



MEAL PLANNING BASICS

Nutrition is a vital component of your overall wellbeing. However, healthy eating can require time and effort. This meal planning guide is intended to help make planning and cooking a simple and delicious process.

Tips to Get Started

Start with the level of prep that works best for you. Prepping 4-5 meals in advance may be desirable and doable. However, if time and energy are limited, a great way to start is by preparing a bulk amount of ingredients rather than an entire meal.

- Batch cook a versatile ingredient like rice to use as a side dish or main ingredient for an entrée
- Chop vegetables or fruit in advance to pair with meals or snacks
- Thaw frozen meat and poultry in advance

- Bake or grill a few chicken breasts at a time and use them in different ways
- Double a recipe to provide leftover meals for lunch or dinner

Shop at home to see what ingredients you have that can be utilized in meals for the week.

- Low sodium canned produce like beans and chickpeas can be a great base for a soup, salad or crockpot meal

- Frozen veggies can easily be steamed, allowing you to have a side in minutes
- Leftover protein or grains? Use them up by making a grain bowl with your protein and vegetable of choice.

Set aside time to plan ahead. Whether you think about what to make for dinner as you drink your coffee in the morning or regularly carve out time to plan your meals for the week ahead, the key is to allow yourself time to think and plan ahead.

Steps

1. Choose an ingredient from each of the four food groups below (please note this is not a comprehensive list and you can choose more than one vegetable or fruit).

Protein

- Skinless chicken breast
- Salmon
- Shrimp
- Whitefish
- Scallops
- Tuna
- Lean ground turkey
- Beans
- Lentils
- Tofu
- Eggs
- Greek yogurt

Complex carb

- Quinoa
- Brown rice
- Sweet potatoes
- Red potatoes
- Spaghetti squash
- Butternut squash
- Pumpkin
- Corn
- Chickpeas
- Green peas
- Oats
- Whole grain bread

Fruit and/or vegetable

- Berries
- Apples
- Pears
- Cherries
- Mango
- Pineapple
- Melon
- Grapes
- Kiwi
- Grapefruit
- Broccoli
- Bok choy
- Cabbage
- Mushroom

Healthy fat

- Olive oil
- Avocado oil
- Canola oil
- Raw avocado
- Chopped nuts (walnuts, almonds, pistachios, etc.)
- Chia, hemp, pumpkin, sunflower or flaxseeds

- Leafy greens (romaine, kale, spinach, iceberg lettuce)
- Eggplant
- Tomatoes
- Olives
- Zucchini
- Bell peppers
- Cauliflower
- Okra
- Carrots
- Asparagus
- Green beans

2. Portion your servings.

Follow the plate method at meals

- Aim to have half of your plate filled with fruit and non-starchy vegetables, ¼ to be complex carbs, ¼ to be lean protein, with 1 serving of healthy fats

3. Choose your flavor profile.

Italian

- Basil, oregano, rosemary, thyme

Indian

- Cumin, curry powder, cardamom, ginger, garam masala, turmeric, black pepper

Mexican

- Cilantro, cumin, chipotle, coriander, cayenne pepper, lime

French

- Tarragon, thyme, rosemary, black pepper, lemon

Caribbean

- Allspice, nutmeg, cinnamon, clove, lime, pickled mango

Spanish

- Paprika, parsley, bay leaf, saffron, cayenne pepper

Japanese

- Miso, yuzu, ginger, garlic, sesame, red pepper, soy

Thai

- Thai basil, lime, lemongrass, ginger, green onion

Greek

- Oregano, basil, dill, parsley, thyme

4. Cook the food.

Choose a cooking method- steam, boil, sauté, grill, bake or roast

- Make sure to research proper time and temperature for your proteins to ensure food safety
- A tip is to add fresh garlic and/or onion to your vegetables or protein to add depth and flavor
- Add fresh or dried herbs and spices
- Garnish with chopped nuts or seeds, fresh lemon juice, a few slices of avocado or fresh herbs

5. Plate it and enjoy!

Store leftovers in the fridge and use them in another meal to prevent waste.



Example Meals

Breakfast:

- Caribbean inspired: smoothie with plain yogurt + frozen mango + pineapple + lime juice + flaxseed garnish
- Oatmeal + blueberries + bananas + chopped walnuts + cinnamon

Lunch:

- Greek style: chicken with Greek seasoning + roasted red potatoes & carrots + olive oil drizzle
- Tex-Mex bowl with brown rice + black beans + onions + bell pepper + cilantro + guacamole

Dinner:

- Japanese style: salmon with ginger & soy marinade + sautéed broccoli & mushrooms + sweet potato + toasted sesame garnish
- Thai style: shrimp + bok choy + brown rice + chopped peanuts + ginger + Thai basil + fresh lime juice