NUTRITIOUS FAMILY MEAL PREP • WINTER EDITION

# Warm Bowls, Strong Days

Budget-Friendly, Kid-Friendly High-Protein & High-Fiber Winter Soups



These five recipes lean on inexpensive pantry staples like lentils, canned beans, frozen vegetables, and economical cuts of meat. Each recipe delivers over **18–25g of protein** and **7–12g of dietary fiber** per serving while keeping flavours mild, familiar, and kid-approved.

| 18–25g | 7–12g | Budget-First | Kid-Approved |
|---|---|---|---|
| Protein per bowl | Fiber per bowl | Staples & pulses | Mild & velvety |

### Why High-Protein & High-Fiber Soups?

During cold winter months, families often rely on warm comfort food that leans heavily on refined carbs and heavy cream. This collection re-engineers classic comforting soup textures using whole food nutrition:

- **Silky Texture Without Heavy Dairy:** Cannellini beans and pureed red lentils naturally melt into broths to mimic heavy cream, keeping meals light on the stomach and easy on the wallet.
- **Blended & Familiar Flavors:** Picky-eater friendly flavors like mild taco seasonings, sweet corn, and sweet potatoes ensure smooth sailing at dinnertime.
- **Freezer-Ready Batching:** Every single recipe is calibrated for easy doubling, fast cooling, and clean freezer storage.

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# 1. "Hidden Bean" Creamy Tomato & White Bean Dipper

*A silky, sweet tomato soup where cannellini beans are blended completely smooth to mimic heavy cream.*

| Protein Engine: | Fiber Engine: | Texture: |
|---|---|---|
| Cannellini beans + Greek yogurt | Navy beans (11g/serving) | Silky, zero chunks |

> **Why Kids Love It:** Familiar sweet tomato flavor with zero chunky "suspicious" vegetable texture; perfect for dipping grilled cheese sandwiches.

### INGREDIENTS

- 2 cans (15 oz each) cannellini beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 can (28 oz) crushed tomatoes
- 2 cups low-sodium vegetable or chicken broth
- 1 small yellow onion & 2 cloves garlic, finely minced
- 1 tbsp olive oil or butter
- 1 tsp Italian seasoning & ½ tsp honey (cuts the tomato acidity)
- ½ cup whole milk or plain Greek yogurt (stirred in at the end)

### HOW TO MAKE

> **Step 1:** Sauté onion and garlic in butter until soft.
>
> **Step 2:** Add crushed tomatoes, drained beans, broth, Italian seasoning, and honey. Simmer for 15 minutes.
>
> **Step 3:** Blend smooth using an immersion or standard blender.
>
> **Step 4:** Remove from heat, stir in milk or yogurt, and season to taste.

### SERVING SUGGESTION FOR KIDS

Cut whole-grain cheddar grilled cheese sandwiches into long "dipper sticks" to let kids dunk straight into the bowl.

# 2. Mild Turkey & Black Bean "Taco Tuesday" Soup

*Tastes like a deconstructed mild taco. Naturally hearty, fast to throw together, and easy to stretch on a budget.*

| Protein Engine: | Fiber Engine: | Flavour Profile: |
|---|---|---|
| Lean turkey / beef + pulses | Black & pinto beans + corn | Savory, warm & mild |

> **Why Kids Love It:** Warm, savory taco flavour with fun toppings (a pinch of shredded cheddar or a few crushed tortilla chips).

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 lb ground turkey or extra-lean ground beef
- 1 packet mild taco seasoning (or 1 tbsp cumin, 1 tsp paprika, 1 tsp onion powder)
- 1 can (15 oz) black beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 can (15 oz) pinto beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 cup frozen sweet corn
- 1 can (14.5 oz) petite diced tomatoes (mild)

- 4 cups low-sodium chicken broth

### HOW TO MAKE

**Step 1:** Brown the meat in a large pot; drain excess fat if needed.

**Step 2:** Stir in the seasoning, both cans of beans, corn, diced tomatoes, and broth.

**Step 3:** Simmer uncovered for 20 minutes to meld the flavors.

**Step 4:** Ladle into bowls and let kids add shredded cheese or tortilla chips.

### SERVING SUGGESTION FOR KIDS

Set out small ramekins with crushed tortilla chips, mild shredded cheddar, and a squeeze of lime so kids can build their own topping pile.

## 3. Golden Chicken, Veggie & Rotini Noodle Soup

*Classic chicken noodle upgraded with fiber-rich whole wheat or chickpea pasta and finely cut tender winter veggies.*

| **Protein Engine:** | **Fiber Engine:** | **Texture:** |
|---|---|---|
| Chicken thighs + pulse rotini | Chickpea pasta + sweet peas | Fun curly spirals & tender bites |

> **Why Kids Love It:** Fun curly pasta shapes, tender bites of chicken, and sweet bright peas.

