

## Getting Started with Your

### Once-A-Month Cooking Holiday Menu Sampler

One of the best ways to de-stress the period between Thanksgiving and Christmas is to keep the home routines running smoothly: laundry, mail and bills, and – especially – meal preparation. You'll have extra baking and cooking over the holidays, but your family is still hungry for dinner every evening! Use this one-week cycle to help keep holiday mealtimes afloat. This cycle includes a family breakfast, Apple-Sausage Brunch Cake, and Beef Flank Steak with Mushroom Stuffing, an elegant entrée for company.

After you've sampled this technique, if you want to expand its value for your family, you'll find several month and two-week menus in the books *Once-A-Month Cooking* and *Once-A-Month Cooking Family Favorites*. These are the ultimate do-ahead dinner method, and include such helps as a kitchen equipment list, a freezing guide, a measurement conversion table, and even table conversation starters.

Note for families who eat **gluten-free**: As always, please read labels and select ingredients carefully, but if you do, the only recipe in this menu cycle that should not work for a gluten-free diet, according to Lori Baird, our gluten-free diet consultant, is the Chicken Almondine. You may want to make a substitution for that recipe. The book *Once-A-Month Cooking Family Favorites* includes a two-week cycle that is gluten-free.

Here are some tips to get you started with your menu sampler:

- Set aside shopping time and cooking time; it's best, for your own energy, to shop one day or evening, and cook the next day. This cycle will take you about 2-1/2 hours to prepare by yourself: less time if you cook with a friend.
- Read through the cycle to acquaint yourself with the flow and the recipes you'll be preparing.
- Look at the pantry list provided and transfer any items you don't have to the shopping list.
- After you shop, prepare for cooking: Leave out on the counter items that don't need refrigeration. Get out the spices and dry ingredients on the pantry list. Clear the counter of décor and unnecessary items.
- Label the freezer containers that you'll use for each entrée (see bottom of each recipe).
- Start cooking, using the Assembly Order to move your smoothly through the menu cycle.
- As you finish preparing a couple of entrees, squeeze the air out of the freezer bags, seal them, and put them into the freezer.

# Once-A-Month Cooking Holiday Menu Sampler

## Recipe List

French Stew

Sledder's Soup

Tortilla Lime Chicken

Chicken Amondine

Sweet Potato Casserole

Beef Flank Steak with Mushroom Stuffing

Apple-Sausage Brunch Cake

## Once-A-Month Cooking Holiday Menu Sampler

### Pantry List

Bay leaf (1 + 1)  
Black pepper  
Brown sugar (1 T)  
Catsup (1/4 cup)  
Cilantro leaves, dried (2 tsp)\*  
Cinnamon (1/4 tsp)  
Dry bread crumbs (1/2 + 1/2 cup)  
Egg (1)  
Garlic, chopped (from jar) (1 + 1-1/2 tsp)  
Honey (1 tsp)  
Maple syrup\*  
Marjoram, dried (1 tsp)  
Milk (1/2 cup)  
Minute Tapioca (1/4 cup)  
Mustard, prepared brown (1 tsp)  
Nutmeg, ground (1/4 tsp)  
Olive oil (2 + 1 T)  
Salt  
Thyme, dried (1/2 tsp)  
Vegetable oil (2 + 2 T)  
White pepper, ground (1/4 tsp) (optional)  
White wine (1 cup)  
Worcestershire sauce (1/4 cup)

#### Freezing Supplies

1-gallon Ziploc freezer bags – 7  
1-quart Ziploc freezer bags – 2  
Ziploc sandwich bags -- 2  
Cotton string  
13x9x2-inch baking dish  
Heavy-duty aluminum foil

# Once-A-Month Cooking Holiday Menu Sampler

## Shopping List

### Produce

- 2 medium Granny Smith apples
- 5 medium carrots
- 4 stalks celery
- 1 medium green bell pepper
- 1 bunch green onions
- Lime juice (2 T)
- ¼ pound fresh mushrooms
- 4 medium onions
- 1 bunch fresh parsley
- 1 parsnip
- 2 medium sweet potatoes
- 1 yellow or orange bell pepper

### Dairy/Refrigerator

- 1 8-ounce package shredded mild cheddar cheese (1 cup needed)
- 1 8-ounce package cream cheese
- 1 8-ounce package shredded Swiss cheese (2/3 cup needed)
- 1 stick butter \*
- 1 4-ounce tube refrigerated crescent rolls\*
- 1 8-ounce package Monterey Jack cheese (1/3 cup needed)\*

