

A top-down view of a marble countertop with various meal prep items. In the top left is a round glass bowl of spiral pasta with shrimp and green peas. To its right is a rectangular glass container with chicken and green beans. Further right is another rectangular container with cherry tomatoes and basil. In the bottom center is a round glass bowl of sliced apples on a bamboo cutting board. To its right is a rectangular container with rice, chicken, and broccoli. A small bowl of nuts is on the left, and a green smoothie bottle is in the bottom left corner. A central teal rounded rectangle contains the title text.

# THE ULTIMATE MEAL PLANNING GUIDE

*Dietitian.Vanika*



# Welcome to the Ultimate MEAL PLANNING GUIDE

## WHY I CREATED THIS GUIDE...

Creating lifestyle changes is hard enough, and now that we're throwing in meal planning and preparation we know it can feel overwhelming. So we created this guide to help simplify it down so you can stop overthinking it, and reap the benefits of prepping and planning ahead of time!

## BY THE END OF THIS GUIDE YOU WILL...

- Understand how to build a balanced plate
- Learn some of our favourite meal prep hacks
- Have a list of well balanced meals to try and understand how to build your own!



# HOW TO BUILD A BALANCED MEAL

Knowing what to eat is only half the battle when it comes to healthy nutrition...you also have to know how much to eat. Over time, food and drink portions have increased in size. And the more food we're served on the plate, the more food we consume, which leads to overeating.

With this awareness, and by having a guide to manage portion sizes, we can eat foods in a healthy, balanced way; building a better relationship around what we put into our body.

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## 1) START WITH PROTEIN

Why is it the base of our meal?

Protein has risen to the forefront as the most important nutrient, not just for muscle building, but for support, transport of nutrients, muscle growth, satiety and many more!

The amount of protein needed varies from person to person, I recommend aiming for around 20g in each meal

## 2) AIM FOR 30-50% VEGETABLES OR FRUITS

We have all heard that fruit and vegetables should be the foundation of a healthy diet. But do we really know why? In short, they provide essential micronutrients (e.g. vitamins and minerals), antioxidants and fiber needed for:

- Energy production
- Immune function
- Control of inflammation
- Healthy digestive system
- Overall health

## 3) FILL THE GAPS WITH WHOLE GRAIN CARBOHYDRATES AND HEALTHY FATS

Carbohydrates are NOT BAD when portion control is implemented. However, it often comes as a surprise to see one true serving size of rice, pasta or bread. It is a lot smaller than one would think. That is why we recommend filling the plate up and adding the carb last!

# HOW TO MEAL PREP LIKE A CHAMP

***Let's dive in and explore some tips and tricks to make you a meal prep expert! SO what is Meal Prepping? As the name insinuates, meal prepping is taking time to prepare, cook, and portion out all or some of your food for the week ahead of you.***

## WHY SHOULD I MEAL PREP?

Meal prepping can be a game-changer for anyone who wants to eat healthier, save time, and reduce stress during the week. By taking a few hours each week to plan and prepare your meals in advance, you can ensure that you have nutritious and delicious food ready to go when you need it.

Meal prepping helps you to avoid unhealthy options like fast food, vending machines, or convenience store snacks when you're on the go.

It can save you money in the long run. By buying ingredients in bulk and preparing meals at home, you can reduce your food expenses and avoid wasting money.

Overall, meal prepping is a great way to take control of your nutrition, save time, and reduce stress. With a little bit of planning and preparation, you can set yourself up for success and enjoy the many benefits of healthy eating.

## BUT I DON'T WANT TO EAT THE SAME FOOD EVERY DAY?

Everyone is different and you can plan and prep as much or as little as you like depending on the week ahead! To avoid eating the same foods day in and day out I usually recommend prepping the separate components of your meals so that you don't have to eat the exact same meal each day.

