Easy Peasy Low Carb Meals

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Abstract

Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS) is a hormonal disorder. Complications of this disease can cause metabolic syndrome (high blood sugar, unhealthy cholesterol, and high blood pressure) and Type 2 diabetes. Doctors suggest a healthy diet full of fruits, vegetables, and healthy carbohydrates to help control symptoms. PCOS is one of many health issues that can be managed with a low-carb diet. My capstone project is a recipe book filled with quick or easy low-carb dinners created with a busy parent in mind.

Keywords: PCOS, low-carb, recipes, menu, food, family, easy
Section 1: Introduction to your Capstone Project

The inspiration for this project came after my youngest daughter was diagnosed with Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS). My children’s health is important to me and since I am the main cook in my home, I take full responsibility for what is offered and served. Polycystic Ovary Syndrome is a hormonal disorder. Complications of this disease can cause metabolic syndrome (high blood sugar, unhealthy cholesterol, and high blood pressure) and Type 2 diabetes. I am a busy mother of six children. I work full-time, attend school full-time, and have children in sports, among other random commitments, so dinners in our home are often a chaotic mess.

When my daughter first got her diagnosis we were referred to a nutritionist who suggested a healthy diet full of fruits, vegetables, and healthy carbohydrates to help her control symptoms. Our family is a large, blended family, meaning there are many different palates to please. I try to plan and make meals everyone will enjoy, however, my current menu doesn’t always consist of the healthiest foods. This is often the case because deciding what to make for dinner, especially after a long day at work, can be extremely stressful.

My result was to make a recipe book filled with lower-carb dinners that can be made in either thirty minutes or less or with less than 15 minutes of preparation time. I have included tips and tricks to help with meal prep and optional side dishes for almost every meal.

Section 2: Elements coming together

My approach to this project began when I noticed that one of the last things my coworkers asked each other, before leaving for the workday, was what everyone was going to make for dinner. I realized that I was not the only busy parent who struggled with making home-cooked meals after a long day at work. The thought process of it all can be overwhelming, especially when the preparation of said dinner can usually take up to an hour.
I knew that having meals that were quick and easy would be the key to making the cookbook essential to not only my family but other families as well. I wanted meals that were comfort foods, yet had lower-carb options that were customizable depending on the needs of each family. Meals that were made for and approved by my family first, were an important step to ensure the success of value to stakeholders.

A key to this project was that I didn’t want my daughter, or any other person, to feel as though they were on a diet. Dieting during the adolescent years can cause other issues later in life, including having an unhealthy relationship with food, which could result in an eating disorder. Restrictive diets can harm a child’s physical and mental health…all of which I wanted to avoid. I wanted dinners that tasted good and were familiar enough so that the transition to the lower-carb diet would be effortless.

The tips and tricks added to the start of the recipe book are a collection of things I now do every other weekend, to make dinner prep easier. I scoured videos online, asked survey-like questions on my social media, and questioned friends and coworkers about their tips to ensure I had a multitude of ideas in hopes that at least one idea would benefit the reader.

As I researched recipes to include in my book, I decided I didn’t want a collection of other people's recipes. Instead, I spent time watching cooking videos or reading recipes online, before heading to the comment section to read other’s thoughts on it. More times than not, someone in the comments section had an idea that would kick the quality or taste of the meal up a few notches.

Since I also wanted meals that were quick and easy, I knew that including any meals that had too much preparation would not be looked at as often as the recipes that had short prep times. It was also my goal to include as many recipes that I could make with staples which are
usually already in our homes. Taking time to grocery shop for one meal is a time-consuming process that busy parents just don't have time for. Focusing on meals that include the same basic ingredients makes for a quick grocery shopping experience.

I felt a cookbook that was geared not only towards PCOS, but any person who has health struggles and who could benefit from a lower-carb diet would be the most beneficial project for me. I wanted the book to be accessible and free of cost to anyone who wished to read it and try the enclosed recipes, so I chose to publish the book through Amazon and Kindle Direct Publishing.

