

THE
WELL-PLANNED
KITCHEN



JENNIFER MASON

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 Jen



Put Your Kitchen on Autopilot

Do you ever feel like you spend too much time in the kitchen?

Sometimes kitchen tasks, cooking, and clean up can be daunting. We can spend far more time preparing food than actually eating it!

It's not surprising, then, that busy moms turn to takeout and drive throughs...which isn't exactly budget-friendly, nor does it make it easy to choose to live a healthy lifestyle.

Organizing your kitchen, schedule, and meals to spend less time in the kitchen and more time enjoying your family and your meals is definitely within reach. Let's dive in with some strategies to help you get started!

Your well-planned kitchen is an organized, inviting space, ready for you to enjoy. It's a space where you spend minimal time for maximum results.

In The Well-Planned Kitchen, you'll learn how to:

- Set your kitchen up for success;
- Create a meal planning system that all but maintains itself;
- Create a backup plan to help you eat at home more often;
- Waste less;
- and prep foods ahead quickly and easily.

Special note:

If you are reading this digital book on an eReader, you'll want to access a PDF version to use the printables that are provided in this ebook.



Do you ever feel even the smallest amount of stress when you're trying to figure out what to eat?

I don't like having to think about food too much. I like to jot down what we'll eat and look forward to the meal, but anything beyond that tends to fall into the mental clutter category for me.

Seven years ago, I began sharing my meal plans at TheWellPlannedKitchen.com. I love to find shortcuts, and this simple meal planning method feels like the ultimate shortcut.

Deciding what to eat shouldn't be complicated or difficult. I've found that the simpler I make those meals, the easier it is to stick to my meal plan with little hassle.



I've developed a meal planning system that puts meal planning on autopilot - you'll create a blueprint every season, plug in the appropriate meals, and you're on your way!

Meal planning with this system requires far less time than I ever would have imagined.

If you feel overwhelmed, there's nothing wrong with starting small! If you aren't used to following a meal plan, try planning just dinners to start. Or choose another meal - as long as you're consistent, and working towards following a full meal plan, you'll be in great shape!



Your Meal Plan Blueprint

3 SIMPLE STEPS FOR MEAL PLANNING



01 COMPLETE YOUR MEAL PLAN BLUEPRINT



02 COMPLETE YOUR MEAL IDEA LISTS



03 MAKE A MEAL PLAN

04 MAKE A BACKUP PLAN





When complete, your meal plan system will include:

1. Your reusable Meal Plan Blueprint
2. Your Meal Plan Resource Lists with meal ideas
3. Your Meal Plan Routine
4. Meal plans and shopping lists
5. Complete a weekly Meal Plan Blueprint

Rinse and reuse so you aren't constantly reinventing the wheel!

Meal Plan Blueprint

Season: _____

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	
BREAKFAST	<input type="checkbox"/> Quick & Easy <input type="checkbox"/> Instant Pot <input type="checkbox"/> Slow Cooker <input type="checkbox"/> 30-60 Minutes S. E. FP. XO	<input type="checkbox"/> Quick & Easy <input type="checkbox"/> Instant Pot <input type="checkbox"/> Slow Cooker <input type="checkbox"/> 30-60 Minutes S. E. FP. XO	<input type="checkbox"/> Quick & Easy <input type="checkbox"/> Instant Pot <input type="checkbox"/> Slow Cooker <input type="checkbox"/> 30-60 Minutes S. E. FP. XO	<input type="checkbox"/> Quick & Easy <input type="checkbox"/> Instant Pot <input type="checkbox"/> Slow Cooker <input type="checkbox"/> 30-60 Minutes S. E. FP. XO	<input type="checkbox"/> Quick & Easy <input type="checkbox"/> Instant Pot <input type="checkbox"/> Slow Cooker <input type="checkbox"/> 30-60 Minutes S. E. FP. XO	<input type="checkbox"/> Quick & Easy <input type="checkbox"/> Instant Pot <input type="checkbox"/> Slow Cooker <input type="checkbox"/> 30-60 Minutes S. E. FP. XO	<input type="checkbox"/> Quick & Easy <input type="checkbox"/> Instant Pot <input type="checkbox"/> Slow Cooker <input type="checkbox"/> 30-60 Minutes S. E. FP. XO	<input type="checkbox"/> Quick & Easy <input type="checkbox"/> Instant Pot <input type="checkbox"/> Slow Cooker <input type="checkbox"/> 30-60 Minutes S. E. FP. XO
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Your Meal Plan Blueprint

Have you ever made a weekly meal plan, only to find that you weren't really able to stick with it?

If you've ever felt like sticking to a meal plan can be a struggle, a Meal Plan Blueprint might come in handy!

A Meal Plan Blueprint is an easy way to map out your week and ensure your greatest chance of success when it comes to actually eating what you planned. It lets you determine what types of meals you need based on your schedule - making meal planning so much easier!

Your Meal Plan Blueprint is something that you'll create once and use to Meal Plan over and over again - you'll only need to make a new one if your schedule changes.

BREAKFAST	<input type="checkbox"/> Quick & Easy <input type="checkbox"/> Instant Pot <input type="checkbox"/> Slow Cooker <input type="checkbox"/> 30-60 Minutes	<input type="checkbox"/> Quick & Easy <input type="checkbox"/> Instant Pot <input type="checkbox"/> Slow Cooker <input type="checkbox"/> 30-60 Minutes	<input type="checkbox"/> Quick & Easy <input type="checkbox"/> Instant Pot <input type="checkbox"/> Slow Cooker <input type="checkbox"/> 30-60 Minutes	<input type="checkbox"/> Quick & Easy <input type="checkbox"/> Instant Pot <input type="checkbox"/> Slow Cooker <input type="checkbox"/> 30-60 Minutes	<input type="checkbox"/> Quick & Easy <input type="checkbox"/> Instant Pot <input type="checkbox"/> Slow Cooker <input type="checkbox"/> 30-60 Minutes	<input type="checkbox"/> Quick & Easy <input type="checkbox"/> Instant Pot <input type="checkbox"/> Slow Cooker <input type="checkbox"/> 30-60 Minutes	<input type="checkbox"/> Quick & Easy <input type="checkbox"/> Instant Pot <input type="checkbox"/> Slow Cooker <input type="checkbox"/> 30-60 Minutes
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WEEKEND	<input type="checkbox"/> Quick & Easy <input type="checkbox"/> Instant Pot	<input type="checkbox"/> Quick & Easy <input type="checkbox"/> Instant Pot	<input type="checkbox"/> Quick & Easy <input type="checkbox"/> Instant Pot	<input type="checkbox"/> Quick & Easy <input type="checkbox"/> Instant Pot	<input type="checkbox"/> Quick & Easy <input type="checkbox"/> Instant Pot	<input type="checkbox"/> Quick & Easy <input type="checkbox"/> Instant Pot	<input type="checkbox"/> Quick & Easy <input type="checkbox"/> Instant Pot

Using Your Blueprint

The Meal Plan Blueprint is fairly simple - you'll look at your schedule for the week and determine what kind of meal you need on each day. If I planned a nice pot roast dinner for a night that I'd only have twenty minutes to cook, I'd be setting myself up for failure.

