



WELL PLANNED START

BY REBECCA, THE WELL PLANNED GAL

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RESOLUTION SOLUTIONS

Around the end of December, amid the exhaustion of the holidays and often with a home out of sorts from Christmas visitors, gifts, and activities, I begin to hear a welcoming word: resolution. It's not that I love to make resolutions, but by this time, I've had my fill of holly, and I'm ready for life to settle down into a more normal and even boring existence.

Thinking about the amount of sweets and food I consumed during November and December, I'm anxious to begin eating healthier and getting back to working out. Along those lines I begin to think about personal growth, housework, kids, and school. Isn't it ironic that we choose to follow up the most hectic time of year with the stress of making yearlong decisions?

// so what's a girl to do? //

I tend to have crystal-clear vision of the many areas I need to better in my post-holiday recoup days. But by making resolutions shortly after the bustling days of December, coupled with my exhaustion, I'm setting myself up for failure. This year, I have postponed making resolutions until after the holiday decorations are put away, the laundry is caught up, and I've had at least one semi-normal week under my belt.

When it's time to make my resolutions, I begin with making a list and prioritizing them. Through watchfulness and prayer, my hope is to have the wisdom to see the items most pressing in my home and address them head on. Sometimes this is a personal development issue like losing weight or it's a parenting need of one of the kids needing special corrective attention.

// strategy dear //

Making a resolution is only the first step. If I really want to achieve these goals, I will begin by creating a strategy. If it is weight loss, the strategy involves a bit of research into creating a healthy menu and workout routine I am confident I can maintain. Then I clear my calendar and create a shopping list.

If my resolution is working on a specific character flaw in my child, I begin the strategy stage with developing a unique plan and communicating it with the child. Regardless of the resolution, it always starts with a strategy.

// keeping to it //

Resolution is made, strategy is in place, and now comes the true test. We live in a society of ease and convenience. We can make a meal in under a few minutes in the microwave, we can order our groceries online to pick up at the store, or simply hit a button and an entire load of dirty clothes becomes clean in under an hour. Although the convenience and technology is tremendous it comes with a price.

Consistency and hard work seem to be the qualities that are dying away with clotheslines and real mashed potatoes. Keeping your resolution isn't difficult, the key is quite simple. Once the strategy is made, it's a matter of working it. As a mom, I want to put forth the effort to keep my resolutions as a means not only to discipline myself but also set an example for my kids.

This year, be different and do things differently. Resolve with wisdom and keep it going through the virtue of self-discipline.

This is a decorative worksheet for 'NEW YEAR RESOLUTIONS AND GOALS'. The title is centered at the top in a bold, black, sans-serif font. Below the title is a large area with horizontal lines for writing. The page is framed by a decorative border featuring dark green branches with leaves and bright orange flowers. The overall design is clean and modern, suitable for a New Year's activity.



15 MINUTE PURGE

It's that time of year. Evaluate life, make goals, and set resolutions. I tend to roll my eyes, because like so many, I have good intentions, but the resolutions fail within a month. I stopped making new year's resolutions some time ago, and instead tried to tackle goals as they became necessary.

This year, however, I see a big change coming down the road. Within the next two years, our family will be moving from the burbs to the country. The glorious life of space, livestock, and long walks can take over the realities of packing up the lives of seven people!

// breathe, Becky, just breathe //

Yes, moving is not something I like. I've only done it twice since I had kids, and it tends to give me hives. I also tend to be a bit a-type personality and like everything to have a place and a place for everything, but between homeschooling, work, entertaining, and just living life, most of my closets, drawers, and cabinets are nowhere ready for a move.

// enter long-term goal //

This year, I'm making a resolution. I will spend fifteen minutes each week cleaning one drawer, cabinet, closet, or space that is in need. Whether organization, decluttering, or simply throwing out, I want to be ready for packing boxes with as little stress as possible.

// what about Bob? //

By taking baby steps of fifteen minutes a week, I'm committing to a resolution that is reasonable. I can easily play catch up if I miss a week or jump ahead with thirty minutes twice a month. The flexibility will be useful as I go through a busy year of becoming a grandmother, travel, and life with four teenagers at home.

It really is a simple formula that can have amazing results. I will begin my first week by creating a checklist of each space to clean out. I'm sure I'll be adding to the list as I work through the house, but by the end of a year, I hope to be ready and a bit less stressed about making the move.

52 “15 MINUTES” CLEANING PROJECTS

<input type="checkbox"/>	wash curtains	<input type="checkbox"/>	organize closets
<input type="checkbox"/>	clean windows	<input type="checkbox"/>	declutter toys
<input type="checkbox"/>	clean blinds	<input type="checkbox"/>	wash out trash cans
<input type="checkbox"/>	declutter junk drawer	<input type="checkbox"/>	clean stove drawer
<input type="checkbox"/>	clean out silverware	<input type="checkbox"/>	clean off electronics screens
<input type="checkbox"/>	declutter coffee cups	<input type="checkbox"/>	move and vacuum under furniture
<input type="checkbox"/>	declutter glasses	<input type="checkbox"/>	clean stove burner grates
<input type="checkbox"/>	clean under kitchen sink	<input type="checkbox"/>	wash or dust trim
<input type="checkbox"/>	clean linen closet	<input type="checkbox"/>	wash knickknacks
<input type="checkbox"/>	clean out medications	<input type="checkbox"/>	clean pantry
<input type="checkbox"/>	vacuum ceilings	<input type="checkbox"/>	clean stove hood filter
<input type="checkbox"/>	scrub carpet	<input type="checkbox"/>	clean out toaster
<input type="checkbox"/>	wash kitchen walls	<input type="checkbox"/>	declutter beauty supplies
<input type="checkbox"/>	dust walls	<input type="checkbox"/>	clean behind washer and dryer
<input type="checkbox"/>	clean oven	<input type="checkbox"/>	vacuum mattresses
<input type="checkbox"/>	declutter school supplies	<input type="checkbox"/>	clean lampshades
<input type="checkbox"/>	flip mattress	<input type="checkbox"/>	wipe lightswitch plates
<input type="checkbox"/>	declutter cds	<input type="checkbox"/>	organize bookshelves
<input type="checkbox"/>	declutter movies	<input type="checkbox"/>	declutter cleaning supplies
<input type="checkbox"/>	clean file drawer	<input type="checkbox"/>	clean lime off sink
<input type="checkbox"/>	clean kitchen cupboards	<input type="checkbox"/>	clean out vehicle
<input type="checkbox"/>	clean bathroom cupboards	<input type="checkbox"/>	clean outdoor furniture
<input type="checkbox"/>	vacuum under bed	<input type="checkbox"/>	declutter office supplies
<input type="checkbox"/>	wash outdoor siding	<input type="checkbox"/>	clean kitchen canisters
<input type="checkbox"/>	clean light fixtures	<input type="checkbox"/>	vacuum dryer vent and wash screen
<input type="checkbox"/>	clean out desk drawers	<input type="checkbox"/>	clean washer

.....

