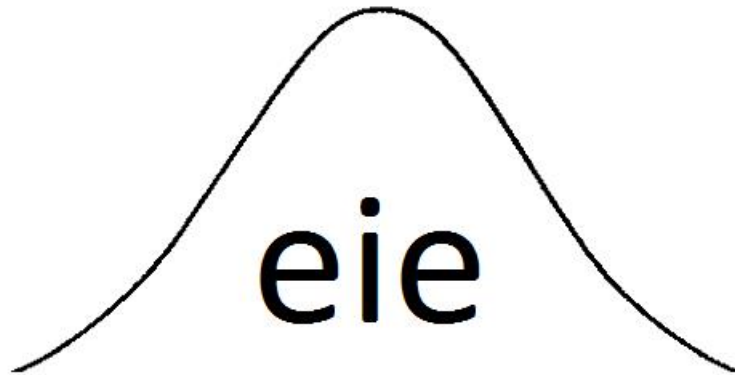


# *Efficiency Is Everything In Cooking*

Michael Kirk



*Recipes that have you eating for \$24 a week.*

*Eight recipes that take two active minutes and make enough food for a week.*

*Food that is so phenomenal that anyone will believe you are a professional.*

## Preface

These recipes are not authentic to a country, a culture, or cuisine; they are **time effective**, **affordable**, often **healthy**, and **tasty**.

I am not a chef, but I spent hours reading cooking message boards daily, reading *Good Housekeeping* at the gym, and excessive time cooking/trying/studying food, including our own Efficiency Is Everything Calorie and Protein Per Dollar List.

These are the meals we eat daily, the groceries we buy every week, and serve our friends. I give detailed *work instructions* style directions, but most corners can be cut. I suggest reading through the entire recipe you plan to make, before starting.

I wrote this recipe book like I am talking to someone who has experience with ramen while trying to shove as many of the cooking tips I've learned - all combined with the Factory Efficiency. Efficiency Is Everything - In Life is concise, each recipe has very fine details, using *Work Instructions*. The goal being, that everyone regardless of skill, can pick up the recipe and complete it without questions and without difficulty.

This was written like a book, where the first chapters give the finer details on characters – in this case the first recipes give the specifics on the cooking processes. When in doubt – Google your question.

## How to use

Each recipe can stand alone. If you read the cookbook from this page on, it goes through tip after tip that I had to learn the hard way.

The first recipes have some extra cooking knowledge that may come in handy later.

You could give the entire Efficient Lifestyle a try, buy a week's worth of recipes and see what your grocery bill looks like.

I personally enjoy making the Sunday Chicken because it's easy, my wife would recommend any of the Thai foods.

Get trying, every recipe is delicious.

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## Terminology

**'PROTIP'** - A jab at myself for coming up with non-scientific things I found worked well.

**Efficiency** – Laziness, but in the best way possible. This is both for saving money and/or saving time.

**(parenthesis)** – Means optional. For instance, (olive) oil, means any oil can be used, but olive oil is the preferred. If an ingredient or step is completely optional (optional) will precede it. The goal is for you to determine how much time/money you want to spend to make your food taste better.

**Large bowl/medium bowl** – These are two types of bowls I will use in the book to distinguish putting foods in a holding area i.e. put carrots, onion, celery into large bowl. Once the oil is hot enough, put everything from the large bowl into the pan.

## Equipment

Some of these recipes require equipment: pots and pans with lids, oven/toaster oven, stove top/heating plate, a dish/tray for the oven.

Use your **dishwasher!** I never realized how much I loved a dishwasher until thanksgiving 2014. Our dishwasher broke. The rest is too sad to say...

I will swear by one purchase. **Go get a slow cooker**. Some people will wait to make the decision, some people are skeptical, its \$20, go get one. **We own three**. We take one on almost every vacation that lasts more than two nights. We use a slow cooker two-three times a week. Turn it on before you leave for work, come home to a delicious meal that is already prepared.

**PROTIP:** *the brand name everyone knows for slow-cookers seem to cook too hot. I like the off-brand, to me, it's superior.*

**More measuring spoons/cups** – we had four measuring spoons and one of our most used Christmas gifts was another set of measuring spoons.

**Tongs** – I somehow grew up with parents who never used tongs, it's like having a hand that can touch a hot pan. If anyone wants to give me a Christmas present, I could use a third.

**Sharp knife + cutting board + knife hone** – we have two chef knives, three cutting boards, and a knife hone. Get a good knife with a solid handle and thick steel if possible. I don't have a preference on cutting boards, plastic seems to have worked and with a dishwasher you don't have to worry of bacteria. A knife hone keeps a blade sharper for longer, if you haven't used one, you will need to get your knife freshly sharpened before using, or it won't be as effective.

**YouTube video of the proper way to cut** – take the time to learn the proper way to cut with a knife. You will be safer, learn to cut quicker, and be better at cutting. Watch a YouTube video, this is just as important as equipment.

**Electric (hand) mixer + mixing bowl** – \$20-\$40 that I use more often than I originally expected. Mixing/mashing/blending can be done by hand, but this is far easier and gives smoother textures.

**Non-stick cooking spray** - not exactly equipment, but I always have it around always sprayed to a pan about to undergo heat.

## Off the bat:

### *PROTIPS:*

#### **Get Skilled Cooking:**

- Taste as you go.
- Use measuring spoons/cups. I may leave things open i.e. 'salt' / 'pepper'. One of the skills you can obtain is knowing how much to add of things. This will give you the ability to 'save' bad dishes and invent your own.
- After a few months of cooking for the first time, try turning up the heat slowly. See how different foods cook depending on the heat. I often recommend starting with medium heat under high attention, then slowly working toward higher heat settings.
- Vegetable oil is a high smoke point oil. It can be replaced with peanut oil. If you want to use other oils, look up online if your oil is a high heat or low heat oil. Butter and olive oil are low heat fats that will smoke/burn at high heats.

#### **Saving Even More Money**

- To further reduce the price of each recipe, reduce chicken/beef/pork and buy those products on sale. These can be removed and the protein can be supplemented with low cost protein powder, beans, and lentils. Purchase chicken breasts in place of chicken thighs if this is cheaper.
- Eat more carbs, add extra rice and noodles than the recipe calls for.
- Make your own canned substitutions. Canned foods are often more expensive than their raw alternatives. Read the ingredients on the canned label and make similar for example, try replacing cream of chicken soup and make a roux (described in Traditional chicken Dinner), mix with 10oz water, 1.5 chicken bouillon cubes, a splash of milk, salt, MSG, onion powder, and other spices of your choice. Saves \$0.50-\$0.75. This would take about eight minutes to make, and I find the cost savings negligible.
- Buy off-brand and from cheaper stores. You will learn most products work fine as off-brand, you will also learn which do not.

#### **Saving More Time**

- Many recipes can be made in one pot/pan with a small reduction of quality. I always suggest cooking the protein first.
- Clean before you cook, having plenty of room means less moving dirty dishes around which will save you time from "Rework".
- Clean while you cook. If you are waiting for water to boil, do the dishes.
- Clean right after you cook. Cleaning a pan while its freshly hot will be easier to clean than if the mess solidifies. If you cannot spare the time to clean, fill hard to clean pans and pots under hot water. This will make it easier to clean later.

### **Adding More Calories**

- If you want to add more calories without drastically changing a recipe, add (extra virgin olive) oil. This could also be butter/vegetable oil/peanut oil etc.
- Sugar can be added to almost every dish, consider that it acts like salt. Very good in small additions.
- Make a roux (instant gravy) – take 2 tbsp. flour + 2 tbsp. butter for every 1 cup of liquid. Put it on over medium heat and stir for five minutes. Keep a close eye on it. Add to a liquid. Instant gravy.

### **Taking Away Calories**

- Many recipes listed have quite a bit of butter and fats. These can be reduced, but it isn't always suggested. Take for instance we put 5 tablespoon lard in 6 cups of refried beans. This means each cup of refried beans gives 100 calories of fat. Considering your average meal has 600-700 calories, this is pretty fair.
- When butter and flour are listed together for a roux, both should be reduced in the same quantities i.e. going from 6 tbsp. flour, 6 tbsp. butter, reducing to 3 tbsp. flour, 3 tbsp. butter.
- Eat less carbs – If rice or noodles are listed, simply put less on your plate.
- Smaller plate sizes – start with your small plate, load it up, sit down for dinner and finish completely before getting seconds. I find that with a smaller plate, I eat slower, savor the last few bites 2x as often.

### **Adding More Protein:**

- Most recipes can have an extra chicken breasts/ground beef/pork added with no downsides. Note: when cooking that much meat the pan gets crowded, causing the food to take longer to cook, and meat not brown as well.
- Feeling hip? Replace carbs like rice with lentils or noodles with black bean noodles.
- Wash your meals down with a protein shake.

### **Replacing:**

- Vegetable oil – as mentioned, can be replaced with other high heat oils like peanut oil. Butter will burn, olive oil will smoke. Extra virgin olive oil costs pennies more, I always get it over olive oil.
- onion - pick the cheapest, yellow or white. Differences are minor.

## Week 1

### Sunday Funday Beef Casserole

**Active Time:** 25 minutes

**Passive Time:** 60-100 minutes

**Total:** 85-125 minutes

**Servings:** You decide

**Features:**

- High Calorie Per Dollar
- Can Be Made In Bulk
- Delicious

**Summary:** Perfect for a Sunday dinner and then lunches all week. Customize it according to: how many people are eating and what ingredients you have on hand. It's versatile to tweaks. This one is pretty free form. Use more/less of anything depending on your preferences. You can't screw it up 😊

**Ingredients:**

- 6 potatoes
- 2¼lbs. ground beef
- 1 onion
- 1 (10½oz) can of cream of chicken soup
- 1 cup cheese
- Salt
- Fresh black pepper

**Instructions:**

1. Brown the Ground beef.

**PROTIP:** Browning Ground Beef

*Meats brown better on high levels of heat. For new cooks, I would recommend starting with medium heat. As you get better, turn the heat up as high as you feel comfortable with. At high heats, you'll need to pay full attention to the pan.*

*To brown meat, there should be no water in the pan. There may be oil/fat in the pan; this is good for conducting heat into the meat. Adding a few tablespoons of vegetable oil (or other high smoke point oils) will also help.*

*Once the meat is broken up, only stir when necessary. Meat browns faster when untouched. Don't overcrowd the pan, if possible, you need to make sure there is separation and meat isn't stacked upon each other. I suggest draining the fat/oil from the meat, but if you want extra flavor, calories, and a tummy-ache, feel free to keep it. It's delicious tasting.*

Finish browning the meat and set aside while we prep the rest of the ingredients.



2. Start the oven. Set to 375 degrees.
3. Cut the potatoes.
  - Rinse/scrub your potatoes under water. If you'd like, you can peel the skin off. I personally don't spend time on that.
  - Cut each potato into cubes.
    - Two long halves. Take the half and cut it into thirds. Then with all three sections of the potato half together, cut along the entire length.
    - Repeat. Don't sweat the weird shapes.
4. Chop the onion up into small pieces.

