

Rx FOOD IS MEDICINE

☒ Secrets

☒ Lies

CONFIDENTIAL

Sustainable Plant-Based on a Budget

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Cooking Plant Based At Home

I learned this the expensive way. I've thrown out more slimy herbs and sad cucumbers than I care to admit. I've spent way too much money at the grocery store because I bought for recipes instead of systems. This is the conversation that I wish someone had with me years ago.

We don't need 110 ingredients (ask me about my Mulligatawny Soup Experience). We don't need expensive substitutes. We need a plan that respects how vegetables actually behave. We need a way to get complex flavors without having to cook for three hours every night! We NEED to explore new foods, new veg, new grains, and diversify our diets.

When we work with the cycle: Raw first. Then raw gets sautéed. Sautéed becomes roasted. Roasted becomes soup. Soup becomes stew or sauce. Nothing is wasted. Everything evolves. Seasonings and cooking techniques pile up and the complexity of flavor we hunger for arrives on our plates.

Step 1 - Build a Pantry Slowly

Buy 1 new spice per month. Start with: Cumin Smoked Paprika Garam Masala	Buy 1 new grain per month. Start with: Quinoa Chia Rice
Buy 1 new bean per month. Start with: Butter Beans Black Beans Canelini Beans	Buy 1 new pasta per month. Start with: Orzo Pene Rice Noodles

No giant investment upfront.

Going to Grocery or Farmer's Market

If you can choose Farmer's Market first, do so.

At the grocery, start at the managers special cart in produce. You may find bananas or sweet potatoes, tomatoes or mushrooms. Buy what is marked down and get inspired by whatever it is, use it first.

If you have the choice between powdered ginger or tumeric or raw, choose raw. If you have the choice between minced or powdered, choose minced. Buy at things closest to their natural state. If you can choose for something held at room temp or refrigerated choose the room temp one. If you can choose something trimmed or untrimmed, for example, broccoli or broccoli crowns, choose the full broccoli. Beats or turnips with tops on or off, choose on. Celery on the root or trimmed, choose on the root. These will keep longer naturally. They will taste better and you'll get more food. More nutrition. Use the celery leafs when chopping celery. Use the beet or turnip greens in a salad or stir fry. Stop throwing away your tips and tails. If you must remove an end of a veg put it into a freezer bag and freeze it. Next time you need to make soup, add all the tips and tails to the water and deepen and diversify your veg broth for free. Take it further and put all the veg and broth into a blender on high for 4 mins, then use it as a thicker stock/sauce with all the fiber, or push it through a sieve. You'll get so much more from everything you've already paid for.

The Life Cycle Of Veg

Once you have harvested or shopped, and got your veg home it's important to store them properly so that we can stretch their decay period as long as possible. Many things like temperature, moisture, oxygen, and impact the decay of vegetables. The type of veg and the surface area exposed to the elements play a big part in how quickly we'll need to use them.

Temperature: Warmer temperatures significantly increase the speed of decay. Keep things in a cool dark place if they have never been refrigerated, or in the fridge.

Moisture: Adequate moisture is necessary for microbial activity; however, excessive water can lead to anaerobic conditions (slow decay). Somethings will keep better under water, like if you take a perfectly ripe avocado, submerge it and keep it in the fridge, it will stay at that perfectly ripe stage for days.

Oxygen: Aerobic decomposition (with oxygen) is faster than anaerobic decomposition. Use resealable storage containers that can push the air out.

Food Type: Leafy greens and tender vegetables break down faster than fibrous or woody vegetables (e.g., carrots, winter squash).

Surface Area: Chopped or damaged vegetables decompose faster than whole items.

Lets think about a carrot. A whole carrot that has never been refrigerated can be kept in a root bin for weeks and change very little. We can wash it and eat it raw. We can take that same carrot and slice it thinnly for a stir fry where light cooking alone brings out the sugars and softens the fiber. That sauteed veg can be popped into a soup and still serve us with lovely flavor and bite, or we can immersion blend it and it can become part of our salad or pasta dressing, broth, sauce or even a juice.

