



Shortcuts for Slimming Meals

What's standing between you and a delicious, home-cooked meal that's also healthy and won't bust your calorie budget? If you said "no time," then you'll definitely want to try the kitchen shortcuts from this session to help you get quick, satisfying meals on the table in less time than it takes to dial up delivery.



Shave Minutes —Even Hours— Off Every Meal

By now, you should know that cooking at home is key to controlling calories (which can help speed your weight loss). So, we've collected our best time-saving techniques to help you put together simple but scrumptious meals in minutes. You'll be able to take control of what goes into your mouth—and ultimately on your waistline. The only problem you'll have now is what to do with all that extra time...watch your favorite puppy videos on YouTube, maybe?

Store-Bought “Fast” Foods

These healthy convenience foods pop up in many of the Real Foods Guide recipes, and they're always handy to have “on hand” for meals-in-minutes.

Store-bought sauces.

Pre-made sauce can save you time, and is a healthy option if you choose carefully. Some healthy picks include lower sodium/sugar marinara sauce (used in the Chicken Pita Bread Pizza and Baked Pasta with Chicken and Broccoli), Thai curry paste (stir into light coconut milk for a quick chicken or shrimp curry dinner), jarred pesto sauce, lower sodium soy sauce (an ingredient in Stir Fry Pork and Green Beans) and vinaigrette salad dressings with minimal additives.



Semi-homemade.

Instead of buying a whole prepared meal, take shortcuts by using partially prepared ingredients. For instance, use store-bought rotisserie chicken in stir-fries, quesadillas, or with a side of microwaved frozen broccoli and minute brown rice topped with olive oil and Parmesan; or purchase pre-made grilled shrimp or chicken from the salad bar, then use it at home on your own greens or in another dish.



Frozen vegetables and fruit.

Frozen produce is just as nutritious as fresh; frozen berries are ideal in smoothies, and thawed, make a great topping for waffles and pancakes. Frozen vegetables can be quickly microwaved and tossed with a little lemon juice and fresh herbs for a quick side dish or thawed and added to stir-fries and casseroles.



Bagged salad greens and fruit.

No washing or chopping required. It makes putting together a salad, a side of sautéed spinach, or a quick snack, a breeze.



Breakfast Time-Savers



The morning rush can be so packed that finding time for anything more than coffee can seem impossible. Unless you use these quick fixes, of course!

Real Appeal bars.

(Apple Peanut Butter Power Bar, Baked Oat Squares). Sure, you have to make them yourself, but once you do, you have 8 instant breakfasts!



Make-ahead smoothie packs.

Slice banana and other fruit, place in small zip-top bags and freeze.



Pop in the blender to make a shake (using recipes from your Real Foods Guide). The 300-calorie shakes make a complete breakfast on the 1,250-calorie-per-day plan; for higher calorie plans, simply have a tablespoon or two of nuts or seeds along with the shake.

Three-minute microwave egg sandwich.

You can have a fresh egg sandwich in less time than it takes to circle the drive-through. Crack an egg in a small bowl or ramekin sprayed with olive oil; whisk egg together with a splash of water or milk, then microwave for 60 to 90 seconds. Let egg cool for 30 seconds then add to a toasted whole wheat English muffin and top with a dollop of salsa and slice of reduced fat cheese. Enjoy for less than 300 calories!

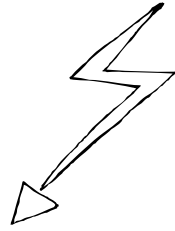


Hard-boiled eggs.

Make a half dozen on a Sunday then grab one along with a non-fat latte and a piece of fruit on your way out the door.



Lightning-Quick Lunch Ideas



You might be tempted to miss your mid-day meal because it's so busy at work, but a healthy bite can power you through the afternoon. Use these strategies to save time.

Mason jar salads.

