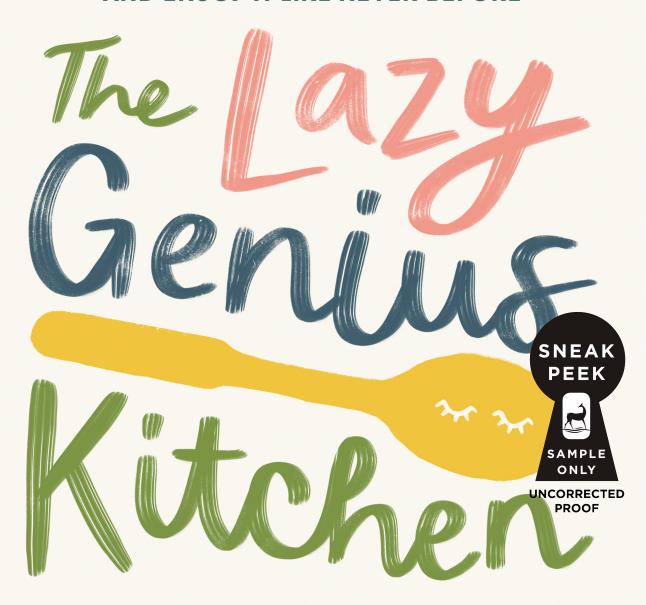
"An empowering, transformative, and slightly sassy guidebook."
—Jenna Fischer, actress, author, and producer/cohost of Office Ladies podcast

HAVE WHAT YOU NEED, USE WHAT YOU HAVE, AND ENJOY IT LIKE NEVER BEFORE



KENDRA ADACHI

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR

PRAISE FOR

The Lazy Genius Kitchen

"Most 'kitchen books' are cookbooks, but not this one. *The Lazy Genius Kitchen* is your guide to strategic meal planning, organization, cooking, and cleaning up. You don't have to dread stepping into the kitchen, because Kendra Adachi shows you how to create a sustainable rhythm for managing your kitchen and feeding the people you care about. And you'll have fun doing it."

-Jenna Fischer, actress, author, and producer/cohost of Office Ladies podcast

"Have a kitchen? You need this book. Kendra teaches you how to be the boss of your kitchen in all the ways that matter most to you."

-MYQUILLYN SMITH, New York Times bestselling author of Welcome Home

"Adachi is like the smart big sister I never had, revealing the secrets of a kitchen that not only take the stress out of daily meal prep, but actually make it fun. With warm, no-nonsense advice and proven formulas that liberate you from kitchen clutter and complicated recipes, The Lazy Genius Kitchen is an essential tool for living better every day."

-INGRID FETELL LEE, author of Joyful

"Whether you are a new cook in a quandary about getting something on the table over and over again each day or a seasoned professional who lives and works in the kitchen but gets weighed down by decision fatigue, Kendra is here to put a friendly hand on your shoulder and remind you what could and should really matter about keeping the heart of your household beating strong."

-BONNIE OHARA, author of *Bread Baking for Beginners* and owner of Alchemy Bread Co.

"This book is chock-full of smart cooking hacks, from tips to eliminating what you don't need to creating autopilot solutions that make it easier and more efficient to get meals on the table. I'm officially on the Lazy Genius cooking train. Choo choo, fellow food hackers."

-SHERRY PETERSIK, New York Times bestselling coauthor of Loyable Livable Home

"Having worked in restaurant kitchens, I understand that a wellorganized kitchen is essential for speed, efficiency, and ease in cooking. Knowing that and living that are two completely different beasts. But Kendra empowers me to find and create systems that work for me. This is so much more than a system or a collection of rules. It's about embracing and loving who you are and working within that to create the space that works for you."

-Ashley Rodriguez, creator of Not Without Salt and author of Date Night In

"Now that I have thought about how I can make my kitchen into a place that serves the needs and personality of my family, I feel empowered as I move through my daily kitchen chores. Kendra has shown me what matters . . . even a lazy cook like me."

