

1 5 E A S Y & T A S T Y

# family dinner

R E C I P E S



The task of feeding the family nutritious meals that the majority of the family is happy to eat can be a real challenge. Add into that allergies, intolerances, different styles of eating and it can almost feel overwhelming.

Over the years I have published 100s of recipes on the blog and in this e-book I have collated 15 of the most popular dinner recipes that are gluten free, easy to make and have been given the thumbs up by my kids and kids of many readers.

I aim to keep dinner meals fairly simple and where possible have kids involved in choosing what we have to eat across the week. Having simple meals that everyone enjoys is a critical step on the way to making sure dinner time is enjoyable.

Each stage of family life with kids can throw new challenges for you as a parent. When they are little it can be about getting them to sit still, in the middle years it can be to stop them arguing at the table and in the older teen years, it can just be having everyone at home at the same time to eat together!

Why, with all of those challenges should we still persist with a family dinner time? Because if you take a planned approach to it with knowing what you want to cook and cooking meals that work for the family it will work really well about 70% of the time. And for some families like ours, it is the only time across the day where we all together, so to me it is worth the effort.

As the kids get older, there are less and less times when we are together as a family. The 18 year old rarely comes out with us on non family related occasions and the 15 and 13 year olds have busy social lives as well, so even if they wanted to come out with us, they may already have a prior engagement to attend.

Research which shows the positive impacts of having a family dinner time. This article from The Washington Post – [The most important thing you can do with your kids? Eat dinner with them.](#) is excellent and I highly recommend reading it in full, but the key benefits of family dinner time are as follows:

### **Brain food**

*For starters, researchers found that for young children, dinnertime conversation boosts vocabulary even more than being read aloud to. The researchers counted the number of rare words – those not found on a list of 3,000 most common words – that the families used during dinner conversation. Young kids learned 1,000 rare words at the dinner table, compared to only 143 from parents reading storybooks aloud. Kids who have a large vocabulary read earlier and more easily.*

### **Does a body good**

*Children who eat regular family dinners also consume more fruits, vegetables, vitamins and micronutrients, as well as fewer fried foods and soft drinks. And the nutritional benefits keep paying dividends even after kids grow up: young adults who ate regular family meals as teens are less likely to be obese and more likely to eat healthily once they live on their own.*

### **Soul food**

*In addition, a stack of studies link regular family dinners with lowering a host of high risk teenage behaviours parents fear: smoking, binge drinking, marijuana use, violence, school problems, eating disorders and sexual activity. [{source}](#)*

So while it may not always be easy, family dinner time is something I will keep on insisting upon and I encourage you to keep trying too. I hope these recipes help make dinner time enjoyable at your place!

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## Wrap meals

Wrap meals are a particularly good option for younger kids. They have more control over exactly what goes into their wrap amongst the healthy choices you put out and it can also work well with older kids too when you have to do different seatings for meal time.

### Tacos

Tacos don't have to come from a box! You can easily make your own seasoning in bulk then just add 1 tablespoon per 500grams mince (a bit less if your kids like things less spicy).

- 3 tbsp Himalayan pink salt
- 3 tsp cracked black pepper
- 3 tbsp chilli powder (less or more depending on tolerance)
- 6 tbsp dried cumin
- 6 tbsp garlic powder
- 3 tsp dried oregano

The below recipe includes a single serve of the taco seasoning, so you can try it out and see if your family like it. If after making it once, it gets the thumbs up from your family then make the seasoning in bulk as noted above.



### Ingredients:

- 1 tsp chili powder
- 1 teaspoon dried cumin
- ½ teaspoon dried oregano
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- 1 tsp garlic powder
- 1 onion
- 2 tsp olive oil
- 1kg of beef mince

- 1 lettuce
- 2 tomatoes
- 1 red capsicum
- 1 cucumber
- 2 carrots
- ¼ cup sour cream
- 3 tbsp sweet chilli sauce
- 1 pack of tortillas (gluten free if needed for your family) or simply use lettuce wraps as illustrated!

