

## 11 Quick, Tasty & Healthy Upgraded Family Dinners



### #1 - Crockpot White Chicken Chili

Prep time: 20 minutes

Serves: 6-8 people

Pairs well with: cornbread, tortilla chips, and a cold beer

#### Ingredients:

- 3 cups diced onion
- 4 cloves of garlic, minced
- 2 lbs. boneless, skinless chicken thighs
- 2 cans (4 oz. each) diced green chilies, mild
- 2 cans (15 oz. each) cannellini beans, drained and rinsed (divided, see below)
- 1 can (15 oz.) garbanzo beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 cup frozen (or canned) corn kernels
- 4 cups chicken broth (divided, see below)
- 1 tsp. ground cumin
- ¼ tsp. ground chipotle powder
- ¼ tsp. smoked paprika
- ¼ tsp. chili powder
- 1 tsp. kosher salt

#### Garnish:

- sliced avocado
- crumbled cotija cheese
- crushed tortilla chips
- sour cream
- chopped cilantro

# 11 Quick, Tasty & Healthy Upgraded Family Dinners



## Method:

1. In a blender or mini food processor, blend  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of the chicken broth with half of your prepared cannellini beans (15 oz.), and puree. This will act as a natural thickener for your chili. Reserve the rest of the chicken broth and cannellini beans for the chili.
2. In a crock pot, put your chicken thighs in first, and then add your pureed chicken broth/bean mixture.
3. Add in the rest of your ingredients, including the reserved chicken broth and cannellini beans.
4. Cook on high heat for 6 hours.
5. With tongs, grab the chicken out of the pot (it should be fully cooked through), and shred it with a fork, then return it to the chili pot.
6. Cook on low another hour or so, until the flavors have melded together.
7. Serve, and garnish with crushed tortilla chips, avocado, cilantro, and other toppings of your choice.

## Notes:

- This chili freezes well, feel free to freeze in lunch sized portions to enjoy all season long.
- If you are short on time, you can skip blending the chicken broth/cannellini beans step, and just dump it all into the crock pot. Your chili will be thinner with a more soup like consistency, but still delicious.
- This makes a milder chili, so if spicy is your thing, double up on the chipotle powder, smoked paprika and chili powder for a spicier dish.
- No Crockpot? No problem! You can make this on the stovetop by roasting your chicken in the oven first. Get the rest of the chili ingredients simmering on the stovetop while the chicken is roasting, then when the chicken is done, shred it, and add it to the rest of the ingredients and simmer on low for an hour or so to deepen the flavors. Or, to make it even easier, use a store bought rotisserie chicken instead.

## 11 Quick, Tasty & Healthy Upgraded Family Dinners



### #2 - 3 Quick and Easy Sides

Serves: 4 people

#### Side #1 - Harissa Roasted Vegetables

**Prep time:** 10 minutes, 20 minutes to bake

**Pairs well with:** chicken dishes, grilled cod, pork roasts

#### **Ingredients:**

- 3 cups chopped Cauliflower
- 2 Carrots, peeled and sliced into large spears
- ½ red onion, sliced in large pieces
- 2 Tbsp. extra virgin olive oil
- 1 tsp. kosher salt

#### **Harissa veggie base:**

- ½ Cup plain Greek Yogurt
- ½ Cup sour cream
- 1 large garlic clove, pressed through a garlic press
- Juice of 1 lemon
- 1 tsp. Harissa spice powder
- ¼ tsp. cumin
- ½ tsp. kosher salt



## 11 Quick, Tasty & Healthy Upgraded Family Dinners



### Method:

1. Preheat your oven to 350 degrees
2. Grease a baking sheet with baking spray or olive oil
3. In a bowl, toss the cauliflower, carrots, and red onion with the olive oil and salt, mix well.
4. Turn your mixture out onto your prepared baking sheet, and roast the vegetables in your preheated oven for 20-25 minutes or until just fork tender.
5. Meanwhile, in a small bowl mix your Harissa veggie base ingredients together.
6. Once your veggies are done roasting, on your serving plate, spread out your Harissa veggie base, then pile your roasted vegetables on top, then serve.

