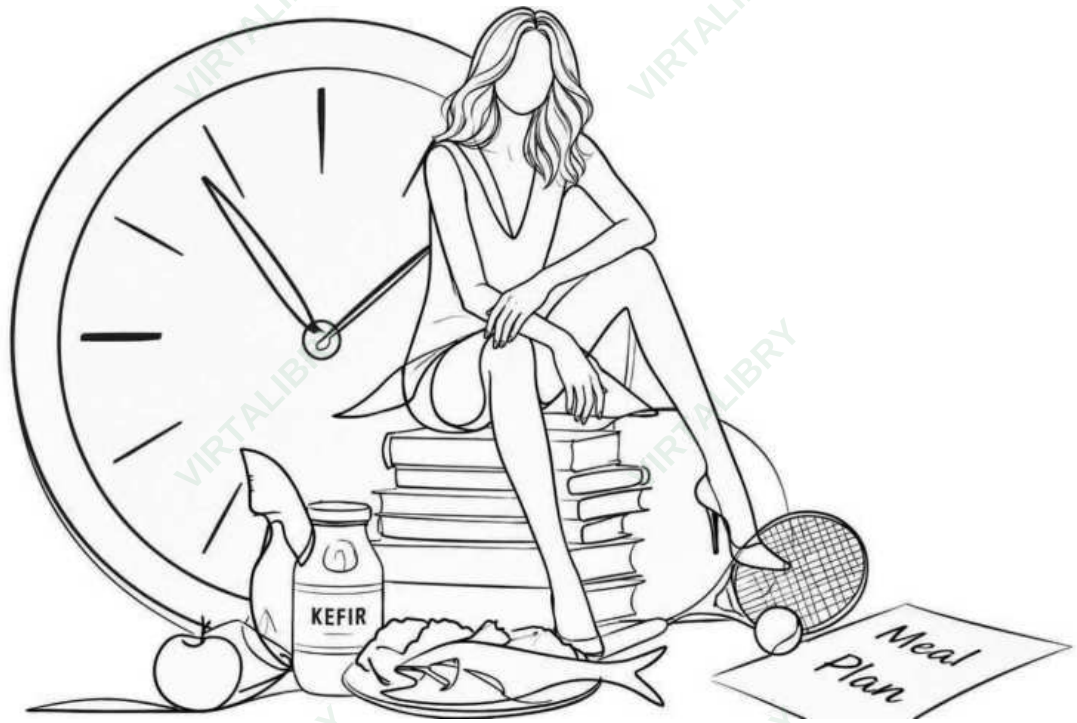




The Healthy Aging Cookbook for Women Over 50

*Easy, High-Protein Recipes for Strength, Muscle
Preservation, and Metabolic Health Through
Perimenopause, Menopause, and Beyond*

Mara Solenne

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Recipes and nutrition information are provided as estimates only. Actual values may vary depending on ingredients, brands, and preparation.

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Introduction

Life unfolds in stages, and let's be real at every stage, our bodies decide to change the rules on us. I get that a newborn and a seven-year-old have different needs, but for some reason, I used to expect my 50-year-old self to run on the same fuel I used at 25. Spoiler alert: it doesn't work that way.

For many women, hitting 50 brings a new reality: muscle mass starts playing hide-and-seek, energy levels can be unpredictable, and our metabolism seems to have taken a permanent vacation. These aren't just minor inconveniences; they're often tied to the significant hormonal shifts of perimenopause and menopause. If you've tried to fix this with the latest "miracle" diet, you know how it ends: you're hungry, frustrated, and feeling like you failed. But here's the truth: the plan failed you, not the other way around. Those trendy, one-size-fits-all diets were never designed for the unique physiological landscape of a woman over 50.

The Healthy Aging Cookbook for Women Over 50 was created for this exact moment. This isn't another restrictive diet; it's a practical system built around what your body needs now: strength, heart health, and metabolic balance. I've taken the latest science like the groundbreaking Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2025-2030 [1] and translated it into meals you'll actually want to cook and eat. This approach reflects a modern, research-informed understanding of protein needs, metabolic health, and the unique nutritional considerations of midlife.

And just as importantly, I wanted this book to feel usable in real life. Because healthy eating should not require a culinary degree, a spotless kitchen, or three uninterrupted hours every time you step into the kitchen. Most of us are not looking for a perfect diet. We are looking for food that helps us feel better, stay strong, keep our energy steadier, and still live our lives. That means meals made from familiar ingredients. Meals that do not make you feel deprived. Meals that support your body without turning every bite into a math problem.

I also believe that healthy food is often simpler than we make it out to be. A good plate does not need to be complicated to be powerful. Protein, fiber, color, healthy fats, and enough flavor to make you look forward to eating it - that is the foundation. The recipes in this book were created with that idea in mind. They are not here to impress anyone with unnecessary complexity. They are here to help you build strength, nourish your changing body, and make everyday cooking feel manageable again.

That matters because consistency is where the real transformation happens. Not from one perfect week. Not from one dramatic reset. Not from cutting out everything you enjoy. Real progress comes from the meals you can repeat, the habits you can actually live with, and the small choices that quietly add up over time. After 50, food becomes more than fuel. It becomes one of the most practical ways to support your muscles, bones, heart, hormones, blood sugar, digestion, and long-term independence.

The secret isn't harsh restriction; it's balance. With simple recipes, carefully estimated macros, and a 4-week meal plan, I'm taking the guesswork out of "what's for dinner?" My goal is to empower you to make informed choices with confidence, not confusion. Designed as a practical companion for everyday cooking after 50, this book is here to guide you toward a healthier, more vibrant version of yourself. Let's start this journey together!



PART 1

Understanding
Your Body
After 50



A Little Truth About 50+

Things only the women who are actually here not heading here, not almost here, but right here know to be true. This isn't a list of complaints. It's a portrait of a woman who is still moving — she just knows where she's going now. It's just an honest look in the mirror. The one we've all stopped arguing with. Well, mostly.

1. When you were 20 and thought 50 was practically the end credits. And now you laugh because you can clearly see what a disaster you were back then, and how many spectacularly bad decisions you fit into those "best years of your life."
2. When you never managed to negotiate a peace deal with the aging. The truce fell through, and now you live in an ongoing standoff with your reflection.
3. When you can finally see how many of your best years went to the wrong people. Not with bitterness just with the clarity that only comes later. Much later.
4. When you genuinely stopped caring what other people think. Not performatively, actually. That might be the single best thing about this decade.
5. When another miracle anti-wrinkle ad comes on, and you feel pure irritation. You know exactly what those promises are worth and you're not buying.
6. When your closet reminds you of all the women you tried to be. The woman you are now wants comfort.
7. When sleepless nights stopped being about parties. Now they're about trying to fall asleep and stop replaying scenes you can no longer edit.
8. When you correctly pronounce your hormones, feel cortisol from the inside — not from a book — and melatonin is part of your nightly ritual.
9. When you go to the gym, not to show off new leggings and a crop top, but because your lower back hurts. And somehow, that turns out to be a stronger motivator.
10. When a thirteen-year-old explains "highlighter drops" and her bathroom shelf has five times more makeup than yours. You just nod.
11. When your body runs its own climate system — hot, then freezing, then both and you can't remember which season you like or how to dress for it.
12. When the choice between plans with people and the couch isn't really a choice. Netflix dropped something new. You already know.
13. When no eye cream has managed to convince the bags under your eyes to cooperate. They've simply chosen a different lifestyle.
14. When you buy yourself flowers. Just because. No explanation required.
15. When you follow ten clean-eating accounts, agree with everything, and fully plan to start implementing it all... eventually. For now, you like the posts.
16. When there are things you'd have done differently. But here you are and more than anything, you hope your kids won't repeat your mistakes. They will. That's how life works.
17. When your glasses vanished again, which is why there are now five pairs distributed around the house, your bag, and your car.
18. When you finally — finally — have every right to spend yourself on yourself. Not the leftover time. Not the minutes between everything else. You. Fully. Without justification...

Chapter 1: Why Nutrition and Exercise Matter After 50

Transitioning into your fifties often brings physical changes that feel like a surprise party you never asked for. Diets that used to work suddenly don't, and maintaining strength can feel like an uphill battle. These aren't personal failures; they're biological shifts that are entirely normal for this stage of life, and thankfully, they can be addressed with the right strategies.

After 50, several key changes occur simultaneously. Your resting metabolic rate gradually slows, estrogen and progesterone levels decline during menopause, and skeletal muscle begins to decrease more rapidly. This trifecta of changes influences how your body feels, moves, and responds to both food and physical activity. One of the most significant yet often overlooked changes is sarcopenia — the age-related loss of skeletal muscle mass and strength. Research, such as a 2025 systematic review on sarcopenia [4], shows this loss can begin as early as your thirties, accelerating significantly after age 60. This means your muscles aren't just getting older; they're actively shrinking if not properly maintained.

Why Muscle is Your Best Friend (and Metabolic Engine)

Think of muscle as your body's metabolic engine. It's metabolically active tissue, meaning it burns calories even at rest. As muscle mass declines, your body burns fewer calories, which is a major reason why that "middle-age spread" happens, even if your eating habits haven't drastically changed. But muscle does so much more! It supports your joints and bones, helps regulate blood sugar, and plays a vital role in hormonal balance and daily movement. For women over 50, maintaining muscle is absolutely essential for reducing fall risk, supporting bone density, preserving independence, and keeping your metabolism humming along [2].

Biological Change	What Happens	Impact on Daily Life
Metabolism	Resting metabolic rate gradually slows down.	Easier weight gain, especially around the midsection, even without changes in eating habits.
Hormones	Estrogen and progesterone levels decline during perimenopause and menopause.	Shifts in fat distribution, increased risk of bone density loss, mood changes, and lower energy levels.
Muscle Mass	Skeletal muscle decreases more rapidly without targeted resistance exercise.	Reduced strength, increased fatigue, slower metabolism, and a higher risk of falls or injury.
Protein Use	Muscle protein synthesis becomes less efficient (anabolic resistance).	Greater difficulty maintaining muscle without adequate protein intake and strength training.

The Power of Movement (It's More Than Just Calories!)

Exercise isn't just about burning calories; it's about sending a clear signal to your body that strength, function, and resilience are still required. It's like telling your body, "Hey, we're still in the game!" Strength-focused exercise can significantly improve muscle mass and strength even in your 70s and 80s [4]. Beyond muscle, regular physical activity supports cardiovascular health, helps manage the increased risk of heart disease that often follows menopause, and strengthens bones, helping to prevent osteoporosis. Plus, consistent movement supports brain health, including memory and cognitive function, helping you stay sharp and vibrant [1].

Here's where the real magic happens: the combination of adequate protein with regular resistance exercise. As we age, our bodies develop "anabolic resistance," meaning our muscles need a louder signal (more protein) to build and repair [3]. This isn't a flaw; it's just a new operating instruction! Research shows that the protein dose needed to maximally stimulate muscle protein synthesis in older adults is approximately 68% greater than in younger people [7]. That's why I recommend about 30 grams of protein per meal — paired with your workouts, you're giving your body both the raw materials and the reason to stay strong and resilient. Protein provides the building blocks, while exercise creates the stimulus that directs those materials where they're needed most.

Putting Chapter 1 Into Practice: Your Action Plan

If there's one thing I've learned from both my clinical experience and my own journey, it's that consistency beats complexity every single time. You don't need a PhD in exercise science or a 2-hour daily gym habit to see results. When I show my body that strength and movement are still required, it responds — sometimes even faster than I expect! For most

of us over 50, the goal isn't to become a professional bodybuilder; it's about building a realistic, repeatable structure that fits into a busy life.

My Recommendations for Movement:

Resistance Training: Aim for 2 to 3 sessions per week, focusing on major muscle groups. I recommend 10 to 12 sets per muscle group at an intensity of 60-80% of your effort [4].

Aerobic Activity: Add about 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity per week, like brisk walking or dancing, to support heart health and daily energy [1].

Timing is Key: Try to consume a protein-rich meal (about 30 grams of protein) within 1 to 2 hours after your resistance training to maximize muscle repair and growth [3].

For reference, about 30 grams of protein can be found in approximately: 100 g of cooked chicken breast, 120–140 g of cooked fish, 120–130 g of canned tuna, 250 g of cottage cheese, or 280–300 g of Greek yogurt. Protein values may vary depending on the brand, preparation method, and whether the food is weighed raw or cooked.

Aerobic Activity

About 150 minutes per week • Moderate intensity • Supports heart health and daily energy



Resistance Training

2 to 3 sessions per week • 10 to 12 sets per muscle group • 60–80% effort



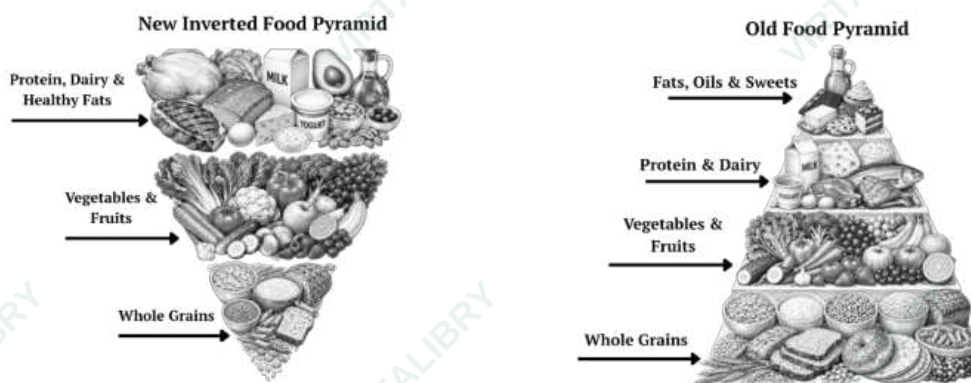
Chapter 2: The Science of Nutrition.

What Research Says

Let's be honest, trying to keep up with nutrition advice can feel like a full-time job. One day, fat is the enemy; the next, it's carbs. It's enough to make you want to give up and order a pizza. But what if the secret to healthy aging isn't about chasing fleeting trends, but about returning to some good old-fashioned common sense, backed by modern science? In early 2026, the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2025-2030 [23] hit the reset button on decades of confusing advice with a simple, powerful message: eat real food [1].

The Food Pyramid Gets a Makeover (and a Flip!)

Remember the old food pyramid that had us loading up on bread and pasta? Well, it's been flipped on its head. The new inverted food pyramid now puts the good stuff — protein, vegetables, fruits, and healthy fats — at the top, giving them the starring role [9]. Grains have been demoted to a supporting part, which, frankly, makes a lot more sense for our bodies after 50.



The new pyramid visually reinforces the shift: protein, dairy, and healthy fats share the top priority with vegetables and fruits, while whole grains move to the foundation as a smaller supporting layer.

This isn't about banning carbs (I'm not a monster!), but about rebalancing our plates to focus on what truly fuels us for the long haul. It's a crucial rebalancing act that recognizes the unique needs of an adult body, especially as we navigate the vibrant decades after 50. Prioritizing nutrient-dense plants and high-quality protein is essential for maintaining muscle, managing weight, and supporting overall vitality.

So, What's the Big Deal About Protein? (Spoiler: It's Everything!)

If there's one takeaway from modern nutrition science, it's this: protein is your new best friend. As I've learned, and as research confirms, our bodies get a little lazy at using protein to maintain muscle as we age — a phenomenon charmingly called "anabolic resistance" [3]. To keep our muscles from packing their bags and leaving, we need to consciously up our intake. Experts now recommend 1.2 to 1.6 grams of protein per kilogram of body weight daily for women over 50 [3, 2]. The ESPEN Expert Group confirms that the dose needed to trigger maximum muscle-building response is significantly higher in older adults than in younger ones [8].

For a 150-pound woman, that's about 82 to 109 grams daily — a significant jump from older, outdated recommendations. This isn't just about building biceps; it's about preserving the muscle mass crucial for strength, mobility, and a healthy metabolism. I recommend aiming for about 30 grams of protein per meal, distributed throughout your day. This strategy helps you feel full, supports your metabolism, and gives your muscles the resources they need to stick around, especially when paired with some resistance exercise [3].

The Good, The Bad, and The Processed (Let's Get Real About Food)

Science has finally made peace with fat — the good kind, that is. The new guidelines encourage embracing healthy, natural fats from whole foods like avocados, olive oil, nuts, and omega-3-rich fish [1]. It's time to let go of the fat-free snacks of the 90s and welcome back real flavor and genuine nourishment. These fats are vital for hormone production, nutrient absorption, and keeping you satisfied.

What's definitely out? Ultra-processed foods (UPFs). These are the industrial concoctions with ingredients you can't pronounce, engineered to be so irresistible you can't stop eating them [5]. Research has linked these foods to a whole host of negative health outcomes, including obesity, type 2 diabetes, and heart disease. If it's made in a lab and barely

resembles its original form, I suggest leaving it on the shelf. Your body deserves better than empty calories and artificial additives.

My Recommendations for Nutrition:

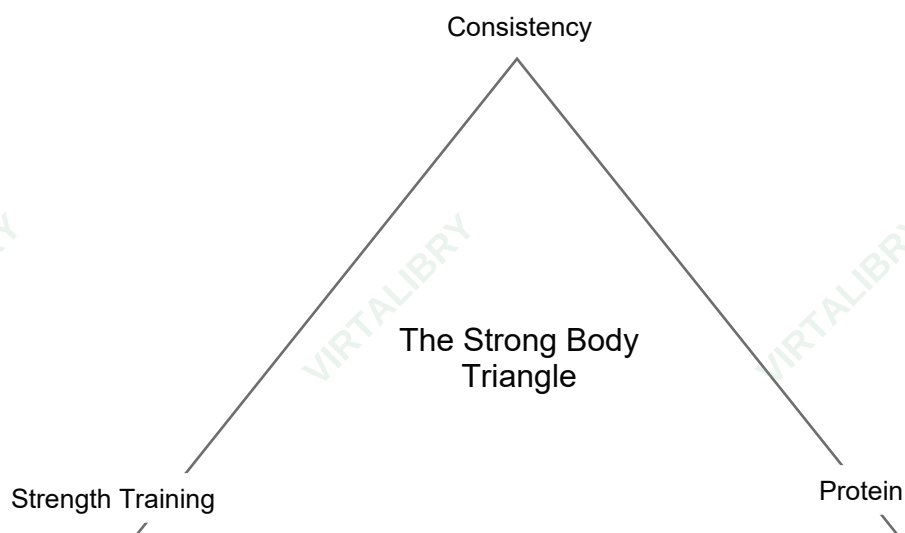
Prioritize Protein: Make protein the star of every meal. Aim for about 30 grams at breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Think eggs, Greek yogurt, lean meats, fish, and legumes.

Embrace Whole Foods: Fill your plate with colorful vegetables, fruits, and healthy fats. These provide essential vitamins, minerals, and fiber that work synergistically to support your health.

Ditch the UPFs: Consciously reduce your intake of ultra-processed foods and added sugars. Read labels, choose whole ingredients, and cook more at home.

Focus on Quality: Choose foods in their whole, intact state whenever possible. If it has a long list of chemical ingredients, it's probably not "real food."

By grounding your choices in this modern scientific understanding, I'm confident you'll feel more energetic, manage your weight more effectively, and enjoy a healthier, more fulfilling life. You've got this!



This week, I will start with: _____

Chapter 3: Protein, Macronutrients, and Your Nutritional Framework

Alright, let's talk about the building blocks of your diet: macronutrients. These are the big three — protein, carbohydrates, and fats — and understanding them is like getting the secret code to your body's operating system. Forget the fads and the diet dogma; I'm here to give you the real scoop on how these guys work together to keep you feeling fantastic, especially after 50.

Protein: Your Body's MVP (Most Valuable Player)

If Chapter 2 didn't convince you, let me reiterate: protein is a non-negotiable superstar for women over 50. It's not just for bodybuilders; it's for your body, every single day. Why? Because as we gracefully age, our muscles become a bit stubborn. This phenomenon, anabolic resistance, means our bodies need a stronger signal to build and repair muscle tissue [3].

That signal comes from leucine, a specific amino acid found in protein. To create enough leucine in your bloodstream to effectively tell your muscles, "Hey, let's build and repair!" you need about 2.5 to 3 grams of leucine per meal — and to get that, you need roughly 30 grams of high-quality protein [2, 7]. This isn't just about preventing muscle loss (sarcopenia); it's about maintaining a robust metabolism, keeping you feeling full and satisfied, and supporting overall strength and vitality. Think of protein as the ultimate multi-tasker for healthy aging.

Carbohydrates: Fuel for Your Fire (The Right Kind!)

Carbohydrates often get a bad rap, but let me set the record straight: they are not the enemy. In fact, they're your body's preferred source of energy! The trick, especially after 50, is choosing the right kind of carbs. I like to think of them as either "fast-burning kindling" or "slow-burning logs."

Fast-burning kindling (refined carbs): Think white bread, sugary cereals, pastries. These give you a quick burst of energy, often followed by a crash, and can wreak havoc on your blood sugar. I recommend limiting these.

Slow-burning logs (complex carbs): These are your whole grains, fruits, vegetables, and legumes. They provide sustained energy, are packed with fiber (great for digestion and satiety!), and contribute to healthy aging [6].

So, what are carbs for? They fuel your brain, your muscles, and every cell in your body. Giving them up entirely can leave you feeling sluggish, irritable, and craving all the wrong things. It's about smart choices, not deprivation.

Fats: Your Hormonal Harmony and More

Remember the low-fat craze of the 80s and 90s? I do, and frankly, it did us no favors. Modern science has unequivocally shown that fats are essential for our health, especially for women navigating hormonal changes. Healthy fats play a crucial role in:

Hormone Production: Your body needs fat to produce hormones, including those that regulate mood, metabolism, and reproductive health. After menopause, supporting hormonal balance is more important than ever.

Nutrient Absorption: Many vitamins (A, D, E, K) are fat-soluble, meaning your body needs fat to absorb them. Without enough healthy fats, you could be missing out on vital nutrients.

Satiety and Brain Health: Fats keep you feeling full and satisfied, and they're critical for brain function and cognitive health. I love healthy fats from sources like avocados, olive oil, nuts, seeds, and fatty fish [1]. These are your allies, not your adversaries.

The Macronutrient Tango: Creating Balanced Meals

Now, here's where the magic happens: understanding how protein, carbohydrates, and fats dance together to create balanced meals that support stable blood sugar and sustained energy. I call it the "Macronutrient Tango."

When you combine protein and healthy fats with complex carbohydrates, you slow down the digestion and absorption of sugars. This prevents those dreaded blood sugar spikes and crashes, keeping your energy levels steady and your mood more even-keeled. This is particularly important for hormonal balance, as erratic blood sugar can exacerbate menopausal symptoms.

My Recommended Macronutrient Proportions for Women Over 50:

While individual needs vary, I've found these general guidelines to be incredibly effective. Remember, these are starting points, not rigid rules. Listen to your body and adjust as needed.

Age Category	Protein (% of Calories)	Carbohydrates (% of Calories)	Fats (% of Calories)
50-60 years	25-35%	35-45%	25-35%
60-70 years	30-40%	30-40%	25-35%
70+ years	35-45%	25-35%	25-35%

Note: These percentages are general recommendations. Your specific needs may vary based on activity level, health conditions, and personal preferences. Always consult with a healthcare professional or registered dietitian for personalized advice.

Common Misconceptions: Don't Go to Extremes!

I've seen countless women fall victim to extreme diets that demonize entire food groups. Let me be clear: you shouldn't give up carbohydrates or fats entirely. These macronutrients are vital. The problem isn't the food group itself, but often the quality and quantity of the choices we make within them. Avoiding ultra-processed foods (UPFs) and added sugars is far more impactful than cutting out all carbs or fats [5]. Balance, not extremism, is the key to sustainable health and happiness.

How Nutrients Affect Hormonal Balance

Beyond just energy, macronutrients play a profound role in your hormonal health. During perimenopause and menopause, your body is already navigating significant hormonal shifts. A diet rich in healthy fats provides the building blocks for steroid hormones. Stable blood sugar, achieved through balanced meals, prevents insulin spikes that can negatively impact other hormones. Adequate protein supports overall endocrine function. By providing your body with the right balance of these nutrients, you're giving it the best chance to find hormonal harmony, reducing symptoms like hot flashes, mood swings, and fatigue.

My Recommendations for Balanced Meals:

Start with Protein: Always build your meal around a generous portion of protein (about 30g).

Add Complex Carbs: Include a serving of colorful vegetables, fruits, or whole grains.

Include Healthy Fats: Don't forget a source of healthy fats for satiety and hormonal support.

Listen to Your Body: Pay attention to how different foods make you feel. This is your most important guide.

By embracing this nutritional framework, you're not just eating; you're actively supporting your body's incredible ability to thrive at every age.

Chapter 4: Perimenopause, Menopause... and How to Keep Your Plate on Your Side

If you're over 40, you've probably started hearing the word perimenopause whispered in conversations — sometimes like it's a secret club you didn't sign up for. And if you've already crossed into menopause? You know it's not just a "new chapter." It can feel like someone quietly swapped out your operating system overnight.

Hot flashes. Sleep that suddenly disappears at 3 a.m. Weight that settles around your midsection like it's found its forever home.

Fun times.

But here's the important part: while nutrition won't cancel menopause (wouldn't that be nice?), it absolutely changes how you experience it. Food becomes less about dieting — and more about steadying the ship.

Perimenopause: When Hormones Get Moody

During perimenopause, estrogen and progesterone don't decline in a neat, predictable line. They fluctuate. Some days they cooperate. Some days... not so much.

Those hormonal swings affect blood sugar, appetite, mood, fat storage, and energy. Which is why suddenly you might feel shaky between meals, crave carbs at 4 p.m., or gain weight doing exactly what you've always done.

This is where the foundation we've already built — protein, fiber, balanced meals — becomes even more important. Stabilizing blood sugar is your best friend during perimenopause [10].

That means: protein at every meal, fiber from vegetables, legumes, and whole foods, pairing carbs with protein and healthy fats, and avoiding refined sugar spikes.

When blood sugar is steady, mood swings soften. Energy dips are less dramatic. Cravings become manageable. No magic. Just physiology.

Menopause: The Focus Shifts

Once menopause settles in and estrogen levels decline more consistently, your priorities evolve. Now we focus on protecting bone density, supporting heart health, preserving muscle mass, and maintaining metabolic efficiency.

Protein becomes even more important. Muscle loss accelerates without it. Calcium and vitamin D deserve attention for bone support. Saturated fats — especially from red meat and full-fat dairy — are best moderated, while heart-friendly fats like olive oil, avocados, nuts, and seeds move into the spotlight.

Notice something? We're not eliminating entire food groups. We're refining the strategy.

Phytoestrogens: Nature's Gentle Assist

Let's talk about phytoestrogens — plant compounds that can lightly interact with estrogen receptors in the body. They don't replace estrogen. They don't "fix" menopause. But they may help soften some symptoms.

Isoflavones, found primarily in soy foods, have been studied extensively. Research suggests that around 50-80 mg daily may reduce the frequency and severity of hot flashes in some women [12].

Practical sources include: tofu, tempeh, edamame, soy milk, flaxseeds, sesame seeds, chickpeas, lentils, berries, broccoli, and cauliflower. These foods also bring fiber, antioxidants, and plant protein to the table — so even beyond symptom support, they're a solid investment. Consistency matters more than occasional intake.

What to Ease Back On (Without Becoming Food-Obsessed)

This is not the time for extremes. It's the time for smart edits.

Ultra-processed foods? They tend to increase inflammation, worsen insulin resistance, and make abdominal weight gain easier. High-sodium snacks? They can amplify bloating and fluid retention — which nobody asked for. Excess alcohol? It may intensify hot flashes and disrupt sleep — two things already complicated enough.

When it comes to fats: limit saturated fats from red meat and heavy dairy, and favor monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats from olive oil, avocados, nuts, and seeds.

Refined sugar deserves special caution. As insulin sensitivity shifts with age, excess sugar has a bigger metabolic impact than it did at 25. Fruit is still healthy — but prioritizing berries and citrus (lower glycemic load) may support steadier blood sugar. Mangoes, grapes, and cherries aren't banned... just enjoyed thoughtfully.

Remember: we're adjusting, not punishing.

The Gut-Hormone Connection (Yes, It's Real)

If bloating suddenly feels like a frequent guest, you're not imagining it. Hormonal shifts influence digestion — and your gut microbiome plays a role in hormone regulation [13].

There's something called the estrobolome — a group of gut bacteria involved in metabolizing estrogen. When your gut is healthy and diverse, estrogen processing tends to be more balanced.

Supporting your gut means eating probiotic foods like yogurt with live cultures, kefir, sauerkraut, and kimchi, along with prebiotic foods (which feed good bacteria) like garlic, onions, asparagus, bananas, and legumes.

Emerging research also highlights a compound called S-equol, produced by certain gut bacteria from soy isoflavones. Not all women produce it naturally, but gut diversity seems to matter [14]. Once again — diversity wins.

The Muscle-Bone Partnership

As estrogen declines, both muscle and bone are affected. And they are deeply connected. More muscle supports stronger bones. Strength training strengthens both.

High-leucine protein sources — like eggs and whey protein — support muscle protein synthesis. Combine that with resistance training, and you're actively protecting your future mobility. Calcium alone is not enough. Protein + strength training + adequate micronutrients = a stronger long-term outcome.

A Calm, Steady Approach

Perimenopause and menopause aren't a crisis. They're a recalibration.

When you keep protein consistent, balance blood sugar, reduce ultra-processed foods, support gut health, and lift weights — you create stability inside a body that's undergoing change. And stability feels powerful.

You don't need a cleanse. You don't need a crash diet. You don't need to fight your body. You need to work with it. And your plate — when structured intentionally — becomes one of your strongest tools.



Chapter 5: Timing Matters

How and When You Eat - Shapes How You Age

We've talked about what to eat. Now let's talk about when.

Because after 50, timing isn't a trendy biohack. It's metabolic strategy.

Your body runs on rhythms. Hormones follow patterns. Digestion follows patterns. Blood sugar follows patterns. And when you align your meals with those rhythms, things tend to feel smoother. Less bloating. More stable energy. Fewer cravings. Better sleep.

Let's build the day step by step.

Step 1: Morning Hydration — Before Coffee, Before Breakfast

Before food. Before caffeine. Before scrolling your phone. Start with one glass of warm water. Not lemon water. Not celery juice. Not a supplement cocktail. Just warm, plain water.

Why? After 7-8 hours of sleep, your body is mildly dehydrated. Even slight dehydration can increase cortisol, reduce mental clarity, slow digestion, and affect blood pressure regulation.

Hydrating first thing in the morning supports bowel motility, gently activates digestion, supports circulation, and helps regulate appetite later in the day.

There's solid evidence that even mild dehydration negatively affects cognitive performance and mood (Ganio et al., 2011; Armstrong et al., 2012) [15, 20]. Hydration status also influences metabolic function and thermoregulation.

It sounds almost too basic to matter, but starting your day with 8 to 12 ounces of warm water acts like a gentle reset for your digestive system. Warm liquids may stimulate gastric motility — the natural movement of your digestive tract — helping to wake up your gut and prepare it for the day ahead. As hormonal patterns shift, digestion can slow slightly. This simple habit helps keep things moving without extremes.

Simple. Effective. Not dramatic.

Step 2: Breakfast — 30 Minutes Later

Give your system about 20-30 minutes after water. Then eat.

Breakfast after 50 should do three things: stabilize blood sugar, provide sufficient protein, and prevent mid-morning cravings. This is not the time for coffee and a muffin.

A metabolically supportive breakfast includes about 30 grams of protein, fiber from whole foods, healthy fats, and controlled complex carbohydrates.

Examples: eggs + sauteed vegetables + avocado, Greek yogurt + berries + flaxseeds + nuts, tofu scramble + spinach + olive oil, cottage cheese + chia seeds + citrus.

Protein in the morning improves satiety and reduces later calorie intake (Leidy et al., 2013). Higher-protein breakfasts have been shown to reduce cravings and stabilize glucose response compared to high-carb breakfasts. After 50, protein distribution matters. Waiting until dinner to "catch up" doesn't support muscle protein synthesis effectively [3].

Breakfast sets the metabolic tone for the day.

The 4-6 Hour Rule: Why Constant Snacking Isn't Helping

After breakfast, allow at least 4-6 hours before your next meal, unless a medical condition requires otherwise. This is where modern culture often clashes with physiology.

We've normalized grazing. Snack bars. Protein bites. Handfuls of this. Sips of that.

But metabolically, constant eating keeps insulin elevated throughout the day. Every time we eat, insulin is released to manage incoming glucose. If we're constantly snacking, insulin levels stay elevated — and over time, that pattern can contribute to insulin resistance, a common challenge for women over 50.

Giving your body a 4-6 hour break allows insulin levels to drop and gives your system the opportunity to tap into stored fat for energy.

Insulin is not the enemy. Chronically elevated insulin is.

When you allow several hours between meals: insulin levels return toward baseline, fat oxidation increases, digestive processes complete, and migrating motor complex (MMC) activity supports gut cleansing.

The migrating motor complex — a fasting-dependent wave of gut motility — activates between meals and helps clear residual food and bacteria from the small intestine (Camilleri, 2019) [16]. Frequent snacking interrupts this process.

Time-restricted feeding research (Sutton et al., 2018; Jamshed et al., 2019) shows that structured meal timing can improve insulin sensitivity and blood pressure, even without weight loss [17, 18].

This doesn't mean aggressive fasting. It means your body benefits from digestive breaks. Unless medically indicated (such as diabetes management, hypoglycemia, adrenal conditions, or specific gastrointestinal disorders), grazing all day is not necessary — and often counterproductive.

For many healthy women over 50, the traditional three-meal structure works remarkably well. Individualization always comes first. But structure helps.

Lunch: Build Stability

Lunch should mirror breakfast in structure: a protein anchor (about 30 grams), fiber-rich vegetables, healthy fats, and moderate complex carbohydrates.

Examples: grilled salmon + quinoa + roasted vegetables, chicken breast + lentils + olive oil + leafy greens, tempeh + brown rice + broccoli, turkey + sweet potato + mixed salad.

This combination prevents afternoon energy crashes, supports muscle protein synthesis, stabilizes blood sugar, and reduces 4 p.m. sugar cravings.

Skipping protein at lunch almost guarantees evening overeating. And we're not doing that anymore.

No Afternoon Snack? Yes — For Most Women

If lunch is properly balanced, most women do not need a 3 p.m. snack. What often feels like hunger is dehydration, fatigue, habit, or an emotional cue.

Try water first. If true hunger is present — shakiness, difficulty concentrating, physical weakness — reassess your meal composition. It usually means lunch lacked protein or fiber.

We're building meals that carry you. Not meals that require backup snacks.

Dinner: Lighter, But Still Strategic

Dinner doesn't need to be tiny. It needs to be intentional. Include protein, vegetables, healthy fats, and an optional smaller portion of carbohydrates.

As we move into the evening, we want dinner to be satisfying but respectful of digestion. This is also the perfect time to support the estrobolome we talked about earlier.

If tolerated, include fermented dairy: yogurt with live cultures or kefir. These provide probiotics that support microbiome diversity and digestive balance. Gut health affects estrogen metabolism, immune regulation, inflammation, and sleep quality.

So yes — your yogurt matters.

Try to finish dinner at least two hours before bedtime to allow digestion to complete and to support deeper, more restorative sleep.

And About Sleep

Whenever possible, aim to be in bed by 11 p.m. Your body performs much of its repair and hormonal recalibration during the earlier part of the night. Growth hormone release, metabolic recovery, and appetite regulation follow circadian timing. Consistently going to bed late interferes with these natural rhythms.

After 50, quality sleep isn't optional self-care. It's biological maintenance.

Hydration Throughout the Day

Water is not optional. It is foundational.

Maintaining consistent fluid intake supports everything from joint lubrication to skin elasticity. Hydration affects blood pressure, digestion, kidney function, temperature regulation, cognitive clarity, and metabolic efficiency.

For most women over 50, a practical hydration target is approximately 1.8-2.2 liters (60-75 ounces) of fluids daily, more if physically active or in warm climates [19, 20].

This range is meant as a practical day-to-day target, not a rigid rule. Intake from food, activity level, climate, and individual needs all matter.

Spread intake throughout the day. Large volumes late at night may disrupt sleep. As we age, the thirst mechanism becomes less sensitive. You may be mildly dehydrated without feeling thirsty.

Signs you need more water: dark urine, fatigue, dry mouth, headaches, constipation. Mild dehydration is extremely common — and often mistaken for hunger.

Putting Chapter 5 Into Practice: Your Daily Rhythm

For many women, three structured meals with 4-6 hours between them create stable insulin patterns, improved digestion, better energy, reduced cravings, and more metabolic flexibility.

Some women naturally transition to two meals per day — especially if appetite decreases or schedules shift. That can work well, provided protein targets are still met.

But the baseline model remains: morning hydration, breakfast, 4-6 hour break, lunch, 4-6 hour break, dinner, hydrate throughout.

Simple structure. Strong physiology. And after 50, structure becomes freedom.

Chapter 6: The Pantry and Shopping Guide — Your Blueprint for Success

If the kitchen is the heart of the home, then the pantry is the engine room. I've seen it time and again: you have the best intentions, you've read the research, and you're ready to conquer the day — but then you open your cupboard and find nothing but a stale box of crackers and some mystery canned soup. That's when the "pizza emergency" happens.

To build a body that's strong, resilient, and metabolically active after 50, we need to stock our environment with the right raw materials. This isn't about having a "perfect" pantry; it's about having a functional one that makes the healthy choice the easy choice.

Must-Have Staples for Healthy Aging

When I'm stocking my own kitchen, I focus on "metabolic anchors" — foods that provide high-quality protein, healthy fats, and slow-burning fiber. These are the items that will help you hit that 30-gram protein goal at every meal without breaking a sweat.

The Protein Power-Ups:

Canned Wild-Caught Fish: Salmon, sardines, and tuna are shelf-stable lifesavers. They're packed with omega-3s for heart and brain health and provide a massive protein punch for a quick lunch.

Lentils and Beans: Whether dried or canned (just rinse them!), these are fiber-protein hybrids that support gut health and keep you full for hours.

High-Quality Protein Powder: Look for whey isolate or a clean plant-based blend (like pea and rice) with at least 2.5 grams of leucine per serving to overcome that "anabolic resistance" we talked about in Part 1 [3].

Greek Yogurt and Cottage Cheese: Keep these in the fridge as your "fast food" protein sources.

The Healthy Fat Foundation:

Extra Virgin Olive Oil: The gold standard for heart health.

Avocados: Nature's butter, full of monounsaturated fats and fiber.

Nuts and Seeds: Walnuts, chia seeds, and flaxseeds are essential for your "estrobolome" and hormonal harmony.

The Slow-Burning Carbs:

Quinoa and Farro: These ancient grains offer more protein and fiber than white rice or pasta.

Cruciferous Vegetables: Keep frozen broccoli, cauliflower, and Brussels sprouts on hand. They're just as nutritious as fresh and won't wilt in the crisper drawer.

How to Read Labels with Confidence (The 2026 Edition)

The FDA's updated Nutrition Facts label [21] is designed to make things clearer, but the food industry is still very good at "health washing" products [1]. When you're standing in the grocery aisle, I want you to ignore the flashy claims on the front of the box like "Natural" or "Heart Healthy." Instead, flip it over and look for these three things:

The "Added Sugars" Line: This is the most important change in recent years. The 2025-2030 Dietary Guidelines are very clear: we need to drastically reduce added sugars to protect our metabolic health [1]. If a product has more than 5-8 grams of added sugar per serving, put it back.