For example, if I have a meeting every Tuesday morning and soccer practice every Thursday night, I'll mark "Quick and Easy" for those meals.

If I know I'll need to walk in the door to a hot dinner on Friday night, I'll mark "Slow Cooker."

Completing a Blueprint every time your schedule changes, then using it to create your meal plan for the week, sets you up for success and makes it easier than ever to stick to your meal plan.



Your Meal Plan Resource Lists

Creating Your Meal Plan

Resource Lists

Now that you have your week mapped out, it's time to figure out what to eat!

If you've ever struggled with meal ideas, I highly recommend making lists of favorites to keep on hand!

If you have lists of your favorite quick and easy meals, your favorite Instant Pot meals, your favorite Slow Cooker meals, your favorite 30-60 minute meals, etc, all you'll need to do is choose from a list and plug the meal into your blueprint for a quicker, easier meal plan.

Quick tip: When you make a new recipe, jot down the time it took you to prepare the recipe on the corner of the page. If the recipe is in a cookbook, you can use a sticky note or write it directly on the page. Alternatively, you could write down the length of time it takes to prepare the recipe next to the recipe name on the Table of Contents in the cookbook.

On a printed recipe, you can write the time down on the corner of the page and put it in a binder when you are done if it's a keeper. After some time you'll have an index of recipes with the exact time it takes to prepare them so you can plan accordingly.



Your Meal Plan Routines



Create a Meal Routine

The simplest and easiest way to plan breakfasts and lunches is with a meal routine. Repetition is the key to simplifying meal planning!

There are hundreds of ways to prepare eggs and oatmeal. Thousands of smoothie recipes out there. Hundreds of ways to make pancakes, even healthy ones, so you don't get bored!

Despite it's...er, repetitive nature, my family has never gotten bored with repeating meals this way! If you've ever downloaded a free meal plan from thewellplannedkitchen.com, you've probably seen that I repeat breakfasts and lunches in a pattern or routine.

This routine saves so much time and energy - if every Monday is oatmeal day, there's no guessing or thinking involved in the breakfast part of your Monday meal plan. But there IS a lot of freedom to experiment within the oatmeal category, AND many ways to prep ahead - you could make overnight oats, baked oatmeal, oatmeal in the crockpot, etc.



Your routine should be full of the general ideas of recipes, not specific recipes, to give you that room to experiment. The goal is to simplify your meal planning process (and to eliminate the "what's for breakfast?" question!

Use the Meal Plan Blueprint you already created to guide to help you ensure that your Meal Routine is a practical fit for your schedule.

Just like the Meal Plan Blueprint, the Routines are reusable! You can shuffle the meals from time to time if you'd like to, but the idea is to use this to simplify weekly meal planning and reuse the same Routine every week.



Breakfast Ideas

Your Breakfast Routine

Here's an example of a breakfast routine:

Mondays: oatmeal

Tuesdays: veggie scramble (I chop and sauté double the amount of mushrooms and zucchini so I can reuse the rest on Thursdays)

Wednesdays: granola

Thursdays: veggie scramble

Fridays: protein shakes or smoothies

Saturdays: triple batch of low-carb pancakes and waffles (we eat one batch and I freeze the rest)

Sundays: Low-Carb pancakes and bacon



I used to stick to something really fast and easy for Sundays, but I've found a planned, sit-down breakfast on Sunday mornings seems to soothe the chaos and has actually helped us get out of the house on time for church.

By pre-making the pancakes and sometimes the bacon on Saturday, I cut down on a big mess of dishes after our Sunday breakfast is done.

The point of this routine is that every Monday we eat the same thing. There's no squabbling or wondering what there is to eat. We've eliminated the six-breakfast mess, as I like to call it, that accumulates when six different people want six different breakfasts. I'm able to plan ahead and pre-cook a few things to save time, too!



Lunch Ideas

Your Lunch Routine

Following the same principles, here is a sample lunch routine:

Mondays: soup

Tuesdays: sandwiches

Wednesdays: leftovers

Thursdays: salad

Friday: veggie bake

Saturdays: smoothies or shakes

Sundays: salad – I pre-chop the veggies and add whatever cooked meat I have from leftovers throughout the week.

As you think about your meal plan for next week, think about ways to simplify! Try this simple meal planning method and plan to repeat breakfasts and lunches – it can help you save money by shopping in bulk for the month, too!





Do you need SUPER quick and easy lunch, snack, or dinner idea?

I used to be a fan of those Protein boxes that Starbucks sells – you know the ones that have hardboiled eggs in them? There are some yummy things in those boxes, but they can be pricey!

Instead of buying one of those boxes and trying to get my kids to eat most of the not-slimming food in there (or wasting it), I came up with my own quick and easy boxes I can make at home. They are filling, delicious, less expensive, and perfect to make in bulk for the week ahead!

If you don't have a spare moment, you could even buy already cooked boiled eggs or pre-cooked chicken at the grocery store to save even more time.

These come together in under 5 minutes, and they are so quick and easy!



All you have to do is choose a protein from the worksheet on the next page, then one item from each category listed.

My kids LOVE these boxes, and they are so deliciously customizable you could have different flavors and combinations all month long!

- I choose one protein, like 2-3 slices of deli meat or a hard-boiled egg.
- Then I add 1/8 to 1/4 cup of nuts, seeds, or cheese.
- Then I mix and match two 1/4 cup portions of berries or veggies.
- Last, I add 1 serving of a special low-carb treat, like Lily's chocolate.
-

That's it! Simple and satisfying! The printable worksheet has lots more ideas, but you can get the general idea and come up with something awesome!

Low-Carb Bento Boxes

Pack your box with one from each category:

CHOOSE YOUR PROTEIN:

- 2-3 slices deli meat or salami
- hard-boiled egg
- 1/3 cup chopped steak
- 1 small salmon filet
- 1/3 cup chopped chicken
- 1 bone-in piece of chicken
- 1-2 cooked low-carb meatballs
- 1 small pack drained tuna
- 1/4 - 1/2 cup cottage cheese

CHOOSE 1/4 CUP:

- nuts: almonds, pistachios, walnuts, pecans, peanuts.
- seeds: pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds
- pickles
- olives - black or green (spicy olives are a great addition)
- artichoke hearts
- cheese (string cheese or other favorite cheese)

ADD 1/4 CUP:

- strawberries
- blackberries
- raspberries

ADD 1 SERVING:

- Lily's Baking Chips
- Lily's Chocolate Bar
- Other low-carb chocolate (like Trim Healthy Mama Brand)
- dark chocolate

ADD 1/4 CUP:

- grape or cherry tomatoes
- sliced cucumbers
- or 1/2 of an avocado

Place each individual item you've chosen in a separate compartment of a bento box or segmented food storage container.

