

Recipe & Meal-Planning Apps Compared

Choose the support that fits your brain

The right app can hold recipes, decisions and shopping steps outside your head. The wrong one can become another system to maintain. This guide compares different kinds of support rather than declaring one universal winner. Features, availability and prices change, so check the current official listing before downloading or paying.

The best tool is the one that removes a real barrier and remains usable on a lower-capacity day.

Five different jobs an app might do

Need	Useful function	Possible hidden demand
"Break this down"	Turns a vague task into smaller actions.	Generated steps still need checking and editing.
"Save my recipes"	Clips, organises and searches familiar recipes.	Initial setup and tagging can become a project.
"Plan the week"	Calendar, reusable menus and leftovers.	A full week may create too many commitments.
"Write the list"	Converts planned recipes into grocery items.	Quantities, duplicates and safe brands need checking.
"Use what I have"	Finds recipes from selected ingredients.	Suggestions may assume extra ingredients or unsuitable methods.

Quick comparison

Tool	Best fit	Main strengths	Consider
Goblin Tools	Task initiation and step breakdown.	Magic ToDo can divide "make dinner" or "food shop" into smaller steps; level of detail can be adjusted.	Not a dedicated recipe library or meal calendar. AI output must be checked.
Paprika	Keeping your own trusted recipe collection.	Web recipe import, meal calendar, smart grocery lists, pantry, scaling, timers and offline access on supported versions.	Each platform version is sold separately; setup may be detailed.
Mealime	Guided weekly selection and a generated list.	Personalised meal plans, recipe guidance and an automatically categorised grocery list.	Recipe suggestions may still be too novel or mixed for sensory/ARFID needs.
Plan to Eat	Calendar-led planning using recipes you choose.	Recipe clipper, meal planner, reusable planning and an automated shopping list linked to chosen dates.	Subscription after trial; planning structure may feel demanding.
SuperCook	Ideas from ingredients already at home.	Ingredient-led recipe search and pantry input, including voice entry on supported apps.	A match is an idea, not proof that every ingredient, allergen or step suits you.

No app is automatically ARFID-aware

Filters can reduce results, but they cannot understand every safe brand, sensory boundary, food-separation need, allergy risk, intolerance or changing level of capacity. Save exact personal notes and keep an already-safe back-up. Never let an app pressure you to use food that is inaccessible.

Maggie's reflection

Technology should carry some of the mental load, not turn eating into a performance dashboard. You are allowed to use one tiny feature—such as a repeated list—without building a complete digital system.

Match the tool to the barrier

A low-demand way to test an app

If the difficult part is...	Start by testing...	Stop if...
Beginning a cooking task	One Goblin Tools breakdown of a familiar meal.	The steps become longer, unsafe or less clear than your usual method.
Losing trusted recipes	Save one familiar recipe in Paprika.	Importing, formatting or tagging creates more work than the recipe saves.
Choosing meals	Select two meals—not seven—in Mealime or a simple planner.	Suggestions create pressure, waste or sensory risk.
Linking recipes to shopping	Plan one or two recipes in Plan to Eat and inspect the generated list.	The list obscures exact brands, safe substitutes or household essentials.
Using food already available	Enter three dependable ingredients in SuperCook.	Results require too many extras, steps or unsuitable combinations.

The one-feature trial

Step	Action	Low-demand boundary
1. Name one barrier	For example: I forget what I can make.	Do not solve every food task at once.
2. Choose one feature	Saved favourites, list, planner or task breakdown.	Ignore the rest of the app during the trial.
3. Add one safe example	Use a familiar recipe or meal.	Do not test the app and a new food together.
4. Use it on a real day	Notice taps, choices, reading and corrections.	A pretty interface is not the same as usable support.
5. Keep, adapt or delete	Judge whether it saved effort overall.	Deleting an unhelpful app is a successful test.

Accessibility and nervous-system check

Check	Questions to ask
Visual demand	Can text size, contrast or display settings work for you? Is the screen crowded or calm enough?
Motor and reading demand	How many taps, scrolls and typed fields are needed? Can voice input, pictures or sharing reduce effort?
Notifications	Do reminders help, or create guilt and interruption? Turn off anything that increases pressure.
Sharing	Can a supporter view or edit the useful part without taking over your choices?
Offline and device fit	Will the tool work where you cook or shop? Are separate device purchases, accounts or syncing involved?
Data and privacy	What information is stored, shared or used for personalisation? Read current privacy information before entering health or household details.

Safety check for recipes and AI-generated steps

Check every suggested recipe against current allergen information, medical requirements, food-storage guidance and the appliance or manufacturer instructions. Confirm ingredients, cross-contamination, cooking temperature, cooking time, reheating and leftovers independently. AI may omit a safety step, misunderstand a food or invent a plausible-sounding instruction.

A simple combined system

Capture: keep a short list of familiar meals. **Choose:** select one or two based on current capacity. **Break down:** use a task tool only where the method feels stuck. **Shop:** transfer exact safe products to a list. **Cook:** follow the trusted recipe and current safety instructions—not an unchecked summary.

When paper may be better

A magnetic list, printed recipe, photograph, index card or shared note can be more accessible than another account. Digital is not automatically more supportive. Use the simplest system that remains findable and understandable.

My app chooser

A printable one-feature comparison

The barrier I want help with	_____
One familiar meal or task for the test	_____
The feature I will test	_____
My safe non-app back-up	_____

Score only what matters to you

Question	App / tool 1	App / tool 2	Notes
Easy to begin	■ Yes ■ No	■ Yes ■ No	_____
Visually manageable	■ Yes ■ No	■ Yes ■ No	_____
Keeps exact safe-food details	■ Yes ■ No	■ Yes ■ No	_____
Reduces decisions overall	■ Yes ■ No	■ Yes ■ No	_____
Useful on lower-capacity days	■ Yes ■ No	■ Yes ■ No	_____
Cost and account acceptable	■ Yes ■ No	■ Yes ■ No	_____
Privacy feels acceptable	■ Yes ■ No	■ Yes ■ No	_____

My decision

■ Keep	It reduces a real barrier. I will keep using this one feature.
■ Adapt	I will change notifications, list length, layout, sharing or frequency.
■ Pause	It may help later, but it does not fit my current capacity.
■ Delete	It adds more demand than it removes. The test still gave useful information.

Current official information checked

Goblin Tools: goblin.tools. **Paprika:** paprikaapp.com. **Mealime:** mealime.com. **Plan to Eat:** plantoeat.com. **SuperCook:** supercook.com. Features, platforms, trials and prices can change; consult the current official service and app-store listing. No inclusion here is a paid endorsement.

Clinical and safety note

This comparison is educational and does not replace medical, dietetic, allergy, swallowing, eating-disorder or food-safety advice. App dietary filters are not a guarantee of allergen safety or nutritional suitability. Seek qualified support when intake or hydration is limited, weight or health is changing, allergies are suspected, swallowing is difficult, or food restriction and distress are increasingly affecting daily life.

A message from Maggie

You do not have to become an organised meal planner to deserve support with food. Choose one small function that makes the next step easier. If an app creates more noise, pressure or guilt, it is not the right support for you right now.