### Side #2 - Maple Mustard Roasted Potatoes

**Prep time:** 10 minutes, 25 minutes to cook

**Pairs well with:** pork tenderloin, meatloaf, grilled steak

### Ingredients:

- 4 Cups mini fingerling or small Dutch potatoes cut in half
- 3 Tbsp. extra virgin olive oil
- 1 ½ tsp. kosher salt

### For the Maple Mustard Glaze:

- 1/4 Cup stone ground mustard
- 1 Tbsp. Pure maple syrup





## 11 Quick, Tasty & Healthy Upgraded Family Dinners



### Method:

1. Preheat your oven to 400 degrees.
2. Grease a baking sheet with baking spray or olive oil.
3. In a bowl, toss your potatoes with the olive oil and salt, mix well.
4. Turn your mixture out onto your prepared baking sheet, and roast in your preheated oven for 25 minutes or until done, turning them once during baking.
5. Meanwhile, in a small bowl mix your stone ground mustard with the maple syrup.
6. Once your potatoes are done, place on a serving plate and drizzle your maple mustard mixture over your roasted potatoes and serve.

### Side #3 - Turmeric Rice with Cashews

**Prep time:** 10 minutes, 20 minutes to cook

**Pairs well with:** chicken shwarma, roast chicken, and salmon dishes

### Ingredients:

- 1 Cup Jasmine or Basmati rice
- 2 Cups chicken or vegetable broth
- ¼ Cup minced shallot
- 1 tsp. turmeric
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- 1 large clove garlic, minced
- 1/2 Tbsp. unsalted butter
- 1 Tbsp. extra virgin olive oil
- 1/3 cup roughly chopped cashews (or, sliced almonds)



# 11 Quick, Tasty & Healthy Upgraded Family Dinners



## Method:

1. In a large saucepan over medium heat, sauté the garlic and shallot in the olive oil and butter for 3-5 minutes or until translucent, stirring frequently making sure not to burn the garlic.
2. Add in the turmeric and kosher salt. Give it a quick stir, then add your rice.
3. Next, add in your broth, turn up your heat to high, and bring to a boil. Once boiling, cover, and reduce the heat to low and simmer covered for 20 minutes or until rice is fully cooked through.
4. When ready to serve, stir in your cashews right before plating to keep their crunch.

## Notes:

- For the turmeric rice, you can mix in golden raisins or currants after it's cooked to add a sweetness to balance out the flavor with something sweet.
- For the maple mustard potatoes, make sure to only use stone ground mustard, no other mustard substitutes.
- For the Harissa Roasted Vegetables, feel free to substitute with your favorite vegetables to roast, the Harissa base goes well with almost any vegetable.

## 11 Quick, Tasty & Healthy Upgraded Family Dinners



### #3 - Fancy Hotdog Bites with 2 Easy Dipping Sauces

Prep time: 30 minutes (includes baking time)

Makes: 18 bite-sized pieces

Pairs well with: cold beer, potato chips, good conversation, and pickles

#### Ingredients:

- 6 good quality hot dogs, such as Hemplers or Painted Hills brand
- 1 sheet of puff pastry, thawed
- 1 egg for the egg wash
- 1 tsp each of poppy seeds, black sesame seeds, and/or everything bagel seasoning (This is personal preference, you can use all of one of them, or all three individually. You can get creative here, they are all great toppings!)

For the dipping sauces:

#### Sauce #1: Maple Mustard

##### Ingredients:

- 2/3 cup Stone Ground Mustard
- 2.5 Tbsp Pure maple syrup
- 1/2 tsp white wine vinegar

#### Sauce #2: Harissa Ketchup

##### Ingredients:

- 2/3 cup ketchup
- 1 tsp Harissa seasoning



## 11 Quick, Tasty & Healthy Upgraded Family Dinners



### Method:

1. Preheat your oven to 400 degrees and line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. On a lightly floured cutting board, roll out your thawed piece of puff pastry to a 12 x 12 inch square.
3. Cut in half, vertically. Then, cut each half into thirds horizontally, so you have six equal pieces.
4. Place a hot dog on each piece and brush one end of the pastry lightly with water to help seal when you roll it up.
5. Roll up each hot dog in the puff pastry until fully covered and lightly press to seal the bottom. No need to press the seams closed at the open ends. Place the hot dogs seam side down onto your prepared baking sheet.
6. Make your egg wash by cracking an egg into a small bowl and add 2 tbsp of water. Whisk with a fork until fully incorporated.
7. Using a pastry or soft bristled basting brush, brush each wrapped hot dog with the egg wash until fully covered.
8. Sprinkle your desired toppings (poppy seeds, black sesame seeds, or everything bagel seasoning).
9. Carefully cut each dog into 3rds, so you have 18 pieces.
10. Bake for 12-15 minutes or until puff pastry is puffed up and golden brown. These are best served right out of the oven. While they are baking, whip up the two easy dipping sauces to serve with these tasty morsels.
11. In two separate bowls, mix together the ingredients for the Harissa ketchup, and then the Maple Mustard for two distinct flavors to dip your dogs in. The ketchup will be spicy with the addition of the harissa, and the stone-ground mustard will have a sweetness to curb the tangy mustard.

