

# Building a Balanced Plate

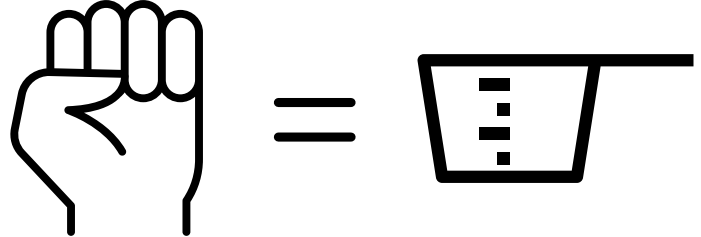


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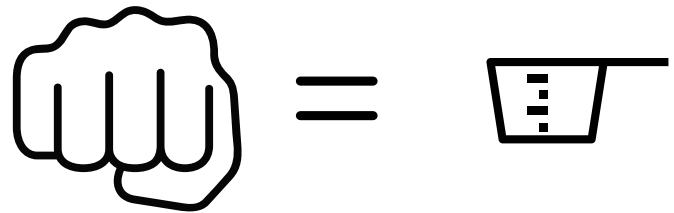
There are many tips and tricks out there about how to count calories, balance nutrients, and portion food. It can quickly sound hard to do. The good news is that it can actually be somewhat simple if you start looking at your plate differently. The plate method is a technique you can use to help you practice building a balanced plate. First, use a 9" plate. Aim to fill half of your plate with non-starchy vegetables, one-quarter of your plate with protein, and one-quarter of your plate with grains or starchy vegetables. You may also find it helpful to use your hand to determine the appropriate portion sizes you should be eating.



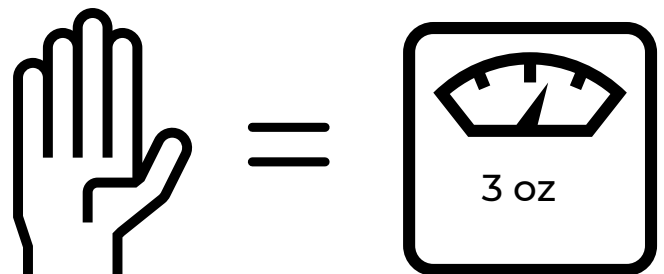
- Your fist is the size of 1 cup. Aim to fill your plate with at least 1 cup of non-starchy vegetables.



- The front of your closed fist (your fingers) is the size of ½ cup. Aim to fill your plate with ½ cup of grains and/or starchy vegetables.



- Your palm (without including your fingers) is equivalent to 3 oz of meat. Aim to eat no more than a palm's worth of chicken, turkey, or beef in one meal.



# The Plate Method

Review the following lists to learn the difference between non-starchy and starchy vegetables, proteins, and grains.



## Protein

(1/4 plate)

- Eggs
- Fish
- Poultry (chicken)
- Turkey
- Lean red meat
- Pork
- Tofu
- Tempeh
- Beans
- Lentils

## Starchy Vegetables & Grains

(1/4 plate)

- Potatoes
- Sweet potatoes
- Corn
- Green peas
- Acorn squash
- Butternut squash
- Yams
- Taro
  
- Whole wheat bread
- Brown rice
- Cereal
- Whole grain pasta
- Tortilla
- Pita bread

## Non-Starchy Vegetables

(1/2 plate)

- Artichoke
- Asparagus
- Beets
- Broccoli
- Brussel Sprouts
- Cabbage
- Carrots
- Cauliflower
- Celery
- Collard Greens
- Cucumber
- Green beans
- Lettuce
- Mushrooms
- Onions
- Peppers
- Zucchini

Aim to have more servings of vegetables than fruit each day.

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You can also add as many herbs and spices to your meal as you like! These foods are full of important nutrients and are low-calorie. Avoid adding excess salt or high salt spices like garlic salt.

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It's okay if this new way of thinking about your plate feels unusual. Starting out, try it with one meal each day. Over time you will get better and better at building your own balanced plate!



### Starchy vs. Non-Starchy Vegetables

Starchy vegetables are those plants that have a high amount of starchy carbohydrates and may have an impact on your blood sugar after a meal. This is why they are included with the whole grain portion of your plate. All other vegetables are considered non-starchy.

