



# Cooking With Ease

Nutrition and Food Services Healthy Teaching Kitchen



**VA**



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

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# Cooking References



# Cooking Safely

Did you know that one in six Americans will get sick from food poisoning this year? Food poisoning not only sends 128,000 Americans to the hospital each year, it can also have long-term health effects.

The keys to basic food safety are cooking it to the right temperature and handling it properly. Follow these guidelines to keep you, your family, and your guests safe.

For more information on these and other food safety guidelines, please visit [www.foodsafety.gov](http://www.foodsafety.gov).

## Practice Good Hygiene

Use hot water and regular soap to wash your hands. Scrub the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails for at least 20 seconds. Need a timer? Try humming the “Happy Birthday” song from beginning to end twice. Rinse hands, then dry with a clean towel.

Wash your hands often, especially during these key times when germs can spread:

- Before, during, and after preparing food
- Before serving food or eating
- After handling raw meat, poultry, seafood, eggs, or their juices
- After using the toilet, touching garbage, touching an animal, or picking something up off the floor
- After changing a diaper or taking care of someone who is sick
- After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing

## Cook to Safe Temperatures

Cook all food to the minimum safe internal temperatures on the chart above. Use a food thermometer to be sure your food is safe. When you think your food is done, place the food thermometer in the thickest part of the food, making sure not to touch bone, fat, or gristle.

Safe Internal Food Temperatures	
<b>Poultry</b>	
Whole or Pieces	165°F
Ground	165°F
<b>Beef, Pork, and Lamb</b>	
Steaks/Roasts/Chops	145°F
Ground	160°F
Pre-Cooked Ham	140°F
<b>Seafood</b>	
Fish Fillet/Whole Fish	145°F
Shrimp/Lobster/Crab	Cook until flesh is pearly and opaque
<b>Leftovers and Casseroles</b>	165°F
<b>Egg Dishes</b>	160°F

## Separate Hazardous Foods

Use one cutting board for hazardous foods (e.g. raw meat, raw poultry, raw seafood, raw eggs) and another for non-hazardous foods (e.g. fresh produce, cooked foods, foods that won't be cooked).

Use separate plates and utensils for cooked and raw foods. Use hot, soapy water to wash all plates, utensils, and cutting boards that touched hazardous foods before using them again.

## Refrigerate and Freeze Properly

Your refrigerator should be set to 40°F or below and your freezer to 0°F or below. Use a refrigerator and/or freezer thermometer to be sure. Place raw meat, poultry, and seafood on plates, in containers, or in sealed plastic bags. Freeze them if you're not planning to use them within a few days. Freezing does not kill harmful germs, but it does keep food safe until you can cook it.

## Avoid the Danger Zone

Bacteria that cause food poisoning grow quickest between 40°F and 140°F, also known as the danger zone. Never leave perishable foods at room temperature for more than two hours. If the food is exposed to temperatures above 90°F, refrigerate it within one hour.

If you're not serving food right after cooking, keep it out of the danger zone by using a heat source like a chafing dish, warming tray, or slow cooker. Cold foods can be kept on ice or in a cooler.

Never thaw or marinate foods at room temperature. The safest way to thaw or marinate food is in the refrigerator. Food can also be thawed under cool running water. Leftovers should be placed in small shallow containers and refrigerated promptly to allow for quick cooling.

## Wash Produce

Cut away any damaged areas on fruits and vegetables, then rinse under warm running water. Scrub firm produce like melons, potatoes, and cucumbers with a clean produce brush. Air dry or pat washed items dry with a paper towel or clean cloth towel. Don't rinse raw meat, poultry, or seafood since this can contaminate other surfaces.

## When In Doubt, Throw It Out

The germs that make you sick are not always the same ones that cause food to go bad. Don't use smell, taste, and appearance as your only guides. Use the storage times on the table above to guide you. If you're still not sure whether a food item is safe, it's better to be safe than sorry and throw it away.

### Safe Food Storage Times (Refrigerated at 40°F or Below)

Raw Poultry	
Whole, Pieces, or Ground	1-2 days
Raw Beef, Pork, and Lamb	
Steaks/Roasts/Chops	3-5 days
Pre-Cooked Ham	3-4 days
Ground	1-2 days
Stew Meat	1-2 days
Raw Seafood	
Fish Fillet/Whole Fish	1-2 days
Shrimp/Lobster/Crab	1-2 days
Raw Eggs	
In shell	3-5 weeks
Out of Shell	2-4 days
Cooked Leftovers	
Beef, Pork, and Lamb	3-4 days
Poultry	3-4 days
Seafood	3-4 days
Egg Dishes	3-4 days
Hard-Cooked Eggs, In	7 days
Vegetables and Fruit	5-7 days
Soups and Stews	3-4 days





# Measurements and Abbreviations

## Common Abbreviations

- c — cup
- Tbsp — tablespoon
- tsp — teaspoon
- oz — ounce (usually weight, unless referring to a liquid)
- fl oz — fluid ounces
- lb — pound
- g — gram
- mg — milligram
- ~ — about/roughly

## Volume Conversions

- 3 teaspoons = 1 tablespoon
- ½ tablespoon = 1½ teaspoons
- 2 tablespoons = 1 (fluid) ounce = ⅛ cup
- 4 tablespoons = 2 (fluid) ounces = ¼ cup
- 5 tablespoons + 1 teaspoon = ⅓ cup
- 1 cup = 8 (fluid) ounces
- 2 cups = 16 (fluid) ounces = 1 pint
- 4 cups = 32 (fluid) ounces = 1 quart
- 2 quarts = 64 (fluid) ounces = ½ gallon
- 16 cups = 128 (fluid) ounces = 1 gallon

## Fresh Herbs to Dried Herbs Ratios

### Dried leafy herbs (e.g. oregano, basil, tarragon)

1 tablespoon fresh = 1 teaspoon dried

### Dried ground herbs and spices (e.g. ground ginger, garlic powder, ground thyme)

4 parts fresh = 1 part dried

### Dried leafy herb to dried ground herb

1 teaspoon dried leaf = ½ teaspoon ground herb

## Reducing Recipes for Fewer Servings

When the Recipe Says...	To Make Half, Use...	To Make a Third, Use...
¼ cup	2 tablespoons	1 tbsp + 1 tsp
⅓ cup	2 tbsp + 2 tsp	1 tbsp + 2¼ tsp
½ cup	¼ cup	2 tbsp + 2 tsp
⅔ cup	⅓ cup	3 tbsp + 1½ tsp
¾ cup	¼ cup + 2 tbsp	¼ cup
1 cup	½ cup	⅓ cup
1 tablespoon	1 ½ teaspoon	1 teaspoon
1 teaspoon	½ teaspoon	¼ teaspoon
½ teaspoon	¼ teaspoon	Scant ¼ tsp
¼ teaspoon	⅛ teaspoon	Scant ⅛ tsp
⅛ teaspoon	1 dash	1 pinch



# Cooking Equipment

Having the right tools on hand can help make cooking as easy and efficient as possible. Use the list below to make sure you will have what you need to make a variety of recipes.

- Large frying pan (skillet), 10+ inches across
- Small frying pan (skillet), 6 inches across
- Large sauté pan, 10+ inches across
- Large saucepan with lid, 6+ quarts
- Small saucepan with a lid, 2-3 quarts
- Stockpot with a lid
- Roasting pan
- At least 2 mixing bowls, one large and one small
- Microwave-safe and oven-safe casserole dish with a lid, 2-3 quarts
- Large cutting board
- 2-3 smaller cutting boards
- Turning spatula
- Scraper/rubber spatula
- Wooden spoons
- 2 metal baking sheets
- 2 wire cooling racks
- Dry ingredient measuring cups
- Liquid ingredient measuring cup
- Measuring spoons
- Box grater
- Chef knife
- Bread (serrated) knife
- Paring knife
- Honing steel
- Spring-loaded tongs
- Wire whisk
- Can opener
- Colander
- Strainer
- Ladle
- Vegetable peeler
- Pot holders and/or oven mitts
- Instant-read digital thermometer
- Potato masher
- Collapsible vegetable steamer
- Slow cooker
- Dutch oven
- Parchment paper
- Aluminum foil
- Plastic wrap
- Food storage containers



# Reading a Recipe

One of the most common reasons why dishes prepared from written recipes go wrong is because the cook did not actually read the recipe. We often scan recipes and make grocery lists from them, but we do not always gather all of the information we need. This is especially important when making something for the first time.

Following these simple steps each time you read a recipe can help you be more successful:

## 1. Sit Down

Sit down and simply read the recipe all the way through. Do not take notes or make lists. Just read.

## 2. Read It Again

Highlight any special steps that you might need to do in advance (e.g. bring cold ingredients to room temperature, soaking).

Pay attention to punctuation. For instance, “1 cup sifted flour” is not the same as “1 cup flour, sifted”. The action (sifting) is to be done before measuring when the word is written before the name of the ingredient. It is to be done after measuring when written after the ingredient.

Also take note of how the recipe writer wants you to measure – by weight or by volume. For example, 6 ounces of brown sugar (weight measurement) is not the same as  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup brown sugar (volume measurement).

## 3. Gather Equipment

Gather all the kitchen tools you will need before you actually decide to cook the recipe, just in case you need to go out and purchase something that you do not have.

## 4. Gather Ingredients

Place all the ingredients that you need in one area, whether it is in the pantry, freezer, or refrigerator. Anything that is missing will go on your grocery list. During this step, pay attention to ingredients that may need to be thawed or brought to room temperature.

## 5. Note the Order of Steps

Follow the recipe steps in the order they are written. Unless the recipe says otherwise, you can heat the oven and/or pans (without any oil) before you start preparing the ingredients. This will save you time and ensure a better end result. Keep in mind that most recipe writers list the ingredients in the order that they will be used, typically from largest amount to smallest.

## 6. Know When It's Done

Make sure to set a timer, based on the time(s) written in the recipe directions. That being said, your senses can tell you more than a timer ever will. If the food should look or smell a certain way, have a specific texture, or reach a certain internal temperature, use these “doneness indicators” to tell when the food is done.

## Typical Recipe Outline

The structure of a recipe is more like an instruction manual than a book. It is a set of steps that should be followed in a certain way to prepare a food or drink. Once you know how to read a recipe, you are well on your way to start cooking!

Most home cooking recipes look something like this:

### Recipe Title

**Yield or Number of servings** (Will you need more than this or less than this?)

**Prep time, Cook time, Total time** (When do you need to start to have it done when you are ready to eat?)

**(Sometimes) Difficulty level**

### Ingredients

Look here for the food ingredients you will need.

Pay attention to special instructions here that may not be mentioned in the directions (e.g. beans, drained and rinsed or carrots, chopped).

Some ingredients may be listed as optional or “to taste”.

### **(Sometimes) Equipment needed**

Look here for any special kitchen utensils and cookware you might need to make the recipe.

### Directions

Look here for the steps that should be completed, in a certain order, to make the recipe.

### **(Sometimes) Recipe Notes**

Look here for tips, shortcuts, storage guidelines, and advice for making substitutions or modifications.

### **(Sometimes) Nutrition Information**

Look here to find out the nutrition information of the recipe (usually per one serving).







## Making Quick Low-Effort Meals

Meals that come together quickly with minimal effort can make balanced eating easier, especially when you have less time or energy to spend in the kitchen. One approach is using prepared, partially prepared, ready-to eat, and/or quick-cooking foods for most of the ingredients in a meal or recipe. This method is called speed-scratch cooking, or semi-homemade cooking. These types of foods may cost more upfront, but save you time and can help reduce food waste which saves you money in the long run. Consider these ideas for faster and easier meals.

### Examples of Speed-Scratch Foods and Ingredients

Storage Location	Examples of Food and Ingredient Options			
Refrigerator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Eggs</li> <li>Cut vegetables and fruit</li> <li>Coleslaw mix</li> <li>Minced garlic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Washed salad greens or salad mixes</li> <li>Shredded cheese</li> <li>Greek yogurt</li> <li>Tempeh</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hummus</li> <li>Yogurt-based dips or salad dressings</li> <li>Stuffed fresh pasta</li> <li>Herb/spice paste</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ground meat, ground poultry, or patties</li> <li>Rotisserie chicken</li> <li>Meat or poultry in marinade</li> </ul>
Freezer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Frozen vegetables (single or blends)</li> <li>Frozen shelled edamame (mukimame)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Frozen fruit</li> <li>Frozen chicken or turkey sausage</li> <li>Frozen meatballs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Frozen baked or grilled chicken</li> <li>Frozen baked, grilled, or raw fish</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Frozen cooked or raw shrimp (peeled and deveined)</li> <li>Frozen potato products</li> </ul>
Countertop, Cupboard, or Pantry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Canned chicken</li> <li>Canned fish or shellfish</li> <li>Canned beans or lentils</li> <li>Canned vegetables</li> <li>Potatoes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Canned tomatoes and tomato products</li> <li>Whole-grain pasta</li> <li>Canned fruit in juice</li> <li>Dried fruit</li> <li>Baking mixes</li> <li>Jarred sauces</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Salt-free or low-sodium seasoning blends</li> <li>Shelled nuts, seeds and nut/seed butters</li> <li>Sliced whole-grain bread and buns</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quick-cooking grains (e.g. oats, quinoa, millet)</li> <li>Microwaveable or “instant” grains</li> <li>Pizza crust</li> <li>Whole-grain tortillas</li> </ul>



## Speed-Scratch Meal Examples

- **Stir-fry** – Cook a bag of frozen stir-fry vegetables in a large pan with some oil, then add chopped cooked meat or tofu and some bottled stir-fry sauce or peanut sauce. Cook until heated through, then serve over cooked instant or microwaveable brown rice. Top with chopped peanuts or cashews, if desired.
- **Pasta bowl** – Cook fresh or frozen chopped vegetables in a pan with some olive oil and Italian seasoning. Add tomato sauce, crushed tomatoes, or pasta sauce. Add cooked meatballs, sausage, or ground meat and cook until warmed through. Serve over cooked whole-grain pasta, topped with parmesan cheese if desired.
- **Egg scramble** – Cook chopped vegetables in a pan with some olive oil until tender, then add lightly beaten eggs. Cook and stir until the eggs form soft curds and are no longer wet. Sprinkle with shredded cheese, then serve with whole-grain toast and fruit.
- **Green salad** – In a large serving bowl, whisk together olive oil and balsamic vinegar. Add salad greens and other cut raw vegetables (e.g. carrots, broccoli slaw, grape tomatoes, snap peas). Toss to combine, then top with canned beans or corn (drained and rinsed) and canned fish or chicken (drained).
- **Oatmeal** – Mix old-fashioned (rolled) oats, milk, and ground cinnamon together in a microwave-safe bowl. Microwave on high power (default setting) until tender, then let sit for 1-2 minutes. Top with dried fruit (chopped if large), chopped nuts, ground flaxseed or shelled seeds (e.g. pepitas, hemp hearts). Add sweetener to taste, if desired.
- **Rice bowl** – Heat a pouch of microwaveable rice according to the package directions, then divide between two bowls. Add canned tuna (drained) or beans (drained and rinsed) and sliced or shredded vegetables (raw or cooked). Add toppings as desired (e.g. sliced avocado, crumbled dried seaweed, sauce or dressing, salsa, cheese, plain Greek yogurt).
- **Tuna noodle salad** – Cook whole-grain pasta noodles according to the package directions, then drain and rinse under cold water. Transfer to a large bowl, along with canned peas (drained and rinsed) or thawed frozen peas. Add canned tuna (drained) and equal amounts olive oil mayonnaise and plain Greek yogurt. Add pickle relish or chopped pickles, if desired. Toss to combine, adding ground black pepper to taste.
- **Chicken sandwich** – Chop or shred cooked chicken (leftover or rotisserie) and toss with a small amount of sauce (e.g. barbecue, honey mustard). Add to one slice of whole-grain bread or the bottom of a whole-grain bun. Top with tender raw vegetables (chopped or shredded as needed) and a second slice of bread or the top bun.
- **Loaded potato** – Prick a medium to large potato all over with a fork. Place the potato in the microwave and cook until fork-tender, about 3-6 minutes on each side. Let cool slightly, then cut open lengthwise. Add olive oil and/or butter, salt-free seasoning, steamed vegetables, and cooked chicken or shrimp. Add toppings as desired (e.g. beans, cheese, fried egg, salsa, barbecue sauce, pesto, plain Greek yogurt).
- **Yogurt parfait** – Mix plain Greek yogurt with some honey or other sweetener to taste. Top with cut fruit (thawed if frozen) and chopped or sliced nuts. Sprinkle on shelled seeds (e.g. pepitas, hemp hearts) or toasted coconut, if desired.



