

FOOD, FOR EATING

And a guide on how to make it

With much love, by yours truly

Charlie



This is a book about how to make lots of healthy food
with minimal dishes & effort.

Right, so I like to talk to people. It's a human thing; we crave companionship. Anyways, I've started to notice a trend. Consistently, the very same people who ask "Charlie how tf do you have so much energy all the time" often later say something like "I don't eat vegetables," or "Instant noodles are a full meal, especially if you put an egg in it."

I'll be real with you, when I eat instant noodles, I feel more depressed than sated.

This has led me to conclude that many of y'all are malnourished, and my friends, you deserve better than to be gouged by the claws of something so preventable.

So hey!

Eat!

Since it's deeply impractical for me to cook for everyone all the time (restaurant budgets are super tight at the best of times, and I really do enjoy having a life outside of work), let me teach you how to fish, so to speak.

About food...

You gotta get your food groups.

Hit those macros, champ.

Acquire the nutrients, and put them in your belly. It is where they belong.

Broadly, you get your proteins (and those associated *sweet gains*, yo) from stuff like meat, tofu, lentils, beans, and protein powder. I think we can also synthesize some protein from vegetables, but don't quote me on it.

You get vitamins and minerals and whatever from vegetables. To my knowledge you cannot eat too many vegetables, so if you're cooking just put more veggies than you think you need. There's really no worst-case scenario here. More vegetables = better.

Carbs (rice, bread, barley, noodles; all the classics) are great to pair with other foods, since they'll crossfade your blood sugar and mix you up a good time. Most cuisines around the world already do this. Think curries over rice, noodles in soup, and breads making a sandwich. You get what I mean.

You should be aiming to eat a little of each of these with every meal. Generally, any meal that ties together the three above categories, will be pretty good. And you'll feel good. Success.

In the recipes that (will) follow, see if you can trace down the food groups mentioned: protein, carbs, vegetables.

Before we start cooking, let's take a quick tour of the kitchen, and the tools of the trade:

First up is the knife, and it'll be central to most meals you make.

Note how to hold it:

Your index finger pinches the blade against your thumb (Fig. 1).

Don't put your finger along the spine of the knife. I've seen y'all do it. It doesn't work well, and it looks silly. Remember this next time you hold a knife. Look cool. Be cool. Hold it the proper way.



Fig. 1

We hold the knife like so because it shifts the cutting action from our wrist to our elbow, which is much stronger. More muscles on the knife means more control, and more control means better food and less risk of injuries.

On the topic of knives, it bears mentioning that the best knife is a sharp knife. You shouldn't have to be fighting with your tools in any endeavour, especially one so important as eating.

If your knife sucks, go buy a new one.

It's important that you look after your knife. A good knife will last you for a long time, provided you take decent care of it.

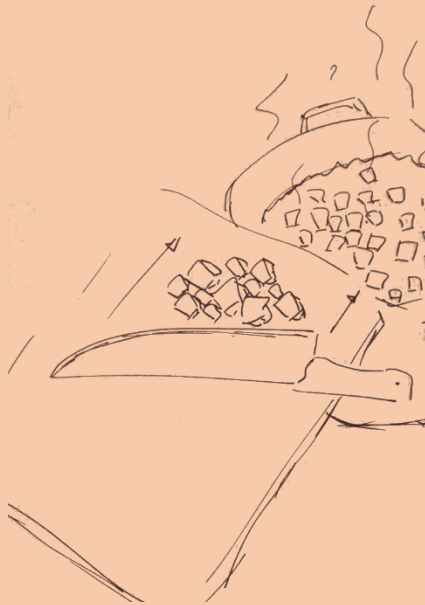
Mainly, keep it clean and don't bang it around unnecessarily.

I once saw one of my buddies use their knife as a can opener and I almost cried. Be gentle to my tender heart; use tools for only what they were designed to do.

