

Calm Meal Prep Frustrations...Make A Plan!

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Do you get tired of running to the grocery store several times per week? Do you ever get frustrated because you forget about a food and it goes bad before you can use it? Does hearing your family say, “What’s for dinner?” cause tension in your life? If so, perhaps it’s time brush up on your menu planning skills.



To plan a menu for your family, start by picking a length of time that works best – usually a week is a good place to start. Write down your meals and snacks on a dry-erase board, calendar, online app, or whatever works best for your family. Using your menu plan, write down your grocery list and you are ready to go shopping!

6 SIMPLE STEPS...

- 1. Check your refrigerator, freezer, and pantry to see what you already have.** You can build a meal around something simple you already have on hand. For example, if you have a lot of frozen vegetables, plan meals such as soups and casseroles that you can stir frozen vegetables into. You may need to buy some foods to go with the items you have. If so, put these on a grocery list.
- 2. Check weekly grocery ads to find the best deals on foods you need to add to your grocery list.** Using sale items in your menu can help you save money. If you see blueberries are a good deal, plan blueberries as snacks, blueberry muffins for breakfast, and a fruit pizza with blueberries for dessert. If they are a really good deal, freeze some for another day. If you don't get the grocery ads in the newspaper, you can download them from the store's website or app.
- 3. Keep a list of family favorites.** List meals and snacks that your family likes and use the list when you have a hard time thinking of meals.

4. Plan to have leftovers. You can make a double batch of something one night and serve it again another night. This works well if you know you have a busy night coming up and will not have time to cook.

5. Review your meals and see if there is something from each of the food groups in most of your meals. This is the simplest way to make sure your meals are healthy.

6. If you have extra money and there are good specials on items your family uses regularly, try to stock up. If you continue to plan using this method, these bargains will be put to good use as part of your “on hand” list.

Menu planning is a fantastic way to keep your family budget on track. It helps save money on groceries, makes sure your family is getting the nutrition they need, and saves time with deciding on meals and preparation.

For more tips to boost your meal planning success, you can find a 5 Day Meal Planning Worksheet at: <https://iastate.app.box.com/s/nwecdndbm5ighioz3suu>, and a Meal Planning Calendar at: <https://iastate.app.box.com/s/6a073s9g34gfia0thev88mu1bp4rzfw2> .

Or, check out the helpful meal planning video located at:

<https://spendsmart.extension.iastate.edu/video/plan-a-menu-2/>.

Find more information about these programs and others, by contacting the Wildcat Extension District offices at: Crawford County, 620-724-8233; Labette County, 620-784-5337; Montgomery County, 620-331-2690; Wilson County, 620-378-2167; Pittsburg Office, Expanded Food and Nutrition Education (EFNEP), 620-232-1930. Wildcat District Extension is on the Web at <http://www.wildcatdistrict.ksu.edu>. Or, like our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/wildcat.extension.district.

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