

CONVENIENT FOOD

Remove far from me vanity and lies:
GIVE ME NEITHER POVERTY NOR RICHES;
feed me with food convenient for me.

Proverbs 30:8

"Don't give me too much or too little. Just give me enough to live on." That's my commentary on this verse, and its message of balance and contentment fit my goal for this book perfectly. Sometimes eating healthy becomes an excuse to eat too much and obsess over food preparation, but God calls us to a higher standard. *Convenient Food* focuses on real, simple ingredients that are smart on calories, big on flavor, and easy on the wallet. In this book you'll find a vast array of savory main dishes and sides, but don't worry - I still enjoy desserts in moderation! My new commitment to a balanced diet doesn't mean that I cut out decadent ice cream entirely, but it does mean that I don't make such recipes every week...and my portions are smaller when I do choose to enjoy something rich. As you cook your way through *Convenient Food*, chew slowly and savor each bite!

VISIT MY WEBSITE AT **BRIANA-THOMAS.COM** FOR MORE RECIPES AND RESOURCES!

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All Bible verses are taken from the King James Version.



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To Ryan

Thank you for encouraging my dreams and putting up with my long hours. Thank you for eating everything I set before you without complaint and enjoying it. Thank you for bringing discount salads home when I was busy typing up recipes. Thank you for listening when I was discouraged and stressed out with this project and showing me that things weren't as bad as they seemed in the moment. Above all, thank you for supporting my plan to slow down. All my love,

Briana



This cookbook is not affiliated with or endorsed by Trim Healthy Mama. I have done my best to make sure that all the recipes included are compatible with that healthy eating plan, but as always, read the book *Trim Healthy Mama Plan: Keep it Simple. Keep it Sane.* or the quick start guide at the beginning of *Trim Healthy Table* (both available from trimhealthymama.com) and use your own discernment based on the information therein. Trim Healthy Mama is a healthy eating lifestyle that includes all food groups. It focuses on a low-glycemic diet centered around protein and separates carbs and fats to allow the metabolism to function at its best.

I may be married to a doctor, but I'm not a doctor, nutritionist, or allergy expert. When determining if my recipes are right for your diet, please use your own best judgment as advised by your physician – and use common sense.

..... CAUTIONS

You may notice that some of the recipes in this book contain raw eggs. It's only fair to warn you that consuming raw or undercooked meats, poultry, seafood, shellfish, or eggs may increase your risk of foodborne illness. Eat raw eggs at your own risk, and if they make you nervous, use pasteurized whole eggs in their place. You can purchase these from some grocery stores or make your own (Google it).

Some of the recipes in this book require you to blend hot liquids. Guess what? This can be dangerous! Blending hot liquids can cause pressure to build up in your blender, which can in turn create an explosion of hot liquid that would be very detrimental to the health and wellbeing of you and your kitchen. When you blend hot liquids, don't fill the blender all the way up. Carefully vent the blender periodically to let pressure escape. An immersion blender can be a safer option for blending hot liquids. Just use common sense, please.

The subject of ingesting essential oils is a volatile one these days. Some of my recipes use essential oils for flavor, so before making these recipes, please do your own research regarding the safety of ingesting essential oils and the best brands to use. If you are not comfortable ingesting essential oils, bypass the recipes that use them or substitute a corresponding extract flavor, to taste.

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TABLE OF *contents*

This Isn't a Foreword Either	VII
Ingredients + Baking Tips	2
Fuel Types	15
Breakfast	17
Main Dishes	60
Side Dishes	181
Salads	219
Shakes + Drinks	243
Ice Cream + Frozen Desserts	291
Cakes + Muffins	343
Candies, Cookies + Bars	375
Desserts	403
Snacks + Appetizers	441
Sauces, Spices, Spreads + Syrups	473
Yogurt Tutorial	495
Alphabetical Index	499





THIS ISN'T A foreword EITHER

Forewords are notorious for being boring, so in my first book, *Necessary Food*, I wrote a non-foreword. People read it, so I'm going to see if I can fool y'all once again.

» WHO AM I? «

» Bree-AH-nah. Not Bree-ANN-ah.

» I grew up as a Thomas in upstate South Carolina with a wonderful family and a bunch of horses. In February 2018, I married Ryan Burkholder, M.D. and moved to northern Louisiana where he is doing his Internal Medicine residency. God only knows where we'll settle down eventually, but we're enjoying Louisiana for now!

» Having been married a grand total of six months at the time of writing this, my life has changed a great deal lately. I used to be very passionate about horses and horse training, but after getting married this country gal got transplanted to the city – sans horse. I miss country life (and privacy, and trees, and mountains) a lot, but I hope that the future holds a nice spot down a back road for Ryan and me and maybe my cantankerous old horse, Traveler. And possibly some cantankerous children, should we ever have any of those.

» Other hobbies of mine include reading, music, and visiting museums with my husband. When it comes to books, I prefer true stories and well-written wit. Dating a doctor opened up a whole new world of very interesting literature to me; books written by doctors and nurses with senses of humor and the irony of life are always entertaining and often thought-provoking. As far as music goes,

singing with Laudate Mennonite Ensemble in 2016 and 2018, going to South Africa for three weeks in 2017 with Aspire Ensemble, and attending Shenandoah Christian Music Camp for a few years have been some of the best experiences of my life.

» Who am I? Most importantly I am a child of God. A relationship with God through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ is the most important part of my life, and I strive to live according to God's loving commands in His Word – the Bible. (Since many of you ask, I am conservative Mennonite by denomination. My husband is from that background as well.)

» NECESSARY FOOD «

I started blogging healthy recipes after graduating from high school in 2013, partly as a creative outlet and partly because I wanted to get into photography and horse training as a business and thought that posting recipes would give me a captive audience upon whom I could someday spring my "real" business ventures. People actually really liked the recipes I posted, I soon realized that I could make money blogging, self-employment and cooking appealed to me, and the rest is history. After a few years my readers asked for my recipes in book form, so *Necessary Food* was born in December 2016 after a long, arduous labor. "I'm never doing that again," said I. (More about that later.)

Necessary Food contains a lot of my basic recipes, so (shameless plug) you should really buy it to go along with *Convenient Food* if you don't already have it. (It's available on my website.) Both

books include a lot of traditional Mennonite foods made healthy, many inspired by the old black-and-white church cookbooks my mom always used. Some recipes are just straight-up Briana with no prior inspiration, so watch out for those.

» HOW DR. RYAN SHOWED UP «

You're going to have to go to my website to read the full love story, parts one and two, because there's not room for it all here. I'll give you the basics.

I was 21 and single. I had escaped three terms of Bible school, two music camps, and countless music events unscathed...then the first Sunday morning in April 2017, some guy showed up at my church. I had no idea who he was, but he was pretty good-looking and wore nice shoes. I heard around the grapevine that he was in med school in Florida. We didn't really talk that morning, but he was around again that evening at a church event and struck up a conversation with me. We ended up eating together and really hit it off - to the point that people were already making smart remarks about something romantic brewing. Before the young man (whose name was Ryan) left that evening, he motioned me out onto the porch at church. I had no idea what he wanted, and I was sure I would never see him again so the thought that he could possibly be interested in me never crossed my mind. (I'm not typically this naïve, I promise.) I followed Ryan out onto the porch, saying as we went, "So, I never asked - what brought you to the area?" We stepped onto the porch, the door shut behind us, and he looked at me and said (in complete sincerity), "You did."

I like to think I remained calm and composed. I stared at him mutely with a raised eyebrow, waiting for him to explain himself. He went on to say that he had come across my blog and thought he would like to get to know me better...and could we go

out for coffee the next day? He wasn't asking for a relationship - just a chat - but I wanted to get my dad's permission first. Unfortunately my dad was in Missouri preaching that weekend. I told Ryan that I would call my dad that evening and let him know our answer in the morning. To make a long story short, we invited Ryan to come over to our house for supper on Tuesday night where he was able to meet my dad and spend time with my family. The two of us talked for a few hours and I heard all about his family (who are wonderful people), his church background (also Mennonite), and his career (he graduated from medical school a month and a half after we met). I really, really liked him - and I liked that he wasn't the type to beat around the bush. By the end of the week he had called my dad to ask if he could start a relationship with me. Long-distance dating with someone in his intern year of residency is not the easiest thing to do, and being the rather intense individuals that we both are, we got engaged that November and married in February. Being married and living in the same house is much better than trying to do the whole long-distance thing.

I realize that at first brush our story probably sounds like a creepy stalking situation, but Anabaptist circles are fairly close-knit and Ryan had called a few people to get references on me before driving eight hours and showing up at my church. We found out as we got to know each other that we had some mutual connections and had even gone to the same music camp - just in different years. To be honest, I would've been a lot more skeptical about him if he would've contacted me before meeting me in person, but as it stood, I had already developed a liking for him before I even knew why he was at my church.

Ryan's intensity, decisiveness, and out-of-the-box thinking are some of the things that I really appreciate about him. He's one of the most

sincere individuals I've ever met, and he puts on no pretense. Over and over I'm amazed at how well we complement and balance each other, and I like to tell people that marriage has been the most refining yet rewarding experience of my life.

Thankfully Ryan has always had an interest in fitness and healthy eating, so eating the way I'm used to cooking was no hardship for him – in fact, he loves it! If I say, "This has cottage cheese in it to cut down on calories and add protein" he says, "Great! I'll have seconds!" He's the least picky person I've ever known, and he's delighted to not have to cook for himself anymore.

» MY FOOD STRATEGIES «

I've eaten a low-glycemic diet since 2013 (following the Trim Healthy Mama plan), and it's become a way of life for me. I eat this way because I feel so much better doing so and I want to take care of the body God has given me. I never really had a lot of weight to lose, but I have lost some and managed to maintain a healthy weight despite doing a lot of traveling in the past few years. I'd like to lose a few more pounds, and these are some of the strategies that have been helping me trim down even more in the past year:

Contentment

This one is first for a reason. We people of the civilized world are spoiled people. We are picky people. We are entitled people. I speak of myself first and foremost! How much food do I actually need to eat to be healthy? Do I really need dessert with most meals? What are the eternal consequences of having to eat a food I don't particularly enjoy because it's what's available? If we could learn to live more simply and not oversatiate ourselves on a regular basis, we would be happier people, we would be skinnier people,

and most importantly, we would be more effective in the kingdom of God. Ryan has been a big conviction and encouragement to me in this area. He is one of the most grateful people I know. He doesn't expect much, but he genuinely enjoys the most simple pleasures of life and is thankful for the most trivial things. That's how I want to be in all of life, including my eating habits! Ryan has taught me that less can be so much more. You can enjoy a small piece of cheesecake even more than a big piece of cheesecake if you don't have it every day and you savor every bite.

Eat to live. Don't live to eat.

This one goes hand in hand with the previous point. Food is definitely a gift to be enjoyed and I don't see anything wrong with making an effort to cook yummy things, but food – and even a "healthy lifestyle" – can easily become an idol. If the preparation and consumption of food become an all-consuming passion to the exclusion of other, more important things in life, food has become an idol to me, and idols are sin. Even if you don't really enjoy cooking but are getting overwhelmed because it feels like you're always either creating dirty dishes or washing them, it's time to simplify! Being a slave to food any which way you look at it is no way to live. Keep things simple (there's nothing wrong with eating the same thing multiple times a week) and focus on savoring the creative process as well as the eating process. Chew slowly and enjoy what you're putting into your body. If you're scared to fellowship with friends because you don't want a shred of sugar to pass your purist lips...(don't take this wrong, but) get over it. There is balance on both sides of the equation! Learn to enjoy your food, but don't let it eat you instead of the other way around! Food is a gift God has given us to sustain us.



ingredients + baking tips

baking tips + substitutions **2**

allergy notes **3**

flours **4**

sweeteners **7**

other unique ingredients **8**

equipment **12**

how i write my recipes **13**

fuel types **15**

» BAKING TIPS + SUBSTITUTIONS «

» Overnight refrigeration immensely improves the taste and texture of most baked goods made with alternative flours and sweeteners.

» When storing spinach, lettuce, fresh herbs, berries, or other fresh ingredients that tend to spoil quickly, place paper towels in the container with the food to absorb moisture and keep the ingredients fresh longer.

» Store all baked goods in the fridge or freezer unless otherwise noted. These recipes don't have preservatives so they won't keep very long on the counter.

» Don't be afraid to think outside the box with recipes! I often use my baked oatmeal recipes as cake-like desserts in a Healthy Carbs setting. Some condiments, like Bri's Adobo Sauce (page 477), make great salad dressings!

» See a glaze or marinade that strikes your fancy in the Main Dishes section? Feel free to get creative and use it on other cuts or types of meat!

» Want to bake a recipe that calls for a microwave? Start with 350° and bake baked goods until a toothpick inserted into the center comes out cleanly or the center of the item springs back when lightly pressed (unless the recipe tells you to leave it on the slightly underdone side). Please note that some recipes that are formulated for a microwave will actually have a better texture in the microwave than in an oven, but in general you should be able to bake instead of microwave without much problem.

» Some protein powders clump if they get too hot. If using protein powder in a hot drink, add it to the hot liquid after adding all other ingredients, right before blending. If whisking protein powder into hot oatmeal, add the protein powder after cooking the oatmeal and give the oatmeal a minute to cool down before doing so. I use Swanson brand

whey protein powder and don't usually have issues with clumping, so I'm guessing some brands are more prone to the problem than others.

» Don't boil soups or gravies after adding dairy products: they'll curdle.

» Cooking rice or baking chicken breasts? Make extra and freeze leftovers to use in future recipes like soups and quesadillas or enchiladas.

» See a great sale on meat? Buy up at the lower price, divide the meat into portions perfect for your family, and freeze! Sometimes I get fresh chicken breasts on sale and freeze them individually on a sheet pan, then transfer to a bag for easy portioning for recipes later.

» When you make dirty dishes, rinse them and let them soak with hot water and soap to minimize cleanup later.

» You don't need to wash measuring cups that have only touched dry ingredients!

» You can usually double a recipe created for an 8"x8" pan and put it in a 9"x13" pan. Likewise you can halve a recipe for a 9"x13" pan and make it in an 8"x8" pan instead.

» Glucomannan and xanthan gum can generally be interchanged in recipes in the same amount. I do have slight preferences of one over the other in certain cases, so I always call for the one I prefer.

» When a recipe calls for glucomannan or xanthan gum, add it while whisking so it doesn't clump. If either is blended in a blender with other ingredients, add it to the blender last, right before blending.

» Sour cream and Greek yogurt can usually be substituted for each other in recipes unless otherwise noted. (Watch the fat content in Healthy Carbs and Low Carb/Low Fat recipes.) Yogurt is tangier in flavor but has more protein.

CAVEAT: In the following sections I'm going to share some information with you that will hopefully be helpful in your own personal recipe experimentation. However, substitutions are just that: experimentation. In this book I'm sharing recipes that I have tried and can stand behind, but if you make substitutions I'm holding you responsible for your own results because I can't test every eventuality. I can tell you where I would start experimenting in case you can't find an ingredient or have an allergy, but after that it's up to you! Flops are all part of the experimentation process...I should know! (You can find more specific tips on baking with alternative flours and sweeteners in the following pages.)

» ALLERGY NOTES «

I don't have any allergies myself, but now that I've blogged for several years I've become a lot more aware of just how many people have to deal with allergies every day. You have my sympathy: substituting for common ingredients isn't always easy! Most of my recipes are naturally gluten free if you're mindful of using non-contaminated ingredients, and I've tried to become conscious of providing more dairy-free recipes. Egg-free baking is one thing that I haven't had much success with in my limited attempts, but many desserts outside of the cake and muffin realm are naturally egg free so you should be able to find plenty of options. (And check out Bri's Best Fudgy Brownies (page 391) and Chocolate Chip Cookie Pie (page 389)!) Briana's Baking Mix (page 345) is nut free (provided that you are able to use coconut products), so most of you with tree nut allergies should be able to make use of that.

I wish I would be able to make every recipe work for everyone, but since that is humanly impossible, I've done my best to provide at least some options for everyone. I'll list some common ingredient swaps here, but keep in mind that my recipes are tested as written and these swaps may or may not work in every recipe. Substitution is experimentation. If you're unfamiliar with substituting ingredients (and even if you're an old pro!), I recommend checking out online forums to get practical suggestions from other people with allergies regarding substitutions they've found to be helpful and foolproof. I am by no means an allergy expert!

