

#154 - How to Add Freshness to Repetitive Meals

Hi there! You're listening to The Lazy Genius Podcast! I'm Kendra Adachi, and I'm here to help you be a genius about the things that matter and lazy about the things that don't. Today is episode 154 - how to add freshness to repetitive meals. We're still in a shelter in place situation in most parts of the country and the world, and part of this process includes not going to the grocery store as often. Or if you're like me, trying new recipes is just not in the cards right now. My energy is not well spent if I'm experimenting and throwing new foods at my kids. Things are weird, and new meals don't fit with our weird. So we're eating a lot of the same meals over and over again. But even if you're not, you might still feel like your meals are a little blah because of limited groceries. You might even feel like meals are blah because you haven't eaten out at a restaurant in two or three months. So today, I'm going to quickly share five ways to add freshness to repetitive meals.

I'll jump right in, but at the end of the episode, I'll tell you about The Favorites File if you haven't heard about it already or have and want to know a little more about this insanely stupid but ridiculously fun little set of pop culture assignments I put together for you.

Okay, first way to add freshness to repetitive meals: fresh herbs and citrus. This the most obvious food-related idea. Food feels blah and bland because there's nothing bright. There's not enough contrast, and often you're missing something fresh. Have you ever ordered street tacos from a Mexican restaurant? The difference in a bite of just tortilla and chicken versus a bite of tortilla and chicken with a fresh green salsa and cilantro? Way different. Not necessarily better for a lot of people, but fresher and exciting. Herbs and citrus are massively helpful in freshening up repetitive meals.

So let's say you make chicken soup. Add in a squeeze of lemon juice at the end or sprinkle fresh parsley on top. For stir-fry, add fresh scallion. For a bowl of pasta and red sauce, fresh basil. Tacos, lime and cilantro. This isn't revolutionary or anything, but sometimes we forget how much herbs and citrus can perk something up, especially something you've been eating a lot of lately.

Okay, second way to add freshness to repetitive meals is to make a sauce. Maybe Change Your Life Chicken is a staple in your house, but even in its life-changing-ness, it's getting a little sad. Make an herb sauce. I'm going to put a link in the show notes to a post by Bri McKoy <https://oursavorylife.com/cilantro-yogurt-sauce/> for her cilantro yogurt sauce, but in that post she also includes links to her fresh herb dressing which is phenomenal, her chipotle honey dressing, and her honey mustard dressing, all of which can be used as sauces to freshen up a repetitive meal. Make sauces. Make sauces make sauces make sauces.

Okay, number three. Switch out one regular component. We make Change Your Life Shawarma which is on my blog every two weeks if not more. It's just so easy and good and everybody likes it. We have always served it with white rice and made bowls no big thing. Recently, I made homemade yellow rice to go with it, and it was a completely different meal. I saw Bri again

making rice in the instant pot with coconut milk - the recipe is on her blog - but I adjusted it a hair by adding another ¼ cup of liquid, doubling the salt and adding maybe a quarter or half teaspoon of ground turmeric, and boom. Delicious yellow rice that's perfect with the shawarma. It was like a new meal. So switch out a component. Maybe you eat tacos a lot. Instead of tacos, do sheet pan nachos. All the same stuff, but instead of a shell, you have chips. Again, not rocket science. Just a reminder that you can switch up one thing to make things feel less repetitive.

Okay, now fresh doesn't always mean new from the ground or just made or whatever. It could mean different and surprising. Sometimes our meals need freshness in ways beyond the food. So number four is to eat from different dishes. This might feel weird, but maybe instead of the normal plates you usually use, you serve a meal from a giant wooden cutting board if it's not soup or something like that. Maybe if you have kids or you could just do this yourself, but put brightly colored straws in your cup. Use a set of dishes you don't usually use. Use the brightly patterned dishes that live in your picnic basket all year long. Put soup in a mug instead of a cup. Very simple but surprisingly nice as a way to add freshness and newness to just one meal even.

And finally, eat in a different location. The standard spot for a meal is the main dining table. Look around for other places. The couch obviously. The front porch steps. The backyard grass. A card table set up by a big living room window. On a blanket in the middle of a hallway. If it's just you or you and a partner or roommate, basically if kids aren't in the equation, eat in different places. You're coordinated enough to sit on your step and eat a meal without spilling everything unlike most three year-olds.

So to recap five ways to add freshness to repetitive meals: one, herbs and citrus; two, make a sauce; three, switch out one regular component for something else; four, eat on different dishes; and five, eat in a different location. Don't feel like you need to do all five at once either. Save them up. Spread them out. If you feel yourself being kind of bored with a meal, do a quick pass of the meal through these five things and see if something adds a tiny hit of freshness. Sometimes one simple change is more than enough to give us a good mental reset.

And that's it! Okay, speaking of a good mental reset, just a quick reminder about The Favorites File. The Favorites File is a free download that helps you be a genius about the things that don't actually matter, things like celebrities you'd be quarantined with, famous actor partnerships, and your favorite TV characters of all time. I'm posting daily prompts on Instagram that you can do whenever you want to in the feed or in stories or on Facebook even, and then there are some templates to share parts of your favorites file in a highlight on my Instagram account called Fave File. All the fun is happening in your own living room with the file and then on Instagram if you want to share and see what other people are sharing too. It's really fun. I'm @thelazygenius on Instagram if you don't already follow me there. The link to the favorites file is in the show notes.

Okay that's it for today! Thanks so much for listening. Until next time, be a genius about the things that matter and lazy about the things that don't. I'm Kendra, and I'll see you next week!