



Get organized and save money: Part 4 - Meals

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With a little advance planning, you can save money and time while creating nutritious meals.
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By doing some planning in advance and keeping balance in mind, you can save money and time, minimize waste, and create healthy, tasty meals for yourself and your family.

Cook for the week or month. If time is precious in your home, consider cooking once a week or once a month. Prepare a list of meals, shop for the ingredients all in one trip, and make preparation a family project. When meals are cooked, freeze them portions that you can thaw and re-heat (or thaw and eat) for quick preparation. Find ideas at [e-How](#) and [FrugalMom](#).

Make quick and inexpensive breakfasts. For many, a quick-and-easy breakfast is the one served at the fast food drive-thru or in the designer coffee shop. To save money, set the alarm to wake you up 15 minutes earlier to prepare a quick, healthy breakfast. Practice a few quick recipes that you can make to eat at home or take to work. Some ideas:

- **Oatmeal** with your favorite toppings, like walnuts or pecans, frozen fruit, or raisins. Take your hot cereal to work in a plastic cup with a lid.
- **Grilled cheese sandwich**, or any grilled sandwich with your favorite breakfast meats, veggies, or cheeses. This one is easy to eat at home, on the run, or package to eat at work.
- **Fruit smoothie.** Prepare ingredients the night before in the blender, cover and chill in the fridge, and blend in the morning for a fresh drink. Or prepare a batch large enough for several days, using cups with lids to make daily breakfast portions.
- **For more inspiration**, try this list of breakfast ideas at [Eating Well](#), grouped by preparation time.

Create quick and thrifty lunches. You can probably calculate pretty quickly how much those time-saving weekday lunches out are costing you (for example, a modest \$5 lunch each day for a work week = \$25, totaling over \$1000 a year - ouch!). Some ideas that don't take much time and save you money:

- **Buy one lunch and eat twice.** When you really want or need to eat out for lunch, you can find places that serve generous portions and save half of your meal for lunch the next day.
- **Bring a frozen meal.** Look for deals on your favorite frozen entrees and sides, or create your own as you cook for the week or month.
- **Bring leftovers.** Chances are, if you're cooking for the week or month, you're preparing meals that you'll enjoy just as much for lunch or dinner. Add variety by including a fresh piece of fruit, some raw nuts, or a portion of your favorite cheese on the side.
- **For additional ideas**, visit [WebMD](#) for an article that includes a shopping list and recipes for ten quick, inexpensive, and healthy lunches for adults.

Prepare speedy and money-saving dinners. Dinner during the work week is typically not an elaborate sit-down event. With busy schedules for both adults and children, you can save time and money by keeping it simple:

- **Have breakfast for dinner.** Once in a while, prepare breakfast items such as cereal or eggs for a quick light dinner, especially if you had a big lunch.
- **Set up a sandwich bar.** Lay out a variety of sandwich ingredients, and have each family member prepare a favorite combination.
- **Visit [Busy Cooks](#)** for a long list of ideas for quick, easy, and inexpensive dinners.
- **Don't forget variety.** Visit [Simple Daily Recipes](#) for recipes with excellent illustrations, and consider signing up for the weekly recipe newsletter to keep your meal preparation ideas fresh.

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