

*Dr. Darria's*  
weeknight  
meal plan

[ FOR WHEN LIFE FEELS CRAZY BUSY ]





When life starts to feel “crazy busy”, we have to cut corners - but feeding yourself and your family well doesn't have to be one of those!  
Why? Because, I have 2 rules when it comes to nutrition.

- 1) That my family will eat (mostly) healthy food
- 2) That them following Rule #1 does not drive me crazy

Which is when it's Tuesday at 6pm and everyone's hangry and asking “What's for dinner?!?” Is NOT the time to be madly rushing around trying to figure out what goes with ramen..and ketchup.

So, here's the plan I follow, in my own home - from me to you.

Because sanity-savers (like good, quick, healthy meals), should be shared.

**LOVE,**

*Dr. Darria*





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# Step 1: PLAN YOUR MEALS FOR THE WEEK

Planning my meals has *SAVED MY SANITY*. And it takes – maybe(?) – 3 minutes. I typically make this plan while we’re driving to church on Sunday morning. Key to meal planning is having a list of about 10-15 meals that you know you can make really easily – then every Sunday, have everyone weigh in on the 3-4 of them they’d like, grab your groceries, and done.

And you’ll never have to ask, “What are we doing for dinner?” at 5pm on a Tuesday, again.

## SAMPLE MEAL PLAN

Sunday	Meatloaf with Roasted Broccoli and Quinoa
	+ Prep veggies for the week
Monday	Roasted Balsamic Salmon with Green Beans and Quinoa
Tuesday	Leftovers
Wednesday	Pasta with Ground Turkey and Beef
Thursday	Roasted Chicken OR Leftovers
Friday	Eat out OR Leftovers (if you cooked Thursday night)
Saturday	Eat out!
Sunday	Pork Tenderloin (buy pre-marinated or with teriyaki) with Roasted Veggies and Potatoes
	+ Prep veggies for the week
Monday	Taco Night!
Tuesday	Leftovers
Wednesday	Pork Sausage with Penne and Sundried Tomatoes
Thursday	Meatballs (can be frozen from prepping in the past) OR Leftovers
Friday	Eat out OR Leftovers (if you cooked Thursday night)
Saturday	Eat out!

## 11 Easy Meals to Add to your Arsenal (Recipes in Appendix)

1. Roasted Balsamic Salmon with Green Beans
2. Salmon, Soba, Spinach, and Avocado Bowl
3. Broiled Shrimp and Scallops with Spinach and Tomatoes
4. Basil Chicken Stir Fry
5. Dijon Mustard-Marinaded Pork Tenderloin
6. Taco Night!
7. Minestrone with Sausage and Kale
8. Kale and Pork Sausage with Penne and Sundried Tomatoes
9. Pork or Shrimp Teriyaki
10. Meatballs
11. Delicious – and easy – Turkey or Beef Chili



## Step 2: ONE HOUR OF PRODUCE PREP FOR FRESH AND READY PRODUCE **ALL WEEK**

A plastic bag in the produce drawer is where veggies go to die. When it's 20 minutes past dinnertime and your kids are starving, you're reaching for the fastest thing possible – and that isn't uncut/unwashed veggies.

Unless you become a produce prepper. I kid you not – it's life-saving. Cut to your new scenario: open fridge, grab chopped carrots and cabbage. Throw into pan with a can of baby corn, bag of frozen peas, and sesame oil. Stir-fry for five to seven minutes and done.

Sha-zaam! Dinner hero! (Sloooooowwww clap.)

### CHEAT SHEET: The Best Methods to Prep and Store Produce, by Type

<p>Hearts of romaine lettuce, cabbage, celery, kale, asparagus</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wash carefully, trim ends</li> <li>• Store wrapped in paper towel inside storage container or plastic bag.</li> <li>• You can also store asparagus by standing it in a small amount of water, like flowers.</li> </ul>
<p>Green/yellow/red peppers, carrots, melon, papaya, broccoli, cauliflower, green beans, radishes (leave radishes whole, but trim ends)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chop into pieces and place in a glass container.</li> <li>• (A spritz of lemon juice on fruit slows browning.)</li> <li>• Dry peppers especially well before (and after!) you chop.</li> <li>• Don't chop too small: Larger pieces tend to stay fresher and last longer than very small ones.</li> </ul>
<p>Berries, tomatoes, grapes, cherries</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rinse and place on top of a dry paper towel inside a glass container, or in a produce-specific container with an inner liner that elevates food off the bottom of the container.</li> <li>• For extra staying power, watch <b>my special berry-washing method here.</b></li> </ul>

### PRO-TIPS FOR PREPPING:

- **Weekend prep.** Take 45 minutes to prep for the week, and you'll be thankful every day. Enlist children ages three and above (littles can help wash and dry or do things like break off asparagus ends). Your goal is to have no produce left in the grimy plastic storage bags.
- **Dry everything really well.** This is important, or it will get mushy and not last the week. Then, place in the container with a dry paper towel to absorb excess moisture. If fluid collects after a few days, drain it and replace the paper towel.

