

DO AHEAD AND DELEGATE

I just can't cook when my kitchen counters are messy. Perhaps it makes the scene feel too chaotic from the start. Or maybe it creates more clutter in my already cluttered brain. But I need some space to spread out when I cook. Of course by the time dinner is ready the counters are often covered with dirty pans and dishes, open jars, sticky sauces and vegetable peels, but if they start out that way, I can't get my cooking Mojo on.

Getting a jump start by doing some prep earlier in the day can definitely ease dinner-time stress. To make this even easier, we recently introduced a new feature in The Scramble newsletter, **Do Ahead or Delegate**. (You'll find these suggestions under the recipe directions in most new Scramble recipes.) In addition to those suggestions, here are a couple of my dinnertime sanity secrets:

- Before I start to make dinner, I find it extremely helpful to pull out the evening's recipe and read through the directions so I can devise a game plan. I like to prop up the recipe in a recipe stand or tape it to a cabinet near the stove so it's easy to see while I'm Scrambling.
- I also like to get all the ingredients out on the counter before I begin cooking. If I have any extra time before 6:00 p.m., I'll also dice the vegetables, combine spices, make sauces, or precook certain elements of the meal (like browning and crumbling bacon or baking potatoes).

One of the best things about the new Do Ahead or Delegate feature in the newsletter is that you can more easily enlist the help of a spouse, babysitter, or older child in meal prep, because the first steps are spelled out for you (that's the delegate part!).

So, if you're a multi-tasker, car-pooler, or all-around-responsibility-juggler, you'll probably find that getting organized before you cook, and recruiting some help, when possible, makes cooking dinner a calm pleasure, rather than a stressful chore.

KIDS COOK MONDAY

After all the meals you've made for your family, do you long for the day when your children will prepare and serve dinner for you? At a soccer game last weekend, my daughter's 12-year-old friend, Katie Zehner, proudly told me that she had cooked another recipe from my cookbook, Rosemary Lemon Pork Chops with Yogurt-Feta Sauce. Katie's mom (my friend, Elizabeth) has really never relished cooking, so she is thrilled that one of her children is showing some passion for the kitchen.

It may not surprise you to know that I think it's important that our kids learn to chop, dice, sauté and bake. Learning some basic cooking skills can ensure that they don't have to rely on packaged foods and restaurants when we're no longer cooking for them, and it can even give us a break in the kitchen once they get more experienced at cooking and cleaning. So why not get your kids into the kitchen with you at least once a week?

[Kids Cook Monday](#) is a public health campaign to get families to cook and eat healthy food together at least once a week. (They chose Mondays because they feel that is the day people get back on track after the weekend and set their health intentions for the week.) To make it easy for you and your children, the site has recipes, videos, materials, and tips for kids, parents, and teachers. The campaign, which was started in association with Columbia Mailman School of Public Health and the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, notes that, "When kids pitch in making meals, they're empowered to consider the portions, the vitamins and the nutrients of what they're eating."

To read the rest of the article and get the recipes, visit [PBS Parents Kitchen Explorers](#).



This scrumptious chicken, adapted from a Weight Watchers recipe, has received raves from subscribers when I have run it in previous newsletters. It cooks so quickly because of the high heat and the chicken's proximity to the oven's heating element. Serve it with bulgur wheat and Lemony Asparagus.

- 1 1/2 tsp. paprika
- 1 tsp. salt
- 3/4 tsp. ground cinnamon
- 3/4 tsp. ground cumin, or use chili powder
- 1 whole chicken, cut up
- 3 Tbsp. pure maple syrup
- 1 1/2 Tbsp. butter or margarine
- 1 1/2 Tbsp. Dijon mustard

Preheat the oven to 500 degrees. Line a baking sheet with aluminum foil and spray the foil with nonstick cooking spray. In a small bowl, combine the four dry spices.

