

Cook with What's on Hand

Have you ever gone to the kitchen to make dinner, only to realize you don't have the ingredients you needed, so you got take-out instead? It can be hard getting dinner on the table for our families after a busy day. With a bit of planning, it can be easier to prepare a nutritious dinner with ingredients already in the kitchen.

Fresh eggs are a staple food in my home. They keep in the fridge for weeks and can be whipped up in practically no time for any meal or snack. I also keep whole grain bread, tortillas, pasta, and brown rice on hand. Low-sodium canned beans are a versatile, shelf-stable food that you can add to many different recipes. Other canned foods I like to keep in my pantry include chicken, tuna, salmon, low-sodium vegetables, low-sodium tomato sauce, and fruit canned in 100% juice. Frozen vegetables and fruits are also helpful to keep since they won't spoil as quickly as fresh. Low-fat milk and non-fat plain yogurt may spoil sooner than these other foods, but I always try and keep them in my fridge. The yogurt can be used as a lower fat alternative to mayonnaise or sour cream. Lastly, stay stocked on oil, vinegar, low-sodium soy sauce, and spices like ground black pepper, garlic powder, cumin, chili powder, and basil to add flavor to any meal.

With these ingredients on hand, you can always be ready to make preschooler-friendly dishes. For example, you can make "breakfast for dinner" by making southwest egg burritos, omelets with vegetables, or simply eggs with toast. Plain yogurt with tuna or chicken can make a quick tuna or chicken salad. You can make an easy pasta dish with whole wheat pasta, canned tomato sauce, basil, and frozen or canned vegetables. Brown rice, frozen or canned vegetables, canned chickpeas, and low-sodium soy sauce come together to make a stir-fry. Canned fruit can be eaten on the side of any meal to make a 5-food group meal.

Teaching your young preschooler how to make a meal with whatever food is in the kitchen is a valuable skill that they'll take with them as they grow up. Happy cooking!



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