



THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX

Classic American Goulash

Many want a home-cooked meal, but the thought of having to clean up the mess from cooking is enough to derail the best of intentions. Oftentimes, when we see examples of healthy meals, the plate shows food groups individually. For example, there is a nice piece of lean protein, a good portion of colorful vegetables and a portion of a whole grain. The number of utensils and pots and pans and cooking skills that may be needed to conform to these examples of healthy meals might just seem too burdensome for many people. This doesn't have to be the case.

The nutritional quality of a meal does not rest on how pretty and neat the plate looks. Special equipment and, fancy cutting skills, or time spent preparing the meal are not as important as choosing the items that you use in your meal. Your body doesn't know if the dish was photo-worthy or messy looking. Some of the most comforting and flavorful meals may not look extravagant, like the picture of healthy meals posted on social media and magazines, but this doesn't mean they are of poorer nutrition quality. The body processes the nutrients in messy-looking meals and photo-worthy dishes the same way!

Combination dishes like casseroles, soups, stews, and stir-fries are some of the quickest and most economical meal choices and can be very nutritious. They key is choosing high nutrient quality items to make them. Use [Choose My Plate](#) to guide you.

Most of these dishes require just one pot and a few utensils to prepare. Making use of items that you already have in your pantry, fridge, and freezer. The key is to always aim to have a few cans of low-sodium stewed tomatoes and broths on hand, as these products are the starting point for many dishes. Additional items such as low-sodium canned vegetables and a variety of whole grain items, such as brown rice and few varieties of frozen vegetables, should also be kept on-hand. They can be quickly added to any one-pot meal. Use a variety of dried herbs and spices to make meals interesting. Also, combination dishes are a great way to use up fresh produce or left overs before they spoil.

This dish is a stick-to-your-ribs, but not your waistline meal. Use the recipe to get you started in goulashes, but the next time try improvising with the a different type of lean meat, whole grain, broth, vegetables, and herbs and spices. Have fun!



Ingredients: 4 servings

- 1 lb. lean ground meat (turkey, pork, or beef)
- 1 large yellow onion, chopped
- 1 8 oz. package elbow macaroni, whole wheat
- 2 cups low-sodium beef broth
- 1 14.5 oz. can diced tomatoes, Italian
- 1 8 oz. can tomato sauce
- 2 tsp. garlic powder
- 1 tsp. paprika
- 1 tbsp. chili powder (optional)
- 1 tsp. salt
- ½ tsp. black pepper
- 2 medium-sized yellow squash, sliced

Directions:

1. In a large sauce pan, cook the meat and onions over high heat for about 8 minutes or until the meat is no longer pink. Be sure to stir frequently to prevent the onions from burning.
2. While the meat is cooking wash and dry the squash. Cut each squash lengthwise and then slice each piece to make ¼ inch pieces.
3. Add the beef broth and bring to a boil. Stir in remaining ingredients and return to a boil. Cover and reduce the heat to medium and simmer for about 10 minutes or until the macaroni is tender. Throughout the cooking, quickly stir every couple of minutes to prevent it sticking to the bottom of the pan
4. Serve immediately by evenly dividing the goulash between 4 plates.

Tips

- Double the recipe and freeze ½ of the product for a quick meal a couple of weeks later. (Just place in the microwave, with a damp paper towel over the frozen goulash and microwave for 2 minutes to thaw. Stir, and cover and cook for an additions 2-3 minutes until heated through.
- Change up the spices by adding cumin or curry instead of the chili powder.
- Add ¼ tsp. of crushed red pepper in step 3 to add a bit of spicy hot to the dish.
- Consider topping with a bit of your favorite shredded cheese about 1 oz. per serving. Just remember this does add calories.

DISCLAIMER:

THIS RECIPE DOES NOT CONSTITUTE AN ENDORSEMENT BY DOD OF ANY INDIVIDUAL VENDOR. ANY PRODUCT OF SIMILAR SPECIFICATION MAY BE USED TO MAKE THIS HEALTHY CHOICE MEAL.