

A top-down view of a bowl of food. The bowl contains white rice, black beans, a portion of guacamole topped with fresh cilantro, and several pieces of fried plantains. To the left, there are chunks of mango and some green vegetables. The bowl is set on a light-colored, possibly marble, surface. The text is overlaid on the top half of the image.

LAZY GIRL'S GUIDE TO WEEKNIGHT COOKING

meals you don't need a recipe for

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

CH 1: THE GROCERY LIST

CH 2: THE MEALS

CH 3: MEAL PLANNER

CH 4: QUICK TIPS

INTRODUCTION

Let's face it: we're all busy. I would be lying if I said all of my meals were as attractive or extravagant as displayed on my blog and Instagram. I think we all *talk* about being busy or having no time, but nothing can compare to that feeling you have when you arrive home from a long day, and you're completely and utterly exhausted.

The absolute last thing you want to do is chop up ingredients, and exert even more energy into cooking a meal.

And besides that, unless you've got the diet of a registered dietitian, or have the will power of a well-trained dog, who the heck wants steamed vegetables and boiled chicken after your boss yelled at you all day? Not this girl.

Eating is one of life's simplest pleasures, and I plan on fully taking advantage of that fact. It might feel impossible right now, but you **can** make your weeknight meals easy, quick, delicious **and** healthy.

I am going to give you a few tools to help you achieve this balance, but I must warn you: the only way you will find this equilibrium, is if you have the correct mindset.

You are in charge of your diet, your lifestyle, your food. If you're reading this, I'm assuming you have the desire to fuel your body the right way, despite a hectic schedule that leaves you with no energy and a hankering for pizza more often than not. I'm here to make your life a little easier, but you are the decision maker.

Now that I got that out of the way, let's get into this, shall we?



GROCERY LIST

PROTEIN

- ROTISSERIE CHICKEN
- GROUND TURKEY
- PROSCUITTO
- BLACK BEANS
- PINTO BEANS
- EGGS

VEGGIES

- RED ONION
- FROZEN CORN
- BELL PEPPERS
- AVOCADO
- GRAPE TOMATOES
- SALSA
- BUTTERNUT SQUASH
- FROZEN VEGGIE TRIO
- SPAGHETTI SQUASH
- TOMATOES
- ZUCCHINI
- ARUGULA
- SPINACH
- KALE

CARBS

- BROWN RICE
- QUINOA
- SWEET POTATOES

SPICES/HERBS

- FRESH CILANTRO
- FRESH BASIL
- GARLIC

MISC.

