

Cooking with Blue Cross Complete

featuring recipes by Chef Paul Penney



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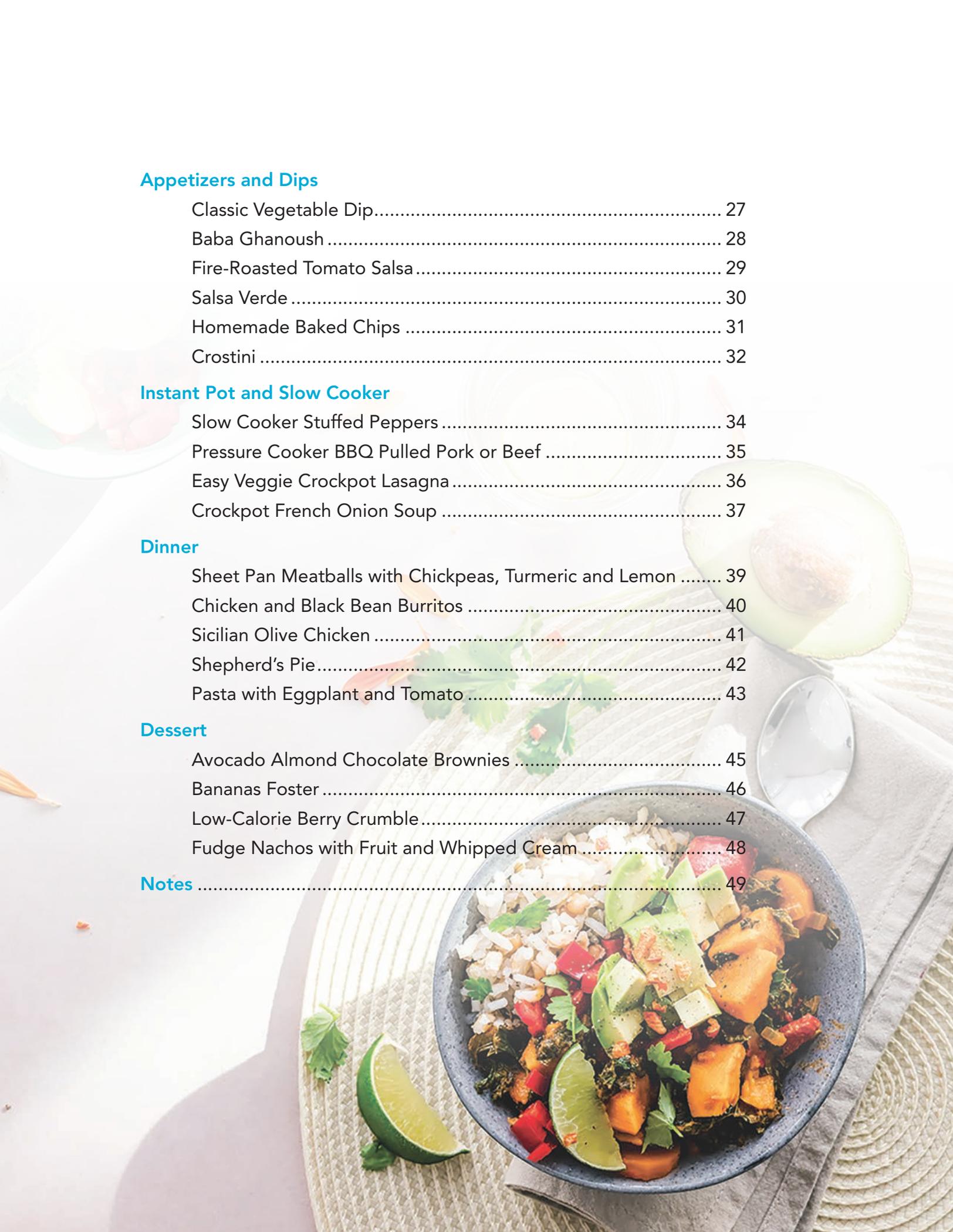
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Introduction

Cooking is a great way to de-stress, take care of yourself and your family and exercise control over your health and wellness. This book features recipes from Chef Paul Penney, who you might recognize from one of the many Blue Cross Complete events he's participated in over the past few years. Chef Paul has 20 years of experience as a chef and specializes in creating healthy, affordable, delicious recipes. Some of the recipes in this book are old favorites, and many are new, created just for you.

Throughout this book, you'll find explanations, substitutions, tips and tricks. If you're an experienced home cook, this book may give you some inspiration and introduce you to new techniques. Whatever your comfort level, the goal is to help you feel confident and creative while preparing delicious, healthy foods.

These recipes cover every meal of the day, from breakfast to snack time to dessert. They borrow flavors from all over the world. There are some that require loving attention and others that can be thrown in a slow cooker and left alone for hours. You're sure to find some that you and your family will want to enjoy time and again.

Be sure to visit us online at mibluccrosscomplete.com and follow us on social media for more recipes, seasonal suggestions and healthy living tips. Search for Blue Cross Complete of Michigan on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

Now, let's get cooking!



Spice mixes and recipe building blocks

Chai Spice Mix

- 5 teaspoons cardamom
- 1 ½ teaspoons cinnamon
- 1 ½ teaspoons ginger
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- ½ teaspoon allspice
- ½ teaspoon cloves
- ½ teaspoon nutmeg

Mix all ingredients together and store in an airtight container. Makes about ¼ cup. This seasoning is great on roasted carrots, or try ½ teaspoon added to a mug of tea.

Taco Seasoning

- 2 tablespoons chili powder
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- ½ teaspoon onion powder
- ½ teaspoon red pepper flakes
- ½ teaspoon ground oregano
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- 2 tablespoons salt
- 2 teaspoons black pepper

Mix all ingredients together and store in an airtight container. Makes about ¼ cup.

Chili Seasoning

- 2 tablespoons chili powder
- 2 teaspoons ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon ground coriander
- 1 teaspoon dried mustard powder
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano

Mix all ingredients together and store in an airtight container. Makes enough for one recipe of chili.

Cinnamon Sugar Mix

- ½ cup sugar
- 1 tablespoon cinnamon

Mix ingredients together and store in an airtight container. Makes about ½ cup.

Italian Herb Mix

- 1 tablespoon dried basil
- 2 teaspoons garlic powder
- 2 teaspoons dried parsley
- 1 teaspoon dried rosemary, crushed
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- ½ teaspoon onion powder
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper

Mix all ingredients together and store in an airtight container. Makes about ¼ cup of seasoning.

Cashew Cream Sauce

For basic, all-purpose cashew cream:

- 1 cup raw, unsalted cashews
- 2 ½ cups water, divided
- ⅛ teaspoon kosher salt

For sweetened cashew cream:

- 1 cup raw, unsalted cashews
- 1 tablespoon maple syrup
- 2 ½ cups water, divided
- ⅛ teaspoon kosher salt

For both recipes, soak the raw cashews for at least 12 hours in 2 cups of water. Drain the nuts and add to a blender bowl. Add ½ of the remaining water, salt and maple syrup (if using). Blend. Add more water as needed for a creamy consistency.

Store in an airtight container in the fridge for up to a week.

Basic Chicken Stock

- 1 pound chicken parts (preferably wings, back bones, feet or thighs)
- 1 large onion
- 3 stalks celery, including leaves
- 1 large carrot
- 1 ½ teaspoons salt
- 3 whole cloves (optional)
- 6 cups water

Chop all the vegetables (no need to peel) and place in a stockpot.

Add the chicken parts and salt. On medium heat, stir, adding ½ cup water to prevent things from sticking to the bottom of the pot.

When the chicken is slightly browned, add the remaining water and bring to a boil.

Add the whole cloves to the mix, if using.

Once the water boils, lower the heat and simmer for 2 hours.

To clean up the stock, remove all of the solids with a slotted spoon and skim the surface for any fat or debris that may have accumulated.

Allow to cool and store in an airtight container or use double plastic freezer bags to store in the freezer, squeezing out as much air as possible before sealing.

