

# Homestyle in a Hurry

Connie Moyers  
Roosevelt Co. Extension Home Economist



## Homestyle in a Hurry



You might ask, what is "Homestyle Cooking"? Homestyle is cooking like your mother or your grandmother or cooking like you used to. But there are shortcuts to make it quicker and easier. We can still have those good home cooked meals without spending all day in the kitchen. The truth is most of us don't have all day to spend in the kitchen or we want to do other things with our time. However it is still important to have those good home cooked meals to enjoy with our families or friends.

Eating out gets really old and expensive after awhile. I hope these quick homestyle meals will give you new ideas to prepare your meals quickly. Eating out less gives you more control over what you eat and what ingredients are added to your food allowing you to make healthier choices.

Don't forget that using a slow cooker or preparing food ahead and popping it in the oven sometimes is the fastest way to cook. One dish meals, skillet dinners or stir fry are also delicious and can be ready in a jiffy.

I hope that you will try some new ideas and enjoy these recipes.

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# Slow Cooker

## Country Style Scalloped Potatoes

6 russet potatoes, thinly sliced  
1  $\frac{1}{2}$  lbs. ham steak, cubed  
1 can (10  $\frac{3}{4}$  ozs.) cream of mushroom soup  
1  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup water  
1 cup shredded Cheddar cheese  
Grill seasoning to taste

Layer potatoes and ham in a slow cooker that has been sprayed with non-stick vegetable spray. Combine remaining ingredients; pour over potatoes and ham. Cover and cook on HIGH setting for 3  $\frac{1}{2}$  hours, until potatoes are fork-tender. Turn slow cooker to LOW setting; continue cooking for about 1 hour. Makes 4 to 6 servings.

## Vegetable Beef Soup

1 lb. beef stew meat, cubed  
3 cans (14  $\frac{1}{2}$  ozs. ea.) beef broth  
2 pkgs. (16 ozs. ea.) frozen mixed vegetables  
1 can (14  $\frac{1}{2}$  ozs.) whole tomatoes  
1 pkg. (16 ozs.) wide egg noodles, uncooked and divided

Combine all ingredients except noodles in a slow cooker. Cover and cook on LOW setting for 8 hours or HIGH setting for 4 hours; about 20 minutes before serving, stir in half the noodles, or desired amount, reserving the rest for another recipe. Cover and cook an additional 20 minutes, until noodles are tender. Makes 4 to 6 servings.

## Picante Beef Roast

1 beef rump roast, bottom round roast or pork roast (3 pounds) trimmed  
1 jar (16 ozs.) picante sauce  
1 can (15 ozs.) tomato sauce  
1 envelope taco seasoning  
3 tablespoons cornstarch  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  cup water

Cut roast in half, if necessary, place in a 5 qt. slow cooker. In a large bowl, combine the picante sauce, tomato sauce and taco seasoning; pour over roast. Cover and cook on LOW for 8-9 hours or until meat is tender. Remove meat to a serving platter; keep warm. Skim fat from cooking juices; transfer 3 cups to a small saucepan. Bring liquid to a boil. Combine cornstarch and water until smooth. Gradually stir into pan. Bring to a boil; cook and stir for 2 minutes or until thickened. Makes 8 servings.

*Convert your favorite stovetop soup recipe to "Fix & Forget" it in a slow cooker. Most soups that simmer for 1 to 2 hours will be done in 8 to 10 hours on LOW or 4 to 5 hours on HIGH. Wait until the last 30 minutes to add dairy ingredients like sour cream and tender veggies like peas.*

## Chicken & Dumplings

- 1 lb. boneless, skinless chicken breasts, cubed
- 1 pkg. (16 ozs.) frozen mixed vegetables
- 1 onion, diced
- 3 cups low-sodium chicken broth, divided
- 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  cups buttermilk biscuit baking mix

Combine chicken, vegetables and onion in a slow cooker. Set aside  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup plus one tablespoon broth; pour remaining broth into slow cooker. Cover and cook on HIGH setting for 2 hours or LOW for 4 hours. Stir biscuit mix with reserved broth until moistened. Drop by tablespoonfuls over hot chicken and vegetables. Cover and cook on HIGH setting for 10 minutes; uncover. Cook for an additional 20 minutes, until dumplings are done. Makes 4 to 6 servings.

