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Chapter 1: Intro to Concussions and Your

Diet

What you eat plays a huge role in your overall health, whether you've experienced a brain injury or are perfectly healthy. However, after a brain injury, proper nutrition becomes even more crucial. The right diet can significantly impact how well and how fast your brain recovers. Instead of barely giving your brain what it needs to function, good nutrition can provide it with the fuel required for healing, repairing, and restoring normal function. Eating nutrient-rich foods can boost your brain's ability to recover from damage, reduce inflammation, and promote the regeneration of healthy brain cells. This can make the difference between a slow recovery and one that maximizes your brain's potential to heal.

By including foods rich in antioxidants, healthy fats, vitamins, and minerals, you're not only giving your body what it needs but also helping your brain get the essential nutrients it requires to rebuild and strengthen its pathways. For example, foods like fatty fish, nuts, and leafy greens are known to support brain health. They reduce oxidative stress, improve blood flow, and provide essential fats that help repair damaged brain tissue.

Post-concussion syndrome (PCS) can be incredibly challenging for anyone dealing with it. The brain struggles to heal, and common symptoms like brain fog, fatigue, trouble focusing, and memory issues can make everyday life feel overwhelming. Even simple

tasks can become mentally draining, leaving little energy for anything extra. This makes dealing with PCS a long and often exhausting process.

For many, improving their diet seems like a natural way to aid in recovery, as proper nutrition plays a key role in brain health. However, the challenge is that making dietary changes also requires effort, planning, and energy—resources that might already feel scarce due to PCS symptoms. Still, incorporating small, manageable dietary adjustments can help boost brain recovery over time. Foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids, antioxidants, and vitamins can reduce inflammation, support cognitive function, and promote healing, even when the brain is operating under strain. The key is to start slow, focus on nutrient-dense options, and build from there.

To support your recovery journey, we've developed this comprehensive guide to post-concussion nutrition. This guide will walk you through everything you need to know about optimizing your diet to aid in healing, regardless of the pace you choose. Whether you're looking to make small, gradual changes or are ready to dive into a full nutritional overhaul, we've got you covered. The guide includes:

- **Key nutrients for brain health:** Learn about vitamins, minerals, and healthy fats that are essential for supporting brain recovery and reducing inflammation.
- **Foods to avoid:** Discover which foods might hinder recovery by increasing inflammation or triggering brain fog, and how to replace them with healthier options.

- **Sample meal plans:** Get easy-to-follow meal ideas that incorporate brain-boosting ingredients, perfect for those struggling with energy or focus.
- **Tips for gradual changes:** Find simple strategies to improve your diet without overwhelming yourself, so you can take small steps toward better nutrition, even when you're feeling fatigued.
- **Hydration and recovery:** Understand the importance of staying hydrated and how dehydration can affect brain function during the recovery process.
- **Supplements for support:** Learn which supplements may complement your diet and help speed up your recovery, especially if you're finding it hard to get everything you need through food alone.

This guide is designed to help you navigate the process of improving your diet for post-concussion recovery at your own pace, making it easier to support your healing without adding stress.

Healthy eating won't cure post-concussion syndrome (PCS), but it can significantly aid your brain's recovery process and improve overall functioning. By providing your brain with the right nutrients, you can support healing, reduce inflammation, and optimize cognitive function, even while dealing with PCS symptoms. A well-balanced diet helps to fuel the brain with essential vitamins, minerals, and healthy fats, which can make it easier to manage symptoms like fatigue, brain fog, and difficulty concentrating. While nutrition alone can't eliminate PCS, it can give your brain a much-needed boost during recovery, helping it work at its best given the circumstances.

After a mild traumatic brain injury (mTBI), your brain and nervous system require specific nutrients to support healing and maintain proper function. Both neurons (the cells that send signals) and your autonomic nervous system (ANS) depend on these essential nutrients to manage neurovascular coupling (NVC), regulate nerve function, and prevent exhaustion from compensating for damaged regions.

Here are the key nutrients your nerves and neurons need, especially after injury:

1. Water

- **Importance:** Hydration is crucial for maintaining brain volume, blood flow, and overall cellular function. Dehydration can worsen cognitive deficits and slow down recovery by impairing the ability of neurons to communicate efficiently.
- **Recommendation:** Drink adequate water daily, aiming for at least 8 cups, but more depending on individual needs, to ensure optimal brain function.

2. Protein

- **Importance:** Protein provides the amino acids necessary for the repair and growth of neurons and other cells in the nervous system. After an injury, protein helps repair damaged brain tissue and supports the production of neurotransmitters, which are essential for communication between neurons.
- **Sources:** Lean meats, eggs, fish, legumes, and plant-based sources like tofu.

3. Lipids (Fats)

- **Importance:** Healthy fats, especially **omega-3 fatty acids**, are critical for brain function and the repair of damaged neural tissue. Omega-3s help reduce inflammation and are necessary for maintaining the structure of brain cells. They also support synaptic plasticity, which is vital for learning and memory.
- **Sources:** Fatty fish (salmon, mackerel), flaxseeds, walnuts, and chia seeds.

4. Carbohydrates

- **Importance:** Carbohydrates provide glucose, the brain's main source of energy. After a brain injury, the brain's demand for energy increases as it works to heal. Choosing complex carbohydrates helps maintain stable blood sugar levels, ensuring a steady supply of energy to the brain.
- **Sources:** Whole grains, fruits, vegetables, and legumes.

5. Antioxidants, Vitamins, and Minerals

- **Importance:** Antioxidants help reduce oxidative stress, which increases after a brain injury. Vitamins and minerals, such as **Vitamin C, E, B-vitamins**, and **magnesium**, play a key role in energy production, neurotransmitter synthesis, and protecting neurons from damage.
- **Sources:** Berries, leafy greens, nuts, seeds, and whole grains provide a rich source of antioxidants and essential vitamins.

6. Sodium

- **Importance:** Sodium helps maintain fluid balance and nerve function. It plays a role in the transmission of nerve signals and muscle contractions, making it essential for the proper functioning of the ANS. However, excessive sodium can be harmful, so balance is key.
- **Sources:** Naturally found in foods like meats and vegetables, but be cautious of added salt in processed foods.

7. Creatine

- **Importance:** Creatine is a compound that plays a crucial role in cellular energy production, particularly in high-energy-demanding organs like the brain. It has been studied for its potential neuroprotective effects, helping neurons withstand damage and recover after injury. Supplementing with creatine may support cognitive function and reduce fatigue after a brain injury.
- **Sources:** Found naturally in red meat and fish, but creatine supplements may be considered, especially for those recovering from mTBI.

By ensuring your diet contains these essential nutrients, you can provide your brain and nervous system with the support they need to function and heal effectively after an injury. Maintaining proper hydration, including brain-boosting fats and proteins, and integrating antioxidants can help mitigate the long-lasting effects of mTBI, improving both recovery and overall health.

In chapter 3, there's a table that categorizes over 100 brain-boosting foods, which you can typically find at your local market. These foods are broken down into the seven essential areas needed for optimal brain and nerve health, especially after an injury.

Chapter 2: Stuff to avoid

To boost brain recovery during post-concussion syndrome, it's important to avoid certain substances and dietary practices that could hinder healing:

1. **Caffeine and Alcohol:** Both caffeine and alcohol can negatively affect brain recovery. Caffeine, as a stimulant, can disrupt sleep and increase anxiety, while alcohol may interfere with brain function, especially in a sensitive post-concussion state. Reducing or avoiding them helps support better cognitive and emotional health during recovery.
2. **Processed Sugar:** Processed sugars can cause spikes and crashes in blood sugar levels, impacting brain performance. It's better to opt for natural sweeteners like honey, coconut sugar, or agave, which have a lower glycemic index and offer steadier energy to the brain.
3. **Artificial Sweeteners:** Substances like aspartame and saccharin can trick your brain, affecting cognitive function and energy balance. Artificial sweeteners can interfere with the brain's ability to process signals related to calorie intake, which may slow recovery.
4. **Fad Diets:** Avoid extreme or restrictive fad diets that lack balance and essential nutrients. The brain needs a variety of nutrients—proteins, fats, vitamins, and minerals—to function and recover well. A balanced diet focused on whole foods like lean proteins, healthy fats, fruits, and vegetables is far more beneficial.

These practices will help create a supportive environment for brain healing while preventing complications. Always consult with your healthcare provider when making significant dietary or lifestyle changes during recovery.

Chapter 3: Food Table

Water:

Hydration: Water, coconut water, watermelon, cucumber, strawberries, oranges, celery, lettuce, Pineapple, cantaloupe, tomatoes, bell peppers, radishes, spinach, and zucchini

Protein:

Animal-Based Proteins: Chicken breast, turkey, eggs, salmon, tuna, mackerel, grass-fed beef, lean pork loin

Plant-Based Proteins: Lentils, chickpeas, black beans, tofu, tempeh, quinoa, edamame, chia seeds, hemp seeds

Dairy-Based Proteins: Greek yogurt, cottage cheese, milk, kefir, ricotta cheese, hard cheeses (e.g., cheddar)

Lipids (Fats):

Omega-3 Sources: Salmon, sardines, mackerel, anchovies, flaxseeds, chia seeds, hemp seeds, walnuts

Monounsaturated Fats: Olive oil, avocado, almonds, cashews, hazelnuts, peanuts, sesame oil, sunflower seeds

Omega-6 Sources: Sunflower oil, corn oil, pumpkin seeds, pine nuts, chicken fat, soybean oil, safflower oil

Carbohydrates:

Complex Carbs: Oats, barley, quinoa, brown rice, bulgur, farro, sweet potatoes, butternut squash, lentils

Fiber-Rich Vegetables: Broccoli, cauliflower, carrots, beets, artichokes, kale, spinach, zucchini, Brussels sprouts

Fruits: Apples, pears, oranges, berries (blueberries, strawberries, blackberries), bananas, grapes

Antioxidants, Vitamins, and Minerals

Vitamin C & Antioxidants: Blueberries, raspberries, spinach, bell peppers, kiwi, citrus fruits, broccoli, kale

Vitamin E: Almonds, sunflower seeds, hazelnuts, spinach, turnip greens, avocado, pine nuts, peanuts

B-Vitamins: Eggs, whole grains, leafy greens (spinach, kale), meat (beef, chicken, pork), legumes

Magnesium: Almonds, cashews, spinach, dark chocolate, black beans, avocado, pumpkin seeds, tofu

Sodium

Natural Sodium Sources: Celery, beets, spinach, carrots, bell peppers, fish (sardines, anchovies), shellfish

Sodium for Rehydration: Pickles, olives, salted nuts, bone broth, seaweed, miso soup

Creatine:

Creatine Sources: Beef, pork, chicken, turkey, salmon, tuna, herring, cod, creatine supplements (if needed)

Chapter 4: Water

Drinking enough water is the single most important health recommendation, especially when recovering from a concussion. Hydration is essential for optimal brain function, as the human brain is made up of 73% water. Water helps you stay focused and alert, aids in digestion, and supports the absorption of nutrients. It also plays a key role in cell growth, which is particularly important when your body is healing.

Proper hydration is also vital for temperature regulation and your circulatory system, which can be negatively impacted by post-concussion syndrome (PCS). When dehydrated, the body struggles to maintain homeostasis, potentially worsening PCS symptoms like headaches, dizziness, or cognitive fog.