# Redefining Your Pantry

When you are unable to shop on a regular basis, cooking can be a challenge. Keeping food on hand with a longer shelf life can expand your options. While the pantry is a common source of shelf-stable ingredients, many food items will keep for a long time in the refrigerator or freezer as well. See the table below for ideas on cooking with shelf-stable ingredients. Note that most shelf-stable ingredients need to be refrigerated or frozen once opened.

<b>Shelf-Stable Substitutions for Fresh Ingredients</b>	
<b>Fresh Ingredient</b>	<b>Shelf-Stable Swap(s)</b>
1 bell pepper	2 (4-ounce) cans green chiles or ½ cup roasted red peppers (rinsed)
1 jalapeño	2 tablespoons canned jalapenos, 1 chipotle pepper in adobo sauce, or ¼ teaspoon chile spices (e.g. crushed red pepper flakes, ground cayenne)
Juice from 1 lemon*	¼ cup bottled lemon juice
Juice from 1 lime*	2 tablespoons bottled lime juice
1 cup fruit	1 cup frozen fruit, 1 cup canned fruit (drained and rinsed), or 1 cup shelf-stable fresh fruit (e.g. apple, pear, citrus)
1 cup raw vegetable	1 cup frozen vegetable (⅓ cup for leafy greens), ½ cup canned vegetable, or 1 cup shelf-stable fresh vegetable (e.g. carrot, beets, butternut squash)
1 clove garlic*	½ teaspoon minced garlic or ⅛ teaspoon garlic powder
1 cup diced onion*	1 tablespoon onion powder
1 tablespoon grated ginger	1 tablespoon ginger paste or ¼ teaspoon dried ground ginger
1 tablespoon chopped fresh herb	1 tablespoon herb paste or 1 teaspoon dried herb
1 ear corn	¾ cup frozen or canned corn
1 egg (for binding)*	1 tablespoon ground flaxseed plus 3 tablespoons water
1 cup milk (dairy or non-dairy)	1 cup shelf-stable (ultra-pasteurized) milk, ½ cup evaporated milk plus ½ cup water, or ¼ cup dry milk powder plus 1 cup water
3 ounces meat, seafood, or poultry	3 eggs, 1 cup cooked or canned beans or lentils, 1 cup tofu, 1 cup tempeh, 1 cup frozen edamame; 3 ounces canned or frozen meat, seafood, or poultry

\*When stored properly, these items are naturally shelf-stable before preparation (e.g. cutting, opening, cooking).



## Filling Your Freezer

The freezer can be thought of as a second pantry. Freezing ingredients and prepared foods can open up a whole new avenue for preserving food and planning meals. When done well, filling your freezer with ingredients and meals can help you save money, save time and effort in the kitchen, reduce your food waste, and minimize trips to the store.

The key to success is to freeze foods with strategy in mind so you end up with an organized storehouse, rather than a jumbled heap of freezer-burnt mystery items. Follow these tips as you get started with filling your freezer.

### Tools for Easier Freezer Prep and Storage

- Reusable or disposable storage containers, ziptop plastic bags, plastic wrap, and/or aluminum foil
- Permanent marker and masking tape for labeling food packaging
- Electric pressure cooker or slow cooker (thaw food before cooking in slow cooker)
- Ziptop bag holder to make filling storage bags easier
- Plastic bins for organizing food in the freezer
- Whiteboard, laminated inventory list, or digital tracking tool (e.g. fillable PDF, spreadsheet)

### Handling Frozen Foods Safely

Make sure your freezer is set at 0°F or below (-10°F for a deep freezer). Never thaw frozen food on the counter. Food should always be thawed in the refrigerator or under cool running water. Make sure to place the food item on a plate or in a bowl to keep it clean and catch any leaks as it thaws. Most food items will take 24 hours to thaw completely, though large pieces may take longer. Count on about four hours per pound for each food item. For more information about safe food storage, visit the food safety page in the topics section of [www.nutrition.gov](http://www.nutrition.gov).

### Freezing Leftovers and Make-Ahead Meals

Whether you live in a small household or wish to have food prepared in advance, freezing meals or components of meals can be a great option. After making or assembling a recipe or food, portion out the amounts you want to freeze. This may involve using freezer-friendly single serving containers, or freezing an entire batch of a recipe in a baking dish, freezer bag, or other larger storage container. Most leftovers and pre-prepared foods will keep for up to six months in the freezer.

## Foods that Freeze Well

Many foods and dishes can be frozen from fresh, some without any special preparation. See the list below for examples of items that do well with freezing. Try searching the Internet for more tips on freezing food from fresh.

### Produce

- Whole or sliced citrus and citrus zest
- Berries
- Stonefruit (e.g. peaches, plums)
- Grapes
- Mango
- Banana
- Cooked fruit (e.g. compote, pie filling, jam)
- Bell peppers and chile peppers
- Onions
- Corn on the cob
- Cooked tomatoes
- Leafy greens (e.g. spinach, kale)
- Ginger
- Fresh herbs
- Guacamole
- Nuts, seeds, and nut or seed flours

### Grains and Starchy Vegetables

- Cooked rice and other grains
- Fresh pasta and undercooked pasta without sauce
- Cooked or canned beans (remove from can)
- Gnocchi
- Mashed potatoes
- Hummus

### Dairy and Non-Dairy Milk Alternatives

- Milk, buttermilk, half and half, and heavy cream
- Shredded cheese and cottage cheese
- Butter
- Coconut milk (remove from can, if applicable)

### Baking Items and Condiments

- Pesto
- Tomato sauce and tomato paste
- Baking yeast
- Broth and stock

### Protein Foods

- Egg whites (use in recipes where rising is not needed such as in an egg wash or omelet)
- Egg yolks, mixed with a 2:1 sugar-water syrup (add  $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon for each yolk; thaw and use in custards)
- Cooked eggs and egg dishes
- Cooked or raw meat, seafood, and poultry
- Cooked or raw bacon, sausage, and ham
- Tofu and tempeh

### Meals (Fully Cooked, Partially Cooked, or Uncooked)

- Meatballs and meatloaf
- Burger patties
- Casseroles
- Soups, chili, and stews
- Breakfast sandwiches or burritos

### Baked Goods

- Yeast breads and quick breads
- Muffins
- Biscuits
- Pancakes, waffles, and French toast
- Pizza and pizza dough
- Cookies and cookie dough
- Bar cookies (e.g. brownie, lemon bars)
- Pie crust and pies without meringue



# Cooking in the Microwave

Although a microwave may not be your first thought when it comes to cooking appliances, almost everybody has one and it can be used for a whole lot more than just heating food up.

With a few simple guidelines, you can cook just about anything in your microwave – from pasta to meatloaf.

## Choose the Right Dish

- Make sure the dish you plan to cook in is labeled safe for microwave oven use, or “microwave-safe”. Most glass and ceramic dishes are safe to use in the microwave.
- Use a round plate or other container, instead of one with corners, to help the food cook evenly.
- Do not use Styrofoam, melamine, or standard plastic wrap in the microwave because they are not heat-stable at high temperatures.
- Never put any metal in your microwave, including silverware and aluminum foil.

## Spread It Out

- Heat small amounts of food in the microwave at one time. Smaller or single portions of food will heat more evenly than larger or multiple portions.
- Spread the food out in a circle around the outer edge of the plate or other container, leaving an opening in the center.
- The more surface area the food takes up, the better. Shallow or thin foods will heat better than thick or dense foods.

## Maintain the Right Amount of Moisture

- Cover food with a damp paper towel to keep it moist. This also helps to promote even cooking and prevent messy splatters.
- Pizza and other crisp or crunchy foods cook best uncovered – on top of a dry paper towel or a microwave rack – so the bottom doesn’t get soggy.

## Take It Slow

- Microwave in short time increments, then stir and repeat until the food is cooked through to avoid scorching.
- For small amounts or delicate foods (e.g. chocolate, eggs, butter), microwave for 15 to 30 seconds at a time. For larger dishes (e.g. casseroles, soup, pasta), microwave for one to two minutes at a time.

## Keep It Safe

- Microwave all raw animal proteins (e.g. chicken, fish, meat, eggs) to an internal temperature of 165°F.
- Stir the food, if applicable, and allow it to sit for two to three minutes before taking the temperature. This will allow the heat to even out and let the food cool slightly so you don’t burn your mouth.





## Keys to No-Cook Success

No-cook recipes can be helpful for a variety of reasons – saving time, cutting down on electricity usage, and getting around the barrier of limited cooking ability or skills. Though sandwiches and salads are common examples of no-cook meals, the possibilities do not end there. Use these tips as a guide to success with no-cook meals.

### **Buy Pre-Cooked**

Selecting items that are already fully or partially cooked can provide a start to a variety of meals. Examples of these items include rotisserie chicken, whole-grain bread or tortillas, pre-cooked frozen shrimp, microwavable whole grains, frozen vegetables, and pre-cooked hardboiled eggs.

### **Go Meatless**

Plant-based and dairy-based protein foods do not require cooking to be safe to eat, so they can be great no-cook protein options. Some examples are tofu, tempeh, hummus, nuts and seeds, Greek yogurt, lowfat cheese, and cottage cheese.

### **Shop the Pantry**

The pantry can provide a variety of no-cook meal items, such as canned beans and lentils, canned fish, and sauces.

### **Cook Ingredients Ahead**

If you plan to use one ingredient for multiple meals during the week, cook all that you will need at one time.

### **Double Up**

It typically doesn't take much more time to cook two batches of a recipe. Try doubling up one of your recipes to refrigerate or freeze for a quick reheated meal later.

### **Change Up the Leftover Routine**

Consider having leftovers for breakfast or lunch. They can be eaten as-is, in a bowl, or in a wrap. Toss your leftover cooked protein and root vegetables with some fresh greens for a nice hearty salad. You can also repurpose a previous night's dinner leftovers in a new dish. For example, shred and season leftover grilled chicken for tacos.

# No-Cook Recipes

# Berry-Vanilla Overnight Oats

Prep: 5 minutes | Chill: 5 hours | Total: 5 hours 5 minutes

Yield: 1 serving | Serving Size: 1 batch (~2 cups)

## Ingredients

- ½ cup uncooked old fashioned (rolled) oats
- ½ cup lowfat (1%) milk
- 1 (5.3-ounce) container vanilla nonfat Greek yogurt (about ½ cup)
- 1 pinch ground cinnamon
- ½ cup frozen berries (one type or a combination; e.g. blueberries, raspberries, blackberries, mixed berries, sliced strawberries)

## Directions

1. In a small (~2-cup) jar, bowl, or storage container, stir together the oats, milk, yogurt, and cinnamon.
2. Add the berries and stir to combine.
3. Cover with a lid or plastic wrap and place in the refrigerator. Chill for at least 5 hours, up to overnight.
4. Serve cold, or warm briefly (about 1 minute) in the microwave.

## Recipe Notes

- These overnight oats will keep in the refrigerator for up to 7 days. Consider making multiple batches for a quick breakfast option throughout the week.
- For more texture and protein, try adding a nut and/or seed (e.g. chopped walnuts, sliced or slivered almonds, pepitas, hemp hearts).
- Another flavor of Greek yogurt can be used, if desired.
- Any frozen or drained canned fruit (e.g. peaches, cherries, mango, pears) can be used in place of the berries. Avoid mixing pineapple with the dairy in this recipe since this can create a bitter flavor.

**Nutrition Facts Per Serving: Calories: 340 | Total Fat: 4 g | Saturated Fat: 1 g  
Sodium: 110 mg | Total Carbohydrate: 45 g | Dietary Fiber: 5.5 g | Protein: 21.5 g**

For more recipes, please visit [www.nutrition.va.gov](http://www.nutrition.va.gov)





# Salmon Wrap

Prep: 5 minutes | Cook: 0 minutes | Total: 5 minutes

Yield: 1 serving | Serving Size: 1 wrap

## Ingredients

- 1 (2.5-ounce) pouch salmon (or half of a 5-ounce can boneless skinless salmon in water, drained)
- 1 teaspoon olive oil mayonnaise
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- ½ cup coleslaw mix or broccoli slaw
- 1 (8-inch) whole-wheat tortilla or wrap

## Directions

1. In a small bowl, stir together the salmon, mayonnaise, and mustard.
2. Transfer the salmon mixture to the middle of the tortilla or wrap, then top with the coleslaw mix or broccoli slaw.
3. Roll into a wrap, folding over the sides to seal the ends.
4. Serve right away.

## Recipe Notes

- The salmon mixture will keep in the refrigerator for up to 4 days. Consider making a larger batch for lunches throughout the week. When ready to serve, add to the tortilla(s) with the slaw and roll into a wrap.
- Whole-wheat tortillas and wraps provide a good source of fiber, but another type can be used if desired.
- The salmon mixture can also be served on a whole-wheat pita, sandwich thin, or sliced bread.

