



KITCHEN HACKS

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Trash Bowl

Use an inexpensive large metal mixing bowl but any old bowl or container will do. My parents use an old ice-cream bucket. Set it up next to your cutting board and toss in any and all scraps as you prep your meal. I love it because it drastically reduces the amount of cleanup time and trips to the trash. Plus, it's something everyone has on hand. You can then dump it into a compost bin outside (minus any meat or animal products) and use it to feed your garden. That also saves you money. I grew up with a compost bucket next to the garbage can in the kitchen.

Dry erase board

Keep a dry erase board on your refrigerator (or large freezer) with a list of what's in your fridge. So often I forget what I bought at the store and this list helps me keep track of what's in stock and also which ingredients should be used first. I divide my list into categories (herbs, produce, dairy etc.) but do whatever works for you. Another perk – it's green! Think of all the time saved lingering in front of an open fridge door. It helps make putting together your grocery list easy too. You know what you need just by glancing at your white board. Just make sure to have everyone on board with this. If your husband/kids/partner eats the last of the cheese, tell them to erase it so you know you need more.

Save your cheese rinds

Don't toss your cheese rinds! Save them in a Ziploc bag in the fridge or freezer and add them to your next tomato sauce or homemade stock – they are fantastic flavor boosters! Because of its high umami factor, Parmesan works especially well, but any hard cheese rind will be a wonderful addition. This is a great way to create that flavor in your dishes

that always seems to be missing. Once I learned this trick, it dramatically changed my savory recipes! Just make sure the rinds don't have any wax or paper in them.

Wrap your herbs in paper towel, or put them in a vase

Ever buy that beautiful bunch of cilantro at the store and then when you get around to using it the leaves are either dried up or turned to slime? To significantly extend their shelf life, take a damp paper towel and gently wrap it around your herbs before storing them in a bag or container in the fridge. Replace every few days as needed. You will be amazed at how much longer they last! Also, try placing them in a vase, like you would a bouquet of flowers. Add water of course. This also makes them more visible to you in the fridge so you don't forget to use them!

Freeze your wine

It never fails, we have a party and there are a bunch of half drunk open wine bottles left over. I have just started freezing them if they are not going to be drunk up soon. You would hate to waste wine. Either drink it or freeze it! It's also handy because the ice trays partition the wine into individual portions. Great to throw into soups, stews, or even slow cooking meats in the crockpot.

Freeze Your Scraps

When you make heavy vegetable dished you are often left with scraps like carrot tops and celery leaves. Do not throw these in the scrap bucket! Keep a large freezer bag in the freezer for just this purpose. Toss them all into the bag and save them for use to flavor soup stocks, bone broths, slow cooked meat dishes. Then the next time you want to make up some bone broth it won't cost you a thing to make it taste like a rich savory vegetable beef soup!

Always Double the Recipe and Freeze Half

Always cook double what you need and learn to enjoy leftovers! This method leaves you with an assortment of frozen meals over time. Just remember to label them with masking tape and also mark them on the white board on the outside of your freezer (with dates included). This also makes easy work of weeknight meals when you will be gone and the family has to fend for themselves. I know it has saved my husband from making the excuse that they had to eat out because there was nothing to eat!

Deep Freeze

One of the best investments I've made is my deep freezer. The sheer ability to store massive amounts of delicious food is a real foodie's dream. Not only can I purchase large quantities of grass-fed and pastured meat from my local farm at bargain prices and freeze seasonal produce at its peak to enjoy during the winter months, but it gives me extra storage!

Chop, Shred, Prep, Repeat

This is what I like to refer to as the "weekend power hour" (or hours, more likely). This is when you chop, shred, and prep all of your meals ahead of time so you don't have to spend any more time throughout the week preparing dinner than you would tossing a frozen pizza in the oven. In a perfect world, you would do this as soon as you get home from your shopping extravaganza, but alas, real life is not that seamless. Schedule this time in the kitchen as if it's a meeting you can't miss. I like to do it on Saturday mornings, after our nice breakfast. The kids help me too. Then it's DONE and you can move on to enjoying your weekend and week ahead!

Make Soup Often

Making up a huge batch of soup can be super easy to do. Plus making large batches of it allows you to freeze it for future meals. I have yet to make a soup that did not freeze well! Soup is also a great meal to freeze into individual portions and bring to work for lunch. If you don't use a microwave (we don't) you can purchase a small crockpot and keep it at work. About 30 minutes before you want to have lunch, just dump your soup in and turn it on. Voila! You will have a healthy meal without having to eat out at a restaurant during the work day! Plus, over time this one can save you a TON of money by not eating out for lunch all week long!

Invest in Technology

Get yourself a good quality food processor. I'm a traditional kinda gal, and enjoy chopping and shredding by hand as much as the next one, but most days, when I'm in the kitchen it's game time! I like to just get it done! I would be lost without my favorite kitchen gadgets. You will learn to use them to your benefit too, and save a ton of time on prepping food each week!

Recruit the Troops

Contrary to popular belief, husbands are perfectly capable of assisting with meal preparation. So are little people. Depending on their age, small hands can chop, wash, measure, and peel. Plus, it gets kids involved in the kitchen and teaches them a valuable lifelong lesson: cooking and nutrition.! If you're dealing with picky eaters, chances are, they're more likely to try something that they helped to prepare. I've seen it happen a million times!

Meatless Monday's

By eliminating meat from your rotation one day per week you can save money. Think about it, thats 4 days per month and 48 days per year. If you think about what you can spend on meat for a meal, those savings add up fast! Now that is not to say that you have to eat a vegan diet on Mondays, not at all. You can simply do something like "breakfast for dinner" and make omelets or scrambled eggs. Plus, it's a great excuse to just make something easy like scrambled eggs for dinner! My kids think its really fun to have our meals flipped around like that!

Meal Planning (I left this one last for a reason)

Finally, this one can be challenging: meal plans. I do not swear by the meal plan model because I really want to teach people how to cook meals from ingredients they have on hand and get creative. But, meal planning is also a great way to learn your cooking methods and flavor preferences. From these meal plans you can build regular routines for your meals. Then making those weekly lists will not be such a chore.

So, to offer meal planning, I leave it to my friend who is a master at it:My personal favorite from Holistic Squid, that includes weekly real food meal plans, recipes, shopping lists, and more for as low as \$6 a month. Priceless, if you ask me. [CLICK HERE](#) for the details. I also have a friend who sends out meal plans in her email newsletter. She does not include shopping lists with her meal plans however. But, it's free. [CLICK HERE](#) to sign up for her emails. You can also grab easy recipes from the Pinterest page that I set up specifically for this group. It's filled with healthy and simple recipes that make meal planning much much easier. [CLICK HERE](#) to check it out.