

ALINA READ

Cooking for One Guide

*Half-portions, planned leftovers, freezer strategy, and senior-friendly
food safety*

Companion resource for
DASH Diet Cookbook for Seniors

Print-friendly • Senior-friendly • Full 60-Day Plan

This guide is a practical companion to the cookbook. It does not replace personalized medical or nutrition advice. Follow any individualized guidance you have received from your healthcare professional.

1. Why Most Recipes Serve 2

Most recipes in the book serve 2 because a second portion can save time without creating waste. When a recipe is easy to divide, halve the ingredients. When it is awkward to split an egg, a can, or a batch-cooked ingredient, prepare the full recipe and store the second serving promptly for another meal.

Quick Decision Guide

Situation	Best practical choice
Recipe divides cleanly	Halve the ingredients and cook one serving.
Recipe uses 1 egg, 1 can, or another awkward-to-split item	Cook the full recipe and refrigerate the second portion promptly.
Recipe serves 4	Divide the finished dish into individual portions; refrigerate what you will use soon and freeze the rest.
Low-energy day	Use a ready portion from the refrigerator or freezer instead of starting from scratch.

2. Cook Once, Eat Twice

- Cook a larger batch of a basic grain or legume once a week. Cooked grains and legumes can be used across salads, soups, bowls, and side dishes.
- Wash and chop vegetables shortly after grocery shopping so they are easier to use when energy is lower.
- Label leftovers and freezer portions with the contents and date. A small label prevents forgotten food and makes the next meal easier.

- Keep a short list of dependable staples within easy reach: whole grains, no-salt-added beans, herbs, spices, unsalted nuts, frozen vegetables, plain yogurt, eggs, and other foods that fit your needs.

3. Portion Promptly

The practical rule from the cookbook: cook once, portion promptly, and make the next meal easier.

- Divide large batches into individual portions before storing.
- Use shallow containers so cooked food cools more quickly and evenly.
- Refrigerate the portion you plan to use within the safe leftover window; freeze portions you will not use in that time.
- Keep frequently used containers in easy-to-reach locations to reduce unnecessary lifting or bending.

4. Senior-Friendly Food Safety

Older adults can be more vulnerable to foodborne illness, so cooling, storage, and reheating deserve extra attention. The cookbook uses the following safety guidance:

Food-safety checkpoint	Guidance used in the book
Refrigerating cooked food	Within 2 hours of preparation; within 1 hour when the surrounding temperature is above 90°F (32°C).
Refrigerator temperature	40°F (4°C) or below.
Refrigerated leftovers	Use within 3 to 4 days.
Reheating leftovers	Reheat to 165°F (74°C).
Poultry	Cook to 165°F (74°C).
Ground meats	Cook to 160°F (71°C).
Fish	Cook to 145°F (63°C).
Eggs	Cook until yolks and whites are firm unless pasteurized eggs are used.
Dairy	Choose pasteurized dairy products.

5. When Appetite Is Smaller

- A modest plate may feel more manageable than an oversized meal.
- Softer foods such as warm oatmeal, bean purée, mashed sweet potatoes, cottage cheese with fruit, or a yogurt-based smoothie may be easier to enjoy than dry or chewy foods.
- Moisture can make foods more comfortable to eat. Broth, olive oil, tomato sauce, yogurt-based sauces, or mashed avocado can help keep meals tender.

- If your appetite or chewing comfort changes significantly, use the book as a starting point and seek individualized guidance when needed.

6. A Simple One-Person Routine

- 1. Shop with a short list.** Buy the fresh foods you will realistically use, then rely on pantry and freezer staples for flexibility.
- 2. Prep one or two basics.** Cook one grain or legume and wash a few vegetables.
- 3. Cook one recipe.** Halve it when practical; otherwise make the full recipe.
- 4. Store the second portion immediately.** Label it with the contents and date.
- 5. Use planned leftovers.** Turn tomorrow's lunch or dinner into a reheating task instead of another cooking project.
- 6. Freeze extras before they become waste.** If you will not use a portion within 3 to 4 days, freeze it promptly when appropriate.

7. The Goal

Cooking for one should reduce effort, not reduce enjoyment. Use half-portions when they are simple, planned leftovers when they save time, and the freezer when it prevents waste. Keep the meals that work well for you and repeat them confidently.