

Eat to Compete...Batch Cooking (Part 2)

Karen Armstrong RD

Another form of batch cooking focuses on preparing ingredients ahead of time so you can assemble a meal quite quickly. A good place to start is with the protein part of the meal. One time saver is to cook up big batches of ground chicken or ground beef and freeze it in meal size portions. I like to add taco seasoning when I batch cook ground chicken. Then I've got the makings of any number of Tex-Mex dishes.

Another batch cooking trick comes in particularly handy now that barbecue weather is here. Marinated chicken, beef and pork are really tasty and pretty quick to cook but you do need to plan ahead so you have enough time to marinate the meat. So save time by marinating meat in your freezer. That's right – your freezer. You'll need your favourite marinades and several pounds of chicken, beef or pork. Divide the meat into meal size portions and put each portion into a re-sealable plastic bag. Use a bag that's big enough to lay the meat out in a single layer. This way more of the meat will be covered by the marinade and thawing will be much faster. Pour the marinade in, squeeze the air out of the bag and seal it. Toss the bags around a couple of times (make sure they're really sealed) so the marinade touches all of the meat. Lay the bags flat on a cookie sheet so the chicken is in a single layer again, and freeze. The meat marinates a little as it freezes and a little more as it thaws.

Now all you have to do is grab a bag from the freezer and let it thaw overnight in the fridge (or for an hour or so in cold water). Then head over to the barbecue to grill up a quick and flavourful meal.

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Manitoba Chicken Producers represents 143 farm families raising chickens that are free-run, grain-fed and free of added hormones. For more information on buying locally grown chicken, visit the Buying Guide at www.chicken.mb.ca