

Day 18

Go, continued!

Let's finish up the kitchen!

__ Open your lower cabinets and toss anything you don't use! Wipe out the bottoms of the cabinets

__ Same thing up high

__ Give the floor a good scrub!

Now, time to think about what's for dinner.

Seriously, this seems to be quite a stressful thing for so many moms. I have one son who says "What's for _____" the second we finish whatever meal we happen to be eating at the time! It's nice to be able to just direct him to the refrigerator to take a look and read it for himself! Planning out weekly menus is a great way to save. You spend less time at the grocery store and therefore less money! But it's even better in my view to have a plan for the whole month, every month! Here's how . . .make a list of everything you make for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Go through your recipe books or cards or whatever you have, and write them down. Then fill out a month-style form for the dinners. Try to mix it up so that beef/chicken/fish/turkey meals are spread throughout the month. You'll be surprised at how many things you do know how to cook, I'll bet!

Often when you try to use someone else's menus for your family, you find things on them that you know your kids are *not* going to eat. I'll go ahead and show you my family's list, and maybe it'll spark some ideas. If you want, you're more than welcome to copy it!

Breakfast:

Sun. Eggs, bacon, biscuits/rolls
Mon. Muffins
Tues. Cereal
Wed. Waffles
Thurs. Oatmeal
Fri. French Toast
Sat. Pancakes and sausage

Lunch:

Sun. Out to eat or big dinner prepared the night before
Mon. Mac n'cheese w/ cucumbers and ranch dressing
Tues. Turkey Sandwiches w/ chips
Wed. Nuggets w/ fruit cocktail
Thurs. PBJ's w/carrot sticks
Fri. Fish sticks w/ corn
Sat. Grilled cheese w/tomato soup

Now, of course any of these are interchangeable. I often will make chicken or egg salad sandwiches rather than the turkey/pbjs; and if there's a cool or rainy day during the week, that's usually when I'll serve grilled cheese!

Here's the big list . . .

Dinner:

Roast chicken/stuffing/green beans
Hamburger stroganoff/corn
Ham & pineapple/rice/peas
Stuffed manicotti/cucumbers
Orange chicken/mashed potatoes/green beans in mushroom soup
Homemade Pizza/carrots
Broccoli-Chicken-Rice casserole/rolls
Pork tenderloin/carrots/mashed potatoes
Steak/corn/roasted potatoes
Spaghetti with meatballs/salad

Salmon with apricot jam/saffron rice/peas
Chicken parmesan/green beans
Pita bread pizza/salad
Sweet n'sour meatballs/rice/broccoli
Pork chops/applesauce/peas
Burgers/fries/corn
Chicken fettucine alfredo/salad
Chili/chips/cucumbers
Chicken and dumplings
Broccoli soup/cornbread
English muffin pizza/carrots
Roast beef/mashed potatoes/brown sugar glazed carrots
Chicken enchiladas/cheesy salsa rice
Ham n'potato casserole/broccoli/
Steak-pepper-mushroom-onion kebobs/roasted potatoes
Lasagne/salad/garlic rolls
Barbecue ribs/wild rice/green beans
Baked mac n'cheese/sliced tomatoes
Sweet n' sour chicken/fried rice
Chicken/steak fajitas
Barbecue meatballs on sub rolls/salad
Chicken pot pie
Barbecue chicken on buns
Chicken noodle casserole

Not bad, hmmm? So you could just go through this list and fill out the squares on a blank calendar (I just drew mine on computer paper with a ruler!) and stick it to the side of your fridge. The point isn't to follow it exactly because some night you might want something that's "scheduled" for two nights from now--the point is, you've got a choice and aren't standing there staring into your open fridge with a glazed look in your eyes! The ingredients will be in your fridge because YOU HAVE A PLAN!

If you *really* want to get ahead of the game, go through the calendar you've made and make two grocery lists: One for weeks 1 and 2's menus (don't forget breakfast and lunch!), and then one for weeks 3 and 4. Just interchange them when you go to the grocery store. Best of all, put them into

your planner so you've always got them with you and can't leave your list home, as I so often do! Make sure you remember lots of fresh fruit on your list, and maybe some pudding, cheese sticks, granola bars and other great things for snacking on. No more wondering what's for dinner!