**PROTIP:** *Learn how to cut onions*

*You will likely be cutting a lot of onions up in your lifetime. Check out a YouTube Video and practice. It will be well worth the time.*

5. Layer the casserole. Get out an oven safe dish (I use a large rectangular Pyrex container).
  - Start placing potatoes/onion/meat/potatoes/onion/meat until you run out.
  - Lightly salt the potatoes at every layer. If you have any vegetables or leftovers, they can be thrown in as one of the layers. If you are feeling festive, add garlic powder or other spices.
  - Top with the cream of chicken soup. In desperation, I've used a half cup of (whole) milk. You can also use Béchamel sauce, which is roux and milk.
6. Put foil over the top and cook for 60 minutes.
7. Check on it. Take some potatoes in the center and make sure they're soft. I've had to cook my bigger batches up to two hours.
8. When there's ten minutes left, take the foil off and dump cheese on top. Return to oven and check frequently to make sure it melts.
9. Top with black pepper and maybe some green-colored herbs.

## Serve

You can replace with ground beef with chicken + chicken broth made in the slow cooker. Shred and scatter like you would ground beef.

## **Monday Thai Fried Rice**

**Active Time:** 15 minutes

**Passive Time:** 30 minutes (+2 hours optional)

**Total Time:** 45 minutes

**Servings:** 3-4

**Features:**

- High Calorie Per Dollar
- High Protein Per Dollar
- Insanely Delicious (It's Thai Food)

**Summary:** It's replaced our \$10 dinner-sized Thai fried rice. This has become a favorite, as we have almost every ingredient in our cupboard. There is no need to buy any strange ingredients every week. Oh, and it's amazing!

**Ingredients:**

- 3 cloves garlic
- 3 green onions
- 2 cups (Jasmine) rice
- 2-3 chicken breasts
- 3 tablespoon fish sauce
- 1 tablespoon oyster sauce
- 2 teaspoon sugar
- ¾ cup frozen peas
- 2 eggs
- 2 tablespoon (peanut) oil
- 1 lime (deliciously optional)
- 1 cucumber (extra deliciously optional)
- 8 tablespoon butter (optional, if you want it to taste like a Thai restaurant)
- Cayenne pepper (optional, for added heat)

**Pre Note:** We make this so often that we've figured out what's optional, I suggest going all-out the first time.

## Instructions:

### 1. Start with the rice.

- Optionally, rinse the rice until the water runs clear. Then begin cooking the rice. Jasmine is our favorite for this. Cooling gives it a better texture but is optional. We often throw the rice in the fridge/outside the night before to let it cool.

### 2. Chopping veggies.

**PROTIP:** “A place for everything and everything in its place”

*I recommend using holding bowls. This may seem like an extra step, but the organization will save you time. This method is used in everything from high end chefs to mass production fast food. This could be as simple as leaving chicken on a cutting board. It can be as complex as having bowls for each ingredient.*

In this recipe, I chop all the vegetables, garlic, and green onion and put them in the large bowl. everything in the large bowl will go in heat soon. Chop them as thin as you find comfy.

### 3. Next, cut the chicken breast:

- Into the shape you see at Asian restaurants, in other words small enough to eat. Don't sweat it if it's not perfect; it'll taste good regardless 😊

### 4. Turn the stove to medium-high.

- In a rush, I'll do high heat, as mentioned in the previous recipe, but only because I know how hot the burner is going to get. It's important to learn your stove. Place your very large Skillet on the heat. Add peanut oil and let it warm up.

### 5. Get the peas out of the freezer and toss them into the Large bowl.

### 6. Grab the eggs and place them near the stove.

### 7. Pour a bit of water on the oil. If it sizzles, we are ready. Throw the chicken breasts on, spread out as much as possible. At medium-high heat, expect to flip after 3 or 4 minutes.

- Your goal is to lightly brown the chicken. Start from the middle (hottest part) and work outward with your longest pair of Tongs flipping each piece.

After another 2-4 minutes, both sides should be browned.

8. Push the chicken to the edges of the pan. Crack the eggs and toss them in the middle, quickly scramble them.

**PROTIP:** Crack the egg on a flat surface

*There's no avoiding it; this area gets dirty. Even master chefs end up leaving a little egg behind. I do it on my stove top and wait until we have company over to clean it up (Can you tell I aim to be time Efficient?). If company is over, I'll use a small plate to crack on.*

9. After the egg is scrambled (1-2 minutes), throw in all the Veggies from the large bowl. Let cook for about 3 minutes. The veggies will cool down the heat a bit. Mix everything gently.
10. This next part requires full attention throw in the oyster sauce, the fish sauce, the sugar, and (optional) the butter.
  - Do your best to spread these sauces around.
  - A second person at this point would be really helpful. Fold, don't stir, the rice in, the gentler, the better.
  - Rice will burn at medium-high heat unless you move it constantly.
  - Do not start doing the dishes (any time you are on medium-high heat).
  - This should take between 1 and 5 minutes.
11. The rice will turn brownish with the sauces. Once the rice is heated, colored, and mixed in with everything, we are ready to serve.
12. Chop cucumber and lime wedges into thin slices,
  - Place on the side
  - Serve with cayenne pepper.
  - Remember: with the lime/cayenne pepper you can always add more, but you cannot take away.

## **Tuesday “Carlos’ Favorite Burrito” Fajitas**

**Active Time:** 15 minutes (+5 for fresh veggies)

**Passive Time:** 0 minutes (+20 minutes with Spanish rice, +8 hours refried beans)

**Total Time:** 15 minutes

**Servings:** 3 (8+ with optional ingredients)

### **Features:**

- High Calorie Per Dollar
- High Protein Per Dollar
- Quick
- A Ton of Food.

**Summary:** This is a versatile recipe that can be made in a few minutes and, with a little extra prep, feed you for multiple days.

It can be as simple as:

- Chicken
- Tortilla
- Cheese
- Sour Cream

Or as complex as:

- Chicken
- Tortilla
- Cheese
- Sour cream
- Refried beans
- Spanish rice
- Lettuce
- Jalapeños
- Green pepper
- Onions
- Hot sauce
- Lime

If you go all out, you will be rewarded. Two quotes regarding this recipe:

“You Make The best burritos” – Carlos from Mexico.

“Ah?” – Jim, seeing leftovers.

However - pick what you would like. I will break this up into the order in which I complete it.

Make one or make a few:

**Refried beans (optional):**

This is faster than it looks. It takes about 5 minutes of active time. Consider 1-2 cups pinto beans, if you do not want leftovers.

**Ingredients:**

- 3 cups pinto beans
- 8 cups water
- 4+ tablespoons lard
- 1½ tablespoon salt
- Cheese (optional)

**Instructions:**

1. Take out a slow cooker and fill 3 cups of pinto beans and eight cups of water. Keep an eye out for rocks in dry pinto beans, rare, but it happens. You will notice it.
2. Set on low and wait eight hours.
3. Take a spoon and strain the cooked beans into a mixing container. I usually add ¼ to ½ cup of the remaining liquid.
4. Add 4+ tbsp. lard (or oil of your choice).
5. Add 1½ teaspoon salt.
  - I usually scoop 1 heaping teaspoon, because efficiency.
6. Use an electric mixer on the beans.
  - To prevent splatters, make sure the mixer blades are entirely under the beans before turning it on.
7. Determine your consistency.
  - If you want to feel bean in a bite, don't mix for long. If you want to make it more like creamy restaurant style, add much more lard. If you are trying to save on calories and want it thinner, add extra liquid.
8. If you want to go full Mexican restaurant style, they seem to always mix in cheddar cheese.
9. Put a top on the mixing container to keep warm or to store.

This makes a lot of beans, you can always reduce the recipe to 2 cups beans, 5 cups water.

**Lazy Spanish Rice (optional):**

- 1½ cups uncooked rice
- 1 tablespoon onion powder
- 1/2 tablespoon garlic powder
- 2 tablespoon oil
- 1 cup tomato sauce
- 2 cups chicken broth (cost efficient: 2 cups water + 2 chicken bouillon cubes)

**Instructions:**

1. Throw everything into the pot. Follow normal directions for cooking rice.
2. Make sure the rice simmers.
  - A high boil will cause your Rice to burn. At a lower temperature, the worst case is you cook the rice longer.
  - This will probably happen to you.

**Super Lazy Spanish Rice (optional):****Instructions:**

1. Buy boxed Spanish Rice. Seriously. It will do the trick. However, this method is more expensive.

**Fajita Seasoning:**

This is the seasoning we add to the chicken. We made this in bulk; four times as much as shown here. It's saved in a bag with the label "Fajita Seasoning." Don't worry if you don't have ingredient or you add more or little. This combo is going to taste great.

- 1 tablespoon cornstarch
- 2 teaspoons chili powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- ¾ teaspoon crushed chicken bouillon cube
- ½ teaspoon onion powder
- ¼ teaspoon garlic powder
- ¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- ¼ teaspoon cumin

**Instructions:**

1. Mix all ingredients together thoroughly.

**PROTIP:** When you are cooking your chicken, if you want the sauce thicker, add more cornstarch.

**“Carlos’ Favorite burrito” Fajitas:****Ingredients:**

- 1 green pepper (optional)
- ½ onion (optional)
- 1/3 head lettuce (optional)
- Refried beans (optional)
- Spanish rice (optional)
- Sour cream (optional)
- 2 tablespoon (vegetable) oil
- 4-8 tortillas
- 3 chicken breasts
- ½-1 lime (time efficient: use lime juice)
- Fajita seasoning

**Instructions:**

1. (Optional) cut green pepper into triangles or long strips. Throw into large bowl. Throw away the seeds.
2. (optional) cut onion into whatever size you like. Throw into large bowl. (I’ve started throwing the entire onion in)
3. Cut chicken breast,
  - Into whatever shape you prefer.
  - I usually do slices along the length of it for speed.
4. Pick a large pan. Start heat at medium or medium-high.
  - Test temperature by throwing water in it and listening for the sizzle.
5. Add oil.
6. Throw the chicken in. Cook 4 minutes on each side under medium heat.
7. Lightly apply seasoning.
  - Spray the chicken with some lime juice.
  - If needed, add a small amount of water to coat.
  - Personally, I enjoy a lot of seasoning and lime juice.
8. Throw the veggies from the large bowl into the hot pan. Stir for the next 2-3 minutes.
  - If you want your chicken extra juicy, you can remove it now. If you are going for efficient, skip this – I never do it. Removal of heat stops the cooking process, making chicken less dry.
9. (very optional) Heat up the tortillas
  - Pan at medium heat until they change to brown slightly. A ridiculously calorie-heavy method is to submerge the tortillas into medium-high heat oil for a few seconds. Personally, I skip both. This food is about to be great!

