

## FEEDING THE TROOPS - SCRAMBLE STYLE

Guest column by Jeanne Rossomme, Scramble Director of Marketing and Business Development

Like you, I recently filled out my 2010 census form. My official household consists of my three sons (ages 10, 12 and 15), my husband, and me. But at dinnertime, that number can vary wildly. My brother lives next door and may pop in around six o'clock. During the wrestling season, I often have extra hungry wrestlers (and their parents) stopping by the house prior to practice. Given my cultural DNA, I feel compelled to feed anyone who steps through the door. The result is that, more nights than not, we are adding place settings at dinnertime.

In the past the idea of last minute guests would have had me calling the pizza guy or cooking up extra macaroni and cheese out of a box. Now that my little men are older and actively involved in all sports involving a stick, ball or headgear, I need to have lots of "real" food on hand, and preferably healthy, fresh fare.

Perhaps this dinnertime dilemma of lots of hungry diners to feed only afflicts you at holiday time, or perhaps, like me, it is a fairly regular occurrence. In either case, here I share with you how The Scramble has helped me find creative ways to feed a last minute army:

- 1) Serve dinner buffet style. That way each person can take what they want and how much they want, and even when they want it, if our mealtimes don't completely coincide.
- 2) Combine Scramble dinners. For example a chicken dish and a rice salad often go well together. Even if the recipes don't share a theme (such as an Asian stir-fry and an Italian pasta dish), no one has ever complained about the variety.
- 3) "Borrow" the side dishes from other meals. I will often use additional side dishes from other Scramble dinners that I've already shopped for to expand a meal.
- 4) Double the sides. Especially for non-perishables like rice and pasta that I always have on hand, I will throw in an extra few servings for safe measure.
- 5) Add a green salad and fresh fruit. I usually take whatever we have and create a mixed salad and some cut up seasonal fruit. Again it helps create extra dishes, colors and flavors to suit anyone's tastes.
- 6) Let guests pitch in (even kids). I find everyone really feels at home and somehow more vested in the meals if they help cook, chop or set up.

So often I have parents astonished that their child ate "fill-in-the-blank" at our home. Perhaps the spontaneity of a last minute invitation and the array of healthy dishes on the buffet allow their adventurous spirit to kick in.

Of course, when lots of unexpected guests show up, my Scramble weekly meal plan may only last me through Wednesday, but it only takes a few minutes to generate a new one! And the best part is that I do not have waste from overbuying those weeks when no extra guests show up. And I never have to worry about running out of food (the horror!) no matter how many hungry troops show up on my doorstep.

Honestly, this satisfying sandwich is just a distant cousin of a true Greek Souvlaki, but we couldn't think of a more descriptive name. Whatever you call it, our son Solomon called it delicious and polished it off, and recipe tester Debbie Firestone said her whole family gave it two thumbs up. It's higher in sodium than the usual Scramble fare because of the sausage, feta and pita, so be sure and drink lots of water with lemon and/or eat some watermelon the day you enjoy the sandwiches. Serve them with a Greek salad.

- 3 Tbsp. extra virgin olive oil
- 1 yellow onion, halved and thinly sliced
- 1 green, red or orange bell pepper, thinly sliced
- 1/2 tsp. minced garlic, (about 1 clove)
- 1/4 tsp. kosher salt
- 12 oz. sweet Italian-style pre-cooked turkey or chicken sausage or vegetarian sausage
- 4 whole wheat or white pita pockets (get the softest and freshest type you can find)
- 1/2 cup crumbled feta cheese, for serving (optional)

Preheat the grill to medium-high heat. Meanwhile, in a large heavy skillet, heat 1 Tbsp. oil over medium heat and sauté the onions and peppers until they are soft and well-browned, about 15 minutes total, stirring occasionally. (Meanwhile, prepare the salad, if you are serving it.) If they are getting too browned, reduce the heat. Remove them from the heat once they are soft and browned.