The Protein-to-Calorie Ratio: For women over 50, we want to maximize protein without overshooting our energy needs. A good rule of thumb: aim for at least 1 gram of protein for every 10 calories in a packaged food.

The Ingredient List: If the first three ingredients include sugar, refined flour, or a seed oil you can't pronounce, it's likely an ultra-processed food (UPF). Remember, if it was made in a lab, your body has to work twice as hard to process it [5].

Grocery Shopping Tips for Simplicity

Shopping for a healthy lifestyle shouldn't feel like a chore. Here's how I navigate the store to keep things simple and stress-free:

Shop the Perimeter: You've probably heard this before, but it's still the best advice. The fresh produce, meat, and dairy are almost always on the outside edges. The middle aisles are where the UPFs live.

The "Frozen is Fine" Rule: Don't feel pressured to buy everything fresh. Frozen fruits and vegetables are picked at peak ripeness and frozen immediately, locking in nutrients. Plus, they're often cheaper and reduce food waste.

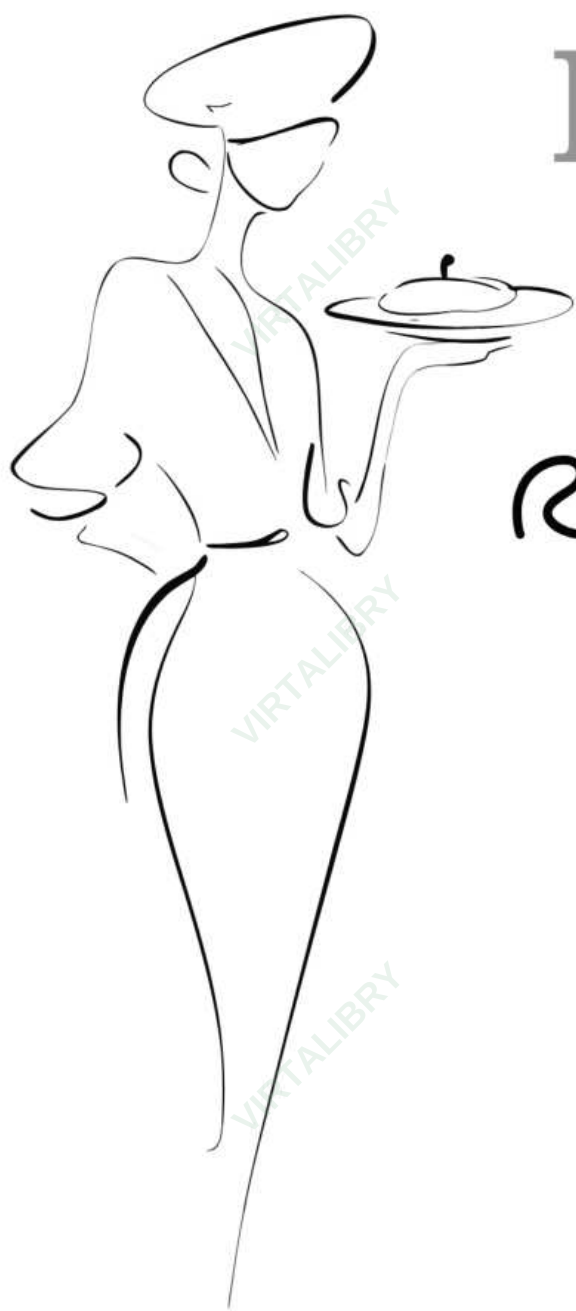
Never Shop Hungry: This is a cliché for a reason! When your blood sugar is low, your brain is biologically wired to seek out high-calorie, sugary "kindling" carbs. Eat a protein-rich snack before you go.

The 80/20 List: 80% of your cart should be "real food" (one-ingredient items like spinach, eggs, or chicken). The other 20% can be your favorite high-quality conveniences, like a good jar of marinara or some dark chocolate.

Foods That Support Strength and Metabolism

As we've discussed, your metabolism after 50 is driven by your muscle mass. To keep that "engine" humming, we need to feed it specific nutrients. Beyond just protein, look for foods rich in Magnesium (spinach, pumpkin seeds) to support muscle function and Vitamin D (fortified foods, fatty fish) to help with calcium absorption for bone density [1].

By curating a kitchen that supports your goals, you're taking the willpower out of the equation. When your pantry is stocked with "metabolic anchors," healthy aging doesn't just feel possible — it feels inevitable.



Part 3

Recipes

Before you dive in, a confession: these recipes are not sacred texts. They don't require perfect execution, a culinary degree, or the exact brand of Greek yogurt the universe apparently had in mind. They're starting points. Suggestions. A general direction, not a final destination. Think of each recipe as an idea you're allowed to steal and make your own. Swap the protein. Skip the ingredient you don't have. Add more garlic - there's always room for more garlic. Mix two recipes together and see what happens. Half the best meals come from exactly that kind of low-stakes experimentation, and the other half come from accidentally leaving something in the oven too long and deciding it's "rustic." All of the recipes in this book are genuinely simple. No complicated techniques, no equipment you don't own, no steps that require a culinary school background to understand.

But simple on paper and simple in your kitchen are two slightly different things - and that's completely normal. Some dishes will come together perfectly the first time. Others will need a second attempt, a little adjustment, or a quiet moment of renegotiation between you and your pan.

Don't take it too seriously. Cooking at this stage of life should feel like freedom, not homework. You've already spent decades following other people's rules. In this kitchen, you make the call.

So use these recipes, bend them, combine them, and don't worry if the result looks nothing like the perfect food photos you see online. It will still be nourishing, it will still be yours - and that's exactly the point.



Chapter 7: Breakfasts

In this section, the recipes already include the calculated nutrients per serving, making it much easier to see how much protein, fat, and carbs you are getting at breakfast. If one dish does not provide enough protein for your needs, a practical solution is to add one high-protein muffin as part of the meal—recipes for these muffins are included in this section as well. This is especially convenient because you can make several servings ahead of time and keep them ready to use in the morning as part of breakfast. It is also worth looking at a few simple breakfast add-ons that can make the meal more satisfying, more balanced, and more nourishing.

Fresh mozzarella is a very convenient option when you want to add more protein to breakfast quickly. If you use a full 8 oz package (226 g), that provides approximately Calories 680 | Protein 56 g | Fat 45 g | Carbs 4 g. It also delivers a very high amount of calcium—about 1,100 mg, depending on the brand. For that reason, in practice it is often better to use half a package at a time, or about 4 oz (113 g), which provides approximately Calories 340 | Protein 28 g | Fat 22.5 g | Carbs 2 g.

This can be a very helpful way to strengthen breakfast with high-quality protein and calcium without making the portion overly heavy. At the same time, it is important to remember that mozzarella is a dairy product, so it may not work well for everyone. It is considered an excellent source of high-quality protein and calcium, but it is also relatively high in saturated fat, so it is best used in moderation as a breakfast addition rather than the foundation of the entire meal. It should also be used carefully by those with lactose intolerance, an allergy to milk proteins, or anyone who has been advised to limit saturated fat.

Another food worth considering is **nuts**. A practical serving is about 20–30 g per day. For a 20 g serving, the nutrition is approximately: Almonds — Calories 116 | Protein 4.3 g | Fat 10.1 g | Carbs 4.0 g; Walnuts — Calories 131 | Protein 3.1 g | Fat 13.0 g | Carbs 2.7 g; Pistachios — Calories 111 | Protein 4.1 g | Fat 8.9 g | Carbs 5.6 g. Nuts are a highly valuable food for heart health, a healthier lipid profile, better satiety, steadier blood sugar support, and overall metabolic balance because they provide unsaturated fats, fiber, magnesium, vitamin E, and other important micronutrients. Nuts are best eaten after soaking overnight, because this may partially reduce phytates and make them easier to digest for sensitive individuals. At the same time, it is important to remember that nuts are calorie-dense, can be hard on digestion in large amounts, and must be completely avoided by anyone with a nut allergy.

Plain Greek yogurt with no added sugar is another very convenient breakfast addition. In a 100 g serving, Greek yogurt with 2–5% fat provides about Calories 90–110 | Protein 8–9 g | Fat 2–5 g | Carbs 3–4 g, while nonfat Greek yogurt provides about Calories 55–65 | Protein 10 g | Fat 0 g | Carbs 3–4 g. This makes it a good option for anyone who wants a light but nourishing breakfast addition that pairs easily with berries, seeds, nuts, or a prepared breakfast as an added protein source. Greek yogurt is also valued for its calcium content, and versions with live cultures may fit well into a diet designed to support digestive health. Still, individual tolerance matters. It may not be suitable for people with lactose intolerance, a milk protein allergy, or those who do not tolerate fermented dairy products well. As always, it is best to choose plain Greek yogurt with no added sugar rather than sweetened dessert-style products.

Sprouted grains are another excellent breakfast addition, especially for women over 50, because they can help make the diet richer in fiber, vitamins, and minerals. As a practical reference point, a 50 g serving of sprouted grains provides approximately Calories 99–107 | Protein 4–6.5 g | Fat 0.5–1.5 g | Carbs 21–24 g depending on the grain. During sprouting, some starch is broken down and certain nutrients may become more available for absorption. That is one reason sprouted grains are valued for their content of folate, iron, zinc, magnesium, vitamin C, and plant protein. They may help improve fullness, support steadier blood sugar, promote digestive health, and contribute to heart and overall metabolic health. For women over 50, especially useful choices include sprouted oats, buckwheat, barley, and quinoa, since they fit well into an eating pattern that supports energy, cardiovascular health, and bone health. A practical daily amount is usually about 50–100 g of the prepared product, depending on tolerance. At the same time, it is very important to remember that raw sprouts carry a higher risk of microbial contamination. To reduce that risk, use only good-quality grains, rinse them thoroughly before soaking, use very clean containers and utensils, rinse the sprouts at least twice a day, avoid keeping them warm for too long, store the finished product in the refrigerator, and discard anything with an off smell, slime, or any sign of spoilage. For women over 50, the safest option is to lightly cook sprouted grains rather than eat them raw. They should also be limited in certain digestive conditions, and sprouted gluten-containing grains are not appropriate for those with celiac disease or gluten intolerance.

And a Few Words About What's in Your Cup

Coffee has been blamed for almost everything at some point - anxiety, poor sleep, heart issues, bad bones. The good news: most of that reputation is outdated. Current research, including large-scale meta-analyses, consistently shows that moderate coffee consumption is more beneficial than harmful across a wide range of health outcomes. For the brain, caffeine blocks adenosine receptors, reducing mental fatigue and improving alertness, memory, and cognitive performance. Long-term studies link moderate coffee intake to a reduced risk of cognitive decline and Alzheimer's disease. For the gut, a 2024 literature review published in *Nutrients* found that moderate coffee consumption - up to 4 cups per day - increases the relative abundance of beneficial bacteria, including *Bifidobacterium*, boosts overall gut microbiota diversity, and supports healthy intestinal motility. That said, timing matters more than most people realize. Your cortisol levels peak naturally within 30–45 minutes of waking. Drinking coffee during that window stacks caffeine's cortisol-boosting effect on top of an already elevated baseline, which can contribute to energy crashes and increased stress response later in the day. The practical sweet spot: wait 60 to 90 minutes after waking before your first cup, ideally between 9:30 and 11:00 a.m. Always pair coffee with food — at minimum a small protein-containing snack — to buffer stomach irritation and slow the cortisol response. Two to three cups per day is the range where benefits are most consistent, and risks remain minimal.

Tea's reputation swings between superfood and overrated habit depending on the week. The evidence is more stable than that. A 2024 meta-analysis of 38 prospective cohort studies found that around 2 cups per day was associated with reduced all-cause mortality, while a large-scale UK Biobank study linked 3 cups daily to a lower risk of dementia. Green and black tea also provide polyphenols that support cardiovascular health and bone density. The practical target: 2 to 3 cups per day, between meals — not alongside food. Tea tannins can reduce iron absorption from plant-based sources by up to 60–70% when consumed with a meal; drinking tea between meals brings that down to around 20%. If you use bagged tea, one detail is worth knowing: a 2024 study found that a single plastic tea bag releases up to 1.2 billion microplastic particles per brew, small enough to be absorbed into the bloodstream. The fix is simple - loose-leaf tea, paper-only bags, or a stainless steel infuser. And keep the temperature below 60°C (140°F); consistently hot tea has been linked to esophageal irritation over time.



SPINACH FETA OMELET

INGREDIENTS

- 3 Large eggs
- 1 cup Fresh baby spinach, packed
- 1 oz Crumbled feta cheese
- 1 tsp Extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 tbsp 2% milk (optional)
- 1/8 tsp Black pepper

TIP

For a lighter version with even higher protein, replace 1 whole egg with 2 tbsp liquid egg whites.

Prep. Time: 5 min Cook Time: 10 min Servings: 1

Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 364 | Protein 24 g
Fat 27 g | Carbs 5 g

DIRECTIONS

1. In a small bowl, whisk the large eggs with the milk and black pepper until well combined and slightly frothy.
2. Heat the olive oil in a nonstick skillet over medium heat. Add the fresh baby spinach and sauté for 1 to 2 minutes until just wilted.
3. Pour the egg mixture over the wilted spinach, tilting the pan to ensure the eggs cover the entire surface.
4. As the eggs begin to set, use a spatula to gently lift the edges, allowing the uncooked egg to flow underneath.
5. Once the top is mostly set but still slightly moist, sprinkle the crumbled feta cheese over one half of the omelet.
6. Carefully fold the omelet in half and cook for another 30 to 60 seconds until the cheese is warm and the eggs are fully set.
7. Slide the omelet onto a plate and serve immediately.

BLACK BEAN AVOCADO SCRAMBLE

INGREDIENTS

- 2 Large eggs
- 1/4 cup Liquid egg whites
- 1/2 cup Canned black beans, rinsed and drained
- 1/4 medium Avocado, diced
- 2 tbsp Chunky salsa
- 1 tsp Extra-virgin olive oil
- 1/4 tsp Ground cumin
- to taste Salt
- to taste Black pepper

TIP

Top with fresh cilantro or a squeeze of lime juice before serving for extra flavor.

Prep. Time: 5 min Cook Time: 10 min Servings: 1

Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 412 | Protein 28 g
Fat 21 g | Carbs 27 g

DIRECTIONS

1. In a medium bowl, whisk together the eggs, egg whites, salt, and black pepper until well combined.
2. Heat the olive oil in a nonstick skillet over medium heat. Add the black beans and cumin, and cook for 2–3 minutes, until warmed through.
3. Pour the egg mixture into the skillet. As the eggs begin to set, gently push them from the edges toward the center with a spatula, allowing the uncooked egg to flow underneath.
4. Continue cooking, stirring gently, until the eggs are cooked to your desired consistency but still slightly moist.
5. Remove from the heat.
6. Top with the avocado and salsa before serving.

BROCCOLI PARMESAN FRITTATA

INGREDIENTS

- 3 Large eggs
- 1 cup Broccoli florets, steamed or sautéed
- 2 tbsp Grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 tsp Extra-virgin olive oil
- 1/4 tsp Garlic powder
- to taste Salt
- to taste Black pepper

TIP

This frittata is great for meal prep. Let it cool completely, then slice and refrigerate in an airtight container for up to 3–4 days. Reheat gently in the microwave or oven.

Prep. Time: 10 min Cook Time: 20 min Servings: 1

**Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 349 | Protein 25 g
Fat 24 g | Carbs 8 g**

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 375°F (190°C). If using raw broccoli, steam or sauté until tender-crisp. Chop into smaller pieces if desired.
2. In a medium bowl, whisk together the eggs, Parmesan, garlic powder, salt, and black pepper until well combined.
3. Heat the olive oil in an oven-safe nonstick skillet over medium heat.
4. Add the cooked broccoli to the skillet, spreading it evenly across the bottom.
5. Pour the egg mixture over the broccoli.
6. Cook on the stovetop for 3–5 minutes, or until the edges begin to set.
7. Transfer the skillet to the oven and bake for 12–15 minutes, or until the frittata is puffed and set in the center.
8. Remove from the oven, let cool slightly, then slice and serve.

CHICKPEA SHAKSHUKA

INGREDIENTS

- 2 Large eggs
- 1/2 cup Canned chickpeas, rinsed and drained
- 3/4 cup Crushed tomatoes
- 1/4 cup Red bell pepper, diced
- 2 tbsp Yellow onion, diced
- 1 clove Garlic, minced
- 1 tsp Extra-virgin olive oil
- 1/2 tsp Smoked paprika
- 1/2 tsp Ground cumin
- 1 tbsp Crumbled feta cheese (optional)
- to taste Salt
- to taste Black pepper

TIP

Garnish with chopped fresh cilantro or parsley before serving for extra flavor and color.

Prep. Time: 10 min Cook Time: 20 min Servings: 1

**Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 440 | Protein 25 g
Fat 19 g | Carbs 41 g**

DIRECTIONS

1. Heat the olive oil in a medium oven-safe skillet over medium heat. Add the onion and red bell pepper, and sauté for 5–7 minutes, until softened.
2. Add the garlic, smoked paprika, and cumin. Cook for 1 minute, stirring constantly, until fragrant.
3. Pour in the crushed tomatoes and chickpeas. Stir well and bring the mixture to a gentle simmer. Reduce the heat to low, cover, and cook for 10–12 minutes to let the flavors meld.
4. Create two small wells in the tomato mixture. Carefully crack one egg into each well. If using, sprinkle the feta over the top.
5. Cover the skillet and continue to cook for 5–8 minutes, or until the egg whites are set and the yolks are cooked to your desired consistency.
6. Season with salt and black pepper to taste. Serve immediately.

POACHED EGGS WITH QUINOA AND SPINACH

INGREDIENTS

- 2 Large eggs
- 1/2 cup Cooked quinoa
- 1 cup Fresh baby spinach
- 1 tbsp Hemp hearts
- 1 tsp Extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 tsp Lemon juice
- to taste Salt
- to taste Black pepper

TIP

Cook a larger batch of quinoa at the beginning of the week and refrigerate it for quick breakfasts.

Prep. Time: 5 min Cook Time: 15 min Servings: 1

**Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 370 | Protein 21 g
Fat 22 g | Carbs 23 g**

DIRECTIONS

1. Prepare the quinoa according to package directions. While the quinoa cooks, prepare the other components.
2. For the poached eggs, fill a medium saucepan with about 3 inches of water and bring to a gentle simmer over medium heat. Add a splash of vinegar, if desired. Crack each egg into a small ramekin or cup, then gently slide each egg into the simmering water. Cook for 3–4 minutes for a runny yolk, or longer for a firmer yolk. Remove with a slotted spoon.
3. For the spinach, heat the olive oil in a small skillet over medium heat. Add the spinach and sauté for 1–2 minutes, until just wilted. Season with a pinch of salt and black pepper.
4. To assemble, place the cooked quinoa on a plate to form a base. Top with the sautéed spinach, then gently place the poached eggs on top.
5. Drizzle with lemon juice, sprinkle with hemp hearts, and season with additional salt and black pepper to taste.

SAVORY OAT PANCAKES WITH CHEESE AND HERBS

INGREDIENTS

- 1/2 cup Old-fashioned rolled oats
- 2 Large eggs
- 1/4 cup 2% milk
- 1/4 cup Low-fat cottage cheese
- 2 tbsp Fresh herbs (dill, parsley), chopped
- 1 tsp Extra-virgin olive oil
- to taste Salt
- to taste Black pepper

TIP

Serve with plain Greek yogurt or sliced avocado for extra protein and flavor.

Prep. Time: 10 min Cook Time: 15 min Servings: 1

**Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 426 | Protein 27 g
Fat 20 g | Carbs 34 g**

DIRECTIONS

1. In a blender or food processor, combine the rolled oats, eggs, milk, cottage cheese, fresh herbs, salt, and black pepper. Blend until smooth and the oats are fully incorporated.
2. Heat the olive oil in a nonstick skillet over medium heat.
3. Pour half of the batter into the hot skillet and spread gently into a round pancake. Cook for 3–5 minutes per side, or until golden brown and cooked through.
4. Repeat with the remaining batter.
5. Serve immediately.

CHICKEN BREAKFAST BURRITO

INGREDIENTS

- 1 Whole-grain tortilla (8-inch)
- 2 Large eggs
- 3 oz Cooked chicken breast, shredded
- 1/4 cup Cheddar cheese, shredded
- 1 tsp Olive oil
- to taste Salt
- to taste Black pepper

TIP

Add salsa, diced avocado, or chopped fresh cilantro before rolling for extra flavor.

Prep. Time: 5 min Cook Time: 10 min Servings: 1

**Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 540 | Protein 48 g
Fat 25 g | Carbs 27 g**

DIRECTIONS

1. In a small bowl, whisk the eggs with a pinch of salt and black pepper until well combined.
2. Heat the olive oil in a nonstick skillet over medium heat. Pour in the egg mixture and scramble until cooked through but still soft. Remove from the heat.
3. Warm the whole-grain tortilla in a dry skillet over medium heat for about 30 seconds per side, or until pliable.
4. Lay the warmed tortilla flat. Spoon the scrambled eggs onto the center. Top with the chicken and cheddar cheese.
5. Fold in the sides of the tortilla, then roll it up tightly from the bottom to form a burrito.
6. Serve immediately.

CHICKEN APPLE BREAKFAST SALAD

INGREDIENTS

- 4 oz Cooked chicken breast, shredded
- 1/2 cup Celery, finely diced
- 1/2 medium Apple, diced
- 1/4 cup Plain Greek yogurt
- to taste Salt
- to taste Black pepper

TIP

Add chopped walnuts or pecans for extra crunch. For a fresh variation, serve it in lettuce cups.

Prep. Time: 10 min Cook Time: 0 min Servings: 1

**Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 270 | Protein 41 g
Fat 4 g | Carbs 16 g**

DIRECTIONS

1. In a medium bowl, combine the shredded chicken, celery, and apple.
2. Add the Greek yogurt and stir gently until evenly coated.
3. Season with salt and black pepper to taste.
4. Serve immediately, or chill for 15 minutes before serving to let the flavors meld.

CHICKEN VEGGIE WRAP

INGREDIENTS

- 1 Whole-grain tortilla (8-inch)
- 4 oz Cooked chicken breast, shredded
- 1 cup Lettuce leaves
- 1/2 medium Tomato, sliced
- 1/2 cup Cucumber, sliced
- 2 tbsp Light Greek yogurt-based sauce
- to taste Salt
- to taste Black pepper

TIP

For extra flavor and crunch, lightly toast the tortilla in a dry skillet for 30 seconds per side before assembling the wrap.

Prep. Time: 10 min Cook Time: 0 min (if chicken is pre-cooked) Servings: 1

**Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 380 | Protein 38 g
Fat 12 g | Carbs 30 g**

DIRECTIONS

1. If not already prepared, cook the chicken breast by boiling or baking until fully cooked. Shred or slice into bite-size pieces.
2. Lay the whole-grain tortilla flat on a clean surface.
3. Spread the Greek yogurt-based sauce evenly over the tortilla, leaving a small border around the edges.
4. Arrange the chicken, lettuce, tomato, and cucumber over the sauce.
5. Season with salt and black pepper to taste.
6. Roll up the tortilla tightly, tucking in the sides as you go to create a secure wrap.
7. Cut in half diagonally, if desired.
8. Serve immediately.

TURKEY AVOCADO EGG WRAP

INGREDIENTS

- 2 Large eggs
- 3 oz Cooked turkey breast, sliced
- 1/4 medium Avocado, sliced
- 1/4 cup Bell pepper, thinly sliced
- 1/4 cup Tomato, diced
- 1/4 cup Lean cheese, shredded
- 2 tbsp Hummus
- 1 tsp Extra-virgin olive oil
- to taste Salt
- to taste Black pepper

TIP

Add a handful of spinach or arugula before rolling for extra freshness and flavor.

Prep. Time: 10 min Cook Time: 5–7 min Servings: 1

**Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 525 | Protein 47 g
Fat 33 g | Carbs 15 g**

DIRECTIONS

1. In a small bowl, whisk the eggs with a pinch of salt and black pepper until well combined.
2. Heat the extra-virgin olive oil in a nonstick skillet over medium-low heat. Pour in the egg mixture, swirling to create a thin, even layer, similar to a crepe. Cook for 2–3 minutes, or until set and lightly golden on the bottom. Carefully flip and cook for 1 more minute. Remove from the heat and transfer to a plate.
3. Spread the hummus evenly over one side of the cooked egg wrap.
4. Arrange the turkey, avocado, bell pepper, tomato, and shredded cheese over the hummus.
5. Carefully roll up the egg wrap tightly. Cut in half diagonally, if desired.
6. Serve immediately.

ROAST BEEF AND EGG BREAKFAST PLATE

INGREDIENTS

- 2 oz Thinly sliced roast beef
- 1 Large boiled egg
- 1 slice Whole-grain bread
- 1/2 cup Radishes, sliced
- 1 cup Fresh arugula
- to taste Salt
- to taste Black pepper

TIP

Add a squeeze of fresh lemon juice or a light vinaigrette before serving for extra flavor.

Prep. Time: 5 min Cook Time: 2 min (for toasting) Servings: 1

**Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 232 | Protein 22 g
Fat 8 g | Carbs 16 g**

DIRECTIONS

1. Lightly toast the whole-grain bread until golden brown.
2. Arrange the roast beef on a plate.
3. Halve or quarter the boiled egg and place it alongside the roast beef.
4. Add the sliced radishes and fresh arugula to the plate.
5. Serve the toasted bread on the side or as a base for the roast beef.
6. Season with salt and black pepper to taste.
7. Serve immediately.

TURKEY HUMMUS SANDWICH

INGREDIENTS

- 2 slices Whole-grain bread
- 3 oz Roasted turkey breast, sliced
- 2 tbsp Hummus
- 2–3 leaves Lettuce leaves
- 2 slices Tomato, sliced (optional)
- 1/4 cup Cucumber, sliced (optional)
- to taste Black pepper

TIP

Add a few slices of bell pepper or some shredded carrots for extra crunch.

Prep. Time: 5 min Cook Time: 0 min Servings: 1

**Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 350 | Protein 30 g
Fat 10 g | Carbs 35 g**

DIRECTIONS

1. Lay out two slices of whole-grain bread on a clean surface.
2. Spread the hummus evenly on one side of each slice of bread.
3. On one slice of bread, layer the roasted turkey breast, lettuce leaves, and, if using, the tomato and cucumber.
4. Season with black pepper to taste.
5. Place the second slice of bread, hummus-side down, on top to complete the sandwich.
6. Cut in half diagonally, if desired.
7. Serve immediately.

SHRIMP AVOCADO SALAD

INGREDIENTS

- 4 oz Cooked shrimp, peeled and deveined
- 1/2 medium Ripe avocado, diced
- 1 tbsp Fresh lime juice
- 2 tbsp Fresh cilantro, chopped
- 1 tsp Extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 tbsp Red onion, finely minced (optional)
- to taste Salt
- to taste Black pepper

TIP

Add a pinch of red pepper flakes or a little diced jalapeño for extra heat.

Prep. Time: 10 min Cook Time: 0 min (using pre-cooked shrimp) Servings: 1

Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 285 | Protein 26 g
Fat 17 g | Carbs 10 g

DIRECTIONS

1. If using frozen cooked shrimp, make sure they are fully thawed and patted dry.
2. In a medium bowl, combine the shrimp and avocado.
3. Drizzle with lime juice and extra-virgin olive oil.
4. Add the cilantro and red onion, if using.
5. Gently toss until well combined, being careful not to mash the avocado.
6. Season with salt and black pepper to taste.
7. Serve immediately, or spoon into lettuce cups if desired.

SMOKED SALMON SCRAMBLE

INGREDIENTS

- 3 Large eggs
- 2 oz Smoked salmon (lox-style), flaked
- 1 tbsp Fresh dill, chopped
- 1 tbsp Red onion, finely diced
- 1 tsp Capers, drained
- 1 tsp Extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 tbsp Plain nonfat Greek yogurt
- to taste Black pepper

TIP

Serve with a few slices of avocado for extra creaminess and healthy fats.

Prep. Time: 5 min Cook Time: 8 min Servings: 1

Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 356 | Protein 31 g
Fat 23 g | Carbs 4 g

DIRECTIONS

1. In a medium bowl, whisk together the eggs, Greek yogurt, and black pepper until well combined.
2. Heat the olive oil in a nonstick skillet over medium heat. Add the red onion and sauté for 1–2 minutes, until softened.
3. Pour the egg mixture into the skillet. As the eggs begin to set, gently push them from the edges toward the center with a spatula, allowing the uncooked egg to flow underneath.
4. Continue cooking, stirring gently, until the eggs are cooked to your desired consistency but still slightly moist.
5. Remove from the heat. Gently fold in the smoked salmon, dill, and capers.
6. Serve immediately.

TUNA WHITE BEAN SALAD

INGREDIENTS

- 5 oz can Canned tuna in water, drained
- 1/2 cup Canned white beans (cannellini), rinsed and drained
- 1 tbsp Fresh lemon juice
- 2 tbsp Fresh parsley, chopped
- 1 tsp Extra-virgin olive oil (optional)
- to taste Salt
- to taste Black pepper

TIP

For a richer flavor, use tuna packed in olive oil and reduce or omit the added olive oil. Add the parsley just before serving for the freshest flavor.

Prep. Time: 5 min Cook Time: 0 min Servings: 1

**Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 280 | Protein 42 g
Fat 2 g | Carbs 21 g**

DIRECTIONS

1. In a medium bowl, combine the tuna and white beans.
2. Add the lemon juice and parsley. If desired, drizzle with the olive oil.
3. Season with salt and black pepper to taste.
4. Gently mix until well combined.
5. Serve immediately.

SARDINE EGG SPREAD TOAST

INGREDIENTS

- 1 can (3.75 oz) Sardines in water or olive oil, drained
- 2 Hard-boiled eggs
- 2 slices Whole-grain bread, toasted
- 1 tsp Dijon mustard
- 1 tsp Lemon juice
- 1/8 tsp Paprika
- to taste Black pepper
- 1 tsp Fresh parsley, chopped (optional)

TIP

For a smoother spread, mash the mixture a little longer or pulse it briefly with a hand blender. Add a few cucumber slices or extra parsley on top for freshness.

Prep. Time: 10 min Cook Time: 0 min Servings: 1

**Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 365 | Protein 26 g
Fat 18 g | Carbs 22 g**

DIRECTIONS

1. In a medium bowl, mash the hard-boiled eggs with a fork.
2. Add the drained sardines and mash again until the mixture becomes smooth and spreadable, like a pate.
3. Stir in the Dijon mustard, lemon juice, paprika, and black pepper until well combined.
4. If using, fold in the chopped parsley.
5. Spread the sardine and egg mixture evenly over the toasted whole-grain bread and serve immediately.

TUNA COTTAGE CHEESE BOWL

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup Low-fat cottage cheese (2% milkfat)
- 1 can (5 oz) Canned light tuna in water, drained
- 1 tbsp Fresh dill, chopped
- 1 tbsp Green onions, thinly sliced
- 1 tsp Lemon juice
- to taste Black pepper
- to taste Salt (optional)

TIP

Serve with a few whole-grain crackers or sliced cucumbers for extra crunch. For a creamier texture, stir the tuna and herbs directly into the cottage cheese before serving.

Prep. Time: 5 min Cook Time: 0 min Servings: 1

Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 275 | Protein 50 g
Fat 4 g | Carbs 10 g

DIRECTIONS

1. Open the canned tuna and drain thoroughly. Flake the tuna with a fork.
2. In a medium bowl, add the cottage cheese.
3. Top with the flaked tuna.
4. Sprinkle the dill and green onions over the tuna and cottage cheese.
5. Drizzle with lemon juice.
6. Season with salt and black pepper, if desired.
7. Stir gently to combine, or enjoy as a layered bowl.
8. Serve immediately.

COTTAGE CHEESE AVOCADO BOWL

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup Cottage cheese (2% or 4% fat)
- 1/2 medium Avocado, diced
- 1/2 tsp Smoked paprika
- 1 tbsp Sunflower seeds, unsalted
- to taste Salt
- to taste Black pepper

TIP

Add a squeeze of fresh lime juice before serving for a brighter flavor.

Prep. Time: 5 min Cook Time: 0 min Servings: 1

Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 360 | Protein 28 g
Fat 22 g | Carbs 12 g

DIRECTIONS

1. In a medium bowl, combine the cottage cheese, avocado, smoked paprika, and sunflower seeds.
2. Season with salt and black pepper to taste.
3. Gently stir until well combined.
4. Serve immediately.

FLOURLESS COTTAGE CHEESE PANCAKES

INGREDIENTS

- 1/2 cup Low-fat cottage cheese (2% or 4%)
- 2 Large eggs
- 2 tbsp Oat bran
- 1/2 tsp Ground cinnamon
- 1/4 tsp Vanilla extract (optional)
- 1/4 cup Plain nonfat Greek yogurt
- for the pan Cooking spray or butter

TIP

Top with fresh berries or a sprinkle of cinnamon before serving.

Prep. Time: 5 min Cook Time: 10 min Servings: 1

**Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 315 | Protein 30 g
Fat 14 g | Carbs 14 g**

DIRECTIONS

1. In a medium bowl, whisk the eggs until well beaten.
2. Stir in the cottage cheese, oat bran, ground cinnamon, and vanilla extract, if using, until well combined. For a smoother texture, pulse the mixture in a blender for a few seconds.
3. Heat a nonstick skillet or griddle over medium heat. Lightly coat with cooking spray or a small amount of butter.
4. Pour about 1/4 cup of batter onto the skillet for each pancake.
5. Cook for 3–4 minutes, or until small bubbles form on the surface and the edges appear set.
6. Carefully flip the pancakes and cook for another 2–3 minutes, until golden brown and cooked through.
7. Transfer to a plate.
8. Top with the Greek yogurt. Serve warm.

GREEK YOGURT WALNUT BOWL

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup Plain Greek yogurt (0%–2% milkfat)
- 1/4 cup Walnuts, chopped
- 1 tbsp Chia seeds
- 1/2 cup Fresh blueberries
- 1/4 tsp Ground cinnamon (optional)

TIP

For a softer texture, stir the chia seeds into the yogurt 5–10 minutes before serving.

Prep. Time: 5 min Cook Time: 0 min Servings: 1

**Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 385 | Protein 24 g
Fat 22 g | Carbs 26 g**

DIRECTIONS

1. Spoon the Greek yogurt into a bowl.
2. Top with the blueberries.
3. Sprinkle the walnuts and chia seeds evenly over the top.
4. If desired, add a light dusting of ground cinnamon.
5. Stir gently before eating, or enjoy as a layered bowl.
6. Serve immediately.

GREEK YOGURT FLATBREAD

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup (8 oz) Thick Greek yogurt (2%–5% fat)
- 1 cup (4.25 oz) Whole-wheat or all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp Baking powder
- 1/4 tsp Salt
- 2 tbsp Finely chopped fresh herbs (dill, parsley, or chives)
- 1 tsp Olive oil (for cooking)

TIP

For extra flavor, stir 2 tbsp of grated Parmesan cheese into the dough per serving.

Prep. Time: 10 min Cook Time: 10–15 min Servings: 1

**Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 275 | Protein 18 g
Fat 4 g | Carbs 45 g**

DIRECTIONS

1. In a medium bowl, combine the Greek yogurt, flour, baking powder, and salt. Mix until a shaggy dough forms.
2. Add the chopped fresh herbs and knead the dough gently for 1–2 minutes, until it comes together and is smooth. If the dough is too sticky, add a little more flour, 1 tbsp at a time.
3. Divide the dough into 2 equal portions. On a lightly floured surface, roll each portion into a flatbread about 1/4 inch thick.
4. Heat the olive oil in a nonstick skillet over medium heat.
5. Cook each flatbread for 2–4 minutes per side, or until golden brown and cooked through. The flatbreads should puff up slightly.
6. Remove from the skillet. Serve warm.

OVERNIGHT GREEK YOGURT OAT BOWL

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup Plain Greek yogurt (2% fat)
- 1/2 cup Old-fashioned rolled oats
- 2 tbsp Walnuts, chopped
- 1/2 cup Fresh fruit (berries, sliced banana, or apple)
- 1 tsp Honey or maple syrup (optional)
- 1/4 tsp Ground cinnamon (optional)

TIP

Add the fruit just before serving for the freshest texture. For a warmer breakfast, microwave the soaked oats for 30–60 seconds before adding the toppings.

Prep. Time: 5 min (plus overnight chilling) Cook Time: 0 min Servings: 1

**Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 385 | Protein 26 g
Fat 15 g | Carbs 38 g**

DIRECTIONS

1. In a medium bowl or mason jar, combine the Greek yogurt and rolled oats. Stir well until evenly mixed.
2. If using, stir in the ground cinnamon and honey or maple syrup.
3. Cover the bowl or seal the jar tightly and refrigerate overnight, or for at least 6 hours.
4. In the morning, stir again. If needed, add a splash of milk or water to reach your desired consistency.
5. Top with the fresh fruit and chopped walnuts.
6. Serve chilled.

SAVORY COTTAGE CHEESE TOMATO BOWL

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup Low-fat cottage cheese (2% milkfat)
- 1/4 cup Plain nonfat Greek yogurt
- 1/2 cup Cherry tomatoes, halved
- 1/2 cup Cucumber, diced
- 1 slice Whole-grain bread
- 1/4 tsp Ground black pepper
- to taste Salt (optional)
- 1 tbsp Fresh herbs (parsley or chives), chopped

TIP

For extra flavor, toss the tomatoes and cucumber with a pinch of black pepper before adding them to the bowl.

Prep. Time: 10 min Cook Time: 2 min (for toasting) Servings: 1

**Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 310 | Protein 33 g
Fat 5 g | Carbs 28 g**

DIRECTIONS

1. Lightly toast the whole-grain bread until golden brown and crisp.
2. In a medium bowl, combine the cottage cheese and Greek yogurt. Stir gently until creamy and well blended.
3. Top with the cherry tomatoes and cucumber.
4. Sprinkle with the black pepper and fresh herbs.
5. Season with salt, if desired.
6. Serve immediately with the toasted whole-grain bread on the side.

TROPICAL YOGURT BOWL

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup Plain Greek yogurt (2% fat)
- 1/2 cup Mango, diced
- 1 tbsp Unsweetened shredded coconut
- 1 tbsp Chia seeds

TIP

For an extra-chilled bowl, refrigerate for 15–20 minutes before serving.

Prep. Time: 5 min Cook Time: 0 min Servings: 1

**Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 335 | Protein 24 g
Fat 13 g | Carbs 29 g**

DIRECTIONS

1. In a bowl, combine the Greek yogurt, mango, shredded coconut, and chia seeds.
2. Stir gently until well combined.
3. Let the bowl sit for 5–10 minutes to allow the chia seeds to slightly expand and thicken the texture.
4. Serve immediately.

EDAMAME WITH SEA SALT AND SESAME

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup Frozen shelled edamame
- 1 tsp Toasted sesame oil
- 1 tsp Sesame seeds
- to taste Flaky sea salt

TIP

For extra flavor, lightly toast the sesame seeds in a dry skillet for 1–2 minutes before adding them to the edamame.

