

HALF BAKED HARVEST

recipes for balanced, flexible, feel-good meals

EVERY DAY



TIEGHAN GERARD







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introduction

If you've been around for a while, you know I come from a big family. Crazy as it may be, my family recently grew, and I'm now one of EIGHT kids! My littlest brother, Oslo, arrived in 2020, and he is the greatest thing that came out of that whole year. While most of my siblings are scattered all over the place now, I'm still up in the mountains of Colorado. I live in a renovated log horse barn steps away from our separate studio barn, where I cook and shoot photos and generally stay busy. A lot of days, I'm on my feet all day cooking and testing new recipes. Other days, I race against the setting sun to get photographs of the finished dishes. And then there are the days I huddle in front of my pizza oven to keep cozy while catching up on emails and calls.

I do all this with my family just next door, which I love. They LOVE food, always have, and they are what started my cooking and keep me cooking—if only because they are constantly hungry! My little sister, Asher, and my brothers (whenever they roll through town) are constantly popping into the studio looking for something to eat. Somehow, no matter how busy I am, I can't resist stopping what I'm doing to make them their favorite foods—that's just what you do for the people you love!

But when my schedule overfills and stress sets in, taking care of myself is usually the first thing to go. And I bet the same is true for you. But it doesn't have to be! No matter what else is going on, we all need to eat—every single day. Food is, quite literally, fuel for life. So sometimes you need a quick sheet pan meal thrown together from whatever's on hand, while other times you can leisurely enjoy both the cooking process and the meal. Sometimes you crave a clean, light, nutrient-packed dish, while other times you just want a big plate of something comforting. For me, the days are all different, but one thing is constant: I always want to be sure my loved ones and I are eating well.

To me, “eating well” means not only sustaining your body but also giving yourself what you feel you need. I am definitely NOT an expert on any sort of healthy eating. What I have learned, though, is that I care about how food makes me feel, but I don’t want to spend a lot of time stressing about it. I want to know where my food came from, what’s in it, and who made it. I want to feel good about what I eat without sacrificing flavor or overcomplicating the process. And that’s the approach I take in my cooking every single day: I aim to make food that is delicious, usually healthy, sometimes decadent, and always satisfying.

what “balance” means to me

We’re always hearing about the importance of “balanced meals.” I don’t disagree, but if you’re looking for rules and regulations on health, I’m afraid you’re in the wrong place. I’m not a nutritionist, and I would never want to tell you how you “should” be eating. For me, feel-good food is not about calorie-counting or restriction. But it IS about lots of flavor and satisfaction. That means cooking with plenty of good fat, reducing sugar when possible—or using natural sweeteners like honey, dates, and maple syrup—and, most important, using non-processed ingredients that are whole and real. The other piece I feel is equally important is to give my body what it wants. Some days that’s a heaping plate of hearty, well-seasoned, yummy vegetables, and some days it’s a bowl of cheesy, buttery, gooey noodles. That’s what balance is for me.

I set out to create a book that embodies the way I eat. I also wanted to give you guys more of what you’ve been asking for: the “healthy-ish” recipes I usually share on the blog at the start of each year. You—and I—want to eat those sorts of meals throughout the year, too, so I wanted to share more of them here. But my biggest hope is no matter what you’re looking for on any particular day, you will find something here that works for you. Whatever you’re feeling, that you can flip through the pages and find something super satisfying. And, of course, that some of these recipes will be on repeat in your kitchen!

I've organized the recipes by types of meals and ingredients. Some dishes are lightened-up versions of old favorites. Others are heavy on superfoods. If you're all about clean living, that's here. And if you just NEED chocolate cake, that's here, too. (Spoiler alert: it's really good...) Whenever possible, I've indicated where you can make a choice of ingredients. There's tons of flexibility here, and you should feel empowered to make the decision that works for you. I do a lot of cooking "research" on my family—some of my most popular recipes have come from Creighton's insane imagination or whatever Red is craving. They are all picky in their own ways, and believe it or not, so am I. So it's very important for my recipes to be flexible and fun. Maybe the way I prepared a dish isn't exactly how you want to eat it that day—that's okay! You can leave out the cheese, use gluten-free pasta, add in more greens, or do whatever else sounds good. I've also given multiple options for how to cook some things, especially when it comes to the slow cooker and pressure cooker, since I know we don't all have them (but those of us who do LOVE them).



