

A collage of food images. At the top right is a fruit pie with peaches and blueberries. In the center is a black skillet with several pieces of cooked chicken. To the right is a white plate with a green salad. At the bottom right is a teal bowl with a salad containing cucumbers, tomatoes, and lettuce. At the bottom left, a hand is shown slicing a loaf of bread on a wooden cutting board. The background is a rustic wooden table.

Real Food Planning  
*Challenge*

A real food lifestyle in 12 days

by Kristin Marr



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# Introduction

## Achieving a Successful Real Food Lifestyle

Real food has become a major buzzword. Many people are eager to adopt a real food “diet,” but soon frustration takes over and the eager desire to eat “real” is met with the reality of a busy life. There are several factors that play a critical role in successfully making real food a long-term, doable lifestyle.

First, is learning to shop for ingredients versus premade “food.” Second, is learning to cook from-scratch in your own kitchen. Third, is learning to put recipes, shopping, and cooking into a practical daily plan.

Even with real food knowledge and cooking skills, the most eager real foodie will fail or become horribly frustrated without learning how to effectively create a plan for putting meals on the table. Without a practical, daily plan all the healthy ingredients and recipes simply won’t meet a plate and frustration will take over. This book is designed to give you the practical everyday tools



needed to create an effective, doable plan, whether you're cooking for one or a family of eight.

# A Planning Challenge, Not a Meal Plan Service

Switching to a real food lifestyle is a change from relying on others to feed our families to accepting the responsibility ourselves, learning to cook in the kitchen with ingredients recognized by our great-great grandma.

While meal planning services are a wonderful option, a long-term lifestyle change requires learning the necessary skills to take full responsibility for what our family eats.

For someone who wants to make real food more than just a temporary diet, live within a budget, and feed a family nourishing food, it's important to learn the art of planning. This is a skill that was once passed down in a time when domestic skills were prized.

Today, in the fast-paced world of modern society, the arts of cooking and planning food are rare skills. But, there's hope! Many people are beginning to question the current fast-paced drive-thru life. Domestic abilities like planning and making homemade meals are making their way back into homes.

While great-grandma didn't use pretty printables and Meal Plan Binders,





### 3. Optional Extras:

1. **Weekly Overview and Shopping List or Shopping List:** You can also use a piece of notebook paper.
2. **My Favorite Meals:** A kid-friendly version of Family Favorite Meals.
3. **Real Food Checklist:** A checklist for real food ingredients.
4. **Budget Keeper:** A 12-month budget keeper for food spending.
5. **What to Buy Organic:** A list for buying organic produce.
6. **Seasonal Produce Guide:** A list for buying seasonal produce.
7. **How to Store Fruits and Veggies:** A list for storing fruits and veggies.
8. **Meal Plan Binder Cover Pages:** Category pages to organize a Meal Plan Binder.
9. **30 Days of Meal Ideas:** 30 days of meal ideas for breakfast, lunch, and dinner.
10. **Make the Switch:** A list for swapping processed food for real alternatives.
11. **Make vs. Buy:** A list of what to make versus buy.
12. **Recipe Cards:** Twenty of my favorite real food recipes.
13. **Blank Recipe Cards:** Create your own favorite recipes.



### 4. An Organization System:

After completing the Real Food Planning Challenge you'll find the resources you print and create are worth their weight in gold. These pages will make meal planning an easy and quick activity. Soon, you'll have enough meal plans to keep your family happy and fed for months. I encourage you to find a way to keep these pages safe.

Here are a couple of options for keeping your planning resources organized:

- **Meal Plan Binder:** This option is my personal favorite. I keep everything related to real food planning in my binder. I divide my binder into categories: Food Inventory, Favorite Recipes To Make & Try, Weekly Meal Plans, Monthly Meal Plans, Budget Tracker, Real Food Tips.
- **File System:** Keeping your planning resources organized can be as simple as a file folder.

## 5. Time:

There's so much more to creating a real food plan than just writing down a few recipes and heading to the grocery store. There are many little details that go into creating a plan that will actually feed you and your family.



Over the course of twelve days I'm going to walk you, step by step, through each detail of how to create a meal plan without frustration, but this will require a time commitment. We're going to start from scratch, teaching you the necessary skills to create a planning system for a real food lifestyle. Each challenge progresses to the next step of successful meal planning. Please don't skip a challenge. Each challenge helps you create the necessary building blocks to create a meal plan you'll love.

I ask that you dedicate one hour a day to each challenge. If you need more time to complete a challenge, simply extend the challenge over a two day time period. There's no pressure to complete the challenges in twelve days, so take your time.

SAMPLE





# My *Favorite* Meals



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# Challenge 1: Taking an Inventory

## The Real Food Inventory

Before we create an actual plan, we need to take an inventory of the food in your kitchen.

