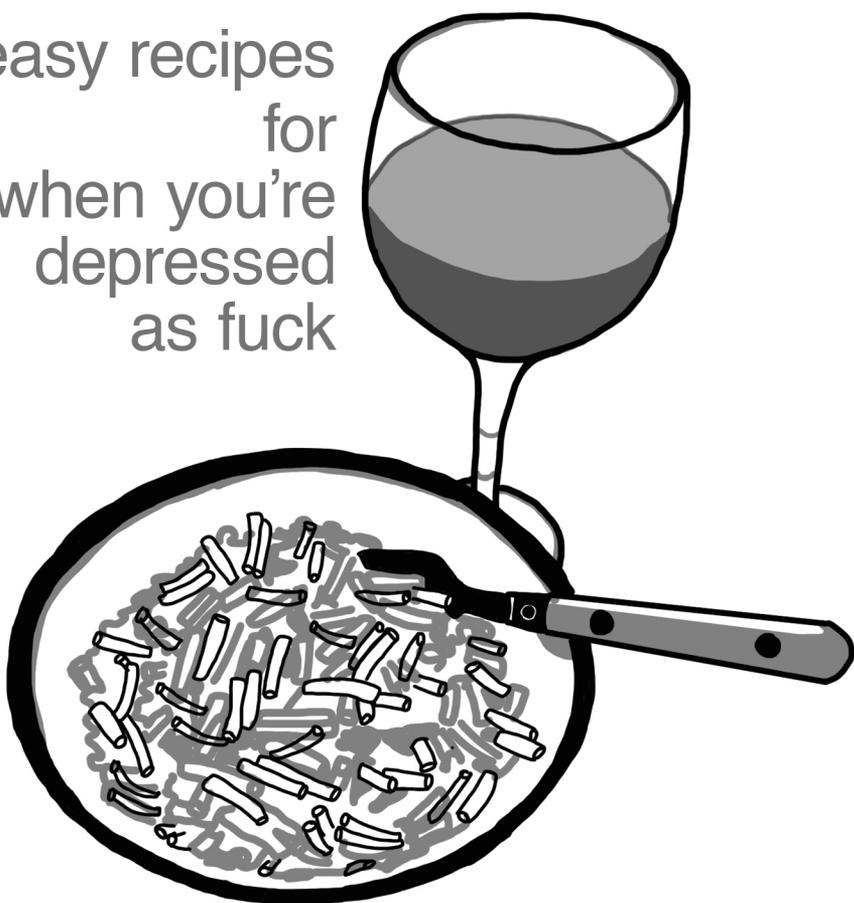


# DEPRESSION COOKING

easy recipes  
for  
when you're  
depressed  
as fuck



# PREFACE

Content warning: I'm going to touch on diet culture, fatphobia, disordered eating, my body and my weight.

This zine belongs to everyone. It is a love letter to my depressed kin. And since this is a very long letter, I've put it in a zine. It builds on many people's knowledge. It doesn't belong to anyone in particular. It is 100% copyleft, so make as many copies as your heart desires. In the spirit of community I just ask that you never sell copies of these. Because this is a love letter after all, and would you sell a love letter?

I think the beauty of zines is that they blur categories. Zines make everyday people into artists, cooks, and poets. Zines create space for us to make things and share information while rejecting the title of 'expert' and complicating the idea of needing to be an expert on anything to write about it. So here I am, once again, a non-expert, writing something relating to mental health with the hopes of being a helpful human in this wide, wild world.

I've wanted to make this zine for some time. It's been what feels like a never-ending project. For the past year, it's been scrawled in notes on my phone and sticky notes on my desk, scattered and needing gathering. At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, I was unemployed for four months. I spent my days cooking three meals a day and eating them. I thought about my relationship to food; why does food make me both cry with joy and pleasure but tremble with frustration and anger? I realized something fundamental—between breakfast, lunch, and dinner we are always waiting for our next meal. And if food is so essential to our existence, wouldn't that make feeding ourselves three meals a day the height of depression victory? I say yes. I say eating in the face of mental illness is the biggest fuck you to depression, which is trying to snuff us out. Not today, depression!

During COVID and unemployment, I spent some time thinking about the way I was socialized around food, its relationship to my body, and the way that manifested in my brain. It finally clicked that being raised in a home deep-rooted in fatphobia and diet culture made me afraid of my own hunger. This fear translated into patterns of disordered eating. As I entered my twenties, this was exacerbated by poor mental health and no energy to cook due to low mood, and sent my relationship with food into a downward spiral. By April, 2018, I weighed just 80 pounds and acquired most of my nutritional value from Divalproex, Wellbutrin, Seroquel and Latuda (mental health medications). Through lots of hard work over the past three years, I've been gradually improving my relationship to food, which I've learned is intricately tied to my mental health and my body.

Through my contemplations on food I decided I wanted to create something that I could have given my 18-year-old self when I moved out of my parents' home. I wanted to give her something that communicated how important food was, to tell her that we need it. That food is connected to our bodies and our mental health. That, in turn, our mental health is connected to our bodies and to food—to tell her to EAT. Through the highs of hypomania and the lows of bipolar depression, I wanted to give her something that would help her eat. In a world where the individual is the most important unit in society, where she was left to fend for herself at meal time stacked against the propaganda of diet culture and the white vegans in her university town who posited mac and cheese as a crime against humanity, I wanted to make a tool to make caring for herself a little easier. What if cooking was simpler?

