

Simple Strategies for Saving Time in the Kitchen!

courtesy of Kelly Smith, TheNourishingHome.com



Throughout the year (and especially when schedules are busy), one of my favorite time-saving techniques is to “Cook Once, Eat Twice or More!”

This simple meal planning strategy really helps us save time and work more efficiently in the kitchen, which is why I always incorporate it into each of my [free weekly meal plans](#).

In a nutshell, you cook a double portion and save half for a future meal.

How does this save time? Well, think of all the work that needs to happen to get a healthy meal on the table – there’s the preparation time, cooking time, and of course, everyone’s favorite – clean-up time! So, if you make double of something during one cooking session, you’re being more efficient because you don’t have to repeat those same exact steps twice.

Cook Once, Eat Twice or More can take several forms, such as:

- Purposing for Leftovers
- Planning Freezer Meals
- Batch Cooking
- Grouping Meals

Once you adopt these time-saving strategies, I’m certain they will become your newfound favorite tips, especially when planning ahead for busy days, when time in the kitchen is limited.

How to “Cook Once, Eat Twice or More!”

As with most things related to saving time in the kitchen, it starts with your Meal Plan! So if you’re new to meal planning, please visit the [Meal Planning Section](#) of The Nourishing Home to help you get started.

Here’s how it works ... as you’re creating your weekly meal plan, consider what meals you can cook a double batch of and freeze or refrigerate for future use. Then schedule time on your meal plan (or prep day) to utilize one of the following Cook Once Eat Twice or More principles, such as:

Planning for Leftovers

One of the easiest and most common time-saving strategies is to intentionally plan for leftovers. Simply double an entire recipe, cook it and then refrigerate/freeze the leftovers for a future meal.

In general, soups, stews, casseroles, and pasta dishes make excellent leftovers. In fact, some dishes taste even better as time passes, because the flavors have had a chance to meld.

And of course, there's also the option of "repurposing" leftovers, which simply means using your leftovers to create a slightly different meal. For example, leftover ground meat from taco night, can easily be used to make a [Taco Salad](#) for lunch. Or a bit of leftover grilled chicken can be turned into a delicious [Greek Salad Wrap](#). Leftover black beans can be used to make a fun [Rainbow Bean Dip](#) lunch. And the great thing is, repurposing leftovers not only saves time, it saves money too!



Batch Cooking

Batch cooking is really just another way to describe intentionally planned leftovers – you simply make large quantities of a food that can be stored for later use. For example, on the weekends, I like to make double or triple batches of [pancakes, french toast or muffins](#), which I can then freeze and use for quick breakfasts during busy weekday mornings.

One of my favorite batch cooking strategies is to simply double or triple a main ingredient in a meal (such as meat, poultry or beans) and save half to create a future meal that uses the same main ingredient. For example, whenever I make a [Slow Cooker Roast Chicken](#) for dinner, I, divided-up the leftovers to make even more meals, such as [One Pot Chicken Chili](#).

And don't forget your veggies! When having grilled veggies as a side dish, plan to grill extra and use them to make [Veggie Quesadillas](#) for lunch or dinner the next day, or add them to a salad or sandwich ... these are just a few ideas to get you started.

Grouping Meals

A simple twist on the batch cooking concept is a strategy I call "Grouping Meals." How it works is, you take a look at your Master List of Meals and consider what recipes contain the same main ingredient. Then, you intentionally schedule on your meal plan to serve at least 2-3 of those meals with the same main ingredient over the course of the week. (*Obviously, the busier the week, the better to have more meals with the same main ingredient.*)

For example, whenever I plan make our favorite [Grilled Pineapple Chicken](#) (or [Grilled Herb Chicken](#)) recipe, I also take a look at other meals that use grilled chicken and plan a couple of those meals on my meal plan as well. That way, I can simply double (*or triple*) the amount of chicken I toss on the grill. Then, I refrigerate or freeze the extra grilled chicken for use in the other grilled chicken based meals on my meal plan.

Honestly, it takes very little extra time to incorporate batch cooking into your schedule. Yet, this simple step saves a ton of time later since you only have to prep, cook and clean-

up once, rather than two or three separate times. Of course, it also saves a significant amount of time when you go to prepare other meals using the same batch-cooked main.



Planning Freezer Meals

With freezer meals, you simply spend a little extra time upfront prepping and freezing meals for future use. This is a popular strategy especially with crockpot meals, casseroles, soups, stocks and stews.

I find the most efficient method is to prepare (and cook, in some cases) two or three of the same meals in one session. Then use one of the meals for dinner that night, and freeze the other(s) for future

quick-n-easy dinners.

One of our favorite crockpot meals is [Sweet & Spicy Crockpot Chicken](#). This is a great example of a meal that can easily be prepped ahead and frozen. Then it's as simple as removing the ingredients from the freezer, popping them into the crockpot and coming home later to a delicious, healthy dinner.

Another example is my [Turkey Times Three \(T3\)](#) strategy for making three great ground turkey based recipes all at the same time and then freezing them to have ready-to-go meals on busy days.

And yet another example, is doubling casserole-style meals. Whenever I plan to make [Chicken Parmesan](#), I always make two batches of chicken at the same time. I cook one for dinner that night and freeze the other for a future meal.

