

# Lynda's Healing Kitchen

LIFE LESSONS, LOVE & RECIPES

Lynda Layng

Photography by Michael Marmora



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For my boys, Joe & Finn Francis

*For my husband, Joe:* You are my love.

Thank you for always loving and believing in me.  
Your unwavering support of all things silly, crazy,  
and vegetable-related means the world to me.

*Finn:* I can't wait to meet you and become your mom forever

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## Foreword

I FIRST MET LYNDA when she was all of eight years old. I clearly remember the very first gift (besides her beautiful spirit) she gave me—a cookbook, where inside she lovingly placed this hand-written recipe:

2 cups love

1/2 teaspoon laughter

1 cup care

1 tablespoon kindness

Mix happily and add a pinch of fun and you have  
a sister-in-law like you.

Lynda has written this cookbook with the same prevailing love.

*Lynda's Healing Kitchen: life lessons, recipes and love* is more than a book of recipes. It provides the reader with a glimpse into the healing and transformational journey of Lynda's life. Woven between delicious and healthy recipes are the stories of Lynda's childhood, stories that guided her on a journey toward transformational healing and self-care.

Imagine how hard a butterfly works to break out of its cocoon in order to fly. Lynda's own growth came from a conscious choice to take what life handed her and be more than her experiences. Her transformation led her to being a fully integrated woman, who is health-minded, generous, and loving.

Is this something you aspire to be? Well then, go make yourself a cup (organic) herbal tea, grab your copy of *Lynda's Healing Kitchen: life lessons, recipes and love*, curl up on your favorite chair, and begin your own journey of healing and health.

This book brings this special lady right into your home. Lynda's love of living and joy spills out on every page. Her story is inspirational; let it be the catalyst to start your journey today. The impact she has had on my life is hard to put into words, but read the book, make the recipes, and maybe you will see just how fortunate I am to journey through this precious life beside her.

— **Barbara A. McGuire**, LCSW, CTS, DPPsy

Licensed Clinical Social Work Manager,  
Clinical Trained Supervisor, Diplomate Pastoral Psychotherapist,  
and Lynda's sister (in law).

“I try to greet my friends  
with a drink in my hand,  
a warm smile on my face, and  
great music in the background,  
because that's what gets  
a dinner party off to a fun start.”

— Ina Garten

# Letter From Lynda

## Hello and welcome!

I'm delighted and honored to finally share with you this piece of my heart. Part memoir and part cookbook, this book is an intimate look back through many years of my life and time spent in the kitchen. Thank you for reading, sharing, and telling your friends about this special collection of recipes. Enjoy the beautiful photographs, inspirational quotes, and mouth-watering recipes, made mostly with plants and sprinkled with love.

I invite you to try these delicious family favorites, including farm-fresh salads, homemade dressings, soups, desserts, and more. Feel free to use these recipes as a starting-off point, adding in whatever you like or have on hand. Anything goes, so be creative and have fun.

Conscious living and honoring yourself involves time, commitment, planning, and preparation. As you slowly incorporate more and more whole foods into your life, your body and mind will shift and reward you. You'll begin to feel amazing, have tons of energy, and even glow. And by changing your plate, you'll find yourself craving more real food.

As you try a few of the following recipes and take steps to improve your health, you'll understand what I mean. I've been in a gradual transition myself, from the standard American diet to slowly adding in more plants and reducing my intake of processed foods. This takes time, and no one is perfect, so be gentle with yourself and go slowly. "Progress not perfection" should be your mantra.

Being a busy business owner, wife, chef, and soon-to-be-mom, I don't want to spend hours in the kitchen every night preparing fancy dishes. So most of these recipes are tried-and-true staples that I make every week to keep things nice and simple. I prepare as much as I can beforehand and cook in batches, so daily meals can be made in minutes.

This book combines my most popular recipes with real-life stories of my own journey to a happier, healthier place through challenging times, laughter, experimentation, and tears. So work your way through the collection at your own pace and enjoy the stories. I truly believe sharing is what can heal us and help us stretch and grow.

Don't know what section to begin with? Why not start with dessert first? My desserts are famous bites that I've shared all over New York and New Jersey for many years now. They are made with love but not a lot of sugar.

Wherever you are on your path to wellness, honor yourself enough to make **health** a priority in your life. Doing so will reward you much more than you could ever imagine.

I wish you fun and fond memories in the kitchen with your friends and family.

Peace & blessings,  
Lynda



# *It's a new day!* *Breakfast*

BREAKFAST IS A TIME TO WAKE UP GENTLY and enjoy a fresh, new start. These are some of my favorite ways to fuel for the day ahead. Add some stretching, yoga, exercise with friends, a warm cup tea, or meditation, and watch your day turn out even better than you expected.



## *Nolan's Camp Muffins*

We started camping as a family many years ago. Since then our small group has multiplied and now includes friends and cousins alike. One year, my best friend Joy's son, Nolan, devoured these eggless muffins every morning on a picnic bench in the middle of the woods. The tradition was started and now he begs for them each year. Filled with vegetables, fruit, and applesauce, these moist, pack-along trail muffins always delight, whether you're in the woods or not.

Yield: 16 to 18 muffins

### **Dry ingredients:**

- ½ cup oatmeal, old-fashioned or quick-cook
- 2 cups oatmeal flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ¼ cup raw or toasted walnuts (optional)

### **Wet ingredients:**

- 1 cup shredded carrots (about 2 to 3 carrots)
- 1 cup shredded apple (about 1 large apple)
- 1 cup unsweetened almond milk or any dairy-free milk



Nolan's Camp Muffins



1/3 cup canola oil  
2 tablespoons ground flax seed  
4 tablespoons water  
1/2 cup raw sugar  
1/4 cup raisins (optional)  
1/4 cup organic unsweetened applesauce  
1 tablespoon lemon juice

### Preparation:

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.

Line muffin pan with paper liners.

Combine the ground flax seed and water in a small bowl. Set the bowl aside for 3 to 5 minutes or until the mixture thickens. Using a small box grater or food processor grate the carrots and apple. Set aside. In a medium bowl combine all the dry ingredients. Stir and set aside.

In a large bowl combine the canola oil, sugar, and applesauce; whisk until smooth. Then add the almond milk, lemon juice, and flax mixture, stirring to combine. Add the dry ingredients to the wet mixture and fold gently. Finally, fold in the grated apple and carrots.

Using an ice cream scoop or 1/4-cup measure, fill each muffin cup evenly. Sprinkle the top of each muffin with a few raw oats or toasted walnut pieces. Bake for 18 to 20 minutes or until the muffins are slightly brown and a toothpick comes out clean. Allow muffins to cool in the muffin pan for 5 to 10 minutes and then move to a cooling rack.

## *Oatmeal Chocolate-Chip Muffins*

Hearty, warm, chocolaty, and perfect for a lazy weekend morning, these simple muffins will make your family smile. The combination of oats, flax, and mini chocolate chips makes each bite a real treat, though this is a healthier version of the sugary classic. You can feel good about serving these muffins, filled with whole-grain oats, oat flour, and heart-healthy flax-seed meal.

Yield: 12 regular-size muffins



Oatmeal Chocolate-Chip Muffins



### Dry ingredients:

- 1¼ cup oatmeal flour (1 ground up old-fashioned oats)
- ⅔ cup old-fashioned oatmeal, plus extra for sprinkling on top of muffin
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon nutmeg
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt

### Wet ingredients:

- 1 cup brown sugar (or sweetener of your choice — bananas, maple syrup, honey, brown-rice syrup)
- ½ cup non-dairy milk (I used unsweetened almond milk.)
- ⅓ cup coconut oil (liquid state) or canola oil
- ¼ cup unsweetened applesauce
- 2 tablespoons ground flax seeds
- 2 teaspoons vanilla

### Toppings:

- ⅓ cup mini chocolate chips
- Sprinkling of raw oats

### Preparation:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.

Line muffin pan with paper liners.

In large bowl combine all the wet ingredients and whisk together until smooth. Set aside. In a smaller bowl combine all the dry ingredients. Slowly add the dry ingredients into the wet and fold together gently, being careful not to over-mix.

Scoop batter into prepared muffin. Fill each cup about ⅔ full. Top with chocolate chips and sprinkle with oatmeal.

Bake for 16 to 18 minutes or until a toothpick comes out clean. Tops should be a light golden brown and firm to the touch. Let the baked muffins cool in the pan for 10 minutes before removing. Transfer muffins to a plate or cooling rack and allow them to cool completely.

## Overnight Oats

If you're an oatmeal lover, you know recipes for overnight oats are popular. These creamy, cold-soaked oats and healthy toppings make the perfect quick-and-easy breakfast. Packed with fiber, oats are a terrific way to begin your day. Whether you pack oatmeal for your desk at work or enjoy it on a relaxing Saturday, these oats take almost no time to prepare and will power you through any morning.

Yield: 1 serving

### Ingredients:

- ½ cup to ¾ cup oats, quick cook or old-fashioned
- ¾ cup unsweetened almond milk (to cover raw oats)

### Suggested toppings:

- sliced banana, berries, almond butter, goji berries, coconut flakes, hemp, chia seeds, and honey.

### Preparation:

Combine oats and almond milk in a small Mason jar or bowl with a lid. Stir to combine and place in the refrigerator overnight. In the morning, add a bit more almond milk (if desired) and additional toppings. Enjoy!



Overnight Oats



# Juicy Blends

JUICES PROVIDE THE BODY with a rush of micronutrients, give you energy, and make your skin glow.

