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# Meal Plan Start Guide



*Hi There!*

# WELCOME TO THE GUIDE!

I am so glad you are here. I love preparing and eating food. And I understand some people don't or they do but don't have the time or patience. This meal plan guide is a collection of the tips I have learnt over the years of practicing meal planning and prepping. They worked for me and I am sure they will for you too.

Happy Cooking!

Much love,

*Antara Dandekar*



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# *What's included in the guide*

- Kitchen Essentials
- Steps of a successful meal plan
- Grocery List - Essentials
- Meal Planning Template
- Sample Recipes

# Traditional meal plan fallacy

I always wonder when the word “Meal Plan” came into being. Maybe its a generational thing, but I started to hear more about meal planning when I started working full time at my day job. I first had thought it was started by some health conscious people who wanted to portion control their meals for gains and/or to loose weight. Growing up in an Indian household, my mom used to pretty much follow an Ayurvedic lifestyle. In Ayurveda, it is highly recommended to eat meals within an hour of preparing it. That sounds amazing and I have had the good fortune of eating freshly prepared meals by my sweet mother. But let’s face it, it is absolutely impossible for working people (and yes that includes stay-at-home parents, because taking care of kids is a full time job) to find time to prepare two to three hot meals a day.



Nevertheless, I “used to” (note the quotes) hate meal planning. I always thought the idea was to purchase 6 identical to-go containers and fill them with calculated portions of protein, fiber and carbs. And eat the same meal for six straight days. This is what I call the meal plan fallacy. This method might be amazing for someone but me. I love variety in terms of taste, texture and appearance of food. I realized that this was only one of the ways to meal planning and that I had to find new one or one-s.

So I decided to mix two to three different styles of meal planning and apply it to my routine. From my experience, I would say its a learning curve. The first few days you will be very enthusiastic and then if its a rough day at work that kills your motivation, which eventually threatens to interrupt the flow. But the key is to keep going and once you get into the habit of it, there is no stopping.

Please note that this is my preferred way of doing it and in no way am i claiming its the best way.

## Step 1. Start Early

I typically prepare my morning cup of tea and grab my writing pad, on a Saturday morning. This is a brainstorming session and I write down everything that I have felt like eating in the past couple of weeks, saved recipes or healthy ones I want to try. I then take a look at my work week calendar (yes, I am that girl) and mark days where I know I am going to have a busy day. These are the nights when I need comfort food at the end of the day. I also look at the sample grocery list item to see if I want to try cooking with a new item. Check the list on the next page.

## Step 2. Check your Pantry and Fridge

I get my inspiration from my pantry and fridge a.k.a things I impulse bought and never used. You will be surprised by the things you can find. Throw together leftover rice and some veggies to make an amazing stir fried rice.

And if you don't have anything, that is fine too. I typically skim the list I created a printable pantry list of things which you can use if there are any ingredients you want to try.

(List general vs based on Cuisines)

## Step 3. Write it down

I write down three meals for each day of the week – Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner. And most of the days Lunch is same meal as the dinner as the previous night or a variation of that.

Breakfasts are made ahead that I can make in bulk on a Sunday night or weeknight. Display this on your fridge or anywhere that can remind you.



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Items in Pantry/Fridge

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Potential recipes with above items

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New Recipes to try

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(\*\*Mark items that are about to expire/or need to be used up)

# Weekly Meal Planner

Day	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Snack
Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				
Saturday				
Sunday				



## Step 4. Hit that grocery aisle

Now that we have the list, its a much easier task to get the groceries. Even if you are shopping online it should be easier. Anytime I find something new at the grocery store, instead of buying it- make a note of it or take a picture. That way the next time you meal plan, you can make a note of trying it.

## Step 5. Prep Day

This is usually a Sunday. I look at all the dishes and see if there are any dressing or sauces I can make in advance. It should not take more that 90 mins. If you are not able to do it on a Sunday that is fine too, it just means a couple of more minutes added to the weeknight meal prep.

