

Step-by-Step Pasta Dinner

Pinching pennies? Make it a pasta night!

Pasta is a budget-friendly way to choose whole grain. Choose ingredients from the chart below to make a meal for four. Then, follow the step-by-step directions and review the chef's notes.

Pasta (½ pound)	+	Protein	+	Veggies (2 cups total, any combo)	+	Sauce (1–2 cups)	+	Seasonings (Optional, to taste)
Whole grain pasta		Lean ground beef, turkey, or chicken, cooked and drained (1 pound)		Spinach, chard, or kale		Marinara		Dried basil
Brown rice pasta		Extra-firm tofu, drained and crumbled (14-ounce package)		Broccoli		Peanut Sauce		Dried oregano
		Beans, rinsed and drained (1 can or 2 cups cooked)		Carrots		Canned diced or crushed tomatoes		Garlic powder or minced fresh garlic
		Frozen peas or edamame (soy beans), thawed and drained (2 cups)		Sugar snap or snow peas		Quick Cheese Sauce (recipe on page 75)		
		Chicken or turkey sausage, cooked and sliced (1 pound)		Zucchini or yellow squash		Simple White Sauce (recipe on page 75)		

Directions

1. Cook pasta according to package directions. In a colander, drain pasta.
2. Cook protein as needed. If using, add optional fresh garlic during the last minute of cooking time.
3. Cook veggies by steaming, grilling, roasting, sauteing, or adding to boiling pasta water during the last few minutes of cooking. See Veggies Three Ways (page 25) for other tips.
4. In a large pot over medium heat, heat sauce. If using, add optional spices now. Add protein and veggies to heat through. Toss with hot cooked pasta and serve.

Chef's Notes

- New to whole grain pasta? Start with a whole grain blend. Once you are used to the taste, switch to 100% whole wheat pasta.
- Use ground meat that is 93% lean or leaner. Drain excess fat from meat after cooking.



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Try these combos!

Peanut Noodles

Whole grain spaghetti + tofu + sugar snap peas + carrots + peanut sauce

Summer Pasta Primavera

Whole grain pasta + diced tomatoes + cannellini beans + zucchini + garlic

Spaghetti and Meat Sauce

Whole grain pasta + lean ground beef + broccoli + marinara sauce + dried basil + dried oregano + garlic



Sauce Recipes

Simple White Sauce

1. In a small bowl, use a fork to whisk together 2 Tablespoons cornstarch and 1 cup nonfat or low-fat milk until smooth.
2. In a large saucepan over medium heat, add milk mixture. Cook until thickened, stirring constantly, about 5 minutes.
3. Stir in 2 teaspoons mustard. Season with dried or fresh herbs as you like, such as basil, parsley, or dill. Start with $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon and add to your taste.
4. Remove from heat. Add salt and pepper to taste. Serve hot.

Quick Cheese Sauce

1. Grate 2 ounces low-fat cheddar cheese.
2. Follow instructions for Simple White Sauce above. In step 3, stir in cheese along with the mustard and seasonings, until melted.



Super Salads

Load up on veggies with a tasty salad.

Serve a small salad before dinner. Or, add protein to make a quick and tasty weeknight meal. Add ingredients from each column to make a salad for four.

Greens (4 cups)	+	Veggies (1-2 cups total, any combo)	+	Optional Protein (2 cups)	+	Optional Add-Ins (½ cup)	+	Salad Dressing (¼ cup, recipes on page 77)
Leaf lettuce		Raw beets or carrots, peeled and shredded		Canned beans, rinsed and drained		Toasted nuts or seeds, chopped or sliced		Oil and vinegar
Spinach		Broccoli or cauliflower, chopped		Hard-boiled eggs, chopped		Cheese, shredded or crumbled		Honey mustard
Romaine lettuce		Cucumber, chopped or sliced		Roasted chicken, turkey, beef, or pork, shredded or sliced		Cooked barley, brown rice, or whole grain pasta		Citrus dressing
Mixed salad greens		Tomatoes, diced (canned or fresh)		Extra-firm tofu, crumbled and drained		Olives, sliced		Balsamic vinaigrette
		Corn kernels or peas (fresh or frozen, thawed)		Frozen peas or edamame (soy beans), thawed and drained		Orange or grapefruit, cut into segments		Low-fat ranch
		Radishes, sliced				Whole grain croutons		
		Bell pepper, chopped				Dried fruit		

Try these combos!