This zine offers what I hope to be low energy meal solutions for depressed humans, with the younger version of myself as the primary audience. I recognize that this might not work for everyone. This might not work for people with different disabilities, dietary restrictions, allergies, and religious considerations that I haven't included. It's a small project and I'd encourage you to

reach out to other wonderful resources in the world if this doesn't work for you. And of course, add your own suggestions and remixes in the margins. Consider visiting @disabledmeals on Instagram and a recipe book I'd love to get my hands on: Cook as You Are by Ruby Tandoh.

I've compiled this first and foremost from cooking tips and tricks I've picked up in the past 10 years, discovered through the pure willpower and curiosity involved in survival. Second, I've collected ideas from strangers through social media and friends through conversation, which I've incorporated. The thank you list would be hundreds of people (or simply usernames) long so I'm not even going to start. But I will thank four people. First is Anna Bowen from Artseverywhere.ca who reached out to me with a pitch invitation and helped me find a home for this project. Second is Abedar at Hamilton Artists' Inc who encouraged me to apply for funding so that the first run of this zine could be shared with the world for free. Third is Jeffrey who always does the dishes and loves me even when I'm hangry. Last is my maternal grandmother Elizabeth Francis. She taught me that all you need to do to start cooking a meal is to fry up a chopped onion and garlic in a pan with oil—and then you can do anything! Whenever I'm stumped with what to cook, I start with an onion. It's the foundation of how I cook. However, we won't be chopping any onions for the purposes of this zine. I've found that when you induce crying in depressed humans, it can be hard to stop the crying. And we want to focus on the eating. So let's eat!

- Sonali Menezes

## INTRODUCTION

Here's how I've formatted Depression Cooking:

Most recipes have two main formats or options. The first is under the category of 'Less Spoons (energy)' and the second is a remix of the first recipe under the category of 'More Spoons (energy).' These two categories are based on a theory called 'Spoon Theory' that was developed by Christine Miserandino to help define what it feels like to live with a chronic illness. In Miserandino's case she used spoon theory to describe what it's like to live with Lupus. The basic principle is that a spoon is used as a metaphor to describe how much energy you might have. The spoon represents a finite amount of energy that needs to be rationed each day to survive. I'm using this theory to apply to depression. Imagine that each spoon represents a task. Let's say you need to shower, eat breakfast and go to work. If you have low energy one morning because of your depression, we might say you have started the day with 5 spoons. Showering and getting dressed might take one spoon of energy; preparing and eating breakfast might take another spoon of energy, and traveling to work and putting in a full day's work will take up more spoons. Once you're out of spoons, you must rest to recharge your spoons. I'm hoping to share meal ideas that take 'less spoons,' or require as little energy as possible. If you're having a better day, or find yourself with more spoons (energy), you can try the 'remix' or second version of the recipe. And of course, you're the expert on your own survival and will have many of your own remixes up your sleeve that you can try. I'd encourage you to add your ideas to the margins. Eventually I'll make a second 'tried and true' edited edition with more remixes and ideas and I'd love to include yours!

There are also three sections that use a 'base' food which you can then spruce up or add more nutrition to with additional toppings (like adding veggie ground to mac and cheese for

protein for example). These sections are Mac and Cheese, Instant Ramen and Toast. I call these base foods the Holy Trinity of Depression Cooking. They're magic.

I didn't add preparation times because everyone takes different times to make things and there's no such thing as a standard time to scramble an egg. I also didn't add servings because one serving of food for me might be two servings of food for you; we all need to eat different amounts. What I did add was an estimation of the dishes that would be dirtied during food preparation so you can decide how many dishes you'd like to wash, because that's an important part of cooking. And of course, in the center spread you'll find the Depression Cooking Manifesto. Feel free to remove this page from the zine and tape it up in your kitchen if your heart desires.

I've always been a guess-timate kind of cook. After spending time with other depressed friends and family, I've learned that a lot of depressed humans really appreciate measured amounts. For the purposes of this zine I've tried my best to add measurements. If you want to try guess-timating (guessing & estimating) please do. Keep in mind that I've never used recipes for the meals I've put in the zine. They're very forgiving to different proportions. Especially the smoothie section!

# CONTENTS

1	.....	PREFACE
4	.....	INTRODUCTION
6	.....	CONTENTS
7	.....	GENERAL TIPS
9	.....	FROZEN FOODS
10	.....	BREAKFAST FOR EVERY MEAL OF THE DAY
15	.....	DEPRESSION COOKING MANIFESTO
17	.....	MAC + CHEESE
19	.....	SMOOTHIES
21	.....	ADULT LUNCHABLES
23	.....	NO FRY KIMCHI FRIED RICE
24	.....	INSTANT RAMEN / NOODLES
26	.....	THINGS TO PUT ON TOAST
28	.....	QUICK QUICHE
29	.....	CHOCOLATE TOFU PUDDING
30	.....	MAC + CHEESE FOR ONE MIX

# GENERAL TIPS:

Difficulty eating?  
Small appetite?  
Meal time causing stress? Try making meal time more enjoyable.

