

# Cooking Challenge

Cooking is a great way to help yourself make better food choices. And you don't have to be a chef to get creative and see the benefits!

Whether you're a beginner or a whiz in the kitchen, this guide will help you reflect on your relationship with food and start taking more control of what you eat. As we'll see, cooking opens the door to a range of better choices – for your body, mind, relationships, and even your bank account!

## WHY IS COOKING IMPORTANT?

1.

You'll be more aware of the ingredients in your meals and cut back on processed foods.

2.

You'll create opportunities to connect with others over a delicious meal you can be proud of!

3.

Preparing meals yourself is a great way to save money.

4.

Getting creative in the kitchen can bring moments of joy and fun to your day.

## LET'S GET COOKING! HERE ARE SOME TIPS TO HELP YOU GET STARTED:

### 1. Make a plan



- Planning out your meals ahead of time is a great way to set yourself up for better food choices.
- To start, pick one night a week when you plan your meals. Planning even just one meal a week is a great start!
- Write a list of your go-to meals you can prep in advance – and post it on your fridge. Over time, you'll build up a list of delicious meals that will bring variety to your days.

### 2. Make a list



- Write down your grocery list before going to the store. Planning ahead helps you avoid buying things you don't need in the moment.
- Take five minutes to change the way you set up your kitchen cabinets to support better food choices. Move highly processed, sugary foods to a less visible place so you won't reach for them first.

### 3. Set up your environment for better eating choices.

Our food choices are connected to our environment in a big way. Set yourself up for success by making small changes to your kitchen. If you know you'll be hungry for a snack in a few hours, you can even put a piece of fruit or other non-sugary treat in a place where you'll easily see it, like the front of the fridge or on the counter.

### 4. Find a cooking buddy.

- Cooking doesn't have to be a solo activity! Asking others to join you in the kitchen can create a sense of community and connection, and can be a lot of fun.
- Set aside time to cook with a family member. You can even do it virtually or on the phone with a friend.

### 5. Remind yourself why you're doing this!

- Think about the intention of what you're doing. Ask yourself who you're cooking for and why it's important, or who will benefit from the shared meal.
- This is especially helpful if you're feeling like you don't have the time or energy to cook. If you can connect to your "why," you'll give yourself a boost.

## COOKING TIPS FROM CHALLENGE WINNERS

"One of my favorite recipes is spicy curry with lots of vegetables, like carrots, squash, and zucchini. Instead of using heavy cream in my sauce, I use unsweetened almond milk. I also created a great granola recipe using beaten egg whites instead of syrup to hold it together."

#### Dominique Clavette

Supercenter #4583; Greer, S.C.  
\$5K Winner



"I never learned to cook growing up, but now, I'm experimenting with one-pot meals in a cast iron skillet. I made Jamaican jerk chicken with rice and habanero peppers...My new way of eating has changed the way food tastes. I used to eat candy throughout the day, but I just tried a peanut butter cup and it didn't taste good anymore!"

#### Brandon Johnson

Colorado Springs, CO  
\$5K Winner

"I began to teach my family how to cook healthier, which has been one of my biggest accomplishments. I enjoy cooking with my husband. We use our air fryer now instead of deep-frying foods...Diabetes runs in my family, so I've learned how important it is to take time to cook and look out for my health."

#### Verna Anderson

Walmart Supercenter #2857; Kansas City, MO  
\$5K Winner