Sidebar: If you participate in any meals ministries, doubling casseroles and freezing them is a great way to always have an extra meal on hand for a family in need!

Healthy meals come together in a snap!

4 Main Dishes = 20 Healthy Meals

Applying these "Cook Once, Eat Twice or More" concepts will definitely help you get healthy meals on the table in a snap! So now that you know these time-saving secrets, start thinking about how you can apply them to many of your favorite recipes, such as casseroles, soups, meats, poultry, and side dishes.

To help, I'm sharing more than 20 of my favorite quick-n-easy, family-friendly meals that you can make in minutes using the batch cooking techniques outlined above. (See the next page for details.) Of course, you can also [subscribe to The Nourishing Home Newsletter](#) and you'll receive lots of healthy recipes, as well as my weekly whole food meal plans absolutely free!

Got questions? Email me at: TheNourishingHome@gmail.com. I'm always happy to help!

“Cook Once, Eat Twice or More” Meal Plan Ideas 4 Main Dishes = 20+ Healthy Meals

To help you get started incorporating batch cooking into your meal planning routine, I've provided some ideas below. Each of the following meals takes just minutes to prepare, by simply doubling or tripling one of the main dishes. Just click the teal-colored underlined meals to get the recipe. Happy meal planning!

Ground Meat

Brown 3-4 pounds of Ground Chicken, Beef or Turkey and use it to create:

- [Shepherd's Pie](#) a wonderful comfort food perfect for chilly winter nights
- [Slow Cooker Chili](#) just toss in the ingredients and come home to dinner
- [Easy Sloppy Joes](#) that taste amazing with lots of hidden veggies!
- **Hearty Marinara Sauce:** Simply combine your favorite 24oz jar of organic marinara sauce with 2-3 cups of browned ground meat and warm on stovetop. Perfect for topping pasta, zoodles, or spaghetti squash.
- **Quick & Easy Tacos:** Sauté 1/4 cup fine diced onion in a large skillet. Add 1-1 1/2 pounds pre-browned ground meat to the skillet and season to taste with Mexican Blend Seasoning and sea salt. Serve with taco shells and all the fixings (*or serve in Bibb Lettuce leaves for a grain-free taco*).

Roast Chicken

Use my [Slow Cooker Rotisserie Chicken](#) recipe to create 1-2 of these meals:

- [Easy Chicken Pot Pie](#) a classic comfort food the whole family will love!
- [One-Pot Chicken Chili](#) for a tasty alternative chock full of flavor
- [Chicken Noodle Soup](#) soothes the soul, especially when it's quick-n-easy
- [Savory Mexican Casserole](#) that's as easy to make as it is delicious
- **BBQ Chicken Sandwiches:** Simply combine your favorite barbecue sauce with leftover shredded roast chicken to make easy BBQ Sandwiches.

Beef Roast

Use my favorite [Slow Cooker Pot Roast](#) recipe to create 2-3 of these meals:

- [Savory Pot Roast Dinner](#) let your slow cooker do the work for you
- [Hearty Beef & Veggie Soup](#) just add leftover diced beef to this easy minestrone soup for a hearty meal.
- **Roast Beef Sandwiches:** Slice & layer beef roast on a sub roll or GF bread with your favorite toppings (we like leftover grilled veggies) for a hearty sandwich.
- **Pulled Beef BBQ Sandwiches:** Simply combine your favorite barbecue sauce with leftover shredded beef to make easy BBQ Beef Sandwiches.
- **Easy Beef Burritos:** Add sliced beef to warmed tortillas along with your favorite toppings like refried beans, cheese, sour cream, diced avocado, etc.

Grilled Chicken

Make a double or triple batch of my popular [Grilled Herb Chicken](#) recipe to create 2-3 of these meals:

- Grilled Chicken topped with [Pineapple Salsa](#) for a tropical twist on dinner
- [Chicken & Veggie Stir Fry](#) a tasty way to get more veggies on your plate

- [Grilled Chicken & Balsamic Berries Salad](#) Add leftover grilled chicken to this delicious salad for a light, yet satisfying meal!
- **Chicken & Veggie Rice Bowls:** Toss your favorite veggies in a little olive oil with your favorite dried seasonings and salt. Grill over medium heat. Dice into bite-sized pieces and serve over rice. Top with leftover diced grilled chicken. (Be sure to make a double batch of veggies to use in other dishes, like the recipe below.)
- **Grilled Veggie & Chicken Sandwiches:** Add sliced grilled chicken to a sub roll or GF bread and top with leftover grilled veggies. (Kick up the flavor by spreading on store-bought or [homemade pesto sauce](#) on each slice of bread.)

Want lots of delicious family-friendly recipes delivered to your inbox? [Subscribe to The Nourishing Home Newsletter](#) and you'll receive my free weekly meal plans, recipes and lots of healthy living resources absolutely free! It's my heartfelt passion to help precious families like yours live healthier, more nourished lives!

My hope is that this presentation and resources will empower you to create healthy, home-cooked meals for your family while saving lots of time in the process! Got questions? Email me at: TheNourishingHome@gmail.com. I'm always happy to help!

With blessings and gratitude! :) Kelly