



READING



OUR DAILY ROUTINE, DIET AND SCHEDULE

FROM A CHEF'S PERSPECTIVE

This is about the whole family. In this section I am going to explain how my wife Michelle and I run our household. Specifically detailing how we get healthy meals on the table every day of the week.

Once you have finished reading this section, you will see that there is very much a flow and daily rhythm to how we work together to achieve great health.

Of uttermost importance is the way we plan, so that we are always able and prepared to create healthy meals for all the family. Also recently we have become more diligent when it comes to exercising. I mention this because we are not perfect by any means, and like most couples we struggle to master the hectic schedule of everyday life. Whilst we would regard ourselves as doing a great job at serving healthy meals on a daily basis, there are certainly other aspects of life that we can get better at. One of them is to exercise more than we have the last five years.

With two young children, one at school and the other at kindergarten, Michelle working full time leaving the house at 8.00am and coming home at 5.45pm Monday to Friday and me working every Tuesday and Wednesday as a chef from 9 to 4.00pm and sometimes also on the weekends, we are busy.

At the end of a busy week we are exhausted, as most couples are, but for us, being exhausted is a good thing as we know we have worked hard both professionally and on the home front and have achieved a lot and are contributing to not just our lives but also to our community around us.

I truly believe that one of the most important aspects of our "go for it" attitude in everyday life is directly linked to the fact that we feed ourselves healthy nutritious meals daily. These meals keep our minds and our bodies healthy.

We obviously still have to challenge ourselves and find time to change things in our lives that we know we can do better, as mentioned before we need to exercise more than we have the last couple of years, but at least we have the energy and mindset to not only discuss how to achieve new goals with one another, but also have the strength and focus to actually take action. This will always be the case and it will be an ongoing challenge for life, keeping our family as healthy as we can and putting in the effort required to maintain our overall family health. A healthy diet is the key and has everything to do with our energy levels.

So it begins...



I work Saturday at a local racetrack serving meals during lunch service.

Michelle spends that Saturday morning cleaning the house, washing clothes and catching up on other chores that need to be done. In the early afternoon she takes the children to a market

and a local playground to meet up with friends. We meet at the park later that afternoon after I finish work, around 4pm.

Dinner that night is homemade pizza with salad, for which all the prep has been done by me the day before, so all we have to do is make the dough and assemble the pizzas.

After dinner, the kids are in the lounge room playing and Michelle and I talk about next week's menu, we write it up on the kitchen blackboard. Then we write our shopping list together. (We had already started this list a couple of days ago, as we noticed different things running low through the week). Checking the fridge and pantry as we fill in the shopping list as per our chosen menu, we quickly work out what we need and what we can shop for today, acknowledging that a couple of shops during the week will be needed in order to get the perishable foods required for some of the week's meals, but all pantry staples for the week are added to the list.

We decide that I will do the grocery shopping for this big shop of the week, as Michelle puts the children to bed.

Doing this Saturday night means that on Sunday morning, all food ingredients are in our house ready to be chopped, diced and cooked, giving us a head start on our main cooking day of the week.

Shopping Saturday night also means that the supermarket is virtually empty, as hardly anyone is around compared to during the day.

Once home with the ingredients I rotate all stock whilst placing it in the fridge and pantry. Chilled items that I will not need for the first couple of days are placed at the back of the fridge, and pantry items I know that I am going to use tomorrow (Sunday) I place to the side on the kitchen bench.

THE MENU WE DECIDE ON FOR THE WEEK IS:

SUNDAY	Spaghetti with meatballs served with salad
MONDAY	Mild chicken curry with sweet potato served with rice
TUESDAY	Left over mild chicken curry with sweet potato served with rice
WEDNESDAY	Entrée corn on the cob, Main pan- fried fish of the day served with boiled vegies and roasted chat potatoes
THURSDAY	Sushi for Michelle and me. Sausages, mashed potatoes, baked beans and vegies for the children
FRIDAY	BBQ lamb served with cous cous salad, vegies and honey dressing
SATURDAY	Chicken filo parcels with cous cous salad and sour cream





Sunday morning our son wakes me at 6.45am and I get up as Michelle sleeps in till 9.00am. Before starting on the day's cooking and prep for the early part of this coming week, I have breakfast and a coffee and enjoy some time with the kids and flick thru the newspaper whilst discussing with the children what we will do as a family after the day's chores have been done.

