

Improvising Meals with Ingredients You Already Have

In a perfect world, you'd have time to plan, prep, and cook every meal. In the real world, life moves fast. Sometimes you just need to make meals happen. You might be surprised at how easy it can be to create delicious, satisfying FCS-friendly meals and snacks with ingredients that are in your fridge, freezer, and pantry right now.

Keep in mind that nutrition information is of a generalized nature and is for education purposes only. It is not medical advice and should not be construed as such. Always consult your healthcare provider for nutrition plans that are tailored to your unique needs.

Stocking Up for Success

The key to improvisational FCS cooking is to have good FCS-friendly foods in your house. For starters, make sure your kitchen is properly stocked with the foods listed on the [FCS-Friendly Foods*](#) fact sheet. This extensive list covers every food category from proteins to flavor enhancers, and includes many non-perishable items that can be safely frozen or stored in your pantry for anytime use.

10 Core FCS-Friendly Food Staples

As long as these 10 foods are in your house, you'll always have plenty of options for great FCS meals.

- Frozen chicken breast
- Fat-free cheese
- Fat-free soft whole grain corn tortillas or low-fat whole wheat tortillas
- Whole wheat pasta
- Oatmeal
- Fresh and/or frozen veggies
- Fat-free no-sugar salad dressings and marinades
- Fat-free salsa
- Fat-free tomato sauce
- Fresh and/or canned no sugar-added fruit

*For more information, resources, and fact sheets, please visit KnowYourTGs.com.

Batch Prep Like a Boss

Whenever possible, batch cook extra portions. Let's say you're making Baked Tilapia. Cooking two portions might take you an hour from start to finish (including bake time in the oven). In that same hour, you could just as easily cook four or six portions, giving you the option to store extra portions in the fridge or freezer. Tonight, you enjoy Baked Tilapia for dinner. Tomorrow you toss the extra portions of tilapia into a refreshing salad or add some Mexican seasonings and make FCS-Friendly Fish Tacos.

Make batch cooking a way of life, keep your kitchen stocked with FCS-friendly foods and don't be afraid to use your imagination. Sometimes the most delicious meals (and experiences) happen when we stop trying to plan and control, and we just allow life to happen.



Smoothies Happen

Fat-free smoothies are a delicious FCS-friendly snack or on-the-go meal that can be easily prepared any time with just a few ingredients. Experiment with these basic smoothie recipes, substituting your favorite fruits and vegetables until you've arrived at two to three 'go-to' smoothie recipes that you love and can prepare without a second thought.

MEAL/SNACK IDEA

Berry Smoothie

- Pour 8 oz of fat-free milk into your blender.
- Add ½ fresh or frozen banana.
- Add fresh or frozen fruit, raspberries, and blueberries.
- If you're using fresh fruit, add 3-4 ice cubes to the blender. If you're using frozen fruit, you do not need to add ice cubes.
- For a thicker smoothie, add some fat-free yogurt in addition to the fat-free milk.
- Blend thoroughly and enjoy.

MEAL/SNACK IDEA

Green Smoothie

- Pour 8 oz of fat-free milk into your blender.
- Add ½ fresh or frozen banana.
- Add a few chunks of fresh or frozen pineapple.
- Add a handful of fresh spinach leaves.
- If you're using fresh fruit, add 3-4 ice cubes to the blender. If you're using frozen fruit, you do not need to add ice cubes.
- For a thicker smoothie, add some fat-free yogurt in addition to the fat-free milk.
- Blend thoroughly and enjoy.



Pizzafication

Almost any protein can become a delicious homemade FCS pizza within minutes. Make sure you always have a few low-fat whole wheat pizza crusts on hand, along with some fat-free mozzarella cheese.

Now, let's say you made baked chicken last night and there are leftovers in the fridge. Dice them up and spread them onto the pizza crust. Add sliced tomatoes and top with fat-free mozzarella and some dried oregano.

Or, instead of pizza, **Burritofy** your leftover chicken by using a fat-free soft corn tortilla instead of a pizza crust, and top it with the leftover chicken, fat-free beans, shredded lettuce, fresh or dried cilantro, and fat-free sour cream.

Recipes and meal suggestions courtesy of Mary Felando, MS, RDN, CLS, FNLA.

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