

The Vegan Life

I'm a bit of a hypocrite. I admit it. I'm not a vegan, though usually my recipe searches use that adjective mostly because I don't really like to use applesauce or mix up egg replacer. The other day I made a comment on Facebook that pointed out that a vegetarian product someone was raving about included eggs. Somehow I've never understood how someone can be a vegetarian and eat eggs, though I do know this type of diet exists. Some people seemed to be upset by what they must have interpreted as my saying they are not true vegetarians. That wasn't my point at all. I was really just feeling sorry for myself that I am unable to try the product they were touting.

But sometimes the table is turned. Like when I went out to eat in Colorado last week. Wow! Colorado loves vegetarians! We had "veggie wings" – O.M.G.!!!! Pieces of seitan in a bowl with optional sauce. Wow!! There is a glimmer that I'm just like everyone else!

Actually, it surprises me that our society, our nation, our world, still consumes so much meat. It doesn't make sense on so many levels: health risks, implications of world hunger, not to mention that terrible lives that processed animals must endure. It is especially surprising to me considering how many yummy, nutritious, wholesome vegetarian options there are out there in the world. As I've been experimenting with some new recipes lately, I see that there are even more possibilities for variations to meat. I've been really impressed with creamy gratin alternative recipes I've found. Making comfort food from whole foods is one of my favorite things, especially when I cook that comfort for others. It isn't about tricking the eater, I'm not looking for a meat-alternate. I want people who eat my food to know they are eating whole, fresh food that keeps their stomach full and mouth happy.

Vegetables and fruits provide so many nutritional benefits. My

recommendation is to aim to make your diet as whole as possible. I saw a meme the other day: "Love your body. Eat whole foods." I can absolutely relate to that!

Whether it is a lacto-ovo vegetarian frozen product at the store or yummy veggie wings at an awesome brewery, these products are made to ensure we have some extra protein, needed fiber, and of course good flavor. So long as we eat them in moderation, I think they are a wonderful addition to our grocery stores and menus.

I think as a society if we can get past vegetarians being seen as wanting to eat something that looks like meat, it would help open minds of those who think it is unhealthy to not eat meat (cancer prognosis be damned!). But in the meantime, let's give some love to the chick'n nuggets and seitan wings out there, and encourage more restaurants and grocery stores to help support the market. The more money that goes into the industry, the better the products. I, for one, would like to see way lower sodium levels and fewer additives in future products. But for now, I eat these items like everything else not whole... in moderation.

#lovetheveganlife

Face Yoga to Banish Wrinkles

I've never been one to worry much about wrinkles or sagging skin as I've gotten older. I tend to see wrinkles as an indication of wisdom and life experience. But furrowing my brow is something I don't like the look of on my face, and it started to bother me when I started to see lines form between my eyebrows. I didn't even know how much I furrowed my brow until my mom said something about it to me as I was getting my

wedding dress fitted years ago. As I stood there in a small dry cleaning shop in Brooklyn, she said to me, as I was looking at myself in the mirror, "You know, you should really work on that scowl." I wasn't irritated and didn't even feel all that stressed, but I finally realized that this was one of those unintentional habits I'd formed. Though I can't stop time, I can be attentive to moments when I scowl and see if it is possible to just stop myself. A few years ago I learned about face yoga (which earlier I didn't even know was a thing.) What I walked away with most from trying it out was that it really helped me recognize when I am scowling just purely because I felt the muscles I'd been working out during the exercises. I want to share with you some tips for face yoga, otherwise known as face exercises. There are people trained in this form, so I won't pretend to be an expert, but I'd like to share a few tips that I learned to get you started.

The Owl helps keep the forehead firm, and reduces lines and wrinkles.

Form a "C" shape with your thumbs and index fingers and place the edge of your hand around your eyes – with your index fingers just above the eyebrows and your thumbs on your upper cheeks. Look up as you open your eyes wide. Pull down slightly your index fingers as you try to raise your eyebrows at the same time. Keep the resistance going for two seconds. Repeat 3 times.

The Frown Buster helps reduce lines between eyebrows and firm the forehead, while also relieving tension.

With your fingers slightly spread, put your fingertips on your forehead, with your index finger nearest your hairline and your little fingers just touching your eyebrows. Allow your eyes to open wide, but don't raise your eyebrows. Gently pull your fingertips away from each other (to the side). Hold the tension for for 10 seconds and then repeat two more times.