Make 3 at a time for several healthy grab-and-go meals throughout the week!



Dinner Ideas



Do you want to make meal planning as easy as possible? I think we could all use a bit of a break when it comes to planning, right? I've been talking about creating a meal plan blueprint, and how that works for breakfasts and lunches, but now it's time to take a closer look at dinners. If you want a great, no-fuss meal plan, family dinner theme nights might be the answer.

Family dinner theme nights sound a lot more elaborate or time-intensive than they actually are. I'm not thinking Shakespeare every Sunday, or Dress-Up-Like-a-Frog Fridays (although both sound fun). A theme night can be as simple or detailed as you make it, but the idea is that you plan on the same type of meal every week to simplify and reduce time spent meal planning. And of course, the actual recipes you choose would need to fit into your Meal Plan Blueprint!

Here's an example of my family's dinner meal routine:

Sit Down Sunday: This is a nice, sit-down family meal with either roast or chicken, vegetables, and potatoes for the kids. I like to make a whole roasted chicken and use up the leftovers in the following days for lunches. Certain seasons of my life have left me with Sunday as my only day with even a few hours of rest, and when that happens, Sit Down Saturdays make more sense so that I can enjoy leftovers on Sundays.

Meatless Monday: Usually rice and beans, but sometimes a big salad or egg dish fits the bill here, too.

Taco Tuesday: If we make rice and beans for Meatless Monday, Taco Tuesday is a great way to use up those leftovers. My family devours **Taco Stack Ups** as a healthier alternative but any tacos will work!

Whatever Wednesdays: Wednesdays are church days for us, so we usually end up eating leftovers or just whatever works in the time we have. Sometimes it'll be sandwiches and fruit, sometimes hot dogs or other foods that heat up quickly.

Throwback Thursdays: I usually have a little more time to cook on Thursdays, so this is the night that we make family favorites and childhood favorites. My kids' favorite and most often requested dish is my healthy twist on **Chicken Divan Casserole**.

Friday is Pizza Night: While I've experimented with Fun Friday, Frugal Friday, and Fish Friday, good old pizza night is our favorite Friday meal (even though it doesn't fit into our overall theme of alliteration).

Spaghetti Saturday or Soup Saturday: Just like it sounds, soup or spaghetti is an easy way to have a family meal on a busy weekend!



Create your Meal Routine

Use the ideas on the previous pages or the sample Meal Routine Ideas page to come up with your own Meal Routine. Please remember to keep these to simple, general meal ideas - you'll use these categories to actually create a Meal Plan in the next step!

Use the worksheets on the following pages to come up with a Meal Routine that suits your family's tastes and works with the Meal Plan Blueprint you already created.

Meal Routine Ideas

	BREAKFAST	LUNCH	DINNER
Monday	<i>oatmeal</i>	<i>salad</i>	<i>meatless</i>
Tuesday	<i>bacon & eggs</i>	<i>soup</i>	<i>tacos</i>
Wednesday	<i>smoothies</i>	<i>sandwiches</i>	<i>Italian</i>
Thursday	<i>muffins</i>	<i>bento boxes</i>	<i>fish</i>
Friday	<i>granola</i>	<i>smoothies</i>	<i>pizza</i>
Saturday	<i>pancakes</i>	<i>potato bar</i>	<i>leftovers</i>
Sunday	<i>omelets</i>	<i>pasta salad</i>	<i>roast & vegetables</i>

Meal Routine

	BREAKFAST	LUNCH	DINNER
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Saturday			
Sunday			



Your Meal Plan



Put it All Together

Once your Meal Plan Blueprint and Meal Plan Routine are complete, it's time for the fun part!

Your Meal Plan Blueprint and Meal Routine are reusable, and the ultimate goal for your Meal Plan is that it should be reusable, as well!

By following the Meal Plan Blueprint and Meal Plan Routine, you'll eliminate a lot of the guess work and stress from the meal planning process. Plugging in the specific recipes and meal ideas you want to use using your idea lists will transform the meal planning process into a quicker, easier, more enjoyable task - but it's still not one you'll need to perform every week!

The meal plans and shopping lists you create in the next step can be saved and reused to make meal planning even easier!

Choose a meal planning method that works for you

One of the most important things to note about meal planning is that there is no perfect meal planning system.

The beauty of creating a meal planning blueprint and your meal idea lists is that you can use them in many different ways - the purpose they serve is to help you plan well, no matter what that plan looks like.

You may find that one season of life lends itself well to a traditional meal plan, but that traditional meal plan may start to fail too often to be considered practical. You may find that too many meal options make it harder to eat at home, or that too few options make you feel stifled and don't satisfy your family.

It does take time to adjust to a new method of meal planning, and with that in mind I recommend giving it at least a solid month before you throw in the towel.

If, after a month, something just isn't working, it's OK to adapt!

What works right now may not work in the future, so keep in mind that it is OK to make a change if you need to adapt.

Method 1 - Make a Weekly or Monthly Meal Plan

After you've completed your Meal Plan Blueprint and Meal Plan Routine, all that's left is plugging the actual recipes into a Meal Plan. This is where your Meal Idea Lists will come in handy - just choose the recipes you'd like and drop them in.

Make sure that you refer to your Blueprint and Routine to choose meals that are time-appropriate for your schedule.

Feel free to use the Meal Planning pages in the appendix for inspiration!



Method 2 – Meal Plan Lists

What if you don't like meal planning, or find it difficult to stick to a meal plan?

If you have meal plan commitment issues, or if this season of life just doesn't lend itself to a typical meal plan, meal planning with a meal list is a great option.



One of the ways I've solved this problem is with my digital book (365: One Year of Healthy Meal Plans for Busy Families), which does all of the meal planning FOR you! My book uses the system below, but keep reading to see how you can DIY the process.

Method 2 – Meal Plan Lists

I know that meal planning is important – it helps you to save money, stay organized, eat up what's in your fridge, and eat healthy meals. And I've made lots of meal plans and stuck with them somewhat successfully, but sometimes the traditional methods just don't work as well. You may find yourself crossing out almost every meal you plan in favor of something else.



If you aren't much of a meal planner or meal plan follower, food lists can save the day! Favorite breakfasts, lunches, and snacks (only about a week's worth), and a list of favorite dinners to run through can be a very simple, yet effective, way to plan your meals.

