



*The Peaceful Mom presents*

# Stress Free Meals



# Stress Free Meals

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Kimberlee Stokes  
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# introduction

As a wife, homeschooling mom of four and a blogger, I know what it's like to have a busy schedule! One of the most difficult parts of keeping my household going is making sure dinner gets on the table.

*"What do you mean you're hungry? Didn't I just feed you yesterday?"--haha!*

To help you get dinner on the table, I've joined with four other bloggers to bring you our best tips and recipes for Stress Free Meals. Be sure to click on the links on the Contributors page at the end of the book to find out more about these amazing women.

I hope you enjoy!



Kimberlee  
[The Peaceful Mom](#)

# stress-free meal tips

- **List Your Favorites.** Sometimes it's hard to remember all those meals that your family likes (or where you have the recipe). I put together a Main Dish Menu Planner that I plugged all of our meals into. Each month when I sit down to plan meals I can pull ideas from the master list. You can see my master list (and grab a copy to use yourself) [here](#).



- **Plan Ahead.** There are days when our schedule goes completely off course, but when I have my meal plan already in place it makes it so much easier for me to just grab and do what was planned ahead. It takes a small chunk of time each month, but ultimately saves a bunch of time (and money) during the month. I plug my meals into my Monthly Meal Planner and can save my plans to use again in the future. You can see my meal planner [here](#).

- **Grocery Shop Once A Month.** There are occasionally things that I need to pick up at the store {maybe some fresh produce or something we run out of unexpectedly}. Planning out our family meals a month at a time helps me save time, travel and money since I'm buying only the things that we need at the store...and spending less time wandering the aisles and browsing.

*Jolanthe Erb, [No Ordinary Moments](#)*

# stress-free meal tips



- **Share the love!** My husband is great on the grill. When he grills, all I have to do is prepare the condiments and salad. Easy peasy! Maybe you've got someone at home who would like to help out. Invite them into the kitchen and make it a family affair.
  - **Prepare the plates in the kitchen.** Keep it simple by leaving food in the kitchen instead of bringing serving dishes to the table. Knowing I have fewer dishes to wash always makes me smile.
  - **Find an easy to prepare dish and do a repeat.** On Saturdays, we usually have pizza night. I love making pizza and it's so easy it doesn't even feel like cooking. On Sunday we have what we call 'planned overs.' (a family name that we like better than the name 'left-overs.')
- This can be leftover pizza plus whatever other treasures that have remained in the fridge from the week. Sometimes we have a buffet with a little o' this and a little o' that, and this way I don't even have to cook!

*Andee Flynn, Joyful Project*

# stress-free meal tips



- **Keep a list of your favorite simple recipes.** When you can't think of something to make, you can pull it out for inspiration.
- **Keep the ingredients for two to three simple meals on hand** at all times. If your original menu plan doesn't sound good to you that night, you'll have a back-up plan!
- **If the oven is already on, cook more!** For instance, if I'm making chicken breasts, I go ahead and pull out two or three packages and cook them at the same time. Then, I cut up the extra and freeze it to pull-out when I need diced chicken. I do the same with all kinds of meats.

*Stacie Nelson, [Motherhood on a Dime](#)*

# stress-free meal tips



- **Double Up.** Often times when I'm making a time consuming dinner like lasagna or enchiladas I like to make 2 pans and freeze the second one to use for another day. This also works for making school lunches. I like to [make a week's worth of lunches all in one day](#) which saves me from having to get up extra early just to make lunches (or hand them lunch money - ouch), and it makes our mornings stress free.
- **Use Crockpot recipes.** Having dinner started earlier in the day can be a great stress relief when that "I'm starving - whining children" phase happens.
- **Make a meal plan.** Whether it's a one week, two week or 45 day meal schedule, make one. Not only will it save you money on shopping at the store, but will help you to focus on what foods need to come out of your freezer the morning before your meal.

*Karrie Truman, [Happy Money Saver](#)*

# stress-free meal tips



- **Choose A Theme.** Plan specific kinds of meals for specific days: Mexican Monday, Soup and Salad Sunday, Pizza Friday. Make your theme nights fun and your family will look forward to the tradition.
- **Designate a Planning Day.** Choose a day each week to make a meal plan for the next week. Having a set day to plan helps you get into a routine, which makes you more likely to complete the task.
- **Keep it simple.** Don't feel that you have to produce amazing gourmet meals. Serve up something wonderful once or twice a week and depend on easy favorites the rest of the week.

