

# **REAL FOOD for Beginners**

*by Christy Pooschke*



**Your guide to eating less  
processed food**

***Includes 25 simple recipes!***

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You can find more of my great tips and tasty recipes at:

[CompletelyNourished.com](http://CompletelyNourished.com)

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# Why I Created this Book...

**In 2007, I made the startling discovery that food additives were destroying my health.**

I had almost given up hope after suffering for years with extreme fatigue, widespread pain, muscle weakness, digestive distress, sleep disturbances, and numerous other symptoms. Daily tasks were unbearable. I was frequently bedridden, and I could no longer fulfill my duties at work. On good days, I felt 90 years old. On bad days, I felt like I should be in the hospital.

After countless doctors' appointments, I was diagnosed with **Fibromyalgia** and told I would suffer with pain and fatigue for the rest of my life...



*Christy Pooschke (author)*

Luckily, I found *other* answers on my own! I started reading the ingredient labels on *every* food I purchased, and I stopped eating things that I couldn't **clearly identify as having come from a plant or animal in nature**. I had **no idea how to cook**, but I did the best I could to teach myself enough to get by. And within just a few months of eliminating dangerous food additives from my diet (e.g., MSG, artificial sweeteners, and preservatives), **all of my symptoms completely resolved!** (You can read my entire return-to-health journey on my website at [www.CompletelyNourished.com](http://www.CompletelyNourished.com).)

After experiencing such drastic improvements in my *own* health, I developed a **passion for helping others eat more naturally**. I know how overwhelming it can be to think about overhauling your processed food diet, so I created this book as an easy way for you to **give this “real food” thing a try without much commitment**. This book provides you with a good sampling of the types of things I have discovered through years of studying the food industry and experimenting in my own kitchen. If you like the recipes and grocery tips included here, then you'll love the products available through my website that feature my *complete* collection of natural recipes and grocery shopping guidance.

It breaks my heart to think of how many others may be **suffering needlessly** just as I was. I've personally experienced the misery that can result from eating processed foods, and countless other people report reactions (headaches, digestive distress, seizures, etc.) to food additives, too. When I started researching about food additives, I was shocked to discover that these chemicals (e.g., MSG) were **hidden in nearly everything I was eating and drinking!** My processed food diet was destroying my health without me even realizing it! Obviously, not everyone will experience the *same* results as I did by avoiding these additives; but when you start learning about all of the health problems associated with various food additives, avoiding them in your diet certainly seems worth a try! It is my sincerest wish that this book gives you the encouragement and confidence to do just that! ☺

# PURPOSE OF THIS BOOK

The purpose of this book is to equip you with the recipes and information you need to **start reducing your reliance on processed food**. I know how overwhelming it can feel to think about overhauling your diet all at once – especially if you’re not a cook (*I sure wasn’t when I first started*)! This book is intended as a way for you to just **try this real food thing out for size** without emptying your entire pantry or making any other huge commitments like buying obscure ingredients or special equipment or tackling a fancy natural grocery store that you aren’t used to. Try a few of the recipes here, purchase a few additive-free goodies at your regular grocery store, and just see how it goes. No pressure. **Just experiment a bit, taste a few new things and build your confidence – because you can do this!**

With the exception of fruits and vegetables, shopping tips are included in this guide for *every* ingredient used in the 25 recipes included here. My advice for selecting *fresh* fruits and vegetables is to give preference to *certified organic* or *local* varieties and to avoid GMOs (“genetically-modified organisms”) whenever possible. These preferences are explained in more detail on the following page and in the shopping guide included here at the end of this book. When selecting store-bought *canned* or *frozen* produce, also check the ingredients label and select brands that contain only vegetables or fruit and, possibly, sea salt.

To avoid overloading you with too much information right now, the shopping guide included here is intended to help you find the most additive-free versions of the ingredients and products required for **just the 25 recipes here in this book**. When you’re ready for it, my **more extensive grocery shopping guide and recipe collections** are available through my website.

This guide is not an *exhaustive* list of *every* food additive. If you see an ingredient on a food label that is not discussed in my guide *and* you don’t *fully* understand what the word means, I recommend leaving that product on your grocer’s shelf! As a general rule, if you cannot easily **identify every ingredient on a label as having come directly from a plant or an animal in nature**, then I do not recommend you purchase the product.

I adhere *strictly* to an additive-free diet 100% of the time because I experience acute physiological reactions to many food additives. The degree to which *you* implement this advice is up to you. I’m including all of the information you need to prepare these recipes as “strictly” as I do. However, depending upon your lifestyle and the foods to which you have access, your choices may be more limited. **Do the best you can, and implement this guidance to the degree that suits you best!** Many people find it useful to adopt an “**80/20 Rule**.” They adhere to an additive-free diet 80% of the time, and they allow themselves flexibility with the other 20% of their diet for social events, special occasions, travelling, etc.

The guidelines here are intended to help you **reduce the amount of health-depleting chemical additives in your diet**. How “pure” you go is up to you. For example, some recipes in this book use pasta, and there are tips here in this shopping guide to help you select the *most* additive-free pasta available at the grocery store. Is additive-free pasta a *health food*? Not really. But if you are going to eat pasta dishes on occasion, you’re much better off making homemade versions of those dishes yourself than ingesting the commercial, additive-filled packaged varieties you’d find at the store or in most restaurants!

# ORGANIC & FARM-FRESH FOODS

According to the USDA, **certified organic** food is “produced by farmers who emphasize the use of renewable resources and the conservation of soil and water to enhance environmental quality for future generations. Organic meat, poultry, eggs, and dairy products come from animals that are given no antibiotics or growth hormones. Organic food is produced without using most conventional pesticides; fertilizers made with synthetic ingredients or sewage sludge; bioengineering; or ionizing radiation.” I am convinced that foods that are *truly* organically-raised in this fashion are the healthiest foods we can consume, but I suggest you do your *own* research and come to your *own* conclusion. Be sure to review the GMOs (“**genetically-modified organisms**”) information included here in my shopping guide, as well, because **purchasing “certified organic” food is one great way to avoid the effects of GMOs.**

Do I personally buy *exclusively* organic foods? No, I do the best I can. **Even if you buy absolutely *no* organically-raised food, you are still much better off preparing your own *non-organic* recipes from whole, real food ingredients** than you would be purchasing processed foods. Also, just because an item is labeled “organic,” that does not mean it is a *health* food - organic ice cream is *still* ice cream! And **just because something is “organic,” that doesn’t guarantee it is *additive-free*, either.** Next time you’re at the grocery store, read the ingredient labels on some “organic” *processed* foods. You may be surprised by what you find. Unless a “certified organic” food is also labeled as “**100% organic**,” it’s allowed to contain up to 5% *non-organic* ingredients. **Unprocessed foods are always best, organic or not.**

Even better than organic food is food that you **grow yourself** or purchase from a **local farmer** whom you’ve gotten to know personally and/or whose farm you’ve been able to visit. Many of these farms will likely *not* be “certified organic” (even though they use organic growing practices) because it is costly for farmers to receive that official designation for their food. So if you’re looking for “organic” food, be sure to ask the growers whether or not they use chemicals on their farm and use organic feed for the animals, etc. before you totally dismiss them as “*not organic*.”

What? You don’t know *any* farmers? Well, you need to **locate farmers markets in your area and go meet a few!** Many consumers are so incredibly detached from where their food comes from and how it is produced. If you want to eat animal products that come from places with green pastures, red barns and families who truly love their animals, spare them suffering and guarantee them a swift and humane death, then you absolutely must purchase from your local farmers! I realize it sounds complicated and overwhelming at first, but just take the first step and start chatting with producers at your local farmers market. If you aren’t familiar with how most commercial meats are farmed, I encourage you to **research “factory farms” on the Internet** - but make sure you’re prepared to see some very disturbing graphics and footage. Remember, you don’t have to figure all of this out right away. Just keep it in mind. 😊

Ideally, we would all eat foods exclusively from our own backyards and local farmers. However, my shopping guide is designed to help you navigate the *grocery store* to make the best possible choices from the products available *there* because that is where you most likely purchase the *majority* of your food. Right? Again, **this book is a *first step*.** You can decide for yourself where you’ll go from here. I shop at the grocery store for plenty of items, so I am fully aware of how overwhelming it becomes to navigate those aisles when you’re searching for additive-free foods. That’s why I created this book!

# HOW TO USE THIS SHOPPING GUIDE

**Step 1:** Read the entire shopping guide included here from beginning to end at least once, so you become familiar with the guidelines. (There are many recommendations included in my guide for additional self-study, as well, for those of you who would like to research certain topics in more depth. Feel free to save those for later on, though, so you don't get too overwhelmed right now.) As you read, make notes of any food items that you already use regularly but would like to replace with an "additive-free" version (e.g., "We need to replace our peanut butter."). Remember, this guide is not an *exhaustive* list of *every* food additive in the grocery store – it's intended to help you find additive-free versions of every ingredient you need for the 25 recipes included here. When you're ready for it, my *more extensive* grocery shopping guide and recipe collections are available through my website.

**Step 2:** Browse through the recipes here, and make a note of which ones you'd like to try first.

**Step 3:** Compare the ingredients of those recipes to the information in my shopping guide to see which items you may already have on hand that meet the additive-free criteria in my guide.

**Step 4:** Make a grocery list of any new items you'll need for those recipes, and place a special mark by any items for which you'll be purchasing a new additive-free brand for the *first* time – that way you'll remember to refer to my guide before making your selection at the store.

**Step 5:** Take my shopping guide (and your shopping list) to the store with you. For your *first* grocery trip, shop at the store where you most often grocery shop; so you'll learn which items you'll be able to regularly purchase at the place that's most convenient for you.

**Step 6:** Ingredients for the recipes in this book should be available at most regular grocery stores. Make notes of any items that your store doesn't carry, though. You'll need to ask a manager if they can order the items for you. If not, then you'll need to select from the following options: 1) check other stores 2) purchase the products online 3) adjust the recipes if possible 4) skip those recipes altogether 5) decide that you're willing to live with a few additive-filled items in your diet for now, and simply purchase the most additive-free version of those items that you can find at your store.

