

Stress Free Cooking



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10 Tips to Stress Free Cooking

Everyone longs for stress free cooking, especially when it comes to cooking for large crowds. Here are 10 simple tips to keep your cooking stress free.

1. **Plan ahead** – It is important to have a plan ahead of time, especially if you are cooking for a large group. Planning ahead keeps you from having to make split-second decisions when you are supposed to be cooking.
2. **Prep ahead** – Once you have your plan, it is important to begin to prep as soon as possible. This can be done several days in advance. For instance, if you have to dice a bunch of vegetables, you can probably get that done two to three days in advance and store them for use. Same with making stock or broth; make it a week in advance and freeze for use. Prior prep work makes for a smooth cooking day.
3. **Don't be overly ambitious** – Just because you think you can pull off a full five course professional meal with one oven and a dog that eats crumbs off the floor, doesn't mean you need to show off your skills for the first time with 30 hungry people waiting. Keep your meals simple yet elegant and not only will your stress levels be down, but so will the stomach growling of your family and friends.
4. **Time plan** – One of the hardest things to accomplish is getting everything ready on time so it comes out hot, all at once. This is a simple thing to figure out, but many people don't take the time to think about this ahead of time. Take a look at what you need to cook, how you are going to cook it, (i.e. stove, oven, crock pot) and how long it takes to cook. Once you have those figures, just walk back from the time you are supposed to have company in order to figure out when you need to put stuff on or take it off.
5. **Use simple recipes** – Using one pot, or simple recipes that do not call for a mess, can keep your life simple as peach cobbler (which also uses one pan). The fewer pans you use, the better off you will be. There will be less to clean up and less you need to worry about finishing at the same time.
6. **Clean as you go** – Not every recipe calls for single pan usage, so if you have to dirty more than one pan, cleaning as you go will reduce stress big time. Keeping your area clean is a major stress reducer, especially once the food is cooked and ready.
7. **Music** – Listening to music is another great way to take the stress out of the kitchen. Studies have shown that music actually helps to calm the system and remove stress.
8. **Reduce movements** – While music might take the mental stress out of the picture, reducing your movements will help to take the physical stress off. Grab a trash bowl to put on your counter and throw everything in there so you are not walking back and forth

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to the trashcan. Organize your kitchen to help you find things quickly and lower the stress level every time you don't move.

9. **Delegate** – Stress usually happens because you have too much stuff to do and not enough time to do it. If you have any children, now would be a good time to delegate and distress. Having some people to help you out can reduce stress quickly and efficiently.
10. **Clean out your fridge ahead of time** – Nothing is more stressful than ending a fantastic meal, only to find out there is no room in your fridge for the leftovers. Having a clean fridge will help reduce the after-party stress. A clean fridge means less work for you and less chaos trying to keep the food from spoiling.

By following some, or all, of these simple tricks, you can distress your cooking. Grab your knife and cutting board; flip on some tunes and start whipping up a storm of scrumptious goodies.

Your Crockpot is Your Best Friend

Crockpots seem to have taken a back seat to just about every other kitchen gadget in the last 10 years. Without a doubt, crockpots should be at the top of everyone's list for desired kitchen tools. Crockpots are the ultimate tool in de-stressing and hassle free cooking. Let's take a quick look at why crockpots should be one of the main staples in kitchens around the world.

Set it and forget it

One of the best reasons to keep a crockpot on your kitchen counter, is the fact that you can set it and forget it. Basically, you can fix a hearty dinner for your entire family while you are getting everything else done. Imagine being able to make a killer barbeque while cleaning the house, running errands and getting the kids to school and sports practices.

The ability to set it and forget it should be reason enough to almost super glue a crockpot to the center of your kitchen counter. Not only can you fully cook meals, but you can reheat them too. Crockpots are useful for reheating food because they do not dry them out like microwaves do. Sure, it takes a little foresight to get the food in there with enough time before dinner is served, but your chicken will be more tender and juicy than if you nuke it for a couple minutes.

Types of recipes

Another reason to become buddy-buddy with your crockpot is the number of great recipes that it can be tasked with. Everything from roast to barbeque and soup to cobbler, the walls of your crockpot can do it all. There are tons of books, filled to the brim, with crockpot recipes from the beginner to the advanced.

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Since there are practically hundreds, if not thousands of recipes, you don't have to stress over having the same things each week. The versatility of a crockpot is well worth the money you will spend on one. If you can think of a recipe you would like to try, chances are there is a crockpot recipe designed strictly for it.

Easy cleanup

Just like one pot meals, crockpots are incredibly easy to clean up, especially the ones made of ceramic or porcelain. Many of the crockpots today are even dishwasher safe, to save even more time and reduce stress. While crockpots can go in the dishwasher, it is usually best to wash them by hand so they do not chip if something hits the basin. As for the rest of the crockpot, there really isn't much to do other than the occasional wipe down with a warm, soapy cloth.

Crockpots are incredibly efficient at reducing stress. With simple controls, a variety of recipes and clean-up that would make your mother proud, crockpots should really regain their rightful place on the kitchen counter. Grab out your crockpot, throw in some ingredients, set it, forget it and come back when it is done. How is that for stress free cooking?

One Pot Wonders

If anything ever made the top stress free cooking charts, it would be the invention of one pot meals. With little to no cleanup, one pot meals are the ultimate kitchen kick boxer, simple to make, delicious to eat and completely stress free. So what exactly is it that makes a one pot meal so versatile? Truth be told; the list of why they are not good will probably be much shorter.

Benefits of one pot

One. Pot. It doesn't get any easier than that, well, other than no pot, but that isn't cooking, it is just making a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. Some of the benefits of one pot meals are the fact that it only takes one pot to make a fantastic meal for you family. That being said, one pot is also much easier to clean up than a whole slew of pots and pans.

Another benefit to cooking out of only one pan is the ability to use that pan as a dish. Please note, if there is more than one person in the house, this would not be recommended, but it is a benefit for the solo chef. On a more serious note, one dish meals are generally associated with comfort foods. Since the original one pot meals were probably some form of soup or stew made with vegetables and the current hunted game, people are familiar with crowding around a table to get some grub.

Also, one-dish meals, just so happen to generally be quality, wholesome meals. Usually including vegetables, starches, and meats, these hardy dishes typically hit on many, if not all,

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of the different levels of the food pyramid. This keeps bodies ready for the next day of work, while satisfying the hunger of toiling throughout the day.

Simple or complex

One pot meals can be as simple or as complex as you wish. Some meals have three ingredients, while others have twenty, thirty, or even around 50. The great thing about one pot meals being as simple or complex as you want, means that the meal will only take as long as you want it to take.