Section 3: Results

Once I realized that my cookbook would take more time than I originally thought to type up and format for publication, I decided to make small booklets of handwritten recipes, that I then copied, to give out to a select group of friends, family members, and coworkers. I wanted them to try out the recipes for themselves and rate them for me. I surveyed a total of seven different people: two of my best friends, two coworkers, two family members, and finally my daughter.

The feedback I received from everyone was very positive overall. Many commented that they felt the recipes didn’t seem much different than they were already eating, which was one thing I was happy about. I noticed that many times side dishes and added bread served at dinner were often the main culprits to added carbohydrates, so substituting those options with vegetables and fruit was best to keep highly processed food off the table. For those who tried dishes that were completely different than what they usually ate, I was told that having something different than the usual was a refreshing change since dinner time can often be boring and repetitive.
The result with the most impact was the reaction from my daughter who often helps me in the kitchen. I included her in meal preparation so that she could learn skills that would benefit her once she has graduated from high school, and is no longer living with me. She often mentioned that cooking dinner was fun and not as difficult as she thought it would be. She also mentioned that my recipes were easy to follow, which was something I tried to achieve by keeping out the often-added narrative that many cookbook recipes seem to have.

Section 4: Conclusion

At the beginning of this project, I was hoping to have a recipe book with thirty different recipes, that all had pictures taken by me. My goal was to make every dish that was included so that I could provide a picture. Ultimately, I was unable to accomplish this in the time frame allotted, especially with my busy life. Within the last two weeks I decided to shift through some of the recipes I have used for years, and much to my surprise, I found a handful of recipes that were low-carb and could be included in the book. These were recipes that I have had for many years, once written down from various magazines that I once shifted through to pass the time. Over the years I have changed a few of the ingredients, here and there, so each is now my recipe.

I included these recipes and have a total of twenty recipes, rather than the initial thirty that I was expecting. Another change from my initial proposal is that only half of the book will have photos. My biggest challenge was remembering to take a photo of the meals! There were SO many I forgot about until we all had eaten and there are rarely leftovers in my home. It was very frustrating and I got discouraged at times.
The final difference between my proposal and the final product was that I was unable to publish the book for free on KindleDirect. The minimum price allowed was $0.99. I truly hope this does not discourage people from trying my book.

For the most part, the book is more than I hoped for, though if I were to do anything differently, it would be to start the project earlier, set an alarm to remind myself to take photos, and have more patience with myself. With the right mindset, I know anything is possible.
Section 5: References

Polycystic Ovary Syndrome. Mayo Clinic. Retrieved April 14, 2024, from
https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/pcos/symptoms-causes/syc-20353439


Section 6: Appendix

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**TIPS TO HELP PREP:**

I try to schedule an hour on my weekends, twice a month, to prep any meat I may need for that week’s dinners. This may mean cooking, seasoning, and freezing meat for some meals. It also means pre-cutting meat raw before freezing. This helps cut down thaw time so it is all ready to go!

Here are a few suggestions:

- Cook ground beef and season it with Taco Seasoning in advance. Freeze until ready to use. Label: GROUND BEEF, SEASONED
- Cook ground beef and season with salt and pepper. Freeze until ready to use. Label: GROUND BEEF, PLAIN
- Costco (or your favorite) rotisserie chicken. Buy a few at a time, shred up, and portion out meat for later use. Freeze until ready to use. (You can also boil and shred chicken breast if you prefer. Use a hand mixer to make shredding chicken easier.) Label: SHRED CHICKEN, READY
- Cube steak and freeze. Label: STEAK BITES
- Cube pork chops and freeze. Label: PORK CHOP BITES
- Cube chicken breasts before freezing. Label: CHICKEN BREAST CHUNKS RAW
- Chicken Breast. Label: WHOLE BREAST, RAW

**Sirloin Bites**

**PREP TIME: 10 MINS**

**COOKTIME: 10 MINS**

**INGREDIENTS**

- Sirloin steak, cubed
- Olive oil
- Worcestershire sauce
- Steak seasoning
- Melted butter
- Minced garlic
- Parsley

**DIRECTIONS**

Cube steak into bite-sized pieces

Heat a pan with olive oil. Add the steak, Worcestershire sauce, and seasonings. Cook in an air fryer at 400° F for 7-10 mins, shaking once at the halfway mark.