In addition, water is crucial in preventing metabolism issues and reducing the risk of chronic diseases like kidney problems or cardiovascular disease. However, hydration needs vary from person to person based on factors such as activity level, climate, and individual health conditions. Generally, aiming for 8-10 cups of water daily is a good start, but listening to your body and drinking as needed is just as important.

A simple way to calculate how much water you need daily is to divide your weight into pounds by two. The result gives you an approximate number of ounces to drink each day. For example, if you weigh 200 pounds, you'd aim for about 100 ounces of water daily (roughly equivalent to four 24-ounce bottles).

If you're exercising, spending time in hot weather, or otherwise increasing your activity level, you'll need to drink more to stay properly hydrated. On the other hand, those with specific health conditions may require different amounts of water and should consult a healthcare provider to ensure they're getting the right amount.

To make sure you're consistently hydrated, always bring water with you wherever you go. Building a habit of drinking regularly can take some effort, but once established, it becomes second nature.

Chapter 5: Protein

Getting enough protein is vital for brain health, especially when recovering from a concussion or injury. Protein sources like meat, fish, eggs, and beans supply essential amino acids, which are the building blocks for neurotransmitters that help the brain communicate effectively. Additionally, nuts and seeds provide good plant-based protein options.

The amount of protein you need depends on factors such as your body type, genetics, and health goals. While many people don't get enough, the focus should be on incorporating a healthy variety of protein sources rather than stressing over exact amounts. For instance, if you usually eat chicken, try mixing in other options like fish, eggs, or nuts. If you're following a vegan diet, ensure you're getting sufficient protein from legumes, beans, and seeds.

It's also important to remember that preparation matters. While most protein sources are healthy, some cooking methods may introduce less desirable components like trans fats or harmful compounds from grilling. For example, grilled steak might be enjoyable, but it could contain small amounts of trans fats and char, which are not ideal for regular consumption. Balance your meals with different cooking techniques such as baking, steaming, or broiling to optimize the health benefits.

Finally, if you're new to eating beans or plant-based proteins, give your body time to adjust. Some types may be easier to digest than others, so experiment with different kinds to find what works best for you.

Chapter 6: Lipids

Lipids, or fats and oils, play a crucial role in supporting a healthy nervous system and brain function. They are especially important for anyone recovering from a brain injury, as certain types of fats can aid in reducing inflammation and promoting brain health. Healthy fats can be found in foods like fish (which are high in omega-3 fatty acids), avocados, olive oil, and nuts.

One specific omega-3 fatty acid, docosahexaenoic acid (DHA), is vital for brain cell development and maintenance. DHA is particularly beneficial for brain injury recovery because of its anti-inflammatory properties, which may help reduce the inflammation often experienced by concussion patients. Ideally, DHA should come from dietary sources like fatty fish (such as salmon, mackerel, and sardines) and eggs. However, if it's difficult to get enough through food, DHA supplements derived from fish oil or algae are good alternatives. Even if you don't take them regularly, they can be especially helpful during acute concussion recovery or when symptoms flare up.

It's important to note that while fats are beneficial, consuming too much fat, particularly unhealthy types, can be harmful. Studies have shown that high-fat diets, especially those leading to obesity, are linked to an increased risk of cognitive decline and dementia, particularly in women. However, sticking to healthy fats as part of a balanced diet — along with plenty of protein, carbohydrates, and vegetables — should minimize these risks and support overall brain health.

Chapter 7: Carbs

The debate surrounding carbohydrates and their role in a healthy diet continues to be a hot topic. While some people advocate for completely avoiding carbs, even complex ones, others maintain that a high-carb diet is perfectly healthy. Based on current knowledge, a balanced approach seems to be the best: primarily consuming carbs from whole grains and fresh fruits.

Fruit is an excellent source of natural sugars, providing a steady supply of energy for your brain throughout the day. In addition, fruits are packed with essential vitamins, antioxidants, and fiber, which can help reduce brain inflammation and promote digestion. The good news is that any fruit you enjoy eating is beneficial, whether it's an apple, banana, or even less expensive non-organic options. The sugars found in fruit are quickly utilized by the brain, but it's important to remember that the brain doesn't require large amounts of sugar for optimal function — moderation is key.

On the other hand, complex carbohydrates found in whole grains offer sustained energy over time. Unlike simple sugars, which may cause a spike in blood sugar levels, complex carbs are absorbed slowly, providing the brain with a steady stream of glucose for extended focus and cognitive function.

Some nutritionists recommend the ketogenic diet, which focuses on high-fat intake, moderate protein, and very low carbs. This diet may provide benefits for some individuals, especially those looking to manage neurological conditions, but it is not a

one-size-fits-all solution. If you choose to try this diet, it's crucial to do so under the supervision of a certified dietitian or nutritionist to ensure it's being done safely and effectively, as the ketogenic diet can be restrictive and complex to maintain.

Chapter 8: Vitamins, Minerals, Antioxidants, and Sodium

Antioxidants are powerful agents that help fight inflammation and neutralize free radicals, molecules that can damage cells and accelerate aging and disease. These compounds also aid your body in absorbing and utilizing essential vitamins, which play critical roles in a wide range of bodily functions. While you can take supplements to increase your intake of these micronutrients, it's best to focus on getting as many as possible from your diet.

Spices, fresh herbs, fruits, and vegetables are excellent sources of antioxidants, vitamins, and minerals. Turmeric, in particular, stands out due to its strong anti-inflammatory properties. You can incorporate turmeric into your diet by adding it to eggs, sautés, or even homemade dishes like mac 'n' cheese. However, be mindful of pre-packaged spice mixes and sauces, as they often contain additives like monosodium glutamate (MSG), as well as excess salt and sugar.

If you're concerned about your vitamin levels, a blood test can reveal deficiencies. Your doctor can help you determine whether you need supplements to correct any imbalances. Some of the most important vitamins for brain health include:

- **Magnesium:** Supports nerve function and helps with muscle relaxation.
- **Zinc:** Plays a role in neurotransmitter function and immune support.

- **Vitamin B12 (Folate):** Essential for cognitive function and the production of red blood cells.
- **Vitamin D:** Important for mood regulation and immune function.
- **Vitamin E:** Acts as an antioxidant to protect brain cells.
- **Vitamin C:** Helps with immune function and collagen production, supporting overall health.

While many people get enough vitamin C from their diet, vitamin D deficiency is widespread, especially in those who don't get regular sunlight exposure. If you're prone to burning easily or live in an area with little sunlight, consider supplementing with vitamin D.

Sodium: Find Your Balance

Sodium needs vary greatly between individuals. Some people need to lower their sodium intake to control blood pressure, while others — especially those recovering from brain injuries who experience low or irregular blood pressure — might benefit from increasing it. Before making any changes to your sodium intake, consult with a healthcare professional to tailor your diet to your specific needs.

Chapter 9: Meal Plans

Daily Water Intake:

- **Daily Target:** Your weight (lbs) \div 2 = daily water in ounces. Example: If you weigh 150 lbs, aim for **75 oz of water/day**.

Day 1:

- **Breakfast:**
 - Oatmeal topped with blueberries, chia seeds, and walnuts (complex carbs + omega-3s)
 - Herbal Tea
 - Water: 19 oz
- **Lunch:**
 - Grilled chicken salad with spinach, tomatoes, avocado, and olive oil dressing (protein + healthy fats)
 - Whole-grain toast
 - Water: 19 oz
- **Dinner:**
 - Baked salmon with quinoa and steamed broccoli (omega-3s + complex carbs)
 - Water: 19 oz
- **Snack:**

- Apple slices with almond butter (carbs + healthy fats)
 - Water: 19 oz
 - **Treat:**
 - Dark chocolate (rich in antioxidants)
-

Day 2:

- **Breakfast:**
 - Greek yogurt with mixed berries and a handful of sunflower seeds
(antioxidants + protein)
 - Water: 19 oz
- **Lunch:**
 - Lentil soup with carrots and celery (high in fiber + protein)
 - Whole grain crackers
 - Water: 19 oz
- **Dinner:**
 - Stir-fried tofu with brown rice and mixed vegetables (plant-based protein + complex carbs)
 - Water: 19 oz
- **Snack:**
 - Baby carrots and hummus
 - Water: 19 oz

- **Treat:**
 - Coconut yogurt with a drizzle of honey
-

Day 3:

- **Breakfast:**
 - Scrambled eggs with spinach and turmeric (anti-inflammatory + protein)
 - Whole wheat toast
 - Water: 19 oz
- **Lunch:**
 - Turkey sandwich with avocado, lettuce, and tomato on whole-grain bread
(protein + healthy fats)
 - Water: 19 oz
- **Dinner:**
 - Grilled shrimp with roasted sweet potatoes and sautéed kale (protein + complex carbs)
 - Water: 19 oz
- **Snack:**
 - Handful of mixed nuts
 - Water: 19 oz
- **Treat:**
 - Fresh fruit salad (rich in vitamins)

Day 4:

- **Breakfast:**

- Smoothie with almond milk, banana, spinach, chia seeds, and blueberries
(omega-3s + antioxidants)
- Water: 19 oz

- **Lunch:**

- Quinoa salad with black beans, corn, avocado, and lime vinaigrette
(protein + healthy fats)
- Water: 19 oz

- **Dinner:**

- Grilled chicken breast with roasted vegetables and wild rice (lean protein
+ complex carbs)
- Water: 19 oz

- **Snack:**

- Cottage cheese with pineapple chunks
- Water: 19 oz

- **Treat:**

- Dark chocolate-covered almonds
-

Day 5:

- **Breakfast:**
 - Whole grain toast with avocado and poached eggs (protein + healthy fats)
 - Water: 19 oz
 - **Lunch:**
 - Chickpea salad with cucumber, tomatoes, and feta cheese (protein + antioxidants)
 - Water: 19 oz
 - **Dinner:**
 - Baked cod with brown rice and steamed asparagus (omega-3s + complex carbs)
 - Water: 19 oz
 - **Snack:**
 - Sliced cucumber with tzatziki sauce
 - Water: 19 oz
 - **Treat:**
 - Greek yogurt with a sprinkle of cinnamon
-

Day 6:

- **Breakfast:**

- Smoothie bowl with mixed berries, almond butter, chia seeds, and coconut flakes (antioxidants + healthy fats)
 - Water: 19 oz
 - **Lunch:**
 - Tuna salad with olive oil, lemon, spinach, and chickpeas (omega-3s + protein)
 - Water: 19 oz
 - **Dinner:**
 - Beef stir-fry with quinoa and bell peppers (protein + complex carbs)
 - Water: 19 oz
 - **Snack:**
 - Handful of cashews
 - Water: 19 oz
 - **Treat:**
 - Fruit sorbet
-

Day 7:

- **Breakfast:**
 - Scrambled eggs with smoked salmon and avocado (omega-3s + protein)
 - Water: 19 oz
- **Lunch:**

- Spinach and feta wrap on a whole wheat tortilla with hummus (fiber + protein)
 - Water: 19 oz
 - **Dinner:**
 - Grilled pork chops with roasted Brussels sprouts and brown rice (lean protein + complex carbs)
 - Water: 19 oz
 - **Snack:**
 - Apple slices with peanut butter (healthy fats + protein)
 - Water: 19 oz
 - **Treat:**
 - Chia pudding with coconut milk and berries
-

Notes:

- **Calories:** Each meal plan day averages 1,800–2,200 calories.
- **Water:** Daily total ranges from 64–75 oz depending on weight, activity level, and weather.

