

Cooking Dinner on a Budget

Studies show that eating at home can help your family eat healthier. It helps stop you from overeating, can help you save money, and help you keep a healthy weight.

Also, if your kids are part of the cooking process, studies show they are likely to eat more vegetables at mealtime. This weekly menu is full of recipe ideas for quick, healthy, easy meals to eat at home with your family.

Monday: **Garden Sloppy Joe Sandwiches** or **Slow Cooker Pulled Pork Sandwiches**

Tuesday: **Easy 3-Can Chili** or **White Chicken Chili**

Wednesday: **Sesame Noodles with Broccoli and Chicken** or **Creamy Chicken and Noodles**

Thursday: **Omelet-stuffed Peppers** or **Build your own Frittata**

Friday: **Sheet-pan Tilapia and Veggies** or **Fish Tacos**

Tips to make your life easier:

1. If you don't have all of the spices at home, check your local grocery store for pre-made seasoning packets (taco, white chicken chili, fajita, beef stew, and meatloaf). You can find them in the aisle with all the spices.
2. If you're making more than one recipe that use noodles or rice, try cooking all of the rice or noodles you'll need for the entire week. Put the rest in the fridge for later to save you time.
3. If you have leftovers from a recipe, pack it for lunch the next day or put it in the freezer to pull out when you're really low on time.
4. If your kids won't eat the recipes suggested here, try making a different version for them. For example, if your kids won't eat omelet-stuffed peppers, try making those for yourself and make them a regular omelet or scramble.
5. If your kids help you with cooking, they may be more interested in what's for dinner and be more likely to eat what's served.

Garden Sloppy Joes

Source: foodhero.org / Serves: 6

Ingredients

- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 carrot, chopped or shredded
- 1 green pepper, chopped
- 1 pound lean ground meat (turkey, chicken, or beef)
- 1 can (8 ounces) tomato sauce
- 1 can (15 ounces) whole tomatoes, crushed
- 1 can (8 ounces) mushrooms or 1/2 pound chopped fresh mushrooms
- 1/4 cup barbecue sauce
- 6 whole wheat buns

Directions

1. Saute onions, carrots, green pepper and ground meat in a 2-3 quart saucepan over medium-high heat for 5 minutes.
2. Add tomato sauce, crushed tomatoes, mushrooms, and barbecue sauce.
3. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer for 15 to 20 minutes or until thick, stirring occasionally.
4. Toast buns if desired. Spoon sauce over buns.

Tips and suggestions

1. Choose a ground meat that is lower in fat, if possible. This will lower calories and make the meal healthier.
2. You can use whatever vegetables you have on hand for most of these recipes. Don't have mushrooms? No problem, don't add them. Don't have carrots? No problem. Have extra celery? Great, add that! This is just a good way to "sneak" veggies in for your kids.
3. Want a lower-carb option? Eat the sandwich open-faced (don't use the top half of the bun).

Nutrition: 140 calories, 10g protein, 19g carbohydrates, 2.5g fat

Slow Cooker Pulled Pork

Source: bettycrocker.com / Serves: 6

Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon kosher (coarse) salt
- 1 tablespoon paprika
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon packed brown sugar
- 1 pork loin roast (2 1/2 to 3 pounds)
- 1 cup water
- 1 cup barbecue sauce
- 6 whole wheat buns

Directions

1. In small bowl, stir together salt, paprika, garlic powder, and brown sugar.
2. Spray a 4- to 6-quart slow cooker with cooking spray. Rinse pork roast under cool water. Rub salt mixture on pork to cover completely. Place pork in slow cooker. Add water to side of pork.
3. Cover; cook on the high heat setting for 5 to 6 hours.
4. In slow cooker, use 2 forks to shred pork. Stir in barbecue sauce until well mixed.
5. Toast buns if desired. Spoon pork over buns.

Tips and suggestions

1. Use "light" barbecue sauce if possible. This will lower the amount of sugar in the sauce.
2. If you don't have coarse salt, it is fine to use regular table salt.
3. Want a lower-carb option? Eat the sandwich open-faced (don't use the top half of the bun).

Nutrition: 670 calories, 60g protein, 31g carbohydrates, 34g fat

Easy 3-Can Chili

Source: buyeatlivebetter.org / Serves: 4

Ingredients

- 1 (15-ounce) can beans (pinto, kidney, red, or black), not drained
- 1 (15-ounce) can whole kernel corn, drained or 1½ cups frozen corn
- 1 (15-ounce) can crushed tomatoes, not drained
- Chili powder to taste

Directions

1. Open cans and drain corn (if using canned corn) before preparing the recipe.
2. Pour the beans with liquid, corn, and tomatoes with liquid into a large pot over medium heat.
3. Add a small amount of chili powder, and stir to mix.
4. Continue to stir over medium heat until it reaches a simmer and is heated all the way through.
5. Taste to see if you want to add more chili powder.

