

ChefGirl Nutrition Weekly Meal Planning Template

Who is this meal planning template for?

- you want to know that when you open your fridge, there's something for you to eat with minimal cooking time
- you want to stick to your healthy eating habits and be confident that you have all that you need to easily assemble nutritious, delicious meals all week
- you don't want to spend an entire day on the weekend prepping your meals
- you don't always want to eat the same thing for every meal day after day
- you want to get more confident in the kitchen & learn to create balanced meals with confidence on your own terms

How to use this template:

This meal planning template helps you to decide the main ingredients you'll use to assemble meals throughout the week. It's up to you to decide how many meals per week you want to plan for (i.e. only dinners, only 3 meals/week, 3 meals/day, etc.) If you're new to meal planning, I recommend starting smaller, so you don't get overwhelmed – my suggestion is to **start with planning just your dinners for the week**. For breakfast and lunch, it's a great idea to still plan for a couple of dishes you can eat for each of those meals throughout the week to make sure you have the items you need on hand – for example, you can have oatmeal & yogurt (with some toppings, like fruit & nuts) stocked for breakfast for the whole week; for lunch, you may consider using leftovers from dinner, having staples on hand, like canned tuna or salmon, plus simple things, like sandwiches/wraps or basic salad ingredients.

This template guides you to identify the **ingredients** you'll need from each major food group, plus toppings/add-ons and “flavor makers” (like sauces, spreads, dressings & other condiments) to assemble meals that are **balanced in nutrients and bursting with satisfying flavor & texture**. Of course, you can choose full recipes to cook for some of your meals, but this method (which you'll see as we go on) allows for some extra flexibility during the week and less time on the weekend prepping.

Start with a fresh template each week. I recommend using completed planners to help you plan for the next week. You can make notes of some dishes you created that you want to make again, or dishes you want to try with a different vegetable, sauce, grain, etc. This also helps you to add more variety into your diet – take a look at the veggies & starches, for example, and if you seem to always choose the same ones, try something new! More variety can help you to get more nutrients in week to week, keep healthy eating exciting so you don't get bored with the same foods over & over, and give you exposure to different foods, learn new flavors & how to use these foods in the kitchen, ultimately growing your confidence & skills in the kitchen to make home cooking easier, less stressful & more fun!

This template will work best when you have a **well-stocked pantry & freezer with staple ingredients**, such as olive oil, salt, pepper, other spices, and also staple foods, like garlic, onions, lemons, etc. You can refer to my **Pantry Essentials Guide** (*copy this link into your browser for the guide: <https://bit.ly/3nrE8gD>*) to stock up your kitchen with the healthy cooking & eating essentials.

For 1 week choose:

Proteins: 3-4 choices

Examples include: animal proteins (beef, poultry, fish, pork, eggs, etc.), beans, lentils, tofu, tempeh

Veggies: 5 choices

Veggies can be non-starchy or starchy. I recommend choosing 5 that are non-starchy to use throughout the week. If you choose any starchy veggies, those can be used as one of your starch/grain choices for the week.

Fruits: 2-3 choices

Choose fruits to include in breakfasts, snacks, etc. You want to aim for at least 2 servings of fruit per day.

Remember, fruits & veggies can also be frozen ones! This is where having a well-stocked freezer comes into play – I recommend always having a couple frozen fruit & veggie options and then you don't need to shop for as much fresh each week.

Starches/grains: 2-3 choices

Examples include: rice, quinoa, barley, cous cous, pasta, starchy veggies, bread products, tortillas, oats

Healthy fats: 2-3 choices

Healthy fats include staple ingredients, like cooking oils, nuts, seeds, nut/seed butter and also foods like avocados. Remember, healthy fats may come from the cooking itself – for example, this could be using a tablespoon of olive oil for cooking your protein.

Toppings/add-ons

Think of ingredients that add texture and a little *oomph* to a dish.

Examples include: cheese, breadcrumbs, croutons, crispy chickpeas, nuts/seeds, olives, capers. Toppings could also be things like hummus that add flavor & nutrients.