Quinoa

Quinoa sometimes gets a bad reputation for having a funky taste, but a different cooking method can make all the difference. It has a natural coating to prevent birds from eating it, which also happens to deter people just trying to enjoy a healthy grain. People tend to cook quinoa like rice, letting it fully absorb the cooking water and, consequently, the taste of the coating. Try this cooking method for fresh-tasting quinoa every time.

Fill a pot with four times as much water as you have dry quinoa. So, for 1 cup of dry quinoa, you'd use 4 cups of water. One cup of dry quinoa will make about 2 ½ cups cooked. Salt the water if you'd like.

Bring to a boil, then add the quinoa and cook at a full boil for 8 to 9 minutes. Don't cover.

Drain the quinoa into a fine mesh sieve or strainer — make sure the holes are small enough so the quinoa won't wash through and make sure the sieve can fit on top of the pot. Rinse the quinoa with water (the temperature doesn't matter). Rinse the cooking pot and add about 1 to 2 inches of water. Bring to a boil. Place the sieve on top of the pot and steam the quinoa for about 10 minutes, uncovered.

Then, fluff the quinoa with a fork and continue with your recipe as required.



FAQ

If you see the following words in a recipe, this is what they mean, unless otherwise stated:

- Egg = a large egg
- Butter = unsalted
- Milk = 1% or skim (if using nondairy milk, make sure it's plain — not vanilla.)

How do I know how much produce to buy? As much as possible, these recipes will give a specific number of an item, like “three celery sticks.” For other recipes, we can make estimates about how much a potato or carrot, for example, will yield. Half of a small item will yield about $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of volume. A whole small item will yield about $\frac{1}{2}$ cup; a medium item, 1 cup; a large item, 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups, and so on. In any case, use your best judgement. Most produce will not have extreme variations in size that would affect your recipe.

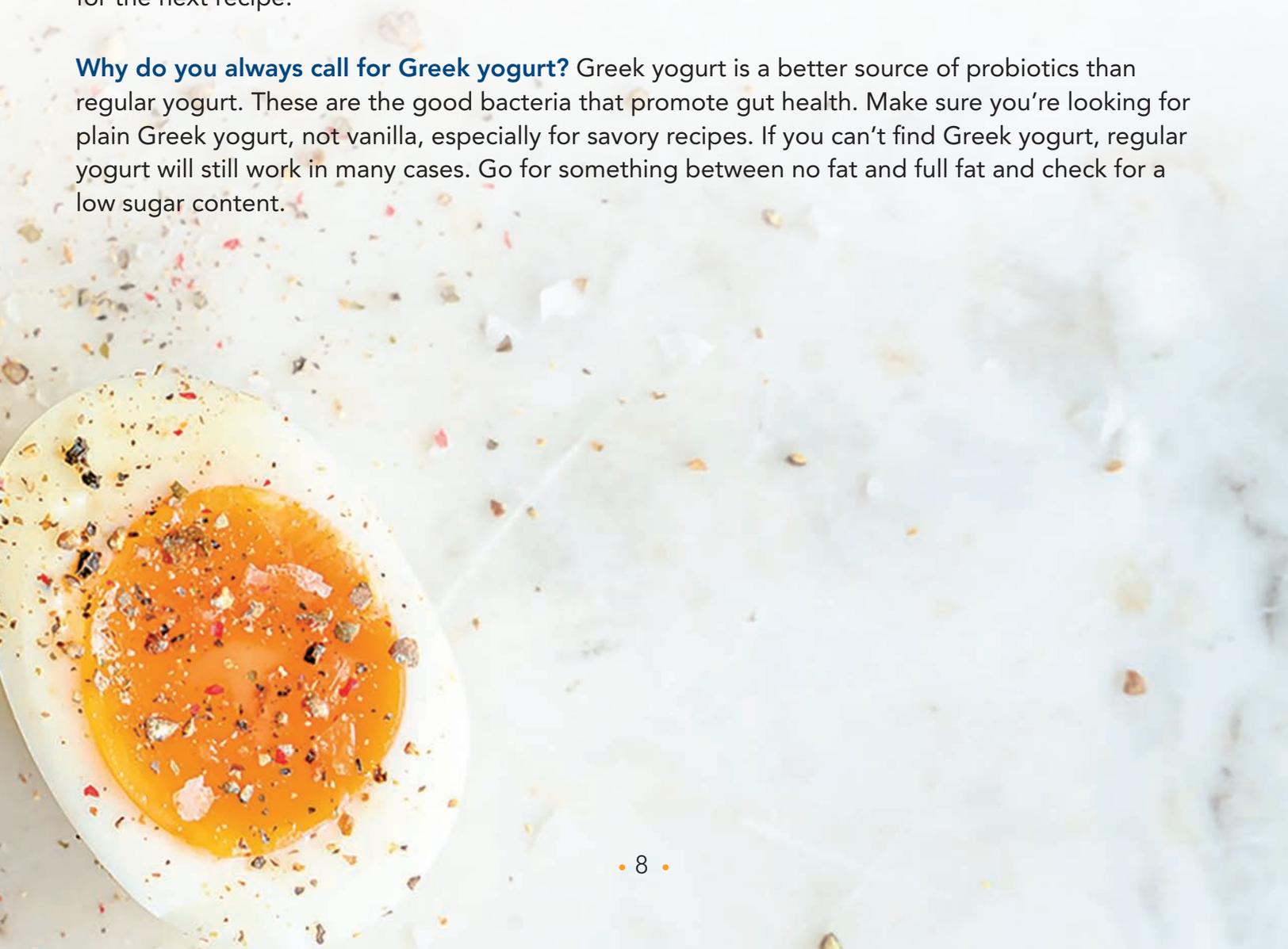
Does it really matter if I use salted or unsalted butter? When you put salted butter together with sneakier salt sources like canned goods, it can really start to add up. We ask for unsalted butter in these recipes to give you more control over the health and taste of your meal. Some recipes will ask you to use salt in earlier steps, but mostly you should add salt only at the end. Start with small amounts and keep taste testing until you're happy with the flavor. If you do have to use salted butter, it's not the end of the world, just reduce salt elsewhere in the recipe.



There are so many types of oil. What should I be cooking with? Unless otherwise indicated, canola or vegetable oils are the way to go, as they're light in flavor and healthier than most olive oils. If you do use olive oil, look for bottles that say "cold pressed," as these will be healthier options. When it comes to fats like oil and butter in these recipes, the measurements given are maximums — less is more. You're never required to use the full amount if less will do the job. You can even use water or stock to sauté ingredients, adding a bit of paprika or cumin for color, if desired.

I don't like buying a whole can of tomato paste, only to use a tiny bit. What do I do? This is a common cooking annoyance. You hope you'll use the rest of the can before it goes bad, but it doesn't often work out that way. Next time you need to use a can of tomato paste, put it in the refrigerator overnight to firm up before you open it. Then, open both ends of the can. Remove one end and use the other end to push the tomato paste out onto a piece of plastic wrap. Since it's firm, you easily can cut off what you need. Wrap the rest up with the plastic wrap and place in the freezer for the next recipe.

Why do you always call for Greek yogurt? Greek yogurt is a better source of probiotics than regular yogurt. These are the good bacteria that promote gut health. Make sure you're looking for plain Greek yogurt, not vanilla, especially for savory recipes. If you can't find Greek yogurt, regular yogurt will still work in many cases. Go for something between no fat and full fat and check for a low sugar content.



Substitutions

Ingredient	Substitution
Half and Half	Add 1 tablespoon cornstarch or flour to 1 cup of milk to thicken
Heavy Cream	$\frac{3}{4}$ cup milk plus $\frac{1}{4}$ cup butter will make 1 cup of rich cream, or thicken 1 cup of milk with 2 tablespoons cornstarch or flour
Shallot, Onion and Other Alliums	Many fresh 'onion-y' foods are interchangeable: Leeks, onions, scallions and shallots can all be substituted without much change in flavor
Red Wine	For smaller quantities, use red wine vinegar; For larger amounts, use stock or grape, pomegranate or cranberry juice
White Wine	For smaller quantities, use white wine vinegar; For larger amounts, use white grape juice or chicken or vegetable stock
Egg (for baking)	$\frac{1}{4}$ cup carbonated water; Or mix together 2 tablespoons water, 2 teaspoons baking powder and 1 teaspoon vegetable oil
Buttermilk	Mix 1 cup whole or 2% milk with 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice or distilled white vinegar and let sit for 5 to 10 minutes. It will curdle a bit – that's okay. Yogurt or sour cream thinned with a bit of milk or water will also work.
Balsamic Vinegar	Add a pinch of sugar to regular vinegar to help add the sweetness most balsamics bring
Capers (1 teaspoon)	Equal amount of chopped green olives or pickles (not sweet ones)
Cider Vinegar	Balsamic vinegar makes a fine substitute. You can add a splash of apple juice or cider for flavor.

