

# Make it Your Own

Remember not too long ago when our girls were all home and we had a baking day? It was so fun but figuring out what to feed everyone on days like that always perplexes me.

I don't want to take away from having fun and visiting by making a labor intensive meal. As the kids have gotten older they are more vocal than they were as kids saying they never did like this..or that. Kayla is a vegetarian so that throws a wrench into some plans too.

We have come to the conclusion that chili is a pretty good option for our family. I do it a little different so that everyone can have something to their own tastes.

I brown 1 1/2 pounds of ground beef browned with a whole onion

Then in a separate pot I mix these ingredients:

2 15 ounce cans of beans- I'm not picky whatever is here.

1 quart of my homemade salsa

1 can of beer

chili powder to taste depending on the salsa

I have Kayla pull out whatever amount she wants saved for her then I mix in the hamburger.

That's when it gets interesting... See? When the kids were little to stretch chili for our family of seven, I started making rice on chili days. Some of the kids don't like soups so they often put rice in the bottom of their bowl and then put the chili over top.

We've gotten so that some of us add shredded cheese over the top of all of that. That's my bowl in the photo below.



Hubby is a straight up chili guy.



Notice sour cream in the photo above. Kelli doesn't like

anything spicy so she puts sour cream in her chili with rice to calm down any spice.

Some add more spice or Tabasco...some have rice, some don't. It's everyone's preference which takes any pressure off of me.

So with six people at the table to eat chili, no one ate it the same way. We had the little boys for lunch too and chili isn't something either of them like so I made grill cheese sandwiches to go with the chili.

That left some of the adults dipping their grill cheese in their chili.

I'm so glad that I've come up with a few meal options for times when the kids are all home that meet the wants of everyone at the table.

Do any of you have any dishes you fix when everyone is home that can be varied like this? I'd love some more ideas in my arsenal.

...and inquiring minds want to know...how do you eat your chili?

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## **Crack      Chicken      Pretzel Sandwiches**

Oh my word...these are YUMMY!! (Before I get a bunch of criticism on the health of these, yes I know they contain fat) Sometimes in life, taste trumps EVERYTHING!

Please bare with me as I didn't write a recipe down as I was making these. I just made it up as I went. I have a habit of doing that.

Here's what they look like all done.



To start with I needed to make the chicken mixture.

To do that I:

Put water in the bottom of the Instant Pot (you don't need an Instant Pot-we just need cooked chicken) Put the chicken in. I used three pounds of chicken breast. I put the setting on Poultry and increased the time to 40 minutes. The chicken needs to be shred-able and 40 minutes gets it to that status.

I did quick release. I shredded the chicken then added:

4 oz of softened cream cheese

1 can of cream of chicken soup

1 serving sized spoon scoop of sour cream

1 serving sized spoon scoop of cheese whiz

1 teaspoon of sage

1 teaspoon of thyme

1 cup shredded cheese (I had white cheddar that needed using up)

Stir it up. If it seems dry add a little more cheese whiz or sour cream. Mine looked like this...



I LOVE pretzel buns and they are perfect for this. Of course you can use whatever you like. I've found I love the pretzel buns from Wal-mart. They are a little smaller than the ones our grocery store carries. This is not the original packaging. These don't come in a reclosable bag so I popped the buns into a ziplock.



I cut the buns in half. I butter the top half of the bun. I loaded the bottom with the chicken mix. I put a slice of bacon cheddar cheese (also needed to be used up) on top of the chicken.



Then I toasted it on broil in the oven until the cheese was melted.

Oh my...these are WONDERFUL. I make a big batch. When Hubby is in the field with harvest, we can make one quick for him when he comes home at night.

I've also been know if there is leftovers of this and needs to be cleaned up, I've added beans and rice to the mix, added more cheese and rolled them up for Mexican meal. I make a sauce and it's also a quick meal that we really like. I regularly cook things with left overs in mind...with sewing they tell us measure twice and cut once. With cooking I like to cook once and eat (at least) twice!!

I'd love any recipes for anything you have that is a cook once, eat twice type of food!!

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# Crack Corn: MUST TRY!

I was walking through Wal-mart last weekend when I saw these two items close to each other.



