USC WorkWell Center is pleased to share this guide to support faculty and staff with quick, easy, and nutritious meal ideas for breakfast, lunch, dinner, including snacks. Use this guide to create healthy meals for you and your family!

Quick Meal Guide

Quick + Easy Tips for Building a Balanced Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner, and Snacks!

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Table of Contents

- Breakfast: 1-8
- Lunch: 9-18
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- Beverages: 41-45
Building a balanced breakfast in under 15 minutes

**Carbohydrates:** bread  
*Fuel for the brain and primary energy source for the body*

**Fiber:** bread + avocado  
*Important for regular digestion and promotes healthy gut microbiome*
*Tip: look for whole grains*

**Fat:** egg yolk + avocado  
*Plays a role in energy production, brain health and hormone regulation*

**Protein:** egg whites + bread  
*Vital for tissue repair and growth*

**Micronutrients:** greens  
*Necessary for immune function and energy production*
Building a balanced breakfast in under 15 minutes

- Baked or overnight oats
- Smoothies
- Yogurt bowls
- Eggs + toast
Overnight oats

Chocolate Peanut Butter Oatmeal

- 1/2 cup oats
- 1 tbsp chia seeds
- 2/3 cup milk of choice
- 1 tsp maple syrup or honey
- 1 tbsp peanut butter
- 2 tsp cacao powder
- Top with chocolate chips

Oatmeal with fresh fruit

- 1/2 cup oats
- 1 tbsp chia seeds
- 2/3 cup milk of choice
- 1 tbsp maple syrup or honey
- Fresh fruit (strawberry, blueberry, peach, etc.)
- 2 tbsp yogurt of choice
- Top with granola
Smoothie Ideas

Berry smoothie

- 3/4 cup frozen fruit
- Handful of spinach
- 1/4 cup yogurt
- 1/2 cup milk of choice
- 2 tbsp oats
- 1 tbsp chia or flax seeds

Green smoothie

- 1/2 cup frozen pineapple
- 2 cups of spinach
- 1 banana
- 1 pear
- 1 cup cold water
- 1 tbsp chia or flax seeds
Build your own yogurt bowl

Butters
Peanut butter, almond butter, cashew butter, etc.

Toppings
Nuts (almonds, walnuts, etc.), granola, seeds (hemp, chia, etc.), coconut flakes, cacao nibs

Fruit
Strawberries, blueberries, mango, kiwi, peach, etc.

Base
Yogurt

Try Greek yogurt for higher protein + easier digestion!
Eggs and Toast: Three Ways

1. Pesto, avocado, tomato, egg, chives
2. Hazelnut spread, sliced almonds, raspberries (or fruit of choice)
3. Cream cheese, cucumber, smoked salmon, red onion, capers, fresh dill

1. Egg + Veggie Scramble
   - Add your favorite vegetables!
   - Try adding tomato, mushroom, onion, spinach, bell pepper, parsley + others

2. Egg muffins
   - Add cheese, fresh herbs + your favorite vegetables!
   - Try adding tomato, mushroom, onion, spinach, bell pepper, parsley + others

3. Omelet
   - Add cheese, fresh herbs + your favorite vegetables!
   - Try adding tomato, mushroom, onion, spinach, bell pepper, parsley + others
Foul Mudammas

Ingredients

- Fava beans, 1 can
- Garlic, 1 clove
- Tomato, diced
- Extra virgin olive oil
- Chopped parsley
- 1/2 tsp cumin, salt and pepper to taste
- Lemon juice

Instructions

- Add fava beans and 1/4 cup of water to skillet to warm. Season with cumin, salt and pepper. Mash beans with potato masher.

- Add olive oil, garlic and lemon juice.

- Top with parsley and tomato. Serve with pita bread.

Rich in fiber and plant-based protein!
Lunch

Tips and Recipes
Lunch Tips:

- Consider meal prepping lunches on the weekend or on your day off.

