

Extension

Seasonal Eating Whitney Danhof, Extension Agent

Pantry Dinners
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Whenever I think of pantry dinners, it immediately brings to mind Tuna Noodle Casserole. My brother and I hated it. That was the worst possible response to the “What’s for dinner?” question. My parents liked it so we would have to suffer through sometimes – we didn’t have a short order cook, you either ate what was on the table or went hungry. I like tuna salad but there’s just something about it being hot in a casserole that is not my favorite. So when I eat from the pantry its usually chicken casserole or salmon patties.



Pantry dinners are great for those nights when you didn’t really have anything planned and don’t have the time (or energy) to stop by the store. With canned meats, vegetables, soups,

broth and pasta or rice stocked in the pantry, you can pull a dinner together by simply looking on the shelf. Another good idea is to keep some frozen vegetables handy and I almost always have some eggs, cheese, milk and sour cream on hand in the refrigerator. From these ingredients can come some hearty and comforting winter meals.

For my salmon patties, I simply drain a can of salmon and remove the bones and skin.. Add an egg, a little chopped onion and some lemon pepper. Grind up some fresh breadcrumbs (I use crusts or hot dog buns or whatever is in the freezer). Form the salmon into patties and coat in the bread crumbs like crab cakes. Then sauté in a little oil and butter until browned and firm. A great side dish is the Green Bean and Corn Casserole below. It is creamy with a crunch from the toasted almonds and perfect with the salmon patties. In just a few minutes dinner is on the table.

Soups are also easy to make from pantry ingredients. Try chicken noodle with a sautéed onion, canned chicken, poultry seasoning, canned carrots, noodles and broth. Another option is chili with canned tomatoes, beans, onion, chili powder and cumin.

Casseroles with canned or frozen vegetables help you to add some produce that was picked at its prime and preserved for the winter. Try layering stuffing mix made by the directions on the box, canned chicken, microwaved frozen broccoli and a cheesy white sauce topped with crushed cornflakes. Enchiladas with canned chicken, canned green chilies, onion, sour cream and shredded cheese rolled up in tortillas with a canned enchilada sauce over the top turns a weeknight into a fiesta.

Pasta is another pantry meal option. Cook up some noodles and top with jarred alfredo sauce jazzed up with canned pimientos, cooked frozen broccoli or peas and parmesan cheese. Or try adding peas and canned ham to macaroni and cheese. Canned tomatoes turn into marinara sauce when cooked down with a little onion, garlic, red wine and dried basil to pour over spaghetti noodles.

So this winter, stock your pantry with handy items to make main dishes as well as vegetable casseroles that will fill you up and keep you warm.

For more ideas on using seasonal produce, visit the Bedford County Extension website (<https://utextension.tennessee.edu/bedford>) and click on Seasonal Eating. The Seasonal Eating Cooking Demonstration on Dinner from the Pantry will be on Wednesday, February 20 at 12:00 noon at the Extension Office. Call the Office at 684-5971 to sign up and bring \$7.00 to class to cover the samples.

Green Bean and Corn Casserole

- 1 (10 3/4-ounce) cans cream of celery soup
- 8 ounces sour cream
- 1 cup shredded Cheddar cheese
- 2 (15-ounce) cans French-style green beans, drained
- 1 (11-ounce) cans shoe peg corn, drained
- 1/2 cup slivered almonds, toasted
- 1/2 sleeve round buttery crackers, crushed

In large bowl, combine soup, sour cream and cheese. Add beans, corn and almonds. Mix well. Pour into greased casserole dish. Sprinkle crushed crackers over top and spray with vegetable spray. Bake at 350 degrees for 30 minutes or until hot and bubbly.