



A FAMILY MEAL GETS REAL

Our new column helps busy families get a healthy meal on the table—fast.
UP FIRST: A “MAC-’N’-CHEESE NIGHT” MAKEOVER

By Sylvia Geiger, R.D., Katie Webster, Joyce Hendley & the EatingWell Test Kitchen

Family dinners are top priority in the Kropf household. But take two parents with busy work schedules, two active 6th- and 7th-grade boys, throw in some guitar and violin lessons and then load on hockey, baseball, lacrosse and swim practices, games and meets, and the time for meal preparation has been whittled away to a few frenzied minutes.

Nightly dinners are a joint effort, with Kim doing the cooking while Joe rounds up the usually far-flung kids from music lessons, practice or friends’ homes. While Kim loves to cook, is good at planning ahead and has trained her boys to help in the kitchen,

she still finds it a struggle to get a healthy meal on the table in under an hour every night of the week. “Honestly, I don’t know how Kim does it,” says Joe with open admiration.

Like many families, what’s served is often “whatever works”—home-cooked meals are interspersed with take-out foods, frozen pizza and convenience dinners. Kim tends to stick to four or five easy meals, because

MENU

- No-Bake Macaroni & Cheese
- Orange-Glazed Shredded Carrots
- or
- Creamy Green Beans
- Romaine Tossed Salad
- Pineapple-Raspberry Parfaits



Opposite: *Kim Kropf in the kitchen.*
 Left, top: *The Kropf family;* bottom:
EatingWell chef Katie Webster and Kim.



THE KROPF FAMILY, SHELBURNE, VERMONT:
Mayson (age 13), hockey left forward, guitar maven
Joe, dentist, skier & paddle-tennis player
Quinn (age 11), hockey defenseman, budding violinist
Kim, publisher, Kids VT family newspaper, hiker, runner

when she strays from the tried-and-true she often runs into trouble. “Mayson doesn’t like casseroles, Quinn won’t eat anything with onions in it, and both Joe and I watch our weight so we don’t want to eat high-calorie foods.”

And even though the boys will eat vegetables, Mayson and Quinn are no different than most kids: the list of those tolerated is pretty short and it’s a constant struggle to get them to try something new. “My biggest challenge is that I just run out of ideas for meals that I can make quickly and that I know my family will actually eat without grumbling,” Kim says.

On those days when there’s just no time, the Kropfs’ fallback is typical of many families: macaroni and cheese from a box, with frozen corn and a quick salad on the side, and maybe some chocolate ice cream for dessert.

When EATINGWELL visited the Kropfs to revamp their mac-and-cheese menu, the goals were simple: boost vegetables and whole grains while keeping the prep time short. The results: a colorful, home-cooked meal with plenty of choices to please picky palates—including an easy, show-stopping dessert.

“THE IMPORTANT THING IS THAT WE’RE SITTING DOWN AS A FAMILY EVERY DAY.” —KIM

GOAL: BOOST VEGETABLES AND WHOLE GRAINS

MEAL MAKEOVER

- ◆ Bagging the boxed mac-and-cheese and upgrading to whole-wheat pasta triples the fiber and adds magnesium and selenium.
- ◆ Cooking frozen broccoli with the pasta adds a stealth serving of vegetables to boost folate and vitamins A and C.
- ◆ Switching sides from frozen corn to Orange-Glazed Shredded Carrots or Creamy Green Beans dramatically increases the vitamin content.
- ◆ Upgrading salad from iceberg to romaine lettuce pumps up the vitamin A and ups the folate by nearly 500%.
- ◆ Serving up Pineapple-Raspberry Parfaits for dessert doubles the calcium and halves the saturated fat, while adding fiber, vitamins A and C and antioxidants.

GOAL: KEEP PREP TIME AROUND 45 MINUTES

FAMILY MEAL TIMELINE

- ◆ Make Pineapple-Raspberry Parfaits; cover and chill.
- ◆ Put water on to boil for No-Bake Macaroni & Cheese.
- ◆ Trim and cut green beans, if serving.
- ◆ Combine sauce ingredients for Orange-Glazed Shredded Carrots or Creamy Green Beans.
- ◆ Prepare salad.
- ◆ Prepare the carrots or green beans.
- ◆ Prepare the mac & cheese.

No-Bake Macaroni & Cheese

High  Fiber

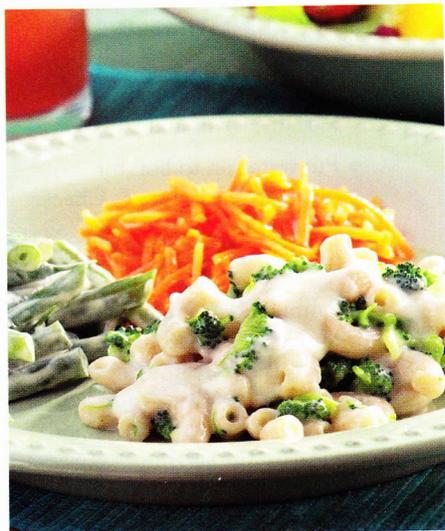
ACTIVE TIME: 20 MINUTES | **TOTAL:** 25 MINUTES

 Not only is this ultra-creamy version of mac-and-cheese nearly as fast as the boxed variety, but your family will be able to pronounce every ingredient. If they aren't broccoli fans, substitute a frozen vegetable of your choice.

