



quirky cooking

# My Story

My mum taught me to cook from a very young age, using basic, fresh ingredients, and cooking 'from scratch'. When we started our own family, I tried to do the same, believing this would keep us healthy.



I studied up on how to cook wholesome meals. I ground my own grains, baked my own breads, cakes and biscuits, cooked with fresh fruit and veges, and tried to avoid junk food. But despite all my hard work, I was constantly fighting exhaustion, headaches, recurring colds, tummy upsets, low blood pressure, and low weight problems. My children also began to have health issues, and I felt that somehow the food we were eating must be the problem. But what should I change? I had no idea where to start.

I finally went to visit a naturopath, and we worked out which foods were affecting us (dairy, wheat and sugar mostly), and learnt to replace them with alternatives that our bodies were more easily able to cope with. We also began to eat a more whole food diet, cutting out additives, colours and preservatives, and trying to buy mostly organic or pesticide free.

Cooking for food intolerances with four young children can get overwhelming, so I was very excited when I first saw a Thermomix in 2003! I knew it would save me a lot of time and money. I bought my first Thermomix in August, 2004, and very soon found I couldn't do without it. I used it for:

- grinding grains and making wheat free and gluten free breads;

- making dairy free milks and creams and custards;
- whizzing up juices and fresh fruit ice-creams and sorbets;
- baking cakes and desserts with wholesome ingredients and natural sweeteners;
- making nut butters, sauces and spreads without additives;
- and for quick, healthy meals.

Changing our diet to an allergy-friendly diet built on wholefoods and fresh ingredients has made a major difference to our family's health. Many families are struggling with allergies, intolerances and health issues, and they find the idea of changing their diet overwhelming. In 2008 I started my blog, 'Quirky Cooking', so I could share my tips, meal plans, and healthy recipes, along with allergy alternatives. I wanted to encourage people to get creative with their cooking, using wholesome ingredients to make delicious food that would suit their family's needs.

Healthy eating doesn't have to be boring. Food intolerances and allergies don't have to make life difficult. My hope is that 'Quirky Cooking' will help to open people's eyes to the possibility of wholesome food that tastes great, is easy and fun to make, and meets the needs of those with diet challenges.

**Get to know me a little more and learn why I cook the way I do in this video interview:** [youtu.be/WOHtFZZkV3o](https://youtu.be/WOHtFZZkV3o)

**Subscribe to my newsletter:** [www.quirkycooking.com.au/subscribe](http://www.quirkycooking.com.au/subscribe)

**My cookbook:** [bit.ly/quirkycookbook](http://bit.ly/quirkycookbook)

*quirkycooking*

## ARE YOUR RECIPES ONLY SUITABLE FOR PEOPLE WHO OWN A THERMOMIX?

The recipes on my blog and in my book are mostly written for the Thermomix, as that is the main kitchen appliance I use, but you can convert the recipes to conventional methods, and lots of people do.

If the recipe says to cook in 'the bowl', you would use a saucepan on the stovetop and stir or whisk as needed. When tempering chocolate or making lemon butter or sabayon or other recipes that need a constant temperature, you should probably use a double boiler and whisk the mixture as it cooks to keep it from seizing or curdling.

If the Varoma (steamer) is used on top of the bowl, you could either do that part in the oven (if baking) or on the stovetop (if cooking veges or meat) or in a steamer.

For blending you would need a powerful blender that can grind ice. Mixing can be done in a food processor or with a mixer, (or by hand), depending on the recipe. The speeds on the Thermomix go from soft speed (40 rpms, just a slow stir) to speed 10 (10,200 rpms, pulverising and milling), with food processor style chopping being about speed 4-5.

If a recipe says to use the butterfly to whisk something, you would need to use a balloon whisk attachment on an electric mixer, or try the old fashioned way, by hand.

When kneading bread dough in the Thermomix, it only takes about 2 mins to knead - you can knead either with a bread maker (usually takes 45 mins), or by hand (10-15 mins), then continue with recipe.

