



National Training Center
Fort Irwin, Ca

2025

DESERT EATS

Guide to Eating Healthy at Fort Irwin



Weed Army Community Hospital
Nutrition Care Division

Table of Contents

MyPlate

Serving Sizes vs Portion Sizes

Nutrition Labels

Budget Friendly Shopping

Health Food Swaps

Harnessing AI

Family Meal Tips

Family of 4 Sample Meal Plan

Field Food Tips

Barracks Food Tips

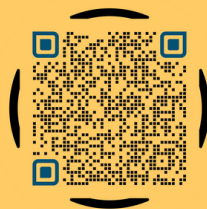
Barracks Sample Meal Plan

Bonus Recipes

Resources



**LEAVE US
FEEDBACK**



**CHECK US OUT
ON THE WEB**

QUESTIONS?

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REFERENCES

**<https://www.eatright.org/>
<https://www.myplate.gov/>
<https://www.fda.gov/food/>**



MyPlate

The official symbol of the five food groups. Learn how to make MyPlate work for you. Visit myplate.gov for free resources.

Start simple with MyPlate

Healthy eating is important at every life stage,
with benefits that add up over time, bite by bite. Small changes matter.

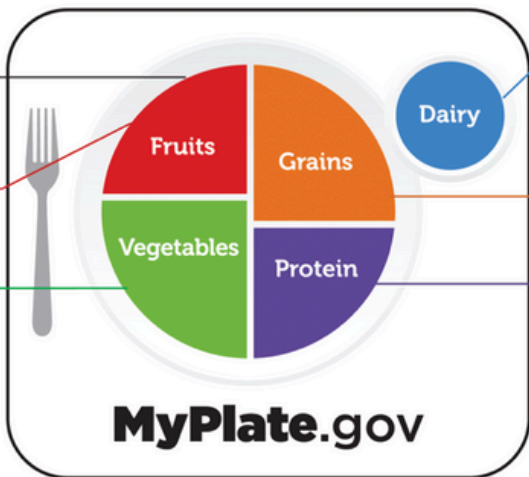
Make half your plate fruits and vegetables.

Focus on whole fruits.

Vary your veggies.

Limit

Choose foods and beverages with less added sugars, saturated fat, and sodium.



Move to low-fat or fat-free dairy milk or yogurt (or lactose-free dairy or fortified soy versions).

Make half your grains whole grains.

Vary your protein routine.

Activity

Being active can help you prevent disease and manage your weight.

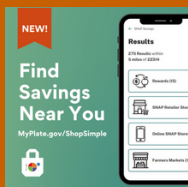
MyPlate Quiz



MyPlate works best when it is customized to include eating style, likes, dislikes, cultural, and family favorites.

- <https://www.myplate.gov/myplate-quiz>

Shop Simple App

























MyPlate's Shop Simple App can help you discover new ways to create budget-friendly meals.

- <https://www.myplate.gov/app/shopsimple>



Serving Sizes vs Portion Sizes

Portion size and serving size are similar but have a big difference. Portion size is the amount of food you choose to eat in one sitting while serving size is a standard measurement of food.

FOOD	SYMBOL	COMPARISON	SERVING SIZE
Dairy: Milk, Yogurt, Cheese			
Cheese (string cheese)			1½ ounces
Milk and yogurt (glass of milk)			1 cup
Vegetables			
Carrots			1 cup
Kale			2 cups
Fruits			
Apple			1 medium
Peaches			1 cup
Grains: Breads, Cereals, Pasta			
Cereal (bowl of cereal)			1 cup
Noodles, rice, oatmeal (bowl of shredded wheat)			½ cup
Slice of whole-wheat bread			1 slice
Protein: Meat, Beans, Nuts			
Chicken, beef, fish, pork (chicken breast)			3 ounces
Peanut butter (spoon of peanut butter)			1 tablespoon

Nutrition Labels

When looking at the Nutrition Facts label, first check the number of servings per container and the serving size.

Nutrition Facts		
Serving Size 1 cup (228g)		
Servings Per Container about 2		
Amount Per Serving		
Calories 250	Calories from Fat 110	
	% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 12g		18%
Saturated Fat 3g		15%
Trans Fat 3g		
Cholesterol 30mg		10%
Sodium 470mg		20%
Total Carbohydrate 31g		10%
Dietary Fiber 0g		0%
Sugars 5g		
Proteins 5g		
Vitamin A		4%
Vitamin C		2%
Calcium		20%
Iron		4%
* Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your Daily Values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs:		
	Calories: 2,000	2,500
Total Fat	Less than 65g	80g
Saturated Fat	Less than 20g	
25g		
Cholesterol	Less than 300mg	300mg
Sodium	Less than 2,400mg	2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate	300g	375g

For educational purposes only. This label does not meet the labeling requirements described in 21 CFR 101.9.

1 Serving Size

This section is the basis for determining number of calories, amount of each nutrient, and %DVs of a food. Use it to compare a serving size to how much you actually eat. Serving sizes are given in familiar units, such as cups or pieces, followed by the metric amount, e.g., number of grams.

2 Amount of Calories

If you want to manage your weight (lose, gain, or maintain), this section is especially helpful. The amount of calories is listed on the left side. The right side shows how many calories in one serving come from fat. In this example, there are 250 calories, 110 of which come from fat. The key is to balance how many calories you eat with how many calories your body uses. **Tip:** Remember that a product that's fat-free isn't necessarily calorie-free.

3 Limit these Nutrients

Eating too much total fat (including saturated fat and trans fat), cholesterol, or sodium may increase your risk of certain chronic diseases, such as heart disease, some cancers, or high blood pressure. The goal is to stay below 100%DV for each of these nutrients per day.

