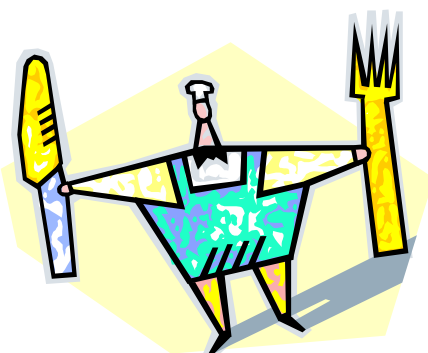


*21 Healthy  
Comfort Food  
Recipes*

*By Debbie Happy Cohen*



# Table of Contents

Chapter	Pages
Benefits	2
Chef's Background	
<b>The Recipes</b>	
Acorn squash with maple syrup and cinnamon	4
Pineapple with sprinkling of cayenne	5
Dates with walnuts	6
Apple slices with peanut butter	7
Peanut butter surprise	8
Wild rice with tomato, cucumber and onion	9
Kitchri	10
Kitchri surprise	11
Quinoa with bananas, dates and nuts	12
Quinoa surprise	13
Guacamole - easy and delicious	14
Potato skins	15
Cooked eggs in spaghetti sauce	16
Egg salad	17
Omelet surprise with banana	18
Trick to great <i>indoor</i> hot dogs	19
Trick to great spaghetti sauce	20
Trick to great pasta	21
Garlic bread	22
Melted cheese on bread	23
Platanos, or fried plantains	24
Copyright page and other books	25





# *B*enefits

- ✓ No sugar or corn syrup
- ✓ Yes honey and maple syrup
- ✓ Most recipes with no gluten
- ✓ Generally low fat recipes, but no low-fat ingredients (I'm not into low-fat cheese, etc.)
- ✓ Low to no salt
- ✓ No microwave cooking
- ✓ Most ingredients can easily be found at a good supermarket, definitely at an organic market
- ✓ EASY... if you can fry eggs, you're in good shape. If you can cook rice, you can create any of these recipes in your sleep.

*I love simplicity. I love home-cooked meals. I love and appreciate distinct flavors (as opposed to food smothered in sauce). So that's what you'll find in these recipes.*



# Chef's Background

I grew up in a home where Mom cooked homemade meals every day. Mostly Iraqi-Jewish cuisine. Dinner was always served with fresh salad.

No frozen foods walked in the house. Nor did mom permit any food with sugar in the first three ingredients. (But that didn't mean I didn't smuggle them in. ☺) Ice cream was an exception. It was a little strict, but we all grew up physically healthy.

As a child, I was skinny and lanky, but I gained some weight as a teenager. I was maybe 15 pounds overweight, but felt obsessive about it. Which was so very easy to feel, growing up in Miami, Florida, home of *Baywatch* and South Beach.

I went on 19 fad diets between the ages of 16 and 19. INSANE, I know!

At age 19, I read *Fit for Life*. It changed my life. I learned to eat healthy for life. I never went on another weight loss diet again, and have refused to "fight" with myself about food. If I really crave something, I eat it. I pay attention to what my body wants and doesn't want.

I learned how great my body feels when I eat healthy. I learned to cook basic dishes, and I have enjoyed using everyday foods to increase feelings of vitality and to boost my immune system. Occasionally, I've used cleansing diets to detoxify the body, but never again to "lose weight."


Even still, I felt addicted to sugar; I just had to have my daily dose. Not a lot, but just enough. Maybe half a bar of chocolate. Or a teaspoon of sugar in my tea. Not a lot. But I knew I was addicted because when I tried to eliminate it completely, I couldn't do it. Not without a fight. And I refused to fight with myself about food!

After 20 years, I felt inspired to try again. I decided to quit eating sugar for 30 days. Just as an experiment. And I did it.\* No cravings at all. It was easy and effortless.

The result was that I felt steadier, more stable on the inside. Calmer. In addition, I lost 15 pounds, and I felt more optimal than I had in years.

Today, I'll eat a little bit of cake or sweets if I'm at a party, especially if someone special baked it. But I don't eat a lot, and I don't crave it. However, I do notice a difference in my mood and in how my body feels (not as good), and this motivates me to keep eating healthy!

\* I believe that I was finally able to drop sugar because I had done a steady amount of internal cleansing using natural herbs for 6 months. I believe the cleansing removed whatever was causing the cravings (probably Candida). I'm mentioning this because if you struggle with sugar addiction, I don't want you to read how easy it was for me to quit and then feel upset with yourself if it's just too hard of a habit to drop, because the craving is just so strong. You can do it, though. If you want more information, check out this book, *The Sugar Addict's Total Recovery Program*, which I learned about after I quit!



## A corn squash with maple syrup and cinnamon

Preheat oven to 410 degrees.  
Split squash in half and remove seeds.  
Put butter, cinnamon and maple syrup  
in each half, and a tiny bit of salt.  
Spread oil in baking dish and add a  
little water. Maybe 1/4 inch. The oil  
will prevent sticking, the water will  
add moisture.  
Place halves in baking dish.  
Bake for an hour.

*Smells fab, tastes super!*

# ineapple with sprinkling of cayenne

The recipe is in the name.

Chop a pineapple into bite-sized cubes,  
and VERY LIGHTLY sprinkle it with  
cayenne pepper.

Serve with toothpicks.

You're done!

*This recipe is so easy I feel like I'm cheating by including it here! It's a strange mix, but when I tasted it at a party a few years ago, I just couldn't get enough of it. Maybe my body was craving the vitamins or something, but I found it to be refreshing and delicious, and I've enjoyed it many times since.*



# Dates with walnuts

Buy a pack of dates.  
Open a date with your fingers. Take out the pit.  
Replace the pit with walnuts. Eat.

YUMM!!

Some people like to replace the pit with cream cheese and then put walnuts on top. This is a great dish for parties, because it looks pretty on the platter.

But either way, it's an awesome snack that's all natural.

Growing up, we ate "regular" dates (the square package at the local grocery store), but I became a bit of a Medjool-date snob years ago and will only eat those now. I prefer to buy them in the bulk section of health food stores, when they're available. You can also buy them online. Refrigerate them and they'll last longer.

