

Raising the Bar on Nutrition

Seven-Day Meal Plan for Healthy, Economical Eating



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Raising the Bar on Nutrition (RTB) is a nutrition program of the Rhode Island Community Food Bank that teaches clients how to cook recipes that are nutritious, easy to make, use economical ingredients and are quite tasty. The foods that make up the Raising the Bar on Nutrition diet are primarily ones that will lead to better health and body weight. These foods include extra virgin olive oil, vegetables, fruits, and whole grain products. The recipes do not use meat –no beef, pork, lamb, chicken, turkey –or seafood. Meat and seafood are the most expensive items to buy. Also, when we eat meat, our need for calcium is higher. A diet that does not contain meat requires less calcium and therefore less dairy product, which also helps to lower your food costs.

This seven-day meal plan was developed using the principles of Raising the Bar on Nutrition. The foods used for the recipes and meals are either foods commonly found at food pantries or ones that are shelf stable and inexpensive. The days of the meal plan can be followed in any order. You can also make substitutions for the vegetables, fruits and starch products. The meal plan includes all whole grain products (whole wheat bread and pasta, brown rice), which are healthier than the refined versions. However, they are also more expensive. If you choose not to use whole grain products, the RTB meal plan is even less expensive.

The recipes are for 4 adult-size servings based upon a diet that contains about 2000 calories a day, which is the standard calorie level used by the US Department of Agriculture. If you are feeding young children, you will be able to feed more people with the recipes. If you are feeding active teenagers or adults, you may need to make some extra servings of the recipes.

Vegetables and fruits

The meal plan was designed to have a variety of vegetables and fruits throughout the seven days of the week. This helps make sure you get all your nutrients. However, you can make substitutions for what your family likes or what is on sale.

A serving of fruit or vegetables is about ½ cup. Frozen vegetables are measured when frozen. A serving of fresh leafy greens (spinach, lettuce) is 1 cup. Cooked servings of leafy greens are much smaller. A standard can of fruits or vegetables contains 1 ¾ cups or 3 and ½ servings. You will need to open 2 cans to have 4 servings. You can save and use the leftover fruit or vegetables for future meals. This meal plan uses the left over vegetables from the week to make a vegetable soup on Saturday.

The pricing for this meal plan was done in August 2009 at one supermarket in Rhode Island.

Day 1 lunch: Frittata with broccoli and potatoes

This can be made on Sunday for Monday's lunch or the night before you plan to use it for lunch.

Makes 4 servings

6 Tablespoons	extra virgin olive oil
2 cups	broccoli, chopped, frozen, defrosted
½ cup	Canned, drained mushrooms
½ cup	Frozen, defrosted peppers (sliced or diced)
6	large eggs
1 cup	1% milk
18 oz.	cooked, diced potatoes

Turn on a broiler.

1. heat oil in a skillet that can be put under a broiler. Stir in the broccoli, mushrooms, and peppers. Cook 5-10 minutes or until the vegetables are soft.
2. while the broccoli is cooking, scramble the eggs and milk in a small bowl. Add the potatoes. You can either leave the potatoes as cubes or use a potato masher to combine the egg and potato. Season with salt and pepper, if desired.
3. add the egg/ potato mixture to the skillet and spread out evenly over the pan (this is easily done with a rubber spatula).
4. cook on top of the stove until the mixture is set. If you run a rubber spatula around the mixture, you can tell when it is crusting on the bottom. It will take about 5 minutes.
5. when the mixture is set, put the pan under the broiler and broil for about 3 minutes or until the top starts to brown.
6. use a metal spatula to loosen the mixture from the pan. The frittata should easily slide out of the pan onto a plate when done.

Day 1 dinner: Spinach, beans and pasta

Makes 4 servings

6 Tablespoons	extra virgin olive oil
2 cups	cannellini beans, drained and rinsed well
2 2/3 cups	Frozen spinach, chopped, defrosted
1-28 oz can	tomatoes

12 ounces
(dry weight) pasta, preferably whole wheat

Optional: garlic, herbs (rosemary, basil, thyme, oregano). Salt and pepper for the vegetables.

Heat a large pot of salted water to cook the pasta. When the water boils, cook the pasta.

