



Make it Great—Make it Fast

Fast Meals at home—healthy too!

Fast Cooking - It's an Option

Fast Cooking uses shortcuts such as convenience products that are either partially or completely prepared and to which you add fresh ingredients and your personal touches.

Fast meals are NOT less nutritious than those made from scratch. They are simpler meals that are quicker and easier to prepare.

- You can buy or make ready-to-add foods and mixes to reduce preparation time at home.
- Handy appliances such as the microwave and slow cooker can help you plan meal times.

Planning - It is Key!

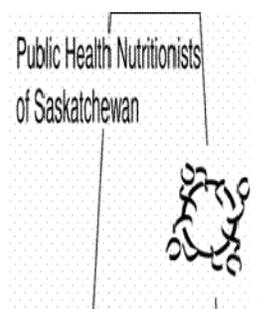
You may be surprised to find that it takes less time to plan enough meals for the week than to decide what to eat at the last minute. However an eating plan needs to be flexible and easy to fit into your busy day.

Here's help to find the right combination of planning, advanced preparation and fast meals that suit your lifestyle, time and budget.

Contact your local Public Health Nutritionist for more menu planning resources.

Canadian Food and Meal Facts:

- *Almost half of Canadian women are working outside of the home full-time but continue to be the main meal planners and providers for the household.*
- *Time spent preparing meals has decreased to 20 minutes or less.*
- *One in 3 Canadians say that convenience and ease of preparation are very important factors in their food choices.*
- *Only 60% of Canadians prepare home cooked meals daily.*
- *Cooking skills are no longer taught in schools or most Canadian homes.*
- *Cooking skills have a positive impact on behaviours and attitudes toward cooking and healthy eating.*
- *Learning new cooking skills and teaching them to children can be a way to ease the meal time rush, but also can provide a family activity all can enjoy.*
- *Eating together is an important way for families to function and to stay connected. Children grow better and they do better at school when families eat together at least four times a week.*



Planning Great Meals ... FAST

1. Just Plan it!

Menu planning sheets are helpful to write down the main meal of the day. Make three headings across the top of a sheet of paper with headings: meals planned, preparation needed, shopping list; and seven spaces down the side - one for each day of the week. You could design your own. See the Menu Planning insert for an example.

- Begin with menus that you have time to cook. Could you make a double batch?
- Fill in the gaps with fast menu ideas for those “on the go” nights when you have a short time. See page 4 for ideas.
- Don’t limit certain foods to certain meals. Pancakes can make a supper meal.

Make meal preparation a cooperative effort. Include suggestions from family members that are willing to help cook. Post the menu in the cooking area where others can see it. Try the fridge or bulletin board. Attaching a pencil can help everyone keep track of items to add to the next shopping list.

In a few weeks, you will start to see 10 or 12 meals emerge as family favorites. Keep a list of these meals to jog your memory when you are planning. Keep the recipes for these meals in plastic protector sheets in a binder or photo album to keep them handy and this also helps to make it easier for others to cook.

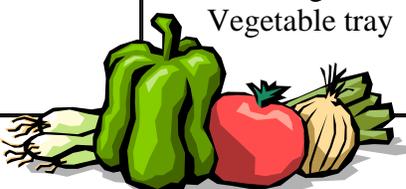
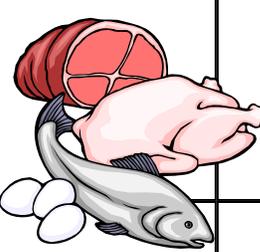
Organize your shopping list to include all items needed for your menus.



2. Prepare it now for speed later!

- Keep pizza shells, grated cheese and portioned meat on hand.
- Wash vegetables, trim, chop and store in zipper locked plastic bags or plastic containers.
- Buy or make larger amounts of coleslaw or marinated vegetable salads that will keep well in the refrigerator.
- Cold foods such as sliced beef, ham, chicken or hard cooked eggs, that are prepared ahead can be nice on a hot day. Cold foods are as nutritious as hot foods.
- Label a shelf in the fridge to store sandwich ingredients for quick preparation.
- Plan meals based around key foods prepared in larger amounts for use in one recipe the first night and an entirely different recipe within the next night or two.
- Extra servings of pasta, rice, ground meat and legumes can be cooked, frozen and successfully reheated in the microwave or steamer.
- Cook ahead, if time permits on the weekend. Make a number of meals and freeze them.
- Buy or make dry bulk flour mixes for baked items. It takes only a few minutes to add liquid and fat ingredients to bake a small batch. It is also easier for less experienced cooks to prepare.
- Involve others in meal preparation. There may be steps they can start if they are home first. Even preschool children can help put a fruit and vegetable tray together or combine the liquid and dry ingredients of a mix.

