

THE POWER OF PLANNING

(COVID-19 EDITION)

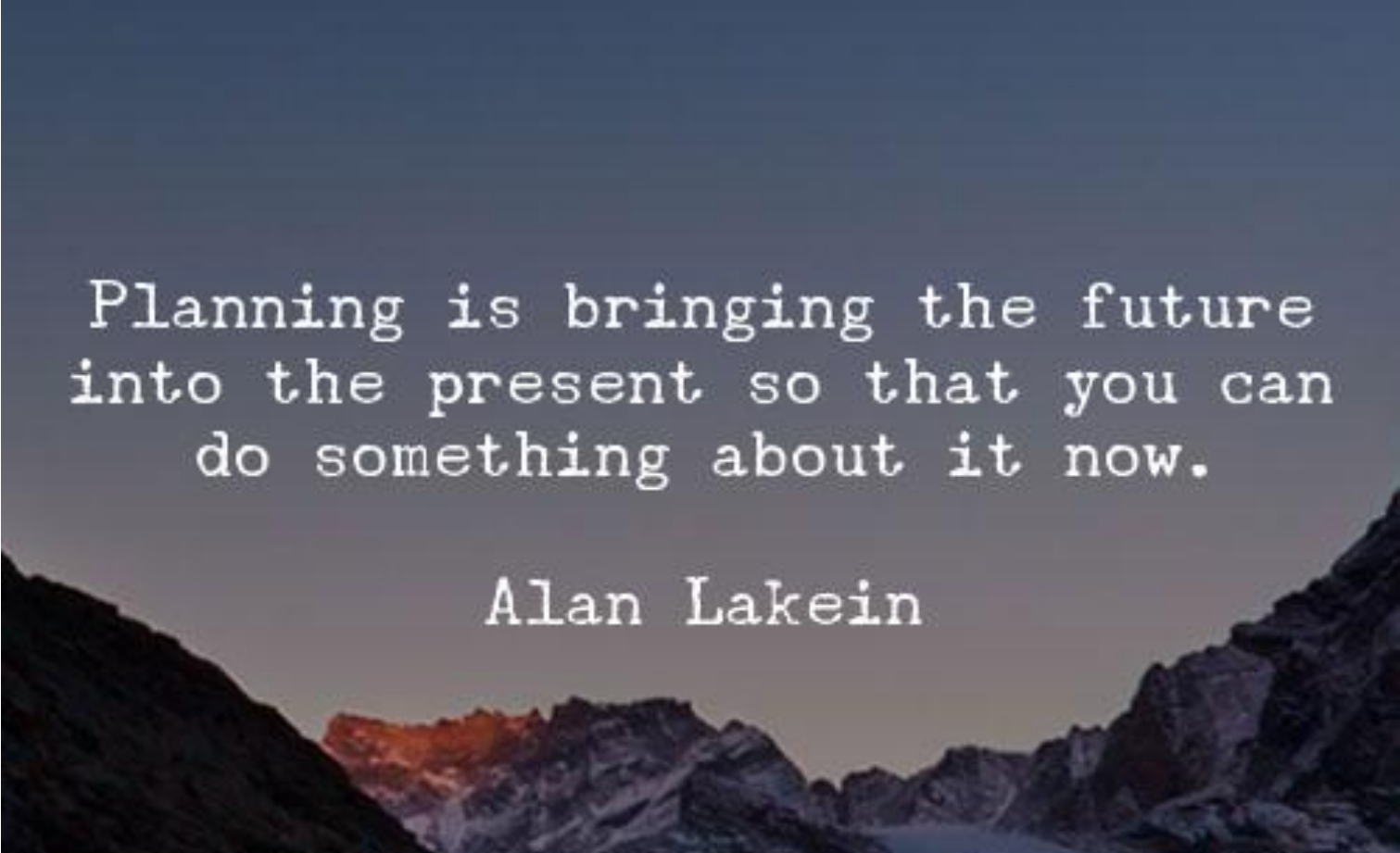
Conner Middelman,
Nutritionist at Modern Mediterranean

How planning saved my day



8-May-20

(c) Conner Middelmann, Modern Mediterranean, LLC

A quote by Alan Lakein about planning, set against a background of a mountain range at sunset. The text is in a white, monospaced font. The background shows a valley between dark, rocky mountains, with a central peak catching the warm, orange light of the setting or rising sun. The sky above is a deep, clear blue.

