

# Time-Pressed? Tips for Smart Eating!

**A**re you overloaded with work, family and personal demands, rushing to meet an often stressful “24/7” schedule? If so, your everyday meal solutions don’t need to come from drive-through windows or cell phone-ordered food delivery.

Even with a hectic lifestyle, you can put healthful meals on your family table – to enjoy together – with ease, speed and great taste. Being time-starved doesn’t mean short-changing good nutrition. A few small changes in your meal and snack strategies can deliver positive results.

## Shop for Speedy “Home Cooking”!

Today’s well-stocked supermarkets offer an array of partially prepared products, created as kitchen “shortcuts.” When you’re busy, put good nutrition on your table – without doing all the chopping, measuring and cooking yourself.

- ◆ **Add your “culinary signature” to “ready-to-prepare” dishes:** perhaps diced lean ham or chicken breast or chopped carrots, broccoli or tomatoes to cooked macaroni and cheese; chopped dried fruit or nuts to rice; sliced red and green peppers, mushrooms and broccoli florets to frozen pizza.
- ◆ **Start with a salad kit.** Make your salad hearty with nutrient-rich extras: shredded cheese; cut-up grilled chicken, boiled shrimp; chopped hard-cooked eggs; cut-up vegetables; sliced apples or pears, berries, bottled or fresh citrus sections; toasted nuts or seeds. (Keep a variety of salad dressings, especially some lower-fat choices, on hand.)
- ◆ **Reheat pre-cooked roasts and other meat products** – sold refrigerated, at or near the meat counter. You just make easy side dishes!
- ◆ **Flavor with prepared sauces and spreads:** barbecue, steak or teriyaki sauce on pork chops, chicken breasts, burgers or fish steaks; hummus as a sandwich spread; salsa tossed with rice or served atop baked potatoes; pasta-ready or pizza-ready herbed tomato sauces.
- ◆ **Marinate with salad dressing.** Use any oil-vinegar based dressing as a vegetable, meat, poultry or seafood marinade.



Grilled Chicken Pita

- ◆ **Keep cheese shreds handy (try some lower-fat options, too)** – ready to sprinkle on pizza, casseroles, baked potatoes or soups, or toss with salads or pasta.

## Do It Ahead

For more time saving, do it ahead when you do it yourself! Spend some kitchen time on weekends or the night before for faster, easier weekday meal preparation.

- ✓ **Plan** – perhaps the best “do-ahead strategy” of all! For instance, keep an ongoing shopping list so you’ll have nutritious, easy-to-fix ingredients on hand. Start thawing frozen casseroles in the refrigerator a day or so ahead.
- ✓ **Pre-prep** – when you can. You might put breakfast cereal and bowls on the counter or pack a carried lunch the night before. Assemble tomorrow’s casserole while you clean up from tonight’s dinner. Wash and slice raw veggies ahead so they’re ready for snacking, salads or a stir-fry.

- ✓ **Double or triple batch.** Make enough (perhaps soup, stew, sauce or whole grains, such as brown rice) for several meals; freeze some. Or prepare two casseroles or meatloaves at a time – one for now, one for the freezer.
- ✓ **Cook once for two different dishes.** For example, broil enough chicken breasts for dinner tonight and chicken Caesar salad tomorrow. Prepare hearty vegetable soup on Sunday; add chicken or beans and rice for Tuesday. Cook enough pasta – some for primavera sauce now, some for pasta salad for lunch tomorrow.

## Keep It Fast and Simple

Using “fewer steps, fewer ingredients” makes healthful eating easier. One-dish and one-appliance meals mean faster clean up, too.

- ◆ **Prepare all-in-one dishes.** One-pan meals – pasta, soups, stir-fries and rice dishes – can provide a variety of foods from all or most food groups. So can family casseroles! (Tip: Serve milk for a nutrient-rich beverage.)
- ◆ **Speed meal preparation...slowly!** Cook dinner in a slow cooker during your busy day. If you need recipes, buy a slow cooker cookbook.

- ❖ **Use quick-cooking methods.** Grilling, stir-frying, microwaving, simmering and broiling are faster than roasting or baking. (Tip: Keep “stir-fry ready” sliced meat, chicken and veggies, as well as microwaveable foods on hand in your refrigerator and freezer.)
- ❖ **Plan no-cook meals.** No time to cook dinner tonight? A sandwich, served with vegetable sticks (carrots, celery, bell pepper), fresh fruit and a glass of milk can offer as much nutrition!
- ❖ **Serve breakfast for dinner.** Breakfast cereal topped with milk, yogurt, dried fruit and nuts, and perhaps served with tomato juice and fruit salad, works any time of day! Or try toaster waffles, served “a la mode” with yogurt and cut up fruit or berries.

