



Meal Planning Toolkit

As we've introduced in the [Love Your Body Handbook](#), there is no magic bullet when it comes to diet and nutrition.

Balanced nutrition has 3 key components:

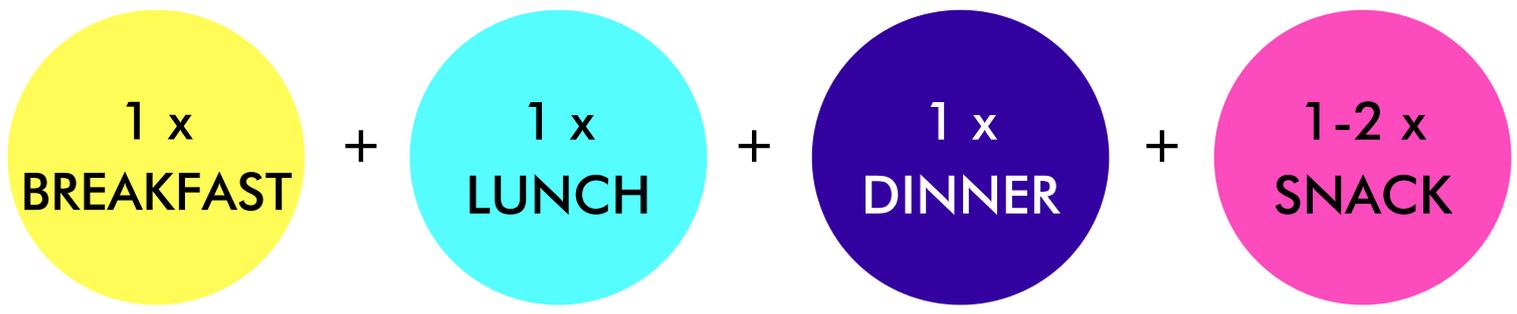
1. Consuming the **right level of calories** to maintain **energy balance**
... or create a deficit/surplus if you're aiming to lose/gain weight
2. Enjoying a **wide range of nutritious foods**
...which deliver essential macro-nutrients (protein, fat, carbs)
...AND deliver plenty of micro-nutrients (vitamins and minerals) plus dietary fibre.
3. Maintaining appropriate **portions**

We DON'T want you to have to follow a slavish meal plan forever. Instead, you need to learn to build this sustainable, long-term, balanced approach to eating for yourself.

However, we know getting started on the right habits can be easier said than done. So the aim of this Meal Planning Toolkit is to build on the general advice in your Love Your Body Handbook with some PRACTICAL and FLEXIBLE tools and meal ideas.

The foundation of the SPIRIT meal plan is **a flexible, mix and match approach** which gives you the freedom to build personalised meal plans which suit YOU.

Choose:



Aim to enjoy variety and feel free to adapt recipes to suit YOU and your lifestyle.

Remember, the biggest secret to healthy eating is **planning, preparation & portions**. Take time to plan your week's meals in advance and shop accordingly. Where possible, batch cook and freeze to give yourself an easy solution for busy/tired days. We've provided a meal planner template to plan out your menu - use it!

Please do feel free to share your challenges and triumphs on the Spirit Squad Facebook group. Pooling our experiences and tips helps us all to make better progress!

BREAKFAST

...A sunny start every day



- These breakfasts all include a healthy dose of protein to set you up positively for the day.
- [Recipes are available in the files section of the facebook group.](#)
- Top tip, you can also use these recipes for lunch options if you fancy it!



1. Greek yogurt bowls

Lots of ways to personalise this one to taste and to add day-to-day variety.

2. Egg in the hole

A side of sauteed spinach and/ or roasted cherry tomatoes is a great addition.



3. Chocolate Chia Pudding

If you're not into chocolate, try with pureed mango or raspberries.



4. Skinny Cooked Breakfast

As well as going easy on the carbs, it's all about the cooking method and choosing lower fat meats/meat alternatives here!



5. Green Eggs

A variation could be a veggie omelette with a sprinkling of low fat cheddar or parmesan.