You would need to buy the flours/nuts pre-milled instead of buying whole grains/nuts and milling, unless you have a grain mill/coffee grinder you can use. The grams will be the same whether it's grain/flour, or nuts/nut meal.

When a recipe calls for so many 'grams' of a liquid, it's the same as millilitres. (eg. 500g water is 500ml water)



You'd be best off getting a set of digital scales to weigh ingredients; otherwise you would need to go online to find 'grams to cups' conversions. Grams are more accurate for baking.

It will really help if you've at least seen a Thermomix demo or watched a friend use theirs, so you know what the terms mean and how the Thermomix works. If you'd like to know more, feel free to contact me via my blog or Facebook page.

**Learn how to convert your recipes to dairy free, wheat free, and naturally sweetened: [quirkycooking.com.au/substitutes-recipe-conversions](http://quirkycooking.com.au/substitutes-recipe-conversions)**

## WHERE SHOULD I START WITH CHANGING MY DIET?

If there's something you find hard to resist and you know it's no good for you – DON'T HAVE IT IN THE HOUSE! Stock up on healthy, basic foods, always have nuts, seeds and fruit on hand for a quick snack; always have smoothie ingredients on hand; keep fruit frozen for 'ice cream' – make healthy eating easy, make junk food harder.

Keep it simple, especially at first. Stick to the basics and you won't feel so overwhelmed. Think meat and fish, steamed veges, salads, avocado, sweet potatoes, eggs, nuts, seeds, coconut (milk, cream, oil, butter), fruit, leafy green in salads, fresh fruit and vege juices, smoothies, some rice and quinoa and buckwheat, natural sweeteners like honey, rapadura and coconut sugar, healthy fats like ghee, butter, coconut oil and animal fats. Think WHOLEFOODS, the way God intended them, not foods that have been made in a laboratory which your body won't recognize as food!

Be aware that no matter how healthy they may seem, some foods just may not agree with you. Learn to listen to your body and know what makes you feel well, and what is best avoided.

Have a fresh green juice first thing in the morning, and then some protein to fill you up and give you energy – eg. eggs poached in bone broth, leftovers from dinner.

Make milk and creams from nuts or coconut – it's so easy, just nuts or dried coconut and water, blended and strained. Nut milk based smoothies are also great to fill you up between meals.

Now and then add in some special treats made with wholefood ingredients.



You can freeze some or make them to share to make sure you don't overindulge. At least 80% of your food should be savoury, and the sweet stuff should be mostly fruit, or fruit-based.

If there's something you REALLY miss, you can probably find a healthier alternative – if you can't figure out how to make it, just ask! You can be sure someone already has. Chocolate mousse made with cashews,

raw cacao, avocado and dates is delicious! Cakes made with ground almonds, a little bit of coconut sugar, eggs, coconut oil and whole oranges. Breads made without gluten and even without grains. Buckwheat & almond wraps (or crepes), chia & quinoa flatbread.

Just keep it as simple as possible; natural, whole foods, with the occasional fancy cooking for a treat, and it won't be so overwhelming.

**Check out my blog and my cookbook for lots of tips, recipes, and meal plans:**  
[www.quirkycooking.com.aubit.ly/quirkycookbook](http://www.quirkycooking.com.aubit.ly/quirkycookbook)

## DOESN'T IT TAKE MORE TIME TO COOK FROM BASIC INGREDIENTS?

Eating a whole food diet is actually not as time consuming as people often think, especially if your focus is on basic foods. Food doesn't have to be made into something fancy all the time. Here's some of my favourite, meals and snacks are:

- a handful of macadamia nuts with a banana
- an avocado with some plain rice crackers
- homemade nut butter on apple or celery, or inside a raw date
- chia pudding (chia seeds soaked in homemade almond or coconut milk) with berries, nuts and coconut cream
- a soft boiled egg with a piece of 'happy' ham/bacon (ethically raised, natural), and some avocado and maybe a piece of toast
- turkey mince patties with sautéed mushrooms and dijon mustard in a lettuce leaf 'wrap'
- eggs poached in chicken or beef broth, with sautéed greens (kale or bok choy)
- a slow cooked stew or roast with veges, both of which take hardly any prep time, and cook themselves for a few hours with delicious results
- steamed veges, baked sweet potatoes, and grilled or steamed chicken or fish
- rice with a meat or vege curry (made with a homemade curry paste, which is surprisingly quick and easy to make, and lasts a fair while in the fridge so you can just use a couple of tablespoons as you need it)



Some tips to make this kind of cooking easier:

- Have a slow-cooked bone broth or chicken broth simmering away on the stove or in the slow cooker every few days, and base any stews, soups, or curries on that. It's very easy to prepare, and contains so much goodness and flavour. (See my blog for recipes: Bone Broths (Liquid Stocks))
- Make a list of simple snack and meal ideas, and stick it on the fridge. Then when you (or the family) feel stuck for something to eat because "all we have is ingredients, there's no food!!", you'll have lots of inspiration.
- Get a Thermomix! This amazing appliance saves heaps of time and money, and makes it much easier to get right back to basic ingredients. It's especially useful for those who have food intolerances/allergies or want to avoid food additives/preservatives. I use it to make all my basics (milks, creams, sauces, mayo, etc), and also to make quick, nutritious meals and delicious desserts. After having one for ten years, I can honestly say it's the best purchase I've ever made, and it's something I wouldn't be without.

**Visit my Quirky Cooking Facebook Page for lots of tips and ideas for healthy eating: [www.facebook.com/quirkycooking](http://www.facebook.com/quirkycooking)**



## BUT ISN'T IT MORE EXPENSIVE TO EAT HEALTHY FOOD?

It depends on what you buy. If you're going to a grocery store and buying organic grocery store items and specialty foods and small packets of nuts and seeds, yes it will get expensive. Healthy eating the 'old fashioned' way is not expensive.

The way I learnt to cook growing up was 'from scratch', basic, wholesome food – because we didn't have much money. It was a blessing in disguise. We couldn't afford to buy all the fancy boxed cereals and packets of things and expensive treats.

Here's some ways I've learnt to save money:

- Buy pesticide free fruit and veges at the local market and through the local CSA (Community Supported Agriculture scheme).
- Build up your pantry items little by little, buying what you can in bulk through a co-op or health food store.
- Buy your honey from a local bee keeper (they're usually at the local markets) and your grass fed meat in bulk from the local butcher, splitting your order with a couple of friends to keep it at a manageable sized order.
- If you can, start a vege garden, plant some fruit trees, and get some chooks for eggs.
- Buy in bulk as much as possible, building up your ingredients bit by bit as you can afford them; and store properly so they don't go to waste.
- Bulk out meat dishes, soups, casseroles and stews with beans or lentils and lots of veges, and just a little meat.

- Drink water.
- Freeze fruits when they're in season to use in smoothies, sorbets and ice creams.
- Bake your own breads, pizza bases, bread crumbs, cakes, biscuits, muffins, etc; and make your own yoghurt.
- Plan your weekly meals using what you have on hand - keep a list of what's in your pantry and freezer so nothing is wasted by being forgotten.

**Learn how to buy in bulk here:**

[quirkycooking.com.au/2011/03/bulk-food-buying-co-ops](http://quirkycooking.com.au/2011/03/bulk-food-buying-co-ops)



## HOW DO I HELP MY KIDS NOT BE ‘FUSSY EATERS’?

It's a good idea to get kids involved with the meal planning, shopping, growing veges and herbs if you can, and preparing meals – that will make them much more excited about healthy eating. Kids still have preferences, but if you teach them to have at least a little bit of the things they don't particularly care for, you'll often find they grow used to it after a while. Mine don't even complain about 'cabbage noodles' now!

