

Dinner is Served!

Meal Preparation Companies Taste Tested

There's nothing like sitting down to a home cooked meal with the family, unless of course you've just picked up three different children from three different schools driven two of them to after-school activities, and the other to a doctor's appointment, stopped to return overdue books at the library, gone to the bank, picked up some last minute school supplies, attended a PTA meeting, taken the car in for a brake job, not to mention doing your part time job. In the real world, sitting down to a home cooked meal can be a rare luxury! Unless, of course, like my family, you've discovered the culinary convenience of meal preparation companies! While there is immense gratification in having fussed over a good meal and basking in the accolades that follow, it also feels good to place a delectable and healthy meal on the table without ever having shopped for ingredients, sliced or diced a vegetable, measured or mixed a marinade, or even slaved over a hot stove!

Over the past two years, a host of meal preparation companies have hit Metro Denver and Boulder. All seem to offer something just a bit different in their approach, food and ordering process. *Kids' Pages Family* staff spent the summer sampling a variety of companies and what they offer to busy moms and dads. Here are the results.

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The Organic Dish

4920 Pearl St.

Boulder

303-485-5091

www.theorganicdish.com

The Organic Dish is a fairly new business in Boulder that specializes in make-your-own meal preparation or pick up meals. The ingredients are fresh and they promote locally grown produce, natural and organic foods, free of artificial preservatives, colors, flavors, sweeteners and hydrogenated fats.

Reservations and payment for the meal preparation time is simple through their online service. The staff and the atmosphere at The Organic Dish are so friendly and personable that the time spent there will go by too fast. Yummy Mango Salsa and freshly baked pizza is offered to keep the taste buds busy while their hands are working. Bottled water is provided or guests can bring a bottle of wine to wash down the tantalizing treats.

The kitchen is clean, and organized. Each recipe is well displayed with exact instructions and all ingredients and measuring tools are handy. All produce is extremely fresh; the meat is prepared and kept on ice in individual baggies to prevent contamination. The herbs & spices are high quality and freshly chopped.

Guests are asked to bring their own coolers, but if they forget the staff kindly stores the food in the refrigerator until preparation is complete. The prepared food is kept in Ziploc baggies for freshness and to prevent spillage, then placed in containers, made from compostable and recyclable material, that are easy to store in a freezer without taking up too much space. Easy to follow instruction labels for home preparation are placed on the front of each box. Once the meals are home, it takes less than an hour to defrost and cook with the option of grill or oven instructions.

The meals are reasonably priced at under \$150 for all six meals.

The Peanut Glazed Chicken and the Peach Tomato Pork Chops are our favorite choices. It is good to know that all the meals are healthy and nutritious without a lot of extra fat, sodium and sugar.

The Organic Dish doesn't provide childcare but it's a great place to meet friends or spend time with your spouse while being productive.