This might seem like a lot of work, but once the seasoning mix is made in bulk, you can make fajitas with only about 10 minutes of active time. Some nights we skip the onion and pepper in favor of making rice.



Other nights we do refried beans and chicken. When company is coming over we go all out. When dieting, I only make chicken. Or I add green pepper and onion.

## **Busy Wednesday – Slow Cooker Sausage and Peppers**

**Active Time:** 5 minutes (+2 optional for cut sausage)

**Passive Time:** 6 hours

**Total Time:** 6 hours

**Servings:** 4

**Features:**

- High Calorie Per Dollar
- High Protein Per Dollar
- Fail Proof
- A Lot of Flavor

**Summary:** This is a fast, cost effective, and easy way to make sausage and peppers. Instead of using an expensive red pepper for sweetness, we add carrots. After trying both, I prefer it this way. This recipe is a “throw and go.”

**Ingredients:**

- Half cup water
- 2 cups of carrot
- 3 garlic cloves (optional)
- 1 green pepper
- 4 Italian sausage links
- 1 (15oz) can diced tomatoes
- (whole wheat elbow) Noodles (optional)

**Instructions:**

1. Cut everything into bite-ish sized pieces.
2. Put in Slow Cooker on low for 6+ Hours
3. Serve. I usually cook whole wheat elbow noodles. They don't seem to need to be stirred to prevent sticking. When dieting I tend to skip noodles completely.

I found cut carrots in the frozen section, look toward those for a time saving opportunity.

If you are going to leave the slow cooker on for more than 7 hours, add a full 1 cup water.

## **Breakfast for Dinner Thursday – Eggs and Sausage (optional)**

**Active Time:** 7 minutes

**Passive Time:** 0 minutes

**Total Time:** 7 minutes

**Servings:** 1-2

**Features:**

- High Protein Per Dollar
- Fast
- Fun

**Summary:** By Thursday we usually have leftovers in the fridge, so I don't usually cook this. If we are out of regular food, eggs and frozen banquet breakfast sausage are high protein per dollar and decent calorie per dollar.

**Ingredients:**

- 6 eggs
- 6 banquet sausages
- 1 cup frozen veggies

**Instructions:**

1. Cook breakfast sausage:
  - Sausage in a small pot with a bit of water on medium heat.
  - Cover with lid. Don't touch for 3-5 minutes.
  - Take off the top and brown for the next 2-3 minutes.
  - Efficiency: Turn up the heat to medium-high to brown quicker.
2. Cook your eggs! Personally:
  - Large Pan
  - Nonstick spray
  - Medium heat
  - Crack 6 eggs into the pan
  - Try my skills at a perfect "over medium" egg (or omelet)
  - If it goes awry, I get to eat something along the lines of scrambled eggs.
3. Warm up frozen veggies (microwave):
  - Bowl
  - Splash of water
  - Cover, and heat for 99 seconds
  - Stir and repeat for another 99 seconds. Test temperature.
  - Efficiency: type "99" instead of "1:39" in a microwave.

***PROTIP: Timing***

*I have made this so many times, the timing is perfected on my stove. Practice and figure out how to finish everything at the same time.*

***PROTIP: Choose frozen***

*Frozen veggies are apparently healthier than fresh. They are picked and instantly frozen. Fresh veggies are picked, shipped for a few days, arrive at a grocery store, and wait to be purchased. By then, they lose some of their nutrition.*

## **Busy Friday – Pulled Chicken + BBQ sauce**

**Active Time:** 1 minute

**Passive Time:** 4 hours

**Total Time:** 4 hours

**Servings:** 3-6

### **Features:**

- High Calorie Per Dollar
- High Protein Per Dollar
- Fail Proof
- Fast

**Summary:** One of the fastest recipes you will find. This recipe completely depends on your BBQ sauce, so pick something very good.

### **Ingredients:**

- 4-6 chicken thighs (chicken breasts are healthier, but more likely to dry out)
- 1 can of soda pop
- Hamburger buns
- High quality BBQ sauce

### **Instructions:**

1. Put everything into the slow cooker
  - Chicken thighs
  - 1 can of soda pop
2. Let cook 4 hours on high or 6+ hours on low.
3. Shred the chicken into edible pieces.
  - We use tongs
  - Don't make it mush.
4. (optional) brown the chicken in a pan on medium-high or high heat.
  - Add vinegar, lime, or lemon juice.
  - Sprinkle salt.
  - The goal here is to boil some of the liquid and brown the meat.
    - For meat to brown there needs to be 0 water and high temperatures
  - Add corn starch for a quick way to soak up some liquid.
  - This whole section is optional – it's our busy day of the week and it doesn't happen much.
5. (optional) toast buns in oven using the broil setting.
  - Warning: keep an eye on it.
  - Bread goes from delicious golden brown to black in as short as 15 seconds.
6. Throw on a bun. Top with/dip in your favorite BBQ sauce.

**PROTIP:** Browning temperatures

*We've talked about browning foods. A few observations I've made: meats brown better at medium to high heats. White carbs brown better at medium or lower heats. This is why the very high temperature broil setting is risky. Check on it very often (30 seconds max).*

If this recipe ever gets boring, swap out the soda pop or swap out the BBQ sauce. You can always add onion, liquid smoke, or BBQ Sauce directly to the slow cooker.

## **Saturday Feast Whole chicken and Gravy**

**Active Time:** 30 minute

**Passive Time:** 1 or 4+ hours

**Total Time:** 1.5 to 4 hours

**Servings:** 4-8

### **Features:**

- High Calorie Per Dollar
- High Protein Per Dollar
- Fail Proof Options
- A Lot of Food
- Makes Stock

**Summary:** The traditional chicken dinner. A roasted chicken, creamy mashed potatoes, crisp green beans, and thick gravy. There are a lot of modifications you can make to meet your needs. There are two ways to cook the chicken: slow cooker and oven. We will go into both.

### **Easy Slow Cooker Whole chicken:**

- 1 whole chicken (although, I always prefer chicken legs – less bones)
- 6-8 (Russet) potatoes
- 6 tablespoon butter
- 6 tablespoon flour
- Green beans (fresh or frozen)
- Lemon (optional)

### **Instructions:**

1. Open the whole chicken package. Take out the gizzards.
2. Put chicken in slow cooker. No liquid needed.
  - (optional) I often splash ¼ cup of water in the slow cooker to help make a stock.
3. (optional) clean the potatoes and toss them whole in the slow cooker.
4. Put it on high for 4 hours or low for 6 hours.
5. Microwave the green beans.
6. Make a gravy! – see roux below and mix with the liquid in the slow cooker (see below).

**Traditional Chicken Dinner:**

The three pillars of the traditional chicken dinner are the chicken, the potatoes, and the gravy.

**The Chicken:****Ingredients:**

- 1 whole chicken (still a fan of chicken quarters – especially if you can get them on sale)
- Lemon (optional)
- Your choice of spices/rubs (optional)
- Meat thermometer – (optional)

**Instructions:**

1. Set oven to 350 degrees.
2. Put the whole chicken in a pan and put it in the oven.
  - (optional) put spices on/under the skin (I don't).
3. Peek on it after 10 minutes, 20 minutes and 30 minutes.
  - No reason to touch anything yet.
  - After 30 minutes of cooking I start the potatoes (see below).
4. At 40 minutes, take it out and check the temperature with a meat thermometer.
  - If you don't have one, you can err on the side of caution by letting it cook longer. The goal is 165 degrees. Chicken is fairly easy to cook. You can overcook it without much pain. Check after 60 minutes.
5. Cut deep into the chicken and check for pink. If it is, place it back in and check again after 10-15 minutes.
6. Take the liquid that came from the chicken. Measure it and set it aside.
7. When it's done, carve the chicken and serve it. If you are intimidated by this, you can watch a YouTube video, or you can eat it like our ancestors did for thousands of years; pull the meat straight off the bones.

After you make these recipes a few times, you will learn the little tricks to getting the meat off.



## **The Potatoes:**

*Note: Recipe is a modification of Alton brown's Recipe*

### **Ingredients:**

- 6-8 (Russet) potatoes
- 2 tablespoon salt
- 2 cups whole milk (or heavy whipping cream/half-and-half)
- 6 cloves garlic
- Mixing bowl
- Hand masher or electric mixer.

### **Instructions:**

1. Fill your largest pot with hot water and put it on the heat. Put salt in the water.

#### ***PROTIP:*** Boiling

*To get water to boil faster, raise the heat to the highest temperature, fill the pot with hot water from the tap, and cover it with a lid.*

2. (optional) Skin the potatoes. (Efficient: The waste nutrition and extra time makes this step not worth it. If you have the luxury, automatic potato peelers are about \$20 and work well)
3. Chop the potatoes into the smallest size cubes
  - That you can manage comfortably and quickly.
  - As in the casserole, I cut the potato in half, producing two long slices.
  - Then I take the half and cut it into thirds.
  - Then with all three lengths of potato together, I make small slices along the entire length of the potato half.
  - Repeat.

(Did you YouTube knife techniques yet?)

4. Throw the potatoes in the water and (vigorously) boil until they are soft (20 minutes is usually plenty).
5. Chop the garlic.
6. In a small saucepan, heat the milk and garlic on low-medium. Stir at least every 30 seconds.  
WARNING: Milk burns easily. Keep a close eye.
7. After boiling, cook for another minute then remove from heat.
8. When the potatoes are falling apart with a fork, drain the water and place into mixing bowl.
9. Mash the potatoes and add the milk-garlic mixture. (Efficient: use an electric mixer)
10. Serve.

We've had many arguments about how fine we should mash the potatoes. Mandy likes it smooth; I like the occasional potato chunk. Have fun with that problem. ☺

**The Gravy (How to make any gravy):****Ingredients:**

- 3 cups chicken stock (from the chicken + store bought broth, or 2 chicken bouillon cubes with 2 cups water)
- 6 tablespoon butter
- 6 tablespoon flour

**Instructions:**

1. Decide how much gravy you want. If you have 1 cup of liquid from the chicken but want 3 Cups of gravy, add 2 cups of chicken broth. (Efficient: 2 cups water and 2 bouillon cubes will make 2 cups of chicken broth)
2. Make the roux. For 3 cups of liquid, you would use 6 tablespoons butter and 6 tablespoons flour.

***PROTIP: Make a Roux***

- A. *Decide how much liquid you want to make thicker. For soups, you will need 1 tablespoon butter and 1 tablespoon flour per 1 cup of liquid. For sauces/gravy, you will need 2 tablespoons butter and 2 tablespoons flour per 1 cup of liquid.*
  - B. *Put the butter and flour in a small pan at medium heat. Set a timer for 5 minutes*
  - C. *Stir. Do not stop stirring. Do not stop stirring. Warning: there's a 100% chance of burning if you don't stir the whole time.*
  - D. *As 5 minutes gets closer, the color should change faintly brown. You can stop then. Otherwise, stop when the timer goes off.*
  - E. *Mix with the original liquid. Wait about 2 minutes.*
3. When complete, mix roux with the broth. After a minute it will thicken.

