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Dormilicious: An Introduction to Cooking Dorm-Life Delicacies

Fern Creson, Staff Photographer

Welcome, Spectator Readers, to my cooking column! I love cooking. It's a stress reliever and I enjoy the act of preparing food maybe even more than eating it. As a college student, my food philosophy is focused on the ease of collecting ingredients and preparing a nutritious and satisfying meal in time to get to my next activity. Fancy recipes are fun, but they're also time consuming, complicated and often expensive. I, like most of you, do not have the resources to buy special ingredients for meals, let alone time to dedicate to cheffing up a three-hour, Master Chef level meal. Most meals I eat are ready in about 30 minutes.

I was fortunate enough to come from a family who ate well and sustainably, and encouraged my kitchen exploration; however, not everyone was set up with those skills going into college. My mission is to share easy, healthy, yummy recipes that you, regardless of experience, can follow along and gain basic cooking skills. Cooking is a necessary skill for adulthood, but it can be intimidating. Let's practice now!

Most things I eat in a day follow a formula: base, sauce, protein, vegetable. I am a vegetarian (for the most part), but you can substitute my proteins for any standard meats. A major plus to plant-based proteins is how simple they are to prepare. Preparing meat is quite the process. I am also, unfortunately, gluten-free, but the things I use, like gluten-free pasta and corn tortillas are easily swapped for the "regular" version.

Before I start sharing my recipes with you, I thought it might be helpful to run y'all through the staples of my "recipes." I quote recipes because I have found that the key to sustainable, easy meal making is to use what you have access to.

Without further ado, what pantry and fridge staples make easy, yummy meals? Here are some ingredients that I find reliable in creating any dish.

Note that I do not have all of these things at all times! The point is to use what you can get your hands on cheaply and quickly. This is not a go-out-and-buy-all-this-stuff-now list. If you don't like a thing I use, swap it out. Also, most of this stuff can be found at the Cave, so if you're on a meal plan, you're in luck!

Base:

Pasta
Rice

Proteins:

Lentils
Tofu
Garbanzo/Black Beans

Veggies: You can use any you like, but here are my favorites

Zucchini
Bell Pepper
Onion
Purple Cabbage: Lasts the longest out of any veggie, in my experience.
Carrot
Potatoes

Hot Tip, coming straight from my mom: the Student Center salad bar is your best friend!

Veggies come pre-cut and pre-washed. If you didn't have time to pick up any veggies from the store or the Cave, the salad bar is always available (until 8 p.m., that is). Be mindful of waste, bring tupperware if gathering stuff, save a disposable container!

Sauce and Seasonings:

Pasta Sauce
Tomato Paste or Diced Tomatoes (both canned)
Coconut Milk (canned)
Soy Sauce
Rice Wine Vinegar
Miso (used less frequently)
Ginger
Garlic
Salt and Pepper
Chili Flakes
Powdered Spices: Curry, Cumin, Coriander, Mustard, Turmeric
Herbs: Thyme, Oregano

Bonus Things to Have:

Sugar
Corn Starch
Oil, preferably olive or avocado
Large Wooden/Plastic spoons
Pots and Pans
Rice Cooker (a true luxury)
Baking Sheet

It seems like a lot, but the reason I consider these items as 'staples' is because they have multiple uses! The sauces, spices and bonuses are all items you have for a very long period of time and can use over and over again; once you buy them, you won't need to again for a while. As for the veggies, depending on your portion size and how many you cook for (I usually cook for two to three), they last a while too! A veggie restock usually lasts me a full week with multiple meals. I usually have three veggies in my fridge at a time, and use those throughout the week in different ways.

If I haven't scared you away yet, get your pots and pans ready and meet me back here in a week for another edition of Dormiliciouse!