



## 6 Keys to the Kitchen

**1) Start a grocery list.** Keep a notepad on the fridge and train every family member to jot down any item once they've used the last of it. A magnetic notepad on the fridge is a lifesaver. If someone uses the last paper towel or drinks the last sip of milk, they write it on the list. I also use a *Target* list, for school supplies and other household items that need to be replaced.

**2) Do a weekly menu plan.** Shop once a week. This saves time and money. If you are afraid that you can't predict what you will be hungry for on Thursday, remember that you can always make substitutions. This plan saves you from making extra stops at the grocery store. It also gives you a sense of control and freedom from the pressure of trying to make these decisions at dinner time.

**3) Stock up.** Buy nonperishable in bulk. That will save money and insure that you won't run out of your favorites. Prepare a list of pantry meals that your family likes and that are easy to prepare. Always have those items on hand.

**4) Cook ahead and freeze.** Double a recipe and freeze one. If you are making a pan of lasagna, why not make two and freeze one? It's so nice to have a few "back up meals" waiting in the freezer.

**5) Do advanced prep work.** Perform simple tasks like chopping vegetables, blending salad dressings or browning hamburger when you have a few spare minutes. Doing this prep work earlier in the day or the night before speeds up the process when you are assembling dinner.

**6) Clean as you go.** Keep a sink full of hot sudsy water and wash dishes while you cook. Staying ahead of the mess makes cleaning up after dinner a breeze. Plus your kitchen doesn't look like a disaster zone.

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