



▲ A photo of the finished product from night two of Sarah Miller's one bird, two dinners recipe. All photos provided by Sarah.

# One bird, two dinners

**T**wenty-five years ago, I hired in to Cook, a 33-year-old mother of two, with the goal of a better life for my family. Part-time jobs had helped supplement my husband's income, but it was always a struggle to make ends meet. Like most families, stretching food dollars was imperative for us. My parents were young children during the Great Depression, growing up with the old adage "Use it up, wear it out, make it do, or do without." They instilled that into my life; it is something I still try to live by, and it has served me well.

*"Having a hard-working husband and two growing kids, I had to make meals that were filling and nutritious, but on a shoestring budget. This was the beginning of one bird, two dinners."*

*– Sarah Miller, an assembler in Torcon/Nylon catheters at Park 48*

### Our very first home

A few years before I came to work at Cook, we had moved out of a rental house, packed up most of what we owned, and sold or gave away the rest in preparation for an out-of-state move for a job offer for my husband. Two days before we were due to leave, the job fell through. We stayed with family for several weeks while we weighed our options. A friend of a friend told us about a small mobile home for sale for \$500, but it was out in the middle of a field on a turkey farm near Solsberry, Indiana. We scraped together the money to purchase it and move it onto a rented lot just outside Bloomington and then began repairs. It was indeed small, just 10 feet by 50 feet, and had been partially remodeled into a one-bedroom, with one bathroom. There was a hole where the front door should have been, big enough to drive a Volkswagen through. To turn on the kitchen lights, one had to plug a drop cord that hung out of the living room wall into the outlet near it.

We made it livable, re-wiring it and fixing the giant hole in the wall and

floor. It was our very first home, and a tiny home at that. Between repairs and normal, everyday expenses, money was super tight. It's no exaggeration to say that I washed kids, clothes, and dishes in the bathtub. We made do.

The first three years, I had no stove, only a small microwave and an electric skillet. I learned to fry meat and potatoes in the skillet and heat up vegetables in a saucepan placed on the lid of the skillet. Necessity really is the mother of invention! We lived in that tiny trailer for five and a half years and, despite the hardships and struggles, they were some of the happiest years in our lives.

### On a shoestring budget

In our *salad days*, we were lucky to spend about \$80 a week on groceries—for a family of four. We bought very few processed convenience foods, preferring to spend our money on more wholesome foods, cooking mainly from scratch, reusing leftovers, and getting creative when we ran out of things. For example, instead of buying boxes of instant,

flavored oatmeal, I bought plain, old-fashioned oats and flavored them with cinnamon and sugar, strawberry jam, or peanut butter. We made do.

Dinners were much harder, despite our finally getting a working stove. Having a hard-working husband and two growing kids, I had to make meals that were filling and nutritious, but on a shoestring budget. This was the beginning of one bird, two dinners. Whole chickens were reasonably priced, definitely cheaper than those that were already cut up. We usually bought one a week, because anything I could squeeze two dinners out of was a win. I would roast the chicken, and we would eat only about half of it the first night. I made mashed potatoes or buttered noodles and a rich gravy with the pan drippings and giblets, plus I heated up a green vegetable or two, made from-scratch yeast rolls, and served chilled canned fruit or, for a treat, instant pudding for dessert.

Once the bird was cool, I'd strip all the meat off the bone and refrigerate it and the carcass to use another night, usually in chicken noodles. More homemade yeast rolls, vegetables, and fruit rounded out the meal.

Things are ever so much easier these days, though I still follow that old adage. I thought it would be fun to do a side-by-side comparison of the recipe for one bird, two dinners with a *salad days* version versus how I make it now. This recipe is easy—a little labor intensive, but it can stretch your food dollars, something needed when times are tight and you've got a family to feed. It works for families and empty nesters alike. The recipe can be doubled or halved; just don't freeze the cooked noodles—they turn mushy.

• **Sarah Miller** (*Sarah.Miller@CookMedical.com*) is an assembler in Torcon/Nylon catheters at Park 48.