***PROTIP: Make a roux for anything and it will taste great.***

**Green beans (optional):****Ingredients:**

- Green beans (fresh or frozen)
- Oil (optional)

**Instructions:**

1. Warm up the green beans. I suggest the microwave or blanch.
2. (optional) Dry.
3. (optional) Coat with absurd amounts of oil. Your dinner is going to be amazing. but if you want to go a step beyond amazing, I suggest adding oil.
4. Salt.

I suppose you could pepper, toss peanuts on it, squeeze a lemon on it, or top with vinegar...Style points?  
Enjoy!

## Week 2

### Sunday (Football) Chili

**Active Time:** 20 minutes

**Passive Time:** 1 hour

**Total Time:** 1 hour and 20 minutes

**Servings:** 4-5

**Features:**

- High Protein Per Dollar
- Eat All Week
- Very Healthy

**Summary:** We found this recipe a long time ago and have been tweaking it ever since. Make the spices in bulk and it's a pretty quick thing to throw together.

Original Recipe: 2am Chili from *Cooking Comically* -> Modified to be efficient.

### Sunday Chili Spice (1 Chili Worth):

**Ingredients:**

- 1 tablespoon onion powder
- 4 teaspoon chili powder
- 1 teaspoon basil Leaves
- 2 teaspoon cumin
- 1 teaspoon cayenne powder
- 1 tablespoon garlic powder
- 2 teaspoon sugar
- 2 tablespoon flour
- 1 pinch baking soda

**Instructions:**

1. Mix all ingredients together thoroughly.
  - Don't really - just dump this in the chili pot at some point

**Sunday Chili:****Ingredients:**

- 1 chili worth of Sunday chili spice (see above)
- 4 cloves garlic
- 1 green pepper
- ½ onion
- 1½-2½lbs ground beef
- 1 (10½ oz.) can tomato sauce
- 1 Large can tomato sauce
- 1 (10½ oz.) can diced tomato
- 1 cup frozen green beans
- 1 cup frozen corn
- 2 tablespoon (vegetable) oil
- Sour cream (optional)
- Cheese (optional)
- Crackers or (whole wheat elbow) noodles (optional)

**Instructions:**

1. Cut the green pepper:
  - Into triangles – style points
2. Dice the half onion.
3. Thinly slice the garlic.
4. Put all in the large bowl.
  - I admit – I’ve been lazy and skipped all of this, added garlic and onion powder.
  - Not recommended, but can save you a minute.
5. Get a large pan and medium-high or high heat
  - **Warning** - high heat burns easy.
6. Add 2+ tablespoons (vegetable) oil.
  - Toss a splash of water, if it sizzles, it’s getting hot.
7. Add the ground beef. Brown for 4-8 minutes.
  - If there is significant fat, you can drain it.
  - If you took your ground beef out of the freezer, and are in the process of thawing it + cooking... yeah I’ve been there too ☺ it will take longer to cook.
8. Dump cooked ground beef in a large (or tall) pot.
9. Using the large pan that has ground beef juices we are going to cook the veggies!
  - Put heat on medium-high.
  - If there is oil/fat from the beef, keep it. Otherwise add more.
10. Throw the ingredients from the large bowl into the pan. Cook for 3-6 minutes.
  - Aim for a bit of browning.

11. Put all vegetables, tomato, and spices into the tall pot.
  - Everything ingredient should be in there now. Stir.
12. Turn heat to low-medium and put a lid on it. Simmer and stir occasionally for 1 hour.
13. Serve with
  - Crackers.
  - Whole wheat elbow noodles – good substance and efficiency-: no need to stir whole wheat elbow noodles. Noodles on chili? The chili is that good.
  - Chicken breast – I needed protein and yeah, actually really freaking good.
14. Sprinkle some cheese on top. Put a nice sized scoop of sour cream to finish it.

Note: the original recipe called for 3x as much cayenne powder.

#### **Troubleshooting Issues:**

- Chili is too acidic – put in a pinch of baking soda.
- Chili is watery – crack the lid and let moisture out. Continue simmering.
- Too spicy – you can always add, but you can't take out. The best solution I have is to add sour cream or noodles.

## **Ginger Asian Monday**

**Active Time:** 35 minutes

**Passive Time:** 0 minutes

**Total Time:** 35 minutes

**Servings:** 4

**Features:**

- High Calorie Per Dollar
- High Protein Per Dollar
- Very Healthy

**Summary:** Pretty tasty recipe, and you can make it as strong or as flavorless as you like. Rice, chicken and veggies!

**Ingredients:**

- 1 onion
- 3 chicken breasts
- 1 can sliced water chestnuts
- 2 cup frozen broccoli
- 3 carrots, chopped
- 1 bell pepper, chopped
- 2 cups uncooked white rice
- 2 cloves garlic
- 1 tablespoon ginger root
- 2/3 cup low sodium soy sauce

**PROTIP:** Low Sodium Soy Sauce is more flavorful.

- ¼ cup brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon corn starch
- ¼ teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 2 tablespoons (vegetable oil)

**Instructions:**

1. Make 2 cups of white rice. When it is done, cool the rice as best as possible.
2. For the ginger root, peel enough of the skin and grate until you get 1 tablespoon. Chop the garlic. Put this in your medium bowl.
3. Add soy sauce, brown sugar, and corn starch to this medium bowl. Stir.
4. Cut chicken into your favorite bite-sized, Asian food shapes.

***PROTIP:*** If you cut off fat, instead of throwing it away, wrap it up and save it in the freezer. There's likely a lot of protein still on it and it would be great in a slow cooker recipe.

***This recipe continues on the next page.***

5. Put chicken in the medium bowl and coat it with the sauce. Let it marinate for at least 15 minutes.
6. While marinating, cut carrots, bell peppers, and onion into your favorite Asian shape. Big, small, long and thin – you decide. Place this in the large bowl.
7. Put the frozen broccoli in the microwave and heat for 99 seconds. Stir. Repeat for another 99 seconds. Place this in the large bowl.
8. Begin heating the pan at medium-high heat. Add (vegetable) oil. Once water sizzles, throw the vegetables in. Cook for about 5 minutes.
9. Remove the vegetables and set them aside in the large bowl. Cover the large bowl about 95%, but not completely.

***PROTIP:*** *Fried foods HATE moisture.* You want the moisture to get out, but not the heat. This is the most effective method we've discovered.

10. Take the chicken that was marinating and throw the chicken only (no marinade) on medium heat. Cook for 4-6 minutes on each side. **WARNING:** This is not like regular meat that is being browned. With the Marinade, we introduced carbs. Keep a close eye and I suggest medium heat; no higher.
11. Throw the vegetables into the pan with the marinade. Cook for another 2-3 minutes. Remove from the marinade. Serve over rice.

This recipe takes longer than most due to the order that must be followed (cutting vegetables, marinating, and then cooking). There is an option of throwing everything in the pan, cooking, and eating in a few minutes. I'll let you make that call.

We've tried using different Peppers (Anaheim), peas, baby corn, etc. It adds variety.



## **Taco Tuesday**

**Active Time:** 15 minutes (+5 optional for fresh for fresh veggies)

**Passive Time:** 0 minutes (+20 minutes with Spanish rice, +8 hours with hours with refried beans)

**Total Time:** 15 minutes

**Servings:** 3 (8+ with optional ingredients)

### **Features:**

- High Protein Per Dollar
- A Ton Of Food
- Variety Of Combinations

### **Summary:**

This has the same formula as Fajitas from last week.

It is a versatile recipe that can be made in a few minutes and can be as simple as:

- Taco meat
- Cheese
- Tortilla
- Sour cream

Or as complex as:

- Taco meat
- Lettuce
- Tortilla
- Jalapeños
- Cheese
- Green pepper
- Sour cream
- Onions
- Refried beans
- Hot sauce
- Spanish rice
- Lime

The refried beans and Spanish rice recipes can be found in *Week 1, Tuesday*. (can we link to the pages)

### **Taco Seasoning:**

This is the seasoning we add to the meat. We made this in bulk, 4x as much as shown here. It's saved in a bag labeled "Taco Seasoning."

From: <http://allrecipes.com/recipe/46653/taco-seasoning-i/>

### **Ingredients:**

- 1 tablespoon chili powder
- ¼ teaspoon garlic powder
- ¼ teaspoon onion powder
- ¼ teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
- ¼ teaspoon dried oregano
- ½ teaspoon paprika

- 1½ teaspoons ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon black pepper

### **instructions:**

1. Mix all ingredients together thoroughly.
  - You don't really need to mix, but definitely prepare it ahead of time.
  - Highly recommend making it in bulk at some point, if you like it, consider making 12 times as much, then eat it 1 time a month, all year.

### **Building the Taco:**

#### **Ingredients:**

- 1 onion (optional)
- 1/3 head of lettuce (optional)
- Refried beans (optional)
- Spanish rice (optional)
- Sour cream (optional)
- 2 tablespoons (vegetable) oil
- 4-8 tortillas or hard shells
- 1½ lbs. Ground beef
- ½-1 lime (efficient: use lime juice)
- Taco seasoning

#### **Instructions:**

1. (optional) Cut onion into whatever size you like. Throw it into large bowl.
2. Pick a large pan and put it on medium (to high) heat. Add oil.
  - Test temperature by throwing water in it for the sizzle.
3. Throw the ground beef in. Cook for about 4 minutes without much stirring.
4. Add the onion. Cook everything for another 4-8 minutes.
  - Mix around, cook until meat is cooked.
5. (optional) Drain fat/oil.
6. Lightly apply the seasoning
  - Add lime juice.
  - If needed, add a small amount of water to aid in coating.
  - I go pretty heavy with the seasoning.
7. (optional) Heat up the hard shells in the oven.
  - Goal is to lightly brown.
  - Warning: with simple carbs, this gets dangerous. It may go from delicious to burnt in 15 seconds.
8. Combine and feast!

When I'm dieting I'll make lettuce wraps with taco meat + jalapeños. It is oddly filling.

## **Easy Pulled Pork Wednesday**

**Active Time:** 1 minute

**Passive Time:** 4 hours

**Total Time:** 4 hours

**Servings:** 3-6

**Features:**

- High Calorie Per Dollar
- High Protein Per Dollar
- Fail-Proof
- Fast

**Summary:** Similar to pulled chicken, this is one of the fastest recipes you will find. The dish completely depends on your BBQ sauce, so pick something very good.

**Ingredients:**

- 1½ lbs. Pork (loin)
- 1 can soda pop
- Hamburger buns
- High quality BBQ sauce

**Instructions:**

1. Put pork and soda pop into a slow cooker. Set for 6 hours on high or 8+ hours on low.
2. Shred the pork into edible pieces, but don't make it mush.
3. (optional) Throw the pork in a pan on medium-high or high heat.
  - Add vinegar, lime juice, or lemon juice,
  - Sprinkle salt.
  - The goal here is to dry out some of the liquid and brown the meat.
4. (optional) Toast buns in oven using the broil setting.
  - Warning: bread goes from delicious golden brown to black in as short as 15 seconds.
5. Throw on a bun. Top with or dip in your favorite BBQ sauce.

