

Tips for QUICK AND EASY Meal Prepping

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With back to school, lunches, homework, daily routine, it's easy to run out of time and energy. Here are my tips and tricks for quick, easy and delicious meals.

Ready-to-Assemble Meals

When you're in a rush or low on energy, it doesn't get any easier than assembling ingredients and calling it dinner. Here are my combination ideas for a filling meal.

Protein	Starchy Food	Vegetable	Other
Pieces of cooked chicken	Pita triangles	Mini cucumber	Store-bought or homemade tzatziki sauce
Ham cubes	Crackers	Baby carrots	Store-bought or homemade dip
Canned fish	Bread or toast(s)	Lettuce	Mayonnaise
Edamame	Couscous	Broccoli florets	Pecans or other nuts
Meatless ground (or rehydrated textured vegetable protein)	Rice	Tomatoes, grated carrots	Avocado, corn

Meal Prep

If you feel like it, prepping ingredients ahead of time (cutting, marinating or cooking) can save you a lot of time in the evening.

Food	Cutting in Advance	Marinating in Advance	Cooking in Advance	Preservation
Fruits	Yes, except those that will brown (apples, pears)	N/A	N/A	N/A
Vegetables	Yes, but some can lose water (e.g., tomatoes) or dry out (e.g., carrots) if not stored properly	Yes	Yes, but the texture may be altered when reheated	Marinated or cooked vegetables can be kept in the refrigerator for 3-5 days. Some can be frozen without altering the texture.
Cereal Products	N/A	N/A	Yes, but the texture may be altered when reheated	Cooked cereal products can be kept in the refrigerator for 7 days and be frozen.
Proteins	Yes	Yes	Yes, but the texture may be altered when reheated	Cooked proteins can be kept in the refrigerator for 3-5 days. Cut, marinated or cooked proteins can be frozen.



Here are a few other tips for easier meal and lunch prepping:



For BREAKFASTS

- Opt for breakfasts that can be prepared ahead of time or the night before (overnight oats, breakfast burrito, breakfast omelette, muffin, breakfast cookie, etc.).
- Take out your utensils, spreads, cereals, etc. the night before to save precious minutes in the morning.
- Choose foods that can be eaten easily without making a mess if your children eat breakfast on the go (whole fruit, individually wrapped cheese, drinkable yogurt, etc.).
- Always keep cereal bars in the pantry for mornings when there's nothing much left to eat or you're in a hurry. Paired with a fruit or cheese, bars make for a fairly balanced breakfast.



For LUNCHES

- Label bins in the refrigerator for the different ingredients that usually make up your child's lunch: cheese, vegetables, snack, dessert, fruits, etc. Fill them up during the weekend or at the beginning of the week. When you need to make lunches, you (or your child!) can simply pick 1 ingredient from each bin to create a quick and balanced lunch. You can do the same in the pantry.
- Don't hesitate to buy foods that have been pre-cut, pre-washed, pre-cooked, etc. Although a little more expensive than buying foods that haven't been prepared, this can save you some precious time!
- Make more! Leftovers from the previous night can make for a filling, satisfying and super quick lunch.



For DINNERS

- Adjust your expectations: it's perfectly fine to eat prepared foods, store-bought sauces or ready-to-eat meals. You don't have to create the "perfect" meal or "perfect" plate. You will not only save time, but also a lot of energy.
- Breakfast for dinner: in addition to being delicious, breakfast foods (eggs, toasts, pancakes, etc.) are very quick to prepare. Don't hesitate to add these to the menu or use them as an easy meal for busy evenings. Your kids will certainly be thrilled to eat such a festive meal.
- Prepare your proteins, sides, marinades, etc. in advance. This takes a bit of time on the weekend but allows you to save precious minutes at dinnertime.