- Try prepping your protein and grains ahead of time for quick assembly.

- Build your own bento or lunch box.

- For workday lunches, pack hardy vegetables that won't wilt (ex: broccoli slaw).
Building a balanced lunch in under 20 minutes

- Mediterranean Farro Salad
- Gyros
- Kimchi Fried Rice
- Red Lentil Dahl
Mediterranean Farro Salad

Ingredients

(6 servings)

- 2 large tomatoes
- 2 Persian cucumbers
- 1/2 red onion
- 1 cup farro, dry
- 1 lemon, juiced
- 1 bunch parsley, rough chop
- 1 16 oz can chickpeas, drained
- 1/2 red onion
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 1/3 cup olive oil

Instructions

- Cook 1 cup of dry farro (boil, rice cooker, etc.) and let cool.

- Finely dice the red onions and tomatoes. Cut cucumber into half slices (or fine dice). Rough chop the parsley.

- In a large bowl combine chopped vegetables with the chickpea and cooled farro.

- Add olive oil and lemon juice. Salt and pepper to taste. Mix thoroughly.

Rich in healthy monounsaturated fats!
Gyros

Ingredients (4 servings)

- 1 can chickpeas (or protein of choice)
- Cucumbers and tomato, sliced
- Pita bread
- Red onion, sliced
- 1/4 tsp paprika; 1/2 tsp cumin
- 1/2 tsp oregano; 1/4 tsp garlic powder; salt and pepper
- Fresh dill and feta cheese
- 2 tbsp olive oil

Instructions

- Cook chickpeas (or protein of choice) in olive oil with salt and pepper.
- Add cumin, oregano, paprika, garlic powder, and more salt and pepper.
- Paprika and cumin have flavonoids that work as antioxidants.
- Cook for a couple of minutes until chickpeas are crispy and well seasoned.
- Serve on pita bread topped with cucumber, tomato, red onion, feta and dill.
Kimchi Fried Rice

**Ingredients**
(4 servings)

- 2 cups steamed rice (prep night before)
- 1/4 small onion, diced
- 2 tbsp olive or avocado oil
- 1/4 tsp sesame oil
- 1/2 cup kimchi, + 1 tbsp kimchi juice
- 1 tbsp soy sauce
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 stalk scallion
- Eggs (optional)

**Instructions**

- Heat wok with olive or avocado oil to sautee the onion and garlic until fragrant.
- Add kimchi and rice. Stir.
- Add sesame oil, soy sauce, scallion, salt and pepper. Stir.
- Serve immediately. Top with a fried egg.

Great source of probiotics that support gut health!
Red Lentil Dahl

Ingredients (8 servings)

- 4 cups cooked brown rice
- 1 yellow onion, finely diced
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 1/2 cups dried red lentils
- 1 can diced tomatoes + 1 can coconut milk
- 1 tbsp garam masala + 1 tsp turmeric + 1/2 tsp chili flakes
- 1 tbsp fresh ginger
- 5 cloves garlic, minced
- 3 cups vegetable broth
- 3 cups baby spinach
- 1/2 lemon, juiced

Instructions

- ☑ Sautee onion in olive oil. Add garlic and ginger. Cook until fragrant.
- ☑ Add garam masala, turmeric, and red pepper flakes to onion.
- ☑ Add lentils, canned tomato with juices, vegetable broth, and coconut milk. Bring to boil and then lower to simmer for about 15 minutes.
- ☑ Add lemon juice and spinach, stir. Salt to taste. Serve with brown rice and naan.

