



THE SIX O'CLOCK SCRAMBLE

Family Dinner: Let Nothing -- Not Even Carpools -- Stand in its Way! Solutions to the 5 Biggest Family Dinner Obstacles

Sometimes it's daunting to get the whole family sitting down for dinner at the same time. Back when Solomon and Celia were toddlers and preschoolers, sitting down for family dinner had different challenges than today. They were squirmy, pickier eaters, and their appetites kicked in well before our usual dinnertime of 7:00 (when Andrew could join us). Today we have different hurdles: the kids' sports practices often don't get them home until 7:30 or 8, and sometimes they have hours of homework to complete before bed.

Too often, in addition to the kids' busy evening schedules, my own cooking schedule is disrupted by driving the kids to activities (although we carpool as much as possible to save time and reduce traffic and pollution). I found I needed to devise a cooking strategy that gets dinner on the table even if I'm not home from 5:30 to 7:30 (Hasn't anyone invented an "app" for that yet?).

Recently I surveyed Scramblers on our [Facebook](#) page about what some of YOUR biggest challenges are to getting dinner on the table, and the results are listed below. Here are a few strategies we have developed over the years to make sure we can still eat a meal together most days of the week despite these challenges: Here are a few strategies we have developed over the years to make sure we can still eat a meal together most days of the week:

Challenge: Kids get too hungry before dinnertime.

Solutions: 1) Put out a platter of cut fruits and vegetables before dinner to placate hunger; 2) If you've made dinner earlier, let the kids snack on part of dinner.

Challenge: Kids need to eat early so they have energy for late activities.

Solution: Have kids eat a healthy and hearty snack before late practices (or let them snack on dinner if you've already made it). Even if they don't eat much at dinnertime (and sometimes they are famished again) we are still sharing that family time.

Challenge: Family cook is also family chauffeur.

Solutions: 1) Cook and/or prep (and certainly plan and shop!) ahead; 2) Double recipes and stock the freezer; 3) Incorporate the slow-cooker into weekly routine.

Challenge: Kids need attention/need to be supervised during prime dinner prep time.

Solutions: 1) Recruit the kids as sous chefs to help you make dinner; 2) Have a drawer of fun cooking tools and stickers, etc., that they can play with while you cook (or if they

are older have a homework station near the kitchen); 3) Cook an extra meal or two on the weekends to serve during the week.

Challenge: One parent simply cannot get home in time for dinner.

Solutions: Make Sunday nights family dinner night and/or make breakfast your family meal.

No matter the challenge, we are determined to sit down to dinner together nearly every night. It is usually the only stress-free time the four of us can share during the busy weekdays; and it's about the only time I can be certain the family is eating a healthy home-cooked meal.

I'm always looking for new ideas to help families reduce their dinnertime stress and remove obstacles that get in the way of family dinners. Do you have other challenges or solutions to share? Please send them my way at aviva@thescramble.com or share them on the [Scramble's Facebook page](http://www.facebook.com/#!/pages/The-Six-OClock-ScrambleAviva-Goldfarb/96498995043?ref=ts) [http://www.facebook.com/#!/pages/The-Six-OClock-ScrambleAviva-Goldfarb/96498995043?ref=ts]. I look forward to conquering them together!