

✓ Week 01 - Build the Menu

✓ Week 02 - Read Your Hunger

✓ Week 03 - Sequence the Meal

Week 04 - Become the Chef

SERIES 02 · DOPAMINE MENU ARCHITECT

WEEK 04

BECOME THE CHEF

Or: The menu was always just a starting point. Now it becomes entirely yours.



WEEK 01 - BUILD THE MENU

You built a personal menu of Appetizers, Entrées, and Sides. You've been using it for three weeks. Some items have proven themselves. Others haven't.



WEEK 02 - READ YOUR HUNGER

You learned to name the flavor before ordering - restless, foggy, or crowded. That skill is now part of your daily operating system.



WEEK 03 – SEQUENCE THE MEAL

You stopped ordering randomly and started running named sequences – Discharge, Warm-Up, Quieting. Your logs now tell a story across three weeks.

You started as a customer reading a menu someone else wrote. This week you become the person who decides what's on it. **The three-week log you've kept is a data set about your own nervous system** – which items consistently score 4–5, which ones score 1–2, which flavors you live in most, and which sequences actually work for how your particular brain is wired.

No one else has your log. No one else has your nervous system. This week you use what you've learned to make the menu permanently, personally yours.

WHAT A CHEF ACTUALLY DOES

A chef doesn't follow a recipe blindly. A chef knows **why** each ingredient is there, which ones are essential and which ones can be swapped, and when the dish needs to be modified for the person eating it. After three weeks, you have that knowledge about your own regulation system.

This week you audit the menu with your log in hand, retire what isn't working, add what your brain has been signaling it actually needs, and commit to the version that's built from real evidence — not from what sounded good in Week 01.

YOURS

FIRST: THE AUDIT — OPEN YOUR LOG

THE THREE-WEEK MENU AUDIT

Look at your logs from Weeks 01-03. You're looking for two lists.




ITEMS TO RETIRE — SCORED 1-2 CONSISTENTLY

- ✗ Items you reached for but they didn't shift your state
- ✗ Items that felt like obligations, not choices
- ✗ Items that made the under-stimulation worse
- ✗ Items you skipped every time they came to mind
- ✗ Items that belong on someone else's menu, not yours

ITEMS TO KEEP — SCORED 3-5 CONSISTENTLY

- ✓ Items that reliably shifted your state upward
- ✓ Items you found yourself looking forward to
- ✓ Items that worked even when you were resistant to starting
- ✓ Items that appeared in high-scoring sequences
- ✓ Items that surprised you by working better than expected

NOW: ADD THREE NEW ITEMS – ONE PER COURSE

 NEW APPETIZER RETIRING <i>The item from your list that scored lowest</i>	 NEW ENTRÉE RETIRING <i>The Entrée that felt like homework every time</i>	 NEW SIDE RETIRING <i>The Side that felt forced or not genuinely playful</i>
KEEPING <i>Your highest-scoring Appetizer – this is your anchor</i>	KEEPING <i>The Entrée that produced the most satisfying completions</i>	KEEPING <i>The Side that most reliably produced absorption</i>
+ Add one new movement you haven't tried yet	+ Add one task or activity you've been curious about	+ Add something you used to enjoy and abandoned


YOUR STEPS THIS WEEK

1

THE AUDIT

Spend ten minutes with your log. Write two lists: retire and keep.

This is the only genuinely reflective task in the series. Bring your phone or notebook and go through every log entry from Weeks 01–03. Circle the high scores. Note the low ones. *Look for patterns across flavors, not just across items.* An item that scores 4 every time you're restless but 1 every time you're foggy is a specialized tool, not a failed item – it stays on the menu with a note.

 Log in one hand, two-column list in the other. No phone for anything else during this ten minutes.


 10 minutes

2

THE EDIT

Retire the lowest-scoring item from each course. Add one replacement each.

Not a complete overhaul. One retirement, one addition, per course. The replacements should come from things your brain has been quietly nudging you toward — activities you've thought about trying, things you used to do, or items from your three personal additions in Week 01 that you never actually tried. **If you haven't tried something from your Week 01 additions yet, now is the time.**

 Rewrite the updated menu somewhere you'll see it. Notes app, sticky note, back of a card — anywhere accessible.

 10 minutes

3

THE FIELD TEST

Use the updated menu at least twice this week. Run the new items.

Don't protect the new items by never ordering them. The whole point of adding them is to find out whether they work in practice. Run each new item at least once this week, in an appropriate sequence for the flavor you're experiencing. *New items need one honest test before you can evaluate them fairly.*

🍃 Same as always: flavor → sequence → course → item. The system hasn't changed. The menu has.

🕒 your sequence length

4

THE FINAL LOG

At the end of the week, write three sentences about what you now know about your brain.

Not a rating. Not a score. Three plain sentences: what flavor you live in most, which item has been your most reliable reset, and one thing about your nervous system you didn't know four weeks ago. **These three sentences are yours.** Bring them to session. They are the most useful thing this series has produced.

🍃 Pen and paper preferred for this one. Write slowly. You've earned a few minutes of reflection.

🕒 5 minutes

ON KEEPING A MENU THAT STAYS ALIVE





The system you built only works if you take care of it.

A menu that never gets updated becomes a list of obligations.
A regulation system that isn't tended becomes another thing

you feel guilty about not using. The most important act of self-care for the system you've built is **treating it as a living document, not a finished product.**

Once a month — not once a week, that's too often — do a five-minute check on the menu. Are the items still landing? Has a new flavor emerged that needs a new sequence? Has life changed in a way that makes some items less accessible? *The menu serves you. You don't serve the menu.*

Signs your menu needs a refresh:

-  Your ratings have been creeping lower for two or more weeks in a row — the items have lost novelty.
-  You're skipping the menu entirely and returning to doomscrolling — the friction has gotten too high or the items aren't appealing.
-  You're reaching for the same item every time regardless of flavor — the menu has collapsed to a single option.
-  The sequences feel mechanical rather than genuinely regulating — you're going through the motions rather than actually eating.

Maintaining this system is not extra work on top of self-care — it is self-care. Knowing how your own nervous system works and keeping the tools sharp is one of the most genuinely useful things you can do for yourself. Bring the menu back to session anytime it needs a second set of eyes.

FOUR WEEKS. SERIES

COMPLETE.

You went from foraging to cooking. That's a meaningful distance to travel.

The menu is yours now. Take good care of it.



The ADHD brain will always be a high-appetite organ. That's not going to change, and it was never something to fix. What changes is the quality and intentionality of what you feed it. Four weeks ago you were foraging. Now you have a kitchen, a menu, the ability to read your hunger, and the skill to sequence a meal. That is a fundamentally different relationship with your own mind.

Bring the three sentences and the updated menu to our next session. The real work starts there.

– Brian Jaeger, MA, CRC, LMHC



This week's reflection (bring to session)

Your three sentences. Your updated menu. And one honest answer to: what did you resist most in this series — and what surprised you most about what actually worked?



The week's target, simply stated

Complete the audit. Edit the menu. Field-test the new items twice. Write three sentences at the end of the week.

Then bring all of it in.