Prep. Time: 2 min Cook Time: 5 min Servings: 1

**Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 246 | Protein 18 g
Fat 14 g | Carbs 16 g**

DIRECTIONS

1. Cook the frozen shelled edamame according to package directions, usually by boiling in lightly salted water for 3–5 minutes or steaming until tender-crisp.
2. Drain thoroughly.
3. In a medium bowl, toss the warm edamame with the toasted sesame oil and sesame seeds.
4. Sprinkle with flaky sea salt to taste.
5. Serve immediately.

QUINOA WITH WALNUTS AND CINNAMON

INGREDIENTS

- 1/2 cup Quinoa, dry
- 1 cup Water or unsweetened almond milk
- 2 tbsp Walnuts, chopped
- 1 tbsp Hemp seeds
- 1/2 medium Apple, diced
- 1/2 tsp Ground cinnamon
- pinch Salt

TIP

For a softer apple texture, add the diced apple during the last 5 minutes of cooking. Toasted walnuts also add deeper flavor.

Prep. Time: 5 min Cook Time: 15 min Servings: 1

**Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 524 | Protein 18 g
Fat 20 g | Carbs 73 g**

DIRECTIONS

1. Rinse the quinoa thoroughly under cold water using a fine-mesh strainer to remove any bitterness.
2. In a small saucepan, combine the rinsed quinoa, water or almond milk, and a pinch of salt. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat.
3. Reduce the heat to low, cover, and simmer for 12–15 minutes, or until the liquid is fully absorbed and the quinoa is tender.
4. Remove from the heat and let stand, covered, for 5 minutes. Fluff with a fork.
5. Stir in the diced apple, walnuts, hemp seeds, and cinnamon until well combined.
6. Serve warm in a bowl.

SOY MILK CHIA PUDDING WITH ALMONDS

INGREDIENTS

- 3 tbsp Chia seeds
- 1 cup Unsweetened soy milk
- 1 tbsp Sliced or slivered almonds
- 1/2 cup Fresh mixed berries (blueberries, raspberries, or strawberries)
- 1/4 tsp Vanilla extract (optional)
- 1/8 tsp Ground cinnamon (optional)

TIP

Stir the pudding again after the first 30 minutes of chilling for a smoother texture. For extra flavor, lightly toast the almonds in a dry skillet for 2–3 minutes before serving.

Prep. Time: 5 min Cook Time: 0 min Servings: 1

**Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 338 | Protein 16 g
Fat 20 g | Carbs 30 g**

DIRECTIONS

1. In a small bowl or mason jar, combine the chia seeds and soy milk.
2. If using, add the vanilla extract and ground cinnamon.
3. Stir thoroughly until the chia seeds are evenly distributed and no clumps remain.
4. Cover and refrigerate for at least 4 hours, or overnight, until thickened.
5. Stir again before serving.
6. Top with the berries and almonds.
7. Serve chilled.

SESAME TEMPEH AND BROCCOLI PLATE

INGREDIENTS

- 4 oz Tempeh, cubed
- 1 1/2 cups Broccoli florets
- 2 tbsp Low-sodium soy sauce
- 1 tsp Sesame oil
- 1 clove Garlic, minced
- 1/2 tsp Fresh ginger, grated
- 1 tsp Toasted sesame seeds

TIP

For extra heat, add a pinch of red pepper flakes to the sauce before serving.

Prep. Time: 10 min Cook Time: 20 min Servings: 1

**Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 280 | Protein 22 g
Fat 14 g | Carbs 20 g**

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 400°F (200°C).
2. In a small bowl, whisk together the soy sauce, sesame oil, garlic, and ginger.
3. Place the cubed tempeh on a baking sheet and toss with half of the sauce. Roast for 15–20 minutes, flipping halfway, until golden brown and slightly crisp.
4. Steam or roast the broccoli until tender-crisp.
5. Arrange the roasted tempeh and broccoli on a serving plate.
6. Drizzle with the remaining sauce and sprinkle with the toasted sesame seeds.
7. Serve immediately.

TURMERIC TOFU SCRAMBLE WITH WHOLE-GRAIN TOAST

INGREDIENTS

- 7 oz Extra-firm tofu, pressed and crumbled
- 1 tbsp Olive oil
- 1/4 cup Yellow onion, finely diced
- 1/4 cup Bell pepper, finely diced
- 1/2 tsp Turmeric powder
- 1 tbsp Nutritional yeast
- 1/4 tsp Garlic powder
- 1/4 tsp Black salt (kala namak), optional
- to taste Salt
- to taste Black pepper
- 1 slice Whole-grain bread, toasted
- 1 tbsp Fresh parsley or chives, chopped

TIP

Add spinach, kale, or mushrooms during the last few minutes of cooking for extra vegetables. Leftovers can be refrigerated in an airtight container for up to 3 days.

Prep. Time: 10 min Cook Time: 15 min Servings: 1

Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 320 | Protein 25 g
Fat 14 g | Carbs 28 g

DIRECTIONS

1. Heat the olive oil in a nonstick skillet over medium heat. Add the onion and bell pepper, and sauté for 5–7 minutes, until softened.
2. Add the crumbled tofu to the skillet. Break it up further with a spoon or spatula so it resembles scrambled eggs.
3. Stir in the turmeric, nutritional yeast, garlic powder, black salt, if using, salt, and black pepper. Cook for 5–8 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the tofu is heated through and lightly golden.
4. While the tofu scramble cooks, toast the whole-grain bread.
5. Serve the tofu scramble with the toast and garnish with parsley or chives, if desired.

WHITE BEAN SPREAD ON WHOLE-GRAIN CRACKERS

INGREDIENTS

- 1/2 cup Canned white beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 clove Garlic, minced
- 1 tsp Extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 tbsp Walnuts, chopped
- 2 Whole-grain crackers
- 1/2 tsp Fresh lemon juice (optional)
- to taste Salt
- to taste Black pepper

TIP

For a smoother spread, blend the mixture in a food processor. This spread can also be used as a sandwich filling or a dip for vegetables.

Prep. Time: 5 min Cook Time: 0 min Servings: 1

Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 246 | Protein 9 g
Fat 10 g | Carbs 31 g

DIRECTIONS

1. In a small bowl, combine the white beans, garlic, extra-virgin olive oil, walnuts, and lemon juice, if using.
2. Mash with a fork or potato masher until you reach your desired consistency. Leave it slightly chunky for a rustic spread, or mash until mostly smooth.
3. Season with salt and black pepper to taste. Stir well to combine.
4. Spoon the white bean spread onto the whole-grain crackers.
5. Serve immediately.

Chapter 8: High-Protein Muffins

Let me say this right away: high-protein muffins are one of those recipes you may not think much about at first, but once you start making them, they quickly earn a regular place in your kitchen. They are simple, practical, nourishing, and surprisingly flexible.

That is what makes muffins such a universal food. They can work for almost any meal of the day. You can have them for breakfast, add them to lunch, take them with you on the road, or pack them for work when you need something easy and satisfying. They are especially helpful on busy days, when you want real food but do not want to cook from scratch every time you get hungry.

The best part is how little attention they need once they go into the oven. You mix the ingredients, divide everything into the muffin tin, and bake. There is no standing at the stove, no constant stirring, no watching the pan every minute. While the muffins are baking, you can make coffee, prepare your bag, clean the kitchen, or simply take a quiet moment for yourself.

These recipes also fit beautifully into meal prep. You can make several portions ahead of time, keep them in the refrigerator, and have a protein-rich option ready when you need it. Warm or cold, at home or packed in a lunchbox, they stay convenient and useful.

The main thing is simply to try them. Once you do, I believe you will come to love this kind of food the way I do: simple, flexible, nourishing, and genuinely helpful in everyday life.



TURKEY BELL PEPPER EGG MUFFINS

INGREDIENTS

- 1/2 cup Ground turkey, cooked and crumbled
- 2 Large eggs
- 1/2 cup Bell pepper, finely diced
- 1/4 onion Small onion, finely diced
- 1/4 tsp Salt
- 1/8 tsp Black pepper
- 1/8 tsp Paprika

TIP

Make sure the ground turkey is fully cooked and well drained before adding it to the mixture. For a little heat, add a pinch of red pepper flakes.

Prep. Time: 10 min | Cook Time: 20 min

Yield: 4 muffins

Serving size: 1 muffin

Per serving (estimated): Calories 85 | Protein 9 g | Fat 5 g | Carbs 2 g

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 375°F (190°C). Lightly grease a muffin tin or line with paper liners.
2. In a large bowl, whisk the eggs until well combined.
3. Stir in the cooked ground turkey, bell pepper, onion, salt, black pepper, and paprika.
4. Divide the mixture evenly among the muffin cups, filling each about two-thirds full.
5. Bake for 18–22 minutes, or until the muffins are set and lightly golden brown. A toothpick inserted into the center should come out clean.
6. Let cool in the muffin tin for a few minutes before transferring to a wire rack.

TURKEY VEGGIE EGG MUFFINS

INGREDIENTS

- 3 Large eggs
- 1/4 cup Diced turkey ham
- 1/4 cup Zucchini, finely diced
- 1/4 cup Carrot, finely shredded
- 1 tbsp Milk (any type)
- 1/2 tsp Olive oil (for greasing)
- to taste Salt
- to taste Black pepper

TIP

These egg muffins are excellent for meal prep.

Prep. Time: 10 min | Cook Time: 15–20 min

Yield: 6 egg muffins

Serving size: 1 muffin

Per serving (estimated): Calories 50 | Protein 4 g | Fat 3 g | Carbs 1 g

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F (175°C). Lightly grease a 6-cup muffin tin with olive oil or line with paper liners.
2. Grate the zucchini and gently squeeze out excess moisture using a clean kitchen towel or paper towels to prevent watery muffins.
3. In a medium bowl, whisk the large eggs with milk, salt, and black pepper until well combined.
4. Stir in the diced turkey ham, zucchini, and finely shredded carrot into the egg mixture.
5. Evenly divide the egg mixture among the prepared muffin cups, filling each about two-thirds full.
6. Bake for 15–20 minutes, or until the egg muffins are set in the center and lightly golden brown on top.
7. Remove from the oven and let cool in the muffin tin for a few minutes before transferring to a wire rack.
8. Serve warm or at room temperature.

CHICKEN BLACK BEAN MUFFINS

INGREDIENTS

- 1/2 cup Ground chicken, cooked and crumbled
- 1/4 cup Black beans, mashed
- 2 Large eggs
- 1/4 cup Canned corn, drained
- 1/4 tsp Cumin
- 1/4 tsp Chili powder
- 1/4 tsp Salt
- 1/8 tsp Black pepper

TIP

For extra heat, add a pinch of cayenne pepper or a few dashes of hot sauce.

Prep. Time: 10 min | Cook Time: 20 min

Yield: 5 muffins

Serving size: 1 muffin

Per serving (estimated): Calories 85 | Protein 8 g | Fat 4 g | Carbs 4 g

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 375°F (190°C). Lightly grease a muffin tin or line with paper liners.
2. In a large bowl, whisk the eggs until well combined.
3. Add the ground chicken, mashed black beans, corn, cumin, chili powder, salt, and black pepper. Mix until well combined.
4. Divide the mixture evenly among the muffin cups, filling each about two-thirds full.
5. Bake for 18–22 minutes, or until the muffins are set and lightly golden brown. A toothpick inserted into the center should come out clean.
6. Let cool in the muffin tin for a few minutes before transferring to a wire rack.

TURKEY HAM CHEESE EGG MUFFINS

INGREDIENTS

- 1/2 cup Diced turkey ham
- 2 Large eggs
- 1/4 cup Shredded hard cheese (such as cheddar or Swiss)
- 2 tbsp Green onions, sliced
- 1/4 tsp Salt
- 1/8 tsp Black pepper

TIP

Mozzarella works well here for a milder flavor.

Prep. Time: 10 min | Cook Time: 20 min

Yield: 4 muffins

Serving size: 1 muffin

Per serving (estimated): Calories 85 | Protein 8 g | Fat 6 g | Carbs 1 g

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 375°F (190°C). Lightly grease a muffin tin or line with paper liners.
2. Cut the turkey ham into small squares.
3. In a large bowl, whisk the eggs until well combined.
4. Stir in the turkey ham, cheese, green onions, salt, and black pepper.
5. Divide the mixture evenly among the muffin cups, filling each about two-thirds full.
6. Bake for 18–22 minutes, or until the muffins are set and lightly golden brown. A toothpick inserted into the center should come out clean.
7. Let cool in the muffin tin for a few minutes before transferring to a wire rack.

TUNA CORN EGG MUFFINS

INGREDIENTS

- 1 (5 oz) can Canned tuna in water, drained
- 2 Large eggs
- 1/2 cup Canned corn, drained
- 2 tbsp Green onions, sliced
- 1/4 tsp Salt
- 1/8 tsp Black pepper

TIP

For a creamier texture, add 1 tbsp of light mayonnaise or Greek yogurt to the mixture.

Prep. Time: 10 min | Cook Time: 20 min

Yield: 5 muffins

Serving size: 1 muffin

Per serving (estimated): Calories 70 | Protein 9 g | Fat 2 g | Carbs 4 g

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 375°F (190°C). Lightly grease a muffin tin or line with paper liners.
2. In a large bowl, whisk the eggs until well combined.
3. Flake the tuna with a fork and add it to the eggs along with the corn, green onions, salt, and black pepper.
4. Mix gently until well combined.
5. Divide the mixture evenly among the muffin cups, filling each about two-thirds full.
6. Bake for 18–22 minutes, or until the muffins are set and lightly golden brown. A toothpick inserted into the center should come out clean.
7. Let cool in the muffin tin for a few minutes before transferring to a wire rack.

SALMON DILL EGG MUFFINS

INGREDIENTS

- 1/2 cup Canned salmon, drained and flaked
- 2 Large eggs
- 1 tbsp Fresh dill, chopped
- 2 tbsp Light cream cheese
- 1/4 tsp Salt
- 1/8 tsp Black pepper

TIP

Add a squeeze of lemon juice to the mixture for a brighter flavor.

Prep. Time: 10 min | Cook Time: 20 min

Yield: 4 muffins

Serving size: 1 muffin

Per serving (estimated): Calories 85 | Protein 9 g | Fat 5 g | Carbs 1 g

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 375°F (190°C). Lightly grease a muffin tin or line with paper liners.
2. In a large bowl, whisk the eggs until well combined.
3. Add the salmon, dill, cream cheese, salt, and black pepper. Mix gently until well combined.
4. Divide the mixture evenly among the muffin cups, filling each about two-thirds full.
5. Bake for 18–22 minutes, or until the muffins are set and lightly golden brown. A toothpick inserted into the center should come out clean.
6. Let cool in the muffin tin for a few minutes before transferring to a wire rack.

BROCCOLI CHEDDAR EGG MUFFINS

INGREDIENTS

- 2 Large eggs
- 2 Large egg whites
- 1/2 cup Broccoli florets, finely chopped
- 3 tbsp Sharp cheddar cheese, shredded
- 2 tbsp Yellow onion, finely diced
- 1/2 clove Garlic, minced
- 1/4 tsp Dijon mustard
- 1/4 tsp Salt
- 1/8 tsp Black pepper

TIP

Chop the broccoli as finely as possible; small pieces bind better into the muffin and give a more even texture in every bite.

Prep. Time: 10 min | Cook Time: 20 min

Yield: 5 muffins

Serving size: 1 muffin

Per serving (estimated): Calories 60 | Protein 5 g | Fat 3 g | Carbs 2 g

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 375°F (190°C). Lightly grease a muffin tin or line with paper liners.
2. Chop the broccoli florets into very small, fine pieces so they distribute evenly through the muffins.
3. In a large bowl, whisk together the whole eggs and egg whites until well combined.
4. Stir in the chopped broccoli, shredded cheddar, diced onion, minced garlic, Dijon mustard, salt, and black pepper. Mix until evenly combined.
5. Divide the mixture evenly among the muffin cups, filling each about two-thirds full.
6. Bake for 18–22 minutes, or until the muffins are set and lightly golden on top. A toothpick inserted into the center should come out clean.
7. Let cool in the muffin tin for a few minutes before transferring to a wire rack.

HERBED COTTAGE CHEESE MUFFINS

INGREDIENTS

- 1/2 cup Low-fat cottage cheese
- 2 Large eggs
- 1 tbsp Fresh dill, chopped
- 1 tbsp Fresh parsley, chopped
- 2 tbsp Whole-wheat flour
- 1/4 tsp Salt
- 1/8 tsp Black pepper

TIP

Chives or basil also work well in this recipe.

Prep. Time: 10 min | Cook Time: 20 min

Yield: 4 muffins

Serving size: 1 muffin

Per serving (estimated): Calories 70 | Protein 7 g | Fat 3 g | Carbs 4 g

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 375°F (190°C). Lightly grease a muffin tin or line with paper liners.
2. In a large bowl, whisk the eggs until well combined.
3. Add the cottage cheese, dill, parsley, whole-wheat flour, salt, and black pepper. Mix until just combined.
4. Divide the mixture evenly among the muffin cups, filling each about two-thirds full.
5. Bake for 18–22 minutes, or until the muffins are set and lightly golden brown. A toothpick inserted into the center should come out clean.
6. Let cool in the muffin tin for a few minutes before transferring to a wire rack.

LENTIL VEGGIE MUFFINS

INGREDIENTS

- 1/2 cup Cooked lentils
- 2 Large eggs
- 1/4 cup Carrot, grated
- 1/4 cup Zucchini, grated
- 1/8 tsp Onion powder
- 1/8 tsp Garlic powder
- 1/4 tsp Salt
- 1/8 tsp Black pepper

TIP

Squeeze excess moisture from the grated vegetables before mixing to keep the muffins from getting soggy.

Prep. Time: 10 min | Cook Time: 20 min

Yield: 5 muffins

Serving size: 1 muffin

Per serving (estimated): Calories 55 | Protein 5 g | Fat 2 g | Carbs 5 g

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 375°F (190°C). Lightly grease a muffin tin or line with paper liners.
2. In a large bowl, whisk the eggs until well combined.
3. Stir in the lentils, carrot, zucchini, onion powder, garlic powder, salt, and black pepper. Mix until well combined.
4. Divide the mixture evenly among the muffin cups, filling each about two-thirds full.
5. Bake for 18–22 minutes, or until the muffins are set and lightly golden brown. A toothpick inserted into the center should come out clean.
6. Let cool in the muffin tin for a few minutes before transferring to a wire rack.

SUN-DRIED TOMATO FETA MUFFINS

INGREDIENTS

- 2 Large eggs
- 1/4 cup Feta cheese, crumbled
- 2 tbsp Sun-dried tomatoes, drained and chopped
- 1/2 cup Fresh spinach, chopped
- 1 tsp Olive oil
- 1/4 tsp Salt
- 1/8 tsp Black pepper

TIP

Make sure the sun-dried tomatoes are well drained before adding them. A pinch of dried oregano works nicely here.

Prep. Time: 10 min | Cook Time: 20 min

Yield: 4 muffins

Serving size: 1 muffin

Per serving (estimated): Calories 80 | Protein 5 g | Fat 6 g | Carbs 2 g

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 375°F (190°C). Lightly grease a muffin tin or line with paper liners.
2. In a large bowl, whisk the eggs until well combined.
3. Stir in the feta, sun-dried tomatoes, spinach, olive oil, salt, and black pepper.
4. Divide the mixture evenly among the muffin cups, filling each about two-thirds full.
5. Bake for 18–22 minutes, or until the muffins are set and lightly golden brown. A toothpick inserted into the center should come out clean.
6. Let cool in the muffin tin for a few minutes before transferring to a wire rack.

Chapter 9: Main Dishes

In this chapter, I have not separated lunch and dinner into two different sections, because in real life they often overlap. What you eat for lunch today can easily become dinner tomorrow, and a good dinner can make an excellent next-day lunch. Food does not need to follow strict labels to be useful.

Many women after 50 naturally move toward two meals a day, especially when appetite changes, schedules shift, or the body simply feels better with longer breaks between meals. Others still feel their best with three meals a day. Both can work. The goal is not to force your day into someone else's structure. The goal is to build meals that keep you satisfied, nourished, and steady.

That is why this section is built around main dishes rather than meal names. These recipes can fit wherever you need them. They can be a strong lunch, a lighter dinner, or the main meal of your day. Some are easy to prepare ahead, some are better served fresh, and many can be adjusted depending on your appetite and protein needs.

Whether you eat twice a day or three times a day, you will find something here that supports you. Something warm, filling, balanced, and practical.



CHICKEN SAUSAGE WITH SAUTÉED KALE

INGREDIENTS

- 2 links (about 4 oz) Natural chicken sausages, no sugar added
- 4 cups Fresh kale, stems removed and chopped
- 2 cloves Garlic, minced
- 1 tbsp Extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 tbsp Water or low-sodium chicken broth
- Pinch Red pepper flakes (optional)
- to taste Salt
- to taste Black pepper

TIP

For extra flavor, add a squeeze of fresh lemon juice over the kale just before serving.

Prep. Time: 10 min Cook Time: 15 min Servings: 1

**Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 310 | Protein 24 g
Fat 18 g | Carbs 12 g**

DIRECTIONS

1. Slice the chicken sausages into 1/2-inch rounds.
2. Heat 1/2 tbsp of the olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the sausage slices and cook for 5–7 minutes, turning occasionally, until browned and cooked through. Remove from the skillet and set aside.
3. In the same skillet, add the remaining olive oil and the minced garlic. Sauté for about 1 minute, until fragrant, being careful not to burn the garlic.
4. Add the chopped kale to the skillet in batches, tossing it with the garlic and oil as it begins to wilt.
5. Pour in the water or chicken broth and cover the skillet with a lid. Let the kale steam for 3–5 minutes, until wilted and tender.
6. Remove the lid and return the cooked chicken sausage to the skillet. Add the red pepper flakes, if using.
7. Season with salt and black pepper to taste. Toss everything together and cook for another 1–2 minutes, until heated through.
8. Serve warm.

CHICKEN AND WHITE BEAN SKILLET

INGREDIENTS

- 6 oz Boneless, skinless chicken breast
- 1/2 can (7.5 oz) Canned white beans, rinsed and drained
- 1/2 cup Unsweetened tomato sauce
- 1/4 cup Onion, chopped
- 1 tsp Olive oil
- 1/2 tsp Garlic powder
- 1/4 tsp Ground cumin
- 1/4 tsp Paprika
- to taste Salt
- to taste Black pepper

TIP

For extra heat, add a pinch of cayenne or a few dashes of hot sauce to the bean mixture.

Prep. Time: 10 min Cook Time: 20–25 min Servings: 1

**Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 450 | Protein 50 g
Fat 12 g | Carbs 35 g**

DIRECTIONS

1. Pat the chicken dry with paper towels and season with salt, black pepper, garlic powder, cumin, and paprika.
2. Heat the olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the chicken and cook for 5–7 minutes per side, or until golden brown and cooked through to 165°F (74°C). Remove from the skillet and set aside.
3. In the same skillet, add the onion and sauté for 3–5 minutes, until softened.
4. Stir in the tomato sauce and beans. Bring to a simmer, then reduce the heat to low, cover, and cook for 5–7 minutes to let the flavors meld.
5. Slice the cooked chicken and return it to the skillet with the bean mixture. Stir gently to combine and heat through.
6. Serve immediately.

TURKEY AND SWEET POTATO SALAD PLATE

INGREDIENTS

- 6 oz Cooked turkey breast, cubed or sliced
- 1 medium (approx. 6 oz) Sweet potato, peeled and cubed
- 2 cups Mixed salad greens (spinach, arugula, or spring mix)
- 2 tbsp Red onion, thinly sliced
- 1 tbsp Olive oil
- 1 tsp Lemon juice or balsamic vinegar
- 1 tbsp Dried cranberries (optional)
- to taste Salt
- to taste Black pepper

TIP

For added crunch and healthy fats, sprinkle a tablespoon of toasted pecans or walnuts over the salad before serving.

Prep. Time: 10 min Cook Time: 20–25 min Servings: 1

**Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 420 | Protein 48 g
Fat 14 g | Carbs 32 g**

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat your oven to 400°F (200°C).
2. Toss the cubed sweet potatoes with half of the olive oil, salt, and pepper. Spread them in a single layer on a baking sheet.
3. Roast the sweet potatoes for 20–25 minutes, or until tender and slightly browned, flipping halfway through. Let them cool slightly.
4. In a small bowl, whisk together the remaining olive oil, lemon juice (or vinegar), salt, and pepper to create the dressing.
5. In a large bowl or on a plate, arrange the mixed salad greens as a base.
6. Top the greens with the cooked turkey breast, roasted sweet potatoes, red onion, and dried cranberries.
7. Drizzle the dressing over the salad and toss gently to combine.
8. Serve immediately.

CHOPPED CHICKEN PATTIES WITH ROASTED BROCCOLI

INGREDIENTS

- 8 oz Boneless, skinless chicken breast, finely diced
- 1 Large egg
- 2 tbsp Yellow onion, finely diced
- 1 clove or 1/4 tsp Garlic, minced, or garlic powder
- 1 tbsp Whole-wheat flour
- 1/4 tsp Turmeric
- 1 tbsp Fresh parsley, finely chopped
- to taste Salt
- to taste Black pepper
- 1 tbsp Olive oil
- 2 cups Broccoli florets
- 1 tbsp Lemon juice, fresh

TIP

For an even crust, make sure the skillet is properly preheated before adding the patties.

Prep. Time: 15 min Cook Time: 25 min Servings: 1

**Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 430 | Protein 48 g
Fat 18 g | Carbs 14 g**

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 400°F (200°C). Spread the broccoli florets on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper. Drizzle with half of the olive oil, season with salt and black pepper, and toss to coat. Roast for 18–20 minutes, turning once halfway through, until the edges are lightly golden and crispy.
2. While the broccoli roasts, prepare the patty mixture. Using a sharp knife, cut the chicken breast into very small, fine cubes, about 1/4 inch, so the mixture holds together well. In a medium bowl, combine the diced chicken, egg, finely diced onion, garlic (minced or powder), whole-wheat flour, turmeric, chopped parsley, salt, and black pepper. Mix until evenly combined.
3. Heat the remaining olive oil in a nonstick skillet over medium heat until properly preheated. Using a large spoon, drop portions of the mixture onto the hot skillet and gently press each one into a round patty shape.
4. Cook for 4–5 minutes on the first side without moving them, until a golden crust forms.
5. Flip the patties and reduce the heat to medium-low. Cook for another 4–5 minutes until cooked through to 165°F (74°C) and no longer pink in the center.
6. Remove the broccoli from the oven and drizzle with fresh lemon juice.
7. Serve the chicken patties warm with the roasted broccoli on the side.

TURKEY GRAIN BOWL WITH HUMMUS

INGREDIENTS

- 6 oz Sliced turkey breast, cooked
- 1/2 cup Cooked farro
- 1/4 cup Hummus
- 1/2 cup Cucumber, diced
- 1/2 cup Cherry tomatoes, halved
- 1 cup Fresh spinach
- 1 tbsp Olive oil
- 2 tbsp Fresh parsley, chopped
- 1 tsp Lemon juice
- to taste Salt
- to taste Black pepper

TIP

For extra flavor, you can use a flavored hummus like roasted red pepper or garlic. If you don't have farro, quinoa or brown rice make excellent substitutes.

Prep. Time: 15 min Cook Time: 0 min (assuming pre-cooked farro and turkey) Servings: 1

Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 580 | Protein 45 g
Fat 22 g | Carbs 40 g

DIRECTIONS

1. If your farro and turkey are not pre-cooked, prepare them according to package instructions and let them cool slightly.
2. In a small bowl, whisk together the olive oil, lemon juice, salt, and black pepper to create a simple dressing.
3. In a large bowl or deep plate, create a base with the fresh spinach.
4. Arrange the cooked farro and sliced turkey breast on top of the spinach.
5. Add the diced cucumber and halved cherry tomatoes to the bowl.
6. Place a generous scoop of hummus in the center or on the side of the bowl.
7. Drizzle the olive oil dressing over the vegetables and grains.
8. Garnish with freshly chopped parsley.
9. Serve immediately, mixing the hummus into the bowl as you eat for a creamy texture.

CHICKEN AND BROCCOLI RICE BOWL

INGREDIENTS

- 6 oz Boneless, skinless chicken breast
- 1/2 cup Cooked brown rice
- 1.5 cups Broccoli florets
- 1 tbsp Olive oil
- 1 tsp Lemon zest
- 1 tbsp Lemon juice
- 1/2 tsp Black pepper
- to taste Salt

TIP

For extra flavor, you can add a pinch of red pepper flakes or a clove of minced garlic to the dressing. If you prefer a bit of crunch, top with a teaspoon of toasted sesame seeds.

Prep. Time: 10 min Cook Time: 15–20 min Servings: 1

Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 410 | Protein 46 g
Fat 15 g | Carbs 24 g

DIRECTIONS

1. Season the chicken breast with salt and half of the black pepper.
2. Heat a grill pan or skillet over medium-high heat. Cook the chicken for 6–8 minutes per side, or until golden brown and cooked through to 165°F (74°C). Remove from heat, let it rest for 5 minutes, then slice.
3. While the chicken is cooking, steam the broccoli florets for 5–7 minutes until tender-crisp and bright green.
4. In a small bowl, whisk together the olive oil, lemon zest, lemon juice, and the remaining black pepper to create a light dressing.
5. In a serving bowl, place the warm cooked brown rice as the base.
6. Arrange the sliced grilled chicken and steamed broccoli on top of the rice.
7. Drizzle the lemon-olive oil dressing evenly over the chicken and broccoli.
8. Serve warm.

CHICKEN AVOCADO CRUNCH SALAD

INGREDIENTS

- 6 oz Boneless, skinless chicken breast
- 2 cups Romaine lettuce, chopped
- 1/2 cup Cucumber, diced
- 1/4 cup Celery, sliced
- 1/2 medium Avocado, sliced
- 1 tbsp Sunflower seeds
- 1 tbsp Olive oil
- 1 tbsp Lemon juice
- to taste Salt
- to taste Black pepper

TIP

To keep the avocado from browning, toss the slices in a little extra lemon juice before adding them to the salad. For an extra flavor boost, add a pinch of dried oregano to the dressing.

Prep. Time: 15 min Cook Time: 12–15 min Servings: 1

**Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 500 | Protein 47 g
Fat 30 g | Carbs 12 g**

DIRECTIONS

1. Season the chicken breast with salt and black pepper.
2. Heat a grill pan or skillet over medium-high heat. Cook the chicken for 6–7 minutes per side, or until golden brown and cooked through to 165°F (74°C). Let it rest for 5 minutes, then slice into strips.
3. In a small bowl, whisk together the olive oil, lemon juice, salt, and black pepper to create the dressing.
4. In a large salad bowl, combine the chopped romaine lettuce, diced cucumber, and sliced celery.
5. Add the sliced grilled chicken and avocado to the bowl.
6. Sprinkle the sunflower seeds over the top for added crunch.
7. Drizzle the lemon-olive oil dressing over the salad and toss gently to combine.
8. Serve immediately.

TURKEY AND WHITE BEAN SALAD BOWL

INGREDIENTS

- 170 g (6 oz) Cooked turkey breast, cubed
- 130 g (about 3/4 cup) White beans, rinsed and drained
- 2 cups Fresh spinach
- 1/2 cup Cucumber, chopped
- 1/2 cup Red bell pepper, diced
- 1 tbsp Olive oil
- 2 tbsp Fresh parsley, chopped
- 1 tbsp Lemon juice
- 1 tsp Dijon mustard (optional)
- 1 small clove Garlic, minced (optional)
- to taste Salt
- to taste Black pepper

TIP

For the best flavor, use freshly squeezed lemon juice. To support a more heart-friendly profile, choose low-sodium white beans and low-sodium turkey whenever possible.

Prep. Time: 15 min Cook Time: 0 min (assuming pre-cooked turkey)

Servings: 1

**Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 500 | Protein 54 g
Fat 16 g | Carbs 32 g**

DIRECTIONS

1. In a small bowl, whisk together the olive oil, lemon juice, salt, and black pepper. If using, whisk in the Dijon mustard and/or minced garlic.
2. In a large salad bowl, combine the spinach, cucumber, and red bell pepper.
3. Add the white beans and toss gently with the vegetables.
4. Top with the cubed turkey breast.
5. Drizzle the dressing over the salad.
6. Sprinkle with the chopped parsley.
7. Toss gently to combine and coat evenly.
8. Serve immediately.

CHICKEN WITH ROASTED CAULIFLOWER AND QUINOA

INGREDIENTS

- 6 oz (170g) Boneless, skinless chicken breast
- 1/2 head (approx. 7–9 oz / 200–250g) Cauliflower, florets
- 1/4 cup dry (50g) Quinoa
- 1.5 oz (40g) Arugula
- 1.5 tbsp Olive oil
- 1/4 pc Lemon
- 1/2 tsp Dried herbs (oregano, thyme)
- to taste Salt
- to taste Black pepper

TIP

The chicken can also be boiled or cooked in a grill pan or skillet while the cauliflower roasts in the oven.

Prep. Time: 15 min Cook Time: 35–40 min Servings: 1

**Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 550 | Protein 50 g
Fat 25 g | Carbs 45 g**

DIRECTIONS

1. Rinse the quinoa under cold water.
2. In a small saucepan, combine the quinoa with 1/2 cup water. Bring to a boil, then reduce the heat, cover, and simmer for 15 minutes. Let it stand, covered, for 5 minutes, then fluff with a fork.
3. Preheat the oven to 400°F (200°C).
4. Toss the cauliflower with 1 tbsp olive oil, plus salt, black pepper, and half of the dried herbs. Spread on a parchment-lined baking sheet.
5. Pat the chicken dry and season with the remaining olive oil, salt, black pepper, and the rest of the dried herbs. Wrap the chicken loosely in foil and place it on the same baking sheet beside the cauliflower.
6. Roast for 20 to 25 minutes, until the cauliflower is tender and lightly golden and the chicken is nearly cooked through.
7. Carefully open the foil and check the chicken. If needed, return it to the oven uncovered for 5 to 10 more minutes, until fully cooked through and the internal temperature reaches 165°F (74°C). Let the chicken rest for 5 minutes, then slice.
8. Arrange the quinoa, roasted cauliflower, and arugula on a plate. Top with the sliced chicken, squeeze over the lemon juice, and serve immediately.

TURKEY ZUCCHINI PATTIES WITH ASPARAGUS

INGREDIENTS

- 250 g Ground turkey
- 1 medium Zucchini
- 1 small Carrot, grated
- 1 Egg
- 2 tbsp Onion, finely chopped
- 1 clove Garlic, minced
- 1/2 tsp Paprika
- 1 tbsp Olive oil
- as needed Breadcrumbs or coarse whole-wheat flour, for coating
- 120 g Asparagus, trimmed and peeled on the lower part
- to taste Salt
- to taste Black pepper

TIP

Do not skip squeezing the zucchini well, or the patties may turn too soft.

Prep. Time: 15 min Cook Time: 15–18 min Servings: 1

**Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 490 | Protein 47 g
Fat 24 g | Carbs 17 g**

DIRECTIONS

1. Grate the zucchini on a medium grater, sprinkle lightly with salt, and leave for 5–10 minutes. Then squeeze out as much liquid as possible.
2. Peel and grate the carrot on a medium grater.
3. Put the ground turkey, squeezed zucchini, grated carrot, egg, onion, garlic, paprika, salt, and black pepper in a bowl. Mix well.
4. Form the mixture into patties and coat each one in breadcrumbs or coarse whole-wheat flour.
5. Trim the asparagus. Use a knife or vegetable peeler to gently scrape or peel the skin from the lower part of each stalk.
6. Heat half of the olive oil in a frying pan over medium heat. Add the patties and cook for 2 minutes.
7. Reduce the heat to very low, turn the patties, and continue cooking for 4–5 minutes per side, until browned and cooked through.
8. While the patties are frying, heat the remaining olive oil in another pan. Add the asparagus and cook for 4–6 minutes, turning a few times, until just tender and lightly browned.
9. Serve the turkey zucchini patties warm with the asparagus on the side.

TURKEY WITH BRAISED CABBAGE

INGREDIENTS

- 6 oz Turkey fillet, diced
- 2 cups Green cabbage, shredded
- 1/2 medium Carrot, grated
- 1/2 small Onion, sliced
- 1 tbsp Tomato paste
- 1 tbsp Olive oil
- 1/4 cup Water or broth
- to taste Salt
- to taste Black pepper
- 1/4 tsp Paprika

TIP

For a deeper flavor, let the dish cook uncovered for the last 2–3 minutes so the extra liquid evaporates slightly. You can also add a little garlic or dried herbs for more aroma.

Prep. Time: 10 min Cook Time: 20–25 min Servings: 1

**Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 340 | Protein 42 g
Fat 12 g | Carbs 14 g**

DIRECTIONS

1. Cut the turkey fillet into small cubes. Season with salt, black pepper, and paprika.
2. Heat olive oil in a deep skillet over medium heat.
3. Add the turkey and cook for 5–7 minutes, stirring occasionally, until lightly browned on all sides.
4. Add the sliced onion and cook for 2–3 minutes, until softened.
5. Stir in the grated carrot and cook for another 2 minutes.
6. Add the shredded green cabbage in batches, stirring as it softens and reduces in volume.
7. Mix in the tomato paste.
8. Add the water or broth in small portions, stirring between additions. The exact amount may vary depending on how juicy the cabbage is.
9. Stir well, cover the skillet with a lid, and cook over low heat for 10–12 minutes, until the cabbage is tender and the flavors are well combined.
10. Taste and adjust with extra salt and black pepper if needed.
11. Serve hot.

BEEF BURRITO BOWL

INGREDIENTS

- 6 oz Lean ground beef, 90% lean
- 1/4 cup Brown rice, uncooked
- 1/2 cup Water
- 1/3 cup Black beans, canned, drained and rinsed
- 1/3 cup Sweet corn kernels, canned, drained
- 1/4 cup Salsa
- 1 tsp Olive oil
- 1/2 tsp Chili powder
- 1/4 tsp Ground cumin
- 1/4 tsp Garlic powder
- to taste Salt
- to taste Black pepper
- 1 tbsp Fresh cilantro, chopped
- 1–2 wedges Lime wedges (optional)

TIP

For extra flavor, use fire-roasted salsa. To make this bowl meal-prep friendly, store the salsa separately and add it just before serving.

Prep. Time: 10 min (plus soaking time) Cook Time: 45 min Servings: 1

**Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 530 | Protein 36 g
Fat 17 g | Carbs 58 g**

DIRECTIONS

1. For the best texture and a shorter cooking time, soak the brown rice overnight or for at least 30 minutes before cooking.
2. Cook the rice according to the package directions. In most cases, this means combining the rice with water in a 1:2 ratio, bringing it to a boil, then reducing the heat and simmering for 35–45 minutes, or until tender.
3. While the rice is cooking, heat the olive oil in a medium skillet over medium heat.
4. Add the lean ground beef, chili powder, cumin, garlic powder, salt, and black pepper. Cook for 6–8 minutes, breaking up the meat with a spoon, until browned and fully cooked.
5. Warm the black beans and canned sweet corn kernels in a small saucepan or in the microwave until heated through.
6. Spoon the cooked brown rice into a serving bowl, spreading it evenly to form the base.
7. Arrange the cooked beef, black beans, corn, and salsa in separate sections in the bowl.
8. Sprinkle with chopped cilantro and serve with lime wedges, if desired.

