

10 Easy Family Friendly Weeknight Recipes



Hi, I'm Kristina -

A registered dietitian, food blogger, food photographer, and millennial mom behind Love & Zest. As a mom to two young and active boys, life is busy and the days can be long. Some nights it's almost impossible to get dinner on the table, much less a dinner that's both nutritious and family friendly.

Weeknights with two little ones aren't always glamorous - and that's okay! Dinner time in our home typically goes one of two ways - the babes either love it or hate it. You win some and you lose some, right mama? When food gets thrown on the floor, tears are shed and the protests begin, it seems pointless to concoct a meal that takes up ample amounts of time in the kitchen.

Cue my 10 easy family friendly weeknight recipes! These are some of the most popular recipes on the Love & Zest blog that are sure to win your family over. Whether you're in a

pinch and need a simple healthy meal or you're looking to prep a nutritious dinner for the weeknights ahead, I've got you covered!

I hope you'll love these simple, delicious, and nutritious recipes as much as my family does! Be sure to check out my website, www.loveandzest.com, for more recipes like these. You'll also find nutrition tips and some cute pictures of my two little boys!



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Weeknight Prep Tips

① Freezer Friendly

- Your freezer is your BFF - save yourself some time on busy weeknights by cooking and freezing meals ahead of time!

② Meal Prep

- Have hangry kiddos (or hubs) and no time or energy to make a healthy weeknight dinner? Meal prep freezer friendly recipes that you, your spouse, or your nanny can easily reheat for healthy options in a time crunch!

③ Stock Your Staples

- If you have several staple food items that you use frequently, buy in bulk on your next grocery shopping trip. Things like beans, grains, soups, and sauces are several examples!

④ Keep It Simple

- Healthy weeknight dinners don't have to be complicated! Focus on a main dish with one or two sides - protein, veggie, and a grain. Simple as that!

⑤ Sheet Pan Meals

- All-in-one meals are not only great for meal prep, but they take minimal time to clean up! Sheet pan meals are a huge time saver and what busy mama doesn't love that?!

⑥ Make Double

- If you have several busy weeknights that result in a later dinner than usual, double up on a recipe during your meal prep so you have back up!

⑦ Prep Seasonal Produce

- Any seasonal produce you snack on throughout the week can be washed, cut, and stored in the fridge until you're ready to dig in! Store produce in an airtight container to keep it fresh and voila - you've got an easy grab-and-go snack!

⑧ Frozen Produce

- Ready to cook, requires zero prep, and pretty darn cheap. Another great option to keep your produce fresher longer and is easy to whip up as a side to any of your freezer friendly meals!

- ✓ [Casserole Baking Dish](#) - the classic look of this stoneware baking dish can't be beat. I go for high-quality and stain-resistant like this piece by Rachael Ray. It's not only dishwasher safe but freezer safe as well!

- ✓ [Large Wood Cutting Board](#) - this piece is what cutting board dreams are made of. It's eco-friendly and reversible! There's also no need to worry about any liquids running off of this board because of its deep grooves!

- ✓ [Stacking Glass Mixing Bowls](#) - I don't think there's any kitchen tool more versatile than these bowls! I use them for basically every kitchen task out there since they come in many different sizes. They also store easily by stacking!

- ✓ [Oxo Leakproof Glass Storage Containers](#) - some of the best glass storage containers you'll find! I personally love using these for meal prep since they make for convenient and compact storage. The lids are also interchangeable!

- ✓ [Stasher Silicone Storage Bags](#) - made from 100% pure silicone, these bags have an airtight seal that keeps food extremely fresh-- great for pre-chopped veggies and fruits. I love using these for my little one's snacks on the go too.

- ✓ [Wooden Cooking Spoons](#) - the spoons are great to use on your non-stick cookware! I enjoy using these for baking and serving casserole dishes and they are incredibly easy to clean.

Sheet Pan Peanut Butter Chicken and Broccoli

Winner winner chicken dinner. We love sheet pan dinners especially when they involve peanut butter and this one tastes like healthy chinese take out! Serve this protein and veggie dish over your favorite microwavable rice packet for a streamlined and easy dinner that's great for meal prep.

