Thrifty Meals for Small Families

Originally prepared by Nellie Hedstrom, Extension nutrition specialist, University of Maine Cooperative Extension.
Revised and updated by Statewide Nutrition and Physical Activity Educator Kate Yerxa, University of Maine Cooperative Extension.

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Some small families tested and liked the recipes in the sample menus. Try them. You may like them too. Some of these recipes are new. Some are old favorites. In either case, they are

- **low in cost**—made with economical foods and seasonings;
- **nutritious**—they contain nutrient-rich foods and limited amounts of fat, sugar and salt.

### Barbeque Beef Sandwich

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1/2 pound lean ground beef

1/3 cup tomato sauce

1/4 cup onion, chopped

2 tablespoons vinegar

2 teaspoons sugar

1/4 teaspoon dry mustard

Dash pepper

2 hamburger rolls, whole grain

1. Cook beef until lightly browned. Drain fat.
2. Mix in remaining ingredients (except hamburger rolls).
3. Cover and cook over low heat for 20 minutes to blend flavors. Stir occasionally.
4. Spoon mixture onto bottom halves of rolls (about 1/2 cup per sandwich). Cover with top halves.

*Makes two sandwiches.*
Creole Beans

1/4 cup celery, sliced
1/4 cup onion, coarsely chopped
1/4 cup green pepper, coarsely chopped
1 teaspoon margarine
8 ounces canned tomatoes (about 1 cup)
1/8 teaspoon garlic powder
Dash pepper
1 1/4 cups peas (navy) beans, canned, drained

1. Cook celery, onion, and green pepper in margarine until tender, about 5 minutes.
2. Break up large pieces of tomatoes. Add tomatoes and seasonings to cooked vegetables. Bring to a boil.
3. Add beans and return to a boil. Reduce heat, cover and boil gently until flavors are blended and liquid is reduced, about 30 minutes. Stir occasionally to prevent sticking.

Makes two servings of 1 cup each.

Bean Tamale Pie
2 tablespoons green pepper, chopped

2 tablespoons onions, chopped

1 teaspoon oil

1 cup kidney beans, canned, drained

1/2 cup tomato puree

About 1 cup frozen whole-kernel corn

1 1/2 teaspoons chili powder

1/3 cup yellow cornmeal

3/4 cup water

1. Cook green pepper and onion in oil in small (8-inch) frying pan until tender.
2. Stir in beans, tomato puree, corn, and chili powder.
3. Cover and cook over low heat until flavors are blended, about 15 minutes.
4. Mix cornmeal and water.
5. Cook over low heat, stirring constantly, until very thick, about 3 minutes.
6. Spread cornmeal mixture over bean mixture to form a crust.
7. Cook over low heat, with lid ajar, until topping is set, about 7 minutes.

Makes two servings of about 1 cup each.
About 1 cup beef cubes, from chuck steak*

8 ounces canned tomatoes (about 1 cup)
1/8 teaspoon garlic powder
Dash pepper
1 small onion, sliced
1/2 medium green pepper, cut in 1-inch pieces

1. Brown beef cubes in saucepan until well browned.
2. Break up large pieces of tomatoes. Stir in garlic powder and pepper. Pour over beef. Cover and cook over low heat until beef is almost tender, about 1 hour.
3. Add onion and green pepper. Cover and continue cooking until vegetables and beef are tender, about 30 minutes.

Makes two servings of 3/4 cup beef mixture.

* Note: For beef cubes or strips, use a 1 1/2 pound blade chuck steak. Separate lean meat from fat and bone. Cut meat into 3/4-inch cubes or strips. Divide beef in half. Use half (about 1 cup) for Beef and Peppers recipe. Save remaining 1 cup for Beef with Noodles recipe.
About 1 cup beef from chuck steak*

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*The % Daily Value tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

1 1/2 cups water
1/4 teaspoon salt
Dash pepper
1 bay leaf
1 small onion, coarsely chopped
2/3 cup celery, diced
1 tablespoon flour
1 tablespoon water
1 1/2 cups noodles, cooked, unsalted

1. Brown beef cubes in saucepan until well browned.
2. Add 1 1/2 cups water, salt, pepper, and bay leaf. Cover and cook over low heat until beef is almost tender, about 1 hour.
3. Add onion and celery. Continue cooking until meat and vegetables are tender, about 20 minutes.
4. Remove bay leaf.
5. Mix flour and water until smooth. Stir into beef mixture. Cook, stirring constantly, until thickened, about 2 minutes.

Makes two servings of 3/4 cup beef mixture and 3/4 cup noodles each.

*Note: For beef cubes or strips, use a 1-1/2 pound blade chuck steak. Separate lean meat from fat and bone. Cut meat into 3/4 inch cubes, or strips. Divide beef in half. Use half (about 1 cup) for Beef with Noodles recipe. Save remaining 1 cup for Beef and Peppers recipe.

