

Deliciously Simple Make-Ahead Meals

Stock the freezer with these family favorites for no-fuss weeknight suppers



Savory Herb-Tomato Chicken

Serves 4 to 6

- 6 boneless, skinless chicken-breast halves
- ¼ cup cream of celery soup
- 2 tsp. minced garlic
- 1 Tbsp. Dijon mustard
- 6 slices tomato (¼ inch thick)
- ¼ tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. black pepper
- ½ cup seasoned bread crumbs
- 2 Tbsp. dried parsley
- 2 tsp. dried rosemary

1 Lay chicken breasts in 9" x 13" baking dish coated with nonstick cooking spray; set aside. In large bowl, combine celery soup, garlic and mustard; mix well. Spread this mixture equally over each chicken breast. Top with tomato slices. In a small bowl, combine salt, pepper, bread crumbs, parsley and rosemary. Sprinkle equal amounts of this mixture over the chicken and tomatoes. If you've tripled

the recipe, wrap up two batches and freeze.

2 To serve tonight, preheat oven to 375°F. Bake, uncovered, for 40 to 50 minutes, or until chicken registers 165°F on an instant-read thermometer. Serve with a mixed salad.

Each serving: About 219 calories, 34g protein, 12g carbohydrate, 3g fat (1g saturated), 1g fiber, 79mg cholesterol, 710mg sodium

Triple Play

It's as easy to make three batches of these recipes as it is to make one, say Stephanie Allen and Tina Kuna, co-founders of Dream Dinners, a company that helps busy moms assemble freezer-ready meals. Here's how:

- Triple the ingredients given in the recipe and make sure you have everything on hand.
- Grab one large mixing bowl (if needed) and combine the ingredients according to Step 1 of your chosen recipe.
- Divide the mixture equally among three containers (foil baking trays or freezer-friendly baking dishes for the tortellini casserole or the chicken, and zip-top plastic bags for the beef).
- Cook one of the three batches tonight, and freeze the other two (uncooked). Cover baking trays with plastic wrap and heavy-duty foil, and securely close zip-top bags.
- Label, date and store in the freezer for up to three months.
- To use, thaw overnight in refrigerator and cook as directed.

Zesty Orange Beef Steaks

Serves 4 to 6

- 6 top sirloin steaks (4 oz. each)
- 2 Tbsp. olive oil
- ½ cup frozen orange juice concentrate (undiluted), thawed
- 2 tsp. hot pepper sauce (such as Tabasco)
- ½ cup lime juice
- 2 Tbsp. minced garlic
- ½ cup honey
- 1 Tbsp. ground cumin
- 1 tsp. black pepper

1 Put all ingredients in a large, heavy-duty zip-top plastic bag (or divide evenly among three bags, if you're making extra batches) and seal tightly. Shake bag to coat steaks. Put two bags in freezer now if you're making extra.

2 To serve tonight, marinate beef in bag in fridge for at least 1 hour. Preheat grill or broiler (if broiling, coat broiler pan with nonstick cooking spray). Grill over high heat, or broil for 5 minutes per side, depending on thickness. Meanwhile, pour remaining marinade into a saucepan, bring to a boil on stove and cook for 5 minutes. Serve as a sauce with the steaks.

Each serving: About 478 calories, 30g protein, 43g carbohydrate, 21g fat (7g saturated), 1g fiber, 92mg cholesterol, 83mg sodium



>q&s tip

In a hurry? Use fresh tortellini, which doesn't have to be precooked.



Tuna-Tortellini Comfort Casserole

Serves 6 to 8

- 1½ lbs. cheese-filled tortellini
- 2 cans (6 oz. each) tuna in water, drained
- ½ cup red bell pepper, chopped
- ½ cup onion, diced
- 10½-oz. jar Alfredo sauce
- ½ cup white wine (you can substitute homemade chicken stock or low-sodium chicken broth from a can or carton)
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- ½ tsp. ground black pepper
- 1 cup seasoned bread crumbs
- 3 Tbsp. olive oil

1 Prepare tortellini according to package directions; drain. In a large bowl, combine cooked tortellini and all remaining ingredients except bread crumbs and olive oil; stir. Transfer to a 9" x 13" baking dish coated with nonstick cooking spray. If you've tripled the recipe, wrap up two batches and freeze.

2 To serve tonight, preheat oven to 350°F. Sprinkle bread crumbs over tortellini in baking dish and drizzle with olive oil.

3 Cover casserole with aluminum foil and bake for 45 minutes to 1 hour, or until bubbly. Remove foil and slide dish under broiler for 3 to 4 minutes, or until topping is golden brown.

Each serving: About 833 calories, 21g protein, 91g carbohydrate, 39g fat (20g saturated), 8g fiber, 135mg cholesterol, 2,139mg sodium

Foolproof Freezing

Follow Stephanie and Tina's do's and don'ts, and no one will ever know it was frozen

- **Do** double-wrap or double-bag packages to prevent freezer burn. (You can always reuse the outer bag.)
- **Don't** freeze food in cans or eggs in their shells.
- **Do** freeze meat, poultry and fish raw — they will retain moisture better than if they were cooked.
- **Do** freeze butter and yogurt-based spreads. Don't freeze cream cheese (it may dry out) or mayonnaise (it may separate).
- **Don't** freeze uncooked potatoes — they'll turn black. Do freeze vegetables such as fresh carrots, zucchini, peppers, onions and celery.
- **Do** plan ahead so that you have time to thaw foods in the fridge, not at room temperature. Overnight is safest.