HEALTHY EATING GUIDE

DESIGNING NUTRITION FOR A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

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WHAT TO EXPECT

Each day we are presented with the opportunity to be better versions of ourselves.

What we choose to do with the opportunity is solely up to us.

Have a mentality for success and know that with each success there will be multiple failures leading up to it, failure is part of the process.

Do not become frustrated, overwhelmed, or dwell in self-doubt. Use each failure as knowledge and the tools needed to be successful.

Complete a self-survey, ask hard questions, and make the commitment to yourself.

Take it a day at a time, then a week at a time, then a month at a time. There will be frustration and a lack of motivation along the way, stick to it and treat every day as an opportunity. Quitting is not part of the process.

Regardless of the hardship and trying moments faced any situation can get worse. Work hard, believe in yourself, make the decision to be better, and know that every day is an easy day.

04 | BREAKING DOWN FOOD

MEAL COMPONENTS

When deciding what to eat for each meal, it needs to include four components: protein, vegetables, healthy Fats, and carbohydrates (Macronutrients). If hungry between meals try a snack including at least two components, one of them being protein or fat. Reference the Flexible Portioning Guide to identify the correct body type and consuming food with the proper portions. It will help accelerate goals and make meals and snack satisfying.

Protein Dense Foods

Meat: Beef, lamb, pork, venison, jerky

Poultry: Chicken, turkey, eggs (whole eggs are a good source of healthy fats)

Fish and shellfish: Salmon, tuna, tilapia, flounder, halibut, clams, mussels, shrimp (oily fish like salmon, tuna, sardines, trout, mackerel are a good source of healthy fats)

Supplements: branched chain amino acids, whey protein, egg white protein, other protein powders (a good option when it's not possible to consume whole food protein)

Vegetables

Zucchini, salad greens, broccoli, mushrooms, asparagus, peppers, eggplant, onions, garlic, brussel sprouts, cauliflower, cabbage, celery, cucumber, beets, carrots, green beans, snap peas, tomatoes (yes we know they are technically fruit)

Fat dense foods

Olive oil, avocados, olives, coconut milk (oil or flakes), butter or ghee (clarified butter, an excellent cooking fat good for those sensitive to dairy)

Nuts and seeds: almonds, cashews, hazelnuts, macadamias, pecans, sesame seeds, pumpkin seeds, flax seeds, peanuts (technically a legume but contains more fat than protein or carbs)

Nut butters: Almond butter, cashew butter, tahini, peanut butter Fish oil capsules (can be used as a supplement)

Carbohydrate dense foods

Fruit: apples, pears, peaches, bananas, citrus, berries, grapes, kiwi, pineapple, melon, etc.

Carb-dense vegetables: potatoes, sweet potatoes, winter squash like butternut or acorn

Whole grains: rice, oats, quinoa, barley, bulgur, corn, popcorn, farro, wheatberries

Dairy: milk, yogurt, cottage cheese (also provides some protein, and fat if not skim. Higher protein sources of dairy include Greek yogurt and cottage cheese)

Legumes: beans, chickpeas, lentils, peas. In a meatless meal, legumes can be used as your source of protein.

Less favorable carbs: processed foods like bread or pasta, baked goods, most cereals, most packaged snacks and bars, candy, sports drinks, soda, sweetened tea, fruit juice, alcoholic drinks

All carbs are better tolerated after exercise. If you are eating starchy and sugary carbs, definitely consider consuming them during your post-exercise meal.

MACRONUTRIENTS

Big confusing words are just big confusing words. Here is the low down, macronutrients are just a type or category of food that is required in a daily diet. Don't get hung up on it.

Carbohydrates

Carbohydrates are the primary energy source in the diet. The majority of carbohydrates consumed should come in the form of vegetables and fruits, with some from legumes, whole grains, and dairy. These types of carbs digest slowly, enhance satiety, and don't result in blood sugar spikes like sugary, processed carbs found in refined grains and junk food. Consuming excess processed carbs can lead to insulin resistance and negative impacts on blood triglycerides and cholesterol. Choosing veggies and fruit over processed foods also supplies you with more fiber and essential vitamins and minerals.

Carbohydrates are tolerated better after exercise. If you are eating starchy and sugary carbohydrates, consider consuming them during your post-exercise meal when they are utilized best. In fact, after intense, prolonged bouts of exercise lasting more than 60 minutes, consuming rapidly digesting carbs can help replenish stores in the body and promote recovery.

Proteins

Proteins are the building blocks of muscle. Protein is also used as an energy source, more so at rest or during endurance exercise, and when on a lower calorie diet. Protein makes up most of the non-steroid hormones, enzymes, transport proteins, and antibodies important for all the primary bodily functions.

There are eight essential amino acids that your body can't make and needs to get from an outside source daily, along with twelve non-essential amino acids that your body can make itself. All eight of these essential amino acids are found in any animal source, and a few plant sources. For those who follow a plant-based diet, it is important to eat a diverse combination of vegetables, legumes, nuts, seeds, and tubers and consider if a protein supplement if
necessary.

Fats

"Low fat" diets have mostly gone out of style, but it's important to realize that not all fats are created equal.

Omega 3 versus omega 6 fatty acids

There's a lot of hype about omega 3s and taking fish oil.

Maintaining a dietary 1:1 ratio of omega 3 to omega 6 fats regulates a ton of bodily processes including inflammation, blood clotting, and cardiovascular, immune and nervous system function. Processed foods skew the standard American diet toward the omega 6s. Eating more omega 3s and less omega 6s can put things back into balance.