### Starchy Vegetable Examples

- Potatoes
- Sweet Potatoes
- Lima Beans
- Corn
- Butternut Squash
- Acorn Squash
- Peas

# Sample Meals

## Breakfast

- Option 1: Oatmeal with apple slices and yogurt
- Option 2: Omelet with mushrooms, olives, roasted potatoes, and spinach, with blueberries on the side



## Lunch

- Option 1: Quinoa and black bean stuffed bell pepper with avocado and onion
- Option 2: Half of a turkey sandwich with whole wheat bread and hummus, carrot and cucumber sticks and an orange



## Dinner

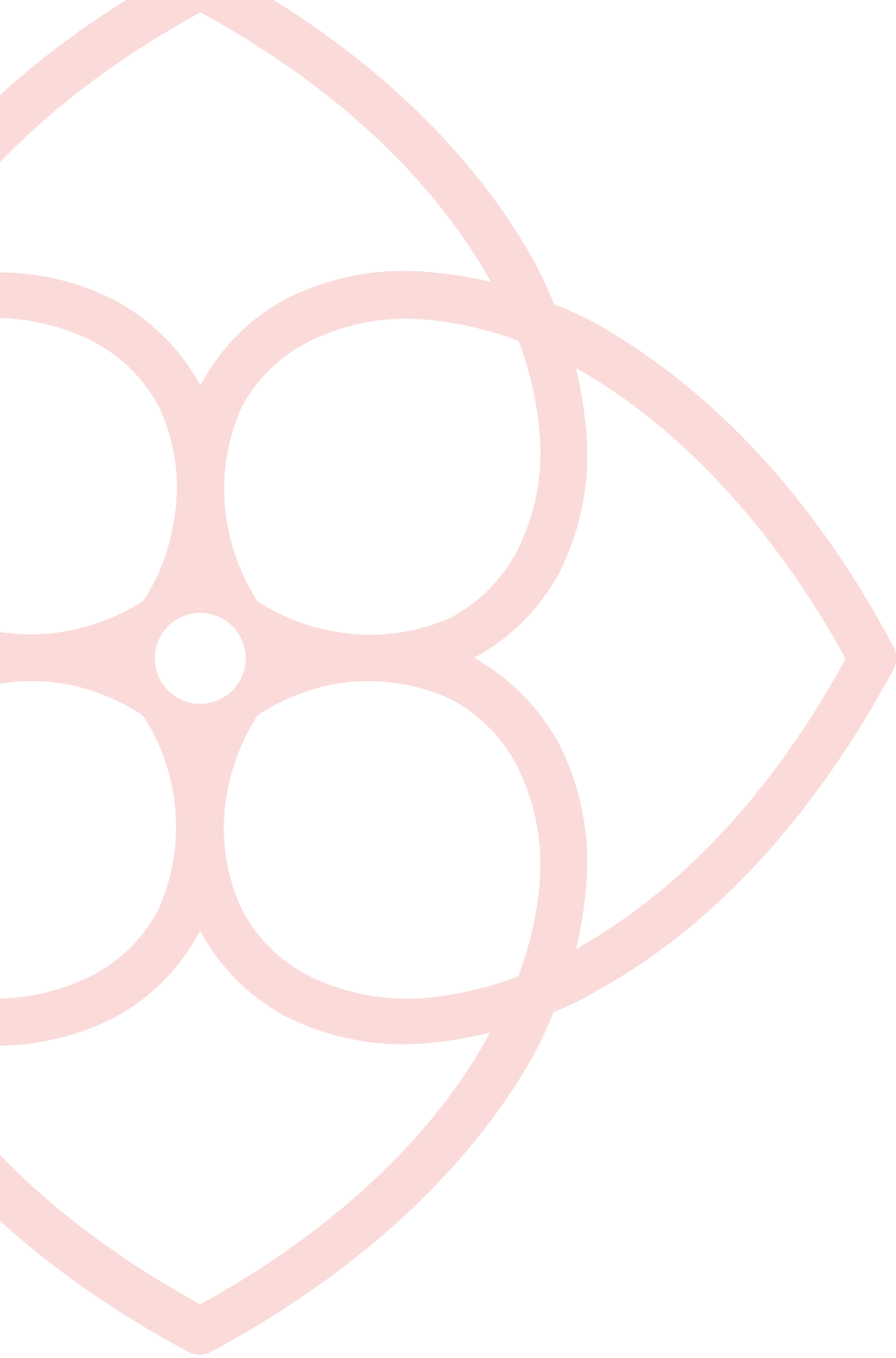
- Option 1: Mixed stir fry vegetables with tofu, brown rice, and a spicy peanut dressing
- Option 2: Summer salad with lettuce, tomatoes, cucumbers, and sweet corn with grilled chicken and an olive oil-based dressing



### From Lesson to Action

Do you use this approach for any of your meals right now?

What meal is the easiest for you to use this balanced plate approach?



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