While eating: Light a candle, watch a movie or TV show. I like watching food related shows like Street Food: Latin America on Netflix.

My go-to dinner music is always Billie Holiday (or go to page 30).

Coffee can suppress your appetite. Try drinking coffee after your meals (instead of before) to avoid this.

A meal replacement drink can do wonders when you're not up for eating or cooking. My favourite is chocolate Ensure.

Ensure often goes on sale at Shoppers Drug Mart. I stock up on them when they're on sale and collect optimum points.

Set aside time to do food prep when you have more energy/ spoons.

Eating alone? Try video calling a friend while you're eating and have your meals together virtually.

Faster boiling: Try boiling water in an electric kettle first then pouring the water into a pot on the stove.

Mac and Cheese is a food group.

**THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS 'CLEAN' EATING.**

To make things easier, I cook everything on the stove element on medium heat (5) and everything in the oven at 425 F. All my food is perfectly fine.

Think about foods that excite you and make you happy. Give yourself permission to eat them.

Eating ready-made foods is a totally okay way to feed yourself. This includes take-out, delivery, and frozen meals.

You can always reach out to a friend or family member to cook a meal for you.

Sometimes adhering to vegan or vegetarian diets can be difficult when we're depressed and food options already feel limited.

If you're a vegan or vegetarian, it's okay to give yourself a break. Sometimes these diets can also be good fodder for disordered eating when we're depressed.

Have you tried adding balsamic reduction? I put that shit on everything.

Write a list of your favourite comfort foods to keep on hand when you're feeling down and can't remember.

If you're using a food ordering app, try going to past orders and re-ordering to avoid getting overwhelmed by choices.

Every time you cook, try to make two portions; one to eat in the moment and one for leftovers for another meal.

Nauseous? Try ginger tea or ginger candy. Eat something pickled. Stay hydrated.

**There are NO BAD FOODS.**

Make a meal plan for the week. Roughly map out what you're eating for each meal. This will aid with groceries, help with food wastage, and lessen meal time anxiety.

# FROZEN FOODS

Frozen TV dinners: Okay, here's my opinion: frozen TV dinners can be great in a pinch when you don't have energy to cook. Only problem? I'm always hungry afterwards. I have yet to find a TV dinner that doesn't leave me hungry afterwards. I'm a very small human and if I don't find them to be enough food for me, I can imagine non-hobbit sized humans to find the same. Here are some frozen foods I do like instead:

---

## FROZEN PRE-COOKED HONEY GARLIC CHICKEN WINGS

Is it a bit over-the-top to say pre-cooked honey garlic chicken wings saved my life? Here's the scoop:

- they're pre-cooked so the worst thing that can happen if you under-cook them is that they will be cold.
  - cook them in a toaster oven. Use a small baking tray (less dishes) and the toaster oven heats up faster than a large traditional oven.
  - line the tray with parchment paper that you can throw out instead of greasing the pan.
  - pair them with frozen fries or minute rice and some baby carrots and you've got all your food groups covered baby!
- 

## FROZEN PEROGIS

I boil my frozen perogis until they float to the surface of the pot. I remove them from the water with a wooden spoon and place them in a bowl with a teaspoon of butter and mix until the butter evenly coats the perogis. Then I add a handful of pre-shredded cheese and if I have more energy, some chopped up green onion. Eat with sour cream and enjoy!

---

## FROZEN PIZZA

My biggest and best secret to making frozen pizza better? Add more toppings before you put it in the oven. I usually add more pre-shredded cheese and a handful of spinach. Sometimes I'll chop up a mushroom or two.

# BREAKFAST FOR EVERY MEAL OF THE DAY

---

Meal categories, or the types of food we eat at certain times of the day, don't need to be observed for Depression Cooking. Cereal for dinner? Why the heck not? Ice cream for lunch? Don't mind if I do. All food has nutrition. Eating something for a meal is better than eating nothing. The Depression Cooking motto: is it edible? Cool. Put it in your mouth.

# GRAB + GO MIX + MATCH

Grab one item from table 1 and one item from table 2. These are no-cook and just grab options.

①

## A glass of plain Kefir

Kefir is a fermented milk drink, sort of like a drinkable yogurt. Last winter I had an annoying (and painful) UTI that refused to go away. After three rounds of antibiotics, my gut was fucked up. I started drinking Kefir for the probiotics and realized how magical it is! Even though I'm lactose intolerant, similar to most yogurts, the lactose in kefir is less and doesn't bother me.

## A chocolate Ensure or another meal replacement drink

My sister got me drinking Ensure this year. I usually buy the High Protein or Plus Calories versions.

②

## A banana or apple

## A pop tart

## A granola bar

My favourites are Nature Valley sweet and salty peanut, Kashi dark chocolate, almond sea salt chewy chia granola bars, and LaraBar cashew.

## A Muffin

## An Avocado

I cut the avocado in half and remove the pit with a knife or my fingers. Sprinkle with salt and pepper and then eat with a spoon straight out of the skin.