**Nutrition Facts Per Serving: Calories: 230 | Total Fat: 7 g | Saturated Fat: 1 g  
Sodium: 315 mg | Total Carbohydrate: 23 g | Dietary Fiber: 3 g | Protein: 18 g**

For more recipes, please visit [www.nutrition.va.gov](http://www.nutrition.va.gov)



# Turkey Apple Pita

Prep: 10 minutes | Cook: 0 minutes | Total: 10 minutes

Yield: 1 serving | Serving Size: 2 filled pita pockets

## Ingredients

2 tablespoons plain nonfat Greek yogurt

¼ teaspoon ground rosemary or thyme

½ medium apple, sliced or chopped (about ½ cup)

4 slices deli turkey (about 4 ounces), divided

½ cup salad greens, chopped if large (e.g. spinach, spring mix, lettuce)

1 whole-wheat pita pocket, cut crosswise into two half-moons

## Directions

1. In a small bowl, stir together the Greek yogurt and rosemary or thyme.
2. Add the apple and toss to coat.
3. Open the pita pockets and divide the apple mixture between the two halves.
4. Add 2 slices of the turkey to each pita pocket half, followed by ¼ cup of the salad greens.
5. Serve right away.

## Recipe Notes

- To reduce the sodium content, look for reduced-sodium deli turkey or use leftover cooked chicken or turkey.
- Another fresh or dried herb, or a salt-free seasoning blend, can be used in place of the dried rosemary or thyme, if desired.
- This recipe can also be served as a sandwich, if desired.

**Nutrition Facts Per Serving: Calories: 300 | Total Fat: 5 g | Saturated Fat: 1 g  
Sodium: 980 mg | Total Carbohydrate: 41 g | Dietary Fiber: 7 g | Protein: 25 g**

For more recipes, please visit [www.nutrition.va.gov](http://www.nutrition.va.gov)



# Southwestern Corn and Black Bean Salad

Prep: 5 minutes | Cook: 0 minutes | Total: 5 minutes

Yield: 6 servings | Serving Size: ~1 cup

## Ingredients

- 1 (15.25-ounce) can corn, drained and rinsed
- 1 (15-ounce) can black beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 (14.5-ounce) can fire roasted diced tomatoes
- 1 (4-ounce) can diced green chile peppers

## Directions

1. Add the corn, beans, tomatoes with their juice, and chile peppers to a medium mixing bowl.
2. Stir to combine.
3. Serve right away, or chill before serving if desired.

## Recipe Notes

- This salad can also be served as a salsa with chips, or as a topping for cooked chicken or fish.
- This salad will keep in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 7 days, or in the freezer for up to 3 months.
- Look for low-sodium or no-salt-added corn, beans, and/or tomatoes if you need to watch your sodium intake.
- A 10- to 12-ounce bag of frozen corn can be used in place of the canned corn, if desired. Add to the salad, then let sit for 10-15 minutes to thaw.
- Feel free to substitute a different type of bean for the black beans.
- For a flavor boost, consider adding lime juice and/or chopped fresh cilantro.

**Nutrition Facts Per Serving: Calories: 120 | Total Fat: 0.5 g | Saturated Fat: 0 g  
Sodium: 300 mg | Total Carbohydrate: 23.5 g | Dietary Fiber: 6 g | Protein: 6 g**

For more recipes, please visit [www.nutrition.va.gov](http://www.nutrition.va.gov)



# Tangy Slaw

Prep: 5 minutes | Cook: 0 minutes | Total: 5 minutes

Yield: 4 servings | Serving Size: ~1 cup

## Ingredients

¼ cup apple cider vinegar or lime juice (about 2 limes)

2 tablespoons olive oil

1 tablespoon honey

½ teaspoon ground black pepper

¼ teaspoon salt

1 (14- to 16-ounce) bag coleslaw mix

## Directions

1. In a large mixing bowl, whisk together the vinegar or lime juice, oil, honey, black pepper, and salt.
2. Add the coleslaw mix and toss to combine.
3. Serve right away, or chill before serving if desired.

## Recipe Notes

- If you have extra cabbage and carrots on hand, substitute 4 cups of shredded cabbage plus 1 cup of shredded carrots for the coleslaw mix.
- Serve this slaw on its own as a side salad, on pulled pork sandwiches, or on fish tacos.
- For a sweet twist, consider adding sliced or grated apple or dried fruit (e.g. raisins, dried cranberries).
- For more crunch, add chopped cashews or slivered almonds right before serving.

**Nutrition Facts Per Serving: Calories: 100 | Total Fat: 7 g | Saturated Fat: 0.5 g  
Sodium: 160 mg | Total Carbohydrate: 10 g | Dietary Fiber: 2 g | Protein: 1 g**

For more recipes, please visit [www.nutrition.va.gov](http://www.nutrition.va.gov)



# Berry-Yogurt Protein Bowls

Prep: 10 minutes | Cook: 0 minutes | Total: 10 minutes

Yield: 4 servings | Serving Size: 1 bowl (~2 cups)

## Ingredients

4 cups plain nonfat Greek yogurt

¼ cup sugar-based sweetener (e.g. honey, maple syrup, agave)

¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon

4 cups fresh or frozen berries (one type or a combination; e.g. blueberries, sliced or chopped strawberries, raspberries, blackberries), thawed if frozen unless making ahead, divided

4 tablespoons (¼ cup) hemp hearts (hulled hemp seeds), divided

4 tablespoons (¼ cup) flax meal (ground flaxseed), divided

## Directions

1. In a medium mixing bowl, stir together the yogurt, selected sweetener, and cinnamon.
2. Divide the yogurt mixture between four individual serving bowls or storage containers (~1 cup each).
3. Top each bowl with 1 cup of the berries, 1 tablespoon of the hemp hearts, and 1 tablespoon of the flax meal.
4. Serve right away, or chill before serving if desired.

## Recipe Notes

- These protein bowls will keep in the refrigerator for up to 7 days.
- Chopped or sliced toasted nuts can be substituted for the hemp seeds and/or flax meal, if desired.



Nutrition Facts Per Serving: Calories: 480 | Total Fat: 16 g | Saturated Fat: 1.5 g  
Sodium: 90 mg | Total Carbohydrate: 53 g | Dietary Fiber: 8.5 g | Protein: 35.5 g

For more recipes, please visit [www.nutrition.va.gov](http://www.nutrition.va.gov)

# No-Bake Mini Cheesecakes

Prep: 10 minutes | Chill: 1 hour | Total: 1 hour 10 minutes

Yield: 4 servings | Serving Size: 1 mini cheesecake

## Ingredients

¼ cup finely ground graham cracker crumbs (about 1 full graham cracker sheet)

1 tablespoon unsalted butter, melted

1 pinch ground cinnamon

¾ cup plain nonfat Greek yogurt

4 ounces reduced-fat cream cheese (Neufchatel), softened at room temperature

3 tablespoons sugar

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

## Directions

1. In a small bowl, stir together the graham cracker crumbs, melted butter, and cinnamon to form a crumbly mixture.
2. Gather four small (~½-cup) jars or other serving containers and divide the graham cracker mixture between them, about 1 tablespoon in each. Press down to form a crust. Set aside.
3. In a medium mixing bowl, use an electric mixer to beat together the yogurt, cream cheese, sugar, and vanilla. Continue to beat until the mixture is completely smooth and it looks like a very thick whipped cream.
4. Divide the yogurt-cream cheese mixture between the jars.
5. Place in the refrigerator to chill, at least 1 hour.
6. Serve cold.



**Nutrition Facts Per Serving: Calories: 175 | Total Fat: 9.5 g | Saturated Fat: 6 g  
Sodium: 150 mg | Total Carbohydrate: 14 g | Dietary Fiber: 0.5 g | Protein: 7.5 g**

For more recipes, please visit [www.nutrition.va.gov](http://www.nutrition.va.gov)

# Simple French Onion Dip

Prep: 5 minutes | Chill: 1 hour | Total: 1 hour 5 minutes

Yield: 8 servings | Serving Size: ¼ cup

## Ingredients

2 cups plain nonfat Greek yogurt

1 (1-ounce) packet dry onion soup mix (or ¼ cup homemade dry onion soup mix; see Recipe Notes)

2 tablespoons lowfat (1%) milk

## Directions

1. Add the Greek yogurt, onion soup mix, and milk to a medium mixing bowl or storage container.
2. Stir to combine.
3. Place in the refrigerator to chill for at least 1 hour, up to overnight.
4. Serve cold.

## Recipe Notes

- This dip goes well with raw vegetables, pretzels, whole-grain crackers, and whole-grain chips.
- To make a two-serving batch, add 1 tablespoon of the French onion soup mix and ½ tablespoon milk to a 5.3-ounce container of plain nonfat Greek yogurt.
- To make your own dry onion soup mix, mix together the following: 2½ tablespoons dried minced onion, 4 cubes beef bouillon (crushed; or 4 teaspoons bouillon powder), 1 teaspoon onion powder, ⅛ teaspoon salt, ⅛ teaspoon ground black pepper.



Nutrition Facts Per Serving: Calories: 35 | Total Fat: 0 g | Saturated Fat: 0 g  
Sodium: 95 mg | Total Carbohydrate: 3 g | Dietary Fiber: 0 g | Protein: 6 g

For more recipes, please visit [www.nutrition.va.gov](http://www.nutrition.va.gov)



# Chocolate Chip Chickpea Cookie Dough

Prep: 10 minutes | Cook: 0 minutes | Total: 10 minutes

Yield: 12 servings | Serving Size: 1 dough ball

## Ingredients

- ½ cup semisweet or dark chocolate chips (mini chips work best)
- 1 (15-ounce) can no-salt-added garbanzo beans (chickpeas), drained and rinsed
- ½ cup peanut butter
- 2 tablespoons sugar-based sweetener (e.g. agave, honey, maple syrup)
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

## Directions

1. Add the chocolate chips to a medium mixing bowl and set aside.
2. Add the garbanzo beans, peanut butter, selected sweetener, and vanilla to a food processor. Pulse to chop and then blend until completely smooth, about 3-5 minutes.
3. Transfer the mixture to the bowl with the chocolate chips and fold to combine.
4. Use a 2-tablespoon disher (spring-loaded cookie scoop) to portion the dough out.
5. Serve right away, or chill before serving.

## Recipe Notes

- Try substituting another nut or seed butter for the peanut butter.
- Try substituting chopped nuts or dried fruit for half or all of the chocolate chips.
- Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 7 days, or in the freezer for up to 3 months. If frozen, be sure to thaw slightly (about 10 minutes at room temperature) before eating.



**Nutrition Facts Per Serving: Calories: 150 | Total Fat: 6 g | Saturated Fat: 1 g  
Sodium: 60 mg | Total Carbohydrate: 16 g | Dietary Fiber: 3 g | Protein: 3 g**

For more recipes, please visit [www.nutrition.va.gov](http://www.nutrition.va.gov)

# Microwave Recipes

# Meatless Microwave Chili

Prep: 5 minutes | Cook: 5 minutes | Total: 10 minutes

Yield: 2 servings | Serving Size: 1½ cups

## Ingredients

- 1 (14.5-ounce) can no-salt-added crushed tomatoes
- 1 (15-ounce) can tricolor beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 cup frozen pepper and onion blend
- 1-2 teaspoons chili powder, to taste

## Directions

1. In a large microwave-safe bowl, stir together the tomatoes, beans, pepper and onion blend, and chili powder.
2. Microwave on high power (default setting) for 3 minutes.
3. Carefully remove from the microwave and stir.
4. Continue microwaving on high power (default setting) until heated through, about 1-2 minutes.
5. Serve warm.

## Recipe Notes

- Try to find canned crushed tomatoes that include peppers and onions. You can then decide to leave out the pepper and onion blend as a separate ingredient, if desired.
- If you cannot find tricolor beans, substitute your favorite canned bean (e.g. kidney beans, pinto beans, black beans).
- If using fresh bell pepper and onion, substitute ⅔ cup of diced bell pepper and ⅓ cup of diced onion for the 1 cup of frozen pepper and onion blend.

**Nutrition Facts Per Serving: Calories: 255 | Total Fat: 2.5 g | Saturated Fat: 0 g  
Sodium: 420 mg | Total Carbohydrate: 49 g | Dietary Fiber: 6 g | Protein: 14 g**

For more recipes, please visit [www.nutrition.va.gov](http://www.nutrition.va.gov)





# Baja-Style Microwave Bean and Rice Bowl

Prep: 10 minutes | Cook: 10 minutes | Total: 20 minutes

Yield: 4 servings | Serving Size: 1 bowl without optional toppings

## Ingredients

1 cup uncooked instant (10-minute) brown rice

1 cup water

½ teaspoon ground black pepper

½ teaspoon ground cumin

½ teaspoon garlic powder

¼ teaspoon salt

1 pinch cayenne (optional)

1 (15-ounce) can no-salt-added beans, drained and rinsed (e.g. black beans, pinto beans, kidney beans)

½ cup frozen corn

1 avocado, sliced

Optional toppings: Salsa or Pico de Gallo, plain Greek yogurt, cilantro, bell pepper, lime juice

## Directions

1. In a large microwave-safe bowl, stir together the rice, water, black pepper, cumin, garlic powder, salt, and cayenne (if using).
2. Cover the bowl with a microwave-safe lid or plate. Microwave on high power (default setting) until tender, about 6-8 minutes.
3. Add the beans and corn. Stir to combine, then cover with the lid or plate. Let sit until warmed through, about 5 minutes.
4. Divide between four serving bowls (~1½ cups each), then layer each with a quarter of the avocado.
5. Serve warm, adding toppings as desired.

Nutrition Facts Per Serving: Calories: 395 | Total Fat: 12 g | Saturated Fat: 2.5 g  
Sodium: 155 mg | Total Carbohydrate: 62.5 g | Dietary Fiber: 12 g | Protein: 12 g

For more recipes, please visit [www.nutrition.va.gov](http://www.nutrition.va.gov)





# Microwave-Baked Barbecue Potato

Prep: 5 minutes | Cook: 10 minutes | Total: 15 minutes

Yield: 1 serving | Serving Size: 1 potato with toppings

## Ingredients

- 1 medium (8- to 10-ounce) potato
- 1 cup fresh or frozen bite-sized broccoli florets
- 1 tablespoon water
- 1 (5-ounce) can chicken or tuna in water, drained
- 2 tablespoons barbeque sauce
- ¼ cup shredded cheese (e.g. cheddar, mozzarella)
- ½ tablespoon unsalted butter
- ½ tablespoon olive oil

## Directions

1. Poke the skin of the potato all over with a fork.
2. Place the potato in the microwave and cook on high power (default setting) until fork-tender, about 3-5 minutes on each side. Set aside.
3. Add the broccoli and water to a microwave-safe bowl with a lid. Vent the lid by opening it a small amount on one side. Microwave on high power (default setting) until fork-tender, about 2-3 minutes, then set aside.
4. In a separate microwave-safe bowl, stir the chicken or tuna with the barbecue sauce. Microwave on high power (default setting) until warm, about 30 seconds. Set aside.
5. Place the potato on a serving plate or in a serving bowl.
6. Slice the potato open lengthwise and add the cheese, butter, and oil. Mash into the potato with the fork.
7. Add the broccoli and chicken or tuna mixture. Serve warm.

