

More Than 100 Simple
and Delicious Real-Food
Recipes from Our
Home to Yours

the oz family kitchen
lisa oz

foreword and healthy eating tips by Mehmet Oz, M.D.



THE
OZ FAMILY
KITCHEN

more than 100 simple and delicious
real-food recipes from our home to yours

LISA OZ



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CUCUMBER and GRILLED CANTALOUPE SALAD

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HIJIKI, MÂCHE, and EDAMAME SALAD

SALAD with KALE, FARRO, and WINTER FRUITS

SALAD with PEANUT DRESSING

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"THE PRIEST FAINTED" EGGPLANT

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BROCCOLI with HAZELNUT TOPPING

CAULIFLOWER OREGANATA

BRUSSELS SPROUTS CHIFFONADE with MAPLE SYRUP and THYME

BABY CARROTS with COCONUT and GINGER

ROASTED SWEET and SAVORY CAULIFLOWER

HARICOTS VERTS with ORANGE, ALMONDS, and CORIANDER

ROASTED SAVORY VEGETABLES

SPICED MASHED SWEET POTATOES with POMEGRANATE

SPICED SWEET POTATO OVEN FRIES with GARLICKY YOGURT DIP

PASTAS AND GRAINS

FARRO with MUSHROOMS and THYME

CURRIED FETTUCCINE with ROASTED SQUASH, CHICKPEAS, and HAZELNUTS

PENNE with QUICK TOMATO and BASIL SAUCE

GNOCCHI with WALNUT and SAGE SAUCE

EDAMAME WONTONS with TRUFFLE and WINE SAUCE

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BROWN RICE BOWL with RED CURRY VEGETABLES

SPAGHETTI with VEGETARIAN PUTTANESCA SAUCE

MILLET with DECONSTRUCTED PESTO

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QUINOA with MUNG BEANS and INDIAN SPICES

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ALMOND-CRUSTED TOFU with CILANTRO CHIMICHURRI

LENTIL and MUSHROOM LOAF

GRILLED HALOUMI and VEGETABLE KEBAB

BLACK COD with BRAISED FENNEL, LEEKS, and TARRAGON

CORNBREAD-CRUSTED CALAMARI with CHIVE-YOGURT DIP

MARINATED SALMON with SCALLIONS, LEMON, and TAMARI

SPICE-CRUSTED RED SNAPPER with MANGO SALSA

BAKED TROUT FILLETS with HORSERADISH-CAPER GLAZE

SEARED SCALLOPS with CAULIFLOWER and GARLIC PURÉE

OLD BAY SHRIMP with EDAMAME SUCCOTASH

COCONUT-CRUSTED CHICKEN BREASTS with PEANUT SRIRACHA DIP

ROASTED CHICKEN DRUMSTICKS with HERB-GARLIC RUB

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ROAST TURKEY with APRICOT and ROSEMARY DRESSING

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CARROT CAKE with CASHEW FROSTING
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FRESH PUMPKIN PIE with COOKIE DOUGH CRUST
LEMON and BLUEBERRY PIE
MAINE RHUBARB-STRAWBERRY CRUMBLE
GINGER SNAP COOKIES
CHOCOLATE ALMOND MACAROONS

SNACKS AND BEVERAGES

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RED PEPPER and WALNUT ROMESCO
WHOLE WHEAT EVERYTHING CRACKERS
MARINATED FETA with OREGANO
VEGETARIAN TAPENADE
NOT-TOO-SPICY GLAZED NUTS
FINGER-LICKIN' EDAMAME
CRISPY KALE CHIPS
TURKISH SANGRIA with MELON and ORANGE
MONACO
CUCUMBER-ORANGE "SPA WATER"
GINGERED PALOMA
ROSEWATER TEA COOLER
GREEN JUICE

BASICS

SAUTÉED CHICKEN BREAST
QUICK SHRIMP with GARLIC and LEMON
TERIYAKI BAKED TOFU
SPICED BAKED CHICKPEAS

BASIC FARRO

BASIC BROWN RICE

BASIC COOKED BEANS

ALL-PURPOSE VEGETABLE BROTH

VEGETABLE MARINADE

CREAMY AVOCADO SALAD DRESSING

OZ FAMILY HOUSE DRESSING

FOREWORD

MEHMET OZ, MD

I grew up eating the Standard American Diet, often referred to by its acronym SAD (because you feel that way after consuming it). My parents had emigrated from Turkey, where the ancestral food is based on the healthy Mediterranean diet. But once in the States, they wanted to assimilate, so we copied our neighbors and focused on convenience and efficiency. We did not put a lot of thought into meals in terms of either health or pleasure.

