

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, 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*. 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 2-1/2 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.

Adapted from *Once-A-Month Cooking Family Favorites*
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- 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 Menu Sampler 01

1. Chicken and Dumplings (2 wk) (Soup) (rotisserie chicken)
2. Sweet and Sour Chicken
3. Lemon Chicken
4. South of the Border Ground Beef and Corn Pie (Mexican)
5. Country-Style Ribs
6. Pineapple Burgers
7. Penne in Cream Sauce with Sausage (Gourmet)

Once-A-Month Cooking Menu Sampler 01

Pantry List

Apple cider vinegar (1/2 cup)

Bay leaf (1)

Bread crumbs, dry (1/4 cup)

Brown sugar (1/3 cup)

Butter (2 tablespoon)

Chili powder (2 teaspoons)

Cumin, ground (1 teaspoon)

Eggs (2)

Garlic, chopped (6 cloves)

Ketchup (1-3/4 cups)

Milk (1/4 cup)

Mustard, prepared (2 tablespoons)

Olive oil (4 tablespoons)

Oregano, dried (1/2 teaspoon)

Parsley, dried flakes (2 tablespoons)

Pepper (1/8 teaspoon)

Salt (3 teaspoons)

Soy sauce (1 teaspoon)

Sugar (1/2 cup)

Tabasco sauce (dash)

Thyme, dried (1 teaspoon)

Vegetable oil (1 tablespoon)

Freezer Containers Needed:

6 gallon Ziploc freezer bags; 1 quart Ziploc freezer bag; 3 Ziploc sandwich bags;

1 pizza plate, heavy-duty aluminum foil; waxed paper; 1 10-cup freezer

container.

Once-A-Month Cooking Menu Sampler 01

Shopping List

Meat and Poultry

- 1 roasted rotisserie chicken
- 10 boneless, skinless chicken breast halves
- 2-1/2 pounds ground beef
- 1 pound mild Italian sausage
- _ pound hot Italian sausage
- 4-1/2 pounds country-style pork loin ribs

Canned Goods

- 1 14.5-ounce can diced tomatoes
- 1 28-ounce can diced tomatoes
- 1 8-ounce can tomato sauce
- 1 32-ounce carton chicken broth
- 1 14.5-ounce can beef broth (check size. Need 2 cups)
- 1 12-ounce jar turkey gravy
- 1 20-ounce can pineapple slices
- 1 2.25-ounce can sliced ripe olives*

Grain, Pasta and Rice

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1 pound mini penne pasta*

1 6-ounce package chow mien noodles*

Bakery

6 wheat hamburger buns*

1 12-ounce tube refrigerated buttermilk biscuits*

Dairy

1 cup whipping cream

2 ounces shredded mild cheddar cheese (1/2 cup)

6 ounces shredded Parmesan cheese (1-1/2 cups)

Produce

3 carrots

7 stalks celery

2 large onions

1 red bell pepper

1 green bell pepper

Frozen Foods

1 10-ounce package frozen peas (1/4 cup)

1 16-ounce package whole frozen whole kernel corn

1/3 cup lemon juice

2/3 cups dry white wine

1 cup red wine

*Store in refrigerator or pantry until the day the entrees is served.

Once-A-Month Cooking Menu Sampler 01 Assembly Order

Drain and reserve cup juice from canned pineapple slices

Chop

1-1/2 cups carrots

2 cups celery

1/3 cup plus 2 tablespoons red bell pepper

2 cups green bell pepper

3 cups plus 2 tablespoons onion

Slice 2 cups onion

Debone and shred roasted rotisserie chicken

Cube 6 boneless, skinless chicken breast halves with kitchen shears

Assemble Chicken and Dumplings, label and freeze.

Assemble Sweet and Sour Chicken, label and freeze.

Begin browning ground beef for South-of-the-Border Ground Beef and Corn Pie.

Assemble Lemon Chicken, label and freeze.

Complete South-of-the-Border Ground Beef and Corn Pie, label and freeze.

Assemble Country Style Ribs, label and freeze.

