

FREE DECISION AID

The Low-Energy Meal Fallback Matrix

Build a short list of meals you can manage when cooking, planning, and decision-making all feel like too much.

No seven-day menu. No perfect grocery haul. A few reliable options for the days when capacity is low.

HOW TO USE THIS

Build fallbacks before you need them

Low-energy meals are not failed versions of ambitious meals. They are practical choices that reduce the chance of skipping food, ordering something you did not want, or spending the evening negotiating with yourself.

“I stopped trying to force plans that did not suit me. Self-awareness made the routine sustainable.”

Natsha, Henkan Hacks

1. Pick a base

Choose something familiar and realistically available.

2. Add support

Add one filling or convenient component if it suits you.

3. Make it yours

Use your flavours, culture, needs, and appetite—not someone else’s rules.

Before choosing examples, note your constraints

Foods I avoid or cannot eat

Accessibility or equipment limits

Flavours that feel familiar

Budget or storage limits

Use your own guidance: Examples are general planning prompts, not a meal prescription. Adapt for allergies, medical conditions, religious or cultural practices, pregnancy, eating-disorder recovery, and professional advice. Food safety and sufficient nourishment matter more than completing a matrix.

Mix familiar parts, not rigid recipes

These are prompts. Circle what you already like, cross out what you do not, and add options that belong in your kitchen.

Easy foundations

Toast · rice · oats · tortillas · noodles · potatoes · soup · cereal · frozen grains · bread

Filling additions

Eggs · yogurt · beans · lentils · tofu · chicken · cheese · hummus · nuts or seeds

Easy produce

Frozen vegetables · fruit · bagged salad · cucumber · tomatoes · canned vegetables · salsa

Fast combinations to adapt

If this sounds useful...	Try a version like...	Make it familiar with...
Something warm	Soup + toast + an easy addition	Spices, chutney, herbs, chili oil, lemon
Something cool	Yogurt or hummus bowl + fruit/veg + bread	Seeds, za’atar, berries, cucumber, seasoning
Something handheld	Toast, wrap, or pita + filling + crunchy produce	Your usual spread, pickle, sauce, or seasoning
Something from the freezer	Frozen grain + frozen vegetables + easy filling	A sauce or spice blend you already trust
Something ordered	A familiar entrée; add or save a simple side if helpful	Choose satisfaction and practicality, not a “perfect” order

A fallback meal earns its place by being possible on a hard day—not by looking impressive.

Low-Energy Meal Fallback Matrix

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YOUR MATRIX

Match the meal to your capacity

Write two options in each useful box. Repeating meals is allowed. Leaving boxes blank is allowed.

Capacity	First meal / morning	Midday	Evening
Almost none Open, pour, unwrap, or order.			
About 10 minutes Toast, heat, assemble, or use one pan.			
Some capacity Cook a familiar meal or make extra.			
Away from home Work, travel, appointments, or errands.			

The option I forget I have

The order I reliably enjoy

Keep a small safety net

Choose items you genuinely eat. Buying an aspirational ingredient that expires untouched does not make the next week easier.

Freezer

- ☐ One complete meal
- ☐ One easy foundation
- ☐ One fruit or vegetable
- ☐ One personally useful extra

Pantry

- ☐ One heat-and-eat option
- ☐ One familiar foundation
- ☐ One filling addition
- ☐ One sauce or seasoning

Fridge

- ☐ One ready-to-eat option
- ☐ One flexible addition
- ☐ One easy produce choice
- ☐ One thing you enjoy

Outside the house

- ☐ One nearby order
- ☐ One work option
- ☐ One travel option
- ☐ One emergency snack

My next small restock

Pick no more than five things.

Your one-card fallback plan

When I have almost no capacity, I can...

When I have ten minutes, I can...

If neither works, my reliable order is...

After one week

Which option did you actually use?

One adjustment

What would make the fallback easier next time?

Help us make the next version better

Tell us what made the list, what felt unrealistic, and what low-energy situation we missed.

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