### Notes:

- Buy the best hot dogs you can, they do make a difference with these, and you can even substitute Chorizo brauts for a spicier version.
- A box of frozen Puff pastry typically comes with two sheets, so if you'd like to make a big batch of these, make sure to buy two packs of hot dogs, and double the two dipping sauce ingredients.
- These freeze well for a great make ahead party appetizer! If freezing to bake later, once you cut your puff pastry wrapped hot dogs into thirds, instead of putting them into the oven, take your pan and set it into the freezer. Freeze for 1-2 hours or until firm, then place them into a plastic zip locked bag and return the bag to the freezer. You can bake them straight from the freezer on a parchment lined sheet pan at 400 degree , adjusting the baking time to 25-30 minutes, or until puffed up and golden brown.
- To defrost your frozen puff pastry sheet, set it into the fridge to defrost the night before you plan to make these, and they will be all ready to go!
- Harissa seasoning is a wonderful staple to have in your pantry. More recipes with it to come! Here is a link to purchase some: [Whole Foods Market, Organic Harissa Seasoning, 1.94 Ounce](#)



## 11 Quick, Tasty & Healthy Upgraded Family Dinners



### #4 - Classic Meatloaf with Sweet Chipotle Glaze

**Prep time:** 1

**Serves:**

**Pairs well with:** roasted or mashed potatoes, green beans and/or roasted root vegetables

#### A YUhcUZ-b[ fYX]YbHg

- 1 ½ lbs. ground beef
- 1 ¼ Cup diced yellow onion
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 Tbsp. ketchup
- 1 Tbsp. yellow mustard
- 1 tsp. Worcestershire sauce
- 1 ½ tsp. kosher salt
- ½ tsp. paprika
- ½ tsp. dried parsley
- ½ tsp. dried basil
- ½ tsp. dried oregano
- ½ tsp. ground black pepper
- 2 eggs
- ½ Cup Panko crumbs
- ½ Cup whole milk



#### **Sweet Chipotle Glaze:**

- ½ Cup ketchup
- 1 Tbsp. brown sugar
- ½ tsp. ground chipotle powder

# 11 Quick, Tasty & Healthy Upgraded Family Dinners



## Method:

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees and line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. In a small bowl mix together the milk and the Panko crumbs, set aside.
3. In a large mixing bowl add all of the meatloaf ingredients (not including the glaze ingredients) and mix all together with your hands or mix gently using a standing mixer with a paddle attachment. Finally, add in your panko crumbs/milk mixture, and mix until all is incorporated.
4. Lift your meatloaf out of the pan and free form a loaf on your parchment lined baking sheet.
5. Place in your preheated oven and bake for 45 minutes.
6. Meanwhile, make your sweet chipotle glaze by mixing together the ketchup, brown sugar, and chipotle powder in a small bowl.
7. After your meatloaf has cooked for 45 minutes, top your meatloaf with the sweet chipotle glaze and return to the oven and cook for 15 minutes more, or until the meat is fully cooked through and internal temperature has reach 155-160 degrees.
8. Remove from oven and let rest for 10 minutes before serving.

## Notes:

- This recipe can easily be doubled, however, rather than making one huge loaf, divide it into two loaves to save on cooking time.
- Need it dairy free? The whole milk can be swapped out for chicken or beef broth and taste just as good.
- Panko crumbs can easily be substituted with crushed up saltines, breadcrumbs, or crushed potato chips. If you need it Gluten free, substitute the Panko crumbs with almond flour or crushed up Chex cereal.
- Chipotle powder is that spice you never knew you needed in your life! It is super versatile and gives a warm, smoky heat to your dishes. It can be found at most grocery stores in the Hispanic food aisle.
- If you don't have chipotle powder, you can substitute with  $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp smoked paprika and  $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp. cayenne or sriracha sauce.

