

Thinking Outside the Box!



Pineapple Cashew Chicken and Rice

If you're not used to cooking, keeping fresh produce around to use before it goes bad might be a challenge when you don't have familiar recipes to make. You might stick to familiar fruits and vegetables to limit food waste but if you want to try new dishes with new fruits and vegetables, there is another option than fresh. A great alternative is to stock up on canned and frozen fruits and vegetables that have a much longer shelf life.

Nutrition experts and health professionals will tell you that eating dark green leafy vegetables is important in a healthy, balanced diet. Dark leafy greens like kale, collards, mustard and turnip greens, and chard are nutrient powerhouses. They are loaded with fiber along with key vitamins, minerals and other phytonutrients that may help protect against heart disease, diabetes, bone fractures, and cancer; but, Americans are not eating enough! Adults should aim to eat at least 2 cups of dark green leafy vegetable, per week. Don't just think of these as fresh ingredients but they can also be found in the canned and frozen section as well and depending on how you cook them, you won't be able to tell the difference. Frozen spinach can be added to many meals while resembling cooked fresh spinach.



Many of us grew up using canned corn or peas in our meals while keeping the canned fruit as a snack but canned fruit can also be incorporated into your dinners to add flavor. Using canned fruit to sweeten dishes has the added benefit of adding more nutrients to your meals without adding fat. The key to choosing the most nutrient dense frozen and canned fruits and vegetables is to aim to select items with no added sugars, salt or fat. Use the Dietitian Approved Thumb to help identify those canned and frozen fruits and vegetables as we have done the work for you.

The benefits of keeping these canned items on hand is it allows you to be more creative in your dishes! In addition, many times, they are less expensive than fresh produce. Using a combination of fresh that is in season and canned or frozen will help stretch the food dollar, save time and assist you in upping your fruit and veggie intake. For most people, eating more fruits and vegetables is a health positive move. Try making a stir fry with canned mandarins or a glaze using peaches. This recipe uses pineapple to not just marinate the chicken but to also use the pineapple chunks as additional flavoring to the meal as a whole.

Ingredients: 4 servings

- 1 lb. boneless skinless chicken breast cut into 1-inch pieces
- 2 tbsp. olive or canola oil, divided
- 8 oz. pineapple unsweetened pineapple chunks (reserve juice)
- 1 tsp. garlic powder
- ½ tsp. ground ginger
- 1 tbsp. low-sodium soy sauce
- ⅓ cup hoisin sauce
- 2 tsp. brown sugar, packed
- 2 medium zucchini squash, sliced into ¼ inch pieces
- ½ white onion, sliced thin
- 1 red bell pepper, cored, seeded and sliced
- 3 tbsp. water
- Dash of salt
- Dash of pepper.
- ⅓ cup dry roasted cashews, unsalted
- 1½ cups instant brown rice and needed water

Directions:

1. In a deep dish place the chicken and add 1 tbsp of the oil, the reserved pineapple juice, sauces, sugar and spices. Gently toss to mix and coat the pieces. Set aside for 15-20 minutes to marinate.
2. While the chicken is marinating, wash and prepare the produce per the ingredients' description.
3. Begin cooking the rice according to package directions.
4. In a large medium-sized skillet over medium heat, bring the remaining oil to temperature. Add the pieces of chicken a little at a time to begin browning. Reserve the marinade. Add the water (2-3 tbsp.) to the skillet to prevent burning and sticking.
5. Brown the chicken on all sides and then add the fresh produce with a dash of salt and pepper.
6. Turn the heat to medium-high heat and then add ½ the reserved marinade. Cook tossing constantly to prevent burning. Once the chicken is cooked through, add the remaining marinade, cashews, and pineapple. Turn the heat back down to medium, cover and cook for an additional 5 minutes or until the vegetables are to the desired level of tenderness.
6. Serve by placing ¼ of the cooked brown rice in a bowl and top with ¼ of the chicken and vegetables. Garnish with green onions if desired.

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.

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