

The background of the image is a top-down view of a white marble surface. It is filled with various healthy food items: a glass container with salmon, broccoli, and a sweet potato; another glass container with salmon, cherry tomatoes, and bread; a bowl of green grapes; a glass of orange juice; a bowl of sliced apples; a bowl of spiral pasta with shrimp; and a glass container with salmon, rice, and broccoli. There are also some nuts scattered on the surface.

Meal Plan *Mastery*

LEARN HOW TO
SYSTEMATIZE YOUR
WEEKLY MEAL PLANNING
FOR EASE AND SIMPLICITY.



BUILD THE SYSTEM

Getting started

Cooking, shopping, and planning for healthy eating each week can feel like a never ending maze, consuming your precious time. With this system you can banish the kitchen chaos and escape the decision fatigue.

Being prepared for the week, knowing what you will eat, can save you so much time each day. Having a method that you stick with each week can make it so much easier.

Life can be unpredictable, and schedules might change throughout the year. When this happens, come back to these initial steps to tweak your system. This means minimal time spent on the front end, to shave off loads of time on the back end. ✨

Five Steps to Developing Your Unique Meal Plan System

- Step 1: Review your calendar for availability.
- Step 2: Schedule your meal themes and create your system.
- Step 3: Collect and organize recipes.
- Step 4: Meal plan for the week.
- Step 5: Meal prep for success.

Set aside 30 - 60 minutes to go through this five step process and save yourself hours on the backend. You do not need to do it all at once, so don't hesitate to get started.

Systematize for Success



STEP 1: REVIEW YOUR CALENDAR

Get Clear on Your Week

We all have different commitments that will affect our ability to shop or cook on certain days. In this step you will review your monthly calendar and get a clear visual of when you will be too busy to cook, and when you will have the time for your culinary creations.

Here is What To Do On The Calendar (Next Page)

- Open your own appointment/commitments calendar and have this ready to review.
- Print out the calendar on the next page which is where you will start to visualize your weeks ahead.
- Get a green, yellow, and red pencil/marker (if you do not have this, don't fret. Just use the letters G, Y, and R to signify these colors). Green is going to symbolize that you have time to make that meal during the meal time. Yellow will signify limited time. Red means you have no time to cook during that meal time.
- On the calendar you will see B, L, and D, which stand for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. While reviewing your commitments calendar go through each meal and circle in green, yellow, or red based on the time you have to cook during that meal time.
 - For example: If on Monday you go to work earlier than usual you might circle this red. If on Tuesday evening you have a school meeting, you would circle this red. If you work from home some days and are able to take 10 minutes to make yourself lunch at the lunch hour, you would circle these meals yellow. Green would be for meals that you are generally available to cook for at least 30 minutes.



STEP 1: AVAILABILITY CALENDAR

Week 1

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
B	B	B	B	B	B	B
L	L	L	L	L	L	L
D	D	D	D	D	D	D

Week 2

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
B	B	B	B	B	B	B
L	L	L	L	L	L	L
D	D	D	D	D	D	D

Week 3

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
B	B	B	B	B	B	B
L	L	L	L	L	L	L
D	D	D	D	D	D	D

Week 4

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
B	B	B	B	B	B	B
L	L	L	L	L	L	L
D	D	D	D	D	D	D

STEP 2: SCHEDULE YOUR MEAL THEMES

Now that you have a general idea of what your weeks for this month will look like in regards to your outside engagements and your time to cook, it is time to schedule your meal types.

IF YOU CAN KEEP EVERY WEEK THE SAME, THIS WILL MAKE YOUR LIFE SO MUCH EASIER. This will give you a consistent meal system and eliminate any decision fatigue. If this is the case, only fill out one week on the calendar on the next page.

You know which meals you can not cook for, so you can schedule accordingly. Here are some options of meal types for meals you can't prepare at that time: Crockpot meals to start the morning of or even overnight, grab n' go meals, pre-made meals that you have cooked earlier in the week, and lastly left overs from the day before.

Example Themes You Can Use

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Left overs• Crockpot meal• Pre-made meal (this could include a meal that you are able to make ahead of time, such as soup, or hardboiled eggs with cut fruit)• Grab n' Go (this would be something you don't have to prepare such as a yogurt, banana, and peanut butter)• Overnight Oats | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Taco night• Asian cuisine• Pasta night• Salad night• Pancakes• Breakfast for dinner• Seafood• Vegetarian• Soup and sandwich night• Eat Out |
|---|---|

Okay, Let's Write The Plan

- Print out the calendar on the next page.
- Use the previous calendar with your green, yellow, and red indications to plan and write down which meal theme you will make for each meal.
- **Once again, if you can keep each week the same, this is a huge win! Don't over complicate your meal plan system. The simpler, the better.**
- You can also view the sample week to see an example of how this is done.



