200 ALL-NEW RECIPES by the much-loved author of the blog Good Cheap Eats—the go-to source for fresh, fast, and flavorful food that doesn't break the bank

GOOD CHEAP EATS DINNER IN 30 MINUTES (OR LESS!)



JESSICA FISHER

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Introduction: The Quick-Fix Dinner

Wouldn't it be nice to bypass the long line at the drive-through, to skip the frozen food aisle at the grocery store, and to avoid long hours in the kitchen? What about eating delicious, healthy, wholesome meals on a regular basis? It sounds like a dream. How in the world could this be possible when we are all so pressed for time?

There are lots of things that clamor for our attention these days: family, work, school, community, friends, and, of course, our various modes of entertainment. We are inundated with more opportunity and information than ever before. In most respects this is good, but what happens in real life is that we feel busier than the generations before us. There is always more to do in this Information Age.

Along with all this newfangled technology come more and more food innovations that have us opening boxes and cans, dumping prepared things onto a plate, or eating on the run. Yet sprouting up through all this is the blossoming understanding that processed foods are, in fact, *not* the best thing since sliced bread. More and more, folks are concluding that home cooking is cheaper and healthier.

Let's be real. How can you quickly get a meal on the table? How can a busy-night supper happen without making "a run for the border" or passing through the Golden Arches? How can we reconcile healthy intentions with real-life schedules?

With easy-to-prep ingredients and time-saving strategies, you can get a delicious, healthy, home-cooked meal on the table in just half an hour. That's quicker than I can find my car keys and get through the take-out line at the local burger joint. Thirty minutes: We can all do that!

Why 30-Minute Meals?

Whether you are a college student carrying a heavy load, a busy professional, a full-time homemaker, a working parent, or an active retiree, chances are that you desire a quick, healthy meal. I know I do.

I've got six kids 18 and under. As you can imagine, ours is a busy household. Between home-school activities, my husband's and my work schedules, and the kids' various lessons, classes, practices, and games, our afternoons and evenings are far from humdrum.

When the kids were all little, dinner together was something we made a priority every night, never fail. As they've grown, we've held on to this family ritual, adjusting mealtimes to fit with our varying outside obligations. This means that I might have only a 60-minute window to get supper on the table between my son's science class and my daughters' swim lesson. Things have gotten a little tricky!

Dinner needs to be a quick fix.

While your life might not mirror mine, I'll hazard a guess that you've got nights when you want dinner on the table, like, five minutes ago. You might be tempted to grab a frozen pizza or run out for fast food instead of bustling about the kitchen. I am, too, sometimes. I've learned, however, that we eat more healthfully and more economically when I take the time to buckle down in the kitchen and give 30 minutes of my time toward dinner prep. What results is delicious and nutritious—and also offers a small taste of home.

You've got 30 minutes. Put down the tablet, switch off the computer, turn up the music, and get thee to the kitchen.

About This Book

This book is a result of my efforts to get a quality, home-cooked meal on the table before a little one starts whining or a big one is late for karate. (Did you know that the sensei will close the door on you if you're late for karate?)

Dinner doesn't have to come out of a box. With a few tricks and some simple organizational techniques, you can pull off a great meal in the time it takes to watch a sitcom—including commercials. The tricks are all laid out for you here. Throughout the book, you will find my 101 top tips for saving time in the kitchen. Heed them well, and you can always enjoy good food.

The 200 recipes here are designed to be easy, flavorful, quick to prepare, and kid-friendly. In most cases, they are also frugal meals. That's how I roll. I'm a pretty thrifty shopper, but I'm not averse to spending a little extra for something that will cook quickly and keep us away from so-called fast food. In the end, we still save money compared with the cost of eating out.

What you'll find in this book are menus composed of pairs of recipes rather than one-dish suppers or three-course meals. A one-dish meal can be a quick fix, but sometimes it feels incomplete, like it's lacking in variety. And given how quickly 30 minutes can go by, a three-course meal seems too cumbersome for every day. I'm the queen of biting off more than I can chew, so with two-course dinners I keep things exciting without being too complicated.

In each menu, the "main event" is always listed first, but you can decide how you want to serve the courses. Sometimes I've paired an obvious main dish with a side to serve on the same plate, such as Honey-Broiled Ham Steak and Cheater Cheesy Potatoes (page 50); other times it's an appetizer and a one-dish main course, such as the Red Pepper Hummus and Greek Beef Wraps with Tzatziki (page 196). In some instances, I pair a main dish with a salad that you can serve before, after, or at the same time, such as the Biscuit Pizza with Sausage and Peppers and Marinated Olive and Tomato Salad (page 146). And in some cases the two dishes are "equal" and you'll just want to serve them side by side, such as the Bacon and Brie Samwiches and Vegetable Soup with Thyme (page 55).

The recipes in each menu are designed to complement one another, but you should feel free to mix and match them to suit your own

taste buds. I've tried to create versatile recipes that lend themselves to many possible combinations. Many recipes can stand alone instead of being part of a menu, and the recipe notes offer lots of alternative serving suggestions. Often a salad or side dish can be quickly and easily adapted into a main dish by adding grilled meat or fish, so please feel free to make yours a one-dish dinner if that suits the day. No matter what you do, dinner will be on the table in a flash!

Each meal in this book will serve at least four adults. For many meals, leftovers will keep well, and you can save even more time by enjoying them the next day for lunch or reheated for supper later in the week. Some dishes take well to preparing and freezing in advance, giving you a bulk-cooking option to save even more precious time.

At my house, we love to end a meal with a bite of something sweet. It doesn't have to be a big, fancy dessert, just a little treat to cap off the meal and help it feel complete. At the end of the book, you'll find a roundup of quick-to-prepare desserts. Present them with style and no one will know you didn't spend hours in the kitchen.

If you're a visual person, you'll be pleased to know that there is a database of photographs of recipes in this book located at GoodCheapEats.com/gallery30/, in addition to the photos that appear in these pages.

Label It!

Since my youngest daughter has a food allergy, we take care to read labels and adapt recipes so that she can enjoy them safely. Even though a food item might not contain the allergen in question, the risk of cross-contamination at the factory or restaurant is often a concern. Cooking most foods at home allows us to save money as well as ensure a healthy and safe diet for her. I know many other families have ingredient concerns of their own, whether it be an allergen or an intolerance of certain ingredients.

I know from experience that when I'm strapped for time, I want to easily and quickly scan a recipe to see if it is going to suit our family's needs. Many of the recipes in this book are marked with the following labels to help you know at a glance how they can fit into the bigger picture of your life, schedule, and dietary preferences.

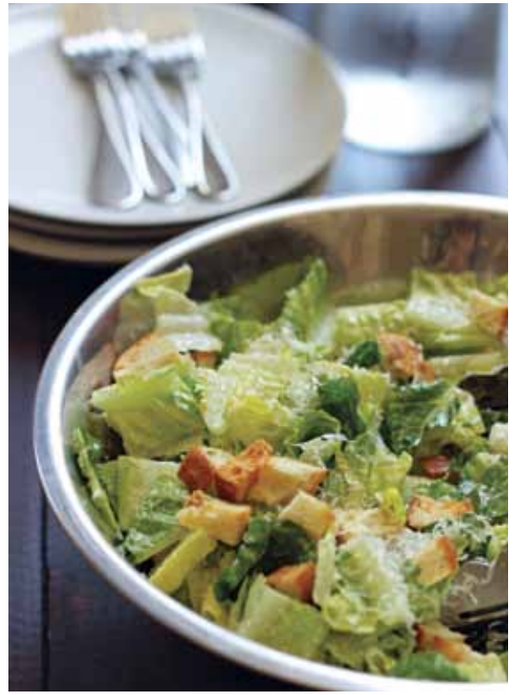
Meatless: Making meals without meat is a great way to eat more healthfully and economically—and save time as well. Many meatless meals can be ready in the blink of an eye, especially when using quick-fix ingredients such as eggs or canned beans.

Dairy-free: Many recipes can easily be adapted for dairy-free eating by making substitutions for butter or cow's milk. Those that are already naturally dairy-free are indicated as such.

Gluten-free: If you already cook gluten-free, you know how to adapt recipes. The labels here will help friends and family prepare a gluten-free meal. Please keep in mind that manufacturers hide gluten in crazy places, so be sure to read all ingredient labels to ensure, for example, that there is no gluten hiding in your bacon, soy sauce, corn tortillas, or chili powder. Naturally gluten-free recipes are labeled as such, though countless others can easily be adapted to work without gluten.

Make-ahead: While all the recipes in this book can be made in 30 minutes or less, there's an added advantage to making food a few hours before serving time. It allows you flexibility in your kitchen schedule as well as provides the option to pack the food for picnics, work lunches, and other on-the-go meals. And, quite honestly, after a hard day, spending even half an hour in the kitchen can seem intimidating. With make-ahead meals, you can do the prep work the night before or first thing in the morning and then come home in the evening knowing that supper will be on the table just a few minutes after you walk in the door.

Freezer-friendly: I am a huge fan of freezer meals—after all, I wrote the book on it! If you liked my first book, *Not Your Mother's Make-Ahead and Freeze Cookbook*, then you'll appreciate the freezer-friendly options peppered throughout this book. In many instances, you can make a double batch of a favorite meal and stash half in the freezer for a busy night weeks or even months down the road. Booyah! Extra time saved. Freezer cooking is also a fantastic way to save money, as you can buy ingredients in bulk when they are on sale.



About Ingredients

Whenever possible, I've chosen ingredients that are readily available and super convenient to use. I lean on items like bagged shredded cabbage or jarred minced ginger or garlic to help me save time in the kitchen. I look at these items as whole-foods convenience items. Spooning out the ginger instead of peeling and grating it buys me an extra five minutes (plus cleanup time). Some days, that five minutes is the difference between survival and losing my cool.

Often convenience might cost a little more. In the situations where I had to choose between time and money in these recipes, I've chosen Door Number One: saving time. For instance, buying a bag of prewashed baby spinach is a much easier alternative to hand washing bulk spinach that's full of sand and grit. The latter may be cheaper, but the convenience of the bagged variety wins this busy mama's heart every time. Time is money, right? Cooked shrimp or bacon may be a bit more costly than their uncooked counterparts, but the speed they bring to meal prep is well worth it to me, particularly if it helps me avoid eating out, which is always more

expensive than eating at home. As with all my shopping, I look for these convenience items on sale and stock up when I see a great price. I build my meal plans around what's on special and thereby get the best of both worlds. All this being said, if you prefer to buy ingredients that aren't precooked and take a few extra minutes in the kitchen, go right ahead and do that.

