Dinner Again

by Linda Larson Hogan

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The thing about dinner is the family just keeps wanting it day after day. I can't just make it and be done with it: They always want to eat again the next night.

I've been lucky to raise my family at Woodberry Forest School, a boarding school where the dinners keep on coming. But there are still those stretches of time when the dining hall is closed, and we have to reacquaint ourselves with the kitchen. So here are some favorite recipes -- and a few random skills that I keep in my brain – to use when the family wants dinner… again. I've even thrown in some dessert, a breakfast, and some non-edibles.

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December, 2012

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Holiday

Cranberry Jello Salad

2 small boxes cherry Jello
1 small can crushed pineapple
1 can whole cranberries
½ cup chopped celery
½ cup chopped pecans
2 chopped apples (skin on is ok)

Dissolve Jello in 2 cups boiling water and stir until dissolved.

Stir in 1 cup cold water, drained pineapple, and cranberry sauce. Add celery, nuts, apples.

Chill.

Green Chile Cornbread Dressing

¼ cup butter
2 cups chopped onion
1 cup celery
1 can broth
1 can corn
2 4-oz. cans chopped green chiles
1 lb. package Pepperidge farms cornbread stuffing
½ cup chopped pecans

Melt butter in a large Dutch oven

Cook onion and celery until tender.

Add other ingredients. Toss crumbs and pecans until moistened.

Cover and bake in a greased 9 x 13 pan at 350 degrees for 30 minutes.

Pumpkin Cheesecake

Crust:

1 ¾ cups graham cracker crumbs
¼ cup finely ground pecans
1 T. brown sugar
½ tsp. cinnamon
1 stick unsalted butter, melted

Preheat oven to 350.

Combine dry ingredients

Mix in melted butter

Press into bottom and 1 inch up the sides of an ungreased springform pan.

Filling:

3 8-oz. packages of cream cheese
1 ½ cup sugar
2 Tbsp. cornstarch
1 tsp. vanilla
1/8 tsp. nutmeg
2 eggs
2 egg yolks1 can pumpkin puree
¼ cup cream
whipped cream

Beat cream cheese, sugar, cornstarch, vanilla, cinnamon, nutmeg in bowl of electric mixer on low speed until smooth and fluffy, scraping sides of bowl as needed. Add eggs and yoks and beat until blended. Mix in pumpkin and cream Spread in pan, plance pan on baking seet. Bake 60-70 minutes. Cool 15 minutes on wire rack.

Remove sides. Cool completely. Cover with plastic, refrigerate four hours to two days.

Sauce

Fresh Garden Sauce

fresh tomatoes, chopped
mozzarella (cubed fresh or grated)
olive oil
garlic
basil
salt and pepper

Combine ingredients, cover, and let sit at room temperature for at least an hour.

Serve over pasta, and top with parmesan.

Sauteed Garden Sauce

onion
tomatoes
peppers
garlic
squash
salt and pepper
herbs

Sauté onions and garlic.

Add peppers, squash, and seasonings, and sauté for five more minutes.

Then add tomatoes and herbs and simmer until vegetables have combined and are tender.

Serve over pasta, rice, or other grain. Top with parmesan.

Arizona Salsa

1 large or 2 small tomatoes
1 medium onion
1 small can chopped green chiles
salt and pepper
dash lemon juice (optional)

Chop tomatoes and onion, and mix gently with other ingredients.

Tastes best when allowed to sit at room temperature, covered, for an hour or two.

Serve on chips, quesadillas, or burritos.

White Sauce

Ratio:

¼ cup of butter:
¼ cup of flour:
1 cup of milk.

Melt butter in a small sauce pan. Add an equivalent amount of flour and sprinkle in some salt and pepper. Cook over medium heat, stirring with a spring whisk, until the mixture is bubbly and you smell a nutty smell. Then, add milk gradually, stirring to prevent lumps and sticking. Keep stirring and cooking over medium heat until the sauce thickens.

Variations: If you are making a cheese sauce, add the cheese after the sauce has thickened. You could add some pesto and parmesan cheese to make a creamy pesto.