## Root Beer Pulled Pork BBQ

- 2 onions, sliced and divided
- 2 tablespoons minced garlic
- 4 lbs. pork roast
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon salt
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon pepper
- 4  $\frac{1}{2}$  cups root beer, divided
- 1 bottle (16 ozs.) favorite barbecue or chili sauce

Place one sliced onion in the bottom of a slow cooker; add garlic. Place roast in slow cooker and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Add 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  cups root beer to slow

cooker. Cover and cook on LOW for 8 to 10 hours or HIGH for 5 hours. Remove roast and set aside to cool. Discard onion and liquid in slow cooker. In a saucepan, bring sauce and remaining root beer to a boil; simmer for 30 minutes. When roast is cool enough to handle, shred with a fork, discarding bone and fat; return shredded meat to slow cooker. Stir in sauce mixture and remaining onion. Cook and cover on HIGH setting for 3 hours, until onion is soft. Makes 12 servings.

*Slow Cooker Liners make easy clean-up when using your slow cooker.*

## "Un Rotisserie" Roasted Chicken

- 5 lbs. roasting chicken
- Seasoning salt to taste

Coat chicken with non-stick vegetable spray. Sprinkle seasoning salt over chicken and set aside. Tear of a 12-inch piece of aluminum foil and crumple into a ball; repeat to make a total of 8 foil balls. Arrange balls in the bottom of an oval slow cooker that has been coated with non-stick vegetable spray. Place chicken on top of foil balls; do not add any water. Cover and cook on LOW for 8 hours or HIGH setting for 4 to 5 hours. Makes 8 servings.

## Slow Cooker Lasagna

1 lb. ground beef  
1 jar (24 ozs.) spaghetti sauce  
1 cup water  
1 container (15 ozs.) Ricotta Cheese  
1 pkg. (7 ozs.) 2% milk shredded  
Mozzarella Cheese, divided  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  cup grated Parmesan Cheese, divided  
1 egg  
2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley  
6 lasagna noodles, uncooked

Brown meat in large skillet; drain; stir in spaghetti sauce and water. Mix ricotta,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  cups Mozzarella, 2 tablespoons Parmesan, egg and parsley. Spoon 1 cup meat sauce into slow cooker; top with layers of half each of the noodles (broken to fit) and cheese mixture. Cover with 2 cups meat sauce. Top with remaining noodles, cheese mixture and meat sauce. Cover with lid. Cook on LOW 4 to 6 hours or until liquid is absorbed. Sprinkle with remaining cheeses; let stand, covered, 10 minutes or until melted. For best results, do not cook on the HIGH heat setting. Makes 8 servings.

*Save time with double-duty slow-cooker recipes by saving half for another meal. Use extra roast chicken as the start of a yummy noodle casserole. How can you change other planned-overs into a different meal?*

- **Prep it ahead.** *If your slow cooker has a removable crock liner, add ingredients the night before and refrigerate overnight. Place crock in slow cooker the next day and cook as directed.*
- **Don't fill it up.** *Your slow cooker should be one-half to two-thirds full. If it's too full, it will take too long to start simmering and risk bacteria build up. If it is not full enough, you risk overcooking.*
- **Keep it thrifty.** *This long, moist cooking method is ideal for inexpensive cuts of meat, since it provides plenty of time for tenderizing.*
- **Leave it alone.** *Don't lift the lid unless you want to extend the cooking time by 20 minutes. If recipe gives you reason to lift the lid, replace it quickly.*
- **Customize it.** *If you want to thicken the juices or concentrate flavors, remove the lid and cook on HIGH for the last 30 minutes.*
- **Stick to the cooking time.** *Slow cookers work by simmering food at a low, even temperature, so stick with the recipe timing.*

# Skillet Meals

## Peachy Pork Picante

2 lbs. boneless pork, cut into 3/4-inch cubes  
2 tablespoons taco seasoning mix  
1 to 2 tablespoons oil  
1 jar (16 ozs.) chunky picante sauce  
2/3 cup peach preserves  
Hot cooked rice

Coat pork cubes with taco seasoning. Heat oil in a large non-stick skillet over medium-high heat; add pork and cook until brown, stirring occasionally. Add picante sauce and preserves to skillet, lower heat. Cover and simmer for 15 to 20 minutes. Serve with hot rice. Makes 8 servings.

## Santa Fe Chicken & Rice

6 chicken breast halves, boneless and skinless  
1 teaspoon salt  
1 large onion, coarsely chopped  
3 cloves garlic, minced  
1 tablespoon vegetable oil  
1 can (14 ozs.) chicken broth  
1 cup mild picante sauce  
1 cup long grain rice  
1 ripe avocado, peeled and sliced  
1 medium tomato, cut in wedges  
3/4 cup shredded Cheddar Cheese

Sprinkle chicken breasts with salt and set aside. Cook onion and garlic in oil in a skillet or electric skillet for 2 minutes. Add chicken broth and salsa. Bring to a

boil. Stir in rice. Arrange chicken breasts over rice. Cover tightly and simmer 20 minutes over low heat. Remove from heat. Let stand, covered, until all liquid is absorbed, about 5 minutes. Garnish with avocado, if desired. Sprinkle with tomato and cheese. Makes 6 servings.