I understand taking an inventory of the food in your fridge, freezer, and pantry may appear daunting and a waste of time. But, I assure it's not. Having a list of the regular items stocked in your kitchen gives you a direction when sitting down to plan family meals. Knowing you have 10 lbs of oats sitting in the pantry due to that amazing sale you just couldn't pass up, allows you to plan multiple meals with oats in January. Hello, oatmeal, fruit crisp, and granola bars! In the real food community we call this strategy "shopping from your own kitchen."

Creating a food inventory saves money. Even though a bag of oats sits quietly in the pantry, other items may easily crowd visibility. Poor, oats! An inventory means those oats will not be forgotten, ultimately saving money because you no longer need to purchase oats for the multiple oat dishes planned.

Knowing your food stock is the first step to creating an effective plan for cooking and eating “real.” Over the next three days I’ll walk you through creating an inventory that will save time and money when it comes to planning and shopping for real food. Benefits to keeping a real food inventory include:

**Save Money:** Knowing what food is currently stocked in your kitchen allows you to shop your own inventory of goods and plan meals accordingly. Shopping your own inventory first means you save money when its time to shop at the store.

**Save Time:** With a delicious dinner plan in hand, you open the pantry only to find you’re missing tomatoes (the key ingredient). You have two options: spend time thinking of a new recipe or go to the store for one jar of tomatoes. Both options consume valuable time. Keeping an updated food inventory allows you to plan accordingly and not waste valuable time scrambling for missing ingredients.

**Organization:** Creating and maintaining a food inventory is about more than just creating a list of food items. Organization plays a key role in maintaining a real food kitchen. Knowing where you can find spices, beans, and even certain veggies means you’ll have more time (less digging for missing ingredients) and save money (less overspending because the ginger fell in the back of the spice cabinet).





# Day 1

## Pantry Inventory

### What you Need:

Pantry Inventory printable

**Today's Task:** Using your pantry inventory printable write down all the usable food currently found in your pantry. This includes: flours, individualized spices, baking soda, chocolate chips, noodles, tomatoes...anything that sits your pantry that can be used to make food. Include the quantity for each food. For example: 3 bags of chocolate chips and 10 lbs of flour.

### Tips

**Clean out:** Remember the bag of black rice the doctor on TV recommended, but your family hated? Place it in a special pile to donate. There's no sense (unless you're on a very strict budget or living in an area with limited food supply) to keep something your family won't eat. A food bank, local church, or charitable organization will often happily take such products. Maybe a friend on Facebook loves black rice and will happily take the bag off of your hands.

**Clean and Organize:** While you're taking an inventory pull everything out. Wipe down shelves, check for food that's taking up space in a box with only a small amount of actual food left. Take organizing a step further by placing food in visible containers with labels. Now is the time for a fresh, clean, and organized pantry.

# MAMA'S CHICKEN NOODLE SOUP

## Ingredients

- 4 cups water
- 5 cups chicken broth
- 1 cup chopped carrots
- 1 cup chopped celery
- 1 cup chopped onion
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 tsp dried thyme
- 3 tsp salt
- ground pepper
- 1 whole chicken (3-4 lbs)
- 2 cups quality store-bought macaroni noodles

## Instructions

- Place the chicken in the crock-pot.
- Add the veggies and garlic to the crock pot along with the salt, pepper, bay leaves, thyme, water, and chicken broth. Do not add the macaroni noodles.
- Cook on low for 8 hours.
- After 8 hours, add 2 cups macaroni noodles and cook for 20-30 minutes in the crock pot. The heat from the soup will cook the noodles.
- Remove the bones from the crockpot. Remember to save the bones to make broth.
- Serve warm or freeze for later.

# APPLE CINNAMON SOAKED OATMEAL

## Ingredients

- 2 cups old-fashioned rolled oats
- 2 cups water
- 2 TB pure maple syrup
- 2 TB acidic medium (choose one: plain whole milk yogurt, lemon juice, apple cider vinegar, milk kefir, or whey. I prefer yogurt.)
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1 cup water
- 1 cup whole milk
- 1 chopped apple
- 1/2 tsp ground cinnamon

## Instructions

- Mix together the oats, 2 cups water, pure maple syrup, and an acidic medium in a large bowl. Cover with a towel and let the oats rest on the counter overnight.
- In a medium-size saucepan bring 1 cup milk, 1 cup water, salt, chopped apple, cinnamon, and oat mixture to a boil. Reduce heat to a simmer. Cover the saucepan and allow to simmer for 5 minutes.
- Spoon into bowls and top with a healthy fat such as: butter or coconut oil. Other toppings options: chopped walnuts or pecans, milk, honey or pure maple syrup.
- NOTE: To make plain oatmeal omit the chopped apple and cinnamon. Serves: 4 people.