



The Food Bank
of Western Massachusetts

From the Food Bank Kitchen

Summer Cooking

Cooking on hot summer days can sometimes feel like a dreaded chore, because using an oven or stovetop can make the house hot and uncomfortable. Sometimes a hot meal itself on a hot day is unappetizing as well. Luckily, during the summer months, fresh produce is readily available and less expensive. Summer is a great time to start implementing more fruits and vegetables into the diet, because they require little to no work to prepare and do not require any heat source to eat! Not only does produce provide the nutrients we need, but they hydrate the body too! There are also ways to prepare hot meals without the use of an oven. This allows a person to enjoy a meal without causing their home to warm up. Consider trying some of the cooking methods below to help keep the house cool in the summer. Always remember, cooking is usually the healthier and cheaper choice than take-out.

Alternative Cooking Methods:

Microwave: Using a microwave is a great way to make single serving meals. Use microwavable bowls and cups such as microwavable plastic, ceramic, and glass. Circular containers are best to use when cooking in a microwave. When cooking foods in the microwave, always follow recipes and follow “standing times.” Standing time means to not open the microwave door after it has completed the cooking time, because food is still cooking internally in the microwave even after the microwave “beeps”. Opening the microwave door lets the heat out and does not give the food time to finish cooking.

Slow Cooker: Slow cookers (also know as “Crock Pots”) are an easy way to cook meals, especially for families. Slow cookers can make a lot of servings so be prepared for leftovers (freezing is a great way to save leftovers). Slow cookers are made to cook food over a long period of time. That means there is minimal prep work and they do not create a lot of heat in the kitchen. The best part about them is that they do not need to be supervised, so a person can have their slow cooker on when they are not at home. Slow cookers are very safe to use. When cooking with a slow cooker, make sure it is on a hard surface, like a kitchen counter, and make sure there is no cloth or any potential fabric near them, such as hanging kitchen curtains. When plugging in a slow cooker make sure the cord is untangled, and not wedged underneath the slow cooker. It is always a good practice to read the slow cooker manual before using it for the first time.

Blender: Blenders are a great way to make cold soups. Cold soups are refreshing and nutritious. Just put all of the ingredients in the blender and blend away! The outcome will be a creamy, cold soup that is perfect for a hot summer day. Blenders are excellent for making homemade salad dressings too! Large salads with lots of vegetables, lean proteins; such as hardboiled egg, tuna, chicken, chickpeas, are great meals for hot days. Making homemade salad dressings are a great way to get less sugar and calories compared to packaged salad dressing.

Microwave Risotto

Serves 2

Ingredients:

- 2 Tbsp. butter
- ¼ onion, finely chopped
- 1 tsp chopped garlic
- 1 C instant brown rice
- 1 Cup & 1 Tbsp. low-sodium chicken broth
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 2 Tbsp. parmesan cheese

Optional Additions

- 2 strips turkey bacon (cooked for a minute in the microwave)
- 2 Tbsp. mushrooms
- OR
- 2 Tbsp. butternut squash

Directions: In a microwave safe mug, add 1 tablespoon butter with the onions. Microwave for 1½ minutes on high, stirring after 30 seconds to distribute the butter. Next, add garlic, brown rice, and 1 cup of chicken broth. Cover loosely with plastic wrap, microwave on 50% for 2 minutes, then stir adding in more chicken broth if needed. Place back in the microwave for an additional 2 minutes. Remove from the microwave, add another tablespoon of butter and chicken broth. Add in any additional ingredients, cover again with plastic wrap, microwave on 50% for 2 minutes. Remove from the microwave, stir in the parmesan cheese and enjoy!

Nutrition: 1 Serving= ½ Cup: Calories 295, Fat 11g, Saturated Fat 5g, Sodium 135mg, Carbs 44g, Fiber 2.5g, Sugar 1g, Protein 7.5g.

