

#179 - The Lazy Genius Stores Recipes

Hi, friends! Welcome 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 179 - The Lazy Genius Stores Recipes. This is a very unsexy topic but also a really important one because we all have to eat. I don't think a single person listening has never tried at least one recipe. Recipes are instructions on how to make a meal, and we eat a lot of meals and might need a lot of instruction. So while this is super personal which we'll get to and that there is really not some magical system which we will also get to, I hope you leave this episode with one small step that helps you feel like your recipe storage is serving you, not you serving it. So let's jump in.

I keep waiting for the day we have a topic where we don't start with why, and it hasn't happened yet. Here we are, starting with why do you want to store your recipes? What is the point? What is the purpose? Because honestly there are a lot of different purposes, and as is often the case, we get stuck because we're trying to solve a problem before actually naming the problem. We just think we're supposed to store our recipes. And we search for a system before naming what we need that system to actually do. Apparently recipe storage is much deeper than we thought.

So let's start with why you want to store recipes. Here are some likely possibilities, but this list is by no means exhaustive. Name what matters about recipe storage to you. But if you need some ideas to get the juices flowing, first you might want to store recipes because you want easily accessible resources. You want when it's time to make a meal to reach into a metaphorical pot of options where the steps are already laid out. It's about having available resources. Now that can actually split off into two different reasons right there. You might want resources for things you've already made. You liked that chicken rice thing and want to be able to make it again. Or you want a pot of available resources of new ideas to try. So it could be that you're looking for a system to store your recipes when really you want a system to store the recipes you've already made. Or you need two different approaches: one for recipes to try and one for recipes you want to make again. It's just important to name what you're really after.

Another possible why. You want to pass recipes down. Maybe you have family recipes you want to preserve or teach your kids. That matters to you, so keeping them written and accessible and part of the family culture matters a lot. How you store those is probably different than how you store recipes you find on food blogs.

So here's what I think. I think a great place to start is with what kinds of recipes matter to you. Ones to try, ones to try again, ones to pass down or keep close. Perhaps having a range of systems for those three categories will really help you in knowing how to store things. The problem here is that I just don't think there's one perfect solution for all of these kinds of recipes. You don't want them all to be digital. It's easy to pin a recipe that's already on a blog post, but it's harder to pin your grandmother's chocolate cake recipe. You don't mind a box of index cards or a notebook where you've printed out stuff, but do you really want to print out every single possible recipe that interests you? That's overwhelming. So as you name why you want to store

recipes, think about how the different categories of recipes - not main dishes and desserts and sides type categories - but purpose categories might need different storage solutions.

I'm going to be super annoying right now and not give you a formula because there just isn't one. We all like different things. We all need different things. We all cook different things. We all process information differently. So instead of giving you a formula, I want to offer some directive questions that can help you name how you personally need to store recipes, especially in light of this categorical idea.

First, do you prefer reading and cooking from a recipe when it's written out or when it's digital? And what's great - that answer could be different based on the category. For me, I try a new recipe in whatever form it came to me. So if it's from a food blog, I pull up the post. If it's from a cookbook, I open the cookbook. But I'm less worried about the form when it's new. If I make something and then want to make it again, I almost always write it out if it's not already written out in a cookbook. There's something comforting and steady about cooking from a physical page rather than a screen. It's like it's joined the family once it's written down. So it's maybe a tiny bit weird to have a response like this to a question about digital or analog, but that's point. Have your answer. Name your thing. It might not matter. You might not have any preference, but that's important to name too! So just see what the analog-digital consideration opens up for you.

Second question. Do you have a preferred or most frequented or most dependable source for new recipes? Maybe 90% of your new recipes come from cookbooks. Amazing. So instead of spending a lot of energy on managing a small number of online recipes, focus on how you store and interact with your cookbooks. Consider your most trusted sources and how you might use those recipes. Or maybe as you consider those trusted sources, you'll find that you have plenty existing within your cookbooks and can decide once that you're not going to choose online recipes for awhile during your current season of life. Again, the result is up to you; the questions help you know where you're going.

One final question: how important are new recipes? Sometimes we feel compelled to collect every possible new recipe but then have to manage how to keep track of them. Maybe you're overwhelmed with recipe storage because you're storing more recipes than you currently need.

So as you answer those questions and consider that you could store those three categories or any category of recipe that makes sense for you in different ways with different approaches or systems, I think you'll find a small step or two of what you're looking for.

Just a reminder, Lazy Geniuses are a genius about the things that matter and lazy about the things that don't. If elaborate storage just as a concept doesn't matter to you, be lazy about it. You don't have to figure out a system. You can have torn out magazine papers and multiple cookbooks and Pinterest boards and all of it without it needing to fall in line. Being disorganized about is I guess lazy, but you're allowed to be lazy about it. That feels really important to say. So just name what kind of genius you're actually after. Once you do that, I think the solutions will show up and surface and make sense for you.

So as we close, I want to give some specific strategies that you could use in some combination based on what you figure out from our first few minutes together. So this is just a bulleted list with ideas that are tethered to nothing but themselves. Just some ideas.

1. Planning parameters. Planning parameters are simply limits you create for how you'll choose new recipes. A planning parameter for me is a limited ingredient list. It makes shopping easier, it makes storing groceries easier, and it helps me pass over recipes that don't serve my family right now. Limits are great. Lean into limits.
2. The washi tape trick. I've shared this on Instagram before, but when I get a new cookbook, I flip through it and mark the recipes I want to make with washi tape folded over the page. That way when I pull out a book, I don't have to flip through the whole thing and have limited my choices based on recipes that work for me and my family right now.
3. A binder. A lot of folks love to print out or write out recipes in a binder. You could even put the pages in page protectors and write on them with a dry erase pen. That way as you adjust, you can erase notes and such.
4. Plan to Eat or other digital recipe aggregators. I used Plan to Eat for years. There's an easy way to save recipes you find and add your own. It also has built in shopping lists and meal planners and it's actually pretty fantastic if you're a fan of digital storage. I'm not. I prefer analog exclusively, so I stopped using it. But there are options like that that could be great for you.
5. Evernote. A lot of people create their own systems in Evernote. Google "how to store recipes in Evernote" and dig around. The same could be said for Trello. Google is your friend.
6. Use index cards or a notebook to capture the highlights, not the complete picture. You might have seen my Plan Your Hot Dogs notebook on Instagram where I've written my fall dinner queue and am making notes around the recipes I'm cooking this year. I don't write out every recipe. I write down where I found it, whether it's a cookbook or online, and make my notes in the book. So for example, a page might say "Instant Pot Butter Chicken." I'll write down the blog I got it from so I can just google it when I need it, but I'll write down the highlights, like the spice mix used or the very general bullet point steps like 10 minutes high pressure, 10 minutes natural release. That way when I'm flipping through or choosing meals later, I know the gist of how long something takes or the general idea of what I'll need. When it comes time to actually cook it, I'll look the recipe up.

Here's the most important point. There is no one way to do this. There is no best way to do this. There is only what works best for you based on what matters. So start with the categories that make sense, ask yourself those questions about how you interact with recipes and what you prefer, see if there are different ways you store your recipes and how that's okay to choose different ways in one house. I'll show some of my own approaches on Instagram this week, so be sure you're following me there @thelazygenius if you're interested.

And that's it! I hope you feel some freedom and direction in this episode, and don't sweat it that you don't have color coded binders or a handcarved box of passed-down recipes. That's not everyone's reality. That's not everyone's choice. You can be lazy about this if you want. But if you do want to be a genius, make sure you're being a genius about what matters.

And that's it for today! Thank you 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!