Ingredient	Substitution
Dijon Mustard	Mix regular prepared mustard with a pinch of sugar
Tahini (1 cup)	Blend $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of any nut or seed butter with $\frac{1}{4}$ cup sesame oil
Worcestershire Sauce (1 tablespoon)	Mix together $\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoon of low-sodium soy sauce and $\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoon of ketchup
Allspice (1 teaspoon)	Combine $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon cinnamon, $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon cloves and a pinch of nutmeg
Onion Powder (1 teaspoon)	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup fresh onion
Cayenne ($\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon)	Substitute $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon paprika for milder flavor. For more of a kick, use $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon red pepper flakes or $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon chili powder
Celery Seed (1 teaspoon)	3 tablespoons chopped celery leaves
Chili Powder (1 teaspoon)	$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon cayenne or a fresh chili pepper/jalapeño
Cloves ($\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon)	$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon allspice
Corriander (1 teaspoon)	1 teaspoon cumin
Cumin (1 teaspoon)	$\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon chili powder or 1 teaspoon coriander
Garlic Powder ($\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon)	1 small clove fresh garlic
Ginger (1 teaspoon powdered)	1 tablespoon fresh grated ginger
Mustard (1 teaspoon powered)	1 tablespoon prepared mustard
Red Pepper Flakes (1 teaspoon)	Use $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon cayenne, to taste



Breakfast

Starting your day with food that is good for you helps you stay on a healthy track for the rest of your meals. Eggs, along with cheese, milk and yogurt, serve as a great source of protein. Fruit can naturally provide the same kind of sweetness in many popular breakfast foods, but without the added sugar. Vegetables, such as peppers and onions, add great flavor and brightness. The following section includes traditional meals, such as oatmeal and breakfast burritos, along with some innovations you may not have tried.



Eggs in *Spicy Tomatoes*

Prep time: 5 minutes | Cooking time: 20 minutes
Serves: 4 to 6 | Calories per serving: 230 per 2 eggs and sauce

INGREDIENTS

- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil or unsalted butter
- ½ cup chopped onion
- 1 garlic clove, chopped
- ¼ cup finely chopped jalapeño
- 2 teaspoons dried oregano
- 1, 16-ounce can crushed tomatoes in tomato puree
- Salt
- Tabasco, or other hot sauce, to taste
- 8 to 12 eggs



DIRECTIONS

Heat butter or oil in a large, deep skillet over medium heat.

Add the onion and garlic. Cook for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally until the vegetables are softened.

Add the jalapeño, oregano and tomatoes. Simmer the sauce until thickened. Season to taste.

Lower the heat until the sauce is barely bubbling.

Using the back of a spoon, make little wells to break the eggs into in the tomato mixture. Put one egg in each well.

Cover and cook the eggs until the whites are set.

Serve with corn tortillas, cornbread, fried potatoes, toast or bread.

Breakfast Burrito

Prep time: 5 minutes | Cooking time: 5 minutes | Serves: 1 | Calories per serving: 220

INGREDIENTS

- 1 tortilla, preferably whole wheat or low-carb flour
- 1 large egg
- 1 tablespoon shredded cheese, or more to taste
- 1 tablespoon black beans or fat-free refried beans (drained and rinsed), or more to taste
- 1 tablespoon salsa (see recipes on Page 29 and Page 30)
- Cooking spray, or 1 teaspoon butter or margarine



DIRECTIONS

Grease a small sauté pan with cooking spray, butter or margarine. In a small bowl, whisk the egg until smooth. Pour into pan and with the stove on low, scramble or make into a thin omelet.

Meanwhile, heat up the tortilla using a microwave or griddle.

Place on a serving plate and add the scrambled egg or omelet to the top $\frac{3}{4}$ of the tortilla.

Add cheese and beans, then top with salsa.

Fold the bottom of the tortilla over and up and then roll the tortilla from left to right to form a burrito.



Chef's choice: Try adding a vegetable, like fresh spinach, when you put on the cheese and beans. Want an extra kick? Add a dash or two of hot sauce.

Crockpot Breakfast *Apple Cobbler*

Prep time: 15 minutes | Cooking time: Varies based on cooking method

Serves: 4 | Calories per serving: 383

INGREDIENTS

- 1 teaspoon butter or margarine, or cooking spray
- 2 ½ cups diced apple of choice
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon honey
- 2 cups old fashioned or quick-cook oats
- ½ cup oat bran, or flax seed if available
- ¼ cup water or apple cider
- Low-fat milk or low-fat vanilla yogurt, for serving

DIRECTIONS

Prepare the crockpot by spraying the bottom with oil or spread the butter or margarine over the bottom.

Place a quarter of the diced apples on the bottom of the crockpot.

Dust with some cinnamon and a small amount of honey. Add a thin layer of oats and bran or flax seed.

Repeat these layers until all ingredients are used.

Add the water or apple cider.

Cover and cook on low for 7 to 9 hours, or on high for 2 1/2 hours. Stir toward the end of the cooking time.

Serve warm and top with low-fat milk or low-fat vanilla yogurt.

Breakfast Cookies

Prep time: 10 minutes | Cooking time: 15 to 20 minutes

Serves: 20 | Calories per serving: 310

INGREDIENTS

- ½ cup unsalted butter
- 1 cup crunchy peanut butter, no salt added, or almond or soy nut butter
- ¼ cup brown sugar
- ¼ cup honey
- 2 eggs
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 3 teaspoons baking soda
- 2 cups whole-wheat flour
- 1 cup wheat germ or flax seed
- 2 ½ cups quick-cook oats
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 cup raisins
- ⅓ cup low-fat buttermilk

DIRECTIONS

Preheat the oven to 325 degrees F. Line a cookie sheet with parchment paper.

Cream the brown sugar and butter together, then add the eggs one at a time and mix well.

Add the buttermilk, vanilla and honey, and stir well.

In a separate bowl, mix the dry ingredients (flour, baking soda, cinnamon, wheat germ and oats).

Add the dry ingredients to the wet ingredients and fold in well.

Add the raisins and peanut butter.

Fold the ingredients in well but do not over-mix them — it will overwork the glutes in the flour and make for a “tough” cookie.

On your cookie sheet, use heaped tablespoons to divide the batter into cookies. Leave plenty of room in between each cookie, as they will spread when baked. This recipe will make about 20 cookies, so you may have to work in batches.

Bake for 15 to 20 minutes.



Lunch

Soup and salad are the name of the game here for lunch. It's always great to have a light, hearty lunch to keep you going throughout the day, and by having healthy food loaded with veggies, you'll stay energized and full. Many of these recipes also use chicken or vegetable stock. Be sure to look for low-sodium options, which are more heart-healthy and give you more control over the amount of salt in your meals. Also, reach for stock instead of broth, as it usually has less salt. You can make an easy homemade stock using the recipe on page 6 and adjust it to your exact liking.



Summer Vegetable Minestrone

Prep time: 15 minutes | Cooking time: 15 minutes | Serves: 6 | Calories per serving: 265

INGREDIENTS

- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, or oil
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 cup chopped onion
- 1 cup sliced carrot
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 4 cups low-sodium chicken stock
- 1 cup water
- 3 cups roughly chopped spinach or other leafy greens
- 1 heaping cup small pasta shells like ditalini or mini shells
- 1 cup green beans, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1, 16-ounce jar tomato and sausage pasta sauce
- 1, 15-ounce can white beans, rinsed and drained — try Great Northern, cannellini or garbanzo
- 1 ½ cups summer squash (sliced into half circles)
- 1 ½ cups zucchini (sliced into half circles)

Optional, for serving:

- ¼ cup fresh basil leaves, torn
- Freshly grated Parmesan cheese

DIRECTIONS

Melt the butter in a large soup pot set over medium-high heat. Add the garlic, onions, carrots and oregano and cook, stirring often, until the onion is translucent, about 5 minutes. Season lightly with salt and pepper.

