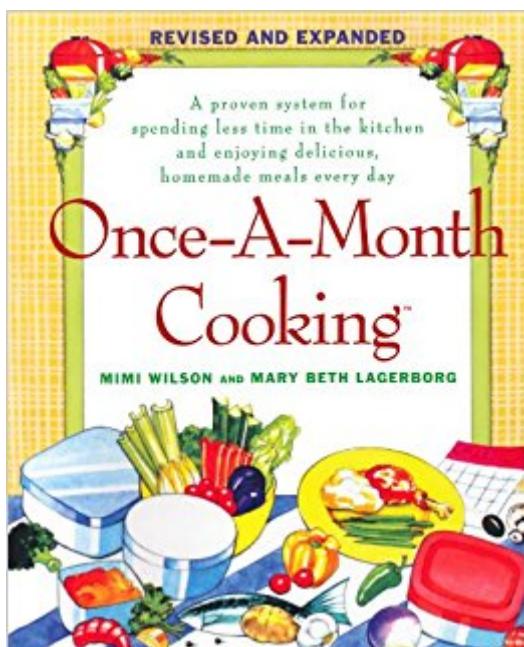


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# Once-A-Month Cooking: A Proven System For Spending Less Time In The Kitchen And Enjoying Delicious, Homemade Meals Every Day



## Synopsis

Since the first edition of Once-a-Month Cooking was published in 1986, its proven, practical method has helped hundreds of thousands of families reduce their cooking time and still enjoy nightly home-cooked meals. You don't have to be a super savvy chef to pull your family together each week for these light and simple, easy-to-prepare meals. Revised to reflect today's healthier diet, this revised edition explains how to: plan ahead, spend less time at the supermarket, cut down on prep time, group similar kitchen tasks together to get them all done at once, make kitchen clean-up more manageable, and use the freezer, computer, and your head to create a month full of delicious meals! Contains many easy, prepare-ahead recipes for dinner time success such as:--Baked Jambalaya Mexican--Chicken Lasagna--Chicken Taco Salad--Slow Cooker Cranberry Pork--Veal Scaloppini--And more! Whether you are a busy parent on the go or you just want a quick dinner to warm your spirit, you'll be instantly hooked on this cookbook classic and its fool-proof Once-a-Month Cooking method!

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Mimi Wilson is author of *Holy Habits: a Woman's Guide to Intentional Living*, and an internationally-known speaker who has lived in Congo, Ecuador, and Jordan. She and her husband Calvin, a physician, currently live in Denver, Colorado. Mary Beth Lagerborg is Director of Media at MOPS International (Mothers of Preschoolers). She is a speaker, the author of *Dwelling: Living Fully from the Space You Call Home*, and editor with Karen J. Parks of *Beyond Macaroni and Cheese*.

She and her husband Alex live in Littleton, Colorado.

**Chapter One**  
**Getting Ready: An Overview of the Once-a-Month Plan**  
This cooking method enables you to prepare either a month's or two weeks' main dishes at once and freeze them. It includes two choices of one-month cycles and three choices of two-week cycles. If you rotate among these, you can easily provide great mealtime variety. We suggest that you start with a cycle from the book to get used to the method. Then you can experiment with adding family-favorite recipes. Turn to chapter 9 for help in adapting the method to your own recipes. Each of the menu cycles gives you a menu calendar that shows the month's entrées at a glance, a grocery shopping list, a list of staples you should have on hand (add to the grocery list any you don't have), a list of the containers you will need for freezing the entrées, step-by-step instructions for preparing the recipes in sequence on your cooking day, and finally the recipes themselves, in the order you will prepare them. To serve an entrée, you will need to thaw the dish and heat it. While it is being heated, you can prepare a vegetable, salad, or perhaps a dessert to serve with it. The time-consuming preparation and cleanup is done all at once on your megacooking day! Since many of the entrées can be frozen in freezer bags instead of bulkier hard-sided containers, even a month's cycle can be stored in the freezer section of your refrigerator. Just make sure you make room by cleaning it out before your cooking day. Sooner or later we need to deal with those hard knots of leftovers anyway! Right after cooking day you will probably not have room in the refrigerator's freezer for things like ice cream and loaves of bread, but as you use entrées from the freezer you can add these to it. The recipes in Once-a-Month Cooking come not from stainless-steel test kitchens, but have been tested numerous times in homes by cooks of varying skills. We have selected recipes we think your family will eat and enjoy. They were chosen for taste, variety, nutritional value, easily available ingredients, and how well they lend themselves to freezing. You will find that the recipes vary in serving size. The average is 5 or 6 servings. Some serve 4; a few serve 12. Depending on the ages (and eating habits) of your children, if you have four or fewer family members, you may want to divide and freeze each larger-serving entrée in two or more meal-size portions. The largest recipes are great for serving to company or ensuring leftovers the following day. You may find that the one-month menu cycle actually feeds your family for five or six weeks or more--particularly if you occasionally eat out or supplement your menu with dinner salads or easy meals like grilled meats and vegetables. Chapter 8 provides creative ways to serve fresh seasonal vegetables and other accompaniments with your entrées--as well as a few sweet treats to have on hand in your