4 Get Enough of these Nutrients

Americans often don't get enough dietary fiber, vitamin A, vitamin C, calcium, and iron in their diets. Eating enough of these nutrients may improve your health and help reduce the risk of some diseases and conditions.

5 Percent (%) Daily Value

This section tells you whether the nutrients (total fat, sodium, dietary fiber, etc.) in one serving of food contribute a little or a lot to your total daily diet.

The %DVs are based on a 2,000-calorie diet. Each listed nutrient is based on 100% of the recommended amounts for that nutrient. For example, 18% for total fat means that one serving furnishes 18% of the total amount of fat that you could eat in a day and stay within public health recommendations. Use the Quick Guide to Percent DV (%DV): 5%DV or less is low and 20%DV or more is high.

6 Footnote with Daily Values (DVs)

The footnote provides information about the DVs for important nutrients, including fats, sodium and fiber. The DVs are listed for people who eat 2,000 or 2,500 calories each day.

– The amounts for total fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, and sodium are maximum amounts. That means you should try to stay below the amounts listed.

Bonus Tips for Smarter Label Reading

- Check Ingredients – Avoid added sugars & artificial additives.
- Watch Serving Size – Packages often list smaller portions than what you'd actually eat.
- Know Your Fats – Choose healthy unsaturated fats (nuts, olive oil) & limit saturated fats.
- Protein Counts – Aim for quality protein sources to stay full and support muscle recovery.
- Fewer Additives – Skip artificial colors & preservatives when possible.

Budget Friendly Shopping

Eating healthy doesn't have to cost a fortune. With planning and savvy shopping strategies, you can stretch your food budget while enjoying nutritious meals.

1. Plan Ahead & Make a List

- ✓ Plan your meals for the week before shopping to avoid impulse buys.
- ✓ Check what you already have in your pantry and fridge to prevent duplicate purchases.
- ✓ Create a running grocery list throughout the week so you only buy what you need.
- ✓ Eat a snack before heading to the store. When you are hungry you may be tempted to buy impulse items.

2. Buy Smart & Compare Prices

- ✓ Shop sales and store promotions – Look for discounts, digital coupons, and bulk deals.
- ✓ Compare unit prices – The price per ounce, pound, or serving helps determine the best deal.
- ✓ Use store-brand items – Generic or commissary brands often have the same quality at a lower cost.
- ✓ Sign up for loyalty programs – Many stores offer discounts, rewards, or points that add up over time.
- ✓ Check the “sell by date” to ensure you are buying the freshest products.

3. Choose Budget-Friendly Ingredients

- ✓ Buy in bulk – Rice, oats, beans, and frozen vegetables are cheaper in larger quantities.
- ✓ Opt for frozen or canned produce – These last longer and are just as nutritious as fresh options.
- ✓ Pick versatile ingredients – Eggs, peanut butter, canned tuna, and potatoes can be used in a variety of meals.
- ✓ Choose cheaper protein sources – Chicken, beans, and lentils are cost-effective protein options.

4. Avoid Waste & Stretch Your Budget

- ✓ Store food properly – Keep fruits and vegetables fresh longer by washing and refrigerating correctly.
- ✓ Use leftovers creatively – Turn extra veggies into soups, stir-fries, or casseroles.
- ✓ Freeze extras – Bread, cheese, meat, and pre-cooked meals can last longer when frozen.
- ✓ Prep your own snacks – Buying whole carrots, cheese blocks, or bulk nuts is cheaper than pre-packaged versions.



Healthy Food Swaps

Making simple substitutions in your diet can significantly improve your health and well-being. Not only can you increase the nutritional value of your meals, but you can also reduce calories, sodium, and sugar.

Breakfast Swaps

- Sugary cereal → Try: Oatmeal with fruit & nuts
- White toast with butter → Try: Whole wheat toast with nut butter
- Flavored yogurt → Try: Plain Greek yogurt with honey & berries
- Store-bought muffins → Try: Homemade banana oat muffins

Lunch & Dinner Swaps

- White rice → Try: Brown rice, quinoa, or cauliflower rice
- Regular pasta → Try: Whole wheat or legume-based pasta
- Flour tortillas → Try: Whole wheat or lettuce wraps
- Heavy cream in sauces → Try: Greek yogurt or blended cottage cheese
- Sour cream → Try: Plain Greek yogurt

Protein Swaps

- Ground beef → Try: Lean ground turkey or lentils in tacos & pasta
- Fried chicken → Try: Baked or air-fried chicken
- Deli meats (high in sodium) → Try: Fresh grilled chicken or tuna
- Bacon → Try: Turkey bacon or avocado for richness

Snack Swaps

- Chips → Try: Popcorn, roasted chickpeas, or nuts
- Candy bars → Try: Dark chocolate with nuts
- Ice cream → Try: Blended frozen bananas ('nice cream')
- Granola bars (often high in sugar) → Try: Homemade oat & nut bars

Drink Swaps

- Soda → Try: Sparkling water with lemon or fruit slices
- Sugary coffee drinks → Try: Black coffee with cinnamon or a splash of milk
- Juice → Try: Infused water or whole fruit
- Energy drinks → Try: Green tea or homemade smoothies

Cooking Swaps

- Butter in recipes → Try: Unsweetened applesauce (for baking) or avocado (for spreads)
- Store-bought salad dressing → Try: Olive oil, vinegar, and lemon juice
- Frying → Try: Baking, grilling, or air-frying

Small changes can make a big difference for your health!



Harnessing AI

Technology can make healthy eating easier and more affordable. AI-powered tools can help you plan meals, reduce waste, and stay on budget with minimal effort.

Step 1: AI-Generated Meal Planning & Budgeting

Generate a personalized meal plan based on your budget, dietary preferences, and available ingredients. Whether you need quick recipes, or meals under \$100 per week, AI can provide a structured plan that aligns with your needs. Once you have a plan, AI can calculate estimated costs per meal, ensuring you stay within budget.

