

Eat Smart, Move More...
Maintain, don't gain!

HOLIDAY Challenge

WEEK 3

Holiday Challenge Guidelines

The overall goal is for participants to *maintain* their current weight for the last 7 weeks of the year. As a participant, you will:

- Weigh yourself each week.
- Track what you eat and drink.
- Track your activity.
- Make a plan.

Keep up the great work!

Thanksgiving has come and gone, and today marks a brand new week to eat smart and move more.



WEEK #3 CHALLENGE:

Focus on Fruits and Vegetables

The USDA's Dietary Guidelines suggest filling at least half of your plate with fruit and vegetables for every meal and snack.¹ This week challenge yourself to focus on fruit and vegetables. Visualize your plate and make sure you have lots of **fruits** and **vegetables**. This can be easier than just counting servings. Fruits and vegetables are nutrient powerhouses that are low in calories and high in fiber, so they keep you fuller for longer. The benefits add up over time, bite by bite.

There are many ways to "sneak" fruits and vegetables into your daily eating routine.

- Try substituting a handful of carrots for a bag of chips or an apple instead of a cereal bar.
- Add a handful of spinach to your morning fruit smoothie.
- Add bell peppers and onions into an omelet to start the day with vegetables.
- Instead of meat sauce with pasta, try adding eggplant, mushrooms, or squash with the marinara sauce and serve over whole-grain noodles.

If possible, opt for in-season fruits and vegetables. These will be more flavorful and oftentimes less expensive than out-of-season produce. Look for winter squash, Brussels sprouts, apples, citrus, and cranberries to be in season this time of year.

1. www.dietaryguidelines.gov



Eat Smart, Move More...
Maintain, don't gain!

HOLIDAY

Challenge

WEEK 3



Daily Tip: Basic Knife Skills

A chef's knife is the workhorse of your kitchen. Knowing how to properly use a chef's knife will make your experience in the kitchen easier, faster, and dare we say, enjoyable. The more you practice good knife skills the better you will become, but the first knife skill you need to master is safety.

- Never catch a falling knife. Step back and put your hands up.
- Use a sturdy, non-slip cutting board.
- Set the knife down on the cutting board with the sharp edge facing away from the hand you will pick it up with.

Watch **How to Cut With a Chef's Knife** to learn the proper grip forms for your knife hand and the hand you'll use to hold the food. Then practice your knife skills by watching **How to Cut Onions Without Crying** or **How to Properly Dice Fruits and Vegetables**.

Essential Knife Set

This basic set will provide you with everything you need to improve your cooking skills and cook great meals.

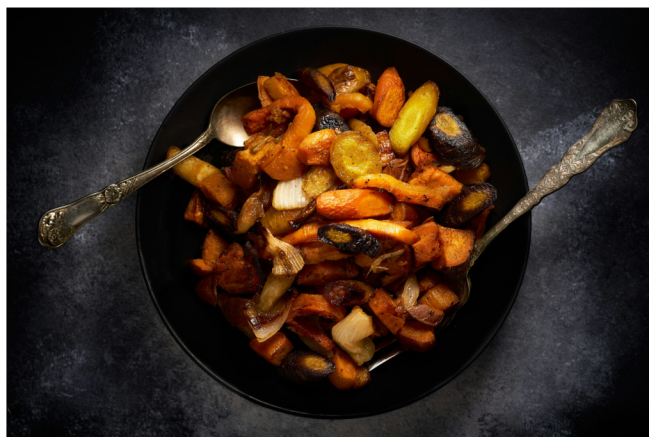
- **Chef's knife** - this is the workhorse of your kitchen and one of the most important knives you should have in your kitchen. The blade length should be around 8 inches long.
- **Serrated knife** - perfect for cutting bread, soft-skinned vegetables, or fruit.
- **Paring knife** - the smallest of the set, it allows for more precision and dexterity when cutting.
- **Kitchen shears** - the culinary, sharper relative of the scissors will come in handy in more ways than you can imagine. From cutting chicken to opening packages, this is a must-have tool in your set.
- **Speed peeler** - although fruits and vegetables can be peeled with a paring knife, this tool will make the job ten times easier and safer.



Daily Tip: 5 Essential Rules of Cooking

Cooking meals at home and eating out less can improve your health by providing more control over the ingredients and portion sizes. You don't need to be a professional chef to eat well, but there are some tips you can borrow from them. Judge **your** cooking success by whether the food tastes, smells, and looks good to you—not by whether it matches a styled and staged photo. Each individual brings their own likes and dislikes, cultural reference points, strengths, and weaknesses to the kitchen.