Method 2 – Meal Plan Lists

Then I put my big old list on the fridge, shop for ingredients, and from this point, you can do one of two things:

1. Use your giant list to meal plan for the week, or month, if you are NOT a meal-plan-commitment-phobe and love planning for the week or month.

OR

2. Get one meal at a time from your list, just making sure that you thaw meat that's needed in time to prepare the meal you want.

I do both of these things – in busier seasons, when I don't have time to be as picky, I'll plan for the week or month and try to stick to it. When I have a little more time, or we don't need the structure, I'll just decide every morning what we will be eating for the rest of the day. That ensures that we are eating something we actually feel like eating, and gives me time to thaw the meat.

I've also put together a simple method for making meals in minutes on those busy nights when you don't have time to stick to your plan. This has been insanely helpful for me and has pretty much eliminated fast food and takeout in my home! You can learn more about this method and how you can make meals in minutes by visiting _____.



Method 3 - Digital Meal Planning

Digital Meal Planning is definitely worth mentioning! If you aren't a paper person, I really recommend completing the Meal Plan Blueprint on paper to get you started, and then making Meal Idea Lists (a Notes app on your phone is great for meal ideas!). Once you have completed those steps, you can make a meal plan on meal planning software or apps like MealTime or BigOven. If you follow the Trim Healthy Mama way of eating for weight loss, their membership site also has a drag-and-drop meal planner.

There are many ways to meal plan, but the best meal planning method will always be the one you will actually use.

Method 3 - Digital Meal Planning

Your Meal Plan Blueprint and Meal Idea Lists can still help a lot with digital meal planning!

1. Use your giant list to meal plan for the week, or month, if you are NOT a meal-plan-commitment-phobe and love planning for the week or month.

OR

2. Get one meal at a time from your list, just making sure that you thaw meat that's needed in time to prepare the meal you want.

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Save and Reuse!

Every meal plan and shopping list you create can be saved and reused!

Meal planning four weekly menus, or one monthly menu, and then reusing them throughout that quarter or season can save tons of time. If you fear repetition (which is possible, but unlikely if you're repeating a meal plan a month later), you can shuffle the same meals within the week to spice things up a bit!

Stick to Your Meal Plan

One of the biggest struggles with meal planning and avoiding food waste is actually sticking to the plan you created!

One simple way to increase your likelihood of sticking to your meal plan is to make a micro-investment in your dinner.

If you go into every meal having at least one thing already accomplished for that meal, you're more likely to stick to it! That could look like pre-cooking a protein, chopping vegetables, thawing meat, or setting ingredients on the counter for later in the day.

These little investments of your time can set you up for success and make it easier to stick to your meal plan (and to eat at home!).



Meal Planning Tips

MEAL PLAN BASED ON SALES

Meal planning based on favorite meals and foods can add up quickly. It can be very helpful to meal plan based on what's on sale at your local stores.

I recommend using the Flipp app to see which items are on sale, then plan meals centered around those items.

It can also be helpful to reserve a portion of your monthly grocery budget for meat and then stock up when you find a big sale.

In the following pages you'll find a price tracker sheet to help you keep track of the best sales!

MEAL PLAN BASED ON INVENTORY

It can also be very helpful to shop your fridge, pantry, and freezer first, then choosing recipes and meals centered around the items you already have.

If I already know I have three pounds of ground beef, I can flip through a cookbook or search for recipes that use ground beef and only add other needed items to my shopping list. Using what you have is a great way to cut back on grocery spending.

I've included printable inventory sheets to help you keep track of what you have!



Your Backup Plan

Make a Backup Plan

Have you ever thought about what you would eat if you didn't have fresh food handy?

Or have you ever thought that you rely on the drive through or ordering pizza too often?

I think so many of us have experienced this mindset – the thought process that we **need** to eat out because we don't have the time or energy required to make a healthy, on-plan meal.

Yes, sometimes it's amazing to take just a little extra time and make a yummy casserole or a more involved recipe. Those definitely have their place! Those recipes are comforting and absolutely perfect for a cold winter night!

But what happens when you plan to make a recipe, then find out you're missing an ingredient? Or find out that you don't have time to make the recipe you intended?

We may not always have time or ingredients for a gourmet meal, but we DO have the capability of making tasty meals at the last minute!



Quick & Easy Pantry Meals

Since developing the method I'll describe below, my family has nearly completely stopped eating out unless we plan to ahead of time. I've saved well over \$200 a month with just a few minutes of preparation – and I use these dinner ideas for lunches, too! I now keep a well-stocked pantry, with multiple meals organized and ready to go, and I know that if I have even as little as five minutes I can put a nutritious meal on the table. Even better, those 5 minutes will be easy – little to no chopping, no racing around the kitchen, just simple steps to a simple meal that the whole family will enjoy.

The simple solution is to keep four baskets in my pantry that each hold a complete dinner meal: ingredients, seasoning, and recipe cards. When I'm in a rush for dinner, I pull the basket out and cook. Everything is in one location, so there is no rushing around to find ingredients, or realizing I've run out of something I need. These meals can be prepared very quickly, which means you can have a quick, healthy dinner on the table with very little effort.

There are many, many ideas and recipes for pantry baskets in my book [Perpetually Prepped Kitchen: The Simple Method for Meals in Minutes](#).



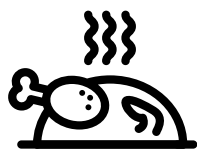
Backup Plan Meals

Aside from making pantry baskets for a plan B, you can rely on a list of other quick and easy meals, such as:

- canned soup
- smoothies
- salads
- rotisserie chicken
- sandwiches
- scrambled eggs

The important thing is to have a go-to list of backup meals, either from your pantry or things you know you keep stocked in your refrigerator, to make it easy to eat at home if you don't have time to cook.