💡 *Example: “Create a budget-friendly meal plan for one week, using mostly pantry staples and high-protein foods under \$100.”*

Step 2: Smart Shopping with AI

Generate grocery lists directly from your meal plan, helping you shop efficiently while avoiding unnecessary purchases. It can also suggest cheaper ingredient alternatives if something is too expensive.

💡 *Example: “Create a shopping list for my meal plan and suggest budget-friendly substitutions if an ingredient is expensive.”*

Step 3: Reducing Food Waste & Maximizing Ingredients

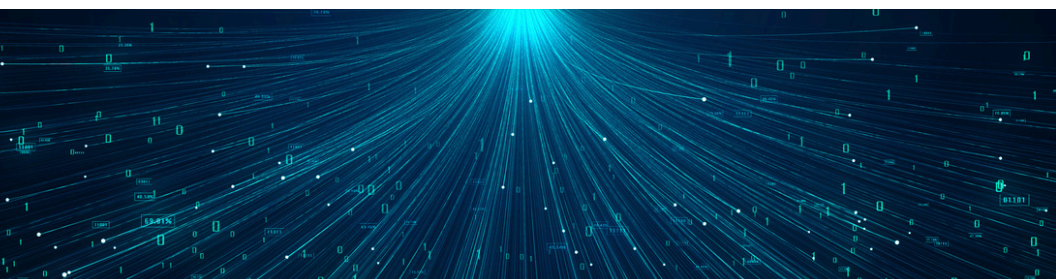
To get the most out of your groceries, AI can help you repurpose leftovers into new meals, ensuring nothing goes to waste. Additionally, AI can suggest proper food storage techniques to keep ingredients fresher longer.

💡 *Example: “I have leftover grilled chicken and rice—what three meals can I make with them?”*

Step 4: Tracking Nutrition & Spending

AI can break down the nutrition of meals and track your food spending to help you make healthier choices while sticking to a budget. Some AI-powered budgeting tools can also track grocery expenses over time, providing insights into where you might be overspending.

💡 *Example: “Compare the nutrition and cost per serving of a homemade smoothie vs. a store-bought protein shake.”*



Family Meal Tips

Cooking at home is one of the best ways to eat healthier, save money, and enjoy quality time with your family. With some planning and creativity, you can make nutritious meals that everyone loves.

Start Simple & Build a Routine

- Find a few go-to recipes that your family enjoys and rotate them weekly.
- Meal plan in advance to avoid last-minute fast food runs.

Smart Snacking

Choosing snack combinations to keep you full longer and prevent energy crashes. Such as pairing a carb + protein.

Snack ideas:

- Apple slices + peanut butter
- Veggie sticks + hummus
- Cheese + whole grain crackers
- Fruit + dark chocolate
- Baked apple + oats

Make It A Family Affair

- ✓ Let kids help with age-appropriate tasks like washing veggies, stirring, or measuring.
- ✓ Create a weekly theme – Meatless Mondays, Taco Tuesdays, or Breakfast-for-Dinner to make planning easier and more fun.
- ✓ Batch prep snacks & meals on Sundays to make busy weekdays smoother.

Make Meals More Nutritious

Add extra nutrients to meals by sneaking in fruits and vegetables.

- Stir chopped bell peppers into scrambled eggs.
- Blend a handful of spinach into smoothies (you won't taste it!)

Add zucchini or carrots to pasta sauces, meatballs, or casseroles.

- Choose whole grains like brown rice, quinoa, or whole wheat pasta for extra fiber and energy.
- Boost protein intake with eggs, beans, lentils, Greek yogurt or cottage cheese.

Reduce Waste & Stretch Your Groceries

- Use perishable foods first – Eat berries, greens, and mushrooms early in the week, saving pantry staples (pasta, rice, beans) for later.
- Get creative with leftovers – Turn extra chicken into soup, tacos, or stir-fry.
- Freeze extra portions – If a meal makes too much, freeze leftovers for quick future meals.
- Cut recipes in half if you're not a fan of leftovers to avoid food waste.

Final Tip: Keep It Fun & Flexible!

Eating healthy at home doesn't have to be restrictive or time-consuming. Start small, experiment with flavors, and find what works for your family. The more you cook at home, the easier it is!



Family of 4 Sample Meal Plan



Day 1

- **Breakfast:** Pancakes with Berries and Syrup (15 mins)
 - Ingredients: 2 cups pancake mix, 1 cup milk, 2 eggs, 1 cup berries, nonstick cooking spray
 - Instructions: Mix pancake mix with milk and eggs, spray griddle with nonstick cooking spray, spoon batter onto griddle and cook 2-3 per side. Serve with berries and syrup.
- **Lunch:** Chicken Caesar Salad (20 mins)
 - Ingredients: 2 grilled chicken breasts, 4 cups romaine lettuce, 1/4 cup Caesar dressing, 1/4 cup Parmesan cheese
 - Instructions: Grill chicken until internal temperature reaches 165°F and chop up before tossing with lettuce, dressing and cheese.
- **Dinner:** Beef Enchiladas (40 mins)
 - Ingredients: 1 lb ground beef, 1 onion diced, 1 can enchilada sauce, 8 corn tortillas, 1 cup shredded cheese, 1 Tbsp olive oil
 - Instructions: Cook beef and onion, about 10 minutes, fill tortillas with mixture, place in a dish and cover with sauce and cheese. Bake at 375°F for 20 min.

