

A FREE GUIDE TO

# Cooking as Self-Care

WITH 5 FREE RECIPES



# Welcome to: Cooking As Self-care

Welcome to "Cooking as Self-Care," a guide designed to help you use the power of food to nurture both your body and your mind. In today's fast-paced world, cooking is often seen as a chore, but it can be transformed into a therapeutic activity that brings joy, relaxation, and fulfillment.

Whether you're an experienced home cook or just starting out, this guide will provide you with simple yet comforting recipes and practical strategies to make cooking a meaningful part of your self-care routine.



Through this book, you'll discover how to create a kitchen space that feels inviting, develop healthy cooking rituals, and find comfort in preparing meals that feed both your soul and body. Cooking is an act of self-love, and by embracing it with mindfulness and creativity, you can turn it into an enriching part of your daily routine.

With Love and a dash of crazy,



# The Connection Between Cooking and Mental Well-Being

Food is more than just fuel—it is deeply connected to our emotions and overall well-being.

Cooking can provide a sense of control, calm, and satisfaction, helping to reduce stress and bring balance to your life.



## 10 Mood Boosting Foods

1. Salmon (omega 3s)
2. Leafy Greens (folate)
3. Nuts and Seeds (healthy fats)
4. Dark Chocolate (serotonin)
5. Whole Grains (energy)
6. Berries (antioxidants)
7. Turmeric (anti-inflammatory)
8. Legumes (protein, fiber)
9. Yogurt (gut health)
10. Eggs (essential vitamins)

## How Food and Emotions Are Linked

- Cooking can trigger positive emotions: certain ingredients bring a sense of nostalgia, comfort, and warmth: Ingredients like chocolate, warm soups, and fresh-baked bread can evoke deep emotional responses.
- Cooking as a mindfulness practice: Preparing a meal with intention and focus allows you to slow down and be present in the moment. The rhythmic actions of chopping vegetables, stirring sauces, and kneading dough can serve as a form of meditation.
- The joy of creating something with your hands: Cooking engages all five senses—sight, smell, touch, taste, and sound—providing a multisensory experience that fosters creativity and satisfaction.
- Cooking can reduce stress and anxiety: Engaging in cooking activities has been shown to lower cortisol levels, enhance mood, and provide a healthy distraction from daily worries.



# Creating a Kitchen Sanctuary



Your kitchen should be a place where you feel inspired, comfortable, and at peace. Setting up your space with intention can help make cooking feel like a joyful and rejuvenating activity rather than a burden.

## Set up your kitchen for ease and comfort:

Organize your space with essential tools within reach. Invest in high-quality kitchenware that makes meal preparation smoother.

## Essential tools and ingredients for stress-free cooking:

Stock your kitchen with versatile ingredients like olive oil, garlic, herbs, and whole grains to make cooking easy and enjoyable.



## Create a sensory experience:

Playing soft music, lighting a scented candle, or opening a window for fresh air can transform your cooking experience into a relaxing ritual.

## Making your kitchen a judgment-free zone:

Give yourself permission to experiment without fear of failure. Embrace the process rather than aiming for perfection.

# Sharing Food, Sharing Love

Cooking can strengthen relationships:

- Preparing meals for loved ones fosters connection and creates lasting memories.
- Sitting down to eat together encourages conversation, bonding, and emotional closeness.

Hosting low-stress gatherings with friends and family:

- Simple, no-fuss hosting tips to make sharing meals an enjoyable experience rather than a stressful one.

Passing down traditions and creating new ones:

Family recipes hold stories and history. Cooking them together preserves heritage while creating new traditions.

**Involving Family in Cooking:**

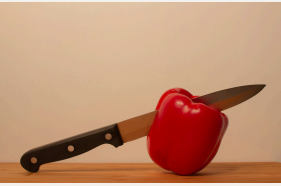
Cooking together fosters teamwork, communication, and a sense of belonging. Inviting children to help with simple tasks, such as stirring, measuring, or setting the table, teaches valuable life skills and creates cherished moments. Cooking with family also allows for the passing down of generational knowledge, making meals more meaningful. By engaging loved ones in the cooking process, you transform an everyday task into an opportunity for bonding, laughter, and shared memories.

The benefits of involving children in cooking:

Encouraging children to participate in meal preparation helps them develop confidence, independence, and an appreciation for food. Cooking teaches essential skills such as measuring, following instructions, and understanding nutrition. It also fosters creativity as children experiment with flavors and textures. Most importantly, it strengthens the parent-child relationship, providing an opportunity for meaningful conversations and shared accomplishments in the kitchen.



# Top 5 Tips for Success in the Kitchen



## Sharpen your knives often

Your knives must be sharp to avoid dangerous slipping of the blade.



## Use a bowl or bag for scraps

Working with a compost bin or trash bag for scraps means less time and energy moving around the kitchen.



## Gather tools and ingredients before you start

Don't wait until halfway into a recipe to find out that you're missing an important ingredient. Get out your ingredients and utensils before you begin.



## Season in layers

Achieve better seasoning by adding it to food in stages. For example, salt the pasta water as well as the pasta.



## Herbs, Zest and Spices

Common herbs and citrus zest can add freshness and interest to almost any recipe. Think mint, basil, thyme, lemon, lime. Grind your own spices for an aromatic kick.

