

# Meal Prep Blueprint

Save 10 Hours Per Week in the Kitchen  
A Step-by-Step System for Busy Adults

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*Disclaimer: This guide is for educational purposes only. Always follow food safety guidelines. Individual dietary needs vary - consult a nutritionist for personalized advice.*

# Table of Contents

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1. Why Meal Prep Changes Everything
2. The 3 Meal Prep Strategies
3. Equipment You Need
4. The Sunday Prep Session
5. Building Blocks Method
6. 5 Complete Meal Prep Plans
7. Storage and Reheating Guide
8. Meal Prep Mistakes to Avoid
9. References

# 1. Why Meal Prep Changes Everything

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The average American spends 6.5 hours per week on food preparation and cleanup. A structured meal prep system can reduce this to 2-3 hours while improving nutrition and reducing food waste by up to 40%.

**\$2,500+** saved per year by meal prepping vs. takeout/restaurants (USDA)

**40%** reduction in food waste with planned meal prep

Benefits: Save time, save money, eat healthier, reduce stress (no daily 'what should I eat' decision), reduce food waste.

**PRO TIP:** Meal prep is not about eating the same boring meal 5 times. It is about smart preparation.

## 2. The 3 Meal Prep Strategies

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### Strategy 1: Full Meal Prep

Cook complete meals, portion into containers. Grab and go. Best for: lunches, busy workweeks. Downside: Less variety, some meals do not reheat well.

### Strategy 2: Ingredient Prep (Building Blocks)

Prep components separately: grains, proteins, vegetables, sauces. Combine differently each day. Best for: people who want variety but still want to save time. This is the recommended approach.

### Strategy 3: Freezer Meals

Make double batches and freeze portions. Build a freezer library over time. Best for: soups, stews, sauces, casseroles. Can prep months in advance.

## 3. Equipment You Need

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- Glass meal prep containers with locking lids (BPA-free, microwave/oven safe)
- Sheet pans (2-3 full-size for batch roasting)
- Large pot for grains and batch cooking
- Sharp chef knife and large cutting board
- Food scale (for portions)
- Labels and markers (date everything)
- Freezer bags (lay flat for space-efficient freezing)

## 4. The Sunday Prep Session

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The 2-hour Sunday prep that sets up your entire week:

### HOUR 1:

- 0:00 - Start grain (rice/quinoa) on stove and preheat oven to 425F
- 0:05 - Chop all vegetables for the week
- 0:20 - Season proteins and place on sheet pans
- 0:25 - Sheet pan vegetables + proteins go in oven
- 0:30 - Make 1-2 sauces/dressings while oven works
- 0:45 - Wash and prep salad greens, fresh herbs

### HOUR 2:

- 1:00 - Remove first batch from oven, start second if needed
- 1:05 - Hard boil eggs (great protein snack)
- 1:15 - Portion grains into containers
- 1:30 - Let everything cool, then portion and label
- 1:50 - Clean up
- 2:00 - Done. Entire week is ready.

**PRO TIP:**

Use oven time wisely: while things roast, prep, chop, and make sauces.

## 5. Building Blocks Method

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Prep these 5 building blocks every Sunday. Mix and match throughout the week:

### Block 1: Base Grains (pick 1-2)

Brown rice, quinoa, farro, pasta, sweet potatoes. Cook a big batch.

### Block 2: Proteins (pick 2-3)

Chicken thighs, ground turkey, salmon, tofu, hard-boiled eggs, lentils. Season differently: one batch Mexican spiced, one Asian, one Italian.

### Block 3: Roasted Vegetables (pick 3-4)

Broccoli, bell peppers, sweet potatoes, zucchini, carrots, Brussels sprouts. Toss with oil + salt, roast at 425F for 20-25 minutes.

### Block 4: Fresh Components

Washed greens, sliced avocado (prep day-of), cherry tomatoes, cucumber, fresh herbs.

### Block 5: Sauces/Dressings (pick 2)

Tahini dressing, soy-ginger sauce, chimichurri, lemon vinaigrette, peanut sauce. Sauces transform the same ingredients into completely different meals.

Monday: Rice bowl + chicken + broccoli + soy-ginger sauce

Tuesday: Quinoa salad + salmon + roasted peppers + lemon vinaigrette

Wednesday: Rice + tofu + Brussels sprouts + peanut sauce

Thursday: Greens + chicken + sweet potato + tahini dressing

Friday: Pasta + ground turkey + zucchini + chimichurri

Same prep session. 5 different meals. Zero boredom.

## 6. Five Complete Meal Prep Plans

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### Plan A: Mediterranean

Grain: couscous. Proteins: grilled chicken, chickpeas, feta. Vegetables: roasted eggplant, cherry tomatoes, cucumber. Sauce: tzatziki, lemon-herb vinaigrette.

### Plan B: Asian-Inspired

Grain: jasmine rice. Proteins: teriyaki salmon, edamame, soft-boiled eggs. Vegetables: stir-fry mix (snap peas, bell peppers, broccoli). Sauce: soy-ginger, sriracha mayo.

### Plan C: Mexican

Grain: cilantro lime rice. Proteins: seasoned ground turkey, black beans. Vegetables: roasted corn, bell peppers, onions. Sauce: salsa verde, guacamole (make fresh day-of).

### Plan D: Plant-Based

Grain: quinoa, sweet potatoes. Proteins: lentils, baked tofu, hummus. Vegetables: roasted cauliflower, kale, beets. Sauce: tahini, balsamic reduction.

### Plan E: High-Protein

Grain: brown rice. Proteins: grilled chicken breast (2 seasonings), turkey meatballs, hard-boiled eggs. Vegetables: steamed broccoli, roasted asparagus, spinach. Sauce: Greek yogurt ranch, mustard vinaigrette.

## 7. Storage and Reheating Guide

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### FRIDGE LIFE:

- Cooked grains: 4-5 days
- Cooked chicken/turkey: 3-4 days
- Cooked fish: 2-3 days
- Roasted vegetables: 4-5 days
- Hard-boiled eggs: 5-7 days (peeled: 5 days)
- Sauces/dressings: 5-7 days
- Cut raw vegetables: 3-5 days (in water for carrots/celery)

### FREEZER LIFE:

- Cooked proteins: 2-3 months
- Soups and stews: 3-4 months
- Cooked grains: 2-3 months
- Sauces: 3-6 months

**PRO TIP:**

Label everything with contents and date. First in, first out.

## 8. Common Mistakes

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- Prepping too much variety (overwhelm). Start with 3-4 meals, not 7.
- Not seasoning building blocks differently (boredom). Vary spices!
- Ignoring texture (soggy reheated food). Store wet and dry components separately.
- Not using the freezer (wasted food). If you cannot eat it in 3 days, freeze it.
- Skipping sauces (bland meals). Sauces are what make meal prep exciting.

Get interactive meal prep plans and grocery lists at [midrecipes.com](https://midrecipes.com)

# References

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