

- Speaker 1: [00:00](#) Welcome to the old fashioned on purpose podcast. In today's episode, we're going to dive into how to cook from scratch when your time is limited because you know I may have written a cookbook and I might have a blog with some recipes on it, but that doesn't mean I spend all day in the kitchen. Keep listening because I'm going to share my very best secrets for keeping from scratch food on your table, even though I know you're just as busy as I am. I'm your host Jill winger and for the last 10 years I've been helping people who feel a little uninspired by modern life, learn how to leave the rat race and create the life they really want by growing their own food and mastering old fashioned skills. As we start this episode, I just want to say that cooking from scratch is a very conscious choice for me because I am well aware that there are bazillions of pre-made ingredient options out there.
- Speaker 1: [01:13](#) Everything from frozen TV dinners to boxes of hamburger helper to even those premade meal plan boxes you can get through the mail. I know there are a lot of faster ways to get food on the table other than chopping and sautéing and stirring and kneading it yourself. And I also am well aware that I'd have a lot more free time during the day if I opted into more convenient options. However, all that being said, I still choose to go the homemade route in most things, let's say eighty to ninety percent of what we eat now. Partially that's because it's usually way healthier to cook from scratch and it also allows us to use the food that we grow ourselves, which is really a big reason because I wouldn't be spending all this time growing vegetables and you know, meats and eggs if I wasn't going to cook with it.
- Speaker 1: [02:18](#) But really the most important reason I think for me and why I continue to cook from scratch, even though my life is just downright insane sometimes is because it's about the quality of life for me. Now. That's kind of funny when you think about it, because if you've ever looked at the labels of processed food at the grocery store, the industrialized world of food, like one of their biggest claims is that their pre-packaged, convenience options will increase your quality of life, right? And if we look back decades when the industrialized food revelation really started happening, it's biggest selling point is that it would liberate the housewife, right? It would make their lives easier. They wouldn't be in the kitchen all day. They wouldn't have to make the cakes from scratch because now we have Betty Crocker box cakes, cake mixes. So it's kind of funny. But I stand here and I'm claiming the opposite.

Speaker 1: [03:27](#) I wholeheartedly believe that humans are wired to make things. We're supposed to be makers, y'all and creators and producers, we are designed to build, to improve, to expand and create with our hands. That can be in the kitchen or it can be elsewhere. But we have that need inside of us. Now the tension comes in here because we live in a time in our modern societies of unprecedented ease, right? It's easier than ever to get things done these days. Everything happens at the press of a button. We have apps and automations and whereas our ancestors would have spent most of their days finding food and just staying alive, it's much easier for us. Now I want to just say right now, right up front that I am not against technology. I have an iPhone and I use a laptop and I have an online business, so I need technology.

Speaker 1: [04:41](#) But I think when we get so wrapped up in that we really get stripped of the joy that comes with producing and creating with our own wo hands. And that is why you will see me on my little soapbox continually begging folks to fall in love with their kitchens, whether that's for the very first time or maybe rekindling an old forgotten romance that got a little dusty as life happens. All of that being said, hopefully you're feeling a stirring inside of you to get back in the kitchen and try some new things and look at it not as drudgery, but as an intentional act that creates a higher quality of life for you and your family. But this is a big but: that's fun and great and romantic and all those things, but how do we embrace from scratch cooking while still having one foot in our very modern, very busy world because that's really the question, isn't it?

Speaker 1: [05:51](#) And we can think about grandma making her pie crusts and canning her tomatoes or the stories of Ma ingles in the log cabin baking the bread, but they didn't have as much to do more than likely as we do. Or maybe they had lots to do, but it was different. Right? They were washing their clothes by hand and looking in foraging for food, but they didn't have to drive their kids to soccer and go to PTA meetings and run businesses work outside the home. That's different. Right? Our modern lives set us up differently. I am still a firm believer that you can have both. And so here are some of my best tips for cooking from scratch when your time is very limited because even though I work from home and we homeschool and you know I'm at home a lot, I don't spend all day in the kitchen.