Simple Spinach Salad

Spinach + shredded carrots + hard-boiled eggs + honey mustard dressing

Winter Salad

Mixed salad greens + shredded beets + grapefruit or orange segments + citrus dressing

Fast Southwestern Dinner Salad

Romaine lettuce + corn + diced tomatoes + black beans + cooked and chilled brown rice + shredded cheddar + sliced olives + citrus dressing with a pinch of chili powder



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Dress foods up with homemade salad dressing.

Make salad dressing just the way you like it with a few basic items.

Follow this ratio:

- 2 parts olive or canola oil
- 1 part acid, such as vinegar, lemon or lime juice, or Dijon mustard
- Salt and pepper

Chef's Notes:

- For a thinner Ranch dressing, use more vinegar. For a thicker Ranch, good for cut-up veggies, use less.
- You can use milk instead of vinegar in the Ranch if you prefer.
- Different ratios of oil to vinegar will change the taste of your vinaigrette and adding ingredients such as honey or mustard may impact the amount of oil needed. Experiment to find the right ratio for your tastes.

Simple Salad Dressing	Honey Mustard	Citrus Dressing	Balsamic Vinaigrette	Creamy Low-Fat Ranch Dressing
3 Tablespoons oil 2 Tablespoons red wine vinegar 1 teaspoon salt ¼ teaspoon pepper	6 Tablespoons mustard ½ Tablespoon fresh lemon juice or cider vinegar 1 ½ Tablespoons honey 1 teaspoon oil Salt and pepper to taste	2 Tablespoons lime, lemon, or orange juice 3-4 Tablespoons oil Salt and pepper to taste	2 Tablespoons balsamic vinegar 1 Tablespoon Dijon mustard 3-4 Tablespoons oil Salt and pepper to taste	1 (6-ounce) container plain nonfat or low-fat yogurt ⅓ cup low-fat mayonnaise 2 Tablespoons white vinegar 1 Tablespoon dried dill ¼ teaspoon garlic powder ⅛ teaspoon salt

Step-by-Step Stir-Fry

Want a quick and healthy weeknight meal?
Try a stir-fry!

Stir-fries are a great way to use up veggies that may soon go bad. Choose ingredients and follow the directions below to make a tasty meal for four.

Veggies (2–3 cups total, any combo)	+	Protein	+	Optional Flavoring (1 Tablespoon)	+	Sauce (1 recipe batch, see page 79)	+	Grain (1 cup dry)
Bell pepper, sliced		Boneless, skinless chicken breasts or thighs, trimmed and cut into bite-size pieces (1 pound)		Minced garlic		Peanut Sauce		Brown rice
Carrots or celery, sliced		Sirloin or flank steak, trimmed and cut into bite-size pieces (1 pound)		Minced ginger (or ½ teaspoon ground ginger)		Spicy Soy Sauce		Whole grain couscous
Snow peas, sugar snap peas, or green beans, trimmed		Pork tenderloin or boneless loin chops, trimmed and cut into bite-size pieces (1 pound)				Lemon Stir-Fry Sauce		Instant barley
Broccoli or cauliflower florets		Extra-firm tofu, drained and cut into 1-inch cubes (14-ounce package)						Rice noodles or whole grain pasta
Mushrooms or onion, sliced		Frozen edamame (soy beans), thawed and drained (2 cups)						
Zucchini or yellow squash, sliced								
Cabbage, thinly sliced								
Canned water chestnuts, rinsed and drained								



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Try these sauces!

Peanut Sauce

In a small bowl, stir together $\frac{1}{4}$ cup peanut butter, $\frac{1}{3}$ cup warm water, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup low-sodium soy sauce, 2 Tablespoons cider vinegar, and 1 Tablespoon sugar.

Spicy Soy Sauce

In a small bowl, stir together $\frac{1}{4}$ cup low-sodium soy sauce, 1 Tablespoon brown sugar, 1 Tablespoon cornstarch, 1 teaspoon minced jalapeno, and $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon ground ginger.

Lemon Stir-Fry Sauce

In a small bowl, stir together 3 Tablespoons lemon juice, 3 Tablespoons low-sodium soy sauce, and 2 teaspoons cornstarch.

Directions

If using meat or poultry as your protein:

1. Cook grains following package directions. While grains cook, make stir-fry.
2. In a large skillet over medium-high heat, heat 1 Tablespoon canola oil. Add meat or poultry. Stir occasionally until just cooked through, about 4–6 minutes. Transfer to a plate.
3. Add veggies to skillet. Start with harder veggies first (e.g., green beans, onion, carrots, broccoli, cauliflower). As they begin to soften, add softer veggies (e.g., zucchini, yellow squash) and keep cooking. Total cooking time may be about 10 minutes.
4. If using garlic and/or ginger, add to skillet when all veggies are soft. Stir until fragrant, about 15 seconds.
5. If using peanut sauce or other thick sauce, remove pan from heat and stir in sauce. If using Spicy Soy Sauce, Lemon Stir-Fry Sauce, or other thin sauce, add to pan and bring to a boil. Cook until thickened, about 1–2 minutes.
6. Stir cooked meat or poultry into veggie mixture. Serve stir-fry over cooked grains.

