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# Meal Plan LIKE A PRO!

TIPS TO IMPROVE FAMILY NUTRITION  
& DECREASE STRESS



# WHAT'S FOR *Dinner?*

It's a dreaded question for many. Busy people text each other at the end of a long day, only to be met with "I don't know, what do you want?" So much uncertainty and frustration, but it doesn't have to be that way!

This *Meal Plan Like a Pro* resource can resolve those annoying, last minute questions and the irritation it causes.

Most can relate to the above scenario – when we are without a dinner plan it creates stress and take-out becomes much more alluring. As a registered dietitian and proponent of meal planning, I like to say that healthy eating does not happen by accident.

We have to learn to prioritize nutrition and plan to set ourselves up for success. The good news is that developing the ability to expertly meal plan CAN be done. Let's explore the benefits of meal planning together and build your skills with guides and templates.

## ***Andrea D'Ambrosio***

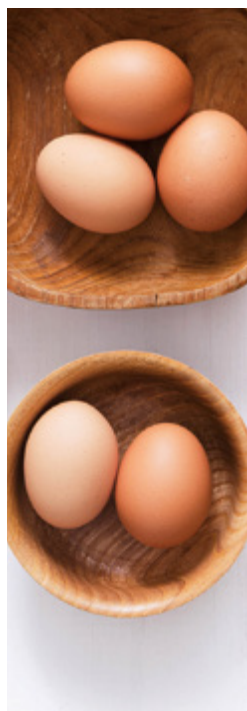
is a Registered Dietitian and owner of Dietetic Directions, a nutrition counselling and communications company. With an enthusiastic, practical approach, she knows that a sustainable healthy lifestyle must be realistic and delicious. Andrea shares science-based information mixed with easy-to-implement strategies.



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# WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN **MEAL PLANS** AND **MEAL PLANNING**?

**Meal Plans:** Usually fixed templates stipulating what to eat. Meal plans involve repetition of suggestions that don't typically take into account schedules or foods on-hand, nor are they individualized to meet your preferences or nutrition needs. The challenge of meal plans is people often grow tired of eating the same foods with little to no choice.

**Meal Planning:** The action of deciding meals in advance using your schedule, preferences, foods on-hand, seasonal produce and sale items as a guide. Meal planning leads to grocery shopping once a week for only the items needed and having others, such as family members, involved in creating the menu. If you know how to meal plan, you decide what to eat!

## IS *Meal Planning* FOR YOU?

Do  
You:

- ☐ Feel overwhelmed by the “what to make for dinner” question?
- ☐ Feel unprepared (with available groceries) to make dinner at home?
- ☐ Resort to take-out more than you'd like?
- ☐ Resent money spent eating out when cooking at home is cheaper?
- ☐ Believe your diet could be healthier if you cooked more?
- ☐ Make several trips to the grocery store in a week?

If you answered **YES** to **ANY** of the above, meal planning would benefit **YOU**!



**Meal Prep:** Preparing meals or components of meals in advance to speed up meal assembly. This guide will help you meal prep specific components (i.e. barbecuing meat, hard-cooking eggs, cooking grains ahead) to make meals faster to assemble. Your future self will always thank you for meal prepping!



**Meal planning** is a skill that takes practice. Don't feel frustrated if it feels difficult at first.

# TOP 5 BENEFITS OF MEAL PLANNING

## 1 Saves Time!

Cook twice as much in less than twice the time. Having foods on hand saves grocery trips and can be faster than take-out.

## 2 Spend Less \$\$

Cooking at home simply costs less than eating out. Discover tips on how to save when buying groceries.

## 3 Improved Nutrition

Planning and home cooking equates to healthier meals with more veggies and reduced amounts of sodium, saturated fat and total calories. If weight loss is an objective, cooking your own meals is a powerful tool to decrease caloric intake.

## 4 Less Stress!

Preparing and planning foods in advance cuts down on later stress and decision making. Decision fatigue is a real thing! Having foods ready (or meals decided) can significantly improve the mental clutter of last-minute dinner decisions.

## 5 It Gets Easier

The process of meal planning is a skill that we can build upon. We tend to increase variety of food choices when we become more comfortable with planning ahead and spending time in the kitchen.