Anyways, here's a secret tip on keeping your knife sharp:

When you're scraping all your freshly-chopped goods off the cutting board, scrape using the back of the knife.

It really goes a long way to saving the blade.



Some other utensils that I would recommend are:



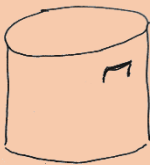
A big ladle. When you're done cooking & it's come time to serve, it's much easier to scoop out one or two dips of a ladle than to try filling a bowl with a soup spoon (or risk the mess or pouring).



A long cooking spoon is good for stirring things in general. You can use a wooden spoon for this if you'd like; it's all up to your own aesthetic preference.



A spatula — Honestly in a pinch you could probably make do with either a spatula and no cooking spoon, or a spoon and no spatula. But you know what? We can dream our wildest dreams, and we can conjure a world where we have both.



A big pot. Bigger than you think you need. Too much food is rarely a problem, and if you make too much? Invite a friend over! Invite two friends over! People love meals, and sharing food brings joy to everyone involved. Have a big pot.

HOW TO PREP STUFF

Ok I'll be real with you, a lot of cooking is mechanical. Like yeah sure you can just throw a bunch of whole ingredients and spices into a pot or a pan and that's technically fine but it never quite lands the same (it's a good trick to know if you're ever feeling mega depressed & in need of nourishment though). The more you work with your ingredients, the better you understand them, and the better you understand them the better you'll be able to play with them in your dishes.

I like to think to of how it'll be eaten — I notice this a lot when eating sandwiches. You take a bite and a whole slice of tomato decides to come for the ride. We love tomatoes! It's a great bite. But then the rest of the sandwich is at a dearth of our favourite fruit.

Take this into account when you're cutting stuff up. Do you want each bite to highlight a different ingredient? If so, use large cuts. Chop things so that they're approximately bite-sized (anything larger is just impractical). If you want to emphasize the meal as a whole, and the interplay of ingredients, dice finely.

Chopping ingredients can be a bit awkward at first, but with courage and skill you will prevail.

Here's a few guidelines on the best ways to prepare some of the most common vegetables.

For the less common ones, you can usually just adapt these techniques. Tomato tomato, amirite?

ONION:

1. Start by chopping off the top of it. Not the part with the roots. This gives you a flat surface that won't roll around when you get to step 2.



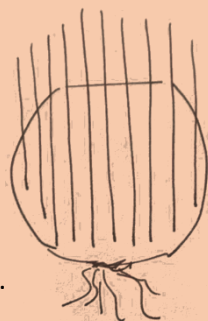
2. Give it the ol' CHOP right down the middle. Get yourself two halves of an onion.
CHOP.



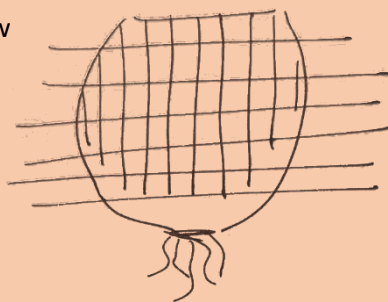
3. Peel it real good. Get rid of the tough skin; it does not taste very good at all. Compost this stuff for bonus Cooking Points™.



4. Cut a bunch of lines down your freshly-peeled onion like so:
Note that you don't cut all the way through! This holds all the pieces together, making it much easier to fully dice. You can do the last cuts later.

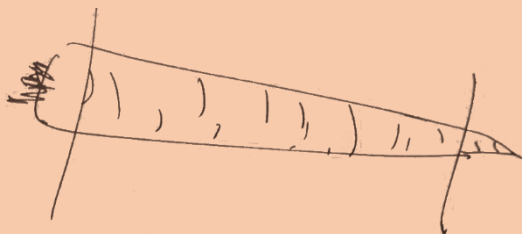


5. Ta-dah! Smash out a few slices acrossways, and you'll see the onion fall apart into perfect little cubey bits. Easy as that.