## Recipe Notes

- Any variety of medium-sized potato, regular or sweet, can be used in this recipe.
- Substitute another vegetable for the broccoli if desired. Some ideas include green beans, spinach, and carrots.
- To use leftover cooked chicken or another protein (e.g. pork, steak), use ½ cup chopped or shredded.

**Nutrition Facts Per Serving: Calories: 585 | Total Fat: 19 g | Saturated Fat: 7 g  
Sodium: 660 mg | Total Carbohydrate: 56 g | Dietary Fiber: 5.5 g | Protein: 47.5 g**

For more recipes, please visit [www.nutrition.va.gov](http://www.nutrition.va.gov)

# Microwave Breakfast Strata (Egg Casserole)

Prep: 5 minutes | Cook: 5 minutes | Total: 10 minutes

Yield: 1 serving | Serving Size: 1 mug or bowl

## Ingredients

Nonstick cooking spray

1 cup frozen pepper and onion blend

2 turkey breakfast sausage links, sliced or diced

1 whole-wheat English muffin, torn or cut into bite-sized pieces

2 eggs

2 tablespoons shredded cheese (e.g. cheddar, mozzarella)

2 tablespoons lowfat (1%) milk

1 pinch ground black pepper

## Directions

1. Coat the inside of a large microwave-safe mug or bowl with nonstick cooking spray.
2. Add the pepper and onion blend and sausage. Microwave on high power (default setting) for 1 minute.
3. Use a paper towel to carefully soak up any liquid.
4. Add the English muffin pieces and cheese. Stir to combine, then set aside.
5. In a separate small bowl, use a fork to whisk together the eggs, milk, and black pepper.
6. Pour the egg mixture over English muffin mixture, then let sit for 1-2 minutes to soak.
7. Microwave on high power (default setting) until the eggs are no longer runny, about 2-3 minutes.
8. Let sit for 2 minutes, then serve warm.



**Nutrition Facts Per Serving: Calories: 445 | Total Fat: 20 g | Saturated Fat: 7 g  
Sodium: 765 mg | Total Carbohydrate: 34.5 g | Dietary Fiber: 5 g | Protein: 29.5 g**

For more recipes, please visit [www.nutrition.va.gov](http://www.nutrition.va.gov)





# Microwave White Chicken Chili

Prep: 5 minutes | Cook: 15 minutes | Total: 20 minutes

Yield: 5 servings | Serving Size: 1½ cups

## Ingredients

- 1 pound (16 ounces) boneless skinless chicken breast, cut into ¾- to 1-inch pieces
- ½ medium onion, diced (about ½ cup)
- 2 tablespoons taco seasoning (store-bought or [homemade](#))
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 2 cups (16 ounces) low-sodium chicken broth
- 2 (15-ounce) cans no-salt-added white beans (e.g. great northern, cannellini), drained and rinsed
- 1 (4-ounce) can diced green chile peppers

## Directions

1. In a large microwave-safe mixing bowl or glass baking dish, stir together the chicken, onion, taco seasoning, and oil.
2. Microwave on high power (default setting) until the onion is tender, about 3-4 minutes.
3. Add the broth, beans, and chile peppers. Stir to combine.
4. Cover the bowl or dish with a microwave-safe lid or a paper towel, then place in the microwave.
5. Microwave on high power (default setting) until the chicken is cooked through (internal temperature of 165°F), about 7-10 minutes, stirring after 5 minutes.
6. Serve warm.

## Recipe Notes

- To reduce the sodium content, use low-sodium or no-salt-added taco seasoning and/or unsalted chicken broth.
- Use ¾ cup of uncooked instant (10-minute) brown rice or 1½ cups of frozen corn in place of one of the cans of beans, if desired. Add ¾ cup of water if using rice.
- You can use 3 cups of chopped cooked chicken or three 5-ounce cans of chicken (drained) in place of the raw chicken breast, if desired. Add with the ingredients in step 3 and then microwave on high power (default setting) until warmed through, about 3-5 minutes.

**Nutrition Facts Per Serving: Calories: 350 | Total Fat: 6 g | Saturated Fat: 1 g  
Sodium: 685 mg | Total Carbohydrate: 34 g | Dietary Fiber: 9 g | Protein: 37.5 g**

For more recipes, please visit [www.nutrition.va.gov](http://www.nutrition.va.gov)



# Microwave Ham and Broccoli Rice Bowl

Prep: 5 minutes | Cook: 5 minutes | Total: 10 minutes

Yield: 1 serving | Serving Size: 1 bowl

## Ingredients

- ¼ cup uncooked instant (10-minute) brown rice
- ⅓ cup (2⅔ ounces) low-sodium chicken broth
- 1 pinch ground black pepper
- 1 cup fresh or frozen bite-sized broccoli florets
- 2 slices deli ham (about 2 ounces), chopped or torn into small pieces
- 2 tablespoons shredded cheese (e.g. cheddar, mozzarella)

## Directions

1. In a medium microwave-safe bowl, stir together the rice, broth, and black pepper.
2. Cover the bowl tightly with a microwave-safe lid, plate, or plastic wrap.
3. Microwave on high power (default setting) for 2 minutes.
4. Carefully remove from the microwave and open the cover.
5. Add the broccoli and stir to combine, then cover and place in the microwave.
6. Microwave on high power (default setting) until the rice and broccoli are tender, about 1-2 minutes.
7. Carefully open the cover and add the ham and cheese. Stir to combine, then cover and let sit for 2 minutes.
8. Serve warm.

## Recipe Notes

- This recipe can also be made in a large microwave-safe mug, if desired.
- To reduce the sodium content, use water or unsalted broth and/or choose a reduced- or low-sodium deli ham.
- A different vegetable (e.g. green beans, cauliflower) or a frozen vegetable blend (e.g. mixed vegetables, California blend) can be used in place of the broccoli, if desired.

**Nutrition Facts Per Serving: Calories: 335 | Total Fat: 8 g | Saturated Fat: 4 g  
Sodium: 650 mg | Total Carbohydrate: 47.5 g | Dietary Fiber: 4 g | Protein: 23 g**

For more recipes, please visit [www.nutrition.va.gov](http://www.nutrition.va.gov)





# Microwave Chicken and Vegetable Soup

Prep: 5 minutes | Cook: 5 minutes | Total: 10 minutes

Yield: 1 serving | Serving Size: 1 bowl (~2½ cups)

## Ingredients

- ½ cup chopped or shredded cooked chicken
- 1 cup (8 ounces) low-sodium chicken broth
- 1 (15-ounce) can no-salt-added mixed vegetables, drained

## Directions

1. Add the chicken, broth, and vegetables to a large microwave-safe bowl. Stir to combine.
2. Cook in the microwave on high (default power) until heated through, about 1-2 minutes.
3. Serve warm.

## Recipe Notes

- One 5-ounce can of chicken (drained) can be used in place of the ½ cup of chopped or shredded cooked chicken, if desired.
- Frozen mixed vegetables can be used in place of the canned mixed vegetables, if desired. Use 1¾ cups of frozen mixed vegetables.
- Consider adding dried herbs and spices such as thyme, Italian seasoning blend, garlic powder, onion powder, or cayenne pepper.
- Serve with whole-grain crackers, if desired.

**Nutrition Facts Per Serving: Calories: 335 | Total Fat: 9 g | Saturated Fat: 2.5 g  
Sodium: 685 mg | Total Carbohydrate: 31.5 g | Dietary Fiber: 7 g | Protein: 21.5 g**

For more recipes, please visit [www.nutrition.va.gov](http://www.nutrition.va.gov)



# Microwave Pita Bread Tuna Melts

**Prep: 5 minutes | Cook: 5 minutes | Total: 10 minutes**

**Yield: 2 servings | Serving Size: 1 filled pita round**

## Ingredients

- 1 (5-ounce) can tuna in water, drained
- ¼ cup shredded mozzarella cheese
- 2 tablespoons olive oil mayonnaise
- ¼ teaspoon onion powder
- 2 (6-inch) pita bread rounds (preferably whole-wheat, if available)

## Directions

1. In a small bowl, stir together the tuna, cheese, mayonnaise, and onion powder.
2. Divide the tuna mixture between the two pita rounds, spreading it onto one half of each pita.
3. Fold each pita over the filling and press down to hold, creating a half-moon shape. Place on a paper towel or microwave-safe plate.
4. Microwave on high power (default setting) until warmed through and the cheese melts, about 1-2 minutes.
5. Let sit for 2 minutes, then serve warm.

## Recipe Notes

- Consider filling with chopped fresh or leftover cooked vegetables, such as spinach, tomato, bell pepper, or mushrooms.
- For a toasted pita, place the filled pita rounds under the broiler to melt the cheese, about 1-2 minutes on each side. This happens quickly, so watch closely to make sure the pita bread doesn't burn.
- To make one serving, look for tuna in a 2.5-ounce pouch. Reduce the amounts of cheese, mayonnaise, and onion powder by half.

**Nutrition Facts Per Serving: Calories: 310 | Total Fat: 7.5 g | Saturated Fat: 1 g  
Sodium: 475 mg | Total Carbohydrate: 36 g | Dietary Fiber: 1.5 g | Protein: 23 g**

For more recipes, please visit [www.nutrition.va.gov](http://www.nutrition.va.gov)

# Microwave French Toast

Prep: 5 minutes | Cook: 5 minutes | Total: 10 minutes

Yield: 1 serving | Serving Size: 1 mug or bowl without optional toppings

## Ingredients

½ tablespoon unsalted butter

2 slices whole-wheat sandwich bread

¼ cup lowfat (1%) milk

1 egg

1 teaspoon packed brown sugar

¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon

¼ teaspoon vanilla extract

Optional toppings: Powdered sugar, fruit compote, fresh fruit, maple syrup, Greek yogurt, sliced almonds, chocolate-hazelnut spread

## Directions

1. Add the butter to a microwave-safe mug or bowl.
2. Place in the microwave and cook on high (default power) until melted, about 15-30 seconds. Set aside to cool slightly.
3. Meanwhile, tear the bread into bite-sized pieces. Set aside.
4. When the butter has cooled, add the milk, egg, brown sugar, cinnamon, and vanilla to the mug or bowl. Whisk with a fork to combine.
5. Add the pieces of bread, stirring to coat and pressing them down into the milk-egg mixture. Let sit for 1-2 minutes to soak.
6. Place in the microwave on top of a plate or paper towel. Cook on high (default power) until the liquid is fully set, about 1½-2 minutes.
7. Let sit for 2 minutes, then serve warm, topping as desired.



Nutrition Facts Per Serving: Calories: 295 | Total Fat: 12.5 g | Saturated Fat: 6 g  
Sodium: 355 mg | Total Carbohydrate: 30 g | Dietary Fiber: 4 g | Protein: 15 g

For more recipes, please visit [www.nutrition.va.gov](http://www.nutrition.va.gov)





# Microwave Chicken Fajitas

Prep: 10 minutes | Cook: 15 minutes | Total: 25 minutes

Yield: 4 servings | Serving Size: 2 fajitas (filled tortillas) without optional toppings

## Ingredients

2 medium bell peppers, sliced ¼-inch-thick (about 4 cups)  
½ medium onion, sliced ⅛-inch-thick (about 1 cup)  
1 tablespoon olive oil  
4 tablespoons (¼ cup) fajita seasoning, divided (store-bought or homemade; see Recipe Notes)  
1 pound (16 ounces) fresh chicken tenders (without breading)  
8 (6-inch) corn or whole-wheat tortillas, warmed  
Optional toppings: Cheese, Pico de Gallo, guacamole or avocado, plain Greek yogurt, lettuce or cabbage, lime wedges, cilantro

## Recipe Notes

- Boneless skinless chicken breast or steak, cut into 1-inch strips, can be used in place of the chicken tenders.
- To make reduced-sodium fajita seasoning (reduces sodium per serving to 515 mg), mix together: 4 teaspoons chili powder, 2 teaspoons sweet or smoked paprika, 1 teaspoon ground cumin, 1 teaspoon onion powder, 1 teaspoon garlic powder, 2 teaspoons packed brown sugar, ½ teaspoon salt, ¼-½ teaspoon cayenne (to taste).

## Directions

1. Add the bell peppers and onion to an 8x8-inch or 9x9-inch microwave-safe glass baking dish (or other 8- to 10-cup microwave-safe dish) with a lid.
2. Add the oil and 2 tablespoons of the seasoning. Toss to coat the vegetables.
3. Coat the chicken with the remaining 2 tablespoons of seasoning, then place on top of the vegetables.
4. Cover the dish with the lid and microwave on high power (default setting) until the chicken is cooked through (internal temperature of 165°F) and the vegetables are tender, about 7-10 minutes.
5. Let sit for 2 minutes, then cut the chicken into thin strips and toss with the vegetable mixture.
6. Divide the chicken-vegetable mixture between the tortillas (~⅓ cup each). Serve warm, adding toppings as desired.

**Nutrition Facts Per Serving: Calories: 415 | Total Fat: 9 g | Saturated Fat: 1.5 g  
Sodium: 620 mg | Total Carbohydrate: 44 g | Dietary Fiber: 5 g | Protein: 37.5 g**

For more recipes, please visit [www.nutrition.va.gov](http://www.nutrition.va.gov)





# Microwave Black Bean Burritos

Prep: 5 minutes | Cook: 5 minutes | Total: 10 minutes

Yield: 3 servings | Serving Size: 1 burrito without optional toppings

## Ingredients

- 1 (15-ounce) can no-salt-added black beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 (10-ounce) can diced tomatoes with green chilies
- 1 teaspoon onion powder
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 pinch cayenne (optional)
- ¼ cup shredded cheese (e.g. cheddar, Mexican blend)
- 3 (10-inch) whole-wheat tortillas
- Optional toppings: Lettuce, tomato, fresh or pickled onion, fresh or pickled jalapeno, avocado, plain Greek yogurt, salsa or hot sauce

## Directions

1. In a medium microwave-safe bowl, stir together the beans, tomatoes with green chilies, onion powder, garlic powder, and cayenne (if using).
2. Microwave on high power (default setting) until warm, about 1-2 minutes.
3. Add the cheese and stir to combine, then mash the bean mixture with a fork or potato masher
4. Microwave on high power until warmed through and beginning to thicken, about 1-2 minutes. Set aside.
5. Microwave the tortillas on high power (default setting) until warm, about 10-30 seconds.
6. Divide the bean mixture between the tortillas (~⅓ cup each).
7. Roll each tortilla into a burrito, folding over the sides to seal the ends.
8. Serve warm, adding toppings as desired.

