

Back to School already? Hard to believe that summer break is coming to an end. In its place, we get crazy schedules, tired kids (and parents), and no extra time.

This week, we will feature some great kid-friendly meals... one less thing to worry about!

Overnight Caramel Gingerbread Oats

Prep Time: 5 min.

Cook Time: 5 min.

Additional Time: 8 hrs.

Total Time: 8 hrs. 10 min.

Servings: 1 jar

1 T. butter
1/4 pear, chopped
2 T. chopped walnuts
1/2 tsp. ground cinnamon, divided
6 oz. caramel-flavored protein shake (such as Premier Protein®)
1/2 C. rolled oats
2 tsp. pumpkin pie spice
1/2 tsp. ground ginger

Melt butter in a small pan over medium heat. Saute pear, walnuts, and 1/4 tsp. cinnamon until pear softens, about 5 minutes. Remove from heat and let cool. Combine protein drink and oats in a small Mason jar. Mix in cooled pear and walnuts. Seal and refrigerate, 8 hours to overnight. Add pumpkin spice, ginger, and remaining cinnamon to the oats the following morning. Stir to combine.

Honey Cinnamon Bars

Prep: 25 min.

Bake: 10 min. + cooling

Servings: 2 dozen

1 C. sugar
3/4 C. canola oil
1/4 C. honey
1 lg. egg, room temperature
2 C. all-purpose flour
1 tsp. baking soda
1 tsp. ground cinnamon
1/4 tsp. salt
1 C. chopped walnuts, toasted

Glaze:

1 C. confectioners' sugar
2 T. mayonnaise
1 tsp. vanilla extract
1 to 2 T. water
Additional toasted chopped walnuts, optional

Preheat oven to 350°. In a large bowl, beat sugar, oil, honey and egg until well blended. In another bowl, whisk flour, baking soda, cinnamon and salt; gradually beat into sugar mixture. Stir in 1 cup walnuts.

Spread into a greased 15x10x1-in. baking pan. Bake until golden brown (edges will puff up), 10-12 minutes. Cool completely on a wire rack.

For glaze, in a small bowl, mix confectioners' sugar, mayonnaise, vanilla and enough water to reach desired consistency; spread over top. If desired, sprinkle with additional walnuts. Let stand until set. Cut into bars. Refrigerate leftovers.

Lunch Box Pizzas

Prep/Total Time: 20 min.

Servings: 10

1 tube (7-1/2 oz.) refrigerated buttermilk biscuits (10 biscuits)
1/4 C. tomato sauce
1 tsp. Italian seasoning
10 slices pepperoni
3/4 C. shredded Monterey Jack cheese

Flatten each biscuit into a 3-in. circle and press into a greased muffin cup. Combine the tomato sauce and Italian seasoning; spoon 1 teaspoonful into each cup. Top each with a slice of pepperoni and about 1 tablespoon of cheese.

Bake at 425° until golden brown, 10-15 minutes. Serve immediately or store in the refrigerator.

PB&J Bites

Prep: 20 min. + chilling
Servings: 1 dozen

1-1/2 C. quick-cooking oats, divided
1 C. creamy peanut butter
1/2 C. confectioners' sugar
6 tsp. favorite jam

Combine 1 C. oats, peanut butter and confectioners' sugar until well blended. Shape dough into 1-1/4-in. balls; flatten into 1/4-in.- thick circles. Place 1/2 tsp. of jam in center of 1 circle; wrap dough around jam. Pinch edges to seal; shape into ball. Repeat with remaining jam and dough. Roll balls in remaining oats. Refrigerate 30 minutes on a parchment-lined baking sheet. Transfer to an airtight container; store in the refrigerator.

Barbecue Beef Cups

Prep Time: 15 min.
Cook Time: 25 min.
Total Time: 40 min.
Servings: 6

3/4 lb. lean ground beef
1/2 C. barbecue sauce
1 T. dried minced onion
1 (12 oz.) package refrigerated biscuit dough
1/3 C. shredded Cheddar cheese

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Grease the cups of a muffin pan.

In a large heavy skillet over medium heat, cook beef until evenly brown. Drain excess fat. Stir in barbecue sauce and dried onion. Simmer for a few minutes over low heat.

Flatten each biscuit, and press into cups of the prepared muffin pan. Make sure the dough comes to the top of the pan. Spoon a portion of the meat mixture into each dough cup.

Bake in the preheated oven for 12 minutes. Sprinkle with cheese and bake for 3 more minutes.