Prep a salad in a mason jar ahead of time, and have it ready to grab in the fridge (where it will last up to three days). Not only is this easy (everything goes in one container), it's also tasty (foods don't get soggy because you're layering them) and it looks beautiful, which will make you excited to eat your lunch!



Bento box.

Make a quick lunch by including simple items from each nutrition group (protein, healthy, whole-grain carb or starchy veggies, veggies, and fruit). For example, pair a hard-boiled egg with whole-grain crackers with hummus (or avocado), and a handful of baby carrots and grapes.



Plan for leftovers.

Once dinner is ready, immediately portion out a serving for lunch and put it in the fridge. This serves double duty by preventing you (or someone else in your family) from eating a second portion, while making for a fast lunch the next day.



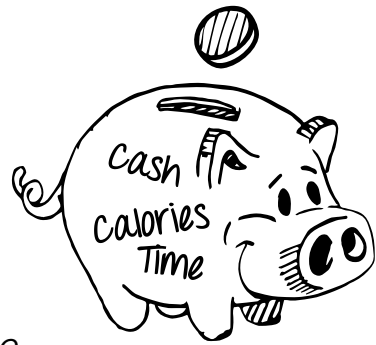
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Mason Jar Layering Lessons

- In the bottom of a 1½ quart mason jar (or plastic container), pool about 2 tablespoons of your favorite dressing.
- Add hearty veggies that won't get mushy in dressing (such as carrots, beets or broccoli).
- Layer more veggies (tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, onions and so on).
- Add a layer (about ½ to ¾ cup) of whole grains or starchy veggies, such as quinoa, brown rice, peas, corn or legumes (beans).
- Drop in about ½ cup cooked shrimp or slices of cooked chicken, beef, or tofu.
- Top it with a big handful of salad greens (baby spinach, arugula, romaine).



Speedy Supper Tips



Save calories, cash and time with these easy eat-at-home tips.

Boil pasta faster.

Pour in just half the amount of water needed to boil pasta, and while that's heating (with the lid on), heat the rest in your tea kettle. Pour boiling water from the kettle into your pot. Make extra pasta to use later in the week.



Cook veggies with pasta.

Add veggies like broccoli, cauliflower, or green beans to pasta water about five minutes before the pasta is done cooking. Drain pasta and veggies, add sauce and you're done.



Cut food into even, bite-sized pieces.

Smaller cuts of chicken and veggies cook faster than larger ones. You can sauté protein and veggies in roughly four minutes.

Measure with less mess.

Pour oil in measuring cups and spoons before sticky ingredients like honey or mustard. The sticky stuff slides right out after using oil so you'll be left with less to clean off in the end.



Good Gear

Your Real Appeal kit comes with some essential kitchen tools that make cooking easier and faster. And in Session 7, you learned how to set up your kitchen for weight-loss success. (If you missed the tool list, refer back to that session.) Here are more time-saving standouts you may want to stash in your drawers or cabinets.

Sharp knives.

They simply cut better and more efficiently, making slicing and dicing not only faster, but safer. A sharp knife is safer than a dull one because it's less likely to slip.



Salad spinner.

This gadget makes washing and drying salad greens a snap. You can prep a couple of servings, use what you need, then put the remaining greens in the spinner in the fridge so they're ready to use the following day.



Ice cube trays.

If you have a fridge with an ice dispenser, you may think you don't need these, but they're perfect for freezing servings of fresh lemon and lime juice, as well as fresh herbs. When a recipe calls for either, simply pop out a cube and quickly defrost it in the microwave or on the counter—no cutting, chopping or squeezing required.



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No Time? No-Brainers!

Truly have no time or energy to prepare a meal? Consider using a shake, bar, (we have plenty of great recipes in the Real Foods guide) or frozen meal. See "No-Brainer Meals" in the first part of your Real Foods guide for details on how to ensure that these meals contain enough calories and nutrition to be healthy.