# 3 DIETITIAN TIPS TO *expertly* MEAL PLAN!

## 1. DESIGNATE A “PLANNING TIME”

Consistency is key in forming any habit. Meal planning involves giving yourself **time to plan!** Start slowly by setting aside 20 to 30 minutes on a Sunday (or whatever day works for your schedule) to think about the week ahead. Look at your schedule and brainstorm foods you would like to eat and the amount of time you have in the week to cook.

Reviewing your schedule allows you to work around time commitments such as kids’ activities, work schedule and social events. When using a meal planning template and noting your weekly schedule, it becomes easier to plan and harder to make excuses!

You decide in advance if you want to plan a re-heated meal or maybe cook a quick 15-minute meal.



### *Dietitian Tip:*

Involve your family in meal planning and brainstorming. Flexing this meal planning muscle makes it easier for you with less chance of picky eaters complaining about dinner. To help with dinner decisions, try giving options to family members. For example, “Would you like chicken tacos on Tuesday or black bean quesadillas?”





## 2. TAKE A FOOD INVENTORY = MEAL IDEAS

Taking stock of perishable food items on-hand is a crucial step in making a realistic and sustainable meal plan. The purpose of taking a grocery inventory is to use up existing groceries first so you only buy what you need.

For example - if you have spinach, cherry tomatoes, mushrooms and eggs in your fridge, plan a meal in your week to use these ingredients like a spinach quiche or stir-fry with veggies and scrambled eggs.



## 3. PROGRESS, NOT PERFECTION

For beginners, the act of meal planning is more important than the level of skill in your meals. Coming up with a plan saves time, decreases eating out, increases healthy eating and saves money. Creating a very simple meal plan and trying your best to follow through with it is more important than striving for advanced culinary creations, which may be unrealistic with busy weeknight schedules. Keep it simple!



**Start small!**

Habit change is like going up a ladder.



Start at the first rung and avoid skipping rungs to get to the top.



Making a lifestyle change means setting your ego aside and not comparing yourself to others!

# HOW TO *Nutritionally* BALANCE MEALS

Before we get into the fundamentals of how to meal plan, let's go over the basics to help you choose nutritionally balanced meals. This allows us to meet our nutrition needs and have energy to be physically active while supporting our body cells and brain function. Balanced eating helps prevent restriction and the cravings that inevitably follow.

In 2019, Canada's Food Guide was released. Health Canada issued the guide after lengthy discussions with dietitians and the general public using evidence-based research to support its modern recommendations.

We now have a nutritionally balanced plate to guide flexibility and variety in our meals.

Canada's Food Guide is a basic education tool designed to help people follow a healthy diet and is by no means a "one size fits all" nor a descriptive analysis of what or how much to eat. Seek a Registered Dietitian for individualized recommendations and counselling to facilitate behavior change.

## CANADA'S FOOD GUIDE



## THE FOOD GUIDE

Half the plate consists of fruits and vegetables, which provide disease-fighting antioxidants and filling fibre, a quarter is for protein (like eggs!) which help repair and rebuild muscles and grow and maintain red blood cells. The remaining quarter is for whole grains like rice, pasta and bread which support energy for brains and muscles.



# 15 NUTRITIONALLY BALANCED PLATES

## BREAKFAST

**Oatmeal** with berries, pumpkin seeds, chia seeds and milk



**Scrambled eggs and arugula on toast** with fresh berries

**Yogurt parfait** with high-fibre cereal and fresh banana slices

**Omelette** with mushroom, spinach, tomato and cheese, whole grain toast and fruit

**French toast** with strawberries, banana and maple syrup

## LUNCH

**Cold quinoa salad** with beans and vegetables



**Bowl or wrap** with brown rice, black beans, chicken and vegetables

**Egg salad on pita rounds** with veggie sticks and fruit

**Cobb Salad** with spinach, egg, tomatoes, cucumber, black beans, and ranch dressing

**Picnic lunch** with crackers, hummus, hard-cooked egg, fruit and veggies

## DINNER

**Pasta or chili** with meat or lentil sauce with vegetables and a side salad



**Shakshuka** with tomato, spinach, feta cheese, egg and crusty bread

**Stir-fry** with veggies, chicken (or other protein) on brown rice

**Naan pizza** with bbq chicken, roasted veggies, cheddar cheese and topped with an egg

**Crepes** with sliced ham, asparagus and Swiss cheese with a side of fruit

# HOW TO USE THIS

# *Meal Planner*

It all starts with your meal planning template, which is located in the templates section at the back of this resource and an example is also below.

