

Your guide to meal prepping

What's for dinner?

It's the most dreaded question of every day. To save time, money and make it easier to eat healthy all week long, consider meal prepping.



What is meal prepping?



Meal prepping involves planning and preparing meals in advance.¹ Choose which method works best for you. You could try:

Batch cooking

Think chili, soup, egg muffins, burritos or steel-cut oats—items that can be reheated when it's time to eat.

Preparing all at once

Get parts of meals started ahead of time. Wash and chop vegetables. Cook whole grains like quinoa or farro. Roast a chicken. Make a dressing or sauce. Wash fruit in advance. And multitask: while the chicken is in the oven, roast vegetables on a sheet pan on a lower oven rack.

Buying pre-prepped ingredients

Save on time by using sliced and diced vegetables, bagged salads, rotisserie chicken, frozen steamable veggies and ready-to-heat, pre-cooked grains.

Planning your meal prep

Meal prepping starts with a game plan. Think about what you'd like to eat for the week and plan accordingly.

Determine how much you want to prep. Which meals do you want to streamline? Do you want to make assembling a healthy dinner go faster? Perhaps you want to prepare lunches that you can grab and go. Start slow so you don't get overwhelmed. Choose one eating occasion (like a snack or lunch) to start with. Or prep for just a few days rather than the whole week.

Decide what foods you want to make. What would you like to eat this week? Find your favorite recipes or research new ones.

Consider what ingredients you have versus need. To save money, think about what you have in the pantry, like vinegars, soy sauce and spices. Focus on buying just the fresh ingredients, like vegetables and proteins.

Schedule your meal prep time. Look at your calendar to plan when to shop for food and prep meals.

Putting it all together

Don't be overwhelmed by the many ways to meal prep. See what works for you—that's key. Excitement and inspiration will follow. A place to start: Try this excellent recipe for your lunch prep.



Chopped chicken salad

Makes: 2 servings | Prep: 10 mins

Rotisserie chicken is a great way to stretch your dollar. After first using it for dinner, the leftover chicken can be repurposed in many ways, including in this chopped chicken salad.

Ingredients

- 1 cup chopped chicken
- 2 cups of chopped crunchy vegetables (carrots, celery, onion, mini peppers, cucumbers, radishes, etc.)
- ¼ cup edamame
- ¼ cup chopped pickled, preserved or fermented vegetables (pickles, kim chi, pepperoncini, olives, etc.)
- 2 Tbsp plain low-fat Greek yogurt, light dressing or light mayonnaise

Nutrition

Serving size: ¼ cup



Calories: 161 | total fat: 4 g | saturated fat: 1 g | sodium: 283 mg | cholesterol: 62 mg
total carbs: 5 g | fiber: 3 g | sugars: 2 g | protein: 26 g | potassium: 554 mg

Preparation

Chop chicken and crunchy vegetables. If you have a manual vegetable chopper, use it (do not use an electric food processor—it will chop too fine). Chop pickled vegetables. Mix all chopped ingredients and edamame in a medium-sized bowl. Dress the salad and season with salt and pepper to taste. You can experiment with flavor by adding fresh or dried herbs (tarragon, parsley, dill) or spices (celery seed, coriander, cayenne pepper, curry powder). Serve with lettuce cups or crackers.

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¹<https://nutritionsource.hsph.harvard.edu/meal-prep/>