

Tasty Healthy Easy LCHF

Kosher Low-Carb Cooking for Beginners

Dina David

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WHY DID I WRITE THIS COOKBOOK?

Yet another cookbook? Why?

When I first tell people about LCHF, Low Carb High (Healthy) Fat, a lot of them, even experienced cooks, get confused. Many times I hear, “how do I make schnitzel without bread crumbs,” or “what should I eat for breakfast if I can’t have cornflakes?” This cookbook is for them.

Then there are those who very much would like to cook healthy but think it takes a lot of time; or maybe they feel they don’t know what truly healthy is. This cookbook is for them too.

And then there are those who just don’t know how to cook at all. This cookbook is for all those as well.

And it is also for those to whom kosher cooking is important; there are many “low carb” recipes available elsewhere, but mostly they are not kosher.

So whatever your reason, “Tasty, Healthy, Easy LCHF: Kosher Low-Carb Cooking for Beginners” will try to encompass most of the above.

Enjoy!

And a bonus: All LCHF recipes are automatically kosher for Passover!



THANKS

A lot of people have encouraged me and helped me to write this cookbook - from my kids to total strangers - and I'm very happy, and lucky, to have this army of support. Thank you all!

But there are two persons, in particular, who I would like to point out: my sister, Ewa, whose ideas, more than once, have made me think of new routes and possibilities. Thank you, Sis!

And last, but definitely not least, my dear best ever partner in life, Yossi, who stands sometimes beside me, sometimes behind me, and who always supports and encourages me and my sometimes crazy ideas. In general and specifically, he is my best friend, thinking partner, and the best thing that ever happened to me. I love you!



MY STORY

I was born and raised in Stockholm, Sweden, and I've been interested in nutrition for as long as I can remember. I took a few courses on the subject at Uppsala University, and I have always enjoyed cooking, baking, and especially, innovating in the kitchen.

After moving to Israel in 1985, I worked in a variety of fields, ranging from hotels to high-tech, until I decided to become a professional pastry chef. My dream was to open my own café and serve authentic Swedish specialties. During that time, since 1985, I also got married, gave birth to a couple of kids, and found, like most women, that I had managed to gain a few extra kilos along the way.

Naturally, with my knowledge of nutrition and cooking, I thought I knew about sensible eating and how to lose weight. So I ate "healthy-whole-grains," "fruit-'n-vegetables," and "low-fat-everything." I also drank plenty of water, exercised on and off, and, mostly, I felt well. But I didn't shed those extra kilos. And my doctor started urging me to pay attention to my cholesterol and blood sugar levels.

Then, by chance, I came across information about the LCHF diet. It sounded too good to be true. The Swedish LCHF lifestyle would allow me to eat butter and brie without counting calories, and even have a piece of chocolate and drink a glass of wine from time to time, as long as I gave up bread, pasta, and potatoes.

Being the curious person I am, I began researching the concept and its basis. Very quickly, I discovered that this nutritional approach is remarkably well-grounded, evolutionarily and biochemically, and it overturned every “fact” that I had grown up believing! I was thrilled to eat tasty foods that I love, and it didn’t take long before I noticed that I was also feeling much better and more energetic than I had in a long time. Thus, I began my personal health revolution and my new professional direction.

Since then, I have been fully involved in the LCHF lifestyle, helping others to regain their optimum health and weight. I also went to Sweden to study and became an LCHF nutritionist.

I decided to write this cookbook when I saw the many beginners’ questions about LCHF cooking. I hope this book will guide you when starting the LCHF journey to live a truly healthy and tasty life, as well as inspire you to create your own LCHF recipes.

For your convenience I’ve added a section with links if you want to read more about LCHF, on page 21. You are also welcome to contact me with any questions.

Dina David
www.lCHF-israel.co.il



WHAT IS LCHF? DIET OR LIFESTYLE?