## Recipe Notes

- The bean mixture can be made ahead of time, and refrigerated for up to 3 days. When ready to serve, add the mixture to the tortilla(s), roll into a burrito, and microwave on high power (default setting) until warm, about 1-2 minutes.

**Nutrition Facts Per Serving: Calories: 350 | Total Fat: 7 g | Saturated Fat: 3.5 g  
Sodium: 630 mg | Total Carbohydrate: 59 g | Dietary Fiber: 13 g | Protein: 18 g**

For more recipes, please visit [www.nutrition.va.gov](http://www.nutrition.va.gov)

# Microwave Spicy Lemon-Herb Salmon

Prep: 5 minutes | Cook: 5 minutes | Total: 10 minutes

Yield: 1 serving | Serving Size: 1 fillet

## Ingredients

1 tablespoon olive oil mayonnaise

1 tablespoon olive oil

½-1 tablespoon sriracha or other hot sauce, to taste

1-2 teaspoons lemon juice, to taste

1 pinch salt

1 pinch ground black pepper

1 (4- to 6-ounce) salmon fillet

½ tablespoon chopped fresh parsley

## Directions

1. In a small bowl, whisk together the mayonnaise, oil, sriracha or hot sauce, lemon juice, salt, and black pepper. Set aside.
2. Place the salmon in a microwave-safe bowl or storage container that has a lid (or use microwave-safe plastic wrap).
3. Spread the mayonnaise mixture over the salmon, coating the top and sides.
4. Seal the container with the lid or microwave-safe plastic wrap and microwave on high power (default setting) until the salmon is cooked through (internal temperature of 165°F), about 2-4 minutes.
5. Let sit for 2 minutes, then sprinkle with the parsley and serve warm.

## Recipe Notes

- Another herb (e.g. dill, cilantro, chives), can be used if desired. If using a dried herb, reduce to 1 teaspoon and add to step 1.



Nutrition Facts Per Serving: Calories: 365 | Total Fat: 27 g | Saturated Fat: 3.5 g  
Sodium: 495 mg | Total Carbohydrate: 4.5 g | Dietary Fiber: 0 g | Protein: 27.5 g

For more recipes, please visit [www.nutrition.va.gov](http://www.nutrition.va.gov)

# Stovetop Recipes





# Marinated Pasta and Vegetable Salad

Prep: 5 minutes | Cook: 10 minutes | Chill: 3 hours

Total: 3 hours 15 minutes

Yield: 4 servings | Serving Size: ~1 cup

## Ingredients

Water

1½ cups uncooked short pasta (e.g. bowtie, rotini; about 4 ounces)

1 cup bite-sized cauliflower florets

1 cup bite-sized broccoli florets

1 cup cherry or grape tomatoes, halved (about half of a 10-ounce package)

½ cup Italian dressing (store-bought or homemade)

## Directions

1. Fill a large saucepan or stockpot halfway to two-thirds full with water. Bring to a boil over high heat.
2. Add the pasta and cook according to the package directions, then drain the pasta into a colander and set aside.
3. In a large mixing bowl, toss together the cauliflower, broccoli, tomatoes, and Italian dressing.
4. Add the cooked pasta and gently toss to combine.
5. Place in the refrigerator to chill, at least 3 hours, then serve cold.

## Recipe Notes

- For more fiber, use whole-grain pasta.
- For a quick meal, try adding cooked shrimp (thawed if frozen) or cooked chicken.
- Substitute a different vegetable (e.g. zucchini, cucumber, onion, bell pepper) for the broccoli, cauliflower, and/or tomatoes, if desired.

Nutrition Facts Per Serving: Calories: 280 | Total Fat: 18.5 g | Saturated Fat: 3 g  
Sodium: 580 mg | Total Carbohydrate: 26 g | Dietary Fiber: 2 g | Protein: 6 g

For more recipes, please visit [www.nutrition.va.gov](http://www.nutrition.va.gov)



# Classic Beef and Vegetable Stew

Prep: 15 minutes | Cook: 1 hour | Total: 1 hour 15 minutes

Yield: 4 servings | Serving Size: ~2 cups

## Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 pound (16 ounces) beef stew meat, cut into 1-inch chunks
- 1 medium onion, diced (about 1 cup)
- 2 medium (6- to 8-ounce) potatoes, cut into ½-inch chunks (about 2 cups)
- 4 medium carrots, peeled if desired, cut into ½-inch chunks (about 2 cups)
- 1 tablespoon garlic powder
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 1 cup water
- 1 (14.5-ounce) can Italian style diced tomatoes

## Directions

1. Heat a large skillet or sauté pan over medium-high heat.
2. Add the oil and heat until shimmering.
3. Add the stew meat and onion. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the meat is browned on all sides, about 3-5 minutes.
4. Add the potatoes, carrots, garlic powder, and salt. Cook and stir until fragrant, about 1-2 minutes.
5. Add the water and tomatoes with their juice. Stir to combine.
6. Bring to a simmer over high heat, then reduce the heat to maintain a simmer.
7. Cover with a lid and cook until the meat and vegetables are tender, about 45-60 minutes.
8. Serve warm.

## Recipe Notes

- For a thicker gravy-like consistency, mix 1 teaspoon cornstarch with 1 tablespoon cold water and add this mixture at the end of cooking. Continue cooking until the liquid is slightly thickened, about 2-3 minutes.
- Substitute cubed pork loin or chicken thighs for the beef stew meat, if desired.
- To save time, use one 16-ounce bag of baby carrots in place of the chopped medium carrots.

**Nutrition Facts Per Serving: Calories: 315 | Total Fat: 7 g | Saturated Fat: 2 g  
Sodium: 455 mg | Total Carbohydrate: 35 g | Dietary Fiber: 6.5 g | Protein: 29.5 g**

For more recipes, please visit [www.nutrition.va.gov](http://www.nutrition.va.gov)





# One-Pot Southwestern Rice and Beans

Prep: 5 minutes | Cook: 45 minutes | Total: 50 minutes

Yield: 4 servings | Serving Size: ~1½ cups

## Ingredients

1 cup uncooked brown rice, rinsed

2½ cups water

1 (15-ounce) can beans, drained and rinsed (e.g. black beans, kidney beans, pinto beans)

1 (14.5-ounce) can diced tomatoes

1 (4-ounce) can diced green chile peppers

1 teaspoon chili powder

1 teaspoon garlic powder

## Directions

1. Add the rice and water to a large saucepan or stockpot. Bring to a boil over high heat, then reduce the heat to maintain a simmer.
2. Cover the pot with a lid and cook for 20 minutes.
3. Add the beans, tomatoes with their juice, chile peppers, chili powder, and garlic powder. Stir to combine.
4. Cover the pot with the lid and continue cooking until the rice is tender, about 20-25 minutes.
5. Serve warm.

## Recipe Notes

- To use instant (10-minute) brown rice, use 1½ cups uncooked rice and 1½ cups water. Add all ingredients to the pot in step 1. Bring to a boil, then reduce the heat to maintain a simmer. Cover with a lid and cook until the rice is tender, about 10 minutes.

**Nutrition Facts Per Serving: Calories: 295 | Total Fat: 2 g | Saturated Fat: 0.5 g  
Sodium: 460 mg | Total Carbohydrate: 59 g | Dietary Fiber: 8.5 g | Protein: 10 g**

For more recipes, please visit [www.nutrition.va.gov](http://www.nutrition.va.gov)





# Mexican Meatballs

Prep: 15 minutes | Cook: 10 minutes | Total: 25 minutes

Yield: 3 servings | Serving Size: 3 meatballs with ~½ cup of the sauce (without optional toppings)

## Ingredients

- 1 pound (16 ounces) lean ground beef (90% lean or higher)
- 1 egg
- ½ cup panko breadcrumbs
- 1 (1- to 1.25-ounce) packet low-sodium taco seasoning (or 2 tablespoons [homemade taco seasoning](#))
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 cup salsa (store-bought or homemade)
- 1 (14.5-ounce) can no-salt-added diced tomatoes
- Optional toppings: Scallions (green onions), pickled jalapeño, cilantro, shredded cheese

## Directions

1. In a medium mixing bowl, gently knead together the beef, egg, panko, and taco seasoning.
2. Divide the mixture into nine equal portions and roll into meatballs, each about 1-inch in size.
3. Heat a large skillet or sauté pan over medium-high heat. Add the oil and heat until shimmering.
4. Add the meatballs and cook until browned, about 2-4 minutes on each side.
5. Cover with a lid and cook until the meatballs are cooked through (internal temperature of 160°F), about 7-10 minutes, then transfer to a clean paper towel and set aside.
6. Add the salsa and tomatoes with their juice to the pan. Bring to a simmer over medium heat, then cook for 5 minutes.
7. Transfer the meatballs back to the pan with the tomato mixture. Gently toss to combine.
8. Serve warm, adding toppings as desired.

## Recipe Notes

- Serve over a cooked grain or grain product (e.g. rice, quinoa, egg noodles, tortillas), if desired.
- Any type of breadcrumbs can be used in place of the panko, if desired. This may increase the sodium content.

**Nutrition Facts Per Serving: Calories: 400 | Total Fat: 14 g | Saturated Fat: 4 g  
Sodium: 605 mg | Total Carbohydrate: 26 g | Dietary Fiber: 2 g | Protein: 38 g**

For more recipes, please visit [www.nutrition.va.gov](http://www.nutrition.va.gov)



# Simple Red Pasta Sauce

Prep: 5 minutes | Cook: 20 minutes | Total: 25 minutes

Yield: 4 servings | Serving Size: ½ cup sauce without pasta

## Ingredients

- 1 teaspoon olive oil
- 1 cup frozen mirepoix (carrot, onion, and celery blend)
- 1 tablespoon Italian seasoning
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- ⅛-¼ teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes, to taste (optional)
- 1 (14.5-ounce) can crushed tomatoes or tomato sauce
- 1 (4-ounce) can mushroom pieces, drained (optional)

## Directions

1. Heat a small saucepan over medium-high heat.
2. Add the oil and heat until shimmering.
3. Add the mirepoix and cook, stirring often, until thawed, about 3-4 minutes.
4. Add the Italian seasoning, garlic powder, and red pepper flakes (if using). Cook and stir until fragrant, about 1 minute.
5. Add the crushed tomatoes or tomato sauce and mushrooms (if using).
6. Bring to a simmer over medium-high heat, then reduce the heat to maintain a gentle simmer.
7. Cook uncovered for 15 minutes, stirring occasionally.
8. Serve warm, over cooked pasta.

## Recipe Notes

- Substitute another type of diced vegetable, such as bell peppers, for some or all of the mirepoix mixture. You can also make your own mirepoix blend with ½ cup diced onion, ¼ cup diced carrot, and ¼ cup diced celery.
- Consider serving over whole-grain pasta for more fiber.
- To make soup, puree the sauce in a blender until smooth, adding vegetable broth to adjust the consistency.
- This sauce can also be used as a base for pizza, a topping for meatloaf, or a dipping sauce for breadsticks.

**Nutrition Facts Per Serving: Calories: 80 | Total Fat: 1 g | Saturated Fat: 0 g  
Sodium: 65 mg | Total Carbohydrate: 17 g | Dietary Fiber: 5 g | Protein: 0.5 g**

For more recipes, please visit [www.nutrition.va.gov](http://www.nutrition.va.gov)



# Garbanzo Bean and Tomato Pasta

Prep: 5 minutes | Cook: 20 minutes | Total: 25 minutes

Yield: 4 servings | Serving Size: 1 bowl or plate

## Ingredients

Water

8 ounces uncooked pasta (half of a 16-ounce box)

1 (15-ounce) can no-salt-added garbanzo beans (chickpeas), drained and rinsed

1 (14.5-ounce) can no-salt-added diced tomatoes

1 (10- to 12-ounce) bag frozen cut green beans

¼ cup Italian dressing (store-bought or homemade)

⅛ teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes

8 tablespoons (½ cup) grated or shredded parmesan, divided

## Directions

1. Fill a large saucepan or stockpot about halfway with water. Bring to a boil over high heat.
2. Add the pasta and cook according to the package directions, then drain and return to the pot. Set aside.
3. While the pasta is cooking, add the garbanzo beans, tomatoes with their juice, green beans, Italian dressing, and red pepper flakes to a medium saucepan. Stir to combine.
4. Set the medium saucepan with the garbanzo-tomato mixture over medium heat and bring to a simmer. Cook uncovered until warmed through, about 4-5 minutes, stirring often.
5. Pour the garbanzo-tomato mixture into the pot with the cooked and drained pasta. Stir to combine.
6. Divide between four serving bowls or plates (~1½ cups each). Top each with 2 tablespoons of the parmesan.
7. Serve warm.

## Recipe Notes

- Frozen broccoli or cauliflower can be used in addition to or in place of the green beans, if desired.
- Short cuts of pasta (e.g. elbows, shells, rotini) work best for this recipe. Use whole-grain pasta, if available.

**Nutrition Facts Per Serving: Calories: 395 | Total Fat: 8 g | Saturated Fat: 2.5 g  
Sodium: 345 mg | Total Carbohydrate: 64.5 g | Dietary Fiber: 7.5 g | Protein: 17 g**

For more recipes, please visit [www.nutrition.va.gov](http://www.nutrition.va.gov)





# Cauliflower-Quinoa Meatballs

Prep: 10 minutes | Cook: 15 minutes | Total: 25 minutes

Yield: 2 servings | Serving Size: 5 meatballs

## Ingredients

- Water
- 1 cup bite-sized cauliflower florets
- 1 cup cooked quinoa (see Recipe Notes)
- ¼ cup panko breadcrumbs
- ¼ cup hemp hearts (hulled hemp seeds)
- 1 egg
- ½ teaspoon chili powder
- ½ teaspoon sweet or smoked paprika
- ½ teaspoon ground cumin
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon olive oil

## Directions

1. Fill a small saucepan about halfway with water. Set over high heat and bring to a boil. Add the cauliflower and cook until fork-tender, about 4-6 minutes, then drain.
2. Transfer the cooked cauliflower to a food processor, along with the quinoa, panko, hemp hearts, egg, chili powder, paprika, cumin, and salt. Pulse until the mixture sticks together, about 2-3 minutes. Remove the blade. Set aside.
3. Heat a large skillet or sauté pan over medium heat. Add the oil and heat until shimmering.
4. Portion the cauliflower mixture out with a 2-tablespoon disher (spring-loaded cookie scoop). Working one portion at a time, roll it into a ball and add it to the pan.
5. Cook the meatballs until browned, about 2-3 minutes on each side, gently turning them with tongs or a spatula as they cook.
6. Serve warm, on their own or topped as desired.

## Recipe Notes

- To cook just enough quinoa, add ½ cup rinsed uncooked quinoa and ¾ cup water to a small saucepan. Bring to a boil, then reduce to a simmer. Cook until tender, about 10 minutes. Cooked brown rice may also be used.
- These meatballs can be baked at 350°F for 15-20 minutes, turning them over after about 10 minutes.

