

THE BALANCED BODY LIFESTYLE

THE GROCERY GUIDE

Build a better kitchen. Make better choices easier.

A practical, flexible shopping system

Use this guide to build meals around protein, plants, fiber-rich carbohydrates, healthy fats, and convenient staples - without chasing perfection or banning entire food groups.

EDUCATE • ENCOURAGE • EMPOWER

BalancedBodyLifestyle.com

Shop With a Simple System

A good grocery cart does not need to be perfect. It needs to make your next several meals easier to build. Use this guide as a framework, then adjust it for your preferences, budget, culture, allergies, schedule, and health needs.

THE BALANCED CART

For most meals, think: a quality protein + produce + a fiber-rich carbohydrate when desired + a source of healthy fat. Water and minimally sweetened beverages should do most of the hydration work.

The 5-Part Grocery Strategy

1. **Start with protein.** Choose the foods that will anchor breakfast, lunch, dinner, and snacks.
2. **Add color.** Pick vegetables and fruit you will realistically eat, including frozen options.
3. **Choose smart carbohydrates.** Favor higher-fiber, minimally processed choices most of the time.
4. **Add healthy fats and flavor.** Use nuts, seeds, olive oil, avocado, herbs, spices, and satisfying condiments.
5. **Buy convenience on purpose.** Pre-cut vegetables, frozen produce, rotisserie chicken, tuna packets, and microwave grains can help consistency when time is tight.

A Better Goal Than “Clean Eating”

Aim for a grocery cart that supports your goals most of the time while still leaving room for foods you enjoy. Consistency matters more than a single “perfect” shopping trip.

QUICK WIN

Before you shop, choose 3 proteins, 3 vegetables, 2 fruits, 2 carbohydrate sources, and 2 easy snacks. That alone can cover most of a week.

Build the Cart Around Protein

Protein supports muscle maintenance and repair and can make meals more satisfying. Keep several options on hand so every meal does not depend on cooking from scratch.

Poultry & Eggs • Chicken breast or tenderloins • Lean ground turkey or chicken • Turkey breast • Eggs and egg whites • Rotisserie chicken - remove skin if desired	Fish & Seafood • Salmon, tuna, sardines • Shrimp and white fish • Canned or pouch tuna/salmon • Frozen seafood portions
Dairy & High-Protein Options • Greek yogurt • Cottage cheese • Skyr • Milk or lactose-free milk • Lower-sugar protein shakes as a convenience tool	Plant-Based Protein • Beans and lentils • Edamame • Tofu or tempeh • Chickpeas • Higher-protein whole grains such as quinoa

What to Look For

- Choose mostly lean or minimally processed protein sources.
- Compare flavored yogurts and shakes for added sugar; plain or lightly sweetened options make it easier to control sweetness yourself.
- Use processed meats less often, especially products high in sodium and saturated fat.
- Keep at least one freezer or pantry protein available for nights when plans change.

PRACTICAL RULE

Buy enough protein for the number of meals you actually expect to eat at home. Overbuying “healthy food” that spoils does not improve nutrition.

Plants, Fiber and Everyday Energy

Vegetables, fruit, beans, and whole grains add fiber, vitamins, minerals, and variety. Fresh is great, but frozen and no-sugar-added or lower-sodium canned options can be equally practical.

Vegetables • Leafy greens • Broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts • Peppers, onions, mushrooms • Green beans, asparagus, zucchini • Frozen vegetable blends	Fruit • Berries • Apples and pears • Citrus • Bananas • Frozen fruit with no added sugar
Fiber-Rich Carbohydrates • Oats • Brown or wild rice • Quinoa • Potatoes or sweet potatoes • Whole-grain bread or wraps	Beans & Legumes • Black beans • Chickpeas • Lentils • Kidney or cannellini beans • Edamame

Easy Portion Logic

For many people, building a meal with a generous portion of non-starchy vegetables, a meaningful protein serving, and an amount of carbohydrate that fits activity level and appetite is a simple place to start. There is no single portion that is right for everyone.

FROZEN COUNTS

Frozen vegetables and fruit are valuable staples. They reduce waste, last longer, and make it easier to add produce when fresh options are running low.

The Foods That Make Healthy Meals Easy

Healthy Fats • Extra-virgin olive oil • Avocados • Walnuts, almonds, pistachios • Natural peanut or almond butter • Chia, flax, pumpkin or sunflower seeds	Dairy & Alternatives • Plain Greek yogurt • Cottage cheese • Lactose-free milk if needed • Unsweetened fortified soy milk • Cheese in portions that fit your goals
Pantry Staples • Old-fashioned oats • Brown rice or quinoa • Low-sodium canned beans • Canned tomatoes • Whole-grain pasta	Flavor Builders • Garlic, ginger, onions • Herbs and spices • Mustard and hot sauce • Vinegars and citrus • Lower-sodium broth or stock

Convenience Foods Worth Keeping

- Microwaveable brown rice or quinoa cups
- Frozen grilled chicken strips with a simple ingredient list
- Bagged salad and pre-cut vegetables
- Single-serve hummus or guacamole
- No-salt-added canned beans
- Plain frozen fruit for smoothies

THE TEST

A convenience food is useful when it helps you assemble a balanced meal faster. “Convenient” and “nutritious” do not have to be opposites.