The sections are numbered so you know what to do first and how! Remember you don't need to be perfect and weeks may not always go as planned.

But that's okay – we can practice “flexible meal planning” where you do the best you can. Getting into the practice of being prepared, prioritizing nutrition and having a system or plan alleviates stress and sets us up for success in eating well.

**MEAL PLAN FOR THE WEEK OF** \_\_\_\_\_

**1 Foods to use up:** SPINACH, TOMATOES, EGGS, CHEESE, PEPPERS, ONIONS

**5 Meals to Make:** FRENCH ONION SOUP, SAUSAGE, FROZEN TURKEY

	LUNCH	DINNER	NOTES
MON	FLAVOUR BUTTER BANANA BRISCELAS WITH ROASTED AND VEGGIES	SPINACH, TOMATO, BACON-BURRITO + CHEESE, ONION	THINK: EGG NIGHT
TUES	BURRITO LEFTOVERS	BEET AND LENTIL SALAD	CUT INGREDIENTS AND SHARE CHEESE IN ADVANCE *MAKE LEFTOVERS
WED	EGG LEFTOVERS IN BUNNY BOWL	GRILLED CHEESE AND SOUP FREEZER	*PLANNED TIME TO COOK, REHEAT SOUP
THUR	CHARCUTERE LUNCH - EGG, MEAT, CHEESE, COUSCOUS, HUMMUS, FRUIT AND VEGGIES	BUILD YOUR OWN OMELETTE WITH TURKEY AND SALAD	HOME AT 6 PM TO START DINNER
FRI	LUNCH WRAPS, TUNA & CARROTS	PEACH BAKED - MEATBALLS, ROAST VEGGIES	*MAKE EXTRAS FOR LEFTOVERS
SAT	SAVING PIZZAS	BAKE SALMON, BEEF & VEGGIES	
SUN	PEACH LEFTOVERS	EGG-KEV WITH VEGGIES, EGG & SAUSAGE/CHICKEN	*MAKE EXTRAS FOR LEFTOVERS

PRODUCE	MEAT/SEAFOOD/CHEESE/BAKERY	GROCERY (FRIDGE/FREEZER)	GROCERY (DRY)
BANANAS CARROTS CELERY SPINACH STRAWBERRIES GRAPES POTATOES	MICROWAVE CHEESE BACON BEEF	ROAST BACON SHELLS EGGS HUMMUS MEATBALLS SALMON	ORTHELLAS 1/2 WHOLE WHEAT CANNED LENTILS CRACKERS TUNA TOMATO SAUCE FOR CANNED TOMATOES TO MAKE SAUCE BAKED BREAD

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**FREE DOWNLOAD**

Visit [getcracking.ca/mealplan](https://getcracking.ca/mealplan) for a printable meal planner

View our full  
**MEAL PLANNING**  
*Template*  
on page 29

# MEAL PLANNER

## Walk Through

### 1 Foods to use up

Determine what you have on-hand that will go bad if not used up. Fresh produce gets listed in this category as well as leftovers. Decide to use these items first in your meal plan before they spoil.

### 2 Notes and schedule section

This is where you reference your schedule such as activities, work commitments and any social plans. On days that are busier, plan something to re-heat or on days where you have more time, like Sunday, you could put a note for “batch cook.” Remember, be realistic!

### 3 Decide your meals

It's time to get creative! Using the sections already filled in, like your schedule and foods to use up, design your meals. Use grocery flyers, themes, cookbooks and Pinterest for inspiration.

### 4 Create a grocery list

Now that you are coming up with meals, add the needed ingredients to the grocery list on the bottom of the template, which is divided by section of the grocery store for easy shopping. Making a list ensures you have all the ingredients you need for one-stop shopping.

### 5 Meals to make

During the week you may find yourself inspired by meal ideas such as a video you see online or in a magazine. Keep track of these ideas for filling in your meal planner for next week.





# TIPS FOR *Successful* MEAL PLANNING



When we know what's on-hand and it's at the top of our meal plan, this food is less likely to go bad – remember “F.I.F.O” (first in, first out) when planning!



Using up ingredients in your fridge reduces food waste, saves money and inspires your meals.



Remember to start easy and choose meals you feel comfortable cooking. You can always add to the level of difficulty as you go along.



To build confidence in cooking – try taking a cooking class! These are offered at grocery stores, community centres and online for adults and kids.