In a small bowl, combine 2 Tbsp. olive oil, the garlic, and the salt and set it aside.

Cut the sausages most of the way through lengthwise, and grill them for 8 - 10 minutes until they are light to medium brown, flipping them once. Meanwhile, brush the olive oil mixture onto both outer sides of the pita pockets (don't cut them), stacking them as you go so they can share their oil. Next, lay the pita pockets on the grill for about 3 minutes per side, flipping once, until they start to puff up (if they are fresh enough) and are lightly browned in spots. Watch them carefully so they don't burn.

Fold one pita pocket around each sausage, topping the sausage with the onions and peppers, and feta cheese (optional).

**Scramble Flavor Booster:** Add 1 tsp. fresh oregano to the peppers and onions while they are cooking. Serve the sandwiches with spicy mustard.

**TIP:** If you have a block of feta cheese and want to crumble it, run it under cold water for 10 seconds. This will clear away any brine and firm it up. Then use your hands or the tines of a fork to break it up into small pieces.

#### **SERVE WITH GREEK SALAD**

To make a Greek salad, combine 2 tomatoes, chopped, 2 cucumbers, peeled and diced, and 1/2 - 1 cup crumbled or chopped feta cheese (use real Greek feta in brine, if possible). Add 1/4 - 1/2 cup sliced or finely diced red onion, if desired. Toss it with 1 Tbsp. olive oil and 1 tsp. red wine vinegar (or more to taste). Add 2 Tbsp. chopped fresh oregano or mint or 1 - 2 tsp. dried oregano and add black pepper to taste.

#### **Nutritional Information per serving (% based upon daily values):**

Calories: 450; Total Fat: 23g, 35%; Saturated Fat: 6g, 30%; Cholesterol: 50mg, 17%; Sodium: 1,310mg, 55%; Total Carbohydrate: 42g, 14%; Dietary Fiber: 6g, 24%; Sugar: 3g; Protein: 23g

#### **Nutritional Information per serving with side dish (% based upon daily values) 1 1/2 cups salad:**

Calories: 530; Total Fat: 28g, 43%; Saturated Fat: 8g, 40%; Cholesterol: 60mg, 20%; Sodium: 1,450mg, 61%; Total Carbohydrate: 49g, 16%; Dietary Fiber: 7g, 28%; Sugar: 7g; Protein: 26g

**Roasted Halibut With Balsamic Marinade**  
**Servings = 4**  
**Prep+Cook = 15 min + Time to marinate or chill**

I clipped this simply scrumptious recipe from *The Washington Post* Food section years ago. It's mild enough for kids but flavorful enough for adults. Serve it with boiled new or red potatoes and Swiss chard with garlic.

- 2 Tbsp. balsamic vinegar
- 2 Tbsp. extra virgin olive oil
- 1 tsp. minced garlic, (about 2 cloves)
- 1/4 tsp. salt
- 1/8 tsp. black pepper
- 1 1/3-1 1/2 lbs. halibut fillet, skin on, or use other thick white fish

In a small bowl, whisk together the vinegar, oil, garlic, salt and pepper.

Place the fish in a small baking dish and add the marinade. Turn to coat the fish. Cover it and refrigerate it for at least 30 minutes and up to 2 hours.

Preheat the oven to 425 degrees. (While the oven is heating, start the potatoes and chard, if you are serving them.) Uncover and bake the halibut in the baking dish with the marinade until it flakes easily and is opaque throughout, 15-20 minutes, depending on the thickness of the fish. Serve it immediately.

**Scramble Flavor Booster:** Double the black pepper and serve the fish with fresh lemon wedges.

**TIP:** In the U.S., dementia, or at the least loss of cognitive function, is becoming virtually synonymous with old age, but recent studies suggest it doesn't have to be, that better brain function in older adults can be promoted by a diet that includes fatty fish like halibut.

