

THE HEALTHY HOMESTEADER

Kitchen Club

August 2026 Recipe Booklet

Back to the Family Table

28 dinners, every one 20 minutes or less on weekdays

6 simple breakfast recipes

Plus the Lunchbox and After-School Snacks collection

MONDAY AUGUST 3 DINNER

Crockpot Beef and Cheddar Sliders, French Dip Style

Prep 10 min · Cook 8 hrs · Serves 6-8 · Easy

INGREDIENTS

Chuck roast — 3 lbs
Beef broth — 2 cups
Au jus seasoning packet — 1 packet
Worcestershire sauce — 2 tbsp
Garlic, minced — 3 cloves
Salt and black pepper — generously
Hawaiian rolls — 1 package (12 count)
Sharp cheddar cheese, sliced — 12 slices
Butter, melted — 2 tbsp

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Season chuck roast with salt and pepper. Place in slow cooker.
2. Whisk beef broth, au jus seasoning, Worcestershire and garlic together. Pour over the roast.
3. Cook on LOW 8 hours until the beef shreds easily with a fork.
4. Shred beef directly in the slow cooker and toss it in all the juices so every bite is seasoned.
5. Slice Hawaiian rolls in half as one slab. Layer bottom half with beef, top with cheddar slices, add the top half of rolls.
6. Brush melted butter over the tops. Broil 2-3 minutes until cheese melts and tops are golden. Slice into individual sliders and serve.

Megan's Tip: Mix the jus right into the shredded beef instead of serving it on the side. Same restaurant flavor, way less mess, and every single bite is already seasoned.

TUESDAY AUGUST 4 DINNER

Creamy Taco Pasta

Prep 5 min · Cook 15 min · Serves 6 · Easy

INGREDIENTS

80/20 ground beef — 1.5 lbs
Taco seasoning — 3 tbsp
Rotini or penne pasta — 12 oz
Beef broth — 2 cups
Diced tomatoes with green chilies — 10 oz can
Cream cheese, cubed — 4 oz
Shredded cheddar — 1.5 cups
Salt and pepper — to taste
Fresh cilantro and lime for serving — optional

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Brown ground beef in a large deep skillet over medium-high heat. Drain excess fat.
2. Stir in taco seasoning, then add broth, diced tomatoes and uncooked pasta.
3. Bring to a boil, then cover and reduce to a simmer. Cook 12-14 minutes, stirring occasionally, until pasta is tender.
4. Stir in cream cheese until melted and fully combined.
5. Remove from heat, fold in shredded cheddar. Season with salt and pepper.
6. Top with fresh cilantro and a squeeze of lime before serving.

Megan's Tip: Reserve a splash of pasta water before draining. If the sauce ever feels too thick, a spoonful loosens it right back up to creamy perfection.

WEDNESDAY AUGUST 5 DINNER

Garlic Butter Chicken and Rice Skillet

Prep 10 min · Cook 20 min · Serves 6 · Easy

INGREDIENTS

Boneless skinless chicken thighs, cut into pieces — 2 lbs
Butter — 4 tbsp
Garlic, minced — 4 cloves
White rice, uncooked — 1.5 cups
Chicken broth — 3 cups
Italian seasoning — 1 tsp
Salt and black pepper — generously
Fresh parsley, chopped — for serving
Parmesan, grated — 1/2 cup

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Season chicken pieces with salt and pepper. Melt 2 tbsp butter in a large skillet over medium-high heat.
2. Sear chicken 4-5 minutes without moving it, then flip and cook 3 more minutes until golden. Remove and set aside.
3. Add remaining butter and garlic to the same skillet, cook 30 seconds until fragrant.
4. Add rice and toast 1 minute, stirring. Pour in broth and Italian seasoning, scraping up any browned bits.
5. Return chicken to the skillet. Bring to a boil, then cover and reduce to a simmer 15-18 minutes until rice is tender and liquid is absorbed.
6. Sprinkle with parmesan and fresh parsley before serving.

Megan's Tip: Let the chicken get a real sear before you touch it, at least 4 minutes untouched. That golden crust is where most of the flavor lives.

THURSDAY AUGUST 6 DINNER

Stovetop Beef Quesadillas

Prep 5 min · Cook 10 min · Serves 4-6 · Easy

INGREDIENTS

80/20 ground beef, cooked and seasoned (or leftover taco meat) — 1.5 lbs
Large flour tortillas — 8
Shredded Mexican cheese blend — 2 cups
Butter, softened — 2 tbsp
Sour cream, salsa and guacamole — to serve

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Heat a large skillet or griddle over medium heat.
2. Lightly butter one side of each tortilla.
3. Place a tortilla butter-side down in the skillet. Add cheese and beef to one half, fold the other half over.
4. Cook 2-3 minutes per side until golden and crispy, pressing down gently with a spatula.
5. Repeat with remaining tortillas.
6. Cut into wedges and serve with sour cream, salsa and guacamole.

Megan's Tip: Don't overfill the tortillas. A thin, even layer of meat and cheese folds and crisps up far better than a thick one, which tends to spill out the sides.

FRIDAY AUGUST 7 DINNER

Sheet Pan Sausage and Peppers

Prep 10 min · Cook 20 min · Serves 6 · Easy

INGREDIENTS

Smoked sausage or Italian sausage links — 2 lbs
Bell peppers, sliced — 4
Yellow onion, sliced — 1 large
Olive oil — 3 tbsp
Italian seasoning — 1.5 tsp
Garlic powder — 1 tsp
Salt and black pepper — generously
Hoagie rolls (optional, for serving) — 6

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 425F. Line a large sheet pan with foil for easy cleanup.
2. Slice sausage into thick coins if using links, or leave whole if pre-sliced smoked sausage.
3. Toss sausage, peppers and onion with olive oil, Italian seasoning, garlic powder, salt and pepper directly on the sheet pan.
4. Spread into a single layer so everything roasts instead of steams.
5. Roast 20-22 minutes, stirring halfway through, until sausage is browned and peppers are tender.
6. Serve as is or piled onto toasted hoagie rolls.

