



BEGINNER Cooking School DINNER II!

Macheesmo Meals



This is the second week of meal plans that are for beginner cooks! If you cook rarely, these are great starter recipes. They are almost fail proof honestly! That's not to say they aren't delicious.

The recipes in this plan are meant to give you at least a base, simple recipe for three core dinners: A pizza/salad dinner, a pasta dinner, and a quick and easy sloppy joe recipe. The sesame pasta bowl is probably the most adventurous of the recipes and the sloppy joe is secretly my personal favorite. The shopping list for this meal plan is a bit larger than last week's, but the meals are still pretty easy to execute!

Helpful Equipment:

- Salad Spinner
- Non-stick Skillet
- Baking Sheet
- Small Food Processor
- Slow Cooker



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

MEAL 1

- Puff Pastry Pizza
- Baby Spinach Salad

MEAL 2

- Sesame Angel Hair Pasta Bowl

MEAL 3

- 30 Minute Sloppy Joes
- Baked Tots

BRUNCH!

- Ricotta Breakfast Muffins
- Crockpot Tortilla Soup



MEAL 1 | Puff Pastry Pepperoni Pizza and Spinach Salad

Look. I realize that pizza is America's quick meal. You can order it to your door in under 30 minutes. You can pop one straight from the freezer to the oven and end up with a decent dinner. This pizza is a little something different though. It starts with a puff pastry crust that is light and airy. I keep the toppings simple, but obviously you can add your favorites.

Puff Pastry Pizza

Yield: 2 medium pizzas | **Time:** 35 min.

Ingredients:

- 2 sheets frozen puff pastry dough (1 17.3 ounce box Pillsbury dough)
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 cup tomato sauce
- 1 teaspoon dried parsley
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1/2 teaspoon onion powder
- 1 pinch red pepper flakes
- 1 pinch kosher salt
- 3 cups grated mozzarella cheese
- 5-6 ounces pepperoni
- 1/4 cup fresh basil, slivered

Directions:

- 1) Preheat oven to 400 degrees F. Unfold thawed pastry sheets on a lightly floured surface and roll into a medium sized rectangle. Place each crust on a baking sheet. Fold about 1/2-inch of the edges over to form a crust. Prick the entire dough with a fork thoroughly so steam can escape while it bakes.
- 2) Bake crusts for 10 minutes until crust is golden brown.
- 2) In a small bowl, stir together tomato sauce, olive oil, parsley, garlic powder, onion powder, a pinch of red pepper flakes, and a pinch of salt and pepper.
- 3) Spread sauce over dough, using about 1/3-1/2 cup per pizza depending on how saucy you like your pies.
- 4) Divide grated cheese between pizzas. Dot cheese with pepperonis.
- 5) Return pizzas to oven and bake for another 5-6 minutes until cheese is melted and crust is golden brown.
- 6) Sprinkle cooked pizzas with fresh basil. Slice and serve!

Weekday Spinach Salad

Yield: Serves 4 | **Time:** 15 min.

Ingredients:

- 5 ounces baby spinach (5 loose packed cups)
- 1/4 red onion, sliced thin
- 1 pint cherry tomatoes, halved
- 1 small cucumber, sliced thin
- 4 ounces Feta cheese, crumbled (opt.)
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 3 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- Pinch of salt and pepper

Directions:

- 1) In a small bowl, whisk together olive oil, red wine vinegar, sugar, mustard, and a pinch of salt and pepper to make a very simple vinaigrette.
- 2) Divide spinach between bowls. I like to shoot for a bit over a cup of spinach per salad.
- 3) Dot each salad with a few red onion slices, cherry tomatoes, cucumber slices, and crumbled feta (optional).
- 4) Right before serving, drizzle each salad with vinaigrette or serve it on the side.



Plan This Meal!

In advance - Thaw puff pastry.

30 minutes ahead - Prepare pizza crust. Make sauce for pizza and prepare toppings.