Stir in the chicken stock, leafy greens, pasta, green beans, oregano, pasta sauce, beans, squash, zucchini, and 1 to 2 cups water. Bring to a simmer and cook until the pasta is cooked through and the vegetables are tender, about 5 minutes. Season to taste with salt and freshly ground pepper.

Divide among 6 bowls and top with the torn basil and Parmesan, if using.

Quick Potato Corn Chowder

Prep time: 15 minutes | Cooking time: 15 minutes | Serves: 8 | Calories per serving: 260

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup chopped onion
- 1 tablespoon oil or butter
- 3 cups low-sodium chicken or vegetable stock
- 4 cups peeled and cubed Yukon Gold potatoes or frozen diced breakfast potatoes
- 2 cups frozen, whole-kernel corn
- 1, 15-ounce can creamed corn
- 1 cup milk
- Salt and pepper to taste

Optional:

- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup potato flakes, for a thicker chowder
- Minced fresh parsley



DIRECTIONS

Add onion and oil to a large saucepan over medium heat, cooking until onions are tender.

Add stock and potatoes; bring to a boil. Reduce heat; cover and simmer for 10 minutes or until potatoes are tender.

Stir in the frozen corn and milk. Add creamed corn, stir, and return to a boil. Cook, stirring, for 2 to 3 minutes or until thickened. Add potato flakes if you desire a thicker chowder.

Sprinkle with parsley before serving.

Salt and pepper to taste.

Quinoa Tabbouleh

Prep time: 20 minutes | Cooking time: 15 minutes | Serves: 6 | Calories per serving: 150

INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups water
- 1 cup quinoa
- 1 pinch salt
- ¼ cup olive oil
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ cup fresh lemon juice
- 2 cups tomatoes, diced
- 1 cup cucumber, diced
- 1 cup green onions, diced
- 1 cup grated carrot
- 1 cup chopped fresh parsley



DIRECTIONS

Cook quinoa according to instructions on page 6. Let cool.

Meanwhile, in a large bowl, combine olive oil, salt, lemon juice, tomatoes, cucumber, green onions, carrots and parsley. Stir in cooled quinoa.



Chef's note: This tasty salad is rich in vitamins A and C.

Spicy Panzanella Salad

Prep time: 20 minutes | Cooking time: 5 minutes | Serves: 2 | Calories per serving: 305

INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups diced cucumber (small dice)
- 2 ½ cups chopped tomatoes
- Salt and pepper
- 4 slices day-old bread
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 tablespoon water
- Salt and pepper

Dressing:

- 1 jalapeño, finely chopped
- 2 tablespoons tomato, chopped
- 1 lime, juiced (about 2 tablespoons of juice)

Additions:

- Fresh herbs; peaches, nectarines or plums; red onion, finely chopped; zucchini or summer squash; olives; or grapes.

DIRECTIONS

Place the chopped tomatoes, except those reserved for the dressing, and cucumbers into a large bowl. Sprinkle generously with salt and pepper and toss quickly to distribute.

For the dressing, place a small saucepan on medium heat with a few drops of olive oil.

Sauté the jalapeño for about a minute, then add the remaining tomato and a tablespoon of water. Cook for another 2 minutes, until the tomato juices release. Season well with salt and pepper.

Once the water has evaporated, turn off the stovetop and dump the jalapeño-tomato mixture on your cutting board. Chop it very finely, then put it back into the pan — with no

heat — along with the lime juice and olive oil. This will be the dressing. Taste it and add more salt and pepper as needed.

Chop or tear the bread into bite-sized pieces, then toast it in a skillet over medium heat, tossing occasionally until the bread chunks are toasty on all sides. Alternatively, toast full slices of bread in a toaster and tear them up afterwards, or skip the toasting entirely if the bread is already hard.

Add the bread and dressing to the bowl of vegetables, then mix. Taste and adjust salt and pepper once more. Let it sit for a few minutes so that the bread can soak up the juices, then serve.



Chef's note: Panzanella is an act of kitchen magic — it's a great way to use up produce and bread you have left over from other meals and bring them together. And it's even better the second day.

Kids Snacks

Snacks can be a tricky place to sneak in healthy food. Usually, store-bought snacks are high in salt, sugar and fat, but many of us don't have time to spend hours making homemade snacks. However, making your own snacks can be simple, fun, and can even save you money. The recipes included here use easy-to-find ingredients and were created to satisfy even the pickiest kid. They won't even know they're eating healthily unless you tell them.





Chef Paul's *No-Bake Energy Bites*

Prep time: 30 minutes | **Cooling time:** 4 hours

Serves: 16 (1 bar or 2 bites) | **Calories per serving:** 50 per bite

INGREDIENTS

- ½ cup chopped nuts of any type, lightly toasted (optional)
- ¾ cup dried fruit (one kind or a combination of raisins, currants, dried cranberries or chopped dates, prunes, apricots and peaches)
- 1 cup finely grated carrot
- ¾ cup quick-cook oats
- ¾ cup crispy-rice cereal
- 2 tablespoons unsweetened coconut (optional)
- ½ cup almond, peanut or soy butter (for a nut-free option)
- ¼ cup honey or maple syrup
- ½ teaspoon vanilla extract

DIRECTIONS

Line a 9-by-13-inch pan with wax or parchment paper. Leave enough extra paper hanging to cover the bars later. It will make it easier to get the bars out of the pan — and be easier to clean up.

Place all the dry ingredients in a large bowl and mix well.

Place the almond, peanut or soy butter and honey or maple syrup in a small bowl. Microwave for 30 seconds. Stir until smooth. Add the vanilla extract and stir again.

Pour the nut butter mixture into the large bowl with the other ingredients and mix with a spoon or spatula until combined.

Pour the mixture into the prepared 9-by-13-inch pan and press down firmly. Pressing firmly will ensure the bars don't crumble and will cut easier.

Use the overhanging paper to cover the bars completely. Then, cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 4 hours.

When the mixture is fully chilled, use a sharp knife to cut it into 16 pieces. You could leave the bites as is, or roll each piece into a bite-sized ball.

The energy bites will keep in the refrigerator for about a week, or can be stored in the freezer and thawed as needed.



Roasted Rosemary Nuts

Prep time: 5 minutes | Cooking time: 15 minutes

Serves: 8 (2 ounces) | Calories per serving: approximately 358, depending on nut types

INGREDIENTS

- 1 pound unsalted mixed nuts, cleaned from shells, if possible
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh rosemary leaves or 2 teaspoons dried rosemary
- ½ teaspoon paprika
- 2 tablespoons dark brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon salt (don't use if the nuts are already salted)
- 1 tablespoon melted butter

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 375 degrees F.

Place nuts on an ungreased baking sheet and bake for about 10 to 13 minutes, stirring halfway through, until they're warmed. Watch carefully so the nuts don't burn.

In a large bowl, combine the rosemary, paprika, sugar, salt and butter.

Toss the warm nuts with the rosemary mixture until the nuts are completely coated. Use up to 1 tablespoon more butter to coat, if needed.

Lay out on the baking sheet to dry and cool.



Chef's choice: For a spicy snack, switch out the paprika for cayenne pepper.



Quick and Easy *Microwave Applesauce*

Prep time: 5 minutes | **Cooking time:** 5 minutes

Serves: 6 (½ cup per serving) | **Calories per serving:** 72

INGREDIENTS

- 4 large Michigan McIntosh apples, peeled, cored and chopped
- 1 tablespoon brown sugar
- ½ teaspoon cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon lemon juice

DIRECTIONS

Place the chopped apple pieces into a microwave safe bowl. Cover loosely with plastic wrap or a small plate and microwave 30 seconds at a time until softened.