In general, you can...

» Use unsweetened carton almond milk, cashew milk, and coconut milk interchangeably. (Please note that carton coconut milk is different nutritionally from canned coconut milk!)

» Switch between whey protein powder and collagen (which is dairy free). Collagen is not quite as creamy as whey protein powder, but I personally prefer the taste (or lack thereof) of collagen over whey protein powder in a lot of applications.

» Use coconut oil instead of butter for a dairy-free option. Use refined coconut oil if you don't want a coconut flavor. You can even purchase butter-flavored coconut oil that is completely non-dairy! Coconut oil may not produce the same richness of flavor as butter, but then I haven't personally tried the butter-flavored coconut oil so that may be the ticket!

» Leave cheese off of things that are otherwise dairy-free as long as the cheese is not an integral part of the structure (for example, part of a dough). You will obviously lose the cheese flavor, but if the other flavors are great, you may have just created a winner of a dairy-free dinner. Feel free to add other toppings - like salsa - to things like casseroles to bring out more flavor in place of a cheese topping.

» FLOURS «

These may require a little more experimentation, but you could also try...

» Substituting unsweetened applesauce for Greek yogurt or sour cream for a dairy-free swap in Healthy Carbs baked goods. The end result may be wetter and more gooey.

» Substituting full-fat canned coconut milk or coconut cream in place of half and half or heavy cream for a dairy-free substitute.

» Natural sunflower butter in place of peanut butter for a nut-free option. (I've never personally done this, which is why I'm putting it in the more experimental category...haha. I've heard from allergy peeps who do this, though.)



first date weekend

» **ALMOND FLOUR** (HF): I use very little of this because of the price and the fact that many of my readers have nut allergies. I hoard my almond flour for use in crusts because it does a great job there. I recommend blanched almond flour for the best look and texture in recipes; it doesn't include the almond skins, which make the end product heavier and a little bit gritty. (As you can see in a picture or two in this book, I didn't always use a blanched version.)

» **BRIANA'S BAKING MIX** (LC/LF in limited amounts, HF in larger quantities): This is a recipe for a blend of alternative flours that I have created and use in many of my recipes for a better texture than you'd get if just using a single flour. You can find the recipe and information on how my baking mix compares to THM Baking Blend on page 345.

» **CHICKPEA FLOUR** (HC): Also known as "besan," this flour is typically found in Indian cuisine and has a strong flavor. It can be purchased from ethnic grocery stores and some more mainstream retailers. I didn't use it a lot in this book because I'm still finding out how it acts in recipes, but I hope to implement it more in the future.

» **COCONUT FLOUR** (HF): This flour is tricky to bake with because it soaks up a tremendous amount of liquid, but it's fairly budget friendly and readily available online and in many local stores. Coconut flour soaks up a lot more liquid than almond flour and golden flaxmeal and requires lots of "conditioners" such as eggs, sour cream, Greek yogurt, and liquids. If you know how to use it, it works great! If you don't, your baked goods will be crumbly and gritty. Substitutions can be especially tricky with this flour because of these variables. On its own coconut flour can have a faint coconut flavor, but in a blend with other flours (in my baking mix, for example), I don't usually notice any coconut flavor.

» SWEETENERS «

» **THM PURE STEVIA EXTRACT POWDER:** This sweetener is super concentrated and is measured in “doonks.” (A doonk is $\frac{1}{32}$ teaspoon.) Because it’s so concentrated, it’s the most economical sweetener in this list, and I use it where I can. Not everyone is a fan of the taste of stevia, especially when just coming off of sugar, but Trim Healthy Mama produces the best-tasting stevia I’ve found. It’s more “forgiving” than other brands if you accidentally use too much. Less is definitely more in the stevia department, and one doonk is perfect for sweetening a mug of hot tea. You can find the THM sweeteners in the Trim Healthy Mama online store and from a few other retailers.

» **THM SUPER SWEET BLEND:** This is my favorite all-purpose sweetener! To me it’s the perfect combination of economy and taste, and I use it for most of my baking.

» **THM GENTLE SWEET:** This sweetener is called “Gentle Sweet” for a reason; it has a lower concentration of stevia and is extra gentle on taste buds that are still coming off of sugar! This sweetener comes in powdered form and is still quite a bit more concentrated than sugar, though it’s less concentrated than pure stevia and Super Sweet Blend.

» **TRUVIA:** Truvia measures similar to THM Gentle Sweet and is usually available locally.

» **ERYTHRITOL:** I personally don’t care for the flavor and peculiar cooling sensation of erythritol, so I rarely use it. It measures similar to sugar and is often available locally as well as online.

» **XYLITOL:** Xylitol is great in that it tastes good, measures similar to sugar, and keeps ice cream from freezing hard, but it’s poisonous to dogs and doesn’t agree with everyone’s digestive tracts. Xylitol can cause gas and bloating, so start with small amounts and work your way up to see how it affects you and let your body adjust. Available locally and online.

» SWEETENER TIPS «

» Don’t use straight stevia to sweeten chocolate or coffee things; the bitter notes of both clash. A granulated sweetener such as THM Gentle Sweet, Truvia, or xylitol will work better in chocolate settings.

» I often use a combination of THM Pure Stevia Extract Powder and a granulated sweetener for cost efficiency and better flavor. “Layering” sweeteners is a great way to round out the sweetness profile of baked goods made with alternative sweeteners. Using various sweeteners in different layers makes for a more rounded sweetness that might be more palatable to you than just using one type of sweetener all the way through.

» Heat dissipates sweetness. Keep this in mind as you taste batters before baking. If you got too much sweetener in it, chances are after baking and refrigeration, it’ll be edible. If you under-sweetened, better luck next time.

» As a general rule, less is more when it comes to alternative sweeteners, especially pure stevia. Start with less than you think you’ll need, taste, and keep adding sweetener a little bit at a time, tasting as you go. Less concentrated sweeteners like xylitol and THM Gentle Sweet are more forgiving sweeteners for people who are getting used to alternative sweeteners.

» Feel free to try substituting your favorite low-glycemic sweeteners (to taste) for the sweeteners I have listed in recipes unless otherwise noted. Some recipes specifically call for a granulated sweetener for bulk or texture purposes. For help estimating how much sweetener you’ll need in place of what I have listed, check out the Trim Healthy Mama Sweetener Conversion Chart. (Google will help you find it.) I always recommend starting with less sweetener than you think you’ll need, then adding more to taste. There are even more sweetener options out there than what I’ve listed here (Swerve, Pyure, monk fruit extract), but I haven’t personally tried any outside of this list.

» Some people complain that my recipes aren't as sweet as the typical American diet. I say it's all a matter of perspective! I've heard from plenty of people who say they love that my recipes aren't as sweet, so I know I'm not the only one! My mom always took sugar out of regular ol' unhealthy recipes, and fine dining and European cuisine take a different approach to sweetness than most of

modern America. However, please feel free to add more sweetener to my recipes if that's what you're used to. Less concentrated sweeteners are often better for this than concentrated sweeteners like pure stevia and THM Super Sweet Blend. Tasting and adjusting is the best, most foolproof way to make sure you're happy with the sweetness of the end result.



» OTHER UNIQUE INGREDIENTS «

In general, product brands don't matter a whole lot to me, and I just try to find the best quality for the best price. Feel free to use whatever brands you prefer as long as they fit into the healthy eating lifestyle you follow. To save space, I'm using this section to cover a lot of info about the products I use instead of making notes about them in each recipe. Don't be frightened at the list - you don't need all of these ingredients! Some of them are only used in a few recipes and aren't things that I always keep on hand.

» **ANCHO CHILES:** These are dried poblano peppers commonly used in Mexican cuisine and can be found in the ethnic food section of your local grocery store.

» **BALSAMIC VINEGAR:** Look for a balsamic vinegar with no more than 2 grams of net carbs per serving.

» **BAOBAB POWDER:** A quick Google search will yield lots of reasons that baobab powder is the next greatest health supplement. I think it tastes

cool - rather puckery, like tart raspberries or lemon. Readily available from online health stores.

» **BOUILLON:** I recommend a high-quality bouillon like Better Than Bouillon. (I consider this to fall under the "2 grams of sugar or less per serving" rule for storebought condiments.)

» **CANNED COCONUT MILK** (full fat or light): Thai Kitchen brand from Walmart and other local grocery stores is a good quality option. Shake coconut milk before measuring: it separates. To my taste buds, coconut milk doesn't really add a coconut flavor to things like soups, curries, and rice pudding; but I can taste it a little more in ice cream. I use it in certain recipes for authenticity as well as non-dairy creaminess.

» **CHANA DAL:** Chana dal are dried split chickpeas; I purchased mine from a local Indian grocery store. Do not substitute lentils for chana dal, or vice versa, as they have different cooking times (in my experience, at least!).

» **CHIA SEEDS:** These are a natural thickener that I like to use in puddings, porridges, and egg-free baking. Available locally.

» HOW I WRITE MY RECIPES «

» I've tried to list ingredients in the order that I would use them. In some recipes, all the dry ingredients are listed first because they're whisked together before the wet ingredients are added. In recipes where wet and dry ingredients are added at the same time, I list them in order of measurement but list the dry ingredient first so you can use the same measuring utensil for both dry and wet.

» If a specific ingredient is mentioned (i.e. "salted butter"), there's a reason for that. If the recipe does not specify, assume that it doesn't matter. (For example, in a recipe that just calls for "butter" instead of specifying "salted butter," assume that you can use either salted or unsalted butter.) The same rule applies to gelatin. If a recipe calls for "plain gelatin," assume that any brand will work in the same amount.

» According to some people, I undersweeten things. If I have a suspicion that some people will want more sweetener in a recipe, I make a note of that beside the sweetener that I suggest you increase (generally the less concentrated sweetener). Always taste and add more sweetener if necessary whether I suggest it in the recipe or not. I don't want you to be disappointed! I usually only use xylitol when I want it for anti-freezing or caramelization effects, so substitute for it at your own risk.

» If a recipe calls for "2 cups spinach (chopped)," measure the spinach, then chop it. If the recipe calls for "2 cups chopped spinach," chop the spinach first, then measure it.

» "1 tablespoon THM Super Sweet Blend (powdered)" means to measure a tablespoon of the sweetener, then powder it in a coffee grinder or spice grinder before using it in the recipe.

» I used half-tablespoon measurements when already working in tablespoons instead of parceling out the measurement into tablespoons

+ teaspoons. Tupperware sells measuring spoons with half-tablespoon measurements, and I'm sure other companies do too. If you don't have a half-tablespoon measurement, eyeball it. Or measure out 1½ teaspoons.

» When a recipe gives a range for an ingredient, start with the smaller amount, then taste and add more if desired.

» I tend to use reduced-fat cream cheese and sour cream in my recipes (unless otherwise noted) to cut down on needless calories. Feel free to use full-fat ingredients in a Healthy Fats setting if you prefer. Reduced-fat cream cheese usually doesn't have to be softened before use, but you'll probably need to soften full-fat cream cheese if substituting it into a recipe.

» All spices and herbs are in their dried forms unless otherwise noted.

» I always use part-skim mozzarella.

» I use large eggs from Walmart.

» Use thawed, drained meats unless otherwise indicated.

» Unless otherwise noted, thaw and drain frozen fruit before adding it to recipes.

» "Chicken breasts (chunked)" just means that you should cut the chicken into bite-sized pieces.

» "Coined" means "cut into coin-shaped pieces." I used this description with things like carrots and sausage links.

» If I say "rinse and drain," that's what I mean. If I say "drain," just drain.

» I use a conventional oven in my recipes. If you have a convection oven, you may need to decrease the baking times.

» Unless otherwise noted, store all recipes in the fridge or freezer. These recipes don't have sugar for preservation, so even baked goods will spoil quickly at room temperature.

» Serving sizes are an inexact science and really depend on your own personal metabolism and activity level. Eat until you're satisfied, but don't stuff yourself. Obviously hungry boys usually eat more than little girls, so in calculating serving sizes I just tried to eyeball average portions to give you an idea of how many people a recipe will serve.

» There are a medley of meal sizes in this book because of my personal journey when writing it. If you have a large family, multiply the recipes as many times as you need to! If you have a small family and find some of the recipes too big, enjoy having leftovers, freeze some for later, or halve the recipes.

» Recipe creation is a science. Substitution is an experiment. It's welcome, and I do it all the time, but for best results, use the ingredients given.

trip to Dallas



*self-timer
engagement picture*



my kitchen



our living room

fuel types

HEALTHY FATS

recipes that focus on healthy fats and keep carbs to a minimum

FOUNDATION FATS

recipes that focus on basic fats that are easy for the body to digest, such as those from coconut oil, butter, eggs, and meat (This category omits ingredients such as cheese, heavy whipping cream, nuts, and cream cheese that are fine to use in a Healthy Fats setting but can sometimes be overdone.)

HEALTHY CARBS

recipes that focus on healthy carbs and keep fats to a minimum

LOW CARB/LOW FAT

recipes that don't contain significant sources of either carbs or fats

HEALTHY CARBS & HEALTHY FATS

recipes that use healthy carbs and healthy fats in the same recipe (Recipes in this category are great for people who don't need to lose weight, but if you'd like to lose a few pounds, keep these recipes for special occasions.)

Note: On occasion I've abbreviated fuel types to save space.



PEANUT BUTTER,
BANANA &
CHOCOLATE STUFFED
FRENCH TOAST
PG 34





breakfast

apple cinnamon waffle **44**
apple pie baked oatmeal **19**
banana bread baked oatmeal **21**
baobab burst muesli **31**
biscuity sour cream & chive egg muffins **51**
breakfast corn pudding **57**
cheater "sourdough" waffles **38**
cherry pie baked oatmeal **20**
chocolate cranberry almond porridge **55**
chocolate waffles for two **40**
chunky monkey chia pudding **56**
cornbread waffle **45**
cranberry orange baked oatmeal muffins **27**
creamy pb&j oatmeal **29**
crispy protein waffle **43**
easy chocolate oatmeal **28**
easy make-ahead breakfast quiche **50**
four vanilla waffles **37**
french toast casserole **36**
french toast for one **33**
ginger peach oatmeal cake **23**
hot chia porridge **54**
maple & "brown sugar"
 baked oatmeal squares **24**
mocha chip baked oatmeal **25**
mocha waffle **46**
oat bran blueberry pancakes **48**
okra & fried egg skillet **52**
overnight oatmeal survival packets **30**
pb&j muesli **32**
pb&j protein waffle **42**
peanut butter, banana & chocolate
 stuffed french toast **34**
peanut butter granola **47**
pineapple rightside-up baked oatmeal **22**
pumpkin chip baked oatmeal **26**
pumpkin stuffed french toast **35**
sausage & okra breakfast **53**
strawberry shortcake waffle **41**



apple pie baked oatmeal

HEALTHY CARBS | SERVES 4

2 cups old-fashioned oats
1 ¼ cups unsweetened almond milk
¾ cup egg whites
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1 teaspoon each maple, vanilla extract
½ teaspoon baking powder
½ teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon THM Pure Stevia Extract Powder
⅛ teaspoon ground cloves

2 med. unpeeled apples (grated)
¼ cup xylitol
1 tablespoon lemon juice
¼ teaspoon cinnamon

Mix the oatmeal ingredients together and pour into a greased 8"x8" pan. Spread out evenly.

Mix the grated apple, xylitol, lemon juice, and cinnamon together. Spread on top of the oatmeal layer, using your fingers to gently distribute it if necessary so the apple doesn't become completely submerged in the excess oatmeal liquid. (This liquid will soak into the oats overnight, don't worry.)

Refrigerate the unbaked oatmeal overnight. In the morning, bake at 350° for 40-45 minutes, let cool for a few minutes to solidify before cutting, then enjoy! Store leftovers in refrigerator and enjoy cold or reheat.

These baked oatmeal recipes have a dense cake-like texture because the batter is refrigerated overnight before baking. I don't recommend skipping that step, but I know people who have and still liked them.... I love to make a batch or two of baked oatmeal, cut it into servings, and keep it in the fridge for a quick breakfast, snack, or dessert. These baked oatmeal recipes contain protein on their own so you don't need to add anything to complete your meal or snack, but if you want to add more protein in the form of low-fat cottage cheese or Greek yogurt to keep you full longer, be my guest!