## 11 Quick, Tasty & Healthy Upgraded Family Dinners



### #5 - Thai Chicken Wings

**Prep time:** 10 min marinade prep plus an overnight marinating time

**Makes:** 6-8 as an appetizer

**Pairs well with:** a crisp lager beer, salty potato chips, coleslaw

👉 [ fYX]Ybhg

- 3 lbs chicken wings/drumettes

#### **For the marinade:**

- 4 garlic cloves, minced or crushed in a garlic press
- 1 tsp. ground ginger
- 1 Cup Sweet chili sauce such as Mae Ploy brand
- 1/3 Cup soy sauce
- 1 tsp. sesame oil
- 1/3 Cup brown sugar
- 1 tsp. fish sauce
- 1/2 tsp. sriracha sauce (up to 1 tsp. if you want them spicier)
- Juice of half of a lime



#### **Garnish:**

- 1/4 Cup finely chopped peanuts
- 1/3 cup chopped green onion

# 11 Quick, Tasty & Healthy Upgraded Family Dinners



## Method:

1. The night before you plan to serve these, make your marinade.
2. Mix all of your marinade ingredients together in a bowl, then pour it into a ziplock bag or other dish with a lid.
3. Add in your chicken wings/drumettes to the marinade making sure they are all covered in the sauce, seal, and set into the refrigerator to let marinate overnight.
4. When you plan to cook these, preheat your oven to 375 degrees.
5. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper, take your wings out of the marinade, and set them on your prepared baking sheet, then bake for 35-40 minutes or until done and just starting to get golden brown.
6. Set them on a serving platter and garnish with your chopped peanuts and green onion.

## Notes:

- These are wonderful served hot right out the oven or at room temperature, both are tasty.
- You can bake these off a day ahead to have them all ready to go and serve them cold as well.
- Leftovers are great to pack in lunches, or added to salads.
- These freeze well! Make the marinade, add the raw chicken wings and stick them in the freezer to have ready for all occasions. Just remember to take them out the day before you cook them to let them thaw in the fridge overnight in the marinade.



## 11 Quick, Tasty & Healthy Upgraded Family Dinners



### #6 - Turmeric Ginger Flu Buster Chicken Soup

**Prep time:** 20 minutes

**Makes:** 6-8 people

**Pairs well with:** saltine crackers or a chunk of crusty French bread

🔪 [ fYX ] Ybhg

- 1 Cup sliced celery
- 1 Cup sliced carrots
- 1 Cup diced onion
- 1 Tbsp. olive oil
- 1 heaping Tbsp. grated fresh ginger root
- 2 Tbsp minced garlic
- 1 tsp. ground turmeric powder
- ½ tsp. dried oregano
- ½ tsp. dried dill
- ½ tsp. dried parsley
- Pinch of ground cayenne (optional)
- 6 Cups chicken Broth
- 3 Cups water
- 2-3 Cups of shredded or chopped Rotisserie Chicken
- ¾ Cup Israeli Cous Cous
- Kosher salt to taste



# 11 Quick, Tasty & Healthy Upgraded Family Dinners



## Method:

1. In a Dutch oven over medium heat, sauté the celery, onions and garlic with the olive oil for 5 minutes or until the onions are translucent.
2. Add in the minced garlic, grated ginger root, turmeric, oregano, dill, parsley and cayenne.
3. Sauté stirring frequently so the garlic doesn't burn for two minutes to incorporate all the ingredients.
4. Add in the rotisserie chicken, chicken broth and water. Bring to a boil then lower the heat and simmer for 25-30 minutes.
5. Add in the Israeli Cous Cous and simmer for 10 more minutes or until the cous cous is tender.
6. Taste and adjust for salt as needed and serve.

## Notes:

- Trader Joes sells a great shortcut to this soup in their already prepped Mirepoix mix which you can easily swap out for the onion, carrot, and celery. It can be found in the salads and fresh vegetable section.
- This soup freezes extremely well! We keep individual portions stocked in the freezer during flu season for quick nutritious meals when sick.
- Not a fan of Israeli Cous Cous, or perhaps your local store doesn't carry it? You can easily swap it out for egg noodles or your favorite noodle of choice.
- Adjusting at the end for salt if needed will depend on how salty your chicken broth is, so add salt with a careful hand at first.
- Don't skip the fresh ginger root! It gives the soup some extra flu fighting properties and gives a spicy (but not too spicy!) kick to the soup.

