Chapter 6

Waking Up to Breakfast

In This Chapter

- ► Tasting the many benefits of breakfast
- ▶ Making some eggs-cellent dishes
- Preparing sweet brunch treats

Breakfast — it's one of my favorite subjects, not to mention meals. As a former innkeeper of a country bed-and-breakfast in Branson, Missouri, I can tell you that when folks are on vacation and don't have to dash off to work, their breakfast attitude certainly changes. Everyone eats breakfast when they stay at a B&B — even folks who profess to *never* eat even a bowl of cereal or granola bar before they start their busy days. Not only do people eat breakfast at a B&B, but they even get up early enough to chat with the innkeeper while she prepares the food. It's an amazing thing, I tell you.

Recipes in This Chapter

- Telain Ol' Simple Omelet
- Puffy Omelet Squares with Tomato-Zucchini Sauce
- Sunday Brunch
 Scramble
- Crab Scramble
- ► Ham and Cheese Frittata
- Crustless Mushroom Quiche
- Crustless Quiche Lorraine
- S Jan's Nostalgic Pancakes
- Apricot-Cheddar Brunch Toast



So now you know that I cook a really mean breakfast that brings people to the breakfast table. In this chapter, I share some of my favorite breakfast recipes that fit your low-carb lifestyle.

Prioritizing Breakfast in Your Low-Carb Lifestyle

Why eat breakfast, you ask? Think about it. The last meal you ate was the previous night's dinner. When you rise and grab your first cup of coffee of the day, you likely haven't had a morsel for at least 12 hours. Believe it or not, eating breakfast helps you lose weight or maintain your current healthy weight! Grab something to eat at least an hour after you've risen for the day. You'll find that you'll function more effectively, your concentration will be better, and you won't be as irritable and short tempered as when you skip breakfast.



Breakfast on the run!

The next time you find yourself rushing out the door on an empty stomach, grab a coffee mug and forget the coffee. Throw in 2 eggs with a pinch of salt and pepper and give them a quick whisk. Pop them in the microwave for 1 minute. If they're still a little runny, give them a quick stir and pop back in the micro for another 10 seconds, grab a fork, and run.

Or, for a quick breakfast burrito, grab a couple of low-carb, whole-wheat tortillas and pop them into the microwave for about 8 seconds. When the eggs are done, add 3 tablespoons of fresh tomato salsa and 2 tablespoons of mozzarella or cheddar cheese. Spoon the mixture into your warm tortillas, roll them up, and you're on your way. Put the breakfast tortillas in plastic wrap and pop them into the micro to warm when you get to work. It's breakfast on the run!

You say you want a quick omelet? Here's a quick omelet recipe for the microwave. Melt ½ tablespoon of butter in a small, shallow, microwave-proof dish on High in the microwave for about

15 seconds — you just want to coat the dish with butter. Place two eggs in the dish and season to taste with salt and pepper. Beat lightly with a fork. Pop the eggs in the microwave and cook on High for about 1 minute. Loosen eggs with a fork — they'll be more cooked around the edges. Return them to microwave on High for another 30 seconds. The eggs will look wet and not quite done. Let stand for 1 minute and your micro-omelet will finish cooking. Top with whatever toppings you have in the fridge.

If you want to add some extra flavor to your micro-omelet, add any of the following ingredients: cheese cubes or grated cheeses, chopped green and red peppers, chopped fresh tomatoes, sliced mushrooms, a bit of chopped green onion, leftover veggies from the night before, a dash of curry powder or some tomato salsa. Just about anything but the kitchen sink applies here.

Plus, if you eat breakfast, research shows that you're more likely to enjoy a nutritionally balanced diet overall.

Increasing your energy and metabolic rate

Overnight, your body uses energy, even while you're sleeping. Your body needs to replace some of the stores of energy it used during the night in the form of food in the morning. Whatever your lifestyle, whatever your age, wherever you live, mornings usually begin with a bang. You're out of the gate full blast and don't understand why you seem to slow down and occasionally get a headache around 10 a.m. Breakfast is the energy you need to stand up in the morning and make it to lunch.



Expecting your body to shift into full gear without stopping to refuel is like assuming your car will run on empty. Even if you try to catch up by eating a balanced lunch, you never regain the energy you would've had if you'd taken ten minutes to eat some breakfast.

A big reason to make breakfast part of your low-carb lifestyle is to kick-start your metabolic rate. Your metabolism slows down at night like everything else, and the boost of breakfast gets your body off and running again. When you increase your metabolism, you burn fat, and you know what that means — you maintain your desired body weight. (Check out Chapter 2 for the full story on increasing your metabolism.)

