

# Making Meal Prep Easy

By Nikki Raymond



If you've ever spoken with a competitive bodybuilder or just scrolled through a bikini athlete's Instagram feed, you probably won't be surprised to learn they achieve their muscular, lean bodies through a regimented exercise and nutrition program.

If you are reading this article and your goal is to transform your body, be it adding lean muscle to your frame or dropping unwanted body fat, the key to success lies in the kitchen and having a plan designed to meet your specific goals. In order to achieve your goals and successfully execute your plan you need to do one important thing: meal prep, meal prep, meal prep!

Winston Churchill said it best, "He who fails to plan is planning to fail!" In this article I am going to lay out some of the basic principles of meal prep along with a few awesome tips to help you achieve optimal health and or your desired physique. Plus, one of my favorite meal prep recipes that will make you drool. So, let's jump right to it!

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## The Basics: Nutrition

Nutrition doesn't have a one-size-fits-all plan that people need to follow. However, most programs combine a calorie counting diet with a macro diet.

Calorie counting requires tracking your calories so that you keep close tabs on exactly how much you're eating each day. Counting macronutrients (macros for short) is about making sure a certain percentage of your total calories come from each of the three macronutrients: protein, carbohydrates, and fat.

The exact percentage of macros will vary person to person. If bodybuilding is your goal, your program will most likely require a high percentage of carbs, a moderate percentage of protein, and a low to moderate percentage of fat. Sounds complicated, right? Honestly, it can be and that is why most athletes hire a coach or nutritionist to help them

figure out what their macronutrient breakdown should be. But, you are in luck, meal prep is my passion and is part of my family's lifestyle so I am going to lay it all out there for you and teach you how you can simplify the process.

## WHERE TO BEGIN:

Steps to a successful meal prep

### 1. Gather Your Tools

#### Download a Tracking App

Apps like MyFitnessPal and Lose It! make it easy to select and track foods by tallying up the calories and macros you've consumed. Plus, they'll help you learn which foods contain carbs, proteins, and fats.

#### Purchase a Kitchen Scale

Having a scale will allow you to measure food more accurately vs. eyeballing portion sizes. When trying to lose body fat or build muscle, knowing exactly how much you are eating is key.

#### Purchase Containers.

Blue top Ziploc containers are convenient, inexpensive, BPA free, and come in several shapes and sizes. I do not recommend re-heating your food in them due the potential xenoestrogens that can be released while heating.

Pyrex glass containers, while more expensive, are a safer choice, they are microwave friendly and will also last longer than plastic containers.

Sandwich bags (or zip top bags) are one of my favorite ways to portion out food while I'm in prep or on the go. You can eat right out of the bag then throw it away when you are done! This eliminates the need to wash multiple containers at night. #winning

### 2. Plan and Purchase Food

#### Grocery Shopping

Make a list before heading to the store. This is a HUGE part of meal prep success! When making your list think about each of these categories—proteins, carbs, and fats—choose three to five main foods you're going to eat for the week then add a few of your favorite veggies to your list. These will be your go-to foods and will make up the bulk of your meals for the week ahead. Also, organizing you list by departments will cut down on shopping times.

#### Stick to a Schedule

Pick one or two days each week to do your meal planning, shopping and cooking. Select days that you can easily commit to and can keep consistent throughout the months ahead. Meal prep Sunday is a favorite among athletes and health enthusiasts.

#### Stock Your Pantry with Staples

Maintaining a baseline stock of pantry staples is a great way to streamline your meal prep process and simplify menu creation. Here are a few examples of healthy and versatile foods to keep in your pantry:

- **Whole grains and Carbohydrates:** Brown or white rice, potatoes, quinoa, gluten-free oats.
- **Legumes:** Canned or dried black beans, garbanzo beans, lentils.
- **Canned goods:** Low-sodium tuna, salmon, chicken.
- **Oils:** Olive, avocado, coconut.
- **Spices/Condiments:** Hot sauce, coconut aminos (soy sauce alternative) dried herbs, balsamic vinaigrette, garlic, salt, pepper, lemon juice.
- **Other:** Protein Powder, almond butter, mixed nuts.