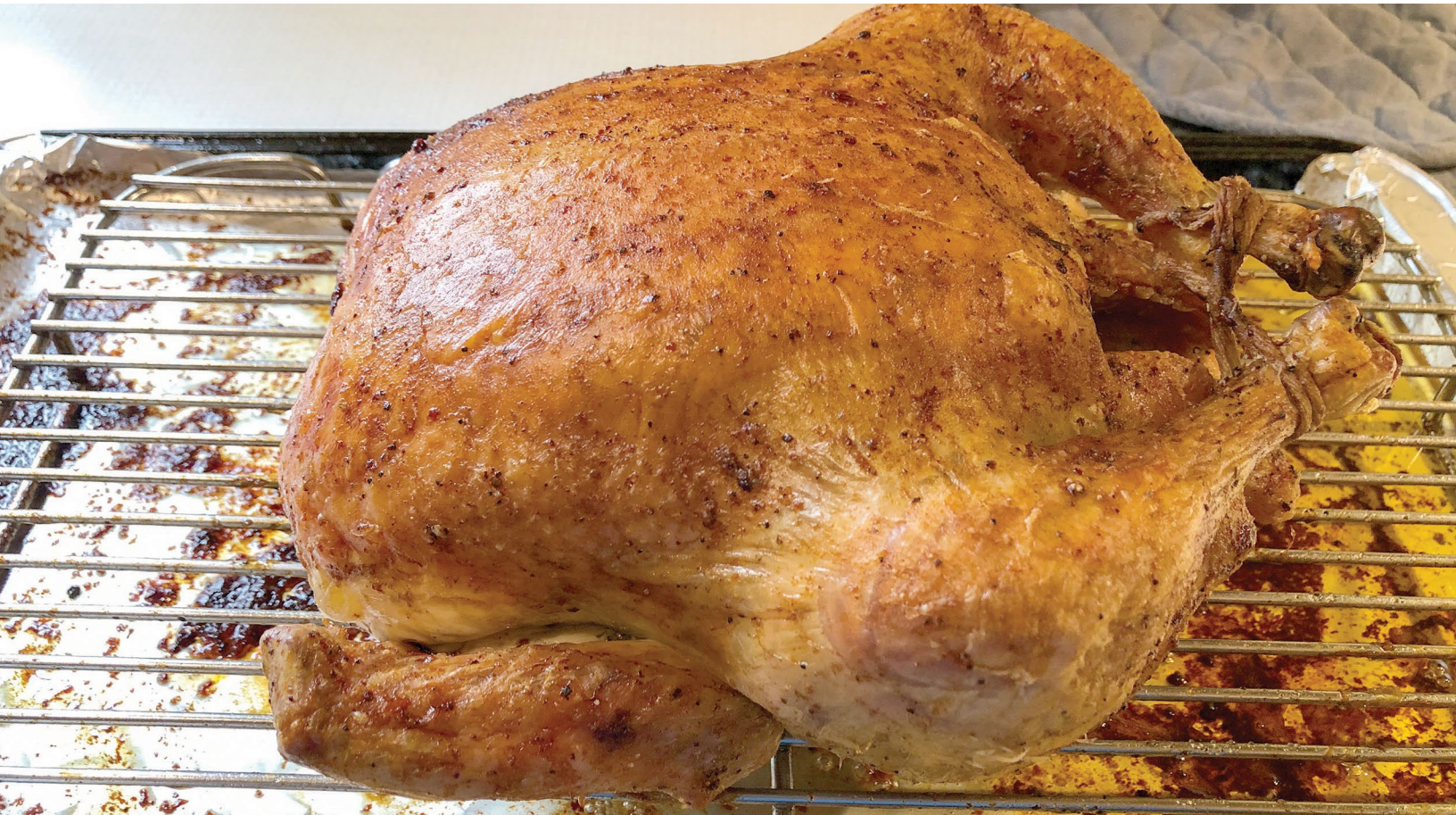


▲ Sarah (front) with her husband, Doug, son, Michael, and daughter, Stephanie. The photo was taken around the time they lived in the trailer.

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# RECIPE

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## Night one

### Ingredients

- ▶ 1 whole chicken, 4-5 lbs.
- ▶ 1 small, sweet onion, chunked
- ▶ ½ tsp of salt
- ▶ 1/4 tsp of pepper
- ▶ 1 tsp of Cavender's Greek Seasoning
- ▶ 3 tbsp of cooking oil

Preheat the oven to 350°F ( 176°C).