Planning Guide for Fast Meals

Make a Meal of it in 5 easy steps	Quick Picks from the Grocery Store	Stock your Pantry Refrigerator & Freezer	Make ahead Cook ahead
Step 1 Start with... Vegetables	Pre-cut vegetables Chopped salad greens Cabbage Deli vegetable salads Stir fry mixes	Frozen or fresh vegetables Hearty vegetable soups Dried soup mixes Tomato sauces	Cleaned vegetables Marinated salads Coleslaw Blanched vegetables Vegetable tray
Step 2 ... add Grains (Try more whole grains)	Pizza shells Italian bread, focaccia Sub buns Pasta, fresh or dry Bagels Tortilla wraps	Pasta varieties Converted or brown rice Perogies Tortilla Pita breads Low fat muffins	 Precooked pasta, rice Fresh pasta Biscuit mix Low fat muffin mix
Step 3 ...add smaller amounts of Meat & Alternatives	Roasted chicken Lean cut deli meats Boneless chicken Ham steak Low fat meat patties Tofu Fresh fish Lean ground beef Ground turkey	Portioned meats Canned beans Legume soups Nuts, peanut butter Canned salmon, tuna, sardines Frozen unbreaded fish Eggs Tofu	Precooked meat: frozen patties, meatballs, ground meat, meatloaf Hummus Bean burger Precooked legumes, toasted nuts, seeds
Step 4 Complement with Milk & Alternatives	 Milk (skim or 1%) Grated cheese Cheese slices Cottage cheese Fresh yogurt	Parmesan cheese Instant milk powder Canned low fat milk Grated cheese	Pudding 
Step 5 Finish with Fruit	Fresh fruit Fruit salad Canned fruit Fruit juice	Canned fruit Dried fruit Frozen fruit/berries Fruit sorbets	Fruit tray Fruit salad Fruit sauce Baked fruit Stewed fruit

Shopping with a grocery list can give you the time to read labels.



Make a Meal in 20 Minutes or Less

Eat at least one dark green and one orange vegetable each day. Make at least half of your grain products whole grain each day. Drink 2 cups of skim, 1% or 2% milk daily. Choose foods that are lower in fat, sugar or salt.

Beans in Tomato Sauce:

Serve with salad or coleslaw, wholegrain bread and a milk pudding. Or for a hearty soup - heat 1 can browned beans, 1 can tomatoes, sliced onions, season with parsley and basil. Serve with grated low fat cheese and bagels.

Baked Potatoes: Bake potatoes in microwave. Split and top with one of the following: chili, canned beans, spaghetti sauce, salsa, vegetables in cheese sauce or canned cream of broccoli or cheddar cheese soup, and frozen vegetables. Serve with milk or juice as a beverage.

Pasta:

Stir-fry chopped greens, such as broccoli, spinach or kale with onions and garlic, add cooked pasta, stir in a small quantity of crumbled feta cheese. Or mix a couple of eggs into hot pasta, heat and stir until the eggs are cooked. Add cooked vegetables. Serve with parmesan cheese.

Vegetable Stir-Fry:

Stir-fry the family's favourite vegetables, fresh or frozen, with chopped cooked chicken, beef, pork, seafood or fish. Season with spices. Serve over rice or noodles. Have milk pudding, or frozen yogurt for dessert or just enjoy drinking a glass of milk.

Sub Buns: Serve cold or hot.

Cold: low fat deli meats or left over cooked meats, salad dressing, shredded lettuce, vegetables and cheese.

Hot: omit lettuce and add sautéed onions, peppers, tomatoes; top with meat and low fat cheese. Broil. Serve fruit for dessert.

Pizza:

Use Italian or French bread, pizza shells or Pita bread. Lightly brush or spray the bread base with oil to keep the bread crisp. Top with pizza sauce, meat or beans, peppers, mushrooms and low fat cheese. Broil until cheese is browned lightly. Serve fruit for dessert.



Tortilla Wraps: Saute chopped mushrooms, onions and peppers together and add chopped ham, chicken or even canned salmon or tuna. Place mixture on half of a tortilla shell. Top with grated low fat cheese. Fold other half to cover, and pan fry on both sides. Cut into wedges and serve with salsa and low fat sour cream. Finish with fresh fruit.

Quick Cannelloni:

Cook lean ground beef with chopped onions, put mixture in the middle of a tortilla wrap and roll up. Put a single layer of rolls in a casserole dish and cover with commercial spaghetti sauce. Top with grated low fat cheese. Heat in the microwave until cheese is melted.

Check out these books!

Callaghan, Bev and Roblin, Lynn, Great Food Fast, 2000

Callaghan, Bev and Roblin, Lynn, Supertime Survival, 2005

Chuey, Cambell, and Waisman, Simply Great Food, 2007

Public Health Nutritionists of SK and The Dairy Farmers of SK, Menu Planning for Health, 2006.

Richard, Sandi, Cooking for the Rushed, The Healthy Family, 2003



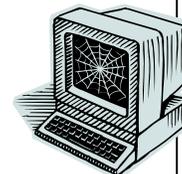
Try these websites!

www.dietitians.ca

www.healthcanada.gc.ca/foodguide

www.eatright.org

www.lancaster.unl.edu/food/ciq.shtml



**These tips have been prepared by your Public Health Nutritionist
For more information call:**

MENU PLANNING

MENU FOR:	PLANNING	GROCERY LIST
SUNDAY		Vegetables & Fruit
MONDAY		
TUESDAY		Grain Products
WEDNESDAY		Milk & Alternatives
THURSDAY		Meat & Alternatives
FRIDAY		Other Foods
SATURDAY		Non Food Items

