



the **Made**
of More

Recipe Storybook

Helping make mealtime moments
more approachable, accessible,
inclusive and welcoming.

Recipes and
stories from and
for the head and neck
cancer (HNC) and
thyroid cancer (TC)
communities

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Welcome!

If you're living with head and neck cancer (HNC) or thyroid cancer (TC), or caring for someone with HNC or TC during their treatment, your meals may look a little different than they used to due to side effects from treatment or surgery. However, mealtime remains a vital part of daily life — providing both essential nutrients and opportunities for connection.

The following pages share unique stories from HNC and TC community members, reflecting on the many ways people have adapted to a new normal after their cancer diagnoses and treatments. You'll find their favorite recipes alongside tips and advice on how to navigate food-centric events and holidays, prepare meals with loved ones, dine at friends' homes, and more.

Our goal through this collection of recipes is to help you discover ways to continue finding enjoyment while cooking and eating, even as your mealtime experience evolves. While some aspects of your routine may change, mealtime can still be a source of joy and connection.

We hope these pages help you and your loved ones make mealtime more approachable, accessible, inclusive, and welcoming.

About Made of More and #TruthAboutTC

This recipe book was developed as part of **Made of More** and **#TruthAboutTC**, initiatives that aim to provide support and community for those affected by HNC and TC. For more personal stories from people impacted by these diseases, as well as helpful resources and information to help others navigate their own experiences with HNC and TC, see below.



To find more information on HNC, scan the QR code below to visit **MadeofMore.com**.

To find more information on TC, scan the QR code to visit **TruthAboutTC.com**.





Chavon's Story

"Today when I eat, tears involuntarily stream down my face, but to still be here, I'll take a little weeping."

Chavon, who was diagnosed with parotid gland cancer (also known as salivary gland cancer) in 2014.

Shifting mindsets

Hi, I'm Chavon. I've never met anyone else with parotid gland cancer, the type of HNC I was diagnosed with. The parotid glands are the pair of major salivary glands in front of and below each ear. My experience began with a lump behind my ear, which doctors originally dismissed as insignificant, and it took another whole year before getting my diagnosis. At first, my mindset was overwhelmingly negative as I couldn't shake my frustration that the cancer had a year to progress to stage IV because my concerns had not been taken seriously by the doctor. I also grappled with my diagnosis because I had always been healthy — I was active, never smoked, and had navigated four healthy pregnancies. Deep down, I knew I needed to find a way to stay present and go into survival mode for my children.

Due to the cancer's location, I was recommended to an ear, nose and throat (ENT) doctor, whose urgency helped shift my mindset in a more positive direction. His fast-moving plans to address the cancer made me feel that my concerns were finally being heard. I received my diagnosis in March, had surgery by May, and started chemotherapy and radiation in August. I was ready to embrace the road ahead for my family and myself.

Connecting with community

It's important to always seek out community. When I was pregnant with my twins, I found support groups, so I did the same after my diagnosis. Through Support for People with Oral and Head and Neck Cancer (SPOHNC), I connected with others who had gone through similar experiences. Their biggest advice was to keep eating, even as treatment diminishes your appetite. They emphasized that during this time, food is crucial for maintaining your strength and avoiding the need for a feeding tube. Therefore, I pushed myself to eat whatever I could manage. In the early days of treatment, I could only stomach two foods — cantaloupe and farina — but I ate as much as I could, knowing each bite was a small victory and a step toward recovery.



Turning to an old recipe

As treatment progressed, I started experiencing a slew of side effects: weakness, chronic cysts on my eyelids, splits in my toenails, breakouts from eczema flare-ups, and digestive issues. I needed to find a way to sustain my strength in order to help mitigate these challenges. One day, I saw a bone broth recipe on a talk show. It reminded me of what my dad used to say about how, during his childhood, people turned to bone broth to help during their healing journeys. Inspired by that memory, I decided to try making my own beef bone broth recipe.

Cancer has undeniably changed my relationship with food. I now gravitate more toward natural foods, filling my plate with a variety of veggies and organic options whenever possible. I've traded sugar for honey, and avoid milk as well as fried foods. Of course, that doesn't mean I always say no to treats. Life is meant to be savored, and that means eating the occasional brownie!

Chavon's Slow Cooker Beef Bone Broth

Prep Time: 15 min

Cook Time: 24 hrs

Total Time: 25 hrs

Servings:
10 8-oz. glasses



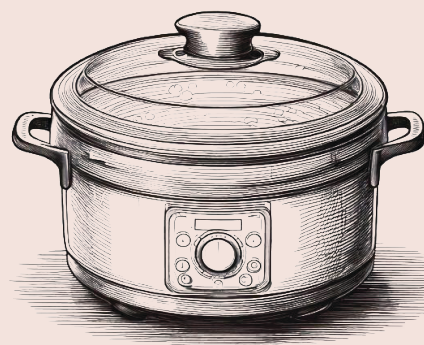
Directions:

- 1 Rinse bones thoroughly and place in slow cooker. Add water until it's about a ½ inch from the top.
- 2 Cook on high setting for 12 hours. For the first few hours, watch for potential boiling over.
- 3 Switch to low setting for another 12 hours.
- 4 Cool for about 1 hour (be careful as it will be very hot). Once cooled, remove bones with tongs or slotted spoon and place to the side.
- 5 Use a strainer to pour broth into a large pot. The grease and fat will stay in the strainer, the good broth will flow into the pot.
- 6 Place bones in zip lock freezer bag to use again the following week. Store in the freezer.

