

Cooking

on

the

Run®

Tips and recipes for getting a home cooked meal on the table...fast!



Tracy

2 Girls Cooking



Sarah

ReCipes, tips, tools...everything you need for your kitchen.

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These days everyone seems to be living life in the fast lane. We're being pulled in many different directions with work, leisure and family activities. People are eating out now more than ever. Having a home cooked meal does not have to be sacrificed. Cooking on the Run® was designed to help busy people like you put together a nutritious, delicious meal... fast.

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Tips for getting a Home Cooked Meal on the Table...Fast

- ◆ Use your crockpot. It cooks while you're working. There are tons of great tasting recipes for crockpot meals available at the website www.2girlscooking.com. Check it out!
- ◆ Plan your menu in advance. We know it's a chore, but not only does it save you time and money, it's healthy for your family. You are less likely to reach for the take out menu when you have a plan so it will save you unwanted fat and calories. There's some help on the website if you don't want to go through the drudgery of planning meals. There's a low cost meal planning service you can use—[click here](#).
- ◆ Prepare as much of the meal in advance as you can.

*Chop vegetables and put them in covered storage bowls or plastic zip bags so all you have to do is wash them and throw them into whatever you're cooking. It's recently been recommended to leave vegetables unwashed as veggies that sit in water breed bacteria faster and can lead to food poisoning. If you do wash them before storing them in the refrigerator, dry them thoroughly.

*Take any meat to be defrosted out of the freezer and put it in the refrigerator the night before. Make it part of your bedtime routine. Save yourself a mess and make sure you put it in a 13 x 9 pan or other dish to catch any drippings. There's nothing much worse than cleaning up meat juice that has leaked all over the bottom of the refrigerator. It's ok if your meat is not completely thawed before you have to cut it. It's much easier to slice it when it's slightly frozen.

- ◆ Involve your family in the cooking and cleaning. If you have kids, you'll not only be teaching them a valuable skill, it's a great way to spend some quality time together. Some of my favorite memories are of helping my grandfather in the kitchen. Even now I can smell the garlic and onions. I bet you have some great memories, too!

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- ◆ *If you have a timer feature on your oven, use it!* I have to admit I don't make the best use of this. I have been able to season and prepare chicken pieces and throw it in the oven to cook and run my child to an activity knowing that the timer will shut it off at the appointed time.
- ◆ *Use recipes with fewer ingredients.* Fewer ingredients mean less preparation time which means getting in and out of the kitchen faster. Aim for recipes with five ingredients or less.
- ◆ *Cook once, eat twice.* Some days you have more time to cook than others. On those days when you have the time, prepare enough meat to be used for two different meals. For instance, brown all the ground beef you need for two meals. Either freeze or refrigerate half of it to be used later. You can use it to make chili today, tacos later. The possibilities are endless.
- ◆ *Use items that cook quickly.* Instead of chicken pieces, use chicken tenders; use shrimp that's already peeled; chop vegetables as finely as possible.
- ◆ *Use prepackaged ingredients.* Look for those that have fewer preservatives and artificial ingredients. Fresh or frozen chopped vegetables, chicken roasted in the deli, sliced/shredded cheese, boil-in-a-bag rice, pasta sauces.
- ◆ *Be efficient.* Make as few moves as needed to get your meal together. Grab all your ingredients at once and put them in your prep area; pull out all the utensils, measuring cups, pans, etc.; maximize your prep space by clearing all the stuff off your counter that you don't use nearly everyday; get a garbage bowl or can and have it right there to throw away scraps and wrappers rather than going back and forth; have all your food prepared and ready to go before you cook.
- ◆ *Have a recipe arsenal.* Have a collection of recipes that are favorites for your family. Then group them by ingredients. For instance, have a list of favorites using ground beef, chicken, pork, fish, etc. When that goes on sale, you'll have a ready list of recipes to use for whatever is on sale. This is efficient and saves money. Try new recipes every so often and if it becomes a new family favorite, add it to the arsenal!

Family Favorites

Here are a few of our family favorites. We hope they become your family favorites, too.

Shrimp Scampi

This dish is quick and full of garlic. Guaranteed to keep the vampires away!