I had never even met a vegetarian—until Lisa turned my world upside down. I tried to impress her with home-cooked dinner for our first date. The only thing I knew how to make was chicken wrapped in aluminum foil. She thanked me for the effort but explained that she didn't eat chicken. I figured we could go out for dinner instead and took her to Pat's Cheese Steak in South Philly only to learn that she didn't eat steak either.

Despite this double faux pas, I was still invited to meet her parents at their home. Lisa was in the kitchen with her mom making a big pot of fresh tomato sauce, using vegetables from their garden while her father toiled over his specialty "gypsy" salad. Her five younger siblings were milling around, sometimes chipping in (or getting in the way). The entire experience was a celebration of life with conversations over whether the whole grain pasta was al dente or overdone. Did the herb vinaigrette need more punch? And everyone ate together, connecting (and arguing) with one another as people have done for all of human history. Meals were the familial glue for my in-laws. Even the road trips and vacations were organized around food.

They also seemed to understand that what they were eating had a profound impact on their well-being. The nutritional value of foods was a frequent topic in the home, and food that was full of empty calories and potentially toxic additives was never welcome at the table.

This is the snapshot of healthy eating that Lisa inoculated into our family when I made the wisest decision of my life and married her two years later.

In the beginning, not every meal was memorable for the right reasons. There were times Lisa's experimentation in the kitchen resulted in less than optimal results, like a curry so hot I could barely breathe. But ultimately her passion for cooking translated into a real talent for creating healthy dishes that taste amazing.

As an intern in a busy city hospital, I quickly realized that the best meals I could eat were the ones I brought from home. I would ride my bike on the George Washington Bridge over the Hudson River with a backpack full of sandwiches in Ziploc bags and soup in Tupperware containers. In my on-call room I would eat my solitary meals and think of the love that went into their preparation. The gently toasted bread reminded me that Lisa cared, even more so the meticulously diced garlic she folded into the tunafish.

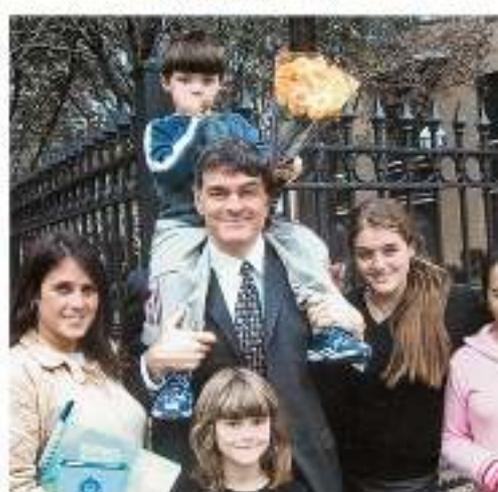
As I did my rounds on sleepy patients staring at their cardboard-like waffles or desiccated egg options at 8 a.m., I had a massive epiphany. I needed to change how they lived their lives, starting with their basic approach to eating, otherwise I was not fulfilling my Hippocratic obligation as a physician.

Thanks to Lisa, I respected the power of food, often commenting that when you walk into a grocery store you are really walking into a pharmacy. But this is not a message that changes minds. People change based on what they *feel* more than what they know. To really engage change, we have to make it easy for folks to do the right thing.

After hearing me complain about the hypocrisy of taking a bandsaw to people's chests to perform open heart surgery without meaningfully impacting lifestyle changes, Lisa created our first TV show, *Second*

Opinion. My first guest was Oprah and the rest is history.