-Anna Sale, host of Death, Sex & Money podcast and author of Let's Talk About Hard Things

"I cook and talk about food for a living, and yet, there are weeks when I struggle to feed myself and my family the way I want to. What I love about *The Lazy Genius Kitchen* is that Kendra succinctly identifies and mutes the subconscious tape playing in our heads, the one that tells us all our meals have to check all the boxes simultaneously: healthy, quick, inexpensive, sustainable, Instagram-worthy . . . the list goes on. With Kendra's no-nonsense, witty, and practical advice, you'll feel empowered to choose your own priorities based on looking at your life with a kind, grateful eye. The result is not only empowerment but peace and gratitude even for the messy places. That's a skill I'll be using not only in the kitchen, but in the rest of my life, too."

-AARTI SEQUEIRA, cookbook author, chef, producer



HAVE WHAT YOU NEED, USE WHAT YOU HAVE,
AND ENJOY IT LIKE NEVER BEFORE

KENDRA ADACHI



THE LAZY GENIUS KITCHEN
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This is not a cookbook.
This is a lifeline.

Contents



INTRODUCTION Lazy Genius 101

9

PART 1

Your Lazy Genius Kitchen

Step 1—PRIORITIZE: Name What Matters Most 22

Step 2—ESSENTIALIZE: Get Rid of What's in the Way 31

Step 3—ORGANIZE: Put Everything in Its Place 37

Step 4—PERSONALIZE: Feel Like Yourself 41

Step 5—SYSTEMIZE: Stay in the Flow 47

PART 2

Have What You Need

Area 1—SPACE: Your Actual Kitchen + All the Stuff Inside 53

Area 2—MEALS: What You Eat Every Day 68

Area 3—PLAN: How You Decide What to Eat 85

Area 4—FOOD: Choosing, Storing + Shopping for Ingredients 98

Area 5—PREP: Getting Your Kitchen Ready for Later 115

Area 6—TABLE: Experiencing Your Meals 127

PART 3

Use What You Have

TECHNIQUES: How to Cook 143

TASTE: How to Make Food Taste Good 152

TOOLS: How to Use Your Stuff 161

TASKS: How to Keep Up with It All 174

TIPS: How to Make Hard Stuff Easier 184

CONCLUSION: Enjoy It Like Never Before

193

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

195

INDEX

Lazy Genius 101



Hi! I'm Kendra. So nice to see you. Thank you for reading this book, but before you go any further, we need to cover something rather important.

You need to know what a Lazy Genius is.

Obviously, you can't have a Lazy Genius kitchen without being a Lazy Genius, so here's your primer.

A Lazy Genius is a genius about the things that matter and lazy about the things that don't.

"Who decides what matters?" you ask.

You do.

You are the only person who can live your life, but my guess is you've been living that life according to other people's rules.

Ask me how I know.

As a self-help junkie, I spent years collecting tips and hacks, systems and manifestos, rules and routines to optimize my life. I spent countless hours and a ridiculous amount of mental energy building a big Machine of Life, trying to replicate the perfect day, succeed at the perfect goals, and be a generally perfect person.

However, that approach had its problems—namely, that I became more robot than human. Can you turn yourself into a cyborg? The jury's still out, but I say yes.

Living like a robot is living like a genius, and while genius sounds good in theory, it has its problems. You're at the mercy of everyone else's opinions, running yourself into the ground to live a perfect life. You're so obsessed with following a plan and doing it right that you ignore your own humanity.

Eventually, you hit a proverbial wall and simply can't do it anymore. My wall came in the form of motherhood, but walls aren't exclusive to life stage. We all hit one, and if you haven't yet, it's coming. Sorry to spoil your fun.

At that point-after all your genius plans dramatically fall apartyou swing to the other side of the spectrum and get lazy.

You give up on everything. You think, If I can't do it perfectly, why do it at all? If I can't manage everything, why manage anything? Enter being a "hot mess." The phrase is on all those t-shirts and coffee mugs for a reason. It feels good. However, working hard at being a mess is often just as draining as working hard to be perfect. You're a differentlooking robot, but a robot all the same.