Day 2

- **Breakfast:** Bagel with Cream Cheese & Smoked Salmon (10 mins)
 - Ingredients: 4 bagels, 4 oz cream cheese, 4 oz smoked salmon
 - Instructions: Toast bagels, spread with cream cheese and top with salmon.
- **Lunch:** BLT Sandwiches (15 mins)
 - Ingredients: 8 slices whole wheat bread, 8 slices of bacon, 4 lettuce leaves, 8 tomato slices, 4 Tbsp light mayo
 - Instructions: Cook bacon, toast bread, assemble sandwiches with bacon, mayo, lettuce, and tomato.
- **Dinner:** Pork Chops with Applesauce & Roasted Veggies (30 mins)
 - Ingredients: 4 pork chops, 1 cup low sugar applesauce, 2 cups carrots, 2 cups broccoli, 2 Tbsp olive oil, salt, pepper
 - Instructions: Season and bake pork chops and veggies at 400°F for 25 minutes. Serve with applesauce.

Family of 4 Sample Meal Plan



Day 3

- **Breakfast:** Cereal with Milk and Fruit (5 mins)
 - Ingredients: 4 cups whole grain cereal, 2 cups milk, 1 cup mixed berries
 - Instructions: Pour cereal, add milk and berries.
- **Lunch:** Chicken Quesadillas (20 mins)
 - Ingredients: 1 lb shredded chicken breast, 4 whole wheat tortillas, 1 cup shredded cheese, 1/4 cup salsa
 - Instructions: Cook chicken until it reaches an internal temperature of 165°F and shred. Layer tortilla with cheese and chicken. Grill 3-4 minutes per side. Serve with salsa.
- **Dinner:** Spaghetti with Garlic Bread (25 mins)
 - Ingredients: 1 lb ground turkey, 1 lbs whole wheat spaghetti noodles, 1 jar marinara sauce, 1 loaf garlic bread
 - Instructions: Cook spaghetti noodles. Cook ground turkey in a pan, add marinara sauce once meat is cooked through. Bake garlic bread at 375°F for 10 minutes.

Day 4

- **Breakfast:** Omelette with Cheese & Vegetables (15 mins)
 - Ingredients: 8 eggs, 1/2 cup shredded cheese, 1 cup bell peppers, 1/2 cup spinach, nonstick cooking spray
 - Instructions: Beat eggs, cook in pan with cheese and veggies.
- **Lunch:** Grilled Cheese with Tomato Soup (15 mins)
 - Ingredients: 8 slices whole wheat bread, 4 slices cheese, 2 Tbsp butter, 1 can low sodium tomato soup, 1 cup water
 - Instructions: Heat pan with butter, butter bread, add cheese. Grill sandwich 3-4 minutes per side. Heat soup with water.
- **Dinner:** Beef and Vegetable Stir-Fry (20 mins)
 - Ingredients: 1 lb beef strips, 2 cups mixed veggies, 2 Tbsp low-sodium soy sauce, 1 Tbsp honey, 2 Tbsp olive oil, 2 cups brown rice
 - Instructions: Cook beef strips in olive oil, add veggies, soy sauce and honey. Serve over rice.

Family of 4 Sample Meal Plan



Day 5

- **Breakfast:** Waffles with Syrup, Sausage & Banana (10 mins)
 - Ingredients: 8 frozen waffles, 4 sausage links, 1/4 cup syrup
 - Instructions: Toast waffles, cook sausage in skillet. Serve with syrup and sliced banana.
- **Lunch:** Turkey and Avocado Wraps (10 mins)
 - Ingredients: 4 whole wheat tortillas, 8 oz turkey breast, 1 avocado, 4 lettuce leaves, 4 tomato slices, 2 Tbsp light mayo
 - Instructions: Assemble wraps and enjoy.
- **Dinner:** Chicken Fajitas (25 mins)
 - Ingredients: 1 lb sliced chicken breast, 2 sliced bell peppers, 1 sliced onion, 2 Tbsp olive oil, 1-2 Tbsp fajita seasoning, 8 tortillas, 1/4 cup shredded cheese, 2 Tbsp sour cream
 - Instructions: Saute chicken, peppers, and onion in olive oil with seasoning until cooked through. Serve in tortillas and top with cheese and sour cream.

Day 6

- **Breakfast:** French Toast with Bacon (15 mins)
 - Ingredients: 8 slices of bread, 4 eggs, 1 cup milk, 1 tsp cinnamon, 4 slices of bacon, nonstick cooking spray
 - Instructions: Beat eggs and mix in cinnamon and milk. Spray pan with cooking spray. Dip bread in egg mixture and cook on pan 3-4 minutes per side. Cook bacon and serve.
- **Lunch:** Tuna Salad with Crackers (10 mins)
 - Ingredients: 2 packets tuna, 1/4 cup Greek yogurt, 1/2 cup diced cucumbers, 1 box whole wheat crackers
 - Instructions: Mix tuna, Greek yogurt, and cucumbers. Serve with crackers.
- **Dinner:** Turkey Tacos (20 mins)
 - Ingredients: 1 lb ground turkey, 1 packet of taco seasoning, 8 tortillas, 1 cup shredded lettuce, 1/2 cup diced tomatoes, 1/4 cup shredded cheese, 2 Tbsp sour cream, 2 Tbsp salsa
 - Instructions: Cook turkey with seasoning, assemble tacos with toppings.

Family of 4 Sample Meal Plan

Day 7

- **Breakfast:** Scrambled Eggs with Toast and Fruit (15 mins)
 - Ingredients: 8 eggs, 4 slices whole wheat toast, mixed fruit, nonstick cooking spray, salt, pepper
 - Instructions: Beat eggs and cook in a pan. Toast bread and serve with a side of mixed fruit.
- **Lunch:** Ham Sandwiches (10 Mins)
 - Ingredients: 8 slices whole wheat bread, 4 oz ham, 4 lettuce leaves, 4 slices of cheese 4 slices of tomato, 2 Tbsp light mayo
 - Instructions: Assemble sandwiches and enjoy.
- **Dinner:** Roast Beef with Potatoes and Carrots (1 hr, 20 mins)
 - Ingredients: 2 lbs beef roast, 4 cubed potatoes, 4 large carrots, sliced, 2 Tbsp olive oil, salt, pepper, garlic powder
 - Instructions: Season beef, potatoes and carrots. Roast at 375°F for 1 hour. Let rest for 10 minutes and serve.