CARROT:

1. Chopping carrots is pretty chill, but you've gotta put your heart into it. They're tough veggies, and so it's best to use controlled leverage with the knife. Plant the tip on the cutting board and push down with your arm. Again: *push down*, don't smash it like a meat cleaver. You'll dull your knife and I will cry.

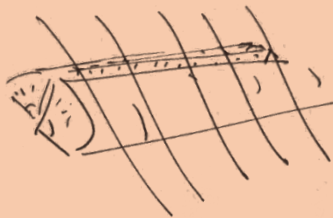
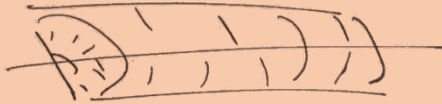
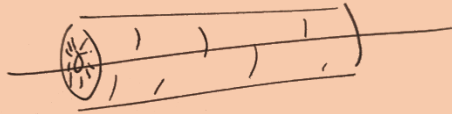


To start, chop off the ends like so:

2. Chop em again.



3. Chop! Chopchopchop! Another middle but different, this time. Carrots aren't very technical, so I'll just load you up with pictures and we'll call it a few thousand words.



Great success.

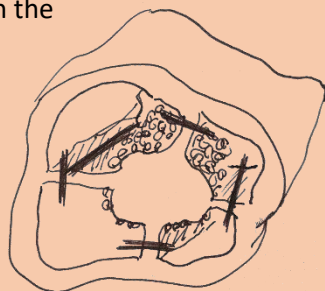
Well done, team. We did it.

PEPPER:

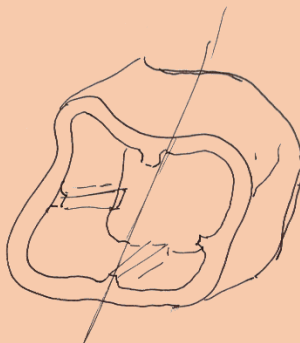
1. Chop the top and the bottom off and cut 'em up as you think is best. I'm only walking us through the body of the pepper here.



2. This part looks a bit messy, and is kind of involved. Slide the knife down the inside of the pepper, and cut through the soft part that joins the seedbody to the tasty shell. This is debatably the wildest thing you should ever have to do with a knife. You can dunk the seeds into the compost, we don't need them anymore.



3. A hollow body of peppery goodness! Half it.



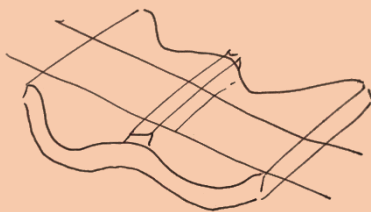
4. Zip a bunch of slices down the length of your halves. By now you should know what's coming.

...

...

Yah buddy.

We're gonna dice it.



You can make some cuts along these slices to make squares, or just leave them as strips and claim creative license.

RECIPES

As a real quick author's note, I want to teach you about *mirepoix* because it's the base of pretty much everything here. If you ever find yourself in need of food and lacking inspiration, make a mirepoix. It's a mix of diced onions, carrots, and celery. Together, these ingredients are a great base for any meal.

Moreover, by the time you've got a good mirepoix going, you'll be in the cooking mindset, and the rest of the meal will fall into place more easily.

Right so many of these recipes look similar, as in they get eaten in a bowl. Rather than draw the same bowl many times, I'll just give you the one. Use your imagination to fill it with different things if you are the visually-inclined type.

I drew a bagel with this, because sometimes I forget to make rice, or don't feel like using another pot to cook noodles.

You can do this too, if you ever feel like it. Bagels are good and they are full of carbs.



Green Lentil Curry

Honestly I don't really measure things out when I'm cooking so take the ingredients and just put as much of them as you think would be good. Don't be shy on the spices.

