

MEAL PLANNING

I like to shop one day a week, usually Saturday, and I cook and prepare a bunch of stuff on Sundays. I do my Coscto run in the morning and stop by the grocery store on my way home for eggs, produce and anything else I need.

On Sunday, I plan 3 hours in the kitchen to get it all done. I am passionate about eating healthy, stretching my dollar, saving myself time throughout the week, and making sure I am prepared with meals and snacks that make me feel good. I don't leave much to chance.

Check out my **Shopping List**, my **Recipes Resource**, and then follow along here to see how I get organized for a typical week.

Be forewarned! I eat leftovers. I know some people *hate* leftovers, and that's ok...but my time is saved because of leftovers. So is my wallet.

I maximize my time and my dollar by planning ahead, buying in bulk, cooking meals that yield leftovers, and by eating those leftovers. 😊

When you go through this week, you may decide that you don't like what I cook on a certain day, or that you have food preferences, allergies or intolerances that don't align with my recipes...and that's ok, too.

What I hope you get from this plan is a "road map" where you can imagine cooking *some* sort of one-pot meal each Sunday that yields lots of leftovers to be eaten during the week; being sure to eat breakfast each morning and planning for it; having a grab-and-go-lunch each day; preparing *some* types of healthy snacks so that you are prepared for the real world; planning ahead for easy week-day meals (that also yield leftovers) and repurposing some meals to create other meals.

If this sounds like stuff you'd like to hear more about, then let's get started!

Sarah's Time-Saving Kitchen Tips

Tip #1 I always buy a dozen eggs so that I have one dozen older eggs for hard boiling and another dozen for baking and cooking.

Tip #2 I always buy bananas. I almost never leave the grocery store without bunches and bunches. I'll have some green, some almost ripe, and some really ripe on-the-go at all times. I freeze lots and have raw bananas as snacks, in smoothies, and in baking. You can never have too many bananas!

Tip #3 I always buy avocados because, as we all know, avocados are never ripe and then all of a sudden they are overly ripe! I have avocados ripening at all times and as soon as they are ready, I turn them into guacamole; I slice them into a salad; I smear them on chicken; or I use them frozen in smoothies.

Kitchen Exercise: Freezing Avocados

Cut them in half, toss the pit, scoop out the flesh and freeze them in halves or quarters on parchment paper and then, once frozen, store them in a Ziploc bag.

Tip #4 I always buy boxed organic spinach. Great in smoothies and if it starts to "go", wilted spinach is an easy and yummy side dish or addition to quinoa or almost anything I'm making.

Tip #5 I always have quinoa on hand, and often have some pre-cooked and packaged in a Ziploc bag in the freezer for an easy side dish or addition to a meal/salad. Quinoa is a "complete protein", meaning it has all of the *essential* amino acids our bodies need. Essential amino acids are those our bodies do not make, so we need to find them in our food sources. Quinoa is actually not a grain, per se, but a seed, or a "pseudo-cereal". That said, it is used like a grain and can be substituted into any recipe that calls for rice or pasta. Plus, it has the added benefit of being a vegetarian source of protein, so when I want to enjoy a vegetarian meal, I use quinoa knowing that I am receiving all of the nutrients I need.

So, with those tips in my toolbox, here's how I go about planning my week of eating food. 😊

MY SUNDAY PLAN

STEP 1: The first thing I do after I wake up is boil a dozen eggs.

Kitchen Exercise: How I Hard-boil Eggs

- I use older eggs (just not fresh, fresh).
- Cover eggs with just enough cold water.
- Place on high heat until they reach the boil.
- Remove from heat and set timer for 15 minutes.
- Once done, drain and rinse with lots of cold water and place eggs in a bowl of ice water.
- Leave eggs in the fridge for at least an hour (many, many times I barely let them cool before I am already using them in my lunch, but for best results, let them completely cool).
- Some say that adding 1 teaspoon of baking soda to the boiling water helps in peeling. I do this regularly and sometimes it seems to work and sometimes it doesn't.
- I peel as I need them, rather than peeling the whole dozen at once. This helps them stay fresh longer. I replace the eggs in the carton and mark the box "hard-boiled".

Sunday Breakfast

STEP 2: High Protein Pancakes: I make a double (or triple!) batch of high protein pancakes for breakfast and eat one batch with fresh fruit (**recipe found in "Easy Breakfasts" in the Recipes Section**). I love topping them with almond butter for extra flavour and protein.

Once I've eaten and the rest of the pancakes are cool, I separate each remaining pancake with parchment paper and place them in a Ziploc bag in the freezer. I'll be toasting them for a fast and healthy breakfast during the week.

