

# MEAL PLANNING TIPS

## IDEAS AND QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

### 1. Plan For One Week At A Time.

- Too much can change from week to week to worry about putting a meal plan together for more than a week at a time.

### 2. How Many Meals Do You Need To Plan For?

- Take some time to map out what your family's schedule looks like for the next seven days. Understanding everyone's schedule before you plan your meals will provide you with a good idea of how many meals you will need and who may or may not be around for each meal.

### 3. What Time Commitments Do You Need To Consider?

- Do you have a busy week coming up? Are you out on Wednesday night at a school meeting or child's practice?
- You might want to consider a slow cooker meal for those busy nights or plan to make the meal in advance.

### 4. What Kind Of Food Do You Want To Eat?

- Things like the weather, changes in seasons, cravings (be careful), or what you had last week might impact what the meal plan for this week might look like.
- Thinking about these things in advance will make recipe selection and the eventual meal plan move ahead much faster and smoother.

### 5. What Is Your Budget For This Week?

- This might be the most important part of the plan. Know how much you can spend and build your meal plan around that budget. Using coupons and price matching will help you get more food for less money.

## ADDITIONAL MEAL PLANNING TIPS

### 1. Breakfasts Are The Perfect Meals To Repeat.

- You will often hear people say that breakfast is the most important meal of the day, and yet it is the one most of us skip.
- Have two or three breakfast selections that you use all the time and rotate through them to get your day started the right way (i.e. yogurt, fruit, and granola; toast with jam; cereal).



## 2. Turn Your Dinner Into Leftovers For Lunch.

- Add a little bit more to your dinner planning and you will be making lunch at the same time.
- Make sure to take out a portion and package up your lunch before it gets eaten at dinner.

## 3. Cook More Vegetarian Meals.

- Animal proteins are typically more expensive, so finding a way to get your protein through other foods is a helpful way to go.
- Beans, lentils, tofu, and whole grains help you get the protein your body needs.

## 4. Let Each Recipe Inform The Next.

- Don't just select random recipes as you put your meal plan together. Select recipes that use some of the same ingredients. You might find a recipe with rice and another that can use the leftover rice.

## 5. Store And Cook Ingredients Based On When They Expire.

- When deciding what meals to have on which days, think about using the more perishable items earlier in the week so you don't end up wasting food (and money).
- Organize your fridge so the more perishable items are at the front and are more visible.

## 6. Concentrate On Your Family's Core Recipes – These Are The Meals You Cook Often And Are Family Pleasers. The Goal Is:

- Prepare 4-5 of these each week.
- Match up with seasonal produce and rotate as the seasons change (this saves money).
- Create a family cookbook that everyone contributes to and encourage participation in the kitchen.

## 7. What Food Is On Sale?

- Look through your coupon folder to find out what coupons you have that you may be able to use this week.
- Look through the flyers to see what product sales might be happening that you can include as part of your meal plan for the week.
- Be prepared to price match once you get to the grocery store.

## 8. Spice It Up!

- Give basic recipes something new.
- Have theme recipes (e.g. Mexican, Italian, Asian, Indian).

## 9. Be Careful Of The Expense Of Meat.

- Use less expensive cuts of meat.
- Stir-frys and casseroles with added vegetables will stretch your dollars.
- The slow cooker is your friend and is the best way to tenderize those tougher, less expensive cuts of meat.
- Plan for at least one meatless meal each week. Use beans, lentils, eggs, tofu, and canned fish.



## 10. Canada's Food Guide/Foodland Ontario.

- Include all the food groups in as many meals as possible.
- Pick up FREE recipe booklets at the grocery store for ideas.
- Get to know our seasonal fruits and vegetables.

## 11. Prepare And Cook Food In Bulk.

- Prepare perishable foods and package them in smaller portions to be eaten by family members for snacks or for additional meals. Your family is more likely to eat food that is prepared (i.e. chop all celery, carrots, peppers, and mushrooms).
- Put prepared vegetables, nuts, etc. into smaller "grab and go" bags or containers.
- Cooking large batches of food helps to stretch your food and reduce food waste and cooking time during the week.

