

National Relaxation Day

COMFORT FOOD THAT GIVES THE COOK A BREAK



A FIVE-RECIPE REST-DAY COOKBOOK

MEALBAKE COLLECTION | AUGUST 15, 2026

National Relaxation Day

COMFORT FOOD THAT GIVES THE COOK A BREAK



THE COLLECTION

Comfort that practically cooks itself

Let the slow cooker handle lemon chicken or tomato-basil tortellini soup while one-pan broccoli cheddar orzo covers a quick dinner. Finish with peach cheesecake jars or chocolate peanut butter oat bars, both ready from the refrigerator when it is time to unwind.

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COLLECTION NOTES

Start hands-off

Load either slow cooker meal early, keep the lid closed, and let the longest part of dinner happen without attention.

Chill dessert first

Assemble the cheesecake jars or press the oat bars ahead so dessert is ready straight from the refrigerator.

Choose one lane

Pair one comfort meal with one chilled dessert rather than making the full collection on a day meant for resting.



THE HANDS-OFF MAIN

Slow-Cooker Creamy Lemon Chicken and Potatoes

Tender chicken thighs and buttery baby potatoes cook together in a bright garlic-lemon broth, then get a light creamy finish for an easy family dinner.

INGREDIENTS

METHOD

VIEW ONLINE

ACTIVE
35 min

CHILL
3 hr 45 min

TOTAL
4 hr 20 min

SERVES
6

LEVEL
Easy

Minimum elapsed time shown; cooling and setup may vary.

Creamy Lemon Chicken and Potatoes

SHOPPING LIST

- 1 1/2 lb Baby Yukon Gold Potatoes, Halved
- 2 lb Boneless Skinless Chicken Thighs, Thawed
- 1 1/2 tsp Kosher Salt
- 1/2 tsp Black Pepper
- 4 cloves Garlic, Minced
- 1 cup Low-Sodium Chicken Broth
- 2 tsp Lemon Zest
- 1 tbsp Dijon Mustard
- 1 tsp Dried Thyme
- 3/4 cup Half-and-Half
- 2 tbsp Cornstarch
- 2 tbsp Fresh Lemon Juice
- 2 tbsp Flat-Leaf Parsley, Chopped
- 1 Lemon, Cut Into Wedges

WHY IT WORKS

This is the kind of dinner that makes a quiet day at home feel especially restorative. Chicken thighs and small potatoes share the slow cooker, so the main dish and its hearty side become tender together with very little attention.

Fresh lemon does two jobs here: zest perfumes the cooking broth without adding bitterness, while juice stirred in at the end keeps the sauce lively. Garlic, thyme, and a spoonful of Dijon give the mild cream sauce enough savory depth without making it heavy.

Keeping the lid closed is the secret to predictable slow-cooker timing. Arrange the potatoes underneath the chicken, cover, and let the cooker hold onto its heat until the potatoes are tender and the chicken reaches 165°F.

A quick cornstarch slurry and half-and-half transform the cooking liquid into a silky, light sauce during the final few minutes. Spoon it over the chicken and potatoes, then add parsley and lemon wedges for a relaxed family meal that still feels complete.

KITCHEN NOTES

- Use thawed chicken thighs only; frozen chicken can spend too long at an unsafe temperature in a slow cooker.
- Choose potatoes no larger than 1 1/2 inches wide and halve any larger ones so they finish cooking with the chicken.
- Check the chicken with an instant-read thermometer in the thickest piece, avoiding contact with the slow cooker or potatoes.
- For the smoothest sauce, let the half-and-half lose its refrigerator chill while the chicken cooks and whisk it thoroughly with the cornstarch before adding.

Creamy Lemon Chicken and Potatoes



1

Lightly coat a 6-quart slow cooker with cooking spray. Spread the halved potatoes in an even layer across the bottom.



2

Pat the chicken thighs dry. Season them all over with the salt and pepper, then arrange them in a single layer over the potatoes.



3

Whisk the garlic, chicken broth, lemon zest, Dijon mustard, and thyme in a measuring cup until combined. Pour the mixture evenly around the chicken.



4

Cover and cook on HIGH for 3 1/2 to 4 hours without lifting the lid, until the potatoes are fork-tender and the thickest chicken thigh registers at least 165°F.

