

Smart Cooking for Busy People

How to Make Healthy and
Tasty Full Meals in 30 Minutes



ALEXANDRA BECK

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in 30 Minutes

Alexandra Beck

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Praise for “Smart Cooking for Busy People”

The recipes will appeal to most tastes and are outstanding not for how unusual they are, but for how straightforward and sensible they are, as well as for the attention paid to the healthiness of the cuisine without actually advocating a “diet.” ...

If any more convincing is needed, the photographs complement the text and show typical results from the included recipes. Lemon Sauce Chicken with Broccoli and Strawberries and Whipped Cream in thirty minutes? Oh, yes! I'll have seconds, please. ...

Overall, this is a helpful and easy-to-digest how-to cook book that fulfills the promise made in the title, “Smart Cooking for Busy People: How to Make Healthy and Tasty Full Meals in 30 Minutes,” and the information it contains complements, simplifies, and improves upon our contemporary lifestyle.

- Margaret Picky, Amazon Top 500 Reviewer

I was impressed with the level of detail — there's a lot of good info here concerning HOW to produce a meal in a short amount of time. The book includes a series of “exercises” to help the cook get in the swing of multi-tasking, using time wisely, and taking shortcuts that don't shortcut the flavor or quality of the finished product.

- L. Mountford, Amazon Top 500 Reviewer

In an effort to eat better, we've been searching for great, healthy recipes. Unfortunately I feel like I spend all day in the kitchen prepping our meals. This book was heaven sent.

This is a simple guide that walks you through the entire process of eating right, from stocking your pantry to having the right tools, to the great recipes. These are recipes for real people that are appetizing and affordable even for our family of 6.

- Danielle Marie, Amazon reviewer

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INTRODUCTION: HOW CAN THIS BOOK HELP YOU?

What this book is all about

As its title declares, this book is about how to cook *smart*. Which, from the perspective of a modern-day active adult such as you, dear reader, implies both *well* and *fast*.

The more specific claim of this book is to teach you how to make full two-course dinners – that is, an appetizer (or a dessert), a main dish and a side dish – in 30 minutes. This is possible because cooking two courses doesn't necessarily take longer than cooking one. Indeed, I will show you that you can easily make an appetizer or a dessert **and** a side dish **while** cooking the main dish. All you need to do is cook 'smart' – and the aim of this book is to teach you how. Don't get me wrong: I'm not saying that you can make **any** appetizer in tandem with **any** main course, but you can make lots of both.

When you've finished this book, you will

- be able to cook *healthy, tasty and quick meals* for you and your family (provided you have a kitchen and a few utensils)
- save an average of 5 hours of precious *free time* every week
- learn to choose your *foods* and *spices* based on their nutritional qualities and ease of cooking
- master some tricks that will make your weeknight cooking as good as it can be.

A word about myself: I am not a chef, or a nutritionist; I am a mom with a full-time demanding job, which means that multitasking has become my second nature. I am also a social scientist trained in observation, data mining and analysis. Believe it or not, my hobby for the past seven or eight years has been collecting and systematizing research findings on diet and nutrition. So, there you have it: a researcher/multitasker working mom, with a husband whose many qualities do not include a love of cooking. As the family's Chef by default, I've spent more time around the stove over the past 10 years than I care to quantify. Inevitably, I began to rationalize my cooking to achieve better nutritional value and reduce my time input, without deteriorating the taste or increasing the cost of our meals. It has been a challenge, and it took me some time to get there, even though there's no BIG SECRET to it, just an

easily learned technique. You'll see.



Why bother cooking in the first place?

Cooking can be great fun... when you have the time and the energy for it. But what about the average weeknight when you (supposing you are employed, studying, mothering or otherwise active) are drained after a busy day, and the prospect of cooking is just not so appealing at all? Well, what typically happens is that you reserve cooking for week-ends and special occasions, while on weeknights you and your family eat ready-made food or fast food...

My method is for those weeknights, and it really is about applying the principle of *efficiency*, i.e., minimizing the input while maximizing the output, to your cooking. In other words, it's about spending the least necessary time in the kitchen while producing meals that are as tasty and nutritious as possible.

Here's a one million dollar question for you: How does one conjure up a nutritious two-course dinner in less than 30 minutes?

Circle the right answer:

- A. by taking it from the freezer and heating in the microwave;
- B. by putting on the table the remains of yesterday's big reception;
- C. by calling the Chinese/Lebanese/Italian/Japanese place around the corner;
- D. by being an astronaut on the *International Space Station* and opening a tube of seafood salad, followed by a tube of delicious roast beef with a side tube of grilled eggplants and steamed potatoes.

As a matter of fact, all of the above answers are correct: each of them will ensure a complete meal that can be qualified as dinner but... there is a catch. In case A, your dinner will lack nutrients and taste. Case B requires having had a big reception the day before. Case C may cost a pretty penny in the long run, both to your wallet and your health[\[1\]](#). Finally, case D applies to

0,00001% of the world population.

Do not despair, dear reader, for there's a fifth answer, without any of the above flaws. And I am happy to present it to you, after having spent a good deal of time over the past five years reading and experimenting to find the optimal time/nutrition/taste/cost ratio for my cooking. It is, indeed, possible to cook healthy two-course meals using fresh produce and meats in less than 30 minutes. All you need is some indispensable kitchen equipment and an organizational technique that I will share with you in this book.

What you will gain in exchange for giving this a shot is precious. If you are a *cooking type*, you will increase your down time by an hour or so every weeknight. Imagine all the things you could do with that hour: you could read, watch your favorite series, surf on the Internet, make love or sleep! Let's envisage for a second the following hypothetical scenario: in a moment of unexplained generosity, your boss allows you to leave work an hour earlier every day, thus gifting you *5 hours each week* without a pay cut. I can hear you sighing, 'Yeah, right - in my wildest dreams', and you do have a point: it's extremely unlikely. There's no archival record of such a thing, nor has it survived in legends and mythology... Well, if your boss won't do it, then your only reasonable option is to gift yourself those 5 weekly hours by learning to *cook smart*. And no catch.

If you are a *non-cooking type* at the moment, learning to cook smart will ensure you cheaper and better meals in exchange for a little half-hour of your weeknight time. And you may even end up enjoying it.



Frustration leads to innovation

This book is also the result of my frustration with a large number of 'fast', 'quick' and 'easy' cookbooks that I've purchased over the years only to discover empty promises and unsupported pronouncements. Here are the most common types of cookbook inadequacies, both 'quick' and 'slow':

- the authors count only the active preparation time neglecting to mention that

in each of their recipes you have to factor in 20 to 60 minutes of cooking time

- the so-called ‘quick’ recipes describe only the preparation of one dish (appetizer, meat, side or dessert), but when you add everything up to make a whole meal, your cooking time suddenly skyrockets

- the authors use shortcuts in their ingredient lists, such as ‘grilled chicken breasts’, ‘grated carrots’, ‘finely chopped parsley’, etc. And who, may I enquire, will finely chop my parsley, grill my chicken breasts and grate my carrots? My house elves or my garden gnomes? Or my ever-so-helpful fairy godmother called Deli?

- finally, the authors use too much jargon to my taste. When you are told to blanch, braise, sear or sweat, you kind of know what to do, but would you put your money on it?

To add cold-pressed olive oil to the fire, I recently came across two edifying studies. The first one, conducted in 2006, aimed to assess the quality of nutrition information provided in popular diet books[2]. The researchers looked up in scientific literature all the nutrition facts in the New York Times bestseller, ‘South Beach Diet’. After rigorous analysis, the inter-disciplinary expert panel concluded that two thirds of nutrition facts in this best-selling diet book had no scientific basis.

The second study, conducted in 2012, analyzed the nutritional content of 100 randomly selected recipes from five bestselling cookery books by UK television chefs[3]. The researchers then compared the results to the dietary guidelines published by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the UK Food Standards Agency (FSA). The chefs’ meals turned out to be too high in protein, fat and salt.

While we’re on this subject, I hasten to assure the readers of this book that all nutrition facts cited here are based on scientific studies, referenced and annotated in Chapter IV.

To sum up, one day I faced the fact that most diet and cookery books I read were impractical, full of pseudo-scientific hot air or, at best, failing to meet the current nutritional recommendations. Frustrated and disappointed by this realization, I had no other choice than to develop my own method, adapt and test lots of recipes and write this book.



How to read this book

Unless you are extremely pressed for time, I suggest that you finish the Introduction before moving on to the core of the book, which is its Chapter I ‘*Smart Cooking Explained*’ and Chapter II ‘*Step-by-Step Practice Program*’.

In Chapter I you will get the theory. This includes a summary of the latest research findings on different diets and cooking methods, and their effects on health. You will also find in this chapter a list of must-have pantry ingredients and another must-have list of kitchen utensils (nothing fancy here, just the essentials). Finally, the most important part of this Chapter explains the three essential tricks of smart cooking that together make up my technique.

Chapter II is about practice. We’ll start with the basics of multitasked cooking. After that we will gradually move on to more and more complex meals requiring parallel activities (for instance, baking while slicing while steaming). As you progress through the steps, you’ll learn some helpful tricks and skills. At the end of the programme, you will test yourself with a timer to determine how proficient you’ve become at smart cooking.

To help you find inspiration, Chapter III contains 15 recipes of varied full meals to make in 30 minutes and less. The recipes are very detailed and clear, and you can either follow my instructions closely (especially if you have not cooked much before) or improvise to suit the contents of your fridge and your fancy.

Finally, Chapter IV contains a large selection of references to recent studies on the link between health and nutrition, collated and annotated by your humble servant.



CHAPTER I: SMART COOKING EXPLAINED

i. Why bother eating healthy?

On fast food, proteins and carbs

According to the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, ‘the relative presence of some foods and the absence of other foods are more important than the level of individual nutrients consumed’[4]. In other words, eating well is a better strategy for your health than eating badly and taking supplements. In yet other words, a Vitamin C pill will not neutralize the damage done by a creamy cake or a nice portion of French fries. Which is a shame, really, considering how much we all love creamy cakes and French fries...

Speaking of French fries, did you know that *every single junk food meal* damages your arteries?[5] Eating fast food *once a week* increases the risk of dying from coronary heart disease by 20% in comparison to people who avoid fast food. Eating it twice a week increases your risk of heart disease by 50%, and of Type 2 diabetes by nearly 30%. The risk climbs to nearly 80% if you eat fast food four or more times each week[6]. Finally – if heart disease and diabetes weren’t enough – eating fast food has also been linked to a greater risk of depression[7].



What else? As it turns out, a *diet too heavy in proteins* (think meat) is not so good for your heart either. For instance, a 2012 study suggests that women who regularly eat a high protein diet are at a greater risk heart disease and stroke than those who do not[8].

There’s more. A growing body of research has been pointing an accusatory finger at the most common diet in the West, which is the diet *high in carbs* (think bread, pasta, pastry, potatoes, rice and cornmeal, but also sugar, honey and fructose). A recent example: in October 2012 the Mayo Clinic announced

that excess carbs are bad not only for your body but also for your brain. According to this study, the elderly who consume too many carbs (i.e., who like bread with their pasta, crackers in their soup and sugar in their tea), have nearly four times the risk of becoming senile compared to the low-carbing bunch[9].

Finally, the dangers of *excess fat* – especially animal fats and industrial trans fats – have been widely publicized. I'll cite here just one 2013 review of the accumulated evidence concluding unequivocally that 'the detrimental effects of industrial trans fatty acids on heart health are beyond dispute'[10].

So, if you hold your health dear, you should avoid *excess fast food, proteins, carbs and fat* like George Clooney is avoiding marriage, like Hilary Clinton is avoiding flower-print dresses, like... well, you get the picture.

Instead, you should have a lot of... good old broccoli, that's what. Well, not only broccoli, of course, but all sorts of fiber-rich foods, as well as fish, seafood and plant oils, i.e., the stuff of what is often called 'prudent diet', 'Mediterranean diet' or 'Nordic diet'. This was the resounding conclusion of the 2013 systemic review of 92 scientific studies on the impact of different diets (or 'Dietary Patterns' – DPs) on health[11]. Pin this quote on your pantry door:

Diets with plenty of plant foods, fish, and seafood that preferably include vegetable oils and low-fat dairy products are associated with a lower risk of most chronic diseases. In contrast, Western-type DPs with food products low in essential nutrients and high in energy, like sugar-sweetened beverages, sweets, refined cereals and solid fats (e.g. butter), and high in red and processed meats, are associated with adverse health effects.

Cooking methods

Now, as regards the cooking methods, *steaming* appears to be the best choice. I'll cite two papers on this, but there are many more out there. A recent study that compared the effects of three common cooking methods – boiling in water, streaming and frying –on the antioxidant capacity of artichokes found that steaming delivered by far the best results[12]. Another study compared the effects of these three cooking methods on carrots, broccolis and zucchini, and concluded that steaming beats the other two standing on its head with its eyes closed (this isn't exactly how the paper put it, but it conveys the message)[13].

As regards *grilling at high temperature*, this cooking method was associated

with heart problems in a recent University of Illinois study, which found that the more one ate foods cooked on very high dry heat, the higher was the risk of cardiovascular disease [14]. Baking or grilling at lower temperatures – 375 to 400 F (180 to 200 C) – is a better alternative.



Stainless steel stovetop steamer

To peel or not to peel: that is the question

We know that most vitamins and nutrients are concentrated in the skin of vegetables and fruit. We also know that most pesticide residue accumulates in the same place. These two facts result in the following quandary: should you peel or not your veggies before cooking? Not to worry, dear reader, because the truth, as used to say Special Agent Mulder, is out there. And the truth is (drum roll, please): if you buy organic produce, you can skip the peeling and keep the vitamins. And save time in the process.

More and more research is showing that organic food has higher levels of disease-fighting nutrients than conventional food. In a study, corn grown with little or no pesticides had almost 60 percent higher levels of phenols than conventionally grown corn. Strawberries were nearly 20 percent higher in phenols, and marionberries also had greater amounts[15]. Another study found that organic tomatoes contained higher levels of healthy phenolic compounds than conventional tomatoes[16]. Researchers suspect that pesticide use somehow inhibits the formation of these powerful disease fighters.

The only rational argument against organic food has to do with its price. But as the demand grows, and more and more farmers go organic, the price gap between the conventional and organic foods diminishes by the day.

Tip: Check out this website <http://www.ewg.org/foodnews/> to find out which fruits and vegetables are the most contaminated with pesticides and should preferably be eaten organic, and which tend to be less contaminated

and can be eaten conventionally grown.

How is all this related to smart cooking

Given what you've read so far, it will come as no surprise that the meals in this book are *high in fiber and low in sugar*, with balanced amounts of proteins, healthy fats and carbs.

Based on what we know today, the Mediterranean cuisine appears to be one of the best choices both in terms of taste and nutrition. It is the main inspiration for my cooking and, consequently, for this book.