Throughout the voyage, Lisa continued to feed me and our children with delicious, wholesome meals. Those dishes make up the bulk of this book. The recipes are about joyful eating that happens to be healthy, unrefined, unprocessed, real food made at home. They are designed to help you live fully, with passion, through meals that tantalize your senses while nourishing your body.



INTRODUCTION

Do you ever feel you are in a weird déjà vu loop? I do, mostly at cocktail parties. When people meet me for the first time, their reactions are almost always the same: “You’re married to Dr. Oz? Oh, my gosh, what do you guys eat at home?” What I want to reply is: “Kale. Only kale.” But that would be a lie.

This book is an attempt to answer the question truthfully, to give you a glimpse of what goes on in our kitchen. The recipes I’ve included here are the ones we actually make on a daily basis. They are designed for busy moms (and dads) who want to provide nourishing meals that the whole family will enjoy. Most of the dishes are plant-based, though some do have meat. Many are gluten free. They are generally healthful, but there are a few special-occasion treats that might surprise you. (Yes, Mehmet really does have German chocolate cake on his birthday.)

I know the thought of “America’s doctor” eating cake may make some of you uncomfortable. For purists there’s no bending the rules—ever. Whether the forbidden food is meat or wheat, fat or sugar, there will always be those who feel that any deviation from the prescribed form of eating is unacceptable. Others will be related by the idea, using it as an excuse to toss the whole “healthy food thing” out the window and go on a self-proclaimed “Oz-endorsed” binge. (Been there, done that. Very bad idea.)

So up-front apologies to anyone who thought he or she would be getting recipes for nothing but broccoli and goji berries, or super-secret diet tips to help you lose 20 pounds in 10 days. Nope, sorry. This is not that book.

It is, rather, an invitation to dine with us: to eat what we eat as a family, to share a meal and to connect over good food. And by “good” I mean both nutritious *and* delicious. Healthful food does nothing for you if you’re not eating it; and if your family is anything like ours, flavorless meals are not an option, no matter how chock-full of micronutrients. For us, food is something to be enjoyed, not endured. Ideally, these dishes will both nourish the body and delight the senses. They make you healthy *and* happy.

Now, since we’ll be spending some time together, allow me to introduce our clan.

We’ll start with Mehmet. He’s practically the poster boy for healthy eating—and that isn’t always meant as a compliment. (He was once labeled a “joyless eater” after he was spied consuming his routine breakfast of Greek yogurt with blueberries.) But the truth of the matter is that Mehmet genuinely *loves* what he eats. It’s just that other people don’t always appreciate it. They don’t understand how he can prefer carrot sticks to french fries or a bowl of quinoa to a cupcake. (However, once they taste the [quinoa](#), it could be a different story.)

Our daughter Daphne is our resident chef. She’s been cooking with me since she was old enough to balance herself on the counter, but a few years ago she graduated from culinary school. One of her favorite things is to explore new restaurants, then come home and try to replicate any outstanding menu items. She bakes when she wants to relax.

John is Daphne’s husband. He likes everything (including dishes we may have accidentally burned). Just about the only thing he doesn’t eat is bread, because he tries to stay gluten free as much as possible. His family is from Serbia, so he’s introduced us to a whole new cuisine.

Philomena (“Philo”) is their wonderful, happy toddler. She likes to hang out in the kitchen and watch me cook. At the moment, she’s mostly into purées.

Our second daughter, Arabella, is generally a pescatarian, but every now and then she has a craving for

“grass-fed, sustainably sourced meat.” (She has occasionally been known to eat a shawarma of unknown origin on a street corner, but tends to keep that to a minimum.) She loves richly seasoned ethnic foods and makes wicked sandwich!

Our youngest daughter, Zoe, is gluten free and dairy free. She’s totally into vegetables and fruit—and, well, that’s about it. (She must have gotten her taste buds from her father.) She eats seasonally, loading up on fresh melon and cherries in the summer, switching to apples and butternut squash in the fall.

Oliver, our son, is fifteen. Need I say more? Almost overnight, my sweet, little, animal-loving boy turned into a giant teenager and decided he had to eat like a *T. rex* on a rampage. Thankfully, he’s willing to grill his own steaks so I don’t have to get involved.

