



EAT AT HOME TONIGHT

101 *Simple* Busy-Family Recipes
for Your Slow Cooker, Sheet Pan,
Instant Pot®, and More

TIFFANY KING



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EAT AT HOME TONIGHT

101 Deliciously *Simple* Dinner Recipes
for Even the Busiest Family Schedule

TIFFANY KING



WATERBROOK

For Mom, for cooking more family dinners than can be counted. And for Dad, your presence at the end of the table and prayers at the beginning of the meal have shaped our family for the better.

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INTRODUCTION

I love dinnertime, but it's not always easy to pull off. Dinner comes with many challenges. From trying to cook while holding a cranky baby to figuring out how to prep a meal while simultaneously driving a preteen across town to soccer practice, this part of parenting stretches us and tempts us to throw in the towel on a homemade meal.

I've been gathering my family around the table since before our kids were born. When Jim and I married thirty years ago, we had dinner together each night. Meals were humble because we had no money and didn't really know how to cook. But those dinners laid the foundation of our marriage and family.

In the years since, I've cooked with babies on my hip, toddlers underfoot, and preschoolers who wanted to help. I've cooked for picky kids, juggled conflicting schedules, struggled in years when we lacked money, and learned to cook quickly in the years when I lacked time.

Most of those family dinners run together in my memory. There are very few that I have specific memories of, but they all worked together to build strong bonds among the six of us. Now

that my kids are all grown or nearly grown, we continue to see the benefits of all those dinners. We still start meals by holding hands and praying together. We still gather around the table. Sometimes there are only three of us there, but about once a week

we're able to get all eight of us together—including the spouses of our two oldest kids. The young married couples have continued the dinner tradition in their homes, too, building that habit with each other.

Despite the challenges, dinner offers benefits that no other hour can provide. In his bestselling book *The Five Love Languages*, Gary Chapman asserts that all of us have a primary love language, meaning we feel love best when it's expressed in one of five ways: quality time, physical touch, words of affirmation, acts of service, or gift giving. I think dinner is the only time during the day that we can hit all five love languages for our family members. Taking time together to sit and share with each other meets the love language of quality

time. Holding hands around the table while we pray provides physical touch. Conversation during the meal about how our days have gone is a foundation for us to give words of affirmation to each other. Cooking the meal, clearing the table after dinner, or offering to clean up are all acts of service. While gift giving might be a stretch during a regular dinner, making a favorite meal for a family member is a gift to that person.

Dinner together makes all of us feel love in the way we feel it best. And isn't showing love for each other one of the best ways to grow a strong family? There's something special about knowing we each have a place at the table. Seeing family members gathered at dinner provides a visual security of who each person is in the family and how they fit, both in the family and around the table.

Dinner also gives us a built-in opportunity to pray together as a family. There's something sacred about holding hands around the table and bowing our heads together. Even though on some nights, this is done quickly and maybe with little thought, it's such a special time together. Those few moments are a chance to practice gratefulness together as well as an opportunity to pray about things that weigh on our hearts.

My hope for you is that you will build the dinner habit into your family life so your connections with each other grow stronger. I can almost hear you saying, "But there are so many challenges that come with this! Sometimes it seems

our schedules and outside demands conspire against us." That's where this book comes in. Each chapter is designed to solve a different challenge you might face on any given night. From needing a one-pot meal because you lack time to do the dishes to being out of the house all day without time for cooking to only having fifteen minutes to pull dinner together, you'll find recipes that will fit your busy days.

Make this book your own by writing notes in it as you try the recipes. Jot down how your family liked each meal and any substitutions or changes you made or would like to make the next time you cook the recipe. Make notes on which meals worked well for after church on Sunday, or those for which you want to keep the ingredients on hand for quick meals when plan A falls through. If you live in a high-altitude area, you may need to make adjustments to baking and pressure-cooking times, so be sure to make note of those, too.

Dinner together can be hard. It involves teaching toddlers to sit at the table, convincing kids to try new foods, and much juggling of schedules to carve out time for a meal together. But when we build the habit of gathering around the table night after night, strong family bonds are forged. And the benefits of those bonds carry on to future generations in ways we may never know.

I ONLY HAVE 15 MINUTES TONIGHT

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I started creating recipes that could be finished in fifteen minutes when my oldest kids were teens. Life had suddenly gotten very busy, and I more often found myself in the car taxiing kids to practice than in the kitchen making dinner. All those hours of shuttling to and fro don't leave much time for dinner-making, or anything else.

I found we were often ravenous when we finally got home, and if I hadn't filled the slow cooker earlier in the day, it meant dinner would be a scramble. It didn't take me long to put creative juices to work figuring out shortcuts to quick meals.

A quarter of an hour isn't much time, but I promise you that with a little strategy and some quick work, you can get dinner on the table for your family faster than the time it would take to run through a drive-through. It will be a lot less expensive, too!

