

# Nine Ways to Create Easy Meals

Ann Henderson

08/02/2017



Summer heat

can dampen the desire for extensive meal preparation. Luckily there are simple ways to make a tasty, healthy meal without heating up the kitchen. Consider these tips:

1. Put your slow cooker to work. Pull out the crock pot and prepare chicken, beef or pork for wraps, salads and sandwiches.
2. Use your microwave. It can be used for many quick and healthy meals. For a baked potato bar, cook the potatoes in the microwave. Top with shredded reduced-fat cheese, non-fat sour cream, chopped chives or green onions, bacon bits, chili or other toppings your family enjoys. Or have everyone build their own burrito. Begin by filling a whole-grain flour tortilla with shredded chicken or beef, black or refried beans, fresh veggies such as green, red, yellow or orange peppers, green onions, grated carrots, olives, shredded cheese, etc. Then wrap it up, put it in the microwave and heat.
3. Create a main dish salad. Tasty options include Chinese chicken salad, taco salad, chef's salad, grilled chicken salad, shrimp or seafood salad.
4. Whip up a stove-top dinner. Some include grilled cheese sandwiches, BLTs or other hot sandwiches, quesadillas, omelets, ham fried rice, fajitas, sloppy Joes, pancakes, French toast or waffles.
5. Chop or spiralize raw veggies in advance. Chopped veggies in the fridge make preparing a healthy meal easier, whether it's a sandwich, salad, quesadilla, omelet or stir fry. Some favorites include bell peppers, green onions, jicama, celery, carrots, zucchini and tomatoes.

6. Grill it. Heat up the grill instead of the kitchen to cook your favorite meats, vegetables and even fruit.

7. Use frozen vegetables. They can be quickly added to any meal. They come in a variety of mixes, so you can get many options in just a few bags. Having stir-fry mixes on hand can significantly reduce prep time.

8. Use convenience products when the price is right and time is tight. It is generally less expensive to prepare foods at home, but pre-cut produce and pre-cooked poultry and meats can be time savers. Weigh the cost to your budget and the time saved to decide if the trade-off is worth it.

9. Serve a low-fuss fruit salad. Easy options include raspberries, blackberries, blueberries, red and green grapes, bananas, canned or fresh pineapple chunks, strawberries or apple slices. The fruit can be put in bags ahead of time for easy options at meal time.

By: Ann Henderson, Utah State University Extension associate professor, 435-695-2544, [ann.henderson@usu.edu](mailto:ann.henderson@usu.edu) What Next? Get useful tips like this as soon as we release them. [Sign up here.](#)