Cooking with Trader Joe's® Cookbook

Your belly-busting, tushie-trimming, good carb guide to Trader Joe's

Lighten Up!

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Photographs by Dan Komoda
Chapter 2

Lighten Up for Life: A Daily Diet To End Dieting

Curb Cravings with Good Carbs and Lose Abdominal Fat

The best way to fight fat and ditch diets is to eat most of your daily calories from carbohydrates. This is not a fad; it’s science. However, not all carbohydrates are created equal. When you understand the difference between good carbs and bad carbs, you’re on your way to winning the weight battle for life.

Good Carbs Unveiled

When you eat good carbs, you’re filling yourself with fiber, phytochemicals, and (good) fats that are vital to your health. What does this mean for you?

- Good carbs give you energy. The body needs fuel, and carbohydrates are the right level of octane.
- Good carbs help you lose that muffin top and jelly belly. Studies show it, but the real proof is in doing it. If you snack on pretzels now, change them to edamame or fruit or hummus and vegetables. That’s an easy start, and you will see a difference in your waistline.
- Good carbs reduce cravings that trigger poor food choices and overeating. Eat good carbs and your cravings will subside as your body is filled with much-needed fiber, phytochemicals, and good fats.
- Good carbs keep us hydrated. Most fruits and vegetables in particular have a high water content. Water, in turn, fills our stomachs and keeps us from overeating. It also helps us feel more energetic and keeps everything in our intestinal tract moving along (and out)!
- Good carbs maintain a healthy acid-base balance in the body. The body likes to be more alkaline, and many of the foods we eat (high protein diets, refined carbs, caffeine) create a more acidic environment that leaves us prone to disease. Most fruits and vegetables and some grains, legumes, and nuts counteract that.

So which carbs are good? It’s a short general list, but the overall number and variety of foods in these food groups is extensive enough to offer even picky palates enough great foods.

- **Fruits.** There are no bad fruits. Most Americans eat far too few. (Avocados are the one fruit whose calories come primarily from fat and not carbohydrates. It is known as a “superfood” and should be part of the diet to provide good fats, but it is higher in calories than other fruits and should not be eaten freely.)
- **Vegetables.** There are no bad vegetables, either. Eat more, eat many!
- **Whole Grains.** The key word here is “whole,” because anything else is refined and not healthful. Consuming more whole grains provides vital micronutrients and fiber that many people are lacking. These grains also provide protein and small amounts of essential fats. And there are so many! Keep things interesting by going beyond brown rice and experiment with quinoa, millet, whole wheatberries, oats, barley, and amaranth.
- **Legumes.** Also known as beans but not limited to beans, these little gems offer the best source of fiber in the diet and complex carbohydrates as well as protein. Many Americans eat few to no legumes but should be incorporating them into daily meals. Why? Because the more fiber you eat, the more pounds you’ll shed in the long run. Whether canned, dried, or fresh, legumes added to your daily—or at least weekly—diet is beneficial, cheap and easy. Some of my top recommendations are edamame (young soy beans), lentils, black beans, chickpeas, cannellini beans (white kidney or great northern), fava beans, kidney beans, lima beans, black-eyed peas. If you encounter any other others you like, eat them!

- Good carbs prevent chronic disease. How many times have we all heard that fruits and vegetables help ward off disease? Apparently not enough, if our country’s weight problems are the gauge!
About the Recipes

Each recipe in this book contains ingredients that can be found at Trader Joe’s. While many of the ingredients are generic, ingredients that are capitalized are specific products found at Trader Joe’s.

Each recipe indicates the total time, which includes prep time and cooking time.

Each recipe contains nutritional data. Optional ingredients are not included when calculating nutritional data. Serving sizes follow FDA guidelines and my recommendations.

Each recipe contains indicators for recipes that are gluten-free, vegetarian, 2-Week Challenge.

Please note that the FDA has not established a standard to define the term gluten-free. Products at Trader Joe’s may be labeled “no gluten ingredients used” which does not necessarily exclude the chance of cross-contamination if it is produced in a facility that handles gluten products. Persons with celiac disease or severe gluten allergies should note that unless a product is labeled and tested gluten-free by standards such as ELISA and produced in a dedicated facility, there is possibility of cross-contamination.

