



10 Days of Meal Planning

When You Don't Like to Plan

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Meal Planning: When You Don't Like to Plan

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10 DAYS OF MEAL PLANNING: WHEN YOU DON'T LIKE TO PLAN

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Join Me as I explore **Meal Planning** without a Plan.

Preface

I love to cook, but I don't like to plan. When I worked full time outside the home I would do **month long meal plans** and did a pretty good job keeping up with them.

After becoming a **stay at home mom** and homeschooling teacher, I grew tired of sticking with that type of schedule. In fact, generally speaking I'm **not much of a planner**. I began to just **wing it with meals** and started cooking whatever I fancied in the moment. I still do that nearly 9 SAHM and 6 HS years later.

I dedicate this book to my Beloved husband of 21 years Michael, my amazing blessing Little Man Jonathan. It is my good pleasure to provide you with meals and to sit around our table breaking bread together. To my dear sweet mom and the grandmothers who were before her for laying foundations which has led me to write this guide.

Renée



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Keeping a Well-Stocked Pantry

Grocery Shopping with Pantry in Mind



Saving Time and Money

Meal planning should begin where your supplies are located. For me, my supplies are stored in my pantry, fridge and freezer. To keep those stocks full I go to my supplier, the grocer. You see I don't want to think of the grocery store as the place that keeps what I need, I want to consider it the place where I get what I need. It's a subtle difference. Here are some shopping tips where meal planning without a plan is important.

10 Tips for Grocery Shopping with Pantry Stocking in Mind

1) Limit the number of times you go to the grocery store.

I can't stress this enough. Don't rely on the grocery for your meals. Learn to rely on your pantry, fridge and freezer for your meals. If you shop once a week you are using the grocery to store your meals, you just go there to get the food. If you shop one time every four to six weeks then you store the food in your own home and the grocery becomes your supplier. By shopping less often you save both time and money.

2) **Pantry List.**

I rarely make a grocery list. Even when I do I often forget it at home or leave it in my purse. Why? Because of the way I plan, I know what I keep in my pantry. I know what I can use and what I don't use. So I keep those supplies stocked. When I'm in the grocery I think about what I'm running low on and then purchase based upon that. Having knowledge of your pantry is a key element in successful stock-up grocery shopping. Keep a running [pantry supply list](#), if you must you can make a grocery list based upon that.

3) **Shopping with a different mindset.**

When shopping for a stocked pantry I go to the grocery I go with the intention of stocking up on items that *we are running low on*. This is a different mindset than going to the grocery for things you *run out of*. Generally speaking if you keep a well-stocked pantry, fridge and freezer you are not running out of items.

Oh yes, occasionally you will use the last of something. Unless it is a major needed item you can live without it by substituting. Then buy more quantity of that item during your next stock up trip. By keeping your stock maintained, you will have the items you need on hand throughout the month.

4) **Save money by shopping less often.**

If you are new to this way of shopping you will have sticker shock the first few times you do this. Why? Because, when you shop every 4 – 6 weeks there will be a big number when you ring up the sale. But think of it this way. If you shop one time a week and spend \$100, then you are spending \$400 a month. If you shop 1 time every 6 weeks, buying basics pantry stock items, you might spend \$400. This averages out to about \$66 a week. Also the fewer times you are in the store the fewer times you choose to buy impulse items.

5) **Buy Sale Items.**

Look for items that have been deeply discounted or on clearance. Look for bulk sales, like 10 for \$10. Instead of buying just one or two go ahead and buy 10. Boxed, jarred or canned items will last a very long time. Once home rotate the new items to the back of the stock and older items to the front so that you use the oldest first. Whenever possible buy the larger package, it will last longer and most likely is a better deal.

- The clearance sections are my favorite places in the store. I find very good deals on bigger ticket items such as olive oil, balsamic vinegar and spices. I also ask the butcher what days they discount their meats. This way I can buy good quality meat at the lowest possible price. Since I'm going to be freezing it anyway the near sale date won't matter.

6) **Avoid pre-packaged meals.**

Many pre-packaged convenience meals are very simple to make. By keeping a well-stocked pantry you will have the supplies on hand to make a similar, probably better, meal at home. For example: Instead of buying a pre-packaged cheeseburger macaroni meal, just make your own. The reality is you have to supply brown the meat. You also have to cook the pasta from the package. So in about the same amount of time you can make your own version.

Here's how:

Brown 1 lb. of ground beef with salt and pepper to taste.

(If desired you can add chopped onion for more flavor about 1/2 an onion will do).

Follow instructions on the box of elbow macaroni, cook pasta to al dente.

In the meantime, in a small saucepan add 2 T butter, 1/4 cup of milk and about 1/2 lb. of Velveeta cheese, sliced. Melt the cheese, stirring constantly.

Drain pasta, add browned meat and cheese and just like that you have made your very own cheeseburger macaroni.

7) **Whenever possible avoid name brands.**

Admittedly, there are items that are just better from a name brand. I have a specific preference for my mayonnaise and for my ketchup. But whenever possible I buy the store brand or generic. I will also shop at places like Aldi's or the local hometown store to find better deals. But I also shop at the BIG name grocers and when I do, I buy either store brand or generic whenever possible. You will get a better deal and you can buy in larger quantity.

If an item such as the ketchup I want isn't on sale or the sale price isn't enough, I walk away from it. I would rather wait and find a better price. When stock shopping, I most likely am not out of the item, I am simply shopping for reserve items.

8) **Buying Meat**

Buy your meat when it is on sale and buy in bulk. You pay a premium for meats that have been butchered and packaged in convenient portion sizes. By buying the larger item you can separate at home to convenience size portions and save money in the process.

I buy whole chickens and cut the meat off the bone.

I divide it into family size portions, in my case 3 portions and freeze in freezer bags. I do the same for pork loins, cutting them into butterfly chops. For ground meats, I separate the meat into 1 lb. portions for the freezer.

If I buy meat that is pre-portioned I still buy a larger package than I need generally, for a family of 3 I can split a 6 portioned package into 2 meals.

I also wait for sales. If the grocer doesn't have beef roast on sale, I don't buy it. When it is on sale I buy several. Keeping a freezer filled with meats that you bought on sale and portioned yourself can save you many trips to the grocery store, thus saving you time and money.

9) **Maybe you are thinking: But I buy Organic!**

So do I. I would say that about 70 percent of what I buy is organic or all natural, especially fresh veggies and meats. You have to be willing to stock up, and be willing to wait until the right sale to save when buying organic, but it can be done. (Don't forget to check that clearance section.)

10) **I don't coupon shop.**

I tried this, I really did. I gave it my best effort when I was doing it. I found that doing couponing caused me a lot of stress, a lot of time and little reward. I found myself frustrated that my pantry was filled with items but they were not items that I generally use in cooking.

