

# Fast Dinners for Busy People With Diabetes

People with diabetes are often more motivated than most to cook healthful dinners at home. That's because, when you do, you have full control over the foods served and what ingredients go into them. As a result, it's easier to keep track of how closely the grams of carbohydrate you eat match the amount prescribed by your doctor or dietitian. But the fact you have diabetes doesn't mean you aren't busy with other things when it's time to put that dinner together. Here are 13 tips you can use to help you fix nutritious meals, even when you are pressed for time.

**Switch to whole grains:** Use brown rice and whole-wheat pasta instead of refined or processed grains to fix diabetes-friendly dinners. Look for 100% whole wheat flour and breads as well as other grains such as oats and barley. You can find convenient products to help you make this switch easier. For instance, there's frozen cooked brown rice that you microwave. Buy whole-wheat hot dog and hamburger buns, whole-wheat flour tortillas, and whole-grain-blend pasta noodles. Another healthy choice is instant oatmeal made with less sugar.

**Get more fiber:** Aim for at least 8 grams of fiber per meal, especially if it includes carbohydrate-rich foods. Soluble fiber in particular can be beneficial for people with diabetes because it helps reduce the rapid rise in blood sugar that tends to take place after eating carbohydrates. A diet high in fiber also reduces the risk of heart disease, which is higher in people with diabetes.

Soluble fiber is found in

- Peas
- Beans
- Oats
- Barley
- Fruits like apples, mangoes, plums, kiwis, pears, blackberries, strawberries, raspberries, peaches, citrus fruits, and figs
- Vegetables like artichokes, celery root, sweet potatoes, parsnips, turnips, acorn squash, potatoes with skin, brussels sprouts, cabbage, broccoli, carrots, cauliflower, asparagus, and beets

**Replace some carbs with good fat:** Foods featuring or cooked with monounsaturated fat -- nuts, avocado, olive and canola oil -- can help lower blood sugar. Add nuts and avocado to dinner salads and entrees. Use olive and canola oil to cook dinner dishes. Look for products that contain either oil, such as salad dressings and marinades or bottled marinara and pesto.

**Use foods that won't spike blood sugar:** Foods that aren't likely to cause a significant rise in blood sugar include meat, poultry, fish, avocados, salad vegetables, eggs, and cheese. Using these kinds of food will help balance carbohydrate-containing foods included in your meal.

**Choose recipes with less saturated fat:** Look for ingredients such as

- Fish
- Extra lean beef -- grass-fed if available
- Pork tenderloin and skinless poultry
- Soy products
- Beans
- Reduced-fat dairy

**Limit foods associated with diabetes risk:** When you plan your dinner menu, limit the use of refined grains and soft drinks. Switch to leaner cuts and smaller portions of red meat. Higher

consumption of these items has been associated with a higher risk of diabetes, according to several recent studies.

In one European study, eating lots of fruit, vegetables, whole-grain bread, and low-fat dairy and limiting alcohol reduced the risk of diabetes and major coronary events when compared to a diet that made ample use of white bread, processed meat, fries, and full-cream milk.

**Know the nutritional values in the recipes you use:** Try to find out the amount of carbohydrate -- and ideally fiber and fat -- per serving. Then stay close to the prescribed portions by serving up your plate in the kitchen, using small plates, and eating slowly and calmly. As you do, you'll become more aware of the textures and flavors and feel more satisfied.

**Replace butter and shortening with canola or olive oil:** Both canola oil and olive oil are healthy alternatives. Both are rich in monounsaturated fat, and canola oil also contains omega-3 fatty acids.

**Make salads ahead of time:** Store a large spinach salad or vegetable-filled romaine lettuce salad without dressing in an airtight container. You can have crisp, wonderful salad with your dinner or as a snack for the next several days.

**Make an easy fruit salad:** With a few chops of a knife, you can turn a few pieces of fruit into a beautiful fruit salad. Drizzle lemon or orange juice over the top. Then toss to coat the fruit. The vitamin C in the citrus juice helps prevent browning.

**Choose beverages wisely:** Instead of soda, sweetened drinks, or fruit juice with your dinner meal, drink protein-rich beverages such as skim or 1% milk. Or sip no-calorie tea, coffee, or water. Regular consumption of coffee and tea was associated with a lower risk of type 2 diabetes in a recent Singapore study.

