

Lemon Chicken Kale Soup

(Adapted from Skinny Meals by Bob Harper)

This lemony, garlicky soup with chicken and kale is a great all-in-one nutrition boost that can be enjoyed all year round.

Ingredients

2 teaspoons refined coconut oil (or olive oil)

1 cup chopped yellow onion

4 garlic cloves, crushed

8 ounces boneless, skinless chicken breast, cut into cubes

2 teaspoons herbes de Provence (or combination of dried thyme, rosemary, oregano and basil)

2 bay leaves

2 1-quart boxes of organic low-sodium chicken broth

1/3 cup freshly squeezed lemon juice

3-4 cups chopped kale

Directions

Heat the coconut oil in a soup pot over medium heat. Add the onion and garlic; sauté for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add the chicken, dried herbs, and bay leaves, raise the heat to medium-high and cook for 6-8 minutes.

Pour in the broth and lemon juice. Reduce the heat, cover, and simmer for 25 minutes.

Turn off the heat and remove the bay leaves. Add the kale and stir until slightly wilted.

How Much Fat is Healthy?

Believe it or not, a certain amount of fat is good for you. Despite the bad press it gets, fat is actually responsible for making your body leaner and healthier.

Sounds counterintuitive, but here are the facts:

1. Your hormones are all stabilized in a lipid ring—a fancy way of saying “fat ring”—which means fat makes hormones work better.
2. Key micronutrients, like vitamins D, E, A and K, are “fat soluble.” In other words, they need fat in order for your body to store and use them. Ironically, these are the same substances they keep your cells healthy and contribute to weight loss. Without them, the only things you’ll lose are hair and disease-fighting antioxidants.
3. It’s chemistry 101: “like dissolves like.” So if you want to release fat, you need fat to dissolve it.

Good Fats Vs. Bad Fats

Not all fats are created equal. Healthy fats – the kind responsible for reducing heart disease, lowering cholesterol, shedding fat, controlling blood sugar levels and delivering nutrients to your body – include monounsaturated, polyunsaturated and omega-3 fatty acids.

The kind to reduce or eliminate from your diet are saturated and trans fats, which you’ll find hidden throughout everyday foods, such as:

- canola, corn, soy and safflower oils. They create inflammation, cause a variety of diseases and typically contain GMOs. Not to mention, you’ll find them in just about

everything you eat.

- packaged and processed foods. Chips, snacks, candy, low- and non-fat brands, and even so-called healthy foods, like granola bars, are loaded with saturated and trans fats.
- restaurant meals, whether they're fast food or gourmet. Eating out increases your intake of omega 6 and omega 9 fatty acids, creating an imbalance in your ratio of omega 3s, 6s and 9s, and causing inflammation, disease and weight gain.

Top 3 Healthy Fats

1. Avocado – I recommend $\frac{1}{2}$ avocado a day, eaten in the morning.
2. Extra virgin olive oil (EV00) – shoot for 2 tablespoons per day
3. Coconut oil – 1 teaspoon a day

Supplement the above healthy fats with a few of these options on occasion:

- Pumpkin seeds – 1 tablespoon sprinkled into salads
- Flax seeds – 1 tablespoon blended in your smoothie or topped on oatmeal or chia seed pudding
- Organic clarified butter (ghee) – no more than 1 teaspoon in a day

Small Diet Swaps That Trim the Waistline

Often the biggest, best results come from doing the littlest things. Do them over and over and you've got yourself a habit. Losing weight is the same idea: You don't have to overhaul

your entire kitchen or burn your takeout menus to make a huge impact on your diet. You just need to start small by making Smart choices every time you eat. Healthier grains. Natural sugars. Unprocessed foods. You get the idea.

The easy diet tweaks below require no additional time – you simply decide to do them – to fast track yourself back into your beach body.

My favorite switch ups:

1. **instant oatmeal to chia seeds**, which have more nutrients, fiber and protein, while keeping you full longer.
 2. **high glycemic to low glycemic fruits** to lessen the spike to your blood sugar levels. Try to stick to berries, green apples, and pears.
 3. **mixed drinks to red wine** for greater antioxidants and less sugar and calories from unhealthy mixers.
 4. **smoothies made with yogurt or dairy milk to smoothies made with nut milks or raw coconut water** for greater nutrition without the saturated fats and casein, a protein that puts huge pressure on human digestion.
 5. **one cup of coffee for one cup of green tea** to boost antioxidants without the acidity.
 6. **fruit juices to vegetable juices** so you get the vitamins, minerals and fiber without the extra sugar.
 7. **whole wheat wraps to collard green wraps**, cruciferous greens with phytonutrients that help lower your cancer risk by supporting your detox and anti-inflammatory systems.
 8. **sports drinks, energy shots and vitamin waters to raw coconut water**, which is loaded with healthy ingredients that naturally boost energy and electrolytes.
-

Smart Life Success Story

I can't help it, I love to share my clients' successes on this journey. I'm so proud of everything they've accomplished and hope they inspire you the same way they inspire me every day.

Rich Dropped 40 Pounds! These are his Before and After Photos!