Megan's Tip: Cut everything roughly the same size so it all finishes cooking at the same time. Uneven pieces mean some parts burn while others are still crunchy.

SATURDAY AUGUST 8 DINNER

Grilled Ribeye with Garlic Butter

Prep 10 min · Cook 15 min · Serves 4 · Easy

INGREDIENTS

Ribeye steaks — 4 (about 1 inch thick)
Salt and black pepper — generously
Butter, softened — 6 tbsp
Garlic, minced — 3 cloves
Fresh rosemary or thyme, chopped — 1 tbsp
Olive oil — 1 tbsp

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Let steaks sit at room temperature 30 minutes. Pat dry and season generously with salt and pepper on both sides.
2. Mix softened butter with garlic and fresh herbs to make a compound butter. Set aside.
3. Heat grill or cast iron skillet over high heat. Add olive oil.
4. Sear steaks 4-5 minutes per side for medium-rare, or until desired doneness.
5. Remove from heat and immediately top each steak with a spoonful of garlic herb butter.
6. Rest 5 minutes before serving so the juices redistribute.

Megan's Tip: Let the steaks come to room temperature for 30 minutes before cooking. Cold steak straight from the fridge cooks unevenly, and nobody wants that on a Saturday.

SUNDAY AUGUST 9 DINNER

Breakfast Burritos with Hash Browns, Sausage and Eggs

Prep 15 min · Cook 20 min · Serves 8 burritos · Easy

INGREDIENTS

Breakfast sausage, crumbled — 1 lb
Frozen shredded hash browns — 3 cups
Farm eggs — 10
Shredded cheddar — 2 cups
Large flour tortillas — 8
Butter — 2 tbsp
Salt and pepper — to taste
Salsa, for serving — optional

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Cook sausage in a large skillet over medium heat until browned. Remove and set aside.
2. In the same skillet, add hash browns and cook 8-10 minutes until golden and crispy. Season with salt and pepper.
3. Push hash browns to one side. Melt butter and scramble the eggs in the empty space until just set.
4. Combine sausage, hash browns and eggs together in the skillet.
5. Warm tortillas, fill each with the egg mixture and shredded cheddar, and roll tightly.
6. Serve immediately with salsa, or wrap extras in foil and freeze for busy mornings all week.

Megan's Tip: Make a double batch and wrap the extras individually in foil, then freeze. On busy school mornings, unwrap, microwave 90 seconds and breakfast is done.

MONDAY AUGUST 10 DINNER

Garlic Butter Beef Bites and Potatoes

Prep 10 min · Cook 18 min · Serves 6 · Easy

INGREDIENTS

Sirloin or ribeye, cubed — 2 lbs
Baby potatoes, halved — 1.5 lbs
Butter — 5 tbsp
Garlic, minced — 4 cloves
Fresh rosemary or thyme, chopped — 1 tbsp
Olive oil — 2 tbsp
Salt and black pepper — generously

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Boil halved potatoes in salted water 8-10 minutes until just fork-tender. Drain.
2. Heat olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high. Sear potatoes cut-side down 4-5 minutes until golden. Remove and set aside.
3. Season beef bites generously with salt and pepper.
4. In the same skillet, crank heat to high. Sear beef in a single layer 1-2 minutes per side, working in batches if needed.
5. Return potatoes to the skillet. Add butter, garlic and herbs, tossing everything together 1-2 minutes until fragrant.
6. Serve immediately while hot and buttery.

Megan's Tip: Sear the beef in batches if your skillet feels crowded. Overcrowding steams the meat instead of browning it, and that golden crust is where the flavor lives.

TUESDAY AUGUST 11 DINNER

Crockpot Salsa Chicken Tacos

Prep 5 min · Cook 6 hrs · Serves 6 · Easy

INGREDIENTS

Boneless skinless chicken thighs — 2.5 lbs
Chunky salsa — 1.5 cups
Taco seasoning — 2 tbsp
Chicken broth — 1/4 cup
Corn tortillas — 12-16
Shredded lettuce, diced tomato, shredded cheese — to serve
Sour cream and lime — to serve

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Place chicken thighs in the slow cooker. Sprinkle with taco seasoning.
2. Pour salsa and broth over the top.
3. Cook on LOW 6 hours or HIGH 3 hours until chicken shreds easily.
4. Shred chicken directly in the slow cooker and stir back into the juices.
5. Warm tortillas and set out all the toppings.
6. Let everyone build their own tacos.

Megan's Tip: Use a chunky salsa rather than a thin one. It keeps the shredded chicken from getting watery and gives every bite more texture.

WEDNESDAY AUGUST 12 DINNER

Beef and Rice Stuffed Pepper Skillet

Prep 10 min · Cook 18 min · Serves 6 · Easy

INGREDIENTS

80/20 ground beef — 1.5 lbs
Bell peppers, diced — 3
White onion, diced — 1
White rice, uncooked — 1 cup
Diced tomatoes — 28 oz can
Beef broth — 1.5 cups
Garlic powder and Italian seasoning — 1 tsp each
Shredded mozzarella or cheddar — 1.5 cups
Salt and pepper — to taste

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Brown ground beef with onion in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Drain excess fat.
2. Add diced peppers and cook 3-4 minutes until slightly softened.
3. Stir in rice, diced tomatoes, broth, garlic powder and Italian seasoning.
4. Bring to a boil, then cover and reduce to a simmer 15-18 minutes until rice is tender.
5. Season with salt and pepper to taste.
6. Sprinkle cheese over the top, cover 2 minutes off heat until melted, and serve.