Tips and suggestions

1. Add lean, lower fat ground meat for a little extra bulk if your budget permits it. This will lower the calories of the dish after meat is added.
2. Try adding in different seasonings and vegetables. Some other things to try are: chopped onion, chopped bell peppers, and garlic powder. Be creative!
3. Serve with toppings of your choice like hot sauce, diced green onions, and shredded cheese.

Nutrition: 180 calories, 6g protein, 35g carbohydrates, 2g fat

White Chicken Chili

Source: allrecipes.com / Serves: 4

Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 3 skinless, boneless chicken breasts, cut in half
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 5 1/4 cups chicken broth
- 3 (15 ounce) cans cannellini (white kidney) beans, rinsed and drained
- 2 (4 ounce) cans chopped green chiles
- 1 tablespoon dried oregano
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 2 pinches cayenne pepper, or to taste
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh cilantro, or to taste
- 1/2 cup shredded Monterey Jack cheese, or to taste
- salt to taste

Directions

1. Heat olive oil in a Dutch oven or skillet over medium heat. Cook chicken, onion, and garlic in hot oil until the chicken is browned completely, 3 to 5 minutes per side.
2. Remove the chicken to a cutting board, cut into 1-inch pieces, and return to the Dutch oven/skillet.
3. Add chicken broth, cannellini beans, green chiles, oregano, cumin, and cayenne pepper.
4. Bring the mixture to a simmer and cook until the chicken is cooked through, 30 to 45 minutes.
5. Divide cilantro into 4 bowls. Spoon chili over cilantro and top with cheese. Season with salt to taste.

Tips and suggestions

1. If you don't have all of the spices at home, check your local grocery store for pre-made seasoning packets (taco, white chicken chili, fajita, beef stew, and meatloaf). You can find them in the aisle with all the spices.
2. If you don't have garlic cloves, a jar of minced garlic works great, too.

Nutrition: 466 calories, 34.7g protein, 53g carbohydrates, 16g fat

Sesame Noodles with Broccoli and Chicken

Source: mainesnap-ed.org / Serves: 8

Ingredients

- 8 ounces whole wheat spaghetti noodles
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 3 tablespoons soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons rice vinegar
- 1/4 cup vegetable oil
- 3 cloves minced garlic or 3/4 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 1/2 cups fresh or frozen broccoli
- 1 1/2 cups cooked, diced chicken breast
- 1 tablespoon sesame seeds

Directions

1. Cook pasta according to package directions. Set aside.
2. While pasta is cooking, toast sesame seeds in a 1-quart saucepan over medium heat. Stir constantly and cook until light brown.
3. Mix together sugar, soy sauce, and vinegar in small bowl. Set aside.
4. Heat oil in large skillet over medium heat (300°F in an electric skillet). Add garlic and broccoli, and cook on medium until soft.
5. Add chicken and cook until heated through.
6. Add drained pasta and soy sauce mixture and mix well. Sprinkle sesame seeds on top.

Tips and suggestions

1. If you made the *White Chicken Chili* earlier in the week, try making all of the chicken at once so it's cooked and diced before starting this meal.
2. If you don't have rice vinegar, you can try to use white wine, lemon juice, or lime juice.

Nutrition: 240 calories, 13g protein, 27g carbohydrates, 9g fat

Creamy Chicken and Noodles

Source: campbells.com / Serves: 4

Ingredients

- 1 can (10.5 ounces) condensed Cream of Chicken and Mushroom soup
- 1/2 cup milk
- 1/8 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1/3 cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 2 cups cubed, cooked boneless skinless chicken breasts
- 3 cups cooked egg noodles (from 4 ounces/about 3 cups dry)
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley for garnish (if you want to use it)

Directions

1. Cook pasta according to package directions. Set aside.
2. Heat the soup, milk, black pepper, cheese, chicken, and noodles in a 4-quart saucepan over medium heat until the mixture is hot and bubbling, stirring occasionally.
3. Season to taste. Sprinkle with the parsley before serving.

Tips and suggestions

1. The recipe works best with egg noodles, but you can use another noodle type. To save time, try using the same type of noodle that was used in the *Sesame Noodles with Broccoli and Chicken* dish.
2. For a healthier option, choose the low-sodium soup option. If condensed Cream of Chicken and Mushroom soup isn't available, plain Cream of Chicken soup or Cream of Mushroom soup will work in its place.