- 8 ounces whole-wheat elbow noodles (2 cups)
- 1 10-ounce package frozen chopped broccoli
- 1 3/4 cups low-fat milk, divided
- 3 tablespoons flour
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon ground white pepper
- 3/4 cup shredded extra-sharp Cheddar cheese (for reduced-fat options, see our Taste Test on page 75)
- 1/4 cup shredded Parmesan cheese
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard

1. Bring a large pot of water to a boil. Cook pasta for 4 minutes. Add frozen broccoli and continue cooking, stirring occasionally, until the pasta and broccoli are just tender, 4 to 5 minutes more.

2. Meanwhile, heat 1 1/2 cups milk in another



large pot over medium-high heat until just simmering. Whisk the remaining 1/4 cup milk, flour, garlic powder, salt and pepper in a small bowl until combined. Add the flour mixture to the simmering milk; return to a simmer and cook, whisking constantly, until the mixture is thickened, 2 to 3 minutes. Remove from the heat and whisk in Cheddar, Parmesan and mustard until the cheese is melted.

3. Drain the pasta and broccoli and add to the cheese sauce. Return to the heat and cook, stirring, over medium-low heat, until heated through, about 1 minute.

MAKES 4 SERVINGS,
1 1/4 CUPS EACH.

PER SERVING: 412 CALORIES; 13 G FAT (7 G SAT, 1 G MONO); 37 MG CHOLESTEROL; 56 G CARBOHYDRATE; 22 G PROTEIN; 7 G FIBER; 640 MG SODIUM; 236 MG POTASSIUM. **NUTRITION BONUS:** Vitamin C (70% DAILY VALUE), Calcium (40% DV), Fiber (27% DV), Vitamin A (25% DV), Magnesium (16% DV).

Orange-Glazed Shredded Carrots

Healthy  Weight Lower  Carbs

ACTIVE TIME: 10 MINUTES | **TOTAL:** 15 MINUTES

 An orange glaze brings out the sweetness in one of the kid-friendliest vegetables around. With convenient pre-shredded carrots, there's no chopping required.

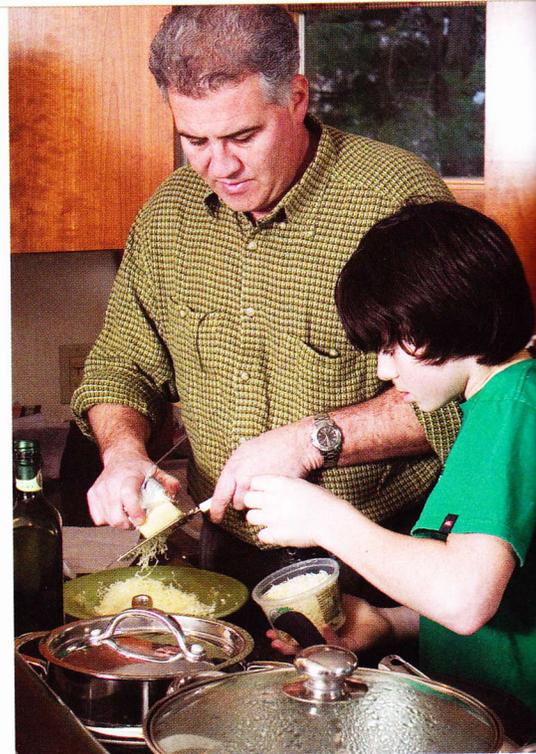
- 1/2 cup orange juice
- 1/2 cup reduced-sodium chicken broth
- 1 teaspoon cornstarch
- 2 teaspoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 10-ounce bags shredded or julienne-cut carrots
- 1 teaspoon butter
- 1/4 teaspoon salt

Whisk orange juice, broth and cornstarch in a small bowl. Heat oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Add carrots and cook, stirring constantly, until slightly softened,

about 3 minutes. Stir the juice mixture and add to the carrots along with butter and salt. Cover and continue cooking, stirring occasionally, until the butter melts and the carrots are tender, 5 to 6 minutes.

MAKES 4 SERVINGS, 1 CUP EACH.

PER SERVING: 107 CALORIES; 4 G FAT (1 G SAT, 2 G MONO); 3 MG CHOLESTEROL; 18 G CARBOHYDRATE; 2 G PROTEIN; 4 G FIBER; 261 MG SODIUM; 516 MG POTASSIUM. **NUTRITION BONUS:** Vitamin A (480% DAILY VALUE), Vitamin C (40% DV), Potassium (15% DV).