List of make ahead salad dressing, sauces, chutneys and more - This week

## Step 6. Smile

Enjoy the process and smile. The feeling of eating meals freshly prepared by you for you and your family. Get a cute bento box or tiffin and take it with you, its motivating for sure



# **Groceries List**

# Grocery LIST

## Vegetables

- ☐ Asparagus
- ☐ Arugula
- ☐ Broccoli
- ☐ Bak Choy
- ☐ Cucumber
- ☐ Cabbage Type: \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Chilli
- ☐ Carrots
- ☐ Corn
- ☐ Garlic
- ☐ Ginger
- ☐ Gourd
- ☐ Mushrooms
- ☐ Spinach
- ☐ Lettuce
- ☐ Tomatoes
- ☐ Fennel Bulb
- ☐ Leak
- ☐ Celery
- ☐ Beetroots
- ☐ Potato
- ☐ Kale
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_

## Indian Veggies

- ☐ "Dudhi" (Oppo squash)
- ☐ Brinjal (Small eggplant)
- ☐ "Karela" (Bitter Gourd)
- ☐ Bhindi (Okra)
- ☐ Green Beans
- ☐ Curry Leaves
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_

## Fruits

- ☐ Bananas
- ☐ Oranges
- ☐ Berries
- ☐ Apples
- ☐ Pears
- ☐ Pineapple
- ☐ Watermelons
- ☐ Plum
- ☐ Peach
- ☐ Nectarines
- ☐ Mangoes
- ☐ Papaya
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_

## Herbs

- ☐ Cilantro
- ☐ Parsley
- ☐ Basil
- ☐ Rosemary
- ☐ Thyme
- ☐ Oregano
- ☐ Dill
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_

## Dairy/Non-Dairy

- ☐ Milk
- ☐ Yogurt
- ☐ Kefir
- ☐ Cheese
- ☐ Butter
- ☐ Cream cheese
- ☐ Sour Cream
- ☐ Heavy Cream
- ☐ Half & Half
- ☐ Paneer
- ☐ coconut Milk
- ☐ Nut Milk Type: \_\_\_\_\_

## Protein

- ☐ Tofu
- ☐ Lentils
- ☐ Kidney Beans
- ☐ Black Beans
- ☐ Pinto Beans
- ☐ Northern Beans
- ☐ Fava Beans
- ☐ Chickpeas
- ☐ Tempeh
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_

## Pantry

- ☐ Nut Butter
- ☐ Nuts
- ☐ Dried Fruits
- ☐ Coconut Flour
- ☐ Whole Wheat flour
- ☐ All Purpose Flour
- ☐ White Rice
- ☐ Brown Rice
- ☐ Jasmine Rice
- ☐ Basmati Rice
- ☐ Quinoa
- ☐ Couscous
- ☐ Pasta
- ☐ Noodles
- ☐ Rice Paper
- ☐ Oil
- ☐ Salt
- ☐ Sugar
- ☐ Vinegar
- ☐ Cooking Wine
- ☐ Coconut Aminos
- ☐ Oats
- ☐ Cereals
- ☐ Maple Syrup
- ☐ Honey
- ☐ Almond Flour

## Indian Pantry

- ☐ Toor Dal
- ☐ Masoor Dal
- ☐ Mung Dal
- ☐ Chana Dal
- ☐ Urad Dal
- ☐ Dried Tamarind
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_

## Spices

- ☐ Chilli Powder
- ☐ Mustard Seeds
- ☐ Cumin Seeds
- ☐ Caraway Seeds
- ☐ Carom Seeds
- ☐ Turmeric Powder
- ☐ Dhaniya Powder (Dried Coriander seed powder)
- ☐ Garam Masala
- ☐ Kala Namak
- ☐ Asafoetida
- ☐ Kashmiri red chili powder
- ☐ Dried red chillies
- ☐ Curry Powder
- ☐ Jeera Powder (Dried cumin seeds powder)
- ☐ Fenugreek Seeds
- ☐ Peppercorn
- ☐ Cloves
- ☐ Bay leaves
- ☐ Star aneese
- ☐ Cardamom
- ☐ Chaat Masala
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_

## Baking

- ☐ Baking Powder
- ☐ Baking Soda
- ☐ Bread Flour
- ☐ Cake Flour
- ☐ 00 Flour
- ☐ Pizza Flour
- ☐ All purpose Flour
- ☐ Vanilla essence
- ☐ Ground Flax seeds
- ☐ Aquafaba
- ☐ Cinnamon
- ☐ Pumpking Spice
- ☐ Powdered sugar
- ☐ Agar agar
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_

## Frozen

- ☐ Banana
- ☐ Ice cream
- ☐ Berry mix
- ☐ Pineapple
- ☐ Grated Coconut
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_

## Cleaning

- ☐ Dishwasher pods
- ☐ Dishwashing liquid
- ☐ Laundry detergent
- ☐ Toilet paper
- ☐ Paper towels
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_



# Grocery LIST

Week of: \_\_\_\_\_

Vegetables

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Fruits

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Bakery

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Cleaning

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