This plan provides balanced amounts of **omega-3 fatty acids, proteins, complex carbohydrates, antioxidants, and essential vitamins** to support brain health and recovery.

Here's a one-week, low-cost meal plan for a brain-healthy diet, focusing on affordability without sacrificing nutrition. Each day includes breakfast, lunch, dinner, a snack, and a treat, with water recommendations for hydration. The meals aim to be budget-friendly by incorporating affordable protein sources, whole grains, and seasonal produce.

Day 1:

- **Breakfast:**
 - Oatmeal with sliced banana and peanut butter
 - Water: 19 oz
 - **Lunch:**
 - Lentil and vegetable soup with a slice of whole-grain bread
 - Water: 19 oz
 - **Dinner:**
 - Baked potatoes topped with sautéed spinach, black beans, and a sprinkle of cheese
 - Water: 19 oz
 - **Snack:**
 - Carrot sticks with hummus
 - Water: 19 oz
 - **Treat:**
 - Apple slices with a drizzle of honey
-

Day 2:

- **Breakfast:**
 - Scrambled eggs with mixed vegetables (onions, bell peppers), served with toast
 - Water: 19 oz
 - **Lunch:**
 - Rice and beans with chopped tomatoes and cilantro
 - Water: 19 oz
 - **Dinner:**
 - Whole-wheat pasta with marinara sauce, peas, and canned tuna
 - Water: 19 oz
 - **Snack:**
 - Popcorn with a light sprinkle of salt
 - Water: 19 oz
 - **Treat:**
 - Dark chocolate squares
-

Day 3:

- **Breakfast:**
 - Greek yogurt with honey and mixed oats

- Water: 19 oz
 - **Lunch:**
 - Chickpea salad with cucumber, tomatoes, and olive oil dressing
 - Water: 19 oz
 - **Dinner:**
 - Chicken drumsticks (or thighs) with roasted carrots and potatoes
 - Water: 19 oz
 - **Snack:**
 - Celery with peanut butter
 - Water: 19 oz
 - **Treat:**
 - A small fruit smoothie
-

Day 4:

- **Breakfast:**
 - Peanut butter toast with sliced apples
 - Water: 19 oz
- **Lunch:**
 - Egg salad sandwich on whole-wheat bread
 - Water: 19 oz
- **Dinner:**

- Stir-fried cabbage and tofu with brown rice
 - Water: 19 oz
 - **Snack:**
 - Boiled egg with a pinch of salt
 - Water: 19 oz
 - **Treat:**
 - Handful of almonds
-

Day 5:

- **Breakfast:**
 - Whole-wheat pancakes with a side of berries
 - Water: 19 oz
- **Lunch:**
 - Tuna salad wrap with lettuce, tomatoes, and mayo
 - Water: 19 oz
- **Dinner:**
 - Lentil stew with carrots, onions, and garlic, served with a small side salad
 - Water: 19 oz
- **Snack:**
 - A small orange or tangerine
 - Water: 19 oz

- **Treat:**
 - A square of dark chocolate

Day 6:

- **Breakfast:**
 - Smoothie made from banana, spinach, and milk
 - Water: 19 oz
- **Lunch:**
 - Leftover lentil stew (from Day 5) with a side of whole-grain bread
 - Water: 19 oz
- **Dinner:**
 - Baked chicken with roasted sweet potatoes and broccoli
 - Water: 19 oz
- **Snack:**
 - Cottage cheese with a small handful of sunflower seeds
 - Water: 19 oz
- **Treat:**
 - Greek yogurt with a sprinkle of cinnamon

Day 7:

- **Breakfast:**
 - Scrambled eggs with a small side of sautéed spinach and toast

- Water: 19 oz
 - **Lunch:**
 - Veggie and black bean burrito with salsa and avocado
 - Water: 19 oz
 - **Dinner:**
 - Spaghetti with tomato sauce, canned sardines, and a side of steamed green beans
 - Water: 19 oz
 - **Snack:**
 - Apple slices with a handful of mixed nuts (150 calories)
 - Water: 19 oz
 - **Treat:**
 - A slice of watermelon
-

Budgeting Tips:

- **Protein:** Use affordable sources like eggs, beans, and canned fish (sardines, tuna).
- **Grains:** Oats, rice, and whole-wheat bread are cheap and nutritious.
- **Vegetables:** Opt for seasonal produce or frozen veggies to save money.
- **Fats:** Peanut butter and seeds like sunflower seeds provide healthy fats at a low cost.

This meal plan is designed to be flexible, using ingredients that are generally affordable and accessible. You can adapt it based on what's on sale or available in your local market.

If you're looking to incorporate your own meals, use the tables below to develop your meal plan.

Meal Component	Breakfast Option	Lunch Options	Dinner Options	Snacks/treats
Protein				
Healthy Fats				
Carbohydrates				
Fruits/Veggies				
Water				

Weekly planners:

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Breakfast							
Lunch							
Dinner							
Snack/ Treat							

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Breakfast							
Lunch							
Dinner							
Snack/ Treat							

Chapter 10: Recipes

All of the meal plans in chapter nine, if you want to recreate these meals specifically, here is the directions to do just that!

Breakfast Recipes:

Oatmeal with Blueberries, Chia Seeds, and Walnuts

Ingredients:

- 1 cup rolled oats
- 2 cups water or milk (dairy or non-dairy)
- 1/2 cup fresh or frozen blueberries
- 1 tablespoon chia seeds
- 2 tablespoons chopped walnuts
- Optional: honey or maple syrup for sweetness



Instructions:

- 1. Cook the Oats:**
 - In a medium saucepan, bring 2 cups of water or milk to a boil.
 - Stir in the rolled oats.
 - Reduce heat to low and simmer, uncovered, for about 5 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the oats have absorbed the liquid and are tender.
- 2. Prepare the Toppings:**
 - While the oats are cooking, prepare your toppings.
 - If using fresh blueberries, rinse them under cold water. If using frozen, you can add them directly to the cooked oatmeal.
 - Chop the walnuts into smaller pieces if they are not already pre-chopped.
- 3. Assemble the Oatmeal:**
 - Once the oatmeal is cooked, spoon it into bowls.
 - Top each bowl with a handful of blueberries, a tablespoon of chia seeds, and a sprinkle of chopped walnuts.
- 4. Add Sweetener (Optional):**

- If desired, drizzle a little honey or maple syrup over the top for added sweetness.

5. **Serve:**

- Enjoy warm!

Greek Yogurt with Mixed Berries and Sunflower Seeds

Ingredients:

- 1 cup plain Greek yogurt
- 1/2 cup mixed berries (fresh or frozen)
- 2 tablespoons sunflower seeds
- Optional: honey or maple syrup for sweetness



Instructions:

- 1. Prepare the Berries:**
 - If using fresh berries, rinse them under cold water.
 - If using frozen berries, you can add them directly to the yogurt or let them thaw slightly before adding.
- 2. Assemble the Yogurt:**
 - Scoop 1 cup of plain Greek yogurt into a bowl.
 - Top the yogurt with 1/2 cup of mixed berries.
 - Sprinkle 2 tablespoons of sunflower seeds over the top.
- 3. Add Sweetener (Optional):**
 - If you prefer a bit of sweetness, drizzle honey or maple syrup over the yogurt and toppings to taste.
- 4. Serve:**
 - Mix gently if desired, and enjoy!

Scrambled Eggs with Spinach and Turmeric

Ingredients:

- 4 large eggs
- 1 cup fresh spinach (chopped if large leaves)
- 1/2 teaspoon turmeric powder
- 1 tablespoon olive oil or butter
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Optional: a splash of milk or cream for creamier eggs



Instructions:

- 1. Prepare the Ingredients:**
 - Wash and chop the spinach if needed.
 - Crack the eggs into a bowl and beat them with a fork. If using, add a splash of milk or cream for a creamier texture.
- 2. Cook the Spinach:**
 - Heat 1 tablespoon of olive oil or butter in a non-stick skillet over medium heat.
 - Add the chopped spinach to the skillet and sauté for about 1-2 minutes, or until wilted.
- 3. Add the Eggs:**
 - Pour the beaten eggs into the skillet with the spinach.
 - Sprinkle 1/2 teaspoon of turmeric powder over the eggs.
- 4. Scramble the Eggs:**
 - Gently stir the eggs with a spatula, cooking them over medium heat.
 - Continue to stir occasionally until the eggs are cooked to your desired consistency.
- 5. Season and Serve:**
 - Season with salt and pepper to taste.
 - Serve warm and enjoy!

Almond Milk Smoothie with Banana, Spinach, Chia Seeds, and Blueberries

Ingredients:

- 1 cup almond milk
- 1 ripe banana
- 1 cup fresh spinach
- 1/2 cup blueberries (fresh or frozen)
- 1 tablespoon chia seeds
- Optional: 1-2 ice cubes for a chilled smoothie



Instructions:

- 1. Prepare the Ingredients:**
 - Peel the banana and break it into chunks for easier blending.
 - If using fresh spinach, rinse it thoroughly.
- 2. Blend the Smoothie:**
 - In a blender, combine 1 cup of almond milk, the banana chunks, 1 cup of spinach, 1/2 cup of blueberries, and 1 tablespoon of chia seeds.
 - If you prefer a chilled smoothie, add 1-2 ice cubes.
- 3. Blend Until Smooth:**
 - Blend the ingredients on high speed until the mixture is smooth and creamy. This should take about 30-60 seconds.
- 4. Serve:**
 - Pour the smoothie into a glass and enjoy immediately.

Whole Grain Toast with Avocado and Poached Eggs

Ingredients:

- 2 slices whole grain bread
- 1 ripe avocado
- 2 large eggs
- 1 tablespoon white vinegar (for poaching)
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Optional: red pepper flakes or fresh herbs for garnish



Instructions:

1. **Toast the Bread:**
 - Toast the whole grain bread slices to your desired level of crispness.
2. **Prepare the Avocado:**
 - While the bread is toasting, cut the avocado in half, remove the pit, and scoop the flesh into a bowl.
 - Mash the avocado with a fork until smooth. Season with a pinch of salt and pepper to taste.
3. **Poach the Eggs:**
 - Fill a medium saucepan with water and bring it to a simmer over medium heat.
 - Add 1 tablespoon of white vinegar to the simmering water (this helps the eggs hold their shape).
 - Crack each egg into a small bowl, then gently slide the egg into the simmering water.
 - Cook the eggs for about 3-4 minutes, or until the whites are set but the yolks are still runny.
 - Use a slotted spoon to remove the eggs from the water and gently place them on a paper towel to drain.
4. **Assemble the Toast:**
 - Spread the mashed avocado evenly over each slice of toasted bread.
 - Place a poached egg on top of each avocado-topped toast.
5. **Season and Serve:**
 - Season with additional salt and pepper to taste.
 - Garnish with red pepper flakes or fresh herbs if desired.
6. **Enjoy:**

- Serve immediately for a delicious and nutritious meal!