1. heat the olive oil on low. Add any optional ingredients and stir to combine. Heat for 2-3 minutes.
2. add the drained, rinsed cannellini beans and stir into the oil. Turn the heat up to medium/high and stir in the defrosted, drained spinach. Season with salt and pepper.
3. heat on medium/high 8-10 minutes, stirring often. Stir in the herbs.
4. add the canned tomatoes and heat until the pasta is cooked.

Toss with cooked pasta and serve.

Day 2 lunch: Pasta salad with cheese

Makes 4 servings

8 Tablespoons	Extra virgin olive oil
2 cups	Red onion, chopped (1 medium)
4 cups	Sliced or chopped carrots
12 oz (dry weight)	Cooked whole wheat pasta
8 slices	American cheese, cut into small pieces
	Salt, pepper, optional: dried basil or oregano

Mix the vegetables and cooked pasta in a bowl. Toss in the cheese. Pour the olive oil over the salad. Season with salt and pepper and any herbs. This salad can be served cold or warmed.

Day 2 dinner: Mashed potato dinner

Makes 4 servings

6 Tablespoons	extra virgin olive oil
2 cups	frozen peas, defrosted
2 cups	Canned carrots, drained
2 cups	Red beans, drained, rinsed
36 oz.	potatoes, chopped (red or white)
1 cup	1 % milk

1. put the chopped potatoes in about 2 inches of water in a sauce pan. Add salt (about ½ teaspoon) to the water, if desired. Bring the water to a boil; reduce the heat and gently boil the potatoes until soft when pierced with a fork (about 5-7 minutes).
2. heat the olive oil in a small skillet on medium/low. Add the peas and carrots; stir to coat with the oil. Cook for 2-3 minutes.
3. add the beans to the vegetables just as the potatoes are finishing cooking.
4. drain the cooked potatoes. Put potatoes back in the sauce pan and start to mash. Add the milk and completely mash.
5. using a rubber spatula, mix in the vegetables. The vegetables will be soft so they will easily fall apart.

Day 3 breakfast: Peanut Butter Oatmeal Bars

Preheat oven to: 375F. You will need a 9x9 inch cake pan.

The recipe makes 8 bars which can be used at 2 breakfasts.

Mix together thoroughly in a bowl:

2/3 cup	Whole wheat flour
1 cup	Loosely packed brown sugar
1 teaspoon	Salt
¼ teaspoon	Baking soda
1 cup	Old Fashioned dry oats

Make a well and add:

½ cup	Extra virgin olive oil
½ cup	Natural peanut butter (Teddie)
1 large	Egg
1 Tablespoon	1% milk

This can be mixed together with a spatula.

Press into a 9x9 square cake pan. I used a coated one so if the pan is not coated, you may have to grease it or use a cooking spray.

Bake for 14 minutes or until the edges are browned. Cool and cut into 8 servings. The bars can be crumbly if cut warm.

Day 3 lunch: Broccoli wrap with cheese

Makes 4 sandwiches

4 Tablespoons	Extra virgin olive oil
4 cups	Frozen, chopped broccoli, defrosted
	Salt and pepper
1 cup	Shredded cheddar cheese
4	Whole wheat wraps

1. Heat the olive oil in a skillet on medium. Stir in the broccoli. Reduce the heat to medium low and cook for 10-15 minutes. Season with salt and pepper.
2. Sprinkle the cheese over the cooked vegetables. Heat until the cheese melts.
3. Divide the mixture between the 4 whole wheat wraps, putting it in the center of the wraps. Fold the bottom of the wrap up over the mixture; fold in the 2 sides.

You can secure the wrap with toothpicks if they are being served right away. If they are to be packed for later eating, wrap tightly in aluminum foil.

Day 3 dinner: Fried Rice with red onion, green pepper and egg.

Makes 4 servings

8 Tablespoons	Extra virgin olive oil
2 cups	Red onion, chopped (1 medium onion)
4 cups	Frozen peppers, defrosted
4 large	Eggs
	Salt and pepper
4 cups	Cooked brown rice

1. Heat the olive oil on medium. Stir in the onions and pepper and reduce the heat to medium-low. Cook the vegetables for 10-15 minutes. Season with salt and pepper.
2. Use a fork to move the vegetables to the side of the pan (leave some oil on the pan).
3. Scramble the eggs in a bowl and pour into the pan with the cooked vegetables. Heat the egg until it starts to set (3-5 minutes) then scramble the egg into the vegetables to cook it thoroughly.
4. Stir in the cooked rice and heat through.

