

**LOW  
CARB  
COOKBOOK  
WITH  
4 INGREDIENTS**

PASCALE NAESSENS

 LANNOO



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The recipes in this book are for two people.





# Do you also love good food?

## Handmade happiness

If you have bought or received this book that means that you're probably interested in healthy and delicious food just like I am. And you might already have an idea of how addictive eating "fresh" can be. I can't live without it these days. Even when it needs to be fast, I want my food to be delicious and healthy. I have written this book, where you will find recipes that take as little as 10 minutes to prepare. It's food that will make you happy in every respect. The recipes involve as little work as possible, so you will have the time to relax and enjoy them. Especially once you realize that these recipes will give you the energy you need, and that you can eat as much as you want without having to worry about the extra calories. I also want to mention the gorgeous colors. Because I use plenty of vegetables and herbs, each recipe simply radiates beauty and freshness. The fabulous colors and delicious smells instantly bring smiles to everyone's faces. I call this handmade happiness.

This may be the book where I have had the most fun thinking up, testing, and making the recipes. Two years ago, I met a chef from New Zealand who always cooks with only four ingredients. I realized that this is something I had been doing myself for years without even thinking about it. I went and took a look at my very first book and saw that more than half my recipes consisted of four or even fewer ingredients. This has always been how I cook: making special recipes from just a few pure and basic ingredients. Cookbooks with just four or five ingredients are not new, but for me it feels like coming home and going back to basics; cooking with as little effort as possible but with maximum results so you can enjoy your meal at the dinner table to the fullest. I also love to dine in style. When you surround yourself with beautiful and fun materials, you don't need much to make an everyday occurrence a moment of pure indulgence. No matter how little time I have, I want my moment at the dinner table to be one of rest and enjoyment.

I have poured my culinary heart and soul into this book, and now I would like to share it with you. I hope that it will inspire you, and that you will have as much fun using this book as I have had writing it.

Love,  
Pascale

## “Walk the talk”

My wife Stacey and I had the pleasure of being invited by Pascale and Paul for dinner at their house, a charming home with a living room featuring what was clearly the heart of the home; a gorgeous and prominent dining table. It soon became apparent that Pascale not only expresses her passion in speech, words and photos, but that she does this in her daily life as well. Or as the Americans aptly say, she “walks the talk”. We had a delicious dinner at Pascale and Paul’s, accompanied by animated conversation and a few glasses of wine while our hostess effortlessly conjured up one dish after the other at the dinner table. This is exactly as Pascale intended it to be. Because according to her, food is an experience, and since that evening I now know exactly how that feels and tastes.

Pascale is a one-of-a-kind phenomenon in the Dutch-speaking world. Not only does she produce the most amazing dishes but she also does so in a unique way, which appeals to me whichever way I look at it. Pascale has, through years of personal study and a constant dialogue with important researchers from all over the world, developed into what I would call an expert on healthy daily nutrition. Furthermore, she combines this with recipes that not only stand out for their flavors and presentation but also for their simplicity. It’s also important to be able to produce quick and easy dishes because we live in a hectic world and we already have so much to do. When we cook for others, we also want to be enjoying each other’s company instead of standing in the kitchen all evening. The recipes in this book make it all possible. Pascale has once again raised the bar to new heights. So simple!

William Cortvriendt

**William Cortvriendt** is a medical doctor and author of various bestsellers about nutrition and health, among which *Living a Century or More - A Scientifically Fact-Based Journey to Longevity*.



# Buy fresh, cook your own meals, and eat together

## Buy fresh

Healthy and flavorful food starts with high-quality, fresh, full-fat products. This is, by far, the best nutrition. I can't begin to count the number of times people tell me: "I eat so much better than I used to. My food has become tasty again, and I always leave the table full and satisfied." Have we really lost our way so badly that we believe that pre-fab meals and products even come close to natural sources of nutrition? Maybe we should have a little more faith in our own nature. Healthier eating has little to do with willpower. As a matter of fact, it has nothing to do with power at all. Instead of fighting your body, you should be working together with it. And you can do that by eating the food that your body is made to eat: natural and fresh food. You will be surprised how strongly your body reacts to this type of food. I have seen many people flourish: people who no longer want to go back to the addictive mass-produced, pre-fabricated foods which leave you feeling flab and drab and crush all your natural appetites. Would you like a powerful body full of energy? Then there is only one option. Buy high-quality, full, fresh, unprocessed and natural food.