Planning is bringing the future
into the present so that you can
do something about it now.

Alan Lakein

Planning feels soothing

We are part of a wider society and we each must do our part to stay calm. The best place to start is at home – keeping ourselves resilient and calm so we can better help others around us.

We don't know what the next week(s) will bring, so let's not speculate or catastrophize (even though that's tempting).

Instead, let's focus on the things we *can* control and create routines to help us get through these trying times, on day at a time. When worry strikes, take a deep breath, check your plan and carry on.



Focus on things you can control

Resilience thrives with proper sleep, movement and nutrition. Day-planning can help:

- **Have a daily schedule.** For instance: “Get up at 6.30 am; drink glass of water; make bed; meditate to 10 minutes; take a 1-hour walk; coffee w. cream; shower & get dressed; read news; start work at 9; take lunch break at 12.30; call XXX; work from 1 to 4; do ½ hour yoga at 4.30; prepare dinner; eat at 6.30; clean up; call XXX; watch XXX; get to bed at 10; read ‘til 10.30.”
- **Plan your meals:** Decide *when* and *what* you will eat. Plan meals that are as **nutritious** as possible. Keep well **hydrated**; this supports brain function and mood. Avoid **alcohol** or excess **caffeine** and **sugar**, which can disrupt sleep and increase anxiety. More on meal planning below.

More things we can control

- **Plan movement & self-care:** A walk after lunch? Yoga or strength training in the living room? A [soothing face/head self-massage](#)?
- **Keep busy.** Keep up with work projects & deadlines (where applicable). Consider what anchors & relaxes you: Gardening? Classical music? Journaling? Talking with friends? Watch funny movies/shows. Steer clear of social media that make you anxious. Restrict news consumption, especially in the afternoon and evening.
- **Set a bedtime.** At least 1 hour before bed, switch off all screens and do soothing things like reading, drinking a calming herbal tea, taking a bath with Epsom salts, meditating.



Don't wait 'til you feel hungry...

The worst time to decide what you're going to eat is when you're hungry. This is true whether you're standing in front of your fridge, pushing your cart down the supermarket aisle, or scanning the menu at a restaurant.

This point was borne out by a [series of experiments at Carnegie Mellon](#). Subjects who chose their selected meals or snacks hours or even days ahead of time made better choices than those who chose their meals right before they ate them.

[Another study](#) showed that people choosing a snack a week in advance were more likely to pick an apple or banana over a candy bar. When choosing a snack for immediate consumption, they were more likely to choose a candy bar.

Research confirms: Failing to plan = planning to fail.

3 styles of planning *(from www.drdauidludwig.com)*

- **Style 1: Precisely plan each meal.** Each meal, snack, side, dessert and portion size is specified. This sense of order can alleviate the kitchen chaos that often leads people to slip back into their old ways of eating. Helpful when you're learning a new way of eating, or when you have a very busy or stressful week ahead with little margin for error.
- **Style 2: On Sunday, list five dinners you'll make for the week.** Check your kitchen and purchase whatever you might need for these. An easy way to meal-plan this way is to purchase a large portion of protein (for example, a whole chicken), and decide what you can do with that protein for each meal. Moroccan Chicken? Chicken Quesadillas? Chicken Soup? Include leftovers in you plan. Improvise breakfasts & lunches.
- **Style 3: Create a list of favorite recipes and always keep those ingredients on hand.** Once you know what works best for your schedule and individual tastes, it's easy to keep your pantry stocked with your favorite staples. Then you can whip up something quickly, especially because these are recipes you make them so often, you have them memorized! Best suited to confident cooks.

3 things that should be in every meal

- **High-quality protein.** For example, fish, seafood, eggs, meat, dairy, tofu.
- **Healthy fats.** For example, olive oil, avocado, fish oil, seeds and nuts.
- **Whole plant foods.** For example, vegetables and fruits, legumes, whole grains, herbs & spices.
- **Extra credit** (crucial to proper functioning of the gut):
 - **Probiotics** (e.g., yogurt, kefir, sour cream, sauerkraut, kimchi, miso, kombucha, etc.) and
 - **Prebiotics** (green leafy vegetables, beans & peas, nuts & seeds, onions/garlic/scallions).