freezer. We think you will be as excited as we are about the wealth of ideas presented by our friend Rebecca Pasquariello, chef and owner of Savor Fresh Foods. Consult chapter 10 for helpful information on such things as freezing tips and food-measurement equivalents. Are you ready to cook? Or at least ready to think about getting ready to cook? Here are some tips to streamline the process. First, read this introductory material. Then choose which menu cycle you would like to try this month and read through that chapter so you'll know what's ahead. Next comes the hardest part: mark off the time on your calendar to grocery shop and cook! These should be on adjacent days. Don't try to shop and cook on the same day, especially if you have young children, or you won't like us very much! You simply won't have the time or energy to do both. You might also not like us about four hours into your cooking day, when your feet are complaining and every pot and pan you own is dirty. But we are consoled by the thought that you will like us very much when you peek at your larder, carefully labeled and layered in your freezer, as well as each day thereafter at about 5:00 p.m. The one-month cycles require about a nine-hour day (of course this varies with the cook). The two-week cycles take about five hours. Cook with a friend or your spouse or an older child. The day goes so much more quickly when you divide the work and add conversation. If you have young children, a cooking companion can help tend the kids, answer the phone, and wipe the counters. You can either divide the food between your two families or cook one day a month at your friend's home and one day a month at your own. Trust us that you will want to go out to dinner on cooking day! Yes, we know you will have plenty on hand for dinner. But you won't want to face any of it on your plate. This will pass. Go out, then have your spouse and kids wash the pots and pans. Err on the side of buying a little more produce, chicken, and ground beef than is called for on your shopping lists. You can always use these for salads, soups, and sandwiches. If you have chicken broth left over, freeze it in an ice cube tray. When the cubes are frozen, pop them into a freezer bag. You can pull out a cube when a recipe calls for chicken broth, or make spur-of-the-moment chicken soup with leftovers. You may want to photocopy the recipes and attach them to large index cards. In many cases you will be working on more than one recipe at a time. You can lay out your recipe cards in sequence to save you from having to keep turning the pages. Don't even think about trying to do extra baking on your cooking day. If you enjoy making pie crust and want to use your own rather than a store-bought one, prepare the pie crust a couple of days ahead. Finally, although you need to free yourself of commitments on your cooking day, the day will go much more easily if you feel free to take a break to tend to the children's needs, make a phone call, or just sit down to rest! Wear shoes that give your feet good support. Listen to your favorite music. Crack open a kitchen

window for ventilation and to let the good smells pour out. The secret of the method involves doing all similar processes at once: browning ground beef and chopping onions and cooking chicken only once rather than several times a month. Imagine the hours this saves! **Grocery Shopping Hints** Before you go to the supermarket or warehouse store, read the grocery and staples lists for the menu cycle you plan to use. The staples list contains items you need but probably have on hand. Look through your cupboards and add any missing staple items to the grocery shopping list. Also check the list of suggested freezer containers to see if you need to buy any of them. For added convenience, photocopy the grocery list that we provide, then write in the other staple items or containers you'll need to buy. The grocery lists have been categorized by sections of food to help speed you through the store. If you shop for a one-month menu cycle, you will have to push one cart and pull another. You may need to budget more carefully in order to set aside the funds needed to purchase food for all your dinner entrées at once. But keep in mind that over the course of the month you will save money on your food bill by cooking this way, since you'll be buying in bulk, eating out less often, and eliminating unplanned trips to the supermarket. Your shopping trip will take you a couple of hours, so don't try to wedge it between two appointments. If you take young children, be sure to go when everyone is well fed and rested. It also helps to break up the trip. For example, go at midmorning to a discount food store to buy in bulk, have lunch at a favorite spot, and then finish any leftover shopping at the supermarket. Since this will be a lengthy shopping trip, plan your route through the supermarket so you visit the meat and dairy aisles last. If a friend or relative can baby-sit for you on shopping day, you will accomplish more in less time. When you get home from shopping, you don't have to put everything away. Stack the canned goods and dry ingredients on a table or counter because you'll be using them soon. Keeping them within sight can inspire you for the task ahead! **The grocery shopping lists** include some items with asterisks (\*). These can be stored, because you will not need them until the day you serve the corresponding entrée. Mark the labels of these items to remind you not to use them by mistake. **The Day Before Cooking Day** After you've returned from the grocery store, clear off the kitchen counters, removing any appliances you won't be using. Create as much free countertop space as you can. Then, following the "Equipment Needed for Cooking Day" list, pull out your food processor, mixer, bowls--the tools you will need. If you have room, you may also want to get out the staple items. Make sure you have all needed groceries on hand. Then perform the tasks that your chosen menu cycle outlines for "The Day Before Cooking Day." If you don't have a food processor to chop and slice the vegetables, you may want to cut them up the day before cooking, since this is one of

the most time-consuming tasks. Then store these vegetables (except mushrooms) in the refrigerator in cold water inside tightly sealed plastic containers. Or omit the water and seal them in zip-closure bags. Finally, check the list of freezer containers needed for the entrées in your menu cycle and get out the ones you'll need. You can usually store entrées in freezer bags, unless they are layered (like lasagna) or contain a lot of liquid. Food stored in freezer bags can be thawed in the bag and then warmed in a suitable container.

