The Dollar General Diner

A collection of simple, health-conscious, and budget friendly recipe ideas.

All ingredients used are sourced from Dollar General stores.



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- "Better for You" Inspiration page, from Dollar General website: (https://www.dollargeneral.com/inspiration/better-for-you.html)

NOTE: Ingredients and prices may vary by location.

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Beverages & Snacks

A surprisingly large portion of our calories (and money) can be consumed by beverages and snacks in between meals- sometimes without us even realizing how quickly it can add up.

Snacking throughout the day isn't bad, especially if it helps get some extra nutrients in your diet! The goal of this section is to provide quick, low cost, and healthier alternatives to over-processed, nutrient deprived beverages and snack foods.

Did you know: Although containing some nutrients from fruit, fruit juices are often packed with added sugars equivalent to that of regular sodas. Try making your own juice, or diluting your juice with water in order to reduce your sugar intake.

BEVERAGES

Fresh Fruit Soda

Ready in **30 minutes**

Serves **8**

70 calories per serving (8oz.) vs 100-150 calories per can of regular soda

Average cost per serving: $1.55 (honey), or $0.80 (white sugar)

Tips

Garnish with frozen fruit instead of ice cubes for a fun twist.

Watch out for added sugars in frozen fruits. Many frozen fruits have been frozen in a sugar or syrup solution.

Honey is sweeter than white sugar! This means we can use less to achieve the same level of sweetness. Honey may also contain additional nutrients, and is often less refined than granulated white sugar.

No need to discard the leftover fruit after straining! Blend it into a smoothie, spoon on top of oatmeal, or spread onto a slice of toast with peanut butter.

This syrup can also be used to top the "South of the Border French Toast" breakfast recipe on page 14!

Ingredients

- 2 cups frozen raspberries/blackberries (recommended), or other available frozen fruit
- ½ cup water
- ½ cup honey, or ⅔ cup granulated sugar
- ½ Crystal Light Lemonade powdered drink mix packet per desired number of servings
- 1 cup sparkling water per desired number of servings (plain or flavor of choice)

Preparation

1. Place frozen fruit and water into a saucepan over medium heat, stirring and mashing fruit as it warms.
2. Once fruit has defrosted, add honey or sugar. Stir to combine.
3. Turn heat to low. Let the mixture simmer for about 20 minutes, stirring occasionally until the mixture becomes a syrup consistency.
4. Remove from heat, and let cool.
5. Pour the mixture through a strainer into a bowl, pressing it through with a spoon to get as much syrup out as possible.
6. Chill the syrup in the refrigerator until ready to use.
7. To assemble soda: pour 2 tablespoons of the fruit syrup into a glass, along with ½ of a Crystal Light Lemonade packet. Top with 1 cup club soda. Stir to combine, then add ice.

BEVERAGES

Classic Iced Mocha

Ready in **5 minutes**

Serves **1**

75 calories per 8oz. serving

Average cost per serving: $1.35 (vanilla addition), or $0.85 (no vanilla addition)

Tips

This recipe can also be heated to create a hot coffee.

Try making this with a chocolate Carnation Breakfast Essentials powdered drink mix, which contains extra vitamins and protein!

Freeze leftover coffee into cubes for your next iced mocha!

Ingredients

- 1 teaspoon instant coffee
- ¼ cup water
- ¾ cup dark chocolate almond milk
- ½ teaspoon vanilla (optional)
- Dash of ground cinnamon

Preparation

1. Stir 1 teaspoon instant coffee into ¼ cup water, until dissolved.
2. Pour ¾ cup chocolate almond milk into the coffee, and stir. Add ½ teaspoon vanilla, if desired.
3. Add ice into coffee.
4. Top with a dash of cinnamon.

BEVERAGES

Shaved Strawberry Mango Ice

RECIPE FROM DOLLAR GENERAL WEBSITE

Ready in **6 hours (Prep: 3 minutes)**

Serves **8**

26 calories per serving

Average cost per serving: $0.70 (white sugar), or $0.90 (honey)

Tips

The mango beverage used in this recipe contains nutritious antioxidants, without all of the added sugar contained in most fruit juices.

Honey is sweeter than white sugar! This means we can use less to achieve the same level of sweetness. Honey may also contain additional nutrients, and is often less refined than granulated white sugar.

Ingredients

- 1 (10oz.) package frozen strawberries
- 1 cup BAI™ mango antioxidant infusion beverage, or a natural fruit juice with no added sugars (check the nutrition labels!)
- 2 tablespoons sugar (or substitute honey)
- 1-1/2 cups ice cubes

Preparation

1. In a blender or food processor, combine strawberries, 1/2 cup mango beverage, the sugar or honey, and ice.
2. Pulse until blended, then add remaining 1/2 cup mango beverage.
3. Blend until mixture is smooth; scraping down sides if necessary.
4. Pour mixture into an 8-inch square baking dish. Cover and freeze for 3 hours.
5. Scrape the ice with the tines of a fork, creating a shaved consistency. Freeze 3 to 4 more hours, or until solid.
6. Scrape the ice with a fork one more time, then scoop into bowls and serve immediately.

SNACKS

Pear Crisp Cream Cheese Delight

Ready in **5 minutes**

Serves **1**

140 calories per serving

Average cost per serving: $1.50

Tips

Enjoy for midday snacks or as a dessert! This easy and delicious nibble is perfect for any time of the day.

Pear crisps can also be crumbled on top of oatmeal, cereal, or other treats.

Ingredients

- 1 package pear crisps
- 2 oz. cream cheese
- Dash of ground cinnamon

Preparation

1. Spread a thin layer of cream cheese onto each pear crisp.
2. Top with a dash of cinnamon, if desired.

SNACKS

Rainbow Fruit Cup

Ready in **15 minutes**

Serves **4**

175 calories per serving

Average cost per serving: $1.00

Tips

This recipe is a great side dish for a gathering, or a fun addition to lunch boxes.