My preferred meal-planning method: Style 1

| My Meal Plan | | Month: | | | Season: | | |
|------------------------|------------|---------------|------------|------------|----------------|-------------|--------------|
| | Fri | Sat | Sun | Mon | Tues | Weds | Thurs |
| Breakfast | | | | | | | |
| Lunch | | | | | | | |
| Dinner | | | | | | | |
| Treat / dessert | | | | | | | |

Each serving should contain 20-25g protein, 20-25g healthy fat, 25-35g low-GL carb (veg, fruit, legumes, whole grains) and pro & prebiotics

Shopping list
 Fresh produce:
 Meat/fish:
 Dairy, eggs, deli (chilled foods):
 Pantry items (dried, canned, bottled, etc.):
 Misc.:

Plan your meals in 9 easy steps

1. **Mini-inventory:** Look through fridge, freezer & pantry to see what you already have. Use these.
2. **Consult diary** for the week ahead and identify meals you won't eat at home. Cross off.
3. **Start with breakfast:** Eat 2-3 different breakfasts a week and ensure that each contains protein, healthy fat and carbohydrate. (See examples below.)
4. **Dinner:** Select a protein (e.g. fish, chicken, legumes) and vary these from one day to the next. Compose the rest of the meal around your chosen protein. (See examples below.)
5. **Lunch:** Simple things like dinner leftovers or tuna salad and crackers, Greek yogurt w. fruit & nuts.
6. **Out:** When you eat out, plan *where* & *what* you will eat & drink. Check restaurant menus online.
7. **Shop:** Once you have planned all your meals, write down all the ingredients you need. Print out meal plan and take it to the store. Save it on your computer.
8. **Display** your meal plan in a visible spot in the kitchen to remind you of the week's menu.
9. **Recycle:** Once you have eaten a week's worth of meals, save your meal plan for later use.

My Meal Plan

Month: April

Season: Spring



| | Sat 4 | Sun 5 | Mon 6 | Tues 7 | Weds 8 | Thurs 9 | Fri 10 |
|------------------------|---|---|--|---|---|-----------------------------------|---|
| Breakfast | Bircher muesli (dairy-free or made with Greek yogurt) topped with nuts & berries – make 3 servings | Asparagus, pea and goat cheese scrambled eggs | Mediterranean smoothie | Leftover Bircher muesli | Asparagus, pea and goat cheese scrambled eggs | Leftover Bircher muesli | Mediterranean smoothie |
| Lunch | Curried chicken salad wrap, sugar snap peas & tomatoes | Tuna & bean salad (add chopped, roasted peppers from a jar) | 1 can TJ's smoked sardines on TJ's crispbread + 1 serving sauerkraut salad | Leftover sheet-pan salmon | Curried chicken salad wrap, sugar snap peas & tomatoes | Leftover tuna & bean salad | Leftover Thai chicken curry |
| Dinner | Lentil stew with smoked turkey leg and vegetables | Sheet-pan salmon topped with pesto, with roasted vegetables | Thai chicken curry with ½ cup brown rice | Easy lamb & eggplant moussaka | Leftover Thai chicken curry | Leftover lamb & eggplant moussaka | Leftover lentil stew with smoked turkey |
| Treat / dessert | Cara cara orange; Greek yogurt with frozen berries & honey; 3 squares dark chocolate (75% cocoa or higher); Emergency chocolate cake with raspberries ; Nicecream | | | | | | |

Each serving should contain at least 20g protein, 20g healthy fat & 25-30g low-GL carb (veg, fruit, legumes, whole grains) and pro & prebiotics

Healthy eating for time-starved cooks



Spend time to save time

- **Plan** your meals (see meal planning template)
- **Shop ahead**, meal plan in hand
- Keep a **well-stocked pantry** (see my Mediterranean Pantry List)
- **Shop in bulk**: Farmers' market, CSA, Costco, etc.
- **Cook in bulk & refrigerate/freeze** (set aside 1 day/week to batch-prepare & cook)
- Make **simple, one-pot meals** (e.g. slow-cooker, casseroles, skillet meals, sheet-pan meals, soups, salads) – these save on prep time and washing-up time.