Megan's Tip: Dice the peppers small and uniform. It helps them cook through at the same rate as the rice instead of staying crunchy while the rice finishes.

THURSDAY AUGUST 13 DINNER

Buffalo Chicken Wraps

Prep 15 min · Cook 0 min · Serves 4-6 · Easy

INGREDIENTS

Cooked shredded chicken (rotisserie works great) — 3 cups

Buffalo sauce — 1/2 cup

Ranch dressing — 1/2 cup

Large flour tortillas — 6

Shredded lettuce — 2 cups

Shredded cheddar — 1 cup

Diced celery, optional — 1/2 cup

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Toss shredded chicken with buffalo sauce until fully coated.
2. Lay out tortillas and spread a thin layer of ranch dressing on each.
3. Layer buffalo chicken, lettuce, cheese and celery if using.
4. Roll tightly, tucking in the sides as you go.
5. Slice in half and serve with extra ranch for dipping.

Megan's Tip: A rotisserie chicken from the store makes this nearly a zero-cook dinner. Shred it warm, toss with sauce, and dinner is basically already done.

FRIDAY AUGUST 14 DINNER

Sheet Pan Steak Fajitas

Prep 10 min · Cook 18 min · Serves 6 · Easy

INGREDIENTS

Flank or skirt steak, sliced thin — 2 lbs

Bell peppers, sliced — 3

White onion, sliced — 1 large

Olive oil — 3 tbsp

Chili powder — 2 tsp

Cumin — 1 tsp

Garlic powder — 1 tsp

Salt and pepper — generously

Flour tortillas, warmed — 12

Lime, sour cream, guacamole — to serve

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 425F. Line a large sheet pan with foil.
2. Toss sliced steak, peppers and onion with olive oil, chili powder, cumin, garlic powder, salt and pepper directly on the pan.
3. Spread into a single layer.
4. Roast 15-18 minutes, stirring halfway through, until steak is cooked through and vegetables are tender.
5. Broil the last 2 minutes for extra char if desired.
6. Serve with warm tortillas, lime, sour cream and guacamole.

Megan's Tip: Broil for the last 2 minutes if you want that charred, restaurant-style edge on the steak and peppers. Watch closely so it doesn't overcook.

SATURDAY AUGUST 15 DINNER

Smoked or Grilled BBQ Chicken

Prep 10 min · Cook 35 min · Serves 6 · Easy

INGREDIENTS

Bone-in chicken thighs or a mix of pieces — 3-4 lbs
Olive oil — 2 tbsp
Salt, pepper, garlic powder, smoked paprika — 1 tsp each
BBQ sauce — 1.5 cups

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat grill or smoker to medium heat, about 350F.
2. Pat chicken dry and rub with olive oil, salt, pepper, garlic powder and smoked paprika.
3. Grill or smoke chicken 25-30 minutes, turning occasionally, until internal temp reaches 165F.
4. In the last 10 minutes, brush generously with BBQ sauce, turning and basting a couple times.
5. Rest 5 minutes before serving with extra sauce on the side.

Megan's Tip: Sauce the chicken in the last 10 minutes only, not the whole cook. BBQ sauce has sugar in it that burns easily over direct heat if it's on too long.

SUNDAY AUGUST 16 DINNER

Sheet Pan Pancakes with Sausage

Prep 10 min · Cook 20 min · Serves 8 · Easy

INGREDIENTS

Flour — 3 cups
Baking powder — 3 tsp
Sugar — 3 tbsp
Salt — 1/2 tsp
Buttermilk — 3 cups
Eggs — 3
Butter, melted — 6 tbsp
Vanilla extract — 1 tsp
Sausage links — 1 package
Maple syrup, for serving — to serve

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 425F. Line a large sheet pan with parchment paper.
2. Whisk flour, baking powder, sugar and salt together.
3. In a separate bowl whisk buttermilk, eggs, melted butter and vanilla.
4. Combine wet and dry ingredients, stirring just until mixed. Small lumps are fine.
5. Pour batter onto the prepared sheet pan and spread evenly. Bake 12-15 minutes until golden and set.
6. While pancakes bake, cook sausage links in a skillet according to package directions.
7. Cut pancakes into squares and serve with sausage and maple syrup.

Megan's Tip: Baking the batter on a sheet pan means every pancake is ready at the exact same time. No more standing over the stove flipping batch after batch while everyone else already eats.

MONDAY AUGUST 17 DINNER

Crockpot Beef Stroganoff

Prep 10 min · Cook 7 hrs · Serves 6 · Easy

INGREDIENTS

Chuck roast or stew meat, cubed — 2.5 lbs
Cremini mushrooms, sliced — 8 oz
Yellow onion, diced — 1
Beef broth — 2.5 cups
Worcestershire sauce — 2 tbsp
Garlic, minced — 3 cloves
Cornstarch — 3 tbsp
Sour cream — 3/4 cup
Egg noodles, cooked — 1 lb
Salt and pepper — generously

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Season beef with salt and pepper. Place in the slow cooker with mushrooms and onion.
2. Whisk broth, Worcestershire and garlic together, then pour over the beef.
3. Cook on LOW 7 hours until beef is fork-tender.
4. Mix cornstarch with a little cold water, stir into the slow cooker to thicken. Cook 15 more minutes.
5. Turn off heat, stir in sour cream until smooth and creamy.
6. Serve over warm egg noodles.