Garam masala and turmeric are loaded with antioxidants that support the immune system!
Build your own lunch bowl

**Toppings**
Nuts, seeds, pico de gallo, salsa, hummus, pesto, herb yogurt, balsamic, etc.

**Veggies**
Onion, garlic, tomato, cilantro, parsley, broccoli, bell pepper, zucchini, cucumber, sweet potato, etc.

**Protein**
Poultry, tofu, mushroom, fish, legume (black bean, chickpea, lentil, etc.)

**Base**
Grains (brown rice, quinoa, farro, etc.) or leafy greens
Pasta Salad: Three Ways

1. Pesto, arugula, mozzarella, artichoke, and olives

2. Red onion, cherry tomato, cucumber, feta, vinaigrette dressing

3. Red onion, cilantro, black bean, corn, cotija cheese, sour cream, and jalapeno
Build your own salad

**Dressing**
Olive oil + lemon + salt and pepper, vinegar, balsamic, etc.

**Toppings**
Nuts, seeds, fresh fruit, fresh herbs, cheeses, whole grains, etc.

**Veggies**
Onion, tomato, carrot, broccoli, bell pepper, radish, zucchini, cucumber, sweet potato, etc.

**Protein**
Poultry, tofu, egg, fish, nuts, seeds, legumes (black bean, chickpea, lentil, etc.)

**Base**
Spinach, arugula, kale, endive, romaine, cabbage, etc.
Dinner

Tips and Recipes
Balance your blood sugar by balancing your plate!

Half of your plate should include a variety of colorful fruits and vegetables.

A quarter of your plate should include lean sources of protein.

A quarter of your plate should include starches like whole grains, complex carbs, etc.
Quick Dinner Ideas

- Tacos with rice and beans
- Seasonal soups
- Fish/seafood
- Chili (vegetarian or meat)
Tacos: Three Ways

1. **Shredded Chicken**
   Add your favorite fresh herbs and vegetables!
   *Try adding tomato, onion, pepper, lettuce, avocado, cilantro + others*

2. **Seafood of Choice**
   Opt for fish/seafood lower in mercury such as salmon, cod, tilapia, shrimp, etc.

3. **Vegetarian Taco**
   Vegetarian sources of protein include beans, mushrooms, tofu, lentils, seitan, etc.
Soup: Four Ways

1. Pozole Soup
   Add your favorite fresh herbs and vegetables!
   Try adding lettuce, oregano, radishes, corn, onion, pepper, avocado, cilantro + others

2. Pumpkin Soup

3. Potato Leek Soup

4. Chicken Noodle Soup
   Add your favorite fresh herbs and vegetables!
   Try adding carrots, celery, broccoli + others
Curried Butternut Squash Soup

Tutorial

30 minutes

Ingredients (4 servings)

- 1 tbsp coconut oil
- 2 med. shallots, thinly diced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 sm. butternut squash, chopped
- 1 1/2 tbsp curry powder
- 1/4 tsp cinnamon
- 1 14 oz can light coconut milk
- 2 tbsp maple syrup
- 2 cups vegetable broth
- Toasted pumpkin seeds
- Full fat coconut milk

Instructions

- Add oil, shallot, and garlic to large pot. Sauté for 2 minutes. Stir.

- Add butternut squash. Season with curry powder, cinnamon, salt and pepper. Cook covered for 4 minutes.

- Add vegetable broth, coconut milk, and maple syrup. Bring to a low boil, reduce heat and simmer for 15 minutes.

- Blend soup and add any seasonings to taste. Garnish with coconut milk and pumpkin seeds.
Fish: Three Ways

1. Baked Fish
Add your favorite fresh herbs like rosemary, parsley, thyme, etc!
Serve with brown rice and your favorite vegetables.

2. Shrimp and Pasta
Get creative with your favorite pasta of choice!
Add in your favorite vegetables, fresh herbs, olive oil, lemon, garlic, etc.