1. **Use a good knife and cutting board.** Ideally, you want at least two knives and a non-slip cutting board. If you do not have a non-slip cutting board, you can place a damp paper towel underneath to prevent slippage.
2. **Prepare your space and your ingredients.** Clean and ready your space before you cook. Then, pull out all of your ingredients. Measure, chop, or prep as needed before cooking. This is called mise en place—or put in place.
3. **Cook a lot.** This essential rule is about cooking in volume. Cooking twice as much as you need does not take twice as long, and you will have leftovers for other meals throughout the week or in the freezer.
4. **Cook with ingredients rather than recipes.** Cooking with ingredients, not recipes is a challenge for beginners. Recipes are helpful and we all use them but don't be afraid to experiment. For instance, if a recipe calls for asparagus but the store only has sub-par asparagus, be willing to experiment with the produce that is on sale and looks fresh.
5. **Find YOUR food.** Find 5-10 recipes that you enjoy preparing and your whole family likes eating. Repeating a dish over and over will help the process get easier and quicker. Making a dish multiple times allows you to change the recipe based on seasonal produce or what you have on hand.



Daily Tip: Rules of Roasting

Roasting is a simple and relatively hands-off cooking technique that enhances and intensifies the flavors of food. This technique is especially great for cooking vegetables because it transforms their flavors from ordinary to extraordinary—it's all in the caramelization. **Roasted vegetables** are good to eat hot, at room temperature, or even cold in salads. While tossing some vegetables in a little olive oil and throwing them in the oven is super easy, some basic rules will take you from good to great as a master vegetable roaster.

1. **Use a good pan.** If you have a sturdy-rimmed baking sheet you are all set. If you have a flimsy baking sheet from your first apartment or one that does not have a 1–2 inch rim, it is time to make a small investment and get one. Choose one that is as large as possible to fit in your oven.
2. **Use foil to line the baking pan – shiny side up.** The shiny side will help with browning. The foil will also help with clean-up.
3. **Don't overcrowd the pan.** If your vegetables are overlapping, you will create steam, and this is a whole different cooking method. You want to get some brown on the vegetables, this can't happen if they are steaming. Even if you must do two batches, don't put too many vegetables in at once.
4. **Toss the vegetables in oil** in a bowl or plastic bag before putting them on the baking sheet. This will allow for an even coating of oil on all the nooks and crannies of the vegetables, and it will help you to not use too much oil. It does take a few minutes and an extra bowl to clean up, but it is worth it.
5. **Flip the vegetables** (if needed) only when they are good and brown. Impatience will result in a less than desirable vegetable. You want caramelization to happen – this takes time. If the vegetables are not coming up from the pan/foil, they need more time.



Daily Tip: What You Need to Know About Food Processing

The term “processed food” often gets mischaracterized and is generally used as a catch-all for foods to avoid. Processed food is any agricultural commodity altered from its natural state. These alterations are referred to as unit operations—steps in the processing of foods that cause a physical or chemical transformation(1). Virtually all food we eat has some level of processing.

The main goals of food processing are to improve food safety, extend shelf life, enhance nutritional value, and improve taste and texture. Many industrial unit operations are like the unit operations you perform in your home kitchen. Oftentimes, the only difference between home cooking and industrial cooking is scale. In fact, industrial cooking performs many unit operations, like freezing, significantly more efficiently than in the home kitchen setting (1).

What about ultra-processed foods (UPFs)? Many foods that are characterized as UPFs are high in sugars, salts, saturated fats, and calories while being low in nutritional value. These food products are also convenient and require little to no preparation—for example, fortified breakfast cereal or peanut butter. Not everyone has the time or means to cook most meals at home. Reading the nutrition facts label is critical to making informed nutrition decisions.

Bottom line: overconsumption of any food with poor nutritional profiles will lead to poor diets and these foods can be produced by industrial cooking or home cooking processes. Instead of choosing food based on whether it's processed or not, consider its ingredients, nutrient content, and how it contributes to a varied, balanced, and nutritionally complete diet.

1.A fresh take on food processing: Empowering your audience to make informed choices. Fruitsandveggies.org Web site. <https://fruitsandveggies.org/a-fresh-take-on-food-processing-empowering-your-audience-to-make-informed-choices/>. Updated 2022. Accessed Jun 29, 2022.