

## #214 - Your Guide to Summer Meals

Hi there! You're listening to The Lazy Genius Podcast! I'm Kendra Adachi and I'm here to help you be a genius about the things that matter and lazy about the things that don't. Today is episode 214 - your guide to summer meals. The energy in my DMs and in the weekly question box on Instagram and just generally in the air is a touch desperate - understandably so - about cooking food this summer. Schedules are different, numbers of bodies are different, and we're all still very tired from this last year, so making decisions and continuing to feed ourselves and other humans... I mean, it feels like it will never get easier. I have a little book coming out next March that could help with that a bit, but until then, this episode is for you. I'm going to share five tips for cooking your summer meals, and all of them fall under one umbrella - I want you to cook like you're on vacation. Cook like you're on vacation. We're going to talk about how you think about your meals, cook them, and eat them through the lens of how you might eat on vacation. And if you're going on vacation and have to feed your people, this episode will obviously be very helpful to you. Now here's what this episode isn't; it isn't a list of meals to make. That episode is episode 164 called The Summer Meal Formula. It explains how to put together your own summer meal formula, the actual recipes and stuff, and then there's a blog post where I share my specific meal formula from last summer, complete with links and all the things. So if you haven't listened to that episode or need a refresher, press pause real quick and go listen to episode 164. You don't need that episode to understand this one, but the two together are an impressive duo. Tina Fey Amy Poehler level partnership here.

Okay, so let's talk about how to eat like you're on vacation. Because really I think that's the key to eating in the summer. Eat like you're on vacation. Approach it the same way. Now, there's a good chance we approach vacation meals differently. Let's be real about that. For some of you, you're like, "um, it's vacation. I am not cooking at all." This is fair. When I say eat like you're on vacation, I mostly mean you're taking most of your food to someone else's kitchen far away with different schedules and needed flexibility. Now if you eat like this at home, you obviously get to stay in your own kitchen. This is a perk. But the overall approach could be similar and help you a lot.

First component of eating like you're on vacation: you have little variety. Right? Think about it, you think through how you can use ground beef a couple of ways, you have tacos more than once, you can only eat what you brought with you, but no one really minds that much. The expectations are lower when you're on vacation. Everybody snacks and assembles and knows that there isn't much variety and is okay with it. Which leads me to the second component.

The second component of eating like you're on vacation are the two tentpoles: snacking and assembly. There is so much snacking on vacation. Bowls of apples, bags of chips, cereal, popsicles, popcorn, plates of stuff you cut up, kind of like a snack platter, and people just munch throughout the day. There are also so many meals you just put together. Assembly. Tacos, sandwiches, rice bowls, oven nachos, a bunch of grilled meat and then whatever sides anyone can scrounge up. For some reason, we don't let ourselves lean into snacking and assembly when we're at home, but summer is the perfect season to embrace snacking and assembly.

Number three, leftovers and weird meals are essential. Think about your last day or two of vacation at your beach house or whatever. There are so many random foods left, and everyone just eats whatever is there before you pack up and go home. It's acceptable on vacation to eat like that, but again, we don't embrace that rhythm during the summer. Let whatever food exist in whatever meal when you're trying to faze out the food from the past week.

Number four, make eating out special and intentional. When my family went on vacation as a kid, we could only really afford one meal at a restaurant, so when we went, it was so much fun. So much fun. It was something everyone looked forward to and was part of the plan. You can do the same thing this summer. Your budget might not be one that you want to eat out one meal a week during the summer, but maybe you could do one every two weeks. It's likely that you're throwing away a good bit of food too from overplanning and making your summer meals complicated, so you might have more cash available for a fun meal out than you think, even to a cheap burger joint or something. But as you plan a week, just for the summer and its particular vibe, make eating out special and intentional. Not necessarily fancy or expensive. Just special and intentional.

And number five, let meals be as big or small as you need them to be. Depending on your life or your imagined vacation, breakfast might make more sense as the biggest meal. I think about if you go to the pool... mornings are slower and you're filling the time until you can actually go to the pool, so you might make pancakes and bacon and whatever else for a big summer breakfast. Then you take sandwiches and snacks to the pool and have something simple for dinner. Dinner doesn't have to be the biggest meal, and dinner doesn't have to look like fall or winter or spring dinner. You don't have to do meat and three or create a ton of variety if that isn't important to you.

That's the thing here, right? You need to prioritize what matters most to you. If sanity matters more than variety, eat that way. If your garden matters more than a stocked pantry, eat that way. If versatility matters more than a concrete plan, eat that way. You decide what matters most to you.

Now how can you eat like you're on vacation when you're at home? How do you find that rhythm? This is a placeholder. Just a rhythm where you can begin and tweak and make it work for you.

