

329 - 10 Things to Do When You Don't Want to Cook

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 329 - 10 Things to Do When You Don't Want to Cook.

It is likely a time of transition in your life. We are going into a new season, fall is coming, school has started, and all of this impacts our energy and schedules no matter what our lives look like and who, if anyone, lives with us in our homes.

But you know what doesn't change? Dinner. Dinner does not change. We have to keep eating food and therefore probably making food for ourselves and our people. I do think that the transition to cold weather, which might be close to happening where you live, is often an exciting time in the kitchen. In theory. We start making soup and chili and warm comfort foods, and for the first little bit, cooking is not so bad, maybe even fun! But it does not take long for that sparkle to dim, and we get days, sometimes even a long string of them, where we just don't want to cook. Today is your answer to that dilemma.

I'm going to share 10 things to do when you don't want to cook, but not all of them are from me. A little bit into the episode, I will be joined by the happiest cooking teacher on the Internet, Bri McKoy, who will complete this list of ten with her own amazing expertise. If you're listening to this episode on the day it releases, tomorrow Bri's new cookbook, *The Cook's Book*, enters the world, and I have been anxiously awaiting this for literal months. I'll share more about the book at the end of the episode, but right now let me just say that if you had to go on a deserted island that miraculously had a working kitchen and also maybe a grocery store and you could only take two books with you, the only two books you need are *The Lazy Genius Kitchen* and *The Cook's Book*. I'm not even kidding. I mean, I'm kidding about the island part, but these two books in tandem hold the answer to just about every kitchen woe there is. I tend to the kitchen, and Bri tends to the cooking. You might notice I don't post a lot of recipes around here because that's not my expertise. It most certainly is Bri's, and you'll hear that today. I'm so excited she's going to join me a little bit later.

For now, let's get started on the 10 things to do when you don't want to cook.

Number one, don't cook. We're going to kick things off with a big ol' dose of permission. Sometimes when you don't want to cook, don't cook. Just don't do it. There are days and even seasons where finding the energy and time to cook something yourself is just too much. You can be lazy about cooking. You can. It's okay. Maybe it's not how you want things to be long-term, and that makes sense. But that doesn't mean you're doing something wrong by choosing to not cook when you don't want to. So get takeout, eat cereal, whatever. When you don't want to cook, you don't have to.

Number two, be kind to yourself. When you don't want to cook, it's easy to let negativity creep in, especially towards yourself. You might think you should have a better stocked pantry or you

wish you had better skills to whip something up really fast. You think cooking's not that hard so it shouldn't feel this hard, right? It's really easy to leave kindness at the door and beat yourself up a little for not wanting to cook, and I'm telling you right now that's not great. You deserve kindness. Before you do anything else, be kind to yourself.

Number three, choose a Brainless Crowdpleaser. It's been awhile since I've talked about Brainless Crowdpleasers, so let's have a little refresher!

A Brainless Crowdpleaser is a meal that is brainless for the cook and relatively pleasing to whatever crowd you're cooking for, be it one person or ten. It's basically the type of meal that you don't have to think about when you make it, and you also don't have to deal with the anticipation of your people hating it. Those meals are essential to sustain life in your kitchen. If every recipe feels hard or requires extra effort and attention from you, that's not going to last long. Neither will not knowing if your people will like the meal each time. You need easy wins at the ready, and that's why I encourage everyone to have a list of your own Brainless Crowdpleasers.

Every person will have different meals for this. The only priority is that it's brainless and a general crowdpleaser. That doesn't mean it's traditionally easy, meaning it takes no skill, or simple, meaning it doesn't have a lot of steps or ingredients. My chicken tikka masala recipe which is on my website is not simple or easy, especially the first time you make it. It has a decent number of ingredients, most of them being spices, and the first couple of times you stir up the wet masala, you might get a little thrown by all the sizzling. It's worth making and getting used to because it's delicious, but I have made that recipe so many times that I could almost do it with my eyes closed. It is absolutely brainless for me. So when you think about your list of Brainless Crowdpleasers, don't feel like it's just spaghetti, hot dogs, and microwave quesadillas even though it could be those things. It's whatever fits those two categories even if they might not fit someone else's. Having that list on your fridge or in a Notes app or something is so helpful on days you don't want to cook. Since the thing is brainless, it's almost like you're not cooking at all. You don't have to muster up any extra energy to make this meal happen, and that's about as close to not cooking as you can get.

If you'd like to hear more of how I use Brainless Crowdpleasers in my own meal planning, try episode 245: How I Personally Meal Plan.