Creamy Lemon Chicken and Potatoes



5

Transfer the chicken and potatoes to a shallow serving dish and tent loosely with foil, leaving the cooking liquid in the slow cooker.



6

Whisk the half-and-half and cornstarch in a bowl until completely smooth. Stir the slurry into the hot cooking liquid.



7

Cover and cook on HIGH for 10 to 15 minutes, until the sauce lightly coats a spoon. Stir in the lemon juice and taste for seasoning.



8

Spoon the creamy lemon sauce over the chicken and potatoes. Sprinkle with parsley and serve with lemon wedges.



THE MEATLESS BOWL

Slow-Cooker Tomato Basil Tortellini Soup

A relaxed, meatless slow-cooker soup with a savory tomato broth, tender cheese tortellini, baby spinach, and fresh basil.

INGREDIENTS

METHOD

VIEW ONLINE

ACTIVE
30 min

CHILL
4 hr

TOTAL
4 hr 30 min

SERVES
6

LEVEL
Easy

Minimum elapsed time shown; cooling and setup may vary.

Tomato Basil Tortellini Soup

SHOPPING LIST

- 1 medium Yellow Onion, finely chopped
- 4 cloves Garlic, minced
- 2 28-ounce cans Crushed Tomatoes
- 4 cups Low-Sodium Vegetable Broth
- 2 tablespoons Tomato Paste
- 1 tablespoon Extra-Virgin Olive Oil
- 1 teaspoon Dried Oregano
- 1/2 teaspoon Dried Thyme
- 1/4 teaspoon Red Pepper Flakes
- 1 teaspoon Kosher Salt
- 1/2 teaspoon Black Pepper
- 20 ounces Refrigerated Cheese Tortellini
- 5 ounces Baby Spinach
- 1/2 cup Heavy Cream
- 1/2 cup Fresh Basil Leaves, thinly sliced
- 1/3 cup Finely Grated Parmesan, for serving

WHY IT WORKS

This slow-cooker soup is designed for a day when dinner should mostly take care of itself. Crushed tomatoes, vegetable broth, onion, garlic, and dried herbs simmer into a full-flavored base while you step away from the kitchen.

Refrigerated cheese tortellini goes in only for the final stretch. That timing keeps the pasta tender and distinct instead of swollen or mushy, while baby spinach wilts into the hot broth without any extra pan to wash.

A modest splash of cream softens the tomatoes without turning the soup into a heavy cheese sauce. Fresh basil added at the end keeps its aroma bright and gives each bowl a welcome contrast to the long-cooked tomato base.

Serve the soup with warm bread or a simple green salad. If you expect leftovers, cook only the tortellini you plan to eat and refrigerate the remaining broth separately so the pasta keeps its texture.

KITCHEN NOTES

- Slow cookers vary, so begin checking refrigerated tortellini after 15 minutes on HIGH.
- For planned leftovers, cook tortellini separately and add it to individual bowls.
- Use vegetarian Parmesan or omit it if you need the entire meal to be strictly vegetarian.

Tomato Basil Tortellini Soup



1

Add the onion, garlic, crushed tomatoes, vegetable broth, tomato paste, olive oil, oregano, thyme, red pepper flakes, salt, and black pepper to a 6-quart slow cooker.



2

Stir until the tomato paste is dispersed and the seasonings are evenly combined.



3

Cover and cook on LOW for 4 hours, until the onion is very tender and the broth tastes rounded and savory.



4

Switch the slow cooker to HIGH. Stir in the refrigerated tortellini, cover, and cook for 15 to 20 minutes, checking at 15 minutes, until the pasta is just tender.

Tomato Basil Tortellini Soup



5

Stir in the spinach a handful at a time until it wilts into the hot broth.



6

Pour in the cream and cook uncovered for 5 minutes, just until the soup is hot again; do not let it boil.



7

Turn off the slow cooker and stir in most of the fresh basil. Taste and adjust the salt and pepper as needed.



8

Ladle the soup into bowls and finish with the remaining basil and grated Parmesan.



THE QUICK COMFORT

One-Pan Broccoli Cheddar Orzo

Tender orzo and broccoli cook together in one pan, then sharp cheddar and milk turn the starchy cooking liquid into a smooth, cozy sauce.