**NOTE:** The first few times you tackle the grocery store with this guide (or one of my more complete shopping guides), it's going to take a bit of extra time to read labels and determine which items are available at the stores in your area. I promise it gets easier and quicker as you become familiar with which items are okay at your particular stores. Eventually, your shopping will take no longer than it did in the past. I recommend keeping a list of brand names of the additive-free items you purchase to use as a reference so you can save time on future trips. Be aware, however, that companies do sometimes change their formulas and ingredients. Memorizing brand names is a great short-cut, but it's a good idea to *double-check* ingredients labels from time to time, as well.



# NATURAL FOOD STORES & SPECIALTY ITEMS

The majority of the ingredients in this book can be purchased at any *regular* grocery store. If you prefer “certified organic” varieties, then you may need to visit a natural grocery store or a grocery store that has a designated “health food” section. However, please don’t assume that *everything* in a health food store or health food section is automatically permitted. Just because it’s sold in a natural or organic health food store or a “health food” section at the regular grocery store does NOT mean it is free of additives. I wouldn’t eat a large percentage of the items sold at many health food stores, especially the *processed* food items!

Regardless of *where* you shop for your food, you must read the *entire* ingredients list on *every* item and compare it to the guidelines provided here before making your purchase. The same holds true for individual products labeled as “natural” or “organic.” Read the ingredients list because many of those items contain numerous additives! Conversely, don’t assume that you *won’t* find what you need at the *regular* grocery store. Additive-free items are slowly becoming more widely available. Many regular grocery stores will special order items for you (and possibly begin keeping them in stock) if you submit a request, so be sure to inquire about that possibility if you don’t find what you’re looking for on the shelf. The more we all speak up and voice our desires at the grocery store, the healthier our options will become!



# NOTES & DISCLAIMERS

**This guide is not an *exhaustive* list of *every* food additive used by the food industry.** My shopping guide included here is intended to help you find the most additive-free versions of the ingredients and products required for the 25 recipes in this book. While shopping, if you see an ingredient listed on a food label that is not discussed in my guide *and* you don't *fully* understand what the word means, then my recommendation is to leave that item on the shelf! Again, do whatever works best for you!

**All product recommendations (especially specific brand names and stores) in this guide are subject to change.** Always double-check the ingredient labels at the store. Don't just memorize the brand names mentioned in this guide and mindlessly purchase them because companies do change their formulas/ingredients from time to time. It is far more useful for you to learn the *general rules* mentioned here about what to look for in the *ingredients* lists rather than to memorize *particular* brand names.

**All of my product suggestions are well-intended and without bias.** I do not receive any compensation from any companies or retail outlets for any products or businesses that I recommend in this book.

**For your printing efficiency, I did *not* include photos of the recipes in this book.** The recipes included in this book were selected because they are basic enough that even most of you “non-chefs” out there will likely do just fine without any photos. If you would like the photos (or additional recipes) or you could benefit from some video tutorials to help get you started with the basic skills you need to make the recipes included here (e.g., how to chop lettuce, dice an onion, open an avocado, cut up a whole chicken, etc.), then be sure to check out my website for all kinds of goodies like that!

## **Medical Disclaimer:**

I am not a medical professional. All information contained in this book is for educational purposes only and does not constitute medical advice. Always consult with a medical professional before making any changes to your medications or other treatment plans.

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# Grilled Chicken Breasts & Thighs

These are great for dinner with any of the veggies or other side dish recipes included here. And we also LOVE to grill up extra to have on hand to eat cold as a quick lunch or on-the-go snack throughout the week! Just slice the leftover meat into strips, toss into a sandwich bag and go! Pair with a baggie of raw veggies (e.g., baby carrots or sliced cucumbers), and you've got lunch for days to come!

## **Ingredients:**

Boneless, skinless chicken thighs or chicken breasts (1-2 pieces per serving)  
Garlic granules, sea salt, and black pepper (to taste)

## **Directions:**

Preheat grill to high heat (about 350°F - 400°F).

When using breasts, we find that they cook better (without drying out) if you thin them out a bit. Just place each breast (one at a time) into a gallon-sized Ziploc bag. Seal the bag, squeezing out any excess air. Place the bag onto a cutting board, and beat the chicken with the flat side of a meat mallet until it is about ½-inch thick. This will help the meat cook more quickly, so it will remain moist. Remove chicken from the bag, and repeat for any remaining pieces. Cut each flattened breast in half and set aside. This flattening process is not necessary with thigh pieces because they naturally contain so much moisture (i.e., fat).

Season both sides of each piece of meat with garlic granules, salt and black pepper.

Once the grill is preheated, place the meat onto the grill. You do not need to oil the grill as long as it is nice and hot and you don't try to flip the meat too soon.

Cook meat for about 4 minutes, until the bottom side is done and removes easily from the grill. Flip the meat. Only flip the meat this *one* time, and then leave it alone! Cook about another 4 minutes, until juices run clear and the internal temperature of each piece reaches 165°F as measured by a meat thermometer.

Remove meat from the grill. Allow it to "rest" on a tray or plate for about 5 minutes before slicing, so the juices can redistribute throughout the meat instead of running out on to your dinner plate! Cover with foil to keep it warm while it rests.

# Roasted (Crock Pot) Chicken

Serves 4-6

## **Ingredients:**

1 whole chicken  
1 onion, peeled and sliced  
6 large cloves of garlic (*minimum*), peeled and smashed  
Several Tablespoons of butter (optional)  
Sea salt and black pepper, to taste

## **Directions:**

Remove and discard any chicken innards – sometimes the neck and organ pieces are stuffed inside the chicken, but sometimes you’ll find nothing there.

OPTIONAL - Pat the outer skin dry, and rub butter all over the skin. This will help the skin brown for that “roasted” look. If you don’t care about that, feel free to skip this step. I rarely bother with the butter because we don’t like to eat the skin anyway, but it does *look* prettier when it’s browned.

Place a few of the onion slices and all of the garlic *inside* the chicken cavity. Arrange the remaining onion slices in the bottom of the crock pot.

Place the chicken (breast side down) in the crock pot on top of the onions. Sprinkle the outside of the chicken with sea salt and black pepper. You can also use additional dried seasonings here. You really can’t mess this one up! If you like thyme, rosemary or whatever, just sprinkle that on there, too.

If you prefer to add liquid to the pot, just fill the bottom of the crock pot with about 2 inches of water. This really isn’t necessary because there will be plenty of juices from the onion and chicken to keep the crock pot from scorching. But if it makes you anxious, pour in some water – it won’t hurt a thing! ☺

Cover and cook on Low heat until the internal temperature of the chicken reaches 165°F (about 6-9 hours, depending on the size of chicken). Be sure to use a meat thermometer here – you do not want to serve undercooked chicken!

Serve with any of the side dishes provided here and a nice salad with one of our homemade dressing recipes.

# Chicken Fajita Pasta Bowl

Serves 4-6

## **Ingredients:**

16 oz. pasta (we prefer spiral-shaped rotini noodles for this dish)  
2 ½ lbs boneless, skinless chicken thighs (amount doesn't need to be *exact*)  
Garlic granules, sea salt and black pepper – to taste  
½ cup (1 stick) butter  
2 green bell peppers, very thinly sliced  
2 red bell peppers, very thinly sliced  
2 small onions, peeled and very thinly sliced  
Sea salt and black pepper, to taste

## **Directions:**

Prepare the **Grilled Chicken Thighs** recipe from this book.

Meanwhile, prepare pasta according to package directions. Use a large stock pot for this, so you'll have room to add the peppers, onions and chicken later on.

While pasta is cooking, melt 2 Tablespoons of the butter in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Sauté the onions and peppers in this skillet until they are tender-crisp (about 10 minutes).

Drain pasta when it is done. While pasta is draining in a strainer, add the remaining butter (6 Tablespoons) to the large pot that you used to cook the pasta, and melt it over Low heat.

Remove the butter from the heat, and toss in the drained pasta.

When the chicken is done, thinly slice it (or cut it into bite-sized pieces). Then toss it with the pasta.

When the peppers and onions are done, toss them with the pasta and chicken. Season, to taste, with sea salt and black pepper.

# Roast with Veggies (crock pot)

Serves 4

## **Ingredients:**

2 - 2 ½ lb roast

1 large onion, peeled and thinly sliced

4 carrots, scrubbed and chopped into large chunks (no need to remove skin)

12 small potatoes, scrubbed and chopped in half (no need to remove skin)

4 cups water

Double batch of homemade **Dry Onion Soup Mix** (recipe included in this book)

## **Directions:**

OPTIONAL: Heat a large skillet on the stove over High heat. Do not add any oil to the pan. Brown the roast on each side. Don't flip it until each side is nice and browned – it should remove easily from the pan if you do so. (A pair of tongs works great for maneuvering the roast.) This step of browning the roast “locks in” the juices and improves the flavor, but it's not 100% necessary. Skip it if you prefer.

Transfer the roast to a crock pot, and add the veggies.

Stir a double batch of **Dry Onion Soup Mix** (recipe included in this book) into the water, and pour this mixture over the meat and veggies.

Cook in the crock pot on the Low setting for 8-10 hours, until the internal temperature of the roast reaches at least 145°F. Be sure to use a meat thermometer!

Pour extra juices over the meat and veggies when serving! Yum!



# Meatloaf

Serves 4-6

## **Ingredients:**

4 ½ tsp dry onion flakes  
2 tsp onion granules  
¼ tsp celery salt  
¾ tsp sea salt  
⅛ tsp black pepper  
¼ tsp garlic granules  
1 egg  
¼ cup water  
⅓ cup quick oats  
1 lb ground beef (we prefer 93% lean ground beef)  
¼ - ⅓ cup homemade ketchup (recipe included in this book)

## **Directions:**

Combine the dry seasonings (first 6 ingredients above) in a medium mixing bowl.

Add egg and water, and mix well.

Stir in quick oats. Using your hands, mix in the beef until just combined. Do not over mix or the meatloaf will turn out “tough.”

Form mixture into a loaf in an ungreased casserole pan. Top with homemade ketchup (recipe included in this book).

Bake uncovered at 350°F for 45-60 minutes. Check middle of the loaf for doneness. Internal temperature should reach at least 155°F as measured with a meat thermometer.

Let the meatloaf “rest” for 10 minutes before serving. Serve with extra ketchup for dipping!