Finally, there’s me. I’ve been a vegetarian since my early teens, with intermittent periods of being completely vegan. My mom was part of that early wave of health-conscious progressives, bucking the 1970s trend of Tang and Twinkies. She raised my siblings and me on a plant-based, whole-foods diet long before it was popular. We grew up on a farm, where we took seasonal fruits and vegetables for granted. Whether it was raspberries along the fences, apples and peaches in the orchard out back, or tomatoes fresh off the vine, there was always something ripening that we could work into our meals. I still have a weak spot for anything right out of the garden.

Okay, that’s who we are in a food-related nutshell. We love to eat. And we love to cook. The kitchen is the heart of our home and the place where we spend most of our time. Everyone contributes when making the family feasts. We like to experiment—to combine tastes and textures, to incorporate ideas from places we’ve traveled and people we’ve met along the way. Our days often center on planning, preparing, and enjoying meals. We eat with enthusiasm bordering on fervor. Remember that scene in *When Harry Met Sally?* You know the one: in that scene, Meg Ryan sounds pretty much like one of us eating a bowl of perfectly cooked pasta.

While we revel in the pleasures of food, we also understand its power. We know that what we eat is a huge factor in how we feel; and for this reason, we choose food that’s as close to its original form as possible. Ideally, it is whole, unrefined, GMO free, and organic. When it’s available, we opt for produce that’s in season and locally sourced. Processed foods are not welcome—except in very rare instances. (There are a few meat substitutes that I use sparingly when I need an umami fix.)

In spite of our shared passion, we don’t always agree on what to serve. For starters, on any given week we have one vegetarian, two flexitarians, one pescatarian, two or three people who are eating gluten free, and a couple who may or may not be on a weight-loss plan. We also have two omnivores who will literally chomp down on anything from alligator meat to fish eyeballs. Needless to say, we have a few challenges when it comes to satisfying everyone at the table.

And yet, we have made it work. We have an overarching family food philosophy that is cohesive but leaves room for diversity. We acknowledge that no one way of eating is right for everyone. Differences in biology, geography, personality, and taste all factor into an individual’s dietary choices.

I wrote this cookbook because I think there are a lot of families like ours—trying to juggle healthy options with hectic lifestyles and varied eating styles. With that in mind, I selected recipes that are full of fresh, whole food ingredients but still easy enough to make, even on a weeknight when just getting everyone to sit down for dinner can seem daunting. I’ve also enlisted the help of my husband, because while his kitchen skills are basically limited to chopping and stirring, he does know how to educate people on what they need to stay healthy. Throughout these pages, you will find his advice and nutritional tips to help guide you when you make choices about what you put in your body and in the bodies of those you love.

So, welcome to our table. Please make yourself at home. We are grateful for the opportunity to spend this time together and celebrate the blessings of food and family and friendship. Now, let's eat!

—LISA O



TO COOK OR NOT TO COOK

I love to cook. It's a way to express my creativity, to experiment, to explore. It's also a way to show my love to the ones that I care—to be generous, nurturing, loving. Sometimes it even becomes meditative, in the repetitive movements of chopping and stirring. Yes, cooking can be utterly delightful.

But that's only on a good day. There's also the rest of the week—those times when there are fifty other things to do, and everyone's famished and no one wants to help get dinner on the table; and then, finally, when it's done, someone declares that he hates beets and excuses himself to get a bowl of cereal. That's when I wish I'd ordered pizza.

Yes, I totally understand that while cooking is good, it's not always easy. Mostly, it takes time and energy—two things none of us have enough of. But being organized can help maximize your use of both. For starters, try to plan what you're going to make ahead of time, especially when you're preparing meals for a large group of people. There are few things more frustrating than standing in front of an open fridge, gazing at a blur of condiments and wilting vegetables after a long day at work, while your children lurk behind you and chant in unison “What's for dinner?” It's best if you have an idea of how to answer that question before you open the refrigerator door.