Cooking Process for Complex Flavors

“Cook for nourishment and for the magic of what today’s meal can become tomorrow, not for a single meal. Cook with 30 Things in mind.”

Example of one week.

Master Grocery List (Serves 4 | 5 Dinners)

1 large cucumber 1 pint cherry tomatoes 1 large bell pepper 1 zucchini 1 sweet potato (medium) 1 red onion
1 yellow onion 1 carrot 1 celery stalk 1 bunch kale 1 bunch parsley 1 small bunch cilantro 1 lemon 1 lime
1 head garlic 1 small knob fresh ginger 1 small knob fresh turmeric 1 can chickpeas (15 oz)
1 can crushed tomatoes (15–28 oz) 1 can full-fat coconut milk 1 cup dry red lentils 1 lb orzo or short pasta
1-2 cups rice (jasmine or basmati) 1 package tortillas 1 block super firm tofu

Pantry Items:

Olive oil, Salt, Black pepper, Citrus tamari, Tahini, Cumin, Smoked paprika, Garam masala, Basil, Oregano, Chili flakes (optional)

Stage 1 – Raw

Think Salads, Lettuce wraps, Tacos. Use the fragile stuff first. Use high-water vegetables. Cucumbers. Tomatoes. Herbs. They decline fast.

RAW MEDITERRANEAN CHICKPEA BOWL

Ingredients (Serves 4)

- 1 can chickpeas, drained and rinsed
- 1 cucumber, diced
- 1 cup cherry tomatoes, halved
- ½ bell pepper, diced
- 2 scallions, sliced

- ¼ cup parsley, chopped
- 2 tbsp cilantro, chopped
- Juice of ½ lemon
- 3 tbsp tahini
- 1-2 tbsp warm water
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- Salt + black pepper

Optional base: cooked rice or greens

Method

1. In a bowl, combine chickpeas, cucumber, tomatoes, pepper, scallions, and herbs.
2. In a small cup, whisk tahini, lemon juice, olive oil, salt, pepper, and enough warm water to loosen.
3. Toss everything together.
4. Adjust salt. It should taste bright, not flat.

Cost Snapshot

Approx \$6-8 total

~\$1.75 per serving

Storage Note

Keeps 2 days max. Herbs fade quickly.

Reserve remaining parsley + cilantro for Day 2

Stage 2 – Light Cook

Flash sauté. Keep structure. Why This Is Second? Vegetables are still strong but starting to soften. Now we apply quick heat, think stir fry, flash sautee, bowls, etc.. Fold in whatever left overs you have from Stage 1.

SMOKY TOFU TACOS

Ingredients (Serves 4)

- 1 block super-firm tofu, cubed
- ½ bell pepper, sliced
- 1 zucchini, sliced
- ½ red onion, thin sliced
- 1 tsp cumin
- 1 tsp smoked paprika
- Pinch chili flakes
- 1 tbsp tamari sauce
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- Juice of ½ lime
- cilantro
- Tortillas
- Remains of yesterday's salad or bowl

Method

1. Heat oil in skillet.
2. Sauté onion, zucchini, and pepper. leave the veg for 2 mins untouched*, flip and cook 2 more mins. Remove.
*this gives us color, caramelization, flavor
3. In same pan, add tofu, cumin, paprika, chili flakes, soy sauce.
4. Let tofu brown, leave it 1-2 mins each side of the cube.
5. Return vegetables briefly.
6. Finish with lime and cilantro.

Cost Snapshot

Approx \$8-10

~\$2.25 per serving

Storage Note

Tofu mix holds 3 days.

Leftovers can fold into soup tomorrow.

Stage 3 – Roast

Vegetables lose moisture but gain flavor. Now we build depth. Why This Is Third? Vegetables are softening.

Roasting removes moisture, concentrates flavor, caramelizes sugars.

