

Feeding a Crowd



For many years I did cook for large groups of high school athletic boys, in addition to my family of 5. However, since we are now empty nesters, a meal may consist of cheese and crackers and a glass of wine. Funny how one adapts! But having a house full of guests this week, with healthy 25-26 year old young men, I am quickly reminded of how much they love to eat. Here are a few of my “go to” recipes for feeding a crowd.

Breakfast



Egg Casserole-a favorite

Generally, I like to do a breakfast spread that can stay out for a few hours to allow our guests to come in and eat when they want. This egg casserole is delicious either hot or cold.



Depending on the size of the piece, it can feed a lot of people. Since it is an easy recipe, it is generally served at our July 4th brunch and holiday weekends. See blog post and recipe [here](#).



We are also blessed with having a lot of oranges from the orchard. The trees need to be gleaned when the first orange blossoms occur. So there is a wheel barrow full of them and perfect for squeezing fresh orange juice~again something that can be made ahead of time. Or it's fun to engage your guests into squeezing the fruit too.



Best Nespresso machine EVER!

For beverages, everyone gets a quick tutorial on how to use the [Nespresso machine](#) so they can help themselves to coffee,

espresso or lattes in the morning. The coffee station has everything you need from German rock sugar to Torani flavored syrups. Coffee cups are handy and available.

Other Breakfast Ideas

Homemade granola (see recipe [here](#)).



My homemade granola

Quiche (use store bought pie crusts for extra ease).



Goat Cheese and Spinach Quiche

Breakfast pizza with store bought pizza dough (add bacon/sausage, eggs, cheese, herbs).



Breakfast Pizza

Lunch

Lunch has been relatively easy with this group of friends because they love Arizona tacos~something difficult to find in Washington, DC. Taco crawls to different places are a way to taste the authentic Mexican food which is abundant here.



Tacos!

But if I need to prepare something, I would suggest a sandwich bar with deli cuts of meat, lettuce, tomatoes, spreads (mustard, mayo, pickled onions) and a great bread or bun (or homemade sourdough bread)! A few bags of different chips and you are good to go.



Another easy solution is the heating up the pizzas I recently

found from Naples, Italy. They come directly from the source, packaged beautifully in quantities of 8 and a wonderful item to keep on hand in your freezer. Add some more toppings and 10-12 minutes in the oven and you have an authentic Italian 10" wood-fired pizza. I am getting ready to order another batch from Talia di Napoli. See resource [here](#).

Dinner



You can't go wrong with steaks on the grill and a big salad. I also just tried Rachel Ray's lemon smashed potatoes, which can be made ahead of time. Everyone said they were delicious as I could not indulge being on my Fast Metabolism diet. Here's the [recipe](#) and sorry, I failed to take any pictures of them.



One recipe that is simple to make and does feed a crowd is lasagna. Using store bought tomato sauce and oven-ready lasagna noodles (see [here](#)) helps with the quick preparation of this dish. The tomato sauce I always use is Rao's, if I don't have any homemade sauce available. You can find it at most grocery stores, Costco and on Amazon [here](#). It does not contain any sugar (check the label as most pasta sauces have lots of sugar).



What makes this recipe flexible is that you can make it with zucchini instead of pasta. Also, you can add beef, turkey or sausage if you like or not. I find it helpful to make a smaller casserole of vegetarian lasagna at the same time. Both freeze well too.

Lasagna, a big salad, garlic bread and a nice bottle of red wine and dinner is served.

Desserts



Whipping up a batch of chocolate chip cookies takes me approximately 17 minutes from start to finish. How do I know this?

While in high school, my son would ALWAYS ask me to make cookies. One night, I was very tired and getting ready to head to bed and he made another cookie inquiry. I suppose I could have said no, but I knew he had more studying to do. With his help, we made them together very quickly...about 17 minutes.

Having the ingredients on hand makes a difference! I sprinkle the top with Maldon smoked sea salt flakes for an extra flavor. You can source it [here](#).



Peach Crisp

Another easy dessert is a Fruit Crisp. Apples, pears, peaches, cherries...really any fruit works. With a crispy, oatmeal/brown sugar/butter topping, all you will need is a scoop of vanilla ice cream. [Here](#) is the recipe to my favorite peach crisp. Just substitute another fruit and double the recipe if you are serving many.

Hopefully with the world opening up you will be entertaining with lots of people soon. Fresh food sources are the key to making great food! Do you have any tried and true recipes for feeding a crowd? If so, please do share.

Have a wonderful Wednesday!

Mary

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Mary's Lasagna

This recipe is so flexible~add turkey, beef, sausage if you want or substitute the noodles for zucchini

- 1 large jar Rao's Homemade Marinara or any flavor you like
- 1 box oven ready lasagna noodles
- 1 cup grated whole-milk low moisture mozzarella ((can use pre-shredded))
- 1/2 cup grated Romano (or Parmesan) ((can use pre-shredded))
- olive oil for baking dish
- 4 Tbsp thinly sliced fresh basil leaves

For the Filling

- 16 oz ricotta cheese (whole or skim milk)
- 1/2 cup shredded whole milk low-moisture mozzarella ((can use pre-shredded))
- 1/2 cup grated Romano cheese (can use Parmesan)
- 1/4 cup finely chopped fresh basil leaves
- 2 cloves garlic (minced)
- 1 tsp finely grated lemon zest
- 1 large egg
- freshly ground pepper

For the Filling

1. Stir all the filling ingredients together in a large bowl.

To Assemble

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees F. Mix the remaining mozzarella and Romano together in a medium bowl. Set

aside.

2. Lightly coat a 9 x 13 inch baking dish with oil.
3. Spoon enough tomato sauce in the bottom of the dish to thinly coat. Add the manufacturer's suggested amount of water for the oven-ready lasagna noodles. I add 1/2 cup.
4. Arrange the noodles in rows down the length of the dish. There may be a bit of space but that is okay. Dot half of the filling mixture and carefully spread it over the noodles in a thin layer. Sprinkle with 1 tablespoon of the basil, then top with sauce (approximately 3/4 cup).

If you'd like to add sprinkle some mozzarella and Romano cheese too, that's fine

5. Repeat with another layer of noodles, filling, basil and sauce and some cheese.
6. Finish with a layer of noodles and add more sauce. Top the casserole with the Mozzarella and Romano cheeses. Cover tightly with foil (and remove foil 10 minutes before final baking time).
7. Place the baking dish on a baking sheet. Bake until bubbly and golden-brown, 40 to 50 minutes. Let cool 10 minutes, and then sprinkle with the remaining basil.

Notes: If you want to add meat (ground turkey/beef), sauté onions and garlic in olive oil until softened. Add meat and brown. Season with salt, pepper, garlic powder and other seasonings you enjoy. Drain off any excess fluid. Add the meat between the noodle layers. Or cooked up a bit of spicy Italian sausage and add.

If you would like to substitute zucchini for the pasta noodles, thinly slice the zucchini lengthwise. Line zucchini in a colander and sprinkle with salt. The salt will draw out

the moisture. Let sit for 15 minutes to drain. Blot moisture off the zucchini and then arrange the zucchini in rows down the length of the dish. I use a mandoline slicer to make sure my zucchini are about 1/4 inch thick.

If you have more ingredients, I tend to make more layers, depending on the size of my baking dish.

P.S. Just a reminder that any words that are italicized bring you to the source. If it is a product on Amazon, please note that I am an Amazon Affiliate. If you purchase something through my website, I receive a small (very small!) stipend, which doesn't affect the price you pay at all. My goal is to make sourcing the items easy for you. Thank you for your continued support.