A few more observations on what to expect:

- the meals presented in this book typically consist of an appetizer followed by a main dish and a side;
- the few desserts we'll make are much lower in sugar and calories than their classical cousins;
- the pasta dishes and salads we'll make contain more veggies than pasta to reduce the carbs and increase the fiber;
- there'll be less meat in our main dishes than vegetables in the sides (in fact, the meat will be the side to the veggies);
- most of the meals we'll cook are gluten-free (unless you eat them with bread);
- the main cooking methods we'll employ are steaming and sautéing with olive oil; we'll also bake and grill from time to time but not above 400 F (200 C) and shorter than in traditional recipes.



ii. Best pantry ingredients for smart cooking

The annotated list below is by no means exhaustive, but in my experience, it represents the most useful ingredients for smart cooking to have in your pantry. So stock up, and don't forget to replenish from time to time!

1. **Olive oil** – preferably, virgin cold-pressed. Olive oil is perhaps one of the greatest culinary discoveries of all times - see the 'Olive Oil' entry in Chapter IV the scientific basis of this claim
2. **Balsamic vinegar** – tastes great and helps reduce the glycemic index of carbs and starches - see the 'Vinegar' entry in Chapter IV for more information
3. **Mustard** – Dijon mustard is an excellent choice when eaten with broccoli, mustard will increase its benefits - see the 'Broccoli' entry in Chapter IV
4. **Mayonnaise** – indispensable in a tuna salad and several other salads; buy it in good quality and consume in moderation
5. **Spices** – always have a supply of the following: black pepper, turmeric powder, paprika, curry, coriander and cinnamon – see Chapter IV on the healthy properties of spices
6. **Unrefined salt** – a better choice than the refined salt both for its taste and nutritional qualities
7. **Soy sauce** – Japanese Tamari is a good choice
8. **Coconut milk** – will come handy for your Asian and Indian-style dishes
9. **Preserves** in tins, jars and vacuum bags – corn, beans, peas, tuna, beetroots, tomato pulp...
10. **Raisins** – dark-colored raisins taste better
11. **Nuts** – cashew, walnuts, pine nuts, almonds (including almond powder)
12. **Seeds** - pumpkin, sunflower, sesame
13. **Wholegrain rice** - the best choice for smart cooking is precooked rice that takes 10 to 25 minutes to cook
14. **Whole wheat pasta** – replace this with corn, buckwheat or rice pasta if you are gluten-sensitive or intolerant (these days you can even find 100% lentil pasta...)
15. **Quinoa** – an easy and nutritious grain from South America – see Chapter

II on how to cook it

16. **Couscous** - North African ground instant pasta – see Chapter II on how to cook it

17. **Polenta** - Italian quick cooking cornmeal – see Chapter II on how to cook it

18. **Buckwheat** – the best choice for smart cooking is pre-roasted buckwheat (often called *kasha*) – see Chapter II on how to cook it

19. **Oat bran** – add a spoonful to your salads, sauces and soups for its health benefits

20. **Bouillon cubes** – chicken, beef or vegetable

21. **Tomato concentrate (aka tomato paste)** – for your soups and sauces

22. **Agave syrup and/or honey** – both have a lower glycemic index than sugar, so it's a good idea to substitute them for sugar in your desserts.



iii. Best kitchen gear for smart cooking

I come from a gadget-loving family, and I am no black sheep. So, when I see ads for gadgets that promise to save me time in the kitchen, how can I resist? Over the years I've purchased and tested dozens of kitchen utensils and gadgets, big and small, cheap and expensive. Some worked for me, others didn't (and – as you may have expected – whether they worked or not had little to do with their price tag). A few others worked but were too bulky to keep at hand, or too much trouble to clean after use, which kind of defeated their purpose...

This section includes two lists: Indispensible Gear and Useful Gear. As for those gadgets that didn't live up to their promise, I'll just say that sometimes one man's (or woman's) poison is another woman's food. So, if you are as much of a gadget-lover as I am, then – by all means – buy and test everything that catches your fancy, and learn from your own mistakes!

Indispensible Gear

This is a list of 15 kitchen tools indispensable for smart cooking. They are very common, inexpensive and low tech.

1. Sharp knife
2. Scissors
3. Cutting board
4. Stainless steel saucepan (preferably, one big and one medium-size)
5. Stainless steel or nonstick skillet / aka frying pan (preferably, one big and one medium-size)
6. Steamer / aka steam cooker / aka steamer pot / aka food steamer (see picture below):
7. Ceramic or Pirex oven dish / aka baking dish
8. Salad bowl (preferably, one large and one medium-size)
9. Natural bristle brush to clean carrots, potatoes, ginger roots, mussels
10. Colander (preferably, also a fine mesh strainer for cooking quinoa)
11. Measuring jug

12. Garlic press

13. Salt grinder (a manual model)

The salt grinder allows you to cook with unrefined sea salt instead of its less healthy refined cousin. I highly recommend using unrefined salt in your salads, in particular, in simple ones such as arugula-parmesan salad (see Meal # 14) where it makes all the difference.

14. Pepper grinder (manual model)

15. Mesh splatter screen for skillets (saves you a lot of clean-up time)



Useful Gear

From among dozens of perfectly superfluous gadgets that I've purchased over the years, a few that were worth the investment. They truly make it easier to perform some cooking tasks and save you time in the process.

Here's my **Top 5**:

1. Mandoline



Mandoline in action

What is it? A mandoline is a manual slicer with adjustable blades

What does it do? The mandoline will help you slice, chop and grate your vegetables in a wink.

How does it work? Type ‘use mandoline’ into the *YouTube* (www.youtube.com) search, and you will get dozens of videos showing you how to use the slicer. It’s really simple, and saves you quite a bit of prep time.

2. Salad spinner



Salad spinner

What is it? A manual salad spinner (aka ‘salad tosser’) consists of a bowl, a basket and a lid. Several models are available, some operated by pulling a cord, others by pushing down on a pump.

What does it do? The spinner will help you dry your leafy greens in 30 seconds using centrifugal force.

How does it work? Remove the basket from the spinner, place the leafy greens in it and wash them. Place the basket back in, cover and push or pull to spin. If still in doubt, type ‘use salad spinner’ into the *YouTube* (www.youtube.com) search, and get dozens of videos showing you how to do just that. Using a spinner will save you about 10 minutes of ‘tossing and waiting for salad to dry’ time.

3. Electric hand-held mixer

This one hardly needs a picture or an explanation. You probably already own one and have used it in various preparations. You probably also have an idea of the amount of time and effort that it saves you, especially when making desserts. I once tried to whip some cream with a whisk... and gave up after 10 minutes (that seemed like an hour), full of renewed admiration for our great-grandmothers who had no other options.

4. Electric seed grinder / aka grain mill / aka grain grinder / aka spice-and-

nut grinder

There are many, many different models on the market. They usually look like this:



Electric seed grinders sold on Amazon.com

What is it? As its various names suggest, it's a grinder for your seeds, grains and nuts.

What does it do? Unlike its manual analogues, the electrical grinder will allow you to grind bigger quantities of flaxseed, sesame, pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, etc. in record time, which is about 10 seconds.

How does it work? Remove the lid, fill the grinder with some seeds, set the lid back in place and press. That's it, really. The trick is in finding the right model: a regular coffee grinder, for instance, will not be able to handle small seeds such as flaxseed or sesame. You will find a helpful discussion on choosing a flaxseed grinder and a selection of several models sold on Amazon on this Squidoo page by Joe Bartmann: <http://www.squidoo.com/flax>.

5. Citrus zester

Here is a nice picture of a citrus zester in action:



Citrus zester

What is it? The zester is a small hand-held tool for obtaining lemon, orange and other citrus fruit zest for your cakes, salads, tea and other preparations.

What does it do? Unlike the first four tools on this Top 5, the zester is not about saving time. It's there to do a precise job that is nearly impossible to do with another tool. That job is obtaining the citrus zest while leaving the bitter white pith on the fruit. If you use a knife or even a peeler, the pith will usually come off with the zest.

Tip: Zest your lemons / oranges before you cut them in half and, especially, before you press them. It will be much easier, and you'll obtain more zest. Be sure to buy the lemons / oranges for zesting organically grown, otherwise you'll be eating a pesticide concentrate.

iv. Food shopping tips for smart cooking

Online shopping

Online shopping is the obvious solution if you wish to reduce the time spent on grocery shopping. In addition to freeing you from the trip to and from the supermarket, Internet shopping can also release you from the tedious process of selecting items and putting them in the virtual basket. Most online supermarkets allow you to save your shopping list or even several different lists for future use.

Meats and seafood

Buy meats and seafood fresh but smart cooking-ready. This means, for instance, that you'll choose boneless fish fillets over whole fish, boneless skinless chicken breasts over whole or half chicken, thin beefsteaks over thick roasting cuts. It may cost you a little more but you'll save a huge amount of time – and time is the most valuable commodity in modern life. Be careful, however, not to cross the red line and purchase over-processed foods. The trick is in sticking with the degree of processing that saves you time but doesn't hurt your wallet or render your foods unhealthy with added chemicals.

As a rule of thumb, go with the processing that involves **only labor and nothing else**. For instance, do pay for chicken that someone spent time and effort on to cut and skin, or shrimp that someone has peeled. Don't if that 'someone' also spiced them (chances are most of those spices contain unwanted E-numbers).

It's also OK to buy frozen meats and fish, as long as you can remember to defreeze them in the fridge before going to bed or early in the morning, at the latest. I usually forget... You can, of course, cook them straight from the freezer (especially, the fish), but they'll cook longer and their taste and look will be inferior.

Vegetables and fruits

Again, fresh and minimally processed is best. Let's take carrots. They are sold in a variety of states. At one end of the spectrum, you can find carrots with tails and lots of dirt on them, straight from the soil. Then you find carrots from which someone brushed off the dirt and cut off the tails. Then you find washed and sliced or grated carrots, 'enhanced' with additives to keep them fresh. At the other end of the spectrum, you find cooked carrots that come in

airtight bags, cans or jars.

Your best choice, if you want to save time yet get all the vitamins you can, would be organically grown pre-cleaned carrots, which you will then rinse, brush and prepare as you please.

Vegetables can also be bought frozen, and they don't require thawing before cooking. The funny thing, however, is that it will take you longer to steam frozen broccoli or carrots than fresh ones. And they won't taste as good... As for the lovely crunch of slightly undercooked veggies – you can still enjoy it... if you like crunching ice.

In my experience, the only vegetable worth buying frozen is the *green beans* (aka French beans, aka string beans). Green beans are legumes that haven't yet developed pods. They handle freezing very well and keep most of their nutrients. Frozen green beans are fast to cook and preserve their crunch, unless you steam them into oblivion. They can make an excellent side dish to your meats or tofu.

Fruit is best fresh, without a doubt. The problem with it is that it's seasonal. While you can buy nice apples and bananas all year round, the berries sold in winter are watery and too expensive. If you want to enjoy berries in cold season, buy them frozen. Raspberries, blueberries, black currants and blackberries retain their healthful goodness and are still yummy when thawed. You can eat them with your morning cereal, make smoothies, or eat them with whipped cream for dessert.

Grains and pasta

Grains represent an exception to my minimal processing rule. Traditional grains take too long to cook, so I buy them precooked. Quick-cooking rice, couscous, polenta, buckwheat and quinoa make excellent side dishes for weeknight dinners. Rice is also sold frozen, but I find it more expensive and not necessarily better tasting or looking than precooked rice.

And then there's pasta. Thank God and Italy for pasta. These days, there's such an incredible variety of it that you can experiment with different compositions and shapes until you find the ones that work best for you. My personal favorites are: whole-wheat penne and spirals, soba (buckwheat) noodles and rice noodles.

Both precooked grains and pasta deliver a filling quick side dish or a base for one-dish meals such as pasta salads and risotto. Their added advantage is that their cooking is handsfree (polenta is the only exception), which makes them truly perfect for smart cooking.

v. *Three essential smart cooking tricks*

This section presents three simple tricks that together form the essence of smart cooking.

Trick N° 1: Visualize the preparation

Have you ever heard about the ‘lizard brain’? The *lizard brain*, aka the *reptilian brain*, is the most archaic part of the human brain dating back 500 million years. It first appeared in fish and reached its most advanced stage in reptiles, about 250 million years ago. It’s vital for our survival as it controls such functions as breathing and heart rate, but it is also... undiscerning and primitive. It tells you to run and hide in sight of an approaching deadline, just as it used to tell our remote ancestors to run and hide in sight of an approaching T-Rex. While one cannot be too careful around a T-Rex, in most modern-day situations the lizard brain makes us too anxious or too aggressive. In contrast, the *neocortex* is the most recently evolved part of our brain: it is perceptive, rational and quick to learn. In other words, it’s *sensible*. While the lizard brain is handy when you are trying to survive in the jungle (including rush-hour traffic), it’s the neocortex, or the sensible brain, that will help you graduate, get a good job and find a committed partner.



Photo by [Cyrinphin](http://fav.me/d2yfban) - <http://fav.me/d2yfban>

If you want to learn more about the evolutionary layers of our brain, check out this very helpful website <http://thebrain.mcgill.ca/>. Oh, and by the way, if you are wondering why I am bringing all this up, just read on.

What I mean by urging you to ‘visualize the preparation’ is that you should take a few seconds to picture yourself rinsing, slicing, sautéing or doing whatever else your meal idea calls for. This must be done after you’ve read the recipe (or, if you are improvising, after you’ve checked out your fridge)

and before you begin to cook.

Visualizing the preparation of a meal before cooking it will quiet your panicky lizard brain and summon your sensible brain, which will do what it does best: plan. While you are visualizing the various preparation steps, your sensible brain will quickly order them into a rational sequence. This simple trick will save you an impressive amount of time, because you will end up cooking efficiently rather than haphazardly.

If you are new to cooking and lack the experience and knowledge required for your brain's 'intuitive' planning, you may need to make a small conscious effort to plan the sequence of your activities. Once you've had a little practice, this planning will happen subliminally and will not require any dedicated effort. We will practice some sequence planning in the next chapter.

So, let's recap *Trick N° 1*:

→ **Take a few seconds before you jump into action and visualize the steps required for your meal to allow your brain to plan.**

Trick N° 2: Reduce the cooking time

I am not saying you should eat your food raw. What I am advocating is that you cook for no more than 20-25 minutes the foods that you would typically cook for 30 to 60 minutes. To reduce the cooking time of your veggies and meats, you need to cut them into smaller pieces and remove from heat before they go mushy. Let's take potatoes as an example: I suggest that you steam them in thin slices for 10 minutes instead of boiling them in large chunks for 30 minutes.

Apart from the obvious time-saving benefit, this trick will offer you a few other non-negligible perks:

- 1) you'll get more vitamins and nutrients than with longer cooking time
- 2) your veggies will look and sound more appetizing because their color, shape and crunch will be preserved
- 3) the carbs in your food will have a lower glycemic impact, i.e, they'll raise your blood sugar less than if cooked longer[\[17\]](#)

A word of caution: some meat cuts (think roast pork), stews and cakes need to be cooked long, and there's nothing you can do about it. Reserve them for weekends and holidays.

To recap *Trick N° 2*:

→ **Reduce the cooking time by chopping or slicing finely and removing**

from heat early.

Trick N° 3: Chase the inactive time

This trick is about multitasking and productivity. If you want to make a two-course meal in 30 minutes, then this means 30 minutes of *active time*. More specifically, this means that while something is cooking on the stove, you don't stand there and watch the pot (or stare into the void, or pick your nose, or watch television). You rinse, slice, toss, chop, broil, and so on. That is, unless you have a house elf. In which case you wouldn't be needing this book.