That's when I remembered that I had made something with these two items last year that was a big hit. What was it? Ah...Crack Corn.

Yep, I'd get enough for a double batch. It was so good and so easy.

Here's how easy it is... Melt the almond bark in the microwave. Mine isn't super powerful and I can do 2:25 seconds and it's perfect. While that's melting, pour the corn pops into a large bowl. Stir the almond bark until smooth. Pour it over the corn pops and stir until the corn pops are covered with almond bark.

Pour all of this out onto wax paper. Spread it around so it's only in one layer. Sprinkle some colored sugar sprinkles over the top if you're feeling festive. It dries in about 15 minutes or so.



This is the PERFECT thing to take to a gathering. I promise you won't bring any home. None..Zero. You can bring it in a zip top bag and leave the empty bag there...no dish to worry about. Also if you're like me, you might remember at the last minute you need to bring something. This can be made from start to finish in a half hour...and best yet, it's YUMMY!!



I made a batch on Sunday. Hubby, Karl and I ate it. Sunday night I was prepping for the upcoming company and asked Hubby this: "If I make a batch tonight, can you leave it alone and not touch it until Sunday?" Hubby said, "No. I can't. If you want some for Christmas Day you better wait until Christmas morning to make it." He was dead serious....Bahahahahaha!! It's the truth though. I doubt he could have.

I had Karl pick up more ingredients and I made a double batch Monday morning. I hid one batch (don't tell).

Kalissa and Carver were over when I made it...I grabbed my camera to take a picture of it as Kalissa was packaging it up. I asked if I could include a picture of her with it as the Crack Corn isn't very "pretty"...she started laughing saying, "I can't figure out why you asked me to bag this up. There's going to be none left." Then she said, "Fine, I'll

pose.”



Then asked me, “How am I supposed to pose?”



Then she said, "Oh wait I have to do something with my hair."



I said..."Don't worry about it. Everyone knows you're just hanging out here for a lazy day. That you're here is more important than how you look." Then she gave me the humble look.



Then she said, "Oh mom, I look terrible" and wouldn't look at



the camera.

I said, "You're pregnant...no one is expecting anything fancy where clothes are concerned. Please just pose?" So, she did this!



She keeps me laughing that's for sure!! I gave up on a picture...I already had enough. Little does she know I used all of the pictures!! I guess the last laugh is on her. Oh, she makes life fun...especially the little things like this!

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## Ask Jo: Fudge Puddles

Check out our auction post: [We have goodies for you to bid on HERE.](#)

I recently told you all about the baking day I had with our girls. One of the things we were busy baking was Fudge Puddles. Several people commented on them asking about the



recipe. They are fun to make and easy. After mixing up the dough we roll it into walnut sized balls and place them in greased mini cupcake tins.

After they come out of the oven, then take a melon baller and push down the centers. Then fill them with chocolate goodness.

In the photo below Kayla was using the melon baller.



I think if you're baking with tweens, this would be a great recipe with rolling to make the balls and hollowing them out for the chocolate.

If you have a stirrer in the family (someone who loves stirring-in our family that's Kalissa) a helper could easily be kept busy with stirring to melt the chocolate.

So here's the recipe I've used:

- 1/2 cup butter
- 1/2 cup creamy peanut butter
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1/2 cup brown sugar
- 1 egg
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 1/4 cup flour
- 3/4 teaspoon baking soda

Mix together the first six ingredients. Then sift in the flour and baking soda. Mix well. Chill for one hour. Shape into 48- 1 inch balls. Place in greased mini muffin pans. Bake at 325 for 15 minutes. Remove from oven. Immediately press a melon baller into the center of each.

While the cookies are baking make the fudge filling.

1 cup of milk chocolate chips  
1 cup of semi sweet chocolate chips  
1 can of sweet condensed milk  
1 teaspoon vanilla

Melt. Mix well. Put filling in each cookie. Top with nuts if desired.

The recipe suggests melting in a double broiler. I don't. I don't put nuts on either. Also, I didn't have milk chocolate chips and used all semi sweet. I'm a dark chocolate lover so this made them better for me.

It's really not a hard a recipe at all...it does look harder than it actually is. They are all already gone. The family loves them!