Megan's Tip: Stir the sour cream in at the very end, off heat if possible. Adding it too early or letting it boil can cause it to break and turn grainy instead of silky.

TUESDAY AUGUST 18 DINNER

Ground Beef Taco Skillet

Prep 5 min · Cook 15 min · Serves 6 · Easy

INGREDIENTS

80/20 ground beef — 1.5 lbs
Taco seasoning — 3 tbsp
Instant white rice — 1.5 cups
Black beans, drained and rinsed — 1 can
Beef broth — 2 cups
Diced tomatoes — 10 oz can
Shredded cheddar — 1.5 cups
Salt and pepper — to taste
Toppings: lettuce, sour cream, salsa — to serve

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Brown ground beef in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Drain excess fat.
2. Stir in taco seasoning, then add broth and diced tomatoes.
3. Bring to a boil, stir in instant rice and black beans.
4. Cover and remove from heat, let sit 5-7 minutes until rice is tender.
5. Fluff with a fork, sprinkle cheese over the top, cover 2 minutes until melted.
6. Serve with your favorite taco toppings.

Megan's Tip: Use instant or minute rice for this one. It cooks fast enough to stay in sync with the beef and beans without the skillet needing to simmer forever.

WEDNESDAY AUGUST 19 DINNER

Sheet Pan Chicken Fajita Bake

Prep 10 min · Cook 20 min · Serves 6 · Easy

INGREDIENTS

Boneless skinless chicken breasts or thighs, sliced — 2 lbs
Bell peppers, sliced — 3
White onion, sliced — 1
Olive oil — 3 tbsp
Chili powder — 2 tsp
Cumin — 1 tsp
Garlic powder — 1 tsp
Salt and pepper — generously
Flour tortillas, warmed — 12
Lime and cilantro — to serve

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 425F. Line a large sheet pan with foil.
2. Pat chicken dry. Toss chicken, peppers and onion with olive oil, chili powder, cumin, garlic powder, salt and pepper directly on the pan.
3. Spread into a single even layer.
4. Roast 18-20 minutes, stirring halfway, until chicken is cooked through and vegetables are tender with some char.
5. Squeeze fresh lime over everything right out of the oven.
6. Serve with warm tortillas and fresh cilantro.

Megan's Tip: Pat the chicken completely dry before seasoning. Any extra moisture on the surface steams instead of roasts, and you lose that nice color on the edges.

THURSDAY AUGUST 20 DINNER

Italian Beef Sliders

Prep 15 min · Cook 0 min · Serves 6 · Easy

INGREDIENTS

Thinly sliced deli roast beef — 1.5 lbs
Provolone cheese slices — 12
Giardiniera, chopped — 1/2 cup
Slider buns or Hawaiian rolls — 12
Butter, melted — 3 tbsp
Garlic powder and Italian seasoning — 1/2 tsp each

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Warm the sliced beef briefly, either in a skillet or microwave, so it's not cold.
2. Slice the buns as one slab if using a connected pack. Layer bottom half with beef, provolone and giardiniera.
3. Place the top half of the buns on.
4. Mix melted butter with garlic powder and Italian seasoning, brush generously over the tops.
5. Broil 2-3 minutes until cheese melts and tops are golden.
6. Slice into individual sliders and serve warm.

Megan's Tip: Warm the beef briefly before assembling, even just 30 seconds in the microwave under a damp paper towel. Cold deli beef makes for a sad slider.

FRIDAY AUGUST 21 DINNER

Creamy Garlic Chicken and Rice

Prep 10 min · Cook 18 min · Serves 6 · Easy

INGREDIENTS

Boneless skinless chicken thighs, cut into pieces — 2 lbs
Butter — 3 tbsp
Garlic, grated or minced fine — 5 cloves
White rice, uncooked — 1.5 cups
Chicken broth — 2.5 cups
Heavy cream — 1/2 cup
Parmesan, grated — 1/2 cup
Salt and pepper — generously
Fresh parsley — for serving

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Season chicken with salt and pepper. Melt butter in a large pot over medium-high heat.
2. Sear chicken 4-5 minutes until golden. Remove and set aside.
3. Add garlic to the same pot, cook 30 seconds until fragrant.
4. Stir in rice and toast 1 minute, then add broth, scraping up browned bits.
5. Return chicken to the pot. Bring to a boil, then cover and simmer 15-18 minutes until rice is tender.
6. Stir in cream and parmesan until creamy. Top with fresh parsley before serving.

Megan's Tip: Grate the garlic instead of mincing it for this one. It melts right into the sauce instead of leaving little chunks, giving you that smooth, restaurant-style creaminess.

SATURDAY AUGUST 22 DINNER

Cheeseburgers with Homemade Hamburger Buns

Prep 20 min + rise · Cook 20 min · Serves 8 · Easy

INGREDIENTS

Warm water — 1 cup
Active dry yeast — 2.25 tsp (1 packet)
Sugar — 3 tbsp
Butter, melted — 3 tbsp
Egg — 1
Flour — 3.5 cups
Salt — 1.5 tsp
80/20 ground beef — 2.5 lbs
Salt and pepper for burgers — generously
American or cheddar cheese slices — 8
Burger toppings of choice — to serve

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Combine warm water, yeast and sugar. Let sit 5 minutes until foamy.
2. Stir in melted butter and egg. Add flour and salt, mix until a soft dough forms.
3. Knead 5-6 minutes until smooth. Place in a greased bowl, cover and let rise 1 hour until doubled.
4. Punch down dough, divide into 8 pieces, shape into buns. Place on a baking sheet, cover and let rise 30 more minutes.
5. Bake buns at 375F for 15-18 minutes until golden. Cool slightly.
6. Form beef into patties, season with salt and pepper. Grill or griddle 3-4 minutes per side, adding cheese in the last minute.
7. Build burgers on the fresh buns with all your favorite toppings.