Add sugar, cinnamon and lemon juice and incorporate well.

Mash the apples with a fork or potato masher, if needed.





Mini Pizzas

Prep time: 5 minutes | Cooking time: 10 minutes

Calories per serving: approximately 190 – many variables

INGREDIENTS

- English muffin, split in half
- Low-sodium pizza sauce or pasta sauce
- Low-fat mozzarella or your preferred low-fat pizza cheese
- Toppings to your liking — try vegetables, such as bell peppers or halved Brussels sprouts, or meats, such as low-fat pepperoni or salami



DIRECTIONS

Preheat toaster oven or oven to 375 degrees F.

Start by adding the tomato sauce to the top of the muffin.

Sprinkle with mozzarella or pizza cheese of choice.

Add vegetable and meat toppings.

Place in the toaster oven or regular oven for 5 to 10 minutes until lightly toasted.

Substitutions

Small 6-inch pita breads or similar-sized tortillas will also work as crust for your pizza. If whole-grain options are available, they're a healthier choice.

Appetizers and dips

When we think of healthy snacks, we don't usually think of dips. In this section, however, we'll create healthier versions of classic appetizers and dips that are just as delicious as their unhealthy counterparts. They feel special enough to serve to guests, but are simple enough to enjoy as an everyday snack. You can also experiment with the ingredients to make them your own.



Appetizers and dips



Classic *Vegetable Dip*

Prep time: 10 minutes | Serves: 8 (2 tablespoons per serving) | Calories per serving: 20 (dip only)

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup nonfat plain yogurt (Greek yogurt works best)
- $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon garlic powder
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon onion powder
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon dried dill
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- Fresh chives for garnish (optional)
- Vegetables for dipping (such as cauliflower, broccoli, carrots, radishes, pea pods, celery, mushrooms and zucchini)

DIRECTIONS

Mix all ingredients in a bowl, top with chives, if using, and enjoy.



Chef's choice: You can add other chopped vegetables and greens to this mix for extra taste and vitamins. Try spinach, kale or roasted red peppers.

Appetizers and dips



Baba Ghanoush

Prep time: 25 minutes | Cooking time: 20 minutes

Serves: 16 (2 tablespoons per serving) | Calories per serving: 25

INGREDIENTS

- 1 large eggplant (about 1 ½ pounds)
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ cup finely chopped fresh, flat-leaf parsley, plus more for garnish
- 2 tablespoons tahini
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice (about 1 lemon)
- Salt

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 450 degrees F. Line a cookie sheet with foil.

Poke the eggplant a few times with a fork, place on the cookie sheet and bake until soft inside, about 20 minutes. You can also grill the eggplant over a gas grill, rotating it around until the skin is completely charred, about 10 minutes. Let the eggplant cool.

Cut the eggplant in half lengthwise and remove pulp from skin; use a slotted spoon to drain liquid, if desired. Use a fork to scoop the pulp into a food processor or blender. Process until smooth and transfer to a medium bowl.

On a cutting board, mix the garlic and salt together with the flat side of a knife, until they form a paste. Add the garlic-salt mixture to the eggplant. Then, stir in the parsley, tahini and lemon juice. Add salt to taste. Garnish with parsley, if using.

Substitutions

Tahini is a roasted sesame seed paste that can be found in the Middle Eastern, Jewish or vegetarian sections of the grocery store. It can also be easily substituted in this recipe with 2 to 4 tablespoons of olive oil or peanut butter. Each of these will give the dish a different flavor and add variety.



Chef's choice: Serve this dip with fresh cut veggies or pita bread.

Appetizers and dips



Fire-Roasted *Tomato Salsa*

Prep time: 5 minutes | Cooking time: 15 minutes

Serves: 8 (2 tablespoons per serving) | Calories per serving: 20

INGREDIENTS

- 1 fresh jalapeño pepper, whole (add one more pepper if you like it spicier)
- 3 garlic cloves, unpeeled
- 1, 15-ounce can diced tomatoes in juice (fire-roasted works best)
- ¼ cup chopped fresh cilantro, or 1 tablespoon dried cilantro
- 2 tablespoons fresh lime juice
- Salt and pepper

DIRECTIONS

Roast the pepper and garlic in a small dry skillet over medium heat until soft and brown, about 10 to 15 minutes.

Allow to cool, then pull the stem off the pepper and roughly chop. Peel the skin off the garlic, finely chop and add to the pepper.

Put the diced tomatoes in a medium bowl and add the garlic and pepper mixture.

Stir in the cilantro and lime juice. Season with salt and pepper.

Substitutions

You can substitute canned jalapeño peppers for fresh, but do not roast.

If you do not have canned, diced tomatoes, you can dice any canned tomatoes.



Chef's note: If using a blender, try pulsing the power to give the mixture a more consistent texture.

Appetizers and dips



Salsa Verde

Prep time: 15 minutes | Serves: 8 (2 tablespoons per serving) | Calories per serving: 15

INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups tomatillos, husked, rinsed and quartered
- 1 large garlic clove, peeled and quartered
- 1 hot green pepper, roughly chopped, or more to taste (jalapeño or serrano work best)
- ½ cup chopped cilantro (or more to taste)
- 2 tablespoons water
- 1 tablespoon lime juice
- ½ teaspoon salt

DIRECTIONS

Combine tomatillos, garlic, pepper and cilantro in a blender or food processor to chop.

Add water, lime juice and salt. Mix until it's a coarse puree, or mixed to your preference.

If necessary, add more water or lime juice to alter the taste or texture.

Substitutions

You can replace the tomatillos with four unripe, green tomatoes and 1 teaspoon of lime juice.



Appetizers and dips



Homemade *Baked Chips*

Prep time: 15 minutes | Cooking time: 5 minutes | Serving size and calories will vary depending on type of chip, see package for serving size and calorie information

INGREDIENTS

Savory Snack Chips

- Pita bread, or flour or corn tortillas
- Oil
- Optional: Salt, garlic powder, cumin or paprika

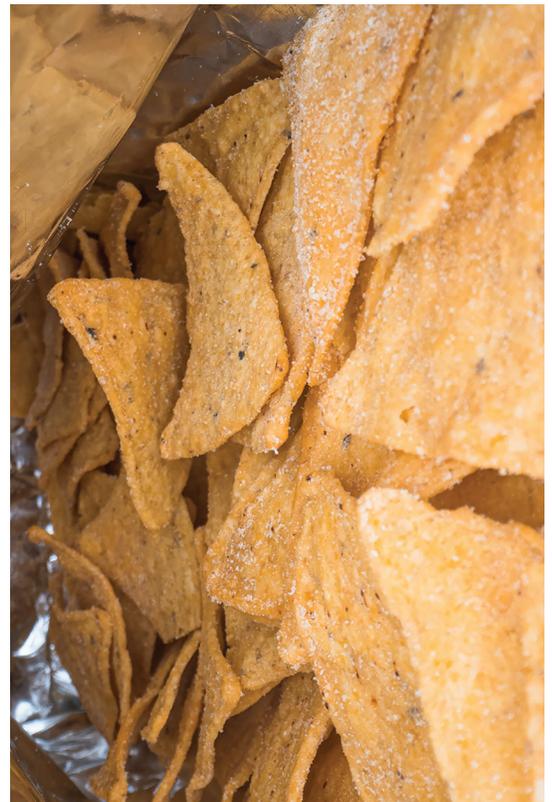
Sweet Dessert Chips

- Pita bread, or flour or corn tortillas
- Butter, melted (or spray butter)
- Cinnamon Sugar Mixture (see recipe on Page 5)

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.

If using pita bread, split pita in half at the edge with a knife. Cut pita or tortillas into bite-sized pieces. Place on a cookie sheet and spray or brush with oil or butter so that each piece is evenly covered. Sprinkle with spices or cinnamon sugar mixture. Bake 1 to 2 minutes until light brown, then flip and repeat.



Chef's note: Pitas or tortillas from the day-old bread section will save money and taste delicious in this recipe.

