

Simple and Delicious
COOKING WITH 3 INGREDIENTS OR LESS



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The concept of creating meals that are both simple and delicious presents a challenge for families of today. Simple meals sometimes resonate as one or two ingredients thrown haphazardly together. Delicious seems to fall by the wayside. This does not have to be the case, however, for today's busy families. Combining simple and delicious is as easy as one, two, three – three ingredients, that is.



Where to Begin

Just about every family has one individual with, well let's say, individual tastes – in other words; picky. It is important to begin your simple and delicious cooking with a three ingredients or less plan with something your pickiest of eaters will enjoy, as well. The most basic place to start is in evaluating your family members' desires and tastes. While you do not want to appear as a full-service restaurant, you do want to present meals that will have "something for everybody" on the menu.

Something for Everybody

1. Take Inventory – Start your simple and delicious cooking by taking inventory of your family members' tastes, likes, and dislikes. For example, if one person is a pasta enthusiast while another is a chicken lover, see if incorporating those two ingredients would work for both of them. Make a list of each family members' likes and dislikes so you will know beforehand what to add and what to stay away from, as well.



2. Ask Every Family Member for Input – Do not try to take this project on yourself and on your own. Sometimes even the best intentions are misconstrued when it comes across as controlling or demanding. Asking for everyone's input and truly taking those thoughts into consideration when preparing meals can make all the difference between acceptance and rejection.

3. Spice it Up A Lot – When you come up with a list of two or three ingredients that you wish to play with, do not forget to

invest in a good set of spices. You can even begin by growing your own herbs to incorporate into the recipes. Once again, ask for some suggestions from family members. Your children may crave some southwestern spices or even Indian spices, but have never indicated that they wish to try on these flavors. You never know; their input may actually help you to put your meals together.

Make a List and Check it Twice

Now that you have every family member's input, it is time to put on your thinking cap. Look at the different ingredients that your family members enjoy, as well as the spices

they are interested in exploring. Take those ingredients and spices and begin making a list to see which ones would complement the others.

For example, if you have one family member who is crazy about pasta and another who loves healthy vegetables, think of creating a chicken and broccoli with pasta dish. Do not forget to incorporate those yummy spices as well.

Perhaps your husband is a meat-eater and a meat-lover while you prefer vegetables. Combining vegetables like yummy green, red, and orange peppers with beef can satisfy both of your taste bud needs and desires.

The Healthier the Better

While you are incorporating a new style of cooking (with three ingredients or less), try to introduce a healthier style of cooking at the same time. It is so easy and tempting to cook fast and easy but to not be aware or conscious of cooking unhealthy meals. While it may be tempting to throw some macaroni and cheese together quickly, that may not be the healthiest option there is.

Cooking Easy and Delicious with Whole Foods

While for some, whole foods may mean foods that are not processed or refined and having no pesticides or being organic, for others it is much simpler. Whole foods are foods that are ready to eat in their whole form and at its most natural state. All the vitamins, essential nutrients, and minerals are “ripe for the picking,” so to speak. A potato is a perfect example of such a thing.

There are many benefits to eating and cooking with whole foods.

1. Whole foods eaten in their natural state are healthier because they provide more vitamins, minerals, and fiber. Vitamins, minerals, and fiber are lost along the way as whole foods are processed.
2. Whole foods have health benefits by the multitude. Whole foods are showing effects of warding off disease such as heart disease, diabetes, and even obesity.
3. You do not always have to rely on supermarkets to obtain your whole foods. Growing fruits (depending on where you live) and vegetables is something that you can achieve in your own backyard. Carrots are a perfect example of a whole food that you can easily grow in your garden.

Eating whole foods has another tremendous benefit and that is avoiding the added preservatives and chemicals found in processed foods before arriving on your table and, worse yet, in your family's stomachs.



Salt, sugar, trans fats, chemicals, and preservatives are all ingredients you want to stay away from when it comes to adding things to your family meal plan.

Fruits and vegetables have all the fiber necessary to fill you up and, therefore, may even result in eating a bit less, especially the wrong things.

Now that you know you can cook simple and delicious meals combined with some whole foods, that sounds like a win-win situation all the way around.

Combining Whole Foods and Simple Eating

Eating is a way to nourish your body and give it health and energy. Most families today are so busy that they think of eating as an end to a means. We are hungry and we need to eat is where it all begins and ends. Most families eat on the go or in a rush. Combining whole foods and simple eating is favorable for many reasons.

1. Whole foods offer prime nutrition.
2. Gathering the family together to create simple but healthy meals with whole foods will help your family to bond more. Since whole foods may take a little more time preparing and even growing, it is a great way to bond with your family.
3. Preparing whole food meals that have fewer than three ingredients gives the family the opportunity to share about their day, their ups and downs, and their lives.