20 minutes ahead - Bake crust with no toppings.

15 minutes ahead - Make spinach salads.

5 minutes ahead - Top pizza and bake for final time.

Pizza Topping Galore

It's pretty hard to think of a savory topping that isn't good on a pizza. You can easily adapt the pizza toppings to your liking, but here are ten that are my personal favorites.

- Sliced Cremini mushrooms
- Artichoke hearts
- Fresh minced garlic
- Roasted red peppers
- Sweet corn kernels
- Sriracha sauce
- Arugula (put it on after cooking)
- Kalamata olives
- Cooked Italian sausage
- Fresh pineapple

MEAL 2 | Sesame Angel Hair Pasta Bowls



If you aren't used to cooking with Asian flavors, this pasta bowl might seem like a stretch, but I really hope you do try it. It's very simple to make and can be on the table in under 30 minutes since the pasta cooks so quickly. It's a great intro into cooking with Asian ingredients.

Sesame Pasta Bowls

Yield: 4 Large Servings | Time: 30 min.

Ingredients:

- 1 clove garlic
- 2 inches fresh ginger, grated
- 1/4 cup soy sauce
- 1/4 cup safflower oil
- 2 tablespoons sesame oil
- 2 tablespoons rice wine vinegar
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 2 teaspoons chili garlic sauce
- 1/2 pound edamame, steamed
- 1 red pepper, diced
- 1 pound angel hair pasta
- Sesame seeds (garnish)
- Chopped scallions (garnish)
- Sriracha sauce (garnish)

Directions:

- 1) Mince garlic and peel and grate ginger using a box grater or microplane grater.
- 2) Whisk garlic and ginger with soy sauce, safflower, sesame oil, rice wine vinegar, sugar, and chili garlic sauce to make a dressing. Set aside.
- 3) Steam edamame in the microwave or in steamer until soft. Toss with chopped red pepper.
- 4) Cook pasta according to package and toss with dressing and vegetables. You might not need all the dressing so add it slowly.
- 5) Serve warm or cold with any garnishes you want.



Extra Protein

If you find yourself wanting to add some protein to this pasta bowl, I would recommend seared chicken marinated in some sesame oil and chili garlic sauce.

You could also add sauteed mushrooms or tofu to the dish if you want a vegetarian option.



Plan This Meal!

30 minutes ahead - Make dressing for pasta.

20 minutes ahead - Steam edamame and toss with red peppers.

10 minutes ahead - Cook pasta.

5 minutes ahead - Toss everything together and adjust dressing and seasoning to your liking.

Ingredient Breakout: Edamame

Edamame are nothing more than soy beans! They are a bit larger than your average bean and packed with protein and fiber which makes them a really filling add-in for a pasta dish like this one.



You can find them already shelled in the frozen section of your supermarket. There should be directions on the bag to steam them in the microwave which is easiest.

MEAL 3 | 30 Minute Sloppy Joes and Tots

The sloppy joe gets such a bad rap thanks to school lunches and Manwich commercials. The truth is that it's a lot easier to mix up a batch of these than even cook a great burger (in my opinion). When it comes to flavor dividends, it's delivers. It's easy to make and very delicious.

30 Minute Joes

Yield: 6 sloppies | Time: 30 min.

Ingredients:

- 1 lb. lean ground beef
- 1/2 yellow onion, diced
- 1 small green pepper, diced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 tablespoon brown sugar
- 2 teaspoons chili powder
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
- Dash of hot sauce
- Dash of worcestershire sauce
- 1/2 teaspoon Dijon mustard (opt.)
- 1 cup tomato sauce
- 6 sandwich rolls
- Green leaf lettuce
- Pickle Slices

Directions:

- 1) In a medium pan add a drizzle of oil and ground beef. Cook until browned over medium heat, about 6 minutes. Add onions, peppers, and garlic, and cook until veggies are soft, another 4-5 minutes.
- 2) Add sugar, chili powder, paprika, salt, hot sauce, worcestershire sauce, and a dab of mustard if you want. Stir to combine.
- 3) Add tomato sauce and bring mixture to a simmer. Simmer until the sloppy mixture thickens, about 8-10 minutes. Then turn heat down to low and keep warm until dinner time.