*I grew up eating this with my dad, usually as a snack in the evening in the den, watching TV. It's a Jewish-Iraqi favorite.*



# *A*pple slices with peanut butter

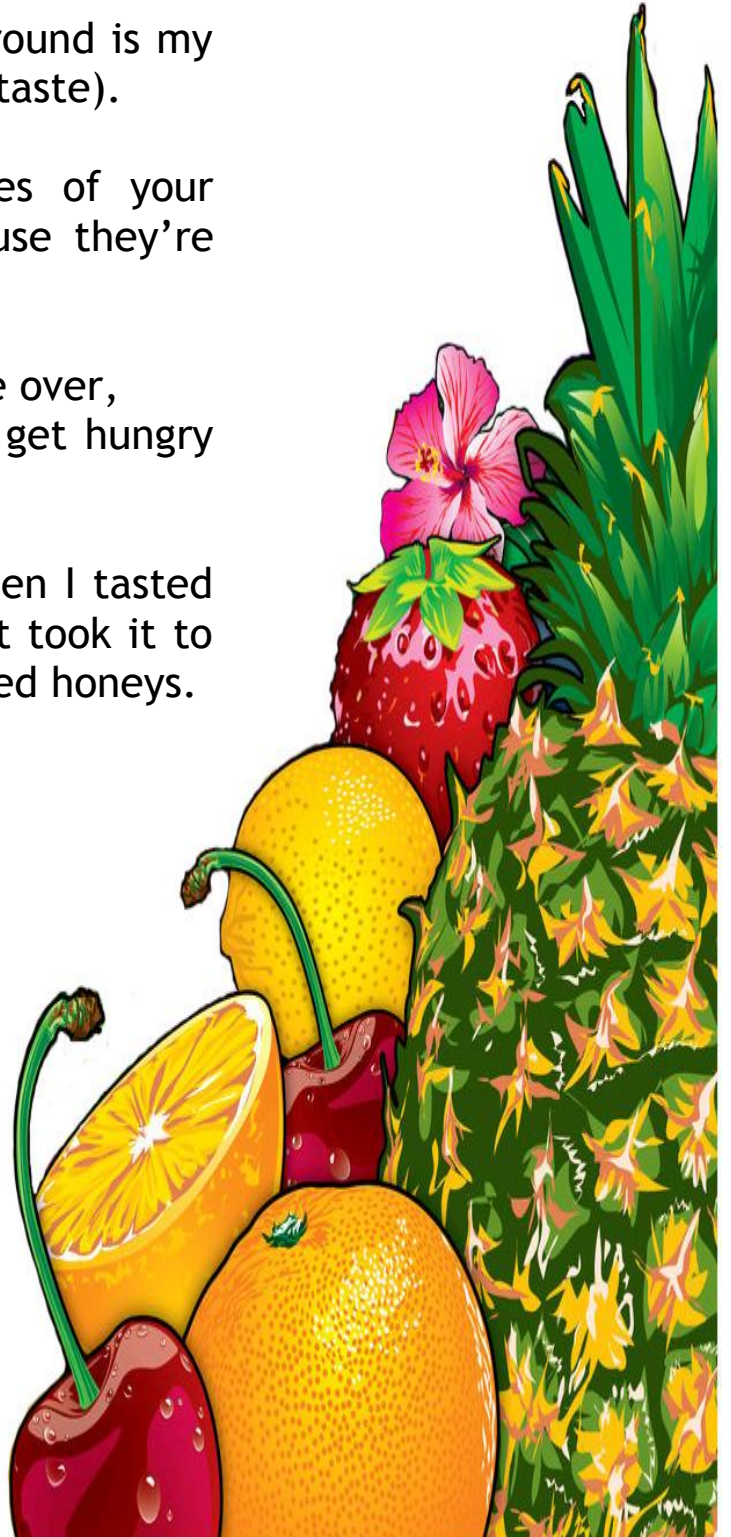
Mix organic peanut butter (fresh ground is my favorite) with a flavored honey (to taste).

Scoop up the nut mix with slices of your favourite apple. I like gala, because they're sweet and crunchy.

This makes a great snack to tide me over, if dinner is running late or when I get hungry at night.

You can use regular honey, but when I tasted this recipe with raspberry honey, it took it to a whole new level. Play with flavored honeys.

*Yummy!*





## eanut butter surprise


Mix organic peanut butter (my favorite is fresh ground) with raisins.  
Scoop with celery slices.  
Crunch!

Of course you can add or replace the nut butter and fruit with other varieties.

Be sure to check the nut butter label for sugar or corn syrup - I prefer mine with neither!

*I love the texture of this snack.  
It's a great after-school or late-night delight!*





# Wild rice mixed with tomato, cucumber and onion

1 cup wild rice mix (you can find it in the bulk section of most health food grocery stores)  
2.5 cups cold water  
½ tbsps butter, salt, herbs to taste

Throw all the ingredients into the pot.  
Boil for about 30 seconds, stir and scrape the bottom.  
Simmer for 50 min.

While it's cooking, chop a third of a small onion, a cucumber, a tomato, and any other salad-vegetable you enjoy.

TO SERVE, put the rice in the dish; decorate with large lettuce leaves, if you'd like.

JUST BEFORE SERVING, add cold vegetables and mix with the rice (don't add the veggies too early; they'll get wilted and the rice will get cold).