To serve: Warm like a cup of tea and sip carefully.

Ingredients

- 5 to 6 beef bones (grass-fed preferred)
- 64 oz of water (add more or less water depending on the size of your slow cooker)



Tip for making mealtimes more approachable:

It's all about moderation.

A cancer diagnosis often inspires people to embrace healthier eating habits, but it's important to still maintain the joy in food and mealtimes. Find the healthy dishes you love to create and savor equally, but don't feel guilty about indulging in sweets or other non-healthy favorites occasionally. Balancing nourishment with enjoyment is a great way to sustain not only your body but also your spirit.

Jack's Story

"Most people take eating for granted — it's just something you do. My motto is: I used to live to eat. Now I eat to live. It's just a different mindset."

Jack, who was diagnosed with squamous cell carcinoma, and his wife Maryellen.

Searching for the path forward

Hello, I'm Jack. In June of 2001, I found a tumor at the base of my tongue, but it took until mid-August to get a proper diagnosis. I had two exploratory surgeries where doctors failed to obtain a biopsy of the tumor. It took a fine-needle biopsy to finally reveal that there were cancer cells in one of my lymph nodes and I was officially diagnosed with squamous cell carcinoma, or tongue cancer.

We caught the cancer early — stage 2 — so I opted not to have surgery. Instead, I had to undergo 36 high-dose radiation treatments and eight rounds of chemotherapy. After enduring this intense treatment period, my doctors told me, "You're done. That's all we can do." I took that to mean that I could now relax and move on. I didn't realize that even 23 years later, I would still be dealing with the effects of having cancer.

The obstacles of food and eating

Eating becomes a major hurdle for many people with head and neck cancer. Foods that you once relished may become off-limits. There's no one-size-fits-all diet after a diagnosis — everyone is different.

The key is to find what works for you — try different things. Go to one of those buffets where they have a wide variety of items, and just try a little bit of each. Go from there and build your meals around what you can and cannot tolerate. I love to cook, so with each discovery, I was thinking up new recipes or figuring out ways to tweak ones I already knew. My advice is to never stop experimenting. My eating abilities have changed considerably over the years, and while it may be daunting, you will also adjust and evolve along the way.

My wife, Maryellen, has also played a huge part in helping me navigate these changes. If we're eating out at a restaurant and Maryellen finishes her meal first, she will ask the waiter to not clear her plate right away, which helps me feel more comfortable eating at my own pace. In Maryellen's eyes, she's not finished with her meal until I'm done eating.

Staying connected through cooking

Even though what's on our plates has changed, the spirit of our family dinners has not. At least once a week, we come together to try new recipes, and I'm conscious of the fact that everyone tries to eat along with my needs so that we can still have shared experiences around food.

Our extended family will come over often for barbeques and other food-related gatherings, knowing how much I love to cook. Since I've been fortunate to have my family always accommodate my eating habits, I'll go to any length to ensure that there is always something there for everyone. These moments around family and friends are constant reminders of the joy and connection that can still exist around mealtimes. To me, it proves that even after a cancer diagnosis changes how and what you can eat, there are still options for you, and you can still socialize and feel "normal" around the table.



Jack's Butternut Squash Soup

Ingredients

- 2 small or 1 large butternut squash, peeled, seeded, cubed and roasted
- 1 yellow onion, diced
- 1 large carrot, diced
- 1 stalk celery, diced
- 1 large tart green apple, peeled and diced
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1 teaspoon dried marjoram
- 1/8 teaspoon cayenne pepper (optional, to taste)
- 4 cups vegetable broth
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- Pinch of nutmeg
- Pinch of cinnamon
- Optional for garnish, as desired:
 - Tablespoon of sour cream
 - Chopped green onions
 - Crispy bacon bits
 - Small cubes of apple



Prep Time: 30 min

Cook Time: 35 min

Total Time: 1 hr 15 min

Additional Time: 10 min

Servings: 4-6

Directions

- 1 Peel and cube the squash in 1" pieces and place it on a baking sheet. Drizzle with olive oil, and season with salt and pepper to taste. Bake it in a 400-degree oven for about 30-45 minutes until it is tender.
- 2 In a large Dutch oven, drizzle olive oil in the bottom and add in the onion, carrot, celery and apple. Sauté over medium heat until the onion and celery are translucent.
- 3 Add thyme, marjoram, roasted squash, and vegetable broth to the Dutch oven.
- 4 Stir to combine and bring to a simmer over medium heat.
- 5 Once it starts to simmer, turn the heat down to low, cover the pot with a lid and let it simmer for another 5-10 minutes.
- 6 Blend everything with an immersion blender until it's smooth.
- 7 Add a pinch of nutmeg and cinnamon, and season with salt and pepper to taste. I like and can tolerate spice, so I add in cayenne pepper, but that's an optional addition.
- 8 Ladle the soup into a bowl and garnish with a scoop of sour cream and green onions or crispy bacon bits and small cubes of apple for crunch.

