

Fast and Fabulous Meals for Families from Tonja's Table

Recipes, Tips, and Strategies for Making Mealtime Matter



A special gift from 1 Corinthians 13 Parent team member Tonja Engen and Tonja's Table!

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Mealtime Makes a Difference

Top 10 Benefits of Family Meals

- 1.** Kids who share at least four meals with their families do better on achievement tests than those who eat three or fewer meals with their families.
- 2.** Frequent family meals are associated with a lower risk of smoking, drinking, and using drugs. (Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine, 2004).
- 3.** Family dinners have positive effects on children's social development, and sense of connection with their parents and siblings. Eating together provides time that kids can count on spending with their parents. What's more, kids treasure that time with their families-even if they don't show it.
- 4.** Kids who eat most often with their parents are 40% more likely to get mainly A's and B's in school than kids who have two or fewer family dinners a week. (National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University)
- 5.** Teens who eat more meals with their families are less likely to be depressed or suicidal.
- 6.** Eating more meals together also results in teens' being more motivated to learn.
- 7.** Adolescent girls who have frequent family meals with a positive atmosphere during those meals are less likely to have eating disorders. (University of Minnesota, 2004.)
- 8.** Teens who share more family meals experience better relationships with their families and friends. Eating together as a family can make a big difference for your kids in terms of self-image, sense of security, self-esteem and overall sense of happiness.
- 9.** Some pediatricians and psychologists believe family dinners are the number one thing you can do to keep your child healthy. Even over bike helmets, car seats, or immunizations. The point is that making the effort to be relational goes a long way.
- 10.** Regular family meals are probably the best psychological "daily vitamin" parents can give their children. Spending time with our kids listening, looking them in the eye and caring about what they have to say.

You can find more about the benefits of family mealtime and additional recipes at 1Corinthinas13Parenting.com.

Tonja's Tips for Making Mealtime a Positive Experience

The Ground Rules

- Turn off the TV.
- Put away the cell phones so you can concentrate on family, not distractions.
- Start with a prayer. Bless the family, the meal, the cook, and the helpers.
- Be a good listener. This is not a time to be critical. Focus on the children's interests and what's happening in their world rather than every nuance of the day. Save the discussions of homework and messy bedrooms for another time. The main point is conversation.
- Treat each other with respect and affection.
- Let the little things ride. Who cares if toddler is bouncing around at the table or someone spills?
- Prepare dinner ahead of time.
- Make it as relaxing as possible.
- Even if you can't do it every night, it's worth rearranging the schedule so that some nights everyone can eat together.

Mealtime can be the anchor everyone needs to refocus, recharge, and relax. It also may be the first time that day we really get a chance to look our children in the eye and engage in conversation.

Meal Prep Tips from Tonja's Kitchen

Prepare as much of dinner as you can ahead of time. Make-ahead dinners are my favorite and much less stress.

- Teach kids responsibility by helping set the table and even assisting to cook the meal.
- Serve dessert! Kids are likely to linger if you have dessert
- When you can't sit down for dinner do a "dessert nightcap" or do breakfast as a family instead of dinner.



Recipes from Tonja's Table

Crockpot Chicken & Dumplings

4 skinless, boneless chicken breasts
2 T. butter
2 cans cream of chicken soup
2 T chicken base
1 tsp. salt
1 tsp. pepper
1 onion, finely diced
1 (10 oz.) package of biscuits, torn into pieces.

Place the chicken, butter, soup, chicken base, salt, and pepper in a slow cooker. Fill with enough water to cover chicken breasts. Cover and cook for 5-6 hours on high. Place the torn biscuits over the chicken and cook until biscuits are cooked through 30-45 minutes before you are ready to eat.

