

Wednesday 8 February 2017

## Don't worry, lowering the bar on home cooking is still healthy

Despite the benefits of home cooking, a new survey shows cooking at home is lower on the 'to do' list of many Aussies looking to improve their health in 2017, prompting dietitians to suggest lowering the bar on the need to always cook from scratch.

The Omnipoll survey of 1,033 Australians aged 18-64 years, commissioned by Australia's peak body for dietitians, the Dietitians Association of Australia (DAA), found just 17 per cent of those with a goal to be healthier this year intend to cook at home more<sup>i</sup>.

This compares with 54 per cent who want to get more active.

The research comes as DAA launches Australia's Healthy Weight Week (AHWW) (13-19 February), which urges Australians to make simple changes towards smart eating, starting with cooking at home more often.

DAA Spokesperson and AHWW ambassador Themis Chryssidis said big health wins are there for the taking for people who regularly cook at home.

"Studies tell us that cooking at home is healthier, being linked with a better overall diet, including more fruit and vegetables. But we're cooking less often and spending less time cooking now than in the past," said Mr Chryssidis, an Accredited Practising Dietitian.

He said common hurdles to cooking at home include time pressures, an inability to afford scratch or fresh ingredients, and a lack of cooking skills<sup>ii</sup>.

"In our modern-day society where time is scarce and convenience is king, it's ok to take short-cuts in the kitchen, especially if it means you're more likely to cook at home.

"Using convenience foods that fit within a healthy diet, such as pre-cut and portioned vegetables and meat, par-cooked rice or pasta, and ready-made sauces can buy you time and make cooking easier, while still giving you control over your meal," said Mr Chryssidis.

He also suggests cooking in bulk and freezing leftovers for another meal, and spending half an hour on the weekend planning meals for the week ahead, so that healthy ingredients are on hand.

"Remember your goal – cooking at home is cheaper and healthier. It's an effort that pays off in the long run for you and your family," said Mr Chryssidis.

To mark AHWW, Themis and celebrity chef Callum Hann, from Sprout, have developed the cookbook 'Everyday Healthy Bumper Edition' for free download from [www.healthyweightweek.com.au](http://www.healthyweightweek.com.au)

# MEDIA RELEASE

Themis Chryssidis' super-easy kitchen hacks:

1. When preparing a stir-fry, don't slice your meat into thin pieces before cooking. Cook pork, chicken or red meat as a whole piece and then slice it before adding it to vegetables. It will remain moist and tender and avoid overcooking and becoming tough like thin pre-cut strips can.
2. Get creative with leftovers. Extra rice? Make fried rice, by adding in some vegetables and a chopped-up omelette. Extra bolognese sauce? Add some beans, green vegetables and rice for a quick chilli con carne, or use it in a taco with avocado, spring onion, pineapple and corn.
3. Stale loaf of bread? Spray it with a little water, wrap in foil and gently warm in the oven to give it a second life.
4. Instant sorbets – forget time-consuming recipes, simply blend frozen fruit (such as mango, banana or kiwi fruit) in a food processor with a splash of water or juice for a quick, tasty and refreshing dessert.
5. Leftover herbs, garlic, chilli, ginger, lemon grass or other aromatic ingredients? Blend these altogether and freeze them in ice cubes and then use them for super-quick flavour bombs in soups, pastas or grilled meats.
6. Easily remove corn silks by holding the cob of corn firmly in one hand and twisting with the other. The silks will clump together and you will be able to easily remove them from the corn.
7. Never remove the root end from onions before slicing them. This holds the onion together and avoids the onion falling apart and becoming difficult to slice.
8. Fish sticking to your dodgy old pan? Pan lost its “non-stick”? Place a piece of baking paper in your frying pan and cook the fish on this. You'll never have a piece of fish stick again! Works perfectly on the BBQ as well.

**ENDS**

**For further information or to organise an interview with Themis Chryssidis, contact DAA:  
Maree Hall (Mon-Wed) 0408 482 581 or Sally Moloney (Thurs & Fri) 0428 916 425.**

## **Background:**

### **About Australia's Heathy Weight Week**

Australia's Healthy Weight Week (AHWW), run by the Dietitians Association of Australia from 13-19 February 2017, is the perfect time to kick-start healthy eating habits.

In 2017, dietitians will be educating Australians that there's a healthy weight that's right for them, whilst raising awareness of the support that Accredited Practising Dietitians can offer in inspiring good health.

The week will focus on getting Australians cooking more meals at home and eating the right foods, in the right portions, as smart ways to help achieve the best weight possible.

Award-winning celebrity cook, Callum Hann, and Accredited Practising Dietitian, Themis Chryssidis (both from Sprout), are supporting AHWW in 2017. Sprout will be urging all Australians to be healthy and confident cooks

in their own kitchen. Dr Andrew Rochford, medical expert and media personality, is also an ambassador of AHWV.

For more information, including the AHWV Instagram Cooking Challenge and the new bumper edition AHWV cookbook, plus nutrition tips, recipes, event details and a social media toolkit, see the AHWV website at [healthyweightweek.com.au](http://healthyweightweek.com.au) and follow AHWV at [www.twitter.com/DAA\\_feed](http://www.twitter.com/DAA_feed) and use #AHWV2017.

AHWV 2017 will kick-off with a launch event in Sydney on Monday 13 February.

*Note: Australia's Healthy Weight Week 2017 is proudly supported by Meat and Livestock Australia, Healthy Food Guide, CanPrint, Australian Mushroom Growers Association, Australian Chicken Meat Federation, Xyris, McKenzie's Foods, and Almond Board of Australia.*

## Surprisingly simple, nutritious home-cooked meals:

**Pizza perfect:** Wholemeal pita bread + tomato paste + pre-cut vegetables + cheese + egg + baby spinach

Spread wholemeal pita bread with tomato paste. Add pre-cut vegetables (such as chopped capsicum, broccoli, mushrooms and tomato), a little reduced-fat cheese and crack an egg on top. Bake in the oven until the cheese melts and the egg is cooked to your liking. Serve with some baby spinach on top.

**Speedy stir fry:** Lean beef + frozen stir-fry vegetables + stir-fry sauce + par-cooked brown rice

Add lean beef strips to a non-stick wok until cooked. Add a packet of frozen stir-fry vegetables and salt-reduced ready-made stir-fry sauce. Serve alongside microwave 90 second brown rice.

**Curry in a hurry:** Chicken breast + curry paste + canned tomatoes + frozen vegetables + cous cous

Add diced chicken breast to a non-stick fry pan until cooked. Stir in two tablespoons of your favourite Indian curry paste, followed by a tin of diced tomatoes and a cup of water. Add half a packet of frozen winter vegetables (like carrot, pumpkin, cauliflower) and heat until cooked through. Serve with cous cous.

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<sup>i</sup> Omnipoll survey (September 2016) of 1,033 Australians aged 18-64 years, commissioned by the Dietitians Association of Australia.

<sup>ii</sup> Wolfson JA et al. What does cooking mean to you?: Perspectives of cooking and factors related to cooking behavior (2016) *Appetite*: 97; 146-54.