Listen, there's nothing wrong with order or with dirty hair and yoga pants. What is wrong is believing they're mutually exclusive. What is wrong is making snap judgments about a person, including yourself, about her value and vulnerability based on where she lands on the Lazy-to-Genius spectrum.

No one, and I mean no one, is completely together or completely a mess.

Being a Lazy Genius is not about either trying hard or giving up. Those don't have to be your only options. Which is rad, because you want to live a life that means something, right?

You want to invest your efforts in things that matter to you.

You want to feel secure when you walk in a room.

You want to be steady when things around you spin out of control.

You want to live a life of purpose and heart, connecting with yourself and the people you love.

You want to be yourself without bowing to everyone else's "shoulds."

Being a Lazy Genius is how you make that life happen. You're a genius about the things that matter and lazy about the things that don't.

And you get to decide what that is.

I got so jazzed about this idea a few years ago that I wrote a whole book about it.

It's called The Lazy Genius Way: Embrace What Matters, Ditch What Doesn't, and Get Stuff Done; it was a New York Times bestseller (which is not a crazy thing to say at all), and I truly believe it can make you more of who you already are and help you get stuff done.

Most self-help/productivity books give you a set of rules to follow based on what worked for the author. And I get that! When you love a new recipe or find an awesome kitchen gadget, you want to tell all your friends about this great new thing! But not everything works for everybody, no matter how good it is.

That's why The Lazy Genius Way is based on principles, not rules or systems you need to copy. These thirteen principles can Lazy Genius (yep, we made it a verb) literally anything based on what matters to you. You can slowly build a system, think strategically, and be intentional, all without being so daggum hard on yourself.



Here's a guick rundown of the principles if you're unfamiliar or just need a refresher.

These Lazy Genius Principles (LGP) are foundational, and I will refer to them throughout the book by their LGP number. You can always flip back here if you need a guick refresher.

Lazy Genius Principles

1. Decide Once

Limit your decisions by making certain choices once and then never again.

2. Start Small

Small steps are easy, easy steps that are sustainable, and sustainable steps actually go somewhere.

3. Ask the Magic Question

"What can I do now to make life easier later?"

4. Live in the Season

Welcome each season of life kindly and let it teach you something.

5. Build the Right Routine

The routine itself isn't what matters. It's simply an on-ramp to help prepare you for what does.

6. Set House Rules

House rules are about connection, not protection, and they prevent life from quickly getting out of hand.

Summarized from The Lazy Genius Way by Kendra Adachi (Colorado Springs: WaterBrook, 2020).

7. Put Everything in Its Place

You don't have to become a minimalist; just put your stuff away.

8. Let People In

Invite people into your crisis, your celebrations, and all the ordinary in between.

9. Batch It

Do the same kind of task all at once.

10. Essentialize

Get rid of what doesn't matter.

11. Go in the Right Order

You already have the steps; you just need a better order.

12. Schedule Rest

Rest and self-care focus on doing what makes you feel like you.

13. Be Kind to Yourself

Value who you are now and without comparison to the past or the future.

Congratulations! You've just completed the Lazy Genius crash course. If I had certificates, I'd give you one. Instead, I'll share a guick rundown of where we're going next.

How to Use **This** Book

The kitchen is so complex, is always in use, and feels way too big to figure out all at once. Besides, you've literally got dinner to make and can't waste your time on massive projects and meandering books.

That's why I broke this puppy down into parts and steps that actually work. Everything you need-and nothing you don't-all with the purpose of helping you have what you need, use what you have, and enjoy your kitchen like never before.

Part 1: Your Lazy Genius Kitchen is all about Lazy Geniusing all parts of your kitchen, using these five steps:

- 1. prioritize: name what matters
- 2. essentialize: get rid of what's in the way
- 3. organize: put everything in its place
- 4. personalize: feel like yourself
- 5. **systemize:** stay in the flow

Here, you'll learn the five-step framework that will transform your kitchen. You won't put anything into practice yet; it's all about getting the lay of the land.

