



Quick Tips for Easy Meal Planning

Plan your meals for a week (seven days) at a time, even if you shop only once or twice a month. Planning meals at home before going to the grocery store will save time and money.

- Pick the same day each week to plan meals. It is easiest to plan menus just before you plan to shop for groceries.
- When bored, or tired of the same recipes, look for creative meal ideas: ask friends about their recipes, browse through cooking magazines, or watch televised cooking programs.
- Ask children to help plan menus. They will be more willing to try new foods when they participate in family food decisions.
- Plan “leftover” days into your meal plans. For example, if ham is served on Monday, consider serving ham and bean soup on Tuesday. If chicken is served on Wednesday, consider serving chicken tacos on Thursday.
- Plan meals around store specials and sales. Save grocery ads from the weekly paper, and use featured foods as the basis for your weekly meal plan.
- Look for coupons only for items you plan to buy. Take only those coupons with you, to avoid impulse buying.
- If you have freezer space, consider making foods in large amounts and storing the rest in freezer containers or freezer storage bags. This works especially well for soups, spaghetti sauce, beans, or bread dough. Freeze immediately after cooking.
- If you buy foods in larger quantities, plan meals around the ingredients you have opened. For instance, if you use part of a large can of tomatoes in a pasta recipe on Wednesday, plan to use the rest of the can in soup or chili for your Thursday meal, so that the tomatoes are not wasted.

Warehouse foods, food cooperatives (co-ops), and neighborhood buying clubs can offer significant discounts on meats or other foods. If you take advantage of these discounts, be sure you will be able to store them properly.