

## Tips for making Fast, Healthy and Delicious Food during the Farming Season

This class was designed by a farmer for farmers or anyone with a busy lifestyle. I personally enjoy food preparation but time does not always permit. My logic goes like this:

- Food is fuel and we need to eat to live.
- Skipping meals or eating poorly can affect your performance as a farmer.
- Emotional well-being and physical ability are influenced by dietary choices.

*Healthy meals lead to a healthy farmer which hopefully leads to a successful crop and happy customers! Thus a happier farmer.*

1. PLAN and PREPARE in ADVANCE - take time to save time
2. PORTION and LABEL - my grandmother did this - it really does help
3. HEAT and EAT - microwave is a personal choice

### 1. PLAN:

- Have easy healthy foods on hand. Foods that you like to eat. Set a day for shopping for dry goods not grown on the farm.
- Decide when you will prepare food - even if not hungry, for when you will have meals, the same way you plan and plant your farm for the season's harvest.
- Fruit, nuts and cheese are nature's own fast food and more nutritious than other processed snack foods.
- Variety is the spice of life - try to vary your meals. Prepare food that can be employed in several different meals (see notes below).
- Take turns cooking if others people are available. Let your interns cook if they are interested! Schedule this in advance

### 2. PORTION and LABEL

- Helps you identify what's in the freezer so you can create a meal
- Prepare more than enough for a meal when you have time, then you have created future meals = less cooking, just reheating

### 3. HEAT and EAT

- Plan for this too. Defrost if necessary, pre-heat oven, etc

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## Rice and Bean Salad

2.5 cups of cooked black beans (or try small red beans or any colorful bean)

\*This means pre-cooking beans, or 2 15 oz canned beans

1 small onion coarsely chopped

1 garlic clove (or more)

1 sweet red pepper, seeded and, diced

1 green, yellow or orange pepper, prepared as above

1 jalapeno pepper- seeded, deribbed and diced (handle carefully - oil from the seeds can be irritating!)

3 scallions/green onions, cleaned and thinly sliced

2 T. chopped cilantro or parsley- not everyone loves cilantro

3-4 c. cooked rice       \*Cooked in advance, in veg. or chicken broth

Chili Dressing – this makes it delicious!

1 t. Dijon mustard or spicy brown

1 t. sherry or white wine vinegar

1/3 cup of extra virgin olive oil

1 t. chili powder

Salt and pepper to taste

4 drops of hot red-pepper sauce

Blend the dressing in a separate bowl, whisking to emulsify the oil. Mix the cooked rice, beans and prepared vegetables in a large bowl and toss thoroughly with the dressing. I like this dish best at room temperature, but it works warm or cold. **Use leftovers in burritos.**

Variations: Substitute corn kernels or another grain like millet for the rice. You may sauté the vegetables in advance, if you wish but they have more crunch by adding them raw. Add grated cheese. Number of servings depends on how hungry you are, but averages 4-6.

## Tomato, Cucumber, Onion and Feta with Pita Bread

When tomatoes are ripe and in abundance, and we have more cucumbers than we know what to do with we eat them like this. Gazpacho in a blender with other spices is another option. You can find lots of gazpacho recipes online. I like the saltiness of the feta during the middle of the day.

Chop a quantity of tomato, cucumber and onion to feed your crowd. Depending on the size of the tomatoes, one per person may be enough. One cucumber per two people and onion to taste.

Add crumbled feta cheese. Toss gently with any vinaigrette dressing that you like. We make pita triangles for eating this salad with. You won't need much if any salt if you put feta cheese in. You can add any fresh herbs from your farm with a theme. Oregano and basil, or cilantro and cumin. Fresh parsley is good with anything.

Variations: Substitutes for the feta: canned tuna, quartered hard-boiled eggs, cannellini beans. Add olives if you have them, or chopped walnuts.