Appetizers and dips



Crostini

Prep time: 20 minutes | Cooking time: 10 minutes

Serving size and calories will vary depending on type of toppings used

INGREDIENTS

- 1 loaf of baguette bread (or any crusty loaf of bread)
 - Oil or melted butter
 - Salt and pepper
 - Hardboiled egg, mayonnaise and mustard
 - Diced tomato, minced garlic, jalapeño and onion
 - Mashed beans and a dash of hot sauce
 - Cream cheese with chives and onion
 - Caramelized onion and cheddar cheese
- Toppings:**
- Avocado and lime juice
 - Mashed sardines with lemon juice

DIRECTIONS

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F.

Cut bread into bite-sized rounds, about ¼-inch thick, and place them on a cookie sheet. If you're using a larger loaf of bread, you may need to cut the slices to make them bite-sized.

Brush each slice with oil or melted butter and toast in the oven until light brown and crisp, about 3 to 5 minutes. Some breads will brown quicker than others, so keep an eye on them to prevent burning.

Arrange the slices on a plate and top with your desired toppings.

Once toasted, you can store the crostini, without toppings, in a sealed bag in the refrigerator for up to 30 days.



Chef's note: This is a great appetizer for company because you can make as much or as little as you need.

Instant Pot and slow cooker

The Instant Pot is a great addition to any kitchen. It cuts down time spent over the stove or in the oven, and is a versatile tool for nearly any type of food — proteins, starches, fruits, vegetables. If you have reservations about the price of the Instant Pot, or if it doesn't appeal to you, not to worry. These recipes are slow-cooker friendly, which can also save you time and energy. Options are given for low and high heat, so make sure you use the right one to get your best results.



Instant Pot and slow cooker



Slow Cooker *Stuffed Peppers*

Prep time: 10 minutes | **Cooking time:** 5 to 6 hours (low) or 2 to 3 hours (high)

Serves: 6 (1 pepper per serving) | **Calories per serving:** 460

INGREDIENTS

- 1 pound lean ground beef or turkey
- 1 ½ cups cooked brown rice
- 1 ½ cups shredded cheddar cheese
- 1, 15-ounce can black beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 cup corn, frozen, canned or roasted
- 1 cup salsa (see recipe on Page 29 or 30)
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro
- 1 teaspoon cumin
- ½ teaspoon chili powder, or more to taste
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 6 bell peppers, tops cut, stemmed and seeded
- 1, 24-ounce can stewed tomatoes
- 2 tablespoons sour cream (optional)
- Cooking spray

DIRECTIONS

Lightly coat the inside of a 6-quart slow cooker with nonstick spray.

In a large bowl, combine beef, rice, 1 cup cheese, black beans, corn, salsa, cilantro, cumin and chili powder; season to taste with salt and pepper.

Spoon the filling into each bell pepper cavity.

Place peppers into the slow cooker. Add stewed tomatoes around the bottom of the peppers. Cover and cook on low for 5 to 6 hours or high for 2 to 3 hours, or until the peppers are tender and the beef is cooked through.

Uncover and top with remaining ½ cup cheese. Cover and cook on low for an additional 10 to 15 minutes, or until the cheese has melted.

Serve immediately, drizzled with sour cream, if desired.

Substitutions

Other grains can be substituted for rice, other types of beans can be substituted for black beans, and canned tomatoes can be substituted for salsa. For a vegetarian option, replace the meat with 2 to 3 cups of cooked quinoa or textured vegetarian protein, rehydrated according to package instructions.

Instant Pot and slow cooker



Pressure Cooker *BBQ Pulled Pork or Beef*

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Prep time: 15 minutes | **Cooking time:** 45 minutes for pressure cooker – up to 7 to 8 hours with slow cooker | **Serves:** 8 (2 tablespoons per serving) | **Calories per serving:** 15

.....

INGREDIENTS

- 2 pounds pork shoulder or boneless loin roast, cubed into 3-inch pieces
- 2 tablespoons oil
- 1 cup finely diced onion
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 cup ketchup
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
- 2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
- 2 tablespoons dry mustard powder
- ¼ cup chili powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon pepper
- ¼ cup water
- 1 ½ cups each, beef and chicken stock (slow cooker only)

DIRECTIONS

In a 6-quart pressure cooker on high heat, add oil and brown the pork pieces in batches.

Remove excess fat from the pot, saving if desired, then add the onion and garlic, sautéing until softened. Depending on the size of your cooker, you may need to remove a few pieces of meat to make room.

Return meat to the cooker if necessary. Add remaining ingredients and mix to combine.

Bring to a low boil, then add the lid of the pressure cooker and bring to pressure.

Cook for 45 minutes at high pressure.

Allow for natural pressure release.

Remove the lid and, using two forks, pull the pork into shreds. Toss the shredded pork in the pan drippings, if desired. Serve hot on rolls.

For a slow cooker, brown the meat as you would for the pressure cooker.

Add 3 cups of stock (1 ½ beef and 1 ½ chicken).

Set slow cooker on low for 6 to 7 hours or high for 3 to 4 hours.

Drain, saving the liquid. Add the sauce ingredients into slow cooker and finish cooking on low for 1 hour. Add small amounts of reserved cooking liquid if needed.

Substitutions

You can use beef chuck roast instead of pork if you prefer.

Instant Pot and slow cooker



Easy Veggie Crockpot Lasagna

Prep time: 15 minutes | Cooking time: 5 to 6 hours (low) or 3 hours (high)

Serves: 8 | Calories per serving: 154

INGREDIENTS

- 2, 24-ounce jars or cans Italian tomato or spaghetti sauce
- 1 box oven-ready lasagna noodles (more may be required depending on size of crockpot)
- 24 ounces part-skim ricotta cheese, or reduced-fat cottage cheese
- 4 cups chopped leafy vegetables (such as spinach or kale)
- 2 cups shredded, reduced-fat mozzarella or provolone cheese
- Parmesan cheese for topping
- Fresh parsley, for serving
- Cooking spray

DIRECTIONS

Spray the crockpot with cooking spray. Spread $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sauce on the bottom of the pan so the noodles don't stick to the bottom.

Trim and place the lasagna noodles so that they fit within the inside of the slow cooker bowl and mostly cover the bottom.

Cover the noodles with about $\frac{1}{4}$ of the ricotta, veggies, sauce and cheese, and then another layer of noodles. Repeat these layers three more times for a total of four complete layers, ending with a layer of noodles on top. Cover the top noodle layer with a thin layer of sauce and top with Parmesan cheese.

Cover and cook on high for 3 hours or low for 5 to 6 hours. It's okay if there's liquid in the pot after the cooking time is done. Turn the crockpot off completely and allow the lasagna to sit for one hour. This step is very important, as it allows the liquid to soak into the noodles.



Chef's choice: You can also use grated zucchini along with the leafy vegetables. If frozen spinach is being used, drain the excess liquid before using.

Instant Pot and slow cooker



Crockpot *French Onion Soup*

Prep time: 10 minutes | Cooking time: 6 to 8 hours

Serves: 8 to 10 | Calories per serving: 154

INGREDIENTS

- 6 cups thinly sliced sweet onions
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar
- 4 tablespoons butter
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
- 3 tablespoons flour
- 2, 32-ounce containers low-sodium beef stock
- 2 tablespoons fresh thyme, or 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- French bread or baguette
- Swiss cheese slices, one per serving

DIRECTIONS

Set crockpot to high, then add onions, garlic, brown sugar, butter, salt and balsamic vinegar and mix until combined. Cover and let cook for 60 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the onions have caramelized a little.

Add in flour, then stir thoroughly and let sit for 5 minutes. Add beef stock, thyme and pepper, then turn heat down to low, cover and cook for 6 to 8 hours.

Taste and adjust seasonings as needed.

Before serving, cut French bread or baguette into slices. Fill oven-safe soup bowls to the top, then cover with slice of bread and a slice of cheese. Set under the broiler for 2 to 3 minutes, or until cheese is bubbly and golden brown.



