

From: [Meeks, Sara R.](#)
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Subject: Calm Down for the Holidays Challenge Week 3 Message 1
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OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION



Live Healthy Live Well

Hello Challenge Friends,

Did you know today is “Dine In Day”? Dine In Day is a chance to remind families (or friends) to eat a meal, at home, together. What are your dinner plans?

Sara

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Stress Less with Meal Prep

During the holidays, my schedule gets hectic with work and multiple events with friends and family. One way I help keep calm and reduce my stress is to plan my meals. There are many different ways that you can accomplish this. I have three different cooking methods that I look for when finding recipes that will save me time and energy.

1. [Sheet Pan Meals](#) allow you to cook everything on a sheet pan together. This allows for extremely easy clean up. A great recipe to do this with is fajitas.
2. [Skillet Meals](#) are also a one-pan plan. These recipes are not only handy because of easy clean up but they also use a lot of pantry staples and can be made when your meal plan falls through. A skillet lasagna is always a family favorite.
3. [Slow Cooker Meals](#) can either be put together the morning of or they can be assembled in advanced and frozen. This allows you to prep ahead of time and then thaw in the refrigerator the day before you need it. You can never go wrong coming home to a big pot of soup that has cooked all day.

Once I've selected the recipes I'm going to use then I plan to stock my pantry, refrigerator and freezer appropriately. With three small kids, a farm and a full time job I do not have a lot of extra time so I have to make the most of what I do have. I do this in a number of ways.

1. **Cook Once Eat Twice-** I will plan for leftovers to use for lunches or dinners for later in the week. With this concept, I will sometimes double the recipe I am making and freeze the other half. I do this a lot with taco meat, spaghetti sauce or soup.
2. **Meal Prep-** If I find myself with a few extra minutes, I will prep out individual foods ahead of time like pre portioned snacks or [overnight oatmeal](#) cups.



3. **Cook Once Eat For A Week-** I have friends that will cook everything they

need for the entire week on one day. That's a little difficult for me so I break it into just cooking the protein for the week. For example, I will cook a 3 pound package of frozen chicken breasts in my slow cooker on Monday. Then I divide the cooked chicken out into 3 different meals for the week. Some examples of recipes for that week might be [Easy Cheesy Enchiladas](#) on Monday, [Quick and Easy Chicken Pot Pie](#) on Wednesday and then freeze the last pound to use for [Potato Skins with Buffalo Chicken](#) on Saturday. For me, this is a more manageable task than prepping every meal on one day.

4. **Freezer meals-** Planning for these meals can take place ahead of time and be prepped, labeled, and frozen for later use. The finished product is a meal in your freezer that's ready when you need it. I like to make breakfast burritos ahead of time or have my own [homemade snack pockets](#).

Our team can't wait to hear back from some of you about your favorite "Meal Prep" ideas. Please write back to share.

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