Though it's not always possible, I like to start thinking about the next week's meals on Saturday or Sunday (Usually it's on weekends that we're making a supermarket run anyway.) Before you get all nervous, please note that I just said “thinking about,” not actually writing out detailed menus and making a cooking schedule (though for those of you who are super-organized, that's not a bad idea). I'm more of the “Let's get a general idea of where we're going” kind of girl.

I begin by making a smart shopping list—that means taking a brief inventory of what you've already got. (I can't tell you how many bags of brown rice I've stacked in my pantry because it's one of those things I just always pick up.) I then break the list into two categories: what we're going to eat in the next few days and what we need in the longer term. The “must eat quickly” portion includes any meats, fish, leafy greens, or berries. The things I can use all week long consist of dried goods like grains, beans, flours, and nuts, as well as some fresh produce that includes eggs, milk, cheese, and some more “resilient” vegetables (winter squash, potatoes, cauliflower, cabbage) that will be fine sitting in the refrigerator for a few days. I make another run to the market mid-week to refresh the stock of super-perishables, but it takes a lot less time because I'm only picking up a few things.

One tip here is to eat before you go to the grocery store—and if you're taking your kids with you, make sure they've eaten, too. (Hungry children = lots of whining when you get to the cookie aisle.) If you don't have time for a meal, throw a healthy snack like nuts or an apple into your purse and munch on it in the car on the way to the market. You don't want to be lured into buying something you don't really need or want because your blood sugar is low and your resistance is even lower.

Since I mentioned the cookie aisle, I have to say up front: Stay away! Don't even walk down that aisle. There is nothing there you want in your house. Those bright colors and cleverly descriptive names are all designed to entice you. And as tempting as they seem on the shelf, they are even more irresistible at 11 o'clock at night, when they're in your kitchen and your favorite TV character has just been killed off.

In general, it's best to limit your time in any of those center aisles of a supermarket. Yes, there will be things you need there, like canned goods and spices and paper plates, but it's also where most of those “nonfood” items are hanging out. One thing I do to avoid them is to shop for “the good stuff” first. I begin in the produce

section and fill up my cart with fruits and vegetables. My next stop is the whole grains, dried beans, and nut sections—items that you can often buy in bulk. By the time I've picked up the milk and eggs, or a bottle of vinegar, there's not much room left in my cart, and I'm trying to balance things in a way that won't crush the tomatoes which are now somewhere near the bottom. Finally, as I walk past an aisle with packaged, processed foods, it's like playing Jenga: one additional item and I would be heading for a shopping cart disaster.

Back at home, we do a few things to make eating healthfully easier. The first is cooking on the weekend. For me, the best thing about this is that I have lots of hands to help. The older kids come home to visit and are great about pitching in. And the regular excuses of work (Mehmet), homework (Zoe), and sports (Oliver) which are frequently used on weekdays to get out of assisting with meals, are moot on a Sunday afternoon. Generally, everyone hangs out in the kitchen anyway, so it's easy to pass someone a knife or a colander when I'm starting to feel overwhelmed. I usually have dance music playing, so cooking together feels more like a party than actual work.



Another thing we do is double the recipe of one or two dishes so we can freeze what we don't eat and enjoy

it at a later date. That way, when I'm really pressed for time, I have a whole meal I can just thaw and reheat. My favorite recipes from this book to freeze for later include the [Chunky Vegetarian Chili with Quinoa](#), [Roasted Butternut Squash Soup](#), [Miso and Vegetable Fasting Broth](#), the [Vegetarian Puttanesca Sauce](#) for pasta, [Lentil and Mushroom Loaf](#), and [Banana, Date, and Nut Muffins](#).

We also prepare and freeze single ingredients that may be time-consuming to fix mid-week. For example, brown rice takes a while to cook (about 45 minutes, which is an eternity when you have hungry teenagers to feed). Beans take a long time, too, both to soak and to cook (which is why on many occasions I am more than grateful for the canned versions). Cooking up big pots of beans or rice on Saturdays or Sundays when there is no rush to get dinner on the table means I'll have a quick and nutritious option at my fingertips later in the week.