### Frozen

- 1 16-ounce bag frozen pearl onions
- 1 14.5-ounce can small peas
- 1 14.5-ounce can peeled and diced tomatoes

### Meats, Poultry, Fish

- 3 pounds beef stew meat
- 2 pounds flank steak
- 1 smoked ham steak (2 cups diced ham needed)
- 12 ounces bacon (3 strips needed)\*
- 1 9.6-ounce package smoked or fully cooked turkey sausage
- 1 9.6-ounce package Jimmy Dean fully cooked pork sausage patties
- 7 boneless, skinless chicken breast halves

### Canned Goods

- 1 10.5-ounce can beef consommé
- 1 14.5-ounce can whole green beans
- 1 8-ounce jar favorite salsa\*

2 6-ounce cans tomato paste  
1 14.5-ounce can beef broth\*

Pasta/Rice

1 8-ounce package spiral pasta (rotini)\*

Other

1 pound mixed dried beans (8 ounces needed)  
1 box "complete" pancake mix  
1 2.25-ounce package sliced almonds (1/2 cup needed)  
Tortilla chips (2 cups crushed)\*

## Once-A-Month Cooking Holiday Menu Sampler

### Assembly Order

**The night before your cooking day**, generously cover the dried beans for Sledder's Soup in water and soak overnight, or at least six hours. Just before bed put all ingredients for the **French Stew** in a slow-cooker on low and cook for 8 to 10 hours.

**On cooking day**, puncture the **sweet potatoes** in several places. Bake 3 chicken breast halves in a baking dish treated with non-stick spray and the two sweet potatoes on the oven rack with it in a preheated 375-degree oven for 50 minutes. The sweet potatoes should be slightly "squeezable" but not too soft. If necessary, leave the sweet potatoes in a little longer (set a timer so you won't forget!) Let the chicken and the sweet potatoes cool.

Label all freezer bags (see bottom of each recipe).

Cool the **French Stew**, divide it into 2 labeled 1-gallon freezer bags, and freeze.

#### **Chop**

- 3/4 cup parsley
- 4 stalks celery
- 2 tablespoons green onion
- 1 cup green bell pepper
- 7 cups onion
- 1 yellow or orange bell pepper

#### **Slice**

- 1/2 cup fresh mushrooms
- 1 9.6-ounce package of smoked or fully cooked turkey sausage into 1/2-inch slices
- 3 strips bacon into 1/2-inch strips with kitchen shears

#### **Peel and slice**

- 2 medium carrots (You will have peeled and sliced 3 carrots for the French Stew the night before.)
- 1 parsnip

#### **Peel and chop**

- 1-1/2 cups Granny Smith apples

Assemble **Sledder's Soup**, label and freeze.

Cut the 3 chicken breast halves into 1-inch cubes using kitchen shears.

Adapted from *Once-A-Month Cooking Family Favorites*  
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Assemble the **Tortilla Lime Chicken**, label and freeze.

Assemble the **Chicken Almondine**, label and freeze.

Peel and cut the sweet potatoes into 1-inch cubes.

Assemble the **Sweet Potato Casserole**, label and freeze.

Assemble **Beef Flank Steak with Mushroom Stuffing**, label and freeze.

Assemble **Apple-Sausage Brunch Cake**, label and freeze.

**Hurray! You have tucked 7 great entrees into your freezer. Put your feet up or do a happy dance and celebrate!**

## French Stew

3 pounds beef stew meat  
1 10-3/4-ounce can beef consommé  
3 large carrots, peeled and sliced  
1 14.5-ounce can whole green beans, drained  
8 ounces frozen pearl onions, separated  
1 14.5-ounce can small peas, drained  
1 14.5-ounce can peeled and diced tomatoes  
1 cup white wine  
1/4 cup minute tapioca  
1 tablespoon brown sugar  
1/2 cup fine dry bread crumbs  
1 bay leaf  
1 tablespoon salt, or to taste  
1/4 teaspoon pepper

Mix all the ingredients and cook in a slow-cooker on low for 8 to 10 hours.

