



Build a “picky plate” full of nutrition

It's a rare meal where you can combine all your favorites and still have balanced nutrition. That's where the “picky plate” shines.

It's a meal that comes from the kiddies. Many parents have assembled an odd collection of foods for their children to try. It's a little of this and that, adding up to a full, balanced meal.



The adult version could look like a mezze plate or a single-serve charcuterie board. It's a way to combine the freshest fruits and vegetables with lean proteins and carbs to make it whatever you want it to be.

To make options healthier and more affordable, consider what's available locally. Purchase fruits and vegetables in season close to the source, like at a farmer's market. Your taste buds will thank you.

Tips for easy assembly

With unlimited combinations, assembling these meals could feel like a challenge. The key is to prepare elements ahead of time. Here are some ideas to get you started:



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1 Prepare raw veggies

Do it all at once. Wash, slice and peel (if needed) vegetables like carrots, cucumbers, celery, edamame, broccoli, snap peas, radishes, mini peppers and mini tomatoes. Store them in containers in the fridge for easy assembly. Steamable frozen veggies are also a quick alternative to fresh.



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2 Divide into portions

Cut cheese into cubes. Divide things like dips, hummus and cottage cheese into serving-sized portions.

3 Prep your protein

Weigh out portions of sliced turkey, ham, prosciutto, rotisserie chicken, etc. When you're cleaning up dinner, portion leftover proteins into 3-to-4 ounce servings. Hard boil eggs and store them unpeeled until you're ready to serve.



5

4 Batch roast

Fill a sheet pan with potatoes, sweet potato wedges, squash, peppers and onion to roast in the oven. These will be delicious additions to your plates. Store them in microwave-safe containers to reheat when ready to eat.

5 Plan, plan, plan

Choose themed picky plates each week. Taking inspiration from Mexican, Italian, Middle Eastern or Asian cuisine allows you to purchase, season and prep accordingly. When planning dinners, think about what you can repurpose on plates. Leftover chili can become a dip or spread. Cube, skewer and sauce leftover meats. Incorporate extra couscous or rice into salads.

Get creative

The only rule about picky plates is that there are no rules. Create combinations that will satisfy and nourish you.¹ Eat the rainbow by adding as many colorful foods as you can. Aim to make fruits and vegetables the stars of your plate. And watch your portion size when it comes to higher fat and calorie items, like cheese, bread or sweets.

Take inspiration from the following plates and then add your own flair.

Mezze plate

The mezze combines foods that are traditionally Middle Eastern. You may have seen versions of this plate in restaurants or at parties. Serve with pita chips.

🍷 Dips/spreads (pick 2)

Hummus
Baba ganoush (roasted eggplant)
Tzatziki (creamy cucumber spread)
Labneh

🍗 Protein (pick 1)

Falafel balls
Chicken kebabs
Lamb meatballs

🥗 Salads (pick 1-2)

Tabbouleh
Greek salad
Tomato salad

🥕 Veggies (all)

Cucumbers or zucchini wedges
Sliced red, yellow or green peppers
Cherry tomatoes
Chickpeas (also a good protein and fiber source)

🥙 Salty, briny (pick 2)

Black and green olives
Stuffed grape leaves
Pepperoncini
Feta cheese cubes

🍪 Sweets (pick 1)

Dates, figs or dried apricots



Farmer's market plate

Let the vegetables and fruits take center stage. Make it fresh and straight from the farmer's market, a country farm stand or even your garden. Serve with fresh baguette, hearty bread or with whole-grain or seeded crackers.

Veggies (whatever is in season)

Cucumbers
Sliced red, yellow or green peppers
Cherry tomatoes
Carrots
Radishes
Snow peas

Fruits (whatever is in season)

Strawberries
Green or red grapes
Melon cubes
Apple or peach slices
Blueberries

Dips/spreads (pick 1)

Yogurt dip
Hummus
Ranch dressing

Protein (pick 1)

Rotisserie, grilled or roasted chicken
Hard boiled eggs

Salty/briny (pick 1-2)

Pickles
Roasted nuts
Cubed cheese (cheddar, jack)

Sweets (pick 1)

Mini cookies
Apple cider donut bites

Salads (pick 1-2)

Broccoli salad
Cabbage slaw



Raid the fridge plate

This is self-explanatory. Start with veggies and then, who knows what you'll find. Take a little of this and a little of that, just to get a taste. Be creative!

Veggies (whatever is in season)

Cucumbers
Sliced red, green and yellow pepper
Cherry tomatoes
Carrots and celery
Radishes
Edamame (a good source of fiber and protein)

Fruits (whatever is in season)

Apple or pear slices
Blackberries or raspberries
Blueberries
Orange or clementine sections
Grapes or kiwi fruit

Protein (pick 1)

Rotisserie chicken
Hard-boiled eggs
Sliced turkey
Cottage cheese (small cup)

Leftovers (pick 1)

Meatloaf cubes
Chicken chili (small cup)
Thai curry with rice (small cup)
Roasted sweet potato wedges
Tuna salad (small cup)
Pasta (small cup)

Sweets (pick 1)

Dark chocolate square
Plain Greek yogurt with honey (small cup)

Salty/briny (pick 1-2)

Olives
Kimchi
Pickles
Cubed cheese

Dips/spreads (pick 1)

Hummus
Ranch dressing



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¹<https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-eating/eat-smart/nutrition-basics/deliciously-balanced-plate-infographic>

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