



video edition

THE 5-PILLAR MAP FOR QUICK & HEALTHY DINNERS

julesclancy

For my beautiful Mum,
who made getting dinner ready for 5 children look effortless.
I miss you xx

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HOW THE 5-PILLAR map can HELP YOU!

Do you work long hours and often get home late? And after a busy day, do you often find that you're too tired and hungry and the last thing you feel like doing is cooking a whole meal?

Are you often too busy to grocery shop and often end up with no fresh ingredients in the house? Do you sometimes find yourself with absolutely no idea what to make? Do struggle to come up with recipes and menu ideas to keep things interesting and not boring?

If you answered YES to any of these questions then you're in the right place!

The thing is, I know what it's like.

In my last job, I had an hour commute each way and that was on a good day. When I got home it would be late and I'd be starving. And even though I love to cook, I'd often find myself just settling for the quickest thing, like cheese and crackers.

Not exactly healthy.

It was about that time that I discovered the wonderful blog Zen Habits and the concept of minimalism. As I started to simplify my life, it was only natural that I began to apply the same process to my shopping and cooking.

I started writing a series of recipes for my blog, Stonesoup focusing on using only 5 ingredients and mostly taking about 10 minutes to make.

At first I thought it was going to be a big challenge. But I soon learned that by keeping things as simple as possible, I could still create delicious, healthy meals but they would only take a fraction of the time and effort of more traditional recipes.

HOW THE
5-PILLAR
map
can HELP
YOU!
[continued]

So how can the 5-pillar map help you?

The 5-pillar map will give you a clear, step-by-step guide to getting **delicious, healthy dinners** on the table in **15 minutes** or less.

You'll also discover (or re-discover) how to:

- + Save at least \$20 per week by avoiding takeaway or pre-prepared processed food.
- + Eat more home cooked meals with heaps of veggies. Which in turn will help you feel and look healthier and have more energy and focus.
- + Be inspired to make really tasty healthy meals in minimal time and with minimal effort.
- + Nurture your relationships by allowing you to sit down and share a relaxed meal and connect with each others worlds.

Sound good?

Before we get started, I just wanted to remind you that insight without action is just as useless as no insight at all. For you to make a difference to your dinner situation, you have to take action.

I know you can do it! I'm here to help, every step of the way.

Also remember that everyone has a different situation. So it's up to you to try things. If you get the results you're after, that's great. But it's more than likely you'll need to tweak a few things before you find the perfect solution for you.

To your healthy dinners!

With love,

Jules x

YOUR 2-STEP
HEALTHY DINNER
QUICK START GUIDE

THE 2-STEP HEALTHY DINNER QUICK-START GUIDE

You're probably thinking, isn't this book meant to be about the 5 pillar map? And you're right it is.

While each of the 5 pillars is super important and will really help you change your dinner habits to a more sustainable healthy way, you don't necessarily need to implement all 5 pillars at the same time.

So I wanted to give you an even easier process that you can implement straight away...

STEP 1. Stock up

Here's the thing. You need actual food in the house to be able to make any sort of dinner. We'll be delving deep into a step-by-step guide to setting up and actually using your life-saving pantry / fridge / freezer in Pillar 1.

But if you're keen to get going fast, just check out the list of pantry [recipes OVER HERE](#). Choose 2-3 and shop for those ingredients.

STEP 2. Make a promise with yourself and get cooking!

Make a promise to yourself that you're going to change your habits and take action. Next time you get home from work late and you don't feel like cooking, turn the thought around and just cook one of your pantry recipes anyway.

It's important to make things as easy as possible to change your habits. We'll be covering how to set yourself up for habit change success in the 'Solve Your Dinner Dilemma' class which starts at the Stonesoup Virtual Cookery School soon. But there's no need to wait to get started.

interactive RECIPE INDEX

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PILLAR 1.
YOUR PANTRY

5 REASONS YOUR PANTRY CAN SAVE YOUR LIFE

The Black-eye Peas may have sung about a DJ saving their life. But I'm pretty sure said DJ couldn't have possibly got food on the table and saved them from starvation as often as my pantry has rescued me.

I grew up in the country and the closest supermarket was a 40 minute drive away. So the concept of a well stocked pantry is something that comes naturally to me.

For me, just the knowledge that I am prepared saves a heap of stress AND it means I can usually find something to make, even on nights when I just don't have the energy to cook.

But in case you're not convinced, here are even more reasons why your pantry can save your life, or at least make things a bit easier...

1. Help you quickly make delicious dinners even on those days when you just don't have the energy to cook.

You know those days when you get home from work much later than you'd like and the last thing you feel like is cooking dinner? Here's another time your pantry can make all the difference.

Imagine knowing you have the ingredients to make a quick soup or a warm salad. Imagine knowing that it's really only going to take you 5-10 minutes to get it all done. Wouldn't that make it much easier for you to take action?

2. You'll always be ready to whip up a meal at short notice.

This is the biggest plus. And as you'll see from the following recipes, your pantry isn't just for bland staples. It's possible to pull together some really delicious, nutritious meals. If you decide to join us for the Solve Your Dinner Dilemma class, you'll get even more quick, healthy pantry recipes.

5 REASONS YOUR PANTRY CAN SAVE YOUR LIFE [CONTINUED]

3. No more struggling with missing ingredients.

With a well organised pantry, built around a set of quick and easy recipes, instead of random staples, you'll be far less likely to be trying to cook recipes that call for ingredients you just don't have.

4. Less trips to the grocery store.

Each trip to the shops takes up valuable time. By batching your shopping and doing larger, less frequent shops you'll be saving yourself loads of time and shopping stress.

5. Source of ideas and inspiration.

One of my favourite ways to decide what to cook for dinner is to have a look at the ingredients I actually have and let this be my guide. If you're someone who isn't confident in being able to 'make things up on the fly', don't worry. If you join us for Solve Your Dinner Dilemma I'll teach you some basic 'template' recipes to get you started on this path.

Even if you don't join us, just stocking your pantry with the ingredients for your favourite pantry recipes from this ebook will set you up with at least 6 ideas for quick and healthy dinners.


a video TOUR OF MY PANTRY

In the next few pages, I'll give you 6 healthy pantry based recipes to get you started. But before we delve into specific recipes, here's a quick video I made for last years Solve Your Dinner Dilemma students.



pea & pesto soup





pea & pesto soup

Frozen peas are seriously one of the best pantry (or freezer) ingredients. I love that they don't require any prep and can actually taste better than fresh peas.

This is a great 'pantry' recipe to have up your sleeve. It's perfect for nights when you need dinner to be on the table in 10 minutes or less.

PEA & PESTO SOUP

serves 2

500g (1lb) frozen peas
2-4 tablespoons pesto

1. Bring 2 1/2 cups water to the boil in a medium pot.
2. Add peas and cook for 5 minutes, or until the peas are hot and tender.
3. Puree with a stick blender. Stir in a little pesto, taste and add more if desired. Season.

video

PEA & PESTO SOUP...

do ahead potential?

