

#252 - How I Choose New Recipes

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 252 - How I Choose New Recipes. We're always on the hunt for new recipes, right? We want variety and beautiful meals, and we think that repetition is somehow a sign of laziness in the kitchen. It's not. Let me just clear that up right now, but that doesn't mean there isn't a place for new recipes. We all have different approaches to them, and today I'm going to share mine. You don't have to copy what I do because that doesn't make sense, but hopefully my process can spark some ideas for your own.

Where do we start? With what matters of course we do! But there are a few questions I ask myself when I'm itching to add new recipes to my life.

First, why do I want new recipes in this season? And if there are multiple reasons, which one matters most? I'll be honest. Sometimes when I get the new recipe itch and I ask myself why I want new ones, the answer is drenched in shoulds. Because I should make more variety than I do. Because my kids should get used to trying new foods. Because if I'm going to talk about food as part of my job and write and release a book about the kitchen then I should make more new stuff. Pals, those are not compelling reasons for me. So sometimes the search stops there. I'm trying to solve a problem that doesn't really matter. It's okay for me to cook a lot of the same things. There is absolutely nothing wrong with that. And it's more stressful for me to add new recipes and expectations and time to my life when the reason isn't important enough to merit that shift. Does that make sense? Only pursue something if it really matters.

So that's my first question. Why do I want new recipes in this season? If there are multiple good reasons, I choose the one that matters most so that I can have an engine for my decision making. I have recently been in a place where I do want to add some new recipes, and the thing that matters most about that is that I want to occasionally be more excited when I cook. I love cooking. I love being in the kitchen. I love watching something come together in a pan. But because we cook a lot of the same things and because a lot of those things are convenience driven like Trader Joe's mandarin chicken, there's not a lot of creating going on. So I'd like to add some new recipes so that I can enjoy that cooking spark more often.

Second question. What matters most about *how* I'm using new recipes? Are you looking for new dinner or lunch recipes? Are you thinking of incorporating them super often or just occasionally? Will new recipes only exist on weekends when you have more time, or does that not make sense because weekends are usually when you enjoy takeout? Think about how you're going to use these new recipes, how often you'll incorporate them and when. What matters most about that?

For me, it's that there isn't pressure or a system I have to follow. That might be a surprising answer because I'm so in love with systems, but I only like systems when following them gives

me life or the system gives me space to enjoy life somewhere else. Saying that I'll make a new recipe every Thursday is a recipe (ha - get it?) for no new recipes on Thursdays or any other day because regularity and systemizing aren't the point. Just having ideas is all I need. So my how is simply having new recipes in the same place where my brainless crowdpleasers are listed so that when I'm making a meal plan for a week, I can decide right then if a new recipe makes sense at some point during the week. That's what matters most about my how. So first ask why, then ask how.

Third question. What kind of new recipes do I need? What do they need to be? I know I want recipes that spark fun for me in the kitchen, and I need them to be easy enough to fit any day of the week. So what kind of recipe is that for me? Probably something that can be spread out over a day or so, like with marinated or slow-cooked meat that I can work on a little ahead of time. Maybe something with a flavor that's a little different or more robust than flavors we normally use. For example, we love generalized Asian food. My husband was born in Japan, and we love a lot of Japanese food. We also love Indian food, Chinese food, Thai food, anything with a profile of flavors that includes ginger or garlic or spices or soy. Now, Asian food is wildly different. If you dig deep into Vietnamese versus Chinese versus Japanese versus a ton of other countries, you will find a million fundamental differences on how those foods are prepared. So when I say we like Asian food, I want to be clear that I understand to a point the wide spectrum of what Asian food is. Basically I mean we like rice, ginger, soy sauce, and some of the other stuff.

So what kind of new recipes do I need? I love to find a good marinated meat in a rice bowl recipe that's a little more complex than what I usually make. A marinade with a few different flavors or extra ingredients, one extra step to preparing a vegetable that will elevate it and spark my cooking joy, an intentional move to develop flavor by browning or grilling or doing something that's more than putting something directly in the oven. I love to put things directly in the oven. That is essential to how my family eats dinner. But sometimes I like to cook. Remember, that's my why. I want to have a little more fun cooking on occasion, and recipes that involve hands-on cooking with familiar but slightly different flavors are a win for me. So that's the kind of recipe I would look for.

Fourth question after why do I need new recipes, how am I going to use them, and what do they need to be is how many new recipes do I want to find right now? If you're just wanting to add two or three new recipes to a monthly dinner queue, all you need are two or three new recipes. You don't have to scour the entirety of your cookbooks or the Internet to find every possible new recipe that might work for you ever. Remember, Lazy Geniuses start small. You can choose a new recipe or two, three, or six. Knowing what I know about most of you listeners, I can't imagine a scenario where you would need to find more than ten new recipes at a time, and that's pushing it. Most of us, unless we're living that Julie and Julia life where we're cooking our way through a cookbook, aren't going to incorporate multiple new recipes into our lives every week. It's probably too overwhelming. So limit your decisions by naming how many new recipes you reasonably need in this season.

When I went on my recent hunt, I found five recipes that I was excited to try, and then stopped. I was in the middle of a cookbook, I got sparkly about a fifth recipe, and then I closed the book because I set my limit to five. I didn't need any more. There's always more to search. There are always food blogs that have four more pages of recipes that you haven't gotten to yet. But they're not going anywhere. Your time is. So ask how many new recipes you need to find, and once you find them, be done for now.

We'll be right back...

Now the question is where might you look for these recipes and then where do you put them once you find them? You get to answer those yourself, but I'll tell you my process.