- MOZZARELLA PEARLS
- BALSAMIC VINEGAR
- LIME JUICE
- PINE NUTS
- PASTA SAUCE
- QUESO FRESCO

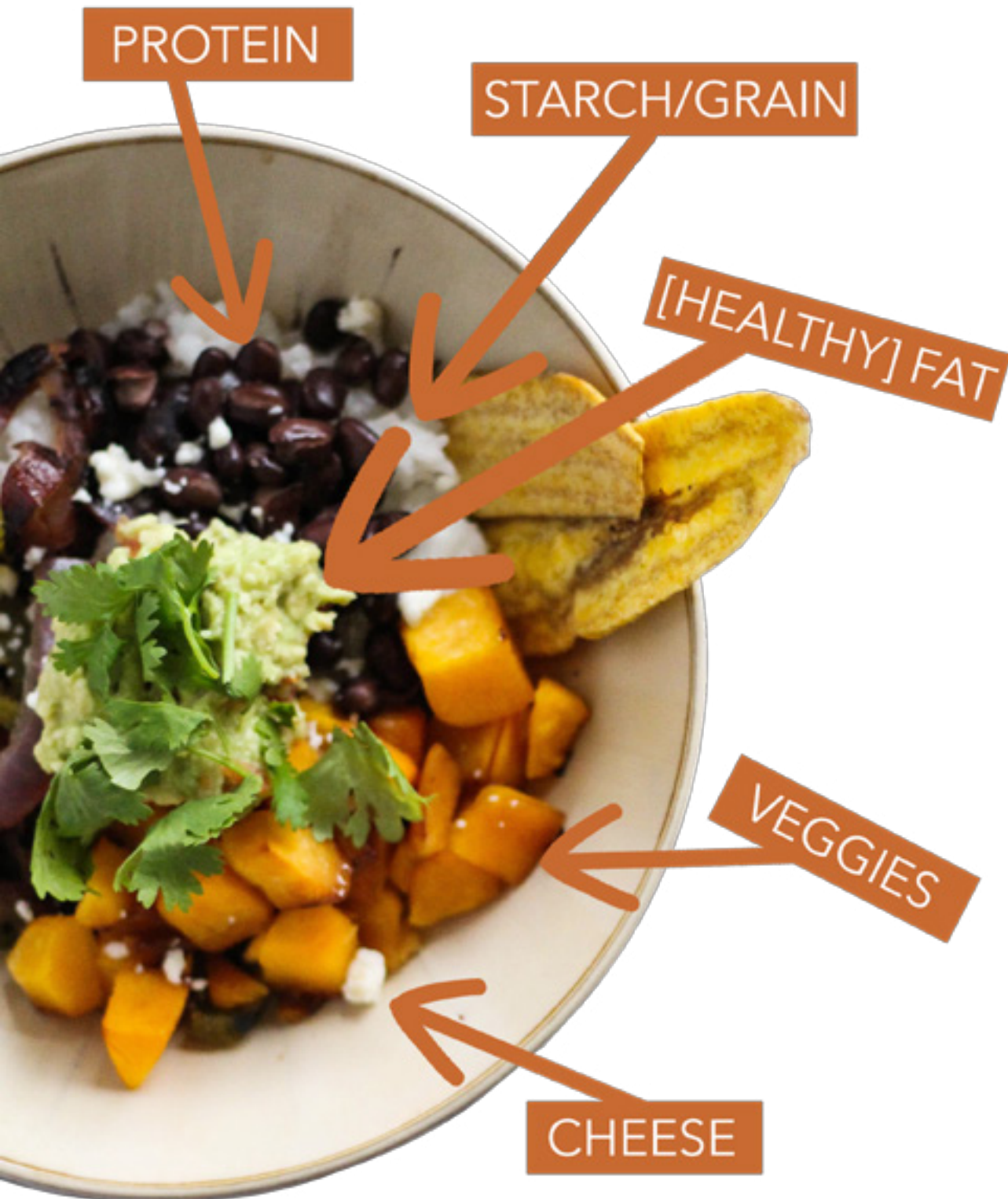
BURRITO BOWLS

Burrito bowls are my number one, always and forever, ride or die weeknight meal. Why? Because they are so versatile, tasty, and healthy. Additionally, they are very meal-prep friendly. Everything that can go into a burrito bowl can be prepared on a Sunday evening, heated up on a Wednesday, and enjoyed like it was freshly cooked.

There are six components to a burrito bowl, which can be seen in the visual map on the next page. According to each component, you can vary which ingredient you use based on the macronutrient and category. For instance, replace rice with quinoa. Replace peppers with kale. Replace beans with chicken.



BURRITO BOWLS



BURRITO BOWLS

HOW TO MAKE MY VERSION

For this particular burrito bowl, I went with a vegetarian theme. I kept my protein to black beans, simply because I love the combination of black beans and butternut squash, which has been in my pantry all season. ***TIP:** If you live near Trader Joe's, I highly recommend going for the large bag of pre-chopped butternut squash. Butternut is one of my favorite types of squash, but let's face it... it's a pain in the butt to peel, seed, chop and roast. Trader Joe does half the work for ya. Here's what I did for mine:

Rice: 1 cup of white rice in the rice cooker + 2 cups water. Set to cook.

Peppers & Onions: For my part of my veggie(s), I chose green bell pepper and red onion, julienned. Mince 2 cloves garlic and saute over medium-high heat with extra virgin olive oil. Add onion to saute pan with garlic and saute until translucent. ***TIP:** always saute garlic and onions first - onions contain a lot of sugar and caramelizing them before the other ingredients will ensure they are cooked properly to achieve your desired flavor and texture. To deglaze the pan before adding the peppers, I always add a splash of white wine. It lifts the residual char, adds a great flavor and aids in the caramelization. Next, add your peppers, another splash of wine, lower the heat to medium and cover. Let saute until peppers are soft. Season with salt and pepper.

Butternut Squash (optional): this was just for fun, but if you wish to add squash, simply add your cubed squash to a baking pan. Drizzle with olive oil, salt and pepper, and bake at 400 degrees for about 45 minutes. (This is a do-ahead ingredient!)

Frozen Corn: Add frozen corn to a small sauce pan and heat at medium. Cover and let sit while you prepare other ingredients.

