

It's back to school time!

This time of year is always a big transition. Keeping the family eating healthy, on-the-go or with sack lunches at school, makes the mornings a challenge. Here are some great options for homemade meals even the pickiest of eaters will enjoy!

Easy Banana Muffins

Prep Time: 10 min.

Cook Time: 20 min.

Servings: 12

1-1/2 C. all-purpose flour
1 C. sugar
1 tsp. baking soda
1/2 tsp. salt
3 med. ripe bananas
1 lg. egg, room temperature
1/3 C. vegetable oil
1 tsp. vanilla extract

In a large bowl, combine dry ingredients. In another bowl, mash the bananas. Add egg, oil and vanilla; mix well. Stir into the dry ingredients just until moistened. Fill greased or paper-lined muffin cups half full.

Bake at 375° for 18-22 min. or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean. Cool for 10 min.; remove from pan to a wire rack to cool completely.

Wagon Wheel Pasta Salad

Prep Time: 10 min.

Cook Time: 10 min.

Servings: 16

3 C. uncooked wagon wheel pasta or elbow macaroni
1 can (16 oz.) kidney beans, rinsed and drained
1 C. cubed cheddar cheese
1 C. halved cherry tomatoes
1 sm. green pepper, julienned
1 sm. sweet red pepper, julienned
1/2 C. thinly sliced green onions
1 C. mayonnaise
1/2 C. picante sauce
1 tsp. salt
1 tsp. ground cumin

Cook pasta according to package directions; drain and rinse in cold water. In a large bowl, combine the pasta, beans, cheese, tomatoes, peppers and onions.

In a small bowl, combine the mayonnaise, picante sauce, salt and cumin; pour over salad and toss to coat. Cover and refrigerate for 2 hr. before serving.

Cheeseburger Cups

Prep Time: 15 min.

Cook Time: 15 min.

Servings: 10

1 lb. ground beef
1/2 C. ketchup
2 T. brown sugar
1 T. prepared mustard
1-1/2 tsp. Worcestershire sauce
2 tubes (10-1/2 oz. each) lg. refrigerated buttermilk biscuits
1/2 C. cubed Velveeta®

In a large skillet, cook beef over medium heat until no longer pink, breaking it into crumbles; drain. Stir in the ketchup, brown sugar, mustard and Worcestershire sauce. Remove from the heat.

Press each biscuit onto the bottom and up the side of a greased muffin cup. Spoon beef mixture into cups; top with cheese cubes. Bake at 400° until cups are golden brown, 14-16 min.

Chicken and Bacon Roll-Ups

Prep Time: 20 min.

Servings: 4 doz.

1 can (9-3/4 oz.) chunk white chicken, drained
1 carton (8 oz.) spreadable garden vegetable cream cheese
1 C. salsa, divided
4 pieces ready-to-serve fully cooked bacon, crumbled
6 flour tortillas (8 in.), room temperature

Mix chicken, cream cheese, 1/2 C. salsa and bacon; spread over tortillas. Roll up tightly; wrap. Refrigerate at least 1 hr. Just before serving, unwrap and cut tortillas into 1-in. slices. Serve with remaining salsa.

Fruity Peanut Butter Pitas

*Prep: 5 min.
Servings: 2*

1/4 C. peanut butter
1/8 tsp. each ground allspice, cinnamon and nutmeg
2 whole wheat pita pocket halves
1/2 med. apple, thinly sliced
1/2 med. firm banana, sliced

In a small bowl, blend the peanut butter, allspice, cinnamon and nutmeg. Spread inside pita bread halves; fill with apple and banana slices.

Mac and Cheese Bites

*Prep: 35 min.
Cook: 10 min.
Servings: 3 doz.*

2 C. uncooked elbow macaroni
1 C. seasoned bread crumbs, divided
2 T. butter
2 T. all-purpose flour
1/2 tsp. onion powder
1/2 tsp. garlic powder
1/2 tsp. seasoned salt
1-3/4 C. 2% milk
2 C. shredded sharp cheddar cheese, divided
1 C. shredded Swiss cheese
3/4 C. biscuit/baking mix
2 lg. eggs, room temperature, lightly beaten

Preheat oven to 425°. Cook macaroni according to package directions; drain.

Meanwhile, sprinkle 1/4 C. bread crumbs into 36 greased mini-muffin cups. In a large saucepan, melt butter over med. heat. Stir in flour and seasonings until smooth; gradually whisk in milk. Bring to a boil, stirring constantly; cook and stir until thickened, 1-2 min. Stir in 1 C. cheddar cheese and Swiss cheese until melted.

Remove from heat; stir in biscuit mix, eggs and 1/2 C. bread crumbs. Add macaroni; toss to coat. Spoon about 2 T. macaroni mixture into each prepared mini-muffin cups; sprinkle with remaining cheddar cheese and seasoned bread crumbs.

