

Save Time & Eat Healthier Foods

# 11 FOOD PLANNING TIPS



## Introduction

You know you should be eating right, but you just can't seem to find the time. You have to get the kids to school, you need to get to work, your house won't clean itself and it seems like there are hundreds of unseen problems which pop up each week.

It's not like you don't understand the benefits of good nutrition.

You know you and your family can enjoy happier, healthier, richer lives when you eat right. You want your family to enjoy the best possible health, but day after day, week after week, it just seems easier to choose handy but unhealthy fast food over a healthy time-intensive alternative.

Fortunately, there are steps you can take to eat healthier and save time doing so. Other time-starved people just like you have found some really smart ways to enjoy good nutrition, while at the same time saving time planning, prepping, cooking and eating.

Start practicing the following food planning tips and you will find yourself enjoying the benefits of eating healthier while investing the smallest amount of time possible. *(Some of the following tips save you time, some help you eat healthier, and some deliver both of those wonderful benefits.)*



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**1 – Buy frozen foods** – Frozen fruits and vegetables are much healthier than their canned counterparts. Healthy frozen foods come in all kinds of combinations, and it is quick and easy to simply remove whatever quantity you need and refreeze the rest. Bags of frozen food also cut down on preparation time. They are usually precooked, saving you anywhere from a few minutes to an hour in the kitchen.

One smart food planning idea here is to **break down large retail frozen food packages into single serving sizes**. This makes it very easy for your family members to quickly enjoy a healthy serving of their favorite fruits and veggies. Healthy lean meats like salmon and chicken breasts can also be purchased in larger frozen food packages and broken down into smaller quantities.

**2 – Buy a kitchen timer** – A timer for your kitchen may not impact how healthy your food is. However, it forces you to spend only a certain amount of time on food prep and cooking. If you enjoy cooking, it is easy to get lost in the enjoyable task of food preparation. A kitchen timer keeps you on task and on schedule.

**3 – Stock up on herbs and spices** – Sauces can really add a flavor boost to your food. However, many condiments and sauces deliver a high calorie count, lots of carbohydrates per serving and way too many unhealthy preservatives and additives. The same is true for salt and sugar.

Herbs and spices deliver a zero calorie count and complement rather than cover up the flavors of the food you eat. They also deliver natural benefits, acting as memory boosters, stress relievers, heart helpers, anti-inflammatories, and they even strengthen your immune system. The following list points out some versatile and flavorful herbs and spices as well as the health benefits they deliver.



- **Turmeric** is an amazing anti-inflammatory. Many painful conditions are symptomized by inflammation and swelling. Turmeric naturally lowers inflammation, soothes your digestive system, is used to treat arthritis and even offers cancer fighting benefits.
- **Rosemary** delivers an awesome boost to your immune system. It improves your circulation and respiratory system, and can calm an upset stomach. It is great for preventing and treating the flu and the common cold, as well as reducing your risk of cancer and other deadly diseases.
- **Basil** improves your heart health and actually boosts a healthy DNA composition. It affects your body in so many positive ways at the cellular level, fights bacteria, and offers a wonderfully peppery taste.
- **Cayenne pepper** is hot and spicy. It also acts as a natural detoxing agent, cleansing your body of all kinds of impurities and waste products. It kills harmful fungi in your body, and can even soothe your stomach in spite of its spicy reputation.

**4 – Shop less frequently, and buy more each time** – Do you find yourself shopping for groceries 2 or 3 times a week? If you have some free time on your hands and you are driving by your favorite grocer, do you just pop in to see what is on sale? If so, you should consider buying groceries less frequently, and purchasing more each time you do shop.

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You can easily spend 3 to 5 hours a week shopping for food if it takes you 2 or 3 trips to do so. Alternately, you could spend just 1 or 2 hours doing all of the food shopping for your entire week in one trip. This is an easy way to free up some time in your busy schedule.



**5 – Buy in bulk** – This makes sense for a lot of reasons. In most cases larger, bulk size purchases are less expensive per serving than smaller packages. If you have a Costco, Sam's Club, BJ's or similar warehouse club nearby, buying in bulk is easy and saves you money, as well as food planning time.