Tip for making mealtime
more inclusive during the holidays:

Make a list and send it out!

With the holiday season so centered around food and eating, it can be intimidating for someone who's been recently diagnosed with head and neck cancer to attend and enjoy holiday gatherings. To help ease my own anxiety, I send out a list of 50 eating tips for head and neck cancer to whoever I'm visiting every year. Everyone always looks forward to that list — even people who have received it 8 or 10 times.

If you're going to a function, don't be afraid to give the host or hostess a heads up about foods that may not work for you. Remember your friends and family want you to be comfortable, and you deserve to have a good time during the holidays!

Ada's Story

"Like bees working together towards a sweet and positive end, my 'hive' of family and friends provided love, prayers, flowers, and plenty of soup."



Ada, who was diagnosed with HPV-positive squamous cell carcinoma.

The Sting

I'm Ada, and at 62, I was diagnosed with HPV-positive squamous cell carcinoma. My cancer journey started in the most unexpected place — as I was beekeeping and tending to the hive in my backyard, a bee managed to sting my neck through my protective wear. Weeks later, there was still a lump on my neck. I went to see an ENT who performed an endoscopy and recommended a biopsy. After inconclusive results, I followed up with a head and neck surgeon that conducted a neck dissection and tonsillectomy. Hidden all the way on the back of my left tonsil was a tiny focal point that my surgeon took a biopsy of, confirming an HPV-attributed squamous cell carcinoma diagnosis.



Craving normalcy

My surgery was only a week before Thanksgiving, but I still attended since my whole family wanted me to come over to celebrate the holiday. While everyone around me was eating huge plates of food, I grew frustrated only being able to take small bites. By the time my family had finished eating, I had eaten maybe a fourth of my plate. I attended this family event because I was craving normalcy, but it ended up being a frustrating meal that I could no longer experience in the same way.

Leaning on my hive

Treatment was far worse for me than recovering from surgery. With the constant burning in my throat, the mouth sores from surgery, and the fact that my esophagus was now smaller, swallowing was so painful that it was hard to focus on anything else. During the 7 weeks of my radiation and chemotherapy treatments, I hardly ate and began losing weight rapidly. It got to the point that if I lost anymore, I'd need a feeding tube. I didn't want to go down that path, but the overwhelming anxiety after my diagnosis left me with no desire to eat.

I was doing my best to find and consume the most nutrient-rich food, turning to food items like milkshakes, but it wasn't enough. When my family started to regularly check in on me, bringing food for my daughters and me, my sister would bring over orders of Chinese food with wonton soup. That's how I discovered that this soup was the perfect remedy for me. It was easy enough to eat that I realized I could still enjoy meals with my family and friends. It felt like that simple soup was the missing key to reconnecting with the joy of eating.





Ada's Wonton Soup

Prep Time: 40 min Total Time: 50 min

Cook Time: 10 min Servings: 2

Directions

Make Wontons

- 1 Put all the filling ingredients (pork, ginger, scallion greens, cooking wine, soy sauce, salt and sesame oil) into a bowl and mix everything together.
- 2 Lay wonton wrappers on a work surface. Put 2 teaspoons filling in the center of the wrapper.
- 3 Dab the edges of the wonton wrapper with water. Fold in half to make a rectangle and seal, pressing out any air.
- 4 Dab water on one corner of the rectangle (not one of the seam corners) and bring the corners together pressing to seal and create a little 'bonnet'. Put wrapped wontons in a container with a lid as you work so that they don't dry out.

You can store and freeze uncooked wontons in an airtight container. From frozen, cook 6-8 minutes.

Cook Wontons

- 1 Bring a large pot of water to a boil.
- 2 Place the wontons into the water and cook for 4 minutes or until they float.
- 3 Remove with slotted spoon straight into serving bowls.

Ingredients

For Wontons

- 1 package of wonton wrappers or enough for 25-30 wontons (These can be found in Asian markets or in the vegetable or refrigerated section of most grocery stores)
- 1 lb. ground pork
- 1 tablespoon grated fresh ginger
- 2 finely chopped scallions/green onions (Separate white part of the onion from the green and save it to use in your broth!)
- 2 tablespoons Chinese cooking wine (Shaoxing wine is highly recommended as it adds depth to the flavor of the filling. You can substitute sherry, sake, or mirin. If you can't consume alcohol, omit.)
- 1 teaspoon light soy sauce
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 2 teaspoons toasted sesame oil



Ada's Wonton Soup

Directions

Make Broth

- 1 Place all broth ingredients in a saucepan over high heat. Add the white ends of scallions if you have them left over from wonton filling. Cover and bring to a simmer.
- 2 Reduce to medium and continue to simmer for 5-10 minutes to allow all the flavors to infuse.
- 3 Remove garlic, ginger, and scallions before serving.
- 4 If adding bok choy, blanch it in the soup broth for 2 minutes, and then place in the serving bowl with the wontons.

