

CHILI

Hormel Chipotle chili jar **2.98**
Jennie-O Lean Ground Turkey (1.25 lbs) **3.42**
Can of great northern beans **.56**
Can tomato sauce **.64**
Yellow onion (I get six in a bag for three bucks so) **.50**
8.10

Put a couple spoons of olive oil on the inside of a pot or deep skillet. Turn the heat to medium.

Cut off the top and bottom of the onion and remove the skin. Cut it into quarters and then chop as finely as you can get away with. Once they're on the heat, they can remain there for just a little bit or as long as 10-20 minutes. The only thing time does is caramelize them to make them sweeter.

Turn the heat up to medium high. Add the thawed turkey, breaking it up as it goes in and also every few minutes. It needs to be in at least 9 minutes to be considered cooked free of anything harmful. [Minced garlic works well and also goes in at this point.](#)

Add the beans. [Black beans are an equally healthy replacement and can go in sooner to get the turkey absorbing their juice, which by itself is of course dry from being so lean.](#)

After a couple minutes, add the jar of chili sauce followed by the tomato sauce to dilute it – the jar by itself doesn't smell remotely appetizing.

Add the desired spices. [I usually do chili powder, of course, with garlic salt, cilantro, black pepper and/or paprika.](#) One of the cool magic tricks I've learned (well, it's magic to me) is to let sauces and chili simmer for as long as you can bear, making the spices multiple times more flavorful than when you first put them in. On my dial I have 9 heat options. I usually go between LOW and 3 and keep it there for a half hour, *covered*.

[Note: I recently discovered Jennie-O has a sweet and spicy Italian turkey sausage that could substitute for the meat in this recipe, at the same price and more or less the same weight.](#)

SPAGHETTI

Ground sirloin beef **3.84/lb**
Barilla fettucini noodles **1.28**
Bertolli jar sauce **2.42**
Bertolli bag sauce **2.42**
9.94

Get a big pot boiling on the range. Depending on how much pasta you're cooking, 3 to 6 cups of water is a good start, and then later when adding the noodles you'll likely have to break them in half and see how they lay, adding water to cover as needed.

At the same time you start the noodles throw the ground beef in a separate pot to brown it. It browns far more literally than turkey and you can tell it's been in too long if you let it set for a minute and it starts to stick to the pan.

When the boil finally arrives, add the noodles to the water and add the sauces to the meat. Stir occasionally.

I find 10 to 12 minutes is a good time to let the noodles boil, draining them once they've finished. *If you don't have a colander or something similar, or simply don't care to use one, I honestly just tip in the sink because it stays inside, in no danger of following the water out.*

Add the meat and sauce mix to the noodles, add black pepper, stir and serve.

STIR FRY

One Minute Rice packet - **.47 (4 in a box, though)**
Half a bag of chicken - **2.50**
Snap-pea stir fry veggie bag -**1.68**
Half a medium-sized Kikkoman soy sauce jar -**1.25**
5.90

Cut the thawed chicken breasts into halves, and then cut those into two or three little triangles. *It helps sometimes to pound the chicken flat beforehand.*

Set a pot of 3-5 cups water to boil, and stick the rice packet in with it. *If you get that brand they make a cheap boil-in bag, get the brown rice, it cooks *perfectly* in 10 minutes. I even add some of my soy in with the water since the rice drinks it up over time.*

Set the range to medium-high, lightly oil a skillet, and throw the chicken on there. Try to give each piece its space, and keep it there for a few minutes until it gets whiter on one side, then flip and do the same to the other side for a few more minutes.

With both sides white, add your vegetables, and stir every half minute or so, getting the rest of the chicken white and making sure there's even heat on the vegetables. If you can push through the chicken pretty easily with whatever you're using to stir, and it's not pink, go ahead and add the soy, distributed evenly.

Drain the rice.