Let's Look at Some Whole Foods

1. Whole Grains – Whole grains are grains that have not been processed. Simply put, they are grains that are eaten in their entirety – the whole grain seed. Examples are brown rice, quinoa, and barley.
2. Fruits and Vegetables – Whole fruits and vegetables are so numerous in variety that there are too many to mention; however, here are a few examples: bananas, apples, grapes, spinach, kale, carrots, and squash, just to name a few.
3. While most individuals consider whole foods to be foods that are organic, whole foods that you grow yourself are also another example.
4. Legumes – Legumes are a great source of protein and another example of what a whole food may be. Kidney beans, chickpeas, lentils, and black beans are excellent whole foods to mix up any meal.
5. Nuts and Seeds – Nuts and seeds such as peanuts, sesame, and sunflower are good examples of how to add a little something extra, just the touch needed, when cooking simple meals under three ingredients. Of course, if anyone has a peanut allergy, cooking with peanuts is not an option.

6. Oils – Some oils such as coconut oil, extra virgin olive oil, and sesame oil in their natural form are great to sauté a meal in and make all the difference between bland and beautiful.

If you take a base food such as lean, skinless chicken, fresh fish, and lean beef or lamb, you can combine these staples with some whole foods and have simple, delicious, healthy, and nutritious meals using under three ingredients. Here are a few examples and recipes:

Lemon Chicken, Spinach, and Rice

The wonderful thing about this recipe is that you can make it the night before. The more you marinate the chicken, the better the flavor will be when you cook it the next day.

You will need to adjust the recipe according to your family size, of course, but here is the basic recipe:

Other than spices, oils, and seasonings, you will need three ingredients: chicken, spinach, and brown rice.

You will need to marinate the chicken:

- 6 chicken cutlets (the preference here would be organic chicken)
- Juice of 2 whole lemons
- 1 clove garlic
- Salt and pepper to taste



Marinate the chicken, lemons, and garlic with the added salt and pepper to taste overnight, covered with plastic wrap in your refrigerator. The chicken will absorb the lovely flavor of the combination of lemon and garlic.

The following evening, all you have to do is take 2 cups spinach; chop it up, and sauté in some whole pressed extra virgin olive oil and 1 small chopped onion, adding salt to taste.

Cook the chicken breasts for approximately three to five minutes, but judge by your view of how the chicken is cooking. When it is lightly browned and no longer pink in the middle, your chicken is done.

When the spinach is sautéed and the chicken is cooked, pour the sautéed spinach atop the brown rice, mixing well. Mixing well will allow for the olive oil and onion to flavor the rice, too. Place the marinated lemon chicken on top and you have a meal using spinach, brown rice, and chicken that is healthy, quick, and easy, as well as tasty.

Beef with Peppers and Tomatoes

Another tasty, delicious, simple, and easy meal that incorporates whole foods and optimum health benefits is beef with peppers and tomatoes. Lean beef that is grass-fed and organic would be the optimal choice here. The peppers and tomatoes are capable of producing their own yummy juices so you can have a tasty meal in minutes.



For this recipe, you will need:

- 1 pound of round steak
- 2 medium green bell peppers
- 2 medium ripe tomatoes

For seasonings, you will need whole pressed, extra virgin olive oil, 2 tablespoons soy sauce, and salt and pepper to taste. For sautéing purposes, you will need two cloves of garlic and 1 small onion.

Chop the onion and garlic, place inside the hot olive oil. Cut the peppers and tomatoes and add into the oil, garlic and onions that are sautéing. Salt to taste. Let the tomatoes and peppers wilt so they are both tender to the taste, but not too mushy and overcooked. They should be soft, but have a little resistance when bitten into.

Cut beef into strips beforehand and add to the pan, stir-fry on both sides, adding soy sauce to the pan.

Stir well, cooking beef to your liking; preferably, a slight pink on the inside with the outer layers of the strips being nicely browned.

Again, if you like you can add this on top of rice or even some wide whole grain noodles. The juices from the peppers and tomatoes will be add a nice additional flavor to either the rice or the noodles.

Pasta with Broccoli and Beans

If your family is like most families, yours enjoys pasta just as much as the rest. The wonderful thing about pasta is that you can buy whole grain pasta and cook it in so many different ways. You can also add so many different things to pasta that you are pretty much provided an endless resource of meals.

For this recipe, you will need whole grain pasta, a head of whole fresh broccoli crowns (preferable organic), and some fresh legumes such as raw, white kidney beans.