"There, too," remarked Alleyne,
as they rode on again, "that which
seems to the eye to be dead is still
FULL OF THE SAP OF LIFE,
even as the vines were. Thus God
hath written Himself and His laws
very broadly on all that is around
us, if our poor dull eyes and duller
souls could but read what He hath
set before us."

SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE
THE WHITE COMPANY

cherry pie baked oatmeal

HEALTHY CARBS | SERVES 8

- 4 cups old-fashioned oats
- 2 cups water
- 1 cup unsweetened applesauce
- 1 cup egg whites
- 2 teaspoons cinnamon
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon molasses
- $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon THM Pure Stevia Extract Powder
- 1 (26 oz.) can tart cherries canned
in water (drained)
- 1½ teaspoons THM Super Sweet Blend

Mix the first section of ingredients together and refrigerate overnight. (If you want the oatmeal to be sweeter, add some THM Super Sweet Blend or other granulated sweetener in addition to the stevia used. I liked it as written.)

The next day, pour the oatmeal batter into a greased 9"x13" pan and spread it out evenly.

Toss the cherries with the Super Sweet Blend. Make a well in the center of each of 8 pieces in the oatmeal batter in the pan; divide the cherries among the holes. Push the cherries down into the oatmeal batter a bit. Bake the oatmeal at 350° for 45 minutes or until it is moist but not mushy in the center.

Enjoy the baked oatmeal warm or cold. I like to eat it with unsweetened almond milk and some extra Super Sweet Blend on top.



I love the taste of tart cherries and was delighted to find some at a discount grocery store in Ohio when I was working there one summer. If you can't find tart cherries in your area, I've given substitution suggestions below.

note

If you can't find canned tart cherries, you could try using frozen sweet cherries or flavorful berries such as blueberries, blackberries, or raspberries. The can of cherries I used yielded about 2½ cups of cherries. Thaw and drain frozen fruit before using in this recipe.

banana bread baked oatmeal

HEALTHY CARBS | SERVES 8

4 cups old-fashioned oats
2 cups unsweetened almond milk
1 cup unsweetened applesauce
1 cup egg whites
2 med. bananas (mashed)
2 teaspoons cinnamon
2 teaspoons banana extract
1 teaspoon baking powder
1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
¼ teaspoon THM Pure Stevia Extract Powder
¼ teaspoon ground cloves

Chopped pecans

Sugar-free chocolate chips (for topping)



Mix the first section of ingredients together and refrigerate overnight. The next day, spread the batter into a greased 9"x13" pan, top with a sprinkling of chopped pecans and sugar-free chocolate chips (just a garnish amount so you don't overdo the fats), and bake at 350° for 40 minutes. This baked oatmeal is good warm or cold, but the banana bread flavors are strongest when warm.

note

If you want the baked oatmeal to be sweeter, add a few teaspoons of THM Super Sweet Blend. Neither Ryan nor I like our food to be too sweet, and the chocolate chips add a few pops of sweetness, so this amount of stevia was the perfect sweetness for us.



Nor let his eye see sin, but through my tears.

PHINEAS FLETCHER - "DROP, DROP, SLOW TEARS"

ADOBO PORK TACOS
PG 86





main dishes

main dishes

CASSEROLES

beef enchiladas with
homemade enchilada sauce **68**
breakfast burritos **70**
enchiladas verdes **69**
fiesta casserole **72**
greek chicken bake **80**
hawaiian pizza bake **74**
italian meatball casserole **64**
lasagna cabbage rolls or enchiladas **76**
loaded cornbread casserole **73**
sausage patty quiche **71**
zucchini lasagna **77**

CURRIES

basic-ally delicious slow cooker curry **153**
bri's easy kettle curry **132**
chana dal & greens **134**
chickpea curry over caulitoees **124**
nutty slow cooker curry **156**
sweet pepper shrimp curry **101**
sweet potato chana dal curry **154**
thai curry **133**

MARINADES

asian grilled chicken **164**
cilantro & lime marinated chicken **169**
easy yogurt marinated chicken **165**
pineapple marinated chicken **163**
ranch marinated chicken **166**
saucy marinated chicken **167**
simple "brown sugar" grilled salmon **161**
simple soy salmon **162**

OVEN DISHES

adobo pork tacos **86**
barbacoa pork tacos **84**
bri's baked barbecue ribs **90**
"brown sugar" glazed ham **89**
crispy chicken thighs **97**
easy saucy meatballs **66**
easy thai turkey meatballs **67**
garlic herb broasted drumsticks **98**
glazed pork steaks **92**
italian chicken bake **79**
italian salmon bake **81**
japanese chicken **106**
lasagna stuffed spaghetti squash **75**
mango chutney chicken **95**
pizza boats **78**
roast beef dinner **82**
roast beef melts **83**
sausage packets **93**
sheet pan chicken fajitas **94**
southwestern meatloaf **65**
spiced baked tilapia **99**
strawberry balsamic glazed pork **87**
teriyaki baked chicken over rice **96**

SALADS

asian chicken salad **173**
burrito bowls **169**
chicken caesar salad **170**
fajita salads **172**
greek salads with quick tzatziki dressing **171**
strawberry, ham & swiss salad **174**



SINGLE SERVE

cornbread in a bowl + beans **177**
creamy sweet potato bisque **150**
kate's weird pasta veggie bowl **176**
leftover turkey fried wrap **179**
quinoa lunch bowl **175**
strawberry, ham & swiss quesadilla **178**
strawberry, ham & swiss salad **174**

SLOW COOKER

basic-ally delicious slow cooker curry **153**
black bean stew **143**
black beans (over cilantro lime rice) **157**
black eyed pea soup **148**
brown gravy beef stew **151**
bulgogi-flavored beef & broccoli **158**
easy cheesy fiesta chowder **144**
hunter's venison stew over rice **152**
nutty slow cooker curry **156**
philly cheesesteak beef roast **159**
slow cooker salsa verde chicken **160**
sweet potato chana dal curry **154**

SOUPS + STEWS

black bean stew **143**
black eyed pea soup **148**
brown gravy beef stew **151**
colorful chicken chili **145**
creamy broccoli bacon chowder **138**
creamy sweet potato bisque **150**
easy cheesy fiesta chowder **144**
easy southwest soup **142**
gumbo **126**

ham & "potato" chowder **139**
happy harvest soup **147**
hearty barbecue soup **146**
hunter's venison stew over rice **152**
lasagna soup **149**
lentil, carrot & roasted red pepper soup **136**
mom's chicken soup **137**
springy cabbage & sausage soup **141**
turkey pot pie chowder **140**

STOVETOP + SKILLET DINNERS

cajun sausage, red beans & rice skillet **120**
chicken in creamy dill sauce **108**
colorful sweet & sour chicken stir-fry **110**
creamy chicken gravy **107**
creamy eggs & spinach **122**
easy mixed rice & beans **121**
ground beef stroganoff **113**
jambalaya **130**
kale, mushroom & ham skillet **119**
korean barbecue pan-fried chickpeas **123**
lemon butter fried tilapia **100**
one pot pineapple chicken & rice **131**
pan-fried chicken strips **105**
pan-fried mushroom chicken **104**
philly cheesesteak skillet **111**
shrimp & cheddar "grits" **103**
skillet sausage & cornbread supper **116**
skillet yumzetti **117**
spaghetti three ways **115**
sweet onion teriyaki stir-fry **109**
western burgers **112**
zucchini fritter pizzas **118**

proteins

BEEF

beef enchiladas with
homemade enchilada sauce **68**
brown gravy beef stew **151**
bulgogi-flavored beef & broccoli **158**
easy saucy meatballs **66**
fiesta casserole **72**
ground beef stroganoff **113**
happy harvest soup **147**
italian meatball casserole **64**
lasagna cabbage rolls or enchiladas **76**
loaded cornbread casserole **73**
philly cheesesteak beef roast **159**
philly cheesesteak skillet **111**
pizza boats **78**
roast beef dinner **82**
roast beef melts **83**
southwestern meatloaf **65**
spaghetti three ways **115**
western burgers **112**
zucchini lasagna **77**

CHICKEN

asian chicken salad **173**
asian grilled chicken **164**
basic-ally delicious slow cooker curry **153**
bri's easy kettle curry **132**
burrito bowls **169**
chicken caesar salad **170**
chicken in creamy dill sauce **108**
cilantro & lime marinated chicken **169**

colorful chicken chili **145**
colorful sweet & sour chicken stir-fry **110**
creamy chicken gravy **107**
crispy chicken thighs **97**
easy cheesy fiesta chowder **144**
easy yogurt marinated chicken **165**
enchiladas verdes **69**
fajita salads **172**
garlic herb broasted drumsticks **98**
greek chicken bake **80**
greek salads with quick tzatziki dressing **171**
gumbo **126**
hearty barbecue soup **146**
italian chicken bake **79**
japanese chicken **106**
kate's weird pasta veggie bowl **176**
mango chutney chicken **95**
mom's chicken soup **137**
nutty slow cooker curry **156**
one pot pineapple chicken & rice **131**
pan-fried chicken strips **105**
pan-fried mushroom chicken **104**
pineapple marinated chicken **163**
quinoa lunch bowl **175**
ranch marinated chicken **166**
saucy marinated chicken **167**
sheet pan chicken fajitas **94**
slow cooker salsa verde chicken **160**
sweet onion teriyaki stir-fry **109**
teriyaki baked chicken over rice **96**
thai curry **133**



MEATLESS

black bean stew **143**
black beans (over cilantro lime rice) **157**
black eyed pea soup **148**
chana dal & greens **134**
chickpea curry over caulitoes **124**
cornbread in a bowl + beans **177**
creamy eggs & spinach **122**
creamy sweet potato bisque **150**
easy mixed rice & beans **121**
easy southwest soup **142**
korean barbecue pan-fried chickpeas **123**
lentil, carrot & roasted red pepper soup **136**
sweet potato chana dal curry **154**

PORK

adobo pork tacos **86**
barbacoa pork tacos **84**
breakfast burritos **70**
bri's baked barbecue ribs **90**
"brown sugar" glazed ham **89**
creamy broccoli bacon chowder **138**
glazed pork steaks **92**
gumbo **126**
ham & "potato" chowder **139**
happy harvest soup **147**
hawaiian pizza bake **74**
kale, mushroom & ham skillet **119**
kate's weird pasta veggie bowl **176**
lasagna soup **149**
lasagna stuffed spaghetti squash **75**
pizza boats **78**
sausage packets **93**
sausage patty quiche **71**

skillet sausage & cornbread supper **116**
skillet yumzetti **117**
springy cabbage & sausage soup **141**
strawberry balsamic glazed pork **87**
strawberry, ham & swiss quesadilla **178**
strawberry, ham & swiss salad **174**
zucchini fritter pizzas **118**
zucchini lasagna **77**

SEAFOOD

italian salmon bake **81**
jambalaya **130**
lemon butter fried tilapia **100**
shrimp & cheddar "grits" **103**
simple "brown sugar" grilled salmon **161**
simple soy salmon **162**
spiced baked tilapia **99**
sweet pepper shrimp curry **101**

TURKEY

cajun sausage, red beans & rice skillet **120**
easy thai turkey meatballs **67**
jambalaya **130**
leftover turkey fried wrap **179**
loaded cornbread casserole **73**
sausage packets **93**
spaghetti three ways **115**
springy cabbage & sausage soup **141**
turkey pot pie chowder **140**
zucchini fritter pizzas **118**

VENISON

hunter's venison stew over rice **152**
loaded cornbread casserole **73**
spaghetti three ways **115**

italian meatball casserole

HEALTHY FATS | SERVES 14-16

MEATBALLS

- 2½ - 3 lb. ground beef
- 1 cup unsweetened almond milk
- ½ cup old-fashioned oats
- ½ cup grated Parmesan cheese
(the green can kind)
- 2 eggs
- 1 tablespoon each dried minced onion,
Italian seasoning
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 1 teaspoon each oregano, sage, black pepper
- 1 (24 oz.) jar no-sugar-added pasta sauce
- Shredded mozzarella cheese

Knead the meatball ingredients together (I use my hands) until thoroughly mixed. Form into golf-ball-sized meatballs and place into 2 greased 9"x13" pans.

Pour the pasta sauce over the meatballs and top with as much cheese as you like. Bake (uncovered) at 350° for 30 minutes or until done.

note

- This amount of oats adds less than 1 gram of net carbs per meatball.
- All pasta/pizza/spaghetti sauce will have sugar listed in the nutritional info because tomatoes contain natural sugars, but you need to look for a sauce that has no added sugar in the ingredients. We buy Priano brand from Aldi.



This casserole doesn't take many ingredients and can be thrown together in a hurry! Yes, it is very possible to make meatballs in a hurry. Simply use your hands to pinch off the meatball mixture in golf-ball-sized blobs and plop them in a dish. You can take the time to roll them nice and pretty if you so desire, but I usually omit that step. They get covered with sauce and cheese anyway! Since this recipe makes two 9"x13" pans of meatballs, you'll probably have leftovers for another meal. Score! This would also be a good recipe to use if you're taking supper over to someone else and want to make enough for your family and their family combined without making two separate dinners.

When I served this to my family, I paired it with cabbage sautéed in butter and garlic salt, salad, and some corn for the children.

southwestern meatloaf

HEALTHY FATS | SERVES 8-10

MEATLOAF

1 cup salsa of choice
½ cup grated Parmesan cheese
(the green can kind)
2 eggs
2 tablespoons sriracha
2½ teaspoons Tony Chachere's
Creole Seasoning
Dime-sized bunch fresh cilantro (chopped)
2½ lb. ground beef

TOPPING

1 lg. onion (sliced)
1 tablespoon salted butter
1 cup shredded cheddar cheese

Whisk all the meatloaf ingredients (except the ground beef) together. Add the ground beef and mix well. (I use my hands for this.) Press the meatloaf mixture into a greased 9"x13" baking pan, then use your hand to make a slight trough around the outside of the meatloaf for the grease to drain off. (Basically just make sure the meatloaf doesn't go all the way to the sides of the pan.)

Sauté the sliced onion in the butter until nice and brown, then stir in the cheese and spread the onion/cheese mixture over the top of the meatloaf.

Bake the meatloaf (uncovered) at 350° for 50-60 minutes or until done all the way through. (We bake it for a full hour because



we like it more on the crispy side.) I like to slice and serve the meatloaf on a separate plate to get it out of the grease.

This meatloaf is so good. The family liked it, I liked it, and I'm pretty sure you're going to like it too. It's worth making for the topping alone. That fried onion + cheese concept is definitely getting used in future recipes....

strawberry, ham & swiss quesadilla

HEALTHY FATS | SERVES 1

1 low-carb tortilla
Mayonnaise
Horseradish spread
Sliced ham
Sliced Swiss cheese
Spinach
Sliced strawberries
Refined coconut oil (for frying)

Spread some mayo and horseradish spread onto a low-carb tortilla. On one half of the tortilla, layer some sliced ham, sliced Swiss cheese, fresh spinach, and a few strawberry slices. Fold the tortilla over onto itself to create a quesadilla and fry on both sides in hot coconut oil until crispy.



leftover turkey fried wrap

HEALTHY FATS | SERVES 1

1 low-carb tortilla
Mayonnaise
Horseradish spread
Yellow mustard
Garlic herb seasoning
Leftover turkey
Cheese of choice
Fresh spinach
Refined coconut oil (for frying)

GRAVY

Turkey broth
Xanthan gum
Salt & pepper


Spread mayo, horseradish, and mustard onto half of the tortilla. Sprinkle with the garlic herb seasoning. Top with turkey pieces, cheese, and fresh spinach. Fold the tortilla over onto itself. Fry it on both sides in hot coconut oil until golden brown. You can enjoy right away or make some gravy to go on top.

For the gravy, heat some turkey broth in a pan. (I just use the same pan that I used to fry the wrap.) Sprinkle in a very small amount of xanthan gum while whisking (so the xanthan gum doesn't clump). Add enough xanthan gum to thicken the gravy to your liking, season with salt and pepper, then pour the gravy over the fried wrap and enjoy!



