MAY: Time and Task – Meal Prepping

Spring is finally here! May is upon us, and you may feel pulled in every direction. For those of us with children, the end of the school year is around the bend, and there’s a rush of summer planning. For some reason, work activities feel busy and due dates are pending. How do we balance it all? We still have to think about our health and wellness, including exercising, sleeping well, eating healthfully and spending time with loved ones.

How do we manage it all? Let’s take it step-by-step and focus on one area: food and mealtime.

In times of stress and busyness, we often don’t carve out time to cook, therefore spending too much money on ordering food, wasting time picking up junk foods or overeating at unhealthy restaurants.

Here’s the deal: there’s never enough time. There’s often not enough money. Most people want to eat food that tastes good and is easy. Oh, and we don’t want to gain weight.

So why are we grabbing fast food, spending a fortune on our meals and gaining weight? Because we don’t plan! Meal planning and prepping is all about using limited resources, like time and money, wisely. Meal prepping has become big business. You can spend money on meal delivery services, meal boxes, and getting takeout or delivery from local health food stores.

Healthy Tips:

Or, you can game the system and do this from home, and prepare delicious, healthy, easy meals and snacks in under an hour. Here are some tips.

1. Pick. Pick your ingredients
So, you acknowledge you might be a picky eater. That’s okay! You get to choose what you eat! If you like celery and carrots, great! If you like berries but not bananas, no problem! When grocery shopping, choose fresh foods you actually like. If you hate chicken thighs, don’t eat them. Eat what you like, eat it in moderation and try to add color to your diet.

Huh? Do I have to keep a month-long calendar of what I’m supposed to eat all month? No! Just pick the meals you intend to cook. Maybe you can commit to eating breakfast each day for a week, three dinners at home this week or bringing your lunch to work four days. That’s a great start. If you want to add fiber and fruit into your diet, buy at least one fruit for each day. You will avoid spoilage and you’ll have just enough. Additionally, know what you’re planning to make. Let’s commit to breakfast “muffins” this week. There’s a recipe at the end of this newsletter as a freebie so you can eat breakfast on your way to work, or when you’re comfortably seated at your workstation. It’s important to know your shopping list so your meals are accounted for.
Pro Tip: You can save time by buying pre-cut veggies. You can save money by buying loose produce. You get to decide which is more important: having a couple more dollars and spending the time cutting produce or having a bit more time by purchasing pre-cut fruit and veggies.

3. Prep. Prep your ingredients
This means when you get home from the market or grocery store, cut up the produce into fork-sized pieces you will eventually be able to cook, portion your grapes or almonds into bags or containers. If you’re buying large chicken breasts, cut them in half for two portions. This way, when you’re ready to cook, most of the tedious work of preparing and chopping will already be done.

4. Cook. Cook your ingredients
If you’re making a stir-fry with veggies and chicken, it goes from raw to delicious in a matter of minutes by stir-frying it. You can also steam rice or quinoa.

If you’re planning to bring your lunch to work, be sure to have a container handy so you can put enough food in it for lunch. Portion the food immediately (so you don’t accidentally eat it when it’s dinner time). Keep foil or containers on-hand so you can create portions of the things you make. Placing your food in a few different containers makes them grab-and-go.

Here are some easy foods to prepare at home. These items are all easily transportable and require minimal work.

- Hard-boiled eggs
- Mini sweet peppers
- Carrots (cut) or baby carrots
- Celery
- Hummus -- scoop it onto a plate, don’t eat from the container, in order to avoid overeating
- Grapes
- Berries
- Fruit: apples, bananas, oranges, tangerines, peaches, etc.
- String cheese
- Pre-portioned almonds or cashews (raw or roasted, avoid sugar)
- Chicken tenders
- Brown Rice Cake with Nut Butter (1 rice cake, 2 tablespoons of nut butter)
- 2 slices deli turkey rolled up with 1 slice of cheese and 1 slice of tomato

Source: Casey Moulton at Kitchen Karate

Exercise of the Month

Task vs Time Workout

With all of the extra time you will have because you’ll be meal prepping, here’s a fun workout that speaks to managing the time and task at hand. This is a great way to test yourself. It’s been adapted from Crossfit Los Angeles/Oak Park. Originally done on a rowing machine, this workout can be done in your neighborhood by walking or jogging. This workout is great for feeling awesome, energized and proud of yourself! The reason this is called Task versus Time Priority is because you’re prioritizing a task (running or walking) and time in each round. You will need a timer.