In other words, this trick consists in minimizing your handsfree or inactive cooking time, which is the only way you can cook a full meal, and not just an appetizer, in 30 minutes. It allows *the preparation time* and *the cooking time*, so neatly separated in cookbooks, to blend together and show a fused middle finger to your lizard brain.

Throughout the next chapter, we will practice processing different components of your meal simultaneously rather than in turns by pairing the handsfree and 'hands-on' tasks – we'll learn to cook in chorus.

Let's recap *Trick N° 3*:

→ **Minimize the inactive time during your cooking by multitasking, i.e., filling the handsfree time with activity.**



Rejoice, dear reader, and go find your cutting board: we're done with theory – it's time for practice!

CHAPTER II: STEP-BY-STEP PRACTICE PROGRAM

In this chapter, you'll put the theory into practice. You'll begin with very simple tasks that will help you acquire the smart cooking instincts, and you'll move on to more complex and improvised operations, step by step, one exercise at a time.

Exercise overview:

Exercise 1: Finding the longest to cook

Exercise 2: Chorus cooking

Exercise 3: Making Olive Oil Dressing (OOD)

Exercise 4: Using a steamer

Exercise 5: Steaming while baking

Exercise 6: Making super-quick healthy side dishes

Exercise 7: Making super-quick healthy appetizers / starters

Exercise 8: Making super-quick healthy desserts

Exercise 9: Making a two-course meal in 30 minutes

Exercise 10: Self-test: making a three-course meal in 30 minutes

Exercise 11: Improvising a 30-minute meal

Exercise 1

Finding the longest to cook

Remember the visualization trick we learnt in the previous chapter? The trick works because visualizing the preparation process allows your mind to order the different steps in an optimal sequence. The 'optimal sequence' implies that you start with the food that takes the longest time to cook and, while it is cooking, you tackle the second longest, and so on.

To practice 'optimal ordering', let's prepare a simple dish with only one ingredient requiring cooking: a classic Italian pasta salad. You'll need a timer, or a clock, or a smartphone - anything that lets you keep time – for this and all the other exercises.

Ingredients

- 1 cup (230 g) pasta, such as penne, spirals or shells
- 2 tomatoes
- 1 green and 1 red bell pepper
- ½ cup (100 g) mozzarella cheese
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- Salt and pepper to taste

Directions

Visualize what you'll need to do to prepare this main-dish salad. As the only ingredient requiring cooking is pasta, you've probably figured out that you'll begin by boiling some water (and if you haven't, not to worry - that's why we are practicing!).

So, let's fill a medium-size pot with water (about halfway to the top) and boil it on maximum heat. As it starts boiling, lower the heat, add salt and pour in the pasta. You now have 8-10 minutes to do the following (you should be able to do it in less time, actually):

- rinse vegetables
- chop tomatoes, seed and chop bell peppers
- dice mozzarella cheese
- in a salad bowl, toss vegetables with cheese, olive oil, salt and pepper

As soon as pasta is cooked (it should be just tender), all that remains to do is rinse it in cold water to cool it and toss with the salad. Your Italian pasta salad is ready in 12 minutes, whereas according to most recipes you need 20, of which 10 minutes of preparation and 10 minutes of cooking time.

And, just like that, you successfully applied two smart cooking tricks: you visualized the process and minimized the inactive time during the preparation. And saved 8 minutes.

Exercise 2

Chorus cooking

To practice 'chorus cooking' some more, we'll make another classic salad – tuna-mayo – enhancing it with four ingredients, two of which require cooking.

You'll need the following *ingredients* for this exercise:

- 1 small can tuna fish
- 2 tbsp mayonnaise
- 1 onion
- 2 eggs
- 1 cup (230 g) pasta, such as penne, spirals or shells
- 1 large tomato
- Salt to taste

Directions

1. Read the list of ingredients and visualize the preparation process.
2. After you've done that, read the directions under point 3 below and compare it with what you just visualized.
3. Begin cooking as directed below:
 - start boiling water in a medium-size pot (for the pasta) and a small pot (for the eggs)
 - rinse the eggs and place them into the small pot while the water is still lukewarm, to prevent them from cracking due to heat shock
 - as soon as the egg water boils, lower the heat, cover and note the time
 - as soon as the pasta water starts bubbling, salt it, add the pasta and let simmer over low heat.

You now have about 10 minutes to do the following:

- peel onion, rinse and finely chop it
- rinse and chop tomato
- drain tuna and put it into a salad bowl
- crumble tuna, stir with mayonnaise and chopped onion

And, to finish:

- cool the eggs in cold water, peel and crumble them into the salad bowl;
- drain and cool the pasta and mix it with the rest.

You just smart-cooked a yummy one-dish meal, with protein, carbs and fiber. True, you didn't sit down for a second, but then again, you prepared a meal for two in about 15 minutes. And generated 15 extra minutes for your favorite

book / your kids / your hobby / your hubby or whatever it is you like to do with your free time.

Tip: When cutting an onion, begin with the pointy tip and finish leaving ½ inch from the hairy tip (which is to blame for your tears). Alternatively, you can wear goggles and start with the hairy tip. As they say in France, ridicule doesn't kill...

Exercise 3

Making Olive Oil Dressing (OOD)

This extremely simple Mediterranean dressing is as healthy as it is delicious. It will serve you well for a variety of appetizers and salads.

The essential *ingredients* to make an OOD for a medium-size salad are:

- 2 tbsp olive oil (preferably virgin cold-pressed)
- ½ tsp salt (preferably unrefined)
- ¼ tsp ground black pepper

Mix well in a salad bowl, and it's ready. You can adjust the salt and pepper after you've added all the salad ingredients.

Tip: The antioxidant value of olive oil can degrade after only a few months of exposure to heat and light. Store your olive oil in an opaque cruet and in a cool place.

The basic OOD we just prepared can be enhanced with any of the following additional ingredients (we'll call it '**OOD +**')

- 1-2 tbsp balsamic vinegar
- 1-2 tbsp lemon juice
- 1 tbsp honey
- ½ tsp Dijon mustard

If you are feeling inspired, you may want to boost the healthful properties of your OOD even further (we'll call it '**OOD ++**'). Here are a few additional ingredients that can be added, depending on your mood, your food allergies

and the content of your pantry:

- 2 tbsp fresh herbs such as parsley, coriander and thyme (or 1 tbsp dried herbs)
- ½ tsp ground turmeric
- 1 tbsp ground flaxseed
- 1 tbsp oat bran
- 1 tbsp pumpkin and/or sunflower seeds
- a handful raisins
- 1 tbsp *Gomasio* (a delicious mix of toasted and ground sesame seeds and sea salt)

Go on, give it a try!



Powdered turmeric

Exercise 4

Using a food steamer

Knowing how to use a steamer is an essential skill for smart cooking. As we saw in the **Introduction**, steaming is the healthiest cooking method. It is also fast and handsfree, which is perfect for chorus cooking. Using a steamer is really, really easy, and even if you've never seen one before, I promise you'll be an ace at steaming before you know it!

There are many different models, from traditional Asian bamboo ones to autonomous electrical devices, and even whole ovens. I use a stainless steel stovetop model that consists of a saucepan, two perforated inserts that fit snugly into the saucepan, and a lid. I recommend using this type of steamer, as it is durable, doesn't leach toxins into the food and provides best value for money.

Alternatively, you can use a regular saucepan and a metal steamer basket with feet to keep the foods you are steaming above the simmering water. You may need to use foil paper in lieu of a lid.



Steamer basket

Finally, if you do not wish to purchase either a steamer or a steamer basket, you can improvise by placing a footed metal colander into a saucepan. Make sure the lid will close or use foil paper.

Depending on what you want to cook, you'll use either both or only one of your steamer's inserts. For instance, if you are steaming just a head of broccoli or a few carrots, one is quite enough. For more complex compositions, you'll need both inserts, and in some cases also the bottom saucepan.

To cook something in a stovetop steamer, proceed as follows:

1. Fill the bottom saucepan with cold water keeping its level below the bottom of the insert. If it raises above, you will submerge the foods and end up boiling rather than steaming them
2. Cover and bring the water to a boil over high heat, after which lower the heat and let it simmer
 - while the water is heating, rinse and chop or slice the foods you are going to steam
3. Place the foods into the insert(s), place the insert(s) into the bottom saucepan, cover, and let it be for 5-15 minutes, depending on what you are steaming. Believe it or not, even potatoes will take no more than 15 minutes to cook if you slice or chop them finely.

It's a good idea to stir a couple of times during the steaming to make sure that the heat is distributed evenly. You may also want to salt your foods after you place them in the steamer. Other than that, there's nothing else to it really.

Let's now look at all the foods that can be cooked in the three compartments of your steamer.

In the **top insert**, you can steam the following (non-exhaustive list):

- broccoli and cauliflower, cut in small florets
- cabbage, shredded
- onions, sliced
- tomatoes, sliced
- mushrooms, sliced
- zucchini, sliced or chopped

In the **middle insert**, you can steam the following (non-exhaustive list):

- chicken and turkey cut in strips (stirring a couple times at the beginning so that they won't stick)
- potatoes, sliced or chopped
- bell peppers, chopped
- carrots, sliced
- eggplants, chopped

In the **bottom saucepan**, you can boil the following (non-exhaustive list):

- pasta
- quick-cooking rice
- quinoa (a small portion, as it requires 1.5 parts water to 1 part quinoa, and you want to keep the level of the water below the middle insert)
- quick-cooking lentils
- roasted buckwheat

Remember the first exercise that we did finding the longest food to cook? Here is a quick test: let's say, you want to use your steamer to cook some pasta, carrots, potatoes and broccoli. In what sequence will you put all these ingredients into the steamer? The answer is: potatoes and carrots first as they are the longest to cook, then pasta and then broccoli, to preserve a maximum of its healthy qualities, along with its color and crunch.

Time for practice: we'll use a steamer to make a vegetarian one-dish meal pictured below cooking the carrots, cauliflower and gnocchi all at once. And,

to advance you on the road to smart cooking, we'll prepare a mustard-cream sauce in parallel.



Vegetarian one-dish meal

To get the most out of this exercise, please proceed as follows:

- Read the list of ingredients below and make sure you have all the items on it – otherwise go grocery-shopping.
- Read the list of ingredients again and visualize what you'll be doing to cook this meal.
- Compare to the *Directions* below.
- Note the time.
- Start cooking, checking against the *Directions* below if necessary.

Note: Only the cooking times shown in **bold** add up. When a cooking time is shown in a regular font, it indicates a shorter activity, taking place simultaneously with a longer one. Your second clue that an activity is taking place at the same time as a longer one is that it is introduced with a 'bullet point' rather than a number.

Ingredients (serves 2 or 3)

- 1 cup (250 g) gnocchi
- 2 large carrots
- 1 head cauliflower

- 1/2 cup (100 g) heavy cream
- 1 tbsp dried herbs
- 2 tbsp Dijon mustard
- 1 tbsp bran oat
- Salt and black pepper to taste

Directions

1. Fill the bottom saucepan of your steamer with cold water – about an inch (2-3 cm);
2. Cover and bring the water to a boil over high heat, after which reduce the heat and let it simmer (**2 minutes**);
 - while water is heating, brush carrots under running cold water, slice them and place them into the insert.
3. As soon as the water starts bubbling, fit the insert with carrots into the saucepan, add some salt, cover, and steam for **5 minutes**.
 - during this time, cut cauliflower into florets and rinse them;
 - in a small saucepan, off the heat, whisk mustard with cream, bran oat, a pinch of salt and pepper.
4. Lift the insert and pour gnocchi into the water in the saucepan, add salt, put the insert back.
5. Add the cauliflower florets to the carrots in the top pot, stir, cover and steam for 5 minutes.
 - while vegetables are steaming and gnocchi boiling, turn on a second burner and heat the cream mixture, stirring, for 4 minutes (add dried herbs towards the end)
6. Turn off both burners, drain gnocchi and mix them with steamed vegetables.
7. Before serving, pour cream sauce over the gnocchi & veggie mix in each plate.

Now take a look at the clock. How long did it take you to prepare this dish?

15 minutes or less: Congrats! You've got the hang of *smart cooking*.

16 to 20 minutes: Not bad, you are nearly there. I suggest you do this exercise again tomorrow with bell peppers, broccoli and dry pasta.

21 minutes and more: There's room for improvement, no doubt, but not to worry: all you need is a little more practice. Repeat Exercises 1 and 2, and then try this one again.

Did you notice that we applied all three Smart Cooking Tricks from Chapter I in making this dish? We visualized the process and identified the longest food to cook (the carrots), we reduced the cooking time (by steaming the carrots for only 10 minutes and the cauliflower for 5), and we eliminated the inactive time from the preparation process.

Exercise 5

Steaming while baking

If you managed to cook the vegetarian one-dish meal from the previous exercise in 15 minutes or less, then you are ready for the next challenge: the *ultimate chorus cooking*. You are going to sauté while steaming while boiling while baking.

Just as in Exercise 4, proceed as follows:

- Read the list of ingredients below and make sure you have all the items on it – otherwise go grocery shopping
- Read the list of ingredients again and visualize what you'll be doing to cook this meal
- Compare to the *Directions* below
- Note the time
- Start cooking, checking against the *Directions* below if necessary

Ingredients (serves 2 or 3)

- 1 cup (250 g) quick-cooking rice
- 2 zucchini
- 6 spring onions or 2 leeks
- 3 salmon fillets
- 4 tbsp olive oil
- 1/2 cup (100 g) heavy cream
- 1 tbsp dried herbs
- Salt and black pepper to taste

Directions

1. Place the salmon filets into a baking dish, season with salt and pepper, pour 2 tbsp olive oil over them and bake at 400 F (200 C) for 20 minutes;

Take steps 2 to 6 while salmon is baking.

2. Fill the bottom saucepan of your steamer with cold water (a little below the insert;

3. Cover and bring the water to a boil over high heat, after which reduce the heat and let it simmer;

- while the water is heating, rinse zucchini, slice and place them into the insert

4. As soon as the water starts bubbling, add a pinch of salt, pour rice into the saucepan, fit the insert with zucchini into it, add a pinch of salt, stir, cover, and steam for 5-6 minutes.

- during this time, heat 2 tbsp olive oil in a small non-stick skillet

o while the oil is heating, rinse spring onions (or leeks) and chop them

- sauté spring onions (leeks) for 3 minutes

5. Remove the steamer and the skillet from heat; drain the rice and mix with zucchini and spring onions. Keep warm.

6. Pour cream into the bottom pot of the steamer, add herbs and cook, stirring, for a minute or two.

7. Check salmon for doneness: if well cooked, pour the warm cream over it and serve with the rice & vegetable side. If you have some fresh herbs, use them to garnish the salmon.

Exercise 6

Making super-quick healthy side dishes

This exercise is about preparing 4 quick side dishes: polenta, couscous, buckwheat and quinoa. They are interesting alternatives to rice and mashed potatoes, especially for weeknight cooking. In addition, buckwheat and quinoa are considered to be particularly healthy by many nutritionists. And buckwheat has even made it to Oprah's 10 superfoods list!