MASHED SWEET
POTATOES • PG 187





side dishes

- adobo baked beans **212**
- baked skillet dressing **214**
- barbecue baked bean medley **211**
- barbecue rice **204**
- buttery garlic brussels sprouts **190**
- cabbage, carrot & onion stir-fry **194**
- cheesy party "potatoes" **217**
- cilantro lime rice **205**
- comforting slow cooker lentils **213**
- creamy roasted eggplant **200**
- crunchy rice **208**
- fancy sautéed greens **198**
- garlic, butter & herb roasted
spaghetti squash **183**
- garlic butter mushrooms **195**
- garlic butter zoodles **183**
- maple butter roasted squash **185**
- mashed sweet potatoes **187**
- mexican fried rice **209**
- roasted brussels sprouts **190**
- roasted butternut squash **184**
- roasted carrots **189**
- roasted okra **201**
- roasted sweet potatoes three ways **186**
- roasted teriyaki broccoli **202**
- sautéed cabbage **193**
- seasoned quinoa **203**
- slow-cooked ham & collards **199**
- slow cooker pinto beans **210**
- sour cream & chive smashed caulitoes **196**
- southwest cauliflower **197**
- special roasted brussels sprouts **191**
- special sautéed cabbage **193**
- steamed dilly carrots **188**
- sunshine rice **206**
- sweet & sour rice **207**



garlic butter zoodles

.....
LOW CARB / LOW FAT | SERVES 4
.....

1 tablespoon butter
2 med. zucchini (spiralized)
Garlic powder, salt, black pepper (to taste)

Sauté the spiralized zucchini in the butter in a skillet just until *al dente*. Do not overcook or the zoodles will be mushy! Season with garlic powder, salt, and pepper, then serve. (Go easy on the salt if serving the zoodles with a salty gravy, but don't skimp on the garlic powder!)

Pictured with Ground Beef Stroganoff on page 113

note

I've marked this as a Low Carb/Low Fat recipe because the amount of butter used comes to less than a teaspoon per serving, but if you intend to eat more than one-fourth of the recipe (which is totally fine!) or add other fats to your meal, decrease the butter or keep the zoodles to a Healthy Fats setting.

garlic, butter & herb roasted spaghetti squash

.....
FOUNDATION FATS | SERVES 4-6
.....

1 (3 lb.) spaghetti squash
2 tablespoons butter (melted)
Dill weed, garlic powder, Italian seasoning,
salt, black pepper (to taste)

Cut the squash in half and place cut side down in a covered baking dish. Bake at 350° until mostly tender (60-70 minutes). Remove the squash from the oven and scoop out the seeds. Place in the baking pan cut side up.

Brush the top of the squash with the melted butter and season generously with dill weed, garlic powder, Italian seasoning, salt, and pepper. (Don't skimp on the garlic!) Bake the squash (uncovered) at 350° until fork tender (about 30 minutes).

This recipe produces an *al dente* squash that "noodles" well with a fork. Enjoy as a side dish or serve spaghetti sauce over it!

roasted butternut squash

HEALTHY CARBS

DIRECTIONS: Slice a butternut squash lengthwise and place on a cookie sheet with the cut sides up. Roast uncovered at 450° for 1 hour and 30 minutes or until tender and caramelized. Scoop out the seeds after baking. Add sweet or savory toppings of your choice!

Ryan and I went to a cabin in the mountains for a brief honeymoon, and we did our own cooking while we were there. While poking around Walmart looking for some easy meal ingredients, we grabbed a butternut squash which I roasted in the oven back at the cabin. Not having any of my usual baking pans or tinfoil, I just roasted it uncovered on a baking sheet. It took awhile to get soft, but I loved the caramelized result of a squash exposed to high

heat. It's so rich and nutty and flavorful; I eat it like candy! Even the skin and crispy roasted seeds are good. Eat this butternut squash on its own as a side dish, or use it as a vehicle for some of the Healthy Carbs curries in this book.

Butternut squash is one of the starchier squashes, so keep it to a half cup serving in a Healthy Fats or Low Carb/Low Fat setting. You can have all you want (with a teaspoon of butter) in a Healthy Carbs meal! On our honeymoon, I pan-fried leftover roasted squash with butter, cinnamon, and salt and it was delicious. Here at home, I'd add some THM Super Sweet Blend. With the amounts of squash and butter I used, I probably created a glorious combination of carbs and fats, but was I worried about that on my honeymoon? Nope.



maple butter roasted squash

HEALTHY FATS | SERVES 4-5

1 (2 lb.) acorn or spaghetti squash

2 tablespoons salted butter (melted)

1 teaspoon THM Super Sweet Blend

1 teaspoon maple extract

½ teaspoon cinnamon

¼ teaspoon each salt, black pepper

Cut the squash in half and place cut side down in a covered baking dish. Bake at 350° until mostly tender; I baked my acorn squash for 70 minutes, but check at 40 minutes in case yours gets done quicker. Remove the squash from the oven and scoop out the seeds. Place in the baking pan cut side up.

Whisk the second set of ingredients together. Brush over the top of the squash, then bake the squash (uncovered) at 350° until fork tender (about 30 minutes).

If you're feeling fancy, you can serve this squash with some chopped pecans and a drizzle of sugar-free syrup. Feel free to add more salt or Super Sweet Blend to your portion at the table.



note

If using acorn squash, keep your serving to half a cup unless you're not concerned about weight loss or just want a special treat. You don't have to be as careful with spaghetti squash, since it's considered a non-starchy.



"One thousand aves and as many credos, said standing with arms outstretched before the shrine of the Virgin, may help thee to remember that the Creator hath given us two ears and but one mouth, as a token that there is twice the work for the one as for the other." SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE - *THE WHITE COMPANY*





salads

- apple salad **238**
- asian slaw & lettuce wraps **233**
- cantaloupe raita **229**
- classic egg salad **234**
- cucumber raita **228**
- dilly ham salad **235**
- fancy cherry gello goblets **241**
- faux tabbouleh **230**
- festive broccoli salad **221**
- mexican chicken salad **232**
- mexican coleslaw **227**
- pasta salad **225**
- picnic radishto salad **224**
- ranch cucumber salad **222**
- raspberry & grated apple gello salad **239**
- sophisticated coleslaw **226**
- sparkling cherry berry gello salad **240**
- strawberry & balsamic chicken salad **231**
- three bean salad **223**
- yogurt fruit salad **237**
- yummy salmon dip salad **236**



festive broccoli salad

HEALTHY FATS | SERVES 6-8

6 cups chopped fresh broccoli florets
1 cup chopped cranberries
 $\frac{2}{3}$ cup chopped pecans
1 sm. onion (chopped)
 $\frac{2}{3}$ cup mayonnaise
 $\frac{2}{3}$ cup sour cream
2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
2 teaspoons THM Super Sweet Blend
1 teaspoon salt
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon each garlic powder, black pepper

Mix the ingredients together and serve! The textures are best the day of making it, but it keeps for a few days in the fridge. (It just gets softer.)

The cranberries give this salad a pinkish hue, hence the name. I love the unique combination of flavors – and the crunch of the pecans!

For wherein shall it be known here
that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight?
is it not in that thou goest with us? So shall we be
separated, I and thy people, from all the people that
are upon the face of the earth. And the Lord said unto
Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken:
FOR THOU HAST FOUND GRACE IN MY
SIGHT, AND I KNOW THEE BY NAME.
EXODUS 33:16-17



ranch cucumber salad

HEALTHY FATS | SERVES 2-3

3 cups sliced cucumber

¼ cup mayonnaise

½ teaspoon parsley flakes

¼ teaspoon each dill weed, onion powder,
salt, black pepper

Mix the ingredients together. Taste and add more salt if needed. If you want to get fancy, add some sliced onion and chopped tomatoes. This salad is best fresh.

This is my new favorite cucumber salad. The end.

note

You could try using reduced-fat sour cream in place of the mayonnaise for a LC/LF version, but I'm partial to mayo.



three bean salad

HEALTHY CARBS | SERVES 6

1 (15.5 oz.) can cannellini beans
1 (15 oz.) can dark red kidney beans
1 (14.5 oz.) can cut green beans

1 med. onion (sliced)
1 cup water
¾ cup apple cider vinegar
¼ cup lime juice
1 tablespoon THM Super Sweet Blend
1¼ teaspoons salt
1 teaspoon each garlic powder, black pepper

Rinse and drain the beans. Set aside.

In a saucepan, bring the second set of ingredients to a boil. (I used a 2-quart saucepan so the liquid nearly covered the

beans.) Cook until the onion starts to get translucent (but retains its crunch). Add the beans and stir once. Bring to a boil again, then cover, remove from the heat, and steep 10 minutes. Transfer to a new container to stop the cooking process. You don't want to overcook or stir too much so the beans stay firm. Chill for several hours or overnight before serving to let the sweetness mellow out. Serve with a slotted spoon so people don't end up with a plateful of pickling liquid. This bean salad keeps well in the fridge for a few days.

This bean salad is the perfect picnic food! It reminds me of a chow-chow relish and tastes like a sweet and sour pickle.



CHOCOLATE
DREAMY • PG 261





shakes + drinks

- banana milk **258**
- banana & peanut butter shake **248**
- chocolate-covered cranberry superfood shake **263**
- chocolate dreamy **261**
- classic strawberry milkshake **245**
- cookie dough shake **247**
- cranberry nog **286**
- cranberry orange superfood shake **264**
- cranberry wassail **285**
- dreamy dairy-free chocolate shake **266**
- drinkable chocolate custard **289**
- five ingredient yogurt smoothie **250**
- grab & go iced coffee **271**
- grapefruit slushie **256**
- ice creamed coffee **270**
- mango strawberry kefir smoothie **254**
- melty blueberry ice cream shake **246**
- mocha frappé **273**
- orange smoothie **251**
- pb&j frappé **275**
- pb&j kefir smoothie **255**
- peach slushie **257**
- peach smoothie **252**
- peanut butter cookie nog **287**
- peppermint chip frappé **276**
- pumpkin pie milkshake **269**
- ryan's spinach smoothie **249**
- simple mixed berry smoothie **253**
- s'mores frappé **274**
- strawberry dreamy **262**
- strawberry milk **259**
- superfood breakfast smoothie **265**
- surprise birthday cake shake **268**
- the velvety golden detox **284**
- vanilla frappé **272**
- velvety autumn sip **282**
- velvety cappuccino **278**
- velvety drinkable custard **279**
- velvety earl grey **277**
- velvety ginger cookie sip **281**
- velvety maple latte **280**
- velvety peppermint sip **283**

some tips

FOR SUCCESS

These drinks and shakes are meant to be enjoyed with a meal or snack or on their own as a meal or snack - not sipped on throughout the day.

Some of these recipes call for crushed ice, which I like to use because it's easier on a blender and can be measured accurately. After I got married and moved, I didn't have an ice maker anymore, so I used ice cubes frozen in trays. If you don't have a way to make crushed ice, just eyeball the measurement with your ice cubes and adjust the amount to make the consistency you like.

I often use glucomannan to add a thick creaminess to my shakes. It promotes stable blood sugar and keeps me full longer. Brands vary in strength, so if you notice a funny texture from the glucomannan, decrease the amount and see if that helps. Glucomannan will clump upon contact with liquid, so I always add it right before blending so it doesn't have time to clump.

I like to blend shakes until they expand and get lighter in color. Protein powder, collagen, and glucomannan get creamier as they're blended, so blending longer gives you a creamier result (which is especially helpful in dairy-free recipes and recipes with okra or cauliflower). A high-powered blender like a Vitamix will do the best job with these recipes and will really upgrade your shake game!

classic strawberry milkshake

HEALTHY FATS | SERVES 1

1 cup frozen strawberries
1 cup crushed ice
1 cup unsweetened almond milk
⅓ cup cottage cheese
3 tablespoons heavy whipping cream
2 tablespoons collagen
⅛ teaspoon THM Pure Stevia Extract Powder
Dash vanilla extract
¼ teaspoon glucomannan

Blend all the ingredients together until completely smooth. Enjoy!

You can top this with a squirt of Reddi-wip or a dab of homemade sweetened whipped cream if you like.

The cream in this recipe makes it more like a traditional milkshake, and since that's the only significant source of fats, the shake is still decently light, especially if this is your meal. The recipe makes quite a large milkshake (close to a quart), so if you're having it as dessert after a meal you may need to share with someone or cut the recipe in half.



note

Using low-fat cottage cheese and omitting the cream, this would be a Low Carb/Low Fat shake. (Stick with fat-free Reddi-wip for the top.)



Drink waters out of thine own cistern, and running waters
out of thine own well. Let them be only thine own, and not
strangers' with thee. Let thy fountain be blessed: and
rejoice with the wife of thy youth. PROVERBS 5:15, 17-18

melty blueberry ice cream shake

HEALTHY CARBS | SERVES 1

1 cup crushed ice
1 cup unsweetened almond milk
½ cup frozen blueberries
½ med. banana
⅓ cup low-fat cottage cheese
2 tablespoons whey protein powder
¼ teaspoon glucomannan
2-3 doonks THM Pure Stevia Extract Powder

Blend the ingredients together until smooth.

The texture of this milkshake is like melty ice cream, hence the name. I used whey protein instead of collagen in this one for a creamier texture.



Let me never fall into the vulgar mistake
of dreaming that I am persecuted
whenever I am contradicted.

RALPH WALDO EMERSON

cookie dough shake

LOW CARB / LOW FAT | SERVES 1

12 ice cubes
½ cup low-fat cottage cheese
½ cup unsweetened almond milk
¼ cup defatted peanut flour
¼ cup water
2-3 teaspoons THM Super Sweet Blend
(or more, to taste)
¼ teaspoon baking powder
⅓ teaspoon salt
Dash each vanilla, butter extracts
½ teaspoon glucomannan

Blend the ingredients together until smooth.
Enjoy!

If you don't like funky veggies in your shakes and just want something "normal," this is for you! I didn't add any protein powder because the cottage cheese and peanut flour already offer a whopping 30 grams of protein between them. A sprinkling of sugar-free chocolate chips would be great in this shake. (They would make it a very light Healthy Fats treat.)



And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.

EXODUS 14:13-14

LIGHT CHOCOLATE
ICE CREAM • PG 311



A decorative silver pin is visible in the top left corner. Below it, a pink rose with green leaves is in focus on a white surface. The background is a soft, out-of-focus white.

ice cream + frozen desserts

angelic birthday cake ice cream **309**
angelic peanut butter cup ice cream **308**
basic vanilla scoopable ice cream **297**
brianafinger ice cream **302**
butter pecan frozen custard **301**
café au lait ice cream **312**
candy cane ice cream **304**
chocolate-covered peanut butter
ice cream bars **337**
creamy black cherry soft serve **316**
creamy red raspberry sherbet **313**
extreme chocolate ice cream **298**
foundational frozen custard **310**
frozen key lime pie **332**
frozen pumpkin pie **334**
fruit slush **335**
ice cream fried taco for one **327**
instant frozen blueberry pudding **325**
instant frozen chocolate pudding **324**
instant frozen lemon pudding **326**
light chocolate ice cream **311**
mango soft serve for one **321**
mochasicles **339**
no-bake cookie ice cream **303**
peach ice cream **317**
peanut butter cookie doughsicles **338**
pecan pie ice cream **307**
peppermint brownie ice cream cake **328**
peppermint ice cream sandwiches **330**
single-serve mint chocolate chip ice cream **323**
single-serve mocha chip frozen yogurt **319**
single-serve pb&j soft serve **320**
single-serve peach frozen yogurt **318**
single-serve peanut butter ice cream **322**
strawberry cardamom superfood ice cream **314**
strawberry delight popsicles **340**
strawberry frozen kefir **315**
strawberry kiwi popsicles **341**

ice cream tips



Ice cream is one of the easiest healthy desserts to make (in my unbiased opinion)! Blend some stuff in a blender, pour it into an ice cream churn, eat. For this cookbook I experimented with many different ways of doing ice cream varying the ingredients, calorie load, and time commitment, so there should be a recipe for everyone!

» THE EQUIPMENT «

» **BLENDER:** I use a blender to blend all my ice cream ingredients together until smooth before pouring them into the ice cream maker.

» **IMMERSION BLENDER:** Sometimes I use an immersion blender instead of a full-size blender to reduce cleanup. An immersion blender is also handy for blending additional ingredients into a hot cooked custard ice cream base without the danger of a pressure buildup.

