

25 Simple and Affordable Home-Style Recipes



25 easy, affordable recipes created especially for seniors, caregivers, and families looking to make every dollar—and every meal—go a little further. Each dish costs around \$2.50 per serving or less, can be stretched to feed six, and many can be stored or frozen for later.

With clear instructions, simple ingredients, and low-cost side dish ideas, these meals are perfect for anyone using SNAP benefits or cooking on a modest budget. Developed by Senior Support Arizona, this collection celebrates comfort food made easy—because good meals should always be within reach.



25 Easy Meals That Stretch, Store, and Satisfy

Cooking for a family—or even just for yourself—should never feel overwhelming or expensive. That’s why we created this special collection of **25 home-style recipes** designed to make mealtime simple, affordable, and enjoyable for everyone.

Each recipe in this collection was crafted with **real households, seniors, and caregivers** in mind. Whether you’re preparing dinner for two or stretching a meal to serve six, these dishes use **affordable, everyday ingredients** you can find at any grocery store. Most cost **under \$2.50 per serving**, proving that wholesome, satisfying meals don’t require a high price tag.

Many of these recipes—like casseroles, soups, and skillet meals—are perfect for **meal prepping or freezing**. Cook once and enjoy again later in the week. Dishes such as *Creamy Chicken & Rice Skillet*, *Simple Homemade Chili*, and *Shepherd’s Pie* hold up beautifully in the freezer, making them ideal for seniors, caregivers, or anyone who appreciates having ready-to-heat homemade meals on hand.

To help you stretch your grocery dollars even further, every recipe includes a **“Stretch It to 6”** section. These small, clever adjustments show how to serve more people or create leftovers with just a few pantry staples—like adding rice, beans, or extra vegetables.

You’ll also find a short **“Simple Sides”** section at the end of each recipe, filled with easy, low-cost ideas to round out your meal. These side dishes—like buttered green beans, fruit cups, or garlic toast—are designed to complement the main dish without adding extra cost or prep time.

This collection isn’t about gourmet ingredients or complicated techniques—it’s about **real food for real people**. Meals that taste like home. Dinners you can cook on a Tuesday night or share on a Sunday afternoon.

Whether you’re shopping on a tight budget, cooking from a senior-friendly kitchen, or using **SNAP benefits**, these recipes were built to make life easier and mealtime warmer.

At **Senior Support Arizona**, we believe that good food and good health go hand in hand. We hope these recipes fill your kitchen with wonderful smells, your table with comfort, and your heart with the joy of sharing affordable, nourishing meals.



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Smart Cooking: Using ChatGPT or Google Gemini to Plan Meals with What You Have

Cooking doesn't have to start with a long grocery list — sometimes, it starts with whatever's already in your pantry or what you've just brought home from the food bank. Tools like **ChatGPT** and **Google Gemini** can help you turn those ingredients into complete, satisfying meals in just a few minutes.

If you're not familiar with them, ChatGPT (from OpenAI) and Google Gemini are **AI assistants** that work a bit like a conversation. You type in what you have, and they give you recipes, meal plans, or ideas that match. Think of them as friendly kitchen helpers that never run out of ideas.

For example, you might type:

"I have two cans of tuna, a bag of rice, and a can of corn. What can I make for dinner?"

Within seconds, you'll get suggestions like *Tuna Rice Casserole*, *Tuna Patties with Corn Salad*, or even a *one-pot tuna and rice skillet*. You can ask follow-up questions, such as "Can I freeze this?" or "How can I make this feed six people?" and get practical, step-by-step answers.

If you pick up groceries from a food bank or community pantry, these tools are especially helpful. They can help you combine ingredients that don't always seem to go together — like boxed stuffing mix, canned vegetables, and chicken — into something hearty and delicious. You can also ask them to make recipes **low-cost, senior-friendly, or SNAP-eligible**, and they'll tailor the answers to fit your needs.

