A top-down view of various fresh ingredients including vegetables, seafood, and kitchen tools on a wooden surface. The ingredients include green onions, dill, a cucumber, a whole head of garlic, a red crayfish, a corn cob, an eggplant, a coconut, wooden spoons and a fork, yellow cherry tomatoes, a pepper mill, green bell peppers, red tomatoes, parsley, lettuce, and shrimp. The text "Meal Prep Guide" is centered in the middle of the image.

Meal Prep Guide

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WELCOME TO YOUR MEAL PLANNING GUIDE!

If you have health and fitness goals, you already know that your nutrition plays a HUGE role in making them happen: eating healthy, “clean,” whole-food meals will speed up your results exponentially.

But if you're like most busy people, you don't have countless hours to spend in the kitchen each day.

The good news is, you don't have to!

This ebook will outline exactly HOW you can prepare and store healthy

meals without spending an entire weekend day in the kitchen doing “meal prep” (unless you really want to!).

We'll show you how to plan, cook, prep and store your food so that you always have a healthy meal ready-to-go. And we'll even show you how to make it FUN!

Bonus: Check out the four make-ahead-meal recipes included in this guide!

Are you ready? Let's get going!

The Power of Planning

There are two basic approaches to meal planning:

- Spend your Sunday (or other any other time you have a few hours of free time) preparing and storing your meals for the coming week.
- Spreading your meal prep over the course of the week, so it becomes a continual process.

You can follow EITHER approach using this guide!

That being said, the second option works best for most people because it doesn't require spending hours in the kitchen. It also is more flexible than the single-prep method. Basically, whenever you cook a meal, cook a double batch of whatever you're making and put the extra food in the fridge or freezer for later.

No matter which you choose, if meal prepping is new to you, we recommend starting with baby steps... and plan and prepare just a few meals ahead of time. Don't expect to prep an entire week's worth of meals your first time out – chances are you'll end up feeling burned out by the time you're done!



Meal Prep Tips

- Keep it fun by looking for recipes you want to try. Pinterest is a great source.
- Use foods that keep well: casseroles and stews last longer than salads.
- Whenever possible, do your planning and shopping separate from your cooking.

Meal Ideas

- **Breakfast:** Overnight oats, pudding and breakfast burritos, smoothies.
- **Lunch:** Mason jar salads, wraps and dinner leftovers.
- **Dinner:** Recipes of your choice.
- **Snacks:** nuts, fruit, smoothies, hummus, veggies.



Create Your Plan

Grab a piece of paper or worksheet and spend a few minutes creating a weekly meal plan. There's a template on the next page, or you can use your own.

Sketching out your meals will help you stay on-track, save you money at the grocery store, AND free up valuable time.

Also, keep in mind that even if you're following a single-cook method, you'll likely have to go to the grocery store midweek for fresh ingredients and/or cook a couple meals to make it through to the weekend.

Sketch out the next 5 to 7 days of meals, including breakfasts, lunches, dinners, and snacks for each day. Include any meals you know you will be eating at restaurants, and include at least one "flex" (or "free") meal.

Save time and \$\$\$

Plan meals that let you double up on ingredients to save \$\$\$\$. For instance, if you're roasting a chicken, you can make a chicken stir-fry or toss some chicken in a salad or wrap. Or if you're making a burrito bowl, use quinoa and then include quinoa in Mason jar salads.

Smart Shopping

Before heading to the store, make sure you have a list of everything you need, including the amount and the recipe you are buying it for.

