

Meal Planning Made Easy!



Revolutionize your life in the kitchen with meal planning and enjoy healthy, homemade meals while saving time, money and stress!

the
nourishinghome

Thank you!

Thank you for your purchase! It helps to support the many free healthy living resources and recipes available at [The Nourishing Home](#).

My prayer is that the meal planning strategies and resources provided within these pages will empower you and your family to live a more nourished life in service to the King!

If you received this book as part of an eBundle or other book promotion, I'd like to cordially invite you to visit me at [The Nourishing Home](#). I look forward to meeting you soon!

Happy Meal Planning! May the Lord be with you and bless you!

Joyfully Serving HIM,
kelly



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introduction



About this book ...

All [turquoise underlined text](#) in this book is a link to yet another helpful meal planning resource ... so click away!

Welcome to Meal Planning Made Easy!

I'm so excited to be able to share with you a simple, yet highly effective process that will truly revolutionize your life in the kitchen.

My hope in writing this book is to pass on my knowledge and passion for meal planning, so that you will discover the joy of nourishing your family with confidence. Not only will you experience more joy in serving your family through providing healthy meals, but you'll also be equipped to pass on the knowledge and experience you gain so others can learn the art of meal planning as well.

Becoming a Catalyst for Change ...

As 21st century homemakers, I completely understand that the majority of us have received relatively little training in how to manage a food budget, make a meal plan, grocery shop, cook and utilize leftovers.

Yet, despite any former lack of training, we can choose to buck the modern-day trend toward continual eating out, bringing home take-out food, and zapping processed meals in the microwave, and instead choose to lead the way in learning these important homemaking skills for our own benefit (*and our families, of course*).

In the process, we will not only become catalysts for change in our own homes, but we can use our knowledge and experience to follow the Titus 2 command to "*teach the younger women*" by encouraging and helping others to learn to better nourish their families as well.

Does This Sound Familiar?

When I speak about being relatively ill-prepared for the task of nourishing a family, I am speaking from the heart – from my own personal experience, and what I’ve seen and heard from other women as well.

Before I started meal planning, my dinnertime routine went something like this ...



- Standing in front of the pantry or fridge hoping for divine inspiration on what I should make for dinner ...
- If I did have a great idea for dinner, I would search through my pantry and fridge only to find I was missing a key ingredient, or two, or three ...
- This led to frequent phone calls to my hubby to pick up the missing ingredient(s), or putting the kids in the car with me and hauling them off the market ...
- I purchased pretty much the same foods over and over again every single week ...
- I frequently threw out food (*which is basically throwing away money*) because although I had good intentions of using everything I bought,

without a plan in place, inevitably some foods would make their way to the back of the fridge and be forgotten ...

- Worse of all, I often would just phone-it-in ... calling for take-out or asking if we could go out to eat, because I was [*insert excuse here*] ... too tired to cook, couldn't think of what to make, or didn't have time to cook.

Can you relate to this stressful dilemma?

If so, please know that I'm here to help. I truly understand how overwhelming putting a healthy meal on the table can be day-in-and-day-out, especially if you have received little training in how to do so.

However, the great news is ... getting healthy home-cooked meals on the table doesn't have to be stressful, time-consuming or expensive. In fact, it can be quite the opposite. Really! It's true!

I promise that with a little organization in the form of a weekly meal plan you'll find your time in the kitchen to be far more enjoyable and productive. The fact is, meal planning will revolutionize your life in the kitchen! It's a proven strategy to help families enjoy healthy, home-cooked meals with the awesome added benefit of saving time, money and stress!

The Many Benefits of Meal Planning

As mentioned, meal planning has so many benefits, but in case you're still on the fence, let me share some details about why meal planning will make your life in the kitchen a whole lot easier and more enjoyable ...

1. Save time and stress!

One of the many benefits of meal planning is that it truly saves time and stress. Once you make your meal plan and purchase the necessary ingredients, you can then go on auto-pilot ... simply executing the meal plan day-by-day without having to stress over what's for dinner, and without having to make multiple trips to the market.

2. Save money!

By making more of your meals at home, you can significantly save money! A typical take-out meal costs the average family of four about \$25. Yet, with this same amount of money, you can actually feed your family three highly nutritious real food meals, plus healthy snacks too!



3. Eat healthier!

Wholesome meals prepared at home contain a greater variety of nutrient-rich foods compared to those found at typical restaurants. So, by learning how to create a weekly meal plan, you'll not only save time, money and stress, but you'll also ensure that your family eats healthier – because you are completely in control of every ingredient that goes into every meal you serve.

4. Stop throwing out food!

You'll be amazed at how little food you waste when you get in the groove with meal planning. That's because you are planning ahead and shopping with a specific list in hand for just the items necessary to execute your meal plan. This helps reduce unnecessary spending that often leads to foods being purchased that don't end up getting used. In addition, meal planning will also help you plan ahead to repurpose any leftovers (*before they sprout legs and walk out of your fridge*).

5. Break free from the same-old, same-old!

Another great benefit of meal planning is that it allows you to really start incorporating more variety in your meals. As you begin planning your meals each week, you can more easily schedule new meals to try, or schedule time to revamp and “health-ify” some of your old favorites. When you create a weekly meal plan, it's also much easier to see potential deficits in your diet, such as too many carbs and not enough veggies.

If these five great benefits of meal planning have you super-jazzed about learning the art of meal planning, then without further ado, **let's get started ...**

getting started

Meal Planning Basics

All underlined text in this document are hyperlinks that you can click on to get the recipes. Meal plan for average family of 4.