3. Glazed Fish
Try glazes made with gochujang, miso paste, honey, hoisin, etc.
Serve over rice and your favorite vegetables.
Sprinkle with sesame seeds, furikake, green onion, etc.
Garlic Butter Tilapia

**Ingredients**

(4 servings)

- 4 fillets of tilapia
- 1/2 tsp paprika
- 1/2 tsp dried thyme
- 1/2 tsp dried oregano
- 4 cloves minced garlic
- 4 tbsp melted butter (or olive oil)
- 2 tbsp lemon juice
- 1/4 tsp lemon zest
- Red pepper flakes, garnish
- Fresh parsley, chopped
- Slices of lemon, garnish

**Instructions**

- Pre-heat oven to 400 °F. Season tilapia with paprika, oregano, thyme, salt, and pepper.

- Whisk melted butter, garlic, lemon juice and zest in a bowl. Pour on tilapia.

- Bake for 10-12 minutes, until fish flakes.

- Garnish with fresh parsley, red pepper flakes, and lemon slices. Serve with brown rice and favorite veggies!
**Coconut Curry Salmon**

*Ingredients*

(4 servings)

- 12 oz of salmon
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 tbsp butter
- 1/2 med. onion, chopped
- 2 cloves minced garlic
- 2 tbsp red Thai curry paste
- 1 cup broccolini, thinly sliced
- 1/2 cup carrots, julienne
- 1/2 tsp fish sauce; 1 tsp lime juice
- 1/2 tsp brown sugar
- 1 can coconut milk
- 2 tbsp fresh cilantro, chopped
- 2 tbsp fresh basil, chopped

*Instructions*

- Add butter and oil to skillet. Once hot, cook salmon skin side down for 5 minutes. Flip and cook for another 2-3 minutes. Transfer to plate.

- Sautee onion in skillet for 3 minutes then stir in garlic and curry paste. Cook for 1 minute.

- Add fish sauce, coconut milk, brown sugar, broccolini and carrots. Simmer about 5 minutes.

- Stir in lime juice and add fish back to pan. Garnish with cilantro and basil. Serve with rice.
Korean Honey and Miso Glazed Cod

**Tutorial**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ingredients (4 servings)</th>
<th>Instructions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 lb cod</td>
<td>✓ Place cod on aluminum foil lined baking sheet. Add oil to the foil and place cod on tray.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 1/2 tbsp rice vinegar</td>
<td>✓ Whisk honey, vinegar, gochujang, soy sauce, miso, sesame oil, garlic and ginger in bowl. Brush 2 tbsp of marinade onto cod. Place mushrooms on tray and broil on high for 3-5 minutes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 tbsp honey</td>
<td>✓ Switch from broil to bake at 375 °F. Brush remaining glaze on cod and bake 5-10 minutes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 tbsp gochujang</td>
<td>✓ Serve with rice, broccoli and garnish with sesame seeds and green onion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 tsp sesame seed oil</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steamed broccoli</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 tbsp white miso paste</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 tsp soy sauce</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1 tsp ginger, grated</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Beech mushrooms, optional</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sesame seeds, green onion</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Chili Recipes

Meat Option: Turkey Chili

Tips:
- Consider slow cooking by prepping earlier in the day and letting the crock pot do the hard work!
- Hide some extra veggies in the chili.
- Garnish with fresh herbs like cilantro, cheese, jalapeño, avocado, sour cream, green onion, chive, etc.

Vegetarian Options

Tips:
- Same tips from above apply here.
- Vegetarian protein sources include beans (pinto, kidney, fava, navy, and black bean), tofu, quinoa, etc.
- Make sure to add some flavorful spices and garnish with peppers, herbs, cheese, etc.
Snacks

Tips and Recipes
Understanding the Labels

New Label

The serving size now appears in larger, bold font and some serving sizes have been updated.

Calories are now displayed in larger, bolder font.

Daily Values have been updated.

Added sugars, vitamin D, and potassium are now listed. Manufacturers must declare the amount in addition to percent Daily Value for vitamins and minerals.

Understanding the Labels

Pay attention to the serving size. Look out for how many servings are in each package.

It is recommended to limit calories from saturated fat to < 10% total calories. This includes food AND drinks.

