



How To Cook More Everyday Meals

DIY approach for busy people
5 Tips for getting dinner on the table

by Cinde Little

Contents

- 3 | From the author
- 4 | DIY Everyday Cooking
- 6 | Tip #1 Cook Once, Eat Twice
- 8 | Tip #2 Prep Once, Eat Twice
- 10 | Tip #3 The BIG Cook
- 12 | Tip #4 Freeze It
- 14 | Tip #5 Label It
- 16 | Organize for Success
- 17 | Putting the Tips into Practice



From the author

Many things inspire me to cook homemade meals, not every day but most days. I want to feel good and stay healthy. I want to enjoy food with family and friends. As much as possible I want to avoid artificial flavours or unnecessary additives and preservatives. I want to eat real food.

What happened to home cooking? Everyone is too busy. Too busy to cook, too busy to eat, too busy to make healthy food choices. Really? Home cooked meals don't need to be complicated or time consuming. Serving everyday meals is definitely possible and can even be easy. If you try hard enough it can be fun too.

Putting homemade meals on the table on a regular basis requires more than a few good recipes. However, preparing and planning doesn't need to be a lot of work. With this DIY approach you can put some of these simple tips into practice the way it makes sense to you and you'll be eating more homemade meals this week.

Why gluten free? Allergies and food intolerance is a part of everyday life. It's time to embrace the idea of cooking and eating real food. Even for those with no food restrictions it is easy to accommodate others needs if you start by cooking real food. So get in the kitchen and cook. You might just be surprised how good it is.



*Cinde
in the
Kitchen*

Visit my blog and sign up to get new tips & recipes sent to your inbox every week.

DIY Everyday Cooking

As a health educator I know it is easier to make a change if you know why you want to change. Take a moment to think about the reasons you want to eat more homemade meals.

Find your why. Challenge your everyday thinking about cooking. Ask yourself why you really want to eat more homemade meals. These tips will be most helpful when you know what your **WHY** is.

- Do you think cooking is difficult or time consuming?
- Do you think fast food is healthy, or even fast?
- Do you think you need to love cooking for it to be easy?

Do you want to:

- Feel good and stay healthy?
- Avoid the frustration or cost of dining out?
- Learn basic techniques and become comfortable trying new recipes?
- Add more variety to everyday meals?
- Decrease stress at mealtime?
- Have some fun in the kitchen?

So what's your **WHY**?

*When baking,
follow directions.
But when cooking,
go by your own
taste.*

-Laiko Bahrs



Freeze meat in lemongrass marinade for this [Vietnamese Noodle Bowl](#)

DIY Thinking

Now...keep your eye on the WHY.

Lean into the joy of cooking. Small changes over time can make a big difference. There is no all or none solution. DIY means just that, do it yourself! Take these ideas and make one of them work for you.

It's your kitchen so have some fun

Dance • Sing

Turn up the music

Flambé • Sauté

Have a glass of wine

Cook with friends

TIP #1

Cook Once, Eat Twice

Make the most of your time in the kitchen by cooking once but making enough for two meals. This might mean:

- Cooking two pans in the oven side by side and putting one in the fridge to serve again in a few days.
- Making double the amount you need and portioning half into a container ready to reheat for a second dinner.

When you make dinner plan to make enough for two meals. The second time you serve it will be a quick reheat while you cook some rice or make a nice salad. Serving it with a different vegetable or potatoes makes it look like a new meal rather than leftovers.



Tandoori Chicken

COOK ONCE, EAT TWICE works well with recipes like these:

- [Tandoori Chicken](#)
- [Cranberry Orange Chicken](#)
- [Sticky Apricot Chicken](#)
- [Beef Rouladen](#)
- [Chicken Porto](#)
- [Meatballs in Almond Sauce](#)
- [Chicken Cacciatore](#)
- [Lemongrass Chicken](#)
- [Cumin Lime Chicken](#)
- [Mango Chutney Chicken](#)

These dishes are ideal for TIP #1

Cook Once, Eat Twice



CUMIN LIME CHICKEN

The first time you make this chicken serve it with rice and corn. Make it look different the second time by serving it as a filling for tacos or quesadillas.

MANGO CHUTNEY CHICKEN

Serve this chicken with rice and broccoli the first time. For a different look the second time serve it with a vegetable stir-fry.



BEEF ROULADEN

Serve rouladen with a warm potato salad and purple cabbage. The second time around serve it with mashed potatoes and green beans.



