

Easy and Wholesome 30-Minute Recipes to  
Get You Out of Your Recipe Rut

# 30 DAYS OF QUICK & EASY RECIPES

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- CHRISTINA HITCHCOCK -



# **30 Days of Quick and Easy Recipes**

## **To Get You Out of Your Recipe Rut**

By Christina Hitchcock

*This book is dedicated to my wonderful husband and son who have supported me through this food-crazed journey that I'm on and who continue to be my faithful taste-testers.*

**Christina is the publisher of [www.ItIsAKeeper.com](http://www.ItIsAKeeper.com)**

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## About Christina



Hi! I'm Christina, the chief cook and bottle washer at [It Is a Keeper](#) where I share [quick dinner ideas](#), [easy slow cooker recipes](#), [meal planning tips](#) and cooking resources.

I'm a northeastern Pennsylvania food blogger and a self-proclaimed recipe hoarder who reads cook books cover to cover like most people read a juicy novel. I'm also a wife and busy mom.

I've always loved to cook. Cooking is very cathartic to me. I'm truly in my element in the kitchen. Maybe it's that I'm using all of my senses – the feel of the dough, the smell of the sauce or the sound of the vegetables being chopped. Whether I'm

making an old favorite that I know by heart or trying a new recipe, it's exciting to see it all come together.

In 2010, as I was cleaning my house, I realized I had amassed hundreds of recipes (ripped from magazines, printed from emails and written on napkins). I made a decision right then and there that I was going to try each recipe in the pile, decide if it's a keeper (or not) and blog about my results. Today, [It Is a Keeper](#) to become a trusted authority for busy moms.

Currently, I'm a contributor on [WNEP's Home & Backyard](#), a cooking and home show on my local ABC affiliate, a field editor for *Taste of Home* magazine, and I have my own column in [NEPA Family Times](#), a family centric magazine in my local area.



## 30 Days of Quick and Easy Recipes

It Is a Keeper is a look into my kitchen. You get a first-hand look at what we are really eating. Most of the things I cook are not fancy and I don't use hard to find ingredients. They are everyday recipes for everyday life.

One of the biggest complaints I hear from my readers and friends is that their bored with their usual recipes. We all get tired of making the same things week after week for dinner and I'm sure our families are bored with eating them.

Get ready to get inspired and get out of your dinner time rut! I'm giving you 30 days of quick and easy recipes that have been tested by the best taste-testers around, my family. As a busy mom, my goal is to only spend 30 minutes or less on dinner each night. All of the recipes in this ebook can be prepared in 30 minutes or less and they all use basic ingredients (no fancy, hard to find ingredients here).

As a food blogger, people assume we eat picture-perfect meals every night for dinner. But, let me let you in a little secret...we don't eat picture-perfect meals every night. My family is probably a lot like yours. I do my best to get a wholesome, home cooked dinner on the table every night but sometimes, it just doesn't work out and we're grabbing takeout or eating sandwiches in the car on the way to practice.

Over the years, I've come up with strategies to help me prepare wholesome meals that my family loves. In this ebook, I'm going to share with you the tricks and tools I use to make dinner as stress free as possible. So, let's dig in!



## INTRODUCTION: Confessions of an Overwhelmed Mother

In this book, I've shared all of the information, tips and tricks that I've learned so you, too, can get dinner on the table for your busy family quickly. Plus, I've included 30 wholesome recipes that can be made in 30 minutes or less. This book will show you how to:

- Get a home-cooked meal on the table in 30 minutes or less
- Feed family that has a busy schedule
- Handle picky eaters
- Provide healthy options for your family





## 30 Days of Quick and Easy Recipes

Getting a healthy, homemade dinner on the table in 30 minutes or less may seem impossible. But, I'm here to tell you it can be done. I do it every single night. I'm not a magician. I'm just a busy mom, like you, with a few quick cooking tricks up my sleeve.

I wasn't always like this though. There was a time when just the thought of dinner overwhelmed me. Right after lunch, I would start thinking, "What are we going to have for dinner?"

I was in a rut. I always seemed to fall back on 4-5 easy meals. It felt like we had the same thing for dinner every single week.

If I wanted to try something new, I would need to stop at the grocery store on my way home from work. By the time I got home and started preparing the meal -- which always seemed to take longer than I had anticipated -- everyone was hungry and snacking.

What would push me over the edge was realizing I only had 20 minutes to feed everyone and get the dishes in the sink before I had to head out to a sports practice or scout meeting.

The easy fix for my situation was eating out. Everyone got what they wanted. There were no dirty dishes to contend with. But most importantly, it was easy and no one complained.

I was frustrated. My family was hungry. And nobody was happy.

I finally realized, there had to be a better way. My family deserved to eat better meals than I was giving them. Enough was enough and it was time to take back control of dinner!

That's when the organizational side of me kicked in. I started mapping out a plan that would change dinner-time in my house.

I made a commitment to try the plan for one month. Now, here I am, several years later and I haven't looked back since.

I no longer stress about dinner. I know I only have about 30 minutes of hands-on time to get a healthy meal on the table. I know that it's a delicious, home-made meal that my family will like. And, I know that I can feed my family and get out the door to whichever sports practice or meeting is on my family's schedule.

The techniques I share in this book are not complicated or difficult. Trust me. If they were, I never would have stuck with it.

I learned how to take back control of dinner, now let me show you how.

## CHAPTER 1: The Tools I Use

As a busy mom, I rely on a few easy tools to help me get dinner on the table for my family. There are three tools in all and they all work together in a system. I use a meal plan, a Family Favorite Meal List and a freezer inventory. At the end of this section, I've provided you with free printable versions of all three.

### Tool #1: Family Favorite Meal List

A Family Favorite Meal List is a go-to list of meals that your family likes all in one place. It's a very organic list because it's always changing as you try new recipes, you can add them to the list. This list is used to help fill in your meal plan each week.

To create your own Family Favorite Meal List, use the free printable provided at the end of this section and fill in your family's favorite meals. I recommend starting with at least 20 recipes on this list. This will help keep you from making the same thing week after week.