Calorie-Dense Foods to Measure & Limit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food Group</th>
<th>Foods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fats/Oils</td>
<td>All oils and solid fats (butter, margarine)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meats</td>
<td>Red meats, processed meats including cold cuts, sausage, bacon, fried chicken and fish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dairy</td>
<td>All cheeses and creams, sour cream, whole milk dairy products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuts</td>
<td>All nuts and nut butters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruits</td>
<td>Avocados, dried fruits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetables</td>
<td>Mashed potatoes, any fried vegetables (including chips and French fries)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condiments, Sauces, Soups</td>
<td>Mayonnaise, cream sauces, gravies, creamy soups, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweets &amp; Alcohol</td>
<td>Wine, beer, hard alcohol &amp; liqueurs Ice cream, cakes, brownies, pies, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Pan-Fried Polenta with Warm Blueberries**

Polenta is a quick, delicious, low-calorie and often over-looked breakfast food. Polenta, or cornmeal mush as my Kentucky-born mother called it, is a satisfying way to start your day, and the sunny color will brighten your morning!

**Single serving**  
**Total time** 10 minutes

- 4 slices precooked Organic Polenta, ¼ inch thick
- ½ Tbsp unsalted butter or Earth’s Balance
- ½ cup frozen blueberries
- 1 Tbsp agave syrup (omit during 2-Week Challenge)
- 1 lemon

1. Rinse berries to thaw slightly and pour into a glass measuring cup. Add agave syrup and microwave on high for 1 minute.
2. In a medium-sized cast-iron skillet or frying pan, heat butter over medium heat just until it begins to bubble. Add polenta slices and lightly fry on each side until golden brown, about 3 or 4 minutes per side.
3. Place polenta on serving plate and pour berries on top. Add lemon zest as desired.

**Nutrition Snapshot**  
Per serving: 230 calories, 6.5g fat, 3.5g saturated fat, 2g protein, 42g carbs, 4g fiber, 310mg sodium
Anytime and "Free" Snacks

These snacks can fill you up, reduce cravings, and get you in the habit of snacking on low-calorie fruits and veggies. When you just need to munch, that’s where popcorn comes in!

- Papaya with fresh lemon juice and mint
- Watermelon
- Simply fruit salad
- Grape tomatoes, celery, baby carrots mix with 2 Tbsp guacamole or hummus
- ½ cup shelled edamame
- 3 cups popcorn
2-Week Challenge  200-calorie Snacks

- 1 organic apple plus 15 almonds
- 4 pieces Brown Rice Sushi
- “Better than PB &J Bagel” (½ whole wheat bagel with almond butter, blackberries and cinnamon)
- 3 Tbsp Avocado’s Number Guacamole (or homemade) plus 8 Reduced Guilt Woven Wheats Wafers (or Triscuits)
- 3 Tbsp Hummus (any) plus 10 multigrain tortilla chips, such as Veggie and Flaxseed Tortilla Chips
- 4 Tbsp Hummus or guacamole with 4 Woven Wheats Wafers plus carrots, celery, grape tomatoes, and/or cucumbers
- No-sugar-added, whole grain “allowed” crackers and chips:
  - Woven Wheats Wafers
  - Veggie and Flaxseed Tortilla Chips
  - Multigrain Tortilla Chips
- 100-calorie spreads/dips:
  - 4 Tbsp Avocado’s Number Guacamole
  - 4 Tbsp original hummus
  - 1 Tbsp peanut butter or almond butter (or other nut butters)
- Salsa is a “free” dip — just measure portion of chips if using them to dip.

Except Woven Wheats, mini bagel & baguette, ak-mak® crackers -- can substitute with rice crackers and rice cakes
Watercress Salad with Goat Cheese, Mango, and Honey-Lime Vinaigrette

The idea of this salad came to me while I was daydreaming about Provence and how much I love the goat cheese there. Two nutritional reasons to eat watercress salad are calcium and vitamin C. If you don’t have watercress, try mâche (lamb’s lettuce).