Braised Turkey Drumsticks
*(Provides cooked turkey for 3 meals)*
2 pounds turkey drumsticks, fresh or frozen
1/8 teaspoon poultry seasoning
Pinch salt
Dash pepper
1 1/2 cups water

1. Thaw frozen drumsticks in refrigerator.
2. Brown drumsticks in hot frying pan about 15 minutes.
3. Sprinkle with seasonings.
4. Add water. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat, cover, and simmer until tender, about 1-1/2 hours. Turn drumsticks halfway through cooking.
5. Measure cooking liquid. Spoon off as much of the fat layer as possible. Add water to liquid, if necessary, to make 1 1/2 cups. Save 1/2 cup for Turkey with Gravy recipe.

**Turkey with Gravy**

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1 tablespoon flour
1 tablespoon water
1/2 cup turkey cooking liquid (from making Turkey Drumsticks)
About 6 ounces turkey (from making Turkey Drumsticks)

1. Mix flour and water until smooth. Stir into turkey cooking liquid.
2. Cook, stirring constantly, until thickened, about 2 minutes.
3. Serve over braised turkey.

Makes two servings of about 3 ounces turkey and 1/4 cup gravy each.

**Eggs Foo Yung**
Egg Mixture:

2 eggs*
1 cup bean sprouts, fresh
1/2 cup chicken or beef, cooked, diced
2 ounce can mushrooms, stems and pieces, drained
1 teaspoon instant minced onion
2 teaspoons oil

Sauce:

1/2 cup water
2 teaspoons soy sauce
2 teaspoons cornstarch

1. Beat eggs with electric mixer until very thick and light, about 5 minutes.
2. Fold in bean sprouts, chicken or beef, mushrooms, and onion.
3. Heat oil in frying pan over moderate heat.
4. Pour egg mixture by half cupfuls into the pan. Brown on one side; turn and brown the other side. Keep warm while preparing sauce.
5. Mix sauce ingredients in small saucepan until smooth.
6. Cook over low heat, stirring constantly, until thickened.
7. Serve sauce over patties.

Makes two servings of 2 patties and 2 tablespoons sauce each, 155 calories per serving.

* Note: Use only clean eggs with no cracks in shells.

Pork Fajitas
Nutrition Facts

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1 cup pork
1 tablespoon lime juice
1/4 teaspoon chili powder
1/2 green pepper, sliced
1/2 onion, sliced
4 flour tortillas (6-inch size)
Optional salsa

1. Cut meat into 1-inch strips.
2. Mix lime juice with chili powder and pour over meat. Set aside for a few minutes or for up to three hours.
3. Slice vegetables, add to meat mixture, and stir.
4. Spray a skillet with non-stick cooking spray and stir-fry meat and vegetables until done.
5. Warm tortillas in microwave about 50 seconds on high or in non-stick skillet. Fill each tortilla with meat mixture and serve with salsa.

Makes two servings of 2 tortillas each.

Quick Pizza
1 refrigerated pizza crust, 12-inch diameter

3/4 cup canned tomato sauce
1 teaspoon oregano leaves
1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
1 small onion, sliced
1/2 small green pepper, thinly sliced
1 cup mushrooms, fresh, sliced
1 cup mozzarella cheese, part skim milk, shredded (about 4 ounces)

1. Preheat oven to 450°F (very hot).
2. Place crust on ungreased pizza pan or baking sheet.
3. Mix sauce, oregano, and garlic powder. Spread evenly over crust.
4. Place vegetables on top of tomato sauce.
5. Sprinkle with cheese.
6. Bake until cheese melts and vegetables are tender, about 15 minutes.

Makes four servings of 2 slices each.

Roast Pork Shoulder
(Provides cooked pork for 3 meals)

2 1/2 pounds fresh picnic shoulder with bone

1. Place picnic shoulder on rack in shallow roasting pan. If meat thermometer is used, insert it in center of roast so the tip does not touch bone or fat.
2. Roast, uncovered, at 325°F (slow oven) until done, about 2 1/2 to 3 hours. To test for doneness, make a small cut next to bone into thicker part of meat. Juices will be clear when meat is done. Meat thermometer, if used, should read 170°F.
4. Separate meat from rind, fat, and bone. Using the smaller pieces of pork, dice and save 1 cup of meat for Pork Fajitas recipe. Slice remaining meat. Save half for sandwiches and half for Roast Pork with Gravy recipe. Cooked pork will keep 3 to 4 days in the refrigerator.

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**Roast Pork with Gravy**

*Water as needed*

1 tablespoon defatted pork drippings (from roast pork shoulder, step 3)
1 tablespoon flour

*About 5 ounces roast pork, sliced (from Roast Pork Shoulder recipe, step 4)*

1. Add water to pork drippings to make 1/2 cup.
2. Pour small amount of liquid into saucepan. Stir in flour. Add remaining liquid.
3. Cook, stirring constantly, until thickened, about 2 minutes.
4. Serve over sliced roast pork.