PRO TIP:

REPEAT MEALS

Find 2 or 3 favorite breakfast foods that you can have on hand for quick and easy meals and keep them on repeat. By choosing a few favorite “go-to” meals you keep from getting bored, you don’t have to put a lot of thought into it and you always have it on hand.

Sample go-to breakfasts



Apple Cinnamon Yogurt Bowl

Maple Blueberry Overnight
Oats



Avocado Toasts

Do the
same with
lunches!

STEP 2 CONTINUED: MEAL SYSTEM

Sample Week

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
B Pancakes	B Overnight Oats	B Avocado Toast	B Yogurt Bowl	B Overnight Oats	B Avocado Toast	B Scrambled Eggs
L Asian	L Soup	L Leftovers	L Grab n Go	L Grab n Go	L Salad	L Salad
D Vegetarian	D Leftovers	D Tacos	D Leftovers	D Crockpot	D Leftovers	D Seafood

Week 1

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
B	B	B	B	B	B	B
L	L	L	L	L	L	L
D	D	D	D	D	D	D

Week 2

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
B	B	B	B	B	B	B
L	L	L	L	L	L	L
D	D	D	D	D	D	D

Week 3

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
B	B	B	B	B	B	B
L	L	L	L	L	L	L
D	D	D	D	D	D	D

Week 4

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
B	B	B	B	B	B	B
L	L	L	L	L	L	L
D	D	D	D	D	D	D

STEP 3: COLLECT RECIPES

Good job! **You have completed your meal plan system.** You should not have to do those steps again for a while, until you have a major schedule change. Now that you have a meal plan system and you know which types of meals you will be making each week, it is time to collect some simple recipes to easily refer back to. You can do this in the following ways.

Print and Organize

If you like to have things on paper, print out several recipes for each meal theme you chose, and organize them in a binder.

Save in One File

If you are more tech savvy, you can save meals in one file with subfolders for each category on your phone or computer. This makes the meals easy to search and find.

Bookmark Recipes

You can bookmark recipes on the internet that you like and tag them into subcategories. Or create a Pinterest board for each meal type.

Star or tag your favorite meals each week to easily go back to these recipes for future weeks.



PRO TIP:

FACTOR IN FLEXIBILITY

Life gets in the way and schedules can be chaotic so even the best laid plans can get up-ended with a last minute work meeting, sick kid or the spontaneous night out with friends. Leave room for flexibility in your schedule to avoid food waste or feeling like you failed to follow your plan. Have pre-made freezer meals for last minute needs or an unplanned night that allows you to shift the menu accordingly.

FACTOR IN LEFTOVERS

It's great to factor in leftovers to reduce the number of days you have to cook / plan for (as well as keeping the budget low). Here are a few key things to remember when including leftovers as a meal:

- Have an idea of the number of servings vs. the number of people who will be eating the meal to ensure there will actually be *enough* for leftovers.
- Decide whether you will be using the leftovers for lunch or dinner the next day so as not to eat the same thing for several meals in a row (unless you are ok with that).
- RECYCLE- those leftover roasted veggies from last night's dinner can be re-purposed in your morning scrambled eggs. Or the grilled chicken that becomes tomorrow's salad. Get creative!



STEP 4: MEAL PLAN FOR THE WEEK

Write out the exact meals you plan to have this week on your calendar, or using the weekly calendar below. Follow your system! Then create your shopping list from the recipes you chose. For week one, this may take a little more time, but as you learn your own system, each week will be easier and easier. Also, you can reuse weeks and grocery lists for future weeks which will simplify this even more.

Meals This Week

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
B	B	B	B	B	B	B
L	L	L	L	L	L	L
D	D	D	D	D	D	D

Shopping List

Produce	MeatEggs	Dairy	Beans/Grains	Misc.
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STEP 5: MEAL PREP

Write down what you will need to do for meal prep to be prepared for each day. For example: if you have overnight oats on your calendar for Monday, you will need to prepare this on Sunday evening to have it ready for Monday. If you are having a crockpot dinner on Thursday evening, you will need to start the crockpot on Thursday morning.