Avoiding cravings and increased hunger

Eating breakfast has been the mantra for many years. It's important not only to your overall health but significantly important to your low-carb healthy lifestyle. Eating breakfast will help you stave off cravings and hunger pangs. Coupled with eating healthy snacks and grazing (see Chapter 2), eating breakfast is a priority.

Eating a healthy breakfast is one way to evenly distribute your day's calories and nutrients and help maintain a steady blood-sugar level and energy level. Irregular eating habits cause a wide fluctuation in blood sugar and insulin levels that affect your energy level and give you hunger cues. Eating four or five small meals a day or snacking on good carb snacks is a great way to keep your blood sugar from spiking and sending you on a hunger roller coaster ride.

- Studies have actually linked low blood sugar levels to poor memory, concentration, and learning ability.
- ✓ Ironically, people who skip breakfast in an effort to cut carbs and calories often do more snacking later in the day and overeat at evening meals.
- ✓ Increased hunger isn't caused by eating breakfast but by other eating habits. Take a look at the foods you choose for breakfast. Sugary food, even the kind with natural sugars, such as a fruit salad or toast and jam, triggers an insulin response and raises brain levels of serotonin, leaving you hungry and sleepy within two hours.

Laying the foundation for your day

Under the breakfast banner of life I want to stress *you*. Breakfast is a very personal meal that's all about how your body works. You don't have time not to eat it. Breakfast is a huge part of any healthy lifestyle, especially your low-carb lifestyle. Experiment and figure out what works for you time-wise, palate-wise, and preparation-wise. And remember, variety is definitely the spice.



Breakfast menus vary with country, locality, and even occupation — not to mention with your healthy low-carb lifestyle of choice. Expand your horizons with common sense. If something is low in carbs and ultrahigh in fats and calories, how much of it do you think is wise for you to gobble down? Consider this rule the common sense rule. You can apply it to any food or any meal you want — not just breakfast.

And breakfast isn't just for breakfast any more. Try the Crab Scramble in this chapter for dinner. Also, see Chapter 15 for great egg crepes that are very versatile, low in carbs, and good for you.

Egging You On



Breakfast on the run tends to conjure up thoughts of foods that aren't considerations when you elect a healthy low-carb lifestyle. But eggs are a great alternative: Eggs aren't the only food on the breakfast list but because of their versatility, you can have a bunch of breakfast options if you get a bit creative. If you're not in a hurry and want some meat with your eggs, select a lean sausage. There are some incredible combinations out there these days with sun-dried tomatoes, mushrooms, various cheeses, basil, and garlic — all options that can add real spice to your breakfast. But please stay away from the fatty stuff. If you just have to have bacon, choose lean cuts, prepare it in the microwave, and blot it with paper towels to remove the excess fat instead of frying it in all that grease. (For more about good fats and bad fats see Chapter 2.)

Two eggs, please, sunny side up! That's just the beginning of the long list of ways to have your eggs. Eggs can be fried, poached, scrambled, and hard cooked. They come in wonderful disguises like omelets that can be filled with such delights as sugar-free jellies and preserves, fruit, mixed veggies, spinach, mushrooms, herbs, and more.

And then there are soufflés, meringues, and mousses made with eggs (see Chapter 13 for low-carb meringue treats). You can also add spices to change the entire egg picture. Think about curry, basil, rosemary, and any other spice — dried or fresh — that shakes or minces. Whoever thought an egg could look or taste so good!



Eggs have been referred to as nature's near-perfect food. A 1-ounce egg has only 75 calories; provides all essential amino acids (see Chapter 11 for more on amino acids), as well as lecithin and potassium; and has only 1 gram of carbohydrates. Eggs should become your new low-carb best friend. Protein is great in the mornings because it truly helps you curb cravings. If you have a boring image of eggs at this very moment, replace it with a new image that's going to help you to eat a breakfast that'll fill you up, not out.



Because eggs are almost the perfect food with some pretty impressive nutritional benefits, they are good for your general health and definitely fit in with your low-carb lifestyle. You need to take good care of this precious cargo so you can reap the most benefit from it. Here are some tips on buying and storing eggs, a couple warnings, and a bit of serving information.

