

DINNER IS SERVED

GROCERY SHOPPING WITH SOPHIE

It is early Friday evening and the grocery store is crowded. Sophie wanders from aisle to aisle trying to remember what she needs to buy and looking for ideas for next week's dinners. She spots taco shells. That's an idea! Let's see. It calls for sauce, ground meat, lettuce, tomatoes, and cheese. But since Sophie can't remember if she has any cheese left at home and she didn't check to see if the tomatoes in the bin are still fresh, she decides to buy them "just in case." It's back to the produce department at the other side of the store (for the third time).

After what feels like hours of shopping and waiting in a long line, it is finally her turn to check out. When the cashier announces the total amount, she thinks ... "Oh my! I can't believe I spent this much?!"

Exhausted, she returns home and flips on the kitchen light, but it doesn't come on. Light bulbs! Oh no! She forgot to buy them. Back into the car Sophie goes. This time, she is headed to the neighborhood store where she will pay more for the convenience of not having to stand in another long line.

MEALS AT MEGAN'S

It is 6:00 and Megan is just beginning to think about what to cook for dinner. It has been another one of those long days. Megan is tired and doesn't have the energy it takes to plan a nice, nutritional meal, much less cook it. Out comes the phone book. Pizza delivery to the rescue once again! And, there goes more money she didn't intend to spend.

MAKING MEALS HAPPEN IN YOUR HOME

Sophie and Megan's situations are not uncommon. In fact, they are far too typical. But there is a better way! Solutions to these and other common meal-related challenges are contained in the following pages. *Dinner Is Served* provides an organized approach that will simplify your grocery shopping and meal planning.

Through *Dinner is Served* you will...

- save money,
- minimize impulse buying and waste,
- save time grocery shopping,
- avoid spending a lot of time and mental energy on the daily decision of "what to cook,"
- be less apt to run out of items you need between trips to the grocery,
- eat out and order out when you choose to, not out of boredom with your meals, not because you don't feel like figuring out what to cook or don't have on hand what you need for a meal, and
- be encouraged to eat healthy.

Enjoy!

THE STAPLES

<p>NEEDED:</p>

<p>___ Staples List form</p>

When most people hear the word “staples” in conjunction with groceries, they think of about a dozen items such as milk, eggs, flour, bread, etc. Although these *are* considered staples in most kitchens, there is a broader way to define staples that we will use. According to dictionary.com a staple can be defined as “goods in steady demand.” So, in addition to items you might initially consider to be staples, your Staples List will include *anything* sold at the grocery store that you want to keep on hand at all times – food items *and* non-food items.

Your Staples List is also the first of two components that will be used later when you create your grocery shopping list.

- ☐ Review the Staples List. It includes common staple items, as well as blank spaces for you to customize your list. Scratch off any item on the list that is not considered a staple in your home. If completing your Staples List on the computer, delete these items. Add any other staple items that are not already listed.

MEAL PLANNING

NEEDED:

Paper Option:

___ Index cards.

Electronic Option:

___ Computer: Use the Notepad section of your email account. If your account does not include a feature for notes, open an email account with Yahoo or other email service that offers this, or open an account through evernote.com. Sync with a smart phone if you have one.

Are you bored with the meals you serve? Maybe you wish they were more nutritional. Are you tired of trying to figure out what to cook? You need a meal plan!

BREAKFAST AND LUNCH

In most homes, breakfast and lunch are relatively simple meals. Standard items are normally kept on hand for breakfast. As for lunch, family members may often be away from home during this meal – at work or at school. So, if not eating lunch out or in the cafeteria, there are usually certain foods that are kept on hand for packing lunches. If this is your situation, simply include the items you regularly use for breakfast and for lunch on your Staples List. Otherwise, in addition to creating dinner menus (as outlined below), also create breakfast menus and/or lunch menus.

DINNER MENUS

Whether you are single or have a large family – you can benefit from pre-planned dinner menus.

Those who cook for one may have the tendency to under-emphasize the importance of putting a healthy meal on the table. Singles often remark about not being as motivated to cook or to meal-plan for themselves.

Those with households of more than one may have added motivation to plan dinners, but the more people in the household, the busier life can be. When there is less time and energy, the dinner meal often gets short-changed. Add to this, the fact that cooking for more people may also mean differing dietary needs and/or preferences, which makes preparing dinners more complicated.

But, we owe it to ourselves and our families to take good care of our health. Not to mention, we want to be good stewards of the bodies God has given us. Eating healthy meals is one of the ways we can honor our bodies. Pre-planned menus are one of the tools that can transition our desire for healthier living into reality.

Rather than spending the mental energy every day deciding what to cook (a decision that is often pushed to the end of the day when energy reserves are running low), discover the benefits of being able to select from a list of pre-planned menus. Creating menus for your list is *a one-time investment* that will serve you for years to come.

Following are instructions for creating your menus. Your pre-planned menus will not only help you conserve time, energy and money, they will also ensure that you will have on hand

everything you need for your meals. If there are other family members in your household, it is especially helpful to include them in this process.

- ❑ In the “Notepad” section of your email account, create a “Notebook” for each of the menu categories listed below that you want as part of your menu plan (Include the word “Menu” before each category.) Examples: Menu–Beef/Menu–Fish/Menu–Pork. Once completed, when you go into your Notepad, all of your menu categories will be grouped together on your Notepad’s “Notebook” list. If using index cards, create tabbed index dividers for each category.

