

QUICK, EASY, HEALTHY One-Container Meals

Whether you want a quick-and-easy healthy dinner or a fun family project, one-container recipes are a great option.

Combine protein, a starch, vegetables, and a tasty sauce in one container to save cooking time and make clean up a breeze.

DIY SHEET PAN MEAL BASICS

Ingredients:

- 1 pound of protein
 - choose chicken, tofu, pork or beef
- 2 cups of starchy vegetables, such as potato, corn, peas or dry beans
- 3 to 4 cups of non-starchy vegetables, such as broccoli, carrot, mushroom, onion, celery, tomato and bell or spicy peppers
- Favorite seasonings, rosemary, thyme, sage, red pepper, parsley or garlic powder, seasoned to taste
- Vegetable oil or non-stick cooking spray

Directions:

Preheat oven to 400 degrees F.

Cube starchier vegetables and toss them in 1 Tbsp. of vegetable oil and sprinkle with 2/3 of your mixed spices.

Slice or cube proteins. Keep in mind, the bigger the size, the more time needed to cook to the correct temperature.

Spray a pan with non-stick cooking spray, and fill 2/3 of the pan with the protein and the starchy vegetables. Bake for 20 minutes.

Chop non-starchy vegetables and toss in 1 Tbsp. of vegetable oil and remaining 1/3 of the spice mixture.

When the timer goes off, safely remove the pan from the oven and add the non-starchy, seasoned vegetables to the remaining 1/3 of the pan.

Bake an additional 15 minutes and use a meat thermometer to check if meat is thoroughly cooked.

CHOOSE RECIPES WISELY. Is this for one meal or do you want to double the batch and freeze some for a future meal? Sauces, soups and chili all hold up well in the freezer. What do you have on hand? What are your family's favorite foods? Either is a good strategy for choosing one-pot or sheet pan recipes. Look for recipes that line up with your household's needs.

MIX AND MATCH. You can use both shelf-stable pantry foods, and items in your refrigerator and freezer. This helps expand the types of meals you can make. Use the "first in, first out" method for your food supply by using older items first. Keep this in mind for fresh produce as well. **Check out this do-it-yourself sheet pan meal guide @ [DIY Casserole Basics](#).**

MAKE IT A FAMILY AFFAIR. All family members can help in the kitchen, making meal preparation a fun event. Planning and making family meals together builds family bonds, cooking skills and nutrition knowledge. Younger children can measure or count ingredients, whisk or stir foods, and use a plastic knife to cut soft foods such as bananas. Older youth can chop fruits and vegetables, practice with cooking on the stove, and measure temperatures with a food thermometer.

KEEP IT SAFE AND PREVENT WASTE. Once shelf-stable foods, such as salad dressing, sauces or canned vegetables, are open, store any remaining food in the refrigerator. Plan to use those leftover meals in 3-4 days. If you have a large batch recipe, freeze half for a meal next week.

REFERENCE:

Adapted from materials and recipes from [University of Illinois Extension and Illinois Nutrition Education Programs](#).