Include more omega 3s, found in fish oil, fatty fish like salmon and mackerel, grass fed meat and eggs.

Include less omega 6s, found vegetable oils, fake butter, and conventionally produced meat.

Trans fats

The FDA is actually taking steps to ban trans fats because of their risk to cardiovascular health. Trans fats are used by manufacturers to keep processed food from spoiling.

Avoid trans fats by skipping deep fried foods and products with partially hydrogenated vegetable oil in the ingredients list or trans fats listed in the Nutrition Facts.

Cholesterol

Cholesterol isn't inherently bad, and in fact, is an essential component of your cells and hormones. You may have heard about "good" and "bad" cholesterol. The "good" stuff, HDL cholesterol, actually carries excess cholesterol to the liver where it can be removed from the body, decreasing your risk of heart disease and heart attack. The "bad" stuff, LDL cholesterol, is more likely to be deposited on the walls of your arteries, increasing your risk.

The consumption of refined carbs and trans fats also leads the body to store cholesterol in smaller molecules that are also more likely to clog up your arteries. So it's not the cholesterol itself that's the problem, it's the refined carbs and trans fats.

Avoid refined carbs (like sugar, white bread, and white rice) and trans fats and eat food with more fiber, like beans, whole grains, and fruits and vegetables for optimal cardiovascular health.

Saturated fat

Saturated fats are not necessarily the bad guys either; they just need to be consumed in balance with unsaturated fats. The cardiovascular risk is associated with excess consumption of saturated fats (butter, animal fat, coconut oil) out of balance with unsaturated fats and in conjunction with high refined carb consumption.

This is another reason to avoid refined carbs and make sure to consume plenty of unsaturated fats like olive oil, avocados, nuts, fish, flax.

Triglycerides

Triglycerides are the main form of fat in the body and circulate in the blood to supply energy to the cells. High triglyceride levels increase the risk of diabetes and heart disease. Consuming more omega 3s can lower triglyceride levels and raise HDL levels. Other lifestyle factors like maintaining a healthy weight, being active, and limiting alcohol can also help lower triglycerides.

Know numbers

Total blood cholesterol, HDL, LDL, and triglyceride levels, is important for cardiovascular health. Talk to your doctor about a screening. WellSpan also offers affordable multiphasic screenings monthly. For every 1% HDL increases, the risk of heart disease decreases by 2 or 3%, so even a small improvement can have a big impact.

SUGAR & SWEETENERS

Sugar and sweeteners are sneakier than a 16-year-old trying to sneak into the house past curfew. They've made their way into every food product you can think of. Many foods you wouldn't even think of as sweet including tomato sauce, BBQ sauce, ketchup, salad dressing, bread, and peanut butter have added sweeteners. The only way to know is to check the labels of packaged foods and to prepare your own meals. The best sweetener is the one you add yourself because you have a visual on exactly what you have added rather than blindly consuming whatever the manufacturer has added.

Sugar isn't always listed as sugar on ingredient labels. Manufacturers often hide added sweeteners with scientific or unfamiliar names. Many alternative names for sugar end in –ose.

Sugar names: High fructose corn syrup, glucose, dextrose, sucrose, fructose, maltose, galactose, lactose, maltose.

Sweetener names: Agave*, honey* maple syrup*, molasses*, coconut palm sugar*, stevia*, corn syrup, corn syrup solids, cane syrup, cane juice, dehydrated or dried cane juice/syrup, brown rice syrup, invert sugar, barley malt syrup, turbinado sugar, carob syrup, fruit juice, sorghum syrup

We're not here to debate the merits of agave, honey, maple syrup, molasses, coconut palm sugar, and stevia. Some of these do contain beneficial vitamins and minerals, particularly the honey and molasses, and stevia may not have the same effect on blood sugar as other sweeteners, but the point is to recognize when sweeteners are added to your food, regardless of any fringe benefits they may contain.

Artificial Sweeteners

While artificial sweeteners don't contain any calories, they mess with the body's sense of how many calories it has consumed and lead to more cravings for sugary food or drinks. Plus, if you frequently consume sweeteners you become accustomed to sweetness in all of your food. Artificial sweeteners can be hundreds of times sweeter than actual sugar.

Artificial sweetener names: Aspartame, saccharin, sucralose, xylitol, sorbitol

Only by recognizing that your food contains sweeteners can you take steps to reduce them in your diet. If you have a lot of cravings for sugar, you'll find that the cravings lessen the less sugar you consume. (Easier said than done, we know.) Consuming sugar activates pleasure receptors in your brain not unlike addictive drugs do. After a while, your brain gets used to always being stimulated by the sugar and you eat more and more to continue to activate those same pleasure receptors. Consuming sugar also wreaks havoc on your metabolic system due to the constant yoyoing of your blood sugar and insulin levels. Over time this can lead to obesity and diabetes.

WATER

Water When you're trying to eat healthy, it's easy to focus on the food alone. But what about what you drink? Sugary beverages and artificial sweeteners definitely don't do you any favors. Even fruit juice, which packs a ton of calories and sugar (albeit natural), isn't a good option. What is the best option? It's free, it's widely available, it's easily portable, and it's WATER!

More than half of the human body is made up of water. We lose water when we breathe, sweat, and digest food, and water is essential for virtually everything the body does including getting rid of waste and maintaining the health of our organs and cells.

Water is obviously essential. How much should you drink?

Consume about half as many ounces of water each day as pounds that you weigh.

150-pound person would consume about 75 ounces per day. Depending on age, activity level, the water content in food, and the weather it could be more or less. Hydrate when thirsty.