Begin Penne in Cream Sauce with Sausage. While sausage is browning,

assemble Pineapple Burgers, label and freeze.

Complete Penne in Cream Sauce with Sausage, label and freeze.

You've done it! Enjoy the sight of seven delicious entrees ready in your freezer.

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Once-A-Month Cooking Menu Sampler 01

Recipes

Chicken and Dumplings

1 roasted (rotisserie) chicken, deboned and shredded
1 tablespoon vegetable oil
1 tablespoon butter
1-1/2 cups chopped carrots
1-1/2 cups chopped celery
1 cup chopped onion
1 32-ounce carton chicken broth
1 teaspoon dried thyme
1 bay leaf
1 12-ounce jar of turkey gravy
1/4 cup frozen peas (do not defrost)

4 cups water*
1 12-ounce tube refrigerated buttermilk biscuits*

Mix all ingredients, except biscuits, in a large bowl. Pour into the freezing container, label, and freeze. Mark the tube of biscuits and store in the refrigerator.

To serve, thaw ingredients. Place in a saucepan (with a lid) and warm over medium heat until hot and bubbling, adding the 4 cups water. While the chicken mixture is heating, unroll the biscuits and cut each into four pieces. Push the biscuit pieces into the hot bubbling liquid with a wooden spoon, a few at a time, until they are all in. Cover and simmer for 10 minutes.

Summary of processes: Debone and shred roasted rotisserie chicken; chop 1-1/2 cups carrots, chop 1-1/2 cups celery; chop 1 cup onion

Serves: 6
Freeze in: 10-cup freezer container

Sweet-and-Sour Chicken

1/2 cup sugar
1/4 cup pineapple juice
1/2 cup apple cider vinegar
3/4 cup ketchup
1 teaspoon soy sauce
1-1/2 teaspoons salt
6 boneless, skinless chicken breast halves, cubed
2 tablespoons olive oil

6 ounces chow mein noodles*

Mix the first six ingredients in a large bowl. Brown the chicken breasts in the olive oil. Place the chicken in the sauce and put in a 1-gallon freezer bag. Label and freeze.

To serve, thaw the chicken and pour into in a 13x9x2-inch pan treated with nonstick cooking spray. Bake in a preheated 350° oven for 45 minutes, basting occasionally. Serve on chow mein noodles.

Summary of Processes: Cube 6 boneless, skinless chicken breast halves; drain _ cup juice from canned pineapple slices for Pineapple Burgers.

Servings: 6

Freeze in: 1 gallon Ziploc freezer bag

South-of-the-Border Ground Beef and Corn Pie

1 pound ground beef
1/4 cup dry bread crumbs
1/4 cup ketchup
2 tablespoon chopped onion
_ teaspoon chopped garlic
1/2 teaspoon salt
2 teaspoons chili powder
1 teaspoon ground cumin
1/8 teaspoon pepper
2 eggs
1/4 cup milk
Dash Tabasco sauce
16-ounces (2 cups) frozen corn kernels
1/3 cup chopped red bell pepper
1/2 cup (2-ounces) shredded mild cheddar cheese
1/2 cup Parmesan cheese

1 2-1/4-ounce can sliced ripe olives*

Brown the ground beef and drain. Add the next 8 ingredients. Place the mixture in a 1-gallon freezer bag.

Slightly beat the 2 eggs and add the milk and Tabasco sauce. To the egg mixture, add the frozen corn and bell pepper. Place the egg-corn mixture in a 1-quart freezer bag. Package the cheeses in a sandwich bag. Place the smaller bags in the gallon bag, label, and freeze.

To serve, thaw all 3 bags. Spread the meat mixture in a 9-inch pie pan that has been treated with nonstick cooking spray. Put the corn mixture inside the meat "crust." Bake, uncovered, in preheated 375° oven for 35 to 40 minutes, or until set. Remove from the oven, sprinkle the two cheeses over the top, and return to the oven for 5 more minutes, or until the cheese is bubbly. Garnish with ripe olives.