# 5 Easy Recipes

TRY THESE EASY RECIPES TO BRING COMFORT TO YOUR KITCHEN ANY TIME OF YEAR

## GRANOLA PARFAIT

### Granola Ingredients:

- 3 cups rolled oats
- 1 cup sliced almonds
- 1 cup cashews lightly chopped
- 3/4 cup shredded coconut
- 1/4 cup brown sugar
- 1/4 cup maple syrup
- 1/4 cup vegetable oil
- 1/2 tsp salt

### How to get started:

1. Mix sugar, syrup and vegetable oil.
2. Add wet ingredients to dry and stir well to distribute.
3. Place mixture onto parchment lined sheet.
4. Bake at 250 degrees, stirring every 15 minutes until uniformly toasted.

### How to Serve:

- Place 1/4 - 1/2 cup of your favorite flavored yogurt in a single-serve bowl.
- Add fruit of your choice (bananas, apples, grapes, oranges).
- Top generously with granola.
- Enjoy!



## CHICKEN AND CAPERS

## Ingredients:

- 2 boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- 1/2 cup flour
- 1 tsp garlic powder
- salt and pepper to taste
- 1/2 cup white cooking wine
- 3/4 cup chicken stock
- juice and zest of one lemon
- 1 jar capers in brine (drained)
- 1 tbsp olive oil for frying and plating



## How to get started:

1. Butterfly and lightly pound each chicken breast to 1/2 inch thickness.
2. Mix flour, garlic, salt and pepper into flour and sprinkle on a plate.
3. Dredge each side of the chicken in the flour mixture.
4. Place chicken in an oiled pan on med heat and fry both sides. Remove from pan.
5. Deglaze the pan with white wine and add the lemon juice and zest.
6. Return chicken to pan and top with 1/2 jar capers (to preference).



**TRYING TO REDUCE YOUR SODIUM INTAKE? RINSE CAPERS BEFORE ADDING THEM TO THE PAN**



**WANT A THICKER GRAVY? MIX 1 TSP CORNSTARCH WITH 1 TSP COLD WATER AND SLOWLY ADD TO BOILING GRAVY**

## LEBANESE TABBOULEH SALAD

## Ingredients:

- 1 cup dry bulgur wheat
- Parsley (1 bunch chopped)
- Mint (1 bunch chopped)
- 3 green onions (chopped)
- 1 -2 ripe tomatoes (chopped)
- 1 cucumber chopped (optional)
- juice of 1 lemon
- 1/4 cup olive oil (good quality)
- 1/2 tsp cumin (optional)
- salt to taste



## How to get started:

1. Prepare bulgur by soaking according to package directions.
2. Once cool, add to your salad bowl.
3. add parsley, mint, onions, cucumbers and tomatoes.
4. In a separate bowl, add the juice of one lemon, olive oil, cumin and salt.
5. Pour over chopped salad and mix to distribute.

Other spices commonly used in tabbouleh include:

- cinnamon
- allspice,
- coriander
- nutmeg
- cloves
- cardamom
- pomegranate seeds



Bulgur wheat is a whole grain with Middle Eastern roots. It is easy to prepare and boasts many health benefits. Look for it in your natural foods aisle or use farro instead.



## CHOCOLATE CHIP BANANA BREAD MUFFINS

## Ingredients:

- 1 cup white sugar
- 1/2 cup vegetable oil
- 1 large or two small eggs
- 2 tsp vanilla extract
- 3 overripe bananas (mashed)
- 1/4-1/2 cup chocolate chips
- 2 cups flour
- 2 tsp baking soda
- 1/4 tsp salt



## How to get started:

1. Thoroughly mix sugar, oil and egg.
2. Add mashed banana and vanilla and stir to combine.
3. In a separate dish combine flour, baking soda and salt.
4. Mix dry ingredients into wet until batter is smooth with no lumps.
5. Add chocolate chips and fold in.
6. Spoon mixture into muffin cups until they are almost full.
7. Bake muffins at 350 degrees for 35 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in the middle comes out clean.



Want a healthier option than chocolate chips?  
Other possible additions include:

- coconut
- walnuts
- demerara sugar (for topping)
- grated carrot or zucchini
- cinnamon
- cocoa

## CHEWY LEMON CRACKLE COOKIES

## Ingredients:

- 2 1/2 cups almond flour
- 3/4 cup granulated sugar
- 1/4 cup granulated sugar (for rolling)
- powdered sugar (for rolling)
- 3 egg whites
- 1 tsp almond extract
- 1 tsp lemon extract
- zest of one lemon
- 1/2 tsp salt



## How to get started:

1. In a bowl, mix almond flour, 3/4 cup granulated sugar and salt.
2. In a separate bowl, whip egg whites and almond extract until soft peaks form.
3. Gently fold flour mixture and lemon zest into the eggs. Add slowly to prevent overmixing.
4. Roll batter into 3 tbsp balls.
5. Place remaining granulated sugar and powdered sugar into separate bowls for rolling.
6. Roll batter first in granulated sugar, then powdered.
7. Bake at 325 degrees for 20-22 minutes until cookies are lightly golden.



Want a better crackle? Let cookies stand for 10-15 minutes before baking, then gently squeeze each to form micro crackles that will deepen as they bake. Bake as directed.