[illegible]

TOMORROW IS ALWAYS FRESH

I'll start Monday. Yes, Monday is a good day to start things anew. It is the best time to start a new diet or a new routine for exercise, better eating or early morning devotions. Best of all, Monday is the day I will, once again, dive into my planner and set a course for the "perfect" schedule. My children will delightfully acknowledge and properly respond to my wishes, yes, on Monday that is. For today it is Tuesday, and so I will start next Monday.

Have you ever had that conversation with yourself? Best intentions in mind, you start out on Monday and by the very next day things have already fallen out of sorts, and you are justifying why you should wait until the following Monday to start anew?

// WHAT ABOUT TOMORROW? //

As a young mother of three little girls, our home would not be complete without all three VHS videos of Anne of Green Gables. Tea party table set up, delicate cookies to snack on, and dressed up like princesses, the girls and I would spend the afternoon on Prince Edward Island.

I'll never forget the moment I heard the statement from Ms. Stacy, "Tomorrow is always fresh with no mistakes in it . . . well, with no mistakes in it yet."

The thought had not occurred to me before. Tomorrow is always the best time to start anew, try it again, and give it another go. So why do we put off the tomorrow for the next Monday?

One of my favorite authors, Martin Lloyd Jones, a minister of the early twentieth century stated it best:

Have you realized that most of your unhappiness in life is due to the fact that you are listening to yourself instead of talking to yourself? Take those thoughts that come to you the moment you wake up in the morning. You have not originated them, but they start talking to you, they bring back the problems of yesterday, etc. Somebody is talking. Who is talking to you? Your self is talking to you. Now this man's treatment [the Psalmist in Psalm 42] was this; instead of allowing this self to talk to him, he starts talking to himself. 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul?' He asks. His soul has been depressing him, crushing him. So he stands up and says: 'Self, listen for a moment, I will speak to you.' Do you know what I mean? If you do not, you have had but little experience.

Managing house and home is not for the faint of heart, and even with the best intentions our schedules and routines can end up in the ditch. What to do? Tell yourself to start again tomorrow. Yes, it's as simple as that.

// NOT SURE HOW TO START? //

Here's an easy yet effective tool that I have used as I have planned, failed, evaluated, and then planned again.

Get out a pencil and a piece of paper.

On the horizontal, list each day of the week. Under each day, begin listing areas of the house that need to be cleaned. Some areas are daily, like making beds, while others are weekly, like bathrooms and washing windows.

// REMEMBER THE DETAILS //

You are almost ready to dive into your house cleaning schedule, but before you do, stop for a moment and think.

Have I scheduled each area of the home? Using the samples on the following pages, run through the list and double check.

// CALLING FOR HELP! //

Now comes a critical element to effectively creating and keeping a schedule: assigning chores to your children. Now, don't get me wrong, we are the moms and it's up to us to serve and set an example to our children, but at the same time, we are to teach our children hard work and the reward of accomplishing a task. Review the list of chores and determine which child can take on tasks.

When a job seems to be daunting, like cleaning the dishes each evening after dinner, I often remind my kids that although they are assigned the task, I will be there to help them. This teaches servanthood and develops a relationship.

The next morning, your tomorrow, post the schedule on the frig and give it a try. As you go, you will see where adjustments can and should be made. It's not a big deal, your investment at this point is a piece of paper and a pencil.

// MAKING ADJUSTMENTS //

At the end of the first week, get a fresh piece of paper, and try again, including your adjustments. Try again the following week, and if needed, make a few more adjustments. Days turn into weeks, and weeks into months.

Children grow, schedules change, and life throws you a curve ball every so often, but in the end, planning a successful (okay, we'll try for a decent) cleaning schedule is as simple as a piece of paper, a pencil, and a tomorrow.

CHORES

SAMPLE CLEANING SCHEDULE

Clean Kitchen	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	WEEKEND
Bathrooms	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen
Load/Unload Dishwasher or Wash Dishes	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen
Spot Clean Fingerprints on Walls, Trim, Windows, etc.	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen
Pick Up/Tidy Rooms	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen
Make Beds	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen
Wipe Down Kitchen Table and Chairs	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen
Purge Magazines, Newspapers, and Catalogs	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen
Sweep Patio	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen
Scrub Kitchen Floor	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen
Clean Pet Bowls/ Areas	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen
File Papers/Go Through Mail	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen
Clean Mirrors	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen
Wipe Down Door Knobs	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen
Do Laundry/Sheets and Bedding	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen
Take Out Trash	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen
Bathrooms	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen
Dust/Vacuum	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen
Do Laundry	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen	Clean Kitchen

[illegible]

CHORES

[illegible]

[illegible]

CLEANING PRODUCTS TO KEEP ON HAND

Cleaning Products to Keep on Hand :

<input type="checkbox"/>	daily shower cleaner
<input type="checkbox"/>	cleanser
<input type="checkbox"/>	window cleaner
<input type="checkbox"/>	antibacterial spray
<input type="checkbox"/>	all-purpose cleaner
<input type="checkbox"/>	lysol
<input type="checkbox"/>	dishwashing liquid
<input type="checkbox"/>	laundry detergent
<input type="checkbox"/>	bleach
<input type="checkbox"/>	ammonia

Natural Cleaners :

<input type="checkbox"/>	vinegar
<input type="checkbox"/>	baking soda
<input type="checkbox"/>	lemon juice
<input type="checkbox"/>	microfiber cloths
<input type="checkbox"/>	borax
<input type="checkbox"/>	essential oils
<input type="checkbox"/>	salt
<input type="checkbox"/>	club soda
<input type="checkbox"/>	liquid castile soap
<input type="checkbox"/>	washing soda

Ways to Store Your Products:

<input type="checkbox"/>	use shower caddies
<input type="checkbox"/>	use an over-the-door shoe holder
<input type="checkbox"/>	put a shower curtain bar under the sink and hang spray bottles on it
<input type="checkbox"/>	use a rolling cart
<input type="checkbox"/>	plastic crates