TIP #2

Prep Once, Eat Twice

Some dishes are best the first time they are cooked. This tip is to maximize your prep time. Small efforts as you prepare dinner keeps meal ideas moving. This could mean:

- Doubling a spice rub or breading recipe to keep in the pantry.
- Making extra sauce or marinade for the fridge to use next week.
- Marinating extra meat for a second meal and freezing it raw.

This recipe makes a generous amount of marinade and sauce so think Prep Once, Eat Twice. Buy a large flank steak and divide the meat and marinade into two containers, one for dinner and the other for the freezer. Make the sauce right in a Mason jar and label it, ready to serve when you cook your steak the second time.



Grilled Flank Steak with Chipotle- Honey Sauce

PREP ONCE, EAT TWICE works well with recipes like these:

- [Hazelnut Lemon Halibut](#)
- [Breaded Pork Chops](#)
- [Mongolian Pork Chops](#)
- [Chicken Satay](#)
- [Grilled Chicken with Adobo Paste](#)
- [Shrimp Pad Thai](#)
- [Grilled Flank Steak with chipotle honey sauce](#)

These dishes are ideal for TIP #2

Prep Once, Eat Twice



HAZELNUT LEMON HALIBUT

Double this breading recipe and keep it in the freezer. Fish is always a quick dinner, especially if you have the breading ready.

BREADED PORK CHOPS

Double the recipe for this crunchy breading and plan to make crispy chicken strips. Serve them on a Caesar salad for a change.



MONGOLIAN PORK CHOPS

This marinade is enough for two meals. Pour half over a second dish of pork chops. Freeze it and label it for a second meal.

TIP #3

The BIG Cook

Whether it's once a month or when the mood strikes, a bit of effort on occasion eases the pressure of day to day planning and cooking. Making a favourite BIG dish lets you enjoy a delicious meal despite a hectic schedule. The DIY strategy means:

- Portion the dish into sizes that work for you.
- Include individual portions for lunch or hearty snacks.

Homemade lasagna takes a bit of time so make the most of it. Cook with a friend and make lots, or even two different BIG dishes. You will each take home several meals and have fun doing it.



Beef &
Sausage
Pesto
Lasagna

The BIG Cook works well with recipes like these:

- [Greek Moussaka](#)
- [Chicken Cacciatore](#)
- [Homemade Chili](#)

These dishes are ideal for TIP #3

The BIG Cook



GREEK MOUSSAKA

Moussaka can be completely prepared and then frozen. Enjoy it hot out of the oven the first time then portion the rest into sizes you need.

CHICKEN CACCIATORE

One dish meals made in a pot on the stove are ideal for *The BIG Cook*. The key is portioning into the right size containers for the way your family eats.



HOMEMADE CHILI

Use chili to make quesadillas, nacho salad or to top a baked potato. Serving the same dish different ways makes it feel like a whole new meal.

TIP #4

Freeze It

Freezing prepared meals as well as ingredients for a specific recipe saves time shopping and allows you to eat homemade more often. The habit of routinely freezing food relieves the day to day pressure of cooking and menu planning. This might mean:

- Buying a larger amount than usual. Portioning and labeling with a specific purpose in mind.
- Dividing into sizes for lunches, weeknights and last minute.
- Occasionally having an *everyone eats different* night.

You can freeze almost anything but some dishes stand up better than others. If in doubt just try it. I think a homemade meal out of the freezer is better than one from a box. For best results use air tight containers and thaw all day or overnight in the fridge.



Cranberry Orange Chicken

Dishes like these freeze well:

- [Homemade Chili](#)
- [Cranberry Orange Chicken](#)
- [Sticky Apricot Chicken](#)
- [Chicken Satay](#)
- [Mongolian Pork Chops](#)
- [Cumin Lime Chicken](#)
- [Chicken Cacciatore](#)
- [Meatballs in Almond Sauce](#)

These dishes are ideal for TIP #4

Freeze It



MEATBALLS IN ALMOND SAUCE

Freeze meatballs raw or cooked, with or without sauce. If you make the effort to freeze them on a tray you can store them in a big bag for easy use.

STICKY APRICOT CHICKEN

Saucy dishes freeze well so the effort to make a double recipe pays off the night you take a ready-made dinner from the freezer.



BRAISED SHORT RIBS in coffee ancho chile sauce

Enjoy the smell of slow cooking short ribs but plan to have an extra meal for the freezer and enjoy them a second time.

