

Dinnertime is So Every Night!

I have been planning dinner for years. Not just because I'm organized, but because it saves me time and a lot of stress. Even though planning menus takes an hour or so, it saves me from having to think through dinner every night. And once I figure out my menus for the week, I can make a complete shopping list, shop only once and the hard part is done! Just the cooking is left.

I usually start with what is already in my fridge and freezer, especially those things that need to be used up. I've accumulated recipes that are favorites, and draw from those. And I'll also ask if there is something various ones want to eat that week.

I try to plan ways to piggyback from one meal to another. For example, this week we had pasta for a couple of meals with some left over each time. We also had a spiral ham. Not only did we use the ham as an entrée, but it appeared in a calzone, and later combined with the pasta and other ingredients for a pasta salad.

When I have a plan, I can make sure my meals are colorful and have variety. I alternate different types of meats, veggies, fruits, and cooking styles so no one gets bored, especially me! I also like to explore the produce and international aisles for interesting and different foods. Purple rice is quite fun. 😊

When I take the time to plan, dinner doesn't sneak up on me. I don't have to rely on fast food or take out. And the guilt is taken out of dinnertime, because I'm serving quick, easy, tasty, and nutritious meals instead of just throwing the easiest thing on the table. I'm saving time because I'm not making daily numerous trips to the grocery store. And I'm saving money – for the cost of four combo meals at a fast food restaurant, we can eat steak and shrimp!

If planning dinner is not your forte, I've written a workbook (Three Steps to Planning Dinner) to help you get started – complete with some easy recipes, a printable grocery list, and a section to start your own collection of favorites. If the planning part is just too overwhelming to you, consider my Hassle Free Dinners – a year's worth of dinner menus, instructions, and weekly grocery lists. I use both.

Even if cooking is not your love, a little planning is worth the peace of mind it brings!

About the Author

Beverly Coggins, professional organizer, has been organizing herself and others for over 30 years, inspiring her authorship of the [1-2-3 ... Get Organized](#) series.

“My passions are to help people make home a refuge and to help people function in peace rather than chaos. When my home, office,

and life are organized, I have more time and energy to devote to my family, my friends, and my faith,” observes Mrs. Coggins.

She lives with her husband in Ohio, where they are foster parents for teenage girls. They have two grown daughters.

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