

Darke County Fair 2011 - Friday Sampler

HOT (OR COLD) TIPS FOR COOKING FOR ONE OR TWO.

- Consider quick cooking carbs, like couscous, quinoa or bulgur.

Couscous Salad

Adapted from the Junior League of Dayton's Cookbook, Creating a Stir

Yield: 2-3 servings

*2/3 cup water
1/2 cup couscous (white or whole wheat)
pinch salt
1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
1 ¼ tablespoon olive oil
¾ cups shredded fresh spinach
1 large green onion, thinly sliced
1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh dill, or to taste
Salt or pepper to taste.*

Make 2 hours or up to 24 hours ahead

Bring water to boil. Stir in couscous and salt. Remove from heat and cover. Let stand 5 minutes. Fluff with a fork and transfer to a bowl.

Stir in lemon juice, oil, salt and pepper, if desired. Cool couscous completely.

Stir in spinach, onion and dill. Cover and chill at least 2 hours or overnight.

(Make sure the couscous is completely cool or the spinach will wilt and turn brown).

- Consider making veggie broth for added flavor (1 each: onion, quartered; carrot; celery and about 6 cups water).
- Buy at the grocery pre-sliced veggies if you are going to make stew and may not want to buy all the veggies separately.
- Eat stir fry type meals. Take individually packed chicken breasts or pieces of meat and cook them quickly.
- Make veggie soup for one by throwing in all the leftover bits and pieces of veggies in the fridge and make a nice veggie soup adding cooked beans with a handful of grains or pasta at the end.

- Pizza is easy to make using a Greek style flat bread (not pitas which dry out) and put some tomato sauce on it, pesto, cheese, mushrooms or just slices of tomato and olives then give it a quick grill in the oven, it tastes great.
- Hummus and dips are easy to whip up and will last in the fridge. Buy a can of chickpeas (or use ones you have frozen!) and blend it with a tiny bit of garlic, tahini, salt, lemon juice & parsley. Make a batch and freeze it in portions.
- Use the zest from oranges or lemons to give a flavor boost.
- Make your own salad dressing. It is easy and will really improve your salads. A basic vinaigrette is listed below.

Green Bean Salad with Vinaigrette Dressing

*(Also try this with chopped cucumbers, steamed asparagus or roasted beets)
Clean, trim and snap fresh green beans in half or smaller as desired.
Steam briefly.*

Toss with vinaigrette below just before serving and add lemon zest.

Vinaigrette Salad Dressing

*In a bowl, place 1 Tablespoon Dijon mustard, 1 minced clove of garlic, ¼ cup of vinegar (rice wine, raspberry, balsamic, red wine or white wine) and whisk or use a small food processor. Slowly add in ½ cup + 2 T. extra virgin olive oil until emulsified. Salt and pepper to taste.
Keeps well in the fridge.*

Optional: Add chopped fresh herbs (parsley, basil to shake it up!)

Works well as a marinade, too!

- **Repackage and freeze meats.** Cut meat into single serving packages and freeze. Even a pound of hamburger needs to be sectioned for one. Buy six pork chops & freeze in groups of two. Whole chicken - cut up and again freeze in groups of one or two. Freezing individual chicken breasts makes quick meals. There is a benefit to buying more but not cooking it all at the same time so you're not wasting it or eating it for the rest of the week. Having individual packets of meat or chicken means quick prep. Freezing food keeps it fresh longer and helps prevent waste. For best quality, freeze food while it's fresh. Don't wait until it's been refrigerated or left on your counter for several days. Beans freeze well. Instead of canned beans, you can soak and cook up a batch and freeze them in smaller packages, ready for use.

- **Blanche veggies and freeze.** In the summer, go to the farmers' market two times a week and buy whatever is fresh, in season, and cheap. Or make quick grocery store produce runs to eat fresh veggies. You can blanch veggies and freeze small amounts in zippered freezer bags. Green beans, broccoli, carrots, etc. all last awhile in the crisper drawer. If you see condensation inside the bag, tuck in a paper towel to soak up the water. Chopped green onions freeze well. Freezing berries in summer means smoothies in the winter.
- **Have "Planned Overs" not always "Left Overs"/Transform foods!** Don't get bored with leftovers all the time. Plan ahead to re-invent ingredients into new meals. **Be creative and keep it fun!**
 - Meatloaf example: First night, regular meatloaf, cut off a couple of slices for meatloaf sandwiches. Another meal can be made by cutting the slices into small-ish cubes and throwing them in a quick tomato sauce and serving over pasta. Another meal can be made with a stir-fry with more cubed and if I still have any meatloaf left, finish it up crumbled into sloppy Joes or a stroganoff-style dish.
 - Chicken example: Day one, grill a few well marinated chicken breasts. Put frozen veggie packets over rice or pasta for a quick dinner. (Make extra rice to recreate for a second meal.) Day two, use some left over grilled chicken for chicken Caesar salad or wrap your salad in lettuce leaves and roll them up! Day 3 chicken salad sandwich, or chicken stir fry or chicken with fried rice. Or, boil or roast a chicken, then make stock from the bones, and use the broth for soups and stews or as the base for a grain pilaf Turn the chicken into chicken salad and the basis for a casserole. Use the broth with leftover grains as a basis for a soup meal.

