

Meal Prep Checklist

A meal prep checklist with a starter shopping list, the containers and gear you need, and a step-by-step plan to batch cook a week of meals.

Starter Shopping List

- ☐ Proteins that reheat well: chicken thighs, ground turkey, eggs, tofu or canned beans
- ☐ Grains and starches: rice, quinoa, oats, potatoes or whole-wheat pasta
- ☐ Sturdy vegetables that keep: broccoli, carrots, bell peppers, cabbage, sweet potatoes
- ☐ Quick greens for the first half of the week: spinach or salad mix
- ☐ Fruit and snacks: apples, bananas, berries, nuts, yogurt or hummus
- ☐ Sauces and flavor: olive oil, garlic, salsa, soy sauce, spice blends
- ☐ Breakfast basics: oats, eggs, yogurt, frozen fruit

Containers and Gear

- ☐ Meal prep containers with tight lids (glass for reheating, plastic for carrying)
- ☐ Freezer bags or freezer-safe containers for meals beyond day 3-4
- ☐ Labels or masking tape and a marker for dates
- ☐ Two sheet pans and a large pot or rice cooker for batch cooking
- ☐ A sharp chef's knife and a large cutting board
- ☐ Small containers for sauces and dressings so food doesn't go soggy

Step 1: Plan Your Meals

- ☐ Choose how many meals and days you're prepping for
- ☐ Pick three to five recipes that share ingredients
 - Overlapping ingredients cut waste and lower your grocery bill.
- ☐ Balance each meal with a protein, a grain, and vegetables
- ☐ Check your calendar for nights you'll be out
- ☐ Note any leftovers or pantry items to use up first

Step 2: Make Your Shopping List

- ☐ List every ingredient from your chosen recipes
- ☐ Check the fridge, freezer, and pantry before adding items
 - Shop your pantry first to avoid buying duplicates and reduce food waste.
- ☐ Group the list by aisle or category
- ☐ Add staples like oil, spices, and storage bags if low
- ☐ Set a budget and note any swaps for sale items

Step 3: Shop and Set Up

- ☐ Shop the full list in one efficient trip
- ☐ Wash produce and put cold items away promptly
- ☐ Clear and wipe down your counters and work surface

- ☐ Gather knives, cutting boards, bowls, and pans
- ☐ Pull out all containers and lids you'll need

Step 4: Prep Ingredients

- ☐ Wash and chop all vegetables at once
Grouping knife work saves cutting board space and avoids washing tools multiple times.
- ☐ Trim, portion, and season proteins
- ☐ Measure out grains, sauces, and dressings
- ☐ Marinate proteins that need time to soak
Marinate the night before or first thing on prep day so the flavor soaks in while you cook everything else.
- ☐ Set aside ingredients for fresh items you'll add later

Step 5: Cook in Batches

- ☐ Start the longest-cooking items first, like grains and roasts
Get slow items simmering or roasting first so you can prep faster foods while waiting.
- ☐ Roast trays of vegetables while proteins cook
- ☐ Use the oven, stovetop, and slow cooker at the same time
- ☐ Cook sauces and dressings to combine later
- ☐ Taste and season everything before it cools

Step 6: Portion, Label and Store

- ☐ Let cooked food cool before sealing containers
Sealing hot food traps condensation, leading to soggy textures and faster spoilage.
- ☐ Divide meals into single-serving portions
- ☐ Keep dressings and crunchy toppings separate until serving
Store sauces, croutons, and nuts in small separate cups to prevent sogginess.
- ☐ Label each container with the meal and date
- ☐ Refrigerate meals for the next three to four days
- ☐ Freeze the rest in clearly dated containers
- ☐ Wash dishes and reset the kitchen for the week