## Chicken & Asparagus Stir Fry

2 tablespoons cornstarch  
1 cup chicken broth  
3 tablespoons olive oil, divided  
2 chicken breast halves, cubed  
1 onion, finely chopped  
3 cups asparagus, cut into 1 1/2-inch lengths  
1 red bell pepper, cut into thin strips  
Salt and pepper, to taste

Combine cornstarch and chicken broth; set aside. Prepare all ingredients. Heat 1 tablespoon oil over medium heat in a wok or heavy skillet. Add half of chicken to heated skillet, stirring until chicken is cooked throughout. Remove chicken from skillet and cook remaining chicken; removing it from skillet when cooked. Add remaining oil to skillet and heat. Cook onion for 1 minute, stirring constantly. Add chicken stock mixture. Increase heat to medium high and add asparagus, red pepper, salt and pepper. Cook for 2 to 3 minutes, stirring constantly. Add chicken, cover, and reduce heat to low. Cook until chicken is heated. Serve over hot cooked rice. Makes 4 to 6 servings.

## ***Stir Frying Tips***

- *Stir-frying was developed as a technique to save fuel. A wok is traditionally used, but you can use a heavy large skillet instead. Make sure the pan is hot when you start cooking.*
- *Have all ingredients prepared ahead of time.*
- *Make sure the sauces are mixed before you start cooking. Since the sauce is usually added last, stir it just before pouring it into the wok or skillet so all the ingredients are combined.*
- *Make sure the food is cut into approximately equal sizes so they cook at the same time.*
- *Start with the longest cooking foods, like the meat and hard vegetables such as onions and carrots.*
- *The food must be moved continually around the hot skillet so it cooks evenly and doesn't burn. Don't stop cooking and don't walk away.*
- *Take some time to browse through your supermarket to look for new stir-frying ingredients, tools and food combinations, especially the frozen variety. New products come on the market all the time.*
- *Most stir-fry starts with a protein, such as shrimp, strips of boneless, skinless chicken breasts, pork or some type of beef steak.*
- *Meat should be cooked in hot oil (about 1 tablespoon) half of meat at a time. Otherwise the skillet will cool down and the food will stew.*
- *There is no right or wrong combination of vegetables. Some can be purchased ready to use such as shredded carrots, coleslaw mix, bite size pineapple chunks for sweet and sour, sliced mushrooms and bell peppers. Other good choices are celery, green onions, fresh bean sprouts, French green beans, thin asparagus, or squash. Also canned water chestnuts or baby corn that has been drained.*
- *Fresh ginger and minced garlic add an aromatic flavor.*
- *After meat is cooked and removed, add 2 tablespoons oil. Cook onion first, until browned but still crisp about 1 minute. Next add garlic and ginger and all the remaining vegetables starting with ones that you think will take the longest to cook. After a few minutes and vegetables are tender-crisp, add cooked meat and your favorite stir fry sauce.*
- *There are many recipes for sauce or at the supermarket a variety of stir-fry sauces is available.*
- *Serve with steamed rice or noodles.*
- *Stir-fry is an excellent way to use what you have on hand.*
- *Cashews, pecans and peanuts added at the end of cooking, add a hint of surprise.*



## Easy Chinese Stir-Fry

1 teaspoon oil  
1 lb. pork tenderloin, cut into thin slices  
3 carrots sliced  
1/3 cup Balsamic Vinaigrette Dressing  
2 tablespoons hoisin sauce  
2 green onions, thinly sliced

Heat oil in a large skillet on medium-high heat; add meat and carrots, stir-fry 5 minutes. Stir in dressing and hoisin sauce; stir-fry 7 minutes or until carrots are crisp tender. Add onions; cook 1 minute. To make a meal, serve over hot cooked angel hair pasta or rice. Makes 4 servings.

## Quick & Easy Italian Pepper Steak

1 pkg. (9 ozs.) refrigerated fettucine  
12 ounces beef top sirloin steak, trimmed and cut into thin bite-size strips  
1/4 teaspoon crushed red pepper  
2 tablespoons olive oil  
1 pkg. (16 ozs.) frozen pepper and onion stir-fry vegetables, thawed and well drained  
2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar  
1 can (15 ozs.) chunky Italian-Style tomato sauce

Cook pasta according to package directions, drain well. Return pasta to pan, cover and keep warm. Combine steak strips and the 1/4 teaspoon crushed red pepper. Set aside. In a large skillet heat 1 tablespoon of the olive oil over medium heat. Add thawed vegetables and stir-fry for 2 to 3 minutes until crisp-tender.