Task vs Time

1) Task Priority
   Jog or walk one block for time (time yourself; you are selecting a distance and timing yourself as you jog or walk that distance). Note how long it took you to complete this distance.
**If you are going for a longer workout, pick another distance, like 3 blocks, or two laps around the track. Rest 3 minutes. Then:

2) **Time Priority**

Now, you will set your timer as a countdown from the amount of time it took you to complete Part 1. For example, if it took you 2 minutes and 30 seconds, set your clock to 2:30 and jog (or walk) as many blocks as possible in the time it took to complete Part 1. Rest 3 minutes. Then:

3) **Task Priority**

Now it’s time to put this together! In Part 3, your goal is to beat your time and your distance! In the final round, you’re back to the task priority. This means you will jog or walk the result of Part 2 as quickly as you can. In other words, redo Part 1 as fast as possible! Note how long it takes you and give yourself a pat on the back!

Source: [http://crossfitla.com/how_to_recover_with_a_workout/](http://crossfitla.com/how_to_recover_with_a_workout/)

### Recipe of the Month

**Meal-Prepped Tomato Basil Frittata with Sausage***

A simple one-pan Tomato Basil Frittata that's paleo, gluten-free and high in protein. The addition of greens, tomato and fresh basil makes this as healthy and nourishing as it is delicious. Packing a piece of this frittata, along with a piece of fruit, makes a great breakfast. When shopping, make sure to buy a piece of fruit for each day of the week.

**Course** Breakfast/brunch/snack  
**Prep Time** 5 minutes  
**Cook Time** 30 minutes  
**Total Time** 35 minutes  
**Servings** 8 servings

**Ingredients**

- *1 lb sweet Italian pork sausage casings removed (optional)
- 1 tbsp coconut oil or extra virgin olive oil
- Bunch of fresh spinach, kale, or chard, roughly chopped
- 2 tbsp chopped fresh basil (or dried, if fresh is not available)
- *pinch of crushed red pepper (optional)
- 9 large whole eggs, whisked
- 1/2 tsp onion powder
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 2 roma tomatoes or 3 smaller tomatoes, thinly sliced, or grape/cherry tomatoes halved
- fine grain sea salt and pepper to taste
- more chopped fresh basil for garnish

**Instructions**

1. Preheat the oven to 375 degrees. Heat the coconut oil or olive oil over med-hi heat in a medium sized cast iron or other ovenproof skillet. *See Note Below.
2. If using sausage, crumble the sausage in the pan and cook, breaking it up as it cooks so it browns evenly. *Add the crushed red pepper now if you wish for extra spice. Cook until browned.
3. If not using sausage, start with the greens and saute. If using sausage, once it is toasty brown, add the spinach to the pan and give it a quick stir to soften and blend with the sausage, then remove from heat.
4. Sprinkle the sausage mixture with chopped fresh basil once off the heat.
5. In a large bowl, whisk eggs well with onion powder and salt, then pour egg mixture over sausage mixture slowly to cover in the skillet or oven-proof pan.
6. Top the egg/sausage/spinach mixture with sliced tomatoes and sprinkle with more sea salt and black pepper, to taste.
7. Bake in the preheated oven 20-25 minutes, or until the eggs are set and edges begin to turn golden brown. Garnish with fresher chopped basil once the frittata has baked.
8. Let frittata cool and set a bit. After it’s cool, portion into 6-8 servings and wrap for daily breakfasts. Refrigerate. This frittata will last in the fridge for one week.

Recipe Notes
*If you don’t have an ovenproof skillet, transfer the sausage mixture to a 9x9 baking dish or pie pan before adding the egg mixture and proceed. If using a baking dish or pie pan, brush a thin layer of olive oil or coconut oil over the bottom and sides to prevent sticking. You may need to bake a few minutes longer if you use an oven-proof pan.

*If you’d like a grab-and-go breakfast, follow the cooking instructions, but pour mixture into a muffin tin. Muffin tins should be sprayed with non-stick cooking spray or brushed with coconut oil/olive oil. Fill tins ¾ of the way to the top. Allow the muffins to cool for 5 minutes, use a knife to loosen from the sides. Store in an airtight container or place muffins in individual containers/bags in the fridge. Take one or two for breakfast each day. Eat alongside a piece of fruit.

Shopping List
9 eggs
1 bottle of extra virgin olive oil or 1 jar of coconut oil
1 bunch or bag of fresh greens (spinach, kale)
1 packet fresh basil or dried basil
1 small container of onion powder
Salt and pepper
2 ripe Roma tomatoes or 3 smaller tomatoes or a package of grape/cherry tomatoes
1 small container or crushed red pepper (optional)
1 pound sweet Italian sausage (optional)