# OATMEAL

## LESS SPOONS (energy)

### DIRECTIONS:

1. Follow the directions of the pouch and mix in the required amount of milk or dairy alternative. (I always use milk here instead of water because of the added protein and flavour).
2. Add sugar OR honey and mix (if packet is flavoured, skip this step).
3. Add desired optional toppings.

DIRTY DISHES: 1 bowl, 1 spoon

### INGREDIENTS:

- microwave oatmeal pouch
- milk or dairy alternative (soy, coconut, oat, almond)
- 1 tsp sugar or honey

### OPTIONAL TOPPINGS:

- handful of frozen blueberries or sliced banana
- 1 tsp hemp hearts
- 1 tsp chopped walnuts (or any nut)
- 1 tsp dried cranberries (or any dried fruit)
- 1 tsp shredded coconut
- 1 tsp chocolate chips

## REMIX MORE SPOONS (energy)

Overnight oats is the no-cook sibling of oatmeal. It does require some advance planning. You do all the same steps except instead of placing the oats in the microwave, you cover them and put them in the fridge overnight and they are ready to eat the next morning. I like to make them when I have a busy day the next day. I used to make overnight oats in mason jars when I was a student and take them to my morning classes. My favourite toppings (more spoons) are: diced granny smith apple, chopped dried apricot, hemp hearts, and shredded coconut.

# SCRAMBLED EGGS

I can eat eggs for any and every meal of the day! They're easy and always gentle on my tummy. They also don't have a strong scent if you're feeling repulsed by strong scents. Sometimes omelettes feel like climbing a mountain. Scrambled is always the Depression Cooking way to go.

## LESS SPOONS (energy)

### DIRECTIONS:

1. Crack eggs into a bowl.
2. Add milk.
3. Scramble with fork.
4. Put oil or butter into a hot pan and pour in eggs.
5. Throw in a handful of spinach.
6. Push mixture around with a wooden spoon until eggs are no longer runny.
7. Add salt and eat out of the pan.

DIRTY DISHES: 1 bowl, 1 fork, 1 pan, 1 wooden spoon. Remixes: add dirty cutting board, 1 knife, 1 teaspoon

### INGREDIENTS:

- 2 or more eggs (you decide based on your appetite)
- 1 handful of pre-washed spinach
- 1 tsp of butter or oil
- sprinkle of salt
- splash of milk (1/4 cup)

### OPTIONAL REMIXES:

- A) throw in a chopped tomato
- B) At step 3, add in a half tsp of paprika and a half tsp of turmeric (this is magic)
- C) do both A and B remixes together

## MORE SPOONS (energy)

- A) Once eggs are cooked, transfer from pan to a piece of buttered toast and eat.
- B) Once eggs are cooked, transfer to a pre-cooked and buttered tortilla or naan, or paratha, or roti. Option to add hot sauce or spoonful of salsa or a handful of pre-shredded cheese. Roll into a wrap and eat. Both of these remixes add one additional dirty dish: a plate.

# DEPRESSION PARFAIT

## LESS SPOONS (energy)

### DIRECTIONS:

1. spoon 1 cup of yogurt into a bowl (no need to measure, eyeball it!)
2. Cut a banana in half. Peel one half of the banana and using a butter knife, slice up the banana directly from your hand into the bowl. No need to use a cutting board.
3. Pour a handful of granola from the box into your bowl.

DIRTY DISHES: 1 bowl, 1 spoon, 1 knife

### INGREDIENTS:

**1 cup of high protein yogurt**

My favourites are Liberte greek yogurt, or President's Choice Skyr yogurt.

**half a banana**

**handful of granola**

My favourite is Quaker Harvest Crunch Granola Cereal.

## REMIX MORE SPOONS (energy) CHIA PUDDING

### DIRECTIONS:

Similar to overnight oats, we're going to make chia pudding. Make it in the evening, refrigerate overnight and it's ready to eat in the morning.

1. Mix 1 cup of coconut milk and 2 heaping tbsp of chia seeds. Cover and place in the fridge overnight and it's ready to eat in the morning. If the pudding is too loose (and not thick) add another tbsp of chia seeds and refrigerate for 1 more hour before eating.
2. Try substituting the yogurt in your depression parfait for chia pudding OR try my favourite: half chia pudding, half yogurt.

### INGREDIENTS:

- 1 cup of coconut milk
- 2 tbsp of chia seeds

# THE DEPRESSION COOKING MANIFESTO

is it edible? Cool. Put it in your mouth.  
 it's better to eat something than nothing  
 we're in the business of surviving, baby  
 we eat in the face of depression! Fuck you and you + you!  
 meal categories? No thanks.  
 breakfast for every meal of the day, we say!  
 in the depression cooking meal-plan, there are no bad foods  
 all foods have nutrition and all foods feed our bellies + bodies  
 individually wrapped microwavable TV dinner? Bring it on.  
 and individualist consumerist choices are not going to save the planet. Large-scale  
 systemic change does. Industries are our largest polluters, not you - you are one depressed  
 human trying to survive under the crushing weight of capitalism.  
 You, you are doing just fine sunshine.  
 Mac and Cheese is the very first food group.  
 Fuck Emma W\*\*\* and any white vegan who will shame you into believing otherwise  
 Shame will get us nowhere  
 Remember to worship the Holy Trinity: the Mac + Cheese, the instant ramen and the Holy Toast  
 This is the foundation. Start here and the meal possibilities are  
 absolutely endless  
 When too depressed to chew, make a smoothie  
 When too depressed to blend, drink an Ensure  
 Remember, a bowl of popcorn will sometimes suffice  
 Cheese and crackers will always do  
 a bowl of ice cream too  
 Is it edible? Cool. Put it in your mouth  
 It's better to eat something than nothing  
 We're in the business of surviving, baby