Mixed Berry Smoothie Bowl with Almond Butter, Chia Seeds, and Coconut Flakes

Ingredients:

- 1 cup mixed berries (fresh or frozen)
- 1 banana
- 1/2 cup almond milk (or other non-dairy milk)
- 1 tablespoon almond butter
- 1 tablespoon chia seeds
- 2 tablespoons coconut flakes (unsweetened)
- Optional: additional toppings such as sliced fruit, granola, or nuts



Instructions:

- 1. Prepare the Smoothie Base:**
 - In a blender, combine 1 cup of mixed berries, 1 banana, and 1/2 cup of almond milk.
 - Blend until smooth and creamy. If the mixture is too thick, add a little more almond milk until you reach your desired consistency.
- 2. Add Almond Butter and Chia Seeds:**
 - Add 1 tablespoon of almond butter and 1 tablespoon of chia seeds to the blender.
 - Blend briefly until well combined.
- 3. Assemble the Smoothie Bowl:**
 - Pour the smoothie into a bowl.
 - Sprinkle 2 tablespoons of coconut flakes over the top.
- 4. Add Optional Toppings:**
 - For extra texture and flavor, you can add additional toppings such as sliced fruit, granola, or nuts.
- 5. Serve:**
 - Enjoy immediately with a spoon!

Scrambled Eggs with Smoked Salmon and Avocado

Ingredients:

- 4 large eggs
- 2 ounces smoked salmon (sliced or chopped)
- 1 ripe avocado
- 1 tablespoon olive oil or butter
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Optional: fresh dill or chives for garnish



Instructions:

- 1. Prepare the Avocado:**
 - Slice the avocado in half, remove the pit, and scoop the flesh into a bowl.
 - Mash the avocado with a fork, and season with a pinch of salt and pepper. Set aside.
- 2. Cook the Smoked Salmon:**
 - If you prefer your smoked salmon warmed, lightly sauté it in a skillet over medium heat for 1-2 minutes. This step is optional; smoked salmon is often enjoyed cold.
- 3. Scramble the Eggs:**
 - In a bowl, crack the eggs and beat them with a fork.
 - Heat 1 tablespoon of olive oil or butter in a non-stick skillet over medium heat.
 - Pour the beaten eggs into the skillet and cook, stirring gently with a spatula, until the eggs are just set but still slightly creamy.
- 4. Add the Smoked Salmon:**
 - Gently fold the smoked salmon into the scrambled eggs, mixing until evenly distributed.
- 5. Assemble the Dish:**
 - Plate the scrambled eggs with smoked salmon.
 - Spread or top with the mashed avocado.
- 6. Season and Garnish:**
 - Season with additional salt and pepper if desired.
 - Garnish with fresh dill or chives for an extra touch of flavor and color.
- 7. Serve:**
 - Enjoy immediately!

Oatmeal with Sliced Banana and Peanut Butter

Ingredients:

- 1 cup rolled oats
- 2 cups water or milk (dairy or non-dairy)
- 1 ripe banana
- 2 tablespoons peanut butter
- Optional: honey or maple syrup for extra sweetness



Instructions:

1. **Cook the Oats:**
 - In a medium saucepan, bring 2 cups of water or milk to a boil.
 - Stir in the rolled oats.
 - Reduce heat to low and simmer, uncovered, for about 5 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the oats are tender and the liquid is absorbed.
2. **Prepare the Banana:**
 - While the oats are cooking, peel the banana and slice it into thin rounds.
3. **Add Peanut Butter:**
 - Once the oatmeal is cooked, remove it from the heat.
 - Stir in 2 tablespoons of peanut butter until well combined and creamy.
4. **Assemble the Oatmeal:**
 - Spoon the oatmeal into bowls.
 - Top with the sliced banana.
5. **Add Sweetener (Optional):**
 - If you prefer a sweeter oatmeal, drizzle a little honey or maple syrup over the top.
6. **Serve:**
 - Enjoy warm!

Scrambled Eggs with Mixed Vegetables

Ingredients:

- 4 large eggs
- 1 cup mixed vegetables (such as bell peppers, onions, spinach, and tomatoes; fresh or frozen)
- 1 tablespoon olive oil or butter
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Optional: shredded cheese or fresh herbs for garnish



Instructions:

1. **Prepare the Vegetables:**
 - If using fresh vegetables, wash and chop them into small pieces. For frozen vegetables, ensure they are thawed and drained.
2. **Cook the Vegetables:**
 - Heat 1 tablespoon of olive oil or butter in a non-stick skillet over medium heat.
 - Add the mixed vegetables to the skillet and cook, stirring occasionally, until they are tender and any excess moisture is evaporated (about 5-7 minutes).
3. **Prepare the Eggs:**
 - While the vegetables are cooking, crack the eggs into a bowl and beat them with a fork.
4. **Combine Eggs and Vegetables:**
 - Push the cooked vegetables to one side of the skillet.
 - Pour the beaten eggs into the empty side of the skillet.
 - Let the eggs cook for a minute or two until they start to set, then gently stir and combine with the vegetables.
5. **Scramble the Eggs:**
 - Continue to cook and stir the eggs with the vegetables until they are fully cooked and no longer runny.
6. **Season and Serve:**
 - Season with salt and pepper to taste.
 - Optionally, sprinkle with shredded cheese or fresh herbs for extra flavor.
7. **Enjoy:**

- Serve immediately while warm.

Greek Yogurt with Honey and Mixed Oats

Ingredients:

- 1 cup plain Greek yogurt
- 1/4 cup mixed oats (such as rolled oats, quick oats, a granola mix)
- 1-2 tablespoons honey (to taste)
- Optional: fresh fruit or nuts for extra topping



or

Instructions:

1. **Prepare the Oats:**
 - If you're using raw oats, you might want to toast them lightly in a skillet for a few minutes until they are golden and fragrant. This step is optional but adds a nice crunch.
2. **Assemble the Yogurt:**
 - Scoop 1 cup of plain Greek yogurt into a bowl.
3. **Add the Honey:**
 - Drizzle 1-2 tablespoons of honey over the yogurt. Adjust the amount based on your preference for sweetness.
4. **Top with Oats:**
 - Sprinkle 1/4 cup of mixed oats over the yogurt and honey.
5. **Add Optional Toppings:**
 - For additional flavor and texture, you can add fresh fruit (such as berries or sliced banana) or nuts.
6. **Serve:**
 - Enjoy immediately or let it sit for a few minutes to allow the oats to soften slightly in the yogurt.

Peanut Butter Toast with Sliced Apples

Ingredients:

- 2 slices whole grain bread
- 2 tablespoons peanut butter
- 1-2 apples (any variety you like)
- Optional: a sprinkle of cinnamon or a drizzle of honey



Instructions:

1. **Toast the Bread:**
 - Toast the whole grain bread slices to your desired level of crispness.
2. **Prepare the Apples:**
 - While the bread is toasting, wash and core the apples.
 - Slice the apples into thin, even rounds or wedges.
3. **Spread the Peanut Butter:**
 - Once the bread is toasted, spread 1 tablespoon of peanut butter on each slice of toast.
4. **Add the Apple Slices:**
 - Arrange the apple slices on top of the peanut buttered toast.
5. **Optional Toppings:**
 - For added flavor, you can sprinkle a little cinnamon on top of the apple slices or drizzle a bit of honey over the apples.
6. **Serve:**
 - Enjoy immediately!

Whole-Wheat Pancakes with a Side of Berries

Ingredients:

For the Pancakes:

- 1 cup whole-wheat flour
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup milk (dairy or non-dairy)
- 1 egg
- 2 tablespoons honey or maple syrup
- 2 tablespoons olive oil or melted butter



For the Berry Side:

- 1 cup mixed berries (fresh or frozen; such as strawberries, blueberries, raspberries)

Instructions:

1. Prepare the Pancake Batter:

- In a large bowl, whisk together 1 cup whole-wheat flour, 1 tablespoon baking powder, and 1/2 teaspoon salt.
- In another bowl, combine 1 cup milk, 1 egg, 2 tablespoons honey or maple syrup, and 2 tablespoons olive oil or melted butter.
- Pour the wet ingredients into the dry ingredients and stir until just combined. The batter may be slightly lumpy, which is fine.

2. Cook the Pancakes:

- Heat a non-stick skillet or griddle over medium heat. Lightly grease with a bit of oil or butter if needed.
- Pour 1/4 cup of batter onto the skillet for each pancake. Cook until bubbles form on the surface and the edges look set, about 2-3 minutes.
- Flip and cook for another 1-2 minutes, or until golden brown and cooked through.
- Repeat with the remaining batter.

3. Prepare the Berry Side:

- If using fresh berries, rinse them under cold water.

- If using frozen berries, thaw them slightly or heat gently in a pan if you prefer them warm.
4. **Serve:**
- Stack the pancakes on a plate.
 - Serve with a side of mixed berries.
5. **Optional Toppings:**
- You can drizzle additional honey or maple syrup over the pancakes or add a dollop of Greek yogurt for extra flavor and creaminess.

Banana, Spinach, and Milk Smoothie

Ingredients:

- 1 ripe banana
- 1 cup fresh spinach
- 1 cup milk (dairy or non-dairy)
- Optional: a few ice cubes for a chilled smoothie



Instructions:

1. **Prepare the Ingredients:**
 - Peel the banana and cut it into chunks for easier blending.
 - Wash the spinach thoroughly.
2. **Blend the Smoothie:**
 - In a blender, combine the banana, spinach, and milk.
 - If you prefer a colder smoothie, add a few ice cubes.
3. **Blend Until Smooth:**
 - Blend on high speed until the mixture is smooth and creamy.
4. **Serve:**
 - Pour the smoothie into a glass and enjoy immediately.

Scrambled Eggs with Sautéed Spinach and Toast

Ingredients:

For the Scrambled Eggs:

- 4 large eggs
- 1 tablespoon butter or olive oil
- Salt and pepper to taste

For the Sautéed Spinach:

- 1 cup fresh spinach
- 1 teaspoon olive oil or butter
- Salt and pepper to taste



For the Toast:

- 2 slices whole grain bread

Instructions:

- 1. Prepare the Sautéed Spinach:**
 - Heat 1 teaspoon of olive oil or butter in a skillet over medium heat.
 - Add the fresh spinach to the skillet and cook, stirring occasionally, until wilted and tender, about 2-3 minutes.
 - Season with a pinch of salt and pepper. Set aside.
- 2. Cook the Scrambled Eggs:**
 - Crack the eggs into a bowl and beat them with a fork.
 - Heat 1 tablespoon of butter or olive oil in a non-stick skillet over medium heat.
 - Pour the beaten eggs into the skillet and let them cook for a few moments without stirring.
 - Gently stir the eggs with a spatula, pushing them from the edges toward the center. Continue to cook, stirring occasionally, until the eggs are fully cooked but still soft and creamy.
 - Season with salt and pepper to taste.
- 3. Toast the Bread:**
 - While the eggs are cooking, toast 2 slices of whole grain bread to your desired level of crispness.
- 4. Assemble the Plate:**

- Place the scrambled eggs on a plate.
 - Add the sautéed spinach as a small side.
 - Serve with the toasted bread.
5. **Enjoy:**
- Enjoy your meal warm!

