The No-BS Low-Carb Kitchen

Practical Recipes, Smart Techniques, and Food That Actually Works

By Christopher Ingison

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Most low-carb cookbooks promise a system. This one doesn’t.

This book exists for people who want low-carb food to actually work in real life, not just on paper. Food that tastes good, reheats well, and doesn't feel like a chore to cook or eat. No food rules to memorize. No phases to follow. Just solid meals and the techniques that make them reliable.

If you’ve tried low-carb before and felt burned out, bored, or frustrated, it probably wasn’t because low-carb doesn’t work. It was because the food didn’t hold up. Dry meat, bland vegetables, and meals that only tasted good the first night make any way of eating hard to stick with.

This book focuses on fixing that.

You’ll find straightforward recipes, practical cooking techniques, and meals designed to fit into a normal schedule. Some recipes are quick. Some are comforting. Some are meant to be prepped ahead and eaten all week. All of them are written to be forgiving and repeatable.

This isn’t medical advice. It’s not a strict diet plan. It’s a collection of meals and habits that make low-carb cooking easier to live with, day after day.

Use what works. Skip what doesn’t. Adjust as needed. That’s the whole point.

How to Use This Book

You don’t need to read this book in order.

The recipes are organized by how people actually cook and eat, not by rules or rigid plans. Some sections focus on quick weeknight dinners. Others lean into comfort food, meal prep, or sauces and building blocks you can mix and match depending on what you have on hand.

Start wherever it makes sense for you.

Each recipe includes clear steps, realistic portions, and macro information so you know what you’re eating without turning cooking into math homework. When storage or reheating matters, it’s noted. When a recipe is flexible, you’ll see where small adjustments make sense.

The technique section at the front of the book exists to make everything else easier. You don’t need to memorize it. Read it once, skim it, or come back to it when something doesn’t turn out the way you expected. Those techniques show up throughout the recipes whether you notice them or not.

This book is meant to be used, not followed perfectly. Cook the meals you like. Repeat the ones that work best for you. Adjust portions, proteins, or sides as needed. That’s how this becomes sustainable instead of another short-term experiment.

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Techniques That Make Recipes Work

Techniques That Make the Recipes Work

Cooking Smarter, Not Harder

This book is built around simple, repeatable meals that don't require living in the kitchen or treating food like a short-term punishment. The recipes are intentionally straightforward, but that also means they sometimes assume you understand why certain steps matter.

This section exists to fill that gap.

You don't need to be a professional cook to get good results, but you do need a working understanding of how heat, fat, and timing affect flavor and texture. Small decisions, like what goes into the pan first or how hot that pan is, can completely change how a dish turns out. When those decisions are made correctly, meals taste better, reheat better, and are far easier to repeat during the week.

These techniques are not rules and they are not the only way to cook. They are simply the methods that make the recipes in this book work the way they are intended to work. Once you understand them, you can apply the same ideas to meals outside this book without overthinking it.

How to Cook a Damn Good Steak (Without Overthinking It)

Steak is one of the best examples of why technique matters more than complicated recipes. With just salt, heat, and timing, a good cut of steak can turn out better than most restaurant versions. When it goes wrong, it's almost always because of heat control or timing, not seasoning.

This method is designed to be repeatable at home and flexible enough to work for meal prep, weeknight dinners, or special meals.

Start with the Right Cut

You don't need an expensive cut, but you do need the right thickness. Steaks around one to one and a quarter inches thick cook more predictably and are far more forgiving than thin cuts.

Good everyday options include ribeye, strip steak, sirloin, or picanha. Whatever cut you choose, let it sit at room temperature for about 20 to 30 minutes before cooking. This helps it cook more evenly.

Pat the steak dry before seasoning. Moisture on the surface prevents proper browning

Season Simply and Early

Salt the steak generously on both sides. Pepper can be added now or later, depending on preference.

Salt does more than add flavor. It draws moisture to the surface, which then evaporates during cooking, allowing better browning. You don't need marinades or rubs here. Steak should taste like steak.

Heat the Pan Properly

Use a heavy pan, preferably cast iron or stainless steel. Heat it over medium-high until it's hot enough that oil shimmers immediately when added.

Add a small amount of oil with a high smoke point. Once the oil is hot, the steak goes in. It should sizzle immediately. If it doesn't, the pan isn't ready.

Sear First, Then Control the Cook

Lay the steak in the pan and leave it alone. Don’t move it, press it, or flip it repeatedly. Let a crust form.

For most steaks, this initial sear takes about two to three minutes per side. Once both sides are well browned, reduce the heat slightly or finish cooking depending on thickness.

If using butter, add it after the initial sear. Butter burns easily, but added later it brings richness and helps finish the steak without scorching.

Know When to Pull the Steak

This is where most people miss the mark. Steak should be pulled off the heat before it reaches its final doneness. Heat continues moving inward after cooking stops, raising the internal temperature during rest.

As a general guideline:

- Rare: pull around 115–116°F
- Medium-rare: pull around 118–119°F
- Medium: pull around 125°F

These temperatures account for carryover cooking during rest.