LCHF is the Swedish-English abbreviation of a grass roots movement that started in Sweden at the turn of the century. The abbreviation itself means “low carb high fat” (although some would like to change it to “low carb *healthy* fat”). It is based on the evolution of humankind and our bodies’ biochemistry - in short, what our bodies are designed to eat. LCHF has the same basics as the Paleo and Atkin’s diets but advocates a more holistic and realistic approach.

What happened? Why Sweden? Here’s the story. Just before the beginning of the new millennium, regular people in Sweden, with various health problems, started to read up about evolution, nutrition, and the body’s biochemistry and started to put it all together. Until then, they had followed all the health advice presented to them by their physicians and dietitians, in vain. They didn’t get healthier; quite the contrary. With the help of the internet, they started researching and educating themselves and soon realized that today’s official health advice is based on false research and monetary interests rather than scientific evidence.

Forums started, books were written, and lectures were held, all explaining LCHF. More and more people understood that if they want to be healthy, they had to change the way they thought about food and nutrition and start eating food that the body knows how to handle.

Switching to LCHF has helped many people stabilize their blood sugar levels, blood pressure, and hormonal balance, get better sleep, oral health, and gut health, get rid of acid reflux and heartburn, get rid of joint pain, lose their sugar cravings, and much more, and, as a bonus, they stabilize their weight to its optimal level.

But LCHF is not only a diet. It is about more than what you should or shouldn't eat; it uses a holistic approach and also takes into account ecological aspects. Our health is about more than just the food we eat. LCHF also looks at our health and activity levels, our daily life and stress, our genes, and what we can tolerate. It advocates using locally grown produce and grass-fed meat to help our planet.

Even if you can't afford to buy all organic, as soon as you understand what modern food does to your body and health, and you decide to change your food options to better ones - those that your body is designed to process - you will start to feel the benefits of LCHF. And you won't regret it.

In 2008, LCHF was approved by the Swedish health authorities (*Socialstyrelsen*) as one of the accepted treatments for diabetes and overweight.

In 2013, the Swedish governmental report (*SBU*) concluded, after researching 16,000 studies from all over the world, that: 1) low carbohydrate diets are best for weight loss and blood sugar stability, and 2) there is no evidence that saturated fat causes cardiovascular disease.

WHY SHOULD I EAT LCHF?

About 2.5 million years ago, the first humans started to abandon the rainforests in deepest Africa and walked out onto the savanna. With the change of habitat, a change in human metabolism also began; from formerly eating mostly plants, humans started to hunt. That required a transformation of the human anatomy and digestive biochemistry. Our large intestine regressed, and our enzymes changed to better break down foods from animal sources. That process took hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of years.

Fast forward till today! Modern processed foods have been around for only 100-200 years. Some have been around for even less, maybe only 50 years. But we eat them as if there are no alternatives. What does that do to our bodies? Unfortunately, our digestive system hasn't had time to develop accordingly, and we get sick.

The occurrence of many modern Western diseases, such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, cancer, IBS, thyroid problems, and celiac disease, has skyrocketed in recent decades, and, in their wake - an obesity epidemic has erupted. If you ask different experts, they point to different causes, each according to their expertise, whether it is refined sugar, modern wheat, or too much stress. But if you look at the big picture, as in LCHF, you see that they have one thing in common - modern foods.

Our bodies need energy (“fuel”) to keep us going and to keep us warm, as well as raw materials (“building blocks”) to grow and repair tissues and to fight infections and harmful microbes. Eating according to LCHF gives your body the food for which it was designed.



What's in our food?

We can define and categorize our food in different ways. First, we can consider if a particular food is for energy (“fuel”) or for nutrition (“building blocks”), then we can see what type of nutrition (macronutrients and micronutrients) it has. Some foods are good for all purposes; others are good only for one or a few.

The macronutrients are divided into carbohydrates, proteins, and fats, whereas the micronutrients are vitamins and minerals.

What do our bodies use? For fuel, the body can use either sugar or fat. (It can also use protein in certain circumstances but tries to avoid it.) The building blocks come from proteins and fats. Vitamins and minerals are used as the tools for putting the building blocks together.