Carefully add balsamic vinegar, toss to coat. Remove from skillet, cover and keep warm. Heat remaining 1 tablespoon oil the same skillet. Add beef and stir-fry for 2 to 3 minutes or until desired doneness. Stir in tomato sauce, heat through. Toss beef mixture with pasta and vegetables. Makes 4 servings.

## Smoked Sausage Skillet Dinner

3/4 pound smoked sausage, cut into 1-inch pieces  
2 tablespoons butter  
2 cups red potato wedges  
1 medium onion, cut into wedges  
1 medium apple, cored, cut into wedges  
1/4 cup cider vinegar  
3 tablespoons sugar  
1/2 teaspoon caraway seeds  
2 tablespoons minced fresh parsley

In a large skillet, sauté sausage in butter for 3-4 minutes or until lightly browned. Add the potatoes, onion and apple; sauté 4-5 minutes longer or until apple is tender and potatoes are golden brown. Stir in the vinegar, sugar and caraway seeds. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat; simmer, uncovered, for 2-3 minutes or until heated through. Sprinkle with parsley. Makes 4 servings.

# Casseroles

## Mexican Biscuit Casserole

- 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  lbs. lean ground beef
- 1 pkg. (1.25 ozs.) taco seasoning mix
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup water
- 1 can (16 ozs.) kidney beans, undrained
- 1 can (11 ozs.) whole kernel corn with sweet peppers, drained
- 3  $\frac{1}{4}$  cups packaged biscuit mix
- 1 cup milk
- 3 cups shredded Cheddar cheese, divided

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In a large skillet, cook ground beef until brown; drain off fat. Add taco seasoning mix using  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup water. Add kidney beans and corn; bring to boiling. Meanwhile combine biscuit mix and milk. Stir until moistened. Beat for 30 seconds more. Roll out dough on a lightly floured surface to  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch thickness. Cut with a 2-inch round biscuit cutter, making 10 biscuits. Spoon hot meat mixture into a 3-quart rectangular casserole dish and top with 2  $\frac{1}{2}$  cups cheese. Immediately place biscuits on top and bake for 20 minutes or until biscuits are lightly browned. Sprinkle with remaining cheese. Let stand 5 minutes. Makes 8 to 10 servings.

*For convenience try frozen biscuits or canned biscuits.*

## Saucy Bow Tie Pasta Casserole

- 1 pkg. (8 ozs.) bow tie, penne or ziti pasta, cooked and drained
- 2 medium red onions, cut into thin wedges
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tablespoon butter or margarine
- 1 jar (24-26 ozs.) tomato pasta sauce
- 1 can (8 ozs.) tomato sauce
- 1 pkg. (10 ozs.) frozen chopped spinach, thawed and well drained.
- 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  cups cubed lean cooked ham
- 2 medium tomatoes, seeded and chopped
- $\frac{1}{3}$  cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 2 cups grated Mozzarella cheese

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Rinse cooked pasta with cold water. Drain again. In a large saucepan or skillet sauté onions and garlic in hot butter until tender. Stir in the cooked pasta, pasta sauce, tomato sauce, spinach, ham, tomatoes and the Parmesan cheese. Spoon mixture into a 3-quart rectangular baking dish. Cover dish with foil. Bake for 30 minutes or until heated through. Increase oven temperature to 400 degrees. Top pasta with Mozzarella cheese and if desired additional Parmesan cheese. Bake, uncovered, about 5 minutes more or until cheese melts. Let stand for 5 minutes. If desired, garnish with parsley. Makes 8 servings.

## Cheesy Cornbread Casserole

- 1 lb. lean ground beef
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 jalapeno pepper, seeded, finely chopped
- 1 can (15 ozs.) enchilada sauce
- 1 can (15 ozs.) black beans or pinto beans, drained
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 pkg. (8.5 ozs.) corn bread mix
- 2 cups Mexican Style Shredded Four Cheese

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Brown meat with onions and peppers in large skillet. Stir in enchilada sauce, beans, garlic powder and cumin. Prepare cornbread batter as directed on the package; stir in cheese. Spread over meat mixture. Bake 20 minutes or until toothpick inserted in center of cornbread comes out clean. Cool slightly. Makes 6 to servings.

