

Planned overs

We're all into efficiency in the kitchen. Get that good wholesome meal made, feed the family and go on to the next project. With a little planning and just a few more minutes, you can cook once and prepare two meals for your family. And I'm not talking about leftovers here. There is a subtle difference between leftovers and planned overs. In both cases you are cooking more than you need. But the variety of having two different meals will make a huge difference for your family's mealtime enjoyment.

First, let's start with the shopping. I look at the meat counter with the idea of what can easily be used in more than one way. A package of 8 to 10 pork chops, a large roast, a large package of chicken, or a 6 to 10 lb package of ground beef are the items that make it into my basket. Let's take each of these individually to see how to plan over family meals.

Pork chops are a good family meal with lots of options for cooking. I usually fix the first meal by seasoning and cooking the whole package. It can be grilled outside, baked in the oven, or even cooked on the top of the stove, though this does take more time. Even with my large family, this is plenty to eat for the first meal. After this meal, I cut the pork from the bone and cut it into slices or chunks. This meat can be combined with a barbecue sauce for pork sandwiches, combined with cheese and green chili sauce, rolled in a tortilla and baked for enchiladas, or even made into a great stew.

What can you do with a roast? A good roast can give you several meals for your family. Season and cook the roast by your favorite method. After the first meal, cut the remainder into slices or chunks. It can be served as sandwiches, made into a casserole, or used in a stew.

Chicken is another easy to plan over meal. You might choose to roast a whole chicken or even a package of breasts or thighs. Cook the chicken as you would like for the first meal, then remove the bones and cut the remainder into chunks. These can be combined with cream of chicken soup and rice for a casserole, rolled in a tortilla for chicken enchiladas, made into soup, or used on top of a salad. Cooked chicken breast sells for \$9 a lb. So cooking your own is a great bargain.

Most ground meat recipes start with the instructions to brown and crumble up your meat. So when you are browning the meat, do the whole package. Then repackage it into smaller amounts that are appropriate for your recipes—maybe 1 pound for tacos or stroganoff, and 2 lbs for chili. This is a great time saver for those rushed nights when you forget to thaw anything--just grab an already cooked package of meat and supper is right around the corner.

We have a great recipe here in the Cooperative Extension Service for an all purpose casserole. Take one part pasta/rice, one part meat, one part sauce, throw in a few vegetables and you have a good basic casserole that will always fill the bill. It is a great way to use up those leftover or planned over items. So think of using noodles, chicken, cream of chicken soup, any leftover vegetables you have in the refrigerator (or use a

package of frozen vegetables), mix it up and heat it. A second version would have ground beef, rice, tomato sauce, and a can of beans or corn. The adaptations on this recipe are endless and all are great ways to feed your family.

Planning ahead for meals is easy on the budget and good nutritious meals for your family.