» **ICE CREAM CHURN:** I have used a Cuisinart ICE-21 1.5-quart automatic countertop ice cream churn for many years and love it. It's so easy to use! You simply keep the aluminum insert in your freezer, take it out when you want to make ice cream, place it on the churn base and insert the churn paddle thingy, turn the machine on, pour your ice cream mixture in, and enjoy your soft-serve ice cream in 20-30 minutes! No ice or rock salt needed. (When the ice cream is finished, remove it from the canister with a plastic spatula to avoid scratching the surface of the freezer canister. If you want a firmer product, put the ice cream in your freezer in a sealed container for an hour or so.) You can use a traditional ice-and-rock-salt churn for my recipes, but they usually come in

much larger sizes so you may need to multiply my recipes to fit the recommended volume for your particular churn. All of my recipes are formulated for a 1.5-quart ice cream churn.

A countertop ice cream churn is well worth the money! They are so easy to use and clean, and they churn out my favorite healthy dessert of all time! If you don't have an ice cream maker and don't want to invest in one, you have a couple of options:

» Use your blender. Quite a few ice cream recipes can be made using a blender, but the texture won't be as nice. Simply freeze the ice cream mixture in ice cube trays, soften the cubes a bit, and blend them with a little unsweetened almond milk or cream in a high-powered blender until a soft-serve consistency is reached. Freeze the ice cream in your freezer for an hour or so to firm up or enjoy right away.

» Try the plastic bag/ice/rock salt method. (Google will show you how.)

» Freeze the ice cream mixture in popsicle molds! Not quite the same as ice cream, but you'll get a refreshing treat! You should probably only make a partial recipe if using this method unless you have a lot of popsicle molds.

» THE INGREDIENTS «

» **CREAM:** Put simply, the more cream you use, the creamier and softer and more scoopable your ice cream will be. The trick is to find a happy medium between "calorie overload" and "good ice cream." I use various amounts in my recipes depending on my mood and the occasion and try to keep my servings of my richer recipes on the more moderate side.

» **HALF AND HALF:** Half and half isn't as calorie dense as cream but stays creamier than almond milk when frozen, so I often use it as part of the volume in my ice cream recipes.

» **CANNED COCONUT MILK:** This makes a great dairy-free ice cream base! You can find a few recipes using canned coconut milk in this section. I purchase Thai Kitchen brand from Walmart and other local grocery stores. (You can find a Basic Dairy-Free Ice Cream recipe on page 239 of *Necessary Food*.)

» **UNSWEETENED ALMOND, CASHEW, OR COCONUT MILK** (the very light kind from the carton with about 40 calories per cup): I use this to make up the rest of the volume for the ice cream, just like you would use milk in regular ice cream recipes. Nut and coconut milks tend to get more icy than dairy milk does when frozen, so if a recipe isn't as creamy and smooth as you'd like, try substituting more cream or half and half in place of some almond milk. Keep in mind that this increases the calorie load!

» **COTTAGE CHEESE:** Cottage cheese is one of my favorite "secret ingredients" to make recipes creamy without a lot of extra calories. You can't taste it (provided that you don't use too much), and it adds a nice protein boost! I've also used Greek yogurt, regular yogurt, and kefir in some of the recipes in this book depending on the taste I was going for. I don't recommend substituting Greek yogurt for cottage cheese in ice cream recipes unless you're OK with the tangy flavor it will add.

» **EGGS:** Eggs (especially their yolks) can really improve the texture and taste of homemade ice creams! Cooking a custard base for an ice cream and chilling it before churning takes time, but the results are worth it. You can add raw eggs for extra richness if you're comfortable with that, but the ice cream's consistency will be better if the eggs are cooked into the ice cream base.

» **SWEETENER:** I used to use THM Pure Stevia Extract Powder to sweeten all my ice cream recipes...until I found that xylitol helps keep them from freezing so hard and improves the texture of the ice cream! Now I usually use mostly xylitol with a few doonks of stevia for extra sweetening power if needed. (I've tried making ice cream with all xylitol but found that the amount I needed to use left me with an aftertaste.) In my experience, xylitol dissolves just fine when blended into an ice cream base whether you cook it or not, but if you have a problem with crystals in your ice cream, try powdering the granulated sweetener in a coffee grinder before adding it. Xylitol is poisonous to dogs and gives some people an upset stomach if they're not used to it, so if you're not into using it you could try substituting erythritol or your favorite granulated sweetener that measures like sugar. I haven't tested anything other than xylitol so I'm not sure if other sugar alcohols will have the same anti-freezing effect in ice cream or not. I prefer the taste (or lack thereof) of xylitol over erythritol. You could also try substituting THM Gentle Sweet for both the stevia and the xylitol (to taste); try xylitol-free Gentle Sweet if you want to avoid xylitol. As always, feel free to add more sweetener to my ice cream recipes since my sweet tooth isn't as strong as some of yours!

» **VEGETABLE GLYCERIN:** This is a clear liquid that helps give ice cream a creamy texture and stay scoopable instead of icy when frozen, then thawed. It also helps keep the ice cream from creating a thick frozen layer on your ice cream canister. From what I've read, vegetable glycerin is safe for diabetics and doesn't spike blood sugar like regular sugar does. I cannot deny or confirm that, but I only use small amounts in my recipes. I made ice cream without vegetable glycerin for awhile, but once I started using it, I haven't made ice cream without it because it improves the texture so much! I always purchase Essential Depot brand from

Amazon, but you can often find vegetable glycerin in the skincare section of grocery or health food stores. A lot of vegetable glycerin is food grade, but if you find one with a poison warning on the label, I suggest finding another brand. I've heard that some vegetable glycerin made for use in cake frostings can have a funky taste in ice cream, so I'd stay away from those.

» **GLUCOMANNAN:** Glucomannan is a natural thickening agent made from the konjac root. Xanthan gum is similar, and they can generally be substituted for each other in the same amount. I've found that adding glucomannan to my ice cream recipes makes them nice and creamy, but I did leave it out of a few recipes when I wanted a more sherbet-like texture. Since glucomannan can clump when it comes into contact with liquid, I add it to the blender last, then immediately put the lid on and blend everything together. Different brands of glucomannan can vary in strength, so if you're using a stronger brand and find that it gives your ice cream a strange texture, try reducing the amount.

» **AIR:** The more air ice cream has in it, the fluffier and softer it will be! This is why I use an ice cream churn. I've also started blending the heavy cream into my cooked ice cream bases to incorporate extra air before churning.

» STORING ICE CREAM «

» So what if you have leftovers? No, really, sometimes you have leftover ice cream. (Or at least you should. Theoretically.) I recommend storing leftover ice cream in a shallow container with a really good seal. (The shallower the container, the faster the ice cream will thaw to a scoopable consistency at room temperature.) I usually use Tupperware containers.

» When you freeze ice cream leftovers, they will eventually freeze hard. How fast they get hard and exactly how hard they get will vary according to the ingredients you used. When you're ready to eat your ice cream leftovers, simply let them thaw at room temperature until they are your desired consistency. The meltier they are, the creamier they'll be, so don't skimp on thaw time, especially for lighter ice cream recipes!



» TROUBLESHOOTING «

» DO NOT pour the ice cream mixture into your countertop ice cream churn without turning it on first! If the canister is not rotating with the blades in place before you pour the ice cream mixture into it, the mixture will instantly freeze to the frozen canister and then the blades won't be able to move. You will have a gigantic ice-cream-ice-cube of a fail.

» Make sure your ice cream machine canister is completely frozen before trying to make ice cream, otherwise your ice cream will not freeze properly.

(Your ice cream maker's instruction manual will have information on how long your specific model takes to freeze.) When you first get your ice cream maker and freeze the canister, I recommend letting it freeze for 48 hours to make sure it's completely frozen. For subsequent batches, I like to give my ice cream canister 24 hours in the freezer just to be on the safe side. If you make ice cream extremely frequently, you might want to invest in an extra freezer canister for your ice cream machine.

custard tips

When making ice cream custard bases and puddings, I use a nonstick or stainless steel saucepan over medium heat. Whisk the custard often, and when it starts to get hot, whisk constantly to avoid burning. (Sometimes I turn the heat down a bit when I can tell the custard is almost ready to start cooking.) As soon as the custard starts to bubble slightly, pull it off the heat and keep whisking until thickened. (It will continue to thicken as it cools.) If the custard or pudding contains eggs, the thickening will be almost instantaneous, and you should not keep cooking after that point or you'll end up with scrambled eggs. If the custard doesn't noticeably thicken, place it back over low heat a little longer, still whisking. When in doubt, pull it off the heat and don't overcook! If you have trouble with lumpy puddings, try a lower heat. People with gas stoves will have to be extra vigilant when making custard because gas stoves tend to run hotter with a very direct heat. If your custard or pudding ends up lumpy, you can always strain it. Custard-making is definitely an art, but once you do it a few times you'll get a feel for when your custard is almost done and ready to be pulled off the burner. If you never have luck making custard this way, try the traditional tempering method.





basic vanilla scoopable ice cream

HEALTHY FATS | SERVES 8

2 cups half and half
2 cups unsweetened almond milk
2 eggs
2 egg yolks
⅛ teaspoon salt
¾ teaspoon glucomannan

1 cup heavy whipping cream
¼ cup xylitol (or more, to taste)
1 tablespoon vegetable glycerin
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
3 doonks THM Pure Stevia Extract Powder

Add the first set of ingredients to a saucepan and blend with an immersion blender until smooth. Add the glucomannan slowly while blending to avoid clumping. Cook the ice cream mixture just until it starts to bubble, whisking occasionally, then pull it off the heat. Add the second set of ingredients and blend with an immersion blender for 1-2 minutes. Let the mixture cool on the counter, then cover and refrigerate for several hours or overnight to chill completely.

When the ice cream base has chilled completely, churn it in a 1½-quart automatic ice cream churn according to manufacturer's directions. Transfer the finished ice cream to an airtight, shallow container and freeze to firm up before eating. I prefer to freeze it overnight until all the way firm, then let it thaw on the counter for 10 minutes before scooping for best taste and texture. (Or longer, for an even creamier texture.)

For years I've tried to find a moderate-calorie homemade ice cream that's scoopable out of the freezer! Storebought sugar-free ice creams are convenient and yummy, but they're often expensive and full of questionable ingredients. Unfortunately homemade ice creams (even the sugary homemade ice cream my family used to make) freeze hard if you don't eat them right after churning. Lots of cream and other fats help ice cream stay softer and creamier after freezing, but they also make it really calorie dense – and I like to enjoy ice cream on a regular basis.

This recipe is the culmination of years of experimentation and research and is a delicate balance of ingredients with a dose of science. I don't recommend replacing ingredients or varying the procedure, unless you're willing to experiment and accept the results, because everything is in here for a reason. I've tried to figure out which elements help ice cream stay softer after being frozen and combined them in a way that gives me a scoopable end result while not overloading the calories.

I don't usually count calories, but I did for this recipe out of curiosity. There are only 159 calories in a half cup serving! (This is how ice cream is usually measured for nutrition, but when I say the recipe serves 8, I'm being more realistic and calculating ¾ cup servings.) A lot of my older recipes are even lighter than this one, but they take longer to thaw to an eatable consistency when leftovers are frozen for an extended period of time.

candy cane ice cream

HEALTHY FATS | SERVES 8

2 cups half and half
2 cups unsweetened almond milk
4 egg yolks
½ teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon glucomannan

1 cup heavy whipping cream
¼ cup xylitol (or more, to taste)
1 tablespoon vegetable glycerin
1 teaspoon each peppermint extract,
vanilla extract
3 doonks THM Pure Stevia Extract Powder

5-6 drops red food coloring

Blend the first set of ingredients until smooth (I use an immersion blender) and cook in a nonstick kettle just until the mixture starts to bubble, whisking often. As soon as it starts to bubble, pull it off the heat.

Add the second set of ingredients. Peppermint extracts can vary in strength, so start with less than 1 teaspoon and work your way up, tasting as you go. Blend these ingredients into the ice cream base; I use an immersion blender so I don't have to blend hot liquids in a covered blender. Let the ice cream base cool to room temperature, then refrigerate to chill completely before churning (overnight is great). Churn the ice cream in an automatic countertop ice cream churn according to manufacturer's directions. Transfer to a shallow sealable


container and swirl 5-6 drops of red food coloring into the ice cream with a spatula for a candy cane effect. Freeze to firm up before serving. Ice cream frozen for long periods will freeze hard, but when stored in a shallow container, it thaws to scoopable consistency in about 10 minutes on the kitchen counter!

This Candy Cane Ice Cream is one of my favorite ice creams to date; even my DAD said it was good, and from the guy who dramatically shivers from the aftertaste every time he takes a bite of something sweetened with an alternative sweetener, that's saying a lot! (He often enjoys my savory recipes, but he would rather do without sweets than detect any aftertaste.) This ice cream is good right after churning, but it's actually meant to be eaten when it's harder, like a scooped ice cream. If you let it freeze hard in the freezer for a few hours or overnight, it will thaw to a scoopable texture at room temperature in about 10 minutes! The key is to use a shallow container so it thaws faster. The texture is amazing!

note

Feel free to add some crushed sugar-free peppermints or a chocolate ganache swirl to take it over the top! The Plain Hot Fudge Sauce (page 413) or Peanut Butter Hot Fudge Topping (page 414) from *Necessary Food* would be great toppings. Or serve with Bri's Best Fudgy Brownies on page 391 of this book!





VANILLA
PUDDING
CAKE • PG 350



cakes + muffins

- blender banana muffins **364**
- blueberry muffin for one **373**
- briana's baking mix **345**
- carrot cake **360**
- carrot cake for one **362**
- chocolate peppermint cupcakes **357**
- chocolate pudding cake for one **352**
- cinnamon roll cupcakes **356**
- cream cheese chocolate chip brownie cake **346**
- cream cheese chocolate chip muffin **348**
- lemon cream cheese cake **347**
- mocha pudding cake for one **353**
- morning glory muffins **365**
- oat bran muffins **366**
- peach & blueberry oat cake **363**
- peanut butter pudding cake for one **354**
- peppermint pudding cake **358**
- pound cake with strawberries **355**
- pumpkin cheesecake muffins **371**
- pumpkin chip muffins **369**
- pumpkin chip mug muffin **370**
- the best blueberry muffins **372**
- vanilla cream cheese chocolate chip muffin **349**
- vanilla pudding cake **350**
- vanilla pudding cake for one **351**
- zucchini spice muffins **367**



briana's baking mix

LOW CARB/LOW FAT | YIELDS 7 ½ CUPS

3 cups coconut flour
2 cups oat fiber
1½ cups golden flaxmeal
1 cup whey protein powder
1½ teaspoons xanthan gum

Combine all ingredients in a plastic container with a tight lid (I use a Tupperware container) and shake thoroughly. Store in a cool, dry place.

A quarter cup serving of this baking mix contains 4.4 grams of fat and 3.34 grams of net carbs, as well as 6.27 grams of protein.

Using a blend of alternative flours provides the best result in recipes, and it's so much easier to pull out one container of homemade baking mix instead of 5 different containers every time I want to make something! Like many low-carb flours, my baking mix needs plenty of liquids and "conditioners" (water, eggs, sour cream, Greek yogurt, etc.) in order to turn out something fluffy and moist, and my recipes take that into account.