Serve with the **Smashed Potatoes** recipe included in this book. (Baked potatoes are great, too! Just pop the potatoes into the oven with the meatloaf, and it will all be ready at the same time!) Warm up some green beans, as well, and you have one of our family’s *favorite* simple meals!

# Pasta with Meat Sauce

Serves 4

## **Ingredients:**

16 oz. dried pasta (we prefer rotini or angel hair varieties for this dish)  
½ lb ground beef (we prefer 93% lean ground beef)  
1 green bell pepper, diced  
1 medium onion, peeled and diced  
½ TBSP fennel seed  
½ tsp dried basil  
¼ tsp dried oregano  
½ tsp garlic granules  
¼ tsp red pepper flakes  
¾ tsp sea salt  
¼ tsp black pepper  
1 (6-oz.) can tomato paste  
2 (6-oz.) cans of water  
1 TBSP honey (optional)

## **Directions:**

Cook pasta according to package directions.

Meanwhile, sauté beef, onion and pepper on the stove over medium-high heat.

When meat is cooked through and veggies are tender, add remaining ingredients. Stir over Low heat until tomato paste is fully incorporated.

Pour warm sauce over prepared pasta.

We enjoy this dish served with frozen corn and/or a fresh salad topped with one of the homemade dressings included in this book.

# Taco Salad

Serves 4-6

## **Ingredients:**

1 lb ground beef (we prefer 93% lean ground beef)  
1 batch of homemade **Taco Seasoning Mix** (recipe included in this book)  
 $\frac{3}{4}$  cup water  
Homemade **French/Catalina Dressing** (recipe included in this book)  
3 heads Romaine lettuce, washed and chopped or shredded  
2 green onions, thinly sliced  
2 medium tomatoes, diced

## **Directions:**

Prepare the **French/Catalina Dressing** (recipe included in this book). This may be done days in advance if you'd like. Depending on how much dressing you like on your salad and how many people you are serving, you may need to make a *double* batch of salad dressing.

Brown the ground beef in a large skillet over high heat until cooked through. Stir in  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup water and 1 batch of homemade **Taco Seasoning Mix** (recipe included in this book). Stir until seasonings dissolve. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer, uncovered, over Low heat for about 10 minutes.

Arrange all ingredients, toppings and salad dressing as an assembly line; and allow each guest to build their own salad.

# Easy Baked Fish

Serves 2

## **Ingredients:**

½ - ¾ lb fish (We prefer turbot, cod or tilapia because they're the least "fishy" tasting to us.)

Garlic granules, sea salt, black pepper (to taste)

Ground cayenne pepper, to taste (optional)

Fresh lemon juice (optional)

## **Directions:**

Preheat oven to 350°F.

Grease a baking dish. (A bit of olive oil spread around with a paper towel works well for greasing a pan without using one of those chemical-filled nonstick sprays.)

Place fish fillets in the pan and season, to taste, with the spices listed above.

Cayenne pepper is spicy, so use caution with that one!

Bake uncovered for about 15 minutes until internal temperature reaches 145°F and the thickest part of the fish flakes easily when stroked gently with a fork.

Alternatively, you can use your oven's Broil setting (on High), and cook for about 5-7 minutes.

Add a squeeze of lemon juice (optional) and serve.

We enjoy this served with the **Quick Garlic Broccoli** and **Herbed Rice** side dish recipes included in this book. A fresh salad with one of our homemade dressings is also a nice addition.

# Garlic Butter Noodles

Makes 4 servings

## **Ingredients:**

8 oz. angel hair pasta  
½ stick (¼ cup) butter  
½ tsp garlic granules  
Sea salt and black pepper, to taste

## **Directions:**

Cook pasta according to package directions.

While pasta is draining in a strainer, melt butter in the pasta pan and then stir in the garlic granules.

Return pasta to the pan and toss to coat.

Add sea salt and pepper, to taste. Yum!

# Quick Garlic Broccoli

Serves 2-4

## **Ingredients:**

1 TBSP olive oil

16 oz. frozen broccoli

6 medium cloves of fresh garlic, chopped or minced

Sea salt, to taste

## **Directions:**

Heat oil over medium-high heat in a large skillet (one that has a lid).

Add frozen broccoli and toss to coat.

Cover and continue cooking for about 5 minutes until broccoli is tender, stirring occasionally. Add more oil if needed.

Add garlic; and cook 1 more minute (uncovered), stirring constantly.

Add sea salt, to taste.

Enjoy!

# Herbed Rice

Number of servings: varies

## **Ingredients:**

Rice of your choice (We generally use a brown Basmati variety.)

Olive oil or butter – amount indicated on rice package

Sea salt, to taste

Dried thyme, to taste (or experiment with *your* favorite dried herbs)

## **Directions:**

Cook rice according to package directions for the number of servings you need (including the amount of butter or oil indicated on the package).

Season, to taste, with sea salt and dried thyme (or other herbs).

This is a great side dish to accompany any meat dish!

We often enjoy this for dinner with **Grilled Chicken Thighs** (recipe included in this book) and canned green beans.



# Roasted Cauliflower & Red Peppers

Serves 4

## **Ingredients:**

2 lbs raw cauliflower, diced into ½-inch pieces

1 red bell pepper, diced into ½-inch pieces

¼ cup olive oil

½ tsp garlic granules

1 ½ tsp dried thyme

½ tsp sea salt

## **Directions:**

Preheat oven to 400°F.

Toss chopped veggies with oil, seasonings and salt in a large baking dish.

Bake uncovered for 20-30 minutes, stirring every 10 minutes until desired tenderness.

# Smashed Potatoes

Serves 4

Smashed potatoes are great when you want the “effect” of baked potatoes without having to *bake* anything! They are not smooth and creamy like mashed potatoes because the skins are not removed (they’re smashed right in!) and no milk is added. Mmmm....we love these!

## **Ingredients:**

1 ½ lbs red or yellow potatoes (no need to remove the skins!)

Water, enough to fully cover the potatoes in the pot

¼ cup (½ stick) butter, to taste

Garlic granules, sea salt and black pepper (to taste)

## **Directions:**

Wash and scrub the potatoes. Do not peel them – it’s really not necessary, so you might as well spare yourself the effort. (I hate peeling veggies!)

Cut potatoes into 1-inch cubes. (The *exact* size isn’t important; but the smaller you chop them, the faster they’ll cook.)

Place potato chunks into a stockpot and cover them with water.

Cover the pot, and bring to a boil.

Reduce heat and simmer (covered) until tender, about 15 minutes. Drain.

Return potatoes to the pot, and smash them with a potato masher.

Add butter and seasonings, and stir to combine.

Serve with additional butter and seasonings, to taste. Sour cream would also be tasty if you’re a sour cream fan.

# Quick Cabbage & Carrots

Makes 4 servings

## **Ingredients:**

2 TBSP extra virgin olive oil (or more if needed)

Couple handfuls of thinly sliced green cabbage

1 small onion, peeled and thinly sliced

1 medium carrot, shredded into “ribbons” using a veggie peeler (no knife needed)\*

Sea salt & black pepper, to taste

## **Directions:**

Heat oil in a large skillet over high heat.

Add all the veggies, and sauté until tender (about 10 minutes) – adding more oil if needed.

Season with salt and pepper, to taste. Serve.

\*Shredding the carrots in this fashion will help them cook in the same amount of time as the cabbage. If you *cut* the carrots, instead, they’ll be too thick and won’t cook quickly enough.

# Dry Onion Soup Mix

Equivalent to 1 store-bought packet of dry onion soup mix.

Mix together the following ingredients:

3 TBSP dry onion flakes  
4 tsp onion granules  
½ tsp celery salt  
1 ½ tsp sea salt  
¼ tsp black pepper  
½ tsp garlic granules

Use immediately or store in sealed bags or containers for later use.

# Chili Powder

Makes about ½ cup

Mix together the following ingredients:

6 TBSP paprika  
2 TBSP turmeric  
1 tsp ground cumin  
1 tsp dried oregano  
1 TBSP red pepper flakes  
½ tsp ground cayenne  
½ tsp garlic granules  
½ tsp sea salt  
¼ tsp ground cloves

Use immediately or store in sealed bags or containers for later use.

# Taco Seasoning Mix

Equivalent to 1 package of store-bought taco seasoning.

## **Ingredients:**

2 tsp chili powder (recipe included in this book)  
1½ tsp paprika  
1½ tsp ground cumin  
1 tsp onion granules  
3 ¼ tsp garlic granules  
½ tsp sea salt

## **Directions:**

Mix together all ingredients. Use immediately or store in a sealed container for later use.

## **Taco Meat Directions:**

Brown 1 pound of ground beef in a large skillet over high heat until cooked through.

Add ¾ cup water and the above seasonings. Stir until seasonings dissolve.

Bring to a boil.

Reduce heat and simmer, uncovered, over low heat until desired consistency is reached (about 10 minutes).

# Ketchup

Makes about 1 ½ cups

## **Ingredients:**

1 (6-oz.) can tomato paste  
¾ cup water  
2 TBSP apple cider vinegar  
2 TBSP honey  
½ tsp sea salt  
¼ tsp onion granules  
2 pinches ground allspice  
2 pinches ground cloves

## **Directions:**

In a medium saucepan, stir all ingredients together with a whisk.

Bring to a boil and stir.

Cover and simmer on Low for about 20 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Remove from heat, and cool completely.

Store in the refrigerator or freeze it for later use.

# French/Catalina Dressing

Makes about 1 cup

If you try this dressing and like it, save time by multiplying this recipe and making a double or triple batch each time in the future.

## **Ingredients:**

½ cup extra virgin olive oil  
¼ cup apple cider vinegar  
2 TBSP honey  
2 TBSP tomato paste  
1 tsp onion granules  
½ tsp garlic granules  
½ tsp paprika  
¼ tsp dry mustard  
¼ tsp chili powder (recipe included in this book)  
¼ tsp black pepper

## **Directions:**

Whisk together all ingredients in a large bowl.

Use a funnel to transfer the dressing to a bottle or other air-tight container for storage. Old salad dressing bottles or containers from other condiments (e.g., ketchup bottles) work great for this!

No refrigeration needed. If you choose to refrigerate this dressing, you will need to “thaw” it out before each use because the olive oil thickens quite a bit in the fridge.