*To save prep time you can prepare the meat mixture. Refrigerate for 3 to 4 days, or freeze up to 1 month. When ready to use, thaw, if frozen, spoon into baking dish. Top with cornbread batter and continue as directed.*

*Use muffin tins or small ramekins for portion control and faster cooking times for pot pies, meatloaves, omelets etc.*

## Chicken Pot Pie

- 1 lb. boneless skinless chicken breasts, cut into bite-size pieces
- 2 tablespoons Zesty Italian Dressing
- 2 cups frozen mixed vegetables
- 1 can (10  $\frac{3}{4}$  ozs.) condensed cream of chicken soup
- $\frac{1}{4}$  lb. pasteurized processed cheese
- 1 sheet frozen puff pastry, thawed or 1 can (8 ozs.) refrigerated crescent dinner rolls

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Cook and stir chicken in dressing in large skillet on medium heat 5 minutes, or until chicken is done. Stir in vegetables and soup. Spoon into 9-inch square baking dish sprayed with cooking spray; top with cheese. Unfold pastry sheet; place over chicken mixture. Fold under edges of pastry; press onto top of baking dish to seal. Cut several slits in pastry to permit steam to escape. Place dish on baking sheet. Bake 30 minutes or until crust is deep golden brown. Let stand 5 minutes before serving. Makes 5 servings.

## Chicken Supreme Casserole

1 pkg. (8 ozs.) rotini pasta  
1 pkg. (16 ozs.) frozen stir-fry vegetables  
2 cans (10  $\frac{3}{4}$  ozs. ea.) condensed cream of chicken soup  
2 cups milk  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  cup mayonnaise or salad dressing  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon ground black pepper  
2 cups chopped cooked chicken  
2 cups cubed French bread (about 3 slices cut into  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch cubes)  
2 tablespoons butter or margarine, melted  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon garlic powder  
Freshly ground black pepper

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Cook pasta according to package directions, except add the stir-fry vegetables for the last 5 minutes of cooking; drain well.

Meanwhile in a large bowl, stir together soup, milk, mayonnaise and the  $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon black pepper. Stir in cooked pasta mixture and chicken. Spoon into an ungreased 3-quart rectangular baking dish. In a medium bowl, toss bread cubes with melted butter and garlic powder; sprinkle over pasta mixture. Bake, uncovered, for 30 to 35 minutes or until heated through and bread cubes are golden brown. Let stand for 10 minutes before serving. Sprinkle with freshly ground black pepper. Makes 6 to 8 servings.

## Tater Tot Special

1 lb. ground beef  
1 can (10  $\frac{1}{2}$  ozs.) cream of celery soup  
1 cup grated Cheddar cheese  
1 pkg. (16 ozs.) frozen tater tots, thawed

Brown ground beef in skillet. Add soup and blend. Spread mixture in a 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  quart casserole. Sprinkle with cheese; then top with tater tots. Bake in 400 degree oven for 15 to 20 minutes or until tater tots have browned and cheese has melted.

This recipe also microwaves well.

Microwave 6 to 8 minutes or until heated through.

## Mexican Beef and Chip Casserole

1 lb. ground beef  
1 onion, chopped  
1 clove garlic, minced  
1 can (10  $\frac{1}{2}$  ozs.) cream of mushroom soup  
1 can (4 ozs.) chopped green chiles  
1 pkg. (9 ozs.) corn or tortilla chips  
1 can (10 oz) enchilada sauce  
2 cups shredded Monterey Jack Cheese

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Cook ground beef, onion and garlic in a skillet until meat is brown and onions are soft. In a casserole dish mix meat mixture, soup and chiles. Layer chips, enchilada sauce and cheese. Bake for 30 to 40 minutes until bubbly and cheese is melted. This recipe also microwaves well. Cover and cook until heated through and cheese is melted approximately 6 to 8 minutes.

## ***Pointers for the Pan***

***Whether you are prepping, serving, freezing or traveling with the pan, using the right techniques for convenience and safety will give you impressive results.***