**Nutrition Facts Per Serving: Calories: 350 | Total Fat: 20.5 g | Saturated Fat: 2.5 g  
Sodium: 365 mg | Total Carbohydrate: 28.5 g | Dietary Fiber: 6.5 g | Protein: 22 g**

For more recipes, please visit [www.nutrition.va.gov](http://www.nutrition.va.gov)



# Rustic Cabbage and Chicken Sausage Stew

Prep: 5 minutes | Cook: 25 minutes | Total: 30 minutes

Yield: 3 servings | Serving Size: ~1½ cups

## Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 (8- to 10-ounce) bag shredded cabbage or angel hair coleslaw (about 3 cups)
- 1 (10- to 12-ounce) bag frozen mirepoix (carrot, onion, celery blend; about 2 cups)
- 1 (12-ounce) package precooked Italian chicken sausage links, sliced (about 4 links)
- 1 tablespoon Italian seasoning
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 (14.5-ounce) can no-salt-added diced tomatoes

## Directions

1. Heat a large saucepan or stockpot over medium heat.
2. Add the oil and heat until shimmering.
3. Add the cabbage or coleslaw and mirepoix. Cook until tender, about 5-7 minutes, stirring often.
4. Add the sausage, Italian seasoning, and garlic powder. Cook and stir until fragrant, about 2-3 minutes.
5. Add the tomatoes with their juice and stir to combine.
6. Bring to a simmer over medium-high heat, then reduce the heat to maintain a gentle simmer.
7. Cook uncovered for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally.
8. Serve warm.

## Recipe Notes

- Another flavorful vegetable (e.g. bell pepper, mushrooms) can be used in place of some or all of the mirepoix. You can also make your own mirepoix blend with 1 cup diced onion, ½ cup diced carrot, and ½ cup diced celery.
- Make this dish plant-based by replacing the sausage with two 15-ounce cans of beans (drained and rinsed).
- This recipe can also be prepared in a slow cooker. Simply combine the ingredients and cook on low for 4-6 hours.

**Nutrition Facts Per Serving: Calories: 320 | Total Fat: 14 g | Saturated Fat: 3.5 g  
Sodium: 665 mg | Total Carbohydrate: 26 g | Dietary Fiber: 6.5 g | Protein: 21 g**

For more recipes, please visit [www.nutrition.va.gov](http://www.nutrition.va.gov)





# Sweet-and-Sour Pork with Vegetables

Prep: 5 minutes | Cook: 10 minutes | Total: 15 minutes

Yield: 4 servings | Serving Size: 1½ cups

## Ingredients

1 tablespoon canola oil or avocado oil

1 pound (16 ounces) boneless pork chops or cutlets, cut into ½-inch-thick strips or chunks

1 (15-ounce) bag frozen stir-fry vegetables (about 4 cups; see Recipe Notes)

¼ cup bottled sweet-and-sour sauce

## Directions

1. Heat a large nonstick sauté pan or wok over medium-high heat.
2. Add the oil and heat until shimmering.
3. Add the pork and cook until browned, about 1-2 minutes, stirring constantly. It is okay if it is not cooked through at this point.
4. Add the vegetables and cook until thawed, about 3-4 minutes.
5. Add the sweet-and-sour sauce and toss to combine. Cook until heated through, about 1-2 minutes.
6. Serve warm.

## Recipe Notes

- This recipe does not use the sauce packet that is included in some bags of stir-fry vegetables. If you decide to use the sauce packet, add it in step 5 and omit the sweet-and-sour sauce.
- Substitute boneless chicken breasts or thighs for the pork, if desired.
- Serve over a cooked grain (e.g. rice, quinoa, millet) or grain-based noodles for a complete meal.

**Nutrition Facts Per Serving: Calories: 290 | Total Fat: 7.5 g | Saturated Fat: 1.5 g  
Sodium: 160 mg | Total Carbohydrate: 21.5 g | Dietary Fiber: 3 g | Protein: 31 g**

For more recipes, please visit [www.nutrition.va.gov](http://www.nutrition.va.gov)



# Simple Skillet Fish with French Dressing

Prep: 5 minutes | Cook: 5 minutes | Total: 10 minutes

Yield: 2 servings | Serving Size: 1 fillet

## Ingredients

2 (4- to 6-ounce) white fish fillets (e.g. flounder, cod, tilapia; about ½ pound total)

1 teaspoon salt-free seasoning blend, divided

½ teaspoon ground black pepper, divided

2 tablespoons olive oil

4 tablespoons (¼ cup) French dressing, divided

## Directions

1. Pat both sides of the fish fillets dry with paper towels.
2. Sprinkle each fish fillet with ½ teaspoon of the seasoning blend and ¼ teaspoon of the black pepper. Set aside.
3. Heat a large skillet over medium heat.
4. Add the oil and heat until shimmering.
5. Place the fish fillets in the skillet and cook on the first side until the edges touching the pan turn white and start to lift from the pan, about 2-3 minutes.
6. Flip the fish over and continue cooking until the fish is cooked through (internal temperature of 145°F, flakes easily with a fork), about 2-3 minutes.
7. Transfer each fish fillet to a serving plate. Drizzle each fillet with 2 tablespoons of the French dressing, then serve warm.

## Recipe Notes

- If using frozen fish, thaw in the refrigerator or under cool running water before cooking.



**Nutrition Facts Per Serving: Calories: 460 | Total Fat: 30 g | Saturated Fat: 4 g  
Sodium: 110 mg | Total Carbohydrate: 10 g | Dietary Fiber: 0.5 g | Protein: 40 g**

For more recipes, please visit [www.nutrition.va.gov](http://www.nutrition.va.gov)



# Cheesy Tuna Mac with Green Peas

Prep: 5 minutes | Cook: 10 minutes | Total: 15 minutes

Yield: 2 servings | Serving Size: 2 cups

## Ingredients

- Water
- 1 (7.25-ounce) box macaroni and cheese
- ¼ cup lowfat (1%) milk
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 (15-ounce) can no-salt-added peas, drained and rinsed
- 1 (5-ounce) can tuna in water, drained

## Directions

1. Fill a small to medium saucepan about halfway with water. Bring to a boil over high heat.
2. Cook the pasta from the macaroni and cheese box in the boiling water, according to box directions. Drain the pasta into a colander and set aside.
3. Set the empty pot back on the stovetop over medium-low heat. Add the butter and cook until melted.
4. Add the milk and the cheese from the packet in the macaroni and cheese box. Stir or whisk together until combined.
5. Return pasta to the pot with the cheese mixture and stir to combine.
6. Add the peas and tuna. Stir to combine, then cook until heated through, about 1-2 minutes.
7. Serve warm.

## Recipe Notes

- If you don't like or don't have canned peas, substitute 1¾ cups frozen peas (thawed).
- Substitute canned chicken or salmon for the tuna, if desired.
- Consider adding one 12-ounce bag of thawed frozen broccoli in addition to or in place of the peas.

**Nutrition Facts Per Serving: Calories: 300 | Total Fat: 13.5 g | Saturated Fat: 8.5 g  
Sodium: 450 mg | Total Carbohydrate: 32 g | Dietary Fiber: 4.5 g | Protein: 14.5 g**

For more recipes, please visit [www.nutrition.va.gov](http://www.nutrition.va.gov)





# Hearty Beef Noodle Stew

Prep: 5 minutes | Cook: 25 minutes | Total: 30 minutes

Yield: 4 servings | Serving Size: 2 cups

## Ingredients

- 1 pound (16 ounces) lean ground beef (90% lean or higher)
- 2 cups water, plus more to adjust the consistency if desired
- 1 (14.5-ounce) can no-salt-added diced tomatoes
- 1 (8-ounce) can no-salt-added tomato sauce
- 1 (1-ounce) packet dry onion soup mix
- 1 (10- to 12-ounce) bag frozen mixed vegetables
- 1 cup uncooked egg noodles (about 2 ounces)

## Directions

1. Heat a large skillet or sauté pan over medium-high heat.
2. Add the beef and cook until it is no longer pink, about 6-8 minutes, breaking it into crumbles as it cooks.
3. Add the water, tomatoes with their juice, tomato sauce, and onion soup mix. Stir to combine.
4. Bring to a boil over high heat, then add the mixed vegetables and egg noodles. Stir to combine.
5. Reduce the heat to maintain a simmer, then cover with a lid.
6. Cook until the noodles are tender, about 10-12 minutes.
7. Add more water to adjust the consistency, if desired, then serve warm.

## Recipe Notes

- For more fiber, look for whole-wheat egg noodles.
- Substitute thinly sliced beef stew meat, cubed chicken, or ground turkey for the ground beef, if desired.
- For a slow cooker version of this recipe, add the beef, water, tomatoes, tomato sauce, and onion soup mix to the insert of a slow cooker and cook on low for 6-8 hours. Turn to high, then add the mixed vegetables and egg noodles. Continue cooking until the vegetables are thawed and the noodles are cooked, about 1 hour.

**Nutrition Facts Per Serving: Calories: 315 | Total Fat: 11.5 g | Saturated Fat: 4.5 g  
Sodium: 270 mg | Total Carbohydrate: 23 g | Dietary Fiber: 5 g | Protein: 27.5 g**

For more recipes, please visit [www.nutrition.va.gov](http://www.nutrition.va.gov)



# Oven Recipes



# Zesty Italian Chicken Sheet Pan Dinner

Prep: 10 minutes | Cook: 40 minutes | Total: 50 minutes

Yield: 4 servings | Serving Size: 1 chicken thigh with ~1½ cups vegetable mixture

## Ingredients

- 1 (10-ounce) bag fresh spinach (about 10 cups)
- ½ cup Italian dressing, divided (store-bought or homemade)
- 4 medium (4- to 6-ounce) potatoes, peeled if desired, cut into ¼- to ½-inch pieces
- 1 medium onion, diced (about 1 cup)
- 4 (3- to 4-ounce) boneless skinless chicken thighs (thigh fillets; about 1 pound total)

## Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 425°F.
2. Add the spinach and ¼ cup of the Italian dressing to a large bowl and toss with tongs to coat. Set aside.
3. Place the potatoes and onion on a baking sheet, then drizzle with the remaining ¼ cup of the Italian dressing.
4. Place the chicken thighs on the baking sheet with the vegetables. Toss to combine and coat with the dressing, then spread into a single layer.
5. Bake until the chicken is cooked to an internal temperature of 165°F and the potatoes are fork-tender, about 30-35 minutes.
6. Spread the spinach over the top of the chicken and vegetables. Continue baking until the spinach is wilted and the chicken is cooked through (internal temperature of 175°F), about 4-6 minutes.
7. Serve warm.

## Recipe Notes

- If chicken breasts are used instead of thighs, cook to an internal temperature of 165°F, about 20-25 minutes, then transfer the chicken to a clean plate and cover with foil. Set aside until the vegetables finish cooking.

**Nutrition Facts Per Serving: Calories: 460 | Total Fat: 17.5 g | Saturated Fat: 3 g  
Sodium: 240 mg | Total Carbohydrate: 49 g | Dietary Fiber: 7.5 g | Protein: 27 g**

For more recipes, please visit [www.nutrition.va.gov](http://www.nutrition.va.gov)



# English Muffin Pizzas

Prep: 5 minutes | Cook: 15 minutes | Total: 20 minutes

Yield: 2 servings | Serving Size: 2 English muffin halves with toppings

## Ingredients

- 2 English muffins, split or cut into two halves (preferably whole-wheat, if available)
- ½ cup diced or sliced vegetables (one type or a combination; e.g. bell pepper, onion, broccoli, mushrooms)
- ¼ cup no-salt-added tomato sauce
- ½ teaspoon Italian seasoning
- ¼ teaspoon garlic powder
- 4 tablespoons (¼ cup) shredded mozzarella cheese, divided

## Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 400°F.
2. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper, then place the English muffin halves on the baking sheet.
3. Bake the English muffins until crispy, about 3-5 minutes.
4. Meanwhile, place the selected vegetables in a small microwave-safe bowl. Microwave on high power (default setting) until softened and liquid is released, about 1 minute. Transfer to a paper towel and pat dry. Set aside.
5. Pour the liquid out of the bowl, then add the tomato sauce, Italian seasoning, and garlic powder. Stir to combine.
6. Divide the sauce mixture between the English muffin halves, spreading it into a thin layer. Top each with a quarter of the vegetables and 1 tablespoon of the cheese.
7. Bake until the cheese is melted and bubbly, about 7-10 minutes. Serve warm.

## Recipe Notes

- Substitute sandwich thins for the English muffins, if desired.
- To make in the microwave, toast the English muffin halves in a toaster then add the toppings and microwave on high power (default setting) until the cheese is melted, about 30-60 seconds.

**Nutrition Facts Per Serving: Calories: 185 | Total Fat: 4 g | Saturated Fat: 2 g  
Sodium: 260 mg | Total Carbohydrate: 30 g | Dietary Fiber: 4 g | Protein: 9 g**

For more recipes, please visit [www.nutrition.va.gov](http://www.nutrition.va.gov)





# Tater Tot Casserole

Prep: 10 minutes | Cook: 40 minutes | Total: 50 minutes

Yield: 10 servings | Serving Size: 1 cup

## Ingredients

- 1 pound (16 ounces) lean ground beef (90% lean or higher)
- 1 medium onion, diced (about 1 cup)
- 2 (10.5-ounce) cans lowfat (98% fat-free) cream of mushroom soup
- 1 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 2 (14.5-ounce) cans no-salt-added green beans, drained
- 1 pound (16 ounces) frozen tater tots (about 3 cups)

## Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F.
2. Heat a large skillet or sauté pan over medium-high heat.
3. Add the ground beef and onion. Cook until the ground beef is no longer pink and the onion is softened, about 7-10 minutes, breaking the beef into crumbles as it cooks.
4. Add the cream of mushroom soup, black pepper, and garlic powder. Cook and stir for 2 minutes.
5. Transfer the meat mixture to a 9x13-inch baking dish or casserole dish. Spread into an even layer.
6. Layer with the green beans, followed by the tater tots.
7. Cover the pan with aluminum foil and bake until warmed through, about 30-35 minutes. For a crispier top, remove the foil after about 20 minutes.
8. Serve warm.

## Recipe Notes

- For a make-ahead option, divide the recipe between two 8x8-inch baking pans. Bake one and freeze the other.
- To reduce the sodium content, use low-sodium or unsalted cream of mushroom soup.
- Another canned vegetable (drained) or a frozen vegetable (e.g. carrots, broccoli, mushrooms) can be used in place some or all of the canned green beans.