Shifty Eyes gives the optic nerve a workout and firm up the muscles around the eye that cause wrinkles. This exercise also helps boost circulation. Standing (or sitting) while relaxed with your shoulders back and spine straight, look ahead. Keep your body position and move only your eyeballs. First look as far to the right as possible (again without moving your head) and then look straight ahead. Then look as far to the left as possible and then back to center. Next look as high up as you can, move through the center ahead of you, and then look down as far as possible. Close your eyes for 2-3 seconds after you have looked in all four directions and then repeat again two times.

I would suggest you start with these easy moves to help your face muscles to naturally keep wrinkles away. It has been a long time since I've done these exercises regularly, but recall that if you do a full face yoga routine six times a week, you will see results on the seventh day. People who do this regularly say you will easily look five years younger. While I don't do a full face yoga routine often, by performing these exercises with some regularity helps me much more quickly catch myself from scowling, or wrinkling my forehead in general.

In a future post, I will also share some tips for eye yoga. Back when I was doing eye yoga on a regular basis, my eyesight improved so well I was able to stop wearing glasses! It is amazing what your body is capable of in really a very short amount of time, and with almost no effort!

Many benefits of Olive Oil,

but make it Extra Virgin (EVOO)

The media has helped us see now that olive oil is an important component in a healthy diet. Olive oil, and especially extra-virgin olive oil, has many beneficial qualities. I have been using olive oil in my diet and in recipes for almost 20 years, since I met my ex-husband.

While my marriage didn't last like I thought it would, I was really lucky to have married into a Greek family who owned a field of olive trees. Annually we would go to Greece to help with the harvest. It was in the mountains of Arcadia that I first experienced the deep pain of carpal tunnel in my wrists. But the pain was far trumped by the amazing landscape, the smell of nature, and the beauty of the harvest.

You may have seen studies that show people who consume a Mediterranean diet have lower risks of some cancers, and researchers believe that in large part it has to do with the olive oil consumed in the diet. Olive oil is extremely rich in antioxidants, which helps on many levels. I read that virgin olive oil's antioxidants include mostly hydrophilic phenols, but also tocopherols and carotenes. It is a *nutraceutical*, a food that contains health-giving additives and has medicinal benefit.

But, um, back to what olive oil can do for you. It can **help your heart**. It is a monounsaturated fat, which improves the endothelial function of your arteries, making your heart stronger. Incorporating 3-4 tablespoons a day of the liquid gold (as a replacement for other fats) can reduce the amount of blood pressure medication for hypertension! ([according to this study](#)) Olive oil is also suspected to help prevent blood clotting.

Impressively, **your brain is also better off** when you consume olive oil. Apparently oleocanthal, a polyphenol found in EV00, “has the potential to reduce cognitive decline that comes with aging, including Alzheimer’s disease.” ([according to California Olive Ranch](#))

Oleocanthal has also been shown to **reduce inflammation**, which we know is a leading cause of cancers. [A group in 2005](#) shared the correlation between olive oil and ibuprofen. In short, they suggest that 50 g of extra-virgin olive oil is absorbed, it is as effective as taking 9 mg of ibuprofen (about 10% of the recommended adult dosage).

Olive oil has also been suggested to help reduce inflammatory markers and inhibit oxidative stress, which in plain terms means that people with rheumatoid arthritis could benefit from increasing their olive oil consumption. ([read the study abstract](#))

When we eat a diet rich in whole foods, and avoid excessively sugared, processed, fried foods, that’s already a step in the right direction. Introducing a little more olive oil into your diet will help promote a healthy eating lifestyle, and will apparently give you many, many health benefits.

I remember years ago, when my (ex)mother-in-law was teaching me her Greek village recipes, I was always amazed by how much oil she included. On everything. I was living in New York City at the time, when a half liter bottle was at least \$12. But this stuff came from her backyard, which made it seem like there was an endless supply.

She used olive oil as a moisturizer for her face and hands. When she had constipation, she drank a shot of it. She even used it to keep her votive candle burning! That woman lived to be a very healthy and strong woman into her 80s, with smooth skin.