At the start of the week you may also plan to precook some foods such as grilled chicken to have on salad or rice to be had with dinner. Grains such as rice and quinoa store well in the freezer and can be made ahead of time.

See the Sample Meal Prep Weekly Plan below for an example. This coincides with the sample meal system from earlier.

Sunday

- Make a double batch of pancakes and freeze half to be had for breakfast again on Friday.
- Prepare overnight oats to be had on Monday morning.
- Make a double batch of dinner to leave leftovers for Monday evening.
- Make soup to be had for lunch on Monday and Tuesday.

Tuesday

- Prepare overnight oats to be had on Wednesday morning.
- Make a double batch of dinner to leave leftovers for Wednesday evening.

Thursday

- Start crockpot in the morning and make a double batch to leave leftovers for Friday evening.
- Cook protein to be had with salad at lunch on Friday and Saturday.

No prep needed on Monday, Wednesday, Friday, or Saturday.



Use the page below for your Meal Prep Plan



STEP 5: MEAL PREP

Write what you will need to do each day to have success with your meal plan.

Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday



YOUR WORK IS COMPLETE

You did it! **You've finished your meal plan system and created a clear plan for this week.**

The amazing thing is that you can reuse this exact plan in future weeks and the plan coincides with your busy schedule.

Was there some work upfront? Of course. But, if you can utilize this system week after week, you will save so much time, effort, and frustration. It will help you stay on track with healthy eating and help you avoid the last minute decisions which can be disastrous.

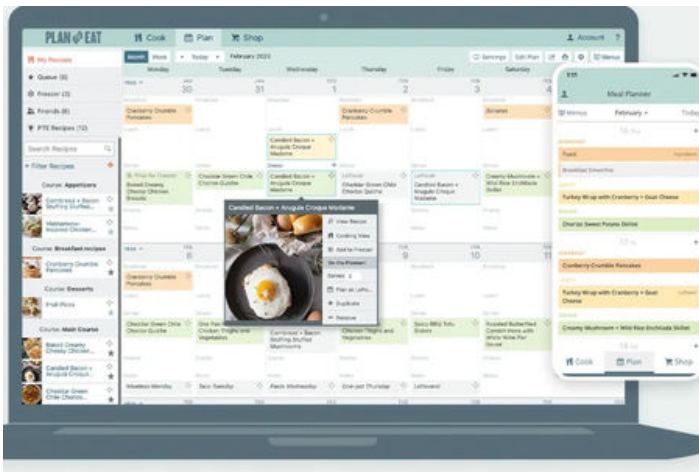
Pat yourself on the back and post your meal plan system in the kitchen to refer back to week after week.



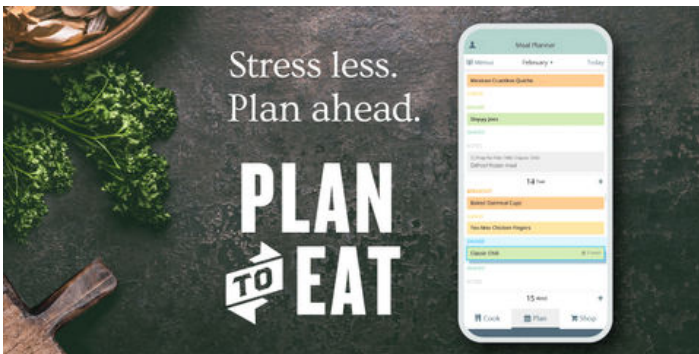
BONUS:

If you find that meal planning is your jam and want to level up on your meal planning tools ...OR, maybe you are not a pen and paper kind of person and need to keep everything in one place. *Plan to Eat* is a great app that has thought of everything from storing recipes, a calendar for easy planning, shopping lists that automatically populate from the meals in your planner and more! I have researched and tested so many meal planning/shopping apps and they all fell short, but *Plan to Eat* has everything I need as if I designed it myself (which I could never do, so thank you to the genius that did!)

Why I Love This App



- Stores all of your recipes in one place with easy categorization.
- Access your account on either the web or your smart phone.
- When following a recipe, the app stays open so you don't have to touch your phone with sticky-messy hands.
- The format for following recipes allows for instructions and the list of ingredients on the same page- so no scrolling back and forth.
- Provides a desktop extension to easily import recipes while you search the internet!



← Check out Plan to Eat, the meal planning app that changed the way I approach my weekly meal planning. By using this link, you will receive 20% off your first annual subscription. But don't just take my word for it, start with a free trial and learn for yourself just how awesome this app is!