05 - Meal Assembly & Food Fatigue

You know how to cook each component. This page is about combining them into actual meals, keeping portions consistent, and making the same three ingredients feel different enough day to day that your family stays willing to eat.

The Basic Meal

Every meal in this plan follows the same structure:

Component	Amount Per Person	Source
Cooked rice	~2 cups	1 cup dry
Cooked beans or lentils	~1.5 cups	1/2 cup dry
Cooking fat	1 tablespoon	Tallow or substitute
Garden or pantry add-ins	Whatever you have	Optional but important

Cook beans or lentils first — they take longest. Start rice about 20 minutes before beans will finish. Add fat to either component during cooking. Combine at serving time.

Portioning for a Family of 4

When food is limited, consistent portioning prevents conflict and ensures everyone gets an equal share. The simplest method is to measure dry ingredients before cooking rather than eyeballing cooked portions, since cooked volume varies.

Per meal, measure dry:

- 4 cups dry rice (feeds 4 people)
- 2 cups dry beans or lentils (feeds 4 people)
- 4 tablespoons tallow (one per person)

Cook everything, then divide into four equal portions at serving time. Consistent portioning from the start prevents the perception that anyone is getting less, which matters more than it sounds when stress is high.

Meal Frequency

On a rationing diet the goal is two meals per day rather than three. This extends your supply without reducing daily caloric intake per meal, and reduces fuel use.

- **Morning meal** — rice with fat, any available garden greens folded in
- **Evening meal** — beans or lentils with fat, any available add-ins

Alternatively combine both into one larger shared pot meal per day if fuel is very limited.

Food Fatigue

Food fatigue is what happens when you eat the same thing every day. It starts as boredom and progresses to genuine reluctance to eat, which becomes a serious problem when the food is all you have. Children hit this wall faster than adults and are less able to push through it by willpower.

The goal is not to make survival food gourmet. The goal is to make it feel different enough from the day before that people eat without a fight.

The most effective tools against food fatigue in this plan are:

1. **Texture changes** — the same ingredients feel different depending on how they are prepared
2. **Garden add-ins** — even a small amount of something fresh or aromatic changes the entire experience
3. **Alternating beans and lentils** — different texture, different mouthfeel, same nutrition
4. **Varying how components are combined** — separate versus mixed versus soup form

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Variations — Same Ingredients, Different Meals

None of these require additional stored ingredients. All of them use only rice, beans, lentils, and fat with optional garden add-ins.

Bean Soup

Add extra water to the cooked beans — roughly double what you would normally use — and thin to a soup consistency. Season with salt and any available add-ins. Serve with rice on the side for dipping or crumble rice into the soup. Feels completely different from a bowl of beans even though it is the same food.

Fried Rice

Cook rice ahead of time and let it cool completely — day-old rice works best. Heat fat in the pot until hot. Add cooled rice and press it flat. Let it sit without stirring for 2 to 3 minutes to develop a crispy bottom. Stir, press flat again, repeat. Season with salt. Add any available green onion, garlic greens, or garden vegetables. The texture and flavor are dramatically different from plain steamed rice.

Rice Porridge (Congee)

Use 4 cups of water per 1 cup of dry rice instead of the normal 2 cups. Cook longer — 30 to 40 minutes — stirring occasionally. The result is a thick, soft porridge. This is easier to eat when someone is sick or has low appetite, and feels more filling and comforting than regular rice despite being the same ingredient.

Mixed Rice and Beans

Combine cooked rice and beans in the pot together and stir. Add fat and any seasoning. The combined texture is different from eating them separately side by side. This is also easier to portion and serve from a single pot.

Crispy Bottom Rice (Intentional)

After the rice finishes cooking, increase heat briefly for 2 to 3 minutes before removing from heat. The bottom layer crisps and slightly caramelizes. Serve the soft top rice first, then scrape the crispy bottom layer and serve separately. Two textures from one pot.

Lentil Dal

See page 03. Cooked with garlic and any available spice, red lentils become something that tastes like an intentional dish. Rotate this in when bean fatigue sets in.

[ADD-INS] — Highest Impact by Category

These are the add-ins that make the biggest difference to the eating experience. Prioritize growing or sourcing these if you can.

Flavor (biggest impact per amount used)

- **Garlic** — transforms almost any base, raw or cooked
- **Green onion** — use the green tops freely, they regrow from the root end
- **Any hot pepper** — a tiny amount changes the entire flavor profile
- **Salt** — never underestimate how much this matters, stock more than you think you need

Nutrition (closes the gaps in a rice and bean diet)

- **Kale, chard, or spinach** — vitamins A and C, folds into anything in minutes
- **Tomato** — vitamin C, acid, brightness, works cooked into beans or fresh on top
- **Sweet potato** — real calories, vitamin A, cook into beans or serve alongside

Comfort and morale

- **Any fresh herb** — even a few leaves of something green and aromatic changes how a meal feels
- **Lemon or lime** — if somehow available, a small squeeze over beans or lentils is transformative
- **Garlic cooked in fat** — the smell alone does significant work for morale

If the garden produces nothing

Plain rice and beans with salt and fat is still a complete nutritional base. Food fatigue will be harder to manage but the body will be fine. Rotate between beans and lentils, vary textures using the

methods above, and use the variation techniques as your primary tool.

Quick Reference — Variation Rotation

Use this as a rough guide to keep meals feeling different across a week.

Day	Morning	Evening
1	Plain rice with fat	Beans with any add-ins
2	Rice porridge	Lentil dal
3	Fried rice (previous day's rice)	Bean soup
4	Mixed rice and beans	Plain beans with crispy fat drizzle
5	Plain rice with garden greens	Lentils with garlic and greens
6	Rice porridge with tomato	Beans with sweet potato
7	Fried rice	Bean soup with lentils mixed in

Repeat and adjust based on what is available. The point is not to follow this exactly — it is to have a rotation in mind so you are not making the same decision from scratch twice a day under stress.

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