Flavor Makers

These are the ingredients that make the magic happen. Flavor makers include things like sauces, spreads, herbs & spices. These can be store-bought or homemade. Many of these would be included as staple ingredients that you keep in your pantry or fridge, like jarred tomato sauce, BBQ sauce, ketchup, curry paste, mustards, etc. I like to have a couple of homemade flavor makers on hand each week, like a pesto and vinaigrette. I also recommend choosing at least one fresh herb to use in meals during the week, like cilantro, basil, parsley, or thyme.

To choose your ingredients, you can either think up the meals you'll want to prepare & then make the ingredient list from that *or* choose your ingredients first & then decide on meals you'll be able to assemble from there. If there are a couple recipes you have in mind, for example, start there with the ingredients you'd need for those dishes & fill in the rest. You may notice that some of your ingredients overlap in categories – for example, beans provide protein and starchy carbohydrates – this is great news! It means you can use less ingredients & prep less to assemble a meal that's nutritionally balanced.

Once you have your ingredients selected, you may want to think about how you'll want to prep them first & then look at how you can assemble those ingredients into balanced meals. You get to decide what works best for you and what makes the most sense for you. Consider:

Do you want to have different ingredients prepped & ready to assemble into meals during the week (this option leaves more flexibility)?

Do you want to prep fully prepared meals with the ingredients you have?

If you're like me, maybe you do a combination of the two – fully prep a couple of dishes, but leave the rest more flexible for later in the week.

(Note: the actual quantity of ingredients you'll need each week depends on how many mouths you're feeding – for example, if you choose chicken breasts as one of the 3-4 proteins for the week, you'll need to determine how many pounds of chicken you need to buy)

Weekly Ingredient List: fill in this template with your choices for each food group to have for the week.

Remember, this list doesn't have to include every ingredient you'll eat all week for all of your meals & snacks. Focus on your dinners for the week to keep it simple. These ingredients don't all have to be fresh either! Always keep a well-stocked pantry & freezer to help alleviate some pressure around planning every single meal for the week. For example, I know I can rely on a dinner of rice & beans with a frozen veggie, or a quick pasta dinner because I always have those ingredients on hand.

You may want to make a note for each ingredient how you plan to prepare it – then, when you go to the meal planner on the next page, you'll have a better idea of how these ingredients can come together to create a balanced meal.

Proteins (3-4)	Vegetables (5)	Fruits (2-3)	Starches/Grains (2-3)	Healthy Fats (2-3)	Toppers	Flavor Makers

Weekly Meal Planner: this is the time to assemble those ingredients together into meals. You don't need to know every single detail of every meal & snack ahead of time; try to fill in as much as you can so you know you have something lined up for each meal and can be sure you have everything needed on your grocery list. Of course, some meals may be take out/dine out – schedule those in too! Remember, the goal here is to avoid having any meal come up and there's zero plan for it and you end up hangry, frustrated, and eating a whole mish-mosh of snacks with no real meal.

	<i>Sunday</i>	<i>Monday</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Thursday</i>	<i>Friday</i>	<i>Saturday</i>
<i>Breakfast</i>							
<i>Lunch</i>							
<i>Dinner</i>							
<i>Snacks</i>							

Weekly Grocery List

I highly recommend organizing your grocery list by section of the grocery store/types of food. This helps you to stay organized and on track with exactly what you need and limit adding those extra goodies to your cart. No wandering up & down aisles or running back across the store because you forgot something. And, of course, this also saves you time and money – yes, please!

Remember, before finalizing your grocery list, **compare the ingredients you need for the week with an inventory check of what you already have on hand.** Use up what you've got & replace any staples that you're running low on. This helps reduce food waste and, again, saves you some money!

Fruits

Vegetables

Grains

Dairy

Protein

Other

Weekly Prep List

Now you've got your groceries home & you're ready to get prepping! It's really up to you how much you want to prep for the week ahead. **Here are some thoughts to consider:**

- How much time do you want to spend prepping (likely on a weekend day)?
- How much time do you want to save on weeknights making dinner?
- How much time do you have available during the week to cook?
- Do you want to prep & cook entire meals? Do you want to do this for all meals or just a couple meals?
- What tasks do you want to get out of the way/what will save you the most time during the week? (is it chopping all your veggies or maybe it's having some protein cooked up, like shredded chicken or hardboiled eggs)

Pick your weekly prep day + how many hours you have to spend prepping. This may vary week to week - some weeks you may have the time to spend hours prepping on a Sunday, when the next week, you may only have an hour to spare. When you're in more of a time crunch, refer back to the question of *what tasks will I get the most benefit from during the week?* You can spend an hour on Sunday rinsing, peeling, chopping all your veggies that you'll now have ready to go to toss into salads, grain bowls, egg scrambles, stir-fry's, etc. That's a big time-saver even with only an hour of prep on the weekend. Meal prepping does not have to be your entire Sunday if you don't want it to be!

