



*Meal Planning*

MADE EASY

# MEAL PLANNING MADE EASY: A GUIDE TO MEAL PREP

Ready to go all-in and learn everything you can about meal planning made easy?

It's been a long day at work. You finally get home only to find that there are only a few random ingredients stuffed in the pantry and the nagging question, "what's for dinner" on everyone's lips.

Instead of finding a meal at the last minute, running to the grocery store for the fifth time this week, or ordering out to make things easy, learning to meal plan can make your life easier and healthier! With a few simple steps and a little forethought, you can have simple, home-cooked meals ready even when you're running out of time.

Get ready to create a meal plan that gives you control and eradicates the question of "what's for dinner" without having to spend money or rely on eating out!

## WHAT IS MEAL PLANNING?

Meal planning and preparing are among the hottest topics going around on social media. Still, it seems like everyone has a slightly different definition. With all the different types of information, it can be hard to figure out the right way to get started!

Meal planning is simple: meal planning is deciding your meals in advance using a schedule, your preferences and allergies, groceries that you have on hand, and adhering to your diet plan. Most meal planning is focused on helping you grocery shop only once a week, saving you money and hassle.

As you become more advanced at meal planning and prepping, you may start planning more than a week ahead and prep for an entire month! Advanced meal planning might take more prep on your end and require more time



throughout the month but will pay off when you don't have to think about what to make for dinner for 30 whole days.

## Creating a Menu

The first step in meal planning, whether it's for a week or a month, is to determine what your menu will be. Plan for every meal on your menu to be cooked once and then eaten twice! When you're meal planning, extras and leftovers are your friends, so factor in some bigger meals to the menu plan.

With a week-long menu and meal plan, you'll want to factor in breakfast, lunch, and dinner every day, including the weekends. When you have meals planned and prepped, it's much easier to avoid going out even on your "cheat" days.

Spend time thinking through your menu options for lunches and dinners, and make sure they include veggies, proteins, and carbs to create a balanced meal. Choose lean meats that keep and check through your pantry to see what groceries you can use up without buying more.

Once you have your menu in place, it's time to grocery shop!

The key to a good meal plan is only having to grocery shop once for the week. Instead of stopping at the store every night or pausing your cooking to run to get one last item, shopping for the whole week gives you control over your time and budget.

Since this is the only time you'll be shopping for the whole week, make a day of it! Grab some coffee and create a plan to take advantage of all the sales across town.

As part of your menu, you'll want to create a budget! This can be a handy guide for the overall structure of your menu and can often be much cheaper than going out to eat or ordering takeout when you run out of time during the week.

Unlike the grocery runs of the past, this type of shopping requires some focus. Create a game plan to hit all the stores you need and be aware of sales/discounts that are happening in all your favourite places. Do this type of research before you head out to incorporate some of those sales into your menu planning!

The best time to plan out meals for the week is Friday. Sit down and invest some time in creating a menu, deciding how many meals you want to make for the week and your budget for the trip. Then on Sunday, commit the time to go shopping and stick to your plan as you go.

## Food Prep

You've got all your groceries, arrived back at home, and you're ready to start cooking! Where do you even start?

## Cook Times

Start before you even leave to get groceries by looking over how long things will take to cook! Some meats might take a few minutes to sear, while other food may take 20-30 minutes to finish.

Sunday or Saturday mornings are ideal to carve out space to ensure all the foods you have to prepare are completed with time to spare. When you're planning out which meals to have on which days, you want to keep this prep time in the back of your mind as well. Choose easy to finish meals for days when you have plans and more complicated meals on days when you have time to spare.

Freezer meals can also be a huge help when it comes to cooking times! With this type of meal prep, you can pull out an entire meal and put it in the oven or reheat it without the undue strain on your schedule.

## Batch your Ingredients

If you struggle to come up with the ingredients or meals at the last minute and facing the open pantry is more than a little daunting, putting all the ingredients together for each meal can save you time and energy!

Sort through your groceries when you get them home and put ingredients together that belong together. Put taco shells, seasoning, and canned toppings together in a bag or small box in your pantry, and gather together all of the refrigerated toppings in the same type of space or container in your fridge. Label them with the meal and any additional notes you have so it's easy to grab and put together when taco night rolls around.

## Cook What You Can

Some ingredients can be made up ahead of time and either frozen or left in the fridge for the week. Others have to be cut up fresh or made on the same night!

Take a look through your ingredient list and see what you can make up in advance. Make a large batch of rice, quinoa, ground turkey, or chicken that you can pull out of the freezer or simply have available to reheat with each meal. *(\*Always try to buy organic to eliminate toxic chemicals and add-ons to food.)*

If you're putting food into the freezer to pull out later, you can extend the life of your fresh foods! You might have gotten a deal on ground turkey because it was close to the sell-by date, but once you cook it up, season it, and stick it in the freezer, it lasts you much longer.

## Double the Batch

Many recipes only make enough for a few people. Instead of pushing aside those recipes for others that tend to make more food that can be reheated as tasty leftovers, simply double the recipe!

Having leftovers to eat from gives you healthy, home-cooked options for lunches and grab-and-go meals later on in the week. Small, healthy recipes can be doubled or tripled to ensure you have plenty to eat throughout the week.

If you're doubling or tripling batches of recipes, you can also opt to freeze the meals whole to pull out later on and reheat without having to do any prep work at all!

## Invest in Freezer Meals

In your meal planning journey, your freezer is your best friend!

Many of your favorite recipes can be cooked up on your day off, put into baggies or a dish, and then frozen for the week. This freezing preserves the flavor and freshness of the meal and makes it extremely easy to pull out and get cooking even after a long day at work!