3 onions

1 medium head of garlic (all of it)

A smallish chunk of ginger

4 stalks of celery

2 largish carrots

1 sweet potato

A bunch of green lentils

Some pearl barley (not too much, but you do you.
They'll adjust your carbs/protein balance in the meal)

A bunch of frozen spinach (like 5-6 cubes. If in doubt, put more)

Spices:

Salt, pepper to taste

A little bit of cinnamon

A tiny bit of turmeric (if you can taste it, you put in too much)

A moderate amount of curry powder

Like a tablespoon of cayenne powder? You can adjust this for spiciness to taste

I used like 1.5 tablespoons of tarragon because I had some on hand, but you can really just see what you have in your spice drawer and add that.

Some paprika

Chop up your vegetables, and cook them – do the onions first so they have time to caramelize while you're chopping. Doing the celery/carrots next is good because the heat softens them, meaning your curry will be done faster.

Once all your vegetables are chopped, top up with water, and add the lentils and the barley.

Add the spices and let it simmer for a while. It's pretty chill.

Peanut & Coconut Curry

3 onions

A couple stalks of celery

Like 4 carrots?

Half a head of garlic

A head of broccoli

1 large can of diced tomatoes

1-2 cans of coconut cream (you can use coconut milk too, but cream is tastier)

Several large spoonfuls of peanut butter

1 package firm tofu, diced small

A thick sprinkling of red lentils

Some frozen peas (easier than fresh peas lol)

Sliced bamboo shoots are really good texture and are easy to add. Chili peppers are also great

Spices

Salt and pepper to taste

Curry powder

Some oregano

A fun amount of paprika

A tiny bit of turmeric — as before, if you can taste it you've added too much

Really this cooks like most other recipes here. Just chop up your vegetables, add your canned stuff, and top up with water so the grains/lentils won't dry everything out.

Let it simmer for a bit, and add spices.

Spices are cool because it doesn't matter when you add them to the dish. The exception being if you're frying seeds (e.g. mustard, coriander), in which case they should spend a couple minutes in the pan/pot over medium/high heat with oil.

Cooking is easier if you get all your hard ingredients in first, and let them simmer for a bit. Let the smells permeate your kitchen.

Get to know them. Ask them their favourite colours.

Once you know the broader flavours of what you're cooking, you can pick the spices that you think would complement them nicely.

Beef, Rice, and Cabbage tomato soup

1 large onion, diced. Maybe 2 small ones idk. Onion is a good flavour, you can't really add too much

A couple celery stalks, chopped up

A couple carrots, chopped up

Like 1/3 head of green cabbage? roughly chopped; bite-size pieces

A couple garlic cloves

1 can of diced tomatoes

1/2 cup of uncooked rice (you can use barley here, but rice is a good substitute if you're cooking gluten-free)

some frozen peas (like 1/2 - 1 cup, maybe?)

some ground beef (check out Ground Round for meat-free alternatives)

Heat oil in a large pot, and add in the ingredients above as you prepare them. Do the onions first

Once you've added all the stuff, top it up with water until it looks soupy enough. The rice will drink a bunch of the water; keep this in mind.

Add salt & pepper until it tastes good. You can also add stuff like oregano, basil, or whatever other herbs seem fun. Let it simmer until the beef is cooked & everything else also looks cooked. Done!

Vegetable Soup

2 onions

A couple carrots

Some celery

1 rutabaga

A sweet potato

A good quantity of mushrooms

1-2 cans of beans

Some green lentils

1 head garlic

1 can diced tomato

Pearl barley (less than you'd think)

A bit of ginger, if you feel spicy

Green beans are good, though they take a bit of effort to prepare. Use peas if you want to add an easy green

Spices:

Salt, pepper, oregano, chili flakes. Easy as that.

Chop all the vegetables, and cook them over oil. When you're done chopping, add the rest of the ingredients, and top up with water.

Spag(hetti)

This one is best if you chop the ingredients finely, since otherwise they don't play nice with the noodles.