# MAC + CHEESE

Macaroni and Cheese is the very first food group of Depression Cooking. I like to think of Mac and Cheese as part of the 'Holy Trinity.' There's Mac and Cheese, Instant Ramen and Toast. These are 'base' foods. They're easy to prepare and the best way to maximize their nutritional value and to add variety to your diet is by adding toppings. Use these three base foods and you'll survive, I promise!

Some preliminary tips: I find the generic brands of Kraft dinner are cheaper and just as tasty as the name brand. Follow the cooking directions on the box. If cooking stove-top, try the 'faster boiling' method. This means boiling water in an electric kettle, then pouring it into a pot on the stove and putting the element on high. My dad taught me this tip and it is amazing.

Cook your mac and cheese and choose a protein and a vegetable to add and baby, you've got yourself a well-rounded meal!

## ADDITIONS/TOPPINGS

### PROTEIN (choose one)

- frozen meatballs • frozen veggie meatballs • fresh or frozen veggie ground • fully-cooked ground beef
- frozen fully cooked shrimp • canned lentils • canned black beans • cubed ham (or any luncheon meat) • canned tuna (spicy thai flavour, lemon and dill flavour or any flavour you heart desires) • shredded cheese of any kind • prosciutto • pre-cooked bacon

### VEGGIES (choose one)

- frozen peas • frozen shelled edamame • frozen or canned corn
- frozen green beans • frozen veggie mix (peas, carrots, corn, green beans) • fresh or frozen chopped broccoli • fresh mushrooms (chopped) • fresh or frozen spinach • fresh or frozen kale • fresh pre-shredded carrot

My favourite side dish for mac and cheese is a pickle (or a few) straight out of the jar

### FLAVOUR (choose one or a few or none)

- canned tomato sauce • canned tomato meat sauce • sriracha • Frank's red hot sauce or any hot sauce • ketchup • fresh basil • fresh cilantro (if you're into that you weirdo, gross) • fresh garlic (try the pre-chopped stuff that comes in a jar) • salsa • pepper • sliced or whole olives • pesto

### Preparation tips:

- When adding frozen vegetables, try throwing them into the boiling water in the last few minutes of boiling the macaroni noodles and they'll defrost quickly. This also works for fresh broccoli, kale or mushrooms if you'd like to cook them a little bit instead of eating them raw in the mac and cheese, whatever you prefer.
- Try defrosting frozen fully cooked meats and veggie meats in the microwave on high or on the 'defrost' setting.
- Place fully cooked frozen shrimp in a bowl of cold water to defrost.
- Instead of dirtying a cutting board and knife, rip up basil, cilantro, kale, spinach, ham, prosciutto etc with your fingers.

## REMIXES

- Serve up your mac and cheese in a leaf of romaine lettuce and eat it like a taco (thanks for the tip Margaret!)
- don't add any toppings and drink an Ensure on the side instead

# SMOOTHIES

Ever feel too depressed to chew? Like maybe your tongue is too big for your mouth and there's no space in your throat for a solid meal? Me too. Try a smoothie.

## Here are my general tips:

- You don't need a recipe for a smoothie per se. Start with the frozen fruits of your choice (maybe banana and blueberries), add the liquid of your choice (think dairy or a dairy alternative, maybe almond milk), add some yogurt if you'd like, choose a protein powder, blend up and you're good to go. The key is to add enough liquid so that the smoothie is exactly what a smoothie should be - **smooth** - so you can drink it. If the smoothie is too thick to drink and there isn't enough space in the blender to add more liquid, just eat it with a spoon, no biggie.
- When drinking a smoothie as a meal replacement, try your best to add a protein powder. There are many kinds: rice protein, pea protein etc. My favourite type of protein is unflavoured whey.
- I bought a compact blender when I was in university. I find it to be less stressful than big blenders and it involves less clean up.
- The fastest way to clean a blender is to run the blender full of cold water and a dash of dish soap! Easy breezy.
- Sometimes my tummy feels a little weird when I only drink liquids for a meal. If I'm up for it I like to pair a smoothie with a bowl of mac and cheese (no toppings) or a slice of toast.

## LESS SPOONS (energy)

### ENSURE SMOOTHIE

#### DIRECTIONS:

1. Place all ingredients in blender and blend.

This is my favourite recipe to make an Ensure drink (or any meal replacement drink) more exciting / substantial.

#### INGREDIENTS:

- 1 chocolate Ensure
- half a banana
- handful of frozen blueberries
- 1/4 cup of greek yogurt

## MORE SPOONS (energy) GREEN SMOOTHIE

The key to a nice green smoothie is to blend the greens with your liquid \*FIRST\* until smooth and no longer chunky, then add your additional ingredients for a second blend. This is what gives your smoothie that beautiful green colour! Without the first and second blend method, you'll end up with big chunks of spinach in your smoothie.

