

R.E.A.L GoalSM: Meal Plan and Recipes on a Budget

(Realistic, Easy, Attainable, Life Goals)

Example: I will meal prep one meal for three days of the week; I will spend at least 30 minutes, one day a week, planning meals for the week.

The benefits: Meal preparation allows you to eat delicious meals with pre-determined portion sizes to ensure you don't overindulge and instead remain on track with personal goals. With proper planning, you can reduce stress, prevent making unnecessary food purchases, save money, and reduce food waste.



Quick tips

- **Set a budget.** Be realistic with the amount you want to spend on food each week.
- **Create a shopping list and stick to it!** There are many free apps and templates you can use to create your list. Some of these apps and templates can be found on the websites listed below.
- **Plan meals around items that are on sale.** Check store rewards programs and flyers, newspaper inserts, and coupon sites online. Be sure you are buying foods you and your family will actually eat.
- **Focus on shopping the perimeter of the store;** this is where you will find fresh produce, meats, eggs, and dairy products. Check your store flyers for these items. They are typically on sale or have a coupon to make sure you are getting the best price.
- **Check your pantry and fridge monthly.** Take inventory of what is expiring soon and use those first.
- **Start simple and pick one meal.** Start with recipes you know.
- **Schedule it.** Write it on your calendar. Block off the time to prep.
- **Make it part of your routine.** When unpacking groceries, prep the food you will use that week.
- **Use the right storage containers.** Refrigeration and freezing are important steps to successful meal planning; using the proper containers can make a difference in how long meals will last.
 - **Refrigeration at 40°F or lower**
 - One to two days: Cooked ground poultry or ground beef
 - Three to four days: Cooked whole meats, fish, and poultry; soups and stews
 - Five days: Cooked beans, hummus
 - One week: Hardboiled eggs and chopped vegetables if stored in an airtight container
 - Two weeks: Soft cheese, opened
 - Five to six weeks: Hard cheese, opened
 - **Freezing at 0°F or lower**
 - Two to three months: Soups and stews, cooked beans
 - Three to six months: Cooked or ground meat and poultry
 - Six to eight months: Berries and chopped fruit (banana, apples, pears, mango) stored in a freezer bag
 - Eight to twelve months: Vegetables, if blanched first (timing depends on the vegetable)

Meal planning recipes

Breakfast

Egg Bake

2 c. veggies (spinach, bell pepper, onion, mushroom, or tomato) 24 eggs, beaten 1 c. cheese of your choice
2 c. milk or water Salt and pepper to taste

Instructions: Bake at 350° for one hour and 20 minutes. Heat a piece throughout the week for breakfast. It is good in the fridge for four days and served with fruit.

Almond Butter Honey Oat Bars

2 c. rolled oats 2/3 c. almond butter or nut butter of choice 1/4 c. honey or maple syrup

Instructions: In a medium bowl, add oats, nut butter, and honey or maple syrup, and mix until well combined. Spray the baking dish with cooking spray. Pour in the mixture and spread evenly. Cover and place in the freezer until firm. Cut into bars. Keep in the fridge until ready to eat.

Pineapple Orange Mango Smoothie

1 c. pineapple, cubed 1 mango, cubed 1 c. plain Greek yogurt
1 orange, sliced 1 1/2 c. milk of your choice

Instructions: Put fruit in a freezer bag. Seal and store in the freezer for up to three months. When ready to use, put milk, Greek yogurt, and frozen fruit into a blender and mix until the consistency is smooth. This will make two servings and can be divided into two freezer bags.

Lunch

Chicken Burrito Bowls

1 tbs. olive oil 2 large, boneless, skinless chicken breasts 1 c. brown rice, cooked
1 white onion, diced 15 oz black beans, drained and rinsed Salsa
1 clove of garlic, diced 1 bundle of green onion, sliced, for garnish

Instructions: Heat the oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Toss in the onion with a pinch of salt and sauté until the onions have softened for about three minutes. Move the onions to the sides of the pan to create an open space in the middle. Add the cubed chicken into the center of the pan, season with salt and pepper, and sauté until the chicken has cooked almost all the way through. Add the garlic and mix until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Pour over salsa, black beans, and rice, and mix until everything in the pan is evenly combined. Let the mixture simmer for five minutes or until the chicken is cooked through. Divide the mixture equally into four to six bowls and sprinkle over some thinly sliced green onions.

Wraps

Wholegrain wrap or large leaf lettuce like butter, Boston, or iceberg.

