

# How to Make Healthy Mason Jar Meals

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★★★★★ 3 Recipe Ratings

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Combining fresh, healthy ingredients in mason jars will add portability and convenience to all of your daily meals. Make a five-minute mason jar oatmeal and customize each serving for a week's worth of healthy breakfasts. Dial up the elegance with a beautiful coconut quinoa and cherry compote breakfast masterpiece. Put a lower-calorie spin on Caesar salad with kale, quinoa, and a light homemade dressing. Create a unique, zesty strawberry spinach salad, finished with a tangy citrus and poppy seed dressing. Turn your lunch salads into gorgeous dinner options, or make a curry in a hurry with lime cilantro rice for a great mason jar dinner.

## Ingredients

### ■ Easy Mason Jar Oatmeal<sup>[1]</sup>

- ☐ 1 2/3 cups (400 mL) steel-cut oats
- ☐ 4 cups (960 mL) water
- ☐ 1 heavy pinch of salt

#### Optional Mix-ins:

- ☐ Milk or soy milk
- ☐ Cinnamon, sugar, and nutmeg
- ☐ Raisins, dried cranberries, or other dried fruit
- ☐ Fresh blueberries, strawberries, or banana
- ☐ Honey

### ■ Coconut Quinoa with Cherry Compote<sup>[2]</sup>

- ☐ 1 cup (240 mL) quinoa, rinsed
- ☐ 1 cup (240 mL) almond milk
- ☐ 1 16 ounce (454 g) can of light coconut milk
- ☐ 1 pinch of salt
- ☐ 1/2 cup (120 mL) almonds
- ☐ 1/2 cup (120 mL) shredded, toasted coconut

#### For the cherry compote:

- ☐ 1 pound (454 g) of fresh or frozen cherries, pitted
- ☐ 2 tablespoons water
- ☐ 1 pinch salt
- ☐ 1 pinch cardamom
- ☐ 1 tablespoon maple syrup

### ■ Caesar Salad with Kale and Quinoa<sup>[3]</sup>

- ☐ 2 tablespoons light Caesar dressing (store-bought or see homemade recipe)
- ☐ 3/4 cup (180 mL) cherry tomatoes
- ☐ 1 baby cucumber, sliced
- ☐ 1/4 cup (60 mL) diced grilled or baked chicken breast (optional)
- ☐ 1 teaspoon Parmesan cheese
- ☐ 1/4 cup (60 mL) quinoa, rinsed
- ☐ 1 cup (240 mL) chopped kale
- ☐ 1 cup chopped romaine lettuce

#### For light Caesar dressing:<sup>[4]</sup>

- ☐ 1/3 cup (80 mL) low-fat or nonfat Greek yogurt
- ☐ 2 anchovy fillets, mashed
- ☐ 1 garlic clove, minced
- ☐ 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- ☐ 2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce
- ☐ 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- ☐ Salt and pepper to taste

### ■ Strawberry Spinach Salad with Citrus Poppy Seed Dressing<sup>[5]</sup>

- ☐ 1/4 cup (60 mL) red onion, sliced

- ☐ 1/2 cup (120 mL) cucumber, sliced
- ☐ 4 large strawberries, chopped
- ☐ 1/2 cup (120 mL) roasted asparagus, chopped
- ☐ 1/4 avocado, chopped
- ☐ 15 ounce (425 g) bag of spinach
- ☐ 2 tablespoons sliced almonds, toasted
- ☐ 6 ounces (170 g) grilled or baked chicken breast (optional)
- ☐ 3/4 cup (180 mL) citrus poppy seed dressing (see recipe below or substitute with a favorite light dressing)

**For the citrus poppy seed dressing:**

- ☐ 1/2 cup (120 mL) fresh grapefruit juice
- ☐ 1 tablespoon maple syrup
- ☐ 1/2 teaspoon sea salt
- ☐ 1/4 teaspoon ground pepper
- ☐ 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- ☐ 1 clove garlic, minced
- ☐ 1 teaspoon poppy seeds
- ☐ 1 1/2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

**Curry in a Hurry with Cilantro Lime Rice**

- ☐ 1 1/2 pounds (680 g) boneless skinless chicken thighs
- ☐ 16 ounces (454 g) jarred salsa
- ☐ 2 teaspoons curry powder or garam masala
- ☐ 1/2 cup (120 mL) low-fat or nonfat Greek-style yogurt
- ☐ 1 1/2 cups (360 mL) basmati rice (rinsed)
- ☐ 2 cups (water 480 mL) water
- ☐ Juice and zest of 1 lime
- ☐ Leaves of 1 sprig of cilantro, roughly chopped

**Method  
1**

**Method 1 of 3:  
Creating Delicious Breakfasts**



**1 Use mason jars to control your portions.** Before you purchase a set of mason jars, make sure they're graduated. Graduated jars have lines that measure the volume of the jar's contents. That way, you'll have total control over your portion size.