**Nutrition Facts Per Serving: Calories: 340 | Total Fat: 17 g | Saturated Fat: 4.5 g  
Sodium: 540 mg | Total Carbohydrate: 30 g | Dietary Fiber: 4 g | Protein: 17 g**

For more recipes, please visit [www.nutrition.va.gov](http://www.nutrition.va.gov)



# Baked Balsamic Tofu

Prep: 10 minutes | Chill: 45 minutes | Cook: 30 minutes | Total: 1 hour 25 minutes

Yield: 4 servings | Serving Size: 4 tofu triangles

## Ingredients

- 1 (14- to 16-ounce) block extra-firm or firm tofu, cut into 8 slabs and then cut diagonally into triangles
- ¼ cup olive oil
- ¼ cup balsamic vinegar
- 4 cloves garlic, minced (about 2 teaspoons)
- 1 tablespoon honey or maple syrup
- 1 lemon, zested (about 1 teaspoon lemon zest)
- 1 teaspoon dried basil
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- ½ teaspoon dried thyme
- ½ teaspoon dried sage
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1 pinch cayenne

## Directions

1. Place a stack of paper towels on a plate or baking sheet. Lay the tofu triangles on the paper towels in a single layer. Top with more paper towels and another plate or baking sheet. Place a heavy item (e.g. cast iron skillet, canned food) on top. Let sit for 15-20 minutes.
2. In a medium mixing bowl, make a marinade by whisking together the oil, vinegar, garlic, honey or maple syrup, lemon zest, basil, oregano, thyme, sage, salt, black pepper, and cayenne pepper.
3. Transfer the marinade to a quart- or gallon-size zip-top plastic bag. Add the pressed tofu triangles and toss gently to coat with the marinade.
4. Seal the bag, squeezing out as much air as possible. Place in the refrigerator for at least 30 minutes, up to overnight.
2. Preheat the oven to 425°F.
3. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper or aluminum foil. Remove the tofu triangles from the marinade and place on the baking sheet in a single layer.
4. Bake until crispy, about 25-30 minutes, turning the tofu pieces over after 15 minutes. Serve warm.

**Nutrition Facts Per Serving: Calories: 225 | Total Fat: 18.5 g | Saturated Fat: 3 g  
Sodium: 305 mg | Total Carbohydrate: 9 g | Dietary Fiber: 1.5 g | Protein: 10 g**

For more recipes, please visit [www.nutrition.va.gov](http://www.nutrition.va.gov)

# Quinoa Enchilada Bake

Prep: 15 minutes | Cook: 45 minutes | Total: 1 hour

Yield: 4 servings | Serving Size: ~4-inch square piece

## Ingredients

Nonstick cooking spray  
½ cup uncooked quinoa, rinsed  
1 cup water  
1 tablespoon olive oil  
1 medium bell pepper, diced (about 1 cup)  
½ medium onion, diced (about ½ cup)  
2 teaspoons chili powder  
½ teaspoon ground cumin  
½ teaspoon garlic powder  
1 (15-ounce) can no-salt-added black beans, drained and rinsed  
1 cup frozen corn  
1 cup enchilada sauce (store-bought or [homemade](#))  
1 (4-ounce) can diced green chile peppers  
1 cup shredded Mexican blend cheese, divided  
¼ cup chopped fresh cilantro  
1 lime, cut into wedges

## Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Spray an 8x8-inch baking dish with nonstick cooking spray and set aside.
2. Add the quinoa and water to a small saucepan and bring to a boil, then reduce the heat to a simmer. Cook until tender, about 10-15 minutes, then remove from the heat.
3. Meanwhile, heat a medium skillet or sauté pan over medium-high heat. Add the oil, bell pepper, and onion. Cook until softened, about 5-7 minutes.
4. Add the chili powder, cumin, and garlic powder. Cook until fragrant, about 30-60 seconds, then remove from the heat.
5. Add the cooked quinoa, along with the beans, corn, enchilada sauce, green chiles, and ¼ cup of the cheese. Stir to combine.
6. Transfer the mixture to the prepared baking dish. Top with remaining ¾ cup of cheese.
7. Spray one side of a sheet of foil with nonstick cooking spray and place over the baking dish. Wrap the edges to seal.
8. Bake for 20 minutes, then remove foil and continue baking until the cheese is melted and the edges are bubbling, about 10 minutes.
9. Let cool slightly, then sprinkle with the cilantro and cut into four pieces. Serve warm with the lime wedges.

## Recipe Notes

- This recipe freezes well, before or after baking. Freeze for up to 3 months. When ready to cook, cover with the foil and place in the preheated oven. Add 10 minutes to the initial cooking time, for a total cooking time of about 40 minutes (30 minutes with foil on, 10 minutes with foil off).

**Nutrition Facts Per Serving: Calories: 350 | Total Fat: 9 g | Saturated Fat: 2 g  
Sodium: 735 mg | Total Carbohydrate: 51 g | Dietary Fiber: 11 g | Protein: 19 g**

For more recipes, please visit [www.nutrition.va.gov](http://www.nutrition.va.gov)





# Baked French Toast

Prep: 10 minutes | Cook: 15 minutes | Total: 25 minutes

Yield: 4 servings | Serving Size: 2 slices

## Ingredients

Nonstick cooking spray  
2 tablespoons unsalted butter  
3 eggs  
1 tablespoon vanilla extract  
2 teaspoons packed brown sugar  
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon  
1 pinch salt  
1 cup lowfat (1%) milk  
8 slices whole-grain or multigrain sandwich bread

## Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 425°F. Spray a rimmed baking sheet with nonstick cooking spray, then set aside.
2. Add the butter to a small microwave-safe bowl. Microwave on high power (default setting) until melted, about 15-30 seconds. Set aside to cool slightly.
3. In a separate medium mixing bowl, whisk together the eggs, vanilla, brown sugar, cinnamon, and salt.
4. Add the cooled melted butter and milk. Whisk to combine.
5. Pour the egg mixture into the prepared baking sheet. Tilt the pan to each side until the liquid covers the bottom.
6. Working quickly, place the slices of bread onto the baking sheet in a single layer, then flip the slices over. Let sit to absorb the egg mixture, about 1-2 minutes.
7. Bake until the bottoms of the bread slices are golden-brown, about 12-15 minutes.
8. With the pan still in the oven, switch the oven to broil on high. Continue cooking until the tops of the bread slices are lightly-browned, about 1-3 minutes. This happens quickly, so watch closely to make sure the bread doesn't burn.
9. Serve warm.

**Nutrition Facts Per Serving: Calories: 280 | Total Fat: 11.5 g | Saturated Fat: 5.5 g  
Sodium: 415 mg | Total Carbohydrate: 29 g | Dietary Fiber: 4 g | Protein: 13.5 g**

For more recipes, please visit [www.nutrition.va.gov](http://www.nutrition.va.gov)



# Lemon-Pepper Fish with Vegetables

Prep: 15 minutes | Cook: 45 minutes | Total: 1 hour

Yield: 4 servings | Serving Size: 1 fish fillet with ~2 cups vegetable mixture

## Ingredients

- 3 lemons
- ¼ cup olive oil
- 3-6 cloves garlic, minced (about 1 tablespoon)
- 1 teaspoon ground black pepper
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 4 (4- to 5-ounce) white fish fillets (e.g. cod, tilapia, mahi mahi; about 1 pound)
- 1 pound fresh green beans, trimmed
- 1 pound red or yellow potatoes, cut into ¼- to ½-inch pieces
- Nonstick cooking spray

## Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 450°F.
2. Juice 1 lemon into a large bowl (about ¼ cup juice). Add the oil, garlic, black pepper, and salt. Whisk to combine.
3. Add the fish fillets and gently turn to coat with the mixture, then place on a clean plate and set aside.
4. Add the green beans and potatoes to the bowl with the lemon mixture and toss to coat, then set aside.
5. Spray a 9x13-inch baking dish with nonstick cooking spray.
6. Thinly slice the remaining 2 lemons. Set 4 lemon slices aside, then add the remaining slices to the bottom of the dish in a layer. Pour the vegetable mixture into the dish.
7. Cover the baking dish with foil, then bake for 20 minutes.
8. Reduce the oven temperature to 350°F, then place the fish on top of the vegetables and top each with a lemon slice.
9. Cover with the foil and continue baking until the fish is cooked through (internal temperature of 145°F) and the vegetables are tender, about 15-20 minutes. Serve warm.

## Recipe Notes

- Substitute boneless chicken breasts for the fish, if desired. Add in step 6 and bake at 450°F for 45-50 minutes.

**Nutrition Facts Per Serving: Calories: 350 | Total Fat: 14 g | Saturated Fat: 2 g  
Sodium: 395 mg | Total Carbohydrate: 28 g | Dietary Fiber: 7 g | Protein: 30.5 g**

For more recipes, please visit [www.nutrition.va.gov](http://www.nutrition.va.gov)





# Hawaiian Pork Sheet Pan Dinner

Prep: 5 minutes | Chill: 30 minutes | Cook: 25 minutes | Total: 1 hour

Yield: 4 servings | Serving Size: 1 pork chop with 1¾ cups pineapple-vegetable mixture

## Ingredients

- 1 (20-ounce) can pineapple chunks or slices in 100% juice
- 1 tablespoon packed brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon lite (reduced-sodium) soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon vinegar (e.g. rice vinegar, apple cider vinegar, white wine vinegar)
- 4 (4- to 5-ounce) pork loin chops, about ½-inch thick (about 1 pound total)
- Nonstick cooking spray
- 1 (10- to 12-ounce) bag frozen sweet potato dices or chunks (about 2 cups)
- 1 (15-ounce) bag frozen stir-fry vegetables (about 4 cups; see Recipe Notes)

## Directions

1. Drain the pineapple juice into a medium mixing bowl. Add the brown sugar, soy sauce, and vinegar. Stir to combine.
2. Add the juice mixture to a gallon-size zip-top plastic bag, along with the pineapple and pork chops. Gently toss to combine, then seal the bag while squeezing out the air.
3. Set the bag in the bowl and place in the refrigerator. Let the mixture chill for at least 30 minutes, up to overnight.
4. Preheat the oven to 400°F.
5. Spray a baking sheet with nonstick cooking spray. Add the sweet potatoes and stir-fry vegetables, spreading them out in an even layer. Pour the pork-pineapple mixture onto the baking sheet and spread into an even layer.
6. Bake until the pork chops are cooked through (internal temperature of 145°F), about 17-20 minutes for boneless or 22-25 minutes for bone-in.
7. Serve warm.

## Recipe Notes

- This recipe does not use the sauce packet that is included in some bags of stir-fry vegetables. If you decide to use the sauce packet, add it to the juice in step 1 and omit the brown sugar, soy sauce, and vinegar.

**Nutrition Facts Per Serving: Calories: 325 | Total Fat: 3 g | Saturated Fat: 1 g  
Sodium: 345 mg | Total Carbohydrate: 45.5 g | Dietary Fiber: 6.5 g | Protein: 30 g**

For more recipes, please visit [www.nutrition.va.gov](http://www.nutrition.va.gov)





# Spiced Apple Bread Pudding

Prep: 20 minutes | Cook: 40 minutes | Total: 1 hour

Yield: 6 servings | Serving Size: 1 cup

## Ingredients

Nonstick cooking spray  
2 eggs  
2 tablespoons packed brown sugar  
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon  
1 teaspoon ground allspice  
1 teaspoon vanilla extract  
1 cup lowfat (1%) milk  
5 slices whole-wheat or multigrain sandwich bread, cut or torn into ½- to ¾-inch pieces  
3 medium apples, cut into ½-inch pieces (about 3 cups)

## Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F.
2. Spray the inside of an 8x8-inch or 9x9-inch baking dish with nonstick cooking spray. Set aside.
3. In a large mixing bowl, whisk together the eggs, brown sugar, cinnamon, allspice, and vanilla.
4. Add the milk and whisk to combine.
5. Add bread and apples. Gently toss to combine and coat with the milk mixture. Let sit for 5-10 minutes to soak.
6. Pour the bread mixture, along with any liquid, into the prepared baking dish and spread into an even layer.
7. Bake until the tops of the bread pieces are lightly toasted and the liquid is fully absorbed, about 40-45 minutes.
8. Serve warm.

## Recipe Notes

- Consider adding up to ½ cup of mix-ins in step 5. Some ideas include dried fruit (e.g. raisins, cranberries, blueberries), fresh fruit (e.g. berries, sliced banana), and chopped toasted nuts (e.g. walnuts, pecans, almonds).
- The soaked bread mixture can be made up to one day in advance (covered and refrigerated). When ready to cook, transfer to the prepared baking dish and bake as directed in the recipe.
- The cooked bread pudding will keep in the refrigerator for up to 4 days.

**Nutrition Facts Per Serving: Calories: 170 | Total Fat: 3 g | Saturated Fat: 1 g  
Sodium: 130 mg | Total Carbohydrate: 31 g | Dietary Fiber: 4.5 g | Protein: 6.5 g**

For more recipes, please visit [www.nutrition.va.gov](http://www.nutrition.va.gov)

# Slow Cooker Recipes



# Slow Cooker Beef Meatballs

Prep: 15 minutes | Cook: 6 hours | Total: 6 hours 15 minutes

Yield: 4 servings | Serving Size: 2 meatballs

## Ingredients

- 1 (14.5-ounce) can crushed tomatoes
- 1 (14.5-ounce) can no-salt-added tomato sauce
- 1 cup panko breadcrumbs
- 2 tablespoons Italian seasoning
- 1 tablespoon onion powder
- 2 teaspoons garlic powder
- 1 egg
- 1 pound (16 ounces) lean ground beef (90% lean or higher)

## Directions

1. Add the crushed tomatoes and tomato sauce to the insert of a slow cooker. Stir to combine, then set aside.
2. In a medium mixing bowl, stir together the panko, Italian seasoning, onion powder, and garlic powder.
3. Add the egg and ground beef. Use clean hands to break the ground beef into crumbles, then gently knead to combine.
4. Divide the ground beef mixture into eight equal portions, then roll into meatballs. Place the meatballs in the slow cooker.
5. Cover the slow cooker with the lid. Cook on low for 6-8 hours (check for an internal temperature of 160°F), then serve warm.

## Recipe Notes

- Serve with whole-grain bread or pasta for a complete meal.