Dinner categories include:

___ Beef	___ Poultry
___ Fish	___ Seafood
___ Game	___ Veal
___ Lamb	___ Vegan
___ Pork	___ Vegetarian

Breakfast and lunch categories (optional):

___ Breakfasts	___ Lunches
___ Brunches	___ Packed Lunches

The next step is to create your menus. Begin with your family favorites. To spark your creativity, refer to your recipe file box, cookbooks, and the internet. Think about favorite meals your family orders when eating out. Would they be easy to recreate at home? For additional menu ideas, access menus posted on restaurant websites.

Now is the time to pay attention to detail. Think about nutrition in your menu choices. Are there any special dietary requirements that you should observe? Remember, you will only need to spend a minimal amount of time creating your list of menus. You won’t need to reinvent the wheel each week when you plan your meals – your pre-planned menus will make meal-planning a cinch! Do not concern yourself with having a large number of menus to begin with; one study revealed that the average family has only about ten dinner menus. Begin with the menus you are currently serving. You can certainly add menu cards later as you think of new ideas and discover new recipes.

- ❑ Create each of your menus as a separate “Note” in the applicable “Notebook.”
Example: The menu: “Baked Chicken, Broccoli & Corn Pudding” would be a Note in the “Menu–Poultry” Notebook. List the menu on the first line, i.e., the heading of the Note.
If using cards, list each menu on a separate card.

- ❑ Under each menu, list all ingredients necessary for that menu other than items already on your Staples List. Exception: If a recipe calls for a large amount of an ingredient that is on your Staples List, but it would deplete your on-hand supply, also include that ingredient on your menu. Here are some menu examples:

Pepper Chicken , Garlic Potatoes, Broccoli

* 4 chicken breasts * small bag of red potatoes * 1 bunch of broccoli

Herb-roasted Salmon, Lemon Couscous, Asparagus

* 4 salmon filets * 2 lemons * 1 bunch of asparagus

Meatloaf with Brown Gravy, Mashed Potatoes, Peas & Carrots

* ground beef * gravy mix * small bag of white potatoes * frozen bag of peas & carrots

GROCERY SHOPPING LIST

NEEDED

Paper Option:

___ Shopping List form

Electronic Option:

___ Use the Notepad section of your email account. If your email account does not include a feature for notes, open an email account with Yahoo or other email service that offers this, or open an account through evernote.com. Sync if you have a smart phone.

- ❑ If you use the electronic option for your Shopping List, in the Notepad section of your email account, create a Notebook titled "Shopping Lists." Create a separate "Note" in your Shopping Lists Notebook for each of the stores in which you grocery shop – titling each with the name of the store (i.e., "Walmart," "Costco," etc.). The Shopping List for each store should have the following eight headings: Produce, Deli, Meat/Fish/Poultry, Bakery, Dairy, Frozen Foods, Other Food & Drink Items, Non-Food Items. These headings remain permanently on your list.

CREATING YOUR COMPLETE SHOPPING LIST

Shopping with a list is one of the top ways to reduce your food bill and cut food waste. Even if you add a few items to your cart that are not on your list, there will be a clear distinction between what you actually *need* and the *extras* you are buying.

In addition to saving money, your complete Shopping List will also save you time and energy. You will make fewer trips to the grocery because you will have what you need on hand.

- ❑ Review the information below for instructions on how to create your quick, easy, and complete Shopping List.
 - First, review your Staples List. Jot down any staple item you need to purchase and the quantity needed.
 - Next, select menus for one week, or two weeks if you shop bi-weekly. Consult your calendar. Do you have any evening engagements in which you will be eating out? Are you planning to have company over for dinner? If so, you will need to adjust your menu planning accordingly.
 - Then, take inventory of the ingredients listed on each of your menus, i.e., the ingredients needed for the menus – except those ingredients on your Staples List. Add to your list those ingredients you need to buy.

Voila'! – Your Shopping List is complete!

MEALS

MAINTENANCE

PREPARE YOUR GROCERY SHOPPING LIST

Before each trip to the grocery, prepare your complete Shopping List.

Suggested frequency – Weekly or Bi-weekly.

REVISE YOUR STAPLES LIST AND MENUS

Keep your Staples List current. Add menus as you go along – especially when you discover new recipes, and if dietary needs change.

Suggested frequency – As Needed

OPTIONAL SYSTEM ENHANCEMENTS

CODE MENUS

Code your menus. Some ideas are listed below. Most electronic Notepads have a search feature. Looking for menus that include winter produce? Simply search for the word “winter.” Will it be a busy week? Find “quick” menus.

Dietary Needs/Preferences: • low calorie • low fat • low sugar • low sodium • low carb
• gluten free • dairy free

Includes Seasonal Produce: • summer • fall • winter • spring

Other: • quick • budget

BULK SHOP FOR NON-PERISHABLES

Stock up on the non-perishable items on your list once a month or however often you prefer.

Maintenance: Bulk shop.

Suggested frequency: Monthly

For more food-related tips, see the following Appendix sections:

Seasonal Produce Guide ~ page 138

Major Ways to Reduce Expenses (“Food” section) ~ page 119

A Penny Saved (“Food” section) ~ page 126