Look for fruit cups that are packed in water, or its own fruit juice. Avoid fruit cups packed in syrup, which is full of unnecessary added sugars.

When draining the fruit cups, save the juice! It could be a great ingredient for the Shaved Ice recipe- see page 6.

Customize this recipe according to fruit preference! Throw in any extra fresh fruits you may have.

Ingredients

- 1 package of mandarin orange cups
- 1 package of mixed fruit cups
- 2 apples (if available)
- 1 teaspoon honey
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon unsweetened coconut flakes (optional)
- 1 teaspoon sprinkles of choice

Preparation

1. Cut apples into bite size pieces. Drain mandarin oranges and mixed fruit. ***See "TIPS"***
2. Combine all fruit in a mixing bowl.
3. Add in honey and lemon juice, then gently stir to evenly coat the fruit.
4. Divide fruit equally into 4 smaller bowls. Top with coconut flakes and sprinkles.

SNACKS

Black Bean Hummus

Ready in **10 minutes**

Serves **2**

80 calories per serving

Average cost per serving: $2.50

Tips

Try this as a sandwich spread, topped onto toast or, added to a rice bowl! It is a great way to quickly add some protein and fiber to your day.

Draining the liquid from the canned beans, and then rinsing the beans, helps decrease extra salt in the dish. Try this with all of your canned goods!

Looking for a healthier chip to make at home? Lightly spray whole wheat tortillas with cooking spray, then sprinkle with your favorite spices. Cut into triangles, then bake in a 350F oven for 7 minutes, or until slightly golden and crispy.

Ingredients

- 1 can black beans, drained and rinsed
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- Recommended spices, added to taste: ¾ teaspoon cumin, ¼ teaspoon salt, ½ teaspoon paprika, ¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper, ¾ teaspoon garlic powder

Preparation

1. Add all ingredients to a food processor, or blender.
2. Blend until smooth.
3. Scoop onto a serving dish, and top with more spices or extra lemon juice, if desired.
4. Enjoy with vegetables, or your choice of low sodium/non-fried chips.



SNACKS

Cowboy Caviar

Ready in **5 minutes**

Serves **4**

375 calories per serving

Average cost per serving: $1.95

Tips

This recipe is a great side dish for a gathering, or can be a filling, high protein lunch.

This is a minimally-processed dish, low in saturated fats and high in filling proteins.

Experiment with ingredients! Try this recipe with pinto beans, kidney beans, or adding other canned vegetables.

Draining the liquid from the cans, and then rinsing the contents, helps decrease extra salt in the dish. Try this with all of your canned goods!

Looking for a healthier chip to make at home? Lightly spray whole wheat tortillas with cooking spray, then sprinkle with your favorite spices. Cut into triangles, then bake them in a 350℉ oven for7 minutes!

Ingredients

- 1 can Rotel tomatoes (10 oz.)
- 1 can black beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 can black eyed peas, drained and rinsed
- 1 can corn, drained and rinsed
- 1 tablespoon minced onion
- ⅓ cup olive oil
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- Recommended spices, added to taste ¼ teaspoon salt, ½ teaspoon black pepper, 1 teaspoon paprika, 1 teaspoon chili powder, 1 teaspoon parsley flakes

Preparation

1. Mix Rotel, black beans, black eyed peas, corn, and minced onion in a large bowl.
2. In a smaller bowl, add olive oil, sugar, and spices. Stir well to combine.
3. Pour olive oil and spice mixture into the larger bowl. Stir well to combine.
4. Can be eaten as is, or served with your choice of low sodium/non-fried chip.

SNACKS

No-Bake Peanut Butter Cookie Balls

Ready in **45 minutes**

Serves **5 (4 balls per serving)**

400 calories per serving/100 calories per ball

Average cost per serving: $0.85

Tips

This tasty treat comes together so quickly, and requires no baking! It is a perfect option to satisfy a sweet tooth after dinner, or a great snack to provide some wholesome energy to get you through the day.

Try choosing dark chocolate over milk or white when you can! Dark chocolate has been shown to contain less sugar and more antioxidants than lighter forms of chocolate.

These cookie balls can be stored in the refrigerator for up to 2 weeks!

Ingredients

- 1 cup uncooked oatmeal/oats
- ½ cup peanut butter
- 3 tablespoons dark chocolate chips
- ⅓ cup honey
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- Dash of cinnamon (optional)

Preparation

1. Roughly chop the chocolate chips.
2. Place all ingredients into a mixing bowl, then stir until well combined.
3. Place bowl into the refrigerator for 30 minutes, so the mixture can become slightly firm.
4. Remove from the refrigerator, scoop out one tablespoon of the mixture, and roll into a ball.
5. Repeat with the rest of the oat mixture. If the balls are not sticking together, stir in more peanut butter.
6. Top cookie balls with a dash of cinnamon, if desired.

Breakfast

When thinking about a traditional breakfast, we often either think of heavy, greasy, and sugary meals, or light foods to grab on the go that simply hold us over until our first real meal of the day. Both of these options lack important nutrients to help us start our day, and may even reduce our energy levels and slow us down.

Did you know: Eating a light breakfast, or skipping it altogether, can make us feel less satisfied during the day and lead to late night snack cravings.

Having a heartier breakfast full of protein, fiber, and nutrients (and low in added sugars and saturated fats) can help keep you full, give you energy, and may reduce the urge to snack on empty calories throughout the day.