Brilliant. Will keep for a week in the fridge.

variations for fun

vegan / dairy-free – either replace the pesto with a large handful of torn basil leaves or use a vegan pesto like this Sicilian nut pesto.

no pesto? – the peas on their own make a really lovely pure soup. Or add in a few handfuls of grated parmesan.

pesto-lovers – if you are using good quality home made pesto, you might like to serve with a big dollop of pesto on top.

richer – add in a few tablespoon of butter when pureeing the soup.

problem solving guide

too watery – This isn't a super thick soup. Feel free to decrease the amount of water to 2 cups and serve in smaller bowls. If the deed is already done, try stirring in some more almond meal or some grated parmesan or even a handful of couscous.

too bland – Season more generously with salt & lemon. A little parmesan can help too.

serving suggestions

Wonderful on it's own. Or with crusty bread & butter.



chickpea & vegetable salad



chickpea & vegetable salad

Anyone who has been following my blog for a while will know that chickpeas are one of my alltime favourite ingredients. So I couldn't have a class on pantry recipes without a chickpea dish.

Grilled marinated veg are great to have on hand in case you need a quick antipasto or something more substantial like this vegetable salad. I've served it warm here but it would be equally as good at room temperature.

CHICKPEA & VEG SALAD

serves 2

- 1 jar grilled red peppers (280g / 10oz), drained
- 1 jar grilled eggplant (280g / 10oz), drained
- 1 can chickpeas (400g / 14oz), drained
- 1 tablespoon sherry or red wine vinegar
- handful almonds, optional

1. Place a medium frying pan or skillet over a medium heat. Add drained peppers, eggplant (aubergine) and chickpeas. Stir fry for a few minutes or until the veg are warm and the chickpeas have browned slightly.
2. Meanwhile, combine vinegar with 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil. Wait and season later as there is probably enough salt in the veg and chickpeas already.
3. Toss warm veg in with the salad. Taste and season. Serve with almonds scattered over the top.



CHICKPEA & VEG SALAD...

prepare ahead?

You could easily prepare this a few days in advance and keep in the fridge. Bring it up to room temp or reheat in a pan before serving. I'd leave the almonds to add at the last minute because they can go a little soggy in the dressing.

leftover potential

Will keep in the fridge for a week or so.

variations for fun

carnivore - fry some sliced chorizo or other sausage in the pan and add to the salad. Or serve with some finely sliced salami or prosciutto scattered over.

more protein - shed the meat from half a BBQ chicken and toss in at the end. Or serve with a couple of halved boiled eggs.

greens - to freshen things up, toss in a handful of chopped flat leaf parsley or torn mint leaves or a handful of washed baby spinach leaves.

cheesy - serve with soft goats cheese or feta crumbled over.

nut-free - skip the almonds completely or substitute in some cheese or protein as per the suggestions above.

problem solving guide

too salty - be careful with the seasoning as preserved veg tend to be quite salty.

too dry - toss in a little extra olive oil and vinegar.

too oily - next time drain your veg on paper towel before using. For now just transfer the salad to a clean bowl, leaving as much oil behind as you can. Toss in the clean bowl to disperse more of the oil onto the sides of the bowl.

no veg? - feel free to char grill some red pepper and sliced eggplant (aubergine) yourself if you can't find good prepackaged ones. Or use whatever veg you have on hand, some slice and softened onions would be lovely as would a drained jar of artichoke hearts or sun dried tomatoes. Olives would also work - pretty much all the antipasto veg are great.

serving suggestions

With the chickpeas and almonds it's a great vegetarian meal on its own.

Also lovely as a side salad with grilled or roast meat or poultry. Would also be great with kebabs or falafels



tuna & lentil salad



tuna & lentil salad

For years tuna and white bean or butter bean salad has been on high rotation in our house as a quick lunch or dinner.

So I was tempted to include that salad in our pantry recipes, but then I had the bright idea to try it with canned lentils and capers instead. Don't tell the butter beans but I think I've found my new favourite tuna salad.

Tuna & Lentil SALAD

serves 2

- 1 tablespoon sherry or white wine vinegar
- 1 can lentils (400g / 14oz), drained & rinsed
- 2 tablespoons capers
- 2 cans tuna in oil (125g / 5oz each)

1. If your tuna is in good quality olive oil, place 2 tablespoons of the oil in a large salad bowl. Drain and discard the rest of the oil or keep it for another use.
2. Toss vinegar in with the oil. Add drained lentils and toss to combine.
3. If the capers are salted, place them in a little bowl of water then remove and squeeze dry. Toss in with the salad.
4. Flake tuna into the salad and toss lightly. Taste and season.

video

Tuna & Lentil Salad...

prepare ahead?

You could easily prepare this a few days in advance and keep in the fridge. Bring it up to room temp or reheat in a pan before serving. I'd leave the almonds to add at the last minute because they can go a little soggy in the dressing.

leftover potential

Will keep in the fridge for a week or so.

variations for fun

carnivore - crumble and pan fry a few good quality pork sausages and use them to replace the tuna. Or use drained canned chicken.

vegetarian - replace tuna with a couple of halved boiled eggs and/or soft goats cheese or feta crumbled over.

vegan - replace tuna with a large handful of brazil nuts or walnuts or an avocado cut into chunks.

fresh - to freshen things up, toss in a handful of chopped flat leaf parsley or torn mint leaves or a handful of washed baby spinach leaves.

tomato - toss in a large handful of halved cherry tomatoes and maybe a little fresh basil if you have it.

fancy - I generally use regular tuna in oil which is really great but to take it up a level, seek out some good quality tuna slices in oil. Seared tuna steaks would also be a great alternative.

problem solving guide

too salty - be careful with the seasoning as the capers and tuna tend to be quite salty.

too dry - toss in a little more extra olive oil and vinegar or serve with a generous dollop of good quality mayonnaise.


no canned lentils? - replace with canned chickpeas, butter beans or other white beans. Or cook some dried lentils and use those.

need some greens? - toss in a small handful of spinach, salad leaves or flat leaf parsley leaves.


no capers? replace with some finely chopped red onion or chives or even some roasted pine nuts.

serving suggestions

Brilliant on its own or toss in some leaves for a more salad-y vibe.

A top-down photograph of a white ceramic plate filled with spaghetti. The spaghetti is coated in a light-colored sauce and garnished with small red chili flakes and black pepper. A simple wooden fork with three tines is placed to the right of the spaghetti. The plate sits on a dark, rustic wooden table. In the upper right corner, a piece of light-colored, textured fabric is partially visible. The overall aesthetic is clean and rustic.

spaghetti with chili



spaghetti with *chilli*

I remember the first time I came across this super simple pasta dish in an Italian restaurant. I was so intrigued that I just had to order it to find out how you could actually have a pasta dish with so little sauce. Safe to say I've been hooked ever since. As long as you have pasta in the pantry, you have the makings for a delicious comforting meal.