No matter if you are under a strict time constraint or if you want the most savory, juicy and delicious pulled pork in the world, one pot meals are where it is at. From a 30-ingredient, 5:00 alarm chili to a Greek baked chicken; the ability to cook a wide variety of meals in one pot caters to every need and skill set. Many college kids only have one pot or pan to weather dorm life and many adults are giving up the kitchen clutter and dropping down to a single trustworthy pot to prepare all their family meals.

If you are up for a challenge, put away all of your other pans and cling to one for a week. See how that does and what meal ideas you can come up with. If things look like they are still going strong, try it out for a month. I believe you will be surprised with the amount of different choices you have available to you within the constraints of a single pan. Who knows, maybe you will be the next to adopt the single-pan kitchen life; it sure saves a lot of cabinet space.

Stress Free Cooking with Your Kids

Stress free cooking and kids, should not ever go in the same sentence. Well, that is, other than to say they shouldn't go in the same sentence. Believe it or not, there are plenty of things that you can do in order to make cooking with kids more enjoyable and less stressful. Let's take a look at just a few tips for making cooking with kids, or your spouse for that matter, more enjoyable and much less stressful.

Delegate Tasks

From the ripe ole age of four, children learn to follow direction and duplicate tasks. This is a great time to begin working with them on delegating tasks. From cutting soft vegetables, like steamed broccoli, to peeling a potato, children can take a lot of the redundant tasks off of your hands; and they will be happy to do so.

Kids love to be in the kitchen, it makes them feel important and grown up because they believe the kitchen is reserved for "big people." Giving them a few tasks to perform helps to build their confidence and begins teaching them about kitchen safety. As they get older, you will find yourself needing to do less and less as they become more comfortable around the tools and foods of the kitchen.

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Use Kid-Safe Devices

While delegating tasks to kids, as mentioned above, might actually increase the amount of stress you have, making sure you have the proper tools will help to remove any of the stress that tries to creep back in. Here is a short list of tools and gadgets you should have on hand in order to make working with kids as stress free as possible.

1. **Plastic or porcelain knives** – will cut vegetables, but not fingers.
2. **Self-contained vegetable chopper** – kids get to pound on something while being helpful and dicing vegetables to your liking.
3. **Garlic peeler and garlic press** – no need to teach the smash and peel, let them roll the skin off and then squeeze the garlic until it turns to a semi-mush.
4. **Wooden stirring utensils** – wooden utensils work on all surfaces, no need to worry about scratching the non-stick skillet.
5. **Small skillets and pans (good for little hands)** – these are the little 5"-7" pans which are great to learn temperature settings and how to properly handle pots and pans.

Have Them Clean Up Afterwards

Sometimes, cooking with kids isn't stressful until it is time to clean up. This could be another delegated task, but just having them help can remove a big part of stress. Let one wipe the scraps into the trash while the other rinses the plate off to hand to you. Make cleaning up just as much fun as the cooking and it will not be a problem getting your kids to help out.

Cooking with your kids can be an extremely joyous and fun time. It takes a little thinking ahead, the right tools and a good attitude, but nothing you can't accomplish on your own. Call the little ones, give them a peeler and a task and watch as your stress levels are peeled off like that potato.

Stress Free Holidays

The turkey is only half cooked, you don't have all the ingredients for the mashed potatoes, the cranberry sauce is more like a cranberry juice and you have no idea what to do with all of the green beans. Sound familiar? If you have ever agreed to cook for your friends and family over the holidays, you know exactly what I am talking about. A giant meal is quite the monumental feat and it can get rather stressful, extremely quick. There are a few things you can do to help relieve most of the stress like taking some time, starting early, planning ahead and scheduling the activities.

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Take time for yourself

You realize in a few days your home will be a whirlwind of commotion, conversations and hungry people. It is important to take a few days prior to the event and spend some time alone, soaking in the quiet of your current surroundings. The more people you add to a mix, the higher the stress levels go. Taking a little time to breathe deeply and prepare yourself for what is to come, might just be the little thing you need to keep those stress levels in check.

Start a few days early

Begin prepping a few days early. Many of your chopping and combining tasks can probably take place a day or two before and be stored in the refrigerator until you are ready for them. This will take quite a bit of time off of your day by prepping in advance. Chopping and combining take the majority of time during a cooking spree, so having them done early will free up a little more time to be social while waiting for the turkey to come out of the oven.

It is also helpful to begin cleaning out your refrigerator ahead of time. Nothing is as stressful as leftovers out the Wahoo and nowhere to put them. You will be feasting on leftovers for the next few days and by the time you are done, nothing in the ice box will still be any good, so go ahead and toss just about everything to make more room ahead of time.

Plan your menu

Having an idea of what you are about to cook is probably a good idea since you will need to make enough to feed thirty or so people. Plan out your menu beforehand so you are not stuck running back and forth to the store while food is cooking. The last thing you want to do is burn the turkey because you had to go grab some cranberry sauce. Roll through your shopping list a couple times before you go and double check that you have everything at checkout. Your stress levels will thank you.

Schedule cooking time and arrival of people

Make sure you count back from the time people are set to arrive and let that be the time you start cooking. The last thing you need to stress about is how you are going to keep the turkey warm for the next twelve hours while everything else finishes cooking. Plan what you want finished at certain times and step through the cooking times to know when you should start on that item. Stick to your schedule as best as possible and all of the food should be ready close to the same time.

Holiday meals are not something to take lightly. There is a lot of effort that goes into preparing large amounts of food, but by following some of these simple tips, you will be the life of the party, have time to socialize and make it look like you are a professional. Not only will this

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impress your friends, it will make cooking a breeze and you will be able to actually hang out instead of hiding in the kitchen.

Monthly Meal Planning

We live in a fast paced world, which is the reason why fast food restaurants are thriving so well in our economy. It almost seems like we don't have enough time to stop and cook lunch or dinner for our family anymore. We are moving so fast during the day, by the time we get home we want to plop down and hang out for about an hour before we are falling asleep. If there was a way you could have lunch and dinners prepared for your family every night and not have any of the typical stress, would you try it out?

Cooking

Believe it or not, you can have high quality meals ready for you every night of the week and not have to lift a finger to prepare anything each night. Many people are taking advantage of monthly meal planning. Basically, one day a month, preferably on a Saturday or Sunday, people will spend the entire day cooking meals to freeze for later.

Now, a month worth of food is quite a bit and even more difficult to store, so many people opt for the weekly meal planning. Same type of situation, only this time you're doing it on a weekly basis. Spend one day cooking and have meals prepared for the rest of the week; that takes a lot of the stress and effort out of planning healthy meals for your family doesn't it?

