



Healthy Make-Ahead  
Meals and Freezer Recipes  
to Simplify Your Life

# skinnytaste

## MEAL PREP



**Gina  
Homolka**  
with Heather K.  
Jones, R.D.



# skinnytaste<sup>®</sup>

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and Freezer Recipes to  
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**Gina Homolka**  
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# Big Batches & Planned-Overs

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## INTRODUCTION

Hear that? That's the sound of your rumbling tummy—a reminder that dinnertime is right around the corner.

Unfortunately, that dreaded end-of-day fatigue is settling in, and the thought of making a meal is just too much to bear. You do a quick mental check and the list of excuses for not cooking is suddenly longer than an average wait at the DMV: you didn't go food shopping, you got stuck at work, the kids' homework will take too much time, extracurricular activities will get you home too late, the family wants different things...and probably won't like what you make anyway. Still, you're hungry and you have to eat something. You want a meal that's healthy and filling, but quick and easy.

Sound familiar? It's a scenario most of us can relate to. I'm here to tell you it doesn't have to be this way—cooking doesn't have to be stressful. In fact, it can be something you look forward to, even something that helps you unwind. No need to chuckle, smirk, or eye-roll...I'm serious! If you view cooking as a ritual instead of a routine, you can actually shift your mindset and turn this daily to-do into a positive form of self-care.

That might seem like a far-fetched goal, but it's not all that difficult to achieve in an era where convenience is king. We're all looking to simplify and optimize our daily lives, and manufacturers are more than happy to assist. Shortcuts abound, from pre-cut fresh veggies and frozen produce to smart cooking

gadgets (some even controlled remotely by your smart phone... brilliant!). You can tell Alexa to add ingredients to your shopping list and have them dropped off at your front door courtesy of grocery delivery services. There is certainly a movement to make cooking quick, simple, and healthy. I, personally, couldn't be more thrilled. In fact, I'm beyond excited to join in by writing this book, which is loaded with totally manageable and absolutely delicious recipes that are sure to please the entire family. When I was brainstorming topics for this cookbook, I polled my Facebook community and the top three requests on your list were meal prep ideas, easy freezer recipes, and make-ahead recipes. Easy is the name of the game, so I combined all three into one book.

Let's take a look at how these time-saving strategies fit into your busy life and make it possible to say farewell to frozen boxed lasagna, pass on the processed pizza, and ditch the drive-through for good!

### Meal Prep:

These are meals that you prep in advance, pack up in the refrigerator, and enjoy for the next few days or even the whole week. Think Greek Chicken Pilaf Bowls ([this page](#)), Chicken Larb Bowls ([this page](#)), and Smashed Broccoli Pecorino Farro Bowls ([this page](#)). Yum! You can also get parts of a meal ready in advance to streamline the cooking process. This might involve pre-chopping veggies for a stew or stir-fry, or boiling rice or quinoa ahead of time so it's ready for a meal during the week. You get the idea. It's preparing meal components when you have some downtime so they're ready to go when you're in a pinch.

### Freezer Recipes:

These are meals you can make ahead of time and stash in your freezer. Soups, stews, and casseroles are ideal to prepare and pack away. Roasted Vegetable Lasagna ([this page](#)), Freezer Chicken Black Bean Burritos ([this page](#)), Turkey Cheeseburger Egg Rolls ([this page](#)), and Turkey Taquitos ([this page](#)) all fit the bill. You can prep two recipes at once—one to eat now, and one to freeze and eat another day—or make a bunch of recipes on a slow weekend to stock the freezer. And, of course, you can always freeze your leftovers if you're cooking for one or two people, or make a double batch of any recipe and freeze half for later. There is a lot of flexibility here!

### Big Batches and Planned-Overs:

Not to be confused with leftovers, where you're simply reheating last night's dinner, *planned-overs* actually repurpose last night's leftovers in a completely new way! Imagine making a batch of Sheet Pan Herb Salmon with Broccoli and Tomatoes ([this page](#)) for dinner on Sunday night and then whipping up some Salmon Fried Rice with Asparagus ([this page](#)) on Tuesday! Or, rather than roasting one chicken for family dinner, why not cook two (it takes the same amount of time!) so you can enjoy a Paprika Roasted Whole Chicken for dinner one night ([this page](#)) and have a Rotisserie Summer Chicken Bowl with Smoked Paprika Aioli ([this page](#)) the next day. I have included plenty of planned-over recipes here, but you don't have to rely on me! Have fun coming up with your own ideas and take a photo to share with me on social media (tag #skinnytaste)! I love seeing what you create in the kitchen.

