

Meal Prepping 101

Why, What and How

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration
VA North Texas Health Care System

By Failing to Prepare,
You are Preparing to Fail

Benjamin Franklin

Why Bother to Meal Prep

- Saves money
- Saves time during a busy work week
- Allows you the opportunity to eat in a healthier manner
- Saves your sanity

How to Meal Prep Cautions

These suggestions are meant to make life easier, not make it more difficult or be another stressor in a busy life

Do meal prepping that
makes sense to you
and works for your
intended Goals



Batch Cooking and Freezing

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Make meals ahead by preparing multiple batches for use now and weeks to come

Individually Portioned Meals

Single serve meals for this week
or later on if frozen



Ready to Cook Ingredients



Chopping ingredients ahead to meal is quicker to fix

Keep the Pantry/Freezer/Refrigerator Stocked with Universal Basics that Many Recipes Will Use

Broth

Canned Beans

Canned tomatoes

Tomato Sauce and Paste

Variety of vinegars

Olive and Canola Oil

Assorted Nuts and Nut Butters

Frozen chopped Peppers and Onions

Assorted Frozen Veggies

Canned, dried or frozen fruit

Instant Brown Rice

Whole Grain Pasta

Chopped Garlic

Basic Assorted spices

Nice Tools and Equipment for Success

- Aluminum foil
- Plastic wrap
- 1 gallon and 1 quart Freezer Bags
- Crock Pot or Pressure Steamer
- Containers for Product storage—
Mason Jars, Ramekins, Tupperware/Reusable boxes
- Food Labels and a Sharpie
- Vacuum food sealers are a nice to have item, but can be expensive



dreamstime.com



Basic Procedure



Check Calendar for what you have going on

Take Inventory of what is available to use in the freezer, pantry, refrigerator or for what needs to be used in the very near future

Make a menu based on favorite recipes. Be sure to consider how leftovers will be used

Make a Grocery List

Do the shopping



Once You're Home from the Store

- Wash off and prep fruit and veggies
- Bake off and/or brown off any meats you might use
- Cook rice or pasta



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Tips for Making the Most of Your Time

- Begin with foods requiring the most time. As they are baking/simmering you can work on other products that need to be done
- If an ingredient is needed in multiple recipes, chop it all at once for both recipes. i.e. onions
- Chop all produce first and then chop meats to save on cleaning the cutting board

Food Prepping Ideas- Breakfast

EGG DISHES

Frittatas

Boiled Eggs

Egg Sandwiches

Quiche Mixes



HOT CEREALS

Overnight Oats

Cook oats overnight
in Crockpot

Simply cook extra



Breakfast Ideas Continued

BREAKFAST MEATS

Precooked Sausage

Precooked Bacon

Precooked or Frozen Sausage
crumbles

Pre-sliced Ham

FRESH FRUIT AND VEGGIES

Make your own fruit platter
cheaper than the grocery
store will sell it you for or
have it ready for a smoothie



Chopped onions, peppers, clean spinach
or other greenery for egg dishes or to put
into a smoothie

Mix up a variety of cleaned greens and chopped veggies- add the dressing just prior to serving

Salad dressings

Large pots of soup can be put in freezer as a single meal or portioned for family sized meal

Tuna salad, egg salad, bean salads and chicken salads are handy to have on hand

Use leftover roasts, chickens or meatloaves for sandwiches

Soup, Salad and Sandwiches



Make Double Batches of items such as soup, meatloaf, pasta sauce, that can be used now and for another week

Make your own frozen pizzas

Cook off and freeze meat as a recipe ready ingredient

Freeze sliced or shredded meats for sandwiches

Dinner Entrée Ideas



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Traditional Baked Chicken Meal

Sautee meat with frozen peppers and onions to create fajitas

Chopped meat is great on a salad

Mix a bit of egg, variety of chopped veggies and mayo to chopped meat to make a chicken salad

Diced meat with frozen veggies for a stir-fry

Take the carcass with a quart of broth, can of tomatoes, can of beans and frozen veggies to make soup

Cook 1 Meat
and get multiple
different meals
from product

*Example: Cook a
chicken and see what
else you can make*

Food Safety Basics

- How long will fresh items keep?
- How to prevent cross contamination
- What is the proper procedure for freezing?
- How to properly thaw frozen products

How Long Will Fresh Items Keep?