The nourishing home whole Food meal plan

	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Dinner	Lemon-Garlic Chicken , Mashed Potatoes and Steamed Broccoli	Grilled Pineapple Chicken with Pineapple Salsa , Crockpot Black Beans & Rice	Taco Salad w/Leftover Black Beans & Rice	Veggie Stirfry w/Leftover Grilled Chicken	Shepherd's Pie and Spinach Salad w/ Raspberry Vinaigrette	Minestrone Soup with Grilled Ham & Swiss Sandwiches on GF Brown Bread	Grilled Fish Provençal over Wild Rice Dessert: Snickerdoodles & Spiced Hot Cocoa
Lunch	Veggie Mini Omelets with Garden Salad	Fruit & Cheese Kebobs with Multiseed Crackers	Grilled Chicken Salad Sandwiches on Sweet Brown Bread and Fresh Fruit	Raw Veggie Kebobs with Greek Hummus Dip and Multiseed Crackers	Nut Butter Apple Slice Sandwiches (see note below) and Vanilla Yogurt	Greek Hummus Veggie Wraps and Fruit & Nut Bar	Leftover Minestrone Soup with Garden Salad
Breakfast	Cinnamon Apple Oatmeal Bake and Boiled Eggs	Leftover Cinnamon Apple Oatmeal Bake and Scrambled Eggs	Leftover Veggie Mini Omelets and Gingerbread Smoothie	Pineapple Coconut Muffins and Eggs Over Easy	Leftover Pineapple Coconut Muffins and Vanilla Yogurt w/ Homemade Granola	Homemade Granola w/Berries and Almond Milk	Savory Baked Eggs and Sweet Brown Bread Toast w/Butter
	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Daily Prep	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bake bread and crackers Soak beans Save leftover oatmeal & mini omelets Make extra potatoes 4Thurs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grilled extra chicken for lunch Tues and dinner Wed Save extra beans & rice for Tues' dinner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brown extra ground meat and save for Thurs' dinner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Save leftover muffins for breakfast tomorrow Make extra hummus and save for Fri 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To make apple sandwiches: Core & slice apples horizontally spread with nut butter & raisins 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Save leftover soup for lunch tomorrow Defrost fish fillets in fridge overnight 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make meal plan, go to market and prep for next week's meal plan

Subscribe to [The Nourishing Home Newsletter](#) and receive a Weekly Meal Plan Shopping List, Prep Day Chart, recipes and more!

Shown above is an example of a typical meal plan at The Nourishing Home. In case you didn't know, I share free [weekly gluten-free whole food meal plans](#), along with a free shopping list and prep day task recommendations to [subscribers of my weekly newsletter](#).

My heart in providing free whole food meal plans and meal planning resources is to help others learn this invaluable homemaking skill that truly makes nourishing your family so much easier and more enjoyable!

For those just getting started with meal planning, I highly recommend taking it slow. There's no need to plan out every single meal – that can really be overwhelming if you're new to meal planning or aren't used to cooking that frequently.

Instead, start with planning just a few meals each week, or planning meals only for the busiest days of the week. Once you see how easy and beneficial meal planning is, you'll most certainly be inspired to add even more meals to your weekly meal plan!

Remember, it's that slow steady progress that results in lasting lifetime change.

How to Make a Weekly Meal Plan – Step by Step!

• Step One: Create a Master List of Meals

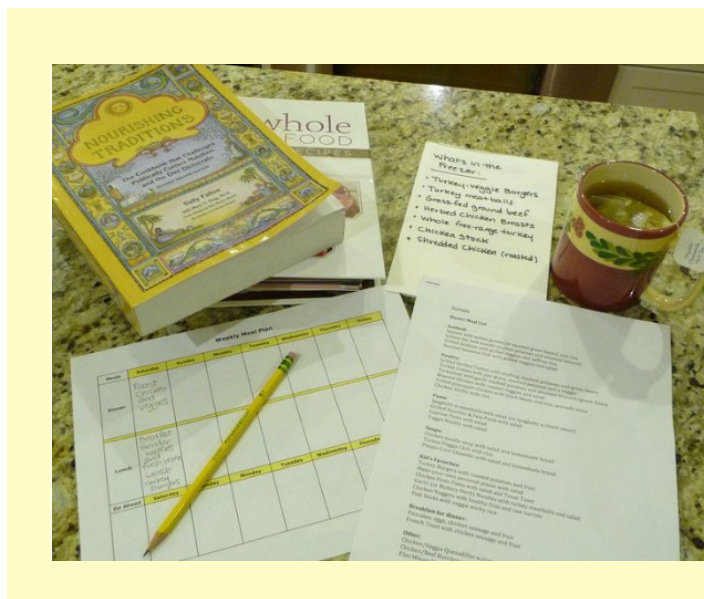
The first step in meal planning is to create a Master List of Meals, which is simply a list of all the meals that you currently make.

Taking time to really think-through this first step will save you a ton of time in the long run – no more racking your brain to try to think of what meals you should make for the week ahead (*and schedule on your meal plan*). Instead, simply look at your Master List of Meals each time you make your weekly meal plan. Talk about less stress and saving time!



A few tips for creating your Master List of Meals:

- It's helpful to list main entrées by category for easy reference, such as poultry, beef, meatless, etc.
- Be sure to include side dishes. If you have a large variety, you may want to categorize them as well, such as salads, potato dishes, rice dishes, veggies, etc.
- Your Master List of Meals doesn't have to be typed, or placed in a fancy layout, what's important is to create it in a format that works best for you and that you will consistently use. (*Same goes for your meal plan.*)
- As you start trying new recipes, remember to add the ones your family likes to your Master List of Meals.



Keep it Simple!

When creating your Master List of Meals, Weekly Meal Plan and Shopping List – keep it simple! There's no need to create fancy spreadsheets, or to type it out, unless you have the time and desire.

Remember, the best system is the one that works for YOU!