Nutrition: 402 calories, 31.7g protein, 37.2g carbohydrates, 12.4g fat

Omelet-stuffed Peppers

Source: delish.com / Serves: 4

Ingredients

- 2 bell peppers, cut in half (any color pepper, with seeds removed)
- 8 eggs, lightly beaten
- 1/4 cup milk
- 4 slices bacon, cooked and crumbled
- 1 cup shredded cheddar cheese
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped chives, plus more for garnish
- Kosher salt
- Freshly cracked black pepper

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 400°F.
2. Place peppers in a large baking dish and bake 5 minutes.
3. Beat together eggs and milk.
4. Stir in bacon, cheese, and chives and season with salt and pepper.
5. When peppers are finished baking, pour egg mixture into peppers.
6. Place back in the oven and bake 35 to 40 minutes more, until eggs are set.
7. Garnish with more chives and serve.

Tips and suggestions

1. It's up to you if you want to use the bacon, cheese, chives, salt, and pepper. Feel free to use items that better fit your diet and taste.
2. Try a different cheese or sausage to change up the recipe a bit.
3. If your kids don't like the peppers, try chopping one up and making them a regular omelet or scramble.

Nutrition: 399 calories, 29.4g protein, 16g carbohydrates, 26g fat

Frittatas

Source: epicurious.com / Serves: 4

Ingredients

- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1/2 cup onions, diced
- 8 large eggs
- 1/2 cup skim milk
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper
- 1 cup cherry tomatoes, cut in half
- 1 cup avocado, diced
- 1 cup cooked chicken
- 1/4 cup cooked bacon, crumbled
- 1/4 cup blue cheese, crumbled

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350°F.
2. In a 10-inch oven-safe skillet over medium-high heat, heat 3 tablespoons olive oil.
3. Add onions and cook until softened, about 5 minutes.
4. In a bowl, whisk eggs, milk, salt, and pepper.
5. Add in tomatoes, avocado, chicken, bacon, and blue cheese.
6. Pour egg mixture into skillet, stir, and cook until edges start to pull away from pan, about 5-7 minutes.
7. Bake until set, about 16-18 minutes.

Tips and suggestions

1. You can easily change up this recipe by using different ingredients and spices.
2. Salt and pepper can be added to taste.

Nutrition: 252 calories, 22.1g protein, 7.9g carbohydrates, 13.9g fat

Sheet-pan Tilapia and Veggies

Source: gimmedelicious.com / Serves: 4

Ingredients

- 4 six-ounce tilapia fillets
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed and diced
- 3 teaspoons olive oil or melted butter
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 3 teaspoons parsley, fresh or dried
- 1 teaspoon oregano, fresh or dried
- salt and pepper, to taste
- 1 large zucchini, sliced
- 1 cup baby carrots, cut in halves
- 2 cups broccoli florets, fresh or frozen
- 1/2 pound asparagus (cut off the tough ends)

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 400°F.
2. Heat olive oil (or butter) on low-medium heat in a small pan.
3. Add garlic and saute on low for about 1 minute.
4. Remove from heat and add lemon juice, parsley, oregano, salt, and pepper to taste.
5. Arrange fish and veggies in a single layer on a sheet pan.
6. Pour the garlic spice mixture evenly onto fish and veggies.
7. Bake for 12-15 minutes or until golden.

Tips and suggestions

1. Use olive oil instead of butter for a more heart-healthy option.
2. Feel free to change out the vegetables with whatever you have in your kitchen.

Nutrition: 433 calories, 48g protein, 17g carbohydrates, 24.3g fat

Fish Tacos

Source: spendwithpennies.com / Serves: 6

Ingredients

- 1 1/2 pounds tilapia, cod, or haddock fillets
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 tablespoon chili powder
- 1/2 teaspoon cumin
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon pepper
- 1 teaspoon oregano
- 1/2 teaspoon onion powder
- 8 six-inch corn or flour tortillas
- 1 sliced avocado
- 1 lime, cut into wedges
- 2 tablespoons mayonnaise
- 3 tablespoons sour cream
- 1/2 lime (just the juice)
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1/2 teaspoon cumin
- 1/2 teaspoon sriracha, or to taste
- Toppings to taste

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 400°F.
2. Combine chili powder, 1/2 teaspoon cumin, 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder, paprika, salt, pepper, oregano, and onion powder and rub into fish fillets.
3. Place fish on a pan lined with parchment paper and drizzle with olive oil.
4. Bake for 12-15 minutes or until flaky and cooked.
5. Mix mayonnaise, sour cream, lime juice, 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder, 1/2 teaspoon cumin, and sriracha. Set aside.
6. Heat tortillas according to package directions.
7. Break fish into large chunks and divide between tortillas. Top with sriracha sauce and desired additional toppings and serve.

Tips and suggestions

1. Instead of the rub seasonings, try a pre-mixed seasoning packet.
2. You can use a fish taco packet, but regular taco seasoning would work, too.
3. Common toppings include tomatoes, cilantro, and cheese.

Nutrition: 163 calories, 3g protein, 27g carbohydrates, 5g fat