Ingredients

- 1 can coconut milk
- ¼ cup creamy peanut butter
- ½ teaspoon freshly grated ginger
- 1-2 teaspoons crushed red pepper flakes
- 2 tablespoons soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons maple syrup
- 2 pounds raw chicken breast
- 1 teaspoon olive oil
- 1 bell pepper, chopped
- 4 cups broccoli florets
- ½ red onion, chopped
- 1 oz crushed peanuts

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees F.
2. In a small bowl, whisk together coconut milk, peanut butter, ginger, red pepper flakes, soy sauce, and maple syrup. Reserve 1 cup sauce to use later for sauce.
3. Place chicken breast in gallon plastic bag and pour remaining sauce in to marinate for at least 15 minutes.
4. On a sheet pan, drizzle with olive oil; place bell pepper, broccoli, and onion on sheet pan tossing to coat with olive oil.
5. Arrange marinated chicken breast on pan with veggies and bake for 30 minutes or until chicken is cooked through.
6. Cook reserved peanut butter sauce on stove top over low heat until warm. Serve chicken and veggies with rice, crushed peanuts, and a drizzle of peanut butter sauce.



Notes from our Kitchen

- ✓ Vary it by changing up the veggies-- use what you have on hand from brussels sprouts to cauliflower, they're all tasty with this PB sauce.
- ✓ Peanut allergy? Try a different nut or seed butter and crushed for garnish.

Sheet Pan Chicken Nachos

Love all the foods with tortilla chips and avocado... so naturally, Sheet Pan Chicken Nachos is a family favorite. It's one of those weeknight meals that we keep on rotation.

Ingredients

- 12-16 ounces tortilla chips
- 1 pound (16 ounces) [easy shredded chicken](#)
- ¼ cup diced red onion
- 1½ cups shredded Mexican cheese blend
- ½ cup canned black beans, rinsed and drained
- ½ cup canned corn, rinsed and drained
- toppings: sliced tomatoes, sliced avocado, sour cream, shredded lettuce, jalapeños

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Line baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Layer tortilla chips with chicken, onion, cheese, black beans, corn, more cheese, and bake for 10-15 minutes until cheese melts.
3. Top with sliced tomatoes, avocado, sour cream, shredded lettuce and jalapeños if desired. Serve warm.



Notes from our Kitchen

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- ✓ Whatever you like on your nachos, pile it high especially the veggies. We love all types of “greens” on our nachos from shredded kale and brussels sprouts to chopped salads, they are all good on sheet pan nachos.
 - ✓ If you’re opting for a heartier veggie like shredded brussels sprouts, kale or mushrooms we suggest piling those on before you bake so they get caramelized in the oven.

Sheet Pan Chicken Fajitas

Sheet Pan Chicken Fajitas are our new weeknight dinner wonder. Check it, all the fajita veg plus super moist flavor packed chicken loaded on one pan and baked in the oven... then wrapped in soft tortillas and topped with cheddar, sour cream and avocado. What's not to love?

Ingredients

- 1 pound raw chicken breast
- 1 teaspoon olive oil
- ¼ cup salsa
- 2 tablespoons taco seasonings
- ½ red onion
- 8 ounces slice mushrooms
- 1 red bell pepper
- 1 green bell pepper
- 1 yellow bell pepper
- your fajita favorites: corn or flour tortillas, shredded cheese, sour cream, avocado



Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees F; line sheet pan with parchment paper.
2. Arrange veggies on sheet pan and drizzle with olive oil.
3. Nestle chicken breasts in with the veggies and top each evenly with taco seasonings and then with salsa.
4. Bake for 20-25 minutes until chicken is cooked through. Once cooked allow to rest for 5 minutes, then slice chicken.
5. Serve with chicken and veggies in tortillas, cheese, sour cream, avocado and your favorite fajita toppings.

Notes from our Kitchen

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- ✓ Hard tacos, quesadillas, burritos, rice bowls, or traditional soft flour tortilla style-- this recipe is a one size fits all. Take your pick and make it your own.
 - ✓ Grain free? Serve these sheet pan chicken fajitas over cauli-rice.

Healthy Hamburger Helper Lasagna Skillet

Healthy Hamburger Helper Lasagna Skillet, OMG! This dinner is genius: one pot on the stove top with minimal effort for the tastiest homemade lasagna with lots of hidden veggies.

Ingredients

- 1 teaspoon olive oil
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic
- 1 yellow onion, small diced
- ½ cup small diced mushrooms
- ½ cup finely shredded carrots
- ½ pound mild Italian sausage
- ½ pound lean ground beef
- 1 28oz. jar of tomato sauce
- 2 tablespoons Italian seasoning
- 4 cups baby spinach
- 1 cup cottage cheese
- 10 lasagna noodles (broken into thirds)
- ½ cup parmesan
- 1 cup mozzarella



Instructions

1. In a large nonstick skillet pot or pot, heat olive oil over medium high heat. Sauté garlic, onion, mushrooms and shredded carrots until softened.
2. Crumble in sausage and ground beef and continue cooking until browned and fully cooked.
3. Add tomato sauce, Italian seasoning, spinach and cottage cheese.
4. Add noodles and cook until noodles are softened. Be sure to tuck noodles under the sauce so that they cook fully. Cover with lid until noodles are cooked.
5. Top with parmesan and mozzarella. Serve when cheese is melted..