Here are a few smart ways to use AI for meal planning:

- **Inventory cooking:** Type in all your pantry items and ask for five meal ideas that use the most ingredients.
- **Stretch your servings:** Ask how to make a meal feed more people or turn leftovers into new dishes.
- **Freezer-friendly planning:** Ask which meals from your list can be cooked once and frozen for later.
- **Health-conscious swaps:** Request lower-salt, higher-protein, or softer-texture options for easier chewing.

Both ChatGPT and Google Gemini can be used on a smartphone, tablet, or computer — many people find them easier to use than searching the web, because they understand natural language. You don't need fancy phrasing; just type like you're talking to a friend.

With a little creativity and the help of these new digital kitchen companions, even a modest pantry can become a week of warm, home-cooked meals — proving that technology can serve both the heart and the stomach.

Sample Prompts to Try with ChatGPT or Google Gemini

Try typing one of these prompts into ChatGPT or Google Gemini. You don't need perfect grammar — just describe what's in your kitchen or what you picked up from the food bank.

When You Have Random Ingredients

"I have two cans of beans, a box of rice, and some frozen corn. What easy dinner can I make for four people?"

"Give me three recipes using tuna, canned soup, and noodles."

"What can I cook with peanut butter, oatmeal, and a banana?"

When You Want to Stretch a Meal

"How can I make a pot of chili feed six people?"

"I have one pound of chicken and some rice — what can I add to make it go further?"

"Show me inexpensive sides to serve with spaghetti."

When You Want to Freeze or Store Meals

"Which of these meals will freeze well: chicken and rice, soup, or baked ziti?"

"Give me freezer-friendly recipes I can make with food bank ingredients."

"How do I safely store leftovers from a casserole?"

When You Want Healthier Options

"Make a low-sodium version of vegetable soup using what I have on hand."

"Give me high-protein meal ideas with canned beans and tuna."

"Show me soft-texture meals that are easy for seniors to chew."

When You Want a Full Week Plan

"Create a 5-day dinner menu using low-cost ingredients and common pantry items."

"Make a grocery list for seven healthy dinners under \$10 each."

"Plan a week of meals for two people using canned and frozen foods."

Tip: After you get a recipe idea, you can always ask follow-up questions like

"Can I make this in one pot?"

"Can I use cream of mushroom soup instead of cream of chicken?"

"What can I serve with this that's cheap and easy?"

One-Pot Cheesy Taco Pasta

A family favorite that combines tacos and pasta into one warm, cheesy dish. It's hearty, comforting, and easy to make in a single pan.

Ingredients

- 1 pound ground turkey or beef
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 packet taco seasoning
- 2 cups dry pasta (small shapes like shells or elbows work well)
- 1 can diced tomatoes (undrained)
- 2 cups water
- 1 cup shredded cheddar cheese

Instructions

1. In a large skillet or pot, cook the meat and onion until browned. Drain if needed.
2. Stir in taco seasoning, diced tomatoes, pasta, and water.
3. Cover and simmer for 10–12 minutes, stirring occasionally, until pasta is tender.
4. Stir in cheese until melted and creamy.

Stretch It to 6

Add 1 extra cup of cooked pasta and a small can of drained beans (black or pinto). Stir in ½ cup of water to balance the sauce. The beans and extra pasta increase volume without changing the flavor.

Simple Sides

- Warm tortillas brushed with butter
- Fresh carrot sticks
- Small bowl of rice seasoned with a little lime juice

Creamy Chicken & Rice Skillet

This one-pan meal is comforting, creamy, and perfect for weeknights. It's quick to prepare and easy to enjoy.

Ingredients

- 2 cups cooked chicken, cut into pieces
- 1 cup white rice (uncooked)
- 1 can cream of chicken soup
- 2 cups water
- 1 cup frozen peas and carrots
- Salt and pepper to taste

Instructions

1. Combine all ingredients in a skillet and stir well.
2. Bring to a gentle boil, then cover and simmer 18–20 minutes, until rice is tender.
3. Add a little salt and pepper to taste.