## 11 Quick, Tasty & Healthy Upgraded Family Dinners



### #7 - Ultimate Turkey Burgers

**Prep time:** 15 minutes

**Makes:** 4-6 people

**Pairs well with:** potato chips, beer, french fries, and brown beans

#### Ingredients

- 1.5 lbs. ground turkey (93% lean, if possible)
- ¼ Cup panko crumbs
- 2 Tbsp. pickle juice brine (or water if you don't have pickle brine)
- 1 Tbsp. finely grated parmesan
- 2 Tbsp. Dijon mustard
- 2 tsp. Worcestershire sauce
- 1 tsp. garlic powder
- 2 tsp. kosher salt
- ¼ tsp. fresh ground pepper
- 3 scallions, finely sliced



#### Burger toppings:

- 1 Pepper Jack cheese slices
- Fried eggs over easy
- Dill pickle slices
- Sliced tomatoes
- Crispy fried onions such as French's
- Shredded iceberg lettuce
- 4-6 sesame burger buns

#### Burger sauce:

- ½ Cup mayo
- 2 Tbsp. ketchup
- 1 Tbsp. yellow mustard
- 2 Tbsp. sweet pickle relish
- ¼ tsp. smoked paprika

## 11 Quick, Tasty & Healthy Upgraded Family Dinners



### Method:

1. Make your burger patties while you preheat your grill. In a medium sized bowl, add in your panko crumbs and pickle brine. Give it a good couple stirs so the crumbs absorb the liquid.
2. Next, add your ground turkey to the mix, parmesan cheese, Dijon, Worcestershire sauce, garlic powder, salt, pepper and scallions.
3. Mix well, using your hands to incorporate all of the ingredients without overworking it, and form into 4 to 6 burger patties.
4. Place your patties onto your preheated grill and cook until a thermometer inserted in the middle reaches 165 degrees. Once done, add your pepper jack cheese slices on top of each patty and keep on the grill until the cheese is melted which shouldn't take long.
5. While your burgers are busy grilling, make the sauce by mixing all of the burger sauce ingredients together in a small bowl. Set aside.
6. In a nonstick skillet, fry your eggs in a 2 tsp of vegetable oil and keep warm in the oven until ready to assemble your burger.
7. To assemble, toast your burger buns, slather with sauce, add your cheesy grilled turkey patties, fried egg, and other burger toppings. Serve with fries or chips and enjoy!

### Notes:

- Try not to use ultra lean ground turkey as it will dry out quickly on the grill. 93% lean should be the leanest you use.
- The burger sauce can also double as a yummy fry sauce, so make extra to dip your fries in.
- When making the patties, double the recipe to freeze some patties for later as the uncooked patties freeze well. Just make sure to defrost fully in the fridge before grilling.
- Pickle juice brine is just the juice from a jar of pickles, so you probably already have it in your fridge or pantry. It gives the burgers a mystery flavor that seasons the burgers so well, very tasty!



## 11 Quick, Tasty & Healthy Upgraded Family Dinners



### #8 - Stromboli

**Prep time:** 10 minutes

**Makes:** 6-8 as an appetizer

**Pairs well with:** frosty cold beer and a veggie plate with dip

Ingredients:

- 1 lb purchased or prepared pizza dough
- ½ lb fresh deli sliced ham
- 1/3 lb fresh deli sliced Genoa Salami
- 6 slices of provolone cheese
- 1 ½ cup shredded mozzarella cheese
- ½ tsp dried parsley
- ½ tsp dried oregano
- ½ tsp dried basil
- ½ tsp. red pepper flakes (optional)
- 14 oz. jar of your favorite pizza sauce



**Egg Wash:**

- 1 egg
- ½ tsp water

# 11 Quick, Tasty & Healthy Upgraded Family Dinners



## Method:

1. Preheat your oven to 375 degrees and line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Divide your dough in half equally and stretch out each half into a 5x14 oblong piece and set them side by side onto your prepared baking sheet.
3. Down the middle of each of your prepared dough pieces, arrange the ham slices down each center leaving a couple inches at each end for sealing it up later.
4. Next, top the ham with your salami pieces, then the provolone, followed by shredded mozzarella.
5. Sprinkle the dried parsley, oregano, basil, and red pepper flakes over your cheeses.
6. Moisten all edges of the dough with water and bring the long edges together towards the center and crimp them up to seal. Seal up your edges at each end, by bring them towards the center and crimping them tightly. You should have two sealed oblong stromboli's.
7. Next, gently turn them over so the seam sides are facing down onto the parchment paper.
8. Make your egg wash by mixing together the egg and water in a small bowl.
9. Brush each Stromboli liberally with the egg wash to make the crust nice and crispy as it bakes.
10. Bake for 25-30 minutes or until the dough is starting to get golden brown.
11. Meanwhile, gently warm up your pizza sauce on the stovetop, then pour into a serving bowl.
12. Once the Stromboli 's are done, cut them into pieces, and place them onto a patter with the warmed pizza sauce for dipping.