To make a sandwich: toast a bun and lay down some lettuce on the bottom half. Top with a big heaping spoonful of sloppy joe mixture. Top with other half and serve with tots (or salad) and pickles.

The lettuce layer is very important because it keeps the bottom bun from getting too soggy!

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Baked Tater Tots

Yield: Serves 4-6 | Time: 45 min.

Ingredients:

- 1 large bag frozen tater tots
- 1 tablespoon seasoned salt
- 1 tablespoon paprika
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- 1 teaspoon Kosher salt
- Ketchup for serving

Directions:

- 1) Cook tots according to package instructions. I like to bake mine for 10 minutes longer than the package says so they get really crispy.
- 2) Stir together seasoned salt, paprika, chili powder, and salt in a small bowl. Halfway through baking, sprinkle tots with seasoning.
- 3) Season tots again when they are done baking. You might not need all of the seasoning mix.

Serve tots with ketchup!



Plan This Meal!

45 minutes left - Get tots cooking.

35 minutes left - Brown beef for joes and prep other sloppy joe ingredients.

15 minutes left - Sloppy joes should be simmering and thickening. Don't forget to season the tots as they bake.

5 minutes left - Toast buns, divide tots, serve up some sloppy joes!



Healthify/Vegify

To make the sloppy joes vegetarian, replace the beef with 14 ounces extra firm tofu. Crumble the tofu and dry it with some paper towels, pushing out as much liquid as possible.

Brown the tofu in oil over medium high heat and once it's browned, proceed with recipe as normal adjusting seasoning to your liking.

You can also replace the tots with a spinach salad from Meal 1 if you want to keep the side healthier.

Two Easy Meals | Ricotta Breakfast Sandies and Crockpot Tortilla Soup

These are two of my favorite meals for this time of year. The breakfast takes all of 10 minutes to make and is really delicious and filling. I love it on the weekends with a big cup of coffee. The crockpot soup is great to make before you head out to work and you'll come home to some of the best soup you've had. It looks like a lot of ingredients, but they are pretty standard and you just toss them all in the pot!

Ricotta Breakfast Muffins

Yield: Serves 2 | **Time:** 10 min.

Ingredients:

- 2 english muffins, toasted
- 1/2 cup ricotta cheese
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 cup baby spinach
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter
- 4 large eggs
- Salt and pepper
- Hot sauce



Directions:

- 1) Toast English muffin and spread on a good layer of ricotta cheese over each half.
- 2) Drizzle muffin with olive oil, and a pinch of salt and pepper.
- 3) Top with baby spinach.
- 4) In a large nonstick skillet, add a tablespoon of butter and melt over medium heat. When butter is bubbling, crack in eggs.
- 5) Cook for about 90 seconds over medium heat until the whites are mostly cooked.
- 6) Cover skillet with a lid or plate that fits and cook for another 30 seconds. This will finish cooking the egg whites but leave you with runny yolks. Don't overcook the eggs!
- 7) Top each muffin half with an egg and a dash of hot sauce. Season with salt and pepper.

