

Getting Started with Your Once-A-Month Cooking Menu Sampler

This free, downloadable one-week sampler of the Once-A-Month Cooking technique will bring you the freedom and satisfaction of less hectic, more economical family meals. It will help you de-stress having company because you'll have the entrée already on hand.

After you've sampled this technique, if you want to expand its value for your family, you'll find several month and two-week menus in the books *Once-A-Month Cooking* and *Once-A-Month Cooking Family Favorites*:

http://www.amazon.com/Once-Month-Cooking-Family-Favorites/dp/0312534043/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1264626606&sr=1-1

These are the ultimate do-ahead dinner method, and include such helps as a kitchen equipment list, a freezing guide, a measurement conversion table, and even table conversation starters.

Here are some tips to get you started with your menu sampler:

- Set aside shopping time and cooking time; it's best, for your own energy, to shop one day or evening, and cook the next day. This cycle will take you about 3 hours to prepare by yourself: less time if you cook with a friend.
- Read through the cycle to acquaint yourself with the flow and the recipes you'll be preparing.
- Look at the pantry list provided and transfer any items you don't have to the shopping list.
- After you shop, prepare for cooking: Leave out on the counter items that don't need refrigeration. Get out the spices and dry ingredients on the pantry list. Clear the counter of décor and unnecessary items.
- Label the freezer containers that you'll use for each entrée (see bottom of each recipe).
- Start cooking, using the Assembly Order to move your smoothly through the menu cycle.
- As you finish preparing a couple of entrees, squeeze the air out of the freezer bags, seal them, and put them into the freezer.

Once-A-Month Cooking One Week Menu Sampler 04

Pantry List

Apple cider vinegar (1 T)
Basil, dried (1-1/2 tsp)
Brown sugar (2 tsp)
Chicken bouillon cube (1)
Chili powder (1 T)
Cornstarch (1-1/2 tsp)
Cumin, ground (1-1/2 tsp)
Dijon mustard (2 T)
Ketchup (1/4 cup)
Lemon juice (3 T)
Minced garlic (1-1/2 cloves)
Olive oil (3T)
Oregano, dried (1-1/2 tsp)
Parmesan cheese (1 cup)
Pepper
Red wine vinegar (1 T)
Salt
Vegetable oil (1 T)
White wine, dry (1/4 cup)

Freezing containers needed

- Cream Chicken Pasta: 1 1-gallon Ziploc freezer bag
- Brie Strata: 1 13x9x2-inch baking dish; heavy aluminum foil; 1 snack bag
- Three Bean Chili: 2 1-gallon Ziploc freezer bags
- Pesto Grilled Chicken Breasts: 1 1-gallon Ziploc freezer bag; 1 snack bag
- Spicy Taco Salad: 1 1-gallon Ziploc freezer bag; 1 1-quart Ziploc freezer bag
- Citrus Salmon: 1 1-gallon Ziploc freezer bag; 1 1-quart Ziploc freezer bag; heavy aluminum foil*
- Fettuccine & Herbed Shrimp: 2 1-gallon Ziploc freezer bags; 1 snack bag

Totals: 9 1-gallon Ziploc freezer bags; 4 1-quart Ziploc freezer bags; 3 snack bags; heavy aluminum foil

Once-A-Month Cooking One Week Menu Sampler 04

Grocery List

Meat, Poultry and Seafood

- 2 roasted rotisserie chickens
- 2 pound boneless pork roast
- 1-1/2 pounds lean ground beef
- 1-3/4 pounds boneless, skinless chicken breast halves (4 medium)
- 4 frozen salmon filets*
- 1 12-ounce package medium-sized frozen cooked shrimp

Canned Goods

- 1 15-ounce can black beans
- 1 15-ounce can northern beans
- 1 15-ounce can kidney beans
- 1 15-ounce can green chili sauce (mild)
- 2 14.5-ounce cans diced tomatoes
- 2 8-ounce cans sliced tomatoes

Grain, Pasta and Rice

- 1 1-pound loaf of French bread
- 1 8-ounce package rotini pasta*
- 1 8-ounce package fettuccine