CHEESY TURKEY CASSEROLE

INGREDIENTS

- 8 oz Ground turkey (lean)
- 1/2 cup Carrot, shredded
- 1/2 medium Onion, chopped
- 2 Large eggs
- 1 cup Mozzarella cheese, shredded
- 1/8 tsp, or to taste Salt
- 1/8 tsp, or to taste Black pepper
- 1 tbsp fresh or 1 tsp dried Dill, fresh chopped or dried

TIP

Use only a tiny amount of salt, or skip it altogether, depending on how salty your mozzarella is.

Prep. Time: 15 min Cook Time: 35–45 min Servings: 1

Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 480 | Protein 45 g
Fat 28 g | Carbs 10 g

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat your oven to 350°F (180°C).
2. In a large skillet, cook the ground turkey over medium heat, breaking it apart with a spoon, until browned and fully cooked. Remove from heat and let it cool slightly.
3. In the same skillet, sauté the chopped onion and shredded carrot over medium heat until softened, about 5–7 minutes.
4. In a large mixing bowl, combine the cooked turkey, sautéed onion and carrot, eggs, shredded mozzarella, dill, a small amount of salt, and black pepper.
5. Using an immersion blender or a regular blender, blend until the mixture becomes smooth and uniform.
6. Pour the mixture into a baking pan or oven-safe casserole dish lined with parchment paper, then spread it evenly.
7. Bake for 35–45 minutes, or until golden on top.
8. Let it cool for a few minutes, then slice into pieces and serve with any salad.

BEEF CHILI MAC

INGREDIENTS

- 5 oz Lean ground beef
- 1/2 cup (dry) Whole-wheat elbow pasta
- 1/2 cup Kidney beans, canned, rinsed, and drained
- 1/2 cup Diced tomatoes, canned, undrained
- 1/4 cup Onion, chopped
- 1 tsp Olive oil
- 1 tsp Chili powder
- 1/2 tsp Cumin
- 1/4 tsp Salt
- 1/8 tsp Black pepper
- 2 tbsp Plain Greek yogurt

TIP

For a thicker chili, you can mash a portion of the kidney beans before adding them to the pot. If you prefer a milder flavor, reduce the amount of chili powder.

Prep. Time: 10 min Cook Time: 25–30 min Servings: 1

Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 490 | Protein 38 g
Fat 15 g | Carbs 50 g

DIRECTIONS

1. Cook whole-wheat elbow pasta according to package directions until al dente. Drain and set aside.
2. While pasta is cooking, heat olive oil in a large skillet or Dutch oven over medium heat. Add chopped onion and cook until softened, about 3–5 minutes.
3. Add lean ground beef to the skillet, breaking it apart with a spoon. Cook until browned and no longer pink, about 6–8 minutes. Drain any excess fat.
4. Stir in chili powder, cumin, salt, and black pepper. Cook for 1 minute, stirring constantly, until fragrant.
5. Add the rinsed kidney beans and diced tomatoes (with their liquid) to the skillet. Bring to a simmer, then reduce heat to low, cover, and cook for 10–15 minutes, allowing the flavors to meld.
6. Stir the cooked pasta into the chili mixture.
7. Serve hot, topped with a dollop of plain Greek yogurt.

SALMON QUINOA LUNCH BOWL

INGREDIENTS

- 4 oz Salmon fillet
- 1/4 cup Quinoa, uncooked
- 1/2 cup Zucchini, chopped
- 1/2 cup Bell peppers (any color), chopped
- 1/2 cup Cucumber, diced
- 2 cups Mixed greens
- 1 tbsp Olive oil
- 1/2 lemon Lemon, juiced
- 1 tbsp Fresh parsley, chopped
- 1/4 tsp Salt
- 1/8 tsp Black pepper

TIP

Consider adding a sprinkle of feta cheese or a few cherry tomatoes for extra color and taste.

Prep. Time: 15 min Cook Time: 20–25 min Servings: 1

**Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 575 | Protein 33 g
Fat 32 g | Carbs 40 g**

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 400°F (200°C). Line a baking sheet with parchment.
2. Toss zucchini and bell peppers with half the olive oil, salt, and pepper; spread on the sheet.
3. Roast 15–20 minutes, until tender-crisp and lightly caramelized.
4. Meanwhile, cook quinoa per package directions and fluff.
5. Season salmon with salt and pepper. Heat the remaining oil in a nonstick skillet over medium-high and cook 4–6 minutes per side, until it flakes easily.
6. Combine quinoa, roasted vegetables, cucumber, and mixed greens in a large bowl.
7. Drizzle with lemon juice, add parsley, and toss. Top with the salmon and serve.

SESAME-GINGER SHRIMP BOWLS

INGREDIENTS

- 6 oz Large shrimp, peeled and deveined
- 1 cup Broccoli florets
- 1 cup cooked quinoa, or about 1/3 cup dry quinoa cooked according to package directions
- 1/2 cup Shelled edamame (frozen, thawed)
- 1/4 cup Shredded carrots
- 1 clove Garlic, minced
- 1 tsp Fresh ginger, grated
- 1 tbsp Low-sodium soy sauce or tamari
- 1 tsp Toasted sesame oil
- 1 tbsp Lime juice, fresh
- 1 tbsp Olive oil or avocado oil
- 1 tsp Sesame seeds, for garnish
- 1 tbsp Green onions, sliced, for garnish

TIP

For extra flavor, add a squeeze of fresh lime juice just before serving. If you like a little heat, stir a pinch of red pepper flakes into the dressing.

Prep. Time: 20 min Cook Time: 20–25 min Servings: 1

**Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 450 | Protein 35 g
Fat 18 g | Carbs 35 g**

DIRECTIONS

1. Cook quinoa per package directions; fluff and set aside.
2. Whisk soy sauce (or tamari), sesame oil, lime juice, garlic, and ginger into a dressing.
3. Heat the oil in a large skillet over medium-high. Sauté broccoli 3–5 minutes until tender-crisp; remove.
4. Add the shrimp and cook 2–3 minutes per side, until pink and opaque.
5. Add quinoa to a bowl; top with shrimp, broccoli, edamame, and carrots.
6. Drizzle with dressing, garnish with sesame seeds and green onions, and serve.

BAKED SALMON WITH ROASTED VEGETABLES AND FARRO

INGREDIENTS

- 6 oz Salmon fillet, skin on or off
- 1 cup Brussels sprouts, trimmed and halved
- 1 cup Cauliflower florets
- 1/4 cup Farro, uncooked
- 1 tbsp Olive oil
- 2–3 slices Lemon, thinly sliced
- 1 tbsp Fresh dill, chopped
- 1/2 tsp Garlic powder
- 1/2 tsp Onion powder
- 1/4 tsp Salt
- 1/8 tsp Black pepper, freshly ground
- 3/4 cup Water or vegetable broth (for farro)

TIP

For an added probiotic boost and a tangy, spicy kick, consider serving a spoonful of kimchi alongside your meal. Its fermented goodness can complement the rich salmon and earthy vegetables.

Prep. Time: 15 min Cook Time: 30–35 min Servings: 1

**Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 600 | Protein 45 g
Fat 30 g | Carbs 45 g**

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 400°F (200°C). Line a large baking sheet with parchment paper for easy cleanup.
2. In a small saucepan, combine the uncooked farro with water or vegetable broth (1:3 ratio). Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to low, cover, and simmer for 25–30 minutes, or until tender and liquid is absorbed. Fluff with a fork and set aside.
3. On the prepared baking sheet, toss the Brussels sprouts and cauliflower florets with 1/2 tbsp of olive oil, 1/4 teaspoon garlic powder, 1/4 teaspoon onion powder, 1/8 teaspoon salt, and a pinch of black pepper. Spread them in a single layer.
4. Roast the vegetables for 15 minutes.
5. While vegetables are roasting, pat the salmon fillet dry with a paper towel. Season with remaining garlic powder, onion powder, salt, and pepper. Drizzle with the remaining olive oil. Top each fillet with lemon slices and fresh dill.
6. After the vegetables have roasted for 15 minutes, make space on the baking sheet and add the seasoned salmon fillet. Continue to roast for another 12–15 minutes, or until the salmon is cooked through and flakes easily with a fork (internal temperature should reach 145°F).
7. Place the cooked farro on a plate. Top with roasted Brussels sprouts, cauliflower, and the salmon fillet. Garnish with extra fresh dill if desired.

TUNA STUFFED AVOCADO

INGREDIENTS

- 5 oz Canned tuna in water, drained
- 1 medium Avocado, ripe
- 1/4 cup Cucumber, diced
- 1/4 cup Celery, finely chopped
- 2 tbsp Plain Greek yogurt
- 1 tbsp Lemon juice, fresh
- 1/4 tsp Black pepper, freshly ground
- Pinch Salt, to taste
- 1 cup Mixed greens, for serving

TIP

For an extra boost of flavor and texture, you can sprinkle a few toasted sesame seeds or chopped fresh chives over the tuna mixture before serving.

Prep. Time: 10 min Cook Time: 0 min Servings: 1

**Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 375 | Protein 32 g
Fat 22 g | Carbs 17 g**

DIRECTIONS

1. Halve the avocado lengthwise and carefully remove the pit. Scoop out some of the avocado flesh from the center of each half, leaving a sturdy shell. Dice the scooped-out avocado flesh and set aside.
2. In a medium bowl, combine the drained canned tuna, diced cucumber, finely chopped celery, plain Greek yogurt, fresh lemon juice, black pepper, and salt. Add the diced avocado flesh and gently mix until well combined.
3. Spoon the tuna mixture generously into the hollowed-out avocado halves.
4. Serve immediately on a bed of fresh mixed greens.

SHRIMP AND LENTIL BOWL

INGREDIENTS

- 4 oz Large shrimp, peeled and deveined
- 1/4 cup Green or brown lentils, dry
- 1/2 cup Cherry tomatoes, halved
- 1/2 cup Cucumber, diced
- 2 tbsp Fresh parsley, chopped
- 1 cup Fresh spinach
- 1 tbsp Olive oil
- 1/2 Lemon, half
- 1 clove Garlic, minced
- 1/4 tsp Dried oregano
- 1/4 tsp Salt
- 1/8 tsp Black pepper, freshly ground
- 3/4 cup Water or vegetable broth (for lentils)

TIP

For an extra layer of flavor, consider adding a sprinkle of crumbled feta cheese or a few Kalamata olives to your bowl.

Prep. Time: 15 min Cook Time: 25–30 min Servings: 1

**Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 500 | Protein 35 g
Fat 18 g | Carbs 45 g**

DIRECTIONS

1. Rinse lentils; simmer in water or broth (1:3) for 20–25 minutes until tender, then drain.
2. Pat shrimp dry and toss with olive oil, garlic, oregano, salt, and pepper.
3. Cook shrimp in a hot skillet 2–3 minutes per side, until pink and opaque.
4. In a large bowl, combine lentils, cherry tomatoes, cucumber, parsley, and spinach. Add lemon juice and the remaining oil; season and toss.
5. Top with the shrimp and serve.

FISH PATTIES WITH VEGETABLE MASH

INGREDIENTS

- 5 oz White fish fillet (cod or hake)
- 1 small Egg
- 2 tbsp Onion, finely minced
- 1 cup Broccoli florets
- 1 cup Cauliflower florets
- 1 tbsp Olive oil
- 1/4 tsp Garlic powder
- 1/2 tsp Dried dill
- 1/4 tsp Salt
- 1/8 tsp Black pepper, freshly ground
- 2 tbsp Milk or vegetable broth (optional, for mash)

TIP

For the best texture, drain the broccoli and cauliflower very well before mashing, and let the fish mixture rest for 5 minutes before shaping the patties.

Prep. Time: 15 min Cook Time: 20–25 min Servings: 1

**Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 380 | Protein 30 g
Fat 18 g | Carbs 25 g**

DIRECTIONS

1. Steam or boil broccoli and cauliflower until very tender, 10–12 minutes; drain.
2. If using raw fish, gently poach or steam it until it flakes easily, then let cool slightly. Flake the cooked fish into a bowl. Add egg, minced onion, garlic powder, dill, salt, and pepper; mix and form into patties.
3. Cook the patties in olive oil over medium heat 4–5 minutes per side, until golden; set aside.
4. Mash the broccoli and cauliflower with the remaining oil, salt, pepper, and optional milk or broth until creamy.
5. Serve the patties with the mash.

BAKED COD WITH ASPARAGUS AND TOMATOES

INGREDIENTS

- 6 oz Cod fillet
- 1 cup Asparagus spears, trimmed
- 1/2 cup Cherry tomatoes, halved
- 1/2 Lemon, half
- 1 tbsp Olive oil
- 1/2 tsp Dried Italian herbs
- 1/4 tsp Garlic powder
- 1/4 tsp Salt
- 1/8 tsp Black pepper, freshly ground

TIP

For a brighter flavor, add a sprinkle of fresh chopped parsley or basil after baking.

Prep. Time: 10 min Cook Time: 15–20 min Servings: 1

Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 280 | Protein 30 g
Fat 12 g | Carbs 8 g

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 400°F (200°C). Line a baking sheet with parchment.
2. Toss asparagus and cherry tomatoes with half the oil, Italian herbs, salt, and pepper; spread out and roast 10 minutes.
3. Pat the cod dry; season with garlic powder, salt, and pepper, and drizzle with the remaining oil.
4. Nestle the cod among the vegetables, squeeze lemon over all, and roast 8–10 minutes more, until the cod flakes easily (145°F).
5. Serve the cod with the roasted vegetables.

BAKED WHITE FISH WITH VEGETABLES

INGREDIENTS

- 6 oz White fish fillet (cod or hake)
- 1 cup Broccoli florets
- 1 cup Cauliflower florets
- 1/2 cup Carrot, sliced or chopped
- 1/2 Lemon, half
- 1 tbsp Olive oil
- 1/2 tsp Dried Italian herbs
- 1/4 tsp Garlic powder
- 1/4 tsp Salt
- 1/8 tsp Black pepper, freshly ground

TIP

For extra flavor, sprinkle fresh chopped parsley or dill over the dish just before serving.

Prep. Time: 10 min Cook Time: 20–25 min Servings: 1

Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 350 | Protein 35 g
Fat 15 g | Carbs 20 g

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 400°F (200°C). Line a baking sheet with parchment.
2. Toss broccoli, cauliflower, and carrots with half the oil, Italian herbs, garlic powder, salt, and pepper; spread out and roast 10–12 minutes.
3. Pat the fish dry; season with the remaining herbs, garlic powder, salt, and pepper, and drizzle with the remaining oil.
4. Nestle the fish among the vegetables, squeeze lemon over all, and roast 10–12 minutes more, until it flakes easily (145°F).
5. Serve the fish with the roasted vegetables.

WHITE FISH FRITTERS WITH DILL AND ONION AND BAKED SWEET POTATO

INGREDIENTS

- 6 oz White fish fillet (cod or hake), boneless
- 1 medium Sweet potato, medium
- 1 Egg, large
- 1/4 cup Onion, finely diced
- 2 tbsp Fresh dill, chopped
- 2 tbsp Whole-wheat flour
- 2 tbsp Greek yogurt (for serving)
- 1 tbsp Olive oil (for frying and sweet potato)
- 1/4 tsp Salt
- 1/8 tsp Black pepper, freshly ground

TIP

These fish fritters can be made in a larger batch and stored in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 2 days.

Prep. Time: 15 min Cook Time: 40–50 min Servings: 1

Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 420 | Protein 30 g
Fat 15 g | Carbs 45 g

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 400°F (200°C). Pierce the sweet potato, rub with oil, salt, and pepper, and bake 40–50 minutes, until very tender.
2. Dice the fish small. Combine with onion, dill, salt, pepper, and egg, then stir in flour until thick enough to form patties.
3. Heat oil in a nonstick skillet over medium. Drop in spoonfuls and cook 3–4 minutes per side, until golden and cooked through.
4. Slice the baked sweet potato open and fluff the inside.
5. Serve the fritters with the sweet potato and Greek yogurt.

TOMATO-CRUSTED WHITE FISH WITH BULGUR

INGREDIENTS

- 6 oz White fish fillet (cod or hake)
- 1/4 cup Bulgur, uncooked
- 1/2 cup Cherry tomatoes, sliced
- 2 tbsp Shredded cheese (e.g., mozzarella, cheddar)
- 1/2 Lemon, half
- 1 tbsp Olive oil
- 1 clove Garlic, minced
- 1/2 tsp Dried Italian herbs
- 1/4 tsp Salt
- 1/8 tsp Black pepper, freshly ground
- 1/2 cup Water or vegetable broth (for bulgur)

TIP

Pat the fish dry before marinating so it bakes rather than steams, and add the cheese only at the end to keep the tomatoes juicy and the topping lightly golden.

Prep. Time: 15 min Cook Time: 25–30 min Servings: 1

Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 380 | Protein 35 g
Fat 18 g | Carbs 25 g

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 375°F (190°C). Line a baking sheet with parchment.
2. Simmer bulgur in water or broth (1:2) for 12–15 minutes until tender; fluff.
3. Whisk oil, lemon juice, garlic, Italian herbs, salt, and pepper. Marinate the fish 15–20 minutes.
4. Place the fish on the sheet, top with sliced cherry tomatoes, and bake 15 minutes.
5. Sprinkle with cheese and bake 5–7 minutes more, until the fish flakes easily (145°F) and the cheese melts.
6. Serve with the bulgur.

WHOLE-GRAIN-CRUSTED WHITE FISH WITH GREEN BEANS

INGREDIENTS

- 6 oz White fish fillets (such as cod, tilapia, or haddock)
- 1/4 cup Whole-grain flour
- 1 Large egg, beaten
- 1 tbsp Olive oil
- 1 cup Fresh green beans, trimmed
- 1/4 tsp Salt
- 1/8 tsp Black pepper, freshly ground

TIP

If you prefer, you can lightly steam the green beans instead of boiling them before sautéing.

Prep. Time: 10 min Cook Time: 15–20 min Servings: 1

Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 380 | Protein 38 g
Fat 18 g | Carbs 25 g

DIRECTIONS

1. Cut the fish into 2-inch pieces and pat dry.
2. Season the flour with salt and pepper. Dip each piece in flour, then in beaten egg.
3. Pan-fry in oil over medium heat 3–4 minutes per side, until golden and flaky; drain on paper towel.
4. Boil green beans 3–5 minutes until tender-crisp; drain.
5. Sauté the green beans in the remaining oil 3–5 minutes until lightly browned; season.
6. Serve the fish with the green beans.

SEA BREAM OVEN-BAKED

INGREDIENTS

- 1 (about 10 oz) Whole sea bream, cleaned and scaled
- 2 medium Roma tomatoes
- 2 Garlic cloves
- 1/4 cup Fresh cilantro, loosely packed
- 1/4 cup Fresh dill, loosely packed
- 1 1/2 tbsp Olive oil
- 1/2 Lemon, juiced
- 1/2 tsp (or to taste) Harissa paste
- 1/2 tsp Ground cumin
- 1/2 tsp Sweet paprika
- to taste Salt
- to taste Black pepper
- for the pan Cooking spray or neutral oil

TIP

For extra brightness, squeeze a little fresh lemon juice over the fish right before serving.

Prep. Time: 10 min Cook Time: 30 min Servings: 1

Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 370 | Protein 30 g
Fat 23 g | Carbs 9 g

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 350°F (175°C). Lightly grease a baking dish with cooking spray or a thin coat of oil.
2. Slice the tomatoes into 1/4-inch rounds and arrange in an overlapping layer across the dish — they form a bed that keeps the fish moist.
3. Rinse the fish and pat dry. Season the cavity with salt and pepper, and make three 1/2-inch diagonal incisions on each side.
4. Blend the garlic, cilantro, dill, olive oil, lemon juice, harissa, cumin, and paprika into a smooth, thick paste.
5. Rub the paste into the incisions on both sides, set the fish on the tomatoes, and spoon any remaining paste over the top.
6. Bake 30 minutes, until the fish is opaque throughout and the flesh separates easily from the bone.

TEMPEH QUINOA BROCCOLI BOWL

INGREDIENTS

- 1/2 cup Quinoa, uncooked
- 1 cup Vegetable broth or water
- 4 oz Tempeh, firm
- 1.5 cups Broccoli florets
- 1/2 cup Shredded carrots
- 1 tbsp Olive oil
- 1 tbsp Lemon juice, fresh
- 1 tsp Sesame seeds
- 1/4 tsp Salt
- 1/8 tsp Black pepper, freshly ground

TIP

For extra flavor, marinate the tempeh in a mixture of soy sauce, ginger, and garlic for at least 15 minutes before pan-searing.

Prep. Time: 15 min Cook Time: 25–30 min Servings: 1

**Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 450 | Protein 28 g
Fat 20 g | Carbs 45 g**

DIRECTIONS

1. Cook quinoa in broth or water with a little salt until absorbed, about 15 minutes; fluff.
2. Cut tempeh into cubes; pan-sear in half the oil over medium 5–7 minutes until golden, then season and set aside.
3. In the same skillet, sauté broccoli in the remaining oil 5–7 minutes until tender-crisp; season.
4. Whisk lemon juice with salt and pepper.
5. Plate the quinoa, tempeh, and broccoli, drizzle with the dressing, and garnish with sesame seeds.

TOFU AND EDAMAME VEGGIE BOWL

INGREDIENTS

- 4 oz Extra-firm tofu, pressed and cubed
- 1/2 cup Shelled edamame, frozen
- 1/2 cup Brown rice, uncooked
- 2 cups Fresh spinach
- 1/2 cup Cucumber, thinly sliced
- 1 cup Shredded cabbage
- 1/4 cup Kimchi
- 1 tsp Sesame seeds
- 1 tbsp Olive oil
- 1 tbsp Soy sauce or tamari
- 1 tbsp Rice vinegar
- 1 tsp Maple syrup or honey
- 1/4 tsp Garlic powder
- 1/8 tsp Salt
- 1/8 tsp Black pepper, freshly ground

TIP

Ensure tofu is well-pressed before baking to achieve a crispier texture.

Prep. Time: 15 min Cook Time: 30–35 min Servings: 1

**Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 420 | Protein 25 g
Fat 18 g | Carbs 45 g**

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 400°F (200°C). Toss tofu with oil, soy sauce, garlic powder, and pepper; spread on a lined sheet.
2. Bake 25–30 minutes, flipping once, until golden and crisp.
3. Meanwhile, cook brown rice per package directions; fluff.
4. Steam or microwave edamame 3–5 minutes until tender; drain.
5. Whisk the remaining oil and soy sauce with rice vinegar, maple syrup or honey, garlic powder, and pepper.
6. Combine rice, spinach, cucumber, cabbage, edamame, and tofu. Drizzle with dressing, top with kimchi and sesame seeds, and serve.

TEMPEH GRAIN BOWL WITH BRUSSELS SPROUTS

INGREDIENTS

- 1/2 cup Farro, uncooked
- 1 cup Vegetable broth or water
- 4 oz Tempeh, firm
- 1.5 cups Brussels sprouts, trimmed and halved
- 2 cups Mixed greens
- 1 tbsp Olive oil
- 1/2 Lemon, juiced
- 1/4 tsp Salt
- 1/8 tsp Black pepper, freshly ground

TIP

For crispier Brussels sprouts, ensure they are dry before tossing with oil and roasting.

Prep. Time: 15 min Cook Time: 30–35 min Servings: 1

Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 410 | Protein 26 g
Fat 17 g | Carbs 42 g

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 400°F (200°C) and line a baking sheet.
2. Simmer farro in broth or water with a little salt 20–25 minutes until tender; fluff.
3. Cut tempeh into cubes; toss with half the oil, salt, and pepper and spread on one half of the sheet.
4. Toss halved Brussels sprouts with the remaining oil, salt, and pepper on the other half.
5. Roast 20–25 minutes, flipping once, until the tempeh is golden and the sprouts are caramelized.
6. Whisk lemon juice with salt and pepper.
7. Combine farro, tempeh, sprouts, and mixed greens; drizzle with dressing, toss, and serve.

COTTAGE CHEESE STUFFED SWEET POTATOES

INGREDIENTS

- 1 Medium sweet potato
- 1/2 cup Cottage cheese, low-fat
- 1/4 cup Black beans, canned, rinsed and drained
- 1 cup Baby spinach
- 2 tbsp Salsa
- 1 tbsp Green onions, sliced
- 1 tbsp Pumpkin seeds (pepitas)
- 1 tsp Olive oil
- 1/8 tsp Salt
- 1/8 tsp Black pepper, freshly ground

TIP

Ensure sweet potatoes are fully tender for the best texture. Adjust the amount of salsa to your taste preference for spice and flavor.

Prep. Time: 10 min Cook Time: 45–60 min Servings: 1

Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 350 | Protein 20 g
Fat 10 g | Carbs 45 g

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 400°F (200°C) and pierce the sweet potatoes.
2. Bake 45–60 minutes until very tender (or microwave 5–10 minutes).
3. Warm the black beans. If using fresh spinach, sauté in a little oil until just wilted.
4. Slice the potatoes open and fluff the insides.
5. Combine cottage cheese, black beans, and spinach; season with salt and pepper.
6. Fill the potatoes and top with salsa, green onions, and pumpkin seeds. Serve warm.

VEGETARIAN CHILI WITH PINTO BEANS

INGREDIENTS

- 1/2 cup Pinto beans, canned, rinsed and drained
- 1/2 cup Black beans, canned, rinsed and drained
- 1 cup Diced tomatoes, canned, undrained
- 1 tbsp Tomato paste
- 1/2 cup Onion, chopped
- 1/2 cup Zucchini, diced
- 1/2 cup Red bell pepper, diced
- 1/2 cup Corn, frozen or canned, drained
- 1 clove Garlic, minced
- 1 tsp Chili powder
- 1/2 tsp Cumin, ground
- 1 tbsp Olive oil
- 1/4 tsp Salt
- 1/8 tsp Black pepper, freshly ground

TIP

For a thicker chili, mash a portion of the beans against the side of the pot before simmering.

Prep. Time: 15 min Cook Time: 25–30 min Servings: 1

**Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 390 | Protein 20 g
Fat 10 g | Carbs 60 g**

DIRECTIONS

1. Heat oil in a large pot over medium. Sauté onion, zucchini, and red bell pepper 5–7 minutes until softened.
2. Add garlic, chili powder, and cumin; cook 1 minute until fragrant.
3. Stir in pinto beans, black beans, diced tomatoes, and tomato paste; bring to a simmer.
4. Cover and simmer 15–20 minutes, adding a splash of water or broth if too thick.
5. Stir in the corn and cook 5 minutes more; season to taste.
6. Serve hot.

LENTIL & MUSHROOM POTATO BAKE

INGREDIENTS

- 1/2 cup Green or brown lentils, cooked
- 1 cup Mushrooms, finely chopped
- 1/4 cup Onion, finely chopped
- 1/4 cup Carrot, finely diced
- 1/4 cup Celery, finely diced
- 1 clove Garlic, minced
- 1 tbsp Tomato paste
- 1/4 cup Vegetable broth
- 1/2 tsp Thyme, dried
- 1 cup Mashed potatoes, firm
- 2 tbsp Greek yogurt
- 1 tbsp Olive oil
- 1/4 tsp Salt
- 1/8 tsp Black pepper, freshly ground

TIP

For the best texture, make sure the filling is thick before baking; if it is too wet, simmer a few extra minutes before adding the potato topping.

Prep. Time: 15 min Cook Time: 30–35 min Servings: 1

**Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 470 | Protein 25 g
Fat 15 g | Carbs 60 g**

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 375°F (190°C).
2. Heat the olive oil in a small skillet over medium heat. Add onion, carrot, and celery; cook 5–6 minutes until softened.
3. Add the mushrooms and garlic; cook 7–8 minutes, until the mushrooms release their liquid and the mixture is almost dry.
4. Stir in tomato paste, lentils, broth, thyme, salt, and pepper. Simmer 5–7 minutes, until thick and spoonable, not watery.
5. Mix the mashed potatoes with Greek yogurt until smooth but still firm.
6. Spoon the lentil-mushroom filling into a small baking dish and spread the mashed potato evenly over the top.
7. Bake 15–20 minutes, until the top is lightly golden and the filling is hot.

Chapter 10: Soups

If there's one category of food that does more quiet, unglamorous work than it gets credit for, it's soup. Not the glamorous kind, not the restaurant-plated bisque with a swirl of cream on top. Just a proper, protein-forward, vegetable-packed bowl of something warm. For women over 50, soup belongs in regular rotation, and here's why.

First, hydration. Most women over 50 are mildly dehydrated more often than they realize - and the thirst mechanism becomes less reliable with age. A bowl of soup contributes meaningfully to your 1.8-2.2 liter daily target without requiring you to track a single glass of water. The liquid is already built in.

Second, satiety. Warm, thick soups trigger stronger hunger-suppressing hormones - specifically CCK and GLP-1, than cold foods at the same calorie count. Research published in the British Journal of Nutrition found that regular soup consumers had lower body weight, smaller waist circumference, and lower total calorie intake over time compared to non-consumers. The mechanism is straightforward: the volume, warmth, and fiber content slow gastric emptying, meaning you stay full longer on fewer calories.

Third, gut health. A vegetable soup that combines three or more distinct fiber sources, say, carrots, lentils, and spinach - feeds multiple strains of beneficial gut bacteria simultaneously. A 2024 analysis found that people who regularly ate multi-fiber soups showed greater gut microbial diversity and reduced markers of systemic inflammation. After 50, when estrogen-driven gut protection naturally declines, this matters more than most women are told.

Fourth, protein delivery. Soup is one of the easiest ways to hit your protein targets without thinking too hard about it. Add chicken, turkey, legumes, eggs, or cottage cheese and a single bowl can carry 25-35 grams of protein alongside a full serving of vegetables. That combination supports muscle maintenance, blood sugar stability, and energy throughout the day.

And practically speaking: soups batch-cook beautifully, freeze well, and reheat in four minutes. For a busy week, one large pot on Sunday is three lunches solved.



SALMON AND VEGETABLE SOUP

INGREDIENTS

- 4 oz Salmon fillet, skinless
- 1 cup Potato, diced (or cauliflower florets)
- 1/2 cup Carrot, peeled and sliced
- 1/4 cup Leek, white and light green parts, sliced
- 1/4 cup Celery, sliced
- 1 tbsp Fresh dill, chopped
- 1 tsp Olive oil
- 1.5 cups Vegetable or fish broth
- 1 tbsp Lemon juice, fresh
- 1/4 tsp Salt
- 1/8 tsp Black pepper, freshly ground

TIP

For a creamier soup, you can mash some of the cooked potato against the side of the pot before adding the salmon.

Prep. Time: 15 min Cook Time: 25–30 min Servings: 1

Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 380 | Protein 32 g
Fat 17 g | Carbs 22 g

DIRECTIONS

1. Cut salmon into 1-inch pieces and season lightly with salt and pepper.
2. Heat oil in a pot over medium. Sauté leek, celery, and carrot 5–7 minutes until softened.
3. Add potato (or cauliflower) and broth; boil, then cover and simmer 10–15 minutes until the potato is tender.
4. Add the salmon and cook 5–7 minutes, until it flakes easily.
5. Stir in dill and lemon juice; season to taste and serve hot.

COD AND TOMATO VEGETABLE SOUP

INGREDIENTS

- 4 oz Cod fillet, skinless
- 1/2 cup Potato, diced (about 1/2-inch cubes)
- 1/4 cup Carrot, peeled and diced
- 1/4 cup Celery, diced
- 1/4 cup Onion, chopped
- 1 clove Garlic, minced
- 1 tsp Olive oil
- 1 cup Diced tomatoes, canned, undrained
- 1 tbsp Tomato paste
- 1 cup Fish or vegetable broth
- 1 tbsp Fresh parsley, chopped
- 1 tsp Lemon juice, fresh
- 1/4 tsp Dried oregano
- 1/4 tsp Salt
- 1/8 tsp Black pepper, freshly ground

TIP

For a richer tomato flavor, you can lightly brown the tomato paste for a minute before adding the diced tomatoes and broth.

Prep. Time: 15 min Cook Time: 25–30 min Servings: 1

Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 320 | Protein 28 g
Fat 10 g | Carbs 30 g

DIRECTIONS

1. Cut cod into 1-inch pieces and season lightly with salt and pepper.
2. Heat oil in a pot over medium. Sauté onion, carrot, and celery 5–7 minutes until softened.
3. Add garlic and oregano; cook 1 minute.
4. Stir in potato, diced tomatoes, tomato paste, and broth; boil, then cover and simmer 10–15 minutes until the potato is tender.
5. Add the cod and cook 5–7 minutes, until it flakes easily.
6. Stir in parsley and lemon juice; season to taste and serve hot.

CREAMY COD CHOWDER WITH LEEK AND POTATO

INGREDIENTS

- 4 oz Cod fillet, skinless
- 1 cup Potato, peeled and diced (about 1/2-inch cubes)
- 1/2 cup Leek, white and light green parts, sliced
- 1/4 cup Celery, diced
- 1 tbsp Olive oil
- 1.5 cups Fish or vegetable broth
- 1/2 cup Milk (low-fat or whole)
- 1 tbsp Fresh parsley or chives, chopped
- 1 tsp Lemon juice, fresh
- 1/4 tsp Salt
- 1/8 tsp Black pepper, freshly ground

TIP

For a thicker chowder, you can mash some of the cooked potato against the side of the pot before adding the milk and cod.

Prep. Time: 15 min Cook Time: 25–30 min Servings: 1

Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 390 | Protein 30 g
Fat 15 g | Carbs 32 g

DIRECTIONS

1. Cut cod into 1-inch pieces and season lightly with salt and pepper.
2. Heat oil in a pot over medium. Sauté leek and celery 5–7 minutes until softened.
3. Add potato and broth; boil, then cover and simmer 10–15 minutes until tender. Stir in the milk.
4. Add the cod and cook 5–7 minutes, until it flakes easily.
5. Stir in parsley or chives and lemon juice; season to taste and serve hot.

TOMATO WHITE BEAN SOUP WITH TUNA

INGREDIENTS

- 4 oz Tuna, drained
- 1/2 cup White beans, canned, drained and rinsed
- 1 cup Canned tomatoes in juice
- 1/4 cup Onion, chopped
- 1/4 cup Celery, diced
- 1/4 cup Carrot, peeled and diced
- 1 clove Garlic, minced
- 1 tsp Olive oil
- 1/4 tsp Dried basil
- 1/4 tsp Dried oregano
- 1/8 tsp Black pepper

TIP

For a thicker texture, lightly mash some of the white beans in the pot before adding the tuna. For a brighter flavor, stir in a small spoonful of chopped fresh basil just before serving.

Prep. Time: 10 min Cook Time: 20–25 min Servings: 1

Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 345 | Protein 31 g
Fat 10 g | Carbs 32 g

DIRECTIONS

1. Drain the tuna and flake it gently with a fork. Set aside.
2. Heat 1 teaspoon of olive oil in a medium pot or Dutch oven over medium heat. Add chopped onion, diced celery, and diced carrot. Sauté for 5–7 minutes until the vegetables begin to soften.
3. Add minced garlic, dried basil, dried oregano, and black pepper. Cook for 1 minute more until fragrant.
4. Stir in the canned tomatoes with their juice and the white beans. Bring the mixture to a gentle boil, then reduce heat to low and simmer uncovered for 10–12 minutes so the flavors can blend.
5. Add the tuna and stir gently to combine. Cook for 2–3 minutes more until heated through.
6. Taste and adjust black pepper if needed.
7. Serve hot.

CHICKEN VEGETABLE SOUP WITH WHOLE-WHEAT PASTA

INGREDIENTS

- 4 oz Chicken breast, boneless and skinless
- 1/4 cup Carrot, peeled and diced
- 1/4 cup Celery, diced
- 1/4 cup Onion, chopped
- 1/3 cup Whole-wheat pasta, dry
- 2 cups Chicken broth

TIP

Choose a small pasta shape so it blends well with the chicken and vegetables and is easy to eat in each spoonful.

Prep. Time: 10 min Cook Time: 20–25 min Servings: 1

**Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 295 | Protein 31 g
Fat 4 g | Carbs 31 g**

DIRECTIONS

1. Bring a small pot of water to a boil and cook the whole-wheat pasta according to the package directions until just tender. Drain and set aside.
2. Dice the chicken breast into small bite-size pieces. Set aside.
3. Pour the chicken broth into a medium pot or Dutch oven and bring it to a gentle simmer over medium heat.
4. Add chopped onion, diced carrot, and diced celery. Cook for 5–6 minutes until the vegetables begin to soften.
5. Add the chicken pieces and simmer for 6–8 minutes until the chicken is cooked through.
6. Stir in the cooked pasta, mix gently, and turn off the heat right away.
7. Taste and adjust with a little extra broth if needed.
8. Serve hot.

CHICKEN AND CHICKPEA SOUP

INGREDIENTS

- 4 oz Chicken breast, boneless and skinless
- 1/2 cup Chickpeas, canned, rinsed and drained
- 1/4 cup Carrot, peeled and diced
- 1/4 cup Celery, diced
- 1/4 cup Onion, chopped
- 1/2 cup Diced tomatoes, canned
- 1 clove Garlic, minced
- 1 tsp Olive oil
- 2 cups Chicken broth
- 1/2 tsp Paprika
- 1/4 tsp Dried herbs (e.g., oregano, thyme)

TIP

For a thicker soup, you can mash some of the chickpeas against the side of the pot.

Prep. Time: 15 min Cook Time: 25–30 min Servings: 1

**Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 350 | Protein 35 g
Fat 8 g | Carbs 30 g**

DIRECTIONS

1. Dice the chicken into bite-size pieces.
2. Heat oil in a pot over medium. Sauté onion, carrot, and celery 5–7 minutes until softened.
3. Add garlic and paprika; cook 1 minute.
4. Add the chicken and cook 5–7 minutes, until lightly browned.
5. Pour in broth and diced tomatoes; bring to a simmer.
6. Add chickpeas and herbs; simmer 10–15 minutes, until the chicken is cooked through.
7. Adjust seasoning and serve hot.

TURKEY MEATBALL AND VEGETABLE SOUP WITH DILL

INGREDIENTS

- 4 oz Ground turkey
- 2 cups Hot water
- 1/2 cup Yukon Gold potato, peeled and diced
- 1/2 cup Cauliflower florets, cut into small pieces
- 1/4 cup Yellow onion, finely chopped
- 1/4 cup Carrot, grated
- 1/4 tbsp Ghee or olive oil
- 1/2 tsp Salt
- 1/8 tsp Black pepper
- 1/2 tbsp Fresh dill, chopped

TIP

Consider making a larger batch of meatballs from the entire package of ground turkey and freezing the uncooked extras for future meals.

Prep. Time: 20 min Cook Time: 25–30 min Servings: 1

Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 320 | Protein 30 g
Fat 15 g | Carbs 18 g

DIRECTIONS

1. Shape the ground turkey into small 1-inch meatballs.
2. Boil the meatballs in water 5 minutes, then drain and return them to the pot with 2 cups fresh hot water.
3. Add the potatoes and cauliflower.
4. Sauté onion and grated carrot in ghee or oil 5–7 minutes, then add to the soup; season.
5. Simmer 15–20 minutes, until the vegetables are tender and the meatballs are cooked through.
6. Stir in the dill just before serving.

