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The Other White Meat® Breathes New Life Into Basics to Revitalize Family Mealtimes

*“Retro Expert” Darla Shine and The National Pork Board Celebrate
National Eat Together Week With Updated Twists on Traditional Favorites*

DES MOINES, Iowa (Sept. 11, 2008) – Back-to-school season means “back to busy” for many American families as they juggle carpools, sports practices and after-school activities. While recent research shows that an overwhelming majority of mothers (99 percent) agree that family mealtimes is important¹, it often gets put on the back burner amid overstretched schedules.

After 13 years of encouraging family dinnertime during annual National Eat *Dinner* Together Week, America’s pork producers are putting a twist on their long-standing tradition to champion the idea that families should enjoy a meal together **WHENEVER** they can find time. Whether it’s dinner, breakfast or a weekend brunch, the new *National Eat Together Week: September 21-27, 2008* now offers multiple opportunities to catch up with your busy bunch.

While it seems like family mealtimes is a thing of the past, the National Pork Board called on retro expert and author of *Happy Housewives*, Darla Shine, to bring back the basics of this multi-faceted bonding time in a way that makes it easy for today’s lifestyles.

“As a proud mother of two, I’m excited to advocate *National Eat Together Week* because I know how valuable a shared meal can be. With so much going on in a modern mom’s life, and dad’s life for that matter, an at-home meal with your loved ones can seem tough to pull off, but it doesn’t have to be,” said Shine. “I’ve got simple secrets to help hectic families – like setting the breakfast table the night before to combat morning chaos – and tasty twists on classic favorite foods to keep them coming back for more.”

That’s Swell, But What To Serve?

Haven’t stepped foot in the kitchen for months? Can’t remember the last meal you had that wasn’t delivered to your door? Don’t fret - you don’t have to be June Cleaver to whip-up an easy, delicious and fun meal for your family in practically no-time flat. Getting a home-cooked meal on the table –morning, noon or night – can be a snap if you have the right recipes and strategies.

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¹ Online Omnibus survey conducted of 1,029 mothers 18+ by Impulse Group on behalf of the National Pork Board; July/August 2008

National Eat Together Week/2

Shine has several suggestions for dishes that match modern flavors with staple ingredients, and most importantly, are a cinch to prepare – a key “ingredient” for any parent. Pork recipes are perfect for the prep-time conscious since so many cuts of pork can help cook up delectable dishes in 30 minutes or less. Plus, it’s an ideal protein choice since it pairs well with any flavor.

Start Out Satisfied

“Breakfast is a great time to gather around the table to set the tone for the day both mentally and physically,” said Shine. In fact, a new study published by the *British Journal of Nutrition* shows that people who eat high-quality protein foods for breakfast, like eggs and lean Canadian bacon, had a greater sense of sustained fullness throughout the day².

The retro-revamp says you can fuel your family member’s bodies and minds in the morning by literally setting the stage the night before. Set the table at night to ensure you won’t slip up in a time crunch, then grab the kids to help mix up a **Breakfast Sausage Pie**. It’s a classic dish featuring sausage, eggs and Mozzarella that’s modernized by making it in advance; pour ingredients into frozen pie shells, and reheat in the morning. Busy families also can cook up a breakfast basic – bacon and eggs – which only takes five minutes yet offers a protein-rich meal to help stave off hunger. Add fresh herbs like basil, dill or thyme for a fresh take.

Lunchtime, Not Crunch Time

Shine enjoys gathering her brood for weekend lunches before heading out for a fun-filled activity together. Cold-cuts are classic lunch fare but her recipe for **Sweet Autumn Ham Sandwiches** serves up one of today’s top food trends: fruit and meat. For a novel spin on the seemingly-old standby, pair deli ham – a surprisingly lean option – with Granny Smith apples, cranberry spread and cream cheese. Plus, sandwiches like these, Shine says, are ones that kids can prepare for themselves without parents, which cuts down on time moms spend solo cooking.

Dinner In a Dash

Here’s a time-saving suppertime strategy. “Most people get the idea of ‘cook once, eat twice.’ For the busy modern mom, that’s not enough. To make the most out of the time you’re spending in the kitchen, choose a make once, eat THRICE option – for that, there’s nothing like ham,” she said.

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² Leidi HJ, et al. Increased dietary protein consumed at breakfast leads to an initial and sustained feeling of fullness during energy restriction compared to other meal times. *British J of Nutr*, published online on Sept. 2, 2008.

Baked Ham Dinner can become a **Brilliant Breakfast Quiche** and a classic **Pea Soup** with Shine's recipe. If that's not enough, she also recommends doubling a recipe – like her **Grilled Cheese Casserole**, which takes all the favorites of a traditional, gooey grilled cheese sandwich, combines them with diced pork tenderloin for a one-pot hot casserole creation – so you can have enough for a second meal later in a super-busy week.

Click 'n' Cook All Year Long

Need all the help you can get? TogetherForMealtime.com is a great go-to Web resource packed with offerings for busy parents that can help turn meals from blah to “ahh” with a click of the mouse! Keep the spirit of *National Eat Together Week* alive year round, whether during back to school season, National Pork Month in October or during the hectic holidays.

The site offers recipes – including Shine's dishes and more – that can be prepared in 30 minutes or less, meal planning and management tips (courtesy of home cooks and busy parents across the country), fun mealtime activity ideas including a Meal Magic recipe game, conversation starters and printable placemats, and the opportunity to create a personalized, online family cookbook that's shareable with family and friends.

For a complete history on more than a decade of celebrating the importance of families around the table, visit TogetherForMealtime.com.

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