INGREDIENTS

METHOD

VIEW ONLINE

ACTIVE
30 min

CHILL
0 min

TOTAL
30 min

SERVES
4

LEVEL
Easy

Minimum elapsed time shown; cooling and setup may vary.

Broccoli Cheddar Orzo

SHOPPING LIST

- 2 tablespoons Unsalted Butter
- 1 Small Yellow Onion, Finely Chopped
- 2 cloves Garlic, Minced
- 1 1/2 cups Orzo
- 2 3/4 cups Low-Sodium Vegetable Broth
- 1/2 teaspoon Kosher Salt
- 1/4 teaspoon Black Pepper
- 4 cups Broccoli, Cut into Small Florets
- 1 cup Whole Milk
- 2 cups Sharp Cheddar Cheese, Freshly Grated
- 1 teaspoon Dijon Mustard
- 1/2 Lemon

WHY IT WORKS

This stovetop orzo delivers the familiar comfort of broccoli cheddar soup in a dinner that needs just one pan. The pasta releases enough starch as it cooks to thicken the sauce naturally, so there is no separate roux and no second pot to wash.

Cut the broccoli into small, bite-size florets so it becomes tender in the same time the orzo finishes. Adding it partway through protects its color and keeps the stems pleasantly firm instead of letting the florets dissolve into the pasta.

The liquid cues matter more than the clock: before the milk goes in, the orzo should be nearly tender and the broth should look glossy rather than soupy. Freshly grated sharp cheddar melts more smoothly than packaged shreds, which often contain anti-caking starch.

Serve the orzo as soon as it turns creamy, with black pepper and a squeeze of lemon to balance the cheese. It thickens as it rests, but a small splash of milk will loosen leftovers without making them watery.

KITCHEN NOTES

- Grate the cheddar from a block so it melts into a smoother sauce.
- If the pan looks dry before the orzo is tender, add warm broth 2 tablespoons at a time.
- To reheat, stir in a splash of milk and warm gently over low heat.

Broccoli Cheddar Orzo



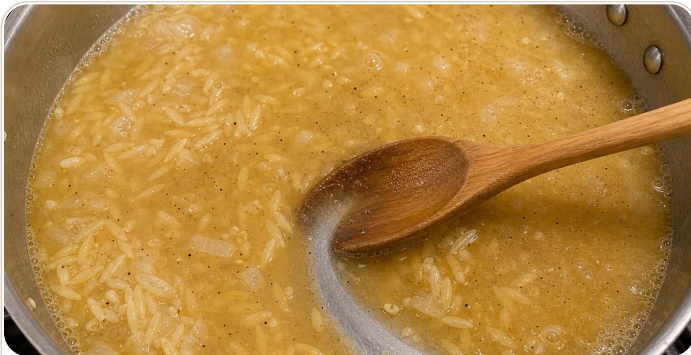
1

Melt the butter in a wide, deep 12-inch skillet over medium heat. Add the onion and cook for 3 to 4 minutes, stirring occasionally, until softened but not browned.



2

Stir in the garlic and orzo. Cook for 1 minute, stirring constantly, until the garlic smells fragrant and the orzo is lightly coated with butter.



3

Pour in the vegetable broth, then add the salt and black pepper. Bring to a steady simmer, scraping the bottom of the pan to release any pasta that sticks.



4

Reduce the heat to medium-low and cook uncovered for 5 minutes, stirring every minute. The broth should still cover most of the orzo at this point.

Broccoli Cheddar Orzo



5

Fold in the broccoli, cover the skillet, and cook for 5 to 7 minutes, stirring twice, until the florets are bright green and easily pierced at the stem. The orzo should be nearly tender with a slight bite, and about 1/2 cup of glossy broth should remain.



6

Uncover and stir in the milk and Dijon mustard. Simmer gently for 2 to 3 minutes, stirring often, until the orzo is tender and the liquid lightly coats a spoon; do not let the milk boil hard.



7

Remove the skillet from the heat. Add the cheddar a handful at a time, stirring until each addition melts before adding the next. Squeeze in the lemon juice, taste, and adjust the salt and pepper. Rest for 2 minutes, then serve while creamy.