• **Step Two: Check Your Calendar!**

Before you start selecting meals for the week ahead, first take a look at what's happening each day and plan your meals accordingly. This is such an important step, because knowing how much time you have available helps you to decide on the best meal to make in that timeframe.

Tips for successful scheduling:

- On busy days, opt for quick and easy-to-prepare meals, such as crockpot dishes, one-pot meals or grilled/roasted meats with a side of steamed vegetables or simple salad.
- For extra-busy days, plan for a "leftovers night," where you can simply warm-up a meal from a previous evening.
- Plan to make more complicated meals (*or try out a new recipe*) on the days you will have the most time available. For example, if you have more time during the weekend, then save a new recipe, or a more complex meal, for the weekend. Don't try to tackle it on a day you'll be running short on time!

• **Step Three: Create Your Meal Plan**

First, check your pantry and fridge to see what you already have on hand and be sure to plan for meals that utilize these ingredients. Then, grab your Master List of Meals and your calendar and get started!

Again, even planning a few meals a week, or planning meals for just the busiest days of the week, will go a long way in helping you stay on track with your healthy-eating goals and budget, as well as save you much time and stress!

Time-Saving Tip #1: Keep your weekly meal plans in a file system of your choice and REUSE them! Once you've created a half dozen or so meal plans, be sure to rotate through them, simply changing out just one or two meals to accommodate for new recipes, or scheduling issues. This can be an especially helpful strategy on weeks when you just don't have time to sit down and create a brand new meal plan from scratch. Instead, look through your past plans to find one that will work and rearrange the meals as necessary based on your schedule/calendar.

Time-Saving Tip #2: Another easy way to save time when creating your weekly meal plan, is to utilize others' free whole meal plans with recipes that meet your family's particular dietary needs and taste preferences. As mentioned, I share my [weekly meal plans for free to subscribers](#). But it's important to note that you don't have to follow my meal plan (*or anyone else's for that matter*) verbatim. Instead, use these meal plans as a springboard for creating your own personalized versions. Simply pick and choose the meals you wish to make, schedule them on your own meal plan, and then fill in the gaps with other meals your family enjoys.

Ready, Set, Go ... Tips for Putting Meal Planning into Practice!

- Pick a specific day/time to create your weekly meal plan. Seriously, you need to schedule it on your calendar and guard that time. When you first get started, it may take 30 minutes to an hour or so to make your meal plan, depending on how many meals you're planning and whether you are utilizing other meal plans for inspiration. Just be assured that it will take far less time as you get the hang of it.
- Just like scheduling time to meal plan, be sure to pick a day/time to shop and be sure to bring your completed shopping list with you. (*See step four below for more about the importance of creating a meal plan shopping list.*)
- When you get home from shopping, get organized for the week ahead by following a few of the time-saving prep day strategies listed in the "Simple Strategies for Saving Time in the Kitchen" chapter.

Most important, remember to take it one step at a time! If you're just getting started, start by planning just a few meals each week and once you get comfortable, add more meals from there. The same goes for the time-saving strategies provided in the "Simple Strategies for Saving Time in the Kitchen" chapter. Start slow and add to your skill set as you get comfortable.

You'll be amazed in just one month of consistent meal planning how much easier and faster it becomes, and how much time, money and stress you'll save.

Remember, it takes 21 days to form a new habit, so give it time. It's slow, steady progress that leads to healthy habits that last a lifetime!

• Step Four:

Make a Shopping List

Once your meal plan is complete, it's time to make a shopping list. "The List" is your prime directive at the market. It helps keep you focused and saves you time and money by limiting distractions. The List ensures you quickly get exactly what you need for making each of the meals you scheduled on your meal plan.

Therefore, it's important to go through each meal on your meal plan and list out all of the ingredients needed to create that meal. Of course, be sure to check to see what you already have on hand. Any missing ingredients go on The List.

In addition, I recommend keeping a pad of paper and pencil on your kitchen counter so you can easily jot down any everyday staples as you run out of them (*or better yet, are close to running out of them*). That way, these can quickly and easily be added to The List.

Shopping List (dinner only)		
Meat, Poultry & Fish <ul style="list-style-type: none">___ Chicken Stock (4 cups)___ Chicken Breasts, boneless, skinless (1 lb.)___ 2 Split Chicken Breasts (about 2 lbs)___ White Fish (1 fillet per person)___ Ground Turkey or Beef (2 lb)___ Nitrate-free Bacon (2 slices)___ Sliced Deli Ham or Turkey	<ul style="list-style-type: none">___ Mushrooms (1 cup)___ Pineapple (1.5 cups, or 1 can)___ Russet Potatoes (5-5 lbs)___ Snap peas (5 oz)___ Sweet onion (1 small)___ Tomatoes (2 small)___ Yellow Onion (2)___ Zucchini (5-7 large)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">___ Pure maple syrup (for dessert recipe)___ Wild rice
Dairy, Eggs & Cold Case Items <ul style="list-style-type: none">___ Cheddar cheese (1/2 oz)___ Fresh salsa (or homemade)___ Sliced Swiss (1 package)___ Sour cream	Fresh Herbs <ul style="list-style-type: none">___ Cilantro (1 small bunch)___ Parsley (1/2 tbsp)	Dry Herbs & Spices <ul style="list-style-type: none">___ Arrowroot powder___ Cinnamon sticks (for cocoa recipe)___ Curry___ Garlic powder___ Ginger___ Ground cinnamon___ Herb Seasoning Blend___ Italian Herb Blend___ Mexican Seasoning Blend___ Oregano___ Red pepper flakes___ Rosemary___ Thyme___ Black Pepper___ Sea Salt
Fresh Produce <ul style="list-style-type: none">___ Avocado (1-2)___ Baby spinach (2 small bunches)___ Bok choy (optional, 1 head)___ Broccoli (2 heads)___ Cherry or grape tomatoes (8oz)___ Carrots (4 large)___ Garlic (2 heads)___ Green onions (1 small bunch)___ Jalapeno pepper (1)___ Lemons (4)___ Lettuce: Romaine (1 bunch)___ Lima (2)	Frozen Produce <ul style="list-style-type: none">___ Organic Veggie Medley (1 small pack)	Staples <ul style="list-style-type: none">___ Blanched almond flour (optional)___ Butter___ Olive Oil___ Vanilla extract (for dessert recipe)___ Sea Salt___ Black Pepper
Pantry Items <ul style="list-style-type: none">___ Black olives (1 small cans)___ Brown (or White) Basmati Rice___ Cashew Butter (if making GF bread)___ Diced tomatoes (2 small cans)___ Dry black beans (or 2 cans)___ Dry white beans (or 2 cans)___ Elbow macaroni (GF, if desired)___ Organic Ketchup___ Organic soy sauce (or coconut aminos)___ Organic tomato paste (1 small can)___ Pineapple Juice (or sub with lime juice)		

