

LET'S GET STARTED

Of paramount importance in today's over-scheduled life is pulling together that weekly meal plan! Although it can seem like a hassle, you will be more likely to prepare balanced meals and eat better overall when you map out your meals for the week. Our meal plan grid and grocery list will help you get started, but phone apps can be useful for this as well! Of course, no one can always plan perfectly, which is why we also have tips for preparing wholesome meals with whatever you have on hand (think stir-fry!) and making packaged food more nutritious when you occasionally need a quick, convenience meal. Whether you plan them out or make them on the fly, strive for meals with plenty of produce and a sufficient helping of healthy protein! This section's stir-fry and classic vegetable remake recipes will get you excited about planning veggie-packed meals!

Family Dinner with Fruits & Vegetables

Even if you are a fruit and vegetable fanatic, it can still be a challenge to get the recommended number of servings every day. Fortunately, no matter what you are preparing at mealtime, there is nearly always a way to add in some extra servings of fruits or vegetables. Here are a few simple ways to incorporate more produce into your diet!



AMP UP YOUR BREAKFAST! Sautéed vegetables can easily be thrown into any egg dishes to create a savory breakfast that's packed with fiber and nutrients. Fruit (fresh or dried), is great mixed into yogurt, oatmeal, and cereal. Or start the morning with an energizing smoothie made of fruit and greens!

DOUBLE UP ON THE GOODNESS: It's easy to load extra veggies into soups, stews, and casseroles. With these dishes, doubling the veggies called for will not ruin the recipe- it will add flavor and nutritional value!

MAKE PIZZA AND PASTA VEHICLES FOR VEGGIES: You can even sneak vegetables into your marinara sauce by adding pureed or diced veggies such as carrots, squash, peppers, and onions.

TRANSFORM SANDWICHES AND WRAPS: Deli sandwiches, grilled cheese, or tacos can be made even tastier with the added crunch from a half cup of fresh greens or veggies. You can even skip the bread or tortilla and wrap it up with a large lettuce leaf instead!

REPLACE GRAINS WITH VEGGIE ALTERNATIVES: In place of pasta, try using spaghetti squash or making zucchini "noodles." Cauliflower can also be prepared to be rice-like.

USE FRESH, FROZEN, AND CANNED: Feel free to mix and match; they all count towards your total servings of fruits and vegetables!

Packaged Food Makeover

Love the convenience of packaged foods?
Follow these tips for making them healthier.

INSTANT NOODLES

- Look for brands that bake the noodles instead of frying them.
- Stir in fresh or frozen vegetables. Try broccoli, peas, carrots, edamame (soy beans), or spinach.
- Add protein if you like. Try leftover cooked chicken, fish or beef. Or add cubes of tofu.
- Use only half of the seasoning packet.

“JUST ADD MEAT” BOXED MEALS

- Use lean ground beef, chicken or turkey. Drain fat from cooked meat.
- Add whatever veggies you have on hand, the more the better! Try broccoli, carrots, peas, spinach, cauliflower, peppers, onions.

BOXED MACARONI & CHEESE

- Add fresh or frozen broccoli or spinach to the pasta during the last few minutes of cooking.
- For southwestern flair, add salsa and cooked black beans for the last 2-3 minutes of cooking.

CANNED SOUP

- Choose options with less than 480 mg sodium per cup serving.
- Mix in plenty of extra fresh, frozen, or canned veggies (or beans for extra protein).

FROZEN & TAKE OUT PIZZA

- Buy a plain cheese pizza or ask for half the cheese. Add your own toppings.
- Top with your favorite cooked veggies. Try broccoli, peppers, onions, olives, tomatoes, zucchini, and spinach. (Wilt fresh spinach by putting it in the microwave with a few drops of water. Squeeze out water after cooking.)
- If you want meat, add low-fat turkey pepperoni. Or use cooked chicken or turkey sausage.
- Look for whole grain crust if you can find them. If not, look for thin crusts.

FROZEN OR PREPACKED CHINESE FOOD

- If veggies aren't included, stir them in! Try bell peppers, broccoli, carrots, cauliflower and edamame.

TACO DINNER KITS

- Look for kits with whole wheat or corn tortillas.
- Use lean ground beef, chicken or turkey.
- Cook half the amount of ground meat called for in the recipe. Drain fat. Stir in a can of rinsed and drained black beans or pinto beans. Or use all beans.
- Add cooked veggies like chopped tomatoes or shredded zucchini.
- Top with low-fat cheese or sour cream.