While these meals definitely count as from-scratch recipes, you will notice a small handful of commercial items in the ingredients lists, like barbecue sauce and enchilada sauce. I can and do make my own most often, but I realize that this may not be everyone else's favorite option. Feel free to make your own when time allows, but by all means grab a bottle of your favorite prepared sauce to get supper on the table more quickly.

As far as meat is concerned, I've focused on the cuts that cook the most quickly. You won't find roasts and whole chickens in this book, as they take more than half an hour to cook in a conventional oven. Instead, I turn to boneless chicken pieces, beef steaks, and pork chops and tenderloin, as well as ground meats and charcuterie. And, of course, seafood almost always cooks up fast.



When it comes to chopping vegetables, I've given you the option of skipping the measuring cup to help you stay under our 30-minute target. Half of a medium onion equals about 1 cup chopped onion. Half of a bell pepper yields about ½ cup chopped pepper. Once you get an idea of how your vegetables "measure up," you can skip the step of piling them in the cup and just get on with your recipe. For those who prefer to be exact, the ingredients lists offer both options, but know that recipes like these tend to be very forgiving. Just be sure to measure exactly for all baking recipes.

Tools of the Trade

There are certain tools that will help you save time in the kitchen. While there are feasible alternative methods to using each one, I think that the time they save more than justifies the space they take up in my kitchen.

Immersion blender: The only regret that I have about my "stick" blender is that I didn't buy it sooner. It has proven to be a rock star in the kitchen, helping me achieve smooth sauces and soups without dirtying another pan or spilling all over the counter.

Stand blender: A good, sturdy stand blender is a great resource for making smoothies and other blended drinks quickly and efficiently.

Food processor: I've had a food processor for over 20 years—as long as my marriage. My husband and my food processor are necessities in my life. They both help me slice and chop vegetables, but the latter does it much more quickly. (Sorry, honey!) The food processor also quickly shreds cheese, purees sauces, and makes fast work of pie crust and other pastry dough.

Rice cooker: Rice is so versatile and one of my favorite quick-cooking grains. While I love baking rice (see page 26), I still rely on my rice cooker as a hands-free helper in the kitchen.

Good knives: I can't stress enough the importance of good knives. I'm not sure there's anything more annoying than hacking through a piece of meat with a dull, junky knife. Not only is it slow work, but it's also dangerous—dull knives are more likely to contribute to kitchen accidents than sharp ones. Invest in a good-quality chef's knife, bread knife, and paring knife, and keep your knives sharpened.

Quality cutting boards: I love big cutting boards. They allow me ample workspace so that I can do all my chopping for a sauté or salad in one spot. Be sure you have enough boards so that you can switch them between working with meats and vegetables to avoid cross-contamination.

Pots and pans: You don't need a full suite of cookware. Choose some key pieces, like a stockpot, a 12-inch nonstick skillet, and a large saucepan, and buy the highest quality you can afford. Good-quality cookware will save you time by being a pleasure to cook with as well as easy to clean. It's just easier to prepare high-quality meals with high-quality cookware.

Baking dishes: The recipes in this book call for different baking dishes on occasion, like rimmed baking sheets, ramekins, 9 x 13-inch baking dishes, and muffin pans. Having the right pan for a job will help you prepare a recipe quickly.

Meat thermometer: Meats are easy to overcook. When we do that, we waste time we could be spending eating or doing something else pleasurable, and the result isn't as appetizing, which is a waste of money. Using an instant-read meat thermometer will let you know exactly when your meat is ready.

My hope is that this book will help put an end to the age-old question of "What's for dinner?" May you find yourself skipping the fast-food lane and instead coming home to quickly and easily prepare a healthy, delicious meal. When kids, spouse, or housemates ask, "When will dinner be ready?" may your answer be a confident "In a half hour."

Quick Casseroles, Bakes, and Broils

We tend to think that baking involves a long, drawn-out process. I am pleased to report that, aside from the initial preheat time—something that some modern ranges can completely bypass—using the oven or broiler is a fast and easy way to get dinner on the table.

These casseroles, bakes, and broils are designed so that both dishes on the menu can share space in the oven or that one will cook on the stovetop or be mixed in the salad bowl while the other bakes in the oven.

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GOLDEN RULES OF MEAL PLANNING

Meal planning is one winning strategy for helping you save time and money in the kitchen. Everyone does meal planning, but some people do it in line at the burger joint. If you don't already, make your plans just a bit more in advance so that you can ensure that you have the ingredients necessary and that you're ready to get cooking when it's time.

Here are some golden tips to help you create winning meal plans:

1. Know what you like.
Don't plan things that you know your family won't eat. It's an exercise in frustration and a waste of your time and money. While I'm all for experimentation and trying new things, do this judiciously to better use your resources.

2. Take stock.
If you know what you have, you won't spend time and money buying more of that thing. Take an inventory before you go shopping to make sure you don't buy duplicates. Maybe you don't even need to shop this week!

3. Make an emergency meals list.
Real quick! Jot down 10 meals that you know like the back of your hand and that are quick to prepare. Add the ingredients for those meals to your grocery list and keep them in stock for those nights when you need a backup plan.

4. Create a formula for the week.
Remember when TV sitcom moms would talk about "meatloaf night"? They planned a certain type of meal for each night of the week. It was a weekly rotation that they knew fit their budgets and schedules. Do the same but update it for the twenty-first century: tacos, pizza, pasta, curry, stir-fry. Choose one type of meal for each night of the week. You'll likely have a common grocery list each week (saves time!), and you'll have endless variety since there are so many fun combinations to make within each of those themes.

5. Plan for leftovers.
Make good use of leftovers. They are typically good for up to three or four days, under proper storage. Plan to use up leftovers and take the night off from cooking.

MENU

Chili Stacks

California Winter Salad

I grew up in Southern California, near Los Angeles, where Latin flavors dominated during my childhood. As a result, my comfort foods are typically of the Mexican-inspired variety. The same goes for my husband. This meal reflects flavors of home for us both.

Chili Stacks

SERVES 4 TO 6

GLUTEN-FREE MAKE-AHEAD

My mom was a working mom in the 1980s, and she needed quick meals to feed us five kids. This was one of our favorites, so I dug up Mom's old recipe and made a few tweaks to it. *Voilà!* An easy and filling meal that comes together quickly. I'm guessing that's one of the reasons Mom served it so often.

- 1 pound ground beef or turkey
- ¼ medium onion, chopped (about ½ cup)
- 1 (14.5-ounce) can petite diced tomatoes, with their juices
- ½ cup tomato sauce
- 1 tablespoon chili powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon dried oregano
- ½ teaspoon ground cumin
- 6 corn tortillas
- 2 cups shredded Monterey Jack or cheddar cheese

TOPPINGS (OPTIONAL)
- Chopped fresh cilantro
- Sliced scallions
- Sliced black olives

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Spray a pie plate with nonstick cooking spray.

2. In a large nonstick skillet, brown the beef and onion over medium-high heat until the meat is cooked through and the onion turns translucent, 5 to 7 minutes.

3. Add the tomatoes, tomato sauce, chili powder, salt, oregano, and cumin and cook for another 3 minutes.

4. Layer a tortilla, some meat sauce, and some cheese in the prepared baking dish. Repeat the layers until all the ingredients are used.

5. Bake until the cheese is melted and bubbly, about 15 minutes. Serve wedges of the casserole with the toppings of your choice.

MAKE IT AHEAD: Prepare the recipe through step 4. Wrap and chill until you are ready to bake, up to 24 hours. Add about 10 minutes to the baking time since the dish will be cold.

#3

BE PREPARED!

If you spend a few minutes each morning thinking about the day's meal prep, you'll be ready when it comes time to actually make that meal. Check that you have the ingredients on hand, lay out the tools you'll need, and fill in the gaps accordingly.

Butter Lettuce Salad with Apples and Gruyère

SERVES 4

MEATLESS GLUTEN-FREE MAKE-AHEAD

I love the combination of sweet-tart apples and nutty Gruyère cheese. I first tasted it as a college student in France. It is delicious atop this salad of delicate butter lettuce. Make it a complete meal by adding grilled chicken.

- 2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
- ½ teaspoon dried tarragon
- Fine sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
- ¼ cup olive oil
- 1 (7-ounce) bag butter lettuce
- 2 medium apples (any kind), cored and chopped
- ½ cup small-cubed Gruyère cheese
- ⅓ cup slivered almonds
- ¼ cup finely chopped red onion

1. In a small jar or bowl, combine the balsamic vinegar, tarragon, and salt and pepper to taste. Cap the jar and shake, or whisk to combine. Add the olive oil and shake or whisk again.

2. Place the butter lettuce in a large salad bowl. Toss it with enough dressing to coat.

3. Divide the dressed greens among four salad plates. Top each plate with an equal portion of the apple, cheese, almonds, and red onion. Serve with additional dressing on the side.

MAKE IT AHEAD: The dressing can be stored in a covered container in the refrigerator for up to 4 days.

MENU

Hands-Free Cashew Chicken

No-Brainer Baked Rice

Chinese take-out was never so easy as this great fake out. Both components cook in the oven. Start the rice first and then slide the pan of chicken and vegetables into the oven alongside. Dinner will be ready faster than it takes to find the number of the local take-out place.

Hands-Free Cashew Chicken

SERVES 4

DAIRY-FREE GLUTEN-FREE

My kids love Chinese food, or at least what we call "Chinese food" here in the United States. Since my youngest has a peanut and walnut allergy, we don't get take-out very often anymore. The kids were pleasantly flabbergasted when I first served them this dish. "It tastes just like Panda!" (And, like all good take-out, this tastes great reheated the next day.) Serve over or alongside the rice.

- 1 pound chicken tenders
- 1 (9-ounce) package fresh snow peas
- ½ cup cashews
- 4 scallions, chopped
- ½ cup chicken broth
- 2 tablespoons soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons dry sherry
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch
- 1 tablespoon honey
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic
- 1 teaspoon toasted sesame oil
- ⅛ teaspoon red pepper flakes
- Toasted sesame seeds, for garnish (optional)

1. Preheat the oven to 425°F. Grease a 9 x 13-inch baking pan with nonstick cooking spray.

2. Place the chicken tenders in the pan. Scatter the snow peas, cashews, and scallions over the chicken.

3. In a small bowl, combine the chicken broth, soy sauce, sherry, cornstarch, honey, garlic, sesame oil, and red pepper flakes, whisking to blend thoroughly. Pour this mixture over the chicken and vegetables in the pan.

