

Why Leftovers Should be a Part of Your Menu Planning!

Have you ever found yourself saying:

OMG, how on earth did they eat that much in one sitting?! That was supposed to last two meals!

Groceries are getting so expensive, how can I cut costs without sacrificing healthy?

What? The Peanutbutter is empty again? How am I supposed to make sandwiches?

Here is a look into how our family meal planning has worked over the years:

I do the planning:

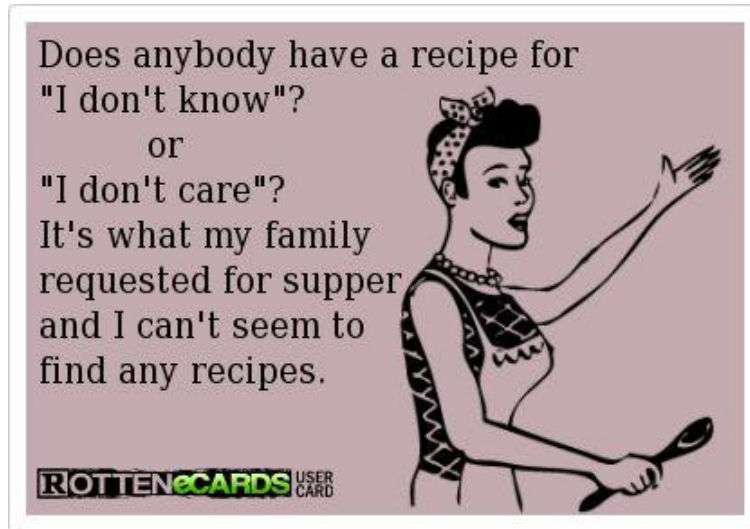
Step 1: Figure out everyone's schedule & write it down.

I created this planner because I like having a quick visual reference. It hangs on the fridge so I can use it to decide:

- ✓ When to pull food out of the freezer
- ✓ Should I use the crockpot
- ✓ How many of us are there each night



Step 2: Get everyone's input on what they want to eat.



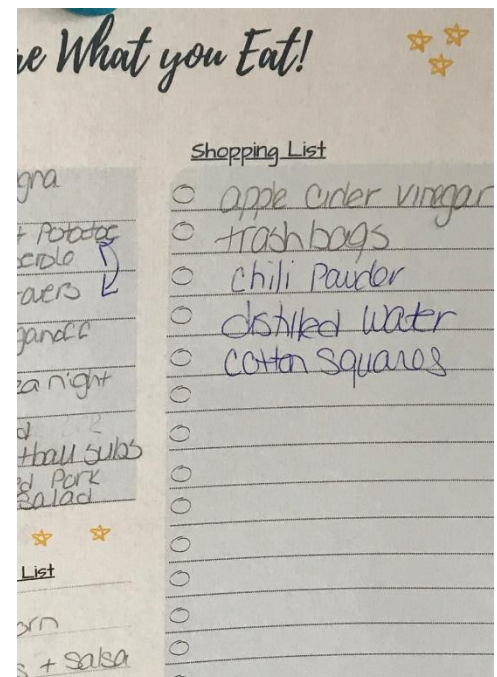
I complete/write the list:

Since the list is on the fridge everyone in the family can participate in writing the list.

- If someone empties the milk = they write **milk** on the list
- Ate the last of the bread = write **bread** on the list
- No more waffles = write **waffles** on the list

See where this is going?

This took years - **years** of training my family to:
"Put it on the list!!"



Having a complete list is good for a few reasons but mostly I use it for budgeting. Working off a list helps put an end to impulse buying and eliminates many trips

back to the store for forgotten items. Saves time (time is money), fuel in the car driving to the store, and back to that impulse buying...yeah it is more efficient all the way around to have a list.

I do have the "staples" that I buy every week whether it is on the list or not like Peanut butter, ginger ale, milk, coffee, coffee creamer, yogurt, fruit, but for the most part everything is on the list.

Another reason I love a list: If I can take the time to separate the list by stores that I know have items much cheaper I will make a special trip if it makes sense (distance, gas, time, etc.)

For example, Coffee, cereal, canned items, and rice (dry goods) are considerably cheaper at Walmart than at my local Stop & Shop. So the money that I am going to save doing a "Walmart Run" is worth it financially.

I did the shopping:

Nowadays: place my online order for curbside pickup or delivery...

I write out our weekly menu.

Considerations regarding budget saving ideas:

- Use up the fresh fruit & veggies early in the week s before they have an opportunity to spoil.
- Research ways on how to store food to help them stay fresher longer.
- Know what food should or should not be kept out vs. in the fridge.

Considerations regarding the leftover night:

- Sometimes leftover nights can create a lot of dishes so keep this in mind when deciding which night is leftover night.
- Are your other meals large enough to expect leftovers?

