Who Has the Time for Healthy Eating?

There are plenty of excuses for not eating the healthy foods we know we should be eating, right? Some, inaccurately, believe it’s too expensive to eat healthy. Others mistakenly believe that healthy food doesn’t taste very good, while still others don’t have the cooking skills to prepare the foods their bodies need. But do you know the number one excuse people use for not eating well? Research tells us that it’s TIME! People believe they DON’T HAVE THE TIME to eat healthy! The good news – it’s not true! With the time-saving tips and easy recipes below, you’ll see that you can eat healthy – even when pressed for time!

Use Rotisserie Chicken from the Grocery Store:
When you’re in a rush or don’t feel like cooking, one of these chickens can make all the difference! Cut up the chicken and make some quick lettuce wraps with salsa. Or grab a bagged salad and add chicken on top. Another option is to keep pre-cooked grilled chicken breast/chunks on hand – find them near the chicken nuggets in the frozen section; a quick zap in the microwave, and you’re good to go. If you’ve spent any time in Campus Rec’s Demonstration Kitchen, you’ve seen the wide variety of ways we use the rotisserie chicken to save time.

Keep Frozen Veggies on Hand:
Keep some of these frozen “gems” in your freezer for super-fast meals on busy days: chopped onion, mashed/pureed squash, green beans and chopped kale are all great options (and frozen fruits and veggies are just as good for you as fresh!). For a quick soup, stir fry some frozen chopped onion, add frozen cooked squash and some chicken stock. Sprinkle in thyme and sea salt. Blend and serve. Done and done! Another super-quick idea: empty a bag of frozen stir-fry veggies in a frying pan with a small amount of oil – cook till veggies are hot; add rotisserie chicken (see above) and some bottled teriyaki sauce from the condiment aisle. While that is heating up on the stove, pop a packet of 90-second brown rice in the microwave – voila! Dinner is served. Even quicker, drop some frozen mixed vegetables into your favorite canned or jarred soup while you heat it up on the stove.

Try Prepared, Bagged Salads:
Could it be simpler? There are a variety of bagged salads that are pre-washed and pre-chopped - all ready to go! Toss it with your favorite salad dressing and serve it as a side dish or add some protein (like the rotisserie chicken or fully cooked frozen grilled chicken breast chunks) and make it your entée. Another easy-peasy protein to use is frozen, peeled shrimp – all it takes to defrost these is a quick rinse under warm water and this low fat protein source is ready to be tossed on top of your salad.

Use Pre-chopped Fresh Veggies from the Produce Section:
Pre-chopped vegetables are certainly not a bargain, but they can keep you on track with healthy eating. You can use pre-chopped snow peas, bell peppers, and mushrooms to make a quick stir fry. Use pre-chopped squash, parsnips or carrots to make dish of roasted vegetables (toss in olive oil and seasoning and bake at 400 degrees) or blend them into a quick soup with herbs and sea salt. Pre-chopped greens like kale and spinach can be blended into a quick and healthy green smoothie.
Pre-cook Your Protein:
Boil some eggs and chicken breasts on Sunday afternoon. Chop up the chicken and store in an airtight container in the fridge – you’ll have lean protein available to toss in salads or soups. Browning a pound of lean ground beef for dinner tonight? Might as well brown 2 pounds instead – freeze the second pound to use later; it’ll just need to be defrosted and seasoned. Costco sells peeled, hard-boiled eggs by the dozen. HEB sells them in packages of 2 with the cold food in the deli.

Start with HEB’s “Blendables” Smoothies:
HEB has created 10 varieties of conveniently pre-portioned, blender-ready smoothie starters – no added sugar or preservatives; just fruits and vegetables, ready to go. The directions say to add water, but you may want to consider adding Greek yogurt and/or milk (or a scoop of protein powder) to round out this “meal” with some protein. And you can always stuff in an extra handful or two of spinach leaves or kale, if you have some!

Dust off the ol’ Slow Cooker:
Let your Crock-Pot® do the work, while you are busy working, going to class, or studying.
1. Place trimmed pork tenderloin in crock pot; cover with HEB’s “That Green Sauce” – cook on low all day. When you get home, shred the pork with 2 forks; mix in a container of HEB premade pico de gallo (produce section); serve on corn tortillas; top with lime juice and queso fresco.
2. Place frozen chicken breasts in crock pot; cover with a jar of your favorite salsa – cook on low all day. When you get home, shred the chicken with 2 forks and serve on corn tortillas or with a side of Uncle Ben’s® 90 second brown rice.
3. Place trimmed pork tenderloin in crock pot; cover with your favorite BBQ sauce – cook on low all day. When you get home, shred the pork with 2 forks. Serve on whole wheat sandwich thins with pickles/mustard (as desired) with a side of canned whole beans.
4. Cut a spaghetti squash in ½ and scoop out the seeds. Place cut sides down in Crock Pot. Add a jar of pasta sauce – cook on low all day. When you get home, brown 1 pound of 96% lean ground beef. Use a fork to scrape out the “noodly” part of the squash, discard the rind; add the ground beef to the squash “noodles” and sauce – spaghetti is served!

For more healthy-eating ideas or to address your specific nutrition-related concerns, be sure to set up a nutrition assessment with Campus Recreation’s registered dietitian, Annie Bell. Appointments are individualized to address your needs, questions, concerns and last about an hour – oh, and they’re free! Full instructions on how to register for your appointment are here: https://campusrec.utsa.edu/fitness-wellness/activities/nutrition.

Sources:
http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3464955/