When planning dinners, make extra for lunches or to freeze for those busy nights. Put a x2 or x4 beside a meal to remember how many extra portions to make.



Make a list! Did you know research shows shopping from a grocery list leads to less impulsive purchases and saves money? It's true - try it!

*Don't skip the yolk!*



## *Dietitian Tip:*

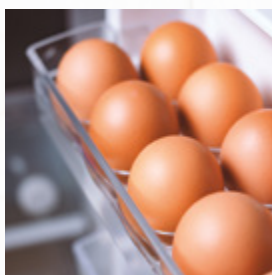
The yolk contains half the protein and most of the nutrition. In fact, yolks provide choline - a nutrient that's essential for brain and heart health. Pregnant and breastfeeding mothers need choline in their diets to support the infant's brain development. Yolks also contain antioxidants like lutein and zeaxanthin, which are forms of Vitamin A that reduce the risk of macular degeneration that can lead to blindness.

# HOW TO *Stock* YOUR KITCHEN

## LIKE A DIETITIAN

### Top Pantry Staples, Fridge and Freezer Foods

Having a well-stocked kitchen helps busy people whip together meals without a trip to the grocery store. This leads to less stress and enjoying more home-cooked meals. When you always have certain items available, making simple meals is easy. Bread in the freezer and eggs in the fridge make a quick 10-minute fried egg sandwich. Now that's faster than take-out!



#### Stock Your Fridge:

- ✓ Low fat milk or alternative
- ✓ Eggs (fresh in the carton and also pre-made, hard-cooked eggs)
- ✓ Vegetables and salad greens
- ✓ Chopped fresh fruit, lemons and limes
- ✓ Cheese
- ✓ Garlic and fresh ginger
- ✓ Hummus or bean dip
- ✓ Sparkling water



#### Stock Your Pantry:

- ✓ Whole grain crackers, pasta, oats, quinoa, rice
- ✓ Peanut butter or alternative nut butter
- ✓ Oil (ie., olive, canola, avocado oil), vinaigrette (balsamic, red wine, rice wine)



#### Stock Your Freezer:

- ✓ Whole grain bread, English muffins, wraps/tortillas, naan bread/pitas (stays fresh longer if frozen)
- ✓ Frozen fruit and veggies



Download our printable  
**GROCERY CHECKLIST**  
at [getcracking.ca/mealplan](http://getcracking.ca/mealplan)

# TOP 10 15-MINUTE MEALS FROM KITCHEN BASICS

Now that you have a well-stocked kitchen, you're ready to put easy, nutritionally balanced meals on the table while saving time and money! Use our top ten 15-minute meals using kitchen basics for some inspiration.



## 1

### NAAN BREAD WITH VEGGIES

- BBQ chicken pizza
- Mushroom, pepper & tomato basil pizza
- Pesto chicken with spinach
- "Fridge-cleaner" - top your pizza with ingredients in your fridge - like an egg!

## 2

### FRIED EGG

- Fried egg on English muffin with cheese
- Egg & cheese wrap
- Egg and ketchup on toast



## 3

### LENTIL OR BEAN SALAD

- Greek lentil salad
- Mixed bean salad
- Quinoa salad with protein (shrimp/chicken/tofu) and veggies
- Potato salad with eggs



## 4

### PICNIC MEAL OR BENTO BOX

- Bento box with crackers, hummus, hard-cooked egg, veggies and fruit



5

## EGG BUDDHA BOWL OR COBB SALAD

- Cobb salad with blue cheese, egg, tomato, cucumber, quinoa and black beans
- Fridge-cleaner Buddha bowl

6

## SMOOTHIE BOWL OR YOGURT PARFAIT

- Yogurt, fruit and granola parfait
- Chia seed pudding with fruit
- Greek yogurt and homemade muffin
- Strawberry-banana smoothie

7

## QUESADILLA WITH VEGGIES

- Black bean and chicken
- Peanut butter and cinnamon with sunflower seeds
- Breakfast quesadilla with egg, ham and cheese

8

## FRIDGE-CLEAN GNOCCHI OR QUICK COOKING PASTA

- Pesto and green pea gnocchi
- Carbonara pasta
- Shrimp and couscous pasta with parsley
- Fridge-cleaner gnocchi with tomato and cream sauce

9

## WRAPS OR SANDWICHES

- Tuna salad wrap
- Curried egg salad on pita
- Black bean wraps with eggs, veggies and feta