For example, shredded chicken breast and roasted vegetables could easily become:

- Stir fry with noodles
- Taco rice bowl
- Buffalo Chicken & Veggie wrap
- Chicken & veggie Salad bowl

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# MAKING IT EASY

## CUT CORNERS WHEN YOU CAN!

No, seriously. Buy diced onions instead of prepping them yourself. Buy frozen rice and heat it up if you want. Buy a pre-roasted chicken and just spend the 5 minutes cleaning it. Buy pre-cooked lentils. Buy butternut squash that's already cubed and ready to be roasted. Work smarter, not harder. Just because its also ready prepped for you doesn't make it any less healthier.

## COOK AS MANY THINGS AT ONE TIME AS YOU CAN

Steam something in the microwave, while baking something in the oven, with 2 skillet on the stove and a Crock-Pot, Instapot, or Air Fryer on the countertop.

## MAKE SURE YOU'RE ORGANIZED

Doing things one at a time will make your meal prep hours longer, so make sure you're organized and being as efficient with your time as possible.

## PREP YOUR SNACKS

If you're having chopped cucumbers and celery with humus throughout the week, chop these up on meal prep day and put them into small Tupperware or plastic baggies so they're ready. its often easier to chop up vegetables all in one go and can save you washing up the chopping board multiple times in a week



## KEEP FROZEN FOOD IN STOCK FOR EMERGENCIES

This means frozen potatoes/rice, frozen veggies, frozen meats and even frozen easy to cook meals ( I really like the ones at Trader Joes) This way, even if your week is slipping away from you, you can do some easy heating for healthy food and avoid living off Doordash.

## ADD YOUR FAVORITE FOODS INTO YOUR MEALS

Allow yourself to enjoy a couple of oreos with your yogurt for a snack or pair your leftover pizza with some vegetables and dip for an easy lunch. The more you feel comfortable adding in those less nutritious foods, the less you will find yourself craving them or feeling restricted.



# MEAL PREP CHEAT SHEET

This is my simple 3 step process for coming up with meal ideas on the fly!  
This has been working for me and my clients for years and I hope it helps you too!

**STEP 1:** Start by choosing a Flavor profile (I listed some common ingredients):

Italian - Basil, mozzarella, parmesan, pesto, olive oil, balsamic vinegar.

Mexican - Salsa, corn tortillas, Beans, taco seasoning, refried beans, peppers, onions

Asian - Ginger, noodles, soy sauce, greens,

Mediterranean - Hummus, olives, tzatziki, eggplant, pita, feta

Indian - Lentils, chickpeas, naan, cumin, chilis, rice

American - Burgers, Grilled foods, sandwiches, salads,

**STEP 2:** Pick your 3 base ingredients:

1 protein

1 carbohydrate

1 vegetable

**STEP 3:** Mix and match to create different meals... here are some examples!

Grilled Chicken / Shredded rotisserie chicken

- Tortilla Wrap + lettuce + buffalo sauce = buffalo chicken wrap
- Pasta + jar alfredo sauce + broccoli = Chicken broccoli alfredo
- Add onto frozen pizza + extra veggies + cheese = Chicken pizza
- Cous Cous + roasted veg + hummus = greek bowl
- Rice + peppers + salsa + cheese = mexican bowl

Eggs/Egg whites

- Wrap + salsa = breakfast burrito
- Rice + veggies + soy sauce = fried rice
- Hash browns + bacon + peppers = breakfast bowl
- English muffin + bacon = breakfast sandwich

Ground beef/turkey:

- Pasta sauce + pasta + cheese (pasta bake)
- Canned tomatoes + taco seasoning + black beans = chili
- Taco seasoning + lettuce + tomato + cheese = turkey lettuce cups
- Burger bun + lettuce + tomato = turkey burgers

# GROCERY STORE TIPS FOR SAVING MONEY AND TIME

## **Create a Detailed Shopping List:**

Plan your meals for the week and create a detailed shopping list based on what you need. This helps you stay focused and avoid impulse purchases.

## **Shop with a Full Stomach:**

Avoid shopping on an empty stomach as you're more likely to make impulsive and often less healthy food choices. A satisfied appetite can keep you focused on your list.

## **Buy in Bulk for Non-Perishables:**

Purchase non-perishable items like grains, pasta, and canned goods in bulk to take advantage of lower unit prices. This is especially useful for items with a longer shelf life.