**Slow down:** Fast eaters tend to eat more. It takes at least 20 minutes for your brain to get the message that your stomach is officially "comfortable" and that you should stop eating.

**Cut out evening snacks:** Avoid late-night snacking unless your blood sugar is too low or an evening snack is prescribed by your certified diabetes educator or dietitian. Drink a cup of tea instead.

### 3 Dinner Menus

Here are three dinner menus with recipes to help you prepare delicious diabetes-friendly meals.

#### Dinner Menu 1

- Sloppy Joes on whole-wheat buns -- 1 serving (see recipe below)
- Steamed broccoli florets -- 1 cup
- Sliced pear -- 1 each
- Cup of hot or iced tea, water, or skim or 1% milk

Total nutritional value (not including milk as beverage): 530 calories, 34 g protein, 78 g carbohydrate, 12 g fat, 5 g saturated fat, 3.5 g monounsaturated fat, 3 g polyunsaturated fat, 72 mg cholesterol, 16 grams fiber, 635 mg sodium.

Calories from fat: 20%. Omega-3 fatty acids: 0.4 gram; omega-6 fatty acids: 2.5 grams.

NOTE: If your desired total for carbohydrates is less than 78 grams for the dinner meal, take away the top bun on your sloppy Joe and the carbohydrate total becomes 66 grams.

## Simple Sloppy Joes (Beef Entrée)

This recipe uses many of the condiments and spices you may already have in your refrigerator and cupboard.

Makes 4 servings

1 pound sirloin or very lean ground beef  
4 green onions, white and part of green, chopped  
1/2 cup finely chopped green bell pepper  
1 1/2 teaspoon minced garlic (or 3/4 teaspoon garlic powder)  
1 teaspoon paprika  
1/2 cup ketchup (low sodium if available)  
2 tablespoons prepared mustard  
1/4 cup chunky salsa  
1/2 cup non-alcoholic beer (water or low sodium beef broth can be used)  
Ground pepper to taste  
4 100% whole-wheat hamburger buns or rolls  
2 ounces or 1/2 cup reduced-fat shredded cheddar cheese

1. In a nonstick skillet or frying pan, cook beef with onions and bell pepper over medium-high heat, breaking up beef with a spoon or spatula, until vegetables are softened and beef is nicely browned (about 5 to 7 minutes).
2. While meat and vegetables are cooking, combine garlic, paprika, catsup, mustard, salsa, and non-alcoholic beer or water in a medium bowl. When meat and vegetable mixture is ready, reduce heat to low and stir in the ketchup mixture. Let mixture simmer for a few minutes. Add pepper to taste.
3. Spoon sloppy Joe mixture onto the bottom buns, top with shredded reduced fat cheddar cheese, and then add the top bun.

Per serving: 350 calories, 31 g protein, 34 g carbohydrate, 11 g fat, 5 g saturated fat, 3 g monounsaturated fat, 3 g polyunsaturated fat, 72 mg cholesterol, 6 grams fiber, 599 mg sodium. Calories from fat: 28%. Omega-3 fatty acids: 0.3 gram; omega-6 fatty acids: 2.5 grams.

## Dinner Menu 2

- Chicken prosciutto, 1 serving (see recipe below)
- 2 cups spinach salad with low-sodium kidney beans (1/4 cup) and raw vegetables (1/4 cup) and 2 tablespoons light dressing made with olive oil or canola oil
- 1/2 cup plain low-fat yogurt blended with 1/2 cup fresh or frozen mixed berries
- Cup of hot or iced tea, water, or skim or 1% milk

Total (not including milk as beverage): 494 calories, 46 g protein, 40 g carbohydrate, 17 g fat, 5.8 g saturated fat, 6.5 g monounsaturated fat, 4.1 g polyunsaturated fat, 100 mg cholesterol, 10.5 g fiber, 876 mg sodium. Calories from fat: 31%.

Omega-3 fatty acids: 0.7 gram; omega-6 fatty acids: 3.2 grams.

## Chicken Prosciutto (Poultry Entrée)

This entrée requires a small investment of time on the front end, and then it bakes in the oven for 20 minutes. The result is a super savory chicken dish that your family will ask you to make again and again.