Assemble Soup

Add 6-8 cooked wontons to each serving bowl and ladle the broth over. Add chopped scallions on top as desired.

Serve and enjoy!



Ingredients

For Broth

- 3 cups chicken broth, enough for two servings (If you are at the Asian market, buy the Asian chicken broth. It's yellower and tastes cleaner than the regular store-bought chicken broth.)
- 2 garlic cloves, smashed
- 1 small piece of fresh ginger, peeled and sliced
- 1½ tablespoons light soy sauce
- 2 teaspoons sugar
- 1½ tablespoons Chinese cooking wine (Shaoxing)
- ¼ teaspoon toasted sesame oil
- 2 scallions/green onions (white bases only, left over from wonton filling)

For Serving (optional)

- Finely chopped scallions/green onions
- Bok choy



Tip for making mealtime more approachable:

Plan ahead.

My advice for others with HNC would be to plan ahead, before you start treatment. Keeping up your weight is very important, so have protein shakes ready to order and try to find ways to overcome the lack of desire to eat. Your body needs the minerals, proteins, and calories from food. Nourishing yourself can help you heal and, hopefully, avoid other procedures like inputting a feeding tube. Find something that works for you and stick to it. Maybe it'll be my wonton soup!

Cindy's Story

"It's important to recognize every little win when it comes to food. Celebrating every time I reintroduced food back into my diet helped me feel excited about the progress I was making, rather than discouraged by how far I still had to go."



Cindy, who was diagnosed with head and neck cancer originating on her tongue.

Feeling blindsided

Hi, I'm Cindy. When I was 27, I was diagnosed with head and neck cancer. I noticed a sore on the side of my tongue that wasn't healing. Despite my age and lack of risk factors, a biopsy revealed cancer that had spread to my lymph nodes. I was completely blindsided. I underwent surgery to remove parts of my tongue and lymph nodes, followed by 33 radiation therapy sessions and a series of complications — including an infection and an allergic reaction to an antibiotic. Two years later, my cancer returned and I underwent another surgery to remove the cancer and reconstruct part of my tongue shortly after my 30th birthday.

Seeking comfort in the classics

After my surgery and treatments, soup and broth were the first foods I could safely eat. I finished my radiation treatment right as my father's garden began bursting with ripe tomatoes. I saw this harvest as an opportunity to keep both my mind and hands busy. I started making large batches of tomato soup, even canning some to have throughout the winter. Now every summer since, I pick tomatoes from my father's garden for this soup.

In the years since my diagnosis, I have learned to adapt certain foods to make them more manageable to eat. I often add broth, gravy, or dressings to meals to ensure I have an easier time swallowing. For example, I'll dip sandwiches in soup or broth. My favorite combination has become the classic tomato soup with grilled cheese made from my mom's recipe — a comfort from childhood that brought me solace during recovery. For other foods, like salads and vegetables, I'll cut them into tiny little pieces to make them easier to eat.



Focusing on the positives

My eating habits permanently changed after cancer. Right after treatment, I only ate around close family and friends, warning them that my eating may not look or sound the way it used to. Over time, I started letting people know if there were certain things being served that I felt uncomfortable consuming, and my loved ones got in the habit of checking with me beforehand.

There are some foods that I won't eat when I am alone because they are a choking hazard. While this can feel frustrating and like a loss of independence, I choose to focus on what I can still enjoy rather than the things that remain challenging. If you're going through something similar, know that despite the difficulties, there are many worthwhile and exciting moments waiting for you on the other side.

Cindy's Tomato Soup and Grilled Cheese

Prep Time: 15 min Total Time: 55 min

Cook Time: 40 min Servings: 4

Directions for Tomato Soup:

- 1 Preheat the oven to 450 degrees. Quarter your tomatoes and the onion. Cut the head of garlic in half (leave the heads in the bulb) and put all 3 on a baking sheet. Drizzle 1-2 tablespoons of olive oil on top of all the vegetables and season with salt and pepper to taste. Place in oven and bake for 30-40 minutes or until softened. (Tip: you may taste seasonings differently after radiation treatment, so alter or remove as needed. You can add them after the fact if you're enjoying a meal with others!)
- 2 On the stove, heat 1 tablespoon of olive oil in a Dutch oven (my preferred method) or a large pot. Add the vegetables you roasted from the oven — be sure to squeeze the garlic cloves out of the skins at this stage! Add the full carton of vegetable stock, the heavy whipping cream, and the parmesan cheese. Stirring frequently, allow the ingredients to come together in the pot for 5-10 minutes until everything is heated and the cheese has melted.
- 3 Puree the soup using an immersion blender or stick blender and insert it directly into the pot to puree the soup until it reaches your desired texture. (Tip: Certain textures may be difficult to tolerate after surgery and radiation. Don't hesitate to blend soups more or less than a recipe requires to make it easier or more palatable to eat!). If you do not have an immersion blender, you can pour the contents of the pot into a regular blender — you may need to do this in more than one batch as you shouldn't fill your blender more than 2/3 full with hot liquid.

Taste and add additional seasonings to your liking.

