



## **Creativity and Cooking: Sharing What I Have Learned**

**By Pam Morris, Early Learning Center director**

Several weeks ago, I shared my trials and tribulations with creating inspiring and fabulous meals every week. From the comments I received, I realized that I am not alone. It's nice to know that we have a shared history and experiences; we all struggle with this!

So, I thought, what if, instead of just complaining, I try to be helpful? I compiled some of my favorite recipes along with the successful results. Because, I mean, if they didn't work for me, why should you have a potential failure??

This weekend is the perfect time to try these out. It is a long weekend so maybe you have a little extra time for experimenting and preparing something new to your family but successful (at least for me and mine). Everyone has different taste buds. Even within my own family, trying to make everybody happy with the five of us is just not that easy. So when I find something that works, I repeat it often!

### **Pasta**

Pasta is definitely one of my favorite and easy go-to options during the week. It is so versatile and child-friendly, plus it takes 10 minutes or less to make. So what can you add? Well, I always say to start with the protein. For our family, this is important. If I am adding chicken, beef or another meat, then dairy is off the table. If I choose Beyond Beef or Impossible Meat or another plant-based option, then dairy can come flooding back in. We keep a kosher home so separation of the dairy



and meat is a hard and fast rule. Now that we have chosen the protein, next comes the add-ins. What veggies do I have in the fridge or freezer? What veggies will the other four of the Morrisses eat? Broccoli is a yes every time, mushrooms get a hurrah from three of the other members of the family, and down the line I go. And then, what sauce? Will it be more Italian-inspired with basil, tomatoes, alfredo? Or maybe Asian inspired with teriyaki, soy, rice vinegar, etc? And this section can also be adapted with other grains - rice, quinoa, even zoodles (zucchini noodles, squash noodles).

## **Taco Tuesday**

Another one of my family's favorite meals! Again, choose your protein first - fish, plant-based meat, just veggies, beans or beef/chicken (other meat). What shells will you use? There are wonderful, prepackaged ones in the grocery store (we like Ortega - they are inexpensive and kosher). If you choose tortillas, this is where it might get a little more involved. You can buy premade tortillas and there are a few brands that are pretty good.

However, did you know that homemade tortillas are SO EASY and taste so much better that it isn't even a contest! All you need is flour, water, a small amount of oil and salt, if you choose. You make a simple dough, divide into balls, let rest for about 30 minutes and then heat a skillet, roll out each ball as flat as you can and cook on each side for 30 seconds or less. Message me if you would like a more detailed recipe! You have your protein, your "shells" and now you need the fixings - cheese, if you choose, veggies - be creative, salsa, taco sauce, and in our house, always guacamole.



## **Pizza**

Did you know that at Fry's grocery store (and I am sure other ones) you can buy pre-made pizza dough, that is kosher, in the veggie/cheese section of the store? They also have pre-cooked pizza shells near the sauce in the aisles. I personally like the dough option better but it does take a bit more time. You can make the pizza gluten free with cauliflower crust. I have not been completely successful with this option but I keep trying. An easy pizza option is using pita bread or the tortillas from above. Again, it is all about the toppings.

And with all of these options, even at the toddler stage, they can help you with the assembly and cutting. If you feel more comfortable, have your child use a plastic knife. There are the throw-away ones and Ikea also has great reusable plastic silverware. As children get older, you can start to introduce more adult-type utensils for cutting.

From my first post, I shared that it was the coming up with ideas that really stressed me out. I hope that you will keep these suggestions in your back pocket for a particularly busy week. Use them and breathe easier. I would love to hear from you if you have ideas too! Enjoy your long weekend, rest and dinner is covered!

Shabbat Shalom.