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7 CHEAP, HEALTHY DINNERS THAT YOU'D SWEAR WERE GOURMET



What could be better than a healthy, homemade dinner? One that's as cheap as bachelor convenience chow but contains a lot more nutrients for your money.

Load up on staples like eggs, onions, carrots, bell peppers, and ground meat – especially when you can find them on sale – and you'll always have something to throw in the skillet or baking dish for a quick dinner.

If you're craving Asian takeout, try No-Noodle Pad Thai or Egg Roll in a Bowl instead. For comfort food, it doesn't get much more comforting than a cottage pie filled with veggies and ground beef. Those who prefer to prep dinner and leave it alone to do the rest will love salsa chicken casserole.

And if all else fails, a turkey burger will make an amazing meal, especially with shredded zucchini mixed in for extra vitamins.

01. Skillet Poached Eggs with Spinach

Serves 4

Need a simple, low-key dinner? There's nothing like breakfast as a nighttime meal, whether you want to whip up some quick 3-ingredient protein pancakes or use a single pan to make bacon and eggs.

Nutrition Facts (Per Serving) 238 CALORIES | 14 g PROTEIN | 8 g CARBS | 17 g FAT

INGREDIENTS

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|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| ✓ 2 Tbsp. extra virgin olive oil | ✓ 8 large eggs |
| ✓ 2 leeks | ✓ Salt and freshly ground black |
| ✓ 5 oz. baby spinach | pepper to taste |

DIRECTIONS

In a large skillet with a lid, heat the oil over medium heat until shimmering. Add the leeks and sauté until tender, 3 to 5 minutes. Add the spinach. Stir gently and cook until slightly wilted.

Spread out the spinach mixture to create 8 small wells. Crack an egg into each well. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Cover and cook until the desired doneness is reached for the eggs, 5 to 8 minutes.

02. No Noodle Pad Thai

Serves 4

Eating more veggies is a cinch when you replace noodles with them, like in this recipe. But looking at the picture, you'd never know the difference! This version of Pad Thai goes light on the carbs by substituting radish, carrots, and zucchini in place of rice noodles.

Nutrition Facts (Per Serving) 459 CALORIES | 27 g PROTEIN | 35 g CARBS | 29 g FAT

INGREDIENTS

Pad Thai:

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|---|------------------------------|
| ✓ ¾ lb. daikon radish, peeled | ✓ 1 small handful cilantro |
| ✓ 4 medium carrots, peeled | leaves, chopped (plus extra |
| ✓ ½ lb. zucchini | for serving) |
| ✓ ½ lb. (8 oz.) bean sprouts | ✓ 2 Tbsp. black sesame seeds |
| ✓ 4 green onions, finely sliced | (plus extra for serving) |
| (white and green parts) | ✓ 4 small wedges of lime |
| ✓ 14 oz. organic extra-firm tofu,
drained, gently squeezed of
excess moisture | |

Peanut Sauce:

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|---|------------------------------|
| ✓ ½ cup peanut butter (or
almond butter) | ✓ 2 Tbsp. honey |
| ✓ ¼ cup lime juice | ✓ 2 tsp. grated fresh ginger |
| ✓ 2 Tbsp. tamari (or soy sauce) | ✓ Pinch of red pepper flakes |
| | ✓ 3 Tbsp. water (to thin) |

DIRECTIONS

Prepare the vegetable noodles: Use a julienne peeler, mandoline, spiralizer or regular peeler to create noodles out of the radish, carrots and zucchini, if using. Transfer the noodles to a large serving bowl. Add the bean sprouts, onions, chopped cilantro and sesame seeds to the bowl.

Slice the tofu: Halve your slab of tofu lengthwise through the middle so you have two large, 1-inch thick slabs. Stack the slabs on top of each other and slice them into 4 columns lengthwise, then turn the tofu and slice across the columns to make ¼-inch wide squares of tofu. Gently transfer the tofu to the serving bowl.

Make the sauce: In a small bowl, whisk together all of the sauce ingredients until the sauce is smooth and creamy. Taste and adjust seasoning if necessary—the sauce should taste very bold at this point. (I added an extra little splash of tamari.)

If you will not be serving all 4 portions immediately, portion off the amounts of vegetable/tofu mixture you need for now. Drizzle in enough dressing to coat the portioned amount. Use your hands to gently toss the mixture until every single strand is coating in dressing. Serve pad Thai with a wedge of lime and a sprinkle of extra chopped cilantro and sesame seeds. Store leftover vegetable/tofu mixture separately from the dressing and dress just before serving.

03. Egg Roll in a Bowl

Serves 4

Everything that's stuffed inside of an egg roll is usually pretty good for you: ground meat, shredded cabbage, and mushrooms. It's the wrapper that's fried in oil that poses a dietary problem. That's why it's smart to deconstruct it and enjoy the flavor of the best Chinese takeout in a bowl.

