

MEAL PLANNING

Why is meal planning important?

- We all have busy lives where we balance multiple roles. Ex/ parents, employees, volunteer
- The busier & unprepared you are, the more tendencies you may have to fall off-track and develop poor eating habits.



Why is meal planning important?

- When planning meals for the week, things to consider:
 - Likes and dislikes – what do you actually enjoy eating
 - Goals
 - Your Resources:
 - How much time do you have for preparation
 - Food choices and availability
 - Money
 - Your preparation skills and equipment
 - Meal Appeal
 - Incorporate a balance of nutrients
 - Modify meals and recipes for health concerns and conditions

Types of Cooking

- Scratch cooking: preparing a dish from **basic ingredients** ex.) chicken noodle soup, roast and potatoes



Types of Cooking

- Convenience foods: foods that have been **commerically processed** to make them easier and faster to prepare. Ex.), *frozen vegetables, canned tuna & foods, rice cakes, precut veg, deli meat, rotisserie chicken, etc.*
 - *Advantages*: quicker to prepare
 - *Disadvantages*:
 - **Cost** – often much more expensive
 - **Meal Appeal** – lack appeal (aesthetics)
 - **Additives** – preservatives, coloring agents, etc.

Types of Cooking

- Speed-scratch cooking: cooking with a mix of the two previous methods ex.) *Let's look at another way to make homemade foods.*

Time-Saving Techniques

- A. Cut large meat portions into smaller ones to reduce cooking time.
- B. Prepare one dish meals or use a slow cooker.
- C. Serve fish more often – easy to prepare, cooks quickly, and good for you.
- D. Use the microwave for cooking and defrosting.
- E. Include family members in planning and preparation.
- F. Cook in advance and freeze.



MEAL APPEAL - - involves all senses: taste, smell, sight, and touch

- Plan your main course first – your sides should compliment your main course.
- COLOR – Plan meals that include a variety of colors. Colorful fruits and vegetables are a big key.
- TEXTURE – The way food feels when you chew it. Ex.) soft, hard, crisp, chewy, etc.

MEAL APPEAL - - involves all senses:
taste, smell, sight, and touch

- **TEMPERATURE** – mix up temperatures, cold, room temperature, hot items, and helps free up oven and refrigerator space.
- **SIZE & SHAPE** – Food is most appealing when the shapes and sizes vary. Cut foods using different techniques.
- **FLAVOR** – serve both strong-flavored and mild foods for a meal.

Step-by-step guide

- (1) Take inventory
- (2) Plan out meals
- (3) Make a grocery list
- (4) Shop strategically

Inventory

- Check your refrigerator, freezer and pantry to find out what items you available
- Keep a list of spices and seasonings you have to avoid buying a product you may already have at home already have at home

Meal Planning

- Plan your meals for one week at a time
- Know your schedule and your family's schedule If applicable – do you have events? Meetings? Gatherings planned?
- Remember the key concepts of the diet when planning
 - Eating multiple small meals throughout the day
 - Eating protein each time you eat
 - Have non-starchy veg when hungry

Planning, cont'd

- Go-To Meal List
 - Consider creating a master list of meals or Go-To Meal List to speed up the meal planning process in the future
 - Make a list of all meals, healthy or not, then classify them by main ingredient & seek out healthy swaps

Example Meal List

- Chicken fajita bowls with rice and salad – swap out rice for cauliflower rice
- Tuna on Ezekiel toast served with veg sticks
- Salmon with frozen vegetables
- Pizza served with salad – use portabello mushroom caps as crust
- Baked chicken with mashed potatoes and green beans
- Fresh shrimp with baked sweet potato and frozen vegetables
- Spaghetti with meat sauce served with salad – use shirataki or zucchini noodles
- Low-fat veggie lasagna with green salad – use eggplant or zucchini as noodles
- Hamburger and fries – use a lettuce bun & serve with baked sweet potato fries

Shop Strategically

- Try shopping only once per week (or less) to save both time and money
- Shop on a full stomach
- Don't be afraid of store brands
- Shop the perimeter of the store first where you will find the less processed and often healthier items (i.e. produce, lean meats, low-fat dairy)

Shopping cont'd

- Buy produce in season and opt for the frozen variety if it is cheaper
- Buy grains in bulk and store in airtight containers
- Stock up on canned tuna, frozen veg and non-perishable options when you are stuck in a bind

Prepping

- Try to incorporate at least one double duty meal per week (i.e. meals that can be enjoyed on more than one occasion)
- Freeze individual portions of the leftovers for “homemade” frozen meals
- Save time with smart prep work
 - Brown lean ground beef to use for dinner tonight AND for tacos later in the week
 - Cook extra brown rice and refrigerate or freeze for later use
 - Bake a few extra chicken breasts to use in a healthy (and simple) stir-fry

Activity Time