Make a list of everything that can be prepped in advance (not everything lends itself well to prepping ahead). Then, **break down that list into the prep tasks:** these include rinsing, peeling, chopping, marinating, blanching, fully cooked/prepared.

Next, **make a schedule of those tasks to keep yourself organized & on track.** Prepping doesn't have to (and shouldn't!) feel like you're on an episode of *Chopped*. Put on some music or a podcast and get in the zone. To make a schedule, look at your list of prep tasks and then organize them by factors like oven temp, cook time, & cooking method. Make it as efficient for yourself as possible (this will become easier the more you do prep!) – *what can go in the oven at the same time? What can you get done while something else is cooking?* Try batching tasks, like chopping all your veggies first and then using them as needed through the rest of your prep. Also consider that anything hot needs to be cooled before you store it in the fridge or freezer, so you probably want to cook hot foods first so they can cool while you do other prep, like chopping veggies.

Once you get prepping, don't forget to set timers on the things getting cooked!

SAMPLE Meal Planning Template *(designed to feed 2 adults)*

Note: this is a more advanced planning sample and you definitely don't need to do such a detailed plan as you're starting out. It all gets easier & more efficient the more you do it!

Weekly Ingredient List

Proteins (3-4)	Vegetables (5)	Fruits (2-3)	Starches/Grains (2-3)	Healthy Fats (2-3)	Toppers	Flavor Makers
Chicken breast <i>(shredded)</i>	Romaine lettuce + baby spinach	Bananas	Brown rice	Olive oil	Shredded cheddar cheese	Fresh cilantro
Ground beef	Broccoli <i>(roasted)</i>	Apples	Whole grain tortillas	Avocado	Feta cheese	Soy sauce + toasted sesame oil
Salmon	Cauliflower <i>(roasted)</i>	Berries	Sweet potatoes <i>(roasted)</i>		Scallions	Salsa
Canned black beans	Red bell pepper <i>(chopped, raw)</i>					Tahini dressing <i>(homemade)</i>
	Cucumber <i>(chopped, raw)</i>					

* Remember, this list also doesn't include everything we'll eat all week, including some of our staple foods, like oats, eggs, nuts, garlic & spices – I'll include those in my meal plan so I know what to add to the grocery list.

Weekly Meal Planner

	<i>Sunday</i>	<i>Monday</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Thursday</i>	<i>Friday</i>	<i>Saturday</i>
<i>Breakfast</i>	Pancakes (from mix) with sliced banana + chopped nuts	Greek yogurt bowl with berries, granola & chopped nuts	Oatmeal with sliced banana + scoop of peanut butter	Greek yogurt bowl with sliced banana, granola & chia seeds	Oatmeal with berries + chopped nuts	Smoothie with Greek yogurt, banana & peanut butter	Will decide later...
<i>Lunch</i>	Eaten out	Baby spinach salad w/ shredded chicken, cubed sweet potato, cucumber, feta, tahini dressing	2 hardboiled eggs mashed w/ avocado, wrapped in tortilla with cucumber	Whole sweet potato stuffed w/ black beans (sauteed w/ spinach & red pepper) + avo, cheddar & scallion	Cubed sweet potato + black bean + scallions with 2 fried eggs, topped w/ salsa	Tuna salad sandwich	Eaten out
<i>Dinner</i>	Broiled salmon w/ roasted broccoli & cauliflower + fried rice (cooked brown rice + soy sauce + toasted sesame oil)	Ground beef tacos in tortillas w/ chopped romaine, avocado & cheddar + cilantro & salsa	Taco bowl w/ leftover taco meat over brown rice, with chopped romaine, red pepper, cheddar, avocado, salsa & scallion	Brown rice bowl w/ shredded chicken + roasted broccoli & cauliflower + feta + tahini dressing	Pasta dinner w/ pantry ingredients (dry pasta, jarred sauce, frozen chicken sausage) + sauteed baby spinach	Leftover pasta dinner	Take out dinner
<i>Snacks</i>	For the week, snacks I'll have on hand: nuts/seeds + dried fruit, Greek yogurt, apples + peanut butter, crispy chickpeas, Larabars or KIND bars						