Sample Meal Plan Shopping List

- **Procurement Location:** Food For Less, High Desert Farmers Market
- **Estimated Cost:** \$120-150

Pantry Staples:

- Pancake mix (1 box) \$3, Whole wheat bread (1 loaf) \$4, Brown rice (1, 2 lbs bag) \$3, Corn tortillas (1 pack) \$2, Enchilada sauce (1 can) \$2, Olive oil (medium bottle) \$5, Soy sauce (1 bottle) \$2, Honey (1 jar) \$2, Whole grain cereal (1 box) \$3, Spaghetti (1 lbs) \$3, Marinara sauce (1 jar) \$2, Garlic bread (1 loaf) \$2, Taco seasoning (1 packet) \$1, Taco shells (1 pack) \$2, Tomato soup (1 can) \$1, Whole wheat crackers (1 box) \$2, Syrup (1 bottle) \$2

Fridge Staples:

- Eggs (2 dozen) \$10, Milk (1 gallon) \$3, Shredded cheese (1, 16oz bag) \$5, Greek yogurt (1 tub) \$3, Bacon (1 pack) \$4, Turkey breast (8oz) \$5, Ham (8oz) \$4, Sour Cream (1 tub) \$2

Fresh/Frozen Produce:

- Banana (4) \$2, Mixed frozen berries (2 pint) \$6, \$3, Avocado (2) \$2, Tomatoes (4) \$2, Bell peppers (4) \$4, Cucumber (1) \$1, Spinach (1 bag) \$2, Frozen mixed veggies (1 bag) \$2, Potatoes (5 lbs) \$4, Carrots (1 bag) \$2, Romaine lettuce (2 heads) \$3

Proteins

- Chicken breast (3 lbs) \$15, Ground beef (2 lbs) \$10, Ground turkey (2lbs) \$10, Pork chops (2 lbs) \$8, Sausage links (1 pack) \$4, Tuna packets (3 packets) \$2, Smoked salmon (4oz) \$5, Beef roast (2 lbs) \$10

Field Food Tips

Being in the field for multiple days means limited food options, little to no refrigeration, and the need for high-energy, lightweight, and long-lasting nutrition. Proper planning can help maintain energy, hydration, and performance.

What to Pack

- Look for non-perishable, high-protein, and hydrating foods that require little prep.

✓ Protein-Packed Options

- Jerky & Meat Sticks – Beef, turkey, bison, or salmon jerky
- Tuna or Chicken Packets – Ready-to-eat, lightweight, and packed with protein
- Hard-Boiled Eggs – Can last a few days if stored in a cool place
- Protein Bars – Look for high-protein options
- Nuts & Nut Butters (Peanut, Almond, Cashew) – Single-serve packs or small jars
- Roasted Chickpeas or Edamame – Shelf-stable, high in protein, and crunchy

✓ Hydrating & Electrolyte-Rich Foods

- Electrolyte Drink Mixes – LMNT, Liquid I.V., or Nuun tabs
- Cucumber, Watermelon Packs or Whole Apples – If you can carry them, these have a high water content and are refreshing

✓ Energy-Dense Carbohydrates

- Instant Oatmeal Packs – Just add hot water for a filling, fiber-rich meal
- Whole Wheat Tortillas – Lightweight and great for making wraps
- Granola or Muesli – No cooking required, high in fiber and energy
- Rice Cakes or Whole Grain Crackers – Easy to eat with peanut butter or tuna
- Instant Mashed Potatoes – Just add water for a quick carb boost
- Squeezable fruit Pouches – quick carbohydrates
- Dried Fruit (Mango, Pineapple, Apricots) – Natural sugars



Pre-Made Field Meal Ideas

Breakfast Ideas

- Overnight Oats (Pre-Made in a Bag or Jar) – Oats + dried fruit + protein powder, mix with water
- High-Protein Granola & Nut Butter – Eat dry or with shelf-stable milk
- Protein Shake Packets + Instant Coffee – Mix with water for a protein & caffeine boost

Lunch/Dinner Ideas

- Tuna or Chicken Wraps – Use a tortilla, single-serve chicken packet, and mustard/hot sauce
- Jerky & Nuts Mix – High in protein and fats for sustained energy
- Instant Rice & Tuna Bowl – Mix tuna over pre-cooked rice, and seasoning packets
- MRE Hack: Add extra protein (jerky, canned chicken, or protein powder) to MREs to stay full longer

Snack Ideas

- Nut Butter Packs & Crackers – Easy, calorie-dense snack
- Dried Fruit & Nut Mix – Great for energy boosts mid-patrol
- Cheese & Meat Sticks – Shelf-stable cheese like Babybel or Laughing Cow works well

Hydration Strategies for the Field

- Remember fluids throughout the day – stay hydrated
- Bring Electrolyte Packets – like Liquid I.V., LMNT, or Propel
- Drink to replace sweat; don't overdrink – could lead to hyponatremia
- Limit high amounts of Caffeine – you will dehydrate faster
- Eat Potassium-Rich Snacks – Dried apricots, coconut water powder, or bananas if available for extra electrolytes

Avoiding Field Food Pitfalls

- ✗ Avoid excessive MREs – They may cause digestive issues and bloating. Supplement with whole foods.
- ✗ Don't rely solely on energy drinks – They spike energy but cause crashes. Stick to water & electrolytes.
- ✗ Don't skip meals – Field work burns a lot of calories. Eat small, frequent meals to maintain energy levels.



