



BACK TO SCHOOL SUPER FAST DINNERS!

It's that time

of the year where everyone is headed back to the classroom (if you aren't already there). I always remember as a kid that there would be a few weeks of adjustment, to say the least, when school started.

This meal plan is dedicated to that adjustment. These meals are quick. Not a single one is under 30 minutes from start to finish. All of them happen to work great as a dinner or a lunch as well. They will fill any gap in your meal plan for the week!

Macheesmo Meals



Helpful Equipment:

- Baking Sheet
- Slotted spoon
- Whisk
- Tongs
- Wok



You can click on these to zap you to Amazon and see my recommendation for each.

MEAL 1

- Spicy Rice Noodle Stir-Fry

MEAL 2

- Turkey Cobb Salad
- Cheesy Bread Sticks

MEAL 3

- Quick Chickpea Curry
- Buttered Na'an

BONUS!

- Greek Chicken Salad
- Microwave Chocolate Cake

MEAL 1 | Spicy Rice Noodle Stir-Fry

 Any time I'm crunched for time, I look to a good stir-fry recipe for dinner. This one is one of my favorites and is much faster to make than you might think if you saw the finished product. I make my version pretty spicy, but feel free to tone down the pepper quantities if you want a more mild version.

Spicy Rice Noodles

Yield: Serves 4 | **Time:** 30 minutes.

Ingredients:

Sauce:

- 2 tablespoons hoisin sauce
- 1 tablespoon chili garlic sauce
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- 1/2 teaspoon brown sugar

- 10 ounces rice noodles, cooked
- 1 tablespoon toasted sesame oil, for noodles
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 pound chicken breasts, sliced thin
- 1 small yellow onion, diced
- 1 red pepper, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2-4 bird chili peppers, minced with seeds
- 2 large eggs, beaten
- 1 cup cherry tomatoes, quartered
- 1/2 cup fresh basil, minced (garnish)

Directions:

- 1) For sauce, stir ingredients together in a small bowl and set aside for later.

- 2) Cook rice noodles according to package instructions. Once cooked, drain, rinse with cold water, and toss with sesame oil to prevent sticking. Set aside.

- 3) Prepare all your other ingredients before you start cooking: Dice chicken and veg. Mince the chili peppers and garlic very fine.

- 4) Heat a large wok over medium-high heat. Once hot, add the oil and chicken and cook until the chicken is just cooked through, about 4-5 minutes.

- 5) Add onions, garlic, and peppers and continue to cook. Be careful not to burn the garlic.

- 6) Add noodles and sauce to pan and toss to combine.

- 7) Make a well in the middle of the noodles and add beaten eggs. Let cook for 30 seconds so eggs can firm up a bit. Then stir together. Stir in grape tomatoes at the very end.

- 9) Serve noodles immediately garnished with fresh chives. Serve extra soy sauce and chili garlic sauce on the side.



Bird is the Word

Thai chili peppers are frequently labeled bird chilis. They are tiny green or red peppers and have an intense heat level and great flavor. If you can't find them at your store, you can substitute Serrano chili peppers. I would use 1-2 for this dish with the seeds, depending on the heat level you want.



Plan This Meal!

30 minutes ahead - Slice chicken, chop veggies, whisk sauce together. Cook rice noodles.

15 minutes ahead - Start stir-fry by cooking chicken.

5 minutes ahead - Finish stir-fry with scrambled eggs and serve immediately!



Veggie Substitutions

Since this is essentially a stir-fry you can use almost any vegetables in place of the chicken. I particularly like a mix of savory veggies (mushrooms) and crunchy veggies (sweet corn, green peppers, peas).

MEAL 2 | Turkey Cobb Salad with Bread Sticks



A salad this robust is easy to make a meal out of. I don't do it often, but if I'm really crunched for time and need a quick side for a salad like this I'll make these cheesy bread sticks which use pre-packaged bread stick dough.

Turkey Cobb Salad

Yield: 4 Servings | **Time:** 30 min.

Ingredients:

- 8 strips bacon, crispy
- 4 large eggs, hard-boiled + baking soda
- 1 large (or 2 medium) head Romaine lettuce, chopped
- 8 ounces roasted deli turkey
- 1 avocado, sliced
- 1 cup cherry tomatoes, halved
- 1/2 red onion, sliced thin
- 6 ounces crumbled blue cheese

Directions:

- 1) Add bacon to a large skillet over medium heat and cook until very crispy, about 15 minutes. Then let drain on some paper towels and crumble a bit once cool.
- 2) For eggs, add them to a large pot and cover by a few inches with cold water. Add in 1/2 teaspoon baking soda which will make them easier to peel. Set over high heat. Once simmering, cover, kill the heat, and let eggs cook for 14 minutes. Run the eggs under cold water and peel them.
- 3) Rinse and chop lettuce and divide between plates.
- 4) Divide deli turkey, crumbled bacon, sliced eggs, avocados, cherry tomatoes, red onions, and blue cheese between plates.
- 5) Drizzle with dressing if you're using it or just a drizzle of olive oil and vinegar works great.