- Check the sell-by date stamped on the egg carton, and use your eggs by this date. The size of the air pocket in the egg increases with age. The bigger the air pocket, the less fresh the egg is.
- ✓ Do a freshness test if you're wondering whether to use eggs on hand. Simply put the egg in a bowl of water. Stale or bad eggs float to the top, and fresh eggs sink with the rounded end pointed up.
- ✓ When you break an egg and the white spreads out very thin, throw it away even if it passes the smell test, because the egg is about to go bad or is bad.
- Store your eggs with the big round end up and the pointy end down.
- ✓ Do not use cracked eggs because they may contain harmful bacteria.
- ✓ Serve egg dishes immediately after cooking or refrigerate them.



And here are a few more egg-cellent secrets:

- ✓ The secret to cooking eggs is to be gentle and apply low heat. If eggs cook too fast or too long, they come out rubbery.
- ✓ The secret to prepping fabulous eggs? A balloon whisk is an awesome kitchen gadget to have for the best beaten eggs and especially for egg whites. For perfect egg whites, use this oversized whisk with a round-bottomed bowl and you can keep all of your egg whites in motion, simultaneously allowing tiny bubbles to form and the volume to build. This tool is a must for making successful egg dishes. See an example of a balloon whisk in Figure 6-1.

Figure 6-1: A balloon whisk is the key to perfectly beaten eggs.



Hard-cooked heaven

"Hard-boiled" eggs can be a great part of a low-carb breakfast, and they make a fabulous snack. But eggs should never be *boiled* but should be *hard-cooked* instead. If you boil eggs too long, they get a greenish-gray look around the yolk. Did I hear an "Ah-ha! That's what causes that to happen"? Here's how to make hard-cooked eggs:

- 1. Put the eggs in a single layer in cold water.
- 2. As soon as they come to a rolling boil, remove the pan from the heat, cover tightly with the pan lid, and let the eggs sit in the pan for 15 to 20 minutes.

3. Immediately run cold water over them to cool, which makes them easier to peel too.

For the best hard-cooked eggs, use eggs that are a few days old. Really fresh eggs that are hard-cooked are more difficult to peel.

You can simplify the job of removing the shell from a hard-cooked egg if you begin by gently tapping it all over, rotating the egg as you tap. Then roll the egg between your hands to loosen the shell from the egg. Starting at the large end of the egg, begin peeling. To make it even easier for the peeling to slip off, hold the egg under cold running water while peeling or put them in a bowl of cold water.

Awesome omelets

Basically, there are two types of omelets. The French omelet can be served plain or folded over almost anything your little heart desires, and the puffy omelet is started on top of the stove and finished in the oven. Both are quick and quite easy. And now for my omelet keys to success:

- ✓ Use only fresh ingredients in your omelets.
- Make sure the eggs are at room temperature (even if you have to pop them in a little warm water to heat them up). The temperature of the egg before you start building the omelet has a profound effect on how your omelet turns out, and you want it light and fluffy.
- ✓ You can have your omelet soft or well done, but you never want to cook your omelet over high heat or it will get very tough and even burn.
- ✓ The maximum load for a successful omelet is three eggs.
- ✓ Use 1 to 2 tablespoons of water for each egg (never use milk in an omelet), plus enough butter or oil to coat the bottom of the pan. Coating the pan keeps the outside of the omelet soft.
- ✓ If you make omelets regularly, do yourself a favor and buy an omelet pan. The ideal size is a 7- or 8-inch pan with curved sides. The pan should be light enough that you can lift it with one hand and shake it as the omelet is cooking.

🖱 Plain Ol' Simple Omelet



This recipe for a very basic omelet can be a springboard for all kinds of omelet variations (see the suggestions after the recipe). Mastering omelet making is by no means difficult. Using an omelet pan gives you a finished product that's much more pleasing to the eye than just using a skillet. (See Figure 6-2 for some visual tips on how to fold an omelet.)

