# A New Year, a New You: Strategies to Simplify Your Life in the Kitchen 



Have you made the goal to simplify your life in the new year? Try these strategies to simplify your life in the kitchen.

## Organize

Keep shelf-stable items and utensils that you frequently use visible in the kitchen. Move spices you use often to the front of the cabinet and invest in a tiered tower or spice rack so everything is visible at once. Store dry goods such as flour, sugar, grains, and beans in airtight glass jars or plastic containers on the counter or on a visible row of the pantry. Store cooking utensils in a holder on the counter or in a drawer next to the stove (Bittman, 2014).

## Stock Up

Having basic pantry, refrigerator, and freezer staples on hand can make it much easier to throw together a quick dinner. If the thought of purchasing all of the items at once seems overwhelming, add a few items to your list each week and in a couple of months, you will be set. Here is a basic list to get you started (Bittman, 2014):

- Extra virgin olive oil, canola oil, and/or vegetable oil
- Vinegars - balsamic, red wine or sherry, and/or white wine
- Dried herbs and spices - salt, black pepper, chili powder, curry powder, cayenne pepper, smoked paprika, cumin, garlic powder, onion powder, red pepper flakes, oregano, sage, rosemary, tarragon, dill, basil, and thyme
- Dried grains - brown rice, quinoa, whole-wheat couscous, dried whole-wheat pasta
- Dried and/or canned beans - garbanzo, black, kidney, navy, and/or cannellini
- Canned tomato products - tomato paste, canned tomatoes (diced, crushed, whole)
- Nut butters*
- Brown sugar, honey, maple syrup
- Flours - whole-wheat white flour, white flour, cornmeal
- Baking soda, baking powder
- Nuts and seeds* (walnuts, almonds, etc.)
- Chicken and/or vegetable stock or bullion
*refrigerate to preserve quality
In addition, stock up on frozen vegetables - corn, mixed vegetables, peas, spinach, edamame - and fruit when items are on sale.


## Plan Ahead

Planning several days or a week of meals at once may seem like an overwhelming task, but once you get into the routine, you will likely find it saves a great deal of time. There will be less trips to the grocery store and less time spent thinking about what's for dinner.

Tips to get started:

- Ask your family for favorite meal ideas.
- Start small. Select one or two recipes you know how to make and add one or two new recipes per week.
- Need help choosing recipes? Think about your weekly schedule. Are there going to be late nights at work or sports games to attend? If so, you may want to plan a slow cooker meal or a meal you can remake from leftovers for this busy night. Look at what is on sale at your local grocery store and consider what produce is in season, which means it will likely be less expensive.
- Gather your recipes for the week and create a grocery list. First, check to see which items you already have at home. Include the other ingredients on a list. Organize your list according to the sections of the grocery store: produce, dairy, meat/seafood, dry goods/spices, and the freezer section.
- Make notes about which recipes your family likes and
dislikes. After a month or so, you'll have a substantial list you can use to create a rotating meal schedule and you can add in new recipes if you choose to.
- Visit Choosemyplate.gov for more grocery shopping and meal planning tips.


## Cook Once, Eat Twice

- Grains: Double a batch of grains, such a rice. Immediately separate, cool, and refrigerate the extra portion. Use the leftovers the next night in a stir-fry or casserole.
- Meat/Protein: Roast extra chicken, pork, or beef. Use it the next night in a soup, tacos, or green salad.
- Beans: Cook extra beans and use the leftovers for bean burritos or taco bowls.
- Roasted vegetables: Roast extra vegetables and use the leftovers for a pureed soup or hearty vegetable stew. Or try roasted vegetable tacos or a roasted vegetable grain bowl topped with nuts, seeds, or crumbled cheese.

Remember to follow food safety rules for leftovers.

- Cool and refrigerate food in shallow containers promptly (within 2 hours of cooking).
- Cold food should be stored at 40 F or lower.
- Discard refrigerated leftovers after 3-4 days.
- Remember to label and date frozen items. Store frozen items in containers such as gallon freezer bags or freezer grade plastic or glass containers and ensure that your freezer remains at 0 F or less.
- Thaw frozen items in the refrigerator or microwave. Never thaw food on the kitchen counter or at room temperature.
- Remember to reheat all leftovers to 165 F throughout.
- Visit Foodsafety.gov for recommended freezer and refrigerator storage times or the National Center for

Home Preservation's Guide to Freezing Prepared Foods for more information on freezing leftovers. Additional information from the USDA on food safety and leftovers can be found here.

This article was written by Brittany Bingeman, Extension Assistant Professor FCS, Washington County

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## More on Cooking for One or Two



Did you see our tips for cooking for one or two people last week? Here are a few more tips to help you cook food that is delicious and nutritious, and to cut down on wasted food.

