

# Elegant dinner ready quick

Amidst today's hectic pace, wouldn't it be nice to enjoy a romantic candlelight dinner at home?

You won't have to worry about giving up your table to the next diners; the meal will be relaxed and unhurried. To set the stage, start with candles. They don't have to be fancy — a couple of votive candles will do nicely.

Pick up a small bunch of colorful flowers while you're at the supermarket. Pull out your favorite china and napkins. Don't forget to check out the many fabulous paper napkin choices available; they can quickly help set the mood of the meal.

Your very special menu should be easy, too, so you won't spend the entire evening in the kitchen. Three-ingredient Herb-Garlic Cheese Stuffed Veal Chops can be prepared and served in about 30 minutes — even less time if you ask your meat retailer to cut the pocket in the chops for you.

With a mixture of cheese and lemon pepper, then quickly broiled to medium doneness. At medium, they will be slightly pink in the center. Make a simple pasta side dish in under 30 minutes as well. Just toss linguine or another favorite pasta with a bit of olive oil and fresh herbs. A green salad is the only other accompaniment you'll need.

Use one of the convenient prewashed, ready-to-serve salad combinations from the produce section. For dessert, check the local bakery for a special dessert.

Here's a recipe from the Test Kitchens of the National Livestock & Meat Board.

## HERB-GARLIC CHEESE STUFFED VEAL CHOPS

2 well-trimmed veal rib or loin chops, cut 1-inch thick (approximately 8 ounces each)

1/2 teaspoon lemon pepper

Cheese stuffing

2 tablespoons herb-garlic fla-

vorod soft spreadable cheese  
1/4 teaspoon lemon pepper

In small bowl, combine stuffing ingredients; mix well. Divide into two portions.

Using a small sharp knife, cut a horizontal pocket (approximately 2 1/4 inches) through center of large muscle in each veal chop; fill each with one portion of stuffing.

Close pockets with small skewers or wooden picks. Sprinkle both sides of each chop with remaining lemon pepper.

Place chops on rack in broiler pan so surface of veal is 3 to 4 inches from heat. Broil 10 to 12 minutes for medium doneness, turning once. Makes 2 servings.

Recipe may be doubled to make 4 servings.

*Nutrition information per serving:* 243 calories; 29 g protein; 1 g carbohydrate; 13 g fat; 1.0 mg iron; 322 mg sodium; 136 mg cholesterol.



Dinner for two: A romantic dinner for two can be ready in 30 minutes when Herb-Garlic Cheese Stuffed Veal Chops are the main course.

# Tips for elegant but easy entertaining

Entertaining is a special gift we give to family and friends while enjoying time spent together. But busy schedules often keep us from entertaining as often as we would like or from enjoying the time we spend entertaining as much as we could.

Whether it's a dinner party in honor of a friend's birthday or a family luncheon to celebrate your daughter's college graduation, some advance planning and a few tips to take out some of the trouble result in parties that everyone enjoys — including the hostess.

Good Humor — Breyers Ice Cream offers the following tips from food consultant Linda

Behrends for enjoying elegant but easy entertaining:

- "Plan your theme and menu early," Behrends suggests. "Let the season or the reason for the party be your inspiration."
- Develop a schedule in advance, outlining the preparations for the week before the party. The more organized you are, the more time you will have to spend with your guests.
- Prepare anything possible in advance. Some items you can prepare the night before; others may be prepared even earlier and frozen.
- "Combine the convenience of

purchased food with a few personalized touches," Behrends says. "For example, brush the rolls you've purchased with your own herb butter."

■ Create a dramatic tablecape using fresh flowers or produce in season. Or mix flowers and produce together — for example, lemons and limes with fresh daisies. "Trailing ivy or other green vines the length of the table and nestling a few votive candles among the leaves also creates an elegant tablecape," said Behrends.

■ Don't worry if you don't have a complete set of china for the number of guests invited. Mix and match patterns to create a unique,

colorful table setting.

- Use candles to cast a warm glow for evening entertaining. Group large pillar candles on a silver tray or place a small votive candle at each setting. For a dramatic centerpiece, float candles and flower petals in a glass bowl. Use unscented candles near food.
- Choose music to fit the theme of the party and help set the mood.
- Make festive napkin rings by twisting or braiding several pastel or gold ribbons. Or if you use ivy to create your tablecape, get enough to twist around your napkins as well.

# Ham & asparagus pasta velvety rich

As any smart eater knows, creamy sauces are like neon signs, blinking the words "high in fat" over each noodle. Whipping cream and butter are the usual weighty culprits that give these sauces their velvety richness, but they also add extra calories and fat. Wouldn't it be nice to keep that creaminess, yet cut the fat to a minimum? Skim evaporated milk is the clever way to do just that. By substituting skim evaporated milk for whipping cream and using lean ham, you can trim the fat in this satisfying pasta dinner to just 4 grams a serving.

I small red or green sweet pepper, cut into thin strips  
Grated Parmesan cheese (optional)

Snap off and discard the woody bases from the fresh asparagus into 1-inch pieces. (Or, thaw and discard the frozen cut asparagus.) Set aside.

For sauce, in a medium saucepan combine stewed tomatoes, parsley, basil, oregano and ground red pepper, if desired. Bring to boiling; reduce heat. Simmer, uncovered, about 15 minutes or until the volume is reduced to 2 1/4 cups, stirring occasionally. Add the evaporated milk all at once, stirring constantly. Heat through; do not boil.