CREAMY TURKEY VEGETABLE SOUP

INGREDIENTS

- 8 oz Ground turkey, lean
- 1/2 tbsp Olive oil
- 1/4 cup Yellow onion, chopped
- 1 clove Garlic, minced
- 1/2 cup Carrots, chopped
- 1/4 cup Celery, chopped
- 1 cup Cauliflower, florets cut into small pieces
- 1/2 cup Potato, diced
- 2 cups Chicken broth
- 1/2 tsp Dried thyme
- 1/2 tsp Dried oregano
- 1/2 tsp Smoked paprika
- 1/2 tsp Salt
- 1/4 tsp Black pepper
- 1/4 cup Cottage cheese, low-fat
- 1/8 cup Greek yogurt, plain
- 1/2 tbsp Lemon juice, fresh

TIP

For an extra boost of flavor, roast the vegetables before adding them to the soup.

Prep. Time: 15 min Cook Time: 30–35 min Servings: 1

Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 450 | Protein 45 g
Fat 18 g | Carbs 28 g

DIRECTIONS

1. Heat oil in a large pot over medium. Cook onion 3–4 minutes until softened.
2. Add the turkey and cook 5–6 minutes, breaking it up, until no longer pink; stir in garlic for 30 seconds.
3. Add carrots, celery, cauliflower, potato, broth, thyme, oregano, paprika, salt, and pepper; bring to a boil.
4. Cover partially and simmer 20–25 minutes, until very tender.
5. Off the heat, stir in cottage cheese, Greek yogurt, and lemon juice.
6. Blend smooth with an immersion blender, then warm gently without boiling.
7. Adjust seasoning and serve warm, garnished as desired.

CREAMY BROCCOLI SOUP

INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups Broccoli florets, fresh or frozen
- 1/4 medium Yellow onion, chopped
- 1 clove Garlic, minced
- 1 stalk Celery, diced
- 1 1/2 cups Low-sodium vegetable broth
- 3 tbsp Plain Greek yogurt
- 2 tbsp Sharp cheddar cheese, shredded
- 1 tsp Olive oil
- 1/4 tsp Garlic powder
- 1/4 tsp Onion powder
- to taste Salt
- to taste Black pepper, freshly ground

TIP

The key to a vibrant green color is not overcooking the broccoli; 12 to 15 minutes of simmering is enough to make it perfectly tender without losing its color.

Prep. Time: 10 min Cook Time: 20 min Servings: 1

Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 210 | Protein 14 g
Fat 9 g | Carbs 16 g

DIRECTIONS

1. Heat oil in a pot over medium. Cook onion and celery 4–5 minutes until softened.
2. Add garlic; cook 1 minute.
3. Add broccoli, broth, garlic powder, onion powder, salt, and pepper; boil, then cover and simmer 12–15 minutes until tender.
4. Blend smooth with an immersion blender.
5. Stir in the Greek yogurt over gentle heat; do not boil.
6. Adjust seasoning, top with shredded cheddar, and serve hot.

CREAMY PUMPKIN SOUP WITH SEEDS

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup Canned pumpkin puree
- 1/2 cup Carrot, peeled and diced
- 1/4 cup Yellow onion, chopped
- 1.5 cups Vegetable broth
- 1 tbsp Pumpkin seeds, raw
- 1 tbsp Greek yogurt, plain (for serving)
- 1 tsp Olive oil
- 1 clove Garlic, minced
- Pinch Ground nutmeg
- 1/4 tsp Salt
- 1/8 tsp Black pepper

TIP

For an extra layer of flavor, roast the pumpkin seeds in a dry skillet for a few minutes until lightly golden and fragrant before sprinkling them on top.

Prep. Time: 10 min Cook Time: 20–25 min Servings: 1

Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 200 | Protein 8 g
Fat 10 g | Carbs 20 g

DIRECTIONS

1. Heat oil in a pot over medium. Sauté onion and carrot 5–7 minutes until softened.
2. Add garlic, nutmeg, salt, and pepper; cook 1 minute.
3. Add pumpkin puree and broth; bring to a gentle simmer.
4. Cover and simmer 10–15 minutes, until very tender.
5. Blend smooth with an immersion blender.
6. Adjust seasoning and serve hot, topped with Greek yogurt and pumpkin seeds.

TOMATO LENTIL SOUP

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup Canned diced tomatoes in juice
- 1/2 cup Red lentils, dry, rinsed
- 1/2 cup Carrot, peeled and diced
- 1/4 cup Yellow onion, chopped
- 1 clove Garlic, minced
- 2 cups Vegetable broth
- 1 tsp Olive oil
- 1/2 tsp Dried basil
- 1/4 tsp Salt
- 1/8 tsp Black pepper

TIP

For a smoother soup, you can use an immersion blender to blend a portion or all of the soup directly in the pot.

Prep. Time: 10 min Cook Time: 25–30 min Servings: 1

Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 250 | Protein 15 g
Fat 5 g | Carbs 35 g

DIRECTIONS

1. Heat oil in a pot over medium. Sauté onion and carrot 5–7 minutes until softened.
2. Add garlic and basil; cook 1 minute.
3. Add red lentils, diced tomatoes, and broth; bring to a boil.
4. Cover and simmer 20–25 minutes, until the lentils are very tender.
5. Season with salt and pepper and serve hot.

HOMEMADE CREAMY MUSHROOM SOUP

INGREDIENTS

- 1/2 tbsp Olive oil
- 1/2 cup Yellow onion, chopped
- 1 clove Garlic, minced
- 4 oz Button or cremini mushrooms, sliced
- 1/2 cup Potatoes, peeled and diced
- 2 cups Low-sodium vegetable broth
- 1/4 cup Heavy cream or half-and-half
- 1/2 tsp Salt
- 1/4 tsp Black pepper
- 1/2 tsp Dried thyme
- 1 tbsp Fresh parsley, chopped (for garnish)
- 1/8 cup Croutons (for serving)

TIP

For a richer mushroom flavor, consider sautéing a small amount of finely chopped shallots along with the onion.

Prep. Time: 15 min Cook Time: 25–30 min Servings: 1

Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 300 | Protein 8 g
Fat 20 g | Carbs 22 g

DIRECTIONS

1. Heat oil in a large pot over medium. Cook onion 3–4 minutes until softened.
2. Add mushrooms and cook 5–7 minutes until browned; stir in garlic for 30 seconds.
3. Add potatoes, broth, thyme, salt, and pepper; bring to a boil.
4. Cover partially and simmer 15–20 minutes, until the potatoes are very tender.
5. Off the heat, stir in the cream, then blend smooth with an immersion blender.
6. Warm gently without boiling, adjust seasoning, and serve hot with parsley and croutons.

Chapter 11: Salads

Salads have a reputation problem. For decades, they've been associated with deprivation — a pile of iceberg lettuce eaten reluctantly by someone who really wanted pasta. That version of a salad isn't what we're talking about here. A properly built salad is one of the most nutritionally efficient meals you can put on the table: high volume, high fiber, high micronutrient density, and surprisingly satisfying when put together with some intention. And then there's the practical argument, which honestly might be the strongest one. A salad is the most forgiving meal format that exists. Half an avocado that needs to be used. Leftover roasted chicken. A handful of cherry tomatoes. Some chickpeas from a can. A few walnuts. Dress it with olive oil, lemon juice, and whatever spice you like — and dinner is done in four minutes. The refrigerator gets cleaned out, nothing goes to waste, and the result is genuinely nourishing.

There's one idea I find personally compelling, though I'll be honest — I haven't yet been able to fully confirm it from my own practice. The theory goes that the human body is calibrated to feel satisfied not just by calories, but by the physical weight and volume of food consumed in a day. Some nutrition researchers suggest that adults naturally feel complete when they've eaten approximately 1.5 to 2 kg of actual food — regardless of caloric density. If that's true, then the strategy becomes clear: fill a meaningful portion of that volume with food that weighs a lot and costs you very few calories. Salads are almost perfectly designed for exactly that. A large bowl of vegetables, greens, legumes, and protein can weigh 400—500 grams and deliver enormous nutritional value for relatively modest caloric investment — leaving room in your daily "food budget" for the more calorie-dense meals that also belong on your plate. Whether or not that specific theory holds up under scrutiny for you personally, the underlying logic is sound: volume and variety in salads work in your favor, not against you



GRILLED CHICKEN GREEK SALAD

INGREDIENTS

- 4 oz Grilled chicken breast
- 2 cups Romaine lettuce, chopped
- 1/2 cup Cucumber, diced
- 1/2 cup Cherry tomatoes, halved
- 1/4 cup Red onion, thinly sliced
- 1/4 cup Kalamata olives, pitted and halved
- 1/4 cup Feta cheese, crumbled
- 1 tbsp Olive oil
- 1 tbsp Lemon juice, fresh
- 1/2 tsp Dried oregano
- to taste Salt
- to taste Black pepper

TIP

For best flavor, ensure all vegetables are fresh and crisp.

Prep. Time: 15 min Cook Time: 0 min (if chicken is pre-cooked) Servings: 1

Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 510 | Protein 43 g
Fat 31 g | Carbs 14 g

DIRECTIONS

1. Cook the chicken if needed; rest, then slice into bite-size pieces.
2. In a large bowl, combine romaine, cucumber, cherry tomatoes, red onion, and Kalamata olives.
3. Whisk olive oil, lemon juice, oregano, salt, and pepper into a dressing.
4. Add the chicken and top with feta.
5. Pour over the dressing, toss gently, and serve.

TURKEY AND APPLE WALNUT SALAD

INGREDIENTS

- 4 oz Cooked turkey breast, sliced or diced
- 2 cups Mixed salad greens
- 1/2 medium Apple, thinly sliced
- 1/4 cup Celery, thinly sliced
- 2 tbsp Walnuts, chopped
- 1 tbsp Dried cranberries
- 2 tbsp Red onion, thinly sliced
- 1 tbsp Olive oil
- 1 tbsp Apple cider vinegar
- 1 tsp Dijon mustard
- to taste Salt
- to taste Black pepper

TIP

For the best texture, slice the apple just before serving to keep it fresh and crisp.

Prep. Time: 15 min Cook Time: 0 min (if turkey is pre-cooked) Servings: 1

Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 420 | Protein 33 g
Fat 23 g | Carbs 19 g

DIRECTIONS

1. If not already cooked, prepare the turkey breast until thoroughly done. Let it cool slightly, then slice or dice it into bite-sized pieces.
2. In a large bowl, combine the mixed salad greens, thinly sliced apple, celery, chopped walnuts, dried cranberries, and red onion.
3. In a small bowl, whisk together the olive oil, apple cider vinegar, Dijon mustard, salt, and black pepper to make the dressing.
4. Add the sliced or diced turkey to the bowl with the salad ingredients.
5. Pour the dressing over the salad and toss gently until everything is evenly coated.
6. Serve immediately.

STEAK AND ARUGULA SALAD

INGREDIENTS

- 4 oz Beef steak, cooked and sliced
- 2 cups Arugula
- 1/2 cup Cherry tomatoes, halved
- 1/2 cup Cucumber, sliced
- 2 tbsp Red onion, thinly sliced
- 2 tbsp Parmesan cheese, shaved
- 1 tbsp Olive oil
- 1 tbsp Balsamic vinegar
- to taste Salt
- to taste Black pepper

TIP

For the best flavor, use steak that has rested before slicing so the juices stay in the meat.

Prep. Time: 15 min Cook Time: 10 min Servings: 1

**Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 390 | Protein 32 g
Fat 26 g | Carbs 9 g**

DIRECTIONS

1. Season the beef steak with salt and black pepper. Cook it in a skillet or on a grill over medium-high heat until it reaches your desired doneness.
2. Let the steak rest for 5 minutes, then slice it thinly against the grain.
3. In a large bowl, combine the arugula, cherry tomatoes, cucumber, and red onion.
4. In a small bowl, whisk together the olive oil and balsamic vinegar to make the dressing.
5. Add the sliced steak to the salad and drizzle with the dressing.
6. Top with shaved Parmesan and toss gently, or leave layered for serving.
7. Serve immediately.

TURKEY COBB SALAD

INGREDIENTS

- 4 oz Cooked turkey breast, sliced or diced
- 2 cups Romaine lettuce, chopped
- 1 large Hard-boiled eggs, quartered
- 1/2 medium Avocado, diced
- 1/2 cup Cherry tomatoes, halved
- 2 strips Turkey bacon, cooked and crumbled
- 2 tbsp Blue cheese, crumbled
- 2 tbsp Red onion, thinly sliced
- 1 tbsp Olive oil
- 1 tbsp Red wine vinegar
- 1/2 tsp Dijon mustard
- to taste Salt
- to taste Black pepper

TIP

The classic Cobb presentation, with toppings arranged in neat rows, is not just for looks.

**Prep. Time: 15 min Cook Time: 0 min (if turkey and eggs are pre-cooked)
Servings: 1**

**Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 480 | Protein 44 g
Fat 29 g | Carbs 11 g**

DIRECTIONS

1. Cook the turkey if needed and slice into bite-size pieces. Crisp the turkey bacon, then crumble.
2. Arrange romaine as the base on a plate.
3. Arrange the turkey, hard-boiled eggs, avocado, cherry tomatoes, bacon, blue cheese, and red onion in rows over the lettuce.
4. Whisk olive oil, red wine vinegar, Dijon, salt, and pepper into a dressing.
5. Drizzle over the salad just before serving.

TUNA, CORN, AND EGG SALAD

INGREDIENTS

- 4 oz Canned tuna in water, drained
- 2 Large hard-boiled eggs, quartered
- 1/3 cup Canned corn, drained
- 2 cups Romaine lettuce, chopped
- 1/2 cup Cherry tomatoes, halved
- 1/4 cup Cucumber, diced
- 2 tbsp Red onion, thinly sliced
- 1 tbsp Plain Greek yogurt
- 1 tbsp Olive oil
- 1 tbsp Lemon juice, fresh
- 1/2 tsp Dijon mustard
- to taste Salt
- to taste Black pepper

TIP

Use tuna packed in water for a lighter result, and pat it dry before adding it to keep the salad from getting watery.

Prep. Time: 10 min Cook Time: 0 min (if eggs are pre-cooked) Servings: 1

Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 370 | Protein 36 g

Fat 15 g | Carbs 18 g

DIRECTIONS

1. If needed, hard-boil the eggs (boil, then sit covered 10 minutes), cool, peel, and quarter.
2. Drain and flake the tuna; drain the corn.
3. Whisk Greek yogurt, olive oil, lemon juice, Dijon, salt, and pepper into a dressing.
4. Arrange romaine on a plate; top with tuna, eggs, corn, cherry tomatoes, cucumber, and red onion.
5. Drizzle with the dressing and serve.

SARDINE MEDITERRANEAN SALAD

INGREDIENTS

- 1 can (about 3.75 oz) Sardines, drained
- 2 cups Arugula
- 1/2 cup Tomatoes, chopped or halved
- 1/2 cup Cucumber, sliced
- 2 tbsp Olives
- 2 tbsp Red onion, thinly sliced
- 1/2 cup White beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 tbsp Olive oil
- 1 tbsp Lemon juice
- to taste Black pepper
- to taste Salt

TIP

For the best flavor, use sardines packed in olive oil and drain them lightly so they stay tender.

Prep. Time: 10 min Cook Time: 0 min Servings: 1

Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 390 | Protein 28 g

Fat 20 g | Carbs 21 g

DIRECTIONS

1. Drain the sardines and place them in a medium bowl. Break them gently into large bite-sized pieces with a fork.
2. Add the white beans, chopped tomatoes, sliced cucumber, olives, and thinly sliced red onion to the bowl.
3. In a small bowl, whisk together the olive oil, lemon juice, black pepper, and a little salt if needed.
4. Pour the dressing over the sardine mixture and toss gently to combine.
5. Arrange the arugula on a plate or in a serving bowl.
6. Spoon the sardine and vegetable mixture over the arugula.
7. Serve immediately.

SHRIMP AND CITRUS SALAD

INGREDIENTS

- 4 oz Shrimp, peeled and deveined
- 2 cups Mixed greens
- 1/2 medium Orange, segmented
- 1/2 medium Avocado, diced
- 1/2 cup Cucumber, sliced
- 2 tbsp Red onion, thinly sliced
- 1 tbsp Olive oil
- 1 tbsp Lime juice
- to taste Salt
- to taste Black pepper

TIP

For the best flavor, chill the cooked shrimp slightly before adding it to the salad.

Prep. Time: 15 min Cook Time: 5 min Servings: 1

**Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 340 | Protein 27 g
Fat 19 g | Carbs 14 g**

DIRECTIONS

1. If the shrimp is not already cooked, bring a small pot of water to a gentle boil or heat a skillet over medium heat. Cook the shrimp for 2–3 minutes, or until pink and opaque, then let it cool slightly.
2. Arrange the mixed greens in a large bowl or on a serving plate.
3. Top with the orange segments, diced avocado, sliced cucumber, and thinly sliced red onion.
4. Add the cooked shrimp over the salad ingredients.
5. In a small bowl, whisk together the olive oil, lime juice, salt, and black pepper to make the dressing.
6. Drizzle the dressing over the salad just before serving.
7. Toss gently if desired, or leave layered for serving.
8. Serve immediately.

SMOKED SALMON BEET AND BEAN SALAD

INGREDIENTS

- 3 oz Smoked salmon, sliced
- 2 cups Mixed salad greens
- 1/2 cup Cooked beets, sliced or cubed
- 1/2 cup Canned white beans, drained and rinsed
- 2 tbsp Red onion, thinly sliced
- 1 tbsp Cashews, roughly chopped
- 1 1/2 tbsp Plain yogurt
- 1 tbsp Olive oil
- 1 tbsp Red wine vinegar
- to taste Chili pepper, finely chopped
- to taste Sea salt
- to taste Black pepper

TIP

Be sure to drizzle the dressing over the salad right before serving.

Prep. Time: 15 min Cook Time: 0 min Servings: 1

**Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 410 | Protein 24 g
Fat 22 g | Carbs 27 g**

DIRECTIONS

1. Cook the beets if needed, then cool and cut into bite-size pieces.
2. Soften the red onion in the red wine vinegar for 5 minutes.
3. Whisk olive oil, yogurt, salt, pepper, and a little of the onion vinegar into a dressing.
4. Arrange the greens on a plate; top with beets, white beans, smoked salmon, and the onion.
5. Sprinkle with cashews and chili to taste, drizzle with dressing, and serve.

GREEK WHITE BEAN SALAD

INGREDIENTS

- 1/2 cup Cannellini beans, drained and rinsed
- 1/2 cup Cucumber, chopped
- 1/2 cup Tomatoes, chopped
- 1/4 cup Red bell pepper, chopped
- 2 tbsp Red onion, thinly sliced
- 1 tbsp Fresh parsley, chopped
- 2 tbsp Feta cheese, crumbled
- 1 tbsp Olive oil
- 1 tbsp Lemon juice
- to taste Salt
- to taste Black pepper

TIP

For the best flavor, let the salad sit for 5 minutes before serving so the beans can absorb the dressing.

Prep. Time: 10 min Cook Time: 0 min Servings: 1

**Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 320 | Protein 12 g
Fat 18 g | Carbs 28 g**

DIRECTIONS

1. Drain and rinse the cannellini beans, then place them in a medium bowl.
2. Add the chopped cucumber, tomatoes, red bell pepper, thinly sliced red onion, and fresh parsley.
3. In a small bowl, whisk together the olive oil, lemon juice, salt, and black pepper to make the dressing.
4. Pour the dressing over the bean and vegetable mixture, then toss gently to combine.
5. Transfer the salad to a serving bowl or plate.
6. Top with the crumbled feta cheese.
7. Serve immediately.

CAPRESE SALAD

INGREDIENTS

- 1 medium Tomatoes, sliced
- 3 oz Fresh mozzarella, sliced
- 6–8 leaves Fresh basil leaves
- 2 tbsp Black olives, sliced or whole
- 1 tbsp Extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 tsp Balsamic vinegar
- to taste Black pepper
- to taste Salt

TIP

For the best flavor, use ripe tomatoes and fresh mozzarella at room temperature.

Prep. Time: 10 min Cook Time: 0 min Servings: 1

**Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 310 | Protein 14 g
Fat 25 g | Carbs 8 g**

DIRECTIONS

1. Slice the tomatoes and fresh mozzarella into even rounds.
2. Arrange the tomato slices and mozzarella slices on a serving plate, alternating them slightly.
3. Tuck the fresh basil leaves between the slices or scatter them over the top.
4. Add the black olives over and around the salad.
5. Drizzle the extra-virgin olive oil and balsamic vinegar evenly over the salad.
6. Season with black pepper and a little salt to taste.
7. Serve immediately.

CUCUMBER TOMATO SALAD

INGREDIENTS

- 1 medium Cucumber, sliced
- 1 medium Tomatoes, chopped or sliced
- 2 tbsp Red onion, thinly sliced
- 1 tbsp Fresh parsley, chopped
- 1 tbsp Fresh dill, chopped
- 1 tbsp Olive oil
- 1 tbsp Lemon juice
- to taste Salt
- to taste Black pepper

TIP

For the best texture, slice the vegetables just before serving and toss the salad gently.

Prep. Time: 10 min Cook Time: 0 min Servings: 1

**Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 120 | Protein 2 g
Fat 9 g | Carbs 8 g**

DIRECTIONS

1. Slice the cucumber and chop or slice the tomatoes into bite-sized pieces.
2. Thinly slice the red onion and place it in a large bowl.
3. Add the cucumber, tomatoes, chopped parsley, and chopped dill to the bowl.
4. In a small bowl, whisk together the olive oil, lemon juice, salt, and black pepper to make the dressing.
5. Pour the dressing over the vegetables and toss gently until everything is evenly coated.
6. Serve immediately.

CABBAGE AND CARROT SALAD WITH OLIVES

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup Green cabbage, finely shredded
- 1/4 cup Carrot, grated
- 2 tbsp Olives, sliced
- 1/2 tbsp Olive oil
- 1/4 tbsp Apple cider vinegar
- 1/4 tsp Sesame seeds (optional)
- to taste Salt
- A pinch Sugar

TIP

For the best texture, let the shredded cabbage sit with a little salt for a few minutes before mixing the salad.

Prep. Time: 10 min Cook Time: 0 min Servings: 1

**Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 110 | Protein 2 g
Fat 8 g | Carbs 8 g**

DIRECTIONS

1. Finely shred the cabbage and place it in a large bowl.
2. Sprinkle the cabbage lightly with salt, then press and toss it gently with your hands for 1–2 minutes until it begins to soften and release a little moisture.
3. Grate the carrot on a coarse grater and add it to the bowl.
4. Slice the olives into rings and add them to the cabbage and carrot mixture.
5. In a small bowl, whisk together the olive oil, apple cider vinegar, a little salt, and a pinch of sugar.
6. Pour the dressing over the salad and toss well until everything is evenly combined.
7. Sprinkle with sesame seeds if using.
8. Serve immediately.

APPLE AND CELERY SALAD

INGREDIENTS

- 1 medium Apple, grated or cut into thin strips
- 1/2 cup Celery, grated
- 1 small Carrot, grated
- 1 tbsp Fresh parsley, chopped
- 1 tbsp Olive oil
- 1 tbsp Lemon juice or vinegar
- to taste Black pepper
- to taste Salt

TIP

For the best texture, prepare the apple just before serving so it stays fresh and does not darken.

Prep. Time: 10 min Cook Time: 0 min Servings: 1

Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 180 | Protein 2 g
Fat 9 g | Carbs 21 g

DIRECTIONS

1. Grate the apple or cut into thin strips.
2. Grate the celery and carrot into a bowl.
3. Add the apple and parsley.
4. Whisk olive oil, lemon juice or vinegar, salt, and pepper into a dressing.
5. Pour over the salad, toss gently, and serve.

ROASTED BEET AND WALNUT SALAD

INGREDIENTS

- 1 medium Beets, peeled and cubed
- 1 cup Baby arugula
- 2 tbsp Walnuts, roughly chopped
- 1 oz Goat cheese, crumbled
- 2 tbsp Red onion, thinly sliced
- 1 tbsp Lemon juice (for marinating onion)
- 1/2 tsp Sugar (for marinating onion)
- 1 tbsp Extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 tbsp Balsamic vinegar
- 1/2 tsp Honey
- To taste Salt
- To taste Black pepper

TIP

Marinating the onion while the beets roast is a perfect use of time — by the time everything is ready, the onion will be soft, sweet, and tangy with no sharp bite.

Prep. Time: 10 min Cook Time: 35 min Servings: 1

Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 300 | Protein 9 g
Fat 21 g | Carbs 21 g

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 400°F (200°C). Peel and cube the beets.
2. Marinate the sliced red onion in lemon juice, sugar, and a pinch of salt.
3. Toss the beets with half the oil, salt, and pepper on a lined sheet; roast 30–35 minutes, turning once, until tender. Cool 5 minutes.
4. Whisk the remaining oil, balsamic, honey, salt, and pepper into a dressing.
5. Arrange arugula on a plate; top with beets, drained onion, and walnuts.
6. Drizzle with dressing, top with goat cheese, and serve.

WARM ROASTED VEGETABLE SALAD WITH TAHINI DRESSING

INGREDIENTS

- 1/2 medium Sweet potato, peeled and cubed
- 1/2 cup Broccoli florets
- 1/4 cup Red bell pepper, chopped
- 1/3 cup Chickpeas, drained and rinsed
- 1 tbsp Extra-virgin olive oil
- 1/4 tsp Smoked paprika
- 1 tbsp Tahini
- 1 tbsp Lemon juice
- 1/2 clove Garlic, minced
- 1 tbsp Water
- 1 tbsp Pumpkin seeds
- To taste Salt
- To taste Black pepper

TIP

This salad is hearty enough to be a full meal on its own.

Prep. Time: 10 min Cook Time: 25 min Servings: 1

Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 340 | Protein 12 g
Fat 19 g | Carbs 33 g

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 400°F (200°C). Cube the sweet potato, chop the bell pepper, and cut broccoli into florets.
2. Toss the vegetables and chickpeas with oil, paprika, salt, and pepper on a lined sheet.
3. Roast 22–25 minutes, turning once, until the sweet potato is tender and the edges are golden.
4. Whisk tahini, lemon juice, garlic, water, and salt into a pourable dressing.
5. Transfer the warm vegetables to a plate, drizzle with dressing, top with pumpkin seeds, and serve warm.

MEDITERRANEAN LENTIL SALAD WITH SUN-DRIED TOMATOES

INGREDIENTS

- 1/2 cup Green or brown lentils, cooked
- 2 tbsp Sun-dried tomatoes, chopped
- 1/4 cup Cucumber, diced
- 4-5 olives Kalamata olives, halved
- 1 tbsp Fresh mint, chopped
- 1 tbsp Fresh parsley, chopped
- 1 oz Feta cheese, crumbled
- 1 tbsp Extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 tbsp Red wine vinegar
- 1/2 tsp Dijon mustard
- 1/2 clove Garlic, minced
- To taste Salt
- To taste Black pepper

TIP

This salad tastes even better after resting in the refrigerator for 30 minutes, as the lentils soak up the dressing and the flavors meld together.

Prep. Time: 15 min Cook Time: 0 min (using pre-cooked lentils) Servings: 1

Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 310 | Protein 14 g
Fat 17 g | Carbs 26 g

DIRECTIONS

1. Cook the lentils until just tender (or drain and rinse canned).
2. In a bowl, combine lentils, sun-dried tomatoes, cucumber, olives, mint, and parsley.
3. Whisk olive oil, red wine vinegar, Dijon, garlic, salt, and pepper into a dressing.
4. Pour over the lentils and toss.
5. Top with feta and serve at room temperature.

NAPA CABBAGE SALAD WITH CORN AND CUCUMBER

INGREDIENTS

- 1 1/2 cups Napa cabbage, thinly shredded
- 1/2 medium Cucumber, thinly sliced
- 1/4 cup Canned or fresh corn kernels
- 1 stalk Green onions, sliced
- 1 tbsp Fresh dill or parsley, chopped
- 1 tbsp Extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 tsp Apple cider vinegar
- 1/2 tsp Honey
- 1/4 clove Garlic, minced
- To taste Salt
- To taste Black pepper

TIP

Napa cabbage is much more tender than regular cabbage, so this salad stays crisp without any wilting.

Prep. Time: 10 min Cook Time: 0 min Servings: 1

Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 120 | Protein 3 g
Fat 7 g | Carbs 14 g

DIRECTIONS

1. Remove the outer leaves of the napa cabbage. Cut the cabbage in half lengthwise and slice it crosswise into thin shreds. Place in a large salad bowl.
2. Slice the cucumber in half lengthwise, then cut into thin half-moon slices. Add to the bowl.
3. Drain the canned corn (or use fresh kernels) and add to the bowl along with the sliced green onions.
4. In a small bowl, whisk together the olive oil, apple cider vinegar, honey, minced garlic, salt, and black pepper until well combined.
5. Pour the dressing over the salad and toss everything gently to coat evenly.
6. Let the salad rest for 3 to 5 minutes so the cabbage softens slightly and absorbs the dressing.
7. Top with fresh dill or parsley and serve immediately.

CELERY AND AVOCADO SALAD WITH LEMON DRESSING

INGREDIENTS

- 2 stalks Celery stalks, thinly sliced on the diagonal
- 1/2 medium Avocado, ripe, cubed
- 1/3 cup English cucumber, halved and sliced
- 3 Radishes, thinly sliced
- 1 tbsp Fresh dill, chopped
- 1 tbsp Extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 tbsp Lemon juice, fresh
- 1/4 tsp Lemon zest
- To taste Salt
- To taste Black pepper

TIP

Always add the avocado last and fold it in gently so it doesn't turn to mush. Slice the celery on the diagonal for a more elegant look and a better bite.

Prep. Time: 10 min Cook Time: 0 min Servings: 1

Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 175 | Protein 2 g
Fat 16 g | Carbs 8 g

DIRECTIONS

1. Thinly slice the celery stalks on the diagonal into pieces about 1/4 inch thick. Place them in a medium bowl.
2. Halve the English cucumber lengthwise, then slice it into thin half-moons. Thinly slice the radishes. Add both to the bowl with the celery.
3. In a small bowl, whisk together the olive oil, lemon juice, lemon zest, salt, and black pepper until well combined.
4. Pour the dressing over the vegetables and toss gently to coat everything evenly.
5. Cut the avocado into 1/2-inch cubes and add it to the bowl. Fold it in very gently with a spatula so the pieces stay intact.
6. Sprinkle with fresh chopped dill.
7. Serve immediately.

BEET SALAD WITH WALNUTS AND PRUNES

INGREDIENTS

- 1 medium Beets, cooked and coarsely grated
- 3 tbsp Walnuts, roughly chopped
- 3 tbsp Pitted prunes, roughly chopped
- 1 tbsp Plain low-fat yogurt or light sour cream
- To taste Salt

TIP

For the best flavor, cook the beets a day ahead and refrigerate them overnight — they become sweeter and easier to grate.

Prep. Time: 10 min Cook Time: 45 min (or 0 min if using pre-cooked beets)

Servings: 1

Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 220 | Protein 5 g

Fat 11 g | Carbs 29 g

DIRECTIONS

1. Boil the beets 40–45 minutes until fork-tender (or roast at 400°F wrapped in foil 50–60 minutes); cool.
2. Peel and coarsely grate the beets into a bowl.
3. Chop the walnuts and prunes and add them.
4. Stir in the yogurt or light sour cream until combined.
5. Season with salt, then chill 20–30 minutes before serving.

ROASTED CAULIFLOWER AND RED PEPPER SALAD

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup Cauliflower florets
- 1/2 medium Red bell pepper, cut into strips
- 1/4 cup Cherry tomatoes, halved
- 1 tbsp Fresh parsley, chopped
- 1 tsp Capers, drained
- 1 tbsp Extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 tsp Red wine vinegar
- 1/2 clove Garlic, minced
- 1/4 tsp Smoked paprika
- To taste Salt
- To taste Black pepper

TIP

The magic here is in the roasting — high heat turns ordinary cauliflower into something nutty, golden, and slightly caramelized.

Prep. Time: 10 min Cook Time: 20 min Servings: 1

Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 130 | Protein 3 g

Fat 10 g | Carbs 10 g

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 425°F (220°C). Cut cauliflower into florets and the bell pepper into strips.
2. Toss with half the oil, paprika, salt, and pepper on a lined sheet; roast 18–20 minutes, turning once, until golden.
3. Whisk the remaining oil, red wine vinegar, garlic, and salt into a dressing.
4. Cool the vegetables 3–5 minutes, then transfer to a bowl with the cherry tomatoes and capers.
5. Pour over the dressing, toss, top with parsley, and serve warm.

Chapter 12: Desserts

Let's address this directly: desserts are in this book on purpose. Not as a guilty concession, not as a cheat meal dressed up in clean-eating language but as a legitimate and genuinely useful part of how we eat after 50.

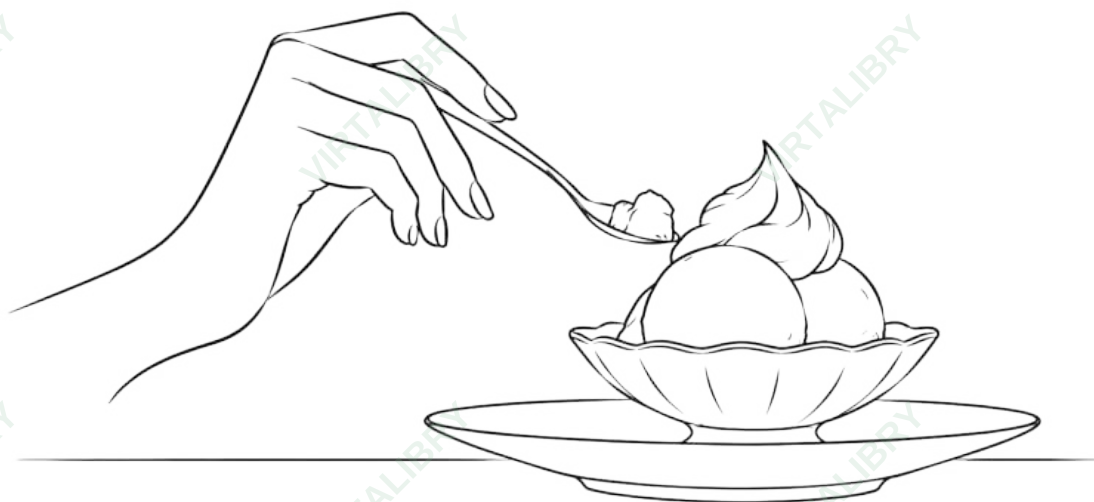
Here's why.

On days when vegetables carry most of the meal weight and they should, regularly the calorie count often falls short of what your body actually needs. The gap is real. And when that gap exists and goes unaddressed, your brain starts solving it on its own, usually somewhere around 9 p.m. in front of an open cabinet. The choice at that moment is rarely between a carrot and a candy bar. It's between a candy bar and nothing, because willpower has already left the building. A homemade dessert that you planned, prepared, and know the contents of is not a compromise — it's a strategy. It closes the calorie gap on your terms, not on the terms of whatever is most convenient and least nutritious at the moment of weakness.

Then there's the psychology. Research published in *Frontiers in Psychology* confirmed what anyone who has ever tried a strict diet already knows intuitively: selectively restricting a food increases preoccupation with it, heightens cravings, and dramatically raises the probability of eventually eating it in quantities that were never the plan. The restriction-binge cycle is well-documented and very real. Banning sugar entirely doesn't make you stop wanting it — it makes you think about it more. There's an old saying that captures this with uncomfortable accuracy: if you can't defeat something, lead it. Build it in. Give it a shape you control. A planned dessert made with real ingredients is always going to serve you better than a defeated raid on whatever happens to be in the pantry.

There's also a purely physiological argument. Sugar is energy, actual, immediate, usable energy. On days when physical output is higher than usual — a longer walk, a workout, a day on your feet — your body's demand for glucose increases. If you haven't adjusted your meals to match that output, your energy stores run low and the body signals that very clearly and very insistently. A small, well-constructed sweet — something with natural sugars, some protein, a bit of fat to slow the release — addresses that signal directly. It's not indulgence. It's refueling.

And finally, the most honest reason of all: for many of us, sweetness has been woven into the emotional fabric of decades. It's celebration, comfort, reward, and routine. That's not a flaw to be corrected through discipline, it's a pattern to be redirected gradually and without punishment. Cold turkey rarely works with food, and it works even less well with food that carries emotional weight. The desserts in this section are designed to give you what you've always reached for something sweet, satisfying, and genuinely pleasurable while being made of ingredients your body can actually work with. That's not compromise. That's how lasting change actually happens.



APRICOT ALMOND ENERGY BITES

INGREDIENTS

- 1/3 cup Dried apricots
- 1/4 cup Raw almonds
- 1 tsp Chia seeds
- 2 tbsp Unsweetened coconut flakes
- 1 tsp Fresh lemon juice

TIP

Dried apricots are an excellent source of iron and potassium. Almonds provide vitamin E and calcium, both essential for bone and skin health.

Prep. Time: 15 min Cook Time: 0 min Servings: 6

**Per 1 bite (estimated): Calories 70 | Protein 2 g
Fat 4 g | Carbs 9 g**

DIRECTIONS

1. Place the dried apricots and almonds in a food processor. Pulse several times until they are broken down into coarse crumbs.
2. Add the chia seeds, half of the coconut flakes, and the lemon juice. Continue processing until the mixture starts to clump together and holds its shape when pressed.
3. If the mixture feels too dry to roll, add a few more drops of lemon juice and pulse again.
4. Spread the remaining coconut flakes on a small plate.
5. Scoop out about 1 tablespoon of the mixture at a time and roll into balls. Roll each ball in the coconut flakes to coat.
6. Place on a parchment-lined plate and refrigerate for at least 20 minutes before serving.
7. Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 1 week.

BAKED APPLES WITH RAISINS AND PECANS

INGREDIENTS

- 1 medium Apple (such as Honeycrisp or Fuji)
- 1 tbsp Raisins
- 1 tbsp Pecans, roughly chopped
- 1/4 tsp Ground cinnamon
- 2 tbsp Water (for the baking dish)
- 2 tbsp Plain Greek yogurt, for serving

TIP

Choose a firm variety like Honeycrisp, Fuji, or Braeburn — they hold their shape during baking better than softer varieties.

Prep. Time: 10 min Cook Time: 30 min Servings: 1

**Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 195 | Protein 4 g
Fat 7 g | Carbs 33 g**

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 375°F (190°C).
2. Wash and dry the apple. Using a sharp paring knife or a melon baller, core the apple from the top, leaving the bottom intact to create a cup. Remove the seeds and create enough space to hold the filling.
3. In a small bowl, mix together the raisins, chopped pecans, and cinnamon.
4. Place the apple in a small baking dish. Fill the cavity generously with the raisin-pecan mixture, pressing it in gently.
5. Pour the water into the bottom of the baking dish — this helps the apple steam gently and prevents it from drying out.
6. Bake for 25 to 30 minutes, until the apple is tender when pierced with a fork but still holds its shape. The skin may split slightly — that is normal.
7. Let cool for 5 minutes, then serve with a dollop of plain Greek yogurt on the side.

BAKED COTTAGE CHEESE BAKE

INGREDIENTS

- 1/2 cup Low-fat cottage cheese
- 1 Egg
- 2 tbsp Plain Greek yogurt
- 2 tbsp Oat flour
- 1/4 tsp Vanilla extract
- 1 tbsp Raisins or chopped dried apricots
- 1/2 tsp Honey
- 1/4 cup Fresh berries, for serving

TIP

For a smoother texture, blend the cottage cheese before mixing. Oat flour can be made at home by blending rolled oats in a blender for 30 seconds.