**High-quality:** untreated fruits and vegetables, meat from animals that have had a good life.

**Whole:** nutrition which still contains all its natural fats and nutrients, for example full-fat yogurt instead of low-fat, real butter instead of margarine and certainly no light products. These foods are also known as "whole foods".

**Fresh:** fresh is actually really easy to recognize simply because fresh food tends to rot after a while. That's normal, that's how it should be. It's living food that contributes to the bacteria in our intestines. Think of vegetables, fruit, fish, meat, natural butter, eggs, full-fat yogurt...

**Unprocessed:** Food which has been processed as little as possible, which still has all its original fats and nutrients and has no additional flavors or additives. We just want simple, pure, natural products, and that means no light products, no margarines, no processed breakfast cereal or artificial products...

Discover or rediscover the charms of the market, where primarily fresh food is sold. If you cook with fresh products, you will have to spend a little more time doing the shopping, but that doesn't have to be a burden. Turn it into a fun outing. Deep down inside, we all know that fresh food forms the basis for a properly functioning body, and that in turn forms the basis for feeling healthy and happy. Consider your shopping trip as a form of indulgence.

## **Cook your own meals**

Cooking your own food can be fast and it is fun to do, not to mention deeply satisfying. Moreover, cooking for yourself and others is a labor of love. A home with a well-used kitchen is a warm home, both literally and figuratively. This doesn't mean that you have to spend hours slaving away in the kitchen; on the contrary! The fun lies in being creative. I love the challenge of using just a few, pure ingredients and as little effort as possible to create an amazing meal. This is what makes cooking really fun. Of course, I also love to go out for dinner and if I am really strapped for time, I buy a healthy ready-made salad. But, as far as I am concerned, nothing beats having a delicious and convivial meal at home.

## **Eat together**

The dining table is the perfect place to learn the art of conversation, especially in today's world of social media. Eating together is much more than just fueling your body. It is about connecting and sharing with each other. These are the real pleasures in life: sharing a nourishing, homemade meal together in a relaxed and convivial setting. This is why I do what I do, to experience these unique moments together with my loved ones. You can create these moments yourself too. It is in your hands.

**This is the best guarantee for a long and healthy life.  
It works better than any medicine.**

# Moderately low carbohydrate Mediterranean food

is the best description of this way of eating.

## Why Mediterranean food?

Because of the abundance of Mediterranean fruits and vegetables, and the widespread use of olive oil and plenty of fish.

## Why moderately low carbohydrate?

Because certain carbohydrate-rich foods are limited, especially the fast-burning carbohydrates such as bread, potatoes, white rice, pasta, sugar, sweetened soft drinks ...

Moderate because fiber-rich and naturally carbohydrate-rich foods are allowed: fruit, carbohydrate-rich vegetables (carrots, peas ...), quinoa, oatmeal, lentils ...

Compared to what we call “low carb” around the world (see further on), we can call it “moderate”.

## Why would you want to eat moderately low carbohydrate Mediterranean food?

Because:

- it is one of the world's most delicious cuisines;
- it makes you healthier with every bite;
- it gives you more energy;
- it will slim you down if you are overweight;
- it can probably help cut down or control type 2 diabetes (1)(2);
- it lowers the chance of cardiovascular disease (3);
- it lowers your blood pressure;
- it makes your gut happy;
- it makes you happy.

(1) Dietary carbohydrate restriction as the first approach in diabetes management: Critical review and evidence base

(2) Keer diabetes2 om. <https://keerdiabetesom.nl/>

(3) <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/carbohydrates/low-carbohydrate-diets/>

## A further explanation of the term ‘low carb’.

The term “low carb” is meaningless unless you can compare it to something else.

“Fewer carbohydrates”, fewer than what? If you want to understand this term properly, you need to link it to how we eat today in the Western world.

Our nutrition has evolved in a very short time from a natural cuisine to fast food, which for the most part consists of refined carbohydrates (carbs). Think of processed grains: white bread, cookies, cakes, packaged sauces, thickeners, pasta, white rice, sugar, soft drinks, etc.

We eat this “fake food” in addition to the potato, which in many cases still forms the basis of every well-stocked kitchen. In the West, we have developed a carbohydrate-rich diet in a relatively short period of time. Besides the potato, we have a whole arsenal of processed carbs that have become the daily staples of our basic diet.

The term “high carb” is apt when we talk about our Western diet. The question then remains, which term do we adopt for the diet of someone who cooks with primarily fresh products, who avoids refined carbohydrates, and who keeps potatoes to a minimum? I believe we can call this type of eating pattern “normal carb”.

