

YOUR WEEKNIGHT FIELD GUIDE

Dinner *rescue.*

A playbook for the nights
you need a plan.

10 flexible dinners **4** quick sauces **1** repeatable formula



Cook bold. Eat better.

You have options.

Let's find dinner.

Start with your time and what is ready to cook. Pick one route. You do not need a perfect fridge.

10-15 minutes Mostly ready Canned beans, tuna, cooked rice, eggs or tortillas. <u>Use the pantry dinners / 03</u>	20-25 minutes A little cooking Thawed shrimp, ground meat, tofu or precooked chicken. <u>Use the fridge dinners / 04</u>	Need a flavor fix? Almost there Your meal is cooked, but something tastes flat or feels missing. <u>Taste and adjust / 06</u>
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THE DINNER FORMULA

Base + protein + veg
+ *sauce + one finish.*

Rice, pasta, bread or tortillas count as a base. Beans and eggs count as protein. Frozen vegetables count, too.

Your first five minutes

1. Choose a dinner on pages 3-4.
2. Read it once and gather everything.
3. Start the longest job first: water, rice or pan.
4. Make a sauce while the food cooks.
5. Taste, finish and serve.

Find your page

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Times are estimates, including basic prep, with the ingredients listed ready to use. This guide is built for two; double ingredients as needed and cook in batches when the pan gets crowded.

Five dinners.

Already in reach.

Each idea serves two. Use what you have; the swaps keep the same basic structure.

01 Smoky bean tacos

15 min

1 drained 15-oz can black beans / 4 small tortillas / 2 cups slaw / 1 tsp cumin / salsa / lime

Warm beans with 1 tsp oil, cumin and 2 tbsp water; mash some to thicken. Warm tortillas, fill, then add slaw, salsa and lime. **Swap:** pinto beans.

02 Tuna crunch wraps

10 min

Two drained 5-oz cans tuna / 2 tbsp mayo / 1 tsp Dijon / 2 large tortillas / 1 cup chopped cucumber / 2 tbsp chopped pickles

Mix tuna, mayo, mustard and pickles. Fill tortillas with the tuna and cucumber. Add black pepper and a little pickle brine if it needs brightness. **Swap:** canned salmon.

03 Egg & vegetable fried rice

15 min

2 cups cooked, chilled rice / 3 eggs / 1 cup frozen peas and carrots / 1 tbsp lower-sodium soy sauce / 2 tsp oil

Scramble eggs in half the oil until set; remove. Heat the rest of the oil, add vegetables and rice, then toss until hot. Return eggs, add soy and heat to 165°F. **Finish:** scallions or chili crisp.

04 Tomato & white bean toast

15 min

1 drained 15-oz can white beans / 1 cup canned crushed tomatoes / 1 tsp Italian herbs / 2 handfuls spinach / 4 slices toast

Simmer beans, tomatoes and herbs for 7-8 minutes. Stir in spinach until wilted. Spoon over toast and finish with olive oil and black pepper. **Swap:** chickpeas.

05 Lemon pea pasta

20 min

6 oz dry pasta / 1 cup frozen peas / 1 drained 15-oz can white beans / 1 tbsp butter / 1 lemon / parmesan, optional

Cook pasta; add peas for the final 2 minutes. Save 1/2 cup pasta water, then drain. Toss with beans, butter and enough pasta water to coat; heat through. Add lemon zest and juice to taste.

Make it yours. Add vegetables you enjoy. Taste before adding salt: canned foods, sauces and cheese may already bring plenty.

Five more ways *to make it work.*

Each idea serves two. Frozen proteins must be safely thawed first; that time is not included.

06 Chicken slaw bowls

15 min

2 cups cooked shredded chicken / 2 cups cooked rice / 2 cups slaw / lemon-Dijon sauce, page 5

Reheat chicken and rice to 165°F. Divide into bowls, add crisp slaw and spoon over the sauce. **Swap:** warm canned chickpeas for chicken.