BREAKFAST

Booneville Breakfast Burrito

Ready in **15 minutes**

Serves **4**

275 calories per serving

Average cost per serving: $1.25

Tips

Starting the day off with protein sources like eggs and beans will help keep you energized throughout the day!

When searching for a "high fiber" food, look for one that has at least 3 grams of fiber per serving (always check nutrition labels). The America Heart Association recommends, on average, 25 grams of fiber per day for adults, and 14-30 grams per day for children.

Make these ahead of time and freeze so they are available quickly in the morning (they can remain in the freezer for a month). To defrost, wrap individual burritos with a paper towel, and microwave for one minute OR place frozen burrito on a baking sheet, and bake in a preheated 350F oven for 10-15 minutes (or until hot in the middle).

Draining the liquid from the canned beans, and then rinsing the beans, helps decrease extra salt in the dish. Try this with all of your canned goods!

Ingredients

- 4 6-inch high fiber or whole wheat tortillas ***See "TIPS" for fiber servings***
- 6 large eggs
- 1 15.5oz can pinto or black beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 tablespoon butter or oil
- 4 tablespoons salsa
- Recommended spices, added to taste: 1 teaspoon garlic powder, 1 teaspoon onion powder, ½ teaspoon chili powder, ½ teaspoon cumin, ½ teaspoon black pepper

Preparation

1. Crack the eggs into a bowl and whisk together with any desired spices until combined.
2. Place a medium-sized sauce pan over medium heat, and add butter or oil to the pan.
3. Once butter or oil is melted, add eggs and scramble until fluffy.
4. Portion scrambled eggs into the 4 tortillas, and top with beans and salsa to your liking.



BREAKFAST

South-of-the-Border French Toast

RECIPE FROM DOLLAR GENERAL WEBSITE

Ready in **25 minutes**

Serves **4**

124 calories per serving

Average cost per serving: $1.30

Tips

This recipe has the comforting feel of classic French toast, but thanks to the tortillas there is extra protein and about half the carbs of traditional white bread.

Watch out for added sugars in frozen fruits. Many frozen fruits have been frozen in a sugar or syrup solution.

Top this dish with a fun sauce! Use the syrup recipe from our "Fresh Fruit Soda" on page 4!



Ingredients

- 2 eggs
- ¼ cup 1% low-fat milk
- ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon vanilla extract
- 4 6-inch high fiber or whole wheat tortilla wraps
- 1 cup frozen mixed berries (thawed)
- 1 teaspoon powdered sugar (optional)

Preparation

1. In a medium bowl, whisk eggs, milk, cinnamon, and vanilla until well blended.
2. Cut each tortilla into quarters, then place in egg mixture.
3. Allow it to soak up the egg mixture (2-3 minutes) then flip it, so that it absorbs the egg mixture on the other side (like you would do when making traditional French toast).
4. Coat a large skillet with cooking spray and heat over medium heat. Add 4 tortilla quarters and cook 3 to 5 minutes or until golden, turning halfway through cooking.
5. Remove to a platter and repeat with cooking spray and remaining tortillas.
6. Serve topped with mixed berries and powdered sugar, if desired. ***See "TIPS" for fruit sauce*.**

BREAKFAST

Avocado Toast

Ready in **5 minutes**

Serves **1**

260 calories per serving

Average cost per serving: $1.65

Tips

Extra time? Bump up the flavor in this breakfast by slightly toasting the walnuts. Simply place them in a small pan over low heat, stirring constantly for about 3 minutes, just until fragrant.

When searching for a "high fiber" food, look for one that has at least 3 grams of fiber per serving (always check nutrition labels). The America Heart Association recommends, on average, 25 grams of fiber per day for adults, and 14-30 grams per day for children.

Extra beans in the pantry or eggs in the fridge? Add these to the top of the toast for an even more filling dish!

Don't be afraid of morning calories! Eating a larger portion of your daily calories during breakfast will help keep you fuller throughout the day, and help reduce nighttime snack cravings.

Ingredients

- 2 tablespoons pre-packaged guacamole
- 1 slice high fiber/100% whole grain bread *__See "TIPS" for fiber servings__*
- 1 handful of roughly chopped walnuts
- Dash of cayenne pepper (optional)

Preparation

1. Toast bread slice to desired consistency, then cut in half.
2. Spread guacamole evenly between the two halves.
3. Sprinkle top with the roughly chopped walnuts, then dust with cayenne or other spices if desired.



BREAKFAST

Okolona Oats

Ready in **10 minutes**

Serves **1**

430 calories per serving

Average cost per serving: $2.85

Tips

This meal is a great way to start your day- fiber, protein, fruits, and a touch of sweetness will give you energy and keep you satisfied throughout the morning without making you feel overly-full and sluggish.

Extra time? Bump up the flavor in this breakfast by lightly toasting the walnuts. Place them in a small pan over low heat, stirring constantly for about 3 minutes, until fragrant.

Try different flavor combinations! Use various frozen fruits, or add a spoon of instant coffee and chocolate chips to the oats.

Don't be afraid of morning calories! Eating a larger portion of your daily calories during breakfast will help keep you fuller throughout the day, and help reduce nighttime snack cravings.

Ingredients

- ½ cup dry 1-minute quick oats (unflavored)
- 1 tablespoon peanut butter
- ¼ cup frozen blueberries
- 1 handful of roughly chopped walnuts
- Dash of ground cinnamon
- Drizzle of honey

Preparation

1. Measure out ¼ cup of frozen blueberries, and allow to thaw for 5 minutes.
2. While the berries thaw, add the recommended amount of water as written on the oats box to ½ cup of oats in a microwaveable bowl, and heat for recommended amount of time.
3. Allow the oats to cool for 2 minutes after microwaving.
4. Add 1 tablespoon of peanut butter, ¼ cup of thawed blueberries, a handful of roughly chopped walnuts, a drizzle of honey, and desired amount of cinnamon to the oats and enjoy.