Commitment Contract

A Week of 5- and 10-Minute Meals

I'm going to make more homemade meals because I'll have much more control over my calorie intake.

This week, I'll make time to prepare homemade meals, and try the quick meal suggestions below.

Here's what a week of meals with mostly 5 and 10 minutes of prep time looks like. The rest of the meals, like the lasagna and the breakfast bars, take a little longer but make enough portions that you can enjoy a zero-prep meal later in the week. You can try it out as-is, move meals around, or come up with an entirely new plan. If creating your own plan, mine the Real Foods Nutrition Guide for five-minute recipes (marked by the  symbol). These will give you some great ideas and act as a jumping off point for your own creative quick meals!

Day of the Week	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Snack(s)
Saturday	3 minutes Cereal, milk, fruit and nuts (pg 28) Make ahead: Baked Oat Squares.	3 minutes Peanut butter burrito and baby carrots (pg 34) Note: instead of strawberry jam, use a sliced strawberry.	40 minutes Turkey Lasagna with salad (pg 84) Note: Set aside one serving for lunch the next day and freeze one serving.	2 minutes ¾ cup plain nonfat or low-fat yogurt with banana and honey (pg 31)
Sunday	1 minute Baked Oat Square (pg 43) and a latte Note: Freeze or refrigerate a square to use later in the week.	5 minutes Leftover Turkey Lasagna	10 minutes Broiled shrimp with lemon, garlic and spinach (pg 90) Note: Set aside a portion for tomorrow's lunch.	2 minutes Celery, Raisin and Almond Mix (pg 112)
Monday	5 minutes Scrambled eggs and whole wheat toast with fruit and milk (pg 32) Note: If you have a latte instead of milk, this will take closer to 10 minutes.	5 minutes Shrimp Salad Pocket with an apple and peanut butter (pg 57) Note: Use leftover shrimp from dinner the night before.	20-30 minutes Grilled Chicken Breast with Whole Grain Noodles, Tomato and Herbs (pg 26). Note: Grill an extra 4-ounce piece of chicken to use for lunch the next day.	5 minutes Strawberry milk (pg 111)

Day of the Week	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Snack(s)
Tuesday	3 minutes Apple and Cinnamon Shake (pg 149)	5 minutes Rotisserie Chicken Salad (pg 23) using leftover grilled chicken from dinner in place of the rotisserie chicken.	15 minutes Ground Beef Soft Tacos (pg 88) Note: Reserve a portion for tomorrow's lunch.	1 minute 10 dry-roasted, unsalted almonds (pg 31)
Wednesday	2 minutes Yogurt, Nuts and Raisins (pg 25)	5 minutes Serve 1 portion of the ground beef and bean mixture from last night's soft tacos over 1 cup romaine lettuce with ¼ cup diced tomato, 2 tablespoons salsa and 8 corn chips	5 minutes Leftover Turkey Lasagna (that was frozen on Monday).	5 minutes ¾ cup plain nonfat or low-fat yogurt with banana and honey (pg 31) Note: Substitute sliced strawberries for the banana.
Thursday	5 minutes Eggs (any style) with black beans and salsa (pg 26)	10 minutes Tuna Fish Melt Quesadilla (pg 52) Note: Make double the portion of tuna salad and use it for the next day's lunch.	10 minutes Black Bean and Corn Salad (pg 28)	2 minutes Celery, Raisin and Almond Mix (pg 112)
Friday	5 minutes Baked Oat Square (pg 43)	5 minutes Serve the extra portion of tuna salad from Thursday over 1 cup romaine lettuce with ¼ cup diced tomato and 1 slice of toasted whole grain bread drizzled with 1 teaspoon olive oil	5 minutes Black Eyed Pea Soup (pg 70) with 100 percent whole grain crackers	1 minute 10 dry-roasted, unsalted almonds (pg 31)

Meanwhile, I'll continue my other healthy habits to the best of my ability.

My signature: _____