What about sports drinks during exercise? Exercise lasting an hour or less doesn't usually require that you replace lost electrolytes. Plain old water should do in most cases. For longer, more intense bouts of exercise, or exercise in extreme heat, replacing sodium and potassium you've lost through sweating is important. Coconut water makes an excellent natural "sports drink." See the Nutrition for Sports Performance section for more recommendations on eating and drinking before, during, and after exercise activity.

Drink from glass or steel containers when possible to avoid chemicals leaching into your water from plastic. Even if your plastic water bottle is "BPA Free," the stuff they replace the BPA with is just as bad as the BPA. We recommend filtered tap water over the bottled stuff for this reason and also for environmental sustainability. Filtering your tap water with a carbon Brita-type filter removes pollutants and chlorine. Bottled water is held to the same standards as tap water for the most part, meaning that it isn't necessarily any more pure. Make it easy to drink water by keeping a glass or bottle of water with you at all times. If plain water seems boring, dress it up with a couple of slices of lemon or lime or a handful of fresh mint. You can even infuse your water with fresh fruit for a refreshing drink.

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BIG BATCH MEALS

Big Batch recipes give you the biggest bang for your buck, timewise. You can eat now and then use what you've prepped to make something different later without having to go through all the motions again! Big Batch cooking lends itself well to cooking on your day off. A 1-2 hour commitment here making a couple of trays of roasted vegetables and a chicken, pork shoulder, or some meatballs, or beans, lentils, or quinoa can give you a huge leg up to eating well all week.

Recipes here for beans/lentils are for cooking from dried. Please read all the way through and allow time for soaking. Lessen prep time by shopping on a different day and washing all produce as you put it away. You'll find shopping lists at the end of this packet.

Now, what's the best way to use all this food without eating the same thing for five days straight? On your prep day we recommend preparing at least one protein, a ton of vegetables, and one extra like a spice rub or batch of beans. The day you cook, you may want to enjoy a simple meal of chicken, pulled pork, or meatballs with roasted vegetables. Serve with a salad. Mix some lentils or beans and quinoa together and dress with olive oil and a splash of vinegar, add in some roasted vegetables and tons of chopped fresh parsley or cilantro. Easy and delicious.

Take the time on your prep day to pick all of the meat of the bones of the chicken and to discard the fat and bones from the pork. If you want to make chicken stock later, put all the bones in a big ziptop storage bag or food container and store in the freezer. You'll find a recipe for chicken stock at the end of the Big Batch section.

Divide the meat up into portions, each enough for one meal and place each meal's worth in a ziptop bag or food container. Repeat with beans, lentils, and quinoa. Leave a few in the fridge for tomorrow's lunch or dinner. You can freeze whatever you might not use within a couple of days. Make sure to label each container with the contents and the date. You'll find Use it Up recipes for using this cooked food in the next section.

There are a number of other recipes (with pictures!) which you can find on our blog at http://crossfitgettysburg.com/blog/.

Dry Spice Rub

Ingredients:
1 tablespoon each smoked or regular paprika, kosher salt, cumin, and chili powder
1 teaspoon each garlic powder, oregano, black pepper
Up to 1 teaspoon cayenne pepper (optional)

Mix all ingredients in a small jar or container.

This Dry Spice Rub is versatile and can be used on just about any protein or vegetable. It's optional, but we really think you'll like it and suggest making a double or triple batch while you have all the spices out and then you'll already have it ready for next time. You can definitely freestyle here, using more or less of spices as you like, or even adding spices for different flavor profiles.

Meat Time

Why cook a whole chicken or a whole pork shoulder instead of just all chicken breasts or all pork chops? A couple of reasons.

First, whole chickens/pork shoulders are generally less expensive. For close to the same price per pound as packaged boneless skinless chicken breasts, you could buy a whole chicken of higher quality (pastured). Reference the Local Foods section for sourcing information. If you can afford organic at the grocery store, go for it. If you can't afford pastured/organic, nobody's judging, just buy plain old chicken or pork.

Second, preparing a whole chicken and a whole pork shoulder as opposed to a styrofoam tray of pieces also reminds us that we are eating what was indeed recently a living animal. We should respect this and aspire to use as much of the animal as possible.

Roasted Chicken

Ingredients:
1 (3-4 pound) chicken (you can certainly use a larger one, cooking time will increase)
Couple tablespoons olive oil or softened butter
Kosher salt and pepper
Optional: dry spice rub, lemon wedges, fresh herbs or spices, garlic cloves

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees. Set chicken on a clean work surface and pat dry with paper towels inside and out. Rub the skin with a couple tablespoons of olive oil or softened butter. Season with a generous amount of dry spice rub if using (or kosher salt and pepper).

Place breast side up in a large roasting pan and put in the oven. Roast the chicken for 50-90 minutes (this is a big range. Roasting time will depend on size and type of chicken) until a meat thermometer measures 165 degrees in the thickest part of the thigh and the juices run clear. If the skin starts to get too brown before the chicken is done, loosely cover the chicken with foil. Once chicken is cooked, remove and let rest, lightly covered with foil, for 10 minutes before cutting into it.

VARIATIONS: Place lemon wedges, garlic cloves (smashed or cut in half), or fresh herbs like rosemary and thyme inside the chicken to add extra flavor from the inside out.

Add chopped fresh rosemary and/or thyme to the softened butter that you are applying to the chicken skin. Or use any other spices you desire.

Roast atop a bed of vegetables (firm or crisp vegetables like carrots, Brussels sprouts, and sweet potatoes are good choices). Cut the vegetables into large chunks and drizzle with olive oil before placing the chicken on top.