SPAGHETTI WITH CHILLI & GARLIC

serves 1

100g (3.5oz) spaghetti or other pasta
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
1/2 - 1 teaspoon dried chilli flakes
1 clove garlic, finely sliced

1. Bring a pot of salted water to the boil. Add pasta and set the timer for 1 minute less than the duration recommended on the packet.
2. Stir pasta every few minutes, but meanwhile make your sauce.
3. Gently heat oil in a small saucepan. Add chilli and garlic and fry for a minute or until garlic is starting to go a little brown. Remove from the heat.
4. When the pasta timer rings. Taste pasta and give it a little longer if it is still too crunchy. When the pasta is al dente, scoop out a cup of cooking liquid and drain.
5. Return pasta to the hot pan and toss in the oil. Taste and season and add a little cooking water if it looks too dry.

video

SPAGHETTI WITH CHILLI...

prepare ahead?

I like this best freshly made, but you could make up a batch of chilli and garlic oil and keep it on hand. It's really lovely in all sorts of things.

leftover potential

Will keep in the fridge for a week or so. Doesn't reheat that well. Either microwave or pan fry in a little more oil.

variations for fun

carnivore - fry some pancetta or bacon in the oil. Or serve with some finely sliced jamon or prosciutto.

lemon & garlic - skip the chilli and proceed as per the recipe, add in the zest of half a lemon at the end and serve with a squeeze of lemon.

rosemary - ditch either the chilli, garlic or both and replace with the leaves from a sprig of rosemary.

greens - to make it into more of a complete meal, toss in a large handful of washed salad green or rocket (arugula) leaves and finish with a squeeze of lemon.

cheesy - serve with freshly grated parmesan if you like, but to be honest I like it better with the simplicity of just the chilli and garlic.

gluten-free / slow carb -because this dish is really relying on the quality of the pasta, don't be tempted to try it with GF pasta. Instead, drain a can of chickpeas or white beans and gently fry in the oil with the garlic and chilli.

problem solving guide

bland - make sure you're generous with the salt and pepper.

too dry - toss in a little reserved pasta cooking water or if you've forgotten to fish some out before draining the pasta, just a little more of your best quality extra virgin olive oil instead.

pasta gluey or falling apart - this is either overcooking or poor quality drained pasta. Next time reduce the cooking time or use a different brand of pasta.

pasta chalky - if the pasta isn't cooked enough, you get a white chalky centre in the middle of each strand. A little of this is good and is what the Italians call 'al dente' or to the tooth. Too much makes for unpleasant eating so next time cook a little longer.

bitter flavours - both the chilli and garlic will go bitter if they are overcooked and burnt so be careful not to get the oil too hot or to cook them too long.

serving suggestions

Makes a very comforting simple supper when the cupboard is bare.

For a more complete meal serve with a green salad or some steamed broccoli dressed with lemon juice.



KEEN'S
CURRY

quick veg curry

quick veg curry

While I just adore Indian food and restaurants, sometimes its much nicer to make your own curry so you know exactly what has gone into it.

Choose your favourite curry powder here and be prepared to play around with the level. Likewise with the chilli. The veg are also something to adjust according to what you have on hand although I love the simplicity of this pantry version.

QUICK VEG CURRY

serves 2

1 jar tomato pasta sauce (400g / 14oz)
1 can white beans (440g / 15oz), drained
1 jar roasted red peppers (280g / 10oz), drained
1/2 - 1 teaspoons chilli flakes
4 teaspoons curry powder

1. Place tomato sauce (marinara sauec), beans, peppers, chilli and curry powder and bring to a simmer.
2. Cook gently for 2 -3 minutes or until the curry is hot.
3. Taste and season, adding more curry powder and chilli if you think it needs it. Serve with a generous drizzle of extra virgin olive oil.

video

QUICK VEG CURRY...

prepare ahead?

You could easily prepare this a few days in advance and keep in the fridge. Currys tend to improve when left to their own devices.

leftover potential

Will keep in the fridge for a week or so.

variations for fun

carnivore - brown some diced chicken, beef or pork in a pan then add the curry ingredients as per the recipe.

no chilli flakes? - Use fresh chilli or chilli powder.

different veg - feel free to add in any veg you have on hand. Wilting some spinach or card through will add a different dimension,

no curry powder? - Replace with another spice blend such as garam marsala or just use an equal mixture of ground cumin and ground coriander.

no tomato sauce - replace with canned tomatoes.

problem solving guide

too hot - if you've overdone it on the chilli, add in a generous slug of olive oil to take the edge off or serve the curry with some chopped cucumber or natural yoghurt.

too thick - add in more water and bring back to a simmer.

too watery - simmer for a little longer to help it reduce down.

too bland? add in more curry powder for now and next time, remember to try a different brand of curry powder. Spices also lose their flavour with age, so make sure your curry powder is fresh.


serving suggestions

You could serve it in bowls like a stew like I have in the picture but it will be pretty full-on.

Steamed rice is a great accompaniment if you happen to have some on hand. For slow-carbers, try grating some cauliflower in a food processor and using that as a raw alternative to rice. It actually tastes really lovely.

red lentils *with* spinach





red lentils *with* spinach

This is a great thing to make when you've been over-indulging and are in need of something hearty but, with a healthy feel to it. Or if you're in the mood to dabble in a little veganism.

The almonds add a lovely crunch but, if you're serving people with allergies it's equally delicious without.

RED LENTILS WITH SPINACH

serves 2

- 2 cloves garlic, peeled & finely sliced
- 150g (5oz) red lentils
- 3 tablespoons tomato paste
- 1 box frozen spinach (approx 250g / 9oz) OR 1 bag baby spinach leaves
- 1 handful almonds, optional

1. Heat 2 tablespoons olive oil in a large frying pan or skillet.
2. Cook garlic over a high heat for about 30 seconds, or until starting to brown.
3. Add lentils, frozen spinach (if using) tomato paste and 1 1/2 cups water. Simmer for about 8 minutes or until lentils are just cooked, but still al dente.
4. Add almonds and if using baby spinach add it now. Stir until the spinach is just wilted.
5. Taste and season.

video

RED LENTILS WITH SPINACH...

prepare ahead?

You could easily prepare this a few days in advance and keep in the fridge.

leftover potential

Will keep in the fridge for a week or so.

variations for fun

nut free – either remove the nuts OR replace with a handful of toasted bread crumbs just sprinkled over at the end.

carnivores – After you've browned the garlic, add about 250g (1/2lb) minced (ground) beef or pork. Stir until browned then proceed with step 3. You can still use the nuts if you like but it probably won't need it.

different lentils - feel free to use green or brown lentils instead of red. They'll just take a little longer to cook. Canned lentils will also work here but you won't need the water or a very long simmering time.

no spinach? - replace with fresh or frozen peas or broccoli. Adjust the cooking time accordingly.

spiced lentils - add in 2 teaspoons ground cumin or chilli with the lentils.

problem solving guide

lentils too crunchy – It can be a challenge to get the lentils cooked so quickly, especially if you're using frozen spinach. Just allow them to cook a little longer, a few minutes should do the trick. If they are looking too dry, add a little more water (1/2 cup at a time).

lentils stuck to the bottom of the pan – Either you haven't stirred enough, or you didn't have enough water or both. Add 1/2cup water at a time and stir vigorously, adding more water if you think it needs it.

bitter flavour - This probably means you've overcooked the garlic in step 2. Not much we can do now, but next time, be more vigilant when browning your garlic, try a shorter time, or lower temperature.

lentils falling apart / mushy – this means you've cooked them for too long. Not much can be done now, but next time try a lower heat or shorter cooking time.

serving suggestions

Lovely in bowls on its own.