Day 4 dinner: Vegetable Lo Mein

Makes 4 servings

8 Tablespoons	extra virgin olive oil
2 cups	Canned sliced carrots, cut into smaller pieces
2 cups	Canned corn, drained
2 cups	frozen peas, defrosted

12 oz	spaghetti noodles, whole wheat
About ½ cup	soy sauce
4 teaspoons	Flour

Optional: sliced/ crushed garlic, salt, pepper

Heat a large pot of water for the spaghetti and cook as directed.

1. heat the olive oil on medium.
2. stir in the vegetables. Season with salt/ pepper. Cook 3-5 minutes or until the texture you would like (cooking longer softens and sweetens the vegetables).
3. in a separate bowl, combine the soy sauce and 2 Tablespoons cold water. Add the flour and stir until there are no lumps. Add to the cooked vegetables and heat until thickened (about 3 minutes).

Serve over cooked whole wheat spaghetti.

Day 5 lunch: Grilled cheese with spinach

Makes 4 sandwiches

8 slices	whole wheat bread
8 Tablespoons	extra virgin olive oil
1 1/3 cup	Frozen spinach, chopped, defrosted
8 slice	American cheese

This sandwich can be made individually or all together, depending on the size of your pan. The sandwiches can be eaten warm when they are first cooked or can be cooled and wrapped in foil and packed for lunch to be eaten later.

Per sandwich:

1. heat 1 Tbs. of the olive oil. Add 1/3 cup spinach and cook 3-5 minutes.
2. while the spinach is cooking, put the cheese on one half of the bread. When the spinach is cooked, place on top of the cheese and cover with the other slice of bread.
3. add the other Tablespoon of olive oil to the pan and let it heat a minute or so. It is important that you heat the oil. If the oil is not heated, the bread will stick. Place the sandwich in the heated pan and use a weight or a small pan filled with water to hold it down.
4. heat until the bottom slice of bread is browned (should be 2-3 minutes but the time will depend on how hot the pan is). You can check after about 1 minute by removing the pan with water and carefully lifting the bottom slice
5. Using a metal spatula or a fork, carefully turn the sandwich over and brown the other side.

Day 5 dinner: Raising the Bar on Nutrition Vegetable Fried Rice

Makes 4 servings

8 Tablespoons	extra virgin olive oil
4 cups	Canned corn, drained
2 cups	black beans, rinsed, drained
2 cups	Canned tomatoes
4 cups	cooked brown rice

Optional: dried oregano and/ or basil; salt and pepper

1. heat the olive oil on medium. Add any herbs and stir to coat with the oil. Stir in the corn and cook 3-5 minutes.
2. add the black beans and cook 3-5 minutes longer.
3. add the tomatoes, stir to combine and heat 3- 5 minutes.
4. add the cooked rice, stir to combine and heat through.

Day 6 lunch: Raising the Bar on Nutrition Vegetable Soup

This soup can be made with the vegetables left over from meals earlier in the week.

Makes 4 servings

6 Tablespoons	extra virgin olive oil
1 1/3 cup	Frozen chopped spinach, defrosted
2 cups	Frozen broccoli, defrosted
1 1/3 cup	Canned carrots, drained

1-28 oz can	tomatoes (chopped, crushed)
2 2/3 cup	Cooked brown rice
4 oz	Shredded cheddar cheese

1. Heat the olive oil on medium in a large soup pan.
2. Add the spinach and broccoli and cook for about 10 minutes.
3. Add the carrots and cook for 5- 10 minutes, stirring occasionally
4. Add the crushed tomatoes and heat through. The vegetable mixture can be left to simmer. If you would like a thinner soup, add some water or broth.
5. When cooked as much as you want, add the rice. Heat through.
6. Serve in bowls topped with 1 oz of shredded cheese on the soup.

Day 6 dinner: Southwest lasagna

Makes 6 servings.

Preheat oven to 350F.