Recipes

Slow Cooker Pork Carnitas

Serves 5

Source: myrecipes.com

Ingredients:

- 1 (1.5lb) boneless pork shoulder, fat trimmed off
- 5 garlic cloves, sliced
- 2 tsp cumin
- 1 tsp dried oregano
- $\frac{3}{4}$ tsp salt
- 6 Tbsp. orange juice

- 1 chipotle chilies canned in adobo sauce, drained and chopped
- 10 (6-inch) tortillas
- $\frac{1}{2}$ onion, chopped
- $\frac{2}{3}$ C bottled salsa
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp black pepper
- 1 Tbsp. lime juice

Directions: Make $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch-deep slits on outside of roast; stuff with garlic. Combine cumin and next 3 ingredients (through black pepper) in a small bowl. Place roast in a $3\frac{1}{2}$ -quart electric slow cooker. Sprinkle pork on all sides with spice mixture. Combine juices and chipotle chilis. Pour juice mixture over pork. Cover and cook on LOW for 8 hours or until pork is tender. Remove pork from slow cooker; shred with 2 forks. Skim fat from cooking liquid. Combine shredded pork and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup cooking liquid; toss well. Spoon $1\frac{1}{2}$ ounces pork mixture onto each tortilla; top each with $1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons onion, $1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons salsa.

Nutrition: 1 Serving= 2 Tortillas: Calories 334, Fat 13g, Saturated Fat: 4g, Carbs 27g, Fiber 3g, Sodium 424, Protein 30g.

Strawberry Chicken Salad with Avocado Dressing

Serves 4

Source: Chobani.com

Ingredients for Salad

- 6C of baby kale and spinach mix
- 6-8 large strawberries hulled and quartered
- 1lb boneless, skinless chicken breast
- $\frac{1}{3}$ C of feta cheese (optional)
- 2Tbsp Italian seasoning

Ingredients for Dressing:

- $\frac{1}{2}$ C plain Greek yogurt
- $\frac{1}{2}$ avocado
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 4 Tbsp. cilantro
- 2 Tbsp. lime juice
- 1 Tbsp. apple cider vinegar
- 1 tsp chipotle powder
- 4 Tbsp. olive oil
- Salt & pepper to taste

Directions for Salad: Preheat oven to 425°F. Season chicken with Italian seasoning, making sure both sides of chicken are seasoned. Once the oven is preheated, place chicken in the oven and cook for 12-15 minutes, until fully cooked. Dice cooked chicken. In a large bowl, mix together kale and spinach mix with strawberries and cooked chicken. Sprinkle the top with feta (optional).

Directions for Avocado Dressing: Combine all ingredients for avocado dressing in a blender and blend until smooth. Drizzle salad dressing on top of salad and enjoy!

Nutrition: 1 Serving= Calories 390, Fat 23g, Sat. Fat 5g, Sodium 223mg, Carbs 11g, Fiber 5g, Sugar 5g, Protein 33g.

Watermelon Gazpacho

Serves 3

Source: eatingwell.com

Ingredients

- 4 C, finely diced seedless watermelon (about 3lbs with rind)
- $\frac{1}{4}$ red bell pepper, finely diced
- 2 Tbsp. chopped flat-leaf parsley
- 1 Tbsp. minced shallot or onion
- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp salt

- 1 small cucumber, peeled, seeded and finely diced
- 2 Tbsp. chopped fresh basil
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ Tbsp. red wine vinegar
- 1 Tbsp. olive oil

Directions: Mix watermelon, cucumber, bell pepper, basil, parsley, vinegar, shallot, oil and salt in a large bowl. Puree the mixture in a blender or food processor to the desired smoothness; transfer to another large bowl. Serve at room temperature or chilled.

Nutrition: 1 Cup= Calories 114, Fat 5g, Saturated Fat 1g, Carbs 2g, Fiber 1g, Sodium 296mg, Sugar 14g, Protein 2g.

If you try any of these recipes and have any comments or suggestions, please contact the Nutrition Coordinators. Either email Amber (amberl@foodbankwma.org) or Mariah (mariahm@foodbankwma.org) and tell us what you think of the recipes!