**SERVE WITH BOILED NEW OR RED POTATOES & SWISS CHARD WITH GARLIC**

Cover 1 - 2 lbs. new or red potatoes with water in a medium pot. Add about 1/2 tsp. salt, and bring the water to a boil. Simmer the potatoes until they are fork tender, 10 - 15 minutes, and drain them. Toss them immediately (cut them in half first, if desired) with 1 Tbsp. butter or olive oil, 1/8 tsp. garlic powder, and 1/4 tsp. lemon pepper seasoning (optional).

To make Swiss chard with garlic, wash 1 head of Swiss chard thoroughly and trim the ends of the stalks. Chop the leaves and stems. Heat 1 Tbsp. olive oil over medium heat in a large nonstick skillet and add 1 tsp. minced garlic (about 2 cloves). When the garlic starts to brown, add the Swiss chard and 1/4 cup water, cover it and reduce the heat if necessary to steam the chard for about 10 minutes. Remove the cover, raise the heat to medium, and let the chard cook, stirring occasionally, until it is very tender, about 10 more minutes. Top it with a little salt and shredded Parmesan cheese before serving.

**Nutritional Information per serving (% based upon daily values):**

Calories: 173; Total Fat: 7g, 10%; Saturated Fat: 1g, 5%; Cholesterol: 37mg, 12%; Sodium: 233mg, 10%; Total Carbohydrate: 3g, 2%; Dietary Fiber: 0g, 0%; Sugar: 3g; Protein: 25g

**Nutritional Information per serving with side dish (% based upon daily values) 3 small potatoes; 1/4 of Swiss chard:**

Calories: 334; Total Fat: 16g, 21%; Saturated Fat: 3g, 15%; Cholesterol: 43mg, 14%; Sodium: 591mg, 26%; Total Carbohydrate: 27g, 10%; Dietary Fiber: 5g, 18%; Sugar: 12g; Protein: 31g

## **Creamy Ricotta Pasta With Cherry Tomatoes**

**Servings = 8 (about 1 1/2 cups)**

**Prep+Cook = 30 min**

I made this dish for the first time with my 10-year-old neighbor, Gillian Ford. She and her sister Charlotte thought this was the second-best pasta dish they had ever had! (They think the best is their mom's Fettuccine with Melted Brie and Tomatoes, which is on The Scramble site and in The Six O'Clock Scramble cookbook.) Serve it with celery sticks with blue cheese dressing.

- 16 oz. spaghetti, broken in half
- 16 oz. cherry or grape tomatoes, halved
- 1 1/2 tsp. minced garlic, (2 - 3 cloves)
- 4 Tbsp. extra virgin olive oil
- 1/2- 3/4 tsp. kosher salt, to taste
- 1 cup ricotta cheese
- 1/4- 1/2 cups grated Asiago or Parmesan cheese, to taste
- 1/2 cup fresh basil, sliced (or use mostly basil and a little fresh oregano, if you have it in your garden)
- 1/8 tsp. black pepper, or to taste (optional)

Cook the spaghetti according to the package directions until it is al dente, and drain it, reserving a little of the pasta's cooking water. (Meanwhile, make the blue cheese dressing, if you are serving it with the celery sticks.)

Meanwhile, in a large serving bowl, combine the tomatoes, garlic, 3 Tbsp. of the oil, and the kosher salt, and set it aside.

When you drain the noodles, immediately transfer the tomato mixture to the pasta pot and cook it over medium heat for 1 - 2 minutes until the tomatoes are hot and slightly softened. Meanwhile, put the pasta in the serving bowl and toss it with 1 Tbsp. olive oil, the ricotta cheese, the Asiago or Parmesan cheese, and the basil. (If it is a little dry at this point, add a splash of the reserved water from the pasta.)

Top the spaghetti with the tomato mixture and serve it immediately, topped with freshly ground black pepper, if desired.

**Scramble Flavor Booster:** Double the garlic and serve it sprinkled with crushed red pepper flakes.

**TIP:** If you have leftovers of this dish, it makes for a delicious pasta salad for the next day's lunch. If it needs a little moisture, just drizzle some balsamic vinaigrette on it.