Ingredients

For Tomato Soup

- 10-15 garden fresh tomatoes (depending on size)
- 1 head of garlic
- 1 small yellow onion
- A handful of fresh basil
- 1 carton vegetable broth (I prefer low-sodium)
- 2-3 tablespoons of olive oil
- ½ cup heavy whipping cream
- ½ cup grated parmesan cheese
- Salt & pepper to taste



Cindy's Tomato Soup and Grilled Cheese

Prep Time: 4 min Total Time: 10 min

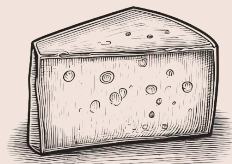
Cook Time: 6 min Servings: 1



Ingredients

For Grilled Cheese

- 2 slices of any bread of your choice (Tip: I prefer heartier breads now that I have gained confidence eating after treatment, but softer breads might be easier to consume to start)
- 1 slice of cheddar cheese
- 1 slice of gouda cheese (Tip: feel free to substitute cheeses that are more to your taste preferences after treatment)
- 1 tablespoon of mayo
- 1 tablespoon of butter



Directions for Grilled Cheese:

- 1 On the stove, heat a small pan on medium/medium-high heat. If you don't have non-stick cookware, you can use cooking spray to ensure an easier time flipping the sandwich (I prefer avocado oil spray). Alternatively, you can use a sandwich panini press or even a tabletop grill with a sandwich setting.
- 2 Place down one slice of bread and spread the inside with $\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoon of mayo. Add the 2 slices of cheese on top. Spread the other $\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoon of mayo on the other slice of bread and place face down on top. Then add $\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoon of butter on the top of the sandwich.
- 3 Place the sandwich butter side down in your pre-heated pan on the stove and grill for 2-3 minutes or until golden. While the first side is grilling, add the additional $\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoon of butter to the top of the sandwich so it is prepared when it comes time to flip the sandwich. After flipping, grill for another 2-3 minutes on the other side or until golden.

Tip for making mealtime more inclusive:

Be vocal about what you need.

Don't hesitate to ask family and friends to have dressings, gravy, or soup available to make eating easier post-treatment — or bring your own. Even the most sensitive cooks are understanding about the circumstances.

For dining out, check restaurant menus online first. If needed, call ahead to discuss your dietary needs with the chef. I have found that most places are extremely understanding and willing to work with me to find creative solutions to adapt their menu.



Becky, who was diagnosed with papillary thyroid cancer, and her husband and caregiver Mike.

Becky's Story

"For me it was about us getting through this, not just Becky getting through this. We became real partners in the whole dietary approach and that has really continued past treatment. We've changed our dietary system a lot."

—Mike, husband and caregiver

Believe me, something is wrong

Hello, I'm Becky. In 2009, I was diagnosed with papillary thyroid cancer after trying to get a proper diagnosis for 8 years. My initial symptoms — panic attacks, heart palpitations, hair loss, dry skin, and weight gain — were dismissed as menopause. Finally, I found a female doctor who better understood the nuances of menopause and therefore referred me to an endocrinologist, who ordered a fine-needle biopsy. The results confirmed that it was papillary carcinoma, and with that, my cancer journey began.

Taking back control in the kitchen

Since my cancer was treated through radioactive iodine (RAI) therapy, my doctor recommended that I follow a low-iodine diet. Doing so meant I had to avoid foods that contain iodized salt, and limit others such as dairy products, certain seafoods, soy, and more all to help my treatment be more effective.

My cancer diagnosis made me feel powerless, but this low-iodine diet became an unexpected area where I could experience a sense of control. Taking ownership of what I was eating was a small but empowering way to contribute to the success of my treatment. Suddenly, the kitchen was my sanctuary — a space where I channeled all my energy into experimenting with new recipes. This focus provided a sense of calm and a welcome distraction from the stress of my diagnosis.

If you're navigating a low-iodine diet, remember that you are only as limited as your imagination. You'll master the rules of the diet before you know it, and then you can dive into a world of delicious alternatives. There are so many different meals you can make that will have you feeling satisfied, and far from deprived. That's the purpose of this chickpea salad: to show you how one simple recipe can open the door to countless options. I eat this salad on its own over a bed of mixed greens, use it as a spread on crackers, or put it in a sandwich or wrap.

Rethinking the dinner plate

This journey has had a profound effect on what my family puts on our dinner plates, and led us to question what we put into our bodies. We think more deeply about our choices and the impact of what we eat. This new mindset has transformed our eating experience and our dietary preferences — in the best way.