Preparation time: 5 minutes **Cooking time:** 2 minutes or less

Yield: 1 serving

2 eggs Pepper to taste 1 tablespoon water 1 tablespoon butter

1/4 teaspoon salt

- 1 Break the eggs into a small bowl. Add the water, salt, and pepper. Beat until well blended but not foamy.
- **2** Using a small skillet or omelet pan, heat the pan and add butter making sure that the butter coats the pan evenly. You want the pan very hot but not hot enough to burn the butter. When you add the butter, it should immediately melt and begin foaming to a sizzle.
- **3** As the butter loses its sizzle, pour the egg mixture into the omelet pan. Holding the handle of the pan with one hand, gently shake the pan to coat the entire pan with the egg mixture. The eggs will begin to cook immediately when they hit the hot omelet pan.
- **4** When the omelet begins to set, tilt the pan away from you and lift the edges with a coated spatula because the edges will cook more quickly. This allows the runny mixture to flow to the bottom of the pan so it can get cooked too.
- **5** Place the omelet pan back on the stove, allowing it to cook until it's firm. The center will be just a tad moist, as the omelet continues to cook in the pan when you remove it from the heat. Tilt the omelet pan away from you, and gently fold one-third of the omelet over onto itself.
- **6** You're now holding the omelet pan up off the heat. Holding the pan firmly, you want to strike the handle of the pan two or three times, making the far side of the omelet flip back on itself over the first fold. Press the sides together to seal and, lifting the side of the omelet with your spatula, slide it off onto a plate.

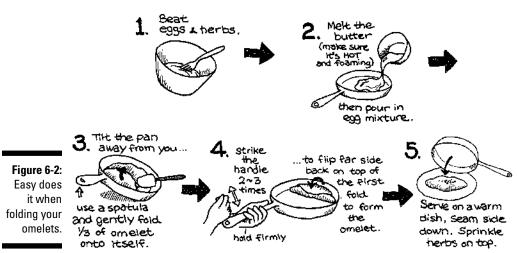
7 Serve immediately.

Variation: Instead of using salt and pepper in your omelet, try Tabasco sauce. It blends very nicely with the eggs and makes the omelet much more flavorful.

Per serving: Calories 250 (From Fat 193); Fat 21g (Saturated 10g); Cholesterol 458mg; Sodium 709mg; Carbohydrate 1g; Dietary Fiber 0g (Net Carbohydrate 1g); Protein 13g.



Folding an Omelet



Whether you're using my Plain Ol' Simple Omelet recipe in this chapter or your own, consider these low-carb, easy variations:

- ✓ **Simple Farmer's Omelet:** Add ¼ cup finely grated cheese to the mixture before cooking. Sprinkle 1 tablespoon of finely chopped ham, turkey, or chicken over the omelet before folding.
- ✓ Mexican Cheese Omelet: Add ¼ cup Monterey Jack or pepper Jack cheese, and add 2 tablespoons bottled salsa (check the sugar content on the salsa, please). Add the cheese before folding your omelet and top with the salsa when you serve it.
- ✓ **Mushroom Omelet:** Add ¾ cup sautéed sliced mushrooms, and 1 table-spoon minced chives. Cook the eggs about 1 minute before adding mushrooms and chives. After adding, cook another 1½ to 2 minutes and then fold omelet and serve.



A general rule is the addition of 1 teaspoon of water for every egg that you plop in an omelet. Water is used because it slows down the cooking of the eggs and makes the texture of the finished omelet much lighter and fluffier.

Tomato-Zucchini Sauce



Make this easy, basic puffy omelet with tomato-zucchini sauce, or try other sauces. Don't limit yourself to veggie sauces; be bold and try the omelet with some easy, fresh fruit and a dollop of whipped cream. This recipe calls for stewed tomatoes. Look for the ones with the lowest carb and sugar counts.

Preparation time: 15 minutes **Cooking time:** 40 to 45 minutes

Yield: 4 servings

Nonstick cooking spray

6 eggs

½ teaspoon onion powder

½ teaspoon salt

¼ teaspoon pepper, divided

14-ounce can stewed tomatoes, cut fine

½ cup quartered (lengthwise) and sliced

zucchini

1 teaspoon dried basil

- 1 Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Spray an 8-x-2-inch baking dish with nonstick spray and set aside. Separate the eggs, placing the whites and yolks in separate bowls.
- **2** Beat the egg yolks, onion powder, salt, and ½ teaspoon pepper for about 4 minutes or until thick and lemon-colored. Set aside.
- **3** Beat the egg whites until soft peaks begin to form and the tips of the peaks begin to gently fold over. Fold the whites into the egg yolks. (Dash over to Chapter 13 for a quick lesson on beating egg whites and the appearance of peaks.)
- 4 Spread the mixture evenly into the prepared dish. Bake for 23 to 25 minutes or until a knife inserted near the center comes out clean. Oven temperatures vary, so begin watching it after about 20 minutes.
- **5** While the omelet is baking, make the sauce. Combine the undrained tomatoes, zucchini, basil, and remaining pepper. Bring to boil, and reduce heat. Cover and simmer about 5 minutes or just until the zucchini is tender. Don't overcook.
- **6** Simmer, uncovered, for 10 more minutes or until the sauce reaches the desired consistency.
- **7** To serve, cut the omelet into quarters and top with sauce.