Time-Saving Tips for Shopping Day

- Clean out your fridge and pantry before heading out to the market – remove expired food and old leftovers you can't use (*hopefully you won't have much as you become BFF with your meal plan*), rearrange and reorganize food on the shelves for ease in locating, take one more look to see if you need something not on The List (*e.g. did your loving hubby or child put the milk back with just a few drops left in the carton?*). Reorganizing your fridge and



pantry ensures you know what's on hand, where it's located and enables you to quickly and more efficiently unload your groceries when you return home from the market.

- Go to the market alone whenever possible to avoid distraction and temptation. This will also help you limit the purchase of unnecessary items.
- NEVER go to the market without your shopping list! Without "The List" in hand, you will forget something and you will buy things you don't need!
- NEVER shop hungry! You will find it extremely difficult to resist the temptation to impulse purchase when hungry. So don't put yourself in that position.
- If you must make an impulse purchase, limit yourself to one or two items at most. It's good to try something new, but only if it's healthy and only if you're certain that you'll have time to actually incorporate it into your meal plan for the week.
- Frequent the same one or two markets regularly. By shopping at the same place each week, you will become very familiar with the store and will be able to more quickly navigate through it, thereby saving time and energy!
- Shop early in the morning, if possible. Most markets restock at night, so you'll have the best, freshest selections by shopping in the early morning.
- Check out Farmer's Markets and local co-ops for produce, they are generally less expensive and have fresher selections since most come from local farmers.

• Step Five: Schedule A Prep Day

Just an hour or two over the weekend can go a long way in making things quicker and easier for you during the busy week ahead!

Use your scheduled prep time to accomplish tasks such as:

- Cutting and dividing meat into portions based on your meal plan and place in marinades and refrigerate or freeze
- Precook and freeze ground meat for use in meals like tacos, chili, soups, etc.
- Chop any veggies/fruits needed for recipes (*those that keep well once chopped*)
- Soak and cook beans and lentils
- Make bone broth
- Bake breads, cookies, muffins or other baked goods for the week ahead
- Prepare anything else that can be prepared ahead of time, e.g. grate cheese, make salad dressings or sauces, etc.



And during the week, you can still be prepping ahead by having a daily “to-do” column in your meal plan that keeps you focused on the tasks you need to do each day to stay on track with your meal plan. (See my [meal plans](#) for an example.)

In addition, I’ve also shared other prep-ahead strategies that you can incorporate into your meal plan, such as batch cooking and repurposing leftovers. These are covered in the “*Simple Strategies for Saving Time in the Kitchen*” chapter.

• Step Six: Have a Back-Up Plan!

We’ve all experienced the thrill of victory, and the agony of defeat – a burned meal, a new recipe that receives a big thumbs-down from our family, or simply an unexpected curve ball in our day that suddenly has us scrambling for time.

Whatever life throws your way, having a back-up plan in place can be a welcomed lifesaver that helps you avoid “phoning it in” and getting fast food.



Breakfast for dinner is a great back-up plan!

Here are a few back-up plan ideas that will help you should your best laid plans go awry:

- If you'll be making a new recipe, plan to have leftovers from a previous meal on hand should the new recipe take a nose dive. If it's a hit, simply serve the leftovers for lunch. Or if they'll keep, plan to use them as part of next week's meal plan.
- Remember, breakfast is the most important meal of the day. *(Especially when you've just burned dinner!)* A quick, yet healthy dinner of [pancakes and eggs](#), a veggie omelet or [breakfast burrito](#) is a great way to redeem dinner. *(And by the way, having breakfast for dinner isn't just a great back-up option, it's also a great addition to your meal plan rotation.)*
- Serve soup and a sandwich. By freezing [homemade soups](#), you'll have an instant healthy meal that takes just minutes to reheat. Pair it with a salad and/or sandwich for a well balanced quick meal that rivals anything you could order out.
- Need dinner in a hurry? By keeping a few key items on hand, you can always create a real food fast-food meal like these: [Homemade Chicken Nuggets](#) or [Chicken Fingers](#) or [Fish Sticks](#) with a side of veggies, or Bean and Cheese or Veggie Burritos or Quesadillas. And of course, there's always pasta with marinara sauce.

Get the Kids Involved!



[Cooking with kids](#) is not only fun and educational – it's also a great way to encourage them to expand their culinary horizons, since kids are more likely to eat what they help make.

So as you're planning out your weekly meals, have the kids chime in with some ideas about what to put on the menu, and have them join you in the kitchen by helping with [age-appropriate kitchen tasks](#).

