

WHAT'S FOR MEAL PREP

start strong guide

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dig in and level up

Big results are built on small habits.

I'm in the business of establishing habits that improve your quality of life ...and meal prep is a natural extension of that.

There's tremendous power in knowing what goes into your food. When you control the ingredients and the portions, you hold the keys to looking and feeling your best.

I created this resource to equip you to start a meal prep practice and keep it going for the long haul. This applies whether you're following a specific diet (like low-carb, vegan, or keto) or if you just want to ensure you're getting good nutrition during the week (which, tbh, everyone should strive for!)

I've been in the meal prep game since 2014. Once a college kid trying to wean off the pizza and Starbucks diet, I'm now an advocate of this practice that's that's touched so many parts of my life.

Here's what's included:

We'll differentiate between complete meal prep and staples and figure out which path you're more drawn to.

I linked some "Worth it" tools that I use every single week in my kitchen.

There are recipes for versatile staples you can make in your Instant Pot: Multipurpose Shredded Chicken, Fluffy Quinoa, and five steamed veggies!

And you'll get my favorite tips for food storage that will retain the taste and texture of your food. No one needs a soggy lunch!

Keep the habit going with weekly meal prep recipes and guidance:

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meal prepping: choose your own adventure

We're not the same person. We don't have the same work schedule, food preferences, family structure, or spare time. For years, this has been my struggle as an educator: I want to make meal prepping as cut and dry as possible, but at the end of the day, it's truly a choose-your-own-adventure! Here's what I mean.

- Maybe you're not fond of eating the same thing 3 or 4 days in a row.
- Maybe you're willing to eat the same thing if it means you don't have to cook and clean up after a hectic work day.
- Maybe you devote your Sunday to gearing up for the week (groceries, cooking, laundry).
- Maybe you devote your Sunday to relaxing and spending time with your family.

Since we vary so much, I'm going to introduce you to two different types of meal prep: Complete Meal Prep and Staple Meal Prep. You may be drawn to one over the other, or a combination of the two. You know your tendencies, you're in the driver's seat. Let's get started!

path 1: **complete meals**

If you work a 9 to 5, complete meal prep is the way to go. You can pack a meal with you in the morning then heat it up at lunch, making it easy to stay on track.

Complete meals usually take more time to prepare than staple foods do--initially anyway. But if you devote the time on Sunday, you will save time during the week since all you need to do is reheat them.

Complete meal prep also means you'll be eating the same thing for a few days in a row. Some people don't mind this if helps them stick to their goals (I'm one of them!)

Ideas for complete meals:

- Beef and broccoli
- Lemon chicken with orzo and asparagus
- A red or white chili
- Overnight oatmeal
- Burrito bowls
- Most of the recipes on What's For Meal Prep!

criteria for complete meals:

Shoot for at least 20 grams of protein in your meal prep and at least 4 grams of fiber.

This will help you stay full and ensure you're getting those hard-to-get nutrients during the week.



path 2: ***staple prep***

Staples refer to ingredients that make up a meal, but they're not a complete meal on their own. If you can't stand eating the same thing every day, staple prep is the best option for you. Another benefit is that most protein staples freeze well! Double the batch and save half for an upcoming week!

One con of staple prep is that you need to put some thought into how you'll re-purpose your staples throughout the week. You'll also be doing more cooking during the week to get meals on the table.

Ideas for your protein staple:

- Shredded chicken or roast beef
- Seasoned ground turkey
- Tempeh crumbles
- Pre-boiled legume noodles

Ideas for your fiber staple:

- A veggie-based sauce (like red pepper sauce or cauli alfredo)
- Pre-cut veggies for a stir fry
- Roasted sheetpan veggies
- Frozen produce for smoothies

criteria for staples:

If you choose to do staple prep, plan to make 1-2 protein staples and 1-2 fiber staples for the week.

Also, brainstorm what you're going to use those staples for and commit to the plan. No food waste!



taste and texture savers

Wait until your food is completely cooled before adding the lid. You don't want to see any steam, which will cause condensation inside your container.

Don't pre-dress your food! Store dressings, sauces, and dips in a separate container until you're ready to eat. I use 2oz condiment cups.

Be mindful of delicate vegetables like leafy greens. Do not crush them with heavy toppings since they can bruise and wilt. In a salad jar, always stack the densest ingredients in the bottom and the lightest toward the top.

Bringing food back to life: My favorite ways to bring leftover staples back to life is with seasonings, fresh garlic, a squeeze of citrus, and/or a splash of soy sauce in a hot pan. I'm also a big fan of making omelets to use up leftover protein and vegetables.



learn from my mistakes

Storing veggies? Keep them DRY. Store a dry paper towel inside your bag of spinach or greens. It will last twice as long!