Prep. Time: 10 min Cook Time: 25 min Servings: 1

**Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 230 | Protein 22 g
Fat 6 g | Carbs 22 g**

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F (175°C). Lightly grease a small ramekin or a 6-inch baking dish with cooking spray.
2. In a medium bowl, combine the cottage cheese, egg, plain Greek yogurt, oat flour, vanilla extract, and honey. Mix well until the batter is smooth and uniform.
3. Fold in the raisins or chopped dried apricots until evenly distributed.
4. Pour the batter into the prepared dish and smooth the top with a spatula.
5. Bake for 23 to 25 minutes, until the top is lightly golden and the center is set — it should not jiggle when you gently shake the dish.
6. Let cool for 5 minutes before serving. Top with fresh berries and serve warm or at room temperature.

BAKED PEARS WITH GREEK YOGURT

INGREDIENTS

- 1 medium Ripe pear (such as Bosc or Anjou)
- 1/4 tsp Ground cinnamon
- 1 tbsp Pecans, roughly chopped
- 3 tbsp Plain low-fat Greek yogurt
- 2 tbsp Water (for the baking dish)

TIP

Bosc pears are especially good for baking as they hold their shape beautifully — Anjou works well too. Serve warm with cold Greek yogurt for a satisfying contrast of temperatures.

Prep. Time: 5 min Cook Time: 20 min Servings: 1

**Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 185 | Protein 6 g
Fat 6 g | Carbs 30 g**

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 375°F (190°C).
2. Wash and dry the pear. Cut it in half lengthwise and use a small spoon or melon baller to scoop out the core and seeds.
3. Place the pear halves cut side up in a small baking dish. Sprinkle cinnamon evenly over the cut surface. Scatter the chopped pecans over and around the pear halves.
4. Pour the water into the bottom of the baking dish to prevent sticking and help the pear steam gently.
5. Bake for 18 to 22 minutes, until the pear is tender when pierced with a fork but still holds its shape.
6. Let cool for 3 to 5 minutes, then serve warm with a generous dollop of plain Greek yogurt alongside or on top.

BANANA OAT COOKIES

INGREDIENTS

- 1 medium Ripe banana
- 1/2 cup Rolled oats
- 1/4 tsp Ground cinnamon
- 1/4 tsp Vanilla extract
- 1 tbsp Raisins or dark chocolate chips (optional)

TIP

The cookies firm up as they cool, so let them sit for at least 5 minutes on the baking sheet before moving. They freeze well in an airtight bag for up to 1 month.

Prep. Time: 5 min Cook Time: 12 min Servings: 6

**Per 1 cookie (estimated): Calories 55 | Protein 1 g
Fat 1 g | Carbs 12 g**

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F (175°C). Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Peel the banana and place it in a medium bowl. Mash thoroughly with a fork until completely smooth — the riper the banana, the sweeter and easier to mash.
3. Add the rolled oats, cinnamon, and vanilla extract to the mashed banana. Stir until the mixture is fully combined and forms a thick, sticky dough. Fold in the raisins or chocolate chips if using.
4. Scoop out about 1 heaping tablespoon of dough per cookie and place on the prepared baking sheet. Flatten each one slightly with the back of a spoon into a round disc about 1/2 inch thick.
5. Bake for 11 to 13 minutes, until the cookies are set and the bottoms are lightly golden.

BERRY RICOTTA PARFAIT

INGREDIENTS

- 1/2 cup Part-skim ricotta cheese
- 1 tsp Honey
- 1/4 tsp Vanilla extract
- 1/2 cup Mixed fresh berries (blueberries, raspberries, strawberries)
- 1 tbsp Rolled oats or granola, for topping
- 1 pinch Ground cinnamon, for topping

TIP

For a smoother, creamier texture, stir the ricotta well before layering — it loosens nicely with just a spoon.

Prep. Time: 5 min Cook Time: 0 min Servings: 1

**Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 215 | Protein 14 g
Fat 7 g | Carbs 24 g**

DIRECTIONS

1. In a small bowl, stir together the ricotta cheese, honey, and vanilla extract until smooth and creamy.
2. Rinse the berries and pat dry. Halve any large strawberries for easier layering.
3. In a glass, jar, or bowl, spoon half of the ricotta cream as the first layer.
4. Add half of the berries on top of the ricotta. Repeat with the remaining ricotta and then the remaining berries.
5. Sprinkle the rolled oats or granola and a pinch of cinnamon over the top.
6. Serve immediately, or cover and refrigerate for up to 2 hours before serving.

CHOCOLATE COTTAGE CHEESE CREAM

INGREDIENTS

- 1/2 cup Low-fat cottage cheese
- 1 tbsp Unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1/4 tsp Vanilla extract
- 1 tsp Honey
- 1/4 cup Fresh berries, for topping

TIP

Blending is the key step — it transforms cottage cheese from grainy to silky smooth in under a minute.

Prep. Time: 5 min Cook Time: 0 min Servings: 1

**Per 1 serving (estimated): Calories 165 | Protein 16 g
Fat 3 g | Carbs 18 g**

DIRECTIONS

1. Place the cottage cheese, unsweetened cocoa powder, vanilla extract, and honey in a blender or food processor. Blend on high for about 1 minute, until completely smooth and creamy with no visible curds.
2. Taste the cream and adjust sweetness with a little more honey if desired.
3. Transfer to a serving bowl or glass. For the best texture, refrigerate for 15 minutes before serving — chilling makes the cream thicker and more mousse-like.
4. Top with fresh berries just before serving.

FIG PECAN ENERGY BALLS

INGREDIENTS

- 1/3 cup Dried figs, stems removed
- 3 tbsp Pecans
- 1/8 tsp Ground cinnamon
- 2 tbsp Unsweetened coconut flakes, for rolling
- 1/4 tsp Vanilla extract

TIP

Choose soft, moist dried figs for the easiest blending. The coconut coating keeps the balls from sticking together when stored. Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 1 week.

Prep. Time: 10 min Cook Time: 0 min Servings: 6

**Per 1 ball (estimated): Calories 72 | Protein 1 g
Fat 4 g | Carbs 10 g**

DIRECTIONS

1. Remove any tough stems from the dried figs. If the figs are very dry or hard, soak them in warm water for 5 to 10 minutes, then drain and pat dry.
2. Place the figs and pecans in a food processor. Add the vanilla extract and cinnamon. Pulse until the mixture is well combined and forms a sticky dough that holds its shape when pressed.
3. Spread the unsweetened coconut flakes on a small plate.
4. Scoop out about 1 tablespoon of mixture at a time and roll between your palms into a smooth ball. Roll each ball in the coconut flakes to coat.
5. Place on a parchment-lined plate and refrigerate for at least 20 minutes to firm up.

CHERRY CHEESECAKE BROWNIES

INGREDIENTS

- BROWNIE LAYER
- 1/2 cup Whole wheat flour
- 5 tbsp Unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1/2 cup Unsweetened applesauce
- 1/2 cup Honey
- 2 Large eggs
- 1 tbsp Coconut oil, melted
- 1/4 tsp Baking powder
- 1/8 tsp Salt
- CHEESECAKE LAYER
- 1 cup Plain Greek yogurt
- 1/3 cup Neufchâtel cheese (or light cream cheese), softened
- 2 tbsp Honey
- 1 Large egg
- 3/4 cup Cherries, pitted and halved (fresh or frozen, thawed)
- 1 tbsp Dark chocolate chips or shavings

TIP

Do not skip the chilling step — the cheesecake layer needs at least 2 hours in the refrigerator to firm up properly and develop its full flavor. If using frozen cherries, thaw them completely and pat dry with a paper towel before adding, so excess moisture does not make the top layer watery.

Prep. Time: 15 min | Cook Time: 30–35 min | Chill Time: 2 h

Yield: 9 brownies

Serving size: 1 brownie

Per serving (estimated): Calories 190 | Protein 6 g | Fat 6 g | Carbs 31 g

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F (175°C). Line an 8×8-inch baking pan with parchment paper, leaving a slight overhang on the sides for easy removal.
2. Make the brownie layer. In a large bowl, whisk together the whole wheat flour, cocoa powder, baking powder, and salt. Add the applesauce, honey, eggs, and melted coconut oil, and stir until a smooth batter forms with no dry streaks.
3. Pour the brownie batter into the prepared pan and spread it evenly with a spatula. Bake for 10 minutes, then remove from the oven — the layer will still be underbaked at this point, which is intentional.
4. While the brownie base bakes, make the cheesecake layer. In a medium bowl, beat together the Greek yogurt, softened Neufchâtel cheese, honey, and egg until smooth and well combined.
5. Pour the cheesecake mixture evenly over the partially baked brownie base and spread gently to the edges.
6. Scatter the pitted and halved cherries over the top, pressing them in slightly. Sprinkle with dark chocolate chips or shavings.
7. Return the pan to the oven and bake for an additional 20–25 minutes, until the cheesecake layer is set and no longer jiggles in the center when the pan is gently shaken.
8. Remove from the oven and let cool completely at room temperature. Transfer to the refrigerator and chill for at least 2 hours before cutting.
9. Lift the brownies out using the parchment overhang, slice into 9 pieces, and serve cold.

BLUEBERRY LEMON ICE CREAM

INGREDIENTS

- 2 cans (13.5 fl oz each) Full-fat canned coconut milk
- 3 tbsp Fresh lemon juice
- 1 tbsp Lemon zest
- 1 cup Frozen blueberries
- 1/4 cup Honey, maple syrup, or xylitol
- 1 tsp Vanilla extract
- 2 tbsp Vanilla or coconut protein powder (optional)

TIP

Lemon zest carries far more flavor than lemon juice alone — don't skip it.

Prep. Time: 10 min | Cook Time: 0 min | Freeze Time: at least 6 h

Yield: 8 servings

Serving size: 1/2 cup

Per serving (estimated, without protein powder): Calories 245 | Protein 2 g | Fat 20 g | Carbs 15 g

DIRECTIONS

1. Shake the coconut milk well and pour into a blender.
2. Add blueberries, lemon juice and zest, sweetener, vanilla, and protein powder if using.
3. Blend on high about 60 seconds, until completely smooth.
4. Taste and adjust sweetness or lemon.
5. Pour into a freezer-safe container and freeze at least 6 hours or overnight.
6. Let soften 5 minutes before scooping; serve, garnished with blueberries and lemon zest if desired.

CARROT WALNUT SPELT MUFFINS

INGREDIENTS

- 1 2/3 cups Spelt flour (fine-ground)
- 2 medium Carrots, finely grated
- 1/2 cup Unsweetened applesauce
- 1/3 cup Xylitol (or coconut sugar)
- 2 tbsp Coconut oil, melted
- 2 tbsp Chia seeds
- 2/3 cup Water
- 1/2 tsp Lemon zest
- 1 tbsp Baking powder
- 1 tsp Ground cinnamon
- 1/2 cup Walnuts, roughly chopped
- 1 pinch Salt
- 1/4 cup Raisins (optional)

TIP

Spelt flour absorbs liquid more slowly than all-purpose flour — letting the batter rest for 5 minutes before filling the muffin cups gives a better rise.

Prep. Time: 15 min | Cook Time: 30 min

Yield: 9 muffins

Serving size: 1 muffin

Per serving (estimated, without raisins): Calories 190 | Protein 4 g | Fat 8 g | Carbs 29 g

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 375°F. Line a muffin tin.
2. Whisk spelt flour, baking powder, cinnamon, and salt.
3. Stir together applesauce, melted coconut oil, xylitol, water, lemon zest, and chia seeds; let sit 2 minutes.
4. Add the wet to the dry and stir until just combined.
5. Fold in the carrots, walnuts, and raisins if using.
6. Divide among 9 cups, filling three-quarters full.
7. Bake 25–30 minutes, until a toothpick comes out clean.
8. Cool 5 minutes, then transfer to a rack.

LAYERED BANANA CHOCOLATE CHEESECAKE

INGREDIENTS

- 2 Ripe bananas
- 1 1/4 cups Neufchâtel cheese, softened
- 2 tbsp Unflavored powdered gelatin (e.g. Knox)
- 6 tbsp Hot water (not boiling)
- 1 tbsp Unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1 tbsp Honey
- 3/4 cup Fresh or frozen berries

TIP

Use very ripe bananas — the darker the peel, the sweeter and more flavorful the cheesecake will be without needing extra sweetener.

Prep. Time: 15 min | Cook Time: 0 min | Chill Time: at least 5 h

Yield: 8 slices

Serving size: 1 slice

Per serving (estimated): Calories 140 | Protein 6 g | Fat 8 g | Carbs 12 g

DIRECTIONS

1. Sprinkle gelatin over the hot water, stir, and let dissolve 1–2 minutes; cool slightly.
2. Blend the bananas and Neufchâtel cheese until smooth.
3. With the blender on low, pour in the gelatin and blend until incorporated.
4. Pour half the mixture into a loaf or 8×8 pan and smooth the top.
5. Chill 30–40 minutes, until just firm.
6. Blend cocoa and honey into the remaining mixture until smooth.
7. Pour over the set layer and scatter berries on top.
8. Chill at least 5 hours or overnight, until set.
9. Slice and serve cold.

WARM APPLE OAT CRUMBLE CUP

INGREDIENTS

- 1 medium Apple, diced
- 1/4 cup Rolled oats
- 1 tbsp Almond flour
- 1/2 tsp Cinnamon
- 1 tbsp Walnuts, chopped
- 1 tsp Maple syrup
- 1 tsp Butter or coconut oil, melted
- 2 tbsp Greek yogurt
- 1 pinch Salt

TIP

For a softer dessert, dice the apple very small; for more texture, leave the pieces larger and bake a few extra minutes.

Prep. Time: 10 min | Cook Time: 20–22 min

Yield: 1 crumble cup

Serving size: 1 crumble cup

Per serving (estimated): Calories 260 | Protein 9 g | Fat 11 g | Carbs 35 g

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C).
2. Place the diced apple in a small oven-safe ramekin or baking dish.
3. Add the maple syrup, half the cinnamon, and a pinch of salt to the apple; mix gently.
4. In a small bowl, combine the oats, almond flour, walnuts, the remaining cinnamon, and melted butter or coconut oil until it looks like a moist crumble.
5. Spoon the crumble evenly over the apple.
6. Bake 20–22 minutes, until the apple is soft and the topping is lightly golden.
7. Let cool 3–5 minutes, then serve warm with Greek yogurt.

Chapter 13: Sauces and Salad Dressings

This chapter is here for a reason. Sauces and salad dressings may look like small details, but in everyday cooking they can make the difference between a meal you eat because you should and a meal you actually look forward to.

Whenever possible, I prefer not to add too much salt during cooking. It is often better to keep the main dish simple and finish it with a flavorful sauce instead. This gives you more control over the final taste, and it also makes the same basic ingredients feel completely different from one meal to the next.

And let's be honest: a salad is not made delicious by lettuce alone. The dressing is what brings everything together. Vegetables, protein, herbs, grains, beans, or seeds can all be perfectly healthy, but without the right dressing, they can still feel a little too "responsible." A good dressing adds brightness, creaminess, acidity, depth, or just that small bit of joy that makes you want another forkful.

Sauces are also forgiving, which I appreciate deeply. A piece of chicken that turned out a little dry, vegetables that came out too plain, or a dish that simply needs something extra can often be saved with the right sauce. Not every meal needs to be perfect from the beginning. Sometimes it just needs a good finish.

So think of this chapter as your quiet kitchen backup plan.



CHARRED GREEN ONION BUTTER BEAN DIP

INGREDIENTS

- 1 bunch Green onions
- 3 tbsp, divided Olive oil
- 2 Garlic cloves
- 1 tsp Lemon zest
- 2 tbsp Fresh lemon juice
- 1 can (15 oz) Canned butter beans, drained and rinsed
- 2 tbsp Plain Greek yogurt
- 3/4 tsp, plus more to taste Salt
- To taste Black pepper
- 1 tsp Paprika
- 2 tbsp Tahini (optional)

TIP

Greek yogurt makes this dip a little creamier and adds a light tang that pairs well with the charred green onions and lemon.

Prep. Time: 10 min | Cook Time: 8 min

Yield: about 2 cups

Serving size: 2 tablespoons

Per serving (estimated): Calories 55 | Protein 2 g | Fat 4 g | Carbs 4 g

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to a high broil setting.
2. Place the green onions on a small baking sheet, drizzle with a little olive oil, and broil for 6 to 8 minutes, turning halfway through, until charred and softened. Remove from the oven and let cool slightly.
3. Roughly chop the charred green onions and place them in a blender or food processor with 1 tablespoon olive oil, the garlic, lemon zest, lemon juice, and salt. Blend briefly.
4. Add the butter beans, Greek yogurt, and tahini, if using. Blend again until smooth and creamy.
5. Taste and season with black pepper and more salt if needed. Transfer the dip to a serving bowl.
6. In a small pan, warm the remaining olive oil with the paprika over low heat for 10 to 15 seconds, just until fragrant.
7. Drizzle the paprika oil over the dip and serve.

GREEK YOGURT CUCUMBER GARLIC SAUCE

INGREDIENTS

- 1 1/4 cups Plain Greek yogurt
- 2 medium Cucumber, finely grated or minced
- 4 to 6 Garlic cloves, minced
- 4 tbsp Olive oil
- 1 tsp White wine vinegar
- To taste Salt
- To taste Black pepper

TIP

For a thicker sauce, drain the cucumber well before mixing. This sauce works well as a dip, sandwich spread, or topping for roasted vegetables, meat, or flatbreads.

Prep. Time: 10 min | Cook Time: 0 min

Yield: about 2 1/2 cups

Serving size: 2 tablespoons

Per serving (estimated): Calories 35 | Protein 2 g | Fat 3 g | Carbs 2 g

DIRECTIONS

1. Grate or finely mince the cucumber. If it seems very watery, squeeze out some of the excess moisture with clean hands or a paper towel.
2. Place the Greek yogurt in a medium bowl.
3. Add the cucumber, minced garlic, olive oil, and white wine vinegar.
4. Stir until smooth and well combined.
5. Season with salt and black pepper to taste.
6. Chill for 10 to 15 minutes before serving for the best flavor.

HONEY MUSTARD CITRUS DRESSING BASE

INGREDIENTS

- 1/3 cup Mustard
- 1/3 cup Fresh lemon juice
- 1/3 cup Honey

TIP

Use this as a dressing base for almost any salad by mixing it with olive oil before serving.

Prep. Time: 5 min | Cook Time: 0 min

Yield: about 16 tablespoons

Serving size: 1 tablespoon

Per serving (estimated): Calories 35 | Protein 0 g | Fat 0 g | Carbs 9 g

DIRECTIONS

1. Add the mustard, fresh lemon juice, and honey to a small bowl or jar.
2. Whisk or shake until the mixture is smooth and fully combined.
3. Taste and adjust if needed, depending on how sweet or tangy you want it.
4. Use immediately or transfer to a sealed jar and refrigerate.

SPICY PARMESAN LIME DRESSING

INGREDIENTS

- 4 tbsp Olive oil
- 3 tbsp Parmesan cheese, finely grated
- 4 tsp Fresh lime juice
- 1 tbsp Honey
- 1 tsp Red chili pepper, finely minced
- 2 Garlic cloves, minced
- 1/2 tsp Dried basil
- 1/2 tsp Dried oregano
- To taste Salt
- To taste Black pepper

TIP

This dressing pairs especially well with leafy green salads, tomato salads, grilled vegetables, or pasta salads.

Prep. Time: 5 min | Cook Time: 0 min

Yield: about 10 tablespoons

Serving size: 1 tablespoon

Per serving (estimated): Calories 55 | Protein 1 g | Fat 5 g | Carbs 2 g

DIRECTIONS

1. Add the lime juice, olive oil, and honey to a small bowl.
2. Whisk until the mixture is well combined.
3. Add the grated Parmesan, minced garlic, minced chili pepper, dried basil, dried oregano, salt, and black pepper.
4. Whisk again until everything is evenly mixed.
5. Use immediately or refrigerate in a sealed jar until ready to serve.

CHIMICHURRI SAUCE

INGREDIENTS

- 1/2 cup Fresh parsley, finely chopped
- 2 tbsp Olive oil
- 1 tbsp Red wine vinegar
- 1 tsp Fresh lemon juice
- 1 Garlic clove, minced
- 1/2 tsp Dried oregano
- 1/8 tsp Red pepper flakes
- 1/4 tsp Salt
- 1/8 tsp Black pepper, freshly ground

TIP

This fresh herb sauce works well with grilled chicken, fish, eggs, roasted potatoes, beans, grain bowls, or cooked vegetables. Chop the parsley by hand for the best texture.

Prep. Time: 10 min | Cook Time: 0 min

Yield: about 8 tablespoons

Serving size: 1 tablespoon

Per serving (estimated): Calories 45 | Protein 0 g | Fat 5 g | Carbs 1 g

DIRECTIONS

1. Finely chop the parsley and place it in a small bowl.
2. Add the garlic, oregano, red pepper flakes, salt, and black pepper.
3. Pour in the red wine vinegar and lemon juice.
4. Add the olive oil and stir well until fully combined.
5. Let the sauce rest 10-15 minutes before serving so the flavors blend.
6. Taste and adjust: add more vinegar or lemon juice for brightness, more oil for a softer flavor, or more red pepper flakes for heat.
7. Use immediately, or refrigerate in a sealed jar until ready to serve.

ASIAN HONEY GINGER DRESSING

INGREDIENTS

- 2 tbsp Sesame oil
- 1 tbsp Fresh lemon juice or rice vinegar
- 1 tbsp Low-sodium soy sauce or tamari
- 2 tsp Honey
- 2 Garlic cloves, minced
- 1 tsp Fresh ginger, grated
- Black pepper, to taste
- Red pepper flakes, optional

TIP

This salty-sweet dressing works well with cabbage or cucumber salads, shredded carrots, seafood, tofu, or rice bowls. For a smoother texture, blend it.

Prep. Time: 5 min | Cook Time: 0 min

Yield: about 5 tablespoons

Serving size: 1 tablespoon

Per serving (estimated): Calories 55 | Protein 1 g | Fat 5 g | Carbs 3 g

DIRECTIONS

1. In a small bowl or jar, combine the lemon juice or rice vinegar, soy sauce or tamari, honey, garlic, ginger, black pepper, and red pepper flakes if using.
2. Whisk well until the honey is fully dissolved and the mixture looks smooth.
3. Add the sesame oil.
4. Whisk again until fully combined. If using a jar, close the lid and shake firmly for 15-20 seconds.
5. Taste and adjust: add more lemon juice or vinegar for brightness, more honey for sweetness, or more soy sauce for savory depth.
6. Use immediately, or refrigerate in a sealed jar until ready to serve.

Chapter 14: When You're Craving Bread or Pizza

Yes, most of us love bread and pizza. And honestly, I do not think that makes us weak. I think it may be written somewhere very deep in our human programming.

The problem is not that we enjoy them. The problem is that the versions we usually buy are often loaded with extra ingredients we do not really need: refined flour, added sugars, excess salt, preservatives, flavor enhancers, and sometimes yeast that does not feel friendly to every digestive system. Giving up bread and pizza completely may sound like the "strong" choice, but it is not the only choice.

There is another way: make them yourself.

Now, I know what you may be thinking. Homemade bread? Isn't that the advanced mathematics of cooking? Doesn't it require special talent, perfect timing, and a kitchen that looks like a baking show? No. Not here. These recipes are simple, practical, and made for real life.

Of course, this will not be the fluffy white bread from the supermarket shelf, engineered to stay soft forever and make you want slice after slice. This is a different kind of bread. A cleaner, simpler, more honest version. And once your taste buds adapt, you may discover something surprising: homemade bread can feel deeply satisfying without pulling you away from your nutrition goals.

So try it. **Just try it.**



COTTAGE CHEESE EGG AND GREEN ONION PATTIES

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup Low-fat cottage cheese
- 1 Large raw egg
- 3 Hard-boiled eggs, chopped
- 2 tbsp All-purpose flour
- 2 tbsp Green onions, finely sliced
- 1/3 cup Reduced-fat shredded cheese
- A pinch Salt
- A pinch Black pepper

TIP

If you want a firmer texture, chill the mixture for 10 minutes before shaping. These patties are best served warm, but they also reheat well for a quick high-protein snack.

Prep. Time: 15 min | Cook Time: 20 min

Yield: 6 patties

Serving size: 1 patty

Per serving (estimated): Calories 75 | Protein 7 g | Fat 4 g | Carbs 3 g

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F (180°C). Line a baking sheet or small baking dish with parchment paper.
2. Place the cottage cheese in a medium bowl. If it looks very wet, drain off any excess liquid first.
3. Add the raw egg, chopped hard-boiled eggs, flour, green onions, shredded cheese, salt, and black pepper. Stir until everything is evenly combined into a thick mixture.
4. Using clean hands or a spoon, divide the mixture into 6 equal portions and shape them into small oval patties.
5. Place the patties on the prepared baking sheet and smooth the tops lightly.
6. Bake for 18 to 20 minutes, until set and lightly golden around the edges.
7. Let cool for 5 minutes before serving.

HIGH-PROTEIN COTTAGE CHEESE PIZZA

INGREDIENTS

- 14 oz Low-fat cottage cheese, drained well
- 1 Large egg
- 1 Egg white
- 3 tbsp All-purpose flour
- 2 tbsp Ketchup or tomato sauce
- 1/2 cup Cooked turkey breast or chicken breast, chopped
- 1 small Tomato, thinly sliced
- 1 small Dill pickles, sliced
- 1/3 cup Reduced-fat shredded cheese
- A pinch Salt
- A pinch Black pepper

TIP

If your cottage cheese is very wet, drain it in a fine-mesh strainer for 10 to 15 minutes before mixing the dough. A drier base will bake up firmer and hold the toppings better.

Prep. Time: 15 min | Cook Time: 25 min

Yield: 1 small pizza

Serving size: 1 small pizza

Per serving (estimated): Calories 280 | Protein 26 g | Fat 8 g | Carbs 22 g

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F (180°C). Line a baking sheet or pizza pan with parchment paper.
2. Place the drained cottage cheese in a medium bowl. Add the egg, egg white, flour, salt, and black pepper. Stir until a thick, spreadable dough forms.
3. Spoon the dough onto the prepared baking sheet and spread it into a small round or oval pizza crust, about 1/4 inch thick.
4. Bake for 10 to 15 minutes, until the crust looks set and lightly golden around the edges.
5. Remove the crust from the oven and spread the top with ketchup or tomato sauce.
6. Add the chopped turkey or chicken, sliced tomato, and sliced dill pickles evenly over the crust. Sprinkle the shredded cheese over the top.
7. Return to the oven and bake for another 10 to 15 minutes, until the cheese is melted and the toppings are heated through.
8. Let cool for 2 to 3 minutes before slicing and serving.

HIGH-PROTEIN COTTAGE CHEESE OAT BREAD

INGREDIENTS

- 14 oz Low-fat cottage cheese
- 2 Large eggs
- 1 packet (about 2 tsp) Baking powder
- 7 oz Rolled oats
- 2 tbsp Ground flaxseed
- 1/4 tsp Salt

TIP

You do not have to mix the dough in a blender or food processor - it can also be mixed by hand. A hand-mixed dough will give the bread a more structured, rustic texture.

Prep. Time: 10 min | Cook Time: 1 h

Yield: 10 slices

Serving size: 1 slice

Per serving (estimated): Calories 135 | Protein 9 g | Fat 4 g | Carbs 16 g

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F (180°C). Line a small loaf pan with parchment paper.
2. Place the cottage cheese, eggs, baking powder, rolled oats, ground flaxseed, and salt in a blender or food processor.
3. Blend until the mixture is mostly smooth and forms a thick batter.
4. Pour the batter into the prepared loaf pan and smooth the top. If needed, shape the batter slightly so it forms an even loaf.
5. Bake for 55 to 60 minutes, until the loaf is golden on top and a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean.
6. Let cool in the pan for 10 minutes, then transfer to a wire rack to cool completely before slicing.

OLIVE AND WALNUT COTTAGE CHEESE BREAD

INGREDIENTS

- 7 oz Rolled oats
- 10.5 oz Cottage cheese
- 1/3 cup Walnuts, chopped
- 1/3 cup Sliced olives
- 1/4 tsp Salt
- 1 1/2 tsp Baking powder
- 2 Large eggs

TIP

For a more even texture, you can pulse the oats in a blender a few times before mixing. If you prefer a more rustic, hearty loaf, leave the oats whole and mix everything by hand.

Prep. Time: 10 min | Cook Time: 1 h

Yield: 1 loaf, 8 slices

Serving size: 1 slice

Per serving (estimated): Calories 120 | Protein 7 g | Fat 6 g | Carbs 10 g

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F (180°C). Line a baking sheet or small loaf pan with parchment paper.
2. Place the rolled oats, cottage cheese, chopped walnuts, sliced olives, salt, baking powder, and eggs in a large bowl.
3. Mix well until all the ingredients are evenly combined into a thick, rustic dough.
4. Transfer the dough to the prepared baking sheet and shape it into a small loaf. You can also place it in a loaf pan for a more uniform shape.
5. Bake for 55 to 60 minutes, until the loaf is firm, lightly golden, and cooked through in the center.
6. Let cool for at least 10 minutes before slicing and serving.

MY FAVORITE BUCKWHEAT BREAD

INGREDIENTS

- 1 lb Raw green buckwheat groats
- 1 Large egg
- 1 tsp Baking soda
- 1/2 to 1 tsp Salt
- 3 heaping tbsp Spelt flour
- 3 tbsp Apple cider vinegar
- 1 tbsp Dried onion (optional)
- 1 tbsp Pumpkin seeds or mixed seeds (optional)
- 1/2 cup Water

TIP

Be sure to use raw green buckwheat groats, not toasted buckwheat.

Prep. Time: 15 min | Cook Time: 1 h

Yield: 1 loaf, 10 slices

Serving size: 1 slice

Per serving (estimated): Calories 115 | Protein 4 g | Fat 1.5 g | Carbs 23 g

DIRECTIONS

1. Place the buckwheat groats in a large bowl and cover with water. Soak for at least 4 hours or overnight.
2. Drain the buckwheat and rinse it very well 4 to 5 times, until the slimy coating is washed away.
3. Transfer the rinsed buckwheat to a tall mixing container. Add 1/2 cup water, the egg, baking soda, and salt.
4. Blend with an immersion blender until the mixture becomes smooth, pale, airy, and uniform.
5. Add the spelt flour and blend again until fully incorporated.
6. Stir in the apple cider vinegar with a spoon, mixing briskly to bring air into the batter. The mixture should look light and slightly bubbly. Fold in the dried onion if using.
7. Pour the batter into a parchment-lined loaf pan. Sprinkle the top with pumpkin seeds or mixed seeds if using.
8. Place the pan in the preheated oven at 350°F (180°C).
9. Bake for about 55 to 65 minutes, depending on your oven, until the loaf is firm and a wooden skewer inserted in the center comes out clean.
10. Remove the bread from the pan and let it cool completely on a wire rack before slicing.

WHOLE WHEAT TORTILLA CRISPS

INGREDIENTS

- 4 medium Whole wheat tortillas
- 1 tbsp Olive oil
- 1/4 tsp, or to taste Salt

TIP

These tortilla crisps can be served as a crunchy side with almost any dish or enjoyed on their own with your favorite dip or sauce.

Prep. Time: 10 min | Cook Time: 8 min

Yield: about 24 crisps

Serving size: 1/4 of recipe (about 6 crisps)

Per serving (estimated): Calories 160 | Protein 4 g | Fat 6 g | Carbs 21 g

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 400°F (200°C). Line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper.
2. Lightly brush the tortillas on both sides with olive oil, then cut each tortilla into triangles.
3. Arrange the tortilla pieces on the prepared baking sheets in a single layer.
4. Bake for 6 to 8 minutes, until lightly golden and crisp.
5. Transfer to a wire rack, sprinkle with salt, and let cool completely before serving.

Chapter 15: 4-Week Meal Plan

Here's one more thought before you get started and it comes straight from behavioral psychology. We make thousands of small decisions every day, and each one quietly draws from the same cognitive reservoir. Food, it turns out, takes up a disproportionately large share of that reservoir: what to buy, what to cook, whether it's actually healthy enough. When breakfast and dinner become familiar and routine, your brain simply stops listing them as decisions to make. That phenomenon has a name — decision fatigue — and it's well-documented. Every simplified choice in the morning preserves concentration for the rest of the day. Research shows that consistent meal routines are linked to higher stress resilience, and this gives us one more compelling reason why. On the days when a deadline or a rough afternoon would normally send you straight to the nearest drive-through, a well-established habit quietly holds the line. My approach in this plan is designed to give you exactly that.

Because here's the thing about restrictions: they're always a battle with yourself and statistically, only about 5% of people actually win that fight. Congratulations if you're in that group. For everyone else, I'd like to suggest a different approach: program your eating once on Sunday, and stop thinking about it every single day.

Protein Day Legend

Meat · Fish · Plant-Forward Protein · Egg-Based Vegetarian

Introduction

This 4-week meal plan was designed specifically for women over 50 who want to support their health and stay active through balanced, protein-forward eating. Think of it as a practical starting point, not a rigid script. Every body is unique, and your individual needs, health status, activity level, and goals around weight loss, maintenance, or gain will all shape how this plan works for you.

Before making any significant changes to your diet, especially if you have a medical condition, chronic illness, or specific dietary restrictions, please consult your doctor or a registered dietitian.

If you need extra calories on any given day, feel free to add a slice of whole-grain bread or one of the wholesome desserts from this cookbook.

A Quick Note on Fermented Foods

You've probably noticed that kefir or yogurt shows up at dinner throughout this plan even on fish days and plant-forward protein days. That's very much intentional. As mentioned earlier in the book, your gut microbiome plays a surprisingly big role in overall health, influencing digestion, immunity, energy levels, and even mood. Kefir and yogurt are two of the most practical, accessible, and universally available ways to support that microbiome daily. A small pour at the end of dinner is honestly one of the easiest healthy habits you can build no prep, no fuss, just pour and enjoy.

That said, if fermented dairy is new to you, ease into it. Start with about half a serving (around 2 fl oz), use it two to three times a week, and give your digestive system a little time to adjust before increasing the amount. Most people settle in beautifully within a week or two.

And if you're already a fan of fermented vegetables, sauerkraut, kimchi, and the like, feel free to swap one in for the raw salad on any day. It adds even more variety and gut-friendly benefits to an already solid plan. Consider it an upgrade, not just a substitution.

Fruits & Berries

Fruits and berries are best enjoyed in the first half of the day. Aim for 10–14 oz (300–400g) daily. Eating them 20–30 minutes before lunch can help manage appetite, support fiber intake, keep you hydrated, and improve digestion. Choose lower-glycemic options whenever possible — berries, kiwi, peaches, and plums are excellent picks.

Approximate nutrition per 3.5 oz (100g), raw:

Fruit	Cal	Protein	Fat	Carbs
Raspberries	52 cal	1.2g	0.7g	11.9g
Blackberries	43 cal	1.4g	0.5g	9.6g
Strawberries	32 cal	0.7g	0.3g	7.7g
Blueberries	57 cal	0.7g	0.3g	14.5g
Apple	52 cal	0.3g	0.2g	13.8g
Peach	39 cal	0.9g	0.3g	9.5g
Kiwi	61 cal	1.1g	0.5g	14.7g
Plum	46 cal	0.7g	0.3g	11.4g

Hydration

The recommended daily fluid intake for most women over 50 is 60–75 fl oz (1.8–2.2 liters). Prioritize water, herbal teas, and unsweetened beverages throughout the day.

How to Use This Plan

Each day includes three meals: Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner. The week is built around alternating protein sources — meat, fish, and plant or egg-based protein. This rhythm repeats across all 28 days, providing variety and nutritional balance. Lunch features raw vegetables; dinner is better suited to cooked ones.

Plant-forward days in this plan are sometimes a little lower in protein than meat or fish days by design. This creates more variety across the week while still supporting a protein-conscious overall pattern of eating. If your personal protein needs are higher, these days are the easiest place to add an extra serving of Greek yogurt, cottage cheese, edamame, tofu, or legumes.

You can always swap any recipe that doesn't work for you with another that shares similar characteristics and meets general healthy eating guidelines.

A quick word on storing cooked meats, since you'll be batch-cooking chicken, turkey, and beef throughout this plan: cooked proteins keep beautifully in the refrigerator for 3–4 days. If you know you won't get to a portion within that window or if you're ever unsure about how long, it's been sitting there — tuck it straight into the freezer rather than taking chances. Then, the evening before you need it, move the portion from the freezer to the refrigerator so it can thaw slowly and safely overnight. It's a small habit with a big payoff: your meals stay fresh, safe, and ready to go.

One more thing worth saying out loud: the most common reason people don't stick to a meal plan isn't lack of motivation, it's the classic "I'm too busy to cook" or "I work all day, I can't make lunch from scratch." Fair enough. But here's the honest truth: some people look for ways to make something work, and others look for reasons why it won't. This plan was designed to put you firmly in the first group.

If you know you'll be away from home during a meal, plan for it the evening before. Pack your lunch in a container, store it in the refrigerator, and grab it on your way out the door in the morning, it takes about five minutes and is infinitely better than whatever the vending machine has to offer. If you're packing a salad, hold off on the dressing and salt until right before you eat; pack them separately so nothing turns into a soggy situation. And on days when life is just genuinely unpredictable — a day trip, an afternoon in the park, a packed schedule — lean on the protein muffins and casseroles in this plan. They travel beautifully and are easy to eat on the go. For food safety, carry them in an insulated bag with ice packs, and do not leave perishable foods at room temperature for more than 2 hours or no more than 1 hour when it is above 90°F (32°C).

Week 1

Sunday Meal Prep

- Complete these on Sunday evening — so your week starts with ease and no extra cooking stress.
- **1. Bake Turkey Veggie Egg Muffins — 1 serving (2 muffins)**
- Storage: refrigerator
- Use: Monday — breakfast
- **2. Make Fig Pecan Energy Balls — 6 balls**
- Storage: refrigerator
- Use: Tuesday — dessert (3 balls); Thursday — dessert (3 balls)
- **3. Make Creamy Turkey Vegetable Soup — 1½ servings**
- Storage: refrigerator
- Use: Monday — lunch (1 serving); Wednesday — lunch (½ serving)
- **4. Cook turkey breast (8 oz / 226g) and chicken breast (3 oz / 85g)**
- Storage: 4 oz (113g) turkey — refrigerator; 4 oz (113g) turkey + 3 oz (85g) chicken — freezer (pull out Friday evening)
- Use: Wednesday — Turkey and Apple Walnut Salad (4 oz turkey); Saturday — Turkey Cobb Salad (4 oz turkey) + Chicken Breakfast Burrito (3 oz chicken)

Weekly Reminder: On Monday — cook a double batch of patties (save the extras, without broccoli, for Wednesday). On Wednesday evening — bake a double batch of cottage cheese muffins (save one serving for Friday lunch). On Saturday — make 1½ servings of meatball soup (½ for lunch, 1 for dinner).