If using tofu or edamame as your protein:

- Follow directions above, omitting step 2. Add tofu or edamame in step 3, during the last 3–5 minutes of vegetable cooking time. Heat through.



Make Your Own Muffins

Muffins make a great grab-and-go breakfast or snack.

Make a large batch on a day you have some extra time. Then pull one out to take on the go! Follow these steps to make 12 muffins.

1. Preheat oven to 400°F.
2. Coat a 12-cup muffin pan with non-stick cooking spray. Or, use muffin tin liner cups.
3. Make muffin dry mix: In a large bowl, whisk together 1½ cups whole wheat flour, 1 cup all-purpose flour, 1½ teaspoons baking powder, and ¼ teaspoon salt. Add **Optional Dry Flavorings**.
4. Make muffin wet mix: In a medium bowl, whisk together 2 large eggs, 1 cup nonfat or low-fat milk, ¾ cup brown or granulated sugar, 2 Tablespoons melted unsalted butter, 2 Tablespoons canola oil, and 1 teaspoon vanilla extract. Add **Optional Wet Flavorings**.
5. Add wet mix to dry mix. Stir until just combined. Fold in **Fruits and Veggies** and **Optional Add-Ins**.
6. Bake muffins until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out with just a couple of moist crumbs attached, 20–25 minutes.
7. Let cool in the pan for 10 minutes. Remove from pan and let cool completely.



Optional Dry Flavorings (1–1½ teaspoons total)
Ground cinnamon
Ground nutmeg
Ground allspice
Ground ginger
Pumpkin pie spice



Optional Wet Flavorings
½ teaspoon coconut or almond extract
1 Tablespoon lemon, lime, or orange zest



Fruits and Veggies (2 cups total)
Fresh or frozen (not thawed) berries
Diced or mashed bananas
Diced mango or pineapple
Shredded apples or pears
Shredded carrots, zucchini, or parsnips



Optional Add-Ins (up to ½ cup total)
Dried fruit, such as raisins, cherries, currants, or cranberries
Toasted chopped or slivered nuts
Mini chocolate chips
Shredded unsweetened coconut

Try these combos!

Spiced Banana-Nut Muffins

Add ½ teaspoon each ground cinnamon, nutmeg, and allspice to the dry mix. Combine wet and dry mixes. Stir in diced bananas and chopped pecans.

Zucchini-Raisin Muffins

Add 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon to the dry mix. Combine wet and dry mixes. Stir in zucchini and raisins.

Blueberry-Ginger Muffins

Add 1½ teaspoons ground ginger to the dry mix. Combine wet and dry mixes. Stir in blueberries.



Chef's Notes:

- To freeze leftover muffins, wrap each one in plastic wrap. Place in an airtight container. Freeze up to 1 month.
- Use up fruits and veggies that are starting to get too ripe.
- To make bread instead of muffins, coat a loaf pan with non-stick cooking spray. Bake at 375°F for 50–60 minutes.

Soups Made Simple

Soup makes an easy lunch or dinner. Leftovers can be frozen for another day.

Use the chart below to choose ingredients from each column. Follow the chef's tips and step-by-step directions below to make your soup.

Protein 1 pound (diced meat)	+	Vegetables 2 cups, chopped	+	Liquid 4 cups	+	Whole Grains 1½ cups, cooked
Beef (shoulder, round or brisket)		Onions		Water		Brown rice
Chicken/Turkey (leg or thigh; boneless, skinless)		Greens (spinach, kale, collards, chard, etc.)		Low-sodium stock/broth		Whole wheat pasta
Pork (shoulder/butt)		Celery				Barley
Beans or lentils (cooked, or drained and rinsed from a can)		Zucchini				Quinoa
		Tomatoes				
		Carrots				
		Mushrooms				
		Broccoli				

If using meat as your protein:

1. Heat 1 Tablespoon canola oil in a soup pot over medium-high heat. Sauté meat until lightly browned, about 5 minutes.
2. Add the vegetables. Reduce heat to medium and sauté for 5 minutes. If using canned or thawed frozen vegetables, skip this step and add vegetables during step 4.
3. Add liquid and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer for 25-30 minutes or until meat is cooked through. Stir occasionally to keep ingredients from sticking to the bottom of the pot.
4. Add cooked grains during the last 5-7 minutes of cooking time, to warm through.