By keeping some of these essentials on hand, you only need to worry about picking up fresh items in your weekly grocery haul. This can help reduce stress and improve the efficiency of your meal planning efforts.

### 3. Prep Basic Food

Meal prep can help you stay on track, but only if you eat what you cooked. Instead of making things like stews, curries, and stir-fries that will require you to eat the exact same thing for five days straight, prep foods that can be combined in different ways.

For Example: Pop your go-to protein (topped with some spices) along with your veggies into the oven and let them bake at the same time. Then, use a rice cooker or the stove-top to cook your carbs while simultaneously steaming any veggies you'd like to have on hand. This is a great time to boil some eggs.

When everything is cooked, store each ingredient in separate containers that you will be able to grab from throughout the week.



## 4. Pre-portion your meals

Pre-portioning your meals into individual containers is an excellent meal prep strategy, especially if you're trying to consume a specific amount of food.

Simply grab your prepared food out of the fridge and weigh or measure each serving into an individual container. Then you can store them in the refrigerator or freezer. When you're ready, simply reheat and eat. Easy!!

**Pro Tip:** If you are not following specific macros an easy way to think about meal prepping is to make a formula out of it. When deciding which foods to meal prep try to pick out one of the following formulas:

- **Basic:** Protein + Grain + Vegetable
- **Low Carb:** Protein + Vegetable + Vegetable
- **Vegetarian:** Legume + Grain + Vegetable

## 5. Make it enjoyable

You're more likely to stick to your meal planning program if it's something you enjoy doing. Instead of thinking of it as something you have to do, try to mentally reframe it as something you get to do as a form of self-care.

If you're the household chef, consider making meal prep a family affair. Have your family help you chop vegetables or be a part of planning what to eat for the week ahead. This way, pepping becomes quality time spent together, instead of just another chore. If you are prepping by yourself, throw on your favorite music, a podcast, or an audiobook while you do it.

Remember, not everyone's meal planning and preparation processes look the same. Having the wisdom to know when you need to scale back and improve efficiency can help you stick to your goals long term and make your new healthy way of eating become part of your lifestyle. If you need more guidance on what your macros or meal plan should look like for your specific goal, reach out to your local coach or schedule a complimentary session with me to go over your plan.

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## Vanilla Latte Overnight Oats

8 ingredients • 3 hours • 4 servings



### Ingredients

- 1 1/2 cups **Unsweetend Almond Milk**
- 1 cup **Organic Coffee** (cold, strong brewed)
- 2 tablespoons **Almond Butter** (divided)
- 2 tablespoons **Maple Syrup**
- 1/2 teaspoon **Vanilla Extract**
- 1 1/2 cups **Quick Oats**
- 1/4 cup **Chia Seeds**
- 1 1/3 tablespoons **Cacao Nibs**

### Directions

1. In a mixing bowl whisk together almond milk, cold coffee, half of the almond butter, maple syrup and vanilla extract. Stir in the oats and chia seeds until well combined.
2. Cover and refrigerate for at least 3 hours or up to overnight.
3. To serve, divide between bowls and top with the remaining almond butter and cacao nibs. Enjoy!

### Nutrition

*Amount per serving*

<b>Calories</b> .....	276	<b>Fat</b> .....	12g
<b>Carbs</b> .....	36g	<b>Fiber</b> .....	8g
<b>Sugar</b> .....	6g	<b>Protein</b> .....	8g

### Notes

#### Leftovers

Refrigerate in an airtight container for up to five days.

#### More Flavor

Add cinnamon or pumpkin spice.

#### Additional Toppings

Top with shredded coconut, additional chia seeds or hemp seeds.

#### More Protein

Stir in your favorite protein powder or collagen powder.