The chicken will cook in less time if you cut it up into pieces (written instructions here: http://www.marthastewart.com/920455/how-cut-chicken) or you can cheat and roast a tray of bone-in chicken legs or breasts instead of a whole chicken.

Another shortcut to reduce roasting time: flatten the whole chicken. Using kitchen shears, cut down both sides of the backbone and remove it (stick it in a gallon size zipper storage bag and store in the freezer for making stock later). Place the chicken breast side up, spread the legs apart, and press on the breastbone until it cracks and the chicken flattens. This will cut down your cooking time to probably 30-50 minutes.

Pulled Pork

Ingredients:
1 (3-4 pound) pork shoulder or pork butt
Kosher salt and pepper
Optional: dry spice rub, onion

Rub pork on all sides with a generous amount of dry spice rub, if using (or kosher salt and pepper). Make a few cuts down through the fat cap to the meaty part and get some of the seasoning in there. Place in slow cooker, fat side up, with about 2 cups of water. You can set the pork on top of a sliced onion if you like. Cook on low for 8-10 hours, or high for 5-6 hours until the meat is fall-apart tender, then remove, discarding liquid and any bones or fat. Shred meat with two forks.

VARIATIONS: No slow cooker? No problem. You can cook the pork in the oven. Place the prepared pork and cooking liquid in a heavy casserole dish or Dutch oven and cook, covered, at 250 degrees for 8 hours or at 200 degrees overnight until fall-apart tender.

This method also works with other large cuts of meat like beef chuck roast or lamb shoulder.

Meat Balls

Ingredients:
2 lbs. ground meat (beef, pork, lamb, turkey, chicken or a mix. 50/50 beef and pork is a good choice.)
2 eggs
2 teaspoons salt
¾ teaspoon pepper
¼ cup finely chopped parsley
½ cup finely chopped (or grated) onion

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Line a baking sheet with foil (if using leaner ground meat like chicken or turkey, grease the foil with a small amount of olive oil to prevent sticking). Place all ingredients except meat in a large bowl and whisk until combined. Add the meat and mix gently (clean hands are the best tool), just until combined. Do not overmix or meatballs will become tough.

Portion out meatballs using a ¼ cup measuring cup and roll each into a ball with your hands. Place an inch or two apart on prepared baking sheet. Bake for 10-20 minutes until cooked through and browned on the outside. They should measure 165 degrees in the centers on a meat thermometer. The cooking time will depend on what type of meat you use. Leaner meats like chicken and turkey cook more quickly than meat containing more fat like pork or beef.

Once cooled, cooked meatballs can be frozen for up to a month before freezer burn is a concern. They reheat well either in a 300 degree oven or in a simmering pot of sauce. Simply heat until warmed through.

VARIATIONS: Add spinach! Defrost a 10 oz package chopped frozen spinach, place in a clean kitchen towel, wring out excess moisture, and add to meatball mixture.

Make them Italian style by adding 1 ½ teaspoons fennel seeds, ½ cup finely grated parmesan cheese, 1 clove of garlic, finely minced or grated, and 1 teaspoon of oregano.

Make them Asian style by using cilantro in place of the parsley, sliced scallion in place of the onion, adding 2 teaspoons each grated fresh ginger, soy sauce, and sesame oil.

Meatballs freeze well, so make a double or triple batch, eat some today and freeze the rest for later. Think outside the box, beyond pasta, for how to serve them. Meatballs are great with sauce and served over sautéed or roasted vegetables, used in soup, or with scrambled eggs and vegetables. In a pinch you can even dice them up and serve atop a salad.

Roasted Vegtables

Ingredients:
Vegetables of choice
Olive oil
Salt and pepper

Preheat your oven to 425 degrees. Wash and dry your vegetables, peel if desired, and cube them up into even sized pieces. The bigger they are, the longer they take to roast, but if you cut them very small they burn more easily. We recommend ¾"-1" cubes.

Toss the cubed veggies with olive oil (enough to lightly coat them) and a generous pinch of salt and pepper on the rimmed baking sheet and spread out into a single layer. Ideally you want the veggies to have a little space between them, but if some are touching, that's cool.

Roast them in the oven for 20-45 minutes until tender and browned to your liking. Every 10 minutes or so pull out the baking sheet and give the veggies a toss using a spatula or tongs. They brown on the bottom, so you need to get at least most of them flipped over so they don't burn.

The cooking time will vary depending on the type of vegetable and how large you cut it. If you find the veggies are browning too fast, turn down the oven temp. Things like broccoli and asparagus will be at the lower end of the range and sweet potatoes will be at the higher end with eggplant, zucchini, and bell peppers somewhere in the middle. You can definitely mix different veggies together, just be aware that some might get a little more browned than others. Or, give each veggie its own baking sheet if you rather.

Speaking of roasting more than one baking sheet of veggies at a time, DO IT! You already bothered to turn on the oven and dirty the cutting board and knife so it's worth your while to prepare more than one meal's worth at a time. Leftover roasted veggies keep well in the fridge for up to 5 days.

VARIATIONS: If you'd like, add your choice herbs or spices when tossing with the olive oil and salt and pepper. A couple teaspoons of the chosen seasoning per sheet of veggies is good.

Here are some ideas.
Dry Spice Rub (recipe above)
Cumin and smoked paprika
Chopped fresh thyme, rosemary, and/or sage
Dried Italian spice blend, jerk seasoning, etc (if the blend contains salt don't add extra salt)
Garam masala (for Indian flair)
Cinnamon (great on sweet potatoes)

Vegetarian

Why cook dried beans or lentils when it's easier to use canned? Using dried beans is also cheaper than using canned. Cooking dried beans also allows you to regulate the salt level. Plus, they just have better texture and taste.