It is really important to start young, if you can. I've been cooking this way since mine were really little. Obviously the earlier you start them eating healthy food, the better. Then they don't know anything else.

Another tip is to not have anything unhealthy in the house to tempt them! (Or you!) If there's no bought bikkies or softdrink or flavoured milk, they won't ask for them. It does get harder as they get older though, because of all the outside influences. And sometimes family and friends don't help, because they don't understand what you're trying to do, and think you're 'over the top'. But that's where educating your kids comes in – help them to understand what good food does for their bodies, and how unhealthy foods (or foods they're intolerant or allergic to) make them feel. For example, my youngest went to a birthday party when she was 8, pigged out on lollies, had a milkshake and an ice cream cone and hot chips, then promptly threw it up all over the host's floor. I had to laugh – it taught her the lesson that if you overdo those kinds of foods, it just makes you feel awful, so it's not worth it.

Educate them about healthy eating. Mine have watched films like 'Fat, Sick and Nearly Dead' and 'Overfed and Undernourished', which made them eager to drink green juices (most of the time anyway). I've showed them diagrams of

how the gut lining is damaged by certain foods, and explained what happens when the gut is damaged. I've showed them videos of how fast food chicken nuggets are made, and photos of how much sugar is in softdrinks, and watched Jamie Oliver's Food Revolution with them... The more they understand what's good for them and what isn't and why, the more likely it is that they'll make good choices, and not be so 'fussy' about eating healthy food.

Stick to a routine for mealtimes and snacks, and don't let them just 'graze' all day long, wandering about with food in their hand. Teach them to sit down and eat mindfully when they do eat. Help them to learn that it's perfectly okay and normal to get quite hungry before a meal. You don't have to be eating all day long to avoid that hunger feeling. Wait a bit, and eat properly. A child that is really ready to eat won't be so picky. Cut down on the snacks, and make sure when they do have them that they're healthy snacks – fruit, nuts, savoury seed mix, homemade dips with vege sticks, smoothies, occasional homemade cake or biscuits or scones.

If your child has sensory issues, the Thermomix is very useful for making lumpy things smooth, or blending lots of veges into sauces and things like that. Work on slowly adding more variety to your child's diet little by little, adding to dishes they already enjoy. You may find you can add a small handful of baby spinach or avocado to a chocolate smoothie, or some pulverised vegetables to spaghetti Bolognese, without them noticing.

Make mealtimes fun, not confrontational. Spread a blanket out on the grass and have a picnic with finger food that they can choose from a big plate that everyone shares, and serve with a smoothie. Or make a cubby house with blankets and chairs inside and sip soup from cups, on a cold, wet day. Show them how much you enjoy good food, and invite over friends with kids that eat well so they see other kids enjoying good food too.

Most of all, don't stress. Keep offering wholesome, natural foods, talk about food positively, and don't say 'you're being fussy!' or 'he's a fussy eater!' if they don't like something. Instead say, 'You'll grow into liking lots more things as you get older, just keep trying new things. When you get a bit bigger you'll LOVE it!'. Don't get upset if they don't like something, just tell them you just want them to have a couple of bites at least, then they can eat something else. But only offer healthy options like a raw carrot or an apple as an alternative to dinner, not a chocolate biscuit. In our house, if a child doesn't eat a decent amount of his/her dinner, it's 'no dessert'. No big deal, but dessert is a special treat for those who've eaten their dinner.

**Show your kids my son's video of how he makes his healthy chocolate cake!**  
[www.quirkycooking.com.au/2013/05/mr-is-far-too-easy-chocolate-cake/](http://www.quirkycooking.com.au/2013/05/mr-is-far-too-easy-chocolate-cake/)



## WHAT ARE YOUR PANTRY STAPLES?

One of the questions I've been asked a lot is 'what do you like to always have on hand in your pantry or freezer?' I mostly buy my pantry ingredients through bulk food co-ops, or in bulk through my local health food shop.