More time-saving tips

- Have a **rotation of favorite recipes**; list on your fridge as a reminder
- Get creative with **leftovers** (e.g. dinner for breakfast, leftovers lunch)
- Use **frozen vegetables, fruits & beans** (no waste, no prepping/soaking, shorter cooking times)
- Make judicious use of **canned/jarred** foods, e.g.:
 - Canned beans, tomatoes, tomato paste, pumpkin puree (unsweetened), coconut milk, sardines, salmon, chipotle in adobo
 - Jarred tomato sauce, artichoke hearts, sundried tomatoes, olives, Mediterranean dips (look out for added sugar or refined seed oils; olive oil = best)
- Use a **pressure cooker or Instant Pot**
- Get **help!** (Family members, friends, cleaner, neighbors, au pair, etc.)

Nutritious time-savers





Eating *Healthy* on a
BUDGET

Does a nutritious diet cost more?

Eating a **super-nutritious** diet costs about **\$1.50** more per day than eating a diet low in nutrients, researchers have found*. (About \$550/year.)

For these extra \$550, people eating healthy diets will obtain **significantly more nutrients** than those eating the least-healthy diets. Thus, on a “**nutrient-per-dollar**” **basis**, the cost of healthy eating is probably very similar to – and possibly less than – that of less-healthy eating.

And that’s not counting the **cost of the diseases** that could be reduced by eating healthier...

**Do healthier foods and diet patterns cost more than less healthy options? A systematic review and meta-analysis, BMJ 2013*

**Comparison Shopping:
McDonald's for Four**

\$27.89



- 2 Big Macs
- 1 cheeseburger
- 1 6-pc. Chicken McNuggets
- 2 medium fries
- 2 small fries
- 2 medium Cokes
- 2 small Cokes

Nutrition facts per person

| | |
|---------------|---------------|
| CALORIES | 900 (average) |
| FAT | 37 grams |
| CARBOHYDRATES | 123 grams |
| PROTEIN | 23 grams |

Chicken, Potatoes and Salad for Four

\$13.78

A savings of \$14.11,
or 51%, over the
McDonald's meal.
Prices per item:



Nutrition facts per person and difference from McDonald's meal



CALORIES 934

+4%

FAT 39 grams

+5%

CARBOHYDRATES 80 grams

-35%

PROTEIN 67 grams

+191%

Pinto Beans and Rice for Four

\$9.26

A savings of \$18.63,
or 67%, over the
McDonald's meal.
Prices per item:



CALORIES 571

-37%

FAT 15 grams

-59%

CARBOHYDRATES 83 grams

-33%

PROTEIN 26 grams

+13%

Sources: McDonald's; Key Food grocery, Sunset Park, Brooklyn (meal ingredients);
Self magazine and United States Department of Agriculture (nutrition analysis)

BILL MARSH/THE NEW YORK TIMES;
PHOTOGRAPHS BY TONY CENICOLA/THE NEW YORK TIMES

Cucina povera (“Poor-man’s diet” - a.k.a. Mediterranean diet)



Click on the image above to get the recipe for this pasta e fagioli dish.

Healthy eating on a budget

- **Cook from scratch** and eat out less often – it's healthier, too!
- **Plan your meals**; this reduces waste
- Eat lots of **plant foods** (vegetables, fruits, legumes, grains, etc.)
- When eating **meat**, choose cheaper cuts and smaller servings (4-6 oz meat or fish (cooked) per person per meal is enough)
- **Cook in bulk** & freeze
- **Make shopping lists and shop in bulk**: Farmers' market, CSA, Costco, online, etc.
- When shopping, only buy what you planned to buy; don't be tempted into "specials" you don't need

More budget eating tips

- **Shop the perimeter of your supermarket** (cheaper & healthier).
- **Shop online** (e.g. [Thrive Market](#), Amazon, [grass-fed meat boxes](#), etc.)
- Don't buy **prepared meals** and **flavored drinks**.
- Minimize **supplements** and “**super-foods.**”
- **Avoid bottled & flavored waters**; filter your own tap water.
- Not everything you eat must be **organic** – see EWG's [Dirty Dozen/Clean Fifteen](#) rankings
- Save money in **other areas** (e.g. cable, eating out, fast fashion, cosmetics, etc.)

