

7 PROVEN STEPS

to making fast, simple and seriously delicious
plant-based meals without recipes



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Cooking without recipes is all in the preparation. There are plenty of people out there who will tell you that cooking with intuition is a natural skill; either you have it or you don't.

I say that's a load of bull.

Yes, some people may be born with it but that doesn't mean it can't be learnt.

And, by the way, I'm not just talking about being able to throw a meal together here. I'm talking about creating seriously delicious food that you LOVE, without spending hours on it and without being glued to a recipe the whole time.

I've taught this process to LOTS of people and now you can learn it to. I'm excited for you! It's time to unleash your inner chef...



RE-ASSESS YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH FLAVOUR

- I often ask people (in the most uncraigdavidese way possible) 'what's your flavour?'. And you know what? Everyone, without exception, takes a while to answer.
- We choose what to eat at least 3 times a day. This shouldn't be a hard question and yet it's just not something enough of us pay attention to!
- Most people fall in to 2 categories:
 1. you've found some flavours you love, which you now cling on to for dear life in the kitchen and forget / are too afraid / don't have time to experiment or
 2. you've never spent time figuring out what you really love and great food just takes you by surprise sometimes
- Ask yourself a question... do you truly know what flavours make **YOU** happy? Can you say why it is that certain dishes make you want to get up and dance and why others are just a bit... ok? How does it change with your mood?
- Knowing what gets you **REALLY** going in the flavour department is, without a doubt, numero uno on your journey to making food that you seriously love every day.
- Sit down and really think about it. And don't forget... if you're cooking for other people, do this exercise together, so you can find common 'oh hell yes' ground with flavour.



ADJUST YOUR MINDSET

- It's your kitchen.
- Let me just say that again because I know it's a tricky one. It's **YOUR** kitchen.

- Take a look around; in your cupboards and your fridge. Do the contents really reflect **YOU**. Do they make you hungry and eager to cook? Or do you scan your eyes across the bottles and jars and think... meh?
- You can't expect to come home after a long day and find inspiration in a place that's full of uninspiring things.
- Your kitchen should feel like a playground. It's a place for colour and taste and delicious smells and creation. It's a place to explore, be curious and let loose.
- Don't let your inner culinary goddess/god be hindered by tinned soup, some dried beans and a limp cauliflower. Unless that's your bag, of course.

WHAT NOT TO DO: build a kitchen according to how you **THINK** it should be, not how it actually **SHOULD** be for you. Don't mimic something you've seen on Pinterest just because it looks cool. Look at every item and ask 'does this excite ME'?

3 THINK: MULTIPLE COMPONENTS

- 'Whats-left-in-the-fridge one pot'? No thank you. Boring. Uninspiring. No damn thank you.
- 'Whats-left-in-the-fridge one pot' with caper berries, a side of creamy polenta, steamed tenderstem broccoli, a dollop of onion chutney and a sprinkle of fresh parsley? Yes please!
- Flat, one or two dimensional dishes are a big no no.
- Repeat after me: I will no longer restrict myself to such bland nonsense.
- Now before you say 'I don't have time for that'. Yes you do. So just stop it. The broccoli can steam in a sieve over the top of your one pot, polenta just sits there and does its thing while you cook said one pot and caper berries, chutney and fresh herbs are waiting in your fridge for their moment to shine because you've done your shopping like a rockstar thanks to step 6.
- I generally have sub-30 minutes to make dinner of an evening and I make every meal in 6 components: meatiness, sauce, superstar, carb / carb equivalent, garnish and accompaniment. And it's always crazy delicious. More on that later.
- Dishes made up of multiple components take dinner to the next level. Each mouthful can be different, bringing new flavour and texture... the two most important things in food enjoyment. If it's all cooked together each mouthful is the same, and after about 3 mouthfuls that gets pretty dull.

WHAT NOT TO DO: over-complicate it. If you suddenly find yourself buried under pots and pans and elaborate ingredients, stop. Take a step back, buddy. A for effort, but you took things a little far. Remember, this is supposed to be quick, simple cooking. Only add things that are readily to hand and / or fit in to the cooking process of your main dish.