# Italian Dressing

Makes about 4 cups

## **Ingredients:**

2 cups extra virgin olive oil  
1 cup apple cider vinegar  
1 TBSP garlic granules  
1 TBSP dried oregano  
4 - 5 TBSP honey, to taste  
2 tsp sea salt  
1 tsp black pepper

## **Directions:**

This dressing tastes even better as it sits, so make it a day in advance if possible.

Whisk (or shake) together all ingredients and enjoy. Old salad dressing bottles or containers from other condiments (e.g., ketchup bottles) work great for this!

No refrigeration needed. If you choose to refrigerate this dressing, you will need to “thaw” it out before each use because the olive oil thickens quite a bit in the fridge.

# Salad with Grilled Chicken

Number of servings: varies

This is one of our favorite "go to" lunches at our house! Just grill up a bunch of chicken, chop a few days worth of veggies, and you have a quick ready-to-eat lunch that's ready to go for the next several days! Talk about *simple*!

## **Ingredients:**

**Grilled Chicken Breasts or Thighs** (recipe included in this book)

Lettuce (we use Romaine lettuce)

Cherry tomatoes, sliced cucumbers, diced colored bell peppers (and/or whatever salad veggies you prefer)

Homemade **Italian Dressing** (recipe included in this book)

## **Directions:**

At least 1 day in advance, prepare the homemade **Italian Dressing** recipe included in this book. This dressing tastes better as it sits, so it won't be as tasty if you don't prepare it ahead of time.

Prepare the **Grilled Chicken Breasts or Thighs** recipe included in this book. This step may be done in advance if you plan to eat the chicken cold, but salad is quite tasty with warm chicken, too – totally up to you!

Wash and chop the lettuce and veggies.

Slice or chop the cooked meat as you wish. We like to cut it into bite-sized cubes.

Toss everything together in a bowl. Top with dressing, and enjoy!

TIP: Chop enough lettuce, veggies and cooked chicken to last you for a few days. Then, you will only make a mess one time; and you will have quick and convenient meals ready to eat for days to come! Yay!

# “Better-than-Candy” Smoothie

Serves 1

## **Ingredients:**

6 medium frozen strawberries (approximate amount)  
12 chunks fresh or frozen pineapple (approximate amount)  
½ of a banana, frozen  
¼ cup orange juice (preferably freshly-squeezed)  
¼ cup water, to desired consistency

## **Directions:**

Mix all ingredients together in a blender on High speed until smooth.

This is a *very* flexible recipe, so if you have more or less of an ingredient, it really doesn't matter. You can even choose different fruits altogether!

## **Frozen fruit tips:**

Many frozen fruits are available in the dessert area of the freezer section at the grocery store, but many are quite pricey.

It's easy to make your own by purchasing fresh fruit on sale and freezing it yourself. We always have frozen bananas on hand at our house for smoothies (even if they aren't on sale). Simply peel them and toss into a Ziploc bag in the freezer.

Sometimes frozen pineapple is cheaper than fresh pineapple, so pay attention at the store. Frozen pineapple is more convenient than chopping a fresh one, too, so no need to pay *more* for it and then do all that work *yourself*, too. Anytime I chop a fresh pineapple for snacking, I usually toss a bit of it into the freezer, too, for making treats like this one!

# Sweet 'n' Salty Popcorn

Serves 2-4

## **Ingredients:**

½ cup popcorn kernels

¼ cup (½ stick) butter

2 TBSP honey\*

⅛ - ¼ tsp sea salt, to taste (perhaps even more if your butter is *unsalted*)

## **Directions:**

Pop the popcorn into a large bowl using an air popper. (This gadget is definitely worth the \$20-\$25 investment if you love popcorn!)

Meanwhile, melt the honey and butter together on the stove in a small pan over low to medium-low heat.

Pour butter-honey mixture over the popcorn, and toss to coat.

Sprinkle with sea salt, to taste. Toss to coat evenly.

This treat is sticky and delicious! Enjoy!

\*If you prefer an *unsweetened* style of popcorn, feel free to omit the honey – it's just as tasty with just butter and sea salt!

# Chocolate Peanut Butter Bars

Makes about 16 small squares

## **Ingredients:**

½ cup natural peanut butter (creamy or chunky)  
⅔ cup honey  
¼ tsp pure vanilla extract  
2 TBSP unsweetened cocoa powder  
2 cups quick oats

## **Directions:**

Grease a small baking dish (7 ½" x 11") with butter or line it with parchment paper.

Melt peanut butter and honey together in a medium saucepan over low heat.

Remove from heat. Add vanilla extract and cocoa powder, and stir until smooth.

Add oats, and stir until combined.

Transfer batter to the greased (or lined) baking dish, and let it cool for a minute.

Using a piece of parchment paper (or your finger tips moistened with water), press batter evenly into the pan. Re-moisten your fingers, as needed, if you use your fingers. We prefer parchment, but either will prevent the batter from sticking to your hands.

Cover the pan, and place it in the freezer until the bars are firm (about 2 hours).

Cut into squares and enjoy!

Store bars in the freezer to maintain firmness.

# Chocolate-Banana Pudding

It's really quick to whip up a batch of this tasty pudding, and all you need is a blender - there's nothing to cook, and no waiting for it to cool, either! Oh, and don't be scared about the avocado ingredient - you won't even taste it!

Makes 2 - 2 ½ cups (about 4 small servings)

## **Ingredients:**

¼ cup unsweetened cocoa powder  
¼ cup honey  
¼ cup water  
2 tsp pure vanilla extract  
1 large (fairly firm-to-the-touch) avocado, preferably chilled\*  
2 frozen bananas\*

\*If you are serving this pudding immediately, it's best to start with *very* cold bananas and avocados, so the pudding will be chilled right away and ready-to-eat!

## **Directions:**

If you are using a standard blender (not a high-powered Vita Mix or Blendtec machine), set the frozen bananas out to thaw for about 10 minutes, so they won't be really hard. Then break each banana into a few chunks.

Add all ingredients to the blender in the order listed above, and blend on High speed until smooth.

If you use a standard blender, you will need to stop several times to scrape the sides of the pitcher to push the ingredients down into the blade.

We enjoy this best eaten immediately, but you may store any leftovers in the refrigerator for later if you prefer.

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## **Apple Cider Vinegar**

Purchase a brand that contains no added colors or flavors. The ingredients list should read something like, “Made from the juice of apples diluted with water to a uniform pickling and table strength of 5% acidity.” There should be no other ingredients listed. Look *carefully* because there are products on the market that are labeled on the front of the bottle as “apple cider *flavored* vinegar” – this is actually *white* vinegar (made from corn, *not* apples!) with artificial flavors and colors added to it to make it *look* and *taste* like **apple cider vinegar**! Crazy, right?!

For maximum health benefit, purchase **raw** (i.e., *not* pasteurized) and **unfiltered** varieties of apple cider vinegar. They will be labeled as such on the front of the bottle. [Bragg](#) and [Spectrum](#) brands both offer organic, raw, unfiltered varieties. You may need to visit a natural food store or the health section of a regular grocery store (or order online) because this type of vinegar is usually not sold in the vinegar section of regular grocery stores. If you are not familiar with the many health benefits of **raw, unfiltered** apple cider vinegar, please do an Internet search and review the amazing benefits! It’s great for digestion, skin, joints, metabolism, etc.!

## **Black Pepper**

We enjoy the flavor of freshly-ground black pepper. This requires purchasing whole black peppercorns (black pepper that has not been ground), which are available in the salt/pepper section of any regular grocery store. You’ll also need a pepper mill or grinder to grind them in. Pepper mills are available at most department stores in the kitchen section. Often these mills are available in the spice aisle at the grocery store, as well; and sometimes they are even filled with peppercorns already! If you prefer the convenience of already ground black pepper, that’s no problem. I’ve never seen additives in black peppercorns or ground black pepper. Any brand of black pepper should be fine, but it never hurts to double-check the label.

## **Butter**

REAL butter is a dairy product made from *cream*. It should only contain “cream” or “cultured cream” and, possibly, “salt.” Avoid brands containing “**natural flavor**” because this ingredient can disguise MSG (as discussed in the “**MSG**” section of this grocery guide). “Natural flavor” is especially common in *unsalted* varieties of butter. If you prefer an *unsalted* variety, look for [Organic Valley](#) brand. Their unsalted version contains just “cream and microbial culture” - no “natural flavor” is added. Don’t let the word “microbial culture” scare you on an ingredients label – that’s just beneficial bacteria. This brand is available at health food stores and many regular grocery stores that have a “health food” section.

Also avoid butter that contains “**annatto**.” Annatto is added seasonally to some brands of butter (when milk quality is lower) because it gives butter a rich yellow color. Some people report MSG-type reactions to this additive. Also avoid brands of butter that contain “**citric acid**” because this ingredient can also contain hidden MSG (as discussed in the “**MSG**” section of this grocery guide).

To avoid **genetically-modified organisms (GMOs)** as discussed in the “**GMOs**” section of this grocery guide, choose *certified organic* dairy products whenever possible. Many

conventional (i.e., *not* organically-raised) dairy cows are given genetically-modified artificial growth hormones (i.e., rbGH) and fed diets containing genetically-modified corn and soy. If *organic* butter is not available to you, at least look for labels that state “No rbGH,” so you can avoid the artificial growth hormones if possible.

My favorite store-bought butter is [Organic Valley](#) brand’s “[Pasture Butter](#).” This variety is salted and cultured butter from cows that are pastured (feasting in fields of green grass) May through September when healthy fats (e.g., CLAs and Omega 3s) are naturally highest. I’ve seen this variety available at natural health stores and Whole Foods Market. It contains just “organic pasteurized sweet cream, salt, and microbial culture.”

Absolutely *never* buy **margarine**! It is not *real* food! Among other things, it generally contains trans fat – the kind of fat that is associated with heart disease and other health problems! If you can’t eat dairy products, coconut oil makes a great butter substitute in many recipes (and on baked potatoes). The coconut taste may take a little getting used to (and I was no coconut fan at first, myself), but it will grow on you with time! Although coconut oil is not used in the recipes I’ve included here in *this* book, it is included in many of the dishes I’ve created elsewhere, so you’ll learn much more about this oil in my complete grocery guide and recipe collections available through my website.