**Cooking Day** The assembly order for each menu cycle is a step-by-step guide to preparing all your entrees. Read through the assembly order before you start to cook. Since you will usually be working on more than one recipe at a time, getting an overview will give you a sense of how the steps flow together. The following suggestions will help make this method work best for you:

Place an empty trash can ...

I received a copy of this book's first edition in the mail MANY years ago. (1990s!) Honestly, I am still stumped as to how I got the book. I didn't order it. (I've since purchased the revised edition and it's follow up book--Family Favorites). After it sat on my shelf for about a year I decided to give it a try. Be prepared, a month of cooking in one day is not for the faint of heart. My feet were killing me and I never wanted to see the inside of my kitchen again. But then I started living with my frozen meals. I loved them. There were a few recipes I chose to bump from the next round of marathon cooking days but by and large the authors have great ideas. Their instructions for the cooking days are priceless. I've so incorporated it into my cooking now that I can choose my own recipes and pull off the same results without thinking about it. So why 4 stars instead of 5? I've stopped cooking with processed foods so ingredients like cream of (whatever) soup are a no-go. I wish they would revise with healthier ingredients. The recipes I have used most over 20 years? Mandarin Orange Chicken, Beef Pot Roast (the marinade is amazing!) Chili Verde, and Mexican Stroganoff. Buy this. You won't be sorry.

After hearing a radio interview with the author I decided to try this cookbook. The idea is interesting and worked well for my family. I don't like cooking, and I REALLY don't like cleaning the kitchen, so it was nice to do the bulk of both of those things in one day and then be done with it. I did still need to make a little extra most nights though (vegi's/ side dish). Since we get our produce through a CSA and it's unpredictable what we'll get, this system was perfect for incorporating last minute sides. The recipes themselves were "interesting" and very different from the way I'm used to cooking. A lot of them call for pre-made packets or mixes, or canned fruit and vegetables. I've always just used fresh produce, or put together my own "taco seasoning", so this was new. It felt

like something out of the 50's (and probably not very healthy!). I think I opened more cans in one day than I had all year! There is A LOT of meat in this plan which was new for me too. Often times I'll use something like tofu instead, but not with this book! Also, there are burgers in every single meal rotation I've made so far. So we're all pretty sick of them now. Some of it I won't make again, like the brined fish (pointless), ham bake (turned out to be ham soup in a soggy pie crust, as described by other reviewers) and the french bread pizza (took up a lot of freezer space and just wasn't good). Overall though, most meals were okay, not bad but not amazing either. They were better than store bought frozen food (although not Trader Joes, they still do frozen food the best). The two week plans actually last us closer to 3 weeks. As for the errors in the book, I didn't really notice because I kind of fudged the specific amounts anyways. I don't have a food scale to measure out exact weights so I just guessed. If it looked like I was running low on something I added less, or if I had a lot left then I added more. With something like cooked chicken it didn't seem to matter much. As for the shopping, expect to buy a ton of food! For the two week plans my grocery bill was about \$400. It would have taken me FOREVER to find everything at the store, but luckily I can order online and they bring it all to the house. Overall I like the idea, and might try a different make ahead cook book next time, since this one was hit or miss.

I bought several Once-a-Month Cooking books for friends. Each time I give it away I get positive feedback. I've used my book for many years, mostly as a backup source to set aside meals in the freezer. It is well done, easy to follow and has an excellent assortment of meals. I highly recommend the book.

This book was wonderful as far as providing shopping lists, recipes and step by step instructions. The recipes were not too over the top and even the pickiest of eaters enjoyed them.

This is such a great book. The author does ALL the organizing for you, so all you have to do is get plenty of rest the night before the big cooking day! It all pays off in huge time dividends throughout the ensuing month, when dinner is a matter of several choices that are ALREADY MADE! I loved it!! This book would've gotten a 5-star rating if it had a spiral binding like the older version. It was MUCH easier to keep open throughout the day of cooking. Still, I have given this book as a gift and the recipient loved it too.

This is my second copy of this book. I was given one at a wedding shower some 33 years ago.

ago, I often worked during those years and this is the perfect cookbook for nights when you want a meal that doesn't look fast but, really was. The recipes are nutritious and appealing to everyone. Now, it would be hard to shop, cook or serve dinner without using this team of women's suggestions, they are that good!

This is the second copy of this book that I have purchased. I bought the first copy about ten years ago and used it so much that it started falling apart. Whether you are new to once a month cooking or an old pro, you'll find tons of good recipes in this book as well as shopping lists and cooking methods to pull the recipes together with minimal effort.

I have started once a month cooking and freezing and found many useful tips from the book. Shipment arrived in great shape and in a timely manner. I would recommend it to anyone wanting to learn more about this time saving venture.

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