Zesty Slow Cooker Chicken Barbecue

6 frozen skinless, boneless chicken breasts
1 (12 ounce) bottle barbecue sauce
½ cup Kraft Zesty Italian salad dressing
¼ cup brown sugar
2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
salt
pepper
hamburger buns

Place chicken in a slow cooker. Season with salt and pepper. In a bowl, mix the barbecue sauce, Italian salad dressing, brown sugar, and Worcestershire sauce. Pour over the chicken. Cover and cook 3 to 4 hours on high OR 6 to 8 hours on low. Shred the chicken and put back on low in the slow cooker. Serve on top of your favorite buns or hoagies.

Crockpot Steak Carnitas Tacos

From Tonja's Table

Spice Rub

1 T chili powder
2 tsp. cumin
½ tsp. onion powder
½ tsp. garlic powder
¼ tsp. cayenne pepper or more to taste
1 tsp. salt
½ tsp. black pepper
2 lbs. flank steak
1 yellow onion, chopped
1 jalapeno, seeded and chopped

Serve with: corn or flour tortillas
shredded cabbage
grated cheese
sour cream
taco sauce

Mix all of the spices together in a small bowl for the spice rub. Rub the spices into each side of the steak, using all of the mixture. Place the steak in the bottom of the crockpot. Place the chopped onion and jalapeno on top of the steak. Cook for on low for 7-8 hours or high for 4-5. Remove the steak from the crockpot and shred with two forks. Serve immediately or return to the crockpot for a few hours until you are ready to eat. Serve on tortillas with your favorite topping.

Jamaican Beef Pies

From Tonja's Table

2 tsp. vegetable oil
1 onion, finely chopped
2 tsp. curry powder
1 lb. lean ground beef
½ tsp. dried thyme
¼ tsp. ground allspice
1 tsp. salt
½ tsp. pepper
½ cup beef broth
½ cup dried bread crumbs
2 packages puff pastry
1 egg, lightly beaten

Preheat oven to 400°. Heat oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium heat. Add onion and cook, stirring occasionally, for 5 minutes. Add curry powder, cook 1 minute. Stir in ground beef, thyme, allspice, salt, and pepper. Cook 5 minutes, breaking meat apart with a wooden spoon. Stir in broth and bread crumbs. Cook 2 minutes. Remove from heat.

Unroll puff pastry dough. Roll out slightly. Cut each piece vertically for a total of 4 vertical strips. Place ¾ cup of filling on one-half of one piece. Fold dough over to enclose filling. Press edges to seal, using a fork. Transfer to a large baking sheet and brush with a little of the egg wash. Repeat with all the pieces of dough. Bake at 400° for 15 minutes. Cut into triangles and serve.

Stromboli

From Tonja's Table

1 loaf pizza dough (Trader Joe's)
6 oz. (1 package) sliced pepperoni (Trader Joe's)
1 10 oz. container pizza sauce (Trader Joe's)
2 oz. sliced provolone cheese
½ cup shredded mozzarella cheese
¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese
1 tsp. Italian seasoning
1 egg yolk, lightly beaten

Preheat oven to 375°. Roll out pizza dough into a rectangular shape. Spread desired amount of pizza sauce over the dough leaving a 2-inch border. Arrange pepperoni and provolone cheese over the pizza dough. Sprinkle each with the mozzarella cheese, Parmesan cheese, and Italian seasoning. Roll up rectangle jellyroll style, beginning with the long side. Pinch the ends of the dough together when finished rolling (much like rolling cinnamon rolls). Place on a cookie sheet lined with tin foil or parchment paper that has been sprayed with a non-stick cooking spray. Seal seams and ends. Place seam-side down on baking sheet. Brush with egg yolk and sprinkle with additional Italian seasoning. Bake at 375° for 20-30 minutes or until golden brown. Let stand for 5 minutes before slicing. Make ahead! Prepare Stromboli according to above but do not egg wash. Cover with plastic wrap and tin foil. Freeze until ready to bake.

