

A Full Week of Dinners

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This week is built around simple prep, affordable ingredients, and cozy, from-scratch dinners that work for real life. A few intentional prep steps at the beginning of the week make the rest feel lighter.

Weekly Dinner Plan

Monday: Creamy Italian Tortellini Soup

Tuesday: Chicken Enchilada Casserole with Cilantro Lime Crema

Wednesday: Cheesy Beef, Bean & Rice Skillet

Thursday: BBQ Chicken Stuffed Sweet Potatoes with Tangy Ranch Slaw

Friday: Flex Night / Leftovers

Saturday: Easy Oven-Baked Smash Burgers with Fries & Burger Sauce

Sunday: Meatball Subs on Homemade Focaccia

Prep Ahead (Do Once, Save Time All Week)

- Cook and shred **all 6 chicken breasts** and shred **all cheese for the week** while making the enchilada casserole.
 - Portion ground beef and sausage for each recipe. Freeze what will be used later in the week.
 - Feed your sourdough starter **Friday evening or early Saturday morning** so it's ready for weekend baking.
 - If not making homemade bread, add **burger buns** and **sandwich rolls** for meatball subs to your grocery list.
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Creamy Italian Tortellini Soup (Serves 6–8)

Ingredients

- 1 lb ground pork or Italian sausage
- 1 tbsp olive oil

- 1 onion, diced
- 1 cup carrots, finely chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- ¼ cup flour
- 4 tbsp tomato paste
- 2 tsp Italian seasoning
- 1 (14.5 oz) can diced tomatoes
- 6 cups chicken stock
- Optional: 1 cup marinara sauce
- 1 (9–12 oz) package tortellini
- 3 cups fresh spinach, chopped
- ⅓ cup heavy cream
- Fresh parmesan, for serving

Instructions

Brown sausage in olive oil. Add onion and carrots; cook until softened. Stir in garlic, flour, tomato paste, and seasoning. Add stock, tomatoes, and marinara. Simmer. Cook tortellini according to package directions. Stir in spinach and cream. Adjust seasoning and serve with parmesan.

Note: To season your own pork for a sausage flavor, blend pork with: 1 tsp salt, 1½ tsp ground fennel, 1 tsp Italian seasoning, ½ tsp garlic powder, ½ tsp dried sage, ½ tsp black pepper, 1 tsp sugar or honey, 1 tbsp cold water, and 1 tbsp apple cider vinegar

Chicken Enchilada Casserole (Serves 8)

Ingredients

- 2 tbsp avocado oil
- 2 shredded chicken breasts
- 1 onion, diced
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 zucchini, diced
- 1 cup corn
- 1 can black or pinto beans, drained
- Corn tortillas
- 4 cups shredded Mexican cheese blend

Easy Enchilada Sauce

- 1 (28 oz) can whole peeled tomatoes
- 1 cup broth or water
- 3 tbsp chili powder
- 2 tsp ground cumin
- ½ tsp garlic powder
- ¼ tsp dried oregano
- ½ onion
- 3 cloves garlic
- 2 tsp sugar
- 1 tsp salt, to taste

Instructions

Blend sauce ingredients and simmer 15–20 minutes. Sauté onion and zucchini until lightly browned; add garlic. Stir in corn, beans, chicken, and 2 cups sauce. Layer tortillas, filling, sauce, and cheese. Bake at 350°F for 30 minutes until golden.

Cilantro Lime Crema

Blend: ½ cup sour cream, 1 cup cilantro, juice of 1 lime, ½ avocado, ½ tsp cumin, ½ tsp salt, and water to thin.

Cheesy Beef, Bean & Rice Skillet (Serves 6–8)

Ingredients

- 1 lb ground beef
- 1 onion, diced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tbsp chili powder
- 1 tbsp cumin
- 1 tbsp onion powder
- 1½ tsp garlic powder
- 1½ tsp smoked paprika
- ½ tsp salt
- 1 (4 oz) can green chiles
- 1 (14.5 oz) can diced tomatoes
- 1 (15 oz) can black beans, drained
- 1 cup corn
- 1 cup jasmine rice
- 2 cups chicken stock
- 2 cups shredded cheese

Instructions

Brown beef with onion. Add garlic and spices. Stir in remaining ingredients except cheese. Simmer covered 18–20 minutes. Stir in cheese and rest 2–3 minutes before serving.

BBQ Chicken Stuffed Sweet Potatoes with Tangy Ranch Slaw (Serves 6)

Ingredients

- 3 shredded chicken breasts
- 1½ cups BBQ sauce
- 6–7 large sweet potatoes
- ½ head green cabbage, thinly sliced

Ranch Dressing (Make First)

- ½ cup mayonnaise
- ½ cup Greek yogurt
- 2 tbsp milk (to thin)
- 1 garlic clove, finely grated
- ½ tsp onion powder
- 1 tsp dried dill
- 1 tsp dried chives
- 1½ tsp apple cider vinegar
- 1 tsp honey
- ½ tsp Worcestershire sauce
- ¾ tsp sea salt
- ¼ tsp black pepper
- 3 tbsp finely grated parmesan

Instructions

Bake sweet potatoes at 400°F for 45–60 minutes, until tender. Warm shredded chicken with BBQ sauce.