Now that you have a better understanding of these terms, let’s talk about “low carb”. Everyone agrees that we need to cut down on fast carbs such as white bread, white rice, soft drinks and such. There’s no doubt about that. The discussion starts when we need to decide how high to raise the bar with regards to the amount of carbs we should be eating. Well, that differs from person to person. That’s why we should stop arguing and start listening to each other and—especially—to our own bodies instead. The only interesting question that still remains is why someone would choose to eat fewer carbs. People often have good reasons for doing so.

One important thing to note in the entire discussion around diets in general, and ‘low carb’ in particular, is that most people assume that everyone should be eating in the same way. But look around you... we are all different and nobody has the same body shape. While one person can eat plenty and stay at their ideal weight, another may gain weight eating the same amount. Why should we all have to eat the same things? We all react differently to food. That’s also true for carbohydrate-rich food: some people can eat plenty of carbs without gaining weight, while other people immediately gain weight and become addicted to boot. I belong to that second group.

## I am one of those people who reacts strongly to (fast) carbs, who immediately gains weight and becomes addicted to them as well.

That's why I have removed practically all (fast) carbs from my diet and have limited my intake of fiber-rich whole carbs such as lentils, quinoa, beans and chickpeas. If the proportion of carbs in my diet becomes too great, even of the healthier carbohydrates, then it feels as if I'm losing control of my body. I feel an insatiable hunger and lose control over my appetite. My whole body feels out of sync and I feel miserable. I get extreme hunger pangs and cravings, which leaves me constantly thinking about food in an unhealthy, obsessive way. Then I end up feeling bad and I start having doubts and depressing thoughts. When I eat fewer carbs and more fatty products—such as nuts, full-fat yogurt and olive oil—and I gorge on vegetables, the process reverses itself and I retain that naturally full and satisfied feeling. I feel happy with my body and I can feel my energy levels rise. Moreover, I love this way of eating because it feels so natural. I think it's a shame that people who eat "differently" should constantly have to defend themselves. Why should they? Because it makes them feel better?

How low you should go with your carb intake depends on how your body reacts and what you want to achieve. Most people benefit from the moderate carbohydrate diet that you'll find in my books. They experience many health benefits: more energy, better blood values, fewer aches and pains as the excess pounds disappear, a return to a more balanced appetite and a reduction in type 2 diabetes. No less than 87% of diabetes patients can completely or partly reverse their type 2 diabetes with the help of a low-carb diet.

Some people need to go one step further and lower their carb intake even more in order to reap the benefits. For example, people with resistance to insulin or stubborn weight issues, or patients who have been suffering from severe chronic type 2 diabetes. They tell me that they must keep a close eye on their carbohydrate intake and that it's best for them to avoid even the healthy, fiber-rich carbohydrates such as oatmeal, certain fruits and beans.

The ketogenic diet (or keto diet, for short) takes it a step further. With this diet you limit your carbohydrate intake to less than 2 ounces (50 grams) per day, combined with a normal quantity of protein and plenty of fats. With this diet, your blood sugar level remains at a constantly low level and your body almost exclusively starts burning fat. Your liver starts producing ketones to feed your brain. That's where the name "ketogenic diet" comes from.

Some opponents claim that this type of diet is unhealthy, possibly because it deviates too much from the traditional and generally accepted norms. However, recent scientific studies have shown mostly positive benefits: weight loss, beneficial effects for people with epilepsy, and even promising results with cancer treatments.

Just to clarify: you should not be leaving carbohydrates out altogether, even with a keto diet. That's practically impossible anyway, because many foods contain carbohydrates, including vegetables. A keto diet is fairly radical and socially not easy to manage, but it's certainly not impossible. Would you like to follow a keto diet? Seek guidance from a professional, especially if you have diabetes. For more information about the keto diet, see page 24.

## Conclusion

How many or how few carbs you should eat varies for each individual. You need to listen to your own body to figure out what works for you. What do you want to achieve? What feels right to you? Read about it and experiment. Experience for yourself the difference between more and fewer carbs, so you know what effect carbs have on your body. That's the only way to gain insight into the conflicting messages we receive about low-carb foods and nutrition.

I would like to add that eating moderately low carb is absolutely delicious, far tastier than the one-sided, traditional, Western, carbohydrate-rich diet, and that it's very easy to maintain.

Anyone saying the contrary either hasn't tried it yet or is strongly addicted to carbs. They can't stay away from the (fast) carbs—not because the high-carb foods are so delicious, but because they are addictive. I know that feeling all too well, because I've been there. As soon as you are released from your addiction, you'll feel liberated and discover a delicious cuisine that will truly make you happy. Just have a look through this book if I haven't convinced you yet.