You'll want to include recipes that are:

- Tried and true. You've made them before and know they taste good.
- Easy to make and can be made in your sleep.
- Varied. Think about different proteins and ingredients. You don't want an entire list of pasta dishes.



### Tool #2: Freezer Inventory

If your freezer is anything like mine, it can easily become a black hole of frozen peas and unidentifiable chunks of who-knows-what. A freezer inventory will help you stay organized so you can use those pork chops you got on sale last week before they become entombed in a frosty coating.

I keep a copy of this printable Freezer Inventory on my fridge at all times. When I add new items to the freezer, I add to the inventory and as I use items from my freezer, I mark them off. This way, I always have a good idea of the staples I have on hand.



### Tool #3: A Meal Plan

The most important tool in my quick cooking tool box is my meal plan. I have been meal planning for many years. I've been doing it for so long that it seems like second nature.

What is meal planning, you ask? A meal plan is your meal time game plan for the week ahead. In short, it's a list of what you're going to eat for the week. Meal plans let you map out your meals so that you can prepare ahead and save time.

Since this book is about getting dinner on the table quickly, I'm going to focus on the dinner portion of the meal plan. However, you can apply the same concepts to breakfast, lunch and snacks. The meal planning printable that I've provided at the end of this

section has space for you to plan for each meal.

### *The Benefits of Meal Planning*

- ***Benefit 1: Save Time***

Think about it...you spend 5-10 minutes stressing out over what to have for dinner. You spend another 5-10 minutes trying to figure out what ingredients you have on hand. Then 20-30 minutes prepping and cooking the meal.

A meal that should only have taken 30 minutes ended up taking you 50 minutes.

But, if you have a meal plan in place you know what you're making for dinner. You've done some of the prep work ahead of time and you are able to get all of your shopping done at once.

- ***Benefit 2: Save Money***

Without a meal plan, we make impulse purchases with well intentioned plans. Often times though, those impulse purchases end up in the back of the fridge only to be found a few weeks later with fuzz on them.

With a meal plan, you buy what you need, when you need it. You take advantage of ingredients you already have. And, you can plan ahead to utilize coupons or in-store sales.

Plus, meal planning will help you curb your restaurant habit.

## 30 Days of Quick and Easy Recipes

A family of four can easily spend \$50 at a restaurant for one meal. That \$50 can feed the same family for two entire days – breakfast, lunch and dinner. Think about how much you can save over the course of a month, or even a year!

- ***Benefit 3: Decrease your Stress Level***

If you have a meal plan in place you know what you're making and your stress level goes down considerably. By putting the investment of time up front, you can be on auto pilot for the week just executing your plan.

- ***Benefit 4: You're Eating Healthier Meals***

Often times when we feel uninspired, we take the easy route. We open a box of something processed. Or heat up a package of frozen convenience. The problem is, these meals may be easy, but they are loaded with unnecessary calories, fat and preservatives that you can't even pronounce. Even the so-called healthy ones are packed with sodium.

Meal planning allows you to provide more nutritious meals for your family, meals that include fresh vegetables, lean proteins and whole grains. And, you can control the sodium and ingredients.



### ***How to Use a Meal Plan***

The first step in meal planning is to check your calendar. Are you going to your in-laws for dinner on Wednesday? Do the kids have practice on Monday and Wednesday at 6:00 PM? Don't forget to check your spouse's calendar too. Are they working late or inviting a coworker to dinner? Is Friday night, pizza night?

Next, think about any new recipes you want to try. Maybe you saw a recipe on It Is a Keeper that your family would like. Pencil it in along with where you can find the recipe. I also flag new recipes with a star so that I know, at a glance, that the recipe may require some extra time.

## 30 Days of Quick and Easy Recipes

To fill in the rest of your plan, determine which days are busy with various activities. Schedule easy recipes, like sandwiches or slow cooker recipes, on these days.

Continue filling in the rest of your meal plan using tried and true recipes from the Family Favorite Meal List and taking advantage of items you already have on hand in your pantry and using your Freezer Inventory.



Some other tips to help make meal planning successful include:

- Don't forget your sides and veggies. Be sure to include them for each meal.
- Get your family involved. Ask each family member to choose a meal during the week.
- Make it fun with special days, such as Taco Tuesday, Pizza Night or Spaghetti Saturday.
- Don't forget to include leftovers on your meal plan. Whether you take them for lunch or have a leftover buffet one night, make sure you use them up.

Remember, this is your meal plan. It is completely customizable for your family. You can be as detailed or general as you like.

Meal planning is not an all-or-nothing system. If it seems overwhelming to you at first, just start with 2 or 3 days. Once you start getting the hang of it, expand your plan to eventually cover the entire week.

And, if you get off track, that's OK. It happens to the best of us. Just pick up where you left off and keep at it.

## Free Printables



FREE

Download  
printables [here](#).  
Password: 30DayDownloads

your



If you want a more comprehensive, spiral bound meal planner,  
I love [this one](#) from CarrieElle Designs.

## CHAPTER 2: Quick Cooking Strategies



## 30 Days of Quick and Easy Recipes

In order to get dinner on the table in 30 minutes or less every night, I use some time-saving quick cooking strategies. By incorporating these strategies into your dinner prep routine you can cut down the time it takes to feed your family. That's music to my ears after a long, hard day.

### Quick Cooking Trick #1: Prep Ahead



Prepping your meals ahead of time is probably the most important trick of all. And it's not even a trick. You are using your time effectively and working smarter, not harder.

Start thinking about how you can prep ahead when creating your meal plan. Do you need to take anything out of the freezer? What can you do ahead of time to make each meal simpler?

For example, if you're chopping veggies for a recipe, simply chop extra to use for another night. Or, if

you've already got a pot of water boiling for pasta make extra, so you can have it ready for later in the week.

I like to do all of my prep-ahead tasks on the weekend, when I have the time. Then I package everything up in containers or freezer-bags, label them and store them.

There are so many simple cooking tasks that be done ahead of time. By taking care of these jobs now, you can free up precious time when you're cooking your meal.