## BONUS: My Step-By-Step Veggie-Prep Hack Video Series



For the total, hold-you-by-the-hand, everything-except-wash-your-veggies-for-you blueprint, watch [my veggie-prep hack video series here](#) (you can see three examples here!)



### LETTUCE

I find it tedious to have to wash and dry lettuce whenever I want to eat it – so I like to have it clean already.

1. Trim the bottom off and trim the top ½ inch of greens
2. Remove any brown/torn outer leaves (in fact, remove/cut away any area that is torn, as that harbors bacteria)
3. Rinse very well under running cold water
4. Shake out any excess water
5. Turn upside down to drain in the dish rack (ideally on a paper towel)
6. Leave to dry (go do another veggie) for 5 minutes or so
7. Wrap each heart in a paper towel, and place inside a plastic zipper bag



### AVOCADO

Any avocado lover knows that it goes brown in less than a day once it's been cut – unless you use this trick!

1. Take cut avocado and LEAVE THE SEED in it (if you've already removed the seed, you can still store it with the remaining avocado).
2. Place into a small plastic zip bag or a small glass container.
3. Add a few squirts of lemon juice (I use the kind you buy in the bottle from the store – who has time to squeeze that many lemons?).



### STRAWBERRIES

Strawberries tend to have higher concentration of pesticides, making them another fruit that I'll try to buy organic.

1. Trim off the stem area (leaving only the part of the strawberry that you'd eat)
2. Soak berries in water and rinse, to get rid of any large chunks of dirt.
3. Pull out and toss any that look moldy, mushy, or have tears/cuts in the skin (these would make all the others go bad asap)
4. Soak in a diluted vinegar bath of 1-part white vinegar, 3-parts water, and use your hands to jostle everything gently.
5. Put on top of a paper towel in a salad spinner, and spin to dry.
6. Place on top of a paper towel in a glass storage container and refrigerate





## Step 3: GETTING IT ON THE TABLE

Preparing a meal from scratch at home may sound daunting, which is why you need a few hacks. You needn't slave all day over a hot stove (my grandmother used the phrase, and it sounds dramatic). With a combination of leftovers (or what I call the dinner miracle that keeps on giving) and other tips, preparing a meal at home takes only about ten minutes longer than waiting for takeout does.

### Staples Shopping Checklist

Keep the follow staples on-hand in your house:

- Pre-roasted chicken** from the grocery store: These stay well in the freezer. To quickly heat up a frozen chicken, microwave for 2-3 minutes or until just soft enough to cut off the bone, then you can quickly microwave the meat (without the bone) in the microwave.
- Precooked packets of rice and quinoa** I'm a fan of Seeds of Change – although there are several brands that make these. Just be sure to pour into a microwave-safe bowl and nuke for ninety seconds – don't microwave in the bag.
- Frozen veggies** (see Appendix for ways to prep these in a flash).
- Frozen leftovers of prior dinners:** If you don't eat them as leftovers, freeze meatballs, spaghetti meat, stews, and other meals.
- Raw prepped veggies:** They can be set out as a "Salad bar" for everyone to serve themselves, eaten with hummus, or throw onto a pan with olive oil to roast, or into a saucepan for a quick sauté or stir-fry.
- "Bake at home bread":** I'm obsessed with this (I can find it at Kroger, and other grocery stores). You buy the bread that is essentially dough, you can freeze it, and then remove from freezer straight to oven. Depending on the brand, you can have ready-cooked fresh bread in 8-15 minutes. I'm not joking, you guys.
- Frozen browned ground beef:** When I'm browning ground beef, if I have time, I'll brown twice as much, then freeze half. Then when you're in a pinch, toss the frozen ground beef into a sauce pan to reheat and can quickly add tomato sauce, taco seasoning, or even stir-fry sauce for a super-quick meal.
- Canned beans:** These are a great add-on that I'll throw into taco meat or spaghetti meat.

