

#85 - The Lazy Genius Kitchen Reset

Hi, guys! You're listening to The Lazy Genius Podcast! I'm Kendra, 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 85 - The Lazy Genius Kitchen Reset. This might feel like a weird topic in the middle of the holidays, but hear me out. You're about to enter the world of Christmas cookies and appetizers and dinners that don't fall into any schedule because of all the things. You're probably still dealing with Thanksgiving leftovers, and if you're like me, sometimes opening the fridge or freezer can be overwhelming this time of year. What I want to encourage you to do in this episode is to consider a kitchen reset. I call it essentializing your kitchen. Right now, you don't need extras; those are about to come in spades. This is a great time to spend just a little bit of time getting your kitchen reset so that when you open cabinets and freezers, you know what's there and have room for what matters... like cookie dough.

This process can be as involved as you want, but it can also be done in ten minutes a day over a few days or one solid hour or two to get your kitchen reset in a way that will make a big difference for the next month.

Here's the problem. We usually shop for too much. We have excess produce that we think we'll cook because it was a good deal or because we think we should eat more kale. We have jars and bottles in the pantry that are supposed to make dinner easier, but because we don't know how to use them, they just sit there. We read those lists of what we need for a stocked pantry, but if you don't use roasted red peppers, you don't need roasted red peppers. There's an episode about stocking your kitchen with only things you need which I'll put in the show notes, but how do you reset the kitchen to get to that place? How do you clear the decks for all the holiday food fun? I have steps. Let's do this.

Step one: pick an area. The fridge, freezer, pantry, a single cabinet... whatever you want to choose, choose it.

Step two: set a timer. I love timers because they give us limits. You don't have to spend all day doing this; five or ten minutes will make a difference. So set a timer for, say, ten minutes, and when the timer goes off, feel free to stop. No big thing.

Step three: pull out everything you know you don't need. If it's the fridge, pull out old produce, expired sauces, that unfortunate pack of chicken that you forgot about. Pull out and throw out everything that needs to go. Still have time? Take the stuff that's on its last legs and change it somehow to make it ready to eat. That process is laid out in a blog post called Bizarro Meal Planning which I'll put in the show notes, too.

That's it. Those are your steps. Pick a spot, set a timer, and get rid of what isn't essential. If it's old throw it out, if it's just something you never use but it's still good, offer it to a friend or neighbor who might like it.

If you do this in all the places you have food, you'll be shocked at how much better your kitchen feels.

Now that could be enough of a reset. Just clearing the decks of the unnecessary is a gift, but if you want to go further, we'll go further.

After you get rid of what you don't need, think about what you will need, especially when it comes to space. If you're a big Christmas cookie maker and know that you'll make a lot of doughs to freeze to use throughout the month, make the space in your freezer. Is there space? Great, you're done. If there's not, start using some of what's already there. If you don't have room for your beloved cookie dough because of all the chicken you stocked up on during the Aldi sale last month, decide to eat a lot of chicken over the next couple of weeks as you make your meal plan. There's a podcast episode about both chicken and meal planning by the way; these show notes are going to be packed. You stock your freezer so you have food to eat; don't hoard it. Eat it, especially if you need the space for cookies and appetizers and any of your holiday needs.

The same goes for your pantry and cabinets and fridge. If you're going to host a big party (yep, there's an episode on that, too!), make sure you have room in your kitchen for all the ingredients you need, and use up what's taking up space.

I think that when it comes to what's in our kitchen, we could use a little more flexibility. We think that our kitchens need to look the same and be full of the same kinds of foods all the time, but maybe that's not true. For December your freezer should be more or less empty to save space for all those cookies and party prep. In the summer, your freezer is full of popsicles, fruit for smoothies, and marinated meat to throw on the grill after a quick defrost. Your kitchen exists to serve you and your needs; it doesn't have to stay stagnant and consistently stocked with all the same things. You're doing it wrong if you don't have anything in your pantry but snack foods and stuff for grazing meals during the holidays. It's what you need or that time, so fill your kitchen with what it needs and empty it of what it doesn't.

So this is one of the shortest episodes ever, but there are clearly other episodes you might want to listen to in this process. The point is an encouragement to do your future holiday self a favor by taking a few minutes to reset your kitchen to function well based on what you need for the next few weeks. Clear out what doesn't matter, leave space for what does, and stock up on what makes December work for you and your people. I rarely eat popcorn during the year except during the winter when watching sports and movies makes sense. I need to leave room in my pantry for a big box of PopSecret that I don't actually need room for ten months out of the year. Invite your kitchen to be your helper, and make it work for you.

Let's talk about this more on Instagram this Thursday! I'm there live every Thursday around 12:15pm EST to answer your questions, so follow me @thelazygenius to get more inspiration. Also don't forget to join the Facebook group and ask a group of brilliant people for ideas for your specific challenges. Crowdsourcing with Lazy Geniuses is basically the more genius thing you can do. A link for that group will be in the show notes along with links to some great episodes for you to listen to based on what your holidays look like. So go reset your kitchen, and don't feel badly if ten minutes is all you give it. Ten minutes is enough if it's enough for you. Don't sweat doing it right or wrong; that's just not a thing.

Alright thanks so much for listening! I appreciate your time and trust in me so much. It's such a beautiful responsibility I love carrying to speak into these random little moments in your life, so thank you for listening and sharing and just being so great. That's it for today! I'm Kendra, and I'll see you on Instagram @thelazygenius. And until next time, be a genius about the things that matter and lazy about the things that don't. Bye, guys!