Here are some of my favorite prep-ahead tasks:

- Chopping veggies and fruits
- Cooking rice
- Cooking pasta
- Measuring ingredients for sauces, marinades or dressings
- Trimming meats
- Measuring dry ingredients

### Quick Cooking Trick #2: Meal Kits



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As you're prepping your ingredients for the week, think about how you can keep them organized when you stash them away.

For instance, if I'm making my Slow Cooker Beef Stew, I will keep all of my ingredients together in the fridge. I'll have my container of chopped veggies, my bag of trimmed meat, my container of pre-measured broth and my seasonings all labeled, stacked together and ready to go.



When I'm ready to make my stew, I can easily grab everything I need from the fridge. I don't have to search for ingredients or pull out bottles, jars and seasonings. I just need to place all of my ingredients into the slow cooker, set it and go.

There's no chopping. No measuring. No fussing. And, most importantly, no stress. Just think of how this trick can streamline your time in the kitchen!

### Quick Cooking Trick #3: Freezer Meals

Some of my favorite recipes require more than 30 minutes of hands-on time. Dishes like lasagna, homemade macaroni and cheese and soups can take a lot of time to assemble and prepare. But, I'm still able to include them in my weekly plan.

How, you ask? By making them ahead of time and freezing them.

My freezer is always stocked with my favorite freezer meals. There are so many casseroles, sauces, soups and other dishes that freeze well. So, why not take advantage of your freezer?

Think about it. If you're going to make lasagna for dinner, why not make two? It doesn't take that much longer to assemble another lasagna (or two) to stash in the freezer.

I usually spend one day every other month in the kitchen preparing freezer meals. I make big batches of my favorite freezer-friendly dishes, like my Chicken Pot Pie Puffs. I store them in freezer bags or disposable pans so I'm not tying up my favorite containers and casserole dishes in the freezer.

I clearly label each dish with the name, date prepared and cooking/baking instructions and then neatly stack it in the freezer.

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Then, when I want to include one of these dishes in my weekly meal plan, all I need to do is take it out of the freezer the day before, thaw it in the fridge and heat it up.

Your freezer can be a huge timesaver on hectic weeknights. This is one of my favorite quick cooking tricks!

### Quick Cooking Trick #4: Batch Cooking

Batch cooking is when you cook large amounts of one item and then portion it out and store it for later. It's very similar, in theory, to some of the other tricks we talked about already – prepping ahead and freezer cooking. And, like those tricks, batch cooking is a great time-saver.

One of the great things about batch cooking is it allows you take advantage of sales at your grocery store. When your favorite ingredients go on sale you can buy extra and prepare them ahead of time.

Some of my favorite things to prepare using this trick are:

- Roasting chicken for recipes for casseroles, salads and soups
- Browning ground beef for chili, soups or casseroles
- Cooking rice
- Blanching fresh veggies from my garden or the farmer's market
- Making sauces like marinara, pizza sauce and salsa
- Making pancakes and French toast
- Cookie dough and pie pastry

### Quick Cooking Trick #5: Use Your Slow Cooker

I have a love affair with my slow cooker – his name is Phillippe. Yes, I've named him. Yes, I know that's weird. But on busy days, I take comfort in the fact that Phillippe is home cooking me a delectable dinner.

My slow cooker is probably the most used small appliance in my kitchen. I use it for everything – breakfast, soups, sauces, dinner and even desserts.

What's not to love? You literally place all of the ingredients in the cooker, turn it on and go. There's no need to fuss over it.

I'll even let you in on another trick. Sometimes, I'll make meal kits for my favorite slow cooker recipes and stash them in the freezer. Then, when I'm ready to make the recipe, I simply thaw the ingredients, place them in the slow cooker and set it and forget it

If you don't have a slow cooker you need to get one. Like now. I'll wait....If you're wondering which slow cooker I recommend, you can head [here](#) to see.



## CHAPTER 3: 30 Days of Quick & Easy Recipes

Whether you have the cooking chops but don't have the time or you're a novice who thinks you can't cook, I have some quick and easy recipes to help you get dinner on the table fast.

This chapter has 30 days of my favorite quick and easy recipes. All of the recipes in this section can be made in under 30 minutes. And, every single one has been tried and tested by my family.

As you go through these recipes remember to implement the tips and tricks that I showed you - like batch cooking and prepping ahead. And, when you find a recipe that your family loves, be sure to add your favorites to the Family Favorites Master List.

If you're looking for even more recipe inspiration, check out these posts in It Is a Keeper:

- [Quick and Easy Recipe Archive](#)
- [Slow Cooker Recipe Archive](#)
- [Freezer Friendly Meals](#)
- [Easy Dessert Recipes](#)

## BROWN SUGAR GARLIC CHICKEN

*Serves 4*



### Ingredients:

- 4 boneless, skinless chicken breast halves
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 3 tablespoons butter, divided
- 6 cloves garlic, minced
- ¼ cup brown sugar, packed
- 1 tablespoon honey
- ½ teaspoon dried oregano
- ¼ teaspoon dried thyme
- ¼ teaspoon dried basil
- ⅛ teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes

### Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees F.
2. Season chicken liberally with salt and pepper.
3. Add 2 tablespoons butter to a large oven-proof skillet and melt over medium high heat.
4. Add chicken and sear on both sides until golden brown, about 2-3 minutes per side; set aside.
5. Add remaining tablespoon butter to the skillet and melt.
6. Add garlic, and cook, stirring frequently, until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Remove from heat.
7. Stir in brown sugar, honey, oregano, thyme, basil and crushed red pepper until combined.
8. Return chicken to the skillet.
9. Place skillet into oven and roast until chicken reaches an internal temperature of 175 degrees F, about 20 minutes.

## CRISPY OVEN FRIED CHICKEN

*Serves 4*



### Ingredients:

- 3 1/2 pounds thin sliced boneless, skinless chicken breast (approx. 1/2 inch thick)
- Salt and pepper
- 1 large egg
- 1/8 cup milk
- 3 cups corn flakes, crushed
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon onion powder
- 1/4 teaspoon cayenne
- 2 tablespoon melted butter

### Instructions:

1. Preheat to 350°F.
2. Line a baking sheet with foil and place a rack on top of foil.
3. Spray baking rack with non-stick cooking spray.
4. Rinse chicken and pat dry; Season with salt and pepper.
5. In a shallow dish, whisk egg and milk together.
6. Combine corn flakes, salt, garlic powder, onion powder and cayenne in another shallow bowl.
7. Dip the chicken into the egg mixture, then coat with corn flake mixture, pressing the crumbs onto the chicken and place on prepared baking sheet. (You can do up to this step about 3 hours in advance and keep uncovered in fridge).
8. Drizzle melted butter over the chicken.
9. Bake for 20-25 minutes or until it reaches an internal temperature of 165 degrees and the coating is golden and crispy.