Ingredients

- 1 can of no salt added chickpeas (garbanzo beans), rinsed and drained
You can also cook dried chickpeas from scratch!
- 1 celery stalk, diced
- ¼ cup diced scallions (can also use white or red onion)
- 2 tablespoons of flat-leaf Italian parsley, chopped
- 1 avocado (to replace the mayo if needed)
- ¼ cup diced red or green bell pepper
- A pinch of non-iodized salt, to taste (like Kosher salt)
- Lettuce cups, toasted bread, matzoh, or a bed of greens for serving
- 1-2 tablespoons of lemon juice



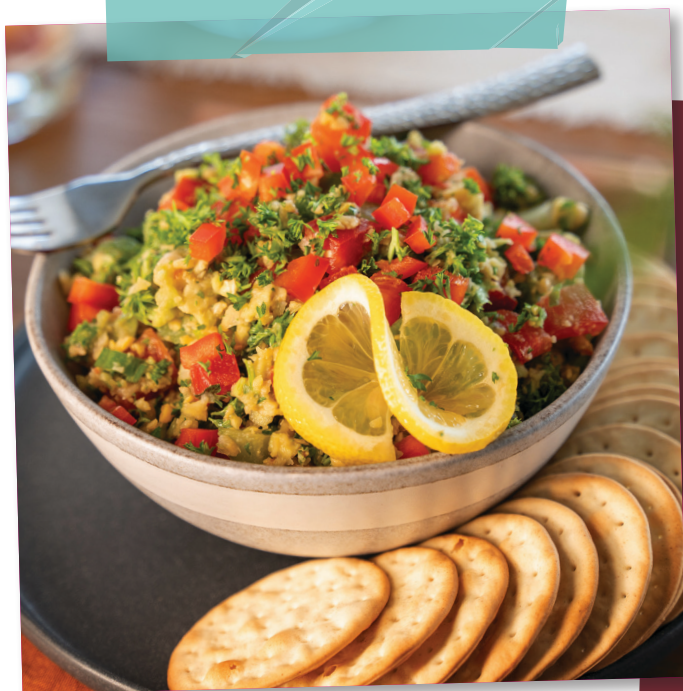
Becky's Chickpea Salad (low-iodine)

Prep Time: 20 min

Total Time: 20 min Servings: 4

Directions

- 1 Pour the chickpeas into a mixing bowl and mash them.
- 2 To the bowl, add the diced celery, scallions, pepper and chopped parsley and combine with the mashed chickpeas.
- 3 Carefully slice the avocado in half, discard the pit, and scoop out avocado flesh, adding to small bowl. Add a tablespoon or two of lemon juice and then mash the avocado.
- 4 Add the avocado to the bowl with the chickpeas and vegetables, add a pinch of non-iodized salt (like kosher salt) and fold everything together. (Tip: It is important on the low-iodine diet not to use regular iodized table salt. But there are many kinds of non-iodized salt, so you want to add that, otherwise it's a bit bland.)
- 5 Put the mixture in a lettuce cup, on a slice of homemade bread made without iodized salt, on matzoh, or on a bed of greens.



Tip for making mealtime more approachable at someone else's home:

Don't be afraid to bring your own food – and share!

We have a very particular diet so when friends invite us over for dinner, they'll always ask, "what can I cook for you?"

Our response is usually, "You cook whatever you'd like. We'll bring something to share." Our friends and family members have been pleasantly surprised by how much they like the dishes we bring to the table.



Steve's Story

"After my diagnosis, I could have worried or lived in fear every single day, if I chose to. I had no idea what the future held, but I knew stressing about it wouldn't change the outcome."

Steve, who was diagnosed with HPV-attributed squamous cell carcinoma in his throat.

Jumping into action

I'm Steve, and in August of 2017, I received life-changing news: I had HPV-attributed squamous cell carcinoma. I didn't even know that men could get HPV-related cancers. However, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), HPV-positive throat cancer actually occurs more frequently in men than in women.

It all started when I found a lump on my neck while shaving. My doctor originally prescribed steroids to shrink it, but once it became clear those had no effect on the lump, I went to an ear, nose, and throat (ENT) doctor. Results from an MRI showed a cyst on a lymph node near my carotid artery. What I was hoping would be a routine medical procedure to remove the cyst led to the devastating call: my doctors found cancer.

My immediate reaction was, "What do I do?" My ENT recommended a radiation oncologist, and before I knew it, I was being fitted for a radiation mask designed to keep my head and neck still and in position to help deliver the radiation accurately during treatment. To protect my vocal cords from the radiation, my doctor placed a special stopper on the mask. Having sung with the Gay Men's Chorus of Los Angeles for almost 20 years, I was grateful for the special measures taken to protect my vocal cords throughout my seven weeks of radiation and six rounds of chemotherapy.

Going back to the basics

After my diagnosis, I had to adjust the types of foods I enjoyed eating. Radiation made my throat hurt, causing me to give up spicy foods. I felt like some foods would be easier to avoid rather than deal with the discomfort they might cause. For a while during treatment, my taste buds were unreliable, and I found myself choosing bland foods that would be easy on my throat rather than going for the flavorful foods I enjoyed.

Finding joy again

Recovery was hard. Chemotherapy affected my speech, so weekly visits to a speech therapist soon became part of my routine. Five months after completing my treatment, a performance with my chorus group sparked so much joy in me. I had to keep searching for those joyful moments, which is where this salad recipe comes in. The process of bringing all those wonderful ingredients together is fun. Sitting in my kitchen, surrounded by persimmons, pears, peaches and pomegranates as I prepare to make this salad, brings me happiness. Finding the things that bring pleasure should not be overlooked during recovery and even after.

