

# Food Prep Makes Life Easier

**Sam:** Well, good morning. Welcome to Sunday Snacks. Hi, I'm Ellie and I'm Sam. Today we're gonna talk about food prep though, which is I think near and dear to not only my heart, but also my stomach.

I will go along with that. When we are talking about food prep, we don't mean it in the sense of we're gonna go work at a restaurant or cutting everything up ahead of time. We're talking about the mental preparation around eating because we all need to nourish our bodies.

Because there are plenty of reasons why things like weight Watchers, Noom, and all these other things exist. While I am a person that is anti-diet. I don't know about you. Obviously. I just like to eat, but I'm very anti diet and I've been that way for my whole life.

I feel that I have a very good relationship with food, but I think that's because I make my food. But that doesn't necessarily mean I make everything.

Let's be transparent on that. I am a, a big advocate for the theory behind programs like Noom because they are advocating for a healthier relationship with food and not dieting. Noom is about approaching the psychology of food and around what that means to you. A lot of it has to do with how you are raised, and your family handled eating. I've seen many of my friends see great success with this program because it changed their relationship with food. It is why I personally, don't believe in dieting.

The reason why I feel like I have a very good relationship with food and because I make a lot of it myself is that I am engaged in every part of that process. I'm smelling it. I'm feeling it. I'm seeing it. I'm tasting it along the way. I'm hearing things as, you know, they pop or sizzle thus I'm having a full body experience with my food.

Therefore, food prep is far easier than people think. You know what I'm getting at? I do. As a mom of two kids, I used to work full time as a teacher. One of the biggest things that saved my butt every day, to be able to still have a home cooked meal that wasn't always pasta, was to take a moment each week and plan out the meals that we were gonna have. That way it was easy to pull something out the night before. When I got home, it would only take me 30 minutes to make dinner because I would've already had thawed chicken or we would have purchased everything we needed on the weekend and potentially chopped it up.. I usually did a lot of the chopping still that same day, but at the end of the day, the reason why my family was able to eat home cooked meals together while I was working a full time job was because I had the forethought to prepare for that week.

And one of the things that did that for me was Knock Knock Pads ([All Out Of](#) and [What To Eat](#)). All right. Go for it. Make fun of me all you want.

**Ellie:** I just think that's an interesting name.

**Sam:** Knock Knock Pads have been my lifesaver. I know she makes fun of them, but they work for me. They are heavy duty notepads that have literally a list of potential foods that you need from the grocery store, that the *All Out Of* pad. As something finishes in my pantry, I can just check it off and say, oh, I need more apples or I need more, or I need more flour. They're all there. They're already pre-written. All I have to do is put a check mark so I recognize that that's something that's missing. My kids even help regularly with this task now. It makes life a lot easier.

The other one that I have that I get in tandem that is simply a week's meal planning is called *What To Eat*. Dinners are the largest block and it's, you know, seven days a of, are we gonna eat at home or what's the meal gonna be? And who's making it. We literally do that. And we do it with our kids. Now, now that they're old enough to make decisions about the food we eat. That is 10 minutes tops of food prep mentality on a Sunday, before I go to the, the grocery store, saves money and it also makes the rest of the week go so much smoother.

**Ellie:** Plus, everybody's happier because they've all had a say in something they want to eat. Yeah. That's an awesome idea.

**Sam:** But that it's different for you, food preps different for you because you live by yourself. How's that work for you?

**Ellie:** Well, I think for a lot of older people, we grew up cooking a lot and then we have a hard time downsizing. How I cook is still in big batches, but I then put it in smaller containers and freeze it. For example, if I'm making a stew, I'll only put enough potatoes in for, for a day or two. Then I'll take the rest of the stew base and freeze. Since potatoes don't freeze well, that is why I only add a few potatoes so that when I thaw the meal for the next time all I have to do is add potatoes and let it simmer for a while.

I do the same with salad. I put it in a 9x13 pan with paper towels on the bottom. After they are clean, I lay in there with a paper towel on top. And my salads will last two weeks. It's impressive. You know of course I keep my refrigerator cold. Yeah. It's kind of like an ice box and, well, from what I've read though, it's where it's supposed to be. Most people don't keep their refrigerator cold enough. I still have crunchy salad a week and a half to two weeks after I bought it.

You have to experiment a little bit, but mostly, I just take advantage of a freezer and being able to make that big meal that you're very comfortable making then freezing it. I have learned that freezing cookies only works a little bit because for some reason, my brain may not think to take out dinner, but it never has a problem saying we should take out three of those cookies this morning. Cause we're gonna want them later. You know, psychology works in strange and mysterious ways.

**Sam:** One of the things that I think both of us do, family or single, that is incredibly helpful is that when we cook say we make enough of a base ingredient for the week at one time. For example, if we are making hamburgers one night, we will plan for chili or pasta with Bolognese sauce. That way when we are making hamburgers we cook all of the meat at one time. Once it's pre-cooked and ready for the next time you need it. If I want to do tacos later in the week, because suddenly your avocados are riper sooner than you thought, it becomes tacos and guacamole.

It's leftovers people! Though, I like the idea that leftovers, it is awful to have the same thing 12 times in a row. Exactly. And, and that's what I think for us when we talk about food prep, that that's what we're really trying to hit home for everybody.

It is that a tiny bit of forethought of you can have 5 meals from hamburger you cooked on Monday for the rest of the week. Everything from chili, tacos, Salisbury steak, pasta and Bolognese sauce, Shepperd's pie, etc... You're creating your own TV dinners with much less hassle and much less salt.