*The rice seems to take forever to cook, but it's a perfect dish for when you don't know what you want to eat, but you want something healthy. I love the textures and the hot/cold variety in this meal.*

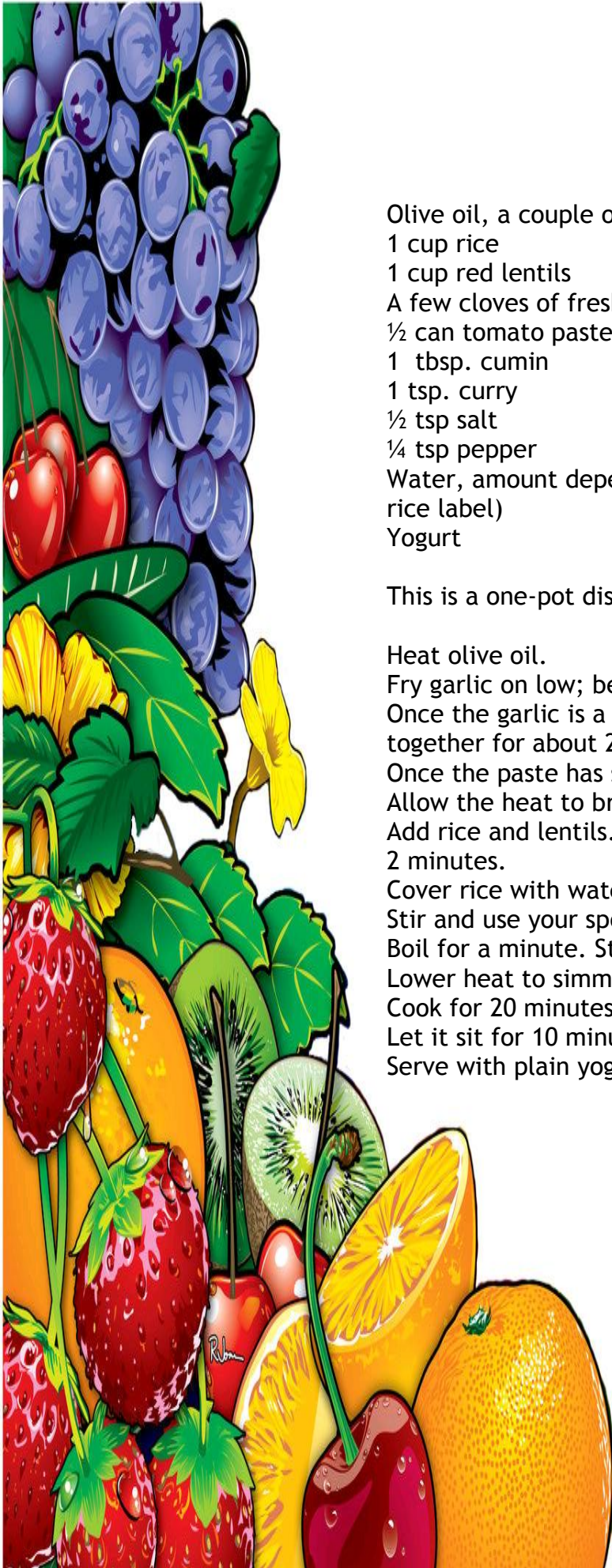
# Kitchri

Olive oil, a couple of tablespoons  
 1 cup rice  
 1 cup red lentils  
 A few cloves of fresh minced garlic, to taste (I usually use 5 or 6 cloves.)  
 ½ can tomato paste  
 1 tbsp. cumin  
 1 tsp. curry  
 ½ tsp salt  
 ¼ tsp pepper  
 Water, amount depends on rice that you use (see instructions on your rice label)  
 Yogurt

This is a one-pot dish.

Heat olive oil.  
 Fry garlic on low; be careful not to burn it.  
 Once the garlic is a little bit translucent, stir in tomato paste (cook together for about 2 minutes).  
 Once the paste has softened, add all of the spices. Stir till well-blended. Allow the heat to bring out their flavors, about 2 minutes.  
 Add rice and lentils. Stir so that the rice picks up all of the flavors, about 2 minutes.  
 Cover rice with water (amount depends on the type of rice you choose). Stir and use your spoon to scrape the bottom of the pot.  
 Boil for a minute. Stir again and scrape the bottom again.  
 Lower heat to simmer.  
 Cook for 20 minutes (timing depends on the type of rice you choose).  
 Let it sit for 10 minutes.  
 Serve with plain yogurt. Or with butter.

*This is my favorite Jewish-Iraqi dish, with rice, lentils, and cumin. I like it best with yogurt. Thanks, Mom!*



# Kitchri surprise

Kitchri ingredients, but NO yogurt.  
A few slices of your favorite cheese (I like Muenster for this dish.)  
Two cups of chopped fresh fruit  
I like chopped apples and halved grapes.  
Follow instructions for kitchri; but instead of serving with yogurt, put the steaming hot rice on the plates. Add your favorite cheese. Fold the rice over the cheese, so the cheese melts.  
Just before serving, top it with the fruit.

*I love the varied textures, which is what makes this meal a “surprise!”*



# Quinoa for breakfast with bananas, dates and nuts

Quinoa is loaded with protein and very healthy, too. If you've never heard of it before, do yourself a favor and get some today.

It's got a bland, nutty taste that blends nicely with a myriad of flavors. Breakfast, lunch, dinner, side dish or snack.

Quinoa rocks!

1 cup quinoa (red or white, both are super)

2 cups water

¼ cup dates, pitted and chopped (As I wrote in Recipe #3, I am partial to Medjool dates.)

¼ cup walnuts, chopped

Rinse quinoa.

Put it in a pot with water.

Let it get to a boil, then simmer for 20 minutes.

10 minutes into simmering, add chopped dates and walnuts.

Close to the end of simmering, add chopped banana.

Done!

Yum!

*This is really easy and is one of my favorite winter warm-me-up meals.*



# Quinoa surprise

It helps to make this in a large pan, and even better if it's one with high sides.

You'll need:

½ cup of leftover gravy-juice from baking a chicken (I usually just pour it into a bowl after cooking the chicken, then put it in the fridge and use it to make "Quinoa Surprise" in the next day or two.) ½ a cup is usually about right, but don't worry about being exact. Whatever spices you marinated the chicken with will infuse the quinoa and beef.

½ lb. beef

½ cup uncooked quinoa (1 cup cooked)

3 tbsp. or so of oil, to fry onions with

½ chopped onion (a fresh, strong onion is good for this dish)

½ cup raisins

1 to 2 cups of diced apples, pears or a combination of the two

1/2 tsp. cinnamon

Optional spices, to taste: salt, pepper, coriander, cardamom, garlic powder, tarragon

Cook the quinoa in a small pot.

In the meantime, while quinoa is cooking:

Fry the onions in the big pan on medium heat till they just begin to get translucent.

Remove the onions and place them in a bowl. Set aside.