Because we have been doing the big cook up virtually every Saturday or Sunday since Michelle and I moved in together, the children know the drill. They can pester us all they like, but they know that if they leave us alone to do the big cook up together, it will be done quickly, and the reward for letting us get on with the job will be a cool outing. Mostly they get it and just play together for the morning... not always of course... but we always get the cooking done, we have to.

Before starting the big cook up I write a prep list detailing all the tasks that Michelle and I have to complete. It just makes it easier to multitask and create momentum when in the kitchen; professional chefs do this every day. Once a job is done it is crossed off the list and we move to the next task, this way we always know where we are up to and also get a sense that we are steadily getting to the end of the list. I write down the main jobs first followed by the smaller tasks. At 8am I empty the dishwasher and empty the dish rack, the kitchen is clean and tidy and ready for today's cook up, not unlike any professional restaurant kitchen.

First I start with the meatballs and meatball sauce for Sunday night (also I am prepping extra of this dish for the freezer). Grated carrot, celery and zucchini are sautéed in garlic oil. As Michelle has an intolerance for onion and whole garlic, I use zucchini as a substitute for onion, it works in meals such as this one and helps give the meatballs some spring and a soft texture, it is also important for me to use as many vegetables in our meals as possible when cooking, as our son is not the greatest raw veggie eater, so it works on a few levels.

I sauté the grated vegies in garlic oil and place half of them in a large bowl, the rest stay in the saucepan. Two large tins of chopped tomatoes go into the saucepan with herbs and seasoning and it's left to simmer until I have rolled and cooked the meatballs.

I add minced meat to the bowl of cooked grated vegies along with a couple of whole eggs, milk, breadcrumbs, herbs and seasoning. I turn on the oven and start to roll my meatballs placing them into a deep tray. Once I have filled two trays I cook them on a high temperature until they have a nicely coloured outer shell, then I add the seasoned sauce between the two trays that has been simmering on the stove top and again place them in the oven to cook the meatballs through, now at a lower temperature.

Once cooked in the now nicely thick rich sauce, I place the trays on racks to cool off on the kitchen bench. Michelle has already started on the salad prep for the next 3-4 days. Iceberg lettuce is cut, washed, spun and placed in a labelled container, with today's date on it. Green leaves are picked, washed and spun and again placed in a labelled container. Michelle then washes, slices, chops, grates, dices and places a range of different salad ingredients into dated containers. Today it is tomato, cucumber, capsicum, carrot, fresh herbs, olives, feta and some tasty cheese sticks for the kids. We call this our salad bar.

She has also sliced some pumpkin which is now roasting in the already hot oven. After the salad bar is complete she makes a start on the fruit salad bar. Cantaloupe melon is cleaned and cut, into slices that will fit into the children's lunch boxes and placed into a dated container. She preps strawberries, grapes, oranges and kiwi fruit. Some of these fruits can easily be used in lunchtime salads for Michelle and I during the first couple of days of the week. It's so important that as a family we eat enough fruit, salad and vegetables during the week and always keep the salad and fruit containers and their contents fresh.

While Michelle is finishing off the fruit bar I have started the prep for Monday's meal, the chicken curry with boiled rice which will carry over to Tuesday. I slice chicken thighs into bite size pieces for the curry and pop that into a container. I dice some sweet potato into small cubes – ready for roasting tomorrow, storing this in the fridge.



I dice some zucchini and a couple of fresh tomatoes ready. The rest of the ingredients are stored in the pantry or fridge and need no prep now.

I then stack the dishwasher and wipe down the cook top and kitchen bench.

Michelle has started making a packed lunch for the family as we have decided to go swimming. Sandwiches full of salad plus a container of the freshly cut fruit are quickly sorted. Some crackers and cheese are packed as are a couple of muffins from the freezer (from a batch Michelle made the week before).

I move the now lukewarm meatballs from the cooking trays to containers, one for tonight another for the freezer. I place them in the fridge surrounded by freezer blocks to make sure the fridge does not overheat and to chill down the meatballs as quickly as possible.