Proteins are found in both animal and plant-based foods; however, humans digest and absorb the animal proteins better than those from plants. This is due to the different enzymes and other biochemical processes that have developed throughout two million years of evolution. There are even some important nutrients we can get only from animals.

Fats are also found in both animal and plant-based foods. There are different types of fats – saturated, monounsaturated, and polyunsaturated – and we humans need them all. (Yes, the big scare

of saturated fats was based on false research and has now finally started to be debunked.)

Carbohydrates, on the other hand, can be found almost only in plant-based foods. (The exception is eggs and dairy products, which count as animal-based foods, and where small amounts of carbohydrates can be found.) Carbohydrate is the general chemical name for what we in everyday life call “sugar,” “starch,” and “fiber.”

Of course, it is not bad per se to eat carbohydrates; the problem occurs when we eat too much and from the wrong sources. The reason for this is the way carbohydrates are digested and how that process impacts our bodies.

Vitamins and **minerals** can be found in both animal and plant-based foods, although in general there are more in animal-based foods. The body's uptake is also easier from animal-based foods.



What do I eat on LCHF? What do I not eat?

In LCHF, there's a generic base that suits more or less everybody; then there are the modifications each person has to make according to their personal needs and lifestyle. Hence, an athlete can eat more carbohydrates on average than a person with diabetes; or a person with sugar addiction might need to avoid some foods that others can eat with no problem. Below are some basic rules. (For more customized options, please consult an LCHF nutritionist.)

You could say that the rule of thumb should be: choose foods with only one ingredient, and avoid anything that has “diet” or “light” printed on the package.

Meat, fish, poultry, and eggs: leave the skin on the chicken and the fat on the meat; use fatty fish like salmon, mackerel, and herring, and don't worry about the amount of eggs you eat. Avoid processed meats, if possible, and choose grass-fed and ecological when available and your budget allows it.

Vegetables: you can eat most vegetables that grow above ground: salad vegetables like tomatoes and cucumbers, of course, but also the cabbage family, and leafy greens. Some non-starchy root vegetables

like onions, radishes, kohlrabi, etc. are good options too. Choose local, organically grown produce as much as you can.

Dairy: choose full-fat options: fatty cheeses, and high-fat yoghurts and creams.

Fats: choose the natural ones like butter, coconut oil, tallow, and *schmaltz*. Olive oil is also good if used cold.

Fruits & nuts: most fruits of today contain more water and sugar than anything else, so eat them in moderation and preferably only eat fruit in season. Berries are usually a better choice. Nuts are okay as small snacks but shouldn't be overeaten either, due to their high omega-6 content.

Avoid always: sugar, wheat, margarine (a chemically processed non-food) and any foods that contain these ingredients! Other grains, plant oils (hydrogenated, partly hardened etc.), and artificial sweeteners should also be avoided as much as possible.

Remember that processed foods, even those with "no sugar added" stamped on the package, contain a lot of carbohydrates. Here are some common names you can find for different types of sugar: demerara sugar, brown sugar, muscado sugar, maple syrup, agave, fructose, sacharos, dextrose, corn syrup, HFCS, invert sugar, glucose, glucose syrup, maltodextrin, honey, malt, malt sugar, manitol, sorbitol, molasses, potato starch, rice starch, corn starch, rice syrup, to name just a few. Also remember that artificial sweeteners are equally bad, as the brain perceives them as sugar in all ways and hence reacts as if they were real sugar.

If you are diabetic, pre-diabetic, or overweight, then starches should also be avoided.

Other health issues may require different food options.

Beverages: best is to drink water, but tea and coffee are also okay.

Alcohol: (unless you have a problem with alcohol and need to stay away from it) dry wines and distilled spirits are okay in moderation but can stall weight loss.

Sweets & candy: should be avoided as they mostly contain sugar and artificial coloring; chocolate with high cocoa percentage can be eaten as a treat every now and then.

How much should I eat? When should I eat?

The best rule is to eat when you're hungry and stop when you're not. However, with today's hectic lifestyle, some meals are more time-fixed than others. Two to three full meals a day is optimal. And no, you don't "have to" eat breakfast, nor do you "have to have" two to three snacks in between meals. If you eat enough protein and fat during your meal, it will take you without problems to the next.