After Breakfast

STEP 3: Smoothie Packs: I prepare Smoothie Packs to make my life easier in the mornings. Most days, I like starting out with a smoothie, so I pack baggies with the following:

- Spinach/kale
- Cinnamon
- Spirulina
- Turmeric
- Hemp hearts
- Ground Chia and Flax seeds
- Maca or Ashwaghandha powder
- Protein powder (if using). I normally like to use Greek yogurt as the protein.

This way, all I have to do is add:

- Water
- Frozen berries
- ¼ -½ a Frozen avocado **or** One Frozen Banana
- ¾ cup Greek yogurt (if not using protein powder)
- and a smoothie pack to my blender for an easy grab-and-go breakfast.

****Note:** See my blog post called “Healthy Juice Boost” to watch the video where I put my smoothie together.

I am making **Kathy Smart’s Brown Lentil Curry** for dinner tonight (and then to have as leftovers during the week). So, I start the recipe now.

STEP 4: Brown Lentil Curry: I chop the onion and garlic and work through this incredibly easy and delicious recipe (**found in “Easy Dinners” in the Recipes Section**).

Once done, it can just sit on the stove, covered, with the element off. ****Note:** Depending on how many people I am serving and/or how much I want leftover, I often make a double batch of lentils!

STEP 5: While the lentils are cooking, I clean and chop 4 cups **total** of any combination of the following: Potatoes, sweet potatoes, turnips, carrots, onions. This is for the **Crock Pot Chicken** I'll be preparing on Tuesday morning (**recipe found in the "Easy Dinners" area of the Recipes Section**).

**** Note:** Sometimes all I have is a sweet potato and an onion, and that works in the chicken recipe, too!

STEP 6: I store my crock pot veggies in a Ziploc bag in the fridge (I re-use lots of my Ziploc bags as I know how wasteful this can be!) Or, I re-use the produce bags from the grocery store or else I store in plastic/glass containers with lids.

I also throw 5 or 6 **cloves of garlic** into my bag of veggies for the crock pot chicken recipe.

Kitchen Tip: Easy-Peeled Garlic I peel garlic cloves by placing an entire bulb in a mason jar and shaking it like crazy!! Seriously, it works!!! It takes some effort (and a few minutes), but once done, all the cloves will be separated and peeled. ☺

STEP 7: I chop up a whole head of cauliflower into florets and store in a Ziploc bag or airtight container. I will be using it for Thursday's dinner, **Vegetable Fried "Rice"**. (**Recipe found in "Easy Dinners" in the Recipes section**).

STEP 8: I chop up raw veggies and pre-package them in baggies to have as snacks on-the-go during the week.

STEP 9: I make Hummus (recipe found in the “Easy Lunches” area of the Recipes Section).

STEP 10: I pre-package Healthy Trail Mix.

Kitchen Exercise: Healthy Trail Mix

- In a medium-sized bowl, I mix raw almonds, raw walnuts, raw pumpkin seeds, organic raw peanuts (or any other combination of nuts/seeds) and some dried organic fruit.
- I mix it all up and portion it into baggies for fast snacks.

STEP 11: I make a batch of my adapted **Banana Split muffins** or the Detoxinista’s **Chewy Granola bars**, or **Cherry “Larabars”**, or **Peanut Butter Cookie “Larabars”** (or any muffin/snack bar recipe I feel like making). (Recipes found in the “Snacks/Treats/Miscellaneous” Area of the Recipes Section).

STEP 12: I prepare my 5 “Snack Bags”, one for each weekday. These are pre-packed bags of various snacks that I can just grab from the fridge each morning.

Inside my Snack Bags I pack:

- a snack bar or muffin,
- a baggie of trail mix,
- an apple,
- 1-2 hard-boiled egg(s),
- a baggie of veggies,
- and a small container of hummus.

On days where I know I’ll be out all day, I also make an extra smoothie and store it in a “shaker cup” (found at most health food/sports stores).

Planning Exercise: I remove a whole chicken from the freezer and place on a plate in the fridge so it thaws by Tuesday morning. This is for my **Crock Pot Chicken** recipe. (Recipe found in “Easy Dinners” in the Recipes Section).

Sunday Lunch

I don't mind eating the same thing for lunch and dinner, so I'll eat some lentils on top of greens for lunch. Arugula is nice and spicy, spinach is mild, and kale softens nicely under the heat of the lentils.

But if I'd rather just have the lentils for dinner, I make a batch of **Healthy Devilled Eggs** using some of my hard-boiled eggs from this morning, and serve with veggies or a salad. (Recipe found in “Easy Lunches” in the Recipes section).