All in all it's good to have the chicken on there for a good twenty minutes. *I recently did this with chunked pineapple (I believe Dole's is less than two dollars) and not only does it tighten and tenderize the meat, it adds subtly to the taste and drinks really nice with the rice and vegetables.*

BUFFALO CHICKEN PIZZA

Pillsbury crust in a tube, deep dish/thin crust, refrigerated (by the ricotta and yogurt) **2.08**

The remaining half bag of chicken **2.50**

A quarter of the soy sauce - **.60**

Can of tomato sauce - **.46**

Generic Louisiana-style hot sauce **.82**

Smaller (2 cup) bag of shredded mozzarella **2.16**

Chopped up yellow onion - **.50**

9.12

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Open the tube, unroll the dough onto a pizza pan or large baking sheet. When it's done heating, stick the pizza in there for about 7 minutes. Drizzling oil in the center allows the addition of toppings to not saturate the crust.

Top it as desired. I actually get a tiny little pot on the range and mix the hot sauce and tomato sauce in equal parts, starting with half the tomato sauce and adding more of each until I like the balance. I then add a few squirts of the soy, though in the original recipe from which this is derived she used Worcestershire.

As far as the chicken, I sprinkle McCormick Montreal Steak Seasoning on the chicken, which is cut up in little palm-sized pieces, and throw them on the George Foreman for 4 minutes (being double-sided I suppose using an actual grill means 8 minutes flipping halfway). After they're cooked I shred the bejeezus out of them with a knife, and go about adding ingredients in layers as you'd expect.

Stick it back in for another 8 to 10 minutes, watching carefully, pull out, cool, and serve. I use 4C Italian-seasoned breadcrumbs on the crust! They have less corn syrup product, and play nicely with corn meal if you have any.

TACOS

Ground beef – 3.84

Can of chili-ready beans **.50**

Two packets of rice **.94**

Ground sirloin **3.84**

Smaller (again, two cups) taco cheese **2.16**

Ortega taco seasoning packet **free with coupon** (special circumstance – usually 82 cents)

Ortega taco shells - **2.36** (I bought two ten packs of self-standing tacos)

Tomato - 70 cents **1.35 (We got two)**

Onion - **50 cents**

11.63

Start the rice as above, and when it's drained stir the chili ready beans into it.
[Zatarain's also makes a red beans and rice that's generally less than two dollars.](#)

Brown the meat like usual, draining the fat and making sure to add the seasoning or salsa/sauce early.

The shells can go in 300, 350, 400 depending on how crisp you like them but no longer than 10 minutes. The package has its own instructions.

Dice the tomatoes if you're having them. You probably won't make a lot of friends with canned on this one, and firm and fresh means you can serve cold, room temperature, or even grilled.

Fill taco. Eat =)

TOMATO PEPPER AND MUSHROOM CHICKEN

Giorgio canned mushrooms – **1.34**
Can of whole tomatoes drained - **.64**
1/2 cup flour -- **25 cents**
An onion sliced into rings -- **.50**
Green bell pepper -- **.98**
2.5 lb bag of chicken – **5**
Thai Kitchen Pad Thai noodles – **2.18** + 1 egg at **12 cents**
11.01

The pad Thai noodles have a box with instructions. Add the noodles immediately to the water while you wait for the boil, adding, if you choose, a little garlic salt and butter. Scramble the egg, and chop the green bell pepper into pieces (no core/insides or stem, just the firm edges), cutting into long strips and then dicing.

Caramelize the onions as previously mentioned, adding the mushrooms soon after.

The chicken is cut through the sides of making two thinner fillets of the same shape. You can literally tear it apart and make chicken breast butterflies. Think of the chicken chunks at a Chinese place in the Chicken and Broccoli. Little rugged discs. Add the flour over those as best you can, then add them to the onions and brown them as above. Once the pink's gone add the whole tomatoes and any seasonings, first draining the can's juice into the bottom of a deep pan, like a 13x9, and pour the cooked rice on top of that. Preheat the oven to 400 degrees.

When the chicken's done (split to test in the same way -- it's safe to turn the heat up higher and bring it down to 15 minutes) and then add the chicken mixture to the pan of sauced rice.

Stick that in the oven and bake for just about 20 mins.

FIRST WEEK'S MEALS + 2.48 feta cheese crumbles for pizza = 64.96

TURKEY and BROCCOLI PASTA

Ground turkey **3.42**
Barilla farfalle (“bowtie”) noodles **1.28**
Bertolli jar garlic alfredo sauce **2.42**
Mushrooms ½ of **1.34** can = **.67**
Frozen broccoli **.98**
8.77

Boil the noodles in the biggest pot you have (lots of food and space between it) starting them in the water, adding a little bit of butter to taste and to prevent sticking.