Nutrition Facts Per Serving: Calories: 255 | Total Fat: 12 g | Saturated Fat: 5 g  
Sodium: 160 mg | Total Carbohydrate: 9.5 g | Dietary Fiber: 1 g | Protein: 26 g

For more recipes, please visit [www.nutrition.va.gov](http://www.nutrition.va.gov)





# Slow Cooker Sausage and Bean Stew

Prep: 10 minutes | Cook: 6 hours | Total: 6 hours 10 minutes

Yield: 4 servings | Serving Size: 2 cups

## Ingredients

- 4 cups (32 ounces) low-sodium chicken broth
- 1 (14.5-ounce) can no-salt-added diced tomatoes
- 1 medium onion, diced (about 1 cup)
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- ½ teaspoon ground black pepper
- 2 (15-ounce) cans no-salt-added white beans (e.g. cannellini, great northern), drained and rinsed
- ½ pound (8 ounces) smoked sausage, chopped or sliced into ½-inch pieces
- 1 (10-ounce) bag frozen or fresh spinach, chopped if large

## Directions

1. In the insert of a slow cooker, stir together the broth, tomatoes with their juice, onion, garlic powder, thyme, and black pepper.
2. Add the beans and sausage. Stir to combine.
3. Cover the slow cooker with the lid and cook on low for 6-8 hours or on high for 4-5 hours.
4. Add the spinach and stir to combine.
5. Cover the slow cooker with the lid and let sit until the spinach is wilted or thawed, about 5-10 minutes.
6. Serve warm.

## Recipe Notes

- Another type of canned bean (e.g. navy beans, black beans, kidney beans) can be substituted for some or all of the white beans, if desired.
- To reduce the sodium content, use reduced-sodium smoked sausage and/or unsalted chicken broth.

**Nutrition Facts Per Serving: Calories: 380 | Total Fat: 16 g | Saturated Fat: 5 g  
Sodium: 665 mg | Total Carbohydrate: 33 g | Dietary Fiber: 13 g | Protein: 24 g**

For more recipes, please visit [www.nutrition.va.gov](http://www.nutrition.va.gov)

# Slow Cooker-Poached Eggs and Salmon

Prep: 10 minutes | Cook: 1 hour 5 minutes | Total: 1 hour 15 minutes

Yield: 2 servings | Serving Size: 1 salmon fillet and 1 egg with half the spinach

## Ingredients

Water  
Nonstick cooking spray  
2 eggs  
2 tablespoons chopped fresh chives, divided  
2 (4- to 6-ounce) salmon fillets  
4 cups fresh spinach (or 1 cup frozen spinach; about 4 ounces)  
1 tablespoon unsalted butter, melted, divided  
2 teaspoons lemon juice, divided  
2 pinches (about ⅛ teaspoon) salt, divided  
2 pinches (about ⅛ teaspoon) ground black pepper, divided

## Recipe Notes

- The salmon is done when it reaches an internal temperature of 145°F or flakes easily with a fork. The eggs are done when the whites and yolk do not jiggle when the dishes are shaken.
- For best results, serve right away. If needed, this recipe will keep in the refrigerator for up to 2 days. To reheat, cook in the microwave at 50% power until warmed through, about 1½-3 minutes.

## Directions

1. Fill a medium saucepan about halfway full with water and bring to a boil.
2. Meanwhile, coat the inside of two oven-safe ramekins or other small dishes with nonstick cooking spray. Crack an egg into each dish and top each with 1 tablespoon of the chives.
3. Set the egg dishes in the bottom of a slow cooker, then add the salmon fillets on either side.
4. Pour the boiling water into the slow cooker until it comes about halfway up the sides of the egg dishes – be careful not to get any water in the egg cups.
5. Cover the slow cooker with the lid and cook on high for 1 hour. Check for doneness (see Recipe Notes). If needed, cook for an additional 10-15 minutes.
6. Use oven mitts to carefully remove the egg dishes. Then, lift the salmon out with a slotted spatula or spoon. Set aside.
7. Add the spinach to the slow cooker and stir into the water until wilted, about 3-4 minutes. Drain or lift out of the slow cooker with tongs and divide between two plates.
8. Add ½ tablespoon of the melted butter to each portion of spinach. Toss to combine. Top each portion with one of the salmon fillets.
9. Use a butter knife to loosen the eggs from the dishes and place each on top of the salmon.
10. Sprinkle each plate with 1 teaspoon of the lemon juice, 1 pinch of the salt, and 1 pinch of the black pepper. Serve warm.

**Nutrition Facts Per Serving: Calories: 280 | Total Fat: 17.5 g | Saturated Fat: 6 g  
Sodium: 305 mg | Total Carbohydrate: 3 g | Dietary Fiber: 1.5 g | Protein: 29.5 g**

For more recipes, please visit [www.nutrition.va.gov](http://www.nutrition.va.gov)



# Slow Cooker Butter Chicken

Prep: 15 minutes | Cook: 2 hours 10 minutes | Total: 2 hours 25 minutes

Yield: 8 servings | Serving Size: ~¾ cup

## Ingredients

2 tablespoons olive oil  
2 medium onions, diced (about 2 cups)  
¼ cup whole-wheat flour  
1 tablespoon grated fresh ginger (or 1 teaspoon ground dried ginger)  
4 cloves garlic, minced (about 2 teaspoons)  
1 tablespoon garam masala  
1 tablespoon curry powder  
1 teaspoon chili powder  
½ teaspoon ground black pepper  
½ teaspoon salt  
1 (6-ounce) can tomato paste  
1 (13.5-ounce) can coconut milk  
1 tablespoon maple syrup or honey  
2 pounds (32 ounces) chicken breasts, cut into 2- to 3-inch pieces  
½ cup chopped fresh cilantro

## Directions

1. Heat a large skillet or sauté pan over medium heat.
2. Add the oil and heat until shimmering.
3. Add the onion and cook until softened, about 5-7 minutes.
4. Add the flour, ginger, garlic, garam masala, curry powder, chili powder, black pepper, and salt. Cook and stir until fragrant, about 2 minutes.
5. Add the coconut milk, tomato paste, and maple syrup or honey. Bring to a simmer, then cover and cook until thickened, about 3-5 minutes.
6. Transfer the mixture to the pot of a slow cooker.
7. Add the chicken and stir to combine.
8. Cover the slow cooker with the lid and set to cook on low for 2-3 hours.
9. Serve warm, topped with the cilantro.

**Nutrition Facts Per Serving: Calories: 420 | Total Fat: 24 g | Saturated Fat: 13.5 g  
Sodium: 280 mg | Total Carbohydrate: 16 g | Dietary Fiber: 3.5 g | Protein: 36 g**

For more recipes, please visit [www.nutrition.va.gov](http://www.nutrition.va.gov)



# Slow Cooker Kielbasa Soup

Prep: 5 minutes | Cook: 6 hours | Total: 6 hours 5 minutes

Yield: 6 servings | Serving Size: 3 cups soup without bread or rice

## Ingredients

- 4 cups water
- 4 cups (32 ounces) low-sodium chicken or vegetable broth
- 1 (6-ounce) can tomato paste
- 3 medium (4- to 6-ounce) potatoes, cut into  $\frac{3}{4}$ - to 1-inch chunks
- 1 (12- to 14-ounce) ring kielbasa, sliced  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch-thick
- 1 tablespoon Italian seasoning
- 2 teaspoons garlic powder
- 2 cups shredded cabbage or angel hair coleslaw
- 1 (10- to 12-ounce) bag frozen pepper and onion blend (about 2 cups)

## Directions

1. Add the water, broth, tomato paste, potatoes, kielbasa, Italian seasoning, and garlic powder to the insert of a slow cooker. Stir to combine.
2. Cover the slow cooker with the lid and cook on low for 6-8 hours. When there is 1 hour left of cook time, add the cabbage and pepper and onion blend.
3. Serve warm, with bread or rice if desired.

## Recipe Notes

- Use ground meat or chicken sausage in place of kielbasa, if desired.
- Stovetop cooking: In a large stockpot, add all the ingredients except the frozen pepper and onion blend. Bring to a boil over high heat, then reduce to a simmer. Cook until the potatoes are tender, about 30 minutes. Add the frozen vegetables and cook to warm through.

**Nutrition Facts Per Serving: Calories: 255 | Total Fat: 11 g | Saturated Fat: 3.5 g  
Sodium: 725 mg | Total Carbohydrate: 31 g | Dietary Fiber: 4 g | Protein: 12 g**

For more recipes, please visit [www.nutrition.va.gov](http://www.nutrition.va.gov)





# Slow Cooker Salsa Chicken

Prep: 25 minutes | Cook: 3 hours | Total: 3 hours 25 minutes

Yield: 4 servings | Serving Size: ~1 cup

## Ingredients

2 (8- to 10-ounce) boneless skinless chicken breasts (about 1 pound total)

1 (15-ounce) can no-salt-added beans, drained and rinsed (e.g. pinto, black, kidney, tricolor)

1 (12-ounce) bag frozen pepper and onion blend

1 cup salsa (store-bought or homemade)

1 lime, cut into wedges (optional)

## Directions

1. Add the chicken, beans, pepper and onion blend, and salsa to the insert of a slow cooker. Toss to combine.
2. Cover the slow cooker with the lid and cook on low for 3-4 hours (check for an internal temperature of 165°F).
3. Transfer the chicken to a large bowl and let rest for 5-10 minutes, then shred with two forks.
4. Transfer the chicken back to the slow cooker and stir to combine. Serve warm, with the lime wedges (if using).

## Recipe Notes

- Use boneless pork chops or chicken thighs in place of the chicken breasts, if desired.
- If you have leftover cooked or canned protein (e.g. chicken, pork, beef, tofu), simply combine with the salsa, beans, and vegetables, then heat through on the stovetop or in the microwave.
- Consider serving with a cooked grain or grain product (e.g. rice, quinoa, corn, tortillas, tortilla chips).

**Nutrition Facts Per Serving: Calories: 295 | Total Fat: 9 g | Saturated Fat: 2 g  
Sodium: 495 mg | Total Carbohydrate: 15 g | Dietary Fiber: 5 g | Protein: 37 g**

For more recipes, please visit [www.nutrition.va.gov](http://www.nutrition.va.gov)

# Slow Cooker Chicken with Rice and Broccoli

Prep: 5 minutes | Cook: 4 hours | Total: 4 hours 5 minutes

Yield: 4 servings | Serving Size: 1 chicken thigh with ~1 cup rice mixture

## Ingredients

- 2 cups water
- 1 (10.75-ounce) can cream of chicken soup
- 4 (4- to 6-ounce) bone-in chicken thighs (about 1 pound total)
- 1 cup uncooked instant (10-minute) brown rice
- 1 (10- to 12-ounce) bag frozen chopped broccoli
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice (about ½ medium lemon)
- ½ teaspoon ground black pepper

## Directions

1. Add the water and cream of chicken soup to the insert of a slow cooker. Stir or whisk to combine.
2. Add the chicken thighs, pressing down to cover with the liquid.
3. Cover with the lid and cook on low for 4-6 hours. During the last 30-45 minutes of cooking time, add the broccoli and rice.
4. Remove and discard the skin from the chicken thighs.
5. Add the lemon juice and black pepper to the rice mixture. Stir to combine, then serve warm with the chicken.

## Recipe Notes

- To make on the stovetop, add the chicken thighs, water, and cream of chicken soup to a large saucepan. Cover with a lid and cook at a low simmer on the stovetop until the chicken is cooked through (internal temperature of 175°F), about 30-45 minutes. Add the broccoli and rice during the last 7-10 minutes of cooking time.



**Nutrition Facts Per Serving: Calories: 330 | Total Fat: 15.5 g | Saturated Fat: 3 g  
Sodium: 585 mg | Total Carbohydrate: 27.5 g | Dietary Fiber: 3.5 g | Protein: 21 g**

For more recipes, please visit [www.nutrition.va.gov](http://www.nutrition.va.gov)





# Slow Cooker Ranch Pork Chops and Potatoes

Prep: 10 minutes | Cook: 4 hours | Total: 4 hours 10 minutes

Yield: 4 servings | Serving Size: 1 pork chop with ~1 cup potatoes

## Ingredients

- 4 tablespoons (¼ cup) olive oil, divided
- 1 (1-ounce) packet ranch seasoning mix (or 2 tablespoons [homemade ranch seasoning mix](#))
- 2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
- 1 medium onion, diced (about 1 cup)
- 1½ pounds red or yellow potatoes, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1 cup (8 ounces) low-sodium chicken broth
- 4 (5- to 6-ounce) bone-in pork chops, at least ¾-inch-thick, patted dry with paper towels (about 1½ pounds total)

## Directions

1. In a small bowl, whisk 3 tablespoons of the oil with the ranch seasoning mix and vinegar. Set aside.
2. Heat a large skillet or sauté pan over medium-high heat.
3. Add the remaining 1 tablespoon of oil and heat until shimmering.
4. Add the onion and cook until softened and lightly browned, about 4-6 minutes, stirring often.
5. Transfer the onion to the insert of a slow cooker, along with the potatoes and broth. Set aside.
6. (Optional) Place the pan back over medium-high heat and add the pork chops. Cook until browned but not cooked through, about 3 minutes on each side.
7. Add the pork chops and ranch-oil mixture to the slow cooker. Toss to combine, then move the pork chops to the top of the potato mixture.
8. Cover the slow cooker with the lid and cook on low for 4-6 hours or on high for 3-4 hours.
9. Serve warm, spooning on the drippings as desired.

**Nutrition Facts Per Serving: Calories: 500 | Total Fat: 26 g | Saturated Fat: 6 g  
Sodium: 230 mg | Total Carbohydrate: 32 g | Dietary Fiber: 4.5 g | Protein: 32.5 g**

For more recipes, please visit [www.nutrition.va.gov](http://www.nutrition.va.gov)

# Slow Cooker Southern-Style Peach Cobbler

Prep: 5 minutes | Cook: 5 hours | Total: 5 hours 5 minutes

Yield: 6 servings | Serving Size:  $\frac{2}{3}$  cup

## Ingredients

Nonstick cooking spray

3 (15-ounce) cans sliced peaches in 100% fruit juice

$\frac{2}{3}$  cup uncooked quick (1-minute) oats

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup packed brown sugar

$\frac{1}{3}$  cup buttermilk pancake and baking mix

1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

$\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon salt

## Directions

1. Spray the inside of a slow cooker insert with nonstick cooking spray.
2. In a medium mixing bowl, stir together the peaches with their juice, oats, brown sugar, buttermilk mix, cinnamon, and salt.
3. Transfer the peach mixture to the slow cooker.
4. Cover the slow cooker with the lid and cook on low for 5 hours.
5. Serve warm.

## Recipe Notes

- You can substitute 4 cups of pitted and sliced fresh peaches (peeled if desired) and  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of water for the canned peaches, if desired.
- Another canned fruit or 4 cups of fresh fruit can be substituted for the peaches, if desired. Some ideas are berries, apples, and pears (trimmed and cut as needed). Add  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of water if using fresh fruit.
- If you don't have quick oats, you can pulse old-fashioned (rolled) oats or steel-cut oats in a blender or food processor until they resemble breadcrumbs.

**Nutrition Facts Per Serving: Calories: 190 | Total Fat: 1 g | Saturated Fat: 0.5 g  
Sodium: 170 mg | Total Carbohydrate: 44.5 g | Dietary Fiber: 4 g | Protein: 3 g**

For more recipes, please visit [www.nutrition.va.gov](http://www.nutrition.va.gov)

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