I'm not coeliac, but I do feel best when eat a gluten free, low grain diet, so I use some grains, but mostly seeds, nuts and non-grain flours. My family does eat spelt though, which is not gluten free, so I buy that also. Here's a list of the kinds of things I like to have on hand.

Note: I didn't buy all of this at once, I built up my stocks little by little as I needed it, or as I could afford to buy in bulk.

### **Grains & Flours:**

Spelt grain, unbleached plain spelt flour, buckwheat grain, millet, quinoa, oats, quinoa flakes, brown rice, basmati rice, arrowroot flour, potato starch, tapioca starch, sorghum flour, cornstarch, coconut flour (or dried shredded/dessicated coconut to make my own)

### **Sweeteners:**

Rapadura, coconut sugar, coconut nectar, raw honey, pure maple syrup, green stevia powder, rice malt syrup

### **Dried Fruit:**

Dates (dried & raw), dried sour cherries, sultanas, sulpher-free apricots (now & then), shredded coconut (I have a dehydrator and can dry my own in-season fruits, especially bananas & mangoes, but I do buy some)

### **Nuts & Seeds:**

Raw almonds/blanched almonds, cashews, macadamia nuts, hazelnuts, brazil nuts, pecans, walnuts, sunflower seeds, sesame seeds, pepitas, linseeds, chia seeds, pine nuts & pistachios (now & then). (I buy all my nuts and seeds raw and activate or roast them myself.)

### **Legumes:**

Chickpeas, lentils (red & green), lima beans, black-eyed peas, kidney beans, turtle beans - (sometimes bought dried, sometimes tinned)

### **Oils/fats:**

Extra virgin olive oil, macadamia oil, coconut oil, sesame oil (all organic cold pressed if possible), lard (occasionally), raw cacao butter (for making chocolate), and butter/ghee (sometimes make my own, sometimes buy)

### **Other:**

Raw cacao powder, raw cacao nibs, additive free baking powder, tamari sauce, coarse celtic sea salt or himalayan salt,

I store my grains, flours, nuts, seeds, and dried fruit in my large chest freezer. This keeps them fresh and stops them getting mouldy or weevily. We live in the wet tropics, so you really can't leave grains and flours just sitting in the cupboard for long periods of time. If you don't have a large freezer, rotate them through the freezer in batches to kill weevil eggs, and keep in sealed containers/jars in a cool, dark cupboard.

**Here's a video explaining my pantry staples:**

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_M1-CPC\\_s98](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_M1-CPC_s98)





## HOW COULD I START A CO-OP IN MY AREA?

A lot of people would love to order through a local co-op, but can't find one in their area. Well, I always say, if you can't find one, start one!

Get the word out to friends, family, co-workers, and fellow 'Thermomixers' that you're interested in starting a co-op. Try and get a good sized group together, but even five or ten people are enough to start with - our co-op started off small and now has about 100 people in it.

Contact the large suppliers (see my bulk buying post) and ask how you would go about ordering through them, what the freight charges are, etc. The bigger the order, the less freight you'll have to pay - which is why we only order 4 times a year.

You will need someone who's willing to be in charge of the co-op, collate the orders, get the order to the suppliers, send out emails, get payments in, organize dividing up the order, etc. You'll also need a large covered garage or verandah or room where you can divide the shipment into each person's orders. The person doing the organising should charge a small fee for his/her time - for example, a 3-5% surcharge on each order as a 'membership fee'. This covers time spent organising the order, computer maintenance, small discrepancies in orders that aren't worth chasing up, and the time spent handling finances. A small discount can be given to those who help divide up the order, such as \$10 off their bill.

