

Dinner: Some Easy, Healthful Ideas

At some point, most people find themselves in a “what’s for dinner?” rut. Bored by the same dishes week after week, it sometimes becomes hard to break out of the monotony. Gone are the days of the meat, potatoes, and vegetables. Many people are grateful to have such a dinner once a week! Because many decisions about what to eat are driven by convenience, taste, familial preferences, time, and budget, thinking outside of the box can feel like it will take too much time, energy, or work. However, sometimes meal planning is possible and easy by using just what you have in your refrigerator, freezer, and pantry.

Try these suggestions:

- **Breakfast night:** Eggs, cereal, waffles, and breakfast sandwiches, served with fresh fruit
- **Leftover frittata:** Great use for leftovers:
 - Take all of the meat and vegetables that are left over from the night before (chicken, beef, pork, vegetables, potatoes, rice, etc)
 - Heat in a pan with a little olive oil
 - Crack 1-1½ eggs/person and scramble them up with some milk, sour cream, or yogurt
 - Dump the eggs over the leftovers
 - Bake in a 350° F oven for 25-25 minutes
 - Serve with toast and a salad
- **Calzones and stromboli:** Keep pizza dough, cheese, and tomato sauce in the house for a quick meal; if you want something other than pizza, make calzones or stromboli:
 - Spread out the pizza dough
 - Layer cold cuts, vegetables, and cheese
 - Roll it up into a calzone or stromboli
 - Bake at 375° F for 30 minutes
 - Warm up some marinara or pizza sauce, and serve with the calzone or stromboli for dipping
- **Peanut butter and jelly fixings bar:** Put out all of the ingredients for peanut butter and jelly and serve with steamed edamame, a salad, or fresh fruit; make sure you put out:
 - Raisins
 - Bananas
 - Granola
 - Honey
 - All of your family’s favorite sandwich goodies
- **Salad night:** Make a big salad with a bag of prewashed lettuce and any fresh vegetables you have in the house, and serve with bread, a roll, or crackers; open the cupboard and refrigerator and add anything that may be salad worthy:
 - Tuna fish
 - Olives
 - Canned beans
 - Roasted peppers
 - Artichokes
 - Sliced or shredded cheese
 - Sliced or chopped hard-boiled eggs
 - Sliced cold cuts
- **Quesadillas:** Great way to use leftover meat:

- Buy more chicken, meat, fish, tofu, or shrimp than your family will eat in a given night, so that you have extra for another night
- Use the leftovers to make a quesadilla
- Load a quesadilla with leftovers and vegetables on one tortilla and put cheese on the other
- Toast it in the oven or toaster oven
- Put two sides together
- Serve with sour cream and salsa
- **Raid the freezer:** Make your own combinations or try this suggestion:
 - Prepare frozen tortellini or ravioli, serving it without pasta sauce if you are out of it
 - Boil up those noodles with some frozen peas, and then toss with olive oil and a little Parmesan cheese
 - Add some extra fresh vegetables for a satisfying meal
- **Buy precooked meats:** Precooked chicken strips, rotisserie chicken, or ham save time:
 - Add to salad, soups, and sandwiches
 - Use the carcass of a rotisserie chicken to make soup for the next day
 - Boil the carcass in water with fresh vegetables
 - Add some pasta or rice before serving for a heartier meal
- **Broth and soup:** Keep boxes of broth and soup on hand
 - Add vegetables, cheese, noodles or whatever you have to brighten the flavor and make more satisfying
 - Serve with crackers and cheese
- **Grilled or toasted cheese sandwiches:** Takes just a few minutes to make a quick and satisfying meal; serve with some fruit or vegetables

Keep these items on hand

These following items are easy to incorporate into meals and have a long shelf or refrigerator life:

- Baby carrots
- Celery
- Apples
- Pears
- Beans
- Vacuum-packed greens and salads
- Tofu
- Vacuum-sealed precooked meats, such as chicken, ham, kielbasa, and cold cuts
- Yogurt
- Cheese
- Sour cream
- Humus
- Cream cheese
- Frozen shrimp, meats, pastas, vegetables, breads, and soups
- Leftovers, such as chili, stews, and casseroles
- Canned or jarred beans, fruit, tomato sauces and products, tuna fish, salmon, salsa, and vegetables
- Peanut butter
- Dried pasta

- Crackers
- Nuts
- Seeds
- Dried fruits

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