

How do you have the time? Meal prep!

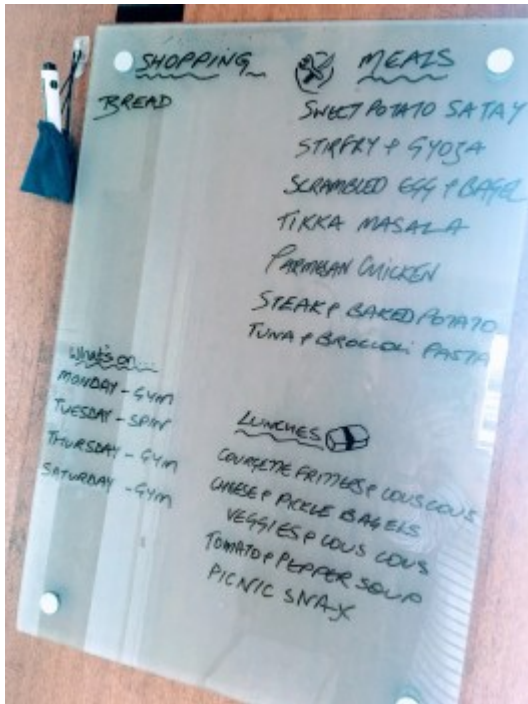
“How do you possibly have the time?” or “I just wish I had the time” is something I hear often so I thought maybe a blog post to share our planning and prep habits might be useful for some folk. Especially around things like food and cooking so evenings aren't a last minute panic.

One thing Kate and I do which we are now realising not everyone else does is that we cook all our meals and pre-pack our lunches. It saves a fortune both financially and in time and means we know what we are eating and are less likely to fall prey to lunch disappointment or worse (burrito van and my work colleagues – is all I'm going to say).

Planning out our weekly meals

At the end of the week, Kate and I plan the meals for the following week so that we know what meals we're cooking and the shopping list can be written. This is great for 3 reasons, knowing in advance what meals we are going to have that week means no faffing around wondering what to cook, we can plan around activities so quick meals for gym nights etc. But best of all, you can plan your meals around your fridge and pantry (store cupboards) so there is way less food wastage. Then, of course, you write a shopping list of things you actually need to make those meals, this reduces the accidental buying of things you don't need and encourages you to use up items in the fridge or cupboard. Excellent saves wastage and money!

We also have a big memo board where we note down items we need for the shopping, list the meals etc for the week and anything we plan to do that week. This helps a lot with being prepared.



Our memo board – basically our mission centre

This prep also has the advantage that some meals work for lunches as well, so you can plan for this and make double portions. Voila, lunch is made in advance.

Lunch prep

I will be honest, there is no way I would make up packed lunches every morning, even though I am up early enough that I could. I just wouldn't, so being organised enough to make lunches the night before means we are more likely to take a packed lunch.

Again, being organised to know the kinds of things you'll want for lunches and make sure you have these in the cupboards helps. Also, don't make separate lunches and dinners, if you want a hot lunch, have left overs (double portion your evening meal), or make it something that's super quick to put together.

Sweet Potato Satay – recipe

Some easy examples of this for the coming week for us (as seen on our memo board) are...

Sweet Potato Satay, makes an excellent reheat lunch the next day. It's also really quick to prepare so perfect for a night when we have to be somewhere like spin class, maybe for you, it's taking your kids to music lessons or sports groups. Fancy trying it out? We blogged this a while back so recipe below...

[Healthier chicken satay with sweet potato noodles](#)

Parmesan Chicken – recipe (if you can call it that)

Another one on the board for this week is parmesan chicken. It's not a complicated recipe, and it's a good one for lunches too.



Ingredients

for the chicken

- 1 chicken breast per person
- parmesan cheese – grated
- mayonaise
- salt & pepper
- parsley

Accompliment – CousCous with veggies

- Giant couscous
- stock
- salt and pepper
- your choice of veggies

Couscous is a favourite of ours to go with chicken and things, we usually have it with some veggies too and the secret we've found to making it tasty is to cook it with stock rather than

just water.

To go with the chicken here we've chosen giant couscous (sometimes called pearl couscous or Israeli couscous).

Cooking

The chicken is easy to do, simply grill the chicken until it's almost done, then top with a little bit of mayonnaise and sprinkle with some parmesan cheese and pop it back under the grill until it's finished (note, my American friends would refer to the grill as the broiler I think).

How easy is that?

Couscous again is dead simple, for two people, for lunch and dinner I usually do about 170 grams and add that to a pot of boiling stock. Usually I use 1 and a half times as much stock as couscous. It takes about 7 or 8 minutes to cook.

While that's cooking, I steam or boil whatever choice of veggies I want. A favourite is green beans, broccoli and peppers.

Serve up for dinner, and box up the rest for lunch tomorrow. You can eat it hot or cold.



Popped into the yumbox to eat cold tomorrow

I don't think this counts as a recipe as it's far too simplistic but it gives you an idea of the kinds of things we do to save time.

I think having a decent set of food storage boxes really helps, for storage and lunches but I won't go on about that here. You can check out the blog post I wrote a while back about my lunch box obsession if you are interested.

[Packed lunches don't have to be boring.](#)