Dinner

The question “What should we have for dinner?” can be stressful if you’re low on ingredients. But, with a bit of planning, dinner can be a tasty and comforting way to wind down your day. Buying ingredients that freeze well, such as chicken, and pairing them with staples in your pantry will allow you to plan your meals out ahead of time and stress less. There’s plenty of variety here to account for different tastes and needs. There are oven-baked and stove-top options, healthy choices for your busy and slow days alike. This section is all about healthy dinners that work for you and make dinner a meal you look forward to.



Sheet Pan Meatballs *with Chickpeas, Turmeric and Lemon*

Prep time: 20 minutes | Cooking time: 40 minutes | Serves: 4 to 6 | Calories per serving: 425

INGREDIENTS

Chickpeas

- 2, 15-ounce cans chickpeas, drained and rinsed
- 1 teaspoon cumin
- 1 teaspoon turmeric
- 1 cup thinly sliced red onion
- 2 tablespoons oil
- Juice from one lemon, divided
- Salt and pepper to taste
- ¼ cup plain nonfat Greek yogurt
- 2 tablespoons water
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 egg
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- ½ teaspoon cumin
- ½ teaspoon turmeric
- ¼ teaspoon cayenne or red pepper flakes (optional)
- 2 tablespoons chopped cilantro, flat-leaf parsley or mint leaves, plus more to garnish

Meatballs

- 1 pound ground turkey or beef
- ½ cup panko or other plain, dry breadcrumbs
- For serving: Toasted pita wedges, hot sauce

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 400 degrees F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper or foil.

Combine chickpeas, cumin, turmeric and half the red onion slices in a large bowl. Toss well with oil and turn out onto the prepared baking sheet. Season with salt and paper. Place in the oven and roast for 25 minutes. Meanwhile, for the meatballs, mix all ingredients in the same large bowl. Mix until well combined, then use your hands to form into bite-sized balls. Keep a dinner plate lined with wax paper nearby to place finished meatballs as you're working. Once the chickpeas are done, remove them from the oven and use a spatula to push them to the edges of the pan so that there is space in the middle for the meatballs. Arrange your meatballs in the empty space and put the pan back in the oven to bake for another 10 to 15 minutes, until meatballs are cooked through. Meanwhile, toss remaining red onion with half of the lemon juice and season with salt and pepper. Combine yogurt with remaining lemon juice and season with salt and pepper. Once the meatballs are cooked, scatter the remaining fresh herbs over the tray and serve with lemony onions, yogurt, toasted pita wedges and hot sauce.



Chef's note: Turmeric, a root similar to ginger, is common in many Indian, and some Asian, dishes. It can help reduce inflammation, reduce cholesterol and, as an antioxidant, can reduce toxins in the liver and in the bloodstream.

Chicken and *Black Bean Burritos*

Prep time: 10 minutes | **Cooking time:** 15 minutes

Serves: 6 (2 burritos per serving) | **Calories per serving:** 570

INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups precooked rotisserie chicken meat
- 1 teaspoon oil
- 1 cup sliced onion
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 1 bell pepper, diced
- 1 packet low-sodium taco seasoning
- 1, 15-ounce can petite diced tomatoes
- 1, 15-ounce can low-sodium black beans, drained and rinsed
- 12, 6-inch soft tortillas (try whole wheat)
- 1 cup shredded, low-fat Monterey Jack cheese
- Juice of 1 lime (about 2 tablespoons)

Optional, for serving:

- Avocado, chopped tomato, nonfat plain Greek yogurt, shredded lettuce, green onion

DIRECTIONS

Remove the meat from the rotisserie chicken and shred it into short, thin strips, or dice it into bite-sized pieces.

In a medium saucepan over medium heat, add oil.

Add onion, bell pepper and garlic to the pan and sauté for 5 minutes.

Add the taco seasoning packet and mix well, then add the tomatoes.

Add the chicken and combine. Simmer for 5 minutes.

Add the black beans and allow to warm through completely, about 1 to 2 minutes.

Stir in green onions at this time, if using.

Spoon a heaping half cup of the chicken and

bean mixture onto each tortilla; top with cheese, lime juice and other optional toppings.

Oven version:

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. After the chicken and bean mixture has finished cooking, spoon it into each tortilla as in the above directions, but do not add the cheese yet. Roll each tortilla and place it seam side down in an ovenproof 9-by-13-inch dish that has been lightly sprayed with cooking oil.

Top with cheese. Cover with aluminum foil and bake for 15 minutes, removing the foil for the last 5 minutes to lightly brown the cheese.

Substitutions

Leftover turkey is a great substitution for chicken.

Sicilian Olive Chicken

Prep time: 5 minutes | Cooking time: 20 minutes | Serves: 4 | Calories per serving: 280

INGREDIENTS

- 1 tablespoon oil
- 4 chicken cutlets (4 to 6 ounces each), or 2, ½-inch-thick chicken breasts
- 1 clove garlic, minced (or more to taste)
- ½ cup finely chopped red onion
- ½ cup chicken stock
- 1, 15-ounce can petite diced tomatoes
- 1 teaspoon Italian Herb Mix (Page 5)
- 4 ounces fresh baby spinach
- ⅓ cup green olives, pitted
- 1 tablespoon capers, rinsed
- ¼ teaspoon crushed red pepper (adjust to taste)
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- Salt to taste

DIRECTIONS

Season both sides of the chicken with a little salt and pepper.

Heat oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Cook the chicken until browned on one side, 2 to 4 minutes. Remove from pan and set aside.

Reduce heat to medium, add garlic and onion. Sauté and soften onion for about 4 minutes.

Add chicken stock and scrape up bits from bottom of pan.

Add tomatoes, olives, Italian herb mix and capers to the pan.

Add chicken and any juices back to the pan, stirring to incorporate.

Sprinkle red pepper on top to taste.

Add spinach on top of mix and cover. Cook just until the spinach is wilted, about 5 minutes.

Season with salt and pepper to taste.



Chef's choice: Bone-in chicken thighs or leg quarters also work well in this recipe, but they may require extra cooking time.

Shepherd's Pie

Prep time: 5 minutes | Cooking time: 45 minutes

Serves: 6 | Calories per serving: 485 with beef, 405 with turkey and 245 with all vegetables

INGREDIENTS

- 1 ½ to 2 pounds butternut squash or potatoes, peeled and cut into 1-inch cubes
- 1 tablespoon butter
- 1 tablespoon oil
- 1 ½ cups chopped onion
- 2 cups mixed vegetables (such as carrots, corn and peas)
- 1 ½ pounds ground beef or ground turkey
- 1 ½ tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
- ½ cup tomato sauce or ketchup
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano, thyme or parsley
- Salt and pepper to taste

DIRECTIONS

Preheat the oven to 425 degrees F.

Place the peeled and cubed squash in medium pot. Cover with at least an inch of cold water.

Add a teaspoon of salt. Bring to a boil, reduce to a simmer and cook until tender, 10 to 15 minutes.

Mash the squash together with butter and a little bit of the cooking water. Season to taste.

In a large pan over medium heat, add oil, then onions and beef or turkey. Cook until the meat is browned and the onions are soft. Drain excess fat from the pan.

Add the mixed vegetables to the pan with meat and onions and stir in well.

Add the Worcestershire sauce and tomato sauce to the pan and bring to a simmer, then reduce the heat to low. Cook, uncovered, for 5 minutes, adding a little water to keep the meat from drying out, if necessary.

Spread the meat and vegetable mixture in a large baking dish (such as a 9-by-13-inch, oven-safe pan or 3-quart casserole dish). Spread the mashed squash evenly over the top of the meat and vegetables.

Drag a fork across the top of the mashed squash to create a rough surface that will brown in the oven. Place in the oven and bake until browned and bubbling, about 20 minutes.



Chef's choice: You can make this meal vegetarian by swapping out ground meat with 4 additional cups of mixed vegetables and using a vegetarian Worcestershire sauce.

Pasta with *Eggplant and Tomato*

Prep time: 10 minutes | Cooking time: 25 minutes

Serves: 4 | Calories per serving: 375

INGREDIENTS

- ½ pound pasta, such as rigatoni
- 2 tablespoons oil
- 1 eggplant, cubed into ¾-inch pieces
- 4 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- ½ teaspoon chili flakes
- 1, 15-ounce can petite diced tomatoes
- ¼ cup freshly grated Parmesan
- Salt and pepper to taste
- ¼ cup fresh finely chopped basil (optional) or 1 tablespoon dried basil

DIRECTIONS

Cook pasta according to the package instructions, saving some of the cooking water.