07 Garlic shrimp & couscous

20 min

12 oz thawed peeled shrimp / 3/4 cup dry couscous / 2 cups broccoli / 1 tbsp butter / 1 minced garlic clove / lemon

Prepare couscous as directed and steam broccoli until tender. Saute shrimp in butter; add garlic for the final minute. Cook shrimp until pearly or white and opaque. Serve with lemon.

08 Beef taco rice skillet

25 min

12 oz ground beef / 1 diced bell pepper / 2 cups cooked rice / 1/2 cup salsa / 1 tsp cumin / lime

Brown beef with pepper, breaking it up, until the beef reaches 160°F. Stir in rice, salsa and cumin; heat the mixture to 165°F. Finish with lime. **Swap:** ground turkey, cooked to 165°F.

09 Crisp tofu noodle bowls

25 min

14 oz firm tofu, drained and dried / 4 oz dry noodles / 2 cups frozen stir-fry vegetables / 2 tsp oil / soy-ginger sauce, page 5

Cook noodles as directed. Cube tofu and brown in oil without crowding the pan. Add vegetables and cook until hot. Add noodles and sauce; toss and heat through. **Finish:** sesame seeds.

10 Spinach egg quesadillas

15 min

3 eggs / 2 handfuls spinach / 2 large tortillas / 1/2 cup shredded cheese / 1 tsp oil / salsa / cucumber on the side

Wilt spinach in oil, add beaten eggs and scramble until fully set. Fill tortillas with eggs and cheese, fold and toast each side until crisp. Serve with salsa and sliced cucumber.

A timer is a guide, not a doneness test. Use a food thermometer for meat and leftovers. Keep raw proteins and their tools away from ready-to-eat foods. More on page 7.

Four sauces.

So many dinners.

Each makes enough for about two servings. Start with less sauce, toss or drizzle, then add more to taste.

BRIGHT / CREAMY

Lemon-Dijon yogurt

Chicken bowls, roasted veg, wraps

- 1/3 cup plain Greek yogurt
- 1 tbsp lemon juice
- 1 tsp Dijon mustard
- 1 tsp olive oil
- Black pepper; water to thin

Stir. Mix until smooth. Add water a teaspoon at a time for a pourable sauce. Taste before adding salt.

SAVORY / SWEET

Soy-ginger glaze

Tofu, noodles, vegetable stir-fries

- 2 tbsp lower-sodium soy sauce
- 2 tbsp water
- 1 tbsp honey
- 1 tbsp rice vinegar
- 1 tsp grated ginger

Warm. Stir together, add to the hot pan near the end of cooking and simmer briefly to coat. Watch the honey so it does not scorch.

RICH / FRESH

Garlic-lemon butter

Shrimp, pasta, green vegetables

- 2 tbsp unsalted butter
- 1 small garlic clove, minced
- 1 tbsp lemon juice
- 2 tbsp water or pasta water
- Chopped parsley, optional

Swirl. Melt butter over low heat. Cook garlic for about 30 seconds without browning. Remove from heat; stir in water, lemon and parsley.

SMOKY / TANGY

Smoky lime crema

Bean tacos, rice bowls, quesadillas

- 1/3 cup sour cream or plain yogurt
- 1 tbsp lime juice
- 1/2 tsp smoked paprika
- 1/4 tsp ground cumin
- Water to thin; salt to taste

Whisk. Combine, then thin with a little water. Add heat with a few drops of hot sauce if you like.

ONE FINISHING TOUCH

Fresh: herbs or scallions **Crunch:** toasted crumbs or seeds

Bright: citrus zest or a small splash of vinegar

Keep dairy sauces refrigerated and use clean utensils. These are finishing sauces; do not reuse sauce that has touched raw meat or seafood. Check ingredient labels for allergens.

Something off?

Make one small move.