Blending fruits and vegetables in a high-powered blender creates a thick juice/smoothie that provides you with fiber, vitamins, and minerals. It is a great way to add more real food to your diet. By blending instead of juicing, you retain the fiber of the produce, which helps slow your digestive process and provides a steady release of nutrients into the blood stream.

Traditional juicing is something different. By using a pressed-juice machine, Breville, or cold-pressed juicer, juicing extracts water and nutrients from produce but discards the indigestible fiber. Juices provide a load of health benefits, however they effect your body much differently from blends. Without the fiber, juices provide your body with more (and more easily-digestible) nutrients, vitamins, and minerals to heal and restore.

Below are a few recipes for some of my favorite blends. I use my Vitamix every day and choose to keep the added fiber as part of the drink, because let's face it, fiber is really good for you!

Prior to owning my beloved Vitamix, I accomplished similar blends using a food processor (to chop up the harder veggies and fruits) and a regular cheapo blender. I went through plenty of motors while saving my pennies for the real-deal machine, but blending was worth all the effort. Start your juice journey today. Believe me, the results will be written all over your face with glowing skin and shiny hair.

The recipes below are just a starting point. Toss whatever produce you have into the blender and pulverize it. You can't go wrong.



## *Basic Green*

Soothing, energizing and cleansing

### **Ingredients:**

- 3 to 4 cups spinach or any green
- 1 ripe banana
- 2 stalks of celery
- ½ to 1 cup frozen fruit: blueberries, mangos, and peaches work well
- 1 to 1 ½ cup filtered water
- 1 tablespoon ground flax, hemp, or pumpkin seed

## *Berry Blaster:*

Anti-oxidant boost, dietary fiber, and nutrients for healthy skin

### **Ingredients:**

- 1 cup fresh or frozen raspberries
- 1 cup fresh or frozen blueberries or strawberries
- 1 cup filtered water
- 1 ripe banana
- 1 teaspoon ground flax seed
- 1 small head of romaine lettuce

## *Tropical:*

Wrinkle fighter with plenty of Vitamin C and Vitamin B6

### **Ingredients:**

- 1 orange, peeled
- 1 ripe banana
- 1 cup filtered water
- ½ cup fresh or frozen mango
- ½ cup fresh or frozen papaya or pineapple
- ¼ cup unsweetened raw coconut

## *Cleansing:*

Detox, heal, and reboot

### **Ingredients:**

- 1 green apple
- 1 lemon, zest and juice
- 2 to 3 stalks of celery
- 1 to 2 cups kale
- 1 cup filtered water
- 1 tablespoon peeled ginger

### **Preparation:**

Combine all ingredients in a high-powered blender or food processor and pulse/blend until smooth.





## Banana Oatmeal Pancakes

These pancakes give you the perfect excuse to stay in the house, linger in your pj's, and create a cozy family meal to comfort everyone and make them smile. Make a few stacks of these pancakes, stand back, wrap your hands around your coffee mug, and take a long, loving sip as your family dives in. You're a rock star! These were what mornings were made for, and you can feel good about serving your family or yourself a pile of banana goodness. I grind fresh oatmeal and prepare this batter ahead of time to allow it to thicken up.

Yield: 8 to 10 medium pancakes

### Ingredients:

- 1 cup steel-cut oats, quick-cook or regular
- 1 cup unsweetened almond milk or nut milk of your choice
- ½ cup oat flour
- 2 ripe bananas
- 2 tablespoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- To prepare skillet: 1 tablespoon earth-balance spread or cooking spray (optional)

### Preparation:

Combine all ingredients in a high-powered blender or food processor and allow batter to rest for at least ten minutes or more to thicken. Letting it thicken yields much lighter, fluffier pancakes. Meanwhile, heat a skillet on the stovetop over medium heat. Spray skillet with cooking spray or add a dollop of vegan butter. Ladle in the pancake batter ¼ cup at a time. Cook each side 2 to 3 minutes or until lightly brown. Continue until all the batter is gone. Serve & enjoy!

*Chef's Note:* These freeze and reheat really well.



Banana Oatmeal Pancakes



## Chia-Seed Banana Smoothie

Chia seeds are powerful, small seeds that are filled with healthy Omega-3 fats and aid in digestion. Added to liquid, they become gelatinous and will thicken this smoothie to a creamy blend of fruits, seeds, and plants. This smoothie is a terrific way to start your day or to recharge post-workout. Feel the power of a plant-based lifestyle with this 'good for you' health shake.

Yield: Two 12-ounce servings

### Ingredients:

- 1 tablespoon chia seeds, soaked in  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup water for 10 to 15 minutes or longer.
- 1 cup filtered water or unsweetened almond milk (I use a mixture of both.)
- 1 ripe banana
- 3 to 4 cups spinach
- 2 stalks celery, chopped
- 1 tablespoon almond butter
- 3 to 4 ice cubes
- 1 teaspoon spirulina (optional)

### Preparation:

Combine all ingredients in a high-powered blender or Vitamix and blend until smooth and creamy. Pour into two glasses and serve immediately.



“Let food be thy medicine and  
medicine be thy food.”

—Hippocrates







# COOKING WITH MOM

## ...*The Martha Years*

FOR AS FAR BACK AS I CAN REMEMBER, I was in the kitchen with my mom. Whether glued to her leg by age two, racing to answer the bright yellow telephone still attached to the wall, or helping prepare a meal for seven people each night, Mom and I were kitchen dwellers. One clear memory I have is listening to Neil Diamond while riding my tricycle around the kitchen and living room, while all the rest of my siblings were far away at school. This special playtime with my mom is what really started this mother-daughter cooking team. Cooking became our daily ritual, on Beech Road, in the small New England town of Tolland, Connecticut.



Barely reaching the countertop, I pulled up a chair and learned my way around the kitchen, helping my mom prepare food for the masses. I grew up the youngest of six children, so it's no wonder why my poor mother was always in the kitchen. I can't imagine cooking for a tribe like that everyday.

When I was in middle school and half of my siblings had left the nest, Mom could finally catch her breath, sit down, and let me create some of my own dishes in our outdated but well-loved 1970s kitchen. It didn't compare to the shiny new kitchens some of my friends had, but that didn't matter. It felt comfortable. Mom and I used what we had and made it work.

After dinner or on the weekends I would spend hours trying different cookie recipes, sampling brownies, or perfecting a classic Rice-Krispie treat. I also loved to recreate delicate Martha Stewart desserts, cakes, and muffins.

On holidays I was Mom's sous-chef, helping shop for, prepare, and cook all our Thanksgiving favorites, something I still do today for my growing family and close friends. It always brings a smile to my face and joy to my heart to replicate my mom's traditions, in a slightly healthier way now, but always delicious and comforting. These days I add more green to the table with farm-fresh side dishes and my beloved Brussels sprouts, something I didn't even know existed until my twenties.

My love of cooking, sharing a meal, and feeding others still holds true today. I honor those times with Mom in our cozy kitchen and remember our cooking adventures as such a blessing. She gave me free rein to explore, experiment, create, and of course, burn things.

Thanks Mom! Xo

## Surviving Dad's Cooking

### ...*The Teen Years*

WITH MOUNTING COLLEGE DEBT and many mouths to feed, both my parents worked hard to care for us, keep a roof over our heads, and put food on the table. During my teenage years, Dad usually arrived home before Mom, so he would start dinner.

He kept things simple with a predictable rotation of pasta, burgers, and over-cooked pieces of leathery meat. Dad was a decent cook, however his timing was a mess. He struggled to have everything ready when Mom walked



in the door. So sweet, right? Well, sweet for my mom, but not so good for the rest of us. Most nights, the meals were overcooked and really tough to choke down.

I can relate to this now. Often when I am at home, I don't know when my husband will be home, or whether I should serve his food with mine or refrigerate it for later.

Timing is essential in cooking and preparing food. And as with most things in life, practice helps us figure out everything and improve over time. When I was young, I found myself stepping in to help my Dad by making meals easier to prepare and more pleasing to the palate.

What a gift and a blessing to not only have had both my parents teach me so much about life and how to be a loving partner, but also how to care for myself by preparing home-cooked and (somewhat) healthy meals in our kitchen.

Today I look back on those 'Dad years' in the kitchen and laugh. He worked so hard to create something edible every night. Family dinner—regardless of the result—was such a beautiful part of my childhood. I look forward to passing on the tradition with my own family and treasuring the time together.

Thanks, Dad!

I'll never eat or look at a pork chop in quite the same way.



# Salads & Sides

HAVING SOME EASY-TO-PREPARE SALADS and sides can make your meal preparation a breeze. These are some of my favorites recipes to make a plate come alive with color and nutrition. Plan ahead and prepare all your greens and veggies so they are ready to go in minutes. You're worth it!

## *Sweet-Potato and Apple Bake*

Traditionally made for my Thanksgiving table, it's too good to serve just once a year. As simple as can be, two household staples unite to blend into one sweet and delicious side dish.

Yield: 4 to 6 servings

### **Ingredients:**

- 2 large sweet potatoes, peeled and diced
- 2 apples, peeled, cored and diced (I like to use granny smith)
- 2 tablespoons apple juice or water
- 1 tablespoon olive oil (optional)
- Drizzle of honey
- Sprinkle of cinnamon to garnish (optional)

### **Preparation:**

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.