To keep cooked noodles from sticking together, rinse them with water after straining. You can also spray them with a bit of cooking spray and toss to coat.



worth it tools

If I don't fall prey to purchasing all the new cooking gadgets out there, but **THESE** tools make life so much easier. They're worth the purchase to streamline cooking and preserve your time & sanity.



AN INSTANT POT

[BUY ON AMAZON](#)

CONDIMENT CUPS

[BUY ON AMAZON](#)

A NICE SHARP KNIFE

[BUY ON AMAZON](#)

AN IMMERSION BLENDER

[BUY ON AMAZON](#)

A STEAM BASKET

[BUY ON AMAZON](#)

*not necessary but
loved by blog readers*

THESE ARE THE GLASS CONTAINERS I USE

[BUY ON AMAZON](#)

THIS IS THE PAN I USE TO MAKE EGG SANDWICH PATTIES

[BUY ON AMAZON](#)

[\(CLICK HERE FOR THE RECIPE\)](#)



Instant Pot®

steamed veggies cheat sheet

broccoli



- Add 1 cup water and steam basket
- Add up to 3 pounds fresh broccoli
- **STEAM function for 0 minutes**
- Quick release

green beans



- Add 1 cup water and steam basket
- Add up to 3 pounds fresh green beans
- **STEAM function for 2 to 4 minutes**
- Quick release

cauliflower



- Add 1 cup water and steam basket
- Add up to 3 pounds fresh cauliflower
- **STEAM function for 0 minutes**
- Quick release

spaghetti squash



- Add 1 cup water and steam basket
- Cut squash in half (wide) and scoop the seeds out.
- Place squash face-down on the steam basket
- **STEAM function for 7 minutes**
- **Natural release 5 minutes**

sweet potatoes



- Poke potatoes several times with a fork.
- Add 1 cup water and steam basket
- **STEAM function for 10 to 12 minutes**
- **Natural release 7-9 minutes**



Instant Pot[®]

shredded chicken for the week

how to make

Add 1 can of chicken broth (or bone broth) to the Instant Pot.

Season 2 pounds of chicken breast or thighs with salt, pepper, and preferred seasonings.

Arrange chicken pieces inside the pot. Secure the lid and make sure the vent at the top is turned to the "sealed" position.

Press "POULTRY" for 12 minutes or "MANUAL" at HIGH PRESSURE for 12 minutes.

Natural release for 5 minutes. Carefully transfer chicken to a large pan. Allow it to cool slightly before shredding against the grain with two forks.

useful links

[Click here for the BEST multipurpose seasoning blend.](#) You don't need anything else but a healthy shake of this.

[Click here for my chicken recipe archives.](#)



how to use it up

- Coat chicken with salsa & cumin for easy chicken tacos.
- Add it to your chili, soup, curry, or stew.
- Toss it in pesto and eat alongside veggies.
- Add it to a casserole like my Alfredo Squash Bake.
- Add to an omelet for a high-protein breakfast.
- Use it for chicken salad wraps or sandwiches.



 ***freezer friendly!***



Instant Pot® *perfect fluffy quinoa*

how to make

Coat the base of your pressure cooker with oil.

Combine quinoa and water (or vegetable broth) in a 1:1.5 ratio (i.e. 1 cup quinoa + 1.5 cups liquid). Stir.

Make sure the vent at the top is turned to the "sealed" position.

Press the "RICE" function for 12 minutes or MANUAL at "HIGH PRESSURE" for 12 minutes.

Natural release for 7-10 minutes.

Release the pressure knob, remove the lid, and fluff with a fork before using.

[WATCH MY VIDEO DEMO HERE!](#)

why quinoa?

For a grain, quinoa is packing some serious nutrition. Ancient South Americans even called it "The Mother Grain."

Quinoa has 9 grams of protein per cup which towers over other grains. It's gluten free, high in fiber, and provides key vitamins and minerals like vitamin B and magnesium.

how to use it up

Try quinoa as a replacement for oatmeal. Add it to a salad or inside soup. Eat it anywhere you'd use rice, such as a stir fry or a casserole filler!



 *freezer friendly!*

ready to take off?

MEAL PREP LAUNCHPAD



Introducing The Meal Prep Launchpad: 29 pages of the most actionable food prep/planning guidance you've ever received, diced into four sections: Education, Application, Freezer Prep, and Shortcuts + Easy Wins!

- Get the meal builder template: Adaptable for ANY meal (+ examples in action)
- Learn the nutrient hierarchy (where to be strict, where to be flexible)
- Steal my meal prep gameplan to preserve your time & sanity on Sunday
- 7 Best websites to get recipe inspiration
- Shortcut flavor boosters to never run out of
- Freezer-friendly masterlists
- Best of Trader Joes shopping list
- ...and way,way more.
- **PLUS 3 webinar lessons:** Building Goal-specific Meals, Freezer Prep 101, and Warm Up to Your Instant Pot!

LET'S LAUNCH!