2-3 onions

1 head of garlic

4-5 stalks of celery

4-5 cubes frozen spinach

1 package ground round (or ground beef)

2 cans crushed tomato

A scattering of bread crumbs

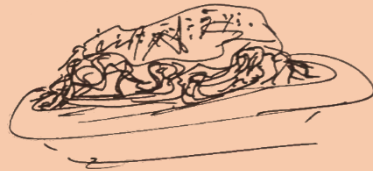
1 can black olives, 1 jar green olives

Spices:

Salt & pepper

Basil and/or oregano

Chili flakes



A huge part of making good pasta is to cook the noodles in water that is salty like the sea. They become much better. You can do the same for rice or any other source of carbs (though maybe a bit less salt, since the noodles get drained). I like to add a bunch of spices to the pot when I make rice, since they get absorbed really well.

Anyways, pasta is a good time. Enjoy.

Squash

This one is less of a recipe so much as it is a method. Hands-down, the best way to cook squash is like so: cut it in half, and place it flat-side down in a baking pan with an inch of water.

Put it in the oven for an hour and a half at 350F.

It comes out really good and is delicious with a bit of butter/oil, salt, and pepper.

Of course, if you want to dress it up a little, you can make a filling for the squash while it's cooking in the oven. Eating meat-free is ethically great, but if you're looking for a recipe wherein you can really bring out the best in ground beef, try cooking it into a tomato sauce and serving it over a half squash.

It's good stuff, and looks impressive when plated.



BAKING

Baking is good because there are lots of carbs involved, which means things taste good very easily.

When people tell you that baking is a finicky process, tell 'em that they're wrong because you can just improvise it. People have been baking since way before measurements were standardized, so gatekeepers can get rekt.

Anyways, while you shouldn't feel the need to be *too* precise with the measurements, it is important to stay somewhat close to the recipe. You can add water and flour freely to get the dough texture close to what you're aiming for.

Sugar has no effect on baking other than the flavour, and I often omit it entirely (except when using yeast).

Butter can be substituted by oil or lard (any fat, really) without any consequence, really. Keep in mind that the state of the fat at room temperature will affect your final product. Coconut oil solidifies, so it will result in crispier baked goods. Vegetable oil is liquid, so it'll keep your stuff moist. Mix & match the above as your heart desires.

Biscuits

There's a lot of ways to make biscuits, so don't be afraid of getting wild with it. All you really need is a dough; the rest is up to your creative license.

Base ingredients:

2 cups flour

1 tbsp baking powder

1/2 tsp salt

~1/2 cup fat (most recipes call for butter, but you can use lard or oil, it's nbd)

3/4 cup liquid (most recipes call for milk, but you can really use anything here. I like soup broth because milk is kind of whack and a broth base makes the biscuits pair really well with other meals)

Add-ins: Some pepper, chili flakes, oregano, and tomato paste — these are pretty flexible. Just pick the things you think would be good. Use olives if you like olives, or use jalapenos or whatever. It's chill.

Heat your oven to 425F

Mix all the dry ingredients, including the spices (not the tomato paste).

Mix/mash in the fat until it's pretty evenly dispersed. If you're using a solid fat, make an effort to break it down in to small bits.

Mix in the liquid and stir it. You should end up with a dough that you can handle without having it stick excessively to your fingers (it should still be kind of sticky!)

Spread some flour on a countertop so things don't stick, and flatten the dough. Spread the tomato paste and whatever other stuff you want to layer the biscuits with over the dough. Fold & flatten the dough like 4-8 times, until it looks good. Flatten it to something close to 1/2" thickness. Cut biscuit sized pieces, then put them on the tray and bake for 10-15 minutes.

Nice.



Focaccia Bread

Focaccia bread is pretty much like making other bread, except with more oil I think. I haven't looked up a bread recipe in a long time, but I made pizza dough a few times and it was pretty similar. Just mix stuff & let it rise.