Don't miss the section on cooking chicken for the freezer on page 000. Having meat already cooked and in the freezer is key for fifteen-minute meals. I have included some recipes for meals that don't require cooked chicken, but your options increase if you've got some stashed and waiting for you.

I also recommend a sharp knife. This is essential for any kitchen, but it becomes really important when you're working in a time crunch. You need a tool that will work well for you, not one that will fight you with every cut.

The next time you find yourself rushing into the house with no time for dinner-making, try one of these recipes. They'll keep you and your family happy and keep you out of the fast-food places, too.

TIME SAVING TIP My favorite way to speed up meal prep is to keep frozen cooked chicken handy. See page 000 for tips on how to cook chicken for the freezer.

Creamy Chicken Florentine Quesadillas

Serves 6 to 8

Quesadillas are a quintessential back-pocket recipe you can pull out when a dinner emergency strikes. But as much as we all love Tex-Mex, it's nice to have a change of pace sometimes. One run-of-the-mill day, I came up with these Florentine-inspired quesadillas. They're stuffed with whatever chicken you have on hand (from the local rotisserie or from your freezer stash) and made healthier with plenty of spinach and artichoke hearts. Cream cheese and Parmesan create a melty inside to contrast with the crisped outside. You can tailor them to even the pickiest eaters (trust me, I have a few). If you have persnickety little ones, too, just pull out the artichoke hearts. And yes, you can keep those extra artichokes all to yourself!

- 1 (8-ounce) package cream cheese, at room temperature (see Note)
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 6 to 8 (8-inch) flour tortillas
- 3 cups chopped cooked chicken
- 1 (15-ounce) jar artichoke hearts, quartered
- 1 cup cherry tomatoes, or 1 large tomato, sliced
- 1 cup spinach
- ¼ cup shredded Parmesan cheese
- Olive oil

ALL-IS-NOT-LOST WORKAROUND

Forgot to let your cream cheese come to room temperature beforehand? No worries! Unwrap the block of cream cheese and place it on a microwave-safe plate. Microwave for 15 seconds. It should be soft enough that your finger leaves a slight print when you lightly press the top. Add 10 seconds, if needed.

In a small bowl, stir together the cream cheese and garlic powder. Spread the cream cheese mixture over the tortillas.

Heat a medium skillet over medium heat. Add enough oil to coat the bottom of the pan. Place a tortilla in the skillet and divide the chicken, artichoke hearts, tomatoes, spinach, and Parmesan among the tortillas, arranging the filling over one half of each tortilla. Fold the half without fillings over to make a half-moon shape. Cook until the tortilla is browned and crisp, then gently flip and cook until the second side is browned and crisp. Repeat with the remaining tortillas.

Enjoy them while they're hot!

White Garlic Chicken Flatbread

Serves 6

"White Garlic Chicken Flatbread" may not sound very exciting, but I promise this recipe will not leave you missing the tomato sauce, pepperoni, or sausage that typically come with pizzas and flatbreads. This recipe grabs your attention with garlic and pepper (don't worry—it's not *too* spicy!) and then mellows out the taste with creamy mozzarella cheese. And the best part? Only fifteen minutes, start to finish!

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- ½ cup diced onion
- 2 garlic cloves, crushed
- 2 tablespoons distilled white or cider vinegar
- 2 tablespoons soy sauce
- ⅓ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch
- 2½ cups shredded cooked chicken
- 6 mini naan, or 4 pita breads
- 2 cups shredded mozzarella cheese

Preheat the oven to 450°F.

In a large skillet, heat the olive oil over medium heat. Add the onion and garlic and cook, stirring, until the onion is soft, about 5 minutes. Stir the vinegar, soy sauce, cayenne, black pepper, cornstarch, and 1 tablespoon water together in a small bowl. Turn the heat off under the skillet and pour the vinegar mixture in with onion and garlic, stirring to combine. Add the chicken to the skillet, tossing to combine it with the sauce.

Arrange the naan in a single layer on a baking sheet. Divide the chicken among the naan and top each with the cheese, dividing it evenly. Bake for 7 to 8 minutes, until the cheese melts and begins to brown. Serve hot.



Chicken Enchilada Melt Subs

Serves 6

When I first got married, I didn't know how to cook at all. Jim and I would get together with another married couple on the weekends, and we'd cook together. My friend taught me how to make easy chicken enchiladas during one of those cooking sessions. It's a recipe I use to this day because it uses basic pantry ingredients, so I almost always have what I need on hand. That recipe is quick, but it requires time to bake the enchiladas. Enter this sandwich version, which has all the cheesy goodness of a chicken enchilada but fits in a fifteen-minute time crunch.

3 cups shredded cooked chicken
 1 (4-ounce) can diced green chiles,
 drained
 1 (8-ounce) can tomato sauce
 ½ teaspoon garlic powder
 Salt and black pepper
 2 cups shredded cheddar cheese
 6 sub rolls

Preheat the broiler.