*Note, don't place steaming hot containers of food in your fridge straight away. Allow them to cool (so they stop steaming) on wire racks on the bench first. Then, when you do put them in the fridge, place them on frozen ice blocks from the freezer (you know the ones you use in the esky). This helps keep your fridge cool and also chills down your food more quickly.

The big cook up has come to an end and we certainly have set ourselves up well for the first part of the week. We head off to the swimming pool and enjoy a great afternoon together as a family.

Come dinner-time at 5.30pm, Michelle and I help one another to boil some pasta, reheat the meatballs, grate some parmesan, and prepare a salad and dressing to go with this.

After dinner I tidy up and clean the kitchen while Michelle prepares a salad for herself for her lunch the following day. Packed lunches for the children and myself are also made giving us a head start to the hectic morning schedule. My son and I are going to a local park with our bicycles after we have dropped my daughter at school, so having the lunches done just makes everything a bit easier. Last job in the kitchen for the day is to wrap, label and date the spare chilled meatballs and place them in the freezer with all the other meals that are prepped for busy days and weeks where we need some easy and healthy last minute meal solutions.



After breakfast I empty the dishwasher and dish rack, Michelle leaves for work at 8.00am I head out the door with the kids at 8.30am. We drop off my daughter at school and then we visit a friend for the day.

Together with his young daughter we visit a very cool playground and we all enjoy riding our bikes together. Come lunch time we swap and enjoy each other's packed lunches. We head off a bit later to school pick up. Once home the children watch TV as I put a load of washing on then I relax and read for a bit.

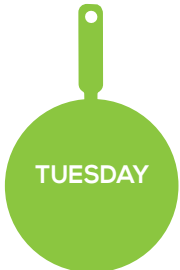
At 4.45pm I hang out the washing and then head into the kitchen and start to cook the curry for tonight. First I turn on the oven, then I oil the sweet potato cubes and pop them in to roast. While the potato is roasting I sauté the chicken. Once coloured, I remove the chicken pieces into a bowl then I sauté the zucchini with garlic oil and a little curry powder (this is a very child friendly curry so I don't overdo the spices). I add the chicken followed by the diced tomato, roasted sweet potato, a tablespoon of peanut butter, a couple of cubes of frozen vegie stock and a tin of coconut milk and last I add some seasoning.

The curry simmers for less than half an hour and is ready to serve. Rice is cooking in the rice cooker and by the time Michelle gets home from work, dinner is ready to be served and we can eat as a family.

After dinner I tidy the kitchen, fill up the dishwasher and get lunches ready for myself and the kids for Tuesday.



No lunch for Michelle as she is at a workshop where lunch is provided. Michelle makes sure that the kids' clothes and bags are ready for the next day and I sort out my own bag with chef clothes, as I am working from 9 to 4pm. Michelle gets the children into their pyjamas, gets her work clothes ready for the next day does homework and reading with the kids until about 7.30pm, when it is bed time for the children and she and I can finally relax.



Michelle is out the door very early today, around 6.30am, as she has to drive into the city. After breakfast it is a challenge to get the children and myself organised, but at least the lunches are made and the bags are ready. First I drop my son at childcare at 8.30am and then my daughter at school 8.45am before I make my way to work at 9am. I finish work at 4pm and pick up the kids.

Dinner is leftover chicken curry, so while the kids are in the bath, I reheat the meal and then get them into their pyjamas and the three of us eat together. Michelle will be home late so we make sure that there is some for her when she gets home. As the children chill out in front of the TV I clean up the kitchen and quickly do some prep for tomorrow's dinner, simple stuff but when done it will make it easier when I get home from work tomorrow.

First I prep some corn on the cob ready to boil, then I peel, cut and wash some vegetables to go with the fish. I also scrub some chat potatoes, cut them in half and like the other ingredients place them in a container and into the fridge. Michelle is home at 7pm and enjoys her dinner, after which she will make the lunches for tomorrow for everyone as I get the children ready for bed and read them a story.



Not so much of a scramble this morning as Michelle is leaving at her normal time of 8am. She takes a small chiller bag to work with a couple of ice blocks in it so she can pick up some fresh fish during her lunch break (there's a great fish shop near where she works).

I drop the children off at childcare and school before getting to work at 9am. Today's schedule at work is very busy - I go through the prep list with some of the other staff and change the order of proceedings, as some of the stock has not arrived yet from the suppliers. After a productive day we start washing the kitchen down, wash the floors and along with one of the other senior chefs, we write a new prep list for the next day, and phone through a couple of orders for fresh stock and ingredients and at 4.30pm it's time to change clothes and go and pick up the children.