PILLAR 2.
YOUR 10 INGREDIENT
SHOPPING LIST

YOUR 10 INGREDIENT SHOPPING LIST

Is meal planning something you struggle with?

When I was first getting into cooking I would pour through my favourite cookbooks and magazines and write my detailed shopping list every week. Mostly we'd end up changing the plan and eating different things, or going out at the last minute. As you can imagine, my veggies, like my meal plan would quietly waste away in the fridge.

At the other extreme, when I was living in the beautiful Barossa Valley, I used to just wake up and head to the farmers markets each Saturday morning and buy whatever looked enticing. This approach was much more fun, encouraging me to try new things when I got home. Took less time and generally had less waste. Win win.

But it takes a certain level of confidence in the kitchen (and a well stocked pantry) to work the 'wing-it' menu plan. So I wanted to come up with an alternative. And here it is.

How the 10 ingredients meal plan works.

Take 10 ingredients, a few pantry staples and five different 5 ingredients recipes. Meal. Planning. Done.

Feel free to play around with this to add variety.

The exact number could vary here to suit your lifestyle. Maybe you only eat in for 3 meals a week. Or maybe it's 7. But the concept is to choose a streamlined shopping list and then make up different meals based on your shopping list.

YOUR 10 INGREDIENT SHOPPING LIST [CONTINUED]

Benefits of the 10 ingredient shopping list.

- :: Quick AND easy.
- :: Super simple shopping list
- :: Streamlines the shopping process.
- :: Little waste, using the same ingredients for different meals so lots of scope to use up any leftovers.
- :: Potential to save money by purchasing ingredients in bulk.

Disadvantages of the 10 ingredient shopping list.

- :: Potentially boring if following the same plan each week.
- :: Requires some confidence and experience to develop a group of recipes yourself. Although if you join us for Solve Your Dinner Dilemma you'll get at least 3 NEW 10 ingredients shopping list, each with 5 different recipes. Enough to keep you going for a whole month!
- :: Limited flexibility to vary for different taste preferences or dietary requirements.

YOUR example 10 INGREDIENT SHOPPING LIST

Your easy 10 ingredient shopping list.

1. cherry tomatoes
2. red capsicum (bell peppers)
3. baby spinach
4. lemons
5. avocado
6. canned tomatoes
7. smoked paprika
8. chicken mince (ground chicken)
9. sausages
10. canned white beans (cannellini)

Note: Vegetarians, we'll have a vego based 10 ingredient meal plan in the Solve Your Dinner Dilemma Class.

Your 5 recipes:

1. White bean & avocado salad
2. Quick sausage supper
3. Sausages with summer veg recipe
4. Spanish chicken with white bean mash recipe
5. Chicken burgers with avocado & red salad recipe

A top-down view of a white ceramic plate filled with a salad. The salad consists of fresh green spinach leaves, white beans, sliced almonds, and chunks of avocado. The plate is set on a light-colored, textured fabric napkin with a decorative dotted pattern, which is placed on a dark wooden surface. The lighting is bright and natural, highlighting the textures of the ingredients.

white bean & avocado salad

white bean & avocado salad

I just adore avocado in salads. Creamy and filling, it's perfect against leafy greens with a sharp dressing.

To turn it into more of a main course, dinner-time salad, I've taken to adding canned white beans. The beans soak up the dressing and make for a more substantial feeling salad without being OTT.

WHITE BEAN & AVOCADO SALAD

serves 2

2 tablespoons lemon juice
1 can white beans (400g / 14oz), drained
4 handfuls baby spinach
1 avocado
small handful roast almonds

1. Combine lemon juice with 3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil in a large salad bowl. Season generously.
2. Toss drained beans and baby spinach in the dressing.
3. Halve avocado and scoop out bight sized pieces of flesh with a spoon and add to the salad.
4. Divide salad between two plates and serve with almonds sprinkled over.

video

WHITE BEAN & AVOCADO SALAD...

prepare ahead?

Avocado can go brown if prepared in advance and salad will go soggy so best to make just before you're ready to serve.

leftover potential

The salad leaves will wilt and the avocado may brown a little, but some people don't mind that.

variations for fun

carnivore - avocado and bacon are great friends. Replace the almonds with some crispy fried bacon pieces. Add in a few halved tomatoes for a classic BLT salad.

no baby spinach - just substitute in whichever mixed salad leaves you have on hand.

nut-free - replace the almonds with some halved cherry tomatoes, for colour OR some finely diced red onion for crunch.

mexican salad - Replace lemon juice with lime and toss in a little dried or fresh chilli to spice things up.

problem solving guide

avocado browned - next time try choosing an avocado that feels firm, rather than squishy and soft. For now just dig out and discard the icky bits as best you can.

too acidic - I've intentionally made this dressing quite punchy, but lemons can vary in their strength. If you find it too intense, toss in a little more olive oil to mellow things out.

too bland? avocado needs some seasoning to cut through the fattiness so be generous with the salt and pepper. A little more lemon may also help liven things up.

serving suggestions

Wonderful as a simple Summer meal on it's own.

Or serve as a substantial side salad to pan fried fish or roast chicken.



quick sausage supper

I just adore sausages. If you're not a big fan, I really encourage you to seek out a good butcher who gets awards for their sausages. Just like most things, there's a big difference between a top quality banger and a cheap super market imitation.

QUICK SAUSAGE SUPPER

serves 2

3-4 good quality pork sausages
1 can tomatoes (400g / 14oz)
1 can white beans (400g / 14oz), drained
1 tablespoon lemon juice
1 handful baby spinach leaves

1. Heat a medium pan on a high heat. Add a few tablespoons olive oil.
2. Remove sausage skins and crumble the meat into chunks in the pan. Discard the skins. Fry, stirring occasionally for a few minutes, or until sausages are starting to brown on the outside.
3. Add tomatoes and bring to a simmer, Cook for another few minutes or until sausages are cooked through and the sauce is hot.
4. Add beans and bring back to a simmer. Taste. Season.
5. Toss lemon juice with 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil. Season and toss the spinach leaves to coat.

video

quick sausage supper

QUICK SAUSAGE SUPPER...

prepare ahead?

