

Fast & Healthy Foods for Families on the Go

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As a working mother of three children, I know what it takes to be a working mom and feed your children healthy meals. Because of my children's food allergies and celiac disease, we don't have the luxury of fast food meals; it is simply not an option for us. We do however have fast and healthy meals. There are several ways that we accomplish this. This is a tip sheet on how to produce healthy meals in a short amount of time. I have included some recipes to make it even easier.

1. Use the Freezer

A freezer is a must for fast and healthy meals. It is also a must if you want to save money on organic meats and produce. We use our freezer for excess greens, organic meats that we buy in bulk, and for storing ready-made meals. One tip is to use a small kitchen scale to weigh the frozen portions in convenient size for later use. Although a freezer requires an initial financial investment, but it will save you time and money in the long run, when it comes to eating healthier.

2. Stir Fry for Speed

You can stir fry vegetables alone, or meat with vegetables or even a meal loaded with meat, vegetables and pasta. Stir-frying is a fast way to put a full meal together or a quick side dish. Stir-frying does not require a special pan - any large frying pan or skillet will suffice.

3. Slow Cooker Meals

Your grandmother probably used a slow cooker because she knew it saves time. You can cook many different foods in a slow cooker. Slow cookers offer a convenient way to prepare meals that many people have forgotten about. As more people are getting into health and nutrition the old fashioned slow cooker is coming back in style!

4. Smoothies

Smoothies offer a quick way to pack nutrients from several different foods into one, convenient drink. Use smoothies for a fast breakfast with very little clean up and you will power pack your day with nutrition. You can add other ingredients to the recipes I have provided below for additional flavors.

5. Double Size When Cooking Meals

Make the time spent in the kitchen worth twice as much by cooking two meals at once. You can eat one now and freeze one for later. Women have been using this old trick for decades. You can freeze portions in individual serving sizes if desired. We do this with the Shepherd's Pie that we make and freeze.

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Turkey Pasta Toss

This is a very popular recipe at our house - my three young children can eat the whole batch! It is also very flexible – you can add other vegetables or tomato sauce for additional variations.

1 medium onion, chopped (¾ to 1 cup)
1 pound ground turkey
3 stalks celery, thinly sliced at an angle
3 medium carrots, thinly sliced
1 large clove garlic, minced
2 tablespoons safflower oil

12 ounces gluten-free pasta (we like rice penne noodles or spirals)

Optional:

2 tablespoons safflower oil, additional
To taste: salt and pepper

Cook the pasta in boiling water. While the pasta is boiling, cook the onions in 1 to 2 tablespoons of oil in a large skillet. Add the ground turkey and sauté into small pieces until well cooked. Add the celery and carrot slices and cook on low heat until desired softness. We sometimes leave the vegetables a little crunchy.

When the pasta is done, drain and add it to the skillet. If desired, add 1 to 2 more tablespoons of oil and salt and pepper to taste. Stir and heat the mixture through.

This makes approximately four, 2-cup servings. For added variety, you can add or use other vegetables, or add tomato or cream sauce.

Slow Cooker Meatballs

2 pounds ground beef, turkey, chicken or pork
To taste: salt and pepper
Two 26 ounce jars of sauce or homemade sauce

Place the ground meat in a mixing bowl and add salt and pepper. Form meatballs and brown in a frying pan until lightly brown on all sides. This helps to hold the meatballs together and to keep the juices in the meatball during cooking. Place browned meatballs in a slow cooker with the sauce of your choice and place on high until it is bubbly. Then turn heat to low and simmer for 3 hours. If you don't have a slow cooker, you can place the meatballs and sauce in a baking dish and bake in the oven at 375° for 1 hour to 1 hour and 15 minutes or until the meatballs are done. This recipe does not add any filler. You may add acceptable breadcrumbs, crushed cereal or cooked or dried rice as filler. This makes approximately 45 walnut sized meatballs.

Chili on the Go-Go

This is a FAST and EASY vegetarian chili recipe that could easily be converted to be a hearty meat chili by throwing in some ground meat, poultry or turkey. I have used canned beans here for speed, however if you have more time you can soak and cook dried beans. The great thing about this vegetarian chili is that you can use any vegetables that you like or that you have on hand. The beans are interchangeable for any beans that you have on hand also! You can eat this plain in a bowl, or over rice or your favorite gluten-free grain.

