

Meal Prep: The 'Why' And 'How To'

<https://www.iifym.com/healthy-diet/meal-prep-the-why-and-how-to/>

Counting macros. It's saved your diet, your body composition goals, and your sanity. Yet, sometimes, it can get time-consuming. There's a reason we have so many fast food options. It's easy, cheap, and convenient; not to mention easy to throw you off your diet plan.

With that said, the growing popularity of bodybuilding and competing, there are more options than ever to keep you on track and counting macros even when you aren't in the comfort of your own kitchen.

If you still don't have your macro numbers, get started with the [IIFYM Macro Calculator!](#)

Counting Macros and Portioning

There are a few ways you can divide your prepped meals. By cooking them in bulk, you can either leave them in a large Tupperware container to portion out each day or, you can split it into separate portions immediately for extreme convenience.

Best Options (Even for the Pickiest Eater)

I've met bodybuilders who can prep a whole weeks worth of meals every single week. The same food. For months...even years. If you're in that boat, fantastic! That means meal prep, counting macros, and sticking to your diet plan will probably be a breeze.

With that, Sunday seems to be a great day for meal prepping. A day of relaxation and gearing up for the week ahead; why not set your self up for a week of success?

Counting macros and meal prep may seem overwhelming at first, but once you establish a routine, it will be an absolute cinch.

It's easy to overcomplicate the process, but if you use every tool at your disposal, you'll meal prep in half the time and continue making those gains and hitting your numbers spot on every day.

Meal Prep Staples



Obviously, since you're following a macro diet, the possibilities are endless when it comes to meal prepping and counting macros!

But for those who don't know where to begin or what meals are easiest to prep, I've outlined several popular options below.

Chicken

There's a handful of ways to prep chicken. I'd say the only option to avoid would be pan-frying because it eats up too much time. So what are the best options?

Grilling: when summer rolls around the grill will be your best friend. Not only is it delicious, but it's crazy convenient for meal prep.

You're counting macros to AVOID the monotony of the usual diet goer.

Baking: you can't argue with a hands-off option. Baking your chicken allows you a solid 45 minutes to focus on other aspects of your meal prep. Just preheat your oven, pop the chicken in, set a timer, and let the magic happen.

Crock Pot: I don't think enough people utilize the power of the crock-pot. Not only is it easy, but the end product is moist, delicious, and many times versatile (because who likes plain chicken?)

Rice

Rice is a great option because it's easy, macro friendly, and convenient. Bodybuilders have been all over rice like...white on rice, for years. Like I said earlier, your best option for meal prepping is utilizing all your tools appropriately.

This means using the oven, stove, and microwave. So depending on what you're prepping for the day, there are a few different ways to prep rice; a rice cooker, stovetop, and in the microwave.

Potatoes

Just like rice, potatoes are a great staple for any diet. They're high in micronutrients and fiber, not to mention a breeze to prep and pack. Also, there are multiple ways to prep them as well; in the oven, stove, or microwave.

If you have trouble diversifying your meals and want more guidance, then one of our coaches will create your Custom Meal Plan.

Vegetables



I know MANY people struggle with their daily vegetable intake. Which makes prepping them ahead of time a sure fire way to assure you'll do what mama always hammered into your head. Again, vegetables are also versatile in the way you can prep them. I personally buy frozen bags of veggies, microwave them, and split them among 3 different meals. For those of you who love your fresh veggies, they taste great pan fried and baked.

Pasta

Who doesn't love some Italian for lunch? Plus, noodles go for about \$1-2/box so you can't beat that sort of cheap carb source!

If you're concerned about your noodles getting soggy, prep your pasta a few days at a time instead of an entire week. Let's say we want 113g of pasta each day and we're prepping for 3 days. Weigh out your dry pasta at 339g.

Pasta usually doubles in weight when cooked, but my suggestion would be to check that once cooked, each portion of noodles weighs the same. To keep noodles fresh, wait until the day of to add your sauce of choice.

Chili

Chili is a fantastic food to prep and pack. The best part? It's easily frozen so you're able to make large amounts at one time without fear of your delicious meals going to waste.

In my last article I covered how to make and portion chili, so now that you know how to do that, all you need to do is store it your Tupperware, freeze it, refrigerate it, or pack it!

Ground turkey/ground beef

Meat is one of the best foods for meal prepping. You can make it in large quantities, it's easy to store, and it should taste fine reheated for the duration of the week. Plus, it pairs well with most carb sources.

So even if you're getting sick of your usual pasta, ground turkey goes well with potatoes, and rice.

Basic baking instructions:

Chicken: For best results, bake chicken at 450 for 20 minutes.

Potatoes: For best results, bake potatoes either directly on the rack or wrapped in tin foil for 45-60 minutes or until potatoes are crispy and soft inside.

Vegetables: On a baking sheet covered in cooking spray, spread your vegetables evenly. Bake until vegetables are crispy and cooked to your liking.

Basic microwave instructions:

Rice: dependent on the microwave, time may vary. In a microwave-safe dish, add 1 part rice to 2 parts water. Many websites recommend cooking for as long as 20 minutes, but I personally cook for 5 minutes, stir, and then another 2 minutes at a time until cooked to your liking.

Vegetables: Instructions may vary based on type, but generally, it should say on the back of the package. Usually, preparation calls for 4 minutes in a microwave-safe dish with 2 tbsp of water, stir, and then microwave for another 4 minutes.