Freezing

Freezing is probably the most challenging task you will come to if you decide to try out monthly or weekly meal planning. It is not difficult because freezing is freezing, the problem comes in with storage space. Many people who chose to meal plan this way, typically purchase a deep freezer or a separate stand-up freezer to keep all of their meals in.

Since space is limited, you will have to devise recipes and meal plans that you know will be able to fit into the space you have available. Just remember, if you are trying to freeze items like pancakes or berries, it helps to lay them out first to flash freeze and then bag, otherwise you will end up with a solid mass of frozen pancakes. Unless you want to eat 30 pancakes, I suggest the first way.

Reheating

Reheating is simple. Some dishes you will want to cook all the way, such as casseroles, which can simply be reheated in the oven on 250 degrees for about 25 minutes. Other dishes, like lasagna, you will want to leave un-baked so it will have that fresh taste when you pull it out and

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bake it for 30 minutes at 375 degrees. Usually the recipes you got the meals from will have proper reheating instructions so be sure to check there first for reheating directions.

Fixing healthy meals for your family is simple and preparing them ahead of time takes all of the stress out of trying to squeeze in a peanut butter and jelly sandwich between practice and bedtime. Why not have great tasting meals to sit down with every day of the week? Grab some recipes and a free weekend and prepare the best week of meals your family has ever seen.

Cooking with Less is More

We all want to prepare great meals for our friends and family because we care deeply about them. We also prepare great meals because we want to be complimented on our abilities to get stressed out, throw a fit, rip our hair out because we burned the 30-ingredient “savory” pizza and now have to order from Domino’s if our friends and family want something edible. Believe it or not, sometimes, less is more. Let’s take a look at how less in the kitchen can be more

Simple Meals can be hearty

Think of the stews you had when you were a child. A simple combination of meat, potatoes, carrots and corn and you had a hearty meal that was filling, good for you and tasted great. Not every meal needs to be impressive with as many ingredients as you can name and twice as many that you can’t name. How about a meatball sub with mozzarella cheese for a cold day? Simple, tasty and quite easy to prepare.

Less ingredients is less stressful

The fewer ingredients you have, the less you have to chop, peel, dice, cube, clean, or even grind. With fewer ingredients, your stress levels will be lower and as your stress comes down, the work of your taste buds are able to rise to the surface of your consciousness. This means that not only do you receive the benefit of less stress, but you are able to enjoy your meals more.

Having less ingredients also means there is probably less to clean up. Most of the time, fewer ingredients mean only one pot or pan. This makes cleanup a cinch and can usually be done while cooking. Fewer ingredients also mean there is less chance for packaged food to end up in your cooking, which can elevate oxytocin levels, which is produced when you are stressed.

Not as stressful to plan or implement

Speaking of stress, does the endless list for the grocery store begin to stress you out? What if you were to cut that list into thirds? Would it be less stressful? If so, try cooking with fewer ingredients. Yes, it does take a little more thought to come up with recipes, rather than pouring

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some milk into processed pasta and cheese sauce, but it is much easier to plan out once you get used to it.

Planning with fewer ingredients means you can quickly change your mind about what to cook and you don't have to worry about a lot of food going bad, plus you can also mix and match different ingredients, as you like. This makes for an interesting dinner if you can pair two or more new foods together.

If you are used to putting on a show or buying large amounts of food, try working with less. I bet you will be surprised with how much better the food tastes and how much stress you lose during the process. Get into the kitchen, grab a few ingredients and start cooking.

5 Tools for Stress Free Cooking

In order to remove stress from your kitchen, you must have the proper tools. Like a doctor extracting an irritating metal shard from a wounded leg, you must have the right types of tools and understand how to use them to take away the pain and suffering that stress can cause. While the tools to de-stress your kitchen may be a little unorthodox in a few areas, they are still absolutely necessary to organize, prepare and execute great meals.

Post it notes

Yes, your little yellow semi-sticky friends should be kept on hand at all time in the kitchen. These little notes make it easy to write down lists of groceries or used-up materials, cooking times, recipes and even reminders that the pumpkin pie in the oven should not begin to smell and look like a rubber tire on hot pavement.

Timer

The ding lets you know it is done so you don't have to worry about counting it out on your fingers and toes, because let's be honest, how many foods do you know that only cook in the oven for twenty minutes? It is actually good practice to have a clock and a couple of timers that, yes, you can post-it-note what they are timing.

Sharp knife

An essential part of a stress free kitchen. A dull knife makes chopping almost three times as long, plus you cannot do intricate work with a dull knife. We all know you love to carve swans into the rinds of cantaloupes, but with a dull knife, it seems to look more like a pigeon. Keeping your tomatoes in pristine shape and your bread in actual slices will definitely help keep the stress down because you won't have to repeat anything.

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Plan / menu

Having a plan or a menu handy for what you are going to prepare will make life a lot easier. With your plan, you can determine when things need to go on to the stove or come out of the oven. When you are just winging it, there is a higher chance you will forget an essential part of your meal and the rest will have to sit and get cold while you correct your mistake. Make a plan and save yourself some stress.

Radio

Yes, I said it. A radio is probably the most important tool you will ever have in your stress-free kitchen. By radio, I mean CD player, iPod, Walkman, whatever you have that makes the noises you like to jam out to. Music has been shown to reduce stress and when combined with another task, like test taking or cooking, for that matter, you become more focused on the task you are doing.

With your new-found focusing abilities, your plan, a precise blade, something to ding at you and a wall covered with yellow sticky paper, you are now ready to have a stress free cooking experience. While these aren't your typical tools, give them a try and see how well they work for you; feel free to adapt them and alter them to fit your needs and ability. Most importantly, get in the kitchen and start cooking for your friends and family because great relationships and fantastic conversation are built at the dinner table.

Cooking: From Distress to De-stress

Alright, so you were the wise-guy who thought it would be a great idea to have Thanksgiving at your place. It wasn't until the day before that you realized you only have one oven and four burners on the stove, which is all well and good in a typical situation, but today you have to prepare a total of ten dishes for thirty people. It seems like your distress is beginning to boil over.

Believe it or not, there are a few things you can do to help take your nerves into de-stress mode. Yes, you still only have an hour before your guests arrive and your turkey still isn't thawed, but no worries; let's take a look at five simple ways to distress in the kitchen.

1. **Deep Breath** – Take a deep breath and repeat after me: “I will not burn the turkey...again, I will not burn the turkey...again.” On a more serious note, taking deep breaths helps to fill the lungs, blood and muscles with oxygen. This oxygen helps to keep you focused and also alert. Believe it or not, deep breaths also give you a boost of confidence, helping to drop-kick your stress levels right out of the kitchen.
2. **Music** – Think back to a time when you were having a great day, maybe riding in your car with the windows down, hair blowing in the wind and singing at the top of your lungs.

