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COOK SOMETHING DIFFERENT FOR DINNER TONIGHT

It is 5 o'clock in America and the number one question is, "What's for dinner?" I personally believe it is THE question children ask the most. The truth is the cook is often asking this question too!

Check the TV schedule and every day of the week you can find a cooking show to watch. Cooking shows are highly popular in our culture as a source of entertainment but nothing more. People are not cooking any more... just eating more!

The main complaint I hear about cooking is planning the menu. Many people actually love to cook, but they find themselves cooking the same recipes repeatedly, and find it difficult to come up with new ideas. Since variety is the spice of life, why not cook something different tonight.

Here are three delicious and distinctive recipes to get you started.

AFRICAN CHICKEN

4 pounds chicken
1/4 cup oil
2 teaspoons salt
1 teaspoon curry powder
1 large onion, peeled and sliced
1 large red sweet pepper, cut in strips
1 large tomato, sliced thin
1 1/2 cups uncooked rice
1/4 cup crunchy peanut butter
1/4 cup warm water

Brown chicken in oil in large pan and set aside. Stir salt and curry powder into drippings; cook 1 minute. Add onion, pepper and tomato, stir and cover and simmer 5 minutes. Return chicken to pan and cover. Simmer until tender for 30 minutes. Cook rice, spoon into serving dish. Arrange chicken on top. Keep warm. Blend peanut butter with water. Stir in vegetable mixture in pan. Heat to boiling. Spoon over chicken and rice.

ASIAN CHICKEN

1/2 cup soy sauce
6 tablespoons dark brown sugar
4 tablespoons lemon juice
4 tablespoons sherry
2 tablespoons salad oil
2 teaspoons ground ginger
2/3 cup chopped green onions
2 garlic cloves, crushed (I usually double this)
8 pieces of chicken

Combine all marinade ingredients. Add chicken and marinate in 9 x 13" baking dish. Cover and marinate chicken for one hour or overnight in the refrigerator. Overnight is more flavorful.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. If you are baking the chicken, take out 30 min early to bring chicken to room temperature. Top baking dish with fol. Bake for 30 minutes with foil on. Remove foil and bake for 30 minutes more.

If you are grilling it chicken, take out of refrigerator and drain off marinade. Sit on counter for 30 min to bring to room temperature. Grill for about 40 min, turning frequently. Brush on barbeque sauce the last 5 minutes of cooking.

SHRIMP QUESADILLAS

1 tablespoon butter
1 cup chopped onion
1 cup fresh corn kernels (about 2 ears)
1 garlic clove, minced
2/3 cup chopped tomato
1 tablespoon chopped green chilies
1/2 pound medium shrimp, peeled, deveined, and chopped
2 tablespoons lemon juice
2 tablespoons minced fresh cilantro
1/4 teaspoon salt
8 (8-inch) flour (or whole wheat) tortillas
1/2 cup shredded mozzarella cheese
1/2 cup shredded cheddar cheese
1 cup of your favorite brand of salsa

Chop onion, tomato and green chilies. Cut corn off the cob. Mince cilantro. Peel, devein and chop shrimp. Shred cheese. Sauté onion, corn and garlic, in butter for 30 seconds. Add tomato, chilies and sauté another 4 minutes. Add shrimp, lemon juice, cilantro, and salt and sauté another 3 minutes. Remove corn mixture from skillet and keep warm.

Preheat quesadilla maker. Place 1 tortilla in quesadilla maker and top with 1/4 cup cheese. Spoon 1/2 cup corn mixture over cheese and top with a tortilla. Cook 3 minutes. If you do not have a quesadilla maker then use a non-stick skillet and cook on Medium heat. Cook for 3 minutes pressing down with a spatula until the cheese melts. Carefully flip tortilla and another minute. Repeat procedure with the remaining tortillas, cheese and corn mixture. Cut into quarters and serve with your favorite salsa.

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