

What's Normal for You?

My 89-year-old grandmother still spends endless hours in the kitchen preparing dinner (everything's from scratch), setting a lovely table (with pressed linens and fresh flowers) and serving the epitomé of the "perfect" meal. According to several studies (New American Dinner Table Survey-NADTS- conducted by the Gallup Organization; Wyler-Bouillon Company-WBC; and National Eating trends Service-NETS) on dinner habits:

- 91 percent (nine out of 10 people surveyed) believe it's more important than ever to eat together as a family.
- 74 percent (three out of four) say they sit and eat together for dinner.
- 74 percent enjoy cooking.
- 61 percent (six out of 10) think it's what you eat, not how it's made (home-cooked, frozen, or pickup). (46 percent plan meals daily.
- 34 percent plan meals a week in advance.
- 77 percent believe you can please everyone with one meal.
- 62 percent of Americans describe the dinner hour as "hectic."
- 77 percent spend less than 30 minutes eating together.
- 26 percent eat in 15 minutes or less.
- 50 percent eat dinner without their partner or spouse.
- 19 percent eat alone.
- 7 percent eat while standing in the kitchen doing other things.
- 37 percent of families with working moms eat together every night. Working moms spend less than 30 minutes preparing dinner (it's ok—it's the being together that counts.)
- 50 percent of families with non-working moms eat together every night.

The overall consensus seems to indicate that families are desperately trying to keep the family dinner hour alive and well. However, wherever, whenever is certainly better than never.