Stretch It to 6

Add ½ cup extra rice and another ½ cup of water. Stir in one scrambled egg at the end for extra protein and creaminess.

Simple Sides

- Sliced cucumbers with a sprinkle of salt
- Applesauce cups
- Simple green salad with light dressing

Bean & Cheese Enchiladas

A simple baked dish that's cozy and satisfying. It's mild, cheesy, and easy to prepare with just a few ingredients.

Ingredients

- 8 flour tortillas
- 1 can refried beans
- 2 cups shredded cheese
- 1 can enchilada sauce
- A little oil for the baking dish

Instructions

1. Lightly oil the baking dish. Spread a small amount of sauce on the bottom.
2. Fill each tortilla with beans and cheese, roll up, and place seam-side down.
3. Pour remaining sauce over the top and sprinkle with cheese.
4. Bake at 350°F for about 20 minutes.

Stretch It to 6

Add 1 extra can of beans and 2 more tortillas. Thin the sauce with ¼ cup water if needed. Serve smaller portions with extra toppings like lettuce and tomatoes.

Simple Sides

- Spanish-style rice (rice cooked with tomato sauce)
- Corn on the cob or canned corn
- Simple cabbage slaw

Turkey Sloppy Joes

Classic, saucy, and satisfying — this meal brings everyone to the table fast.

Ingredients

- 1 pound ground turkey or beef
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 1 can tomato sauce
- 2 tablespoons ketchup
- 1 tablespoon mustard
- 6 to 8 hamburger buns

Instructions

1. Cook meat and onion until browned. Drain if needed.
2. Stir in tomato sauce, ketchup, and mustard.
3. Simmer 8–10 minutes, stirring occasionally.
4. Serve on buns.

Stretch It to 6

Stir in ½ cup cooked lentils or ½ can drained beans to increase bulk. If the sauce thickens, add a splash of water.

Simple Sides

- Oven-baked potato wedges
- Pickle spears
- Steamed peas or mixed veggies

Loaded Baked Potato Bar

A fun, customizable dinner everyone enjoys — and cleanup is a breeze.

Ingredients

- 4 large baking potatoes
- 1 cup shredded cheese
- ½ cup cooked crumbled bacon or ham (optional)
- ½ cup steamed broccoli
- Sour cream, salt, and pepper

Instructions

1. Bake potatoes at 400°F for 45–60 minutes until tender.
2. Slice open and fluff with a fork.
3. Add toppings and serve buffet-style.

Stretch It to 6

Use 6 smaller potatoes instead of 4 large. Add extra toppings like beans or diced veggies for volume.

Simple Sides

- Small garden salad
- Sliced apples
- Garlic toast

Chicken Noodle Skillet

Warm and comforting, this dish combines the flavors of homemade soup in a single skillet.

Ingredients

- 2 cups cooked chicken
- 8 ounces egg noodles
- 2 cups chicken broth
- 1 cup frozen mixed vegetables
- 1 can cream of chicken soup

Instructions

1. Mix all ingredients in a large skillet.
2. Bring to a gentle boil, then cover and simmer 10–12 minutes.
3. Stir occasionally until noodles are tender.

Stretch It to 6

Add 1 cup extra broth and another handful of noodles. Toss in ½ cup cooked rice to bulk it up without extra cost.

Simple Sides

- Saltine crackers
- Simple side salad
- Steamed carrots

Simple Beef & Rice Skillet

A cozy, one-pan favorite that's hearty and satisfying.

Ingredients

- 1 pound ground beef or turkey
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 1 cup rice
- 1 can diced tomatoes
- 2 cups water
- Salt and pepper

Instructions

1. Cook beef and onion until browned. Drain if needed.
2. Add rice, tomatoes, and water.
3. Cover and simmer 18–20 minutes, until rice is tender.