Beans and Lentils

Ingredients:
Dried beans or lentils – several meals' worth
Salt
Water
Optional: onion, garlic, herbs and spices

Pick through the beans or lentils discarding any rocks or debris. Soak the beans or lentils in water with a pinch of salt in a large bowl for 12-24 hours, changing the water once if you can. Then drain and rinse several times. The soaking removes anti-nutrients (which otherwise prevent ample absorption of nutrients) and also reduces the cooking time. Soaking can also reduce the compounds that cause digestive distress some people experience when they eat beans.

Place the beans or lentils in a saucepan (when choosing a pan, remember they will rehydrate to more than double their dried size), cover with water, and boil until tender. After soaking, most varieties of lentils will take 20-30 minutes. Many varieties of beans will take upwards of an hour. Make sure the pan does not boil dry or the beans will burn. Cool them in the liquid then drain in a colander. List of popular legumes and their cooking times here: http://yumuniverse.com/how-tosday-soaking-and-cooking-legumes/

VARIATIONS: Add some sliced onion, a clove of garlic, or herbs and spices of your choice (bay leaves, cumin, rosemary or thyme are good options) to the cooking liquid.

Sprout the beans or lentils for extra nutrients. Takes a few extra days, but is no more difficult than soaking them. Sprouted legumes can be eaten raw or cooked as you would cook unsprouted ones, though cooking times may be less. Details here: http://yumuniverse.com/sprouting-seeds-legumes-and-grains/

In a pinch, you can cook unsoaked lentils.

Stock freezes well. Let it cool in the fridge first, then transfer to the freezer to minimize the chance of your container cracking. It's perfectly fine to freeze in glass containers. Whatever container you choose, make sure to leave plenty of headspace to accommodate expansion and never put warm liquids into the freezer without cooling them down first.

Notes: Once the stock cools, you may notice it has a gelatinous texture. This is good. It means the good-for-you gelatin has been extracted from the bones into your stock. If you desire to remove the fat from your stock, you may find it easiest to scrape off the top once the stock is cool. You don't need to make stock every single time you roast a chicken. Simply collect the bones and store in a ziptop bag in the freezer until you want to make a batch.

USE IT UP RECIPES

With big batch meals there is always leftovers and wasting quality cooked food is crazy. Use it up recipes make quick work of prepped food.

Taco Bar with Quick Salsa

Ingredients:
Chicken bones/backs/necks/wings
1 medium onion, quartered
2 cloves garlic, smashed
2 carrots, cut into a few pieces
2 stalks celery, cut into a few pieces
1 or 2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
1 or 2 bay leaves
A few whole black peppercorns

Combine all ingredients in a slow cooker or a large stockpot. Add enough cold water to cover ingredients. If using a stockpot on the stove simmer, covered, on low for at least 4 hours. If using a slow cooker, cook on low for 8-12 hours. (You really can't overcook it.) Strain the stock, let cool, and store in the fridge.

Classic Chicken or Italian Bean Soup

Ingredients: Needed for both Classic Chicken and Italian Bean Soup.
1 medium onion, diced
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 tablespoon olive oil
6 cups chicken stock (store bought or homemade-see Chicken Stock recipe in the Big Batch section) or vegetable stock

Classic Chicken Soup:
2 cups leftover cooked chicken, shredded
1 cup chopped carrots
1 cup chopped celery
1 teaspoon dried or fresh thyme

Italian Bean Soup:
3 cups cooked cannellini beans (2 (15oz) cans, drained and rinsed well, if not using beans you cooked from dried)
1 teaspoon minced fresh rosemary
1 (15oz) can diced tomatoes

Sauté onion and garlic in olive oil until soft. Add remaining ingredients for either Chicken Soup or Italian Bean Soup and simmer 20-30 minutes. Season with salt and pepper.

VARIATIONS: Add extra vegetables: 1-2 cups chopped baby spinach or a package of frozen chopped spinach, or 1 cup diced zucchini, frozen peas, or sliced mushrooms. All of these softer vegetables will cook in less time-add them for the last 5 minutes or so of cooking.

Spice it up with chili powder, cayenne, cumin, or other spices. Add these in when the onion and garlic are almost softened and stir for 30 seconds to bring out the flavor before adding the rest of the ingredients.

Freestyle: Add the chicken AND the white beans, plus whichever of the ingredients appeal to you. You do you.

Double the recipe and you can freeze half for later!

Slow Cooker Chili

Ingredients: 2 ½ cups leftover pulled pork OR leftover roasted chicken OR cooked chickpeas (2 (15oz) cans, drained and rinsed well, if not using chickpeas you cooked from dried)
3 cups cooked kidney beans (2 (15oz) cans, drained and rinsed well, if not using beans you cooked from dried)
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 small onion, diced
1 red bell pepper, diced
1 (28 oz) can crushed or diced tomatoes
1 (28 oz) can tomato puree
¼ cup tomato paste
3 tablespoons cumin
3 tablespoons chili powder
1 tablespoon smoked paprika
¼-1 teaspoon cayenne pepper, optional
For serving: shredded cheese, sour cream, scallions, and cilantro, optional

Place all ingredients in slow cooker and mix well. Cover and cook on low for at least 6 hours. If you don't have a slow cooker, place ingredients in a large pot and simmer on low, covered, for 1 ½ -2 hours, stirring occasionally. If possible, taste the chili halfway through and add more spices if needed. Taste again and adjust seasonings before serving.