## Rethink your recipes.

Most recipes that serve four or more can be easily converted to produce a smaller quantity; however, having knowledge of kitchen measurements can be helpful for those tricky
conversions that are not as straightforward.
Keep these recipe measurement conversions in mind:

| 1 cup | 16 tbsp. |
| :---: | :---: |
| 1 tbsp. | 3 tsp. |
| 1 cup | 8 fluid ounces |
| 1 fluid ounce | 2 tbsp. |
| 1 pint | 2 cups |
| 1 quart | 2 pints |

For example, to make half of a recipe, you would substitute the following:

| Recipe Calls For: | Use: |
| :---: | :---: |
| $1 / 4$ cup | 2 tbsp. |
| $1 / 3$ cup | 2 tbsp. +2 tsp. |
| $3 / 4$ cup | 6 tbsp. |
| 1 tbsp. | $11 / 2$ tsp. |

## Cook Once, Eat Twice

Having a plan for leftovers can be a great way to increase variety in your eating, reduce boredom and eliminate food waste.

For example, a one-pan, roasted vegetable and chicken dish makes an easy first meal and the components can be used in a variety of ways for leftovers.

Sample Recipe: Honey Mustard Chicken with Roasted Vegetables
Roasting a pan of vegetables at the beginning of the week can be an easy way to add in extra vegetables over the next couple of days. Leftover vegetables can be frozen for use at a later time. Here are some ideas for using leftover roasted vegetables:

- Make roasted vegetable tacos. This recipe includes black beans for an inexpensive protein source, and the Mexican flavor profile mixes things up.
- Create a roasted vegetable + leafy green + whole grain + flavorful toppings bowl. Leafy greens include spinach, kale or mixed salad greens. Try whole grains such as quinoa, farro or brown rice, and add crunchy or flavorful toppings such feta or blue cheese crumbles, roasted pumpkin seeds, dried cranberries, and/or walnuts and a vinaigrette dressing. Try this farro roasted root vegetable bowl.

Similarly, there are many uses for leftover roasted chicken.

- Add roasted chicken to a soups or to a mixed greens salad.
- Or, try the leftovers in chicken salad. This honey mustard chicken salad uses a similar flavor profile to the original sheet pan recipe. Substitute 2 tbsp. of light mayonnaise + 2 tbsp. non-fat Greek yogurt for the $\frac{1}{4}$ cup regular mayonnaise and you'll pack in extra nutrition without sacrificing flavor.


## Keep Food Safety in Mind

- Remember to use good food safety practice when handling leftovers.
- To start, food should initially be cooked to proper temperatures. Visit Food Safety.gov to find the proper cooking temperatures for various foods.
- To cool cooked foods faster, place them in a shallow dish no more than 2 inches deep, and refrigerate promptly. (Foods should be kept in the temperature danger zone (400-140ㅇ), or the temperature range that promotes bacterial growth, for less than two hours total.)
- Never put warm foods directly in the freezer. Instead,
cool them in the refrigerator and then put in the freezer.
- Reheat all leftovers to 165 F . Stir food as it is reheating to make sure it is being heated thoroughly throughout, and test the final temperature with a food thermometer.
- Keep a thermometer in your refrigerator to make sure the temperature remains at 40 F or below.
- Refrigerated leftovers should be eaten within 3-4 days or discarded. Frozen leftovers can be kept for a few months, depending on the type of food. Visit Food Safety.gov to find the recommended times to store different foods in the refrigerator or freezer.

This article was written by Brittany Bingeman, Extension Assistant Professor FCS, Washington County

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## Family Mealtime Planning 101



A key to successful family mealtime is planning. Research has shown that cooking at home is significantly more likely if you already know what you will have for dinner.

## 10 Steps to Meal Planning

1. Set aside time each week for menu planning. The amount of time you need will decrease as you gain practice.
2. Ask your family for ideas of what they would like to eat during the week.
3. Plan your menu around food items you already have in the pantry.
4. Choose a variety of meals including family favorites, budget stretchers, and quick fix meals.
5. Cook once, eat twice.
6. Plan to use your leftovers.
7. Picture USDA's MyPlate as you plan each meal.
8. Have your local store circulars available. Take advantage of those sales!
9. Create a thorough shopping list.
10. Keep it simple! Successful family meals don't have to be gourmet; they just have to be a time together.

| Weekly Menu. |  |  |  |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Family mealtime is an anchor for the day. | Breakfast | Lunch | Dinner | Snacks |
| Monday |  |  |  |  |
| Tuesday |  |  |  |  |
| Wednesday |  |  |  |  |
| Thursday |  |  |  |  |
| Friday |  |  |  |  |
| Saturday |  |  |  |  |
| Sunday |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  | DENSE teUniversity n, wrte UsDh. Director, Once |

Printable Weekly Menu Planner

## Quick Tips

Tired of planning a menu every week? Try planning a 2-4 week cycle menu. Choose meals for $2-4$ weeks and then repeat once the cycle is over. Change cycle menus with the seasons to take advantage of local produce.