PANTRY - FRIDGE - FREEZER BASICS

PANTRY:

<input type="checkbox"/>	olive oil
<input type="checkbox"/>	vinegar
<input type="checkbox"/>	vegetable oil
<input type="checkbox"/>	chicken broth
<input type="checkbox"/>	cream of chicken soup
<input type="checkbox"/>	canned vegetables
<input type="checkbox"/>	canned fruits
<input type="checkbox"/>	tomato sauce
<input type="checkbox"/>	tomato paste
<input type="checkbox"/>	canned beans
<input type="checkbox"/>	refried beans
<input type="checkbox"/>	tuna
<input type="checkbox"/>	rice
<input type="checkbox"/>	pasta
<input type="checkbox"/>	flour
<input type="checkbox"/>	sugar
<input type="checkbox"/>	brown sugar
<input type="checkbox"/>	powdered sugar
<input type="checkbox"/>	potatoes
<input type="checkbox"/>	canned tomatoes
<input type="checkbox"/>	olives
<input type="checkbox"/>	peanut butter
<input type="checkbox"/>	honey
<input type="checkbox"/>	shortening/Crisco
<input type="checkbox"/>	evaporated milk
<input type="checkbox"/>	sweetened condensed milk
<input type="checkbox"/>	oatmeal
<input type="checkbox"/>	chocolate chips
<input type="checkbox"/>	cornmeal
<input type="checkbox"/>	baking power

<input type="checkbox"/>	baking soda
<input type="checkbox"/>	dried beans
<input type="checkbox"/>	breadcrumbs
<input type="checkbox"/>	bread
<input type="checkbox"/>	cornstarch
<input type="checkbox"/>	gelatin
<input type="checkbox"/>	pickles
<input type="checkbox"/>	onions

FRIDGE:

<input type="checkbox"/>	milk
<input type="checkbox"/>	eggs
<input type="checkbox"/>	butter
<input type="checkbox"/>	sour cream
<input type="checkbox"/>	cream cheese
<input type="checkbox"/>	cheddar cheese
<input type="checkbox"/>	mozzarella cheese
<input type="checkbox"/>	yogurt
<input type="checkbox"/>	mustard
<input type="checkbox"/>	ketchup
<input type="checkbox"/>	carrots
<input type="checkbox"/>	celery
<input type="checkbox"/>	Worcestershire sauce
<input type="checkbox"/>	soy sauce
<input type="checkbox"/>	salsa
<input type="checkbox"/>	yeast
<input type="checkbox"/>	maple syrup
<input type="checkbox"/>	mayonnaise
<input type="checkbox"/>	vanilla extract

FREEZER :

<input type="checkbox"/>	chicken breast
<input type="checkbox"/>	hamburger

<input type="checkbox"/>	frozen vegetables
<input type="checkbox"/>	bread dough
<input type="checkbox"/>	bacon
<input type="checkbox"/>	tortillas
<input type="checkbox"/>	sausage
<input type="checkbox"/>	nuts
<input type="checkbox"/>	frozen fruit

SPICE DRAWER:

<input type="checkbox"/>	cinnamon
<input type="checkbox"/>	nutmeg
<input type="checkbox"/>	ginger
<input type="checkbox"/>	salt
<input type="checkbox"/>	pepper
<input type="checkbox"/>	garlic powder
<input type="checkbox"/>	onion powder
<input type="checkbox"/>	garlic salt
<input type="checkbox"/>	onion salt
<input type="checkbox"/>	season all/season salt
<input type="checkbox"/>	onion flakes
<input type="checkbox"/>	chili powder
<input type="checkbox"/>	paprika
<input type="checkbox"/>	dried mustard
<input type="checkbox"/>	Italian spices
<input type="checkbox"/>	oregano
<input type="checkbox"/>	parsley
<input type="checkbox"/>	thyme
<input type="checkbox"/>	turmeric
<input type="checkbox"/>	rosemary
<input type="checkbox"/>	cayenne pepper
<input type="checkbox"/>	cilantro

ENJOYABLE CLEANING

With five kids between the ages of ten to eighteen, it is much easier now than ever to whip the house into shape, but it hasn't always been that way. At one point, I was pregnant with our fifth child and had four kids under the age of five! Here are a few tips I discovered that can make cleaning enjoyable and doable:

// WHEN MAMA'S CLEANING ALONE //

I focused on cleaning throughout the day in spurts. It is a rare opportunity to have several uninterrupted hours to focus on a project, so I chose several ten- to fifteen-minute sessions to do quick pickups.

I left the heavy duty cleaning until I had a little help. My husband had the weekends off, and I would often scrub the bathrooms, clean out the fridge, or organize a closet when he could play with the little ones or watch them for about an hour.

Use naptime wisely. Don't burn out thinking that every sleeping moment of a baby's or toddler's life has to be spent "catching up" on housework. Spend a little time cleaning and a little time for yourself!

// CLEANING WITH THE KIDS //

As children get older, the time comes to pull them into the cleaning process. It's a rare sight to see children enjoy clean-up time, but whether it's cleaning the bathrooms or straightening up after school, here are three things that can make it enjoyable:

// Togetherness //

Children would much rather clean and tidy with parents than on their own. When it's time to clean, do it together! Not only does this allow for you to watch over the process, keeping it within a reasonable time frame, but it allows for meaningful conversations to occur during the process.

// Whistle While You Work //

Nothing motivates moving around like music. When it's time to scrub floors in our home, I put on some music with a beat, and we sing together while we clean. It not only makes the time go by faster, but it builds lasting memories when Mom hits the wrong note!

// Set the Timer //

Cleaning is more enjoyable when it is not a process that takes up an entire day. Set a reasonable goal for what you would like to accomplish and communicate it clearly with your children. If they know the end goal, they have something to work toward.

