

Pantry meals

Imagine you're on your way home and you remember that you haven't planned (or thawed) anything for supper. Many times the first thing that crosses the mind is to stop for pizza or fast food. But, take out meals can damage both your budget and your waistline. Don't despair, there are some quick and inexpensive alternatives to help you out of your dilemma.

A well stocked pantry is the key to creating quick and easy meals. Canned vegetables, canned beans, meat and fish, sauce mixes, soups, rice and pasta can quickly be made into nutritious, satisfying suppers. Look at what leftovers are hiding in the refrigerator, then go to work.

Try making a black bean soup by combining canned black beans, canned stewed tomatoes, browned sausage or ground beef, and a little beef broth (bouillon cubes in water works fine). Heat thoroughly and serve with tortilla chips.

Heat a can of refried beans, spoon them onto a warm tortilla, add a little cheese, and warm it in the microwave. Serve with salsa and sour cream for great burritos.

For a great skillet supper, boil a cup or two of noodles of any type. Add a can of salmon (or tuna if you prefer), a can of cream of chicken (or mushroom or celery) soup, a can of your favorite vegetables, onions, peppers, and heat before serving.

A delicious curry is as simple as taking a can of coconut milk, a can of chicken, and some frozen vegetables; add curry powder and basil to taste. Heat thoroughly and serve over rice.

Stir up a quick batch of biscuits, or if you prefer, use canned biscuits from the refrigerator section of the store. Roll or pat them out to a ¼ inch thickness. In another bowl mix canned salmon, cream cheese, and just a little dill. Put a spoonful of the salmon mixture in the center of the flattened biscuit, fold it over, and seal the edges. Bake them for about 10 minutes and you've got a homemade version of a hot pocket.

Does your family like hot sandwiches? Mix a can of salmon or tuna with onions, ½ cup of catsup, and 1 cup of grated cheese. Put it in hamburger buns and wrap each bun in foil. Pop them into the oven for about 15 minutes until they are hot and the cheese is melted. This was one of my family's favorites when the kids were growing up.

How about Fried Rice? Cook some rice (or better yet use leftover cooked rice). Heat a small amount of oil in a skillet, stir in rice, a tablespoon of soy sauce and frozen or canned, drained vegetables, canned or leftover, cooked meat and a scrambled egg if desired.

Many of us love breakfast for supper. Take out the pancake mix or stir some up from scratch. But fancy them up a little by folding in some kind of canned or frozen fruit. If

you've got a can of cranberry sauce left over from Thanksgiving, break it up and add some in your pancake batter before cooking. Mix the remainder with corn syrup and heat for syrup.

When your pantry is well stocked, its only a few minutes until you have a hot, nutritious meal for your family.