Speaker 1: [06:46](#) I just can't. I have a lot of moving pieces in my life. I'm out and about outside, and in my office. I just have a lot of different things going on. So six to eight hours a day in the kitchen is not an option for me. And I'm guessing it's not an option for you

either. So here are my secrets. Okay? Number one, this is not earth shattering, but I really want you to let it sink in because it does matter. So plan ahead. Your menu planning does not have to be extravagant or even that detailed. But Holy Moly, you guys, my weeks are so much smoother. If I take five minutes or ten minutes at the beginning of the week to sketch out what we'll be having for supper the next few days. Okay. It makes a massive difference. Being on the office in the kitchen always, always, always beats being on the defensive because the defensive usually equates to putting weird or unhealthy stuff out on the table as a last minute resort to feed the hungry hordes that are your family.

Speaker 1: [08:02](#) So if you plan ahead, you can make sure things are defrosted, you can make sure you have things set out. If there's different little components that need to be made ahead, you can have that ready to go. Everything flows cause I don't know about you, but there's nothing worse than getting to about two o'clock in the afternoon and realizing you have nothing planned for supper and everything is frozen solid. So planning ahead, I am actually not one of those super fancy menu planner gals. I know there's tons of systems and planners and worksheets out there that you can get. If that's your jam, go for it. Actually keep it much more simple. I have a paper planner that's my brain. Everything is in my paper planner and I just have a line at the end of each day where I write in what we're having for. And I usually don't plan out breakfast and lunches.

Speaker 1: [09:01](#) Supper is my main focus. I'm going to talk about this in a minute, but that kind of keeps me on track and I generally don't necessarily even plan out vegetables. I plan out just the main course of that meal and then I just toss in whatever vegetables I have in the freezer or the garden or the refrigerator. So it's very simple, but it makes all the difference. Okay. Tip number two is to make double or triple or quadruple whenever possible. Now there's hree reasons I would do this. So number one, I think this is my most common reason for making extra is so we have leftovers the next day. I don't like making an entire lunch spread. I'd rather do simple lunches or leftovers because we're usually, you know, either in the middle of school we homeschool, you know, you the school year or we're outside. So being in the kitchen for two hours before lunch, prepping food doesn't really work for me.

Speaker 1: [10:05](#) So I make double to have leftovers for lunch. I make double to eat later in the week or I make double to freeze. To be perfectly honest, I don't know why, but I haven't really got into the whole freezer meal thing yet. I know there's folks who just swear by it

and I have plenty of recipes for fantastic freezer meals. It just isn't something I've ever gotten the routine of. So if that's your jam, go for it. Like that's a fabulous plan. You can make extra, you know, I figure if I have the kitchen dirty and the bowls and the spoons and the mixer or whatever already out and covered in food, I might as well get more bang for my buck while it's out there. And I only have to do dishes once. So some of my favorite things to make ahead or to make in big batches are homemade pesto.

Speaker 1: [11:01](#)

And so I like to do this, especially in late summer when I have a lot of greens in the garden. If you have my cookbook, I have a recipe for homestead pesto in there, which basically replaces Basil with random greens, whether it's Kale, spinach, even spicier things like mustard greens, beet tops, whatever. You can use those to make pesto and it freezes beautifully. So if I am overwhelmed with greens, I make a giant batch of Pesto in my food processor and then I freeze it and we use it all winter when there's nothing fresh and put it on a pastas and all sorts of yummy skillet meals. I also always, always make a ton of homemade stock. So beef stock, chicken stock, I don't really do a lot of stock. I have a little bit in the past. Those are always done in very large batches, at least a gallon.

Speaker 1: [12:00](#)

And my routine is, you know, roasting a chicken for supper, eating it for supper, pulling the leftover meat off the bones for a soup or a skillet meal later in the week. And then I throw that the chicken bones in the skin, in any of the leftover bits into my instant pot or my slow cooker. And I let that baby go all night. In the case of a slow cooker, instant pot doesn't take that long and that makes about a gallon of broth and I usually just keep that in a jar and the refrigerator use it up within seven to ten days and then just start the cycle all over again. You can also freeze broth, you can can broth but make lots because it's a beautiful foundation for all sorts of recipes. I also do homemade yogurt in large batches, especially what our milk cow is producing.