Serve with sour cream, shredded cheese, scallions, and cilantro if desired.

Curry or Thai Stir Fry

A super easy and customizable Curry or Thai Stir Fry. This is going to become your new go-to for transforming leftovers. Curry or stir fry is also a great way to use up any vegetables that are languishing in your crisper, a little past their prime. If you want to use chicken but don't have any on hand, you can use raw chicken in this recipe. We also won't tell if you use leftover cooked rotisserie chicken.

Ingredients needed for both Curry and Thai Stir Fry:
2 tablespoons coconut oil or olive oil
1 medium onion, diced
2 garlic cloves, minced
1 inch piece of fresh ginger, grated
2 cups your choice vegetables, diced (broccoli, snow peas, or carrots are great. Can use frozen vegetables, no need to thaw, can use up leftover roasted vegetables)
1 cup chicken stock
1 (14 oz) can full fat coconut milk
2 ½ cups leftover cooked chicken, shredded (or 1 lb raw chicken breasts or thighs, cut in ¾" cubes) or 2 ½-3 cups cooked chickpeas (2 (15oz) cans, drained and rinsed well, if not using beans you cooked from dried)

Curry:
1 ½ tablespoons curry powder
1 tablespoon garam masala
1 cup diced tomatoes (fresh or canned)
For serving: chopped cilantro, plain yogurt, optional

Thai Stir Fry:
1 tablespoon jarred red curry paste
1 tablespoon fish sauce (this does not make the finished product taste like fish. You can substitute soy sauce, but it won't be quite the same.)
Juice of one lime
For serving: chopped cilantro and/or basil, lime wedges, optional

Curry or Thai Stir Fry Cont.

Curry and Thai Stir Fry: Heat the oil in a large saucepan over medium heat then add the onion and cook until soft, 6-8 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Curry: Add the garlic, ginger, garam masala, and curry to the softened onions and cook for 30 seconds or so, stirring constantly, until you smell the spices. Then add the tomatoes and your veggies of choice and cook a couple minutes longer. Add the chicken stock and coconut milk, and bring to a simmer. Follow finishing instructions below.

Thai Stir Fry: Add the garlic, ginger, and red curry paste to the softened onions and cook for 30 seconds or so, stirring constantly, until you smell the spices. Then add your veggies of choice and cook a couple minutes longer. Add the chicken stock and coconut milk, and bring to a simmer. Add the fish sauce. Follow finishing instructions below.

Curry and Thai Stir Fry, to finish: Add the chicken or chickpeas. If using cooked chicken, continue to simmer until heated through. If using raw chicken, simmer until chicken is cooked through, about 5-7 minutes. If you would like the sauce thicker, continue to simmer, uncovered, until it reaches the desired consistency. Taste and add salt if needed. Finish the Thai Stir Fry by adding the lime juice.

Serve on its own or over rice or cauliflower rice (recipe follows, extra credit for more vegetables). If desired, serve Curry with cilantro and yogurt, or Thai Stir Fry with cilantro, basil and lime wedges.

VARIATIONS: For the curry, you can add a peeled and diced apple with the onion and/or a handful of golden raisins with the chicken stock.

You can add 1 cup of plain Greek yogurt to the curry during the last 5-10 minutes of cooking for added richness.

Some like it hot: add ½ teaspoon or so of cayenne pepper when you add the garlic or add some chopped chilies with the vegetables.

Add ALL THE VEGETABLES. Really can't go wrong adding more vegetables to either recipe.

Cauliflower Rice

Ingredients:
1 large head cauliflower
1 tablespoon olive oil

Cut the cauliflower into quarters and trim out and discard the core. Break the cauliflower up into large florets using your hands. Either grate these florets using a large box grater or use a food processor and pulse until broken down into rice-sized pieces. You may need to process in more than one batch-avoid filling the food processor more than 2/3 full. If any pieces don't get chopped up, pull those out and reprocess.

Heat the olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the cauliflower rice and a little salt. Cover and cook until it reaches your desired tenderness, 5-8 minutes.

Note: you can freeze raw cauliflower rice for later use.

AWESOME VEGGIES

One of the easiest ways to cook vegetables is probably to steam them. Unfortunately this may be one of the most boring ways to actually eat them. First of all, make sure you aren't overcooking your vegetables. You want them to still be crisp and to maintain their color, not be mushy and lifeless. As far as your method for steaming them, if you are going for overall convenience, it's hard to beat the steam-in-the-bag frozen vegetables found in the frozen section at the grocery store. If you have a little more time, you can prep your own vegetables. If you want to mix types, be aware that more tender vegetables like broccoli will take less time than denser vegetables like carrots. Either cut the denser vegetables up smaller or start them first and then add the more tender vegetables later. If you have a steamer or steamer basket, perfect, use that to cook the veggies on the stovetop. If not, have no fear, you can do it without one.

Easy Steamed Vegtables

In a pot big enough to hold all your veggies, add about half an inch of water and bring it to a boil over medium high. Add the veggies and cover with a lid. Because there's so little water the veggies will mostly steam rather than be boiled, which is good because it preserves most of the nutrients. Check that the pot doesn't boil dry (add more water as needed) and steam them until they reach your desired tenderness. Vegetables like spinach and peas will take about 3 minutes, broccoli, cauliflower, and green beans will take more like 5-7 minutes, and more firm vegetables like carrots may take about 10 minutes.

Ok, so they're cooked but they're still boring. Now what?