Rotisserie Chicken last-minute meals



Rotisserie Chicken



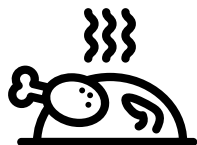
Fresh Veggies



Salad Dressing



Garden Salad



Rotisserie Chicken



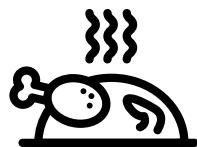
Healthy Pizza Crust



Pesto



Bake for
Chicken Pesto
Pizza



Rotisserie Chicken



1/2 Cup Mayonnaise



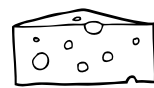
1/4 Cup Sliced Almonds



Chicken Salad



Rotisserie Chicken



2 Cups Cheddar Cheese



1 Can Mild Rotel



Broil for 5 min
for Cheesy Chili
Dip



Rotisserie Chicken



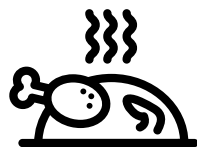
Rice & Beans



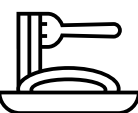
1 Jar of Salsa



Heat & Combine
for Burrito Bowls



Rotisserie Chicken



Pasta of Choice



Pesto, Alfredo, or Marinara



Heat & Toss for
Chicken Pasta



Rotisserie Chicken



Steamed Veggies



Rice



Heat & Serve
Chicken, Veggies
and Rice



Rotisserie Chicken



Chopped Veggies & Garlic



2 Quarts Chicken Broth



Combine, season,
and simmer for
Chicken Soup



Rotisserie Chicken



Cucumbers, Tomatoes, Red Onion



Feta Cheese & Dressing



Chop &
Combine for
Greek Salad



*Put Your Kitchen
on Autopilot*

Fill Your Freezer the Easy Way

What if I told you that you could be like one of those once a month cooking super moms and have a freezer full of dinners without the major once a month cooking spree?

Here's the deal: I love the concept of freezer cooking. How often are we super busy, or just don't feel like cooking, and need a quick meal? I love the idea of pulling a frozen dinner out of my freezer and feeding my family something healthy with minimal effort.

The problem is, I don't have a whole day to devote to freezer cooking. I don't even think I could manage a half day with all of these kiddo and work. Not to mention the shopping, prep, and calculations.

Here's my secret (feel free to "duh" me if you already do this): I make two or three dinners at once.

For example, last week I noticed that my freezer was getting empty, and I knew that we had a slow week planned (well... slower). So every dinner I made last week was made in triple portions. We ate one, and froze the other two. By Saturday night I had fourteen meals in my freezer. At the end of this week, I'll have 28 total...not to mention the extra sides I've made (quinoa and brown rice). Plus, I always batch cook chicken breasts and thighs at the beginning of the week to use for lunches, so it's pretty easy to find something to eat when we are in a hurry!

Cooking this way saves so much time and energy. It may take an extra five minutes (if, for example, you're grating cheese or use extra dishes), but on most nights it takes no time at all to throw the other two portions in a freezable bag or dish and put them in the freezer.

Tips for an Easier Breakfast

Let's be real - you may not always have time to prep ahead.

What if you hacked your day to make it more conducive to eating at home, and eating well?

The best way to make your day easier is to do just a little bit the night before.

If you can start a batch of crockpot oatmeal, set some frozen fruit in the refrigerator to thaw, get the coffee machine ready, or even make some bacon to refrigerate for the next day, you'll be in great shape!

If you absolutely don't have any time to prep ahead, pre-cooked bacon and sausage are available at most grocery stores and can make for a much easier morning. I always check the ingredients for hidden carbs and sugars, but these pre-cooked choices are definitely valid options.

Pre-cooked hard-boiled eggs and pre-chopped veggies can save the day in preparation for really busy weeks (like the first week of school, or when coming back from a vacation).

Thinking outside the box for breakfast can be a huge help when you don't have time to cook.



BREAKFAST TIPS

Even something as simple (and non-breakfasty-y) Grabbing some deli meat and string cheese on your way out the door can be a huge time-saver.

If you don't have anything prepped ahead, start breakfast right when you wake up in the morning - I mean before you exercise or make coffee - start a quick and easy task to make sure you get a yummy breakfast.

The key here is to make sure you aren't spending a ton of time on whatever you decide to do. Wake up, go straight to the kitchen to start something, and get on with your day. That means the something you start needs to be just a few steps - or even ONE step. If it's too complicated, like a breakfast casserole, you just won't have time to do it.

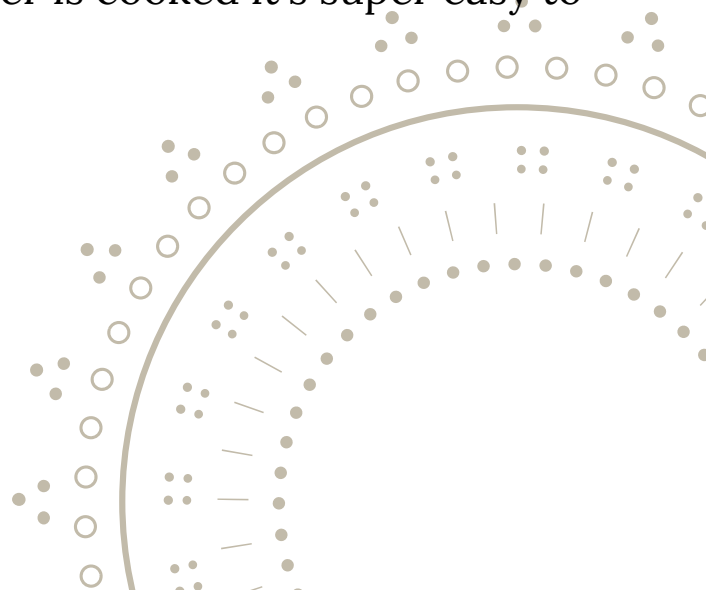


Start something and walk away (or stay nearby but don't necessarily spend a lot of hands-on time in the kitchen). With the ideas below, you'll want to start them, watch them as needed when you go about your next tasks, then come back and have them ready to go.

Once you've started your breakfast task first thing in the morning, you can make coffee and do devotions, start load of dishes , get kids ready for school or make your bed while it's cooking. Of course you'll want to keep an eye on anything you're preparing, but breakfast is not the best time of day to be planted in your kitchen.

By spending just a few minutes before you jump into your morning, you get a great start to your day by getting things accomplished. And you get to eat a delicious, filling breakfast!

- Put bacon in the oven to cook. When I come back to pull the bacon out of the oven, I'll usually let it cool for a few minutes while I put my shoes on or something like that, then we'll just eat it and go.
- Start steaming cauliflower rice for THM's Unlikely Heroes Breakfast (on the membership site), either in the microwave or on the stovetop. The cauli rice is the most time-consuming part of that recipe, so once the cauliflower is cooked it's super easy to throw the rest of it together.



- Throw eggs in the oven (Please don't actually throw them. That sounds messy. Preheat your oven to 350, spray each cup of a muffin tin with coconut oil spray, then crack an egg into each cup. Sprinkle with salt and pepper, then bake for 15 minutes). After 15 minutes, I'll (carefully) just scoop them out with a spoon and they're pretty much ready to go.
- Start some mushrooms sautéing in a pan with garlic. To make this even faster, I buy pre-sliced mushrooms and frozen pre-chopped garlic (HUGE time-saver!). I just put them in the pan with some butter, season them with salt and pepper, and set the heat on low. Getting these non-starchy veggies in with my breakfast is a win! When they're soft and cooked through I'll serve them with hard-boiled eggs if I have them already cooked. If not, I'll have some collagen in my coffee and call it good.
- Mix up a muffin in a mug and put it in the microwave. I usually let mine sit in the microwave until I'm ready to eat it.
- If I mix up a quick batch of granola, I'll double or triple it - that way I have breakfast throughout the week! Once I get it mixed up I can eat it right away or store it for later.
- Set out some frozen fruit to thaw for an E breakfast, or put an airtight ziploc bag of frozen fruit into a bowl of cold water to thaw for about 15 minutes while you get your day started.