You don’t need to chase exact numbers forever, but using a thermometer while learning removes the guesswork.

Resting Is Part of Cooking

Once the steak comes off the heat, let it rest uncovered or loosely tented for five to ten minutes, depending on thickness.

Resting allows juices to redistribute and the internal temperature to settle. Cutting too early causes moisture loss and a dry texture, even if the steak was cooked correctly.

This step finishes the steak.

Slicing and Serving

Slice against the grain if serving sliced. If serving whole, cut only when ready to eat.

For meal prep, leave the steak whole until reheating whenever possible. Reheat gently and slice after. This preserves moisture and texture far better than slicing ahead of time.

Why This Matters for the Rest of the Book.

Steak highlights everything this section is trying to teach:

- Heat control
- Timing
- Carryover cooking
- Resting protein
- Using fat intentionally

Once you understand how steak behaves, cooking chicken, pork, and other proteins becomes more predictable. That’s why this method sits here, before the section on carryover cooking and resting protein.

separate steps that don't influence each other. In reality, the order things hit the pan plays a major role in how much flavor ends up in the final dish.

When protein is cooked first, especially meat, it releases fat and creates browned bits on the surface of the pan. That browning is not burned residue, it is concentrated flavor. Those bits are exactly what you want vegetables to come into contact with next.

Seasoning the protein before it goes into the pan matters just as much as the order. Salt and spices do more than flavor the meat itself. They season the fat that renders out during cooking. When vegetables are added later, they absorb that fat along with the seasoning already dissolved into it. This is why vegetables cooked in the same pan almost always taste better than vegetables cooked separately.

In most skillet meals, the best approach follows a simple sequence:

- Cook the protein until it is properly browned
- Remove it from the pan and set it aside
- Leave the pan as is, unless something has truly burned
- Adjust the heat if needed, then add the vegetables directly to the same pan
- Return the protein to the pan at the end to finish the dish

This sequence allows the protein to develop flavor without overcooking, while the vegetables pick up everything that was built in the pan before them.

There are times when a light deglaze makes sense, such as adding a splash of broth, wine, or cream to lift some of the browned bits. In other cases, leaving the pan dry and letting the vegetables pull flavor naturally works even better. The key point is that the pan itself is part of the recipe.

This method shows up repeatedly throughout the book because it saves time, builds flavor without extra ingredients, and produces meals that hold up well for leftovers and meal prep.

Sautéing and Roasting Vegetables: Choosing the Result You Want

Vegetables don't fail because they're boring. They fail because they're cooked without intention.

Sautéing and roasting are the two most common ways vegetables are cooked in this book, but they serve different purposes and produce very different results. Understanding when to sauté, when to roast, and how heat and fat change the outcome lets you decide what role the vegetables should play in the meal instead of hoping they turn out right.

This section walks through the primary sautéing methods first, then explains when roasting makes more sense and how the two techniques can work together.

Slow Sauté in Oil: Soft, Sweet, and Supportive

This method uses low to moderate heat and a neutral oil such as olive oil or avocado oil. Vegetables are added to a warm pan with oil and cooked slowly, usually for 8 to 15 minutes depending on the vegetable and how small it's cut.

The goal here is gentle softening, not browning. Moisture cooks off gradually, flavors mellow, and the vegetables become tender without developing much color.

What this produces:
Soft vegetables with mild sweetness that blend into a dish rather than stand out.

Best used for:
Sauces, casseroles, stews, soups, and any recipe where vegetables are meant to support the meal instead of competing with protein or seasoning.

Slow Sauté in Butter: Rich and Rounded

This method mirrors a slow oil sauté but uses butter as the primary fat and slightly lower heat to prevent burning. Butter brings milk solids into the pan, which deepen flavor and add richness.

Cook time is similar, generally 8 to 12 minutes, and vegetables should be stirred gently to avoid browning too quickly.

What this produces: Soft, rich vegetables with a fuller mouthfeel and more depth than oil alone provides.

Best used for: Comfort meals, cream-based dishes, steak sides, and recipes where richness matters more than brightness.

Medium-High Sauté: Golden Edges and Texture

Medium-high sautéing uses a fully preheated pan and oil rather than butter to handle the higher heat. Vegetables cook faster, usually in 4 to 7 minutes, and should be spread out so they make direct contact with the pan.

Stir only when necessary. Too much movement prevents browning.

What this produces: Vegetables with golden edges, firmer texture, and stronger flavor that holds up next to protein.

Best used for: Skillet meals, bowls, stir-fries, and dishes where vegetables need to contribute structure and flavor, not disappear into the background.

High-Heat Sauté or Light Char: Bold and Assertive

This method uses high heat, minimal fat, and short cook times, often 2 to 4 minutes. Vegetables are added to a very hot pan and cooked quickly with minimal stirring.

This is not about cooking vegetables through completely. It’s about surface browning and flavor intensity.

What this produces: Vegetables with slight char, deeper bitterness, and firm texture. They retain crunch and deliver strong flavor.

Best used for: Steak pairings, fajita-style dishes, bold sauces, and meals where vegetables need contrast and intensity.