Peel and dice sweet potatoes and apples into small cubes. Place onto a rimmed cookie sheet along with the olive oil. Pour on apple juice or water and toss to combine. Drizzle a little honey (about 1 tablespoon or so) over the potato-apple mixture. Cover with aluminum foil and bake for 30 to 35 minutes or until fork tender. Allow to cool slightly.





Transfer cooked apples and potatoes to a food processor and pulse to blend, scraping down the sides occasionally. Pour pureed mixture into a prepared casserole dish, sprinkle with cinnamon, and serve immediately or reheat later in a low oven (200 degrees F) for 12 to 15 minutes.

*Chef's Note:* Sometimes I leave out the honey, since the apples and potatoes tend to be sweet enough already.

## *Rainbow Rolls with Asian Almond-Butter Sauce*

A fun way to roll up your salad and enjoy eating your veggies. These rainbow rolls are some of my favorite ways to sneak in more vegetables either as an appetizer or as part of my lunch. Give them a try and eat all the colors of the rainbow. Get creative with your fixin's and discover the healing power of raw plants in your life.

Yield: 4 to 6 appetizer portions

### **Ingredients:**

- 12 to 15 rice-paper wrappers
- 2 medium carrots, cut into long matchsticks
- 1 cucumber, cut into long matchsticks
- 1-2 cups purple cabbage, shredded thin
- 1 avocado, peeled, pitted and sliced
- ½ to 1 cup micro-greens or sprouts
- ½ to 1 cup fresh greens (spinach, kale, or Swiss chard)

### **Sauce:**

- 2 tablespoons tamari or soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons almond butter
- 1 tablespoon honey
- 1 tablespoon or more of water to thin out

### **Preparation:**

This recipe requires a lot of preparation ahead of time, but the crunch and flavor of these rolls are worth every minute. So get your paring knife ready and prep ahead.





Wash and chop all the veggies/toppings into thin matchsticks. Set aside. Remove the stems from the spinach or stalks from the greens. (This will prevent the wrap from tearing once they are rolled.)

Prepare a shallow dish or wide-bottom pan with a few inches of water. Spread out a clean dishtowel for your prep area.

Submerge the rice wrappers one at a time into the water bath for about 30 seconds to a minute. When the wrapper becomes soft and pliable, remove it from the water and place onto the dishcloth.

Select the veggies you would like in your roll and pile neatly into the center of the moist wrapper. Fold one side of the rice wrapper over the veggies. Next, fold over the sides and then roll like an eggroll. Set aside and repeat the process until all the veggies are used.

In a small bowl, mix the dipping sauce and whisk all ingredients together, adding more water if needed to thin out the sauce. Transfer into a small serving bowl and set aside.

Cut the rolls in half (if desired), dip into the sauce, and enjoy!

## *Kale, Pomegranate & Quinoa Salad*

I created this scrumptious salad for a friend Kelly's baby shower and it was gone in minutes. Bright and packed with protein, fiber and micronutrients it's health on a plate. The pomegranate arils are a nice burst of juice and gives you plenty of antioxidants.

Serves: 4 to 6 lunch-size servings

### **Ingredients:**

#### **Salad:**

- 1 large bunch of kale (purple or green) taken off the stalk, cut into ribbons
- 1½ cups cooked quinoa (white or red)
- 2 to 3 carrots, shredded
- 1 yellow pepper, diced
- 1 small red onion or shallot, sliced thin
- 1 cup fresh pomegranate arils, divided (reserve some for garnish)
- ¼ cup pumpkin or sunflower seeds, divided (reserve some for garnish)

Kale, Pomegranate & Quinoa Salad





**Dressing:**

2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar  
1 tablespoon honey  
Zest and juice of one or two limes  
1 teaspoon Dijon mustard  
Salt and fresh-ground pepper to taste

**Preparation:**

At the bottom of a large, wooden salad bowl combine all the dressing ingredients and whisk until incorporated. Next place all the salad greens and toppings, saving some pomegranate arils and sunflowers seeds for garnishing the top.

This salad can be prepared ahead of time and whisked together right before serving.

## *Pear, Walnut & Fig Salad with Raspberry Vinaigrette*

Pears, walnuts, and figs unite in a classic combination that always leaves your taste buds happy. I developed my own version of this salad after tiring of my usual raisin and cranberry combination. You'll be amazed how adding a few chopped figs upgrades your usual lunchtime greens. Delightfully sweet, figs are wonderful source of potassium and magnesium, a nice complement to the toasted walnuts and antioxidant-rich raspberries.

Yield: 2 to 4 servings

**Ingredients:**

1 head romaine lettuce, torn into small bites  
1 to 2 cups another variety of greens (kale, spinach or arugula)  
1 pear, sliced thin  
½ red onion, thinly sliced  
¼ cup toasted walnuts, roughly chopped  
2 to 3 dried or fresh figs, sliced thin  
½ cup fresh raspberries  
Garnish with more walnuts and fresh raspberries



Pear, Walnut & Fig Salad with Raspberry Vinaigrette



Use one of my [Favorite Salad Dressings](#), or give this one a try:

### Raspberry Vinaigrette

Pure raspberry bliss...a light and fruity dressing to make any salad pop.

Yield: ½ to ¾ cup dressing

- ¼ cup fresh or frozen raspberries
- 2 tablespoons raspberry or white-wine vinegar
- 3 tablespoons filtered water
- 1 tablespoon honey
- 1 clove garlic
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- Splash of olive oil (optional)
- Salt & fresh-ground black pepper to taste

### Preparation:

Combine all ingredients (except salt and pepper) and pulse in a high-powered blender or food processor. Process until smooth. Season to taste.

## Lazy Girl's Kale Salad

My no-fuss kale salad saves the day when I can't spend a lot of time in the kitchen but still want my greens. With chopped fruits, seeds, creamy avocado, and seasonal berries, this beauty comes together fast. Playing on the notion to use what you have on hand, feel free to swap out anything in this recipe, as long as you keep it colorful, raw, creamy, and crunchy. This is basic and beautiful, filled with healthy greens, vitamins, and minerals to make your skin glow. Make this salad every day and your body will start to crave it. Here's to you and your health.

Yield: Serves 1 healthy girl (or guy)

### Ingredients:

- ½ bunch kale (washed, stalks removed, and cut into thin ribbons)
- Small handful sunflower seeds (about 2 tablespoons)
- Zest and juice of one lime or lemon



Lazy Girl's Kale Salad

Drizzle of honey

Sea salt

### Only if you have time:

- 5 to 6 fresh strawberries, sliced
- 1 small carrot, peeled into ribbons
- 1/4 of an avocado, peeled, pitted and sliced

### Preparation:

In a large bowl, combine zest and juice of one lime or lemon. Add in the ribbons of kale and massage gently using both hands to soften the kale leaves.

Add the additional toppings, strawberries, carrot, sunflower seeds, and avocado, arranging them beautifully around the bowl.

Drizzle salad with a tablespoon of honey, season with salt and pepper to taste, and serve. If you want more dressing, add an additional squeeze of lime or lemon juice.

“Eat food. Not too much.  
Mostly plants.”

—Michael Pollan



## Asian Soba-Noodle Salad

When cooking soba noodles, why not make extra for the next day and include them in a healthy salad. It pumps up the dish and gives it a touch of gluten-free hearty pasta, combined with carrots, cabbage, and a creamy nut-butter dressing. Soba-noodle salad is a perfect party food that can be made ahead of time and enjoyed at room temperature, so you can enjoy the party.

Yield: 4 to 6 servings

### Ingredients:

#### Salad:

- 1 cup Napa cabbage
- 1 cup purple cabbage
- 1 cup kale, cut into ribbons or thin strips
- 2 cups carrots, grated
- 1 yellow bell pepper, diced
- 1 small bundle buckwheat Soba Noodles, (about 2 cups) cooked and cooled

#### Dressing:

- ½ cup almond butter
- 2 tablespoons honey or maple syrup
- 1 tablespoon tamari
- 1 clove garlic, grated or minced
- 1 teaspoon fresh ginger, grated
- ½ cup filtered water

#### Garnish:

- ¼ cup toasted and slivered almonds
- 1 tablespoon black sesame seeds
- 1 medium avocado, sliced (optional)

### Preparation:

Cook the soba noodles according to the package. Drain, rinse, and cool. Set aside for later.



Asian Soba-Noodle Salad



Using a food processor or box grater, grate all the cabbage and carrots. Dice the kale and colored pepper. Place vegetables in a medium size bowl and set aside.

Heat the same pan you used for the noodles (or a wok) over a medium-low burner. Add the almond butter, tamari, honey, grated garlic, ginger, and water (a little at a time). Whisk to combine into a thin sauce, adding water a little at a time, as needed. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Next, add your cooled soba noodles into the sauce mixture and toss gently. Pour the raw salad fixings into the pan and toss again. Plate your salad and garnish with almonds and black sesame seeds. Can be served at room temperature or refrigerated for later. Keeps well, even overnight.

## *Tropical Guacamole*

This guacamole was born from a summer lunch with my nieces Hannah and Kate. We enjoyed a version of it in New York City, but I knew I could make it better at home. Light, refreshing, and simple, this quick appetizer elevates normal guacamole to a whole new level. And with protein-packed edamame, you can feel better about indulging. It's a perfect summer-time food to be shared outside with ones you love.