## **Compare Prices:**

Pay attention to the unit prices on shelves. Sometimes, buying a larger or smaller quantity might be more cost-effective. Compare prices to get the best value for your money.

## **Consider Generic or Store Brands:**

Explore generic or store brands for certain items. These products often have similar quality but can be more budget-friendly compared to name brands.

## **Shop Seasonal and Local Produce:**

Seasonal and local produce is not only fresher but also tends to be more affordable. Check what's in season and incorporate it into your meal planning.

## **Avoid Shopping at Eye Level:**

Grocery stores often place more expensive items at eye level. Look up and down on the shelves to find cheaper alternatives or sales on similar products.

## **Use Frozen and Canned Alternatives:**

Consider using frozen fruits and vegetables or canned goods as alternatives. They often have a longer shelf life and can be more budget-friendly than fresh produce, especially if certain items are out of season.



# GROCERY LIST ESSENTIALS

**Here is my list of grocery store essentials - these ingredients make up the bulk of what i usually buy and all of these ingredients can be used to make well rounded meals**

## **Vegetables:**

I make sure to grab a variety of fresh, frozen and even some pre chopped to help me save time. Some of my favourite frozen veggies are peas, spinach and onion & pepper mix

## **Fruits:**

I usually opt for fresh fruits however if you have a blender frozen fruits are great for making smoothies or a healthy ice cream.

## **Protein:**

- Chicken Breast: Lean and adaptable for various recipes.
- Salmon: Rich in omega-3 fatty acids, excellent for heart health.
- Ground Turkey: A versatile and lean protein option to be used in place of ground beef
- Eggs: High in protein and can be used in multiple ways.
- Canned Tuna or Salmon: Quick protein option for salads and sandwiches.
- Chia Seeds: A nutritional boost for smoothies and puddings.
- Peanut or Almond Butter: Versatile for both sweet and savory dishes.
- Lentils: They're versatile and can be used in
  - soups, stews, salads, and veggie burgers.
- Chickpeas (Garbanzo Beans): They're great in
  - salads, roasted as a snack, blended into hummus,
  - or used in curries and stews.
- Tofu: It can be grilled, sautéed, stir-fried





# GROCERY LIST ESSENTIALS

## **Whole Grains:**

- Quinoa: A complete protein and an excellent alternative to rice.
- Rice: A nutritious staple for many family meals.
- Protein Pasta: I like to grab this for an extra protein boost
- Oats: Great for breakfast and baking.

## **Healthy Fats:**

- Avocado: Adds creaminess to dishes and is rich in healthy fats.
- Olive Oil: A heart-healthy oil for cooking and dressings.
- Nuts (e.g., Almonds or Walnuts): Perfect for snacks or as salad toppers.

## **Dairy or Dairy Alternatives:**

- Greek Yogurt: High in protein and a versatile ingredient.
- Cheese (preferably low-fat): Adds flavor to various dishes.

## **Pantry/Fridge Essentials:**

- Canned Beans: A cost-effective source of protein and fiber.
- Canned Tomatoes: Convenient for sauces and stews.
- Tortillas: can be used to make wraps or chopped up and baked for chips
- Hummus - Great as a snack with some raw veg and chips
- Spice mixes - save time and money buying pre made spice mixes ex taco seasoning.
- Coconut Milk: Adds richness to curries and soups.
- Artichoke Hearts: Great for salads and pasta dishes.
- Sundried Tomatoes: Adds depth to sauces and salads.
- Chicken or Vegetable Broth: For soups, stews, and cooking grains.
- Olives: A flavorful addition to salads and Mediterranean dishes.
- Pickles: Adds a tangy crunch to sandwiches and salads.
- Tomato Paste: Concentrated tomato flavor for sauces and soups
- Soy Sauce or Tamari: Essential in Asian cooking.
- Worcestershire Sauce: Adds depth of flavor to various dishes.
- Dijon Mustard: Versatile for dressings and marinades.