This stir fry only takes about 15 minutes to whip up too, so it's faster than calling for delivery.

Nutrition Facts (Per Serving) 316 CALORIES | 33 g PROTEIN | 17 g CARBS | 13 g FAT

INGREDIENTS

- ✓ 1 lb. extra-lean ground pork
- ✓ 2 Tbsp. coconut aminos, divided

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|---------------------------------------|--|
| ✓ 1 lb. (half medium head)
cabbage | ✓ ½ cup dried shiitake
mushrooms (dried or fresh) |
| ✓ 3 medium carrots | ✓ 1 tsp. fish sauce |
| ✓ 2 Tbsp. peanut oil | ✓ 2 Tbsp. sesame seeds
(optional garnish) |
| ✓ 1 tsp. fresh grated ginger | |
| ✓ 2 cloves garlic, minced | ✓ Chopped green onions
(optional garnish) |

DIRECTIONS

Mix ground pork with 1 Tb coconut aminos. Set aside.

Shred or finely slice the cabbage and carrots. Set aside.

In a large skillet, heat 2 Tb of cooking oil over medium heat. Add the garlic and ginger, stirring until they become fragrant. Add the shredded cabbage, carrots, and mushrooms. Cook for around 1 minute, until vegetables start to get limp.

Push the vegetables to the outsides of the skillet and add pork to the cleared area. If your skillet isn't big enough for this, simply brown pork in a separate skillet or cook in batches. Cook until the pork is browned, then add coconut aminos and fish sauce and combine everything.

Transfer to bowls. Top with sesame seeds and/or chopped green onions (optional). Serve immediately, with additional coconut aminos if desired.

04. Stuffed Pepper Casserole

Serves 6

There's a lot to rave about when it comes to stuffed peppers, but unfortunately that's because they're often laden with fat like too much oil and cheese.

This casserole delivers on the flavor, but it keeps the macros as lean as possible so it's a well-balanced meal – not just greasy ingredients hiding in a healthy package.

Nutrition Facts (Per Serving) 297 CALORIES | 26 g PROTEIN | 29 g CARBS | 9 g FAT

INGREDIENTS

- ✓ 1 lb. lean ground beef (90%)
- ✓ 1 green bell pepper, diced
- ✓ 1 red bell pepper, diced
- ✓ 1 small onion, diced
- ✓ 1 ½ Tbsp. minced garlic
- ✓ 1 tsp. oregano
- ✓ 2 cups brown rice, cooked
- ✓ 24 oz. jar reduced-sugar spaghetti sauce
- ✓ 1 cup reduced-fat shredded Italian cheese blend

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Spray a 13x9-inch casserole dish with nonstick cooking spray and set aside.

In a large skillet over medium-high heat, cook the ground beef, bell peppers, onion, and garlic until the vegetables soften and the beef is no longer pink, 10 to 12 minutes. Use a wooden spoon to break up the beef as it cooks. Drain any excess fat and return the skillet to the stovetop, turning the heat down to low.

Microwave the rice according to package directions.

Add the cooked rice, pasta sauce, basil, oregano, salt and pepper to the beef in the skillet and mix well. Transfer the skillet ingredients to the prepared baking dish.

Sprinkle the Italian cheese on top of the casserole.

Bake uncovered until the cheese is melted, 18-20 minutes.

05. Beef & Lentil Cottage Pie

Serves 4

This recipe uses lentils and mixed root vegetables to create something even heartier than the standard shepherd's pie but with just as much protein.

Nutrition Facts (Per Serving) 627 CALORIES | 51 g PROTEIN | 81 g CARBS | 12 g FAT

INGREDIENTS

- ✓ 1 Tbsp. extra virgin olive oil
- ✓ 1 lb. ground beef
- ✓ 1 onion, finely diced
- ✓ 1 carrot, finely diced
- ✓ 1 celery stalk, finely diced
- ✓ ¾ cup tomato puree
- ✓ 16 oz. beef stock
- ✓ 1 ½ Tbsp. tomato paste
- ✓ 1 tsp. Worcestershire sauce
- ✓ ½ tsp. chili powder
- ✓ ¾ cup green lentils
- ✓ 2 ½ lb. mixed root vegetables
(one sweet potato + carrots,
parsnips, butternut squash)
- ✓ 1 ½ Tbsp. bread crumbs

DIRECTIONS

Heat the oil in a heavy-based saute pan, brown the mince then set aside. Peel and finely chop the onion, carrot and celery, add to the pan and cook for 5 minutes or until softened and lightly browned. Return the mince to the pan, add the passata, beef stock, tomato puree, Worcestershire sauce and chilli powder, mix well. Bring to the boil then leave to simmer for 20 minutes before adding the lentils, rinsed in cold water. Bring back to a simmer and cook for 15 minutes.

Meanwhile, bring the root vegetables to the boil in a pan of cold, salted water until tender. Drain and allow to steam-dry slightly before mashing.