## CHICKEN CACCIATORE PASTA SKILLET

*Serves 4*



### Ingredients:

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 medium onion diced
- 2 cloves garlic minced
- 1 pound ground chicken
- 1 tablespoon Italian seasoning blend
- 1 [teaspoon House Seasoning blend](#)
- 1 1/2 cups chicken broth
- 1 24 oz jar pasta sauce
- 1 pound uncooked penne pasta
- 1/2 cup jarred roasted red peppers diced
- 1/2 cup parmesan cheese

### Instructions:

1. Heat olive oil in a large skillet with deep sides over medium-high heat.
2. Add onion, garlic and chicken; Season with Italian seasoning and House Seasoning blend.
3. Saute until chicken is cooked through, about 5-6 minutes, ensuring that the chicken is crumbled.
4. Add chicken broth and pasta to the pan; Bring to a simmer.
5. Add pasta and stir to ensure it is evenly coated.
6. Put lid on pan and cook for 11 minutes, stirring periodically.
7. Remove pasta from heat and stir in roasted red peppers and parmesan cheese.



## SHEET PAN CHICKEN FAJITAS

*Serves 4*



### Ingredients:

- 1 pound boneless skinless chicken breasts cut into strips
- 1 4 oz can diced green chilies
- 1 medium onion sliced
- 2 large bell peppers seeded and sliced
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 2 teaspoons [Homemade Taco Seasoning Blend](#)
- 12 flour tortillas warmed to serve

### Instructions:

1. Preheat the oven to 400 degrees.
2. Coat a sheet pan with non-stick cooking spray.
3. Spread chicken and vegetables on a large rimmed sheet pan in an even layer.
4. In a small bowl combine the oil and seasoning blend.
5. Drizzle the spice mixture over the chicken and veggies and toss to coat.
6. Bake uncovered for 20-25 minutes or until chicken is cooked through and the vegetables are tender.

## CHICKEN MARSALA

*Serves 4*



### Ingredients:

- 4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts, thinly sliced (approx. 1/2 inch thick)
- 1/4 cup flour
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon dried oregano
- 4 Tablespoon olive oil
- 4 Tablespoon butter
- 8 oz mushrooms, sliced
- 1/2 cup Marsala wine
- 1/2 cup sherry or dry white wine

### Instructions:

1. Season both sides of each chicken cutlet with salt and pepper.
2. In a shallow dish, combine flour, salt, pepper and oregano.
3. Dredge each chicken cutlet in flour mixture, making sure each piece is completely coated.
4. In a large skillet, heat olive oil over medium high heat.
5. Place chicken in the pan and brown for 3-4 minutes on each side. Depending on the size of your pan, you may have to do this in batches.
6. Remove cooked chicken from the pan and set aside.
7. Turn heat down to medium and add butter to the pan.
8. Once butter is melted, add mushrooms and season with salt and pepper.
9. Saute mushrooms for 4-5 minutes.
10. Add Marsala wine and sherry to the pan and place the chicken back in the pan.
11. Simmer for 3 minutes or until liquid has reduced slightly.
12. Add chicken back into the pan until warmed through.

## SKILLET LEMON CHICKEN

*Serves 4*



### Ingredients:

- 4 inch thinly sliced boneless skinless chicken breasts (about 1/2" thick)
- [House Seasoning Blend](#) to taste
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1/3 cup finely diced shallots or onion
- 4 cloves garlic minced
- 1/4 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
- 1/2 cup chicken broth
- 1/2 cup dry white wine or chicken broth
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1/4 cup half and half
- 2 tablespoons parsley chopped
- 3-4 slices lemon

### Instructions:

1. Preheat the oven to 375 degrees.
2. Season both sides of the chicken with House Seasoning blend.
3. Heat olive oil in a large, oven-safe skillet over medium-high heat.
4. Add chicken and brown on both sides - about 2-3 minutes per side; remove chicken to a plate and set aside.
5. Add shallots; saute for 5 minutes, until translucent.
6. Add garlic and crushed red pepper to skillet and saute for 30 seconds or until fragrant.
7. Add chicken broth, wine and lemon juice to the skillet; use a whisk to scrape the browned bits from the bottom.
8. Simmer for 10 minutes or until sauce reduces to 1/2 cup.
9. Turn off the heat and add the butter and half and half. Whisk until combined.
10. Add the chicken back to the skillet and place in preheated oven for 8 minutes (or until internal temperature of chicken reaches 165 degrees)
11. Remove skillet from oven and serve with chopped parsley and lemon slices.

## THE BEST MEATLOAF

*Serves 6*



### Ingredients:

- 1 1/2 pounds ground beef
- 3 slices of white bread
- 1/4 cup of milk
- 1/4 cup onion, finely chopped
- 1 clove garlic, finely minced
- 1/2 cup parmesan cheese
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 3 tablespoons fresh parsley, minced
- 1 teaspoon [House Seasoning Blend](#)

### Glaze Ingredients

- 3/4 cup ketchup
- 1/4 cup brown sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon dry mustard

### Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Pour milk over bread and let sit for a few minutes so it absorbs the milk. In a large bowl combine the beef, milk-soaked bread, onion, garlic, cheese, eggs, parsley, salt and pepper.
3. Mix with your hands until well combined.
4. Spray a muffin pan with non-stick cooking spray. Fill each muffin cup with meatloaf mixture.
5. Combine all of the glaze ingredients in a bowl. Stir until combined. Spread 1/2 of the mixture on the top of the mini meatloaves.
6. Bake for 25 minutes or until a meat thermometer reads 160 degrees.
7. Use the remaining glaze for dipping.