Summary of processes: Peel and slice 3 carrots

Serves 8

Freeze in: 2 1-gallon Ziploc freezer bags

You can give one bag, still frozen, to another family as a hearty gift, perhaps with homemade cornbread. The other half you'll have available in your freezer.

## Sledder's Soup

½ 1-pound package mixed dried beans  
1 tablespoon olive oil  
2 onions, chopped  
1 yellow or orange bell pepper, chopped  
1-1/2 teaspoons chopped garlic  
2 carrots, peeled and sliced  
1 parsnip, peeled and sliced  
2 stalks celery, chopped  
1 smoked ham steak (2 cups ham, cubed)  
1 6-ounce can tomato paste  
½ teaspoon dried thyme  
1 bay leaf  
1 teaspoon dried marjoram  
2 tablespoons fresh parsley  
Salt and pepper

8 cups water\*

Generously cover beans and soak overnight: at least six hours. Drain and add enough cold water to cover by 2 inches. Bring to boil and boil for 10 minutes. Drain and rinse well.

Sauté onion, bell pepper and garlic in the olive oil in a large skillet. Add carrots, parsnip, celery and ham and cook 2-3 minutes. Pour into a large bowl the beans, sautéed vegetables, and remaining ingredients except for the water. Stir gently. Cool.

Pour ingredients into a 1-gallon freezer bag, label and freeze.

To serve, thaw the entrée. Pour into a large pot and add 8 cups water. Simmer for 1-1/4 hours, or until beans and vegetables are tender.

Summary of processes: Chop 2 onions and 1 yellow or orange bell pepper. Peel and slice 2 carrots and 1 parsnip. Chop 2 stalks celery. Cube 2 cups ham.

Serves 8

Freeze in: 1-gallon Ziploc freezer bag

## Tortilla Lime Chicken

2 tablespoons lime juice  
2 tablespoons vegetable oil  
1 teaspoon honey  
4 boneless, skinless chicken breast halves (cut in half, optional)

2 cups crushed tortilla chips\*  
1 8-ounce jar salsa\*  
2 teaspoons dried cilantro leaves\*  
1/3 cup grated Monterey Jack cheese\*

Whisk the liquids together and pour into a 1-gallon Ziploc freezer bag. Add the chicken breasts, squeezing the chicken to coat with the lime and oil. Label and freeze. Freeze the cheese in a Ziploc sandwich bag attached to the larger bag. Store tortilla chips and salsa in the pantry.

To serve, thaw the chicken. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Roll the chicken in crushed tortilla chips to coat. Bake chicken for 35 minutes.

Stir the chopped cilantro into the salsa. Pour the salsa on top of the chicken, sprinkle with the cheese, and return it to the oven for 15 more minutes.

Serves 4-6

Freeze in: 1 gallon Ziploc freezer bag; 1 Ziploc sandwich bag

## Chicken Amondine

- 1 8-ounce package cream cheese
- 1 cup celery, chopped
- ½ cup chopped onion
- 3 cups boneless, skinless chicken breast, cooked and chopped
- 2/3 cups shredded Swiss cheese
- ½ cup sliced almonds
- ¼ cup butter\*
- 1 tube (4oz) refrigerated crescent rolls\*

Mix cream cheese, celery and onion in mixing bowl (your hands work best). Add chicken and mix slightly. Pour into a 1-gallon Ziploc freezer bag. In a 1-quart Ziploc freezer bag store the cheese and almonds. Attach the bags, label and freeze. Store the crescent rolls and butter in the refrigerator.

To serve, thaw the chicken and almond mixtures. Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Pour the chicken mixture into a 2-quart baking dish treated with non-stick spray. Unroll the crescent roll dough, separate at perforations, and place the triangles over the chicken mixture. Melt the butter and stir into it the sliced almonds and Swiss cheese. Spread this mixture on top of the crescent rolls. Bake uncovered for 30 minutes or until crust is golden brown.

Summary of processes: Cook and chop 3 cups chicken, chop 1 cup celery, chop ½ cup onion

Serve 4

Freeze in: 1 gallon Ziploc freezer bag and 1 quart Ziploc freezer bag

## Sweet Potato Casserole

1 9.6-ounce package smoked or fully cooked turkey sausage cut into 1/2" slices  
2 medium sweet potatoes, baked and cut into 1-inch cubes  
2 tablespoons olive oil  
1 cup green pepper, chopped  
1/2 cup onion, chopped  
1 teaspoon minced garlic  
1 14 1/2-ounce can diced tomatoes  
1/4 teaspoon salt  
1/4 teaspoon pepper  
1 cup shredded mild cheddar cheese

8 ounces spiral pasta (rotini)\*

Cook the sweet potatoes in 375-degree oven until slightly squeezable but not too soft, about 75 minutes. Let them cool, then remove the skins and cut into 1-inch cubes. While the potatoes are cooling, sauté the green pepper, onion, and minced garlic in olive oil until onion is transparent, about 5 minutes.

