

Week 1: Summer Budget Meal Plan

A complete 7-day meal plan for a family of four - with full recipes, a shopping list, and simple prep instructions. Print it and keep it on the fridge for daily reference.

MON	\$19.75
TUE	\$20.00
WED	\$19.50
THU	\$19.25
FRI	\$20.00
SAT	\$19.75
SUN	\$19.75

Estimated weekly total: \$138.00. Prices are approximate and vary by store, brand, season, and location. The plan assumes common pantry basics are already on hand.

Monday - Summer Start (\$19.75)

Breakfast - Oatmeal with Bananas (\$2.50)

Ingredients: 2 cups old-fashioned oats, 4 cups water, 2 bananas, 2 tbsp honey.

Directions: Bring water to a boil. Stir in oats and cook about 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Divide among four bowls. Slice bananas over the oatmeal and finish with a small drizzle of honey.

Lunch - Peanut Butter & Jelly with Apples (\$3.25)

Ingredients: 8 slices bread, 6 tbsp peanut butter, 4 tbsp jelly, 2 apples.

Directions: Make four sandwiches with peanut butter and jelly. Slice the apples and divide among four servings.

Dinner - Baked Chicken Thighs, Rice & Vegetables (\$14.00)

Ingredients: 8 chicken thighs, 1 1/2 cups dry rice (about 3 cups cooked), 1 lb frozen mixed vegetables, salt, pepper, garlic powder, 1 tbsp oil.

Directions: Heat oven to 400°F. Rub chicken lightly with oil and season. Bake 35-45 minutes, or until the thickest pieces reach 165°F. Cook rice according to package directions and steam the vegetables. Reserve enough cooked chicken for Wednesday's lunch if possible.

Tuesday - Ground Beef Day (\$20.00)

Breakfast - Scrambled Eggs & Toast (\$3.50)

Ingredients: 8 eggs, 2 tbsp milk, 1/2 cup shredded cheese, 8 slices bread.

Directions: Whisk eggs with milk. Scramble over medium-low heat until nearly set, then stir in cheese. Serve with toast.

Lunch - Turkey Sandwiches & Carrots (\$4.50)

Ingredients: 8 slices bread, about 8 oz sliced turkey, 4 cheese slices, lettuce, 1 tomato, mustard or mayo, 2 cups baby carrots.

Directions: Build four sandwiches with turkey, cheese, lettuce and tomato. Add mustard or mayo and serve with carrots.

Dinner - Cheesy Beef Pasta (\$12.00)

Ingredients: 1 1/2 lb ground beef, 1 small onion diced, 12-16 oz pasta, 24 oz pasta sauce, 1 cup shredded cheese.

Directions: Cook pasta. Brown beef and onion in a large skillet; drain excess fat. Stir in sauce and simmer 5 minutes. Toss with pasta and top with cheese. Refrigerate four lunch-size portions for Thursday.

Wednesday - Chicken Variety (\$19.50)

Breakfast - Apple Cinnamon Oatmeal (\$2.50)

Ingredients: 2 cups oats, 4 cups water, 2 apples diced, 1 tsp cinnamon.

Directions: Cook oats in water about 5 minutes. Stir in apples and cinnamon during the final 2 minutes.

Lunch - Chicken Salad Sandwiches (\$4.50)

Ingredients: about 2 cups diced leftover chicken, 1/3 cup mayo, 1 celery stalk diced, salt and pepper, 8 slices bread, lettuce.

Directions: Mix chicken, mayo, celery and seasonings. Divide among four sandwiches and add lettuce.

Dinner - BBQ Chicken, Coleslaw & Rolls (\$12.50)

Ingredients: 8 chicken pieces, 3/4 cup BBQ sauce, 1 bag coleslaw mix, 1/3 cup mayo, 1 tbsp vinegar, 1 tsp sugar, 4 dinner rolls.

Directions: Heat oven to 375°F. Coat chicken with BBQ sauce and bake about 40-45 minutes, or until it reaches 165°F. Mix slaw with mayo, vinegar and sugar. Serve with rolls.

Thursday - Rice Bowl Night (\$19.25)

Breakfast - Granola, Yogurt & Berries (\$3.75)

Ingredients: 3 cups yogurt, 2 cups granola, 1-2 cups fresh or frozen berries.

Directions: Divide yogurt among four bowls and top with granola and berries.