Throw the ground beef into the same pan where you just removed the onions (if the beef is fatty, you don't need to add more oil to the pan). Cook the beef until it's edible (no red). Don't overcook it!

Pour the chicken gravy-juice on top of the beef. Stir.

Add the raisins and the cooked onions. Stir.

Add the cooked quinoa (it should be done by now or it will be in a couple of minutes). Stir.

Add the apples and pears. Mix them in really good.

Turn the stove off.

Cover the pan.

Let it sit for a couple of minutes to let the fruit get heated and softened, just a little bit.

Serve hot.

YUMMY!!! So good for you, too!!!

I think this meal is worth this entire recipe book. I hope you do too!!!

Oh, by the way, leftover Quinoa Surprise is delicious, because the flavors have a chance to dance and get enhanced while sitting in the fridge.

*I love this meal. But I'm hesitating about including it here, because you need to know how to marinate and bake a chicken and use the leftover gravy-juice from the chicken to flavor this meal. So, it's the most "difficult" of all these recipes. If you're a real beginner, just Google "how to marinate and bake a juicy chicken" and you can catch up.*



# G uacamole - easy and delicious

There seems to be an art to knowing when an avocado is ready to be prepared.

According to avocado.org, “the best way to tell if a California Avocado is ready for immediate use is to gently squeeze the fruit in the palm of your hand (avoid squeezing with your fingertips). Ripe, ready-to-eat fruit will be firm, yet will yield to gentle pressure.”

2 avocados, smushed with a fork, but chunky  
1 small tomato, diced, small pieces  
1/8 cup finely chopped onion (or to taste)  
1/8 cup fresh cilantro, chopped  
A dash of salt  
A dash of pepper  
Juice from ½ lime (or to taste)

Mix ‘em and presto, you’re done!  
Chill for 30 minutes or serve immediately with healthy chips,  
of course!

*First, be sure to get California avocados... the darker, smaller ones. I love shopping for these ingredients at local Mexican stores. They always have them on hand and they’re always fresh.*



# Potato skins

Okay, so this isn't *the* healthiest meal on the planet, but it sure beats a Mickey burger.

But you can make it healthier by replacing the bacon with turkey bacon! Here's a recipe for 2 people, which makes 4 boats.

2 potatoes

½ cup of onion (amount to taste, depends on the size of the potatoes)

1 cup of bacon (amount to taste)

1 cup of cheddar cheese (amount to taste)

Rinse potatoes and lightly poke a fork into them about 6 times per potato (this prevents them from exploding).

Bake potatoes at 400 for 50 minutes (small potatoes) or 60 minutes (large potatoes).

Remove potatoes and slice them in halves, so you have 4 boats.

Scoop out 2/3 of the interior of each potato boat (you can make hash browns with them later or just add sour cream and eat them now 😊).

Fill the boats--it's the order that counts here.

Chopped onion definitely has to go on the bottom, otherwise it can get burned / dry.

Bacon or turkey bacon, already cooked, and cut into small pieces--I use scissors and just go at 'em. That's the middle layer.

Cheddar cheese, grated, on top. Be generous here.

Bake for another 10 minutes at 375.

Serve with sour cream and chives.

*The first time I ate potato skins at a late-night restaurant, I fell in love with them. Shortly afterwards, I figured out how to make them myself.*





## *C*ooked eggs in spaghetti sauce

Pour your favorite spaghetti sauce into a pan (amount according to how many you're serving).

Check the label, you'd be surprised how many sauces are made with sugar.

A small pan easily cooks about a cup and a half of sauce with 2 eggs.

Use a finger or a spoon to make shallow "holes" in the sauce... you'll be placing the eggs into them. Thicker sauces are easier to do this with, but I've made it with liquidy sauce too.

Crack each egg into a "hole."

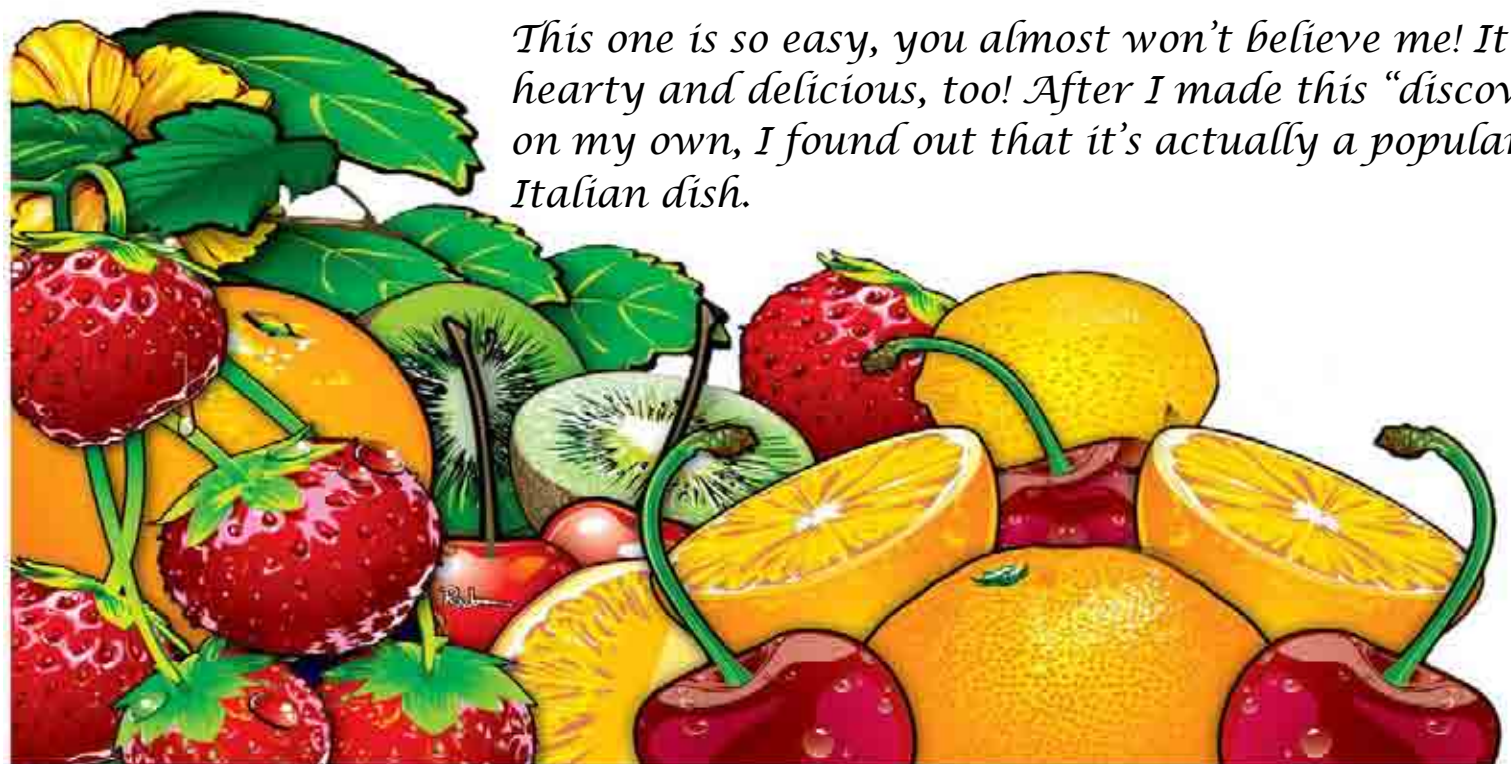
Cover the pan (unless you don't mind sauce splatters all over your stove).