Barracks Food Tips

Tired of the DFAC menu? Eating healthy in the barracks can be challenging, but with some planning and creativity, you can still have nutritious food using only a microwave and essential ingredients.

Pantry Staples

(Non-Perishable)

- Instant oatmeal
- Whole wheat bread/tortillas
- Peanut butter or almond butter
- Canned tuna, salmon, or chicken
- Canned beans (black beans, chickpeas)
- Canned or packet soups (low sodium)
- Instant brown rice, quinoa, or whole wheat pasta
- Shelf-stable hummus
- Dried fruit and nuts
- Protein powder or meal replacement shakes
- Spices: salt, pepper, garlic powder, chili powder, paprika, oregano etc.

Fridge Staples

(Perishable, but Lasts a While)

- Greek yogurt (plain or lightly sweetened)
- Hard-boiled eggs (store-bought or made in a microwave)
- Pre-cooked grilled chicken strips or rotisserie chicken (store-bought)
- Pre-washed bagged salads or spinach
- Baby carrots, cherry tomatoes, cucumbers
- Cheese (string cheese, shredded cheese, or cheese slices)
- Milk or milk alternatives (almond, oat, soy)

Smart Shopping Tips

- Buy pre-cooked or ready-to-eat proteins (canned tuna, rotisserie chicken, protein shakes).
- Stock up on shelf-stable carbs (instant oatmeal, brown rice, whole wheat wraps).
- Choose healthier convenience foods (low-sodium canned goods, Greek yogurt, unsalted nuts).
- Use microwave-friendly vegetables (frozen mixed veggies, bagged salads, canned beans).
- Plan your meals weekly to avoid relying on fast food or food trucks.
- Use seasoning & sauces to keep meals interesting (hot sauce, soy sauce, salsa).
- Keep portions in check – It's easy to overeat packaged snacks.
- Microwave wisely – Cover food with a damp paper towel to avoid drying it out.
- Stay consistent – Small, daily healthy choices make a big difference.



Easy Barracks Recipes

1. Microwave Oatmeal Bowl

- ½ cup oats + 1 cup water/milk
- Add peanut butter, blueberries and banana
- Microwave for 2 minutes, stir, and enjoy

2. High-Protein Yogurt Parfait

- Greek yogurt + granola + berries
- Add honey or cinnamon for extra flavor

3. Scrambled Eggs in a Mug

(Yes, you can make eggs in the microwave!)

- Crack 2 eggs into a mug, add salt & pepper
- Microwave for 45 sec, stir, then microwave 30 sec more
- Add cheese or pre-cooked bacon bits for extra protein

4. Microwave Baked Potato (or Sweet Potato)

- Poke holes in the potato with a fork
- Wrap in damp paper towel
- Microwave for 5-7 min until soft
- Top with sour cream, shredded cheese, or green onion

5. Protein-Packed Rice Bowl

- 1 packet of microwave brown rice
- 1 can of tuna or chicken
- 1 can of mixed veggies
- Add hot sauce, soy sauce, or salsa for flavor

6. Barracks Taco Wrap

- Whole wheat tortilla + canned beans + pre-cooked chicken
- Add shredded cheese, salsa, or avocado
- Microwave for 30 sec and wrap it up

7. Microwave Mac & Cheese (Healthier Version)

- ½ cup whole wheat pasta + water (microwave 5 min)
- Drain, mix in shredded cheese & Greek yogurt

Quick Bites

- Rice cakes + almond butter
- Hard-boiled eggs + hot sauce
- Pre-cut veggies + hummus
- Cottage cheese + fruit
- Dark chocolate + almonds
- Peanut butter + apple
- Cherry tomatoes + mozzarella
- Greek yogurt + granola + honey
- Tuna packet + whole grain crackers
- Cucumber slices + cottage cheese
- Baked apple + cinnamon + walnuts
- String cheese + whole wheat crackers
- Trail mix (nuts, seeds, dried fruit)
- Instant oatmeal + fruit



Barracks Sample Meal Plan

Day 1

- **Breakfast:** Instant Oatmeal and Fruit (5 mins)
 - Ingredients: 1 packet of instant oatmeal, 1 banana, 1 Tbsp peanut butter
 - Instructions: Prepare oatmeal per instructions on package. Top with sliced banana and Tbsp peanut butter.
- **Lunch:** Turkey and Avocado Wrap (5 mins)
 - Ingredients: 4oz pre-cooked grilled chicken strips, 1/4 avocado, handful of spinach, 1-2 slices of tomato
 - Instructions: Assemble wrap.
- **Dinner:** Microwave Chicken Fajita Bowl (10 mins)
 - Ingredients: 4oz pre-cooked grilled chicken strips, 1/3 cup instant brown rice, 1/4 cup sliced bell peppers, 1/4 cup sliced onion, 1 Tbsp olive oil, 1 tsp fajita seasoning
 - Instructions: Cook instant rice per package instructions. In a bowl mix the chicken, bell peppers, onion, olive oil and seasoning; microwave 2-3min. Serve over rice.



