

What's For Dinner?

By Jill McTaggart

Congratulations working mothers! You have read the article about putting more joy into the weeknight dinner routine. Taking into account that most working moms make a variation of the same meals each week; Mexican, Italian, burgers, and pastas, this strategy names the night according to the Menu that you have shopped and planned for.

Here is a reminder of how you can simplify dinnertime for all in 3 easy steps.

1. Have a family meeting that outlines this easy strategy and how each family member has a cooperative role.
2. Try the Weeknight Menu Plan.
3. Enjoy dinnertime again as a family - one of the most important parenting tools there is.

is a way of staying one step ahead of the agonizing "what's for dinner" question.

Sunday has the most "to-do" because shopping is involved. I like to shop at Trader Joe's, but I do need to stock up at Safeway every couple of weeks for; *Taco seasoning, Mahatma's saffron yellow rice, Tacos, Tostados and frozen tortellini.*

STEP 2. The weeknight menu plan

Weeknight Menu Plan	To-do's	Ingredients <u>underlined</u> all Trader Joe's Includes basic cooking instructions.
<p>Mantra: Sunday is Pasta night!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fusilli pasta with Bolognese sauce, sausage and ricotta cheese. • Salad • Dessert 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Shop 2. Cooperatively cook and clean up dinner with entire family. 3. Bake cookies or a cake if you have time to enjoy during the week. Great activity to do with your child and a sweet way to start the week. 	<p>Boil <u>Organic fusilli Pasta</u> in salted water while pan frying sliced <u>Medium Italian Sausage</u>. Microwave jarred <u>Bolognese meat sauce</u> Combine drained pasta, sauce and browned sausage, add <u>Ricotta Cheese</u> and serve with <u>Organic Spring Mix Salad</u> <u>Balsamic Vinaigrette</u> dressing or <u>Caesar Salad</u> dressing</p>
<p>Mantra: Monday is Mexican night!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chicken Burritos • Side of fruit <p>Put all burritos fixings; in bowls and let family make their own at the table.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cooperatively cook and clean up dinner. 	<p><u>Frozen chicken tenderloins</u> – cut and sautéed with <i>taco seasoning</i> Microwave <u>Organic frozen rice or Mahatma's yellow rice</u>. Microwave <u>Organic refried beans</u> <u>Guacamole</u> prepared <u>Romaine lettuce</u> shredded <u>Sour cream</u> <u>Cheddar cheese</u> shredded <u>Tortillas</u> <u>Salsa</u> <u>Fruit</u></p>
<p>Mantra: Tuesday is BBQ night!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pork Tenderloin • Green beans with Pinole nuts in garlic and oil • Scalloped potatoes • Side of fruit 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Cooperatively cook and clean up dinner 	<p><u>Pork Tenderloin</u> – season and bbq for 20 minutes <u>Frozen Green Beans</u> sautéed in <u>garlic</u> and <u>olive oil</u> with <u>Pinolj nuts</u> <u>Scalloped potatoes</u> follow boxed instructions <u>Fruit</u></p>
<p>Mantra: Wednesday is Italian night!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tortellini soup • Garlic bread • Dessert 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Cooperatively cook and clean up dinner 	<p>Sauté 2 <u>frozen garlic</u> cubes in olive oil. Add a jar of <u>marinara tomato sauce</u> and a <u>box of organic chicken stock</u> and bring to a boil. Add <u>frozen spinach</u> or <u>frozen peas</u> and boil again. Add <u>frozen tortellini</u>, tortellini bubbling at the top, time to serve. <u>Fresh bread</u> – freeze or refrigerate until ready to warm in oven</p>
<p>Mantra: Thursday is Burger Night!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turkey burgers • Potato chips • Crudite fries 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Cooperatively cook and clean up dinner 	<p>Grill <u>Turkey burgers</u> Toast <u>Burger buns</u> <u>Potato chips</u> <u>Carrots, peppers, cucumbers</u> cut like French fries dipped in ketchup or ranch dressing.</p>
<p>Mantra: Friday is Take out or Pizza Night!</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Cooperatively cook and clean up dinner 	<p>Look for coupons from Mangia and Mountain Mike's pizza.</p>

So that is it for Step 2. The beauty of the Menu Mantra is that it doesn't have to be the same exact meal each week, but a variation on that night's theme. For instance, one week Mexican Monday might be Burritos and the next it could be Tostados. In the next issue we'll cover Step 3, the real return to the sit – down family dinner.