Per serving: Calories 144 (From Fat 68); Fat 8g (Saturated 2g); Cholesterol 319mg; Sodium 670mg; Carbohydrate 9g; Dietary Fiber 2g (Net Carbohydrate 7g); Protein 10g.



Scrambling skillets

Scrambled eggs are the easiest of all skillet dishes to prepare. A basic egg scramble begins with 2 eggs (more if you like) salted and peppered to your liking. Beat the eggs just until the yolks and whites are blended. Add a table-spoon of cream. Melt some butter in a pan and tilt the pan so the bottom is well coated. Depending on how you like your eggs done, you can finish your eggs by choosing from the following cooking methods:

- ✓ Creamy and Smooth Eggs: Cook the eggs over low heat and constantly stir them with a wooden spoon. Your scramble is finished when the eggs are moist but firm with no uncooked liquid floating about. Allow about 3 minutes cooking time for 3 to 4 eggs.
- ✓ Large, Creamy Egg Curds: Cook the eggs over low heat, occasionally pulling the cooked portions of the eggs to the center of the skillet allowing the uncooked portions of the scramble to run to the edges. Repeat this process until all of the eggs are cooked in large, moist curds.
- ✓ Dry Scramble: Cook the eggs a couple of minutes past the moist but firm stage. The eggs will look dry and crumbly.
- ✓ Fluffy Scramble: Beat the eggs vigorously until light and fluffy. After cooking, you can pop them in the blender for more fluff if desired. Eggs will be semi-dry (not moist) when done.

The skinny on egg substitutes

Egg substitutes are ideal for scrambled eggs, quiche, frittatas, omelets, casseroles, sauces, and other recipes that call for whole eggs. Some folks today prefer to use egg substitutes for several reasons. You don't have to worry about them going bad, and because egg substitutes are made up mostly of egg whites, they contain fewer calories and less cholesterol than fresh eggs. Egg substitutes come in refrigerated form as well as frozen. You'll find the refrigerated egg substitutes in the milk section, usually

next to the cream and milk. You can find the exact substitute measurements on each carton of the particular brand that you purchase. You'll also find just egg whites that can be used for meringues and other recipes that call for just whites so you don't waste the yolks or try to figure out something to do with them. Please be sure to read the labels on egg whites to double-check whether that particular brand can be used for meringue making. (See Chapter 13 for great meringue recipes.)

Sunday Brunch Scramble



Sunday afternoon is a perfect time to give this recipe a whirl. The little bit of curry powder combined with the onions and sour cream give this scramble a special twist. Curry powder is a blend of rich, warm, earthy, and pungent flavors with varied overtones, always giving any dish a mysteriously warm flavor. Maybe serve this with some low-carb bagels or low-carb English muffins and just a dab of sugar-free jam or preserves. Yum! This is a quick and easy, yet filling and very low-carb, Sunday brunch.

Preparation time: 10 minutes **Cooking time:** 5 to 6 minutes

Yield: 4 servings

6 eggs ½ cup finely chopped green onions

½ cup sour cream ½ teaspoon curry powder

2 tablespoons butter ½ cup coarsely grated cheddar cheese

1 Beat the eggs and sour cream together with a mixer until they're light and fluffy.

- **2** Melt the butter in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the green onions and cook for about 3 minutes. Add the curry powder, and stir for just a few seconds.
- 3 Add the egg mixture and stir gently until the eggs are cooked to desired consistency (see the bulleted list earlier in this section). Top with cheese and serve immediately.

Per serving: Calories 284(From Fat 216); Fat 24g (Saturated 13g); Cholesterol 362mg; Sodium 200mg; Carbohydrate 3g; Dietary Fiber 0g (Net Carbohydrate 3g); Protein 14g.





Here's a little way to test the doneness of your scrambled eggs, omelets, and frittatas: Cook them until eggs are thickened and no visible liquid egg remains.

Crab Scramble



An almost elegant scramble, this is a great weekend brunch treat, or it can serve it as a quick main course for supper. If you take the brunch route, a portion on each plate with some colorful fresh fruit and a sprig of mint makes a lovely presentation. It's downright low-carb beautiful! (See the color section of this book for a look at this dish.)