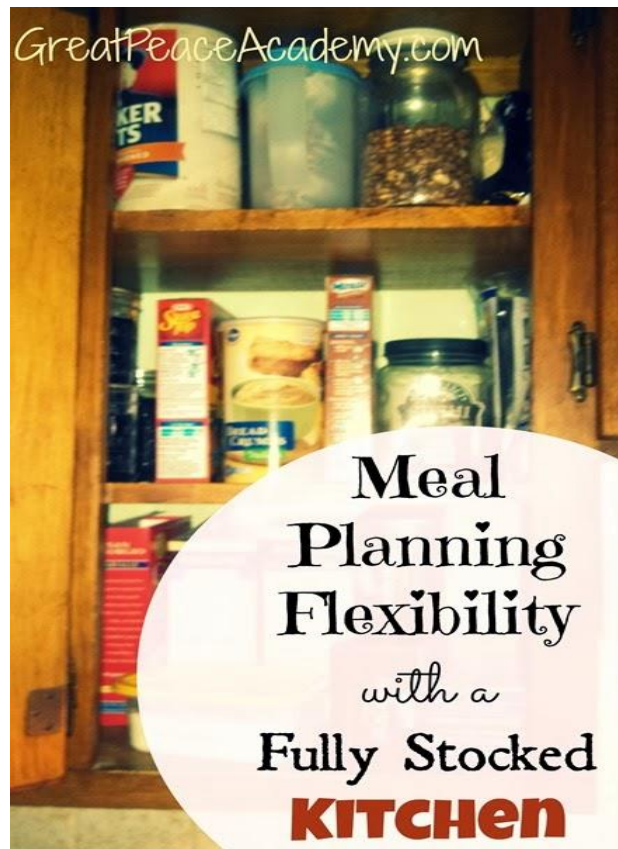
I also found it to be more expensive because I was buying name brands to get the good coupon deals when store brands were cheaper without the coupon. I also had to shop more often to keep up with the expiring coupon, which put me in the store more often, which led to more impulse buys.

Whatever money saving techniques you are good at, you can incorporate most of them into this type of shopping for stocking. If you are great at store hopping, then do that to your family's maximum benefit. If you are good at organizing and maintaining your coupons, then by all means make that work while stocking your pantry to its fullest extent. Remember to be flexible and open minded and willing to walk away from an item if it doesn't meet your budget or if you can make it easier and cheaper at home.



Grocery Shop with Reserve in Mind

Having a Ready Supply for Meal Flexibility



I love to cook. I love the **freedom to express** how I'm feeling through food. I love providing **satisfying meals for my family**. But I don't like being held down by a pre-formulated plan. I mean what if the plan says meatloaf, but I'm just not feeling like making a meatloaf? That's why I plan the day of or maybe the day before. **Having the supplies** I need *on hand* allows me the **flexibility to cook** whatever comes to mind the day of. That does mean though, I have to be flexible and willing to **use only what is on hand**.

I am great at **stretching a pantry** to its maximum potential. I learned from my mom how to stretch a pantry. She says "Even if I only had a little flour, oil and water, I could make a meal. You see she learned very early in life how to make gravy and biscuits. She prefers buttermilk for her biscuits to water, but if she had to she could make gravy and biscuits from reserved bacon grease, flour and water. Now, that's stretching a pantry as far as possible.



I want to share with you my **basic supply list** for keeping a well-stocked kitchen which includes the **pantry, fridge and freezer**. I believe that if you have a kitchen that is well supplied **with basics**, then having a weekly or monthly **meal plan is unnecessary**. You know some of the top chefs in the country plan their menus based on what is available.

Stock the Basics and Keep them supplied.

Having the basics in your pantry means you can **make a meal quick and easy**. Keeping those supplies also means you don't have to buy prepackaged meals because you have the needed **items on hand**, with a little prep most pre-packaged meals can be **made from scratch** with **little effort**.

Each person needs to **tailor their pantry** to reflect **what their family eats**, that being said, to save at the grocery store consider whether you can learn to **make certain convenience items from scratch**.

Here is a list of the items that I like to keep on hand.

Kitchen Basics

Baking Goods

- Bread Flour
- Self-Rising Flour
- White Corn Meal
- Wheat Germ
- Sugar
- Brown Sugar
- Confectioners Sugar
- Cornstarch
- Baking Soda
- Baking Powder
- Cocoa
- Baking Chocolate
- Vanilla Extract
- Baking chips (variety)
- Marshmallows
- Nuts
- Shredded Coconut
- Raisins
- Boxed Cake Mix

Dairy

- Milk
- Cheese sliced (Variety)
- Cheese Shredded (Variety)
- Ricotta Cheese
- Sour Cream
- Yogurt
- Eggs (I know eggs aren't dairy but they keep em in the dairy case at the grocer)

Frozen

- Vegetables (Variety)
 - ◊ Broccoli Cuts
 - ◊ French Style Green Beans
 - ◊ Sweet Corn
 - ◊ Mixed Vegetables
 - ◊ Peas
- Waffles (I only buy these because I don't have a waffle maker right now)
- Ice Cream
- Bread Dough (I make my own)
- Vegetables (I freeze a variety myself)

Spices & Herbs

- Sea Salt
- Iodized Salt
- Coarse Black Pepper
- Peppercorns
- Paprika
- Chili Powder
- Oregano
- Basil
- Garlic Powder
- Parsley
- Sage
- Rosemary
- Thyme
- Cinnamon
- Ginger
- Nutmeg

Canned Goods

- Beans (Variety)
- Evaporated Milk
- Condensed Milk
- Tomatoes whole
- Tomato Sauce
- Tomato Paste
- Spaghetti Sauce
- Alfredo Sauce
- Applesauce (I make my own and can it)
- Pineapple crushed and slices
- Peaches
- Cream of Soups (Variety)
- Pumpkin
- Vegetables (Variety, I keep these for when I've exhausted all other possible vegetable options, fresh, frozen, home canned)

Produce

- Lettuce
- Cabbage
- Tomato
- Carrots
- Onions
- Potatoes
- Celery
- Mushrooms
- Bananas
- Grapes
- Apples
- Lemons

Dried Goods

- Pasta (Variety)
- Rice (Variety)
- Bread Crumbs
- Stuffing
- Beans (Variety)
- Cream of Wheat
- Oats
- Cereal (Variety)
- Crackers

Jarred & Bottled Goods

- White Vinegar
- Apple Cider Vinegar
- Balsamic Vinegar
- Salad Dressing (Variety)
- Ketchup
- Mayonnaise
- Mustard
- Peanut Butter
- Jelly (I do make & Can my own)
- Pickles (Variety)
- Soy Sauce
- Worcestershire Sauce
- Barbecue Sauce

Meats

- Ground Beef
- Beef Roasts
- Flank Steak
- Pork Roasts
- Pork Chops
- Whole Ham
- Bulk Sausage
- Sweet Italian Sausage
- Bacon
- Pepperoni
- Chicken Whole
- Boneless Skinless Chicken Breasts
- Hot Dog Weiners
- Deli Ham (Variety)

Oils

- Olive Oil
- Vegetable Oil
- Shortening (I use Spectrum, Palm)
- Reserved Bacon Grease
(Hey, I'm a country girl)

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I prefer to shop about every **six weeks to replenish perishables** and buy sale items. But I even **freeze a lot** of those, dairy especially. *See my Freezing for Keeping section.* As you can see I try to keep a ready supply on hand. When my cabinets and cold storage options are full I could if needed feed my family for about **3 months**



I love using my slow cooker for stock cooking. I can put together a meal and then freeze the leftovers with such ease. I'm sure this book [Slow Cooker Batch Cooking](#), written by my friends at [Southern Hodgepodge](#), will give you some great tips for stretching your pantry further.

How I Stock-up With Canning

Extending Good Deals Through-out the Year

Home canning is a good way to extend your purchased groceries for a longer period of time. Since I love canning and think that it's easy and anyone can do it, I want to share with you some of [my recommendations](#) for canning produce. You can find them at the bottom of this [blog post](#). If you have [questions](#) about canning feel free to stop over at the [blog post](#) and leave a question. [I'd love to chat](#) with you about it.