You'll be amazed at the difference this will make in reinforcing and building healthy eating habits that last a lifetime!

saving time in the kitchen

Simple Strategies for Saving Time in the Kitchen

So now that you know the basics of meal planning, let's talk about some incredible time-saving strategies that can really streamline your meal planning efforts and increase your efficiency in the kitchen. I call these the "*Cook Once, Eat Twice or More*" principles of meal planning.

Please note: As someone who has been meal planning for more than 10 years, I want to encourage you to take it slow, especially if this is your first go at meal planning. Don't overwhelm yourself by trying to tackle every single one of these time-saving techniques right out of the gate.

Instead, pace yourself. Read through these helpful "*Cook Once, Eat Twice or More*" principles and pick one or two to get started with. Then, once you're comfortable with them, add another to your toolbox and keep moving, making small steps forward.

Cook Once, Eat Twice or More!

"*Cook Once, Eat Twice or More!*" is a basic meal planning principle that really helps homemakers to save time and work more efficiently in the kitchen, which is why I always incorporate it into each of my weekly meal plans.

In a nutshell, you cook (*or simply prepare*) a double portion of something and save half for a future meal.

How does this save time? Well, think of all the work that needs to happen to get a healthy meal on the table – there's the preparation time, cooking time, and of course, everyone's favorite – clean-up time. So, if you make double of something during one cooking session, you're being more efficient because you don't have to repeat those same exact steps twice.

Cook Once, Eat Twice or or More can take several forms, such as:

- Purposing for Leftovers
- Planning Freezer Meals
- Batch Cooking
- Grouping Meals

We'll cover each of the above techniques in detail below. Because once you adopt these time-saving strategies, I'm certain they will become your newfound favorite tips, especially when planning ahead for busy days, when time in the kitchen is limited.

How to “Cook Once, Eat Twice or More!”

As with most things related to saving time in the kitchen, it starts with your Meal Plan! So as you’re creating your weekly meal plan, consider what meals you could cook (*or simply prepare*) a double batch of and freeze or refrigerate for future use. Then schedule time on your meal plan (*or on your meal planning prep day*) to utilize one of the following *Cook Once Eat Twice or More* principles, such as:

Purposing for Leftovers

One of the easiest and most common time-saving strategies is to intentionally plan for leftovers. Simply double an entire recipe, cook it and then refrigerate/freeze the leftovers for a future meal. In general, soups, stews, casseroles, and pasta dishes make excellent leftovers. In fact, some dishes taste even better as time passes, because the flavors have had a chance to meld.

And of course, there’s also the option of “repurposing” leftovers, which simply means using your leftovers to create a slightly different meal. For example, leftover ground meat from taco night, can easily be used to make a [Taco Salad](#) for lunch. Or a bit of leftover [grilled chicken](#) can be turned into a delicious [Greek Salad Wrap](#). Leftover black beans can be used to make an easy layered [bean dip](#) for lunch. And the great thing is, repurposing leftovers not only saves time, it saves money too!

Planning Freezer Meals



With freezer meals, you simply spend a little extra time upfront prepping and freezing meals for future use. This is a popular strategy especially with crockpot meals, casseroles, soups, stocks and stews.

I find the most efficient method is to prepare (*and cook, in some cases*) two or more of the same meal in one session. Then use one of the meals for dinner that night, and freeze the other(s) for future quick-n-easy dinners.

One of our favorite crockpot meals is [Sweet & Spicy Crockpot Chicken](#). This is a great example of a meal that can easily be prepped ahead and frozen. Then it's as simple as removing the ingredients from the freezer, popping them into the crockpot and coming home later to a delicious, healthy dinner.

Another example is my [Turkey Times Three \(T3\)](#) strategy for making three great ground turkey based recipes all at the same time and then freezing them to have ready-to-go meals on busy days.

And yet another example, is doubling casserole-style meals. Whenever I plan to make [Chicken Parmesan](#), I always make two at the same time. I cook one for dinner that night and freeze the other for a future meal. Or in this case, you can make a double batch of just the chicken and use half to make Chicken Parmesan and the other half can be frozen for use as chicken tenders for a future meal.

Sidebar: If you participate in any meals ministries, doubling casseroles and freezing them is a great way to always have an extra meal on hand for a family in need!



Batch Cooking

Batch cooking is really just another way to describe intentionally planned leftovers – you simply make large quantities of a food that can be stored for later use. For example, on the weekends, I like to make double or triple batches of pancakes, french toast or muffins, which I can then freeze and use for [quick breakfasts during busy weekday mornings](#).

One of my favorite batch cooking strategies is to simply double or triple a main ingredient in a meal (*such as meat, poultry or beans*) and save half to create a future meal that uses the same main ingredient. For example, as shown in the photo above, I intentionally made a large 6 lb. roast turkey breast for dinner. Then, divided-up the leftovers for 4 more meals: Sliced breasts for leftovers night, two 2-cup portions of shredded turkey (*frozen for future use in turkey noodle soup and turkey pot pie*) and turkey salad for lunch.

In addition, whenever I make [Stovetop Chicken Stock](#), I always make two batches instead of one. That way, I end up with lots of stock and meat that I can freeze and use to quickly make other soups and meals in the future.

And don't forget your veggies! When having grilled veggies as a side dish, plan to grill extra and use them to make [Veggie Quesadillas](#) for lunch or dinner the next day, or add them to a salad or sandwich ... these are just a few ideas to get you started.

Grouping Meals on Your Meal Plan

A simple twist on the batch cooking concept is a strategy I call "Grouping Meals."

How it works is, you take a look at your Master List of Meals and consider what recipes contain the same main ingredient. Then, you intentionally schedule on your meal plan to serve at least 2-3 of those meals with the same main ingredient over the course of the week.

(Obviously, the busier the week, the better to have more meals with the same main ingredient.)