Place the chicken pieces skin side up on the baking sheet. Sprinkle and rub the spice mixture evenly over the chicken (leave the drumsticks without spices for picky eaters). Position the sheet in the upper third of the oven, about 4 inches from the heating element, and bake it, without turning it, for 15 minutes.

Meanwhile, in a small saucepan combine the maple syrup, butter and mustard. Stir it over low heat until the butter melts. Remove it from the heat. (Start the bulgur now, if you are serving it.)

After the chicken has baked for 15 minutes, remove it from the oven and brush it with the maple glaze and bake it for 5 more minutes. (Prepare the asparagus now, if you are serving it.) Brush the chicken with the glaze again and bake it 5 minutes more. Remove it from the oven and serve it.

Do Ahead or Delegate: Combine the dry spices.

Scramble Flavor Booster: Substitute 1/4 tsp. of the paprika with cayenne pepper.

TIP: In comparison to honey, maple syrup has fewer calories and a higher concentration of minerals. It's a great source of manganese and zinc.

SERVE WITH BULGUR WHEAT & LEMONY ASPARAGUS

In a medium saucepan, cook 1 1/2 cups bulgur wheat in 3 cups chicken or vegetable broth or combination of broth and water. Bring it to a boil, cover, and simmer it for 15 minutes until it is tender. Or, prepare quick-cooking brown rice according to package directions, using broth or water.

Trim 1 lb. asparagus and cut it into thirds. In a heavy skillet over medium heat, sauté 1/2 tsp. minced garlic (about 1 clove) in 1 tsp. olive oil, add the asparagus and sauté it for 4 - 5 minutes until it is tender crisp. Sprinkle it with the juice of 1/4 fresh lemon or with 1/2 - 1 tsp. salt-free lemon pepper seasoning, to taste.

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

Calories: 310; Total Fat: 16g, 24%; Saturated Fat: 5g, 26%; Cholesterol: 105mg, 34%; Sodium: 360mg, 15%; Total Carbohydrate: 7g, 2%; Dietary Fiber: 0g, 0%; Sugar: 6g; Protein: 33g

Nutritional Information per serving with side dish (% based upon daily values) 1 cup cooked bulgur wheat; 1/4 of asparagus:

Calories: 486; Total Fat: 18g, 27%; Saturated Fat: 5g, 26%; Cholesterol: 105mg, 34%; Sodium: 435mg, 18%; Total Carbohydrate: 44g, 14%; Dietary Fiber: 9g, 37%; Sugar: 7g; Protein: 40g

Pan-Fried Tilapia With Mango Lime Salsa

Servings = 4

Prep+Cook = 20 min

You can use this sweet and tangy salsa in so many ways -- serve it with fish, chicken, beans, or scoop it up with tortilla chips. You'll love how it livens up the mild flavor of a white fish like tilapia. Serve it with lightly buttered corn, and tortilla chips and salsa.

- 1 mango, peeled and diced
- 1/2 sweet yellow onion such as Vidalia or Walla Walla, diced
- 1 Tbsp. fresh mint leaves, finely diced, or more to taste
- 1 lime, juice only, about 2 Tbsp.
- 1 Tbsp. extra virgin olive oil
- 1 1/4-1 1/2 lbs. tilapia fillets or other thin white fish fillets

In a medium serving bowl, combine the mango, onions, mint, and the juice of half the lime. Set it aside. (The salsa can be made up to 24 hours in advance and stored in the refrigerator).

(Start the corn now, if you are serving it.) In a large skillet, heat the oil over medium-high heat. When the pan is hot, add the fillets and press them down with a spatula to ensure each fillet is completely touching the pan. Cook the fillets 2-3 minutes per side until they are lightly browned. After flipping the fish, sprinkle the fillets with the juice of the remaining half lime, and season them with salt and pepper to taste.

Serve the fish immediately, topped with the mango salsa.

Do Ahead or Delegate: Make the salsa.

Scramble Flavor Booster: Add additional mint and/or hot sauce or Thai sweet chili sauce to the mango salsa.

TIP: If the mango isn't completely sweet and ripe, add 1 tsp. honey or agave nectar to the salsa.