If using beans or lentils as your protein:

- Skip step 1 above. Follow the remaining steps, adding beans to the liquid in step 3. Shorten the total cooking time to 15 minutes.

Chef's Notes:

- **Vegetables:** Softer vegetables like spinach or zucchini will cook faster. Add during the last 5-7 minutes of cooking time.
- **Whole Grains:** Cook grains according to package instructions ahead of time. Refrigerate and add to soups you make that week.
- **Seasonings:** In addition to salt and pepper, try adding herbs and spices such as dried thyme, parsley, or ground cumin. Or, kick up the flavor by adding some minced garlic, hot peppers, ginger, or citrus zest. When using fresh herbs, add them at the end of cooking to keep the flavor fresh.

Casseroles: An Easy, Make-Ahead Meal

Use the guide below to choose your ingredients. To cook, season with salt and pepper or other spices, to taste. Bake at 350°F for 40-60 minutes or until top is brown and bubbly.

Protein 1 cup, fully cooked	+	Vegetables 1½-2 cups, chopped	+	Sauce (choose one)	+	Whole Grains 1½ cups, cooked	+	Toppings ½ cup
Beef (lean cuts), cubed or ground		Greens (kale, spinach, chard)		Low-fat or nonfat cream soup, such as mushroom, celery, or tomato (10 ounce can) + ¼ cup nonfat milk		Brown rice		Grated low-fat cheese
Chicken or turkey (boneless; skin removed), cubed or ground		Mixed vegetables (such as carrots, peas and corn)		Diced tomatoes (14.5oz can, drained — approx. 1 cup) + ½ cup reduced-fat sour cream (optional)		Whole wheat pasta		Bread crumbs
Low-sodium ham, diced		Zucchini				Barley		Crushed corn flakes
Beans or lentils		Mushrooms				Quinoa		Crushed tortilla chips
Canned tuna or salmon		Broccoli				Cubed whole wheat bread (1 cup)		

Casserole Ideas:

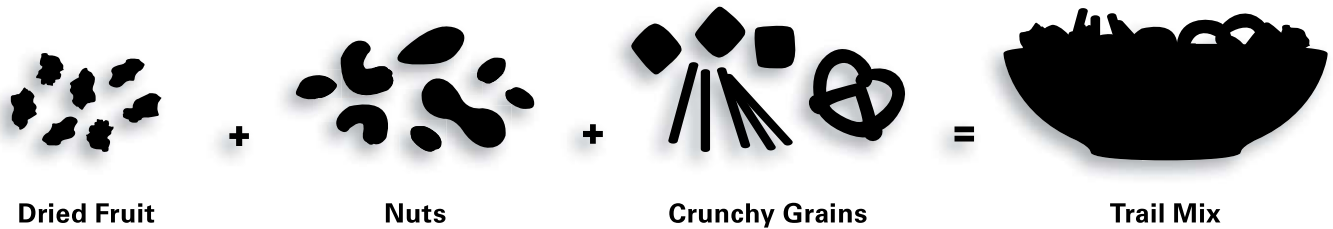
- **Chicken, Rice & Broccoli:** 1 cup diced, cooked chicken + 1½ cups chopped, blanched broccoli + 1½ cups cooked brown rice + 1 can cream of mushroom soup + ¼ cup nonfat milk + ½ cup shredded low-fat cheese on top.
- **Smoked Turkey & Spinach:** 1 cup diced, smoked turkey + 1½ cups chopped spinach + ½ cup chopped mushrooms + 1½ cups cooked barley + 1 can cream of celery soup + ¼ cup nonfat milk + ½ cup shredded low-fat cheese on top.
- **Mexican Black Beans & Rice:** 1 cup black beans + 1½ cups chopped spinach + ½ cup corn + 1½ cups cooked brown rice + 1 cup diced tomatoes + ½ cup low-fat sour cream + ½ teaspoon ground cumin + ¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper + ½ cup shredded low-fat cheese on top.

Chef's Tips:

- **Vegetables:** Cook firmer veggies like carrots or broccoli, and heartier greens like kale or collards, for 3-4 minutes in boiling water. Drain well before adding to casserole. If using canned or thawed frozen vegetables, drain them well. You don't need to cook them before adding.
- **Whole Grains:** Cook grains according to package instructions ahead of time. Refrigerate and add to casseroles you make that week.
- **Toppings:** Toppings like bread crumbs, corn flakes, or tortilla chips may brown quickly. Cover the casserole loosely with foil while cooking. Remove the foil for the last 5-10 minutes.

