

The Healthy Dinners Toolbox

Bonus – 15 No-recipe Healthy Dinners Guide

Gaye Groover Christmus, MPH

15 no-recipe dinners you can make on your busiest days – or when your dinner plan falls apart!



THE HEALTHY DINNERS TOOLBOX

Healthy family dinners. 4 nights a week. Yes, you can.

Bonus Guide

15 No-recipe Healthy Dinners



- **Chicken, beef or pork in the Crockpot.** Put enough boneless skinless chicken breasts, London broil roast, or pork tenderloin to feed your family for two meals into your Crockpot. Add a little bit of water, broth or sauce of your choice. Cook all day and serve it sliced that evening with simple sides, like brown rice with butter and steamed green beans.

- **Next-day Tacos.** The next day, shred the rest of the chicken, beef or pork, mix with salsa and make tacos. Serve with as many or as few toppings as you like – just shredded cheese and more salsa is fine if you're really short on time or if your kids like to keep it simple. Add some fruit on the side.

- **Mediterranean Chicken Wraps.** For this simple meal, grill or pan sauté boneless, skinless chicken breasts. When done, let them cool a bit, then slice thinly. Warm pita breads or flatbreads in the oven, microwave or skillet. Set out hummus, feta or other cheese, [salad dressing or vinaigrette](#), and as many vegetables as you have time to fix (lettuce, tomatoes, cucumbers, olives, etc.). Let each person make his or her own wrap. Serve with orange slices or other fruit.

- **Sautéed Chicken Breasts, Baked Sweet Potatoes and Quick Brown Rice.** Heat olive oil or salad dressing/marinade in a large skillet. Add enough boneless, skinless chicken breasts to serve your family. Brown on both sides, then cover and cook until done. While the chicken is cooking, put a pot of water on to boil, following the instructions for the amount of quick/instant brown rice you'll need.

Pierce sweet potatoes several times and place in microwave. Cook on high for 10 minutes or until soft all the way through. When water is boiling, add rice and cook as directed (usually about 10 minutes). When

sweet potatoes are done, cut them open or in half and add butter. (Cinnamon is a nice addition too.) Add butter, salt and pepper to taste to the rice.

- **Soup and Grilled Cheese.** If you have some homemade soup in the freezer, great. If not, keep several cans or boxes of good-quality soups on hand, the kinds that include primarily real food ingredients. Organic is great; even though it's expensive, it's not as expensive as going out to dinner on a busy evening! While the soup is heating, make sandwiches with whole wheat bread and real cheese and toast them in a pan with some olive oil or butter. Serve with carrot sticks, grapes, or apple slices.



- **Whole Wheat Pasta with Cheese and Pick-up Vegetables.** Put a pot of water on to boil. While it's heating, grate your family's favorite cheese. (We like extra sharp cheddar on pasta.) You can also keep bags of pre-grated cheese on hand, or grate your own when you have a few extra minutes and freeze it.

Then start pulling together a plate of pick-up vegetables – baby carrots or carrot sticks, cherry tomatoes, slices of cucumber, strips of red or orange pepper, whatever you have on hand (or have prepped on the weekend!).

When the water boils, add enough whole grain pasta to serve your family and cook according to the package directions. Drain the pasta and add butter or olive oil to coat lightly and salt to taste. Divide among plates and



top with grated cheese. Place the vegetable plate on the table and allow family members to choose from it.

- **Spaghetti.** Keep several jars of high-quality spaghetti sauce on hand – look for brands that contain primarily tomatoes and just a few other ingredients - and little or no sugar. (Some spaghetti sauces list sugar as the second or third ingredient!) Or make a big batch of your own one weekend and freeze dinner-size portions that you can grab on hectic days.

While whole grain spaghetti is cooking, make a simple salad or cut up vegetables for a simple veggie plate with some salad dressing on the side as a dip.

- **Chicken Fajitas with Fruit.** Heat olive oil in a large skillet. Add enough boneless, skinless chicken breasts

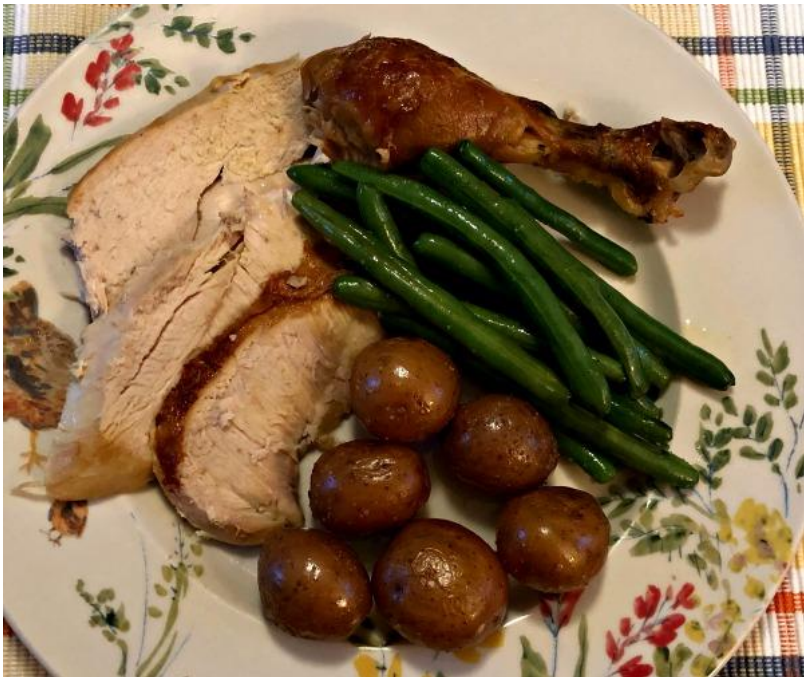


for your family and cook until done. Remove from pan to a cutting board to cool slightly. (Better yet, get your spouse to grill them. Or cook or grill them on the weekend and have them ready to go!) While the chicken is cooking, slice onions and red, orange, or yellow peppers. Add more olive oil to the pan and sauté the vegetables. Grate cheese (or, even better, take previously-grated cheese out of the refrigerator or freezer).