Polenta

Polenta is ground Italian cornmeal. It is typically sold as quick-cooking/instant flour. We'll practice making polenta puree from instant polenta to be served as a side dish.

To cook plain polenta puree for 3-4 persons, proceed as follows (do check the directions on the box, even though in most cases the ratio should be 4 parts water to 1 part polenta):

1. Bring 4 cups (1 l) salted water to a boil over high heat
2. When the water starts bubbling, reduce the heat and pour in 1 cup (225 g) polenta in a slow steady stream whisking continuously
3. Continue stirring over medium heat for 4-5 minutes until polenta thickens, then remove from the heat
4. Add 1 tbsp olive oil, salt and pepper to taste, and stir energetically for a few more seconds.

That's it. Your polenta puree is ready. For extra taste and healthfulness, consider adding dried or fresh herbs such as thyme, rosemary and coriander.

Couscous

Couscous is North African ground quick-cooking pasta made from semolina, which is a type of wheat. In the West, it is typically sold pre-steamed and dried. Instant polenta and couscous are your best allies in smart cooking: they allow you to concoct a filling side dish in less than 5 minutes to accompany your main course.

Preparing couscous is even easier and faster than cooking polenta. Let's do it straight away:

- 1) Pour 1 cup (225 g) couscous into a large bowl
- 2) Boil 2 cups (500 ml) water in a kettle or an electrical boiler
- 3) Pour the water over the couscous to cover it with a generous margin
- 4) Add 1 tbsp olive oil, salt and pepper to taste, stir, cover and let it stand for a 2-3 minutes
- 5) As soon as the grains soak up the water at the top, fluff them with a fork and let them stand for a couple more minutes.

Your couscous side dish is ready. For extra taste and healthfulness, consider adding dried or fresh herbs such as thyme, rosemary and coriander, or spices such as turmeric and curry, which go well with couscous.

Buckwheat



Buckwheat. Photo: Laitr Keiows

Buckwheat is a plant, domesticated millennia ago in Asia. In cooking, the term refers to grain-like seeds that, in spite of the name, are not at all related to wheat. Like polenta – and unlike couscous – buckwheat is gluten-free. Buckwheat flour is used in Japan to make Soba noodles and in French Brittany to make pancakes. *Roasted* buckwheat (often called kasha) can be purchased in any health food stores and many supermarkets and makes an excellent side dish in 5 minutes. Cook it exactly like couscous, described above.

Tip: If you are cooking couscous or buckwheat as a side to steamed meat or veggies, you don't even need to boil water and use a separate pot. As soon as you have finished steaming, turn off the burner, remove the steamer insert and pour the couscous or buckwheat into the water remaining in the bottom saucepan. Add olive oil, salt and pepper to taste, cover and let it stand for a couple of minutes, after which fluff with a fork – and serve. To make sure you have enough water left after steaming, fill the bottom of your steamer almost up to the level of the insert.

Quinoa



Quinoa is s a grain-like seed domesticated millenia ago in the Andes. It takes a little longer to cook than the first three cereals discussed above, but it's still quick enough to qualify for weeknight meals. Let's give it a try and cook 1 cup (230 g) quinoa.

Directions:

1. Rinse quinoa in a fine mesh strainer, turning it with your hand under cold running water
2. Drain and pour into a saucepan, add 1,5 cups water
3. Bring water to a boil over medium to high heat, cover, and simmer for 12 minutes
4. Remove quinoa from heat and let it sit, covered, for 5 minutes
5. Fluff quinoa with a fork and serve.

Try also cooking quinoa with a little salt, pepper, olive oil and herbs, and see which way you prefer it.

Exercise 7

Making super-quick healthy appetizers / starters

How do you make a two-course meal in 30 minutes if your main dish takes 20 minutes of active time to prepare? The answer is: by preparing your appetizer or dessert in less than 10 minutes. Of course, I could simply suggest that you serve some Pringles for appetizer – but this book has 'healthy' in its title, remember? You could also serve some olives, but then your starter won't be filling enough and won't feel like a proper dish. Luckily, there are other options. Without further ado, we'll practice three healthy, filling and quick appetizers that take 3 to 7 minutes to prepare (and we'll practice a few healthy and quick desserts in the next exercise).

1. Avocado with mustard and lemon juice

This appetizer takes 3 minutes to make and it is eaten with a spoon, scooping directly from the shell.

You will need the following ingredients (serves 2):

- 2 ripe (but not overripe) avocados
- 1 tsp olive oil
- Salt and pepper to taste
- ½ tsp Dijon mustard

- 1 tbsp lemon juice

Directions:

1. Rinse, halve and pit avocados
2. Whisk together the OOD+ (olive oil, salt, pepper, Dijon mustard and lemon juice)
3. Place the avocado halves on plates and fill the middles with OOD+

2. Smoked salmon and cream cheese on toasts

This is a quick and easy appetizer guaranteed to please (do you know anyone who doesn't like smoked salmon or cream cheese?).



Salmon & cream cheese on toast

You will need the following *ingredients* (serves 3 or 4)

- 8 slices of artisanal bread
- 3 oz (100 g) smoked salmon
- 3 oz (100 g) cream cheese
- 4 tbsp broccoli sprouts or fresh dill
- 1 tsp lemon juice

Directions

1. Turn on the oven to 450 F (220 C) to preheat.
2. Grill bread slices on the top rack until they turn golden brown (4-5 minutes)
 - o while the bread is in the oven, rinse broccoli sprouts, mix the cream cheese

with lemon juice and cut the salmon into strips

3. Transfer the toasts to a serving platter and spread cream cheese on each toast

4. Top with salmon strips, garnish with broccoli sprouts and serve.

3. Bruschetta

Bruschetta is an Italian appetizer that consists of grilled bread rubbed with garlic and olive oil. Bruschetta is often topped with tomatoes and herbs.



Bruschetta

You will need the following ingredients (serves 3):

- 6 slices artisanal bread
- Large clove of garlic
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 2-3 tomatoes
- Pinch of salt, pepper and dried herbs

Directions

1. Turn on the oven to 450 F (220 C) to preheat.
2. Crush garlic with a knife handle and let it sit
3. Grill bread slices on the top rack until they turn golden brown (4-5 minutes)
 - o while the bread is in the oven, rinse and finely chop tomatoes and toss them

with salt, pepper and herbs

4. Transfer the toasts to a serving platter, rub with the crushed garlic clove and drizzle olive oil over them

5. Place tomato topping on the toasts and serve.

In addition to these ‘finger food’ appetizers, some salads are extremely quick to make. These 5-minute salads include the basic *Mixed green salad*, *Tomato-mozzarella* salad and *Arugula-parmesan* salad. We’ll prepare them in the next chapter.

Exercise 8

Making super-quick and healthy desserts

From time to time, it’s nice to finish a meal with a healthy dessert. Even though ‘healthy’ and ‘dessert’ are rarely on friendly terms, there’s one easy way to reconcile them: making fruit desserts. Most fruits are suitable for quick desserts. My personal favorites are berries (strawberries, raspberries, blueberries), bananas, grapes, mangos, oranges, tangerines, apples, pears, peaches, kiwis, plums and figs.

I will not waste your time on sophisticated fruit salads that can easily take 20 minutes to make. Instead, we’ll make the all-time classic *Strawberries and Cream*.

Version 1: With liquid cream

This version of *Strawberries and Cream* is the ultimate smart dessert: it provides good value for very little effort.



Strawberries and liquid cream

Ingredients (serves 3):

- 1 cup (230 g) heavy cream
- 2 tbsp sugar or, even better, vanilla sugar
- 1,5 cup (350 g) strawberries

Directions:

1. Rinse strawberries under running cold water, and cut them into halves or quarters (2 minutes)
2. Place strawberries in individual cups and sprinkle them with sugar (1 minute)
3. Pour cream over strawberries in each cup (30 seconds).

Version 2: With whipped cream

This version requires a little more effort than the previous one – you need to exert your arm muscles for a few minutes to hold an electric mixer. The result is as yummy as it is nice to look at. In addition to the classic strawberries, you can combine the whipped cream with lots of other berries and fruits. On the picture below, I used a sliced banana and a few pomegranate seeds.



Bananas with whipped cream

Ingredients (serves 3):

- 1 cup (230 g) heavy cream
- 2 tbsp sugar or, even better, vanilla sugar
- 1,5 cup (350 g) strawberries or any of the following fruits: banana, mango, banana, berries (strawberries, raspberries, blueberries, currants), orange, tangerine

Directions

1. In a tall bowl (to avoid splashes), combine cream with sugar. Whip with an electric hand mixer until peaks begin to form (4 minutes)
2. Wash and chop fruit (1-2 minutes)
3. Place fruit in individual glasses or small plates and spoon whipped cream over them (or do it the other way round: place whipped cream into glasses or plates and place fruit on top)

Tip: If you are worried about the fat in the cream, use plain yoghurt & honey or vanilla yoghurt instead. Whatever you do, don't use industrial whipped cream: the homemade one tastes better, has a richer texture, is free of chemical additives, is cheaper and is so easy to make that you have no excuse for using the surrogate instead.

Exercise 9

Making a two-course meal in 30 minutes

You have arrived, dear reader, at a pivotal point in this undertaking –*trumpet fanfare* – you are about to prepare a two-course meal in 30 minutes. It will be an easy meal – I am not asking you to swim with the sharks (yet).

So, here is today's menu:

Appetizer: Goat cheese and honey toasts

Main dish and side: Butter-garlic sautéed shrimp with grilled vegetables



Grilled veggies and goat cheese toasts

Note 1: The vegetables in question are asparagus and bell pepper. If it's the wrong season for asparagus, grill bell peppers of different colors. Thankfully, these days bell peppers are available at a reasonable price all year round.

Note 2: Buy your shrimp boiled so you can skip washing them and save time on cooking. Sauté the shrimp without peeling – a double advantage once again: you'll save time and the shrimp will have more flavor because their shells will retain the cooking juices.

Ingredients for the appetizer (serves 2):

- 6 slices baguette-type bread
- 5 oz (150 g) firm goat cheese (chevre)

- 2 tbsp honey
- 1/4 cup (50 g) dried figs

Ingredients for the main dish and side (serves 2):

- ½ lb large boiled shrimp with shells on
- 3 tbsp olive oil
- 1 tbsp butter
- 1 large garlic clove
- ½ lemon
- 1 bunch fresh asparagus and 1 large red bell pepper
- Salt and pepper to taste

First, let's visualize the cooking process and determine which ingredient will take longest to cook. In all likelihood, it will be the vegetables, so we'll start by washing the asparagus and pepper and prepping them for the grill. The shortest to cook will be the shrimp – so we'll tackle them last, while the toasts and veggies are in the oven.



Sautéed butter-garlic shrimp

1. Preheat the oven to 400°F (200 C°).
2. Rinse asparagus, lemon and bell pepper, crush garlic clove and set it aside **(2 minutes)**
3. Cut the tough ends off asparagus and discard them **(1 minute)**
4. Halve and seed bell pepper **(1 minute)**

5. Lay asparagus and pepper on a baking sheet, coat them with olive oil (**2 minutes**) and grill on the top rack for **5 minutes**

During this time:

- spread a little honey on bread slices, cut cheese into ¼ inch (1cm) slices and place them on the bread

- halve dried figs and set them aside

6. Take the baking sheet out of the oven, flip asparagus and pepper halves rearranging them more tightly, and add the bread slices (**2 minutes**).

7. Grill the vegetables and bread for another **4-5 minutes**, until the cheese starts turning golden brown

During this time:

- preheat skillet over high heat with butter and olive oil until the butter melts (1-2 minutes).

- lower the heat to medium, add shrimp and sauté them for a minute.

- press garlic and lemon over shrimp, add a little salt and pepper (and, if necessary, oil), stir and sauté for another minute over medium heat.

8. Turn the burner and the oven off, transfer the toasts to plates, garnish them with fig halves and serve.

Keep the veggies in the oven and cover the shrimp to keep them warm.

Note: an alternative garnish for the toasts is walnut halves whose taste marries perfectly with goat cheese and honey.

It shouldn't take you more than 25 minutes to cook this delicious and healthy two-course meal. If it does, consider doing Exercises 1, 2 and 5 again before giving this one another shot.

Exercise 10

Self-test: making a three-course meal in 30 minutes

No, it's not a typo: I am challenging you to make a **three**-course meal with a side dish in 30 minutes. Just because you can. The meal I've chosen for this exercise will sound familiar because we have practiced its different components in earlier exercises. So relax, you are still in chartered waters (for now).

Here are the three courses you are going to prepare:

Appetizer: Avocados with mustard and lemon juice

Main course: Baked chicken with polenta

Dessert: Strawberries and cream

You'll need these *ingredients* (serves 2):

For the avocados:

- 2 ripe (but not overripe) avocados
- 1 tsp olive oil
- ½ tsp Dijon mustard
- 1 tbsp lemon juice
- Salt and pepper to taste

For the main course:

- 2 skinless boneless chicken breasts
- 2 tbsp olive oil or butter
- 1 cup (230 g) instant polenta
- Salt and pepper to taste

For the dessert:

- 1/2 cup (100 g) heavy cream
- 1 tbsp sugar or vanilla sugar
- 1 cup strawberries

If you are feeling lucky, opt for the whipped cream version of the dessert rather than the liquid cream version. For a small nudge in the right direction, read the 3 clues below before you begin to cook:

Clue # 1: Remember to identify the food that's the longest to cook and start with it.

Clue # 2: Remember that strawberries and cream are best when served cold, so factor in some fridge time for your dessert.

Clue # 3: Remember that avocados have the annoying habit of turning brown after you open and pit them, so make the appetizer last.

Finally, a piece of advice in case you feel under pressure: when you are visualizing the preparation process, it may help jotting down a few notes.

That's it. I am not providing *directions* this time. You are on your own, chef.
Ready, aim, cook!

Exercise 11

Improvising a 30-minute meal

The last exercise in this program is improvisation. You are going to conceive, plan and prepare a two-course meal. Try to do the conception and planning in 15 minutes maximum and the cooking, in 30.

Directions:

1. Take a look in your fridge and your pantry and make a mental note of what you have and what you'd like to cook with right now.
2. Using your own knowledge and what you've learnt in this book, decide on your menu.
3. If your mind has gone blank in regard to the appetizer or the main dish, or both, Google 'easy <name of ingredient or ingredients> recipe'. For the side dish, pick one of the options you've tried in earlier exercises.
4. Browse several recipes, bearing in mind that you want to cook a healthy and fast meal. This means that if the recipe says to boil your veggies, you'll want to steam or sauté them instead. You'll also want to cut your foods into smaller pieces and reduce their cooking time whenever possible (the mandoline slicer will come handy at this point). Finally, choose a main dish recipe that leaves you sufficient handsfree time to prepare your appetizer or dessert (recipes involving steaming, baking or grilling are good choices). If, on the contrary, the main dish you set your sights on involves non-stop attention and activity – such as chopping and stirring – **and** takes more than 20 minutes to prepare, bookmark it for another time and choose something else for now.
5. Once your choices are made, visualize the process, decide where to start and begin to cook.