#### DIRECTIONS:

1. Blend coconut milk and spinach together until smooth. Your coconut milk should turn bright green!
2. Add the rest of the ingredients and blend until smooth.

#### INGREDIENTS:

- 1 cup coconut milk
- 1 cup of fresh spinach
- 1/2 avocado
- 1 cup mango juice
- 2-3 ice cubes
- 1 scoop unflavoured whey protein powder

## MORE SPOONS (energy) STRAWBERRY SMOOTHIE

Strawberries remind me of my absolute favourite season of the year: strawberry season. Try this one in the dead of winter when you're feeling blue and you will practically smell June.

#### DIRECTIONS:

1. Blend all ingredients until smooth.

### REMIX

Try substituting the strawberries in this recipe with frozen blueberries (or any frozen fruit for that matter!)

#### INGREDIENTS:

- 1 cup of almond milk (substitute any milk of choice)
- 1 banana
- 1 cup of frozen strawberries
- 1/2 cup of greek yogurt
- 1 scoop unflavoured whey protein powder

# ADULT LUNCHABLES

I was always so envious of the kids whose parents packed them lunchables for lunch when I got chicken curry sandwiches. In hindsight curry sandwiches are much tastier, but in the fourth grade I wanted to be cool. Despite the small portion sizes, I have learned one thing: the parents who were sending their kids to school with lunchables were depression cooking. In my adult life, this envy of the lunchable kids has translated into one thing: adult lunchables. The formula is pretty simple. Adult lunchables are assemblage meals with no cooking involved. I generally do adult lunchables for lunch (for nostalgia sake) but they make delicious dinners and breakfasts too. I like to think my combinations are a little more exciting than the brand name. I'm listing the general formula below, please portion to your tummy's desires. Here's how I do it:

- ① Get a dinner plate for your assemblage. I usually choose a pretty plate that makes me happy.
- ② Pick 1-2 vegetables and pair them with a big dollop of store-bought hummus for dipping.  
Here are my faves: baby carrots (no cutting) • sliced large carrots • cherry tomatoes (no cutting) • sliced cucumber (I like the mini cucumbers) • sliced sweet pepper (my faves are yellow or orange) • sliced celery

AND/OR

- ③ Slice half an apple (or a whole apple if you're hungry) and pair it with a big dollop of peanut butter for dipping.

+

- ④ Slice up some of your favourite cheese. Sometimes the cheapest cheddar cheese from the grocery store will do it.

- ⑤ Add a few pieces of something nice and salty to make you feel fancy: salami, prosciutto, olives, pickles, pickled carrots or pickled green beans.
- ⑥ Add something carb-y that will feel nice in your tummy. These could simply be a stack of crackers of any kind. Or choose something larger, toasted and buttered. Think: bread, sourdough bread, pita, naan, roti, chapati. Whether you go with crackers or something bigger these are great for dipping in hummus or stacking with cheese or salami.
- ⑦ Ooh and ahh at your beautiful arrangement on your plate and dig in. These also make great packed meals for when you're on the go.

---

Here are my favourite go-to lunchable combos:

## LESS SPOONS (energy)

One whole granny smith apple sliced • four tablespoons of natural peanut butter in a small bowl for dipping • sliced goat cheddar cheese • 3-4 kalamata olives • one big slice of toasted sourdough bread smothered in butter.

## MORE SPOONS (energy)

Half a sweet pepper sliced • two mini cucumbers sliced • a large dollop of store bought hummus • sliced cheddar cheese • pre-sliced salami • 3-4 green olives • half a pita cut into triangles • one hard boiled egg cut in half with salt and pepper.\*

## HARD BOILED EGG

- \* How to hard boil an egg: Bring a small saucepan of water to boil on the stove. Try using the 'faster boiling' method. Slowly lower an egg into the bottom of the saucepan using a spoon. After 8 minutes remove the egg from the boiling water with a large spoon and run under cold water from the tap. Peel and throw out the shell. Slice the egg in half and sprinkle with salt and pepper.

# NO-FRY KIMCHI FRIED RICE

I absolutely adore kimchi! Kimchi is a Korean dish that's made of fermented cabbage. It's salty and spicy and because it's fermented, it's packed with good pro-biotics. Sometimes when I'm feeling really down and blue, a big punch of flavour can be invigorating. I haven't found a store bought kimchi that I'm in love with just yet. I usually buy a couple orders of restaurant kimchi (from Saigon House in Hamilton, Ontario) and transfer it to a large mason jar in my fridge. This is also my first experiment with minute rice. I've always thought that cooking rice was pretty simple, but living with white people on and off for the past ten years has informed me that this is not true for everyone!

## LESS SPOONS (energy)

### DIRECTIONS:

1. Empty rice pack into a microwave safe bowl.
2. Cube slices of tofu, add to bowl.
3. Chop Kimchi into smaller pieces and add to bowl. Pour some of the liquid from the kimchi over the rice to add flavour.
4. Add a handful of frozen peas.
5. Mix everything up with a fork. Cover the bowl with an upside down microwave safe plate and microwave for 2 minutes (or the time indicated on the rice packet).