You don’t have to move to the mountains of Arcadia, Greece, to

heal your body. You can find Extra Virgin Olive Oil just about anywhere these days. Use it instead of butter in a recipe; use it as a dressing in your salad; add a little to your veggie or pasta dish. When I make waffles or pancakes, I always add oil to the batter and I never need spray to get the waffles or pancakes off the griddle.

These are just a few tips of how to incorporate oil into your diet. What other ways do you increase the amount of EV00 in your daily life? Please comment below!

10 Tips and Tricks to Help Lose Belly Fat

Here are some ideas to get you motivated to lose a few pounds. As always, you have to keep up the positive habits to see positive results. Keep up the good work, and please let me know your most powerful tip or trick in the comments below!

1. Up your Interval Training

It really helps to mix up your routine. If you are a runner, don't always go the same speed or distance. Make some runs long and slow and others short and quick. Incorporate resistance training into your cardio routine. When you

2. Consume Olive Oil

You probably already know how much I love EV00 from my post [The Many Benefits of Extra Virgin Olive Oil](#). According to [this site](#), consuming 2 tablespoons of olive oil will help “improve your blood pressure, your glucose levels and your good cholesterol.” And when you make it up to 3 tablespoons a day, you will start to see the effect of weight-loss. Use olive oil

as part of your salad dressing, and use it in place of butter or margarine in your favorite recipes.

3. Hydrate with water

Seems a lot of people have trouble getting enough water. We don't all need the same amount of water. How much we should drink depends on our activity level, the weather if our activity is outside, and how much we weigh. The recommended formula is to take about 60% of your body weight and drink that many ounces of water daily. If you weigh 150 pounds, you'd need 90 ounces. Don't drink too much, but don't drink too little. One of the benefits of drinking water is that you fill up more quickly and don't need to eat as much.

4. Get enough sleep

Getting enough rest is really important to your body. When we don't get enough sleep, our body produces higher levels of cortisol, a stress hormone, that increases our appetite. Allowing your body to rest calmly will naturally allow that belly to trim down. Another tip to reducing body stress is to keep a regular sleep schedule, even on the weekends.

5. Keep moving

I know, a no brainer, but it is certainly effective. Do small things to start like park at the far end of the parking lot when you go to the grocery store, if you have stairs in your home, walk up and down them 10 times in a day even if you split it up throughout the day. Go for a walk around the block, or more!

6. Vinegar

Probably by now you've seen an ad for the apple cider vinegar diet. The acetic acid of apple cider vinegar lowers your blood sugar levels, decreases insulin levels, improves metabolism, reduces fat storage, burns fat, and suppresses appetite. <https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/apple-cider-vinegar-weigh>

[t-loss](#) Apple cider vinegar isn't the only vinegar you can use to benefit your health, but it is certainly is a popular one that is easy to find.

7. Reduce Stress

Basically this is the same issue as not enough sleep, in that high cortisol levels get you off balance. Incorporating meditation, yoga, and light exercise (like walking) into your day can have a massive impact on reducing stress, thus showing up in a slimmer waistline.

8. Don't eat after dinner

This works wonders for many people. One great rule of thumb is not to eat after 8 pm. Allow your body to digest your food before you start eating again in the morning. When your body is resting at night, it isn't able to burn as many calories when you are up and moving, so you give your body a break by not filling it up in the evening before you sleep for 8 hours.

9. Eat smaller meals more often

It is important to keep a reasonable portion if you want a trimmer mid section. Many people like to eat 5 mini meals a day to keep their metabolism active and their stomach organ a moderate size. By eating more frequently your appetite will be suppressed more often, which helps stabilize your blood sugar, thus providing the slim factor.

10. Drink green tea

The beneficial components of green tea are its flavonoids and caffeine. These help elevate your metabolic rate and increase fat oxidation (you burn fat quicker than normal). Green tea is also rich with antioxidants that help boost your brain and keep you healthy. Incredibly, studies have shown it also has an impact in helping our bodies fight and prevent cancer. Green tea supplements are also available for those of you who don't care for the taste of green tea.

3 Yoga Poses to Make You Sturdy

There are so many good things we can do so simply, and for free, for our bodies and mind. Yoga is one of them. It doesn't matter if you are super athletic, or barely get off the couch, you can do yoga poses.