Black Beans: Drain and rinse your can of black beans. Add them to a small sauce pan and heat over medium. Cover and let sit while you prepare other ingredients.

BURRITO BOWLS

HOW TO MAKE MY VERSION, CONT'D

Guacamole: mash 1 or 2 avocados in a bowl with a fork. Add a couple tablespoons of salsa, 1 tbsp lime juice, a handful chopped fresh cilantro, and sprinkle with salt and pepper. ***TIP:** Instead of purchasing fresh limes, for convenience I purchase bottles of lime juice. Great to have on-hand for burrito bowls, marinades, and of course, cocktails. Also, squeezing lime (or lemon) juice on avocados helps preserve them in your refrigerator!

To serve: add rice into a bowl. Ladle black beans and corn on top of rice. Add peppers, onions, and squash, then top with guacamole and fresh cilantro for garnish and extra flavor!



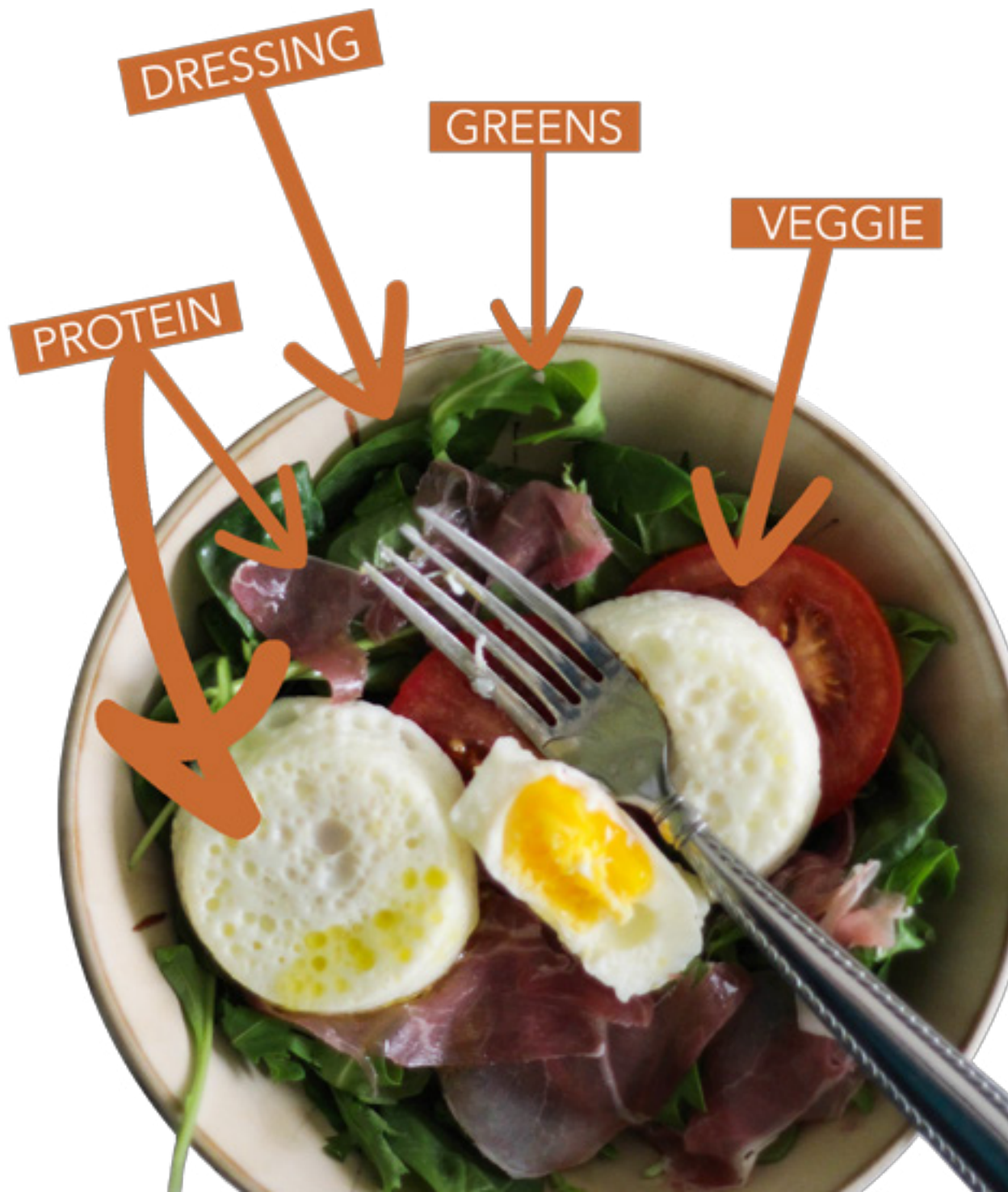
ARUGULA SALAD

An easy salad is one of the best ways to go when you're exhausted yet want to nourish your body. Similar to the burrito bowl, my favorite arugula salad has a few components that can be switched around. I like to keep my flavors Italian when using arugula, but you can get creative with it.

Something I like to do when I'm making a salad in a hurry (in a hurry to plop on the couch and stuff my face), is throw all of the ingredients into a large Tupperware. Then, I pour the dressing in. Cover the Tupperware, and shake. Boom, you've got yourself a salad to accompany your post-work Netflix binge-watching.



ARUGULA SALAD



ARUGULA SALAD

HOW TO MAKE MY VERSION

For this particular arugula salad, like I said, I kept with Italian flavors. Italian food culture thrives off of simple, wholesome ingredients, which is actually the way I like to approach my health and my diet. Real food, real components.