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Soup

How to Make Soup from Scratch

Choose ingredients from each of the lists below that combine well and that you have on hand. Or be creative and come up with your own ingredients. Sauté onions and garlic in olive oil in a Dutch oven until translucent. Add hard vegetables and seasonings and continue to sauté for 5-10 more minutes. Add soft vegetables, protein, and broth. Simmer until vegetables are tender. Add cooked grains and heat. Serve with toppings.

aromatics:
onions
garlic

hard vegetables:
green peppers
carrots
celery

seasonings:
salt
pepper
basil
thyme
rosemary
bay leaves
oregano
cumin
Tabasco sauce
etc.

broth:
water

homemade stock made by simmering and straining leftover chicken bones in water

vegetable or chicken boullion from cubes or cans

tomato juice

soft vegetables:
Summer squash
Potatoes
Green beans
Frozen peas
Corn

proteins:
cooked meat
cooked or canned beans
lentils
quinoa

grains:
cooked rice
pasta
couscous

toppings:
fresh parsley
sour cream
crackers
grated cheese

Cheesy Vegetable Chowder

1 quart vegetable stock
1-2 peeled and diced potatoes
1 onion, chopped
2-3 carrots, chopped, (or a handful of baby carrots, chopped)
2-3 ribs celery, chopped
salt and pepper
1 stick of butter
½ cup of flour
1 ½ cup milk
1-2 cup frozen corn
2 cup shredded cheese

Put potatoes, carrots, celery, salt, and pepper in stock in a large soup pot on medium heat. Simmer until tender.

Make white sauce in a separate saucepan.

Add cheese to thickened white sauce.

Combine cheese sauce with vegetables and add corn. Stir and heat until corn is heated.

Side

Smashed Potatoes

2 lbs. red potatoes, cut into chunks with skin still on
½ cup butter
½ cup milk or cream
salt and pepper

Boil potatoes until tender.

Add other ingredients and smash coarsely with a potato masher.

Parmesan Roasted Potatoes

1 ½ lb. potatoes, cut into chunks with skin still on
3 Tbsp. olive oil
salt and pepper
½ cup parmesan
fresh thyme sprigs

Heat oven to 400 degrees.

Combine ingredients in a bowl or Ziploc bag.

Transfer to a roasting pan and roast, stirring once, until golden brown and crisp, about 50 minutes

Couscous Tabbouleh

1 ½ cup couscous
1 cup lemon juice
salt and pepper
1 clove garlic
chopped parsley
chopped mint
4 scallions or green onions, minced
1 red bell pepper, minced
4 chopped tomatoes
1 can garbanzo beans, drained and rinsed
2 Tbsp. olive oil

Place couscous in a bowl and add lemon juice and 1 cup of water.

Cover and allow to sit 15-20 minutes.

Add all remaining ingredients.

Cheesy Garlic Bread

1 loaf French bread
softened butter
minced garlic
mozzarella

Combine butter and garlic in a small bowl. Slice bread in half the long way, leaving it attached on one side. Spread garlic butter liberally on both sides. Sprinkle with a good layer of cheese. Close the bread up and wrap the whole thing in foil. Bake at 350 degrees for 20 minutes or so, until the cheese is all gooey. Remove from foil and slice thickly.

Main

Pizza Dough

1 tsp. sugar
1 package yeast
1 ½ cup warm water
1 Tbsp. olive oil
1 tsp. salt
2 cups whole wheat flour
1 ½ cup unbleached flour
cornmeal

Dissolve sugar and yeast in water and let sit for 5 minutes in mixer bowl. Add oil and salt, then whole wheat flour. Mix with dough hook and gradually add white flour until a single ball is formed. Knead with dough hook for 10 minutes. Place in an oiled bowl, turning to coat entire surface, and leave until it doubles in size, about an hour. Divide in half, roll out into two crusts, and set on pizza pans sprinkled with corn meal. Leave in pans for 45 minutes, then bake for 5 minutes at 425 degrees. You can now freeze the crusts for later use, or top and bake at 425 for about 8 minutes.