### **Important note:**

Some people can eat plenty of fast carbs without gaining weight. Sometimes people come up to me and tell me with pride how they can eat plenty of chips, potatoes, bread and even chocolate bars and still stay slim. But being slim on the outside doesn't necessarily mean that you're healthy on the inside. You may have already heard of TOFI: **thin outside, fat inside.**

Doctor William Cortvriendt sums it up as follows: "Slim people who eat lots of fast carbs have in their blood all the factors which can lead to problems with joints, diabetes, or cardiovascular disease later in life, just like people who are overweight."

Do you want to live a good life? Stay close to what feels natural to you and eat high-quality, fresh food.

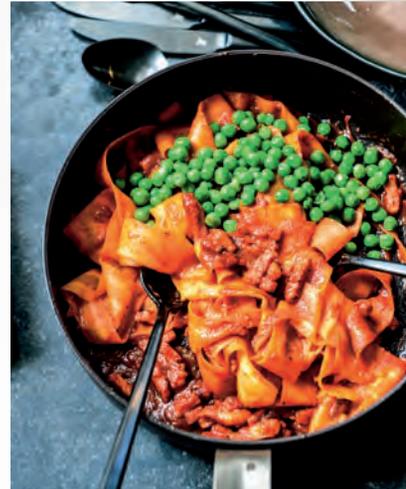


ready in  
**15 minutes**



# carrots

## with bacon and peas



- 3 large, fat carrots
- 7 oz (200 g) diced bacon
- 9 oz (250 g) strained tomatoes or tomato puree
- 3½ oz (100 g) peas (fresh or frozen)

Cook the diced bacon for approximately 4 minutes in a non-stick pan without any oil or fat. Meanwhile, slice the carrots into thin strands using a vegetable peeler. Add the strained tomatoes and the peas to the bacon, stir and then scatter the carrot strands on top. Cover the pan and allow to simmer for a few minutes until the carrots are just cooked. Stir everything carefully.

### TIP: FRESH OR FROZEN PEAS

Fresh peas are the best, but you will only find these in the spring. Thankfully, frozen peas are a perfect alternative. They have the advantage that they've already been blanched, which means that you only have to heat them through at the end. Fresh peas should ideally be cooked about 4 minutes.

### TIP: KETO

Replace the peas with relatively low-carb edamame beans (see cover).

*This is probably the dish with the least work and the most flavor. It's so delicious.*



*There's so much you can  
do with eggplant.*



# “Asian style” eggplant ✓ keto and shrimp

- 1 lb (450 g) organic shrimp with tail (approx. 12 shrimp)
- 2 eggplants
- ¾ oz (20 g) ginger
- 1½ oz (40 g) fresh cilantro

Slice the eggplant into ¼-inch (½ cm) slices and then slice them again into sticks. Finely chop the ginger and add it to the eggplant sticks. Sauté the eggplant and ginger for 6 to 7 minutes until tender in some olive oil and season with salt and pepper. Stir occasionally. Push the vegetables to one side of the pan and cook the shrimp approximately 3 minutes in the same pan, next to the vegetables. Roughly chop the fresh cilantro and mix it in with the vegetables just before serving.

#### TIP: HERBS

Use plenty of ginger and cilantro, as they give this dish that typical Asian flavor. Are you not a fan of cilantro? Try using basil instead.







*A juicy steak with velvety-smooth garlic  
and crunchy thyme—absolute bliss!*



# sirloin steak ✓keto

## with zucchini

- 10½ oz (300 g) sirloin steak
- 1 large zucchini (or 2 for big eaters)
- 1 head of garlic
- 1½ oz (40 g) fresh thyme (2 bunches, with soft stems)



- balsamic vinegar -

Slice the head of garlic in half horizontally across the middle (see the photo above). Slice the zucchini. Splash a bit of olive oil in a large frying pan, add the zucchini and place the two halves of the head of garlic in the pan with the cut side down. Do not turn the garlic over during cooking. Sauté the vegetables over medium to high heat.

Season the meat with salt and pepper. After 7 minutes, push the vegetables over to one side and add the meat to the pan. Place the thyme sprigs alongside the meat. Add a little olive oil if necessary. Cook the meat for 2 to 3 minutes on each side (or longer, depending on how you want your steak cooked). Just before serving, drizzle a little balsamic vinegar over the zucchini. Serve the meat with the zucchini, velvety-smooth garlic and crunchy thyme.