Tips for Meal Preparation Without Power

Meal preparation without power can be a challenge. Safely preparing healthy meals without power is an even greater challenge. UF/IFAS Lake County Extension offers these recommendations.

Keep safety in mind when using alternative cooking methods. Now is the time to dig out that fondue pot or candle warmed buffet dish you haven’t used in years. Use them to warm prepared and canned foods. Do not cook raw meats, fish, poultry, eggs and frozen foods in these dishes. These foods require more cooking time and heat to prepare as well as reach safe temperatures.

Camp stoves, charcoal and gas grills are commonly used to prepare foods during power outages. Never operate inside your home, fumes can be deadly. If using an electric burner connected to a generator, be sure to use a properly rated extension cord and follow safety precautions for the generator. Information on generator safety is available from the Lake County Extension office.

Disasters are stressful. Healthy eating helps people cope by providing comfort and energy. Whenever possible, purchase single serving items that need no refrigeration.

For breakfast try:
- Fruit and canned juice
- Ready to eat cereals and cereal bars
- Bread or crackers with jelly, peanut butter, cheese or cheese spreads.
- Instant milk or creamer that can be reconstituted with water
- Instant coffee, tea or cocoa

Lunch and dinner suggestions:
- Canned vegetables and fruits
- Canned meat, fish and poultry
- Canned beans such as baked beans, garbanzo beans and black beans
- Raw fruits and vegetables
- Canned puddings
- Bread, crackers and cookies
- Peanut butter
- Instant noodles and soup

Canned beans are quick to fix, filling and an excellent source of protein and fiber. Try to only fix enough food for a single meal so you do not have to store leftovers in a cooler. Ideas for snacks include beef jerky, nuts and seeds and granola bars.

Take time to sit down and enjoy your meals during this stressful time. Combine your food and cooking implements with friends and neighbors. Not only will you have more variety in your diet, you will have the support and companionship of others in the same situation.

Information adapted from the University of Florida Disaster Handbook. Available online at: http://www.disaster.ifas.ufl.edu/. For more information contact Julie England at UF IFAS/Lake County Extension (352)343-4101.