



# Mealtime Mentoring

October 2008

## Quick and Easy Meal Ideas

*How can you spend less time in the kitchen but still prepare nutritious and tasty meals and snacks?*

### Stock up

Keep foods on hand that will make a quick meal.

- Canned tomato sauce – Add to pasta and top with grated cheese.
- Canned beans – Add to soups and stews.
- Tuna and salmon – Add to pasta along with vegetables for a salad meal.
- Pancake mix – An easy breakfast or lunch. Top with fruit chunks and yogurt.
- Fruit cocktail – part of a quick snack.
- Frozen vegetables – Add to soups, stews and stir fries.
- Frozen fruits – Use as a side dish, a dessert or topping for pancakes.
- Grated cheese – a topping for pasta, pizza and wraps.
- Wraps – keep in freezer. Children love to roll their meat and cheese in a wrap. Spread with peanut butter and wrap around a banana.
- Pre-packaged salad – Add meat and cheese and serve with a bun or baked bannock. Use as a filling for wraps and tortillas.
- Raw vegetable mixes – Provide variety for dipping or cooking.

### Prepare ahead

Cook double or triple the amounts you need for a meal. Freeze the extras for a quick meal another day.

- Rice – Use for a stir fry, salad or rice pudding.
- Pasta – Use for a casserole or in soup.
- Spaghetti sauce – Use for lasagne or baked spaghetti.
- Chili – Serve over a baked potato or rice.
- Soups – Add noodles or rice for a fresh menu choice.
- Stews – Serve with fresh tea biscuits or bannock.
- Casseroles and lasagne.
- Pancakes and waffles – Put them in the toaster for an easy breakfast, snack or lunch. For a snack, cut into strips and dip in applesauce.
- Meatballs – Ready for soup, sweet and sour sauce, spaghetti.
- Pizza Dough – Bake with grated cheese and serve with soup or stew.
- Whole grain muffins and baked bannock.



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### **Make convenient foods from your own pantry**

- Baked potato – Microwave potato (4 minutes per potato). Top with chilli and cheese.
- Potato wedges – Slice potato(s) into wedges. Shake in small amount of oil. Bake for 30 minutes.
- Chicken strips – Slice boneless, skinless chicken breasts into strips or chunks. Dip in milk and breadcrumbs. Bake. (Also use fish for fish sticks.)
- Vegetable dippers – Bake root vegetables in chunks and serve with ranch dressing.

### **What about desserts?**

If you serve dessert-style foods, they can be healthy choices from the four food groups and part of your menu plan.

- a piece of fruit, whole or cut up
- frozen yogurt
- fruit wedges and yogurt dip
- rice pudding
- smoothie made with fruit and yogurt
- bread pudding
- custard
- applesauce
- homemade milk pudding

Serve dessert-style items as part of the meal, not as a separate dessert. This may help avoid power-struggles with children “finishing their meal before they get dessert”. It’s OK if the child eats it first. They will usually eat the rest of their meal because they will still be hungry. If you choose to serve it after other foods, let them know it is coming to avoid overeating after their appetite has been satisfied.

### **Involve the children**

Your activity with children can revolve around food. Once your activity is finished, your meal will be made. Children will be glad to be involved in their meal preparation. Involve them in choosing foods, preparation and also the clean up.

At different ages they can handle different skills, with supervision:

Under 5 years old:

- wash vegetables and fruits
- husk corn
- peel bananas and Mandarin oranges
- shell peas, snap green beans
- shake meat in crumbs
- use a cookie cutter
- help mash
- help put filling in a sandwich
- spread peanut butter
- mix with wooden spoon
- spoon yogurt or pudding into bowls

From 8-10 years old:

- grate cheese
- read the recipe
- measure
- stir and mix
- mash
- cut vegetables and fruits (not with a sharp knife, though)
- spread sandwich filling
- stir batter
- set/clear the table



*Helping you provide healthy food and a positive eating environment in early learning and child care settings.*