Cooking Methods that Make Quick Dinners a Breeze

Eating healthy doesn’t mean you have to produce complicated meals with tons of ingredients. Sometimes the simplest meals can be the most satisfying, while still providing your body all the nourishment it needs. Focus on simple cooking strategies with just a few ingredients.

Sauté

A sauté pan is perfect for cooking individual-sized meals like a single steak, fish filet, or chicken breast. Make a zesty sauce or just add some jarred salsa, steam asparagus, or green beans, and dinner is served! You can also sauté the veggies in the pan for a one-pot meal that is tasty and easy to clean up.

Try these recipes:

* Pork and Apples: First, put some rice on to cook. Peel and core an apple and cut it into slices. Heat some olive oil and a little butter in a frying pan and lay in the chops, then scatter the apple slices around the edges. Fry the pork for about 1 minute on each side to brown. Pour in 1 small carton (200ml) apple juice, lower the heat and simmer until done, about 10 minutes. Stir in 1 T crème fraiche (or sour cream) and a handful of greens (spinach, kale) and bring back to a simmer. Serve with the rice and the extra sauce.
* Sautéed Beets, Carrots, & Kale: Sear cubed beets and carrots in a little olive oil until you see a browned edge. Add kale just to wilt it and bring out a bright green color. Add a little ginger and honey for a sweet flavor or garlic, cumin, and cilantro for a southwest feel. Add about a quarter cup of broth, and cover until vegetables are soft. Remove the lid and let the liquid boil away, which will create a glaze on the vegetables. Salt and pepper to taste.

# Grilling, Broiling and Roasting

# These quick cooking methods are great for the short-on-time cook, as they deliver fantastic flavor, fast. Don’t just think of the Sunday pot roast as your only roasting method.

Try these recipes:

* Cut vegetables in large pieces (zucchini, peppers, mushrooms, summer squash, onions, and cherry tomatoes work well) and brush with a vinaigrette salad dressing. Pat dry fillets of salmon and brush with the same vinaigrette. Roast vegetables at 425 degrees for 10-15 minutes, adding the salmon for the last 6 minutes.
* Add a few slices of fresh tomato and mozzarella cheese to a piece of whole grain bread. Broil for a minute or two. Top with fresh basil and serve.

# Foil or Parchment Packets

Another great method is to cook en papillote. This French name refers to food cooked in a bag, which helps to keep it moist and tender.

Try this recipe:

* Place thin strips of carrot, celery, and green onion on a piece of aluminum foil or parchment paper, lay a boneless, skinless chicken breast on top with a few sprigs of fresh tarragon, then sprinkle with a little salt, pepper, and a splash of white wine. Wrap the paper and bake at 375 degrees for about 20-25 minutes. You can swap the chicken for fish – just reduce the baking time to 15-20 minutes.

**Simmer**

Soups and stews with a side of crusty bread or cornbread can make for easy, nourishing meals, particularly during the colder months. Did you know that most soups start in the same way – with a *mirepoix*, which is a mix of diced onions, carrots, and celery in a 2:1:1 proportion? (aka twice as much onion as carrot or celery).

Sauté this mixture for about 5 minutes or until tender (but not mushy). Next, add veggies, beans, pastas, or lentils, along with stock, herbs, and spices. Simmer for anywhere from 10-25 minutes, depending on the soup contents.

Try this recipe:

1 TBSP olive oil  
1 onion, finely chopped  
1 medium carrot, chopped  
1 celery rib, chopped   
4 cups chicken broth  
1 ½ cup jarred tomato sauce   
½ tsp dried basil  
½ tsp dried oregano   
½ tsp salt  
¼ tsp pepper   
2 cups frozen spinach  
1 cup frozen mixed vegetables  
1 cup pasta (such as macaroni elbows, mini penne, orzo, or broken spaghetti)  
1 ½ cups cannellini beans (or other canned bean), with their juices  
Parmesan cheese (for garnish)  
  
In a large pot over medium heat, heat olive oil. Add onion, carrot and celery and sauté for about 5 minutes. Add chicken broth, tomato sauce, basil, oregano, salt, pepper, and bring to a low simmer. Add frozen spinach, vegetables, and pasta; simmer for about 10 minutes or until pasta is tender. Stir in beans and lower heat. Cook an additional 10 minutes. Serve garnished with parmesan cheese.

If you are finding it difficult to purchase healthy foods to prepare for your family, resources in your community exist to help.

[**Michigan 2-1-1**](https://www.hwmuw.org/211),in partnership with Heart of West Michigan United Way, connects you to the things you need. By dialing 2-1-1, you can get help accessing resources you need—whether it’s the number to a local food pantry or information on how to enroll for supplemental food support. Need more assistance navigating a complex system? Submit a confidential form through [Community Connections](https://northernmichiganchir.org/linking-people/community-connections-hub/)**.** Through a combination of phone calls and office/ home visits, a team member will help you get the resources you need. Support is offered one-on-one and is confidential.

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