It will taste even better if allowed to sit in the fridge overnight, so feel free to make in advance. Just leave the salad dressing for the last minute.

leftover potential

Wonderful. Although the salad will wilt if kept in the fridge after it has been dressed.

variations for fun

vegetarian - try a white bean & ricotta 'supper'. Skip the sausages. Instead, bring the tomato & white beans to a simmer then add spoonfuls of ricotta (about 350g). Season generously and allow to simmer again.

vegan - hello mushroom 'supper'. Replace sausages with halved button mushrooms - about 500g (1lb), Brown the mushrooms as you would sausages then proceed as per the recipe.

duck cassoulet - for an even more decadent experience. Buy two duck confit legs and pan fry them until golden and hot and serve with the sausage supper.

problem solving guide

sausages sticking to the pan - if your pan is like mine, your sausages will stick unless you're very generous with the oil. Don't stress, when you add the tomato it will all cook in together and make your sauce taste even more delicious.

too watery - Sounds like you haven't let the sauce cook for long enough. Give it another few minutes of vigorous simmering.

too bland? It's super important to use good quality sausages. For now season more generously, but next time try getting some good Italian style pork sausages from a reputable butcher.

serving suggestions

With the salad on the side, this is a great little mid week meal on its own.

For a more breakfasty/brunchish vibe, serve with a poached egg on top.



sausages with summer veg



sausages with summer veg

Tomato and red capsicum (bell peppers) are just bursting with Summeriness. It's hard not to feel sunny just looking at their bright colours.

I've kept this quite light with just the sausages and veg. Feel free to serve with some mash, pasta, white beans or crust bread.

sausages WITH summer VEG

serves 2

- 4-6 good quality pork sausages
- 1 red capsicum (pepper)
- 1 punnet cherry tomatoes (250g/10oz)
- 1 teaspoon dried chilli
- 1 handful baby spinach leaves

1. Heat a medium pan on a high heat. Add a few tablespoons olive oil.
2. Remove sausage skins and crumble the meat into chunks in the pan. Discard the skins. Fry, stirring occasionally for a few minutes, or until sausages are starting to brown on the outside.
3. Meanwhile chop capsicum (pepper) into long chunks and add to the pan. Halve tomatoes and add them as well.
4. Continue to stir fry for another few minutes or until the sausages are browned and cooked through and the tomatoes have started to break down and go a little squishy.
5. Season with salt, pepper and chilli and serve with baby spinach leaves scattered over the top.

video

sausages WITH summer veg...

prepare ahead?

The cassoulet will taste even better if allowed to sit in the fridge overnight, so feel free to make in advance. Just leave the salad dressing for the last minute.

leftover potential

Wonderful. Although the salad will wilt if kept in the fridge after it has been dressed.

variations for fun

vegetarian - try a tofu with summer veg. Replace sausages with about 350g (12oz) crumbled firm tofu. Add in a tablespoon smoked paprika to help give the tofu some colour and flavour.

vegan - Replace sausages with diced eggplant. No need to salt the eggplant first but the eggplant will take quite a bit longer to cook than the sausages and be prepared to be very generous with the olive oil. Super important to make sure the eggplant is cooked - there are few things worse than crunchy eggplant.

different sausages - I've used good Italian style pork and fennel sausages here but feel free to play around with different types. Chorizo would work really well with the tomato and peppers.

problem solving guide

sausages sticking to the pan - if your pan is like mine, your sausages will stick unless you're very generous with the oil. Don't stress, when you add the tomato it will all cook in together and make your sauce taste even more delicious.

too dry - We're really relying on the tomatoes to break down a little and give us some sauce in this dish. If your tomatoes aren't ripe enough you may need to cook them for a little longer. A splash of your best extra virgin olive oil or a squeeze of lemon will help.

too bland? It's super important to use good quality sausages. For now season more generously, but next time try getting some good Italian style pork sausages from a reputable butcher.

serving suggestions

With the spinach on top, this is a great little mid week meal on its own.

For a more substantial meal, serve with crusty bread or even toss in some cooked pasta or a can of lentils



chicken burgers with a red salad



chicken burgers with a red salad

While it's hard to beat a good burger in a bun, for mid week dinners I often fancy up my burgers by ditching the bread and serving with salad or veg and an interesting sauce. I just love the colours in this dish with the vibrant 'red' salad and green avocado sauce. So pretty!

CHICKEN BURGERS

serves 2

450g (1lb) minced (ground) chicken

1 avocado

lemon juice

1 punnet (250g / 8oz) cherry tomatoes, halved

1 red capsicum (pepper)

1. Heat a medium frying pan (skillet) on a very high heat. For about 3 minutes. You want it searing hot.
2. Divide chicken into 2 and form into 2 patties.
3. Sprinkle a scant teaspoon of salt over the base of the pan and add burgers.
4. Cook for about 4 minutes each side or until burgers are deeply golden.
5. Meanwhile, mash avocado flesh with 2 tablespoons lemon juice and season. Taste and add a little more lemon if you like.
6. Finely dice capsicum (pepper) and toss together with tomato and a squeeze of lemon.
7. Serve burgers on a bed of avocado mash with salad on the side.

video

CHICKEN BURGERS...

prepare ahead?

The salad will happily sit around for a few hours but is better if you don't refrigerate it first. Same with the avocado. The burgers could be cooked in advance and either eaten cold or reheated gently in a medium pan, but I think they're best when they're fresh.

leftover potential

OK. But again, I prefer burgers freshly cooked.

variations for fun

vegetarian - replace chicken with halloumi cheese. Slice into pieces about 1cm (1/3in) thick and pan fry in oil until golden.

vegan - Replace chicken with large field mushrooms. You'll need 1-2 mushrooms per person depending on their size. Either pan fry the mushrooms in oil OR roast in a 200C (400F) oven for about 30 minutes or until tender and juicy.

different meat - ground beef, ground buffalo, ground pork or ground lamb would all be lovely here.

problem solving guide

burgers sticking to the pan - there are two important things to getting these burgers. First the pan must be very hot before you add the meat. And second, you need to leave the meat to cook for long enough to form a crust before you try and turn it. If your burgers stick, it means you've got one or both of these wrong.

burgers falling apart - again it's all about having the pan hot enough and leaving the burgers for long enough before attempting to turn them.

burgers undercooked - Again, remember to use a very hot pan. If you're a bit nervous about whether the burgers are cooked or not, just cut into one and have a look. Better to be safe and have a slightly mangled burger than serve someone undercooked poultry.

too salty? Remember we're going to be getting quite a bit of salt from the salt crust, so you're not going to need much extra salt. If the burgers end up too salty, try and eat around the salty crust. Next time try only 1/2 teaspoon salt in the bottom of the pan.

serving suggestions

Great as is. But you could serve between two halves of a bun, if you must. A little of your favourite hot sauce might be a nice addition to the avocado.



spanish chicken with *white bean mash*

Smoked paprika and red peppers just scream of Spain to me. If you can't find smoked paprika, substitute in regular paprika but it won't have the same exotic flavour.

SPANISH CHICKEN WITH WHITE BEAN MASH

serves 2

450g (1lb) minced (ground) chicken
1 tablespoon smoked paprika
1 red capsicum (pepper), sliced into ribbons
1 can white beans (400g / 14oz), drained
2 tablespoons lemon juice

1. Heat a large frying pan (skillet) on a very high heat.
2. Add a few tablespoons of olive oil, chicken and paprika. Stir fry for a few minutes.
3. Meanwhile chop the pepper and add to the pan. Continue to stir fry until the chicken is golden and cooked through. Season.
4. Mash beans and lemon juice together and season.
5. Serve chicken on a bed of beans with a little extra lemon if you think it needs it.

video

spanish chicken with white bean mash

SPANISH CHICKEN WITH WHITE BEAN MASH...

prepare ahead?