4. Bake until the chicken is cooked through and the sauce is thick and bubbly, about 15 minutes. Sprinkle with sesame seeds, if you wish.

#10

WATER, WATER, EVERYWHERE

Keep a filled carafe of water on the counter to easily and quickly add water to your recipes without having to haul it from the sink or refrigerator spout. It will also remind you to drink more, too.

Swiss Chard and Mushroom Sauté

SERVES 4

MEATLESS DAIRY-FREE GLUTEN-FREE

Sautéed mushrooms and Swiss chard are a delight. Swiss chard is one of the more delicate greens, so don't overcook it—just wilt it gently.

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 4 ounces white mushrooms, sliced (about 1 cup)
- 2 shallots, sliced
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic
- 1 large bunch Swiss chard, chopped
- ¼ cup water
- Fine sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

1. In a large skillet with a lid, heat the oil over medium-high heat until shimmering. Add the mushrooms, shallots, and garlic and cook, stirring, until the mushrooms start to brown and the shallots start to turn translucent, about 5 minutes.

2. Add the chard and water to the pan and turn the heat to high. Cover the skillet and cook for 5 minutes. Uncover and continue cooking until the liquid is evaporated and the chard is wilted, a few minutes more. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

STOCKING THE QUICK-FIX KITCHEN ON A BUDGET

When strapped for time and faced with the choice between buying a quicker but more expensive ingredient and a cheaper one, I find it hard to go for the pricier item. Thrifty Me wants it both ways. If I plan right, I can.

Here's how to stock your pantry with quick-fix, budget-friendly items:

1. Watch for sales.
Every week your grocery store releases a sales flyer. On the front cover it will typically feature the lowest-priced items for the week. These are called loss leaders, and are basically shopper's bait. They use those to entice you to visit their store and buy a bunch of other things (that aren't on sale) while you're there.

Stock up on the items that you know you will use in a reasonable amount of time. Then, when you want to prepare a certain recipe, you'll have the ingredient in your possession already. You'll save time and money by building a practical stockpile.

2. Check the clearance section.
You'd be surprised at the great treasures you can find in the clearance aisle of the grocery store. Visit it regularly, as the selection changes often. Items here are typically just being discontinued or they're seasonal items whose time has passed, but the quality is still fine.

3. Compare prices.
If you spend a little time comparing the prices of the same items at different stores, you'll find out which places give you the best deal on the things you buy regularly. This may be different for everyone, depending on what you like to eat. But you can stock your pantry economically if you source wisely.

4. Skimp somewhere else.
Maybe food is your hobby or something that you really don't mind spending money on. Go for it. Just skimp somewhere else so that you can still keep the budget in check.

5. Get *Good Cheap Eats.*
If you're interested in trimming your grocery budget but aren't sure where to start, be sure to grab a copy of my cookbook, *Good Cheap Eats: Everyday Dinners and Fantastic Feasts for $10 or Less*. It provides you with 200 budget-friendly recipes as well as tips and tricks for saving more money on food costs. And don't forget to check the Good Cheap Eats blog for daily updates.

Breakneck Sandwiches and Burgers

These days, sandwiches don't have to be two slices of white bread with some bologna stuck in between. With the rise of the five-dollar foot-long sub and upscale delis and sandwich shops, the humble sandwich has become a veritable work of art. Thanks to its easy, tasty, and versatile nature, my family gives sandwich night a regular spot in the meal-planning rotation.

These breakneck sandwiches and burgers are made from wholesome ingredients and packed with flavor. They taste amazing and come together in no time. For sure, they make sandwich night something to look forward to.

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MENU

Taco Joes

Smoky Chili Beans

A sloppy joe with a side of beans and a green salad is a classic summertime feast. But let's face it: It's pretty good in the wintertime, too. Serve it with a Mexican twist and the old becomes new again.

Taco Joes

SERVES 4 TO 6

MAKE-AHEAD FREEZER-FRIENDLY

I love the versatility of the joe sandwich. Sloppy or otherwise, it comes together quickly, and its preparation allows you to stretch the amount of meat you use for economy's sake. This mixture is absolutely delicious—it's like a taco in a bun. Feel free to serve it on Mexican-style bolillo or telera rolls, if you like.

- 1 pound ground beef
- 1 (8-ounce) can tomato sauce
- 1 to 2 tablespoons Basic Taco Seasoning Mix (page 163) or other favorite seasoning
- 2 cups shredded cheddar cheese
- 2 cups shredded cabbage
- Salsa, such as Serrano Pico de Gallo (page 189), for serving
- Sliced pickled jalapeños, for serving
- 4 to 6 hamburger buns

1. In a large nonstick skillet, cook the beef over medium-high heat until no longer pink, 5 to 7 minutes. Add the tomato sauce and taco seasoning mix. Simmer for 5 minutes.

2. To assemble the sandwiches, layer the meat mixture, cheese, cabbage, salsa, and jalapeños on each hamburger bun. Serve immediately.

MAKE IT AHEAD: The meat mixture can be stored in a covered container in the refrigerator for up to 4 days or in the freezer for up to 2 months. Thaw in the refrigerator overnight before reheating.



Speedy Soups and Stews

Soups have a reputation for needing long simmering, so folks tend to turn to processed and overly salted canned soups. Stop it, already. You can easily make a homemade soup in a very short time.

I almost always pair soup with a tasty homemade bread. To my way of thinking, the enticement of biscuits, savory muffins, or garlic bread wins over any reluctant soup eater pretty easily. (Kids and some husbands, I'm looking at you.) That being said, the stuffed peppers on page 88 will go great with some of the other soups in the chapter as well. Sandwiches and salads are also great pairings for soup.

Soup Night is one of my favorite nights of the week. Not only is it a quick and easy meal to prepare, but it is also one that signals comfort and relaxation. Practically every generation that's gone before us has enjoyed a bite of bread and some soup for the evening meal. Why should we be any different?

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Sausage-Stuffed Peppers 89

Quickest Chili in the West 90
Jalapeño Cheese Toasts 91

Vegetable Alphabet Soup 92
Cheesy Scallion Biscuits 94

Shrimp Chowder 95
Garlicky Brie Toasts 96

Confetti Chili 97
Pumpkin Biscuits 99

Quick Chicken and Sausage White Bean Stew 100
Herbed Lemon Broccoli 101

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Easy Herbed Garlic Bread 104

Sweet Pea Soup 105
Tomato- and Cucumber-Topped Bagels 106

Loaded Potato Soup 107
Garlic-Herb Mini Breads 109

#30

BAG THE BAGUETTE

When making bruschetta or other baguette-based appetizers, search your grocery's baked goods section for a presliced baguette. You can often find cubed bread as well, which works great for egg bakes and bread pudding, as well as making croutons. These bags are often offered at a discount on the day-old shelf, so you can save some money, too.

Garlicky Brie Toasts

SERVES 4

MEATLESS

French baguettes are brushed with a garlic-infused olive oil and topped with a slice of Brie cheese. A few minutes under the broiler creates a quick and delicious accompaniment for soups and stews.

- ½ baguette, about 9 inches long
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic
- 4 ounces Brie cheese

1. Preheat the broiler.

2. Slice the baguette on the bias into eight 1-inch-thick slices. Place the slices on a baking sheet.

3. In a small bowl, combine the olive oil and garlic. Brush this mixture over the bread slices.

4. Slice the Brie into eight equal portions. Place one portion on each slice of bread.

5. Broil until the cheese bubbles and the bread is toasted, about 5 minutes. Watch carefully to avoid burning. Serve immediately.

MENU

Confetti Chili

Pumpkin Biscuits

Fall weather and football games practically beg you to mix up something hot and filling. And what says fall more than a bowl of bubbling stew and something with a little hint of pumpkin? This meal fits the bill on both counts. Please the crowd at your next tailgate party or bonfire supper with this festive fall fare.

Confetti Chili

MAKES ABOUT 10 CUPS

MEATLESS DAIRY-FREE GLUTEN-FREE MAKE-AHEAD FREEZER-FRIENDLY

Wow your family with this quick-fix chili loaded with vegetables and bright colors. My kiddos gobble this down, even the picky people. If you have salsa verde on hand, it offers great flavor. If not, tomato sauce works just as well. Serve with any traditional chili toppings of your choice.

- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 green bell pepper, cored and chopped
- 1 (15-ounce) can pinto beans, drained
- 1 (15-ounce) can black beans, drained
- 1 (15-ounce) can kidney beans, drained
- 1 (15.5-ounce) hominy, rinsed and drained
- 1 (14.5-ounce) can petite diced tomatoes, with their juices
- 1 cup salsa verde or tomato sauce
- 2 tablespoons chili powder
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin

1. In a large stockpot, heat the oil over high heat until shimmering. Add the onion and bell pepper and cook, stirring, until the onion turns translucent and the peppers are tender, about 5 minutes. Watch carefully to prevent scorching.

2. Add the beans, hominy, tomatoes, salsa verde, chili powder, and cumin. Bring to a low boil, cover, and simmer for 15 minutes.

MAKE IT AHEAD: The chili can be cooled and stored in a covered container in the fridge for up to 4 days or in the freezer for up to 2 months. Thaw in the refrigerator before reheating.



#31

QUICK MIX

I love having dry biscuit, pancake, and waffle mixes on hand. It saves me precious minutes at baking time. I make several batches at once while I have all the dry ingredients out and store the mixes in labeled quart jars. Assembly-line mix making doesn't take me as long as it would to make five batches on five different days.

Pumpkin Biscuits

MAKES 12 BISCUITS

MEATLESS MAKE-AHEAD FREEZER-FRIENDLY

These drop biscuits are light and fluffy without all the work of traditional biscuits. They are unsweetened, allowing them to meld well with savory foods. I serve them with honey and butter. They remind both FishPapa and me of sopaipillas, a classic Southwestern fried bread that is served as a foil for spicy foods. Use plain canned pumpkin here, not pumpkin pie filling, which has sugar and spices added.

2 cups unbleached all-purpose flour
1 tablespoon baking powder
½ teaspoon fine sea salt
½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
½ teaspoon ground nutmeg
1 cup canned pumpkin puree
1 large egg, beaten
½ cup milk
¼ cup vegetable oil

1. Preheat the oven to 450°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper or a silicone baking mat.

2. In a medium-size bowl, whisk together the flour, baking powder, salt, cinnamon, and nutmeg. In a large bowl, whisk together the pumpkin puree, egg, milk, and oil.