### PRO-TIPS:

- If you're not cooking enough protein for leftovers, you're not cooking enough. When it comes to protein (which tends to be the most time-consuming portion of the meal), my philosophy is "cook once, eat twice." Roast two chickens for dinner tonight, then shred the remainders tomorrow for soup or pasta. Have fajitas tonight and use the leftover meat for chili tomorrow. (Sauté olive oil, garlic, and chili powder with a little tomato paste, tomatoes, beans, onions, corn, and beef broth and a bay leaf. Once your veggies are cooked, add the beef until hot.) Broil salmon tonight and add the leftovers to a veggie stir-fry tomorrow.
- Don't have time to cook rice? Packets are now available for brown rice, quinoa, and other grains and can be heated in the microwave for 90 seconds. Just pour them in a glass bowl to heat.
- Double your veggies. Whatever vegetable you're cooking tonight, double your recipe. Use leftovers for the next day's lunch as a salad or sandwich topping or repurpose it as a side for the next night's dinner. Steamed veggies one night can easily be tossed into a stir-fry, pasta, or soup the next night.
- Ask your grocery meat department to prep your meat. Whatever you're cooking, ask the meat department to cut the meat into the correct size that you'll need to cook (i.e., have them chop the chicken into stir-fry size, or the salmon or pork into kebab size), so that you won't have to chop. Don't be shy; the guy behind the meat counter at your grocery store can do this while you do the rest of your shopping. That simple request saves you time and raw meat-handling (not to mention cleanup).



## BONUS: Making it possible for the family to sit down together – at least sometimes

Research shows that eating together is beneficial for kids in ways ranging from physical (like their weight) to emotional (school performance, relationships with you and friends). But again – between after-school activities and parents' work schedules and...LIFE...this can seem like an impossible task. Not necessarily! Get started with these tips.

- **Aim for a minimum of one or two family meals a week.** Sure, the more you eat together the better, but studies show that benefits start at even one to two shared meals a week. So, if you're not doing family dinner at all, start there.
- **They can be short, but not too short.** This isn't Thanksgiving dinner. Aim for a meal that lasts approximately twenty minutes.
- **Eat in the kitchen or dining room with TV and devices off.** Kids who eat dinner without TV or devices are more likely to maintain healthy weight. Not only is it distracting, the frequency of candy commercials has doubled since 2007 – and no matter how GREAT your cooking may be, let's be honest – it probably can't compete with a commercial for ice cream, in your child's eyes.
- **It's okay if both parents can't be there.** Research shows that having one family-related adult is necessary for "family dinner." But it needn't be both parents to get the beneficial effect if that's not possible.
- **Add a vegetable.** It's okay if you didn't cook the meal from scratch. Even if you do takeout one night, research shows that just adding one home-prepped vegetable is associated with better health for everyone. Add a salad to takeout, microwave frozen veggies with olive oil, or serve raw veggies dipped in hummus (for my salad dressing recipe + other veggie dips, see Recipes, below).







## Step 4: HOW TO STORE IT Minimizing Chemicals Exposure in Your Food

Would you like a side of plastic with your meal? If you're eating something that came wrapped in fast-food type plastic wrappers or that was heated in plastic, you're also having a helping of chemicals along with it. And that can significantly impact your health. Chemicals like BPA, phthalates, and other plastics are considered "endocrine disruptors" that impact hormone regulation and metabolism and contribute to obesity, diabetes, and other chronic diseases. BPA exposure increases fat growth in infancy and can even affect weight decades later. The biggest source of our exposure to these chemicals is food containers, including plastic bottles and sippy cups, can linings, takeout packages/wrappers, plastic storage containers, and receipts. These chemicals seep into our food directly or rub onto our hands and transfer to food when we touch it.

- **BPA-free or BPA-alternative is not good enough.** When we discovered the dangers of BPA, the market responded with a host of "BPA-free" plastic products. Except, now we're learning that BPA-free alternatives are just as harmful. The best way to avoid them is to minimize your use of plastic containers and plates, period.
- **Instead, use glass or stainless steel whenever you can.** As much as possible, I store and serve food and beverages in glass or stainless steel (a plastic lid is okay). That includes sippy cups and bottles—glass or metal versions are more expensive, but they're more durable and won't melt in the dishwasher. I've also bought little caps that you can attach to your glass baby bottles, converting them to sippy cups. Yes, the caps are made of plastic, but it's much less plastic than an entire sippy cup.
- **Avoid plastic in the dishwasher.** Unless a plastic piece has touched meat or dairy (or is just gross), I try to wash plastic by hand. Minimize putting plastics in your dishwasher, as the high heat makes chemicals seep out of the plastic and onto your other dishware. Plastic can also melt into the dishwasher, causing damage—plus an awful burning smell.
- **Microwave in glass or china.** Never heat foods in plastic containers, particularly thin takeout containers. Transfer to a glass or microwave-safe china plate.
- **Avoid cutesy plastic plates.** A cute Minnie Mouse plate may be tempting, but these cutesy plastic dishes are another source of these chemicals. As soon as your child is old enough to not throw dishes on the floor, swap them to adult china.
- **Limit receipts and wash hands after handling them.** Receipts are laden with BPA, and we often grab the receipt when we get takeout, food from the grocery store, or fast food and then use that same hand to handle our food. Decline the receipt if you don't need it or wash your hands before touching food. Definitely also keep receipts away from children, particularly infants and toddlers who love to nom nom on anything they touch.