It's clear to see how these cooking strategies save you time and effort. If you're already preparing one recipe, it's easy to

prep a second batch and store it for a future meal. Meal planning allows you to make use of your free time, so dinner rush hours are less frenzied. And just imagine opening your fridge to an already chopped salad (simply toss with your favorite dressing), precooked pasta, and a sauce that simply needs to be heated—a complete meal that you can get on the table in minutes!

## Meal Planning Tools for Success

In addition to 120-plus mouthwatering recipes, I also provide dozens of tips and tricks to build your cooking confidence. Meal prepping is easy once you feel at ease in the kitchen. It's about spending a little extra time when you're a bit less busy, so you can fill your fridge with healthy make-ahead breakfasts like Sausage, Egg, and Cheese Breakfast Sandwiches ([this page](#)), Piña Colada Yogurt Bowls ([this page](#)), and Lemon Blueberry Buttermilk Sheet Pan Pancakes ([this page](#)). You'll also learn how to meal prep some easy lunches like Vegan Hummus Kale Wraps ([this page](#)), Slow Cooker Chicken Enchilada Rice Bowls ([this page](#)), and Chili-Lime Chicken and Black Bean Cauli-Bowls ([this page](#)) that you can simply grab from the fridge to eat when hunger strikes. Plus, there's nothing better than knowing there's a chicken soup, like Freezer-to-Instant-Pot Chicken and Dumpling Soup ([this page](#)), prepped, frozen, and ready to whip up, or casseroles like Moussaka Makeover ([this page](#)) or Sicilian Rice Ball (Arancini) Casserole ([this page](#)), ready to bake. All you have to do is pop it in the oven when you get home. That's what this cookbook is all about. I get excited just talking about it—and I hope you get excited about the possibility of transforming

mealtime in your house. Pre-planning takes all the angst out of cooking and it's super easy and doable with just a little bit of thought and foresight.

To give you an idea of just how easy it is, you don't even need to follow a formal recipe or meal plan! There's a mix-and-match section ([this page](#)) featuring your favorite roasted in-season veggies, easy grain bases, pre-prepped proteins, and a wide variety of tasty toppings. No recipe required...just select and savor. There's a separate chapter for snackers (I heard you!). If you're craving something crunchy yet healthy, you can try the BBQ Roasted Green Peas ([this page](#)), which are insanely addictive. If you're looking for a low-carb snack, whip up California Tuna Salad–Stuffed Cucumbers ([this page](#)). I can't get enough of them.

You'll also find a meal plan (for those who like it all mapped out, [this page](#)), meal prep tips, freezer basics, and useful nutritional info for every recipe as well as a recipe key. Trust me, you've got this! Cooking is now faster, less fussy, and more fun than you ever thought it could be. Who's ready to get cooking?

### **A NOTE ABOUT SALT**

Different brands and different types of salt vary not only in sodium but also in taste. For consistency in my recipes—both for flavor and for nutrition information—I used Diamond Crystal Kosher. If you use another kind, just remember to taste as you go.

### **WEIGHT WATCHER POINTS**

For those of you on Weight Watchers, all of the up-to-date Weight Watcher Points are conveniently located on my website

under the cookbook tab: [www.skinnytaste.com/cookbook](http://www.skinnytaste.com/cookbook).

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## **RECIPE KEY**

*Look for these helpful icons throughout the book:*

-  Quick (ready in 30 minutes or less)
-  Vegetarian
-  Gluten-Free
-  Dairy-Free
-  Freezer-Friendly
-  Instant Pot (or any electric pressure cooker)
-  Slow Cooker
-  Air Fryer

# Meal Prep Basics



**G**etting dinner on the table night after night (especially on those pesky weeknights!) is no small feat. When you're juggling sports-practice carpools, work schedules, homework, studying, and more, sitting down to a home-cooked meal every weeknight can seem near impossible—and let's be honest, it might very well *be* impossible without a little bit of advance preparation. The key to making the magic happen in the kitchen lies in the pages of this book. Two simple words: meal prep. Prepping your meals in advance using time-saving tips and freezer-friendly recipes puts you on the fast track to healthy, tasty, family-friendly meals you can rely on all week long.