Slice apples, oranges or other fruit. When chicken is cool enough to handle, cut into strips. Place sliced chicken and cooked peppers and onions on a large platter and cheese in a bowl. Warm whole wheat tortillas in the microwave. Open a jar of salsa. Place all the ingredients on the table and let each person make his or her own fajitas. Serve with fruit.

- **Mini Pizzas.** Preheat the oven to 400. Line a large baking sheet with foil (for easier clean-up) and place whole wheat flatbreads on the foil. (Keep some of these in the freezer for busy days.) Top with spaghetti sauce (or tomato sauce and dried Italian seasoning), grated cheese, and veggies or other toppings your family likes. Bake for about 12 minutes. Serve with a simple salads cut up vegetables, or sliced fruit.

- **Rotisserie Chicken with Tiny New Potatoes and Green Beans** – Line a large baking sheet with aluminum foil (to make cleanup easier). Place enough tiny new potatoes for your family on the sheet and drizzle with olive oil. Bake at 375 for about 15 minutes (longer if the potatoes are larger than the tiny size). Carefully move the potatoes to one side of the sheet and add green beans to the other side (a package of washed and snapped beans saves time.) Drizzle with olive oil and bake for 8-10 minutes. Serve with rotisserie chicken.



- **Black Beans and Quick Brown Rice with Sliced Fruit** – Heat olive oil in a large saucepan or Dutch oven. Coarsely chop an onion (or use a package of pre-chopped onions) and sauté it in the olive oil. While the onion cooks, open cans of black beans (enough for your family) plus one or two cans of diced tomatoes. Rinse and drain the beans. In the meantime, start water for quick brown rice heating in another pot, according to the package directions. (If you have cooked brown rice in the freezer, even better!)

Add beans and tomatoes to cooked onions, and season according to your family's tastes (salt, pepper, Italian seasoning, cumin, chili powder, Tabasco, etc.). Cook for 10 minutes. Add rice to boiling water and cook as directed (usually about 10 minutes). While the beans and rice cook, slice oranges, apples or whatever fruit



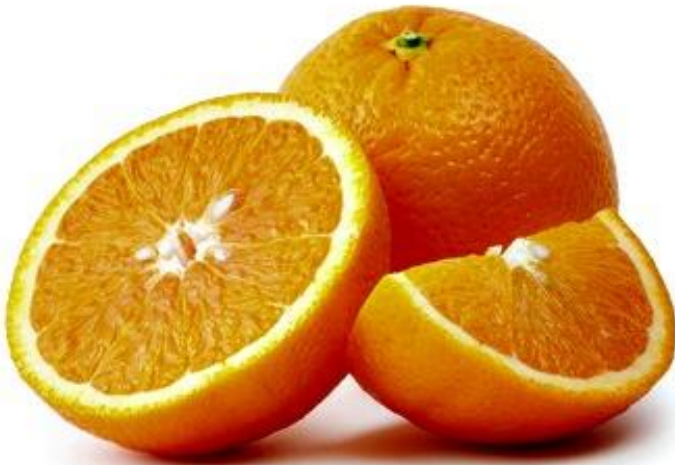
you have on hand. Serve beans on top of rice, with fruit on the side.

- **Turkey Kielbasa, Tomatoes and Sautéed Vegetables over Pasta** – Cook enough whole grain pasta for your family (and maybe some extra to have for lunches). Slice a package of turkey kielbasa into rounds and sauté them in a little bit of olive oil in a large skillet until lightly browned on both sides. Remove from skillet onto a plate covered with paper towels to drain.

Add a bit more olive oil to the skillet. Sauté chopped onions and green or colored peppers. (To save time, chop onions and peppers on the weekend, keep some in the freezer, or buy the pre-chopped ones in the grocery store.) Add one or two cans of diced tomatoes plus Italian seasoning and salt and pepper to taste. Add cooked kielbasa and simmer for a few minutes. Serve over pasta with a simple salad or sliced fruit or vegetables on the side.

- **Scrambled Eggs, Whole Wheat Toast and Fruit.** Breakfast for dinner can be quick and healthy. Cut up whatever fruit you have on hand - even apples and bananas are fine - and make a simple fruit salad, crack enough eggs to serve your family and mix with a bit of milk, salt and pepper. Whisk together (a stick blender does this really quickly).

Melt butter in a large skilled and scramble eggs. While eggs are cooking, begin making toast. Butter it as it comes out of the toaster and put it in the oven to keep warm. Serve eggs, toast with jam or fruit spread, and fruit salad.



- **Baked Stuffed Sweet Potatoes.** Put enough large sweet potatoes for your family in the oven or microwave to cook (poke a few holes in each one first). Sauté chopped onions, peppers, and/or garlic in olive oil in a medium sauce pan. Add a can of rinsed and drained black beans and a can of diced tomatoes (including the liquid). Then add seasonings that your family likes – salt, pepper, cumin, chili powder, and Italian seasoning work well – and simmer until most of the liquid is absorbed. When the sweet potatoes have finished

cooking, cut them lengthwise and crosswise and squeeze them open. (Be careful – they’ll be hot.) Fill each potato with the black bean filling and top with shredded sharp cheddar cheese (optional). Serve with sliced fruit.



On the next page, add your own no-recipe dinners and notes about how you adapted these dinners for your family.

Add Your Own No-recipe and Quick and Easy Dinners