Yield: 2 to 3 cups

### **Ingredients:**

- 2 ripe avocados
- 1 cup edamame, shelled
- Zest and juice of one lime or lemon, extra for garnish
- ½ cup mango, small dice, divided
- ½ cup papaya, small dice, divided
- ¼ cup fresh cilantro, chopped, plus extra for garnish
- Salt and fresh-ground pepper to taste

### **Preparation:**

In a food processor combine avocados, edamame, lime zest, lime juice, cilantro, ¼ cup mango, ¼ cup papaya, salt, and pepper. Pulse until combined, scraping down the sides to incorporate well. Season to taste. Transfer to a serving bowl and top with the rest of the mango, papaya and cilantro. Serve with additional lime wedges, vegetable sticks, and tortilla chips.





# BOOSTING NUTRITION

NOURISHING YOURSELF WITH HEALTHY WHOLE FOODS, fresh fruits, and vegetables makes your body and mind happy. Here are some great ways to increase your intake of nutrients, honoring your body and your commitment to good health.

- Use a fruit bowl. Place it somewhere you pass often and eat from it daily.
- Use fresh seasonal produce and herbs for flavor and taste, keeping it simple and easy.
- Add variety, rotating your meals and eating mostly real, unprocessed foods.



# Kitchen Timesavers

IN TODAY'S HECTIC WORLD, spending hours in the kitchen isn't always an option. Especially if you've worked all week, and you just want to relax and unwind at home. I get it. I've been cooking for as long as I can remember, and over the years I have learned a few tricks to keep things simple and to help me get in and out of the kitchen.

Try some of these strategies to help you have a smooth, easier mealtime and happier, healthier week.

- Save a trip to the store. Shop in your refrigerator and pantry and use up what you already purchased.
- Create a weekly meal plan, and prepare what you can a few days in advance. Chop, pack and assemble.
- Cook once, eat twice. Invest a few hours in making large batches, which you can then use for several meals. Leftovers usually taste better and reheating is easy.
- If you're cooking for two or more, that mean you have a partner and—hopefully—a sous-chef. Have fun and share the responsibilities. Two hands make light work. Put on some music and enjoy the time together.

# Cooking for a Crowd

DON'T PANIC! From someone who has hosted an ever-growing Thanksgiving Day crowd over the years, you've got this. Keep your cool. Remember, everyone is coming to spend time with you. Food is just a way to bring people together. Besides, if dinner flops (which it won't), you can always order in.

Create a simple menu and stick to it. Preparing too many dishes adds time and stress. Instead, focus on recipes you love to make, and be sure to ask for help. Usually guests are more than happy to bring a dish or two.

- Make as much ahead of time as possible.
- Prepare, plan and execute the menu. Ask people to make something.
- Make it special. People notice the small details, like garnishes, fresh flowers, photographs, creative place cards.





# Becoming the HEALTHY HOBOKEN GIRL

ABOUT FOUR YEARS AGO I STARTED MY BLOG, Healthy Hoboken Girl.

With a passion for cooking, I was completely addicted to food and lifestyle blogs. Seeing what others were creating in the kitchen inspired me to try new recipes and up my game. One of the first blogs I enjoyed reading was [KathEats](#), written by a young mom and registered dietician who posted what she was eating three times a day. Her daily food log and beautiful food photography was light, colorful, and fun. She gave me ideas for what to make for dinner.

At the time I was also posting my recipes on a large bulletin board at the local gym. People started to take them, and I soon found myself sharing and emailing my favorite recipes all over town. I needed a place where people could go to find all my recipes in one spot.

After doing a little research, I discovered how easy it was to start your own blog. So after journaling and brainstorming names with my friend, Joy, I launched Healthy Hoboken Girl. It was such fun to design and share my recipes, dinner plates, personal struggles, and stories. It opened up a whole new world of discovery. I loved it.

What I didn't expect was the incredible value the writing process would provide me. By sharing my thoughts and feelings with the universe, I released a lot from my heart and my head. By putting my smoothies and myself out there, I started my very own personal journey to a healthier, happier lifestyle. The blog became an online healing journal that I didn't even know I needed at the time. Over the keyboard I wrote, cried, laughed, and let go of all my thoughts, feelings, and pent-up emotions.



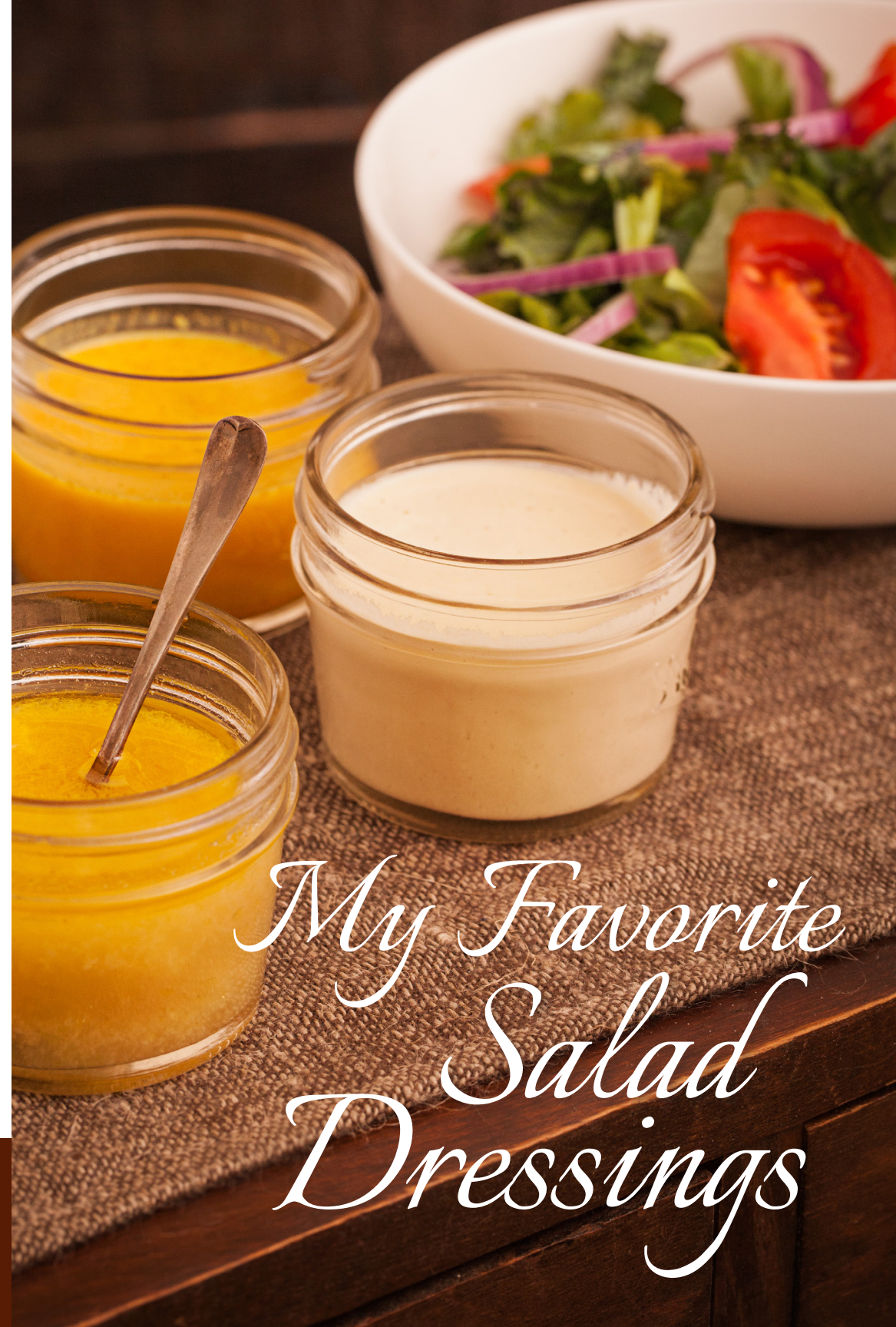
It's all been so rewarding, a true gift. Since starting Healthy Hoboken Girl, I've met wonderful people in my community and even started a local blogger group that grew from five people to over one hundred.

In the beginning I really didn't know what I was doing. I fumbled my way through posting, editing, and uploading photos. I spent weekends meeting other healthy living bloggers and traveling to blogger conferences. I learned on the go and shared my recipes all over town.

Over the past few years, the website has changed, as I've grown from blogger to business owner. This creative healing outlet has brought me so much joy and opportunity into my life. I'm grateful for all the lessons I've learned, and I treasure being of service to my community. My hope for the site is that it continues to grow, share, and provide a place where people can find real-food recipes, motivation, and information to live their best life.

‘One cannot  
think well, sleep well,  
if one has not  
dined well.’

-Virginia Woolf



# *My Favorite Salad Dressings*



LET'S FACE IT. A good dressing turns a humble bed of greens into an unforgettable salad. Here are some of my favorite dressings, so delicious they're bound to turn anyone into a better plant-eater.

## *Vinegar Hill*

When I can take my time and prepare a large bowl of greens, this is my go-to salad dressing. Light, sweet, and tangy, it's always a crowd favorite. You can also make a larger batch. Just double the recipe, shake everything in a covered mason jar, and store it in the refrigerator for later.

### **Ingredients:**

- 3 to 4 tablespoons raw apple cider vinegar
- 1 tablespoon honey
- Zest of lemon or lime
- 1 to 2 tablespoons fresh-squeezed lemon or lime juice
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- Small drizzle of olive oil (optional)

### **Preparation:**

Combine all ingredients and whisk until smooth. Season with salt and fresh-ground pepper.