*Kimberlee Stokes, [The Peaceful Mom](#)*

recipes



# Pulled Pork Sandwiches

## Ingredients

8 ounces of tomato sauce  
3 teaspoons of chili powder  
1 cup of chopped onion  
1 teaspoon cumin  
1 cup of barbecue sauce  
1/2 teaspoon cinnamon  
1/3 cup brown sugar  
2 pounds boneless pork roast  
hamburger buns

# Pulled Pork Sandwiches

## Directions

1. Place pork in crock pot.
2. Mix first seven ingredients and pour over pork.
3. Cover and cook on low for 6-8 hours.
4. Remove meat when tender and shred with forks.
5. Return meat to the crock pot and mix with sauce.
6. Allow shredded meat to heat through.
7. Serve 1/3 - 1/2 cup on a hamburger bun.

Coleslaw is optional...but highly recommended (especially if you can convince your husband to pick up some KFC coleslaw on the way home).

Jolanthe, [No Ordinary Moments](#)



# Beef Stew

## Ingredients

2 pounds of stew meat, cubed (I put this in the crock pot fully frozen)

8 slices of bacon, cut into small pieces

1 can (15 oz.) petite diced tomatoes

2 cans (15 oz. each) whole potatoes, drained and cubed

2 tsp. beef bouillon or 2 beef bouillon cubes

1/2 cup water

1 cup Italian salad dressing

1 cup chopped onions

3 - 4 cups sliced carrots

# Beef Stew

## Directions

1. Place the meat at the bottom of the crock pot and pour the Italian dressing over the beef.
2. Mix the beef bouillon in the water and add to the crock pot.
3. Add in the bacon, diced tomatoes, potatoes, onions, and sliced carrots.
4. Turn the crock pot on low and cook for 7-9 hours.

## Shortcuts

- Use frozen chopped onions (because chopping real ones makes me cry like a baby).
- Using canned potatoes keeps the potatoes from getting mushy.
- You can pull the meat right out of the freezer and cook it from frozen.
- The hardest part is peeling and cutting the carrots!

Jolanthe, [No Ordinary Moments](#)



# Mamma Allegra's Tomato Basil Garlic Pizza

## Ingredients

whole wheat pizza dough (find it in the freezer section)

1/4 cup marinara sauce

8 ounces grated mozzarella cheese

2-3 medium tomatoes

1/4 cup chopped fresh basil (enough to scatter generously over the top of your pizza)

4-5 cloves garlic

## Directions

1. Prepare your pizza crust as directed, then stretch it out over a pizza stone or a floured cookie sheet.
2. Top sparingly with marinara. (I've found that when I go lighter on the sauce, I get more of an authentic crispness to my pizza crust.)
3. Finely chop your garlic and mix with the grated cheese. (Mixing it with the cheese helps to spread it evenly over the surface of the pizza. Feel free to use a little more than 8oz. of cheese, but not too much or your dough will go all soggy. Mamma Allegra doesn't like the soggy dough.)
4. Thinly slice your tomatoes.
5. Spread your cheese and garlic mixture over the top of the marinara.
6. Scatter tomatoes and basil over the surface of the pizza.
7. Bake at 550 degrees. (Since I use a pizza stone I have to put it into a cold oven. but if you are using a cookie sheet you can pre-heat your oven to 450-500 before putting the pizza in.)
8. When the cheese is hot & bubbly, you're done!

Andee Flynn, fondly known as  
Mamma Allegra, [Joyful Project](#)



# Mamma Allegra's Oven Fried Chicken

## Ingredients

Whole skinless chicken, cut in pieces

1/2-3/4 qt. low fat buttermilk

spray oil, olive or canola

1 cup flour

2 teaspoons salt

tiny pinch of cayenne pepper

1/2 teaspoon white pepper

1/2 teaspoon cumin powder

gallon zipper bag

cookie sheet

parchment paper (optional)

# Mamma Allegra's

## Oven Fried Chicken

### Directions

1. Place chicken into zipper bag. Add enough buttermilk to completely cover the chicken pieces.
2. Refrigerate for 45 minutes.
3. Mix dry ingredients together on a plate.
4. Remove chicken from bag and discard buttermilk.
5. Dredge each chicken piece in the flour mixture to cover both sides.
6. Shake off excess flour mixture.
7. Spray chicken with cooking spray.
8. Dredge chicken in flour mixture again.
9. Place chicken on parchment covered cookie sheet.
10. Lightly coat the chicken with cooking spray one more time.
11. Bake for 20 minutes, then turn pieces and bake for additional 15 minutes.

Voilà. Your super yummy oven fried chicken is done. Now go enjoy it while it's still hot!