Greens: You guessed it - arugula. Arugula has a peppery taste, so it goes very nicely with the ingredients in this salad. You can also mix it with other greens like spinach or butter lettuce.

Prosciutto: What's more Italian than prosciutto? This particular deli meat can be a bit expensive, but let's face it... you deserve to treat yourself after a long day of work, right? I love prosciutto on salads because it is so thin and doesn't weigh down the other components.

Tomato: This is my 'veggie', although, I know, tomatoes are considered fruits. I will never get that through my head. I could eat a sliced tomato with salt, pepper and olive oil. Or just bite into it on its own like a juicy apple. Tomatoes are bursting with flavor and full of nutritional benefits. No need to go too crazy with the vegetable portion, tomatoes are simple yet satisfying in this salad.

Poached egg: Why did I add a poached egg? Well, for one, it adds a whole other realm of flavor. Secondly, I just like to have some added protein. Salads get a bad wrap for not being 'enough' to eat for dinner. Yet, behold, double the protein. This will keep you full, trust me. And I know what you're thinking... poached eggs? On a quick, lazy girl's meal? Hear me out: I like to poach my eggs in the oven. That's right. You can cook twelve eggs at once to prepare for the week. For my how-to, head to this blog post: <http://theblissfulbalance.com/recipes/how-to-poach-eggs-in-the-oven/>

Dressing: For dressing, I like to simply drizzle extra virgin olive oil with salt and pepper. A few more combinations you can try are: EVOO with balsamic glaze, EVOO with lemon juice, or EVOO with dijon mustard.