## BONUS: Dealing with Picky Eaters 101

My son, who is my second child, will eat anything that doesn't eat him first. My daughter, however, is a little more . . . well . . . independent. She'll eat green beans today but not tomorrow. Or she'll ignore the stir-fry vegetables and chicken I cooked and only eat quinoa. I try not to take it to heart. The reality is that, at any point in time, up to 20 percent of parents would characterize their children as picky eaters.

"Picky eating" can range from mild avoidance (like with my daughter) to refusing to touch a particular food group. The good news is that 60 percent of kids labeled picky will outgrow it within two years. Unless your child has a health problem that prevents him from eating a wide variety of foods, you can change his eating habits.

- **Sanity saver 1:** Stop stressing about it. Your child will not starve. Your job is not to make sure your child swallows the food. Your job is to keep offering it and to model eating it yourself. It's the child's decision whether to eat it.
- **Sanity saver 2:** They don't have to eat every food group at every meal. Aim for a balanced week; it's okay if he doesn't hit every food group in a single meal—or day. Some days he may eat everything at breakfast, then just protein for lunch, and veggies at dinner. With your pediatrician's blessing, don't make yourself crazy about having three square meals.
- **Give options.** Pull a few tricks from Game Theory (a model from economics to influence behavior) and allow your child to feel in control. Instead of just putting two foods on your child's plate and expecting him to eat both, put three or four healthy options (think a protein, a starch, and a vegetable or two), and allow him to choose which ones he eats. He feels like he has "won" by choosing what he eats, and you win because he ate healthy food.
  - » **Dessert TIP:** Recently, eating dinner and dessert was starting to become a battle – and I definitely didn't want dessert to be seen as the "reward". So, I told my daughter that we don't need dessert every night of the week. I said that we could still have it – but only three nights a week – and that SHE could choose which nights. She's happy because she feels in control, and I'm happy because dessert is no longer an issue.
- **Stand your ground.** When you can (and especially when you're home and your child's protests can't bother anyone else), stand firm. The meal is what's offered, and no number of tantrums will change that. Make it clear that dinner is the food for the night, and that grabbing something from the pantry afterwards is not an option. Unless your pediatrician is concerned about your child's weight and growth, she will survive skipping dinner that night. Sure, her protesting makes dinner more stressful for everyone, but it won't last forever, and the more consistent you are, the sooner it will end. Breathe.



# Recipes: Dips/Dressings



## My Favorite Dip + Dressing Options:

- Hummus (great for dipping raw or roasted veggies – and not to mention also a great sandwich spread or dollop added to your salad for that extra umami flavor)
- Salsa (buy store-made or [try my recipe here](#))
- Edamame Hummus (see recipe below)
- Olive Tapenade
- My Champagne Vinaigrette ([recipe](#))
- My Super-Lazy, No-Prep Salad Dressing (see recipe below)
- My At-Home Balsamic Vinaigrette (see recipe below)

## My Super-Lazy, No-Prep Salad Dressing:

There is no measuring (just add what you want of each, to taste), and you don't have to make it ahead of time.

- Extra virgin olive oil
- Thick/aged balsamic vinegar like [this one](#)
- Lime juice (a splash)
- Sea salt

## My At-Home Balsamic Vinaigrette:

Store-bought dressings tend to be high in sugar, sodium, and preservatives. Since it's really easy to make my own, I try to avoid the in-store options and stick to this one.

- ½ cup thick/aged balsamic vinegar like [this one](#)
- 2 teaspoons finely minced garlic (btw do you think I take the time to mince garlic? Nah. I buy the jars of pre-minced garlic at the store and keep refrigerated).
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard (or for a milder flavor, use Dijonnaise)
- ¼ cup water
- 1 ½ tablespoons olive oil
- Optional: 1-2 teaspoons lemon juice to taste
- Optional: 1 teaspoon of dried basil, oregano, or parsley



# Recipes: Dips/Dressings

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## Edamame Hummus

- ¼ c Tahini
- 1/3 c lemon juice
- 3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 1 medium clove garlic, minced (or roughly chopped)
- ½ tsp sea salt
- 2 cups shelled edamame (about 12 ounces) – I buy these frozen and then microwave to defrost
- Combine all ingredients EXCEPT olive oil into the food processor
- While pulsing food processor, drizzle in olive oil
- Add 2-4 tablespoons water, as necessary to reach desired consistency