"6 Months to a Smart Life introduced so many great, positive changes into my life. Prior to working with Ronit, I was slightly overweight, with mildly high blood pressure, borderline high cholesterol, and from time to time, a short temper. Since implementing her approach I've seen great results:

1. I lost 40 pounds.
2. My blood pressure lowered from 154/104 to 120/80, and my medication dropped to minimal dosing.
3. No more headaches due to high blood pressure.
4. My blood sugar levels are lower.
5. My cholesterol dropped from 206 to 154.
6. I sleep better and longer.
7. I manage stress more easily and don't blow my fuse as often.
8. I feel more energized and younger, and work out 4 to 5 days a week.

The days of feeling lethargic, cranky, overweight and getting older are in the past!

Thanks to the Smart Life approach:

- I'm eating less processed, store-bought foods, plus making smarter choices at restaurants.
- I've replaced dairy and dairy products, including milk or creamer in coffee, with almond milk and coconut products.

- I'm drinking more green tea instead of coffee.
- I've reduced consumption of alcohol.
- I'm enjoying more vegan meals.
- I've eliminated toxins, such as processed sugar and dairy, as well as incorporated organic foods whenever possible.
- I've started juicing and enjoying green smoothies. I actually crave greens and miss them when I don't have them.
- I eat more, and as many super foods as possible, like chia seeds, goji berries, spirulina, hemp and flax seeds, and kale (I'm a kale-a-holic!).
- I take supplements that add antioxidants and anti-inflammatories to my diet.

Thank you, Ronit, for showing me the way that I should be eating and living!" – Rich

Green Tahini Dressing

Ingredients:

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup sesame tahini

2 tablespoons shoyu or tamari

1 tablespoon ume plum vinegar

$\frac{1}{2}$ bunch parsley chopped

$\frac{1}{2}$ bunch scallions chopped

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup of water (more or less)

Preparation:

1. Put tahini, shoyu/tamari, vinegar, parsley and scallions in food processor.
 2. Blend and add water slowly to achieve desired consistency.
 3. Platter the steamed greens and top with Tahini sauce or use as dipping sauce for crudité veggies.
-

The Smart Way to Blast Fat

Don't wait for the New Year to start your weight-loss resolutions. Blasting fat and dropping pounds are easy to do year-round (even during the party season) when you understand how your body works.

Below are some easy ways to stop storing—and start releasing—fat to avoid those creeping cold-weather pounds, despite winter blahs, hectic holiday hours and non-stop celebrations.

1. **Switch to SMARTer Caffeine.** That morning mug of coffee sounds like the perfect quick fix to burn fat and spike energy when you're tired. Problem is that drinking caffeine on an empty stomach tells your body to store fat, not release it. Switch to a gentler pick-me-up, like **green tea**, followed by a B vitamin. This more caffeine-friendly lifestyle powers up your **energy** without boosting your waistline.
2. **Keep a consistent meal plan.** Skipping meals or maintaining irregular meal schedules puts you on the fast track for storing fat. When you're depleted, your

blood sugar drops, triggering your endocrine system to move leftover sugar to where you store fat (think love handles, muffin tops and thighs). Fat is simply stored glucose. Instead, **schedule your eating** at regular times to keep blood sugar levels balanced and don't rebel. The more you mother yourself this winter, the better you'll look and feel.

3. **Stop avoiding fat in your diet.** Despite what you read in the media, fat is not a four-letter word. But, "low-fat" and "fat-free" might as well be. The ingredients in low- and no-fat foods – chemicals, preservatives and sugars – added to make up for taste, sabotage your body's ability to absorb nutrients, create inflammation and turn your cells into fat-storing machines.
4. **Move after meals.** Don't eat and stay seated after you're finished. Instead, spend 5 minutes away from the table and moving. Even a slow walk or mini stretch session signals your brain, liver and endocrine system that it's time to use what you just ate for fuel. Pronto!
5. **Eat like a European.** Prevent fat storage while you sleep by eating your biggest meal at mid-day. The perfect size lunch is about 400 to 500 calories, then lighten up at dinner.

Cleansing Carrot-Ginger Soup

This is a great cleansing soup during the cold months of winter. You can double or triple amounts as needed.

- 2 Tbs coconut oil
- 1 medium yellow onion, chopped
- 2 Tbs ginger, peeled and chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, sliced

- 6 medium size carrots, chopped
- 6 cups low sodium vegetable broth
- 2 cups of water
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon turmeric
- sea salt and pepper to taste
- chopped chives to garnish (optional)

Directions

1. Saute onion, garlic and ginger in coconut oil until onions translucent.
2. Add carrots and vegetable broth, water and turmeric.
3. Bring to simmer, cover, cook for 30 minutes.
4. Add all ingredients to blender (or use hand blender to stir in pot), add sea salt and pepper to taste, blend until smooth.

The New Fat Formula: Sugar + Stress

There's no magic formula to dropping pounds. Take away sugar and stress, you'll see a huge difference in how you look and feel. Guaranteed.