Feel free to mash the beans and cook the chicken ahead of time. Reheat the chicken in a pan and serve as per the recipe. You may need to add a little more oil.

leftover potential

Great. Will keep in the fridge for up to a week.

variations for fun

vegetarian / vegan - replace chicken with crumbled tofu. You may like to increase the amount of paprika to add a little more flavour to the tofu. A few tablespoons of tomato paste will help too.

bean-free - serve chicken on a bed of your favourite pasta or noodles or even steamed rice.

more colourful - toss in a sliced green pepper or a handful of snowpeas at the end.

problem solving guide

chicken sticking to the pan - add a little more oil for now. But next time, best to use a hotter pan and stir more frequently.

too bland - it's important to use good quality free range chicken if you can. Seasoning generously and adding a little more smoked paprika can help.

too dry? This dish isn't super saucy. For now add a little more olive oil or maybe an extra squeeze of lemon. A little tomato puree will also help make it more saucy.

serving suggestions

Great as is. Might be nice to have a little green salad or some steamed broccoli on the side.

PILLAR 3.
YOUR 1-HOUR PER
WEEK PREP PLAN

HOW a 'CHEF SECRET' can HELP YOU PREPARE FOR THE BUSY WEEK AHEAD

Ever eaten at a restaurant with an exposed kitchen so you could watch the chefs at work?

Ever noticed all the little containers and bottles of sauces they have at their work stations?

Well you've seen 'mise en place' in action.

Mise en place is a French term that roughly translates as 'put in place'. It's used to describe the practice of chefs preparing food up to a point where it is ready to be used in a dish during food service.

It may be as simple as washing and picking herbs into individual leaves or chopping vegetables. Or more complicated like caramelising onions, cooking dried beans or slow cooking meats.

The main benefit in a restaurant is that it makes it much quicker and easier to get food on the table after the customer has ordered.

The secondary benefit is that the preparation can help to extend the shelf life of fresh produce.

How can this 'secret' help you prepare for the busy week ahead?

1. Save you time during the week.

By taking the time on weekends to do a little 'mise en place' preparation, we can make it much quicker and easier to get dinner on the table when we come home from work late and everyone is hungry.

HOW a
'CHEF SECRET'
can HELP
YOU PREPARE
FOR THE BUSY
WEEK AHEAD
[continued]

2. Prolong the shelf life of your produce

Happily, a little bit of preparation can extend the shelf life of fresh produce. This is usually because the preparation involves some sort of heat which reduces any microbes present.

Just think of a slow cooked meat dish which will last for a few weeks in the fridge, compared to a piece of fresh meat that may only keep for a few days. Same goes for wilted spinach vs a bunch of fresh spinach.

Ready to try a little 'mise en place' for yourself?

I've included an example that was previously published on Stonesoup.

Basically we're going to roast some butternut pumpkin (squash) for about 45 minutes. Then we'll use the pumpkin to make 3 different quick healthy dishes including:

- :: Roast butternut curry
- :: Warm salad of chickpeas & butternut squash
- :: Butternut 'hummus'

Your 1-hour prep plan. Taking 'mise en place' to the next level.

If you join us for Solve Your Dinner Dilemma, I'll show you how to take 'mise en place' to the next level. I'll show you step-by-step how just a one hour investment of your time on the weekend or maybe on a Monday night after dinner, can transform your weekly meals.

You'll get video recipes for both the 1 hour of mise en place as well as recipes for how to turn your weekend creations into healthy, delicious meals in 10-20 minutes.

roast butternut



I adore roast pumpkin, sweet potato or butternut squash. But I used to hardly make it because it always felt like a huge hassle to peel the damn things. So one day I thought I'd cook them peel and all and take the peel off once they were done. The good news is the roast skins actually taste really lovely. Since then I haven't ever peeled. So much quicker.

I also leave the seeds in partly to save time, but mostly because I love to eat roast pumpkin seeds.

ROAST BUTTERNUT

1/2 butternut squash

1-2 teaspoons cumin or coriander seeds, optional

1-2 teaspoons chilli flakes or powder, optional

1. Preheat oven to 200C (400F).
2. Chop butternut squash (pumpkin) in half, crosswise. Then chop each half into 6-8 wedges.
3. Place wedges on a baking tray. Drizzle generously with oil and sprinkle over spices, if using. Scatter liberally with sea salt flakes.
4. Bake for 30 – 45 mins or until wedges are deeply browned on the edges and tender in the middle.

video

roast butternut

ROAST BUTTERNUT...

prepare ahead?

Absolutely.

leftover potential

Great. Will keep in the fridge for a few weeks. Can be frozen.

variations for fun

different veg – any pumpkin such as Jap or Queensland blue. Sweet potato or yams are also lovely like this.

short on time? - chop into cubes about 2cm (1in). Should only take about 20 minutes to roast.

problem solving guide

burning – reduce the heat and turn the veg more frequently. You may like to cover with foil to prevent drying out. A splash of water can retard the burning process.

hard / dry veg – not cooked for long enough OR cooked at too high a temperature. Veg are much less sensitive to overcooking than meat.

serving suggestions

Use in salads, soup, curries. Pretty much anywhere you feel the need for some lovely sweet roast veg!

roast butternut & chickpea salad



roast butternut & chickpea salad



This is a brilliant light dinner for Autumn when the days are getting cooler and shorter.

WARM SALAD OF CHICKPEAS & ROAST BUTTERNUT

serves 2

- 4-6 wedges roast butternut squash (recipe above)
- 1 can chickpeas, drained
- 2 handfuls baby spinach
- small handful almonds
- 4-6 tablespoons natural yoghurt

1. If the squash is cold, warm in the oven (200C/400F for 10 mins) or heat with a little oil in a frying pan.
2. Add chickpeas and allow to warm for a few minutes.
3. Divide baby spinach on two plates. Top with warm chickpeas and squash.
4. Season yoghurt generously with salt and pepper and drizzle over the salad. Top with almonds.

WARM SALAD OF CHICKPEAS & ROAST BUTTERNUT...

prepare ahead?