As a mother of two, I'm no stranger to the stress of getting everyone fed on time, let alone with a nutritious meal! Some days, quick-cooking dinners are my best friend, and other days, I need meals that can go straight from my freezer to my oven or Instant Pot (or any electric pressure cooker) and be ready in a matter of minutes. That's what you'll find here: Recipes that are *easy* to prep in advance, and *even easier* to finish up when it's time to eat.

Truth be told, meal prepping does take a little bit of advance planning, but don't let that discourage you! A few minutes of prep over the weekend can save you hours during a busy week. I'll be spilling all my secrets on how to make that weekend prep as simple and painless as can be. And no, that doesn't mean buying processed foods! I'm a big fan of healthy, whole, and wholesome ingredients, so I've jam-packed every recipe in this book with *real* food. You'll be meal prepping with fresh produce and ingredients you can pronounce (well, except maybe quinoa, but I can help you with that one—it's pronounced "keen-wah").

My tried-and-true strategies will help you master meal prep in no time. Here's how to get started:

## STEP 1:

### Choose Your Recipes

The first step is choosing your recipes, and in my opinion, this is the best part! You can select recipes from this cookbook, or pick from any of the limitless options online. For inspiration, take a look in your pantry to see what you may want to use up, so you can build a meal around that. I also like to get my husband and kids involved—we all come up with dinner ideas that we're excited about. You can also scan your grocery store circular to see what's on sale, choosing ingredients that are seasonal, so you score the best prices and quality. I jot down my ideas in *The Skinnytaste Meal Planner* (a notebook works just as well).

## STEP 2:

### Make a Shopping List

Heading to the store without a list is like hitting the bank without your ATM card. It's both futile and frustrating! Thanks to technology, making a shopping list is easier than ever: I simply say "Alexa, add milk to my shopping list" and it appears on my phone app. But an old-fashioned pen-and-paper list does the trick, too.

## STEP 3:

### Go Shopping

Step three is heading out to do your shopping. You might want to simplify by ordering online and having your groceries delivered (again, do what works for you). For recipes that use fresh seafood or vegetables that may spoil fast, I usually buy the day before or the day I plan to cook.

## STEP 4:

### Meal Prep!

Finally, find a day that works best for you to do all of your meal prepping. For many people, Sunday makes sense, but everyone's schedule is different. Then prepare some of the dishes that will hold up well in the fridge that you can reheat during the week. Recipes like soups, stews, chilis, and so on all reheat well. And don't be afraid of leftovers and planned-overs—those are the easiest lunches! Cook hard-boiled eggs, rice, quinoa, oatmeal, and more ahead of time and store them in airtight containers. As a general rule, they should last 4 to 5 days in the fridge. Label everything with a name and date. You can use dry-erase markers on plastic containers or permanent markers on tape.

### Don't stop at dinner.

As you strategize your meal prep for the days or week ahead, don't forget about breakfast, lunch, and snack time! What meals put the most pressure on your family? Maybe you don't mind throwing together a last-minute dinner, but packing lunches and getting breakfast ready every day has you stressed. No problem! Start by getting breakfast and lunch prep out of the way with recipes like Breakfast-on-the-Run Bowls ([this page](#)) or Banh Mi Turkey Meatball Rice Bowls ([this page](#)), and leave yourself some flexibility for dinners. Feel fine with packing lunches, but aren't sure what to snack on? I get it! Get a head start with some of my favorite snacks like Buffalo Chicken–Stuffed Celery Sticks ([this page](#)) or Air-Popped Popcorn with Sea Salt ([this page](#)).

Whether you're prepping one dinner a week or stocking your fridge with breakfasts, lunches, snacks, and dinners, you'll be saving tons of time, stress, and cash!