

One-Pot Meals



One-pot meals made from a variety of foods are great for weeknight dinners. They need little preparation and cleanup and won't break your budget. One-pot meals include stew, chili, and soup. Once you learn the basic one-pot cooking method, you can mix and match your favorite ingredients to make other meals.

Portion Control

Keep portions of one-pot meals to about 1½ cups per person. To round out your meal, serve the dish with a green salad or small whole wheat dinner roll.

Think Ahead

A benefit of one-pot meals is that you can cook them ahead of time and freeze them for a quick meal on another day. You can also freeze leftovers for a later date.

To freeze, divide the prepared meal into small, shallow containers with well-fitting lids. Leave the containers out for up to 2 hours to cool. Once the food reaches 70°F, it can be placed in the freezer safely. Cover the containers tightly and mark them with the date. One-pot meals can be stored safely in the freezer for up to 2 months.

Use the basic steps provided in this handout to learn how to make stew, chili, and soup. Check your recipe for exact amounts of ingredients and cooking times.

How to Make Stew

1. Cut meat or poultry into cubes. Chop vegetables (potatoes, carrots, onions, tomatoes, mushrooms) into small pieces. Wash fresh herbs, like parsley, thyme, bay leaf, or rosemary, or measure out dried herbs.
2. Heat canola oil in a large pot over medium heat and add meat or poultry. Use 1 tablespoon oil for each pound of meat or poultry.

Equipment

- Cutting board
- Knife
- Measuring cups and spoons
- Large pot with lid
- Wooden spoon

3. Sauté meat or poultry until browned on all sides. (Note: Some recipes will tell you to remove the meat before you start cooking the vegetables.)
4. Slowly add broth, tomato sauce and/or diced tomatoes, chopped vegetables, and herbs to the pot. Bring the broth to a boil.
5. Cover the pot and turn the heat to low. Simmer until meat or poultry is tender, stirring occasionally. Check the recipe for the exact cooking time and number of servings.

How to Make Chili

1. Heat 1 tablespoon canola oil in a large pot over medium-high heat.
2. Add ½ cup chopped onions and 3 minced garlic cloves and cook for several minutes, until fragrant. You can also add chopped peppers at this point.
3. Add ground beef, chicken, or turkey to the pot. Cook about 5 minutes, stirring to crumble.
4. Stir in water, beans, tomatoes or other vegetables, and herbs and spices like cilantro, chili powder, cayenne pepper, cumin, and cinnamon. Bring to a boil.
5. Turn the heat to low and simmer, stirring occasionally. Cooking time can vary, depending on the recipe, from 30 minutes to 1 hour.

How to Make Soup

1. Chop leftover meat or poultry into small pieces. Select fresh or frozen vegetables, like carrots, peas, onions, cabbage, and broccoli, and (as needed) cut them into pieces about the same size as the meat or poultry. The more you use, the chunkier your soup will be!
2. Heat 1 quart chicken, vegetable, or beef broth in a large pot over medium heat until boiling.
3. Add uncooked pasta or rice to the pot. Bring to a boil, then turn heat to medium-low. Cook pasta or rice until tender (check the time on the package label).
4. Add vegetables and leftover meat. You can also add canned beans that have been rinsed and drained. Bring soup to a boil, then turn heat to low and simmer for 10–15 minutes.

