

Yes, you can still eat well during a kitchen makeover; some tips

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

(AP)—When my husband and I recently remodeled our 1905 home, we knew that going without a kitchen for four months would be disruptive. Friends even warned that home renovation was a leading cause of divorce.

But we figured we had two advantages: We live in a neighborhood with lots of tempting take-out options, and it was summer in Minnesota. No problem, I thought, envisioning sushi and Thai on the porch.

Problem. After breaking the umpteenth plastic fork, not to mention adding the cost of three restaurant meals a day to the ever-increasing remodel tab, even our favorite to-go orders lost their appeal.

We did survive, marriage intact, and today our kitchen is the most-used room in our home. But with a little hindsight, it's clear the process could have been much more appetizing. Here are some expert tips on how to keep body and spirit going strong during a kitchen makeover.

Getting organized

Eventually, we set up a makeshift kitchen in the dining room, complete with a new refrigerator (bought early for that purpose), small appliances and real cutlery. Since it was summer, we also made good use of the grill and outdoor water supply.

In addition to basic pots, pans and utensils, Lynne Rossetto Kasper, host of American Public Media's "The Splendid Table," recommends a toaster oven, slow cooker, hot plate and microwave for a temporary kitchen. Other useful items include a basement sink, sandwich grill and blender.

To my surprise, our toaster oven did more than brown bread. It can bake quick breads, for example, or Kasper's mac and cheese recipe.

Use the microwave, she suggests, as an aid. It can cook rice

or melt chocolate, for example. We discovered it can also cook pasta.

Gabriel Keller, an associate at Domain Architecture & Design in Minneapolis, offers more advice:

- Have your contractor seal off the kitchen renovation with plastic walls, ideally with zipper openings. That keeps the mess away from the rest of the house, and off your food.

- Move old appliances to the basement or utility room, or buy new ones early and temporarily install them there. Many dishwashers can easily be converted to drain into a basement utility sink.

- Buy a convection microwave oven, which can do everything from popping popcorn to roasting chicken.

- If your temporary kitchen has concrete flooring, lay down a section of Marmoleum or vinyl flooring (available in a roll). If the ceiling is unfinished, install gypsum board, plywood or fabric to keep dirt from falling.

- Discover the pleasures of grilling more than just hamburgers (even bread can be baked on a grill). And don't worry about the weather: In Minnesota, we are known to fire up the grill even when it is 20 degrees below zero.

- Remember that construction always takes longer than you or the contractor think it will, so plan for an additional two to four weeks beyond the schedule.

Eating Out

No matter how functional your temporary kitchen, you'll occasionally need a break.

"If you're going to eat out with more frequency, it's extra important to be diligent" about choosing healthy foods, said Dawn Jackson Blatner of Chicago, a registered dietitian and spokesperson for the American Dietetic Association who recently went through a kitchen remodel herself.

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