

Menu Planning



Do you want to save time and money? We all do! Here are some tips to help you do both.

Menu Planning Tips

- **Set aside one day each week to do your menu planning.** Plan meals for one week in advance. By planning ahead and making a list, grocery shopping can be done only once a week.
- **Check your cupboards** at home to see what needs to be used up first.
- **Look at grocery store ads** to help you plan meals. For example, if broccoli is on sale, use it in your week's menu by making broccoli soup one night, and broccoli as a side dish on a different night.
- **Gather your recipes and make your grocery list** from the ingredients on those recipes. Cross off the items that you already have on hand. Add regularly used items such as eggs, milk, and bread.



- **Write on the calendar** what you are going to have for supper each day of the week.

Grocery Shopping Tips:

- **Eat before grocery shopping.** Never go shopping hungry! You will be less tempted to buy junk food and unnecessary items.
- **Use your shopping list.** Stick to it to avoid impulse buying.
- **Use the “stoop-and-rise” method.** Bargains can often be found on the top and bottom shelves.
- **Compare prices** on store brands and “no names”. Buy the least expensive.
- **Buy healthy.** Choose 1% or skim milk and other low or non-fat dairy products. Buy whole grain breads and cereals. Try to choose items with the first ingredient listed as 100 percent whole wheat or “whole grain”. A good rule of thumb is to look for products with 3 grams of fiber (or more) per serving.
- **Try a new recipe once a week and continue to find new recipes.** Keep a list of recipes and refer back to it each planning day. Some people use a recipe file. Your list will grow, as will your cooking skills!

Helpful Web-sites

www.eatright.org/Public/index_19389.cfm
www.momcentral.com/newslettergroceryshopping.htm
www.ams.usda.gov/howtobuy/
www.thefrugalshopper.com/tips/grshopping.shtml
www.familyresource.com/finance/21/697



Cooking Methods



Healthy cooking doesn't mean that you have to become a gourmet chef or buy pricey cookware. Simply use basic cooking methods to prepare foods in healthy ways.

These cooking methods offer ways to capture the flavors and nutrients from your food without adding a lot of fat or salt. Practice using these methods and use them often to prepare your favorite dishes.

***Baking**. Besides breads and desserts, use this method to cook uniform-sized pieces of vegetables, fruit, seafood, poultry or lean meat. Place food in a pan or dish surrounded by the hot, dry air of your oven. You may cook the food covered or uncovered. Baking generally doesn't require that you add fat to the food.

***Grilling and broiling**. Both of these cooking methods expose fairly thin pieces of food to direct heat. To grill outdoors, place the food on a grill rack above a bed of charcoal embers or gas-heated rocks. For grilling smaller items, use a long-handled grill basket, which prevents pieces from slipping through the rack. To broil indoors, place food on a broiler rack below a heat element. Both methods allow fat to drip away from the food.

***Marinating**. This will help food have more flavor or be more tender. Cover the food item with a marinade for several hours or overnight. You can make your own marinade from a recipe or buy them already made. If the food needs to be refrigerated, the marinating time can take place when the food is in the refrigerator.

***Steaming**. One of the simplest cooking techniques to master is steaming food in a perforated (with holes) basket suspended above simmering liquid. If you use a flavorful liquid or add seasonings to the water, you'll flavor the food as it cooks.

***Stir-frying**. A traditional Asian method, stir-frying quickly cooks small, uniform-sized pieces of food while they're rapidly stirred in a wok or large nonstick frying pan. You need only a small amount of oil or nonstick cooking spray.

There's nothing too difficult about healthy cooking techniques. In fact, the basic methods are used by new cooks and skilled chefs alike. Try a few recipes, decide which methods you like best and use them often to prepare healthier meals and menus.

