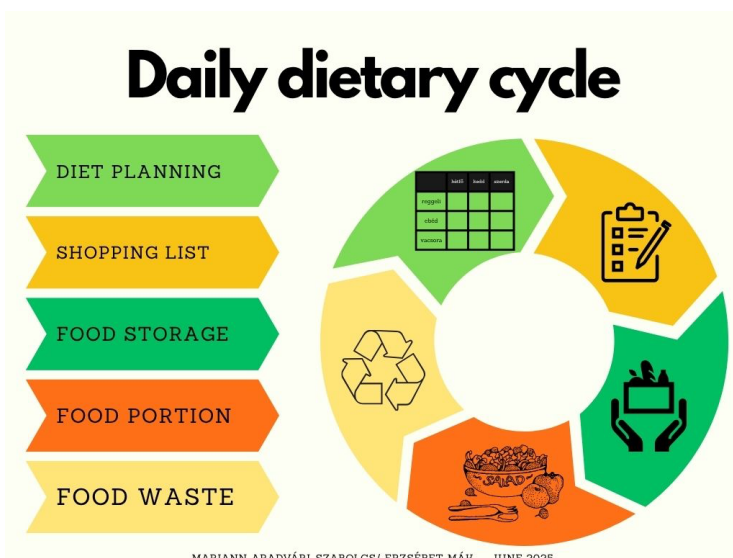


## Daily menu cycle

The dietitian provides nutritional advice to both sick and healthy clients and must deal with foods, meals, recipes, menu planning, and portion sizes. Individual needs and local possibilities must be considered, as well as economic factors in quantity planning and the use of leftovers.

In other words, a dietary cycle must be implemented, which nowadays should be guided by environmental awareness. These aspects are not complicated—in fact, they are quite intuitive—but they must be made more conscious in people's minds to be implemented more frequently.



**To reduce the ecological footprint, here are a few examples of daily dietary cycling:**

### Menu Planning:

Start by considering what ingredients are already at home and what can be prepared with the least energy input, ideally in a way that the whole family can eat it. This might only require minor modifications—for example, the family might prefer spicier food than the client—which needs to be pointed out. In such cases, there's no need to cook separate meals; it's enough to divide the prepared quantity into two portions before seasoning.

### Shopping List:

This is a crucial part of mindful shopping. Also, the client should not go shopping while hungry. Teach clients to think through their needs for several days in advance. This way, they only need to buy the necessary amounts; if more of something is needed, it is wise to buy larger packages, which reduces packaging waste. Fewer shopping trips are needed, saving time, energy, and fuel.

### Food Storage:

Many people are unaware that food should be stored in a categorized manner—that is, adequately separated from each other. Randomly thrown-in food items or leftovers in the fridge or pantry can contaminate each other microbiologically. Improper storage can also lead to avoidable food waste, for example, if one food absorbs another's odour, making it unappetizing (e.g., raw onions placed too close to fresh strawberries).

### Food Portions:

Portion sizes can be precisely calculated using the **OKOSTÁNYÉR®** guide (see [www.okostanyer.hu](http://www.okostanyer.hu)). Of course, it's not realistic to weight all ingredients every time—except in specific diets. In such cases, we can use various food exchange tables or the infographics available on the MDOSZ website, such as the hand size rule (1 portion is ca. 1 hand size). The right-sized, non-oversized portion is cheaper, requires less cooking time, and uses less electricity or gas—thus optimizing resources.

*Daily Menu Cycle, Mariann Aradvári-Szabolcs / Erzsébet Mák, June 2025*

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## Food Waste Utilization:

Despite careful planning and shopping, leftovers can still arise in the kitchen (Figure 4). Dietitians should give clients ideas for how a zero-waste diet can be achieved in many ways, especially if we consider a broader use of food items:

- Vegetable cooking water can be reused to cook other ingredients like grains or legumes.
- Vegetable peels and stems can be used to make vegetable stock for other dishes like stews, sauces, or smoothies.
- Herb stems and peels can be dried to make herbal teas later—for example, onion peel tea for colds.
- Fruit peels can be boiled into tea or dried and used as potpourri.
- Leftover meat dishes can be served with different side dishes or sauces as a new meal the next day.
- Leftover meats can be added to salads to make them a complete dinner.
- Leftover eggs, meats, and cooked or roasted vegetables can be turned into delicious sandwich spreads.
- Slightly wilted vegetables or fruits forgotten in the fridge can be turned into smoothies, cream soups, sauces, or simply added to dishes for flavor.