Mash the veg until very smooth, season well and set aside. Heat the oven to 180C, gas 4. Remove the pie filling to an ovenproof dish and cover evenly with the mash. Drizzle over a little olive oil, sprinkle with the breadcrumbs and cook for 30 minutes.

06. Spicy Turkey and Zucchini Burger

Serves 4

A lean burger can still be a satisfying burger, and this patty proves it. Not only does it use ground turkey instead of beef, but this recipe mixes in grated zucchini to

lighten it even further. There's no sacrificing flavor here, however. This burger has Middle Eastern flair with mint, cilantro, cayenne, and a lemony sour cream sauce.

Nutrition Facts (Per Serving) 392 CALORIES | 34 g PROTEIN | 6 g CARBS | 28 g FAT

INGREDIENTS

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|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| ✓ 1 lb. ground turkey | ✓ 1 clove garlic, crushed, |
| ✓ 2 cups very lightly packed, | minced |
| coarsely grated zucchini | ✓ 1 tsp. ground cumin |
| ✓ 3 green onions, thinly sliced | ✓ 1 tsp. kosher salt |
| ✓ 2 Tbsp. chopped fresh | ✓ ½ tsp. freshly ground black |
| spearmint | pepper |
| ✓ 2 Tbsp. chopped fresh | ✓ ½ tsp. cayenne |
| cilantro | ✓ 3 Tbsp. vegetable oil |

Sour Cream Sauce:

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|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| ✓ ¼ cup sour cream | ✓ ½ tsp. minced garlic |
| ✓ 1/3 cup plain non-fat Greek | ✓ 2 tsp. extra virgin olive oil |
| yogurt | ✓ ¼ tsp. salt |
| ✓ 1 tsp. grated lemon zest | ✓ Pinch of freshly ground black |
| ✓ 1 Tbsp. lemon juice | pepper |

DIRECTIONS

Make the sour cream sauce by placing all of the sauce ingredients in a bowl and stirring until combined. Chill until ready to use.

Mix the turkey zucchini mixture: In a large bowl place the grated zucchini, sliced green onions, chopped mint, cilantro, and garlic, ground cumin, salt, pepper, and cayenne. Stir to combine.

With your hands, mix in the ground turkey until the zucchini mixture is well distributed through the ground turkey.

Form patties: Use your hands to form 3 to 4-inch-wide patties, placing them on a baking sheet. Note that the patties will be rather wet, so they may be a little tricky to handle.

Fry gently: Heat 3 Tbsp of vegetable oil in a large frying pan on medium high heat. Once the oil is hot, lower the heat to medium. Working in batches, place the patties in the pan. Let cook for about 5 minutes, then flip the patties over and cook for another 5 to 6 minutes.

You want them to brown and to gently cook all the way through. If the temperature is too high, they'll get browned on the outside but the inside will still be raw. So, cook them gently. If the outsides are browned and the insides still aren't done, lower the heat and cook longer.

Remove to paper-towel lined plate: Once the first batch of patties are done, remove to a paper towel-lined plate while you cook the second batch. Or you can keep the patties warm in a 200°F oven.

Makes 8 large patties or up to 18 small ones. Serve with the sour cream sauce.

07. Salsa Chicken Casserole

Serves 6

This is like everything you love about stopping by the Mexican restaurant on the corner for tacos, burritos, and horchata – well, except the horchata. But otherwise, this casserole nails it with juicy chicken breast, beans, rice, salsa, and cheese. And did I mention it's low-fat too? There's not a single teaspoon of oil required.

Nutrition Facts (Per Serving) 698 CALORIES | 58 g PROTEIN | 80 g CARBS | 17 g FAT

INGREDIENTS

✓ 1 cup uncooked rice

- ✓ 1 cup frozen corn kernels, thawed
- ✓ 1 can (15 oz.) black beans
- ✓ 1 jar (16 oz.) salsa
- ✓ 1 cup chicken broth
- ✓ ½ Tbsp. chili powder
- ✓ ½ tsp. oregano
- ✓ 2 large chicken breasts
- ✓ 1 cup shredded cheddar cheese
- ✓ 2 whole green onions, sliced

DIRECTIONS

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees. Drain and briefly rinse the black beans. Add the dry rice, black beans, corn, salsa, chicken broth, chili powder, and oregano to an 8×8 inch casserole dish. Stir until everything is evenly combined.

Cut the chicken breasts into three pieces each. Push the chicken pieces down into the rice salsa mixture in the casserole dish. Try to push them down as far into the liquid as they'll go. Cover the casserole dish tightly with foil. Bake for one hour.

Take the casserole dish out of the oven, test the rice with a fork to make sure it is tender. If it is not, recover the dish, return it to the oven, and bake for 10-15 minutes more. When the rice is tender, sprinkle the cheese over top and return the casserole to the oven for a few minutes, or until the cheese has melted. Add the sliced green onions on top after baking and serve hot.

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