### **SERVE WITH CELERY STICKS WITH BLUE CHEESE DRESSING**

To make chunky blue cheese dressing, combine 1/4 - 1/2 cup crumbled blue cheese (depending on how chunky you like it), 1/4 cup reduced fat mayonnaise, sour cream or plain yogurt, 1 tsp. Worcestershire sauce, and 1 tsp. white wine vinegar. If you prefer a white dressing, skip the Worcestershire and add an extra tsp. of vinegar, 1/4 tsp. white pepper, and 1/4 tsp. garlic powder. Serve it with celery sticks.

### **Nutritional Information per serving (% based upon daily values):**

Calories: 296; Total Fat: 7g, 10%; Saturated Fat: 3g, 14%; Cholesterol: 13mg, 5%; Sodium: 203mg, 9%; Total Carbohydrate: 47g, 16%; Dietary Fiber: 3g, 11%; Sugar: 3g; Protein: 13g

### **Nutritional Information per serving with side dish (% based upon daily values) 1/6 of celery and dressing:**

Calories: 387; Total Fat: 15g, 23%; Saturated Fat: 5g, 24%; Cholesterol: 24mg, 8%; Sodium: 457mg, 20%; Total Carbohydrate: 50g, 17%; Dietary Fiber: 3g, 13%; Sugar: 5g; Protein: 15g

**Thai Beef And Mango Salad**  
**Servings = 4**  
**Prep+Cook = 30 min**

This is a sweet and tangy meal to liven up your evening! If your kids don't eat salad, serve them the steak, mango and carrots separately. This is a meal in itself, or serve it with whole grain bread.

- 2 limes, juice only, 1/3 - 1/2 cup
- 2 Tbsp. brown sugar
- 4 Tbsp. reduced-sodium soy sauce (use wheat/gluten-free if needed)
- 2 Tbsp. peanut or vegetable oil
- 1 lb. top sirloin steak (or use boneless, skinless chicken breasts or meatless chicken or steak strips)
- 2 scallions, thinly sliced
- 2 cups shredded (matchstick cut) carrots
- 1/2 cup fresh cilantro or basil, chopped (optional)
- 1 mango, peeled and diced
- 1 small head Boston lettuce, torn into bite-sized pieces

In a medium bowl, whisk together the lime juice, sugar, soy sauce and oil. Lay the steak in a flat dish with sides and pour **half** the marinade over it, and flip it to coat the meat thoroughly. Set it aside and reserve the remaining marinade to use as a dressing for the salad.

In a salad bowl, combine the scallions, carrots, cilantro or basil (optional), mango and lettuce.

Heat a heavy skillet over medium-high heat. Remove the steak from the marinade, discarding the marinade, and cook it for about 5 minutes per side until it is just cooked to desired doneness. If the outside of the steak is cooking too quickly, reduce the heat and partially cover the pan. Transfer the steak to a cutting board, allow it to cool slightly, and slice it across the grain into 1/2-inch wide strips. Dress the salad with the reserved marinade (not the marinade you used for the steak) and serve the salad topped with slices of steak.

**Note:** To slice a mango, hold it firmly in an upright position (think football readied for a place kick.) With a sharp knife, slice both sides of the mango from top to bottom as close to the elliptical-shaped pit as possible. Use a paring knife to score each half of the fruit in a grid pattern almost all the way to the peel. Turn the peel inside out, and slice or pull the small squares of fruit off the peel with a paring knife. (This is also a great way to serve mango to your kids -- they can eat it with a spoon.)

**Scramble Flavor Booster:** Add 1/2 tsp. Asian chili garlic sauce to the marinade and/or serve the salad with Thai sweet chili sauce. Sprinkle the salad with fresh lime juice and chopped peanuts.

**TIP:** To determine whether or not a mango is ripe, use your nose--a ripe mango will have a very fragrant aroma. Ripe mangos can be stored in the refrigerator for two to three days.