SAMPLE SEASONAL CLEANING SCHEDULE

//SPRING//

Clean out winter clothes
Inspect air conditioner
Clean out garage
Clean fireplace and chimney
Vacuum vents and ducts
Plant flowers and gardens
Vacuum walls and ceilings
Scrub carpet
Wash knickknacks and dust picture frames and mirrors
Clean closets and drawers

//SUMMER//

Clean out cars
Outdoor home repairs
Wash siding
Wash windows and screens
Wash curtains
Clean light fixtures
Wash/dust trim
Wash or beat rugs
Clean blinds
Defrost and clean freezer

//FALL//

Rake leaves
Plant trees
Inspect furnace
Sort summer/spring clothing
Clean out garage
Clean BBQ
Vacuum walls and ceilings
Move and vacuum under furniture
Clean closets and drawers

//WINTER//

Clean out gutters from the fall
Clean oven
Oil door hinges
Clean under and behind appliances
Wash all blankets and throws

[illegible][illegible][illegible][illegible]

MENU PLANNING

Early on in my parenting decisions, family dinners were a must. A time to relax, enjoy good food, review the day, and converse with loved ones, the supper table was where relationships were formed and family was established.

As with anything of importance, family dinners take planning and consistency. Although our family has had many different seasons, I created a system which had the flexibility for toddlers to teens. Here are the five staples to my menu planning skills:

// CREATE A ROUTINE //

Find a time of the week that works best for planning. Typically the day before or the day of shopping. Creating a routine that is respected by the family will save you time on trips to the store and eating out. Whether weekly or biweekly, make time to sit and begin planning for your menu.

// TAKE INVENTORY //

Before writing out the specific menu and grocery items, you can often save money by using up what's in the pantry. Scan your shelves and begin brainstorming how you can use up those cans, boxes, and packages of food that have been sitting way too long in the pantry.

For grab-and-go meals like breakfast and lunch, create a list of grocery staples like butter, milk, eggs, peanut butter, etc. Use this list to take inventory before running to the store.

// DISCOVER DEALS //

In my neck of the woods, stores will honor competitor ads. So I review the best deals in local stores and begin to make my menu plans according to the pantry inventory and the best bargains on food for the week.

// MAKE A PLAN //

With my knowledge of what's in the pantry and what's on sale, I write out the menu. Sometimes, for special occasions, this will include a breakfast or lunch, but mainly dinners. I also take into consideration a leftover night, date night, or any other activity that might be planned.

With a plan in hand, create your grocery list, making sure to add staples to your list. Shop with list in hand, bringing along coupons and/or sale ads.

// STICK TO THE PLAN //

The key to any plan is sticking to it. If possible, take a few minutes each morning and prepare vegetables, clean meats, or begin prepping dinner. Use your crock pot when you can and get the kids in to help.

By creating a plan, shopping wisely, and cooking the meals you planned for, you can bring your family around a table each evening for fun, food, and relationships.

Save time, save money, and bring healthier options to the table by planning your meals!

PRE-PLANNED MEAL PLAN

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
BREAKFAST	Pancakes*	Avocado Toast with Eggs*	Oatmeal	Banana Nutella Sushi*	Smoothies*	Eggs and Toast	Banana Bread*
LUNCH	Turkey Sandwiches	Tuna Salad with Crackers*	Tortilla Pizza	Chicken Nuggets *	PB&J	Mac and Cheese	Leftovers
SNACK	Hummus and Carrots	Dried Fruit	Apple Cookies*	Nuts	Goldfish and Raisins	Fruit	Yogurt
DINNER	Zuppa Tiscana* (Italian Sausage and Potato Soup)	Roast with Mashed Potatoes*	Enchiladas*	Spagetti and Garlic Bread	Chicken Pot Pie*	Leftovers	Hamburgers

*recipes included

SHOPPING LIST

PRE-PLANNED MEAL PLAN

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
BREAKFAST	Yogurt and Fruit	Breakfast Burritos*	Overnight Oats*	French Toast*	Avocado Toast with Eggs	Sweet Potato Hash*	Muffins
LUNCH	PB&J	Chicken Noodle Soup*	Chicken Caesar Salad	Avocado Chicken Salad on Toast*	Spaghetti Squash Lasagna*	Quesadilla	Leftovers
SNACK	Cheese and Crackers	Granola Bars	Deviled Eggs	Hummus with Carrots	No-Bake Granola	Smoothie*	Trail Mix
DINNER	Tilapia, Broccoli and Rice	Mushroom and Spinach Pasta*	Chicken and Dumplings*	Bratwurst and Sauerkraut	Tortilla Mexican Soup*	Leftovers	Chicken and Broccoli with Rice

*recipes included

SHOPPING LIST



FLUFFY PANCAKES

Ingredients :

2 cups flour (measured with spoon, not sifted*)

2 tsp. baking soda

1 tsp. salt

3 Tbsp. sugar

2 eggs

2½ cups low fat buttermilk (don't use anything above 1%)

butter for cooking

Instructions:

Preheat a pancake griddle to 350. Peel the paper off of one end of a stick of butter and set on a plate next to the griddle for greasing.

Whisk eggs and buttermilk together in a medium bowl. Add flour*, baking soda, salt, and sugar. Whisk just until combined.

Rub butter in a circle on the griddle and drop ½ cup of batter into the butter spot. I like to use a large ice cream scoop for this. As soon as the batter hits the griddle, level it out and smooth it quickly into a circle with the back of the ice cream scoop.

The pancakes should be flipped when the 2nd bubble pops. This will take about two minutes on most griddles. Flip the pancake and cook on the second side until no longer doughy.

Every time you put new batter on the griddle you need to butter it again.

Pancakes should be served piping hot off the griddle. Stacking them up or holding them in an oven can cause them to lose the crunchy outside and / or become tough.



AVOCADO TOAST

Ingredients :

2 slices of bread

1/2 avocado

1 Tbsp. EVOO

spices (garlic powder, red pepper flakes, pepper, dash sea salt)

Directions:

Toast the bread. Take the bread and smash the avocado on top with a fork.

Fry one egg on medium heat in a small skillet until whites are cooked.

Add the EVOO on the avocado, then place egg on top.

Add spices on top to taste.

BANANA NUTELLA SUSHI

Ingredients :

2 tortillas

4 Tbsp. Nutella

2 bananas

strawberries for garnish

Directions:

Lay out tortillas and spread Nutella over the tortilla.

Peel the banana and place on the tortilla and roll it.

Slice into rounds and serve on a plate.