Honestly, a breakfast casserole or pancakes are best made on the weekends or on days when you have time to make them - both of those meals make excellent leftovers throughout the week!

But for the purposes of quick and easy meals when you haven't had time to prepare, or when nothing is ready - starting your mornings by making a healthy breakfast can empower you to get through the rest of the day.

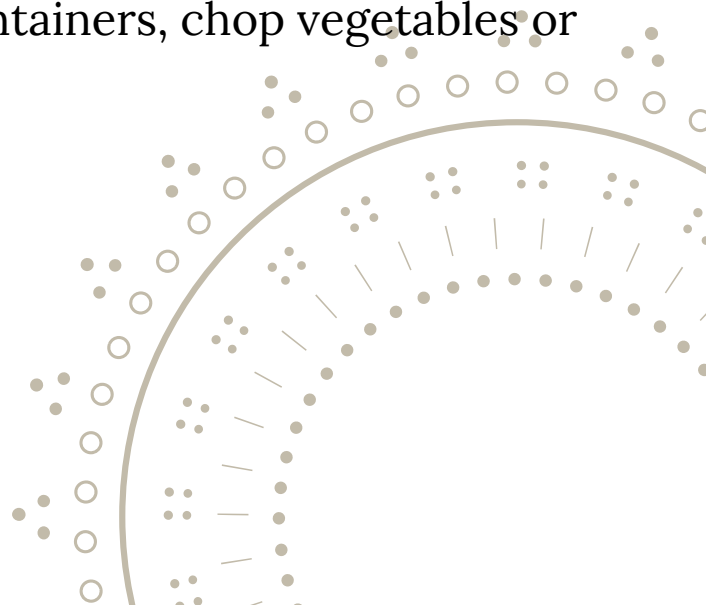
Tips for Easy, Healthy Snacks

Bags of frozen fruit can come to the rescue for quick, healthy, family-friendly snacks. Frozen mango, cherries, or berries are available at Costco - as an added bonus, many of the I buy big bags of frozen fruit at Costco - mangoes and cherries are delicious, and many of their frozen fruit options are organic.

Whether you buy the frozen fruit at Costco or smaller sized bags at other stores, it can be a huge time-saver to portion the fruit into snack-sized ziploc bags and put them in the freezer.

That frozen fruit is great with collagen tea, or in oatmeal. After it's been out for 15 - 20 minutes, it's just thawed enough to be perfect for most people! You can also thaw it further if you'd like to.

If you can grab just a few minutes to prep ahead, you can pre-measure dry shake ingredients into small containers, pre-measure dry latte ingredients into containers, chop vegetables or fruit, or portion nuts into snack bags.



Tips to Reduce Food Waste



Do you ever toss produce that's cooled its' heels in your refrigerator for just a little too long?

It can be tough to remember what you have on hand, and even tougher to remember to use it before it goes bad. Aside from making sure you don't overbuy, here are some simple strategies to help you avoid wasting food:

1. USE YOUR GROCERY STORE RECEIPT AS A GUIDE.

When you get home, put your grocery store receipt on the refrigerator. If you have kids or think you may be unlikely to get the receipt home intact, you can snap a picture immediately after you leave the store.

Highlighting perishable items on the receipt with a neon highlighter can also be extremely helpful because it will remind you of what you have on hand.

Using the receipt (or a photo of it) to meal plan is a great way to ensure that you plan to use what you've just purchased.

TIPS TO REDUCE FOOD WASTE



3. HAVE A LEFTOVER NIGHT!

This is so simple, but it can save so much money! Sundays have become leftover days at our house, and it is an easy way to eat up any leftover food or unused food.

Leftovers don't have to be exact repeats, either – we often use leftover meats in tacos, leftover sauces in casseroles, etc. My favorite way to use leftovers is to make a giant salad bar. It's fun to get creative with your leftovers and come up with a whole new meal!

4. ONCE AGAIN, ALWAYS “SHOP” IN YOUR FRIDGE, PANTRY, AND FREEZER BEFORE YOU GO SHOPPING!

Nothing saves more than using what you already have! When you meal plan, try to incorporate ingredients you already have stocked before coming up with new meal ideas that need need to be shopped for. Following this step can save time and money, and it can also keep your food from going to waste.

5. CLEAN OUT THE REFRIGERATOR ONCE A WEEK, AT LEAST!

I recommend taking everything off of the shelves and setting them on the counter, unless the items are expired and needs to be tossed. Next, I recommend taking a picture of all of the food that just came out of the refrigerator for the next time you need to meal plan. This saves time AND money!

Wipe down the shelves and drawers with disinfecting spray or hot, soapy water, wipe the bottoms of the products you pulled out previously, and return them to their rightful places. Then it's time to wipe down the counters.

QUICK TIP: USE PLASTIC LUNCH TRAYS IN YOUR MEAT DRAWER SO THAT IF YOU HAVE ANY DRIPS THE FRIDGE STAYS NICE AND CLEAN.





*Put Your Planning
on Autopilot*



Your Weekly Schedule

It is incredibly important that you plan to plan.

Meal planning is so necessary for reducing food waste, saving money, and eating well at home but it is often one of those things that falls by the wayside.

I follow a weekly routine that allows for me to do all of my planning and paper-related tasks on one particular day of the week. It's become a habit - something I do weekly but not something I think a lot about.

Even if you don't arrange your days in a pattern with daily assigned tasks, choosing a day and time to meal plan can be a huge help in assuring that your meal planning is accomplished.

The beauty of having completed a Meal Plan Blueprint and Meal Idea Lists is that your meal plans can come together very quickly and easily.

Even better, once you have a collection of meal plans and shopping lists saved to reuse, your "meal planning time" will only require you to choose a meal plan from you collection - leaving you more time to focus on other important tasks.



Sample Weekly Schedule

Monday – Laundry Day – wash, fold, and put away the laundry (you may need to do more loads throughout the week, but do the bulk of it on Monday!), clean the laundry room/laundry area.

Tuesday – Office Day – Pay bills, sort and put away mail and paperwork, fill out forms, budget, **meal plan**, make grocery lists, cut coupons, etc.

Wednesday – Errand Day – Schedule lessons, doctor's appointments, etc. on this day, and get your grocery shopping done while you're out. The night before, we pack lunches, set out everything we'll need for the day (including coloring books for the little ones), and plan to be out for awhile.