This morning during my own practice, it occurred to me that yoga can be so simple. My earliest days of practice was in the Ashtanga tradition, so I knew asanas to be rigorous and make me sweat.

Taking time to appreciate each pose and how your body interprets the movement is of course important. In just a few minutes, you can do these three poses and your day will be brighter and you will be stronger. Another good habit.

Tadasana/Mountain Pose

If you are just starting out, step up from the couch, and simply stand erect in Tadasana. This is Mountain Pose. Stretch your shoulders back and lift your heart. Tuck in your sacrum (that's the little triangular bone at the end of your spine) just slightly, and keep your core engaged. Your thighs should also be engaged.

A trick to ensure you are really standing steady is to lift your toes, just standing on the base of your foot. If you can keep your balance here, sway just a little to feel the strength within you. Then go back to keeping your mountain firm. Stretch your toes out and place them down, ideally with each toe standing on its own, not touching another.

Your arms are also firm and straight, some teachers say erect fingers touching, others say give each finger some room (like the toes). Be here and breathe for 5-10 deep inhale and exhalations.

Tadasana

- Improves posture
- Strengthens thighs, knees, and ankles
- Firms abdomen and buttocks
- Relieves sciatica
- Reduces flat feet

Downward Dog/Adho Mukha Svanasana

The most iconic yoga pose is Downward Dog. Basically, if you can make a big upside down V with your body, you are doing it. The main idea is to keep your back and legs straight, but relaxed. Like Tadasana, your whole body is engaged.

A good way to get into the pose is from being on hands and knees. This way you can get a proper alignment. Make sure your knees are directly under your hips and your hands are slightly forward of your shoulders. Index fingers parallel, but the other fingers spread wide. Tuck your toes under and bring your hips up.

As you extend your knees, keep your heels high off the floor, but work towards getting them close to the ground. Make sure your sitting bones are extending toward the ceiling. Keep your shoulders back, and core engaged.

Breathe deeply and keep a gentle gaze on your belly button. If you feel your neck straining to do that, gaze instead between your knees or toes.

Downward Dog, adho mukha svanasana

- Calms the brain and helps relieve stress and mild depression
- Energizes the body
- Stretches the shoulders, hamstrings, calves, arches, and hands
- Strengthens the arms and legs
- Helps relieve the [symptoms of menopause](#)
- Relieves menstrual discomfort when done with head supported
- Helps prevent osteoporosis
- Improves digestion
- Relieves headache, insomnia, back pain, and fatigue
- Therapeutic for high blood pressure, asthma, flat feet, sciatica, sinusitis

Sukhasana

Sukhasana, or easy pose, is basically meditation pose. Sit cross-legged and put your hands on your knees, palms up or down.

If palms up, you might like to touch your index finger and thumb as you cup your hand. This is Jnana Mudra, which creates an opening effect and allows for a receiving from the divine source.

Universal consciousness is represented by the thumb and individual consciousness is represented by the index finger. Their unity represents the union of divine self with individual self.

As you sit in this posture, with your eyes closed, keep your inner gaze at a spot just above between your eyes. Keep your spine erect, shoulders relaxed, core in, but not forced; the top of your head parallel to the ground.

Breathe slowly and if your mind wanders, you might find some

focus by counting 1 to 10 over and over. Stay seated in Sukhasana for as long as is comfortable. Those just starting out might feel a foot fall asleep after 10 minutes or so.

If it is uncomfortable to sit directly on the floor, then find a cushion (small or tall, hard or soft depending on your comfort), or even a chair is fine if the discomfort is too distracting. The more important thing is to keep your spine straight, and your mind calm and focused on nothing. This is easy pose, after all.

[Sukhasana](#)

- Calms the brain
- Strengthens the back
- Stretches the knees and ankles

Looking to get started and want to follow along with a great teacher? Check out Yoga with Adriene's [Foundations of Yoga](#) video series on YouTube! In this video she explains these three poses, and more. Her demeanor will get you off the couch and practice right away with her! You will find so much amazing information!

Did you know that stress, weak digestive system muscles, and physical inactivity can work together to cause constipation? If you are having trouble with this issue, be sure to read the article [Yoga for Constipation: 14 Yoga Poses For Relieving Constipation](#) on Jen Reviews. This sequence of poses, including some powerful twists, will undoubtedly rid your body of toxins and get your system *flowing*!