TIP #5

Label it

Labels help reduce food waste and serve as a reminder of what you might have for dinner. Label as often as you can in the fridge and freezer. Put helpful information on the label like:

- “buy bean sprouts & cilantro” on a jar of Pad Thai sauce
- “for Beef & Bok Choy” on an 8-oz package of ground beef
- “Chipotle-Honey Sauce (flank steak in freezer)” or “try on corn”
- “Flank Steak, serve with chipotle-honey sauce in fridge”

This recipe for Salmon with West Coast BBQ Sauce is enough for two or more meals. Label the jar of sauce and try using up the final amount in tuna or salmon salad for lunches. Put your ideas right onto the label.



Salmon with West Coast BBQ Sauce

Try some of these ideas to make labeling work for you:

- Buy a label maker
- Buy sticky labels at the dollar store and keep them in a convenient spot
- Use an elastic to attach a label or printed recipe to a can or jar in the pantry as a reminder of what you want to make with that item

Use Tip #5 in the fridge, freezer and pantry

Label it

SHRIMP PAD THAI

When you make “*Pad Thai sauce*” make an extra jar & label it for the fridge. Portion a single chicken breast for the freezer with the label “*for Pad Thai*”. Got the idea?

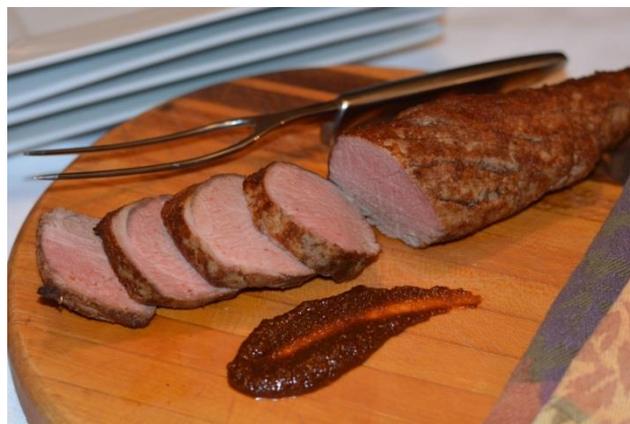


BEEF and BOK CHOY

Weigh the exact amount of ground beef you need for a recipe. Label it “*for Beef & Bok Choy*” then freeze it. That label will serve as a quick dinner idea.

PORK TENDERLOIN with Asian Flavours

Put a tenderloin in a freezer bag and write “*pork tender for Asian sauce*” on the bag. The label will be a dinner suggestion when you see it.



Organize For Success

Organization in the kitchen is a never ending project. Small changes over time are more realistic than cleaning out an entire cupboard or drawer. Look for something small that annoys you and make adjustments.

What can you do today?

1. HIGH TECH ideas

- Download a grocery app.
- Change your screensaver to a daily reminder about dinner.

2. OLD SCHOOL ideas

- Write your top 5 dinners on a card and tape it inside a cupboard door.
- Post a peel-and-stick notice board in the kitchen and write 3 new dinner ideas on it. Make a goal for the month.

3. LET'S GET ORGANIZED

- Buy a few organizers at the dollar store and separate similar items in your fridge.
- Put some real food in your fridge.



Michael Pollan's Food Rules

Rule #1

*Eat
Food*

Rule #63

Cook

Putting The Tips Into Practice

Tip #1 Cook Once, Eat Twice

On a card write 3 new dinner ideas that will each give you 2 meals.
Put the reminder in plain sight.

Tip #2 Prep Once, Eat Twice

Challenge yourself to make a new recipe this week where the prep will serve you a second time.

Tip #3 The BIG Cook

Make something BIG. Choose dishes you want to eat, not what's trendy.

Tip #4 Freeze It

If they sell it frozen you can freeze it too. Just try it.

Tip #5 Label It

Label something with a reminder to yourself of another dinner you will make.



*No one is
born a
great
cook, one
learns by
doing.*

Julia Child



Sign up at www.everydayglutenfreegourmet.ca for more tips and recipes sent straight to your inbox each week.

Tell me what tip worked for you and share a picture of your dinner.

Instagram

Post a picture of your dinner and tag me

@everydayGFgourmet

#EGFGourmet

Facebook

Post a picture of your dinner on Facebook and mention me,

Everyday Gluten Free Gourmet

Twitter

Tweet a picture of your dinner, ready-to-eat or in-the-making and mention me **@LittleCinde**

If you have any feedback, suggestions for improvement or another topic that would be helpful to you contact me at cinde@everydayglutenfreegourmet.ca.

By Cinde Little, author of the Everyday Gluten Free Gourmet food blog. Copyright © 2017