We've usually got a pound or two of shrimp and a few chicken breasts tucked into the freezer, as well. These take very little time to cook, so I don't bother preparing them ahead of time, but have them available as last-minute "add-ins" to an otherwise vegetarian dish if my carnivores become feisty.

In fact, "add-ins" are the key to keeping all of our family happy at the table. You may notice that the vast majority of recipes in this book are vegetarian. That's because I believe a plant-centered diet makes the most sense for our overall physical health, as well as the health of our environment. And while other family members understand and respect this philosophy, their definition of "plant centered" is a bit broader than mine—and it includes meat, fish, or chicken several times a week. To avoid becoming a short-order cook and having to make six different entrées in order to sit down at the table, I like to start with a communal base and let everyone build his or her own plate around it.

WEIGHT AND FOOD I am often asked about foods that can help keep everyone at a healthy weight. Let me share a little secret. The best tactic is to use ingredients that look the same coming out of the ground as when you eat them. After all, the brain is not counting calories, it is counting nutrients. That's why empty calories fail to satiate us, tempting us to overeat. —MEHMET

Typically, most people's dinners start with a main-course protein and include some vegetables, and maybe starch on the side. Though we sometimes use this model as well, I prefer to make the heart of the meal a central bowl of salad, grains, soup, or pasta—and then put out small sides of proteins (quickly sautéed chicken, shrimp, or tofu) as "add-ins" that allow everyone to customize as desired. This way I can accommodate the different dietary needs of our individuals while also enjoying a collective culinary experience.

Some of my favorite recipes for building this dinner-table model include:

[Warm Quinoa and Chickpeas](#)
[Quinoa with Mung Beans and Indian Spices](#)
[Brown Rice Bowl with Red Curry Vegetables](#)
[Brown Rice with Vegetable Stir-Fry and Tahini-Miso Sauce](#)
[Fried Rice Paella with Spiced Chickpeas and Shrimp](#)
[Mexican Chopped Salad with Creamy Chipotle Dressing](#)
[Hijiki, Mâche, and Edamame Salad](#)
[Salad with Peanut Dressing](#)
[Asian Slaw with Ginger Dressing](#)
[Oz Family Salad Bar](#)

["Wagababy" Pot with Udon and Asian Vegetables](#)
[Curried Fettuccine with Roasted Squash, Chickpeas, and Hazelnuts](#)

[Farro with Mushrooms and Thyme](#)
[Bosphorus Breakfast with Soft-Boiled Eggs and Fruit](#)

Making ethnic dishes in which meat isn't the focus is a great way to cut back on the amount of animal products you eat. Our family especially loves the cuisines of India, Thailand, Turkey, and Italy. With all these cooking styles, there are so many wonderful vegetable dishes that you will barely even notice the absence of meat. Traditionally, these regional diets considered meat a luxury and it was therefore used sparingly, often just for flavoring or was reserved for celebrations and feast days.

Speaking of celebrations, I need to mention desserts. I was toying with the idea of leaving them out of the book altogether. Truthfully, they're not recipes our family makes very often—at most, probably ten times a year, generally for birthdays or holidays. Normally, if we want something sweet after dinner, we'll grab some fruit. But sometimes we all need to mark an event with a mouth-watering indulgence. On those special occasions, we still abide by the same principles we use for everyday cooking: we use real food (in this case, milk, sugar, and butter), and we make the sweets ourselves rather than buying them "pre-fab." These are by no means health foods, but eaten sparingly they aren't too bad for you—unless, of course, you're trying to lose weight!

Some of you may be wondering about weight loss, especially since Mehmet speaks about it so frequently on his show. Frankly, most of us know what we should and shouldn't be eating when we want to drop a few pounds. The problem is almost never a matter of ignorance. (If I showed you a picture of an ice cream sundae and a piece of celery, I don't think any of you would say the ice cream is the right choice for weight loss.) The issue has way more to do with *acting* on what we already know than in uncovering some secret information.

