

MSOF Family Focus

SOF Family Dinner Challenge

WHY FAMILY DINNER?

The Military Special Operations Family Collaborative (MSOF), a nonprofit public health initiative for the special operations community, found that **avoiding or giving up on family dinner is one of the first signs of family strain.**

Decades of research show that family dinner is good for the body, brain, and spirit (The Family Dinner Project, 2019). Family dinner **boosts vocabulary, improves storytelling skills, and promotes literacy** in children. Sharing mealtime with others is also associated with **better mental and physical health** for adults, and can result in **enhanced team performance** (The Family Dinner Project, 2021). Families and communities share challenges, success stories, and bond around food.

A Story of SOF Family Resiliency & Food

by Christine Trax, MSOF Family Dinner Team

One fateful morning during the start of a snowstorm, in the middle of a deployment during COVID, my washing machine caught fire. I stood in the kitchen with a baby on my hip and two other children asking for breakfast, and just laughed - of course, this would happen! I immediately went online and ordered a new washing machine, promised to arrive in five days. Nearly a month later, I had no washing machine and a pile of dirty laundry that was awe-inspiring.

While having a pleasant phone conversation with the battalion commander's wife, laughing about the deployment curse, she discovered I was still without a washing machine. She was absolutely horrified, and I was ordered to immediately come over and do my laundry. I arrived at her home with a van full of dirty laundry and three kids hoping all would go well. It could not have been better!

Our children played, happy to finally see a face not on a screen. I did laundry and helped fold hers. She made a wonderful dinner, with spices as warm as her hospitality. Her kindness was inspiring - I will forever remember the "Commander's Curry", a house full of inviting smells, children laughing, and a warm belly.

Try out Christine's recipe for Commander's Curry on the reverse of this page.



To learn more about the benefits of family dinner and find fun conversation starters, visit our partner thefamilydinnerproject.org

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MILITARY
SPECIAL OPERATIONS
FAMILY COLLABORATIVE

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COMMANDER'S CURRY

INGREDIENTS

- 1/2 onion, chopped
- 2 serrano chiles (remove seeds for a milder curry)
- 3 cloves garlic
- 1 tablespoon canola oil
- 1 3/4 pound sirloin tip steak, cut into 3/4-inch cubes
- 1/2 teaspoon fine sea salt, plus more to taste
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 1 1/4 teaspoon coriander seeds
- 1 1/4 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon ground turmeric
- 1 (13.5-ounce) can light coconut milk
- 1 (14.5-ounce) can diced tomatoes, drained
- 1/2 teaspoon sugar
- 1 pound red potatoes, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1/3 cup packed cilantro

**FAMILY =
COMMUNITY**
PREPARE THIS RECIPE
WITH/FOR YOURSELF,
FRIENDS, FAMILY,
TEAM, OR UNIT

DIRECTIONS

1. In a blender, combine onion, chiles, garlic and 1/2 cup water and blend until smooth. Set aside.
2. In a large high-sided skillet with a tightly fitting lid, heat oil over high heat.
3. Sprinkle steak with salt. Add half the steak pieces to the skillet and cook, stirring occasionally, until lightly browned.
4. Transfer to a bowl with a slotted spoon; repeat with remaining steak. Set aside.
5. Return the skillet to medium-high heat and add cinnamon, coriander, cumin and turmeric; stir for 10 seconds and then add the onion and chile mixture.
6. Simmer for 1 minute and then stir in coconut milk, tomatoes and sugar.
7. Add the beef back in, cover the skillet, and simmer 40 minutes.
8. Stir in potatoes and continue to simmer until beef and potatoes are very tender, about 20 minutes more; remove the lid during last 10 minutes of simmering if you would like a thicker sauce.
9. Remove cinnamon stick; taste curry and add more salt if desired. Serve garnished with chopped cilantro leaves.

Join us in adding certainty to the SOF journey at [MSOFC.org](https://www.msofc.org)

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