CANNED RAVIOLI OR PASTA DISHES

- Look for products made with whole grain pasta.
- Add your favorite cooked veggies.
- Try zucchini, yellow squash or spinach. Or serve with a veggie-filled side salad.

FROZEN CHICKEN NUGGETS OR FISH STICKS

- Compare labels. Choose a brand with less saturated fat and sodium.
- Look for chicken nuggets made with white meat instead of dark.
- Serve with a hearty salad or colorful vegetable side dish.
- If fries on the side are a must, make your own sweet potato fries.

FROZEN WAFFLES OR PANCAKES

- Look for whole grain pancakes or waffles.
- Top with fresh fruit and yogurt instead of syrup.
- If making pancakes, add bananas and berries to the batter. You can also add canned pumpkin.



Healthy Protein Foods

FOCUS ON OPTIMAL PROTEIN INTAKE

Protein needs differ depending on how much a person weighs. In order to preserve muscle mass, you need 0.36 grams of protein for every pound you weigh. Therefore, you can multiply your body weight by 0.36 to determine how many grams of protein you should consume daily. For example, if you weigh 150 lbs: $150 \times 0.36 = 54$, so you would need 54 g. of protein daily.

EXAMPLES OF LEAN AND HEALTHY PROTEIN:

Chicken breast, eye of round beef roast, lean center cut pork roast, turkey, starchy beans such as kidney beans*, eggs, nuts and seeds*, sautéed tofu*, salmon, shrimp, nut butters*, cottage cheese, and Greek yogurt.

STRIVE FOR A NICE DOSE OF PROTEIN AT EACH MEAL

At least 15 g. per meal (for women) or 25-30 per meal (for men).

- A container of greek yogurt has 15 g. of protein.
- Every oz. of meat has 7 g. of protein. Therefore, a standard 3 oz. portion has 21 g. of protein
- A cup of beans has 17 g. of protein
- ½ cup Tofu has 9 g. of protein
- 2 Tbsp. peanut butter has 8 g. of protein
- A large egg has 7 g. of protein

FOR BEST HEALTH

Minimize less healthy protein choices such as fried chicken or fried fish, fatty steaks, roasts, hamburgers, ribs, brats, sausage, hot dogs, bacon, bologna, and other processed meats. Cheese and higher fat dairy products should also be consumed in moderation.



Cooking from Your Cupboards

Another way to plan meals is to use food you usually have in your kitchen. When in a pinch, keep these nutrient-rich staple foods on hand for quick, easy meals.

IN YOUR CUPBOARDS:

- Canned beans - black, pinto, green
- Canned petite diced tomatoes
- Canned pineapple chunks
- Chili powder
- Peanut butter
- Instant brown rice
- Garlic powder or fresh garlic
- Canned chopped green chilies
- Whole-wheat spaghetti
- Low-sodium cream-based soup
- Low-sodium teriyaki sauce
- Canned tuna

IN YOUR REFRIGERATOR:

- Shredded cheddar cheese
- Shredded mozzarella cheese
- Eggs
- Light sour cream or plain yogurt
- Whole-wheat or corn tortillas
- Whole-grain English muffins
- Applesauce

IN YOUR FREEZER:

- Stir-fry vegetables
- Bell pepper strips
- Vegetable medley
- Corn
- Lean meats
- Chopped spinach
- Peas

MEAL 1: Bean and Cheese Burritos

Whole-wheat or corn tortillas
Canned pinto beans
Chili powder or low-sodium chili seasoning packet
Cheddar cheese, shredded
Light sour cream or plain yogurt
Canned chopped green chilies

MEAL 6: Stir Fry

Frozen lean meat or meat leftover from earlier meal
Frozen stir-fry vegetables
Small can pineapple chunks or tidbits, in own juice, drained
Instant brown rice
Low-sodium teriyaki sauce

MEAL 2: Black Bean Veggie Fajitas

Canned black beans
Frozen bell pepper strips
Whole-wheat or corn tortillas
Cheddar cheese, shredded
Light sour cream or plain yogurt

MEAL 7: Rice and Beans

Instant brown rice
Canned black beans
Canned tomatoes
Frozen corn
Cheddar cheese, shredded

MEAL 3: Tuna Casserole

Whole-wheat spaghetti
Low-sodium cream of mushroom soup
Frozen vegetable medley
Garlic powder or fresh garlic
Tuna

MEAL 8: Minestrone Soup

Frozen chicken breast tenders, boneless and skinless
Canned kidney beans, rinsed, plus 1-2 cans water
Frozen vegetable blend
Canned tomatoes, undrained
Whole-wheat spaghetti, broken in half
Mozzarella cheese, shredded