Perhaps you don't have some big box discount wholesaler in your city. In this case, buy the largest size food packages at your local grocer. Talk to your local butcher about purchasing large quantities of meat at a reduced per serving price. When used in combination with tips number 4 and 6, bulk buying can save you time, money and headaches when planning what's for dinner.

**6 – Purchase a standalone freezer** – Unless you have a huge refrigerator, the freezer that comes with it is limited in size. Most families open the freezer compartment of their refrigerator only to see very little available space. Save time with your food planning efforts by purchasing a standalone deep-freeze.

This also lets you save valuable money.

When you see an unbelievable special on a large quantity of meat, vegetables, fruits or some other type of food, you don't have to worry about where you are going to store it. A standalone freezer promotes healthy eating as well, since you can stock it with whatever naturally healthy foods you desire.

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**7 – Cook several meals at once** – Why not cook just once a week? If that sounds impossible, think again. You can cook whole grains, lean meats, fish, beans, peas, fruits and vegetables once a week and have them available for all of your weekly meals.

This means minimal cleanup time in the kitchen. You only have to cook and clean one time! Then you simply pack your deep-freeze and refrigerator with healthy serving size containers that minimize preparation and cooking time.

**8 – Eat more single-ingredient foods** – Since they are not processed, natural single-ingredient foods are extremely healthy. Raw foods, fruits and vegetables like apples, broccoli, oranges, avocados, bananas and nuts can be used in a nearly limitless variety of recipes.

They can be combined, eaten separately, eaten raw or cooked a number of ways and snatched up when you are in a hurry and headed out the door. This is a time-saving and health conscience combo that can't be beat when it comes to food planning and preparation.

**9 – Precook a large quantity of brown rice** – Brown rice is high in fiber, super healthy for you, versatile and great tasting. However, it takes a long time to cook properly. It stores rather well though. Boil a large pot of brown rice and store in portion sizes.

Place a couple of portions in your refrigerator. Freeze the rest. Now you are ready for soup or salad, you can make a quick fried rice dish or reheat and serve with chicken, salmon or some other type of protein.

**10 – Eat fewer foods that come in a wrapper** – One way to eat healthier and save time is quite simple ... avoid foods that come in a wrapper. This doesn't just mean skipping the drive-through. You know fast food is unhealthy for you. So are most other processed foods, which are generally served in some type of wrapper or package.

Most of the single-ingredient natural foods, like those mentioned in tip number 8, are package-free. Mother nature provides the packaging. They don't need to be cooked, so you save time as well. It wasn't until the advent of agriculture and food processing that a need existed for food packages and wrappers. Not all packaged food is unhealthy. So learn to read food labels and you will make healthier choices.



**11 – Limit the number of times you eat away from home** – When you eat a lot of meals at fast food diners and casual dining restaurants, you have very little choice over the quality of your meal. Where was the food purchased? How healthy is it? Is it loaded full of harmful additives and ingredients? Was it handled properly? How is it prepared?

It's obvious to see how you can promote better health when you eat at home. You have total control over the food that you put into your body. Believe it or not, cooking your own meals at home rather than eating out saves a lot of time too. Dining out can be very relaxing. That means you linger over your meal, possibly enjoying the company of your friends and family.

Then of course there is the time it takes to travel to and from your favorite restaurant. When you cut back on the number of times you eat outside of your home, you choose to take control over what you are eating. You can still enjoy sharing meal time with those important to you, and you cut your mealtime commute down to nothing.

## Conclusion

**One theme you saw mentioned over and over in the above food planning tips is smart preparation.** Any time you spend planning and preparing your family's meals, you usually save time in the shopping and cooking stages. This planning includes buying the right types of items for your kitchen that make food prep quick and easy (think small appliances and food processors). A standalone deep freezer also allows you to save time in your meal planning process, while delivering healthy fruits, vegetables and other frozen food year-round.

Don't try to tackle this list all at once. Pull a few smart food planning ideas out and implement them this week. Over the next couple of weeks or months, begin slowly incorporating more of the healthy meal planning ideas listed above into your weekly routine. Your family's health will benefit, and you may find more free time on your hands than ever before.



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