

Here's what you need: Whole wheat pasta, fresh herbs (try basil, oregano and/or parsley), parmesan cheese, shrimp, fresh or bottled garlic.

To prepare: Saute shrimp in a small amount of olive oil with some minced garlic until cooked through. Cook pasta according to package directions. When pasta is drained, return to the pan and toss with shrimp mixture, chopped herbs, and a tablespoon or two of parmesan cheese.

TRY SERVING WITH: A bag of mixed green salad with chopped tomatoes and lowfat dressing.

Prep time: 5 minutes

Cooking time: Approximately 15 minutes

When trying to maintain a healthy diet, it's a wonderful thing to find a non-perishable food that you can keep on hand in your pantry that can be used for a quick and nutritious dinner. One of my favorites is canned chicken breast. It's versatile, low in fat, high in protein and ready to eat!

**Meal #1: Chicken salad sandwiches.**

Talk about quick! All you need to do is drain and flake the chicken, add just enough mayonnaise to coat, seasonings to taste (I like basil, onion powder, garlic powder), and chopped celery, halved grapes or green olives if desired. Serve on bread, toast, tortilla, a 'light' hamburger bun, a bagel, or whatever you like! I like to serve vegetarian baked beans and a salad for side dishes.

**Meal#2: Quick burritos.**

Simply place chicken, black or fat-free refried beans, lowfat cheese and chopped cilantro (if you have some) in a reduced fat tortilla. Heat in microwave. Top with salsa and light sour cream and enjoy. [If you're cooking for a crowd, heat up ingredients separately and build burritos all at once. Serve with fresh watermelon slices.

**Meal #3: Chicken Pasta Salad.**

Simply boil pasta shells (or other pasta) according to package directions. Drain and run under cold water until cool. Toss with drained chicken breast, light mayonnaise, chopped veggies (red bell pepper, onion, celery, carrots) or grapes, and seasonings. Eat immediately or chill until ready to eat. Serve with whole grain rolls.

**Meal #4: Chicken and Green Chili Quesadillas.**

Heat a nonstick skillet and spray with cooking spray. Add tortillas,

top with reduced fat cheese, chopped green chilies, drained chicken breast, and another tortilla, spray with cooking spray. Cook, flipping once, until both sides are lightly browned and cheese is melted. Optional: Add sautéed bell peppers, onion and/or mushroom to quesadillas with other ingredients. Serve with light sour cream, guacamole and salsa. Optional side dish: Brown rice with chopped cilantro and lime juice.

#### **Meal #5: Greek Chicken Salad.**

Start with a bowl of torn romaine lettuce. Add drained and flaked chicken breast, chopped tomatoes and cucumbers, a small amount of chopped kalamata olives and feta cheese and dried basil. Toss with a splash of olive oil and red wine vinegar. Optional side dish: Spray pita wedges with cooking spray and sprinkle with garlic powder, broil until crispy.

This is just the beginning of ideas for using this convenient meal-starter.

Canned chicken, and also rotisserie chicken, can be used in most recipes calling for cooked chicken. Keep a few cans in your pantry and you can whip up a healthy meal in minutes!

#### **CILANTRO SHRIMP SALAD**

HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED: Fresh cilantro, olive oil, lime juice, balsamic vinegar, mixed greens, cooked shrimp, black beans (drained and rinsed), avocado.

TO PREPARE: Make dressing by combining chopped cilantro, olive oil, lime juice, vinegar, and salt and pepper\*. Place greens, shrimp, black beans and chopped avocado in a bowl. Toss with dressing

\*For 4 servings, use the following approx. amounts: 2 T. cilantro, 1 T. olive oil, 2 T. lime juice, 1 T. vinegar, salt and pepper to taste.

TRY SERVING WITH: Whole wheat rolls

Prep time: 10 minutes

Cooking time: n/a

#### **Easy Taco Soup**

HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED: 1 lb lean ground beef, turkey or chicken; 1 can corn (drained); 1 can dark red kidney beans; (do not drain), 4 cups low-sodium tomato juice; 1 package taco seasoning (low sodium if available)

Optional garnishes: Low-fat or fat-free -- tortilla chips, shredded cheese and sour cream.

TO PREPARE: Brown meat and drain well. While meat is cooking, combine remaining ingredients in a large pot. Bring mix to a boil. Add meat and simmer at least 10 minutes. Serve with garnishes as desired.

TRY SERVING WITH: Fresh pineapple or other fruit

Prep time: 10 minutes

Cooking time: n/a

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HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED: Angel hair pasta (whole wheat is best), olive oil, garlic (thinly sliced, or jarred), pre-washed fresh baby spinach, lemon juice, cooked chicken breast (rotisserie, leftovers, or precooked), parmesan cheese (shredded is best).

