

## Why This Matters

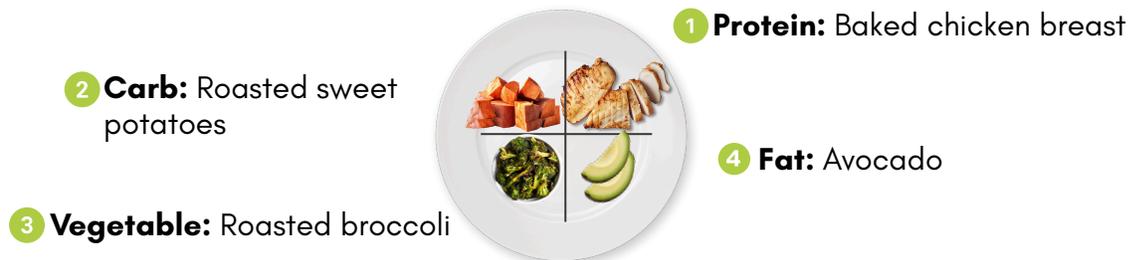
Knowing your calories and protein is step one. But the real results come from the *quality* of what you put on your plate. You don't need to cook gourmet recipes or spend hours in the kitchen. Simple meals built from whole-food staples — and a few convenience shortcuts — will get you leaner, stronger, and feeling better.

## Step 1. Build Your Meal

Every meal should have 4 things:

- Protein
- Carb
- Vegetable
- Fat

Build 3-4 of these plates per day to hit your calorie and protein goals.



## Step 2. Food Sources

*Please note, these lists are not exhaustive and are intended to be only a helpful starting point.*

### Proteins:

- Chicken breast, chicken thighs
- Lean ground turkey (94/6)
- Lean ground beef (90/10), steak (sirloin)
- Pork loin
- Salmon, cod, tilapia, tuna, shrimp
- Eggs, egg whites, low-fat cottage cheese, low-fat greek yogurt

### Carbs:

- Sweet potatoes, purple potatoes, white potatoes
- Blueberries, strawberries, blackberries, raspberries, apples, oranges, pineapple, grapes, banana, pear, kiwi, grapefruit, cantaloupe, watermelon, plum, cherries, mango
- Brown, white or black rice, quinoa, oatmeal

### Vegetables:

- Salad greens (any), celery, artichoke, cauliflower, asparagus, onions, green beans, spinach, broccoli, broccolini, cucumbers, mushrooms, brussels sprouts, cabbage, zucchini, garlic, tomatoes, carrots, turnips, peppers, squash, radishes, parsnips, peas, eggplant, beets, bell peppers

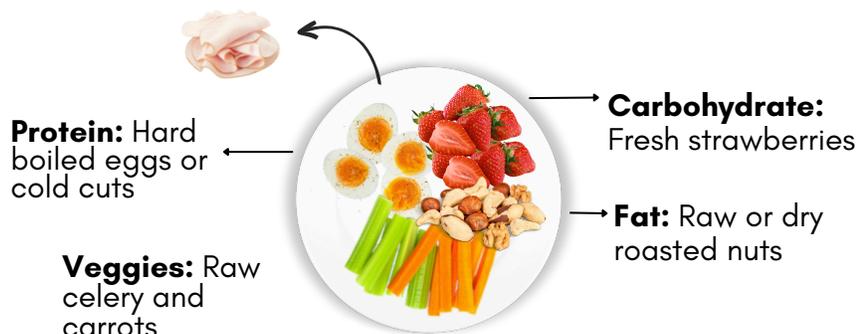
### Fats:

- Extra virgin olive oil, Avocado oil
- Avocado oil-based dressing or mayonnaise (personally, I love the primal kitchen brand!)
- Avocado
- Nuts, seeds, nut or seed butters (Almonds, cashews, pecans, walnuts, pistachios, brazil nuts, macadamia nuts, sunflower seeds, hemp seeds)
- Olives

## Step 3. No Recipe, No Problem

You don't need to cook fancy recipes. Your meals don't need to look Pinterest worthy. Keep it simple and repeatable. Like this:

- Grill, bake, or pan-cook a protein (I recommend batch cooking a bunch at once)
- Add a simple carb on the side (fruit, potato, rice,)
- Throw in a veggie somewhere
- Drizzle with olive oil, dip in primal kitchen dressing, or add avocado or nuts



## Step 4. Make Healthy Convenient

Leaning into store-bought shortcuts saves time and keeps you consistent.