9 Tablespoons	Extra virgin olive oil
2 cup	Chopped red onions (1 medium)
2 cups	Canned Black beans, rinsed and drained (cooked)
1 cup	Salsa
1 cup	Canned, crushed tomatoes
4 oz	Shredded cheddar cheese or Mexican flavored shredded cheese
1 ½ cup	Part skim ricotta cheese
1 large	Egg
1 teaspoon	Dried oregano
6 oz	Whole wheat lasagna noodles, cooked

1. heat the olive oil on medium. Add the chopped onions. Stir to coat with the oil and season with salt, if desired. Heat on medium until soft (about 15 minutes), stirring occasionally.
2. stir in the black beans and cook an additional 3-5 minutes.
3. add the salsa and tomatoes. Cook this vegetable mixture about 5 minutes.
4. scramble the egg and add to the ricotta cheese. Mix in the dried oregano.
5. pour about 3 cups of the vegetable mixture in a baking dish. Put a layer of cooked noodles over the vegetables.
6. top with the ricotta cheese/egg mixture.
1. place a layer of noodles on top. Add the rest of the vegetable mixture and then sprinkle the shredded cheese evenly over the top.
2. cover with aluminum foil and bake at 350F for 30 minutes. Let stand 10-15 minutes before cutting.

Day 7 breakfast: Breakfast burrito/ Huevos Rancheros

Makes 4 servings

4 Tablespoons	extra virgin olive oil, plus extra to heat wraps
2 cups	canned black beans, drained and rinsed
4 large	eggs
1 cup	Salsa

4 Tablespoons	chopped/ shredded cheese
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4	Whole wheat wraps
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To heat the wraps: lightly oil a small skillet and heat on medium. Add the wraps, 1 at a time and heat on 2 sides. You may need to add a little more oil as you heat all the wraps. Keep the heated wraps warm in the oven (about 250F) while the mixture cooks. When the wraps are heated, the pan is used to cook the eggs.

1. heat the olive oil on medium. Add the black beans, stir to combine and heat 1-2 minutes.
2. add the canned tomatoes or salsa and heat.
3. start to cook the eggs in the pan used to heat the tortillas. Break the eggs into a bowl, taking care not to crack the yolks. Add a little more oil to the pan used to heat the wraps. Gently slide the eggs into the pan and cook until the white is opaque. Carefully turn the eggs when the white is opaque. Sprinkle each egg with 2 Tablespoons of the cheese, cover and heat until the cheese melts.
4. place 1 heated wrap on a plate. Top with the bean mixture and then the egg with the cheese side up.

Day 7 lunch: Vegetable stuffed baked potato

Makes 4 servings

This recipe can be made with any vegetables you like or those you have leftover from other meals.

4 medium baking potatoes (about 9 oz each)

6 Tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

4 cups Frozen pepper, defrosted

2 cups Canned mushrooms, drained

Salt, pepper

Clean the potatoes and prick with a fork in several places. Bake at 400F for about 1 hour. When the potatoes have been in the oven for about 40 minutes, start the following:

1. heat the olive oil on medium.
2. Stir in the peppers and mushrooms and reduce the heat. Season with salt and pepper. Heat the vegetables on low until the potatoes are cooked.

Slice baked potato and fill with the vegetables.

Day 7 dinner: Macaroni and cheese

Makes 4 servings

6 Tablespoons	extra virgin olive oil
2 cups	Red onion, chopped
4 cups	Frozen broccoli, chopped, defrosted
4 Tablespoons	white flour
2 cups	1% fat milk
4 slices	American cheese
12 oz	cooked, macaroni (preferably whole wheat)
	Salt, pepper

Cook the macaroni as directed and drain. While the macaroni is cooking prepare the sauce.

Preheat the oven to 350F. Lightly coat a 13x9x2 inch glass Pyrex pan with olive oil.

1. heat the olive oil on medium in a large skillet. Add the onion and broccoli. Stir to combine. Cook on medium about 10 minutes or until the vegetables are soft. Stir the mixture while it is cooking.
2. sprinkle the flour on the vegetables and stir to coat. The flour should be completely mixed in. Pour in the milk, stir to mix in. Stir gently and continue to cook until the mixture thickens.
3. cut the cheese into smaller pieces (about 4-6 pieces per slice). Add the cheese to the thickened sauce. Stir to combine and continue stirring until the cheese melts.
4. add the cooked macaroni and stir to combine. Pour into the prepared pan.
5. bake until bubbling, about 20-30 minutes. It will take less time if you use a larger pan.