2 lbs. Peeled shrimp
1 stick butter
2 T. olive oil
2 T. chopped garlic
pinch of cayenne pepper
6 cups cooked rice or 1 pound dried pasta, cooked
optional: fresh chopped parsley

You can serve this dish over rice or pasta, depending on what you have on hand and what you're in the mood to eat. We call it Shrimp Spaghetti when we have it over pasta. Whatever you decide, get that started according to package directions and prepare the rest of the dish. While the rice or pasta is cooking, melt the butter and olive oil together in a large skillet over medium heat. Once melted and starting to bubble, add the garlic and pinch of cayenne pepper. Turn the heat up to high and add the shrimp. Cook until pink and heated through. Remove from heat. Snip parsley directly onto shrimp mixture. If serving over rice, spoon some rice onto each plate and spoon the shrimp mixture over it. If serving over pasta, drain pasta and pour the shrimp mixture into it and toss. Serve onto individual plates.

Shrimp cook quickly which makes it an ideal meal to prepare on the run. A great time saver step is to buy it peeled. If you're a cheapskate like me, you can buy it unpeeled. My husband, daughter (one of the 2 girls cooking) and I usually peel it together. It's a way for me to get them off the couch, away from the tv and in the kitchen. Another quick way to prepare shrimp is to put it peeled onto skewers or in a grill basket, brush it with olive oil and cook it on the grill. (Another way to get my husband involved since the only cooking he does is on the grill). Add a vegetable and side dish and you have another tasty and quick meal.

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Lemon Chicken

This dish is full of flavor and easy to put together. It's a great dish for an everyday dinner or entertaining.

½ cup flour	4 Tbs. Butter, divided
salt and pepper	2 Tbs. Olive oil
6 boneless, skinless chicken breasts (1 ½ – 2 lbs.) pounded flat	14 oz. Can artichoke hearts in water, drained and quartered
½ cup dry white wine	1 Tbs. Capers, drained + rinsed
zest of one lemon	
juice of one lemon	

Salt and pepper the chicken breasts. Dredge in flour. Set aside. Heat half the butter and olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Cook chicken 4 – 5 minutes on each side or until golden brown and no longer pink on the inside. Remove to a platter and cover with a paper towel to keep warm. Add remaining butter to the skillet. Add artichoke hearts, wine, lemon juice, lemon zest and capers. Scrape up the brown bits left behind by the chicken. Stirring occasionally, cook 2 – 3 minutes or until bubbly. Return chicken to skillet, cover and reduce heat to low. Cook 8 – 10 minutes until the chicken is warmed through and the sauce has thickened slightly.

Capers are the buds of a flower found all over the Mediterranean region. My husband's family still lives in Greece. When visiting my sister-in-law in Crete I asked her what the flowers were that were blooming everywhere. She told me that they were capers. If you go to the website, www.2girlscooking.com, look in the section, "Spotlight on Seasonings". There's a picture of a caper plant and some more information about this sassy little flavor agent.



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Salmon in Foil

Salmon is good for you. It's a great source of protein, vitamin D, and Omega-3 fatty acids. It's firm pink flesh lends itself to a variety of preparations. This is just one of the many ways.

1 lb. Salmon fillets
olive oil
2 lemons, slice thin
2 Tbsp. Capers, drained and rinsed
dried dill
aluminum foil

Preheat oven to 350°. Divide salmon into four portions. Get a piece of foil long enough so that the salmon piece has about a 1-2" diameter around it. Drizzle some olive oil over the fillet. Sprinkle the desired amount of dried dill on the salmon fillet. Sprinkle ½ Tbsp. Capers over the fillet. Top with lemon slices. Tear off another piece of aluminum foil. Place prepared salmon. Roll the edges of the top and bottom pieces of foil together to make the packet. Make three more packets with the remaining salmon fillets. Place packets on a cookie sheet and bake for 20 minutes. You can serve the packets right on the plate. Be careful when opening. Poke a hole in the top to vent the steam and then open.

This recipe can easily be double or tripled or halved. You can also cook the prepared salmon packets on a grill.