- Can you “jazz-up” these leftovers so they are not dull the second time around?
- Activities: My kids had late-night dance classes so I would often have food ready for them to eat early, then hubby and I would eat later.
 If this is the case: meals needed to be easy enough for them to make on their own if I wasn’t home, or I prepped several meals on a single day, and then all they had to do was heat it.
- Sunday dinner: Many times, I would make a turkey dinner and then plan to use the leftover turkey several different ways throughout the week.
 (Everyone would get fair warning of this so we could get the moans and groans out of the way.)

This also could be Pot Roast, Pork Roast, or Ham dinners.

In my planner I have two areas that I fill in so everyone in the house can see what I bought and planned for:

Breakfast & Lunch options -and- Snack options.

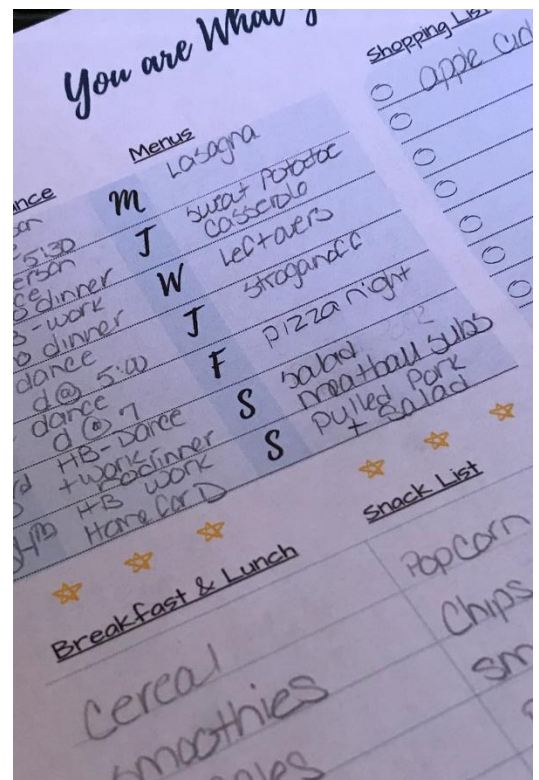
Now, I cook and they eat.

And then I find myself saying things like:

OMG, how on earth did they eat that much in one sitting?! That was supposed to last two meals!

What? Why are you so hungry, I was going to use that for my lunch box this week!

Hey! Why did you eat that for lunch while I was out? That was dinner!



Then I think to myself (sometimes out loud. Loud enough for the neighbors to hear? I don't know but I'll ask them 😊)

I don't understand: It was all there in writing!

The nightly menu, the breakfast & lunch list the snack list.



What now?!

How is it I have no food for leftovers??

Whatever the reason: lack of planning, unexpected but welcomed dinner guests, the schedule got turned around and upside down so plans changed, everyone had extra big portions...here are some suggestions that might help ensure there are leftovers.

1. Make a double batch.
2. Serve your family a set plate rather than letting them help themselves.
This is also a great way to portion control for those who are dieting, counting calories, etc.
3. Encourage drinking water with meals or right before. It fills you up so you eat less.
Also a great diet tip for dieters.
I also encouraged my kids to drink milk, almond milk, (even chocolate milk on occasion).
4. Serve dessert or an after-dinner snack.
Desert does not always have to mean sugar or high-calorie junk food.
You can search for some good healthy desserts online, on Pinterest, or here on our website:
<https://alongsidecreations.com/health-wellbeing/>
5. Have a backup plan for leftover night.
Soup & sandwich night
Breakfast for dinner
Spaghetti night
6. Keep side-dish options at the quick to fluff up the meal. Our favorite is a salad. We have salad multiple times per week.

The tip I use most:

7. Set aside what you want for leftovers before you serve the meal.
Grab your lunch containers and portion out what you want.

Leftovers do not mean that you have to have an entire 2nd meal out of the one you just prepared for tonight's dinner.

It is a culmination of all the food that is left from your previous meals. It is a smorgasbord of food that can be divided amongst the family however you see fit.

On some leftover nights there is enough for everyone to have a second night of chili, but other times it might be that there is just one portion of meatloaf; one portion of turkey, and two portions of chicken so each person picks what they want.

A lot of people tell me they hate leftovers and that their family would never eat leftovers. At this point, I would suggest that you have a conversation with the family and discuss options and ideas of what would work. – Share those ideas with us.

My family knows that this is how it is for us and it works. My oldest hates leftover night – I tell her to find something you do like and make it. – that in itself can put the kibosh on whether or not a kid likes leftovers 😊
The leftover night is not a night off for me. It is a budget thing.

Do what works for you. My budget, my family's lifestyle; this is what works for us. If you can use some of this advice to help your family I would love to hear from you!

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