Thankfully, my taste has mostly returned, although I still shy away from very spicy foods. My story remains one of hope and serves as a reminder to take time to enjoy the little moments — such as making a delicious salad.



Steve's Persimmon Pomegranate Fruit Salad

Ingredients

- 4 Fuyu persimmons
- 1 cup pomegranate seeds
- 1 Bartlett or Green Anjou pear
- 1 yellow or white peach
- 1 Granny Smith apple
- 2 teaspoons lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon honey
- Mint for flavor



Prep Time: 15 min

Total Time: 15 min

Servings: 4

Directions

- 1 Peel the Fuyu persimmons and the Granny Smith apple.
- 2 Chop the Fuyu persimmons, Bartlett or Green Anjou pear, and yellow or white peach into $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch pieces.
- 3 Core and chop the Granny Smith apple into $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch pieces.
- 4 Combine all these ingredients with the pomegranate seeds, lemon juice, and honey in a large bowl and mix. Add mint for flavor.

Tip for making mealtime more accessible:

*Play it safe & adjust
as needed.*

During recovery, adjust your diet based on how your body is feeling — pay attention to the different flavors you can taste and the different foods that may or may not cause discomfort, and then adjust accordingly. After cancer treatment, especially with certain types of head and neck cancer, it's important to be mindful of eating foods that are gentle on your throat.



Trish's Story

"Cooking was the way I took care of my family—it was how I showed my love. To have something affect my mouth and my taste buds—and the process of enjoying food—was very devastating."



Trish, who was diagnosed with squamous cell carcinoma in her cheek, with her husband and caregiver John — with whom she shares a teenage daughter named Gramercy.

Finding out I have cancer

I'm Trish. In the summer of 2022, I had a dentist appointment that changed my entire world. I went in for what I originally thought was a bad cheek bite and an hour later I was receiving a biopsy procedure. I was then diagnosed with squamous cell carcinoma, a form of head and neck cancer. Two weeks later, I was in surgery to remove the cancer, which was followed by 33 radiation treatments and 6 weeks of chemotherapy.

Mealtime after my diagnosis

With a head and neck cancer diagnosis, everything about eating changed for me. During my treatment, the radiation therapy became so intense that I had to be on a liquid diet. This not only made it hard to get my necessary daily calories, but it also transformed my family's dining experience. My husband, John, and I were no longer sitting down together to eat full meals with our daughter, Gramercy, and with each skipped dinner, we lost more than just shared food. We missed out on precious moments of connection.



Finding a new way to connect

This smoothie recipe started as a lifeline, but it turned into something much more meaningful.

During my treatment, it became the go-to solution for getting the calories I needed, and it was simple enough that John and Gramercy could also make it. Preparing this smoothie became a new way for us to bond. We would get creative — adding ice cream, topping it off with sprinkles, and using fun straws. Each smoothie was now more than just nourishment, it was an opportunity to be together. While I couldn't sit down for a full meal anymore, these shared times around the blender brought us joy and a sense of normalcy. With each creative twist and delicious sip, we were reclaiming our moments of connection.



Trish's Peanut Butter Chocolate Banana Smoothie

Prep Time: 7 min

Cook Time: 3 min

Additional Time: 1 minute

Total Time: 10 min

Servings: 1 smoothie



Ingredients

- 1 cup of whole milk (If you don't want milk, you can replace it with coconut water. This can help you with staying hydrated during chemotherapy)
- ½ cup vanilla Greek yogurt
- 1 tablespoon of creamy peanut butter or another nut butter, if tolerated
- 1 scoop of chocolate protein powder
- 1 banana, peeled, sliced and frozen
- Whipped cream to garnish



Directions

- 1 Pour the cup of whole milk in a blender.
- 2 Add in:
 - Greek yogurt
 - A tablespoon of peanut butter
 - A scoop of chocolate protein powder
 - Frozen banana slices
 - For extra creaminess and calories, consider adding an avocado
- 3 Once everything is in the blender, place the lid on the blender and blend everything together until it's smooth.
- 4 Pour it into a fun or special glass. Sometimes I add whipped cream on top to make it feel more special and my daughter always likes to add ice cream and sprinkles.

Tip for making mealtime more inclusive during the holidays:

Fill up before the event.

During the holiday season, I would prepare for a meal with family by adding more protein to this smoothie recipe and drinking it before leaving the house. Once at the holiday celebration, I'd still pick up a plate and add all the food to it. Even though I wasn't eating what was on my plate, moving the food around helped me feel like I was having the same experience as everyone else. It made me feel normal.

Allison's Story

"People often think that when you're done with your treatment, you're fine. They don't realize there are some issues that you may have to deal with forever. I think it's important to find people who get it and have been there so you can learn from their experiences."



Allison and her husband Sean, who lives with Fanconi Anemia, a rare genetic disorder that causes bone marrow failure and increases the risk of developing head and neck cancer (HNC) by more than 500 times relative to the general population.