THE CHILLED FRUIT DESSERT

No-Bake Peach Cheesecake Jars

Buttery graham crumbs, a light tangy cheesecake filling, and juicy vanilla-lemon peaches are layered in individual jars for an easy make-ahead summer dessert.

[INGREDIENTS](#)[METHOD](#)[VIEW ONLINE](#)

ACTIVE
25 min

CHILL
2 hr

TOTAL
2 hr 25 min

SERVES
6

LEVEL
Easy

Minimum elapsed time shown; cooling and setup may vary.

Peach Cheesecake Jars

SHOPPING LIST

- 1 cup Graham Cracker Crumbs
- 4 tablespoons Unsalted Butter, Melted
- 6 tablespoons Granulated Sugar
- 1/8 teaspoon Kosher Salt
- 12 ounces Cream Cheese, Softened
- 1/3 cup Sour Cream
- 3/4 cup Heavy Cream, Cold
- 1 1/2 teaspoons Vanilla Extract
- 3 medium Ripe Peaches, Pitted and Cut into 1/2-Inch Pieces
- 1 tablespoon Fresh Lemon Juice
- 1/2 teaspoon Finely Grated Lemon Zest

WHY IT WORKS

These individual cheesecake jars turn ripe summer peaches into a relaxed dessert that can be assembled well before dinner. The layers look inviting through the glass, but the method stays simple: stir the crumb base, whip the filling, and spoon everything into place.

A little sour cream sharpens the cream cheese filling while softly whipped cream keeps it light enough to eat chilled. The peaches are tossed with lemon, vanilla, and just enough sugar to draw out their fragrance without creating a pool of juice.

Moisture control is what keeps the jars distinct. Drain any liquid that collects under the peaches before layering, and place the fruit above the cheesecake rather than directly against the crumbs. The butter-coated crumb base will stay pleasantly crisp for a day in the refrigerator.

Use short 8-ounce jars or small glasses so every spoonful reaches all three layers. Chill the assembled jars for at least 2 hours, then let them stand for about 5 minutes before serving to soften the filling slightly.

KITCHEN NOTES

- Choose peaches that yield slightly near the stem but are still firm enough to dice cleanly.
- For the neatest layers, transfer the filling to a zip-top bag, snip one corner, and pipe it into the jars.
- If making the dessert more than a day ahead, chill the peaches separately and add them a few hours before serving.

Peach Cheesecake Jars



1

Stir the graham cracker crumbs, melted butter, 1 tablespoon of the sugar, and the salt in a medium bowl until the crumbs are evenly moistened and hold together when pressed.



2

Divide the crumb mixture among six 8-ounce jars, about 3 tablespoons per jar. Press it gently into an even base with the back of a spoon, then refrigerate while you make the filling.



3

Beat the softened cream cheese with 3 tablespoons of the sugar in a large bowl until completely smooth, scraping the bowl once. Beat in the sour cream and 1 teaspoon of the vanilla just until combined.



4

In a separate chilled bowl, whip the cold heavy cream to medium peaks. Fold one-third into the cream cheese mixture to loosen it, then gently fold in the rest until no white streaks remain.

Peach Cheesecake Jars



5

Divide the cheesecake filling among the jars, keeping the sides clean and leaving at least 1 inch of space at the top. Smooth the filling and refrigerate the jars uncovered.



6

Toss the peaches with the remaining 2 tablespoons sugar, lemon juice, lemon zest, and remaining 1/2 teaspoon vanilla. Let stand for 10 minutes, then drain off any liquid that has collected in the bowl.



7

Spoon the drained peaches over the chilled cheesecake layer. Cover the jars and refrigerate for at least 2 hours, or up to 24 hours, so the filling becomes firm and thoroughly chilled.



8

Set the jars out for 5 minutes before serving. Serve cold, spooning straight down to pick up peaches, cheesecake filling, and crisp crumbs in each bite.



THE PANTRY TREAT

No-Bake Chocolate Peanut Butter Oat Bars

Chewy peanut butter oat bars with a firm dark chocolate topping, made on the stovetop and chilled until neatly sliceable.