It's easiest if everyone orders in 1kg, 5kg or 12.5kg lots (or whatever size bags the produce comes in) - it makes dividing up the shipment a lot quicker! We used to order big 25kg bags of everything, then spend most of a day weighing out everyone's orders into bags, and trying to work out costs, and it was a real

headache. Now we sort the bags/boxes into piles of what it is (spelt grain, Rapadura, etc) and those helping go through each persons' list and puts their bags/boxes into a pile, someone else checks it, and it's done! Much easier. No weighing and dividing and bagging things up. But if people want to divide a bag with friends, they can always get one person to order the whole bag, then take it home and weigh it out there, and sort out payment amongst themselves.

We have sub-groups in our co-op, divided by suburbs/towns, with up to 10 people in each group. The person in charge of each group collates the groups' orders and sends them in to the organiser of the co-op. The organiser collates all the orders into one big order and sends it off. Once the shipment arrives, everyone's invoices are emailed to them and they pay the organiser by direct deposit. Payments must be made within a couple of days. Once all payments are received, the organiser pays the supplier. (We have a computer program that was made specifically for our co-op, and that's been a big help in organising things.)

We divide up the shipment as soon as possible after it arrives. Everyone who can comes to help with dividing up and delivering the orders - it's quite a social activity! Then we all go home loaded up with goodies :) So much fun!

This might sound like a lot of work, but if it's well organised it will run smoothly, and it's really worth the trouble. If you have any questions that I haven't covered, let me know and I'll try and help. I think food co-ops are a great way to go for those of us who want to go back to basic ingredients, buy organic foods, and save money!

## HOW DO I BEGIN MEAL PLANING?

Having a meal plan for the week can make a big difference to your weekly food budget, the time you spend in the kitchen, and your frustration levels at dinner time! It might not always work out exactly to plan, but you're less likely to have that 'what in the world can we eat for dinner?' moment at 6pm! And it really does save money, because you don't just dash out and impulse shop at the last minute, buying convenience foods to save time! Here's my tips for meal planning.

Keep a file/list of your family's favourite recipes (either on paper or on the computer) so you have plenty of 'old faithfuls' that will keep your family happy. Use mostly these recipes each week (working towards healthier versions if needed), plus one or two new ones per week. I go through my recipe books (or websites) each week looking for new ideas - sometimes I end up putting too many new ones on the menu, and I find I've bitten off more than I can chew (lol)... It's really easier if you only have a couple of new ones each week, unless you've got plenty of time to spend in the kitchen! (Or unless they're simple ones, eg. basic Thermomix ones.)

Get the family involved! Ask each family member to pick a meal for the week, then get them to help prepare that meal. That way picky eaters will be more likely to enjoy the food, because they chose it, and helped prepare it.

Go through your calendar and figure out where you'll be each day (lunch and dinner) so that you know when you'll be able to cook more time consuming recipes, when you'll need something quick, and when you won't be home and need to leave meals for the family. (You can even write your week's schedule down on your menu, so the whole family knows who will be where, and when.)

Figure out how many times per week you want to have fish, chicken, red meat, and vegetarian meals for your main meals... or whatever your family eats. Write down next to each day of the week what you're going to have that day. Eg: Monday - leftovers/vegetarian; Tuesday - fish; Wednesday - red meat; Thursday - fish; Friday - chicken; Saturday - leftovers/vegetarian; Sunday - meat/chicken. Now you have a plan you can build on.

As you look at each day, think about your calendar and commitments, and have a look through your recipes to find meals that will suit. An example of a day for me: "Tomorrow I'll be out all afternoon and evening, so I need a quick lunch for the family between home schooling and leaving the house. I'll make extra dinner the night before, so that there's leftovers for lunch, and I'll make a casserole during the morning that my family can pop that in the oven for dinner. I'll also have to make sure there's something for snacks, so I'll make a cake today, and some custard tomorrow for the kids to have for supper." I know that sounds like a lot of work, but because I plan it out ahead of time I don't have to have cupboards full of junk food and packet snacks to fall back on, and we hardly ever buy take away meals. We save a lot of money by planning home-cooked meals and snacks, and we eat a lot healthier.

