



Family dinner planning

Meal planning can be a wonderful way to reduce stress during your week, get your family involved in the dinner decisions (and perhaps cooking), and makes your shopping easier.

Meal planning helps you to be prepared for the 'what are we having for dinner?' decisions. It can be a great way to plan ahead, prepare, budget and have flexibility and variety with dinner options.

Key Partners



Queensland
Government

Family dinner planning

This simple guide will step you through the planning of evening meals, allowing you to cater for your lifestyle, commitments and food preferences in the planning process. This guide will also assist you and your family to meet the Australian Guide to Healthy Eating recommendations.



How many days do you need to plan for?

- You do not have to plan for every day. Sometimes it is easier to plan for 2 or 3 dinners, especially on work or other busy days. Make a choice on what suits you and your family.
- Pick the meals you would like to have. Ask your family for suggestions, and check the fridge, freezer and pantry for ingredients for inspiration. Add a new recipe you would like to try to your plan.

Use the following steps to help plan your dinners:

- Pick your cut of lean meat and/or meat alternative. This part of the meal usually will take up about 1/4 of an adult's plate, or 1/3 of a child's plate:
 - Include red meat (beef, lamb, pork, veal, kangaroo) 1-2 times per week
 - Include Omega-3 rich seafood (fish, prawn, mussels, scallops) 2-3 times per week
 - Other meats (chicken, turkey, duck) 2 times per week
 - Meat alternative (tofu, eggs, nuts and seeds, legumes and pulses) 1-2 times per week
- Cooking method. Select cooking methods that you will have enough time and energy for:
 - Oven baking
 - Stove top
 - Steaming
 - BBQ
 - Slow cooking
 - Toasting
 - Air frying
- When cooking, choose an unsaturated fat like extra virgin olive oil or spray, or canola oil or spray. Use non-stick cookware or baking paper to reduce the amount of oil used.
- Choose a way to flavour the meal. Choose from:
 - Garlic, ginger, mustard, chilli
 - Herbs - basil, oregano, thyme, rosemary, chives, herb mixes
 - Spices – cinnamon, paprika, turmeric, pepper varieties
 - Low sodium or salt reduced stock and sauces
 - Tomato paste, curry paste or powder, miso paste
 - Other flavouring – vinegar, citrus juice or zest
- Pick a grain or starchy vegetable option. Ideally choose brown or wholegrain varieties. This part of your plate usually takes up to 1/4 of an adult's plate or 1/3 of a child's plate:
 - Wholemeal or high fibre pasta
 - Wholegrain or wholemeal bread
 - Brown or long grain rice
 - Noodles
 - Couscous
 - Starchy vegetables - potato, sweet potato or corn
- Pick vegetables or salad to go with your meal. Choose vegetables you enjoy and try to include as many colours as possible plus try new ones you don't normally choose. Aim for 1/2 of an adult's plate or 1/3 of a child's plate to be filled with vegetables and/or salad:
 - Fresh vegetables - carrot, capsicum, mushroom, broccoli, zucchini, spinach, choy sum, snow peas, green beans, cauliflower
 - Frozen vegetables (does not include frozen chips) – a bag of frozen stir fry vegetables or other frozen vegetables
 - Canned vegetables or legumes – beetroot, asparagus, tomato, chickpeas, lentils, beans
 - Salad vegetables - spinach, lettuce, tomato, cucumber, canned beetroot, red onion, grated carrot
 - Assemble a vegetable grazing plate – cherry tomatoes, cucumber, celery, green beans, snow peas, capsicum, carrots



Check out the guide below, and then fill out your own plan.
Remember you do not have to fill in every day.

	M	T	W	T	F	S	S
Cooking method	Stove top (pot)	Oven baking	Oven baking	Stove top (fry pan or wok)	Oven baking	BBQ	Oven baking
Flavour	Chilli con-carne	Lemon and pepper	Herbs	Garlic and soy	Tomato pesto	Extra virgin olive oil, garlic and miso	Extra virgin olive oil and lemon
Lean meat and/or meat alternative	Lean beef mince, lentils, red kidney beans	Salmon	Quiche (eggs and cheese)	Chicken breast	Canned tuna	Sizzle pork steaks	White fish fillet
Grain or starchy vegetable	Brown rice	Small wholegrain bread roll	Bread crumbs on bake (see below)	Hokkien noodles	Lebanese bread (as a pizza base)	Corn	Baby potatoes
Vegetables or salad	Grazing vegetable plate	Salad	Broccoli, cauliflower bake	Carrot, wombok/ cabbage, mushroom	Mushroom, capsicum, spinach, olives, basil	Beans, asparagus, zucchini, carrot	Pumpkin, broccoli, zucchini, carrot, capsicum

Here is your own plan

Remember you don't have to fill it all in.

	M	T	W	T	F	S	S
Cooking method							
Flavour							
Lean meat and/or meat alternative							
Grain or starchy vegetable							
Vegetables or salad							