## Meal construction at Firefly Farm

1. Whatever is fresh from the farm +
2. Basis item +
3. Protein

1. **What's fresh at the farm-** I like lots of veggies in every meal and I don't mind chopping. If you do,

- chop more than enough for a meal and store it. If you plan to use it in a few days you may not need to label it.
- If you offer recipes to your customers it's a good idea to try some of them.

example

Greens, 60 ways

Steam

sauté

stir fry

boil (as in soup)

bake (as in casserole or gratin)

Arugula

Chard

Cabbage

Collards

Kale

Escarole

Mustard

Spinach

Turnip

Tatsoi

Creasy, lambs quarters, other wild

Lettuces

Just to name a few!

More than 10 types of greens prepared 6 different ways, all fairly fast

- In an omelet
- On pasta
- With rice
- In soup
- As salad or slaw
- In a burrito or quesadilla
- In a casserole

Thinly sliced Greens cook quickly. Seasoning can be done immediately after they soften or just before serving. Greens provide fiber, vitamins and calcium.

2. **Basis items** (a.k.a. carbohydrate): Rice, pasta, polenta, other grains: bulgur, millet, corn, barley tortilla/pita. Make enough of cooked items for more than one meal. I don't usually freeze these items unless prepared in a casserole with other ingredients.

All of these items are relatively simple and can be found in "instant" cooking forms. I prefer traditional varieties.

3. **Protein:** beans, cheese, meat/chicken, fish, or nuts. Soyfoods in moderation

- **Beans**

Canned beans seem faster and are fine to use, but if on a budget dry beans are definitely cheaper. Both are available organically produced.

If preparing dry beans the key is to prepare a large quantity at one time and freeze some.

2 lbs of dry beans will produce about 15.5 cups of cooked beans. That can make a good number of meals!

- Soup, dip, salads, chili, burritos to name a few. These dishes also prepared in advance then become fast food during the farming day.
- Try new varieties of beans for fun. Another good source of fiber and protein, easily seasoned in a variety of ways.
- **Lentils** cook really fast and are easily delicious on their own. Add onion or garlic, tomato, fresh herbs, salt and pepper. Serve as soup or gravy. Serve with any of the basis items, add cheese if desired.

- **Meat**

Locally produced meat is becoming more widely available and is a good source of protein and minerals. Depending on the species and cut, it can be prepared quickly, or consider a crock pot/slow cooker meal. This piece of kitchen equipment is not expensive and can produce a meal with minimal preparation and little/no attendance.

- **Fish**

Generally cooks quickly and local NC seafood and other fish is available. Fish is generally more expensive. Canned tuna is affordable but there are reasons not to consume it too often.

## Wheels of Steel

Cookies are usually seen as a treat but this cookie is our powerhouse. Instead of a store-bought granola bar. Making cookies during the growing season might seem difficult but these are worth it - nutritious and delicious.

½ c. unsalted butter  
½ c. natural peanut butter – any works fine  
1 c. brown sugar  
1 egg  
1 t. pure vanilla extract  
¾ c. whole wheat flour  
¼ c. wheat germ  
½ c. non-fat dry milk powder (I have left this out by accident, no problem)  
½ t. salt  
¼ t. baking powder  
¼ t. baking soda  
3 T. milk  
1 c. oats, quick cooking or rolled  
1 cup raisins  
3 T. sesame seeds

Notes: I have added 1/4 c. cornmeal for more crunch, also added chocolate chips, walnuts, whatever I have on hand, keeping in mind not to make the mixture too dry.

Preheat oven to 375.

- In a large bowl cream together the butter, peanut butter and brown sugar until light. Add the egg and vanilla.
- Combine the flour, wheat germ, dry milk, salt, baking powder and soda. Stir into the butter mixture. Add the liquid milk, oats, raisins (nuts and chocolate if including).

The cookies are intended to be large - one recipe makes 9 (GIANT) cookies.

- Place a heaping spoonful on the cookie sheet and spread to about 4 inches. Only a few will fit on the sheet. Sprinkle with the sesame seeds.
- Bake about 12 minutes until done, allow to cool 5 minutes on the sheet then remove to cooling rack.

I like these because one cookie can hold me between lunch and dinner, serve as breakfast if necessary or a snack on the way to an afternoon market. A hungry farmer is a grumpy farmer!

From the New York Times New Natural Foods Cookbook,  
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