- ***Volume check.*** To check the capacity of a pan or dish, fill it with water, 1 quart at a time.
- ***Slick prep.*** When a recipe calls for greasing a pan or dish, dip a piece of waxed paper in shortening and wipe the pan with a light coating. Or use a light coating of nonstick cooking spray.
- ***Foiling stickiness.*** Lining the pan with foil makes removing bar cookies easier. Foil also helps keep pans from being damaged from knife cuts and makes cleanup easier. Measure the foil over the outside of the pan, extending it over the edges; place the shaped foil inside the pan. If your recipe calls for a greased pan, grease the foil inside the pan (or choose nonstick foil). Bake and cool the bars as directed. When cooled, grasp the extra foil at edges to lift uncut bars out of the pan.
- ***Safe toting.*** Choose a pan or dish with a tight fitting lid. Pack cold foods in an insulated cooler with ice packs. Insulated casserole carriers are good for transporting hot dishes. You also can wrap a tightly covered dish of hot food in layers of newspaper and towels, and transport in an insulated carrier. Fill gaps around the food container with crumpled newspaper or towels to prevent shifting or spills.
- ***Storing leftovers.*** Whether you have just one serving of a hot dish left or are dividing a casserole for another meal, keep these safety tips in mind.
  - ✓ *It is best to refrigerate leftovers immediately after you have finished eating. Never let perishable foods cool at room temperature.*
  - ✓ *Divide cooked foods in small portions in shallow containers. Place in the refrigerator to chill. Then, if freezing, move containers to the freezer.*
- ***Freeze with ease.*** If you plan to freeze an entire dish before or after baking, always use freezer-to-oven dishes lined with foil. Cover them with plastic freezer wrap or with foil. When frozen, lift out the foil-lined food and place it in a storage container or freezer bag, or wrap it in additional foil and return to the freezer. Be sure to label and date the food.
- ***Casserole cooking.*** To thaw and bake a frozen casserole, unwrap the casserole and place it in the original baking dish. Cover and thaw in the refrigerator for up to 2 days before baking. If you don't have time to thaw it in the refrigerator, cover and reheat it in a 325 degree oven for twice its normal baking time.
- ***Let it stand.*** Allowing a casserole to stand for several minutes after it comes out of the oven improves the texture and flavor, allowing the food to firm and hold a cut edge. This is especially true with hot cheesy dishes and layered casseroles.
- ***Testing doneness.*** Take the temperature of the casserole to test doneness. For best flavor and food safety, a casserole needs to be heated to 160 degrees. When the casserole is bubbly around the edges, insert an instant-read thermometer at an angle in its center, being careful not to touch the sides or bottom of dish.

# Extras

## Cheese & Vegetable Rice Casserole

- 1 pkg. (16 ozs.) frozen broccoli, cauliflower and carrots, thawed
- 4 cups cooked rice
- 1 can (15 ozs.) black beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 jar (12 ozs.) roasted red sweet pepper, drained and coarsely chopped
- 1 cup frozen whole kernel corn, thawed
- 2 cans (4 ozs. ea.) diced green chiles
- 2 cups shredded Cheddar Cheese, divided
- 1  $\frac{1}{4}$  cups chicken broth
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup seasoned fine dry bread crumbs
- 2 tablespoons butter, melted

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Lightly grease a 3-quart rectangular baking dish; set aside. In a large bowl, stir together mixed vegetables, cooked rice, beans, roasted peppers, corn and chile. Stir in 1 cup of cheese and broth. Transfer mixture to the prepared baking dish. Sprinkle with remaining 1 cup cheese. In a small bowl, combine bread crumbs and melted butter. Sprinkle over vegetable mixture. Bake, uncovered, for 35 to 40 minutes or until mixture is heated through and crumbs are golden. Let stand for 10 minutes before serving. Makes 6 to 8 servings.

*Use a muffin tin to freeze extra portions of sauces, broths, tomato paste, canned pumpkin and fresh basil pesto. Transfer the frozen portions to zip-top bags, date and return to the freezer for 6 to 8 months.*

## Cheesy Bacon & Egg Cups

- 12 slices bacon, cut into halves
- 6 eggs or 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  cups egg substitute
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup half-and-half
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup diced bell peppers
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup low-fat Cheddar cheese
- $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon salt
- $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon black pepper

\*Feel free to add sliced mushrooms, chopped onions or mixed vegetables. Low fat cottage cheese could also be substituted for the half-and-half.

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees and spray a 12-cup muffin tin with non-stick cooking spray. Place a paper towel on a plate and arrange the bacon in one layer on top. Cover with another paper towel, then microwave for two minutes until almost done, but still flexible. Beat eggs, half-and-half, bell peppers, cheese, salt and pepper until incorporated. In each muffin cup, place two bacon halves in a crisscross pattern, then fill each with  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup egg mixture. Place the muffin tin on a baking sheet for easier transport to the oven, then bake for 20 to 25 minutes or until eggs are set in the center.

## Ham & Broccoli Muffins

- 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  cups reduced fat all-purpose baking Mix
- 1 cup finely chopped cooked ham or Canadian bacon
- 2 cups (8 ozs.) shredded 2% reduced-fat Cheddar Cheese, divided
- 1 pkg. (10 ozs.) frozen chopped broccoli, thawed and well drained
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup fat-free milk
- 1 tablespoon butter, melted
- 1 large egg, lightly beaten
- Vegetable cooking spray

Preheat oven to 425 degrees. Combine baking mix, chopped ham, 1  $\frac{3}{4}$  cups shredded cheese and broccoli in a large bowl; make a well in the center of mixture. Stir together milk, melted butter and lightly beaten egg until well blended; add to cheese mixture, stirring just until moistened. Place paper baking cups in muffin pans and coat with cooking spray. Spoon batter into paper baking cups, filling three-fourths full. Sprinkle tops with remaining cheese. Bake for 18 minutes or until golden. Let stand 2 to 3 minutes before removing from pans.

