



# Shaping Up America's Kitchens!

*Your Toolbox for Building a Healthier Family*

**M**om....what's for dinner???. If you're like many households, you haven't even thought about what to serve for dinner. Yet, what's more important for life than food? Only air and water! It's time to boost this vital 'ingredient' for life to the level it deserves! Making nutrition a priority doesn't mean spending hours in the kitchen or giving up favorite foods. It just means planning ahead, stocking up on healthful ingredients, taking advantage of the many nutritious, flavorful, time- and effort-saving alternatives in today's supermarkets, and knowing how to put them together quickly and deliciously in meals your family will love.

*Tools help you perform tasks faster, easier, and better.*

*This Factivity Folio will give you the tools to tune up or overhaul your mealtime planning and preparation, and help you serve nutritious, delicious meals in a hurry.*

## Planning & Shopping Factivity Folio #3

### Why bother?

Preparing meals at home lets you control food quality and portion sizes—plus, it gives you control over your health and your future! Remember, healthy meals build healthier families!

### Smart & Healthy Meal Planning, Preparation and Supermarket Shopping

Healthy meals at home start with having the right ingredients on hand and a plan for using them. Take time to consider how to fit good nutrition into your busy schedule.

### Action Step: Pumping Up Health

Now that you have your food storage zone in shape, get ready to pump up mealtime nutrition and streamline family meals! This means keeping the right ingredients on hand and having a plan for using them—even on the most frenzied days. Start by thinking about the meals you prepared at home this week and why you chose those particular menus. *How satisfied were you with their taste, preparation time, and healthfulness? How satisfied was your family?* Now, think about the changes you'd like to make.

### Analyze the Situation

*What's for dinner? After a weekly trip to the supermarket, how many options are on hand?*

If you shop weekly and eat at home most nights, you should be able to visualize at least 5 dinners. Anything less and you are likely to resort to take-out more often than you'd like! For quick meal organization, store non-perishable ingredients for each meal in a bin or basket in the food preparation zone. This can really save time on hectic days! Here's an example.



### Pasta Night!

- 🕒 **Get Ready** - put a box of spaghetti, can of crushed tomatoes, can or pouch of clams, jar of dried oregano, and loaf of Italian bread in a basket.
- 🕒 **Get Cooking** - grab the basket and get fresh parmesan cheese, low-fat salad dressing, and pre-cut salad mix from the fridge.
- 🕒 **Save Time** - tuck the recipe in the basket! Just add a few instructions and your family can get started boiling the pasta water, opening the cans, grating the cheese, and setting the table.

*If you are what you eat, your pantry is your mirror.*

*Do the foods on hand get you in and out of the kitchen as quickly as possible but still result in nutritious, delicious meals?*

**Food fast doesn't have to mean fast food!**

Many healthy foods can be fast and convenient. Which is faster? Pouring a glass of milk or soda? Serving a bag of chips or baby carrots? The many time-saving and healthy options available let you pull together meals your family will love. Stocking up on nutrition-packed foods like these can help you reach this goal.

- ❑ **Breads**—corn tortillas, whole grain English muffins, bagels, breads, and wraps, frozen whole wheat waffles
- ❑ **Grains**—instant oatmeal, quick cooking brown rice and pasta, couscous, whole wheat bread crumbs, frozen or refrigerated pizza crust
- ❑ **Fruits**—fresh (pre-washed, pre-cut, salad bar), dried, frozen, canned
- ❑ **Vegetables**—fresh (pre-washed, pre-cut, salad bar), frozen, canned, sun-dried
- ❑ **Sauces**—tomato pasta sauce, salsa
- ❑ **Soups & Broths**—canned, frozen, aseptic cartons
- ❑ **100% Juice**—refrigerated, frozen, canned, boxed
- ❑ **Milk**—fresh, canned, shelf-stable packages
- ❑ **Eggs**—fresh eggs, egg whites in cartons
- ❑ **Cheese**—sliced, cubed, shredded, crumbled
- ❑ **Beans/Legumes**—canned beans, like black beans and chick peas
- ❑ **Nuts and seeds**—bagged, canned, nut butters
- ❑ **Chicken**—frozen or fresh boneless breasts, canned
- ❑ **Seafood**—fresh or frozen ready-to-cook fish fillets, frozen shrimp, canned tuna, salmon, and sardines
- ❑ **Beef**—pre-made lean ground patties, ready-to-cook kebabs
- ❑ **Flavorings**—add zing with dried herbs & spices, vinegars, mustard, hot/steak sauces, lemon/lime juice, light dressings, non-fat sour cream

**Watch the fat:** choose foods naturally low in fat or fat-free. Limit foods with trans fat and saturated fat.

These foods can be combined in endless ways. Keep a ready stock at all times, so you have the right ingredients on hand to serve healthy, streamlined dinners every night of the week.

***Afraid produce will spoil before it's eaten?***

***Put fragile fresh fruits and vegetables (berries, salad greens) on the menu for days right after food shopping. Buy sturdy fresh produce (apples, citrus, celery, carrots), or canned, frozen, or dried versions for later in the week.***



***What does your weekly shopping list look like?***

Planning menus and making a shopping list sounds pretty old-fashioned to some and time-consuming to others—but it is essential to success. According to Ben Franklin, ***failing to prepare, is preparing to fail.***

**Visualize your meals—what will they look like? What do you need?**

- ✓ The healthiest meals emphasize grains, vegetables, and fruits--- serve them in the greatest amounts.
- ✓ Meat portions should be smaller---this will save \$\$ and help keep saturated fat and cholesterol in check. Try a meatless meal, like chili with beans instead of beef.