## Notes:

- Pepperoni can be easily be swapped out for the Salami.
- Classico fire roasted pizza sauce is recommended for the pizza dipping sauce, but even a good marinara can be used as a substitute for the pizza sauce in a pinch. Cento brand pizza sauce is another good option or Trader Joe's fresh pizza sauce freezes well.
- Make sure all of your edges are crimped tightly so the cheese doesn't melt out when baking.
- All different hams can be used for this. Honey roasted, black forest, or any regular ham will do!
- You can omit the egg wash step, but your dough will not have that shiny crispy crust. Alternatively, you can brush olive oil over your dough instead of the egg wash for a similar result.

## 11 Quick, Tasty & Healthy Upgraded Family Dinners



### #9 - Awesome Beef Bean Chili

**Prep time:** 15-20 minutes (see shortcuts section; skip shortcuts = longer prep time)

**Serves:** around 6 people

**Suggested toppings:** grated cheddar cheese, sour cream, avocado, picked jalapeños, hot sauce

**Cook time:** 8 hours on low — Fills 3-4 Q Slow Cooker.

*For larger capacity 6.5 Q Slow Cooker, you can double the recipe but reduce the chicken broth by 1 cup.*

**Serve with:** tortilla chips or cornbread

#### Ingredients:

- 1 lb. ground beef
- 1 lb. beef chuck steak/roast cut into 3/4" cubes
- 2-3 tbsp. olive oil, plus more as needed (vegetable oil is okay)
- 1.5 tbsp. Kosher salt and 1.5 tbsp. ground pepper (+/- to taste)
- 2 large yellow onions, chopped
- 8-10 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 3 tbsp. chili powder (optional 1-2 tbsp. more for extra spicy)
- ½ tsp. cayenne pepper
- 1 tbsp. ground cumin
- 2.5 cups chicken broth
- 2 16-oz. cans of kidney beans, rinsed
- 2 tbsp. tomato paste
- 1 14-oz. can of tomato sauce
- 28 oz. chopped fire roasted tomatoes



#### Optional if you like hot to extra hot:

- 4 dried chilis New Mexican or arbol
- ½-1 cup pickled jalapeños
- 5 dashes +/- hot sauce like Franks or Tabasco

## 11 Quick, Tasty & Healthy Upgraded Family Dinners



### Cooking instructions:

1. Cube chuck steak, salt & pepper cubed beef (lightly-moderately depending on personal state).
2. Brown steak in 1-2 tbsp. olive oil, transfer browned meat to crock-pot.
3. Brown ground beef in same skillet, add to crock-pot, wipe skillet for next step.
4. Chop 2 onions, brown in skillet using 2 tbsp. olive oil, once translucent add chili powder, cayenne pepper, cumin, & garlic and stir.
5. Transfer onion mixture to crock-pot.
6. Add to crock-pot: chicken broth, rinsed beans, tomato sauce, tomato paste & tomatoes. Stir well.
7. Do not open lid to stir until there is about an hour left.
8. For hour of cooking, remove lid and allow the chili to thicken. Crock-pot brands vary some in heat levels so you may need to adjust this timing to a bit. If you prefer thinner soup like chili, skip this step.

### Shortcuts:

- Can cook on high setting but it won't be as flavorful and steak cubes won't be quite a tender.
- Use cornbread mix (Krusteaz is my favorite).
- Chop onions & grate cheese topping in food processor.
- Use jar minced garlic (quantities vary depending on brand, most are ~ 2 teaspoons = 1 clove) 10 tbsp. = 1/5 cup so I often grab the 1/4 cup scoop and fill it a bit below the top.