For hundreds of years homemakers have used the process of canning to preserve food. For many canning is as much a part of life as is eating, especially, if they also garden. Canning allows cooks to extend foods received for free or low prices for a longer period of time. Having home-canned foods on hand helps me to be flexible in my making meals.

At the same time many people are afraid to can. There are many reasons for this. Maybe it's a fear of proper technique, or a fear of messing up, or a fear of the unknown. But canning isn't as hard as it may seem.

I use canning to fill in my pantry, preserve the freshness of summer and save money by not having to buy items that I am able to can. I also am not a gardener although I dream of one day having that perfect kitchen garden. I have grown some tomatoes in the past, and growing up my parents always had a kitchen garden, but I've yet to dive in and plant my own complete garden. So perhaps you are wondering where I get my goods.

There are a lot of places to get goods. I get apples from the trees in my yard that a previous owner planted. I also get black raspberries from my yard for the same reason. The congregation we attend puts in a garden each year, I try to help out with seeding and pulling weeds. So I'm able to get some veggies from that garden. My neighbor this year let me pick his concord grapes, so I was able to make grape jelly.



You can get goods at the local farmers market, or even from your grocery store. If you find a good price on berries, buy lots and make some jam. If you see local corn on sale, get a couple of dozen. The key is thinking long-term instead of short-term. Ask yourself, *'How can I utilize this deal for the long-term benefit of my family.'* This rule applies whether you plan to can or freeze. You will find information on freezing in the next chapter.

Three Reasons Why I Love to Can

1. Home canned products are preserved at the peak of freshness, making for delicious foods all year long.
2. Saves money at the grocery store by filling your pantry with canned goods made with your own hands.
3. Brings satisfaction to my heart when my hard work produces fruitfulness by filling the pantry while providing for my family.



Canning Basics

Equipment

- **Water Canner**

Generally a large tall pot used for preserving high acidic foods,

- **Pressure Canner**

Used for low acidic foods such as vegetables and meats. For instructions on pressure canning see your manufacturer's guidebook. Each pressure canner is different.

- Jars
- Lids
- Rings
- Quality Canning Recipe Guide

(You can find [My Favorite Recipe Guide](#) within my original blog post.)

➤ Additional equipment

- Colanders
- Large heavy pot, such as a dutch oven
- Large Mixing Bowls
- Pot holders
- Kitchen Towels
- Canning Funnel
- Canning Tongs

Canning Methods

- **Cold-Pack**

This method is also known as raw-pack. Uncooked foods are placed in jars and covered with boiling liquid, water, syrup or juice.

- **Hot-Pack**

Food is par-cooked then placed in jars and covered with liquid; water, syrup or juice. Some foods, such as tomatoes, make their own juice and additional juice isn't necessary.

What to Do

- 1) Clean Jars. Wash jars with hot soapy water. Sanitize jars by pouring hot boiling water over the jars. (If you have a sanitizer setting on your dishwasher you can use that.) Set the jars on a towel.
- 2) Sanitize Lids. In a small pan, boil water, place lids in the boiling water and boil for a few minutes.
- 3) Pack food into jars. Pour liquid over food leaving 1/2 inch head space.
- 4) Gently tap the jars releasing air bubbles.
- 5) For vegetables and meats add 1/2 tsp. salt and 1/2 tsp. sugar.
- 6) Wipe the rims of jars with a soft moist cloth.
- 7) Run finger over the rim feeling carefully for damage or bits of dried food.
- 8) Add lid and ring, tighten ring by hand until secure.
- 9) Place jars in canner.
- 10) Process based upon the canner instructions. (I'll give basic instructions below for water canning; pressure canning varies based upon the manufacturer of the canner.)
- 11) Once processed, remove the jars from the water, set on soft towel. Leave lid on until the cans seal. This generally happens as the jar cools down. You will hear a "pop" as the pressure creates a vacuum seal.

****Tip:** Turn jars upside down on the towel to aid in the sealing process.

Boiling-Water Canning

Boiling-water canning is used to process fruits, tomatoes, pickles, jams and jellies. Use a large deep pot and a rack or basket to hold the jars. Any large pot will work if you can cover jars with at least one inch of water and you can bring to a boil safely without spill over.

Start with a pot 1/2 full of water, bring to a boil. In a separate pan bring additional water to a boil. Add jars; if necessary add enough water to cover jars. Boil water times based upon recipe suggestions (*you can find recipes in a canning guide, jam pectin product packaging, or even online*) if needed add more water to keep the jars covered.

The use of canning in my kitchen extends foods I've gotten for free or low prices for much longer. We enjoy applesauce, apple butter, tomatoes, jellies, jams and pickled beets throughout the year due to canning. Many more foods can be canned but I also freeze preserve foods, which you can find in the next chapter.

To see my canning product recommendations, visit the [original post](#) on my blog.



Freezing for Keeping

Freezing Makes for Easy Meal Prep



In my humble opinion there is **no better appliance** than the **freezer**. Walk down the aisle at most grocery stores and you will find three or even four aisles of frozen products. Why? **Because freezing food is cheap and easy**. You can preserve food at the peak of freshness and keep prepared foods for an extended period of time.

I can only think of a few foods which do not freeze well. Sour Cream because the cream separates from the whey in the thawing process and I've never been able to mix it back successfully. Yogurt however freezes great. Go figure! You can not freeze eggs in shell, but you can freeze raw eggs that have been cracked, see below. Lettuce doesn't freeze well, since it is made up mostly of water, it will turn to mush in the thawing process.

What Foods to Freeze?

- **Meats**

I freeze all kinds of meat, raw, deli, ham, sausage, pepperoni, bacon. You can also [freeze cooked meat](#). If you have leftover meats, simply divide into usable portions and place in your freezer.

- **Vegetables**

Most **vegetables can be frozen** fairly easily. By simply doing a quick **par-cook**, you can **prep veggies in no-time**. Then place in freezer bags. They make for quick and easy side dishes. Just remove from their containers, add water with salt and pepper, additional flavorings such as butter and onion if you prefer and bring to a boil, let boil for a few minutes until heated through and tender.

I know some who will **chop onions in bulk and freeze for ease of use**, onions and peppers do not need to be par-cooked.

Potatoes for various uses, such as hash browns. Simply peel and boil potatoes until tender. Cool enough to handle. Then using a food-processor with a shred attachment or hand shredder, you can shred the potatoes for hash browns. Lay flat on a baking dish to freeze then move to a freezer bag, portioned for ease of use.

- **Dairy**

You can freeze most dairy items.

I freeze milk. To do this, simply pour out a cup of milk and put the jug in the freezer. *(I don't pour out in paper cartons because there is extra head room in the container.)*

You can **freeze cheese**, both sliced and shredded, **yogurt, cream cheese, and ricotta**. As mentioned before, sour cream does **NOT** freeze well.

Eggs, well I know eggs are *not* dairy, but they keep them in the dairy section at the grocery. **You can freeze eggs, out of the shell.** First of all, you can keep eggs longer than most people think. Eggs have a **shelf life of about 4-5 weeks**. By freezing un-used eggs at around the 3 week mark you can [extend the shelf life of your eggs to about a year](#).

Here's How: Crack the egg and put into a freezable container in usable portions. Freeze. Thaw in the fridge overnight. The eggs will cook well in many recipes, however the yolk thickens in the freezing process, so some recipes may better left to fresh eggs.