6. Smoked Salmon Cream Cheese Bagel

Always feels like a luxurious choice. Not a fan of smoked salmon? Try topping with turkey bacon and a few sliced tomatoes instead, or consider half a small avocado mashed with salt, pepper and lime juice and topped with a slice of sliced chicken.



Processed cereals are not a recommended start to the day, but porridge is a good choice (make with 40g oats + 120ml milk + 100ml water). Try topping with apple, cinnamon & a dash of maple syrup. Or take a look at overnight oats recipes online – just don't add too many sugary extras.

If you can't get through the morning without a coffee, so be it - just make sure you're **STARTING** your day with a big glass of water (hot with lemon, if you prefer) and drink another glass with breakfast. Staying hydrated is particularly important if you're aiming to lose weight, so drink up!



LUNCH

...Fuel your afternoon



SOUPS... are an wonderful lunch option – warm, comforting - and with our hand-picked recipes, healthy too. Serve with a couple of oatcakes on the side if you like. Find the full recipes on the FB group!



TUSCAN BEAN



THAI CHICKEN



RED LENTIL



BUTTERNUT SQUASH



PEA

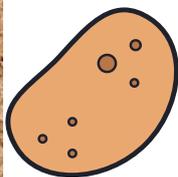


WRAPS... are a great alternative to bread for a sandwich style lunch. Wholemeal will leave you more sustained than white. Brown pitta pockets are also a good choice. If you prefer a classic-style buttie, try the smaller style loaves (the 400g ones) - the slices are a more reasonable size so you don't unbalance carbs and protein/veg. Wholemeal seeded bread is best.

Filling ideas:

1. **Roasted Veg:** Fill your wrap with a generous portion of oven roasted veg (peppers/red onions/mushrooms are a great combination) and crumble around 50g feta cheese on top.
2. **Tuna Salad:** 1 small tin of tuna mixed with 1 tbsp of light mayo and 2 tbsp sweetcorn.
3. **Chicken Salsa:** Get in the habit of cooking a load of chicken mini fillets (grill or pan fried using spray oil) to keep handy in the fridge/freezer. Place 2-3 mini fillets and a generous dollop of salsa in your wrap and add a few baby spinach leaves and any other salad veg you enjoy. Top with 1 tbsp of grated parmesan before rolling up and enjoying.

JACKET POTATOES... Carbs are not evil – especially in the form of a wholesome baked potato. Just remember to keep an eye on size (don't go bigger than about 250g) and be mindful that adding butter adds calories too – so if your topping doesn't need butter, it's best avoided. If you're at home, pop potatoes into the oven mid morning for the perfect slow-baked spud. Or if you're shorter on time, microwave is fine. Feel free to swap out a standard potato for the sweet variety.



Topping ideas:

- 3 tbsp cottage cheese plus a couple of slices of turkey/chicken ham.
- Quorn mince chili con carne (batch cooked and frozen in small portions for ease).
- The classic cheese and beans! Go for no added sugar/salt beans and use max 40g lower fat cheddar,

If you're grabbing lunch on the go, choose options where you can see the nutritional labelling – aim for no more than 400 calories for lunch (including any drinks), and at least 20g protein. Beware salads with creamy dressings, avoid pastry-based items and steer clear of massive mayonnaisy sandwiches from the likes of Pret!

DINNER

...A recipe for evening meal success



In this plan, dinners are set as the most substantial meal of the day; but if you prefer to eat your main meal at lunchtime, just swap dinner and lunch ideas. For dinner, aim to eat earlier rather than later if you can, to allow full digestion before bedtime.

Here, we've given an example of a week's worth of dinner choices with a salad alternative every day (full recipes saved in the Spirit Squad group) - though any of the choices in the SPIRIT recipe bank are suitable, so do have a browse through. Alternatively, we've also come up with a more modular approach (overleaf).

