

Plan economy with casseroles

When you are looking for an "econo-meal" you often settle on a casserole. Casseroles are given some delightful names these days to help give them the creative reputation they deserve.

One-Pot Pleasers, one-Dish Meals, Covered Dish, Meal in a Dish, Dinner Dish—it all adds up to one thing—a meal that saves money, time and energy.

The way you save money is to add a "stretcher" to make the meat go farther. These stretchers are usually carbohydrates.

Things like pastas, rice and bread are all inexpensive ingredients that make hearty and flavorful dishes.

Too fattening, you say! Not really. Most of these ingredients have fewer calories than having that extra large piece of meat to fill you up.

If calories are a concern, cut down on preparation methods that use fat rather than cutting down on these economical stretchers.

Pastas are great fun. They come in all shapes and sizes. If your casseroles are getting kind of ho-hum, try varying the pasta you choose or even consider making homemade noodles.

Compare costs on rice. One reason people buy instant rice is to avoid failure in cooking the regular kind. Instant rice, however, costs more than twice as much and flavored rices can cost three or four times the price of plain rice.

Don't feel insecure about cooking plain rice. It's just as foolproof as the instant kind and only takes about 9 minutes longer. Just follow the directions on the package and use a pan with a tight fitting lid. Don't peek and do use a timer.

Bread may be one of the most versatile stretchers. Remember, all the different kinds Grandma made? Dumplings, biscuits on top, bread mixed in with ground meat for meatballs or meatloaf. Oatmeal for toppings or in the meat. Corn meal mush as a topping layer really makes that tamale pie special.

One delightful casserole is a strata, a soufflee-like casserole that uses bread (even stale bread), eggs, milk and some type of meat or cheese and then is baked in the oven. It's great to make early in the day or the night before.

Casserole recipes can be real winners—great combinations of flavorful ingredients that help you in the budget battle.

Start being creative as you combine ingredients and seasonings to make great family planners.

You can use your stale bread in this recipe. Make up and refrigerate at least two hours early.

- 12 slices bread
- 6 slices cheese or 2 cups shredded cheese
- 2 1/2 cups milk
- 4 eggs
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard

Brownie Petit Fours

- 1 cup sugar
- 1/2 cup unsifted all-purpose flour
- 1/2 cup cocoa
- 1/2 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 2 eggs
- 1/2 cup butter or margarine, softened
- 1/4 cup milk
- 1/2 cup chopped walnuts
- Glaze (recipe below)

Combine sugar, flour, cocoa, baking powder and salt in large mixer bowl; add eggs, butter or margarine and milk. Beat on low speed of mixer 30 seconds until all ingredients are moistened; beat on high speed 30 seconds longer. Stir in nuts.

Spread batter evenly in a foil-lined 9-inch square baking pan; bake at 350° for 25 to 30 minutes. Cool completely in pan; chill about 2 hours. Remove foil and cut into 1 1/2-inch squares. Dip top of each square in glaze; garnish with rosettes of whipped cream or decorator icings.

Glaze: Completely melt 1 cup chocolate chips and 1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon shortening in top of double boiler over hot, not boiling, water. Cool, stirring occasionally, until glaze is lukewarm and slightly thickened. Dip chilled brownie squares into glaze. Garnish as desired. Makes about 1 cup glaze.

Brownie recipe makes 36 pieces.

Butter bread lightly. Arrange 6 slices in bottom of 9x13 inch greased baking dish. Cover with cheese. Top with remaining bread. Beat together milk, eggs, salt and mustard and pour over. Bake at 350° for 45 minutes or until puffed and golden. Serves 6.

Option: Add a layer of sauteed vegetables (onion, green pepper, mushrooms) or leftover cooked vegetables just before cheese. You could also add leftover meat such as

chicken, turkey or pork.

ARROZ CON POLLO

- 2 1/2 to 3 pound fryer chicken
- 1/2 cup fat or oil
- 1 cup uncooked rice
- 1 or 2 cloves garlic
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 3 1/2 to 4 cups canned tomatoes
- 1 teaspoon salt

Cut chicken into serving pieces, if not cut up. Dip in flour seasoned

with salt, pepper and paprika. Cook in hot oil until a delicate brown. Remove from pan.

Pour uncooked rice into drippings. Cook and stir about 5 minutes. Add onion and garlic and continue to cook about 5 minutes until golden. Add tomatoes and salt. Stir to combine.

Replace chicken on top of rice. Cover tightly and simmer 45 minutes. For color you can also add chopped bell pepper or green peas at the time you add the tomatoes.

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