



Efficient Meal Planning for Busy Families

I. Getting Started

- Setting clear goals for healthy eating: have a family meeting and discuss shared health and dietary goals in a positive and inclusive manner
- Inventory check: know what food you already have to help build menus and reduce grocery costs; discard expired items or donate items that don't fit with your goals to the local food bank
- Review your schedule: Which days can you do meal prep and cook? When will you need quick on-the-go meals or snacks?
- Involve the whole family in the planning and cooking process: allow children to participate in a safe age-appropriate manner
- Embrace leftovers

II. Planning Your Weekly Menu

- Create a list of several favorite meals to keep on repeat
- Batch meals with overlapping ingredients to make meal prep more efficient
- Utilize one-pot and sheet pan meals or use a slow cooker or air fryer when possible
- Plan your menu: Use the meal planner included in this handout or an app like Plan To Eat. Make a grocery list to streamline shopping. Scan the QR code below for 20% off the Plan To Eat subscription.

III. Grocery Shopping Tips

- Keep a master list of frequently purchased items
- Shop efficiently: start at the periphery, head to the beans & grains aisle, then check out the frozen vegetable aisle; skip aisles with items that don't align with your goals
- Nutrition label essentials: check ingredient list for whole grains, look for no added sugar under carbs, keep saturated fat low and trans-fat at zero; sodium should be lower than calories per serving
- Take advantage of online ordering and curbside pick-up if available

V. Streamlining Meal Prep

- Organize the kitchen for efficiency
- Batch prep repeating ingredients for quick use throughout the week
- Chop extra of staples like onions or peppers and freeze for future use
- Involve the entire family in meal prep tasks in an age-appropriate manner
- Store food in labeled, reusable containers to grab and use quickly



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VI. Sample one-week meal plan

- Breakfast: overnight oats, egg bites, smoothies
- Lunch: grain bowls, sandwiches, fruit salad
- Dinner: roasted vegetable and wild rice pilaf, quick spaghetti, soup

VII. Meal Prep Guide

- Cut and roast all vegetables in advance on sheet pans
- Dice onions and garlic and store in fridge (chop extra and freeze)
- Rinse berries and other fruit
- Cook grains (cook extra and freeze)
- For breakfast:
- Add dry ingredients for overnight oats to enough mason jars for the week. Add milk and berries to the jars you want to serve the next morning and store in the fridge overnight.
- Make a big batch of savory egg bites in muffin tins in advance. Put enough for 2-3 days in the fridge and freeze the rest to heat & eat later.
- Freeze individual portions of berries & greens for smoothies in reusable bags. Blend with milk or juice in the morning.
- For lunch:
- Grain bowl: Cook wild rice and roast vegetables in advance. Assemble all ingredients except dressing in containers in advance. When ready to eat, just add dressing.
- Sandwiches: Prep veggies in advance and assemble with hummus and cheese when ready to eat.
- Side: Make a fruit salad with berries & other fruit. Store in individual containers to add to lunch box before school.
- For dinner:
- Pilaf: Cook wild rice and roast vegetables in advance. Use some immediately for the pilaf & grain bowls, and freeze the rest to use later in the spaghetti & soup.
- Quick Spaghetti: Blend the roasted vegetables with your favorite jar of spaghetti sauce. Blending in canned white beans adds protein and make a nice thick sauce. Serve with a side salad.
- Soup: Blend roasted vegetable with sautéed onion and garlic. As with the spaghetti, adding in a can of white beans will give you a nice creamy soup with extra protein. Top with toasted pumpkin seeds & serve with whole wheat crackers or baguette.

All recipes are plant-based. You can add in shredded baked chicken or lean ground beef if desired.



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Recipes

Overnight Oats

- ½ cup Old fashioned rolled oats
- 1 Tbs Chia seeds
- 2 Tbs Pea protein powder
- ½ cup Mixed berries
- 1 tsp Vanilla
- 1 Tbs Maple syrup
- 1 cup Soy or almond milk
- ½ cup Greek yogurt
- Add oats, chia seeds, and protein powder to enough jars for a week of breakfasts in advance
- Add fruit, vanilla, syrup, and milk to enough jars for the following day and store in the fridge overnight.
- Top with yogurt in the morning and enjoy.

Egg Bites

(From www.ju.st website)

- 16 oz carton of Just Egg plant-based scramble or 6 large eggs, beaten
- ½ cup Onion, finely diced
- 1 clove Garlic, minced
- ½ cup Broccoli florets, chopped fine
- ½ cup Sweet potato or carrot, grated
- ½ tsp Salt
- Pepper to taste
- Preheat oven to 350°F
- Mix all ingredients together
- Use a silicone muffin tin, or line muffin tin with baking cups.
- Fill each muffin cup ½ to ¾ full with mixture and bake. Bake for 10-12 minutes for mini-muffins or 12-15 for full-sized muffins. Center will be firm, and edges will be golden when done.