My mix is a little sturdier and soaks up more liquid than THM Baking Blend. You should be able to use THM Baking Blend in most of the recipes in this book in place of my baking mix, but it's always safest to use the ingredients with

which recipes are formulated. I really recommend mixing up a batch of my baking mix to use in my recipes for best results. If you do want to try substituting, you'll need a little more THM Baking Blend than my mix called for in recipes. General rule of thumb is to start with 1 cup of THM Baking Blend for every ¾ cup of my baking mix called for in a recipe, then add more flour or liquid if needed. (In small amounts of only a few tablespoons, you can probably substitute THM Baking Blend in the same amount.)

note

- Oat fiber brands vary drastically and can have a very negative impact on any recipes you make with this baking mix. You need to use a brand that has a very light color and flavor. I've always purchased LifeSource brand from Netrition.com and had very good success with it. I can't personally vouch for any other brands.
- Almond flour could probably be substituted for the golden flaxmeal.
- Need to be dairy free? Try substituting collagen for the whey protein powder.
- Glucomannan could probably be substituted for the xanthan gum.
- I do not suggest substituting for the oat fiber or coconut flour unless you are planning to create your own unique flour blend.

cream cheese chocolate chip brownie cake

HEALTHY FATS | SERVES 9

½ cup Briana's Baking Mix
½ cup cocoa powder
2½ tablespoons THM Super Sweet Blend
(or more, to taste)
1½ teaspoons baking powder
1 teaspoon glucomannan
¼ teaspoon salt

1 cup water
4 eggs

CREAM CHEESE FILLING

1 (8 oz.) pkg. reduced-fat cream cheese
2 teaspoons THM Super Sweet Blend
½ teaspoon vanilla extract

Sugar-free chocolate chips

Whisk the dry ingredients. Add the water and eggs and mix. Spread the batter into a greased 8"x8" pan.

Beat the cream cheese, Super Sweet Blend, and vanilla together until smooth. Dollop the mixture onto the cake in 9 blobs, in the center of what will become each piece. Top with a sprinkling of sugar-free chocolate chips (or chopped 85% dark chocolate for a more economical version).

Bake at 350° for 40 minutes or until a toothpick comes out cleanly and the cake appears to be done all the way through. You can let it cool a little to solidify before eating it warm, but I prefer the texture cold after refrigeration.



Why do I call it "brownie cake"? Because the texture reminds me of a cross between a brownie and a cake! It's more moist and fudgy than a cake but more cakey than a brownie. Whatever it is, it's awesome. (Of course adding cheesecake and chocolate chips makes anything awesome, right?) The best part about this recipe is that it really doesn't take very many ingredients and it's so simple to make!

note

Different brands of glucomannan can vary in strength, so if you notice an odd texture in the cake, try decreasing the amount a bit. If you don't have glucomannan, you should be able to use xanthan gum in the same amount.

lemon cream cheese cake

HEALTHY FATS | SERVES 9

½ cup Briana's Baking Mix
½ cup oat fiber
2½ tablespoons THM Super Sweet Blend
(or more, to taste)
1½ teaspoons baking powder
1 teaspoon glucomannan
¼ teaspoon salt
⅓ teaspoon turmeric (for color)

¾ cup water
½ cup lemon juice
4 eggs
1 teaspoon vanilla extract

CREAM CHEESE FILLING

1 (8 oz.) pkg. reduced-fat cream cheese
2 teaspoons THM Super Sweet Blend
½ teaspoon vanilla extract

Whisk the dry ingredients. Add the wet ingredients and mix. Spread the batter into a greased 8"x8" pan.

Beat the cream cheese, Super Sweet Blend, and vanilla together until smooth. Dollop the mixture onto the cake in 9 blobs, in the center of what will become each piece. Push the cream cheese blobs down into the batter a bit.



Bake at 350° for 40-45 minutes or until a toothpick comes out cleanly and the cake appears to be done all the way through. The cake is good (kind of a custardy texture) when warm, but it's meant to be eaten cold after overnight refrigeration. The lemon flavor and sweetness level out overnight and the cake sets up to an amazing texture!



Commit thy works unto the Lord,
and thy thoughts shall be established.

PSALM 16:3



A close-up, slightly blurred image of a glass filled with milk. A single cookie is visible inside the milk, partially submerged. The background is dark and out of focus.

candies, cookies + bars

- brianafinger bar for one **401**
- brianafinger truffle fudge **384**
- bri's best fudgy brownies **391**
- chocolate chip cookie pie **389**
- chocolate peanut butter snack bars **400**
- coconut cream pie bars **398**
- easy chocolate cake truffles **382**
- gooey brownies **392**
- joyous almond bites **380**
- mounds of coconut treats **379**
- peanut butter cookie dough fudge **383**
- peanut butter cookies **388**
- peanut butter cups **377**
- pecan pie cheesecake bars **395**
- peppermint truffle fudge **386**
- raspberry crèmes **378**
- raspberry crumble bars **396**
- snickerdoodle truffles **381**
- superfood brownies **393**
- superfood single brownie **394**
- trail mix bark **387**
- trail mix snack bars **399**



peanut butter cups

HEALTHY FATS | YIELDS 24 CANDIES

PEANUT BUTTER LAYER

- 1 cup natural peanut butter
(well-stirred and creamy)
- ¼ cup refined coconut oil (softened)
- 1 tablespoon THM Super Sweet Blend
- ½ teaspoon vanilla extract
- ⅛ teaspoon salt
- 3 tablespoons oat fiber

CHOCOLATE

- 1 (3.5 oz.) bar 85% dark chocolate
- ¾ cup refined coconut oil
- 3½ teaspoons THM Gentle Sweet
(or more, to taste)

Mix the peanut butter, coconut oil, sweetener, vanilla, and salt together with a hand mixer. Add the oat fiber one tablespoon at a time until the mixture returns to a typical natural peanut butter thickness. I used 3 tablespoons of oat fiber, but my natural peanut butter was from a new jar that had just been stirred so it wasn't super thick like some natural peanut butters can get if they're not stirred correctly. The end result should be easily spooned into candy liners; if anything, err on the thin side so the peanut butter mixture won't be too dry once refrigerated. Taste and add more sweetener if desired.

Make the chocolate by melting the chocolate bar, coconut oil, and sweetener together in a microwave. Stir at 20-second intervals so the chocolate doesn't burn. (Alternatively, you

could melt the chocolate in a double boiler.) Taste and add more sweetener if necessary; I like dark chocolate.

Divide half the chocolate mixture among 24 mini cupcake tin liners, then freeze to harden. When the chocolate is firm, divide the peanut butter mixture among the liners. Top with the remaining chocolate, then put the candies in the freezer to firm up. (If you have chocolate left over, freeze it on its own and enjoy.) You can store the candies in the freezer or refrigerator; I prefer the fridge for a more traditional peanut butter cup texture.

note

I use Smucker's brand natural peanut butter (from Walmart) that contains just peanuts and salt and has a very intense peanut flavor.

SERVING SIZES ▼

It's so hard to note serving sizes on candy recipes because they're so subjective! Serving sizes vary according to your metabolism and what else you're eating along with the candy. In general, I'd stick with 2-4 pieces per serving depending on how heavy the rest of your meal or snack is. Most candy recipes don't have a lot of protein, so include some protein along with them to round out your meal or snack.

raspberry crèmes

HEALTHY FATS | YIELDS 24 CANDIES

RASPBERRY FILLING

1 (8 oz.) pkg. reduced-fat cream cheese
2 tablespoons refined coconut oil (melted)
1 teaspoon raspberry extract
½ teaspoon vanilla extract
3 doonks THM Pure Stevia Extract Powder
1 drop red food coloring

CHOCOLATE

1 (3.5 oz.) bar 85% dark chocolate
¾ cup refined coconut oil
3½ teaspoons THM Gentle Sweet
(or more, to taste)

Beat the filling ingredients together until smooth. Put the filling into a sealable plastic bag, seal, and snip a hole in one bottom corner for piping. Set aside.

To make the chocolate coating, melt the chocolate bar, coconut oil, and sweetener together in the microwave, stirring every 20 seconds or so to prevent the chocolate from burning. (You could also use a double boiler for this.) Taste and add more sweetener if desired. (I happen to like dark chocolate.)

Fill 24 mini muffin tin holes with liners. Divide half of the chocolate mixture among the liners and freeze to firm up. When the chocolate is firm, pipe some raspberry filling into each liner until all the filling is gone. Spoon the rest



of the chocolate mixture over the raspberry filling in each liner and freeze. (If you have chocolate left over, just freeze it to eat on its own.) When the crèmes are firm, transfer them to a sealable container and store in the fridge.

note

Want to switch things up? Try using orange, maple, or mint/peppermint extract instead of raspberry! (Adjust the color.)

mounds of coconut treats

HEALTHY FATS | YIELDS 36 SQUARES

1 (13.66 oz.) can light coconut milk
½ cup + 2 tablespoons coconut oil (softened)
1 tablespoon THM Super Sweet Blend
(or more, to taste)
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
¼ teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon xanthan gum

4 cups unsweetened coconut flakes

75 grams 85% dark chocolate (3 pieces
of Moser Roth chocolate from Aldi)
2 teaspoons coconut oil

Blend the first section of ingredients together in a blender or food processor, adding the xanthan gum right before blending so it doesn't clump. Add the coconut and pulse to break up the flakes just a bit (but don't blend until smooth). Pour the coconut mixture into a foil-lined 8"x8" pan, spread out, and refrigerate until firm. Cut into 36 squares, then put the pan in the freezer to super chill. When the squares are nice and cold, remove them from the pan and spread them out on foil on a cookie sheet. Melt the chocolate and coconut oil together in a microwave or double boiler, stirring often. Drizzle the melted chocolate over the coconut squares, then refrigerate or freeze to firm up the chocolate. Store the finished squares in a sealed container in the fridge.



These little squares are on the soft side and remind me of the inside of the classic chocolate-covered coconut candy bar!

note

Feel free to use your favorite sugar-free chocolate chips in place of the 85% dark chocolate.

MOCHA CHEESECAKE
PG 425





desserts

amazing turtle cheesecake **426**
black raspberry cheesecake **420**
blueberry cheesecake delight **413**
chai spice rice pudding **432**
cherry cobbler **407**
chocolate rice pudding **433**
classic cheesecake **418**
creamy pumpkin chocolate fried taco **438**
fresh strawberry pie **410**
fried apple pie **436**
hot chocolate custard **434**
hot pumpkin custard **435**
lemon cheesecake delight **414**
mocha cheesecake **425**
no-bake pumpkin cheesecake **417**
pb&j fried taco **437**
peach cobbler with biscuit topping **405**
peanut butter banana fried taco **439**
peanut butter chocolate cheesecake **422**
peppermint delight **416**
pumpkin donuts **409**
pumpkin torte **408**
quick pumpkin cheesecakes **428**
single-serve peach cobbler **406**
single-serve strawberry chia "tapioca" **431**
single-serve vanilla chia "tapioca" **430**
vanilla custard chia "tapioca" **429**



peach cobbler with biscuit topping

HEALTHY CARBS | SERVES 9

4 cups chopped peaches (peeled)
1-2 tablespoons THM Super Sweet Blend
(amount will vary based on
sweetness of peaches)
1 teaspoon cinnamon
½ teaspoon vanilla extract

BISCUIT TOPPING

1 cup oat flour
½ cup low-fat Greek yogurt
½ cup egg whites
2 teaspoons refined coconut oil (melted)
1 teaspoon baking powder
⅓ teaspoon THM Pure Stevia Extract Powder
⅓ teaspoon salt

I like to use a hamburger chopper to roughly chop my peaches and get the juices flowing. If using frozen peaches, thaw them, chop them, then drain them well. If they're pretty mushy (either from being frozen or from being overripe), I suggest adding ½ teaspoon xanthan gum to the peach mixture to thicken it while baking. Sprinkle it over the peaches in a fine layer and stir quickly to prevent clumping.

Add the Super Sweet Blend, cinnamon, and vanilla to the chopped peaches and stir to coat. Pour the mixture into a greased 8"x8" baking pan.

Whisk the biscuit topping ingredients together to mix well. Blob it on top of the peaches with a spoon, then spread it out

evenly. You can sprinkle the top of the cobbler with additional Super Sweet Blend and cinnamon if you like.

Bake the cobbler at 350° for 40 minutes or until a toothpick inserted into the biscuit topping comes out cleanly and the center feels done. Let the cobbler cool for 15 minutes before serving for best results. Refrigerate leftovers and enjoy them for breakfast with a lean protein source such as low-fat cottage cheese or Greek yogurt or some collagen in your morning tea.

I've eaten this cobbler warm from the oven as well as cold from the fridge. It makes a special Sunday morning breakfast! Just add a side of low-fat cottage cheese or Greek yogurt for protein. I enjoy my cobbler with a splash of unsweetened almond milk, a squirt of fat-free Reddi-wip, or some low-fat ice cream (such as the Basic Soft Serve recipe on page 241 of *Necessary Food*).

note

- Feel free to add more sweetener to this cobbler recipe if you like your desserts really sweet. I prefer to use less – just call me European. (My grandpa, who has spent quite a bit of time in Germany, tells me often that European desserts are generally a lot less sweet than American desserts are.)
- The coconut oil adds a very small amount of fat per serving, and I like the texture it adds.

single-serve peach cobbler

HEALTHY CARBS | SERVES 1

1 med.-lg. peach (thawed and drained
if frozen, chopped)

1 teaspoon THM Super Sweet Blend
(or more, to taste)

Dash vanilla extract

Dash cinnamon

BISCUIT TOPPING

¼ cup oat flour

2 tablespoons full-fat sour cream

2 tablespoons egg whites

¼ teaspoon baking powder

1 doonk THM Pure Stevia Extract Powder

Dash salt

Stir the first section of ingredients together and pour into a ceramic or glass ramekin.

Whisk the biscuit topping ingredients together and pour over the top of the peaches.

Microwave for 2 minutes. The topping will look done after about a minute, but you need to nuke it a little longer than you think. Let the cobbler cool for a few minutes before digging in for best texture. You can use this as a dessert after a Healthy Carbs or Low Carb/Low Fat meal, or add some protein (like low-fat cottage cheese) on the side and call it breakfast. (Between the peach and the oat flour, this recipe contains roughly 30 grams net carbs, so keep additional carbs minimal.)



note

- I used full-fat sour cream as my allotted fat in this recipe because I like the texture it gives the topping. If you don't have sour cream or want to use your 5 grams of fat elsewhere, use fat-free Greek yogurt in its place. For a dairy-free option, I would try substituting the sour cream with unsweetened applesauce, but the result will be gooier.
- Feel free to top with some unsweetened almond milk, fat-free Reddi-wip, and/or low-fat ice cream (such as the Basic Soft Serve recipe on page 241 of *Necessary Food*).
- I haven't tried baking this recipe, but that would probably work. Bake at 350° until a toothpick inserted through the topping comes out cleanly.

cherry cobbler

HEALTHY CARBS | SERVES 9

1 (26 oz.) can tart cherries canned in water (undrained)
1-2 tablespoons THM Super Sweet Blend (or more, to taste)
1 tablespoon oat flour
 $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon xanthan gum
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon cinnamon
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon vanilla extract
 $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon salt

BISCUIT TOPPING

1 cup oat flour
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup low-fat Greek yogurt
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup egg whites
2 teaspoons refined coconut oil (melted)
1 teaspoon baking powder
 $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon THM Pure Stevia Extract Powder
 $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon salt

Stir the filling ingredients together gently with a spatula to combine. (Sprinkle the xanthan gum into the mixture in a fine layer before stirring to avoid major clumping.) Pour into a greased 8"x8" pan.

Whisk the topping ingredients until smooth. Spread over the filling. Top with a sprinkle of cinnamon if you like. Bake at 350° for 30 minutes or until a toothpick inserted into the topping comes out cleanly and the top feels done in the middle. Let the cobbler cool for a few minutes before digging in. Feel free to top with a squirt of Reddi-wip, some unsweetened almond milk, or some low-fat, sugar-free ice cream.



note

- A 26-oz. can of cherries holds about 3 cups of cherries and a little over $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of juice. If you can't find canned cherries, you could try cooking down fresh or frozen tart cherries (pitted, of course!) in some water, then using the cooked cherries and resulting juice in this recipe.
- The coconut oil adds only a trace amount of fat per serving and improves the texture of the topping.

