

Meal Prep; For Busy Moms

Life in NYC is crazy busy for everybody. How can a busy mom ensure her family is properly fed while managing between house chores and the office?

The answer to this question is weekly meal preparations. Taking a few hours of your day to prepare meals is a simple and efficient way to ensure you and your family are eating proper meals instead of just quickly grabbing some McDonalds, Wendy's or any other fast food that we find in the street. Whether a super busy mom that is struggling to manage a family with office life or if you are just a super busy mom at home who thinks that cooking and cleaning up after taking a big portion of all your day, meal prep might just be the solution to that problem.

But what if you've never done meal preparations for the whole family before? What if you have tried but get bored from eating the same food over and over again? What if you worry that the kids won't eat it? Well, many agree that meal prep starts at the desk and not in the kitchen. This is because before you start cooking you will need to do some thinking and planning.

In this article you will find some simple but useful steps on how to go about it as well as some useful videos that can help you get started.



Steps To Meal Prep

The first step is to look over your weekly schedule and find one day in which you have a few consecutive hours. Depending on the size of your family you will need an average of 2 to 5 hours of that day. It is very important to designate one day as your meal prep day. Most moms find Sunday mornings a good day to get all their weekly meals done. But the day and time will depend on your personal schedule.

It is very important that you pick a day and time that you are less likely to get interrupted. The idea is to be able to repeat the meal prep session the following week.



The second step is to sit down and make a list of all your favorite meals. Include everything you like, even those things you tend to order when you eat out and the things you know your family likes. The point of meal prepping is that you and your family eat the food you have taken a day to prepare. It is important that you make food that will make both you and your family happy.

The point is to use this list to give you an idea of the kind of food you will later search recipes for. Also it will help you see what you are currently eating, analyze your eating habits and help you decide what food you might need to find healthy replacements for.



The third step is to get the appropriate containers. You need to get containers that are the appropriate size and shape. Although you are meal prepping which means you are working hard, this day is supposed to be reasonably fun and at the end of the day you are supposed to feel good about yourself. Believe it or not having the appropriate containers will make your life so much simpler. In her video “best meal prep containers” Lacey Bainer says that the containers must: make your meal prep easier, keep your food fresh, be easy to use and make your life better. If the containers that you currently have are miss match, you don't know if the lids fit or are broken you might want to get a new set before starting to meal prep. Although containers might not sound like the most important part of meal prepping, having the appropriate containers will make a great difference.

What kind of containers should I get? Wherever you use plastic, glass or steel will depend on the needs of your family. Glass containers are usually the most recommended because they are durable and microwave safe. However plastic is lightweight and great, especially when you are starting because they are less costly and allow you to know what you need without making a commitment. Here are some links to a few videos that will help you when deciding what containers to buy, what size and how many:

1. Lacey Bainer explains why she prefers glass and shows the different sizes:

<https://youtu.be/bhquUhCSX4M>

2. The ultimate guide to meal prep containers:

<https://youtu.be/TPJ2kGTtLjY>



The four step is to go back to the list you made with all your families favorite food and choose 2 to 3 meals you would like to prepare each week. If you need the recipes, print them and have them at hand. This is the list that you will use when going food shopping. Only buy what you need for that week from greens and vegetable selections. Considerer how much freezer space you have before buying a whole bunch of freezer food. If this is the first time you are meal prepping it will be useful to look at your fridge and freezer and see what you already have. This way you can try to use what you have already instead of running to get more stuff.

The more you do these the more comfortable you will get and you will know what to buy and what not to buy as much of. Also, using tools like google and YouTube to search up other simple recipes that are versatile and healthy will help you little by little incorporate a variety of foods into your weekly meal prep

The fifth step is to start your meal prep. You don't have to eat the same thing everyday. I personally find it helpful to get 2 bases and two proteins. Then vary with different vegetables.

Is important to keep in mind that meal prep is a broad term that simply means getting a head start in your meals. There are different ways one can meal prep and what you do and how you decide to do it will vary greatly depending on the size of your family. For example some families are able to eat one of their meals (breakfast, lunch or dinner) a day together. If that is the case of your family you can meal prep in big bulks for that meal rather than individual containers. You would use the individual containers only for those meals that you must take to work or school.

Similarly, if you are a mom that is meal prepping only because you don't want to cook everyday. You might find that meal prepping in bulks and then doing some small addition to those bulks is the best way to go. For example, roast all your veggies and then just prepare the protein that day. A little goes a long way.



Here are some YouTube channels that I use to get simple recipes that can get you started:

1. The Domestic Geek. In this YouTube channel she gives a lot of different ideas for breakfast, lunches and Dinner meal prep that could be adapted to fit your needs. This is the link to one of her breakfast meal preps: <https://youtu.be/eFcPrtjg1LM>
2. Kayla Chandler. Her YouTube channel is intended for weight loss recipes for those of you who are trying to lose weight as well as save time. Here is the link to her easy meal prep for 1 week video: <https://youtu.be/YrWV26j887U>
3. Emily Norris. Has a family of 5 and shows some very simple recipes. Here is a video showing how she meal prep for the whole family to eat home: <https://youtu.be/tubafhrxQ5s>



The truth is that meal prep has more than one benefit. The article, Meal Preparation: What is it, and Why Should You Start? published by North shore University of Health system argues that “Meal preparation allows for you to eat your favorite meals while predetermined portion sizes ensure you don’t overindulge. Having a collection of well-balanced meals on hand will help you regulate what you eat and help you stay on track with your personal diet goals”.

Now, when thinking about how to cook something that goes hand and hand with meal prepping is meal planning. In her article “10 Meal Planning Tips for Busy Families” by Jesisca Leviston who is mum of 2 girls and a wife says “As our lives got busier, meal planning became my insurance that I would be able to get a healthy and delicious meal on the table (almost) every night. On a rare week that I don’t plan my menu in advance, I find myself at a loss for what to cook or out of ingredients that I need to make a meal.”

In addition to saving cooking time, meal prepping also reduces the clean up time. Instead of having to wash a lot of cooking pots everyday your clean up time can be reduced tremendously by having the meals ready. It is clear that meal prepping is a great option for anyone who wants to stay on top of their life but it is especially useful for busy moms.