First thing I do when I get home is turn the oven on, oil the chat potatoes and get them roasting. I also get the corn on the cob on the boil and then get the children into their bath. Michelle is home at 5.30pm with the fish, some salmon pieces, whiting and a handful of prawns.

I crumb the whiting whilst the kids tuck into the corn on the cob and the seafood is being sealed in my biggest frying pan and the pre-cut vegetables go into a pot of simmering water.

Roasted chat potatoes, boiled vegies and crispy sealed seafood are all ready to serve at the same time. After dinner Michelle and I load the dishwasher, clean the kitchen benches and cook top. Michelle makes herself a salad for lunch the next day, including some leftover salmon. Together we also write the shopping list for the mid-week shop, I will shop after I have dropped the children off at childcare and school tomorrow morning.



I need some smoked salmon, avocado, cucumber and eggs for the sushi for Thursday night and some sausages for the children. Left over sushi from Thursday's dinner will be lunch for both of us on Friday so we will not restock the salad bar this time around, but we do need to restock the fruit bar.

The rest of Thursday's ingredients we have in the pantry, fridge and freezer. For Friday and Saturdays' meals I need some lamb straps to marinate, chicken thighs for the filo parcels plus some filo pastry. The fridge is low on stock so as well as fruit for the rest of the week I need some fresh vegetables, some natural yogurt for the dressing and a few other things. At this midweek shop I will try to buy exactly what we need to get us through Thursday to Saturday so that the fridge is virtually empty for the big shop and cook up on Sunday. I decide to make the lunches tomorrow morning so instead of hitting the snooze button a few times I will get up nice and early to prepare them, I am just too tired to do them tonight.



Michelle is getting the children ready as I make the packed lunches for them. Packed lunches done, two cars packed we start our engines and go in opposite directions. Children dropped off and the midweek shopping done I get home and unpack the groceries.

I make the sushi that morning so that that is done and all I have to worry about later is the kids' dinner, plus I replenish the fruit bar. I am done by 12 noon giving me 3 hours to work on my business, make some phone calls and check my emails. Before I head out the door to pick up the children I pack some fruit and nuts, plus cheese and crackers for all three of us.

The kids play and we enjoy our snacks at a local playground before heading home to relax around 4pm. The children are in front of the TV and I put a load of washing on and then I enjoy reading the newspaper whilst having a coffee. At 4.45pm I prep and cook that evening's dinner for the children and chop the vegetables for the cous cous salad for Friday and Saturday's dinner. I then marinate the lamb straps and chop some vegetables ready to boil to go with the dish.

Michelle gets home and takes over in the kitchen as I give the children a bath, she puts in the effort and quickly creates the honey dressing to go with Friday night's dish, plus she makes a packed lunch for our daughter. While cutting sushi for our dinner and organizing the condiments to go with our meal, she also creates a sushi packed lunch for herself for Friday.

After dinner we help each other clean the kitchen and hang out the washing then we sit down and enjoy our family's favourite TV show, and all scream and yell at the TV urging on our favourite contestant.



My son and I get home after the school drop off and decide to go to the local zoo for a good walk and to enjoy lunch. As he plays in his room I quickly do a couple of chores around the house and also spend half an hour in the kitchen. I roast off all the pre-cut vegetables with herbs and spices for the cous cous salad and I cook the cous cous itself with a little vegetable stock. Once cooked I spread these food items out on a flat tray each and place in the fridge to chill for when I get home when I will mix them into a salad.



Then I make our packed lunches – some leftover sushi for my lunch and I make a sandwich for my son. I also bring some cut fruit and our water bottles, knowing we will buy a small treat for ourselves there.

After our zoo visit we pick up my daughter from school and head home to relax. Come dinnertime I simply have to mix and flavour the cous cous salad, seal off the BBQ lamb straps and boil the pre-prepped vegetables to go with the meal.

I put a handful of the roasted vegetables for the cous cous salad in the fridge, I will use these for the children's filo parcels on Saturday. The children have had their bath and Michelle is home at 5.45pm after a big week in the office, the smile on her face is a big one and she lets out a big sigh of relief; weekends are treasured. I grab the honey dressing from the fridge and start to serve up dinner, happy we are managing to eat together as a family, it is not always so, but we do manage it today.