Combine the sweet potatoes, sausage, onions, green pepper, garlic, diced tomatoes, salt and pepper, and pour into a 1-gallon Ziploc freezer bag. Label and freeze with the cheddar cheese in a Ziploc sandwich bag attached. Store the pasta in the pantry.

To serve, thaw the ingredients and pour the sausage mixture into a 13x9x2-inch baking dish treated with non-stick spray. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Cook the pasta according to package direction until al dente. Drain the pasta and carefully stir into the sausage mixture. Bake 30 minutes or until bubbly.

Summary of processes: Cut turkey sausage into 1/2" slices, cut baked sweet potatoes into 1-inch cubes, chop 1 cup green pepper and 1/2 cup onion

Serves 4-5

Freeze in: 1 gallon Ziploc freezer bag and 1 Ziploc sandwich bag

## Beef Flank Steak with Mushroom Stuffing

2 pounds flank steak  
¾ teaspoon salt, divided  
¼ teaspoon ground white pepper (optional)  
1 teaspoon prepared brown mustard  
2 tablespoons vegetable oil  
1 medium onion (2 cups chopped)  
½ cup sliced fresh mushrooms  
½ cup chopped fresh parsley  
2 tablespoons green onions, chopped  
1 tablespoon tomato paste  
½ cup dry bread crumbs  
1 teaspoon paprika  
¼ teaspoon ground black pepper  
3 strips bacon, cut into ½-inch slices\*  
1 14.5-ounce can beef broth (1 cup needed)\*  
2 tablespoons catsup  
string

Season flank steak with ½ teaspoon salt and white pepper. Spread one side with prepared brown mustard. Heat oil in skillet, add onion and sauté for 3 minutes, or until lightly browned. Add mushrooms; cook for 5 minutes. Stir in parsley, green onions, tomato paste and dry bread crumbs. Season with paprika and pepper. Spread the onion mixture on the mustard side of the flank steak, roll up jelly roll fashion, and tie with string. Slip the flank steak into a 1-gallon freezer bag, label and freeze. Store the bacon in the refrigerator and the beef broth in the pantry.

To serve, thaw the flank steak. Cook bacon in a stockpot until soft, stirring constantly. Add the meat roll and brown on all sides, approximately 10 minutes. Pour in beef broth, cover, and simmer for 50 minutes. (Meat should be pink but not bloody in center.) Remove the meat. Stir ketchup into the gravy and serve over the sliced flank steak.

Summary of processes: Chop 2 cups onion, slice ½ cup fresh mushrooms, chop ½ cup fresh parsley, chop 2 tablespoons green onions, cut 3 strips bacon into ½-inch slices

Serves 6

Freeze in: 1-gallon Ziploc freezer bag; cotton string

## Apple-Sausage Brunch Cake

1 9.6-ounce package Jimmy Dean fully cooked pork sausage patties (keep in their shrink wrap to freeze)  
2 cups complete pancake mix  
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon  
3/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg  
1 cup milk  
2 eggs  
1-1/2 cups peeled and chopped Granny Smith apple (2 apples)

Maple syrup\*

Treat an 13x9x2-inch baking dish with non-stick spray. In a small mixing bowl whisk together rapidly the pancake mix, cinnamon, nutmeg, milk and egg; about 1 minute. Stir in apples. Pour into baking dish, cover with heavy-duty aluminum foil, label and seal. Pour sausage into a 1-quart Ziploc bag and attach to the baking dish. Freeze.

To serve, thaw ingredients. Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Arrange sausage on top of pancake mix. Bake 20-25 minutes until golden brown. Serve with hot maple syrup.

Summary of processes: Peel and chop 1-1/2 cups Granny Smith apples

Serves 4-6

Freeze in: 13x9x2-inch baking dish; heavy-duty aluminum foil; 1-quart Ziploc freezer bag