Lunch Recipes:

Grilled Chicken Salad with Spinach, Tomatoes, Avocado, and Olive Oil Dressing

Ingredients:

For the Salad:

- 2 boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- 4 cups fresh spinach
- 1 cup cherry tomatoes, halved
- 1 ripe avocado, sliced
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1 tablespoon olive oil (for grilling chicken)



For the Olive Oil Dressing:

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice or balsamic vinegar
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard (optional)
- Salt and pepper to taste

Instructions:

1. Grill the Chicken:

- Preheat your grill or a grill pan over medium-high heat.
- Brush the chicken breasts with 1 tablespoon of olive oil and season with salt and pepper.
- Grill the chicken for about 6-8 minutes per side, or until fully cooked and the internal temperature reaches 165°F (74°C).
- Remove from the grill and let the chicken rest for a few minutes before slicing it into strips.

2. **Prepare the Salad:**
 - While the chicken is grilling, wash and dry the spinach.
 - Slice the avocado and halve the cherry tomatoes.
3. **Make the Olive Oil Dressing:**
 - In a small bowl, whisk together 2 tablespoons of olive oil, 1 tablespoon of lemon juice or balsamic vinegar, and 1 teaspoon of Dijon mustard (if using). Season with salt and pepper to taste.
4. **Assemble the Salad:**
 - In a large bowl, combine the fresh spinach, cherry tomatoes, and avocado slices.
 - Top with the sliced grilled chicken.
 - Drizzle with the olive oil dressing.
5. **Serve:**
 - Toss gently to combine or serve the dressing on the side.
 - Enjoy immediately!

Lentil Soup with Carrots and Celery

Ingredients:

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 large onion, diced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 3 carrots, peeled and diced
- 2 celery stalks, diced
- 1 cup dried lentils (green or brown), rinsed
- 6 cups vegetable or chicken broth
- 1 can (14.5 ounces) diced tomatoes
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1 bay leaf
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Optional: 1 cup chopped spinach or kale



Instructions:

- 1. Sauté the Vegetables:**
 - In a large pot, heat 1 tablespoon of olive oil over medium heat.
 - Add the diced onion and cook until translucent, about 5 minutes.
 - Stir in the minced garlic and cook for another 1 minute until fragrant.
 - Add the diced carrots and celery. Cook for about 5 minutes, stirring occasionally.
- 2. Add Lentils and Broth:**
 - Stir in the rinsed lentils, vegetable or chicken broth, and diced tomatoes (with their juice).
 - Add the ground cumin, dried thyme, bay leaf, and season with salt and pepper to taste.
- 3. Simmer the Soup:**
 - Bring the mixture to a boil, then reduce the heat to low.
 - Cover and simmer for about 25-30 minutes, or until the lentils are tender.
- 4. Add Greens (Optional):**
 - If using, stir in the chopped spinach or kale and cook for an additional 5 minutes until wilted.

5. Adjust Seasoning and Serve:

- Taste the soup and adjust the seasoning with additional salt and pepper if needed.
- Remove the bay leaf before serving.

6. Enjoy:

- Serve hot and enjoy!

Turkey sandwich with avocado, lettuce, and tomato on whole-grain



Ingredients:

- 2 slices whole-grain bread
- 3-4 slices turkey breast (deli or cooked)
- 1/2 avocado, sliced
- 2-3 lettuce leaves
- 2-3 tomato slices
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Optional: mustard or mayo

Instructions:

1. **Prepare the Bread:**
 - If desired, lightly toast the whole-grain bread slices for added texture.
2. **Assemble the Sandwich:**
 - Spread mustard or mayo on one or both slices of bread, if using.
 - Layer the turkey slices evenly on one slice of the bread.
 - Arrange the avocado slices on top of the turkey.
 - Add the lettuce leaves and tomato slices on top of the avocado.
3. **Season:**
 - Sprinkle a little salt and pepper on the tomato slices for added flavor.
4. **Complete the Sandwich:**
 - Place the second slice of bread on top to complete the sandwich.
5. **Serve:**
 - Cut the sandwich in half if desired and serve immediately.

Quinoa Salad with Black Beans, Corn, Avocado, and Lime Vinaigrette

Ingredients:

For the Salad:

- 1 cup quinoa
- 1 can (15 ounces) black beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 cup corn kernels (fresh, frozen, or canned)
- 1 ripe avocado, diced
- 1/4 cup chopped red onion (optional)
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh cilantro (optional)



For the Lime Vinaigrette:

- 1/4 cup lime juice (about 2 limes)
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 1 teaspoon honey or maple syrup (optional, for sweetness)
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
- Salt and pepper to taste

Instructions:

1. Cook the Quinoa:

- Rinse 1 cup of quinoa under cold water.
- In a medium saucepan, bring 2 cups of water to a boil.
- Add the quinoa, reduce heat to low, and cover.
- Simmer for about 15 minutes, or until the quinoa is cooked and the water is absorbed.
- Remove from heat and let it sit for 5 minutes. Fluff with a fork and let it cool.

2. Prepare the Lime Vinaigrette:

- In a small bowl, whisk together 1/4 cup lime juice, 1/4 cup olive oil, minced garlic, ground cumin, and honey or maple syrup (if using).
- Season with salt and pepper to taste.

3. Assemble the Salad:

- In a large bowl, combine the cooked and cooled quinoa, black beans, corn, diced avocado, and chopped red onion (if using).
- Pour the lime vinaigrette over the salad and toss gently to coat all the ingredients.

4. Add Fresh Herbs (Optional):

- Stir in the chopped cilantro if desired.

5. Serve:

- Enjoy immediately or chill in the refrigerator for about 30 minutes to let the flavors meld.

Chickpea Salad with Cucumber, Tomatoes, and Feta Cheese

Ingredients:

- 1 can (15 ounces) chickpeas, drained and rinsed
- 1 cucumber, diced
- 1 cup cherry tomatoes, halved
- 1/2 cup feta cheese, crumbled
- 1/4 cup red onion, finely diced (optional)
- 1/4 cup fresh parsley or basil, chopped (optional)



For the Dressing:

- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice (about 1 lemon)
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- Salt and pepper to taste

Instructions:

- 1. Prepare the Ingredients:**
 - Drain and rinse the chickpeas.
 - Dice the cucumber and halve the cherry tomatoes.
 - Crumble the feta cheese.
- 2. Make the Dressing:**
 - In a small bowl, whisk together 3 tablespoons olive oil, 2 tablespoons lemon juice, Dijon mustard, and minced garlic.
 - Season with salt and pepper to taste.
- 3. Assemble the Salad:**
 - In a large bowl, combine the chickpeas, diced cucumber, cherry tomatoes, crumbled feta cheese, and red onion (if using).
 - Pour the dressing over the salad and toss gently to coat all ingredients.
- 4. Add Fresh Herbs (Optional):**
 - Stir in the chopped parsley or basil if desired.
- 5. Serve:**

- Enjoy immediately or chill in the refrigerator for about 30 minutes to let the flavors meld.

Tuna Salad with Olive Oil, Lemon, Spinach, and Chickpeas

Ingredients:

- 1 can (5-6 ounces) tuna in olive oil, drained (or use tuna packed in water, but add extra olive oil)
- 1 cup fresh spinach, chopped
- 1 can (15 ounces) chickpeas, drained and rinsed
- 1/4 cup red onion, finely diced (optional)
- 1/4 cup fresh parsley or basil, chopped (optional)



For the Dressing:

- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice (about 1 lemon)
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard (optional)
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- Salt and pepper to taste

Instructions:

- 1. Prepare the Ingredients:**
 - Drain the tuna and place it in a large bowl.
 - Chop the fresh spinach.
 - Drain and rinse the chickpeas.
- 2. Make the Dressing:**
 - In a small bowl, whisk together 3 tablespoons olive oil, 2 tablespoons lemon juice, Dijon mustard (if using), and minced garlic.
 - Season with salt and pepper to taste.
- 3. Assemble the Salad:**
 - Add the chopped spinach and chickpeas to the bowl with the tuna.
 - Pour the dressing over the salad and toss gently to combine all ingredients.
- 4. Add Optional Ingredients:**
 - Stir in the diced red onion and chopped parsley or basil if desired.
- 5. Serve:**

- Enjoy immediately or chill in the refrigerator for about 30 minutes to let the flavors meld.

Spinach and Feta Wrap with Hummus

Ingredients:

- 1 whole wheat tortilla
- 1/4 cup hummus (store-bought or homemade)
- 1 cup fresh spinach leaves
- 1/4 cup crumbled feta cheese
- 1/4 cup sliced red bell pepper (optional)
- 1/4 cup sliced cucumber (optional)
- 1/4 cup sliced red onion (optional)
- Salt and pepper to taste



Instructions:

1. **Prepare the Tortilla:**
 - Lay the whole wheat tortilla flat on a clean surface.
2. **Spread the Hummus:**
 - Evenly spread 1/4 cup of hummus over the tortilla, leaving a small border around the edges.
3. **Add the Spinach and Feta:**
 - Place 1 cup of fresh spinach leaves on top of the hummus.
 - Sprinkle 1/4 cup of crumbled feta cheese over the spinach.
4. **Add Optional Veggies:**
 - If using, layer on the sliced red bell pepper, cucumber, and red onion.
5. **Season:**
 - Sprinkle a little salt and pepper over the top if desired.
6. **Wrap It Up:**
 - Carefully fold in the sides of the tortilla and then roll it up from one end to the other, ensuring all the fillings are wrapped tightly.
7. **Serve:**

- Cut the wrap in half if desired and enjoy immediately, or wrap it in foil or plastic wrap for a convenient on-the-go meal.

Lentil and Vegetable Soup

Ingredients:

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 large onion, diced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 3 carrots, peeled and diced
- 2 celery stalks, diced
- 1 red bell pepper, diced
- 1 cup dried lentils (green or brown), rinsed
- 6 cups vegetable or chicken broth
- 1 can (14.5 ounces) diced tomatoes
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1 bay leaf
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1 cup chopped spinach or kale (optional)



For Serving:

- 1 slice whole-grain bread per serving

Instructions:

- 1. Sauté the Vegetables:**
 - Heat 1 tablespoon of olive oil in a large pot over medium heat.
 - Add the diced onion and cook until translucent, about 5 minutes.
 - Stir in the minced garlic and cook for another 1 minute until fragrant.
 - Add the diced carrots, celery, and red bell pepper. Cook for about 5 minutes, stirring occasionally.
- 2. Add Lentils and Broth:**
 - Stir in the rinsed lentils, vegetable or chicken broth, and diced tomatoes (with their juice).
 - Add the ground cumin, dried thyme, bay leaf, and season with salt and pepper to taste.
- 3. Simmer the Soup:**
 - Bring the mixture to a boil, then reduce the heat to low.

- Cover and simmer for about 25-30 minutes, or until the lentils are tender.
- 4. **Add Greens (Optional):**
 - If using, stir in the chopped spinach or kale and cook for an additional 5 minutes until wilted.
- 5. **Adjust Seasoning and Serve:**
 - Taste the soup and adjust the seasoning with additional salt and pepper if needed.
 - Remove the bay leaf before serving.
- 6. **Serve with Bread:**
 - Ladle the soup into bowls and serve with a slice of whole-grain bread.