Preparation time: 5 minutes

Cooking time: 5 minutes

Yield: 4 servings

2 tablespoons butter
Salt and pepper to taste
8-ounce can lump crabmeat, chopped
½ cup grated cheddar cheese

1 teaspoon finely chopped fresh chives 8 eggs, beaten and seasoned to taste

1 Heat the butter in a nonstick frying pan over medium-high heat. When hot, turn the heat to low and add the crabmeat and chives. Cook for 2 minutes over low heat. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

2 Stir the cheese into the beaten eggs. Pour over the crabmeat in the frying pan. Cook for 3 minutes while stirring constantly.

Per Serving: Calories 313 (From Fat 190); Fat 21g (Saturated 10g); Cholesterol 506mg; Sodium 549mg; Carbohydrate 2g; Dietary Fiber 0g (Net Carbohydrate 2g); Protein 28g.



Frittata this

A *frittata* is like a flat egg cake. It's a bit thick and is cooked until it's firm but by no means dry. To make sure that you don't burn the bottom of the frittata, start it over low heat on top of the stove and then finish it under the broiler, using an ovenproof skillet. My favorite old-fashioned iron skillets are the best for frittatas. If you're a good flipper, you can flip the frittata instead of popping it under the broiler. Good luck — I, for one, don't do this very well.

Ham and Cheese Frittata



Frittatas, in my humble opinion, are even easier than omelets. Both add veggies, cheese, or meat to eggs in some manner. With an omelet, the additional ingredients are used as a filling and the finished omelet is folded over the ingredients. When making a frittata, you just throw in whatever ingredients you can find in the fridge. All of the ingredients are mixed together and poured into heated oil or butter. Most frittatas include a short trip to the broiler, so it's a good idea to start the frittata process in an ovenproof skillet.

Preparation time: 5 to 8 minutes

Cooking time: 8 minutes

Yield: 4 servings

3 eggs 6 ounces smoked deli ham, diced in ½-inch

3 egg whites cubes

% teaspoon salt % cup red bell pepper strips
Nonstick cooking spray

½ teaspoon pepper Nonstick cooking spray
1½ cups broccoli florets 1 tablespoon butter

'. ½ cup shredded sharp cheddar cheese

- **1** Preheat the broiler. Beat the eggs, egg whites, salt, and pepper in a large bowl until well blended. Stir in the broccoli, ham, and bell peppers.
- **2** Coat a 10-inch ovenproof skillet with sloping sides with nonstick cooking spray. Melt the butter over medium heat in the skillet. Pour the egg mixture into the skillet and cover. Cook for about 6 minutes or until the eggs are set around the edges. The center will be wet.
- **3** Uncover the skillet and sprinkle the egg mixture with cheese. Transfer the skillet to the broiler and broil 5 inches from the heat source. Watch closely, because you only need to broil for about 2 minutes, or until the eggs in the center are set and the cheese is melted.
- **4** Let stand for 5 minutes before serving. Cut the frittata into wedges.

Variation: You can use almost any veggie in the universe in a frittata. A few more basic ideas are red and green peppers, zucchini, cauliflower, and spinach. You can also add Canadian bacon, sausage, or ham and any kind of cheese.

Per serving: Calories 205 (From Fat 113); Fat 13g (Saturated 6g); Cholesterol 193mg; Sodium 1,020mg; Carbohydrate 3g; Dietary Fiber 1g (Net Carbohydrate 2g); Protein 19g.



Kickin' quiche

For a quiche to be good, you don't need the extra carbs of the crust. Quiches are actually very easy and quick to make, and I think you're are going to be quite pleased how good they are the next day for a quick breakfast or a lunch to tote.

Crustless Mushroom Quiche



This is a favorite quiche from my bed and breakfast in Branson and is quite like a more traditional quiche even without a crust (I never did make it with a crust at the B&B either). This is a great quiche to ensure plenty of leftovers for breakfast on the run or a great lunch (add a salad). But before you get to leftovers, enjoy this great mushroom quiche!

Preparation time: 10 minutes **Cooking time:** 35 to 40 minutes

Yield: 6 servings

8 ounces fresh mushrooms, cleaned and

sliced

¼ cup butter, divided

1½ cups shredded Swiss cheese

¾ cup whipping cream

1/4 teaspoon salt

½ teaspoon dry mustard

6 eggs

1 tablespoon Italian parsley, finely chopped

- 1 Preheat the oven to 325 degrees. Cook the mushrooms in 2 tablespoons of butter over medium-high heat until they're lightly browned and the excess liquid evaporates from the pan, about 3 to 4 minutes. Set aside.
- **2** Sprinkle the cheese in a buttered 8-x-8-inch baking dish and dot with the remaining 2 tablespoons of butter.
- **3** Mix the cream, salt, dry mustard, and eggs in a medium bowl. Pour the egg mixture over the cheese. Pour the mushrooms evenly on top of the egg mixture.
- 4 Bake at 325 degrees for 35 minutes, or until the eggs are set. Sprinkle with chopped fresh parsley. Serve immediately.