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Mexican Fiesta

Mexican food is perfect for quickly putting a meal on the table. The Mexican section in the grocery store has a lot of choices. However, I don't like to use products that have a lot of sodium and preservatives. You can still make some classic Mexican dishes without having to rely on the convenience of pre-packaged Mexican foods.

Fajitas

Nothing sizzles like fajitas!

1 lb. Sliced chicken, beef or pork or
peeled, deveined shrimp
1 lg. onion peeled and sliced into thin rings
1 bell pepper seeded and sliced thin
1 Tbsp. chopped garlic
2 tsp. Southwestern seasoning
4 10" flour tortillas

Add vegetable oil to a large skillet. Heat until hot over medium-high heat. In the meantime, season the meat with the Southwestern seasoning. Throw all the ingredients into the heated skillet and stir until thoroughly cooked. Heat the tortillas briefly in the oven under the broiler just until the bubble up. See below for serving suggestions.

Fajitas are a versatile meal. *You can use all your leftover meat up in one meal. If you do this, saute the onion and pepper just until soft and add the meat and heat through. *If you'd like a little heat, get an ancho chile in adobo sauce, chop it and cook it with the fajita mixture. *To serve, you can smear the tortilla with sour cream, sprinkle on some shredded cheddar cheese and salsa, add your fajita mixture and roll it all up. *Add some beans and rice and you have a complete meal. *You can also chop up some tomato or slice some mushrooms and cook them along with the meat, onions and pepper. When you sign up for the e-mail list on the website, www.2girlscooking.com, you'll get a series of mail messages that has a Spanish Rice recipe that would go perfect with this meal.

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Fish Tacos

1 ½ lb. Mild whitefish filets
1 ½ tsp. Southwestern seasoning
vegetable oil
6 10" flour tortillas
your favorite side items

Coat a large skillet with the vegetable oil. Heat over medium heat. Season fish filets. When oil is heated, add seasoned fish. Break up the fish and keep the fish moving around the pan so it won't burn, stick or scorch. This should take around 5-7 minutes. Cook until heated through. In the meantime, warm the tortillas. Place desired sides on the tortilla, top with fish and roll up.

--This is a super fast, super easy recipe. Favorite side items include sour cream, rice, salsa, shredded cheese or shredded lettuce or cabbage.

--Types of whitefish that you can use are pollock, whiting, flounder, mahi, perch.

--Southwestern-type seasoning can be found in the grocer's spice section. Find a spice mix that has some chili powder, garlic and cumin. I always recommend that you season to taste, but be careful with this seasoning as whitefish has a delicate flavor and the spice could overwhelm it.

--The fish tacos go great with coleslaw as a side dish.



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It's a Wrap!

Roll up some ingredients in a tortilla and you can have a whole meal in your hand.

Hail Caesar Chicken Wrap

1 ½ lbs. Chicken, pounded flat and sliced into thin strips
 vegetable oil
 6 10" flour tortillas
 1 ½ cups cooked rice
 romaine lettuce, cut into small pieces
 bottled caesar salad dressing

Coat the bottom of a large skillet with vegetable oil. Turn heat up to medium-high and add chicken. Stir occasionally. Cook until the chicken is no longer pink, approximately 10-12 minutes. Warm tortillas. To serve, put ¼ cup of the rice down the center of the tortilla. Add the desired amount of chicken and lettuce. Drizzle with the desired amount of salad dressing.

Chicken Ranch Bacon Wrap

1 ½ pounds chicken, pounded flat and sliced into thin strips
 vegetable oil
 1 jar bacon bits
 6 10" flour tortillas
 diced tomato
 shredded lettuce
 bottled or home made ranch dressing

Coat the bottom of a large skillet with vegetable oil. Turn heat up to medium-high and add chicken. Stir occasionally. Cook until the chicken is no longer pink, approximately 10-12 minutes. Add the jar of bacon bits and stir until incorporated into the chicken. Set aside. Warm tortillas. To serve, put the desired amount of the chicken mixture down the center of the tortilla. Top with diced tomato and lettuce. Drizzle with the desired amount of salad dressing.

*****Both of these wraps would go great with roasted potatoes. If you are in a big hurry, you can always cook frozen fries or tater tots.

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