**Method:**

1. Combine all spices with the exception of the garlic.
2. Finely chop onion.
3. Heat oil on a med-low heat in a large frying pan. Add onion and cook until translucent.
4. Add your preferred meat and cook until browned.
5. Add spices and stir for a couple of minutes until well combined.
6. Cut up veggies to serve.
7. Serve in lettuce or tortilla wraps with your fave veggies and salad.

**Note:**

This makes enough to feed a family of four for two meals. If you have a smaller family I recommend halving the ingredients.

## Sang choy bow



### Ingredients:

- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 700g chicken mince
- 1 onion
- 1 clove garlic
- 1 1/2 tablespoons grated fresh ginger
- 1 red chilli
- 1 tablespoon (20ml) soy sauce or tamari sauce for gluten free option
- 2 tablespoons (40ml) oyster sauce or coconut aminos for gluten free option
- handful of fresh mint
- iceberg lettuce cups

### Method:

1. Finely chop onion, crush garlic, grate ginger, finely chop chilli (remove seeds).
2. In a large frying pan add two tablespoons of oil and heat. On a high temperature add chicken and cook.
3. Stir continuously and break up the mince as it cooks.
4. Remove the chicken mince from the frying pan and set aside.
5. On a low heat add some more oil and cook onion. Cook for a couple of minutes.
6. Add garlic, ginger and chilli and cook for another couple of minutes.
7. Add the chicken back into the frying pan.
8. Add the soy and oyster sauce.
9. Cook for a couple of minutes, combining all ingredients.
10. If you are intending to eat straight away, allow to cool a little before serving.
11. Spoon mixture into cups and top with roughly chopped mint and enjoy! I made smaller and bigger sizes so they would be easy for the kids to eat.

## Sweet chilli chicken wraps



### Ingredients:

- 4 chicken breasts (approx 1kg) - **this makes sure there is some left over for lunches. You could halve this for smaller families.**
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 4 tablespoons [homemade sweet chilli sauce](#) or store bought
- 4 teaspoons tamari soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon dried coriander leaves
- ½ lettuce
- ½ cucumber
- 3 carrots
- 1 red capsicum
- 2 tomatoes
- 150 grams yogurt
- 1 packet of wraps (gluten free if required)

### Method:

1. Cut chicken into thin strips.
2. Cut up lettuce, tomato, cucumber and capsicum. Grate carrot.
3. In a small bowl, mix sweet chilli sauce and soy sauce.
4. Heat oil in a large frying pan on a medium heat, add chicken and cook until browned.
5. Add the sauce mixture and coriander to the chicken and cook for another couple of minutes, until the sauce has heated all the way through and thickened slightly.
6. Heat wraps per their instructions, add chicken, salad and top with yogurt and enjoy.
7. If you cook up four chicken breasts you have plenty of meat left over for lunches. The kids had cold wraps in their lunch boxes the next day at school and just loved them!

## Stir it up

Stir fries are a great quick meal you can throw together quickly in the evening when you come in from work or sporting activities. While I have listed veggies in the ingredients to use, the great thing about stir fries are you can throw in many different veggies that you have in the fridge and need to be used up.

### *Chicken, cashew and ginger stir fry*



#### **Ingredients:**

- 1kg chicken breast (you could use thigh if you prefer and if you have a smaller family, halve ingredients)
- 1 large red capsicum
- 2 bunches broccolini
- 2 large carrots
- 125 gms snow peas
- 3 garlic cloves
- 3 tsp freshly grated ginger
- 1 cup cashews, roasted
- 3 tps arrowroot (or cornflour)
- 3 tbsp [Pureharvest Tamari soy sauce](#) (or regular soy sauce if you don't need gluten free)
- 3 tbsp coconut oil
- ⅓ cup good quality veggie or chicken stock
- Rice to serve

#### **Method:**

1. Finely grate ginger, chop carrots, capsicum and trim snow peas and trim and halve broccolini.
2. Slice chicken into thin pieces. Combine the arrowroot (or cornflour), 1 tbsp coconut oil and 1 ½ tbsp Tamari soy sauce in a medium bowl and mix. Add the chicken and mix again.
3. If you are having rice, prepare as per preferred method.