Again, first I ask those four questions. Why do I need new recipes, how am I wanting to use them, what kind of recipes do I need, and how many. Once I know that, I know where to look, and I always start with my cookbooks. I choose a cookbook that is most aligned with the kind of recipe I need. If I'm needing new ways to cook meat, I'll probably grab one of my Mad Hungry books by Lucinda Scala Quinn. If I'm wanting a whole meal that's simple and comforting, I'll probably start with Hope's Table by Hope Helmuth. If I'm wanting some new Indian recipes to add to the few we already make, I'll for sure grab either Aarti Paarti by Aarti Sequiera or Made In India by Meera Sodha. Different cookbooks meet different needs, so depending on the kind of recipe you need, you'll reach for a different cookbook. We all need chances to limit our options, and knowing the kind of recipe you're looking for helps limit where you look.

Now, I personally start with cookbooks and not food blogs since most food bloggers play around with different kinds of recipes because that's the nature of creating content on the Internet. It's rare that a food blogger will have one kind of recipe or one style of cooking that covers their entire site. But also that's why categories or filters exist. I can go to Budget Bytes's website and search for quick recipes or look through the one-pot-meal category. I also love the Damn Delicious blog, and she has a whole category called "asian inspired" which is my sweet spot. But my most trusted food blogger slash recipe developer is Bri McKoy. If I am looking for new recipes, I almost always check Bri's site because chances are very good she has something that fits my bill. And I trust her implicitly with flavor. Some recipes, even from food bloggers I love, haven't been as successful as I'd hoped, but Bri never lets me down. So I usually start with cookbooks and then check the Internet, always trusting Bri and then I have a couple of other blogs I check, too.

Now where do I put these new recipes? This will not work for everyone, but I am very much an analog person when it comes to recipes. I have two large unlined notebooks in my kitchen, one for baking recipes and the other for everything else. It's like I can't read a recipe on a screen. So here's what I do. When I'm looking for new recipes and I find one I want to try, I list it in my recipe notebook with the following information: the recipe name, where I can find it, like the book and page number, what ingredients I need that I don't usually have stocked, approximate hands-on time it'll take, and what I could do ahead of time. I make a little bulleted cliff's notes list of what I need to know in order to determine if that recipe can fit into my life on any given week.

Just writing down the title and where to find it isn't enough. I need to know if I need to buy different groceries than usual or if I need to get started making it earlier than usual. By batching the research energy of these new recipes and writing them down as I search, I'm saving myself so much time when I meal plan by knowing exactly what I'm getting into on a Sunday when I'm meal planning. Then if that recipe is successful whenever I cook it and it is a recipe I found online, I will write down the recipe in detail in my notebook so I don't have to look it up again. I don't write everything down for new recipes I might not make again, but after the first successful try, I do write it down. Again, I prefer, dare I say *need* to, read recipes off a piece of paper and not a screen. That's why I love cookbooks so much. They're already paper!

So in that same notebook of new recipe discoveries is my list of brainless crowdpleasers. I also have my brainless crowdpleasers listed in my planner for weeks that I know are too busy to add anything new. I can just do all of my planning within one book. But for weeks that I can spend a little more time and be a little more thoughtful and can consider a new recipe, I'll use that recipe notebooks.

So that's how I choose new recipes! You don't have to do it exactly this way, but I do think asking yourself those four questions will be super helpful. Why am I wanting new recipes? Once you answer that question, the search might stop in its tracks. Two, how am I planning on using these new recipes in my current season of life? What kinds of recipes do I need? And how many? Your search will be so much easier, no matter where you look or how you store them, if you can answer those four questions.

Alright, let's celebrate the Lazy Genius of the Week! This week it's Tori Carras who has been around the Lazy Genius space for a long time and has been such an encouragement to me for years and this idea is MAGIC you guys. Tori sent me a DM and said, "My decide once: whenever I plan to make CYLC, I always plan tomato soup the next night. I use the leftover roasted vegetables for the soup base. Already seasoned. Already soft. Not only does it make the soup extra yummy, but it's even quicker than quick." You GUYS. Is your mind blown like mine is? This is beyond genius. Tori, you have just saved our lives. Basically all you need to do is blend canned tomatoes with those vegetables, check to make sure it's seasoned well enough, and then heat it up on the stove. Absolutely incredible. I am so excited to implement this in my own life. JOB WELL DONE, TORI.

Okay, everyone, thanks for listening! I hope this episode has given you more comfort and excitement when you think about adding new recipes to your life! Also don't forget about The Pub Crawl! At the time of this recording, I don't actually know if we have any tickets for the three live events remaining, so you can check thelazygeniuscollective.com/pubcrawl to see, but we for sure have space in our virtual party on March 22! That kickoff Pub Crawl event to celebrate the release of The Lazy Genius Kitchen is free for everyone who preorders The Lazy Genius Kitchen book, out on May 3. Remember that you can buy it in any form from any retailer although I highly recommend the hardback version because of how often you'll want to access it, and - and listen up this is important - you have to tell us you preordered. The bookstore or retailer that you purchase from is not in contact with us. We don't know them. So once you

order, you need to go to thelazygeniuskitchen.com and enter your order information. Once you do that, you'll get emails from us with ticket information for that March 22 virtual party as well as other preorder bonuses that will automatically be delivered to you. Again, that's thelazygeniuskitchen.com to enter your preorder information, and all the Pub Crawl event information can be found at thelazygeniuscollective.com/pubcrawl.

Okay, that's it for today! Thank you for listening, for being amazing, and for making this job an absolute pleasure. 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!