



Food Bites

May 2016



Fruit of the Month: Cherries

The ancestors of today's domestic cherries originated in the Caucasus Mountains and were carried to Rome in ancient times. There were no cherry trees in Italy until 74 B.C., says Pliny the Elder, but within 120 years cherry trees would "spread as far as Britain." He also described three varieties of tame sweet cherries, including the Junian cherry that "has a pleasant taste, but only if eaten under its tree, since it is so tender that it cannot stand being transported."

Domestic cherries didn't become widespread throughout Europe and Britain until the 15th century. However, by the 17th century, cherries were so popular that, like apples, peaches, plums and pears, cherries crossed the wide Atlantic with our Founding Fathers.

Cherries are loaded with antioxidants and polyphenols that help fight disease. One portion of cherries contains 97 calories, 25 grams of carbohydrates and 20 grams of sugar. One of the benefits of cherries is their fiber content. With 3 grams of fiber, cherries provide 13 percent of the recommended daily amount. Fiber promotes digestion, prevents constipation and aids in weight loss.



Veggie of the Month: Collards

Collards are also known as tree cabbage or non-heading cabbage. Though greens did not originate in Africa but originated in the eastern Mediterranean, it wasn't until the first Africans arrived in Jamestown, Virginia in the early 1600s that America got its first taste of the dark green, leafy vegetable.

Collard greens are an extremely nutritious cool-season vegetable — rich in vitamins and minerals that help prevent and fight disease. Today, many varieties of greens — collards, mustard, turnips, chard, spinach, and kale — continue to be a traditional offering at picnics, potlucks, parties and family dinners. They are a staple in African-American culture and provide rich health in promoting phytonutrients, optimized detoxification, broad antioxidant protection, calcium, optimized immune functions, promoted lung health, cardiovascular protection, and vitamin enrichment that slows the loss of mental functions.



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and USDA Food and Nutrition Service.

Cheeseburger 'n' Fries Casserole

Ingredients

- 2 lbs ground beef
- 1 can condensed mushroom soup, undiluted
- 1 can condensed cheddar cheese soup, undiluted
- 1 package frozen crinkle-cut french fries

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350°. In a large skillet, cook beef over medium heat until no longer pink; drain. Stir in soups. Pour into a greased 13x9-in. baking dish.
2. Arrange French fries on top. Bake, uncovered, 50-55 minutes or until the fries are golden brown.



Taco Biscuit Bake

Ingredients

- 1 lb ground beef
- 2/3 cup water
- 1 envelope taco seasoning
- 2 tubes refrigerated buttermilk biscuits
- 1 can chili con carne
- 1 cup shredded cheddar cheese
- Salsa and sour cream, optional

Directions

1. In a large skillet, cook beef over medium heat until no longer pink; drain. Stir in water and taco seasoning. Bring to a boil; cook and stir for 2 minutes or until thickened.
2. Meanwhile, quarter the biscuits; place in a greased 13-in. x 9-in. baking dish. Layer with beef mixture, chili and cheese.
3. Bake, uncovered, at 375° for 25-30 minutes or until cheese is melted and biscuits are golden brown. Serve with salsa and sour cream if desired.



Mashed Potato Hot Dish

Ingredients

- 1 lb ground beef
- 1 can condensed cream of chicken soup, undiluted
- 2 cups frozen French-style green beans
- 2 cups hot mashed potatoes (prepared with milk and butter)
- 1/2 cup shredded cheddar cheese



Directions

1. In a large skillet, cook beef over medium heat until no longer pink; drain. Stir in soup and beans.
2. Transfer to a greased 2-qt. baking dish. Top with mashed potatoes; sprinkle with cheese. Bake, uncovered, at 350° for 20-25 minutes or until bubbly and cheese is melted.

Baked Cheddar Eggs & Potatoes

Ingredients

- 3 Tbsp butter
- 1 1/2 lbs red potatoes, chopped
- 1/4 cup minced fresh parsley
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 3/4 tsp kosher salt
- 1/8 tsp pepper
- 8 large eggs
- 1/2 cup shredded cheddar cheese

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 400°. In a 10-in. ovenproof skillet, heat butter over medium-high heat. Add potatoes; cook and stir until golden brown and tender. Stir in parsley, garlic, salt and pepper. With back of a spoon, make four wells in the potato mixture; break two eggs into each well.
2. Bake 9-11 minutes or until egg whites are completely set and yolks begin to thicken but are not hard. Sprinkle with cheese; bake 1 minute or until cheese is melted.



Cheesy Hash Brown Egg Casserole with Bacon

Ingredients

- 1/2 lb sliced bacon, chopped
- 1/2 cup chopped onion
- 1/2 cup chopped green pepper
- 12 large eggs, lightly beaten
- 1 cup milk
- 1 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp pepper
- 1 package frozen shredded hash brown potatoes, thawed
- 1 cup shredded cheddar cheese

Directions

1. In a large skillet, cook bacon over medium heat until crisp. Remove with a slotted spoon; drain on paper towels. Discard drippings, reserving 2 tablespoons. In the same skillet, saute onion and green pepper in drippings until tender; remove with a slotted spoon.
2. In a large bowl, whisk eggs, milk and seasonings. Stir in the hash browns, cheese, onion mixture and bacon.
3. Transfer to a greased 13x9-in. baking dish. Bake, uncovered, at 350° for 35-45 minutes or until a knife inserted near the center comes out clean.