If you're serious about losing weight, the first thing to do is clean out the sweets. It's where I start with all my clients. Sugar increases insulin, which in turn triggers your body's storage of fat. The process is simple: You need to eat to get energy – that's how your cells provide you with the fuel to go about your day. When insulin is low, fatty acids come into cells, boost energy and leave as fatty acids. That's healthy. Foods low in sugar don't spike insulin levels so this fatty acid process works efficiently. When insulin is high,

fatty acids get stored in cells as triglycerides (a type of fat), a process that makes you gain weight. Eating less sugar means lowering your insulin levels, thereby lowering your weight.

Stress also makes you fat. Insulin and cortisol are interconnected hormones. When insulin is high, so are your cortisol levels. And when cortisol hikes up, it keeps insulin hiked up, too. Increased cortisol is your body's response to stress. That's why stress can pack on the pounds. There's a myth that when you're stressed out, you eat unhealthy food, make bad choices or stuff yourself for emotional comfort, causing you to gain weight, but that's only part of the story. The reality is that so many people are eating healthy but still can't lose inches. Why? Their cortisol levels are keeping insulin spiked, so it's nearly impossible to shed pounds.

The answer: stress less, weigh less.

3 things you can do in the next 24 hours to feel calmer:

Right now: Breathe. Do a breathing exercise that gets you out of anxiety, worry or fear and into the present moment. I love this one from Dr. Andrew Weil: Inhale four counts slowly, hold your breath four counts, then exhale slowly for eight counts. Repeat three times whenever you need to clear your thoughts or just before bed to help you drift off to sleep.

Today: Organize. Clutter and chaos can make you feel overwhelmed and stressed out. Create a To Do list based on how you like to work – by priority, by ease, by due date – to streamline your day and give you a sense of control. Check them off when completed. When you juggle your obligations in your mind, they never turn off which increases anxiety and the feeling like they'll never get done.

Tonight: Sleep. Get at least seven hours of shuteye each night. Anything less and you'll begin to compromise your

system, which lowers productivity, focus, memory, concentration and hormones related to hunger satiety. At the same time, fatigue, irritability and moodiness increases. And yep, you guessed it, all that adds to even more stress.

Lemon Elixir

This natural detoxifier stimulates digestion, releases toxins from your liver and jumpstarts your digestive enzymes.

Spaghetti Squash With Cherry Tomatoes and Kale

Squashes and root veggies are in season and if you haven't tried spaghetti squash yet, now is the time! Spaghetti squash makes for a wonderful alternative to pasta and I love it for Meatless Monday dinners with sauteed tomatoes and kale.

Spaghetti squash possesses an uncanny resemblance to spaghetti strands when cooked, and for this reason is known as vegetable spaghetti, noodle squash, vegetable marrow and "squaghetti".

Spaghetti squash is a variety of the winter squash and has a mild taste similar to pasta. It is often used as a healthful substitute for pasta due to its low carbohydrate levels. Spaghetti squash can be added to a variety of dishes, such as soups and stews and when served as "spaghetti," it can be topped with a wide variety of pasta sauces. Spaghetti squash

is significantly lower in calories than traditional pasta. A 1-cup serving of cooked spaghetti squash has 42 calories, while 1 cup of cooked pasta has 221 calories. If you are following a low-calorie diet, consider substituting spaghetti squash for pasta. Doing so can save you 180 calories per cup. Spaghetti squash has a high water content. One cup of cooked squash contains 143 grams of water. Foods high in water can increase your daily water intake. They also typically are lower in calories than foods with little or no water content. Spaghetti squash is also a good source of fiber, with 2.2 grams in a 1-cup serving. Spaghetti squash also contains beta carotene, which can help improve eye and skin health, maintain a strong immune system and can help prevent infection.

Ingredients

- 1 medium sized spaghetti squash
- 1 bunch kale, stems removed, leaves chopped into small pieces
- 5 medium garlic cloves, thinly sliced
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 quart of cherry tomatoes, halved
- A sprinkle of red pepper flakes
- 2 Tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 2 Tablespoons refined coconut oil
- Sea salt
- Fresh pepper
- Fresh herbs (optional)

Directions

1. Pre-heat oven to 400 degrees F. First, slice your spaghetti squash in half lengthwise and use a spoon to scrape out the seeds. Drizzle with a little extra virgin olive oil along with a sprinkle of sea salt and black pepper. Place squash face down on a lined baking sheet

(I prefer using parchment paper) and cook for about 45 minutes – until tender.

2. While the squash is baking, get the kale, tomatoes, garlic and onion ready. Next, place 2 tablespoons of coconut oil, chopped onion, garlic and red pepper flakes in a pan over medium heat. Simmer for a few minutes (until garlic begins to brown) and then add tomatoes and kale. Cook for a few more minutes until tomatoes are tender and kale begins to soften.
3. When squash is done cooking, remove it from the oven and let cool a few minutes so you can handle it without burning yourself. Using a fork, scrape out the insides of squash, which will come apart in strands. Place strands in a bowl and mix with kale and tomatoes. Sprinkle with fresh herbs to taste.