

Quick and Easy 5-Ingredient Meals for Young Athletes

Are you running out of time to cook dinner at night? Are you grabbing takeout because you didn't have the ingredients for a complicated meal? Most parents of active children know the struggle of wanting young athletes to eat healthy but having little time to prep meals. That's why we put together these simple, five-ingredient recipes with the help of TrueSport Expert Kristen Ziesmer, a registered dietitian and board-certified specialist in sports dietetics.

The point of these recipes is to combine healthy pantry staples with a couple fresh or frozen ingredients to create simple meals that are ready in minutes. And many of these meals actually feature similar ingredients, so you can easily make meals that look and taste different with only a dozen ingredients in total.

Ingredients

First, let's talk about your shopping list. Consider creating a master list that you take with you to the store every week. This list can have all of your normal breakfast, lunch, dinner, and snack staples so you're not constantly trying to remember what you need.

For dinners, consider adding these favorites from Ziesmer to your list:

- **Pantry:** Brown rice, canned black beans, Italian seasoning, chili or taco seasoning, canned salsa, high-quality tomato soup, olive oil
- **Frozen:** Broccoli, peppers, onions, stir fry-ready mixed vegetables, sprouted bread (can buy fresh but if you don't use much bread, frozen is a longer lasting option)
- **Fresh:** Chicken, salmon, greens, any fresh vegetables that you won't mind chopping and prepping, a good-quality shredded cheese

5-Ingredient Recipes

Burrito bowl

Ziesmer likes using brown rice and chicken and then adding different toppings to create different flavor palates. Starting with those basics, you can then add frozen stir fry veggies and soy sauce, or top with black beans, frozen peppers and onions, and cheese or avocado.

One of her favorite meal prep staples is a big tray of chicken breasts cooked in the oven and pre-chopped, plus a large pot of rice, that can be used for a couple of meals without feeling repetitive. It's also a great way to serve dinner to a family of picky eaters: it's a neutral base, and then kids can dress up their bowls with the toppings that they like the best.

Grilled cheese and soup

Does it get any easier? Use frozen sprouted whole grain bread with your cheese and a light brush of olive oil (and maybe a few leafy greens or tomato slices in there) to make a speedy grilled cheese.

Heat up a canned tomato soup, but add chunks of vegetables. You can add in spinach puree for an addition of greens that your athlete won't even notice (just use the blender to pulse the soup

and greens together), and consider adding chunks of peppers, onions, and fresh tomatoes if you have them in the fridge.

Classic meals done simple

We tend to overcomplicate a lot of basic dishes, but really, there's no reason you can't make a delicious baked chicken or salmon dinner with almost no cleanup. Wrap chicken or salmon in foil with a sprinkle of Italian seasoning and put in the oven at 350 degrees to cook until done (usually around 30 minutes). Rather than chopping and sautéing your own veggies, opt for frozen mixed vegetables that steam in their bag in the microwave.

Make a quick pot of brown rice using a rice cooker, or, in a pinch, Ziesmer recommends getting packets of pre-cooked rice that only require a couple minutes in the microwave to heat up. For cleanup, you just need to toss foil and the bags!

Ziesmer does a similar meal by baking chicken and heating up frozen steam-in-bag broccoli, but she'll swap the rice for foil-wrapped baked potatoes, which she then cuts open and stuffs a bit of cheese into for their final minutes in the oven. Again, a delicious and healthy meal for a growing athlete, with almost zero cleanup required.

Leftover nachos

Skip your usual takeout night for a still-indulgent option by having family nacho night. It's a great way to use up leftovers or create a fun and easy meal with a couple of pantry staples.

Look for a higher-quality tortilla chip that only contains a couple of ingredients (corn, salt, and vegetable oil). Lay out a base of the chips on a pan (covered in foil or parchment paper if you want a speedy cleanup). Then, add toppings that require heating. This could include black beans from the pantry, as well as slightly wilted spinach, peppers, and onions from the fridge, or any leftover meat (ground beef or chopped up chicken are easy options). Top with some cheese, then pop in the oven at 350 degrees for eight minutes before switching to broil for one to two minutes to get the cheese bubbling.

Pull them out of the oven, then top with fresh tomatoes, avocado, cilantro, and/or salsa. (You can also use pie plates for each family member if you have picky eaters who prefer to build their own.)

Takeaway

Meals don't have to be complicated or time consuming to be healthy and delicious. Try these easy five-ingredient recipes next time you need to whip up a quick dinner after your athlete's practice.



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