**Post Notes:** As mentioned in the pulled chicken, if this ever gets boring you can swap out the soda pop or swap out the BBQ sauce. You can always add onion, liquid smoke, or BBQ sauce directly to the slow cooker.

## **Breakfast for Dinner #2 Thursday – Creamy Scrambled Eggs (optional)**

**Active Time:** 7 minutes

**Passive Time:** 0 minutes

**Total Time:** 7 minutes

**Servings:** 1-2

### **Features:**

- High Calorie Per Dollar
- High Protein Per Dollar
- Delicious
- Fast

**Summary:** As before, by Thursday, we usually have leftovers in the fridge. If we are out of food, this scrambled egg recipe is high protein per dollar and good calorie per dollar.

This is the Gordon Ramsey method, worth checking out on YouTube because he has great technique. This was modified so I could feed a family dinner with the cost saving efficiency we aim for:

### **Ingredients:**

- 6 eggs
- 1-2 tablespoons sour cream
- 4 slices of bread
- 1 cup frozen veggies
- 2 tablespoons butter (optional)
- Something green (sprinkle on top for style points – even head lettuce works)

### **Instructions:**

1. Spray pan or put in 2 tablespoons butter. Start heat on medium.
2. Crack the eggs in the pan.
  - No need to wait for it to heat up.
3. Put bread in the oven or toaster.
4. Start scrambling the eggs by constantly moving them.
5. (optional) Every 30 seconds or so, lift the pan off the heat. Stir, and then place back on the heat.
  - Constantly move the eggs, constantly.
6. As soon as the eggs are cooked, pull them off the heat.
7. Add sour cream and mix well.
8. Scoop and serve on toast. Add salt and fresh ground pepper.

Microwave some frozen veggies for your side.

## **“Sunday” chicken – So easy we make it on Fridays**

**Active Time:** 1 minute

**Passive Time:** 4 hours

**Total Time:** 4 hours

**Servings:** 3-6

### **Features:**

- High Calorie Per Dollar
- High Protein Per Dollar
- Delicious
- Fail-Proof
- Easy
- Low Effort
- Great for busy Days

**Summary:** Slow cooker miracle. There has never been a food so easy and so good.

### **Ingredients:**

- 5 chicken thighs (chicken breasts can be swapped without any loss; there is enough fat in this recipe)
- 1 (10½ oz.) can cream of chicken soup
- 1 packet of dry Italian seasoning – near the salad dressing
- 1 package of cream cheese
- 2 cups uncooked rice

### **Instructions:**

1. Put chicken, dry Italian seasoning, cream cheese, and can of cream of chicken soup in a slow cooker
2. Set timer 4 hours on high or 6+ hours on low.
3. Start rice and follow package directions.
4. Break up the meat.
  - a. Don't turn it into mush.
5. Serve on top of rice

We usually add a side of microwaved green beans or peas. Mixing peas in has been known to be a success.

**Post Notes:** If this ever gets boring, swap out the can of soup with cream of mushroom or something new. Swap out the dressing packet; try dry ranch dressing.

## **Enhanced Enchilada Saturday**

**Active Time:** 20 minutes

**Passive Time:** 4 hours

**Total Time:** 4 hours and 20 minutes

**Servings:** 3-6

**Features:**

- High Calorie Per Dollar
- High Protein Per Dollar
- Delicious
- Unique

**Summary:** This is my personal recipe that has received the following acclaim:

“This is my favorite food.” – Mandy

“You gotta have us over again.” – Dan Engerer

“Make what you made last time.” – Luke Alward

“Oh, this is good.” – Vinnie Olle (followed by requests for the recipe).

**Story of Creation:** I was looking for new slow cooker recipes, as they seem to be efficient. I stumbled upon a method for using pulled chicken to make enchiladas. I had never eaten enchiladas in my life, but I was interested in trying a new food. Growing up, Mexican food was shell + meat + toppings, and was never made in the oven. I didn’t know any better.

The first time I made this I looked up a recipe. Tomato paste, chicken stock, pepper, etc. That got me started. I slowly began adding different spices, smelling them and tasting as I went. I had never invented anything before, but I kept going until it tasted good. The last thing I added was cayenne pepper - I accidentally tapped way, way too much into it. It became absurdly spicy; the creation was ruined.

I decided that I would simply put less sauce on each shell. I fried up the meat, fried up a tortilla shell, and combined it all like a taco. Took a bite, and – whoa. Sweet, spicy, savory, creamy, crispy, and fresh. It was perfect.

Henry Ford once said “If I had asked people what they wanted, they would have said faster horses.” I suppose I wanted enchiladas, but instead we are getting something better.

**Fun Fact:** My original recipe has the quantities listed in milliliters.

## **Enchilada Sauce:**

### **Ingredients:**

- 2 cups chicken broth (efficient: 2 ground-up chicken Boolean cubes + 2 cups water)
- 1 small (6 oz.) can tomato paste
- 1 1/3 tablespoon cumin (efficient: 1 heaping tablespoon)
- 1 1/3 tablespoon garlic powder (efficient: 1 heaping tablespoon)
- 1 1/3 tablespoon chili powder (efficient: 1 heaping tablespoon)
- 1 1/3 tablespoon brown sugar (efficient: 1 heaping tablespoon)
- 1 tablespoon onion powder
- 1 tablespoon (vegetable) oil

**Note:** Going to “teaspoons” now

- 1 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- 2 teaspoon (white) vinegar
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 pinch baking soda
- 1 pinch MSG

**PROTIP:** MSG isn’t bad for you. Some people are allergic to MSG just as people are allergic to peanut butter or strawberries. If you aren’t allergic, enjoy your extra-delicious food.

Wikipedia on MSG: “MSG has been used for more than 100 years to season food, with a number of studies conducted on its safety. Consumption and manufacture of high-salt and high-glutamate foods, which contain both sodium and glutamate, stretch back far longer, with evidence of cheese manufacture as early as 5,500 BC.[11] international and national bodies governing food additives currently consider MSG safe for human consumption as a flavor enhancer.[gov. 6]”

Some foods that have glutamate in it: cheese, soy sauce, walnuts, tomatoes, peas, mushrooms, broccoli, oysters, corn, potatoes, chicken, fish, beef, eggs.

### **Instructions:**

1. Put a small sauce pan on low-medium heat
2. Add all ingredients and stir.
3. Let cook for at least 10 minutes, stirring occasionally.
  - a. Goal is to make it thick enough that the sauce sputters.
  - b. Should be thicker than spaghetti sauce, and a little thinner than thick gravy.
  - c. Warning: if you don’t stir every few minutes, it will burn.

**PROTIP:** If you put a lid on, the sauce will not evaporate as fast. Without a lid, the sauce may sputter and make a mess. A 95% covered top will be enough for evaporation and will keep the counter mess-free.

**Enchilada:****Ingredients:**

- 5 chicken thighs (chicken breasts can be swapped without any loss)
- 12+ corn tortillas
- Vegetable oil
- 1 can soda pop
- Cheddar cheese
- Sour cream
- Enchilada sauce

**Instructions:**

1. Put chicken into slow cooker with soda pop.
  2. Set slow cooker on high for 4 hours or low for 6+ hours.
  3. Make the enchilada sauce. (see above)
  4. Place your largest pan on medium-high or high heat. Add a lot of (vegetable) oil; 4-6 tablespoons or more.
  5. Throw the chicken from the slow cooker into the pan.
    - Get most of the water to evaporate.
    - Slightly brown the meat.
    - Salt the meat lightly. Taste, salt more, until it tastes good.
    - Add a lot of lime juice. Start small. Add more and more until you can actually taste the lime.
  6. Once the flavor is salty and a little sour, take the pan off the heat.
  7. Place a brand new pan on medium heat. Coat the entire bottom of the pan with (vegetable) oil.
    - Test the temperature by tossing in water and listening for a sizzle.
  8. Once hot, lay flat as many corn tortilla shells as you can.
    - We fit 3 or 4.
    - Only cook one side.
    - Warm for 1-3 minutes. The goal is to warm, and if you are lucky, lightly brown.
    - Warning: keep a close eye on it; it doesn't take much for the smoke detector to go off.
    - Medium-high heat is possible, but be ready to pull out of the oil.
  9. Pull tortillas out of the oil. Start the next batch. Repeat.
    - We usually do 1 batch per person.
  10. Place tortillas on plate with oily side facing up.
  11. Add meat along the length of the tortilla.
  12. Put 1-3 tablespoon of sauce on each tortilla.
- PROTIP: 1 tablespoon is usually the size of the large metal spoons you have next to your forks.***
13. Sprinkle cheese on top.



14. Place 2-5 tablespoons of sour cream on the side of the plate for dipping.

- The layering of flavors is why this works so well.
- Mixing everything together at the beginning subtracts that.

15. Wrap and serve immediately. Cold shells break.

**Post Notes:**

The first time you make this, take it slow. Understand the finished product rather than trying to get everything out at the same time. Even we often turn off the heat on the tortilla shell pan to catch up.

For best flavor, eat immediately, rather than bulk production.

Don't sweat it - they are going to be great anyway.

## Week 3

### Creamy chicken Tortilla Soup Sunday

**Active Time:** 20 minutes

**Passive Time:** 4 hours

**Total Time:** 4¼ hours

**Servings:** 3-6

**Features:**

- High Calorie Per Dollar
- High Protein Per Dollar
- Nutritious
- Delicious
- Fail-Proof
- Easy
- Fun to Eat

**Summary:** Based off a recipe found online. We tweaked it to make it easier, creamier, and more delicious.

**Ingredients:**

- 2 cloves of garlic
- 1 onion
- 5 chicken thighs or chicken breasts
- 1 (15 oz.) Can diced tomatoes
- 1 (10 oz.) Can of enchilada sauce
- 2 (16 oz.) Cups chicken broth (2 cups water + 2 chicken bouillon)
- 2 Additional Cups Water
- 1 (4 oz.) Can chopped green chili peppers
- 1½ cups frozen corn
- 1 teaspoon cumin
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 bag tortilla chips (optional)
- 8 tablespoons butter (optional)
- 8 tablespoons flour (optional)

**Instructions:**

1. Chop the onion into a size you desire. Chop the garlic.
    - Efficient: don't stress too much about the size/shape. It's going into the slow cooker and won't be very recognizable
  2. Put everything except the tortilla chips, butter, and flour in the slow cooker on high for 4 hours or on low for 6+ hours.
  3. (optional) As the slow cooker is finishing, make a roux.
    - Up to 8 tablespoon butter and 8 tablespoon flour.
    - Refer to the "traditional chicken dinner" recipe on making the roux. When finished, add to the slow cooker.
2. Gently break up the chicken and serve with tortilla chips for dipping, scooping, and crumbling.
- I highly recommend the roux; it is well worth the extra time. If you are dieting, I'd try using half the butter/flour, but this is your delicious soup. You can make it low calorie with no roux.