Megan's Tip: Most of the 'time' here is just waiting for the dough to rise, not hands-on work. Mix the dough early in the day, let it rise while you do other things, and shape it right before dinner.

SUNDAY AUGUST 23 DINNER

Cheesy Hash Brown and Sausage Casserole

Prep 15 min · Cook 40 min · Serves 8 · Easy

INGREDIENTS

Breakfast sausage, crumbled — 1 lb
Frozen shredded hash browns — 1 bag (30 oz)
Farm eggs — 8
Whole milk — 1 cup
Shredded cheddar — 2.5 cups
Salt and pepper — generously
Garlic powder and onion powder — 1/2 tsp each

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 375F. Grease a 9x13 baking dish.
2. Cook sausage in a skillet over medium heat until browned. Drain and set aside.
3. Spread frozen hash browns evenly in the baking dish. Layer sausage over the top.
4. Whisk eggs, milk, salt, pepper, garlic powder and onion powder together.
5. Pour egg mixture evenly over the hash browns and sausage. Top with shredded cheddar.
6. Bake 35-40 minutes until eggs are set and the top is golden. Let rest 5 minutes before serving.

Megan's Tip: Assemble the whole casserole the night before and refrigerate. Sunday afternoon, just pop it in the oven. Even less to think about on an already full day.

MONDAY AUGUST 24 DINNER

Crockpot Chicken Fajita Soup

Prep 10 min · Cook 6 hrs · Serves 6 · Easy

INGREDIENTS

Boneless skinless chicken breasts or thighs — 2 lbs
Bell peppers, sliced — 3
White onion, diced — 1
Diced tomatoes with green chilies — 10 oz can
Chicken broth — 4 cups
Chili powder, cumin, garlic powder — 1 tsp each
Corn, frozen or canned — 1 cup
Salt and pepper — generously
Shredded cheese, tortilla strips, avocado — to serve

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Place chicken, peppers and onion in the slow cooker.
2. Add diced tomatoes, broth, chili powder, cumin, garlic powder, salt and pepper.
3. Cook on LOW 6 hours or HIGH 3 hours until chicken is cooked through and tender.
4. Shred chicken directly in the pot and stir back in.
5. Stir in corn and cook 10 more minutes.
6. Serve topped with shredded cheese, tortilla strips and avocado.

Megan's Tip: Shred the chicken right in the pot at the end instead of dirtying another dish. It soaks up even more flavor that way too.

TUESDAY AUGUST 25 DINNER

Ground Beef Taco Salad Bowls

Prep 10 min · Cook 10 min · Serves 6 · Easy

INGREDIENTS

80/20 ground beef — 1.5 lbs
Taco seasoning — 3 tbsp
Romaine lettuce, chopped — 2 heads
Cherry tomatoes, halved — 1 pint
Shredded cheddar — 1.5 cups
Tortilla chips, crushed — 2 cups
Sour cream, salsa, guacamole — to serve

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Brown ground beef in a skillet over medium-high heat with taco seasoning and a splash of water.
2. While beef cooks, chop romaine and halve cherry tomatoes.
3. Build bowls with lettuce as the base.
4. Top with warm taco meat, cheese, tomatoes and crushed chips.
5. Finish with sour cream, salsa and guacamole.

Megan's Tip: Brown extra beef and freeze half in a labeled bag. On a night when even 15 minutes feels like too much, dinner is just a thaw and assemble away.

WEDNESDAY AUGUST 26 DINNER

Chicken and Broccoli Alfredo Skillet

Prep 10 min · Cook 15 min · Serves 6 · Easy

INGREDIENTS

Boneless skinless chicken breasts, cubed — 1.5 lbs
Penne pasta — 12 oz
Broccoli florets — 3 cups
Butter — 3 tbsp
Garlic, minced — 3 cloves
Heavy cream — 1.5 cups
Chicken broth — 1 cup
Parmesan, grated — 1 cup
Salt and pepper — generously

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Cook penne according to package directions in salted water. Drain and set aside.
2. Season chicken with salt and pepper. Melt butter in a large skillet over medium-high heat.
3. Cook chicken 5-6 minutes until golden and cooked through. Remove and set aside.
4. Add garlic to the same skillet, cook 30 seconds, then pour in cream and broth.
5. Bring to a simmer, stir in parmesan until melted and smooth.
6. Add broccoli, cook 3-4 minutes until just tender. Return chicken and cooked pasta to the skillet, toss to coat and serve.

Megan's Tip: Add the broccoli in the last few minutes of cooking so it stays bright green and just tender, not mushy and gray.

THURSDAY AUGUST 27 DINNER

Sheet Pan Steak and Veggies

Prep 10 min · Cook 18 min · Serves 6 · Easy

INGREDIENTS

Sirloin steak, cut into bite-sized pieces — 2 lbs
Baby potatoes, halved — 1.5 lbs
Green beans, trimmed — 1 lb
Olive oil — 3 tbsp
Garlic powder, onion powder, smoked paprika — 1 tsp each
Salt and pepper — generously
Fresh parsley — for serving

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 425F. Line a large sheet pan with foil.
2. Toss potatoes with a bit of the olive oil, salt and pepper. Spread on the pan and roast 10 minutes to get a head start.
3. Toss steak pieces and green beans with remaining olive oil, garlic powder, onion powder, smoked paprika, salt and pepper.
4. Add steak and green beans to the sheet pan with the potatoes.
5. Roast 10-12 more minutes until steak is cooked through and vegetables are tender.
6. Sprinkle with fresh parsley before serving.