## *Turmeric Ranch Dressing*

Turmeric makes this an anti-inflammatory dressing and gives it a brilliant yellow-orange color.

Yield: ½ cup dressing

### **Ingredients:**

- ½ cup raw cashews, soaked for 10 to 20 minutes (or longer)
- 4 to 6 tablespoons filtered water
- 2 tablespoons apple-cider vinegar
- 1 medium lime, both juice and zest



- 1 to 2 teaspoons vegan mayonnaise
- ½ teaspoon dried thyme or 1 tablespoon fresh thyme
- ½ teaspoon turmeric

### **Preparation:**

Combine all ingredients in a high-powered blender or food processor. Thin with additional water if needed, and season with salt and fresh-ground pepper.

“Cauliflower is nothing but cabbage with a college education.”

— Mark Twain

## Creamy Cashew

This is my favorite comforting, creamy dressing for any type of greens. I usually make a batch every week and always having a bowl of cashews soaking on my counter. This dressing is a sure way to get your kids to eat more greens.

Yield: ¾ cup to 1 cup

### Ingredients:

- ½ cup raw cashews, soaked for 30 minutes to an hour
- ¼ cup apple-cider vinegar
- ¼ cup nutritional yeast
- ¼ cup filtered water
- 2 cloves raw garlic
- 1 tablespoon honey
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard or vegan mayo

### Preparation:

Blend all ingredients in a high-powered blender or food processor until smooth and creamy. Thin with additional water if needed, and season with salt and fresh-ground pepper. Can be stored in the refrigerator for 3 to 4 days.

## Creamy Roasted-Garlic Heaven

If this can't get you to eat more greens, I'm not sure what will. Roasting the garlic is the secret to this sauce...pure heaven. I try always to have roasted garlic on hand or cook some when the oven is on. It makes the house smell great. Cashews, fresh shallots, roasted garlic, and miso are the stars of this dreamy blend.

Yield: 1 cup

### Ingredients:

- 1 small head roasted garlic, peeled
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 cup raw cashews, soaked at least 30 minutes to overnight
- ¾ to 1 cup filtered water
- 1 small shallot, peeled and roughly chopped
- 2 to 3 tablespoons apple-cider vinegar

- 1 tablespoon honey
- 1 teaspoon miso paste (optional)
- Salt and fresh-ground pepper to taste

### Preparation:

Blend all ingredients in a high-speed blender or food processor. Add in more water if needed at the end. Season with salt and fresh-ground black pepper to taste. Enjoy on a tossed green salad or drizzled over your favorite veggies.

*Chef's Note:* Roasting garlic adds more time to this recipe, but yields a terrific-flavored dressing, worth the extra time and effort. If you're unfamiliar with roasting your own garlic, here are the simple instructions.

*Chef's Note:* If you don't have time to roast, just add 2 or 3 cloves of raw garlic to the recipe and follow instructions above.

## Lynda's Lemon Ginger

This light, lemony dressing will perk up any bed of greens. Shake it up today for a fresh, fun, flavorful salad filled with anti-inflammatory garlic and ginger that will heal your body and make you happy and healthy.

Yield: 1 cup dressing

### Ingredients:

- 2 small lemons, both zest and juice (about ½ cup)
- ¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons white-wine vinegar
- 2-inch piece fresh ginger, peeled and grated
- 2 cloves of garlic, grated
- 2 tablespoons honey (optional)
- 1 tablespoon olive oil (optional)
- Pinch of sea salt (optional)

### Preparation:

Combine all ingredients in a high-powered blender or place in a covered jar and shake together.



## Roasted Garlic

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.

Carefully chop off the top an entire garlic bulb or cut it in half and open it like an onion. Put the garlic in aluminum foil, drizzle about a tablespoon of olive oil over the top, season it with salt and pepper, and then wrap up the bulb. Bake on a small cookie sheet for 30 to 40 minutes, or until tender and slightly brown. The garlic should be soft. Remove from oven and allow to cool. Once cooled, gently peel away the garlic skins and add roasted garlic to the blender.



## Can't Stop Eating You... Cashew-Cheese Sauce

Removing dairy from my day-to-day routine took time. I'd often fall on and off the wagon without shame, until I discovered easy ways around my favorite cheese fixes. This is one of those early recipes that helped me make a smooth transition. I know it will help you too. Drizzle this sauce on just about anything. It can take you from hot foods all the way to raw salads, depending on how thick or thin you prepare it. I usually thin it out to a smooth dressing for raw salads or leave it thicker for steamed veggies. Some of my favorite uses are on homemade tacos, in burritos, on veggie pizza, over grilled veggies, as a dip, or as part of a vegetable pasta bowl.

Yield: 1 to 1½ cups

### Ingredients:

1 cup cashews, soaked for 30 minutes or more

½ cup nutritional yeast flakes

Zest and juice of one lemon

½ to ¾ cup water (Add more if too thick, or if you are heating it on the stove.)

Salt and fresh-ground pepper to taste

### Preparation:

Blend ingredients together in a high-powered blender or food processor until smooth. Drizzle on your favorite dish.

For warm dishes, heat in a small saucepan over medium-low heat for 5 to 10 minutes. Season with salt and fresh-ground black pepper to taste. Then drizzle away. And I won't tell if you lick the spoon a hundred times. It's that good!





## Fending For Myself: MANAGER'S SPECIAL

MY MOM HAD A UNIQUE WAY of communicating when she didn't feel like cooking on certain nights. After raising six kids could you blame her? It was called Manager's Special. In the late afternoon, she'd make a casual announcement that we were to rummage through the kitchen and assemble a dinner plate or bowl of our own.

I personally rejoiced in these nights. No bits of brown, unidentifiable meat to push around my plate. And permission to eat three giant bowls of Honey Nut Cheerios along with a toasted, buttered English muffin was music to this girl's ears. If not breakfast-for-dinner, then it was usually a frozen French-bread pizza or deli sandwich and chips, washed down with a large Diet Coke to round things out for this happy middle-school student.

While my mom took a well-deserved break and parked herself in her chair on the porch or in front of the television, we happily munched our way through anything that wasn't nailed down in the kitchen. Growing up with so many siblings, I had to get the good food while it was still there. There was no time to waste.

As I got older, cooking and preparing food for myself started to become a fun hobby. I loved to spend time in the kitchen and baked almost every day for family and friends, watching old Martha Stuart episodes for inspiration. The skills I learned during all those nights of fending for myself serve me well to this day. My husband, Joe, will often say how quick I am in the kitchen and how easy it is for me to look design a meal around just a few ingredients.

Today, I recognize what a huge responsibility it was for my mom to feed her large family (nearly) every night and all the time it took for her to make wonderful dinners appear on the table.

I'm happy to say that Manager's Special Night lives on in our home. Joe actually likes it as much as I do, although it often means ordering take-out from Seamless with only two clicks from our phone. Oh how my mother would have enjoyed that! It's like a dinner magic wand.

I wish you healthy, happy family dinners cooked just the way you like them. No matter who is on duty.





# The Main Stage: Lunch & Dinner

THE FOLLOWING RECIPES fall under my all-time favorite comfort foods. It's a small cross-section of quick meals I pull together during a busy weeknight or serve to friends. Go ahead and try them. You won't miss the meat. I promise.

## *Black Bean and Avocado Wrap:*

### *Two Ways*

Let's face it. Anything with avocado is good in my book. Creamy, heart-healthy avocado wrapped up with veggies, greens, and mashed black beans, this quick-and-easy lunch idea comes together in minutes. A perfect picnic food, this portable roll is filled with fiber, omega-3 fats, and greens. Below are two ways to prepare it. Create the warm and toasty version and pack it for a day of hiking, or prepare the no-cooking method and see how easily homemade lunches or dinners can come together.

Serves: 4 to 6

#### **Ingredients:**

- 1 package large, whole-grain tortilla/burrito wraps
- 1 14-ounce can black beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 16-ounce jar salsa
- 1 cup cooked brown rice, cooled
- 1 avocado, peeled, pitted and sliced
- 1 tomato, sliced thin
- 1 medium red onion, sliced thin
- 1 small head butter lettuce or any greens, torn into small pieces



Black Bean and Avocado Wrap



### Optional add-ins for more color & nutrition:

Thin slices of colored peppers  
Shredded raw carrots  
Sprouts

### Preparation:

**Warm and Toasty:** Assemble wrap with the filling. Warm it up for a few minutes in a small skillet over medium heat. Spray the pan lightly with cooking spray or keep it dry, toasting both sides and creating a warm, burrito-style meal.

**No-Cook Method:** Gently warm the burrito wrap in the microwave for 10 seconds, just to make it easier to fold. Fill with all your favorite fixings, fold, and enjoy!

### Filling preparation:

Combine half the can of black beans,  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of the brown rice, with  $\frac{1}{4}$ - to  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of the salsa in a small bowl. Stir to combine and set aside. This mixture stays well in the refrigerator, so feel free to make a batch and keep it for another meal or more lunches later in the week. Prepare all the other veggies and warm the wraps.

To assemble the wrap, place the tortilla on a plate and add a  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of the bean and rice mixture in the center of the wrap. Then pile on your toppings as you like and season with salt and fresh-ground pepper. Fold one side of the wrap, tuck in the sides and roll it up. If you would like to toast and/or grill it and warm up the sandwich, that takes it to another level, but it's not necessary.

Slice the roll in half and serve with a side salad, hummus, and veggie slices.