Lunch - Leftover Beef Pasta & Side Salad (\$3.00)

Ingredients: reserved beef pasta, lettuce or salad greens, simple vinaigrette.

Directions: Reheat the reserved pasta until steaming hot. Serve with a small side salad.

Dinner - Chicken Teriyaki Rice Bowls (\$12.50)

Ingredients: 1 1/2 lb chicken breast, 1 1/2 cups dry rice, 1 lb stir-fry vegetables, 1/2 cup teriyaki sauce, 1 tbsp oil.

Directions: Cook rice. Dice chicken and cook in oil until it reaches 165°F. Add vegetables and stir-fry until tender-crisp. Stir in teriyaki sauce and serve over rice. Reserve about 1 1/2 cups chicken for Friday dinner.

Friday - Pasta Night (\$20.00)

Breakfast - Eggs, Toast & Fruit (\$3.00)

Ingredients: 8 eggs, 8 slices bread, butter, 2 pieces of fruit or 2 cups cut fruit.

Directions: Scramble eggs and serve with buttered toast and fruit.

Lunch - Tuna Salad, Crackers & Cucumber (\$3.50)

Ingredients: 2 cans tuna drained, 1/3 cup mayo, 1 celery stalk diced, salt and pepper, crackers, 1 cucumber.

Directions: Mix tuna, mayo, celery and seasonings. Serve with crackers and cucumber slices.

Dinner - Chicken Pasta Salad (\$13.50)

Ingredients: 12-16 oz pasta, 1 1/2 cups reserved cooked chicken, 2 cups diced vegetables, 1 cup cheese cubes, 1/2 cup Italian dressing.

Directions: Cook pasta, drain and cool. Toss with chicken, vegetables, cheese and dressing. Chill before serving, or serve at room temperature. Refrigerate promptly after the meal.

Saturday - Weekend Favorites (\$19.75)

Breakfast - Homemade Pancakes & Fruit (\$4.00)

Ingredients: 1 1/2 cups flour, 1 tbsp baking powder, 1 tbsp sugar, 1 egg, 1 1/4 cups milk, 2 tbsp oil or melted butter, fruit.

Directions: Mix dry ingredients. Whisk egg, milk and oil separately, then combine just until mixed. Cook pancakes on a lightly greased skillet. Serve with fruit.

Lunch - Grilled Cheese & Tomato Soup (\$4.25)

Ingredients: 8 slices bread, 8 cheese slices, butter, 1 large can tomato soup plus any milk or water called for on the can.

Directions: Prepare soup according to the label. Butter bread and grill four cheese sandwiches until crisp and melted.

Dinner - Ground Beef Tacos (\$11.50)

Ingredients: 1 1/2 lb ground beef, taco seasoning, 8-12 tortillas, shredded lettuce, 1 tomato, 1 cup shredded cheese.

Directions: Brown beef and drain. Add taco seasoning and water according to the seasoning directions. Warm tortillas and set out toppings so everyone can build their own tacos.

Sunday - Easy Finish (\$19.75)

Breakfast - Oatmeal with Nuts (\$3.00)

Ingredients: 2 cups oats, 4 cups water, 1/2 cup chopped nuts, optional cinnamon or honey.

Directions: Cook oats about 5 minutes. Divide into bowls and top with nuts.

Lunch - Egg Salad Sandwiches (\$3.50)

Ingredients: 8 eggs, 1/3 cup mayo, salt and pepper, 8 slices bread, lettuce.

Directions: Hard-boil eggs, cool, peel and chop. Mix with mayo and seasonings. Make four sandwiches with lettuce.

Dinner - Roast Chicken with Potatoes & Carrots (\$13.00)

Ingredients: 1 whole chicken (about 4-5 lb), 2 lb potatoes, 1 lb carrots, 2 tbsp oil, salt, pepper and garlic powder.

Directions: Heat oven to 425°F. Cut potatoes and carrots into chunks and toss with oil and seasonings. Place around chicken in a roasting pan. Roast until the chicken reaches 165°F in the thickest part, usually about 60-80 minutes depending on size. Rest 10 minutes before carving. Save leftover chicken for next week's meals.

Week 1 Shopping List

Check your pantry first and cross off anything you already have. Quantities are approximate and allow for normal package-size differences.

