



HM Government

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Active Wellbeing

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Tips on meal preparation



If you've ever seen one of the 1000 or so cooking programmes on TV in the last few years, you're probably thinking 'how do they make it look so easy'? Well, if you've been inspired by how quick and simple they make it look, with a little bit of planning and preparation we can help you fit cooking and eating great meals into your busy weeks. So let's assume you don't have a commis chef, sous chef and pot washer on hand and can't use the magic of TV with "here's one I prepared earlier".

Planner or do'er?



Whether you like to plan your week's meals ahead or take inspiration from your day, it helps to have a good list of versatile ingredients in your kitchen. Dried herbs and spices last for ages and add real flavour, at a moments' notice, for next to nothing.



Flip through some online recipes for meals you like the sound of and write a list of all the ingredients you'll need. Start with some simple ones, but remember to vary them so you don't get bored.



Try to shop once a week. Follow your list and stick to your budget. But if you don't have time or can't get to the shops, there are some handy companies out there now, who will plan your meals for you and deliver all the items you'll need.



Take these hints & tips with a pinch of salt

- Buy a good range of different sized Tupperware in advance. Not only are they great for left overs, but you can store your opened packets in them and even keep your premeasured ingredients in them, ready for the next day's cooking.
- Prep your ingredients before you begin to cook. Depending what you're using, this could be days in advance. This will help speed up cooking, particularly if you don't have much time after work. It also means you can get some of the washing up out the way too.
- Clean up as you go, a clean kitchen means less chaos! Particularly useful for some modern, smaller kitchens.
- Use both sides of the chopping board. A great way to keep cooked and raw foods separate.
- Divide your meals into servings into an airtight container and leave the lid off to cool before putting in the fridge or freezer.
- If space in your freezer is limited try using zip-lock bags instead of Tupperware.
- If you don't have much room in your fridge, remember that most supermarkets don't keep their fruit, vegetables or eggs refrigerated so why should you?
- If you don't have enough left overs for a full meal, you can combine them to make excellent curries or pies.
- Don't be afraid to 'cheat'. Most professional chefs use pre-made pastry, so if it's good enough for them.



If you don't want to freeze your food, these foods are perfect for prepped meals that will last up to three days



Hard boiled eggs



Grilled chicken breasts or fish

add to whole wheat pasta or salads



Roasted vegetables

try roasting a week's worth on Sunday and reheat them



Brown rice

more nutritious than white rice



Oats

add half a cup of raw oats into a jar and top with milk of your choosing



Quinoa or cous cous

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