



THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX

Quick Microwave Quesadillas

When people don't have the time, they will often sacrifice nutrition or a balanced meal and opt for what's convenient instead. Time limitations can impact your ability to meal plan or how much time you can commit to making a meal from scratch. When you're in a rush, you may be more likely to go through the drive-thru, popping in a prepared meal that can be high in sodium, or snacking on anything you can get your hands on. Many of the things that are commonly reached for can be high in sodium, fat, and full of empty calories. A key strategy in addressing this need is to have a few easy meals you can make using a small amount of time and with whatever you have in your pantry. Another strategy to keep your diet high in nutritional quality is to also aim to keep nutritious snacks like cut up vegetables, hummus, whole fruits, boiled eggs, etc. at-the ready. Spend just 30 minutes on the weekend preparing your nutritious snacks for the week.



There are many pantry staples that can help you make a balanced meal while also aiming for optimal nutrition and high performance fuels. By making small changes, you can make a meal more nutrient-dense to help you meet and maintain your health and fitness goals. Oftentimes, when we think about microwavable food, we automatically think about frozen or boxed items that are either overly processed and/or higher in fat and sodium than desired. But there are a number of tasty and quick items that we can make in the microwave that are nutrient-dense and easy to reach for when the dining facility may be closed or we just don't feel like going out to obtain foods to curb our hunger. It doesn't have to be a choice between convenience and nutrient-dense. Nor do our taste buds have to suffer.

Chicken quesadillas aren't just made on the stove or in the oven. By using canned chicken you can skip the stove and go right to the microwave. This meal can be made in around 5 minutes, using a whole grain tortilla, a lean protein, and adding a side salad. It's a high-nutrition and high-performance meal. It's also kid friendly! One of the benefits of this meal is how versatile it is. It can be an easy, on the go breakfast, or you can add any leftovers you may have and make it a burrito.

Ingredients: 4 servings

- 5 - 6 oz. of canned chicken or turkey, drained and flaked
- 1/3 packet of taco seasoning, divided
- 1 14-16 oz. can fat-free refried beans
- 4-5 oz. of sliced black olives, drained
- 4 oz. salsa
- 8-6 inch whole wheat tortillas
- 4 oz. shredded cheddar cheese
- Mixed salad greens
- Plain nonfat Greek yogurt (optional)
- Juice of 1/2 lime (optional)

Directions:

1. In a medium-sized bowl, empty the refried beans, taco seasoning, drained olives, and lime juice (optional) and gently mix.
2. Lay out 4 tortillas, then spread 1/4 of the mixture on each tortilla. Top the mixture with 1/4 of the chicken per tortilla, then top the chicken with 1 oz. of cheese. Finish by topping each with a tortilla.
3. Place one quesadilla in the microwave. Cover with a damp paper towel and cook for 60-70 seconds, or until heated through and the cheese is melted. Carefully remove from the microwave and top each with 1/4 of the salsa each salad greens, and a dollop of Greek yogurt (optional).
4. Repeat step 3 for the remaining quesadillas.

Tips

- All four quesadillas do not need to be made at one time. Just throw together the bean mix, and gently add the chicken. Keep it in a covered container in the fridge for up to three days. Make them as desired. These work great for an after school snack or even a quick breakfast.
- Forget the tortillas and make yourself a big salad with mixed greens and a variety of vegetables. Use the bean and chicken mixture to create a "leaned down" version of taco salad.

DISCLAIMER:

THIS RECIPE DOES NOT CONSTITUTE AN ENDORSEMENT BY DOD OF ANY INDIVIDUAL VENDOR. ANY PRODUCT OF SIMILAR SPECIFICATION MAY BE USED TO MAKE THIS HEALTHY CHOICE MEAL.