10

## FRENCH TOAST

- With cinnamon and berries
- Stuffed with brie, mushroom & caramelized onions
- Topped with bananas and peanut butter



THINK

*Outside*

THE CARTON

- Poached eggs on avocado toast
- Devilled eggs
- Quiche
- Mini egg bites
- Omelette
- Scrambled eggs on toast
- Frittata with veggies
- Egg drop soup
- Egg fried rice
- Homemade mayonnaise
- Egg Foo Yung
- Breakfast burrito
- Skillet with fried egg
- Crepes
- Shakshuka
- Custard
- Eggs benedict
- Spaghetti carbonara

**What's your favourite?**

View our

*tasty*

**EGG RECIPES**

at [getcracking.ca/recipes](http://getcracking.ca/recipes)

## NEED MORE MEAL INSPIRATION?

Let's *Get Cracking* with ideas for enjoying eggs that go beyond fried or scrambled for breakfast. Be sure to include **#EggsYourWay** on social media to let us know your favourite ways to enjoy eggs and don't forget to tag us!





# SETTING YOURSELF UP FOR *cooking success* THROUGH MEAL PREP



## WHAT IS MEAL PREP?

Have you ever noticed how a little time spent can reap BIG benefits later? Meal preparation (or 'meal prep') is the action of preparing foods or components of meals in advance. This includes things such as cutting vegetables, cooking rice and preparing proteins in advance. This way, you can enjoy a quick meal without much preparation.

**Just remember these simple concepts to make your meal prep a success:**

**Be specific** – determine a time when you will do meal prep, such as after grocery shopping or Sunday mornings after breakfast. Set this time aside and make it a recurring event.

**Start small** – you might decide to dedicate 20-30 minutes on a determined day, or maybe even less if you are short on time. Gradually add time to your meal prep sessions as you get used to doing them.

**Consistency is key!** If you do just a little bit every week, you're still getting ahead!







## THE TIMER *challenge!*

Have you ever tried using a timer when cooking? I came up with this to make mundane tasks more exciting. When I don't look forward to doing something (like unloading the dishwasher) I set a timer for the amount of time I would like to finish the task. Now you have a race against the timer and it's amazing to see how much or how little time tasks really take. With the 15-minute meal suggestions in this resource, you can do the same. Set a timer for 15 minutes and go!

# 3 SIMPLE STEPS TO *basic* MEAL PREP

## 1 Vegetable Prep

You have probably heard of veggie prep on Instagram or Pinterest and seen containers of freshly chopped produce. It's a trendy way to make healthy meals and increase your vegetable intake.

- Place pre-cut vegetables in clear glass containers in the fridge, where they will last for 4 to 10 days. Place at eye-level so you will remember to use them!
- Portion vegetables into lunch-sized containers for making lunches a breeze to pack.
- Pre-cut and freeze onions so they are always ready to throw into cooking.
- Roast a tray of vegetables in the oven and later add to soups, sauces, pizza and fajitas.
- Try doing the timer challenge!

*Remember* the time you spend on meal prep will help with quicker meals, less stress, a healthier diet and more money in your pocket.

## 2 Protein prep

We know our bodies need protein for slowing the release of blood sugar and to help our muscles. To help us include protein in all our meals, prepare your proteins ahead of time:

- **Hard-cooked eggs** – eggs will last in the fridge (in their shell) for 7 days. Keeping them ready in the fridge means they are easy to grab as a snack or to toss on a salad or wrap.
- **Rotisserie chicken** – if you don't have the time to make your own, buy one! These often go half price at some grocery stores in the evening and you can pick it apart and store it in containers or bags. Great for a quick sandwich or salad topping or to add to soups, stews and pasta.
- **Ready-to-eat beans** – canned black beans, lentils and chickpeas can be quickly opened and rinsed to add to meals.
- **Cheese** – grate cheese and place in a container in the fridge for easy to make quesadillas, tuna melts, pizza or as a salad topper.
- **Pre-cook protein** - ground beef, turkey, sausage or lentils and store in the fridge.

## 3 Carbohydrate prep

For a balanced plate, we need carbohydrates. Choose wholesome, whole grain options (at least half the time) that provide fibre, vitamins and minerals.

- Choose one or two carbohydrates (such as brown rice, quinoa, bulgur or couscous) in advance and cook a batch. Allow to cool and set aside in the fridge. These can be used for bowls, cold salads or fried rice.