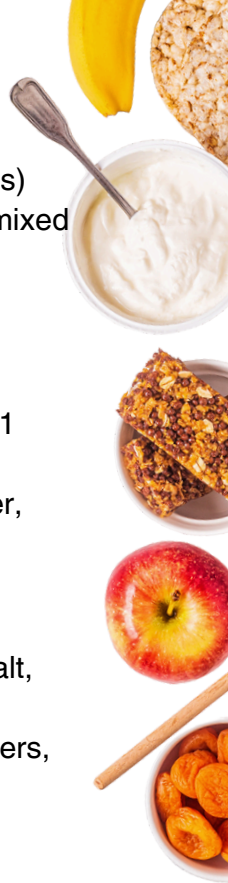
Day 2

- **Breakfast:** Microwave Scrambled Eggs with Spinach (5 mins)
 - Ingredients: 2 eggs, 2 Tbsp, 1/4 cup spinach, salt, pepper
 - Instructions: Beat eggs and milk in a mug, stir in spinach, microwave 1-2 minutes, stirring halfway through.
- **Lunch:** Chicken Quesadilla (5 mins)
 - Ingredients: 4oz pre-cooked grilled chicken strips, 1 whole wheat tortilla, 1/4 shredded cheese, 1 Tbsp salsa
 - Instructions: Place chicken and cheese on the tortilla, fold, microwave 1-2 minutes. Serve with salsa.
- **Dinner:** Microwave Beef and Bean Burrito (5 mins)
 - Ingredients: 4oz canned beef, 1 whole wheat tortilla, 1/4 cup black beans, 1 Tbsp shredded cheese, 1 Tbsp salsa
 - Instructions: Assemble burrito, microwave 1-2 minutes.

Barracks Sample Meal Plan

Day 3

- **Breakfast:** Instant Oatmeal with berries & nuts (5 mins)
 - Ingredients: 1 packet of instant oatmeal, 1/4 cup mixed berries, 1 Tbsp sliced almonds
 - Instructions: Prepare oatmeal per instructions on package. Top with fresh berries and almonds.
- **Lunch:** Tuna salad Wrap (5 mins)
 - Ingredients: 1 packet tuna, 1 whole wheat tortilla, 1 Tbsp Greek yogurt, 1/2 cup diced cucumber
 - Instructions: Mix tuna, Greek yogurt and cucumber, spread on tortilla, roll up.
- **Dinner:** Microwave Spanish Omelette (10 mins)
 - Ingredients: 2 eggs, 1/4 cup pre-cooked diced potatoes, 1/2 cup bell peppers, 1 Tbsp olive oil, salt, pepper
 - Instructions: Beat eggs, mix in potatoes and peppers, microwave in a mug for 2-3 minutes.



Day 4

- **Breakfast:** Instant Oatmeal with Peanut Butter & Jelly (5 mins)
 - Ingredients: 1 packet of instant oatmeal, 1 Tbsp Peanut butter, and 1 tsp jelly
 - Instructions: Prepare oatmeal per instructions on package. Stir in peanut butter and jelly.
- **Lunch:** Ham and Cheese Sandwich (5 mins)
 - Ingredients: 2 slices whole wheat bread, 2 oz ham, 1 slice cheese, 1 tsp mustard
 - Instructions: Assemble sandwich and enjoy.
- **Dinner:** Microwave Baked Potato with Broccoli (10 mins)
 - Ingredients: 1 medium potato, 1/2 cup frozen broccoli, 1/4 cup shredded cheese
 - Instructions: Pierce potato, wrap in damp paper towel and microwave for 5-7 minutes. Add broccoli and cheese, microwave for 1 minute.

Barracks Sample Meal Plan

Day 5

- **Breakfast:** Microwave Scrambled Eggs (5 mins)
 - Ingredients: 2 eggs, 2 Tbsp milk, 1/4 cup shredded cheese, salt, pepper
 - Instructions: Beat eggs and milk, microwave for 1-2 minutes, stir in cheese.
- **Lunch:** Peanut butter and Banana Sandwich (5 mins)
 - Ingredients: 2 slices whole wheat bread, 2 Tbsp peanut butter, 1/2 banana
 - Instructions: Spread peanut butter on bread, add banana slices. and assemble.
- **Dinner:** Microwave Chicken and Rice (10 mins)
 - Ingredients: 4 oz pre-cooked chicken, 1/3 cup instant brown rice, 1/4 cup frozen broccoli, 1 Tbsp low sodium soy sauce
 - Instructions: Cook instant rice per package instructions. Add chicken, broccoli, and soy sauce, microwave for 2 minutes.

Day 6

- **Breakfast:** Instant Oatmeal with Apple & Cinnamon (5 mins)
 - Ingredients: 1 packet of instant oatmeal, 1/2 apple, 1 tsp cinnamon
 - Instructions: Prepare oatmeal per instructions on package. Stir in diced apple and cinnamon.
- **Lunch:** Ham and Cheese Sandwich (5 mins)
 - Ingredients: 2 slices whole wheat bread, 2 oz ham, 1 slice cheese, 1 tsp mustard
 - Instructions: Assemble sandwich and enjoy
- **Dinner:** Microwave Beef Chili (5 mins)
 - Ingredients: 1 can low-sodium beef chili, 1/4 cup shredded cheese
 - Instructions: Microwave chili in a bowl for 2-3 minutes, top with cheese.



Barracks Sample Meal Plan

Day 7

- **Breakfast:** Instant Oatmeal with Strawberries & Greek Yogurt (5 mins)
 - Ingredients: 1 packet of instant oatmeal, 1/4 cup strawberries, 2 Tbsp Greek yogurt
 - Instructions: Prepare oatmeal per instructions on package. Top with strawberries and Greek yogurt.
- **Lunch:** Chicken Salsa Wrap (5 mins)
 - Ingredients: 4 oz pre-cooked chicken, 1 whole wheat tortilla, 1/4 cup spinach, 1 Tbsp salsa
 - Instructions: Assemble wrap and enjoy.
- **Dinner:** Microwave Tuna and Veggie Bowl (10 mins)
 - Ingredients: 1 packet of tuna, 1/3 cup instant brown rice, 1/2 cup frozen mixed veggies, 1 Tbsp olive oil
 - Instructions: Cook instant rice per package instructions. Mix in tuna, veggies, and olive oil. Microwave for 2 minutes.



