



DOWNSHIFTOLOGY

Healthy Meal Prep

100+ Make-Ahead Recipes and
Quick-Assembly Meals

Lisa Bryan

FREE OF
Refined Sugar
& Gluten



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PHOTOGRAPHS BY REN FULLER



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introduction

I'll be honest, I never imagined that one day I'd write a cookbook. But then again, I also never imagined that I'd create a food blog or plaster my face across YouTube videos for millions of people around the world to see. Life is funny that way, isn't it?

When I first started Downshiftology, my goal was humble and simple—to inspire people to eat more vegetables, to cook from home more frequently, and to ditch processed food. I'm not a professional chef (or even a trained chef for that matter). I'm a former burned-out corporate gal who struggled to balance life and healthy eating while dealing with several autoimmune conditions and an overly sensitive gut. I'm an introvert, albeit a chatty one, who reluctantly started my YouTube channel to appease a few blog readers who asked for tutorial videos, and then I chuckled to myself at how silly it was for a forty-something to be starting a YouTube channel (I mean, I was double the age of the average YouTuber!).

Somewhere along the way, though, my moderate, mostly anti-inflammatory, and certainly not-perfect approach to eating clicked with a few of you, and then a few more, and before I knew it, what started out with me saying, "Oh, I'll just toss a few recipes on a website and cobble together a few videos" turned into my full-time job.

my wellness journey

I thought I was generally healthy for most of my life. Which kind of makes me laugh now, considering my diet was the “standard American diet,” full of processed food, fast food, sugar, and hard-to-pronounce ingredients. I was fairly active and assumed that because I was not overweight, I was healthy. Never in a million years did I correlate food and lifestyle with health.

In my twenties, my main nourishment came from fast food and processed food, with McDonald’s double cheeseburgers and Taco Bell Mexican pizzas always at the top of my list. I was also quite the sugar fiend and had a massive addiction to anything sweet and sugary, like candy, cakes, and pastries. I even thought about opening a bakery for a while!

In my thirties, my career progressed and I climbed the corporate ladder as an executive for healthcare companies. High levels of stress, long hours, and reduced sleep were now added to my lifestyle mix. Without really realizing it, I had become the quintessential type A corporate workaholic, grabbing coffee and snacks while running between meetings.

At this same time, mysterious symptoms were increasingly appearing. I had seasonal allergies for the first time in my life, gastrointestinal issues, and dry patches of skin on my legs and face. I suffered from dizziness and fainting episodes, as well as hormonal imbalances. But it was the massive fatigue that really got me. I’d go to bed at 8 p.m., sleep for ten hours, and still be tired the next day.

I visited several doctors and underwent lots of testing but was told that other than low blood pressure, I was the epitome of good health. I received inhalers for the asthma and

corticosteroids for the skin issues and was sent on my way. But deep in my core, I knew something was off. So I became a late-night Google-oholic and began connecting the dots myself. At the age of thirty-five, I received my first autoimmune diagnosis—celiac disease. From there, other diagnoses rolled in one after the other—Hashimoto's, psoriasis, and endometriosis—all within two years! As you can imagine, my world was flipped upside down.



the importance of real food and lifestyle

After I was diagnosed with celiac disease, I did just about everything wrong. I thought the easiest way to eat gluten-free would be to raid the entire gluten-free section of Whole Foods. So I dropped two hundred dollars on gluten-free packaged food the week after I was diagnosed.

Instead of feeling better, I actually felt worse for several months. And I triggered candida and SIBO (small intestinal bacterial overgrowth) because the packaged food contained massive quantities of sugar and unique, gluten-free starches that my body wasn't used to. My other symptoms also flared up, and I felt absolutely deflated. Wasn't going gluten-free supposed to make me feel better?

Desperate, I researched everything I could about autoimmune disease, nutrition, gut health, and the mind-body connection. I also began working with a functional medicine doctor who forced me to evaluate what I was putting into my body and how I was living my life. Long story short, I stopped eating processed foods and started eating whole, nutrient-dense foods, and I *finally* started to feel better!

Through trial and error, I eventually learned my body's unique triggers and began to reverse the autoimmune symptoms that had piled up. Within a year, simply through nutrition and lifestyle changes, virtually all my autoimmune symptoms disappeared—which I thought was nothing short of miraculous.