### Tips on How to Hard-Cook Eggs

1. Place the eggs in a single layer on the bottom of the pot and cover with cold water, an inch higher than the eggs. Cover and bring to a boil over medium-high heat.
2. Once water boils, remove the pot from heat and let stand, covered for 12-18 minutes depending on how firm you like the yolk.
3. When time is up, drain and immediately run cold water over the eggs until cooled or remove the eggs with a slotted spoon and place in an ice bath to stop cooking.



- Instant Pots or rice cookers make carb prep even easier!
- Cut and peel sweet potatoes for an easy Vitamin A boost and later you can enjoy them as fries, sweet potato mash or a delicious sweet potato soup!
- Cook a batch of whole grain pasta and allow to cool to make a cold pasta salad or to warm up later with sauce.



# HOW TO DO A *freezer* INVENTORY

When was the last time you did a freezer inventory? I'll bet not recently. Without a doubt, there is food lurking in the back corners that has become freezer burnt and sadly ready for the garbage. You should do a freezer inventory every six months to stay on top of what goes in and out of your freezer.



## **Why do a freezer inventory?**

- To avoid buying food you already have
- To help with meal planning
- To use up leftovers for quick meals
- To avoid making foods you already have in the freezer
- Cuts down on food waste





# 3 STEPS TO *freezer* INVENTORY

1. **The clear out** – Take the time to remove EVERYTHING so you have a completely empty freezer. Wipe down the inside to disinfect and leave it sparkling clean. Remember – if something has been in there for over 6 months, throw it out!



2. **Categorize your food** – Categorize all your freezer foods into four categories (see back of resource for Freezer Inventory sheet). Keep the inventory handy so you can strike off foods when eaten or add it when new foods go in (be sure to label and date all foods).

3. **Organize your freezer** – After you have recorded each freezer food item on your sheet, put everything back into the freezer in organized sections.

Remember the F.I.F.O rule (first in, first out) to avoid waste and save money!



# 10 WAYS TO *save* ON GROCERIES AND STILL EAT HEALTHY

## 1 START MEAL PLANNING

To help you avoid food waste, purchase only what you need and eat less take-out.



## 2 USE A GROCERY LIST

With a list, trips become faster and you buy only what you need.

**FACT:** University of Pennsylvania research shows people who can avoid impulse spending can save up to 23 percent on their grocery bills!

## 3 SALES AND PRICE-MATCHING

Be sure to use store flyers and flyer apps like Flipp when planning meals to purchase ingredients at a reduced price.



## 4 BUY IN-SEASON OR FROZEN/CANNED

In-season produce is often lower in price.

## 5 UTILIZE ALTERNATIVE PROTEINS

Eggs, peanut butter and tofu are low-cost protein alternatives. One carton of eggs costs about \$2.80 and feeds three to four people.





## 6 EXTEND PROTEINS WITH LENTILS OR EGGS

To increase the bulk of your recipes and bump up the protein, add eggs or lentils to meat sauces and stews. They take on the flavour of the dish they are being mixed with and make the meal go further.

## 7 BUY GENERIC BRANDS

Store brands often cost 25 per cent less than the name brand and many of them are very similar. Compare the Nutrition Facts label and ingredients list to see how the products compare nutritionally.

## 8 PREP YOURSELF

If you spend time prepping items like grating cheese or cutting vegetables, you can save up to 50 per cent off the price from prepared in-store items.

## 9 EAT OUT LESS

Ordering in can be a nice treat, but for healthier meals at a fraction of the price, try swapping your take-out for a simple home-cooked alternative.

## 10 SET A BUDGET

Set a goal for spending for the week and keep track of your total food expenses on groceries, eating out, coffee runs, etc. Take a look at where you spend your money during the week or month to create a plan to save more.



## TIPS FOR A *smarter* GROCERY LIST

**Go to the grocery store with purpose, stick to your list, save money and decrease food waste.**

### ***Have your grocery list visible at home***

Make sure your list is somewhere visible so you and family members can write down items that need to be replaced.

### ***Categorize your grocery list***

Make sure your list has foods categorized by area of the grocery store so you don't miss items.

### ***Plan ahead!***

Use your meal planner so you know what to buy for the week.

**Need help with your grocery list? See the back of this resource for the sample Grocery Checklist.**







# 15 FUN AND UNIQUE *meal themes*

## 1 MEXICAN FIESTA

This is fun and versatile because a lot of Mexican cooking uses the same ingredients in different ways. Who doesn't love fajitas, quesadillas, tacos, enchiladas and rice?