Best if the dressing is added at the last minute or so.

leftover potential

OK. Will keep in the fridge for a week but the leaves will wilt.

variations for fun

dairy-free / vegan – make a tahini dressing instead using 2 tablespoons each tahini, lemon juice, water and olive oil.

don't have any roast squash? – replace with other roast veg OR some roast red capsicum (bell peppers). Or finely sliced fresh red capsicum (bell peppers).

nut-free – just skip the almonds or replace with a handful of toasted sourdough breadcrumbs.

chickpea alternatives – any cooked or canned legumes are good here. Try cannellini beans or lentils. Puy or French-style lentils are particularly lovely. Or just double the roast squash and forget about the chickpeas.

problem solving guide

too dry – splash in some more yoghurt.

prefer to cook your own chickpeas? – Soak overnight and then drain and simmer until chickpeas are tender. Anywhere from 45mins to 2 hours. You'll need 250g (1/2lb) cooked chickpeas for the salad.

too bland - season with a little more salt and think about adding some more chilli or some chilli oil.

serving suggestions

Wonderful as a light dinner on it's own. You could also serve with pita bread on the side for wrapping the salad.

roast butternut curry



roast *butternut* curry

The sweetness of butternut works really well with the deeply savoury spiciness of an Indian curry. To make it more substantial, feel free to toss in some cooked or canned lentils or cooked meat such as chicken. Lovely with flatbread, steamed rice or cauliflower 'rice' (raw grated cauliflower).

ROAST BUTTERNUT CURRY

serves 2

1 heaped tablespoon garam marsala
1/2 - 1 teaspoon chilli flakes or powder
1 can tomatoes (400g / 14oz)
4-6 tablespoons coconut milk
6-8 wedges roast butternut squash, chopped

1. Heat a little oil in a medium frying pan. Add spices and cook for about 20 seconds.
2. Add tomatoes and simmer for 5 minutes or until the sauce has reduced a little.
3. Stir in coconut milk. Taste and season.
4. Add butternut chunks and bring back to a simmer.

video

ROAST BUTTERNUT CURRY...

prepare ahead?

Absolutely.

leftover potential

Great. Will keep in the fridge for a few weeks.

variations for fun

no garam marsala? – Use a good quality curry powder instead. Reduce the quantity to about 2 teaspoons and taste before adding more. You may want to skip the extra chilli. Or replace with equal parts ground coriander and ground cumin.

higher protein / more substantial – add in some cooked chicken, beef, chickpeas or lentils.

dairy-lovers – replace coconut milk with whipping cream.

herby - serve with fresh coriander (cilantro) leaves OR add in a few handfuls of fresh curry leaves to simmer with the tomatoes.

problem solving guide

bitter - if the spices get burned the curry will end up being bitter.

mushy texture – sounds like you've cooked the curry for too long. Or your butternut was a little overdone. Next time either leave in larger chunks or add the veg later in the cooking process.

not hot enough – serve extra dried chilli powder or chilli flakes so your guests can adjust the heat level themselves.

too sweet – season with more salt or try a splash of soy or fish sauce.

serving suggestions

Lovely in big bowls on its own. Or serve with steamed rice or finely grated raw cauliflower (aka cauliflower 'rice).

A top-down view of a small, light-colored ceramic bowl filled with a thick, creamy, golden-yellow hummus. The hummus has a slightly textured surface. Surrounding the bowl are several slices of roasted butternut squash, cut into wedges. The squash is a vibrant orange color with some darker, charred edges. The slices are scattered on a dark, textured surface, possibly a stone or slate countertop. The lighting is soft, highlighting the textures of the hummus and the roasted squash. The overall composition is centered and visually appealing.

roast *butternut* hummus

Roast veg make a wonderful substitute for chickpeas in hummus. This is easily the best I've tried. If you're a little doubtful, feel free to add in some chickpeas as well.

Serve anywhere you'd use regular hummus.

ROAST BUTTERNUT HUMMUS

makes about 1 cup

250g (1/2lb) roast butternut squash

3 tablespoons lemon juice

3 tablespoons tahini

1-2 cloves garlic, peeled

1. Whizz all ingredients in a food processor until smooth and creamy. Taste and season.

A photograph showing several pieces of roasted butternut squash on a dark, textured surface. The squash is cut into wedges, showing a golden-brown, slightly charred exterior and a soft, orange interior. In the foreground, a small white bowl is filled with a thick, creamy, yellow-orange hummus. The background is a dark, mottled grey surface, possibly a baking sheet or a rustic table.

roast butternut hummus

ROAST BUTTERNUT HUMMUS...

prepare ahead?

Absolutely.

leftover potential

Great. Will keep in the fridge for a few weeks.

variations for fun

regular hummus – replace butternut with a drained can of chickpeas and 3 tablespoons of the canning liquid.

different veg – roast carrots, roast beets, roast parsnip.

lentil hummus – replace butternut with a drained can of lentils and 3 tablespoons of the canning liquid.

can't find tahini? – use peanut butter instead – preferably one without added sugar.

problem solving guide

lumpy hummus – keep whizzing until the hummus is super smooth.

bland – be generous with the seasoning. And add a little more tahini and lemon juice if you think it will help.

don't have a food processor? – make a more chunky style hummus by just mashing everything together with a fork. Make sure you chop the garlic nice and fine.

serving suggestions

Use anywhere you'd use regular hummus. For a quick & tasty meal, steam some broccoli and serve on a bed of roast butternut hummus with a handful of roast almonds.

PILLAR 4.
THE ART OF
ADAPTATION

4 PROBLEMS WITH a RECIPE-CENTRIC APPROACH TO COOKING

I've heard it said that there are 2 types of cooks: those that like to follow recipes to the letter, and those that consider a recipe to be nothing more than a gentle suggestion.

Which camp do you fall into?

These days I'm definitely a recipe-is-just-for-inspiration type of cook. But it wasn't always the case.

*my journey from recipe follower to
recipe creator*

When I first started to get into cooking I always followed the recipe. As my confidence grew, I began to tweak a few things here and there.

During my winemaking days, when I was living in the Barossa Valley, I started leaving recipes behind. Each week, I'd go to the local farmers market and just buy whatever looked good. I'd then cook based on the produce I had.

But to be honest I was still pretty reliant on recipes. I wouldn't ever follow them word-for-word, but it was rare for me to just cook something from my own imagination.

Then I got divorced and moved back Sydney. In my tiny kitchen in Paddington, with just myself to feed, I finally started to cook from the heart. To truly just make things up based on the ingredients I had in the house.

It was very liberating and so much fun!

Don't worry, I haven't turned into some kind of cooking snob. There's absolutely nothing wrong with following a recipe. But there can be a few problems with a recipe-centric approach to cooking on a daily basis...

4 PROBLEMS WITH a RECIPE-CENTRIC APPROACH TO COOKING

4 problems with a recipe-centric approach to cooking

1. You need to be super organised and plan ahead.
2. Often, you won't have all the ingredients you need. This means another trip to the grocery store (takes time).
3. You tend to have more waste.
4. It can get a bit boring.

Thankfully, the art of adaptation is a skill that anyone can learn.

The art of adaptation is something that all cooks can master. And you can take baby steps to get there.

If you join us for Solve Your Dinner Dilemma, you'll learn 10 of my favourite most 'adaptable' recipes. These template recipes will give you a starting point or 'training wheels' to help you flex your own adaptation muscles.

With time you too will be able to learn to cook with what you have.

The next recipe, which was previously published on Stonesoup, is an example of one of the many template recipes you'll have at your disposal.



ketchup 'baked' legumes



ketchup 'baked' legumes

This is an example of one of the 10 'template' recipes you'll learn if you join us for Solve Your Dinner Dilemma. Only the recipes in the 'Adaptation' module will come in this format.

