

10 EASY TIPS FOR MEAL PLANNING



40% of food in the U.S. is never eaten. Meal planning helps reduce wasted food and also saves time, stress, and money. Even better, it usually leads to healthier eating.

1. DON'T START FROM SCRATCH

Meal planning doesn't have to mean hours spent with a cookbook. Start with your go-to meals. Repeat them every week or two. Then try something new.

2. CHECK THE REFRIGERATOR

Next week's meals get their start in the fridge. See what needs to be used up and then think of a meal to make with those items. Check your pantry for the rest of the ingredients and add missing pieces to the shopping list.

3. USE PORTION PLANNERS

Portion calculators can help you feed a big group, but they can offer insight into daily cooking too.

4. HAVE KITCHEN ESSENTIALS HANDY

Having two or three grains, cooking fundamentals, key spices, and "hero" sauces like barbecue and peanut sauce can use up odds and ends in the fridge and bring new life to old meals.

5. USE BUILDING BLOCKS

Pick two types of protein, one or two grains, and a veggie medley to make at the beginning of the week and then incorporate into different meals. A sauté of broccoli and peppers can be used as a side one night, spooned onto enchiladas another night, and worked into a soup or meatloaf later in the week.

6. THINK DOUBLE DUTY

Planning a Tuesday taco night? Think about other ways to use the extra tortillas. Ingredients sometimes come in larger portions than we need. If you plan a second meal around them, it's easier to avoid overload.

7. SCHEDULE A LAZY NIGHT

The truth is we don't always have the time or energy to cook every night. Plan a few lazy nights that don't require cooking and take the opportunity to order takeout or dine with friends.

8. GO FRESH FIRST

To preserve freshness and nutrition, use perishables like seafood and meat earlier in the week and save pasta, dairy, and omelets for later in the week. Some greens like kale, will stay fresh longer than others.

9. LEAN ON FROZEN INGREDIENTS

Frozen foods have nearly all of the nutrients (and sometimes more) as their fresh counterparts. And they don't go bad.

10. COOK AND FREEZE

Soups, stews, casseroles, and lasagnas can all be made in large batches and then frozen and defrosted when you need a quick dinner. To keep it easy, freeze the portion sizes you'll want to defrost.

For more tips, visit [SaveTheFood.com](https://www.savethefood.com).

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