3. Pour the dry mixture over the wet mixture. Stir gently until a sticky batter forms.

4. Spoon the batter into 12 mounds on the prepared baking sheet. Bake until golden brown, 10 to 12 minutes.

MAKE IT AHEAD: The baked and cooled biscuits can be stored in an airtight container at room temperature for up to 2 days or in the freezer for up to 2 months.

Swift Salads

I have always been a salad girl. Of anything to eat in the world, I would choose a salad. A bed of greens, slices of veg, chunks of cheese, and hunks of protein? I'm all over that.

These main-dish salads range all over the globe, taking their inspiration from China, India, the Middle East, Europe, Latin America, and the good ol' USA. I love them all.

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Mangolada Smoothies . . . 113

Asian Steak Salad . . . 114
Vegetable Wonton Soup . . . 115

Rainbow Ravioli Salad . . . 116
Garlic-Basil Asparagus . . . 117

Roast Beef and Cheddar Salad . . . 118
Tomato-Olive Muffins . . . 120

Farfalle with Tomatoes, Olives, and Capers . . . 121
Green Salad with Pears and Grapes . . . 123

Guac o'Clock Tostadas . . . 124
Cheesy Jalapeños . . . 126

Avocado BLT Salad . . . 127
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Pesto Shrimp Linguine Salad . . . 130
Spiced Berry Bowl . . . 132

Turkey and Ham Cobb Salad . . . 133
Minty Pomegranate Limeade . . . 135

Buffalo Chicken Salad . . . 136
Pesto Bread Sticks . . . 137

Vegetable Couscous Salad . . . 138
Spiced Pita Chips . . . 140

Curried Chicken and Apple Salad . . . 142
Parmesan Puffs . . . 143

#41

GO CONTINENTAL

Don't feel as if you need to be a short-order cook at breakfast time. Providing a continental breakfast bar saves you precious morning minutes and supplies the needed sustenance for the day. Save yourself even more morning time by laying out the buffet (bowls, spoons, cereals, breads) the night before.

Cornbread Waffles

MAKES ABOUT 8 WAFFLES

MAKE-AHEAD | FREEZER-FRIENDLY

These waffles are a fun alternative to your typical cornbread. They're rich in corn flavor, and the savory quotient is enhanced with cheddar and scallions.

- 1½ cups milk
- ½ cup vegetable oil
- 2 large eggs, beaten
- 2 cups unbleached all-purpose flour
- 1 cup cornmeal
- 2 tablespoons baking powder
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- ¾ teaspoon salt
- ½ cup shredded cheddar cheese
- 2 scallions, chopped
- Butter, for serving

1. Preheat the oven to 200°F. Heat a waffle iron according to the manufacturer's instructions.

2. In a large bowl, combine the milk, olive oil, and eggs. In another large bowl, combine the flour, cornmeal, baking powder, sugar, salt, cheese, and scallions. Fold the dry ingredients into the wet ingredients to combine.

3. Cook the waffles in the waffle iron according to the manufacturer's instructions. Place finished waffles in the oven to keep warm while you cook the remaining waffles. Serve with butter.

MAKE IT AHEAD: Cooled waffles can be stored in a covered container in the refrigerator for up to 4 days or in the freezer for up to 2 months. Toast lightly before serving to re-crisp.

EASY DRESSINGS IN A JIFFY

Making homemade salad dressings is unbelievably easy. They taste so much better than store-bought varieties and come together so quickly that there's really no reason to grab a bottle of commercial dressing.

Once you master the vinaigrette and the standard ranch dressing, you'll never need to buy the bottle. And your friends? They'll be begging you to bring the salad to the next get-together.

basic vinaigrette

MAKES ¾ TO 1 CUP

- ¼ cup vinegar or citrus juice, or a combination
- 1 teaspoon sweet paprika
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt
- ⅛ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- Mix-ins (choose a few): 1 tablespoon jam; ½ teaspoon Dijon, yellow, or dry mustard; ½ teaspoon minced garlic; ¼ teaspoon favorite dried herbs such as basil, oregano, Italian herbs, herbes de Provence, or tarragon
- ½ to ¾ cup sunflower or olive oil

1. Place the vinegar, paprika, salt, and pepper in a Mason jar. Add the mix-ins of your choice. Cap the jar and shake until well combined.

2. Add the oil and cap again. Shake. Serve immediately, or chill until ready to serve.

creamy buttermilk ranch dressing

MAKES 1 CUP

- ½ cup buttermilk
- ½ cup mayonnaise
- 3 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley or 1 tablespoon dried parsley
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic
- ½ teaspoon onion powder
- ¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- Pinch of cayenne pepper

In a medium-size bowl, whisk together the buttermilk and mayonnaise until smooth. Stir in the parsley, garlic, onion powder, black pepper, and cayenne.

MENU

Pesto Shrimp Linguine Salad

Spiced Berry Bowl

Pesto and shrimp are a dynamic duo—and make for a quick, tasty supper in this warm pasta salad. Pass the bread basket and end the meal as the French do: with a few bites of fruit and yogurt.

Pesto Shrimp Linguine Salad

SERVES 4

MAKE-AHEAD

This pasta salad is delicious warm, at room temperature, or chilled. Obviously, in 30 minutes you won't have time to chill it, but know that leftovers will taste awesome. If you've got a few more minutes, grill the shrimp for an extra burst of flavor.

- 1 pound linguine
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 pound peeled medium shrimp, thawed if frozen
- Fine sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
- ¾ cup prepared pesto
- 1 large red bell pepper, cored and julienned
- ½ cup julienned sun-dried tomatoes, drained if using jarred
- ½ cup pitted black olives
- Shredded Parmesan cheese, for garnish
- Chopped fresh parsley, for garnish

1. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil over high heat. Cook the linguine according to the package directions just until al dente. Drain and rinse with cool water.

2. In a large nonstick skillet, heat the oil over medium-high heat until shimmering. Add the shrimp and season to taste with salt and pepper. Sauté until the shrimp turns pink and is cooked through, about 10 minutes.

3. Place the pasta in a large salad bowl and toss with the pesto, distributing it evenly. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

4. Divide the pasta among four dinner plates. Distribute the shrimp, pepper strips, tomatoes, and olives among the plates. Garnish with Parmesan and parsley and serve.

MAKE IT AHEAD: The salad can be stored in a covered container in the refrigerator for up to 4 days.



Fast Pizzas and Flatbreads

Friday night is pizza night at our house. It's our way to welcome a few days of rest and family fun. I've made homemade pizzas for over 15 years. But, honestly, some Friday afternoons, I'm just too tired to make dough and didn't have the forethought to pull stuff from the freezer.

These quick-fix pizzas come to my rescue on those nights. They are delicious, fun to eat, and unbelievably easy to prepare.

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Marinated Olive and Tomato Salad 148

BBQ Chicken Lavash Pizza 149
Crudités and Blue Cheese Dip 151

Cheesesteak French Bread Pizza 152
Caesar Salad 154

Tomatoes and Goat Cheese on Puff Pastry 155
Power Greens with Golden Raisins 156

Pepperoni Pizzadillas 157
Chopped Antipasto Salad 158

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MENU

Biscuit Pizza with Sausage and Peppers

Marinated Olive and Tomato Salad

Traditional homemade pizza dough takes a few hours of prep time, between making and kneading the dough and allowing it to rise. With a biscuit crust, you can eliminate all the rise time. Pair this hearty pizza pie with a marinated olive salad for a simple yet filling supper.

Biscuit Pizza with Sausage and Peppers

SERVES 4 TO 6

I love the flavors and simplicity of this biscuit pizza. It bakes in a 9 x 13-inch baking dish, making it an interesting combination of pizza and casserole all wrapped in one. If you can't find whole-wheat pastry flour, feel free to use unbleached all-purpose flour.

- 2 sweet Italian sausage links, casings removed
- 1 medium green bell pepper, cored and chopped
- ½ medium onion, chopped (about 1 cup)
- 2 cups whole-wheat pastry flour
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon dried Italian herb blend
- 1 teaspoon fine sea salt
- ¼ cup olive oil
- ½ cup buttermilk
- ½ cup tomato sauce
- 2 cups shredded pepper Jack cheese

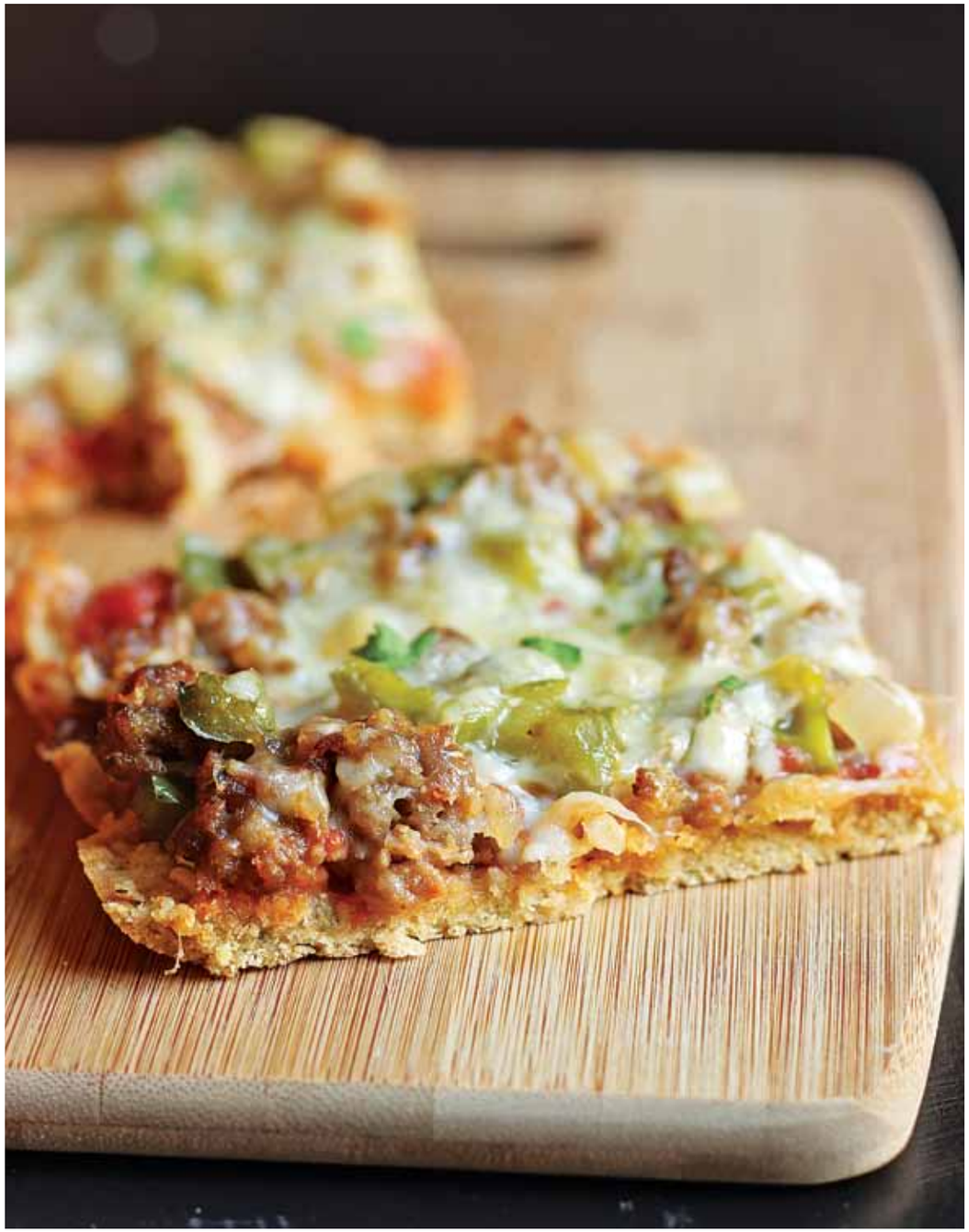
1. Preheat the oven to 400°F. Grease a 9 x 13-inch baking pan with nonstick cooking spray.