## *Veggie Burger Sliders*

My first few attempts with homemade veggie burgers were major mushy kitchen fails. Since then I've experimented with dozens of recipes, and this one—a wonderful medley of black beans, peppers, scallions, and corn—is one of my favorites. These crispy, comfort-food sliders make any day feel like a summer BBQ. Pair with sweet-potato fries and a salad, and you're good to go.

Servings: 6 to 8 burgers (depending on size)

### Ingredients:

1 15-ounce can black beans, rinsed and drained  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  cup assorted colored peppers (whatever you have on hand)  
2 scallions, finely chopped  
1 small yellow onion, finely chopped



Veggie Burger Sliders

2 cloves fresh garlic, chopped  
1½ cups oatmeal, old-fashioned or quick cook  
½ cup oat flour (or more if needed)  
1 to 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice  
1 tablespoon tomato ketchup or BBQ sauce  
1 tablespoon prepared mustard  
Salt and fresh-ground pepper to taste

#### **Additional topping ideas:**

Sprouts, avocado slices, butter-lettuce leaves, sliced tomato, ketchup and mustard

#### **Preparation:**

Rinse and drain the black beans in a colander and set aside.

In a medium saucepan heated to medium-high heat, gently sauté onions, peppers, scallions, and garlic until soft (about 5 minutes). Set aside and allow to cool slightly.

Meanwhile, put the drained beans in a large bowl. Using the back of a small fork, smash the beans until about half of them are mushy, leaving some of the beans whole. Next add in the oatmeal, flour, lemon juice, ketchup, mustard, sautéed vegetable mixture, and salt and pepper. Mix until combined.

Depending on the moisture content of the beans, more or less flour may be needed. Form into mini-slider patties and cook until desired. If I have more time, I refrigerate the burger patties for 30 minutes to a day to allow the flavors to meld. Fry burgers in a skillet for 3 to 5 minutes per side, or until golden brown and crispy. Alternatively, bake them on a parchment-lined baking sheet on 350 degrees for 15 to 20 minutes per side or until they are firm and warmed all the way through. Covering the patties with foil for half of the cooking process will help them stay moist.

Serve on top of a large green salad or on a toasted burger bun and enjoy!

## *Garden-Delight Sandwich*

Working from home some days, my lunches are creations of what I have available and/or need to use up. This happy-accident sandwich was one of those days, when I was not in the mood for salad but still wanted raw veggies. Piled high with thinly sliced cucumbers, avocado, sprouts, and tender butter lettuce, you'll get the crunch and chewiness of an old-fashioned deli sandwich minus the unhealthy, processed cold cuts. Feel free to swap out any vegetables you have on hand. Anything goes! Cooking and creating without a recipe is so freeing and creative. Have fun, experiment, and enjoy!

Servings: 2 sandwiches

#### **Ingredients:**

4 pieces whole-grain bread, toasted (I use Ezekiel 4:9 Sprouted Whole Grain)  
1 small head butter lettuce, torn into small pieces  
4 to 6 slices of cucumber, sliced thin  
1 tomato, sliced thin  
1 ripe avocado, sliced thin  
¼ small red onion, sliced thin  
Handful of sprouts  
Salt and fresh-ground pepper to taste



Garden -Delight Sandwich



### Preparation:

Toast the bread (if desired) and spread out the sliced avocado. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Pile on the thinly sliced vegetables and sprouts. Eat open faced or like a normal sandwich. Serve with a cup of soup or kale chips.

*Chef's Note:* Hummus can be used instead of avocado.



Garden -Delight Sandwich

## Sweet Potato and White Bean Soup

This soup holds a special place in my heart. It was one of the first soups I taught in my cooking classes. It's perfect in the fall, paired with a tossed salad, crusty bread, and good company.

Yield: 8 to 10 servings

### Ingredients:

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 2 to 3 carrots, chopped
- 3 stalks celery, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, roughly chopped
- 2 large sweet potatoes, peeled and diced
- 1 15-ounce can cannellini beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 32-ounce box (4 cups) low-sodium vegetable broth
- 2 cups filtered water
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon ground coriander
- ½ teaspoon cumin
- ½ teaspoon turmeric
- Salt and fresh-ground pepper to taste
- Fresh chopped parley to garnish

### Preparation:

In a large, heavy-bottom soup pot, heat the olive oil over medium high heat. Add the onion, carrots, celery, and garlic and cook (stirring often) until soft, about 8 to 10 minutes.

Next add the ground spices to the onion mixture and stir constantly until fragrant and toasty, about 12 minutes. Then add the vegetable broth, water, and sweet potato cubes.

Bring the heat up to high, watching carefully until the soup begins to boil gently. Reduce heat to low, stir once, cover, and simmer until the sweet





Sweet Potato and White Bean Soup

potatoes are soft, about 30 to 40 minutes. Once the potatoes are soft, add in the white beans and stir to combine. Continue to heat through for another 5 minutes.

The soup is ready to serve as is, but if you prefer a puree, blend the soup in small batches in a blender or food processor (or directly in the soup pot with an immersion blender). Season with salt and pepper and serve with chopped fresh parsley.

## *Lynda's Lentil Pita Pouch*

When Joe and I first started dating, he had no idea how important lunch was to me, poor guy. He quickly became aware and to this day continues teasing me about my favorite meal. This one's for you, Babe...and for our love of lunch. Perfect to wrap up and take on the go, this little pocket of joy is flavorful and delicious. Hearty enough to keep you full until dinner, these pitas are a road trip staple.

## *Lentil Meatballs*

Yield: 12 to 14 mini-meatballs

### **Ingredients:**

- 2 cups cooked lentils
- ½ cup oatmeal, quick cook or old-fashioned
- 1 tablespoon ketchup or barbeque sauce
- 1 tablespoon tamari or soy sauce
- 3 to 4 sun-dried tomatoes, soaked in water to rehydrate (10 minutes)
- 2 cloves garlic
- ¼ cup fresh basil or spinach

### **Preparation:**

Process all ingredients in a food processor, pausing several times to scrape the sides. Form into meatballs the size of golf balls and place on a greased cookie sheet. Bake in a preheated 350-degree oven for about 18 to 20 minutes, turning over halfway through to brown each side. Set aside to cool. Can be eaten warm or cold from the refrigerator.



## Pita Pocket Assembly

Serves: 2

### Ingredients:

- 2 to 4 small whole-grain pita pockets, sliced in half and warmed in a low oven (about 200 degrees F) for 5 to 10 minutes
- 1 to 2 tablespoons hummus, any variety
- ½ small cucumber, sliced thin
- several thin slices of red onion
- a few leaves of tender spinach or other greens
- 3 to 6 cooked lentil meatballs, sliced in half

### Preparation:

Warm pitas in the oven. Carefully slice the pita pockets in half and open like an envelope. Smear one or both sides of the inside of the pita with 1 tablespoon or so of hummus. Place the spinach leaves, cucumber slices, and sliced meatballs into the pita and prop up on a serving platter. Feel free to get creative with the sandwich fixings. Whatever you can fit works, and the more color the better.

*Chef's Note:* For gluten sensitivities, swap out pita pockets with brown rice tortillas or gluten-free pitas, if available. This is also one of my favorite sandwiches to pack on the go. Perfect for lunch or easy dinner on the road with a large tossed salad.

## Sweet Potato & Bean Chili

My fall winter classic, this pot of delicious-ness is a household staple during the colder months. The perfect make-ahead-and-freeze meal, it's packed with healthy ingredients. My secret ingredient is grated sweet potato that melts into the chili to thicken and sweeten it. Beans and quinoa provide plenty of fiber and protein to keep you full for hours. And you'll get a full dose of beta-carotene to give your immune system a boost. Give it a try...you will never miss the meat.

Serves: 10 to 12

### Ingredients:

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 medium onion, diced







**Chef's Note:** As with most chilis, this one usually tastes better the following day. Pair with a side tossed salad and a healthy corn bread, and you'll be in heaven!

- 1 red and/or yellow pepper, diced
- 1 green pepper, diced
- 3 to 4 carrots, peeled and diced
- 2 to 3 cloves of garlic, minced
- 1 to 2 jalapeno peppers (optional, for those who like heat!)
- 3 tablespoons chili powder
- 1 tablespoon cumin
- ½ teaspoon ground coriander (optional)
- 1 28-ounce can of crushed tomatoes
- 1 15-ounce can of diced tomatoes (I prefer fire-roasted.)
- 4 cups water
- ½ cup dry, uncooked quinoa
- 1 large sweet potato, peeled and shredded
- 1 15-ounce can black beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 15-ounce can kidney beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 15-ounce can of pinto beans, rinsed and drained

**Preparation:**

Heat oil in a large pot over medium-high heat. Add the diced onion, carrot, and bell peppers. Stir, cover, and cook until soft, about 8 to 10 minutes. During the last few minutes, add in the minced garlic, stirring constantly until fragrant.

Add all the spices to the vegetable mixture. Stir to combine for a minute or two. This will smell amazing.

Pour in the water, crushed tomatoes, diced tomatoes, and dry quinoa. Stir and turn the heat up to high, until the chili begins to boil. Once boiling, add the shredded sweet potato, turn the heat down to low, and cover. Continue to cook for about 20 to 25 minutes, stirring occasionally.

At this point the sweet potato will be melting into the chili, thickening it, and the quinoa will be getting soft. Allow to cook for another 20 to 25 minutes, and then add the beans.