As you choose the week's recipes, think about what's in your fridge, freezer, garden, vege box from co-ops, and cupboard - leftovers, grains, veges, beans, fruits, etc - and try to incorporate them into your menu. It's easy to forget the leftover veges in the fridge, or the abundance of chokos in the garden, or bags of dry beans and quinoa that have found their way to the bottom of the freezer. Use up the oldest things first, and be careful not to double up when you go shopping.

A good way to remember what's in the fridge and freezer is to keep a list on the fridge, on a white board or a laminated piece of paper. You can write on

it (with a whiteboard marker) any leftover meals, frozen meals, and bags of things you've bought bulk and frozen, rubbing them out as you use them. This is also helpful for when you're about to put in another bulk order, as you know how much you have left of things.

Try to plan at least once in a week to make a double batch of something that can be frozen for a future meal - casseroles are especially good for this, as they can be thawed and cooked at the same time. (Just pop it in the oven frozen and covered well with foil, and cook on 180 degrees C for approx 1 1/2 to 3 times longer than you would need for baking in its' unfrozen state. Or thaw overnight in the fridge for a shorter cooking time.)

After you've planned your main meals, think about lunches. This is optional - you might be the kind of person who always has a sandwich, or a basic salad, for lunch. We have main meals or leftovers at lunch time quite often, as my hubby shift works. If there's not quite enough leftovers, I make them into something else - eg. soup, vege & bean patties, fried rice, vege curry. Or we just have something quick and easy like soup, omelettes, or chicken in a lettuce 'wrap' with vege sticks or a smoothie. We don't eat lunch meats because of the additives and preservatives in them, so if we do have a sandwich, we use either leftover roast meat, fish, salad, eggs, or homemade nut butter/spreads.

If you have kids at school, it's a good idea to plan their lunches too, so they don't get bored with the same thing every day. Eg: soup in a thermos with homemade muffin/crackers; raw vege sticks with dip & boiled egg; interesting sandwiches or wraps; fruit salad; pasta salad.

Sometimes I also plan for breakfasts - generally, though, I just do whatever I feel like or have time for in the mornings. Breakfasts here usually include eggs, often poached in broth or scrambled; sometimes with a bit of

homemade toast, or avocado; quite often leftovers, fried rice, chia pudding/ porridge, soup or stew.

When you write out your menu plan, add notes on each day to remind yourself what you need to prepare for the next day. Eg: beans, grains or nuts that need soaking for the next day, meat or casseroles that needs to be thawed in the fridge the day before, bread that needs to be baked the day before so you can have toast for breakfast the next day... anything that can be prepared ahead to save you time the next day.

**There are plenty of sample menu plans on my blog (just search 'menu' in the search box), and also an album of menus on my Facebook page, if you need some ideas: <http://on.fb.me/1ozaRzj>**



## Helpful Links

Buy a copy of the **Quirky Cooking Cookbook**:  
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# Coconut Caramel Custard

## To make this in the Thermomix:

Weigh all the ingredients into the Thermomix bowl and cook for 7 mins/90C/speed 4.

- 500ml coconut milk (or 250g thick coconut cream + 250g water)
- 60g coconut sugar (or Rapadura)
- 1 large tsp vanilla bean paste
- 2 Tbsp butter or ghee (optional, but awesome)
- 20-30g arrowroot starch (depending how thick you like it)
- 1/4 tsp Himalayan or sea salt
- 2 eggs

## To make this on the stovetop:

Whisk the ingredients together in a heavy based saucepan, and simmer gently on stovetop over medium-low heat, whisking constantly, until thickened.

For an egg free version, just leave out the eggs and increase the starch/cornflour to 50-60g.

## Serving suggestions:

Serve with sliced bananas and roughly chopped macadamias, or serve over apple crumble.

