

MENU PLANNING MAGIC

By Tricia Dennis

Here it is -- A simple, timesaving system that uses your own family's favorite foods and helps you spice up your menus with variety.

This is a practical and easy way to create diversity and meal appeal by planning 8 weeks of family menus in advance and serving them in rotation. No two meals within the 8-week period will be exactly the same. Avoid the "what-can-I-fix for dinner?" dilemma.

You will need:

1. Your collection of favorite recipes
2. Approximately 60 3 x 5 or 4 x 6 index cards
3. Two small rings to hold prepared menu cards

Steps in Planning:

1. Review your recipes. List your family's main-course favorites. Approximately 52 will be needed.
2. Determine which day of the week a particular menu would be the most suitable by considering your family's pattern of activity on various days of the week. Decide which days lend themselves to heavier or lighter meals.
3. Arrange these dinner menus into groups of 7, one for each day of the week, keeping in mind the time needed for preparation.
4. Prepare an index card for each day of the 8-week period. Write either the main dish or the complete menu for the day's main meal, listing along with the main course suitable vegetables and fruits to give variety and nutritional balance.

5. Prepare a shopping list for each week, listing all of the food items needed to be purchased for each day's main meal.

Step 1

MAIN DISHES MY FAMILY LIKES WITH:

Hamburger

Chicken

Pork/Ham

Roast/Round Steak

Soups

Seafood

Meatless

Leftover

Other

BE SURE TO LIST ONLY THOSE FOODS YOUR FAMILY WILL EAT!

Step 2

Place your main dishes on the menu sheet on the days they seem to fit best.

For example:

--Sunday dinner could be planned to cook slowly while your family is attending church meetings and then is easily put together, such as roast beef or a crock pot meal.

--Monday family home evening meal could be planned to be fun for your children, one that they can have a hand in preparing.

--Tuesday could be a good day for fish.

--Wednesday could be chicken night.

--Thursday could be a night for favorite ethnic foods such as tacos, spaghetti or chow mein.

--Friday is date night. Plan something to be prepared ahead for the children or something they can fix easily themselves.

--Saturday might be best to plan casual fare such as hamburgers, hot dogs, ham and eggs or waffles with everyone coming and going.

Try to balance out your week with variety. Include some chicken, beef, seafood, and meatless meals; and plan one leftover meal for every other week.

Step 4

Using your menu sheet as a guide to the main dish, write down your entire menu for each meal on separate index cards. (Or to simplify, you

can just write the main dish.) If you do write the entire meal, write the menu on the left side of the front of the card. Consider what goes good with what. Don't have a hard-to-make main dish with a hard-to-make vegetable. Don't plan a creamed main dish and a creamed vegetable, etc.

On the right side of the front of the menu card, list all the ingredients for the entire meal, including spices, etc. If there is anything you have to do the night before or the morning of, such as thaw the meat, write this in the top left hand corner of the card. On the back of the card write the How To of preparing the entire meal. Be sure to include the timing of each part of the meal, especially if you are trying to help a beginning cook.

Step 5

Go through the menu cards for each week and list the ingredients you need to purchase on shopping day. Write the appropriate heading on each of 8 different index cards:

"Shopping List for Week No. 1"

"Shopping List for Week No. 2"

etc.

Total the amounts needed for the entire 8 weeks and then multiply those numbers by 6 to determine the amounts needed to obtain a one-year's supply of food.

Punch holes in the menu cards, place them in chronological order and insert the small rings. Now you're prepared with a simplified time-saving system for providing your family with well-planned delicious meals!