Produce

- Bananas - 2
- Fresh or frozen berries - 1 pint/bag
- Tomatoes - 3
- Baby carrots - 1 small bag
- Cucumber - 1
- Onions - 1-2
- Stir-fry or mixed vegetables - about 2 lb total

Meat & Protein

- Chicken thighs/pieces - about 16 pieces total
- Whole chicken - 1 (4-5 lb)
- Sliced turkey - about 8 oz
- Eggs - 2 dozen
- Chopped nuts - about 1/2 cup

Dairy & Refrigerated

- Milk - 1/2 gallon
- Shredded cheese - about 3 cups
- Cheese cubes or block cheese - about 8 oz
- Mayonnaise - 1 jar

Bread, Grains & Pasta

- Sandwich bread - about 2 loaves
- Tortillas - 8-12
- Rice - about 3 cups dry
- Granola - about 2 cups
- All-purpose flour - at least 1 1/2 cups

Pantry / Sauces

- Jelly - small jar
- Pasta sauce - 24 oz
- Teriyaki sauce - about 1/2 cup
- Tomato soup - 1 large can or 2 regular cans
- Baking powder
- Vinegar
- Cooking oil
- Black pepper
- Cinnamon

- Apples - 4
- Salad greens or lettuce - 2 heads/bags
- Celery - 1 bunch
- Carrots - about 1 lb
- Potatoes - about 2 lb
- Coleslaw mix - 1 bag
- Extra diced vegetables for pasta salad - about 2 cups

- Boneless chicken breast - 1 1/2 lb
- Ground beef - 3 lb
- Canned tuna - 2 cans
- Peanut butter - 1 jar

- Yogurt - about 3 cups/32 oz
- Sliced cheese - 12 slices
- Butter or spread - 1 package

- Dinner rolls - 4
- Old-fashioned oats - about 6 cups
- Pasta - 3 packages (12-16 oz each)
- Crackers - 1 box

- Honey - small bottle
- BBQ sauce - about 3/4 cup
- Italian dressing - about 1/2 cup
- Taco seasoning - 1 packet
- Sugar
- Mustard (optional)
- Salt
- Garlic powder

Weekly Prep Instructions

- 1. Check the kitchen before shopping.** Look for oats, rice, pasta, flour, seasonings, sauces and condiments you already own. Buying duplicates is one of the easiest ways to push a budget meal plan over budget.
- 2. Wash and portion produce.** Wash apples, berries, lettuce, celery, carrots and cucumber. Slice only sturdy vegetables ahead of time; keep delicate produce whole until needed so it stays fresh.
- 3. Make rice ahead if you prefer.** Cook a larger batch for Monday and Thursday. Cool it quickly, refrigerate within two hours, and reheat portions until steaming hot.
- 4. Use planned leftovers.** Monday's chicken becomes Wednesday's chicken salad. Tuesday's beef pasta becomes Thursday lunch. Thursday's chicken is reserved for Friday's pasta salad. Label these portions before serving dinner so they do not disappear.
- 5. Prep sandwich fillings.** Dice celery once for the chicken salad and tuna salad. Keep it refrigerated in a sealed container.
- 6. Divide snacks and sides.** Portion carrots, crackers, fruit and nuts into reusable containers. This makes lunches faster and helps prevent accidental overuse early in the week.
- 7. Handle cooked food safely.** Refrigerate leftovers within two hours. Use most cooked leftovers within 3-4 days, and reheat hot foods to 165°F. When in doubt about how long something has been sitting out, discard it.

Fridge Reference: The Week at a Glance

Day	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
Mon	Banana oatmeal	PB&J + apples	Chicken, rice & veggies
Tue	Eggs + toast	Turkey sandwiches	Cheesy beef pasta
Wed	Apple oatmeal	Chicken salad sandwiches	BBQ chicken + slaw
Thu	Yogurt + granola	Leftover beef pasta	Chicken rice bowls
Fri	Eggs + toast + fruit	Tuna + crackers	Chicken pasta salad
Sat	Pancakes + fruit	Grilled cheese + soup	Beef tacos
Sun	Oatmeal + nuts	Egg salad sandwiches	Roast chicken + vegetables

Budget note: This plan is designed around an estimated \$20 per day for four people. It can help control grocery spending through meal planning, ingredient reuse, and planned leftovers. Actual costs and savings will vary.