I encourage you to read this part first and in order, because the right order matters (LGP #11). Going out of order is like listening to an album or playlist on shuffle; you'll enjoy the music, but you'll miss the magic.

Part 2: Have What You Need focuses on . . . wait for it . . . having what you need. But the point is not having what everyone needs, what I (Kendra) need, or what your favorite food blogger needs. It's about having what you need. I'll help you name what matters to you in six areas of your kitchen:

- 1. Space: your actual kitchen + all the stuff inside it
- 2. meals: what you eat every day
- 3. plan: how + when you decide what to eat
- 4. food: choosing, storing + shopping for ingredients
- **5. prep:** getting your kitchen ready for later
- 6. table: experiencing your meals

This is where you'll get practical and start applying the five steps from Part 1 to your kitchen.

Use What You Have is a treasure trove of beautifully de-Part 3: signed and supremely helpful resources so you feel equipped to enjoy your kitchen:

- 1. techniques: how to cook
- 2. taste: how to make food taste good
- 3. tools: how to use your stuff
- 4. tasks: how to keep up with it all
- 5. tips: how to make hard stuff easier

There's also a conclusion to remind you of the enjoyment that awaits you at the end of this journey, but it's short and sentimental rather than a list of steps. Life needs both, am I right?

These pages are full of Big Sister Energy, and I vow to be both excessively kind and helpful. I promise that these pages are a safe place, no matter your circumstances, personality, or skill set. I feel supremely confident-like, Beyoncé confident-that this book will change your life. And since your kitchen is such a huge part of your life, the change will be big.

And while you can totally skip around to what seems most helpful, following the book from start to finish will serve you best. Stick with me, and I promise on my collection of James McAvoy GIFs that this order will not fail you.

Ready to jump in and become obsessed with how awesome your kitchen is and how amazing you are inside it?



Your Lazy Genius Kitchen



If you try to count the number of meals you will likely make over the course of your lifetime, you might weep. Since weeping would decidedly kill the fun vibe we're going for here, let's hurry along.

The point? No day escapes a food-related task, most days hold more tasks than you can count, and being in your kitchen feels like running on a turbo-charged hamster wheel that leaves you gasping for breath.

Allow me to hold your metaphorical face in my metaphorical hands as I say this: of course you're exhausted. Of course you are. Life in the kitchen doesn't provide any breathers to figure out what

you're doing or what you need. Meals just keep coming no matter how much you need them to slow down.

Plus, you likely have never been taught the scope of skills to make your kitchen experience a little easier, but you feel stupid asking someone now because you're a grown person who pays utility bills, schedules dentist appointments, and buys retinol, so you're obviously supposed to know this stuff already.

First of all, it's fine that you don't know everything (spoiler: no one does), and second of all, I'm here to help.

The five steps I'm about to teach you will change your life in the kitchen literally forever. They are foundational to finding pain points, naming helpful solutions, and creating a sustainable rhythm in your kitchen for as long as you have one.

Remember that this part of the book is only about learning. You don't have to figure anything out yet. Maybe think of me as a fun, hip professor who's giving a fun, hip lecture (humor me here), and your only task is to absorb the information. No labs or practicums yet; that's Part 2.

Ready?

The first thing you need to do is name what matters. Always. It's foundational. Nothing else works until you name what matters, so that's our first step in creating a Lazy Genius kitchen.







Name what matters most



What's the whole point of life in your kitchen? If you break it down to its essence, what's the purpose? What's the point? It's pretty simple, really:

You should have what you need, use what you have, and enjoy it.

Think about it. If you have everything you need and you use it, you'll enjoy your kitchen. It's what's extra, what's missing, and what lies unused that make your kitchen feel accidental.

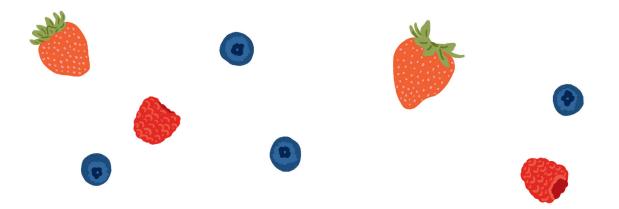
Accidental or Idealistic?