SERVE WITH CORN, LIGHTLY BUTTERED & TORTILLA CHIPS AND SALSA

Cook 1 lb. frozen corn kernels in the microwave or the stovetop for 3 - 5 minutes (we like it a little undercooked so it doesn't get chewy). Toss the hot corn with 1 tsp. butter or margarine and a squeeze of fresh lime juice (about 1/4 lime), if desired.

Serve it with 4 - 6 cups tortilla chips and 1 - 2 cups salsa.

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

Calories: 203; Total Fat: 6g, 10%; Saturated Fat: 2g, 7%; Cholesterol: 71mg, 24%; Sodium: 75mg, 4%; Total Carbohydrate: 10g, 4%; Dietary Fiber: 1g, 5%; Sugar: 8g; Protein: 29g

Nutritional Information per serving with side dish (% based upon daily values) 1/2 cup corn; 1/2 cup tortilla chips and 1 1/2 Tbsp. salsa:

Calories: 337; Total Fat: 11g, 17%; Saturated Fat: 3g, 11%; Cholesterol: 72mg, 25%; Sodium: 287mg, 13%; Total Carbohydrate: 34g, 12%; Dietary Fiber: 3g, 15%; Sugar: 11g; Protein: 33g

Crispy Stuffed Tex-Mex Potato Skins

Servings = 4

Prep = 20 min; Cook = 70 min

This recipe marries my love of baked potato skins, twice baked potatoes and Tex-Mex flavors into one delectable morsel. The key to making these possible for a busy weeknight is to bake the potatoes in advance, and even make the stuffing in advance if you can. Baking the potato skins without the filling for a few minutes makes them nice and crispy. Serve them with a green salad with shredded carrots, feta cheese and pine nuts.

- 6 small russet or other baking potatoes
- 2 strips turkey, pork or vegetarian bacon, cooked and crumbled (optional)
- 2 Tbsp. extra virgin olive oil
- 3/4 cup nonfat sour cream or Greek yogurt
- 1/2 cup salsa
- 3 scallions, green parts only, thinly sliced
- 1/2 cup shredded Cheddar cheese

Poke a few holes in each potato and bake them for 50 - 60 minutes at 400 degrees until they are tender. This can be done up to 24 hours in advance (or cook them in the microwave or slow cooker). Cook and crumble the bacon (optional) according to the package directions. (Meanwhile, prepare the salad, if you are serving it.)

Raise the oven temperature to 450 degrees. Pour 1 Tbsp. olive oil into a small bowl. Wearing an oven mitt to protect your hands, halve the potatoes and using a grapefruit spoon or teaspoon, scoop the flesh from each potato half into a bowl, leaving a thin layer of potato around the inside of the skins. Transfer the potato skins to a baking sheet that has been sprayed with nonstick cooking spray. Brush the insides of the potato skins with the oil using a pastry brush, and bake them for 8 - 10 minutes until they are crisp and starting to brown. Remove them from the oven and preheat the broiler, setting the oven rack a few inches from the heating element.

Meanwhile, mash the potato flesh with 1 Tbsp. oil, the sour cream, salsa, scallions, and bacon (optional). Scoop some of the potato mixture into each potato half to just fill it (you will have some extra potato filling at the end), and carefully sprinkle the cheese on top of the potatoes. Broil the potatoes for about 2 minutes until the cheese is melted and starting to brown. Let them cool for a few minutes before serving. We like to eat them with our hands.

Do Ahead or Delegate: Bake the potatoes, cook and crumble the bacon, slice the scallions.

Scramble Flavor Booster: Use spicy salsa and/or Pepper Jack cheese in place of the Cheddar cheese.

TIP: To bake the potatoes in a slow cooker, prick them several times with a fork, wrap each potato tightly in foil, and cook them in the slow cooker on High for 3 - 4 hours or Low for 8 - 10 hours.