As to how much to eat, if your hunger-satiety signals aren't working properly, this could be of help: on your plate, put a protein (preferably from animal source), about the size of your stretched out palm including your fingers, add a nice amount of some fatty sauce, and about a handful of vegetables. If you see that it's not enough to satisfy your hunger, add some more protein and fat.

► You might not feel the same "stuffed full" feeling as before but a more mild "not hungry" feeling.

LCHF FOR VEGETARIANS

As mentioned previously, our bodies need both fuel and building blocks, and some of these building blocks are found only in animal products. So what does a vegetarian, who wants to eat LCHF, do? Well, if you eat a lacto-ovo-vegetarian diet, there's usually no problem as you will receive the animal proteins from the eggs and the dairy.

However, if you are a vegan, you'll have to carefully monitor your vitamins and minerals and probably need to supplement them. You will, of course, need to eat more carbohydrates than on a normal LCHF diet, so it is important to choose starchy vegetables (e.g. sweet potatoes), over grains. And you should definitely avoid whole grains as they will inhibit mineral and vitamin uptake in the gut. It is also important to soak, sprout, and even ferment and cook legumes and beans, to destroy as much as possible the phytic acid and harmful proteins like lectin.



DO YOU WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT LCHF?

This is a cookbook, so I've mentioned only the very basics about LCHF; but you might have a lot of questions, so here are some links to more information. You can also contact me or another LCHF nutritionist for consultation.

www.lCHF-israel.co.il/en/

www.dietdoctor.com

www.eatingacademy.com

www.drbriffa.com

www.wheatbellyblog.com

USEFUL KITCHEN TOOLS

Cooking can be quite simple and doesn't need a lot of special tools. Basically, it's enough with a few bowls and pots in different sizes, a sturdy pan, one or two cutting boards, some wooden spoons for stirring, and some good knives. But there is a tool or two that can make cooking both faster and easier, especially if you're constantly in a hurry: the slow cooker and the stick blender.

The **slow cooker** is genius; you put all the ingredients in it in before heading out in the morning, turn it on, and when you get back home in the evening, food's ready. Can it be simpler? And you can even prepare the ingredients the evening before, to save time.

The **stick blender** will help you mush almost anything, thicken soups, and also make instant mayonnaise.

If you have the space in the kitchen and the budget, a food processor can be quite handy if, for example, you want to grind almonds yourself (much cheaper than buying ground almonds).

About the microwave - a good invention, but is it safe? So far I haven't seen any convincing research either way, whether it is harmless or harmful. Do you already have one? Does it help you in your daily life? Then maybe you don't have to throw it out. But if you don't have one, there are other ways to heat a meal, even pretty fast, and you might not need to get one.

INGREDIENTS

Cooking LCHF will require some substitutes for common ingredients, but it really is quite simple. Here are some suggestions:

Sugar and sweeteners

First let me tell you that very quickly after starting LCHF, you'll find that you won't need as much sweet as before. Your taste buds will start to detect the natural subtle sweet flavors in different foods as well as other flavors too. Quite nice!

However, if you want something sweet, like in a cake, you will need to think about what your body can tolerate. Are you diabetic? Avoid glucose. Do you have a sugar addiction? Avoid any sweet at all! Do you have fatty liver problems? Avoid fructose. And so on. In my recipes I have decided to write "sweetener" and, by this, I mean that you have to choose the sweetener that suits your situation. Preferably use a natural sweetener like honey, and try to avoid the artificial ones. The same goes for other recipes you want to convert to LCHF: choose the sweetener that suits your health and goals, and use as little as possible.

- ▶ Agave syrup may be all natural but it is 100% fructose, and as such, a disaster for your liver. You are better off using honey, date syrup, apple sauce, a mashed banana, etc. as they have a mix of glucose and fructose. Even if you are diabetic!