### Notes:

- When buying the beef, look for better quality, grass fed and/or hormone free that's lean to moderate (extra lean often ends up dry when slow cooking).
- If you like a more rustic, chunky style whole-canned tomatoes and chunk them with your hands instead of buying pre-chopped tomatoes.
- Non-fire roasted tomatoes work fine, the fire roasted ones are just a bit more flavorful.
- If you prefer pinto beans, sub them for the kidney beans.
- If you want hot spice level, mixed the crushed dried chilis with tomato paste before adding to crock-pot. For XX hot, do the tomato paste/chili step plus right before serving, add 1/2 cup up to 1 cup pickled jalapeños and hot sauce to taste.
- If you have a larger 6 or 6.5 Q crock-pot, make a double batch and freeze one batch.
- For left overs, make chili dogs or chili nachos.



## 11 Quick, Tasty & Healthy Upgraded Family Dinners



### #10 - Carne Asada Marinade with Cilantro Chimichurri

Prep time: 15 minutes

Serves: 4-6 people

Pairs well with: Mexican rice, refried beans, salsa, flour tortillas and beer

#### Ingredients for the marinade:

- 1.5 lb flank steak
- ¼ cup fresh squeezed orange juice
- ¼ cup fresh squeezed lime juice
- 4 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 1.5 Tbsp soy sauce
- 2 Tbsp apple cider vinegar
- 6 garlic cloves, chopped
- 1 tsp sugar
- 1 tsp ancho powder
- 1 tsp chipotle powder
- 1 tsp smoked paprika
- 1 tsp Mexican oregano
- ¼ cup chopped cilantro
- ½ of a small white onion, sliced
- Kosher salt and fresh ground pepper to taste



#### Ingredients for the Cilantro Chimichurri:

- 1 cup of fresh parsley, packed
- 1 cup fresh cilantro, packed
- ¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
- ¼ cup diced white onion
- 2 cloves of garlic
- 3 Tbsp fresh lime juice
- 2 Tbsp white or red wine vinegar, either one is just fine
- ¼ tsp crushed red pepper flakes
- Kosher salt and fresh ground pepper to taste

## 11 Quick, Tasty & Healthy Upgraded Family Dinners



### To make the Carne Asada Marinade:

1. In a small bowl, add all of the marinade ingredients except for the flank steak.
2. Whisk well to incorporate all of the flavors, tasting to adjust salt/pepper.
3. Place your flank steak into a glass baking dish or a plastic gallon sized ziplock bag, and pour your marinade over the steak to cover it well.
4. Place in the refrigerator to marinate for 6-12 hours or overnight.
5. When ready to grill, discard the used marinade and grill your steak until lightly pink inside or until your desired doneness, about 8-10 minutes on each side.
6. Once off the grill, let your steak rest 5-10 minutes before slicing your meat diagonally across the grain into thin slices and topping with the cilantro chimichurri.

### To make the Chimichurri:

1. In the bowl of your food processor, place in all of the ingredients for the cilantro chimichurri except for the olive oil.
2. Puree the ingredients, then slowly drizzle in the olive oil until your desired thickness.
3. Taste for salt/pepper seasoning before drizzling onto your steak.

### Notes:

- Since this marinade has so much citrus in it, try not to marinate over 24 hours at the most, as the citrus may make the meat a little mushy.
- Although ancho and chipotle powders are excellent in this recipe, in a pinch you can substitute them out for 2 tsp of chili powder if you don't have them.
- This marinade with the meat freezes well for a quick meal later! Place the raw meat and the marinade into a ziplock plastic bag and freeze until you are ready to use it. Just remember to pull it out the day before and place it into your refrigerator to fully defrost and marinate before you grill it.
- The chimichurri freezes well too, another thing you can make a big batch of, and freeze portions for later use.
- For the citrus, make sure you use freshly squeezed, as store bought pressed juices can contain more sugar, and throw off the flavors.

## 11 Quick, Tasty & Healthy Upgraded Family Dinners



### #11 - Ultimate Grilled Cheese

Most of us have a memory deep down of having this meal stemming from our childhoods that invokes feelings of deep nostalgia. Remember dipping it into a bowl of steaming hot Campbell's Tomato soup? Ohhh, the best!

Grilled cheese need not be a meal only enjoyed by your younger self, it has a timeless quality to it, so much so, that there are even grilled cheese parties, and fancier versions of this classic sandwich on fancy restaurant menus.



One of my favorite things about grilled cheese is it that it is fast to make, and the fillings are almost endless and can be tailored to your tastes.