## 2 BUILD YOUR OWN PIZZA

A family favourite! Try doing this on a Friday night to ease decision making and to avoid the temptation of take-out. Use naan bread for a quick dough option, have new ingredients to try and try different types of cheeses!

## 3 PROTEIN SWAP!

Have fun cooking meals with protein alternatives like eggs, tofu, lentils, fish and chickpeas. Just swap out your usual protein in recipes with one of the above.

## 4 FISH FRIDAYS

Enjoy a day by the sea with anything from salmon to sushi to shrimp. Dive deep with this one!

## 5 SIMPLE SANDWICHES

This is a great idea for Saturdays and Sundays to give yourself a break. Sandwiches offer a variety of options by changing the protein, toppings and type of bread. An egg salad sandwich is always a quick and delicious option!



## 6 TACO TUESDAY

This is similar to Mexican fiesta, except it is exclusive to tacos, which can be prepared in a variety of ways. For example – try egg, fish, spicy chicken, shrimp or black bean tacos.

## 7 ENTRÉE SALADS

Think outside the green salad box and bump up the nutrition with carbs and protein to make your salad into a filling meal! Add ingredients to create interest like seeds, fruit, grains, beans, other proteins and fresh herbs.

## 8 BREAKFAST FOR DINNER

Eggs are super convenient, versatile, economical and easy to prepare. Plan to use eggs (which contain 6 grams of complete protein) for your meal and you'll have a variety of options from avocado toast to quiche!

## 9 BATCH COOKING

Batch cooking allows you to make meals for planned leftovers and freezer options. Frozen meals save time when you are too busy to cook a meal and also make great lunch options! Chili, lasagna, meatballs, meatloaf, soups and sauces are all great batch items to make for your freezer.

## 10 NOW THAT'S ITALIAN!

Make an Italian meal for fun which is always a crowd pleaser! There are over 350 pasta shapes to choose from and an endless variety of sauces to try something new.





## 11 MAKE IT EASY!

Use this theme on busy nights filled with commitments when you need a quick but easy meal. Ideas include a grilled cheese or fried egg sandwich with side salad, perogies with plain greek yogurt, baked beans, chicken finger wraps or a charcuterie style dinner with cheese, hard-cooked eggs, crackers and fruit.



## 12 SOUP NIGHT

This popular comfort food is also a great option for batch cooking and adding to your freezer for a quick meal.

## 13 BURGER NIGHT

Burgers have so much flavour and flexibility by using different toppings and sauces and you can bump up your vegetable intake by adding them as toppings. Try changing up what type of burger you make: beef, chicken, fish, veggie, homemade or black bean are all great choices. Top with an egg to boost the protein!

## 14 STIR-FRY OR CURRY NIGHT

Many people love stir-fry meals to use up what they have in the fridge. Curries offer the same kind of variety and can be made easily at home with store-bought curry pastes added to coconut milk.

## 15 FAMILY FAVOURITES

What was your favourite childhood meal? Food naturally brings back many emotions, so why not make them part of your meal inspiration. Things like homemade Mac and Cheese Salad, Grandma's meatloaf, sloppy Joe's or mom's lasagna can easily fit into your modern meal selection.





# THE POWER OF PLANNED *leftovers*

One of the most powerful meal planning strategies is to make extras so you will have leftovers for lunches, dinners or for easy freezer meals which come in handy on those busy days!

**What is a fridge-cleaner?** A fridge-cleaner is a flexible recipe that can use up existing foods that will go bad, such as omelettes, soups, sauces, quiche, frittatas, casseroles or stir-fry.

**What is batch cooking?** Batch cooking simply means making a large portion of a recipe so that you have planned leftovers to use for future lunch or dinner.

## TIPS FOR LUNCH BOX SUCCESS

Preparing your lunches in advance can lead to meals with more vegetables and less fat, calories, salt and sugar than eating out. This saves you money and makes you feel healthier by improving mood, lowering stress and giving you more energy.

### Make sure you stock up on LUNCH BOX ESSENTIALS:



**Insulated lunch bag** – the bigger the better! Containers for sandwiches, soups, chopped fruit and veggies, portioned nuts and dips can take up space. Make sure you have enough space!



**Accessories** – if possible, keep your water bottle cool which will entice you to drink more throughout the day. Many people like to have reusable cutlery in their lunch bags and don't forget a napkin.