Prepare the turkey as before, giving it some help with spices. I cook it a little longer in this recipe, and sometimes add something sweet, like browning sauce, chicken rub spice, or even cinnamon. Some paprikas taste sweeter too.

After the 9-minute mark, throw in the broccoli and mushrooms, and stir frequently. In my experience it takes a *long* time to damage turkey, and without much fat it doesn't like to stick, but while it can dry out easily after that mark the vegetables give it some juice and also, the interplay somehow makes the turkey taste more like beef.

When both noodles and mixture are done, drain the noodles and replace with meat and vegetable mixture. Empty the whole sauce container and stir. There's so much surface area it actually makes a nice light coating even though it's a thick, heavy, generous portion. It's also safe and tasty to put a few spoons of olive oil in there, to get the juices to mix and match and to de-cling everything.

After a few minutes off the heat it's ready to serve.

CURRIED CHICKEN

Spice mixture (Ginger/garlic/fennel/cinnamon/clove/mustard/red & black pepper/cilantro)

Half bag chicken **2.50**

Can of Whole Tomatoes **.64**

Can of green chiles **.50**

Near East Rice Pilaf **1.85**

6oz. Dried cranberries – **1.46**

Onion **.50**

7.45

Read the instructions for the pilaf or use the boil-in bags from the other recipes (you're safe to use two bags), and put that in a 13x9 pan.

Aim for the chicken pieces to fit between the first finger and thumb of both hands.

Get all the spices into a bowl, adding at least 1 but no more than 2 tbsp of each.

Brown the chicken on a skillet, spread out evenly, adding the spices to cover one side as much as possible, cooking about 5 or 6 minutes on that side, then flipping and spicing the other side to cook for the same amount of time.

Preheat the oven to 425.

Take the chicken off and place on a plate. Chop the onion and throw it on that same skillet along with the chiles and cranberries. *Adding some butter with the onions is a great idea.* Let that sit and collect for a few minutes, then bring the chicken back and add the tomatoes for another 5 or 6 minutes stirring occasionally

Spill that concoction into the rice, turn the heat down to 400, and stick it in the oven for 15 minutes.

CHICKEN PARMESAN

Barilla linguini **1.28**

½ cup flour **.25**

2 eggs **.24**

Chicken bag **5.00**

Italian-seasoned bread crumbs **1.33**

2 cup bag of shredded mozzarella **2.16**

Barilla marinara sauce jar – **2.08** (Secretly makes you look like a better cook.)
12.34

Keep the chicken breasts whole. Cut off all the fat. Put the flour in one bowl and the eggs in another (both whole, or one and just the white of the other), and the breadcrumbs in a third.

Preheat the oven to 400.

Dip the chicken in the flour, then the eggs, then the crumbs. Place them in any oven pan that'll have enough room.

Bake for 15 minutes, then flip, starting the noodles as you would for any other dish in another pot, taking about 15 minutes.

Take out the chicken and top with half the sauce and cheese. Drain the noodles and stick the other half of the sauce in with them and stir it around.

Keep cooking the chicken for another 5 or 10 minutes. Pull it out and do a test cut to see that it cooked through. Serve.

MEATLOAF

Ground beef **3.84**
Green pepper **.98**
Egg **.12**
½ of mushrooms - **.67**
Bag of red potatoes – **3.97** (1/3 remain as leftovers)
Frozen “California” vegetables **1.48**
11.06

Preheat oven to 400. In a large mixing bowl, combine the thawed beef, the egg, the chopped up pepper and mushrooms. *Even though it isn't listed ¼ of the remaining bread crumbs adds taste and texture while helping hold ingredients together.* Smoosh it around and let it run between your fingers, then pack the mess into a deep pan. *A bread pan works nicely. It will rise by 25-50 percent tops so don't worry about spillage.*

Peel and quarter the potatoes, boiling them for 20 minutes. Drain, adding as much as 2/3 stick of butter. *Garlic salt, black pepper, cilantro, and minced garlic are all beneficial additions.* Whip it into mashed potatoes.