BREAKFAST

The Tasty Tupelo Parfait

Ready in **5 minutes**

Serves **1**

450 calories per serving

Average cost per serving: $2.25

Tips

This versatile breakfast is perfect when you have a busy day ahead and not much time to prep in the morning! It requires no cooking or baking, and is packed with vitamins, calcium, grains, and protein to keep you feeling full.

Try different flavor combinations! Thaw various frozen fruits to add, try a different yogurt flavor, top with chopped walnuts, or add a dash of instant coffee to the yogurt!

Don't be afraid of morning calories! Eating a larger portion of your daily calories during breakfast will help keep you fuller throughout the day, and help reduce nighttime snack cravings.

Ingredients

- 1 prepackaged cup of low fat vanilla yogurt (Greek yogurt, if available) (6oz.)
- 1 tablespoon peanut butter
- ¼ cup banana crisps, or sliced fresh banana (if available)
- 1 KIND Healthy Grains Dark Chocolate Granola Bar, crumbled. OR ½ cup of unsweetened cereal like corn flakes or cheerios
- Dash of ground cinnamon

Preparation

1. Smear 1 tablespoon peanut butter around the inside and bottom of a glass.
2. Layer remaining ingredients into the glass in whatever order you desire.
3. Top with a dash of cinnamon
4. Can be stirred to combine, or eaten in layers.



BREAKFAST

Loaded Egg Muffins

RECIPE FROM DOLLAR GENERAL WEBSITE

Ready in **30 minutes**

Serves **6**

127 calories per serving

Average cost per serving: $1.09

Tips

This recipe can also be made using 1 cup liquid egg substitute.

Make these ahead of time and freeze so they are available quickly in the morning (they can remain in the freezer for a month). To defrost, place an egg cup on a plate in the microwave, then cover with a bowl. Microwave for 1 minute.



Ingredients

- 2 teaspoons canola oil
- 1 cup frozen onions and mixed peppers (thaw and chop into bite-sized pieces)
- 1 cup frozen broccoli (thaw, and chop into bite-sized pieces)
- ½ teaspoon minced garlic
- 2 breakfast sausage links (thaw and chop into bite-sized pieces)
- 4 large eggs, cracked into a small bowl and whisked
- ¼ cup 1% low-fat milk
- ¼ cup shredded Mexican cheese blend
- Recommended spices, added to taste: ¼ teaspoon black pepper, ¼ teaspoon paprika

Preparation

1. Preheat oven to 375F. Coat a 6-cup muffin tin with cooking spray.
2. In a large skillet, heat oil over medium-high heat until hot. Sauté pepper-onion mixture, broccoli, garlic, and sausage for 3 to 4 minutes or until heated through.
3. In a medium bowl, combine liquid egg, milk, cheese, sausage-vegetable mixture, and desired spices; mix well. Spoon evenly into muffin cups.
4. Bake for 18 to 20 minutes or until set in the center. Remove from the oven and run a knife around the edges to loosen them, remove from pan, and serve warm.

Lunch

While lunch may sometimes be overlooked, it plays a more important role than we realize. Lunch can sometimes be a thing that we eat simply to get through the day- spending money on the same fast food full of excess calories, sodium, and saturated fats while providing us with no real nutrition. However, lunch has the potential to give us something to look forward to and boost our mood in the middle of a dreary day with fun, interesting, and energy-providing dishes.

Did you know: Not all fats are created equal! When looking at your food labels, pay attention to the amount of ***saturated fat***, which is found in many animal products and can have negative effects on our cholesterol. On average, the American Heart Association recommends no more than 13 grams of saturated fat per day (based on a 2,000 calorie diet). On the other hand, ***Unsaturated fat*** (commonly found in nuts, some fish, and avocados) can actually help improve cholesterol levels.

LUNCH

Cat Island "Crab" Cakes

Ready in **30 minutes**

Serves **3 (2 cakes per serving)**

210 calories per serving/105 calories per cake

Average cost per serving: $2.00

Tips

This simple and cheap recipe is a surprising crowd pleaser, even for those who usually do not love fish! The tuna is a satisfying source of nutrition, but still creates a light dish that is not overly fishy or heavy-feeling in the stomach.

Ranch dressing, sour cream, or plain yogurt can be used in place of mayonnaise.

For a quick spread to top these tuna cakes, spoon some plain, unflavored yogurt into a bowl and stir in hot sauce and ranch seasoning mix (sold in 1oz. packets) to taste.

To freeze, be sure the tuna cakes first come to room temperature. They can be stored in an airtight container for 1-3 months. To reheat, place a tablespoon of olive oil in a pan over medium-low heat. Place frozen cakes onto the pan, and let them heat for 5-10 minutes.

Ingredients

- 2 cans (5 oz. each) StarKist Chunk Light Tuna in Vegetable Oil
- 2 large eggs, lightly beaten
- 3 tablespoons olive oil or butter (for frying- note that the cakes will only absorb about half this amount)
- 2 tablespoons real mayonnaise
- 2 tablespoons mustard
- ½ teaspoon minced garlic and/or onion
- Recommended spices, added to taste: 1 teaspoon dried parsley, ½ teaspoon black pepper, ½ teaspoon paprika, ¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper.

Preparation

1. Drain the tuna well.
2. In a medium-sized mixing bowl, stir together tuna, eggs, mayonnaise, mustard, and spices.
3. Heat ½ tablespoon of butter or olive oil in a skillet over medium heat for each patty.
4. Scoop out ¼ cup of the mixture for each tuna cake, pressing the mixture into a "patty" shape.
5. Cook until golden, about 4 minutes on each side.
6. Best when served immediately with your choice of rice, veggies, and/or sauces.