SERVE WITH GREEN SALAD WITH SHREDDDED CARROTS, FETA AND PINE NUTS

In a large bowl, combine 6 - 8 cups lettuce, 1/2 cup shredded carrots (you can use a carrot peeler to shred 1 carrot), 2 Tbsp. crumbled feta cheese, and 1 Tbsp. pine nuts, toasted if desired. Toss the salad with 2 - 4 Tbsp. vinaigrette, to taste.

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

Calories: 344; Total Fat: 14g, 22%; Saturated Fat: 5g, 24%; Cholesterol: 20mg, 7%; Sodium: 452mg, 19%; Total Carbohydrate: 47g, 17%; Dietary Fiber: 8g, 39%; Sugar: 6g; Protein: 11g

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

Calories: 385; Total Fat: 15g, 24%; Saturated Fat: 5g, 26%; Cholesterol: 22mg, 7%; Sodium: 579mg, 25%; Total Carbohydrate: 53g, 19%; Dietary Fiber: 10g, 48%; Sugar: 9g; Protein: 13g



You can throw together this soup faster than you can order Chinese (or Japanese) take-out, and it only costs about \$10 to make the entire meal. You can, of course, substitute your favorite vegetables in the soup. Serve it with Asian dumplings or eggrolls and with orange slices.

- 64 oz. reduced-sodium chicken or vegetable broth
- 3 Tbsp. reduced-sodium soy sauce (use wheat/gluten-free if needed)
- 3 slices small chunk fresh ginger, (use 3 quarter-size slices fresh peeled ginger)
- 2 cups bok choy or Napa cabbage, sliced
- 2 cups sliced cremini or other mushrooms
- 2 carrots, sliced on the diagonal into thin slices
- 8-16 oz. extra-firm tofu packed in water, diced
- 2 pkgs. (3 oz. each) ramen noodle soup, any variety
- 4 scallions, thinly sliced
- 2 Tbsp. rice wine or mirin, (or use juice of 1/2 lime)

(Start the dumplings or eggrolls first, if you are serving them.) In a stockpot, bring the broth, soy sauce and ginger to a boil over medium-high heat.

Add the bok choy or cabbage, mushrooms, carrots and tofu and cook for about 2 minutes, then add the ramen noodles (discard the flavor packet), stirring with each addition. Reduce the heat, if necessary, to keep the soup at a low boil.

Cook the noodles for 3 minutes, and then add the scallions and rice wine (or lime juice). (Meanwhile, slice the oranges and grapefruit, if you are serving them.) Cook for 1 more minute until everything is heated through, and serve it immediately.

Do Ahead or Delegate: Slice the bok choy, carrots and scallions, and dice the tofu.

Scramble Flavor Booster: Add a few drops of sesame oil or hot chili sesame oil into each bowl at the table, or stir a handful of fresh cilantro, mint or basil into the soup before serving.

TIP: Bok choy and Napa cabbage are usually interchangeable in Asian recipes.

SERVE WITH ASIAN DUMPLINGS OR EGG ROLLS & ORANGE SLICES

Prepare the dumplings or egg rolls according to the package directions. For the dumplings, make a dipping sauce, if desired, with 1/4 cup reduced-sodium soy sauce, 1 Tbsp. rice vinegar, and 1 tsp. superfine sugar. Add 1 Tbsp. finely chopped scallions or chives (optional). If you are using egg rolls, serve them with duck sauce and/or Chinese mustard.

Cut 3 - 6 oranges into wedges for serving.

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

Calories: 170; Total Fat: 7g, 11%; Saturated Fat: 2g, 8%; Cholesterol: 10mg, 3%; Sodium: 590mg, 25%; Total Carbohydrate: 16g, 5%; Dietary Fiber: 2g, 8%; Sugar: 7g; Protein: 13g

Nutritional Information per serving with side dish (% based upon daily values) 2 dumplings; 1 orange:

Calories: 281; Total Fat: 10g, 15%; Saturated Fat: 3g, 12%; Cholesterol: 19mg, 6%; Sodium: 747mg, 32%; Total Carbohydrate: 34g, 11%; Dietary Fiber: 5g, 17%; Sugar: 15g; Protein: 19g



When I first saw this recipe, I wondered how lentils and rice could be as good as Scramble subscriber Sena Murphy suggested. But it was a big hit in our family, too! Solomon and Celia both gave it thumbs up, and Andrew and I had several helpings. My more carnivorous friends report that this dish is great with a little cooked spicy sausage thrown in at the end. Serve it with a Chopped Cucumber and Avocado Salad, and Indian naan or pita bread.