Basil Pesto Chicken

From Tonja's Table

2-14 oz. packages chicken tenders
salt
pepper
Cayenne pepper
cooking spray
1 cup basil pesto (I used my homemade basil pesto, but you can use any pesto you have.)
1 cup grated mozzarella cheese
4 oz. cream cheese
½ cup chicken broth
3 Roma tomatoes, sliced

Preheat oven to 350°. Season the chicken with salt, pepper, and cayenne pepper as desired. Spray a 9"x 12" baking dish with non-stick spray. Lay chicken tenders over the bottom. Heat a large skillet over medium heat. Add the pesto and chicken broth to the skillet. Stir to combine and allow it to come to a simmer. Add the cream cheese in chunks and whisk it into the hot liquid until a smooth sauce forms. Pour the pesto mixture over the chicken tenders and top with mozzarella cheese. Cover the baking dish with aluminum foil and bake the chicken 20 minutes. Remove the foil and top with Roma tomatoes. Put dish back into the oven without foil and cook 5-10 minutes more, just until the cheese is melted. Serve hot.
(Recipe can be doubled.)

Chicken Fried Rice With Veggies

From Tonja's Table

Chicken marinade: 1 T. cornstarch
4 T. soy sauce
1 T. Mirin
1 T. Sriracha

Stir fry: 1 pound chicken, about 2-3 chicken breasts.
5-6 cups cooked rice (2 cups unprepared)
2 Tbls. sesame oil
1 yellow onion, chopped
3 carrots, peeled and diced (or one bag frozen peas and carrots)
1 cup frozen peas
½ cup soy sauce (more or less to taste)
2 eggs

Slice chicken into bite size pieces and place in mixing bowl. Mix soy sauce, Mirin, and Sriracha together in a small bowl. Add cornstarch and mix thoroughly. Pour this mixture over chicken and let marinade 10-15 minutes.

Preheat a large skillet or wok to high heat. Pour 1 T. sesame oil in the bottom. Add half the chicken and stir fry 4-6 minutes or until cooked through. Repeat process with last batch of chicken. Remove from wok and set aside.

Pour 1T. of sesame oil in wok or skillet. Add onion and carrots and stir until tender, 5-8 minutes. Add peas and cook another 2 minutes. Crack eggs into wok and scramble, mixing throughout the vegetables.

Add the rice and chicken to the veggie and egg mixture. Pour the soy sauce on top. Stir and fry the rice and veggie mixture until heated through and combined.

Best Chicken Chili Ever

From Tonja's Table

2 T. olive oil
1 lb. boneless skinless chicken breast, cut into cubes
1 onion, chopped
1 packet chili seasoning
1 can Rotel tomatoes
1 28-oz can of tomato sauce
1 or 2 can black beans
1 can chili beans
1 beer (I buy the seasonal Oktoberfest.)

Sauté the chicken in a Dutch oven with olive oil over medium-high heat until cooked through. Remove chicken to plate. Pour another tablespoon of olive oil and add onion and cook until soft, 5-10 minutes. Add chili seasoning and mix. Add chicken back in along with Rotel tomatoes, beans, tomato sauce, and beer. Simmer for 30-45 minutes to let flavors blend. Serve with cheese, sour cream, and green onions.

Rotini Con-Pollo

From Tonja's Table

(Chicken With Sun-Dried Tomatoes & Roasted Garlic Cream Sauce)

4 T. olive oil
1 pkg. chicken breasts, sliced very thin
5 T. Italian seasoning
1 cup onion, chopped
4 oz. sun-dried tomatoes
1 head of roasted garlic
3 cups chicken stock
1 cup cream or half & half
½ cup Parmesan Reggiano
3 T. parsley
salt and pepper
1 box of rotini or penne noodles

Slice the top off the garlic, drizzle with olive oil, wrap in tin foil and cook for one hour at 375°. In the meantime, slice the chicken very thin and put in a bowl with 2 T olive oil and Italian seasoning. (Cut the chicken semi-frozen it's much easier). Marinate for at least an hour. Heat 2 more T. of olive oil in a pan over med-high heat and sear chicken until cooked through, 8-10 minutes. Remove chicken from pan and set aside. Add onion to oil and cook over medium heat until translucent. Then add the sun-dried tomatoes, chicken, parsley, and roasted garlic. Cook until mixed well together, 3-4 minutes. Add chicken stock and boil over medium-high heat until stock cooks down, approximately 5-10 minutes. Add cream and cook down 5-10 minutes. Salt and pepper to taste. Toss in cooked noodles and top with Parmesan cheese to finish.

