

No Time to Cook? Quick & Tasty Meals from a Mix

Packaged convenience mixes like Au Gratin Potatoes, Macaroni & Cheese, or flavored rice and pasta – have been part of American cooking for years. These mixes, originally marketed as side dishes, can easily be turned into healthy, satisfying, plant-based meals. You can save time, and still maximize your health.

Maximize Health with Minimal Work

Packaged mixes and soups are often high in sodium and fat. There are easy ways to reduce the sodium and fat content of the finished product without greatly altering taste. The table below shows examples of how to make these alterations.

If you're cooking for one or two, use these ideas to cook once, and eat twice!

Packaged Mix	Changes	Additions
Macaroni & Cheese	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce added margarine by ½ or omit • Use low fat or fat-free milk • Add extra macaroni when cooking the macaroni • Choose Option A or B 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cook ½ c. additional macaroni <p><u>Option A: Add the following</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1-2 c. cooked green vegetables • water-packed tuna or salmon, cooked chicken <p><u>Option B: Add the following:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 c. canned tomatoes, drained • ½ # lean ground beef, browned • 1 t. chili powder
Seasoned Rice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce added margarine by ½ or omit • Omit seasoning packet and add your own herbs and spices (i.e., garlic powder, cilantro, basil, oregano) • Add extra regular rice to cook; or prepare instant rice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ¼ c. rice plus ½ c. water or ½ c. rice plus 1 c. water <p><u>Then add 1 or more of following:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 c. red or black beans, drained and rinsed • 1 c. cooked chicken or ham • ½ c. sliced celery • ½ c. green pepper, chopped • 1 c. canned tomatoes, drained • ¼ c. shredded sharp cheese
Noodles in Sauce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce added margarine by ½ or omit • Use low fat or fat-free milk • Cook extra noodles to combine with the noodles in the mix 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In separate pan, cook 1 c. noodles, drain <p><u>Then add 1 or more of following:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1-2 c. cooked green peas or broccoli • 1 can water-packed tuna, drained or 1 c. cooked chicken • 1 hard boiled egg, chopped • ¼ c. shredded sharp cheese

Packaged Mix	Changes	Additions
Scalloped & Au Gratin Potatoes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce margarine by half • Use low fat or fat-free milk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Stove-top method</u> – add extra medium potato-cooked and sliced. Add extra potato when stirring in milk (microwave a potato while dry potatoes from mix simmer) <p><u>Then add 1 or more of following:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 c. green vegetables • 1 c. chopped ham, chicken or turkey • 2 T. diced red or green pepper
Canned Bean Soup		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add can of white or red beans, drained and rinsed • ½ c. water
Canned Cream of Potato Soup		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 can of creamed corn • 1 cup skim milk <p><u>Then add 1 or more of following:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ½ c. sliced celery (cook in microwave) • ½ t. dry minced onion • ½ c. grated carrots (cook in microwave) • Garnish each bowl with fat-free cheese
Bread Stuffing Mixes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce margarine by half or omit • Use low-salt chicken broth or salt-free homemade chicken broth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add 1-2 cups extra dry bread crumbs (use blender to make dry bread crumbs) • Add extra spices and herbs if desired (i.e. garlic, onion powder, sage, thyme)

Putting It All Together for Better Nutrition.

Round out your meal with additional fruits and vegetables, and whole grains. Fruits and vegetables are heart-healthy, fat-free foods, and contain important phytochemicals that reduce our risk for cancer. Put more “color” in your meals by eating a variety of fruits and vegetables. Top off your meal with a glass of milk.....we never outgrow our need for milk and all its wonderful nutrients.

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