### INGREDIENTS:

- 1 pack of Ben's 2 minute rice (go for a garlic flavour if it's available!)
- a few slices of extra firm tofu
- 3-4 fork-fulls of kimchi
- a handful of frozen peas

DIRTY DISHES: 1 bowl, 1 plate, 1 fork, 1 knife, 1 small cutting board

## REMIX MORE SPOONS (energy)

Substitute tofu for pre-cooked frozen shrimp. Defrost 4-6 shrimp by placing in a bowl of cold water for 15 minutes. Once defrosted, remove from water and remove and throw out the tails. Add to minute rice before microwaving.

23

# INSTANT RAMEN/NOODLES

I discovered instant ramen during lockdown in the winter of the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. It was a game changer! One year later, with the pandemic still ongoing, I continue to rely on instant ramen when I don't have the energy to cook something from scratch. I'm still learning all the tips and tricks and thanks to Instagram, many people have contributed to the list I'm going to share.

For starters, my go-to brand is Sutah Ramen. I find the flavour packet pretty spicy, so I only add about half of it to the broth. When I want something less spicy, I go for Sapporo Ichiban original. Other brands that have been recommended are: Indomie Mi Goreng, Nissin, MAMA, Paldo Gomtang, Nongshim Shin Ramyun, Chapagetti. Not all grocery stores will have this selection so if you're in a pinch you should at least be able to find Mr. Noodles. If you're in Hamilton, Ontario I'd suggest going to Nations in Jackson Square.

I make my ramen/instant noodles on the stove in a small saucepan. A saucepan is great because it's easier to clean than a whole pot. I also use the 'faster boiling' method that I've mentioned, by boiling water first in an electric kettle and then pouring it into a saucepan on the stove.

## ADDITIONS/TOPPINGS

### FLAVOUR (choose 2 or more):

minced garlic and/or ginger (if fresh, try putting it through a garlic press), garlic paste and/or ginger paste • pickled ginger • kimchi • soy sauce • sesame oil • sesame seeds • sriracha • hoisin sauce • crushed chillies • wedge of lime • thai basil • cilantro (if you're into that you weirdo) • sambal • miso paste OR soybean paste • fish sauce • fresh mint • fried and dried onions (my favourite)

24

# THINGS TO PUT ON TOAST

In the Holy Trinity of Depression Cooking, Toast is the Father (I am a former Catholic after all). Toast pre-dates instant convenience foods like mac and cheese and instant ramen and is old school depression food. I first learned about the beauty of spruced up toast from observing my mother on weekends in my pre-teen years. She would slice cheddar cheese and tomatoes and layer them on a slice of toast which she would complete with fresh cracked pepper before placing in the toaster oven to become perfectly toasty and melty. She used to call these 'open faced sandwiches.' I call this 'things on toast.' Some of these ideas are oh so simple and you've already eaten them half a million times. Some of these are little fancier and require a few more spoons. The formula is simple 1. Toast a piece of bread 2. Put stuff on it. If there's cheese involved and you'd like it to melt, reverse the order of the formula: 1. Put stuff on bread 2. Toast it.

**VEGGIES** (add as many as you'd like to the saucepan while cooking):

baby bok choy • kale (rip up with your fingers) • spinach (or any other greens) • chopped red cabbage • chopped nappa cabbage • mushrooms (white, cremini, enoki) • shitake mushrooms (I buy dehydrated shitake mushrooms in a pack and re-hydrate them in a bowl of water for 15 minutes before adding to my ramen) • green onion • red onion • pickled onion • canned corn • chopped zucchini • chopped tomatoes • nori (crumble with fingers) • shredded carrot • bean sprouts • chopped broccoli • chopped cauliflower • snap peas • frozen vegetables like peas

My usual go-to combo is: Satah Ramen with kale, green onions, cubed firm tofu and dried shitake mushrooms (which have been rehydrated in a bowl of water). My two favourite additions I've made to instant ramen are

1. I've added leftover red cabbage and carrot slaw (made with sesame oil, apple cider vinegar and sesame seeds. It was perfect.
2. Sliced leftover tofurkey (magic!)

## PROTEIN:

cubed tofu OR a hard boiled egg\* OR a fried egg

\* Recipe on page 22

**PEANUT BUTTER** +

- honey
- jam
- sliced banana
- nutella
- chocolate chips

} Try these separately with peanut butter, all together or in any combination

**MASHED AVOCADO** +

- drizzle of olive oil
- sprinkle of salt and pepper
- goat cheese
- chilli flakes
- sliced tomato
- sunny side-up egg
- cooked bacon
- sliced red onion
- drizzle of balsamic reduction

} Try these separately with avocado, all together or in any combination

## REMIXES

Add a spoonful of Japanese Kewpie mayonnaise and mix well for some creaminess OR add a spoonful of peanut butter and mix well. OR try cracking an egg into the ramen/ instant noodles while cooking and mix the egg in.