Dairy

- 8 ounces sour cream*
- 8 large eggs
- 1 pint 2% milk
- 8 ounces Brie cheese
- 8 ounces grated mild cheddar cheese*
- 4 ounces grated Mozzarella cheese
- 1 3-ounce package cream cheese
- 4 ounces pesto sauce
- 2 ounces grated parmesan cheese

Produce

- 3 large onions
- 2 large red bell peppers
- 1 green bell pepper
- 1 medium carrot
- 1 head lettuce*
- 3 lemons
- 1 bunch green onions

1 orange
1 bunch fresh parsley

Frozen Foods

1 32-ounce bag frozen bash brown southern style potatoes
1 16-ounce package frozen chopped spinach

Misc.

1 9.4-ounce bag corn chips*
1 13-ounce bag tortilla chips*
¼ cup molasses

Once-A-Month Cooking Menu Sampler 04

Assembly Order

Debone 2 roasted rotisserie chickens and cut into bite-sized pieces (If possible do this while the chickens are still warm; refrigerate overnight)

Cube 1 loaf of French bread

Slice thinly 1 large carrot (1/2 cup)

Mince 2/3 cup fresh parsley

Chop

- 1 large red bell pepper

- 1 green bell peppers (3/4 cup)

- 1 bunch green onions, including green tops

- 5-3/4 cups onions (coarsely chop 1 cup; finely chop the rest)

Zest and squeeze 1 orange

Zest 1 lemon and squeeze 2 lemons

Cube 1 pound boneless, skinless chicken breast halves into 1-inch pieces

Butterfly 4 boneless chicken breast halves

Refrigerate the meats and poultry until using them to prepare a recipe.

Prepare Cream Chicken Pasta, label and freeze.

Prepare Pesto Grilled Chicken Breasts, label and freeze.

Prepare Brie Strata, label and freeze.

Brown the ground beef for Spicy Taco Salad with the chopped onion and green bell pepper.

Meanwhile, prepare Three Bean Chili, label and freeze.

Complete Spicy Taco Salad, label and freeze.

Prepare Citrus Salmon, label and freeze.

Prepare Fettuccine & Herbed Shrimp, label and freeze.

Once-A-Month Cooking One Week Menu Sampler 04

Recipes

Cream Chicken Pasta

2-1/2 cups rotisserie chicken, deboned and cut into bite-sized pieces

1 lemon

1 package green onions, chopped including green tops

1 3-ounces package cream cheese

1 8-ounce package rotini pasta*

Debone and cut the chicken into cubes. Squeeze the fresh lemon onto the chicken in a mixing bowl. Add green onions and cream cheese and mix with hands. Pour into a 1-gallon freezer bag, label and freeze.

To serve, thaw chicken mixture. Cook 2 cups pasta according to package directions. Place chicken mixture in microwave for 1 minute to soften the cream cheese. Stir chicken mixture, then toss with the pasta and serve.

Summary of processes: Chop 1 bunch green onions including green tops

Freeze in: 1 1-gallon Ziploc freezer bag

Serves 3-4

Pesto Grilled Chicken Breasts

1-3/4 pounds boneless, skinless chicken breast halves (approx. 4 medium-sized)
½ cup (2 ounces) grated Mozzarella cheese
½ cup pesto sauce*
1 red bell pepper*
¼ teaspoon pepper*

Butterfly the chicken breast halves by slicing them with a sharp knife in half horizontally almost but not quite to the far edge. Spread them open and they will look a bit like butterflies. (Take your time and don't cut yourself!) Place the chicken in a 1-gallon freezer bag and slip inside it a snack bag holding the grated cheese. Label and freeze. Store the pesto sauce with the label marked and the red bell pepper in the refrigerator.

To serve, thaw the chicken and cheese.

Prepare charcoal or gas grill for direct, high heat.

Cut the red bell pepper in quarters and put them on a baking sheet skin-side up. Broil about 4 inches from the broiling unit until the skins begin to blacken. Immediately transfer the peppers to a paper bag; seal the bag and let it stand for 15 to 20 minutes. The steam in the bag will help to loosen the skins. Remove the red pepper from the bag, and when it's cool enough, peel off the skin with a knife or your hands. Then slice the pepper into strips.

