

Crock-Pot Taco Chicken

Serves 4

6-8 boneless skinless chicken thighs

2-14.5 oz. cans diced tomatoes with green chilies (Muir Glen Organic or Rotel)

1 pkg. low-sodium taco seasoning

In a crock-pot mix taco seasoning and tomatoes, add chicken thighs (make sure the sauce covers them). Cook on low 7-8 hours. Shred chicken. Use on whole wheat tortillas with lettuce, cheese, sour cream, salsa, etc. Or place on top of brown rice or corn bread (see recipe below) with cheese, sour cream, black olives, etc.

I add a can of rinsed black beans to the left over tomato sauce and make chili for the next day.

Easy Cornbread

1 package corn muffin mix

1 egg

1 small can corn, rinsed

1 small can cream of corn

1 8oz container sour cream or plain yogurt

4 T. butter, melted

Preheat oven 350. Mix all ingredients together. Place in a greased 8 inch square pan. Bake 40-50 minutes.

Easy Pasta Casserole

Serves 6

10 oz. fusilli pasta (cork screw pasta or whatever you have)
1 egg
1/8/ cup olive oil
10 oz frozen chopped spinach, thawed and drained (I squeeze it)
½ c Italian bread crumbs
39 oz spaghetti sauce (I use Bertolli tomato and basil)
6 oz mozzarella cheese, part-skim shredded
4 oz. Parmesan, grated

Preheat oven to 350. Cook pasta, drain. In a smaller bowl mix together egg and oil. Add to pasta and toss. Add spinach and bread crumbs, toss again. On the bottom of an 11 x 7 inch baking pan, pour half of the spaghetti sauce. Add half of the pasta mixture. Sprinkle half of the cheeses. Repeat. Bake 45 minute till bubbly.

To kick this up a notch I add an 8 oz container of part skim **ricotta** cheese to the pasta mixture and a pound of browned **Italian turkey sausage** to the sauce. It's worth the added effort!

Not-So-Sloppy Joes

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 small yellow onion, finely chopped
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 red bell pepper, finely chopped
- 1 pound ground beef
- 1 6-ounce can tomato paste
- 1 1/2 teaspoons chili powder
- 1 teaspoon cumin
- 1/8 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1/8 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 4 hamburger buns, toasted
- 1/2 cup grated Cheddar
- 1/2 cup sour cream

Heat the oil in a large saucepan over medium heat. Add the onion, garlic, and red pepper. Sauté until fragrant, about 3 minutes. Add the ground beef and brown, about 5 minutes. Stir in the tomato paste, chili powder, cumin, black pepper, cinnamon, and salt. Simmer, stirring occasionally, until the sauce has thickened slightly, about 12 minutes. Spoon onto the buns, sprinkle with the Cheddar, and top each sandwich with a dollop of the sour cream.

Tip: If you have any leftover filling, use it for tacos the next day. Scoop the meat into a shell and add salsa.

Yield: Makes 4 servings

Pasta with Broccoli and Sausage

1 lb. orecchiette or some other short pasta (kids like bow tie)
1T. olive oil
1lb. sweet Italian sausage, casing removed
2 cloves of garlic, minced
1 14.5 oz. can low-sodium chicken broth
1/8 t. red pepper flakes
1 head of broccoli, florets only, cut into 1 inch pieces
4 T. butter
1 ½ c. grated Parmesan
¼ t. kosher salt
¼ t. pepper

Cook the pasta according to package directions.

Meanwhile, in a large saucepan over medium heat, heat the oil. Add the sausage and cook, crumbling it with a spoon, until browned, about 5 minutes. Add the garlic and cook for 1 minute more. Add the broth and red pepper, bring to a boil. Then add the broccoli, cover and cook until tender 3-5 minutes. Stir in the butter and Parmesan and cook uncovered until the sauce thickens slightly, about 2 minute. Add the drained pasta, season with salt and pepper, toss to combine.

Corn Pancakes with Black Beans

Black Beans

1 T. olive oil
1 garlic clove, minced
½ t. ground cumin
2 16 oz. cans black beans, rinsed and drained
A few dashes of hot sauce
¾ c. water

Corn Pancakes

1 ½ c. flour
2 T. sugar
2 t. baking powder
1 t. salt
3 eggs
1 ¼ c. milk
2 T. butter, melted
2 c. frozen corn
Oil for greasing

Optional Toppings

Sour cream
Green onions, chopped

Heat the oil in a medium-size pan over medium heat. Add the garlic and cumin and sauté 1 minute. Stir in the black beans, hot sauce, and water. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat to simmer and cook 5 minutes. Remove from heat cool slightly.

Pour contents of the pan into a food processor and process until the beans are creamy yet still chunky. Scrape the mixture back into the sauce pan and keep warm over low heat.

To make pancakes, combine the flour, sugar, baking powder and salt in a large bowl and mix well. In a food processor, thoroughly blend the eggs, milk and melted butter. Add the corn and process a few seconds. Pour into the flour mixture and stir just until blended. Do not over mix.

Lightly coat the griddle or large skillet with oil and heat over medium heat. Drop tablespoons of batter onto the griddle to make 4" pancakes. Cook until golden brown on each side. The batter should yield 12 pancakes.

Check the consistency of the black beans; they should be like very soft mashed potatoes. If they are too thick, stir in a little water. Top pancakes with black beans, sour cream and green onions.