Make Your Own Trail Mix

Make your own trail mix for a healthy snack packed with flavor!



Add one ingredient from each column to make 6 servings (½ cup each).

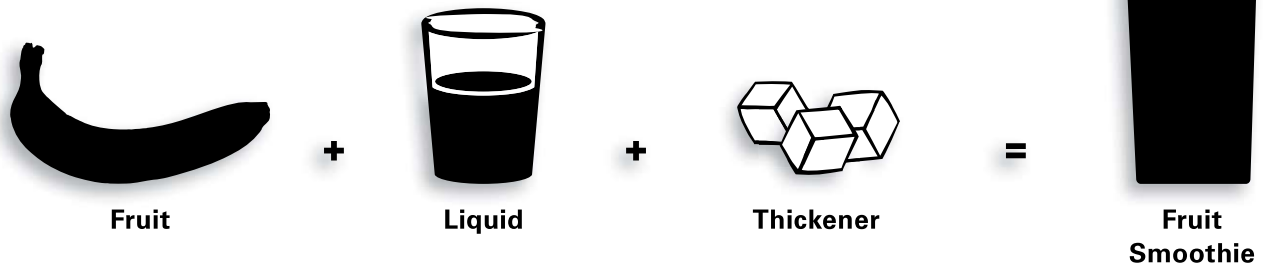
Dried Fruit (½ cup)	+	Nuts (½ cup)	+	Crunchy Grains (1 cup)	+	Other (1 cup total; no more than ½ cup chocolate or marshmallows)
Cranberries		Unsalted roasted peanuts		Low-fat granola		White or dark chocolate, carob, or butterscotch chips
Banana chips		Unsalted cashews		Crispy whole grain cereal		Yogurt-covered chips or raisins
Mango slices		Unsalted raw sunflower seeds		Low-sodium or unsalted pretzels		Low-sodium or unsalted pretzels
Raisins		Unsalted roasted almonds		Sesame sticks		Chocolate-coated nuts or dried fruit
Crystallized ginger		Soy nuts				Shredded unsweetened coconut
Pineapple		Chopped walnuts				Mini-marshmallows
Apple						
Papaya						

Chef's Tips:

- Make a batch in advance. Store in an air-tight container in a cool, dry place.
- Trail mix can be high in calories. Keep portion sizes small.
- Pack single servings into small zip-top bags. Take for a healthy snack on the go!

Make Your Own Fruit Smoothies

Smoothies are easy, healthy, and can be made to your liking!



Add ingredients from each column to blender. Blend until thick and smooth.

Fruit (½ -1 cup sliced or chopped per smoothie – fresh or frozen)	+	Liquid (½ to 1 cup per smoothie)	+	Optional Flavorings (up to ½ tsp per smoothie)	+	Thickener (up to ½ cup per smoothie)
Bananas		Apple juice, 100% juice		Ground cinnamon		Ice
Strawberries		Orange juice, 100% juice		Vanilla extract or flavor		Low-fat or nonfat yogurt (plain or frozen)
Raspberries, whole		Cranberry juice, 100% juice		Zest from lemon, lime, or orange		Frozen low-fat or nonfat yogurt
Blueberries, whole		Low-fat or nonfat milk, plain or flavored		Coconut flakes, unsweetened		Silken tofu
Peach		Soy milk, plain or flavored		Honey or maple syrup		
Mango		Almond milk				
Pineapple						

Try these combos!

Very Berry: ½-cup mixture of strawberry, blueberry, and raspberry + ½ cup apple juice + ¼ cup plain yogurt + 1 tsp honey + ¼ cup ice

Banana-Honey: ½ cup sliced, frozen banana + ¼ cup apple juice + ¼ cup nonfat milk + ¼ cup plain yogurt + 1 tsp honey

Triple-C Blaster: ½-cup mixture of mango and papaya + ½ cup orange juice + ¼ cup nonfat vanilla yogurt + 1 tsp honey + ¼ cup ice

Tropical Sunrise: ½-cup mixture of banana and mango + ½ cup low-fat milk + ½ tsp coconut flakes + ¼ cup nonfat yogurt + ¼ cup ice

Chef's Tips:

- Use milk, tofu, or yogurt to create a creamier smoothie.
- If adding frozen fruit, use less or no ice.
- Freeze slices of fruits that are about to go bad. Use them in smoothies.