Butter and sour cream are the only dairy products used here in *this* book, but my *complete* grocery shopping guide and cookbook will also show you how to shop for (and cook with) other dairy products, such as:

- Additive-free milk, cheese, yogurt, etc.
- Raw (i.e., unpasteurized) milk
- Non-homogenized dairy products
- Non-dairy milks (e.g., almond milk, soy milk, rice milk, coconut milk)

## **Celery Salt**

Look for a brand containing just “celery seed and salt.” [Durkee](#) brand is available at some regular grocery stores, and it’s additive-free. I sometimes find additive-free celery salt in the bags of spices near the produce section at regular grocery stores. [Frontier](#) and [Simply Organic](#) are two organic brands available at natural food stores. Both contain just “sea salt and celery seed” - and both brands are available online, as well. If you can’t find a brand that is free of additives or anti-caking agents, then just purchase plain “celery seed” (in the spice aisle) and substitute 3 parts celery seed and 1 part sea salt for whatever amount of “celery salt” is required for a recipe.

**Chicken** – (see “**Meat**” section of this guide)

## **Chili Powder**

Many commercially available chili powders (and other seasoning blends for that matter) contain vague ingredients (e.g., the word “**spices**”) that may be used to disguise things like MSG (as explained in the “**MSG**” section of this shopping guide)! If you’re able to find a brand with a “clean” label that lists each *individual* herb/spice and contains no mysterious words, that’s

great. Otherwise, try the homemade recipe I've included in this book – it's simple! I've found one additive-free brand, [Spice Supreme](#), in the most unlikely of places – the dollar aisle at some regular grocery stores. And it contains just the following ingredients: “chili pepper, cumin, oregano, garlic powder and salt.”

**Cocoa Powder, Unsweetened** – (see “**Unsweetened Cocoa Powder**” section of this guide)

**Cumin (Powder)** – (see “**Ground Cumin**” section of this guide)

### **Dried Basil**

This is a dry spice (seasoning) located in the spice/baking section of any grocery store. I have never seen any additives in this product.

### **Dried Oregano**

This is a dry spice (seasoning) located in the spice/baking section of any grocery store. I have never seen any additives in this product.

### **Dried Thyme**

This is a dry spice (seasoning) located in the spice/baking section of any grocery store. I have never seen any additives in this product.

### **Dry Mustard (“Mustard Powder”)**

This is a dry spice (seasoning) located in the spice/baking section of any grocery store. I have never seen any additives in this product.

### **Dry Onion Flakes**

This is a dry spice (seasoning) located in the spice/baking section of any grocery store. It is also sometimes referred to as “minced onion” or “dry minced onion.” I have never seen any additives in this product.

### **Eggs**

Definitely do *not* use egg substitutes! Buy *real, whole* eggs, and crack them yourself! For optimum health benefit, purchase farm-fresh eggs from a local farm whose chickens are “**pastured**” (i.e., allowed to roam freely on grassy pastures). Compared to typical commercial eggs, those from pastured hens are richer in vitamin D, omega 3 fatty acids, vitamin B12, folic acid and Vitamin A. If you aren't familiar with how most commercial eggs are raised, I encourage you to research “factory farms” on the Internet - but make sure you're prepared to see some very disturbing graphics and footage. You can also visit [www.EatWild.com](http://www.EatWild.com) for more great

information about pasture-raised versus factory-farmed animal products.

Many stores now carry locally-raised eggs from small family farms. Ideally, make sure they are “pasture-raised.” Even eggs labeled as “cage-free,” for example, may come from hens that are raised *indoors* their entire lives! Another great place to start is to visit your local farmers markets. Often there are farmers there selling eggs. At many local markets, eggs sell out very quickly, so you need to arrive shortly after market opens unless you order in advance. If your markets are not year-round, you can also make arrangements with some farmers who deliver their eggs to town monthly throughout the off-season. If you wish to avoid **genetically-modified organisms (GMOs)** as discussed in the “**GMOs**” section of this guide, purchase eggs that are *certified organic* or raised by a farmer you trust and who does not feed a genetically-modified diet (e.g., soy and corn) to the chickens.

Farm-fresh, pastured eggs are *particularly* important when eggs are consumed *raw* (e.g., in cookie dough or homemade mayonnaise). Farm-fresh, pastured eggs come from chickens that live in environments and maintain states of health that are less conducive to the spread of bacteria like salmonella.

If you buy eggs at a store, there’s very little chance that the chickens were raised in an environment that in *any* way approximates the image of the red barn and open fields depicted on the carton! Companies make all sorts of claims on their packaging (e.g., “cage-free,” “natural,” “free-range”) which imply one thing to consumers but, in reality, mean quite another. Many of these terms are not regulated. Even “certified organic” chickens are only required to “have access to the outdoors,” which doesn’t mean that they actually ever set foot outside. They can be housed in a large building that has an *opening* (similar to a “doggie door”) to an outdoor space.

Now, take a moment to picture in your mind what that “outdoor space” may look like. Did you envision a fenced *cement* patio? Well, that *is* sufficient and permissible as “outdoor space” according to organic regulations. See the problem? The only way to *truly* know how your eggs are raised is to visit the local farm from which you purchase them...or raise egg-layers *yourself*. It may surprise you to learn how many municipalities (e.g., my hometown of Omaha, NE) *do* allow city folks to raise egg-laying hens in their own backyards, so check your local codes if you’re interested in getting that up close and personal with your food!

**Extra Virgin Olive Oil** – (see “**Olive Oil**” section of this guide)

## **Fennel Seed**

This is a dry spice (seasoning) located in the spice/baking section of any grocery store. I have never seen any additives in this product. There is also a spice called “fennel powder,” which is *ground* fennel seed. Fennel powder is *not* what *my* recipes require, so be sure you buy the whole *seeds*.

## **Fish**

To avoid any hidden additives, only purchase “unseasoned” varieties of fish. The only thing in the ingredients list should be “fish.” Give preference to “wild caught” varieties when you select

fish, as well. Otherwise, the fish are “farm raised” which means they are raised in captivity for the sole purpose of consumption. Farm-raised fish may be confined in unnatural and overcrowded enclosures and fed diets that are not compatible with their physiology. As a result, the animals are not as healthy...and neither are we if we eat them! For example, farm-raised salmon must be fed a chemical to turn their flesh pink because in captivity they are denied access to the tiny shrimp that “wild caught” salmon eat to achieve this reddening effect naturally. If farm-raised salmon do not eat this chemical, their flesh remains an unattractive (and not very “salmon-like”) *grey* color.

**Fresh Garlic** – (see “**Garlic**” section below)

### **Garlic (“Fresh Garlic,” “Garlic Cloves”)**

Unless my recipe specifies “garlic *granules*,” the word “garlic” in my cookbook refers to *fresh* garlic. *Fresh* garlic is located in the produce section of any grocery store, usually near the onions. An entire “bunch” of garlic is called a “bulb” or a “head,” and each piece that you can break off is called a “clove.” Most of my recipes require just a few *cloves*.

There is a dry skin holding all of the cloves together as a bulb, and there is also a skin on each individual clove that must be removed prior to eating. A great way to remove the skin from each clove is to lay the clove on a cutting board and place the side of a large knife blade on top of it. Then give the blade a good whack on top with your palm and it will smash the clove a bit and break up the skin for easy removal.

Store *unpeeled* garlic at room temperature (on your kitchen counter is fine). If you use a lot of garlic, you can peel a week’s worth of cloves and store them in an air-tight container in your fridge so you’ll have fresh garlic ready to go whenever you need it.

Do not use store-bought, jarred varieties of garlic that have been pre-crushed because they generally contain additives, and their flavor cannot compare to that of *fresh*, raw garlic.

### **Garlic Granules (“Granulated Garlic”)**

This is a dry spice (seasoning) located in the spice/baking section of any grocery store. I have never seen any additives in this product.

Garlic granules are often labeled as “garlic powder.” True garlic *powder* is the consistency of flour, and garlic *granules* are closer to the consistency of salt. If you cannot find garlic *granules* at your grocery store, peek through the sides of the garlic *powder* containers, and look for one that appears to be coarser than flour. That will work just fine.

If all you can find is true garlic *powder* (with a flour consistency), then substitute half the amount called for in my recipes. Avoid most store-bought “garlic *salt*,” however, as these *blends* often contain additives and/or artificial flavor enhancers. They are often *not* comprised *solely* of “garlic” and “salt” as you may presume.

## **GMOs (“Genetically-Modified Organisms”)**

GMO stands for “**Genetically-Modified Organisms**” (also referred to as “**Genetically-Engineered**” Foods). Currently, there are products in our food supply that contain organisms whose genetic structures have been manipulated by scientists to express certain traits that increase the food industry’s profits. For example, scientists have created plants that are able to withstand an otherwise deadly dose of weed killer. Once you start researching this GMO issue, you quickly become aware of the insufficient safety testing and the undeniable conflict of interest that surrounded the initial approval (and the ongoing presence) of GMOs in our food supply. I recommend the Institute for Responsible Technology ([www.ResponsibleTechnology.org](http://www.ResponsibleTechnology.org)) as a great place for everyone to start doing their own research on this topic.

Many researchers are concerned about the possible negative health consequences of altering our food supply in this fashion. There is increasing evidence from animal studies of a connection between GMOs and health problems such as allergies, reproductive problems and faulty insulin regulation. Unfortunately, the FDA does not require safety testing of these products, so the biotech companies are responsible for deciding whether or not their *own* products are safe enough to unleash on the human population.

Because the FDA also does not require these GMOs to be *labeled* on food packages, all of us are essentially participating in a long-term safety test of these organisms *without* our consent. As of March 2014, the most commonly genetically-modified foods on the market in the U.S. are:

- **Corn**
- **Soy**
- **Dairy (varieties containing artificial rbGH growth hormones)**
- **Hawaiian papayas**
- **Sugar (from sugar beets)**
- **Canola oil**
- **Cottonseed oil**
- **Aspartame (artificial sweetener)**
- **Zucchini and some yellow squash**
- **Meat, eggs and dairy from animals that are fed GMOs in their diets**

**Aspartame** is a neurotoxin that I don’t recommend ingesting. It’s used as an artificial sweetener, and you should avoid those altogether when switching to a natural diet. Yes, that means no more diet soda! Do a quick Internet search for the “dangers of artificial sweeteners,” and you’ll want to run the other way!