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Music has a certain way of lifting spirits and keeping your mind off of everything else. Grab a radio and crank up your favorite tunes while you are cooking, who knows, maybe you will even enjoy your chaotic experience with some tunes to do life by.

3. **Chop Something** – No, seriously. Grab your biggest knife and go to town on some produce. It will make you feel like a million bucks as you show that carrot who is boss. Just make sure you don't choose an onion, otherwise your eyes and nose will hate you forever.
4. **Open a Window** – Vitamin D does wonders for moods. If you are stressed out, step outside for a bit and grab some rays. If you have the option to open a window and get some sun, do it. Bask in it for a few minutes, possibly taking some deep breaths (just not around the onion you just brutalized).
5. **Have Fun** – That's right. Moon-walk in your socks on the tile; try to carve a face into a lime; heck, put on an apron and pretend you are Julia Child. Have fun. Goofing off and being a free spirit will always lower the stress levels.

See, you don't have to worry about anything. Just follow these five simple tips and you will be stress-free in no time. Just make sure you stop moon-walking and yelling at the turkey before your guests arrive. This article cannot be held accountable for any strange looks or awkward moments between friends. Get in the kitchen and have some fun preparing food for your closest friends and family; everything will be ok.

Timing is Everything

One of the most stressful aspects of cooking is trying to get everything finished at the same time so it is still hot when it is time to eat. This troublesome conundrum has been the thorn in a chefs' side for many years. While making sure food comes out hot and ready to eat, there are a few things that can help keep the devastating reheat setting on the microwave from getting all the attention.

Counting back

Sure, it may take more time to actually sit down and do a little prior planning, but it will pay off in the end. By going through your menu and thinking about the amount of time it will take to cook each aspect of every dish you plan on making, you will have a great understanding of what exactly is needed to get everything to the table on time.

Grab a sheet of paper and start jotting down how long it will take to fix each portion of the meal. Once you have that done, break it down into portions. For instance, it will take about ten minutes to brown the meat for the spaghetti and twenty minutes for the water to boil and cook the pasta; about twelve minutes to boil water and eight minutes to cook. Once you have this, you know that in order to have your dinner ready by 6:30, you need to put the water on the

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stove around 6:10 and then start the meat about 6:20. While the water is boiling and meat is cooking, you can be heating up the pasta sauce, which shouldn't take more than the twenty minutes.

Keeping track

So you have all the times you need to begin each step. Great! With the pasta example above, it is pretty straightforward and there is not much thought that needs to go into keeping track of the full twenty minutes. However, if you are in charge of preparing a holiday meal, you are in for a big surprise. With all of the different courses and dishes, things can get a bit hectic.

First you need to chop stuff, then put things in the oven and next thing you know, you are putting the milk in the cabinet and the cat in the freezer. It can be a bad picture if you catch my drift. One of the best ways I have found to keep track of times and tasks is to have a clock, a timer (or two) and a bunch of post-it-notes.

Don't underestimate the power of a post-it in the kitchen. They stick to anything and make great recipe markers in case you have to close your cook book to make room to bread the turkey legs. Putting post-it notes in order of need, you can have a visual time line of your cooking, not to mention, they are great to write down "time in" and "time out" as reminders.

The clock and timers are self-explanatory as they are just for keeping track of time without having to count out the seconds yourself. I use my watch to make sure I am sticking to my time schedule, then the timer on the over for the food in the oven and an egg timer for food on the stove.

Properly planning your meals may not cancel out the stress of cooking for the masses, but it sure will help out knowing that you are actually right on schedule. Cooking doesn't have to be complicated, but it does take a little prior proper planning.

Stress Free Recipes

Recipes Included:

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BTST Sandwich
Canadian Style Pineapple Turnovers
Cheesy Ravioli & Spinach Skillet
Cherry Basil Ham
Chicken & Noodles in a Flash
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20 Minute Quesadillas

What You Need:

3/4 C of Swiss cheese, shredded
4 (8 in.) flour tortillas
3 oz. cooked ham, sliced thin
2/3 C of tomato, chopped

How to Make It:

Sprinkle the cheese over one half of each of the tortillas.
Place the ham slices over the cheese.
Sprinkle the tomatoes evenly over the ham.
Fold the other side of the tortilla over the filling and press to seal.
Spray a skillet with a non stick cooking spray.
Add the quesadillas and place the skillet over medium heat.
Cook the quesadillas for 2 1/2 minutes per side or until nicely browned.

Makes 4 servings

This makes a great lunch for kids and adults alike. Add a side of fresh fruit or make it a full Mexican meal by adding refried beans, Spanish rice and tortilla chips with a little salsa on the side.

Preparation Time: approximately 15 minutes
Cooking Time: approximately 5 minutes
Total Time: approximately 20 minutes

All in One Chicken and Pasta

What You Need:

8 oz. of spaghetti, broken in half
3 C of small broccoli florets
1 (8 oz.) pkg. cream cheese with garlic, chives and onion
1 C of milk
1/4 tsp pepper
1 (6 oz.) pkg. cooked chicken, chopped

How to Make It:

Cook the spaghetti in a large saucepan as directed on the package.
Add the broccoli to the spaghetti during the last 3 minutes of cooking time.
Drain well and set aside.
Place the cream cheese, milk and pepper into the same saucepan.
Cook over low heat, stirring almost constantly, for 5 minutes or until smooth.
Stir the pasta and broccoli into the sauce.
Add the chicken and stir until blended in well.
Cook, stirring occasionally, for 10 minutes or until heated through.

Makes 4 servings

If the sauce seems to thicken add some extra milk a little at a time until you reach the desired consistency.

Preparation Time: approximately 5 minutes

Cooking Time: approximately 25 minutes

Total Time: approximately 30 minutes

BTST Sandwich

What You Need:

1/4 C of salad dressing
8 slices of bread, toasted
12 slices of bacon, cooked crisp and drained well
8 thin slices of deli turkey
2 tomatoes, sliced
8 fresh spinach leaves

How to Make It:

Spread the salad dressing on one side of each slice of toasted bread.
Lay 3 slices of bacon onto each of 4 slices of bread.
Top the bacon with 2 slices of ham.
Add 2 slices of tomato to each sandwich and top with 2 spinach leaves.
Place the other slices of bread, salad dressing down onto the top of each sandwich.

Makes 4 servings

What a different take on an old favorite. If you are fixing these for the kids and they aren't fond of spinach use lettuce instead. For adults the spinach gives these tasty sandwiches a little different but wonderful taste. Mayonnaise can be used in place of the salad dressing if you prefer.