# Recipes: Veggies



## Cheat-sheet: Yummy (and Easy) Cooking Options – By Veggie

VEGGIES	COOKING	TIPS
Sweet potatoes (whole or sliced), eggplant, asparagus, beets, green beans, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts	<b>ROAST/BAKE</b>	Toss with 1-2 tablespoons olive oil, sprinkle kosher salt, pepper, garlic, and/or rosemary. Heat oven to 425°F-450°F. Cook time varies by veggie and your oven (anywhere from 10 minutes [green beans] to 45 [potatoes]).
Beans, asparagus, cabbage, peppers, snap peas, zucchini, sliced carrots, baby corn, bok choy, edamame, water chestnuts	<b>STIR-FRY</b>	Chop into relatively uniform pieces. <b>Sauce:</b> (1) sesame oil and either low-sugar teriyaki sauce or low-sodium soy sauce or (2) a low-sodium chicken stock, a little white wine (a little in the pan . . . a little in my glass) and a teensy bit of Worcestershire sauce. Heat pan to high, then add veggies in small batches, stirring constantly.
Broccoli, cauliflower, carrots, green beans, artichokes, spinach	<b>STEAM</b>	Cut uniformly. Place 1-inch water in a large pot and boil (add lemon juice for flavor). Add veggies in a steamer insert. Sprinkle after cooking with olive oil, herbs, and spices.
Green beans, asparagus spears, carrot sticks, green peas, sugar snap peas	<b>BLANCH</b>	Place veggies into a pot of rolling boiling water. Boil until al dente (2–4 minutes). Immediately place in ice bath to stop cooking process. Eat as a side, serve as a crudité platter, or add to your salad.
Carrots, spinach, cabbage, zucchini, mushrooms, kale, brussels sprouts	<b>SAUTÉ</b>	Bring 1–2 tablespoons olive oil to medium heat. Add chopped veggies. Stir often (but not constantly, to allow for browning). For Brussels sprouts: Blanch to take out bitterness, then sauté in olive oil, garlic, herbs (tarragon, parsley), and very little salt.
Fresh or frozen green peas, green beans, broccoli	<b>MICROWAVE</b>	Pour frozen veggies into a glass bowl, and heat for about 2 minutes. Pour out any water, add olive oil, a little shredded parmesan, and herbs.

# Main Dish Recipes:



## Salmon, Soba, Spinach, and Avocado Bowl

### INGREDIENTS:

Soba noodles (around 6 ounces dry)

salt

4 cups packed spinach, roughly chopped

4 x 4-ounce pieces of wild salmon

4 teaspoons sesame oil

1 avocado, thinly sliced

4 teaspoons toasted sesame seeds (optional)

### For the Pickled Cucumbers:

*(my favorite part – yes, you're going to make your own pickles. In 5 minutes.)*

4 small pickling cucumbers (or about 1/2 of those long English cucumbers)- whatever you use, you want it to be thin, with minimal seeds

2 teaspoons salt

2 teaspoons sugar

2 teaspoons finely grated fresh ginger (optional – I just asked the man at my grocery store's sushi counter for a little bit of ginger, and then chopped it myself, instead of finely grating)

4 tablespoons red wine vinegar

### For the Sauce:

4 tablespoons soy sauce

4 tablespoons rice wine vinegar

2 splashes sesame oil

4 teaspoons kimchi juice (optional – can be bought at Whole Foods)

### TO COOK:

1. Start by making the pickles: Thinly slice cucumber, add all ingredients, and then add just enough water to over. Let that marinate at room temperature while you prepare everything else.
2. Cook soba noodles per the package instructions.
3. In a separate pot, put spinach, and about 1-2 inches of water, and cook on medium, until spinach is nice and green.
4. Preheat oven to broil
5. Pour 1 teaspoon of sesame oil on each filet of salmon, and rub it over the salmon piece. Season each filet with salt and pepper, and place in a glass oven dish.
6. Broil salmon for 8-12 minutes, checking at 8 minutes and frequently after, until the salmon pieces flake easily.
7. To make the sauce, just whisk together all ingredients into a small bowl.
8. When it's all ready, place soba and spinach in the base of the bowl, then top with salmon, avocado, and pickled cucumbers. Garnish each bowl with sauce and sesame seeds.

*(My version is a modified and slightly simplified version of a recipe on [Goop.com](#)).*



# Main Dish Recipes:



## Basil Chicken Stir-Fry

My toddler (and hubby) LOVED this dinner. I loved that it's an easy teriyaki sauce to make at home.