Meanwhile, add half the oil to a large frying pan over medium heat.

Add the eggplant cubes, sprinkle with salt and cook until lightly browned, about 5 minutes.

If the eggplant starts to look too dry, add a bit of the pasta water.

Add garlic and chili flakes; stir.

Add the tomatoes and continue to cook for 15 minutes, stirring occasionally.

If the mixture looks dry, add a bit of pasta water at a time until it's saucy again.

The sauce will reduce and thicken. Add half the cheese and half the basil, if using.

Once the pasta is cooked, drain and add it to the saucepan. Toss everything together.

Turn off heat and season with salt and pepper to taste.

Serve in bowls sprinkled with remaining Parmesan and basil.



Dessert

Some people think desserts have no place in a healthy diet. However, with some care and creativity, desserts can be both healthy and delicious. They can even help you get in your daily servings of fruits and vegetables. In this section, we'll explore ways to use the natural sweetness of fruits and the fiber of vegetables to make desserts that are the perfect end to your meal.



Avocado Almond *Chocolate Brownies*

Prep time: 10 minutes | Cooking time: 35 minutes | Serves: 12 | Calories per serving: 321

INGREDIENTS

- ½ cup whole-wheat flour
- ½ cup Dutch process cocoa
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 cup roughly chopped, unsalted almonds
- 4 ounces bittersweet chocolate, chopped into ¼-inch pieces
- ¼ cup canola oil
- 1 large ripe avocado, pitted and peeled (approximately 1 cup)
- 6 eggs
- ¼ cup granulated sugar
- ¾ cup dark brown sugar

DIRECTIONS

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Line a 9-by-13-inch dish with parchment paper.

Whisk flour, cocoa and salt together in a large bowl.

Add almonds and chocolate pieces and mix.

In a food processor or blender, add the oil, avocado, eggs and sugars and mix until smooth.

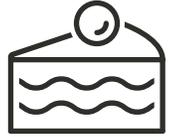
Gently fold the avocado mixture into the dry mixture until everything is mixed.

Pour into prepared baking dish and bake for 35 minutes, until the batter has barely set in the middle.

Allow to cool fully before slicing into pieces.



Chef's note: Avocados add a natural creaminess to cookies, cakes and desserts and add less total fat than butter or oil without detracting from the flavor. Though not required, it's recommended to use Dutch process cocoa in avocado desserts because of the chemical reaction that takes place.



Bananas Foster

Prep time: 15 minutes | Cooking time: 5 minutes | Serves: 6 | Calories per serving: 210

INGREDIENTS

- 3 tablespoons butter
- ¼ cup brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 tablespoon banana flavor extract (or more to taste)
- 4 ripe bananas, cut in ¾-inch rounds
- 1 tablespoon rum flavoring extract
- 6 scoops low-fat vanilla ice cream (or nonfat vanilla yogurt)



DIRECTIONS

Combine the butter, sugar and cinnamon in a skillet. Cook over low heat, stirring, until the sugar dissolves.

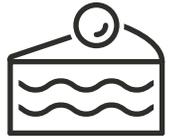
Stir in the banana extract, then place the bananas in the pan.

When the bananas soften and begin to brown, slowly add the rum flavoring to create a sauce.

Continue gently stirring until the sauce covers and coats the bananas well.

Lift the bananas out of the pan with a slotted spoon and divide evenly between six bowls.

Add a scoop of ice cream to each bowl, then spoon the remaining sauce over the top of the ice cream and serve immediately.



Low-Calorie *Berry Crumble*

Prep time: 20 minutes | **Cooking time:** 25 minutes (and an additional 10 minutes to cool)

Serves: 4 | **Calories per serving:** 270

INGREDIENTS

- ¾ cup fresh or frozen blueberries (thawed and drained)
- ¾ cup fresh or frozen raspberries (thawed and drained)
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1 tablespoon orange juice concentrate, thawed
- ½ cup rolled oats
- 2 tablespoons packed brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ¼ cup whole-wheat white flour
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoons chopped raw walnuts
- 2 tablespoons butter, melted

DIRECTIONS

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees F. Spray a shallow 8-inch round baking pan with nonstick cooking spray.

In a medium-sized mixing bowl, combine the berries, then sprinkle with sugar and drizzle with orange juice concentrate. Mix together until the ingredients are evenly combined.

Pour the berry mixture into the prepared pan.

Then, add the oats into a medium mixing bowl, followed by brown sugar, cinnamon, flour, salt and walnuts; stir. Pour in the melted butter and crumble the mix with your hands to create pea-sized crumbles.

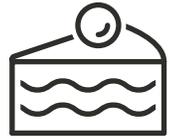
Sprinkle the oat mixture evenly over the berry mixture.

Bake for 25 minutes, or until the berry mixture starts to bubble up along the sides and the topping is crisp.

Remove and allow to cool for 10 minutes.



Chef's note: This dish is best served soon after it's baked while it's nice and warm. Enjoy it with a small scoop of vanilla frozen yogurt or low-fat ice cream.



Fudge Nachos *with Fruit and Whipped Cream*

Prep time: 20 minutes | Cooking time: 35 minutes | Serves: 6

INGREDIENTS

- Sweet Dessert Chips (Page 31) (or unsalted tortilla chips)
- 2 ounces dark chocolate, or chocolate syrup
- 2 ounces white chocolate
- Fresh mint sprigs
- Powdered sugar
- 1 recipe each of Fresh Summer Fruit Salad, Red Berry Sauce and Vanilla Sour Cream Topping (below)

DIRECTIONS

Fresh Summer Fruit Salad recipe:

Approximately 125 calories per serving

Start with 6 to 8 cups of cut fruit — such as watermelon, blueberries, strawberries, raspberries, blackberries, peaches, oranges, plums, apples — and place into a large mixing bowl.

Add 5 sprigs of chopped fresh mint and, if you prefer a sweeter fruit salad, 1 tablespoon of maple syrup.

Chill before use. If using for nachos, drain excess liquid first.

Red Berry Sauce recipe:

Approximately 20 calories per serving

In a blender, add 2 cups fresh strawberries or raspberries (frozen will work), with 1 tablespoon powder sugar and 1 tablespoon lemon juice.

Blend well and strain through a fine mesh strainer. Chill before use.

Vanilla Sour Cream Topping recipe:

Approximately 35 calories per serving

In a medium mixing bowl, add 1 cup low-fat sour cream, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup powdered sugar and 1 to 2 tablespoons vanilla extract, to taste. Mix well and chill before use.

For the finished dish:

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees F.

Mound the tortilla chips on an oven-proof tray or dish. Spread the drained fruit salad over the chips. If using solid chocolate, grate the dark and white chocolate over the top of the fruit. If using chocolate syrup, don't add yet.

Bake for 10 minutes or until the chocolate has melted.

Garnish with vanilla sour cream, red berry sauce, mint sprigs and chocolate syrup, if using; dust with powdered sugar.

Chef Paul Penney

Australian Chef Paul Penney has become well known in Michigan's cooking scene with his personal chef service called Aussie in the Kitchen. He presents and teaches for lunch-and-learn cooking programs at businesses throughout Southeast Michigan. He has appeared on many television segments where he demonstrates healthy alternative recipes. Born in Adelaide, South Australia, he now lives in Southeast Michigan with his wife, Sandy, and daughter Emma.





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- If you need help filing a grievance, Blue Cross Complete of Michigan Customer Service is available to help you.

You can also file a civil rights complaint with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Civil Rights, through the Office for Civil Rights Complaint Portal available at ocrportal.hhs.gov/ocr/portal/lobby.jsf, by mail or phone at:

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

200 Independence Avenue, SW
Room 509F, HHH Building
Washington, D.C. 20201
1-800-368-1019
(TDD/TTY: **1-800-537-7697**)

Complaint forms are available at:
hhs.gov/ocr/office/file/index.html.

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