Add protein of choice (chicken, deli meat, bean spread, cheese, and or hummus)

Add veggies (spinach, tomatoes, peppers, onion)

Drizzle with a condiment (low-fat dressing, vinaigrette, teriyaki)

Dinner

Turkey Meatloaf

1/2 c. breadcrumbs	2 cloves minced garlic	1/3 c. parsley, chopped
1 lb. ground turkey	1/2 c. crumbled feta	1 1/2 tsp. Salt
2 eggs, beaten with 2 tbs. milk	1/4 c. sun-dried tomatoes	1 tsp. pepper

Instructions: Stir all ingredients together in a large mixing bowl. Spray cooking spray into a 9x5 loaf pan and add the meatloaf mixture. Bake at 375° for 45 minutes or until the internal meatloaf temperature is 165°.

One Tray Alfredo Pasta

2 c. pasta, cooked al dente	1/2 c. broccoli	1 tsp. salt
1/2 c. carrot, sliced	3/4 c. alfredo sauce	1 tsp. pepper

Instructions: Preheat oven to 400°. Take two sheets of aluminum foil, about 12x12-inch, and stack them on top of each other. Fold one side of the foil about 1/3 of the way across the sheet, and repeat for the opposite side. Pinch the corner to form a point and then flatten it to the short side of the foil, forming a raised corner. Repeat on all sides to make four boats. Add all of the ingredients to one of the foil boats, then stir. Bake for 12 minutes. Allow to cool for 10 minutes. Eat or put in Tupperware, and refrigerate for three to five days.

Chicken Barley Soup

1 tsp. olive oil	2 cloves garlic, chopped	1 1/2 lbs. skinless bone-in chicken breast
1 c. carrots, chopped	1/4 c. parsley, chopped	7 c. reduced-sodium chicken broth
1 c. onions, chopped	2 bay leaves	Black pepper, to taste
1/2 c. celery, chopped	2/3 c. dry pearl barley	

Instructions: Heat a large, heavy pot or Dutch oven on medium heat. Add the oil, carrots, onion, celery, and garlic to the pot and stir. Add chicken, broth, parsley, and bay leaves, and bring to a boil. When boiling, reduce heat to low and cover. Simmer covered over low heat until the chicken and vegetables are tender, about 30 minutes. Remove the chicken, shred or cut the meat, discard the bones, and return the chicken to the pot along with the barley; adjust the salt if needed, and add fresh ground pepper. Simmer for an additional 30 minutes or until the barley is cooked. Discard the bay leaves and serve. The recipe makes about nine cups.

Prep and packing tips for kids

- **Invest in sectional containers.** Sectional containers are an easy way to make the food you pack look appealing, portion control items, and will help you save money on buying plastic baggies.
- **Ask your child** what parts of lunch they like. Sometimes, there are items you are packing that go to waste and could be substituted with an option they actually like. Cut food into fun shapes if you have time!
- **Items to pack:** fresh fruit, crunchy veggies with a dip (hummus, ranch, honey mustard), sliced meat, hardboiled egg, nut butter, string cheese or grated cheese, yogurt, milk, whole grain bread, pita, or flatbread. Quesadillas, mini pizzas, chicken salad, sandwich.

Ways to extend the life of your food

General rules of refrigeration:

- Don't overcrowd your fridge. Air should be able to circulate around the food.
- Follow the lead of the supermarkets and keep your new stock behind the old stock.
- Never keep open cans of food in the fridge, as this could result in chemical contamination.
- Use the fridge thermometer to check that the coldest part of your fridge is five degrees.

Freeze! You can freeze pretty much everything:

- Baked goods
- Bananas – peel and wrap or place in an airtight container.
- Bread
- Cheese – except soft cheeses
- Eggs – including hardboiled eggs
- Fish
- Meat
- Milk
- Yogurt

Helpful tips to extend the life of produce

Asparagus	Stand in a jar with two inches of water, cover it loosely with a small plastic bag, and keep it in the fridge.
Bananas	Cover banana stems with cling wrap or foil to stop them from going brown. Bananas can also speed up the ripening process of other fruits. Store them separately from the fruit bowl or on top of fruits that need ripening.
Berries	Wash berries in a one-part vinegar, three-part water solution to destroy bacteria and mold spores. Dry berries thoroughly afterward and store them in an airtight container.
Bread	Avoid moldy bread by keeping it in the freezer.
Carrots	Keep them in a container of water in the fridge to keep them crisp.
Cheese	Rub a little bit of butter on the exposed side of the cheese to keep it from drying out.
Mushrooms	Keep mushrooms fresh and dry by keeping them in brown paper bags.
Onions	Hang onions in clean pantyhose or tights with a knot separating each onion.
Potatoes	Storing apples and potatoes together stops the potatoes from sprouting.
Salad Greens	Wash and dry thoroughly, and wrap them in a kitchen towel or with a paper towel.
Spring Onions	Chop and keep in plastic bags in the freezer. When you're ready to use them, add them straight to the cooking pan.
Tomatoes	Store them stem side down outside of the fridge.

Explore more [Real Goals and Supplemental Resources](#)

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