Continue to cook, stirring occasionally for another 10 to 12 minutes. Season with salt and fresh-ground pepper to taste, and it's ready to eat. Serve with your favorite toppings and enjoy.





# Living Plant-Based

MY GRADUAL SHIFT to a whole-food, plant-based diet has taken many years. It did not happen overnight, but today I'm in a place that feels right for me. I feel strong, happy, and healthy. My departure from meat came easily to me. Cheese, however, took me multiple starts and stops, thanks to delicious New York City pizza. And I'm OK with that. It's about a journey—not a diet label.

From the beginning, I was never a huge meat lover. I'd eat what my parents would serve me, but as far back as I can remember, meat was not the star of my plate. I much preferred the bread and sides.

Once I was living on my own, I experimented with easy tossed salads, soups, and pastas. But during my twenties my diet still wasn't perfect. It consisted of way too many processed foods, dairy, diet sodas, baked goods, and too much alcohol. Suffering from allergies, headaches, and a few extra pounds around the middle, I was far from the picture of health. The stress of multiple jobs, relationships, and the sudden fear and responsibility of helping my mom through breast cancer was at times too much to bear. My diet and the stress made me feel tired, heavy, and sluggish.

On a positive note, a few good things entered my life in my mid- to late-twenties—a consistent gym routine and an introduction to the world of health food stores. My sister-in-law Barbara introduced me to a crunchy, granola-selling health-food store. Usually it would smell weird, some odd-ball would be cooking strange food in the back, and people would be downing wheatgrass shots like vodka. But somehow it felt good to be in there. It made me smile. I discovered new foods, nuts, and seeds and began experimenting with them.

As I started to cook at home, I discovered more and more dishes that not only tasted good but also were good for me. I had always loved baking, but I started working with more whole grains and less sugar. Tasting and sharing my recipes with my friends and family became my new favorite hobby.

I was also hungry for knowledge about preventative health and wellness. Nutrition books began to pile up on my nightstand and fill my bookshelves. I



couldn't get enough. I began to educate myself about diet and disease, especially the relationship between nutrition and cancer.

It wasn't until I started teaching school at a children's hospital that I found myself on the frontline of childhood obesity, pharmaceutical drugs, and modern medicine. What my students were eating for lunch and their health became more important to me than the academic lesson of the day. At that point, I decided to go back to school to study nutrition and dive deeper into the world of health and the human body.

Today my diet looks very different than it did even a few years ago. And I delight in helping others live their best lives and eat more plants. My slow transition from meat eater to plant-based chef has had many twists and turns. I focus on simple, clean, real foods that fill me up and give me a ton of energy. I am always conscious of how foods make me feel. Other plant-powered chefs, athletes, and authors inspire me to try new recipes almost every week. I stay motivated by surrounding myself with positive people and thinking of my mom and dad.

My hope is to continue to honor my parents and improve the lives of others by sharing my personal journey of grief, love, health, and happiness.



“People who love to eat are always the best people.”

— Julia Child

# Desserts & Snacks

I'D LIKE TO INTRODUCE YOU to some of my signature sweets, goodies I've packed up and carried all over Hoboken and New York City. These are some of my most requested recipes, finally all together in one location. Healthier treats, these lovelies are perfect for an average weeknight or any special occasion. They often find their way into my bag, providing perfect emergency snacks on the go.





## *Cousin Susan's 'Got to Date' Raspberry & Date Squares*

These berry-topped treats are the perfect something to make you smile after your meal. My cousin, Susan, helped create these little bites for her birthday celebration one year, and they've been a family favorite ever since. The chunky nut-oatmeal base topped with sweet date filling and fresh berries is sure to please any guest.

Yield: 20 to 24 small bars

### **Adapted from Oh She Glows: Oat Date Bars**

#### **Ingredients:**

##### **Crust:**

- 1½ cup almonds
- 1½ cup oatmeal, old-fashioned or quick cook
- ¼ cup coconut oil, melted
- ½ teaspoon sea salt
- 10 to 12 dates, pitted and roughly chopped

##### **Topping:**

- 25 to 30 dates, pitted and roughly chopped
- ½ cup water
- ¼ cup raspberry jam
- 1 to 2 pints fresh raspberries

#### **Preparation:**

Line an 8 x 8-inch baking pan with parchment paper.

In a food processor combine nuts, oatmeal, dates, coconut oil, and salt and blend until combined. Pour the nut mixture into the prepared baking pan and press firmly to form a crust. Set aside.

Add the rest of the chopped dates and raspberry jam to the food processor. Pulse until combined, and then slowly add water to form a soft, spreadable paste. (If more raspberry taste is needed you can add more jam to your liking).

Spread the date-raspberry mixture evenly over the crust. Top with fresh raspberries. Allow to firm and chill in the refrigerator for at least 30



Cousin Susan's 'Got to Date' Raspberry & Date Squares



minutes or overnight. (If serving the next day, wait until serving to place the raspberries.) Cut into small bars and serve in cupcake liners for a simple and attractive presentation.

Store covered in the refrigerator. (If you didn't already eat the whole pan, that is.)

## *Chocolate Nut Bites*

Raw-chocolate nut bites always bring me to my happy place. Filled with nuts, seeds, and dates, they are a powerful way to transition to a whole-food lifestyle while still indulging in dessert. Perfect for after a meal or pre- or post-workout, these little balls of energy will keep you going.

Yield: 12 to 14 bites

### **Ingredients:**

- ½ cup oatmeal
- ½ cup almonds
- ½ cup sunflower seeds
- 1 tablespoon raw cacao or unsweetened cocoa powder
- Pinch of sea salt
- 10 to 12 pitted dates, soaked in water for 10 minutes
- 1 tablespoon filtered water, if necessary

## *Vanilla, Oatmeal & Chocolate-Chip Nut Bites*

These easy, no-bake bites are among my favorite after-dinner treats to enjoy with a mug of warm tea. Share them with friends or just keep them all to yourself. Don't worry, I won't tell anyone.

Yield: 12 to 14 bites

### **Ingredients:**

- ½ cup oatmeal
- ½ cup almonds
- ½ cup cashews
- 10 to 12 pitted dates, soaked in water for 10 minutes and roughly chopped



Chocolate Nut Bites



Vanilla, Oatmeal & Chocolate-Chip Nut Bites



- 1 tablespoon water, if needed, for moisture and holding the mixture together
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- Pinch of sea salt
- ¼ cup mini chocolate chips

**Preparation:**

Line a cookie sheet with wax paper, and set it aside.

Combine all the ingredients except water and chocolate chips in a food processor and pulse until mixed well. Stop occasionally to scrape the sides and test the 'dough' for stickiness, adding water, if needed. Transfer the nut mixture into a medium bowl. Add the chocolate chips and mix until combined. I find that my hands work best for this. Roll out the dough into golf-ball-size bites onto the cookie sheet. Place in the refrigerator or freezer to firm, about 10 to 20 minutes. Once firm, store the nut bites in an airtight container in the refrigerator.

## *Lemon Coconut Bites*

Rolled in shredded coconut, these snowball look-a-likes are pillows of lemony heaven. You can make a batch of these in no time with only a few simple ingredients. Perfect for post-workout fuel or pre-workout energy, these power bites are the ultimate raw-food snack. Dates, lemon juice, oats, coconut, and nuts combine to give you a sweet citrus bite. Enjoy this real-food snack and make a bunch to share with your friends.

Yield: 12 to 14 bites

**Ingredients:**

- ½ cup cashews, soaked for 10 to 20 minutes
- ½ cup almonds, soaked for 10 to 20 minutes
- ½ cup unsweetened shredded-coconut flakes, plus more for dusting at the end
- ½ cup old-fashioned or quick cook oats
- 10 to 12 pitted dates, soaked for 10 to 20 minutes and roughly chopped
- 1 tablespoon coconut oil
- Zest and juice of one lemon (about 2 tablespoons to ¼ cup fresh lemon juice)

**Preparation:**

Line a cookie sheet with wax paper, and set it aside.

Place the nuts, oatmeal, and coconut flakes in a food processor and pulse on high until thoroughly mixed. Add the dates a few at a time and pulse until ingredients are combined. Scrape the sides of the processor bowl if necessary. Finally add in the coconut oil and lemon zest and juice, pulsing one last time. The mixture should come together easily and resemble moist, firm, cookie dough. If you need a little more moisture to hold it together, add one tablespoon of water or lemon juice and pulse to



Lemon Coconut Bites



combine. Form the dough into small golf-ball size spheres and place on the cookie sheet. Freeze bites for 10 to 12 minutes or until firm. Then place in a sealed container in the refrigerator and enjoy as a sweet bite anytime of day or after or before a workout. One of my favorite road-trip snacks.

Mini Chocolate and Almond-Butter Cups



## *Mini Chocolate and Almond-Butter Cups*

Who needs Reese's when you can make this healthier version of a nutbutter cup! This recipe was born during a very long winter in our apartment in 2014. My friend, Joy, and I were snowed in, craving something sweet, and this is what happened. Enjoy!

Yield: 12 to 14 mini cups

### Adapted from Oh She Glows

#### Ingredients:

##### For the base:

- ¾ cup almond meal
- ¼ cup ground oatmeal
- 2 tablespoons almond butter
- 1 tablespoon coconut oil
- 1 tablespoon maple syrup
- ¼ teaspoon vanilla
- Pinch of sea salt

##### For the chocolate topping:

- 3 tablespoons coconut oil
- 2 tablespoons maple syrup
- 2 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder
- Pinch of sea salt

#### Preparation:

Line a mini-muffin tin with paper liners and set aside.