Per serving: Calories 357 (From Fat 281); Fat 31g (Saturated 18g); Cholesterol 299mg; Sodium 244mg; Carbohydrate 4g; Dietary Fiber 1g (Net Carbohydrate 3g); Protein 16g.



Crustless Quiche Lorraine



Ah my sweet Quiche Lorraine! Here's another recipe from my ol' inn in Branson that you make in the microwave. This crustless quiche recipe is a favorite of a lot of quiche lovers. Like almost all quiches, this one is good hot or cold, and it's a great portable and healthy low-carb snack. Cut the quiche in wedges, wrap it individually in plastic wrap, and you have an instant breakfast to go. If you serve this as a meal, complement your quiche with a salad of fresh greens. Feel free to experiment with this great basic quiche recipe, adding some of your favorite veggies to the mix for variety.

Preparation time: 5 minutes **Cooking time:** 15 to 20 minutes

Yield: 6 servings

10 slices bacon1½ cups half-and-half1½ cups shredded 3-cheese blend of
mozzarella, Monterey Jack, and cheddar¾ teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon pepper4 eggs½ teaspoon nutmeg

- 1 Cook the bacon in the microwave by placing 2 layers of paper towels in a shallow microwave-safe dish. Place the bacon on the paper towels. Cover the bacon with a single layer of paper towels. Cook bacon on high for 5 to 7 minutes until crisp. Let the bacon cool and crumble bacon into small bits.
- **2** Sprinkle the bacon and the cheese in the bottom of a 9-inch glass pie plate or shallow ceramic quiche plate.
- 3 In a small bowl, beat together the eggs, half and half, salt, pepper, and nutmeg until well blended.
- **4** Pour the blended egg mixture over the bacon and cheese.
- **5** Bake in the microwave on high for 9 to 11 minutes. Stop the cooking after 3 minutes, and stir and then stop again after 6 minutes and stir, cooking until the quiche is set.
- **6** Let stand for 10 minutes before serving.

Variation: If you want to bake this in a conventional oven, simply preheat your oven to 375 degrees and bake the quiche for 40 to 45 minutes.

Variation: This is a basic quiche recipe, so feel free to add veggies, other herbs and spices, and a variety of cheeses. In place of the bacon, you can substitute chopped sautéed onions, smoked salmon, diced cooked sausage, asparagus spears, or something from the sea.

Per serving: Calories 288 (From Fat 211); Fat 23g (Saturated 12g); Cholesterol 198mg; Sodium 670mg; Carbohydrate 4g; Dietary Fiber 0g (Net Carbohydrate 4g); Protein 16g.



Quiche takes you to the land of versatility. You can eat quiche as an entrée, for lunch, breakfast, or a low-carb snack. Somehow it got a bad rap years ago, and quiche was declared a rather unmanly dish. You may remember hearing that real men don't eat quiche. This stereotyping has since disappeared, and introducing quiche to your low-carb lifestyle will add lots of variety to your menus, and will give you ways to use those leftovers — simply throw them in a quiche — all while enjoying the healthful benefits of eating eggs.

Skipping the crusts in your quiche recipes is so easy and so user friendly to your healthy low-carb lifestyle. You'll find that you can easily adapt most traditional quiche recipes to the crustless variety. Here's a little insight on low-carb crustless quiche: The finished product isn't always quite the same texture as a classic quiche because you don't use some of the binding ingredients, like hash browns for instance. If your low-carb quiches turn out to be a little fluffier and more like a scramble, it's okay. Sometimes, I'll cook my crustless quiches in a smaller size dish so the quiche is thicker – depending on whether you like it thick or thin. Experiment with a couple of these quiche recipes and it will take you about two tries to make up your mind how you like your low-carb quiche. So quiche on and do the low-carb quiche!



When you cook in the microwave, be mindful that the ingredients keep on cookin' after you remove them and set them on the counter.

Brunching with Low-Carb Treats

The flexibility of your low-carb lifestyle allows you so many wonderful food options. The days of delectable and sweet breakfast treats aren't gone; your options are just a little different. The recipes here are ideal if you're having guests over for a weekend brunch, a great excuse to get together with your low-carb friends. Your guests may be surprised to discover that these dishes are low-carb. And even if you're preparing brunch for only you and your family, these recipes are ways to treat them and eat healthy, too.