### INGREDIENTS

- 1.25 lbs boneless skinless chicken thighs (or leftover shredded rotisserie chicken)
- 6 cups low-sodium chicken broth
- 2 large carrots, cut into thin bite-sized coins
- 2 stalks celery, sliced thin
- 1 cup frozen sweet green peas
- 6 oz chickpea rotini (e.g., Banza) or whole wheat spiral pasta
- 1 tbsp olive oil, salt, and black pepper

### HOW TO MAKE

**Step 1:** Sauté carrots and celery in olive oil for 4–5 minutes.

**Step 2:** Add the broth and raw chicken thighs. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer gently for 15–18 minutes until chicken reaches 165°F (74°C).

**Step 3:** Remove chicken, shred with two forks, and return to the pot.

**Step 4:** Stir in pasta and simmer until al dente (about 7–9 minutes). Stir in frozen peas in the last 2 minutes so they stay bright green and sweet.

### FREEZER NOTE

If freezing, withhold pasta; boil fresh pasta in the reheated broth at serving time to maintain perfect al dente texture.

## 4. Velvety Sweet Potato & Red Lentil "Sunshine" Soup

*Red lentils are the ultimate budget superfood—they melt completely into the broth in 20 minutes without needing heavy blending.*

| Protein Engine: | Fiber Engine: | Visual Appeal: |
|---|---|---|
| Split dry red lentils | Red lentils + sweet potatoes | Vibrant warm golden sunshine |

> **Why Kids Love It:** A vibrant golden-orange colour, natural sweetness from roasted or simmered sweet potato, and zero lumps.

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup dry split red lentils, thoroughly rinsed
- 2 medium sweet potatoes, peeled and cubed small
- 2 large carrots, chopped
- 1 medium yellow onion, diced
- 4 cups low-sodium vegetable or chicken broth
- 1 cup water or canned light coconut milk
- 1 tbsp olive oil or butter
- ½ tsp mild ground turmeric & ½ tsp ground cumin

### HOW TO MAKE

**Step 1:** Sauté onion in oil until translucent.

**Step 2:** Add cubed sweet potatoes, carrots, rinsed red lentils, turmeric, cumin, and broth.

**Step 3:** Bring to a boil, cover, and simmer for 20–25 minutes until lentils are dissolved and sweet potatoes are fork-tender.

**Step 4:** Puree until completely velvety.

### REHEAT TIP

Red lentil purees naturally thicken upon cooling. Whisk in ½ cup warm broth or water when reheating to restore silky texture.

## 5. Cheesy Beef & Brown Lentil "Sloppy Joe" Stew

*A rich, comforting one-pot dinner that uses inexpensive brown lentils to double the volume of ground beef while cutting the cost in half.*

| Protein Engine: | Fiber Engine: | Flavour Profile: |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Lean ground beef + brown lentils | Brown lentils + russet potatoes | Rich, savory & cheesy |

> **Why Kids Love It:** Thick, savory beef-and-potato stew with a melted cheddar finish.

### INGREDIENTS

- ½ lb lean ground beef
- ¾ cup dry brown or green lentils, rinsed
- 2 medium russet potatoes, peeled and diced into ½-inch cubes
- 1 can (15 oz) tomato sauce
- 4 cups beef broth
- 1 cup frozen mixed peas and diced carrots
- 1 tbsp Worcestershire sauce & 1 tsp garlic powder
- ½ cup mild shredded cheddar cheese

### HOW TO MAKE

**Step 1:** Brown the beef in a soup pot, crumbling it finely.

**Step 2:** Add the rinsed lentils, diced potatoes, tomato sauce, beef broth, Worcestershire sauce, and garlic powder.

**Step 3:** Bring to a gentle boil, cover, and simmer on low for 30 minutes until lentils and potatoes are tender.

**Step 4:** Stir in the frozen vegetables and simmer 5 more minutes. Stir in the shredded cheddar right before serving until melted through.

### BUDGET HACK

Brown lentils hold their shape nicely and match the texture of ground beef, letting you stretch ½ lb of meat across 5 hearty family portions.

# Batch-Cooking & Freezer Guide

Turn these high-protein, high-fiber soups into effortless weeknight freezer meals with these storage rules.

