Grilled Chicken (Leftover) and Basil Pizza

According to the USDA, in 2014, Americans began spending more money on food away from home than food prepared and consumed at home. As this trend rises so does the rate of obesity. Although, most people realize that to obtain health and weight and eat better tasting, nutritious foods that are lower in sodium and calories, they should cook more meals at home.

Americans spend less time cooking and eating than other countries and have higher obesity rates. Americans view cooking as hard work! In fact, cooking ranks up there with vacuuming; however, cooking creates messes while vacuuming cleans them up. Sadly, many Americans will spend a few to several hours a week in the gym sweating to burn calories and build muscle without realizing that cooking and planning meals needs to take on the same level of importance. Cooking meals at home is the best way to control the quality of the ingredients in our meals, while also likely saving money. "Abs are built in the gym, but work in the kitchen reveals them."

A recent survey identified additional key reasons Americans have cited for not cooking. Nearly 2 out of 3 respondents viewed grocery shopping as the most time-consuming household chore and nearly 1 in 3 reported not knowing how to cook. Yet, for those that regularly cook most meals at home, they reported it only takes about 20 minutes a week to grocery shop and they didn't use recipes. Rather, they used their intuition and a few simple cooking techniques to combine items that they kept stocked in their pantries.

Cooking does require some learning. It is not difficult and the payoff is huge. Believe it or not, for most, once they adopt the habit of cooking more meals at home, meeting their health and fitness goals becomes much more attainable. There is no need to focus on recipes that call for numerous and unfamiliar ingredients. For example, a great way to use up produce that may be going bad is to throw together a stir fry. All you would need to have in your pantry is rice or a whole grain pasta and your favorite seasoning. Any lean protein food would round out the meal. The varieties are endless. The key is to aim to keep your pantry stoked with nutritious foods so you can throw a meal together in a pinch. Check out the **Healthy Food Staple List** provided here.

To overcome the cleaning blues, focus on 1 pot meal solutions where you can mix and cook your ingredients using 1 pan. Another option is to use foil packets and grill or bake the individual meal packets. Grilling requires very little clean-up and is a great way to help keep your kitchen clean. This meal features a new way to make pizza. The combination of healthy toppings are endless.

Healthy Food Staple List:

Aim to choose low sodium and no added salt and no added sugar items.

- Low-sodium broth
- Tomato sauce, tomato paste, petite diced and stewed tomatoes
- Canned beans (black, kidney, navy, etc.)
- Brown rice
- Whole-wheat/grain pasta
- Cooking Oil (extra virgin olive oil and/or canola oil)
- Vinegar (balsamic, rice, wine, and/or apple cider)
- Frozen vegetables (mixed, peppers and onions, broccoli, etc.)
- Heart-smart, dry biscuit mix
- Dried herbs and spices

 Pizza Crust Mix + Tomato Paste + Sauce + Italian Seasoning + Grilled & Ready Oven Roasted Diced Chicken Breast

Directions:

Serves: 4

1) Make the pizza sauce by mixing in a bowl, 1- 15 oz. can of tomato sauce, 1- 7 oz. can of tomato paste, ¼ tsp. of garlic powder, and 2 tsp. of dried Italian seasoning. Set aside.

2) Prepare the grill for high, direct heat.

3) Make 2 pizza crusts according to package directions. Use 2- 7-9 oz. packages of dry pizza mix. Make 2 pizza crusts by flattening the dough with your hands on a slightly floured surface. Use your fingers to stretch out the dough. Once the dough is made into 2- 8 inch pizza crusts, let it rest for 5 minutes and then push the edges out again until you have 2 nicely shaped 10-inch flat round crusts. Cover one with a slightly damp paper towel. Place the other on a lightly floured rimless cookie sheet.

4) Prepare the toppings so they are ready to top the pizza. Cut 6 oz. of fresh mozzarella into 6 equal slices and then cut each slice in half. Place the cheese and 4 oz. of cooked boneless chicken pieces (skin removed) on a plate.

5) Once the grill is hot (when you can hold your hands an inch over the grates for no more than 2 seconds), dip a tightly folded up paper towel in small dish of olive oil and use tongs to wipe the grill grates. Slide the crust from the cookie sheet onto the grill. Close the lid of the grill and let cook for 2 minutes.

6) After 2 minutes, open the grill and check underneath the crust to see if it is browned. If it is not beginning to brown, cover the grill and continue to cook a minute at a time until the bottom begins to brown. The top of the pizza crust will start bubbling up with air pockets.

7) Use the cookie sheet and tongs to remove the crust from the grill. Flip the crust over so that the grilled side is now up. Keep the grill covered so it stays hot.

8) Lightly brush the grilled side of the dough with oil; add about 2 oz. of sauce. Avoid too much sauce or the pizza will be soggy. Sprinkle ½ the chicken over the sauce and then cover the chicken with ½ of the fresh mozzarella.

9) Slide the topped pizza back onto the grill. Close the lid and cook for 2-3 minutes more, or until the bottom begins to char and the cheese is bubbly. Pull off the grill onto a cutting board or other flat surface and top with chopped, fresh basil leaves. Let the pizza rest.

10) Place the second dough on the cookie sheet and repeat steps 5-9.

11) Serve ¼ of a pizza alongside a large piece of fruit or a large tossed salad.

12) Cut the second pizza into ¼ and wrap into single pieces to carry to lunch.

Tips: Use the leftover sauce for dipping, or freeze it and use it at a later time for more pizzas, or add it to your spaghetti sauce.