2. In a large nonstick skillet, cook the sausage, bell pepper, and onion until the sausage is cooked and the vegetables are tender, about 10 minutes. Drain off the fat.

3. In a large bowl, whisk together the flour, baking powder, herbs, and salt. Add the olive oil and buttermilk and stir gently, just until combined. Spread this mixture in the bottom of the prepared pan.

4. Spread the tomato sauce over the biscuit layer. Scatter the meat mixture over the tomato sauce. Sprinkle the cheese over the top.

5. Bake until the crust is crisp on the bottom and cooked through and the cheese is melted, 12 to 15 minutes.



MAKE YOUR OWN SPICE BLENDS

One of my favorite ways to save time in the kitchen is to create custom spice blends. They add huge flavor to dressings, meats, rice mixes, and vegetables and make quick work of preparing dinner. No measuring out little bits of this and that; just grab a scoop and go. Store it in a shaker jar and then go to town, sprinkling on flavor.

You can certainly buy commercial spice mixes, but it's cheaper to make your own, and you can customize the flavors and control the sodium level. Buy spices in bulk and combine them in different ways. When using fresh citrus zest or fresh herbs, be sure to store the blend in the freezer. I store my spice mixes in half-pint canning jars. Here are five of my faves.



cajun spice blend

MAKES ABOUT 5 TABLESPOONS

This Cajun-style mixture offers just enough heat to keep things exciting. Use it for Shrimp Chowder (page 95) and Cajun Fish and Chips (page 262), or anywhere you need a little pizzazz.

- 1 tablespoon onion powder
- 1 tablespoon garlic powder
- 1 tablespoon kosher salt
- 2 teaspoons paprika
- 2 teaspoons dried thyme
- 1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- ½ teaspoon dried oregano
- ¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper

Combine all of the ingredients in a small jar with a lid. Shake to combine well and store in the cupboard.

fishmama spice

MAKES ABOUT 3 TABLESPOONS

This is my own little vanity spice, named after Yours Truly. It's a little bit salty with great herb flavor. I love it in Turkey and Ham Cobb Salad (page 133), Oven-Roasted Green Beans (page 232), Pork Medallions with Sherried Shallot Sauce (page 237), and Easy Chicken and Asparagus (page 240).

- 1 tablespoon fine sea salt
- 2 teaspoons garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1 teaspoon dried basil
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- 1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

Combine all of the ingredients in a small jar with a lid. Shake to combine well and store in the cupboard.

jamie's spice mix

MAKES ABOUT ⅔ CUP

This blend is named after my sister in honor of the spice mix that she gave as a party favor at her wedding a few years ago. The celery seeds add a strong, unique flavor; feel free to omit them if you'd rather.

Add a few shakes to salad dressings, meat marinades, or French fries. It also goes well on pizza and in pulled chicken sandwiches. Some recipes that feature it include Roast Chicken and Veggies (page 45), Better than Big Mac's Burgers (page 60),and BBQ Chicken Lavash Pizza (page 149).

- 2 tablespoons onion powder
- 2 tablespoons garlic powder
- 1½ tablespoons paprika
- 1 tablespoon dried basil
- 1 tablespoon dried oregano
- 1 tablespoon fine sea salt
- 2 teaspoons freshly ground black pepper
- 1 teaspoon celery seeds (optional)
- ½ teaspoon grated fresh lemon zest
- ½ teaspoon cayenne pepper

Combine all of the ingredients in a small jar with a lid. Shake to combine well and store in the freezer.

basic taco seasoning mix

MAKES ABOUT ⅔ CUP

I haven't bought packaged taco seasoning in years, as this is a standard spice blend in my cupboard. It can be mixed into ground beef, shredded chicken, soups, or chilis to give them a little punch. It is also delicious whisked into sour cream as a dip and stirred into marinades and dressings. We love this in Taco Joes (page 68) and Yellow Rice and Beans (page 268).

- ¼ cup chili powder
- 2 tablespoons dried oregano
- 2 tablespoons dried onion flakes
- 1 tablespoon fine sea salt
- 1 tablespoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

Combine all of the ingredients in a small jar with a lid. Shake to combine well and store in the cupboard.

greek spice blend

MAKES ABOUT 6 TABLESPOONS

This all-purpose seasoning goes great on grilled meats and in dressings and dips. Try it in Veggie and Feta Torpedoes (page 74), Steak and Mushroom Skewers (page 274), and Greek Vegetable Rice (page 276).

- 1 tablespoon garlic powder
- 1 tablespoon onion powder
- 1 tablespoon dried parsley
- 2 teaspoons dried oregano
- 2 teaspoons fine sea salt
- 1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1 teaspoon grated fresh lemon zest
- ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon ground nutmeg

Combine all of the ingredients in a small jar with a lid. Shake to combine well and store in the freezer.

Rapid Tacos, Burritos, and Wraps

I don't know that I've ever met anyone who didn't love tacos, burritos, or wraps. They are easy to make, customizable to your heart's delight, and fun to eat. We regularly include at least one of these menus in our weekly meal rotation. Their flexibility allows us to mix and match ingredients or to easily include guests without a lot of fuss. Plus, they taste fantastic!

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Corn and Bean Salad 180

Gingery Turkey-Vegetable Wraps 181
Pot Stickers with Sweet and Spicy Dipping Sauce 183

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Tres-Frijoles Salad 185

Super Secret Subs 186
Veggie Pasta Salad 187

Super-Rica's #7 Tacos 188
Chips with Serrano Pico de Gallo 189

Asian Shrimp and Avocado Summer Rolls 190
Ginger-Cucumber Salad 191

Veggie Fajita Burritos 192
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Spiced Grilled Corn on the Cob 204

MENU

Green Chile Burritos

Spiced Grilled Corn on the Cob

Burritos are the spice of life. (Okay, well, if they aren't, they should be.) All the ingredients can be kept on hand in the pantry, fridge, or freezer, and they can be pulled together with little work or planning. Prepared burritos freeze well and reheat easily. What's not to love? Throw some corn on the grill to finish off this delicious, easy-on-the-budget meal.

Green Chile Burritos

SERVES 4 TO 6

MEATLESS | MAKE-AHEAD | FREEZER-FRIENDLY

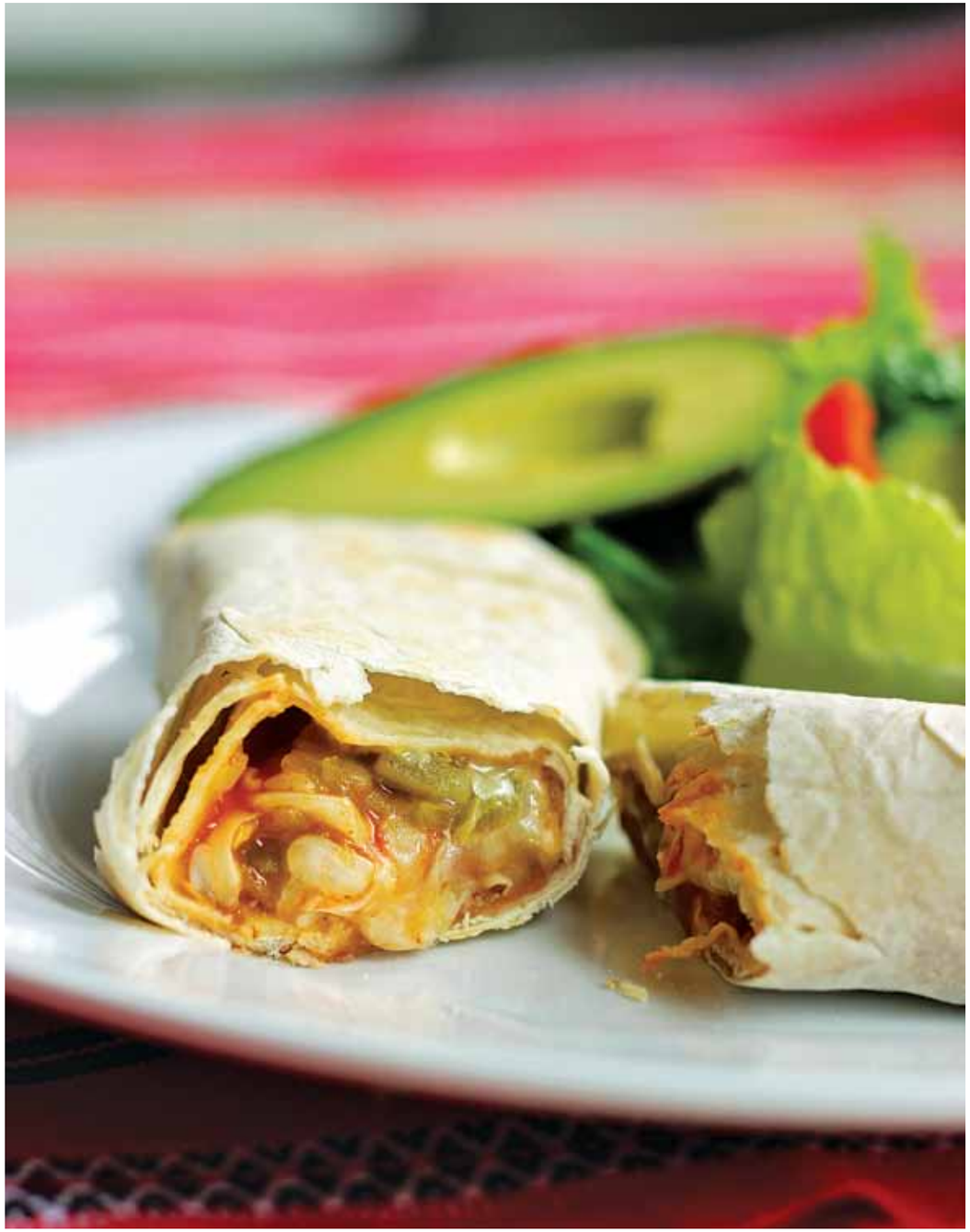
With refried beans, abundant cheese, green chiles, onions, and a little hot sauce, these meatless babies will rival whatever the local burrito joint can make. Plus, they're pretty much guilt-free, made from real food and prepared at home. If you've got a little extra time, make a batch of Spicy Pintos (page 33) to really take these over the top. My life is complete when I have a few dozen of these stashed in the freezer.