For example, whenever I plan make our favorite [Grilled Pineapple Chicken](#) or [Grilled Herb Chicken](#) (*shown above*), I also take a look at other meals that use grilled chicken (*such as stirfrys, pasta dishes, main-course salads, quesadillas, etc.*) and plan a couple of those types of meals on my meal plan as well.

That way, I can simply double (*or triple*) the amount of chicken I toss on the grill. Then, I refrigerate or freeze the extra grilled chicken for use in the other grilled chicken based meals on my meal plan. This saves so much time!

To better illustrate Grouping Meals, take a look at the meal plan graphic below. You will see the yellow highlighted meals each use grilled chicken as the main ingredient. So by planning several meals that use the same main ingredient – grilled chicken in this case – I can save a lot of time by simply preparing and grilling all of the chicken needed in just one cooking session.

All underlined text in this document are hyperlinks that you can click on to get the recipes. Meal plan for average family of 4.

The nourishing home whole Food meal plan

	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Dinner	<u>Lemon-Garlic Chicken</u> , Mashed Potatoes and Steamed Broccoli	<u>Grilled Chicken</u> with <u>Pineapple Salsa</u> , <u>Crockpot Black Beans</u> & Rice	<u>Taco Salad</u> w/Leftover Black Beans & Rice	<u>Veggie Stir Fry</u> w/Leftover Grilled Chicken	<u>Shepherd's Pie</u> and Spinach Salad w/ <u>Raspberry Vinaigrette</u>	<u>Minestrone Soup</u> with Grilled Ham & Swiss Sandwiches on <u>GF Brown Bread</u>	<u>Grilled Fish Provençal</u> over Wild Rice <u>Dessert: Snickerdoodles & Spiced Hot Cocoa</u>
Lunch	<u>Veggie Mini-Donuts</u> with Garden Salad	<u>Fruit & Cheese Kabobs</u> with <u>Multiseed Crackers</u>	<u>Grilled Chicken Salad</u> Sandwiches on <u>Sweet Brown Bread</u> and Fresh Fruit	Raw Veggie Kabobs with <u>Great Hummus Dip</u> and <u>Multiseed Crackers</u>	Nut Butter Apple Slice Sandwiches (see note below) and Vanilla Yogurt	<u>Greek Hummus</u> Veggie Wraps and <u>Fruit & Nut Bar</u>	Leftover <u>Minestrone Soup</u> with Garden Salad
Breakfast	<u>Cinnamon Apple Oatmeal Bake</u> and Boiled Eggs	Leftover <u>Cinnamon Apple Oatmeal Bake</u> and Scrambled Eggs	Leftover <u>Veggie Mini-Omelets</u> and <u>Gingerbread Smoothie</u>	<u>Pineapple Coconut Muffins</u> and Eggs Over Easy	Leftover <u>Pineapple Coconut Muffins</u> and Vanilla Yogurt w/ <u>Homemade Granola</u>	<u>Homemade Granola</u> w/Berries and Almond Milk	<u>Savory Baked Eggs</u> and <u>Sweet Brown Bread Toast</u> w/Butter
Daily Prep	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bake bread and crackers Soak beans Save leftover oatmeal & mini omelets Make extra potatoes 4Thurs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grilled extra chicken for lunch Tues and dinner Wed Save extra beans & rice for Tues' dinner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brown extra ground meat and save for Thurs' dinner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Save leftover muffins for breakfast tomorrow Make extra hummus and save for Fri 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To make apple sandwiches: Core & slice apples horizontally spread with nut butter & raisins 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Save leftover soup for lunch tomorrow Defrost fish fillets in fridge overnight 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make meal plan, go to market and prep for next week's meal plan

Subscribe to [The Nourishing Home Newsletter](#) and receive a Weekly Meal Plan Shopping List, Prep Day Chart, recipes and more!

The yellow highlighted meals demonstrate how I group meals with the same main ingredient on my meal plan so I can “Cook Once, Eat Twice or More.”
The pink highlighted meals show how I further use batch cooking and “purposing for leftovers” to save even more time in the kitchen. With just a little planning and practice, you’ll be saving lots of time too!

It takes very little time to incorporate batch cooking into your schedule. Yet, this simple step saves a ton of time later since you only have to prep, cook and clean-up once, rather than 2-3 separate times. And of course, it also saves a significant amount of time when you go to prepare other meals using this same ingredient.

So now that you know these time-saving secrets, as you start looking over your Master List of Meals, it will be exciting to see how you can group meals with the same ingredients together to make preparation time and cooking time faster, easier and less stressful. Remember to also look for recipes that make great freezer meals, and of course, one of the easiest ways to save time is to simply plan for leftovers (or repurpose them).

Free meal plans

A Month of Free Real Food Meal Plans

The nourishing home whole Food meal plan: week One

The following Whole Food Meal Plan, Shopping List and Prep Day Chart feature budget friendly, healthy gluten-free meals that typically feed a family of four. For those not living GF, no worries! I'm a GF girl living in household of grain lovers. So let me assure you, this real food menu can easily be adjusted to meet your needs. In addition, for those following a grain-free diet, this meal plan is exactly easy to adjust, since the majority of recipes I develop and share are grain-free. It's a joy to share our meals with you! Many blessings, Kelly



Shopping List (dinner only)