Sample Meal Plan Shopping List

- **Procurement Location:** Fort Irwin Commissary
- **Estimated Cost:** \$65-85

Pantry Staples:

- Instant oatmeal - (1 box) \$3, Whole wheat tortillas (2 packs) \$4, Canned black beans (2 cans) \$2, Canned beef (1 can) \$3, Canned beef chili (1 can) \$2, Instant brown rice (1 box) \$3, Peanut butter \$2, Jelly \$2, Olive oil (small bottle) \$4, Soy sauce (small bottle) \$2, Fajita seasoning (1 packet) \$1, Tuna packets (3 packets) \$2

Fridge Staples:

- Eggs (1 dozen) \$5, Milk (1 quart) \$1, Shredded cheese (1, 8oz bag) \$3, Greek yogurt (small tub) \$3, Pre-cooked chicken (1 pack) \$5, Turkey breast (8oz) \$5, Ham (8oz) \$4

Fresh/Frozen Produce:

- Banana (4) \$2, Mixed frozen berries (1 pint) \$3, Strawberries (1 pint) \$3, Avocado (2) \$2, Tomatoes (2) \$1, Bell peppers (2) \$2, Cucumber (1) \$1, Spinach (1 bag) \$2, Frozen broccoli (1 bag) \$2, Frozen mixed veggies (1 bag) \$2, Potatoes (4 medium) \$2, Almonds (small bag) \$2



Bonus Recipes

Veggie Egg Muffin Tins

Ingredients

- Cupcake pan liners
- Nonstick spray
- 12 eggs
- 1/2 cup red bell pepper, chopped
- 1/2 cup yellow onion, chopped
- 1 cup spinach, roughly chopped
- 1/2 cup feta cheese
- 1/2 tsp garlic powder
- 1/4 tsp pepper
- Few dashes of salt

Directions

- Preheat oven to 350 degrees, line muffin tin with liners and spray with nonstick spray
- Divide the onion, bell pepper, spinach and feta cheese between the muffin tins
- In a medium bowl whisk together the eggs, garlic powder, salt, pepper
- Pour egg mixture evenly between each tin
- Bake for 15min or until the eggs look set

Basic Overnight Oats

Ingredients

- 1/2 cup old-fashioned rolled oats
- 1 cup water
- 1/4 cup fresh or frozen blueberries
- 2 tsp brown sugar
- 2 tbsp walnuts

Directions

- Combine all ingredients into a bowl
- Refrigerate and cover overnight





Garlic and Ginger Salmon

Ingredients

- 2 salmon fillets
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1/4 cup lemon juice
- 3 cloves of garlic
- 2 tsp minced ginger
- 2 tsp honey
- Salt and pepper

Directions

- Preheat the oven to 325 degrees
- Line a baking tray with aluminum foil and brush the foil with olive oil
- Place the salmon fillets on the tray
- Mix together the lemon juice, garlic, ginger, honey, salt and pepper in a small bowl
- Pour the mixture over the salmon
- Bake for 15-20min or until tender

Chickpea Summer Salad

Ingredients

- 2 cups cherry tomatoes, sliced
- 1 English cucumber, sliced
- 1/2 red onion, sliced
- 1 can chickpeas, drained and rinsed
- 1 avocado, sliced
- 5 oz feta cheese
- 3 tbsp olive oil
- Juice from 1 lemon
- 2 cloves minced garlic
- Salt and pepper

Directions

- Slice all the veggies and mix with chickpeas in a large bowl
- Combine the lemon juice, olive oil, garlic, salt and pepper in a small bowl
- Pour over the veggies and enjoy



Free & Low-Cost Food Resources

For those looking for affordable or free food assistance, there are several resources available in Fort Irwin, Barstow, and Victorville.

Fort Irwin Commissary

Save Money with Digital Coupons & Weekly Sales

- The Commissary website offers digital coupons you can save to your profile and use in-store.
- Check weekly ads and promotions to plan meals around sales and discounts.
- Bulk and discounted items available.

Address: 3920 Inner Loop Road, Bldg 920, Fort Irwin, CA, 92310

Website: shop.commissary.com

Low-Cost Grocery Stores in Barstow & Victorville

For bulk items, discount groceries, and fresh produce, check out these options:

- Food For Less – Affordable produce, meat, and pantry staples.
- Walmart – Budget-friendly for everyday groceries and household items.
- Dollar General – Good for shelf-stable pantry staples at low prices.
- WinCo – Bulk food bins for grains, nuts, and snacks at lower prices.
- Costco – Great for stocking up on bulk meats, frozen foods, and healthy snacks.
- Smart & Final – Ideal for buying family-sized portions without a membership.

Barstow's High Desert Farmers Market

Fresh, Seasonal, & Local Produce at Low Prices

- Shop for locally grown fruits, vegetables, and specialty foods directly from farmers.
- Often cheaper than grocery stores, especially for seasonal produce.
- Great for finding fresh herbs, organic options, and farm-fresh eggs.

Open Every Tuesday – 9:00 AM - 1:30 PM (October - March)

Location: Barstow Community College, 2700 Barstow Road, Barstow, CA, 92311

Website: highdesertfarmersmarket.com

Fort Irwin Food Distribution

Free Food for All Community Members

- Distribution includes fresh produce, non-perishable goods, and pantry staples.
- Open to military families, soldiers, and community members in need.

When: Every Second Wednesday of the month, 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM

Where: Taylor Fieldhouse or Ingalls Hall, Fort Irwin

11th ACR Chapel – Food & Community Support

Chaplain-Led Food Assistance & Outreach for 11ACR Soldiers & Families

- Chaplain Khomyn provides food, support, and guidance for those in need.
- Reach out for spiritual and material assistance.

Location: BLDG T-213, Ave B, Fort Irwin

Contact: (323) 514-7271