

# Recipes To Rescue A Tired Home Cook

**BY ELLISE PIERCE**  
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PARIS — The funny thing about being a food writer and cookbook author is that people think since I'm in the kitchen all day long, dinner must be a snap. Right.

Thing is, I'm not always in the kitchen. And when I am, I may be testing appetizers or desserts all day long for something I'm working on. That doesn't get me any closer to dinner than I would be if I worked in an office. In fact, I'm at a greater disadvantage because when my day is over, the last thing I want to do is cook.

But I can't just untie my apron and dash out to dinner any old time I decide I'm tired of being in the kitchen. It's expensive, for one thing, and going out also requires that an effort be made to spruce up one's appearance — because let me tell you, it's not all Food Network gloss and shine in my cramped little kitchen, and I usually emerge at the end of the day looking like I've been to war with the oven (which I usually have, and I have the burn scars to prove it). I'm also likely to be decorated with bits of whatever I've been cooking.

All of that's to say that just like you, I'm wiped out at the end of the day, and I'm usually trying to figure out what I can make for dinner that will minimize my kitchen time.

I have some super-easy, go-to meals — avocado smashed on toast with a drizzle of pistachio or hazelnut oil; scrambled eggs and chevre in a tortilla, splashed with Valentina sauce; a heap of baby spinach or arugula topped with a poached egg and Parmesan — but even these get a bit boring after a while.

This year, I'm trying to mix it up. Make something new, something different, even when I'm tired and I just want to take off my cowgirl boots and sit in front of the TV and watch Downton Abbey reruns.

These recipes, fortunately, do not require the sort of time that will put off marathon Maggie Smith viewing, if you're like me and cannot watch just one. And no servants required, either. Less than a half-hour, almost all of these, from start to finish.

Dum dum dum dum dum ... I can hear the open now.

### RED QUINOA, CANNELLINI BEANS AND CAULIFLOWER WITH ARUGULA PESTO

Makes 4 servings  
1 small head of cauliflower, florets removed  
About 2 tablespoons olive oil  
Sea salt and pepper  
1 cup red quinoa  
Handful of wild arugula  
1 cup (9.25 ounces) cannellini beans, drained and rinsed  
For arugula pesto:  
1 clove garlic, minced  
4.5 ounces wild arugula  
1/3 cup walnuts, toasted  
1/4 cup olive oil  
Sea salt and pepper  
1. Preheat oven to broil and line a cookie sheet with parchment paper or foil. Put cauliflower florets onto cookie sheet, add olive oil, salt and pepper, and toss. Place in oven and cook until florets begin to brown, about 15 minutes, then flip them and brown other sides, about 10 more minutes. Remove from the oven and let cool.

2. Cook quinoa: Put 2 cups of salted water onto boil, then add quinoa, stir, cover, and reduce heat to a simmer. Let cook for 10 minutes, then turn off heat and let quinoa absorb the rest of the water. Let cool.

3. Make arugula pesto: Put garlic, arugula, walnuts, olive oil, salt and pepper in a food processor and pulse till combined.

4. To assemble the salad, put quinoa in a large bowl and add handful of arugula, beans, roasted cauliflower and a tablespoon or two of pesto. Toss and serve.

Cowgirl tip: Toss roasted veggies with leftover arugula pesto, or use it as a sandwich spread or whisked into vinaigrette. Pasta works, too.

### SPINACH STRACCIATELLA SOUP

Makes 2 to 4 servings  
4 cups/1 quart vegetable or chicken stock  
2 cups water  
Sea salt and pepper  
4.5 ounces baby spinach  
1/4 cup grated Parmesan, plus more for serving  
2 eggs, lightly beaten  
Warm stock and water over medium-high heat, with salt and pepper to taste. When it comes to a simmer, add spinach and Parmesan and let cook until the spinach wilts, 5 to 10 minutes. Slowly add beaten eggs, briskly stirring so they'll be streaky throughout and not cook in clumps. Taste for seasonings and serve right away with more Parmesan.

### CHOPPED STEAKS WITH GRILLED RADICCHIO

Makes 2 servings

1 clove garlic, minced  
1 teaspoon grainy mustard  
2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar  
Sea salt and pepper  
4 to 5 tablespoons olive oil  
1 tablespoon vegetable oil  
2 chopped steaks, at room temperature  
1 to 2 heads of radicchio (depending on the size; I used 1), cut into fourths  
About 2 ounces Roquefort, crumbled

1. Make the vinaigrette: Put garlic, mustard and vinegar in a jam jar along with a pinch of sea salt and pepper, and give it a shake. After 5 to 10 minutes, add olive oil and shake again. Taste.

2. Put vegetable oil in a cast-iron skillet, making sure it's evenly coated, and turn the heat to high. Salt and pepper the steaks, then add them to the skillet and cook 2 to 3 minutes each side, depending on how done you like them. Remove steaks and cover with foil.

3. Wipe out the skillet with a paper towel and add a tiny bit of

olive oil — just enough to moisten the bottom. Turn the heat to medium-high. Add radicchio wedges and cook for about 30 seconds on each side.

4. Put the radicchio on two plates and top with steaks. Drizzle with vinaigrette and sprinkle with Roquefort.

### CHICKEN TINGA TACOS

Makes 4 to 6 servings  
1 pound chicken tenders  
1 celery stalk, halved  
1 carrot, halved  
A couple sprigs of parsley  
About 10 peppercorns  
Olive oil  
1/2 of an onion, diced  
3 to 4 cloves garlic, minced  
2 chipotles in adobo, finely chopped  
2/3 cup canned corn, rinsed and drained  
1 cup canned black beans, rinsed and drained  
1 (14.5-ounce) can diced fire-roasted tomatoes  
Sea salt and pepper (if needed)  
6 to 8 tortillas (corn or flour)

1 avocado, chopped  
Handful of chopped cilantro  
3 to 4 tablespoons goat cheese, crumbled  
2 to 3 limes, cut into wedges  
1. Poach chicken tenders: Put chicken, celery, carrot, parsley and peppercorns in a saucepan. Cover with water, put on the stove over medium-high heat, and cover. When it boils, reduce heat to a simmer and set the timer for 10 minutes. Let the chicken cool in the pot if you have time; if you don't, shred chicken and proceed to the next step.

2. Drizzle a little olive oil in a large skillet, add onion and garlic and turn heat to medium-low. Cook just until the onion is translucent, about 5 to 10 minutes. Add chipotles, corn and black beans and stir. Add shredded chicken and let mixture cook 10 to 15 minutes. Add tomatoes and let it go for 5 minutes more. Taste and add seasonings if necessary. Serve on warmed tortillas with avocado, cilantro, goat cheese and limes.



ELLISE PIERCE/FORT WORTH STAR-TELEGRAM/MCT  
**Chopped steaks with grilled radicchio is a quick dinner recipe.**

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