ROASTED VEGETABLE TOMATO ORZO

Ingredients (Serves 4-5)

- Remaining zucchini
- 1 sweet potato, cubed
- ½ red onion
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- Salt + pepper
- 2 cloves garlic
- 1 can crushed tomatoes
- 1 tsp oregano (if fresh ¼ cup)
- 1 tsp basil (if fresh ¼ cup)
- 1 lb orzo or short pasta
- Remaining parsley
- Remaining Taco filling from yesterday

Method

1. Roast vegetables at 425°F for 25-30 minutes.
2. Meanwhile cook pasta.
3. In pan, sauté garlic. Add crushed tomatoes + seasoning. Simmer 10 minutes.
4. Toss pasta, sauce, roasted veg.
5. Finish with parsley and olive oil.

Cost Snapshot

Approx \$10-12

Feeds 4-5

~\$2.40 per serving

Storage Note

Reserve 1-2 cups roasted veg for tomorrow's soup.

Stage 4 – Soup

Older produce becomes softer and sweeter. This is where “almost tired” becomes powerful. Why This Is Fourth?

Moisture loss makes vegetables sweeter. Soup brings them back to life. Fold in whatever is left over from Stage 3 and anything that looks like it's on it's way out from the produce bin.

RUSTIC ROASTED VEGETABLE SOUP

Ingredients (Serves 4-6)

- 1-2 cups roasted vegetables
- 1 carrot, chopped
- 1 celery stalk, chopped
- ½ yellow onion
- 2 cloves garlic
- 1 inch fresh minced Turmeric (1 tsp if dried/powdered)
- 1 inch fresh minced Ginger (1 tsp if dried/powdered)
- 4 cups vegetable broth
- 1 cup chopped kale
- Salt + pepper
- Leftovers

Method

1. Sauté onion, carrot, celery 5 minutes.
2. Add garlic 30 seconds.
3. Add roasted vegetables + broth.
4. Simmer 15-20 minutes.
5. Add kale last 5 minutes.
6. Adjust salt carefully.

Cost Snapshot

Mostly already paid for.

Adds about \$3-4 in ingredients.

Storage Note

Freezes well.

Reserve nothing. Tomorrow is final stage.

Stage 5 – Stew/Sauce

Nothing wasted. Everything integrated. Why This Is Last? A stew can absorb layers of flavors and present them as something altogether new and satisfying. Lentils cook fast, thicken naturally and will absorb anything left from our week's vegetables.

COCONUT RED LENTIL DAAL

Ingredients (Serves 4-6)

- 1 cup red lentils
- ½ onion, diced
- 1 tbsp grated ginger
- 1 tbsp turmeric
- 2 cloves grated garlic
- 1-2 tsp garam masala
- 1 can coconut milk
- 2 cups vegetable broth or water
- Salt
- leftovers

Method

1. Rinse lentils.
2. Sauté onion, ginger, turmeric, and garlic.
3. Add garam masala. Stir 30 seconds.
4. Add lentils, coconut milk, broth.
5. Simmer 20-25 minutes until soft.
6. Adjust salt. Add squeeze of lime if needed.

Texture should be thick but spoonable.

Cost Snapshot

Approx \$5-6 total

~\$1.50 per serving

TOTAL WEEK COST ESTIMATE

\$45-60 depending on region

Feeds 4 people

5 dinners

Average per serving: ~\$2-3

What have we learned?

This wasn't about stir fry, tacos or lentils. It wasn't about saving a few dollars. It's about thinking differently. When we understand that vegetables change every day, we stop fighting them. We work with them. We start shopping with intention. We stop panic-cooking at 6 p.m., we waste less, stress less, spend less. And we eat better.

This method scales. It works in a food truck or a café. It works in a small apartment kitchen. It works when cooking for one or for a large family. It works when money is tight and when we can afford to explore.

If this talk helped you, please leave us a google review. Those really help real people understand what we have to offer.

Please do share this knowledge, teach someone else, cook with someone!

When you want to go deeper, come cook with us in person.

We don't chase trends. We cook with what we have, what is local and seasonal. And we make it work. That's sustainability.