Remember that the brain believes that any sweet flavor is “sugar” and hence will start the same biochemical processes in your body, regardless of whether you’re eating white sugar, raw honey, or an artificial sweetener. This is especially important to consider for diabetics and sugar addicts.

- ▶ Tip: mixing cinnamon and vanilla gives a mild sweet flavor suitable for cheesecakes or cookies.

Flour and thickeners

All wheat and grains should be avoided because of their harmful proteins. Potato starch doesn’t have those but is very high in carbohydrates, so use it sparingly. The best is to use other options; here are a few:

Psyllium husk is the husk of a herb. When it becomes wet, it swells and becomes a soft gel. It can be used for pancakes or to soak up liquids (e.g. in a vegetable casserole dish).

You can use **egg yolks** or **cream** (dairy or coconut) to thicken sauces. To thicken soups, use the stick blender; “blenderize” all or only part of the soup depending on how thick you want it.

Coconut flour is the ground dried fibers left after squeezing out the oil from coconuts. (Note that it’s not shredded coconut which is another product, still with its fat content.) The coconut flour is highly absorbent and can be used in breads and cakes. You need very little

to substitute for regular flour, maybe one quarter or so.

Nut flours can also be used to stabilize cakes, but they are not absorbent. They are great when making cookies.

For “**breadding**,” I sometimes use “**Fibrex**” which is the brand name of a Swedish product - ground dried fibers left from sugar beets after extracting the sugar. I have found the same product under the same name in Israel and hopefully you can find the same or a similar product in a store near you. But don’t worry if you don’t find it. You can also use shredded coconut or nut flours instead of bread crumbs, or crumbled *grebnitz* (recipe on page 72).

Some simple substitutes for common recipes

Here are some examples on how you can convert regular recipes to LCHF.

British shepherd’s pie: use mashed cauliflower (recipe on page 84) instead of mashed potatoes.

Schnitzel: cover the chicken breast or veal with chopped nuts, sesame seeds, ground coconut flakes, or crumbled grebnitz, instead of bread crumbs.

French fries: cut kohlrabi or white radish in sticks and fry.

Spaghetti: cook cabbage or zucchini strips for one minute in slightly salted water and drain.

Some tips and notes about the recipes before you begin

- ▶ Read through the recipe before you begin; preheat the oven and put all the ingredients on the counter for your convenience and to save time.
- ▶ I use a lot of ground almonds. You can buy ready-made almond flour in health food stores, but it is generally cheaper

to make your own at home using a food processor. Peeling the almonds first before grinding is a matter of taste; some prefer the lighter color of blanched almonds, others don't like the texture of the ground skins, and yet others can't be bothered with the peeling. Personally, as I use quite a lot of ground almonds, I decided to peel them only when I make special cakes that need the lighter color.

- ▶ I always use cream with as high a fat percentage as possible. The same goes for cream cheese and other dairy products, the higher the fat percentage, the better. I try to get butter from grass-fed cows to get a better omega-3/omega-6 balance. Usually, I prefer unsalted butter, so I can add the salt myself according to taste and what I'm making.
- ▶ Unless otherwise stated, I use size L eggs (approximately 60 grams; this differs a bit between countries).
- ▶ As I grew up in Sweden, I always use the metric system. In cooking, you don't really need to be exact on measurements. Baking, on the other hand, can be a bit trickier, and measurements need to be more exact. However, the larger the batch you're making, the less exact the measurements have to be. (I usually cook and bake by eye, but when writing a cookbook one should be more specific. I'll try!)
- ▶ For liquids, I use **milliliters (ml)** as I found that "a cup" varies greatly between countries; a US cup = 236 ml, a UK cup = 250 ml, and apparently a Japanese cup = 200 ml! For weights, I use **grams (g)**. I will also use the terms **teaspoon (tsp)** and **tablespoon (tbsp)**. Even though these two measures also vary somewhat between countries (tsp approximately 5 ml, tbsp approximately 15–20 ml), it doesn't really matter as I explained before.
- ▶ I've stated oven temperatures in both Celsius (C) and Fahrenheit (F) for your convenience.