TO PREPARE: Cook pasta according to package directions. While pasta is cooking, saute garlic in olive oil. When garlic begins to brown, add fresh spinach. Use a couple large handfuls per person, as spinach cooks down a LOT. When spinach starts to wilt, remove from heat. Splash with lemon juice, salt and pepper and toss with drained pasta. Serve with sliced or diced chicken and parmesan cheese.

TRY SERVING WITH: Green salad with a light vinaigrette dressing.

Prep time: N/A

Cooking time: 10-15 minutes

### **Basil Parmesan Snapper**

HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED: Dried basil (about 1/2 t. per fillet), grated parmesan cheese (about 1 T per fillet), black pepper (about 1/8 t. per fillet), snapper fillet(s) (about 4 oz per serving), lemon juice.

TO PREPARE: Preheat oven to 400°. Combine cheese, basil and pepper. Spray fish with cooking spray and sprinkle with cheese mixture. Bake until fish flakes with a fork (probably about 10 minutes). Sprinkle with lemon juice and serve.

TRY SERVING WITH: Green salad with lots of veggies and light vinaigrette dressing.

Prep time: 5 minutes

Cooking time: Approximately 10 minutes

### **Caribbean Chicken Salad**

HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED: 10 oz. can chunk white chicken in water, (drained), 8 oz. can pineapple chunks (drained), small can mandarin oranges (drained), 1/2 cup canned water chestnuts (drained and

quartered), sliced green onions, 3 T. light or fat-free mayonnaise, 1 T. minced gingerroot, 1 T. fresh lime juice, salt and pepper to taste.

TO PREPARE: Toss the chicken, pineapple, oranges, water chestnuts and green onions. Mix the mayonnaise, ginger, lime juice and salt and pepper. Toss with the chicken mixture. Serve over lettuce or in melon halves.

TRY SERVING WITH: Whole wheat rolls

Prep time: 15 minutes

Cooking time: N/A

### **Quick Crustless Quiche**

HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED: Eggs, flour, lowfat or fat-free cheese (any kind), and optional ingredients:

- Steamed or sauteed vegetables of your choice (good suggestions include onions, mushrooms, asparagus, broccoli, bell peppers, spinach)
- Meat/seafood (you can try leftover chicken, bacon, ham, fresh or canned shrimp or crab, imitation crab or lobster)

TO PREPARE: Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Spray a pie pan (preferably deep dish) liberally with cooking spray. Add to the pan cooked veggies. Toss in some cheese, any kind, shredded, sliced, cubed or crumbled. Add meat. Mix 4 eggs or egg substitute with 1/4 c flour or baking mix. Salt and paper as desired, although if you use bacon or any other salty ingredients and some cheeses are pretty salty, you may choose to omit salt. Pour egg mixture over other goodies in pan. Bake at 350 degrees for about 25-30 minutes until solid, puffy and browned slightly. This freezes well, slices microwave well and is a different dish every time!

TRY SERVING WITH: Fresh fruit

Prep time: 10 minutes

Cooking time: Approximately 25-30 minutes

### **BBQ Chicken Quesadillas**

HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED: High fiber tortillas, barbecue sauce, cooked chicken breast (an easy option is to buy a cooked rotisserie chicken), fresh cilantro, reduced fat provolone cheese, red onion.

TO PREPARE: Slice onion into thin strips. Cook over medium-high heat in a nonstick skillet with a little butter/margarine, stirring often. I like to let the onions caramelize (become light brown & crispy), but cook according to your preferences.

Preheat nonstick skillet over medium/medium-high and spray with cooking spray. Place one tortilla in pan, spread with BBQ sauce, add chicken, chopped cilantro, onions and sprinkle lightly with shredded cheese. Add

second tortilla and spray lightly with cooking spray. Cook on each side until lightly browned. Slice into pie shape and enjoy!

TRY SERVING WITH: Tossed salad.

Prep time: 5 minutes

Cooking time: 15 minutes (cooking onions and baking pizza)

--> **Easy Shrimp Kebabs**

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HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED: Lowfat or fat-free Italian salad dressing, raw (peeled and deveined) shrimp, sweet bell pepper (any color), onion, instant brown rice.

TO PREPARE: Marinate shrimp in enough dressing to cover (approx. 4 oz. per person, per serving) for at least 10 minutes. Cut peppers and onions into approx. 1-inch chunks. Alternate threading shrimp and veggies on skewers. Grill until shrimp is cooked through (approx. 3 minutes per side). Serve over rice.

TRY SERVING WITH: Steamed broccoli

Prep time: 12 minutes (including min. marinating time)

Cooking time: 6 minutes