SMOOTHIES

GREEN CHOCOLATE SMOOTHIE

Ingredients :

1 frozen banana, chopped into pieces

1 cup spinach

1/2 cup nonfat yogurt

1 cup chocolate almond milk

Pinch of cinnamon, optional

PB&J SMOOTHIE

Ingredients :

2 cups fresh strawberries

1 frozen banana, chopped

2 teaspoons peanut butter

4 ounces fat-free plain Greek yogurt or fat-free milk

1/2 cup ice cubes

COCONUT ALMOND SMOOTHIE

Ingredients :

12 ounces of pure, unsweetened

coconut water

1 banana

1 Tbsp. almond butter

2 Tbsp. plain nonfat Greek yogurt

Stevia or honey, to taste

ice, to preference

POM AND CHIA SMOOTHIE

Ingredients :

1 cup frozen mixed berries

1/2 cup unsweetened pomegranate juice

1/2 cup water

1/2 Tbsp. chia seeds

BANANA BREAD

Ingredients :

3 bananas (brown, mashed)

½ cup melted butter

½- 1 cup sugar (depends on how sweet you want it)

1 egg, whisked with a fork

1 tsp. vanilla

1 tsp. baking soda

pinch of salt

1½ cups flour

Instructions:

Preheat oven to 350

In a bowl, mix all ingredients by hand until well incorporated

Pour into a greased bread pan (approx 9x4x4)

Bake 50 minutes to 1 hour or until browned and toothpick inserted in middle comes out clean (check at about 50 minutes)

Cool on rack.

APPLE COOKIES

Ingredients :

1 apple

2 Tbsp. peanut butter

pecans

coconut shreds

chocolate chips

Instructions:

Slice apple into thin rings and remove core.

Spread peanut butter over one side of ring.

Top with pecans, coconut shreds, and chocolate chips.

FREEZER BREAKFAST BURRITOS

Ingredients :

12 large eggs

1/4 cup milk

salt and pepper

2 Tbsp. olive oil

1 medium white onion, peeled and diced (about 2 cups)

1 pound Yukon gold or red potatoes, diced into 1/4-inch cubes

1 large red bell pepper, cored and diced (about 2 cups)

1 (4-ounce) can Old El Paso chopped green chiles

2 tsp. salt

1 tsp. ground cumin

1 (15-ounce) can black beans, rinsed and drained

2 (8-count) packages Old El Paso large (burrito-sized) flour tortillas

2 cups (8 ounces) shredded Pepper Jack cheese (or the cheese of your choice)

(Optional: salsa, for serving)

Instructions:

Begin by making your scrambled eggs. In a large bowl, whisk together eggs, milk, and a generous pinch of salt and pepper until smooth. Heat a large sauté pan that has been misted with cooking spray (or spread with a teaspoon of oil) on the skillet over medium heat, then add the eggs and cook for 4-6 minutes, stirring occasionally, until they are scrambled and cooked through. Transfer to a separate plate and set aside.

Meanwhile, while your eggs are cooking, heat the 2 tablespoons of olive oil in a large sauté pan over medium-high heat. Add onion and sauté for 3 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the onion is mostly cooked and slightly translucent. Add the potatoes and bell peppers, and stir to combine. Continue cooking, stirring frequently, for 7-10 more minutes, or until the potatoes are tender and cooked through. Stir in the black beans, green chiles, salt, and cumin, and continue cooking for 2 more minutes. Then remove the mixture from the heat, and set aside.

To assemble your burritos, spread out a large sheet of plastic wrap on a flat surface and lay the tortilla squarely in the center of it. Add a large spoonful of scrambled eggs in the center of the tortilla (roughly 1/4 cup), followed by another large spoonful of the potato mixture on top of the eggs, followed by a few tablespoons of shredded cheese on top of the potato mixture. Fold the two opposite sides of the tortilla in so that they meet and overlap, then fold in the two remaining open ends so that the entire burrito is sealed. Wrap it tightly in plastic wrap so that the entire burrito is very tightly sealed. (I find it easiest to fold the plastic wrap over the two short ends, then the longer sides of the burrito.) Then transfer burritos to the freezer, where they will last for up to 3 months.

To thaw the frozen burritos, remove the plastic wrap and place a burrito on a microwave-safe plate. Microwave for 60-90 seconds, or until warmed through. Serve plain or with salsa, for dipping.

OVERNIGHT OATS

BROWNIE BATTER OATS

Ingredients :

1 cup unsweetened almond milk (or low fat milk of choice)

1/2 cup plain low fat Greek yogurt (or mashed banana, or pumpkin)

2 Tbsp. unsweetened cocoa powder (or more, to taste)

1/8 tsp. salt

2 Tbsp. baking stevia or 1/4 cup sweetener that measures like sugar

1 cup old-fashioned oats

1/4 cup protein powder (or additional oats)

CHERRY PIE OATS

Ingredients :

1/4 cup old-fashioned oats

1/2 cup plain nonfat Greek yogurt

1/4 cup nonfat milk

1/4 cup cherries, diced (fresh or frozen and thawed)

2 tsp. Truvia (or other sweetener, to taste)

1/8 tsp. ground cinnamon (optional)

ENERGY OATS

Ingredients :

1/3 cup organic rolled oats

1 cup almond milk

1 banana (sliced)

1 Tbsp. chia seeds

1 tsp. maple syrup

PEACH OATS

Ingredients :

1/2 cup old-fashioned oats

1/3 cup almond milk, or sub another milk

1/4 cup peach yogurt

1/2 tsp. Truvia, or sub an equivalent of another sweetener

1 and 1/2 tsp. vanilla extract, separated

Pinch of cinnamon

1/2 Tbsp. coconut oil

1 peach

For all of these recipes combine the ingredients in a mason jar or sealable container and refrigerate overnight.

FRENCH TOAST BAKE

Ingredients :

1 loaf sourdough bread (we used Pepperidge Farm loaf)

8 eggs

2 cups milk

1/2 cup heavy cream

3/4 cup sugar

2 Tbsp. vanilla

Topping:

1/2 cup flour

1/2 cup brown sugar

1 tsp. cinnamon

1/4 tsp. salt

1/2 cup cold butter, cut into pieces

Instructions

Cut loaf into cubes and place evenly in a greased 9x13 pan.

In a bowl, mix together eggs, milk, heavy cream, sugar, and vanilla. Pour evenly over bread.

Cover your pan with Saran Wrap and refrigerate overnight.

Mix together flour, brown sugar, cinnamon, and salt in a medium bowl.

Cut in butter with this mixture until crumbly and place in a Ziploc bag and refrigerate overnight as well.

Take pan and Ziploc out when ready to bake. Sprinkle crumbly mixture evenly over the bread.

Bake at 350 for 45 minutes to 1 hour depending on how soft you like it.



SWEET POTATO HASH

Ingredients :

1 lb. Italian sausage

1 medium onion, chopped

2 medium-sized sweet potatoes

coconut oil

salt and pepper, to taste

rosemary, to taste

Instructions :

Brown sausage. Transfer to a plate.