VARIATIONS: Toss steamed vegetables with:
Butter or olive oil + salt and pepper + chopped fresh herbs
Butter or olive oil + a squeeze of fresh lemon juice or a little lemon zest
Butter or olive oil + freshly grated parmesan cheese
Sesame oil + rice wine vinegar + soy sauce + sesame seeds
Olive oil (2 T)+ dijon mustard (1 T) + balsamic vinegar (1 T) + half a clove garlic, minced (shake in a jar or mix in a bowl before dressing vegetables)

*Extra credit: brown the butter for more flavor. This is totally worth the extra few minutes. Simply melt a couple tablespoons of butter in a small saucepan over medium (it will start to foam) then cook, stirring often, until it turns a toasty brown and smells amazing. This will take maybe 5-8 minutes. You'll see small brown bits sink to the bottom, that's normal. You can keep any extra brown butter in the fridge for next time.

Baked Sweet Potatoes

Here's an easy way to prepare sweet potatoes that doesn't involve any chopping or peeling. Easier than baking them, you can wrap in foil (whole, unpeeled, no need to poke holes) and cook in the slow cooker! They will take about 4 hours on high or 8 hours on low. In a hurry? Poke holes in the potatoes with a fork, wrap in plastic wrap, and cook in the microwave until tender enough to pierce with a fork. Cooking time depends on the size of the sweet potato, you can usually count on 5-10 minutes.

VARIATIONS:
Top a cooked sweet potato with:
Cinnamon + almond butter
Cinnamon + butter
Butter + salt
Pecans + goat cheese + a drizzle of honey
Feta + olives + chopped sundried tomatoes
Cheddar + chopped steamed broccoli
Black beans + corn + diced onion + jarred salsa + cilantro

To make it a meal, add: Leftover cooked chicken or pork or beans or sausage or whatever your little heart desires.

Another option for a quick side is to remove all the peels, mash with a fork and stir in:
Coconut milk + salt and pepper
Olive oil (¼ C) + lemon juice (2 T) + soy sauce (1T) + chopped fresh rosemary + red pepper flakes (shake in a jar or mix in a bowl before dressing vegetables. Killer with some chopped nuts on top of your sweet potatoes and good on steamed veggies or pork chops too.)

BREAKFAST

A good breakfast can make you feel in control and empower you to make healthy choices for the rest of the day. Mornings can be rushed, we get that. Let's figure out a way to make breakfast work for you so you don't have to be a slave to the stovetop at in between getting ready for work or getting the kids off to school. If you're happy eating the same thing or nearly the same thing for breakfast every day, go with that. No reason to switch up what you need to prep if you're happy with the same nutritious meal.

What sounds good for breakfast? If you're in a rut, choose one of our breakfast ideas for inspiration!

Fruit + nut butter + glass of milk
Plain (unsweetened) yogurt + fruit + nuts
Oatmeal + fruit + glass of milk
Other suggested toppings for yogurt/oatmeal/fruit slathered with nut butter:
Unsweetened dried coconut, unsweetened dried fruit, nuts, granola, berries, pomegranate seeds, chia seeds
Hard boiled eggs (recipe follows) + fruit + cheese or nuts
Fried or scrambled eggs + veggies and/or avocado + sausage or bacon
Bake ahead muffin cup eggs (recipe follows)

Here are our make ahead breakfast tips and recipes:

Wash and cut up fresh fruit when you get home from shopping. Portion it in individual containers and it'll be ready for grab and go when you are. You can also portion out nut butter into small containers, or just bring in an extra jar to work if you're breakfasting there. Same goes for portioning out yogurt and nuts.

Want to mix up the usual with some toppings? Yes! All The Toppings! Here's just one possibility inspired by the Fruit + Nut Butter idea:

Nutty Frozen Bananas

Cut a firm but ripe banana in half long ways. Top the flat side with nut butter and your choice of toppings like nuts, unsweetened dried coconut, cherries or chopped apricots, raisins, or granola. Freeze until firm.

Oatmeal also lends itself to All The Toppings. Avoid sugary packets of instant oatmeal and prep it yourself the night before:

Overnight Oats

At night, combine ⅓ cup old fashioned oats (not quick cooking), ½ cup milk, ½ a mashed banana, ¼ cup chopped nuts, and ground cinnamon and/or nutmeg in a small container. The oatmeal will be ready in the morning and you can heat it in the microwave if you'd like. Other tasty mix ins: dash of vanilla extract, unsweetened dried coconut, raisins, fresh berries, or chia seeds.

Hard Boiled Eggs

Prefer breakfast on the savory side? We got your back. Nothing is easier for a protein packed breakfast on the go than hard boiled eggs. They also make a great snack. Prep a bunch at once and you'll be stocked all week. For perfect eggs every time, steam them instead of boiling them. It's easy, here's how you do it:

Bring an inch of water to a boil in the bottom of a pot. Add your eggs (tongs make this easier) and cover. Let them steam for 10-11 minutes. If you cool the eggs off in an ice water bath or under cold running water they are easier to peel. If you want soft boiled eggs, where the white is set but the yolk is still a little runny, steam for about 7 minutes. Pro tip: write HB on the shells in permanent marker before storing back in the fridge. Also, older eggs are easier to peel than fresh eggs.

Sautéed Veggies With Eggs

If you want a breakfast that really sticks to your ribs, you need veggies as well as healthy fats, like avocado.