Potatoes: Place the potatoes in a microwave-safe dish and microwave for five minutes. Turn them over and microwave for another three to five minutes. If still hard in the middle, microwave for additional minutes until cooked.

How to Diversify While Counting Macros



Now that you have counting macros and meal prep down, what's next? Odds are you won't just want potatoes with your chicken every day. You're counting macros to AVOID the monotony of the usual diet goer.

Below I'll outline a handful of killer options including those convenient diet staples to easily incorporate into any macro diet.

- Chicken Caesar wrap
- Chicken and vegetable soup
- Stir-fry
- Tacos
- Chicken fajitas
- Sloppy joes

- Buffalo chicken
- Spaghetti
- Chicken sandwiches
- Taco bowls
- BLTs
- Chicken fried rice

Our meal plan creation staff is more than willing to include these and many more easily prepped meals within a **Meal Plan**.

Fresh Options

For some, the thought of eating reheated food every day is enough to make you dump everything in the trash and hit the drive-through. So, for those of you, here are a handful of easily prepared foods you can pack the night before or the morning of.

Protein powder and oats

An easy carb and protein source that can be packed and stored easily. You can drink the protein as a shake, add it to oatmeal, add in fruit, or make it into sludge!

There are a handful of macro friendly snacks you can keep on hand for such occasions.

For those who don't know what protein sludge is, its protein powder mixed with a small amount of water to create a pudding-like consistency.

Subs/sandwiches

It's easy to head on over to the local sub shop, but, counting macros spot on won't be likely. You can guess, or look on your macro app, but nothing is measured or weighed.

Plus, one sub can cost you upwards of \$10 a pop. Buying a loaf of bread, or sub bread, plus deli meat can save you serious cash, and also allow you to track exactly what you're eating.

Cottage cheese and fruit

A quick healthy snack that can take less than a minute to pack. You can buy the individual cups of cottage cheese, or a larger container and split it into small Tupperware containers as an easy snack.

Parfaits

Another snack that can be whipped together in a minute, and can be as simple, or as versatile as you'd like.

Individual yogurt cups are easy to pack, or, like with cottage cheese, you can portion a large container into small Tupperware containers.

Plus, granola can be stored at work (or wherever you're eating your prepped meals), or packed individually to top your parfait with.

Salad

There's a handful of helpful options when it comes to salads. They even have pre-packed salad kits with lettuce, croutons, and dressing! But, for those macro and money-conscious folks, your best option would be heads of lettuce or bulk packages of romaine heads.

You can chop the lettuce, and store it in a large Tupperware container to split between your meals easily. Also, there is small condiment- accommodating Tupperware that will easily hold salad dressing so your lettuce doesn't get soggy.

Counting Macros: Tips and Tricks



Starting a macro diet can be confusing and frustrating at first. But, once you get the basics down, and walk into it with a plan, counting macros will be a breeze.

Below are a few tips and tricks to increase the likelihood of success.

Pack the night before

If you feel rushed in the morning, pack your meals at night. Add it to your routine. Once it becomes a normal part of your day, you won't even think about it.

Pack the Tupperware you need and stick them somewhere in the fridge where you won't forget them. Anything that doesn't need to be refrigerated can go immediately in your bag, or lunch box the night before too.

Have an emergency plan

Sometimes things don't go according to plan. You forgot your meals, Bob in accounting ate your

chicken and potatoes, your turkey isn't as fresh as you initially thought.

Now what? That's right. Keep counting macros! There are a handful of macro friendly snacks you can keep on hand for such occasions.

Because let's face it, there really isn't much when it comes to the vending machine in the lobby.

Macro friendly emergency items that can easily be stored in your car, desk, locker, etc:

- Protein bars
- Nuts
- Jerky
- Pretzels
- Protein powder
- Oats
- Peanut butter
- Rice cakes
- Bread/bagels

Plan Ahead!

Plan your meals ahead of time so you aren't stuck in a situation that leaves you with an unfavorable macro balance. I see it all the time with beginners.

They're so excited about counting macros! It's been a great day so far; until they plug in the meals they've eaten. It's 3 pm and they have 140g of protein, 5g of fat, and 30g of carbs. THE HORROR!

The new macro user doesn't know what to do. Guess it's 2 cartons of egg whites for the rest of the day. Yes, it certainly happens.

Yet, if you plan your meals ahead of time, you won't get stuck in this predicament.

You won't have to do this forever, but initially, while getting used to counting macros, it's a smart move to ensure you aren't trapped with impossible numbers at the end of the day.

Perks and Pluses

As I briefly covered above, packing your own meals ensures you're counting macros spot on, and also saves you a good chunk of money.

Not only does going to the grocery store save you money, but there are stores such as Sam's Club, Costco, etc. that can leave even more change in your pocket.

Because let's be real, this lifestyle is expensive. Far gone are the days of ramen and cereal for every meal. Some of the best deals you can find at these stores:

- Chicken
- Ground turkey
- Oatmeal
- Bread
- Potatoes
- Rice
- Vegetables
- Fruit
- Seasoning/sauces
- Yogurt
- Milk
- Egg whites
- Fish

If you have space, I highly recommend buying a majority of your staples from one of these stores. You'll save a ton of money, and a ton of those precious macros.

So go forth! Make gains, stick to your diet plan, keep counting macros, save money, save time, and enjoy the food you eat without breaking the bank or sabotaging your goals.

Originally posted 2019-02-14 19:15:29.



via IIFYM <https://www.iifym.com>
July 03, 2019 at 06:34AM