Cinnamon Sugar Knots, [this page](#)



Coconut Cake with Chocolate Frosting, [this page](#)

To make this book as easy and fun to use as possible, I included some icons to help you navigate what's here. Look for the following categories throughout the book so you can see what a recipe has to offer at a glance:

30 **30 Minutes or Less:** You'll be able to whip this up in a snap!

1 **One-Pan:** The recipe requires you to use only one pan, skillet, or sheet pan (these are some of my favorites!).

P **Pantry Ingredients:** If you have a well-stocked pantry, you already have everything you need.

DF **Dairy-Free:** The way I've written the recipe is without any dairy products.

GF Gluten-Free: Same as dairy-free! The way I've written the recipe is without any gluten products.

SF Refined Sugar-Free: While the recipe may include some natural sugars or sweeteners, it doesn't have any refined sugar.

V Vegetarian: No meat (obviously).

Additionally, depending on some ingredient choices you may make, many recipes can easily be made dairy-free, gluten-free, or vegetarian. There's a recipe in this book for every palate and craving and occasion and mood. Wherever you are today, right now, you'll find something in here that's exactly what you need and want. My goal is simple: for you to feel GOOD when you eat these dishes!



ingredients

When it comes to food, quality means more to me than pretty much anything else. I won't bore you with an exhaustive list of the basic ingredients to stock up on (you can find those on my blog or in one of my other cookbooks). However, I do want to share some info on items where there are a lot of options that might be confusing, and let you know the selections I turn to over and over again.

eggs

We keep twelve chickens between my house and the studio. That means I pretty much always have fresh eggs on hand. If you're shopping in a grocery store, you'll find a million different words on the packaging—what do they all mean?! In my opinion, the best egg is organic, pasture-raised or free-range, and certified humane. Vital Farms and Kirkland are reliable brands. All of my recipes call for large eggs.

butter

Butter makes everything better—that's just a fact. I use it throughout this book, but in moderation, and only when needed.

I always, always prefer salted butter. That's what I use in all of the recipes in this book. If you prefer unsalted, that's fine—you just may need to add more salt to your finished dish.

I prefer to use organic, European-style butter, which is at least 82 percent butterfat, whereas most American-style butter is only 80 percent. That extra fat makes for a yellower, smoother butter that tastes richer. In addition,

European-style is often cultured, which gives it a slightly tangy taste, and is probiotic. Whichever style you choose probably won't make a huge impact on the outcome of your dish, though; it's most noticeable when the butter plays a big role. The brands I like are Straus Family Creamery, Kerrygold, Vermont Creamery, and Land O'Lakes Extra Creamy.

milk, cream, and yogurt

Some people prefer not to eat dairy, and I totally get that. Wherever possible, the recipes here call for the milk of your choice: whole or skim cow's milk or goat's milk, or almond, oat, soy, or whatever else you prefer. I use goat milk because, well, I have goats! You can easily find it in most grocery stores now; Meyenberg is a good brand. I like it because it's less processed than some cow's milk, and it's easier for a lot of people to digest. I also love the flavor, which is a little tangier—but you won't notice that in recipes, only if you're drinking it straight.

I often use coconut milk in place of heavy cream, and I'll usually call for either/or throughout this book. When I say coconut milk, I ALWAYS mean the unsweetened full-fat canned version—I like the texture it adds, plus I think it has the best flavor. Native Forest is my favorite brand. Just give the can a good shake before you crack it open, or if yours won't shake, stir it to reincorporate the cream into the liquid before using it.

