

BY

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PHOTOS & HAND LETTERING

TRACY BENJAMIN

FOOD STYLING

TODD WAGNER

# PREP SCHOOL

*get a head start!*

FOOD BLOGGER  
TRACY BENJAMIN'S  
SECRET TO A  
WEEK OF GOOD  
EATING AND  
MINIMAL COOKING  
STARTS WITH A  
SMART SUNDAY  
GAME PLAN.



healthy  
ENERGY  
BARS

to ward off  
temptation



CUT  
VEGGIES

for lunch box  
assembly



TUNA  
SALAD

for lunches



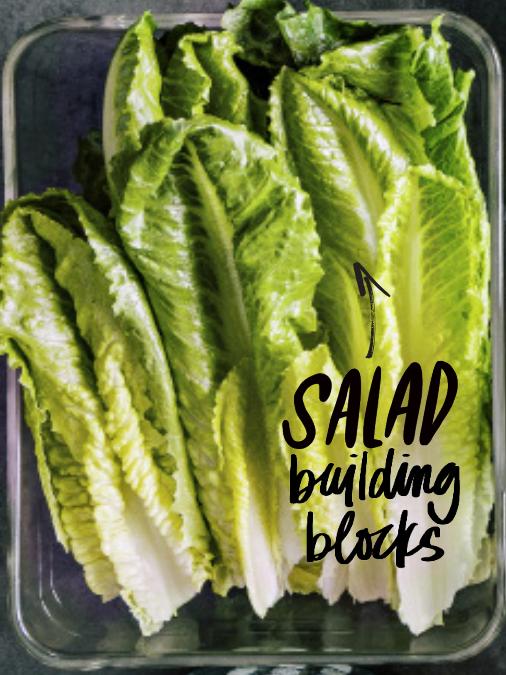
HARD-  
BOILED  
EGGS

for  
breakfast



ROASTED  
TOMATOES

for pasta, pizza,  
or sandwiches



SALAD  
building  
blocks



or Tracy Benjamin, a disorganized fridge can throw the whole week off course. "If I don't corral all those bags of produce, I'll never want to cook," says Tracy, a photographer who chronicles her life in the kitchen on her food blog, Shutterbean.

So most Sundays, once the breakfast dishes have been cleared, the coffee has been consumed, and her 9-year-old son and husband have gone off to baseball practice or golf, Tracy sets aside a few hours in her kitchen in the San

Francisco Bay Area to act, essentially, as her own sous chef. While she works with a few dinners in mind (a big salad, a pasta dish), her meal-prep strategy is more about preparing building blocks for the week than a precise menu. The goal is to have enough components to pull together any lunch or dinner in a few minutes, which pays off in less wasted food, more family time, and all-around smoother evenings.

"I know my fridge can handle whatever the week throws at us."

## [STRATEGY] A SUNDAY IN THE LIFE

Tracy shares how she gets a typical week's worth of food ready in two to three hours.

**\* WARMING UP**  
"I start hard-boiling eggs in my Instant Pot, setting out an ice bath for when they're done. I throw tomatoes in a 350°F oven to roast for 20 minutes. I also form meatballs and pop them in, too, to get the most mileage out of the hot oven."

**\* CHOPPING**  
"I get into a real rhythm as I start chopping vegetables. It's almost therapeutic. After prepping ingredients for a vegetable soup—often curried zucchini—and putting it on the stove, I chop vegetables for salads and bread for croutons."

**\* TOASTING TIME**  
"After pulling out the meatballs and tomatoes, I lower the oven to 325°F to toast walnuts for 8–10 minutes and croutons for 20."



**\* BLITZING IT**  
"The food processor comes out and pesto gets whirled. While I have a jar out, I'm reminded to make a vinaigrette. After cleaning the food processor, I use it to make energy bars."

**\* WRAPPING UP**  
"I finish the soup with an immersion blender, make a quick tuna salad, and put everything away in clear dishes. I might finish by making banana bread or trail mix to treat myself for all the hard work. And now, the cleanup."





## GREEN BEAN SALAD

Tracy uses her mom's vinaigrette recipe to dress all her salads, including this one made with quickly steamed green beans, chopped mint, and sliced almonds.

→  
fresh-picked  
VEGGIES  
get you one step  
closer to  
making salad.  
↓



## HIPPIE BANANA BREAD

When Tracy has ripe bananas, they go into this bread, dense with nutrients from walnuts, pepitas, sunflower seeds, and dried cherries. She says, "My family is really happy when there's banana bread on the counter. Who am I to deny them?"



## RESET-BUTTON SALAD + CURRIED ZUCCHINI SOUP

"Doing a vegetable chopping session on Sunday means just one cleanup, which saves you a big chunk of time during the week," Tracy says. She usually pairs a weeknight salad with a seasonal vegetable soup (freezing half of it to eat for lunch later).



## FRIDAY night PIZZA

To clean out the fridge as she heads into the weekend, Tracy layers any leftover vegetables—arugula or spinach, tomatoes or red sweet peppers—and pesto onto thawed dough.



**Homemade pizza tonight?**

Yes, even on a weeknight, if this dough is in the freezer. [BHG.com/Pizza Dough](http://BHG.com/PizzaDough)



## PASTA WITH ROASTED TOMATOES + ARUGULA PESTO

A versatile flavor booster, pesto is a cornerstone of Tracy's meal prep. For dinner, she often tosses it with roasted tomatoes and spaghetti. For lunches, she mixes it into pasta salad or spreads it on bread with mozzarella for a sandwich.

# chicken-zucchini MEATBALL SUBS

"Having meatballs on hand gives us all kinds of options," Tracy says. She works her chicken-zucchini version into pasta, salads, her son's lunch box, or—with the addition of store-bought marinara and crusty rolls—weeknight subs. ■



1  
freeze extra  
**MEATBALLS**  
as a gift  
to your future self.

RECIPES  
BEGIN ON  
PAGE 129.