Preparation Time: approximately 15 minutes
Total Time: approximately 15 minutes

Canadian Style Pineapple Turnovers

What You Need:

1 (13.8 oz) pkg. refrigerated pizza dough
1/4 C of pizza sauce
2 slices of Mozzarella cheese cut in half diagonally
20 slices of pizza style Canadian bacon
1 (8 oz) can pineapple tidbits, drained well
1 tbsp milk
2 tbsp Parmesan cheese, grated

How to Make It:

Allow the oven to preheat to 400 degrees.
Spray a large baking pan well with a nonstick cooking spray.
Unroll the pizza dough onto the prepared baking sheet.
Cut the dough into 4 equal size squares.
Spread 1 tbsp of pizza sauce over each square to within 1/4 inch of the edges.
Place a half of cheese slice on each square.
Top each cheese slice with 5 pieces of bacon.
Top each turnover with pineapple tidbits.
Fold one corner of each square over to the opposite corner making a triangle.
Carefully slide the triangles apart about 2 inches.
Press the edge to seal the turnover.
Brush the top of each turnover with a little milk.
Sprinkle each turnover evenly with the Parmesan cheese.
Bake 15 minutes or until golden brown.

Makes 4 servings

These turnovers can be made in a number of different ways. Use pepperoni slices and leave out the pineapple. Use ham pieces in place of the Canadian bacon along with the pineapple tidbits. You can even crumble some cooked sausage and add mushrooms if you prefer. Anyway you fill them they are sure to be a hit at the dinner table.

Preparation Time: approximately 10 minutes
Cooking Time: approximately 15 minutes
Total Time: approximately 25 minutes

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Cheesy Ravioli and Spinach Skillet

What You Need:

2 C of chunky pizza sauce
1/3 C of water
1 (9 oz) pkg. refrigerated cheese ravioli
1 egg
1 (15 oz) container of ricotta cheese
1/4 C Parmesan cheese, grated
1 (10 oz) pkg. frozen chopped spinach, thawed and squeezed dry

How to Make It:

Stir the pasta sauce and water together in a large skillet.
Bring the mixture to a boil over medium heat.
Stir in the ravioli and cook for 5 minutes or until the ravioli is just beginning to soften.
Place the egg in a bowl and beat lightly with a fork.
Add the ricotta and Parmesan cheese and whisk until blended in well.
Spread the spinach over the ravioli.
Spoon the cheese mixture over the top.
Reduce the heat to low and cook 10 minutes or until the cheese layer is set.

Makes 4 servings

Need a quick meal and don't have any ricotta cheese on hand? Use cottage cheese instead. The Parmesan cheese can be replaced with Romano cheese or use a mixture of both. The spinach is also optional. Add a salad and slice of garlic bread to make this meal one they will ask for over and over again.

Preparation Time: approximately 10 minutes

Cooking Time: approximately 15 minutes

Total Time: approximately 25 minutes

Cherry Basil Ham

What You Need:

2 tbsp of butter, divided
1 (1 lb.) center cut ham slice, cooked
1 (15 oz.) can of dark sweet cherries, pitted
2 tsp cornstarch
1/2 tsp basil

How to Make It:

Place 1 tbsp of the butter into a large skillet placed over medium heat. Melt the butter then add the ham slice. Cook the ham for 10 minutes, turning once, or until heated through. Drain the cherries but reserve the juice. Place the cherry juice into a saucepan and stir in the cornstarch. Heat the juice over medium heat, stirring constantly for 2 minutes or until thick and bubbly. Stir in the cherries, basil and remaining butter. Cook, stirring constantly for 2 minutes or until the butter has melted. Place the ham on a serving platter and top with the cherry basil sauce.

Makes 4 servings

This ham is quite tasty and very simple to throw together. Not found of cherries? That's okay. Use peaches, apricots or pears instead.

Preparation Time: approximately 5 minutes

Cooking Time: approximately 14 minutes

Total Time: approximately 19 minutes

Chicken and Noodles in a Flash

What You Need:

2 C of frozen stir fry vegetables
1 (10.75 oz) can of cheddar cheese soup
3/4 C of milk
1/2 tsp thyme
1 dash hot pepper sauce
2 C of cooked chicken, cubed
2 C of cooked noodles

How to Make It:

Cook the vegetables in a large skillet as directed on the package.
Drain well and set aside.
Stir together the soup, milk, thyme and pepper sauce in the skillet.
Add the chicken and vegetables and stir to combine well.
Cook the mixture over medium heat for 10 minutes or until heated through.
Place the noodles into a serving bowl and top with the chicken mixture.

Makes 4 servings

This is comfort food taken to a new stress free level. Add sides of applesauce, some warm biscuits and a quick dessert and you have a meal that's fit for both a king and queen.

Preparation Time: approximately 5 minutes

Cooking Time: approximately 20 minutes

Total Time: approximately 25 minutes

Chicken Mushroom Pizza Boat

What You Need:

1 (12 in) Italian bread shell
1/2 C of pizza sauce
1 C pizza cheese, shredded
1 (6 oz.) pkg. Italian seasoned chicken breast strips, cooked
1 1/2 C of mushrooms, sliced

How to Make It:

Set the oven to 400 degrees and preheat.
Place the bread shell on a pizza pan and spread the pizza sauce over the inside of the shell.
Sprinkle half the cheese, over the sauce.
Add the chicken strips and top with the mushrooms.
Sprinkle the remaining cheese evenly over the top.
Bake for 15 minutes or until heated through and the cheese is melted.

Makes 4 servings

Here's a new twist on that beloved pizza. Remove the bread from the inside of the shell and let it dry. Crumble the dried bread and use as bread crumbs for any of your favorite recipes.

Preparation Time: approximately 10 minutes
Cooking Time: approximately 15 minutes
Total Time: approximately 25 minutes

Chili Mac Supper

What You Need:

1 C of uncooked macaroni
1 lb. lean ground beef
1/2 tsp chili powder
1 (11.25 oz.) can chili beef soup
1 (14.5 oz.) can diced tomatoes
1/2 C of cheddar cheese, shredded

How to Make It:

Cook the pasta according to the package directions.
Drain the pasta well.
Crumble the meat into a skillet placed over medium heat.
Cook the meat, stirring often, for 10 minutes or until browned.
Drain the meat well.
Return the meat to the skillet and stir in the chili powder.
Cook the meat, while stirring, for 1 minute.
Pour the soup and the tomatoes with their juice into the skillet.
Stir in the cooked pasta.
Cook the mixture, stirring often, for 10 minutes or until heated through.
Sprinkle the cheese over the top and cook 2 minutes or until the cheese begins to melt.

Makes 4 servings

It doesn't get any easier than this. The kids will love it and you'll love how it easy it is to throw together. Top each serving with a little sour cream and a sprinkle of green onions.