Meal Helpers

SUN BASKET



FRESHLY



The joys of leftovers

Three ways to enjoy “Eggplants braised in olive oil”



As a filling for an omelet (light lunch)



On a “combo platter”

(with grilled chicken, broccoli, TJ’s roasted red pepper dip)



Weeknight special: Turbo Thai Curry



[Turbo Thai tofu / chicken / shrimp curry](#)

Weeknight special: Sheet-pan dinner



Sheet-pan pesto salmon with roasted vegetables

Highly nutritious breakfast



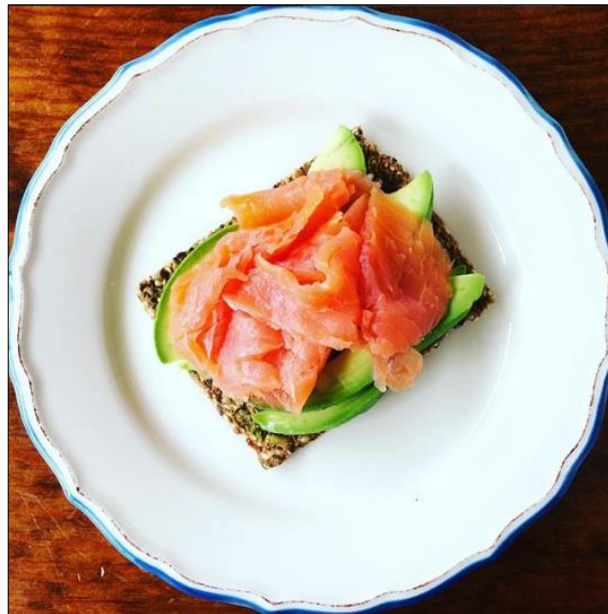
Bircher muesli (overnight oats)

Quick & easy breakfast



[Mediterranean Smoothie](#)

Healthy snacks in seconds



Avocado & smoked salmon
on TJ's GF cracker



Chia pudding



Sardines on TJ's GF cracker

Don't know how to cook?

- Ask a friend/relative to teach you some basic recipes; take cooking classes; watch [my YouTube videos](#).
- Find reliable recipe resources (books, websites, classes).
- Buy basic cooking equipment. Good knives, a chopping board, a few decent pots & pans, a blender, a food processor and you're good to go! You can find great, inexpensive appliances on Craig's List.
- Try a new recipe each week; follow my recipe blog, [Recipes for Disaster](#). By the end of the year, you'll have increased your repertoire by 52 dishes!
- If it tastes bad, forgive yourself. Figure out what went wrong and try again.
- Take it one meal at a time.

Baby steps: Rome was not built in a day!



Who am I?

- **Conner Middelman**, nutritionist (not a dietitian). In Boulder since 2012, preceded by 11 years in S-W France. Trained at the Institute for Optimum Nutrition in the UK (DiplON).
- 20 years ago, working as a financial journalist, I was diagnosed with early-stage cervical cancer. My experience with cancer and years in France prompted me to become a nutritionist and write *Zest for Life: The Mediterranean Anti-Cancer Diet*.
- I work as a nutrition coach at Colorado Center of Medical Excellence, Boulder Community Health and my own business, Modern Mediterranean.
- I cook daily. See what I eat on www.instagram.com/modernmediterranean.

Any questions? Don't be shy:

Conner Middelmann, B.Sc., DiplON

Nutrition coaching (in-person and/or via Skype)

Tel: 720 289 1958

Email: connermid@gmail.com

Coaching website: www.modernmediterranean.com

Recipe & self-care blog: www.recipes-for-disaster.com

Instagram:

-- Food pics: www.instagram.com/modernmediterranean

-- Self-care: www.instagram.com/myrecipesfordisaster

You Tube: Click on [this link](#)