- For example, if you're on a diet that calls for a 1/2 cup of oatmeal for breakfast, you can measure the appropriate portion and place it into a super-portable, half-pint sized jar.



**2 Make easy oatmeal for your mason jar breakfasts.** Get a large saucepan hot over medium heat. Add the oats, water, and salt and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to low, simmer for three minutes, then remove from heat.<sup>[6]</sup>

- Ladle equal portions of the oatmeal among the five mason jars. Let them stand uncovered for about an hour, or until they're cool to the touch. Cap them, then put them in the refrigerator.
- Make overnight, no-cook oats by portioning uncooked oats into the mason jar (for instance, 1 cup) and then adding your liquid (such as 1/2 cup of almond milk). Add any mix-in ingredients (nut butter, raisins, cranberries, etc.), cover, and refrigerate overnight. In the morning your oatmeal will be soft and ready to eat.
- Pint-sized jars allow more room for additional mix-ins, but you can use half-pint jars for a more portable size and extra portion control.
- You can mix in optional added ingredients, like fresh or dried fruit and milk, before refrigerating your oatmeal or after you reheat it. It just depends on how portable you need your breakfast to be and whether you prefer a hot and cold temperature combination. Stir in maple syrup or honey for a healthy sweetener before reheating. Or, for a nice hot-cool temperature combination, reheat your oatmeal then add fresh blueberries, chopped strawberries, or a sliced banana.
- Add different nutritious mix-ins to each jar to switch up your breakfasts' flavors. You can add fresh blueberries to Monday's jar, toasted almonds and coconut to Tuesday's, raisins to Wednesday's, and so on.



**3 Cook up some healthy coconut quinoa.** Coconut quinoa with cherry compote is a great way to make your breakfast ahead of time and/or eat it on the go. To start, grab a medium saucepan, get it hot over medium heat, and add the almond milk and quinoa. Bring it to a gentle boil, then reduce heat to low and simmer until most of the milk has evaporated. Stir frequently while it simmers.<sup>[7]</sup>

- Slowly stir in the coconut milk to the simmering mixture, adding about 1/4 of the can at a time. Stir gently until most of the liquid evaporates, then add the salt. Remove the pan from heat, then cover and set aside.<sup>[8]</sup>
- Try not to reduce the milk completely. Leave a little liquid left so the quinoa has nice, creamy consistency.



**4 Make a cherry compote and toasted mix-ins.** Get a medium frying pan hot over medium heat, then add the cherries, water, salt, and cardamom. Cook, stirring frequently, until the cherries release their juices and the sauce thickens, or about 10 to 15 minutes. When it thickens, stir in the maple syrup, cook for another two minutes, then remove from heat.<sup>[9]</sup>

- You can add the cherry compote to either the oatmeal or the coconut quinoa.
- To toast sliced almonds and shredded coconut, heat a small frying pan over low heat. Add the almonds, and flip the pan or stir them gently as they toast. Transfer the almonds to a separate dish once they have just started to brown. If your shredded coconut isn't already toasted, use the same pan and technique to get them brown.



**5 Assemble your quinoa breakfast masterpiece in layers.** Use one pint-sized jar or two half-pint jars, depending on your portion preferences. First, add the cooked quinoa, then a layer of the cherry compote, the toasted almonds, and, finally, the shredded coconut. If necessary, or if you prefer, continue to add another layer of each until you reach the top of the jar.<sup>[10]</sup>

- Enjoy it cold, or if you prefer your quinoa hot, reheat it in the microwave for two to three minutes.



## Method 2 of 3: Packing Healthy Lunches



**1 Assemble salads in the right order.** You can make a mason jar salad using virtually any healthy ingredients, as long as you add them to the jar in the right order. The dressing goes first, then the least absorbent ingredients, like tomatoes or onions. Work your way up to the lightest ingredients on top, like kale or lettuce.<sup>[11]</sup>

- If your heaviest and wettest ingredients are on bottom, your greens will be less likely to get soggy.



