

## 312 - My Favorite Chapter from The Lazy Genius Kitchen

Hi there! 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 is episode 312 - My Favorite Chapter from The Lazy Genius Kitchen.

I'm guessing that since you listen to this podcast - thank you for that so much - you probably listen to others. Few people just listen to one podcast, and chances are you listen to a show hosted by an author, like myself. Or maybe you follow someone on Instagram who has written a book. I'm like you; I listen to plenty of podcast hosts and follow plenty of people on social media who have written books, and I have never read them. It's not that I don't want to, but there are so many books in the world that I sometimes just don't. Ever since I became an author, I make it a point to support an author by getting their book even if I don't read it right away. If I listen to your free stuff, I'm grateful for that, so I'll buy the book as a way to support that free work. But I don't always read the thing. You guys should see my bookshelves. So I say that as an introduction for today. Maybe you are someone who has gotten The Lazy Genius Kitchen to support me but never opened it up. Maybe you are someone who supports me in other ways, like listening to this podcast, and kind of forgot about that book. So if you listen to this show and haven't read either of my books and feel a little bad about it, please don't. It's very normal. I read your DMs. I hear your apologetic tone. "I love your show. I haven't read the books, but I've been meaning to I'm sorry!" Please don't apologize for not reading my books. It's really okay I promise. Certain books meet us in certain seasons and sometimes not at all, and I'm not mad at you for listening to this podcast but not reading the books.

And because two things can be true at once, I would love for you to read these books, not for me but for you. I think these are really good books, and it's meaningful to me to celebrate their existence in the world. We've sold of the two books combined almost 150,000 copies which I am blown away by. Both books were New York Times Bestsellers which is still the weirdest sentence to say. These books have been consistently helpful to people since their respective releases, and I couldn't be happier about that.

This Wednesday, May 3, marks the one year anniversary of the release of my second book, The Lazy Genius Kitchen, and today I want to celebrate that by sharing my favorite chapter with you. This chapter is helpful on its own, so you'll be able to walk away with a practical outlook on your kitchen which is a win, and if you hear this chapter and you get sparkly-eyed about how the entire book might help you, that makes me sparkly-eyed, too! We're just two sparkly-eyed people over making our kitchens work for us! I wouldn't have written this book if I didn't think it would help you, so I hope hearing this chapter gives you a flavor of not just the help you'll get but the vibe of the writing and the experience of reading it.

One thing that is important to note about The Lazy Genius Kitchen is that it is not a cookbook. It has two recipes in the whole thing, and one is for Change Your Life Chicken which you can get

on the Internet. I love cookbooks. I have a lot of them. But you need more than cookbooks. Cookbooks give you things to cook and might even teach you how to cook things better, but *The Lazy Genius Kitchen* is a book to help you do everything else: plan, organize, shop, gather, figure out what tools you need, what kinds of recipes to choose, everything you need to make the cooking itself be a little easier and make more sense for your life.

So I'm going to read my favorite chapter from *The Lazy Genius Kitchen*. The book is in three parts. Part one is called *Your Lazy Genius Kitchen*, and it lays out the five step system to - you guessed it - *Lazy Genius* your kitchen because we use *Lazy Genius* as a verb. Part two is called *Have What You Need*, and it applies those five steps to six areas of your kitchen: your space, your meals, your plan, your food, your prep, and your table. And then part three is called *Use What You Have*, and it's full of the coolest illustrated one sheets of tons of tips and tricks to use in the kitchen. So there are techniques for how to cook, help for how to make food taste good, how to use your stuff, how to keep up with everything in your kitchen, like task related things, and then some tips on how to make the hard stuff a little easier. It's color and, again, illustrated by the very talented Sarah Horgan.