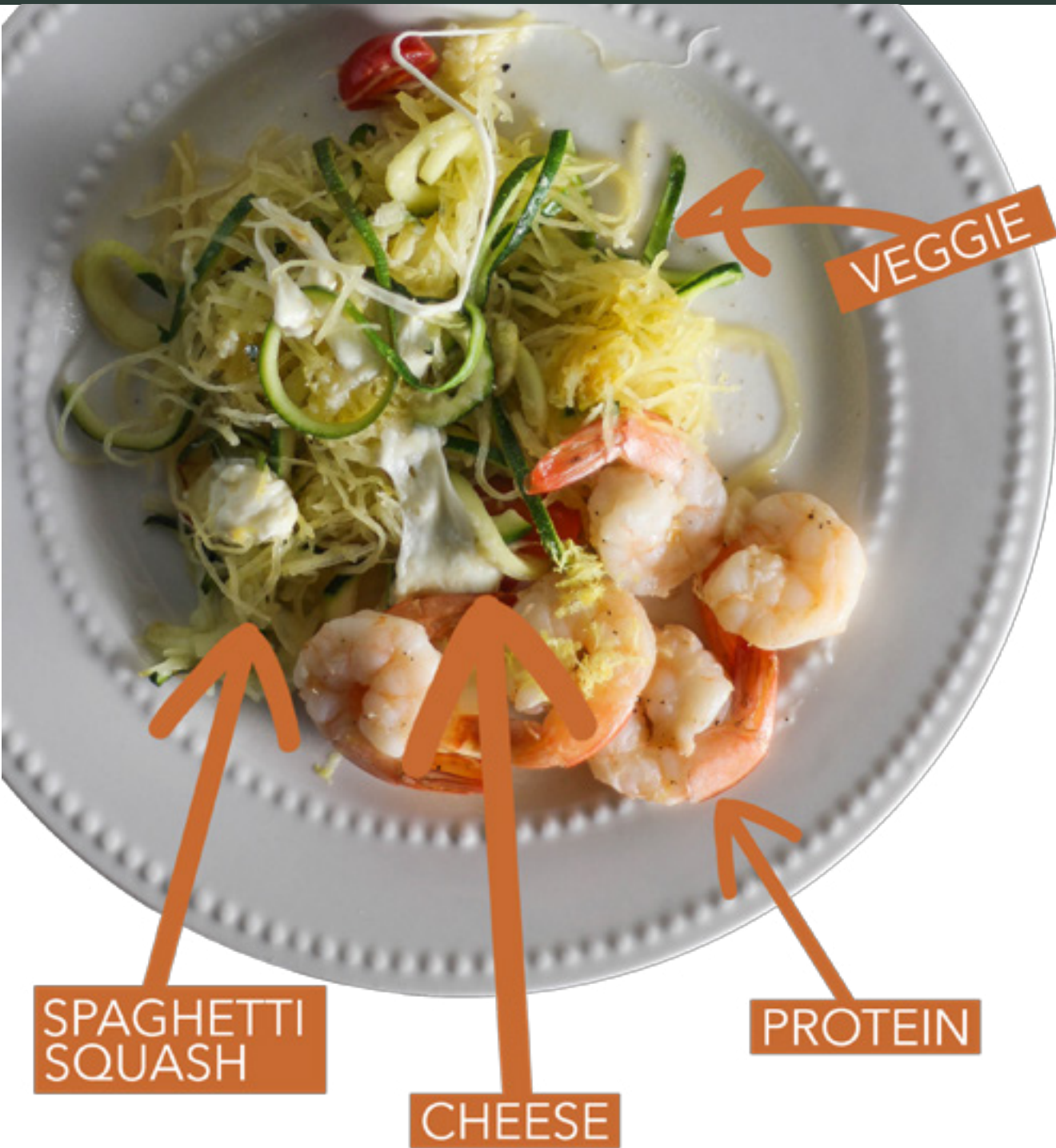
SPAGHETTI SQUASH CAPRESE BAKE

If you haven't tried spaghetti squash, what are you waiting for? This meal combines two of my favorite noodled veggies: spaghetti squash and zucchini. Spaghetti squash is the original 'spiralized' vegetable. You'll be amazed at its natural noodle form. Meanwhile, zucchini is the quintessential spiralized vegetable. It's durable like pasta and adds so much more flavor and nourishment.

Make this meal ahead of time and simply heat up in the oven when you're ready to enjoy.



SPAGHETTI SQUASH CAPRESE BAKE



SPAGHETTI SQUASH CAPRESE BAKE

HOW TO MAKE MY VERSION

This dish is definitely a make ahead, but you'll be so glad you have it once you come home and find that it's waiting for you in the refrigerator. This is one of those toss-everything-into-a-baking-dish-and-bake recipes. You know, one of my favorite kinds. The oven does the work for you.

Spaghetti squash: To bake the spaghetti squash, first pre-heat the oven to 400 degrees. Slice the squash in half lengthwise. Spoon out the seeds. Place the squash on a baking sheet and bake for about an hour.

Zucchini: Using your Spiralizer, spiralize about three zucchinis.

Pesto: In a food processor, combine garlic, basil, extra virgin olive oil, pine nuts, salt and pepper. Pulse until pesto texture is formed.

Bake: When the spaghetti squash is finished, fork out the 'noodles' from the squash into a greased 9x13 baking dish. Mix in the noodles, mozzarella pearls, and halved grape tomatoes. Top it off with a sprinkle of Parmesan cheese. Place in the oven at 375 degrees for about 20-30 minutes. When ready to serve, top it off with a drizzle of pesto.

***TIP:** For some quick, added protein, saute some shrimp in some garlic, olive oil and lemon juice. This takes a maximum of five to six minutes.

ZOODLES WITH AVOCADO SAUCE

Okay, so this is a two-for-one - that's how easy these are.

Have you ever used a Spiralizer? It's a kitchen tool that turns veggies and fruits into NOODLES. Yep. Dream come true. I think it might be a scientific fact that foods are better in noodle form.

