

MEAL PLANNING

1. Make a list of foods your family likes to eat for dinner: If planning for a week you will need 5-7 meals. (Ex: pizza, tacos, casserole, hamburgers, sandwiches, baked chicken, tilapia filets, soup, baked potatoes, breakfast for dinner, etc)

2. Take an inventory of your kitchen: What needs to be used up before it goes bad? What do you have too much of and want to get rid of? What is on sale or in season at this time.? This will help generate your list and prevent over buying.

3. Search for healthy recipe online or modify your family's favorites to make them more nutritious. Standard pizza can be amped up with whole wheat crust and extra veggies. Burgers can be boosted by choosing a black bean or turkey patty. Challenge yourself to try 1 new healthy recipe each week.

4. Narrow down your list: Consider what recipes call for similar ingredients or thing of multiple ways you could prepare one main protein type. For example: Have black bean burrito bowls one night and then use left over beans for black bean burgers the next.



5. Write out your menu: Plan out the meals with your family's schedule in mind. Pick quick dinners for night you know you will be short on time and save more challenging recipes for the weekend. Don't forget to include a night for eating leftovers or to add a day for eating out.

6. Consider the My Plate method : be sure each meal includes protein, carbohydrates, and some kind of fruit or vegetable. Try to get as many food groups possible at every meal. Make sure to include healthy sides of fruits or vegetables as well.

7. Make a list of everything you will need for each recipe to make your meals. Having a grocery list based on the meals your planned will save you money and help keep you on track at the store.



MEAL PREPARATION

1. Pick a time when you can block off enough time for meal preparation. Usually a Saturday or Sunday afternoon works well.

2. Make your meal plan and purchase all of the ingredients you will need in advance. This will make meal prepping go much smoother. Consider how much freezer space you have when choosing to prep more than a week in advance. Don't forget other meal prep supplies such as plastic containers, freezer bags, permanent marker (for labeling), measuring cups/spoons, etc



3. Cook foods in large batches with no seasoning or mild seasoning so they can be used in multiple dishes. *Tip: Slightly undercook your starches and vegetables so that they don't get mushy when reheated.*

- Bake an entire sheet pan of chicken breast or other protein
- Cook a big pot of brown rice, whole wheat pasta, or quinoa
- Roast, steam, or sauté your favorite vegetables

4. Food Safety: Be sure to wash hands before you begin and each time you change tasks while cooking. Use different cutting boards for meat and produce as well as for raw and cooked foods to reduce the risk of food borne illness

5. Choose two or three seasoning themes and divide your food into groups to be seasoned separately. For example: one third of your chicken could be seasoned with taco seasoning, one third placed in a gallon sized bag with orange sauce, and the last third could be drizzled with olive oil and topped with Italian seasoning



6. Portion food into family meals for dinners or individual servings for lunches

7. Label each bag or plastic container with what it contains, when it was made, and how to reheat it. If prepared properly most foods can be stored: In the fridge up to 1 week, in an upright freezer up to 1 month, in a deep freeze up to 3 months