4. Heat remaining coconut oil in wok or frying pan. Add garlic and ginger and stir for a minute or two.
5. Add chicken mixture and brown stirring frequently. Once chicken is cooked add all vegetables stir fry for a minute or so. Then add the stock and remaining tamari soy sauce and cook for a few minutes until thickened.
6. Turn off heat, add cashews and stir through.
7. Serve as is or on a bed of rice.

**Notes:**

This makes a large meal, feeding our family of 7 and enough for one lunch the next day.

## Super quick beef stir fry



### Ingredients:

- 2 - 3 x 100 gram packets of Changs Noodles or use rice noodles for gluten free
- 3 carrots
- 1 red capsicum
- 1 bunch spring onions
- 2 garlic cloves
- 2 tablespoons oil
- 500 grams beef strips
- 2 tablespoons [Sweet Chilli Sauce](#)
- 2 tablespoons light soy sauce or tamari
- 2 tbsp water

### Method:

1. Finely slice carrots, capsicum and spring onions.
2. Heat oil in large frying pan (I don't own a wok, but you would obviously use the wok if you had one!), add meat and brown.
3. Add spring onions to the pan and cook for a minute or two constantly stirring. Then add crushed garlic and cook for another minute or so.
4. Add veggies and cook stirring constantly for 1 - 2 minutes.
5. Add soy sauce, chilli sauce and water to the pan. Stir for a minute.
6. Place a bed of noodles onto a plate and add the stir fry. My kids love giving chop sticks a go at the moment - it sometimes only lasts for a minute with the youngest ones, but they are all getting better at using them.

## *Moroccan beef*



### **Ingredients:**

- 2 tbsps Olive Oil
- 1 Onion
- 2 tsps Ground Cumin
- 1 Lemon
- 425 grams Tomatoes Tinned
- 750 grams Beef Strips
- ¾ cup Slivered Almonds
- ½ cup Mint
- 1½ cups Rice

### **Method:**

1. I like to serve this meal on a bed of rice. The dish itself is quite quick to cook, so I begin cooking the rice first.
2. Slice onion thinly.
3. Grate the rind of the lemon.
4. Toast almonds lightly. (I do this by placing them under the grill for a few minutes.)
5. Finely shred mint leaves - you need about 3 - 4 teaspoons.
6. Heat oil in a pan.
7. Add onion and cook until soft.
8. Next add the lemon rind and cumin, stirring for a minute or so.
9. Add tomatoes and bring to the boil.
10. Reduce heat and simmer for about five minutes or until the mixture thickens.
11. While this is simmering, cook the beef in a large heated pan until it is browned.
12. Pour the tomato mixture into this pan.
13. Serve the beef on a bed of rice and top with mint and almonds.

## Make it in bulk

To feed a growing family, it is often super helpful to have left overs from each meal. The left overs can then either be taken for lunch, eaten for breakfast or you can make a meal where the family chooses what is left over in the fridge and you get a night off cooking! All of these recipes can also be cooked earlier in the day and will reheat well at dinner time.

### *Mexibake*



#### **Ingredients:**

- 500 grams beef mince (ground beef)
- 1 onion, roughly chopped
- 1 red capsicum, finely chopped
- 1 green capsicum, finely chopped
- 2 carrots grated
- olive oil
- 410 grams tinned tomatoes - chopped thoroughly
- 1 packet Taco Seasoning Mix
- 500 mls pasta sauce
- 600 mls sour cream
- 2 cups grated cheese
- Approx 1.5 cups rice (uncooked)
- 1-2 teaspoons cayenne pepper

#### **Method:**

1. Preheat oven to a moderate heat (approx 180)
2. I say approx 1.5 cups of rice, because I use a rice cooker, of which I use 4 of their measuring cups of rice for this recipe. Once I have added the water to the rice, I add the cayenne pepper

and mix gently, so the rice is slightly spiced. Begin cooking the rice as you prepare the other ingredients.