Cut peppers and onions will keep 2-3 days

Sturdier veggies (cabbage, carrots, winter squash) will keep 3-5 days

Cleaned Salad Greens that are washed and dried will keep 5-7 days

Cooked Meats will keep 5 days if stored properly



How to Prevent Cross Contamination of Germs from One Thing to Another

Clean hands



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Clean surfaces



<https://www.workingmother.com/>

Separation of foods that will be eaten raw from raw meats



<https://www.a2zfoodsafety.co.uk>

Proper Containers Are a Must

- Ideally clear so you can see through them
- Freezer Safe
- Dishwasher Safe
- Microwave oven safe or oven safe
- Stackable
- Reusable



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Prevent Freezer Burn

Wrap in plastic first then cover with aluminum foil

Freezer Safe Bag

Freezer Safe Reusable containers

Label and date everything.

Be mindful of when it needs to be used so you get the best flavor and texture when you do use it.

Label and Date EVERYTHING

Identify what the product is

When it was frozen/made

Good Idea to put on a use by date so you know the quality won't be suspect

Turkey Gumbo

3/17/17

Use by 9/17/17



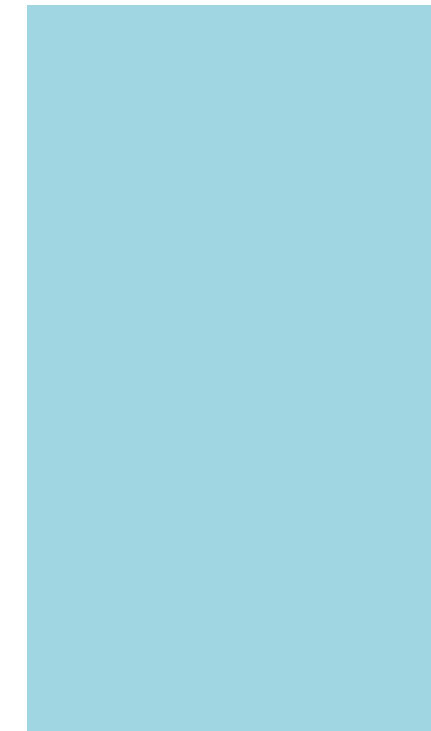
Procedure for Freezing Soups and Grain Products

Cool to Room Temperature

Give 1 inch head space to allow for expansion as product freezes in the freezer bag

Carefully label product

Lay them flat so they stack



Procedure for Freezing a Casserole or Meatloaf

Cool to Room Temperature

Carefully wrap in plastic wrap to prevent any acids in the food from breaking down the Aluminum foil

Wrap in Foil to assure the product remains air tight and doesn't get dried out

Carefully label product



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Procedure for Thawing Out Products

- Thaw products under refrigeration



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- Or run the package under water for 30 seconds to get the packaging unstuck from the food product and then carefully place product in a microwave safe container and microwave until the product is done

Tips for Using Microwave Oven



Cover the food

Use only microwave safe dishes.
Do not use take-out containers or
plastic food tubs

At the mid point of cooking/
defrosting time, give the food a stir
or flip it over

After heating, allow the food to rest
covered for a minute or two to
distribute the heat through out the
product

Food thawed in microwave needs
to be used immediately



Reheat Foods to 165 to Prevent Food Borne Illnesses

- Use a Food Thermometer to verify the end point Temperature
- Always place thermometer into the thickest part of the product when taking the temperature



Cook Book/Recipe Resources

Ellie Krieger

- *Week Night Wonders*
- *You've Got It Made*

Pinterest

AllRecipes.com

Pressurecookingtoday.com

Thirtyhandmadedays.com

Questions?

Thank You For Coming!

Presented by North Texas NFS Dietitian Staff

Developed by Brenda Greer, MS, RD; Brenda.Greer@va.gov