

# Where To Start

Now that you've established your "why," let's start diving into the "how."

You're probably feeling pretty excited to make your vision a reality, but you may be wondering where to even start. "This is great and all," you might be thinking, "but what do I need in order to feed my family well?"

Let's start with the Basic 4 — the four things I think every meal manager needs to set herself (or himself!) up for success.

We'll be going into each of these in more detail in the coming chapters, so for now, I'm simply going to introduce them to you.

## #1 – A Plan

In order to feed your family well (especially on a budget), you absolutely need some kind of plan. We'll go into all the reasons why in the next chapter, but I truly believe that meal times are much smoother with *some kind of plan*.

Now, these plans are going to look different for everyone. And it's imperative that you find a system that works for *you* — your schedule, your lifestyle, and your personality. That's why, in this book, I'm not going to give you meal plans. Rather, I'm going to teach *you* how to make the best plans for you and your family.

And contrary to what a lot of people think, meal planning doesn't have to take hours. It is possible to do it quickly and efficiently, and that is one of the things I hope to show you as we journey through this book.

## #2 – A Reserve of Recipes

The second thing you need is a good list of recipes — a recipe repertoire, I call it.

Being prepared with recipes ahead of time makes meal planning a breeze, especially for some of the methods we're going to talk about in the next chapter. These recipes can also serve as handy back-up options, which we'll talk about shortly.

The two most important keys here are that a) these recipes are realistic for your family's schedule, lifestyle, and tastes, and b) you have this list written down and somewhere handy for quick reference.

But we'll discuss all this further in chapter 4.

## #3 – A Well-Stocked Pantry and Freezer

The third component in the Basic 4 is a well-stocked pantry and freezer. To feed your family well, it helps to be prepared with ingredients and foods you will use often.

For one thing, every extra trip to the store is an increased chance of spending more money on extra items and an increased chance you'll simply say, "Forget it. Let's order out." But having a well-stocked pantry and freezer means you'll always have *something* to pull together for dinner.

Having a well-stocked pantry and freezer also means you will be prepared for those times when your meal plan goes south. (And it happens to even the most seasoned meal planners!)

We'll be talking more about why a well-stocked pantry and freezer are important and *how* to stock your pantry and freezer in chapter 5.

## *#4 – Back-up options*

The final element in the Basic 4 is a good stash of back-up options. These are what I'm calling "Plan Bs, Emergency Meals, and 'Uh-Oh' Go-Tos."

This stash is what you will run to when things don't go as planned — when you forget to thaw the meat, when you discover you don't have a necessary ingredient, or... not that this would ever happen... when you ruin the food beyond repair.

These back-up options are also what you'll turn to when you are simply too tired or too sick to cook.

We'll be discussing different kinds of back-up options in chapter 6, as well as how to build up your reserve.

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That's the Basic 4 in a nutshell. Those are the four main tools you need to feed your family well and achieve the objectives you outlined in chapter one.

Now, it's time to dive in to the nitty-gritty of making this all a reality.

### *Your Homework:*

Your homework for this chapter is easy. Simply read through the Basic 4 again, and answer these questions:

1. Which element(s) do I already have a pretty good handle on?
2. Which element(s) am I not doing at all?
3. Which element(s) am I most eager to learn about?