- **Prepared Foods**

My **rule of thumb** when it comes to freezing prepared foods is if I can find it as a **pre-packaged convenience food** in the frozen section at the grocery store then I can freeze it myself. I can **make it at home cheaper**, most likely it will taste better and if I freeze it at home I'm making my own pre-packaged convenience foods.

[Pinterest](#) is filled with ideas for freezing prepared meals. You can do this by saving leftovers, doubling recipes and freezing the second batch or spend a day making 10 pre-cooked meals.

- **Bread**

I do this in 2 ways. I **buy extra sliced bread and buns** and freeze them. I also **freeze homemade bread dough**. I have a good basic bread dough recipe and I make it often. Whenever I do, I make and freeze extra by splitting the dough, and forming it into either loaves or rolls. **I coat the dough with olive oil** to make for easier removal from bag later.

My recipe doubles as a pizza or Stromboli dough. When I need a quick meal, like after homeschool co-ops, I'll set out a loaf of frozen dough before I leave to thaw while I'm away. When I return home I can whip up a homemade pizza in no time.



Here's How I Freeze Bread Dough:

My recipe rises two times before baking. After mixing, I let the dough rise the first time. Then I punch down the dough and divide. I form the loaves/rolls. The portions that I plan to freeze I coat in olive oil and put in freezer bags and freeze. When it's time to use, I set out and thaw for a couple of hours, let rise in a warm place before baking.

I also will make up **Stromboli's filled with meats and cheeses and freeze** those following these techniques only I wrap them in double layers of foil.

- **Fruits**

By far **fruit is the easiest thing to freeze**. I freeze applesauce (made in the [crockpot](#)) berries, bananas and even grapes. Just trim, wash and put in the freezer bag. What could be easier? **For bananas that are over ripe, peel, and freeze**. They make great [smoothies](#) or mock [ice-cream](#).

Equipment Needed

- **Freezer**

Any freezer will do. The one in your kitchen with your refrigerator is great. But for extra long storage I recommend a deep freeze. My dad bought one for us about 17 years ago and it still works great. It's a small size but stores a lot of food. If you have a larger family you might consider a larger one.

- **Freezer Bags**

They come in a few sizes, the most often used are gallon and quart sizes. To see my preferred brand see this original blog post: [Freezing for Keeping](#).

- **Food Safe Freezer Containers**

These are not an absolute necessity item. However they are handy to have on hand, and most likely you have a few 100 in your kitchen anyway right? They are convenient for those times when you may be out of freezer bags.

With very little effort you can produce your own pre-packaged convenient foods. It's simple, easy and will save you money. Why not give it a try?

Working with What You Have

Stretching Your Kitchen Stock to the Max



Waste Not. Want Not. A penny saved is a penny earned. A bird in the hand is worth 2 in the bush. I know these are platitudes but they stem from a reality. We live in a fast-food, throw it out, one time use kind of world. But just a **couple of generations ago**, during the **great depression** homemakers became very **frugal**, very **savvy at stretching their food supplies to their maximum**.

Maybe you are thinking that was more than a couple of generations ago. But the reality is the [Great Depression](#) lasted from 1929 to 1939. During that 10 year period, my parents were born. Their mothers and grandmothers were **brides and homemakers working hard to stretch their \$** and their food.

They also had quite a few mouths to feed. My dad was the youngest of 9 children. So **they learned the hard way** and my parents were taught from their reality how to **use every part**, not to waste a thing. My mom says that her **grandma could peel a potato paper thin**. Then use the **peelings to add flavor to a soup**, while cooking the rest of the potato for a completely different meal.

So let's get started.

Stretching Meat

I buy **whole chickens**, for about \$7 – \$8, I can stretch a chicken to feed my family of 3 about 5 times.

- Split the breasts, legs and wings. Carefully remove the tenderloin from the breast. I also trim close to the breast bone.
 - Use the breast for one meal. For my family of 3 I cut the 2 breasts off the bone, split the meat into 4 pieces. 3 are used for one meal. *(Obviously if your family is larger you have to use more meat per meal but consider every possible use of the meat and think of ways to extend that.)*
- I use the tenderloin meat, the trimmed from the bone meat and the reserved portion of breast in recipes that called for Cubed chicken. I cut those pieces into cubes, cook them quickly in a little olive oil, salt and pepper, then reserve them for a quick and easy throw together meal. Such as [Cheesy Chicken & Rice](#), Chicken Fajitas or burritos, [Hawaiian BBQ Chicken Taquitos](#), BBQ chicken pizza. The possibilities are endless.
- Place the bones in a pot cover with water with salt (Many people add veggies to the pot, I prefer my broth without the veggies). Bring to a boil. Lower heat, let simmer. The longer you simmer the more concentrated the broth becomes. Remove the carcass. Strain the broth. You can then freeze the broth for several months. I use the broth to make Chicken and Noodles, Dumplings, stuffing and more.



- Don't just throw away those bones. Take a closer look. There is some good meat on those bones. It's so flavorful! Go ahead and pick those bones clean. I know! It's a mess. But it also makes the most delicious chicken noodle soup ever! It makes a delicious chicken salad sandwich or throw it in with some alfredo sauce for a quick, chicken alfredo. The key is don't waste that meat, instead put it to good use for a delicious meal for your family.
- I haven't forgotten, have you? That I trimmed off the legs and wings. Those I use for fried chicken.. If you are extremely frugal you can remove the thighs of the chicken before making broth and use those along with the legs and wings for your fried chicken. You can also make fried chicken with the breasts and legs if you prefer and use the wings for just wings

If you prefer you can roast your chicken, then split the meat in a similar way. Never throw out a carcass without cleaning the bone, to do so is wasteful. The key is to take that whole chicken and stretch it to the maximum possible use. This is one way that I maximize the blessings the Lord brings into our home.



- You can buy a larger than needed roast and **trim off a few steaks** before using the rest for a roast. Better yet, find a **buy one get one sale**, use one for just steaks, cut in even portions, you may have some extra which you can cube for stew. Then use the second roast for pot roast.

- Got left over pot roast? Besides sandwiches which are delicious, consider using it for a quick and easy Philly cheesesteak by adding onions, mushrooms and cheese. YUM! Or with onions and peppers make a quick and easy burrito.

Using Replacement Food Items

- What if a recipe calls for “cottage cheese” but you don’t have cottage cheese. Do you run out and buy a pint? Instead think outside the box. Instead of cottage cheese, try Ricotta, or sour cream mixed with cream cheese. Many times, if these items are blended into a casserole or mixed recipe, the flavor difference is mild and not too noticeable.
- What if you realize you are out of [eggs](#) after you’ve started a recipe that calls for eggs? Oh No! **Eggs are so useful** and versatile and a staple to most American diets. They are used in everything from cakes to salads, sandwiches to meatloaf. So what do you do if you run out of eggs? Well, I grab the jar of **mayonnaise**. Yep! That is right. A heaping table spoon of mayonnaise is about the equivalent of one small egg. Why? Mayonnaise is a mixture of **eggs and oil**. So if a cake recipe calls for eggs and oil and I’m out of eggs, I use mayonnaise and reduce the amount of oil. You would **NEVER tell the difference**.
- Switch out any one pasta for another that you have on hand.
- **Applesauce** can serve as an **oil** replacement in baked goods.
- **Out of buttermilk?** No problem, just add a 1 tsp. lemon juice or vinegar to milk to **make sour milk**. (lemon juice is best). Out of milk entirely, no problem, just mix a little water into some sour cream stir well till you get a milky consistency for your baked goods.
- If you reach a point where you feel you have exhausted your pantry, there simply isn’t enough on the shelf, in the fridge or freezer to pull together a meal. Chances are you may have bits of food, **small amounts of leftovers** that by themselves would not feed 1 person let alone your family. That is where it’s time to make [stone soup](#). Well not really stone soup, but as a homeschooler I couldn’t resist the analogy.