In a large microwave-safe bowl, stir together the chicken, chiles, tomato sauce, and garlic powder and season with salt and pepper. Microwave the mixture for 2 minutes. Add 1 cup of the cheese and stir to combine.

Split the sub rolls horizontally and set them cut-side up on a baking sheet. Toast the buns under the broiler, watching closely so they don't burn. Set the top halves aside and divide the chicken enchilada filling evenly among the bottom bun halves. Top with the remaining 1 cup cheese.

Broil until the cheese has melted and the tops look toasty. Remove from the oven and place the top of the bun on each sandwich.

Memphis-Style BBQ Chicken Tacos with Coleslaw

Serves 6 to 8

Barbecue styles vary widely across the country. In Memphis, they use a dry rub and sometimes follow that up with a mop sauce. Even if you don't know exactly what that means, it sounds good! This recipe is a play on Memphis-style dry rub, only we're serving up this quick 'cue in corn tortillas, topped with creamy coleslaw. The mild spiciness of the chicken pairs perfectly with the slightly sweet crunch of the slaw. This is Taco Tuesday with a Tennessee twist!

1½ teaspoons paprika, preferably smoked paprika (but regular is fine)
¼ teaspoon black pepper
1½ teaspoons light brown sugar
¼ teaspoon salt
⅓ teaspoon cayenne pepper
¼ teaspoon garlic powder
¼ teaspoon dry mustard
4 cups shredded cooked chicken
1½ tablespoons cider vinegar

FOR THE COLESLAW

1 (16-ounce) bag coleslaw mix
½ cup mayonnaise
2 tablespoons granulated sugar
1 tablespoon cider vinegar
Salt and black pepper

12 to 16 corn tortillas, for serving

In a small bowl, stir together the paprika, black pepper, brown sugar, salt, cayenne, garlic powder, and mustard. Put the chicken in a large microwave-safe bowl, sprinkle the spice mixture over the chicken, and toss to coat. Add the vinegar and stir. Microwave the chicken for 45 seconds to 1 minute, until hot.

For the coleslaw, in a large bowl, stir together the coleslaw mix, mayonnaise, granulated sugar, and vinegar, season with salt and black pepper, and stir again until well combined.

To serve, warm the tortillas in a dry skillet over medium heat. Place ¼ cup of the chicken in each tortilla and top with the coleslaw.





Rustic Italian Sausage Soup

Serves 6

Soup doesn't have to be an all-day cooking affair. This recipe takes just fifteen minutes and makes a hearty, warm meal that's perfect for fall and winter. It relies heavily on pantry ingredients, so chances are you'll have what you need on hand. The soup is fabulous with warm rolls and a green salad.

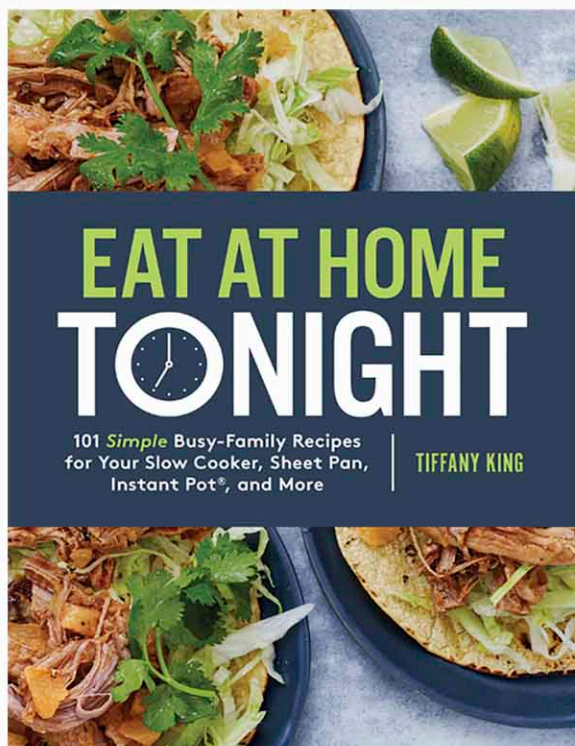
- 1 teaspoon olive oil
- 1 pound bulk mild Italian sausage
- 1 small onion, diced
- 1 garlic clove, crushed
- 1 (15-ounce) can butter beans with liquid
- 1 (15-ounce) can black beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 (15-ounce) can diced tomatoes
- 1 (15-ounce) can beef broth
- 1 teaspoon dried basil
- 2 cups coarsely chopped kale leaves
- ½ cup shaved or shredded Parmesan cheese (optional)

In a large soup pot, heat the olive oil over medium heat. Add the sausage, onion, and garlic and cook, breaking up the sausage with a wooden spoon as it cooks, until the sausage is browned. Add the beans, tomatoes with their juices, broth, basil, and kale. Cook the soup for 5 minutes, or until heated through.

Ladle into bowls and serve topped with the Parmesan, if desired.

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