Above: Joe and Mayson team up to grate cheese; the boys help themselves to—gasp—vegetables.



Left: Quinn and Mayson with Tessa; right: Pineapple-Raspberry Parfait

Creamy Green Beans

Healthy \times Weight Lower \downarrow Carbs

ACTIVE TIME: 10 MINUTES | **TOTAL:** 15 MINUTES

- 1 pound green beans, trimmed and cut into 1-inch pieces
- 3 tablespoons reduced-fat mayonnaise
- 2 teaspoons Dijon mustard
- 1/8 teaspoon salt

Place beans in a steamer basket and steam over 2 inches of boiling water until tender, 5 to 7 minutes. Whisk mayonnaise, mustard and salt in a medium bowl. Add the beans; toss to coat.

MAKES 4 SERVINGS, 1 CUP EACH.

PER SERVING: 57 CALORIES; 2 G FAT (0 G SAT, 0 G MONO); 0 MG CHOLESTEROL; 10 G CARBOHYDRATE; 2 G PROTEIN; 4 G FIBER; 240 MG SODIUM; 242 MG POTASSIUM. **NUTRITION BONUS:** Vitamin C (30% DAILY VALUE), Fiber (16% DV), Vitamin A (15% DV).

Pineapple-Raspberry Parfaits

Healthy \times Weight

ACTIVE TIME: 5 MINUTES | **TOTAL:** 5 MINUTES

- 2 8-ounce containers (2 cups) nonfat peach yogurt
- 1/2 pint fresh raspberries (about 1 1/4 cups)
- 1 1/2 cups fresh, frozen or canned pineapple chunks

Divide and layer yogurt, raspberries and pineapple into 4 glasses.

MAKES 4 PARFAITS.

PER SERVING: 109 CALORIES; 0 G FAT (0 G SAT, 0 G MONO); 3 MG CHOLESTEROL; 23 G CARBOHYDRATE; 5 G PROTEIN; 3 G FIBER; 58 MG SODIUM; 113 MG POTASSIUM. **NUTRITION BONUS:** Vitamin C (60% DAILY VALUE), Calcium (15% DV).

SHOPPING LIST:

(not including regular pantry items)

FRUITS & VEGETABLES

- Broccoli, frozen chopped, 10-ounce box
- Pre-shredded carrots, two 10-ounce bags
- Green beans, 1 pound
- Romaine lettuce, prewashed, 1 bag
- Salad veggies and/or fruit
- Raspberries, 1/2 pint
- Pineapple chunks, fresh, frozen or canned, 1 1/2 cups

REFRIGERATED AISLE

- Extra-sharp shredded Cheddar cheese, 8-ounce bag
- Shredded Parmesan cheese, 1 small container
- Nonfat peach yogurt, two 8-ounce containers
- Orange juice, 1 pint

DRY GOODS

- Whole-wheat elbow noodles, 1 package
- Dijon mustard
- Reduced-fat mayonnaise
- Reduced-sodium chicken broth, 14-ounce can
- Salad dressing (family favorite)
- Cornstarch
- Garlic powder
- White pepper



WEB BONUS: Our Lemon Zinger Cider makes a cool accompaniment to this meal. Go to www.eatingwell.com.

THE FAMILY WEIGHS IN

Joe raised his eyebrows when Kim added the macaroni to the water bubbling in the pot. “Whole-wheat pasta?” he said, suspiciously. Later on, though, he dug in with relish. “You can’t even tell it’s whole-wheat,” he declared. “It doesn’t even look brown and the flavor is great!” The mild-flavored broccoli was a barely noticeable addition and did not, as feared, get picked out and discarded by the kids.

For research purposes, Kim prepared both vegetable side-dish options—easy, but probably overkill: “Next time we’ll probably just make one.” Quinn, for his part, votes for the carrots: “They’re sweet and a little crunchy. I like that.”

“WE GET TO
HAVE DESSERT IN
AN EATINGWELL
DINNER?” —QUINN

The fruit-and-yogurt parfaits, in festive sundae glasses, were an easy sell. “We should make these again,” pronounced Mayson. “Maybe we could add some blueberries or peaches.”

“We’re definitely going to do this again,” said Kim.

Mayson was more pragmatic: “It was really good—I liked everything except the green beans. But then, I never like green beans.” **ew**

SMALL CHANGES, BIG RESULTS

Instead of iceberg, the Kropfs now use prewashed romaine lettuce in their salad—just as easy, and more nutritious. They’ll toss in grape tomatoes, mandarin oranges or other fruit or vegetables they have on hand for a quick, kid-friendly bowlful. Dressing is a vinaigrette everyone loves.




simple truth #1
Happy families don't
grow on trees.
They grow around
the dinner table.

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