(7 mins is medium, 10 mins for well done. Cook depending on your steak preference)

Toss in melted butter and garlic

Enjoy!

**SIDE OPTIONS:**

- Vegetables: Mashed Cauliflower, Salad
- For a few more carbs: Brown Rice, Baked Potato
EASY PEASY LOW CARB MEALS

**JUICY CHICKEN BREAST**

**PREP TIME: 5 MINS**  
**COOK TIME: 25 MINS**

**INGREDIENTS**
- Whole Chicken Breast
- Garlic Powder
- Garlic Salt
- Lemon Pepper Seasoning
- Paprika
- Avocado Oil

**DIRECTIONS**
Place both sides of the chicken breast dry with a paper towel. Liberally coat the chicken breast with seasonings. Turn the breast over and repeat.

Get a pan hot and coat it with avocado oil. Sear chicken on one side for 5 minutes.

Fry and immediately place in oven at 400° F for 13 mins.

Pull from oven and rest on the counter for 5 mins.

Enjoy.

**SIDE OPTIONS:**
- Vegetables, Mashed Cauliflower, Salad. For a few more carbs: Brown Rice, Baked Potatoes

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**CHICKEN FAJITAS**

**PREP TIME: 15 MINS**  
**COOK TIME: 20 MINS**

**INGREDIENTS**
- White Chicken breast
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- One red pepper
- One yellow pepper
- One orange pepper
- Yellow Onion (¼)
- 2 teaspoons chili powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon ground paprika
- ½ teaspoon onion powder
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- ¼ teaspoon oregano pepper

**DIRECTIONS**
Combine all spices and peppers into a bowl. Add vegetables into a pan. Add oil to a pan and heat over medium heat. Add peppers and onions. Cook until to your desired firmness. Remove from heat.

Slice chicken breast into strips. Add chicken to skillet. Cook until done. Add peppers and onion back into the pan. Season with seasonings. Cook for a few more minutes until all flavors have melded.

**OPTIONAL TOPPINGS:**
- Salsa (optional)
- Sour Cream (optional)
- Cheese (optional)
- Serve over lettuce or with low-carb tortillas

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**JALAPENO POPPER CHICKEN CASSEROLE**

**PREP TIME: 10 MINS**  
**COOK TIME: 20 MINS**

**INGREDIENTS**
- Shredded Chicken, 2 cups
- 5 slices of bacon, diced
- Onion, ¼ chopped
- Cream Cheese, softened 8 oz
- Mayonnaise, 1/8 cup
- Shredded cheddar cheese, 1/2 cup
- Diced parmesan cheese, 1/4 cup
- Jar Nacho jalapenos, 1/4 cup and a splash of the juice

**TOPPING**
- Pork Slices, crushed, 2 oz bag
- Grated parmesan cheese, 1/4 cup
- Melted butter, 4 TBSP

**DIRECTIONS**
Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Place shredded chicken in a 3X9 casserole dish. Fry bacon pieces until crisp. Remove bacon and add onions to bacon grease and saute until tender.

Drain sautéed onion from bacon grease and add to a large mixing bowl. Add crumbled bacon, jalapenos, cream cheese, mayonnaise, cheddar and parmesan cheese. Mix until well combined.

Spread the jalapeno pepper mixture all over the shredded chicken. Bake for 15 minutes or until the topping starts to get brown and bubbly! Pull from oven and add topping.

**Topping:** Mix crushed pork skins, parmesan cheese, and melted butter. Sprinkle on top of jalapeno pepper-topped chicken and place under broiler for a couple of minutes until pork skins are browned. Be careful not to burn!

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**TACO SALAD/BURRITOS**

**PREP TIME: 5 MINS**  
**COOK TIME: 5 MINS**

**INGREDIENTS**
- Seasoned taco meat
- Black beans
- Lettuce
- Salsa (optional)
- Olives (optional)
- Sour Cream (optional)
- Shredded Cheese (optional)
- Low-carb tortillas (optional)
- Jalapenos (optional)
- Tomatoes (optional)
- Onions (optional)

**DIRECTIONS**
Heat taco meat and black beans. Assemble taco salads or burritos with whatever toppings make you happy.

Enjoy.