Meat-free Monday



Vegan Chilli
A great batch-cook and freeze option

OR



Lentil & Tahini Salad
A veggie masterpiece

Speedy Tuesday



Mediterranean Tuna Bake
Packed full of veg - a crowd pleaser

OR



Chicken Chickpea Salad
Quick, easy, tasty.

Happy Hump Day



Shakshuka
A flavourful one-pan dish full of nutrition

OR



Watermelon Quinoa Salad
Refreshing and full of flavour.

Easy Thursday



Fish Pie Jackets
Healthy comfort food at its best

OR



Tuna & Bean Salad
Packed with protein, ready in minutes

Takeaway Friday



Tortilla Pizza
A much lighter take on standard pizza

OR



Quick Greek Salad
Hold the kebab, it's chicken salad time

Social Saturday



Turkey Burgers + wedges
Great for sharing

OR



Spirit of Summer Salad
A versatile choice everyone'll love

Sunday Yum-day



One Pan Chicken
A healthy alternative to your Sunday roast

OR



Roasted Fennel Salad
Delicious and nutritious

DINNER

...A recipe for evening meal success



Dinner doesn't always have to be a full-on recipe-cooked affair. Try our modular approach to planning your evening meal and you'll have hundreds of possibilities.

ABOUT HALF YOUR PLATE SHOULD BE VEGGIES

Below are just a few ideas of what that could look like, but experiment-experiment-experiment.

Make your plate as colourful as possible and aim to have at least 2 different kinds of veg per dinner.



Centre your meal around a palm-sized portion of high quality **PROTEIN** – that's about a **quarter** of your plate. Season well and experiment with herbs and sauces to add flavour.

Another **quarter** of your plate can be **CARBS**. Choose wholemeal options wherever you can - and again, manage that portion size.

Veggies (50%)

EG

Roasted veg
Side salad
Roasted cauliflower
Stir fried asian veg
Grilled courgette
Butternut squash puree
All steamed veg

Protein (25%)

EG

Chicken breast (skinless)
Salmon fillet
Lean steak
Prawns
Tofu
Lower-fat cheese

Quality Carbs (25%)

EG

Rice (pref brown)
Wholemeal couscous
Lentils/beans
Potatoes / sweet potato – baked, boiled or roasted with min. oil

Cooking methods are key – go for GRILLED or OVEN BAKED (in foil or paper to retain moisture) wherever possible. If you want to PAN FRY you need to take care not to add unwanted calories through excess cooking fat - so try a low cal cooking spray or olive oil in a spray dispenser. These can also be used for oven baked items which need a little oil (eg sweet potato wedges/ oven roasted veggies).



Go easy on condiments which can be high in added sugar/fat – not to say you can't have them at all but keep amounts low - a teaspoon not a serving spoon dollop.



AVOID PROCESSED wherever you can – if you're short on time, batch cook and freeze at weekends but really do try to avoid pre-prepared options which are high in salt, sugar or sweetener and additives - these can disrupt proper digestion and mess with our natural hunger signals. .

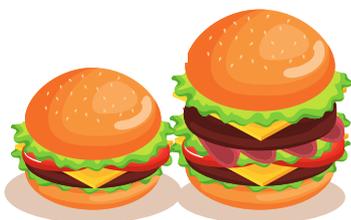


PORTION DISTORTION

...avoid this common pitfall



Our complete recipes have been carefully curated to ensure balance and appropriate portion sizes, so you don't have to think. But when you're using the modular approach you need to take REAL care not to go overboard on more calorie-dense meal elements..



Many of us routinely serve portion sizes way in excess of the recommended level - and as a result, unwittingly consume far more calories than we intend to. Then wonder why we're not losing weight. It doesn't help that eating-out portion sizes have been super-sized over the last few decades, distorting our perceptions of a reasonable portion. So we need to re-educate ourselves.

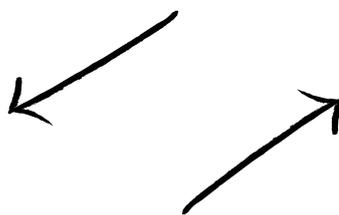
HANDY PORTION SIZES!