Summary of Processes: Chop 2 tablespoons onions; chop 1/3 cup red bell peppers

Servings: 6

Freeze in: 1 gallon Ziploc bag, 1 quart Ziploc freezer bag; 1 Ziploc sandwich bag

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Lemon Chicken

4 boneless, skinless chicken breast halves
1/3 cup lemon juice
1 tablespoon olive oil
2 tablespoons chopped red bell pepper
1-1/2 teaspoons chopped garlic
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon pepper
1/2 teaspoon dried oregano

Mix all ingredients and place in a 1-gallon freezer bag, label and freeze.

To serve, place in microwave-safe pan and cook in microwave on high power for 5 minutes. Baste the chicken with juices, turn, and microwave for 3 more minutes.

Summary of Processes: Chop 2 tablespoons red bell pepper

Servings: 4

Freeze in: 1 gallon Ziploc freezer bag

Country Style Ribs

Salt and pepper to taste
4-1/2 pounds country-style pork loin ribs
2 cups chopped onion
2 cups chopped green bell peppers
1/2 cup chopped celery
1 cup red wine
1 28-ounce can diced tomatoes
1 8-ounce can tomato sauce
2 cups beef broth

Salt and pepper meat and place in a 1-gallon freezer bag.

Combine all the other ingredients and pour into another 1-gallon bag. Label and freeze, with the two bags taped together.

To serve, thaw the ribs and place in a slow cooker with the other ingredients. Cook on low for 8-10 hours – the whole house will smell wonderful.

Summary of Processes: Chop 2 cups onions, 2 cups green bell peppers, 1/2 cup celery

Serves: 8

Freeze in: 2 1-gallon Ziploc freezer bags

Penne in Cream Sauce with Sausage

1 tablespoon butter

1 tablespoon olive oil

2 cups sliced onion

2-2/1 teaspoons chopped garlic

1 pound mild Italian sausage

_ pound hot Italian sausage

2/3 cups dry white wine

1 14.5-ounce can diced tomatoes

1 cup whipping cream

2 tablespoons dried parsley flakes

Salt and pepper to taste

1 pound mini penne pasta*

1 cup grated Parmesan cheese*

Melt the butter with the oil in large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the onion and garlic and sauté until golden brown and tender, about 7 minutes. Add the sausage and sauté until golden brown and cooked through, breaking up the sausage as it cooks, about 7 minutes. Drain any excess fat from the skillet.

Add wine to the skillet with drained meat and boil until almost all the liquid has evaporated, about 2 minutes. Add the tomatoes with their juices and simmer 3 minutes. Add the cream and simmer until the sauce thickens slightly, about 5 minutes. Stir in parsley and season to taste with salt and pepper. Cool, package in labeled 1-gallon freezer bag, and freeze with 1 cup Parmesan cheese in a sandwich bag attached.

To serve, thaw the meat sauce and simmer for 10 minutes, stirring frequently. Meanwhile, cook the pasta in large pot of boiling, salted water until tender but still firm to bite.

Pour sauce over the pasta and sprinkle with Parmesan cheese.

Summary of Processes: Slice 2 cups onions

Serves 6

Freeze in: 1 gallon Ziploc freezer bag; 1 Ziploc sandwich bag

Pineapple Burgers

1-1/2 pounds ground beef

3/4 teaspoon salt

1 20-ounce can pineapple slices, drain and reserve cup juice for Sweet and Sour Chicken

1/3 cup brown sugar

3/4 cup ketchup

2 tablespoons prepared mustard

6 wheat hamburger buns*

Shape the meat into 12 thin patties, using waxed paper to press them flat. Sprinkle the patties with salt. Place a pineapple slice on 6 of the patties. Top with remaining patties and press the edges together to seal. Mix the remaining 3 ingredients and pour into small sandwich bag. Place the patties on a pizza plate and cover with heavy-duty aluminum foil. Label and freeze with the small sandwich bag taped to the top.

To cook, place patties on a grill or pan-fry on the stovetop. Cook to desired doneness. To serve, spoon on the topping mixture. Serve on toasted hamburger buns.

Serves 6

Freeze in: Pizza plate, heavy-duty aluminum foil; 1 Ziploc sandwich bag; wax paper