## SLOPPY JOES

*Serves 6*



### Ingredients:

- 1 pound ground beef
- 1 green bell pepper chopped
- 1 onion chopped
- 3/4 cup ketchup
- 1 teaspoon celery seed
- 2 teaspoon dry mustard
- 1 teaspoon vinegar
- 2 teaspoon sugar
- [House Seasoning Blend](#) to taste

### Instructions:

1. Brown beef with onions and peppers in a large skillet.
2. Drain well and return to skillet.
3. Add remaining ingredients and simmer for 15 minutes.
4. Serve on your favorite sandwich roll.

## SKILLET STEAK SANDWICHES

*Serves 4*



### Ingredients:

- 2 large onions sliced
- 2 sticks butter
- 3 cloves garlic thinly sliced
- 2-3 pounds Cube Steak
- [House Seasoning Blend](#) to taste
- 1/2 cup Worcestershire Sauce
- 4 hoagie/sub rolls
- 4 slices Provolone cheese

### Instructions:

1. Melt 2 tablespoons of butter in a large (preferably cast-iron) skillet.
2. Add onions and cook until soft and light brown. When onions are just about done, add garlic and cook for about 30 seconds, until fragrant.
3. Remove onions and garlic from pan and set aside.
4. Slice cube steak, against the grain, into 1/2 inch strips.
5. Season well with House Seasoning.
6. Melt 2 tablespoons butter over high heat (in same skillet).
7. Add meat in single layer; Cook one side until brown, then flip and cook until brown.
8. Add Worcestershire sauce, 2 tablespoons butter and cooked onions and garlic.
9. Stir to combine.
10. Remove from heat.
11. Butter halved rolls and toast in skillet.
12. Pile meat on roll and spoon sauce from pan over top.
13. Place cheese on top of sandwich and melt under broiler.



## STEAK PIZZAIOLA

*Serves 4*



### Ingredients:

- 1 1/2 pounds thinly sliced Eye Round
- Salt and pepper
- 2 Tablespoon olive oil
- 1 large clove garlic, thinly sliced
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1/8 cup tomato paste
- 1/2 cup red wine
- 1 cup chicken stock

### Instructions:

1. Season both sides of meat with salt and pepper.
2. Heat olive oil in large skillet over medium-high heat.
3. Add the sliced garlic and stir it around to flavor the oil.
4. Add in the beef, in a single layer, and quickly brown on both sides — it doesn't need to be cooked all the way through.
5. Remove the meat to a plate and reserve. Stir in the onions, red pepper flakes, and oregano.
6. Reduce the heat and cook for 7 to 8 minutes.
7. Add the tomato paste, and cook for 1 minute, then add the wine, and cook for another minute.
8. Stir in the stock and combine well.
9. Slide the beef back into the pan and simmer to finish cooking the meat, about 2 to 3 minutes.



## PIZZA ROLL UPS

*Serves 4*



### Ingredients:

- 2 cans refrigerated pizza crust
- 2 teaspoons garlic powder
- 2 teaspoons Italian Seasoning
- 1 cup sliced and chopped pepperoni
- 1 cup shredded cheese (we used mozzarella and fontina)
- 1/2 cup Parmesan Cheese
- Your favorite marinara sauce for dipping

### Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 425 degrees.
2. On a floured surface, roll out each pizza crust.
3. Evenly sprinkle garlic powder and Italian seasoning over each crust
4. Top each crust with 1/2 cup of pepperoni and 1/2 cup of shredded cheese
5. Be sure to leave a 1/2 inch border around the crust.
6. Top the each roll with 1/4 cup parmesan cheese.
7. Starting at one of the shorter ends, roll each crust into a tight log.
8. Slice each roll crosswise into one-inch sections.
9. Place the slices on a lightly greased baking sheet or pizza stone
10. Bake for 10-12 minutes or until tops are lightly browned and cheese is bubbly.
11. Serve with your favorite marina sauce for dipping.

## BLT PASTA

*Serves 6*



### Ingredients:

- 12 slices of bacon, divided
- 4 cups chicken broth
- 2 (14.5 oz) cans diced tomatoes
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 4 cloves garlic, chopped
- 1/2 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
- 12 oz uncooked linguine pasta
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup loosely packed fresh parsley, chopped
- 4 oz cream cheese
- 1 oz Parmesan cheese, grated
- Halved cherry or grape tomatoes

### Instructions:

1. Slice the bacon cross wise into strips.
2. Cook in a large skillet with high sides for 8-9 minutes, or until crisp. Remove bacon and drain on paper towels.
3. Drain skillet, leaving 1 tablespoon of bacon drippings in the skillet.
4. Add onion and red pepper flakes to the skillet. Saute for 2-3 minutes or until tender.
5. Add garlic and cook for 10-20 seconds more.
6. Add broth and tomatoes to the skillet and bring to a simmer.
7. Add pasta, salt and half of the cooked bacon.
8. Simmer, covered for 9-10 minutes or until pasta is almost cooked by still firm. Stir occasionally.
9. Remove skillet from heat and add cubed cream cheese, tomatoes and parsley, reserving 1 tablespoon of parsley for garnish.
10. Cover and let stand for 5 minutes or until pasta is tender and sauce is thickened. Serve with remaining bacon, grated Parmesan cheese and reserved parsley.

## KOREAN PORK CHOPS

*Serves 4*



### Ingredients:

- 4 thin boneless pork chops
- 1/2 cup soy sauce
- 4 tablespoons honey
- 2 cloves garlic minced
- 2 teaspoons sesame oil
- 4 teaspoons fresh ginger grated
- 2 tablespoons sweet chili sauce
- 2 tablespoons olive oil

### Instructions:

1. In a medium size bowl whisk together soy sauce, honey, garlic, ginger, sesame oil and sweet chili sauce.
2. Pour half of marinade over the pork chops and allow to sit for 10 minutes.
3. Reserve the remaining half of the marinade.
4. Heat olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat.; add pork chops to skillet, discard the marinade left in the bowl.
5. Cook chops until browned on one side, about 6 minutes.
6. Turn the chops over and add the reserved marinade to the pan.
7. Cook for 6 more minutes, or until the pork reaches an internal temperature of 160 degrees.
8. Allow to rest for a few minutes before serving.