Pat the chicken dry, tuck the wing tips under the wings, and truss the drumsticks together with kitchen twine. Season the cavity with salt and pepper, and then loosely stuff it with the onion. In a small bowl, mix the salt, pepper, Greek seasoning, and oil. Brush the entire bird with the oil mixture.

Roast the chicken, uncovered, for 20 minutes per pound, basting it with the pan drippings about every half hour, until a meat thermometer inserted in the inner thigh reads at least 180°F (82°C). Remove it from the oven and let it rest for 10 minutes before carving, reserving half of the meat and half of the pan drippings for night two. Use half of the drippings to make a gravy.

When the bird is cool, remove all of the remaining meat from the carcass and put it in an airtight container. Reserve all of the bones, skin, cartilage, and pan drippings in a separate container or a large zippered bag, and refrigerate both.

## Night two

*Note: From this point forward, ingredients for the current version are listed first, with the "salad days" version, where used, in parentheses.*

### Into a 5 quart Dutch oven or stockpot pot:

- ▶ Reserved chicken carcass
- ▶ 2 carrots, peeled and cut into 4 inch pieces
- ▶ 3 stalks of celery, trimmed and cut into 4 inch pieces
- ▶ 6 cloves of fresh garlic, crushed
- ▶ 3-4 tbsp of Better Than Bouillon, Roasted Chicken Base
- ▶ 4 14-oz. cans of chicken broth
- ▶ 2 ½ quarts of water
- ▶ 2 bay leaves
- ▶ 1 tsp of dried thyme
- ▶ 1 tsp of crushed rosemary
- ▶ 1 tsp of rubbed sage
- ▶ ½ tsp of salt
- ▶ ¼ tsp of ground pepper

Bring everything to a boil, and then reduce the heat and simmer, covered, for about three hours.

Remove it from the heat and let it cool.

Remove the carcass from the broth and discard it. Using a large mesh strainer or sieve lined with cheesecloth, carefully ladle the broth through the strainer back into the pot until all bones, skin, and cartilage are removed, discarding the contents of the strainer. You should have about 2 ½ quarts of stock.

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## RECIPE

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### Night two (cont.)

Freeze or can 1 quart of the broth for another day.

- ▶ 1 ½ quarts of stock
- ▶ Roasted chicken meat, cut to bite size
- ▶ 2 cups of water or 1 can of chicken broth and 1 cup of water
- ▶ 1 tbsp of Better Than Bouillon (not used in the “salad days” version)
- ▶ 1 24-oz package of frozen Reames Homestyle Egg Noodles (homemade egg noodles\*)
- ▶ ½ cup of heavy cream (1 cup of 2% milk)
- ▶ up to 2C milk, optional
- ▶ 4 tbsp of cornstarch

Put the stock on to boil. Add about 1 ½ cups of water and 1 tablespoon of Better Than Bouillon. When the broth has started to boil, add the egg noodles to it. Reduce the heat and simmer it until the noodles are done, about 20 minutes. When the noodles are tender, turn the heat to low.

In a glass measuring cup, combine the heavy cream, milk, and cornstarch. Slowly stir the mixture into the noodles, and stir over low heat until thickened. Gently stir in the cut-up chicken, and heat it through over low heat. Add up to 2 cups milk. Add more milk if desired for a thinner gravy.

Serves 4-6.

\* Homemade egg noodles:

Combine 1 beaten egg, 2 tbsp of heavy cream (2% milk), and ½ tsp of salt. Add about 1 cup of flour to make a stiff dough. Roll very thin, and let stand for 20 minutes. Roll up loosely, and then slice ¼ inch wide. Unroll and dry for two hours. If pressed for time, you can also pinch off small bits and flatten them before adding them to boiling stock, similar to dumplings.



▲ A current photo of Sarah and Doug, who are now empty nesters.

### Salad days

It refers to periods in a person's youth when life was relatively carefree. It's actually from Shakespeare's play "Antony and Cleopatra" ("They were my salad days, when I was green in judgment").

Growing up, I heard and read it being used in a different context. Basically, it's when you're young, first starting out, and can't afford much—usually used in the context of young singles and young couples before having children.

— **Sarah Miller**, assembler in *Torcon/Nylon catheters at Park 48*.