Meat, Poultry & Fish <ul style="list-style-type: none">Chicken Stock (8 cup)Chicken Breasts, boneless, skinless (1 lb.)2 Split Chicken Breasts (about 2 lbs)White Rice (1.5 cups per person)Ground Turkey or Beef (2 lb)Mediterranean Bacon (2 slices)Beef Sausage (1 package)	Vegetables <ul style="list-style-type: none">Mushrooms (3 cups)Pineapple (2 1/2 cups, or 2 cans)Assorted Potatoes (2-5 lbs)Swiss chard (1 bunch)Sweet onion (2 small)Sweet potato (2 small)Yellow Onion (1)Garlic (1/2 head)	Grains & Beans <ul style="list-style-type: none">Wild riceDry lentils & split peasArroz con lecheCasseroles (for casseroles)ComaGarlic powderOnionGround cinnamonHot sauce (optional)Italian Herb BlendMexican Seasoning BlendOnionRed pepper flakesMustardThymeBlack PepperSalt	Other <ul style="list-style-type: none">Pure maple syrup (for dessert recipe)Wild rice
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Dairy, Eggs & Cold Case Items

- Cheddar cheese (3/4 cup)
- Fresh milk (or homemade)
- Shred cheddar (1 package)
- Sour cream

 Fresh Herbs - Chives (1 small bunch) - Parsley (1/2 head) | **Protein Powders** - Organic Veggie Medley (1 small pack) | **Pantry Items** - Black olives (1 small can) - Beans for Tostitos (Santitas) Rice - Cashew Butter (if making GF bread) - Ground tomatoes (2 small cans) - Dry black beans (or 2 cans) - Dry white beans (or 2 cans) - Shred cheddar (1/2 head) - Organic ketchup - Organic soy sauce (or coconut aminos) - Organic tomato paste (1 small can) - Pineapple Juice (or sub with lemon juice) | **Spices** - Blended almond flour (optional) - Butter - Oil - Vanilla extract (for dessert recipe) - Salt - Black Pepper |

All underlined text in this document are hyperlinks that you can click on to get the recipes. Meal plan for average family of 4.

The nourishing home whole Food meal plan: week One

	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	
Dinner	<u>Leaves Only Chicken, Mashed Potatoes and Steamed Broccoli</u>	<u>Grilled Pineapple Chicken with Pineapple Salsa, Chicken Stock, Coconut Milk, Coconut Oil & Rice</u>	<u>Two Baked Leftover Black Beans & Rice</u>	<u>Yogurt Muffins with Leftover Grilled Chicken</u>	<u>Shepherd's Pie and Spinach Salad w/ Honey Mustard Dressing</u>	<u>Mediterranean Soup with Grilled Herb & Salsa Sandwiches on GF Buns, Bread</u>	<u>Grilled Fish (steamed) over Wild Rice QUINOA SANDWICHES</u>	
Lunch	<u>Vegetable Medley with Garden Salad</u>	<u>Fruit & Cheese Salsa with Nutritional Yeast</u>	<u>Grilled Chicken Salad Sandwiches on GF Buns, Bread and Fresh Fruit</u>	<u>Raw Veggie Kabobs with Greek Hummus Dip and Multigrain Crackers</u>	<u>Hot Butter Apple Salsa Sandwiches (use extra salsa) and Vanilla Yogurt</u>	<u>Green Hummus Veggie Wraps and Fruit & Nut Bar</u>	<u>Leftover Mediterranean Soup with Garden Salad</u>	
Breakfast	<u>Cinnamon Apple Cinnamon Raisin and Baked Eggs</u>	<u>Leftover Cinnamon Apple Cinnamon Raisin and Baked Eggs</u>	<u>Leftover Cinnamon Apple Cinnamon Raisin and Baked Eggs</u>	<u>Flaxseed Coconut Muffins and Eggs Over Easy</u>	<u>Leftover Flaxseed Coconut Muffins and Vanilla Yogurt with homemade Granola</u>	<u>Honeydew Smoothie w/ Berries and Homed Milk</u>	<u>Savory Baked Eggs and Sweet Potato w/ Butter</u>	
Daily Prep	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bake bread and crackers• Soak beans• Save leftover almond & mini crackers• Make extra post-fermented	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If left extra chicken for lunch, Tuna and dinner food• Save extra beans & rice for "Tuna" dinner	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Remove extra ground meat and save for "Tuna" dinner	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Save leftover muffins for tomorrow• Make extra hummus and save for Fri	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To make apple sandwiches: Core & slice apples, bananas, fully spread with hot butter & raisins	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Save leftover soup for lunch tomorrow• Defrost fish fillets in fridge overnight	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make meal plan, go to market and prep for next week's meal plan	

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The nourishing home prep Day TIPS

As you can see from my meal plans, I schedule daily prep-ahead tasks that save me organized in getting homecooked meals on the table. But I also schedule a 1-2 hour block of time each weekend for simple prep-ahead tasks that make putting meals together a snap during busy weekdays.

Why schedule a Prep Day? Investing Time Now = Less Time Later! Scheduling a meal plan prep-session, whenever possible, allows you to get prepared for the week ahead. By prepping ahead, you'll save time and you'll be less stressed in getting healthy, homemade meals on the table during busy weekdays. Want to see a step-by-step prep session, [click here](#).



A few easy ideas on the types of tasks you can accomplish in a 1-2 hour Prep Session:

- Make nut flours and salad dressings
- Cut meats, poultry and seafood (if appropriate, you can also place these into marinated)
- Pre-cook ground beef and meats for stews
- Bake cookies, crackers and snacks for lunchboxes and treats
- Pre-chop fruits and veggies that hold-up well, such as carrots, and onions (be sure to store chopped onions in airtight containers - unless!)

Now, let's get down to business!

Here are some specific ideas on what you can do to prep ahead for this week's meal plan...