## TEX MEX OVEN FRIED PORK CHOPS

*Serves 4*



### Ingredients:

- 2 pounds thin cut, boneless pork chops
- Salt and pepper
- 1 large egg
- 1/8 cup milk
- 3 cups corn flakes, crushed
- 2 teaspoons taco seasoning
- 2 tablespoons melted butter

### Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Line a baking sheet with foil and place a rack on top of foil.
2. Spray baking rack with non-stick cooking spray.
3. Season pork chops with salt and pepper.
4. In a shallow dish, whisk egg and milk together.
5. Combine corn flakes and taco seasoning in a shallow bowl.
6. Dip the pork chops into the egg mixture, then coat with corn flake mixture, pressing the crumbs onto the meat (you can do up to this step about 3 hours in advance and keep uncovered in fridge).
7. Drizzle melted butter over the chops and bake for 20-25 minutes or until it reaches an internal temperature of 160 degrees. The meat should be golden and crisp.

## PORK CHOPS IN CREAMY SHALLOT SAUCE

*Serves 4*



### Ingredients:

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 4 boneless pork chops (about 5 ounces each)
- 1/4 cup chopped shallots
- 2 teaspoons dried thyme
- 1 teaspoon dried tarragon
- 1 cup dry white wine or chicken broth
- 1 tablespoon all-purpose flour
- 1 cup milk

### Instructions:

1. Heat oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat.
2. Season pork with salt and black pepper and add to hot pan.
3. Cook 2 minutes per side, until golden brown.
4. Remove pork from pan and set aside.
5. In the same pan, add shallots and cook for 2 minutes, until soft.
6. Add thyme and tarragon and cook 1 minute, until fragrant.
7. Add wine or broth and cook 1 minute.
8. Whisk flour into milk and add to pan.
9. Return pork to pan and simmer 3 to 5 minutes, until pork is cooked through and sauce thickens.

## TUNA CAKES WITH GARLIC LEMON AIOLI

*Serves 4*



### Ingredients:

- 12 oz can Bumble Bee tuna packed in water drained
- 1 egg beaten
- 1/4 cup plain Greek yogurt
- 1/4 cup shallot minced
- 1/4 cup red bell pepper minced
- 1 clove garlic minced
- 2 tablespoons fresh parsley minced
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1 cup Panko bread crumbs
- 1 tablespoon olive oil

### GARLIC LEMON AIOLI

- 1/2 cup plain Green yogurt
- 1 tablespoon light mayonnaise
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- 2 cloves garlic minced
- Salt and pepper to taste

### Instructions:

1. In a small bowl whisk together all of the ingredients for the aioli.
2. Cover and refrigerate until you're ready to serve.
3. In a medium bowl, combine the tuna, egg, yogurt, shallot, pepper, garlic, parsley, salt and pepper.
4. Mix together with a fork until combined. Be careful not to over mix and break up the tuna too much.
5. Form the tuna mixture into 4 cakes.
6. Place the the Panko on a plate and press each cake into the bread crumbs, coating both sides.
7. Heat the olive oil in a large skillet over medium high heat.
8. Place the tuna cakes in the pan and cook for 3-5 minutes on each side, or until golden brown.
9. Remove from pan and serve immediately with Garlic Lemon Aioli.



## BAJA FISH TACOS

*Serves 4*



### Ingredients:

#### FISH TACOS

- 1 pound cod fillets cut into 1 inch thick fillets, or any white fish
- 2 tablespoons taco seasoning
- 2 tablespoon olive oil
- 4 flour tortillas warmed
- 1 cup cabbage shredded
- Crunchy tri-colored tortilla strips
- Baja Sauce below

#### BAJA SAUCE:

- Juice of 1/2 lime
- 1/2 cup sour cream
- 1/2 cup mayo
- 1 tablespoon garlic powder
- 1-2 in chipotle peppers adobo sauce to taste
- 1/4 cup roughly chopped cilantro or to taste
- 1 teaspoon salt

### Instructions:

1. Heat a large skillet over medium high heat and add olive oil.
2. Season one side of fish liberally with taco seasoning.
3. Place fish, seasoning side down, in the hot skillet.
4. Season the other side of the fish.
5. Cook for 2 minutes.
6. Flip fish and allow to cook for 2 more minutes or until fish is cooked through.
7. Place an even amount of fish in each tortilla.
8. Top with shredded cabbage, tortilla strips and Baja Sauce.
9. To make Baja Sauce, place all of the ingredients into a food processor or blender and purée until combined.



## SHRIMP SCAMPI

*Serves 6*



### Ingredients:

- 4 tablespoons butter divided
- 4 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil divided
- 4 cloves garlic minced
- 1 shallot minced
- 1/8 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
- 1 pound large or extra-large shrimp shelled and deveined
- 3/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1/2 cup dry white wine or broth
- Juice of 1 lemon
- 1/3 cup chopped fresh parsley
- 1 pound cooked linguine

### Instructions:

1. Melt 2 tablespoons butter and 2 tablespoons olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat.
2. Sauté the shallots, garlic, and red pepper flakes for 3 minutes or until the shallots are translucent.
3. Meanwhile, season shrimp with salt and pepper.
4. Once shallots are translucent, add seasoned shrimp to the pan and cook until they turn pink, about 3 minutes.
5. Remove the shrimp from the pan, place on a plate and cover with foil.
6. Add wine and lemon juice to the skillet and bring to a boil.
7. Add remaining 2 tablespoons butter and 2 tablespoons oil and whisk until butter is melted.
8. Add shrimp to the pan and toss to coat; turn off heat.
9. Add linguine and parsley to the pan and toss until everything is completely coated.
10. Taste for seasoning and add additional salt and pepper as needed.
11. Serve immediately.

