

Getting Started With Easy Meals

Think about having three home-cooked meals a week. Take a few minutes and study the menus shown here. These menus meet the criteria for successful easy meals. Apply these criteria to other menus you plan and the recipes you select.

Easy Meal Checklist

- Includes a variety of foods from the *Food Guide Pyramid*.
- Includes foods that have variety in color, flavor, temperature, and texture.
- Includes recipes that have few ingredients.
- Can be made in less than an hour.

Quick Lasagna*
Relish Plate with Dip
Garlic Bread
Milk

Beef and Salsa Burritos*
Tossed Salad
Sliced Bananas with Peanut Butter Sauce*
Milk

Chili-Cheese Potatoes*
Steamed Broccoli
Muffin with Butter
Golden Fruit Salad*
Milk

* The recipe is included.

Source: Ann M. Obrecht, C.F.C.S., former Ashland County Program Assistant, Family Nutrition Program, Ohio State University Extension. Used with permission.

Quick Lasagne Serves 12

You don't precook the noodles in this recipe so it is really fast to assemble. This can be put together the night before and refrigerated without baking. Increase baking time by 15 minutes if it has been refrigerated.

2 cups low-fat ricotta cheese
1 cup low-fat cottage cheese
2 Tablespoons dried parsley
1 teaspoon chopped garlic
4 cups spaghetti sauce (less than 4 g fat per 4 oz)
3/4 lb. uncooked lasagne noodles
4 oz. grated, part-skim mozzarella cheese
1/4 cup Parmesan cheese

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Spray a 9-inch by 13-inch baking pan with nonstick coating. Mix ricotta cheese, cottage cheese, parsley, and garlic. Pour 1 cup of sauce in bottom of pan. Arrange one-third of the noodles in the pan so that they touch but do not overlap. Spread one-half of the cheese mixture over the noodles. Top with one-half of the mozzarella cheese. Top this with 1 cup of sauce, one-third of the noodles, the remainder of the cheese mixture, and the rest of the mozzarella cheese. Add another cup of sauce, another layer of noodles, and the remainder of the sauce. Sprinkle with Parmesan cheese. Cover tightly with aluminum foil. Bake for one hour.

Yield: 12 servings

One serving: 1/12 recipe

Per serving: 240 calories, 32 grams carbohydrate, 15 grams protein, 6 grams fat

Exchanges: 1-1/2 starch, 2 vegetable, 1 lean meat.

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Beef and Salsa Burritos Serves 8

1-1/4 pounds lean ground beef
1-1/2 Tablespoons chili powder

1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon pepper
1 package (10 oz.) frozen chopped spinach, thawed, well drained
1-1/4 cups prepared chunky salsa
1 cup shredded Cheddar cheese
8 medium flour tortillas, warmed

In a large nonstick skillet, brown the ground beef over medium heat 10 to 12 minutes or until no longer pink, stirring occasionally. Pour off drippings.

Season beef with chili powder, cumin, salt, and pepper. Stir in spinach and salsa; heat through. Remove from heat; stir in cheese.

Spoon 1/2 cup beef mixture in the center of each tortilla. Fold bottom edge up over filling; fold sides to center, overlapping edges. Makes 8 burritos.

Source: National Cattlemen's Beef Association, 1996. Used with permission.

Sliced Bananas with Peanut Butter Sauce Serves 4

4 bananas
1/3 cup peanut butter
2 Tablespoons brown sugar
3 Tablespoons milk (add an extra teaspoon or two if the mixture is too thick)

Slice bananas into 4 serving bowls. In a small mixing bowl, combine peanut butter, brown sugar, and milk. Stir vigorously with a spoon until well mixed and creamy. Top each bowl of bananas with one-fourth of sauce.

Source: Original recipe printed with permission from Ann Obrecht, Program Assistant, Family Nutrition Program, Ashland County, Ohio State University Extension, 2001.

Chili-Cheese Potatoes

Top a baked potato with chili and add shredded cheddar cheese for a quick meal.

Chili 4 servings, about 3/4 cup each

1/2 pound lean ground beef
1/2 of a 15-1/2 ounce can kidney beans, drained (save liquid)
1/3 cup bean liquid
1 cup no-salt-added canned tomato sauce or crushed tomatoes
1 Tablespoon instant minced onion
1-1/2 teaspoon chili powder (add more if you like a stronger chili flavor)

Cook beef in a hot frying pan until lightly browned. Drain off fat. Stir in remaining

ingredients. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat, cover, and simmer 10 minutes.

Note: The remaining kidney beans could be heated and placed in flour tortillas for a quick lunch or a snack. Or try using the kidney beans on a salad. Store leftover beans in the refrigerator.

Per Serving: Calories 230, Fat 9 g, Saturated fatty acids 3 g, Cholesterol 34 mg, Sodium 390 mg.

Baked Potato

4 baking potatoes, well scrubbed

To Microwave the Potato – Prick potatoes twice with a fork so some steam can escape during microwaving. Place a paper towel in the microwave. Arrange potatoes on the paper towel at least 1” apart. Halfway through the cooking time, turn the potatoes over and rearrange. When the cooking time is completed, remove the potatoes from the microwave and either wrap in foil or place in a tightly covered casserole to hold in the heat. Let stand 5 to 8 minutes. The potatoes complete their cooking during this standing time.

Times for Medium Potatoes – High power

1 potato 3 to 5 minutes 3 potatoes 7 to 10 minutes

2 potatoes 5 to 7-1/2 minutes 4 potatoes 10-1/2 to 12-1/2 minutes

Menu Suggestions:

This chili makes a great “planned over” meal. Make a double batch and freeze half to reheat for later use.

? **Chili Tacos** – Spoon chili into taco shells; top with chopped lettuce, tomato, and cheese.

? **Macaroni and Chili** – In a skillet, combine cooked macaroni with chili for a quick supper.

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture Human Nutrition Information Service, Home and Garden Bulletin 232-10, *Shopping for Food and Making Meals in Minutes Using the Dietary Guidelines*.

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