Smoothies

- 1 cup spinach or kale
- 2 cups mixed berries
- ½ medium sized apple
- 1 Tbs ground flax seed
- 1 Tbs chia seed
- 3 Tbs Pea protein powder
- 2 cups liquid of choice
- Freeze pre-cut greens and fruit to reusable bags until ready to use.
- Mix seeds & protein powder in reusable containers and store in a cool, dry place until ready to use.
- Blend fruit, greens, seeds, and protein powder with preferred liquid until smooth: I prefer a combination of 100% orange juice and tart cherry juice. Other options include plant-based milk like soy, oat, or almond



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Roasted Vegetable Grain Bowls

(recipe serves 4; adjust as needed)

- 2 cups cooked grain: use wild rice from pilaf recipe or try quinoa, farro, or brown rice
- 2 cups roasted sweet potatoes or butternut squash
- 1 cups shelled edamame
- 1 cup thin carrot slices (use vegetable peeler)
- 1 cup sweet corn
- 2 cups thinly chopped kale or spinach
- 4 Tbs pickled vegetables (jalapenos, red onion, beets, or sauerkraut)
- 4 Tbs toasted pumpkin seeds
- Dressing:
 - ¼ cup olive oil
 - 1 lemon, zested & juiced
 - 1 ½ tsp oregano
 - 1 tsp salt
 - 1 tsp black pepper
- Set out 4 glass meal prep bowls
- To each bowl, add ½ cup grain, ½ cup greens, ½ cup roasted vegetable, ¼ cup each edamame, carrots, & corn, pickled vegetables, and pumpkin seeds
- Cover with lid and store in fridge.
- In a mason jar, add all dressing ingredients and store in fridge
- When ready to serve, shake dressing well and pour over grain bowl
- Mix and enjoy

Hummus & Veggie Sandwich

- Whole grain bread
- Hummus (I use roasted red pepper hummus, but any flavor is fine)
- Spinach, kale, or romaine lettuce
- Thinly sliced carrots and cucumber (use a vegetable peeler)
- Pickled vegetable if desired, well drained
- Lightly toast bread
- Spread with hummus and add vegetables
- Add sliced plant-based or dairy cheese if desired
- Serve with a side of mixed berry fruit salad



Roasted Vegetable-Wild Rice Pilaf

- 2 cups sweet potato or butternut squash, cut into 1-inch cubes
- 16 oz sliced fresh baby bella mushrooms
- 2 cups fresh broccoli florets
- 2 cups brussels sprouts, halved
- 1 Tbs olive oil
- 1 ½ tsp ground thyme
- ½ tsp salt
- Pepper to taste
- 1 medium onion, diced
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 cup wild rice
- 3 cups low sodium vegetable broth
- ½ cup sliced almonds
- ½ cup shredded parmesan, vegan or dairy
- Preheat oven to 425°F
- Line 2 sheet pans with parchment paper and spread sweet potato, mushrooms, broccoli, and brussels sprouts evenly onto pans
- Drizzle with olive oil and season with thyme, salt, and pepper
- Roast for 15-20 minutes, or until soft and starting to brown
- While vegetables are roasting, sauté onions and garlic in a dutch oven or large pan until fragrant and golden
- Add rice and broth. Bring to a boil and then reduce heat and simmer for 30 minutes, or until liquid is absorbed and rice is cooked
- Add roasted vegetables and sliced almonds and gently mix
- Taste and adjust salt and pepper to taste
- Top with parmesan to serve

Quick & Easy Spaghetti

- 1 package whole wheat spaghetti
- 15 oz jar spaghetti sauce
- 32 oz can diced fire-roasted tomatoes
- 2 cups roasted vegetable from pilaf recipe
- 1 tsp olive oil
- ½ cup onion, diced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 15 oz can white beans, drained & rinsed
- Shredded parmesan, vegan or dairy
- Cook noodles according to package directions
- In a large pot, sauté onions & garlic in olive oil
- Add in jarred sauce, diced tomatoes, roasted vegetables, and white beans
- Cook for 10 minutes, until heated through
- Blend with an immersion blender to blend until smooth. (Or blend in small batches in a blender; use caution as hot liquids can explode out of top causing burns)
- Serve sauce over noodles
- Top with parmesan if desired



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Roasted vegetable soup

- Leftover roasted vegetables from pilaf
- 3 cups low sodium vegetable broth
- 15 oz can white beans
- 1/2 cup sautéed onion & garlic
- ½ tsp salt
- Pepper to taste
- Toasted pumpkin seeds
- Add all ingredients to a blender and blend until smooth
- Heat over medium
- Top with toasted pumpkin seeds
- Serve with whole wheat crackers or baguette and a side salad.

Eat Your Greens



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