Fun fact: Sarah Horgan designed the cover for my first book, *The Lazy Genius Way*, and I loved it. It's such a great cover. I started following Sarah on Instagram, and y'all, she posted an illustration she did of Timothee Chalamet who I love with my whole heart, and I was like this chick is the coolest illustrator. Well, when we were trying to figure out the design aesthetic for *The Lazy Genius Kitchen*, I asked if we could use Sarah because I love her stuff so much. So not only did she do the cover for both my books, she did the illustrations for the entire inside, and they're so great. She's so talented. She did the covers for *One to Watch* by Kate Stayman-London; I loved that book, and that cover was amazing. She also did the most recent Taylor Jenkins Reid book, *Carrie Soto Is Back*. She's really good, and it's the coolest thing that she added her genius to this book.

So anyway, this chapter, my favorite chapter, is part one, step one. It's the beginning of the whole kit and caboodle which is why I love it. It sets the stage for what matters about your kitchen and why not naming that causes problems. So here you go. This is my favorite chapter from *The Lazy Genius Kitchen* that I will now read.

If you try to count the number of meals you will likely make over the course of your lifetime, you might weep. Since weeping would decidedly kill the fun vibe we're going for here, let's hurry along.

The point? No day escapes a food-related task, most days hold more tasks than you can count, and being in your kitchen feels like running on a turbo-charged hamster wheel that leaves you gasping for breath. Allow me to hold your metaphorical face in my metaphorical hands as I say this: of course you're exhausted. Of course you are. Life in the kitchen doesn't provide any breathers to figure out what you're doing or what you need. Meals just keep coming no matter how much you need them to slow down. Plus, you likely have never been taught the scope of skills to make your kitchen experience a little easier, but you feel stupid asking someone now

because you're a grown person who pays utility bills, schedules dentist appointments, and buys retinol, so you're obviously supposed to know this stuff already. First of all, it's fine that you don't know everything (spoiler: no one does), and second of all, I'm here to help.

The five steps I'm about to teach you will change your life in the kitchen, literally forever. They are foundational to finding pain points, naming helpful solutions, and creating a sustainable rhythm in your kitchen for as long as you have one.

Remember that this part of the book is only about learning. You don't have to figure anything out yet. Maybe think of me as a fun, hip professor who's giving a fun, hip lecture (humor me here), and your only task is to absorb the information. No labs or practicums yet; that's Part 2.

Ready?

The first thing you need to do is name what matters. Always. It's foundational. Nothing else works until you name what matters, so that's our first step in creating a Lazy Genius kitchen.

What's the whole point of life in your kitchen? If you break it down to its essence, what's the purpose? What's the point? It's pretty simple, really: You should have what you need, use what you have, and enjoy it.

Think about it. If you have everything you need and you use it, you'll enjoy your kitchen. It's what's extra, what's missing, and what lies unused that make your kitchen feel accidental.

A lot of people have accidental kitchens. For example, maybe your mom unpacked the boxes when you moved into your home, and everything is still where she put it three years ago. Even how you shop, plan, and gather around the table could be accidental. Sometimes you just do stuff. There's no real reason or purpose; it's just what you've always done. Or maybe your kitchen and how you live in it are idealistic. You think it has to look a certain way, function within a specific system, and make you look and feel like you have your act together at every meal. Neither Lazy nor Genius, accidental nor idealistic will serve you in the long term. Why? Because you don't know what matters most. Even if you started over and built a kitchen from scratch, I'd bet my Benedict Cumberbatch poster that you'd be back where you are now in a matter of weeks—frustrated, overwhelmed, and picking up the phone for another night of takeout pizza.

Without knowing what matters to you, even a new sparkly kitchen becomes accidental. I know what you want. You want a kitchen that feels intentional but without making you try too hard for it. I have good news: that happens when you prioritize and name what matters most.

When you haven't figured out what matters, you implicitly allow everything to matter. You buy more stuff, sign up for more services, and reorganize more cabinets to try to make life easier. You spin off in a dozen directions, trying to make everything matter. But it can't. It just can't. That's why your kitchen is cluttered and your brain is overwhelmed. Unless you know what matters most about your space, your meals, how you plan them, and so forth, you'll simply tend to the most urgent need and repeat ad nauseam. No one needs ad nauseam in the kitchen.

