Avoiding crowds and trying to make your groceries last as long as possible? Here are a few simple recipes designed to make a quick, easy meal from items that you might already have in your cupboard, especially during that last week when your store of fresh produce is dwindling.

Open Faced Tuna Melts

2 servings

1 can tuna, drained

¼ c mayonnaise

½ stalk celery, diced small

2 green onions, thinly sliced

Salt & pepper to taste

¼ tsp dried dill

1 tsp capers (optional)

2 pieces of toasted bread

2 slices of cheese of your choice (cheddar, Monterey Jack, provolone)

Tomato slices

Combine the tuna, mayonnaise, celery, green onions, salt, pepper, dill, and capers. Divide tuna salad evenly onto your two pieces of toast, top with tomato slices and cheese. Broil in the oven until the cheese becomes golden brown, about 3 minutes.

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White Bean Tuna Salad

2 servings

1 can tuna, drained

1 15 oz can white beans, such as navy, cannellini, great northern, drained and rinsed

½ red onion, thinly sliced

2 stalks celery, sliced

1 c cherry tomatoes, sliced in half

½ c roasted red pepper, coarsely diced

1 Tb capers

2 cups mixed salad greens

Toss together all of the ingredients but the greens, and then make the vinaigrette.

Vinaigrette:

3 Tb olive oil

1Tb red wine or cider vinegar

¼ tsp garlic powder

½ tsp oregano

Salt and pepper to taste

1 tsp Dijon mustard

Whisk together with a fork until emulsified.

Toss together with your salad ingredients and serve on top of greens.

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Cuban Black Beans and Rice

4 servings

Cook white or brown rice according to package directions, enough for 3 cups cooked. While the rice cooks, make the beans:

2 Tb olive oil

4 cloves garlic, sliced

1 onion, diced

1 bell pepper, seeded and diced

1 jalapeno, seeded and diced

2 Tb cider vinegar

1 15-oz can diced tomatoes, with juice

1 Tb ground cumin

1 tsp oregano

2 cans black beans, drained

Optional: top w cilantro and sour cream and lime wedges

Sauté the onions, garlic, and peppers in the olive oil over medium heat until they just start to wilt, about 8 minutes. Add the spices and toss to coat nicely, and sauté for another minute. Add the canned tomatoes, the vinegar, and the black beans. Cook over a high simmer, stirring occasionally, for about 15 minutes.

Serve over rice and add toppings of your choice.

Shakshuka

*Eggs cooked in a mildly spicy tomato sauce*

2 servings

2 Tb olive oil

1 small onion, diced

1 red bell pepper, seeded, quartered and then sliced thin

1/3 c cilantro, coarsely chopped

2 cloves garlic, crushed

1 tsp ground cumin

1 tsp paprika

Salt and pepper to taste

½ - 1 tsp red pepper flakes (optional)

1 15-oz can diced tomatoes, with the juice

4 eggs

Optional: crumbled feta

In an oven-safe pan, sauté the onion, garlic, red pepper in the olive oil until almost soft, about 8 minutes. Add the spices, sauté for a couple of minutes, stirring frequently. Add the tomatoes and simmer for another ten minutes, stirring occasionally. Make four wells in the tomato sauce and break an egg into each well. Let simmer on the stove for 3 or 4 minutes and then pop your entire pan into the oven for about ten minutes, until the eggs are done to your liking. You may certainly stretch this recipe to serve more people by simply adding more eggs.

Very nice served with a green salad and toasted French bread slices.

Brown Rice

4-6 servings

1 C brown rice

2 C water

Pinch of salt

Bring to a boil, cover, reduce heat to a simmer, and cook for about 50 minutes. Fluff with a fork, cover again, and let rest ten more minutes. Serve or store in the fridge for future recipes.

Very Quick Bean Stew

Serves 2-4

1 15-oz can of beans, drained (any kind – garbanzo, kidney, pinto, black…)

1 small onion, diced

1 bell pepper, seeded and diced

2 cloves garlic, peeled and sliced

1 15-oz can of diced tomatoes with their juice

2 Tb olive oil

Salt & Pepper to taste

1 tsp oregano

1 cup chopped greens such as spinach, kale, or collard

Sauté the garlic, onion, and bell pepper in the olive oil over medium heat for about 7 minutes until they are just tender. Add the beans, tomatoes and seasonings. Cook for another 5-10 minutes. Add the chopped greens and cook until they are wilted, about two minutes.

You can add anything else that you have in the fridge that sounds good – cauliflower, broccoli, leftover chicken or cut up cooked sausages to name a few ideas.

Serve over brown rice, if you like.

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Quick Brown Rice Stir Fry

Serves 2

2 C cooked brown rice

1 tsp grated ginger, or dried

1 crushed garlic clove

2 Tb olive oil

1 Tb sesame oil

¼ c soy sauce

½ onion, diced small or 1 bunch green onions, sliced

1 carrot, peeled and diced small

2 eggs

1 cup chopped vegetables, such as broccoli, cauliflower, and or frozen peas

water

Heat the olive and sesame oils over medium high heat and add the ginger, garlic, and onion. Sauté for about four minutes.

Add the carrots, the other vegetables and continue to sauté for about five minutes until just tender. You can add a splash or two of water while you are cooking to lightly steam the vegetables along the way.

Stir in the rice and soy sauce, and cook until heated through, about three minutes.

In a small bowl, beat the eggs. Make a well in the center of your stir-fried rice and pour the eggs into the pan. Stir to scramble them, and as they get cooked, toss them evenly throughout the rice.

Adjust the seasoning as necessary and serve.

Cheddar and Apple Omelet

Serves 1

2 large eggs

½ apple, peeled and sliced

1 slice cheddar cheese

Sliced scallions, if you like

Butter

Salt and pepper

Plain yogurt to garnish, optional

Put a small pat of butter in an omelet pan and sauté your apples and scallions together until just soft, about four minutes. Remove from heat and set the apples aside. Wipe your pan and add a new small pat of butter.

In a small bowl, beat your eggs with a small splash of water and a small pinch of salt. Heat your pan to medium high, and when the butter has melted and no longer bubbles but has not started to brown, pour in your eggs and distribute them evenly across the pan. Gently push the eggs to one side and redistribute the uncooked egg across the pan. As soon as the eggs are almost firm, to one side of the eggs add the cheese, apples, and scallions, and then flip the other side of the eggs over the top to form your omelet. Add salt, pepper, and a dollop of yogurt, if you like.

Tuna Feta Pasta

Serves 2

½ lb small pasta of your choice, such as orzo, pennette, shells, farfalle, etc.

1 can tuna packed in water, water reserved

4 oz butter

6 oz crumbled feta

Juice of 1 lemon

1 bunch scallions, sliced

1 bunch spinach

Salt and pepper

1 tsp dill, oregano, or basil

Cook your pasta until al dente, according to package directions.

Meanwhile, in a saucepan, melt the butter, and sauté the scallions for about 3 minutes. Add the tuna with the tuna water, salt, pepper, the dill, oregano or basil, and the spinach. Cook until the spinach wilts. Add the lemon juice and stir to incorporate. Toss with the pasta, add the feta, and serve.

Some nice optional additions would be red pepper flakes, capers and/or Kalamata olives

 Sally Beck works at Helena Food Share where she is a regular chef demonstrating new recipes on their Charlie Cart mobile kitchen. She is a food enthusiast, professional baker, and has owned her own restaurant.

For more recipes, check out these columns from the last few months: (insert links)