MEAL 4: Mediterranean Chicken

Frozen chicken breast tenders, boneless and skinless
Canned tomatoes
Garlic powder or fresh garlic
Whole-wheat spaghetti or instant brown rice

MEAL 9: Super Simple Lunch

English muffin with peanut butter
Applesauce
Peas

MEAL 5: Veggie Quesadillas

Whole-wheat tortillas
Leftover veggies or frozen bell pepper strips
Mozzarella cheese, shredded





MEAL 10: Veggie Scramble

Eggs
Frozen chopped spinach, cooked and squeezed dry
Cheddar cheese, shredded
English muffins, toasted

Websites such as superfood.com and myfridgefood.com can provide recipe suggestions for whatever ingredients you have available in your pantry and refrigerator!

STIR-FRY COMBOS

Here are our favorite stir-fry combos for quick, delicious, and healthy meals. With all the different proteins and veggies you can mix and match, you'll never have to order take-out again!

KEY	KUNG PAO CHICKEN	CLASSIC BEEF & BROCCOLI	BEAN SPROUT STIR-FRY	SAVORY SPINACH & TOMATO STIR-FRY	EASY WEEKNIGHT STIR-FRY	GREEN STIR-FRY	CABBAGE, CARROT & CORN STIR-FRY	EGGPLANT & FISH STIR-FRY
 PROTEIN	Chicken	Steak	Tofu	Pork	Steak	Tilapia	Mahi Mahi	
 VEGETABLES	Carrots, Celery, Snow Peas, Baby Corn	Broccoli	Roma Tomatoes, Baby Corn, Baby Spinach	Onions, Carrots, Celery, Brown Mushrooms	Napa Cabbage, Snow Peas, Edamame	Cabbage, Carrots, Corn	Eggplant, Bean Sprouts	
 SAUCE	Basic Sauce	Basic Sauce	Basic Sauce	Basic Sauce	Basic Sauce	Basic Sauce	Basic Sauce	
 GARNISH	Lemon Juice, Hot Sauce, Peanuts	Lemon Juice	Lemon Juice, Hot Sauce, Green Onions	Lemon Juice, Hot Sauce	Lime Juice, Green Onions	Lemon Juice, Hot Sauce, Green Onions	Lemon Juice, Fresh Basil, Sesame Seeds	
RED CURRY SHRIMP STIR-FRY	TWO-PEAS GREEN CURRY STIR-FRY	SALMON & GREEN BEAN CURRY STIR-FRY	SPRING STIR-FRY	PORK & KALE STIR-FRY	ORANGE CASHW CHICKEN	ORANGE SCALLION TILAPIA	ORANGE-GINGER & CASHW STIR-FRY	
Shrimp	Chicken	Salmon	Squid	Pork	Chicken	Tilapia	Salmon	
Onions, Bell Peppers, Chinese Eggplant	Onions, Snow Peas, Peas	Green Beans, Brown Mushrooms	Zucchini, Asparagus, Peas, Corn	Celery, Kale	Bell Peppers, Zucchini, Sugar Snap Peas	Bok Choy	Asparagus, Edamame	
Curry Sauce	Curry Sauce	Curry Sauce	Curry Sauce	Curry Sauce	Orange-Ginger Sauce	Orange-Ginger Sauce	Orange-Ginger Sauce	
Lime Juice, Fresh Basil	Lime Juice, Fresh Cilantro	Lime Juice, Fresh Cilantro	Lemon Juice, Hot Sauce	Lemon Juice, Fresh Cilantro, Peanuts	Lemon Juice, Cashews, Green Onions	Lemon Juice, Green Onions	Lemon Juice, Sesame Seeds, Cashews	
SQUID WITH BLACK PEPPER SAUCE	SPICY CAULIFLOWER STIR-FRY	PEPPERY PORK STIR-FRY	BLACK PEPPER CHICKEN STIR-FRY	BLACK PEPPER STEAK & VEGETABLES	SWEET & SOUR CASHW TOFU	SWEET & SOUR SHRIMP	SWEET & SOUR PORK & VEGETABLE STIR-FRY	
Squid	Seitan	Pork	Chicken	Steak	Tofu	Shrimp	Pork	
Onions, Bell Peppers	Onions, Cauliflower, Shiitake Mushrooms	Bell Peppers, Zucchini	Onions, Broccoli, Mushrooms	Baby Corn, Sugar Snap Peas, Bok Choy	Bell Peppers, Broccoli, Chinese Eggplant	Onions, Bell Peppers, Sugar Snap Peas	Carrots, Bell Peppers, Green Beans	
Black Pepper Sauce	Black Pepper Sauce	Black Pepper Sauce	Black Pepper Sauce	Black Pepper Sauce	Sweet & Sour Sauce	Sweet & Sour Sauce	Sweet & Sour Sauce	
Lemon Juice	Lemon Juice	Lemon Juice, Green Onions	Lemon Juice, Fresh Cilantro, Peanuts	Lemon Juice, Cashews	Lemon Juice, Green Onions	Lemon Juice	Lemon Juice, Sesame Seeds, Fresh Basil	