Makes 4 servings

4 skinless, boneless chicken breasts, pounded with meat mallet to about 1/2-inch thick  
1 cup unbleached white flour

1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper  
1 teaspoon salt  
1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper  
2 teaspoons canola oil  
Canola cooking spray  
1/4 cup double-strength or condensed low-sodium chicken broth  
4 thin slices of prosciutto (about 1 1/2 ounces)  
2 ounces shredded Fontina cheese

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Line a 9x13-inch baking dish with foil. Pat the chicken pieces dry with paper towels.
2. In gallon-size sealable bag, combine flour, black pepper, salt, and cayenne pepper. Add the chicken pieces one at a time to the bag with seasoned flour and coat chicken well.
3. Add canola oil to a large nonstick skillet, spreading it out to cover the bottom of the skillet. Place the skillet on medium high heat. When the oil is hot, add the chicken pieces to the skillet and lightly coat the tops with the cooking spray. Brown the chicken on both sides (about 3 minutes per side).
4. Place chicken in the prepared baking dish and drizzle each with 1 1/2 teaspoons of chicken broth. Cover each with a slice of prosciutto and sprinkle the cheese evenly over the tops. Drizzle remaining chicken broth over the cheese.
5. Bake the chicken in the center of the oven for about 20 minutes or until the breasts are cooked throughout and the cheese is bubbly.

Per serving: 34 g protein, 7 g carbohydrate, 10 g fat, 4 g saturated fat, 4 g monounsaturated fat, 1.6 g polyunsaturated fat, 93 mg cholesterol, 0.3 g fiber, 496 mg sodium. Calories from fat: 34%. Omega-3 fatty acids: 0.4 gram; omega-6 fatty acids: 1.2 grams.

### **Dinner Menu 3**

- Citrus salmon, 1 serving (see recipe below) with 1/2 cup orange segments as garnish
- 2/3 cup cooked brown rice
- Grilled asparagus spears (5 spears lightly coated with 1/2 teaspoon olive oil and grilled on indoor grill)
- Cup of hot or iced tea, water, or skim or 1% milk

Per serving (not including milk as beverage): 535 calories, 37 g protein, 57 g carbohydrate, 17.8 g fat, 3 g saturated fat, 7 g monounsaturated fat, 6 g polyunsaturated fat, 83 mg cholesterol, 8 g fiber, 71 mg sodium.

Calories from fat: 30%. Omega-3 fatty acids: 3.1 grams; omega-6 fatty acids: 2.3 grams.

### **Citrus Glazed Salmon (Fish Entrée)**

This is a tangy salmon that is great served warm or cold. Salmon is one of the best food sources of omega-3 fatty acids.

Makes 3 (4-ounce) servings

1/2 cup orange juice  
1 tablespoon finely chopped orange zest  
1 tablespoon lemon juice  
1 tablespoon honey  
2 teaspoons canola oil  
2 teaspoons finely chopped fresh parsley  
2 teaspoons finely chopped fresh chives

1 pound salmon filet

Salt and pepper to season the salmon (optional)

1. Preheat oven to broil. Line a baking dish that fits the salmon filet as closely as possible, with foil. Coat the foil with canola cooking spray.
2. Add orange juice, orange zest, lemon juice, honey, canola oil, parsley, and chives to a small bowl and whisk together well.
3. Pour the citrus sauce mixture into the prepared foil-lined dish. Season the flesh side of the filet with salt and pepper to taste if desired. Place salmon flesh side down in baking dish on top of citrus sauce. Broil about 6 inches from the heat, skin side up, for about 4 to 5 minutes (watch carefully).
4. Remove dish from broiler. Remove the crisp skin with a fork and discard. Flip the filet over, cover well with the citrus sauce in dish, and continue to broil until fish is cooked throughout (about 5 minutes more). Serve fish warm or cold.

Per serving: 283 Calories, 31 g protein, 11 g carbohydrate, 12 g fat, 1.7 g saturated fat, 5 g monounsaturated fat, 4.8 g polyunsaturated fat, 83 mg cholesterol, 0.2 g fiber, 67 mg sodium. Calories from fat: 38%. Omega-3 fatty acids: 3 grams; omega-6 fatty acids: 1.3 grams.

Source: WebMD.com