- **Make the Fresh Pineapple Salsa** only if you're planning to serve the salsa within 1-3 days of making it.
- **Make the Pineapple Chicken Marinade**, but don't add the chicken until your meals to grill, as per recipe instructions.
- **Brown the ground turkey or beef** for the Taco Salad and Shepherd's Pie. Place in fridge (if using within 4-5 days) or place in freezer (if freezing for dinner 2-3 pounds of ground meat and store in freezer in 2-cup size containers. Yes, high five yourself for saving even more time in putting together future meals!
- **Make the Crockpot Black Beans**. If you opt to cook the beans during your prep session, just remember to soak them the night before. Once their done cooking, measure out what you'll need for the Grilled Pineapple Chicken and for Taco Salad. If you've got any leftovers, mash them up and repurpose them as a [salsa base](#) for lunch.
- **Soak and cook dry beans**. If you don't plan to cook the black beans during your prep session, you may want to prep the white beans ahead of time for the Mediterranean Soup. (I'll most likely be making the white beans since Fridays are busy.)
- **Prepare salad fixings and dressings**. Chop lettuce and store in an airtight container with a paper towel (or cloth cloth) to help keep the lettuce crisp. You can also pre-chop most salad fixings like cucumbers, peppers, carrot, radishes, etc. and store in airtight containers in fridge. And if you make your own salad dressings, prepare those as well.

Prep Day TIPS continued

- **Pre-chop and slice the veggies** for one or two of the following meals (depending on the time you have available). Be sure to place the veggies in their own individual airtight containers per meal and store in fridge.
 - Veggie Stir Fry: Chop the green onions, carrots, bok choy, zucchini, broccoli and mushrooms
 - Shepherd's Pie: Chop the carrots and onion
 - Mediterranean Soup: Chop the onion and zucchini
 - Grilled Fish/Pineapple Dinner prep ahead ideas:

Consider what you'll be making for breakfast and lunch this week!

Remember, the shopping list provided in this meal plan only includes ingredients for the dinners featured. So be sure to also add to the shopping list any items you need for preparing breakfast and lunch for the week. That way you can get everything in one shopping trip! You can also prep ahead for these meals as well (if you have time left over after prepping for dinner). For example, baked eggs can be prepped and stored in an airtight container in the fridge for up to 3-4 days. Another example is having homemade muffins, breads, crackers or energy bars that for the week ahead.

Some final words of wisdom...

- If this is your first time prepping ahead, **start SLOW**. Prepping it always takes more time when you're learning the ropes, which is why I don't provide exact prep times for each step here as they truly vary by person. So don't overwork yourself by taking on the world. Just pick 1-2 tasks and get comfortable with those. Then pace yourself to keep adding more tasks as time permits.
- **Enlist some help!** If you've got some extra, ask your hubby to help here (and here) while you prep. The promise of delicious home-cooked meals should be all the incentive he needs. At the same time, consider how practical and rewarding it is to get your kids in the kitchen with you. You'll find [my top 100 meal prep tips](#) for making your kitchen time together productive and fun!
- And last but not least, **enjoy yourself!** It's a blessing to be able to provide healthy homecooked meals to your family and with a little time and practice, you'll be amazed at how much easier and enjoyable it will become.

Let's get together again soon! Of course, you're always welcome to pop over for a visit anytime at [The Nourishing Home](#).



Blessings,
Kelly

Download 4 Weeks of Healthy GF Meal Plans [HERE!](#)

Another tool I've provided to help you get started on the path to meal planning is an entire month of [gluten-free whole food meal plans](#) that you can, of course, customize to meet your family's personal dietary needs and taste preferences.

Remember, utilizing others' meal plans is a great way to gain inspiration and to better learn the time-saving strategies detailed above. For a free month of meal plans, [click here](#) and you'll be directed to The Nourishing Home where you can download four weeks worth of meal plans, along with the shopping lists and prep day task recommendations as shown above.

In addition I recommend checking out other real food bloggers who provide meal plans. My meal plans are gluten-free, yet are very easy to adjust for those who enjoy whole grains. However, for those of you who are looking for whole grain recipes and meal plans, I recommend checking out my friend Kristin's free weekly meal plans at [Live Simply](#). Kristin's meal plans feature healthy real food recipes from her own kitchen, as well as the kitchens of many other talented real foodies.

helpful resources

Congratulations on taking the first steps forward in learning the joys of meal planning! But wait, there's more ... In this section, I've provided some additional helpful resources to give you even more tools for meal planning success.

Free Meal Planning Presentation Video

If you'd like to see an actual live presentation on meal planning, I invite you to pop over to my website to watch my [free meal planning video](#). This presentation covers a brief overview on many of the concepts outlined in this book.

Meal Planning Template

In addition to the free meal plans provided below, I'm pleased to provide you with a [free meal planning template](#) perfect for creating your own custom meal plans. You can select to download either a pdf or Excel version of the template.

Real Food on a Real Budget

Although I'm not covering budgeting in this book, I can't stress enough how important it is to learn how to create and manage a food budget. That's why, I encourage you to check out my friend Tiffany's site – [Don't Waste the Crumbs](#). In addition to her amazing blog, you'll also find Tiffany over at The Nourishing Home each month where she shares a bit of her budgeting wisdom with us. *(I'd also like to thank Tiffany for serving as editor for this eBook. Her eagle eyes helped to ensure this book was as typo-free as possible. She is such a blessing!)*

Free Weekly Whole Food Meal Plans

In addition to the free month of meal plans you can [download here](#), I encourage you to sign up for my weekly email newsletter.

By [becoming a subscriber to The Nourishing Home](#), you'll receive my helpful email newsletter. Each issue includes my free weekly meal plan kit with a whole food GF meal plan, shopping list and prep day task recommendations that help make putting meals together a snap.

And, you'll also find a wealth of helpful strategies for saving money on real food, more meal planning tips, exclusive subscriber-only recipes and much more!

I look forward to connecting with you soon!

Happy Meal Planning,

kelly

let's connect!

Subscribe and receive free weekly meal plans, gluten-free recipes, budgeting tips & more: [The Nourishing Home](#)

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