Write down the ingredients and instructions on the containers used for freezer meals when you're in the process of prepping. This way, anyone in the family can pull out a healthy meal and stick it in the oven without your expert knowledge.

## No-Cook Options

Cooking and prepping your meal plan is an investment. Your ingredients and grocery shopping might take a significant period of time, your budget has to be highly researched, and you'll need to commit to some serious time on a Sunday afternoon to do all the prep work for the week.

If you're not quite ready to dive all in and do all that cooking and prep work, there's a solution: no-cook meal plans.

No-cook meal planning options have a lot of great benefits! You save yourself time and energy, never have to turn on the stove or oven in your kitchen and therefore keep it cooler, and you can still have plenty of healthy choices even without cooking!

## How to Do No-Cook Meal Prep

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There are several things you can do to help make the transition to no-cook meal prep a smooth one!

Even though you aren't cooking, you still need to do some steps before sitting down to put together all the meals for the week. Each step in a no-cook meal plan still stands: create the menu, plan a grocery trip, and put all the food together.

### Use Pre-Cooked Meat

Cooking meat takes quite a bit of time. Meat has to be temped to perfection, grilled, sauteed, baked, or boiled, and constantly watched so that it doesn't burn. Instead of investing the time in watching it cook, buy pre-cooked meats like grilled chicken!

Seafood like tuna and imitation crab is easy to get in cans or packets and simple to use. You can also opt for a fully cooked rotisserie chicken or pre-made packages or shredded pork or chicken to incorporate into recipes and your overall meal plan. Another option is to get sliced lunch meat (*\*nitrate-free*) from your local grocery store. The sodium and fat content can be higher in these types of meats, but some are better than others and make a great addition to wraps and sandwiches that you make throughout the week!

### Choose Pre-Cut Ingredients

Many no-cook meal options require cooked fruits or veggies, and even that can take a huge amount of time out of your day!

Luckily, many grocery chains and local stores offer pre-cut fruits and veggies at an affordable price. Don't be daunted or overwhelmed by the thought of chopping and cutting up all those veggies on your day off during meal prep. Choose some pre-cut ones that taste and work just as well in all your recipes!

## Invest in Reusable Containers

Plastic containers can warp and become damaged over time and even leak toxins into your system as they're reheated over and over again. For your meal preps, invest in some reusable glass containers that make it easy and fun to prepare for the week!

Glass containers are more expensive than plastic, so be prepared with your budget and your plan to sink some money into the endeavor. Once you have them, though, you're more easily able to prepare for the week and keep things running smoothly as you hustle from place to place.

Having a product you like working with can be its own kind of fun as well! Getting out your containers for meal prep each week is a ritual that you may come to enjoy!

# EASY TO MAKE MEAL PREPS

Everyone is different with varying tastes and styles when it comes to meal prep, but there are a few options for meals that anyone can adjust and take on for themselves!

## Cooked Options

Whether you're cooking for a whole family or just for yourself, some of the best meal prep meals harken back to your childhood! You can adjust and tweak each recipe to fit your lifestyle and your tastes, but they make plenty for leftovers and can be easily frozen to pull out later.

- Lasagna (zucchini noodles)
- Sweet potato casserole
- Chicken fajitas
- Taco bowls
- Chicken stir-fry



Expand and grow your rotation of cooked option meals as you go! You may bend up experimenting and find that some ingredients and preps work better as whole freezer meals and others just need to be organized into containers and assembled on-site. Don't be afraid to practice and try new things!

## No-Cook Options

There are a lot of no-cook options that make it simple to prepare and simpler to serve! These are great choices if you struggle to find something that you can pack in a work lunch each day.

### Breakfast

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You likely won't find yourself getting up hours in advance to make protein pancakes, bacon, and eggs for you and your family each day, but these simple breakfast items are no-cook and last long in your fridge or can be prepared beforehand and easily assembled! If you struggle to get going in the morning but want to make sure you get in your breakfast, this is a great choice.

- Smoothies
- Yogurt parfait
- Overnight oats

### Lunch and Dinner

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Whether you're trying to pack a lunch to take into the office or just want to keep from spending your entire lunch break cooking up a storm, meal prepping lunch and dinner options without cooking save you a ton of time. These can all be done in advance and then kept in the fridge or freezer for easy access!

Salads-make up in jars to keep fresh

- Wraps
- Cold soup
- Stuffed veggies

Coming home from a long day of work to then be faced with the never-ending question of what's for dinner can get old fast. You end up making endless trips to the grocery store for one or two ingredients and wasting your time, energy, and money just to do it all again tomorrow.

That feeling of helplessness or being stuck in a repetitive cycle can be managed by simply engaging in some serious meal prep work for the week!

Start by creating a menu that includes the number of meals you're making each week and when you want to have them. This menu should also include a detailed budget, recipes, and other options in case the store is out of key ingredients, or you need to re-think a plan for the week.

Each meal doesn't have to be a freezer meal but incorporates both freezer meals and well-organized options into the plan. Batch your ingredients together in containers in your fridge and pantry to make it simple to get out and put together when the time is right.

As you become more advanced with our meal prep, you might expand your vision from prepping for a week to prepping for the entire month! Including both cooked and non-cooked options on your menu list, you give yourself some variety and open up a whole new world of choices!

There's no time like the present to get your meal plan underway and give your kitchen a new purpose!

Want to learn more about how to eat healthily and feel amazing with support from a health coach who cares (ahem, me)? Click [here](#) to book a free health discovery session.