You need to prioritize. When you prioritize what matters most, you see a clearer path to your best choices. You know clearly what to cook, organize, and renovate. You know what to buy, skip, and prep. You know if that chicken recipe is worth spending time on or not. When you prioritize, you have a lens for choosing only what you need. And I promise it works.

## **Ad break**

How do you know what matters? You might be thinking, This all sounds good, Kendra, but I don't know what matters most to me. Don't worry. You're not expected to know right away. Any time you need clarity on what matters, ask yourself these three simple questions:

1. What could matter?
2. What does matter?
3. What matters most?

It's basically a process of elimination. Not rocket science, I know, but it's a lot easier and exceedingly cheaper than a degree from MIT. Plus, it works. Before you start answering, though (that'll come in Part 2), let's break down how these questions get you to what matters.

As an example, let's think about what could matter when you shop for food: price, quality, convenience, selection, experience, sustainability, and if a place has grocery pickup or shopping carts shaped like race-cars for your toddler. Those could all be important, right?

However, there is no grocery store on earth that can prioritize all those things. None. Whole Foods prioritizes quality and sustainability over price. Aldi prioritizes price over selection and experience. Trader Joe's prioritizes its personal identity over carrying multiple brands. Every store has to prioritize something, or it won't survive.

The same is true for you. You have to prioritize. If you try to tend to everything, you'll tend to nothing—at least not well. You have to drill down to what matters most to you, and the first step is listing all the possibilities.

Now, will all those possibilities likely be good, desirable qualities? Most definitely. Can they all matter? You want to say yes, so allow me to rephrase. Can they all matter with equal value? That's a big no. But here's the good news: when you name what matters most, everything else falls into line without your having to give up as much as you think. When your priority is clear, it makes any sacrifices easier to swallow because you're getting what's most important.

There are "what could matter" lists for all six areas of your kitchen—space, meals, plan, food, prep, and table—coming up in Part 2, so don't worry about starting from scratch.

Once you have your list of what could matter, you just start crossing stuff off. Now, for some people, that will prove a touch more difficult than for others. Choosing is just the worst. If you need some help narrowing down, here are two thoughts that could ease the process.

First, live in the season. This is Lazy Genius Principle #4, and it's one that offers the best permission to do what you need right now. Your life in the kitchen is massively impacted by how much time, emotional margin, money, and many children you have. And those things change with each season of life.

As you narrow down the list of what could matter to what does matter, think about what matters right now. No ideals, no futures, no "when this changes." Right. Now. When you live in your season, you know life will eventually be different while still embracing where you are now.

Second, what makes you crazy?

Identifying pain points is where the magic happens. If you can name what makes you frustrated about cooking, your space, and even certain tools, you can more easily name what matters and therefore have a much better experience.

Some examples of what could make you crazy:

- a nonstick skillet that everything gets stuck to
- a countertop covered with other people's junk
- having grocery lists in multiple places so you're always forgetting something
- kids that throw food on the floor
- having to go to five different stores to get the best deal
- splattering soup on your new Madewell sweater because you don't have a ladle and awkwardly use a coffee cup to serve it Instead

When you name what makes you crazy, you have a clearer picture of your priorities. So, when we get to those "what could matter" lists in Part 2, you're going to narrow them down to about three things each. If you have trouble, think about your season of life and what makes you crazy so you can gain some extra clarity. And remember, only you can decide what matters most to you. It's okay if your short list looks different from everyone else's. You're allowed to care about what you care about.

Now comes the hard part. You have to narrow your list of three down to one, to what matters most.

Before you start yelling at me, listen up. You're not dismissing what does matter outright. Your top three priorities will all play a role in how you experience your kitchen, but you need a main thing. Why? You want an engine that pulls the train. You want a sun that holds everything in orbit. You want a killer pair of jeans that are the foundation for all your amazing outfits.