4 Servings
Total time 8 minutes

1 large bunch watercress
1 mango or 1 (12-oz) pkg sliced Fresh Mango
4 oz fresh goat cheese

1 Wash watercress well and put in shallow serving dish or spread onto salad plate.
2 Peel and cut mango into strips or chunks and distribute over watercress.
3 Crumble or cut 1 oz goat cheese onto each salad.
4 Drizzle Honey-Lime Vinaigrette (see below) on salad and serve immediately.

Honey-Lime Vinaigrette
1 Tbsp honey
Juice of 2 fresh limes
¼ cup olive oil
¼ tsp salt

1 Whisk together vinaigrette ingredients.

Nutrition Snapshot
Per serving: 250 calories, 20g fat, 6g saturated fat, 7g protein, 14g carbs, 1g fiber, 260mg sodium
Red and Green Salad — Roasted Beets, Pomegranate, Red Onion, and Basil

This mix of purple, red and green is both beautiful and bursting with nutrition. It’s a good example of how cheese can be enjoyed sparingly and mindfully. Of course, the salad is flavorful and even lower in fat and calories without it.

4 Servings
Total time 5 minutes

2 (6-oz) bags organic mixed greens
1 (8-oz) pkg refrigerated Steamed Beets
1 (5.6-oz) pkg refrigerated Pomegranate Seeds
⅓ cup sliced red onion
¼ cup chopped fresh basil
2 oz crumbled goat cheese (optional and omit during 2-Week Challenge)

1 Combine all salad ingredients in a large bowl and toss with Standard Dressing (p. 74) using white balsamic vinegar. Serve immediately.

Nutrition Snapshot
Per serving: 180 calories, 11g fat, 3g saturated fat, 6g protein, 18g carbs, 5g fiber, 240mg sodium
Quick Quesadillas

Thanks to these special whole grain tortillas, my kids and I often eat this nutritious, high-fiber lunch that is faster and healthier than any Tex-Mex drive-through.

**2 Servings**

**Total time** 10 minutes

- **4 Whole Grain Flour Tortillas with oats and flax**
- **Canola spray**
- **½ cup Traditional Style Fat-Free Refried Beans**
- **1 cup frozen Fire Roasted Bell Peppers and Onions**
- **½ cup (8 Tbsp) Fancy Shredded Lite Mexican Blend cheese**

2. In a small pan, heat refried beans with peppers and onions until warm and beans are not thick and pasty. Peppers and onions should no longer be frozen.
3. Spoon half the bean and pepper mixture onto the tortilla.
4. Sprinkle 4 Tbsp cheese on top then place a second tortilla on top.
5. Turn heat up to medium and let cook 1 minute. Flip tortilla and cook 1 to 2 more minutes.
6. Remove from pan and repeat steps for second quesadilla.

**Serving Suggestion**  Serve quesadillas with salsa, fat-free sour cream, or 1 Tbsp guacamole or avocado slices.

**Nutrition Snapshot**

Per quesadilla: 410 calories, 10g fat, 3g saturated fat, 21g protein, 65g carbs, 14g fiber, 700mg sodium

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Use brown rice tortilla
Best-Loved Chicken Balsamico

This balsamic-infused chicken has become a family favorite not only my family but for many of my friends’ families too. It’s always a crowd-pleaser, most likely because it’s simplicity at its best! Leftover chicken makes a great cold sandwich or salad addition the next day.

My gourmet tip: Add shiitake (or other mushrooms) to the chicken for even tastier results!

4 Servings
Total time 20-25 minutes

4 (4 oz each) skinless, boneless chicken breasts
3 Tbsp olive oil
2 cloves garlic, minced
2 or 3 shallots, chopped
2/3 cup low sodium chicken broth
1/3 cup balsamic vinegar
½ tsp salt
Black pepper to taste

1 Heat oil in large frying pan on medium-high heat. Add chicken and brown on both sides.
2 Add garlic and shallots and cook until soft/tender.
3 Add broth, balsamic vinegar, and salt. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer uncovered 15 minutes or until liquid reduces and becomes thick and syrupy.
4 Season with pepper. Remove from heat and serve.