Preparation Time: approximately 10 minutes

Cooking Time: approximately 22 minutes

Total Time: approximately 32 minutes

Cinnamon Apples on the Side

What You Need:

1/2 C of water
3 red apples, cored and sliced
1 tbsp brown sugar
1/4 tsp salt
1/4 tsp cinnamon

How to Make It:

Pour the water into a skillet and place over medium heat.
Add the apple slices and cook 5 minutes or until the apples are tender.
Stir in the brown sugar, salt and cinnamon.
Cook an addition 2 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the sugar has completely dissolved.

Makes 4 servings

This is a quick and tasty side dish that goes well with just about any meal. It can also be used as dessert. Just top it with a little whipped cream or a scoop of vanilla ice cream.

Preparation Time: approximately 10 minutes
Cooking Time: approximately 7 minutes
Total Time: approximately 17 minutes

Ham and Cheese Chowder

What You Need:

1 (14 oz) can of chicken broth
1 C of water
1 C of macaroni, uncooked
1 C of frozen corn
1 C of cooked ham, sliced
6 oz. American cheese, cubed
1 C of milk

How to Make It:

Pour the broth and water into a saucepan and place over high heat.
Bring the liquid to a brisk boil then stir in the macaroni.
Reduce the heat to medium low and cook 10 minutes or until the macaroni is tender.
Stir in the corn, ham, cheese and milk.
Stirring often, cook the mixture for 10 minutes or until the cheese has melted completely.

Makes 4 servings

Add a side of corn chips to this chowder for a special treat. If you really like cheese top each bowl of chowder with a little shredded cheddar cheese before serving.

Preparation Time: approximately 5 minutes

Cooking Time: approximately 20 minutes

Total Time: approximately 25 minutes

Ham and Cheese Pasta Salad

What You Need:

2 C of frozen cheese filled tortellini
1 1/2 C cooked ham, cut into strips
1 C of cheddar cheese cubes
1 C broccoli florets
1 C of sliced squash
1/2 C Italian salad dressing
1 tbsp Parmesan cheese, grated
Lettuce
4 tomatoes cut in quarters

How to Make It:

Cook the tortellini as directed on the package then drain well.
Rinse the tortellini with cold water and drain again.
Place the tortellini, ham, cheese cubes, broccoli and squash into a bowl.
Whisk together the dressing and Parmesan cheese.
Pour the dressing mixture over the tortellini mixture and toss to coat.
Place the mixture in the freezer for 10 minutes to quickly chill.
Line salad plates with the lettuce leaves.
Spoon the salad onto the lettuce.
Top with the quartered tomatoes.

Makes 4 servings

Placing the salad ingredients into the freezer chills them quickly for a quick dinner. If you prefer you can throw the salad ingredients together the night before, cover the bowl and refrigerate for up to 24 hours before serving.

Preparation Time: approximately 20 minutes

Chilling Time: approximately 10 minutes

Total Time: approximately 30 minutes

Honey Mustard Halibut

What You Need:

1 1/4 lbs. frozen halibut steaks, thawed
1/2 C of chunky salsa
2 tbsp honey
2 tbsp Dijon mustard

How to Make It:

Set the oven to 450 degrees and preheat.
Place the fish in a shallow 2 qt. baking dish.
Bake for 6 minutes or until the fish flakes easily with a fork.
Remove and drain any liquid from the baking dish and leave the oven on.
In a bowl whisk together the salsa and honey.
Carefully spread the mustard over the fish.
Top each fish steak with the honey salsa mixture.
Bake 4 minutes longer.

Makes 4 servings

If your family likes fish they are sure to love this recipe. Kids enjoy anything honey mustard and they will like this recipe just as much. Add a salad and wild rice pilaf for the perfect stress free meal.

Preparation Time: approximately 10 minutes

Cooking Time: approximately 10 minutes

Total Time: approximately 20 minutes

Italian Pasta Soup

What You Need:

1 lb. ground beef
2 (14 oz.) cans of beef broth
1 (16 oz.) pkg. frozen broccoli and cauliflower
1 (14.5 oz.) can diced tomatoes
1/2 C of tomato juice
1 C wagon wheel pasta, uncooked
1/2 C of basil pesto

How to Make It:

Crumble the meat into a Dutch oven pan and place the pan over medium heat. Cook the meat, stirring often, for 10 minutes or until browned through. Drain the meat well and return to the pan. Stir in the broth, vegetables, tomatoes with their juice and tomato juice. Bring the mixture to a rolling boil then stir in the pasta. Cover the pan, reduce the heat to low and simmer 10 minutes or until the vegetables are fork tender. Remove from the heat and stir in the pesto.

Makes 6 servings

If you don't have basil pesto on hand that's okay. Just add a pinch of dried basil to the soup before bringing it to a boil. Add some Italian bread and a side of fruit and you have a meal that is both filling and delicious in no time.

Preparation Time: approximately 5 minutes

Cooking Time: approximately 20 minutes

Total Time: approximately 25 minutes

Italian Sweet Pepper Bow Tie Pasta

What You Need:

8 oz. of uncooked bow tie pasta
12 oz. Italian sausage links, cut into 1 in pieces
2 red sweet peppers cut into pieces
1/2 C of beef broth
1/4 tsp pepper

How to Make It:

Cook the pasta as directed on the package and drain well.
Place the sausage and peppers into a large skillet.
Cook the mixture over medium high heat for 5 minutes, stirring often, or until the sausage is browned and the peppers are tender.
Drain off any fat.
Pour the broth into the skillet.
Stir in the pepper and bring the mixture to a boil.
Reduce the heat to low and cook 5 minutes.
Pour the mixture over the pasta and stir to coat the pasta completely.

Makes 4 servings

Add a Caesar salad and a loaf of Italian bread to this meal. Make it a real Italian meal and top each portion with some fresh parsley.

Preparation Time: approximately 10 minutes

Cooking Time: approximately 20 minutes

Total Time: approximately 30 minutes

Make Ahead Subs

What You Need:

1 (16 oz) loaf of French bread
1/2 (8 oz) container of sour cream ranch dip
3/4 C of pkg. shredded carrots
1 C of lettuce, shredded
1/2 of a cucumber, peeled, seeded and shredded
2 oz thin sliced deli roast beef
2 oz. thin sliced deli ham
2 oz. thin sliced deli turkey
2 oz thin sliced deli chicken
4 oz thin sliced provolone cheese

How to Make It:

Cut the bread loaf in half lengthwise.
Spread the sour cream ranch dip onto the cut sides of the bread.
Layer the carrots, lettuce, cucumbers, all 4 types of meat and the cheese onto one side of the cut bread.
Close the bread over the top.
Wrap tightly in saran wrap and refrigerate for up to 8 hours.
To serve, cut into 8 slices and secure with a toothpick.

