

Beat the Heat Summer Meal Ideas

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You can prepare quick and healthy summer meals even when it's hot outside and all you want to do is put your feet up when you get home from work.

Over the weekend, boil a box of bowtie or rotini-shaped pasta. Check nutrition labels for higher fiber varieties with 6 grams fiber per serving. Also, make one or two cups of brown or whole-grain rice. Cut up some of your favorite vegetables like bell peppers, onions, broccoli, etc. into bite-sized pieces and give them a quick five-minute boil. Store cooked pasta, rice and vegetables separately in the refrigerator. Keep mixed salad greens, fresh spinach, fresh fruit and avocado on hand to add to salads or stir fries. A lettuce spinner is a great tool for washing and drying lettuce quickly. Keep a couple of lower salt rubs in your cupboard to flavor chicken or fish before grilling.

Here are a couple of quick and delicious meal ideas for when you get home from work:

- For a pasta salad, mix together the pasta and vegetables. Add a small amount of low-fat salad dressing. Sprinkle with parmesan cheese, add your favorite variety of bean for protein and you're ready to eat.
- For a stir fry, mix the rice and vegetables in a pan with a tablespoon of healthy oil (olive or canola). Add a couple teaspoons of lite soy sauce, some red kidney beans and some peanuts for an Asian-inspired meal.
- For a plain meat entrée, use the pasta, rice or vegetables as a side dish and add a piece of grilled chicken or fish rubbed with Cajun or other seasonings.
- For a green salad, toss together fresh spinach or mixed greens, add grilled chicken or fish, fresh berries, nectarine slices or watermelon chunks and pecans. Top with a lite raspberry vinaigrette dressing.
- Use the fresh fruit for a healthy side dish, salsa or dessert. Add a glass of nonfat milk to balance your meal. If you're not having other grains with your meal, toss a whole grain roll from the freezer on the grill (you can brush it lightly with olive oil and garlic powder for more flavor).

Spend some time on the weekend (or the night before) to make your weekday supper meals quick, satisfying and healthy so you can still have time to fit in a long walk after dinner.

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