



Alice Henneman, MS, RD, UNL Extension Educator

This soup is so simple to make and will warm you up on a cold winter's day!

## Turkey or Chicken Salsa Soup

- 16 oz. (2 cups) mild, chunky salsa**
- 2 cups frozen whole kernel corn**
- 2 (15 oz.) cans black soybeans, rinsed, drained**
- 2 cups chopped, cooked turkey or chicken**
- 1 quart (4 cups) low sodium chicken broth**

Combine in a large saucepan or Dutch oven. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer for 5 minutes. Season to taste with salt and freshly ground black pepper. If desired, top with grated cheddar cheese.



## \$tretch Your Food Dollar with Skillet Meals



Helping limited-resource families learn to prepare nutritious and safe foods while stretching their food dollars.

Mardel Meinke  
UNL Extension Associate

A skillet meal is a main dish combination, which implies it contains a protein as well as other food components. We often plan our meals around a meat or protein because it is often the most costly and takes the most time to prepare.

A skillet meal also includes a grain or starchy food which "stretches" the protein. This makes skillet meals economical as well as convenient because the same skillet or pan can be used to cook and serve the food.

They are time-saving because foods usually cook faster in the

skillet as compared to baking time in the oven. Skillet meals are also a family favorite, enjoyed by everyone.

There are many choices of protein including chicken, turkey, beef, pork, seafood, beans, lentils, or eggs. Popular choices for the grain or starchy portion might be bread, rice, potatoes, pasta, tortillas, beans, cornbread, barley, or oatmeal. Other flavors, sauces, toppings, and vegetables are added to make the skillet meal moist and flavorful. A recipe can easily be varied by just substituting a different protein or grain.

The 2010 USDA Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends 5–7 ounces of protein daily for adults. Choose MyPlate.gov, which is USDA's new icon for healthy Americans, suggests about one fourth of our plate should be protein foods.

The Skillet Lasagna recipe below is convenient, economical, and time-saving. It may become your families' favorite! Add a colorful fruit for a healthy and delicious meal.

### Skillet Lasagna

(8 servings)

- 1 pound ground beef**
- ½ onion, chopped**
- 2 cloves garlic, minced or ¼ teaspoon garlic powder**
- 3 cups spaghetti or pasta sauce**
- 1½ cups water**
- 6 ounces wide noodles, uncooked**
- 1 package (10 ounce) chopped spinach, thawed**
- 1 can (6.5 ounce) sliced mushrooms, drained (optional)**
- 1 container (12 ounce) low-fat cottage cheese**
- 8 ounce package Mozzarella cheese, shredded**

In a large skillet or electric frying pan, brown ground beef, onions and garlic. Drain fat. Add spaghetti sauce and water and bring to a boil. Layer noodles, cover with a lid and simmer for 5 minutes. Add spinach and mushrooms over noodles. Spoon cottage cheese over top. Sprinkle with Mozzarella cheese. Put lid on and heat for 5–10 minutes until noodles are tender. Serve immediately. After the meal, refrigerate leftovers promptly or freeze for a later meal.

## Planning Healthy Meals for One or Two — a Checklist

Alice Henneman, MS, RD  
UNL Extension Educator

Sometimes, it can be hard to get motivated when cooking a meal for just one or two people. Here is a checklist to help you get the most value for your time and money if you're cooking for two, or just you!



### General Tips

- ☑ Maximize your nutrition!
  - Make half your plate fruits and vegetables
  - Make at least half your grains whole grains
  - Switch to fat-free or low-fat (1%) milk
- ☑ Cook once, eat twice
  - Plan two meals from the same entree
  - Separate out extra food BEFORE serving
  - Eat extras in 3–4 days or freeze



### Shopping Tips

- ☑ Should you buy in bulk?
  - May be half the cost but just as expensive if you toss half!
  - Smaller portions help avoid eating same food over and over
  - Repackage meat in freezer bags for smaller servings and freeze
- ☑ Consider individually packaged servings of items if you frequently have leftovers
  - String cheese, wrapped cheese slices
  - Single containers of tuna, soup, fruit
  - Individual cartons of yogurt
- ☑ Buy smaller number of servings from meat counter
  - Enjoy one pork chop
  - Purchase a single salmon filet
  - Explore a different cut of beef
- ☑ Buy fruit at varying stages of ripeness
  - Buy some fruit to eat immediately and some to ripen for later
  - Apricots, bananas, cantaloupe, kiwi, nectarines, peaches, pears, and plums continue to ripen after purchase
  - Refrigerate fruit after it has ripened for longer storage
- ☑ Buy frozen vegetables in bags
  - Pour what you need
    - ♦ Use in 8 months or per package guidelines
  - Toss into soups, casseroles, salads
    - ♦ Thaw corn, peas in strainer under cool running water for salads
  - Taste and nutrition
    - ♦ Comparable to fresh
    - ♦ Often lower in salt than canned veggies
- ☑ Can-do canned foods
  - Nutrition comparable to fresh/frozen
  - No refrigerator space needed
  - Helpful in emergency; have manual can opener handy
  - Remove from can when storing unused portions
  - Use by date recommended on can for best safety/quality; after can is opened, use within 3–4 days
  - Low sodium versions available
  - Canned Food Alliance offers recipes at [www.mealtime.org](http://www.mealtime.org)

- ☑ Shop at supermarket salad bars
  - Purchase small amounts of fruits/vegetables
  - Buy individual salads
  - Use foods within 1–2 days of purchase for best quality



### Restaurant Tips

- ☑ Benefit from large restaurant portions
  - Two meals for price of one
  - Divide meal in half BEFORE eating!
  - Refrigerate perishables in shallow containers within 2 hours of service



### Storage Tips

- ☑ Refrigerator storage tips
  - Refrigerate in a shallow pan — food should be no more than 2 inches deep
  - Eat perishable foods in 3–4 days; heat until steaming hot (165°F)
  - Thaw packages on a plate in refrigerator near bottom so they don't drip on other foods
- ☑ Freezer Storage Tips
  - Store it, don't ignore it — food is "safe" indefinitely at 0°F but "quality" lowers over time
  - Use freezer quality containers for freezer storage
  - Safest to thaw in fridge; it takes about 24 hours to thaw 5 pounds of food
  - Foods that don't freeze well include: watery foods such as cabbage, celery, lettuce, etc.; cream or custard fillings; milk sauces; sour cream; cheese or crumb toppings, mayonnaise; gelatin; and fried foods
  - Store bread in freezer; remove a slice at a time and toast as needed.

### Reducing Recipe Size

- ☑ Recipes can frequently be successfully reduced by 1/2 to 1/3. Some helpful equivalents include:
  - 1 cup = 16 tablespoons
  - 1 tablespoon = 3 teaspoons
  - 1 cup = 8 fluid ounces
  - 1 fluid ounce = 2 tablespoons
  - 1 pound = 16 ounces (weight)
  - 1 pint = 2 cups
  - 1 quart = 2 pints
- ☑ To change pan sizes:
  - 9 x 2 x 13-inch pan holds 14 to 15 cups; for half, use:
    - ♦ Square 8 x 2-inch
    - ♦ Round 9 x 2-inch
  - Reduce oven temperature by 25°F if substituting glass for metal pan