Bored of the same old meals? Add some theme nights to your week. Taco Tuesdays, Breakfast for Dinner Thursdays, or Sandwich Saturdays are fun for the whole family. Let the kids choose a theme and then make some table decorations for added entertainment.

September is National Family Mealtime month. Each Friday this month we'll be posting on that topic - specifically from the Live Well Utah Cookbook, Family Mealtime Edition. This publication is available for free at your local Extension office, or available digitally here. It features some great tips on the importance of family mealtime and meal planning, plus 21 quick, inexpensive, and nutritious recipes that are

# Family Mealtime // Overnight Oatmeal 3 Ways 

Looking for a make-ahead breakfast to streamline your families morning routine? Try overnight oatmeal, and spend your morning eating together instead of scrambling to cook breakfast.

## Family Mealtime // How to Get Kids Involved



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## Getting Kids Involved

Involving children in meal planning and cooking at a young age is a great way to instill a love for delicious, homemade food! Here are some ideas on how to include kids of all ages in the kitchen. Remember to choose age appropriate jobs and keep safety in mind at all times.

## Ages 2-5

Meal Planning:

- Color coordinate fruits and vegetables
- Circle foods they would like in store advertisements
- Help cut coupons
- Choose one meal they would like

Grocery Shopping:

- Point out fruits and vegetables from the grocery list
- Choose a new fruit or vegetable to try

Cooking:

- Pour premeasured items into bowl to mix up
- Tear up lettuce for a salad
- Rinse off fruits and vegetables


## Ages 6-10

Meal Planning:

- Help make a list of meals they like
- Look at USDA's MyPlate diagram and come up with one meal following the diagram
- Choose fruits and vegetables to put on the side of the main courses

Grocery Shopping:

- Read the list to parent and cross items off as they are put in the cart
- Choose a new fruit or vegetable to try

Cooking:

- Measure ingredients and put them together with parent's help
- Toss a salad
- Knead dough
- Put together sandwiches


## Ages 11-18

Meal Planning:

- Look up three new recipes on social media
- Create a 3-day menu using USDA's MyPlate as a reference for a complete meal

Grocery Shopping:

- Take a portion of the list and retrieve those items
- If old enough to drive, do a small grocery trip on own
- Keep track of the money saved each week

Cooking:

- Run the show as head chef! Put together a full meal and recruit family members to help as needed


## Top 10 // How to Fill an Empty Stomach on a Full Schedule



When your life is constantly on the go, don't let nutrition go!

## Eating Healthy in a Hurry

It's a fact: life is crazy. Unfortunately, one of the first things to go when life gets hectic is a healthy diet. It's hard to find time to cook a delicious meal or prepare a
variety of dishes when you barely have time to save your sanity!

When your life is in a whirlwind and you still want to watch what you eat, follow these top 10 tips from Eat Well Utah!

Here are a couple of tips:
\#2. Keep a well-stocked pantry. A well stocked pantry with staple items like rice, pasta, canned fruits and vegetables, and herbs and spices can be thrown together for a quick, yet healthy meal when your day didn't quite go as planned. For a list of good foods to have on hand, click here.
\#6. Use a slow cooker. Many slow cooker recipes call for little prep time and long, slow cooking times. Take a minute to throw the ingredients in the slow cooker, leave it, and you will have a great meal later.

For eight other great tips, click here!
Also, try one of these tasty, hasty dishes. They are perfect to make when your schedule is full but your stomach isn't.

Directions
Mix cumin, chili powder, and dressing in a bowl. Place frozen chicken in slow cooker and pour spice mixture over the chicken to cover. Cook on high for 5 hours or cooker and mix it well. Shred chicken in the slow cooker and mix it well.

Ingredients:
8 oz . Italian dressing
8 oz. Italian dre
1 Tbsp. chili powder
3 lbs. frozen boneless,
skinless chicken breasts.


## Green Chili Enchiladas

Directions
Brown meat with onion and garlic; drain fat from mea Mix in green chilies, seasonings, soup, and milk.
Simmer mixture for 10 minutes. Cut tortillas in fourths. Layer tortillas and meat mixture in $9 \times 13$ baking dish, starting and ending with meat mixture. Top dish with cheese and bake at 350 degrees for 30 minutes.

EXTENSION* FOOD

Ingredients:
1/2lb. lean ground beef
medium onion, chopped clove garlic, minced 1 small can diced green chilies $1 / 2$ tsp. cumin
$1 / 4$ tsp. chili po
th tsp. chili pow
$1 / 2$ tsp. pepper
1 can cream of chicken soup 1 can black beans, drained and rinsed $11 /$ cups skim
8 corn tortillas 1 cup grated cheddar cheese