1/3 cups water at ~110F

2.25 tsp yeast

1 tbsp sugar

5 cups flour

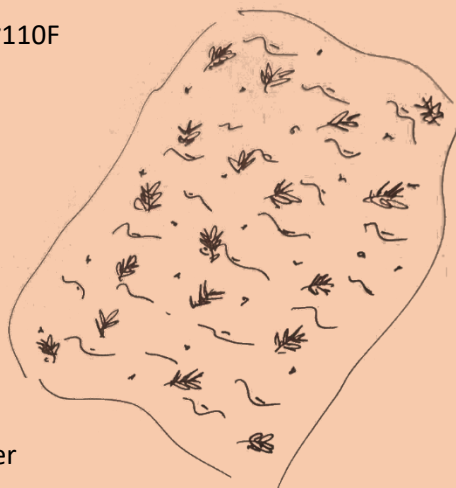
1 tbsp salt

1/2 cup oil

fresh rosemary

fresh ground pepper

chunky salt



Right so I think a lot about baking is to not be too tied to the recipe. It's good to reference a recipe to get an idea of how much of each ingredient to add, but baking is so heavily influenced by ambient conditions (room temperature, humidity, etc.) that natural variance outweighs any overly precise measurement. Recipes vary so much among themselves anyways, all of them making more or less the same thing.

So take a grain of salt (lol) with the above quantities, and trust your gut when baking. Add more or less of stuff as feels right.

Get the yeast ready: mix the sugar, water, and yeast. Stir, and let sit for a few minutes until it's frothy. The yeast will eat the sugar and give off CO₂ — in the dough this will make air pockets, which gives the bread its breadly texture when baked.

Mix the flour & salt. You can add some spices in here if you want.

Add the oil and the yeast water. Mix it all together until it looks like a dough. You'll probably need to add more water or flour until it feels doughy enough. If you don't know what a dough should feel like, just do more baking until you do. That's the best advice I have to give you.

Add some oil to a large bowl to coat the sides, drop the dough in, and cover with a damp cloth. If the dough dries out, it'll form a gnarly kind of crust. To my knowledge it can't be too humid.

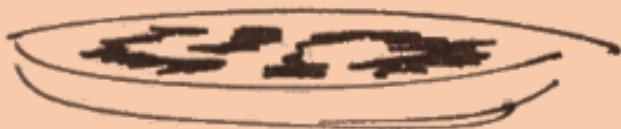
Wait an hour or two, then roughly flatten the dough onto a baking sheet & tray. Aim for just a bit over 1/4" thick. Poke a bunch of indents into the dough. Press your finger down to the pan (but not necessarily through the dough).

Let it sit on the tray for another hour or two, covered again with a damp/wet cloth.

Add the salt, pepper, and rosemary on top, maybe a bit of olive oil if you want, and bake it at 425F for 25-30 minutes.

You are obligated to eat this with olive oil & balsamic vinegar.

Put some oil on a plate, and drizzle balsamic over top. It looks really cool and tastes even better.



Banana Bread

Banana bread sucks because if you put too much banana it doesn't cook right. The best banana bread has no banana, and that is downright deceitful.

2 bananas

1/3 cup oil

½-1 tsp baking soda

1 pinch salt

1 egg

A tiny bit of brown sugar

1 tsp vanilla

1 and ½ cups flour

½ cup hemp hearts

A cheeky drizzle of molasses

2 tbsp cocoa powder? This one is optional

Some fun spices, like cinnamon, ground cloves, cardamom, mace, etc. They really make a difference.



Mix the banana and oil, then add the egg & vanilla.
Molasses too.

Add in your dry ingredients, then bang the thing into an oiled baking pan, and forget it in a 350F oven for 1 hour.

Great success!

Eat well, my friends.

If you have complaints (good luck roasting these recipes better than my oven) or questions or just want to talk about how cool it is to be alive, you can rip me an email at:

charlifake@email.com

I will try my best to reply xoxo