First thing, you're working on a week rotation, right? Most vacations last a week. There are two main things to include in your weekly rhythm: a scrounge day and a replenish day. And those two can exist in the same day if you want, if that works better for you.

So what happens on the scrounge day? That's the "eat whatever is there for whatever meal you want" day. Cereal boxes are low, there are bits and bobs from all the dinners, you eat up whatever is in the fridge or pantry, even if it doesn't make much culinary sense, and that's the expected way of things. There aren't a lot of rules because you need to eat up the food. If a kid

finishes off that bag of chips for breakfast, it's not the worst thing in the world. I actually really love those days on vacation. It's like going to a weird version of Golden Corral with a very eclectic buffet.

Now let's talk about the replenish day. The replenish day is when you make a new plan (or repeat the old one another week), you get groceries, and maybe you batch-cook some things so they're ready for later in the week. It doesn't have to be the entire day. You just know what your general assembly meals and snacks are, you pick that stuff up at the store, and you get it ready as much as you'd like.

Now scrounge day and replenish day could go on the same day; that way you don't have to think about what meals are on days you're cooking and/or planning for later. Your call. If that doesn't work for you, you could always make your special and intentional eating out meal to be on a replenish day so you're not having to plan anything.

So decide if you like the idea of combining the two or if you'd like to keep them separate, and then look at your energy and your family's weekly rhythm. When does it make the most sense to put the replenish day? That's where you start. What's the day where you have the time and energy to think and do that? That's kind of your "we're about to leave for vacation day!" week after week during the summer. Keep that day of the week fixed until it doesn't work anymore.

Decide if you want scrounge day to be on the same day or not. If it's not the same day, scrounge day always goes before replenish day. Then use the summer meal formula or five tenets of eating like you're on vacation: being okay with less variety, embracing snacking and assembly meals and weird buffets of leftovers, eat out intentionally, and remove the rules and expectations you have around what a meal is supposed to look like.

I don't expect you to adopt this completely and every single week of the summer, but I do think it's likely I've said something that's recalibrated your summer cooking brain just a little to help you adjust even one notch to a simpler approach to summer meals. And don't forget to listen to that summer meal formula episode. That thing is so daggum helpful.

But the idea here is simple: eat like you're on vacation. Eat with simple, accepted limits that lean into the summer season. Adjust your expectations of what meals look like in a season that doesn't typically look like any other. I love batch cooking like you often do on vacation and in the summer because you're not having to heat up stuff every single day, especially when it's hot. This very simple mindset, however you'd like to implement it, is a super helpful one. And it's only for a season. Try it one week and see what happens. Pick a replenish day, plan like you're going on vacation, and see how that week feels. If it doesn't work, don't throw the whole thing out. Just adjust what didn't work. If you have the expectation that this is a full system from A to Z and if one letter doesn't work you have to throw out the whole thing, you will be very frustrated. You will adjust your approach to summer meals every week. You'll learn what works and what doesn't. You're smart and will make changes that make sense for you. You'll have a better idea of where and how to apply Lazy Genius principles to your summer meals simply because your

expectations are seasonally appropriate and you're just paying attention and starting small with what you see. I hope there's something in here that helps you have a deep breath about your summer meals whether at home or on actual vacation.

Okay, before we go let's celebrate the Lazy Genius of the Week! This week it's Letoya whose last name I'm pretty sure is Jenkins? I met Letoya on my mini book tour last August during the release of *The Lazy Genius Way* where I would just tell Instagram "Hey I'll be at this bookstore in an hour if you want to come do a socially distant book signing!" It was one of my favorite days ever because I really named what mattered that day, my book launch day. I didn't want to be stuck to a screen refreshing Amazon rankings. I didn't want work to feel like work. And I also knew I wanted some detox time by myself. My favorite way to get that is to go for a long drive on back roads and listen to music, so on August 11th, the day my book released, I drove around North Carolina and met up with people at random places. I stopped at the Jeni's ice cream in Charlotte, told Instagram I'd be there, and Letoya was there randomly visiting from Ohio with her daughter, and we sat outside with a couple of other folks and ate ice cream and took silly socially distant pictures, and it was just lovely. Anyway, I'm celebrating Letoya as your Lazy Genius of the week because she tagged me in a post where she made Change Your Life Chicken Shawarma, a staple summer recipe, y'all, and she has some other really great recipes on her feed! Food that feels accessible to most everybody with the recipes right in the caption. So check out [@thefouronenine](#) and that's all the numbers spelled out to see what Letoya is sharing. Also she's just a really lovely human in general. I'm sure that's true of every Lazy Genius of the Week, but she's one I've actually gotten to meet in person, so I can vouch for it. Thanks for being awesome, Letoya!

Okay, that's all for today! Thanks so much for listening, and until next time, be a genius about the things that matter and lazy about the things that don't. I'm Kendra, and I'll see you next week!