Makes 8 servings

Have plans on Saturday and know your going to be rushed when it comes to eating? This sub will help you out. Use your favorite deli meats and your favorite type of cheese. Purchase already shredded carrots and lettuce and if you prefer use sliced pickles instead of the cucumbers.

Preparation Time: approximately 20 minutes
Total Time: approximately 20 minutes

Marmalade Loin Steaks

What You Need:

1/2 C of orange marmalade
2 tbsp butter or margarine
¼ tsp rosemary
4 lean beef loin steaks, fat trimmed
1/2 tsp salt
1/2 tsp pepper

How to Make It:

Preheat the broiler.

In a saucepan over low heat, stir together the marmalade, butter and rosemary.

Heat the mixture for 3 minutes, stirring often, until melted and hot.

Place the steaks on a broiler pan and season with the salt and pepper.

Broil 4 inches from the heat for 17 minutes, turning once, for medium cooked steaks.

Brush the steaks with the marmalade mixture during the last 5 minutes of broiling.

Place the steaks on dinner plates and top with the remaining marmalade mixture.

Makes 4 servings

Steaks aren't as difficult to cook as many people believe. The timing of your steaks is everything though. To cook a medium rare steak, broil them about 14 minutes, for medium broil them about 17 minutes and for well done broil them for about 20 minutes. Make a small cut in the middle of the steak to see if they are cooked just the way you like them.

Preparation Time: approximately 10 minutes

Cooking Time: approximately 20 minutes

Total Time: approximately 30 minutes

Orange Fried Rice

What You Need:

1 (6 oz) pkg. Oriental fried rice mix
1 tbsp frozen orange juice concentrate, thawed

How to Make It:

Cook the rice according the directions on the box.
When the water has cooked into the rice add the orange juice well.

Makes 4 servings

This is one of the simplest, stress free side dishes you can make. It takes very little time and tastes great. Sprinkle the rice with a few cashew pieces before serving. Serve it with chicken or beef for a meal everyone will enjoy.

Preparation Time: approximately 5 minutes

Cooking Time: approximately 10 minutes

Total Time: approximately 15 minutes

Pizza Beef Burgers

What You Need:

1 lb. ground beef
4 (1/4 in) slices of sourdough bread
1 C of mushroom pasta sauce
1 C mozzarella cheese, shredded

How to Make It:

Preheat the broiler and spray a broiler pan with a nonstick cooking spray.
Form the beef into 4 equal size patties.
Place the patties onto the prepared pan.
Broil 4 inches from the heat for 10 minutes, turning once, or until cooked through.
Add the bread slices to the broiler and toast during the last 2 minutes of the broiling time, turning them once to toast both sides.
Place the pasta sauce into a small saucepan.
Heat the sauce over medium heat, stirring occasionally for 5 minutes or until bubbly.
Place the burgers on the toasted bread.
Spoon the sauce over the top of each burger and sprinkle with the cheese.
Return the burgers to the broiler for 1 minute or until the cheese melts.

Makes 4 servings

Who doesn't like a good pizza burger? This one is a little different than most and takes very little time to prepare. Add a side of potato chips or a nice pasta salad to round out the meal.

Preparation Time: approximately 10 minutes
Cooking Time: approximately 16 minutes
Total Time: approximately 26 minutes

Potato Stuffed Sweet Peppers

What You Need:

2 green sweet peppers
1 pint of deli potato salad
1 C of cooked ham, diced
1/2 C of frozen corn, thawed
2 tbsp of pickle relish

How to Make It:

Cut the peppers in half and remove the seeds, membrane and stems.
Place the peppers in a saucepan and cover with water.
Place the pan over medium high heat and bring the water to a brisk boil.
Boil the peppers for 3 minutes, drain them well and submerge them in ice water to chill.
Stir the potato salad, ham, corn and pickle relish together well in a bowl.
Remove the peppers and drain them on paper towels.
Spoon the potato mixture into each of the pepper halves.

Makes 4 servings

These are not like any stuffed peppers Mom used to make. These make a great quick lunch on a hot summer day. The kids will like them because of the sweetness the pickle relish gives them. Add a fresh fruit plate and you have the perfect summertime meal.

Preparation Time: approximately 15 minutes

Total Time: approximately 15 minutes

Preserve Glazed Fish Fillets

What You Need:

1 lb. frozen fish fillets, thawed
3 tbsp pineapple preserves
2 tbsp rice vinegar
1/2 tsp dried thyme
1/8 tsp red pepper
1/2 tsp garlic, minced
1/4 tsp pepper
1/8 tsp salt

How to Make It:

Preheat the broiler and lightly spray the broiler pan with cooking spray.
Rinse the fish, pat dry with paper towel and cut into 4 serving size pieces.
In a bowl mix together the preserves, vinegar, thyme, red pepper and garlic
Sprinkle the fish evenly on both sides with the pepper and salt.
Place the fish on the broiler pan.
Broil 4 inches from the heat, cooking 4 minutes per 1/2 inch of thickness of the fish.
Brush occasionally with the preserve mixture during broiling.

Makes 4 servings

This is a tasty way to get the kids to eat fish. They will love the sweetness the preserves give the sauce. Children may not be too fond of the red pepper seasoning so go ahead and leave it out if you wish. Be sure to measure the thickness of the fish before broiling to determine how long the fish should be cooked.

Preparation Time: approximately 10 minutes
Cooking Time: 4 minutes per 1/2 inch of thickness

Quick Mashed Sweet Potatoes

What You Need:

1 (17 oz.) can of sweet potatoes, drained well
1 tbsp of butter

How to Make It:

Place the potatoes in a pan.
Mash the potatoes with a potato masher.
Stir in the butter.
Place the pan over medium heat and stirring often cook 10 minutes or until heated through.

Makes 4 servings

Looking for a quick side dish to go with your meal? This one is as simple as it gets. If you think the kids won't eat them jazz them up a little. Stir in a tsp of brown sugar and add a few mini marshmallows to the top before serving.

Preparation Time: approximately 5 minutes

Cooking Time: approximately 10 minutes

Total Time: approximately 15 minutes

Ramen Turkey Slaw

What You Need:

1 (16 oz.) pkg. shredded coleslaw mix
6 oz. cooled turkey breast, cubed
1 (3 oz.) pkg. ramen noodles
1/2 C of vinaigrette salad dressing
1 (11 oz.) can mandarin oranges, drained well

How to Make It:

Place the coleslaw mix into a large serving bowl.
Add the turkey and toss to combine.
Crumble the ramen noodles into the slaw and reserve the seasoning packet for another use.
Pour the dressing over the salad and toss to coat the slaw well.
Fold in the oranges.