Cauliflower and chickpea curry (creamless masala)



The longer you can simmer the sauce on low, the more flavorful the overall taste.

I love cauliflower. Seriously. I can eat it any way. It is one of my favorite raw vegetables and, when cooked, it soaks up flavors so well. And have you read its health benefits? Here's the [top online search result](#):

- Helps Reduce Cancer Risk
- Fights Inflammation
- Decreases Risk for Heart Disease and Brain Disorders
- Provides High Levels of Vitamins and Minerals (Especially Vitamins C and K)
- Improves Digestion and Detoxification
- Aids in Weight Loss
- Helps Balance Hormones
- Preserves Eye Health

And chickpeas? They are also another huge favorite of mine. Also when served any way. We'll let Dr. Axe tell us again the amazing [health benefits of chickpeas](#):

- Helps Control Blood Sugar Levels
- Increases Satiety and Helps with Weight Loss
- Improves Digestion Thanks to a High Fiber Content
- Helps Protect Against Heart Disease and Cancer
- Provides Essential Vitamins and Minerals
- High Source of Protein

I of course prefer to soak my own dried chickpeas in advance, but I rarely plan that far in advance, so I usually have canned chickpeas in the pantry. Side note: I do like getting

canned chickpeas so that I can make vegan marshmallow fluff! (If you don't know about aquafava, you have to try it out!)

I almost always use fresh tomatoes, but sometimes they aren't as juicy as I'd like, so I end up adding some water, or vegetable stock if I have it in the fridge. The usual amount of liquid in canned tomatoes is about how much you want to have while simmering.

1. Sauté onions and garlic in oil. Mix in seasonings (as desired) and allow them become fragrant, then add chopped tomatoes. Allow to simmer on low for 6-7 minutes. Seasoning may include $\frac{1}{4}$ to 1 teaspoon of the following: turmeric, paprika, ginger, cayenne pepper, cinnamon, curry, salt.
2. Add chickpeas and vegetables and put lid on pan, and keep on low simmer until the cauliflower starts to soften. (If you want to use heavy cream, this is the time to put it in. Some people like to pour in a spoon of sugar as well. Mix well and simmer until sauce is thickened.)
3. Boil rice noodles, or rice, or heat up some naan, plate well and enjoy!

10 Reasons Why I Run; Running is Just a Fast Walk

There are so many wonderful things about running, or in my case jogging, and I count myself lucky that I have free use of my body. I've always loved to walk around to explore the world around me. Before I got into running, I was doing a lot of fast walking. It wasn't crazy power walking, but I was trying to make the most of the movement.

Once I realized that I could run (seriously, I was one of those people who couldn't run a block!), I stopped walking, though I do love to hike, and really enjoy earth's treasures that abound. I wanted to share a few reasons why I love running so much, and I hope I inspire some of you to pick it up. My guess is you'll like it, too!

1. Gives me a chance to not think

With many activities taking my time, tasks to accomplish, and calls to make, it is nice to just leave it all back at home (or upstairs on the days when I run on the treadmill). When I run outside, I enjoy not talking, not typing, not looking at the computer. I could probably do the same by just sitting on the back yard patio chair, but running sort of puts me in a trance that allows me to let go of any deadlines or other stresses. Sometimes I try to push away thoughts of work or family to keep a clear mind, but often that time away from my desk allows me to think things through to gain clarity on my next step (pun intended) on what I should do in a situation.

2. I sleep more soundly

I'll admit it. Running is a challenge. It isn't a power walk, though power walks are *also* great for your body and mind. Running knocks me out when I do it right. I relax more and have more restful nights. I find especially when I'm training for a half marathon that I sleep better because I've really exhausted my body and it takes the opportunity to shut down at night.

3. I am happier

I'm not sure if it is because I've pushed myself out the door

(or into the basement) and powered through whatever distance was on the agenda, or that I have given myself enough unburdened time to do it, but my day is always brighter after a run. Maybe the sweat build up inside me being let out is where the noted release of endorphins come from (wink).

4. I can do it alone

My schedule allows me to run during the day and I am glad that I can run by myself. I can't always find others to run with at that time, and while I do like to run with my other mother runners and of course my partner Matthew, I love that I have the freedom to do it any time. I don't need a pass, and I'm not bound to start at a particular hour. Usually the miles fly by much more quickly when you have someone at your side!