### Protein:

- Rotisserie chicken (Wegmans, Costco)
- Pre-cooked chicken sausages or chicken meatballs (Wegmans, Aldi, Trader Joes, Costco)
- Pre-cooked chicken thighs (Wegmans)
- Natural cold cuts (Wegmans, Aldi, Trader Joes)
- Pre-packaged protein shakes (Wegmans, Target, Walmart, Costco)
- Pre-cooked chicken breast or strips (Wegmans, Aldi, Trader Joes, Costco)
- Canned tuna or salmon

### Carbs:

- Steamable/Microwavable potatoes (Wegmans)
- Frozen/pre-packaged rice packets or pouches (Wegmans, Trader Joes)
- Pre-cooked frozen potatoes (Wegmans, Trader Joes)
- Frozen fruit
- Microwaveable oatmeal packets

### Vegetables:

- Pre-washed salad greens
- Already cut veggies
- Frozen veggies, steam-able bagged veggies
- Raw veggies (cucumber, bell peppers, carrots, celery)

### Fat:

- Single serve guacamole packets (Wegmans, Trader Joes, Aldi, Costco)
- Single serve nut butter packets



## Step 5. Be Intentionally Flexible (this is key for sustainability)

Aim to build most of your week around whole-food meals.

- 5 days/week: stick closely to the plate formula with proteins, carbs, veggies, and fats from the lists.
- Other days or meals: enjoy more flexibility — go out to eat, have a meal that isn't on the list, or relax structure. The key is to be intentional about this flexibility. This is not a free for all, but an intentional deviation from the basics *with boundaries*.

### Real-life examples:

- **Dinner out with friends:** Order the steak and veggies instead of the pasta. Treat yourself to a serving of french fries *or* dessert.
- **Pizza night at home:** Have 2 slices of pizza, but pair it with a side salad with chicken, eat regular meals during the day so you still hit your protein target.
- **Weekend brunch:** Enjoy the pancakes, but add eggs or turkey bacon on the side for protein, and skip the extra pastries. Decide on a set and reasonable amount of pancakes you'll eat ahead of time. Stick to it.
- **Family party:** Make a plate with a good dose of protein and veggies, then add and enjoy a portion of the dish or treat that's more processed. Decide ahead of time to not go back for seconds or snack on the charcuterie board. Stick to the "one plate rule".

Flexibility works when it's **planned** (think ahead, no impulsive decisions), **portioned** (commit to a portion size), and **balanced** (with protein!)— not when it turns into "anything goes."

### How to succeed with flexibility:

- Don't stack flexible meals. If you've got pizza Friday night, don't also make Saturday and Sunday full flexible days. One flexible meal is fine — stacking multiple in a row can backfire and start to impact how you feel physically and mentally.
- Even on flexible days, hit protein at every meal. This keeps you fuller and makes indulgences less likely to spiral.
- Get back on track fast. The most successful people don't let one flexible meal snowball into a lost weekend. They enjoy it, then get right back to their normal structure at the next meal.

## Eat Meals, Not Snacks

Snacking and grazing seem harmless, but they often derail weight loss and vitality. This is the #1 challenge my clients face, and the most rewarding habit they tackle and claim victory over.

### **Meals beat snacks:**

- Biologically. Meals regulate blood sugar and hormones better. Snacking all day keeps insulin elevated, which blunts fat burning and leaves you hungrier.
- Psychologically. Meals create structure and mindfulness. Snacking is usually impulsive and mindless.
- Practically. Snacks are often processed (chips, bars, sweets). Meals are usually built from real food that supports your goals.

### **Do this.**

- Stick to 3–4 structured meals/day
- If you need something in-between, make it more of a mini meal (protein shake + fruit, hard boiled eggs + veggies) instead of a snack food from a package.
- Pause before grabbing something between meals and ask: Am I actually hungry, or just bored/stressed?

## FAQ

### **Should I meal prep?**

I highly recommend a bit of meal prep for your week. It goes a long way. Meal prep doesn't have to mean cooking for hours. Just prepping a few basics — like a couple of proteins, a carb source, and some chopped veggies — makes life easier during the week. You'll spend less time deciding "what's for dinner" and more time just heating, assembling, and eating.

### **What if I get bored?**

Swap sauces, dressings, spices, and cooking styles — not the whole meal structure. Keeping the framework the same but changing flavors keeps it easy and interesting.

### **Can I still go out to eat?**

Of course. I would try to eat most of your meals at home. But if you do go out, try to follow the same guidelines: prioritize a protein, add some veggies, and include a reasonable carb portion. Or skip the carb altogether if there is no good fit. Healthy options are everywhere.