

[NOTE: Some sentiments contained within "What We're Reading" articles may not strictly conform with Simple Again's nutritional outlook. We read articles containing opposing information all the time and derive our nutritional philosophies from the latest science, the opinions of experts worldwide and our anecdotal experiences in the field. We keep an open mind and a strong affinity for fact-based evidence to help make the world of nutrition "Simple Again" for you.]

Eating Whole Foods in an Unprocessed Meal Plan

Whole foods are those closest to their natural state. They've been mostly untouched by chemicals, processing or preservatives. Whole foods also tend to be rich in phytochemicals, antioxidants, fiber and healthy fats. A diet rich in whole foods boosts your health by offering up multiple nutrients that work together synergistically in their most natural forms.

Typically, you find whole foods at the perimeter of the store. These include plant products, including fresh fruits and vegetables, as well as whole grains, plain dairy, eggs, meats and fish. Craft an unprocessed meal plan using these ingredients and minimal processed foods from the center aisles of the store.

Choose a Protein

Whole sources of protein include eggs, dairy, beef, chicken, pork and fish. When creating a meal plan, aim to have one of these options at each meal. Protein provides essential amino acids for development of muscle and healthy cells. Plus, it keeps you feeling full due to its longer digestion time and satiating qualities.

At breakfast, poach or scramble eggs with a pinch of salt and pepper; mix plain, unsweetened yogurt with fresh berries; or season ground turkey with fresh garlic and oregano and saute for a sausage substitute. Proteins to avoid at breakfast include seasoned pork sausage, bacon, sweetened yogurt and egg substitutes, as these have additives or have undergone processing of some sort.

Lunch and dinner proteins appropriate on an unprocessed meal plan include roasted chicken or turkey, grilled steaks or homemade burgers and steamed or broiled fish. Plain canned or dried beans also fit an unprocessed meal plan. Avoid hot dogs and other processed meats, as well as sauces and marinades that may have additives.

Add Some Produce

An unprocessed meal plan includes lots of fresh fruits and vegetables. At meals, use fresh produce generously. Mix fresh, chopped peppers and onions into scrambled eggs. Have a fruit salad alongside grilled chicken. Mix up a fresh, raw vegetable side salad. Or roast broccoli, cauliflower and zucchini to have with your steak.



Keep the vegetables free of processed additions, such as canned sauces, bottled salad dressings and marinades. Flavor veggies with olive oil, citrus juice and herbs. Make your own salad dressing with red wine or balsamic vinegar and olive oil. When fresh produce is just not an option, frozen vegetables are OK. Look for ones that are flash frozen and not mixed with seasonings or herbs.

Go With the Grain

Grains can also fit into an unprocessed meal plan. Skip the refined white types, like white rice and white bread. Instead, go for whole varieties -- brown rice, quinoa, farro and barley, for example. Purchase grains that are unseasoned, rather than "flavored" or as "mixes." They're often most affordable from the the bulk bins.

Prepare them by cooking in water or all-natural broth. Season grains with chopped onion, garlic and herbs.

Snack Smartly

Most conventional snacks don't really fit into an unprocessed meal plan. Chips, cheese puffs, snack mixes, cereal bars and gummy fruit snacks are a no-no. Instead, go for dry-roasted or raw unsalted nuts and seeds, fresh fruit, cut-up vegetables, unsweetened applesauce, plain yogurt or kefir and unsweetened dried fruit, such as dates and raisins.

Snacks can also look a lot like foods you eat at other meal times. Toss together a fruit or vegetable salad; have a few ounces of roast chicken breast wrapped in a romaine lettuce leaf; or enjoy a small cup of homemade bean chili.

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