Whisk all ranch dressing ingredients together until smooth. **Measure out ½ cup of dressing and 1 tbsp apple cider vinegar** and toss with sliced cabbage to make the slaw. Reserve the remaining dressing for another use (works great in my broccoli salad recipe found on my website)

Split sweet potatoes and top with BBQ chicken and tangy slaw.

Easy Oven-Baked Smash Burgers with Oven Fries (Serves 8)

Burger Ingredients

- 2 lbs ground beef (80/20 preferred)
- 1 tsp fine sea salt
- ½ tsp black pepper
- Burger buns (or homemade buns)
- Cheese slices, optional

Oven Fries Ingredients

- 3 large Yukon gold potatoes, cut into fries
- 2 tbsp olive or avocado oil
- 1½ tsp fine sea salt
- Optional: 1 tbsp tapioca starch (extra crisp)

Instructions

Preheat oven to 425°F. Line a large baking sheet with parchment paper.

Place ground beef on parchment and season evenly with salt and pepper. Top with a second sheet of parchment and press meat into a large rectangle about ½–¾ inch thick. Remove top parchment.

Bake for 12–14 minutes, until fully cooked. Remove and cut into squares. Add cheese if desired and let melt.

For fries, toss sliced potatoes with oil, salt, and optional tapioca starch. Spread in a single layer on a parchment-lined sheet. Bake 30 minutes, flipping halfway through, until golden and crisp.

Serve burgers on buns with fries.

Meatball Subs on Homemade Focaccia

Meatball Ingredients

- 1 lb ground beef
- 1 lb Italian sausage
- 1 onion, very finely minced
- 1 cup grated Parmesan or Romano cheese
- 4 large eggs

- 1 cup milk
- 2 cups breadcrumbs (see note below)
- ½ cup fresh parsley, finely chopped
- 2 tbsp red wine vinegar
- 1 tsp fine sea salt
- ½ tsp black pepper
- 1 (32 oz) jar marinara sauce

For Serving

- Focaccia or sandwich rolls
- Optional Pesto Spread

Breadcrumb Note

To make homemade breadcrumbs: Tear 3 slices day-old sourdough into pieces. Toss with 2 tbsp olive oil and ½ tsp Italian seasoning. Bake at 400°F for 15 minutes until crisp. Crush before using.

Meatball Instructions

Preheat oven to 400°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

In a large bowl, gently mix beef, sausage, onion, cheese, eggs, milk, breadcrumbs, parsley, vinegar, salt, and pepper until just combined.

Roll into golf-ball-size meatballs and arrange on baking sheet. Bake 18–22 minutes, until cooked through and lightly browned.

Warm marinara in a large skillet or saucepan. Add meatballs and simmer 10 minutes.

Serve meatballs on sliced focaccia with extra sauce and cheese if desired.

Homemade Bread (Optional)

If you'd like to make homemade bread this week, you can find the full step-by-step recipes on the blog:

- **Simple Sourdough Focaccia (for Meatball Subs):**
<https://christinesnotebook.com/simple-sourdough-focaccia/#recipe>
- **Bread Machine Burger Buns / Sandwich Rolls:**
<https://christinesnotebook.com/quick-bread-machine-sourdough-yeast-buns-with-freshly-milled-wheat/>

These recipes are written to stand alone and include all measurements, timing, and baking tips.

Other Homemade Staples

- **Easy Homemade Mayo (used in Ranch Dressing)**
<https://christinesnotebook.com/easy-homemade-mayo/>
- **Instant Pot Chicken Stock**
<https://christinesnotebook.com/how-to-make-bone-broth-in-the-instant-pot-no-fail-method/>

Master Grocery List

Meat

- Chicken breasts – 6
- Ground beef – 4 lbs
- Italian sausage or ground pork – 2 lbs

Dairy

- Sour cream – 24 oz
- Heavy cream – 1 pint
- Milk – 1 quart
- Parmesan or Romano – 2 + 3 tbsp cups finely grated
- Mexican cheese blend – 6 cups
- Cheese slices (burgers)
- Eggs - 6

Produce

- Yellow onions – 4
- Garlic – 2 heads
- Carrots – 2–3
- Zucchini – 1 large
- Sweet potatoes – 6–8
- Yukon gold potatoes – 3 large
- Spinach – 1 large bag
- Green cabbage – 1 head
- Cilantro – 1 bunch
- Parsley – 1 bunch
- Limes – 1

Pantry & Grains

- 1 Package Corn tortillas
- Jasmine rice – 1 cup
- Tortellini – 1 (9–12 oz) package
- Marinara sauce – 32 oz
- BBQ sauce – 1½–2 cups
- Chicken stock – 8 cups
- Whole peeled tomatoes – 28 oz
- Diced tomatoes – 14.5 oz
- Tomato paste – 1 small can
- Black or Pinto Beans – 2 cans
- Green chiles – 1 4oz can OR salsa
- Corn – 2 cups
- 2 cups bread crumbs
- Optional pesto spread for meatball sandwiches
- Mayo - homemade or avocado oil mayo from the store

Staples & Spices

Olive oil, avocado oil, chili powder, cumin, flour, Italian seasoning, garlic powder, onion powder, oregano, sage, fennel, smoked paprika, dill, salt, pepper, sugar or honey

Notes: