

Star
STUNNING
Evening
Meal Planning
As Easy As 1, 2, 3



As busy working moms, we have so many responsibilities.

Sure, some of us have help, but no one does it like mom. Our responsibilities can include getting the kids ready for school, to school, perhaps with a prepped lunch, then get ourselves to work, rock our workday, pick-up the kids and then there is dinner. It is exhausting and some days dinner is just not in the cards, but we all need to eat.

Regarding your family's evening meal, I have three simple questions for you:

- 1. Have you headed to a fast-food drive-thru after picking up cranky kids?*
- 2. Have you frantically rushed to the grocery deli on your way home from work, selecting the best option as you dart to pick-up the kids on time?*
- 3. Have you reached for a box of mac-n-cheese for the second time in one week?*

Did you answer yes to any of these questions? It's ok, I have too, more times than I would like to admit. Like me, you are busy, and the answer is probably yes.



Let's turn that yes into a simple, achievable plan for healthy meals.



A *Star Stunning* way to keep it simple is to eliminate exhausted meal planning. Instead of thinking of a full meal for each night of the week, let's plan in three simple categories. These categories are no other than the components of a balanced meal:

- 1 **Vegetables First**
- 2 **Lean Protein Second**
- 3 **Complex Carbs to Top it Off**



As a compliment to the work I am doing at *Star Stunning*, I created the Meal Planning as Easy as 1, 2, 3 Guide to alleviate a little stress. The steps include: the three simple ingredients; three preparation methods; and three tricks to get the kids to enjoy their meal in addition to you. Not only does this guide provide a path to reduce the after-work rush to dinner, but it provides a great framework to healthy eating for the entire family.



Ingredient #1

Vegetables First

We all know we need to eat our vegetables. Some of you may have this well covered in your diet, but for some it can be an after-thought. Make a point to identify the vegetable you will have each night of the week and have it on hand. Consider a ½ cup for each adult and ¼ cup for each child. Everyone has their own approach to grocery shopping. This is an area where I look for convenience to reduce my prep time and I like pre-cut vegetable packages.

Go-to vegetables include:

- Broccoli
- Asparagus
- Green Beans
- Spinach
- Cauliflower
- Brussel Sprouts
- Snow Peas
- Beets

Go-to raw vegetables include:

In the summer a good way to reduce cooking time is to go with raw vegetables.

- Carrots
- Cucumbers
- Sweet Peppers
- Tomatoes

Method #1: Steam It

My proven method for preparing vegetables is microwave steaming. You can't beat it. I have a silicone steamer that I love, but you can even do this without a special gadget. Take a cereal bowl, put a plate face down on top of the bowl and poof you have a steamer.

Then follow what I call the 2-n-2 plan:

- Add 2 tablespoons of water to a handful of vegetables
- Steam on high for 2 minutes

Trick #1: Spice It Up

Steamed vegetables are great because the cooking does not dry them out. As a result, it isn't necessary to add butter or oil. None-the-less, a little goes along way. Butter, olive oil, or coconut oil can help your body absorb the nutrients. For the adults add saltless flavoring such as Mrs. Dash. The kids might complain it is too spicy, for them a little butter and salt will do the trick.

As for the raw vegetables partner them with a side of hummus or ranch dressing, and it is always a hit with the kids.

Ingredient #2

Lean Protein Second

Protein has been a part of our diet for centuries. If you grew up with comfort cooking like me, images of hamburgers and chicken fried might come to mind? Nonetheless, leaner meats are a better go-to. Strive for this. Again, consider a ½ cup for each adult and ¼ cup for each child.

Favorites include:

Chicken Breast:

- *Choose chicken breast tenderloins, these smaller cuts cook up quickly*
- *Add Italian seasoning mix*

White Fish:

- *Cod, Walleye, and Halibut are a hit with the kids*
- *Add Lemon and a dash of garlic, pepper, and salt*

Meat Alternatives:

- *Tofu or a Portobella mushroom*
- *Marinate in liquid aminos for healthy added flavor*





Method #2: Pre-Cook It

Have you heard the saying, failure to plan is a plan to fail? I suspect most of us would rather not fail when it comes to eating healthy. A good way to achieve success is to do some prep work ahead of time. This might work for you too.

Go-to tips include:

- Dedicate a specific time each week. Look for a two-hour time block and prep 3 – 4 protein items.
- Sauté the chicken in a little oil until lightly golden to an internal temperature of 165°F.
- Bake the white fish in a covered dish for approximately 20 minutes to an internal temperature of 145°F.
- For meat alternatives, marinate them and place in the fridge. Grill or sauté them when you are ready to eat them.

Tip #2: Cut It

Kids can be picky and resistant to the texture of proteins. A trick that works for me is to cut them into small bite size pieces. Think smaller than what an adult would eat. Aim to be 1/2 inch or smaller and see how the kids react to that. The smaller the piece the less distinct the texture and it might just work.

Top it off with Trick #1: Spice It prior to cooking:

- Oregano + Basil
- Herbs of Provence
- A salt-free spice such as Mrs. Dash

Ingredient #3

A Complex Carb Top-Off

When reaching for your complementary carbohydrates go past simple to complex. A simple guide is, if it is white (rice, bread, potato) pass it up for a complex carbohydrate that offers greater nutritional value. Aim for ½ a cup for adults and kids.

Go-to complex carbs include:

- Sweet Potato or Yams
- Beans (kidney, black, garbanzo)
- Rice (brown or wild)
- Other Grains (barley, bulger, quinoa, millet)
- Red Potato
- Tortilla (whole wheat or corn)

Method #3: Quick Cook It

Nothing works like a microwave. It cooks quick and in just a few minutes your side is done. The following ideas have saved me time. They might work for you as well.

- Puncture potatoes and yams with 3 or 4 knife slits and cook on high until soft. The amount of time depends on the size of the potato. Two-minute increments work well. After each increment turn it over. Another tip is to prep potatoes for the week when you prep your protein. The warm-up can be under a minute for a ½ cup portion.
- Pre-cooked rice can be found in the frozen section at most groceries and can be warmed up in minutes.
- Grains can be made in large batches on the stove. This could also be done during your dedicated cooking time suggested in Method #2 and can be used throughout the week.

Trick #3: Add A Twist

Simple toppings to a complex carbohydrate can go a long way and result in an empty plate. The suggestions below led to success at my house. They might work for you too.

- Cinnamon is a best loved spice for many. It tastes great on sweet potatoes and rice. For extra flavor consider adding 1 teaspoon of coconut oil or ½ teaspoon of butter.
- Greek yogurt is lower in fat and sugar and can be used any time you might think to add sour cream instead.
- Salt free seasoning such as an Italian Seasoning + Garlic Powder mix can bring a desired savory taste. A little goes a long way.





These steps have made tummies happier, meal prep easier and life calmer at my house.

At *Star Stunning* I believe in simple solutions to achieving the must-do things will grant more time to achieve the goals you are looking for in your career and give you peace at home. I hope the suggestions in this guide help you step into your *Star Stunning* self each night of the week.



Star STUNNING

Star Stunning is an online resource providing empowering ideas for working moms. This is your source to achieve your career goals while maintaining a balance at home. I am dedicated to supporting, inspiring, and encouraging you to reach a life of fulfillment and serenity.

STARSTUNNING.COM