The meatloaf can safely be in there until what feels like the end of time. After closer to thirty minutes, start watching it The juice should bake off and you can tell a great deal from the way the top browns, and of course good old-fashioned poking. Now's a good time to boil the vegetables for 5 minutes or so, with your choice of a tiny portion of oil or butter, drain it when it's finished.

I don't use sauce but a good rule of thumb is to either put it in at the beginning, or spreading it across the top about 10 minutes before you think you'll be done. *Al is gorgeously tasty on this.*

SAUSAGE TORTELLINI

Morningstar meal starter crumbles (a fake meat, like vegetables/soy composite) – **2.98**

2 eggs - **.24**

Onion **.50**

Tomato sauce **.64**

Frozen asparagus **3.42**

Bag of frozen cheese ravioli **2.27**

10.05

Cover the ravioli in a deep pot and boil for 10-12 minutes.

In a shallow skillet/pan add the crumbles with some oil and the eggs on medium heat. They aren't meat and they're already dark brown so they don't “brown” so much as unfreeze and soften – you could stir them around less than 3 minutes.

Add chopped up onion, and fennel seed if you have it. *Ground would work well but I pulled it off with just a tiny bit of them whole. Like, enough to count. Maybe a spoon or so tops.*

Stick the asparagus in the microwave for a few minutes with a very small amount of butter.

Stir the crumble mixture for another minute, then add the tomato sauce. Feel free to keep the heat on medium or bring it down to a simmer/low. Let that sit there, stirring occasionally, until the ravioli's done, then drain the ravioli and mix the two.

SECOND WEEK'S MEALS: 63.67

SPINACH & MUSHROOM STUFFED CHICKEN BREAST ([allspice recommended](#))

Chicken bag – **5**

1/3 bag Fresh Express Spinach – **.96**

Giotgio Mushroom can – **1.34**

Zatarain's Dirty Brown Rice Mix - **2.09**

9.39

Stick the spinach in a medium mixing bowl.

Put some butter on a skillet over medium heat with the mushrooms. [Shallots/green onions and minced garlic help here too](#). Season to taste with salt and black pepper. Blend the mushroom in a blender or food processor and pour the result over the spinach to mix.

Flatten your chicken breasts and cover with the mixture. [If you have any ricotta spread that across the top before doing anything else](#). Roll them up and secure them with a toothpick.

Add oil to the skillet and cook chicken as evenly as possible for 10 to 12 minutes.

Follow the box instructions for the rice mix.

Remove the chicken and add a little butter and flour and stir for a minute. You can also add in white wine or red wine vinegar and let that reduce another minute.

Add broth and/or spices, reduce heat, and return chicken, simmering until ready.

When serving, pour the remaining sauce over the plated chicken.

PIZZA

Ground beef – **3.84**
Crust tube – **2.08**
2 cup bag of mozzarella – **2.16**
1/3 bag Spinach – **.96**
Tomato sauce - **.46**
Can whole tomatoes - **.64**
10.14

Grab the spinach in two clumps, and cut in columns. Turn each 90 degrees then repeat. Throw it in a medium-high skillet **without** oil with thawed ground beef. Add spices.

If you're using the Pillsbury tubes, follow the “dark pan” instructions, cooking halfway as specified then topping and finishing, otherwise you can top it with common sense and cook it either per instructions or if at 425 for 12 minutes for a pre-baked crust.

The whole tomatoes can be sliced, or you can grab good scissors and dip them into the can and goes crazy snipping. Contents may be under pressure. I never would've believed it myself till it shot like a triage gone bad over the wall. To that end you could as easily buy the comparably priced stewed or diced tomatoes in a can. They add a nice sweet balance to the acidity and saltiness of everything else. On an additional note, I put some olive oil on my finger – that I cleaned!– and ran it around where the crust should be, and sprinkled some of those breadcrumbs from before on it. I know someone that made a stuffed pizza with the Pillsbury tube before and topped it with minced garlic and a chicken rub spice.

