



Cook Once, Eat All Week

Meal prep for busy families

Camille Fabre

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CHAPTER 1

Why prepare ahead

It is 6:40 p.m. The kids are hungry, the fridge is half empty, and nobody has the faintest idea what's for dinner. This scene is not a personal failure: it is the result of a decision you make every evening, at the hour when you have the least energy to make it.

Meal prep moves that decision. Instead of choosing, rushing and cooking under pressure five nights out of seven, you set aside one session to organise everything: a calm moment, a shopping list, a few dishes that go together. The rest of the week is just reheating and assembling.

What you really gain

- **Time on weeknights:** no more hours lost deciding, shopping at the last minute or cooking after work.
- **Less waste:** you buy what you planned to cook, and what is bought gets used.
- **More varied meals:** planned in advance, they escape the Tuesday-night pasta reflex.
- **A lighter mental load:** the question "what are we eating?" gets its answer on Sunday, once and for all.

Worth remembering

You don't need to cook better. You need to decide less often.

What this method doesn't ask of you

No dozens of matching containers, no chart to fill in, no identical meals from Monday to Friday. One two-hour session, a little method, and a menu your family actually wants to eat. The next chapters give you the equipment, the plan and the minute-by-minute routine.

CHAPTER 2

Equipment and organisation

Good news: an ordinary kitchen is enough. Meal prep doesn't rely on expensive equipment, but on a few items that save you time during the session.

The essentials

- Two large baking sheets and a big gratin dish, to cook in parallel.
- One or two large pots and a wide frying pan.
- Airtight containers in different sizes, **preferably glass**: they go in the oven and the microwave.
- A good knife and a stable cutting board. Half of your time is won or lost there.
- Labels and a marker, to write the contents and date on every container.

A kitchen that works with you

Before you start, clear the counter and empty the dishwasher. Sort the ingredients by family: vegetables together, starches together, proteins together. You will always know where to look, and you will see at a glance what is left to do.

A successful prep session is decided before you turn the oven on.

— The organised kitchen's golden rule

Tip

Put on music or a podcast. Two hours of cooking go by much faster when it doesn't feel like a chore.

CHAPTER 3

The week's plan

The plan is the most useful part of the method, and the one you are most tempted to skip. Ten minutes of thinking on Saturday are worth more than an hour of catching up on Wednesday.

Cook building blocks, not fixed menus

Rather than preparing five complete dishes, prepare **building blocks** that you combine differently each night: a grain, one or two proteins, two trays of roasted vegetables, a sauce. On Monday you serve them as a bowl; on Wednesday, in a wrap; on Friday, as a gratin with a little cheese.

A sample week

- **One grain:** rice or bulgur, cooked in bulk.
- **Two proteins:** spiced roasted chickpeas and oven-baked chicken thighs.
- **Two vegetables:** a tray of squash and carrots, another of broccoli and peppers.
- **One sauce:** a lemony herb yoghurt that lifts everything.
- **One fresh extra:** raw vegetables cut on the day, for texture.

The right rhythm

Prepare four meals, not seven. Leftovers, eggs and improvised evenings cover the rest of the week without guilt.

Write your plan on a sheet of paper, then build the shopping list from it, aisle by aisle. Buy only what is written down: that is what makes the method economical.