

## #164 - The Summer Meal Formula

Hi, everyone! You're listening to The Lazy Genius Podcast! I'm Kendra Adachi, and I'm here to help you be a genius about the things that matter and lazy about the things that don't. Today? You guys. Today, I'm really excited. This episode is really great. It's #164 - the summer meal formula. I'm not saying I fixed summer cooking because that would be stupid, but I think I found an approach that will be pretty awesome, especially if you're three weeks into hot weather no school everyone home cooking and losing your mind a little.

First, it's launch team time! I'll keep this super quick. If you want to be on the launch team for my book, *The Lazy Genius Way*, click the link in the show notes to get all the info. Applications are open a little over a week until next Wednesday July 8th. A launch time is basically a fun group that tells people about my book in hopefully very natural non-awkward ways at very specific times. Again, all details are in that link. Thanks for being excited about it!

Okay, the summer meal formula. First, there are two rules of the summer food formula and then the actual formula. Ready?

Rule #1 - summer is a season. I mean, yeah. But give me twenty more words. Summer is a season, and it won't always be like this, but since it is like this, let's lean into what it offers us. Living in your season is one of the principles of being a Lazy Genius, and this is about as near perfect a time there is to practice it.

Summer food feels complicated because we try and fit rhythms of fall and winter and spring food into a summer food hole. It doesn't work. For most of you who are truly concerned about how you're going to feed everybody three meals a day during hot months with hardly any schedules or structures and everyone home and all the things, this mindset is important. You can't expect to approach summer food like you do in the other three seasons of the year. This needs its own plan, and that plan is the summer meal formula. But for now, remember that first rule - summer is a season. Enjoy what it offers.

Rule #2: Dinner is not the most important meal of the day. On Friday, there will be a bonus episode where I talk to Kate Strickler from Naptime Kitchen about Lazy Geniusing dinner, and it's so good. In the episode and on her instagram account, she says something really simple and profound. Each week has 21 meals. Twenty-one. That's a lot. But let's think of them all as carrying similar weight. Or let's be willing to shift the weight sometimes. Dinner doesn't always have to be the most elaborate meal. Summer affords you the chance to flip the script a little. Maybe this is the season of a big hot breakfast or a lunch that might feel like dinner, but the oven was on in the morning instead of the hot afternoon. Or maybe the oven has nothing to do with it and you just have more energy to make an actual dinner-ish meal at 11 in the morning instead of 4:30 in the afternoon. That's actually a real thing. Most people's time rhythm makes them less diligent in tasks and therefore less motivated in the afternoon. That's not a great time to cook the biggest meal of the day, at least not on most days of the week. So rule #2 is that

dinner is not and does not have to be the most important meal of the day. All meals are created equal. This is a season for that.

Okay, so those are our two foundational rules for the summer meal formula - summer is a season so lean into it, and dinner does not have to be the most important meal of the day.

Now, the formula.

Here's the math we have. If you consider our summer eating to include every meal from today until let's say August 20th, that's 156 meals. One hundred and fifty six. That's a lot of meals. And if you try and decide each of those meals one at a time, you will die. You will be so sad. You will give up completely with everyone surviving on cereal for every meal. Now is cereal for every meal a bad thing? Not in the slightest. But that's generally not your top choice. We all like to eat tasty food that looks and sounds and tastes different, that's fun to eat and sometimes even to cook. So this formula helps you see those 156 meals in a more pleasant light.

We are considering things that don't heat up your whole house, we are considering food that doesn't need a lot of prep or take a lot of time because summer has its own schedule, and we are considering food that's not just burgers all the time.

So here's how we're going to build our formula. We're going to create a summer meal matrix for every meal of the day. What's a meal matrix? It's essentially meal scaffolding. It's a certain category of food that can be assigned to a certain day or not, but it limits your options in the best way. By making a summer meal matrix, you can choose the types of meals that make sense for you and your people, your appliances, everything.