## HAM AND ASPARAGUS PASTA

1/4 pound fresh asparagus spears or one 10-ounce package frozen cut asparagus

Two 14 1/2-ounce cans low-sodium stewed tomatoes, cut up

1 tablespoon dried parsley flakes

1/2 teaspoon dried basil, crushed

1/2 teaspoon dried oregano, crushed

1/2 teaspoon ground red pepper (optional)

1 cup evaporated skim milk

10 ounces multicolored pasta, such as wagon wheel or corkscrew

6 ounces lean fully cooked ham, cut into bite-size strips

To serve, place the pasta mixture on a serving platter; top with sauce. If desired, serve with Parmesan cheese. Serve warm.

Makes 4 or 5 main-dish servings.

*Nutrition facts per serving:* 460 cal., 4 g fat, 16 mg cholest., 27 g protein, 81 g carbs., 0 g fiber, 643 mg sodium. Daily values: 33 percent calcium, 31 percent iron, 47 percent vit. A, 113 percent vit. C, 89 percent thiamine, 44 percent riboflavin, 45 percent niacin.

# Celebrate spring with strawberry tart

AP — Strawberry cheesecake tart features a flaky tart crust with semisweet chocolate, cream cheese and a crown of sliced strawberries. (You can create a reduced-fat version of this dessert by using nonfat cream cheese and soft chocolate.)

While the tart's presentation is decidedly elegant, it's quick to assemble when using a ready-made pie crust. The cream cheese mixture can be prepared ahead of time, so you need only melt the chocolate and assemble at least an hour before serving.

## STRAWBERRY CHEESECAKE TART

1 prepared refrigerated pie crust, for a 9-inch, single-crust pie (half of a 15-ounce package)

Two 8-ounce packages cream cheese, softened

3 tablespoons sugar

1 teaspoon vanilla

3 ounces semisweet chocolate, melted

1 1/2 to 2 baskets strawberries, stemmed and halved

2 tablespoons strawberry or red currant jelly, melted

Heat oven to 425 degrees F. Press pie crust into 9-inch round tart pan with removable bottom. Fold edge in and press firmly against side of pan. Prick crust all over with fork. Refrigerate 10 minutes.

Bake tart crust in the center of 425-degree F oven 10 to 12 minutes until lightly browned. Cool on rack. Meanwhile, in bowl, beat cream cheese, sugar and vanilla to blend thoroughly. When tart shells completely cool, spread melted chocolate evenly over bottom. Refrigerate 5 to 10 minutes until set.

Spread cheese mixture evenly over chocolate. Arrange strawberries on cheese mixture; brush lightly with jelly. Refrigerate at least 1

hour before serving. Makes 8 servings.

*Nutrition facts per serving:* 410 cal., 30 g carbs., 6 g pro., 31 g fat, 70 mg chol., 280 mg sodium, 2 g fiber.

Lighter Version: Coat the bottom of the pie shell with 2 ounces melted semisweet chocolate and substitute two 8-ounce packages nonfat cream cheese for the cream cheese; increase vanilla to 1 1/2 teaspoons.

*Nutrition facts per serving of lighter version tart:* 260 cal., 31 g carbs., 14 g pro., 10 g fat, 20 mg chol., 810 mg sodium, 2 g fiber.

Recipe from: California Strawberry Commission

# Split peas, lentils add fiber to your diet

By AP NEWSWriters

Eat less meat. Eat more fiber. Watch fat. Cut down on sodium. Watch cholesterol. Eat Mediterranean. Eat from the bottom of the Food Guide Pyramid. Save time. Save money.

## SAVORY STUFFED PEPPERS

4 medium green peppers

1/2 cup split peas

2 1/4 cups water

1 packet vegetable broth

1/2 medium onion, chopped

1 cup sliced mushrooms

1 tablespoon minced garlic (2 to 3 cloves)

1 tablespoon olive oil

1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar

1/2 teaspoon ground cumin

1/2 teaspoon dried oregano

1/2 cup couscous

2 medium tomatoes, seeded and chopped

Remove tops and seeds from green peppers. Stand pepper cups upright in an 8-inch microwave-safe baking dish.

Wash and pick over peas. Place in a medium saucepot with 1 1/4 cups of the water and the vegetable broth. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat, cover and simmer for 30 minutes.

Meanwhile, in a large saucepan, saute onion, mushrooms and garlic in olive oil until onions are tender, 2 to 3 minutes. Remove from heat; stir in peas along with seasonings. Set aside.

In small saucepan, bring the remaining 1 cup of the water to a boil, add couscous and remove from heat. Cover; let stand for 5 minutes. Stir into pea-vegetable mixture along with half of the tomatoes.

Stuff peppers with mixture, cover and cook on high (100 percent power) for 5 minutes. Top with remaining tomatoes. Makes 4 servings.

*Nutrition facts per serving:* 260 cal., 12.8 g pro., 4.5 g fat, 300 mg sodium, 45.3 g carbs., 11.91 g fiber, 0.7 g saturated fat.

Recipes from: USA Dry Pea and Lentil Council

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## LENTIL AND RICE ONE-POT SUPPER

1 cup lentils

1/2 cup rice

2 cups sliced carrots

3 cups water

1 packet vegetable broth

1 teaspoon garlic

1 teaspoon dried basil

1 tablespoon olive oil

Wash and pick over lentils. Place in a large saucepot with rice and carrots. Add remaining ingredients. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat, cover and cook until rice is done, 30 to 30 minutes. Makes 4 servings.

*Nutrition facts per serving:* 313 cal., 16.3 g pro., 4.3 g fat, 309 mg sodium, 53.8 g carbs., 8.43 g fiber, 0.8 g saturated fat.