## **Seductive Savory Alfredo Monday**

**Active Time:** 20 minutes

**Passive Time:** 0 minutes

**Total Time:** 20 minutes

**Servings:** 3-4

### **Features:**

- High Calorie Per Dollar
- High Protein Per Dollar
- Nutritious
- Delicious
- Romantic

**Summary:** This recipe has been refined over the past 6 years and is quite the pleaser. The most difficult part is the timing. The goal is to have everything complete at the same time. Cold noodles, cold chicken/broccoli, or cold sauce are a real danger.

### **Rough timing:**

- 12 minutes to boil water and cook noodles.
- 4 minutes to cut the chicken and 8 minutes to cook.
- 2 minutes to start the sauce and 5 minutes to make the roux. Cook the sauce another 2-4 minutes.
- 5 minutes to microwave the broccoli and another 1-4 minutes to finish in the sauce.

The difficult part is that everything takes a similar amount of time and the order is important. Holding bowls and preparation is key. Multiple heating methods will be going on at the same time. The most important thing is to finish the noodles last. Everything else can hold “good enough.” If the sauce is too thick, add extra milk or water.

### **Ingredients:**

- 3 cloves garlic
- 3 chicken breasts
- 1 box alfredo (angel hair) noodles (choose the quantity you’d like. We usually use 75% of the box.)
- 2 cups (whole) milk (I recommend heavy whipping cream)
- 1/3 cup parmesan cheese
- 3 tablespoons butter
- 3 tablespoon flour
- (optional) 1/8 cup crumbled bacon

### Instructions:

1. Get a pot full of warm water. Bring it to boil. (optional: salt the water)
2. Get out a medium bowl, a large bowl, cutting board, chef knife, large pan, small sauce pan.
3. Chop garlic. Mix with milk and cheese in medium bowl.
  - Mix in bacon
    - Bake bacon @350°F
    - Keep a close eye on it, have need to be flipped or moved around after 8-12 minutes.
    - Crumble up cooked bacon and lay it on a sheet
    - Freeze it in a crumbled bacon freezer bag
4. Cut chicken breasts into a size you prefer.
5. Microwave frozen broccoli for 99 seconds. Stir. 99 seconds. Stir. 99 seconds. The goal is to unfreeze, not necessarily cook.

The first foods are going to start cooking now. The order depends greatly on type of noodle – cook times vary – and the temperature at which your chicken is cooking. This recipe assumes angel hair noodles and medium heat.

6. Start large pan on medium heat with (olive) oil.
7. When hot, add chicken.
  - Separate and spread out the chicken as much as possible.
  - Set timer for 5 minutes
8. Make a roux.
  - Start low-medium-medium heat on small sauce pan.
  - Put in 3 tbsp. butter and 3 tbsp. flour.
  - Set timer for 5 minutes. Begin stirring and stir constantly.
  - Warning: roux is easy to burn. Stir the whole time.
9. Chicken and roux will finish at close to the same time. Paying attention to roux should be your priority. Dump the medium bowl into the roux. Stir.
10. Flip the chicken.
  - Set timer for 4 minutes for the chicken.
  - Warning: alfredo sauce is easy to burn. Stir frequently.

**PROTIP:** *If the Sauce gets too thick, add water or Milk and place a Lid on top. If it's too thin, continue to boil.*

11. Put Noodles in boiling water. Set timer for 5 minutes.
12. Stir the Alfredo Sauce and Noodles occasionally.
13. When the chicken timer goes off, add the broccoli and Alfredo sauce directly to the chicken Pan. Cook for a few more minutes.
14. When the Noodles are finished, strain them and serve immediately.

This sounds more difficult than it is.

**Countermeasures for potential problems:**

If the noodles are cold, the creamy sauce should be warm and will improve the texture.

If the sauce is too thick, add water or milk. If the sauce is perfect but is sputtering and making a mess, put a lid on top and turn down the heat.

If the sauce is too thin, continue cooking.

If the flavor isn't strong enough, add salt. There is almost no salt in this entire recipe. You can salt the water, chicken, broccoli, and sauce. That or add salt after the fact – when I serve this to friends, you bet I salt everything!

## **Nacho Tuesday**

**Active Time:** 20 minutes (+8 for refried beans)

**Passive Time:** 0 minutes (+10 minutes for oven-melted cheese, +8 hours for refried beans)

**Total Time:** 20 minutes

**Servings:** 3-6

### **Features:**

- High Protein Per Dollar
- Versatile
- Delicious
- Fun to Eat

**Summary:** Nachos are an all-around fun thing to build and eat. Using leftover chips from chicken tortilla soup, we can potentially reduce the number of chips that will go stale.

### **Ingredients:**

- 1½ lbs. ground beef
- 1 bag nacho/tortilla chips
- (3 cups) pinto beans (optional)
- Sour cream (optional)
- Shredded cheddar cheese (optional)
- Pickled jalapeños (optional)
- Hot sauce (optional)

### **Instructions:**

1. (optional) Make refried beans.
2. Cook ground beef. Follow directions from “taco” recipe.
3. Prepare your chips. You have two options:
  - Microwaved chips (60 seconds):
    - Place chips on the plate you will eat from.
    - Sprinkle (a lot of) cheese on the chips.
    - Microwave for 60 seconds.
  - Oven chips (5-10 minutes):
    - Place chips on a pan.
    - Sprinkle with (a lot of) cheese.
    - Place them in the oven. Turn it on at 350 degrees for 5 minutes.
    - Check often. The goal is to melt the cheese.
    - Some may like to brown the chips lightly. The broil setting is best for this. Warning: as before, going from golden brown to burnt can happen in less than 15 seconds.
4. Top with taco meat, refried beans, sour cream, hot sauce, jalapeños, more cheese, and whatever you like on your nachos.

## **Spaghetti with Generations of Secrets Wednesday**

**Active Time:** 1 hour (make in bulk, freeze, then only 10 minutes to make a dinner)

**Passive Time:** 4 hours

**Total Time:** 5 hours

**Servings:** You decide

**Features:**

- High Calorie Per Dollar
- Nutritious
- High Protein Per Dollar
- Made with Love
- Delicious
- Traditional

**Summary:** This is a recipe mom made my whole life. It's a recipe dad made every week when mom worked.

As an Italian- "I'm not allowed to like spaghetti sauce unless it's my ma's or grandma's."

There's truth to that; no spaghetti sauce compares to mom's. Feel free to play around with the herbs and spices. The real magic is in the process.

**From My Mom:**

Spaghetti Sauce

1 med. onion diced, I use food processor  
 2 (15 oz.) cans tomato sauce  
 1 (6 oz.) can tomato paste  
 olive oil  
 (1+ tsp) oregano  
 (1+ tsp) basil  
 (1+ tsp) garlic salt  
 (1 pinch) baking soda  
 (1+ tbsp.) sugar

Cook onions in olive oil until soft

Add tomato sauce and paste

Add water- I usually add a little to the tomato sauce can to get the excess sauce out not a full can. I do use a full can of the tomato paste to try to get all the paste out of the can

Heat until it starts to bubble

Add a pinch of baking soda, it will foam (this takes out the acidity)



Add oregano to taste (tsp)  
 basil to taste (tsp)  
 garlic salt to taste (tsp)  
 sugar to taste (TbS)

Simmer for a few hours uncovered, stirring frequently or it will burn  
 you can put in fridge, it usually tastes better the next day  
 You can freeze and thaw when needed

If you want to make bulk sauce I go to a Wholesale Store and buy the big can of tomato sauce and two 12 oz can of tomato paste then just add more of all the other things  
 I then freeze the sauce in 5-6 containers and thaw as needed

If you want to make meatballs

3/4 lb ground round  
 1-egg  
 seasoned bread crumbs

put meat in bowl, add egg, mix, add bread crumbs so it isn't too wet  
 if you add too much it will taste more like filler than meat  
 form into balls (I use a melon baller to keep them uniform)  
 cook in boiling water until they float.  
 Then put them in the sauce to cook and soak up the sauce

I hope this makes sense

Joann

Can you feel the love?

#### **Some notes:**

- To save time making meat balls, you can make meat sauce by browning ground beef then adding it to the sauce.
- The baking soda is one of the secrets. As mentioned, the sauce is less acidic by doing this. I use this trick in our chili.
- The sugar isn't to reduce the acidity, but rather to lighten the sauce. My grandma makes a spring sauce and a winter sauce. The spring sauce has more sugar, while the winter sauce has less. Your call.
- Garlic bread is a great addition. Slice some (fresh) bread. Put some (melted) butter, salt, (onion powder) and garlic powder on it. Pop it in the oven until it lightly browns.
- play with the recipe. What makes spaghetti sauce so amazing is that it isn't a recipe you found; it's yours. No restaurant will compare.

## **Leftover Thursday/Breakfast #3 French Toast**

**Active Time:** 10+ minutes (depends on how many batches)

**Passive Time:** 0 minutes

**Total Time:** 10+ minutes

**Servings:** You decide

**Features:**

- High Calorie Per Dollar
- Delicious
- Easy
- Ingredients Are Always Stocked

**Summary:** Didn't go to the grocery store? Hungry? Have eggs and bread? Feed a family in 10 minutes or make it as dessert. Scale the recipe accordingly.

**Ingredients:**

- 10 slices of bread
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup milk
- 4 eggs
- Splash of vanilla
- Splash of cinnamon
- 4+ tablespoon butter

**Instructions:**

1. Mix (whisk) eggs, milk, cinnamon and vanilla in a shallow bowl.
2. Start large pan on medium heat. Place 2+ tablespoon butter on the pan.
3. Once the pan is hot, dip each side of the bread into the mixture and toss into the pan.
  - Don't let it sit in the milk/egg mixture very long or it will get soggy.
4. Cook for 1-2 minutes on each side.
  - The bread should crisp up.
  - Shaking the pan back and forth should free the bread from the pan. That's a good sign. That means it's done/almost done.
5. Repeat for as many slices of bread as you like.
  - After the first batch, the pan is usually hotter and cooks faster.
  - You may need to add more butter to the pan between batches.
6. (optional) top each slice of bread with a sliver of butter.
  - More butter=better. Highly recommended if you aren't watching your weight.
7. Serve with your favorite French toast topping. I prefer fake maple syrup. It's sugary and delicious. We have served this with fresh fruit and it looks professional.

To make it last longer, we freeze our bread. For a few slices, 10-20 seconds in the microwave gets it soft enough to dip.

## **Sloppy Joe Friday**

**Active Time:** 12 minutes

**Passive Time:** 0 minutes

**Total Time:** 12 minutes

**Servings:** 4

### **Features:**

- Good Calorie Per Dollar
- Good Protein Per Dollar
- Can be A Diet Food

**Summary:** Easy to make recipe. The biggest thing is determining the thickness that you prefer. Extra sloppy or extra thick?