Tan's Nostalgic Pancakes



I've been flippin' pancakes for years but not the low-carb kind. I grew up on homemade buttermilk pancakes! But I gotta tell you that these come close in a big low-carb way. They're delicious and taste a little like blintzes. The trick to making these pancakes is to stay with them while they're cooking. They cook very quickly, and you can stack them up fast. Serve these with sugar-free syrup, if desired, or spread on some sugar-free jam or preserves of your choice and roll them up like a blintz. You can also sprinkle with Splenda and top with a dollop of whipped cream. Feel free to substitute fresh or frozen berries to get the real blintz effect. Use this recipe as a basic one that you can apply your sugar-free dreams to. Enjoy!

Preparation time: 10 minutes

Cooking time: 3 to 4 minutes per pancake

Yield: 6 pancakes

3 eggs

1 cup small-curd cottage cheese

¼ teaspoon salt

1 teaspoon vanilla

1 teaspoon cinnamon

1 packet Splenda sugar substitute

3 tablespoons white whole-wheat flour

¼ teaspoon baking powder

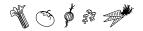
3 teaspoons butter, divided (If you're cooking the pancakes individually, you need about ½ teaspoon per pancake; if you're cooking all 6 at one time on a griddle, 2 teaspoons should

be adequate)

- 1 Combine the eggs, cottage cheese, salt, vanilla, cinnamon, and packet of Splenda and mix well in the blender until smooth. Combine the flour and baking powder in a small dish and add to the blender. Blend again until all ingredients are well blended. The batter will be very thin.
- **2** Heat a nonstick skillet or griddle over medium heat. When it's hot, lightly grease with butter.
- 3 When the butter has melted, drop about ½ cup of the batter onto the skillet or griddle. If necessary, spread the batter out with the back of a spoon. Let the pancake cook for about 1 minute, or until small craterlike bubbles begin to form on the top of the batter. Lift the edge of the pancake with a spatula to see if the bottom side is golden. (You may have to let it cook another 15 seconds.) Flip the pancake and brown lightly on the other side.
- 4 Remove the pancake from the skillet or griddle immediately and serve.

Variation: Add ½ cup finely chopped hazelnuts (or nuts of your choice) to the batter and make nutty pancakes that are crunchy.

Per serving: Calories 109 (From Fat 56); Fat 6g (Saturated 3g); Cholesterol 117mg; Sodium 297mg; Carbohydrate 5g; Dietary Fiber 1g (Net Carbohydrate 4g); Protein 8g.



Apricot-Cheddar Brunch Toast

This recipe is also from my days as an innkeeper at my country bed-and-breakfast. I've actually prepared this for guests and made extra for them to take for a breakfast on the run on a frantic Monday. Serve these toasted sandwiches with a dollop of freshly whipped cream and a sprig of mint, as well as fresh sliced strawberries on the plate, for an awe-some low-carb presentation. (See the color section for another presentation idea.)

Preparation time: 15 minutes **Cooking time:** 6 to 8 minutes

Yield: 4 servings

8 slices low-carb bread of your choice

1/4 cup sugar-free apricot preserves

4 slices Canadian bacon

8 slices medium cheddar cheese

3 eggs

½ cup Hood's low-carb orange juice

1 teaspoon sugar-free maple syrup

2 tablespoons butter

Splenda sugar substitute (optional)

- 1 Spread four slices of bread with the preserves. Top each one with a slice of Canadian bacon and two slices of cheese. Top with the remaining slices of bread, pressing down very gently.
- **2** Combine the eggs, orange juice, and maple syrup in a shallow dish. (Choose a dish that is flat on the bottom and that the whole sandwich can lay flat in to make your dipping very quick and easy). Dip the sandwiches in the egg mixture, turning once with a flat spatula and allowing them to stand in the mixture for about 30 seconds per side, or until the mixture soaks in.
- **3** Melt the butter in a large, heavy skillet (or use your griddle) over medium heat. Cook the sandwiches for about 3 minutes on each side, monitoring the heat carefully. The cheese should be melted, and the bread should be golden brown.
- 4 Sprinkle with powdered Splenda, if desired, and serve with additional preserves.

Per serving: Calories 511 (From Fat 299); Fat 33g (Saturated 17g); Cholesterol 247mg; Sodium 1,117mg; Carbohydrate 23g; Dietary Fiber 6g (Net Carbohydrate 17g); Protein 31g.

