

How I Construct a Pandemic Menu



I used to shop like I'm French. So what does that mean?

Well, the French shop daily not weekly like us Americans. That way they get the freshest food. Oftentimes they go to more than one shop, too. They might go to a meat market, a vegetable shop and then the bakery.

My way of shopping like the French used to be like this: I decide by about 2:30 in the afternoon what I am hungry for and then I take a break from my day and run to the grocery store to buy the fixin's for the meal I'm going to make that night. Because I'm only buying for one meal my list is short and it doesn't take me very long. Now, because of the risk of exposure, I am going to the store a lot less often. I am shopping about every 7 – 10 days.

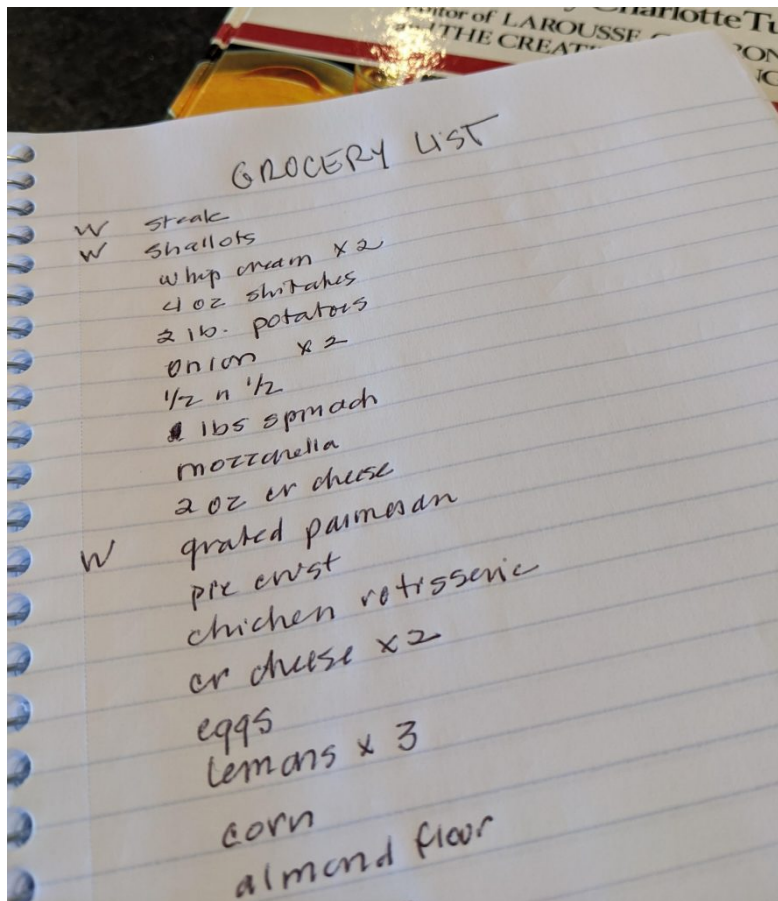
I thought you might be interested in how I put together my menu and my grocery list. I am still buying fresh food but because some of it might not be eaten for even a week, I have had to resort to freezing some items. The items I freeze are things like ground beef. That sort of thing freezes and thaws without

much deterioration. The delicate items like fresh fish I make early in my week so they don't have to be frozen. So what I eat when does matter.

The first thing I do is choose my menu. I might search the Plan Z diet site for inspiration. I might clip things out of magazines, or I might go through my collection of cookbooks looking for ideas. For each night I try to choose a different ethnicity and I choose recipes that are easy to make. I am very busy with work (unlike some folks who are furloughed and have more spare time). So, on one day I might decide it will be Italian, the next American, the third Mexican and so on. I try to choose recipes that are a mix of proteins: beef, chicken, fish/seafood etc. I like to mix things up. For meals on weekends I can choose some of the more complicated dishes. This past weekend I made a St. Louis rib recipe that cooked for almost six hours. I accompanied that with a caramelized onion tart. Those onions take about 45 minutes to make. Those are not simple and quick recipes.

I actually write down what I am going to make for the entire week. I tear those pages out of my notebook and keep them in the corner of my kitchen. As the week progresses, I cross them off the list so I can easily see what's left to make. Once I have my menu, I make my grocery list. I pull out each recipe and I write the ingredients I need to buy on a notebook page. I never go to the grocery store without a list. I find that to be a recipe for weight gain disaster. If the list is long, I write the items in a notebook and take that along rather than just a piece of paper. I find it a lot easier to check things off the list with something stiff holding the list on the shelf cart.

If you look at my grocery list, you'll see some items marked "W".



That means I will be buying those items from Whole Foods. They are specialty items I am not likely to find in the cheaper grocery store where I buy the rest of the food. Going to two stores in Chattanooga is fairly easy. The city is pretty small, and the stores are less than 10 minutes apart. I check each item off the list as I go through the aisles. This keeps me focused. I come home. I unpack the groceries. I make the food each night after work.

For the lunch meal it's usually leftovers from some other night or maybe just a cheese platter to snack on. Breakfast is usually a protein smoothie made with homemade yogurt (I bought a yogurt maker by Lavele...really awesome) or an apple with peanut butter. Simple meals during a time of pandemic.

I am finding it rewarding to put in the homework time up front on my menu and then execute. I hope this gives you some ideas

you can use to make the grocery experience more satisfying during this tough time.

Cheers,