Marinated Chicken - for grilling or broiling

Adapted from Martha Stewart's, Hors D'Oeuvres

*2½ T olive oil
 1 T. soy sauce
 1 ½ T. rice wine vinegar
 4 sprigs parsley, chopped
 2 chicken breast pieces, boned, skinned & pounded flat*

*. Flatten chicken in a plastic bag. Cut into ¾ inch cubes for k-bobs or larger strips or keep as whole pieces.
Combine all ingredients and marinate for 4 hours or overnight.
Grill or broil chicken, 5 – 7 minutes*

- Side dish example: Rice (barley, bulgur, quinoa or other grain) the first night as a plain side, makes fried rice or rice cakes, a rice salad, rice pudding or addition to a soup. Or you can freeze the grain in a zippered bag for later use. They last in the freezer several months.

Fried Rice

*1 green onion (or ¼ chopped onion)
2 cups cooked rice
2 Tbsp. canola oil for frying
1 – 2T. light soy sauce, to taste
1 egg, beaten*

Warm the oil in the pan. Sauté the onion. Add the rice and sauté so that some of the rice lightly browns.

Add the egg and stir around the rice. Add the soy sauce. Serve!
Great options: Add left over green veggies just before the egg. Can also add leftover slivered beef, pork or chicken &/or add peanuts or toasted almonds.

- **Freeze herbs** when they are fresh and available. Fresh flavor all winter is wonderful, or you can buy small packages of fresh herbs and freeze what you don't need for later use.
- Pastas can be boiled in the amount desired and tossed with a quick sauce, like pesto!

Pesto sauce – makes 1 cup

Great with pasta or in soups or stews - Great spread on a chicken breast – then grilled or broiled

*2 cups lightly packed fresh basil
2 tablespoons pecans (or use pine nuts or walnuts)
2 medium garlic cloves
½ cup parmesan cheese (plus more if desired for garnish)
½ cup olive oil+*

Puree nuts and garlic in the food processor. Add 1 small ice cube. Add oil to make a soft paste. Add in cheese. Can be prepared up to 1 week ahead or freeze without the cheese.*

*To serve on pasta: Toss with hot pasta and a little pasta water.
Garnish with large grated parmesan.*

To use with chicken: spread pesto (with cheese added) on top of a flattened chicken breast. Broil, grill or sauté about 10 minutes (flipping the chicken over half-way through).

To freeze: put 7 or 8 sheets of plastic wrap on the counter (each about 8" wide), dab about 1 rounded tablespoon of pesto in the middle of the plastic wrap and pull up the sides and twist to form a ball of pesto with a twisted top. Place all the balls of pesto into a freezer bag.

When ready for use, defrost a ball of pesto on the counter for 20 minutes, toss with the hot pasta and add the cheese.

Tip: put an ice cube in the processor to keep the blades cold and the basil bright green!

- **Freeze meals.** You don't have to eat the same thing all week. Invest in some plastic or glass containers. Lasagna, chili, quiche, soups, casseroles, etc. can be frozen in single portions, you can easily take one out at a time--so you might have lasagna once a week for 6-8 weeks instead of for 6-8 days in a row.
- **Modify any recipe** by cutting it in half or fourths. Or make the whole recipe and freeze a portion. Recipes with eggs are a little harder to fraction out. Pick recipes from cuisines that you are familiar with. If you cook Italian foods, for example, you have a sense of proportion and flavor. Carbs freeze well, too. Don't forget to label before you freeze. Most tomato based pasta sauces freeze well, so you can make a full batch and then freeze the leftover sauce in zippered freezer bags in individual portions. If you do try an unfamiliar dish, a good rule is to slightly reduce the amount of spice. (If a recipe for six calls for two tablespoons of cinnamon, start with three-quarters of a teaspoon instead of a whole one.) As with most cooking, you can always add, but you can't take away.
- **Prepare one-dish meals.** For quick and simple cooking, choose a dish that serves as the whole meal. Look for dishes that include foods from several food groups, such as meats, whole grains, legumes and vegetables. Healthy examples include beef, barley and vegetable stew; chicken, vegetable and rice casserole; turkey and bean casserole (made with turkey breast, white beans and tomatoes); and vegetarian chili with diced chicken.

BON APPETIT!

By Eileen Litchfield, 8.26.2011