A lot of people have accidental kitchens. For example, maybe your mom unpacked the boxes when you moved into your home, and everything is still where she put it three years ago. Even how you shop, plan, and gather around the table could be accidental. Sometimes you just do stuff. There's no real reason or purpose; it's just what you've always done.

Or maybe your kitchen and how you live in it are idealistic. You think it has to look a certain way, function within a specific system, and make you look and feel like you have your act together at every meal.

Neither Lazy nor Genius, accidental nor idealistic will serve you in the long term. Why? Because you don't know what matters most.

Even if you started over and built a kitchen from scratch, I'd bet my Benedict Cumberbatch poster that you'd be back where you are now in a matter of weeks-frustrated, overwhelmed, and picking up the phone for another night of takeout pizza.



Without knowing what matters to you, even a new sparkly kitchen becomes accidental.

I know what you want. You want a kitchen that feels intentional but without making you try too hard for it. I have good news: that happens when you prioritize and name what matters most.

What Matters Matters

When you haven't figured out what matters, you implicitly allow everything to matter. You buy more stuff, sign up for more services, and reorganize more cabinets to try to make life easier. You spin off in a dozen directions, trying to make everything matter.

But it can't. It just can't. That's why your kitchen is cluttered and your brain is overwhelmed.

Unless you know what matters most about your space, your meals, how you plan them, and so forth, you'll simply tend to the most urgent need and repeat ad nauseam.

No one needs ad nauseam in the kitchen.

You need to prioritize.

When you prioritize what matters most, you see a clearer path to your best choices. You know clearly what to cook, organize, and renovate. You know what to buy, skip, and prep. You know if that chicken recipe is worth spending time on or not.

When you prioritize, you have a lens for choosing only what you need. And I promise it works.

How Do You **Know What Matters?**

You might be thinking, This all sounds good, Kendra, but I don't know what matters most to me.

Don't worry. You're not expected to know right away. Any time you need clarity on what matters, ask yourself these three simple questions:

- 1. What could matter?
- 2. What does matter?
- 3. What matters most?

It's basically a process of elimination. Not rocket science, I know, but it's a lot easier and exceedingly cheaper than a degree from MIT. Plus, it works. Before you start answering, though (that'll come in Part 2), let's break down how these questions get you to what matters.

What Could Matter

As an example, let's think about what could matter when you shop for food: price, quality, convenience, selection, experience, sustainability, and if a place has grocery pickup or shopping carts shaped like racecars for your toddler. Those could all be important, right?

However, there is no grocery store on earth that can prioritize all those things. None. Whole Foods prioritizes quality and sustainability over price. Aldi prioritizes price over selection and experience. Trader Joe's prioritizes its personal identity over carrying multiple brands. Every store has to prioritize something, or it won't survive.

The same is true for you. You have to prioritize. If you try to tend to everything, you'll tend to nothing-at least not well. You have to drill down to what matters most to you, and the first step is listing all the possibilities.

Now, will all those possibilities likely be good, desirable qualities? Most definitely. Can they all matter? You want to say yes, so allow me to rephrase. Can they all matter with equal value? That's a big no.

But here's the good news: when you name what matters most, everything else falls into line without your having to give up as much as you think. When your priority is clear, it makes any sacrifices easier to swallow because you're getting what's most important.

There are "what could matter" lists for all six areas of your kitchenspace, meals, plan, food, prep, and table-coming up in Part 2, so don't worry about starting from scratch. (Kind Big Sister Energy coming through for you, pal.)

What Does Matter

Once you have your list of what could matter, you just start crossing stuff off. Now, for some people, that will prove a touch more difficult than for others. Choosing is just the worst. If you need some help narrowing down, here are two thoughts that could ease the process.

First. live in the season.

This is Lazy Genius Principle #4 (LGP #4), and it's one that offers the best permission to do what you need right now.

