

Don't Panic— More Dinner's in the Freezer

A Second Helping of Tasty Meals You Can Make Ahead

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Grand Rapids, Michigan

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The recipe for the Orange Pine Nut Chicken pictured on the front cover is found on page 148.

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Preface

When someone at Revell referred to our first cookbook as “the little cookbook that could,” we thought there was no better way to sum it up. *Don't Panic—Dinner's in the Freezer* has been a book that people buy because someone they know loves it and uses it endlessly. It is not a book that became popular, had its moment in the spotlight, and then faded away. It continues to chug along, as we hear from people all over the world who own it.

When asked to write a second book, we wondered if we would be able to build a new collection of freezable treasures as good as the first. However, after months of feeding our brave families and friends new recipes, we proudly present you with a book that, in our estimation, is even better than the first. When we went to the mountains to edit this book, we got hungry just thinking about making these dishes again. As with the first *Don't Panic* collection, we think you will like any recipe you try. So go ahead and get started . . . and feel free to let us know what you think. We always love hearing from you. Enjoy!

Introduction

It was the funniest thing, I thought, when Bonnie's three-year-old son climbed up on a chair one cooking day to inspect three large stockpots of cooled chili sitting on the counter. They were the fruit of our labors, trophies—the products of blood, sweat, and tears. Beautiful to behold! And in the blink of an eye this little guy, with a hand as quick as lightning, pulled a stockpot of chili off the counter and onto the floor. You should have seen it! It was as if a volcano had erupted into the air, with tiny red droplets of tomato sauce landing on cupboards, light fixtures—and the neighbor's roof.

It was funnier yet, I thought, when Bonnie knelt down to scoop up all the chili not directly touching the floor and return it to the pot to be packaged for the freezer. Desperate times call for desperate measures!

If you ask a roomful of people to raise their hand if they feel they have a lot of free time each day, few would do so. Instead of enjoying an elegant *dinner* with *wine*, most moms would say their kids *whine* while they *dine*. If you ask a single professional how many home-cooked meals they eat, many would laugh and say they know a local waiter by name. My retired parents are representative of a group who has “been there and done that” with the world of cooking. They recently discovered, with excitement, that the grocery store deli makes mashed potatoes—a little thick and pasty, but edible.

Cooking every day is a pain. Few have the time, patience, or desire to do so. The question of what to have for dinner haunts people from all walks of life. The question begins in the morning, and by the end of daylight hours, it demands an answer.

So who wrote this book? Who are we? We are a nurse, a kitchen designer, and a therapist. We cook together, but we also laugh and cry together. For me, personally, Vanda and Bonnie have become the sisters I never had. And it all started years ago with three young women looking for friendship, fellowship, and an easier way to get dinner to their families. Are you thinking about trying it? What do you have to lose? Grab a friend or two and embark on this journey. You will find you share much more than meals together. The rewards will catch you by surprise.

It took us years to tell Bonnie's husband the "chili on the floor" story, but perhaps we didn't wait quite long enough. He mentioned something about needing to trust the person who cooks your food, and we realized it might have been best to keep this incident just between us. So a word of caution: if something completely hysterical happens when cooking with your friends, try to determine if "you had to be there" to see the humor in it.

Get excited! This is going to be fun!

Susie