Note Chicken breasts vary in weight and size. Weigh them to get an idea of portion, or divide the weight on the package by the number of breasts. Each breast should weigh no more than 4 ounces, otherwise cut each in half.

Menu Suggestion Serve with Standby Green Salad (p. 74), Cumin Carrots (p. 176) and Sizzling Spuds with Sage (p. 187). Other great sides are asparagus, Brussels sprouts, or baby broccoli and brown rice or jasmine rice.

Nutrition Snapshot
Per serving: 190 calories, 9g fat, 1g saturated fat, 23g protein, 3g carbs, 0g fiber, 600mg sodium

Choose gluten-free broth
Trini Chicken

I adapted this recipe from my sister-in-law who comes from Trinidad. She’s a great cook, and the combination of flavors makes a savory, vitamin-rich sauce that is served best over quinoa to soak up the flavorful liquid.

4 Servings
Total time 40 minutes (after marinating)

4 (4 oz) chicken breasts, rinsed and patted dry
4-5 cloves of garlic, minced
2 tsp finely chopped fresh ginger
2 Tbsp reduced sodium soy sauce
1 small onion, peeled and chopped
1 tsp each, dried thyme, basil, chive and oregano (2 Tbsp chopped fresh can be used for any)
3 Tbsp olive oil, divided
2 Tbsp brown sugar (omit during 2-Week Challenge)
2 medium tomatoes, chopped
1 sweet/bell pepper, chopped

1. Combine garlic, ginger, soy sauce, onion, herbs, and 2 Tbsp oil in a dish.
2. Add chicken and cover with marinade. Cover and let marinate for an hour — or all day if made early in the day or overnight.
3. Heat remaining 1 Tbsp oil in heavy pot on medium heat. Before oil gets hot, add sugar. As it heats, sugar will begin to melt and bubble. At this point, lower heat a bit. Do not allow sugar to get very dark brown or burn.
4. Quickly and carefully, add chicken and marinade to bubbly, brown melted sugar.
5. Cover pot for a minute, then uncover again and stir pieces until all are browned in pot. Cover again. Turn back up heat to medium.
6. Turn pieces every now and again, allowing liquid to evaporate partially, but not completely, about 15 minutes. If drying out, add about ½-1 cup of water. Chicken should be cooked until tender, 30 minutes total.
7. During the last 10 minutes of cooking, add tomatoes and bell peppers.

Note The only reason this is not a 2-Week Challenge recipe is the brown sugar. When I say no added sugar, I mean it! If you leave out the brown sugar, it’s allowed.

Menu Suggestion Quinoa, Great Green Beans (p. 179) or Cumin Carrots (p. 176), Standby Green salad (p. 74)

Nutrition Snapshot Per serving: 200 calories, 8g fat, 3g saturated fat, 26g protein, 7g carbs, 3g fiber, 440mg sodium

Use tamari instead of soy sauce
Summery Quinoa

If you’ve never tried quinoa, this is the dish I use to get people turned on to it. There’s so much goodness in this quick, light, and savory side dish. Quinoa is a complete protein, like eggs and meat, but also gives you the added benefits of fiber, complex carbs, and lots of minerals, including iron, calcium, potassium, magnesium, and zinc. No wonder this ancient grain has staying power!

6 Servings
Total time 15 minutes

1 cup uncooked quinoa
½ cup shelled edamame (fresh or frozen)
1 ½ cups chopped carrots (about 2 carrots)
1 cup chopped red bell pepper
¼ cup fresh mint, chopped
1 large lemon
3 Tbsp olive oil
½ tsp salt

1 Rinse quinoa with cold water and cook quinoa according to instructions (12 minutes cooking once water boils). When done, transfer to serving bowl.
2 If using frozen edamame, microwave it for 1½ minutes on high power to thaw.
3 Add all vegetables and mint to quinoa and toss.
4 Squeeze lemon over quinoa using a small strainer to catch seeds.
5 Pour on olive oil, add salt, and toss well. Serve and enjoy!