Taking on the caregiver role once more

Hello, I'm Allison. My husband Sean was diagnosed with tongue cancer in 2014, but my first time stepping into the role of his caregiver was three years earlier after he was diagnosed with Fanconi Anemia (FA) – a rare disease that leads to bone marrow failure and is a risk factor for various cancers, including HNC. His FA diagnosis called for a bone marrow transplant, which required me to sign a caregiving contract that outlined my responsibilities for providing around-the-clock care for the 100 days following his procedure. While it helped prepare me for our future, it did not fully equip me for the challenges that come with HNC.

Sean's tongue cancer required extensive surgery in which they removed half of his tongue and all of the lymph nodes on one side. As a result, my then 37-year-old husband needed therapy to re-learn how to talk, swallow, and eat. He could no longer do the way he used to do three of life's most basic functions – ones that connect us, provide us with nourishment, and keep us alive.

Learning to eat again

For weeks after Sean's surgery, he was unable to eat or drink normally. During that time I would mix liquid nutrition with water, measuring and pouring the mixture into a bag to attach to his feeding tube every few hours. Once he was able to eat by mouth again, his diet had to be highly modified. It was challenging to find foods that he could tolerate, while also trying to feed myself and our daughter. I sometimes felt guilty eating certain things in front of him, knowing he couldn't join in. My priority was finding foods that sounded appealing to him and were high in calories, which he desperately needed at that time. If there was one week where the only thing he could stomach was a Blizzard® from Dairy Queen, then that's what I'd get him!

While it was fun and successful to get Sean to eat with things like Blizzards, I knew he needed more than calories. He required nutrients, especially protein. I played around with different ingredients until I came up with this nut butter smoothie. The best part was that it was a hit with all three of us! It no longer felt like he was eating something special as part of a post-treatment diet, or that we were eating something he couldn't eat with us. We were once again all sharing the same meal.

I'm happy to report that today Sean's speech is completely unaffected, and he can eat anything he chooses.



You're part of the story

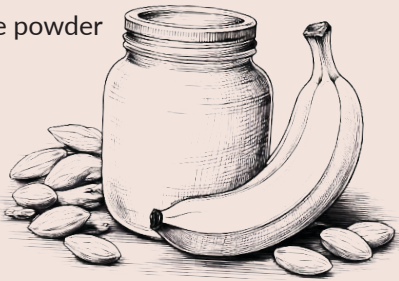
After Sean's diagnosis, his treatment and recovery were understandably our family's focus, but my daughter and I were still part of the story too. I want others who may find themselves assuming the caregiver role to recognize their own importance in this journey. While you're pouring your attention and resources into your loved one, it's essential to acknowledge that what's happening is affecting you as well. It's okay to admit that this is hard.

Ingredients

- 1/2 cup of ice
- 1/3 cup of any type of milk
- 1 banana, peeled and sliced
- 2 tablespoons of your favorite nut butter (We love peanut butter or almond butter)
- 1 teaspoon of cinnamon
- 1 scoop of protein powder (We like vanilla, but you can use your favorite flavor)

Optional, as desired:

- Chia seeds
- Fiber powder
- Creatine powder
- Yogurt
- Honey



Allison's Nut Butter Smoothie:

Prep Time: 7 min

Total Time: 10 min

Cook Time: 3 min

Servings: 1 smoothie

Directions

- 1 Put all the ingredients in a blender in the order listed (add ice to your blender first).. Add any extra ingredients your loved one wants or needs, e.g., chia seeds, fiber powder, creatine powder.
- 2 Once everything is in the blender, place the lid on the blender and blend everything together until it's smooth. Serve immediately.



Tip for making mealtime more accessible:

Make a list of their favorite high-calorie options that are easier to eat.

Make a list of everything you know your loved one enjoys, is easy to eat, and contains lots of calories (like the Blizzards we would eat with Sean!). Start with a food that sounds appealing, something they love and will look forward to eating. Eventually, once you figure out how to modify those favorites, your loved one will get the nutrients and protein they need, and smoothies are a great example of how you can do that.

Thank you for reading and allowing
Made of More to be part of your
culinary journey.

Our hope is that, within these pages, you found new ways to help your meals be more nourishing and your mealtime moments more meaningful and manageable.

As we close the pages of this recipe storybook, we want to take a moment to honor the strength, resilience, and spirit of those who have been affected by HNC and TC. This collection of recipes, personal stories, and heartfelt advice shows how mealtime moments can remain approachable, accessible, inclusive, and welcoming, even after a cancer diagnosis.

We hope these dishes inspire you to find your own approach to cooking and eating, and that the stories help you prepare for potential changes in your mealtime experiences. Whether you've recently been diagnosed, are currently undergoing treatment, or are in recovery, remember that each meal can be a small victory, a moment of comfort, and a way to connect with others.

For additional support, head to [MadeofMore.com](https://www.madeofmore.com) and [TruthAboutTC.com](https://www.truthabouttc.com) to explore valuable resources available from our advocacy partners.

Looking for more TC-friendly recipes?

Visit [TruthAboutTCRecipes.com](https://www.truthabouttc.com/recipes) to explore an interactive cookbook filled with delicious and healthy recipes by and for the TC community.

Scan the QR code to explore our **Made of More** YouTube channel, where you'll find more inspiring stories from the community and helpful information from health care providers.



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