Quick & Healthy “Pick & Mix” Meals

How do you create meals from basic foods on hand? One way to ease the "dinner dilemma" is to plan meals like some people plan clothing purchases. Consider the person who rapidly mixes and matches a few clothing items into dozens of different outfits. Perform that same trick in your kitchen! Stock up with basic foods that quickly assemble into an assortment of different and delicious meals. To start you thinking, here are some sample foods and suggested uses.

**Pick a Protein**
(Choose lean and natural)
- Beans (legumes)
- Hummus
- Refried beans
- Peanut Butter
- Eggs
- Cottage Cheese, reduced fat
- Chicken or other lean meat* (planned left-overs)
- Tuna
- Tilapia
- Tofu
- Sausage, lean
- Deli meat, lean
- Yogurt, non fat
- Nuts & Seeds
- Edamame (soy beans)

**Pick a Healthy Carb**
(Choose whole grains)
- Tortilla
- Pasta*
- Spaghetti Squash*
- Sweet potato*
- Potato
- Bread, Pita or English Muffin
- Crackers, whole grain
- Rice Cakes
  (Lundberg’s whole grain)
- Corn
- Rice*
- Quinoa*
- Bulgur*
- Cereal/Granola
  (less than 10 gm sugar)

*Many of these can be cooked in advance, frozen and reheated quickly.

**Serve as**
- A Stir fry
- A Soup/Stew
- A Dish or Casserole
- In a sandwich or tortilla

**Add Veggies**
(Fresh, Frozen or Canned)
- Carrots
- Onion
- Peas
- Green beans
- Tomatoes
- Celery
- Waterchestnuts
- Broccoli
- Cauliflower
- Cabbage
- Spinach
- Kale
- Bell Peppers
- Mushrooms
- Snow Peas
- Sugar Snap Peas

**Add A Fruit**
Add as a side dish or dessert
- Apples go well with peanut butter
- Other fruits go well with cottage cheese or yogurt

**Select Seasonings/Sauce**
- Tomato sauce
- Salsa
- Pesto
- Soup base (“better than bouillon”)
- Hot Sauce
- Garlic
- Basil
- Oregano
- Dill
- Thyme
- Curry Powder
- Cajun Spice
- Italian Spice
- Ginger
- Mint
- Cilantro
- Marinated Artichokes, drained
- Citrus Juice or Zest
- Balsamic Vinegar
- Chipotle Peppers in Adobo Sauce (hot & smokey)

*These cheeses at salt & flavor:
- Feta Cheese, reduced fat
- Parmesan
- Mozzarella, part skim
- Cotija (a Mexican Cheese)
Example meals:

**Salsa Chicken or Fish with Veggies:**
Sauté thawed chicken breasts or tilapia in a large skillet with non stick spray. After you turn half way through cooking, top generously with salsa of choice and green beans or other fresh/frozen vegetable of choice. Cover and simmer until chicken or fish and vegetables are cooked.

**Toasted pasta soup:**
Lightly toast broken up spaghetti or other smaller noodles in small amount oil in large pot. Add jar of marinara sauce, water, can of black beans or bean of choice and bag of frozen vegetables of choice. Simmer until pasta done. Add spices of choice such as oregano, black pepper, hot sauce.

**Cottage cheese dip with salsa and frozen vegetables (hot or cold):** Thaw or cook 2 parts frozen peas, corn, carrots or green beans and drain. Stir in 1 part salsa and 1 part cottage cheese. Season with black pepper to taste and serve on tortillas, rice cakes or crackers.

**Pesto English muffins with cheese and veggies:**
Spread prepared whole grain English muffins with thin layer pesto, sprinkle with mozzarella cheese and arrange peas, green beans or veggie of choice on top and bake in oven or toaster oven until cheese is bubbly.

**Breakfast Baked Potato:**
Wash, pierce and bake potatoes in oven or microwave until tender. Heat broccoli in microwave and season with Cajun spice, lemon pepper or Italian seasoning. Scramble 1 to 2 eggs per person. Open potatoes, top with broccoli and scrambled eggs and a sprinkle of finely grated cheddar cheese.

**Warm Rice or Bulgur Salad with Cilantro Lime Dressing:**
Toss equal part of prepared or thawed rice or bulgur with pre shredded cabbage or broccoli slaw or veggies of choice. Also add 1 can drained beans of choice or edamame or can tuna or chicken.

Make about 1 cup dressing with equal parts lime juice and rinsed cilantro, 1 to 3 cloves garlic (crushed), salt to taste=blend in blender. Mix salad with half of dressing and add as much remaining dressing as needed.

Need more information on how to cook rice, bulgur, or baked potato?
Do a quick search on the internet or check out these websites with quick healthy recipes & videos:

- [http://www.whfoods.org/recipestoc.php#recipes](http://www.whfoods.org/recipestoc.php#recipes)
- [http://www.nutritionaction.com/Health-Advice/daily-healthy-recipes](http://www.nutritionaction.com/Health-Advice/daily-healthy-recipes)
- [http://www.eatingwell.com/recipes_menus](http://www.eatingwell.com/recipes_menus)

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