Cheesy Bread Sticks

Yield: 12 breadsticks | **Time:** 20 min.

Ingredients:

- 1 can prepared breadstick dough
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
- 1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese

Directions:

- 1) Preheat oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit (or the recommended temperature for your breadsticks).
- 2) Lay out breadsticks on a baking sheet and brush with butter. Sprinkle with Parmesan cheese.
- 3) Bake as directed which will most likely be around 14 minutes. Serve immediately!

Creamy Parmesan Dressing

Yield: 1 cup | **Time:** 10 min.

Ingredients:

- 1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 1/4 cup mayonnaise
- 1/3 cup buttermilk
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- 1 teaspoon crushed black peppercorn
- Dash of hot sauce
- Pinch of kosher salt

Directions:

- 1) Grate Parmesan cheese. Add all ingredients to a mini food processor and pulse until smooth.
- 2) Season dressing with salt and hot sauce to meet your tastes. Store in the fridge until needed. Will keep for two weeks.



Plan This Meal!

30 minutes ahead - Start bacon and eggs for salad.

20 minutes ahead - Bake breadsticks and make dressing (optionally)

5 minutes ahead - Toss everything together!



To Dress or Not To Dress

To be honest, I don't think this salad needs a dressing at all. It's got a lot going on. I like a drizzle of olive oil and vinegar on mine.

That said, some people like a richer dressing on a salad like this and this Parmesan dressing is one of my favorites. You can drizzle it over this cobb salad or any other side salad for a little flavor boost!



Veggify and Healthify

This salad is really delicious, but some of you might be looking for something a bit healthier (or vegetarian). Here are some substitutions that I sometimes use in a salad like this that might work for you:

- Sauteed asparagus
- Boiled new potatoes
- Blanched green beans
- Blanched broccoli florets
- Seared tempeh slices

If you use some of these, be sure to season the veggies with some salt and pepper. Otherwise the salad might be a bit bland.

MEAL 3 | Quick Chickpea Curry with Na'an

Quick Chickpea Curry

Yield: 4 Servings | **Time:** 30 minutes

Ingredients:

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 large yellow onion, diced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 inches fresh ginger, minced or grated
- 2 tablespoons red curry paste
- 2 (15 ounce) cans chickpeas, drained
- 1 (14 ounce) can lite coconut milk
- 1 lemon, juice only
- Kosher salt, to taste
- Fresh cilantro, garnish

Directions:

- 1) Add oil to a medium-large pot over medium heat. Once hot, add the onions, garlic, and ginger. Cook until the veggies are slightly soft and fragrant, about 4 minutes.
- 2) Add curry paste to the veggies and sautee for 2 minutes.
- 3) Add chickpeas, coconut milk, and lemon.
- 4) Simmer curry for 5 minutes to heat through and taste for salt.
- 5) Serve curry garnished with fresh cilantro.

Buttered Na'an

Yield: 6 na'an | **Time:** 10 min.

Ingredients:

- 6 na'an breads
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
- 2 tablespoons fresh chives

Directions:

- 1) Preheat oven to 400 degrees F. Lay out na'an breads on a few baking sheets.
- 2) Bake na'an breads for a few minutes. Then brush with butter and return to the oven.
- 3) After another minute or two the na'an should be slightly crispy around the edges but still soft on the inside.
- 4) Serve the bread sprinkled with fresh chopped chives.



Plan This Meal!

30 minutes left - Preheat oven, chop veggies for curry.

20 minutes left - Start curry.

10 minutes left - Bake na'an bread.

5 minutes left - Serve everything together!



Curry Paste or Powder

Curry powder is a dried spice and generally has a more mild flavor than the paste. For a dish like this, you want the paste which is packed with flavor. My favorite brands are Mae Ploy and Thai Kitchen.



Homemade Na'an

Na'an is one of the most perfect sides for a dish like this. You can find prepared na'an bread in the bakery section of most supermarkets these days, but if you are feeling ambitious, I made a really delicious homemade onion na'an earlier in the year that would be perfect for this dish. [Check it out here.](#)

I use the prepared stuff all the time though and just jazz it up if I'm crunched for time.

BONUS! | Lunch and a One-Minute Dessert!

 Everybody is always on the hunt for flavorful and quick lunches and this is one of my favorites. The chocolate cake is just a little bonus because I just discovered it and it's kind of fun.

Greek Chicken Salad

Yield: Serves 4 | **Time:** 20 min.

