

# The Minimalist Cook



**The Minimalist Cook** approach to food is about simple food and simple methods. The recipes are not only for novice cooks, but for anyone who feels worn out from the recent years of high-profile chef shows, cooking magazines, trendy food, foodism, exotic ingredients, and a general sense that if you have people over for dinner, you really ought to put on a show. It is time to step back from cooking as a form of consumerism and instead look to its simplest and humblest forms for the purpose of sharing food, breaking bread.



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Photography by Steve Johnson

**Here are seven** main-course recipes to give you a start toward being a Minimalist Cook:

**Laughably Simple and Unoriginal, but I'm Serious:**

The Simplest Possible Roast Beef  
Easy Roast Chicken

**One-bowl Wonderful:**

Easy Macaroni and Cheese  
Quick Caribbean Chicken Chili

**Chopped and Fresh Anytime:**

Quick and Healthy Two-Bean Chopped Salad  
Fast Chicken Pecan Salad  
Snappy Mediterranean Tuna Salad

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Thank you for downloading my first little ebooklet. Do let me know if you have comments or questions or suggestions via the Minimalist Cook blog at <http://minimalistcook.com> .

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Check out my other blog at <http://minimalistwoman.com>



# The Simplest Possible Roast Beef

Yes, there are some really fabulous instructions for making roast beef out there, and I've tried dozens of them. The point of this method, though, is that it is minimalist and the resulting flavor is pure roasty beef, ready for fresh horseradish sauce or a hearty mustard. Cutting very thin slices increases flavor and reduces chewiness, and also makes it easier to consume a smaller, healthier amount of red meat.

1. Buy a 3-4 lb boneless hunk of rump roast or whatever looks good or is on sale at the grocery store.
2. Take it out of the wrappings and plunk it into a baking dish big enough to hold it. No cover, no seasonings, no liquid, no rack, no nothing.
3. Turn the oven on to 375F and put the roast into the oven for about an hour.
4. Stick an instant-read thermometer into the middle of the roast; if it reads 130F, it's cooked, medium rare in the middle, more well done on the edges. If not, roast a little longer, and check the temperature every ten minutes until it reads 130F.
5. Remove from oven and let the roast rest, unsliced, for about half an hour.
6. Slice as thin as you can, crosswise to the grain of the meat.

Quintessentially served with fresh prepared horseradish—look in the refrigerated section of the grocery store and at farmer's markets. Both the Polish brands from Chicago and Amish ones from Indiana are terrific in my area.



# Easiest Roast Chicken

There are all kinds of ways to roast chicken, most of them pretty darn good, and many of them involve a lot of steps and a lot of mess. Whole chickens make a beautiful presentation, but cut-up chicken can be laid to cook faster and more evenly, and without so much time-consuming prep work.

Oven 375F

Spray 9 x 13" baking pan with cooking spray.

Ingredients: 1 3-4 lb pkg whole cut-up chicken, olive oil, Kosher salt, pepper, and optional seasonings such as rosemary, lemon-pepper, or rotisserie seasoning.

Arrange whole cut-up chicken parts in pan, skin side up, thickest parts at the outside edges of the pan.

Drizzle with olive oil and rub it into the chicken skin a little.

Sprinkle with fresh-ground pepper and kosher salt to taste, or sprinkle with seasoned blend such as lemon-pepper.

Roast for 45 minutes to 1 hour, or until thickest portion of chicken reads 170F on instant-read thermometer.

Let rest for 20 minutes before serving.

This method works with all chicken breast pieces or leg quarters as well. The leftovers are wonderfully delicious for sandwiches and salads.



# Easy Macaroni and Cheese

Honestly, this is easier than the boxed stuff with the alien cheese powder in it! In fact, you don't even have to bake it, just let it simmer in the pot on low heat for a few minutes. The pot will be a pain to wash up, but it saves turning on the oven on a warm day.

Oven 400F

Lightly spray, oil or butter a 9 x 13 baking dish

Cook according to directions:

1 lb elbow macaroni

Drain well

In a large bowl, mix together:

1 qt heavy cream

¼ tsp ground nutmeg (if you don't have it on hand, skip it)

1 pound shredded cheese (Italian blend, or Colby/Jack combo is nice)

Add cooked macaroni to cream and cheese mixture, and stir thoroughly to coat the pasta. Pour into baking dish and bake for @ 20 minutes.