**SERVE WITH WHOLE GRAIN BREAD**

Serve it with a loaf of whole grain bread.

**Nutritional Information per serving (% based upon daily values):**

Calories: 400; Total Fat: 23g, 35%; Saturated Fat: 8g, 40%; Cholesterol: 60mg, 20%; Sodium: 710mg, 30%; Total Carbohydrate: 24g, 8%; Dietary Fiber: 4g, 16%; Sugar: 16g; Protein: 25g

**Nutritional Information per serving with side dish (% based upon daily values) 1 slice bread:**

Calories: 510; Total Fat: 25g, 38%; Saturated Fat: 8g, 40%; Cholesterol: 60mg, 20%; Sodium: 890mg, 38%; Total Carbohydrate: 44g, 15%; Dietary Fiber: 7g, 28%; Sugar: 19g; Protein: 29g

## Mexican Lasagna With Avocado Salsa

Servings = 8

Prep+Cook = 30 min

This casserole is a great one to make with your kids, though you should brown the tortillas yourself to prevent burns. Serve it with blueberries or raspberries.

- 15 oz. canned black beans, drained and rinsed
- 15 oz. vegetarian refried beans
- 15 oz. corn kernels, naturally sweetened, drained, (or use 1 1/4 cups corn kernels from 3 - 4 ears corn)
- 1 cup mild salsa
- 4 scallions, sliced
- 2 cups shredded Cheddar cheese
- 4 tsp. vegetable oil
- 6 soft taco size (8-inch) flour or wheat tortillas
- 1 avocado, peeled and diced
- 2 tomatoes, diced
- 1/2 lime, juice only, 1 Tbsp.
- 1/4 tsp. salt

Heat the oven to 400 degrees. Spray a 9 x 13-inch casserole dish with nonstick cooking spray.

In a large bowl, stir together both types of beans, corn, salsa, scallions and cheese.

Put the oil in a small bowl. Heat a large skillet over medium to medium-high heat. Brush both sides of each tortilla with a thin layer of the oil and fry it in the skillet, turning once, until it is puffed and golden in spots, about one minute total. Stack the cooked tortillas on a plate.

To make the lasagna, put 2 tortillas in the bottom of the casserole dish; top them with 1/2 the bean filling, then top that with 2 more tortillas, and the second half of the bean filling. Top it with the final 2 tortillas. Press down with a spatula on the top tortillas to seal the layers.

Bake the lasagna, uncovered, for 10-12 minutes until it is heated through. Cut it into squares with a pizza cutter or serrated knife to serve.

While the lasagna is baking, in a medium bowl, gently toss the diced avocado and tomatoes with the lime juice and salt. Top the lasagna squares with the avocado salsa at the table.

**Scramble Flavor Booster:** Use spicy salsa and mince one hot chili pepper or some red onion with the avocados for the salsa.

**TIP:** If you tend to buy the same salsa every time, switch it up a little! Different brands will have subtle taste differences and can make an old "stand-by" dish slightly new and interesting.

### **SERVE WITH BLUEBERRIES OR RASPBERRIES**

Serve it with 1/2 - 1 lb. of fresh blueberries, raspberries, or your favorite berries.

### **Nutritional Information per serving (% based upon daily values):**

Calories: 410; Total Fat: 19g, 29%; Saturated Fat: 8g, 40%; Cholesterol: 30mg, 10%; Sodium: 1,140mg, 48%; Total Carbohydrate: 55g, 18%; Dietary Fiber: 10g, 40%; Sugar: 3g; Protein: 17g

### **Nutritional Information per serving with side dish (% based upon daily values) 1/2 cup berries:**

Calories: 451; Total Fat: 19g, 29%; Saturated Fat: 8g, 40%; Cholesterol: 30mg, 10%; Sodium: 1,141mg, 48%; Total Carbohydrate: 66g, 22%; Dietary Fiber: 12g, 47%; Sugar: 10g; Protein: 22g