Andee Flynn, fondly known as  
Mamma Allegra, [Joyful Project](#)



# Crock Pot Chicken Cacciatore

## Ingredients

3 boneless skinless chicken breasts

2 cans (15 oz.) Italian diced tomatoes

8 oz. can tomato sauce

4 oz. can sliced mushrooms

1/2 cup hot water

1 chicken bouillon cube

6 servings of cooked rice or spaghetti noodles

# Crock Pot Chicken Cacciatore

## Directions

1. Place the chicken breasts in the slow cooker. Pour in the Italian diced tomatoes, sauce (use a larger can if you desire a thicker sauce), and mushrooms. Dissolve the bouillon cube in the 1/2 cup hot water and add to the slow cooker.
2. Cook on high for 3-4 hours or low for 6-8 hours.
3. Take out the chicken breasts, pull the meat apart with forks, and stir back into the mixture
4. Serve over cooked rice or spaghetti noodles.

Stacie Nelson, [Motherhood on a Dime](#)



# Crock Pot Chicken Taco Soup

## Ingredients

- 2 cups diced chicken breast or shredded chicken
- 4 cups chicken broth
- 1 can chili-ready tomatoes
- 1 can plain tomatoes
- 1 can or 2 cups of beans, drained (I prefer black or Northern White)
- 2 cups frozen corn (or 2 cans corn, decrease chicken broth by 1 cup)
- 1 package taco seasoning (or use my [taco seasoning here](#))
- 1 tsp. cumin
- 1 small onion, diced, (optional)

## Ideas for Garnishing:

cheese, chips or tortilla strips, sour cream, salsa, cilantro

# Crock Pot Chicken Taco Soup

## Directions

1. Add all ingredients into a crockpot.
2. Cook on low for 6-8 hours or high for 4-6 hours.
3. Stir the soup, ladle into bowls, and garnish!

Stacie Nelson, [Motherhood on a Dime](#)



# Cilantro-Lime Chicken with Avocado Salsa

## Ingredients

2 tablespoons minced fresh cilantro

2 1/2 tablespoons fresh lime juice

1 1/2 tablespoons olive oil

4 skinless boneless chicken breast

pinch salt

# Cilantro-Lime Chicken with Avocado Salsa

## Directions

STEP 1-MARINATE. Add cilantro, lime juice, and olive oil to your chicken. The lime juice and olive oil will absorb right into the meat. Most marinades leave some juice behind, but this one doesn't. Marinade for 3 min. There is no need to marinate it any longer.

STEP 2- GRILL IT.

1. Set your grill to medium-high and preheat.
2. Once preheated, place your chicken breasts on the grill.
3. Grill your chicken until the top side of the chicken begins to turn an opaque color (as opposed to pink).
4. Once the TOP of the chicken begins to change color, flip the meat.
5. Cook until the bottom side of the chicken is a nice brown. You want the chicken to be firm when pressed with a spatula, but not hard.

You can also use a meat thermometer to make sure that the chicken is 165 degrees in the center.

6. Garnish your chicken with salsa. MMMM..... ENJOY!

# Cilantro-Lime Chicken with Avocado Salsa

## Salsa

1 avocado, peeled and finely chopped

1 cup chopped tomato

2 tablespoon finely chopped onion

2 teaspoon fresh lime juice

1/4 teaspoon salt

1/8 teaspoon pepper

Karrie Truman, [Happy Money Saver](#)



# French Dip Sandwiches

## Ingredients

4 buns

1 pound sliced deli roast beef

1 14 ounce can beef broth

1 8 ounce package sliced swiss or provolone cheese

# French Dip Sandwiches

## Directions

1. Pour beef broth into a sauce pan and heat to boiling. I like to boil it for 5-10 minutes to remove some of the extra water from the broth which makes it more flavorful.
2. Turn oven on Broil.
3. Slice the buns in half and place them onto a cookie sheet with the inside facing upward.
4. Place some sliced roast beef on one half and place a slice or two of swiss cheese on top of the beef. Leave sandwich open.
5. Broil for 30 seconds – 2 minutes checking CONSTANTLY so it doesn't burn.
6. Once toasted, place the tops of the buns on top of the bottom halves of each sandwich and broil for an additional minute until tops are golden brown.
7. Serve with broth.