LUNCH

Buffalo Chicken Roll-Ups

Ready in **40- 70 minutes (Prep: 10 minutes)**

Serves **4**

220 calories per serving

Average cost per serving: $2.05

Tips

This dish is easy to prepare and requires no cooking or baking! It is filling but not greasy, and is always a hit at gatherings.

Don't like spicy foods? Leave out the hot sauce, stir in a ½ tablespoon more ranch seasoning for Ranch Chicken Roll-Ups!

Ingredients

- 12.5oz. canned white chicken
- 4 oz. cream cheese (light/low fat, if available)
- ¼ cup canned spinach, drained and rinsed
- ¼ cup buffalo sauce (more or less depending on spice preference)
- 4 medium-sized high fiber or whole wheat tortillas
- ½ tablespoon dry ranch seasoning

Preparation

1. Drain the chicken.
2. After draining and rinsing the spinach, squeeze out as much of the liquid from it as possible.
3. In a medium bowl, mix the chicken, spinach, cream cheese, buffalo sauce, and dry ranch seasoning.
4. Lay out the 4 tortillas on a flat surface.
5. Spread the mixture into an even layer over each tortilla roll.
6. Roll the tortilla up tightly and refrigerate for 30 minutes – 1 hour. The rolls should be slightly firm.
7. Remove from the fridge and cut the rolls into 1-inch pieces with a sharp knife. This is a great dish to be served with a side of veggies or alongside a soup.

LUNCH

Seafood Pasta Salad

FROM DOLLAR GENERAL WEBSITE

Ready in **75 minutes (Prep: 10 mins)**

Serves **4**

284 calories per serving

Average cost per serving: $1.85

Tips

This is a great versatile chilled dish. It is light and refreshing, while still hearty enough to provide a balanced source of energy for your day.

Have a box of Kraft Mac and Cheese? Use the macaroni for this recipe and leave out the cheese packet!

Try mixing in other ingredients based on your preferences or what you may already have, like corn, broccoli, cauliflower, carrots, or white beans.



Ingredients

- 8oz. elbow macaroni, or pasta of choice
- 2 packages (16oz. total) frozen imitation crab meat OR 1 package frozen pre-cooked shrimp
- 1 (10oz.) package frozen peas (thawed)
- ⅔ cup real mayonnaise
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon Old Bay seasoning
- Recommended spices, added to taste: 1 teaspoon onion powder, 1 teaspoon garlic powder, ¼ teaspoon black pepper, ¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper, ½ teaspoon paprika

Preparation

1. Thaw the imitation crab meat and/or the shrimp. Once thawed, flake the imitation crab meat with a fork, or chop the shrimp to desired size.
2. Cook macaroni according to package directions. Drain, rinse, and drain again well.
3. In a large bowl, combine macaroni with remaining ingredients. Mix well.
4. Cover and chill at least 1 hour before serving. Top with hot sauce, if desired.

LUNCH

Big-Time Burrito Bowl

with Chipotle Cream Sauce

Ready in **45 minutes**

Serves **4**

440 calories per serving (chicken)

550 calories per serving (beef)

Average cost per serving: $2.75 (chicken), $2.49 (beef)

Tips

To reduce the fat and calories in ground beef, transfer to a paper towel lined plate after cooking. Discard fat from the pan. Blot the beef with additional paper towels. Next, place beef in a colander and run under hot water to rinse off additional fat.

Draining the liquid from the cans, and then rinsing the contents, helps decrease extra salt in the dish. Try this with all of your canned goods!

Ingredients

- 1 cup uncooked rice (brown rice if available), prepared according to package directions.
- 1 lb. boneless skinless chicken breast (chop into ½ inch pieces), or 1 lb. 80/20 ground beef
- ½ tablespoon olive oil
- 1 cup salsa
- 1 can mixed vegetables, drained and rinsed
- 1 can black beans, drained and rinsed
- 4 tablespoons pre- packaged guacamole
- ½ cup sour cream
- 1 tablespoon chipotle peppers, in adobo sauce
- 2 teaspoons minced garlic
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- Recommended spices, added to taste: 1 teaspoon chili powder, 1 teaspoon onion powder, ½ teaspoon cumin, ½ teaspoon paprika, ½ teaspoon black pepper, ¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper, ¼ teaspoon salt

Preparation

1. Once rice is cooked, stir in salsa and set aside.
2. Heat ½ tablespoon oil and 1 teaspoon minced garlic in another skillet over medium heat. Add in meat, and cook thoroughly. ***See "TIPS" for beef***
3. Once meat is cooked through, add the mixed vegetables and black beans (after draining and rinsing both) to the pan.
4. Season meat and vegetable mixture with desired spices.
5. In a small bowl, combine ½ cup sour cream, 1 teaspoon minced garlic, 1 teaspoon lemon juice, and ¼ teaspoon salt.
6. Finely chop one or two chipotle peppers, then add them with one tablespoon of their sauce to the cream mixture.
7. To assemble: In each bowl, add 1 cup rice, ¼ of the meat and veggie mixture, top with 1 tablespoon guacamole, then drizzle with 1 tablespoon of the chipotle cream sauce.

LUNCH

Quick & Easy Risotto

Ready in **35 minutes**

Serves **3**

350 calories per serving

Average cost per serving: $1.90

Tips

Risotto is traditionally not a “quick and easy” dish, but this fast version captures the creamy, comforting feeling of the best risotto bowl in Italy while being lower in sodium than the traditional dish, and a good source of protein and vegetables.

Top with some sliced chicken, if desired.