Rice and Beans with Chopped Tomatoes and Cilantro

Ingredients:

- 1 cup white or brown rice
- 1 can (15 ounces) black beans or kidney beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 cup chopped tomatoes (fresh or canned)
- 1/4 cup fresh cilantro, chopped
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 clove garlic, minced (optional)
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin (optional)
- Salt and pepper to taste



Instructions:

- 1. Cook the Rice:**
 - Rinse the rice under cold water.
 - In a medium saucepan, bring 2 cups of water to a boil.
 - Add the rice, reduce heat to low, cover, and simmer according to package instructions (usually about 15-20 minutes for white rice and 40-45 minutes for brown rice).
 - Once cooked, fluff with a fork and set aside.
- 2. Prepare the Beans:**
 - Heat 1 tablespoon of olive oil in a large pan over medium heat.
 - If using, add minced garlic and cook for 1 minute until fragrant.
 - Stir in the drained and rinsed beans and cook for about 5 minutes, just until heated through.
- 3. Combine Ingredients:**
 - Add the chopped tomatoes and ground cumin (if using) to the beans.
 - Cook for another 3-4 minutes, allowing the flavors to meld.
- 4. Mix with Rice:**
 - Stir the cooked rice into the bean and tomato mixture.
 - Season with salt and pepper to taste.
 - Remove from heat and stir in the chopped cilantro.
- 5. Serve:**
 - Serve hot, and enjoy as a side dish or a main course.

Chickpea Salad with Cucumber, Tomatoes, and Olive Oil Dressing

Ingredients:

- 1 can (15 ounces) chickpeas, drained and rinsed
- 1 cucumber, diced
- 1 cup cherry tomatoes, halved
- 1/4 cup red onion, finely diced (optional)
- 1/4 cup fresh parsley or basil, chopped (optional)



For the Olive Oil Dressing:

- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice (about 1 lemon) or red wine vinegar
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard (optional)
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- Salt and pepper to taste

Instructions:

- 1. Prepare the Ingredients:**
 - Drain and rinse the chickpeas.
 - Dice the cucumber and halve the cherry tomatoes.
 - Finely dice the red onion (if using) and chop the fresh parsley or basil (if using).
- 2. Make the Dressing:**
 - In a small bowl, whisk together 3 tablespoons olive oil, 2 tablespoons lemon juice (or red wine vinegar), Dijon mustard (if using), and minced garlic.
 - Season with salt and pepper to taste.
- 3. Assemble the Salad:**
 - In a large bowl, combine the chickpeas, diced cucumber, cherry tomatoes, and red onion (if using).
 - Pour the olive oil dressing over the salad and toss gently to coat all ingredients.
- 4. Add Fresh Herbs (Optional):**
 - Stir in the chopped parsley or basil if desired.
- 5. Serve:**

- Enjoy immediately or chill in the refrigerator for about 30 minutes to let the flavors meld.

Egg Salad Sandwich on Whole-Wheat Bread

Ingredients:

- 6 large eggs
- 1/4 cup mayonnaise
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh chives or parsley (optional)
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 4 slices whole-wheat bread
- Lettuce leaves (optional)
- Tomato slices (optional)



Instructions:

- 1. Prepare the Eggs:**
 - Place the eggs in a medium saucepan and cover with cold water.
 - Bring the water to a boil over medium-high heat.
 - Once boiling, cover the pan, remove from heat, and let the eggs sit for 12 minutes.
 - After 12 minutes, transfer the eggs to a bowl of ice water and let them cool for a few minutes.
 - Peel the eggs and chop them into small pieces.
- 2. Make the Egg Salad:**
 - In a large bowl, combine the chopped eggs, mayonnaise, Dijon mustard, and chopped chives or parsley (if using).
 - Season with salt and pepper to taste.
 - Stir until everything is well mixed.
- 3. Assemble the Sandwich:**
 - Spread the egg salad evenly over two slices of whole-wheat bread.
 - Add lettuce leaves and tomato slices on top if desired.
 - Place the remaining slices of bread on top to complete the sandwiches.
- 4. Serve:**

- Cut the sandwiches in half if desired and serve immediately.

Tuna Salad Wrap with Lettuce, Tomatoes, and Mayo

Ingredients:

- 1 can (5-6 ounces) tuna, drained
- 2 tablespoons mayonnaise
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard (optional)
- 1/4 cup red onion, finely diced (optional)
- 1 celery stalk, finely diced (optional)
- 1/4 cup fresh parsley or dill, chopped (optional)
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1 large tortilla wrap
- 1-2 large lettuce leaves
- 1 tomato, sliced



Instructions:

- 1. Prepare the Tuna Salad:**
 - In a medium bowl, combine the drained tuna, mayonnaise, and Dijon mustard (if using).
 - Stir in the diced red onion and celery (if using) and chopped parsley or dill (if using).
 - Season with salt and pepper to taste and mix until well combined.
- 2. Assemble the Wrap:**
 - Lay the tortilla wrap flat on a clean surface.
 - Place the lettuce leaves in the center of the tortilla.
 - Spoon the tuna salad mixture over the lettuce.
 - Top with tomato slices.
- 3. Wrap It Up:**
 - Fold in the sides of the tortilla and roll it up tightly from one end to the other.
- 4. Serve:**
 - Cut the wrap in half if desired and enjoy immediately, or wrap it in foil or plastic wrap for a convenient on-the-go meal.

Veggie and Black Bean Burrito with Salsa and Avocado

Ingredients:

- 1 can (15 ounces) black beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 cup bell peppers, diced (any color)
- 1 cup onions, diced
- 1 cup zucchini, diced
- 1 cup corn kernels (fresh, frozen, or canned)
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 2 large tortillas
- 1/2 cup salsa (store-bought or homemade)
- 1 avocado, sliced
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh cilantro (optional)
- Lime wedges for serving (optional)



Instructions:

- 1. Cook the Vegetables:**
 - Heat 1 tablespoon of olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat.
 - Add the diced bell peppers, onions, and zucchini. Cook for about 5-7 minutes, until the vegetables are tender.
 - Stir in the corn kernels, ground cumin, chili powder, and season with salt and pepper.
 - Cook for another 3-4 minutes until everything is well combined and heated through.
- 2. Prepare the Beans:**
 - Stir the drained and rinsed black beans into the skillet with the vegetables. Cook for an additional 2-3 minutes until the beans are warmed through.
- 3. Assemble the Burritos:**
 - Warm the tortillas in a dry skillet or microwave to make them more pliable.
 - Spread a spoonful of salsa down the center of each tortilla.
 - Spoon the veggie and black bean mixture on top of the salsa.
 - Add slices of avocado and sprinkle with chopped cilantro if using.

4. **Wrap the Burritos:**

- Fold in the sides of the tortilla and then roll it up from the bottom to enclose the filling.

5. **Serve:**

- Serve the burritos warm, with additional salsa and lime wedges on the side if desired.

Dinner:

Baked Salmon with Quinoa and Steamed Broccoli

Ingredients:

For the Baked Salmon:

- 4 salmon fillets (about 6 ounces each)
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice (about 1 lemon)
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Lemon slices for garnish (optional)



For the Quinoa:

- 1 cup quinoa
- 2 cups water or vegetable broth
- 1/2 teaspoon salt (if using water)

For the Steamed Broccoli:

- 1 head of broccoli, cut into florets
- 1/4 teaspoon salt (optional)

Instructions:

1. Prepare the Baked Salmon:

- Preheat your oven to 400°F (200°C).
- Line a baking sheet with parchment paper or lightly grease it.
- In a small bowl, mix together olive oil, lemon juice, minced garlic, dried oregano, dried thyme, salt, and pepper.
- Place the salmon fillets on the prepared baking sheet.
- Brush or spoon the olive oil mixture over the salmon fillets.
- If desired, place lemon slices on top of the salmon.

- Bake for 12-15 minutes, or until the salmon flakes easily with a fork. Cooking time may vary depending on the thickness of the fillets.
2. **Cook the Quinoa:**
- While the salmon is baking, rinse the quinoa under cold water.
 - In a medium saucepan, bring 2 cups of water or vegetable broth to a boil.
 - Add the quinoa and 1/2 teaspoon salt (if using water).
 - Reduce the heat to low, cover, and simmer for 15 minutes, or until the quinoa is tender and the liquid is absorbed.
 - Remove from heat and let it sit covered for 5 minutes. Fluff with a fork before serving.
3. **Steam the Broccoli:**
- While the quinoa is cooking, bring a pot of water to a boil (a steamer basket or insert is ideal for this).
 - Place the broccoli florets in the steamer basket over the boiling water, cover, and steam for 5-7 minutes, or until tender but still crisp.
 - Season with a pinch of salt if desired.
4. **Serve:**
- Place a portion of quinoa on each plate.
 - Top with a salmon fillet.
 - Add a serving of steamed broccoli on the side.
 - Garnish with additional lemon slices if desired.

Stir-Fried Tofu with Brown Rice and Mixed Vegetables

Ingredients:

For the Stir-Fried Tofu:

- 1 block (14 ounces) firm tofu, drained and pressed
- 2 tablespoons soy sauce or tamari
- 1 tablespoon sesame oil (or any cooking oil)
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tablespoon fresh ginger, minced
- 2 tablespoons hoisin sauce (optional for added sweetness)
- 1 tablespoon rice vinegar or apple cider vinegar
- 1/4 cup water or vegetable broth



For the Mixed Vegetables:

- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 1 cup bell peppers, sliced (any color)
- 1 cup broccoli florets
- 1 cup carrots, sliced
- 1 cup snap peas or snow peas
- 2 tablespoons soy sauce or tamari
- 1 teaspoon sesame seeds (optional)

For the Brown Rice:

- 1 cup brown rice
- 2 cups water or vegetable broth

Instructions:

1. **Prepare the Brown Rice:**
 - Rinse the brown rice under cold water.
 - In a medium saucepan, bring 2 cups of water or vegetable broth to a boil.
 - Add the brown rice, reduce heat to low, cover, and simmer for 40-45 minutes, or until the rice is tender and the liquid is absorbed.

- Remove from heat and let it sit covered for 10 minutes. Fluff with a fork before serving.
2. **Prepare the Tofu:**
- Cut the tofu into bite-sized cubes.
 - Heat sesame oil (or any cooking oil) in a large skillet or wok over medium-high heat.
 - Add the tofu cubes and cook until golden brown on all sides, about 5-7 minutes. Remove tofu from the pan and set aside.
3. **Stir-Fry the Vegetables:**
- In the same skillet or wok, add 1 tablespoon of vegetable oil.
 - Add the garlic and ginger, and cook for about 30 seconds until fragrant.
 - Add the bell peppers, broccoli, carrots, and snap peas. Stir-fry for 5-7 minutes until the vegetables are tender-crisp.
4. **Combine Tofu and Vegetables:**
- Return the tofu to the skillet with the vegetables.
 - Add soy sauce (or tamari), hoisin sauce (if using), rice vinegar (or apple cider vinegar), and water (or vegetable broth).
 - Stir well to coat the tofu and vegetables in the sauce and cook for an additional 2-3 minutes until everything is heated through.
5. **Serve:**
- Serve the stir-fried tofu and vegetables over a bed of brown rice.
 - Garnish with sesame seeds if desired.