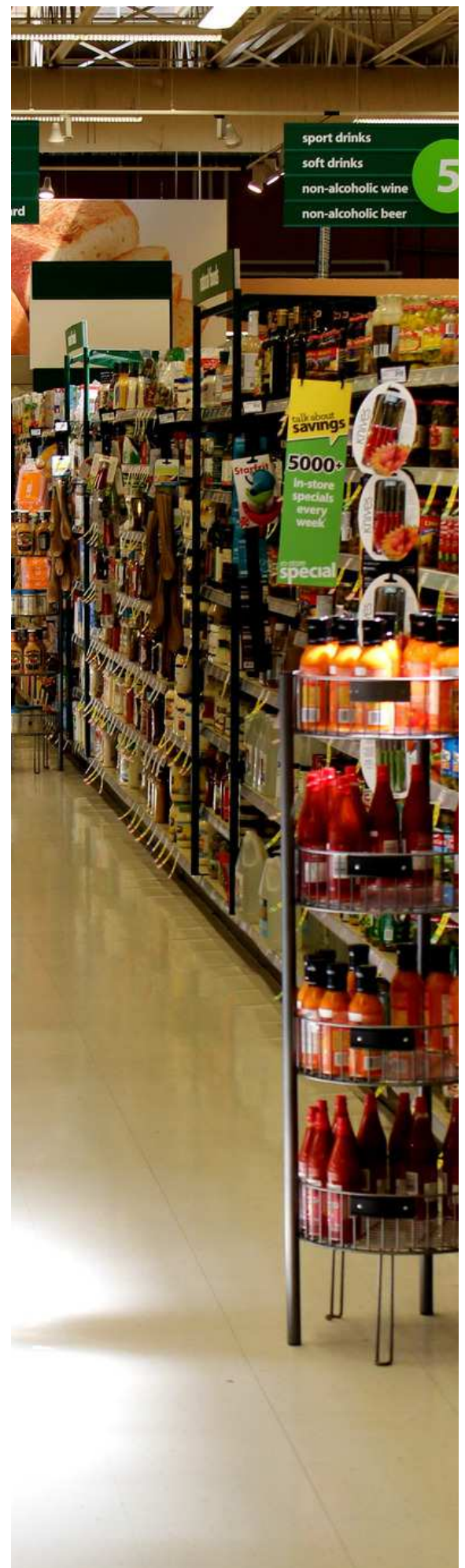
This will help you in case the store doesn't have exactly what you're looking for, or in the event you find something else on sale. You'll be able to make substitutions on the fly.

If you're doing a single-session meal prep, whenever possible avoid grocery shopping the day you do your cooking – by the end of the process, chances are you'll be feeling like doing anything but cooking! Doing as much as you can ahead of time is everything.

"Alexa, add this to my list ..."

If you don't already keep a running shopping list, start one now using your phone or device-driven VA (like Siri or Alexa).

You'll always know what you need to pick up during your next trip to the grocery store ... and it will cut down on the number of trips you have to take!



Prep Tips

1. Use multiple timers to help stay on track.
2. Make a timeline and checklist.
3. Keep it fun: listen to music you enjoy and/or podcasts.



Prep Your Workspace

Make a timeline for your food prep plans – this is especially important if you’re cooking multiple meals or foods at the same time.

Having a checklist will keep you organized.

Take into consideration foods that have a longer cooking time (like stews or roasted chicken), along with any appliances (like a rice cooker, Instant Pot, or slow cooker) you plan to use. If you're cooking several meals at once, small kitchen appliances will make the job so much easier.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

1. Always start with a clean kitchen! Empty the dishwasher, clean off the counters and scrub 'em down before you start ... and be sure to clean as you go along. This is important for a number of reasons, but it’s vital for food safety.
2. Bring any meat you will be using to room temperature by removing from the fridge for 30 to 45 minutes before you’ll be cooking them, and be sure to season them.

Then, after you chop your veggies, it’s time to cook!

How to Store Your Meals

After you've done all the hard work of shopping, chopping and cooking, you have a decision to make when it comes to keeping your meals: to refrigerate, or to freeze?

Check out the chart on the next page.

If you don't plan on eating your prepped meals in the next couple of days, the best bet is to prepare it for freezing. It's better to put your food in the freezer sooner than later, which ensures you are storing a fresher meal.

If you plan to store your food in the refrigerator:

Portion out your meals in whatever way makes you happy. You can pre-portion your meals into single servings, or keep it family-style in a bigger container.

Put it in the refrigerator within an hour of cooking for ultimate food safety.



FOOD STORAGE CHART

Your food will keep indefinitely in the freezer, but quality can deteriorate over time.

Food	Refrigerator	Freezer
Eggs		
Fresh, in shell	3-5 weeks	Don't freeze
Hard boiled	1 week	Don't freeze
Liquid egg substitutes or pasteurized eggs		
opened	3 days	Don't freeze
unopened	10 days	Don't freeze
Soups and Stews		
Vegetables or meat-added, or mixtures of both	3-4 days	2-3 months
Meat leftovers		
Cooked meat & meat dishes	3-4 days	2-3 months
Gravy & meat broth	1-2 days	2-3 months
Cooked Poultry Leftovers		
Cooked poultry dishes	3-4 days	4-6 months
Poultry pieces, plain	3-4 days	4-6 months
Poultry pieces, covered with broth or gravy	3-4 days	6 months
General Leftovers		
Casseroles, etc.	3-4 days	2-3 months



HOW TO PREP YOUR FOOD FOR FREEZING

1. Cool your food in the refrigerator for an hour. To speed cooling, place it in a metal bowl that's sitting in a larger bowl of ice.

This will help it freeze faster when you put it in the freezer, plus you'll be less likely to partially defrost the food surrounding it.