As I mentioned in the introduction, this is not a diet book. It's a book about eating nutrient-dense, mostly plant-based foods that taste delicious. The recipes here support a healthy lifestyle, and you could use many of them in an effective dieting program but certainly not all. For anyone wondering which recipes in this book would work best on a diet, I'll just say that when I need to lose weight, the recipes I choose are things like the [Banana-Blueberry Breakfast Smoothie](#), [Miso and Vegetable Fasting Broth](#), and a selection of the vegetable salads, and whole grains. I do my best to stay away from the pastas, sandwiches, and desserts.

Thankfully, our kids have always been foodies. Even when they were little, they took a genuine interest in what we were eating, and they wanted to be involved in everything from menu planning to grocery shopping to cooking. (The only thing they weren't particularly enthusiastic about was cleanup.) Though I made an effort to include all of them in the whole process, each child gravitated to a different aspect of meal preparation.

Our youngest daughter, Zoe, loved making lists. She would practice her cursive writing by carefully copying out everything I needed to buy at the market, then make a decorated menu for that evening's meal. She always liked to read it aloud and have us "order" what we wanted her to bring to the table.

Oliver was my shopping buddy. He always wanted to pick out the produce by himself, even when he was still small enough to be riding in the cart. He would make me hold open the bag for him while he dropped in the carefully chosen lemons or limes. Then he would point to a specific melon that he had to inspect before he would be allowed to place it behind him in the cart. When he was a little older, Oliver liked to be given food "assignments," during which he would leave me with the cart and run off to find the item by himself. (I made sure I could see where he was headed.)

Daphne and Arabella were both little cooks, but they approached the task very differently. Daphne was a gangbuster—all in. She knew her way around the kitchen at an early age and could have taken over if I had

mysteriously disappeared. Arabella was more circumspect. Rather than jump in with the washing and chopping, she preferred to hang out by the seasonings, waiting for me to stir in spices so she could taste and discover a dish as it was being born. She was always drawn to the most exotic and pungent flavors.

Even when the kids weren't cooking with me, they were in the kitchen. That's where they did their homework, colored or painted their pictures, read books, and had their excited conversations. The kitchen has always been the place where we came together as a family, but mealtimes were especially important.

We had our first two daughters while Mehmet was still a surgical resident, which meant he wasn't around whole heck of a lot. When he did come home, it was often quite late; but we made the decision to keep the girls up so they could sit with us while we ate dinner. There were times when we thought we might be making the wrong choice (mostly on mornings when the girls were too tired to get up for school), but we felt that the time we spent together as a family ultimately would mean more than a few missed classes.

Since the children have gotten older, prioritizing these family meals has become even more significant—and difficult to arrange. With after-school activities, sports and homework, the kids' schedules are almost as hectic as ours. Often we aren't all home until after 8:00 or 9:00 p.m. But even if we don't all eat at the same time, we always make an effort to sit together, the early birds having a cup of herbal tea while the last stragglers finish their dinner.

As parents, Mehmet and I both find these moments as a family around the table to be essential. It is here that we share the events of the day and our insights into those events. *This is one of the most important ways we communicate our values to our children*, including an appreciation of the sacred nature of food and the understanding that the mundane act of sharing a meal is much more important than it seems.



WHAT WE EAT

So, what does the Oz family eat? Well, put simply, food.

Yes, I know that seems like a silly answer, but sadly it's not what many Americans are eating these days. The highly processed, colored, preserved, artificially flavored, packaged stuff that makes up a large part of the standard American diet is not food. And chances are, if you're buying something in a box (or from a drive-through window) with a long list of unpronounceable ingredients, that falls into the nonfood category.

By the way, full disclosure here: when I talk about what we eat, I mean *mostly*. While we normally make choices that are wholesome and nourishing, we have been known to answer the siren's call of salt and vinegar potato chips. The stuff that passes for food can be very appealing—even when you know better.

There are a million reasons for this. First, it's pretty darn tasty (in a highly addictive and ultimately unsatisfying way). Loaded with sugar, fat, and salt, these processed "faux foods" push our most rudimentary taste-bud buttons. Second, they are cheap (owing to subsidies and economies of scale). As an added bonus

sample content of The Oz Family Kitchen: More Than 100 Simple and Delicious Real-Food Recipes from Our Home to Yours

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