### INGREDIENTS:

2 tablespoons soy sauce (I recommend low sodium, or the dish will get salty)

2 tablespoons water

1 tablespoon brown sugar

1 pound boneless, skinless chicken breast

1 pound boneless, skinless chicken thigh (you can do all white meat with 2 lbs of chicken breast, but I like the added flavor of dark meat)

4 tablespoons olive oil

1 large bell pepper, seeded and cut into strips (1 1/2 - 2 cups)

3 cloves garlic, chopped (I buy it minced in a jar, and keep in the fridge for easy use, so it would be 1 1/2 teaspoons of minced garlic)

1/2 teaspoon black pepper

10 ounces fresh baby spinach

1 cup fresh basil leaves

### TO MAKE:

1. Whisk together soy sauce, water, and brown sugar in a mixing cup.
2. Place all chicken into a zipper plastic bag, and pour marinade over chicken. Compress bag (so chicken is bathed in marinade), and allow to marinate for a minimum of 30 minutes. (I allow to marinate longer: about 1-2 hours in the fridge, and the last 30 minutes at room temperature).
3. Heat 1 tablespoon of olive oil in a large saucepan over medium heat. Add peppers and cook until softened (about 3 minutes), stirring occasionally. Add garlic and pepper and cook 1 minute more, then set aside in a separate bowl.
4. Heat 3 tablespoons olive oil in skillet, and add chicken. Cook (stirring frequently) until chicken is no longer pink and juices run clear, around 5-10 minutes.
5. Add spinach to chicken in pan, and cover, stirring occasionally, for 2 minutes.
6. Add peppers back to chicken and spinach in pan, stir, and serve! I add rice or quinoa as an easy side.

Special thanks to [AllRecipes.com](https://www.allrecipes.com) for the original recipe (that I modified here).

# Main Dish Recipes:

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## Dijon Mustard Marinated Pork Tenderloin

### INGREDIENTS:

- 1/4 cup white wine
- 1 tbsp firmly packed light brown sugar
- 3 tbsp olive oil
- 1/2 cup burgundy/dijon mustard
- 2 tbsp chopped rosemary
- 1 large garlic cloves, chopped
- 1 boneless pork loin roast (about 3 lbs)
- Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste

### TO COOK:

1. In a zip-lock plastic bag, combine and whisk together wine, brown sugar, olive oil, mustard, rosemary, and garlic.
2. Place pork into the bag, and refrigerate to marinate (ideally at least 1 hour, but totally fine to leave this all day in the fridge!).
3. To cook, preheat oven to 475 F. Roast for 20 minutes, then reduce temperature to 400 F and continue roasting (usually another 40-45 minutes) until thermometer in meat center reads 145F.
4. Let rest for 10 minutes and serve.

*Thank you Williams Sonoma for the **original recipe!***

# Main Dish Recipes:



## Minestrone with Sausage and Kale

This one takes a little longer, so I typically reserve it for a Sunday, when I have more time.

Serves 4-6

### INGREDIENTS:

- 8 Tbs. olive oil
- 1 lb. (500 g) mild Italian sausage, casings removed
- 1 yellow onion, diced
- 4 carrots, peeled and coarsely diced
- 4 celery stalks, diced
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 cans (each 14 oz./440 g) cannellini beans, drained and rinsed
- 4 cups (32 fl. oz./1 l) chicken broth
- 1 cup (4 oz./125 g) grated Parmesan cheese
- 2 fresh rosemary sprigs (or can use dried rosemary in a pinch – I won't judge)
- Juice of 1/2 lemon
- Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper
- 2 bunches kale, stems removed, leaves chopped

### DIRECTIONS:

1. In a Dutch oven over medium heat, warm 4 Tbs. of the olive oil. Add the sausage and sauté, breaking it into pieces with a wooden spoon, until browned, about 7 minutes.
2. Add the onion, carrots, celery and garlic and sauté, stirring occasionally, until the vegetables are tender, about 5 minutes.
3. Add the beans and chicken broth and bring to a boil.
4. Reduce the heat to a simmer and add 1/2 cup (2 oz./60 g) of the Parmesan, the rosemary sprigs and lemon juice. Cover the pot and simmer, stirring occasionally, for 30 minutes.

*Add some delicious crusty rolls or a loaf of bread, and you're done!*

*Slightly modified from the [original recipe at Williams Sonoma Test Kitchen](#) – a big thanks to them for this recipe!*



# Main Dish Recipes:



## Delicious and Easy Turkey or Beef Chili

TIME: Prep about 5 minutes (Literally. You throw it in the pot). Cook-time about 40 minutes.

### INGREDIENTS:

1 1/2 lb ground turkey or beef	1 tsp salt
1 onion (half chopped into medium chunks for the chili, the other half diced for toppings)	2 tbsp chili powder
2 cans stewed tomatoes	1-2 bay leaves
1 can corn	1/4 tsp cayenne pepper
1 can beans, drained (chic pea, red beans, black beans - do what you like)	Shredded cheese for topping
1 tsp ground cumin	Lime wedges for topping
1 tsp ground oregano	Tortilla chips (for dipping!)
2 cloves diced garlic	If you REALLY go all out, pick up some cornbread while you're at it. (No. I don't make from scratch)

### DIRECTIONS:

1. Brown beef/turkey
2. Throw the 1/2 onion chopped, stewed tomatoes, corn, beans, and spices into a pot (essentially everything except for the toppings).
3. Bring to a boil, then put on lid and lower heat to simmer for 30-45 minutes.