What matters most? Naming this in all six areas of your kitchen will make you a Lazy Genius. Real-life examples always help, so I'll share what matters most in my kitchen so you can see how this all plays out.

My current season of life involves writing this book during a pandemic, over the holidays, and within a tight timeline. Super chill. I also have three tremendously picky children. One doesn't like cheese or eggs. One doesn't like meat except salami. One doesn't eat sandwiches except on Thursdays. It's a situation. If I were to ignore this season and keep chugging along like it's just me and my husband and all the time in the world, I'd be in a ball in the corner right now. Thankfully, I've Lazy Geniused my kitchen and picked what matters most. I'm upright and not in a corner!

Here's what this looks like . . .

This is what matters to me about tools.

Of all the qualities that could matter about my kitchen tools, I narrowed the list down to these three: they work, they're well made, and they can go in the dishwasher. If a tool fits all three of those qualities, I am supremely happy. But sometimes those priorities conflict with each other. In that case, I need to know what matters most. For me, it's functionality. I don't have a lot of time, my friend. I need my stuff to work. I once went to an Airbnb that had only flimsy plastic cutting boards in the kitchen. When I tried to cut on them, they'd slide, it felt like the knife was hitting the counter beneath, and I started to feel crazy. No joke . . . I stopped cooking, went to Walmart, and bought a big wooden cutting board. I happily used it during my stay and left it as a gift for future vacationers. That's how much function matters to me. I become slightly unhinged in a stranger's home and spend money on something I'll use for only three days. Because that's what matters most to me.

Back to my own kitchen. I already said that in addition to function, I want tools that are well made and can go in the dishwasher. However, high-quality tools are often divas and need to be washed by hand. Listen, I hate washing dishes. It hurts my back, it makes my hands dry, and I'm legitimately grossed out when I have to reach into the lukewarm forgotten dishwater to let it drain. I do everything I can to avoid the process. If I'm forced to choose between function or something being dishwasher-safe—for example, with a good knife—I choose function. I choose the knife. I choose to wash it by hand and cry a single tear and then move on with my life. However, if a tool's function isn't sacrificed much when it goes in the dishwasher, I pick the tool that can go in the dishwasher. For example, wooden spoons are a general dishwasher no-no. The wood eventually cracks, and if that wood is reclaimed and hand-carved and an heirloom, the dishwasher will not be its friend. But if it's a cheap wooden spoon from a yard sale, I'll put it in the dishwasher with great enthusiasm until it cracks and I get another one. No harm done. Why? Because I know what matters to me.

When you prioritize what matters, decisions are so much easier to make.

Here's another example of what matters to me about meals.

My top three priorities from the what could matter list (that exists on page 70) are brainless, tasty, and crowd-pleasing, and that's been my top three ever since I started having kids over a

decade ago. During that time, I've slowly collected meals that fit all three priorities, and we eat them on a very frequent rotation. However, when one priority must take charge, what matters most to me is a meal that's brainless.

I love to cook, and I'm good at it. I love trying new flavors and learning new skills, but being a working mom means now is not my season to embrace that love. The time will come, and I'll love it when it does. For the time being, I want to cook meals I don't have to think about. I don't want to constantly fact-check instructions. I skip recipes that go against my cooking intuition. If a meal involves specific timing or deep attention, it's a pass.

That's why hot dogs and Tater Tots stay in our rotation right alongside chicken tikka masala. My brain doesn't work hard for either. Are hot dogs tasty to me? Not really. Do all three of my kids devour tikka masala? The little one is still on the fence. But both meals are brainless. That means they get to stick around.

Prioritize is step one because it is the only place to start. You must start with what matters. Everything in this book—I'm talking everything—hinges on your priorities.

But don't let that scare you. You can name what you think matters most, live with it, and if you realize that something else matters more, you can pivot. The world is not ending if you change your mind. In fact, expect to change your mind. It happens all the time because life is not white noise. It's dynamic and full of change. You have kids or then they move out, or you don't have them at all. You get a new job or quit the one you have. You move homes, cities, and states. You learn a new skill, buy a new pot, or get a new Trader Joe's down the street. Life changes, and every time it does, your priorities likely will, too. Please be kind to yourself as they do.