3. Heat oil in large frying pan. Once at a medium heat fry onion for a few minutes until soft.
4. Add meat to the pan and brown meat, ensuring that it is completely broken up.
5. Once meat is cooked, stir in capsicums and carrot. Cook for few minutes until temperature has reached medium again.
6. Add tomatoes and stir well.
7. Add pasta sauce and stir well.
8. Add taco seasoning and mix well.
9. Let simmer for about 15 minutes.
10. In a lasagne dish, spread rice on the bottom of the dish, until it is just under halfway. Don't press the rice firmly in, as it will then stick to the bottom.
11. Spread the meat mixture on top of the rice.
12. Spread sour cream on top of meat mixture. I have found it easier to spread the sour cream if I place it in a bowl and stir it up with a fork.
13. Sprinkle cheese over sour cream.
14. Cover with aluminium foil and bake in the oven for 45 minutes.
15. About 5-10 minutes before cooking time ends, take foil off and allow the cheese to go golden on top.

## *Fried rice*



### **Ingredients:**

- 2 cups Rice White
- 1 Large Capsicum Red chopped finely
- 3 Large Carrots grated
- 8 Rash Bacon (I use Shortcut Rindless) chopped
- 8 Large Eggs
- 6 sticks of Spring Onions
- 3 tbsp olive oil

### **Method:**

1. Put rice on to cook by your preferred method.
2. Crack eggs into a bowl and beat lightly.
3. Chop bacon into even pieces, about 1.5cm x 1.5cm.
4. Peel and grate carrots.
5. Finely chop capsicum.
6. Slice finely the spring onions.
7. Heat a large frying pan to a medium temperature and then pour egg mixture into pan. Cook this like an omelette. Once the mixture has firmed and looks like it has browned slightly on the bottom, divide the egg into 4-6 parts. This makes it easier to turn each section over to cook the other side. Once the second side has browned, remove from the pan and cut egg into pieces of about 2cm x 2 cm.
8. Add oil to the pan and turn up heat slightly, add the bacon and cook to desired taste.
9. Leaving the bacon in the pan, add spring onions and cook, stirring constantly for about a minute.
10. Add the capsicum and carrot, cooking and stirring frequently for about 2-3 minutes.
11. Turn heat down on pan to low and add rice, mixing the ingredients through.
12. Finally add egg to the pan and mix through evenly.
13. Season with salt and pepper if required.

## Shepherd's pie



### Ingredients:

- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 onion
- 2 carrots grated
- 1 clove garlic
- 750 grams lamb mince – I actually use beef as the kids prefer this
- ⅓ cup tomato paste
- 3 tbsp fresh parsley
- 2 tbsp corn flour
- 1.5 cups beef stock
- 6 large potatoes
- 525 grams pumpkin butternut
- 1 large egg
- 1 tbsp Worcestershire sauce

### Method:

#### Meat mixture

1. Preheat oven to 180°C.
2. Chop onion. Crush garlic. Grate carrots.
3. Heat oil in a large pan. Add onion and garlic and cook until soft.
4. Add mince. Ensure mince is broken up during cooking process. Cook until browned.
5. Add carrots, tomato paste, Worcestershire sauce and parsley, mixing well.
6. Combine corn flour with beef stock - make sure that it is not lumpy.
7. Add stock mixture to the pan and stir over a medium heat until it begins to boil.
8. Reduce the heat and simmer covered for 25 minutes, stirring occasionally.

#### Topping

1. The vegetables can be boiled then mashed, but I prefer to steam them.
2. Chop potatoes and pumpkin into cubes.
3. Boil water in steamer and place potatoes on first. Add potatoes after 5 -7 minutes.

4. Once tender, place potato and pumpkin into a large bowl. Add chopped up butter and lightly beaten egg. Mash until a smooth consistency.

### **Pie**

1. Spoon the meat mixture on to the bottom of a lasagne style dish.
2. Spread the topping evenly across the meat.
3. Bake in the oven for approx 45 minutes or until golden brown on the top.

## Taking it slow

Slow cookers can make feeding the family super easy, while still serving up tasty meals they will love. The beauty of the slow cooker is you can put the meal on before you start work and it will be waiting for you when you get home – ready to serve!