Grab those bits of leftovers and put them in a big pot with water and spices and in about an hour you will have a **delicious and filling meal**. If you happen to have [reserved bread dough in the freezer](#), all the better.

There have been many times in my 21 year married life where finances have been tight, or the next paycheck was a few days away and I have had to stretch. I could sit and worry over our meal or I can **trust in the Lord to provide**. He always does **if we trust** in Him. Sometimes it's through the blessing of an **unexpected gift** at just the **RIGHT** time and at other times it's finding a **forgotten package of meatballs** in the back of the freezer. Sometimes it is through the **creativity and flexibility** of a homemaker, trying to **stretch** their family budget and **kitchen stock** to the **maximum possible potential**. But He does provide.

Psalm 37:25

“I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the **righteous forsaken** or their children begging bread.”

*By the way, all of the above mentioned provisions were blessings to me and my family in the **very week** that this was written. **EVERY** one of them.*



Meal Planning Printable Pages

Planning to Stock Up Your Kitchen

Whenever possible I want to share with you information, ideas and topics that I think might encourage you and inspire you in your roll as a mom. Meal planning is one of those areas. As moms and wives we generally have to plan 21 meals every week, plus snacks, desserts and sometimes we even entertain guests. To help you in your planning efforts I'm sharing some free printable pages. I also want to share with you some supplies to help you build your own planner. Take a look at the [original blog post](#) to find those supply links.



As you can see, my method of meal planning consists of keeping a well stocked kitchen, then making choices daily based upon what I have on hand.

Perhaps that's not the way you plan. I came up with some meal planning printables which might help you as you plan while thinking about stocking your kitchen for the first time. My planning pages include a Food Supply Planner, Monthly Meal Planner, Weekly Meal Planner and Daily Planning Schedule.

Here is a preview:

[illegible]

Food Supply Planner

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday

MONTHLY

Menu Planner

Printable

GreatPeaceAcademy.com

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Monthly Meal Planner

Weekly Menu Planning <small>Week of:</small>			
	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
Sunday			
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Saturday			

WEEKLY
Menu Planner
PRINTABLE

GreatPeaceAcademy.com

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Weekly Meal Planner

Today's Planning Schedule	
<i>What's for Dinner, Mom?</i>	<i>Daily Schedule</i>
On the menu:	7:00
Breakfast: _____	7:30
_____	8:00
_____	8:30
Lunch: _____	9:00
_____	9:30
_____	10:00
Dinner: _____	11:00
_____	12:00
Get out ingredients	1:00
Need to throw anything?	3:00
_____	5:00
<u>To Do List</u>	6:00
_____	7:00
_____	8:00
_____	9:00
_____	10:00
_____	11:00
_____	12:00

Daily
Planning Schedule
Printable

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Daily Planning Schedule

Consider your meal planning methods what works best for you? I would love to chat with you about it. Stop in at my blog [Great Peace Academy](#) and comment on this [original blog post](#).

My Favorite Recipes

Utilizing my Stocked Kitchen

Because we are talking about **meal planning** I want to also suggest kitchen products that I find useful in my home. You can find links to these products and their links to purchase them on the original “[My Favorite Recipes](#)” blog post at Great Peace Academy. They may also help you in your meal preparation.

I want to share with you some of my favorite recipes. These are recipes that I can make based upon what I keep in my well-stocked kitchen. If I am out of an ingredient, I either don't make the recipe or I substitute something that I have on hand.

I am not one to follow an exact recipe, neither was my mom, mammaw, or any of my 6 aunts that I grew up surrounded by. A recipe for us is simply a suggestion, we then alter and change it based upon, 1. preference and 2. availability. So when it comes to the recipes I am sharing, feel free to change it up, experiment and by all means use what you have on hand. *After all, that's what I do.*



Orrichiette with Ham & Asparagus *(Pictured Above)*

- 1 box Orrichiette pasta, cooked to package directions.
- 1/2 lb. deli ham, chopped, (or add cubed ham from leftovers)
- 1 teaspoon Butter
- 1 Tablespoon Olive Oil
- 1/2 lb fresh asparagus cubed
- 1 Jar alfredo sauce

In small saucepan over medium/low heat melt butter add olive oil, and asparagus. cook until asparagus is tender and bright in color. Turn off heat, add ham and stir together. Pour sauce over drained pasta. Mix in ham and asparagus.

Note: This is a recipe that I formulated solely based upon what was in my pantry. Pulled entirely together based on what I had on hand at the time. I loved it so much it has become a regular although I switch out the pasta depending on what's available.

Meatloaf

- 2 lbs. Ground Beef
- 1/4 cup dried bread crumbs
- 1/4 cup oats (raw)
- 2 Tablespoons milk
- 1 large egg
- 1/2 large onion, chopped
- Salt & Pepper
- 1 teaspoon dried basil
- 2 teaspoon dried oregano

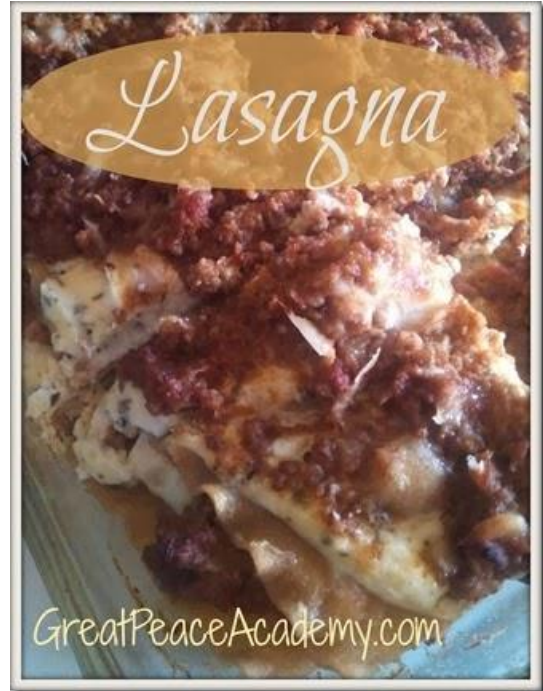
Glaze:

- 1/2 Cup packed brown sugar
 - 1/4 to 1/2 cup ketchup
 - 1/2 teaspoon mustard
 - 2 teaspoons worcestershire
 - 1 Tablespoon warm water
- Mix well until sugar is melted.

Soak bread crumbs & oats in milk; add egg, ground beef, salt, pepper and herbs. Mix well. Form loaf in loaf pan. Pour topping over top, reserve about 1/2 of glaze mixture to add to sliced meatloaf. Bake at 375 degrees for apx. 45 – 50 minutes until cooked through. Let rest for 10 minutes before slicing. Drizzle reserved mixture over sliced portions.