Stretch It to 6

Add ½ cup extra rice and a little more water. Stir in 1 cup frozen veggies for bulk and color.

Simple Sides

- Buttered toast
- Applesauce
- Steamed green beans

Creamy Ham & Peas Pasta

An easy, cozy pasta with creamy sauce and mild flavors.

Ingredients

- 8 ounces pasta
- 1½ cups cooked ham
- 1 cup peas
- 1 can cream of mushroom soup
- ½ cup milk

Instructions

1. Cook pasta and drain.
2. Stir in ham, peas, soup, and milk.
3. Heat gently until creamy.

Stretch It to 6

Add 2 extra ounces of pasta and ½ cup frozen peas. Mix in ¼ cup water or milk to thin the sauce slightly.

Simple Sides

- Sliced oranges
- Simple side salad
- Garlic bread

Cheesy Veggie Quesadillas

Quick, crispy, and full of melted cheese — a sure hit for all ages.

Ingredients

- 8 tortillas
- 2 cups cheese
- 1 cup cooked vegetables
- A little oil or butter

Instructions

1. Heat skillet with a small amount of oil.
2. Fill each tortilla with cheese and veggies.
3. Fold and cook both sides until golden and melted.

Stretch It to 6

Add one extra tortilla and spread filling slightly thinner. Serve with a side of rice or beans to fill everyone up.

Simple Sides

- Refried beans
- Fresh fruit
- Corn salad

Chicken Stir-Fry with Rice

Colorful, easy, and delicious — a flexible favorite that works with any veggies on hand.

Ingredients

- 2 cups cooked chicken
- 2 cups cooked rice
- 2 cups mixed vegetables
- 2 tablespoons soy sauce
- Oil for cooking

Instructions

1. Heat oil in a skillet.
2. Add veggies and cook 4–5 minutes.
3. Stir in chicken, soy sauce, and rice.
4. Cook until warmed through.

Stretch It to 6

Add 1 extra cup of rice and another splash of soy sauce or broth. A scrambled egg also adds bulk and protein.

Simple Sides

- Sliced oranges or pineapple
- Green salad
- Toasted bread with butter

Baked Ziti

A bubbly, cheesy casserole that's always a hit.

Ingredients

- 12 ounces pasta
- 1 jar marinara sauce
- 1½ cups mozzarella cheese
- 1 cup ricotta or cottage cheese

Instructions

1. Cook pasta and drain.
2. Stir in sauce and ricotta.
3. Pour into baking dish, top with mozzarella.
4. Bake at 375°F for 25 minutes.

Stretch It to 6

Add 2 extra ounces of pasta and a little water or sauce. Mix in ½ cup chopped spinach for more volume.

Simple Sides

- Garlic bread
- Simple cucumber salad
- Applesauce

Shepherd's Pie

A hearty, layered dish with meat, veggies, and mashed potatoes.

Ingredients

- 1 pound ground beef or turkey
- 1 onion, chopped
- 2 cups vegetables
- 1 packet gravy mix
- 4 potatoes
- Butter, milk, salt, pepper

Instructions

1. Boil and mash potatoes.
2. Cook meat and onion; add gravy and vegetables.
3. Layer meat mixture in a dish, top with mashed potatoes.
4. Bake 25 minutes at 375°F.

Stretch It to 6

Add 1 more potato and ½ cup extra veggies. Stir in ½ cup cooked rice into the meat mix for more servings.

Simple Sides

- Warm dinner rolls
- Green beans
- Fruit cup

Creamy Chicken & Stuffing Bake

A classic comfort food casserole that's easy to love.

Ingredients

- 2 cups cooked chicken
- 1 box stuffing mix
- 1 can cream of chicken soup
- 1 cup vegetables
- 1 cup milk

Instructions

1. Mix soup, chicken, milk, and veggies.
2. Spread in baking dish.
3. Top with prepared stuffing.
4. Bake 30 minutes at 375°F.