Don't be disheartened if this exercise takes you more than 45 minutes – after all, you haven't had an awful lot of practice with this type of cooking yet. As everyone knows, **success is 1% talent and 99% practice**. All you need is some more practice.

CHAPTER III: SELECTED RECIPES FOR 30-MINUTE MEALS

To get started, you'll find in this chapter 15 varied two-course meal recipes that you can cook on weeknights over 3 weeks. Most are composed of an appetizer, a main dish and a side dish. Some include dessert instead of an appetizer. You can find more recipes on my blog <http://smartcooking.weebly.com>.

I suggest that you select the meals you'd like to try during the first week, list all the ingredients, assess the quantities required for your family and/or your person and do your grocery shopping online or in real life.

Most of the meals in this Chapter contain *meat protein* (beef, chicken, fish, etc.). If you are a vegetarian, do experiment replacing these with plant proteins such as *tofu*.

Finally, don't be surprised to find the **Directions** in this chapter less detailed than in the previous one. If you've gone through all the exercises in the Step-by-step Practice Program, you'll quickly find your bearings and will have no trouble keeping pace. If you feel confident, I suggest you don't read the Directions at all – just take a look at the **Smart Sequence** synopsis that precedes them, and then cook.

Note 1: Only the cooking times shown in **bold** add up. When a cooking time is shown in a regular font, it indicates a shorter activity, taking place simultaneously with a longer one. Your second clue that an activity is taking place at the same time as a longer one is that it is introduced with a dash rather than a number.

Note 2: The quantities indicated in the recipes will serve three 'average' eaters. If you are cooking for more or fewer persons, or if your family of three includes two sumo wrestlers, do adjust the quantities – or make sure you have some cheese and toasts or grapes to complement the meal.

Note 3: If you are reading this book on an E-ink Kindle, the photos will be black and white. You can see them in color here: <http://smartcooking.weebly.com>.

Shall we?

Meals at a glance

Meal # 1

Appetizer: Mixed green salad

Main dish & side: Baked salmon with cream sauce and polenta

Meal # 2

Appetizer: French-style endive salad

Main dish & side: Beef strips with sautéed vegetables and quinoa

Meal # 3

Appetizer: Bruschetta

Main dish & side: Sautéed scallops with rice

Meal # 4

Appetizer: Tomato-mozzarella salad

Main dish & side: Baked chicken with Thai rice

Meal # 5

Appetizer: Greek salad

Main dish & side: Baked trout with steamed potatoes

Meal # 6

Appetizer: Broccoli salad

Main dish & side: Honey mustard chicken with buckwheat

Meal # 7

Appetizer: Steamed asparagus

Main dish & side: Thai curry chicken with sesame, pine nuts and couscous

Meal # 8

Appetizer: Goat cheese and honey toasts

Main dish & side: Beef steak with red cabbage and bell peppers

Meal # 9

Main dish & side: Lemon sauce chicken and broccoli

Dessert: Strawberries and cream

Meal # 10

Appetizer: Raw salmon and avocado salad

Main dish & side: Tofu stir fry with green beans

Meal # 11

Appetizer: Californian endive salad

Main dish & side: Herring and steamed potatoes

Meal # 12

Appetizer: Goulash-inspired tomato soup

Main dish & side: Beef steak with mixed green salad

Meal # 13

Main dish & side: Sautéed mushrooms

Dessert: Baked apples with cinnamon

Meal # 14

Appetizer: Arugula salad with parmesan

Main dish & side: Chop steak with corn salad and rice

Meal # 15

Main dish & side: Grilled salmon with mango salsa and quinoa

Dessert: Fruit salad with yogurt dressing

Meal # 1

Appetizer: Mixed green salad

Main and side: Baked salmon with cream sauce and polenta



Mixed green salad



Baked salmon with herbs

Ingredients

- 1 head Oak leaf lettuce (or Butterhead lettuce)
- 1 red bell pepper
- 5 tbsp olive oil, of which 2 for main dish and 1 for the side
- 2 tbsp balsamic vinegar

- 1 lemon
- 1,5 cup (350 g) polenta
- 3 salmon fillets
- ½ cup (100 g) heavy cream
- 1 tbsp dried or fresh herbs
- Salt and black pepper to taste

Smart sequence

1. Bake salmon, *during which*
2. Make salad, make side dish and heat cream.

Directions

1. Place salmon filets into a baking dish, squeeze juice of half lemon and pour 2 tbsp olive oil over them, season with salt and pepper and bake at 400 F (200 C) for **20 minutes**.

During this time:

- wash lettuce leaves, herbs (if fresh) and bell pepper
- spin-dry lettuce and chop pepper
- in a salad bowl, mix together OOD + vinegar
- toss lettuce and bell pepper with the dressing

Your salad is ready in about 7 minutes

- to cook the side dish, slowly pour 1,5 cup polenta into simmering salted water (5 cups), whisking continuously
- continue stirring over medium heat for 4-5 minutes until polenta thickens, then remove from heat, add 1 tbsp olive oil, salt and pepper to taste, and stir.

Your side dish is ready. Cover it and keep warm.

- heat cream in a small pot for a minute or two, stirring.
2. Check salmon for doneness and sprinkle it with herbs; if well-cooked, pour the cream over it and keep it warm in the oven – otherwise bake for a few more minutes.
 3. Serve the salad, and then salmon fillets with polenta.

Meal # 2

Appetizer: French-style endive salad

Main course: Beef strips with sautéed vegetables and quinoa



Beef strips with vegetables

Ingredients:

- 3 head endive (aka chicory)
- 1 small handful walnut halves
- 1 large handful raisins
- 3 tbsp olive oil, of which 1 for the main dish
- 2 tbsp honey
- 1/2 lemon
- 2 beef steaks
- 1 onion
- 2 red bell peppers
- 1 cup (230 g) quinoa
- ½ tsp turmeric or curry powder
- Salt and pepper to taste

Smart Sequence

1. Steam beef, *during which*
2. Roast veggies, boil quinoa and make salad, *after which*

3. Sauté beef with veggies and let quinoa sit.

Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 400 F (200 C) and bring 2 cups water to a boil in your steamer over high heat (adjust so that the water remains below the level of the holed insert) **(2 minutes)**

- while the water is heating, cut steaks into strips.

2. When water starts boiling, lower the heat, place beef strips into the holed pot, cover, and steam for **15 minutes**.

During this time:

- rinse quinoa in a fine mesh strainer, drain and pour it into the bottom saucepan of the steamer; boil for 12 minutes

- rinse bell peppers, halve and seed them; peel, rinse and halve onion

- rinse endives and cut them 1/4 inch (1 cm) slices

- roast bell peppers and onion on the top rack of the oven for 10 minutes

- in a salad bowl, whisk together OOD+ honey & lemon juice

- crush walnuts into chunks; toss endives with walnuts, raisins and OOD

Your salad is ready. While preparing it, remember to stir the meat and quinoa in the steamer once or twice.

3. Transfer peppers and onion to a cutting board and slice into strips **(2 minutes)**

4. Remove the steamer from heat, replace with a medium to large skillet, and heat 1 tbsp olive oil **(1 minute)**

5. Add pepper, onion and beef strips, season with salt, pepper and turmeric, and sauté over medium heat for **4 minutes**

6. The quinoa has now sat for 5 additional minutes and is ready. Fluff it with a fork and cover again to keep it warm.

Serve the salad, and then the main dish with quinoa.

Meal # 3

Appetizer: Bruschetta

Main & side: Sautéed scallops with rice



Scallops with rice

Ingredients

- 6 slices artisanal bread
- 2 cloves garlic (of which 1 for the main dish)
- 2-3 tomatoes
- 3 tbsp olive oil (of which 1 for the main dish)
- 1 cup (230 g) basmati rice cooking in 10 min
- 1 lb small (500 g) fresh scallops
- Fresh or dried herbs to taste (half for the main dish)
- 3 tbsp sour cream
- 1 tbsp bran oat
- ½ lemon
- 1 tsp turmeric
- Salt & pepper to taste

Smart Sequence

1. Cook rice, *during which*
2. Rinse and chop, *after which*
3. Sauté scallops, *during which*
4. Make bruschetta.

Directions

1. Bring water to a boil as directed on the package (**2 minutes**), add salt and the rice and cook for **10 minutes**

During this time:

- crush garlic cloves and let them sit
- rinse tomatoes, lemon and herbs (if fresh)
- finely chop tomatoes and toss them with salt, pepper and herbs
- heat olive oil in a skillet
- peel and mince 1 clove garlic

Keep rice warm after it's cooked.

2. Sauté garlic with olive oil on medium heat until golden

3. Add scallops and simmer for **12 minutes** (you'll turn them mid-way)

During this time:

- preheat oven to 450 F (220 C)
 - grill bread slices on the top rack until they turn golden brown (about 5 minutes)
 - in a small bowl, mix together sour cream, lemon juice, turmeric, oat bran, herbs
 - turn off the oven, rub toasts with crushed garlic and drizzle olive oil over them
 - top toasts with tomatoes and put them back into the oven to keep them warm
4. Add sour cream mixture to scallops and cook over low heat for **3 minutes**

Meal # 4

Appetizer: Tomato-mozzarella salad

Main & side: Baked chicken with Thai rice



Tomato-mozzarella salad



Baked chicken breast

Ingredients

- 3 boneless skinless chicken breasts
- 5 tbsp olive oil (of which 3 for the main dish)
- 1 cup (230 g) Thai rice cooking in 10 min
- 1 lb (500 g) tomatoes
- 8 oz (230 g) mozzarella cheese
- Salt and pepper to taste

Smart Sequence

1. Sauté chicken breasts, *after which*
2. Bake chicken breasts and cook rice, *during which*
3. Make salad.

Tip: Perfectly baked chicken breasts are golden-brown on the outside and tender on the inside. The best way to achieve this is by sautéing them over high heat for a few minutes and then baking then over moderate heat.

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 400 F (200 C) and heat oil in a non-stick skillet over high heat (**1 minute**)
2. Place chicken breasts into the skillet, salt and pepper them, and cook for **6-7 minutes** over high heat until golden brown (turn them a couple of times to avoid burning – burnt meat is unhealthy)
3. Transfer chicken breasts to a baking dish, pour the remaining oil over them and cook for **12 minutes** (lower the heat to 350 F (180 C) after 5 minutes)

During this time:

- bring water to a boil as directed on the package, add salt and the rice and cook for 10 minutes
- rinse tomatoes and mozzarella and slice them into rounds
- arrange them on a serving dish, sprinkle with olive oil, salt and pepper

Your salad is ready.

4. Remove rice from heat, check chicken for doneness (if required, bake it for a few more minutes)

Meal # 5

Appetizer: Greek salad

Main & Side: Baked trout with steamed potatoes



Greek salad



Baked trout with lemon zest

Ingredients

- 3 trout fillets
- 1,5 lb (700 g) potatoes
- 1 organic lemon
- 3 large tomatoes
- 1 large cucumber
- 1 medium onion
- 2 red bell peppers

- 6 oz (170 g) feta cheese
- 3 tbsp olive oil (of which 1 for the main dish)
- handful cornsalad (optional)
- Salt and pepper to taste

Smart sequence

1. Bake trout, *during which*
2. Steam potatoes and make salad

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 400 F (200 C), wash lemon using a brush, then zest it **(2 minutes)**
2. Place trout fillets into a baking dish, add salt and pepper, squeeze lemon juice and pour olive oil over them **(2 minutes)**
3. Bake trout for **25 minutes**

During this time:

- bring water to a boil in your steamer
- wash potatoes, brushing them well under running water
- slice potatoes into ¼ inch rounds and steam them for 12-15 minutes
- whisk together OOD
- rinse and chop tomatoes, cucumber and peppers
- peel the onion and cut it into thin half-rings
- crumble the cheese into the salad bowl
- toss all the ingredients with ODD

The salad is ready.

4. Check potatoes and trout for doneness, keep warm.

Meal # 6

Appetizer: Broccoli salad

Main & Side: Honey mustard chicken with buckwheat



Broccoli & walnut salad



Honey & mustard chicken

Ingredients

- 2-3 boneless skinless chicken breasts
- 3 tbsp honey
- 3 tbsp mustard (a seedy one, such as *Dijon ancienne* would be best)
- 1 cup (230 g) buckwheat
- 2 head broccoli
- handful walnut halves
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- Salt and pepper to taste

Smart sequence

1. Bake chicken, *during which*
2. Cook broccoli and buckwheat, *after which*
3. Bake chicken some more, *during which*
4. Make appetizer.

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 400 F (200 C), place the chicken breasts in a baking dish, salt and pepper them and drizzle with olive oil; bake for **15 minutes**

During this time:

- bring 2 cups water to a boil in your steamer over high heat (adjust so that the water remains below the level of the holed insert)
- while the water is heating, cut broccoli into small florets and rinse them
- when water starts boiling, lower the heat, season and steam broccoli for 5 minutes
- in a small bowl, whisk together honey and mustard, reserve
- crush walnut halves, reserve
- as soon as broccoli is ready, turn off the burner, remove the insert and pour the buckwheat into the water remaining in the bottom pot. Add olive oil, salt and pepper to taste, cover and let it stand.

2. Take the dish out of the oven and spread the honey & mustard mixture over the chicken breasts; bake for another **10 minutes**

During this time:

- in a salad bowl, whisk together OOD
- add broccoli florets and crushed walnuts and toss

The salad is ready.

- fluff buckwheat with a fork and keep warm

3. Check chicken for doneness and keep warm in the oven until the salad is eaten.

Meal # 7

Appetizer: Steamed asparagus

Main & Side: Curry chicken with sesame, pine nuts & couscous



Asparagus with balsamic vinegar



Curry chicken with couscous

Ingredients

- 1 lb (500 g) boneless skinless chicken breasts
- 2 spring onions or 1 leek
- 1 tbsp sesame seeds
- 1 tbsp pine nuts
- 1 tsp curry powder
- 1 cup (230) sour cream
- 3 tbsp olive oil (of which 2 for the main dish)
- 1 bunch asparagus
- 2 tbsp balsamic vinegar

- 1 cup (230 g) couscous
- Salt and pepper to taste

Smart sequence

1. Steam chicken, *during which*
2. Sauté onions with spices and cream, *after which*
3. Simmer chicken and steam asparagus, *during which*
4. Prep couscous.

Directions

1. Bring 2 cups water to a boil in your steamer over high heat – **2 minutes**
 - while the water is heating, cut chicken breasts into strips
2. When water starts boiling, lower the heat, season chicken strips and steam for **10 minutes**, stirring a couple of times

During this time:

- rinse spring onions and chop them
 - rinse asparagus, cut the tough ends off
 - heat oil in a skillet, sauté onions with sesame and pine nuts over medium heat until they turn golden
 - add sour cream and curry powder, and simmer for a couple of minutes
2. Transfer chicken to skillet and cook, stirring from time to time, over low heat with the curry sauce for **7-8 minutes**

During this time:

- add water to the steamer (adjust so that it remains below the level of the holed insert), bring to a boil and steam asparagus for 5 minutes
3. As soon as asparagus is ready, turn off the burner, remove the insert and pour the couscous into the water. Add olive oil, salt and pepper to taste, cover and let it stand for **2-3 minutes**.
 4. Turn off the burner under the chicken, keep it warm while you serve asparagus with balsamic vinegar, then fluff the couscous and serve with the curry chicken.