5. It makes me stronger

When I get going and maintain a steady practice of running, I see that it makes me stronger in other areas of my life. There is a psychological aspect to running in terms of having to get over a challenge. As I count down the percentage (actually, it is usually fractions) of what distance remains on my run, I get over the seemingly insurmountable and that gives me strength to power through at the end and go for a negative split.

6. It is great for my heart

The World Health Organization (WHO) suggest that adults ages 18 to 64 do at least 150 minutes of a moderate exercise or at least 75 minutes of high-intensity physical activity each week, with a recommendation of added muscle strengthening exercises. Scientists have shown that running can help prevent

obesity, type II diabetes, high blood pressure, some cancers, heart disease, stroke.

7. I believe it'll make me live longer

I've read enough studies on heart longevity that show that running or even walking will extend your life. I am pessimistic about how our society is advancing, but I still want to live to the ripe old age of 99. And so, I hope to be walking until then.

8. It boosts my metabolism

I mean, for real. This is probably why most people run. Running burns fat and it burns calories. If you aren't a pig during the week, you will slim right down. One of the huge benefits of running is not having to "diet." I eat as healthy as I can, but I don't worry about eating a little more if I'm hungrier that day, as I know my metabolism is running strong, even when I'm sleeping.

9. It relaxes me

You'd think that sitting on the couch would be more relaxing than going for a run. But seriously, after I get over having to put on the sports bra, I'm 98% of the time happy, ecstatic even, that I made the effort. After the tension of 3-6 miles and a shower, my muscles are relaxed and my mind feels refreshed. This is heightened by the path I jog... trails increase relaxation tenfold.

10. Gives me confidence

If you would ask me, Heather, are you an athlete? I would laugh, as I feel far from it. While I've been running for 3 years, I'm no faster than when I started. Though I've never considered myself an athlete, I own more running pants than jeans or any other pants! The confidence that I gain from running doesn't just come from my steady waistline, but from knowing that I can do a very hard and at times uncomfortable thing to sustain a healthy mind and body. It is why I most recommend running to others.

I would love to hear the reasons why you run. Please share below!

Vegan Sugar Cookies for the Superbowl

My son wanted to make sugar cookies for the Super Bowl. I'm not sure why, but he chose this particular cookie to represent his celebration. His usual favorite is chocolate chip. I haven't made sugar cookies in years. Many years. I'm in love with the [Minimalist Baker](#), so it was my go-to for a recipe.

I used Bob Red Mill egg replacer, which becomes close to the consistency of applesauce. I wouldn't have thought to use pumpkin puree as the binder, and I will one day. And you should, too! I usually use half a mashed banana for each egg, and less frequently applesauce. But I recently started using this powder. It is so much better than the boxed variety I was using in the 1990s!

My son wanted to be able to decorate the cookies for the team

he was rooting for. The Philadelphia Eagles. He also asked to put up green and white streamers all around the living room. That wasn't quite enough, though, he asked if he could use the confetti he received as a reward from his piano teacher during the game. He meticulously picked out the silver and green colored pieces which he then, hours later, threw out every time the Eagles inched closer to winning.

I didn't anticipate how light the green color of the frosting would be. We could have added more dye to make it darker, but he was satisfied with this color, and quickly licked the beaters and ate a test cookie.

The best tip that Dana at Minimalist Baker shares in this recipe is to dip a glass in sugar before pressing it down on the formed "heaping 1 tablespoon chilled dough" balls. Not only does this reduce a big chunk of mess, it leaves a tiny bit of extra sugar on top of the cookie. I would have pressed these a little harder, or next time, I may opt to roll the dough out and cut some shapes.

Again, I feel grateful that my son embraces a vegetarian lifestyle, and was happy to cook these cookies together with me, egg replacer and all.

Creamy Spinach Sauce

This amazingly creamy sauce can be flavored as you wish. I've made it Italian, Greek, Indian, and Thai. Spices are seriously everything.

Even though this calls for an immersion blender, you can use a regular blender as well, just more loss of that amazing sauce. (wink) I read somewhere that cutting the spinach before

sauteing it allows it to soak in more flavors, so I usually do that.

