



Meal Planning
&
Prepping
Made Easy!

By
Jaime Umphenour

Welcome Home!

Why does the idea of getting dinner on the table seem to overwhelm so many people? Work, School, Sports, Activities, you name it! Our lives are busy and probably getting busier. How would you feel to be able to open up your freezer in the morning and see meals ready to be finished for dinner in the evening? You would be the family hero!

As my girls were growing up, I was the taxi for 4H, FFA, theatre rehearsals, voice lessons, school and everything that comes with it. I was also a Sales Director with The Pampered Chef for many, many years. I had to get organized and feed my family! I had to master getting dinner done- and also come up with quick breakfasts, especially for early mornings going to the fair barns. Yes, you can prep breakfasts and dinners!

Meal planning and prepping is so easy to do, just takes a little effort on your end up front- and then you get to save all kinds of time and money in the long run! You will have more time with your family, more time around the table and far LESS STRESS! Another side benefit is you always have meals on hand if you know someone in need- like a mama who just had a baby or a sick friend.

Home Ec Express has taught many classes and workshops about meal planning and prepping over the years. For those on the Central Coast, you may have hired me to meal prep for YOU! I want to continue to empower YOU to take charge and be the DINNER TIME HERO in your home! YOU CAN DO IT! Enjoy these tips and inspiration.

Happy Cooking!

Jaime



Terms and Tips!

- **Power Cooking**- Set aside an afternoon or day to do your Power Cooking! I love to do it on Sundays as it is a slower day for my girls and I. This method is all about stocking the freezer all at one time. Breakfast, dinners, you name it- you will be ready for the Zombie Apocolypse!
- **Investment Cooking**- The idea is to use your main dish, usually a protein, that is used for are least 2 meals- Cook Once, Serve at least twice! E.G. Roasted whole chicken for dinner #1, strip the leftovers, cook the bones to make broth, and turn it all into White Chicken Chili.
- **Crockpots/Slow Cookers**- Let's just say, it is your best friend! Dump your meal in it before you leave in the morning, come home 8 hours later and the glorious smells of dinner await! Slow Cookers come in various forms, sizes and shapes- you may need more than one!
- **Pressure Cookers**- "In the old days" pressure cookers were a bit scary. Today, thanks to technology and engineering, they are so much safer and easier to use! You can even cook frozen proteins in 30 minutes or less! I have the Pampered Chef Quick Cooker and not only does it cook by pressure, it is a slow cooker, rice cooker and so much more! View it here:
<https://www.pamperedchef.com/pws/pamperedjaime/shop/Gifts/Holiday/Quick+Cooker/100011>
- **Calendar Method**- Use a blank calendar to plan out your dinners based on your and your family's schedule. Days where you are not home should be more crockpot style meals, days in which you are home, a more involved dinner. Ask your family what they like or want, make a master shopping list off of your meal calendar
- **Grocery Store Mailers**- It is wise to go through the mailer from your local grocery store when planning meals and stocking up. In my area, the mailer is in the box on Tuesday, prices are effective on Wednesday. Sometimes they will also list in the ad special weekend deals (I tend to shop on Saturdays). Look for the best prices on whole chickens, boneless/skinless chicken, ground turkey or beef and so on. Usually bulk packed meats on sale is the best way to buy!

What supplies do I need to have to start my meal prepping??

- Available freezer space!
- Gallon-size FREEZER zip top bags
- Sharpie markers
- Can opener
- Measuring cups, both liquid and solid
- Measuring spoon set
- Knives
- Cutting boards
- Ladle
- Heavy duty aluminum foil

A few optional items:

- Vacuum sealer- if you make meal prepping part of your home, this is a great investment!
- Mason jars- great for soups and sauces- a word to the wise- leave 1/2" of head space for the food to expand in the freezer (if not, you will be bummed!)
- Quart size restaurant to-go containers/lids- the thicker containers can be reused and go in the top rack of the dishwasher. These can be found at restaurant supply stores
- Disposable foil pans- if you do not have many baking dishes in your cabinets, there are many choices for disposable baking pans in most grocery stores

Tips from my experiences:

- Freezer your meals **FLAT**, not in big blobs just thrown anywhere in the freezer. Freezing flat helps save on storage space and allows for less thawing time.
- When closing zip top bags, make sure you squeeze out as much air as possible! Air in the bag is what creates ice crystals and can degrade the quality of the food.
- **ALWAYS date your meals!** Freezer meals are good for about 6 months. Make sure to use the oldest first.
- When making soups, beans, chilis, lasagna, enchiladas, taco meat, marinara and other common recipes your family loves, double or triple your recipe so that you can freeze all of the extra for the busy days you know will be coming!
- **Buy ahead** bread, tortillas and more when they are on a great sale to stock up your freezer- just make sure that you check the seals.
- It is super easy to make your favorite salad dressings at home! Mason jars are the easiest way to make and store your dressings in the fridge.
- If your meal has multiple ingredients that need to stay separate, use different size bags and then pack it all in one large bag.
- Write cooking directions on the outside of the freezer bag, especially if it is not you who will be putting dinner together. If it is a bit much for writing ON the bag, tape a paper with the directions to the outside. You will thank yourself later!

Visit us at:
www.homeecexpress.com

Find us on social:

Pinterest

Instagram

Facebook

homeecexpress@gmail.com