Black Beans and Rice

2 cans of black beans, drained, rinsed
3 Tbsp. olive oil
2 garlic cloves
1 chopped onion
1 tsp. cumin
1 tsp. ground coriander seeds
1 tsp. paprika
3 chopped carrots
1 green pepper
salt and pepper
fresh parsley
1 can of chopped tomatoes with juice
½ cup orange juice (optional)

Sauté onions, spices, and garlic in oil in a sturdy skillet or Dutch oven over medium heat. Add carrots and sauté for three more minutes, and then add green pepper and sauté for 5 more minutes. Add all other ingredients except beans. Simmer until vegetables are tender. Add the beans, then puree 2-3 cups of the mixture in a blender, or use an immersion blender or potato masher to partially puree the stew. Add water as needed to create a good consistency. Stir together and simmer for 10 minutes. Serve over brown rice with sour cream.

Groundnut Stew

Chicken (cubed chicken breast or thigh, or ground) or other protein
Olive oil for sautéing
1 onion
1 can chopped tomatoes with juice
parsley
2 cloves garlic
tabasco sauce
salt and pepper
½ cup natural peanut butter

Brown chicken in oil. Add onions, and sauté. Then stir in tomatoes, parsley, garlic, and seasonings. Simmer until tender, about 30 minutes, adding water as needed. Add peanut butter, blend, and simmer for 10 more minutes. Serve over brown rice. This could be made vegetarian by eliminating the meat or using garbanzo beans instead.

Oven Burritos

flour tortillas, burrito size, at room temperature
can of refried beans
grated cheese
chopped onion
green chile

Combine beans with other ingredients, and place a dollop on each tortilla. Fold bottom up, then two sides, then top. Secure with a toothpick if needed.

Spray with Pam and cook in a 350 degree oven for about 15 minutes, turning once, until tortillas begin to brown.

Remove toothpicks before serving with sour cream, salsa, and Mexican sides like yellow rice or posole.

Hakuna Frittata

½ onion, chopped
2 cloves chopped garlic
1 bell pepper, chopped
½ potato per serving, diced and boiled
1-2 eggs per serving
thyme
parmesan

Sauté onion, garlic, and pepper in olive oil in a large frying pan. Add potatoes and toss using tongs

Pour beaten eggs over vegetables and sprinkle with herbs and cheese.
Cover and cook on low for 12 minutes.

Try with other vegetables, leftover asparagus, spinach, summer squash, other fresh herbs.

Indian Vegetables

olive oil
1 onion, sliced
1 green pepper, sliced or chopped
1 cup summer squash, chopped (optional)
2 Tbsp. Patak's Curry Paste
1 can chopped tomatoes with juice
1 can garbanzos, drained and rinsed, or chopped, cooked chicken

Sauté onion and garlic in olive oil. Add pepper and squash and continue to sauté. Add curry paste, tomatoes, and protein.

Simmer for 15 minutes, adding water to make a sauce.

Serve with brown basmati rice, sour cream or Greek yogurt, raisins, nuts, and fresh herbs.

Baked

Snickerdoodles

½ cup butter, softened
½ cup shortening
1 ½ cup white sugar
2 eggs
2 tsp. vanilla
2 ¾ cup all-purpose unbleached flour
2 tsp. cream of tartar or Bakewell Cream
1 tsp. baking soda
¼ tsp salt

Cream butter and shortening with sugar, eggs, and vanilla.

Blend in flour and other dry ingredients.

Shape dough into balls.

Roll in 2 Tbs. sugar and 2 tsp. cinnamon.

Bake 8-10 minutes at 400 degrees.

Choc-Oat Chip Cookies

1 cup butter flavored Crisco
1 ¼ cup brown sugar
½ cup sugar
2 eggs
2 Tbsp. milk
1 tsp. vanilla
1 tsp. butter flavor
2 eggs
1 ¾ flour
1 tsp baking soda
salt
2 ½ cup old-fashioned oats
12 oz. (2 cups) chocolate chips

Beat shortening and sugars.

Add eggs, milk, flavorings and beat well.

Mix in dry ingredients.

Stir in oats and chips.

Drop rounded spoonfuls on an ungreased cookie sheet.
Bake at 375 degrees for 9-10 minutes. Allow to cool 1 minute on cookie sheet, then cool on wire rack.

