



Enlightened Organizing

Monthly Newsletter August 2007

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This month, we will discuss different ways to improve your dinner meal despite our busy lives.

I hope you are Enlightened by our newsletter!

Feel free to pass it on to your friends and family! Any feedback would be greatly appreciated!

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Quote of the Month

Bread can be refrigerated, it helps delay mold growth! Make sure it is tightly tied to help reduce staleness.

Look For Me!

Check out **New Homes Directory** Magazine July / August issue!

I will be featured in a Kitchen organizing article!

Dinnertime was a struggle last year with the children's evening activities. Between religious, swimming and dance classes, it was a balancing act to make sure each meal was healthy and on the table quickly. So, I decided to experiment with different meal options.

The first option I tried was cooking 30-45 minute meals which included low fat meats, veggies (frozen or fresh), a salad and maybe a rice or starch. This system included different NO M.S.G. spice mixes that I would purchase, like Poultry Magic, and place on the meat for flavor. The veggies were seasoned with salt & olive oil usually. For additional meal ideas, check out 30 Minute Meals with Rachel Ray on Saturdays, 11:00am on the Food Network.

The second option was something new to me. It was called "Once a month (Freezer) cooking". Below is the book I used to make my first series of meals. It involved cooking recipes for 2 weeks or 1 month all in one day ("the cooking day") and freezing the meals for future days. I usually prepare 2 week meals which ends up to last our family of 4 about 20+ meals because some of the dishes are larger and can be used for leftover meals. There is an upfront cost but in the long run, I saved money because I did not over spend at the grocery store. I also reduced the number of trips to the grocery store. I am on my second set of freezer recipes and noticed the process is getting easier to handle.

The third option was "Weekly" cooking. Last year, I tried cooking 3 meals on Sunday afternoon for the next week. For the remainder of the week, one day was for leftovers and Friday was usually pizza. This involved going to the grocery store each week to buy what I needed for the next week's recipes.

The fourth option was buying some prepared meals or making them at a location nearby and then freezing them for the week(s). The Food Experience (www.thefoodexperience.net) and Supper Thyme (www.supperthymeusa.com) are two places in the area. You can go there and prepare the meals and bring them home for freezing or you can have the completed meals delivered to you without doing the prep work. This is great for people who do not like to or do not have the time to cook.

The fifth option was to prepare meals with similar items for the week. Quick Fix Meals with Robin Miller at Saturday 10am on the Food Network discusses ways to prepare meals ahead of time by using similar ingredients.

To make these systems work more efficiently, here are some simple tips to help the chef cook quicker.

1. Move spices, seasonings, oils, marinades closer to the cooking area.
2. Make sure the work space is clear of clutter. Only leave out what you need for the meals you are preparing.
3. Organize your pantry, cabinets, freezer and refrigerator into categories like canned veggies, cereals, canned beans, grains/pasta, meats (turkey, chicken, fish, beef, pork) and dairy.
4. Plan, Plan, Plan—set a menu for the week or weeks ahead by using a hanging kitchen calendar. Write the main course & side dishes for each day.

A mixture of these options may work for you depending on your week's activities. If you have any other cooking ideas or have any comments, feel free to contact me. I am always looking for different meal options.

Enjoy Your Mealttime!

Sabrina Quairolì

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Product of the Month

If you are interested in Once-a-month cooking, check out Mimi Wilson & Mary Beth Lagerborg's "Once-a-month Cooking". You can purchase it through any bookstore. It gives you step by step instructions on how to do this type of cooking. I did notice that I needed to purchase a couple more needed items that were not on the ingredient list to complete some of the recipes.

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