

How to Plan Meals

Do you ever get tired of running to the grocery store several times each week? Do you ever get frustrated because you forget about a food and it spoils before you can use it? Do you want to save money on your food budget? If so, menu planning is for you.



To plan a menu for your family, start by picking a length of time that works best -- usually a week is a good place to start. Write down your meals and snacks on a dry-erase board, calendar, notebook, piece of paper, app, worksheet or whatever works best for your family. Using your menu plan, write your grocery list and you are ready to go shopping.

5 SIMPLE STEPS...

- 1 Check your refrigerator, freezer, and pantry to see what you already have. You can build a meal around something simple you already have. For example, if you have a lot of frozen vegetables, plan meals such as soups and casseroles that you can stir frozen vegetables into.
- 2 Check weekly grocery ads to see what is a good deal. Using sale items in your menu can help you save money. If you see blueberries are a good deal, plan blueberries as snacks, blueberry muffins for breakfast, and a fruit pizza with blueberries for dessert. If they are a really good deal, freeze some for another day
- 3 Keep a list of family favorites. List meals and snacks that your family likes and use the list when you have a hard time thinking of meals.

Check out our example menu plan for a week or the *Spend Smart. Eat Smart. recipes* (spendsmart.extension.iastate.edu) for some new ideas.

- 4 Plan to have leftovers. You can make a double batch of something one night and serve it again another night. This works well if you know you have a busy night coming up and will not have time to cook.
- 5 Be flexible. Think of simple things to stock for breakfast, lunch, and snacks—especially if your family is on the go with work and school. Then put more planning into supper, a meal you can sit down and enjoy as a family.

SERVES: 6 | SERVING SIZE: 3 ounces meat and 1 cup vegetables

PORK LOIN ROAST AND VEGETABLES

INGREDIENTS

2 cups onions (*cut in wedges*) (about 1/2 pound or 2 medium onions)
2 cups potatoes, diced (about 12 ounces or 2 medium)
2 cups baby carrots or 3/4 pound regular carrots, sliced
2 tablespoons oil (*canola or vegetable*), divided
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper
1 1/4 pounds pork loin
For Rub:
1 tablespoon brown sugar
1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper
1/4 teaspoon salt

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 400°F.
2. Mix vegetables with 1 tablespoon oil, salt, and pepper in a bowl.
3. Lay vegetables around the edge of a 9" x 13" pan. Put in oven.
4. Use a small bowl to make the rub. Mix the brown sugar, garlic, pepper, and salt in the bowl.
5. Sprinkle the rub over the loin. Press gently so the rub sticks to the roast. Wash your hands after handling the raw meat.
6. Heat 1 tablespoon vegetable oil in a large skillet over medium high heat. Add the loin. Brown the sides of meat. Cook about 2-3 minutes per side.
7. Transfer the pork to the center of the pan with vegetables. Bake for about 40 minutes. Check the temperature after 30 minutes in the oven.
8. Remove from oven when meat thermometer reads 145°F. Let set for 5 minutes. Slice and serve.

Nutrition Facts Servings: 6, **Serv. size: 3 oz. meat and 1 cup vegetables**, Amount per serving: **Calories 240**, **Total Fat** 8g (12% DV), **Sat. Fat** 1.5g (8% DV), **Trans Fat** 0g, **Cholest.** 55mg (18% DV), **Sodium** 310mg (13% DV), **Total Carb.** 19g (6% DV), **Fiber** 4g (16% DV), **Total Sugars** 7g, **Protein** 22g, **Vit. D** (2% DV), **Calcium** (2% DV), **Iron** (11% DV), **Potas.** (16% DV).

CHECK OUT OUR VIDEOS:

spendsmart.extension.iastate.edu/videos for more information on basic food preparation, safety, storage, and easy recipes!

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