### *Slow cooker pulled pork*



#### **Ingredients:**

- 2kg boneless leg of pork (you could use shoulder if you like)
- 2 tbsp coconut oil
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 4 cloves garlic
- 1 large piece of ginger (about 5 cms)
- 1 tsp fennel seeds
- 1 tbsp cinnamon
- 2 tablespoons tamari soy sauce
- 350 mls passata

#### **Method:**

1. Prepare garlic for crushing and finely grate ginger and set aside.
2. Heat oil in a large frying pan on a medium high heat and then add the pork. Brown the pork on all sides, then remove and add to the slow cooker. Season with salt and pepper.
3. Add the garlic, ginger and spices to the pan and reduce to a low heat stirring constantly.
4. Add the passata and tamari soy sauce to the pan and bring to the boil. Reduce the temperature, stir for a minute or two and then pour over the pork in the slow cooker.
5. Set to cook on high 4 - 5 hours or low for 8 - 10 hours. The meat should fall apart easily once cooked.
6. Remove the meat from the slow cooker, place in a large serving tray and cover with foil.

7. Pour the marinade from the slow cooker into a saucepan and heat on a medium high heat until it reduces slightly.
8. Pull apart the meat (remove any fatty pieces) then pour over some of the marinade - as much or as little as you like. Serve!

### *Slow cooker chicken satay*



#### **Ingredients:**

- 500 grams chicken
- 3 carrots
- 1 red capsicum
- 2 cloves of garlic
- 3 tbsps almond butter (I make my own - [recipe here](#)) or for a more traditional taste use peanut butter
- 3 tbsps tomato paste
- 3 tbsps sweet chilli sauce (I make my own - [recipe here](#))
- 250 mls coconut cream
- Optional to serve - ½ cup almonds
- Optional to serve - baby spinach or steamed rice

#### **Method:**

1. Slice capsicum and carrots and add to the slow cooker.
2. Place chicken into slow cooker with cut vegetables.
3. Crush garlic on top of the veggies.
4. Add remaining ingredients with the exception of the almonds and stir to combine.
5. Place lid on slow cooker and cook for 4 hours on high.
6. Serve with [sautéed baby spinach](#) or steamed rice.
7. Roughly chop almonds and sprinkle on top.

### *Slow cooker sweet potato curry (vegetarian)*



#### **Ingredients:**

- 2 tbsp coconut oil
- 1 onion
- 1 ½ tbsp freshly grated ginger
- 2 garlic cloves
- 3 tbsp curry paste
- 1.2kgs sweet potato (approx 2 large)
- 500 grams broccoli (approx two small heads)
- 250 grams carrots (approx 2 large)
- 400 grams diced canned tomatoes
- ¾ cup vegetable stock
- 1 tbsp turmeric freshly grated or paste
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 440mls coconut cream

#### **Method:**

1. Finely chop the onion, grate the ginger and prepare the garlic for crushing.
2. Cube the sweet potato, cut the broccoli into small pieces and dice the carrots.
3. In a large pan, heat the coconut oil on a medium heat. Add the onion and fry for a couple of minutes, then add ginger, turmeric and crush garlic.
4. Add sweet potato and stir for a couple of minutes, then add all of this to the slow cooker.
5. Add broccoli, carrots, tomatoes, vegetable stock, salt and pepper to the slow cooker and give a gentle stir.
6. Cook on high for 6 hours, or until the vegetables are tender.
7. 30 minutes before serving, add the coconut cream. I like my curry thicker so only add the solid part and stir. Allow to heat through.
8. Serve on a bed of rice.

## Slow cooker vegan “pulled pork” (jackfruit)



### Ingredients

- 1 red onion
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1 tsp ground cumin
- 1 tsp ground paprika
- 1 tbsp apple cider vinegar
- 4 tbsp sweet chilli sauce
- 100 grams chopped pineapple
- 2 x 400g cans young jackfruit
- 1 tbsp apple cider vinegar
- 1 tbsp arrowroot powder

### Method

1. Drain and rinse young jackfruit and place in the slow cooker.
2. Finely chop red onion and add to the slow cooker.
3. Add remaining ingredients except for the arrowroot powder and cook on high for 3 hours.
4. After three hours shred the jackfruit using two forks and stir in the arrowroot powder.
5. Allow the jackfruit to cook for an additional 15 – 20 minutes with the lid off or until the sauce has thickened.
6. Serve with coleslaw, guacamole, jalapenos and corn tortillas!

