

The Flexible Meal Plan



A practical week of shopping
cooking and using what you have

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EatEasier

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Make the next dinner easier

A week rarely unfolds exactly as planned. The useful plan begins with who is home, what is already in the kitchen and how much cooking each evening can hold. From there, quantities, purchases and leftovers become connected decisions.

This guide follows four adult households through different weeks: one person with a small freezer, two people with separate schedules, four adults sharing the work and a person waiting for shift details. Their worked calendars show how to give every purchase and prepared portion a realistic next use.

Use familiar recipes and their package instructions with the planning method. The five reusable tools at the end help you record the week, inventory, purchase quantities, stored portions and changes. Start with the decision that makes tonight easier.

The food-safety chapters explain the storage limits that shape a workable plan. Their primary USDA, FDA and FoodSafety.gov sources are listed on pages 48–49.

How to use this book

A useful meal plan tells you what to do next without making every later decision for you. It connects three things: the people who will eat, the food you already have and the work the week can realistically hold. This book shows how to make those connections visible.

Read pages 4–24 once to learn the method. Then choose the worked household week closest to your circumstances. A person cooking alone needs different quantities from four adults sharing dinner, but the same questions still help: what is available, who is home, what must be used soon, and what can wait?

Keep your familiar food

You do not need to adopt the example menus. Substitute meals you already know how to cook. The examples deliberately repeat components and leave some nights open so you can see the planning decisions behind them. They are dinner plans, not complete daily eating patterns.

Use the tools selectively

Pages 42–46 contain five different working sheets. Start with the week map and the inventory sheet; add the quantity or leftover record only where it solves a real problem. Copy the tools into your own notebook or use this editable edition. You do not need to complete every field before making dinner.

A change of plan is normal. The aim is to notice it early enough to choose a sensible next use for the food and the time you have. A smaller plan that survives Wednesday is more useful than a perfect-looking plan that stops working on Monday.