Sample Weekly Schedule

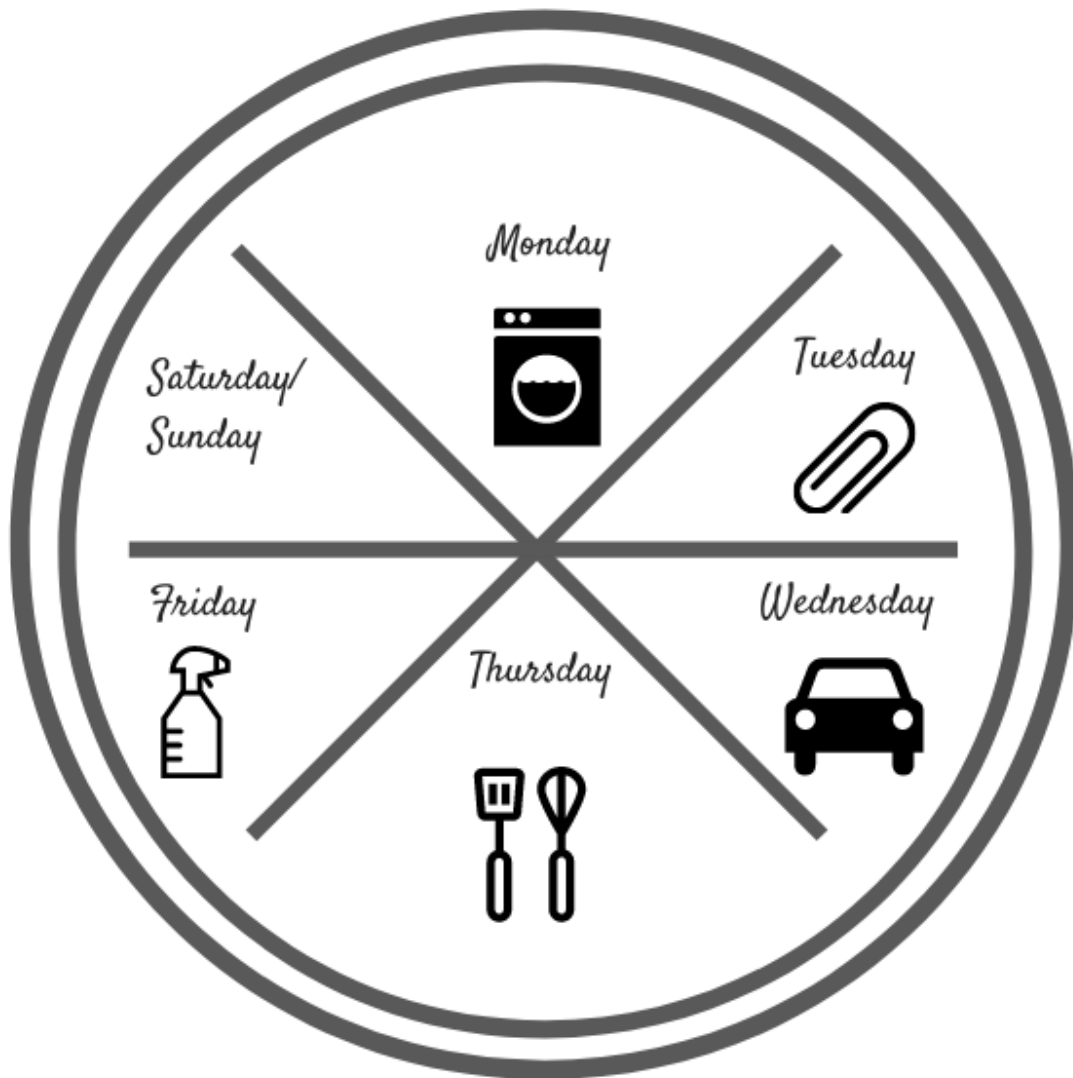
Thursday – Cooking Day – This is the day I do the bulk of my baking. I also choose one cabinet, one drawer, and one refrigerator shelf to deep clean on this day.

Friday – Cleaning Day – On Fridays we deep clean bedrooms and bathrooms in addition to regular chores. This is also the day that I choose one organizing project to complete.

Saturday & Sunday – sometimes we might do some yard work on Saturday, but generally we don't schedule anything besides church on those two days. Scheduling "blank" days in the midst of a busy schedule is a blessing!



Weekly Routine





Your Meal Plan Printables

Meal Planning Quick Start Worksheet

| Choose a time to plan : _____

| Choose length of time to plan for: _____

| Make your Meal Plan Blueprint: What types of meals do you need/want for each day of the week?

Sun. Mon. Tues. Wed. Thurs. Fri. Sat.

7 Breakfast Ideas:

- _____
- _____
- _____
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7 Lunch Ideas:

- _____
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7 Snack Ideas:

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My Family's Favorite Meals:

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Action Items:

- Create a Meal Plan Blueprint
- Create Meal Idea Lists
- Create a Meal Plan

Notes: _____

Low-Carb Bento Boxes

Pack your box with one from each category:

CHOOSE YOUR PROTEIN:

- 2-3 slices deli meat or salami
- hard-boiled egg
- 1/3 cup chopped steak
- 1 small salmon filet
- 1/3 cup chopped chicken
- 1 bone-in piece of chicken
- 1-2 cooked low-carb meatballs
- 1 small pack drained tuna
- 1/4 - 1/2 cup cottage cheese

CHOOSE 1/4 CUP:

- nuts: almonds, pistachios, walnuts, pecans, peanuts.
- seeds: pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds
- pickles
- olives - black or green (spicy olives are a great addition)
- artichoke hearts
- cheese (string cheese or other favorite cheese)

ADD 1/4 CUP:

- strawberries
- blackberries
- raspberries

ADD 1 SERVING:

- Lily's Baking Chips
- Lily's Chocolate Bar
- Other low-carb chocolate (like Trim Healthy Mama Brand)
- dark chocolate

ADD 1/4 CUP:

- grape or cherry tomatoes
- sliced cucumbers
- or 1/2 of an avocado

Place each individual item you've chosen in a separate compartment of a bento box or segmented food storage container.

Make 3 at a time for several healthy grab-and-go meals throughout the week!