Vera Morrell's Zucchini Bread

3 eggs
1 1/3 cup oil
2 ½ cup sugar
2 cups grated zucchini
3 tsp. vanilla
3 cups flour
1 tsp salt
1 tsp. baking soda
2 tsp baking powder
3 tsp. cinnamon
¾ cups nuts

Beat eggs until light and foamy.

Add oil, sugar, zucchini and vanilla. Mix well.

Mix dry ingredients and add to mixture. Mix until blended and add nuts.

Pour into two greased loaf pans.

Bake at 325 for 60 minutes.

Let stand on rack for 10 minutes.

English Muffin Bread

5 cups bread flour
1 ½ tsp each yeast, salt, oil
1 Tbsp. sugar
2 cups very warm water

Mix dry ingredients with oil.

Pour in water and mix thoroughly.

Cover bowl with plastic wrap and a dish towel. Let stand overnight or at least six hours.

Divide dough into 2 loaves and place in buttered and cornmeal dusted loaf pans.

Bake at 375 degrees for 1 hour.
Cool in pans on racks.
Serve toasted.

Oven Pancakes

½ cup milk
½ cup flour
2 eggs
1 tsp. vanilla
butter for pan
½ cup jam
confectioner's sugar

Whip together all ingredients.

Melt butter and spread in a 9 x 13 pyrex baking dish.

Pour in batter.

Bake at 415 degrees for 15 minutes until golden brown.

Melt jam in microwave.

Pour jam onto pancake and sprinkle with powdered sugar.

Biscuits

4 cups flour
4 tsp. Bakewell Cream
2 tsp. baking soda
1 tsp. salt
½ cup shortening
1 ½ - 2 cup cold milk

Mix dry ingredients and cut in shortening with a pastry blender until it is the consistency of coarse cornmeal. Add milk, stirring gently with a wooden spoon. You want it to be combined into a single ball, but still sticky. Turn out onto a floured board and knead just a few strokes, no more than ten. Pat or roll the dough down to about a half inch thickness and cut with a biscuit cutter. Place on an ungreased cookie sheet and bake at 475 degrees for 5 minutes. Then turn off the oven and bake for about 10 more minutes without opening the door. Leave in until golden brown. Serve immediately with butter and sourwood honey.

Random

Bean Sprouts

Soak 2 Tbsp. mung beans overnight.

Place beans in a wide mouth jar. Poke holes in the lid. Keep the jar on its side in a dark, warm place.

Rinse 3-4 times a day with lukewarm water.

Beans will sprout in 3-4 days. When they have long, smooth tails, they are done. Set in sunlight for a few hours before using to develop a green color in the leaves.

Best Playdough

1 ½ cup cornstarch
½ cup flour
2 cups water
2 tsp. cream of tartar
1 cup salt
1 Tbsp. oil
food coloring (cake decorator paste is best)

Mix all ingredients in a sauce pan.

Cook on medium heat, stirring until the mixture gathers on the spoon, about 6 minutes.

Dump onto wax paper and cool. Knead.

Divide and add different colors of food coloring. Store in a plastic bag.

This makes a great toddler gift.

Granola

dry:
1 small container old-fashioned oats
1 ½ cup raw sunflower seeds
1 cup unsalted nuts (peanuts, chopped almonds, pecans)
½ cup wheat germ
½ cup bran (if desired)

wet:
1/3 cup vegetable oil
¼ cup molasses
¼ cup honey

Combine dry ingredients in a large baking pan and toast at 350 degrees for 8 minutes. Stir and bake for 8 more minutes.

Combine wet ingredients in the same measuring cup. Drizzle over the granola and stir thoroughly. Bake for 8 more minutes, stir, and bake for a final 8 minutes.

To Build a Fire

starter: matches, lighter, blow torch

Ttinder: firestarters, twisted newspaper, dry leaves, small bark pieces, pinecones, pineneedles, diesel-soaked torches

kindling: twigs, large bark pieces, new boys

fuel: split wood, logs

a safe place to have a fire: a fireplace, a fire ring, a fire pan, a grill, the golf course.

Pile the tinder first, then surround with kindling. Light the tinder. Make sure the kindling is above the tinder where it can catch fire. Once the kindling is burning, gradually add fuel. Add fuel as the fire consumes it.

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