VEGGIE PIZZA
PG 464





snacks + appetizers

- baba ghanoush **455**
- basic cauliflower "hummus" **457**
- buffalo chicken dip **461**
- carrot cake greek yogurt snack **449**
- chewy peanut butter protein bites **450**
- chocolate chip cookie dough protein butter **451**
- cinnamon "sugar" cottage cheese toast **452**
- deviled eggs **468**
- easy jalapeño poppers **467**
- fiesta dip **460**
- french onion veggie dip **458**
- fresh nacho pizzas **470**
- goldmine salsa **453**
- greek dip **462**
- greek yogurt variations **443**
- guacamole **454**
- marshmallowy fruit dip **459**
- pb&j power bowl **448**
- pigs in a blanket **466**
- raspberry jalapeño baked brie **469**
- refried bean dip **463**
- regular yogurt variations **446**
- roasted red pepper hummus **456**
- single-serve greek yogurt variations **444**
- veggie pizza **464**
- yogurt parfaits **447**



greek yogurt variations

HEALTHY FATS OR LOW CARB / LOW FAT | SERVES 4

VANILLA (LC/LF)

- 1 (500 gram) container low-fat Greek yogurt (about 2 cups)
- ⅓ cup half and half or unsweetened almond milk
- ½ teaspoon vanilla extract
- ⅛ teaspoon THM Pure Stevia Extract Powder (or more, to taste)

PEANUT BUTTER (HF)

- 1 (500 gram) container Greek yogurt (about 2 cups)
- ⅓ cup half and half or unsweetened almond milk
- 3 tablespoons natural peanut butter
- ⅛ teaspoon THM Pure Stevia Extract Powder (or more, to taste)

NOTE: If a stronger peanut butter flavor is desired, add a tablespoon or two of defatted peanut flour. If you use low-fat yogurt and defatted peanut flour in place of the peanut butter, this would be LC/LF. You may need to add more peanut flour than the peanut butter called for, plus some extra salt and sweetener to round out the flavors.

KEY LIME PIE (LC/LF)

- 1 (500 gram) container low-fat Greek yogurt (about 2 cups)
- ⅓ cup half and half or unsweetened almond milk
- 1 tablespoon lime juice
- ½ teaspoon vanilla extract

- 5-6 doonks THM Pure Stevia Extract Powder (or more, to taste)
- 1 drop each green and yellow food coloring

ORANGE (LC/LF)

- 1 (500 gram) container low-fat Greek yogurt (about 2 cups)
- ⅓ cup half and half or unsweetened almond milk
- ½ teaspoon vanilla extract
- ½ teaspoon orange extract
- ⅛ teaspoon THM Pure Stevia Extract Powder (or more, to taste)
- 1 drop each red and yellow food coloring

Whisk the ingredients together for the flavor you want to make. Adjust the half and half/ almond milk according to your desired thickness, and adjust the sweetness to your liking as well. Some THM Gentle Sweet would be a good option for adding a kick of extra sweetness if needed. The flavor of the yogurt is best after overnight refrigeration.

Because of the additions to the yogurt, it probably won't keep quite as long as plain Greek yogurt. It will keep for at least a week in the fridge; if the added liquid separates out a bit, just give the yogurt a stir.

note

Using half and half to thin down the yogurt adds 2.3 grams of fat per serving.

single-serve greek yogurt variations

HEALTHY FATS, HEALTHY CARBS, OR LOW CARB/LOW FAT | SERVES 1

FOUNDATION (LC/LF)

½ cup low-fat Greek yogurt (or a single-serve container of low-fat Greek yogurt)
1-2 tablespoons half and half or unsweetened almond milk (to desired consistency)
1 doonk THM Pure Stevia Extract Powder (or more, if desired)

VANILLA (LC/LF)

Dash vanilla extract

PEANUT BUTTER (HF)

1 tablespoon natural peanut butter
Squirt of Reddi-wip and sugar-free chocolate chips for topping (optional)

NOTE: Use defatted peanut flour instead of peanut butter and keep the chocolate chips to a garnish amount to make this LC/LF.

TOASTED COCONUT (LC/LF)

Dash each coconut extract, vanilla extract
Dash liquid smoke (optional)
Toasted coconut flakes for topping (optional, HF)

KEY LIME PIE (HF)

1 additional doonk THM Pure Stevia Extract Powder
Hearty dash lime juice
Dash vanilla extract
1 drop green food coloring

Squirt of Reddi-wip and a sprinkling of low-carb granola or toasted coconut flakes (to mimic pie crust) for topping (optional)

NOTE: Omit the granola or coconut flakes for LC/LF.

CHUNKY MONKEY (HF)

1 tablespoon natural peanut butter
Dash banana extract
Sprinkling of sugar-free chocolate chips

NOTE: Use defatted peanut flour instead of peanut butter and keep the chocolate chips to a garnish amount to make this LC/LF.

BANANA CREAM (HC)

Dash each banana extract, vanilla extract
½ lg. banana (sliced)

NOTE: Omit the sliced banana for LC/LF.

ORANGE CREAM (HC)

Dash orange extract
Chunks of orange/tangerine/clementine

NOTE: Omit the orange chunks for LC/LF.

Start with the foundation ingredients, then add the mix-ins from your desired variation. Feel free to add more sweetener to taste. Whisk until smooth, then top with any additional toppings. Enjoy!



L-R:
TOASTED COCONUT
PEANUT BUTTER



L-R:
KEY LIME PIE
CHUNKY MONKEY

Here are seven easy ways to turn your thick and tangy Greek yogurt into deliciously smooth, flavored yogurt using very few ingredients! Greek yogurt has a lot less carbs than regular yogurt does – and a whole lot of protein for the volume! However, it's really thick, and sometimes it's downright sour! My favorite way to make Greek yogurt more palatable (i.e. more like regular yogurt) is to add a little liquid – half and half or almond milk – and a little sweetener.

I usually use a doonk or two of THM Pure Stevia Extract Powder, but the liquid squirt stevia bottles like you can find at Walmart are an even easier option!

note

If you're making a Healthy Fats variation, the Greek yogurt can be full fat.

ORANGE CREAM



BANANA CREAM




VANILLA



BLUEBERRY JAM
PG 487





sauces, spices, spreads + syrups

- asian vinaigrette **482**
- balsamic & lime vinaigrette **481**
- blueberry jam **487**
- blueberry topping **493**
- bri's adobo sauce **477**
- bri's kickin' barbecue sauce **476**
- bri's sweet & spicy rub **484**
- chocolate peanut butter
 - hardshell ice cream topping **489**
- chunky cinnamon applesauce **488**
- cow sauce **478**
- cranberry syrup **492**
- creamy sweet onion dressing **480**
- foundational peanut butter topping **490**
- mushroom soup/gravy **483**
- perfect barbecue sauce (and pulled pork) **475**
- pineapple sweet & sour sauce **479**
- pumpkin butter **485**
- waffle & pancake syrup **491**



perfect barbecue sauce (and pulled pork)

LOW CARB / LOW FAT | YIELDS 6 CUPS SAUCE

½ cup salted butter
4 cups no-sugar-added ketchup
½ - 1 cup water
2 tablespoons THM Super Sweet Blend
2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
1 tablespoon yellow mustard
1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
2 teaspoons each chili powder, salt
1 teaspoon each onion powder, black pepper
1 teaspoon molasses

Melt the butter in a saucepan, then add the rest of the ingredients and whisk to combine. Taste and add more sweetener if desired. Simmer (uncovered) for 20 minutes. Store in the refrigerator.

Based off of my mom's favorite barbecue sauce recipe, this is definitely my favorite healthy barbecue sauce to date! It's a sweet barbecue, so adjust that according to your family's preferences. I love it on everything from grilled chicken to haystacks to green beans to brown rice! I kind of love barbecue sauce....

This barbecue sauce contains butter, which would normally be a Healthy Fats ingredient, but if you use ¼ cup of sauce or less in a serving, the fat stays within Low Carb/Low Fat boundaries and can be used in any fuel setting. Pair the sauce with a lean meat such as chicken or turkey breast or pork tenderloin to stay in LC/LF territory, or use it with a fattier meat for an HF meal.



note

Start with ½ cup water in the sauce, then add an additional ½ cup if you prefer a thinner sauce.

PULLED PORK ▼

To make barbecue pulled pork for 12-14 people, cook a 4 pound pork loin in a slow cooker on High for 4 hours, flipping it over halfway through. Drain the juice (reserving it for another use if desired), break the pork loin into chunks, and add 3 cups of barbecue sauce. Simmer on Low for 4 hours, stirring occasionally (do this with a meat fork to shred the pork finer). Serve with additional sauce as desired. This pulled pork would be Healthy Fats since pork loin is not a lean meat.

bri's kickin' barbecue sauce

LOW CARB/LOW FAT | YIELDS 1¼ CUPS

1½ cups no-sugar-added ketchup
2 tablespoons salted butter
2 tablespoons sriracha (feel free to decrease this for less heat)
2 teaspoons apple cider vinegar
1-2 teaspoons THM Super Sweet Blend (or more, to taste)
1 teaspoon liquid smoke
¾ teaspoon each chili powder, dry mustard, paprika
½ teaspoon maple extract
Dash orange extract

Whisk the ingredients together in a small saucepan and simmer for ten minutes. Taste and add more sweetener and/or spice as desired. Store in the refrigerator. This sauce is Low Carb/Low Fat as long as you stick with ¼ cup per serving or less.



As a South Carolina girl - born and raised - barbecue is an integral part of my life. While a mound of sweet, tangy, and juicy pulled pork with a side of coleslaw will always be my favorite way to eat barbecue, I enjoy a variety of sauces and styles. This sauce is thick with a kick, full of deep flavor with some fruity notes, and perfect for basting onto a rack of baby back ribs. Adjust the sweetness level to your own personal taste (as written it has a definite sweet note but isn't overly sweet) and feel free to add more or less sriracha depending on how much you like heat. I'm not a big spice fan, but I put a little more in this sauce than usual. I'd say it's on the upper end of medium on the spice scale, but some of you spice-handling firemouths will probably take one lick and laugh me out of the state.

Leave to thy God to
ORDER & PROVIDE;
in ev'ry change
He faithful will remain.

KATHRINA VON SCHLEGEL
"BE STILL, MY SOUL"



bri's adobo sauce

LOW CARB / LOW FAT | YIELDS 5 CUPS

4 ancho chiles (stems and seeds removed)
1 lg. onion (chopped)
5 lg. garlic cloves (peeled)

2 cups water
1 (28 oz.) can diced tomatoes
(no salt added, undrained)
1 (6 oz.) can tomato paste
3 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
Juice from 3 med. limes
1 tablespoon + 1 teaspoon
THM Super Sweet Blend
2 teaspoons each cumin, oregano,
smoked paprika, salt
1 teaspoon black pepper

Smash the garlic cloves with the flat of a knife. Roast the chiles, onion, and garlic in a Dutch oven on the stovetop over medium-high heat until the onion starts to brown, stirring occasionally. Add the rest of the ingredients and bring to a boil, then turn the heat down and simmer (uncovered) for 30 minutes. Blend with an immersion blender until smooth, then use in a recipe or refrigerate for later and use on all the things.

note

This sauce makes a great Low Carb/Low Fat salad dressing!



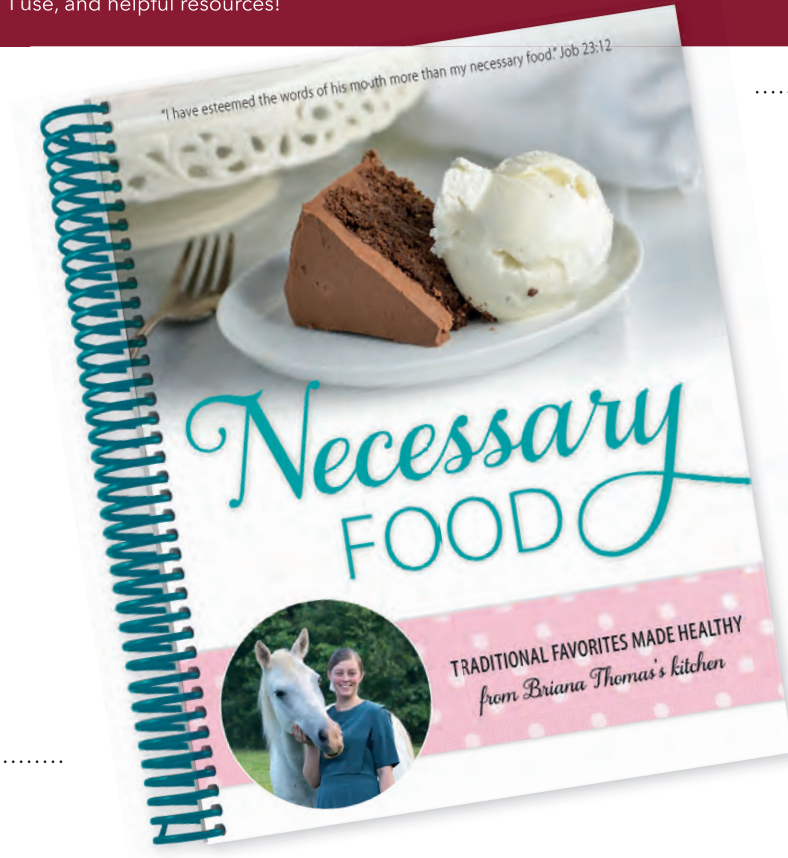
Disclaimer: this is my play on adobo sauce. It may or may not be authentic, but it is now one of my favorite sauces to keep in the fridge. This sauce has a nice body to it and leaves a lingering heat in the back of the throat (but it's not overwhelmingly spicy). I use it like a barbecue sauce on pretty much everything.

SUGGESTIONS FOR USE ▼

dipping sauce // stir into brown rice // salad dressing // pizza or quesadilla topping // enchilada sauce // toss with veggies before roasting // broasted chicken drumsticks (page 98) // chicken salad // Adobo Pork Tacos (page 86) // Adobo Baked Beans (page 212)

resources

Visit BRIANA-THOMAS.COM/CONVENIENTFOODRESOURCES for future book corrections (let's hope there aren't any), links to the products I use, and helpful resources!



Go to BRIANA-THOMAS.COM/NECESSARYFOOD to purchase my first cookbook! *Necessary Food* is full of classic Mennonite church cookbook recipes made healthy – along with many classic Briana-style originals.

yogurt

tutorial

Why make your own yogurt? Well, I personally think it tastes a lot better than storebought yogurt! Homemade Greek yogurt in particular is less tangy than the storebought kind. Depending on where you live, homemade yogurt may be cheaper to make than to buy, and if you go through a lot of yogurt, the savings may be worth your time. Once you get the drill down, making yogurt is so easy. There's also the added benefit of knowing exactly what's in your yogurt and being able to make it whatever flavor you want!

Using skim milk gives you more fuel type options. Regular skim yogurt is Healthy Carbs, while skim Greek yogurt is Low Carb/Low Fat. Full-fat Greek yogurt is Healthy Fats, but full-fat regular yogurt combines carbs and fats (not ideal for weight loss).



1» Bring a gallon of skim milk to a boil over medium heat in a large covered kettle. (This takes about 45-55 minutes.) Bringing the milk to a boil slowly keeps the yogurt from being slimy.

2» Take the milk off the heat after it has achieved a slow boil. Let the milk cool to bathwater temperature (about one hour).

3» If a film has formed over the top of the milk, remove it, then stir a half cup of room temperature plain yogurt or Greek yogurt into the warm milk. The milk needs to be warm enough to allow the cultures to do their thing but not so hot that it kills them.

4» Cover the milk and put it in the oven with the oven light on overnight or for at least six hours (until the milk comes together into one big curd).

5» At this point you can drain off any whey pooled around the yogurt curd, then whisk the yogurt smooth before storing it in the fridge. If you want to make Greek yogurt, you'll need to strain a

lot of the whey off. To do so, place a large piece of straining cloth over a strainer in the sink. Pour the yogurt into the cloth and tie the corners of the cloth up over a wooden spoon to form a bag. Hang the wooden spoon suspending the yogurt over a tall container to catch the whey. (Alternatively you can just omit the wooden spoon trick and suspend the cloth-lined colander by its handles inside a larger bowl to catch the whey. I've included pictures of both methods.)

6» Let the yogurt strain for an hour or two in the fridge, dumping the accumulated whey as needed to keep the yogurt from hanging in the whey. Drain as long as needed to reach your desired thickness; the thickness of your cloth will affect the straining time. The more whey you drain off, the fewer carbs your yogurt will have. I aim for 7-8 cups of remaining yogurt for a Greek-style yogurt. Store the strained yogurt in the fridge in a sealed container.

» NOTES «

» Don't forget to save some homemade yogurt (regular or Greek) to start your next batch!

» On a gas stove I've had some trouble with milk burning and sticking to the bottom of my kettle, so I usually keep the heat lower than I would on an electric stove (between 2 and 3 on a gas stove) and pull it off the heat before it's actually boiling. (I pull it off when it's really hot and I can tell it's right on the edge of boiling.)