Makes two servings, about 2 1/2 ounces pork and 1/4 cup gravy each, 195 calories per serving.

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**Sesame Fish**

1/2 pound cod fillets, fresh or frozen
1/2 teaspoon margarine, melted
1 tablespoon lemon juice
1/2 teaspoon dried tarragon leaves
1/8 teaspoon salt
Dash pepper
1 tablespoon sesame seeds
1 tablespoon parsley, chopped

1. Thaw frozen fish in refrigerator overnight or defrost briefly in a microwave oven. Cut fish into 2 portions.
2. Place fish on a broiler pan lined with aluminum foil. Brush margarine over fish.
3. Mix lemon juice, tarragon leaves, salt, and pepper. Pour over fish.
4. Sprinkle sesame seeds evenly over fish.
5. Broil until fish flakes easily when tested with a fork—about 12 minutes.

Makes two servings, about 2-1/2 ounces each.

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**Stove-Top Beans**

...
3 1/4 cups pea (navy) beans, canned

1 cup water
2/3 cup tomato puree
1/2 cup onion, chopped
1 medium apple, unpared, finely chopped
1 tablespoon prepared mustard
1 1/2 teaspoons worcestershire sauce
2 teaspoons sugar
1/8 teaspoon pepper

1. Mix beans with other ingredients in saucepan. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat, cover, and boil gently 30 minutes.
2. Continue cooking, uncovered, until sauce is of desired consistency—about 10 minutes.
3. Serve half of the beans, and refrigerate remaining 2 cups for use at another meal within 3 to 4 days.

Makes four servings of about 1 cup each.

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**Taco Salad**
1/3 pound ground beef

2 tablespoons onion, chopped
1 teaspoon flour
1 cup kidney beans, canned, drained (reserve liquid)
1/3 cup tomato puree
2 tablespoons bean cooking liquid, or water
1 teaspoon chili powder
1/4 teaspoon oregano leaves
1/8 teaspoon salt
1/8 teaspoon garlic powder
2 cups lettuce, torn in bite-sized pieces
1 small tomato, cut in chunks
1/4 cup green pepper, coarsely chopped
8 cornmeal chips, crumbled

1. Cook beef and onion until beef is well browned. Drain. Stir in flour.
2. Stir in beans, tomato puree, bean liquid or water, and seasonings.
3. Cook over low heat until thickened, about 10 minutes.
4. Mix lettuce, tomato chunks, and green pepper.
5. To serve, place half of lettuce mixture (about 1 1/2 cups) on each plate. Mound half of beef mixture (about 3/4 cup) in center of lettuce mixture. Sprinkle crumbled cornmeal chips over beef mixture. Serve immediately.

Makes two servings of about 2 1/3 cups each.

Turkey Spanish Rice
1/4 cup onion, cut in pieces

1/4 cup green pepper, chopped

2 tablespoons celery, sliced

1/4 cup rice, uncooked

1/2 teaspoon margarine

8 ounces canned tomatoes (about 1 cup)

2/3 cup turkey, cooked, diced (from braised turkey drumsticks)

1/4 cup water

1/4 teaspoon chili powder

1/16 teaspoon salt

Dash pepper

1 bay leaf

1. Cook vegetables and rice in margarine in a small saucepan until onion begins to brown, about 4 minutes.
2. Break up large pieces of tomatoes. Add tomatoes and remaining ingredients to rice mixture.
3. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat, cover, and cook slowly until rice is tender, about 25 minutes. Stir as needed to prevent sticking.
4. Remove bay leaf.

Makes two servings of about 1 cup each.

Turkey-Potato Salad
1 3/4 cup turkey, cooked, diced (from Braised Turkey Drumsticks)

1/4 cup celery, chopped
1 cup potato, cooked, peeled, diced
1 tablespoon onion, chopped
2 tablespoons green pepper, chopped
2 tablespoons salad dressing, mayonnaise-type
1/4 teaspoon prepared mustard
1/8 teaspoon salt

1. Mix turkey, celery, potato, onion, and green pepper.
2. Mix salad dressing, mustard and salt. Stir lightly into turkey mixture.
3. Chill.

Makes two servings of about 1 cup each.

See the other bulletins in the Thrifty Meals for Small Families series:

- Planning Thrifty Meals for Small Families (#4330)
- Ideas for Planning Thrifty Menus (#4331)
- Buying Food for Thrifty Small Families (#4332)
- Thrifty Recipes: Salads and Soups, Breads and Desserts (#4334)

Originally adapted from “Thrifty Meals for Two: Making Food Dollars Count,” USDA Home and Garden Bulletin #244.

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