## FREEZER COMPATIBILITY & MODIFICATIONS

| Soup Recipe | Freezer Strategy | Modifications for the Freezer |
|---|---|---|
| **1. Creamy Tomato & White Bean** | Freezes well (up to 3 mos) | **Hold the dairy:** Freeze before adding milk/yogurt; stir fresh on reheat. |
| **2. Turkey & Black Bean Taco** | Outstanding (up to 4 mos) | **None needed:** Freeze fully assembled. Add cheese/chips fresh at table. |
| **3. Golden Chicken & Rotini** | Freezes well (up to 3 mos) | **Leave out pasta:** Freeze chicken broth & veggies; boil noodles fresh when reheating. |
| **4. Sweet Potato & Red Lentil** | Pureed perfection (up to 4 mos) | Purees thicken once frozen; add ½ cup extra broth or water when reheating. |
| **5. Beef & Brown Lentil Stew** | Very friendly (up to 3 mos) | Cut potatoes to ½-inch. **Hold cheddar:** Melt cheese fresh right into bowls. |

## BATCH-COOKING 90-MINUTE SEQUENCE

1. **Chop & Prep Aromatics:** Dice onions, carrots, and celery in one go. Rinse dry lentils and canned beans in bulk.
2. **Brown Meats & Layer Bases:** Use two pots at once: brown meat in pot 1, sauté aromatics in pot 2.
3. **Simmer & Puree:** Simmer per recipe instructions. Puree soups #1 and #4 hot using an immersion blender.
4. **Rapid Cool-Down:** *Never put piping-hot soup in the freezer.* Place pots into a sink ice bath for 15–20 mins until room temp.
5. **Portion, Label, and Pack:** Ladle into quart or gallon bags; label with recipe name and "fresh add" reminders.

### Packaging Methods

• **Flat-Freeze Bags:** Lay filled bags flat on baking sheets until solid, then stack upright like files.

• **Glass Containers:** Always leave at least 1 inch of headspace at top for liquid expansion.

### Reheating Instructions

• **From Fridge:** Simmer 5–7 mins on stovetop or heat 90-second bursts in microwave.

• **Direct From Frozen:** Loosen under warm tap water, slide block into pot with 2 tbsp water, simmer low for 10–12 mins.

# Consolidated Grocery Shopping List

Combined shopping list for single batches of all 5 recipes (yielding ~20–24 total family servings).

### PRODUCE

- **Yellow onions:** 4 medium (or a 3 lb bag)
- **Garlic:** 1 bulb (for 3+ cloves and extra flavor)
- **Carrots:** 1 bag (1 lb or 2 lb bag; ~6 large needed)
- **Celery:** 1 bunch (2 stalks needed)
- **Sweet potatoes:** 2 medium
- **Russet potatoes:** 2 medium

### MEAT & POULTRY

- **Chicken thighs:** 1.25 lbs boneless skinless
- **Ground turkey or lean beef:** 1 lb (Soup #2)
- **Lean ground beef:** ½ lb (Soup #5 — or buy 1.5 lb total)

### FROZEN SECTION

- **Sweet green peas:** 1 bag (12–16 oz; ~1 cup needed)
- **Sweet corn:** 1 bag (12–16 oz; ~1 cup needed)
- **Mixed peas & diced carrots:** 1 bag (~1 cup needed)

### DAIRY & REFRIGERATED

- **Whole milk or plain Greek yogurt:** ½ cup (Soup #1)
- **Mild cheddar cheese:** 8 oz block/shredded (Soup #2 & #5)

### CANNED & JARRED GOODS

- **Cannellini beans:** 2 cans (15 oz each)
- **Black beans:** 1 can (15 oz)
- **Pinto beans:** 1 can (15 oz)
- **Crushed tomatoes:** 1 large can (28 oz)
- **Petite diced tomatoes (mild):** 1 can (14.5 oz)
- **Tomato sauce:** 1 can (15 oz)
- **Chicken broth (low-sodium):** 12 cups total (three 32 oz car tons)
- **Vegetable or chicken broth:** 4 cups (one 32 oz carton)
- **Beef broth (low-sodium):** 4 cups (one 32 oz carton)

**Tip: Bouillon paste (e.g. Better Than Bouillon) covers all broth affordably.*

### DRY GOODS & PANTRY

- **Dry split red lentils:** 1 cup (buy 1 lb bag)
- **Dry brown or green lentils:** ¾ cup (buy 1 lb bag)
- **Chickpea rotini (e.g., Banza):** 1 box (6 oz needed)
- **Canned light coconut milk:** 1 can (optional for Soup #4)

### OILS, SEASONINGS & CONDIMENTS

- Olive oil or butter
- Mild taco seasoning (1 packet)
- Worcestershire sauce (1 tbsp needed)
- Honey (½ tsp needed)
- Italian seasoning, cumin, turmeric, garlic powder, salt, pepper

### OPTIONAL FUN TOPPINGS

- Tortilla chips (Taco Soup)
- Whole grain bread & cheddar (Grilled cheese dippers)
- Oyster crackers or soup crackers

**Disclaimer:** We have made every effort to provide accurate information, but humans do make mistakes. Enjoy these delicious soups - Make them your own ... Change them up and use your favourite spices.

From my home to yours,
*Leanne Nicholson*

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