Spoon a little into a bowl and test your fix there first. Adjust gradually, then taste again.

Too salty

Add unsalted ingredients: beans, rice, vegetables or broth that fit the dish. If practical, replace some salty liquid with unsalted liquid. Lemon or butter can change the balance, but they do not remove salt.

Too spicy

Dilute with more of the mild base. A little yogurt, cream or coconut milk may soften the heat when it fits the dish. Serve strong sauce on the side.

Flat or heavy

Try a few drops of lemon or vinegar. Taste before adding a small pinch of salt. Finish with fresh herbs, citrus zest or something crisp.

Too sharp

Add a little fat or more of the unsoured base. A small amount of sweetness can help balance acidity; start with a tiny taste-test portion.

Too thin

Simmer an uncovered sauce gently to reduce it. For beans, mash a few into the liquid. If it is already salty, add unsalted solids instead of reducing further.

Burned on the bottom

Stop stirring. Move the unburned food to a clean pan without scraping the scorched layer. If the burned taste remains strong, start again; seasoning cannot reliably hide it.

Six habits that make dinner better

01 Read once before turning on the heat.

03 Give ingredients room in the pan.

05 Taste with a clean spoon.

02 Dry food before you try to brown it.

04 Save pasta water before draining.

06 Add delicate herbs at the end.

Your rescue shelf.

Small, useful, ready.

Choose a few items from each group that you actually enjoy. Check your cupboards before shopping.

The base

- ☐ Rice or microwave rice packs
- ☐ Pasta, couscous or noodles
- ☐ Tortillas or sliced bread

The vegetables

- ☐ Frozen peas, broccoli or stir-fry mix
- ☐ Slaw, spinach or sturdy greens
- ☐ Canned tomatoes and a lemon or lime

The protein

- ☐ Canned beans or chickpeas
- ☐ Tuna, eggs or tofu
- ☐ Portioned chicken, meat or shrimp

The flavor

- ☐ Olive oil, butter and plain yogurt
- ☐ Soy sauce, Dijon and vinegar
- ☐ Cumin, smoked paprika and garlic

CHOOSE TWO BACKUPS NOW

My pantry dinner

My fridge dinner

Keep the ingredients for these two meals on hand. Refill what you use.

A quick safety check

Cold food stays cold. Refrigerate perishables at 40°F / 4°C or below. Put leftovers in shallow containers within 2 hours, or 1 hour when it is above 90°F / 32°C.

Use or freeze. Use refrigerated leftovers within 3-4 days. Reheat to 165°F / 74°C. These rules apply to cooked rice, too.

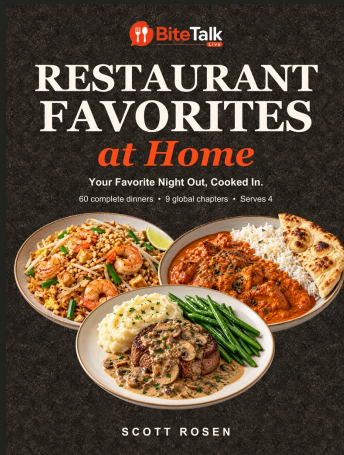
Check the center. Poultry: 165°F / 74°C. Ground beef: 160°F / 71°C. Fish: 145°F / 63°C. Cook eggs until whites and yolks are firm; egg dishes to 160°F / 71°C.

Keep it separate. Wash hands, tools and surfaces after handling raw proteins. Thaw safely; do not leave food on the counter to thaw.

Sources: [USDA / Leftovers and Food Safety](#) & [FoodSafety.gov / Safe Minimum Internal Temperatures](#).

Tonight is handled. *What sounds good next?*

More dinner ideas, full recipes and cookbooks from Scott's kitchen.



THE NEWEST BITETALK COOKBOOK

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FOR THE BUSY WEEKNIGHTS

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Scott Rosen / BiteTalk Live