Easy Mini Chicken Pot Pies

Ingredients

- No-stick cooking spray
- 2 cups shredded rotisserie chicken
- 1 1/2 cup frozen mixed vegetables
- 3/4 cup milk
- 1 can condensed cream of chicken soup
- 2 Tbsp margarine
- 1/2 tsp garlic powder
- 1/4 tsp pepper
- 1 package Pie Crust, softened as directed on package

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 425°F. Spray 12 medium nonstick muffin cups with cooking spray. Combine all ingredients, except crusts, in large microwave-safe bowl. Cover with plastic wrap. Microwave on HIGH 3 minutes or until mixture is hot; stir to combine. Set aside.
2. Meanwhile, roll each crust into a 12-inch circle on floured work surface. Using a 4-1/2-inch cookie cutter, cut 4 rounds from each crust. Carefully press rounds into muffin cups. Re-roll crust scraps and cut 4 more rounds; press into remaining muffin cups.
3. Place 1/4 cup chicken mixture into each crust-lined muffin cup. Bake 15 to 20 minutes or until crusts are browned and filling is hot and bubbly. Cool in pan 5 minutes; carefully remove from muffin cups.



Creamy Bruschetta Chicken

Ingredients

- 1 Tbsp olive oil
- 1 lb boneless, skinless chicken breast, sliced
- 1 clove garlic, chopped
- 1 package Creamy Chicken flavored rice
- 2 large tomatoes, seeded and chopped
- 1/2 cup shredded mozzarella cheese
- 2 Tbsp chopped fresh basil leaves

Directions

1. Heat oil in large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat and cook chicken, stirring frequently, until chicken is thoroughly cooked, about 4 minutes, adding garlic during the last 30 seconds of cook time. Remove and set aside.
2. Prepare Creamy Chicken flavored rice in same skillet according to package directions.
3. Stir in chicken and tomatoes. Sprinkle with mozzarella and basil.



Taco Salad Casserole

Ingredients

- 1 lb ground beef
- 1/4 cup chopped onion
- 1/4 cup chopped green pepper
- 1 envelope taco seasoning
- 1/2 cup water
- 1 cup crushed tortilla chips
- 1 can refried beans
- 1 cup shredded cheddar cheese

Toppings:

Chopped lettuce and tomatoes, sliced ripe olives, sour cream and picante sauce

Directions

1. In a large skillet, cook beef, onion and green pepper over medium heat until meat is no longer pink; drain. Stir in taco seasoning and water. Cook and stir until thickened, about 3 minutes; set aside.
2. Place chips in a greased 8-in. square baking dish. In a small bowl, stir refried beans; spread over chips. Top with beef mixture and cheese.
3. Bake, uncovered, at 375° for 15-20 minutes or until heated through. Top with lettuce, tomatoes and olives. Serve with sour cream and picante sauce.



Some General Information for Cooking Small Meals

By Shereen Lehman, MS - Revised by a board-certified physician.

Updated on April 16, 2016

Planning and cooking small meals might not feel like it's worth your time, especially since recipes are typically designed for four to six people. Isn't it just easier to go out to eat or pick up something on the way home?

Okay, let's admit that's probably true - - it is simpler to buy dinner than it is to make it, but there's something special about a home cooked meal. So here are some tips and ticks for cooking meals for just one or two people.

First, Plan Your Meal

Take an hour or so to make up a meal plan for a few days or a week. Make a shopping list based on the ingredients you'll need - it helps to choose two or more meals that use some of the same fresh ingredients so you don't end up wasting them. Or in some cases, you can freeze leftover ingredients for another week.

Try out some recipes specially designed for one or two people. You can look for larger recipes and cut them down by half or make two or more meals at one time and freeze the leftovers for healthier frozen dinners later, similar to once-a-month cooking. Look for recipes that call for ingredients that are low in calories, sugar, and saturated fats, but rich in nutrients like dishes that feature lots of colorful vegetables.

Shopping for One or Two

There are also a few things to think about when you're grocery shopping. Some foods can be purchased in bulk because they store well for a long time.

You can keep dry beans, pasta, flour, and other dry goods in covered containers and use as much as you'd like whenever you want them.

Stock up on canned goods, too, but first, think about the amounts you'll consume after the containers are opened. A large family-sized can of soup might seem like a great bargain, but not if you end up throwing half of it away.

Stay with smaller single and double serving sizes of canned goods.

Grocery shopping is always easier when you have a shopping list. This way you'll buy the foods you need, and you'll be less tempted to fill your cart with highly processed meals.

What About the Leftover?

Some of your favorite recipes might be difficult to scale down to size, but you can save the leftovers for another meal. You might bake a whole chicken for dinner one night and use the leftover meat to make a stir-fry or stew. Or you could use some of the chicken on a sandwich to take to work or school the next day.

Be sure to practice food safety when you store leftovers. They should be kept in the right size containers, usually sealed, and put in the refrigerator or freezer within one hour after serving. Frozen foods can last for several months, but refrigerated cooked foods will keep for less than a week, so you'll want to make good use of them quickly.

When it's time to eat your leftovers, be sure to reheat them thoroughly before serving, to avoid cold spots in your food.

Frozen Foods should be thawed in the refrigerator or the microwave (in microwave-safe dishes only) and not left to thaw at room temperature.



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