It is recommended to limit calories from added sugar to < 10% total calories. This includes food AND drinks.
Try more of:

Nuts and seeds

Fruit

Granola bars

Opt for one higher in fiber and lower in sugar!

Yogurt + fruit

Veggies + hummus/dip

Popcorn

Opt for lower sugar. Consider Greek yogurt for added protein.

Make your own at home to reduce the butter and salt.
Limit:

Check the ingredient label: look for fewer ingredients, lower in saturated fat, sodium and sugar.

Sugary candies
Sugary ice cream/popsicles
Donuts
Fries
Processed snacks
and other sugary pastries
and other tried snacks
Swap this:

- Milk chocolate
- Sugary candies
- Sugary ice cream/popsicles

For this:

- Dark chocolate (low sugar)
- Fruit
- Yogurt + fruit
Swap this:

- Fries and other fried snacks
- Buttery and salty popcorn
- Processed snacks

For this:

- Veggies + hummus/dip
- Plain popcorn
- Nuts and seeds
Snack Ideas

- Caprese Salad
- Chocolate Peanut Butter Banana Bites
- Cucumber bites + cream cheese + Greek yogurt
- Hummus + carrot, cucumber + pita, etc.
Caprese Salad

Ingredients

- 3 medium tomatoes, sliced 1/4" thick
- 12 oz fresh mozzarella, sliced 1/4" thick
- 1 bunch fresh basil
- 3 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 2 tbsp balsamic vinegar
- Salt and pepper to taste

Instructions

- ✔ Slice tomatoes and layer on a plate.
- ✔ Layer mozzarella between each tomato slice.
- ✔ Tuck whole basil leaves in between tomatoes and cheese.
- ✔ Season with salt and pepper. Drizzle olive oil and balsamic vinegar.
# Chocolate Peanut Butter Banana Bites

**Tutorial**

15 minutes

## Ingredients

- 3 ripe bananas
- 1/3 cup peanut butter
- 1/2 cup dark chocolate chips
- 2 tsp coconut oil

## Instructions

- Slice banana and place on parchment lined baking sheet.
- Add peanut butter to each banana and top with another banana slice.
- Let harden in the freezer for 1 hour. Next, melt chocolate and coconut oil in the microwave for 1 minute.
- Dip each banana bite into chocolate and put back in the freezer for 15 minutes.
Snack Boxes

Classic Box:

- Turkey and cheese
- Grapes
- Pretzels

Mediterranean Box:

- Carrots and celery
- Turkey
- Olives and hummus

Bagel Box:

- Smoked salmon
- Egg and cucumber
- Cream cheese and crackers
Beverage

Tips and Swaps
Beverage Ideas

- Water
- Spa water
- Tea
- Low/sugar free coffee
Try more of:

- Water
  - Tip: consider sweetening with monk fruit or honey.

- Spa water
  - Loaded with gut friendly probiotics!

- Sparkling water
  - Tip: include a splash of juice for flavor.

- Sugar-free coffee
  - Opt for flavors lower in sugar

- Kombucha

- Unsweetened tea
Juice is high in sugar and removes the fiber from fruit. Try eating the fruit instead!

Limit:

- High fructose corn syrup
- Added sugar
- Sodas
- Sugary coffee drinks
- Sports drinks
- Juice

Opt for sugar-free options.
Swap this:

- Sodas
- Juices
- Sugary coffee

For this:

- Water
- Spa water
- Sugar-free coffee
For more information, contact:

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References


Rimmer, A. (2022, October 4). 6 healthy overnight oats recipes - easy make ahead breakfast idea! Simply Quinoa. Retrieved from https://www.simplyquinoa.com/overnight-oats-recipes/?epik=dj0yJnU9Rk5SazcwdEpqc01OdWwzeTk2d3lPdjVDbW4zTnJHYmEmcD0wJm49T1jUVE0Rkh6c3VxWG9tdUlIsNUI5dyZ0PUFBQUBR05SZEdF