Turn stove on low simmer.

Cook for 10 minutes, or a little more, depending on how you like your eggs.

Serve with toasted bread.

*This one is so easy, you almost won't believe me! It's hearty and delicious, too! After I made this "discovery" on my own, I found out that it's actually a popular Italian dish.*



# Egg salad

6 eggs (preferably from local, yard-raised chickens; they're the best!)

3 tbsp. of the best mayo (my favorites are Duke's or if I'm going really healthy, Vegenaïse)

3 tbsp. very finely chopped onion (An older onion is better, it's less dramatic-tasting.)

1/8 tsp. salt, or to taste

1/16 tsp pepper, or to taste

1/8 tsp. garlic powder, or to taste (not garlic salt... I like the strong stuff)

¼ tsp dried tarragon

For extra crunch, add finely chopped celery, to taste.

Boil a pot of water.

Place eggs in boiling water, 10 minutes.

De-shell eggs (I like to do this under cold water. Sometimes it helps the shells peel off easier.)

Mix and integrate all the other ingredients in a bowl, in which you'll be adding the eggs.

Use a fork to mix them.

Add eggs.

Use the same fork to break them up (less dishes to wash 😊) into small-medium chunks.

Mangia! Mangia!

(This isn't an Italian dish, but I'm feeling Italian right now.)

*I love egg salad that is "just right," not too mayonaisey, not too salty. Just right. Here's my concoction, which I love to eat with toasted bread, or on crunchy rice crackers.*



# omelet surprise with banana

(Blueberries optional)

First of all, the trick to a SUPER DUPER omelet is to let it cook on LOW heat, and cover the pan. It takes longer to cook, but you end up with a moist, yellow result rather than crusty dry brown.

oil (I like olive oil, but you can use whatever you've got)

1/3 cup onion, chopped

6 eggs, whisked with a fork

1 banana

½ cup blueberries (fresh, if they're available)

Optional: 1/3 cup of cheddar cheese, sliced or grated (sliced, if you feel like being lazy)

Fry the onion on low-medium heat, until it begins to get translucent.

Add the eggs.

Lower the heat to "low" and cover.

About 7 minutes later, once the bottom is a little firm, add the fruit. Sprinkle it around evenly. It will sink into the egg.

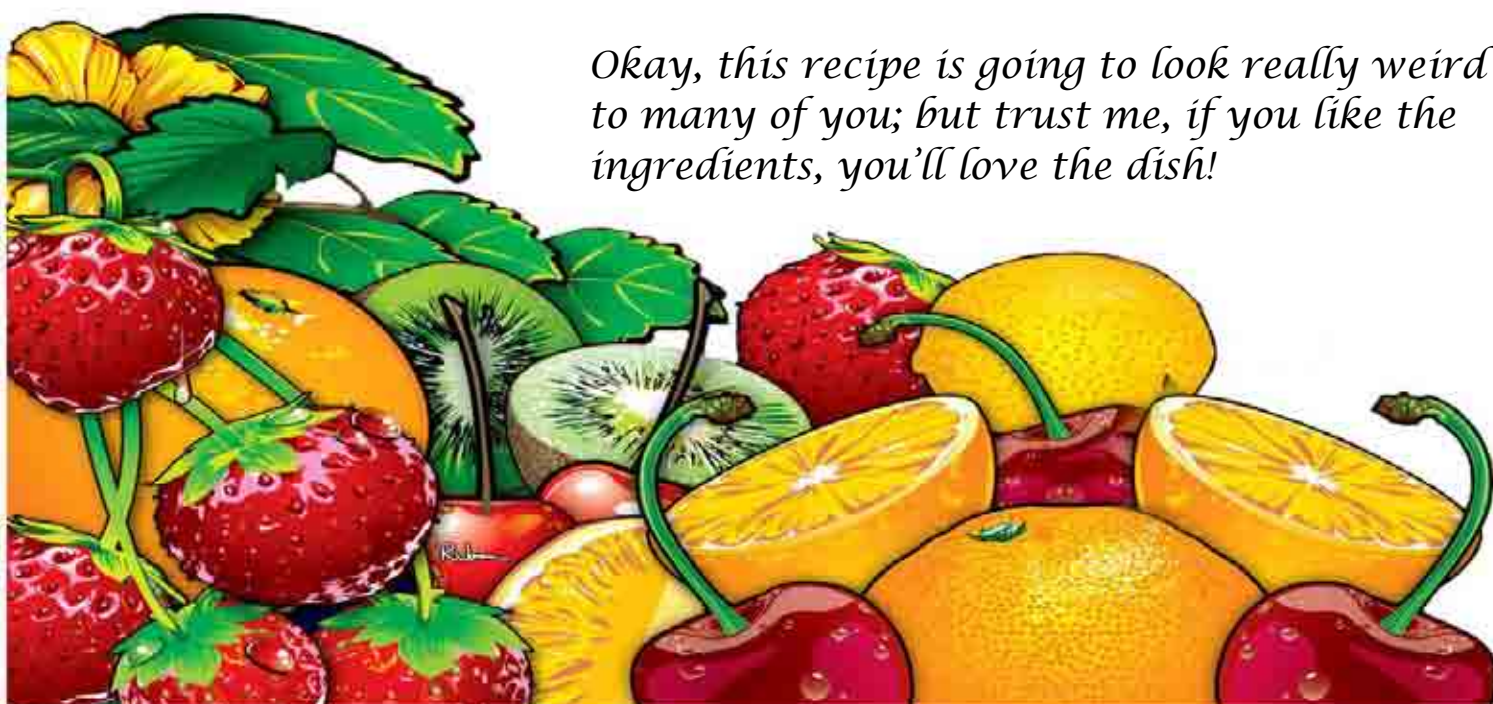
Let it cook for another 10 minutes. Keep an eye on it; your stove may be different than mine.