For this simple three-ingredient recipe, you will need:

- 1 package whole-grain pasta
- 1 bunch of broccoli crowns, preferably organic
- 2 cups of dried white kidney beans

It is preferable to soak the dried white kidney beans overnight. To do so, place the kidney beans in a pot of cold water, cover, and soak overnight. The following evening, rinse and drain the kidney beans before cooking.

To cook the kidney beans, simply place them in a pot of water covered by about two inches over the top of the beans and cook for approximately 1 and ½ hours. Many individuals like to cook the beans in chicken broth, which, of course, would have to be organic as well, if you are thinking healthy.

Once the beans are tender to the touch and soft, they are ready to eat.

Put up your pasta according to the package directions and you can cook your broccoli crowns in many ways. Some individuals put the broccoli crowns in the boiling water a few minutes before they add the pasta to the boiling pot of water.

You can steam the broccoli crowns, sauté them in olive oil and garlic, or microwave them. However you choose to do it, just try to choose the healthiest method, which would probably be steaming.



Once your broccoli is steamed and your beans are cooked, place them in a pan with some olive oil, garlic, salt, pepper, and garlic powder to taste. Once the pasta is cooked, drain and add the olive oil and broccoli. Mix well in the pasta. If you serve this with a salad on the side, your family will be sure to be pleased.

The kidney beans are an excellent source of protein. The broccoli has

antioxidants and calcium and, of course, everyone loves pasta. In addition, the best part of the whole meal is that it is healthy, quick, and super inexpensive to create.

If your family enjoys the lemon-marinated chicken, here is a slightly different, but just as simple version.

Lime Chicken with Rainbow Peppers and Broccoli

For this recipe, you will need a few simple ingredients:

4 boneless chicken breasts (no skin and preferably organic)
3 Limes
A rainbow of peppers from orange and red to green and yellow

Again, marinating this the night before will work wonders with the flavors of the lime and the chicken.

Mix a ¼ cup of extra pressed, extra virgin olive oil, the juice of the limes, two cloves of garlic, some parsley and salt and pepper to taste. Place the chicken breasts in the mixture of marinade.

Refrigerate overnight, turning occasionally. The next evening, all you have to do is stir-fry your rainbow of peppers and broccoli in a sauté pan with olive oil, garlic, salt, pepper, and garlic powder to taste.

Once the vegetables are sautéed, meaning that they are cooked through but still have a little bit of a bite to them, add the chicken to the pan, sautéing on each side until lightly browned and no longer pink on the inside.

You will have a combination of lime chicken, rainbow peppers, and broccoli. Adding a whole food such as a legume like black kidney beans will add to the recipe and fill up your family.

Once again, you have a tasty delicious, nutritious, satisfying meal in a hurry - using three ingredients.

Now that you have a little background on how easy it is to make three ingredient meals and how doing so with whole foods is something achievable, here is some information about preparing whole foods ahead of time.

Not only does preparing whole foods ahead of time make life easier and quicker, it really is one of the healthiest ways to go, as far as quick meals are concerned.

Preparing Some Whole Foods Ahead of Time

As with any type of meal plan, whether it is vegetarian, whole foods, or traditional cooking, the only sure way to success is meal planning and preparation.

1. Meal Planning – Sitting down with yourself and, yes, even your family on a Sunday evening, to plan out the week's meals is a wise choice, indeed. Without a plan, you will more than likely find yourself staring into the freezer asking yourself why you did not remember, once again, to defrost something for the next day. A little planning in the meals department is a lifesaver for the sanity of the rest of your work week.



2. Meal Preparation – While it is not possible to completely plan ahead, there are a few things you can do to make meals simple and easy. You may have to set aside one whole day per week for food shopping and meal preparation, but on that night, why not treat yourself and your family to a nice, light, and healthy meal out that evening?

Meal Planning

Have a sit down with your family and ask them what kind of mood they are in, and what ideas they can bring to the table, within reason. One family member may suggest Mexican, while another may be craving Italian.

Do not be afraid to ask for assistance. Once you have two or three ideas as far as ethnicity for your meals, sit down and plan out a few basic recipes and what ingredients you will need.

It is always a great idea to have a well-stocked pantry, because if you do, chances are meals will be a great success. Things like spices, different oils such as whole food oils like extra-virgin olive oil or sesame oil are great ways to make a simple meal simply fabulous.

You will find that with a well-stocked pantry, input from your family, and a little pre-planning, you will be quite happy with the results and changes around dinnertime in your household.

