

Mom's Day Off: Quick-Meal Tips for Dads and Kids

Don't cook? Don't worry! You can still whip up a mom-worthy meal

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If you're a mom who normally cooks for your family, there is one thing I'm pretty sure you DON'T want to do on Mother's Day -- and that's cook! (If you're married to such a mom, take heed.)

Even if mom's loved ones aren't exactly seasoned chefs, they can give her the day off from cooking by using products found in any supermarket. This isn't so much "cooking" as "assembling" the meal.

Still, we're not talking about junk food. All of the dishes described below can be part of a healthy diet, and we've emphasized trimming extra calories and fat grams and adding higher-fiber, higher-nutrient foods wherever possible.

So, Mom, print this article out and leave it where Dad and the kids can find it. Hint shamelessly. Then, prepare to be pampered!

Make Mom breakfast:

- Bake reduced-fat cinnamon rolls (in the pop-fresh can from Pillsbury).
- Use reduced-fat Bisquick and follow the directions on the box to make pancakes or waffles. If you are making pancakes, jazz them up by stirring in some frozen blueberries. If you are making waffles, top them with sliced strawberries and serve with a dollop of Light Cool Whip or light whipped cream (from the pressurized can).
- Serve up a smoothie using frozen or fresh fruit, fruit juice, yogurt, and light vanilla ice cream or fat-free frozen yogurt.
- Layer up a beautiful yogurt parfait. Use flavored yogurt, top with berries or sliced fruit, then low-fat granola. Repeat the layers, if there's room in the parfait glass.
- Start with multigrain toaster waffles. Top with fresh fruit, a sprinkling of powdered sugar, and a dollop of Light Cool Whip or light whipped cream.
- Grill a ham-and-cheese bagel open-faced in a toaster oven: Top a whole-grain bagel half with a couple of slices of extra-lean ham, and sprinkle with the shredded, reduced-fat cheese of your choice. Broil or toast until cheese is nicely melted.
- Make a bird's-nest breakfast: Coat a 9-inch, nonstick frying pan generously with canola cooking spray while heating over medium-high heat. Top with a cup of frozen, shredded hash browns (choose some with 0 grams of fat per serving) and cook until nicely brown on bottom. Coat the tops of the hash browns with canola cooking spray, then flip them over

- and brown the other side. Once they're nicely browned, push hash browns all around the edges of the pan (to make an opening in the middle of the pan). Coat the hole with canola cooking spray, then crack an egg into the opening. Cover pan and let egg cook if you like it sunny side up. If you like it fried on both sides, turn the whole shebang over to fry the egg's other side. Serve with sliced tomato, catsup, and fresh fruit.
- Serve any of the above breakfast items with a fresh fruit kabob (just line up fruit chunks on a skewer) or a melon slice topped with grapes or fresh berries.

Make Mom lunch:

- Whip up a batch of albacore tuna salad with a can of water-packed albacore tuna, drained; a tablespoon of light mayo; and some pickle relish. Serve on her favorite bread with lettuce and tomato.
- Make a quick pasta salad by tossing cooked, cooled pasta; less-fat salami slices (cut into quarters); cubes of part-skim mozzarella; diced zucchini, red pepper, and/or broccoli florets; and bottled light Italian salad dressing.
- Bake up some nachos by layering reduced-fat tortilla chips; canned, fat-free refried beans; shredded reduced-fat jack or cheddar cheese; and chopped green onions. Bake in 400-degree oven until cheese melts (10-15 minutes). Top with fat-free sour cream and salsa.
- Grill or pan-fry a Gardenburger (you'll find several flavors in the frozen food section) with a slice of reduced cheese melted on top. Serve on a toasted multigrain bun with grilled onions or sliced tomato and lettuce.

Make Mom dinner:

- Toss up a chicken Caesar salad using shredded, roasted chicken breast (from a rotisserie chicken bought at the supermarket), Romaine lettuce (you'll find bags of ready-to-use romaine in the produce section), and bottled light Caesar salad dressing.
- Make a chicken quesadilla by sandwiching reduced-fat, shredded Jack or cheddar cheese and shredded, roasted chicken breast (from a rotisserie chicken) inside two flour tortillas (use the higher-fiber ones if you can find them). Fry them in a nonstick frying pan until the cheese melts; serve with sliced avocado, salsa, and fat-free sour cream.
- Grill some salmon teriyaki. Coat salmon filets with bottled teriyaki sauce, then broil or grill them until cooked throughout. Serve with cooked brown rice (follow the directions on the box or bag) and steamed veggies.
- Serve up soup in a bread bowl! Hollow out a small sourdough bread round (usually around 6 inches wide) and fill with gourmet canned soup that you've heated in a saucepan over the stove (Wolfgang Puck has tasty soup options with 6 grams of fat or less per serving). Garnish with shredded Parmesan cheese and parsley flakes.

- Shrimp cocktail can be quickly put together with defrosted pre-cooked shrimp (from the frozen fish section) served in a pretty glass or bowl with bottled cocktail sauce.
- For quickie pasta, boil fresh packaged tortellini or ravioli, drain, then serve with bottled marinara sauce or frozen pesto (available in the frozen pasta section of most supermarkets) warmed up. Serve with cooked veggies and fresh fruit.
- Make designer pizza! Start with a Boboli pizza crust and top with bottled pizza sauce (or defrosted pesto sauce). Add shredded cheese of choice and whatever toppings you desire (sun-dried tomatoes, mushroom slices, less-fat salami or turkey pepperoni, artichoke hearts, green onions, green or red pepper slices, etc.).