After dinner we help each other stack the dishwasher, clean the pots and pans and also the kitchen and then spend a little time on writing next week's menu together and create a shopping list for the big shop which Michelle will shop for tomorrow morning (Saturday) and she writes a prep list.

Whilst she goes shopping for the big shop I will prep the chicken filo parcels for Saturday evening's dinner, which will be served with the left over cous cous salad and some vegetables.

THE MENU WE DECIDE ON FOR THE WEEK IS:

SUNDAY	Homemade chunky minestrone soup for Michelle and me. Fish fingers with mashed potato and vegies for the children (with a little soup if they are up for it)
MONDAY	Homemade chunky minestrone soup for Michelle and me. Cheese burgers for the children with avocado, tomato and salad (with a little soup if they are up for it)
TUESDAY	Rump steak with chunky tomato gravy, roasted/boiled vegetables and soft polenta
WEDNESDAY	Mild chilli con carne (homemade from the freezer) served with rice, sour cream, avocado salsa and fresh coriander
THURSDAY	Entrée corn on the cob, Main pan-fried fish of the day served with boiled vegies and polenta cakes
FRIDAY	Boiled silverside served with potatoes, white sauce, baked cauliflower, boiled vegetables and wholegrain mustard
SATURDAY	Roast vegetable and cheese frittata with salad and roasted chat potatoes (served with leftover slices of silverside if anyone wants it)





It is an early start for everyone in the family as we have a very busy Saturday, Michelle and I want to set ourselves up so that come Sunday we have virtually no chores to do and we can get into the car nice and early and head into the centre of Melbourne and spend all day sightseeing and visiting our favourite spots.

But we need to set ourselves up for the week so it is time to get on with the big shop and cook up as well as clean and tidy the house at the same time. To occupy the kids, we have invited a couple of friends over for a play date, which always works well.

Michelle is out the door at 10am and has the shopping list in her hand and plenty of bags for the produce. I have already emptied the dishwasher and dish rack, put a load of washing on and have made a pancake batter for the children's lunch. I start to make the filo parcels for tonight's dinner slithers of chicken, camembert cheese and dried figs go into Michelle and my parcels, the children's version have Tasty cheese and roasted vegetables. I start to clean the house as I wait for Michelle to get home with the groceries.

Michelle arrives home and unpacks the groceries and gets started on the soup straight away.

I start making pancakes for the children, cut up strawberries and banana pieces and put syrup on the table and they all get a glass of milk. As the children say, 'best lunch ever'. I then help Michelle with all the chopping and dicing for the minestrone soup - celery, carrots, zucchini, green beans, potatoes, cabbage etc.

Once all the prep has been done for the soup, Michelle starts cooking. I get stuck into the salad bar and the fruit bar. As I am slicing and dicing the salad I prep our lunch at the same time, a simple tuna salad. Once the salad bar is finished I cut, wash and prep vegetables for both boiled and roasted vegetables for the first part of the week, and once done I pack and label the ingredients, and pop them into the fridge.

I then get stuck into the fruit bar - oranges, rock melon, kiwi and mango pieces are all cut, packed and labelled as are washed grapes. We enjoy our lunch before finishing off the big Saturday cook up; the soup is scooped into containers, making sure all the vegetables are evenly distributed, and placed on racks to chill on the kitchen bench before going into the fridge with some ice blocks. A couple of potatoes are peeled and placed in water ready to boil tomorrow for the childrens' mashed potato.

Last on the agenda is to wash all the pots and pans, fill up the dishwasher and clean the kitchen benches and cook top. The day has gone well and we are finished in the kitchen just after 3pm. Michelle takes our daughter to the shopping centre for some mum and daughter time, while I take our son to the park to play football.

Dinner for the next three nights is taken care of, tonight after dinner we will prepare sandwiches, wraps and fruit for our visit to the city and we will make sure our water bottles are filled and placed in the fridge to chill.

So there you have it. That's a look at an average week in our household. Every week is a little bit different - but the essentials are always the same. Planning and prepping for great health.

The next part of the program will give you the tools and information you need to implement a similar process in your everyday life.