Megan's Tip: Cut the steak into bite-sized pieces before roasting rather than after. It seasons more evenly and cooks faster, which matters on a Thursday.

FRIDAY AUGUST 28 DINNER

Beef and Cheese Tortellini Skillet

Prep 5 min · Cook 15 min · Serves 6 · Easy

INGREDIENTS

80/20 ground beef — 1.5 lbs
Marinara sauce — 24 oz jar
Beef broth — 1 cup
Refrigerated cheese tortellini — 20 oz
Italian seasoning — 1 tsp
Shredded mozzarella — 1.5 cups
Fresh basil — for serving
Salt and pepper — to taste

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Brown ground beef in a large deep skillet over medium-high heat. Drain excess fat.
2. Stir in marinara, broth and Italian seasoning.
3. Bring to a simmer, then add tortellini directly into the sauce.
4. Cover and cook 6-8 minutes, stirring occasionally, until tortellini is tender.
5. Sprinkle mozzarella over the top, cover 2 minutes until melted.
6. Top with fresh basil and serve straight from the skillet.

Megan's Tip: Use refrigerated tortellini instead of frozen or dried. It cooks directly in the sauce in just a few minutes, so this really does come together in 20.

SATURDAY AUGUST 29 DINNER

Grilled Chicken Bacon Ranch Sandwiches

Prep 10 min · Cook 15 min · Serves 6 · Easy

INGREDIENTS

Boneless skinless chicken breasts — 6
Olive oil — 2 tbsp
Salt, pepper, garlic powder — to taste
Bacon — 12 slices
Ranch dressing — 1/2 cup
Sharp cheddar cheese slices — 6
Burger buns, toasted — 6
Lettuce and tomato — to serve

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Pound chicken breasts to an even thickness. Season with olive oil, salt, pepper and garlic powder.
2. Cook bacon in a skillet until crispy. Set aside.
3. Grill or pan-sear chicken 5-6 minutes per side until internal temp reaches 165F.
4. In the last minute of cooking, top each chicken breast with cheese to melt.
5. Toast the buns. Spread ranch dressing on both sides.
6. Build sandwiches with chicken, bacon, lettuce and tomato.

Megan's Tip: Pound the chicken breasts to an even thickness before grilling. It cooks more evenly so you don't end up with a dry thin end and an undercooked thick end.

SUNDAY AUGUST 30 DINNER

Biscuits and Gravy

Prep 10 min · Cook 20 min · Serves 6 · Easy

INGREDIENTS

Breakfast sausage, crumbled — 1 lb
Butter — 2 tbsp
Flour — 1/3 cup
Whole milk — 3.5 cups
Salt and black pepper — generously
Refrigerated or homemade biscuits — 8

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Bake biscuits according to package or recipe directions. Keep warm.
2. Cook sausage in a large skillet over medium heat until browned, breaking it up as it cooks.
3. Add butter to the skillet with the sausage and let it melt.
4. Sprinkle flour over the sausage, stirring constantly, and cook 1 minute.
5. Slowly pour in milk while whisking constantly to avoid lumps. Simmer 5-7 minutes until thickened.
6. Season generously with salt and pepper. Split biscuits and ladle gravy over the top.

Megan's Tip: Whisk the flour into the sausage grease before adding milk, and keep whisking constantly as the milk goes in. That's the secret to smooth gravy with zero lumps.

BONUS SECTION

Breakfast Recipes

6 simple recipes for busy mornings

BREAKFAST RECIPE

Overnight Oats

Prep 5 min · Cook Overnight · Serves 1 · Easy

INGREDIENTS

Old-fashioned oats — 1/2 cup
Milk of choice — 1/2 cup
Greek yogurt — 1/4 cup
Honey or maple syrup — 1 tbsp
Fresh fruit, chopped — 1/4 cup
Cinnamon — pinch

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Combine oats, milk, yogurt, honey and cinnamon in a jar or container with a lid.
2. Stir well until fully combined.
3. Cover and refrigerate overnight, at least 6 hours.
4. In the morning, stir and top with fresh fruit. Eat cold straight from the fridge, or warm 30 seconds if you prefer it warm.

Megan's Tip: Use a mason jar so it is grab and go straight from the fridge. Double or triple the recipe on Sunday night and you have breakfast handled for several mornings at once.

BREAKFAST RECIPE

Smoothie Bowl

Prep 5 min · Cook 0 min · Serves 1 · Easy

INGREDIENTS

Frozen mixed berries or banana — 1 cup
Greek yogurt — 1/2 cup
Milk of choice — 1/4 cup
Honey — 1 tbsp
Granola, for topping — 2 tbsp
Fresh fruit, for topping — small handful

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Add frozen fruit, yogurt, milk and honey to a blender.
2. Blend until thick and smooth, adding a splash more milk only if needed to get it moving.
3. Pour into a bowl.
4. Top with granola and fresh fruit, and eat immediately with a spoon.

Megan's Tip: Use frozen fruit straight from the freezer rather than fresh. It gives the smoothie that thick, scoopable texture instead of turning into a thin drink.

BREAKFAST RECIPE

Yogurt Parfait

Prep 5 min · Cook 0 min · Serves 1 · Easy

INGREDIENTS

Greek yogurt — 3/4 cup
Granola — 1/4 cup
Fresh berries — 1/3 cup
Honey — 1 tbsp

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Spoon a layer of yogurt into a glass or bowl.
2. Add a layer of berries, then a layer of granola.
3. Repeat the layers once more.
4. Drizzle honey over the top and serve immediately.

