

What's for Dinner?

(Is this a school topic?)

But of course it is a school topic! You have heard of Home Economics, haven't you? How about Math? Actually, nearly every subject I can think of can be worked in to this topic. Lest you think I am planning on rambling on about many subjects, let me clarify. First, let me tell you what this little composition of mine is not going to be about.

I am not going to explain to you the fact that you can easily teach math concepts as you measure ounces, cups, and tablespoons. I am not going to tell you that you can discuss a literature selection as you chop tomatoes for salsa. I will also not tell you that you can build interesting science experiments about atoms and molecules using green and red grapes as you prepare to make a fruit salad. Oh, and I certainly will not be encouraging you to try out recipes that they might have eaten in the days of the Pilgrims if that is what you are studying in history.

I hope that clears that all up for you. On to the true topic at hand! The topic of what's for dinner can be a true thorn in the side at times, can it not? As a busy teaching mom, I long to have what is best for my family when it comes to healthy eating. But, not being "supermom", I don't always have it all together and we wind up eating frozen pizza or (shudder) fast food!

Now, notice that I said that I don't "always have it all together". This gives the idea that I actually do have it all together at least some of the time. Don't ask me to define all. Well, okay, I will in this instance. In this particular instance, it means that portion of my life that includes the preparing of dinner. When I have things "together", I have organized my meals in advance and I have shopped so that I have the proper fixings on hand to make the meals I have chosen.

My method of organization includes planning out a month's worth of dinners. Then, I try to make sure I have on hand all the nonperishable items for that entire month. That leaves only a few trips to the grocery store for produce and dairy products. I don't always adhere strictly to what is on my list. Sometimes something that sounded yummy at the beginning of the month just doesn't sound appetizing any more. Or, something on the list just would take more effort than I want to deal with.

I try to look at my week on Sunday and plan which dinners would go best on which days. For instance, if we are to be gone most of the day, then throwing something in the crockpot before leaving is a great option. That way, when we walk in the door at 6:00, I am not scrambling for something to make for dinner. If I know I am going to be home all day and it is a somewhat light day of school, then I might take on something more ambitious like chicken noodle soup with homemade noodles that has several steps to the process.

If I know I have a little more time available on a particular day, I often prepare ahead for another day. Cooking up ground beef and freezing it or making sure the dry beans are put on to soak can save some hassle for another day. Putting a bunch of chicken accompanied by a little broth into the crockpot makes meals requiring cooked chicken a snap on another day.

It is always easier for me when I have a plan. Even if I don't follow my plan to exactness, it feels good to have it there if I need or want it. So, in case you want to see a model of what I do, or if you want to copy all or some of my dinner plans, I am pasting here a copy of what I had planned for the month of July. Off and on, I post these to my website.

July Dinners

First, buy everything you don't already have that can keep for a month. That way you only need to go back to the grocery store for perishable items! Second, these can be done in any order. Save the easiest ones for the days when you forgot to think ahead. Third, combine efforts as much as possible. Make a crockpot full of chicken that you can be able to use in several of the dishes. Or, chop a couple bunches of green onions up and only use what you need for that meal, save the rest for the next meal requiring green onions.

1. Pasta salad with shrimp, homemade dips with tortilla chips
2. BLT & potato salad
3. Angel hair pasta with veggies & chicken in tomato basil sauce
4. Pineapple Ham Steaks and hashbrowns
5. Homemade bean burritos
6. Grilled Hawaiian Sandwiches
7. Feta & veggie pitas
8. Salsa with shrimp, corn and black beans over rice.
9. Fish tacos
10. Garlic fettucine Alfredo
11. Strawberry chicken & bowtie salad
12. BBQ burgers and potato foil packets
13. Penne pasta with fresh garlic tomato sauce
14. Marinated Chicken and pineapple steaks with rice
15. Feta Tuscany Pitas
16. Thai-style Beef Salad
17. Gyro Salad
18. Greek Penne & Chicken
19. Chicken Caesar Sandwich Ring
20. Brushetta Pasta
21. Chef's Salad
22. Spaghetti
23. Stir Fry
24. Fish Sticks & Pasta Side
25. Whole Wheat Belgian Waffles, Yogurt, Berries

26. Assembly Required Burritos
27. Hawaiian Rice
28. Italian Soup
29. Pizza
30. Tortellini

In wrapping things up, yes, “what’s for dinner” is certainly a school topic. This is true in many ways, not the least of which is the fact that it is good to teach your children how to prepare dinner so that they can do it themselves! Who knows, maybe you have a future gourmet chef in your house.

Hope some of these ideas will help when you are trying to make sure to fit school and everything in to the schedule.

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