No special nut flours are required for this recipe. If you don't already have them, just add almonds and oats into a food processor and process until a flour forms.

Add the almond meal and oat flour to a medium bowl and mix.

Add the nut butter, coconut oil, vanilla, and sea salt, and stir until thoroughly combined. The dough should be similar to cookie dough.



Portion the dough into muffin pan lined and press down until even and smooth.

**For the chocolate sauce:** In a small bowl whisk together the coconut oil, maple syrup, cocoa powder, and salt until smooth. Spoon over the top of each of the cups.

Place the muffin tin in the freezer for 25 to 30 minutes or until firm. Once frozen and firm, the nut-butter cups can be stored in a container in the refrigerator or freezer and enjoyed by all.

## *Grilled Summer Peaches with Mint and Toasted Almonds*

While living in Hoboken, we didn't have outdoor space, so during the summer when we visited someone who had a grill, I would always make this for dessert. It's super simple, light, and refreshing after a meal. It's so easy, but sure to impress.

Serves: 4 to 6

### **Ingredients:**

- 4 to 6 ripe, organic peaches, cut in half and pitted
- Non-stick cooking spray, 1 to 2 tablespoons coconut oil, or Earth Balance vegan spread
- ½ to 1 cup honey (depending on size of the group)
- 2 pints of non-dairy ice cream of your choice (I usually use vanilla.)
- ¼ to a ½ cup toasted almonds to garnish the plate
- a few sprigs of fresh mint (optional)

### **Preparation:**

Cut peaches in half and gently remove pits. Set aside.

Heat up your outdoor grill, indoor grill pan, or simple frying pan to medium-high heat.

Once grill is nice and hot, spray cooking spray on pan/grill or brush peaches with melted Earth Balance or coconut oil. Place peaches cut-side down on grill/pan. Allow them to cook until soft, about 4 to 7 minutes. Check with a fork to see if tender. You should also see nice, golden grill marks on the bottom.



Grilled Summer Peaches with Mint and Toasted Almonds

Flip over and grill the other side for 1 to 3 minutes or until soft and tender.

Plate a pair of peaches with a scoop of ice cream, drizzle of honey, and sprinkle of toasted slivered almonds. Garnish with fresh mint leaves, if you wish. Serve immediately.

One of my favorite ways to celebrate summer fruits, this dessert is always a winner!



# Healing, Self Care, And Healthy Living

FOR YEARS I GAVE TO EVERYONE BUT MYSELF. Teaching middle school by day, caring for sick, aging parents at night, and doing things for everyone in between. I felt exhausted, resentful, and stuck. I was miserable, depressed, and hated where I saw my life going. I didn't know what to do, and at first I really didn't know any better. At a particular low point, crying in the bathroom at work, I reached out for help. I got professional help, found activities I enjoyed doing, and added more exercise and movement to my life as a natural way to relieve stress. It worked.

Gradually, I started to take better care of myself and to balance out my life. This allowed me to take charge of my life. Today I look back on those days of slow, gradual healing with gratitude. Experiencing that journey and being present enough to realize what didn't feel right was such a gift. Dealing with the grief and loss that comes with caring for and losing your parents is overwhelming, however it made me appreciate my youth and life even more. I felt my own mortality, grew up quickly, gained much needed clarity and felt my life start to shift. Wandering the halls of smelly nursing homes after teaching middle school all day was an eye opener.

Today I continue to check in with myself, honor my commitment to living my best life, and listen to my body each day. This is what keeps me in balance and happy to get up and spread this powerful message of health and happiness.

I continued to reach out for help, rely on my friends and family, find more joy, and try to stay balanced. On a regular basis I try new things, get outside my comfort zone, and hone my perspective on my life. It's not always perfect, but that doesn't matter. All of these actions make me feel more alive, happy, and content. I find myself in a much better place and able to open my heart and surrender to what life has in store.

Wherever you find yourself today, it's never too late to take one small step in a positive, healthy direction. Reach out for support and move forward. We are all on our own journey to health and happiness, and each person has a unique path.

May you find peace and continued blessings on yours.



Lynda Layng



# Acknowledgments

NOTHING IN THIS WORLD IS DONE ALONE, and this book is no exception. So many talented people came together to make this possible. They mean the world to me. Where do I begin....

**Joe**, my sweet, supportive partner and husband, who inspires me to keep moving forward and to try new recipes. He helps me discover new ways to heal, support, and care for one another. Thank you for always being my biggest cheerleader, a funny and crafty writer, and unpaid late-night tech-support staff. And for providing a soft, loving place to land after the day is done. Knowing you have my back and support my every move makes me want to give more, reach higher, never stop learning, and stretch myself further. Thank you! I love you so much.

**My dear siblings**, Kevin, George, Kathleen, Dot, and Edy. We shared a beautiful upbringing together and each have our own fond and, of course, twisted memories of Mom and Dad. Thank you for always showing me how things are done, spoiling me with countless meals, driving me places, wiping my tears, and holding my hand. You made me wise beyond my years, taught me to drive, made some mean chocolate afterschool snacks, and gave me an appreciation for all the good music of the sixties, seventies, and eighties. I treasure and adore you all. Thanks for always being there.

My second set of siblings, my **Ramsey Cousins**, George, Madelyn, Peter, Heather, Mary, John, Susan, Patrick, and Amy. You continue to play a major role in my life. Thanks for your constant encouragement, laughs, and faith. You've tried all my different salads, granola bars, and desserts and always provide honest feedback. You even allow me to grill Brussels sprouts and tofu next to your steaks while camping in the woods each Memorial Day. Memories of all our family gatherings hold a special place in my heart. I love you guys so much!

**Joy**, one of my closest and dearest friends. Our weekly walks and workouts birthed Healthy Hoboken Girl and countless other business ideas. Thanks for your guidance, love, patience, and laughter. I couldn't have done this without you, my sister and friend always.

My sweet sister-in-law, **Barbara**, for contributing the beautiful foreword. The in-law title doesn't really apply, when you meet each other at only eight years old. You are my true sister in every sense of the word. Thank

you for encouraging me to seek out healing and support in those early years. What an unbelievable gift you have been in my life. I'm eternally grateful and love you deeply.

**My favorite recipe testers:** Joy, Susan, and all my gym buddies—Laurie, Thea, Nancy, Kelly, Sue, Erin, Lisa, Noel, Tricia, Kyla, Laurie G, Alison, Ian, Kathia, and Joan.

**Susan D'antonio:** My early kitchen crusader who encouraged me to share my recipes weekly throughout Hoboken. Thank you for allowing me to cultivate my community, talk about real food and health, and find my voice.

**Michael Marmora:** It was a treat to work with you and have you photograph this special collection of recipes. We cooked and created beautiful plates, styled down to the last detail, and ate all day long. Thank you for your friendship, dedication, talent, and time. You captured it all, and I'm so grateful.

Willow Solutions: A very special thanks to **Michael and Kara Sober** for helping me design and build a small, local brand; a warm community of fans; fun videos, with more green-juice out-takes and bloopers than I'm sure you wanted to film. I appreciate it all.

**Tiffany Pinero Style:** After all the food styling, I needed to call in the real stylist to help me put together some fun and casual looks for our shoot day. Thank you Tiffany for making me feel so put-together, confident, and comfortable.

**Hoboken Blog-her Ladies:** Jen, Tiffany, Alexandra, Running Bun, Kristin, Diana, Jacquelyn, Jessie, Elodie, Laura, Skinny Chef-Jen, Kristen, Kathia, Sloane and Niambi, You are all so inspiring and talented. Thank you for pushing me forward, sampling all my recipes, sharing my posts, and encouraging me to reach high.

My **Stanford Inn** family: **Joan and Jeff Stanford, Sid Garza Hillman,** and **Sadhana Berkow** for pushing my culinary limits and for giving me time to explore your organic gardens for inspiration. You made me use cashews, tofu, and herbs in ways I never imagined. And you taught me how to get comfortable in a fast paced, lively, vegan restaurant kitchen. I adore you all and can't wait to come back.

And last but not least, a huge thanks to the two people who brought me into this world, my mom and Dad, **Doris** and **William Layng**. Your lives and examples guided me into the person I'm humbled and honored to be today. Thank you for showing me how to be of service to others, to do the right



thing when know one is looking, and for gracing me such a gift during your final years on this earth. You showed me not to take my health for granted, that laughter is sometimes the best medicine, and that I am worthy and deserving of love and self-care. You're never far from my heart. I love you both more than words can say.

## Special Thanks to:

**Photography:** Michael Marmora is a commercial photographer based in the New York City area, specializing in food, people, and lifestyle. He studied advertising photography at Rochester Institute of Technology and has been fortunate to work with a wide range of subjects for both assignments and personal work. In the time he has spent working professionally, Michael has been given the opportunity to foster long-lasting relationships with many of his clients and collaborate with other artists who find joy in their craft.

When Michael is not working, he can be found in the kitchen or traveling with his fiancé, Elizabeth. He maintains a commercial studio in Hoboken, New Jersey.

**Styling:** Tiffany Pinero website: [www.TiffanyPineroStyle.com](http://www.TiffanyPineroStyle.com) . A dear friend and all-around style goddess.

**Hair & Make-up:** By Brittney Cowan, Salon Caru Hoboken, NJ