When it comes to yogurt, I like full-fat plain Greek yogurt for everything. Fage and Greek Gods are my favorite brands. They've got a great creaminess and a nice tang that makes it a perfect sub for sour cream, crème fraîche, and mayonnaise.

cheese

You probably know this about me already...I LOVE cheese. Like, really love it. There's plenty of it in these recipes. You should always feel free to use as

much or as little as you like, and if you just prefer not to eat cheese, it can be left out of a lot of dishes, too.

But if you do opt in, you gotta get the good stuff for maximum YUM. Cheese is, of course, made from milk, so just like milk, depending on the animal it comes from, some cheese might be easier to digest than others. If lactose can be issue for you, try goat's or sheep's milk cheese, which has less lactose (though it's not lactose-free).

I usually prefer to shred and grate cheese myself. Sometimes pre-shredded, packaged cheese contains added ingredients.

READING LABELS

To be sure you're bringing home only the good stuff, I recommend checking out the labels of the products you buy. Be wary of any weird, exceptionally long words—I like to be able to pronounce the names of everything I'm putting into my body! In general, the first ingredient should be what the food actually is. For example, with ketchup you'll want to see tomatoes listed as the first ingredient. Always avoid ingredient lists that are miles long.

Keep an eye out for added sugars. These will be listed a lot of different ways: concentrated fruit or vegetable juice, corn sweetener, molasses, syrup, fructose, maltose, sucrose...basically anything that ends in "ose."

Also, look for good fats. I prefer products made with avocado oil and olive oil rather than canola oil.

No matter what, don't opt out of full-fat versions because you think the low-fat version is "better" for you. It's not! Unnatural additives usually take the place of the removed fat. You don't want to be eating these additives...trust me.

QUICK NOTES

Mozzarella: Fresh mozzarella contains a lot of water, which will end up in your food if you use it on top of, say, a pizza. That's why I call for low-moisture whole-milk mozzarella any time the cheese will be melted. The package will be labeled this way!

Parmesan: Without a doubt, Parm is my favorite cheese to grate! I think it makes pretty much everything better, so you will see it used in many recipes here. I also love to save Parmesan rinds to add extra flavor to my soups and tomato sauces; just drop it in while the dish is simmering and then discard it before serving. If you're looking for a nondairy option, nutritional yeast is a great substitute—I've found it to have the closest flavor to Parmesan. It won't melt, but it does the trick!

salt

Salt is something our bodies need to stay healthy. For the recipes in this book, unless otherwise specified, I use fine pink Himalayan salt. In addition to being pretty (yes, it really is pink!), this type of salt contains many minerals. It's thought to be the least processed form of sea salt. Redmond Real Salt is another great option, and since it comes from the Great Salt Lake in Utah, it has a low carbon footprint for those living in the United States. If kosher salt is what you know and love, that's all good, too. You'll just want to use a little bit more than what I call for, since it's not quite as fine. A good rule of thumb no matter what? Taste your food before you add salt!

meat and fish

All of the chicken recipes here work with thighs or breasts. Use what you like! If you're cooking thighs, the timing is a bit more forgiving, as they don't dry out as fast as white meat.

Red meat gets a bad rap sometimes, but, for me, it's really important for balanced eating. It's a great source of iron and nutrients and supports healthy brain function. I prefer to stick to grass-fed beef, since it's natural for

cows to eat grass, versus grain-fed. And grass-fed beef generally contains less monounsaturated (bad) fat but more omega fatty acids—and those are GOOD!

When it comes to ground beef, I opt for 80% lean and 20% fat.

You'll see bacon in several recipes here. If bacon is not for you, you can either swap it for prosciutto or simply leave it out. I always look for organic

bacon that says “no sugar added” on the packaging. I usually buy uncured, which has no added sodium nitrates or nitrites.



For fish, both wild-caught and farm-raised can be good choices, depending on a number of factors. You always want to opt for the most sustainable and ethical choice, which often just means asking your fishmonger or checking with sources such as seafoodwatch.org.