Megan's Tip: Layer the granola in right before eating, not the night before. Granola sitting in yogurt overnight goes soft, and the crunch is half the appeal.

BREAKFAST RECIPE

Scrambled Eggs and Toast

Prep 2 min · Cook 8 min · Serves 1-2 · Easy

INGREDIENTS

Farm eggs — 3
Butter — 1 tbsp
Salt and pepper — to taste
Bread, toasted — 2 slices
Avocado, optional — 1/2

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Whisk eggs with a splash of water or milk, salt and pepper.
2. Melt butter in a nonstick skillet over medium-low heat.
3. Pour in eggs and let sit a few seconds, then gently push and fold with a spatula as they cook.
4. Remove from heat while still slightly glossy, they will finish cooking off the burner.
5. Serve with buttered toast and sliced avocado if using.

Megan's Tip: Take the eggs off the heat just before they look fully done. They keep cooking from the residual heat in the pan, and pulling them a touch early is the secret to soft, creamy scrambled eggs instead of dry ones.

BREAKFAST RECIPE

Fried Eggs and Avocado Toast

Prep 3 min · Cook 5 min · Serves 1 · Easy

INGREDIENTS

Farm eggs — 2
Butter or olive oil — 1 tbsp
Bread, toasted — 1-2 slices
Avocado, mashed — 1/2
Salt, pepper, red pepper flakes — to taste

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Heat butter or oil in a skillet over medium-high until shimmering.
2. Crack eggs into the skillet. Cook 2-3 minutes until whites are set and edges are crispy.
3. Spread mashed avocado onto toast, season with salt and pepper.
4. Top toast with fried eggs and a sprinkle of red pepper flakes if desired.

Megan's Tip: Let the pan get properly hot before the egg goes in. A hot pan is what gives you those crispy golden edges around a fried egg instead of a pale, rubbery one.

BREAKFAST RECIPE

Fruit and Yogurt Smoothie

Prep 5 min · Cook 0 min · Serves 1-2 · Easy

INGREDIENTS

Frozen banana — 1
Frozen berries — 1/2 cup
Greek yogurt — 1/2 cup
Milk of choice — 3/4 cup
Honey, optional — 1 tbsp

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Add all ingredients to a blender.
2. Blend until completely smooth, about 30-45 seconds.
3. Pour into a cup with a lid for an easy grab and go breakfast.
4. Drink immediately for the best texture.

Megan's Tip: Freeze a banana ahead of time and toss it in. It makes the smoothie thick and creamy without needing any ice, which waters it down.

BONUS SECTION

Lunchbox and After-School Snacks

12 make-ahead recipes for a smoother school week

LUNCHBOX READY · FREEZES WELL

Homemade Lunchbox Uncrustables

The freezer staple every kid wants. Make a big batch on Sunday and mornings basically run themselves.

INGREDIENTS

Sandwich bread, crustless — 1 loaf
Peanut butter or sunbutter — 1 cup
Jelly or jam — 1/2 cup

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Cut crusts off two slices of bread using a sharp knife or the rim of a wide cup.
 2. Spread peanut butter on one slice, jelly on the other.
 3. Press the two slices together, then use the cup rim to seal and round the edges.
 4. Wrap individually and freeze. Pack frozen in the morning; it thaws perfectly by lunchtime.
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LUNCHBOX READY · AFTER SCHOOL

Mini Turkey and Cheese Roll-Ups

No bread needed, just protein and cheese rolled up and sliced into easy bites.

INGREDIENTS

Deli turkey slices — 12
Cheddar or provolone cheese slices — 12
Toothpicks, optional — for serving

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Lay a slice of turkey flat, top with a slice of cheese.
2. Roll tightly from one end to the other.
3. Slice into bite-sized rounds if desired, or leave whole.
4. Secure with a toothpick if packing for lunch, store in the fridge up to 4 days.

LUNCHBOX READY · AFTER SCHOOL · FREEZES WELL

Peanut Butter Granola Bars

Chewy, peanut buttery and made with real ingredients you can actually pronounce.

INGREDIENTS

Old-fashioned oats — 2.5 cups
Peanut butter — 1 cup
Honey — 1/2 cup
Butter, melted — 3 tbsp
Vanilla extract — 1 tsp
Mini chocolate chips, optional — 1/2 cup

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Line an 8x8 pan with parchment paper.
2. Warm peanut butter, honey and melted butter together until smooth, either on the stovetop or in the microwave.
3. Stir in vanilla, then fold in oats and chocolate chips if using.
4. Press firmly and evenly into the prepared pan. A firm press is key so the bars hold together.
5. Refrigerate at least 1 hour before slicing into bars. Store in the fridge or freezer.

LUNCHBOX READY · AFTER SCHOOL · FREEZES WELL

Classic Chewy Granola Bars

The neutral, everyone-likes-it granola bar that tastes like the store-bought kind you already buy every week.

INGREDIENTS

Old-fashioned oats — 2.5 cups
Honey — 2/3 cup
Butter, melted — 1/3 cup
Brown sugar — 2 tbsp
Vanilla extract — 1 tsp
Salt — 1/4 tsp
Mini M&Ms or raisins, optional — 1/2 cup

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Line an 8x8 pan with parchment paper. Preheat oven to 350F.
2. Warm honey, melted butter and brown sugar together until combined.
3. Stir in vanilla and salt, then fold in oats and mix-ins if using.
4. Press firmly into the prepared pan and bake 15 minutes until lightly golden at the edges.
5. Cool completely in the pan before slicing into bars. Store in the fridge or freezer.

