

TOP TEN TIPS (plus a few bonus tips!)

These timesaving tips will help you put a nutritious meal on the table in no time flat!

Tip #1

Marinate and grill an entire package of boneless, skinless chicken breasts once a week. Chop into cubes and/or strips and keep in the refrigerator to create healthy quick meals, like...

a) chicken salad with mayo, b) with salad ingredients to create a nutritious and balanced main entrée, or c) toss over whole-wheat pasta or brown rice and top with marinara sauce or salsa.

Tip #2

Buy "no-cut veggies": Baby carrots, cherry tomatoes, and snap peas for easy additions to salad greens. Don't forget low sodium jarred or canned veggies too: roasted red bell pepper, hearts of palm, water chestnuts, bamboo, baby corn and even mushrooms!

Pre-cut and store in frig - carrots, celery, peppers, broccoli and cauliflower for a quick snack or to add to stir-fries.

Tip #3

Here's a great idea! Ever find yourself at 5:00pm wondering what you should serve for dinner? Take the decision work out and plan your meals according to "themes:"

- * Monday = Mexican night (bean burritos, chicken tacos)
- * Tuesday = Greek night (Greek salad, hummus sandwiches)
- * Wednesday = pizza night (make your own nutritious version)
- * Thursday = "burger/dog" night (veggie burgers, salmon burgers, turkey burgers, tuna burgers, dogs or brats)
- * Friday = kids' choice (but limit the choices to healthy ones)
- * Saturday = Italian night (lasagna or pasta with meatballs)
- * Sunday = Soup and Salad night (prepare extra soup and freeze for lunch during the week)

Other great ideas - a) Designate a "crock-pot" day and you can have a hot meal ready when you want it. There are endless crock-pot recipes. b) How about a grill day, even if you use a counter top Foreman grill that works! c) Asian/Chinese/Thai is always tasty. d) We like stir fry night - whatever greens and veggies we have on hand, toss in the chicken you already prepared and for a treat try adding chopped apples. Yum!

Tip #4

"Recycle" at least one item from your dinner for the following day's dinner.

Example: Use leftover brown rice from Monday in a rice, bean and vegetable burrito on Tuesday. Cook extra carrots, broccoli or cauliflower to serve with lunch the next day or so. These cooked veggies also make a great addition to a quick pizza.

Tip #5

Hard boil a dozen eggs (or more) and use during the week in salads or as snacks (remove the yolk and fill with hummus for one of my favorite snacks!). I love egg salad sandwiches.

Tip #6

Fry a pound or two of your favorite ground meat. Season and add onions, peppers, garlic to your taste. Keep in the refrigerator to create healthy quick meals like...

a) quesadillas with meat, cheese and veggies, b) tacos or taco salad c) burritos d) quick pizza on hoagies, prepared pizza crust or English muffins.

Tip #7

Prepare a large quantity of rice (we use basmati or red or wild or even make a mix of our own) to have on hand for side dishes, stir fries, or even cold rice salads (brown rice with tomatoes and feta cheese; drizzle with extra virgin olive oil and balsamic vinegar...yummy!).

Tip #8

Prepare a large quantity of whole wheat pasta and keep in the refrigerator to use during the week as side dishes or salads (cold pasta salad with canned tuna and kidney beans; drizzle with low calorie poppy seed dressing).

Tip #9

Bake a few sweet potatoes or regular potatoes at a time and keep on hand for side dishes, additions to soups (dice and add to butternut squash soup) or as snacks (one of my favorites: top with cottage cheese and cinnamon). Regular potatoes are fried in a little olive oil; cube, add oil and seasonings and bake; or add to tortillas or scrambled eggs.

Tip #10

Quick meal tip: Precooked rotisserie chicken or better yet bake your own = multiple meals. You can do the same with a roast of your choice. I like to put a roast on Saturday night when we go to bed and then we have nice hot meal when we get home from church and some great leftovers!

* Day #1: Remove the skin and pair with a salad and brown rice or sweet potato.

* Day #2: Shred leftover chicken or beef with a fork and mix with a little BBQ sauce (we like Organicville BBQ because it tastes great and it's gluten free). Serve as you would serve "pulled pork."

* Day #3: Add leftover "pulled chicken/beef" to bagged salad and wrap up in a whole wheat tortilla to make a "salad wrap" for lunch or dinner.

Bonus Tips –

Buy spice mixes or mix your own so you always have your favorite beef, chicken, fish and veggie seasonings quick and handy to use. Fresh garlic is fabulous, but have granules and powder on hand for when you're in a hurry. Just be sure it's not garlic salt. Same with onions - fresh is great, but have on hand powder and dried for when you're in a hurry.

Grate cheese and store for use for the week.

Keep previous week's meal plans and re-use them again.

Keep a recipe binder for quick reference. Use the provided recipe sheets (full page 8.5x11 and/or 4x6 cards) to keep track of favorite recipes. Print many copies, put them in your binder and add to them as you go. Print internet recipes and put them in your binder. Print recipes from my weekly emails for your binder. Separate by recipe type or meal or whatever system works for you. I like to keep a section for recipes I want to try. Once I've tried them and we like them then they get moved to their permanent section.

Store your pre-cooked items in glass Pyrex container. They stack well, you can see exactly what you have and you aren't using plastic!

Enjoy!