Grilled Shrimp with Roasted Sweet Potatoes and Sautéed Kale

Ingredients:

For the Grilled Shrimp:

- 1 pound large shrimp, peeled and deveined
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice (about 1 lemon)
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper (optional for heat)
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Lemon wedges for serving (optional)



For the Roasted Sweet Potatoes:

- 2 large sweet potatoes, peeled and diced
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 teaspoon ground paprika
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon (optional)
- Salt and pepper to taste

For the Sautéed Kale:

- 1 bunch kale, stems removed and leaves chopped
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/4 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes (optional for heat)
- Salt and pepper to taste

Instructions:

1. Prepare the Sweet Potatoes:

- Preheat your oven to 400°F (200°C).
- In a large bowl, toss the diced sweet potatoes with 2 tablespoons of olive oil, paprika, garlic powder, cinnamon (if using), salt, and pepper.

- Spread the sweet potatoes in a single layer on a baking sheet.
 - Roast for 25-30 minutes, or until tender and lightly browned, tossing halfway through cooking.
- 2. Prepare the Grilled Shrimp:**
- In a large bowl, combine the olive oil, minced garlic, lemon juice, paprika, cumin, cayenne pepper (if using), salt, and pepper.
 - Add the shrimp and toss to coat. Let it marinate for about 10-15 minutes.
 - Preheat your grill or grill pan to medium-high heat.
 - Thread the shrimp onto skewers (if using a grill) or place them directly on the grill pan.
 - Grill for 2-3 minutes per side, or until the shrimp are opaque and cooked through.
- 3. Prepare the Sautéed Kale:**
- While the shrimp and sweet potatoes are cooking, heat 1 tablespoon of olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat.
 - Add the minced garlic and crushed red pepper flakes (if using). Cook for about 30 seconds until fragrant.
 - Add the chopped kale and sauté for 4-5 minutes, or until the kale is wilted and tender.
 - Season with salt and pepper to taste.
- 4. Serve:**
- Arrange the roasted sweet potatoes and sautéed kale on a plate.
 - Top with the grilled shrimp.
 - Garnish with lemon wedges if desired.

Grilled Chicken Breast with Roasted Vegetables and Rice

Ingredients:

For the Grilled Chicken Breast:

- 4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice (about 1 lemon)
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1 teaspoon dried basil
- 1/2 teaspoon paprika
- Salt and pepper to taste



For the Roasted Vegetables:

- 2 cups baby carrots or carrots, peeled and cut into sticks
- 1 red bell pepper, sliced
- 1 yellow bell pepper, sliced
- 1 zucchini, sliced
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
- Salt and pepper to taste

For the Rice:

- 1 cup rice
- 2 cups water or vegetable broth
- 1/2 teaspoon salt (if using water)

Instructions:

1. **Prepare the Wild Rice:**
 - Rinse the wild rice under cold water.
 - In a medium saucepan, bring 2 1/2 cups of water or vegetable broth to a boil.
 - Add the wild rice and 1/2 teaspoon salt (if using water).

- Reduce the heat to low, cover, and simmer for 40-45 minutes, or until the rice is tender and the liquid is absorbed.
 - Remove from heat and let it sit covered for 10 minutes. Fluff with a fork before serving.
2. **Prepare the Roasted Vegetables:**
- Preheat your oven to 425°F (220°C).
 - In a large bowl, toss the baby carrots, bell peppers, and zucchini with 1 tablespoon olive oil, dried thyme, garlic powder, salt, and pepper.
 - Spread the vegetables in a single layer on a baking sheet.
 - Roast for 20-25 minutes, or until tender and lightly caramelized, tossing halfway through.
3. **Prepare the Grilled Chicken Breast:**
- In a small bowl, mix together olive oil, minced garlic, lemon juice, dried oregano, dried basil, paprika, salt, and pepper.
 - Rub the mixture evenly over the chicken breasts.
 - Preheat your grill or grill pan to medium-high heat.
 - Grill the chicken breasts for 6-8 minutes per side, or until the chicken is cooked through and has nice grill marks. The internal temperature should reach 165°F (74°C).
4. **Serve:**
- Arrange the grilled chicken breasts on a plate.
 - Serve with a portion of wild rice and roasted vegetables on the side.

Baked Cod with Brown Rice and Steamed Asparagus

Ingredients:

For the Baked Cod:

- 4 cod fillets (about 6 ounces each)
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice (about 1 lemon)
- 1 teaspoon dried parsley
- 1/2 teaspoon dried thyme
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Lemon wedges for garnish (optional)



For the Brown Rice:

- 1 cup brown rice
- 2 cups water or vegetable broth
- 1/2 teaspoon salt (if using water)

For the Steamed Asparagus:

- 1 bunch asparagus, trimmed
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1/4 teaspoon salt (optional)
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper (optional)

Instructions:

1. Prepare the Brown Rice:

- Rinse the brown rice under cold water.
- In a medium saucepan, bring 2 cups of water or vegetable broth to a boil.
- Add the brown rice and 1/2 teaspoon salt (if using water).
- Reduce the heat to low, cover, and simmer for 40-45 minutes, or until the rice is tender and the liquid is absorbed.
- Remove from heat and let it sit covered for 10 minutes. Fluff with a fork before serving.

2. Prepare the Baked Cod:

- Preheat your oven to 400°F (200°C).
- Line a baking sheet with parchment paper or lightly grease it.
- In a small bowl, mix together olive oil, minced garlic, lemon juice, dried parsley, dried thyme, salt, and pepper.
- Place the cod fillets on the prepared baking sheet.
- Brush or spoon the olive oil mixture over the cod fillets.
- Bake for 12-15 minutes, or until the cod is opaque and flakes easily with a fork. Cooking time may vary depending on the thickness of the fillets.
- Garnish with lemon wedges if desired.

3. Prepare the Steamed Asparagus:

- While the cod is baking, bring a pot of water to a boil (a steamer basket or insert is ideal for this).
- Place the asparagus in the steamer basket over the boiling water, cover, and steam for 4-6 minutes, or until tender-crisp.
- Toss with olive oil and season with salt and pepper if desired.

4. Serve:

- Arrange a portion of brown rice on each plate.
- Top with a baked cod fillet.
- Add a serving of steamed asparagus on the side.

Beef Stir-Fry with Quinoa and Bell Peppers

Ingredients:

For the Beef Stir-Fry:

- 1 pound beef sirloin or flank steak, thinly sliced against the grain
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil or sesame oil
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tablespoon fresh ginger, minced
- 2 bell peppers (red and green), sliced
- 1 medium onion, sliced
- 1 cup snap peas or snow peas
- 1/4 cup soy sauce or tamari
- 2 tablespoons hoisin sauce (optional for added sweetness)
- 1 tablespoon rice vinegar or apple cider vinegar
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch mixed with 2 tablespoons water (for thickening, optional)
- 1/4 teaspoon red pepper flakes (optional for heat)
- Sesame seeds for garnish (optional)



For the Quinoa:

- 1 cup quinoa
- 2 cups water or vegetable broth
- 1/2 teaspoon salt (if using water)

Instructions:

1. Prepare the Quinoa:

- Rinse the quinoa under cold water.
- In a medium saucepan, bring 2 cups of water or vegetable broth to a boil.
- Add the quinoa and 1/2 teaspoon salt (if using water).
- Reduce the heat to low, cover, and simmer for 15 minutes, or until the quinoa is tender and the liquid is absorbed.
- Remove from heat and let it sit covered for 5 minutes. Fluff with a fork before serving.

2. Prepare the Beef Stir-Fry:

- Heat 2 tablespoons of vegetable oil or sesame oil in a large skillet or wok over medium-high heat.
- Add the minced garlic and ginger, and cook for about 30 seconds until fragrant.
- Add the sliced beef to the skillet and stir-fry for 3-4 minutes, or until browned and cooked through. Remove the beef from the skillet and set aside.
- In the same skillet, add a little more oil if needed, and stir-fry the bell peppers, onion, and snap peas for 4-5 minutes, or until they are tender-crisp.
- Return the beef to the skillet with the vegetables.
- Add the soy sauce, hoisin sauce (if using), rice vinegar, and red pepper flakes (if using). Stir well to coat the beef and vegetables in the sauce.
- If you want a thicker sauce, stir in the cornstarch mixture and cook for an additional 1-2 minutes until the sauce has thickened.

3. Serve:

- Divide the cooked quinoa among plates.
- Top with the beef stir-fry and vegetables.
- Garnish with sesame seeds if desired.

Grilled Pork Chops with Roasted Brussels Sprouts and Brown Rice

Ingredients:

For the Grilled Pork Chops:

- 4 bone-in or boneless pork chops (about 6 ounces each)
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar or white wine vinegar
- 1 teaspoon dried rosemary or thyme
- 1/2 teaspoon paprika
- Salt and pepper to taste



For the Roasted Brussels Sprouts:

- 1 pound Brussels sprouts, trimmed and halved
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1/2 teaspoon onion powder
- Salt and pepper to taste

For the Brown Rice:

- 1 cup brown rice
- 2 cups water or vegetable broth
- 1/2 teaspoon salt (if using water)

Instructions:

1. Prepare the Brown Rice:

- Rinse the brown rice under cold water.
- In a medium saucepan, bring 2 cups of water or vegetable broth to a boil.
- Add the brown rice and 1/2 teaspoon salt (if using water).
- Reduce the heat to low, cover, and simmer for 40-45 minutes, or until the rice is tender and the liquid is absorbed.
- Remove from heat and let it sit covered for 10 minutes. Fluff with a fork before serving.

2. Prepare the Roasted Brussels Sprouts:

- Preheat your oven to 425°F (220°C).
- In a large bowl, toss the halved Brussels sprouts with 2 tablespoons of olive oil, garlic powder, onion powder, salt, and pepper.
- Spread the Brussels sprouts in a single layer on a baking sheet.
- Roast for 20-25 minutes, or until they are tender and caramelized, tossing halfway through.

3. Prepare the Grilled Pork Chops:

- In a small bowl, mix together olive oil, minced garlic, Dijon mustard, apple cider vinegar, dried rosemary (or thyme), paprika, salt, and pepper.
- Rub the mixture evenly over the pork chops.
- Preheat your grill or grill pan to medium-high heat.
- Grill the pork chops for 4-5 minutes per side, or until the internal temperature reaches 145°F (63°C) and the chops have nice grill marks. Let the pork chops rest for 5 minutes before serving.

4. Serve:

- Arrange a portion of brown rice on each plate.
- Top with grilled pork chops.
- Add a serving of roasted Brussels sprouts on the side.

Baked Potatoes with Sautéed Spinach, Black Beans, and Cheese

Ingredients:

For the Baked Potatoes:

- 4 medium russet potatoes
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- Salt and pepper to taste

For the Topping:

- 2 cups fresh spinach, chopped
- 1 can (15 ounces) black beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1/4 teaspoon chili powder (optional)
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1/2 cup shredded cheese (cheddar, Monterey Jack, or your choice)



Instructions:

1. Prepare the Baked Potatoes:

- Preheat your oven to 400°F (200°C).
- Wash and scrub the potatoes. Pat them dry with a paper towel.
- Rub the potatoes with olive oil and season with salt and pepper.
- Place the potatoes directly on the oven rack or on a baking sheet.
- Bake for 45-60 minutes, or until the potatoes are tender when pierced with a fork. The baking time may vary depending on the size of the potatoes.

2. Prepare the Topping:

- While the potatoes are baking, heat 1 tablespoon of olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat.
- Add the minced garlic and cook for about 30 seconds, until fragrant.
- Add the chopped spinach to the skillet and cook for 2-3 minutes, until wilted.

