The Keto Queens
How to Meal Prep

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Photography by Faith Gorsky







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The Keto Queens: How to Meal Prep

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For more of Faith and Lara's recipes, see www.AnEdibleMosaic.com, www.HealthySweetEats.com, and www.LaraClevenger.com.

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Introduction

This easy guide on *How to Meal Prep* will help you save time and money, reduce food waste, and get a delicious, nutritious crowd-pleasing meal on the table as painlessly as possible.

Most of us have the best of intentions when it comes to cooking at home more and eating out less (or avoiding the drive-through on the way to or from work!). But unless we give ourselves some practical tools, meal prep can seem like a huge chore. In this guide I simplify the process by making meal prep approachable and giving some real-life solutions to make meal planning and meal prep as effortless as possible.

I'm one of those oddballs who loves organizing and all the tools that go along with it. Color-coded tabs, my label-maker, and my giant file folder are things that would bore most people, but actually get me excited. I see meal planning and meal prep as a way to stay organized, but if you aren't quite as enthusiastic about it, there are a few really good reasons you should meal plan and prep that I'll tell you about.

I'll break down meal prep so you see how easy it is! There are tons of ways to do it, and quite a few helpful cooking methods and tools to use. Before you know it, once you're into the swing of things with meal prep, you'll be amazed at how much time opens up for you to spend doing something other than cooking or worrying about what to eat or what to feed your family. Not to mention you know you're giving yourself and the fam nutritious food (no one likes resorting to the drive through for dinner, right?). Additionally, you'll be able to take ownership of what you're putting into your body, and you might even find a new hobby and discover that you enjoy cooking. And bonus, you'll be saving money! It's a win all around.

Now let's meal prep!

xoxo, Faith and Lara

Chapter 1

Why You Should Meal Prep

A couple of the biggest reasons to plan and prep your meals are to save money and time. In this guide you'll learn how to repurpose leftovers (so they don't even taste like leftovers – don't worry!), make a shopping list and stick to it, and start looking forward to a home-cooked meal during your weekday lunches.

Another perk that comes along with meal prep is reduced food waste because you're only buying what you need and you're making better use of leftovers.

Last but not least, meal prep can be a great way to lose weight or reach your health goals. When you plan ahead, you know you're getting in nutritious foods! Planning, prepping, and eating nutrient-dense meals can more effectively help you reach your weight loss and health goals.

Initially, meal planning and meal prep might seem like an overwhelming task and a chore, but in the end, it will make your daily life run smoother and actually open up more free time in the long run.

Chapter 2

How to Meal Plan

Brainstorm and Make a Menu

Meal prep starts with meal planning. Basically, sit down with a pen and paper and write down what you want to make for dinner each day of the week. I like to print out a blank calendar and fill it in with three meals per day. If you're cooking for your family, this is a great time to get them involved and make it fun by letting them choose a meal each week that they can help cook. Plan leftover nights and plan for a night out to dinner if you want. It's also fun to have themed dinner nights, for example, Meatless Mondays, Taco Tuesdays, Fish Fridays, Pizza Saturdays, etc.

It can also be beneficial to get kids involve in weekly menu planning. Not only are they more likely to help cook, but meal planning can also help get kids excited about healthy eating and make them more likely to want to try new things.

In addition to planning dinners, I like to add in breakfasts and lunches so I'm less tempted to eat out. Breakfasts can be as easy as hard-boiled eggs and berries, avocado and crisped beef bacon, or keto toast with nut butter. Sandwiches, salads, and leftover dinners work great for lunches throughout the week.

"Favorite" Dinner Rotation

Keep a few favorites in your dinner rotation, but make enough for leftovers that can easily be tweaked into completely different meals to keep things interesting. For example, if you make roast chicken every Sunday, serve it with mashed cauliflower and steamed green beans one week, and serve leftovers with roasted broccoli and sautéed cabbage during the week. Or remake it into a

meal with a completely different flavor profile. For example, add BBQ sauce to the chicken and serve it with jicama fries, or repurpose the chicken into a cheesy chicken and vegetable casserole.

Leftovers

Use leftovers to your advantage; after all, leftovers are basically your sous chef ready to help you get a meal on the table quick. If you're not a big fan of leftovers in general, you can remake leftovers into an entirely different meal so you don't get bored. For example, if you make a roast chicken, you can have roast chicken dinner the first night, chicken cobb salad the second night, and chicken enchiladas the third night.

Another great way to utilize leftovers is for packed lunches during the week. If you have access to a microwave at work or school it opens up a whole world of hot lunches! However, even if you don't have a microwave you can find creative ways to use leftover dinner as a lunch. For example, instead of heaving leftover roast chicken dinner, make a roast chicken sandwich and store it in an insulated lunchbox with an ice pack.

Grocery Shop

Choose one of your days off and do a big shopping haul. Go to the store with your meals for the week planned out and your grocery shopping list in hand! Not only will this help you get in and out of the grocery store as fast as possible, but it will help prevent you from wasting money buying items you don't need.

