

meal prep

ESSENTIALS



Meal Prep 101: A Beginners Guide

BY CHRISTIE MARKFELD

What is meal prepping? How does one start? Let's begin with the basics. This meal prep guide will help you get a handle on how to begin, how to choose your meals, how to make a meal prep grocery list and much more.

Why Meal Prep?

Be prepared. It's a slogan that's stood the test of time because the relationship between looking ahead and successfully meeting one's goals is undeniable. When it comes to what you eat and how you eat, preparedness matters if you want to reach your health and fitness goals. And, meal prepping helps you do just that!

What is Meal Prep?

Meal prepping is defined as preparing, cooking, or packaging food for three to four days in advance so you know exactly what and how much you are eating.

Having a healthy meal ready to enjoy can help you say no to unhealthy food choices. Tempted to go through the drive-thru on the way home to save time? No point when you've already got a delicious meal at home waiting for you! Taco truck pull up in front of the office again? No sweat — you've already packed a hearty lunch you're looking forward to.

Think of meal prepping as a way to put lunch, breakfast, or even dinner on autopilot for the week. You do all the major chopping, cooking and cleaning on one day!

GIZMOS AND GADGETS! Stock Up on Meal Prep Essentials

Before we talk about a grocery list, you may need to dust off some other items to set yourself up for meal prep success. Here are some items you might find helpful to pick up if you don't have them already. (I will share links on page 3 to these in case you are interested in purchasing)

1. Bento-Style Meal Prep Containers
2. Meal Prep Lunch Bag
3. Pyrex Meal Prep Containers
4. Mason Jars
5. Chef's Knife
6. Food Scale
7. Cutting Board
8. Spatula
9. Saute Pan, Saucepan
10. Mixing Bowls
11. Slow Cooker or Insta Pot
12. Blender or Food Processor
13. Portion Control Containers
14. Egg Cooker
15. All Purpose Sheet Pan

How to Start Meal Prepping

Start Small

If you're not calculating calories yet, but just want to make more healthy food choices, start small by meal prepping a few of those! Planning ahead and prepping your meals can be a great way to make more healthy choices and avoid temptation! If you're not used to cooking, you might want to begin with just prepping one or two days at a time. If you try to do too much too soon, you may be overwhelmed and not want to do it again. Starting small will allow you to test one or two recipes to see how you like them and just how much you eat.

Pick a Day to Meal Prep

It is recommended to start on a Sunday or Monday but you can do it on any day that works best for you. Sundays often work well since most people have a little extra time. She adds that people also tend to be more motivated to engage in healthy behaviors at the beginning of the week.

Come up with Easy Meals to Prep

Planning your meals for the week doesn't have to be complicated. At first it might seem a little daunting, but it's surprising how many different meals you can make with just a limited number of ingredients. This week I will be teaching you the best way to do this by using no-fuss combinations like chicken, brown rice, and broccoli or cooked taco meat. You can add flavor without calories, by using herbs and spices.

Once you have your meal prep recipe list set, check your pantry and fridge for ingredients, make a list, and head to the store!

Prep Staples to Use Later

Once you're comfortable meal prepping, it's best to prepare staples — like rice, oats, lentils, and sweet potatoes — in bulk. You'll return to them again and again and they can take the longest to cook. You can make a pot of rice, use some now for a meal, refrigerate a portion, and freeze a portion to be used later.

Three More Tips to Make Meal Prep Easy:

Include some no-cook recipes in your meal prep. Snacks like Shakeology and foods that don't require cooking (like salads and overnight oats) can help save time in the prep process.

When prepping, use the oven to cook several things at once. Veggies can generally roast together, and there's a reason that sheet pan dinners are becoming so popular.

Don't shy away from the Crockpot or the Insta Pot. The former has long been a meal prep kitchen staple and the latter is quickly becoming one. They're time savers — just add ingredients, set, and forget. While it's doing the work on one recipe, you have time to focus on another.

Where to Purchase Meal Prep Items

1. Bento-Style Meal Prep Containers: <https://www.amazon.com/Freshware-15-Piece-3-Compartments-Bento-Lunch/dp/B01GH5KQLO>
2. Meal Prep Lunch Bag: https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B00NSM085E/ref=as_li_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=thedumbbelle-20&camp=1789&creative=9325&linkCode=as2&creativeASIN=B00NSM085E&linkId=4e09112bf55960a5b4fc16712c7507f
3. Pyrex Meal Prep Containers: <https://www.amazon.com/Pyrex-Storage-Clear-Orange-Pieces/dp/B00O1FPRT0>
4. Mason Jars: <https://www.amazon.com/Ball-Wide-Mouth-Quart-Bands/dp/B00CNHCDR6> You can usually find these cheaper at Walmart, Aldi's or other local stores.
5. Chef's Knife
6. Food Scale: https://www.amazon.com/Ozeri-Digital-Multifunction-Kitchen-Elegant/dp/B004164SRA/ref=sr_1_5?ie=UTF8&qid=1504924079&sr=8-5&keywords=food+scale
7. Cutting Board
8. Spatula
9. Saute Pan, Small Saucepan, Baking Sheet
10. Mixing Bowls
11. Slow Cooker or Insta Pot
12. Blender or Food Processor
13. Portion Control Containers: <http://teambeachbody.com/shop/-/shopping/BBPrtnFixCont?referringRepId=828686>
14. Egg Cooker: https://www.amazon.com/Dash-Rapid-Egg-Cooker-Black/dp/B00DDXWFY0/ref=sr_1_4?s=home-garden&ie=UTF8&qid=1503950125&sr=1-4&keywords=egg+cooker
15. All Purpose Sheet Pan: https://www.amazon.com/dp/B000G0KJG4/ref=as_li_ss_tl?_encoding=UTF8&colid=1EBPAFHNL8LCD&coliid=IPYBG7KENHUEB&psc=1&linkCode=sl1&tag=thlastswi-20&linkId=0566dfaff9e282bdb83c1cb9c3625f8a