Slow Cooker Mozzarella-Stuffed Turkey Meatballs

Prep Time: 30 min.
Cook Time: 2 hrs.
Total Time: 2 hrs. 30 min.
Servings: 10

1 (8 oz.) pkg. low-moisture mozzarella cheese
1 lb. ground turkey
1/2 lb. bulk Italian turkey sausage
1 C. dry breadcrumbs
1/2 C. whole milk
1/4 C. grated Parmesan cheese
1/2 C. chopped fresh parsley
2 eggs
2 tsp. salt
1 tsp. ground black pepper
1/2 tsp. garlic powder
2 (24 oz.) jars spaghetti sauce

Cut mozzarella cheese into 3/4-inch cubes. Store in the refrigerator while preparing the meat.

Combine turkey, turkey sausage, breadcrumbs, milk, Parmesan cheese, parsley, eggs, salt, pepper, and garlic powder in a large mixing bowl. Mix well by hand. Roll meat mixture into golf ball-sized meatballs. Squish a mozzarella cube into the center of each and pull the edges of the meat around it to enclose.

Pour 1 jar of spaghetti sauce into the bottom of a slow cooker. Arrange meatballs on top and cover with the second jar of sauce.

Cover and cook on High until no longer pink in the centers, 2 to 2 1/2 hours.

Maple Almond Granola Clusters

Prep Time: 15 min.
Cook Time: 50 min.
Total Time: 1 hour, 45 min.
Servings: 5.5 cups

3 C. old-fashioned whole rolled oats
3/4 C. almond flour or almond meal
1/2 tsp. salt

3/4 C. sliced, slivered, or chopped almonds -unsalted
1/3 C. coconut oil
1/3 C. packed light or dark brown sugar
1/3 C. pure maple syrup
1 tsp. pure vanilla extract

Preheat oven to 300°F. Line a 9x13-inch baking pan with parchment paper. Set aside.

Mix the oats, almond flour, salt, and almonds together in a large bowl. Set aside.

Combine coconut oil, brown sugar, and maple syrup in a medium saucepan over medium heat. Whisk until sugar dissolves. It's ok if there's a layer of oil on top. Remove from heat, whisk in the vanilla, and pour over oat mixture. Stir until everything begins to come together. The mixture will be sticky.

Pour into prepared baking pan and, using a spatula, press mixture tightly into an even layer in the pan.

Bake for 40 minutes, rotating the pan every 10 minutes to ensure the granola "slab" bakes evenly. Remove the baking pan, but do not turn off the oven. Let the granola slab cool in the pan for 5–10 minutes. (The cooling is crucial!) Lift the granola out of the pan using the parchment overhang on the sides. Cut into squares, and then break up into smaller cluster pieces—be careful, the granola is hot! Place the clusters back into the baking pan, with or without parchment, or spread onto a lined or unlined baking sheet, and bake the clusters for 10 more minutes.

Remove clusters from the oven and cool completely. Clusters become crunchier the longer they cool.

Cover and store the cooled clusters at room temperature for up to 1 week, or freeze for up to 3 months. Thaw at room temperature.

Chewy Chocolate Chip Cookies

Prep Time: 15 min.

Cook Time: 12 min.

Total Time: 3 hrs., 22 min.

Servings: 20 med./lg. cookies

2-1/4 C. all-purpose flour
1 tsp. baking soda
1-1/2 tsp. cornstarch
1/2 tsp. salt
3/4 C. unsalted butter, melted & cooled 5 minutes
3/4 C. packed light or dark brown sugar
1/2 C. granulated sugar
1 lg. egg + 1 egg yolk, at room temperature
2 tsp. pure vanilla extract
1-1/4 C. semi-sweet chocolate chips or chocolate chunks

Whisk the flour, baking soda, cornstarch, and salt together in a large bowl. Set aside.

In a medium bowl, whisk the melted butter, brown sugar, and granulated sugar together until no brown sugar lumps remain. Whisk in the egg and egg yolk. Finally, whisk in the vanilla extract. The mixture will be thin. Pour into dry ingredients and mix together with a large spoon or rubber spatula. The dough will be very soft, thick, and appear greasy. Fold in the chocolate chips. The chocolate chips may not stick to the dough because of the melted butter, but do your best to combine them.

Cover the dough tightly and chill in the refrigerator for at least 2–3 hours or up to 3 days. We highly recommend chilling the cookie dough overnight for less spreading.

Take the dough out of the refrigerator and allow it to slightly soften at room temperature for 10 minutes.

Preheat oven to 325°F. Line large baking sheets with parchment paper or silicone baking mats. Set aside.

Using a cookie scoop or tablespoon measuring spoon, measure 2 heaping tablespoons of dough for medium/large cookies. Roll into a ball, making sure the shape is taller rather than wide. Repeat with remaining dough.

Bake the cookies for 12–13 minutes or until the edges are very lightly browned. The centers will look very soft, but the cookies will continue to set as they cool. Cool on the baking sheet for 10 minutes. After 10 minutes transfer cookies to a wire rack to cool completely.

Cookies stay fresh covered at room temperature for up to 1 week.

Quote of the Week:

"You must be prepared to work always without applause."

~ Ernest Hemingway