

Meals In Minutes

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LEESPORT (Berks Co.) —
"Good cooking has to take time,"
said Fay Strickler, Berks County
extension home economist. A
broad smile spread across her face
as she added a resounding, "Not!"

With the help of nutrition advisers
Alice Torres and Carol Fisher,
Fay led a recent workshop called
"Meals in Minutes," which
demonstrated that delicious meals
can truly be made in minutes.

The secret lies mostly in selecting
the right recipes and in
planning.

Fay explained that a pot roast
can't be made in minutes, but doubling
the amount, freezing, and
reheating results in a quick meal
later on.

The demonstration team also
pointed out that what one person
considers time saving another person
may not. Some people like
using pressure cookers, some like
buying in large quantities and
dividing into smaller portions,
some precook foods, and others
prefer to open cans and dump.

The workshop was packed with
both verbal and written information
for spending less time in the
kitchen and devising better meals.

Planning

Planning includes a lot of common
sense ideas. These include:

- The night before — place frozen
meat in the refrigerator to thaw.
Check to make certain you have
all the ingredients to make the
dish.

- As you start cooking, preheat
the broiler or oven, reread the
recipe, and gather all ingredients
and utensils needed.

- During cooking, try to do two
things at once; for example, while
water is boiling for pasta, open

cans or chop vegetables.

- Hurry up the heating process
by choosing wide-diameter
saucepans.

- To boil water, start with hot tap
water.

- Use work- and time-saving
ingredients and gadgets whenever
possible.

- Cut down on clean up by reusing
measuring cups and spoons.
Measure dry ingredients before
wet ones.

- Have the whole family pitch
in. Divide the meal into parts and
give each member something to
prepare.

- Bake or chill the dessert while
you're eating.

Time-Saving Hints

- Meal planning: save time,
money, and unnecessary trips to
the store by planning a two to four-
week cycle of menus. Once
planned, you can recycle the
menus. Include cookbook names
and recipe pages and numbers on
menu listing.

- Use the refrigerator for a handy
spot to post a running grocery list.
Encourage family members to add
their ideas.

- Prepare ahead: cut, wash, and
store lettuce and other salad ingredients.
Place in resealable plastic
bags so you can quickly toss
together.

- Wash, dry, and slice fresh turkey
and chicken into strips. Place in
freezer bag and freeze.

- Chop large quantities of seasonal
vegetables such as onions,
green peppers, and celery, and
freeze in half-cup bags or tray
freeze.

- Fresh tomato salad: use low or
nonfat Italian bottled salad dressing
for tomatoes. Add chopped
fresh or frozen basil and let stand
to warm 30 minutes to absorb fla-



Fay Strickler, Alice Torres, and Carol Fisher demonstrate quick and easy meals made in minutes.

vor. Add lemon or lime juice and
other seasonings.

- Stew large amounts of chicken
pieces, then debone and bag them
in serving sizes.

- Fruit sauce for ice cream, fruit,
or angel food cake — heat to soften
one jar of red currant seedless jelly,
add water to thin and a dash of
lemon. Use as a sauce for fresh
fruit.

- Wash and dry fresh herbs.
Chop and seal in ziplock freezer
bags (squeeze out all air). Stack on
door shelf of freezer.

- Enhance commercial bottled
salsa: add fresh pepper, celery,
cilantro, parsley, and lime juice.

- Add flavor to vegetables:
freeze broth, soups, tomato paste
and sauce, and gravies in ice cube
trays. Add as needed to saute
vegetables.

Make Your Own One-Dish Meals

Don't buy packaged one-dish
meals. You can save lots of money
by making your own. A list of
items to stock in your pantry and
menu ideas results in a multitude
of choices for spur-of-the-minute
meals.