Lasagna

1 pound hamburger
1 pound sausage
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
1 medium onion, diced
1 can tomatoes (12 ounce), crushed
2 cans tomato paste
2 cloves garlic, diced
salt and pepper, to taste
2 teaspoons oregano
1 can water (paste can)
1 teaspoon basil
1 egg
1 pint ricotta cheese
mozzarella cheese
lasagna noodles, cooked
extra virgin olive oil



Brown hamburger and sausage with onion. Mix in tomatoes, paste, garlic, salt and pepper, oregano. Simmer together for 30 to 45 minutes. As needed add a paste can of water to mixture to keep moist. Do not let it over heat or it will scorch.

In the meantime, cook lasagna noodles in salted and oiled water. In a small bowl mix together egg, basil and ricotta cheese.

In a 9x13x2-inch baking dish, pour about 1 tablespoon of olive oil in bottom. Then layer noodles, ricotta mixture, sauce then mozzarella. continue layering until pan is filled. Sprinkle top with mozzarella cheese, salt and pepper. Bake in a 375 degree oven for 35 to 45 minutes until cheese is melted and browned.



Spaghetti

1 clove garlic, minced
1 small sweet onion, chopped
1 tablespoons dried parsley
2 tablespoons oil
1 pound ground beef
1 Can whole tomatoes crushed
1 can tomato paste
2 cups water
1 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon pepper
1/2 teaspoon basil
1/2 teaspoon oregano
1 tablespoon sugar
8 ounces spaghetti, cooked in salted water
Parmesan cheese

In large skillet, lightly sautee garlic, onions and parsley in oil. Add meat and brown while stirring, drain off excess fat. Add tomatoes, and paste, water and seasonings. Cover while venting and simmer 1 1/2 hours, stirring occasionally. Serve over hot spaghetti. Sprinkle with Parmesan Cheese.

Dumplings

2 cups self-rising flour
(+3-4 T for rolling out dough)
3 tablespoons melted shortening or butter
1/3 to 1/2 cup milk or buttermilk
2-3 T of Chicken stock
4 quarts of chicken stock, boiling
(Add in 1/2 cup cubed or shredded chicken if preferred)



Cut shortening into the self-rising flour until crumbly like meal, and mix together with milk and chicken broth forming a very soft dough. Pour dough out gently in extra flour. Pat bringing together until you can form a rectangle. Cut into squares, Drop into boiling stock and lower heat to simmer. Cook about 20-25 min. depending on size of dumplings, until dumplings are cooked through and the stock has turned to a thick gravy.

Vegetable Soup

1 1/2 lbs Ground Beef
1 Bag Frozen Mixed Vegetables
2 or 3 Potatoes, peeled and diced
1 Onion, diced
Cabbage, chopped to taste
1/4 tsp. Garlic powder
1/4 tsp. Parsley
Salt & Pepper
1 teaspoon Sugar
1 Can Tomato Paste

(You can add more vegetables if you like, whatever kind you want)

Brown beef, Add all ingredients in a large pot, drain oil off beef before adding. Add water to cover veggies well. Cook on med. heat until done, about 1 hour.

Sweet Rolls

1 package dry yeast
2 cups warm water
5-6 cups flour
1 teaspoon salt
1/2 cup sugar
4 tablespoons butter softened

Dissolve yeast in warm water. Blend together flour, sugar and salt. Mix in softened butter, and add in water and yeast mixture incorporating into a soft dough. Knead until dough is smooth. Cover with tea towel and let rise until double in size, about 1/2 hour. Punch down, pinch off and shape into rolls, whatever shape you like best. Place rolls in pans, and brush tops with melted butter. Cover with tea towel and let rise for about 30 to 45 minutes or until tops are golden brown.



Note: I use this recipe often, it makes a really good soft roll and is good to serve to company. I also make loaf bread, pizza dough and Stromboli from this same recipe. This can be mixed in a large mixer with dough hook attachment, by hand and I've even used it in a bread machine by mixing 1/2 the recipe and it always turns out good. You can freeze the dough after the first rise as previously explained. You can get about 3 dozen rolls or 3 loaves of bread.

Cabbage Rolls

1 large head of cabbage
boiling water
1 pound ground beef
1 cup rice
1/2 cup oats, rolled (raw)
1 medium onion, diced
salt and pepper, to taste
1 can Campbell's Tomato Juice
Toothpicks

Place cabbage head in large pot with boiling water. Boil until cabbage is tender and leaves can easily be peeled off. Drain.

Mix together beef, rice, oats, onion, salt and pepper. Additional spices can be added to taste, I like oregano.

Place a 1" ball inside each leaf, and fold sides over and then roll up, securing each roll with a toothpick. Place each roll inside pot and then cover with tomato juice.

Bring to a boil then reduce heat to simmer and let simmer covered for about an hour.



Pulled Pork

1 large pork butt
salt, pepper
thyme & parsley
.

Sprinkle herbs, salt & pepper liberally over both sides. Place in a crock pot, cook on high for 4 hours. Using a pair of tongs or fork, pull pork apart, turn crock pot to low and cook an additional 1-2 hours. You can add BBQ sauce if desired in the last hour of cooking

Pot Roast

1 Whole Shoulder Roast

(You can certainly use your preferred cut, but I've tried this with many cuts and by far this is my favorite.)

Salt, Pepper

1 – 2 teaspoons dried basil

1 - 2 teaspoon dried oregano

1 teaspoon dried rosemary

1-2 teaspoon dried thyme

2-3 Tablespoons olive oil

3 Garlic cloves, minced

1 large sweet onion, sliced

4 large carrots carrots, cut

4 medium potatoes, cut

Drizzle both sides with olive oil, rub into the flesh. Sprinkle with salt, pepper, and herbs on both sides. Chop veggies. Add all ingredients to crock pot. Cook on high for about 4 hours or low for 6-8 hours. You do not need to add water.

Note: This roast can be cooked overnight from the frozen stage. Just follow the above recipe adding oil and spices to a frozen roast, place in crockpot and cook on low overnight. (Great for Sunday Lunch.)

My favorite Recipe Sites:

[The Planted Trees](#)

[Relative Taste](#)

[Trains & Tutus](#)

What are your favorite meals? Do you rely on old family recipes, family favorites, convenience foods, or do you make up your own? Stop in at the [original post](#) and leave a comment letting me know.

Cooking for a Small Family

Portioning for Maximum Benefit



I grew up in a family with 4 children and 2 adults. My dad was the youngest of 9 children and where I grew up I was surrounded by my aunts, uncles and 25 cousins, their wives and children. **We were a big family.**

When I got married I had to learn to cook for **just the two of us**. At first I found that reality to be a struggle, but quickly learned how to **utilize bulk sale items** at the grocery to **leverage my budget** to its fullest advantage.

- **Buy in Bulk, save the difference.**
 - If you buy in bulk you get a better cost per unit. So I learned to buy the bulk item and then portion it myself at home. That is a big advantage because that package of meat with 10 portions in a family of 5 will only feed the family 2 times if everyone eats a single portions. In my family of 3 that will feed us 3 times with a one portion left over for a lunch.
 - Oh and you can buy the larger item and have the butcher portion it for you if you just don't feel confident.



- **Don't half a recipe.**

In my experience most recipes will make 6-8 servings. For a family of 3 that is way to many servings. For a long time, I found myself halving recipes. Then one day I heard about this rule of thumb “**cook once eat twice.**” Since that time I stopped halving recipes. After cooking and before serving I portion the item into 2 portions, I freeze one for a second meal making it **a quick and easy meal** for those days when we are rushing about.