Draining the liquid from the cans, and then rinsing the contents, helps decrease extra salt in the dish. Try this with all of your canned goods!

Ingredients

- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1 cup long grain white rice
- 1 cup reduced-sodium, fat-free chicken broth
- ¾ cup water
- 1 cup frozen peas
- 1 6.5oz. can sliced mushrooms, drained and rinsed
- 1 tablespoon dried minced onion
- 1 tablespoon minced garlic
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
- ¼ cup cream cheese
- Sprinkle of parmesan cheese
- Recommended spices, added to taste: ½ teaspoon paprika, ½ teaspoon black pepper, ½ teaspoon dried parsley for sprinkling

Preparation

1. In a medium saucepan over medium heat, melt butter. Add mushrooms, minced garlic, minced onion, and Worcestershire sauce, and stir for 4 minutes.
2. Add rice, and sauté until light golden.
3. Add the chicken broth and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to low, cover, and simmer for 10 minutes, stirring once.
4. Add the water, frozen peas, desired spices, and return to a boil; reduce the heat to low and simmer for 10 minutes, or until rice is tender.
5. Remove from heat and stir in cream cheese until well blended. Sprinkle with parmesan and dried parsley, if desired, and serve immediately.

LUNCH

Beans & Greens Soup

Ready in **35-95 minutes**

Serves **4**

290 calories per serving

Average cost per serving: $1.90

Tips

If the beans are not blending smoothly, add a splash of chicken broth to the blender. Alternatively, you can pour the beans and olive oil into a bowl and smash them with a spoon.

Before using spinach, drain the can and rinse the contents as usual. Squeeze out as much of the liquid from the spinach as possible. After placing spinach into the soup pot, add a teaspoon of lemon juice or vinegar. This will improve its taste.

Using turkey bacon instead of traditional pork bacon will reduce calories, saturated fats, and sodium in the dish, while still contributing a savory and smoky flavor.

Ingredients

- 1, 1lb. bag dry great northern beans
- 2 ½ cups low sodium chicken broth
- 1 package (10oz.) frozen mixed vegetables (carrots, peas, corn, green bean mixture)
- 1 13.5oz. can spinach, drained and rinsed
- 4 strips turkey bacon
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 tablespoon minced onion
- 1 tablespoon minced garlic
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice or vinegar
- Recommended spices, added to taste: ¼ teaspoon dried oregano, ¼ teaspoon black pepper, ¼ teaspoon dried parsley, ¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper

Preparation

1. Soak and prepare the dried beans according to package instructions.
2. Place ⅓ of the cooked beans into a blender or food processor with 1 tablespoon olive oil and blend until smooth.
3. Add ½ tablespoon olive oil to a soup pot over medium heat. Place spinach along with 1 teaspoon lemon juice or vinegar to the pot, and cook for 4 minutes. Remove from the pot and set aside.*See “TIPS” for spinach*
4. Dice bacon, and place it along with ½ tablespoon of olive oil in the soup pot. Cook on medium heat for approximately 5 minutes, or until bacon is cooked through.
5. Add spinach back into the pot, along with minced onion, minced garlic, & frozen vegetables. Cook and stir just until frozen vegetables have thawed.
6. Add the blended beans, the rest of the cooked beans, chicken broth, and spices to the pot. Stir to combine.
7. Bring soup to a boil, then reduce heat to low and simmer for 15 minutes, stirring occasionally, before serving.

LUNCH

Blackjack Bean Burger

Ready in **15 minutes**

Serves **6**

110 calories per patty

Average cost per serving: $1.05

Tips

This lunch is a quick and delicious way to add protein and cut down on fat! Although it may not taste like a traditional beef burger, it is full of flavor and will leave you feeling just as satisfied.

Try topping this burger with salsa, pre-made guacamole, and/or hot sauce for even more flavor and nutrients.

Draining the liquid from the cans, and then rinsing the contents, helps decrease extra salt in the dish. Try this with all of your canned goods!



Ingredients

- 2 15oz. cans black beans, drained and rinsed
- 2 eggs
- ⅔ cup crushed crackers
- ½ onion, finely chopped
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon cumin
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- 1 tablespoon worcestershire sauce
- Burger buns, or wraps
- 3 tablespoons olive oil

Preparation

1. Crush crackers into a breadcrumb-like consistency. Measure out ¾ cups of the crumbs and add to a medium sized mixing bowl.
2. Add the beans to the bowl, and mash them. Leave some clumps for texture.
3. Add the eggs, diced onion, spices, and worcestershire sauce. Mix.
4. Add 1 tablespoon olive oil to a pan over medium heat. Then scoop out ½ cup of the mixture, and drop into the pan. Using a spatula, pat the mixture into a patty shape. If pan allows, 2 patties can be cooked simultaneously. Use 1 tablespoon of olive oil per two patties.
5. Cook patty for 5 minutes, then use a spatula to carefully flip. If patty starts to break apart, squish back together after flipping.
6. Cook for 5 more minutes, then transfer from pan onto bun/wrap with desired toppings.

Dinner

These dinner recipe inspirations are versatile and can all be prepped in minutes! Get a good night's sleep after trying out these filling recipes, without overloading your body with excess salt, calories, saturated fats, and cholesterol which could upset your digestive system before bedtime.

Did you know: Dinner, in its original tense, refers to an old French word describing the main meal of the day. Historically this was usually eaten around midday, while supper was considered to be a light meal served in the evening. No matter what you call it, these budget friendly & health conscious options are sure to leave you feeling happy and satisfied.

DINNER

Schooner Shrimp and Grits

Ready in **25 minutes**

Serves **4**

250 calories per serving

Average cost per serving: $1.85

Tips

This take on a classic southern comfort food cuts down on calories, cholesterol, and saturated fats by not overloading the dish with cheese and butter. Instead, the garlic, lemon juice, hot sauce, and a smaller amount of cheese come together to create a balance of flavor.