***Can't think what to serve?***

*Having a hard time coming up with meal ideas? Ask your family and friends for suggestions. Or, try the Internet. Websites that can help are [mealtime.org](http://mealtime.org) and [myrecipes.com](http://myrecipes.com). Choose meals based on whole grains, fruits, vegetables and lean protein, like tuna canned in water and skinless chicken.*

**How much time do you need for each meal?**

**1. Plan simple meals for busy nights.**

On days with more time, preparations can be more elaborate. Or, use the extra time (10 minutes may be enough) to double a recipe and freeze it. On super busy nights, pop it in the microwave oven and serve!

**2. Use shortcuts.**

- Washed and pre-cut salad greens and salad bar ingredients speed up preparation.
- Canned and frozen mixed vegetables save washing and chopping time for stir-frys, fancy omelets, and on pizza toppings.
- Pureed canned beans make broths thick and creamy (plus, they deliver lots of fiber and are almost fat free!).
- Supermarket roasted chicken shaves an hour off cooking time.

**3. Multi-task to get out of the kitchen fast.**

While the meatloaf bakes, make the salad and set the table. When you have a break, put away ingredients you are finished with and wash dirty equipment or put it in the dishwasher.

## What do you need to make each meal?

Try using a meal planning grid like the one here—it only takes minutes to complete, but can save lots of time later. The partly completed grid combines the menu with a shopping plan. The shopping plan lists all the items needed and is arranged by food type to speed up shopping. This grid can be used when you get home to put non-perishable food away by meal in a basket or box, as described earlier. If an ingredient is already in stock, put it on the list with an 'X' beside it—that way you remember the ingredient is earmarked for your menu.

- ✓ Add or remove sections in the grid to make it fit your household and the layout of your favorite supermarket.
- ✓ For items you buy each time you shop, keep a master shopping list and photocopy it weekly.
- ✓ Keep quantities in mind. For meals, plan to use two-thirds of the plate for whole grains, fruits, and vegetables and one-third for lean protein, like beans, fish, skinless chicken, and lean beef.



*Concerned that canned or frozen fruits and vegetables short-change your family?*

*Actually, fresh is not always best! Research shows the nutrient levels of fresh, frozen, and canned foods*

## In a rush? Keep the menu simple!

Feature one-dish meals like casseroles, stew, and sandwiches. To make one-dish meals quick, just add a beverage and maybe a simple side.



## Quick & healthy side dishes:

- salads
- vegetables (plain or with a simple dip)
- slices of whole grain bread or whole grain crackers
- instant brown rice

## Easy, nutrient packed desserts:

- canned peaches with ice cold evaporated skim milk
- scoop of sorbet (just puree frozen fruit!)
- light ice cream, fat-free pudding
- orange wedges, sliced watermelon, or a dish of berries
- plain cookies



## Fast, delicious beverages:

- lowfat milk
- chilled water with a slice of fruit or a splash of juice
- vegetable juices
- unsweetened teas



*Now that you have analyzed the situation, it's time to get to work!*

**Be flexible when planning meals.** Even the best plans may need adjusting. You might want to take advantage of a special you discover at the supermarket or get stuck in traffic and have less time than you planned.

**Save each week's menu and shopping list.** These are your mealtime roadmaps for the week and can be recycled from week to week. Just be sure to make it a habit, and plan meals *every* week.

## Grocery shop in your pajamas!

*Online grocery shopping saves time and there's less chance you will forget items. Cover the extra cost (\$10-\$20) by using coupons and ending impulse buys!*



## At the Grocery...

**Take your list and stick to it**—but have alternates in mind in case a food is sold out, too expensive, or is 'on sale'.

**Schedule your shopping trip.** Pick a day when you have time to concentrate on shopping.

**Leave the kids at home!** You'll spend less and it's easier to stick to your list.

**Eat before you go**—you'll be less tempted to buy items you don't need. People spend 15% more if they shop when hungry.

**Cross items off your list as you go**—you won't forget things or buy those you don't need.

**Take your groceries right home!** Letting them sit in the car while you run errands can quickly wilt greens, melt frozen foods, and increase the risk of foodborne illness.

**Use the Meal Planning Grid to organize the storage of your groceries**—when it's time to make dinner, everything is easy to find and ready to go!



## Mealtime Planning Assessment

1. Ask Yourself	Yes	No	If no, what are my plans for improvement?
Do I know the menu I will serve my family for the next 3 days?			
Do the foods on hand let me serve delicious meals?			
Do the foods on hand let me serve nutritious meals?			
Do the foods on hand let me get in and out of the kitchen fast?			
Do I usually plan a weekly menu for family meals?			
Is my shopping list planned with my menus in mind?			
Is my shopping list organized for efficient shopping?			
Do I frequently forget to buy needed items at the supermarket?			

2. How many family meals do I plan to serve at home this week? \_\_\_\_\_

3. How much time will I have for preparing each meal? \_\_\_\_\_

4. For each meal I plan to serve, I will fill in the grid with the menu and ingredients needed. I will put an "X" by ingredients I already have on hand.

a. Looking over my grid, the short-cut ingredients I could substitute to boost nutrient levels include:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

b. Looking over my grid, the short-cut ingredients I could substitute to save time and effort include:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5. When it's time to put dinner on the table, I will motivate myself to follow through by:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6. The strategies I will use to get my family on board for health-smart eating are:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

7. The date I will start on this goal is: \_\_\_\_\_ I will complete this goal on: \_\_\_\_\_