**To avoid GMOs** when you purchase the *other* foods on this list, be sure to select items labeled as “**non-GMO verified**” or “**certified organic**” because GMOs are not allowed in products with these certifications. If you don’t have access to non-GMO versions of the foods listed here, then you may decide to eliminate those foods from your diet altogether. Because I don’t feel comfortable with GMOs in my diet, I do my best to avoid them. I have included here



in my shopping guide the information you will need if you choose to avoid them when making my recipes, as well.

Dairy products are listed here because many commercially-raised dairy cows are treated with the genetically-modified growth hormone rbST/rbGH to increase milk production. To avoid this growth hormone in dairy products (milk, butter, sour cream, etc.), select brands that are labeled as “no artificial hormones,” “certified organic,” “rbGH-free,” or “rbST-free.”

Other less obvious sources of GMOs are meat, eggs or milk products (*yes, even “hormone-free” milk products*) that are not “certified organic.” These animals may eat a diet that contains GMO corn and/or GMO soy. It is uncertain whether or not the GMOs fed to animals will directly impact *our* health if we ingest these products, but if you are not comfortable with participating in *this* experiment, you must avoid eating such products.

In addition to the foods listed above, you must be careful to check ingredient lists for products that are *derived from* these foods. For example, white vinegar is *derived* from corn and “whey” ingredients are derived from milk. So if GMO corn or milk is used in the process, the end product that you purchase will also contain GMOs. Because these types of ingredients are not used in the recipes I’ve provided here in this book, we’ll just leave it at that for now. ☺

I have plenty more tips about avoiding GMO foods, but most of them are not relevant to the recipes provided here in this particular book, and I don’t want to burden you with too much information at once. When you’re ready to move on and start making other recipes, there’s plenty of information in my complete grocery shopping guide about how to avoid GMOs in sugar, soy and the other ingredients listed above. Again, you’re just getting started here – so even if you choose *not* to address the GMO issue in your diet right now, you’ll still be well on your way to transitioning to REAL foods! I just want to make sure you’re aware of the GMO issue, so you’ll know where to look when you’re ready to address it in your own life.

## **Ground Allspice**

This is a dry spice (seasoning) located in the spice/baking section of any grocery store. I have never seen any additives in this product. Despite the impression that you may get from its name, allspice is a *single* spice (just like “cinnamon” is a *single* spice). It is made from the dried berries of a plant known as Pimenta dioica – a member of the pimento family. It is not a spice *blend*, so it should not have a list of ingredients for you to search through. It should just contain “allspice,” but it never hurts to double-check the label before purchasing.

**Ground Beef** – (see “Meat” section of this guide)

## **Ground Cayenne Pepper**

This is a dry spice (seasoning) located in the spice/baking section of any grocery store. I have never seen any additives in this product. Cayenne is a *spicy* pepper, so beware!

## **Ground Cloves**

This is a dry spice (seasoning) located in the spice/baking section of any grocery store. I have never seen any additives in this product.

## **Ground Cumin**

This is a dry spice (seasoning) located in the spice/baking section of any grocery store. I have never seen any additives in this product. Many of my recipes require cumin; and some of them use a large amount, so purchase a large container if possible – once you know that you like how the recipes taste!

I have found it difficult to locate *large* containers of cumin in the spice aisle at many regular grocery stores; but often there are larger/cheaper containers available in the spice section of the fresh produce area, rather than in the spice aisle. Other possible sources are the dollar aisle of your regular grocery store or the bulk spice sections at natural food stores where you can scoop out however much you need! You can also shop for ground cumin in bulk online.

## **Honey**

Some brands of honey contain *corn syrup* or other strange ingredients, so always read the ingredients label! Yes, believe it or not, you even have to read the ingredients label on...*honey*! That's how crazy things have gotten out there! Yikes!

The only ingredient listed should be “honey.” Most honey you find in the baking aisle of your regular grocery store is heated/cooked (i.e., pasteurized). In contrast, “**raw honey**” has *not* been heated and is generally a thicker consistency. Raw honey has more health benefits, and there's more information about shopping for it in my complete shopping guide, but just try out some regular store-bought honey for now to get started experimenting with the recipes here.

## **Ketchup**

Most brands of ketchup contain additives like “spices,” “natural flavor” and/or “high fructose corn syrup” which can disguise MSG as discussed in the “**MSG**” section of this guide.

One additive-free variety I've found on the market is [Annie's Naturals](#) brand. It contains only “organic tomato paste, organic distilled white vinegar, water, cane sugar, sea salt, organic onion, organic allspice, and organic clove.” I've found this brand at *Super Target* and *Whole Foods Market* stores and also at natural health shops. It's also available through the Internet. *HEB organic* brand is another good brand with a similar additive-free ingredients list if you happen to live near an HEB grocery store.

I've also included a recipe for homemade **Ketchup** in the recipe section of this book so you can make your own ketchup if you don't have access to a good store-bought variety.

## **Lemon/Lime Juice**

Store-bought juice varieties are *pasteurized* (i.e., “cooked”), and many are filled with additives. Additionally, the flavor of these products pales in comparison to freshly-squeezed juice! Some health stores carry pure, additive-free juice in glass jars in the juice aisle, but these varieties are still cooked (i.e., not fresh). If you do purchase these store-bought juices, be sure the *only* ingredient is lemon juice or lime juice! However, this is one short-cut you don't want to take unless you have to. I strongly recommend buying *whole* lemons and limes and juicing them

*yourself!* Hand juicers work great for this purpose, and they are readily available at most department stores or in the kitchen utensils section of most grocery stores.

## **Meat**

Ideally, we would all purchase animal products exclusively from local, grass-based farms where we could verify how the animals are treated and raised by visiting the farms *ourselves*. This is what I have chosen to do as much as possible for *my* family. However, I realize that won't be everyone's choice, so I am providing information here to help you make the most informed decisions possible at your grocery store.

Meat products from animals that are raised on grass pasture (i.e., their natural diet and environment) taste better and are better for our health than animal products from factory-farmed animals that may be subjected to unnatural practices (e.g., antibiotics, growth hormones, inhumane confinement, limited or no access to the outdoors, etc.). Pasture-raised animal products are lower in calories and fat, and they contain higher levels of healthy Omega 3 fatty acids and antioxidants.

If you aren't familiar with how most commercial meats are farmed, I encourage you to research "factory farms" on the Internet - but make sure you're prepared to see some very disturbing graphics and footage. You can also visit [www.EatWild.com](http://www.EatWild.com) for more great information about the health benefits of pasture-raised versus factory-farmed animal products. If you wish to avoid **genetically-modified organisms (GMOs)** as discussed in the "**GMOs**" section of this guide, purchase meat products that are *certified organic* or "*non-GMO verified*" or raised by a farmer you trust and who does not feed a genetically-modified diet to the animals.

If you choose to purchase meat products at the grocery store, you must ignore *most* of the claims on the *front* of the package. Save yourself the headache and flip straight to the ingredients list. No matter how "natural" or "free of artificial ingredients" a product claims to be on the *front*, you **MUST** check the back and find the ingredients list. Many of the words used to make claims on the front of packaging are *not* regulated (e.g., "natural"), so they really have *no* meaning because companies say whatever they want to get you to buy their products.

Also, just because you purchase meat from the "fresh meat" case at the grocery store or your local butcher, that doesn't guarantee it's free of additives. You must *ask* the butcher or (preferably) the meat manager *directly*! Don't expect to find the information stated on any label because most meat that is cut and/or wrapped *at* the grocery store *won't* have the ingredients listed anywhere. Never assume that this means it's *just* meat, as I have found this is often *not* the case! Tell the butcher that you need to know with *absolute* certainty that there are *no other* ingredients in the product besides meat.

Store-bought meats (whether purchased from the fresh meat counter or the meat cooler) are often injected with solutions to tenderize and/or preserve them. These solutions are often referred to as "*marinade*" or "*broth*" on the package, and they may contain hidden sources of the dangerous food additive, MSG (see "**MSG**" section of this guide). Note: By "solutions," I am *not* referring to statements you'll often see on the front of packaging about the percentage of "*water retained from processing*." That phrase on the front label is *not* of concern from a *food*

*additives* stand point. It does, however, indicate that you are paying for added *water* if the meat is priced by *weight*.

Be especially wary of *ground* chicken and *ground* turkey. Many store-bought varieties contain “**natural flavors**,” which can disguise the dangerous food additive, MSG (see “**MSG**” section of this guide). Also be especially wary of purchasing meat from a store that has no butcher on site. Meat at such stores may contain preservative solutions to help “retain freshness” because it is cut and packaged at a distant location and then shipped to the store. Again, a butcher on site does *not* guarantee that the meat is additive-free. But *not* having a butcher on site makes it likely that the meat *does* contain additives. Always ask!

Please be aware that no store-bought cuts of meat are sacred – *any* cuts of meat *may* contain additives. If there is an ingredients list on the package, make sure it *only* contains meat! If there is no ingredients list on the package, steer clear of packages that mention “broth, solution, or marinade” in small print on the front of the package. If there is neither an ingredients list nor any information listed on the front, don’t assume you’re in the clear – always ask the butcher or meat manager to be *sure*!

There are a few particular brands of meat available at many regular grocery stores that are generally additive-free. Things do change, however, so always double-check before purchasing the items mentioned here. These are good places to start for increasing your odds of finding additive-free cuts:

- [Just Bare](#) and [Smart Chicken](#) brands of chicken – unseasoned varieties
- Ground beef and whole/unseasoned cuts of beef and chicken at Costco
- [Farmland](#) brand pork – unseasoned varieties
- Whole Foods Market, Trader Joe’s, Sprouts, and other natural health stores also carry many additive-free meats and local, farm-raised meats – many of which are also *grass-fed*.

When I visited the Omaha, NE location of Costco, I learned that all *unseasoned* cuts of beef and chicken in the meat department are additive-free, but the butcher there informed me that the unseasoned *pork* products *do* contain a solution at this time – even though it’s not labeled on the package. Again, always double-check with your butcher, especially for packages that don’t list ingredients!

Never assume that additive-free meats are only available at high-end grocery stores, either. For example, in my hometown of Omaha, NE, as a general rule, meats cut and packaged by the butchers at No Frills, Bag ‘N Save and Fareway stores (which are *not* high-end stores) are *likely* to be additive-free, but always double-check. (Oh, and if you live in Omaha, you can also check out Hy-Vee stores for **Amana beef** which is also additive-free.) Again, whether you purchase meat from a cooler or a fresh meat case (at *any* store), always double-check the ingredients!