- 1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
- 1 large yellow onion, chopped
- 1 cup conventional brown rice (not quick-cooking)
- 2 tsp. curry powder
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 cup dried green/brown lentils
- 4 1/2 cups water
- 1 tsp. salt, or to taste
- 1/2 cup raisins
- 1/4- 1/2 lbs. spicy sausage (optional)
- 1 cup low fat plain yogurt, for serving

In a stockpot with a tight fitting lid, heat the oil over medium-high heat and sauté the onions, uncovered, for about 5 minutes until they start to turn golden.

Add the rice, curry powder, and bay leaves and stir it for a minute to coat the grains of rice. Add the remaining ingredients, except the yogurt and optional sausage, and bring it to a boil. Cover and simmer it until the water is absorbed and the rice is tender, 50-55 minutes. Meanwhile, crumble or dice and brown the sausage in a nonstick skillet, if you are adding it (and make the salad and warm the bread, if you are serving them.)

Remove the bay leaves, stir in the cooked sausage (optional) and serve it topped with a dollop of yogurt (or, refrigerate it for up to 3 days.)

Do Ahead or Delegate: Chop the onion.

Scramble Flavor Booster: Add 1/2 tsp. of ground cumin with the other spices, and/or stir in a couple of tablespoons of chopped fresh cilantro after cooking.

TIP: Before cooking lentils, rinse them under cold water and check them for any tiny stones or dirt.

SERVE WITH CHOPPED CUCUMBER AND AVOCADO SALAD & PITA BREAD OR INDIAN NAAN

To make the salad, in a medium bowl, combine 1 cucumber, peeled and chopped, 2 avocados, peeled and chopped, and 1 Tbsp. crumbled Gorgonzola or blue cheese. Top everything with 1 tsp. fresh lemon juice (about 1/8 lemon) and 1/2 tsp. balsamic vinegar, or more to taste. Toss gently and serve it immediately.

Serve it with pita bread or naan, either warmed in the microwave for about 1 minute or wrapped in foil and warmed in the oven at 300 degrees for 8 - 10 minutes.

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

Calories: 280; Total Fat: 8g, 12%; Saturated Fat: 2g, 8%; Cholesterol: 0mg, 0%; Sodium: 320mg, 13%; Total Carbohydrate: 43g, 14%; Dietary Fiber: 9g, 36%; Sugar: 10g; Protein: 11g

Nutritional Information per serving with side dish (% based upon daily values) 1 cup salad; 1 pita or naan:

Calories: 592; Total Fat: 12g, 17%; Saturated Fat: 3g, 11%; Cholesterol: 0mg, 0%; Sodium: 777mg, 31%; Total Carbohydrate: 105g, 34%; Dietary Fiber: 13g, 51%; Sugar: 10g; Protein: 20g

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TEAR OFF FOR A FRIEND!

GROCERY LIST

STAPLES

- 1 1/2 Tbsp. + 1 tsp. butter or margarine (1) (2S)
- 3 Tbsp. + 1/4 cup + 1 tsp. extra virgin olive oil (1S) (2) (3) (5)
- 1/2 tsp. minced garlic (1S)
- 3 Tbsp. pure maple syrup (1)
- 1 tsp. sugar (superfine if possible) (optional for 4S)
- 1 1/2 Tbsp. Dijon mustard (use wheat/gluten-free if needed) (1)
- 1 Tbsp. rice vinegar (optional for 4S)
- 3 Tbsp. + 1/4 cup reduced-sodium soy sauce (use wheat/gluten-free if needed) (4) (optional for 4S)
- 1/2 tsp. balsamic vinegar (5S)
- 2-4 Tbsp. vinaigrette dressing (3S)

