

introduction

The Meal Planning Playbook is your guide to plan and prepare meals for today, tomorrow and beyond. This guide includes more than 100 basic everyday lunch and dinner recipes along with meal ideas to help you develop meal plans.

The recipes in this book are simple and made with common ingredients. Where possible, the recipes use reduced sodium and reduced fat ingredients to improve the nutrition profile, which is included with each main recipe. Many of these recipes have been developed to replace commonly-consumed convenient foods purchased from the grocery store and fast food restaurants.

The Meal Planning Playbook provides two approaches to meal planning:

- **Today-Tomorrow Meal Planning** is based on cooking a larger quantity of protein for today's meal so you can use the leftover amount to create a new meal for tomorrow.
- **Freezer Meal Planning** is based on cooking extra of one day's meal (or a meal component) to freeze and use at a future date. You can also plan to cook one or two recipes specifically to freeze for future convenience.

benefits of the meal planning playbook approach:

reduces stress Planning what you are going to eat in advance whether it be what you are going to cook that evening or what homemade convenient meal you may re-heat from the freezer will reduce stress.

improves eating habits Planning and preparing homemade meals allows you to control the ingredients you use, whether your goal is to eat healthier, better balanced meals or lose weight through simple portion control.

saves money Planning in advance can help reduce the cost of grocery bills as you can plan your meals around the sales in weekly flyers or buy ingredients in larger quantities. Eating meals prepared at home instead of eating out will also help save money.

saves time Planning what you are going to cook takes a bit more effort and time up front, but can be a huge time saver later on when you take advantage of what you have stored in the freezer for a heat-and-eat meal or a re-invented leftover.

who is this book for?

Whether you are single, married with or without kids, an empty-nester couple or a retiree, you may often rely on convenient store-bought meals or fast food options. It can be challenging to eat healthy when you're looking for convenient food choices.

you might recognize yourself in one or more of these scenarios...

cooking for one: Many people find it a challenge to cook for only themselves. The alternatives include purchasing fresh pre-made meal kits, packaged heat-and-eat meals or eating out. These alternatives may be expensive and/or less than healthy.

families with young kids: Many families find themselves rushing to take their kids to their extracurricular activities after school. Meal times are often no longer an opportunity for the family to sit together, eat a homemade meal and discuss how their day was. Dinner may be picked up at a drive-through or be heat-and-eat meals from the grocery store, both of which may be less healthy than a homemade version.

people with aging parents: People who have responsibilities for aging parents may find it a challenge to ensure they are eating well-balanced meals. Their parents may resort to unhealthy convenient food choices due to a lack of desire to cook or even physical limitation to do so.

the sandwich generation: People with young children and aging parents are often "sandwiched" between responsibilities from the generation before them and the generation after them. This can lead to challenges in finding the time and energy to eat healthy and provide balanced meals.

trying to lose weight: People trying to lose weight often resort to convenient, store-bought meals for portion-controlled sizes. Although these meals may offer a controlled amount of calories, they may not provide a good nutritional alternative to homemade meals where you can control the ingredients.

homemade vs. manufactured

Grocery stores today provide an abundance of food options that could be categorized as convenient foods. Many of these solutions include frozen entrées, packaged side dishes and canned foods. While these options are not necessarily all unhealthy, a homemade version can provide a better alternative.

The examples below show that when you make your own version of a can of soup or frozen entrée, you can enjoy a better balanced meal by increasing the amount of vegetables and protein.

chicken noodle soup

CANNED



Noodles	50%
Vegetables	30%
Chicken	20%

HOMEMADE



Vegetables	50%
Chicken	20%
Noodles	30%

chicken oriental

FROZEN ENTRÉE



Rice	50%
Vegetables	30%
Chicken	20%

HOMEMADE



Vegetables	50%
Chicken	30%
Rice	20%

note: In the examples above, the homemade versions were created by using the same amount (weight) of carbohydrate and doubling the amount of protein and vegetables. Percentages have been rounded. These examples are for illustrative purposes only.

italian salad

italian dressing

1/4 cup	extra virgin olive oil
2 tbsp	balsamic vinegar
1 1/2 tsp	grainy Dijon mustard
1 tbsp	reduced fat mayonnaise
1 tsp	italian seasoning
1/4 tsp	black pepper
1/8 tsp	salt

salad

8 cups	spring mix (or other mixed greens)
1/2	red bell pepper, seeded and cut into strips
1/2 cup	sliced crimini or white button mushrooms
2 tbsp	pine nuts

makes 6 servings

nutrition per 1/6 of salad with dressing calories 130, total fat 12g (sat fat 1.5g), cholesterol 0mg, sodium 105mg, total carbs 4g (fiber 1g, sugars 2g), protein 2g

In a container with a lid, add dressing ingredients and shake well. Set aside.

In a large bowl, add lettuce and toss with dressing adding a little at a time until lightly coated. Add remaining ingredients and gently toss a couple times. Serve immediately.

nutrition for dressing alone per 2 tbsp (30g) calories 150, total fat 16g (sat fat 2.5g), cholesterol 0mg, sodium 160mg, total carbs 2g (fiber 0g, sugars 1g), protein 0g

reduced calorie version Substitute 2 tbsp olive oil with water to reduce calories to 80 and fat to 8g



chicken noodle soup

3 tsp	vegetable oil, divided
1 lb	boneless, skinless chicken breasts, cut into 1/2-inch cubes
1/2 cup	finely chopped onion
1	garlic clove, minced
1 1/2 cups	chopped celery
1 1/2 cups	chopped carrots
6 cups	reduced sodium chicken broth
2 cups	dry no yolk egg noodles
1 tbsp	finely chopped fresh parsley

makes 6 to 8 servings

nutrition per 1/6 recipe

calories 200, total fat 4.5g (sat fat 1g), cholesterol 55mg, sodium 630mg, total carbs 17g (fiber 2g, sugars 3g), protein 23g

In a large skillet or grill pan, heat 2 teaspoons oil over medium-high heat. Add chicken and sauté until browned and cooked through. Set aside.

In a stockpot or Dutch oven, heat 1 teaspoon oil over medium heat. Add onions and garlic; sauté for 2 minutes or until onions are slightly translucent. Add celery and carrots; sauté for an additional 3 to 4 minutes.

Add cooked chicken, broth and noodles; stir. Bring to a boil then reduce heat, cover and simmer for 10 to 15 minutes or until noodles are tender, stirring occasionally. Stir in parsley.

beef noodle soup Substitute chicken and chicken broth with beef and beef broth.

note: Many soup ingredients continue to absorb broth after preparation. Add additional broth if soup becomes too thick.



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mexican

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