To learn more cooking formulas to help you live healthier and smarter in the kitchen, visit cooksmaparts.com

Planning Meals

- 1 Planning meals takes time but is well worth the effort.
- 2 Plan balanced meals by keeping a list of foods that you and your family enjoy from each of the main food groups.
- 3 As you plan your meals, consider both balance and variety; try new foods often!
- 4 It's okay to blend in "fun foods" that give pleasure. Just ensure that these foods make up only about 10% of your diet.

PROTEIN	GRAIN/STARCH	VEGETABLES	FRUIT	DAIRY	FUN FOOD
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Now, plan 10 meals you or your family will enjoy:

1. Develop your menu.
 - a. For variety, you will want to change your meals over time and from season to season.
 - b. Plan more grilled food and salads during warm weather and prepare soups and roasted meals during cooler weather.
2. Make a grocery list.
3. Save your planning sheet for quick meal ideas when you are in a hurry.
4. Many families eat the same 10-15 meals over time, and that is okay.
5. Focus on making sure each of these meals is balanced with food from 3-6 food groups.



Meal ideas using our recipes PLUS theme night meals

MEAL 1:

Italian Wedding Soup (page 40)
Whole Grain Roll
Crustless Pumpkin Pie (page 154)

MEAL 2:

Black Bean and Corn Pizza (page 133)
Raw Veggies
Berry Salad (page 161)

MEAL 3:

Tasty Fried Rice (page 75)
Cinnamon-Oatmeal Baked Apples (page 88)

MEAL 4:

Crock Pot Pulled Chicken with Cabbage Slaw (page 122)
Whole Wheat Buns
Juicy Fruit Salad (page 88)

MEAL 5:

Red Lentil Soup (page 38)
Apple Kale Salad (page 29)

MEAL 6:

Sheet Pan Salmon (page 124)
Looks Like Mashed Potatoes (page 72)
Peach and Strawberry Smoothie (page 109)

MEAL 7:

Grilled BBQ Mushroom Roll-up (page 59)
Refreshing Cauliflower Tomato Salsa (page 163)
Healthy Baked Tortilla Chips (page 188)
Fresh Apple



As you plan your meals, consider organizing these fun 'THEME NIGHT MEALS' at your house!

- Eat Local Night (all food must be produced locally)
- Eat like an Italian!
- Ole! Mexican Night
- Chop Sticks Asian Night
- Buddah Bowl Night
- Meatless Monday
- Make your Own Pizza Night
- Make your Own Taco Night

The ideas are endless!
Get your kids involved and make it super fun!

The Grocery Shopping Trip

Use this weekly meal planner and shopping list to organize your shopping trip. Make copies of this for weekly use, and post the shopping list on your refrigerator. Write down the names of items you are running low on during the week. As you plan meals for the week, think about your family's schedule. Also, check grocery store deals to save on cost. List all the foods you will need for the main meals, and don't forget about breakfast, lunch, snacks, and household items like toilet paper.

WEEKLY FAMILY MEAL PLANNER

MONDAY _____

FRIDAY _____

TUESDAY _____

SATURDAY _____

WEDNESDAY _____

SUNDAY _____

THURSDAY _____

SHOPPING LIST

FRUITS/VEGETABLES

PAPER/CLEANING ITEMS

BAKERY/BREAD

REFRIGERATED/DAIRY

GROCERY ITEMS

MEATS/SEAFOOD

FROZEN

MISCELLANEOUS

DELI

HEALTH/BEAUTY ITEMS

AT THE GROCERY STORE, YOU SHOULD:

- Cross off items as you set them in the cart.
- Stick to the list, but be flexible if you see a good deal. Ask yourself if the "deal" is really needed.
- Avoid shopping when hungry. Hungry shoppers often buy more than needed.
- Post the weekly meal planner on the refrigerator when you get home from the store, so family members will know what is planned for the main daily meal. The first adult or teen home can start cooking!