During your big haul trip to the grocery store, buy things like:

- Pantry staples that you're low on, such as condiments, cooking oils, spices, tea/coffee, keto sweeteners/flours, nuts, etc.
- Meats for the week; meats for the first half of the week go in the fridge to use and meats for the second half of the week go in the freezer
- Eggs for the week

- Dairy for the week
- Produce for the first half of the week; buy produce for the second half of the week mid-week so it's fresh

Mid-week plan another trip to the grocery store to replenish produce or anything you forgot from the store on your big haul day.

Ingredient Prep on Shopping Day

It's easiest and most time-efficient to prep and process ingredients for weeknight meals on the day you do your big grocery store haul. For example, if you do your big grocery haul on Saturday and buy beef, broccoli, and onions to make stir-fry on Tuesday night, you might do the following to on Saturday to be ready for Tuesday:

1. Thinly slice the beef across the grain. Store it in the fridge in a covered glass container labeled "beef stir-fry Tuesday night".
2. Clean the broccoli and cut it into florets. Store it in the fridge in a covered glass container labeled "beef stir-fry Tuesday night".
3. Peel the onion and thinly slice it. Store it in the fridge in a covered glass container labeled "beef stir-fry Tuesday night".
4. Whisk together the ingredients for the stir-fry sauce. Store it in the fridge in a covered glass jar labeled "beef stir-fry Tuesday night".

The more meals you can do that for, the easier your weeknight dinners will flow!

Chapter 3

Batch Cooking and Cooking in Bulk

Cook in bulk so you can cook once and eat twice (or more!). Let's go back to the roast chicken example. If you make roast chicken dinner with all the fixings every Sunday, maybe roast an extra chicken to make chicken noodle soup for dinner another night, and chicken salad to make chicken salad lunches for work. Or you can stash some roast chicken in the freezer to make BBQ chicken a few weeks later.

These are a few things that I like to cook a double batch of so that the leftovers can be repurposed into different meals throughout the week.

- Beef pot roast, remake into tacos, beef stew, beef stroganoff, etc.
- Roast chicken, make into creamy chicken soup, cheesy chicken broccoli casserole, BBQ chicken salad, etc.
- Baked white fish, use for fish tacos, fish chowder, etc.
- Grilled chicken or grilled steak, for making into sandwiches, salads, casseroles, tacos, soups, etc.
- Roasted vegetables, such as zucchini, eggplant, bell peppers, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, broccoli, etc. Roasted veggies make a great side dish for just about anything, or you can easily make them into quiche or frittata, add them to low carb pasta along with grated Parmesan cheese, use them as pizza toppings, and add them to sandwiches, wraps, and/or soups.

Now the question is when to find time to batch cook. If you can do it the same day you do your big grocery haul and ingredient prep, it's one less thing to worry about doing on another day! But the downside of that is then your shopping day becomes a marathon of shopping, meal prepping, and cooking. If you have two days off in a row, you can do the batch cooking on your second day

off. Or you can take one or two days a month and batch cook to fill your freezer so you have to do it less often. Alternatively, if you use a hands-off cooking method, you can cook a roast during a weekday while you're at work (for example, using a slow cooker) or cook a turkey on a weeknight evening in a fraction of the time (for example, using an electric pressure cooker).

Chapter 4

Meal Prep Cooking Methods

Hands-Off Cooking Methods

Convenient methods of cooking, such as electric pressure cookers and slow cookers, will do the work for you, not even requiring you to stir! They are truly hands-off. Once you start to utilize these cooking methods, you'll realize that getting a nutritious meal on the table for your family doesn't have to be a chore.

Electric Pressure Cooker

Another perk in addition to the fact that an electric pressure cooker (such as an Instant Pot) is a hands-off cooking method is that it cooks things in a fraction of the time that it would otherwise take. It's a very helpful tool for batch cooking if you want to prep enough meals to stock the freezer for busy nights.

An electric pressure cooker also helps you multitask. Meaning, on a random Wednesday evening you can have a movie night with your family while your roast for the next two night's dinners cooks in the kitchen. And you don't even have to get up to check on it, just let it do its thing!

Slow Cooker

An equally useful kitchen tool is a slow cooker, such as a Crockpot. You can throw a few things into the slow cooker in the morning and come home from work to a house full of delicious smells and a hot, home-cooked meal. Make enough for leftovers and let it serve double duty!

Hands-On Cooking Methods

Unlike the hands-off cooking methods that don't require being check on, stirred, or peeked at until they're finished cooking, these hands-on cooking methods require a bit of babysitting. Nothing too labor-intensive though; and if you're home anyway, it's really no trouble to check on a beef stew that's braising in a Dutch oven on the stovetop, right? Alternatively, sheet pan dinners still need to be watched, but they're quick and easy enough to throw together for a weeknight dinner, usually requiring less than 30 minutes.

Dutch Oven

The beauty of a Dutch oven is that it can go from searing on the stovetop, to braising in the oven, to serving at the table. Dutch ovens come in very handy; for example, when you want to do a classic roasting technique and you know you'll be at home anyway so it doesn't matter if you pop a roast chicken in the oven and have to check on it every so often.