### Rally Your Family!

Reduce “meal prep time” while multiplying family time. Involve

your children in pre- and post-meal tasks, so you can enjoy meal-time together. Research shows that family meals promote good nutrition. School-age children can:

- ❖ **Share in menu planning and grocery shopping.** Help plan celebration meals, such as a birthday dinner. Choose a favorite fruit for a snack or select vegetables to add to a green salad.
- ❖ **Set the table.** Pour beverages. Fill serving bowls.
- ❖ **Help with food preparation.** Wash fruits and vegetables. Measure ingredients. Chop ingredients (if old enough to safely handle knives with your supervision). Mix ingredients. Assemble salads.
- ❖ **Help with kitchen clean up.** Clear the table. Return perishable foods, such as milk, to the refrigerator. Wipe off countertops. Take out the garbage.

### Good News

Healthful eating doesn’t need to take lots of extra time or effort, just some planning and food savvy. And even a few small steps can add up to good nutrition. Try it for yourself and your family! *Here are two tasty food ideas to help you get started.*

#### Grilled Chicken Pitas

**Prep:** 20 minutes

**Grill:** 14 minutes

- 3/4 cup KRAFT LIGHT DONE RIGHT Italian Reduced Fat Dressing, divided
- 1 lb. boneless skinless chicken breast halves
- 2 medium green or red peppers, cut into wedges
- 1 medium red onion, sliced
- 1 each small zucchini and yellow squash, sliced lengthwise
- 6 whole wheat pita breads, cut in half

**SET** aside 1/4 cup of the dressing.

**PLACE** chicken and vegetables on greased grill over medium coals.

**GRILL** chicken 6 to 7 minutes on each side or until cooked through, and vegetables 4 to 5 minutes on each side or until crisp-tender, brushing frequently with remaining 1/2 cup dressing.

**CUT** chicken and vegetables into thin strips; mix lightly. Spoon evenly into pitas. Serve topped with reserved 1/4 cup dressing.

Makes 6 servings, 2 filled pita halves each.

**Nutrition Bonus:**

**Fire up the grill!** These Grilled Chicken Pitas provide a good source of vitamin C, thanks to the peppers.

**Nutrition Information Per Serving:** 310 calories, 8g total fat, 1g saturated fat, 45mg cholesterol, 570mg sodium, 39g carbohydrate, 6g dietary fiber, 4g sugars, 23g protein, 8%DV vitamin A, 35%DV vitamin C, 4%DV calcium, 15%DV iron.

**Exchange:** 2 Starch, 1 Vegetable, 2 Meat (VL), 1 Fat

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#### Layered Fruit Cup

**Prep:** 30 minutes plus refrigerating

- 3/4 cup boiling water
- 1 pkg. (4 serving size) JELL-O Brand Orange Flavor Gelatin
- 1 cup cold water
- 1 can (14 oz.) mandarin orange segments, drained
- 1/2 cup thawed COOL WHIP LITE Whipped Topping
- 1 cup sliced strawberries

**STIR** boiling water into gelatin at least 2 minutes until completely dissolved. Add cold water; stir well. Measure 3/4 cup of the gelatin into small bowl; set aside.

**REFRIGERATE** remaining gelatin until slightly thickened. Stir in orange segments. Pour into 4 cups or dessert dishes.

**PLACE** small bowl of measured gelatin in larger bowl of ice water. Stir until slightly thickened. Add whipped topping; stir with wire whisk until well blended. Add strawberries; stir gently until well blended. Spoon over gelatin in cups.

**REFRIGERATE** 2 hours or until firm. Makes 4 servings.

**Variation:** Prepare as directed, using JELL-O Brand Orange Flavor Sugar Free Low Calorie Gelatin.

**Nutrition Bonus:**

**Enjoy!** Fresh fruit adds an excellent source of vitamin C to this low fat dessert.

**Nutrition Information Per Serving:** 150 calories, 1.5g total fat, 1g saturated fat, 0mg cholesterol, 85mg sodium, 33g carbohydrate, 3g dietary fiber, 28g sugars, 2g protein, 15%DV vitamin A, 70%DV vitamin C, 0%DV calcium, 0%DV iron.

**Exchange:** 1 Fruit, 1 Carbohydrate

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