

Meal Planning Basics

Getting Started

- Use weekly grocery ads for inspiration and to take advantage of sales. Flip through your cookbook collection or invest in some new ones. Browse online recipe collections.
- Focus on recipes that feature quick and healthful recipes that use easy-to-find ingredients.
- It doesn't take any more time or effort to make more of most recipes. Consider doubling the amount you make, so that leftovers can stretch for a day or two or you can freeze some for later.
- The right techniques and equipment are also important. Take advantage of one pot and crock pot meals and recipes that use the microwave or stovetop instead of the oven. Foil packet meals are also a fun and easy way to cook. If possible, invest in equipment such as a pressure cooker, rice cooker, or countertop grill.
- Do not choose your weekly recipes in a vacuum. Consider what is on your schedule and take that into consideration when meal planning. When you have evening obligations, choose recipes that can be pre-prepped, made in a slow cooker, or plan to have leftovers on those days.
- If applicable, allow family members to have a say in the process. This promotes support for your efforts, as well as buy-in for the meals themselves.

Making it Happen

- Create a shopping list based on your recipes. Consider keeping a "staple" list of items you always need to keep around, as well as a list of the "special" items you need each week to complete your selected recipes.
- Look in your refrigerator and pantry to take stock of what items you need.
- As you plan, consider what ingredients can be modified in a recipe to cut down on time (i.e. minced garlic in a jar, frozen diced onion, canned tomatoes, etc.)
- Go to the store with your list and stick to it!
- When you come home, pay attention to how you store your food. If you need chicken for a recipe tomorrow, do not freeze it. If you bought frozen chicken and need it in a couple days, put it in the fridge to thaw.
- Review your recipes and determine what steps you can take to prep your recipes ahead of time. Examples include chopping vegetables, assembling casseroles, mixing ingredients for marinades or sauces, measuring spices, cutting chicken, cooking rice or pasta, etc. Decide when you can do those steps, such as at the start of the week or the night before.

Quick and Healthy Recipe Resources

<http://www.cookinglight.com/food/quick-healthy>

http://www.eatingwell.com/recipes_menus/collections/quick_healthy_dinner_recipes

<http://www.foodnetwork.com/healthy/packages/healthy-every-week/quick-and-simple.html>

<http://www.realsimple.com/food-recipes>

<http://www.leannebrown.com/>

<http://www.theleangreenbean.com/>