Reduce heat to medium high, add 1 tablespoon coconut oil to cast iron skillet and sauté onions until translucent. Transfer to the plate with the sausage.

Heat 1 tablespoon coconut oil over medium high heat, add chopped sweet potatoes and cook, stirring occasionally, until tender (about 10 minutes). Sprinkle some rosemary over sweet potatoes. Cover skillet with a lid while cooking.

Add sausage and onions to the cast iron skillet and stir everything.

Crack four eggs over sweet potato hash. Place cast iron skillet in a preheated 425 degrees oven and cook for about 10-15 minutes until eggs are set.



TUNA SALAD

Ingredients :

1 (5 or 6 ounce) can of tuna fish (drained; if packed in water, drain it, and add a teaspoon of good quality olive oil to the tuna)

1/3 cup of cottage cheese

2 Tbsp. of mayonnaise

1/4 cup finely chopped red onion

1 celery stalk, finely chopped (about 1/2 cup)

1 Tbsp. of capers

1 Tbsp. lemon juice

Pinch or two of dill

2 Tbsp. minced fresh parsley

1 tsp. of Dijon mustard

(optional - lettuce and sliced tomatoes)

Sliced bread, lightly toasted

Instructions:

Mix all of the ingredients. Serve on toast, either open faced or in a regular sandwich with lettuce and tomatoes. For a low-carb option, serve on sliced lettuce.

CHICKEN AVOCADO SALAD

Ingredients :

2-3 boneless chicken breast, cooked

1 large avocado

1/4 cup chopped onion

juice of 1/2 a lime

2 Tbsp. cilantro

salt and pepper to taste

Instructions:

Cook chicken breast until done, let cool, and then shred. Mix well with all other ingredients. Enjoy.

CHICKEN NOODLE SOUP

Ingredients :

2 Tbsp. olive oil

1 cup carrots, peeled and sliced thin (about 1 1/2 large carrots)

1 cup celery, sliced thin (about 2 stalks)

1 cup sweet Vidalia or yellow onion, peeled and diced small (about 1 medium onion)

2 garlic cloves, minced

64 ounces (8 cups) low-sodium chicken broth

2 bay leaves

1 tsp. fresh thyme (or 1/2 teaspoon dried thyme)

1/2 tsp. dried oregano

1 tsp. pepper, or to taste

12 ounces wide egg noodles (or your favorite noodles or pasta)

2 cups shredded cooked chicken (use store-bought rotisserie chicken to save time; or roast or cook your own chicken in a skillet)

3 to 4 Tbsp. fresh flat-leaf parsley leaves, finely chopped

1 Tbsp. lemon juice, optional

salt, to taste

Instructions:

To a large Dutch oven or stockpot, add the oil and heat over medium-high heat to warm.

Add the carrots, celery, onion, and sauté for about 7 minutes, or until vegetables begin to soften. Stir intermittently.

Add the garlic and sauté for another 1 to 2 minutes.

Add the chicken broth, bay leaves, thyme, oregano, pepper, and bring to a boil. Allow mixture to boil gently for about 5 minutes or until vegetables are fork-tender.

Add the egg noodles and boil mixture for about 10 minutes, or until noodles are soft and cooked through. At any time while making the soup, if the overall liquid level is lower than you like and you prefer more broth, adding a cup or two of water is okay. At the end you will adjust the salt level.

Add the chicken, parsley, optional lemon juice (brightens up the flavor), and boil 1 to 2 minutes, or until chicken is warmed through. Taste soup and add salt to taste. I added about 1 tablespoon but this will vary based on how salty the brand of chicken broth used is, how salty the rotisserie chicken is, and personal preference. Make any necessary seasoning adjustments (i.e. more salt, pepper, herbs, etc.), remove the bay leaves, and serve immediately. Soup will keep airtight in the fridge for 5 to 7 days or in the freezer for up to 6 months.



BAKED CHICKEN NUGGETS

Ingredients :

16 ounces (2 large) skinless boneless chicken breasts, cut into even bite-sized pieces

1/2 tsp. kosher salt and black pepper, to taste

2 tsp. olive oil

6 Tbsp. whole wheat Italian seasoned breadcrumbs

2 Tbsp. panko

2 Tbsp. grated Parmesan cheese

olive oil spray

Instructions:

Preheat oven to 425°. Spray a baking sheet with olive oil spray.

Put the olive oil in one bowl and the breadcrumbs, panko, and Parmesan cheese in another.

Season chicken with salt and pepper, then put in the bowl with the olive oil and mix well so the olive oil evenly coats all of the chicken.

Put a few chunks of chicken at a time into the breadcrumb mixture to coat, then on the baking sheet. Lightly spray the top with olive oil spray, then bake 8 - 10 minutes. Turn over then cook another 4 - 5 minutes or until cooked through.



SPAGHETTI SQUASH LASAGNA

Ingredients :

1 spaghetti squash, cut in half lengthwise with seeds removed

1 medium chopped onion

2 Tbsp. minced garlic

1 Tbsp. dried basil

1 cube of vegetable bouillon

15 ounces chopped black olives

1 cup of shredded mozzarella cheese

1 cup of shredded Parmesan cheese

black pepper to season

Instructions:

Spray a baking tray with a thin layer of cooking spray. Place the squash cut side down onto the tray.

In an oven pre heated to 325F, bake the squash for around 35 minutes or until you can easily insert a knife into it. Remove from the oven and leave to cool.

While squash is baking, spray cooking spray into a saucepan. Over a medium heat, sauté onion and garlic until golden brown. Stir in the tomatoes, bouillon cube, basil, and black pepper to season. Cook for around 15 minutes or until the sauce is of a medium thickness.

Remove squash strands with a fork until you are left with the shells. Keep the strands for the next step.

Layer each shell with a dollop of the sauce, then layers of spaghetti squash, olives, and mozzarella cheese. Repeat this until the shells are full or all the ingredients are used up. Top with the Parmesan cheese.