4 PIMP YOUR PANTRY

- OK, so when I say ‘pantry’ I mean the cupboards you keep food in, plus your fridge.
- Cooking without recipes requires a well-stocked pantry. And by ‘well’ I don’t necessarily mean full. I have stunned many a friend by whipping up a feast from a pretty empty pantry.
- It’s not how full it is, it’s what’s in it that counts.
- First up, clear out everything that’s out of date. You might be surprised by how much this is! Then put to one side all the things you think you don’t like – we’ll come back to these later but, for now, shuffle them to one side for now.
- Next up, organise everything left in to your different ‘component groups’. Here’s mine: sauce ingredients (coconut milk, tinned tomatoes), superstars (capers, olives, lime pickle), carbs / carb equivalents, meatiness (lentils, beans, chickpeas), garnishes (toasted seeds) and accompaniments.
- **BONUS TIP:** take a moment to upgrade all possible ingredients. For example, toast nuts and seeds and store them in Tupperware, so they’re ready to go in a flash. The crunch and flavour they add to a dish can be a complete game-changer.

5 ‘LEVEL UP’ YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH VEG

- At the heart of great plant-based food is a true appreciation of veg. So many colours, flavours and textures. So many different ways you can prepare them to change their form and flavour.
- If you want to make outstanding plant-based food you have to level-up your relationship with veg.
- When was the last time you walked around the fruit and veg section of the supermarket and **REALLY** looked at what’s on offer?
- Next time you’re there look at it all. Pick up things that look interesting, rather than your go to veg. You’ll figure it out what to do with it if you let yourself. And it may become your new favourite.
- Now think about preparation methods. Do you always chop your veg the same way? Does it always look the same? Start mixing it up. You’re not adding any complexity to the cooking process, but you’re adding a bit of fun and it’ll bring newness to the familiar. Cook field mushrooms whole, rather than slicing them. Shred your brussel sprouts. Slice carrots, long, on an angle. **PLAY**.
- And think about those cooking methods too. Do you always cook your mushrooms in the dish? Try roasting them in a little oil, soy and Chinese 5 Spice while you cook everything else and place them on top of the dish at the end. Again, it’s no extra work but takes the dish to the next level.

WHAT NOT TO DO: buy ALL the new veg at once, get overwhelmed and waste half of it. Focus on one or 2 new things each week and really play with them in different ways.

6 SHOP WITH SMARTS

- First up, you should always base your shopping list on the elements of your pantry. Remember: that pantry is your **BEST FRIEND**. If you're busy and tired and you're heading home after a long day, and you don't know what's in your pantry... **TRUST ME**, it does not matter as long as it's balanced with a few of each element.
- You'll be able to whip up an amazing, inspiring meal in no time.
- Buy too many of one element and not enough of another and you'll find yourself with all sauce and no substance or vice versa. Zero inspiration. Unhappy dinner. Not cool.
- Secondly, shop curiously. Delve into those aisles and seek out a couple of new superstars, a new sauce ingredient, a new garnish. Pick up at least one thing you haven't tried before and give it a go.
- And lastly, when it comes to fresh ingredients, buy a few fridge heroes that will easily survive a week or so. I'm talking sweet potato, cauliflower, courgette, etc. These guys are lifesavers if you haven't had time to shop. They make fast, simple cooking stress-free at any time.

7 KEEP IT GOING!

Alright! You officially know what you need to do. The key, now, is to keep it up. Here's my tips:

- Repetition: play with similar ingredients again and again until you hit that **YES** moment.
- Take note: jot down anything you create that blows your socks off.
- Lean on your freezer: put it to work by freezing veg on the turn, herbs in oil in ice cube trays and components you use most frequently.
- Stay curious: every week make a point of asking yourself 'what flavour haven't I tried in a while?'

I HOPE YOU ENJOYED THIS STARTER FOR 10



This was designed to give you a super-quick outline of the steps, shake up your thinking and get you started on a journey towards making fast, simple and seriously delicious plant-based meals without recipes.

If anything didn't make sense... don't fret! I'll be back soon with more great stuff to answer any questions and make it oh-so-crystal-clear.