Ingredients:

- 1 pound chicken, poached and shredded
- 1/3 cup kalamata olives, chopped
- 1/2 red onion, diced
- 1/2 English cucumber, diced
- 1 cup grape tomatoes, quartered
- 1 cup Greek yogurt
- 1/2 cup crumbled feta cheese
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 lemon, juice only
- 2 tablespoons minced fresh parsley
- 1/2 teaspoon red pepper flakes
- Salt and pepper
- 4 pita breads, halved

Directions:

- 1) Bring a medium pot of water to a slight simmer with a pinch of salt. Once simmering, add chicken, cover, and let simmer for five minutes. Then remove from heat and let poach slowly for another 10 minutes until the chicken is cooked through.
- 2) Remove chicken and shred with two forks or chop roughly.
- 3) Dice all the other veggies and stir together with yogurt, feta, garlic, lemon, chicken, and spices. Season with salt and pepper and chill.
- 4) To make a sandwich, slice a pita in half and microwave it on high for 15 seconds so it is flexible and warm. Stuff each half with a few spoonfuls of chicken salad and eat up!

Microwave Chocolate Cake

Yield: Serves 2 | **Time:** 5 min.

Ingredients:

- 1/4 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 2 tablespoons cocoa powder
- Pinch of salt
- 3 tablespoons milk
- 2 large eggs
- 3 tablespoons melted unsalted butter, cooled
- Dash of vanilla extract

Directions:

- 1) In a small bowl, whisk together flour, sugar, cocoa powder, and a pinch of salt.
- 2) Stir in milk, eggs, and melted butter. Add a tiny dash of vanilla. Stir until batter is smooth.
- 3) Lightly oil or butter two 8-ounce coffee cups. Divide batter between the two cups.
- 4) Microwave cakes on high for about 2 minutes until the cakes are puffed and cooked through.
- 5) Serve immediately!



Veggie Options

If you want to try something besides chicken in the chicken salad, I like crumbled tempeh which has good flavor and texture. I wouldn't use hard-boiled eggs. They will be too heavy. Also, you could just add more veggies like peppers and more cucumbers and tomatoes and call it a day.



Feedback!

I'm always anxious for feedback. If you have any feedback of any individual meal or the meal plans as a whole, please let me know! You can email me directly at nick@macheesmo.com.



SHOPPING LIST

This is a full list of all the ingredients used in every meal in this week's plan. I recommend reviewing it for stuff you probably already have on hand before rushing out to the store and buying everything! If items on the list don't have amounts, it is most likely because the recipe uses a very small amount of that ingredient or it is used as a garnish.

Fresh Produce

- Avocado (1)
- Cherry tomatoes (3 cups)
- Cilantro (garnish)
- English cucumber (1/2)
- Fresh Basil (1/2 cup)
- Fresh chives (2 Tbsp.)
- Garlic (6 cloves)
- Ginger (small piece)
- Lemon (2)
- Parsley, fresh (2 Tbsp.)
- Red onion (1)
- Red pepper (1)
- Romaine lettuce (1 large or 2 medium)
- Yellow onion (2)

Meat, Poultry, Seafood

- Bacon (8 strips)
- Boneless skinless chicken breasts (2 lb.)
- Deli turkey (8 oz.)

Dairy

- Blue Cheese (6 ounces)
- Butter, unsalted (7 Tbsp.)
- Buttermilk (1/3 cup)
- Eggs (8)
- Feta cheese (1/2 cup)
- Greek yogurt (1 cup)
- Milk (3 Tbsp.)
- Parmesan cheese (3/4 cup)

Spices and Pantry Items

- All-purpose flour (1/4 cup)
- Black pepper
- Breadstick dough (1 can)
- Brown sugar (1/2 teas.)
- Chickpeas, canned (2 15-oz.)
- Chili garlic sauce (1 Tbsp.)
- Cocoa Powder (2 Tbsp.)
- Coconut milk, lite (14-oz.)
- Dijon mustard (1 teas.)
- Dried bird chili peppers (2-4) (sub: 1 teaspoon red pepper flakes)
- Hoisin sauce (2 Tbsp.)
- Kalamata olives (1/3 cup)
- Kosher salt
- Mayonnaise (1/4 cup)
- Na'an Bread (6)
- Olive oil (3 tablespoon)
- Pita Bread (4)
- Red curry paste (2 Tbsp.)
- Red pepper flakes (1/2 teas.)
- Rice noodles (10 ounces)
- Soy sauce (1 Tbsp.)
- Sugar (1/4 cup)
- Toasted sesame oil (1 Tbsp.)
- Vanilla extract
- Vegetable oil (2 Tbsp.)



COUPONS

To be honest, I'm not a huge coupon user. I find that most of them are for processed foods that you will almost never find in these meal plans. As I develop more plans though I will try to contact companies and get a few coupons for products that are in the recipes. Hopefully, they can save you a few bucks!



Colavita makes nice products and I frequently use their vinegar and olive oil. On the shopping list this week, you can find their red wine vinegar, white vinegar, and olive oil. To request coupons for their products, send your address and name to usa@colavita.com.



I contacted Pillsbury to try to get a coupon for their refrigerated breadstick dough and they said that they have a national coupon that is dropping the week of 10/13, So check your Sunday papers to find that coupon. Unfortunately they wouldn't give me a coupon to include in the meal plan though.