## PLASTIC OR GLASS CONTAINERS

Stock up on different shapes and sizes of reusable plastic or glass containers. Consider buying BPA-free containers for reheating.





# SKIP THE *fancy* LUNCHES

## MENTAL SHIFT

To change your lifestyle, you need to change your thoughts. Many people have a mental block when it comes to making lunches and associate it with being time-consuming and overwhelming. In the world of sharing food on social media, we sometimes feel guilty or inadequate when it comes to lunches and it's easy to be defeated before we even begin.

Try taking a realistic approach and come up with simple lunch ideas and don't worry about the complexity of your lunch. With habit forming, remember consistency is more important than performance! If you get into the habit of packing a lunch, you've taken the first step and you can always get more creative with your choices as it becomes more comfortable.



*Remember* the 15-minute meals and meal theme ideas we shared earlier? They also make great ideas for lunches as well!







DOWNLOADABLE

*Templates*





# MEAL PLAN FOR THE WEEK OF \_\_\_\_\_

FOODS TO USE UP:
MEALS TO MAKE:

	LUNCH	DINNER	NOTES
MON			
TUES			
WED			
THUR			
FRI			
SAT			
SUN			

PRODUCE	MEAT/SEAFOOD/CHEESE/ BAKERY	GROCERY (FRIDGE/FREEZER)	GROCERY (DRY)



# Top ITEMS TO STOCK IN YOUR KITCHEN



## FRIDGE

- ☐ Eggs
- ☐ Milk and/or alternatives
- ☐ Fresh fruits and vegetables
- ☐ Salad greens
- ☐ Low fat yogurts
- ☐ Quick snacks  
(hummus, dips, sliced turkey)
- ☐ Unsalted butter
- ☐ Condiments  
(ketchup, mustard)
- ☐ Cheese
- ☐ Fresh garlic and ginger
- ☐ Lemons and limes
- ☐ Sparkling water

## PANTRY

- ☐ Whole grain crackers or rice cakes
- ☐ Peanut or nut butter
- ☐ Oil (olive, canola, avocado)
- ☐ Vinegar (balsamic, red wine, rice wine)
- ☐ Whole grain pasta, oats, bulgar, couscous and quinoa
- ☐ High-fibre cereal
- ☐ Unsalted seeds and nuts
- ☐ Canned, unsalted tomatoes and beans
- ☐ Canned tuna, salmon, chicken or crab
- ☐ Spices
- ☐ Low sodium soya sauce
- ☐ Vegetable or chicken broth
- ☐ Popcorn kernels
- ☐ Pizza toppings  
(sundried tomato, pesto, olives)
- ☐ Tea and coffee

## FREEZER

- ☐ Whole grain bread, wraps, English muffins
- ☐ Frozen fruit
- ☐ Frozen vegetables
- ☐ Fish, shrimp, salmon
- ☐ Chicken, pork, beef, tofu
- ☐ Quiche shells
- ☐ Perogies
- ☐ Ravioli



# MY GROCERY *checklist*



## PRODUCE (FRESH FRUIT AND VEGETABLES)

<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____



## EGGS, MEAT, SEAFOOD AND CHEESE

<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____



## GROCERY (FRIDGE/FREEZER)

<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
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<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____



## GROCERY (DRY)

<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____



## MISCELLANEOUS

<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____

don't forget to use  
up what you  
already have first



# FREEZER *inventory*

<p><b>LEFTOVER MEALS</b></p> <p>Include foods that are pre-portioned into single serve or family sized containers which can be moved into the fridge to thaw for lunch or dinner.</p>	
<p><b>COMPONENTS OF MEALS</b></p> <p>Easy proteins (such as meatballs, chicken fingers or fish), sauces or batch recipes that can be used as part of a meal.</p>	
<p><b>USE-UP</b></p> <p>Items that you keep stocked up such as English muffins, tortillas, frozen fruit or vegetables.</p>	
<p><b>MISCELLANEOUS</b></p> <p>Items for personal use, large batch food that can be eaten for several meals (such as stew or lasagna).</p>	





# GET TO KNOW YOUR ONTARIO EGG FARMERS.

THE  
LAVER FAMILY



THE  
VYN FAMILY



TO LEARN MORE ABOUT ONTARIO'S  
EGG FARMERS VISIT

**GETCRACKING.CA**