And now, let's level up this list and bring in the wonderfully talented, always delightful Bri McKoy.

We'll be right back...

[Bri's segment]

We'll be right back...

Alright, let's finish up our list with two more ideas for when you don't want to cook. Number nine is to use a Meal Matrix. I'm almost positive I talk about a Meal Matrix in that episode I mentioned earlier, Episode 245: How I Personally Meal Plan, because I totally use a Meal Matrix. It's a fantastic structure to help make decision-making easier.

A Meal Matrix is a way to use the Lazy Genius principle Decide Once in your kitchen. You decide one time that on a certain day, you'll have this kind of meal. Done. Almost every week, we do Pasta Mondays, Pizza Fridays, and we get takeout on Saturday. That's almost always how it goes. And then somewhere in the middle of the week is a rice bowl of some sort. The type of pasta changes, the type of pizza changes from homemade to different pizza places, and a rice bowl can be a dozen different things. But rather than choosing from every recipe ever and meal planning from scratch, you already have categories ready to go. This is why people love Taco Tuesdays. Every Tuesday, you get tacos! Done!

If you haven't tried this or maybe this fell by the wayside during the summer, take this as your encouragement to try it out. If you know there are days during the week that are usually busier and you need to relieve some of the decision fatigue, make a Meal Matrix for that day only. You don't need to do the whole week. Mine is four days a week, and one of those is takeout. Just do it where you need it, but holy moly does it make dinner easier when you don't want to cook. In fact, I think one of the reasons we often don't want to cook is because we don't know *what* to cook. A Meal Matrix smooths out that frustration.

And finally, number ten, start small. When you don't want to cook, don't immediately start thinking of everything you need to do. That will not get you off the couch if you know you'll eventually get off the couch. Just get going with something really small. If you don't want to cook, start small by just choosing something. Just make a decision, whatever it is. Then maybe you just get out the Instant Pot or fill your big pot with water for some kind of noodle later. You don't have to do everything all at once or even think about everything all at once. When you don't want to cook, it's easy to be overwhelmed by the meal in front of you, so just start small. Do one thing at a time, and whether the momentum picks up or not, you're still moving in the direction of something that matters to you.

Now, a fabulous way to start small in your kitchen right now is to buy The Cook's Book. For real. I don't adequately know how to explain how fantastic this cookbook is. I always say The Lazy Genius Kitchen is not a cookbook, and it very much is not. It's got two recipes in it. The Cook's Book is totally a cookbook, but it's also so much more than that. Bri teaches you how to actually cook using the recipes in the book. For example, the first lesson in the book is about balance and trusting your own taste as you're cooking. Food is usually good, not because you follow a recipe to the letter, but because you trust your own taste. You learn to know if something needs more salt or acid or something to make it pop, but you don't develop that skill without practicing. So Bri gives you a way to practice in the form of her tableside guacamole recipe. You make guacamole and you taste and adjust. She tells you what to taste for, ways you can adjust,

literally teaching you how to be a better cook. And she does this with so many cooking skills. She explains a concept so well, and most are accompanied by photos to help, and then she gives you a recipe that will help you practice that skill. It's absolutely fantastic. Also Bri is an incredibly dependable recipe writer. You know how you'll find a recipe in a book or on the Internet and you're like "this isn't very good I must not be good at this." No. Some recipes just aren't that good. Well, I can tell you right now you will never say that about anything Bri makes. Her recipes are always excellent. She understands flavor so well, she knows what it means to season food, and she also likes to make things fun and easy! That means are recipes really doable. Plus, in *The Cook's Book*, you get a whole chapter on pairing food and wine which she is literally qualified for because she took classes and got a certificate and a pin and everything, and there's another chapter about how to create your own beginner's bar cart to get you into the world of cocktails at home. Nobody makes homerun cocktail recipes like Bri. I'm telling you this book is magic. If you like me, you'll love *The Cook's Book*. I have no doubt.

It releases into the world officially on August 29th which is likely tomorrow for most of you listening, so order from your favorite retailer. It'll be the best tool to have around as you enter into this new season, and it'll help you feel more confident to handle those future feelings of not wanting to cook. Bri is the best, and this book is everything.

In fact, Bri is our Lazy Genius of the Week for writing such a tremendous book, for realizing that recipes can't exist without cooking knowledge, but cooking knowledge is unhelpful without a recipe. She figured out how to really teach cooking while also giving us a great idea of what to cook for dinner tonight. Boom. Okay, we're done, go get *The Cook's Book* by Bri McKoy!

Thanks for listening, and 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!