- 12 burrito-size flour tortillas
- 3 cups canned refried beans
- 2 cups shredded Monterey Jack and/or cheddar cheese
- 1 (7-ounce) can chopped green chiles, drained
- ½ cup finely chopped onion
- Hot sauce

1. Lay out the tortillas on a work surface. Spread ¼ cup beans in a line down the center of each. Sprinkle on a small handful of cheese, a spoonful of chiles, and then a teaspoon of onions. Add hot sauce to taste. Roll up the tortillas over the filling, tucking in the sides as you go.

2. Heat a griddle over medium-high heat. Cook the burritos on the hot griddle until the filling is hot and the tortillas are crisp, turning to crisp all around.

MAKE IT AHEAD: The filled and rolled burritos can be placed in a zip-top freezer bag and frozen for up to 2 months. Thaw in the refrigerator before cooking.



Snappy Sautés, Skillets, and Other Stovetop Specials

Whether you prefer a cast-iron skillet or an eco-friendly Teflon-free nonstick pan, the frying pan can really be your best friend. It's amazing what magic can happen in a skillet. Folks rave about slow cookers and other gadgets, but the good ol' fry pan has been dishing it up for decades.

These sautés, skillets, and other stovetop specials are sure to delight and surprise you. Some of my favorite meals come together on the cooktop in a snap.

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Green Salad with Pesto Dressing 212

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Summer Vegetable Sauté 260
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Cajun Fish and Chips with Rémoulade Tartar Sauce 262
Broccoli Slaw 263

MENU

Alfredo Noodles and Broccoli

Easy Bruschetta

Italian food is always a crowd pleaser. It's hard to mess up, affordable, and healthy—and it tastes great! This meatless meal is quick and simple to make. Feel free to add some grilled chicken or fish if you like, but know that my carnivores are happily satiated with this combo as is. There are never any leftovers.

Alfredo Noodles and Broccoli

SERVES 4 TO 6

MEATLESS

When it comes to pasta dishes, I invariably choose a creamy Alfredo-type dish over its tomato-based cousins. This sauce is one of my go-to recipes. For a really quick fix, I make the sauce in the microwave while the pasta cooks and then toss it with the hot cooked pasta. Easy peasy. My kids can make it themselves; so can you.

- 1 pound penne pasta
- 3 cups small broccoli florets
- 8 tablespoons (1 stick) butter
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic
- ½ cup heavy cream
- Fine sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
- ½ cup finely shredded Parmesan, Romano, or Asiago cheese

1. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil over high heat. Cook the pasta according to the package directions, adding the broccoli for the last 5 minutes of the cooking time. Drain and set aside.

2. Return the empty pot to the stove, lower the heat to medium, and add the butter. After it melts, add the garlic and cook until fragrant, about 1 minute. Stir in the cream and heat through. Add the cooked penne and broccoli and stir to coat. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

3. Sprinkle the cheese over the pasta mixture and toss again. Adjust the seasonings and serve.

#72

THE RIGHT PAN FOR THE JOB

By using an adequately sized pot or pan, you will be able to cook more efficiently. You won't worry about splashing food all over the stove. You'll have enough elbow room to work, so to speak. And it really isn't much more effort to wash a taller pot or bigger pan. The size of the cooking vessel can make a huge difference in your time investment.

Lemon-Dill Cauliflower

SERVES 4 TO 6

MEATLESS | DAIRY-FREE | GLUTEN-FREE

We always told our toddlers that cauliflower stalks were white trees and broccoli florets were green ones. It worked for picky eaters. You won't need special names to get folks to eat this cauliflower, however. It's so delicious that I doubt there will be any left over.

- 1 head cauliflower, cut into florets
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- Juice of ½ lemon
- ½ teaspoon dried dill
- Fine sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

1. Place the cauliflower in a large skillet with a lid and add 1 inch of water. Cover and cook over medium-high heat for 5 minutes. Drain the cauliflower and return it to the skillet, pushing it to one side.

2. Add the oil to the skillet and raise the heat to high. Toss the cauliflower with the oil and let it brown slightly. Season with the lemon juice, dill, and salt and pepper to taste. Serve hot.

MENU

Mini Meatloaves

Stovetop Mac and Cheese

Meatloaf and mac and cheese is a classic combination. Many folks rely on boxed mixes and canned sauces to make this vintage dish, but you can easily do it all yourself. Savory meatloaves are made miniature so that they cook quickly. Old-fashioned macaroni and cheese cooks on the stovetop in about the same time it takes to prepare that iconic blue box. Serve steamed broccoli on the side and you've got a tasty, whole-foods meal that really isn't more work than opening those boxes and cans.

Mini Meatloaves

SERVES 4

DAIRY-FREE | MAKE-AHEAD | FREEZER-FRIENDLY

These meatloaves may be Lilliputian in size, but they pack Gulliver-size flavor. Whiz a couple of slices of bread through the blender or food processor for quick bread crumbs on the cheap.

- 1 pound ground beef
- 1 cup fresh bread crumbs (from about 2 slices sandwich bread)
- ½ medium onion, chopped (about 1 cup)
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- ½ teaspoon paprika
- ½ teaspoon dried thyme
- ¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- Fine sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Grease a 9 x 13-inch baking pan with nonstick cooking spray.

2. In a large bowl, combine the ground beef, bread crumbs, onion, soy sauce, paprika, thyme, cayenne, and salt and pepper to taste. Mix gently, being careful not to overmix.

3. Divide the mixture into eight equal portions. Form each one into a small loaf or patty, not more than 1 inch tall. Place in the prepared baking pan.

4. Bake until cooked through, 20 to 25 minutes.

MAKE IT AHEAD: The meatloaves can be made through step 3, covered, and stored in the refrigerator for up to 1 day or in the freezer for up to 2 months. Thaw in the refrigerator overnight before baking. Add a few minutes to the baking time to allow for the cold dish.

#79

FREEZE FOR EASE

Fresh meat can be a little unwieldy to cut. Freeze it just until firm to the touch. It will be easier and quicker to slice.

Skillet Potatoes

SERVES 4

MEATLESS DAIRY-FREE GLUTEN-FREE

The trick to cooking these potatoes quickly is to dice them small and not crowd them in the pan. If you are really pressed for time, you can use frozen diced potatoes instead—no need to thaw.

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 6 medium potatoes, diced very small
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic
- 1 teaspoon herbes de Provence
- Fine sea fresh and freshly ground black pepper

1. In a large nonstick skillet with a lid, heat the oil over medium-high heat until shimmering. Add the potatoes and garlic and toss to coat. Add the herbes de Provence and salt and pepper to taste, and toss again.

2. Cover the pan and lower the heat to medium-low. Cook for 20 minutes, stirring once.

3. Uncover the pan and cook for 5 minutes more, stirring occasionally to crisp up the potatoes.

MENU

Pork Medallions with Sherried Shallot Sauce

Rebel with a Cause Smashed Potatoes

My family loves this meal so much that it's become a request for special occasions. The pork medallions are great over smashed potatoes, but you can easily serve them over rice, egg noodles, or quinoa instead.

Pork Medallions with Sherried Shallot Sauce

SERVES 4 TO 6

GLUTEN-FREE

My boys are meativores. (Their term, not mine.) Their eyes light up when something meaty is on the menu. This dish ranks as a top favorite. Grab pork tenderloin when it's on sale and stash it in the freezer so you can make this meal whenever the mood strikes.

- 4 tablespoons (½ stick) butter
- 2 pounds pork tenderloin, cut into ¾-inch-thick slices
- 1 tablespoon FishMama Spice (page 162)
- 2 or 3 shallots, sliced, or 1 medium onion, sliced
- ¼ cup unbleached all-purpose flour
- 1½ cups chicken broth
- ½ cup dry sherry
- Chopped fresh parsley, for garnish

1. In a large nonstick skillet, melt 2 tablespoons of the butter. Season the pork generously with the spice mix and cook until browned on both sides, 3 to 5 minutes. Transfer to a platter and tent with foil.

2. Add the remaining 2 tablespoons butter to the pan to melt with the drippings. Add the shallots and sauté until tender and lightly browned, about 5 minutes. Sprinkle the flour over all and cook, stirring, for 1 minute. Add the broth and sherry, scraping up any browned bits. Simmer until the sauce is thickened, about 5 minutes.

3. Return the pork medallions to the sauce and let heat for a minute or two. Garnish with chopped parsley and serve.



#80

ENJOY SLOW FOOD

While the recipes in this book focus on 30 minutes of active prep and cooking time before serving, don't dismiss the beauty of the slow cooker. There are a number of preparations, likes stews, chilis, and braises, that favor slow cooking. You might spend your 30 minutes (or less) in the morning prepping dinner and then come home to the aroma of a delicious meal.