Make the Easy Choice a Better Choice

Snacks work best when they solve a real need - hunger between meals, pre- or post-workout fuel, travel, or a long workday. Pairing protein and/or fiber with a satisfying food can help a snack carry you farther.

Balanced Snack Ideas

- Greek yogurt + berries
- Apple or banana + nut butter
- Cottage cheese + fruit
- Tuna packet + whole-grain crackers
- Hummus + vegetables
- Hard-boiled eggs + fruit
- Air-popped popcorn + a protein source
- A protein shake + fruit when convenience matters

Read the Label in This Order

1. **Serving size:** Know what the numbers actually refer to.
2. **Protein and fiber:** Useful markers of how filling and nutrient-dense a food may be.
3. **Added sugar:** Compare similar products and choose lower-added-sugar versions when it makes sense.
4. **Sodium:** Especially important when comparing packaged foods, soups, sauces, and frozen meals.
5. **Saturated fat:** Favor foods that keep saturated fat moderate while emphasizing unsaturated fats.
6. **Ingredient list:** Shorter is not automatically healthier. Focus on what the ingredients are and whether the food fits your overall eating pattern.

LABEL TIP

Compare similar foods against each other - yogurt to yogurt, bread to bread, sauce to sauce. That makes the nutrition label much more useful than judging a food in isolation.

Not “Forbidden” - Just Less Often

A sustainable eating pattern does not require a banned-food list. The goal is to keep highly processed, calorie-dense foods from crowding out the foods that support your health and performance.

Keep an Eye On	Watch for “Health Halo” Foods
• Sugar-sweetened beverages • Frequent fried foods • Highly processed snack foods • Large portions of sweets and desserts • Processed meats • Heavy sauces and creamy dressings	• Granola with lots of added sugar • Protein bars that function like candy bars • Sweetened coffee drinks • Smoothies with very large calorie loads • “Low-fat” foods high in added sugar • “Natural” products with little nutritional advantage

Use the 80/20 Mindset as a Concept, Not a Rule

Most of your grocery cart can support your goals while a smaller portion can simply be there because you enjoy it. You do not need to calculate an exact percentage. The point is to make nutritious choices the default without turning eating into an all-or-nothing exercise.

Before You Check Out

- Do I have enough protein for my planned meals?
- Do I have vegetables and fruit I will actually eat?
- Do I have at least one fast meal for a busy night?
- Do I have one or two satisfying snacks?
- Did I buy for my real schedule - not my fantasy schedule?

BALANCE WINS

A grocery cart that is 85% useful and consistently repeated will beat a “perfect” cart that you cannot sustain.

The Balanced Body Lifestyle Grocery Checklist

Circle, check, or write in what you need. You do not need something from every line every week.

PROTEIN ☐ Chicken / turkey ☐ Fish / seafood ☐ Eggs / egg whites ☐ Greek yogurt / cottage cheese ☐ Beans / lentils ☐ Tofu / tempeh ☐ Protein shake / powder ☐ Other: _____	VEGETABLES ☐ Leafy greens ☐ Broccoli / cauliflower ☐ Peppers / onions ☐ Green beans / asparagus ☐ Frozen vegetables ☐ Salad kit ☐ Other: _____
FRUIT ☐ Berries ☐ Apples / pears ☐ Citrus ☐ Bananas ☐ Frozen fruit ☐ Other: _____	SMART CARBS ☐ Oats ☐ Brown / wild rice ☐ Quinoa ☐ Potatoes / sweet potatoes ☐ Whole-grain bread / wraps ☐ Whole-grain pasta ☐ Other: _____
HEALTHY FATS ☐ Olive oil ☐ Avocado ☐ Nuts ☐ Nut butter ☐ Seeds ☐ Other: _____	PANTRY + FLAVOR ☐ Beans / tomatoes ☐ Low-sodium broth ☐ Herbs / spices ☐ Mustard / hot sauce ☐ Vinegar / citrus ☐ Whole-grain crackers ☐ Other: _____
SNACKS + CONVENIENCE ☐ Hummus ☐ Pre-cut vegetables ☐ Tuna packets ☐ Microwave grains ☐ Frozen meal components ☐ Popcorn ☐ Other: _____	THIS WEEK ☐ Meal 1: _____ ☐ Meal 2: _____ ☐ Meal 3: _____ ☐ Quick backup meal: _____ ☐ Snack plan: _____

ONE LAST THING Do not shop hungry if you can avoid it, and do not let one imperfect meal change the direction of your week. Build the next good choice.