Your life in the kitchen is massively impacted by how much time, emotional margin, money, and many children you have. And those things change with each season of life.

As you narrow down the list of what could matter to what does matter, think about what matters right now. No ideals, no futures, no "when this changes." Right. Now.

When you live in your season, you know life will eventually be different while still embracing where you are now.

Second, what makes you crazy?

Identifying pain points is where the magic happens.

If you can name what makes you frustrated about cooking, your space, and even certain tools, you can more easily name what matters and therefore have a much better experience. No more yelling at inanimate objects! Huzzah!

Some examples of what could make you crazy:

- a nonstick skillet that everything gets stuck to
- · a countertop covered with other people's junk
- having grocery lists in multiple places so you're always forgetting something
- · kids that throw food on the floor
- · having to go to five different stores to get the best deal
- splattering soup on your new Madewell sweater because you don't have a ladle and awkwardly use a coffee cup to serve it instead



When you name what makes you crazy, you have a clearer picture of your priorities.

So, when we get to those "what could matter" lists in Part 2, you're going to narrow them down to about three things each. If you have trouble, think about your season of life and what makes you crazy so you can gain some extra clarity.

And remember, only you can decide what matters most to you. It's okay if your short list looks different from everyone else's. You're allowed to care about what you care about.

What Matters Most

Now comes the hard part. You have to narrow your list of three down to one.

Before you start yelling at me, listen up. You're not dismissing what does matter outright. Your top three priorities will all play a role in how you experience your kitchen, but you need a main thing. Why? You want an engine that pulls the train. You want a sun that holds everything in orbit. You want a killer pair of jeans that are the foundation for all your amazing outfits.

What matters most? Naming this in all six areas of your kitchen will make you a Lazy Genius.

Real-life examples always help, so I'll share what matters most in my kitchen so you can see how this all plays out.

What Matters Most to Me

My current season of life involves writing this book during a pandemic, over the holidays, and within a tight timeline. Super chill, I also have three tremendously picky children. One doesn't like cheese or eggs. One doesn't like meat except salami. One doesn't eat sandwiches except on Thursdays. It's a situation.

If I were to ignore this season and keep chugging along like it's just me and my husband and all the time in the world, I'd be in a ball in the corner right now. Thankfully, I've Lazy Geniused my kitchen and picked what matters most. I'm upright and not in a corner!

Here's what this looks like . . .

What Matters to Me About Tools

Of all the qualities that could matter about my kitchen tools, I narrowed the list down to these three: they work, they're well made, and they can go in the dishwasher. If a tool fits all three of those qualities, I am supremely happy.

But sometimes those priorities conflict with each other. In that case, I need to know what matters most.

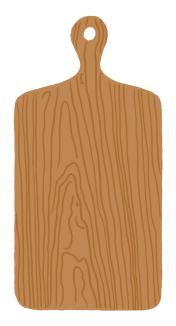
For me, it's functionality. I don't have a lot of time, my friend. I need my stuff to work.

I once went to an Airbnb that had only flimsy plastic cutting boards in the kitchen. When I tried to cut on them, they'd slide, it felt like the knife was hitting the counter beneath, and I started to feel crazy. No joke . . . I stopped cooking, went to Walmart, and bought a big wooden cutting board. I happily used it during my stay and left it as a gift for future vacationers.

That's how much function matters to me. I become slightly unhinged in a stranger's home and spend money on something I'll use for only three days. Because that's what matters most to me.

Back to my own kitchen. I already said that in addition to function, I want tools that are well made and can go in the dishwasher. However, high-quality tools are often divas and need to be washed by hand.

Listen, I hate washing dishes. It hurts my back, it makes my hands dry, and I'm legitimately grossed out when I have to reach into the



lukewarm forgotten dishwater to let it drain. I do everything I can to avoid the process.

If I'm forced to choose between function or something being dishwasher-safe-for example, with a good knife-I choose function. I choose the knife. I choose to wash it by hand and cry a single tear and then move on with my life.