Makes 4 servings

Often times we wonder how we are going to use that left over turkey we have the fridge. This recipe is one way to make good use of that turkey. Don't worry if it's not quite 6 oz. or a little more than 6 oz. just throw what you have into the mix. It also doesn't matter what type of ramen noodles you are using because the seasoning packet isn't used to make this tasty slaw.

Preparation Time: approximately 10 minutes

Total Time: approximately 10 minutes

Ranchy Chicken and Sweet Pepper Salad

What You Need:

1 (10 oz) pkg. of mixed greens, torn
1 (6 oz.) pkg. cooked chicken breast strips
1/2 C of red, orange and yellow sweet pepper strips
1/2 C of cherry tomatoes
1/4 C red onion, sliced
1/2 C of creamy Ranch dressing

How to Make It:

Place the torn mixed greens into a salad bowl.
Lay the chicken strips over the greens.
Add the sweet pepper strips, tomatoes and red onion slices.
Pour the dressing over the top and toss to coat well.

Makes 4 servings

This is a great full meal salad that takes no time to throw together. Add any of your favorite salad ingredients like cucumbers or croutons. Add breadsticks on the side. Substitute regular green bell peppers for the sweet colored peppers if you wish.

Preparation Time: approximately 15 minutes
Total Time: approximately 15 minutes

Saucy Cranberry Chicken

What You Need:

1 tbsp of margarine
4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts
1 C of whole cranberry sauce
2 tbsp honey
1/2 tsp ginger

How to Make It:

Melt the margarine in a skillet over medium high heat.
Place the chicken into the skillet and reduce the heat to medium.
Brown the chicken for 15 minutes, turning occasionally until cooked through.
Remove the chicken from the skillet and keep warm.
Place the cranberry sauce, honey and ginger into the skillet with the chicken drippings.
Cook over medium low heat, stirring almost constantly, for 5 minutes or until smooth and heated through.
Pour the sauce over the chicken before serving.

Makes 4 servings

If you're looking for something a little different to do with your chicken this recipe tops the list. It's quick, easy and tastes like heaven. Add a side of mashed sweet potatoes and a fruit for a meal that everyone will be asking for over and over again.

Preparation Time: approximately 5 minutes

Cooking Time: approximately 20 minutes

Total Time: approximately 25 minutes

Sesame Vegetables

What You Need:

2 tsp sesame oil
1 (16 oz.) pkg. frozen stir-fry vegetables

How to Make It:

Place the oil into a skillet over medium high heat.
Add the vegetables and stir fry for 5 minutes or until crisp tender.

Makes 4 servings

The sesame oil gives these vegetables a great taste. Use your favorite combination of vegetables. Add this dish as a side to any of your favorite pork dishes.

Preparation Time: approximately 5 minutes

Cooking Time: approximately 5 minutes

Total Time: approximately 10 minutes

Snow Pea Chicken

What You Need:

4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts
2 tsp + 1/2 tsp lemon pepper, divided
3 tbsp butter, divided
2 C of fresh snow peas, strings and tips removed

How to Make It:

Season the chicken breasts on both sides with the 2 tsp of lemon pepper.
Melt 2 tbsp of butter in a large skillet over medium heat.
Add the chicken and cook 12 minutes, turning occasionally, or until no longer pink in the middle.
Remove the chicken and keep warm.
Melt the remaining butter in the same skillet.
Stir in the snow peas and remaining lemon pepper.
Cook stirring constantly for 3 minutes or until crisp tender.
Serve the snow peas on the side with the chicken.

Makes 4 servings

This tasty chicken dinner includes both the main meat and the side dish. If you don't have or can't find fresh snow peas use 1 (6 oz) pkg. of frozen pea pods that have been thawed.

Preparation Time: approximately 10 minutes

Cooking Time: approximately 15 minutes

Total Time: approximately 25 minutes

Throw it Together Beef Stew

What You Need:

- 1 (17 oz.) pkg. of refrigerated cooked roast beef au jus
- 2 (10.75 oz) cans of beefy mushroom soup
- 1 (16 oz) pkg. of mixed frozen vegetables
- 1 1/2 tsp basil
- 1 1/2 C of milk

How to Make It:

Cut the beef into bites size pieces and place into a large saucepan.
Stir in the au jus, soup, vegetables and basil.
Place the pan over high heat and bring to a quick boil.
Reduce the heat to low, cover the pan and simmer 10 minutes.
Stir in the milk and cook uncovered for an addition 5 minutes or until heated through.

Makes 4 servings

This is one of the easiest, stress free meals you can make. Serve it with hot biscuits and a side of fruit or over rice for a meal that's tasty as well as satisfying.

Preparation Time: approximately 5 minutes

Cooking Time: approximately 15 minutes

Total Time: approximately 20 minutes

Tuna Vegetable Alfredo

What You Need:

3 C of mini lasagna noodles, uncooked
2 C broccoli florets
1 red sweet pepper, cut into strips
1 (10 oz.) container of Alfredo sauce
1/2 tsp dill
1 (9.5) oz. can of tuna, drained

How to Make It:

Cook the pasta according the package directions adding the broccoli and sweet peppers the last 5 minutes of the cooking time.
Drain well and return to the pan.
Pour the Alfredo sauce into the pan, add the dill and stir to combine.
Fold in the tuna.
Cook the mixture for 5 minutes or until heated through.

Makes 4 servings

Add a side of fruit, a buttermilk biscuit and a nice dessert and this meal is ready to go in no time. Use tuna that is packed in water instead of oil for a healthier dish. If the Alfredo sauce seems to thick add 1 tbsp of milk at a time, stirring after each addition, until you reach the desired consistency.

Preparation Time: approximately 10 minutes

Cooking Time: approximately 15 minutes

Total Time: approximately 25 minutes

Walnut Topped Tenderloin

What You Need:

4 beef tenderloin steaks,
1/2 tsp garlic salt
1/2 C sour cream
3 tbsp blue cheese crumbled
3 tbsp walnuts, chopped and toasted

How to Make It:

Trim off fat on the steaks and sprinkle with the garlic salt.
Spray a large skillet with cooking spray and heat over medium high heat.
Place the steaks in the skillet and reduce the heat to medium.
Cook the steaks 15 minutes, turning once during cooking time.
Remove the steaks to dinner plates.
Whisk the sour cream and blue cheese together well.
Pour the mixture over the steaks and sprinkle the top with the walnuts.

Makes 4 servings

The hardest part of this dish is toasting the walnuts. Do a few ahead of time and place them in the freezer. Take them out and by the time the steaks are done the walnuts are defrosted and ready to use.

Preparation Time: approximately 5 minutes

Cooking Time: approximately 15 minutes

Total Time: approximately 20 minutes