Meal-Planning Basics

A handy guide to get and stay fit with foods you like

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When it comes to healthy, satisfying dishes that are quick and easy to create in portions that won't fatten you up, Phyllis Lerner, an advocate for women who are 50 or older, offers suggestions galore.

"Most meal choices are easily assembled using previously prepared or packaged foods and require minimal cooking," she says. "The most important foods for you to have available are those you like!"

Stock your kitchen with basic foods to support nutritional needs. Lerner proposes precooked proteins, such as chicken and hard-boiled eggs; precut fresh fruits and veggies; cooked brown rice; and a variety of salt-free seasonings "to spice up your food without added calories."

Always keep on hand different snacks in the appropriate portions, she adds. "The trick is to use nutritious foods with just enough naughty extras to make your taste buds sing," she advises. "My favorite is crunchy, super-thin rice cakes that can be used as a base for all types of toppings to give you something sweet, salty or creamy."

This means less time counting calories and prepping food and more fun effectively managing your weight.

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