Sheet Pan Meals

I absolutely love sheet pan meals! The idea is that you pair protein and vegetables for a balanced meal that's cooked together on one sheet pan. You can add different herbs, spices, sauces, fats, etc. and use different meats and veggies to keep the flavors exciting. The best part is, depending on what kind of protein you're using, these types of meals usually cook in less than 30 minutes from start-to-finish, making them a great option for a weeknight meal – even if you didn't have time to prep the meal in advance!

Here are a few of my favorite easy sheet pan meal ideas:

- Sheet pan butter dill salmon with asparagus
- Chicken sausage and parmesan-roasted broccoli
- Cheeseburgers with crispy zucchini

Chapter 5

Freezer-Friendly Meal Prep

Take your leftovers and batch cooking methods to the next level and stash a few meals in the freezer for super busy nights!

These dishes tend to freeze well:

- Soups, stews, curries, etc.
- Cooked roasts, like beef chuck roast and roast chicken. You can even shred the meat before freezing so it's that much easier to prepare once it's thawed.
- Stir-fries
- Meatballs
- Casseroles
- Ground meat-based dishes, such as taco meat
- Chopped vegetables, such as onion, carrot, celery, bell peppers, etc. The key is to pat the veggies dry, chop them, spread them out in an even layer on a large baking tray, and flash freeze them, and THEN transfer them to a zip-top plastic bag or glass container to store in the freezer.
- Sauces, such as pesto and homemade BBQ sauce. Pro Tip: Freeze them in ice cube trays so you can use as much or as little as you want! Just pop them out of the tray when you want to use them.

Here are a few tips for freezer-friendly meal prep:

- Freeze things in glass or see-through plastic containers so you can see what it is (if the label gets torn off or if you forget to label something).
- Label everything with the following information: 1) what it is, 2) date made, and 3) reheating instructions.

- Choose containers that fit well and can be stacked in the freezer to save space. If possible, I like to use glass containers instead of plastic or foil.
- Regularly pull from your freezer meal stash into your regular dinner rotation.
- Keep an inventory of what's stockpiled in your freezer and cross it off as you use it. Eat through the older meals first.
- Freeze some meals in individual-sized portions so you can take them for lunches or use them for those nights when you're dining alone.
- Try to remember to thaw a freezer meal the night before you want to eat it, so you're not stuck trying to microwave it to get it to thaw before reheating.

Chapter 6

Grab-and-Go Solutions

Fridge Grab-and-Go Items

The following items are easy to meal prep on the weekend, and some don't even require any prepping! These items are great to keep stashed in your fridge to grab for a quick meal or snack when you don't have time to cook, but still want a nutritious option:

- Hard-boiled eggs
- Deviled eggs
- Cottage cheese
- Cheese sticks or sliced cheese
- Sliced deli meat
- Deli meat and cheese roll-ups
- Olives
- Nut butter paired with celery sticks
- Cucumber slices, chopped bell pepper, broccoli florets, or cauliflower florets paired with homemade ranch or blue cheese dressing

Pantry Grab-and-Go Items

I also like to keep my pantry stocked with a few healthy choices that don't require any preparation for busy days when I'm really pressed for time:

- Nuts
- Homemade low carb granola
- Low carb store-bought or homemade protein bars

- Homemade low carb crackers
- Store-bought powdered meal replacement to make shakes

Now Get Started Meal Prepping! ☺

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Faith Gorsky

A law school graduate, Faith found her true calling in recipe development, photography, and writing through her blogs **www.AnEdibleMosaic.com** and **www.HealthySweetEats.com**. Her recipes and food photography reflect her various travels around the world, and emanate her passion for healthy, seasonally-focused meals shared with friends and family. But as an adult, Faith had a shift in what she considered "healthy" eating. About 5 years ago she fell in love with the paleo lifestyle and discovered she feels best when she avoids things like gluten, sugar, and even grains. Through trial and error and immersing herself in research, about a year ago she found that the ketogenic lifestyle is what ultimately works best for her body in terms of maintaining a healthy weight, improving mental clarity and focus, and reducing bloating and feelings of lethargy.

Lara Clevenger

A Registered Dietitian Nutritionist and Personal Trainer, Lara has worked in clinical settings, in dialysis centers, and in long term care facilities, but she discovered her true passion after launching her private practice **www.LaraClevenger.com**. Lara discovered her passion for educating individuals and using a food as medicine approach to treat medical conditions. Through this she found a love of cooking, recipe development, and food photography. Lara, like Faith, previously followed a paleo-like diet, but after doing much research, she embarked on a ketogenic diet and lifestyle and found that her sugar cravings disappeared, her energy levels increased, her recovery and sports performance improved, and her insomnia disappeared while following a ketogenic lifestyle.

Their Story

Faith and Lara met in spring 2017 and immediately connected through their mutual love of the ketogenic lifestyle. They teamed up to bring you www.TheKetoQueens.com, a one-stop-shop for all things keto-related. They want to showcase two things: 1) that eating keto isn't just about bacon and heavy whipping cream, so they make balanced real-food recipes that are doable for home cooks of all levels, and 2) that keto really is a lifestyle and not just a fad diet, and you can be satisfied eating this way even when dining out at restaurants or on vacation. Cheers to ketosis!