Day	Breakfast	Lunch	Dessert	Dinner
MON	Turkey Veggie Egg Muffins (from Sunday prep) 2 oz fresh mozzarella	Cabbage and Carrot Salad with Olives Creamy Turkey Vegetable Soup (from Sunday prep) 1 slice whole-grain bread		Chopped Chicken Patties with Roasted Broccoli 4 fl oz kefir
TUE	Smoked Salmon Scramble 2 oz fresh mozzarella 1 slice whole-grain bread	Apple and Celery Salad Salmon and Vegetable Soup 1 slice whole-grain bread	Fig Pecan Energy Balls — 3 balls (from Sunday prep)	Baked White Fish with Vegetables 4 fl oz kefir
WED	Chopped Chicken Patties (leftover from Monday) ½ avocado 2 fl oz Greek yogurt	Turkey and Apple Walnut Salad Creamy Turkey Vegetable Soup (½ serving, from Sunday prep) 1 slice whole-grain bread		Herbed Cottage Cheese Muffins 4 fl oz kefir
THU	Turmeric Tofu Scramble with Whole-Grain Toast ½ avocado	Napa Cabbage Salad with Corn and Cucumber Vegetarian Chili with Pinto Beans 1 slice whole-grain bread	Fig Pecan Energy Balls — 3 balls (from Sunday prep)	Tofu and Edamame Veggie Bowl 4 fl oz kefir
FRI	Overnight Greek Yogurt Oat Bowl (soaked overnight) 2 oz fresh mozzarella 1 slice whole-grain bread	Sesame-Ginger Shrimp Bowls Herbed Cottage Cheese Muffins (leftover from Wednesday)	Baked Apples with Raisins and Pecans	Fish Patties with Vegetable Mash 4 fl oz kefir
SAT	Chicken Breakfast Burrito	Turkey Cobb Salad Turkey Meatball and Vegetable Soup with Dill (½ serving) 1 slice whole-grain bread		Turkey Meatball and Vegetable Soup with Dill (1 serving) 4 fl oz kefir
SUN	Broccoli Parmesan Frittata 2 oz fresh mozzarella 1 slice whole-grain bread	Mediterranean Lentil Salad with Sun-Dried Tomatoes Creamy Broccoli Soup 1 slice whole-grain bread	Chocolate Cottage Cheese Cream	Tempeh Quinoa Broccoli Bowl 4 fl oz Greek yogurt

Daily Totals Week 1

Monday: Calories 1,540 / Protein 145g / Fat 76g / Carbs 77g

Tuesday: Calories 1,812 / Protein 127g / Fat 78g / Carbs 98g

Wednesday: Calories 1,379 / Protein 131.5g / Fat 61.4g / Carbs 69g

Thursday: Calories 1,706 / Protein 85.5g / Fat 63g / Carbs 170g

Friday: Calories 1,830 / Protein 133g / Fat 69g / Carbs 127g

Saturday: Calories 1,620 / Protein 145g / Fat 79.5g / Carbs 82g

Sunday: Calories 1,824 / Protein 128g / Fat 82g / Carbs 125g

Notes

Monday: Patties: cook a double batch — store half (without broccoli) in the refrigerator for Wednesday breakfast.

Wednesday: Muffins: bake a double batch — save one serving in the refrigerator for Friday lunch.

Thursday: Soak the oats for Friday's Overnight Greek Yogurt Oat Bowl tonight: combine oats and yogurt in a jar and leave in the refrigerator overnight (8–10 hours).

Friday: This evening, take the turkey and chicken out of the freezer and move them to the refrigerator for slow, safe thawing overnight — they're on the menu for Saturday.

Saturday: Meatball soup: make 1½ servings — serve ½ at lunch, keep 1 serving for dinner.

Week 2

Sunday Meal Prep

- Complete these on Sunday evening — so your week starts with ease and no extra cooking stress.
- **1. Bake Salmon Dill Egg Muffins — 1 serving (2 muffins)**
 - Storage: refrigerator
 - Use: Tuesday — breakfast (2 muffins)
- **2. Make Apricot Almond Energy Bites — 6 pieces**
 - Storage: refrigerator
 - Use: Tuesday — dessert (3 pieces); Thursday — dessert (3 pieces)
- **3. Make Chicken and Chickpea Soup — 1½ servings**
 - Storage: refrigerator
 - Use: Monday — lunch (1 serving); Wednesday — lunch (½ serving as a starter)
- **4. Cook turkey breast (3 oz / 85g) for Turkey Avocado Egg Wrap**
 - Storage: refrigerator
 - Use: Monday — breakfast
- **5. Cook chicken breast (3 oz / 85g) and beef (4 oz / 113g)**
 - Storage: freezer (pull out Friday evening)
 - Use: Saturday — Chicken Apple Breakfast Salad (3 oz chicken) + Steak and Arugula Salad (4 oz beef)

Weekly Reminder: On Monday — cook a double batch of Turkey Zucchini Patties (save the extras for Wednesday breakfast).

Day	Breakfast	Lunch	Dessert	Dinner
MON	Turkey Avocado Egg Wrap (turkey from Sunday prep)	Cucumber Tomato Salad Chicken and Chickpea Soup (from Sunday prep) 1 slice whole-grain bread		Turkey Zucchini Patties with Asparagus 4 fl oz kefir
TUE	Salmon Dill Egg Muffins (2 muffins, from Sunday prep) 2 oz fresh mozzarella	Celery and Avocado Salad with Lemon Dressing Tomato-Crusted White Fish with Bulgur	Apricot Almond Energy Bites — 3 pieces (from Sunday prep)	Cod and Tomato Vegetable Soup 1 slice whole-grain bread 4 fl oz kefir
WED	Turkey Zucchini Patties (leftover from Monday) ½ avocado 2 fl oz Greek yogurt	Turkey and Sweet Potato Salad Plate Chicken and Chickpea Soup (½ serving, from Sunday prep, as a starter)		Creamy Broccoli Soup 4 fl oz kefir
THU	Soy Milk Chia Pudding with Almonds	Warm Roasted Vegetable Salad with Tahini Dressing 1 slice whole-grain bread	Apricot Almond Energy Bites — 3 pieces (from Sunday prep)	Tomato Lentil Soup 1 slice whole-grain bread 4 fl oz kefir
FRI	Sardine Egg Spread Toast (2 slices)	Apple and Celery Salad Tomato-Crusted White Fish with Bulgur	Baked Pears with Greek Yogurt	Fish Patties with Vegetable Mash 4 fl oz kefir
SAT	Chicken Apple Breakfast Salad 1 slice whole-grain bread	Steak and Arugula Salad 1 slice whole-grain bread 2 oz fresh mozzarella	Cherry Cheesecake Brownies	Cheesy Turkey Casserole 4 fl oz kefir
SUN	Savory Oat Pancakes with Cheese and Herbs 2 oz fresh mozzarella	Greek White Bean Salad Homemade Creamy Mushroom Soup (½ serving) 1 slice whole-grain bread	Blueberry Lemon Ice Cream	Homemade Creamy Mushroom Soup (1 serving) 4 fl oz Greek yogurt

Daily Totals Week 2

Monday: Calories 1,605 / Protein 139g / Fat 77g / Carbs 87g

Tuesday: Calories 1,545 / Protein 111g / Fat 84g / Carbs 109g

Wednesday: Calories 1,411 / Protein 134.9g / Fat 56.8g / Carbs 88.6g

Thursday: Calories 1,328 / Protein 61g / Fat 48g / Carbs 127g

Friday: Calories 1,550 / Protein 103g / Fat 72g / Carbs 128g

Saturday: Calories 1,660 / Protein 148g / Fat 72g / Carbs 66g

Sunday: Calories 1,721 / Protein 80g / Fat 79g / Carbs 113g

Notes

Monday: Patties: cook a double batch — store half (without asparagus) in the refrigerator for Wednesday breakfast.

Wednesday: Soak the chia seeds for Thursday's Soy Milk Chia Pudding with Almonds tonight: combine chia seeds and soy milk in a jar and leave in the refrigerator overnight (8–10 hours).

Friday: This evening, take the chicken and beef out of the freezer and move them to the refrigerator to thaw slowly overnight — they're on the menu for Saturday.

Sunday: Soup: make 1½ servings — serve ½ at lunch, keep 1 serving for dinner.

Week 3

Sunday Meal Prep

- Complete these on Sunday evening — so your week starts with ease and no extra cooking stress.
- **1. Bake Tuna Corn Egg Muffins — 1 serving (2 muffins)**
 - Storage: refrigerator
 - Use: Tuesday — breakfast (2 muffins)
- **2. Bake Carrot Walnut Spelt Muffins — 2 servings (4 muffins)**
 - Storage: refrigerator
 - Use: Tuesday — dessert (2 muffins); Thursday — dessert (2 muffins)
- **3. Cook chicken breast (3 oz / 85g) for Chicken Veggie Wrap**
 - Storage: refrigerator
 - Use: Monday — breakfast
- **4. Cook turkey breast (3 oz / 85g) for Turkey Hummus Sandwich**
 - Storage: refrigerator
 - Use: Wednesday — breakfast
- **5. Boil beets (if not using pre-cooked) for Beet Salad with Walnuts and Prunes**
 - Storage: refrigerator
 - Use: Tuesday — lunch
- **6. Cook chicken breast (3 oz / 85g) for Chicken Avocado Crunch Salad**
 - Storage: refrigerator
 - Use: Wednesday — lunch

Weekly Reminder: On Sunday evening, allow the Carrot Walnut Spelt Muffins to cool completely before storing.

Day	Breakfast	Lunch	Dessert	Dinner
MON	Chicken Veggie Wrap (chicken from Sunday prep)	Caprese Salad Beef Burrito Bowl		Turkey with Braised Cabbage 4 fl oz kefir
TUE	Tuna Corn Egg Muffins (2 muffins, from Sunday prep) 2 oz fresh mozzarella	Beet Salad with Walnuts and Prunes (beets from Sunday prep) Whole-Grain-Crusted White Fish with Green Beans	Carrot Walnut Spelt Muffins — 2 muffins (from Sunday prep)	Tomato White Bean Soup with Tuna 1 slice whole-grain bread 4 fl oz kefir
WED	Turkey Hummus Sandwich (turkey from Sunday prep)	Chicken Avocado Crunch Salad (chicken from Sunday prep) 1 slice whole-grain bread	Baked Apples with Raisins and Pecans	Creamy Broccoli Soup 4 fl oz kefir
THU	Sesame Tempeh and Broccoli Plate	Apple and Celery Salad Tempeh Grain Bowl with Brussels Sprouts	Carrot Walnut Spelt Muffins — 2 muffins (from Sunday prep)	Creamy Pumpkin Soup with Seeds 1 slice whole-grain bread 4 fl oz kefir
FRI	Tuna White Bean Salad	Salmon Quinoa Lunch Bowl	Baked Cottage Cheese Bake	Creamy Cod Chowder with Leek and Potato 1 slice whole-grain bread 4 fl oz kefir
SAT	Roast Beef and Egg Breakfast Plate	Grilled Chicken Greek Salad 1 slice whole-grain bread	Chocolate Cottage Cheese Cream	Chopped Chicken Patties with Roasted Broccoli 4 fl oz kefir
SUN	Spinach Feta Omelet 1 slice whole-grain bread	Caprese Salad Cottage Cheese Stuffed Sweet Potatoes	Baked Cottage Cheese Bake (½ serving, leftover from Friday)	Chickpea Shakshuka 4 fl oz Greek yogurt

Daily Totals Week 3

Monday: Calories 1,610 / Protein 134g / Fat 68g / Carbs 115g

Tuesday: Calories 1,775 / Protein 127g / Fat 52g / Carbs 105g

Wednesday: Calories 1,375 / Protein 103g / Fat 52g / Carbs 80g

Thursday: Calories 1,570 / Protein 74g / Fat 53g / Carbs 120g

Friday: Calories 1,470 / Protein 137g / Fat 40g / Carbs 100g

Saturday: Calories 1,457 / Protein 137g / Fat 60g / Carbs 61g

Sunday: Calories 1,709 / Protein 109g / Fat 82g / Carbs 115g

Notes

Friday: Baked Cottage Cheese Bake: make 1½ servings — serve 1 serving on Friday, save ½ for Sunday dessert.

Week 4

Sunday Meal Prep

- Complete these on Sunday evening — so your week starts with ease and no extra cooking stress.
- **1. Bake Banana Oat Cookies — 6 cookies**
 - Storage: refrigerator
 - Use: Tuesday — dessert (3 cookies); Thursday — dessert (3 cookies)
- **2. Bake Cherry Cheesecake Brownies — 1 serving**
 - Storage: refrigerator
 - Use: Monday — dessert (with lunch)
- **3. Cook quinoa for Quinoa with Walnuts and Cinnamon — 1 serving**
 - Storage: refrigerator
 - Use: Thursday — breakfast
- **4. Cook turkey breast (3 oz / 85g) for Turkey Avocado Egg Wrap**
 - Storage: refrigerator
 - Use: Monday — breakfast
- **5. Cook turkey breast — 1 serving for Turkey and Sweet Potato Salad Plate**
 - Storage: freezer (pull out Friday evening)
 - Use: Saturday — lunch

Day	Breakfast	Lunch	Dessert	Dinner
MON	Turkey Avocado Egg Wrap (turkey from Sunday prep)	Cucumber Tomato Salad Chicken and White Bean Skillet	Cherry Cheesecake Brownies (from Sunday prep)	Chicken Sausage with Sautéed Kale 4 fl oz kefir
TUE	Tuna, Corn, and Egg Salad 1 slice whole-grain bread	Napa Cabbage Salad with Corn and Cucumber White Fish Fritters with Dill and Onion and Baked Sweet Potato	Banana Oat Cookies — 3 cookies (from Sunday prep)	Baked Cod with Asparagus and Tomatoes 4 fl oz yogurt
WED	Roast Beef and Egg Breakfast Plate	Caprese Salad Chicken with Roasted Cauliflower and Quinoa		Creamy Broccoli Soup 1 slice whole-grain bread 4 fl oz kefir
THU	Quinoa with Walnuts and Cinnamon (quinoa from Sunday prep)	Tempeh Grain Bowl with Brussels Sprouts	Banana Oat Cookies — 3 cookies (from Sunday prep)	Vegetarian Chili with Pinto Beans 4 fl oz kefir
FRI	Tuna Cottage Cheese Bowl 1 slice whole-grain bread	Cabbage and Carrot Salad with Olives Shrimp and Lentil Bowl	Baked Pears with Greek Yogurt	Baked White Fish with Vegetables 4 fl oz yogurt
SAT	Flourless Cottage Cheese Pancakes 2 fl oz yogurt	Turkey and Sweet Potato Salad Plate (turkey from Sunday prep)	Baked Pears with Greek Yogurt	Chopped Chicken Patties with Roasted Broccoli 4 fl oz kefir
SUN	Black Bean Avocado Scramble	Cucumber Tomato Salad Poached Eggs with Quinoa and Spinach 1 slice whole-grain bread	Berry Ricotta Parfait	Chickpea Shakshuka 4 fl oz Greek yogurt

Daily Totals Week 4

Monday: Calories 1,645 / Protein 133g / Fat 80g / Carbs 106g

Tuesday: Calories 1,485 / Protein 117g / Fat 55g / Carbs 131g

Wednesday: Calories 1,422 / Protein 108g / Fat 70g / Carbs 102g

Thursday: Calories 1,539 / Protein 71g / Fat 52g / Carbs 216g

Friday: Calories 1,550 / Protein 143g / Fat 52g / Carbs 129g

Saturday: Calories 1,430 / Protein 142g / Fat 54g / Carbs 97g

Sunday: Calories 1,687 / Protein 105g / Fat 79g / Carbs 139g

Notes

Thursday: When making the chili tonight, keep it mild — skip the hot peppers or heavy spice. Spicy foods in the evening can sometimes irritate the digestive system and interfere with sleep, especially for women navigating perimenopause or menopause when the gut tends to be more sensitive. The goal is a warm, cozy bowl full of flavor — not a fire alarm. You can always add a pinch of red pepper flakes to your own bowl if you want a little heat.

Friday: This evening, take the turkey out of the freezer and move it to the refrigerator to thaw slowly overnight — it's on the menu for Saturday lunch.

Grocery Lists

4-Week Grocery List

These grocery lists are built directly from the 4-Week Meal Plan in this book. Each list covers exactly one week of breakfasts, lunches, dinners, and prepped desserts — every ingredient counted, combined across recipes, and organized the way you actually move through a grocery store.

- Now, I know what you're thinking: this list looks long. Don't let that intimidate you! I'm fairly confident you already have a good chunk of it sitting in your pantry or refrigerator right now - oils, spices, condiments, vinegars, and most dry goods carry over from week to week. Before you head out, do a quick scan of what you've got on hand. Items that should reasonably remain from the previous week are clearly marked in the list.
- I've also noted which dish each ingredient goes into, so you can easily cross-reference your Sunday meal prep and adjust both your prep plan and your shopping list to fit your week. If you're skipping a recipe or swapping it for something else, you'll know exactly what you can leave off the list.
- One more thing: if you plan to bake one of the bread recipes from this book instead of picking up a store-bought loaf, add those ingredients separately based on the specific recipe you choose. The shopping lists assume a purchased whole-grain loaf.
- Each item includes a suggested package size commonly found in U.S. grocery stores, along with a minimum shelf-life recommendation based on the last day that ingredient appears in the meal plan. For fresh fish and seafood, buying frozen is always a perfectly safe backup - just move it to the refrigerator the night before you need it.



Grocery List - Week 1

Week 1 Meals at a Glance: Turkey Veggie Egg Muffins · Fig Pecan Energy Balls · Creamy Turkey Vegetable Soup · Cabbage & Carrot Salad with Olives · Chopped Chicken Patties with Roasted Broccoli · Smoked Salmon Scramble · Apple & Celery Salad · Salmon & Vegetable Soup · Baked White Fish with Vegetables · Turkey & Apple Walnut Salad · Herbed Cottage Cheese Muffins · Turmeric Tofu Scramble · Napa Cabbage Salad with Corn & Cucumber · Vegetarian Chili with Pinto Beans · Tofu & Edamame Veggie Bowl · Overnight Greek Yogurt Oat Bowl · Sesame-Ginger Shrimp Bowls · Baked Apples with Raisins & Pecans · Fish Patties with Vegetable Mash · Chicken Breakfast Burrito · Turkey Cobb Salad · Turkey Meatball & Vegetable Soup · Broccoli Parmesan Frittata · Mediterranean Lentil Salad with Sun-Dried Tomatoes · Creamy Broccoli Soup · Chocolate Cottage Cheese Cream · Tempeh Quinoa Broccoli Bowl

Produce

- **Broccoli, 3 medium heads** - minimum 7 days before expiration (Chicken Patties Mon, Frittata Sun, Tempeh Bowl Sun, also Creamy Broccoli Soup Sun)
- **Cauliflower, 2 medium heads** - minimum 7 days before expiration (Creamy Turkey Vegetable Soup Mon lunch; Baked White Fish with Vegetables Tue dinner; Fish Patties Vegetable Mash Fri dinner; Meatball Soup Sat)
- **Green cabbage, 1 small head (~1 lb)** - minimum 7 days before expiration (Monday Cabbage & Carrot Salad)
- **Napa cabbage, 1 small head (~1 lb)** - minimum 5 days before expiration (Thursday Napa Cabbage Salad)
- **Carrots, 1 (2 lb) bag** - minimum 7 days before expiration (Monday salad, Turkey Vegetable Soup, Meatball Soup, Sesame-Ginger Shrimp Bowls)
- **Celery, 1 bunch** - minimum 7 days before expiration (Apple & Celery Salad, Salmon Soup, various soups)
- **Cucumbers, 2 medium** - minimum 5 days before expiration (Thursday Napa Cabbage Salad + others)
- **Bell peppers (red or orange), 3 medium** - minimum 6 days before expiration (Turkey Veggie Egg Muffins, Tofu Scramble, various)
- **Avocados, 3 medium** - minimum 7 days before expiration (Wednesday breakfast ½, Thursday breakfast ½, Saturday Cobb Salad ½; buy slightly firm)
- **Apples (Gala, Honeycrisp, or Fuji), 4 medium** - minimum 7 days before expiration (Tuesday Apple & Celery Salad, Wednesday Turkey & Apple Walnut Salad, Friday Baked Apples)
- **Leek, 1 large** - minimum 4 days before expiration (Tuesday Salmon & Vegetable Soup)
- **Romaine or mixed salad greens, 2 (5 oz) bags** - minimum 5 days before expiration (Wednesday Turkey & Apple Walnut Salad; Saturday Turkey Cobb Salad)
- **Cherry tomatoes, 1 pint** - minimum 6 days before expiration (Saturday Cobb Salad)
- **Tomatoes on the vine, 2 medium** - minimum 4 days before expiration (various)
- **Zucchini, 2 medium** - minimum 5 days before expiration (various soups and bowls)
- **Baby spinach, 1 (5 oz) container** - minimum 3 days before expiration (Thursday Tofu Scramble)
- **Potatoes (Yukon Gold or russet), 3 medium** - long shelf life item (soups and mash)
- **Fresh dill, 1 bunch** - minimum 6 days before expiration (Salmon Soup Tue, Meatball Soup Sat)
- **Fresh parsley, 1 bunch** - minimum 6 days before expiration (various soups and salads)
- **Fresh mint, 1 small bunch** - minimum 5 days before expiration (Sunday Mediterranean Lentil Salad)
- **Garlic, 2 heads** - long shelf life item (used in nearly every recipe this week; 2 heads recommended)
- **Yellow onions, 4 medium** - long shelf life item
- **Red onion, 1 medium** - long shelf life item (Mediterranean Lentil Salad Sunday)
- **Lemons, 3** - minimum 10 days before expiration (dressings, Salmon Soup)
- **Limes, 2** - minimum 10 days before expiration (Friday Sesame-Ginger Shrimp Bowls)
- **Fresh ginger root, 1 piece (~2 oz)** - minimum 6 days before expiration (Friday Shrimp Bowls)
- **Green onions (scallions), 1 bunch** - minimum 5 days before expiration

Meat & Poultry

- **Boneless, skinless turkey breast, 1.5 lb** - minimum 2 days before expiration; use for Sunday prep Turkey Vegetable Soup + cooked portions (4 oz for Wednesday salad + 4 oz for Saturday Cobb); freeze Saturday portion immediately

- **Ground turkey (93/7 lean), 1.5 lb** - minimum 2 days before expiration; use for Sunday Turkey Veggie Egg Muffins (~4 oz) and Saturday Meatball Soup (~12 oz); refrigerate or freeze same day
- **Diced turkey ham, 1 (6 oz) package** - minimum 4 days before expiration (Sunday prep Turkey Veggie Egg Muffins; find near deli meats or packaged ham)
- **Turkey bacon, 1 (12 oz) package** - minimum 5 days before expiration (Saturday Turkey Cobb Salad)
- **Boneless, skinless chicken breast, 1.5 lb** - minimum 2 days before expiration; freeze 3 oz portion immediately for Saturday Breakfast Burrito; remainder for Monday dinner patties (double batch ~1 lb)

Fish & Seafood

- **Smoked salmon (cold-smoked, sliced), 1 (4 oz) package** - minimum 5 days before expiration (Tuesday breakfast)
- **Fresh salmon fillets, 3/4 lb (12 oz)** - minimum 2 days before expiration (Tuesday Salmon & Vegetable Soup); or buy frozen and thaw Monday night
- **White fish fillets (cod, tilapia, or halibut), 1.5 lb** - minimum 2 days before expiration; or buy frozen; last use Friday Fish Patties (~6-8 oz Tuesday Baked White Fish + ~8 oz Friday Fish Patties)
- **Shrimp (medium, peeled & deveined), 1 (12 oz) bag** - buy frozen; thaw in refrigerator Thursday night for Friday Sesame-Ginger Shrimp Bowls

Dairy & Refrigerated

- **Fresh mozzarella (whole-milk ball), 1 (8 oz) ball** - minimum 7 days before expiration (Monday, Tuesday, Friday, Sunday: 2 oz each = 8 oz total)
- **Greek yogurt (plain, whole-milk or 2%), 1 (32 oz) container** - minimum 8 days before expiration (Wednesday breakfast 2 fl oz, Friday Overnight Oat Bowl, Sunday dinner 4 fl oz)
- **Kefir (plain, whole-milk), 1 (32 fl oz) carton** - minimum 7 days before expiration (4 fl oz Monday-Saturday dinners = 24 fl oz)
- **Cottage cheese (2% or low-fat), 1 (16 oz) container** - minimum 8 days before expiration (Wednesday Herbed Muffins + Sunday Chocolate Cottage Cheese Cream)
- **Parmesan cheese (shredded or grated), 1 (6 oz) bag** - minimum 8 days before expiration (Sunday Broccoli Frittata + Creamy Broccoli Soup)
- **Sharp cheddar cheese (shredded), 1 (8 oz) bag** - minimum 7 days before expiration (Sunday Creamy Broccoli Soup + Saturday Chicken Breakfast Burrito)
- **Blue cheese (crumbled), 1 (4 oz) container** - minimum 5 days before expiration (Saturday Turkey Cobb Salad)
- **Feta cheese (crumbled), 1 (4 oz) container** - minimum 8 days before expiration (Sunday Mediterranean Lentil Salad)
- **Extra-firm tofu, 2 (14-16 oz) blocks** - minimum 8 days before expiration (Thursday Turmeric Tofu Scramble + Thursday Tofu & Edamame Veggie Bowl; press before using)
- **Tempeh, 1 (8 oz) package** - minimum 8 days before expiration (Sunday Tempeh Quinoa Broccoli Bowl)
- **Kimchi, 1 (14 oz) jar** - minimum 1 month before expiration (Thursday Tofu & Edamame Veggie Bowl; sold refrigerated; long-lasting once opened)
- **Cream cheese (block style), 1 (4 oz) package** - minimum 5 days before expiration (Tuesday Smoked Salmon Scramble)
- **Unsalted butter, 1 stick (4 oz)** - minimum 3 weeks before expiration
- **Milk (any type: whole, 2%, or plant-based), 1 (32 fl oz) carton** - minimum 5 days before expiration (Turkey Veggie Egg Muffins)

Eggs

- **Large eggs, 2 dozen** - minimum 8 days before expiration (muffins, scrambles, patties, frittata, Cobb Salad, fish patties throughout the week)

Canned & Jarred Goods

- **Pitted Kalamata olives or black olives, 1 (6 oz) jar or can** - long shelf life item (Monday Cabbage & Carrot Salad + Sunday Mediterranean Lentil Salad)
- **Capers (in brine), 1 (3.5 oz) jar** - long shelf life item (Tuesday Smoked Salmon Scramble)
- **Pinto beans (no salt added), 2 (15 oz) cans** - long shelf life item (Thursday Vegetarian Chili with Pinto Beans)

- **Black beans (no salt added), 1 (15 oz) can** - long shelf life item (Thursday Vegetarian Chili also uses black beans)
- **Diced tomatoes (no salt added), 1 (14.5 oz) can** - long shelf life item (Thursday chili)
- **Tomato paste, 1 (6 oz) can** - long shelf life item
- **Low-sodium chicken broth, 2 (32 fl oz) cartons** - long shelf life item (Creamy Turkey Vegetable Soup + Salmon Soup + Meatball Soup; consider buying 3 if you make all soups full-size)
- **Whole kernel corn (no salt added), 1 (15 oz) can** - long shelf life item (Thursday Napa Cabbage Salad)
- **Sun-dried tomatoes in olive oil, 1 (8 oz) jar** - long shelf life item (Sunday Mediterranean Lentil Salad)
- **Salsa (mild or medium), 1 (16 oz) jar** - long shelf life item (Saturday Chicken Breakfast Burrito)
- **Reduced-sodium soy sauce or tamari, 1 (10 fl oz) bottle** - long shelf life item (Shrimp Bowls, Tofu dishes)

Grains, Bread & Dry Goods

- **Whole-grain sandwich bread, 1 loaf** - minimum 5 days before expiration (used multiple days; ~10 slices total)
- **Whole-wheat burrito-size tortillas, 1 package** - minimum 6 days before expiration (Saturday Chicken Breakfast Burrito)
- **Old-fashioned rolled oats, 1 (18 oz) canister** - long shelf life item (Friday Overnight Oat Bowl + Fig Pecan Energy Balls; will carry forward)
- **Green or brown lentils, 1 (16 oz) bag** - long shelf life item (Sunday Mediterranean Lentil Salad)
- **Quinoa, 1 (12 oz) bag** - long shelf life item (Sunday Tempeh Quinoa Broccoli Bowl + Thursday Tofu & Edamame Bowl option; will carry forward)
- **Brown rice, 1 (2 lb) bag** - long shelf life item (Thursday Tofu & Edamame Bowl; Friday Shrimp Bowls; will carry forward)
- **Whole-wheat flour, 1 (2 lb) bag** - long shelf life item (Monday Chopped Chicken Patties + Wednesday Herbed Cottage Cheese Muffins; will carry forward to all weeks)
- **Whole-grain breadcrumbs or panko, 1 (8 oz) canister** - long shelf life item (chicken patties, meatballs, fish patties)

Baking

- **Unsweetened cocoa powder, 1 (8 oz) can** - long shelf life item (Sunday Chocolate Cottage Cheese Cream)
- **Baking powder, 1 (8 oz) can** - long shelf life item (cottage cheese muffins, egg muffins)
- **Pure honey, 1 (12 oz) bottle** - long shelf life item (Tofu Bowl, energy balls, various)
- **Maple syrup, 1 (8 fl oz) bottle** - long shelf life item (Thursday Tofu & Edamame Veggie Bowl + energy balls alternative)
- **Pure vanilla extract, 1 (2 fl oz) bottle** - long shelf life item
- **Ground cinnamon, 1 jar** - long shelf life item (Baked Apples, various)
- **Sugar (granulated or coconut), 1 (1 lb) bag** - long shelf life item (Cabbage & Carrot Salad dressing + desserts)

Nuts, Seeds & Dried Fruit

- **Pecan halves, 1 (6 oz) bag** - long shelf life item (Fig Pecan Energy Balls Sunday prep + Friday Baked Apples with Pecans)
- **Walnut halves, 1 (6 oz) bag** - long shelf life item (Wednesday Turkey & Apple Walnut Salad)
- **Raisins, 1 (12 oz) box** - long shelf life item (Friday Baked Apples)
- **Dried figs (soft-dried), 1 (7 oz) package** - long shelf life item (Sunday prep Fig Pecan Energy Balls)
- **Dried cranberries, 1 (6 oz) bag** - long shelf life item (Wednesday Turkey & Apple Walnut Salad)
- **Sesame seeds, 1 (4 oz) bag** - long shelf life item (Friday Sesame-Ginger Shrimp Bowls)

Frozen

- **Shelled edamame (frozen), 1 (10-12 oz) bag** - long shelf life in freezer (Thursday Tofu & Edamame Bowl + Friday Shrimp Bowls)

Optional / Pantry Check

- **Extra-virgin olive oil** - check quantity; need at least ½ cup this week (multiple recipes use it for cooking and dressings; buy 1 (16.9 fl oz) bottle if running low)

- **Toasted sesame oil** - check pantry; needed for Asian-style dishes (Shrimp Bowls, Tofu Scramble, Tofu Bowl)
- **Red wine vinegar** - check pantry; needed for Turkey Cobb Salad dressing (Saturday) and Mediterranean Lentil Salad (Sunday)
- **Rice vinegar** - check pantry; needed for Shrimp Bowl dressing
- **Balsamic vinegar** - check pantry; optional for salads
- **Dijon mustard** - check pantry; used in salad dressings
- **Dried thyme** - needed for Creamy Turkey Vegetable Soup (Monday); buy 1 jar if not in pantry
- **Dried Italian herbs blend** - needed for Baked White Fish (Tuesday dinner); buy 1 jar if not in pantry
- **Dried turmeric** - needed for Thursday Tofu Scramble; buy 1 jar if not in pantry
- **Ground cumin** - needed for Thursday Vegetarian Chili
- **Chili powder** - needed for Thursday Vegetarian Chili
- **Dried oregano** - check pantry; used in chili and soups
- **Garlic powder** - check pantry
- **Smoked paprika** - check pantry
- **Salt and black pepper** - pantry staples; ensure adequate supply

Berries or low-glycemic fruit - 4.5-5.5 lb total (2-2.5 kg) for the week; choose from strawberries, raspberries, blueberries, blackberries, kiwi, peaches, or plums; buy in stages if possible, since fresh berries are best within 3-4 days of purchase.

Check pantry for olive oil, sauces, and spices before shopping.

Grocery List - Week 2

Week 2 Meals at a Glance: Turkey Avocado Egg Wrap · Cucumber Tomato Salad · Chicken & Chickpea Soup · Turkey Zucchini Patties with Asparagus · Salmon Dill Egg Muffins · Celery & Avocado Salad with Lemon Dressing · Tomato-Crusted White Fish with Bulgur · Apricot Almond Energy Bites · Cod & Tomato Vegetable Soup · Turkey & Sweet Potato Salad Plate · Creamy Broccoli Soup · Soy Milk Chia Pudding with Almonds · Warm Roasted Vegetable Salad with Tahini Dressing · Tomato Lentil Soup · Sardine Egg Spread Toast · Apple & Celery Salad · Baked Pears with Greek Yogurt · Fish Patties with Vegetable Mash · Chicken Apple Breakfast Salad · Steak & Arugula Salad · Cherry Cheesecake Brownies · Cheesy Turkey Casserole · Savory Oat Pancakes with Cheese & Herbs · Greek White Bean Salad · Creamy Mushroom Soup · Blueberry Lemon Ice Cream

Produce

- **Broccoli, 1 large head** - minimum 5 days before expiration (Wednesday Creamy Broccoli Soup)
- **Cauliflower, 1 medium head** - minimum 5 days before expiration (Friday Fish Patties with Vegetable Mash)
- **Zucchini, 3 medium** - minimum 3 days before expiration (Monday Turkey Zucchini Patties, double batch)
- **Asparagus, 1 bunch (~1 lb)** - minimum 2 days before expiration (Monday dinner); store upright in a glass of water in the refrigerator
- **Carrots, 1 (2 lb) bag** - minimum 7 days before expiration (Chicken & Chickpea Soup Mon; Turkey Zucchini Patties Mon; Cod & Tomato Soup Tue; Tomato Lentil Soup Thu; Apple & Celery Salad Fri)
- **Radishes, 1 bunch (about 8 radishes)** - minimum 5 days before expiration (Tuesday Celery & Avocado Salad with Lemon Dressing)
- **Cucumbers, 3 medium** - minimum 5 days before expiration (Monday Cucumber Tomato Salad + various)
- **Tomatoes (vine or roma), 4 medium** - minimum 4 days before expiration (various)
- **Avocados, 2 medium** - minimum 5 days before expiration (Tuesday Celery & Avocado Salad + Wednesday breakfast ½)
- **Sweet potatoes, 2 medium** - minimum 7 days before expiration (Wednesday Turkey & Sweet Potato Salad Plate)
- **Celery, 1 bunch** - minimum 7 days before expiration
- **Apples (firm variety), 2 medium** - minimum 5 days before expiration (Saturday Chicken Apple Breakfast Salad + Friday Apple & Celery Salad)
- **Pears (Bosc or Anjou, firm), 2 medium** - minimum 5 days before expiration (Friday Baked Pears with Greek Yogurt); buy slightly underripe
- **Arugula, 1 (5 oz) bag** - minimum 5 days before expiration (Saturday Steak & Arugula Salad)
- **Romaine or mixed salad greens, 1 (5 oz) bag** - minimum 5 days before expiration (various salads)
- **Fresh cremini or button mushrooms, 1 lb** - minimum 3 days before expiration (Sunday Creamy Mushroom Soup, 1.5 servings)
- **Bell peppers (red or mixed), 3 medium** - minimum 6 days before expiration (Chicken & Chickpea Soup, various)
- **Lemons, 3** - minimum 10 days before expiration (Tuesday Celery & Avocado Salad dressing + various)
- **Fresh dill, 1 bunch** - minimum 5 days before expiration (Salmon Dill Muffins + Cheesy Turkey Casserole)
- **Garlic** - use remaining from Week 1; top up with 1 head if fewer than 8 cloves remain
- **Yellow onions** - use remaining from Week 1; top up with 2-3 medium if needed
- **Red onion, 1 medium** - long shelf life item
- **Cherry tomatoes, 1 pint** - minimum 5 days before expiration (Steak & Arugula Salad Sat + Cheesy Turkey Casserole Sat)

Meat & Poultry

- **Boneless, skinless turkey breast, 1 lb** - minimum 2 days before expiration; Sunday prep: cook 3 oz (refrigerate, for Monday wrap); cook for Wednesday Turkey & Sweet Potato Salad Plate (~5 oz); refrigerate
- **Ground turkey (93/7 lean), 1.5 lb** - minimum 2 days before expiration; use for Monday Turkey Zucchini Patties double batch (~12 oz) and Saturday Cheesy Turkey Casserole (~10 oz)
- **Boneless, skinless chicken breast, 3/4 lb (12 oz)** - minimum 2 days before expiration; Sunday prep: cook 3 oz for Saturday Chicken Apple Breakfast Salad (freeze immediately); remaining ~9 oz for Chicken & Chickpea Soup Monday

- **Beef (sirloin or flank steak), 6 oz** - minimum 2 days before expiration; cook Sunday evening, freeze for Saturday Steak & Arugula Salad; thaw Friday night

Fish & Seafood

- **Fresh salmon fillet, 4 oz** - minimum 1 day before expiration (Sunday prep for Salmon Dill Egg Muffins); or buy frozen and thaw Saturday
- **White fish fillets (cod, halibut, or tilapia), 2 lb** - minimum 2 days before expiration; or buy frozen; portions: ~7 oz Tue Tomato-Crusted; ~7 oz Fri Tomato-Crusted; ~8 oz Fri Fish Patties
- **Cod fillet (for soup), 3/4 lb (12 oz)** - minimum 2 days before expiration (Tuesday Cod & Tomato Vegetable Soup); can combine with white fish purchase above
- **Canned sardines in olive oil or water, 1 (3.75 oz) can** - long shelf life item (Friday Sardine Egg Spread Toast)

Dairy & Refrigerated

- **Fresh mozzarella, 1 (8 oz) ball** - minimum 7 days before expiration (Tuesday breakfast 2 oz + Saturday lunch 2 oz + Sunday breakfast 2 oz = ~6 oz)
- **Greek yogurt (plain, whole-milk or 2%), 1 (16 oz) container** - minimum 8 days before expiration (Wednesday breakfast + Friday Baked Pears + Sunday dinner 4 fl oz)
- **Kefir (plain, whole-milk), 1 (32 fl oz) carton** - minimum 7 days before expiration (4 fl oz Monday-Saturday = 24 fl oz)
- **Sharp cheddar cheese (shredded), 1 (8 oz) bag** - minimum 7 days before expiration (Wednesday Creamy Broccoli Soup + Sunday Savory Oat Pancakes)
- **Parmesan cheese (shaved or grated), 1 (4 oz) package** - minimum 7 days before expiration (Saturday Steak & Arugula Salad)
- **Feta cheese (crumbled), 1 (4 oz) container** - minimum 5 days before expiration (Sunday Greek White Bean Salad)
- **Cream cheese (block style), 1 (8 oz) package** - minimum 7 days before expiration (Saturday Cherry Cheesecake Brownies)
- **Cottage cheese (2% or low-fat), 1 (16 oz) container** - minimum 7 days before expiration (Sunday Savory Oat Pancakes)
- **Heavy cream or half-and-half, 1 (8 fl oz) carton** - minimum 7 days before expiration (Sunday Creamy Mushroom Soup)
- **Soy milk (unsweetened), 1 (32 fl oz) carton** - minimum 7 days before expiration (Thursday Soy Milk Chia Pudding)
- **Milk (whole or 2%), 1 (16 fl oz)** - minimum 5 days before expiration (Sunday Savory Oat Pancakes with Cheese & Herbs)

Eggs

- **Large eggs, 1½ dozen (18 eggs)** - minimum 8 days before expiration (Salmon Dill Muffins, Turkey Avocado Egg Wrap, Sardine Egg Spread, Savory Oat Pancakes, Cherry Cheesecake Brownies, Cheesy Turkey Casserole)

Canned & Jarred Goods

- **Chickpeas (no salt added), 2 (15 oz) cans** - long shelf life item (Monday Chicken & Chickpea Soup)
- **White beans (cannellini), 2 (15 oz) cans** - long shelf life item (Sunday Greek White Bean Salad)
- **Diced tomatoes (no salt added), 2 (14.5 oz) cans** - long shelf life item (Tuesday Cod & Tomato Soup + Thursday Tomato Lentil Soup)
- **Low-sodium chicken or vegetable broth, 3 (32 fl oz) cartons** - long shelf life item (Chicken & Chickpea Soup + Cod & Tomato Soup + Tomato Lentil Soup + Creamy Broccoli Soup; 3 cartons to cover all soups comfortably)
- **Tahini (sesame paste), 1 (8-10 oz) jar** - long shelf life item (Thursday Warm Roasted Vegetable Salad with Tahini Dressing; first purchase)
- **Cherry preserves or jarred sour cherries, 1 (12 oz) jar** - long shelf life item (Saturday Cherry Cheesecake Brownies)
- **Kalamata olives** - use remaining from Week 1; top up with 1 (6 oz) jar only if needed
- **Tomato paste** - use remaining from Week 1; buy 1 (6 oz) can only if completely out
- **Soy sauce / tamari** - use remaining from Week 1

Grains, Bread & Dry Goods

- **Whole-grain sandwich bread, 1 loaf** - minimum 5 days before expiration
- **Bulgur wheat, 1 (12-16 oz) bag** - long shelf life item (Tuesday + Friday Tomato-Crusted White Fish with Bulgur; first purchase)
- **Chia seeds, 1 (12 oz) bag** - long shelf life item (Thursday Soy Milk Chia Pudding; first purchase; will carry forward)
- **Red lentils (dry), 1 (16 oz) bag** - long shelf life item (Thursday Tomato Lentil Soup specifically calls for red lentils; first purchase)
- **Rolled oats** - use remaining from Week 1 (Sunday Savory Oat Pancakes); top up if less than 1 cup remains
- **Quinoa** - use remaining from Week 1 if any; not required in Week 2 menus
- **Brown rice** - use remaining from Week 1; not required in Week 2 menus
- **Whole-wheat flour** - use remaining from Week 1 (Turkey Zucchini Patties coating + Fish Patties muffin coating)
- **Whole-grain breadcrumbs** - use remaining from Week 1; top up if less than ¼ cup remains

Baking

- **Granulated sugar or coconut sugar, 1 (1 lb) bag** - long shelf life item (Cherry Cheesecake Brownies + Blueberry Lemon Ice Cream)
- **Unsweetened cocoa powder** - use remaining from Week 1 (Cherry Cheesecake Brownies)
- **Baking powder** - should remain from Week 1
- **Honey** - top up if less than ¼ cup remains from Week 1
- **Maple syrup** - should remain from Week 1
- **Vanilla extract** - should remain from Week 1
- **Ground cinnamon** - should remain from Week 1

Nuts, Seeds & Dried Fruit

- **Dried apricots (soft-dried, unsulfured), 1 (6 oz) package** - long shelf life item (Sunday prep Apricot Almond Energy Bites; first purchase)
- **Whole or slivered almonds, 1 (6 oz) bag** - long shelf life item (Apricot Almond Energy Bites + Thursday Soy Milk Chia Pudding with Almonds; first purchase)
- **Pumpkin seeds (pepitas), 1 (4 oz) bag** - long shelf life item (Thursday Warm Roasted Vegetable Salad with Tahini Dressing; first purchase)
- **Pecan halves** - use remaining from Week 1 (Chicken Apple Breakfast Salad); top up if less than ¼ cup remains
- **Walnut halves** - use remaining from Week 1; top up if less than ¼ cup remains
- **Sesame seeds** - use remaining from Week 1

Frozen

- **Frozen blueberries, 1 (10-12 oz) bag** - long shelf life in freezer (Sunday Blueberry Lemon Ice Cream)

Optional / Pantry Check

- **Olive oil** - check quantity; at least ½ cup needed this week
- **Balsamic vinegar** - needed for Saturday Steak & Arugula Salad; buy 1 bottle if not in pantry
- **Dijon mustard** - check pantry (various dressings)
- **Dried Italian herbs** - needed for Tuesday Tomato-Crusted White Fish with Bulgur; check pantry
- **Dried thyme** - needed for Sunday Creamy Mushroom Soup; check pantry
- **Dried basil** - needed for Thursday Tomato Lentil Soup; check pantry
- **Ground cumin and smoked paprika** - check pantry
- **Sesame oil** - check pantry
- **Red pepper flakes** - check pantry

Berries or low-glycemic fruit - 4.5-5.5 lb total (2-2.5 kg) for the week; choose from strawberries, raspberries, blueberries, blackberries, kiwi, peaches, or plums; buy in stages if possible, since fresh berries are best within 3-4 days of purchase.