However, if a tool's function isn't sacrificed much when it goes in the dishwasher, I pick the tool that can go in the dishwasher. For example, wooden spoons are a general dishwasher no-no. The wood eventually cracks, and if that wood is reclaimed and hand-carved and an heirloom, the dishwasher will not be its friend. But if it's a cheap wooden spoon from a yard sale, I'll put it in the dishwasher with great enthusiasm until it cracks and I get another one. No harm done. Why?

Because I know what matters to me.

When you prioritize what matters, decisions are so much easier to make.

Here's another example.

What Matters to Me About Meals

My top three priorities from the what could matter list (that exists on page 70) are brainless, tasty, and crowd-pleasing, and that's been my top three ever since I started having kids over a decade ago.

During that time, I've slowly collected meals that fit all three priorities, and we eat them on a very frequent rotation. However, when one priority must take charge, what matters most to me is a meal that's brainless.

I love to cook, and I'm good at it. I love trying new flavors and learning new skills, but being a working mom means now is not my season to embrace that love. The time will come, and I'll love it when it does. For the time being, I want to cook meals I don't have to think about. I don't want to constantly fact-check instructions. I skip recipes that go against my cooking intuition. If a meal involves specific timing or deep attention, it's a pass.

That's why hot dogs and Tater Tots stay in our rotation right alongside chicken tikka masala. My brain doesn't work hard for either. Are hot dogs tasty to me? Not really. Do all three of my kids devour tikka masala? The little one is still on the fence.

But both meals are brainless. That means they get to stick around.

What Matters to Me About Shopping

Right now, I'm in the season of life where **convenience** is top, top priority. When my kids were babies and I had very little to fill my days, I used to shop at multiple stores to get the best price and the absolute best version of whatever ingredient I needed. Now, I barely have enough time for one store, let alone five or six, so I use Walmart grocery pickup almost exclusively. I order online and wait for a kind soul to load the food into my car. It's exactly what matters right now.

Do I sacrifice quality? Yes. Do I miss the experience at Whole Foods or Trader Joe's? Yes. Do I miss the savings I'd get from buying a few select things at Costco? Absolutely. But none of those are as important as the convenience of a Walmart a mile from my house that I don't even have to walk into to get what I need.

It will not always be that way, but I will embrace that it's that way right now. That's one of the best things about being a Lazy Genius. You live in your season (LGP #4) while it's here, know that life will eventually be different, and enjoy where you are as best as you can.



Prioritize Your Priority

Prioritize is step one because it is the only place to start. You must start with what matters. Everything in this book-I'm talking everything-hinges on your priorities.

But don't let that scare you. You can name what you think matters most, live with it, and if you realize that something else matters more. you can pivot. The world is not ending if you change your mind. In fact, expect to change your mind. It happens all the time because life is not white noise. It's dynamic and full of change. You have kids or then they move out, or you don't have them at all. You get a new job or guit the one you have. You move homes, cities, and states. You learn a new skill, buy a new pot, or get a new Trader Joe's down the street.

Life changes, and every time it does, your priorities likely will, too. Please be kind to yourself (LGP #13) as they do.

To recap, list what could matter, drill down to what does matter, and then do the hard but helpful work of naming what matters most. Your best decisions come from knowing what matters most to you. Name that one thing, and your kitchen will serve you well.

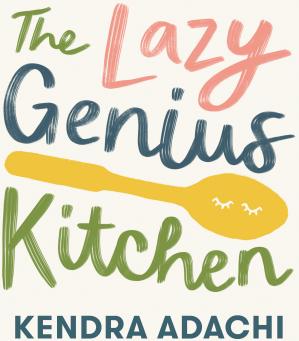
You will get a lot of prioritization reps throughout this book, and every time you go through the process, your confidence will grow. You're going to be an expert by the time we're done.

What could matter? What does matter? What matters most?

Once you know that, it's time for step two: essentialize. Let me teach you how to get rid of what's in the way.

"An empowering, transformative, and slightly sassy guidebook."
—Jenna Fischer, actress, author, and producer/cohost of Office Ladies podcast

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