**2 Store in the fridge until you're ready to enjoy.** Your mason jar salads should store for up to five days. To make them stay fresher longer, try adding chicken and other protein choices the day that you'll be eating the salad. When you're ready to serve, just shake the jar well, and eat it from the jar, or pour it into a bowl or plate.<sup>[12]</sup>

- Mason-jar salads allow you to make these meals ahead of time so they'll be ready to go throughout the week. Instead of spending time every day preparing your lunch, you'll do it all in one session at the start of the week. In addition, the mason jars mean you can easily transport your salad to work or school.



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**3 Make a light Caesar dressing.** You can go with a store-bought light dressing or you can make your own. Mash the anchovies if they aren't already, and add them to a small bowl with the yogurt, minced garlic, lemon juice, and Worcestershire sauce. Slowly drizzle in the olive oil as you constantly whisk to create an emulsion, then season with salt and pepper to taste.<sup>[13]</sup>



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**4 Add the ingredients for your Caesar salad in layers.** Start with 2 tablespoons of your store-bought or homemade light Caesar dressing. Then, in the following order, add the tomatoes, cucumbers, chicken (if you eat meat), Parmesan cheese, and quinoa. Finally, add the kale and romaine lettuce.<sup>[14]</sup>

- If you made chicken the night before, diced up leftovers are a great addition to this salad. Otherwise, or if you're a vegetarian, it's fine to skip the meat. Add a pair of hard-boiled eggs or baked tofu if you want a vegetarian protein fix.



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**5 Make the items you'll need for a strawberry spinach salad.** First, whisk up your citrus poppy seed dressing by combining all the ingredients for the dressing except for the oil into a mixing bowl. Whisk the ingredients together vigorously as you slowly drizzle in the oil until they're suspended in an emulsion. Measure out 3/4 cup (180 mL) of the dressing to use in the salad.<sup>[15]</sup>

- Then roast your asparagus. Preheat your oven to 400°F (204°C) and break off the tough ends of the asparagus. Toss the asparagus with olive oil, salt, and pepper, then place them on a baking sheet in a single layer. Roast them for 25 minutes, until the stalks are tender but still crisp.<sup>[16]</sup>
- You can use leftover asparagus or easily roast some fresh for your salad.



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**6 Layer the strawberry spinach salad ingredients in two large mason jars.** The recipe allows for two large servings, so use a pair of 32-ounce (907 g) jars. Start by dividing the dressing evenly between the two jars. Then, add half of each ingredient to the jars in the following order: onions, cucumbers, strawberries, asparagus, chicken (if you're a meat-eater), avocado, spinach, and almonds.<sup>[17]</sup>

- Add diced or coarsely chopped chicken from last night's dinner for an easy protein fix. Or, if you're a vegetarian, you can skip the meat or substitute with a couple hard-boiled eggs, or divide a 16-ounce (454 g) can of chickpeas between the two jars.



### Method 3 of 3: Using Mason Jars for Easy Dinners



**1 Make and store dinners for a week or use jars for transport.** You can make one meal in bulk and measure out portion sizes into mason jars to eat later in the week. They're also freezable, so you can store food for longer periods of time. If you're packing dinner to transport elsewhere, mason jars offer an elegant and portable presentation option.



**2 Switch up protein choices to dress up lunch salads.** Since they're already so gorgeous, those lunch salads will present beautifully for dinner. You can make them heartier by going with the optional protein choices, like adding the baked or grilled chicken. You can also substitute chicken for grilled shrimp or salmon to dress your salads up for dinner.



**3 Make a curry in a hurry.** Curry and rice will pack some robust flavors into your mason jar dinner. To make the curry, simmer the chicken, salsa, and curry powder or garam masala in a large skillet covered with a fitted lid over low heat for 30 minutes. Then remove the pan from heat and stir in the low- or non-fat yogurt and use two forks to shred the simmered chicken.

- Then divide 1/2 cup portions of the pulled chicken in wide mouth pint jars.



**4 Prepare cilantro lime rice.** Bring the rice, water, and salt to a boil in a large saucepan, then lower the heat and simmer until the rice is tender and has absorbed the water, or 20 to 30 minutes. Fluff the rice with a fork and stir in the cilantro and lime juice and zest.

- Add 3/4 cup of the rice over the chicken in each jar, then top with a lime wedge and cover the jar to store for up to five days or to transport. Make sure the chicken goes in the jar first, so the rice will be less likely to become soggy.
- To reheat, microwave for 90 seconds, and enjoy dinner from the jar or pour its contents onto a shallow dish.

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