

Where to get no fuss home-cooked meals

September 8, 2009 by SYLVIA E. KING-COHEN / sylvia.king-cohen@newsday.com



When the school bell rings, it can drown out the sound of everything else - including promises you made to yourself to prepare healthy meals for your family.

Busy schedules and evenings packed with soccer and violin practices don't necessarily mean you have to give up taste or nutrition for convenience. Instead, hand over your spatula to one of these services that get dinner on your table without the fuss or cleanup afterward.

DINNER MY WAY: 547 Bedford Ave., Bellmore, 516-785-1290, dinnermyway.com. Hours: 1-6 p.m.

Tuesday-Friday, 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Saturday, other hours by appointment.

Dinner My Way is a make-and-take kitchen where you assemble meals from a preset menu with 17 entree choices each month. The menu costs \$12-\$27 for a six-serving entree and a side starch dish; \$7 for individual meals (six for \$36).

"You can just pop in and pick up a meal," says owner Cheryl Dattoma. "Or, you'd call a day in advance and we'd have the ingredients ready for you. . . . We also do individual meals for the microwave and toaster."

FRANCINE STONE COOKS FOR YOU: 516-721-4465, dinnertime18@hotmail.com. Deliveries to [Nassau](#) and [Suffolk](#) counties (delivery charge \$5 and up)

Most pre-prepared meals serve a family of four - side dishes can be customized. Popular requests include baked eggplant marinara with broccoli rabe and Tuscan white beans (\$39.99), turkey burrito casserole (\$32.99) and zucchini linguini with marinara and chicken or shrimp (\$19-99-\$36.99).

"Ninety-five percent of the meals I prepare are family style," says Francine Stone, who is a chef and caterer by day and sanity-saver for busy families by night. "I look for it to be healthy and easy. People with kids want a good healthy meal that is a step up from chicken nuggets."

HOME COOKING CONSULTANT: 516-826-3169, cheflia.com

Owner and certified personal chef Lia Soscia plans, shops and prepares meals in your home. Delivery areas include [Nassau](#) and western [Suffolk](#) counties

Meals cost \$400-\$425 for five four-serving entrees that include at least one side dish. Popular dishes include sauteed sea bass with shiitake mushroom sauce and broccoli rabe, smoky meatballs in a Serrano ham and tomato sauce with risotto with green peas, filet of sole in lemon and oil with asparagus almandine and eggplant Parmigiana and apricot-glazed grilled chicken with a sweet potato salad.

It's like having a private chef without having to pay the salary 365 days a year. Once the meal menus are approved, "I do all the food shopping, the preparation in your home, packaging, storage in the freezer or refrigerator, and the cleanup" says Soscia. "Like I wasn't even there."

DREAM DINNERS: Blue Ribbon Plaza, 3028 Jericho Tpke., East Northport, 631-486-6214, dreamdinners.com. Cost: \$130-\$150 for 12 three-serving dinners; \$75 sampler menu of six three-serving entrees; \$224-\$264 for 72 servings (24 three-serving or 12 six-serving containers)

Chicken, beef, pork, shellfish and vegetarian entrees are on the menu at Dream Dinners. This month's menu includes entrees such as [Caribbean](#) pork roast and crispy French onion chicken.

The concept is simple. You pick three- or six-serving dinners from a menu of items that varies monthly (scout it out before you go on the store's Web site, which also lists each entree's nutritional information). You come to a prearranged session and use their recipes to prepare dishes for packing, freezing and reheating at home. "They convenient, and save time and money," says franchise co-owner Mindy Rogers.

NU-KITCHEN: 212-582-1144, nu-kitchen.com

This [Manhattan](#)-based food delivery company specializes in fresh portion-controlled meals and delivers to

Great Neck, Port Washington, Roslyn and select other north North Shore [Nassau](#) County communities

The service costs \$42 (includes delivery) for full day's menu of breakfast, lunch, dinner, dessert and snacks; \$11-\$12 a la carte entrees. Popular sellers include flank steak with mushroom ragout, lasagna, chicken teriyaki and seared mahi mahi with yuzu dressing and carrot salad. Desserts might include chai latte brownie, apple strudel or cheesecake.

"We cater mostly to busy professionals who are looking to eat well and stay healthy," says company founder Mark Newhouse. "Our meals are prepared fresh the day before they're dropped off at your home."

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