## Easy Meatballs

### INGREDIENTS:

2 cups spaghetti (or any pasta)	1/2 tsp Worcestershire sauce
1 lb lean ground beef (I like to mix half ground beef and half ground turkey)	1/4 tsp pepper
1/2 cup Italian-style bread crumbs	1 small onion, finely chopped
1/4 cup milk	1 egg
1/2 tsp salt	<b>Sauce</b> – I sometimes serve with just some extra olive oil, a little pesto, and parmesan, or you can add your own favorite tomato-based sauce

### DIRECTIONS:

1. Heat oven to 400 F, line 13 x 9 inch pan with foil and spray with cooking spray
2. Put on water to boil (add a pinch of salt) for pasta. Make meatballs while water heating – as soon as it boils toss in pasta and bring back to a boil, then cook uncovered for 8 minutes, then drain.
3. In a large bowl, mix all ingredients, and then shape into 1 -1 1/2 inch meatballs. Place 1 inch apart in pan.
4. Bake uncovered for 18-22 minutes, or until no longer pink in the center.
5. Top pasta with meatballs and your sauce of choice, and Saluti!

# Main Dish Recipes:



## Roasted Balsamic Salmon with Roasted Green Beans

TIME: 15 minutes. Time-saver tip – I purchase packaged couscous! (see below).

**Couscous** – Full disclosure, I made this using **Near East Pearled Couscous in Basil and Herb** (no they don't sponsor me, but they make this mama's life easier, so they get a shout-out).

### Salmon and Green Beans

#### INGREDIENTS:

1 lb green beans

1 tbsp olive oil

1/4 tsp kosher salt

1/4 tsp pepper

4 6-ounce salmon filets

2 cloves minced garlic (I buy **Spice World Minced Garlic** (no they do not sponsor me, but they save me time!) (1/2 tsp = 1 clove)

Approximately 1 cup of balsamic vinegar or balsamic glaze (while balsamic glaze dishes are DELICIOUS, I usually don't want to take the time to make the glaze, and find that balsamic vinegar makes a great marinade). If you use a more "boutique" balsamic vinegar such as the delicious ones from **Oli and Ve** (no, not sponsoring me!), you can use less, and just drizzle (or soak, as I like to do) the top.

#### TO COOK:

1. Pre-heat oven to 450 F
2. Toss green beans with olive oil, salt, and pepper, and bake on a flat pan for 10 minutes.
3. While the beans are cooking, place salmon in a small pan (just large enough to hold the salmon) (Tip: line the pan with a single sheet of aluminum foil to make clean-up super easy).
4. Pour balsamic vinegar over salmon—enough to cover about the bottom half of the filets
5. Spoon garlic onto salmon filets
6. Once the 10 minutes for the beans have completed, put the salmon pan into the same oven, and cook beans and salmon for 12 minutes, or until salmon is cooked through and beans are tender.

# Main Dish Recipes:



## Broiled Shrimp and Scallops with Spinach

**Time: SUPER-short. From fridge/raw to cooked, this takes me about 15 minutes.**

**Time-saver tip:** I buy pre-washed organic spinach so I only have to give the spinach a quick rinse. Thank you to Coastal Living for the original version of [this recipe](#).

### INGREDIENTS:

1/4 cup olive oil

1/3 cup dry white wine (pour yourself some red while you cook!)

1 tablespoon lemon juice (I buy the pre-squeezed refrigerated)

1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce

3 garlic cloves, pressed (I purchase the jars of chopped garlic- the label states that 1/2 tbsp equals 1 clove, so save yourself the time of crushing the cloves!)

1/2 teaspoon salt

1/4 teaspoon black pepper

1 pound large de-veined and peeled shrimp (buying peeled and de-veined is KEY for saving time)

1 pound sea scallops (slice them in half if they're over 1 inch thick)

1 pint cherry tomatoes, cut in half

5 ounces baby spinach leaves

French bread (or any other yummy bread for dipping in the sauce)

### TO COOK:

1. Preheat broiler (keep oven rack approximately 6 inches from heating element)
2. Combine all ingredients EXCEPT the spinach (set spinach aside for the moment) into the pan, tossing to coat the shrimp/tomatoes/scallops.
3. Place pan in oven and broil for 3 minutes.
4. Stir shrimp and scallops, and return to broil for 2 more minutes.
5. Remove pan from oven and add spinach. Toss with the spinach for approximately 1-2 minutes or until spinach wilted. (You don't need to place back in the oven – the heat from the food will cook it fairly quickly).