Even though you are probably whizzes at making your sandwiches by now, let me walk you through a couple pointers I've learned throughout the years about this amazing sandwich. Let's make our sammies!

### Pointer 1: Cheese

Quality ingredients mean a tastier sandwich. There is definitely something to be said about using American cheese slices, I'm certainly not knocking it, however, branching out and using a combination of different cheeses have elevated this sandwich to a whole new level.

Through the many different varieties of cheeses throughout the years to build the ultimate classic, I have settled on a duo of Sharp Cheddar cheese and Colby Cheese for the perfect grilled cheese sandwich. Four slices of each type of cheese per sandwich gives a perfect amount of ooey gooey cheese.

Using pre-cut quality cheese slices melt better as opposed to using grated cheese, as the grated cheese tends to be messier, and falls out the sides when you flip it. There are many other combos of cheeses too, more on that below.

## 11 Quick, Tasty & Healthy Upgraded Family Dinners



### **Pointer 2: Bread**

Bread is the walls to your golden cheesy middle, and like cheese, there are many options to this as well.

If stove top grilling, choose pre-sliced artisan bread such as French, Sourdough, or Pullman bread.

Make sure your slices are not too thick though, don't get the thick cut slices, as you don't want your bread to burn on the outside before the heat gets to the middle to melt the cheese.

If using a Panini maker to grill your sandwiches however, that is the time where thicker, sturdier bread is best, such as thick, crusty slices of rustic bread which is perfect for pressing grilled cheese paninis.

### **Pointer 3: Heat and getting that soft, golden crust**

The best way to grill your sandwiches is by using a cast iron skillet or a non-stick skillet. That way, your sandwich will brown evenly and release easily for turning.

One big no-no is to get your pan screaming hot before you put your sandwich on it. Doing that will definitely burn your bread instantly instead of melting your cheese resulting in the boo-hoos. Instead, have your sandwich all ready to go, then preheat your pan by turning your heat up to low-medium at the very highest setting, or low, if using a cast iron pan, then put on your sandwich once your pan is gently heated. You want to heat your sandwich slowly rather than a quick sear, so the heat has time to reach the cheese before burning your bread if your skillet is too hot.

If using a Panini maker, this is the easiest method, and the perfect gadget for heating up your grilled cheese. You can find a Panini press on Amazon [here](#):

### **Pointer 4: Butter or Mayonnaise??**

I've seen many people put butter directly into the pan before grilling their sandwiches instead of buttering the top slices of bread. Maybe that is something you've always done?

Although it may be an old habit to break, this can result in the butter unevenly browning your bread. There is a more effective way to get that golden brown crust by greasing the top of each slice before it touches the heat.

Now, here is where personal preference comes to play, and most people feel a bit passionate about this: Do I use butter or mayonnaise to spread on the outsides of my bread? My recommendation, I use each one for different methods. I definitely favor the use of mayonnaise when I grill up my sammies on the stove top as it has a higher smoke point, and I use butter when using the Panini press. Totally personal preference my friends! Both seem to work just fine. With butter though, because of its lower smoke point, you do have to watch it more carefully when grilling on the stove top.





# 11 Quick, Tasty & Healthy Upgraded Family Dinners



So, we've covered the pointers, now let's get to flavors!

Here are some of the combos and methods we favor in our house. Feel free to omit ingredients or substitute with your favorite flavors

- The Classic: Sourdough bread + Sharp Cheddar + Colby Cheese/stove top skillet method
- The Caprese: Rustic Panino bread + Pesto + Sliced tomato + Fresh Mozzarella (my favorite!)/ Panini method
- The Easy Cheesy: Pullman bread + American cheese slices + dill pickle slices/stove top skillet method
- The Spicy Monster: French bread + a smear of pureed canned chipotle peppers + Jack cheese + Mozzarella (another fave!)/Stove top skillet method
- The BTG: Sourdough bread + Bacon slices + Tomato + Gruyere/Stove top method
- The breakfast for dinner: Pullman bread + Pepper Jack + White cheddar + pickled jalapeño's + a fried egg on top/Stove top skillet method, grill the sandwich first, then use the same pan to fry up your egg and plop it on top of your grilled sandwich. Serve with fresh slices of avocado.
- The fancy pants: Rustic Panino bread + Gruyere + Sharp white cheddar + prosciutto + sliced pepperocinis/Panini method

for more delicious recipes go to  
<https://www.happymomlifelab.com>