Today, a decade later, my wellness journey continues with just small tweaks here and there, because that simple, back-to-basic approach that I started with has proven to be the most sustainable. But just in case you think I've got this healthy thing

100 percent figured out, let me remind you that I still have challenges (hello, “the mena”—aka perimenopause). That’s why I’m all about progress over perfection and just doing the best I can day by day!



where meal prep fits in

When I changed my diet, I began meal prepping to prevent food waste. People always assume cooking for one person *must* be easier than cooking for a family. I mean, how hard can it be to whip up a single portion of something? Well, the truth is, it's actually difficult to scale down recipes to just a single portion, *and* I also couldn't eat the fresh produce I purchased fast enough. Spinach, berries, and zucchini were all going moldy in my fridge, and my potatoes were wildly sprouting to the point that it looked like I had a farm in my pantry. I was wasting food *and* money.

So I decided to do something different. I started prepping individual ingredients to create quick-assembly meals. First, I roasted a sheet pan of sweet potatoes and put them into a single container. Then I cooked some wild rice and put that into another container. I baked a couple of chicken breasts, shredded them, and stored them in a third container. I diced up a raw red onion, so I'd have to cry only once a week rather than every day of the week and placed that in yet another container. When I took a step back and looked at what I had done I was blown away! Not only was it fast and easy to prep individual ingredients, but I now had this astounding *buffet bar* in my fridge. I could combine those individual ingredients with other fresh foods like avocados, cherry tomatoes, nuts, and seeds, and when I added a sauce or dressing, I was able to create delicious and flavorful meals throughout the day in less than five minutes.

I originally shared this meal prep concept on my YouTube channel several years ago, and it absolutely went viral! Needless

to say, my approach resonated with many of you, and I'd wager that's how many of you discovered Downshiftology.

But as much as I love individual ingredient meal prep and quick-assembly meals, it's not the only way I prepare meals. I'm a staunch believer that in order to build sustainable healthy habits, you need variety—in colors, nutrients, and flavors. That's why my weekly meal-prep routine also includes big-batch and freezer-friendly recipes such as soups and stews, as well as stir-fries, casseroles, and even breakfast items, like chia pudding, that will last for months in the freezer. Between quick-assembly and storage-friendly recipes, I'm now covered with an assortment of healthy food that can be easily assembled or quickly reheated, with very little effort.

The recipes in this book, like my diet, are 100 percent gluten-free. I also typically avoid refined sugar, and most dairy, though I do enjoy yogurt and a little cheese here and there. So while you may notice sprinkles of feta or goat cheese on recipes, know that it's optional and you can make every recipe in this cookbook dairy-free. I'm all about healthy with a dash of comforting normalcy. That's also why you'll find a dessert chapter—something not found in most meal-prep cookbooks. I'm a fan of healthier sweet treats that can be portioned into smaller bites and nibbles to satisfy sugar cravings in a balanced way. Balance is key, both on the plate and in life—it's the Downshiftology way!

As you flip the pages of this book, I hope you'll be inspired to get back to basics and embrace the versatility of whole food ingredients. My motto with Downshiftology is to “take life down a notch,” and what better way to start than with a new approach to healthy eating, thinking about meal prep in an entirely new way, and giving yourself permission to switch directions to a simpler

path (it's never too late and you're never too old). I'll be over here cheering for you, along with the entire community of downshiffters!

Xo
Lisa

IS PREPPED FOOD LESS NUTRITIOUS?

This is one of the most common questions I get. And my short answer is this—yes, slicing and dicing fruits and vegetables ahead of time can cause them to lose a small amount of nutrients. Fat-soluble vitamins may oxidize, and water-soluble vitamins can leech out (for instance, when celery is stored in water). But (and this is a biggie) opting for healthy prepped food, even with a small amount of nutrient loss, *is still better for you* than the alternative—grabbing takeout or eating unhealthy convenience food. So it's best to keep it in perspective. As long as you're prioritizing whole foods, you're doing a great job!

a sample day of meals

For each of these meals, it takes about five minutes to warm up a few ingredients or slice and dice a few veggies, then assemble. It's not the monotonous meal prep you may be used to (ahem, rice, chicken, and veggies for five days straight), and you can serve it up faster than you can order from Uber Eats (and obviously, it's far healthier). In my meal prep world, a day may look like this:

BREAKFAST

Leftover **Balsamic Roasted Mushrooms** ([this page](#)), and **Garlic Sautéed Beet Greens** ([this page](#)) with a jammy, **soft-boiled egg** (see [this page](#)) on top.

LUNCH

A macro bowl with **Lemon Herb Rice** ([this page](#)), fresh baby spinach, and diced veggies (tomatoes, cucumber, and red onion), topped with **Mediterranean Lamb Meatballs** ([this page](#)) and a dollop of **Tzatziki** ([this page](#)).

DINNER

Reheated **Roasted Chicken with Fennel, Pear, and Onion** ([this page](#)) on a mound of **Garlicky Root Vegetable Mash** ([this page](#)).

DESSERT