# MEAL PLANNING SHEET

	BREAKFAST	LUNCH	DINNER	SNACKS
MON				
TUE				
WED				
THU				
FRI				
SAT				
SUN				

# EASY MEAL IDEAS (PT.1)

## **Grilled Chicken Salad:**

Grilled chicken breast over a bed of mixed greens, cherry tomatoes, cucumbers, and a balsamic vinaigrette.

## **Vegetarian Stir-Fry:**

Tofu or chickpeas stir-fried with broccoli, bell peppers, snap peas, and carrots. Serve over brown rice or quinoa.

## **Baked Salmon with Sweet Potatoes:**

Baked salmon fillets with roasted sweet potato wedges and a side of steamed asparagus.

## **Quinoa Bowl:**

Quinoa topped with black beans, corn, cherry tomatoes, avocado slices, and a drizzle of lime dressing.



## **Turkey and Vegetable Skewers:**

Skewers with lean turkey or chicken chunks, cherry tomatoes, zucchini, and mushrooms, grilled or baked.

## **Shrimp and Broccoli Stir-Fry:**

Quick stir-fry with shrimp, broccoli, bell peppers, and snap peas served over whole wheat noodles.

## **Mediterranean Chickpea Salad:**

Chickpeas mixed with cucumber, cherry tomatoes, red onion, feta cheese, and olives, tossed in olive oil and lemon dressing.



# EASY MEAL IDEAS (PT.2)

## **Lemon Garlic Shrimp with Quinoa:**

Sautéed shrimp with garlic and lemon, served over a bed of fluffy quinoa, and accompanied by steamed broccoli.

## **Veggie and Hummus Wrap:**

Whole grain wrap filled with hummus, shredded carrots, cucumber slices, bell peppers, and spinach.

## **Pesto Chicken Pasta:**

Grilled chicken breast tossed with whole wheat pasta, cherry tomatoes, and broccoli in a light pesto sauce.

## **Black Bean and Vegetable Burrito Bowl:**

Black beans, brown rice, sautéed bell peppers, onions, corn, and avocado in a bowl, topped with salsa and Greek yogurt



## **Eggplant Parmesan:**

Baked slices of eggplant layered with marinara sauce and mozzarella cheese, served with a side of whole wheat spaghetti.

## **Turkey and Quinoa Stuffed Peppers:**

Bell peppers filled with a mixture of ground turkey, cooked quinoa, black beans, corn, and diced tomatoes, baked until tender.

## **Salmon and Avocado Salad:**

Grilled or baked salmon over a salad of mixed greens, cherry tomatoes, avocado slices, and a light lemon vinaigrette.

# EASY MEAL IDEAS (PT.3)

## **Vegetable Omelette:**

Whisked eggs with diced bell peppers, tomatoes, spinach, and feta cheese, cooked into a delicious omelette.

## **Sweet Potato and Black Bean Quesadillas:**

Whole wheat tortillas filled with mashed sweet potatoes, black beans, corn, and a sprinkle of cheese.

## **Ground Turkey Lettuce Wraps:**

Seasoned ground turkey served in lettuce cups with diced tomatoes, avocado, and a dollop of Greek yogurt.

## **Chickpea and Spinach Curry:**

Chickpeas cooked in a tomato-based curry sauce with spinach, served over brown rice.

## **Caprese Chicken Skillet:**

Chicken breasts cooked with cherry tomatoes, fresh mozzarella, and basil, served with a balsamic glaze.

## **Teriyaki Tofu Stir-Fry:**

Cubes of tofu stir-fried with colorful vegetables in a teriyaki sauce, served over brown rice or cauliflower rice



# LOOKING FOR MORE?

If you loved this guide but are looking for more resources on building healthy habits, finding your healthiest weight and building body confidence then it may be time to work 1:1 together!

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## All my coaching clients receive:

- Individualized nutrition guidance from a Registered Dietitian
- Weekly check-ins and guidance
- 24/6 messaging, for all of your health and wellness questions

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I do work with insurance via Fay and also accept self pay clients. To check your FAY coverage use this [LINK](#)