Crockpot Chicken Tortilla Soup

Yield: Serves 6 | **Time:** 8 hours

Ingredients:

- 1 yellow onion, diced
 - 3 cloves garlic, minced
 - 1 Serrano pepper, diced (with seeds)
 - 1 red pepper, diced
 - 1 stalk celery, diced
 - 1 15 ounce can diced tomatoes
 - 1 pound chicken breasts
 - 2 dried New Mexico chile peppers (or poblano)
 - 1 teaspoon cumin seeds
 - 1 quart chicken stock
 - A few sprigs cilantro
 - 1 cup frozen sweet corn
 - 3 corn tortillas, diced
 - Salt and pepper
- Garnish:**
- Corn tortilla strips
 - Avocados
 - Limes
 - Cotija cheese
 - Sour cream

Directions:

- 1) Finely dice the onion, garlic, peppers, and celery and add them to a crockpot.
- 2) Also add in the chicken breasts, canned tomatoes, dried chiles, cumin, and chicken stock. Add water to cover ingredients.
- 3) Cover and set the crockpot on low. Cook for 6-8 hours.
- 4) Remove dried chiles and bay leaves and discard. Remove chicken breasts, shred, and return to crockpot.
- 5) Add in cilantro sprigs, corn, and a few corn tortillas cut into bits. Let the crockpot simmer for another 30-60 minutes.
- 6) Season soup with salt and pepper.
- 7) To make tortilla strips, dice corn tortillas into strips and bake at 350 degrees for 15-20 minutes until lightly browned and crispy.
- 8) Serve soup piled high with tortilla strips. Other fun garnishes include lime wedges, crumbled cotija cheese, avocados, and sour cream.





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 for garnish)
- Baby spinach (1 large container)
- Basil (1/4 cup)
- Celery (1 stalk)
- Cucumber (1)
- Cherry tomatoes (1 pint)
- Garlic (6 cloves)
- Ginger (small piece)
- Green bell pepper (1)
- Green leaf lettuce (1 small head)
- Limes (1 for garnish)
- Onion, yellow (1 1/2)
- Red onion (1/4)
- Red pepper (2)
- Scallions (garnish)
- Serrano pepper (1)
- Sweet corn, frozen (1 cup)

Meat, Poultry, Seafood

- Chicken breasts (1 lb.)
- Ground beef (1 lb.)
- Pepperoni (6 oz.)

Dairy

- Butter (1 Tbsp.)
- Cotija cheese (garnish)
- Eggs (4)
- Feta cheese (4 oz.)
- Mozzarella cheese (12 oz.)
- Ricotta cheese (1/2 cup)
- Sour cream (garnish)

Spices and Pantry Items

- Angel hair pasta (1 lb.)
- Black pepper
- Brown sugar (1 Tbsp.)
- Chicken stock (1 qt.)
- Chili garlic sauce (2 teas.)
- Chili powder (1 Tbsp.)
- Corn tortillas (3 + extra for strips)
- Cumin seeds (1 teas.)
- Dijon mustard (1 teas.)
- Dried parsley (1 teas.)
- English Muffins (2)
- Garlic powder (1/2 teas.)
- Hot sauce and/or sriracha
- Ketchup
- Kosher salt (2 teas. + seasoning)
- Olive oil (8 Tbsp.)
- Onion powder (1/2 teas.)
- Paprika (1 Tbsp. + 1 teas.)
- Pickles (garnish)
- Puff pastry (1 17.3 oz. box)
- Red pepper flakes (1/2 teas.)
- Red wine vinegar (3 Tbsp.)
- Rice wine vinegar (2 Tbsp.)
- Safflower oil (1/4 cup)
- SUB: Olive oil
- Sandwich rolls (6)
- Seasoned salt (1 Tbsp.)
- Sesame oil (1/4 cup)
- Sesame seeds (garnish)
- Soy sauce (1/4 cup)
- Sugar (2 Tbsp. + pinch)
- Tater tots (1 large bag)
- Tomatoes (1 15-ounce can diced)
- Tomato sauce (2 cup)
- Worcestershire sauce

Note: Even though the recipes in this meal plan are fairly easy, some of them do have a good number of ingredients -- especially the crockpot tortilla soup which is definitely an optional add-on meal. Don't get discouraged by the pantry items in this meal plan. Many of them are spices or canned items that you probably have on hand.