2. Portion out the meals. You can do this in individual containers for each meal you plan to eat, or in larger containers with multiple servings – it's up to you.

Use the smallest container possible while still being able to securely close it (air is NOT your friend when you freeze items!).

If you use plastic wrap, make sure it's moisture proof.

3. You can freeze meals in moisture-proof freezer bags, which lets you get rid of as much air as possible before zipping the bag closed.

For ultimate air removal, use a vacuum sealer machine.

4. Label your container so you know what's in it, the date it was cooked and frozen, plus any nutrition info you want to include.

5. Avoid overcrowding your freezer so your food freezes ASAP. If it freezes too slowly, it will form large crystals and turn mushy.

6. Thaw your food in the fridge for 24 hours before cooking. If you defrost it in the microwave, heat it to 165 degrees to discourage bacterial growth.

Make-Ahead Meals

Sweet Potato Turkey Burgers

Makes 4 servings

- 2 tbsp olive oil
- ¼ cup diced onion
- 1 sweet potato, cooked, cooled, peeled and mashed
- 2 tsp minced garlic
- 3 cups chopped/shredded spinach
- 1 lb. 94 percent fat-free ground turkey
- 1 egg
- ⅓ cup to ¼ cup gluten-free rolled oats
- 1 tbsp mustard (Dijon)

Preheat a cast iron skillet on medium to medium-high heat. Mix all the ingredients in a bowl, being careful not to overwork the meat mixture. If the mixture is too loose add more oats. Form into 6 burger patties.

Add the olive oil to the pan, and when it is hot, add the burgers. Cook for 4-6 minutes each side, or until done. Eat immediately or store in the refrigerator/freezer for later.



Glass containers for the win

- Make the switch from plastic reusable containers to glass for your food storage needs.
- They'll last longer and they contain fewer chemicals.



Amazing Make-Ahead Mason Jar Chia Pudding

Makes 2 servings

- 1 ripe banana, chopped
- ¼ cup of your favorite nut butter
- 1 cup coconut or almond milk
- ¼ cup chia seeds
- 1 tsp pure vanilla extract
- 2-3 dates, chopped
- ½ tsp cinnamon
- Raw honey (optional)
- Walnuts (optional)
- 1 scoop plant-based protein powder (optional)

Place all the ingredients except honey in a bowl and mix well. Let sit for a couple minutes until the chia seeds start to swell. Mix again, and then divide the mixture into two small Mason jars. Cover and place in the refrigerator overnight.

To serve, top with your favorites: more nut butter, walnuts, dates, protein powder or honey. It can be eaten warm or cold.

Have fun experimenting with this one. You can substitute berries for bananas, and use different nut milks and other add-ins.

Greek Slow Cooker Chicken Thighs

Makes 4-6 servings

This one is couldn't be simpler: set it and forget it. To make the chicken skin crispier before serving, you can stick them on the grill or brown in a cast-iron skillet.

To mix it up, you can substitute broccoli for the green beans.

-
- 1 lb. trimmed green beans
 - 1 15 oz. can diced tomatoes
 - 1 yellow onion, diced
 - 1 cup chicken broth
 - 2 cloves garlic, minced
 - 2 tbsp fresh lemon juice
 - ¼ cup fresh chopped dill (if unavailable, use 1 tbsp dried)
 - 1½ lb. skin-on chicken thighs
 - Salt and pepper to taste

Place all ingredients except chicken and oil in a slow cooker. Place the chicken in the slow cooker with the other ingredients and cook on low for 8 hours or high for 4 hours.





Instant Pot Beef Stew

Makes 6 servings

Don't have an Instant Pot? Make this on the stove or in the slow cooker.

-
- 1 tbsp butter
 - 1 lb grass-fed beef stew meat
 - 1 tsp salt
 - ½ cup your favorite gluten-free flour
 - 1 yellow onion, diced
 - 4 carrots, diced
 - 2 celery stalks, diced
 - 3 potatoes, diced (about 2 cups)
 - 4 garlic cloves, minced
 - 3 cups beef broth
 - 1 can diced tomatoes
 - 2 tsp thyme
 - 1 tsp pink Himalayan salt
 - ½ tsp ground pepper

Turn the Instant Pot to saute for 10 minutes. While it's warming, toss the stew meat in the flour and 1 tsp salt to coat. Add the butter to the Instant Pot pot and brown the beef on all sides, stirring occasionally.

When the meat is browned, add the rest of the ingredients to the Instant Pot. Carefully attach the lid and seal. Select the Meat/Stew setting and set your timer for 17 minutes. When it's done cooking, allow the steam to naturally release for 5 minutes, and then perform a manual release.