## SHRIMP TACOS WITH BOOM BOOM SAUCE

*Serves 4*



### Ingredients:

#### SHRIMP TACOS

- 1 ounce package Gorton's Skillet Crisp Shrimp 10
- 8 soft flour taco shells
- 2 cups shredded cabbage or prepackaged coleslaw mix
- 1 avocado sliced
- Boom Boom Sauce recipe below

#### BOOM BOOM SAUCE

- 1/4 cup mayonnaise
- 1 Tablespoon ketchup
- 1 Tablespoon sweet chili sauce
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 3/4 teaspoon Sriracha

### Instructions:

1. Prepare shrimp according to package directions
2. Place about 1/8 cup shredded cabbage in taco shell
3. Place 2-3 slices of avocado on top of shredded cabbage
4. Place 4-5 shrimp on top of avocado
5. Drizzle Boom Boom Sauce on top of shrimp
6. To make Boom Boom Sauce, place all ingredients in a small bowl and stir to combine.

## SHRIMP WITH PEAS AND ORZO

*Serves 6*



### Ingredients:

- 1/2 pound shrimp, peeled and deveined
  - 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
  - 1/4 teaspoon salt
  - 1/4 teaspoon pepper
  - 1/8 teaspoon sugar
  - 2 cups chicken broth
  - 1 cup white wine (can substitute chicken broth)
  - 1 clove garlic, minced
  - 8 ounces orzo
  - 1 cup frozen peas
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
  - 1 tablespoon butter
  - 1 tablespoon lemon zest, grated
  - 1 tablespoon parsley, finely chopped

### Instructions:

1. In a large bowl, toss shrimp with salt, pepper and sugar.
2. Heat oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat.
3. Cook shrimp for 3 minutes.
4. Turn shrimp and remove from heat.
5. Let stand for another 1 minute, or until shrimp turn pink and are opaque.
6. Remove shrimp from skillet.
7. Add broth, wine, orzo and garlic to skillet. Bring to a boil.
8. Cover and cook on medium-low for 10-12 minutes, or until orzo is cooked.
9. Return shrimp to skillet, add peas, butter and lemon juice.
10. Cover and let stand for 3-5 minutes or until heated through.
11. Remove from heat and top with grated lemon zest and parsley.

## CARRIBEAN JERK SHRIMP

*Serves 4*



### Ingredients:

- 1 teaspoon Jamaican Jerk spice divided
  - 12 raw shrimp peeled and deveined with tails
  - ¼ cup light beer
  - ¼ cup Roma tomatoes chopped
  - 1 tablespoon green bell pepper diced
  - 2 teaspoons Serrano chili pepper diced
  - 1 tablespoon red onion diced
  - 1 scallion chopped, greens and whites
  - 2 cloves garlic chopped
  - 2 teaspoons fresh thyme minced
  - 1 tablespoon fresh cilantro minced
  - 4 tablespoons butter melted
- 8-10 thyme sprigs
  - 1 loaf of crusty bread

### Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 500°F.
2. In a small bowl, toss shrimp with 1/2 teaspoon of Jamaican Jerk Seasoning; set aside.
3. In a cast iron skillet or other oven proof skillet, combine beer, tomatoes, peppers, onions, garlic, minced thyme and minced cilantro.
4. Add shrimp on top of vegetables and herbs.
5. Pour melted butter over top of the shrimp and top with Thyme sprigs.
6. Slice the bread and wrap it tightly in foil.
7. Bake shrimp and bread for 5-7 minutes, or until shrimp is cooked through.
8. Remove shrimp and bread from the oven and serve immediately.

## 30 MINUTE MARINARA

*Serves 6*



### Ingredients:

- 1 medium onion diced
- 6 cloves garlic minced
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 2 cans tomato sauce, 28 Oz
- 2 leaves bay
- 2 tablespoons Italian seasoning blend
- 1 [tablespoon House Seasoning blend](#)
- 1/4 cup grated parmesan cheese

### Instructions:

1. Heat olive oil over medium-high heat in a large pot.
2. Add onions and sauté for 5 minutes or until translucent.
3. Add garlic to pot and cook for 1 minute.
4. Add tomato sauce, bay leaves, Italian seasoning blend and House seasoning blend; stir to combine.
5. Bring to a bubbling simmer then turn the heat down to low and simmer for 20 minutes.
6. Add grated parmesan cheese; stir to combine.
7. Serve immediate or freeze for later.



## GNOCCHI WITH HAM IN BUTTER SAUCE

*Serves 4*



### Ingredients:

- 1 17.5 oz package of gnocchi
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1 clove garlic
- 1/4 pound prosciutto (or other thinly sliced ham) diced into bite size pieces
- 1 teaspoon of flour
- 1/2 cup chicken broth
- 1 tablespoon parsley minced
- Grated parmesan cheese

### Instructions:

1. Bring a pot of salted water to a boil.
2. Add gnocchi and boil for approximately two minutes or until gnocchi float to the top.
3. Meanwhile, melt butter in a medium skillet over medium-high heat.
4. Peel and crush garlic clove and add to melted butter.
5. Add Speck ham to butter and saute for a minute or until heated through.
6. Add flour to butter and stir until combined.
7. Add chicken broth to butter mixture and whisk until mixed.
8. Add cooked gnocchi to the sauce and cook for 2 minutes or until sauce is thickened slightly.
9. Top with minced parsley and grated parmesan before serving.



## CREAMY ONE POT PESTO CHICKEN

*Serves 4*



### Ingredients:

- 4 thin boneless skinless chicken breasts
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- Salt and pepper
- 1 shallot chopped
- 3 cloves garlic minced
- 4 cups chicken broth
- 4 tablespoons Barilla Traditional Pesto Sauce divided
- 1 pound of Barilla Organic Spaghetti Pasta
- 1 cup half and half
- 1/2 cup grated parmesan cheese

### Instructions:

1. Heat olive oil in a large skillet over medium high heat.
2. Season both sides of chicken with salt and pepper and chop into one inch strips.
3. Sear chicken on each side in skillet. It does not need to be cooked through at this point.
4. Once chicken is seared, add shallot and cook for 2-3 minutes until translucent.
5. Add garlic, chicken broth and 2 tablespoons of pesto.
6. Add addition salt and pepper to taste.
7. Bring to a simmer and add the pasta.
8. Simmer for 9-11 minutes or until pasta is al dente.
9. Remove from heat and stir in half and half and parmesan cheese.
10. Serve immediately.

