

In the Kitchen – Easy Makes – by Marcy Lytle

It's November. And I'm not even sharing one Thanksgiving meal recipe here, at all. I realized last year that so many have their traditional dishes, and they're not budging from them. . Or...some folks completely eat a different table of food altogether – opting for Mexican or Italian – just to enjoy something other than traditional. So this month, I'm just sharing some treats that we ate and enjoyed, they were comfortable and easy to put together, and we enjoyed every bite. Maybe you'll want to try one over the next few weeks of the holiday season, just for fun.

Avocado Cheddar Grilled Cheese

If you can visit a local market during these fall months, buy a loaf of sourdough bread. Or make your own. Let that be the base, then add these few ingredients for the most delicious and crunchy sandwich for lunch:

- Sourdough bread
- Avocado slices
- Cheddar cheese slices
- Cooked bacon
- Butter

In a skillet, melt the butter. Lay one slice of bread down with the cheese on top, and let it start melting. Then add the avocado and bacon and a little more cheese, and that second slice of bread. Place a couple pats of butter on top, and then after the bottom is toasted, carefully flip the sandwich. Make sure both sides are toasted well.

Serve with whatever you like We added fresh cherry tomatoes, and it was such a good lunch!

Rio Ramen

This is an old recipe from my vault, and it's really a favorite that we both love SO MUCH. It's sort of like a taco salad, only the base is Ramen noodles – and the flavors are amazing:

- Two packages of beef flavored Ramen soup
- 1 lb ground beef
- Shredded lettuce
- Tomatoes
- Onion, diced
- Green pepper, diced
- Grated cheddar
- Salsa

Brown the meat in a skillet, and add in the seasoning packets from the noodle pouches. Cook and stir until done, and drain. In another pan, cook the noodles.

Drain the noodles well and place in the base of your shallow bowls for serving. Top with the beef, then layer all the rest until it piles up and looks ready to eat. Top with the salsa. Avocado is good as well, as another topping.

Serve with tortilla chips if you like!

Cast Iron Skillet Pizza

This was so easy, and I was really impressed with how well it turned out. If you have a cast iron skillet, this pizza recipe is a must to try! I like that it doesn't have too much sauce.

- 12" cast iron pan
- 1 T olive oil
- 12 oz pizza dough at room temp
- 2 c shredded mozzarella cheese (use low moisture block, not fresh – for a crispy crust)
- ½ c pizza sauce
- Toppings of your choice

Move oven rack to bottom and preheat oven to 450.

Evenly spread oil on bottom and side of cast iron pan. Gently stretch the dough to fill the bottom of the pan and dimple it with your fingers. Sprinkle the cheese over the entire top of the dough, all the way to the edges. Then dot the sauce over the cheese, also to the edges.

Add your toppings and bake on bottom rack 18-20 minutes, or til the bottom of the crust is golden brown and cheese is melted. (Just check the crust by using a spatula to lift up the side).

Place the hot pan on a wire rack momentarily, then use a sharp knife to run around the edges to keep crust from sticking to pan. Use spatula to then carefully transfer pizza to a cutting board to keep the crust crisp. Serve hot and enjoy!

Healthy Artichoke Dip

It's good sometimes to have a dip in the fridge for the family to enjoy with carrot sticks or chips, when they're hungry and you're busy. This one is it!

- Blender
- 14 oz artichoke hearts (rinsed and patted dry)
- 1 c packed baby spinach
- ½ c canned white beans (rinsed and drained)
- 1 scallion
- 2 t grated lemon zest
- 2 T lemon juice
- ¼ c grated Parmesan

- ½ t pepper

Place all of the above in a blender and puree til finely chopped. (I had to stop and stir several time to get it all to blend). Place in a bowl and top with more black pepper and grated parm, and enjoy.