ZUPPA TOSCANA

Ingredients :

1 Tbsp. olive oil
1 lb. Italian sausage
¼ tsp. red pepper flakes (or to taste)
3 cloves garlic, minced
1 onion, diced
4 cups chicken broth
3 small russet potatoes, thinly sliced
2 cups kale, finely chopped
1 cup heavy cream
salt and pepper to taste

Instructions:

To a large pot over medium heat, add the olive oil. Brown the sausage until no longer pink. Add the red pepper flakes, garlic, and onion and cook, stirring often, until the onion is translucent and the garlic is fragrant, about 4 minutes. Add the chicken broth, potatoes, and kale. Bring the broth to a simmer, reduce the heat to medium-low, and cook until the potatoes are tender, about 10 minutes. Remove the soup from the heat, stir in the cream, and season with salt and pepper to taste. Ladle into soup bowls and serve.

POT ROAST

Ingredients :

1(3-4 lb.) chuck roast (see note)
2 Tbsp. olive oil
1 Tbsp. butter
2 large onions, cut in half then thickly sliced
4 cloves minced garlic
2-4 cups beef stock
2 Tbsp. Worcestershire sauce
5 sprigs of fresh thyme
1 sprig rosemary
1 (16 ounce bag) baby carrot
1 ½ lbs. Yukon gold potatoes, cut into quarters

Instructions:

Position a rack in the center of the oven and preheat the oven to 275°F. Place the chuck roast on a flat surface and generously salt and pepper the roast.

Heat a large Dutch oven or a heavy-bottomed (oven-safe) pot on high heat. Add 1 tablespoon of the olive oil. When the oil is hot and shiny, add the thickly sliced onions. Allow the onions to brown and cook for 2-3 minutes. Remove to a plate.

Add the remaining 1 tablespoon of olive oil and butter to the Dutch oven. Place the meat inside and allow it to sear on all sides for 1 minute. You want the meat to brown as this will allow for a more tender roast. Remove to a plate.

De-glaze the pan with 1 cup of beef broth, garlic, and Worcestershire sauce, whisking and scraping the bottom of the pan to remove all the brown bits. When the pan has been de-glazed, add the roast and the onions back into the pot. Pour enough beef broth into the pan to cover the meat halfway (I used about 2 cups). Add the thyme and rosemary sprigs in. Cover the Dutch oven with a lid and let sit in the oven for 1 hour and 15 minutes (for a 3 pound roast) or 2 hours and 15 minutes (for a 4 pound roast).

Add the carrots and potatoes into the Dutch oven and allow the roast to bake for an additional 1 hour and 45 minutes (for both the 3 and 4 pound). Check for doneness of veggies by piercing with a knife. Remove pot from oven. Let rest 5 minutes before serving

CHICKEN ENCHILADAS

Ingredients :

3-4 cups cooked shredded chicken (I use cooked rotisserie chicken)

1 medium onion, chopped

1 tsp. olive oil

1 cup sour cream

1/2 cup chopped parsley

1 large can enchilada sauce (La Victoria is my favorite)

3 cups shredded cheese (I use Mexican blend)

10-16 flour tortillas

Instructions:

Preheat oven to 350°F.

Heat a teaspoon of olive oil in a large frying pan over medium heat. Add the onions and cook until translucent, stirring the entire time.

Add the chicken to the onions in the frying pan. Stir until combined.

Pour 1/3 – 1/2 cup of enchilada sauce over the chicken and onion mixture, just enough to coat the chicken.

Add sour cream and parsley. Stir until combined.

Once the sour cream and parsley are fully combined, turn off the heat. Now add the shredded cheese. I usually add 2 to 2-1/2 cups. Sometimes more. It just depends on how cheesy I want it. I like the mixture to be creamy and cheesy.

Pour just enough sauce in a baking dish to cover the bottom of the dish.

Fill the tortillas. Spoon sauce onto a tortilla, and then spoon on some of the chicken mixture.

Roll up the tortilla and place it in the baking dish. Repeat steps to make enough tortillas to fill your baking dish, or until the chicken mixture is all used up.

Pour enchilada sauce over the completed enchiladas. Spread it evenly over the top.

Top with more shredded cheese and garnish with chopped parsley. Place in the oven covered with foil and bake for 20-30 minutes. Remove the foil for the last 10 minutes of cooking. Cook until sauce is bubbling, tortilla edges are slightly crisp, and the cheese is melted. Enjoy!

CHICKEN POT PIE

Ingredients :

1 recipe homemade pie crust
1 lb. skinless boneless chicken breast, cubed
1 cup sliced carrots (about 2 carrots)
1/2 cup sliced celery (about 1 stalk)
1/3 cup unsalted butter
1/3 cup chopped onion
1 tsp. minced garlic
1/3 cup all-purpose flour (spoon & leveled)
1 tsp. salt
1/2 tsp. black pepper
1/2 tsp. dried thyme
1 and 3/4 cups chicken broth
2/3 cup half-and-half
1 cup frozen peas
1 large egg, beaten
sprigs of fresh thyme for garnish, optional

DOUBLE PIE CRUST

Ingredients :

2 cups flour
2 tsp salt
2/3 cup shortening
8 tbsp cold water

Instructions:

Combine flour and salt together in a medium size bowl. With a fork, cut the shortening into the mixture until it resembles coarse crumbs.

Drizzle 2-3 tablespoons of ice water over flour. Toss mixture to moisten, adding more water a few drops at a time until the dough comes together.

Gently gather dough together into a ball. Wrap in plastic wrap, and chill for at least 30 minutes before rolling.

Instructions:

Prepare the pie crust as directed in my recipe, including chilling for at least 2 hours. I usually make the crust the night before. The pie crust recipe makes 2 crusts and you'll be using both crusts.

In a large saucepan, combine chicken, carrots, and celery. Add water to cover and boil for 12 minutes. Remove from heat, drain, and set aside.

In a large skillet, cook the butter, onions, and garlic over medium heat, stirring occasionally. Cook until the onions are translucent and the butter is lightly browning. Whisk in the flour, salt, black pepper, thyme, chicken broth, and half-and-half. Cook and whisk until no flour lumps remain, then simmer over medium-low heat until thick. I simmer mine for 10 minutes. You want it to be a very thick gravy; simmer longer if necessary. Taste and add more seasonings if you prefer. Sometimes I add more thyme. Remove from heat and set aside.

Preheat oven to 425°F (218°C).

After the pie dough has chilled: On a floured work surface, roll out 1 half of the chilled pie dough. Turn the pie dough about a quarter turn after every few rolls until you have a circle 12 inches in diameter. Carefully place the dough into a 9-inch pie dish. Tuck it in with your fingers, making sure it is smooth. With a small and sharp knife, trim the extra overhang of dough and discard. Place the chicken mixture on top. Top with frozen peas. Pour gravy over top. Roll out second half of pie crust dough just as you did the first. Cover the pie with the second crust and trim the extra overhang off the sides. Seal the edges by crimping with a fork or your fingers. With a small sharp knife, slice a few small slits in the top crust for steam to escape. Using a pastry brush, brush crust and edges with beaten egg.