Sunday Dinner

Brown Lentil Curry With Quinoa. I make a double or triple batch of quinoa and serve it hot with the lentils. To heat up the lentils, I just remove what I need for dinner and warm up in a pot on the stove. I either serve the lentils over greens (to wilt them) or serve steamed vegetables on the side.

I wait until the quinoa is cool and then store some separately in a Ziploc bag and refrigerate. I'll be using plain cooked quinoa in Wednesday's dinner. I store the remaining cooled lentils/quinoa in portioned containers and refrigerate. These are my lunches for a few days.

Sunday Treat

I love having The Detoxinista's **Chocolate Peanut Butter Banana Milkshake** for dessert on Sundays. (Recipe found in the “Snacks/Desserts/Miscellaneous” area of the Recipes Section).

MY MONDAY PLAN

Monday Breakfast

Monday mornings are often rushed, so I usually have a **Smoothie** using one of my smoothie packs.

Monday Lunch

I pack a small cooler and take leftover **Lentils/Quinoa** as well as a **Snack Bag**.

Monday Dinner

Lentil leftovers! I am a BIG fan of leftovers and don't mind eating them several times in a row. To re-heat everything, I melt a little coconut oil on the stove, add the quinoa and fry. In a separate pot, I warm the lentils. (**Note:** I don't own a microwave, but if you'd rather reheat yours in one, go for it!)

MY TUESDAY PLAN

Tuesday Breakfast

Smoothie. I need the extra time to quickly prepare my chicken dinner.

Prepare **Crock Pot Chicken** (see Recipe in the “Easy Dinners” area of the Recipes Section)

In a nutshell, I grab my pre-chopped veggies and toss them into the crock pot, drizzle with oil and seasoning. I pat the chicken dry, rub it with olive oil and season it. Before I run out the door, I turn on the crock pot. 6 hours on HIGH or 8 hours on LOW.

Tuesday Lunch

Leftover lentils and a Snack Bag

Tuesday Dinner

Yummy, yummy **Crock Pot Chicken!**

Remove chicken from crock pot and place in a shallow dish or large bowl. I’m careful, as it is fall-off-the-bone, so I do this wearing clothes I don’t care about or an apron!

Using a carving knife, I cut down the back of the chicken, cutting it completely in half. I remove both legs with my hands (I should wear gloves, as it’s hot, but often don’t) by twisting and pulling. The chicken comes off easily. I remove the skin and discard. I slice off some white meat from one side and plate it.

Using a slotted spoon, I scoop out some of the cooked veggies from the crock pot onto each plate. I drizzle some of the juices from the crock pot onto the chicken.

I serve it with a side of steamed broccoli or a green salad. Dinner is done!

Kitchen Exercise: Chicken Clean Up & Storage

After dinner, once the bird has cooled a bit but is still warm, I de-bone the chicken. I use my bare hands but thin gloves are even better. I either discard the carcass or immediately place in water and boil to make bone broth.

I store the remaining chicken in container(s).

I store the veggies in their own container, separate from the broth that's in the crock pot.

I store the broth in a medium-sized container. Once everything is cool, I refrigerate it.

MY WEDNESDAY PLAN

Wednesday Breakfast

High Protein Pancakes in the toaster or **3 Scrambled Eggs** with spinach wilted into them, and a banana smeared with almond butter.

Wednesday Lunch

Leftover lentils (if there are any left) or leftover chicken and a Snack Bag.

Wednesday Dinner

“**Saucy Chicken**”. This is less of a recipe and more of me making a new meal out of last night's leftovers. Here's what I do:

- I pull out the broth that I saved in a separate container from last night's chicken dinner. I scrape off the fat on the top and discard it into the trash. I dump the broth into my blender.
- I then pull out the veggies from last night, and add them to my blender. I blend on high, adding some water to thin it a bit. The sauce should still be fairly thick to maintain all the flavour.

- In a frying pan set to medium heat, I melt a teaspoon of butter or coconut oil and toss in about a cup of sliced mushrooms, making sure I don't overcrowd them. I allow them to brown a bit and then turn them over using tongs. I add in a few handfuls of kale or spinach (or other greens), allowing them to wilt.
- I pour the sauce from the blender over top and begin to warm it through. If it's too thick, I add a little more water.
- I add in chicken pieces.
- I toss in my leftover plain cooked quinoa and warm it through until my dish is hot and ready to serve. Dinner is done!

Wednesday Treat

A few squares of dark chocolate and some dried cranberries. Such a yummy sweet/tart combination!

Planning Exercise: Tomorrow night, I'm making The Detoxinista's **Vegetable Fried "Rice"**. I take a few minutes to "rice" the cauliflower by pulsing it in my food processor or using a box grater. I store it in a Ziploc bag in the fridge for tomorrow.

