

This is a foundation for anyone to put dinner on the table at home at least **five nights a week**. I say five nights a week because I figure you may want to give yourself and your family one or two nights a week "off." After all, we all love to eat out at our favorite fast-food or casual-dining restaurants from time to time. Then again, some weeks we don't feel like going out. No problem. My plan gives you recipes for seven nights a week, and then you choose which nights to take off, if any.

HOW TO MAKE IT HAPPEN

MAP OUT TWO WEEKS AT A TIME

I said earlier that the key to having a consistent dinnertime with a home-cooked meal is meal planning.

The key to effective meal planning is mapping out your meal schedule a week or two in advance. (Two is easier.) Here's how:

1. Get out your calendar.

Think of when you may eat out. Think of who might be coming for dinner.

2. Go through my recipes and choose meals

or use your own recipes for the different theme nights. Make sure that what you choose will fit within your food budget if you have one. You can see which dishes are inexpensive to prepare; I have plenty of those to choose from. For more on recipe selection, see page 275.

3. Write down your chosen meals on our form, a sheet of paper, or 5x7-inch card.

DINNER MENUS FOR <i>October 6-19</i>					FRIDAY PIZZA	SATURDAY GRILL NIGHT	SUNDAY TRADITION
MONDAY COMFORT FOOD	TUESDAY ITALIAN	WEDNESDAY FISH/MEATLESS	THURSDAY MEXICAN				
<i>Savory Meat Loaf (p. 45)</i> <i>Scalloped Potatoes (p. 43)</i> <i>Baked Buttered Carrots (p. 207)</i> <i>Sour Cream Devil's Food Cake (p. 256)</i>	<i>Red & White Mostaccioli (p. 73)</i> <i>green salad</i> <i>Italian bread (p. 224)</i>	<i>Fish Tacos (p. 95)</i> <i>Santa Fe Lime Rice (p. 123)</i>	<i>Mexican Chicken and Black Bean Soup (p. 121)</i> <i>tortilla chips with fresh salsa (p. 125)</i> <i>melon wedges with lime juice</i>	<i>Pepperoni & Cheese Pizza (p. 138)</i>	<i>Sweet & Sour Baked Chicken (p. 162)</i> <i>On the grill if the weather's nice?</i> <i>white rice</i> <i>steamed broccoli</i>	<i>Traditional Roast Dinner (p. 170)</i> <i>Buttermilk Corn Bread (p. 241)</i>	
<i>Three-Bean Chili with Sausage (p. 49)</i> <i>carrot sticks</i> <i>Cinnamon Rolls (p. 236)</i>	<i>Baked Chicken and Potatoes Italiano (p. 80)</i> <i>steamed green beans</i> <i>French bread (p. 225)</i>	<i>Mac & Cheese Kids Crave (p. 86)</i> <i>steamed peas</i>	<i>Baja Fajitas (p. 115)</i>	<i>BBQ Chicken Pizza (p. 143)</i>	<i>Sloppy Joes (p. 152)</i> <i>baked beans</i> <i>green salad</i> <i>potato chips</i>	<i>Easy Slow Cooker Chicken Bleu (p. 200)</i> <i>Rice Pilaf (p. 205)</i> <i>vegetable soup (p. 210)</i>	