Weekly Grocery List

Fruits	Vegetables	Grains	Dairy	Protein	Other
5 apples	Romaine lettuce	Tortillas	Feta cheese	1 dz eggs	
5 bananas	Baby spinach	Whole grain bread	Shredded cheddar	1 lb. ground beef	
Pint berries	1 head broccoli		Greek yogurt	1.5 lbs chicken breast	
2 avocados	1 head cauliflower			2 salmon filets	
	1 red bell pepper				
	Cilantro				
	~1 lb. (3 medium) sweet potatoes				
	Scallions				
	1 lemon				

For the Tahini dressing: tahini, extra virgin olive oil, garlic, lemon juice, maple syrup, salt & pepper

****Already in my pantry/fridge/freezer:**

Nuts, seeds, oats, peanut butter, black beans, salsa, jarred pasta sauce, brown rice, pasta, taco spices, olive oil, tahini, salt & pepper, garlic, soy sauce, sesame oil, sesame seeds, maple syrup, frozen chicken sausage, frozen edamame, frozen berries

Note: when making your grocery list, this is when you'll take into consideration how many servings of each meal you need and determine how much of each ingredient you need to buy. How many mouths do you need to feed? Do you want to double your dinners to have leftovers for lunches?

Prep List (*Sunday after grocery shopping*) – estimated total time: 2 hours

1. Rinse, cube & roast 1 sweet potato (*total time: ~45-50 minutes*)
 - a. Preheat oven to 425°
 - b. Rinse, scrub, & chop into cubes
 - c. Mix with olive oil, salt, pepper & garlic powder, then spread on baking sheet
 - d. Roast for 20 minutes, toss, and roast another 20 minutes
2. Roast 2 whole sweet potatoes (*total time: ~50 minutes*)
 - a. Oven 425° (will go in with the cubed sweet potatoes)
 - b. Rinse & scrub clean
 - c. Poke holes around potatoes with a fork. Place on foil lined baking sheet. Roast for ~45 minutes, turning once.
3. Get brown rice cooking (*total time: ~50 minutes*)
 - a. Rinse rice, dry toast in pot for 1 minute, add 2 1/2 cups water, place lid on pot & bring to a boil.
 - b. Reduce heat to simmer & cook for ~45 minutes
4. Cook chicken breasts & shred (*total time: ~15 minutes*)
 - a. Season chicken breasts with salt & pepper & place in large pot
 - b. Cover chicken with ~1 inch water, bring to boil, then reduce to simmer ~10 minutes
 - c. Remove chicken from pot & shred once cool enough to handle
5. Make 6 hardboiled eggs (*total time: ~15 minutes*)
 - a. Place eggs in pot, cover with water, bring to a boil, cook total 10 minutes
 - b. Transfer eggs to ice bath to cool
6. Chop broccoli & cauliflower into florets & roast (*total time: ~30 minutes*)
 - a. Preheat oven to 400° (once sweet potatoes are done, lower oven temp)
 - b. Mix florets with olive oil, salt & pepper in large bowl, then spread on baking sheet
 - c. Roast for 15 minutes, toss, and roast another 10 minutes
7. While everything else finishes cooking, rinse & chop the greens, cucumber, and red bell pepper (*total time: ~10 minutes*)
 - a. Store in containers in the fridge
8. Make the Tahini Dressing & store in sealed jar in the fridge
9. Store cooled foods in the fridge

Note: there are some ingredients I don't prep in advance, like dicing avocado because these ingredients don't keep well once sliced. I'll do any other tasks when it's time for cooking/serving to maintain the best quality of these ingredients. I also won't be prepping the ground beef for tacos in advance because I like it better fresh and it only takes about 10 minutes to cook up the meat – while the meat cooks, you can get all the other taco ingredients together – the quickest weeknight meal!

For more support with meal planning & prep, healthy balanced eating & cooking videos to get you more confident in the kitchen, join our free Healthy Cooking Community on Facebook! Copy this link into your browser to join the group:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/chefgirlnutrition>