The night before, sauté your choice of chopped veggies in olive oil with a pinch of salt and pepper (we like onion, red bell pepper, and yellow summer squash) until tender and browned to your liking. Cook a whole bunch, enough for several days, while you have everything out. Store each portion in its own container. If you want sausage or bacon with your eggs and veggies, cook it at night also and portion it out with the veggies. In the morning, all you need to do is crack a couple eggs into a skillet, fry or scramble them up, and reheat the veggies (microwave in the container or dump them right into the skillet you cooked the eggs in) for a fast breakfast. Add some mashed avocado and you'll be shocked at how filling this breakfast is. You can also use leftover roasted vegetables in place of sautéing more vegetables.

Running late? Just grab a couple of those hard boiled eggs you have in the fridge and pair with the veggies you've already cooked.

Forgot to make the veggies the night before and only have a couple minutes? Scramble the eggs and add a handful of chopped baby spinach when the eggs are nearly done. Cook until the eggs are set and the spinach wilts. Stir in a little cheese if you like (blue cheese or feta is great here).

Fun fact: You can scramble eggs in the microwave. Crack two eggs in a medium sized microwave safe bowl and stir with a fork. Microwave for 45 seconds and stir with the fork, then microwave for about another 45 seconds until cooked through.

Cold Brew Coffee

You can make your own cold brew coffee concentrate for easy iced coffee throughout the week. Just combine 1 cup ground coffee with 4 cups water in a jar (quart mason jar works perfectly) or pitcher, let sit at room temp or in the fridge for about 12 hours, and strain. This makes a concentrate which you can dilute to your liking with water.

Bake Ahead Muffin Cup Eggs

To make about 12 muffin cups: combine 10 eggs, ¼ cup chopped onion, ½ cup cooked protein of choice like ham, bacon, or sausage (optional), and 1-2 cups chopped veggies of choice like bell pepper or spinach, and a generous pinch of salt and pepper. Divide into a well greased muffin tin, top with a few halved cherry tomatoes if you like, and bake for 20-25 minutes at 350 until eggs are set. Muffin cup eggs freeze well (wrap individually in plastic wrap and seal in a ziptop bag) and reheat in seconds in the microwave. This recipe is very forgiving and is great for using up leftovers, just don't use too much of any particularly watery vegetables like zucchini. Great with a little cheese added in too.

THE PERFECT SALAD

Salad doesn't have to be rabbit food. Salads can be delicious, filling and satisfying. What makes a salad a really good salad? Really good salads have greens that actually taste like something. Ex-nay on the iceburg lettuce, aka the most flavorless, nutritionally worthless vegetable known to this planet. Really good salads have some texture or crunch. They have something sweet to serve as a counterpoint to savory or salty components or acidic dressings. And lastly, they have simple but flavorful and tangy dressings.

Branch out and try something different for your salad greens. A good one to try if you've never had it is arugula. It has a wonderful peppery taste and is great mixed with baby spinach! Baby spinach and baby kale have more nutrients than plain old lettuce. A good compromise, if you prefer the texture of lettuces to spinach, is a mix. You can usually find decently priced packages of prewashed, organic 50/50 baby spinach/spring greens mix at the grocery store. You can sometimes even find blends with leafy herbs like parsley or cilantro mixed in for even more flavor.

If you buy greens that must be washed, say from the farmers' market, here's the best way to wash them. If you have a salad spinner, this is super quick.

Wash Greens

Put the colander part inside the bowl of the salad spinner and fill ⅔ of the way with your greens. Fill with cool water and swish the greens with your hands until clean. Any grit sinks to the bottom of the bowl. Lift out the colander part leaving the dirty water in the bowl. Dump out the water, replace the colander, and spin the greens dry.

If you don't have a salad spinner, put the greens in a large bowl, fill with cool water, and swish around with your hands until clean. Dump the greens and water into a large colander. Spread the greens on a clean kitchen towel, top with another clean kitchen towel, and pat to dry.

Store Greens

Store washed and dried greens in a container or ziptop bag lined with a couple of paper towels in the crisper drawer for the best longevity.

Pack Greens

Salad can make great lunches, but you need to be able to transport them without disastrous oil and vinegar spills. How? You can layer them in a large mason jar with the dressing on the bottom, hardy ingredients that won't wilt next like carrots or peppers, and the rest of the ingredients on top. Plus, you'll be super trendy. Or pick up a leakproof lunch container of some sort for your salad and dressing.

The Builders

Be sure to use the Salad and Dressing Builders in More Great Stuff. In the mean time here are some great combinations to get you started.

Salad
Spinach + apple + pecans + feta + chicken
Mixed greens + dried cranberries + walnuts + gorgonzola
Arugula and mixed greens + beets + goat cheese + chickpeas
Spinach + sun dried tomatoes + pesto + mozzarella + chicken
Spinach + bacon + avocado + hard boiled egg
Mixed greens + red bell pepper + carrots + bleu cheese + steak

Dressing
Extra virgin olive oil + balsamic vinegar + honey + dijon + minced garlic + salt and pepper
Extra virgin olive oil + lemon juice + dijon + salt and pepper + thyme
Extra virgin olive oil + red wine vinegar + strawberry jam + salt and pepper
Extra virgin olive oil + 3 tsp sesame oil + lime juice + honey + grated fresh ginger
Extra virgin olive oil + apple cider vinegar + maple syrup + whole grain mustard + salt and pepper

MAKE IT CREAMY: Add 2-3 tbsp mayo, sour cream or plain yogurt

Pressed for time and out of dressing? Sprinkle a single serving of salad with a little bit of olive oil, a littler bit of vinegar or a squeeze of lemon, and a sprinkle of salt and pepper. Boom.