Meal # 8

Appetizer: Goat cheese and honey toasts

Main & Side: Beef steak with red cabbage and bell peppers



Chevre and honey toast



Red cabbage with bell peppers

Ingredients

- 3 thin cut beefsteaks
- 1 head small red cabbage
- 1 yellow or red bell pepper
- 1 onion
- 3 tbsp balsamic vinegar
- 5 tbsp honey (of which 3 for the main dish)

- 2 tbsp olive oil
- handful raisins
- 1 tbsp dried herbs (thyme & rosemary)
- 6 slices of baguette-type bread
- 5 oz (150 g) firm goat cheese (aka chevre)
- handful walnut halves
- Salt and pepper to taste

Smart sequence

1. Marinate steaks, *during which*
2. Chop vegetables, *after which*
3. Cook steaks, *during which*
4. Grill toasts and finish side dish.

Directions

1. Rub salt, pepper and herbs on both sides of the steaks and let them sit for **15 minutes**

During this time:

- rinse pepper, peel and rinse onion, chop them
- shred cabbage then rinse it
- preheat the oven to 400°F (200 C°)
- spread a little honey on the bread slices, cut the cheese into ¼ inch (1cm) slices and place them on the bread
- in a salad bowl, whisk together 3 tbsp balsamic vinegar and 3 tbsp honey
- heat olive oil in a large skillet over medium to high heat

2. Cook steaks for **3 minutes** then turn them over with tongs and cook for another **3 minutes**

During this time:

- place bread slices on a baking sheet and grill on the top rack for 4-5 minutes
- in the salad bowl, toss cabbage, pepper, onion and raisins and the vinegar & honey dressing, season with salt and pepper to taste; reserve to be served with the steaks.

3. Check steaks for doneness, then remove from heat and let them rest
4. Transfer toasts to plates, garnish them with walnut halves and serve.

Meal # 9

Main & Side: Lemon sauce chicken and broccoli

Dessert: Strawberries and cream



Lemon sauce chicken and broccoli



Ingredients

- 3 boneless skinless chicken breasts
- 1 organic lemon
- 1-inch piece fresh ginger root
- ½ cup sour cream

- 2 bell peppers
- 3 tbsp olive oil
- 2 oz parmesan shavings
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1 cup (250 g) heavy cream
- 2 tbsp sugar
- 1,5 cup (350 g) strawberries

Smart sequence

1. Marinate chicken, *during which*
2. Make dessert and chop veggies, *after which*
3. Steam veggies, *during which*
4. Sauté chicken.

Directions

1. Wash and zest lemon, reserve the zest, then juice the lemon (**2 minutes**)
2. Marinate chicken in lemon juice for **15 minutes**

During this time:

- whip cream with sugar using an electric hand mixer until peaks begin to form (about 4 minutes), then distribute it into glasses
 - wash and chop strawberries, add to the cream, and put glasses in the fridge
 - cut broccoli into florets and rinse them
 - rinse and slice peppers
 - rinse and brush ginger under cold water, then mince it
 - heat oil in a large skillet and cook ginger over medium heat for 2 minutes
3. Bring water to a boil and steam broccoli and pepper for **5 minutes**, then keep warm

During this time:

- cut chicken breasts into chunks or strips and sauté them with the ginger over medium to high heat for 4-5 minutes
4. Mix sour cream with the lemon juice and add to the chicken, cook for **2-3 minutes** over low heat.

Serve chicken with broccoli and pepper, sprinkled with parmesan shavings.

Meal # 10

Appetizer: Raw salmon and avocado salad

Main dish & side: Tofu stir fry with green beans



Raw salmon & avocado salad



Stir-fried tofu with green beans

Ingredients

- 2 boneless skinless salmon fillets
- 2 avocados

- 1 lemon (of which half for the main dish)
- 10 oz (300 g) extra firm tofu
- 3 tbsp olive oil
- 3 tbsp soy sauce (e.g. Tamari)
- 1 tbsp sesame seeds
- 1 large clove garlic
- 1 lb frozen green beans (aka French beans, aka string beans)
- Salt and pepper to taste

Smart sequence

1. Prep appetizer, *after which*
2. Steam green beans, *during which*
3. Stir-fry tofu and finish main dish.

Directions

1. Rinse and cut salmon fillets into cubes (**3 minutes**)
2. Halve, pit and slice avocados (**2 minutes**)
3. Rinse and halve the lemon
4. In a bowl, toss salmon with avocado and juice of ½ lemon (**3 minutes**)

This appetizer can be served in glasses or on plates, on top of lettuce leaves

5. Salt and steam green beans over medium heat for **10 - 12 minutes**, stirring occasionally

During which:

- crush garlic and let it sit
- drain tofu, squeeze it in your palms to get more water out, and cut into cubes
- heat a large non-stick skillet and toast sesame seeds over medium to high heat for about 3 minutes
- add olive oil and tofu cubes, stir-fry over medium heat for 5-6 minutes, until they turn golden brown
- 5. Add steamed green beans, soy sauce, a pinch of pepper, press garlic and half lemon, and cook, stirring, for another minute.

Meal # 11

Appetizer: Californian endive salad

Main dish & side: Herring and steamed potatoes



Endive & avocado salad



Smoked herring with potatoes & onions

Ingredients

- 16 oz (250 g) smoked herring
- 1 lb (500 g) small potatoes
- 1 bunch spring onions or a large red onion
- 3 head endive (aka chicory)
- 3 ripe avocados

- 5 tbsp olive oil (of which 3 for the main dish)
- ½ tsp Dijon mustard
- Salt and pepper to taste

Smart sequence

1. Steam potatoes, *during which*
2. Make appetizer, *after which*
3. Finish main dish.

Directions

1. Bring water to a boil in your steamer (**2 minutes**)

During this time, rinse, brush and slice potatoes

2. Steam potatoes for **12 minutes** over medium heat, after which remove steamer from heat and cool the potatoes

During this time:

- wash endives and remove damaged leaves
- cut endives into 1/2 inch slices
- halve and pit avocados, and cut them into wedges (see ‘Knife and spoon technique’ below)
- in a salad bowl, whisk together OOD + mustard
- toss avocados and endives with OOD + mustard

Your appetizer is ready.

3. Slice herring and toss in a salad bowl with olive oil, salt and pepper (**2 minutes**)
4. Rinse and chop spring onions (**2 minutes**)
5. Toss potatoes with herring and onions (**1 minute**).

Your one-dish main course is ready.

Tip: The ‘knife and spoon’ technique of slicing avocado:

- 1) rinse and halve the avocado lengthwise
- 2) rotate the halves in opposite directions to separate them and remove the pit

- 3) place a half in your palm and slice trying not to pierce the shell; repeat with the other half
- 4) with a table spoon, scoop the sliced halves out of the shells and into your salad bowl.

Meal # 12

Appetizer: Goulash-inspired tomato soup

Main dish & side: Beef steak with mixed green salad



Goulash-inspired tomato soup



Beefsteak with mixed green salad

Ingredients

- 1 onion

- 1 clove garlic
- 1 large or 2 small potatoes
- 2 beef stock cubes
- 2 tbsp tomato paste
- 1 tsp paprika
- 3 thin beef steaks
- 5 tbsp olive oil (of which 2 for the soup, 2 for main dish and 1 for salad)
- 2 tbsp balsamic vinegar
- 1 head lettuce
- 2 avocados
- Salt and pepper to taste (including some peppercorns for steak garnish)

Smart sequence

1. Prep soup, *after which*
2. Cook soup, *during which*
3. Make salad and steaks

Directions

1. In a medium size saucepan heat olive oil, sauté onion and garlic over medium heat (about **4 minutes**)

During this time, bring to a boil 4 cups (1 l) water in an electrical boiler

2. Lower the heat to simmer, add tomato paste and paprika, stir for **a minute**, then pour the boiled water into the saucepan and crumble the beef stock cubes

3. Rinse, brush and cut potato into small cubes, add to the saucepan (**3 minutes**)

4. Cook covered over low to medium heat for **20 minutes**

During this time:

- rinse and spin-dry lettuce, separate leaves (2 minutes).
- halve, pit and slice 2 avocados (2 minutes)
- in a salad bowl, make OOD + vinegar, toss avocado & lettuce with it (2 minutes)

Your salad / side dish is ready.

- heat 2 tbsp olive oil, season the steaks and cook them over medium to high heat one to two minutes on each side, depending on how well done you like them

4. Remove soup from heat and serve (garnish ideas: fresh herbs or a blob of sour cream). Let the steaks sit while you are eating the soup.

Meal # 13

Main dish & side: Sautéed mushrooms with rice

Dessert: Baked apples with cinnamon



Mushrooms with spring onions & garlic



Baked cinnamon apple

Ingredients

- 3 tbsp olive oil
- 2 cup (500 g) mushrooms
- 2 ripe tomatoes
- 2 clove garlic
- 4-5 spring onions (or a leek)
- 2 tbsp white wine
- 1 cup (250 g) precooked rice
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 3 apples (avoid firm sorts that take longer to bake)
- 2 tbsp brown sugar
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1 oz butter

Smart sequence

1. Prep dessert, *after which*
2. Bake dessert, *during which*
3. Cook rice and mushrooms

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 375 F (180 C)
2. Rinse and core apples, pierce in several places
3. In a bowl, mix together sugar and cinnamon
4. Place apples in a baking dish and stuff them with the cinnamon mixture
5. Top with ½ tsp butter and bake for 30 minutes, until tender when pierced (if needed, continue baking while you eat the main course).

During this time:

- crush garlic, let it sit
- boil water in a saucepan and cook rice as directed on the package

While the rice is cooking:

- rinse and slice mushrooms and tomatoes
- heat oil in a large skillet, mince garlic, chop spring onions

- sauté onions and garlic over medium to high heat until golden brown
- add mushrooms, and sauté for 3 more minutes
- reduce heat to low, add tomatoes and wine, season, and let simmer for 2 more minutes

6. Serve mushrooms with rice, and then baked apples for dessert (spoon cinnamon liquid in the middle of each apple over it before serving).

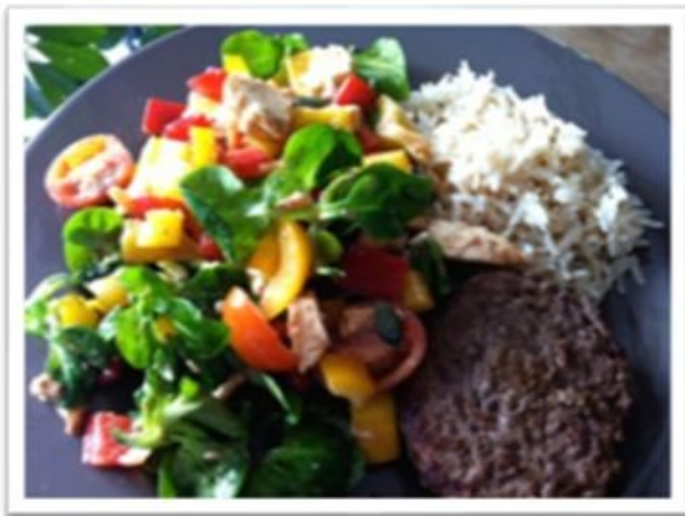
Meal # 14

Appetizer: Arugula salad with parmesan

Main dish & side: Chop steak with corn salad & rice



Arugula-parmesan salad



Chop steak with corn salad & rice

Ingredients

- 8 oz (250 g) arugula (aka rocket)
- 3 oz parmesan shavings
- 6 tbsp olive oil (of which 2 for the appetizer, 2 for the main and 2 for the side dish)
- 1 tsp coarse sea salt
- 3 chop steak
- 6 oz corn salad (aka mâche, aka lamb's lettuce)
- ½ cup (100 g) cherry tomatoes
- 1 yellow bell pepper
- ½ cup (100 g) mozzarella cheese
- 1 cup (250 g) precooked rice
- Salt and pepper to taste

Smart sequence

1. Make appetizer salad, *after which*
2. Cook rice, *during which*
3. Cook steaks and prep corn salad

Directions

1. Season chop steaks with salt and pepper, let them sit
2. Wash arugula, spin-dry (2 minutes)
3. In a salad bowl, toss arugula with olive oil, parmesan shavings and coarse sea salt (2 minutes). Reserve.

Your appetizer is ready.

4. Boil water in a saucepan and cook rice as directed on the package

During this time:

- wash corn salad, spin-dry
- rinse tomatoes and pepper, chop
- dice mozzarella
- in a salad bowl, mix OOD and toss corn salad, tomato, pepper and

mozzarella with it

- heat 2 tbsp olive oil, season the steaks and cook them over medium to high heat one to two minutes on each side, depending on how well done you like them

5. Let the chop steaks sit while you are eating the arugula salad.

Meal # 15

Main dish & side: Grilled salmon with mango salsa and quinoa

Dessert: Fruit salad with yogurt dressing



Salmon & mango salsa



Fruit & yogurt salad

Ingredients

- 3 salmon fillets
- 1 cup (230 g) quinoa
- 1 ripe mango
- 1 red bell pepper
- ½ lemon
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1 medium to large mango
- 3 portions fruit (e.g. 1 banana, 1 mango and ½ cup strawberries)
- 1 vanilla yoghurt

Smart sequence

1. Prepare salsa, *after which*
2. Bake salmon, *during which*
3. Cook quinoa, *during which*
4. Make dessert.

Directions

1. Rinse and dice mango and bell pepper, mix together in a bowl, cover and let sit at room temperature **(5 minutes)**
2. Preheat oven to 400 F (200 C), season salmon fillets with salt, press lemon and bake for **10 minutes**, after which grill on the top rack for another **10 minutes**.

During this time:

- rinse quinoa a fine mesh strainer, drain and pour into a saucepan with 1,5 cup cold water
- bring water to a boil over medium to high heat, cover, and simmer for 12 minutes

While quinoa is cooking:

- rinse strawberries and mango
- chop strawberries, peel and slice banana, dice mango
- mix with vanilla yogurt, and keep in the fridge.

Quinoa will be cooked by now.

- remove quinoa from heat and let it sit, covered, for five minutes
 - fluff quinoa with a fork and serve.
3. To serve salmon, place fillets on serving plates, and spoon salsa over them.

Bon appétit!

CHAPTER IV: THE SCIENCE BEHIND THE CHOICE OF INGREDIENTS

The studies referenced and annotated below were extracted from *PubMed* (<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed>) and *ScienceDaily* (<http://www.sciencedaily.com/>) databases.

Almonds

Almonds are rich in healthy monounsaturated fat, fiber, magnesium, copper and phytonutrients. A recent review of clinical trials found that eating almonds helped reduce cholesterol and inflammation, and contributed to weight loss. Another study has shown that chewing a handful of almonds 40 times instead of 25 or less quelled hunger better and faster, and provided a feeling of fullness that lasted longer.