Freezer Inventory

Inventory Date:

Item/Meal:

Quantity:

Exp. Date:

Pantry Inventory

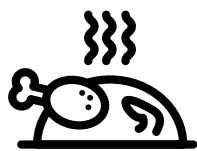
Inventory Date:

Item/Meal:

Quantity:

Exp. Date:

Rotisserie Chicken last-minute meals



Rotisserie Chicken



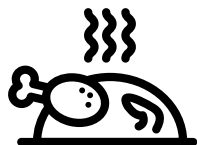
Fresh Veggies



Salad Dressing



Garden Salad



Rotisserie Chicken



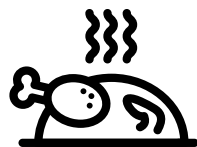
Healthy Pizza Crust



Pesto



Bake for
Chicken Pesto
Pizza



Rotisserie Chicken



1/2 Cup Mayonnaise



1/4 Cup Sliced Almonds



Chicken Salad



Rotisserie Chicken



2 Cups Cheddar Cheese



1 Can Mild Rotel



Broil for 5 min
for Cheesy Chili
Dip



Rotisserie Chicken



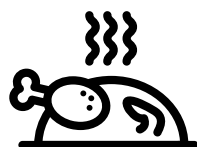
Rice & Beans



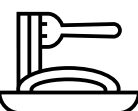
1 Jar of Salsa



Heat & Combine
for Burrito Bowls



Rotisserie Chicken



Pasta of Choice



Pesto, Alfredo, or Marinara



Heat & Toss for
Chicken Pasta



Rotisserie Chicken



Steamed Veggies



Rice



Heat & Serve
Chicken, Veggies
and Rice



Rotisserie Chicken



Chopped Veggies & Garlic



2 Quarts Chicken Broth



Combine, season,
and simmer for
Chicken Soup



Rotisserie Chicken



Cucumbers, Tomatoes, Red Onion



Feta Cheese & Dressing



Chop &
Combine for
Greek Salad

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7 Snack Ideas:

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My Family's Favorite Meals:

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Action Items:

- Create a Meal Plan Blueprint
- Create Meal Idea Lists
- Create a Meal Plan

Notes: _____

Meals this Week

WEEK OF: _____

Breakfasts

Lunches

Dinners

Snacks

5 DAY MEAL PLAN

DAY
01

DAY
02

DAY
03

DAY
04

DAY
05

thewellplannedkitchen.com



M E A L P L A N

Breakfast

Lunch

Dinner

Sun

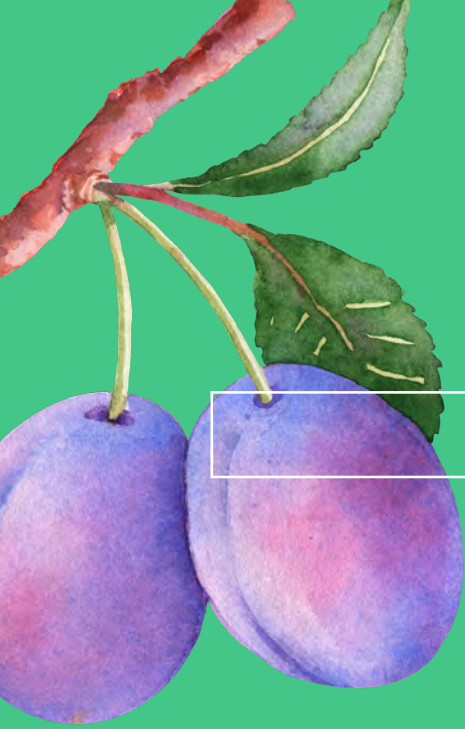
Mon

Tue

Wed

Thu

Fri



MEAL PLAN

DATE _____

BREAKFAST

LUNCH

DINNER

MON

TUE

WED

THU

FRI

	BREAKFAST	LUNCH	DINNER
MON			
TUE			
WED			
THU			
FRI			



WEEKLY MEAL PLAN

MON

TUES

WED

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SAT

SUN

THINGS TO BUY

NOTES:

Meal Planner

January

Breakfasts

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Dinners

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Lunches

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Snacks

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Meal Planner

February

Breakfasts

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Dinners

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Lunches

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Snacks

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Meal Planner

March

Breakfasts

Dinners

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Lunches

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Snacks

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Meal Planner

April

Breakfasts

Dinners

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Lunches

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Snacks

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Meal Planner

May

Breakfasts

Dinners

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Lunches

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Snacks

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Meal Planner

June

Breakfasts

Dinners

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Lunches

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Snacks

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Meal Planner

July

Breakfasts

Dinners

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Lunches

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Snacks

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Meal Planner

● August

Breakfasts

Dinners

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Lunches

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Snacks

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Meal Planner

September

Breakfasts

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Dinners

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Lunches

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Snacks

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Meal Planner

October

Breakfasts

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Dinners

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Lunches

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Snacks

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Meal Planner

November

Breakfasts

Dinners

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Lunches

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Snacks

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Meal Planner

December

Breakfasts

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Dinners

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Lunches

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Snacks

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WEEKLY MEAL PLAN

MON

TUE

WED

THU

FRI

SAT

SUN





DAILY MEAL PLAN

Breakfast

Lunch

Dinner

Snack/Dessert



Dedication

This book is dedicated to my five amazing kids. Through incredible hardship you've persevered and become stronger than you were before. I hope you always remember that God is there for you 100% of the time, even when you feel alone. I'm always in your corner and I love you more than I could ever put into words.

Love Always,

Mom

About Jen



Jen is a single parent of five children and is passionate about helping busy moms reach their health goals even if they are too busy, too tired, or don't want to spend tons of time in the kitchen.

Jen is a Certified Trim Healthy Mama Coach and has authored four books to support a busy, healthy lifestyle. Jen's work can be seen in the book Trim Healthy Table and on the websites MoneySavingMom.com, ScaryMommy.com, and LivingWellSpendingLess.com.

At Jen's website, thewellplannedkitchen.com, she provides tools and strategies to help you lose weight and reach your goals all while spending less time in the kitchen.



Thank you for reading The Well-Planned Kitchen!



thewellplannedkitchen.com

youtube.com/thewellplannedkitchen

facebook.com/thewellplannedkitchen

instagram.com/thewellplannedkitchen

pinterest.com/thewellplannedkitchen





Breakfast (264 calories)
• 1 cup nonfat plain Greek yogurt
• 1/4 cup muesli
• 1/4 cup blueberries

A.M. Snack (84 calories)
• 5 dried apricots

Lunch (335 calories)
Chickpea & Veggie Salad

- 2 cups mixed greens
 - 3/4 cup chickpeas, rinsed
 - 1/2 cup chopped walnuts
 - 1/2 Tbsp. chopped walnuts
- Combine ingredients and top salad with 1 Tbsp. each balsamic vinegar and olive oil.

P.M. Snack (70 calories)
• 2 clementines

... (434 calories)
...ash & Red Lentil Curry

FREE THM-SPECIFIC MEAL PLANNING CLASS!

[Click HERE](#)

To access your completely free, bonus meal planning class to help you meal plan for Trim Healthy Mama!