A Little Meal Preparation Goes a Long Way

Once you have planned out some of your meals and the ingredients, an excellent idea is to do a little meal preparation in advance. Here are some basic tips:

1. Try batch cooking, even if it is just your main ingredient from your three ingredient or less meal. Batch cooking your chicken, for example, even if it is just the marinade portion, will save you tons of time. For example, you could buy your chicken in bulk, slice it into cutlets, and marinate in a freezer bag and freeze for later use. In this way, your three ingredient or less meal will have the main staple ready, set, to go.



2. Try buying in bulk. Sometimes buying in bulk can save you even more money. If you know what types of lean beef and skinless chicken meals your family enjoys, try buying organically, whole foods and in bulk. In this way, you will reap the rewards of eating healthy, cooking quickly, and saving money all at the same time.
3. Prepare different rubs and spices ahead of time. If you have a basic set of recipes for your three ingredient or less meals, then you can go ahead and prepare some marinades and rubs ahead of time. This will save you tons of time in the kitchen. Imagine pulling out a small package of chicken breasts, rubbing some pre-made marinade on them and throwing together just one more ingredient to have a really flavorful, spicy, simple, easy, and nutritious meal that saved you money.
4. Preparing whole foods may seem a little bit more work; however, you can wash and cut whole fruits and vegetables and enjoy them as you go along your week. A fresh fruit salad is easy to grab and go for breakfast. Chopped broccoli, carrots, and cauliflower are super easy to use as a stir-fry, in a salad, or with a dip as you are waiting for the real deal dinner to cook.
5. Whole foods do not have to be difficult foods. If you are cleaning up from one meal, it is very easy to throw a few potatoes in a pot and boil them for tomorrow night's meal. You could toss carrots and celery along with onion and cauliflower in a pot of boiling chicken broth to simmer for another evening's soup meal. When you plan ahead, and keep the momentum going, the possibilities are endless.

Once you incorporate meal preparation and meal planning alongside your knowledge of whole food preparation, your three ingredient meal options are endless.

Here are a few different types of whole foods that you can mix and match, so to speak, with other types in order to create a variety of whole food meals.

The Fruit Family

While most individuals do not think of cooking with fruits, to do so is a creative way to add whole foods such as fruits to your meal planning.

- Apples
- Pears
- Peaches
- Mangoes
- Apricots



Many beef dishes, as well as chicken and fish, are made with mango and apricot glazes.

Cooking with whole fruits is a wonderful way to incorporate the fruit family into otherwise ordinary meals.

Vegetable Whole Foods

While vegetables are easy to purchase in the frozen or canned section, cooking with whole food vegetables is just as easy. A sweet potato or a baked potato is easy to make in the microwave or even a toaster oven or crock pot as a meal with beef or turkey.

- Potatoes
- Broccoli
- Carrots
- Squash
- Eggplant
- Yams



Legumes

Legumes are a wonderful addition to any meal, as they provide protein, flavor, and texture to your meals.

Legumes come in many varieties:

- Chickpeas
- White beans
- Red kidney beans
- Black beans
- Peas and lentils

Do Not Forget the Nuts

Nuts and seeds are wonderfully expressive ways to make your meals pop. Sesame seeds, peanuts (if there are no allergies, of course), sunflower seeds, and almonds are superb ways to add nutty, nutritious flavor to your foods.



There are so many options for recipes; the list goes on and on, for example:

- Vegetable lasagna made with whole grain pasta
- Beef and bean enchiladas
- Creamy tomato soup
- Avocado and pear salad
- Chicken and broccoli over rice
- Shrimp and broccoli over spaghetti
- Desserts with whole fruits such as peach cobbler or apple tarts, sweet potato pie
- Vegetable dip with a side of cucumber or broccoli soup
- Beef and pepper tacos
- Chicken tortillas with peppers
- Beef with broccoli
- Beef with stir fry vegetables
- Chicken, pasta, and broccoli

- Any kind of bean with any kind of pasta with some added chicken

The list is almost endless. You can keep these ideas as your favorite under three ingredient meals as your go-to source or you can mix and match and come up with one or two or even four of your own. The possibilities are unlimited.

You can even get creative with desserts, such as making a peach cobbler topped with whole walnuts.



Whole foods are not just for dinner, either. You can enjoy a healthy fruit salad by dicing and chopping a bunch of whole fruits and keeping it in a container to enjoy throughout the week. You can eat it as is or add it to cereal or oatmeal, as well.

Snacks such as a banana or an avocado are excellent choices for whole foods – even tomato and cucumber are tasty treats for snack time.

The Low-Down on Simple and Delicious Cooking with 3 Ingredients or Less

So, as you can see, simple and delicious cooking really is a thing of your present. You can absolutely cook delicious meals with three ingredients or less. In addition, the best news is that there are ways to cook these meals and have them be highly nutritious and save you time and money, as well.

A win/win situation all the way around – for you and for your family.