Sources: Health Benefits of Almonds beyond Cholesterol Reduction. Kamil. A, Chen CY. J Agric Food Chem. 2012 Feb; Mastication of almonds: effects of lipid bioaccessibility, appetite, and hormone response. Cassady, B. A. et al., American Journal of Clinical Nutrition 2009 Mar

Asparagus

Rich in folic acid, asparagus appears to protect against pancreatic cancer. Similar protection was not shown with folic acid supplements. Asparagus also helps prevent hypertension and preserve renal function.

Sources: Folate intake and pancreatic cancer incidence: a prospective study of Swedish women and men. Larsson, S. C., Hakansson, N., Giovannucci, E., Wolk, A., Journal of the National Cancer Institute 2006 Mar; Green Asparagus (Asparagus officinalis) Prevented Hypertension by an Inhibitory Effect on Angiotensin-Converting Enzyme Activity in the Kidney of Spontaneously Hypertensive Rats. Sanae M, Yasuo A. J Agric Food Chem. 2013 June

Avocado

Avocados contain monounsaturated fatty acids (MUFA) dietary fiber, essential nutrients and phytochemicals. Its consumption is associated with improved overall diet quality, nutrient intake, and reduced risk of metabolic syndrome. Research shows that compounds in avocados may inhibit or kill certain types of cancerous and precancerous cells.

Sources: Avocado consumption is associated with better diet quality and

nutrient intake, and lower metabolic syndrome risk in US adults: results from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) 2001-2008. Fulgoni VL 3rd, Dreher M, Davenport AJ. *Nutr J.* 2013 Jan; *Chemopreventive characteristics of avocado fruit.* Ding, H. et al., *Seminars in Cancer Biology* 2007 Oct; *Inhibition of prostate cancer cell growth by an avocado extract: role of lipid-soluble bioactive substances.* Lu QY, Arteaga JR, Zhang Q, Huerta S, Go VL, Heber D. *J Nutr Biochem.* 2005 Jan

Bananas

Bananas are an excellent source of potassium (450 milligrams in one banana), but also of vitamin B6 and folate, calcium, magnesium and vitamin C. They're bursting with phenolic compounds that appear to cut your renal-cancer risk in half (if you eat four bananas/week). They will also cut your risk of colorectal cancer by 20 to 30 percent, according to another study.

Sources: Fruits, vegetables and risk of renal cell carcinoma: a prospective study of Swedish women. Rashidkhani, B., Lindblad, P., Wolk, A., *International Journal of Cancer* 2005 Jan 20; *Dietary vitamin B6 intake and the risk of colorectal cancer.* Theodoratou, E. et al., *Cancer Epidemiology, Biomarkers & Prevention* 2008 Jan

Beans

A study evaluating the dietary habits of over 90,000 women between the ages of 26 and 46 revealed that women who consumed two or more servings of beans per week had a reduced risk of breast cancer compared to women who consumed these foods less than once a month.

Source: Dietary flavonols and flavonol-rich foods intake and the risk of breast cancer. Adebamowo, C. A., Cho, E., Sampson, L., Katan, M. B., Spiegelman, D., Willett, W. C., Holmes, M. D., *International Journal of Cancer* 2005 Apr

Bell peppers

Eating bell peppers, broccoli and other Vitamin C-rich vegetables helps prevent prostate cancer according to a 14-year long observation of nearly 2000 men. Bell peppers have been studied at four maturity stages (immature green, green, immature red, and red). Ascorbic acid was the main form of vitamin C, and its content increased as the pepper reached maturity. The red ripe stage had a relevant impact on the carotenoids content. Thus, immature green peppers showed the highest content of polyphenols, while red ripe fruits had the highest content of vitamin C and provitamin A.

Source: Fruit, vegetable, vitamin A intakes, and prostate cancer risk.

Abrosini GL, de Klerk NH, Fritschi L, Mackerras D, Musk B. *Prostate Cancer Prostatic Dis.* 2008 (11); *Characterization and quantitation of antioxidant constituents of sweet pepper (Capsicum annuum L.)*. Marin, A., Ferreres, F., Tomas-Barberan, F. A., Gil, M. I., *Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry* 2004 Jun

Berries

Berries protect against inflammation, they have been linked to reduced risk of cancer, and recent studies suggest that they also help prevent age-related cognitive impairment.

Sources: Tart cherry anthocyanins inhibit tumor development in ApcMin mice and reduce proliferation of human colon cancer cells. Kang, S. et al., *Cancer Letters* 2003 May 8; *Dietary intakes of berries and flavonoids in relation to cognitive decline.* Elizabeth E. Devore, Jae Hee Kang, Monique M. B. Breteler, Francine Grodstein. *Annals of Neurology*, 2012; *More evidence berries have health-promoting properties.* Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology. *ScienceDaily*, 21 Apr. 2013

Broccoli

Steaming broccoli for two to four minutes is the best way to preserve the vegetable's valuable enzyme and nutrients. Researchers also found that steaming broccoli with other foods that contain sulforaphane (mustard, radishes, arugula, wasabi) boosts its benefits. Another study found that among smokers, eating broccoli reduced the risk of developing lung cancer from 20 to 55 percent, depending on the duration and intensity of smoking.

Sources: Sulforaphane Absorption and Excretion Following Ingestion of a Semi-Purified Broccoli Powder Rich in Glucoraphanin and Broccoli Sprouts in Healthy Men. Jenna Cramer, Elizabeth Jeffery. *Nutrition and Cancer*, 2011; *Comparison of Isothiocyanate Metabolite Levels and Histone Deacetylase Activity in Human Subjects Consuming Broccoli Sprouts or Broccoli Supplement.* John D. Clarke, Ken Riedl, Deborah Bella, Steven J. Schwartz, Jan F. Stevens, Emily Ho. *Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry*, 2011; *Broccoli May Lower Lung Cancer Risk In Smokers.* American Association for Cancer Research. *ScienceDaily*, 19 Nov. 2008.

Broccolis and tomatoes

The combination of tomato and broccoli was more effective at slowing tumor growth than either tomato or broccoli alone.

Source: Combinations of tomato and broccoli enhance antitumor activity in

dunning r3327-h prostate adenocarcinomas. Canene-Adams K, Lindshield BL, Wang S, Jeffery EH, Clinton SK, Erdman JW Jr. Cancer Res. 2007 Jan

Chili peppers

Capsaicin, a compound in chili peppers that makes them spicy, induced the death of liver cancer cells in a recent study.

Source: A phospholipase C-dependent intracellular Ca²⁺ release pathway mediates the capsaicin-induced apoptosis in HepG2 human hepatoma cells. Kim, J. A., Kang, Y. S., Lee, Y. S., *Archives of Pharmacal Research* 2005 Jan

Chocolate

Growing evidence suggests an important role of chocolate in heart and vascular protection.

Source: The emerging role of flavonoid-rich cocoa and chocolate in cardiovascular health and disease. Engler MB, Engler MM., *Nutr Rev.* 2006 Mar; Review. ; *Effect of cocoa and tea intake on blood pressure: a meta-analysis.* Taubert D, Roesen R, Schömig E., *Arch Intern Med.* 2007

Cinnamon

Cinnamon tested near the top when 26 spice extracts were recently analyzed for their antioxidant capacity. Cinnamon also scored high marks for anti-aging compounds. In addition, a recent literature review established its role in lowering blood glucose levels in patients with diabetes.

Sources: Antioxidant capacity of 26 spice extracts and characterization of their phenolic constituents. Shan, B. et al., *Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry* 2005 Oct; *Cinnamon supplementation in patients with type 2 diabetes mellitus.* Pham AQ, Kourlas H, Pham DQ., *Pharmacotherapy.* 2007 Apr

Cruciferous vegetables (Brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, broccoli)

An overall protective effect was seen for consumption of cruciferous vegetables at least once a week compared with less than monthly, which was much the same for cabbage, broccoli and Brussels sprout consumption. A study of breast cancer survivors found that cruciferous vegetable intake during the first 3 years after the diagnosis was associated with a reduced risk for mortality and disease recurrence (by up to 62% reduction of mortality in those with highest intake).

Sources: Effect of cruciferous vegetables on lung cancer in patients stratified by genetic status: a mendelian randomisation approach. Paul Brennan,

Charles C Hsu, Norman Moullan, Neonilia Szeszenia-Dabrowska, et al. *The Lancet* London. 2005. Vol.366; *Eating cruciferous vegetables may improve breast cancer survival*. Vanderbilt University Medical Center. *ScienceDaily*, 3 Apr. 2012.

Curry

A Singapore study found a positive association between usual curry consumption level and cognitive function in elderly Asians.

Source: Curry consumption and cognitive function in the elderly. Ng TP, Chiam PC, Lee T, Chua HC, Lim L, Kua EH. *Am J Epidemiol*. 2006 Nov

Figs (dried)

Dried figs are high in polyphenols, powerful antioxidants that help keep your heart and blood vessels healthy. In a recent study, researchers gave fasting participants 40 grams of figs raised participants' blood levels of antioxidants for four hours after eating the fruit. Figs contain fiber, B complex vitamins, magnesium, and other nutrients.

Source: Dried fruits: excellent in vitro and in vivo antioxidants. Vinson, J. A., Zubik, L., Bose, P., Samman, N., Proch, J., *Journal of the American College of Nutrition* 2005 Feb

Fish (especially, salmon, herring and sardines)

A 2012 review of 38 studies involving 800,000 individuals in 15 countries found that eating at least two servings of oily fish reduces the risk of stroke. In a large Swedish study of 40 000 men, those who ate fatty fish such as salmon or herring once a week had the lowest rates of heart failure (33% less compared to no consumption). A 2006 meta-analysis of medical literature established that consuming fish 1-2 times/week, especially fatty fish like salmon, herrings and sardines, and avoiding fish with high concentrations of mercury, such as mackerel, swordfish, shark and tuna, reduces risk of coronary death by 36% and from all causes by 17%. In addition, there is strong epidemiologic correlation between fish consumption, levels of omega three fatty acids and protection from depression and suicide.

Sources: BMJ-British Medical Journal (2012, October 30); *Fish consumption, marine omega-3 fatty acids, and incidence of heart failure: a population-based prospective study of middle-aged and elderly men.* Levitan, E. B. et al., *European Heart Journal* 2009 Jun; *Fish intake, contaminants, and human health: evaluating the risks and the benefits.* Mozaffarian, D., Rimm, E. B., *Journal of the American Medical Association* 2006 Oct 18; *Fish consumption*

and self-reported physical and mental health status. Silvers KM, Scott KM. *Public Health Nutr.* 2002 Jun; *The role of omega-3 fatty acids from fish in prevention of cardiovascular diseases.* Reiner E, Tedeschi-Reiner E, Stajminger G., Lijec Vjesn. 2007 Oct-Nov; *n-3 Fatty acids and cardiovascular disease: mechanisms underlying beneficial effects.* Jung UJ, Torrejon C, Tighe AP, Deckelbaum RJ., *Am J Clin Nutr.* 2008 Jun; *Omega-3 fatty acids: role in cardiovascular health and disease.* Engler MM, Engler MB, *J Cardiovasc Nurs.* 2006 Jan-Feb

Fruit and vegetables

A large American study demonstrated a reduced risk of head and neck cancer associated with consumption of fruit and vegetables, in particular, beans and peas, as well as apples, peaches, plums, pears, strawberries, peppers, tomatoes and carrots. A 9 year-long study found that fruit and vegetable juices may play an important role in delaying the onset of Alzheimer's disease, particularly among those who are at high risk for the disease.

Sources: Fruit and vegetable intake and head and neck cancer risk in a large United States prospective cohort study. Freedman, N. D., Park, Y., Subar, A. F., Hollenbeck, A. R., Leitzmann, M. F., Schatzkin, A., Abnet, C. C., *International Journal of Cancer* 2008 May 15; *Fruit and vegetable juices and Alzheimer's disease: the Kame Project.* Dai Q, Borenstein AR, Wu Y, Jackson JC, Larson EB. *The American Journal of Medicine.* 2006 Sep

Garlic

Research shows that garlic inhibits the growth and proliferation of a number of cancer cell lines. It also protects the heart by lowering of cholesterol and blood by offering protection against atherosclerosis and associated disorders.

Sources: Anticarcinogenic properties of garlic: a review. F. Khanum, K. R. Anilakumar, and K. R. Viswanathan. *Crit. Rev. Food Sci. Nutr.* 2004; *Garlic: nature's protection against physiological threats.* Butt MS, Sultan MT, Butt MS, Iqbal J. *Crit Rev Food Sci Nutr.* 2009 Jun; *Allium vegetables and stomach cancer risk in China.* Setiawan VW, Yu GP, Lu QY, Lu ML, Yu SZ, Mu L, Zhang JG, Kurtz RC, Cai L, Hsieh CC, Zhang ZF, *Asian Pac J Cancer Prev.* 2005 Jul-Sep

Ginger

It is well established that ginger has antioxidant, antiapoptotic, and anti-inflammatory effects. Gingerol has been shown to have anticancer and chemopreventive properties, improve osteoarthritis and curb nausea and vomiting during pregnancy, without significant side effects.

Sources: Cancer preventive properties of ginger: a brief review. Y. Shukla, and M. Singh. Food Chem. Toxicol. 2007; *Effects of a ginger extract on knee pain in patients with osteoarthritis.* Altman, R. D., Marcussen K. C., *Arthritis and Rheumatism* 2001 Nov; *Effectiveness and safety of ginger in the treatment of pregnancy-induced nausea and vomiting.* Borrelli F, Capasso R, Aviello G, Pittler MH, Izzo AA. *Obstet Gynecol.* 2005 Apr

Leafy greens

In people with a history of squamous cell carcinoma, the second most common form of skin cancer, a diet high in leafy greens was associated with a reduced risk (a possible 50 percent) of another round of the disease.

Source: Dietary pattern in association with squamous cell carcinoma of the skin: a prospective study. Ibiebele, T. I. et al., *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* 2007 May

Lemon

Research shows that a squeeze of lemon in your tea can help preserve 70% of its healthy catechins in your digestive tract (up to 80% can normally be destroyed by digestive enzymes).

Source: Common tea formulations modulate in vitro digestive recovery of green tea catechins. Green, R. J. et al., *Molecular Nutrition & Food Research* 2007 Sep

Milk and dairy

Researchers found that adults who had at least one serving of lowfat milk or milk products each day had 37 percent lower odds of poor kidney function linked to heart disease compared to those who drank little or no lowfat milk.

Source: Associations between microalbuminuria and animal foods, plant foods, and dietary patterns in the Multiethnic Study of Atherosclerosis. Nettleton JA, Steffen LM, Palmas W, Burke GL, Jacobs DR Jr. *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition.* 2008

Mushrooms

Mushrooms protect arteries from plaque buildup, and button mushrooms may help defend against tumors and virus-infected cells.

Sources: The novel antioxidant ergothioneine found in dietary mushrooms inhibits monocyte binding to human aortic endothelial cells. Martin, K. R., *FASEB Journal.* 2008; *Dietary supplementation with white button mushroom enhances natural killer cell activity in C57BL/6 mice.* Wu D, Pae M, Ren Z,

Guo Z, Smith D, Meydani SN. Journal of Nutrition 2007 Jun

Nuts and peanut butter

In a study, the people who ate an ounce of nuts or a couple of tablespoons of peanut butter five times per week had a much lower risk of type 2 diabetes compared to the people who rarely ate nuts or peanut butter.