Rebel with a Cause Smashed Potatoes

SERVES 4

DAIRY-FREE GLUTEN-FREE

Despite what your grandmother says, these potatoes are meant to have lumps. Don't worry about making them all pretty and smooth. Leave the skins on, even. You're a rebel with a cause: Get some yummy potatoes ready to soak up the gravy from those pork medallions. Leather jacket not required.

2 pounds very small red or gold potatoes, halved or quartered
¼ cup olive oil
½ cup warm chicken broth, or more as needed
Fine sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

1. Place the potatoes in a large pot of salted water and bring to a boil over high heat. Cook until tender, 15 to 20 minutes. Drain and return the potatoes to the pot.

2. With a potato masher, mash the cooked potatoes until more or less smooth, but still with some chunks. Stir in the olive oil. Add enough of the broth to moisten and make the potatoes a little bit creamy. Season to taste with salt and pepper and serve.

#87

JUST CAN IT

Canning jars are great for more than just canning. Use them as quick measuring cups for large recipes like soups or sauces. (A pint jar is 2 cups, while a quart jar holds 4 cups.) Another great use of a small canning jar is a quick vinaigrette. See the basic recipe on page 129, then grab a half-pint Mason jar; pour in vinegar or citrus juice; add some herbs, spices, jam, garlic, and/or mustard; and give it a good shake. Add the oil, then shake again. *Voilà!*

Spicy Cabbage Salad

SERVES 4 TO 6

MEATLESS · DAIRY-FREE · GLUTEN-FREE · MAKE-AHEAD

This spicy cabbage salad offers a nice, fresh counterpart to the hearty egg dish. It can also stand alone as a filling main-dish salad if you add avocado and grilled chicken or shrimp. To make things go even quicker, use a bag of coleslaw mix in place of the cabbage and carrots.

1 (12-ounce) bag shredded cabbage or coleslaw mix (about 5 cups)
2 carrots, peeled and shredded
1 bell pepper (any color), cored and julienned
1 medium tomato, chopped
Handful of fresh cilantro, chopped (about ¼ cup)
2 tablespoons unsalted dry-roasted sliced almonds
2 tablespoons fresh orange juice
2 tablespoons fresh lime juice
1 tablespoon finely chopped seeded jalapeño, or to taste
½ teaspoon ground cumin
Pinch of salt
¼ cup olive oil

1. In a large bowl, combine the cabbage, carrots, bell pepper, tomato, cilantro, and almonds.

2. In a small jar or bowl, combine the orange juice, lime juice, jalapeño, cumin, and salt. Cap the jar and shake, or whisk to combine. Add the olive oil and shake or whisk again.

3. Pour the dressing over the salad and toss to distribute the dressing throughout.

MAKE IT AHEAD: The salad and dressing can be stored in separate covered containers in the refrigerator for up to 2 days.

QUICK-CHECK TIPS AND TRICKS

My first job as a teenager was bagging groceries at the local Lucky Supermarket. Two years later I worked at an amusement park. The contrast was striking. The uniforms were still lame, but the mood was different.

Not everyone visits Magic Mountain, but pretty much everybody has to grocery shop, whether they want to or not. It can get pretty tricky to navigate crowded stores, bumping elbows with disgruntled and often hungry shoppers.

Your shopping trips—and mine—can be much more pleasant and efficient when we follow these tricks:

Know your stores.
Within a 5-mile radius of my house, there are 10 grocery stores, and some are duplicates within the same chain even. I know which stores offer the best deals on the things that we regularly buy. I know when they have sales. I know where everything is located in the aisles.

Since I truly know my stores, I can get in and out without a lot of fuss. It saves me time because I don't have to ask where a certain item is located or when the sale price will end. By educating myself on these things, I've bought myself some time. Get to know your store and you will, too.

Limit yourself to one or two shops.
I have been known to shop at up to 10 stores in a week in order to get the best deals on food. However, when time is precious, I choose one store and let the rest go. I may pay a little bit more to buy everything I need at that one store, but the time savings is worth it.

Make a list.
Making a list saves me time because I don't end up short on items that we need. I don't overbuy and I don't end up making extra trips for things I forgot.

Shop in the quiet hours.
I have gone grocery shopping at 6 in the morning during the busy holiday season and had the entire store to myself. The whole place is quiet and calm, meaning I feel that way, too. I find that shopping when the crowd is thin helps me to enjoy the experience more—and to do it more quickly.

Let someone else do the shopping or have it delivered.
It's a hard thing to let go control over something I enjoy doing. I'd much rather let someone else clean my toilets. But, the reality is that having my husband stop at Costco on his way home from work saves me time and gas money. It's on his regular route, and he doesn't mind doing it. The same goes for having our produce box delivered each week. It's one less thing that I need to think about.

Chances are there are other little tricks you can implement in your own grocery shopping routine that will save you time and money.

Grilled Fare in a Flash

A grilled dinner can be one of the tastiest and quickest to prepare as long as you keep things simple. No overnight marinades or brines or beer cans allowed. Cooking out is a great way to escape a hot kitchen on a summer day, too. The flavor the grill imparts is an added plus. If the weather prevents you from cooking out of doors, consider investing in a stovetop grill pan so you can grill whenever you want.

The main course in each of these menus is cooked on the grill while the side is prepped on the grill, stove, or countertop.

Grilled Mahi-Mahi with Pineapple Salsa 266
Yellow Rice and Beans 268

Herbed Pork Tenderloin 269
White Bean Salad 271

Seasoned Tri-Tip Steak 272
Stuffed and Grilled Potatoes 273

Steak and Mushroom Skewers 274
Greek Vegetable Rice 276

Burgers with Marsala-Marinated Portobello Mushrooms 278
Barley Pilaf 280

Ginger-Scented Grilled Salmon 281
Sweet Potato Hash Browns 283

Spicy Chicken Satay 285
Snow Pea Salad 287

Shrimp on the Barbie 288
Tomato Rice Pilaf 290

Grilled Vegetable Medley 291
Cilantro-Lime Rice 293



#92

EYEBALL IT

Don't be afraid to guesstimate on ingredient measures. In baking, exact measurements matter, but for most savory dishes, they are less crucial. Spend time making comparisons to your own hand so you know at a glance how much to put into a dish. For me, a closed handful of fresh herbs is about ¼ cup. A double handful of chopped onions is about 1 cup. A little extra basil never hurt anybody, so don't spend too much time measuring.

White Bean Salad

SERVES 4

MEATLESS DAIRY-FREE GLUTEN-FREE MAKE-AHEAD

This side dish is simple, yet packed with flavor and fiber. It's also a great make-ahead if you've got more time in the morning than you do at suppertime. White beans are delicate, so be sure to stir gently.

- 2 (15-ounce) cans cannellini or Great Northern beans, rinsed and drained
- ½ cup finely chopped red bell pepper
- ⅓ cup chopped fresh parsley
- ¼ cup finely chopped sweet onion (such as Vidalia)
- 2 tablespoons white wine vinegar
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic
- Fine sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 2 tablespoons olive oil

1. Combine the beans, bell pepper, parsley, and onion in a large salad bowl.

2. In a small jar or bowl, combine the vinegar, garlic, and salt and pepper to taste. Cap the jar and shake, or whisk to combine. Add the oil and shake or whisk again.

3. Toss the salad with the dressing, folding gently so as not to break up the beans. Adjust the seasonings and serve.

MAKE IT AHEAD: The salad can be stored in a covered container in the refrigerator for up to 2 days.

MENU

Shrimp on the Barbie

Tomato Rice Pilaf

I love the simplicity of shrimp and rice. Both cook quickly, and are perfect partners for creating a delicious dinner. Complete the picture by adding a side salad or steamed or grilled vegetable, if you like.

Shrimp on the Barbie

SERVES 4 TO 6

DAIRY-FREE GLUTEN-FREE

FishPapa, upon first trying this dish, said, “What did you put on this shrimp?” My confident reply was, “Awesome sauce.” He honestly couldn’t disagree with me. The simple flavors of the spice mixture complement the smoky shrimp perfectly. This is a favorite at our house. Put another shrimp on the barbie!

- 2 pounds peeled large shrimp, thawed if frozen
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- 1 teaspoon dried dill
- Pinch of cayenne pepper
- Chopped fresh cilantro, for garnish
- Lemon wedges, for serving

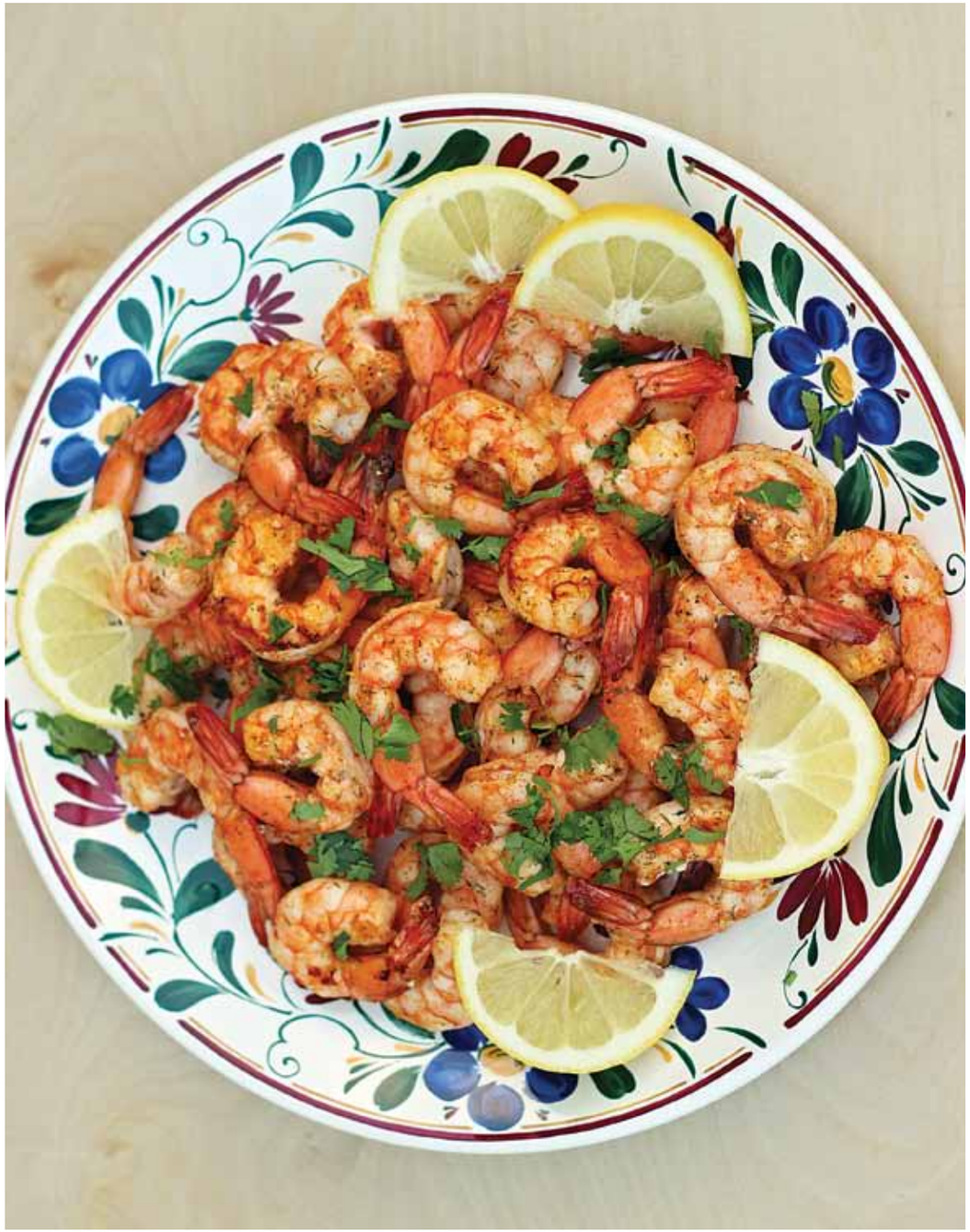
1. Heat an outdoor grill for a medium-hot fire or a stovetop grill pan over medium-high heat. If your grill has widely spaced grates, use a grill pan or wok with small holes so the shrimp don’t fall through (or thread the shrimp onto metal skewers).