### **Ingredients:**

- (optional) 4 hamburger buns
- (optional) 1 box mac and cheese (this can be made from scratch, but I'm lazy and to me, the center piece is the 'joe')
- 1 lb. ground beef
- 15 oz. can tomato sauce
- 1 tablespoon mustard
- 1 tablespoon vinegar
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- Frozen broccoli

### **Instructions:**

1. Brown the ground beef on medium or medium-high heat in a large pan.
2. (optional) Start mac and cheese.
3. Put tomato sauce, mustard, vinegar, and sugar in the large pan.
4. Warm up broccoli in microwave.
5. Cook the ground beef until it reaches your preference of thickness.
6. (optional) Toast buns in the oven using the broil setting. Warning: 15 seconds is the difference between golden brown and burnt.

There are two ways you can eat this. There's the traditional:

Meat on hamburger bun, broccoli + mac and cheese on the side.

Salad style: mix everything. Mix the mac and cheese with hamburger, mix the mac and cheese with broccoli.

When dieting, I'll eat this with meat and broccoli only. A delicious way to consume protein.

## **Brown Sugar pork (n' Potatoes) Saturday**

**Active Time:** 5 minutes (+10 minutes for potatoes)

**Passive Time:** 5 hours (+1 hour for potatoes)

**Total Time:** 5 hours

**Servings:** 5

**Features:**

- Great Calorie Per Dollar
- Great Protein Per Dollar
- Different

**Summary:** Sweet little recipe that can be made quickly. I've made this with rice and it was good. I personally prefer spicy potatoes for the huge variety of flavor. (Note: Upon eating this for years, plain white rice has become my favorite.)

### **Brown Sugar pork:**

#### **Ingredients:**

- Frozen peas (as a side dish, microwaved/steamed before serving)
- 1 boneless pork loin roast, 4 to 6 pounds
- 1 clove garlic, halved
- Salt and pepper
- 1 1/3 cups brown sugar, divided
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar
- 1/4 teaspoon cinnamon

#### **Instructions:**

1. Combine brown sugar, mustard, vinegar, cinnamon and mix in a bowl.
2. Put pork loin and garlic in a slow cooker. Rub mixture on the pork loin. Turn slow cooker on for 6+ hours on high or 8+ hours on low.
3. Serve. Use the juices as a light mixture/gravy.

**Spicy Potatoes:****Ingredients:**

- 5-6 (red) potatoes
- Red pepper flakes
- Salt
- (fresh) Black pepper
- Garlic powder
- Thyme
- Olive oil
- (optional) onion powder

**Instructions:**

1. Start the oven at 375 degrees.
2. Scrub and wash the potatoes. (Efficient: don't skin the potatoes)
3. Cut the potatoes into cubes of your preferred size. (Efficient: the smaller the pieces, the faster they cook)
4. Spray a pan with non-stick spray and add a single layer of potatoes.
5. Sprinkle the spices over the potatoes. Salt gently.
6. Lightly drizzle olive oil over the potatoes.
7. Put in the oven for 30-50 minutes. Test for tenderness at 30 minutes.

This is a free-form spicy potato recipe. Add spices that taste good. I like heavy spices. To save time, feel free to use premixed spices if they smell like something you want on the potatoes.

## Week 4

### Soooo Gooood Lentil Sooooup Sunday

**Active Time:** 15 minutes

**Passive Time:** 1 hour

**Total Time:** 1¼ hours

**Servings:** 6

**Features:**

- High Calorie Per Dollar
- High Protein Per Dollar
- Deliciously Addicting
- Can be Made in bulk
- Extremely Nutritious

**Summary:** Mandy hated beans and green-colored things. Lentils were not something she was going to taste. After 5 minutes of drama trying to get her to taste it, she asked for a bowl. This is literally an addicting dish. You have been warned. Inspired by Alton Brown's lentil soup

**Ingredients:**

- 1 onion
- ½ cup celery
- ½ cup carrot
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 (15 oz.) can diced tomato
- 1 lb. lentils
- 2 teaspoons salt
- ½ teaspoons cumin
- 8 cups chicken broth (efficient: 8 chicken bouillon cubes + 8 cups water)
- ½ teaspoon coriander (optional)

**Instructions:**

1. Chop up the carrots, celery, and onion into dime sized pieces. (efficient: don't worry about them being perfect. Chop them as good as you can, as quick as you can, and as safely as you can)
  2. Start a large pot on medium heat. Add salt and chopped veggies. Set a timer for 5 minutes and stir every minute or so. This is called sweating.
  3. Once the onions are translucent, add the rest of the ingredients. If you want the soup to be green, only add 1 cup of dice tomatoes. Otherwise add the entire can.
  4. Get the pot to a roaring boil, and then turn down the heat to ensure it doesn't overflow. Place a lid on top so that it's slightly cracked. Cook for 40 minutes to 1 hour. No stirring needed.
- (optional) upon completion, transfer contents to a mixing bowl and blend them. This will make it creamy, like a split-pea soup. We do this every time. Serve as-is or on top of noodles for seconds.

## **Pad Thai Monday**

**Active Time:** 20 minutes

**Passive Time:** 0 minutes

**Total Time:** 20 minutes

**Servings:** 4

**Features:**

- Great Calorie Per Dollar
- High Protein Per Dollar
- It's Pad Thai

**Summary:** We realized some amateur moves in the recipe we found. Not enough peanuts, not enough oil, and not enough detail in each step. As with most recipes, everything could be thrown into a pan and cooked together until the food is edible, but following these steps will give you restaurant-grade pad Thai.

**Ingredients:**

- 2 chicken breasts (sometimes we use 3 or 4 if we want the protein)
- 1(12 oz.) rice noodle package
- 3 green onions
- 2 cups bean sprouts (we use canned)
- 2 tablespoons fish sauce
- ½ cup crushed peanuts
- 4 eggs
- ½ teaspoons red pepper flakes
- 1 tablespoon vinegar
- 3 tablespoons sugar
- Peanut oil (see instructions)
- Butter (see instructions)
- (optional) Lemon

**Instructions:**

1. Prepare the noodles as instructed on the box. The goal is to get the noodles soft to your preference. This is more of a skill than you would expect. These noodles do not need to be boiled, but rather soaked. Soak for too long and it becomes mushy. Don't soak long enough, they are too firm. Follow the directions and begin testing before the instructions finish. Feel free to let soak longer than directed.
2. Cut/dice green onions. Set them aside in the large bowl. Crush peanuts into your preferred texture (using a mortar and pestle). Add to large bowl. Drain bean sprouts and add to large bowl. Cut chicken breasts into your favorite Asian food sized shapes.

3. (Optional) Get out the medium bowl and put in fish sauce, sugar, red pepper flakes, and vinegar. Stir. This is optional, since you could add them directly to the pan while cooking. However, given how quickly things will cook and how mixing each of the ingredients will mush your noodles, a pre-mixed bowl is beneficial.
4. Put your largest pan on medium or medium-high heat. Add at least 2 tablespoons of (peanut) oil.
5. Once water sizzles on the pan, throw your chicken onto the pan and let cook for 4 minutes on medium, 2 minutes on medium-high, or until browned. Flip the chicken and repeat.
6. Push the chicken to the sides of the pan and crack 4 eggs into the center. Scramble.
7. Once finished, add everything. Noodles, large bowl, medium bowl. Everything! Do your best to distribute the food equally around the entire pan.
8. (optional, but recommended) Add either 8 tablespoons peanut oil or 8 tablespoons butter to make it taste like restaurant pad Thai
9. Stir/fold gently. Too much movement will mush the noodles. Warning: medium-high heat can cause burning if you are not keeping an eye on it.
10. Turn off the heat. Serve with lemon wedges and cayenne pepper.



## **Italian Style chicken and Cheese Quesadilla Tuesday**

**Active Time:** 15 minutes

**Passive Time:** 0 minutes

**Total Time:** 15 minutes

**Servings:** 2

**Features:**

- Great Calorie Per Dollar
- High Protein Per Dollar
- Quick
- No Grocery Store Needed

**Summary:** Called “Italian Style” because it’s cooked in olive oil. Here’s an easy recipe that has a few shortcuts. Completes the “Taco Tuesday” theme we’ve established. Serves 2, but feel free to scale up.

**Ingredients:**

- 2 chicken breasts
- Olive oil
- 2 large flour tortillas
- Cheese
- (optional) Sour cream
- (optional) Salsa
- (optional) Jalapeños

**Instructions:**

1. Cut the chicken breasts into bite-sized pieces.
2. Start a large pan at medium heat. Add 2 (or more) tablespoons of olive oil. The more, the better. Try 8 tablespoons.
3. Once water sizzles on the pan, add chicken and cook for 4 minutes on each side.
4. Remove chicken from heat and begin building quesadillas
  - a. Lay tortilla flat. To one half of the tortilla add cheese, then chicken, then more cheese. (optional: add jalapeños)
  - b. Fold over.
5. Place in the large pan. It should still be hot and will instantly begin sizzling. The chicken that was browned will add a delicious flavor to the tortilla. The oil will help puff up and brown the tortilla. WARNING: Carbs burn quickly. 15 seconds is all it takes to go from delicious brown to burnt.
6. Repeat the build for each quesadilla.
7. Serve with sour cream and salsa on the side. Salsa is low calorie and packed with flavor. Feel free to make your own salsa. I’m no expert, I simply love eating.

If you don't want to cook in oil, microwaving at step 4 is a quick and low calorie way to melt cheese. You could warm on low-medium heat without oil, but we are going to save those specifics for salsa chicken burritos.

## **Hobo Stew Wednesday**

**Active Time:** 20 minutes

**Passive Time:** 1-4+ hours

**Total Time:** 1-4 hours

**Servings:** 4+

**Features:**

- High Calorie Per Dollar
- Great Protein Per Dollar
- Easy

**Summary:** Hobo stew is a pretty versatile way to cook food. Feel free to throw anything in. I'll be sharing our favorite formula. Here we will provide 2 methods of cooking this: The slow cooker and the oven. Scale up as needed. We often make enough for lunches all week.

**Ingredients:**

- 1+ lb. of ground beef
- 1 onion
- 4 potatoes
- 2 cups carrots
- Garlic powder
- Salt
- Black pepper
- 4+ tablespoons butter
- Cooking spray

**Note:** Requires aluminum foil

**Instructions:**

1. Turn on oven at 350 degrees or slow cooker on high.
2. Cut out 4 aluminum foil sheets the size of an open 3-ring binder. Spray each with cooking spray.
3. Make hamburger-shaped ground beef patties. Place them on the foil sheets. We usually put 2 on each.
4. Cut carrots, onion, and potatoes into bite-sized pieces. Divide pieces into each patty.
5. Sprinkle salt over everything. Remember, you can always add more but you cannot remove.
6. Add garlic powder and black pepper. Put 1+ tablespoon of butter into each.
7. Close each foil so it houses the food inside. There should be 1 opening facing upward.