Karrie Truman, [Happy Money Saver](#)



# Taco Cups

## Ingredients

For cups:

(6) 6 inch flour tortillas

2-4 tablespoons olive oil in a small bowl

For Filling:

2 tablespoons olive oil

1 medium onion, diced

1/2 green or red pepper, diced (optional)

1 lb ground beef

2 tablespoons Taco Seasoning ([homemade version here](#))

Toppings of choice (shredded cheese, tomatoes, green onions, avocado)

# Taco Cups

## Directions

1. Brush both sides of each tortilla lightly with olive oil.
2. Arrange each tortilla into the cup of a muffin tin, so that it forms a bowl shape.
3. Bake at 350 degrees for ten minutes or until the top of the cups is lightly brown.
4. While the cups are baking, add 2 tablespoons of olive oil to a large stainless steel or iron skillet (or spray with cooking oil).
5. Over medium heat, saute peppers (if using) and onion until the peppers are soft and the onion is slightly translucent.
6. Add ground beef and brown.
7. Push meat to the outside of pan and add taco seasoning to the center of the pan.
8. Allow seasoning spices to heat for 45 seconds.
9. Stir seasoning into meat.
10. Add 1/4 cup water and stir again.
11. Add taco meat to baked cups and squeeze with a little bit of lime.
12. Garnish with desired toppings. Serve immediately.

Kimberlee Stokes, [The Peaceful Mom](#)



# BBQ Chicken and Black Bean Tostadas

## Ingredients

4 boneless skinless chicken breasts

1/2 bottle barbecue sauce

1 can black beans or 1 1/2 cups prepared black beans

1 medium red onion thinly sliced

2 cups shredded cheddar or mexican blend cheese

12 tostadas

1 avocado sliced (optional)

# BBQ Chicken and Black Bean Tostadas

## Directions

1. Place chicken breasts in crockpot and pour 1/2 bottle of barbecue sauce over the chicken.
2. Cook on low 4-6 hours or until done. Do not overcook.
3. 20 minutes before dinner preheat oven to 350 degrees.
4. Place tostadas side by side on a large cookie sheet.
5. Shred BBQ chicken in crock pot with a fork.
6. Place approximately 1/3 cup of chicken on each tostada.
7. Top with 2-3 tablespoons black beans, 2-3 onion slices and 3-4 tablespoons of shredded cheese.
8. Bake for 10-15 minutes or until cheese is melted. Serve immediately.

Kimberlee Stokes, [The Peaceful Mom](#)

# contributors



Jolanthe is a homeschool mom to four and wife to an amazing man. She has two blogs: [Homeschool Creations](#) where she shares printables, resources and more for families and also [No Ordinary Moments](#), where she shares recipes, stories, and the fun of everyday life. Join her on her blogs for many free printables, encouragement, and more!



Andee Flynn is a designer, personal coach and blogger at [Joyful Project](#) where she shares practical tips, tools and inspiration for daily living. She is all about making it real and helping you live a joyful life. Andee has spent lots of time in Italy learning to cook Italian food and creates great recipes through her alter ego [Mamma Allegra](#).



Stacie Nelson is wife to her college sweetheart, mom to three little girls, elementary teacher turned stay-at-home mom, and lover of all things frugal. A self-professed "messie", she's trying to simplify and streamline her life while keeping her creative side intact! You can find her blogging at [MotherhoodOnADime.com](#)

# contributors



Karrie Truman, author of the blog [HappyMoneySaver.com](http://HappyMoneySaver.com) is a busy mom of 4 wild and amazing children living in the Northwest. She loves hunting down great deals and finding ways to save money in every aspect of life. Check out [HappyMoneySaver.com](http://HappyMoneySaver.com) for more [frugal food recipes](#), [great deals](#), [thrifty tips](#), [fun research projects](#) as well as a [coupon savings tracker spreadsheet](#) you can use to track all your savings.



Kimberlee Stokes is the creative (and sometimes cluttered) mind behind the popular website [The Peaceful Mom](http://ThePeacefulMom.com). When she's not homeschooling her four children, photographing dinner or writing about ways to make life easier, she enjoys thrift store shopping, watching movies with her husband and the occasional nap. Join her at [The Peaceful Mom](http://ThePeacefulMom.com) where you can find fabulous ideas to spend wisely, live intentionally and find joy!

# additional resources

## Printable Planners

[Printable Grocery List](#)

[Printable Meal Planners](#)

## Helpful Articles

[Easy Recipes](#)

[Easy Meal Planning](#)

[\\$100 Budget Weekly Menus](#)

[Easy Freezer Cooking](#)

[How To Use Over-Ripe Produce](#)

# additional resources

## Videos

[Easy Menu Planning](#)

[Easy Meal Prep](#)

[Easy Freezer Cooking](#)

## Other

[eMeals](#)\*—If you need help with meal planning, try eMeal’s weekly lunch and dinner menus including recipes and a grocery list starting at just \$5 a month. Use promo code **PEACEFUL** to get an additional 10% off their already low prices!