

YOUR GUIDE TO

healthy MEAL PLANNING



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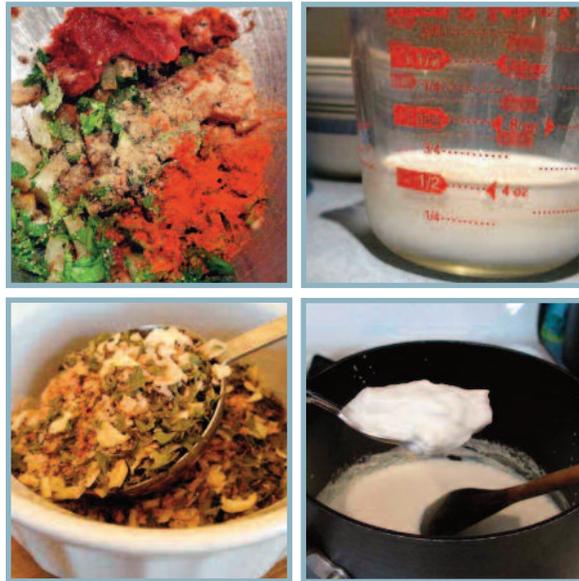
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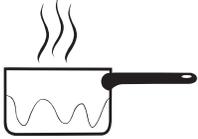


what is it

Healthy meal planning is essential for those who want to save time, money and improve nutrition, by having everything planned out ahead of time. When you go to the grocery store, you are not tempted to by items that are unhealthy or unnecessary if you stick to your meal plan grocery list. Also, you are more likely to include fresh produce when planning ahead. When it comes time for dinner, you know exactly what is on the menu and spend zero time fretting over what you will make. This also makes it easier to get dinner going much earlier in the day to scrap that “witching hour” when everyone is tired and hungry. In this guide you’ll find tips to make healthy meal planning easier on you and your family.



how to do it



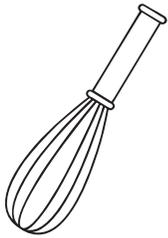
1. **Decide to do it every week.** Make the commitment to do this and involve those who eat with you by asking what they do and don't like to eat.
2. **Plan your meals according to your preference.** You can decide to plan meals for one week or one month as well as planning on freezer cooking or the "cook once, eat twice" strategy.
3. **Are you in a menu rut?** Ask your family to pitch in and choose meals. Get some colored postits or other paper and have them go through cookbooks and mark the recipes they would like to eat. Not only will you have a number of different meals to try out, you will also get a chance to let others choose the meals and get out of the same old menu rut.
4. **Make a shopping list.** Use the note tool on your phone to make a list so you can delete items as you go in the store. Also, I like to add items to the list in the order of where they are located in the store so I am less likely to forget things and have to go back around the store to pick them up, therefore being less likely to impulse buy.
5. **Shop when it's convenient.** You want to make sure you shop on a day when the store is not insanely busy. If you are rushing to get through a crowded supermarket, you may decide on meals while you are shopping and not stick to the meal plan, or skip some ingredients which would cause those planned meals to be deleted from the menu. Then you have to substitute which defeats the entire purpose of meal planning.
6. **Cook perishables first.** It's best to cook perishables early in the week and rely on frozen vegetables like peas, spinach, and corn when the fresh has been used up so you don't waste it.
7. **Ask for input.** When you make a meal, ask the family for their input. After a few weeks, you will be able to start a meal planning binder with tested and approved meals.

how to do it, continued



- 8. Spend an hour each week looking for new recipes.** Then once you have tried them, you can chuck it or add it to your meal planning binder.
- 9. Organize your meals and meal planning printouts.** As much as I like to conserve paper, I have a hard time storing meals on sites like Pinterest for meal planning. It's great for when you need ideas, but I always forget which meals were good and which ones were not in that sea of pins. It's much easier for me to keep a binder, even if it means printing on paper. Just make sure you are being as conservative as possible. For me that means printing on 100% recycled paper and using an energy star printer with eco-friendly soy ink.
- 10. Next, check the sales flyer for your grocery store.** Find out what is on sale and coordinate some meals according to that. If you found a great recipe that calls for asparagus and only green beans are on sale, use the beans.
- 11. Plan for leftovers at the end of the week.** We love to use leftovers for lunches rather than sandwiches with deli meat. If you end up with leftovers of the meals made with fresh produce then you can store the non-perishables for the next week.
- 12. One thing I do is prepare foods when I return from the store.** This is a huge time- and money-saving idea. Chop onions, cut ends off celery and store in bags. Shred cheese, tomatoes, carrots, etc. and store for quick meals.
- 13. Use your freezer.** When you prepare something basic, like boiling beans after soaking them overnight, prepare twice as much and store in the freezer. Buy meat that is on sale and after trimming and marinading, put the extra in the freezer.

The Basics



- Before starting, read the recipe all the way through. Then preheat the oven, if necessary.
- Make sure you have the ingredients and gear you need and get it all out.
- Before you start cooking, prep all the ingredients according to the recipe instructions. (This is called *mise en place*.)
- Keep a kitchen towel close at hand for wiping dirty hands and handling hot pans.
- Wipe down cutting boards as you go: Once you chop the parsley, give it a swipe, then start on the garlic.
- Work near a trash can or keep a “trash bowl” in the prep area to dispose of trimmings and peels.



Make Ahead



- Cook extra grains ahead of time.

Store portioned leftovers in the freezer for up to a month—you'll be ready when you need a healthy meal in a hurry.

Barley	1 cup grain : 3½ cups liquid : cook 50–60 min
Brown rice	1 cup grain : 2 cups liquid : cook 40–45 min
Bulgur	1 cup grain : 2½ cups liquid : cook 20–25 min
Millet	1 cup grain : 2½ cups liquid : cook 20–25 min
Quinoa	1 cup grain : 2 cups liquid : cook 15–20 min

- Cut veggies ahead of time.
- Make smoothie packs and put in containers for the week.
- Make spice mixes and label them for your favorite dishes - taco seasoning for crockpot chicken salsa, tacos and fajitas, etc.
- Cook chicken and hard-boiled eggs to have on hand.
- Make yogurt for smoothies, breakfast casseroles, put mason jar salads together, breakfast burritos, and assemble crockpot meals into containers.



week of January 21

“It’s not about having the time,
it’s about making the time.”

Monday
Dentist 10:00
grocery store
don't forget coupons!

Tuesday

Wednesday
Library 1:30

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

Sunday

Healthy Menu Planner

monday farro salad
tuesday tacos
wednesday chicken fajitas
thursday crockpot dish
friday pizza
sat/sun leftovers!!

Store Specials
Market Basket: Chicken 1.99/lb
 mangoes .79
Hannaford: Blueberries 2.50

Groceries
feta
red pepper
broccoli
spinach
beef
tomatoes
beans
chicken
flour
squash