Serve or package for storage.

Garlicky Kale with Curried Chickpeas

Makes 4-6 servings

Curried Chickpeas

2 tbsp olive oil

4 garlic cloves, minced

1 large yellow onion, chopped

1½ tbsp curry powder (to taste)

2 cans of chickpeas, rinsed and drained

⅓ cup tomato paste

¼ cup water

Sea salt and pepper, to taste

4 cups cooked quinoa or rice (your choice!)

Garlicky Kale

1 tbsp olive oil

5-6 garlic cloves, minced

10-12 oz bag baby kale, washed and rinsed

½ tsp of sea salt

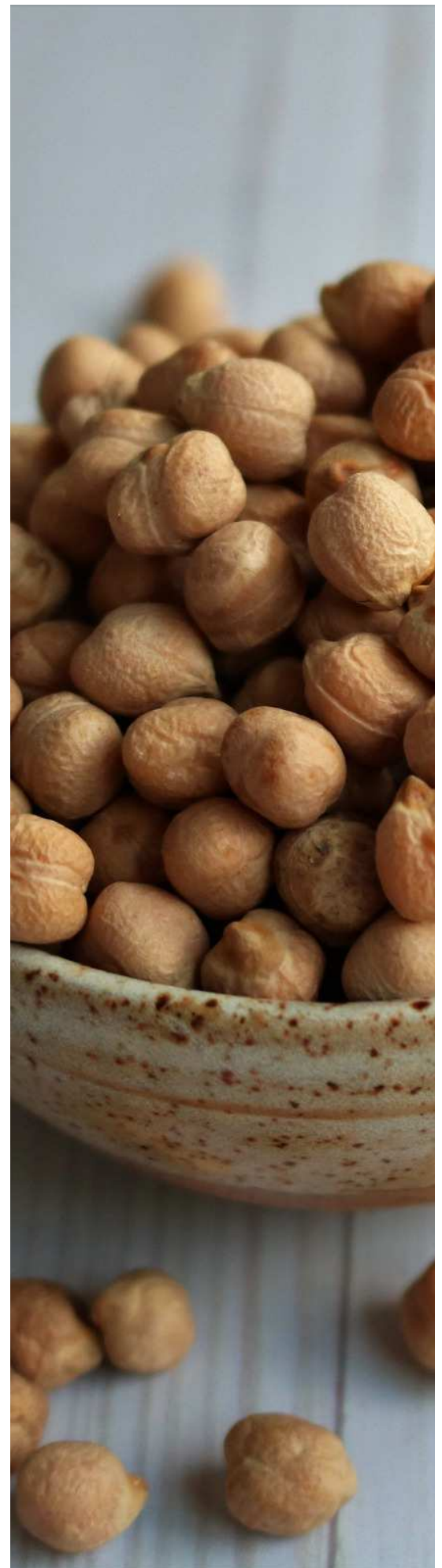
¼ cup lemon juice

Add 2 tbsp. olive oil to a skillet over medium heat and sauté onion until soft, 4-5 minutes.

Add garlic and cook for 1-2 minutes. Stir in curry powder and then add chickpeas, water and tomato paste. Heat through, adding salt and pepper to taste. Remove from heat.

In a large skillet, heat 1 tbsp olive oil over medium heat. Add garlic and cook until fragrant (about 1-2 minutes), stirring to make sure it doesn't burn. Add the kale and cook till it's just wilted, then add salt and lemon juice to taste, and remove from heat.

Let cool and portion into 4 meal-sized containers.





Easiest Ever Make-Ahead Butternut Squash in the Slow Cooker

Makes 4 servings

Besides being a one-pot, one-ingredient wonder, with this recipe you won't have to struggle to cut the squash before cooking.

1 Butternut squash, washed

Place the butternut squash in a slow cooker and cover.

Cook on high for 4-5 hours or low for 6-8 hours. It will be done when the squash is soft and easily pierced with a fork.

Remove from the slow cooker and when it's cool enough to handle, cut the squash in half and scoop out the seeds. Dice the remaining flesh and serve with your favorite seasonings.

Green Beans Almondine

Makes 4 servings

Guess what? You can use frozen green beans in this recipe. Just give it a little extra time to steam.

1 tbsp olive oil

2 garlic cloves, minced

¼ cup slivered almonds

1 lb (or 1 package frozen) green beans

¼ cup veggie or chicken broth

Salt and pepper to taste

Heat the olive oil in a pan on the stove. Add the green beans and garlic, and sauté for 1-2 minutes so garlic begins to cook. Add the chicken broth and cover, and steam on low heat for 5-10 minutes (longer if using frozen green beans), stirring occasionally.