Please also note that just because a brand or store carries an additive-free cut of a particular meat, that doesn’t mean that *all* of their meats are necessarily free of additives. Each item you purchase must be *individually* checked, even within the same brand! A special note about [Tyson Chicken](#): At the time of this writing, this brand carries a line of “All Natural” chicken, some of which contains a “broth” and some of which contains *just* chicken. Be sure to

check *each* label so you get the additive-free version!

Aside from these solutions and seasonings that are added to meats *after* slaughter, there are also the issues of how an animal is raised and fed while it is *alive*. Please do not assume that just because you purchase meat at a health food store or natural market that it is automatically grass-fed and free-range. When purchasing “grass-fed” meats (even directly from a farmer), you must also verify that the meat is “grass-finished.” Grass-finished means that an animal was raised on pasture for its *entire* life...not fed grass for *most* of its life, labeled as “grass-fed,” and then fattened up on *corn* in its final weeks of life. This is one common “trick” used in the labeling of “grass-fed” meats!

For the most part, if you want to ensure that your meat products are grass-fed, you will need to seek out local farmers *directly*. Again, I am not a fan of store-bought meats at all, and I do not support the way most of those animals are raised or fed. Unfortunately, even if you buy the most additive-free meat available at most stores, you are still most likely getting much more than just meat (e.g., antibiotics, hormones, corn-fed); but if you *must* purchase at the store, hopefully this guide helps you make some more informed decisions.

## **MSG (“Monosodium Glutamate”): Hidden Sources & Health Effects**

**NOTE:** This section is fairly scientific and technical. I don’t want to overwhelm you, but I need to include this information here to alert you that **MSG** (the dangerous food additive you hear about in Chinese food) is hidden in all sorts of foods you’d never suspect at the grocery store – even things you may think are “healthy” for you! I (and many other people) experience all sorts of physiological misery if I accidentally ingest this stuff, so I want to make sure you’re aware of it. Feel free to skip this section for now because if you follow the rest of my grocery guide when purchasing ingredients for my recipes, you’ll be avoiding hidden MSG 100% automatically without even reading this section right now. Once you’re ready to move on and start purchasing things that aren’t listed in this grocery guide, though, you’ll definitely need to read this section first!

Despite common perception, the **toxic food additive MSG** is everywhere - not just in Chinese food! This **unnecessary flavor enhancer** is actually *hidden under dozens of ingredient names* in *all sorts* of processed foods, restaurant foods, beverages, chewing gums, vitamins and supplements. It is added to foods in higher dosages than ever before, and more and more people are experiencing symptoms from ingesting it.

**Monosodium Glutamate (MSG)** is a **health concern** because it contains glutamate. Glutamate is the salt form of "**Free Glutamic Acid**." Glutamate is an **excitotoxin** that has been associated with many health problems (e.g., headaches, migraines, digestive distress, seizures, heart attacks, vision problems), and you’ll find *many* more common symptoms if you do an Internet search for “symptoms of MSG toxicity.” Due to insufficient labeling laws, food companies use *many* ingredient names to disguise Free Glutamic Acid in their products, so consumers must look for more than just "MSG" on food labels if they wish to avoid this toxin and its associated health effects. These hidden names are discussed in much more detail in my



*complete* grocery guide which includes many more pages dedicated just to MSG and its hidden names, but here are a few examples of ingredient names that can disguise MSG on food labels: natural flavor, yeast extract, broth, bouillon, spices, carrageenan, citric acid, corn syrup, guar gum, lecithin, and modified food starch.

To understand why processed **Free Glutamic Acid has been associated with so many health problems**, it is helpful to learn about *natural* Glutamic Acid. Glutamic Acid is an amino acid (a building block of protein) that occurs *naturally* in the body as one of many excitatory neurotransmitters (chemicals that "excite" cells into action). Glutamic Acid occurs *naturally* in certain *unprocessed*, whole foods (e.g., tomatoes). In this *natural* form, it is bound (i.e., linked) together with other amino acids to form a protein. Once ingested, the protein is broken down *slowly* by the digestive system. The Glutamic Acid is released *gradually* into the blood stream and is non-toxic. If one ingests more glutamate than the body needs, the cells clear away the excess just as they were designed to do. The digestion of these *natural*, whole food sources releases into the bloodstream such a small amount of Glutamic Acid that even people who react to *processed* MSG (i.e., "free glutamic acid") can usually tolerate them.

When food manufacturers break down a protein during processing (usually from corn, soy, wheat, tapioca starch, molasses or beet sugar), Glutamic Acid is "freed" from the links that bind it to other amino acids in nature. **MSG (i.e., "monosodium glutamate")** and dozens of other ingredients used by the food industry contain this *free* form of glutamate. When one ingests this already-broken-down, *free* form of glutamate, blood levels of glutamate can spike to more than 20 times the usual amount because the digestive system does not have to work to break down the links. The human nervous system is not equipped to handle such quickly-absorbed doses. The excess glutamate cannot be efficiently cleared away, so it accumulates around the cells throughout the body, over-exciting them to the point of damage or death.

**This disruption at the cellular level causes and exacerbates a wide range of physiological reactions** from runny noses to heart palpitations. According to experts like Dr. Russell Blaylock, M.D., **Free Glutamic Acid is an excitotoxin, not an allergen**. Some people are more sensitive to lower dosages than others, but it affects everyone to *some* degree. There is often a delay between ingestion and the onset of symptoms, preventing many people from realizing the connection between their symptoms and their diet. Most acute symptoms will display within 48 hours (many within 30 minutes) of ingestion, but some health effects (e.g., obesity, infertility) have been demonstrated in lab mice *long* after exposure.

Processed free glutamate over-stimulates our taste buds, tricking us into thinking that these foods are extremely flavorful. Because glutamate receptors line various organs and tissues (brain, heart, lungs, digestive tract, etc.) throughout the body, ingesting free glutamate can over-stimulate *any* of these systems and cause a **variety of symptoms**. Luckily, much of this damage is reversible, and many sufferers resolve their symptoms (often within 7-10 days) by *completely* eliminating Free Glutamic Acid from their diets.

**To prevent these effects and to avoid this hidden additive**, one must carefully scrutinize the ingredients list on every item one consumes and avoid any mysterious or vague ingredients on product labels. It is best to prepare meals at home from basic, whole food ingredients and to minimize reliance on processed foods. Ingredients such as natural flavor, yeast extract, broth, bouillon, carrageenan, citric acid, and modified food starch can contain free

glutamate in varying amounts, and there are many more hidden sources of MSG discussed in my complete grocery shopping guide available through my website.

Please don't become overwhelmed by reading this section. There are still *plenty* of healthy food options for you to eat; you'll just need to prepare most of them at home. And, with the aid of my recipes and this shopping guide, your transition will surely be a lot smoother than *mine* was! ☺ Follow my grocery guide to **avoid hidden MSG** in all ingredients you need for the recipes in this book. When you're ready to move on to new recipes, be sure to check out my complete guide to learn how avoid MSG altogether and to find out how it is hidden in things like:

- Products labeled as "All Natural"
- Products labeled as "No MSG added"
- Vegetarian foods
- Chips, crackers and other snacks
- Soups
- All-purpose flour
- Cereal
- Juice
- Broth & Bouillon
- Canned tuna
- Soy sauce
- Vinegars
- Cottage cheese, sour cream, whipping cream, milk, cheese, cream cheese
- Chewing gum
- Non-dairy milks (e.g., coconut milk, almond milk, rice milk)
- Canned tomato products
- Vitamins and supplements
- Salad dressings
- Protein and weight-loss products (powders, shakes and bars)
- Chocolate
- Low-fat and fat-free products
- Nuts
- Cooking oils
- Jellies and jams
- Sauces & marinades
- Tea (bags, loose leaf, and prepared versions)
- Ice cream
- Yogurt
- ...and so much more!

## **Oats**

There are 3 varieties of oats used in my complete recipe collection. **Quick oats** are the only variety used in my recipes here in *this* book, but here's a quick run-down of all three types...

**Steel-cut oats** are the least processed variety. They take the longest to cook, but they retain their texture which is great for making hot breakfast cereal! **Old fashioned oats** (also known as “rolled oats”) are steamed and pressed during processing. This results in a thinner oat that cooks more quickly. Old fashioned oats are great for making breakfast cereal, as well as granola and cookie recipes! They retain much of their shape and texture when cooked. **Quick oats** are pressed during processing to be thinner than old fashioned oats. They cook even more quickly, but they tend to lose their shape and have a “mushier” texture. If my recipe specifies *which* variety to use, be sure to use *that* variety. For example, when making meatloaf, quick oats work best.

*Quaker* is a popular brand of oats that's available at most grocery stores, but generic and store brands work just as well. Most natural food stores and health sections will also carry *organic* oat varieties, and these are usually available in the bulk bins and/or cereal aisles of those stores. I've never seen additives in any brand of plain (unflavored) oats, but always double-check the ingredients list just to be sure.

## **Olive Oil**

The only ingredient on the label should be “olive oil,” and olive oil is widely available at any grocery store. We prefer “*extra virgin olive oil*” because it's a higher quality oil with greater health benefits. For example, extra virgin olive oil provides superior anti-inflammatory effects compared to more refined varieties of olive oil. If a label just says, “olive oil,” then it's a more refined variety. Inspect the label to make sure the ingredients indicate that the oil is 100% pure “*extra virgin*” olive oil. Also, the flavor of extra virgin olive oil varies significantly across brands, so you may need to experiment with a few different brands until you find one you like best. Lastly, as a general rule, avoid any “flavored” varieties of olive oil (e.g., “garlic olive oil”), as these may contain additives.

## **Onion Granules**

This is a dry spice (seasoning) located in the spice/baking section of any grocery store. I have never seen any additives in this product. Onion *granules* are often labeled as “onion *powder*.” *True* onion *powder* is the consistency of flour, and onion *granules* are closer to the consistency of salt. If you cannot find onion *granules* at your grocery store, peek through the sides of the onion *powder* containers, and select one that looks coarser than flour. That will work just fine. If all you can find is true onion *powder* (with a flour consistency), then substitute that *powder* at a rate of half the amount called for with the *granules*.