Your hands are perfect for measuring the right portion size for you – this guide gives examples of portion sizes for different food and drinks for adults. You can find portion sizes for more foods on the BNF website.

Group	Food	1 Portion	Weight
●	Fresh fruit	About one handful or more	80g
●	Vegetables	About 3 serving spoons or more	80g
●	Fruit juice	1 small glass	150ml
●	Dried rice or pasta	About 2 handfuls	65-75g
●	Cooked pasta or rice	About the amount that would fit in two hands cupped together	180g
●	Flaked breakfast cereals	About 3 handfuls	40g
●	Dried porridge oats	About 1 and a half handfuls	40g
●	Baked potato	About the size of your fist	220g
●	Plain popcorn	About 3 handfuls	20g
●	Grilled chicken breast	About half the size of your hand	120g
●	Cooked fish fillet (e.g. salmon or cod)	About half the size of your hand	100-140g
●	Cooked steak	About half the size of your hand	130g
●	Cooked beans, chickpeas or lentils	About 6 tablespoons	120g
●	Canned tuna in water	One can (about 160g net weight)	120g
●	Houmous	About 2 tablespoons or about ¼ standard pot	55g
●	Nuts and seeds	The amount you can fit in your palm	20g
●	Low fat yogurt	About 4 tablespoons or one individual pot	120g
●	Cheddar cheese	About the size of two thumbs together	30g
●	Milk or plant-based alternative	One medium glass	200ml
●	Unsaturated oils or spread	One teaspoon	3-5g

These portion sizes have been based on averages and may be different to what you see in stores and on pack. They have been developed based on a 2000kcal per day diet. Individual needs vary and you may need larger or smaller portions. As hand size varies you can use your hands as a measure of a suitable portion size for you. Note that where we have used 'tablespoon' this refers to a 10ml spoon that would be used to eat soup or pudding, rather than a larger serving spoon.

The British Nutrition Foundation have come up with this HANDY guide makes it simple to keep portions in check. Print this page and keep on your fridge as a reminder.



Having a healthy, balanced diet is about getting the right types of foods and drinks in the RIGHT amounts.

Finding your BALANCE is a critical part of that, and relies on you choosing both the right foods AND the right portion sizes

FINDING YOUR balance across the day

The image below shows how many portions to aim for from each food group each day for a healthy, balanced diet.

FRUIT AND VEGETABLES A variety of different types each day	5+
STARCHY CARBOHYDRATES Potatoes, bread, rice, pasta and others	3-4
PROTEIN FOODS Beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and others	2-3
DAIRY AND ALTERNATIVES Milk, cheese, yogurt and alternatives	2-3
UNSATURATED OILS AND SPREADS	SMALL AMOUNTS

Intuitive eating is the goal, but to get there you need to EDUCATE yourself on appropriate portion sizes - as evidence shows that guessing typically leads to portions in EXCESS of the intended.

We highly recommend you to WEIGH AND LOG YOUR FOOD on something like myfitnesspal - this lays the nutrition and calorie truth bare for you to actually understand the impact of your choices.



SNACKS

...Nutritious options keep hunger at bay



These snack ideas are all around 100 calories or less so you can afford 1-2 per day.



Go-to staples

- Fruit and veg are ALWAYS a good choice
- Piece of fruit – ultimate portability and nutrition
- Crudites and hummus
- A SMALL handful of almonds



Protein Power-Up

- Protein shake or protein powder mixed with natural yogurt and a sprinkle of blueberries
- Roll Ups: Chicken ham wrapped around cucumber batons
- Boiled egg and a few nuts



Craving something sweet?

- A 150g 0% fat Greek yogurt
- Chia pudding
- Square of dark chocolate and a handful of raspberries



Just really hungry?