I'm going to give you a lot of ideas in a second, but here is your job to create your formula. And I'm assuming that you want thoughts on every single one of those 156 meals. Now obviously if one of your daily meals already has its own rhythm, don't fix what's not broken. I'm just talking about this like everyone is starting from scratch. Okay, so your job in creating your formula is to choose four breakfast categories and ten non-breakfast categories. We're combining lunch and dinner because remember rule #2? Dinner doesn't have to be the most important. Let's put them on equal footing.

Now fourteen categories might sound like a lot, and I get that. It's a big number. But it's a lot smaller than 156. What we're going to do is spend maybe 15-20 minutes on building out your formula so that all you need to do for the literal rest of summer is plug and play. You're going to make a bunch of general decisions now so that you have way fewer to make later. So first, categories.

Let's start with breakfast. You want four categories. Some ideas. Category #1: Boxes and Bananas. Things like cereal or instant oatmeal for the boxes and then obviously a banana. Category #2: Batch stuff. Pancakes, waffles, cornbread mix. And make the whole box. When you pull out a box of pancake mix or if you make your own pancakes (which mine are now on

the blog by the way and they're legit incredible), make a lot. Make the whole box. Or double the recipe or whatever. You can have a couple dozen to put in the fridge or freezer for the rest of the week or throughout the summer. Category #3: The Bakery. Muffins and stuff you'd get if you went to get breakfast at a little bakery or coffee shop. Again, make a big batch and eat off it. That way when that category comes up again, you've already got stuff in the freezer and don't have to cook again if you don't want to. Category #4: Grand Slam. Things like bacon, sausage links, scrambled eggs, those hashbrowns from Trader Joe's, whatever you think of and like when you think about a breakfast plate you'd get at Denny's or something. Category #5: smoothies. Self-explanatory. Category #6: Egg Sandwiches. Egg McMuffins, breakfast burritos. Category #7: Parfaits. Different flavors of yogurt, cereal or granola recipes (mine is on the site and awesome), different fruits based on what you have. Category #8: Toast. Different kinds of bread, butter and jelly, cinnamon sugar toast, cheese toast, French toast when you want to get fancy.

Pick four categories that you like and know what to do within them. Then choose a handful of options within each of those categories. Some might be two deep, like batch stuff could be just one pancake recipe and one waffle recipe full stop. Or maybe you have an entire pancake category and do all kinds when the day rolls around. Here's what you don't do. Don't write ten options below each category. That's creating a problem again where you just had a solution. Because think about it - if you pick four breakfast categories and four options within each one, that's sixteen breakfasts. That's over two weeks of breakfasts where every day is something different. Does that mean you're making breakfast every morning? Maybe if you want to. Maybe not if you don't want to. You decide. But you're limiting your breakfast options to something totally doable but not pulling from the entire internet about what constitutes a breakfast. That's why I want you to start with categories. Choose categories that make sense to you. Two of my kids don't do eggs, so any breakfast category that's egg-dependent doesn't work for us.

Now here's what's great. You choose categories and options within those categories that are a mix of high maintenance and you don't have to get out of bed. Cereal to French toast. You need the whole scope. If you try and make a hot breakfast every morning, one week in, your entire family will do cereal for the rest of the summer. Again, not bad unless that's not what you want. So wisely limit yourself with categories that work for you and options within those categories that also work for you. You now have over two weeks of breakfasts that you can just more or less rotate however makes sense.

Now let's do non-breakfast. This will probably settle into a more predictable rhythm than breakfast just because breakfast is generally a fairly low maintenance meal, at least it is around here. I've done an episode on breakfast where I talk about how to LG breakfast but also how I personally approach it. Essentially, whenever I make pancakes or waffles or pumpkin chocolate chip muffins, I make a lot and freeze them. Then everybody eats whatever they want out of the freezer until we run out of stuff, and then we do it all again. The one or two mornings a week, I'll make bacon and eggs and hashbrowns and biscuits or any combination of those. We'll do the Grand Slam.

FYI I'm going to put a post on the site - hopefully, I haven't written it yet, but I'm writing it down - that has my meal formula: my categories and the ideas within them and an idea of how those might pan out over the course of a few weeks.

Okay for real now let's do non-breakfast. We need ten categories and 3-4 options within each one. That's thirty to forty meals. That's 2-3 weeks of both lunches and dinners without any repeats. I'd say that's pretty good.