## Poppy Seed Slaw

- 1 pkg. (10 ozs.) angel hair coleslaw
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup dried cranberries
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup sliced almonds
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup poppy seed salad dressing
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon salt
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon pepper

Combine coleslaw, cranberries and almonds in a large bowl. Whisk the salad dressing, salt and pepper; drizzle over salad and toss to coat. Refrigerate for 1 hour before serving.

## Pickled Okra Slaw

- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup sour cream
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon sugar
- 1 teaspoon salt
- $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon pepper
- 1 pkg. (16 ozs.) shredded coleslaw mix
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup sliced pickled okra
- 1 jar (4 ozs.) diced pimiento, drained.

Stir together sour cream, sugar, salt and pepper. Toss together coleslaw mix, pickled okra, diced pimiento and sour cream mixture.

## Blueberry Fields Salad

- 1 cup chopped walnuts
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup balsamic vinegar
- $\frac{1}{3}$  cup blueberry preserves
- $\frac{1}{3}$  cup olive oil
- 2 pkgs. (5.5 ozs. ea.) spring greens and baby spinach mix
- 2 cups fresh blueberries
- 1 small red onion, halved and sliced
- 1 cup crumbled blue cheese

Heat walnuts in a small skillet over medium-high heat, stirring constantly, 5 minutes or until toasted and fragrant. Whisk together balsamic vinegar, preserves, olive oil salt and pepper to taste in a small bowl. Combine walnuts, spinach mix, blueberries, onion and blue

cheese in a large bowl. Drizzle with desired amount of vinaigrette and toss to combine. Serve immediately with remaining vinaigrette. Makes 8 servings.

## Skillet Roasted Veggies

1 cup asparagus spears, trimmed and cut into 2-inch pieces, patted dry  
3 ounces sliced Portobello mushrooms  
1/2 medium red bell pepper, cut into thin strips  
1/4 teaspoon salt  
1/8 teaspoon black pepper

Place a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat until hot. Coat the skillet with nonstick cooking spray and add the asparagus, mushrooms and bell pepper. Coat the vegetables with nonstick cooking spray and sprinkle evenly with the salt and black pepper. Cook 5 to 6 minutes, or until the vegetables begin to richly brown on the edges. Use two utensils to stir as you would when stir-frying. Remove from the heat, cover tightly and let stand 2 minutes to develop flavors. Makes 4 servings.

## Honey Mustard Carrots

2 pkgs. (10 ozs. ea.) julienned carrots  
1/4 cup honey  
2 tablespoons honey mustard  
2 teaspoons butter  
1/4 teaspoon salt

Place 1-inch water in a large saucepan; add carrots. Bring to a boil, reduce heat; cover and simmer for 3 to 4 minutes or until tender crisp. Drain and set aside.

In a small saucepan, combine the remaining ingredients. Bring to a boil and stir for 2 to 3 minutes or until slightly thickened. Pour over carrots; heat through. Makes 5 servings.

## Creamy Dill Cucumbers

1/4 cup fat-free sour cream  
1 tablespoon reduced-fat mayonnaise  
1/2 teaspoon dried dill  
1/4 teaspoon salt  
2 cups peeled diced cucumber

Stir the sour cream, mayonnaise, dill and salt together in a small bowl until completely blended. Place the cucumbers in a medium bowl, add the yogurt mixture and toss gently to coat completely. Serve within 30 minutes for peak flavors and textures. Makes 4 servings.

## Hot Skillet Pineapple

2 tablespoons butter  
1 tablespoon packed dark brown sugar  
1/2 teaspoon ground curry powder  
8 slices pineapple packed in juice

Place a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat until hot. Add the butter, sugar and curry; bring to a boil. Stir to blend. Arrange pineapple slices in a single layer in the skillet. Cook 6 minutes until the pineapples are richly golden in color, turning frequently. Arrange the pineapples on a serving platter and let stand 5 minutes to develop flavors and cool slightly. Serve hot or at room temperature. Makes 4 servings.



