

# Menu Planning // The Tips, The Tricks and The Benefits



*Who knew that saving your time, your money and your health was this easy!*

---

## October Menu Planning

### Picture this:

The clock strikes 5:00 and you are home free. Everything is wonderful until you remember you don't have plans for dinner. All of a sudden you're panicking about ingredients and recipes and if you have enough of everything to make a meal. Instead of dealing with the idea of cooking you decide to just grab takeout.

### Sound familiar?

While this option can be convenient, it is expensive and definitely not the most healthy. No matter if you have a big

family or live by yourself, taking time to create menu plans each week will save time and money.

## Why plan a menu?

Planning a menu will help you avoid:

- Going to the grocery store, loading up your cart, spending \$100 or more, returning home to put all the food away, and then realizing you still have nothing to make for dinner. Let's be honest, we have all done it.
- Spending 30 minutes or more at night trying to figure out what to eat for dinner. Menu planning means you spend 30 minutes or less per week figuring out what to eat. That is quite a time savings.
- Spending \$40 on take out because you couldn't figure out what to make with ingredients in the pantry.
- Throwing out leftovers you forgot about in the back of your refrigerator.

## How to plan a menu

The hardest part of planning a menu is making time to do it. Use these simple and easy tips along with the **menu planning template** to make a menu in just minutes!

- 1. Schedule a time** when you will have a few minutes to dedicate to the task.
- 2. Plan your menu around food items you already have on hand.** This will not only make your grocery bill less, but also use up products before they spoil.
- 3. Choose a variety of meals** that include family favorites, budget stretchers, and quick-fix meals.
- 4. Cook once, eat twice.** Plan to use your leftovers. Putting leftovers into your menu plan will reduce the amount you have to cook and reduce the amount of food waste.
- 5. Picture your plate as you plan each meal.** Remember to include veggies and fruits in the menu. Ideally half the plate

will include vegetables and fruits, a quarter of the plate will have grains, and the other quarter will have protein. With a glass on the side for dairy, you will have all the food groups suggested by MyPlate: [choosemyplate.gov](http://choosemyplate.gov).

**6. Have the local store circulars available** when you are planning. Always take advantage of sales on products you know you will use.

**7. Create a thorough shopping list.**

Use this handy **Grocery Shopping Packet** to assure you have a successful trip to the store.

## Sample Menu Plan for October PLUS 7 Delicious Recipes.

**Big Bites on a Little Budget** has put together a sample menu plan for October to help you get started. Feel free to switch things around and get creative.

Here is one of their wholesome and delicious recipes. **Click here** to find 6 more!

### Easy Lite Lasagna

*casserole* 

#### Ingredients

2 cups small curd low-fat cottage cheese  
4 egg whites, beaten  
1/3 cup toasted, chopped almonds  
2 Tbsp chopped parsley  
1/2 tsp Italian seasoning  
1/2 lb. lean ground beef  
1 cup chopped onion  
1 clove garlic, minced  
2-15oz. cans spaghetti sauce  
1-8oz box lasagna noodles  
2 cups sliced zucchini  
1/2 cup water  
\* Serves 8

#### Directions

Combine cottage cheese, egg whites, almonds, parsley and Italian seasoning; set aside. Brown beef with onion and garlic. Stir in spaghetti sauce. Spoon a little sauce in the bottom of a 9x13 baking dish. Layer with half the noodles (uncooked), half the zucchini, half the almond mixture and half the remaining sauce. Repeat layers, being sure noodles are covered with sauce. Drizzle with water. Cover tightly with foil. Bake at 375 degrees for 1 hour or until noodles are tender.

EXTENSION  FOOD  
UtahStateUniversity SENSE

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer. This material was funded by USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program-SNAP.

Enjoy!

---

# References

Mayo Clinic  
mayoclinic.org

USU Extension  
extension.usu.edu

---