Speaker 1: [12:49](#)

Well, I'll take a gallon or two of milk and put it into quart jars and make a gallon or two of yogurt and that lasts us for quite a while because yogurt will stay good in the fridge for a very long time. Now all those recipes are in the prairie homestead cookbook if you want to grab them with more of my little notes and techniques, but those are some of my favorite bulk ingredients to make. I also like to have a repertoire of easy to make standby meals and these have saved the day more than one time because if I happen to not have planned very well or plans change and the meat's not defrosting as fast as I thought or I'm not going to be around to do some of the prep I had

originally planned, I have a list of easy meals that I can kind of make without having to think about it.

Speaker 1: [13:42](#)

And those fill in the gaps in the case of an emergency because town and pizza and delivery, while delivery is not an option out here, pizza is a long ways away. So that really actually did a lot in teaching me how to plan and cook because there is no backup where I live and maybe you have backup and there's nothing wrong with getting a pizza when you need it, but I don't have that option so I've got to build my own backup. But some of my favorite repertoire meals are tacos. You can't go wrong with Tacos. I always have tons of ground beef in the freezer. It's easy to defrost. If I need to do it in a hurry, I just do it in a bowl of hot water. I also like to do shredded pork or beef sandwiches. That's good for a last minute company meal.

Speaker 1: [14:30](#)

If you have like a day, you know they're coming, but you're going to be busy on the day that they arrive. Pop a pork shoulder or a beef roast in the Crockpot, shred it, season it, slap it on some sandwich buns. Super easy. Super good. Pan Fried pork chops are always a hit and they don't take a lot of brainpower. Roasted chicken, one of my favorites. Stick some whole potatoes and carrots in the bottom. Some herbs call it good. Stick it in the oven. And my probably my easiest cheater meal is we call them Idaho tacos cause instead of a Tortilla we use a baked potato, you know, get it baked potatoes, Idaho, and we bake the potato and then we will put whatever leftover meat is in the fridge, whether it's bacon, although I mean seriously, who has leftover bacon? Never. I never have leftover bacon. But if you do, you could use bacon or ground beef like seasons with Taco seasoning or leftover chop chicken.

Speaker 1: [15:32](#)

We put the meat on the baked potatoes, add some cheese, sour cream, butter, chives, whatever you want. And those are Idaho Tacos. Super easy. So create your own list of your favorite standby meals that you can throw in at a minutes notice and they will save the day at some point, I promise. Okay, my next tip is to invest in good appliances. Now some of you may find this shocking because sometimes people get a little bit of the wrong idea because I love old fashioned things and heritage kitchen skills. But that doesn't mean I'm churning my butter in a butter churn with a stick, right? In order to eat well and still live in a modern life with activities and obligations. I depend on appliances. Now I have some rules when it comes to appliances, they have to be multipurpose and not gimmicky. And what I mean by that is, you know, if you ever watch infomercials or you know, you see the latest greatest thing on the shelves at

Walmart at Christmas time, there's a lot of gimmicky appliances out there.

Speaker 1: [16:51](#) I'm not going to actually name them cause I feel like this might offend some people cause some people have their favorite appliances. But there's just some that I am personally not interested in because they serve, you know, just one purpose. So I don't like a lot of appliances. The ones I love and the ones I use a ton or my slow cooker obviously. But that's not a surprise. My food processor, I love my food processor, my high powered blender, I have a blend tech and my instant pot. I depend on those our things and a few others. But those were the main ones to allow me to live this from scratch homestead life while I'm still having one foot or a foot and a half in a fast paced modern life as well. So here are the few of the ways I use these appliances to make my life easier.

Speaker 1: [17:47](#) The slow cooking whole chickens is a breeze. Roasts are fantastic. Soups and Stews, I will often use it to make homemade beef broth or chicken stock. You know, there's bazillions of slow cooker recipes out there. Collect your favorites and use them. That slow cooker is my best friend. I also use my instant pot quite a bit. Now, one little note is I actually don't love the instant pot for creating whole meals and there's a few exceptions, but for the most part, I've found it to be just not my favorite. It's like if I'm trying to make a soup, I just don't like the textures as much. I don't like being able to not adjust the salts in the herbs while the soup is cooking. It's just not my favorite and that's totally me. You may have a completely different opinion. So I don't use my instant pot for doing a lot of meats or a lot of whole meals, but I do use it, I'd say almost every day for cooking, either rice or quinoa.