[INGREDIENTS](#)[METHOD](#)[VIEW ONLINE](#)

ACTIVE
20 min

CHILL
2 hr

TOTAL
2 hr 20 min

SERVES
16

LEVEL
Easy

Minimum elapsed time shown; cooling and setup may vary.

Chocolate Peanut Butter Oat Bars

SHOPPING LIST

- 2 1/2 cups Old-Fashioned Rolled Oats
- 1 cup Creamy Peanut Butter
- 6 tablespoons Unsalted Butter
- 1/3 cup Packed Light Brown Sugar
- 2 tablespoons Pure Maple Syrup
- 1 teaspoon Vanilla Extract
- 1/2 teaspoon Kosher Salt
- 6 ounces Finely Chopped Dark Chocolate
- 1 pinch Flaky Sea Salt, optional

WHY IT WORKS

These no-bake bars turn familiar pantry staples into a calm, low-effort dessert. Toasty oats and peanut butter make the base pleasantly chewy, while a thin dark chocolate layer gives each square a clean snap without overwhelming the nutty flavor.

Briefly warming the binder is the key to bars that hold together. Let the brown sugar dissolve, then stir the oats over low heat so they absorb the glossy peanut butter mixture before it is pressed firmly into the pan.

A measured amount of maple syrup keeps the bars sweet but balanced. Semisweet chocolate works well too, but a 60 to 70 percent dark chocolate bar gives the richest contrast and slices more smoothly than oversized chips.

The bars need a full two hours in the refrigerator to become firm. Store them chilled for a tidy, fudgy bite, or let individual squares stand at room temperature for about 10 minutes before serving for a softer texture.

KITCHEN NOTES

- Use a conventional smooth peanut butter rather than a runny natural style; separated oil can keep the base from setting firmly.
- Refrigerate the bars in an airtight container for up to 1 week, placing parchment between layers, or freeze them for up to 2 months.
- For the cleanest cuts, warm the knife briefly under hot water, dry it thoroughly, and wipe it after each slice.

Chocolate Peanut Butter Oat Bars



1

Line an 8-inch square pan with parchment paper, leaving an overhang on two sides. Lightly coat the exposed sides with nonstick spray.



2

Pulse 1 cup of the oats in a food processor 6 to 8 times, just until coarsely broken. Combine them with the remaining whole oats in a bowl.



3

Melt the butter in a medium saucepan over medium-low heat. Add 3/4 cup peanut butter, the brown sugar, maple syrup, vanilla, and kosher salt; whisk for 2 minutes, until glossy and the sugar no longer feels gritty.



4

Reduce the heat to low and stir in all the oats. Cook for 2 minutes, stirring constantly, until the mixture thickens slightly and every oat is evenly coated.

Chocolate Peanut Butter Oat Bars



5

Transfer the warm oat mixture to the prepared pan. Cover it with a small sheet of parchment and press very firmly into an even layer, paying particular attention to the corners; remove the top parchment.



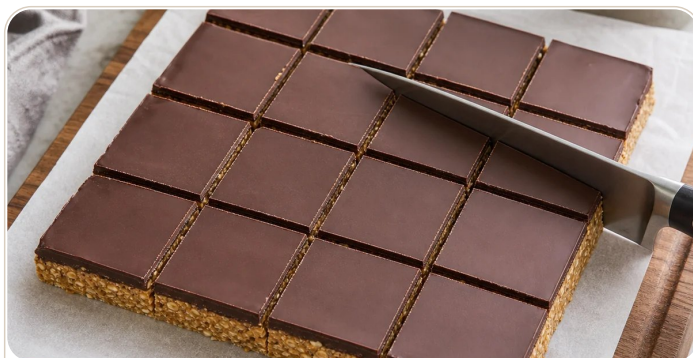
6

Place the chocolate and remaining 1/4 cup peanut butter in a heatproof bowl. Microwave in 20-second intervals, stirring well after each, until smooth, or melt over a pan of barely simmering water.



7

Spread the chocolate mixture evenly over the oat base and sprinkle with flaky sea salt, if using. Refrigerate uncovered for 20 minutes, then cover and chill for at least 1 hour 40 minutes more, until completely firm.



8

Lift the slab out by the parchment overhang. Let it stand for 5 minutes, then cut with a large sharp knife into 16 squares, wiping the blade between cuts.