- **Stretching produce.**

Buying produce has been one of my biggest frustrations in my small family. Frankly, it's just **ridiculous to buy as many grapes** as they stick in the bags. These days they don't want you to split the portions in the store, you have to find someone to do it for you. **Which is frustrating right?** Well I've found a few tips helpful when it comes to produce.

1. Don't be afraid to ask them to portion the item for you. (Unless a package is sealed, such as pre-packaged lettuce.) Produce is generally sold by the pound, so if you don't want to buy the 2 or 3 pound packaged item you don't have to.
 2. If you do buy the larger item, consider how you can extend the life of it.
- Lettuce can be chopped and stored in a [mason jar in the fridge](#), thus extending the shelf-life of the lettuce for up to a couple of weeks.

- Chances are you will only need 1/2 that bag of veggies or whole fruit item. So here is a quick tip to use up the other half. Cut carrots, celery, cucumbers, melons and apples (add a little lemon juice) place in snack size bags for quick and easy snacks. Throw them in with to-go lunches. If you do this the day you go grocery shopping, they are ready all week long.
- Spinach goes bad quickly, in a couple of days, you can do a flash steam then place in freezer bags and freeze.
- Banana's just peel and freeze in a freezer bag.
- Grapes can be frozen for a quick and easy cold snack on a hot day.
- While onions keep pretty well for an extended period of time, you can also chop them and freeze them, making for an ease in cooking with chopped onions. Better yet, chop them in bulk in a food processor, split into usable portions and freeze for as needed use.
- Lemons & Limes: Juice this citrus fruit and freeze for later use.
- Most veggies can be frozen, par-cook before freezing. I even freeze mushrooms, raw. WHAT? Yep, they work great in cooked meals.
- Shred & Freeze cabbage for use in soups and stews.
- Eggplant, can be cooked whole, scraped from the shell and frozen.
- Zucchini & squash and be shredded and reserved for breads or as veggie fillers in sauces.

3. Use extra veggies and reduce your meat portions. It's healthier for you and adds a depth of flavor to sauces and stews.

- **Buying canned foods.**

That **small can** of veggies sometimes **costs as much or more** than the big size doesn't it? **Which is just wrong!** You are paying for convenience. That's ok, be smarter than the manufacturer. Buy the largest can. When you open it for use, take out what you need, then put the rest in a freezer bag and freeze.

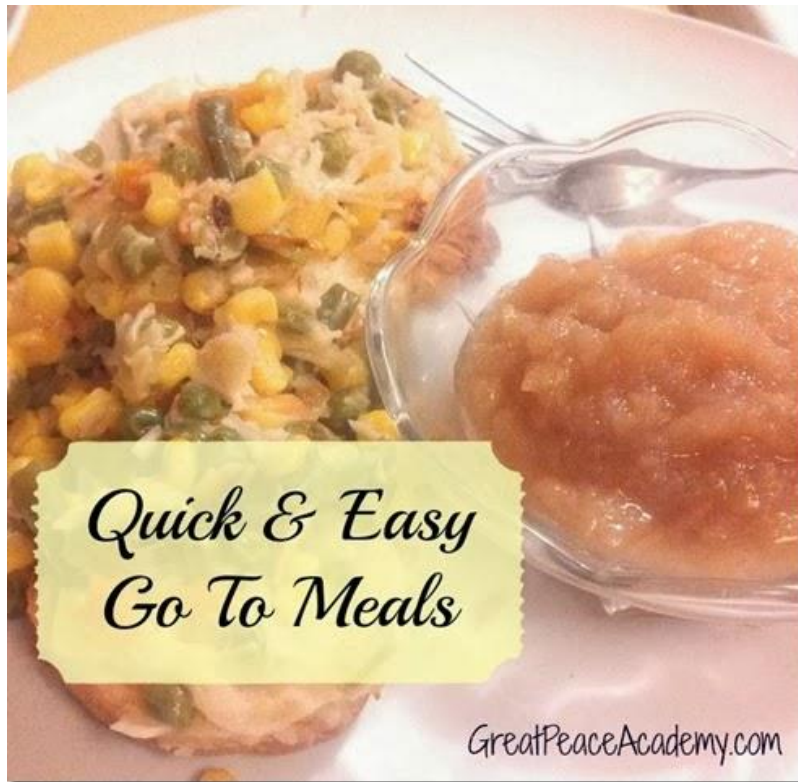
- **Snack Foods**

Go ahead and buy the item, when you've opened it, feel free to portion out to usable sizes and store in plastic storage bags.

Do you have a large family or a small one? How do you leverage the grocery store to its fullest advantage? Let's [talk about other options](#), just comment on my blog. If you are enjoying e-book, be sure to follow my [Pinterest Meal Planning Board](#).

My Go To Meals

Quick and Easy Meals



Sometimes I just don't want to cook. Sometimes, **I just want someone else to decide** what the meal will be. But the reality is **I'm the wife and mom**. The reality is it is **my responsibility** to provide meals for my family. It really is **my good pleasure** and for the most part I find peace in the role. But sometimes, just sometimes, I want someone else to answer the question, **"What's for dinner?"**

That's when I usually go to my Go To Meals. I thought I would share some of those meals with you. These are some of the **easy meals**, the ones I can throw together with ease or is so **comforting** that I just jump in and do. **You know what I mean?**

Fajita's

Depends on what meat I have on hand sometimes its steak and other times it's chicken. Slice an onion, (if you like green peppers too), sautee in a little olive oil with salt. Slice chicken or flank steak. Cook chicken through, steak to preference. Wrap in tortillas. Serve with a side salad.



Pork Chops with Beans & Rice

2 Cups White Rice + Water according to package directions.

1 Can of Red Beans

1/4 cup chopped onions

1 T. Olive oil or butter

Pork Chops, Quantity for your family

Start rice in a rice steamer or sauce pan.

In small saucepan, add oil or butter and onions, cook on low until onions are tender.

Drain and rinse canned beans, add to onions with 1/2 cup of water. Cook until tender. Serve over the rice.

In the meantime, salt & pepper both sides of the pork chops add to pan with a couple Tablespoons of oil. Cook through.

Chicken Pot Pie *(Pictured Above)*

1 Package frozen mixed veggies
1/2 large sweet onion chopped
1 can cream of potato soup (do not add water)
1 can chicken breast (or reserved chicken from previous meals)
salt & pepper to taste
Pie dough (refrigerated) or leftover biscuits, or canned biscuits.

In large bowl, mix together, veggies, soup, onion, chicken, salt & pepper. If using pie dough, layer one dough on the bottom of pie pan, add in the mixture, cover with top dough, crimp edges and vent top. Bake at 350 degrees for apx. 35-40 minutes until top is browned. If using canned biscuit dough, layer top of mixture with the dough, bake for apx. 15-20 minutes, until biscuits are baked and brown. If using leftover biscuits, place mixture in pie plate, bake in oven without biscuits for 15 minutes, layer cooked biscuits on top and bake for an additional 5 minutes.



Pizza

Using a [frozen bread dough](#), let thaw, roll out, lay on a pizza pan. Spread top with a marinara sauce (I use jarred spaghetti sauce, sprinkled with oregano). Add favorite toppings. My favorites are Pepperoni Sausage and Ham. We also like Ham with Pineapple. Sprinkle top with cheese, bake at 375 for 15-20 minutes until browned.