Another thing that I learned that you and I differ about is I like making bread and I know you love making bread too, because I know how much you love to eat it <laugh> but I like to make bread by making a very low, low energy, no knead - throw it in my refrigerator - dough. Once it's risen and you are very traditional, like want to knead and have that experience. I don't have the time.

I just don't. And I don't want to, I don't want to go through all that, especially with my shoulder.

**Ellie:** Yeah.

**Sam:** Taking the time to learn that simple skill. Yeah. Like you don't have to know how to make bread from scratch with kneading it, punching it down like three times or two times.

I know you love it. <laugh>

**Ellie:** It's like your sensory things you were just describing with food prep.

**Sam:** I have that sensory experience is one time of mixing it and then let it do its thing.

**Ellie:** Oh, it's not the same. But for me, again as a single person, mm-hmm <affirmative> the recipe I use usually will make three loaves. Yep. I cut them in half, wrap them in plastic wrap, put them in a plastic bag and put them in the freezer. Mm-hmm <affirmative> I'm learning that. I don't have to eat at all at once, even though I would like to. But it's, it's also, I'm only doing that once every three weeks. Yeah. You know?

**Sam:** We go through more bread than that.

**Ellie:** It's still not a lot of time, you know? <affirmative> but it's just finding out what works. Yeah. What, what is the, the kink in your plan mm-hmm <affirmative> and find a way to, to get around that, find a solution for yourself that works to make it easier.

**Sam:** One of the things that when I was teaching again, mm-hmm <affirmative>, I'm gonna go back to that example. When I was teaching, my husband and I realized that we were notorious for forgetting to pull out meat.

He did a lot of research online and he's like, I'm gonna buy you a new wave oven. I'm like, what the heck is a new wave oven? It's one more thing to take up counter space. Yeah.

But that saved my butt because what we were able to do was put something in there from frozen and in 30-ish minutes, while I was prepping all the other aspects of dinner, a roast could cook or chicken breast could cook from frozen.

We had that as an available resource. Now mind you, it doesn't exist in my kitchen anymore, mainly because I'm able to, since I work from home now, I can take more time to do things. I don't have to stress out if I forget, you know, at 11 o'clock, I can still pull out a roast and have it all in time. It doesn't have to be overnight because I'm home. But if you're working in an office, something like that would work.

Instapot is hugely notorious for that. I don't like them because I already have a pressure canner and a traditional pressure cooker. I don't need one more kitchen gadget. But if you are on a time crunch and you really wanna do those kind of meals, an Instapot would be a great option.

Mm-hmm <affirmative>, you know, if that's something that you're open for and you know, another one - crockpots are great. I don't like to cook meat in there, but heck I will definitely do all my broth in there.

My tomato sauce from gets made in there. You, I do a lot more vegetarian meals out of a crockpot than I do a meat dish, but that's just me because I don't like that. But other people I know live and die by their crockpot. One of my friends is I swear, she's got like 20 cookbooks for different crock pot recipes, and she's really good at it.

It just doesn't work for me. And that means it's okay. Like it doesn't have to be what works for you. What works for me? What works for her. **And I think that's the valuable point is that food prep is what it needs to be for *your* family.**

Yeah. If that's bento boxes for kids for lunch that you can do on a Saturday or a Sunday before the week for school rock it, if that is utilizing your crockpot rocket, if that's taking the time to pull out food, do it

**Ellie:** One other little tip is if you have a couple things in your fridge or pantry and you don't know what you want, try Googling it! Just put in recipe with potatoes and sour cream <laugh> and you'll be surprised at how many things come up.

Mm-hmm <affirmative> that use that. And then you just look for those things that you have those ingredients at home, or you can replace with something. I got a cabbage by mistake instead of lettuce. It was a door service. And I thought like, what am I gonna do with all this cabbage? It's a lot of cabbage. I ended up making a great cabbage casserole when I put in three or four things that I had right then.

And, it ended up it's on my favorite recipes list, which I would've never looked for. Not that I don't like cabbage it, not one of the things because it's usually more than I can eat. It was simple to make. It was, you didn't have to roll up anything. It was a wonderful casserole.

Take advantage of the internet for ideas, ways to use a cake mix, or even how to make your own cake mix. Yeah. You know, I mean, it's, it's all there and put the word easy in and you'll get a hundred more recipes.

**Sam:** <laugh> exactly. And I will tell you another hack on that one. If they have the button that says scroll to the recipe, just click it. Yeah. I love all their stories. Yeah. I will go back and read them if I like that recipe. But scroll straight to the recipe so you can see if you have what you need to go forward. Yeah.

**Ellie:** Great tips.

**Sam:** If there's any ideas or hacks that you have for your food prep or questions, please put them in the comments. We're very interested.

Again, former teacher, everyone always questioned how I actually did it. I did it by just that little bit of shift in mentality. You know, knock-knock pads saved my life. It was just a simple concept, but it completely changed the way I do things.

Find the little glitch you have to fix mm-hmm <affirmative> and make it work for you. It'll save you money. It'll save you time and, more than likely, you'll eat a lot healthier. And that's a big thing. You will eat healthier.

If you change your mindset around food prep, it doesn't have to take hours and days and all these things you don't even have to take do what a lot of the food preppers talk about, which is like you take your whole Sunday and do all the pre-cooking.

If you just do a little bit, each time, your life would be so much simpler.

Have a good one. See you later. <laugh>.