## Shortcut Malted Chocolate Cake

1 pkg. (18  $\frac{1}{4}$  ozs.) dark chocolate fudge or devil's food cake mix  
1/3 cup vanilla malted milk powder  
1 can (12 ozs.) whipped chocolate frosting  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  cup vanilla malted milk powder  
1  $\frac{1}{2}$  cups coarsely crushed malted milk balls

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Grease a 13 x 9 x 2-inch baking pan; set aside. Prepare cake mix according to package directions, adding the 1/3 cup malted milk powder to the batter. Pour batter into the prepared baking pan. Bake for 30 to 35 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in center comes out clean. Cool in pan on a wire rack. In a medium bowl, stir together frosting and the  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup malted milk powder. Spread evenly over cake. Sprinkle with crushed malted milk balls. Makes 20 servings.

## Chocolate Caramel Cookies

1 pkg. (18  $\frac{1}{4}$  ozs.) devil's food cake mix  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  cup water  
1 egg  
3 tablespoons canola oil  
38 Rolo candies  
Chopped pecans, walnuts or hazelnuts

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Combine cake mix, water, egg and oil in a large bowl. Roll rounded teaspoonfuls of dough into balls. Press a candy into each; reshape balls. Dip tops in chopped nuts. Place 2-inches apart on ungreased baking sheets. Bake for 8 to 10 minutes or until tops are cracked. Cool for 2 minutes before removing from pans to wire racks. Store in an airtight container. Makes 3 dozen.

## Lemon Custard Cake

1 prepared angel food cake  
1 pkgs. (3.4 ozs.) instant lemon pudding mix  
1  $\frac{1}{2}$  cups cold milk  
1 cup (8 ozs.) sour cream  
1 can (21 ozs.) cherry pie filling

Tear angel food cake into bite-size pieces. Place in a 13 x 9 x 2-inch pan. In a bowl, combine the pudding mix, milk and sour cream. Beat until thickened, about 2 minutes. Spread over cake. Spoon pie filling on top. Chill until served.

## Chocolate Chip Cheesecake Bars

1 pkg. (8 ozs.) cream cheese, softened  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  cup sugar  
1 egg  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  cup coconut, if desired  
1 roll (16 .5 ozs.) refrigerated chocolate chip cookies

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In small bowl, beat cream cheese, sugar and egg until smooth. Stir in coconut. In ungreased 9- or 8-inch square pan, break up half of cookie dough. With floured fingers, press dough evenly in bottom of pan to form crust. Spread cream cheese mixture over dough. Crumble and sprinkle remaining half of dough over cream cheese mixture. Bake 25 to 40 minutes or until golden brown and firm to the touch. Cool 30 minutes. Refrigerate at least 2 hours or until chilled. For bars, cut into 4 rows by 4 rows. Store in refrigerator.

# ***Tips to Make These Easy Dinner Recipes Even Easier!***

## ***Prep it Ahead***

- *Cut boneless skinless chicken breasts into bite-size pieces, then freeze in 1-lb. quantities in resealable freezerweight bags so they're ready to use in your favorite recipes.*
- *If you use browned ground beef frequently, save time by cooking it in advance. If ground beef is refrigerated promptly after cooking, it can be safely refrigerated up to 4 days, or frozen up to 3 months. Never partially cook ground beef for later use -it should be fully cooked to destroy any bacteria.*
- *Purchasing a fully-cooked rotisserie chicken at the supermarket is a quick way to obtain cooked chicken for recipe use.*
- *Purchase ready-to-use cut-up vegetables from the salad bar of your grocery store to use to quickly assemble salads or side dishes. Many fruits and vegetables are also now available already sliced, chopped and washed in the produce section.*

## ***Stay Organized***

- *To keep track of exactly what's in your freezer, attach a running inventory list to the freezer door. Add and cross out items on the list as they are stored or removed for at-a-glance meal planning.*
- *Prepare a standard grocery list for items you want to keep on hand, such as kitchen staples like bread, milk, and vegetables, as well as other commonly use foods, such as pasta, cheeses, meats and baking needs. When you use up the last of an item, just circle it on your list so it's ready for the next grocery trip.*
- *Organize the food in your refrigerator so you can easily see everything that's there, preventing you from purchasing foods you already have but just didn't know they were there! Also, remember to organize the food in your cabinets and frequently check expiration dates for outdated ingredients.*

## ***Make it Easier***

- *Slow cookers let you put everything together in the morning and arrive to a perfectly cooked recipe later in the day.*
- *Plan a day or weekend to do a lot of cooking, then freeze the prepared dishes for enjoyment throughout the week.*
- *Enlist friends and family to help out. Create a family night when everyone works together in the kitchen to help prepare the meal. Or, plan a potluck with your neighbors and friends, asking everyone to prepare and share their favorite recipes.*



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