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Chapter 21: Speed-Scratch Cooking—Creative-Thinking Activity

Cook? Who has time? This is the lament in busy families these days. People long to sit down at home to meals made from scratch, but preparing such meals isn't easy—and it can be time-consuming.

As a compromise between home-cooking and carry-outs, speed-scratch cooking is a trend in recent years that offers a way to get a meal on the table in a short time. To do this, cooking combines convenience foods with home-cooked foods. You can get that home-cooked taste, but with less effort.

How does it work? One trip through the supermarket shows the many options open to cooks today. Delis have precooked meats, even rotisserie-roasted chickens. You can get meats and cheese cut just the way you want them and in the exact amount you need. Precut fresh vegetables are available in bags. Some combinations are frozen with seasonings already added. You can buy delicious spaghetti sauces in a jar. Heat up your favorite sauce, cook the pasta, make a salad, and add some crusty bread, and the meal is ready to eat, almost like making it from scratch. And you can enjoy it at home.

Although speed-scratch cooking can be costlier than cooking from scratch, sometimes the extra cost is worthwhile. This style of cooking has all sorts of variations. Pantry staples and leftovers may be used in the process, which can help keep the costs down. Typically, the ingredient list for a speed-scratch dish is short.

Now, test your creative-thinking skills. Read the cooking plans below and come up with at least one idea for a speed-scratch-cooking dish for each one.

Activity Questions:

1. You want to make a stir-fry, but with less effort. What could you do?

2. Suppose you want to make a soup that tastes and looks better than soup from a can. What could you do?

Name _____ Date _____

3. In the store you see a package of cheese sauce mix. How could it help you make a tasty dish for a meal?

4. You have a craving for a salad, but you don't have time to cut everything up. How could you have a salad and make it suitable for a meal, not just a side dish?

5. Suppose you want to make a dessert that will be special for your family, but you don't want to spend a lot of time making it. You find a brownie mix in the cupboard. What could you do?