It's done when the top of the egg is firm.

No flipping is necessary.

Spread cheddar cheese on top and cook for 1 more minute, till it melts.

*Okay, this recipe is going to look really weird to many of you; but trust me, if you like the ingredients, you'll love the dish!*



## rick to great *indoor* hot dogs

In this case, name brand counts.  
My favorite is Hebrew National.

If you have a grill and it's the right time of year, that's the best. So just do that! But if you cook hot dogs indoors, here's the trick to getting that sizzling grilled taste.

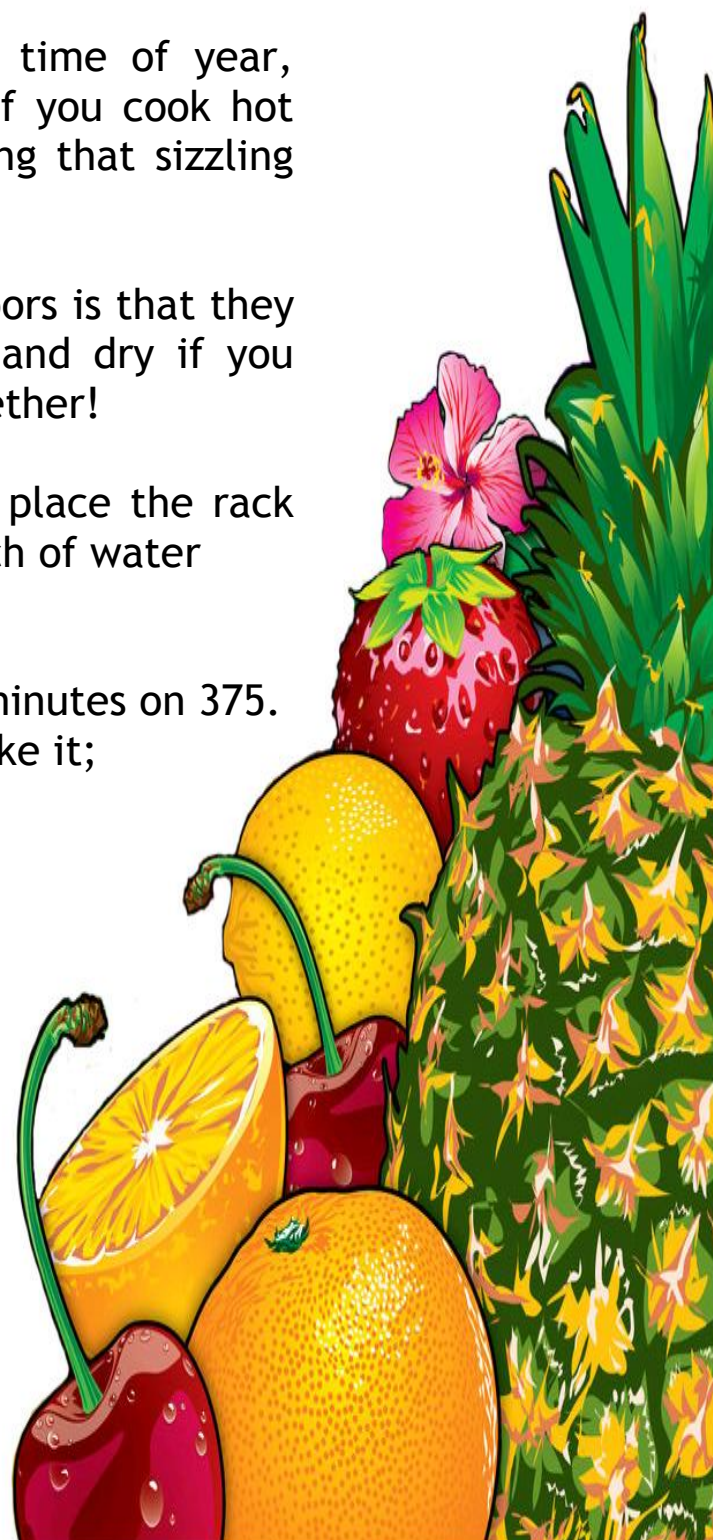
The problem with making hot dogs indoors is that they come out flavorless if you boil them and dry if you bake them. Solution: Bring the two together!

Bake the hotdogs on a wire rack, and place the rack over a baking pan that has a quarter inch of water in it.

For regular sized hotdogs, bake for 12 minutes on 375. Then BROIL for 5 to 7 minutes (as you like it; I like mine almost-burned).

Enjoy your dogs!

*Hotdogs aren't categorically a "healthy" food, but the better brands are 100% beef, no additives. You can even find vegetarian dogs (not that I recommend those... but you might enjoy them ☺).*



# rick to great spaghetti sauce

The problem with making sauce from scratch is that it takes too darn long. The problem with canned spaghetti sauce is that it doesn't have quite enough fresh flavor.

The remedy is so easy! And if you like onions and garlic as much as I do, you'll like this.

