

Easy cooking ideas for those lazy days of summer

By SUZANNE KENNEDY

Summertime is my least favorite time to cook. And that's saying something, because I am not a fan of cooking during any season. I'm constantly looking for shortcuts and searching for ways to get out of cooking make my job easier. I've pulled together what I consider to be a good variety of easy meals. By easy, I mean short prep time and quick cleanup.

Sausage and Peppers

Ingredients: You'll need beef sausage links (polska kielbasa if you like), bell peppers (all colors), onion, garlic, orzo pasta, grape tomatoes if you have them, and an apple (any variety) for some sweetness, if you want. For my family of six, I use two packages of sausage, three whole peppers, one apple, half an onion, a scoop of minced garlic, about ten grape tomatoes, and half a box of orzo.

Directions: Chop everything into bite-size pieces. In a large skillet, cook sausage until almost done (we like ours slightly crispy), adding onion and garlic about halfway through. While the sausage is cooking, start the orzo. When the meat is done, add the peppers, apples, and grape tomatoes. Add the pasta and serve it in a bowl.

Cleanup: The only things you have to wash are the cutting boards and one skillet.

Sloppy Joes

Directions: Use one pound of ground beef and one can of tomato paste per package of sloppy joe mix (follow directions on the packet), with hamburger buns, of course. Serve with raw baby carrots and ranch dip, and maybe some chips. If you are a better parent than I am,



make your own sloppy joe mix. One pot cleanup!

BLTs/BLT Pasta Salad

Directions: BLTs are a no-brainer. Bacon (cooked in the oven for less mess and better taste), lettuce, and tomatoes. We like to add avocado and cheese to give it a little more nutritional value. Light mayo or Miracle Whip, depending on which team you root for, and toast up some of your favorite bread. Clean up the bacon grease. Done and done.

We had these the other night and I ran out of bread when I got to my sandwich. I'm just lazy enough not to want to go to the outside fridge, so I made mine into a salad. Had I really wanted to do it up, I would have used cherry or grape tomatoes instead of chopped, shredded cheese, and added some red onion. Ranch dressing does just fine.

Pulled Pork Sandwiches

Directions: Another amazingly easy dinner. I use about 1.5 pounds of unseasoned pork tenderloin, and throw it in the slow cooker for the day. At the end of the timed cycle, add whatever barbecue sauce

you like and let that heat through. Scoop onto buns and serve with a side green salad. One pot cleanup!

Gazpacho

This is a summertime favorite of mine. Imagine salsa as a soup.

Ingredients: 2 cans of petite diced tomatoes, ½ cup water, 2 Tbs extra-virgin olive oil, 1 seedless cucumber (or with seeds – who cares?), 1 yellow bell pepper, 1 small onion, all diced. 2 cloves minced garlic, 2 Tbs red or white wine vinegar, 2 Tbs parsley, basil, or cilantro, and salt and pepper.

Directions: Puree the tomatoes,



Nutrition

water, and oil together. Then add everything else and throw it in the fridge to chill.

Cleanup: Just the cutting board and the blender for this one.

Simple Spaghetti Carbonara

I must confess, I haven't tried this one yet, but my friend's daughter loves it.

Ingredients: 1 lb. spaghetti, 6 oz. bacon, 4 eggs, 1 cup heavy cream, 1 cup Parmesan cheese, pepper.

Directions: Mix eggs, cream, cheese, and pepper. Cook bacon separately, chop into bits, and add to mixture. Cook spaghetti, then drain and add to mixture.

Cleanup: Bacon stuff and pasta pot.

Enjoy, but most importantly, take it easy!

Suzanne Kennedy is a former middle school teacher who lives in Pendleton with her husband and four children.

