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Cooking Quick and Easy

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Benefits to Preparing Your Own Meals


- Preparing your own meals is an important skill for improving your health and successfully managing your weight.
- When you do the cooking yourself, you are in control and can choose the recipes and ingredients, so you know exactly what you are eating.
- You may feel that you just don't have the time to prepare quick healthy meals, but there are many ways you can save time and boost the nutrition of your meals.

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SET YOURSELF UP FOR SUCCESS: PLAN YOUR MEALS IN ADVANCE


- Create a weekly meal plan and shopping list
 - Make a list of at least 5 quick and healthy meals that take 15 minutes to fix
 - Create a shopping list from these meal ideas with items you need
 - Start small with 1-2 dinners, and work up to 5
- To prevent food waste
 - make the meals that have the most perishable ingredients early in the week
 - Utilize leftovers, take for lunch or have a 'leftover night' planned after several nights of cooking
 - Freeze other portions for a later time (works well with soup, chili, hot dishes)

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Save Time and Stock Up on Staples


- Whole grain items (breads, cereals, and pasta, quick-cooking brown rice, quinoa, bulgur, tortilla shells)
- Cooked beans (kidney, pinto) low sodium, in cans
- Vegetable: A variety of frozen or canned, low sodium
- Fruit: A variety of frozen or canned, packed in water or juice
- Spices and herbs
- Cooking oils: Olive, canola
- Vinegars: Balsamic, apple cider, rice
- Eggs
- Meats, poultry, fish (freeze in meal size portions)
- Dairy: cottage cheese, no sugar added Greek yogurt, sour cream, cheese

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Accessorize your Kitchen with Time-saving tools


- Slow cooker: Cook a meal overnight or during the day and come home to dinner ready to eat.
- Table top grill: Convenient for grilling meat, chicken, and fish quickly and with very little mess
- Mini food processor/blender: Great for processing small amounts of food
- Steamer basket: Holds vegetables for steaming in just about any size pot
- Pressure cooker: cooks foods, such as whole grains and dried beans in almost half the time
- Air fryer: great for cooking food that is often deep-fried without the oil, giving you a similar 'deep-fried' crunch. Also quicker than your oven.

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EXPLORE TIME-SAVING READY-TO-GO FOODS

- Partially prepped ingredients:
 - Sliced mushrooms
 - frozen chopped veggies
 - shredded cabbage
 - Vegetable tray
- Packaged salad mixes and salad bars
- Meat, seafood, and veggie kabobs—already assembled and ready to cook
- Rotisserie chicken, turkey breasts, meat loaf (be cautious of sodium content)
- Ready-to-cook bags of non starchy veggies: green beans, broccoli, carrots
- Fruit
 - Already washed, peeled and/or sliced
 - Low maintenance fruit (bananas, grapes, apple)
- Meal kit delivery and grocery delivery are options

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COMBINE AND CONQUER

- **Already prepped and portioned**
 - Using either already prepped ingredients from the store or those you've prepped yourself (example: diced onions, shredded chicken, ect)
 - Place in containers in the fridge if planning to use soon
 - Optional: Premeasure according to recipe (1 onion, 2 lbs shredded chicken)
 - Or place in freezer-safe plastic bags for longer storage in the freezer.
 - Write date on bag, optional write item and amount
 - If freezing vegetables, it is recommended to blanch before freezing
 - Be aware of recommended time to keep frozen food
- **Already prepared**
 - Try batch cooking on a day when you have a little more time. Cook enough for several meals, portion out, and freeze for later.

<https://www.foodsafety.gov/food-safety-charts/cold-food-storage-charts>

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Meal/Snack Prep

- Focus on preparing for meals/snacks that you struggle making balanced and healthful choices for.
- Have a designated part of the fridge/pantry stocked with ready to grab items:
 - high protein items:
 - hard boiled eggs
 - no sugar-added Greek yogurt
 - cheese
 - individual containers of cottage cheese
 - pre portioned nuts
 - protein shake/protein bar
 - Meat sticks/jerky
 - other meal/snack components:
 - Prepared/portioned fruit
 - Prepared/portioned veggies (optional dip)

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Easy Meal Prep Ideas

When meal prepping, keep your carbohydrate and protein goals in mind and adjust portions and servings accordingly

Protein smoothie

- Carbs ↓ ½ - ¾ cup frozen fruit, no sugar added Greek yogurt,
- Protein ↑ Greek yogurt, protein powder

Overnight oats

- Carbs ↓ ¼ cup dry quick oats, avoid adding sugar/honey
- Protein ↑ adding Greek yogurt, protein powder

Breakfast burrito-

- Carbs ↓ low carb wrap, non starchy veggies as desired
- Protein ↑ eggs, cheese, meat + low carb tortilla)

Homemade lunchable-

- Carbs ↓ 6 triscuits (or 1 oz Whole Grain Crackers)
- Protein ↑ 2-3 oz deli meat + 1 oz cheese slice

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ACTIONS TO TAKE:

- What time-saving tools and gadgets can you purchase to make food preparation quicker and easier for you?
- What time-saving staples do you need to add to your pantry, freezer or fridge?

With a little bit of planning and advance groundwork, you can enjoy preparing your own quick, easy meals!

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thank you!

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