All you need is:

½ onion, chopped

optional: a few garlic cloves, minced

your favorite jar of spaghetti sauce (NO SUGAR, NO CORN SYRUP)

optional: Italian spices

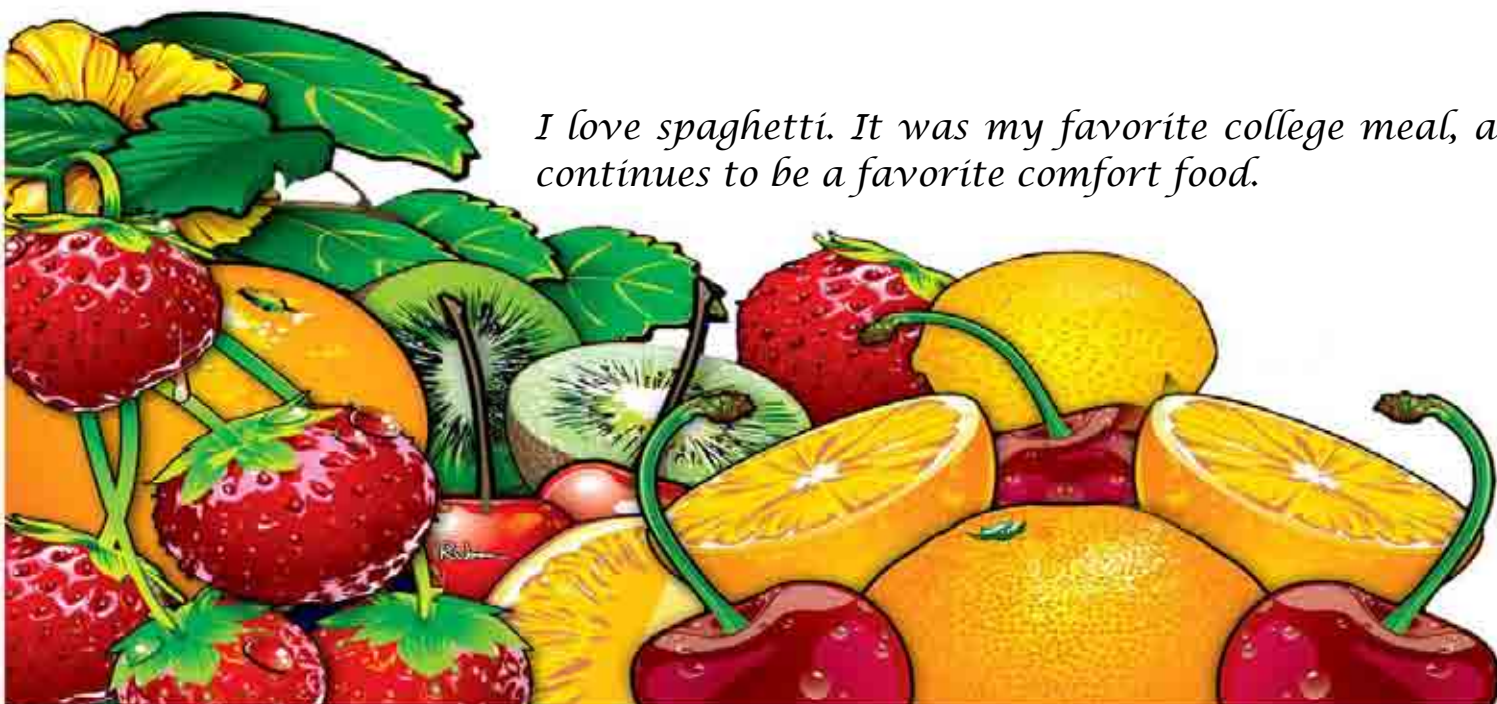
Sauté the onion and garlic in olive oil on low to medium heat. The cooked onion will add sweetness to the sauce.

When the onion becomes translucent (not barely translucent, like in the other recipes.... you want them to be soft, not crunchy), then stir in spaghetti sauce and Italian spices.

Turn the heat down to low. Cover and let it keep cooking for 10 or 15 minutes. Stir occasionally.

Voila! Done!

*I love spaghetti. It was my favorite college meal, and continues to be a favorite comfort food.*



## rick to great pasta

This “trick” works well with both regular pasta and rice pasta.

The steps might seem like unnecessary labor, but they really do make a difference to the final taste, and that’s what counts to me!

Boil water.

Add a dollop of olive oil and some salt to the boiling water before you add the pasta.

Add the pasta.

Lower the heat of the water.

Stir a couple of times (to separate the strands).

Cook for the amount of time it says on the package.

After you pour the spaghetti into the colander, rinse it off with cold water.

Then throw it back into the pot, add a couple of dollops of olive oil, and stir over medium heat until the pasta is hot and ready to serve.

Turn the heat off.

If you like parmesan / Romano cheese, now is the time to add them. This way, they stick to the pasta, rather than getting lost in the sauce.

Then add the sauce.

Top it off with more cheese, to taste.

*A few months ago, a friend served rice pasta for dinner. I really liked it. So many of the other “healthy” pastas taste like cardboard and I’m not willing to sacrifice taste for health when it comes to comfort food. Rice pasta tastes like regular pasta, but it doesn’t feel so heavy in your gut after you eat it.*





# Garlic bread

Slice a loaf of Italian bread, about ½ inch thick.

Soften a stick of butter.  
Mince 10 cloves of garlic. Mix into the butter.  
Add 1/8 tsp salt. Stir with a fork.

Pre-heat the oven to 350.

Spread the garlic-butter evenly on both sides of the bread.

Place the buttered slices on a baking sheet.

Bake for 10 minutes. This heats them up and integrates the flavors.

Flip the slices over. Bake for another 3 minutes.

Broil for 3 - 4 minutes, until golden brown. This is the secret trick. **KEEP THE LIGHT ON IN THE OVEN. KEEP YOUR EYE ON IT. DON'T LEAVE THE KITCHEN!** I can't tell you how many times I've burned a batch, and it's so disappointing, because it smells SO good and I'm SO psyched to eat it!

When you cook it just right, it comes out crunchy and soft. You may need to play around with the timing, depending on your oven.