Bake for 32 - 38 minutes, or until crust is golden brown. I use a pie crust shield to protect the edges from browning too much too soon. Cool for 10 minutes before serving. Makes amazing leftovers-the filling is so thick on the next day! Reheat as desired. Leftovers keep well in the refrigerator in an airtight container for up to 5 days.

Make ahead tip: Filling and gravy can be prepared 1 day in advance, cover and chill in the refrigerator. Assemble, fill, and bake the next day as directed. The pie crust dough can be made ahead of time and stored in the refrigerator for up to 5 days or in the freezer for up to 3 months. Thaw overnight in the refrigerator before using. The baked pot pie freezes well for up to 2-3 months. I usually bake the pot pie in a disposable pie dish, let it cool completely, then wrap it tightly in aluminum foil and freeze. Then, bake from frozen at 375°F (191°C) for about 40 minutes or until warmed through.

MUSHROOM PASTA

Ingredients :

1 Tbsp. olive oil
3 onions, medium or large, sliced
pinch of salt
1 Tbsp. balsamic vinegar
1 Tbsp. olive oil
10 or 15 small mushrooms sliced (I used shiitake with stems removed.)
pinch of salt
3 cups spinach
8 ounces fettuccine pasta
2/3 cup heavy cream
1/3 cup milk
1 cup grated Parmesan cheese
1/4 tsp. salt

Instructions:

First we need to caramelize onions. Heat 1 tablespoon olive oil on high heat in a large skillet; when oil is heated, add sliced onions and cook on high heat for about 10 minutes, constantly stirring with spatula. The onions should start to brown, but without burning (a couple of onions may be burnt here and there, but overall they should not be charred). Reduce heat to medium and cook onions for 10 more minutes, continuing to stir, as onions brown even more without burning. At this point add just a pinch of salt over onions. Continue cooking for 10 more minutes on medium or low heat, stirring occasionally to make sure onions don't stick to the bottom of the pan or burn. Total you should have cooked onions for 30 minutes. Remove from heat and sprinkle onions with a small amount of balsamic vinegar to de-glaze the pan. Using spatula, mix the onions, scraping the bottom of the pan and coating onions with the balsamic vinegar you just added.

After you have started cooking onions, heat 1 tablespoon olive oil in another pan and add sliced mushrooms (I used shiitake with stems removed; you can use any small-sized mushrooms). Add just a pinch of salt. Reduce heat to medium-low and cook mushrooms covered for about 20 minutes, occasionally stirring. Keep in mind that if you use other mushrooms (not shiitake) the cooking time will be much shorter, only about 5 minutes. Shiitake mushrooms need longer to cook. If you use regular button mushroom cook them for only about 5 minutes until they soften.

Add cooked mushrooms to the pan with caramelized onions, add 3 cups of spinach, and stir on low heat just until spinach wilts.

CHICKEN AND DUMPLINGS

Ingredients :

For Dumplings

1 cup all-purpose flour

1 egg, beaten

2 tsp. baking powder

½ tsp. salt

2 Tbsp. chives, chopped

½ cup buttermilk

Chicken soup

1 Tbsp. olive oil

1 onion, chopped

1 large carrot, chopped

1 large celery stalk, chopped

½ tsp. dry thyme

4 cups chicken broth

⅓ cup all-purpose flour

salt and pepper to taste

½ cup frozen peas

2 cups roasted chicken, shredded (any part of the chicken will do, both white and dark meat would be great for flavor)

Instructions:

In a large Dutch oven, add the olive oil and heat over medium-high heat. Add the chopped onion, carrot, and celery to the pot and cook for about 5 to 7 minutes until the onion sweats and becomes translucent.

Add thyme and 4 cups of chicken broth to the pot. In a small bowl, whisk the flour with a ladle of the broth from the pot then pour back into the pot and whisk making sure there are no lumps. Stir in the frozen peas and the shredded chicken. Season with salt and pepper and cook for 5 minutes.

While the broth is cooking, prepare the dumplings. In a bowl, whisk together all the dumpling ingredients, making sure not to overmix. If you overmix, the dumplings will turn out too dense.

Using a spoon, drop dumpling batter into the thick broth. Make sure you don't use too much batter at once because the dumplings will double in size while they cook.

Cover the pot and simmer for about 15 to 20 minutes or until the dumplings are cooked. Make sure you don't peek while the dumplings are cooking, because they need to steam in order for them to cook and be nice and fluffy; lifting the lid will release the steam. After about 15 minutes use a toothpick to test if the dumplings are cooked through.

Tortilla Mexican Soup

Ingredients :

1 1/2 lbs. boneless skinless chicken breasts*

1 Tbsp. olive oil

1 cup chopped green onions (including whites, mince the whites)

2 jalapeños, seeded and minced (leave seeds if you want soup spicy, omit if you don't like heat)

2 cloves garlic, minced

4 (14.5 ounce) cans low-sodium chicken broth

2 Roma tomatoes, seeded and diced

1/2 tsp. ground cumin

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

1/3 cup chopped cilantro

3 Tbsp. fresh lime juice

3 medium avocados, peeled, cored, and diced

Tortilla chips, Monterrey jack cheese, and sour cream for serving (optional)

Instructions:

In a large pot heat 1 Tbsp olive oil over medium heat. Once hot, add green onions and jalapeños and sauté until tender, about 2 minutes, adding garlic during last 30 seconds of sautéing. Add chicken broth, tomatoes, cumin, then season with salt and pepper to taste and add chicken breasts. Bring mixture to a boil over medium-high heat. Reduce heat to medium, cover with lid and allow to cook, stirring occasionally, until chicken has cooked through, 10 - 15 minutes (cook time will vary based on thickness of chicken breasts). Reduce burner to warm heat, remove chicken from pan and let rest on a cutting board 5 minutes, then shred chicken and return to soup. Stir in cilantro and lime juice. Add avocados to soup just before serving (if you don't plan on serving the soup right away, I would recommend adding the avocados to each bowl individually, about 1/2 an avocado per serving). Serve with tortilla chips, cheese, and sour cream if desired.

*For thicker chicken breasts, cut breasts in half through the length (thickness) of the breasts; they will cook faster and more evenly.