## SPAGHETTI CARBONARA

*Serves 4*



### Ingredients:

- 1 pound spaghetti cooked
- 2 large eggs
- 3/4 cup grated Parmesan
- 4 slices bacon diced
- 4 cloves garlic minced
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley leaves

### Instructions:

1. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil; Cook pasta according to package instructions.
2. Reserve 1/2 cup of pasta cooking water before draining.
3. Heat a large skillet over medium high heat.
4. Add bacon and cook until brown and crispy, about 6-8 minutes; reserve excess fat.
5. In a small bowl, whisk together eggs and Parmesan; set aside.
6. Add garlic to skillet and cook for about 1 minute or until fragrant.
7. Reduce heat to low.
8. Quickly add spaghetti, egg mixture, salt and pepper Working quickly, stir in pasta and egg mixture, and gently toss to combine; season with salt and pepper.
9. Slowly add reserved pasta water until desired consistency is reached.
10. Top with chopped parsley and serve immediately.

## CHICKEN PASTA PRIMAVERA

*Serves 4*



### Ingredients:

- 2 cups uncooked spiral pasta
- 1 pound boneless skinless chicken breasts, cut into 1" pieces
- 1 tablespoon butter
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 package (16 ounces) frozen broccoli-cauliflower blend, thawed
- 3/4 cup heavy whipping cream
- 3/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper

### Instructions:

1. Cook pasta according to package directions and drain.
2. Meanwhile, in a large skillet, saute chicken in butter and olive oil until chicken is no longer pink.
3. Add garlic; cook 1 minute longer.
4. Add the vegetables, cream and garlic and cook until vegetables are tender.
5. Add the pasta, cheese, salt and pepper to skillet; stir until heated through.

## STUFFED PEPPER SOUP

*Serves 4*



### Ingredients:

- 1 pound ground beef
- 1 small onion, diced
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 green pepper, diced
- 1 can (28 oz) crushed tomatoes
- 28 oz water
- 2 tablespoons beef bouillon granules
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 1 teaspoon pepper
- 1½ cups regular Minute® rice, prepared

### Instructions:

1. In a large Dutch oven, cook beef and onions over medium heat until no longer pink; drain.
2. Stir in the remaining ingredients except for rice; bring to a boil.
3. Reduce heat; cover and simmer for 15 minutes or until peppers are tender.
4. Stir in rice and simmer for 5 minutes more.

## CHEESEBURGER SOUP

*Serves 6*



### Ingredients:

- 1 pound ground beef browned and drained of excess fat
  - $\frac{3}{4}$  cup onion diced
  - $\frac{3}{4}$  cup carrots shredded
  - $\frac{3}{4}$  cup celery diced
  - 1 teaspoon dried basil
  - 1 teaspoon dried parsley flakes
  - 4 tablespoons butter divided
  - 3 cups chicken broth
  - 4 cups peeled and diced potatoes
  - $\frac{1}{4}$  cup flour
  - 2 cups of Velveeta processed cheese cubed or 2 cups shredded cheddar cheese
  - $\frac{1}{2}$  cups milk
- $\frac{3}{4}$  teaspoon salt
  - $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon pepper

### Instructions:

1. In a large Dutch oven, melt 1 Tablespoon butter.
2. Add onion, carrot and celery and sauté until tender. Add basil and parsley and sauté for 30 seconds.
3. Add the chicken broth and potatoes; cover and bring to a boil.
4. Reduce heat and simmer for 10-12 minutes or until the potatoes are fork tender.
5. Meanwhile, in a small skillet, melt the remaining butter and add the flour.
6. Cook for 3 minutes or until a bubbly paste forms.
7. Add to the soup and bring back to a boil. Boil for 2 minutes.
8. Reduce heat to low and stir in the cheeses, milk, salt and pepper. Stir until cheese melts.
9. Top with extra shredded cheese before serving.

## SAUSAGE AND PEPPER SOUP

*Serves 4*



### Ingredients:

- 1 pound sweet Italian sausage, casings removed
- 1 24 oz jar spaghetti sauce, zesty variety
- 2 bell peppers diced
- 1 14 oz can diced tomatoes
- 3 cups water
- 3 cups chicken broth
- Fresh grated parmesan cheese for garnish

### Instructions:

1. Brown sausage in a large pot over medium high heat.
2. Add spaghetti sauce, bell peppers, diced tomatoes, water and chicken broth.
3. Bring to a boil; reduce heat and simmer for 12 minutes.
4. Serve with freshly grated parmesan cheese.



## CREAM OF BROCCOLI SOUP

*Serves 6*



### Ingredients:

- 1 whole onion, diced
- 1/2 cup butter
- 1/3 cup flour
- 4 cups milk
- 2 cups Half-and-half
- 4 heads broccoli, cut into florets
- 1 pinch nutmeg
- 3 cups cheddar cheese, grated
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- Chicken broth (if needed) for thinning

### Instructions:

1. Melt butter in a large dutch oven or soup pot over medium heat.
2. Add onions and cook for 3-4 minutes.
3. Sprinkle flour over top and cook for one minute.
4. Pour in milk and half and half; Add nutmeg, broccoli, salt and pepper.
5. Reduce heat to low and cover pot and simmer for 20-30 minutes, or until the broccoli is tender.
6. Taste for seasoning and adjust if necessary. Use an immersion blender to puree the soup to your liking.
7. You can also transfer to a regular blender in two batches to puree soup to your liking. If using this method, return soup to pot and allow to reheat.
8. Stir in cheese, allowing cheese to melt.
9. If soup is too thick, add chicken broth to thin it to your liking.

## **Conclusion & Resources**

So, there you have it. My tried and true system for getting dinner on the table quickly and enough recipes to help you through your first month. Once you've mastered the tips and tricks I've described, dinner-time will become less stressful and more enjoyable.

If you encounter any roadblocks or challenges implementing the steps I've outlined, drop me a line. You can contact me via [email](#), [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#).

For even more easy recipes, visit my website [www.itisakeeper.com](http://www.itisakeeper.com). I have hundreds of tried and true recipes.

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