## Slow cooker honey sesame chicken



### Ingredients:

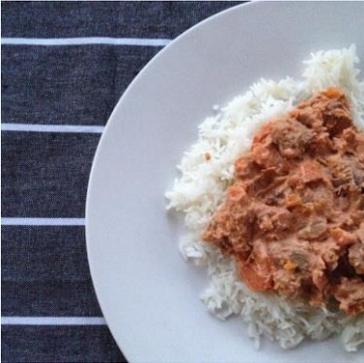
- 600 grams chicken breasts (2 breasts)
- ¼ cup Tamari or soy sauce
- ¼ cup honey
- 2 cloves garlic
- 1 tbsp coconut oil
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1 tbsp water
- 3 tsp arrowroot
- 3 spring onion stalks
- ⅓ cup sesame seeds
- 1 cup basmati rice

### Method:

1. In a small bowl mix tamari, honey, garlic, coconut oil (melted) and salt and pepper and whisk quickly with a fork.
2. Slice chicken breasts in half width wise and place into the slow cooker.
3. Pour honey mixture onto the chicken and then cook on low for 3-4 hours, or high for 2 hours.
4. If you wish to serve with rice, start cooking this 15 minutes before the chicken is due to finish cooking.
5. Once the chicken is cooked, remove the chicken from the slow cooker and place it into a large dish. Keep the slow cooker turned on and make sure it is on high.
6. In a glass or small bowl add the arrowroot and water and mix well. Pour this into the slow cooker and stir well. To ensure the sauce thickens leave the sauce to cook for about 10 minutes, Stir about three times during this cooking process to make sure it thickens evenly.
7. While the sauce is cooking, use two forks and shred the chicken.
8. To serve place rice on a plate, add the chicken and then spoon some of the sauce from the slow cooker onto the chicken

9. Finely chop the spring onions and sprinkle on the chicken. Sprinkle on the sesame seeds, serve and enjoy!

### *Slow cooker beef stroganoff*



#### **Ingredients:**

- 500 grams diced beef
- 2 tablespoons arrowroot
- 2 tablespoons coconut oil
- 2 cloves garlic
- 2 large potatoes, cubed 1cm x 1cm
- 3 large carrots, sliced thinly
- 1 cup beef stock
- 3 tablespoons tomato paste
- 300 mls sour cream (optional)

#### **Method:**

1. In a medium sized bowl place the meat, add the arrowroot then toss.
2. Heat oil in frying pan and brown the meat.
3. Once browned, transfer meat to the slow cooker and then add all ingredients with the exception of the sour cream. If you are pressed for time, you can skip the browning of the meat and place meat straight into the slow cooker. The dish is very good without browning the meat, but browning the meat does allow for a more flavoursome dish.
4. Place lid on and cook on Auto/Low for 8-10 hours or High for 4-5 hours.
5. In the last 30 minutes add sour cream (optional) and stir in thoroughly.
6. Serve with rice or a large serving of green veggies.



To keep on top of feeding the family, many years ago I started spending some time on the weekend, prepping food for the week ahead. Even if it was just one or two things, **the difference this made during the week was huge**. As I was rewarded each week for my efforts in the kitchen on the weekend, I began increasing the food I prepped. And the more weekly meal prep sessions I did, the better I became at it. The better I became at it, the less time it took me to do the sessions and the better we ate – win-win all around!

Meal prepping isn't rocket science but it is about habit formation. It is about planning what you are going to do and then executing on that plan. To set a new habit sometimes **you just need a starting point**, something to get you on the right track and this is where [Meal Prep Primer](#) can help.

[Meal Prep Primer](#) shows you how to plan effectively to spend time in the kitchen over the weekend and prep food that will make your week days easier:

- Imagine being able to simply **pick and pack** from your pre-made items to make the kids' lunch boxes.
- Imagine being able to **make a meal in minutes** when you come in late after work or an after school activity using the food you prepped on the weekend.
- Imagine **eating a nutritious homemade lunch each day** that you can simply reheat in a flash.

**This can be a reality for you and it doesn't have to take up all of your weekend.**

In my Meal Prep Primer course I will teach you the process I have developed and it will:

- save you time
- save you money
- save you stress through the week days
- allow you to enjoy meal time more with the family

You can read more and sign up for the short course [here](#).