Here are some of my non-breakfast categories:

Field trip lunch. A sandwich, fruit, crackers, carrots sticks, and a pudding cup. Whatever you put in a brown bag for your kid when they have to go to the zoo or whatever. Obviously the options within that are endless because of the type of sandwiches and fruits and crackers and everything else.

Next up, snack platter. Yes, that's a category. Anything can go on a snack platter because it's literally just throwing crap on a plate in a pinwheel or in groups and it looks kind of pretty. Lunch or dinner.

Cheesy things. Quesadillas, grilled cheese sandwiches, mac and cheese, cheesy nachos, that kind of thing. Think golden foods.

Next, rice bowls. A beloved of mine. There's a whole podcast series I did on food on a bowl. Rice cookers or Instant Pots are great in the summer heat, and then you can throw whatever on top that you cook or buy already cooked.

Your category can be by the animal if that's not too crude to say. So one category could be cows and pigs, and you pick your two favorite beef recipes and two favorite pork recipes that work well in the summer. You could do the same with chicken and fish.

Next category idea is the farmers market. You make a meal based on what you bought there, so it's super fresh. I mean it could be a hunk of bread and a couple of peaches. Remember, summer is its own season. Lean into it.

A favorite on a recent instagram post was a dinner where everyone picks their own thing. My favorite names for that were yoyo dinners for you're on your own, go with what you know which rhymes which is fun, or silly supper.

You could also categorize by cooking appliance. So Instant Pot, the grill, the crock pot, the sheet pan where you use the broiler for only a little bit. And I've still got more! Chicken on the grill, and within it, pick four marinades and rotate: shawarma, bbq, citrus, and taco-ish. Stuff on a bun - beef burgers, turkey burgers, hot dogs, sloppy joes, veggie burgers, frozen salmon burgers, bahn mi sandwiches, asian pork burger, fried chicken filets. Stuff in a wrap -, tacos, burritos, flatbreads, pita stuff. Pizza! Pizza is its own category.

So you see how this can help in big ways? Pick ten categories that make sense for you, that also get you a little excited maybe. Then within each, write down 3-4 options. Pull from your brainless crowdpleasers, from those meals that you don't mind cooking and most people in your house don't mind eating it. Get specific on actual recipes if you need to, or just have general ideas like an asian pork burger and you'll riff once it's time.

Once you do that, again you have 30-40 meals to choose from. But here's what I strongly suggest. Don't have a list of 40 meals and choose from the entire 40 every time it's time to eat. Plan once a week or every couple of days or even every day by category. Choose the category first. Spread out the categories. Let that matrix work for you. Then if you plan one week at a time and you have ten non-breakfast categories, you can say Monday lunch this week is school lunch and dinner is chicken on the grill. Tuesday lunch is stuff in a wrap, and Tuesday dinner is Instant Pot meals. Wednesday lunch is... you get the idea. You could create that matrix for yourself for one week and then just repeat that matrix one week after another. All you're doing is choosing which of the three or four options in each category you'll do that day.

I'm telling you - choice is what makes you crazy. There are too many choices. Even just having your list of brainless crowdpleasers could be too many choices. You can basically capsule wardrobe your summer food situation by having so few things to choose from, but those categories are heavy hitters. You have versatility within them because you planned it that way. Then just plug and play.

Again, I'll try and have that post up by the time this episode is live, and I'll also have links to some of my favorite summer recipes and other episodes and posts I've done about summer food. But I think this summer meal formula could be really fantastic. Just spend a little time brainstorming now. Make it a little project you can be excited about. Ask your family "what's stuff you like to eat on a bun?" and write it down. The categories keep you from repeating, but the formula keeps you from starting from scratch every single meal.

I hope this helps. Let me know how it goes, and we can talk this Thursday about it too. I'll be on Instagram around noon eastern to go live and answer your questions.

Okay, that's it for today! Thanks so much for listening! Remember to check the show notes, and launch team info will be there too! Grateful for all of you. Until next time, be a genius about the things that matter and lazy about the things that don't. I'm kendra, and I'll see you next week.