1. In a deep pan, sauté a diced onion with some garlic.
2. Add a little more olive oil and a quarter cup of heavy cream then stir in a couple teaspoons of flour. Mix until smooth, add your desired seasoning, and bring to a simmer.
3. Add mounds of spinach and allow to simmer for several minutes.
4. Use immersion blender and mix well.
5. Allow to simmer another minute or two and time to settle.

This sauce can be used on pizza, quesadillas, pasta, on rice, with chips, in a 7 layer dish, and beyond. The fat from the cream and the loaded spinach punch is a great way to get super valuable nutrition.

My guess is that you know some of the amazing benefits that spinach provides. We know it has a high content of iron and vitamins A and C. Rich in protein, it helps us increase metabolism and heal wounds. Have you also heard that by eating spinach, our skin is healthier, our eyesight is improved, and are muscles are stronger?

[This amazing article](#) explains in great detail the many health benefits of spinach.

I am aiming as much as I can towards a 100% whole food diet. The ease and convenience of middle-aisle supermarket packages means I don't have to start from raw almonds to get cheese or chop up 5 quarts of vegetables to get a good base. But the more I am at least aware of what I am eating, and what it takes to preserve what I buy, I see myself easily making easier choices at the grocery store and making more time in the kitchen.

And did you know? Spinach originated in Persia (Iran today)

and was grown in other central and Southwestern Asian countries. It made its way to India and then it went on to China through Nepal around 647, where it was called “Persian vegetable.” It was then taken to Sicily in 827. Its history is as rich as its nutrients! [Footnote](#)

Let’s keep up a bountiful crop of spinach in our diets.



Simplify your Life (Your living space is a reflection of your mind)

There are a few times each year that I feel the need to really clean my house. I am starting to see a natural cycle in my cleaning. Sometimes the motivation manifests itself as a need to get rid of clothes I haven’t worn in too long and take them to the local women’s shelter, other times the need is directed at removing the stringy cobwebs populating the ceiling... Over time, if not also tied to moving, I’ve also noticed that I tend to rearrange the furniture in a room every couple years, which always helps uncover old “treasures.” Interestingly, as we get older we can start to see these patterns; one reason I’m grateful to age.

In my recent “spring clean” (in the dead of winter, at the early point of a continual 2 weeks of sub-zero temps), I thought of something I wanted to share. I’ve often thought of the state of my desk as a reflection of my mind. I’ve had moments when I look in dismay at all the papers stacked, interspersed among a pile of books, my laptop, and bills to

pay, among uncapped pens, floating post-it notes, receipts, and who knows what else waiting to be put in its place. At these times, I usually look at my desk and say to myself, "How am I ever going to get out of this mess?" If I have some presence of mind, I can see that at these times I am usually scatterbrained and not as effective as usual.

It is hard to stop for a moment, especially when you are under a deadline or have multiple demands, to tidy up a bit. But really it is so simple... just take a few moments each day to clean up the mess. Just like any other good habit. Sometimes when I recognize the messiness of my desk (if I can even function, because truth be told, because sometimes the mess just shuts me down!)... I give myself a 10 minute break. I step away, take a few moments to breathe and take in the disarray. Before I get back into the sometimes overlapping deadlines, I recognize that the mess will not subside and I take even just 2-4 minutes to sort through some of the mess. If I don't challenge myself to clean up the whole mess, I find that I can make just enough calm in the storm to be more effective as I tackle the next impending project. But as soon as a deadline passes, I see my relief in getting down to the bottom of the stack... knowing all the bills are paid, and forms are filled out and filed. Then when I tackle my next task I do it with a much clearer head and tend to work more efficiently. Amazing how decluttering can help bring on a sense of calm and even greater production. Embrace the organization and time it takes to achieve it.

Don't allow the external mess to drive you to what you perceive as an ensuing internal chaos. Just take a few minutes to put things in the proper pile. The small bits add up and especially if you can make it a habit. The key is to see it and know that you will get it, and do your best to not let it distract you until you have some moments to make a dent. I find for me it helps to remove unnecessary distractions. Books tend to pile up on my desk (wow, there is so much knowledge

out there, am I right?!) so from time to time I have to put them back on the bookshelf. I love to be surrounded by all that great information, but sometimes it gets to be too much.