Speaker 1: [18:56](#) We eat a lot of quinoa for breakfast. I use it for, this is my favorite in the whole world. Guys. Cooking whole and soaked. Yes. Unsoaked beans, like dry beans, like navy beans, pinto beans, black beans in like less than sixty minutes. You can go from dry bean on the shelf to cooked and ready to eat in less than sixty minutes. It's, it's mind boggling and it works. I use it to cook chunks of squash or pumpkin cause I just kinda always found like you hack open a squash, which is a ordeal in and of itself or a Pumpkin. You scrape the seeds out, you stick it on a baking tray. You know, sometimes it takes a long time in the oven so you can pop those babies in your instant pot, add a little water and I can't remember the exact time.

Speaker 1: [19:47](#) I think it's like eight to ten minutes of active cooking time. There'll be done ready to eat or mash or whatever. I also love

this, this has been mind blowing for a lot of my audience, steaming fresh eggs in the instant pot. And a lot of these techniques are in my prairie homestead cookbook in case you're wanting them. But you can take farm fresh eggs, which as many of you know traditionally are impossible to peel because the shells are on there like glue. If you steam them in your instant pot, the shells fall right off and you can make deviled eggs or whatever. It's magic. I also use it to make homemade broth or stock. If I'm in a hurry, sometimes I kind of go fifty fifty sometimes I do that with a slow cooker sometimes with the instant pot, but works great.

Speaker 1: [20:36](#)

And then my favorite things to do with a food processor are making butter, making homemade mayonaise, making pestos, chopping large amounts of onions or peppers because I cry so bad with onions. I am the worst. I have got to have the most sensitive eyes with onions in the universe and also shredding cheese. So I have a recipe that calls for a bunch of cheese. There is no way I'm doing that by hand. I popped those chunks in the food processor and it's ready to go. Okay, last little secret. And I kind of alluded to this a minute ago, but I'm going to encourage you as you're menu planning and cooking from scratch is to focus on that one larger meal per day and then fill in the gaps with the other meals with little easier options. So for us the larger meal is supper that might be different for you depending on your schedule.

Speaker 1: [21:32](#)

I really put most of my focus on supper each day and making it, you know, a main course and a side and a vegetable and trying to make sure there are some sort of leftovers. Then we eat the leftovers for lunch, which simplifies lunch and breakfast I keep it pretty simple. I don't do a lot of fancy stuff for breakfasts. My husband Christian doesn't really love breakfast and we're always kind of in a hurry to get out the door or into the project of the days. So what I do with breakfast is I have a rotation of kind of a topical rotation. So I'm trying to remember. Mondays we have either oatmeal or quinoa, Tuesdays we have eggs and toast. Wednesdays we'll have smoothies. Thursdays we'll have pancakes or waffles. And so I kind of, that gives me a little leeway so we don't have to eat the exact same thing every week. You know, like on Mondays we either pick quinoa or oatmeal or maybe I'll do my homemade cream of wheat or something like that. So it's in that category. But that just keeps me on track. So when I wake up in the morning and I'm like, oh my gosh, the children want to eat again. Cause that just happens everyday. You know, I know a little bit more of a game plan of where I'm headed.

Speaker 1:

[22:51](#)

So to wrap it all up, I want you to remember as you are incorporating more from scratch foods into your schedule is just a really go with baby steps. Just do what you can. If you need to use some convenience options. It's okay. Like it's not the end of the world. There are times I still use store-bought tortillas and store-bought chips because while I know how to make those things from scratch, it's not always in the schedule. And it's okay, give yourself some grace. Don't beat yourself up and just do what you can and enjoy the process. So if you are falling in love with the idea of an old fashioned intentional kitchen full of nourishing food and rich memories, you will love my heritage kitchen handbook. I've packed little ebook full of my very best tricks for cooking and eating like a farmer, even if you live in the city and you can grab it free at [www.heritagekitchenhandbook.com](http://www.heritagekitchenhandbook.com) and that's it folks. Thanks for listening. If you have a minute, I'd be so honored to have you subscribe and leave a quick review over on iTunes so more people can find this podcast and embrace this homestead life. I'll catch up with you on the next episode on the old fashioned on purpose podcast.