Spread the pesto sauce on the butterflied chicken, then add strips of roasted red bell pepper, and the grated cheese. Close the chicken. Season with pepper. When all the chicken is all stuffed, rub any remaining pesto on the outside of the chicken breasts.

Lay chicken on the grill (close lid if using gas), and grill until it is browned on the bottom, about 7 minutes. Turn the chicken and continue grilling until browned on the other side and no longer pink in the center.

Summary of Processes: Butterfly chicken breast halves; roast and slice red bell pepper (on serving day)

Freeze in: 1 1-gallon Ziploc freezer bag; 1 snack bag

Serves 4

Brie Strata

1 1-pound loaf of French bread, cut into cubes
1 large onion, chopped fine
1 large red bell pepper, chopped
1 cup frozen hash brown southern style potatoes
8 large eggs
3 cups 2% milk
2 tablespoons Dijon mustard
1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon pepper
8 ounces Brie cheese
1 cup Parmesan cheese

Package the cubed bread in a labeled 1-quart freezer bag.

Chop the onion and red bell pepper. Pour them into a 1-quart freezer bag with the hash brown potatoes (still frozen but broken up a bit).

Blend the eggs, 2% milk, Dijon mustard, salt, and pepper. Then add the Brie cheese (remove the rind) and blend until mixed. Pour this mixture into a 1-gallon freezer bag.

Package the Parmesan cheese in a snack bag, and clip the bags together.

To serve, thaw all ingredients. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Spray a 13x9x2-inch casserole dish with non-stick spray. Spread the bread cubes in the dish, then the vegetables, and cover with the liquid. Bake for 45-50 minutes, until it is set and not runny.

Summary of processes: Chop 1 large onion and 1 red bell pepper
Cube 1 loaf French bread

Freeze in: 1 1-gallon Ziploc freezer bag; 2 1-quart Ziploc freezer bags; 1 snack bag

Serves: 8-10

Spicy Taco Salad

1 tablespoon vegetable oil
1-1/2 pounds lean ground beef, drained
1 cup onion, chopped
3/4 cup green bell pepper, chopped
1 teaspoon minced garlic
2 14.5-ounce cans diced tomatoes
1 large carrot, sliced thin (1/2 cup)
1/4 cup ketchup
1 tablespoon chili powder
1 tablespoon red wine vinegar
2 teaspoons brown sugar
1-1/2 teaspoons ground cumin
1/4 teaspoon black pepper

1 head lettuce, torn*
1 8-ounce package grated mild cheddar cheese*
1 8-ounce package tortilla chips*

Chop the onion and the green bell pepper. Brown the ground beef with the onion and green bell pepper and minced garlic in the vegetable oil. Drain, cool, and combine the meat mixture with all other ingredients in a large mixing bowl.

Pour the mixture into a 1-gallon freezer bag, label and freeze. Pour the cheddar cheese into a 1-quart labeled freezer bag and clip it to the other bag. Store the lettuce in the refrigerator. Label the package of tortilla chips and store in the pantry.

To serve, thaw ingredients. Warm them in large skillet until bubbly.

Tear the lettuce and place it in a large salad bowl. Add the Spicy Taco Salad ingredients and toss gently. Add the shredded cheese and toss again. Serve with tortilla chips.

Summary of processes: chop 1 cup onion and 3/4 cup green bell pepper, slice thinly 1/2 cup carrot

Freeze in: 1 1-gallon Ziploc freezer bag; 1 1-quart Ziploc freezer bag

Serves 4-6

Three Bean Chili

1 15-ounce can black beans
1 15-ounce can northern beans
1 15-ounce can kidney beans
1 15-ounce can green chili sauce (mild)
½ 32-ounce bag frozen hash brown southern style potatoes
One rotisserie chicken, deboned and cut into bite-sized pieces

1 9.4-ounce bag corn chips*
8 ounces sour cream*

Pour beans (undrained) and chili sauce into a labeled 1-gallon freezer bag. Put potatoes and chicken in another 1-gallon freezer bag. Clip the two bags together, label and freeze. Mark the corn chips and the sour cream and store them in the pantry and refrigerator respectively.