Chicken Gruyere Turnovers

From Tonja's Table

1½ cups shredded rotisserie chicken
1½ cups grated Gruyère
1 cup frozen peas or vegetable of your choice
2 sheets (one 17.25-ounce package) frozen puff pastry, thawed
1 large egg, beaten
1/4 cup Dijon mustard (optional for serving)

Heat oven to 400°. In a medium bowl, combine the chicken, Gruyère chesse, and peas. Cut the two sheets of puff pastry in half to form four rectangles and place on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper. Dividing evenly, top half of each rectangle with the chicken mixture. Fold over and seal the turnovers; brush the tops with the egg. Bake until golden, 20 to 25 minutes. Serve with the mustard, or drizzle with Béchamel sauce.

Two-for-One Dinner

Cola-Braised Beef with Rosemary (Day 1)

From Tonja's Table

4½ pound boneless chuck roast
3½ teaspoons kosher salt, divided
2 teaspoons freshly ground black pepper
2 tablespoons minced garlic
2 teaspoons minced fresh rosemary leaves
2 cups beef stock or low-sodium canned beef broth
2 tablespoons vegetable oil
12 ounces cola soda
2 tablespoons tomato paste
2½ tablespoons flour

Preheat the oven to 325°.

Season the roast well on all sides with 2 teaspoons of the salt and the pepper. On a cutting board combine the remaining salt, minced garlic, and rosemary. Using the side of a knife, mash against the board repeatedly to form a paste. Using a small paring knife, make thin slits into the roast on all sides, about 2 inches apart, and fill the holes with the garlic-rosemary paste. Repeat until you have used all of the paste.

Heat a Dutch oven over high heat and add the oil. When the oil is hot, add the roast and cook until very well browned on all sides, 10 to 12 minutes. Add the beef stock and cola and bring to a boil, scraping the bottom of the pan with a wooden spoon to release any browned bits. Add the tomato paste and stir to blend.

The liquid should be about half way up the sides of the roast. Cover the Dutch oven, place in oven, and roast until the meat is fork-tender, about 3 1/2 hours, turning the meat every hour and adding extra water if necessary to keep the liquid level at about 1/3 up the sides of the roast.

When the meat is fork-tender, remove the roast from the oven and transfer the roast to a serving platter. Cover loosely to keep warm.

Reserve ½ cup of the liquid in a small bowl and add the flour. Stir to make a smooth paste.

Slowly whisk this mixture into the hot cooking liquid that remains in the Dutch oven and place over high heat on the stovetop. Cook, whisking frequently, until mixture comes to a boil and thickens, about 5-10 minutes. Turn down to simmer until ready to serve. Taste and adjust seasoning if necessary.

Slice the braised beef and pour gravy over the top. Serve with mashed potatoes.

Two-for-One Dinner

Braised Beef Ragu With Pappardelle (Day 2)

leftover braised beef
1-15 oz. can chopped tomatoes
1 6-oz can tomato paste
1 cup beef stock
½ cup full-bodied red wine
2 cups grated Parmesan cheese
1 package Pappardelle noodles

Place a large skillet or Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Add leftover braised Beef and chopped tomatoes, shredding the meat as it heats. Next, add tomato paste, beef stock, and wine. Bring to a boil and simmer until sauce cooks down and flavors meld, 30-45 minutes. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

While sauce is cooking, boil Pappardelle according to directions.
Add noodles and Parmesan cheese to sauce. Serve with crusty bread and salad.

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