Lovely options:

Top with buttered breadcrumbs before baking, or even a couple slices of bread torn into small pieces and tossed with melted butter.

Add 4-8 ounces of shaved or chopped ham or prosciutto to the cream and cheese mixture.

Other possible additions: peas, mushrooms, black olives, green olives, drained diced tomatoes, chili peppers, roasted red peppers, chopped onions, chopped broccoli



# Quick Caribbean Chicken Chili

Here's a quick and spicy one-pan supper that assembles in minutes. You can find jerk seasoning spice blends in the spice display in most grocery stores. Experiment to find the one you like best.

Heat a little oil in a big skillet and brown  
1 lb ground chicken

Add

½ pound chopped onions  
1 Tb finely chopped fresh garlic (2-3 cloves, or use prepared garlic available in jars)  
1 Tb jerk seasoning spices, such as McCormick's  
Stir everything together and don't let the garlic burn.

When onions are soft, add:

1 can black beans  
1 can diced tomatoes  
1 cup frozen corn kernels  
3 Tb brown sugar

Stir and deglaze the pan and reduce the heat to let the flavors blend for @ 10 minutes

Add

1 Tb lime juice (bottled is fine)  
salt to taste

Alternative: skip the ground chicken, start with sauteeing the onions, and add 12 oz canned chicken breast, drained, with the beans and tomatoes.



# Quick & Healthy 2 Bean Chopped Salad

This can be made with just about any kind of canned beans or crispy veggies. Add softer veggies and tomatoes or cheese only if you are not keeping the salad for longer than a day.

Empty into colander:

1 can black beans  
1 can cannolini or navy beans  
Rinse under tap until water runs clear, then set aside to drain

Chop into small pieces

6-7 radishes  
1-2 stalks celery  
4-5 green onions  
1-2 carrots  
½ sweet red or green pepper

Mix beans and vegetables together in a bowl. Drizzle with:

¼ c olive oil  
juice of 1 lemon  
Stir to mix it all up

Taste, and add more lemon juice or sprinkle on a mild vinegar such as malt vinegar or brown rice vinegar for more snap. Add coarse salt and fresh ground pepper to taste. Cover and give it at least an hour in the fridge to marinate, but it tastes good right away, too.

If you have fresh herbs to hand, try a little finely chopped rosemary or basil.

Top with grated cheese or mix in a can of drained tuna for an extra hit of protein.



# Fast Chicken Pecan Salad

Poppy seeds can vary radically in quality and price, as can fresh grapes. You can leave out the poppy seeds and still have a good salad, and canned pineapple bits are easy to keep on hand or to buy on sale. Pecans can also be scarce or expensive, and I've substituted them with everything from walnuts to sunflower seeds.

For Salad Dressing:

Mix together

1 c mayonnaise  
1 ½ Tb apple cider vinegar  
2 Tb honey  
2 tsp poppy seeds  
salt & pepper to taste

Stir dressing into mix of:

1 ½ lbs cooked chicken breast, cubed, or 2 12.5-oz cans of chicken breast, drained and crumbled (leftover roast chicken is really good here, too!)  
3 stalks celery, chopped fine  
1 c chopped pecans  
1 20-oz can unsweetened pineapple tidbits or chunks  
OR 2 c seedless red grapes

chill for several hours for best flavor.



# Snappy Mediterranean Tuna Salad

This is not the same old sandwich-filler with mayo and hard-boiled egg. It's much lighter, and this recipe makes enough for several large plate-sized servings or plenty of leftovers for lunch the next day.

For dressing, whisk together:

4 Tb good olive oil

Juice of 1 whole lemon

1 Tb Dijon mustard

A few finely chopped tarragon or basil leaves, to taste,

OR 1 ½ tsp dried tarragon or 1 tsp dried basil

Fresh ground pepper & Kosher salt to taste

Stir dressing into salad mix of:

1 c finely shredded carrots (2-3 carrots)

24 oz canned Albacore tuna, drained and crumbled

½ red bell pepper, chopped

½ small onion, chopped

½ c pitted and chopped Kalamata olives

2-4 oz crumbled Feta cheese

Can be eaten immediately, but a few hours covered in the fridge intensifies the flavors.