The shrimp in this dish provide a source of lean protein that can be prepared in minutes for a gathering, or a quick weeknight dinner.

Using turkey bacon instead of traditional pork bacon will reduce calories, saturated fats, and salt in the dish while still contributing a savory and smoky flavor.



Ingredients

- 2 cups low sodium chicken broth
- 4 individual packets or 1 cup plain instant grits
- 1/4 cup shredded sharp cheddar cheese
- 4 slices turkey bacon
- 3 teaspoons olive oil
- 1 12oz. bag frozen raw shrimp (thaw and peel)
- 2 teaspoons minced garlic
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon hot sauce
- ½ tablespoon Tony Chachere's Creole Seasoning
- Recommended spices, added to taste: ½ teaspoon dried parsley flakes, ½ teaspoon paprika, 1 teaspoon onion powder.

Preparation

1. In a medium saucepan over medium heat, add turkey bacon and 1 tsp olive oil. When bacon is cooked through (about 5-10 mins.), dice into small pieces and return it to the saucepan.
2. Add chicken broth, and bring to a boil.
3. Stir in grits and cook 4 to 5 minutes, or until thickened.
4. Add cheese, paprika, onion powder, and hot sauce, then stir until comnbined.
5. Meanwhile, in a large skillet over medium-high heat, heat 2 tsp oil, minced garlic, and Creole Seasoning until hot. Add shrimp to the skillet, and sauté 3 minutes or just until shrimp turn pink.
6. Spoon grits into a bowl. Add shrimp, then drizzle with lemon juice and top with parsley and hot sauce if desired.

DINNER

Crazy Coconut Ramen Bowl

Ready in **30 minutes**

Serves **1**

665 calories per serving OR
475 calories per serving
(½ of the instant noodles)

Average cost per serving: $2.59 OR $2.09 (½ of the noodles)

Tips

Leaving out the seasoning packet cuts preservatives and a significant amount of salt from your meal.

For a soft yolk in boiled eggs, boil for 4-5 minutes. For a firm yolk, boil for 10 minutes.

For variations, add in chicken or shrimp, black beans, or broccoli.

Draining the liquid from the cans, and then rinsing the contents, helps decrease extra salt in the dish. Try this with all of your canned goods!



Ingredients

- 1 package instant noodles. Discard flavor packet.
- 1 egg (optional)
- ¼ cup sliced canned mushrooms, drained and rinsed
- 1 teaspoon olive oil
- 1 tablespoon low sodium soy sauce
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic
- ½ cup frozen peas or vegetables of choice
- 1 ½ cups low sodium chicken broth
- ½ cup unsweetened, lite coconut milk
- 1 teaspoon hot sauce
- 1 tablespoon lime juice
- Recommended spices, added to taste: ¼ teaspoon ginger, ½ teaspoon onion powder, ¼ teaspoon black pepper, ¼ teaspoon paprika

Preparation

1. Boil 1 egg according to personal preference. Peel, cut in half, and set aside.
2. In a small pot, heat 1 teaspoon olive oil over medium heat. Add mushrooms, soy sauce, and garlic. Stir for 1-2 minutes.
3. Add frozen peas, and stir for another 2 minutes.
4. Stir in chicken broth, coconut milk, hot sauce, and desired spices. Bring to a simmer. Let it simmer about 5 minutes.
5. Add dry ramen. Cook and stir for about 3 minutes.
6. When noodles become tender, add lime juice according to taste.
7. Transfer to a bowl, and top with both halves of the egg. Sprinkle egg with black pepper and paprika if desired.

DINNER

The Scooba Scramble

Ready in **15 minutes**

Serves **1**

490 calories per serving

Average cost per serving: $1.75

Tips

This twist on breakfast-for-dinner provides two delicious sources of protein (from the eggs and beans), in a quick and easy-to-prepare meal.

Using only egg whites or an egg substitute instead of whole eggs cuts the calories and cholesterol in your meal!

Draining the liquid from the canned beans, and then rinsing the beans, helps decrease extra salt in the dish. Try this with all of your canned goods!

Looking for a healthier chip to make at home? Lightly spray whole wheat tortillas with cooking spray, then sprinkle with your favorite spices. Cut into triangles, then bake them in a 350℉ oven for7 minutes!

Ingredients

- 2 large eggs OR 3 egg whites OR ½ cup egg substitute
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 2 tablespoons Mexican style 4 cheese blend
- 2 tablespoons salsa, desired spice level
- ½ cup black beans
- 1 teaspoon lime juice
- Recommended spices, added to taste: ½ teaspoon garlic powder, ¼ teaspoon cumin, ¼ teaspoon paprika, ¼ teaspoon chili powder

Preparation

1. Turn the stove on to medium heat. Pour 1 tablespoon of olive oil into a medium-sized saucepan pan.
2. While the stove heats up, mix ½ cup of black beans, 2 tablespoons of salsa, and 1 teaspoon lime juice in a small bowl. Set aside.
3. Once the oil is sizzling, add in the eggs and stir constantly to scramble. Also mix in desired spices.
4. Add 2 tablespoons of cheese when the eggs are almost fully cooked
5. Add the egg and cheese mixture to the bowl mixture.
6. Can be served with a side of roasted vegetables, homemade chips, or on a slice of toast.

DINNER

4-Can Chicken Taco Soup

Ready in **20 minutes**

Serves **7**

320 calories per serving

Average cost per serving: $2.06

Tips

This high protein, comforting meal comes together in a matter of minutes!