- Spread a whisper of lower fat mayo onto a wholemeal sandwich thin and fill with a slice of turkey ham and some chopped tomatoes/ salad leaves
- 2 oatcakes topped with cottage cheese and a few grapes
- A mug of home-made soup
- Toasted Cinnamon raisin bagel thin spread with 15ml low fat cream cheese



Less naughty 'sometimes' treats

And for the times you really just can't resist a more naughty/ processed treat - make it a bit less naughty and just don't make it every day.

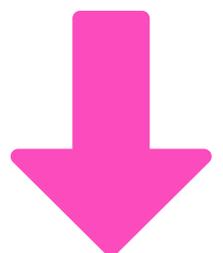


- Baked not fried crisps (go for a single serve bag rather than a family sharing bag to better control portion sizes)
- A 2 finger kitkat or fun sized milky way, not an XL mars bar
- An americano or flat white (ask for skimmed milk) not a latte
- 2 jaffa cakes not 2 choc chip cookies
- Oven baked chips not a portion from the chippie
- Gin and slineline tonic not a pint of lager
- A chocolate coated ricecake not a piece of toast with nutella



more
of
these

less
of
these





A note on calories

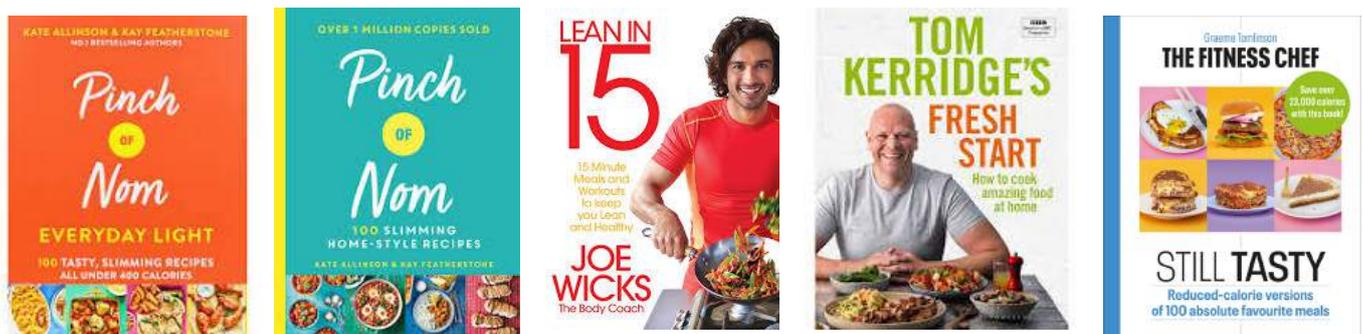
Following this plan will mean you consume around 1500 calories per day – which for most of you will put you into gradual weight loss territory. Your coaches will chat to you if you need to be eating less than 1500 calories to guide you on how to adjust the plan.

It's easy to eat more calories – just add an extra (nutritious) snack and/or increase portion sizes.

A note of caution - do ensure you're adding any extra calories mindfully – it's all too easy to rack up an extra few hundred calories without even noticing – milky/sugary drinks, biscuits with your tea and a lack of portion control are key things to watch. As is alcohol....sorry! It's not to say you can never enjoy these treats, just make them a 'sometimes' treat rather than an 'everyday' habit.

To emphasise once more - we REALLY recommend weighing and logging your food intake in the learning phase, to help you internalise positive habits.

Finally, a couple of cookbooks worth a look and some online recipe resources you may find helpful:



WEBSITES:

- Skinnytaste – facebook/Instagram
- BBC Good Food – has a whole healthy section + all recipes include nutritional info.

DISCLAIMER: This meal planning advice is not aimed to diagnose, treat, prescribe or cure any medical conditions. The meal plans issued are solely to guide and provide advice to compliment and support your fitness goals. This resource must be viewed as recommendation and advice ONLY - and you should seek the advice of a registered dietician or doctor if you feel you have a medical condition to diagnose, prescribe or treat any nutritional based issues.

- meals this week -



SHOPPING

	BREAKFAST	LUNCH	DINNER	SNACKS	
M					
T					
W					
T					
F					
S					
S					