



MEAL PREP GUIDE

Particularly popular amongst busy people, Meal Prepping is the concept of preparing whole meals or dishes ahead of schedule to save a lot of time during the hectic school and workweek. Despite what people may think, there are various ways to meal prep — not all of which involve spending a whole Sunday afternoon cooking dishes for the week to come.

You can choose methods that work best for you, like a popular option suggested by one of our Meal Prep fans... “Just Make More!” When cooking a favorite dish for dinner for yourself or family, make more by batch cooking. Basically, it’s the same prep time, mess, and cooking time, after which just Snap Pak® the leftovers to the freezer for another dinner or pop in the fridge for lunches later that week. For other quick Meal Prep options check out our Snap Prep recipe section at snappakusa.com for FREE healthy and delicious recipes, like the ones included here, from top Meal Prep Chefs from around the country.

By having self-prepared nutritious meals on hand will not only save money, but it allows you to control portion size for those looking to lose or maintain healthy body weight. Especially when you’re overwhelmed and exhausted by helping to avoid unhealthy options like frozen dinners or fast-food takeout.

GETTING STARTED WITH MEAL PREP

- 1. DECIDE WHICH DAY OF THE WEEK IS BEST FOR YOUR PREPPING.**
- 2. SELECT A MEAL OR TWO YOU WANT TO PREP IN ADVANCE.**
- 3. WHEN YOU GO INGREDIENTS SHOPPING, BE SURE YOU HAVE ENOUGH SNAP PAK® CONTAINERS.**
- 4. PREP YOUR MEAL(s).**

STEPS TO A SUCCESSFUL MEAL PREP

The method that will work best for you depends on your goals and daily routine. For instance, make-ahead breakfast might work best if you’re looking to streamline your morning routine. On the other hand, keeping batch-cooked meals in your freezer is particularly handy for those who have limited time in the evenings.

The different meal-prepping methods can also be mixed and matched depending on your own circumstances. Start by choosing the most appealing way, then slowly experiment with the others to determine what suits you best.

PICKING THE RIGHT NUMBER AND VARIETY OF MEALS

- Figuring out how many meals to make and what to include in each meal can sometimes be tricky. The best first step is to check your calendar to decide the number of breakfasts, lunches, and dinners you’ll need for the upcoming week. Also, remember to account for times you’re likely to eat out — for instance, on dates, at brunch with friends, or at client dinners.
- When selecting which meals to make, it’s best to start with a limited number of recipes that you already know. This will ease your transition into meal planning. That said, it’s also important to avoid picking only one recipe for the whole week. This lack of variety can lead to boredom and won’t provide your body with the proper nutritional balance it needs.

- Try picking meals that contain different vegetables and protein-rich foods, as well as varied, complex carbs such as brown rice, quinoa or sweet potatoes. Integrating a vegetarian or vegan meal into the mix is another way to add variety.

- Grocery shopping can be a big time waster. To half the time you spend in the grocery store, keep a detailed once a week grocery list organized by supermarket departments and aisles. Of course, if you have access to a grocery delivery service is the easiest way to spend less time shopping.

• TIPS TO CUT DOWN ON COOKING TIME

Few people look forward to spending hours in the kitchen while meal prepping. This is only natural since the key incentive for meal prepping is reduced cooking time. The following methods will help streamline prep and cook times.

• STICK TO A CONSISTENT SCHEDULE

Meal prepping works best when you stick to a regular schedule. For instance, you might reserve Sunday mornings for grocery shopping and meal prepping, or you could select Monday evenings for making lunches for the rest of the week. The schedule is up to you and should fit your weekly routine simplifying the decision-making process, freeing up mental space for other things.

• PICK THE RIGHT COMBINATION OF RECIPES

Picking the right combination of recipes will help you become more effective in the kitchen, save time by selecting recipes with different cooking methods. A good rule of thumb is to stick to one oven meal and a maximum of two stovetop meals at once — for example, loaded baked potatoes, a stir-fry, and a soup. Then simply add meals that don't require cooking to the mix, such as sandwiches or salads.

• ORGANIZE YOUR PREP AND COOK TIMES

- A well-thought-out workflow will save you much time in the kitchen. To best organize your prep and cook times, start with the recipe requiring the longest cook time; once that meal is underway, focus on the rest.

- For extra time savings, double-check the ingredients for all recipes before starting. This way, if two recipes require diced onions or julienned peppers, you'll be able to chop the total quantity at once.

- Using automated gadgets such as a rice cooker or slow cooker can further streamline your workflow.

- Reserve the cold meals for last since they can easily be made while the other meals are cooking

Food safety is an important yet an often overlooked component of meal prepping. Cooking, storing and reheating foods at the right temperature can prevent food poisoning, which affects an estimated 9.4 million Americans each year.

HERE ARE SOME GOVERNMENT-APPROVED FOOD SAFETY GUIDELINES:

- **BE MINDFUL OF PROPER TEMPERATURES:** Make sure your refrigerator is kept at 40°F (5°C) or below and your freezer at 0°F (-18°C) or below.
- **COOL FOODS QUICKLY:** Always refrigerate fresh foods and meals within two hours of purchase or cooking. For quick cooling, spread out cooked foods in shallow containers and immediately place in your refrigerator. Keep storage times in mind: Cook fresh meat, poultry and fish within two days of purchase and red meat within 3–5 days. In the meantime, keep them on the bottom shelf of your refrigerator.
- **COOK AT THE RIGHT TEMPERATURES:** Meats should be cooked until they reach an internal temperature of at least 165°F (75°C), as this kills most bacteria.
- **THAW FOODS SAFELY:** Thaw frozen foods or meals in your refrigerator instead of on your countertop. For faster thawing, submerge foods in cold tap water, changing the water every 30 minutes.
- **REHEAT FOODS ONLY ONCE:** The more times you cool and reheat a food, the higher the risk of food poisoning. That's why defrosted foods should only be reheated once.
- **REHEAT FOODS AT THE RIGHT TEMPERATURE:** All meals should be reheated to 165°F (75°C) before being eaten. Frozen meals should be reheated and eaten within 24 hours of defrosting.
- **USE LABELS:** Remember to label and date your containers so that you can consume foods within the food-safe period.
- **EAT FOODS WITHIN THE RIGHT TIME PERIOD:** Refrigerated meals should be consumed within 3–4 days and frozen meals within 3–6 months.