Notes from our Kitchen

- ✓ The cottage cheese in this recipe packs a good protein punch, and don't worry it melts down and tastes so good! You can also use ricotta instead.

Turkey Taco Soup

This Turkey Taco Soup is easy peasy to make for a weeknight dinner... a healthy meal the whole family will enjoy. Toss all ingredients into a pot and simmer until you're ready to eat! The toppings are the best part!!

Ingredients

- 1 teaspoon olive oil
- 1 red onion, diced
- 1 tablespoon minced garlic
- ½ bell pepper, diced
- 1 pound lean ground turkey
- 1 packet taco seasoning
- 28 ounces canned petite diced tomatoes
- 1 can black beans
- 1 can corn
- 4.5 ounces canned green chilies
- sour cream, green onions, tortilla chips for toppings

Instructions

1. In large pot, heat oil over medium high heat and add onions and garlic until softened.
2. Stir in bell pepper and continue to cook to soften.
3. Add ground turkey and cook until browned.
4. Stir in taco seasoning to incorporate into meat and add tomatoes, beans, corn, and chilies and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to simmer until ready to eat.
5. Ladle soup into bowls and top with sour cream, green onions and tortilla chips if desired.



Notes from our Kitchen

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- ✓ Want something a little extra? Serve this soup stuffed into a sweet or regular potato with all the fixings.

Cheesy Meatloaf Minis

Cheesy Meatloaf Minis made in the muffin tin and full of hidden veggies. Freezer friendly, family friendly weeknight meal that's gluten free.

Ingredients

- 1 teaspoon olive oil
- 1 cup diced onion
- 1 cup diced bell pepper
- 2 cloves (1 teaspoon minced) garlic
- 1 pound 90% lean ground beef
- ½ cup shredded carrots
- 1 cup finely shredded zucchini
- 4 ounces cheddar, small diced
- 1 cup diced gluten free bread
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- 1 egg
- 1 teaspoon Italian seasonings
- salt and freshly ground pepper
- *for sauce*
- ¼ cup maple syrup
- ¼ cup spicy brown mustard
- ¼ cup tomato paste



Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F; coat 12 count muffin tin with cooking spray or oil.
2. Over medium high heat, sauté onions, bell pepper and garlic until translucent and fragrant.
3. In large bowl, gently mix together cooked onions and bell pepper with beef, carrots, zucchini, cheese, bread, tomato paste, egg, and seasonings.
4. Roll mixture into 12 small meatloafs and place in muffin tin; bake for 15 minutes.
5. In small bowl, mix together sauce by combining maple syrup, mustard and tomato paste.
6. Add tablespoon sauce on top of each meatloaf and broil 5 minutes.

Notes from our Kitchen

- ✓ If you're dairy free, it's totally fine to leave out the cheese in this recipe, but we think it makes these meatloaf minis more flavorful and extra delicious!

Vegetarian Tortilla Casserole

This Vegetarian Tortilla Casserole is made with wholesome ingredients like onions, bell pepper, corn, beans, vegetarian burger patties, corn tortillas and shredded cheese. It's a great recipe for vegetarians and meat eaters alike, since the veggie patties have a meaty flavor and texture.

Ingredients

- 1 teaspoon olive oil
- 1 medium onion, diced
- ½ large bell pepper, diced
- 4 large veggie patties
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- 1 (4 oz can) diced green chilies
- 1 cup frozen corn
- 1 can black beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 cup salsa
- 12 small corn tortillas
- 1 ½ cups shredded cheese

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees F and prepare 9x9 inch baking dish with cooking spray or olive oil.
2. Heat olive oil in nonstick skillet over medium high heat; sauté onion and bell pepper until softened.
3. Crumble Gardenburger patties and stir into pepper and onions. Stir in cumin and chili powder until fully incorporated.
4. Stir in green chilies, corn, black beans and salsa and cook until heated through. Remove from heat.
5. Place 4 tortillas in bottom of baking dish with edges overlapping. Spread ⅓ veggie mixture over tortillas and top with 2 ounces of cheese. Repeat with remaining ingredients by assembling layers of tortillas, veggies, and cheese. Ending with shredded cheese on top.
6. Bake for 15-20 minutes until cheese is melted and bubbly.