SPICES

- 2 tsp. salt (1) (5)
- 3/4 tsp. ground cumin (1)
- 1 1/2 tsp. paprika (1)
- 3/4 tsp. ground cinnamon (1)
- 2 tsp. curry powder (5)
- 2 bay leaves (5)
- 1/2-1 tsp. salt-free lemon pepper seasoning (optional for 1S)

MEAT AND FISH

- 1 whole chicken, cut up (1)
- 2 strips turkey, pork or vegetarian bacon (optional for 3)
- 1/4- 1/2 lbs. spicy sausage (optional for 5)
- 1 1/4-1 1/2 lbs. tilapia fillets or other thin white fish fillets (2)
- 8-16 oz. extra-firm tofu packed in water (4)

REFRIGERATED/FROZEN SECTION

- 1/2 cup shredded Cheddar cheese (3)
- 2 Tbsp. crumbled feta cheese (3S)
- 1 Tbsp. crumbled Gorgonzola or blue cheese (5S)
- 3/4 cup nonfat sour cream or Greek yogurt (3)
- 1 cup low fat plain yogurt (5)
- 1 pkg. Asian dumplings or egg rolls (4S)
- 1 lb. frozen corn kernels (2S)

PRODUCE

- 1 large yellow onion (5)
- 1/2 sweet yellow onion such as Vidalia or Walla Walla (2)
- 8 scallions (3) (4) (optional for 4S)
- 3 carrots (3S) (4)
- 1 small head lettuce (3S)
- 2 cups bok choy or Napa cabbage (4)
- 1 Tbsp. fresh mint leaves (2)
- 1 cucumber (5S)
- 1 lb. asparagus (1S)

PRODUCE (CONT.)

- 6 small russet or other baking potatoes (3)
- 2 cups sliced cremini or other mushrooms (4)
- 3 slices small chunk fresh ginger (4)
- 2 ripe avocados (5S)
- 3/8 lemon (5S) (optional for 1S)
- 1 1/4 limes (2) (optional for 2S)
- 1 mango (2)
- 3-6 oranges (4S)

SHELVED ITEMS

- 1 pkg. pita bread or Indian Naan (5S)
- 1 1/2 cups bulgur wheat (or quick-cooking brown rice) (1S)
- 4-6 cups tortilla chips (2S)
- 2 pkgs. (3 oz. each) ramen noodle soup, any variety (4)
- 1 cup conventional brown rice (not quick-cooking) (5)
- 3 cups + 64 oz. reduced-sodium chicken or vegetable broth (4) (optional for 1S)
- 1 cup dried green/brown lentils (5)
- 1 1/2-2 1/2 cups salsa (2S) (3)
- 2 Tbsp. rice wine or mirin (4)
- 2 Tbsp. Chinese or Dijon mustard (optional for 4S)
- 1/4 cup Chinese duck sauce (optional for 4S)
- 1 Tbsp. pine nuts (3S)
- 1/2 cup raisins (5)

These ingredients will prepare the following recipes

- (1) Spiced Chicken with Maple Butter Glaze
(1S) Bulgur Wheat & Lemony Asparagus
- (2) Pan-Fried Tilapia with Mango Lime Salsa
(2S) Corn, Lightly Buttered & Tortilla Chips And Salsa
- (3) Crispy Stuffed Tex-Mex Potato Skins
(3S) Green Salad With Shredded Carrots, Feta And Pine Nuts
- (4) Japanese Vegetable Noodle Soup
(4S) Asian Dumplings Or Egg Rolls & Orange Slices
- (5) Indian Spiced Lentils with Rice
(5S) Chopped Cucumber And Avocado Salad & Pita Bread Or Indian Naan

S = used in sidedish for the corresponding recipe