Bake until golden brown, 8-10 min. Cool in pans 5 min. before serving.

Lunch Box Pizzas

*Prep: 10 min.
Cook: 10 min.
Servings: 10*

1 tube (7-1/2 oz.) refrigerated buttermilk biscuits (10 biscuits)
1/4 C. tomato sauce
1 tsp. Italian seasoning
10 slices pepperoni
3/4 C. shredded Monterey Jack cheese

Flatten each biscuit into a 3-in. circle and press into a greased muffin cup. Combine the tomato sauce and Italian seasoning; spoon 1 teaspoonful into each cup. Top each with a slice of pepperoni and about 1 tablespoon of cheese.

Bake at 425° until golden brown, 10-15 min. Serve immediately or store in the refrigerator.

Creamy Skillet Noodles with Peas

*Prep Time: 10 min.
Cook Time: 15 min.
Servings: 6*

1/4 C. butter, cubed
2 T. canola oil
5 C. uncooked fine egg noodles
2-1/2 C. frozen peas (about 10 oz.)
2-1/2 C. chicken broth
1 C. half-and-half cream
1/2 tsp. salt
1/4 tsp. pepper

In a large skillet, heat butter and oil over medium heat. Add noodles; cook and stir 2-3 min. or until lightly browned. Stir in peas, broth, cream, salt and pepper. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat; simmer, covered, 10-12 min. or until noodles are tender, stirring occasionally.

Pizza Puffs

Prep Time: 20 min.

Cook Time: 10 min.

Servings: 20

1 loaf (1 lb.) frozen pizza dough, thawed
20 slices pepperoni
8 oz. part-skim mozzarella cheese, cut into 20 cubes
1/4 C. butter
2 sm. garlic cloves, minced
Dash salt
Marinara sauce, warmed
Optional: Crushed red pepper flakes and grated Parmesan cheese

Preheat oven to 400°. Shape dough into 1-1/2-in. balls; flatten into 1/8-in.-thick circles. Place 1 pepperoni slice and 1 cheese cube in center of each circle; wrap dough around pepperoni and cheese. Pinch edges to seal; shape into a ball. Repeat with remaining dough, pepperoni and cheese. Place seam side down on greased baking sheets; bake until light golden brown, 10-15 min. Cool slightly.

Meanwhile, in a small saucepan, melt butter over low heat. Add garlic and salt, taking care not to brown butter or garlic; brush over puffs. Serve with marinara sauce, and sprinkle with red pepper flakes and Parmesan cheese if desired.

Glazed Fruit Medley

Prep: 20 min.

Servings: 10

2 C. orange juice
1 C. sugar
2 T. cornstarch
3 C. cubed honeydew melon
3 med. firm bananas, sliced
2 C. green grapes
2 C. halved fresh strawberries

In a small saucepan, mix the orange juice, sugar and cornstarch until smooth. Bring to a boil, stirring constantly; cook and stir for 2 min. or until thickened. Transfer to a small bowl; cool slightly. Refrigerate, covered, for at least 2 hr.

Just before serving, combine the fruit in a large serving bowl. Drizzle with orange juice mixture; toss gently to coat.

Sweet and Salty Chex® Mix

Prep: 10 min.

Cook Time: 1 hr. 15 min.

1 pkg. (12 oz.) Corn Chex®
1 pkg. (10 oz.) Cheerios®
1 pkg. (10 oz.) Honeycomb® cereal
1 pkg. (10 oz.) pretzel sticks
1-3/4 C. sugar
1-1/2 C. canola oil
1-1/4 C. butter, melted
3 T. soy sauce
2 T. garlic salt

Preheat oven to 275°. In a very large bowl, combine cereals and pretzels. In another bowl, mix the remaining ingredients until sugar is dissolved. Pour over cereal mixture; toss to coat.

Transfer to a large roasting pan. Bake, uncovered, 1-1/4 hours or until cereal is crisp, stirring every 15 min. Cool completely. Store in an airtight container.

PB&J Bites

Prep: 20 min.

Servings: 12

1-1/2 C. quick-cooking oats, divided
1 C. creamy peanut butter
1/2 C. confectioners' sugar
6 tsp. favorite jam

Combine 1 C. oats, peanut butter and confectioners' sugar until well blended. Shape dough into 1-1/4-in. balls; flatten into 1/4-in.-thick circles. Place 1/2 tsp. of jam in center of 1 circle; wrap dough around jam. Pinch edges to seal; shape into ball. Repeat with remaining jam and dough. Roll balls in remaining oats.

Refrigerate 30 min. on a parchment-lined baking sheet. Transfer to an airtight container; store in the refrigerator.

Quote of the Week:

“The crickets felt it was their duty to warn everybody that summertime cannot last forever. Even on the most beautiful days in the whole year - the days when summer is changing into autumn - the crickets spread the rumor of sadness and change.”

~ E.B. White