Notes from our Kitchen

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- ✓ This recipe is super adaptable, toss in whatever you have on hand. We've even made it BBQ chicken flavored with shredded chicken tossed in BBQ sauce! So good.

Baked Coconut Chicken

Make this recipe ahead of time in minutes to prep for the week! Serve with veggies and side of couscous. Perfect and FAST weeknight dinner!

Ingredients

- 2- 8 ounce boneless skinless chicken breasts
- 1 tablespoon minced garlic
- ½ teaspoon Italian seasoning
- ¼ teaspoon cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon paprika
- 2 tablespoons coconut oil
- ¼ cup unsweetened shredded coconut
- pinch of salt and pepper

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees F.
2. Coat 9X13 inch baking dish with 1 teaspoon coconut oil.
3. Divide each 8 ounce breast to half with sharp knife to reduce thickness and ensure even cooking.
4. Place the four chicken breasts in prepared baking dish and top each with remaining ingredients to season.
5. Bake in oven for 18-20 minutes or until cooked through.



Notes from our Kitchen

✓ Everybody needs a good chicken recipe. Pair this with your favorite sides. Some of our go-tos for a quick weeknight meal are microwaveable sweet potatoes and a chopped salad kit.

Potato Chip Chicken Casserole

This Potato Chip Chicken Casserole recipe has been around for generations but this one has been reinvented with better-for-you ingredients to fit our healthier lifestyles. Now I can feel good serving this well-loved Potato Chip Chicken Casserole to my family.

Ingredients

- ½ small yellow onion, finely chopped
- 1 cup chopped celery
- 1 cup chopped mushrooms
- 2 cups cooked shredded chicken (about 1.5 pounds raw)
- 1 teaspoon minced fresh sage
- 1 lemon, juiced (3 tablespoons juice)
- 16 oz sour cream
- ¼ cup chicken broth
- 10oz package frozen broccoli
- 10 oz. package frozen brown rice
- ½ cup sliced raw almonds
- 2 cups shredded cheese
- 1 cup crushed potato chips
- salt & freshly ground pepper, to taste

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees F. Prepare 9X13 inch baking dish with cooking spray.
2. Steam broccoli and brown rice in microwave according to the directions on the package.
3. In a large mixing bowl, add onion, celery, mushrooms, chicken, sage, lemon juice and sour cream and stir to combine.
4. Stir in chicken broth, broccoli, brown rice, and almonds and continue mixing until all ingredients are incorporated. Season liberally with salt and freshly ground pepper.
5. Transfer mixture into greased 13 x 9 baking dish; top casserole with Kraft Sharp Cheddar cheese and potato chips.
6. Bake 400 degrees F for approximately 25 – 30 minutes until cheese is bubbling and chips are golden in color.



Notes from our Kitchen

✓ If you're not a fan of onions or celery, it's totally fine to leave them out! Sneak in some extra veg into this recipe by going halves with cauliflower rice and brown rice.

Slow Cooker Winter White Chicken Chili

This Slow Cooker Winter White Chicken Chili has a simple ingredient list and made with pantry staples like canned beans and corn. Great family friendly weeknight meal!

Ingredients

- ½ large onion, chopped
- 1 red bell pepper, chopped
- 2 teaspoons minced garlic
- 1.5 pounds raw chicken breast
- 1 can (14.5 oz) corn, drained
- 1 can (15 oz) garbanzo beans, drained
- 1 can (4.5 oz) chopped green chiles
- 2 teaspoons ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- pinch of salt and freshly ground pepper
- 1½ cups low sodium chicken broth
- 1 cup milk
- toppings: cilantro, cheddar cheese, tortilla chips, lime wedges

Instructions

1. In a slow cooker, add onions, bell pepper, garlic, chicken breast, corn, beans, green chiles, spices, chicken broth and milk.
2. Cook on low heat for 6-8 hours. Shred chicken and stir to combine.
3. Serve bowls of chili garnished with cilantro, cheese, lime wedges and a side of tortilla chips.



Notes from our Kitchen

✓ This recipe can totally be made in the instant pot, in fact that's how I make it these days because I'm all about FAST, and hardly use the slow cooker or the slow cooker function on the IP anymore.

✓ To make in IP, saute the onion, bell pepper and garlic together. Add rest of the ingredients, submerge chicken and cook on manual high pressure for 12 minutes.