Remove the cover and add the almonds. Sauté for a couple minutes, until the liquid evaporates from the pan.

Eat immediately or portion into 4 serving-sized containers.





Buffalo Chicken Egg Muffins

Makes 6 servings

2 muffins = 1 serving

These breakfast "muffins" are so tasty you might find yourself eating them for lunch and dinner, too!

2-3 tbsp your favorite Buffalo / Hot Wings Sauce

½ tbsp olive oil

½ sweet bell pepper, diced

2 cups of chopped fresh spinach

1 cup of cooked and diced chicken

8 eggs

Salt & pepper to taste

Preheat your oven to 350 degrees F and grease a 12-cup muffin pan.

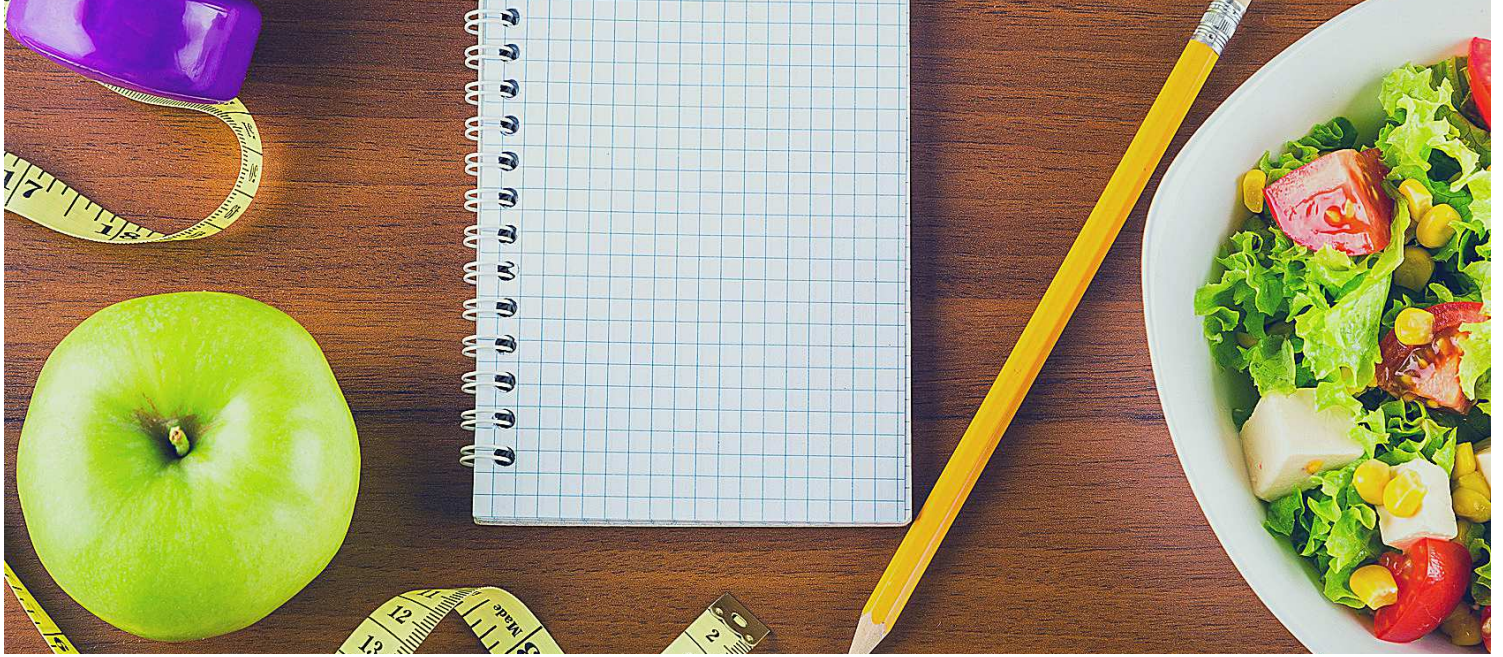
In a medium skillet, heat the olive oil and sauté the pepper about 5 minutes, until soft.

Add the spinach, chicken and buffalo sauce, stirring to combine. Heat until the spinach just begins to wilt, and remove from heat.

Add the mixture in equal portions to each of the 12 muffin wells.

Meanwhile, crack the eggs into a bowl and beat until combined, adding salt and pepper if desired. Pour equal amounts into each muffin well, over the veggie/chicken mixture.

Bake for 20 minutes. The eggs should be set – you'll know it's done when a toothpick inserted in the middle comes out clean.



TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL.