MY THURSDAY PLAN

Thursday Breakfast

Greek Yogurt Parfait & A Hard-Boiled Egg: I layer $\frac{3}{4}$ of a cup of plain Greek yogurt (my favourite brand is "Greek Gods") with fresh berries and some of my trail mix. I eat one hard boiled egg.

Thursday Lunch

Leftover Saucy Chicken and a Snack Bag

Thursday Dinner

Vegetable Fried “Rice” (Recipe found in “Easy Dinners” in the Recipes Section)

I also add any extra vegetables I have on hand or leftover from my snack bags or sometimes I add some Asian vegetables that I buy frozen.

Kitchen Exercise: I pull out a salmon fillet from the freezer for tomorrow’s dinner. I decide if I’m making **Easy Dijon and Rosemary Salmon** or **Easy Maple Dijon Salmon**. I prepare the marinade for the choice I’ve made and pour it into the Ziploc bag of salmon so it can marinate overnight.

MY FRIDAY PLAN

Friday Breakfast

Smoothie

Kitchen Exercises:

- I soak one cup of almonds in water to make **Homemade Almond Milk** tonight.
- I pull out a package of chicken breasts from the freezer and leave it in the fridge for **Healthy Chicken Tenders** tomorrow night.

Friday Lunch

Leftover Vegetable Fried “Rice” and a Snack Bag

Friday Dinner

I feel like I have more time on Friday nights, so I can take time to make a more elaborate side dish. That said, it still has to be easy and fast! Enter **The Detoxinista's Balsamic Roasted Brussels Sprouts**. I used to loathe the taste of Brussels sprouts, but now I love them, and this recipe appeals to even the fussiest of palates (my niece and nephew's!). **Found in "Easy Side Dishes" in the Recipes Section.**

I proceed with my **Salmon** recipe (**found in "Easy Dinners" in the Recipes Section**) and serve it with the Brussels sprouts and/or a salad. Because of the texture of Brussels sprouts, I don't feel like I need a starchy side dish.

Kitchen Exercises: Make **Homemade Almond Milk** (see **"Snacks/Treats/Miscellaneous" in the Recipes section**) to use in the oatmeal recipe I'm making (there is NOTHING like homemade!!)

Before I head to bed, I prepare **Kathy Smart's Peaches and Cream Steel Cut Oats** in the crockpot so I'll be waking up to warm and yummy oatmeal tomorrow 😊

Note: If I don't have peaches, I have made it with apples & cinnamon; strawberries & rhubarb...Anything will work!

I make sure to set my alarm for 8 hours from the time I turn my crock pot on. If I want more time to sleep, I just make oatmeal on the stove in the morning. 😊

MY SATURDAY PLAN

Saturday Breakfast

Peaches & Cream Oatmeal! Serve with chopped nuts and a drizzle of maple syrup. I also add almond butter to mine. I often eat a Greek yogurt parfait as well, with fresh berries.

Saturday Lunch

Buffet! Serve up any leftovers that are still in the fridge from the week (eggs, Vegetable Fried “rice”, salads etc...) along with remaining chopped veggies and hummus, fruit etc... If needed, I whip up some healthy tuna or salmon salad.

Kitchen Exercise: Healthy Tuna Salad or Salmon Salad

- Drain a can of tuna or salmon.
- Mix in a dollop of Dijon mustard and a drizzle of apple cider vinegar. Crack a bunch of black pepper.
- Squeeze some fresh lemon juice (probably a half a lemon).
- Mash it together with a fork until combined.

Optional: Add in chopped celery, red pepper, and/or red onion if desired. Serve over greens and with Mary’s crackers.

Saturday Dinner

Healthy Chicken Tenders (found in “Easy Dinners” in the Recipes Section). I serve with a salad and sweet potato “fries”.

And that, my friends, is how I do it!!

If you followed along, YOU DID IT TOO!!!

You got through an entire week of eating healthy. I hope it was easy for you to stay with it, and I hope the recipes and instructions were tasty and easy-to-follow. Or, perhaps you just used this as a guideline to create your own custom healthy week, and that's great too.

I would love to hear how it went for you, so send me an email at Sarah@SarahTalksFood.com and let me know how you did this week and whether this served you.

Thank you!

A Final Note From Me

I created this resource to serve you. I wanted to share how I manage a week in my kitchen because I understand how overwhelming it can feel to think about having to prepare *every single meal, all week long*.

But with a plan and some preparation, you can avoid common pitfalls (cafeterias, candy bowls, coffee shops), eat well on a budget, and feel happy, healthy and fit.

Because I want you to love your life one bite at a time,

Sarah