To recap, list what could matter, drill down to what does matter, and then do the hard but helpful work of naming what matters most. Your best decisions come from knowing what matters most to you. Name that one thing, and your kitchen will serve you well. You will get a lot of prioritization reps throughout this book, and every time you go through the process, your confidence will grow. You're going to be an expert by the time we're done.

What could matter?

What does matter?

What matters most?

Once you know that, it's time for step two: essentialize. Let me teach you how to get rid of what's in the way.

And that's the end of part one, step one, and my favorite chapter of *The Lazy Genius Kitchen*.

If you're into that and haven't yet read the book, I encourage you to try it out! Do what a lot of Lazy Geniuses do and get it at the library first! Flip through it, live with it for a couple of weeks,

and then you can decide if having it on your shelves forever matters. For some it does, and others it doesn't. I just would love for you to give it a try because I think it could be incredibly helpful.

Also one last favorite thing before we go, to launch the book last year, I basically made a TV show that wasn't on TV. It was The Lazy Genius Kitchen video series, and I went into the homes of real people to solve real problems using the steps in this book. I went to Sharon Says So's house and helped her Lazy Genius her drawer full of kitchen tools, and we laughed so much. I went to Mattie James' home and helped her Lazy Genius her meal plan. I hung out with Andy Baxter from Penny and Sparrow and his wife, Sarah, to Lazy Genius the types of meals they cooked during a busy season. I helped Annie Downs clean out her freezer, and that was an absolute riot. I helped Terrance Jackson from The Popcast figure out the types of foods he needed to have in his single-guy kitchen to make meals that would work for him. I made dinner kits with Erin Moon, and if you know Erin Moon, you know you will laugh. These videos were created in collaboration with the team from Unmutable productions, and it was my most favorite experience making something ever. It was so much work, but it was truly the most fun. Plus, we made something excellent. Excellent. The production quality of these episodes could be on TV. They are just a blast. So if you'd like to see how this book helps in real time with people that are super rad, enjoy watching those episodes. We'll put links in the show notes.

Okay, y'all, let's celebrate the Lazy Genius of the Week! This week it's Megan Elsbury. Megan sent me this DM a few weeks ago, and while it is a bit on the nose for today's episode, it still means a lot to me since it's something I already mentioned I do, too. Megan writes this: "Hi there! I love listening to podcasts and appreciate the value they add to my life for zero cost to me. So I've Decided once that any time one of my favorite podcasters releases a book, I will buy it. It's my way of supporting content creators that typically allow me to enjoy their content for free. For example, I just preordered my copy of The Life Council by Laura Tremaine and can't wait for it to arrive on release day. Thanks and love the show!" Megan, this is so kind and lovely, and you just have no idea how this encourages authors who also make a podcast. I know there are a ton of you like Megan who do this, and it really does mean the world. I'm not trying to make those of you who haven't gotten any books by podcasters to feel guilty about that oh my goodness! We all do what matters to us in the season we're in, and new books aren't always in the cards. But this feels like a very appropriate episode to say thank you for that support when it does happen. I know that I write the books I write to genuinely, effectively make your life better. If they didn't, I wouldn't write them because writing books is so daggum hard. So to know that the things I make help you is the best, and when you all support that by buying the book but then you also benefit from reading it? It's just the most special thing, so thank you to those of you who are able to do that. And for those of you who can't, thank you for listening to the podcast! It's still so incredibly supportive for you to subscribe to the show and listen, and I so appreciate it. And thank you, Megan, for being the Lazy Genius of the Week!

Okay, y'all, that's it for today! I hope that if you dive into The Lazy Genius Kitchen for the first time in the next week or two that it brings a lot of emotional lightness and practical help to your kitchen. And thanks for those of you who have been around this whole first year of the life of

The Lazy Genius Kitchen. I'm so grateful for 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!