Oh, and of course, it's super easy. I timed myself, and it took me about five minutes to clean, chop the ends off, and spiralize three zucchini. Which is how many I used to make BOTH of these bowls. Such a simple, delicious way to pack your veggies in.



ZOODLES WITH AVOCADO SAUCE



ZOODLES WITH AVOCADO SAUCE

HOW TO MAKE MY VERSION

So, the reason I didn't include an ingredient map for this dish is because it's literally just two components: zoodles and sauce. However, the sauce is totally dependent on you. So, let me tell you how I make my avocado sauce.

Avocado sauce: For this creamy sauce, I use just four ingredients. YEAH. And it's amazing. Simply add a few large basil leaves, about 1/4-1/2 cup of extra virgin olive oil, 1-2 tbsp of lime juice, and 1/2 avocado to a food processor, and process until smooth and saucy. That's. It. Again, I timed myself, and it took me about five minutes to make this.

Zoodles: Using your spiralizer or veggie noodle device, create your zoodles and place them aside. ***TIP:** To avoid neverending noodles in your finished product, use a knife and cut the pile of zoodles before cooking. When time to cook, add a couple cloves of minced garlic and about 2 tbsp of extra virgin olive oil to a saute pan at medium heat. When the garlic is golden, add in the zoodles and cook for ONLY about three minutes. They get soggy very easily, so you want to maintain the crunch!

Red sauce: The easiest option here is obviously a jarred sauce, which is what is pictured on the previous page. However, the easy equation to homemade sauce is as follows: about six roma tomatoes (chopped), fresh basil leaves, two cloves minced garlic, about 1/4 cup white wine, salt, pepper, and some olive oil. Let it simmer, and you've got sauce!

Protein: If you're looking to add protein to these dishes, I recommend different (easy) options for each. For topping the avocado zoodles, I would add a poached egg. As for the zoodles with red sauce, I would add in some ground turkey to make it like a healthified bolognese sauce!

WEEK OF: _____

SUN.

MON.

TUES.

WED.

THUR.

FRI.

SAT.

GROCERIES:

DESSERT:

QUICK TIPS

Eating healthier (and quicker) is the result of small changes that add up to big results. Nobody completely transforms a lifestyle (habit) overnight. So, with that said, use these quick tips to slowly but surely get into a healthier routine, and stick to it when the going gets busy.

How to poach 12 eggs at once.

I recently shared a super time-saving tip on The Blissful Balance that is extremely helpful when preparing meals. No more peeling egg shells when hard-boiling a million eggs. No more delicate egg-poaching. On TBB, I teach you how you can poach twelve eggs AT ONCE. The ideal meal-prep situation.

Get the how-to here: <http://theblissfulbalance.com/recipes/how-to-poach-eggs-in-the-oven/>

Chop immediately when you get home.

What I mean by this is, as soon as you get home from the grocery store on say, Sunday, get the chopping over with. Wash and cut your fruit for the week, cut your veggies, your garlic, your meat, whatever it is you plan on eating that week. Just get it over with - you'll thank yourself later.

Invest in some mojo.

I grew up on this stuff, and I swear by it for quick meals. Find some mojo marinade at your local grocery store (usually in the ethnic section), and put it on EVERYTHING, mainly chicken or fish. Simply saute whichever meat you prefer and pour the mojo in the pan to add flavor, without any work.

Plan ahead.

Okay, yes, this one is pretty obvious, but it's definitely not utilized enough. This is the whole reason I even wrote this. Use the meal planner and have an idea of what you'll be eating for the week. Prepare everything ahead of time, and you will have a seamless process.



FINAL NOTE

The easiest option is to pour a bowl of cereal and call it a night. Or to pick up a pizza on the way home. But if you read this e-book, I know that you prioritize your health and wellness. You believe in the notion that our bodies are our temples and we need to take care of them because, when nourished properly, they can do amazing things. Your wellness today is your future, and if you exert energy into anything today or tomorrow or next week when you're swamped, let it be your body. Your self. Your mind. Like I said - **you** have control over **you**, and **you** are the only one who can make a change or maintain **your** health.

I hope you enjoyed this book, and that it provides you with the boost you need to start or maintain a healthy lifestyle, no matter how busy you are.

If you make any of these meals using this e-book, I would love to see! Share a photo on Instagram and tag me, @theblissfulbalance!