LUNCHBOX READY

Homemade Lunchables

Crackers, cheese and deli meat portioned into containers Sunday night so lunch is grab-and-go all week.

INGREDIENTS

Round crackers — 1 sleeve
Deli meat, cut into circles — 1 package
Cheddar or colby jack cheese, sliced into circles — 1 block

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Cut cheese slices into circles roughly the same size as the crackers, using a small cup or cookie cutter.
2. Cut deli meat into circles the same way.
3. Portion crackers, meat and cheese into small containers, one per lunch.
4. Store in the fridge up to 4 days. Kids build their own stacks at lunchtime.

AFTER SCHOOL · FREEZES WELL

Banana Muffins

A classic for a reason. Freezer-friendly and the perfect way to use up those spotty bananas on the counter.

INGREDIENTS

Ripe bananas, mashed — 3
Butter, melted — 1/3 cup
Sugar — 3/4 cup
Egg — 1
Vanilla extract — 1 tsp
Flour — 1.5 cups
Baking soda — 1 tsp
Salt — 1/2 tsp

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 350F. Line a muffin tin with liners.
2. Mash bananas in a large bowl. Stir in melted butter, sugar, egg and vanilla.
3. Add flour, baking soda and salt. Stir just until combined, do not overmix.
4. Divide batter among muffin cups, filling about 2/3 full.
5. Bake 18-20 minutes until a toothpick comes out clean. Cool before freezing extras.

AFTER SCHOOL

Ranch Chex Mix

Salty, crunchy and dangerously snackable. One batch lasts the whole week in an airtight container.

INGREDIENTS

Chex cereal (rice, wheat or corn) — 6 cups
Pretzels — 2 cups
Butter, melted — 6 tbsp
Ranch seasoning packet — 1 packet
Garlic powder — 1/2 tsp

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 250F. Combine Chex and pretzels in a large bowl.
2. Whisk melted butter, ranch seasoning and garlic powder together.
3. Pour over the cereal mix and toss until every piece is evenly coated.
4. Spread onto a large sheet pan and bake 45 minutes, stirring every 15 minutes.
5. Cool completely before storing in an airtight container.

AFTER SCHOOL · FREEZES WELL

Yogurt Bark Bites

Kids treat these like candy but it's just yogurt and fruit. Freezer snacking at its easiest.

INGREDIENTS

Vanilla Greek yogurt — 2 cups
Honey — 2 tbsp
Fresh berries, chopped — 1 cup
Granola, for topping — 1/2 cup

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Line a sheet pan with parchment paper.
2. Mix yogurt and honey together, then spread evenly onto the pan about 1/4 inch thick.
3. Scatter berries and granola over the top, pressing gently so they stick.
4. Freeze 3-4 hours until solid.
5. Break into pieces and store in a freezer bag or container.

LUNCHBOX READY

Ham and Cheese Pinwheels

Tortilla roll-ups sliced into rounds, easy for little hands to eat and easy for you to pack.

INGREDIENTS

Large flour tortillas — 4
Cream cheese, softened — 8 oz
Deli ham, thinly sliced — 8 oz
Shredded cheddar — 1 cup

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Spread a thin, even layer of cream cheese over each tortilla.
2. Layer ham slices and shredded cheddar evenly across each tortilla.
3. Roll tightly from one end to the other.
4. Wrap in plastic wrap and refrigerate at least 1 hour to help them hold their shape.
5. Slice into pinwheels and pack for lunch.

LUNCHBOX READY · AFTER SCHOOL

Homemade Fruit Snacks

Real fruit, no dye, no mystery ingredients. Fridge or freezer stable for easy grab-and-go.

INGREDIENTS

Fruit juice (100% juice, any flavor) — 1 cup
Unflavored gelatin — 4 tbsp
Honey — 1 tbsp

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Warm juice in a small saucepan over low heat, do not boil.
2. Whisk in gelatin and honey until fully dissolved, about 2-3 minutes.
3. Pour into a silicone candy mold or a small parchment-lined dish.
4. Refrigerate 30 minutes until fully set.
5. Pop out of molds or cut into small squares. Store in the fridge up to 2 weeks.

AFTER SCHOOL · FREEZES WELL

Protein Energy Balls

No-bake and packed with staying power. A few minutes to mix and roll, then grab-and-go all week.

INGREDIENTS

Old-fashioned oats — 1 cup
Peanut butter — 1/2 cup
Honey — 1/3 cup
Mini chocolate chips — 1/4 cup
Chia or flax seeds, optional — 1 tbsp

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Combine all ingredients in a large bowl and stir until fully mixed.
2. Refrigerate the mixture 20 minutes so it firms up and is easier to handle.
3. Roll into small balls, about 1 inch each.
4. Store in the fridge up to a week, or freeze for longer storage.

AFTER SCHOOL · FREEZES WELL

Date Snickers

Medjool dates stuffed with peanut butter and dipped in chocolate. Naturally sweetened and feels like a real treat.

INGREDIENTS

Medjool dates, pitted — 16
Peanut butter — 1/2 cup
Chocolate chips — 1 cup
Coconut oil — 1 tsp
Flaky salt, optional — for topping

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Slice each date lengthwise and remove the pit, keeping the date mostly intact.
2. Fill each date with about 1 tsp of peanut butter and press closed.
3. Melt chocolate chips and coconut oil together until smooth.
4. Dip each stuffed date halfway into the melted chocolate, place on parchment paper.
5. Sprinkle with flaky salt if desired. Refrigerate 20 minutes until chocolate sets.