

# THE MEAL LIST

A guide to ease your meal planning struggles by creating the meal list



# INTRO

The meal list is a solution if not *the entire solution* to your meal planning burnout!

This super easy system is revolved around the concept of identifying meals you already know how to make and enjoy, and then sorting out those meals into categories that make it easier to locate, and then easier to plan!

I've been using this system for years and it has given me *so much* of my time back, as well as my mental energy back! And the good news for you is that this process is so easy and it will start to give you your time back today!

# STEP 1

Get out a pen and paper, open up a Word doc on your laptop, or use the last page of this guide to brain dump. Put down the various cooking methods/categories of meals that you frequently go to. Maybe you do a lot of crock pot meals and that works well for your family and your schedule. Or maybe you like to do casserole-like meals, or no-cook meals like a charcuterie plate... everyone has a go-to category of meal they frequently use. Think of what your categories are. Check out this list of category ideas below to get you started!

· Crock pot · One-Sheet Bake · Stovetop · Pre-Made/Frozen · Canned · Shelf-Stable · Meals Your Husband/Kids Can Cook · Work Meals · Breakfasts · Entertaining · Sides · Desserts · Camping Meals · Protein Type (Poultry, Beef, Fish, etc.)

Again, think about the categories that you make decisions by. For example, I may choose meals based on the category of "Meals My Husband Can Cook" on days when I have to work long hours and want to plan a meal that my husband will make from start to finish without my help.

# STEP 2

Once you have your categories listed (you can choose as many as you'd like!), now you can start to plug in those meals under each category.

Remember, you are creating a *list of meals*, not a recipe book... basically, you are creating the *index* to your personal recipe book. This part should be simple. Write down *only the meals* you 1) already know how to make and 2) that you know you and your family like. There's no sense in writing meals in any of these categories if you don't know how to make them! Maybe you want to learn how to make them, that's great, but put those meals on a to-do list or something, not on your meal list. The goal of the meal list is to decrease your time planning meals and to decrease the brain power it takes to make those decisions. If you put meals in your meal list that you've never made before, then you're going to have to take more effort to learn how to make that meal in the moment than if you made a meal you already know how to make.

Going off my previous example of "Meals My Husband Can Make", I will list things like grilled cheese and tomato soup, or, grilled steak and baked potatoes, etc. Once again, the goal of the meal list is to decrease decision fatigue and reduce time spent meal planning.

# STEP 3

Now that you have your meal categories and your meals listed under each category, you can further organize it, if you want, by adding color coordination into the mix. If that's not your jam, you've already done enough in step 1 and 2 to make your meal list easy to utilize when meal planning. But if you want to add another level of organization, here are some suggestions. Again, with the "Meals My Husband Can Make" example, I can list items under it like grilled cheese and tomato soup and highlight it in green, meaning that it is a quick meal to prepare. And for the steak and baked potatoes meal, I could highlight it in yellow or red because it will take him a little bit more time to cook. Basically, with this level of organization, it all depends on how it will benefit you in your planning. If further sorting your meals by color for variables such as level of difficulty; time it takes to prepare; or availability of ingredients would be helpful, then go for it!

See the next two pages for my own meal list as inspiration!

## **Beef**

- Roast Beef
  - French Dip Sandwiches on Ciabatta Bread/Wheat Rolls
  - Roast Beef Sliders
  - Pulled BBQ Beef Sandwiches
  - Beef Fajitas
- Ground beef
  - Burgers
  - Tacos
  - Sloppy Joes
  - Cheesy Beef Taquitos
  - Shepherd's Pie
  - Burger Sliders
  - Loaded Taco Chips
  - Beef and Veggie Stack
  - Hamburger Helper
  - Tater Tot Casserole
- Steak
  - Reheated Steak Bites with Potatoes
  - London Broil
  - Filet Mignon
  - Steak Burrito Bowls/Burritos

## **Poultry**

- Whole Roasted Chicken
  - Chicken and Rice Soup
  - Baked Chicken Pie
  - PA Dutch Boiled Chicken Pot Pie
  - Quesadillas
- Chicken breast
  - Grilled, on salad
  - Grilled, with sauce
  - Grilled, on sandwich
  - Chicken Salad
  - Enchiladas
  - Chicken Caprese
  - Chicken Burrito Bowls/Burritos
  - Chicken Bacon Ranch Wraps
- Chicken Thighs
  - BBQ Chicken Thighs
  - Honey Mustard Chicken Thighs
- Ground Chicken
  - Meatballs
- Deli Chicken
  - Sandwich/Sliders
- Whole Roasted Turkey
  - Turkey Risotto
  - Turkey Baked Pot Pie

## **Fish**

- Salmon
  - Salmon Patties
- Crab
  - Cream of Crab Soup
  - Crab Cakes
- Shrimp
  - Seafood Soup
  - Bang Bang Shrimp
  - Shrimp Alfredo
  - Shrimp Tacos

## **Pork**

- Ribs
- Pulled Pork BBQ
  - Sandwiches
  - On Baked Potato
- Pork Chop Steaks
- Meatballs
- Italian Sausage Links
  - Sausage, potato, veggie sheet bake

## **Venison**

- Ground Venison
  - Tacos
  - Chili
  - Spaghetti
  - Meatballs
  - Tater Tot Casserole
- Steak
  - Tacos
  - Quesadillas/Burritos
- Breakfast Sausages
- Regular Sausages
  - Sausage, potato, veggie sheet bake







# BRAIN DUMP

For the last step, you can create variables to further organize your meal list. You can choose variables like the time it takes to prepare the meal, the intricate level of ingredients needed for that meal, if it can be a freezer meal or not, etc!

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---