You can create hundreds of different
casseroles by mixing and
matching the foods from the following
list. Choose one food under
each heading. Cook pasta according
to package directions, and
drain. Add vegetables, sauce, and
meat to the pasta. Stir lightly. Season
to taste with salt, pepper, and
spices of your choice. Continue to
heat slowly or place in a greased
casserole dish. Sprinkle with topping
of your choice. Bake at 350
degrees for 30 minutes or simmer
for 20 minutes.

Protein

- 1 cup cooked, diced chicken
- 4 hot dogs, sliced
- 1 cup cooked ham cubes
- 1 cup cooked pork cubes
- 1 pound ground beef, browned
- 1 cup shrimp, cooked
- 1 can mackerel
- 1 pound ground pork, cooked
- 1 can tuna
- 1 cup grated American or cheddar
cheese

Uncooked Pasta

- 1 cup elbow macaroni
- 1 cup medium noodles
- 1 cup shell macaroni
- 1 cup rice
- 1 cup spaghetti
- 1½ cups thin noodles
- 1 cup curly noodles
- 1 cup lasagna
- 2 cups diced potato

Vegetable

- peas
- onions
- green pepper
- diced carrots
- tomatoes
- broccoli
- corn
- lima beans
- mushrooms
- green beans
- celery

Sauce

(with soups ½ can milk or water
may be added)

- cream of mushroom
- cream of tomato
- cheddar cheese
- cream of potato
- cream of celery
- chili beef
- bean with bacon
- onion
- green pea
- cream of asparagus or cream of
shrimp
- medium white sauce — your
own recipe
- casserole sauce mix (recipe
printed in this article)

Meals In Minutes

- Make ahead meatballs — use
with spaghetti, meatball sandwiches,
beef broth, and mushroom
sauce with meatballs over pasta.

- Pizza — buy prepared or make
ahead and freeze the crust, sauce,
shredded mozzarella, and
meatballs.

- Frozen veal or chicken patties
— make into sandwiches or top
with tomato sauce and cheese for



A herb vegetable bake is made by alternating zucchini, tomatoes, potatoes, and cloves brushed with olive oil and arranged in a 12-inch circular casserole dish. Sprinkle with thin garlic slices and chopped basil leaves. Bake for 30 to 40 minutes or until vegetables are tender.

veal or chicken parmesan — good
over rice.

- Microwave chicken breasts
with canned soup (gumbo, minestrone)
and serve over rice.

- Fish fillets — broiled or baked
with onion, green pepper, and
tomato sauce, and serve with rice.

- Turkey kielbasa (heated in
microwave) pasta with butter and
Italian seasoning and vegetables.

Free Information

The information given is much
too extensive to include in this article.
Much of the same information
if available through your county
extension office. The free hand-
outs include ideas, lists, and
recipes. Look in your phone directory
for the number of the Penn
State Cooperative Extension office
nearest you.

Here are a few recipes.

CANNED CREAM SOUP OR CASSEROLE SOUP MIX

(Use this instead of cream soups in
casserole recipes. It has about one-
third the calories).

- 2 cups nonfat dry milk powder
- ½ cup cornstarch
- ½ cup instant reduced sodium
chicken or beef bouillon

- ½ teaspoon dried crushed thyme
- ½ teaspoon dried crushed basil
- ½ teaspoon pepper

Combine all ingredients using
blender or food processor. Store in
airtight container. To prepare as
substitute for one can of condensed
cream soup in recipes, stir together

½ cup dry mix and 1¼ cups water
in saucepan. Cook and stir until
thickened.

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Rice and beans make a company meal when garnished with a tomato flower and strips of pepper.



This attractive cake can be made in minutes. Thaw a frozen pound cake, cut in three layers. Soften lime sherbet and spread on the bottom layer. Spread soft tropical sherbet and thinly sliced strawberries on the middle layer. Top with whipped cream topping garnished with kiwi fruit and a strawberry fan. The fan is made by keeping on the cap of the strawberry and slicing the berry lengthwise into eight thin slices and spreading apart as a fan.