

Title:

Discover Your Kitchen Personality

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487

Summary:

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Keywords:

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Article Body:

What kind of cook are you? Do you prefer to get up early to prep the evening meal? Are you simply too crazed to even think about dinner until after work? Or are you one of those who are able to find a balance in between?

These are some of the questions I ask in "Kitchen Life," my new book in which I quiz readers to help them determine what kind of cooks they are. I've developed recipes and techniques that go along with an individual's cooking and kitchen management style.

The quiz results show me that lack of time is the biggest barrier in the kitchen. The right tools, though, can help with that.

Among my top five time-saving kitchen essentials is a vacuum-packaging appliance. My favorite is made by FoodSaver. Whether you're trying to preserve meals you've prepared in advance or maintain the fresh-cooked flavors and textures of leftovers, this appliance is an easy way to get more out of your time in the kitchen.

As you plan your meals, you can save a lot of time if you look for recipes that allow you to use your leftovers. I call these recipes "kitchen workhorses" because one batch can yield several different meals.

When preparing a recipe to eat now and use later, the key is vacuum-sealing the leftovers to maintain freshness and prevent freezer burn. Take my Chili Shepherd's Pie with Buttermilk Potato Topping, for example. I start with my Kitchen Workhorse Chunky Beef Chili. The chili is great as a stand-alone, but

it's also a key ingredient in several spin-off recipes.

Then, I vacuum-package the extra chili with my FoodSaver appliance and freeze the remainder in controlled sizes to use later for other recipes, like my tasty Soft Beef Tacos or Chili and Macaroni Casserole. Voila! From one meal, many.

CHILI SHEPHERD'S PIE WITH BUTTERMILK POTATO TOPPING

(Makes four servings)

2 pounds Yukon Gold

potatoes, peeled and cut into 1-inch chunks

2 tablespoons unsalted butter

1/2 cup buttermilk, preferably at room temperature

1 quart Kitchen Workhorse Chunky Beef Chili (found on page 150 of "Kitchen Life"), heated

1 1/2 cups fresh or thawed frozen corn kernels

1/3 cup (about 2 1/2 ounces) shredded sharp cheddar cheese

Position a rack in the center of the oven and preheat the oven to 400 degrees. Lightly oil an 8-inch square baking dish.

Place potatoes in a medium saucepan and add enough cold, lightly salted water to cover them by 1 inch. Bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce heat to medium and cook potatoes until tender, about 20 minutes.

Drain potatoes and transfer to a bowl. Add the butter. Mash potatoes with a masher or an electric mixer on low, gradually adding the buttermilk. Season with salt and pepper.

Mix the chili and corn in the baking dish. Spread the potatoes on top of the chili and sprinkle with the cheddar. Bake until the cheddar melts and the topping is tinged with brown, 15 minutes to 20 minutes. Serve hot.