Nutrition Snapshot
Per 1 cup serving: 250 calories, 10g fat, 1g saturated fat, 7g protein, 33g carbs, 5g fiber, 220mg sodium
Great Green Beans

Green beans are a common vegetable that kids seem to like, but they aren’t a nutrition commoner. They are high in folate and other vitamins, fiber, and phytochemicals, and they’re not a vegetable that people tend to dislike! In other words — serve them often, and they will be eaten.

4 Servings
Total time 15 minutes

1 lb fresh or frozen green beans (or haricot verts)
2 Tbsp olive oil
2 cloves garlic, peeled and chopped
2 cups chopped celery (2 or 3 stalks)
¼ tsp salt
¼ tsp pepper

1 Heat olive oil in a large pan over medium heat and add garlic. Cook 1 minute, making sure garlic does not get browned.
2 Add celery and stir around pan to cook about 1 or 2 minutes.
3 Add green beans, salt, and pepper, stir and then cover. Let cook 6-7 minutes.

Nutrition Snapshot
Per serving: 100 calories, 7g fat, 1g saturated fat, 2g protein, 9g carbs, 4g fiber, 320mg sodium
Romaine Leaves with Langostino Salad

Langostino salad served on romaine leaves is a must-have at your next party or get together. You can make the “little lobster” salad ahead of time and refrigerate for several hours or overnight. The mayonnaise coating ends up being very subtle and light, and the overall result is a guilt-free appetizer you’ll love and love serving to guests.

16 Servings
Total time 15 minutes (excluding refrigeration)

1 (8-oz) pkg frozen langostino tails, thawed
½ cup frozen roasted corn, thawed
1 lemon
¼ cup chopped fresh parsley
2 Tbsp chopped fresh chives
1 Tbsp Wasabi Mayo
1 Tbsp mayonnaise
¼ tsp salt
Pepper to taste
1 head Romaine lettuce hearts

1 Combine langostino tails and corn in a bowl and squeeze lemon over them, using a mesh strainer to catch seeds.

2 Add herbs, both mayos, salt, and pepper. Stir to combine well. Cover and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes before serving.

3 Cut each lettuce piece into 2 or 3 pieces and scoop 1 Tbsp langostino salad onto each Romaine lettuce wedge.

Nutrition Snapshot
Per salad wedge: 40 calories, 1.5g sat, 0.5g saturated fat, 4g protein, 2g carbs, 0.5g fiber, 110mg sodium
Lemon Blueberry Yogurt Pie

Lemons and blueberries are a match made in heaven, creating a palate-pleasing result. You can feel good about all the berries you’re getting if you need to justify this sweet indulgence. For non-bakers, this recipe is about as easy as pie-baking gets, and you’re sure to impress family and friends with virtually no effort.

Servings
Total time 35 minutes

1 frozen pie crust, thawed
1 ½ cups Greek yogurt, non-fat or 2-percent
4 Tbsp Lemon Curd
1 ½ (12-oz) bags frozen wild blueberries, thawed

1 Preheat oven to 400°F.
2 Place crust in 9-inch pie pan according to instructions and bake crust 6 minutes.
3 While crust is pre-baking, stir together yogurt, blueberries and lemon curd in a bowl until well blended.
4 Spoon berry mixture into crust and bake for 25 minutes (until crust is browned and filling starts to crack).
5 Let cool completely before serving.

Nutrition Snapshot
Per serving: 295 calories, 14g fat, 8g saturated fat, 6g protein, 37g carbs, 5g fiber, 65mg sodium
Blend It, Baby Frozen Yogurt

Super-fast, super-easy, super-thick-and-creamy good! It honestly doesn’t get easier or faster than this duo that makes a delicious and healthy dessert or snack any time of year. It’s not quite a smoothie and not quite a frozen treat, since it is meant to be consumed immediately.

2 Servings
Total time 3 minutes

1 cup frozen mango chunks (or other frozen fruit, such as strawberries, blueberries or banana)
6 oz vanilla yogurt
Fresh mint and strawberries (optional)

1. Pour mango and yogurt into a blender and blend until smooth.
2. Pour into a bowl, top with fresh mint and a strawberry. Serve immediately.

Nutrition Snapshot
Per serving: 140 calories, 0g fat, 0g saturated fat, 4g protein, 30g carbs, 2g fiber, 60mg sodium