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## GROCERY LIST

### STAPLES

- 1 Tbsp. butter or extra virgin olive oil (2S)
- 11 Tbsp. extra virgin olive oil (1) (1S) (2) (2S) (3)
- 2 Tbsp. peanut or vegetable oil (4)
- 4 tsp. vegetable oil (5)
- 4 tsp. minced garlic (1) (2) (2S) (3)
- 1/4 cup reduced-fat mayonnaise (3S)
- 2 Tbsp. brown sugar (4)
- 1 tsp. red wine vinegar (1S)
- 2 Tbsp. balsamic vinegar (2)
- 1 tsp. white wine vinegar (3S)
- 1 tsp. Worcestershire sauce (3S)
- 4 Tbsp. reduced-sodium soy sauce (use wheat/gluten-free if needed) (4)

### SPICES

- 1/2 tsp. black pepper (1S) (2) (optional for 3)
- 3/4-1 tsp. kosher salt (1) (3)
- 1 1/4 tsp. salt (2) (2S) (5)
- 1/8 tsp. garlic powder (2S)
- 1/4 tsp. salt-free lemon pepper seasoning (optional for 2S)

### MEAT AND FISH

- 1 lb. top sirloin steak (or use boneless, skinless chicken breasts or meatless chicken or steak strips) (4)
- 12 oz. sweet Italian-style pre-cooked turkey or chicken sausage or vegetarian sausage (1)
- 1 1/3-1 1/2 lbs. halibut fillet, skin on, or use other thick white fish (2)

### REFRIGERATED/FROZEN SECTION

- 1-1 1/2 cups crumbled feta cheese (1S) (optional for 1)
- 2 Tbsp. shredded Parmesan cheese (2S)
- 1/4- 1/2 cups blue cheese (3S)
- 1/4- 1/2 cups grated Asiago or Parmesan cheese (3)
- 2 cups shredded Cheddar cheese (5)
- 1 cup ricotta cheese (3)
- 6 soft taco size flour or wheat tortillas (5)

### PRODUCE

- 1/4 red onion (1S)
- 1 yellow onion (1)
- 6 scallions (4) (5)
- 2 cups shredded (matchstick cut) carrots (4)
- 1 green, red or orange bell pepper (1)
- 1/2 lb. celery (3S)
- 4 tomatoes (1S) (5)
- 16 oz. cherry or grape tomatoes (3)
- 1 small head Boston lettuce (4)
- 1 head Swiss chard (2S)
- 1/2 cup fresh cilantro or basil (optional for 4)

### PRODUCE (CONT.)

- 2 Tbsp. fresh oregano (1S)
- 1/2 cup fresh basil (3)
- 2 cucumbers (1S)
- 1-2 lbs. new or red potatoes (2S)
- 1 ripe avocado (5)
- 1/2-1 lbs. blueberries or raspberries (5S)
- 2 1/2 limes (4) (5)
- 1 mango (4)

### SHELVED ITEMS

- 4 whole wheat or white pita pockets (get the softest and freshest type you can find) (1)
- 1 loaf whole grain bread (4S)
- 16 oz. spaghetti (3)
- 15 oz. canned black beans (5)
- 15 oz. vegetarian refried beans (5)
- 15 oz. corn kernels, naturally sweetened (5)
- 1 cup mild salsa (5)

### These ingredients will prepare the following recipes

- (1) Grilled Quicki Souvlaki Sandwich  
(1S) Greek Salad
- (2) Roasted Halibut with Balsamic Marinade  
(2S) Boiled New Or Red Potatoes & Swiss Chard With Garlic
- (3) Creamy Ricotta Pasta with Cherry Tomatoes  
(3S) Celery Sticks With Blue Cheese Dressing
- (4) Thai Beef and Mango Salad  
(4S) Whole Grain Bread
- (5) Mexican Lasagna with Avocado Salsa  
(5S) Blueberries Or Raspberries

S = used in sidedish for the corresponding recipe