Check pantry for olive oil, sauces, and spices before shopping.

Grocery List - Week 3

Week 3 Meals at a Glance: Chicken Veggie Wrap · Caprese Salad · Beef Burrito Bowl · Turkey with Braised Cabbage · Tuna Corn Egg Muffins · Beet Salad with Walnuts & Prunes · Whole-Grain-Crusted White Fish with Green Beans · Carrot Walnut Spelt Muffins · Tomato White Bean Soup with Tuna · Turkey Hummus Sandwich · Chicken Avocado Crunch Salad · Baked Apples with Raisins & Pecans · Creamy Broccoli Soup · Sesame Tempeh & Broccoli Plate · Apple & Celery Salad · Tempeh Grain Bowl with Brussels Sprouts · Creamy Pumpkin Soup with Seeds · Tuna White Bean Salad · Salmon Quinoa Lunch Bowl · Baked Cottage Cheese Bake · Creamy Cod Chowder with Leek & Potato · Roast Beef & Egg Breakfast Plate · Grilled Chicken Greek Salad · Chocolate Cottage Cheese Cream · Chopped Chicken Patties with Roasted Broccoli · Spinach Feta Omelet · Cottage Cheese Stuffed Sweet Potatoes · Chickpea Shakshuka

Produce

- **Broccoli, 2 large heads** - minimum 7 days before expiration (Thursday Sesame Tempeh Plate + Saturday Chopped Chicken Patties; also Wednesday Creamy Broccoli Soup)
- **Cauliflower** - not required this week (Mash is not on the menu in Week 3)
- **Green cabbage, 1 medium head** - minimum 7 days before expiration (Monday Turkey with Braised Cabbage)
- **Fresh beets, 3-4 medium (or 1 package pre-cooked vacuum-sealed beets)** - minimum 7 days before expiration (Tuesday Beet Salad; boil Sunday evening or buy pre-cooked)
- **Green beans, 3/4 lb (12 oz)** - minimum 4 days before expiration (Tuesday Whole-Grain-Crusted White Fish with Green Beans)
- **Brussels sprouts, 1 lb** - minimum 5 days before expiration (Thursday Tempeh Grain Bowl)
- **Leek, 1 large** - minimum 5 days before expiration (Friday Creamy Cod Chowder)
- **Carrots, 1 (2 lb) bag** - minimum 7 days before expiration (Sunday prep Carrot Walnut Spelt Muffins + Chicken Veggie Wrap + soups; needed in multiple recipes this week)
- **Avocados, 2 medium** - minimum 5 days before expiration (Wednesday Chicken Avocado Crunch Salad + Monday wrap filler option; buy slightly firm)
- **Sweet potatoes, 2 medium** - minimum 7 days before expiration (Sunday Cottage Cheese Stuffed Sweet Potatoes)
- **Apples (firm variety), 2 medium** - minimum 5 days before expiration (Thursday Apple & Celery Salad + Wednesday Baked Apples)
- **Zucchini, 1 medium** - minimum 5 days before expiration (Friday Salmon Quinoa Lunch Bowl)
- **Baby spinach, 1 (5 oz) container** - minimum 4 days before expiration (Sunday Spinach Feta Omelet + Monday Chicken Veggie Wrap)
- **Romaine or butter lettuce, 2 heads or 1 (5 oz) bag** - minimum 5 days before expiration (Monday Chicken Veggie Wrap; Wednesday Turkey Hummus Sandwich; Wednesday Chicken Avocado Crunch Salad; Saturday Grilled Chicken Greek Salad)
- **Arugula, 1 (5 oz) bag** - minimum 4 days before expiration (Saturday Roast Beef & Egg Breakfast Plate)
- **Radishes, 1 bunch (about 8 radishes)** - minimum 5 days before expiration (Saturday Roast Beef & Egg Breakfast Plate)
- **Celery, 1 bunch** - minimum 7 days before expiration (Thursday Apple & Celery Salad + various soups)
- **Tomatoes on the vine, 5 medium** - minimum 5 days before expiration (Caprese Salad Mon + Sun; Tomato White Bean Soup Tue; Shakshuka Sun - buy 5 to cover all; supplement with canned where needed)
- **Fresh basil, 1 small bunch (or 1 pot of living basil)** - minimum 4 days before expiration (Caprese Salad Monday + Sunday)
- **Cucumber, 2 medium** - minimum 5 days before expiration (Chicken Avocado Crunch Salad + Chicken Veggie Wrap)
- **Bell peppers (red and green), 3 medium** - minimum 6 days before expiration (Beef Burrito Bowl + Shakshuka Sunday)
- **Fresh cilantro, 1 bunch** - minimum 4 days before expiration (Monday Beef Burrito Bowl)
- **Potatoes (Yukon Gold), 3 medium** - minimum 10 days before expiration (Friday Creamy Cod Chowder)
- **Fresh ginger root, 1 piece (~1 oz)** - minimum 5 days before expiration (Thursday Sesame Tempeh & Broccoli Plate)
- **Lemons, 3** - minimum 10 days before expiration

- Garlic - use remaining from Week 1/2; top up with 1 head if fewer than 8 cloves remain
- Yellow onions - use remaining from previous weeks; top up with 2-3 medium if needed
- **Red onion, 1 medium** - long shelf life item
- **Fresh dill or parsley, 1 bunch** - minimum 5 days before expiration (Cod Chowder Fri + Chopped Chicken Patties Sat)

Meat & Poultry

- **Boneless, skinless turkey breast, 1.5 lb** - minimum 2 days before expiration; Sunday prep: cook 3 oz for Wednesday Hummus Sandwich (refrigerate); cook portion (~8-10 oz) for Monday Turkey with Braised Cabbage
- **Ground beef (90% lean), 1/2 lb (8 oz)** - minimum 2 days before expiration (Monday Beef Burrito Bowl; use or freeze same day as purchase)
- **Deli-sliced roast beef, 1 (4-6 oz) package** - minimum 4 days before expiration (Saturday Roast Beef & Egg Breakfast Plate; buy from deli counter or sliced package)
- **Boneless, skinless chicken breast, 1.5 lb** - minimum 2 days before expiration; Sunday prep: cook 3 oz for Monday Chicken Veggie Wrap + 3 oz for Wednesday Chicken Avocado Crunch Salad (refrigerate both); remainder for Saturday Grilled Chicken Greek Salad (~6 oz) and Saturday dinner Chopped Chicken Patties (~10 oz)
- **Tempeh, 2 (8 oz) packages** - minimum 8 days before expiration (Thursday breakfast Sesame Tempeh & Broccoli Plate + Thursday lunch Tempeh Grain Bowl with Brussels Sprouts)

Fish & Seafood

- **Canned tuna in water or olive oil, 3 (5 oz) cans** - long shelf life item (Sunday prep Tuna Corn Egg Muffins + Tuesday Tomato White Bean Soup with Tuna + Friday Tuna White Bean Salad)
- **White fish fillets (cod or tilapia), 3/4 lb (12 oz)** - minimum 2 days before expiration (Tuesday Whole-Grain-Crusted White Fish with Green Beans); or buy frozen
- **Fresh salmon fillet, 3/4 lb (12 oz)** - minimum 2 days before expiration (Friday Salmon Quinoa Lunch Bowl); or buy frozen and thaw Thursday night
- **Cod fillet (for chowder), 3/4 lb (12 oz)** - minimum 2 days before expiration (Friday Creamy Cod Chowder); can purchase together with white fish as 1.5 lb cod total

Dairy & Refrigerated

- **Fresh mozzarella, 1 (8 oz) ball** - minimum 7 days before expiration (Tuesday breakfast 2 oz + Caprese Salad Monday + Caprese Salad Sunday = ~8 oz total)
- **Greek yogurt (plain, whole-milk or 2%), 1 (16 oz) container** - minimum 8 days before expiration (Sunday dinner 4 fl oz; also Baked Cottage Cheese Bake + Chocolate Cottage Cheese Cream)
- **Kefir (plain, whole-milk), 1 (32 fl oz) carton** - minimum 7 days before expiration (4 fl oz Monday-Saturday)
- **Cottage cheese (2%), 2 (16 oz) containers** - minimum 8 days before expiration (Friday Baked Cottage Cheese Bake 1.5 servings + Saturday Chocolate Cottage Cheese Cream + Sunday Cottage Cheese Stuffed Sweet Potatoes)
- **Feta cheese (crumbled), 1 (4-6 oz) container** - minimum 5 days before expiration (Sunday Spinach Feta Omelet + Saturday Grilled Chicken Greek Salad)
- **Sharp cheddar cheese (shredded), 1 (8 oz) bag** - minimum 5 days before expiration (Wednesday Creamy Broccoli Soup)
- **Plain low-fat yogurt or light sour cream, 1 (8 oz) container** - minimum 5 days before expiration (Tuesday Beet Salad with Walnuts & Prunes dressing)
- **Milk (low-fat or whole), 1 (16 fl oz) carton** - minimum 5 days before expiration (Friday Creamy Cod Chowder)
- **Hummus (plain or roasted garlic), 1 (10 oz) container** - minimum 6 days before expiration (Wednesday Turkey Hummus Sandwich)
- **Parmesan cheese (grated)** - use remaining from Week 1; top up with 1 (4 oz) bag if needed

Eggs

- **Large eggs, 1½ dozen (18 eggs)** - minimum 8 days before expiration (Tuna Corn Egg Muffins, Baked Cottage Cheese Bake, Spinach Feta Omelet, Chopped Chicken Patties, Roast Beef & Egg Plate, Chickpea Shakshuka)

Canned & Jarred Goods

- **Black beans (no salt added), 1 (15 oz) can** - long shelf life item (Monday Beef Burrito Bowl)

- **White beans (cannellini), 2 (15 oz) cans** - long shelf life item (Tuesday Tomato White Bean Soup + Friday Tuna White Bean Salad)
- **Chickpeas (no salt added), 1 (15 oz) can** - long shelf life item (Sunday Chickpea Shakshuka)
- **Diced or crushed tomatoes, 2 (14.5 oz) cans** - long shelf life item (Tuesday Tomato White Bean Soup + Sunday Chickpea Shakshuka)
- **Pumpkin purée (100% pure, not pie filling), 1 (15 oz) can** - long shelf life item (Thursday Creamy Pumpkin Soup with Seeds)
- **Whole kernel corn (no salt added), 1 (15 oz) can** - long shelf life item (Sunday prep Tuna Corn Egg Muffins; can use fresh corn ear instead)
- **Low-sodium chicken or vegetable broth, 2 (32 fl oz) cartons** - long shelf life item (Cod Chowder + Creamy Broccoli Soup + Shakshuka)
- **Salsa (chunky, mild or medium), 1 (16 oz) jar** - long shelf life item (Monday Beef Burrito Bowl)
- **Black olives (sliced or whole), 1 (3.8 oz) can** - long shelf life item (Caprese Salad Monday + Sunday)
- Tomato paste - use remaining from previous weeks; buy 1 (6 oz) can only if completely out
- Soy sauce / tamari - use remaining from previous weeks
- Tahini - use remaining from Week 2
- Kalamata olives - use remaining from previous weeks; buy 1 (6 oz) jar if needed for Saturday Grilled Chicken Greek Salad

Grains, Bread & Dry Goods

- **Whole-grain sandwich bread, 1 loaf** - minimum 5 days before expiration
- **Whole-wheat wraps or tortillas, 1 package** - minimum 6 days before expiration (Monday Chicken Veggie Wrap)
- **Spelt flour, 1 (2 lb) bag** - long shelf life item (Sunday prep Carrot Walnut Spelt Muffins; first purchase; will carry forward)
- **Farro (uncooked), 1 (14-16 oz) bag** - long shelf life item (Thursday Tempeh Grain Bowl with Brussels Sprouts specifically uses farro; first purchase; will carry forward to Week 4)
- Quinoa - use remaining from Week 1 (Friday Salmon Quinoa Lunch Bowl); buy 1 additional (12 oz) bag only if less than $\frac{3}{4}$ cup remains
- Brown rice - use remaining from Week 1 (Beef Burrito Bowl if not using farro for grain bowl); top up only if less than $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups remains
- Whole-wheat flour - use remaining from Week 1 (Saturday Chopped Chicken Patties + Whole-Grain-Crusted Fish; top up if less than $\frac{3}{4}$ cup remains)
- Whole-grain breadcrumbs - use remaining from Week 1 (Whole-Grain-Crusted Fish)

Baking

- **Maple syrup or honey** - check quantity; needed for Carrot Walnut Spelt Muffins and Wednesday Baked Apples
- Baking powder - should remain from Week 1
- Vanilla extract - should remain from Week 1
- Ground cinnamon - should remain from Week 1 (Carrot Walnut Muffins + Baked Apples)
- Unsweetened cocoa powder - use remaining from Week 1 (Saturday Chocolate Cottage Cheese Cream)
- Sugar or coconut sugar - use remaining from previous weeks

Nuts, Seeds & Dried Fruit

- **Dried prunes (pitted), 1 (6 oz) package** - long shelf life item (Tuesday Beet Salad with Walnuts & Prunes; first purchase)
- **Sunflower seeds (raw or lightly roasted), 1 (4 oz) bag** - long shelf life item (Thursday Creamy Pumpkin Soup with Seeds; first purchase if not in pantry)
- Pumpkin seeds (pepitas) - use remaining from Week 2 (Thursday Creamy Pumpkin Soup with Seeds)

- Walnut halves - use remaining from Week 1 (Tuesday Beet Salad + Sunday prep Carrot Walnut Spelt Muffins); buy 1 additional (6 oz) bag if less than $\frac{3}{4}$ cup remains
- Pecan halves - use remaining from Week 1 (Wednesday Baked Apples with Raisins & Pecans); top up if less than $\frac{1}{4}$ cup remains
- Raisins - use remaining from Week 1 (Wednesday Baked Apples with Raisins)
- Sesame seeds - use remaining from Week 1 (Thursday Sesame Tempeh Plate)
- Almonds - use remaining from Week 2 if any

Optional / Pantry Check

- **Sesame oil** - needed for Thursday Sesame Tempeh & Broccoli Plate; check pantry
- **Soy sauce / tamari** - check quantity (Sesame Tempeh Plate + Tofu Bowl)
- **Olive oil** - check quantity; needed for roasting, sautéing, and dressings
- **Balsamic vinegar** - needed for Caprese Salad (Mon + Sun) and Greek Salad (Sat)
- **Dried Italian herbs** - needed for Saturday Chopped Chicken Patties; check pantry
- **Ground cumin and smoked paprika** - needed for Sunday Chickpea Shakshuka and Beef Burrito Bowl
- **Dried oregano** - needed for Greek Salad and Shakshuka
- **Cayenne pepper or harissa** - check pantry for Shakshuka
- **Ground nutmeg** - optional for Pumpkin Soup; check pantry
- **Dijon mustard** - for Chicken Avocado Crunch Salad dressing (Wednesday)

Berries or low-glycemic fruit - 4.5-5.5 lb total (2-2.5 kg) for the week; choose from strawberries, raspberries, blueberries, blackberries, kiwi, peaches, or plums; buy in stages if possible, since fresh berries are best within 3-4 days of purchase.

Check pantry for olive oil, sauces, and spices before shopping.

Grocery List - Week 4

Week 4 Meals at a Glance: Turkey Avocado Egg Wrap · Cucumber Tomato Salad · Chicken & White Bean Skillet · Cherry Cheesecake Brownies · Chicken Sausage with Sautéed Kale · Tuna, Corn & Egg Salad · Napa Cabbage Salad with Corn & Cucumber · White Fish Fritters with Dill, Onion & Baked Sweet Potato · Banana Oat Cookies · Baked Cod with Asparagus & Tomatoes · Roast Beef & Egg Breakfast Plate · Caprese Salad · Chicken with Roasted Cauliflower & Quinoa · Creamy Broccoli Soup · Quinoa with Walnuts & Cinnamon · Tempeh Grain Bowl with Brussels Sprouts · Vegetarian Chili with Pinto Beans · Tuna Cottage Cheese Bowl · Cabbage & Carrot Salad with Olives · Shrimp & Lentil Bowl · Baked Pears with Greek Yogurt · Baked White Fish with Vegetables · Flourless Cottage Cheese Pancakes · Turkey & Sweet Potato Salad Plate · Chopped Chicken Patties with Roasted Broccoli · Black Bean Avocado Scramble · Poached Eggs with Quinoa & Spinach · Berry Ricotta Parfé · Chickpea Shakshuka

Produce

- **Broccoli, 2 large heads** - minimum 8 days before expiration (Wednesday Creamy Broccoli Soup + Saturday Chopped Chicken Patties)
- **Cauliflower, 1 large head** - minimum 7 days before expiration (Wednesday Chicken with Roasted Cauliflower & Quinoa)
- **Kale (curly or lacinato), 1 bunch** - minimum 3 days before expiration (Monday Chicken Sausage with Sautéed Kale)
- **Asparagus, 1 bunch (~1 lb)** - minimum 3 days before expiration (Tuesday Baked Cod with Asparagus & Tomatoes); store upright in a glass of water
- **Napa cabbage, 1 small head** - minimum 5 days before expiration (Tuesday Napa Cabbage Salad with Corn & Cucumber)
- **Green cabbage, 1 small head (~1 lb)** - minimum 7 days before expiration (Friday Cabbage & Carrot Salad with Olives)
- **Carrots, 1 (1 lb) bag** - minimum 7 days before expiration (Friday Cabbage & Carrot Salad)
- **Brussels sprouts, 1 lb** - minimum 5 days before expiration (Thursday Tempeh Grain Bowl with Brussels Sprouts)
- **Sweet potatoes, 3-4 medium** - minimum 7 days before expiration (Tuesday Baked Sweet Potato + Saturday Turkey & Sweet Potato Salad Plate from Sunday prep)
- **Avocados, 3 medium** - minimum 8 days before expiration (Monday Turkey Avocado Egg Wrap + Sunday Black Bean Avocado Scramble; buy slightly firm)
- **Cucumbers, 3 medium** - minimum 6 days before expiration (Monday Cucumber Tomato Salad + Tuesday Napa Cabbage Salad + Sunday Cucumber Tomato Salad)
- **Tomatoes on the vine, 5 medium** - minimum 6 days before expiration (Monday salad + Caprese Wed + Tue Baked Cod + Sun salad)
- **Cherry tomatoes, 1 pint** - minimum 5 days before expiration (Tuesday Baked Cod + Sunday Chickpea Shakshuka)
- **Bell peppers (red and orange), 4 medium** - minimum 7 days before expiration (Monday Turkey Avocado Egg Wrap + Thursday Vegetarian Chili + Sunday Chickpea Shakshuka)
- **Zucchini, 2 medium** - minimum 6 days before expiration (Thursday Vegetarian Chili with Pinto Beans)
- **Baby spinach, 1 (5 oz) container** - minimum 8 days before expiration (Sunday Poached Eggs with Quinoa & Spinach)
- **Romaine lettuce or mixed greens, 1 (5 oz) bag** - minimum 4 days before expiration (Tuesday Tuna, Corn & Egg Salad)
- **Arugula, 1 (5 oz) bag** - minimum 5 days before expiration (Wednesday Roast Beef & Egg Breakfast Plate + Wednesday Chicken with Roasted Cauliflower & Quinoa)
- **Radishes, 1 bunch** - minimum 5 days before expiration (Wednesday Roast Beef & Egg Breakfast Plate)
- **Pears (Bosc or Anjou, firm), 4 medium** - minimum 7 days before expiration (Friday + Saturday Baked Pears with Greek Yogurt; buy firm so they ripen by use day)
- **Ripe bananas, 4 medium** - minimum 4 days before expiration (Sunday prep Banana Oat Cookies; the riper the better)
- **Apples, 1 medium** - minimum 7 days before expiration (Thursday Quinoa with Walnuts & Cinnamon breakfast bowl)
- **Fresh basil, 1 small bunch** - minimum 4 days before expiration (Wednesday Caprese Salad)
- **Fresh dill, 1 bunch** - minimum 4 days before expiration (Tuesday White Fish Fritters with Dill and Onion)

- **Fresh parsley, 1 bunch** - minimum 7 days before expiration (Monday Cucumber Tomato Salad + Friday Shrimp & Lentil Bowl + Saturday Chopped Chicken Patties)
- **Lemons, 3** - minimum 10 days before expiration
- **Yellow onions** - use remaining from previous weeks; top up with 3 medium if needed
- **Garlic** - use remaining from previous weeks; top up with 2 heads (garlic is used in nearly every recipe; 7+ cloves needed this week)
- **Red onion, 1 medium** - long shelf life item

Meat & Poultry

- **Boneless, skinless turkey breast, 1.5 lb** - minimum 2 days before expiration; Sunday prep: cook 3 oz (refrigerate, for Monday Turkey Avocado Egg Wrap); cook 1 serving (~6-8 oz) for Saturday Turkey & Sweet Potato Salad Plate and freeze immediately; thaw Friday night
- **Boneless, skinless chicken breast, 1.5 lb** - minimum 2 days before expiration; use for Monday Chicken & White Bean Skillet (~8 oz) and Saturday Chopped Chicken Patties double batch (~1 lb)
- **Chicken sausages (fully cooked, mild flavor), 1 (12 oz) package** - minimum 5 days before expiration (Monday Chicken Sausage with Sautéed Kale)
- **Deli-sliced roast beef, 1 (4-6 oz) package** - minimum 4 days before expiration (Wednesday Roast Beef & Egg Breakfast Plate)
- **Tempeh, 1 (8 oz) package** - minimum 8 days before expiration (Thursday Tempeh Grain Bowl with Brussels Sprouts)

Fish & Seafood

- **Canned tuna in water or olive oil, 2 (5 oz) cans** - long shelf life item (Tuesday Tuna, Corn & Egg Salad + Friday Tuna Cottage Cheese Bowl)
- **White fish fillets (cod or tilapia), 1.5 lb** - minimum 2 days before expiration; last use Friday Baked White Fish (portions: ~8 oz Tuesday White Fish Fritters + ~6-8 oz Friday Baked White Fish); or buy frozen
- **Cod fillets, 3/4 lb (12 oz)** - minimum 2 days before expiration (Tuesday Baked Cod with Asparagus & Tomatoes); can combine with white fish purchase
- **Shrimp (medium, peeled & deveined), 1 (12 oz) bag** - buy frozen; thaw in refrigerator Thursday night (Friday Shrimp & Lentil Bowl)

Dairy & Refrigerated

- **Greek yogurt (plain, whole-milk or 2%), 1 (32 oz) container** - minimum 8 days before expiration (Saturday breakfast 2 fl oz + Fri & Sat Baked Pears + Sunday dinner 4 fl oz; also used in Tuesday yogurt serving)
- **Kefir (plain, whole-milk), 1 (32 fl oz) carton** - minimum 7 days before expiration (4 fl oz Monday-Saturday dinners = 24 fl oz)
- **Cottage cheese (2% or low-fat), 2 (16 oz) containers** - minimum 8 days before expiration (Saturday Flourless Cottage Cheese Pancakes + Friday Tuna Cottage Cheese Bowl + possibly Shakshuka topping)
- **Ricotta cheese (whole-milk), 1 (15 oz) container** - minimum 8 days before expiration (Sunday Berry Ricotta Parfé)
- **Fresh mozzarella, 1 (4 oz) ball** - minimum 7 days before expiration (Wednesday Caprese Salad)
- **Cream cheese (block style), 1 (4 oz) package** - minimum 8 days before expiration (Sunday prep Cherry Cheesecake Brownies)
- **Shredded cheddar or Monterey Jack cheese, 1 (8 oz) bag** - minimum 7 days before expiration (Monday Chicken & White Bean Skillet)
- **Sharp cheddar cheese (shredded), 1 (8 oz) bag** - minimum 7 days before expiration (Wednesday Creamy Broccoli Soup)
- **Feta cheese (crumbled), 1 (4 oz) container** - minimum 6 days before expiration (Sunday Chickpea Shakshuka topping)
- **Hummus (plain or garlic), 1 (10 oz) container** - minimum 5 days before expiration (Monday Turkey Avocado Egg Wrap)

Eggs

- **Large eggs, 2 dozen** - minimum 8 days before expiration (Turkey Avocado Egg Wrap, Tuna/Corn/Egg Salad, Roast Beef & Egg Plate, Flourless Cottage Cheese Pancakes, Poached Eggs with Quinoa, Chickpea Shakshuka, Cherry Cheesecake Brownies, White Fish Fritters, Banana Oat Cookies)

Canned & Jarred Goods

- **Pinto beans (no salt added), 2 (15 oz) cans** - long shelf life item (Thursday Vegetarian Chili with Pinto Beans)
- **White beans (cannellini), 1 (15 oz) can** - long shelf life item (Monday Chicken & White Bean Skillet)
- **Black beans (no salt added), 1 (15 oz) can** - long shelf life item (Sunday Black Bean Avocado Scramble)
- **Chickpeas (no salt added), 1 (15 oz) can** - long shelf life item (Sunday Chickpea Shakshuka)
- **Diced tomatoes (no salt added), 2 (14.5 oz) cans** - long shelf life item (Thursday Vegetarian Chili + Sunday Chickpea Shakshuka)
- **Whole kernel corn (no salt added), 1 (15 oz) can** - long shelf life item (Tuesday Tuna, Corn & Egg Salad + Tuesday Napa Cabbage Salad with Corn)
- **Green or brown lentils, 1 (15 oz) can OR use dry lentils from Week 1 bag - long shelf life item (Friday Shrimp & Lentil Bowl)**
- **Black olives (sliced or whole), 1 (3.8 oz) can** - long shelf life item (Wednesday Caprese Salad)
- **Kalamata olives, 1 (6 oz) can or jar** - long shelf life item (Friday Cabbage & Carrot Salad with Olives)
- **Cherry preserves or jarred sour cherries, 1 (12 oz) jar** - long shelf life item (Sunday prep Cherry Cheesecake Brownies)
- **Salsa (chunky, mild or medium), 1 (16 oz) jar** - long shelf life item (Sunday Black Bean Avocado Scramble)
- **Low-sodium chicken or vegetable broth, 2 (32 fl oz) cartons** - long shelf life item (Wednesday Creamy Broccoli Soup + Monday Chicken Sausage with Kale + Vegetarian Chili + Shakshuka)
- **Tomato paste** - use remaining from previous weeks; buy 1 (6 oz) can only if completely out
- **Soy sauce / tamari** - use remaining from previous weeks

Grains, Bread & Dry Goods

- **Whole-grain sandwich bread, 1 loaf** - minimum 5 days before expiration
- **Oat bran, 1 (16 oz) canister** - long shelf life item (Saturday Flourless Cottage Cheese Pancakes; first purchase if not already in pantry)
- **Hemp seeds (hemp hearts), 1 (8 oz) bag** - long shelf life item (Thursday Quinoa with Walnuts & Cinnamon breakfast bowl + Sunday Poached Eggs with Quinoa & Spinach; first purchase)
- **Quinoa** - use remaining from Week 1/3 (Wednesday Chicken with Roasted Cauliflower & Quinoa + Thursday Quinoa with Walnuts & Cinnamon + Sunday Poached Eggs with Quinoa); buy 1 (12 oz) bag if less than 1½ cups remains
- **Farro** - use remaining from Week 3 (Thursday Tempeh Grain Bowl with Brussels Sprouts; same recipe uses farro)
- **Rolled oats** - use remaining from Week 1 (Sunday prep Banana Oat Cookies); buy 1 (18 oz) canister only if less than ¾ cup remains
- **Whole-wheat flour** - use remaining from Week 1 (Tuesday White Fish Fritters + Saturday Chopped Chicken Patties); top up if less than ¾ cup remains
- **Whole-grain breadcrumbs** - use remaining from Week 1 (White Fish Fritters coating); top up if less than ¼ cup remains

Baking

- **Mixed frozen or fresh berries, 1 (10-12 oz) bag** - for Sunday Berry Ricotta Parfé; or use fresh berries from your weekly fruit allotment
- **Unsweetened cocoa powder** - use remaining from Week 1 (Sunday prep Cherry Cheesecake Brownies)
- **Baking powder** - should remain from Week 1

- Honey or maple syrup - check quantity; needed for Banana Oat Cookies + Baked Pears + Quinoa Breakfast Bowl; top up if running low
- Vanilla extract - should remain from Week 1
- Ground cinnamon - should remain from Week 1 (Quinoa Breakfast Bowl + Banana Oat Cookies)
- Sugar or coconut sugar - use remaining from Week 2 (Cherry Cheesecake Brownies)

Nuts, Seeds & Dried Fruit

- **Apple cider vinegar, 1 (16 fl oz) bottle** - long shelf life item (Tuesday Napa Cabbage Salad with Corn & Cucumber + Friday Cabbage & Carrot Salad with Olives; first purchase if not already in pantry)
- Walnut halves - use remaining from Week 1/2 (Thursday Quinoa with Walnuts & Cinnamon + Tempeh Grain Bowl); buy 1 additional (6 oz) bag if less than $\frac{3}{4}$ cup remains
- Pecan halves - check remaining from Week 1; not required in Week 4 core recipes
- Pumpkin seeds (pepitas) - use remaining from Week 2/3
- Sesame seeds - use remaining from Week 1
- Almonds - use remaining from Week 2 if any

Frozen

- **Mixed berries (frozen), 1 (10 oz) bag** - long shelf life in freezer (Sunday Berry Ricotta Parfé; or use fresh from fruit allotment)
- **Shrimp is listed under Fish & Seafood above (buy fresh frozen; thaw Thursday night) ★**

Optional / Pantry Check

- **Olive oil** - check quantity; needed for sautéing kale, roasting cauliflower, and dressings
- **Sesame oil** - check pantry (Thursday Tempeh Grain Bowl)
- **Apple cider vinegar** - listed in Nuts & Seeds section above; needed for 2 salads this week
- **Balsamic vinegar** - check pantry (Wednesday Caprese Salad)
- **Dijon mustard** - check pantry (various dressings)
- **Dried Italian herbs** - needed for Tuesday Baked Cod + Friday Baked White Fish; check pantry or buy 1 jar
- **Ground cumin and chili powder** - check pantry (Thursday Vegetarian Chili)
- **Smoked paprika and dried oregano** - check pantry (Sunday Chickpea Shakshuka + Chili)
- **Cayenne pepper or hot sauce** - optional for Shakshuka and Chili
- **Ground nutmeg** - optional for Flourless Cottage Cheese Pancakes; check pantry
- **Cooking spray (oil spray)** - for Flourless Cottage Cheese Pancakes; check pantry
- **Salt and black pepper** - check and replenish if needed

Berries or low-glycemic fruit - 4.5-5.5 lb total (2-2.5 kg) for the week; choose from strawberries, raspberries, blueberries, blackberries, kiwi, peaches, or plums; buy in stages if possible, since fresh berries are best within 3-4 days of purchase.

Check pantry for olive oil, sauces, and spices before shopping.

Kitchen Conversion Chart

Liquid Measures

Fluid oz	Cup	Pint	Quart	Gallon
8	1	1/2	1/4	1/16
16	2	1	1/2	1/8
32	4	2	1	1/4
64	8	4	2	1/2
128	16	8	4	1

Dry Ingredient Approximate Weights

These conversions are approximate. Dry ingredients vary by brand, grind, packing method, and moisture level. For best accuracy, use a kitchen scale.

Ingredient	1 tablespoon	1/4 cup	1/2 cup	1 cup
All-purpose flour	8 g	30 g	60 g	120 g
Whole-wheat flour	8 g	30 g	60 g	120 g
Spelt flour	8 g	30 g	60 g	120 g
Rolled oats	5 g	20 g	40 g	80 g
Cocoa powder	5 g	21 g	43 g	85 g
Chia seeds	12 g	40 g	80 g	160 g
Ground flaxseed	7 g	28 g	55 g	110 g
Chopped walnuts	8 g	30 g	60 g	120 g
Almond flour	6 g	24 g	48 g	96 g
Granulated sugar	12 g	50 g	100 g	200 g
Honey	21 g	85 g	170 g	340 g

Oven Temperatures

°C	120	160	180	205	220
°F	250	320	350	400	425

My Re

Conclusion

If there is one message I have tried to weave through every chapter, every explanation, every recommendation, and yes, even through some deliberate repetition, it is this: nourishment matters more than most of us were ever taught to believe.

I wrote this book with deep care because I truly wanted to help women understand that food is not just about weight, calories, or rules. It is about showing up strong, physically, mentally, and emotionally. It is about protecting your bones, muscles, brain, hormones, and independence so that you can truly live on your own terms. For women over 50, nutrition stops being an afterthought. It becomes one of the most direct levers you have for shaping how you feel, move, and age. Throughout these pages, certain themes kept surfacing, protein, balance, whole foods, blood sugar stability, muscle preservation, consistency. That repetition was deliberate. The ideas that shift how we live rarely land on the first pass; they need time, context, and repetition to take root. My aim was never just to leave you feeling motivated for a day. I wanted to give you something concrete, a framework clear enough to recall and practical enough to actually use.

Now, the next step is yours.

How willing are you to care for your body with the respect it deserves? How ready are you to protect your mind, your strength, and your vitality for the years ahead? Healthy aging is not about chasing youth. It is about creating the conditions for a strong, clear, capable, joyful adulthood. It is about giving yourself the best possible chance to feel well in your own body and at home in your own life.

I hope this book helps you begin that process with more confidence and less confusion. And I hope it reminds you that small, steady choices are never small when they are repeated over time.

This book is only the first step. In my next book, I plan to take a deeper look at what truly happens in women 50+ on every level: physiology, psychology, emotional change, adaptation, identity, and the many visible and invisible transitions that shape this stage of life. But before we can go deeper, we need a strong foundation. And that is exactly why I felt nutrition had to become its own book. Bringing order to the way we eat is not a minor task. It is one of the most important acts of self-support a woman can make.

So start here. Start with your plate. Start with one meal, one habit, one better choice at a time.

And then keep going.

Because your life is still unfolding. And you deserve to meet the years ahead feeling nourished, strong, and fully alive.

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