Draining the liquid from the cans, and then rinsing the contents, helps decrease extra salt in the dish. Try this with all of your canned goods!

Looking for a healthier chip to make at home? Lightly spray whole wheat tortillas with cooking spray, then sprinkle with your favorite spices. Cut into triangles, then bake them in a 350℉ oven for7 minutes!



Ingredients

- 1 package Tyson Grilled and Ready Fully Cooked Chicken Breast
- 1 15.25oz. can corn, drained and rinsed
- 1 19.75oz. can black beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 28oz. can crushed tomatoes
- 1 15.5oz. can light red kidney beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 1oz.package McCormick 30% Less Sodium Taco Seasoning Mix
- 1 cup of water
- Recommended spices, added to taste: ½ teaspoon black pepper, ½ teaspoon chili powder, ½ teaspoon cumin, 1 teaspoon paprika, ¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper

Preparation

1. Place a medium-sized soup pot over medium heat.
2. Add crushed tomatoes, kidney beans, black beans, and corn to pot,
3. Add taco seasoning mix packet and 1 cup water to the pot and stir.
4. Warm chicken in microwave or stovetop skillet. Shred chicken with forks, then add to the soup pot.
5. Bring soup to a simmer for 5 minutes.
6. Serve with a side of homemade chips or brown rice, if desired.

DINNER

Bacon-Ranch-Spinach Crockpot Chicken

Ready in **4 hours (Prep: 10 minutes)**

Serves **8**

284 calories per serving

Average cost per serving: $2.68

Tips

This meal can be quickly prepped during a few extra minutes in your day, and will be ready to eat when dinner time comes around.

Consider adding a can of pinto beans to the crockpot, or serving the chicken over brown rice.

Ingredients

- 32oz. package boneless skinless chicken breasts (fresh or frozen)
- 1 13.5oz can spinach, drained and rinsed
- 2 10.5oz cans Healthy Cream of Chicken
- 1 packet of ranch dip seasoning mix
- 2 tablespoons real bacon bits
- ⅓ cup low-moisture part-skim mozzarella shredded cheese
- 1 cup water

Preparation

1. Defrost chicken and place in a crockpot.
2. Add 2 cans of Healthy Cream of Chicken
3. After draining and rinsing the spinach, squeeze out as much moisture as possible. Add to the crockpot.
4. Add 1 packet of ranch dip, and 1 cup water.
5. Place lid on the crockpot, and cook for 4 hours on high.
6. Before serving, garnish each plate with 1/3 cup of shredded mozzarella, and bacon bits.

DINNER

Flounder with Thai Peanut Sauce

FROM DOLLAR GENERAL WEBSITE

Ready in **20 minutes**

Serves **4**

355 calories per serving

Average cost per serving: $1.29

Tips

Fish are an excellent source of lean protein and also contain a source of omega-3 fatty acids. These are essential nutrients that have many benefits, including supporting heart health.

Incorporating more whole grains, like brown rice, into your diet wherever you can is a great way to boost fiber and can even help control blood sugars.

Ingredients

- 1 cup uncooked brown rice
- 4 4oz. frozen flounder fillets, or other non-breaded fish
- 3/4 cup coconut water
- 2 tablespoons low sodium peanut butter
- 1 tablespoon light brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon crushed red pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1/8 teaspoon chili powder
- 1 tablespoon chopped dried pineapple
- 1/2 cup frozen pea
- 1 tablespoon chopped dry roasted peanuts

Preparation

1. Prepare 1 cup uncooked brown rice according to package instructions. Set aside.
2. Preheat oven to 400℉.
3. Place flounder on a rimmed baking sheet. Bake for 12 to 15 minutes, or until firm in the center.
4. Meanwhile, in a small skillet over medium-low heat, combine the remaining ingredients except peanuts and heat for 8 to 10 minutes or until peas are heated through, stirring occasionally.
5. Divide rice into 4 portions.
6. Place a generous spoonful of peanut sauce over the rice, top with fish, and drizzle another spoonful of peanut sauce over fish. Sprinkle with peanuts and serve.

DINNER

Ripley's Rapid Red Beans & Rice

Ready in **45 minutes**

Serves **4**

650 calories per serving

Average cost per serving: $2.10

Tips

Incorporating more whole grains, like brown rice, into your diet wherever you can is a great way to boost fiber and can even help control blood sugars.

If you're not a fan of kidney beans, try this recipe with pinto or black beans.

This meal is a great opportunity to experiment and throw in any fresh or frozen vegetables you may have!

Draining the liquid from the canned beans, and then rinsing the beans, helps decrease extra salt in the dish. Try this with all of your canned goods!

Ingredients

- 1 14oz. package smoked sausage, sliced
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic
- 1 teaspoon minced onion
- 2 15oz. cans red kidney beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 cup uncooked brown rice
- 1 cup crushed tomatoes, or 1 tablespoon tomato paste
- 2 cups low sodium chicken or vegetable broth
- ½ tablespoon Tony Chachere's Creole Seasoning
- Hot sauce, to drizzle (optional)

Preparation

1. Prepare 1 cup brown rice according to package instructions. Set aside.
2. In a soup pot, add olive oil over medium-high heat.
3. Add sausage pieces, minced garlic, and minced onion to the pot and cook for 3-4 minutes, stirring frequently.
4. Turn heat down to medium, and add crushed tomatoes or tomato paste, and Cajun seasoning. Stir for another 1-2 minutes.
5. Stir in red beans and broth, then bring to a boil. Boil for 2 minutes.
6. Smash some of the beans against the side of the pot with a large spoon, to thicken the dish.
7. Reduce heat to low, cover pot, and simmer for 15 minutes.
8. Serve over the brown rice, and top with hot sauce if desired.