LASAGNA

Ground beef - **3.84**
Can whole tomatoes -.64
1/3 bag Spinach – .96
3 eggs - .36
Barilla “no boiling required” lasagna noodles – **1.72**
Barilla marinara – **2.08**
15 oz. Ricotta cheese – **1.27**
10.87

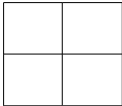
As the box states, there isn't any boiling required with these noodles. It softens with all the goodies that saturate it when you bake it.

While the meat browns – remove it from the heat just as it does – mix the eggs and ricotta off to the side, whisking with a fork.

Preheat the oven to 325. In a 13x9 pan, layer each group of four sheets alternately, one row of four and then two rows of two, etc.



versus



with a recommended setup of 1/3 ricotta-egg mixture and a little less than 1/3 sauce on each layer, with the exception that the bottom layer of noodles and the second-highest layer each get covered with half of your meat. The sauce is extended by both the whole tomatoes and the little bit of juice they come with. The top receives any remaining sauce and benefits from grated cheese.

Cover with foil and bake for 50 minutes. Take off the foil and bake another 10 to get the cheese good and hard. Let sit for five minutes and serve.

LIME CHICKEN PICCATA PASTA TOSS

Half bag chicken – **2.50**
2 Limes **.60**
Piccata noodles **1.28**
Canned/Jarred Capers – **2.47**
Brussels Sprouts – **1.48**
7.86

Cut chicken into thumb-sized pieces. Squeeze the limes hard to compress juice from the outside, and grate peels. *Quoted and edited from a website, with changes:*

Heat a deep nonstick skillet over medium high heat. Add a tablespoon of extra-virgin olive oil and the chicken to the pan. Season chicken with salt and pepper. Brown chicken until lightly golden all over, about 5 to 6 minutes. Remove chicken from pan and return the skillet to the heat. Reduce heat to medium. Add another tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil and 1 tablespoon butter – and minced garlic if you have it. Cook 3 minutes. Add two spoons of flour and cook 2 minutes. Whisk in white wine or red wine vinegar and reduce liquid 1 minute. Open limes and whisk in juice, stirring in capers. When the liquid comes to a bubble, add 1/2 tablespoon butter to the sauce to give it a little shine.

Add chicken back to the pan and heat through, 1 to 2 minutes. Toss hot pasta with chicken and sauce and serve. Adjust salt and pepper, to your taste. Top with grated lime.

RICE BAKE (includes crushed red pepper)

2 bags Minute Rice brown rice - **.94**
Can of black beans - **.56**
2 bags Morningstar crumbles – **5.96**
Remaining half bag of potatoes – **1.98**
Green peas – **.96**
10.44

Cook the rice and spread it on bottom of 13x9 pan with peas. Preheat oven to 375-400. Prepare the potatoes for mashing as in previous week.

While the rice is cooking, use a little olive oil and brown the crumbles for a few minutes before adding the black beans. Give that a minute or two and then spread that mixture over the peas and rice. Once the mashed potatoes are done, spread that over the top of the bake, and put in the oven for 10 minutes. Pull it out, top with cheese and spices (unless you whipped those right in from the beginning) and stick it back in for another 10 minutes. None of these ingredients need much cooking but it helps get it light-tasting and allows the flavors to congeal.

This is great as a leftover.

CHIMICHURRI CHICKEN (includes red wine vinegar, ground red pepper and minced garlic)

Half bag of chicken – **2.50**

Green chiles - **.67**

Yellow onion - **.50**

Canned Mandarin - **.68**

SIDE | Can whole tomatoes - **.64** + Pasta Roni noodle side – **1**

5.99

Cut chickens into half-palm sized chunks and place in lightly-oiled skillet over medium heat. *Dusting chunks with flour beforehand is unnecessary but helps with color, flavor, texture, and edge firmness.* Spice to taste, with ingredients as close to those listed in the title as possible.

While waiting for chicken to brown, start the Pasta Roni as per instructions – it should be 12 minutes tops.

Once chicken is browned, add chopped onion and wait a minute, then the green chiles and wait another minute.

When the pasta finishes, chop up the whole tomatoes and stir them in. Take the chicken and vegetables off the heat, and while it's cooling down add the mandarin oranges. They'll heat enough hanging out with everything else, but you do not want them to burn or even cook..

Serve entree and pasta side-by-side.

63.08