## **Orange Juice**

Freshly-squeezed juice from raw fruits/veggies is always best. If you insist on purchasing store-bought varieties, at least look for brands with ingredient labels that list *solely* fruits and/or veggies. Orange juice should contain ONLY “orange juice” and *no* other ingredients. Ignore claims on the *front* of the package. Many brands say, “100% juice” on the *front* of the container; but if you look at the ingredients, you’ll find they contain more than just juice. Many juices contain the additive “natural flavor” which can disguise MSG (see “**MSG**” section of this guide). Always do your research. Additionally, store-bought commercial juice varieties are *pasteurized* (i.e., “heated”), so the nutrient levels are not the same as from *fresh* juice made at home from *raw* fruits and veggies. It is also important to note that fruit juices (even when freshly-made) are *loaded* with sugar, so use accordingly!

## **Paprika**

This is a dry spice (seasoning) located in the spice/baking section of any grocery store. I have never seen any additives in this product.

## **Pasta**

When possible, choose *whole-wheat* pasta (or *brown rice* pasta if you are gluten-intolerant). The only ingredient in whole-wheat pasta should be “whole-wheat flour,” and the only ingredients in brown rice pasta should be “brown rice and water.”

Regular *white* pasta is generally made from “enriched white flour,” which may contain **hidden MSG** (as explained in more detail in my *complete* grocery guide). Whole-wheat pasta is widely available at most grocery stores, but make sure to read the ingredients list. If you eat a gluten-free diet and need brown rice pasta, my favorite one is *Trader Joe’s* organic brand. To me, it has the best texture; and it also has a great price!

## **Peanut Butter**

You may assume that peanut butter is a health food and that it is made from *just* peanuts. In many cases, you’d be wrong! Many common commercial brands contain unnecessary ingredients like sugar, high fructose corn syrup, salt, and partially-hydrogenated vegetable oil (i.e., trans fat)!

Ideally, purchase brands that are unsalted and contain just *one* ingredient: “dry roasted peanuts.” Many regular grocery stores may not carry plain, unsalted peanut butter; so you may need access to a natural food store like *Whole Foods Market* which carries several choices (e.g., “365 brand”). Many stores now carry at least *one* brand that contains only “peanuts and salt.” For example, Costco’s *Kirkland organic* brand peanut butter and [Smucker’s Natural](#) brand (and Smucker’s “certified organic” varieties) contain just “peanuts and salt.” Smucker’s brand is available in creamy or chunky varieties at many regular grocery stores.

Because these natural varieties of peanut butter contain no additives, the peanut oil will settle to the top of the jar; so you’ll need to stir it well before using it the first time. Peanut butter that you may be accustomed to likely contains hydrogenated oil (i.e., trans fat), which is added to

keep the fat from separating in this manner. Natural peanut butter should be stored in the *refrigerator* to preserve freshness after opening. Refrigeration will also prevent the oil from settling back to the top, so you won't need to stir it again after the first use. Also note, natural peanut butter is a bit *sticky*, so don't put too much in your mouth at once! ☺

## **Popcorn Kernels**

Popcorn kernels are available at most regular grocery stores in the snack aisle. To avoid unhealthy oils and other additives, it is best to pop your *own* popcorn from *scratch*. Air poppers are a great tool for making popcorn, and they are available at most department stores and kitchen supply stores (or online) for under \$30. Much of the corn grown in the U.S. contains **genetically-modified organisms (GMOs)**, as discussed in the “**GMOs**” section of this guide. However, it is unlikely that *popcorn* is genetically-modified (according to sources at [www.ResponsibleTechnology.org](http://www.ResponsibleTechnology.org)). The best way to make *sure* you're avoiding GMOs, though, is to *only* purchase corn products that are labeled as “certified organic” or “non-GMO verified.”

**Quick Oats** – (see “**Oats**” section of this guide)

## **Red Pepper Flakes**

This is a dry spice (seasoning) located in the spice/baking section of any grocery store. I have never seen any additives in this product.

## **Rice**

Most regular grocery stores now carry at least *one* variety of brown rice. Rice is naturally *brown* until it is processed and the bran is removed to *make* it white. We generally choose to prepare *brown* rice at our house because it is more nutritious. Brown rice does tend to have a “mushier” texture, so I recommend adding about 20% *less* water than directed on the package. I've also found that I prefer the texture of **long-grain** brown rice varieties, such as Basmati or Jasmine, because they seem firmer to me. These varieties are more expensive and are not always available at regular grocery stores, so you may need to visit a natural foods store or order them online if you want to try them out.

You won't find an ingredients list on (unflavored) varieties of white rice or brown rice, but the FDA does require U.S. food suppliers to “enrich” (i.e., add nutrients to) white rice because the nutrients are stripped away when it is processed. As explained in more detail in my *complete* grocery shopping guide, this enrichment process can result in hidden MSG being added to the rice, and it won't be listed on the ingredients label! If you *must* use white rice, either select imported varieties that are *not* enriched (available at some ethnic specialty stores) or rinse the rice very well before cooking it to wash off as much of the “enrichment” additives as possible.

**Roast** - (see “**Meat**” section of this guide)

## **Salad Dressing**

If you're the type of person who smothers everything you eat with store-bought Ranch dressing, then you might want to close your eyes for this...there are tons of additives and unhealthy oils in there! I have yet to find *any* commercially-prepared salad dressings that contain *no* suspicious ingredients. The good news is that it's quick and easy to make your *own* dressings, and they taste better than store-bought varieties! There are a couple super tasty options here in this book for you to try...and there are even more dressing recipes waiting for you in my complete recipe collection available through my website.

## **Salt**

We prefer **sea salt** that we grind ourselves at home. Whether you purchase regular salt or sea salt, you must check the ingredients list. Yes, even on your *salt*! Salt often contains “anti-caking agents” (e.g., dextrose, cornstarch) to keep the granules from clumping together, and these are generally listed in the ingredients list. I recommend avoiding anti-caking agents because many of them can disguise the dangerous food additive MSG (see “**MSG**” section of this guide). I also recommend avoiding *iodized* salt because the process used to make this type of salt may result in hidden MSG being added - and that *won't* be disclosed in the ingredients list. To find brands of salt that do *not* contain additives, you may need to shop at a natural foods store or the health section of a regular grocery store. Look for brands that are *not* iodized and contain just “salt” in the ingredients list.

If you are extremely sensitive to hidden MSG, then also use caution when purchasing processed foods (e.g., store-bought mustard and ketchup) that contain “salt” within their ingredients lists because you have no way of knowing whether or not the salt *they* use is iodized or contains anti-caking agents. I am *quite* sensitive to hidden MSG, and to my knowledge I have never experienced an acute reaction to the small amounts of salt that I consume in prepared foods (e.g., condiments). Of course, do what works best for *you*.

**Sea Salt** – (see “**Salt**” section above)

## **Sour Cream**

I was shocked to learn how many additives you can find in some brands of sour cream! Choose a brand of sour cream that contains only *one* ingredient: “cultured cream.” [Daisy](#) brand is one variety that is readily available at regular grocery stores. Check the ingredient labels on sour cream containers next time you're at the store. You won't believe the number of ingredients contained in some brands, especially the “reduced-fat” varieties! And many of these ingredients can disguise hidden MSG (as discussed in my complete grocery shopping guide).

To avoid **genetically-modified organisms (GMOs)**, as discussed in the “**GMOs**” section of this guide, purchase *certified organic* dairy products whenever possible. Many conventionally-raised dairy cows are administered genetically-modified growth hormones and fed genetically-modified corn and soy. If *organic* dairy is not available to you, at least look for labels that state “No rbGH,” so you can avoid the artificial growth hormones if possible.

## **Spices (seasonings)**

Read the ingredients list carefully on *any* seasonings you own or purchase! Many commercially available spice mixes contain mysterious and/or MSG-filled, flavor-enhancing ingredients like **hydrolyzed protein, maltodextrin, dextrose** and **spice**. (See “**MSG**” **section** of this guide for details.) Some brands *do* list *individual* herbs and spices, which is great as long as they contain *nothing* else. It is often difficult to find additive-free seasoning mixes (e.g., chili powder, taco seasoning), so I included homemade recipes for you in the recipe section here! Most *individual* spices in your grocer’s baking aisle should be okay (e.g., “dried basil,” “ground cinnamon”), and most of them won’t have an ingredients list because *that* spice is the *only* ingredient in there.

## **Tomato Paste**

Many varieties of tomato paste are *flavored* or *seasoned*. Be sure to purchase the plainest variety you can find. Many brands contain a surprising number of ingredients. “Natural flavor” is commonly added to tomato paste, and it can disguise hidden MSG (see “**MSG**” **section** of this guide). Look for a brand that contains only “tomatoes” and no “natural flavor.” Often the generic store brands of tomato paste are additive-free!

## **Turmeric**

This is a dry spice (seasoning) located in the spice/baking section of any grocery store. I have never seen any additives in this product.

## **Unsweetened Cocoa Powder**

Be sure to purchase cocoa powder that contains *only* “cocoa” and no sweeteners or other ingredients. All of my recipes that require (unsweetened) cocoa powder also include a sweet ingredient (e.g., honey) to balance the bitterness of the cocoa in the recipe. If you use *sweetened* cocoa powder to make my recipes, the end result will be way too sweet to enjoy!

## **Vanilla Extract (Pure Vanilla Extract)**

Look closely at the front of the container before you bother to check the ingredients. If it is labeled as “*imitation* vanilla” on the front, just leave it on the shelf – it’s going to be full of additives. If the front label says, “*pure* vanilla extract,” proceed to the ingredients list – and, yes, you *must* check the ingredients because many “pure extracts” still contain additives. Because you’re buying actual *extract*, it will be more expensive than other varieties of vanilla *flavoring*. Any store should have at least one brand in the baking aisle that meets these criteria.

Now check the ingredients to find a brand that contains just “vanilla bean extractives in water, alcohol, and sugar.” Some brands don’t contain sugar, so look for those brands if you wish to avoid sugar, too. Most brands contain at least one additive that you’ll need to avoid (e.g., caramel coloring, high fructose corn syrup, propylene glycol), and some of these additives may disguise hidden MSG (see “**MSG**” **section** of this guide for details).