*Italian bread, a ton of butter  
and garlic! A slice of life!*

# Melted cheese on bread, open-faced sandwich

2 slices of bread  
 4 slices of Muenster cheese  
 1 tablespoon of mayonnaise, or to taste  
 a little bit of deli mustard, or to taste  
 very thinly sliced onion, enough to spread out on both slices of bread  
 dried basil  
 garlic powder  
 a dash of salt  
 a dash of pepper  
 very thinly sliced tomato

For the best results, a crunchy yet soft dish, PAY ATTENTION TO THE ORDER:

This makes 2 open-faced sandwiches.

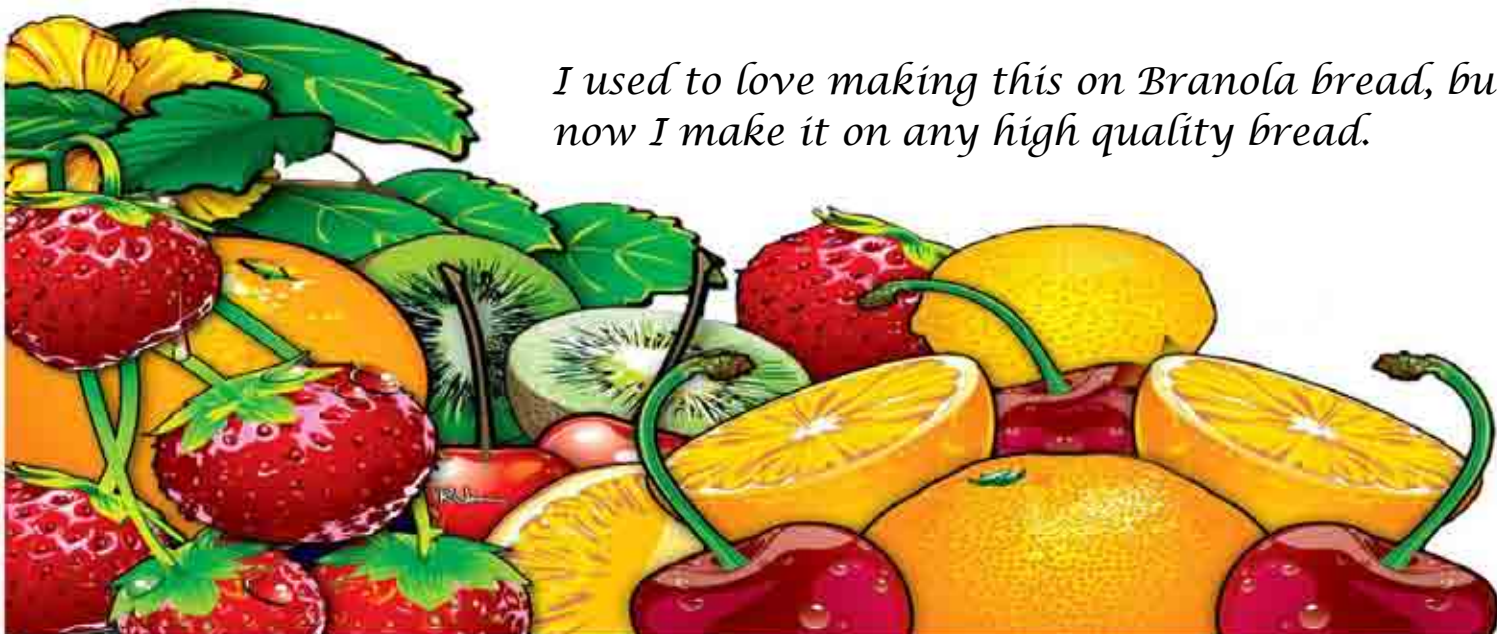
Preheat oven to 375.

Spread mayo and mustard on the bread slices, both facing up.  
 Place thin onion slices on top of the goop.  
 Sprinkle the basil, garlic powder, salt and pepper on top of the onions.  
 Place the thin tomato slices on top of the spices.  
 Finally, add the slices of cheese. (Keep them within the edges, so they melt without a mess.)

Place bread slices on a stone pan or on a wire rack. These allow the bread to get toasted on the bottom. (You can use the top wire rack in your oven; just put a piece of aluminum foil on the rack BELOW to catch any melted cheese. DON'T allow the foil to touch the bread.)

Bake for 12 to 15 minutes, until the cheese just begins to bubble.

*I used to love making this on Branola bread, but now I make it on any high quality bread.*





# latanos or fried plantains

(Depending on if you're from Cuba or from the South)

The trick to great fried platanos is to cook them when they're no longer hard as a rock, but haven't gotten soft as mush. Basically, let 'em sit on your counter till they're "just right," almost all brown on the skin, slightly tender to the touch.

I like to cut mine into diagonal strips, not too thick, not too thin, maybe 1/3 inch thick.

Heat up a large pan with about ¼ inch of oil. Medium heat.\*  
Add the platanos slices.

Let them cook for about 5 minutes or until the color has changed from opaque yellow to translucent brown.

Flip each one using a fork or tongs.

Cook for 5 minutes on the other side or until the color has changed to translucent brown.

\* Sometimes mine take a lot longer (10 or 12 minutes on each side), because I prefer to cook platanos with olive oil, which cooks better on low heat.  
Enjoy!

*These banana-cousins are simply delicious, baked or fried. When they're fried, they're like my favorite candy. And it's best if you don't try to share a plate with me, because I'll forget you're sitting there while I keep taking "just one more bite!" But I'll be glad to share the recipe. Here you go!*



Other books by Debbie Happy Cohen include:

*Reach Your Stars!* Paperback (2001)

*I Don't Think So!* Paperback (2010)

*I Don't Think So!* Kindle (2011)

*IMAGINE Your Life in Full Color* Kindle (2012)

*God is an Ocean* (Coming Soon)

Thank you for joining me on this healthy comfort food adventure!

I welcome your opinion about this recipe book. Do you have a favorite recipe or one that you're excited to try? Email your questions, suggestions and ideas to me at:

[artinthemind@hotmail.com](mailto:artinthemind@hotmail.com)

To stay in touch with me and receive updates about my latest creative adventures, be sure to subscribe to my newsletter at:

[www.artinthemind.com](http://www.artinthemind.com)

Original art by Randy Jones  
Layout and design by Marie Casafrancisco

21 Healthy Comfort Food Recipes  
© 2012 Debbie Happy Cohen