I've never been a fan of baked beans out of a can. These ketchup beans are a whole other story. The onion, the paprika & the ketchup combine to make a dish you'd swear had been 'baking' for hours.

KETCHUP 'BAKED' LEGUMES

serves 2

- 1 tablespoon butter, optional
- 1/2 aromatic vegetable*, chopped
- 1/2 can legumes, drained
- 2 tablespoons ketchup (or 'tomato sauce')
- 1 teaspoon spice*, optional

1. Heat a medium fry pan on a medium heat. Add butter and aromatic veg and cook for 5-10 minutes until the veg is soft and lightly golden.
2. Add legumes, ketchup and spice.
3. Stir and simmer for a couple of minutes to make sure everything is hot. Taste & season.

*NOTE: See the 'variations' on the following page for suggestions on the type of aromatic veg and spice.

video

KETCHUP 'BAKED' LEGUMES...

leftover potential

Great. Will keep in the fridge for a few weeks.

variations for fun

aromatic veg – onions are my favourite but celery or carrots would be good instead..

legumes – I've used cannellini beans in the photo but any canned or cooked legume will work. Try butter beans, borlotti beans, black beans, chickpeas or lentils.

no ketchup? – I really recommend getting a small bottle to try with this dish. I'm not really a big ketchup fan but I adore these legumes. Otherwise try tomato paste and a big pinch or three of brown sugar. A good BBQ sauce will also work.

spice - first choice smoked paprika. Next choice other paprika, dried chilli (you may like to reduce the quantity if really hot). Coriander seed or cumin would be interesting. And curry powder would work if you're in the mood for a curry.

higher protein – Preheat the oven to 180C (350F) while the onion cooks. When the legumes are done, make a small well in the middle and crack an egg into it. Bake for about 10 minutes or until egg whites are set and yolks still runny.

dairy-free / vegan – replace butter with any oil you normally cook with.

problem solving guide

too bland – Season with salt & pepper. A little more smoked paprika or ketchup may help.

too dry – Add a little water or a little more ketchup.

too sweet – Next time try a different brand of ketchup, for now add a little more salt or some soy sauce to season.

legumes falling apart – sounds like they were overcooked to begin with. Make sure you only heat for long enough to warm everything through once the legumes go in.

serving suggestions

Lovely straight up or with a side of shredded kale or baby spinach. Also good with hot buttered toast.

PILLAR 5.
HOW TO STAY
INSPIRED &
MOTIVATED

5 TIPS FOR GETTING EXCITED ABOUT COOKING

As with most things in life, it's how you choose to look at a situation which makes the difference between getting things done and procrastinating to avoid the activity.

Even for someone like me who LOVES food and cooking, there are the odd times when I feel a bit 'over it'. So I thought I'd share some tricks I use to get myself excited about cooking.

1. embrace your favourite foods

Think of the foods you love, the things that get you excited just thinking about it. Then put these favourite foods at the top of your 'things-to-cook' list.

I get excited about beets, brussels sprouts, chickpeas and asparagus, among other things.

2. make dinner time a special treat

Making dinner time a reward rather than a chore is an easy way to help get motivated to cook. Think of dinner as time to relax and unwind. Put on some good music and pour yourself a glass of wine. Make the most of this wonderful part of the day.

As my friend Margot says, "I LOVE coming home and cooking dinner. Even if it's just something quick and easy. I enjoy the chance to relax but most of all I love that at the end I'll have something real (and delicious) to show for my efforts. Which is more than I can say for most days in the office!"

3. set the table to set the scene

Even when I'm eating solo I still set the table with proper cutlery and a serviette, light some candles and if I had a TV, I'd turn it off. If your creations are given proper appreciation, it's much easier to get excited about doing it all again tomorrow night.

5 TIPS FOR GETTING EXCITED ABOUT COOKING [CONTINUED]

4. play the use-what's-in-the-fridge game

No need to stop in to pick something up on your way home from work. Just open the fridge – pull out a few ingredients and see where the evening takes you.

We'll go into step-by-step detail on how you can use this 'game' to get you excited about cooking if you join us for Solve Your Dinner Dilemma.

5. resolve to try new things

If you struggle to get inspired, why not make a little promise to yourself to try one new ingredient each week? Or even try a new recipe a week?

Sometimes making a conscious commitment to change is all we need to make a big difference.

Need more inspiration?

If you choose to join us for Solve Your Dinner Dilemma, we'll have a whole module devoted to inspiration and motivation.

We'll explore even more tips for inspiration and motivation along with some of my favourite inspirational blogs, websites, magazines and cookbooks.

We'll also delve into my favourite **do-ahead dinners** AND my favourite **5 minute dinners** which I pull out on days where things are a bit crazy and I don't have time.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



THANKYOU for making it this far! This is the part where you get to find out a bit more about the brains behind 'The 5 Pillar Map to Quick & Healthy Dinners'.

I'm Jules Clancy and am first and foremost a food lover who adores her veggies. The type of girl who plans her holidays around restaurant reservations.

Cooking and simplicity are my big loves. So I am constantly on the lookout for ways to make my cooking less complicated and time consuming without sacrificing flavour or wholesomeness.

I have degrees in both food and wine science but I like to think I'm not a nerd, really. In 2010, I packed in my day job as a chocolate biscuit designer for Australia's largest biscuit company to become a full time blogger.

A few years ago, I founded the Stonesoup Virtual Cookery School because I believe that the ability to cook simple, healthy, delicious food is a basic skill, like reading, that everyone should and can have.

When I'm not cooking, writing about food or taking photographs [of food], I can be found indulging my passions for long boozy lunches, travel, running, cookbooks, growing my own veggies, cheese, red shoes and Irishmen, [OK one Irish man in particular].

If you haven't already done so, I'd love it if you became a regular reader of my blog. Just pop over to www.thestonesoup.com and sign up for my FREE weekly email newsletter. You'll get more delicious healthy meals in minutes delivered to your inbox each week.

You can contact me at:
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WHAT NOW?

WHAT NOW?

1. take action!

As Marie Forleo always says, insight without action is useless. So do yourself a favour and make the decision to change your dinner situation. Then I'd suggest revisiting your [2-Step Quick Start Guide](#) to take your first (baby) steps.

2. share this FREE eCookbook!

If you have found this eCookbook useful, please feel free to **share it with at least 3 people** you think will also find it helpful.

You have my permission to either email it or forward the download link to as many people as you like.

3. Watch your inbox.

If you think the new Solve Your Dinner Dilemma class is something that you'd love to be part of, watch your inbox. You'll soon receive an email with a link explaining everything you need to know about the e-course.

If you received this eCookbook from a friend and you're interested in finding out more about the class, just [enter your name and email in the form over here](#) and I'll send you more details when they're available.

Although if it's not for you, that's cool too. I hope you'll still use this free eCookbook to take action and help you overcome your dinner woes. And of course share it with your friends!

With love,
Jules x

ps. If you have any questions, please feel free to email me:
jules@thestonesoup.com