- Stir in the black beans, ground cumin, chili powder (if using), salt, and pepper. Cook for an additional 2-3 minutes until the beans are heated through.

3. Assemble and Serve:

- Once the potatoes are done baking, remove them from the oven and let them cool slightly.
- Cut a slit down the center of each potato and gently fluff the insides with a fork.
- Top each potato with a portion of the sautéed spinach and black bean mixture.
- Sprinkle with shredded cheese.
- Return the topped potatoes to the oven for 5 minutes, or until the cheese is melted and bubbly.

Whole-wheat pasta with Marinara Sauce, Peas, and Canned Tuna

Ingredients:

- 8 ounces whole-wheat pasta (penne, fusilli, or spaghetti)
- 1 can (15 ounces) marinara sauce
- 1 cup frozen peas
- 1 can (5-7 ounces) tuna in water, drained
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/4 teaspoon dried basil (optional)
- 1/4 teaspoon dried oregano (optional)
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Grated Parmesan cheese for serving (optional)



Instructions:

- 1. Cook the Pasta:**
 - Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil.
 - Add the whole-wheat pasta and cook according to package instructions until al dente.
 - About 2 minutes before the pasta is done, add the frozen peas to the pot.
 - Drain the pasta and peas, and set aside.
- 2. Prepare the Sauce:**
 - While the pasta is cooking, heat 2 tablespoons of olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat.
 - Add the minced garlic and cook for about 30 seconds, until fragrant.
 - Stir in the marinara sauce, and add dried basil and oregano if using. Simmer for 5 minutes to heat through and blend the flavors.
 - Gently fold in the drained tuna and cook for an additional 2-3 minutes until the tuna is warmed through.
- 3. Combine and Serve:**
 - Add the cooked pasta and peas to the skillet with the marinara sauce and tuna. Stir to combine and heat through.
 - Season with salt and pepper to taste.
 - Serve hot, with grated Parmesan cheese if desired.

Chicken Drumsticks (or Thighs) with Roasted Carrots and Potatoes

Ingredients:

For the Chicken:

- 4-6 chicken drumsticks (or thighs)
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 tablespoon paprika
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon onion powder
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme or rosemary
- Salt and pepper to taste



For the Roasted Carrots and Potatoes:

- 4 medium carrots, peeled and cut into chunks
- 4 medium potatoes, peeled and cut into chunks
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme or rosemary
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
- Salt and pepper to taste

Instructions:

- 1. Prepare the Oven and Chicken:**
 - Preheat your oven to 425°F (220°C).
 - In a large bowl, mix together olive oil, paprika, garlic powder, onion powder, dried thyme (or rosemary), salt, and pepper.
 - Rub the mixture evenly over the chicken drumsticks (or thighs).
- 2. Prepare the Vegetables:**
 - In another large bowl, toss the carrot and potato chunks with olive oil, dried thyme (or rosemary), garlic powder, salt, and pepper.
 - Spread the vegetables in a single layer on a large baking sheet or roasting pan.
- 3. Roast the Chicken and Vegetables:**
 - Place the seasoned chicken drumsticks (or thighs) on top of the vegetables on the baking sheet.

- Roast in the preheated oven for 35-45 minutes, or until the chicken reaches an internal temperature of 165°F (74°C) and the vegetables are tender and golden brown. The cooking time may vary depending on the size of the chicken pieces and the cut of the vegetables.

4. Serve:

- Remove the chicken and vegetables from the oven and let them rest for a few minutes.
- Serve the chicken drumsticks (or thighs) with a generous portion of roasted carrots and potatoes.

Stir-fried cabbage and Tofu with Brown Rice

Ingredients:

For the Stir-Fry:

- 1 block (14 ounces) firm tofu, drained and cubed
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil or sesame oil
- 1 small head of cabbage, shredded or thinly sliced
- 1 red bell pepper, thinly sliced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tablespoon fresh ginger, minced
- 3 tablespoons soy sauce or tamari
- 1 tablespoon hoisin sauce (optional for added sweetness)
- 1 tablespoon rice vinegar or apple cider vinegar
- 1 teaspoon sesame seeds (optional for garnish)
- 2 green onions, sliced (optional for garnish)
- Salt and pepper to taste



For the Brown Rice:

- 1 cup brown rice
- 2 cups water or vegetable broth
- 1/2 teaspoon salt (if using water)

Instructions:

1. **Prepare the Brown Rice:**
 - Rinse the brown rice under cold water.
 - In a medium saucepan, bring 2 cups of water or vegetable broth to a boil.
 - Add the brown rice and 1/2 teaspoon salt (if using water).
 - Reduce the heat to low, cover, and simmer for 40-45 minutes, or until the rice is tender and the liquid is absorbed.
 - Remove from heat and let it sit covered for 10 minutes. Fluff with a fork before serving.
2. **Prepare the Stir-Fry:**

- While the rice is cooking, heat 2 tablespoons of vegetable oil or sesame oil in a large skillet or wok over medium-high heat.
- Add the cubed tofu and cook for 5-7 minutes, or until golden brown and crispy on all sides. Remove the tofu from the skillet and set aside.
- In the same skillet, add a little more oil if needed and stir-fry the garlic and ginger for about 30 seconds, until fragrant.
- Add the shredded cabbage and bell pepper to the skillet. Stir-fry for 5-7 minutes, or until the cabbage is tender-crisp.
- Return the tofu to the skillet.
- Add the soy sauce, hoisin sauce (if using), and rice vinegar. Stir well to coat the tofu and vegetables in the sauce.
- Season with salt and pepper to taste. Cook for an additional 2-3 minutes until everything is well combined and heated through.

3. Serve:

- Divide the cooked brown rice among plates.
- Top with the stir-fried cabbage and tofu mixture.
- Garnish with sesame seeds and sliced green onions if desired.

Lentil Stew with Carrots, Onions, and Garlic

Ingredients:

For the Lentil Stew:

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 medium onion, diced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 3 medium carrots, peeled and diced
- 1 cup dried lentils (green or brown), rinsed and drained
- 4 cups vegetable broth or water
- 1 can (14.5 ounces) diced tomatoes (optional for added flavor)
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- 1/2 teaspoon dried thyme or rosemary
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1 bay leaf (optional)
- 1 cup chopped kale or spinach (optional, for added greens)



For the Small Side Salad:

- 2 cups mixed salad greens (e.g., lettuce, spinach, arugula)
- 1/2 cucumber, sliced
- 1/2 bell pepper, sliced
- 1/2 cup cherry tomatoes, halved
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar or lemon juice
- Salt and pepper to taste

Instructions:

1. **Prepare the Lentil Stew:**
 - Heat 1 tablespoon of olive oil in a large pot over medium heat.
 - Add the diced onion and cook for 5-7 minutes, until translucent.

- Add the minced garlic and cook for an additional 30 seconds, until fragrant.
- Stir in the diced carrots and cook for another 3-4 minutes.
- Add the rinsed lentils, vegetable broth (or water), and diced tomatoes (if using).
- Stir in the ground cumin, paprika, dried thyme (or rosemary), salt, and pepper. Add the bay leaf if using.
- Bring the mixture to a boil, then reduce the heat to low, cover, and simmer for 25-30 minutes, or until the lentils are tender.
- If using, stir in the chopped kale or spinach during the last 5 minutes of cooking.

2. Prepare the Small Side Salad:

- In a large bowl, combine the mixed salad greens, sliced cucumber, sliced bell pepper, and cherry tomatoes.
- In a small bowl, whisk together the olive oil, balsamic vinegar (or lemon juice), salt, and pepper.
- Drizzle the dressing over the salad and toss gently to combine.

3. Serve:

- Ladle the lentil stew into bowls.
- Serve with a small side salad.

Baked Chicken with Roasted Sweet Potatoes and Broccoli

Ingredients:

For the Baked Chicken:

- 4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts or thighs
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon onion powder
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- 1/2 teaspoon dried thyme or rosemary
- Salt and pepper to taste



For the Roasted Sweet Potatoes and Broccoli:

- 2 medium sweet potatoes, peeled and cut into chunks
- 2 cups broccoli florets
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1/2 teaspoon dried thyme or rosemary
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
- Salt and pepper to taste

Instructions:

- 1. Prepare the Oven and Chicken:**
 - Preheat your oven to 400°F (200°C).
 - In a small bowl, mix together olive oil, garlic powder, onion powder, paprika, dried thyme (or rosemary), salt, and pepper.
 - Rub the mixture evenly over the chicken breasts or thighs.
 - Place the chicken on a baking sheet or in a baking dish.
- 2. Prepare the Vegetables:**
 - In a large bowl, toss the sweet potato chunks and broccoli florets with olive oil, dried thyme (or rosemary), garlic powder, salt, and pepper.
 - Spread the vegetables in a single layer on a separate baking sheet or on the same baking sheet as the chicken, if there's enough space.
- 3. Bake the Chicken and Vegetables:**
 - Place the chicken and vegetables in the preheated oven.

- Bake for 25-30 minutes, or until the chicken reaches an internal temperature of 165°F (74°C) and is no longer pink in the center.
- The vegetables should be tender and slightly caramelized. You may need to remove the vegetables from the oven a few minutes earlier if they cook faster than the chicken.

4. Serve:

- Remove the chicken and vegetables from the oven and let them rest for a few minutes before serving.
- Serve the baked chicken with a portion of roasted sweet potatoes and broccoli.

Spaghetti with Tomato Sauce, Canned Sardines, and Steamed Green Beans

Ingredients:

For the Spaghetti:

- 8 ounces spaghetti (whole-grain or regular)
- 1 can (15 ounces) tomato sauce
- 1 can (3.75 ounces) sardines in olive oil, drained
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1/2 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1/2 teaspoon dried basil
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Grated Parmesan cheese for serving (optional)



For the Steamed Green Beans:

- 2 cups fresh green beans, trimmed
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder (optional)

Instructions:

- 1. Prepare the Spaghetti:**
 - Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil.
 - Add the spaghetti and cook according to package instructions until al dente.
 - Drain and set aside.
- 2. Prepare the Tomato Sauce:**
 - While the spaghetti is cooking, heat 1 tablespoon of olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat.
 - Add the minced garlic and cook for about 30 seconds, until fragrant.

- Stir in the tomato sauce, dried oregano, and dried basil. Simmer for 5-7 minutes to heat through and blend the flavors.
 - Gently fold in the drained sardines. Cook for an additional 2-3 minutes until the sardines are warmed through.
 - Season with salt and pepper to taste.
3. **Combine Spaghetti and Sauce:**
- Add the cooked spaghetti to the skillet with the tomato sauce and sardines. Toss to coat the spaghetti evenly with the sauce.
4. **Prepare the Steamed Green Beans:**
- In a medium saucepan, bring about 1 inch of water to a boil.
 - Place a steamer basket or a colander over the boiling water (make sure it doesn't touch the water).
 - Add the green beans to the steamer basket. Cover and steam for about 4-5 minutes, until tender-crisp.
 - Remove from heat and toss with olive oil, salt, pepper, and garlic powder if using.
5. **Serve:**
- Divide the spaghetti with tomato sauce and sardines among plates.
 - Serve with a side of steamed green beans.
 - Sprinkle with grated Parmesan cheese if desired.