Stretch It to 6

Add ½ cup cooked rice or a handful of frozen veggies to the mix. If it seems thick, stir in an extra ¼ cup of milk.

Simple Sides

- Steamed carrots
- Sliced pears
- Toasted bread with butter

Spaghetti with Meat Sauce

A timeless dinner that never fails. It's simple, hearty, and always comforting.

Ingredients

- 1 pound spaghetti
- 1 pound ground beef or turkey
- 1 jar pasta sauce
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Optional: Parmesan cheese

Instructions

1. Cook spaghetti per package directions; drain.
2. Brown meat in a skillet, then stir in pasta sauce.
3. Simmer for 10 minutes, then serve sauce over pasta.

Stretch It to 6

Add 2 extra ounces of spaghetti and ½ can diced tomatoes or a little water to thin the sauce. Mix in a cup of frozen veggies or lentils to extend servings.

Simple Sides

- Garlic bread or toast
- Small green salad
- Applesauce or orange slices

Black Bean Quesadillas

Warm, cheesy, and satisfying — these make a fast, easy dinner or lunch.

Ingredients

- 8 flour tortillas
- 2 cans black beans, rinsed and lightly mashed
- 2 cups shredded cheese
- A little oil or butter

Instructions

1. Spread beans and cheese over one tortilla half, fold, and cook in an oiled skillet until golden on both sides.
2. Slice and serve warm.

Stretch It to 6

Add 1 extra tortilla and use a thinner layer of beans. Pair with rice or veggies to round out the meal.

Simple Sides

- Spanish-style rice
- Corn kernels with a bit of butter
- Fresh fruit cups

Chicken Pot Pie Biscuit Bake

Comforting and creamy with a golden biscuit topping — all the flavor of pot pie, no crust needed.

Ingredients

- 2 cups cooked chicken
- 1 can cream of chicken soup
- 1 cup mixed vegetables
- 1 cup milk
- 1 can refrigerated biscuits

Instructions

1. Mix chicken, soup, veggies, and milk.
2. Spread into a greased dish and top with biscuit halves.
3. Bake 25–30 minutes at 375°F until biscuits are golden.

Stretch It to 6

Add ½ cup cooked rice or an extra cup of vegetables to the filling. If it thickens, stir in a splash more milk.

Simple Sides

- Steamed green beans
- Applesauce
- Simple salad

Sausage and Cabbage Skillet

Savory and satisfying, this dish fills the kitchen with a homey aroma.

Ingredients

- 1 pound smoked sausage, sliced
- 1 head cabbage, chopped
- 4 potatoes, diced
- 1 onion, chopped
- Oil for cooking
- Salt and pepper

Instructions

1. Brown sausage in oil, add onion, cabbage, and potatoes.
2. Season and cook 12–15 minutes, stirring occasionally, until tender.

Stretch It to 6

Add 1–2 extra potatoes or ½ can of drained beans. A splash of broth can help stretch the dish while keeping it moist.

Simple Sides

- Buttered bread
- Small dish of applesauce
- Carrot and celery sticks

Broccoli Cheddar Rice Bowls

Creamy, cheesy, and comforting — a quick, filling meal.

Ingredients

- 2 cups cooked rice
- 2 cups steamed broccoli
- 1 cup shredded cheddar
- 1 tablespoon butter
- Salt and pepper

Instructions

1. Stir butter into warm rice.
2. Add broccoli and cheese, stirring until melted.
3. Season lightly.

Stretch It to 6

Add 1 extra cup of rice and a drizzle of milk to keep it creamy. Stir in a scrambled egg or some leftover chicken for protein.

Simple Sides

- Sliced apples
- Side salad
- Crackers or toast

Tuna Noodle Casserole

A comforting classic full of gentle flavor and creamy texture.