Serve with french bread for a full meal!

# Main Dish Recipes:



## Pork or Shrimp Teriyaki

**Cook time: 10 minutes)**

**\*Caveat** – for this recipe, I “cheated”, in that I shortened the prep as much as possible (such as asking the butcher to do some of the work! – it’s free :) See below for tips.

When I bought the pork, I asked the butcher to cut it into strips (so all I had to do at home was toss it into the pan). I also bought the veggies pre-chopped – many groceries now have washed and pre-chopped veggies that in a pinch now and then, are life-savers.

### INGREDIENTS:

1 pound pork (I asked the butcher to cut into strips, so all I had to do when I cooked was toss it into the pan)

1 pound shrimp (I also bought this pre-cooked and de-veined)

Veggies:

Pre-chopped (I was in a rush, so I bought 2 packages of the store’s “pre-chopped stir-fry vegetables”. Many stores carry these pre-cut packages.) If not, buy:

OR

2 cups chopped broccoli

2 red/yellow/orange peppers, chopped in 1-2 inch chunks

1 package asparagus, ends trimmed

any other veggies that you’d like to throw in! (think: mushrooms, baby corn, green beans, onions....)

Teriyaki Sauce

Soy Sauce

Sesame Seeds

3 tbsp coconut oil (or olive oil)

Rice (cooked separately as a side dish- recipe not included here; for a super-quick side, purchase the microwaveable bags by Uncle Ben or Seeds of Change – for the picture above, I used Seeds of Change Quinoa and Brown Rice. Nope, I’m not above microwave shortcuts!)

### TO COOK:

1. Heat 2 tbsp coconut oil in a work (or a separate large saucepan). Toss in all veggies with 2 tbsp teriyaki sauce and 1 tbsp soy sauce. Cover for 2-3 minutes, until veggies just start to wilt.
2. While veggies are covered, heat 1 tbsp coconut oil in a large saucepan, until hot. Add pork strips and 1 tbsp teriyaki sauce, and turn until fully cooked, around 3-5 minutes. Remove from heat, cover, and set aside.
3. Add shrimp to vegetable mix and stir until veggies cooked and shrimp warm.
4. Toss in pork, stir and add more teriyaki + soy sauce to taste.
5. Add to a side of rice, and you’re good to go!

# Main Dish Recipes:



## Kale and Sausage with Penne and Sundried Tomatoes

**Cook time: 20-25 Minutes** (slightly modified from **The Fresh Market**)

### INGREDIENTS:

1 box Penne pasta, cooked and drained

Olive oil

1 pound Italian pork sausage (about 1 links) without casing (I've had good luck with chicken sausage, as well – try what you'd like!)

1 package sun-dried tomatoes (julienne cut)

2 cloves garlic, minced

1/3 c white cooking wine

1/2 cup chicken broth

1 bunch kale (thick ribs removed, chopped)

2 tbsp coconut oil (olive oil also works, but I'm obsessed with coconut oil right now)

1/3 c shredded parmesan cheese

### PREPARATION:

1. Cook and drain the pasta and set aside
2. Put 2 tbsp olive oil in a large skillet and heat 2 minutes, then toss in the sausage, breaking up into pieces and cook until no longer pink
3. Add sun-dried tomatoes and garlic and cook for 1 more minute
4. Remove from heat and add white wine, chicken broth, and kale, then continue to cook until kale wilted and tender (about 5 minutes)
5. Combine with pasta
6. Toss on parmesan and VOILA!



# Main Dish Recipes:

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## TACO NIGHT

OK, so this one is so simple, it barely needs a recipe – which in my mind is FABULOUS. And it's a hit in my house.

### INGREDIENTS:

#### For taco meat:

- 2 pounds ground beef
- 2 packets of taco seasoning

#### For the taco bar:

This is where you can have fun. Set out everything, and let everyone personalize their own. Some of our favorite add-ons include:

- Shredded lettuce
- Tortillas
- Shredded cheese (or I find that just a pinch of a stronger cheese, like Feta, lets you eat less cheese while still getting the flavor)
- Chic peas or black beans (not fried – but from a can. Rinse beans well to remove starch before serving)
- Corn (again, great from the can or jar is fine)
- Salsa – naturally!
- Avocados or guacamole
- Diced tomatoes
- Diced onions
- Sliced green or black olives
- Diced cucumbers

# Dr. Darria's weeknight meal plan

[ FOR WHEN LIFE FEELS CRAZY BUSY ]

## Questions? Comments?

Suggestions for other amazing, time-saving  
recipes that are your go-to's?

**LET US KNOW. [INFO@TRUEVELAB.COM](mailto:INFO@TRUEVELAB.COM)**