## CREAM CHEESE

+

- sliced tomato
- sliced cucumber
- capers
- fresh dill
- smoked salmon or trout

} Try these separately with cream cheese, all together or in any combination

## CAN OF FLAKED TUNA

+

- mixed with a tablespoon of mayo
- sliced tomato
- sliced cheese
- handful of greens (my choice is arugula)

} Try these separately with tuna, all together or in any combination

I like the mini flavoured cans (Clover Leaf or No Name). My choices are Lemon and Dill OR Thai Chilli. I find one can the perfect amount for one piece of toast

## OTHER COMBINATIONS

- butter + cheddar cheese + sliced tomato + pepper
- store-bought baba ganoush
- store-bought hummus + bean sprouts
- butter + chopped dates + honey
- canned sardines in oil, mashed into the toast with a fork
- pre-cooked bacon + sliced tomato + lettuce + mayonnaise
- goat cheese + sliced peach + prosciutto
- brie cheese + sliced apple
- ricotta cheese + sliced fresh figs + honey
- grilled halloumi + sliced tomato + pepper + balsamic reduction
  - I slice halloumi and fry it in a pan on medium heat until brown and then flip and fry the reverse side
- sliced mozzarella cheese (fresh if you're fancy) + sliced tomato + fresh basil + drizzle of olive oil + drizzle of balsamic reduction
- prosciutto + arugula + dijon mustard
- red pepper jelly + a sharp cheese (then broiled)

# QUICK QUICHE

The quick quiche is the most energy intensive recipe in this zine and the only recipe where we're going to use the oven (you've been warned!). I love quiche for the same reasons that I love eggs in general. The key to making this a 'quick' quiche is to use a frozen Tenderflake pie crust. I can usually get about 3-4 meals out of one quiche depending on how hungry I am.

## DIRECTIONS:

1. Preheat the oven to 425 F.
2. Bake the tenderflake crust for 8 minutes and then remove from the oven and set aside
3. Chop broccoli and set aside
4. Crack eggs into a bowl. Add milk, thyme, oregano, salt and pepper and scramble together with a fork.
5. Place pie crust in the centre of a small baking sheet. Evenly spread the chopped broccoli in the bottom of the pie crust. Pour the egg mixture onto of the broccoli. Evenly sprinkle the cheese on top.
6. Place quiche on baking sheet in oven and bake for 25 minutes.

## INGREDIENTS:

- 1 Tenderflake all vegetable shortening frozen pie crust
- 4 large eggs
- 1/2 cup of milk or cream
- 1 cup of chopped broccoli
- 1 cup of pre-shredded cheddar cheese
- 1/2 tsp of thyme
- 1/2 tsp oregano
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp of pepper

DIRTY DISHES: 1 knife, 1 cutting board, 1 bowl, 1 fork, 1 small baking sheet

PS: This recipe has endless remix possibilities. Swap out broccoli for any vegetable (what about asparagus?) and cheddar cheese for any cheese (what about goat cheese?)

# CHOCOLATE TOFU PUDDING

There are tons of Depression Cooking desserts to choose from in the frozen food aisle and snack aisles of the grocery store. Here's one simple recipe that's more of a smoothie that just passes for a pudding. As someone who's lactose intolerant, I always appreciate a dairy-free dessert!

## LESS SPOONS (energy)

### DIRECTIONS:

1. Put all ingredients in blender and blend until smooth.
2. Place in a covered dish in the fridge overnight & eat the next day. The tofu will become very smooth when blended and becomes more firm and pudding-like in the fridge overnight.

### INGREDIENTS:

- 1 pack of soft tofu (around 400g)
- 1/4 cup of cocoa
- 1/2 cup of sugar

## REMIX MORE SPOONS (energy)

I love having this 'dessert' for breakfast. My favourite way to eat chocolate tofu pudding is layered with chia pudding and topped with fruit. Try making chia pudding from page 14. Get a mini mason jar or jam jar. Place a few teaspoons of chocolate tofu pudding in the jar, on top of this add a few teaspoons of chia pudding. Layer both puddings, one on top of the other until the jar is almost full. Sprinkle with a teaspoon of hemp hearts and add a few raspberries or blueberries. Prepare a few of these in advance and store them in the fridge and you've got breakfast (I mean dessert) for the week.

DJ TENDERFLAKE  
PRESENTS:

# MAC + CHEESE FOR ONE

My very first memory of making Mac and Cheese was at Rebecca Rapacioli's house in the seventh grade. I remember being afraid of the boiling water and overcooking the noodles until they were soggy. I think cooking Mac and Cheese is an important lifelong skill and I've relied on it heavily throughout my twenties. To finish off Depression Cooking, I'm sharing a playlist. Side A is called 'Almost Thirty,' and has songs I usually listen to when I'm cooking dinner for myself. Realistically this should be 90% Billie Holiday but I added a little more variety for you. Side B is called 'Seventh Grade,' and are songs I would have been listening to in the seventh grade when I first tried cooking Mac and Cheese. This one's really special, it has the first song that played during my very first school dance in Annunciation Catholic School's gym. Imagine me in a brown halter top from Sirens with turquoise blue beads with sweaty palms nervously walking into the centre of the gym and press play!

## SIDE A: ALMOST 30



SCAN ME



SCAN ME

SIDE B: SEVENTH GRADE

Sonali Menezes  
2022  
[@sonaleeeeeee](#)

copyleft: make as many copies as you'd like!

First edition printed and distributed with  
generous support from [PS Guelph](#),  
[Artseverywhere.ca](#) and [Hamilton Artists Inc.](#)