» The straining cloth I used at home was just a loosely-woven fabric that we bought at Walmart. Cheesecloth holes are too big and the yogurt will run through it, but a double layer might work. I'm currently using a piece of an old curtain that I found at a thrift store; it works great! I'm sure you can buy yogurt straining bags online as well. You should be able to see through the cloth you use,

but the holes shouldn't be so open that the yogurt solids can run through.

» Regular unstrained yogurt can be runny, so I try to pour off any easily-discarded whey that has collected around the yogurt curd before whisking the yogurt smooth and storing it in the fridge. Yogurt tends to thicken up a bit in the fridge as it ages, so that can help too.

» If your yogurt won't set up into a curd in the oven, try using a new starter, add the room temperature starter to your warm milk when the milk is between 110° and 115° (measure with a thermometer instead of just using your finger), let it culture longer in the oven (I always leave it in the oven overnight), and make sure your oven light is working correctly.





"Once you get
the drill down,
making yogurt
is so easy."



MEET THE *designers*



Abigail Nicole and Grace Elizabeth were born in Walnut Creek, Ohio, three years apart. Growing up on a hundred acre farm meant hard work with a side of exploring creeks, woods, and collapsing outbuildings. Many summer days were spent with family, friends and pets, rich in adventure and color. As teenagers we were co-workers at a local print shop as graphic designers. Today our paths are quite diverse. Abigail, founder of the Abiart greeting card line, and husband Ryan live on a five acre wilderness near the small town of Wilmot. The Abiart mission is speaking life through unique paper goods to women of all ages while raising funds for children in Haiti. Grace spent a greater part of the past 2 years living in the city of Panagiouda, Greece, working with refugees. Grace has dedicated this season to being a voice of freedom to vulnerable women from around the world. Designing *Convenient Food* as a sister team has been a pleasure and felt like "the good ole days." Grace will be returning to Greece shortly, far from color palettes, computer screens, and tranquility. Abigail is eagerly awaiting the arrival of a firstborn, ready to embrace this new chapter of life—possibly far from tranquil as well. Our prayer is that you enjoy the design details on these pages that only accent the wisdom and talent of Mrs. Briana Thomas Burkholder.



visit abiartcreative.com
or call 330.440.3418 for
more information

.....

follow Grace in Greece
on Instagram @graceafull



alphabetical index

BREAKFAST

apple cinnamon waffle **44**
apple pie baked oatmeal **19**
banana bread baked oatmeal **21**
baobab burst muesli **31**
biscuity sour cream & chive egg muffins **51**
breakfast corn pudding **57**
cheater “sourdough” waffles **38**
cherry pie baked oatmeal **20**
chocolate cranberry almond porridge **55**
chocolate waffles for two **40**
chunky monkey chia pudding **56**
cornbread waffle **45**
cranberry orange baked oatmeal muffins **27**
creamy pb&j oatmeal **29**
crispy protein waffle **43**
easy chocolate oatmeal **28**
easy make-ahead breakfast quiche **50**
four vanilla waffles **37**
french toast casserole **36**
french toast for one **33**
ginger peach oatmeal cake **23**
hot chia porridge **54**
maple & “brown sugar”
 baked oatmeal squares **24**
mocha chip baked oatmeal **25**
mocha waffle **46**
oat bran blueberry pancakes **48**
okra & fried egg skillet **52**
overnight oatmeal survival packets **30**
pb&j muesli **32**
pb&j protein waffle **42**
peanut butter, banana & chocolate
 stuffed french toast **34**

peanut butter granola **47**
pineapple rightside-up baked oatmeal **22**
pumpkin chip baked oatmeal **26**
pumpkin stuffed french toast **35**
sausage & okra breakfast **53**
strawberry shortcake waffle **41**

MAIN DISHES

adobo pork tacos **86**
asian chicken salad **173**
asian grilled chicken **164**
barbacoa pork tacos **84**
basic-ally delicious slow cooker curry **153**
beef enchiladas with homemade
 enchilada sauce **68**
black bean stew **143**
black beans (over cilantro lime rice) **157**
black eyed pea soup **148**
breakfast burritos **70**
bri’s baked barbecue ribs **90**
bri’s easy kettle curry **132**
brown gravy beef stew **151**
“brown sugar” glazed ham **89**
bulgogi-flavored beef & broccoli **158**
burrito bowls **169**
cajun sausage, red beans & rice skillet **120**
chana dal & greens **134**
chicken caesar salad **170**
chicken in creamy dill sauce **108**
chickpea curry over caulitoes **124**
cilantro & lime marinated chicken **169**
colorful chicken chili **145**
colorful sweet & sour chicken stir-fry **110**
cornbread in a bowl + beans **177**

creamy broccoli bacon chowder **138**
creamy chicken gravy **107**
creamy eggs & spinach **122**
creamy sweet potato bisque **150**
crispy chicken thighs **97**
easy cheesy fiesta chowder **144**
easy mixed rice & beans **121**
easy saucy meatballs **66**
easy southwest soup **142**
easy thai turkey meatballs **67**
easy yogurt marinated chicken **165**
enchiladas verdes **69**
fajita salads **172**
fiesta casserole **72**
garlic herb broasted drumsticks **98**
glazed pork steaks **92**
greek chicken bake **80**
greek salads with quick
tzatziki dressing **171**
ground beef stroganoff **113**
gumbo **126**
ham & "potato" chowder **139**
happy harvest soup **147**
hawaiian pizza bake **74**
hearty barbecue soup **146**
hunter's venison stew over rice **152**
italian chicken bake **79**
italian meatball casserole **64**
italian salmon bake **81**
jambalaya **130**
japanese chicken **106**
kale, mushroom & ham skillet **119**
kate's weird pasta veggie bowl **176**
korean barbecue pan-fried chickpeas **123**
lasagna cabbage rolls or enchiladas **76**
lasagna soup **149**
lasagna stuffed spaghetti squash **75**
leftover turkey fried wrap **179**
lemon butter fried tilapia **100**

lentil, carrot & roasted
red pepper soup **136**
loaded cornbread casserole **73**
mango chutney chicken **95**
mom's chicken soup **137**
nutty slow cooker curry **156**
one pot pineapple chicken & rice **131**
pan-fried chicken strips **105**
pan-fried mushroom chicken **104**
philly cheesesteak beef roast **159**
philly cheesesteak skillet **111**
pineapple marinated chicken **163**
pizza boats **78**
quinoa lunch bowl **175**
ranch marinated chicken **166**
roast beef dinner **82**
roast beef melts **83**
saucy marinated chicken **167**
sausage packets **93**
sausage patty quiche **71**
sheet pan chicken fajitas **94**
shrimp & cheddar "grits" **103**
simple "brown sugar" grilled salmon **161**
simple soy salmon **162**
skillet sausage & cornbread supper **116**
skillet yumzetti **117**
slow cooker salsa verde chicken **160**
southwestern meatloaf **65**
spaghetti three ways **115**
spiced baked tilapia **99**
springy cabbage & sausage soup **141**
strawberry balsamic glazed pork **87**
strawberry, ham & swiss quesadilla **178**
strawberry, ham & swiss salad **174**
sweet onion teriyaki stir-fry **109**
sweet pepper shrimp curry **101**
sweet potato chana dal curry **154**
teriyaki baked chicken over rice **96**
thai curry **133**

turkey pot pie chowder **140**
western burgers **112**
zucchini fritter pizzas **118**
zucchini lasagna **77**

SIDE DISHES

adobo baked beans **212**
baked skillet dressing **214**
barbecue baked bean medley **211**
barbecue rice **204**
buttery garlic brussels sprouts **190**
cabbage, carrot & onion stir-fry **194**
cheesy party “potatoes” **217**
cilantro lime rice **205**
comforting slow cooker lentils **213**
creamy roasted eggplant **200**
crunchy rice **208**
fancy sautéed greens **198**
garlic, butter & herb roasted
 spaghetti squash **183**
garlic butter mushrooms **195**
garlic butter zoodles **183**
maple butter roasted squash **185**
mashed sweet potatoes **187**
mexican fried rice **209**
roasted brussels sprouts **190**
roasted butternut squash **184**
roasted carrots **189**
roasted okra **201**
roasted sweet potatoes three ways **186**
roasted teriyaki broccoli **202**
sautéed cabbage **193**
seasoned quinoa **203**
slow-cooked ham & collards **199**
slow cooker pinto beans **210**
sour cream & chive smashed caulitoes **196**
southwest cauliflower **197**
special roasted brussels sprouts **191**
special sautéed cabbage **193**

steamed dilly carrots **188**
sunshine rice **206**
sweet & sour rice **207**

SALADS

apple salad **238**
asian slaw & lettuce wraps **233**
cantaloupe raita **229**
classic egg salad **234**
cucumber raita **228**
dilly ham salad **235**
fancy cherry gello goblets **241**
faux tabbouleh **230**
festive broccoli salad **221**
mexican chicken salad **232**
mexican coleslaw **227**
pasta salad **225**
picnic radishto salad **224**
ranch cucumber salad **222**
raspberry & grated apple gello salad **239**
sophisticated coleslaw **226**
sparkling cherry berry gello salad **240**
strawberry & balsamic chicken salad **231**
three bean salad **223**
yogurt fruit salad **237**
yummy salmon dip salad **236**

SHAKES + DRINKS

banana milk **258**
banana & peanut butter shake **248**
chocolate-covered cranberry
 superfood shake **263**
chocolate dreamy **261**
classic strawberry milkshake **245**
cookie dough shake **247**
cranberry nog **286**
cranberry orange superfood shake **264**
cranberry wassail **285**
dreamy dairy-free chocolate shake **266**

drinkable chocolate custard **289**
five ingredient yogurt smoothie **250**
grab & go iced coffee **271**
grapefruit slushie **256**
ice creamed coffee **270**
mango strawberry kefir smoothie **254**
melty blueberry ice cream shake **246**
mocha frappé **273**
orange smoothie **251**
pb&j frappé **275**
pb&j kefir smoothie **255**
peach slushie **257**
peach smoothie **252**
peanut butter cookie nog **287**
peppermint chip frappé **276**
pumpkin pie milkshake **269**
ryan's spinach smoothie **249**
simple mixed berry smoothie **253**
s'mores frappé **274**
strawberry dreamy **262**
strawberry milk **259**
superfood breakfast smoothie **265**
surprise birthday cake shake **268**
the velvety golden detox **284**
vanilla frappé **272**
velvety autumn sip **282**
velvety cappuccino **278**
velvety drinkable custard **279**
velvety earl grey **277**
velvety ginger cookie sip **281**
velvety maple latte **280**
velvety peppermint sip **283**

ICE CREAM + FROZEN DESSERTS

angelic birthday cake ice cream **309**
angelic peanut butter cup ice cream **308**
basic vanilla scoopable ice cream **297**
brianafinger ice cream **302**

butter pecan frozen custard **301**
café au lait ice cream **312**
candy cane ice cream **304**
chocolate-covered peanut butter
ice cream bars **337**
creamy black cherry soft serve **316**
creamy red raspberry sherbet **313**
extreme chocolate ice cream **298**
foundational frozen custard **310**
frozen key lime pie **332**
frozen pumpkin pie **334**
fruit slush **335**
ice cream fried taco for one **327**
instant frozen blueberry pudding **325**
instant frozen chocolate pudding **324**
instant frozen lemon pudding **326**
light chocolate ice cream **311**
mango soft serve for one **321**
mochasicles **339**
no-bake cookie ice cream **303**
peach ice cream **317**
peanut butter cookie doughsicles **338**
pecan pie ice cream **307**
peppermint brownie ice cream cake **328**
peppermint ice cream sandwiches **330**
single-serve mint chocolate chip ice cream **323**
single-serve mocha chip frozen yogurt **319**
single-serve pb&j soft serve **320**
single-serve peach frozen yogurt **318**
single-serve peanut butter ice cream **322**
strawberry cardamom superfood ice cream **314**
strawberry delight popsicles **340**
strawberry frozen kefir **315**
strawberry kiwi popsicles **341**

CAKES + MUFFINS

blender banana muffins **364**
blueberry muffin for one **373**
briana's baking mix **345**
carrot cake **360**
carrot cake for one **362**
chocolate peppermint cupcakes **357**
chocolate pudding cake for one **352**
cinnamon roll cupcakes **356**
cream cheese chocolate chip
brownie cake **346**
cream cheese chocolate chip muffin **348**
lemon cream cheese cake **347**
mocha pudding cake for one **353**
morning glory muffins **365**
oat bran muffins **366**
peach & blueberry oat cake **363**
peanut butter pudding cake for one **354**
peppermint pudding cake **358**
pound cake with strawberries **355**
pumpkin cheesecake muffins **371**
pumpkin chip muffins **369**
pumpkin chip mug muffin **370**
the best blueberry muffins **372**
vanilla cream cheese
chocolate chip muffin **349**
vanilla pudding cake **350**
vanilla pudding cake for one **351**
zucchini spice muffins **367**

CANDIES, COOKIES + BARS

brianafinger bar for one **401**
brianafinger truffle fudge **384**
bri's best fudgy brownies **391**
chocolate chip cookie pie **389**
chocolate peanut butter snack bars **400**
coconut cream pie bars **398**
easy chocolate cake truffles **382**
goeey brownies **392**
joyous almond bites **380**
mounds of coconut treats **379**

peanut butter cookie dough fudge **383**
peanut butter cookies **388**
peanut butter cups **377**
pecan pie cheesecake bars **395**
peppermint truffle fudge **386**
raspberry crèmes **378**
raspberry crumble bars **396**
snickerdoodle truffles **381**
superfood brownies **393**
superfood single brownie **394**
trail mix bark **387**
trail mix snack bars **399**

DESSERTS

amazing turtle cheesecake **426**
black raspberry cheesecake **420**
blueberry cheesecake delight **413**
chai spice rice pudding **432**
cherry cobbler **407**
chocolate rice pudding **433**
classic cheesecake **418**
creamy pumpkin chocolate fried taco **438**
fresh strawberry pie **410**
fried apple pie **436**
hot chocolate custard **434**
hot pumpkin custard **435**
lemon cheesecake delight **414**
mocha cheesecake **425**
no-bake pumpkin cheesecake **417**
pb&j fried taco **437**
peach cobbler with biscuit topping **405**
peanut butter banana fried taco **439**
peanut butter chocolate cheesecake **422**
peppermint delight **416**
pumpkin donuts **409**
pumpkin torte **408**
quick pumpkin cheesecakes **428**
single-serve peach cobbler **406**
single-serve strawberry chia "tapioca" **431**
single-serve vanilla chia "tapioca" **430**
vanilla custard chia "tapioca" **429**

SNACKS + APPETIZERS

baba ghanoush **455**
basic cauliflower “hummus” **457**
buffalo chicken dip **461**
carrot cake greek yogurt snack **449**
chewy peanut butter protein bites **450**
chocolate chip cookie dough
 protein butter **451**
cinnamon “sugar” cottage cheese toast **452**
deviled eggs **468**
easy jalapeño poppers **467**
fiesta dip **460**
french onion veggie dip **458**
fresh nacho pizzas **470**
goldmine salsa **453**
greek dip **462**
greek yogurt variations **443**
guacamole **454**
marshmallowy fruit dip **459**
pb&j power bowl **448**
pigs in a blanket **466**
raspberry jalapeño baked brie **469**
refried bean dip **463**
regular yogurt variations **446**
roasted red pepper hummus **456**
single-serve greek yogurt variations **444**
veggie pizza **464**
yogurt parfaits **447**

SAUCES, SPICES, SPREADS + SYRUPS

asian vinaigrette **482**
balsamic & lime vinaigrette **481**
blueberry jam **487**
blueberry topping **493**
bri’s adobo sauce **477**
bri’s kickin’ barbecue sauce **476**
bri’s sweet & spicy rub **484**
chocolate peanut butter
 hardshell ice cream topping **489**
chunky cinnamon applesauce **488**
cow sauce **478**
cranberry syrup **492**
creamy sweet onion dressing **480**
foundational peanut butter topping **490**
mushroom soup/gravy **483**
perfect barbecue sauce
 (and pulled pork) **475**
pineapple sweet & sour sauce **479**
pumpkin butter **485**
waffle & pancake syrup **491**

FIND A *fuel type index*

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