- 1 Tablespoon oil**
- 1 large onion, sliced**
- 1 red pepper, cut into bite-sized chunks**
- 4 medium carrots, peeled and sliced into bite-sized chunks**
- 1 15-ounce can black beans, rinsed and drained**
- 1 15-ounce can pinto beans, rinsed and drained**
- 1 15-ounce tomato sauce**
- 1 15-ounce diced tomatoes**
- 1/4 teaspoon dried basil**
- 1 Tablespoon chili powder**
- Dash of cinnamon**
- 2 teaspoons of sugar, stevia or other sweetener**
- Dash cayenne pepper**
- Salt to taste**

Optional: Any other vegetables that you like or want to use up!

Sauté the onion slices in the oil over medium high heat until soft and caramelized. Add the red peppers, carrots and any other vegetables you are using. Sauté for 10 minutes over medium heat. Add the beans that have been rinsed well and drained, the tomato sauce and diced tomatoes and the spices. Cook over medium low heat for 20 minutes. This recipe as listed above will make 6-7 cups. We liked this so well that when I made it again tonight, I doubled the recipe! Enjoy and eat in good health!

Apple-Raspberry Smoothie

- 1 cup pure drinking water**
- 2 apples, cored and sliced**
- ½ cup raspberries, either fresh or frozen**
- 3 fresh kale leaves**

Mix the water, apples and raspberries in the blender and purée until smooth. Then add the kale leaves and blend until smooth and creamy. You may add more water if necessary. This makes 2 servings or a little more than 2 cups.

Banana-Blueberry Smoothie

- 2 bananas**
- ½ cup blueberries (fresh or frozen)**
- ½ cup pure drinking water**
- 2 fresh kale leaves**

Mix the bananas, water, and blueberries in a blender until creamy and smooth. Add the 2 fresh kale leaves and blend until the kale is puréed and smooth. Add more water if necessary. This makes 2 cups or 16 ounces.

Cauliflower and Greens Stir Fry

I made this with kale on a whim, trying to increase the number of greens and vegetables that my children would eat. Nothing could have surprised me more than when two of my three children cleaned their bowls and actually asked for seconds! This dish can easily be made as a vegetarian dish by omitting the bacon and using another acceptable oil in place of the bacon fat. You can also add additional vegetables for grown ups!

- 4 to 6 slices of bacon (free of nitrates, nitrites, and preservatives)**
- 1 small onion, finely diced**
- ½ head cauliflower or more**
- 8 to 10 very large leaves fresh kale, spinach or greens of your choice**
- To taste: salt and pepper**
- ½ cup water (omit if using frozen spinach or greens)**

Prepare cauliflower and greens by washing. Chop or rip greens and cauliflower into very small pieces, removing any coarse or thick stems, and set aside. Fry the bacon in a large skillet. Remove the bacon when fully cooked and set aside. Keep most of the bacon fat in the skillet, only removing 1 or so tablespoons, if the bacon has rendered too much fat. Fry the onion and cauliflower in the bacon fat until soft. Add the small pieces of greens and sauté. Sauté the greens until they are wilted and very soft. Once the vegetables are done, crumble the cooked bacon over the vegetables and serve.

Trail Mix or “Gorp”

I really am excited to share this gluten-free, dairy-free, tree-nut free and peanut-free recipe with you because it is a great snack food for busy people. It appeals to both children and adults although some children will snub their noses at it. When I was young we used to eat what we called trail mix or gorp. I think gorp was the name that the hikers used (“good old raisins and peanuts”). It was easy to make, portable, a quick snack food, and I could make it without nuts. Many trail mixes contained tree-nuts and I've been allergic to tree-nuts since my childhood. You can substitute any ingredients you can have for anything you don't like or do not tolerate!! I made several batches of this for a gathering in March while I was in Los Angeles and it was devoured!

- 2 cups raw sunflower seeds (unsalted or salted)***
- 1 cup roasted, hulled pumpkin seeds (raw, unsalted or roasted)***
- 1 cup raisins**
- 1 cup dried cranberries**
- 1/2 cup to 2/3 cup GF CF chocolate chips**
- 1 cup GF CF pretzel pieces, broken into bite-sized pieces**

For the sunflower seeds and pumpkin seeds, you can use raw, unsalted or roasted and salted. We like this recipe made both ways (salted and unsalted), although we use the raw and unsalted seeds more often. Mix all ingredients together gently. Store in an airtight container. This recipe makes about 6-6-1/2 cups. You can divide it in half to make just 3 cups.