Balsamic Glazed Chicken over Pasta Alfredo

Balsamic Vinegar

2 Tablespoons sugar

Boneless, skinless chicken tenders, cubed

salt & pepper

2 cloves garlic minced

Olive Oil

Pasta (Penne, Bowtie, Linguini, your choice) cooked to package directions

Jar of Alfredo Sauce

Sprinkle salt and pepper on chicken, add oil to sauté pan. Cook chicken until cooked through and tender. In a small saucepan, add sugar and balsamic vinegar, reduce on low heat.

Mix pasta with Alfredo, stirring over low heat until combined. Top with chicken and drizzle balsamic glaze over top.

Mac & Cheese with Cornbread

Elbow Macaroni

1/2 pound Velveeta boxed cheese

3 T. Milk

1 T. Butter

Salt & Pepper to taste

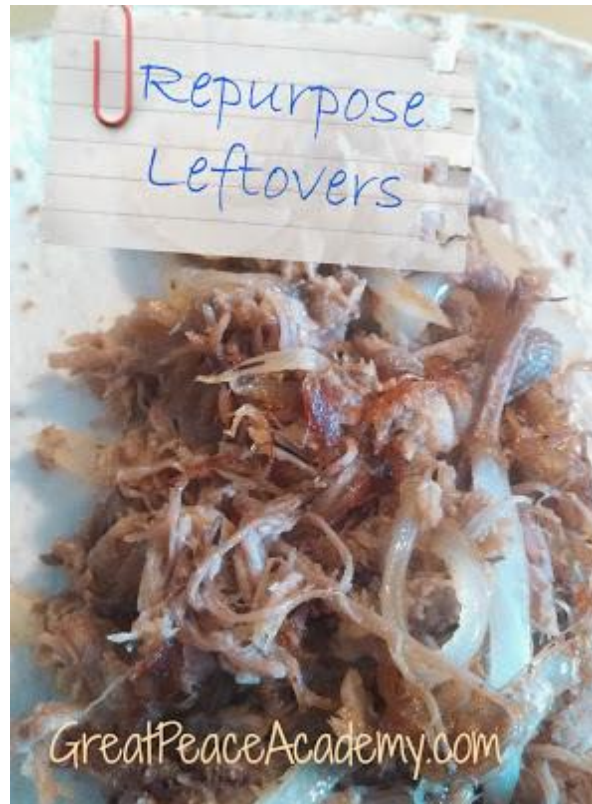
Cook macaroni to al-dente. Drain. In a small saucepan melt butter, add milk and sliced cheese, and melt. Add to macaroni stirring until well coated. Serve with a side of cornbread.

(To add protein, chop some ham and mix in with the macaroni)

If you are enjoying this e-book, be sure stop visit me on Twitter [@Gr8tPeaceAcademy](#) or [Like me on Facebook](#) to let me know. I'd love to chat with you for a bit.

Repurposing Left Overs

Being Intentional with Extra Food



No matter how good a planner you are, or how precise your measurements may be, as a home-cook **there will be days** where you will have **leftover foods**.

Perhaps this is one of the biggest areas of **wasted food** there is in this country. Most of us do not like eating the **same meal** for more than one day in a row. Often leftovers get **repurposed** for lunch the next day. That is a great re-use of a dinner meal. But what do you do **if you have more** than that left over?

Tips for repurposing leftovers.

- Leftover meats can be frozen and then later added to a **quick burrito** or fajita.
- Cube leftover chicken and throw together with a pasta or rice casserole.
- Meatloaf makes for delicious lunchtime sandwiches.

- Leftover chicken or ground meat can make for a [simple chicken pot pie](#) or shepherds pie.



- Leftover Pot Roast can be repurposed for quick and easy Philly cheesesteaks. Just sauté some onions and mushrooms, add the pot roast and heat through. Place on buns cover with cheese. Yum!
- At the end of every meal place leftover vegetables in one large freezable container such as a gallon freezer bag. When the bag gets full, thaw and mix together with a can of whole or crushed tomatoes, your favorite seasonings and some water for a simple thrown together vegetable soup.
- Left over bread can be repurposed for croutons or bread crumbs. Biscuits can be used for topping pot pies. Use leftover dinner rolls for making sliders the next day. Leftover cornbread can be made into cornbread dressing or corn casserole.
- Leftover scrambled eggs from breakfast can be saved for the next day's breakfast burrito, just add crumbled sausage and a little salsa.
- Leftover spaghetti sauce makes for a quick and easy throw it together lasagna. OR think outside the Italian box and use that spaghetti sauce as a base for sloppy joes. Simply add in some chili powder, paprika and if you like some chopped green peppers. Serve on a bun with a salad on the side. Leftover

Spaghetti Sauce also makes a great base for Chili. Just mix in chili powder, paprika, cumen, canned beans, cayenne or any other preferred spices add some water and maybe a little extra tomato sauce and before long you have a delicious chili.

- Mashed potatoes can be used to thicken a stew. They also can make for a simple potato cake as a next day side dish. To your leftover mashed potatoes, add a few tablespoons of flour to thicken until stiff. Pat out into patties, dredge the patties in cornmeal. Fry in a little oil until golden brown.



Leftover baked or boiled potatoes can be repurposed into a cheesy “campfire” potato, just chop the potatoes drizzle with olive oil or butter, sprinkle with garlic powder, salt & pepper, add in 2 heaping Tablespoons sour cream and sprinkle with your favorite shredded cheese. Heat through. Or make “smashed” potatoes by doing the same.



- I love pork carnitas at Chipotle so I tried to make my own using leftover pulled pork. In a sauté pan, sweat some sliced onions and minced garlic in olive oil. (If you like you could add in green bell peppers). Stir in the pork and sprinkle in chili powder, paprika, cumin and parsley. Think layers of flavors. I also add a couple of whole roasted dried red hot chili peppers which I remove before serving; these just add a ton of flavor! Wrap in a tortilla. Serve with a side of white rice and you have a flavorful and filling meal.

With a little **creativity and imagination** you can repurpose just about any leftover for another meal. Try to think **outside the recipe box**, many times necessity is the best mother of recipe invention. **Happy meal planning friends.**



This [10 Days of Meal Planning](#) was originally a part of the [iHomeschool Network Autumn 2013 Hopscotch](#). Stop in and visit with the other fantastic bloggers of iHIN. There are some marvelous and dynamic topics available in this hopscotch, such as, crafts, homemaking, parenting and homeschooling.

May you be both inspired and blessed by the thoughts I've shared with you in [10 days of Meal Planning](#). Let me know what you think by visiting or following me at any of the following locations.

Blog: [Great Peace Academy](#)

Google+: [Great Peace Academy](#)

Twitter: [@Gr8tPeaceAcadmy](#)

Facebook: [Great Peace Academy](#)

Pinterest: [Great Peace Academy](#)

LinkedIn: [Renee Brown](#)

Instagram: [Great Peace Academy](#)



[Renée Aleshire Brown](#) is wife to her Beloved husband Michael and a homeschooling mom to her Little Man, Jonathan age 10, who is their life's greatest blessing. Renée is passionate about nurturing family through Biblical guidance. She enjoys cooking for her family and friends. She learned many of the techniques found in this book from her mom and hearing stories about how her grandmothers "stretched" their supplies during the depression and years that followed. You will often find her with a tall glass of sweet iced tea or a hot cup of coffee. She enjoys writing and reading books. You can read more of her writing at her blog: [Great Peace Academy](#).