8. Cook the hobo stew.

- For the slow cooker, place each foil inside. Leave on for 4 hours on high or 6 hours on low.
- For the oven, which I recommend, place each foil on a pan and put them in. Check after 40-60 minutes for cooked beef and soft potatoes.

Tradition is to put one scalding hot piece of aluminum foil on each plate, and have each person open theirs and dump on their plate.

Picky eaters can decide what they want to put in their foil. Healthy eaters can throw in a bunch of vegetables. It is a dynamic dish!

## **Leftover Thursday/Bagel Egg and Cheese**

**Active Time:** 10 minutes

**Passive Time:** 0 minutes

**Total Time:** 10 minutes

**Servings:** You decide

### **Features:**

- Great Calorie Per Dollar
- High Protein Per Dollar
- Versatile
- Fast

**Summary:** Before it was cool, my dad was making bagel egg and cheese sandwiches. These can be made with a variety of cheeses, a variety of bread mediums like toast or english muffins, and can have different proteins like sausage or bacon. The most important skill involved here is going to be the timing.

This recipe will make 1 complete sandwich.

### **Ingredients:**

- 2 eggs
- 1 bagel (frozen, fresh, or refrigerated)
- (optional) Breakfast sausage
- Cheddar cheese (optional: Velveeta slices are choice)

### **Instructions:**

1. (optional) Start the breakfast sausages. Follow package instructions.
2. Place pan for eggs on medium heat. Spray with non-stick spray.
3. Break the yolk and form egg into patties.
4. Start toasting the bagel.
5. When the bottom of the egg is cooked pretty well, flip it. Err on the side of over-cooking. It's better to get a good flip than a messy flip.
6. After the first flip, turn off the heat. Add cheese to the top.
7. Once the cheese is melted, transfer egg to the bagel. Top with breakfast sausage.

Include a frozen vegetable for a well-rounded meal. Play around with the 'doneness' of the eggs. I've recently been attempting the perfect 'over medium' egg for this instead of scrambled.

## **Salsa Chicken Burritos Friday**

**Active Time:** 1 minute (+10 minutes for warm tortillas)

**Passive Time:** 4+ hours

**Total Time:** 4 hours

**Servings:** 4

### **Features:**

- High Calorie Per Dollar
- High Protein Per Dollar
- Good for Diets
- Slow Cooker
- Easy
- Low Effort
- Versatile

**Summary:** A slow cooker recipe that can be modified without much effort. Picking different types of salsa and different cuts of meat will change it up from week to week.

### **Ingredients:**

- 5 chicken thighs (can be replaced with breasts)
- 1 jar salsa
- Flour tortillas
- (optional) Cheese
- (optional) Jalapeños
- (optional) Sour cream

### **Instructions:**

1. Put chicken thighs in slow cooker and add salsa. Set to high for 4 hours or low for 6+ hours.
2. Shred chicken.
3. (optional) Put chicken in a large pan and cook down the excess liquid on medium-high heat.
4. Wrap chicken in a tortilla shell. Add cheese and jalapeños.
5. (optional) Place tortilla shell on a pan over low-medium heat for 4-6 minutes. Flip and warm for another 4-6 minutes. This should lightly brown and crisp up the sides, sealing the delicious burrito together. This can be done in the pan that the chicken was reduced in for extra flavor.

### **Notes:**

If you are going to reduce the liquid, you are at risk of making dry chicken. Consider adding lard or an oil to give smoothness.

Try different types of salsas. Black bean + corn is my current favorite.

Try adding black beans or pinto beans to the slow cooker for extra protein.

## **Pork Thai Fried Rice Saturday**

**Active Time:** 15 minutes

**Passive Time:** 30 minutes (+2 hours optional)

**Total Time:** 45 minutes

**Servings:** 3-4

### **Features:**

- High Calorie Per Dollar
- High Protein Per Dollar
- Insanely Delicious (It's Thai Food!)
- No Cutting chicken Needed

**Summary:** Repeating the chicken Fried Rice recipe, but with Pulled pork. This is our preferred method of making Fried Rice. Savory and Sweet.

### **Ingredients:**

- 3 cloves garlic
- 3 green onions
- 2 cups (jasmine) rice
- 1½ lbs. pork
- 1 can soda pop
- 3 tablespoons fish sauce
- 1 tablespoon oyster sauce
- 2 teaspoons sugar
- ¾ cup frozen peas
- 2 eggs
- 2 tablespoons (peanut) oil
- 1 lime (deliciously optional)
- 1 cucumber (extra deliciously optional)
- 8 tablespoons butter (optional, if you want it to taste like a Thai restaurant)
- Cayenne pepper (optional, for added heat)

**Pre Note:** We make this so often that we've figured out what's optional. I suggest going all-out the first time.

### **Instructions:**

1. Start with the rice. Optionally, rinse the rice until the water runs clear. Then begin cooking the rice. Jasmine is our favorite for this. Cooling gives it a better texture but is optional. We often throw the rice in the fridge/outside the night before to let it cool.
2. Start chopping.
3. Next, cut the pork into the shape you see at Asian restaurants. In other words, small enough to eat. Don't sweat it if it's not perfect; it'll taste good regardless. 😊

4. Turn the stove to medium-high. In a rush I'll do high heat, but only because I know how hot the burner is going to get. It's important to learn your stove. Place your very large skillet on the heat. Add peanut oil and let it warm up.
5. Get the peas out of the freezer and toss them into the large bowl. Grab the eggs and place them near the stove.
6. Pour a bit of water on the oil. If it sizzles, we are ready. Throw the pork on, spread out as much as possible. At medium-high heat, expect to flip after 3 or 4 minutes. Your goal is to lightly brown the pork. Start from the middle of the pan (the hottest part) and work outward with your longest pair of tongs, flipping each piece. After another 2-4 minutes, both sides should be browned.
7. Push the pork to the edges of the pan. Crack the eggs and toss them in the middle. Quickly scramble them.
8. After the egg is scrambled (1-2 minutes), throw in all the veggies from the large bowl. Let cook for about 3 minutes. The veggies will cool down the heat a bit. Mix everything gently.
9. This next part requires full attention. Do not start doing the dishes (any time you are on medium-high heat). Throw in the oyster sauce, the fish sauce, the sugar, and (optional) the butter. Do your best to spread these sauces around. A second person at this point is really helpful. Fold (don't stir) the rice in. The gentler, the better. Rice will burn at medium-high heat unless you move it constantly. This should take between 1 and 5 minutes.
10. The rice will turn brownish with the sauces. Once the rice is heated, colored, and mixed in with everything, we are ready to serve.
11. Chop cucumber and lime wedges into thin slices. Place them on the side of the plate and bring out the cayenne pepper. Remember: with the lime/cayenne pepper you can always add more, but you cannot take away.

**Last Notes:** The first time you make any recipe or a technique, you are going to take longer. You will make more mistakes than the 10<sup>th</sup> time you make anything.

A short story on mistakes. My sister, a professional hairdresser, was cutting my hair and we started talking about how my wife usually cuts my hair.

"I know where I make mistakes, so I know how to fix it."

That line changed me. I was practicing guitar and I could play a song, but it didn't quite sound like a record. It wasn't the guitar, it was me. I wasn't muting the strings after a mistake. As I got better, muting an accidentally hit string became second nature.

Cooking is the same way. After years of browning chicken, I know the sound chicken makes when it browns. I know the sound chicken makes when it burns. It changes depending on the temperature of the heat and the type of heat (gas/electric).

You are going to be eating for the next 365.25 days \* x years of your life. Make that food the most delicious, the healthiest, and the most effective way possible. You will have a chance to fine-tune everything.



## Breakfast/Lunch Ideas:

I will mass produce these early in the week, separate into storage containers, and microwave throughout the week.

### Pinto Beans + Cheese:

Extremely high protein per dollar, great calorie per dollar, meet your daily fiber in 140 calories, and feel full.

1. Add pinto beans and fill generously with water to slow cooker. (i.e.: 3 cups beans 8 cups water)
2. Turn on low for 8 hours
3. Divide into containers, top with cheddar cheese.

If it doesn't have much flavor, add salt. Can be replaced with black beans. Warning: red beans cannot be cooked in the slow cooker in this way. They must be soaked first and use a different process.

### Lentils + Oil:

Absurdly high protein per dollar, high calorie per dollar, meet your daily fiber in 140 calories, and feel full.

1. Turn on burner to high, fill pot with hot water and lentils. Keep water at a boil.
2. Wait 15-20 minutes, no stirring needed. (you will determine how 'done' you prefer over a few batches)
3. Strain lentils, divide into containers
4. Top with olive oil

The first time you make this, add a fast food amount of salt to it. Make your first experience good. I have also swapped out oil for sour cream. With some sour cream, add spices like black pepper. It will change the food completely. Out of efficiency I've enjoyed sour cream + premixed spices.

### Chicken Breast + Seasoning:

This is a good addition to both lentils and pinto beans, essentially teaching a quick way to cook chicken in bulk.

1. Start oven at 350 degrees
2. Clean chicken (cut off fat)
3. Butterfly the chicken – cut down the thin way, this will make 2 very thin pieces. Search online for a how-to.
4. Spray a pan with nonstick spray, place chicken on, cook on each side for 8 minutes.
5. Divide into containers

## **Protein Shake:**

I do not buy protein powder unless I get above 40 grams of protein per dollar. This makes protein comparable to chicken breast costs. Do the math, grams of protein multiply by servings, divided by price. That's it.

Formulas to good tasting protein powder:

Don't buy vanilla

Mix with at least 1% milk.

If you have a lot of time, I used to blend fruit into protein shakes. However, this is very time consuming. I would only do this to use the rest of my vanilla protein powder.

For those trying to gain weight I used to make:

- 16 oz. whole milk
- 1 scoop whey protein
- 1-2 tbsp. olive oil
- 1 tbsp. grinded up oats
- Coco syrup

I'd have this for breakfast and before bed. Easy 800 calories, and I was still hungry for lunch and dinner.

## **Leftovers:**

Tips: separate liquids and carbs in different containers. It keeps the carbs crisper.

Fruits are a quick way to get calories and nutrition in a rush.

Frozen veggies + microwave (or let thaw) are a great way to add vitamins, and fiber to fill yourself up.

We leave Thursdays open for leftovers, if we don't have leftovers, we will eat some sort of breakfast for dinner foods. We always have eggs in the refrigerator, breakfast sausage and toast in the freezer. In this book there are 4 cost effective, tasty, and easy recipes that we often will use on a Thursday.

**PROTIP:** 90 seconds

*As an absurdly large person once recommended to me, 90 seconds is the perfect time for a microwave. It makes everything hot enough, or is the time to stir it. I trust their lifelong wisdom. Pushing 90 saves you the time of hitting a third button (1:30), that 1 second it takes will save you 300 minutes over the course of your lifetime.*