Source: Nut and peanut butter consumption and risk of type 2 diabetes in women. Jiang, R., Manson, J. E., Stampfer, M. J., Liu, S., Willett, W. C., Hu, F. B., *The Journal of the American Medical Association* 2002 Nov

Olive oil

Recent studies demonstrate that phenols from virgin olive oil are capable of inhibiting several stages in colon carcinogenesis in vitro. Polyphenols in olive oil may inhibit the bacterium (*Helicobacter pylori*) that causes most stomach ulcers. Virgin olive oil also appears to reduce blood clotting in people with high cholesterol. A study reported a significantly lower risk for fatal ischemic heart disease among participants in the Nurses' Health Study who consumed oil-and-vinegar salad dressings frequently (5-6 times or more per week) compared with those who rarely consumed them.

Sources: Potential anti-cancer effects of virgin olive oil phenols on colorectal carcinogenesis models in vitro. Gill, C. I., Boyd, A., McDermott, E., McCann, M., Servili, M., Selvaggini, R., Taticchi, A., Esposto, S., Montedoro, G., McGlynn, H., Rowland, I., *International Journal of Cancer* 2005 Oct 20; *Inhibitory effects of olive oil phenolics on invasion in human colon adenocarcinoma cells in vitro.* Hashim YZ, Rowland IR, McGlynn H, Servili M, Selvaggini R, Taticchi A, Esposto S, Montedoro G, Kaisalo L, Wähälä K, Gill CI., *Int J Cancer*. 2008 Feb 1; *In vitro activity of olive oil polyphenols against Helicobacter pylori.* Romero, C. et al., *Journal of Agriculture and Food Chemistry* 2007 Feb 7; *Intake of phenol-rich virgin olive oil improves the postprandial prothrombotic profile in hypercholesterolemic patients.* Ruano, J. et al., *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* 2007 Aug; *Dietary intake of alpha-linolenic acid and risk of fatal ischemic heart disease among women.* Hu FB, Stampfer MJ, Manson JE, et al. *Am J Clin Nutr*. 1999

Onions

Many studies have shown that eating onions and other allium vegetables may protect against different cancers such as endometrial, benign prostatic hyperplasia, oral cavity and pharynx, esophageal, colorectal, laryngeal, breast, ovarian, prostate and renal cell.

Sources: Allium vegetable intake and risk of acute myocardial infarction in Italy. Galeone C, Tavani A, Pelucchi C, Negri E, La Vecchia C., *Eur J Nutr.* 2009 Mar; *Allium vegetables intake and endometrial cancer risk.* Galeone C, Pelucchi C, Dal Maso L, Negri E, Montella M, Zucchetto A, Talamini R, La Vecchia C., *Onion and garlic intake and the odds of benign prostatic hyperplasia.* Galeone C, Pelucchi C, Talamini R, Negri E, Dal Maso L, Montella M, Ramazzotti V, Franceschi S, La Vecchia C. *Am J Clin Nutr.* 2006 Nov; *Onion and garlic use and human cancer.* Galeone C, Pelucchi C, Levi F, Negri E, Franceschi S, Talamini R, Giacosa A, La Vecchia C. *Am J Clin Nutr.* 2006 Nov

Oranges and citrus fruit

Orange juice and other sources of citrus are high in limonoids, phytochemicals that studies suggest inhibit the growth of certain types of cancer cells.

Sources: Bioavailability of citrus limonoids in humans. Manners, G. D., Jacob, R. A., Breksa 3rd, A. P., Schoch, T. K., Hasegawa, S., *Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry* 2003 Jul; Citrus limonoids induce apoptosis in human neuroblastoma cells and have radical scavenging activity. Poulouse, S. M., Harris, E. D., Patil, B. S., *The Journal of Nutrition* 2005 Apr

Pomegranate

Both pomegranate extracts and genistein inhibit the growth of MCF-7 breast cancer cells through induction of apoptosis, with combination treatment being more efficacious than single treatments. A recent review of over 90 pomegranate-related studies suggests that pomegranates can be used in the treatment and prevention of cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, dental conditions, erectile dysfunction, bacterial infections and antibiotic resistance, and ultraviolet radiation-induced skin damage.

Sources: Anticancer activities of pomegranate extracts and genistein in human breast cancer cells. Jeune, M. A. et al., *Journal of Medicinal Food* 2005 Winter; *Therapeutic applications of pomegranate (Punica granatum L.): a review.* Jurenka, J. S., *Alternative Medicine Review* 2008 Jun

Red meat

Early research suggests there may be a link between diets high in red meat (be it fresh or processed) and [age-related macular degeneration \(AMD\)](#), the most common cause of blindness in older adults. People in a study who got about a serving and a half of red meat daily were almost 50 percent more likely to develop early AMD than those who cut back to less than five servings a week.

Moreover, a dietary pattern characterized by high meat and fat intakes increases skin cancer risk, particularly in persons with a skin cancer history. Finally, researchers found that men who ate more than 2.5 servings of red meat cooked at high temperatures were 40 percent more likely to have advanced prostate cancer.

Source: Red meat and chicken consumption and its association with age-related macular degeneration. Chong, E. W. et al., American Journal of Epidemiology 2009 Apr; Dietary pattern in association with squamous cell carcinoma of the skin: a prospective study. Ibiebele, T. I. et al., American Journal of Clinical Nutrition 2007 May; Red meat and poultry, cooking practices, genetic susceptibility and risk of prostate cancer: results from the California Collaborative Prostate Cancer Study. Joshi AD, Corral R, Catsburg C, Lewinger JP, Koo J, John EM, Ingles S, Stern MC. Carcinogenesis, Jul 20, 2012

Soy foods

A study shows that eating soy foods is associated with a reduced risk of [chronic obstructive pulmonary disease](#) (COPD, including ailments such as chronic bronchitis) and breathlessness.

Source: Soy consumption and risk of COPD and respiratory symptoms: a case-control study in Japan. Hirayama, F. et al., Respiratory Research 2009 Jun

Tomatoes

Eating tomatoes and tomato-based foods lowers the risk of stroke, concluded a large Finnish study that had followed men aged 46 to 65 during 12 years. Another study found that it reduced hypertension.

Source: Serum lycopene decreases the risk of stroke in men: A population-based follow-up study. J. Karppi, J. A. Laukkanen, J. Sivenius, K. Ronkainen, S. Kurl. Neurology, 2012; Gazpacho consumption is associated with lower blood pressure and reduced hypertension in a high cardiovascular risk cohort. Cross-sectional study of the PREDIMED trial. A. Medina-Remón, A. Vallverdú-Queralt, S. Arranz, E. Ros, M.A. Martínez-González, E. Sacanella, M.I. Covas, D. Corella, J. Salas-Salvadó, E. Gómez-Gracia, V. Ruiz-Gutiérrez, J. Lapetra, M. García-Valdúez, F. Arós, G.T. Saez, L. Serra-Majem, X. Pinto, E. Vinyoles, R. Estruch, R.M. Lamuela-Raventós. Nutrition, Metabolism and Cardiovascular Diseases, 2012

Turmeric

A 2002 study showed that curcumin, the yellow pigment in turmeric, reduces tumor growth in humans and is therefore a potent anticancer agent. Another recent study supports the hypothesis that curcumin can reduce inflammation resulting from exercise-induced muscle damage. A very recent review of 3000 published studies showed that curcumin is a potent anti-inflammatory and chemopreventive agent. As regards the relationship between curcumin and body weight, mice on a high-fat diet with the spice had less weight and fat gain than mice eating the same amount but without curcumin.

Sources: Curcumin inhibits interleukin 8 production and enhances interleukin 8 receptor expression on the cell surface: impact on human pancreatic carcinoma cell growth by autocrine regulation. Hidaka H, Ishiko T, Furuhashi T, Kamohara H, Suzuki S, Miyazaki M, Ikeda O, Mita S, Setoguchi T, Ogawa M. *Cancer*. 2002 Sep; *Curcumin effects on inflammation and performance recovery following eccentric exercise-induced muscle damage.* Davis JM, Murphy EA, Carmichael MD, Zielinski MR, Groschwitz CM, Brown AS, Gangemi JD, Ghaffar A, Mayer EP. *American Journal of Physiology* 2007 Jun; P. Anand, C. *Curcumin and cancer: An “old-age” disease with an “age-old” solution.* Sundaram, S. Jhurani, A. B. Kunnumakkara, and B. B. Aggarwal. *Cancer Lett.* 2008; *Curcumin inhibits adipogenesis in 3T3-L1 adipocytes and angiogenesis and obesity in C57/BL mice.* Ejaz, A. et al., *Journal of Nutrition* 2009 May

Vinegar

Japanese studies have demonstrated that vinegar was a strong anticancer agent in mice, but also in humans. Vinegar also reduces the GI of the accompanying foods (such as, for instance, high GI bread and potatoes) and increases the feeling of satiety that results in people eating less. In a placebo-controlled trial, healthy adult women consumed fewer total calories on days that vinegar was ingested at the morning meal. Several studies have demonstrated that vinegar in salad dressings or added to rice decreased the Glycemic Index of the meals by 20 to 35%. A very recent double-blind study found that a daily intake of as little as 15 ml of vinegar over 12 weeks reduced body fat mass and waist circumference, making it useful in the prevention of metabolic syndrome by reducing obesity.

Sources: Extract of vinegar “Kurosu” from unpolished rice inhibits the proliferation of human cancer cells. Nanda K, Miyoshi N, Nakamura Y, et al.. *J Exp Clin Cancer Res.* 2004; *Antitumor activity of rice-shochu post-distillation slurry and vinegar produced from the post-distillation slurry via oral administration in a mouse model.* Seki T, Morimura S, Shigematsu T,

Maeda H, Kida K.. Biofactors. 2004; *Vinegar and peanut products as complementary foods to reduce postprandial glycemia*. Johnston CS, Buller AJ. J Am Diet Assoc. 2005; *Effect of neutralized and native vinegar on blood glucose and acetate responses to a mixed meal in healthy subjects*. Brighenti F, Castellani G, Benini L, et al.. Eur J Clin Nutr. 1995; *Vinegar dressing and cold storage of potatoes lowers postprandial glycaemic and insulinaemic responses in healthy subjects*. Leeman M, Ostman E, Bjorck I.. Eur J Clin Nutr. 2005; *Glycemic index of single and mixed meal foods among common Japanese foods with white rice as a reference food*. Sugiyama M, Tang AC, Wakaki Y, Koyama W. Eur J Clin Nutr. 2003; *Vinegar intake reduces body weight, body fat mass, and serum triglyceride levels in obese Japanese subjects*. Kondo, T. et al., Bioscience, Biotechnology, and Biochemistry 2009 Aug

Watercress

Consumption of watercress has been linked to a reduced risk of cancer via decreased damage to DNA. Researchers also found that eating a little watercress 2 hours before a workout can prevent some of the DNA damage caused by high intensity exercise and help maximise the benefits of a workout.

Sources: *Watercress supplementation in diet reduces lymphocyte DNA damage and alters blood antioxidant status in healthy adults*. Gill CI, Haldar S, Boyd LA, Bennett R, Whiteford J, Butler M, Pearson JR, Bradbury I, Rowland IR., Am J Clin Nutr. 2007 Feb; *Acute and chronic watercress supplementation attenuates exercise-induced peripheral mononuclear cell DNA damage and lipid peroxidation*. Mark C. Fogarty, Ciara M. Hughes, George Burke, John C. Brown, Gareth W. Davison. *British Journal of Nutrition*, 2012

Yogurt

In a large Swedish study, people who ate two or more yogurt servings daily had almost a 40 percent lower risk of bladder cancer. Another study found that eating yogurt improves gum health. Yogurt was also identified as a safe and cost-effective means of preventing bacterial infections.

Source: *Cultured milk, yogurt, and dairy intake in relation to bladder cancer risk in a prospective study of Swedish women and men*. Larsson, S. C. et al., *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* 2008 Oct; *Intake of dairy products and periodontal disease: the Hisayama Study*. Shimazaki, Y., Shirota, T., Uchida, K., Yonemoto, K., Kiyohara, Y., Iida, M., Saito, T., Yamashita, Y.,

Journal of Periodontology 2008 Jan; *Probiotics and their fermented food products are beneficial for health*. Parvez S, Malik KA, Ah Kang S, Kim HY., *J Appl Microbiol*. 2006 Jun.

Zest of citrus fruit

The zest of lemon, orange, and grapefruit peels is high in d-limonene, a compound in citrus oil that may significantly reduce the risk of skin cancer by blocking tumor growth.

Source: Citrus peel use is associated with reduced risk of squamous cell carcinoma of the skin. Hakim, I. A., *Nutr Cancer*. 2000

CLOSING THOUGHTS

I hope that you enjoyed this book and found it useful. I also hope that you will benefit from the *smart cooking* technique as much as my friends, my family and I have. If thanks to this book, many busy people generate free time to make their weeknights more relaxing – and end up eating healthier in the process – my ambition will be fulfilled, and I, extremely pleased.

Here's a quick recap for the road:

1. Take a few seconds before starting to cook and visualize the steps required for your meal to allow your brain to plan.
2. Reduce the cooking time by chopping or slicing finely and removing from heat early.
3. Minimize the inactive time during your cooking by multitasking, i.e., filling the handsfree time with activity.

ONE LAST THING...

Thank you for purchasing this book and reading it! I would be very grateful if you could take a few minutes to post a short review on Amazon:

<http://amzn.to/12t2KFU>.

Your comments and feedback will be highly valued!

If you enjoyed “Smart Cooking for Busy People”, you may also enjoy “Easy Vegetarian Cooking” available from www.amazon.com/author/alexandrabeck.

Do let me know how you get on by joining me on these social networks:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/SmartCookingBook>

Twitter: https://twitter.com/aalex_beck

Pinterest : <http://pinterest.com/alexandraabeck>

If you'd like to get cooking tips, recipes and nutrition news handpicked by the author of this book **directly in your Inbox**, sign up here:

<http://bit.ly/12Xr9Tc>.

All the warmest,

Alexandra

ENDNOTES

1. In its February 2013 issue, the influential French consumer association *L'Union fédérale des consommateurs* published in its journal *Que Choisir* the results of a price analysis and a lab test of 18 popular supermarket ready meals. The conclusion was that these meals cost on average 2,5 more than their home-made equivalents, but not due to their great quality. They contained too many carbs, fats and preservatives, and too few vegetables.
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5. Researchers found that after eating the junk food meal, the arteries of non-smoking men dilated 24% less than they did when in the fasting state. In contrast, the arteries were found to dilate normally and maintain good blood flow after the Mediterranean-type meal. J. Cantin, S. Lacroix, J. Tardif, A. Nigam. 390 *Does the Adherence to a Mediterranean Diet Influence Baseline and Postprandial Endothelial Function?* Canadian Journal of Cardiology, 2012
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17. See this article on glycemic impact published in the journal of the American Diabetes Association at: <http://clinical.diabetesjournals.org/content/29/4/155.full>