Ingredients

- 8 ounces egg noodles
- 1 can tuna
- 1 can cream of mushroom soup
- 1 cup peas
- ½ cup crushed crackers

Instructions

1. Mix all ingredients, top with crushed crackers, and bake 20 minutes at 350°F.

Stretch It to 6

Add 2 ounces extra noodles and ¼ cup milk or broth to keep creamy. Mix in a handful of corn or diced carrots to increase volume.

Simple Sides

- Green salad
- Applesauce
- Garlic bread

Easy Vegetable Soup

Simple, soothing, and full of tender vegetables.

Ingredients

- 4 cups broth
- 2 cups mixed vegetables
- 2 potatoes, chopped
- 1 onion, chopped
- Salt and pepper

Instructions

1. Combine everything in a pot, bring to boil, then simmer 25 minutes.

Stretch It to 6

Add 1 more cup of broth and ½ cup cooked rice or small pasta. It increases yield without affecting flavor.

Simple Sides

- Buttered toast
- Saltine crackers
- Sliced pears

Ham and Potato Soup

Creamy, hearty, and filling — the perfect comfort meal.

Ingredients

- 2 cups diced ham
- 4 potatoes, cubed
- 2 carrots, sliced
- 2 celery stalks, sliced
- 4 cups broth
- Salt and pepper

Instructions

1. Combine everything in a pot, bring to a boil, and simmer 25 minutes until potatoes soften.

Stretch It to 6

Add 1 extra potato and an additional cup of broth. Stir in a spoon of instant mashed potatoes to thicken and extend servings.

Simple Sides

- Simple side salad
- Warm bread or rolls
- Canned peaches

Chicken Tostadas

Crispy and colorful, these make a fun family dinner.

Ingredients

- 8 tostada shells
- 2 cups shredded cooked chicken
- 1 can refried beans
- 1 cup lettuce, shredded
- 1 tomato, chopped
- 1 cup cheese

Instructions

1. Spread beans on shells, add chicken, lettuce, tomato, and cheese.

Stretch It to 6

Use smaller portions of beans and chicken per shell; add cooked rice, corn, or shredded cabbage as extra toppings.

Simple Sides

- Spanish rice
- Corn salad
- Fresh fruit

BBQ Pulled Chicken Sandwiches

Sweet, tangy, and tender — perfect for an easy dinner or casual get-together.

Ingredients

- 2 pounds chicken
- 1 bottle barbecue sauce
- 8 buns

Instructions

1. Cook chicken in barbecue sauce in a slow cooker for 4–6 hours.
2. Shred and mix.

Stretch It to 6

Add ½ can of drained beans or a small scoop of cooked rice into the sauce. Serve smaller sandwiches with hearty sides.

Simple Sides

- Coleslaw
- Baked beans
- Potato wedges

Ramen Stir-Fry Bowls

Quick, colorful, and delicious — ramen with a fun twist.

Ingredients

- 4 packs ramen noodles
- 2 cups mixed vegetables
- 2 eggs
- 2 tablespoons soy sauce
- Oil for the pan

Instructions

1. Cook noodles; drain.
2. Scramble eggs; set aside.
3. Stir-fry veggies, add noodles, eggs, and soy sauce.

Stretch It to 6

Add 1 extra ramen pack and another handful of vegetables. Use half the seasoning packets to avoid salt overload.

Simple Sides

- Orange slices
- Steamed edamame or peas
- Toasted bread

Simple Homemade Chili

Hearty, flavorful, and perfect for cool nights.

Ingredients

- 1 pound ground beef or turkey
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 can diced tomatoes
- 1 can tomato sauce
- 2 cans beans, drained
- 1 packet chili seasoning

Instructions

1. Cook meat and onion; drain.
2. Add tomatoes, sauce, beans, and seasoning.
3. Simmer 25 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Stretch It to 6

Add an extra can of beans and ½ cup water or broth. It increases volume and makes leftovers for the next day.

Simple Sides

- Cornbread or crackers
- Small salad
- Apple slices