To serve, thaw ingredients and pour into Crockpot. Cook on low 3-4 hours.

Serve with corn chips and sour cream.

Summary of processes: Debone 1 rotisserie chicken

Freeze in: 2 1-gallon Ziploc freezer bags

Serves 8

Citrus Salmon

4 frozen salmon filets*

Sauce

¾ cup onion, chopped fine

1/3 cup fresh minced parsley

Zest and juice from 1 lemon

Zest and juice from 1 orange

1 tablespoon olive oil

1/8 teaspoon salt

1/8 teaspoon pepper

Leave the salmon filets frozen, slip store into a Ziploc freezer bag, and freeze. Combine the remaining ingredients and pour into a labeled 1-quart freezer bag. Slip this bag into the Ziploc bag holding the salmon.

Serving Option One (oven):

Thaw the ingredients. Preheat oven to 450 degrees. In 4 aluminum foil packets and in each one place a salmon filet and some of the sauce. Close the packets tightly. Put the packets on a baking sheet and cook for 15-20 minutes, until salmon flakes easily.

Serving Option Two (grill or campfire):

Keep the filets and sauce frozen until a half hour before grilling them. Then set them out to thaw slightly. Create four foil packets (see above). Place the packets on gas grill over medium heat or on charcoal grill 4 to 6 inches from medium-hot coals. Cook, with grill covered, for about 20 minutes, or until the fish flakes easily with a fork. Rearrange the packets halfway through the cooking.

Summary of processes: Chop fine ¾ cup onion; mince 1/3 cup fresh parsley; zest and squeeze juice from 1 lemon and 1 orange

Freeze in: 1 1-gallon Ziploc freezer bag; 1 1-quart Ziploc freezer bag; heavy aluminum foil (for serving)*

Serves 4

Fettuccine & Herbed Shrimp

1 12-ounce package frozen cooked shrimp (medium sized)*
1 8-ounce package fettuccine*

2 tablespoons olive oil
2 8-ounce cans sliced mushrooms
1 cup onion, coarsely chopped
2 teaspoons minced garlic
1 16-ounce package frozen chopped spinach

¼ cup dry white wine
1 teaspoon corn starch
1 chicken bouillon cube
1-1/2 teaspoons dried basil
1-1/2 teaspoons dried oregano
1/8 tsp. pepper

¼ c. grated Parmesan cheese
¼ c. chopped fresh parsley
Juice of one lemon*
Salt to taste*

Thaw the frozen chopped spinach in the microwave. Drain and squeeze out liquid. Store the fettuccine until cooking day, marking the package. Store the lemon in the refrigerator until serving day. Leave the frozen shrimp in its packaging.

In a large saucepan, sauté the sliced mushrooms, chopped onion and minced garlic in the olive oil. When the onion is transparent, add the spinach; stir and simmer for 5 minutes. Boil 1 cup water in the microwave and add the chicken bouillon cube.

In a small bowl whisk together the white wine and cornstarch. Then add 1 tablespoon chicken bouillon, basil, oregano, and pepper.

Pour the ingredients from the small bowl to the sauté pan for a few minutes, and simmer on low to combine. Cool and pour into a labeled 1-gallon freezer bag.

Pour into a snack bag the Parmesan cheese and chopped fresh parsley.

Place all bags, including the shrimp package, into a labeled 1 gallon freezer bag and freeze.

To serve, thaw the sauce. Rinse the shrimp in cold water until thawed. Cook fettuccine until tender according to package directions. Bring the thawed sauce to a gentle boil, then simmer it for 10 minutes. Drain the pasta and add it to the thawed sauce. Toss lightly. Add thawed shrimp and toss again. Salt to taste.

Sprinkle with lemon, Parmesan cheese and parsley. Serve either hot or cold.

Summary of processes: Coarsely chop 1 onion

Freeze in: 2 1-gallon Ziploc freezer bags; 1 snack bag

Serves 4-6