2. Place the shrimp in a large bowl and drizzle on the olive oil. Toss to coat.

3. In a small bowl, combine the garlic powder, paprika, dill, and cayenne. Sprinkle this mixture generously on the shrimp, tossing to coat.

4. Cook the shrimp on the grill over direct heat or in the grill pan, turning once, until pink and cooked through, about 10 minutes.

5. Transfer to a platter. Sprinkle with cilantro and serve with lemon wedges for squeezing over the shrimp.



Desserts on the Double

Dessert is the crowning touch on a great meal. My time in France as a college student transformed the way I looked at the ending of a meal. It doesn't seem complete without a bite of something sweet. It doesn't have to be something super fancy and elaborate. Just a few bites to close a great meal are all I require.

Dessert can be as simple as a dish of beautiful fruit, a cup of coffee and a square of good-quality dark chocolate, or a small piece of pastry. It also doesn't have to take a long time to make. You can pull together any one of these desserts in less than 30 minutes, offering you that little bit of sweet to cap off the evening.

Cinnamon Apple Puffs 295
Decadence Sundaes with Caramel-Lime Sauce 296
Strawberries, Cookies, and Cream 297
Apple Crowns with Maple Whipped Cream 298
Black and White Trifle 300
Chocolate Fondue with Fruit and Cake 301
Cherry Mamabars 303

Cinnamon Apple Puffs

SERVES 4

These apple pastries are simple to pull together with packaged puff pastry, applesauce, and cinnamon sugar. I make lots of things from scratch, but puff pastry is not one of them. Impress your people and let them think you did. If you've got time to make homemade applesauce, that will take these pastries over the top.

5 teaspoons sugar
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1 (17.5-ounce) package frozen puff pastry, thawed
1 cup applesauce
1 egg yolk, beaten with 1 tablespoon water
Vanilla ice cream, for serving

1. Preheat the oven to 425°F. Line a large baking sheet with parchment paper or a silicone baking mat, and place another sheet of parchment paper on your work surface.

2. In a small bowl, combine the sugar and cinnamon.

3. Lay out the two sheets of puff pastry on the sheets of parchment paper. Cut each puff pastry sheet in half and separate the halves.

4. Spoon ¼ cup applesauce on one end of each rectangle of pastry, leaving a ½-inch border on that end. Sprinkle 1½ teaspoons of the cinnamon sugar over the applesauce. Brush a little egg wash on that border.

5. Fold the empty end of each rectangle over to cover the applesauce mixture. Seal around the edges and press the folded edge down as well so that there is a border on all four sides. Using a fork, crimp all of the borders together. Transfer the two pastries on the work surface to the baking sheet.

6. Brush egg wash over the tops of the pastries. Prick a few holes in the top of each to allow steam to escape.

7. Bake until the pastry is puffed and golden brown, about 20 minutes. Serve warm with ice cream.

Acknowledgments

Sometimes I try to do too much. Even as a child, I'd pile more on my plate because it all looked so good. My dad was continually saying that my eyes were bigger than my stomach. Yes, I've been cautioned more than once not to bite off more than I could chew.

I have to use that same caution in life since I might try to do it all myself if I'm not careful. I'm super thankful not to be alone in this cookbook-creating endeavor.

Thank you to the team at the Harvard Common Press: to Bruce Shaw, Adam Salomone, and Dan Rosenberg for giving ear to my ideas as well as the space to run with them. To Valerie Cimino, Karen Wise, and Kelly Messier for the most excellent feedback, editing, and correcting. To Pat Jalbert-Levine for her extraordinary attention to detail. To Virginia Downes and Elizabeth Van Itallie for adding style and beauty to the finished product. To Emily Geaman for working so diligently at getting books in the hands of people who will enjoy them.

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Thank you to Mom and Dad for being my biggest fans. Love and thanks to my crazy crew of Getskow siblings: Jamie, Janel, John, and Jace; thanks for putting up with me.

Special thanks to my six sweet children. You have been so patient with weird food, late dinners, and all kinds of craziness while I sometimes try to do more than I can really manage with grace.

Deep gratitude goes to my amazing husband, who has encouraged me to follow my dreams so that I would never regret what could have been. You are a wise man to counsel me when I've piled my plate too high. I should listen to you more often.

My ultimate thanks to Jesus, who has given me all good things.

Measurement Equivalents

LIQUID CONVERSIONS

U.S.	METRIC
1 tsp	5 ml
1 tbs	15 ml
2 tbs	30 ml
3 tbs	45 ml
¼ cup	60 ml
⅓ cup	75 ml
⅓ cup + 1 tbs	90 ml
⅓ cup + 2 tbs	100 ml
½ cup	120 ml
⅔ cup	150 ml
¾ cup	180 ml
¾ cup + 2 tbs	200 ml
1 cup	240 ml
1 cup + 2 tbs	275 ml
1¼ cups	300 ml
1⅓ cups	325 ml
1½ cups	350 ml
1⅔ cups	375 ml
1¾ cups	400 ml
1¾ cups + 2 tbs	450 ml
2 cups (1 pint)	475 ml
2½ cups	600 ml
3 cups	720 ml
4 cups (1 quart)	945 ml

(1,000 ml is 1 liter)

WEIGHT CONVERSIONS

U.S./U.K.	METRIC
½ oz	14 g
1 oz	28 g
1½ oz	43 g
2 oz	57 g
2½ oz	71 g
3 oz	85 g
3½ oz	100 g
4 oz	113 g
5 oz	142 g
6 oz	170 g
7 oz	200 g
8 oz	227 g
9 oz	255 g
10 oz	284 g
11 oz	312 g
12 oz	340 g
13 oz	368 g
14 oz	400 g
15 oz	425 g
1 lb	454 g

OVEN TEMP. CONVERSIONS

°F	GAS MARK	°C
250	½	120
275	1	140
300	2	150
325	3	165
350	4	180
375	5	190
400	6	200
425	7	220
450	8	230
475	9	240
500	10	260
550	Broil	290

Note: All conversions are approximate.

About the Author



Sharon Leppellere

Jessica Fisher's two very popular blogs, Life as Mom and Good Cheap Eats, have established her as a go-to authority on cooking for a family cheaply, creatively, and nutritiously.

Good Cheap Eats Dinner in 30 Minutes (or Less!) is Jessica's fourth cookbook. Her bestselling first book, *Not Your Mother's Make-Ahead and Freeze Cookbook*, offers a wealth of clever ideas for feeding a family inexpensively and well. Jessica's second book, *Best 100 Juices for Kids*, brings the juicing revolution home for the entire family, children included. *Good Cheap Eats*, her third book, proves that you can feed a family of four a terrific and tasty dinner for $10 or less.

A widely cited figure in the world of food blogs and "mom blogs," she has also written online for the Kitchn, Life Your Way, Money Saving Mom, $5 Dinners, and the Art of Simple and in print for more than 85 regional parenting publications. Jessica's readers recognize that she walks the talk: She is the mom to, and primary cook for, six children, aged 7 to 18. She lives with her husband and children in the San Diego area.

BEAT THE CLOCK WITHOUT BREAKING THE BANK

Hundreds of thousands of readers come to Jessica Fisher's blogs to find family-friendly food that's inexpensive and cooks up fast. They appreciate, too, that Jessica's food is healthy—she doesn't get meals on the table quickly by using processed shortcuts. And they love her encouraging spirit, knowing that she really lives the busy lifestyle they share with her.

In *Good Cheap Eats Dinner in 30 Minutes (or Less!)*, Jessica shares loads of exciting new recipes not found in her blogs. The book features 100 two-course dinners, each consisting of a tasty main course and a substantial side, salad, or soup. A bonus chapter, "Desserts on the Double," offers up sweet endings that can be made while the rest of the food cooks. Can you eat *really* well when you're cooking against the clock and on a budget? Absolutely! Jessica's book proves that anyone can.

Chicken Fajita Bake, page 42, from the chapter "Quick Casseroles, Bakes, and Broils"

Suggested side: Baby Greens with Chipotle-Lime Dressing, page 44





Biscuit Pizza with Sausage and Peppers, page 146, from the chapter "Fast Pizzas and Flatbreads"

Suggested side: Marinated Olive and Tomato Salad, page 148



JESSICA FISHER's blogs, Life as Mom and Good Cheap Eats, have established her as the go-to authority on cooking for a family cheaply, creatively, and nutritiously. Jessica walks the talk: She is the mom to, and primary cook for, four sons and two daughters. She is the author of *Not Your Mother's Make-Ahead and Freeze Cookbook*, *Good Cheap Eats*, and *Best 100 Juices for Kids*. Jessica lives with her husband and children in the San Diego area.

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Want the whole shebang?

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