A FREE GUIDE FROM SAMANTHA BAX

The Quiet Three

Three everyday kitchen habits that quietly work against you after 60, and the simple swap for each. With 3 recipes to try this week.

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FOR WOMEN OVER 60 WHO COOK AT HOME

A Note from Samantha

You're not doing it wrong. You're doing it the way you were told.



Most of the women who write to me aren't eating badly. They've done the reading. They buy the whole-grain bread. They cook with olive oil. There's yogurt or cottage cheese in the fridge and soup in the pantry for the nights they're too tired to cook.

And still, something isn't adding up.

Usually it comes down to three habits. None of them looks like a mistake. Each one hides inside a choice you made *for* your health, which is exactly why nobody points them out.

This guide takes them one at a time. For each habit you'll get what's really going on, why it matters more after 60, one simple swap, and a recipe that puts the swap to work.

The nutrition for every recipe is calculated from the exact ingredients and amounts listed. When it says 179 calories and 32 grams of protein, that's what's on your plate.

It takes about ten minutes to read. The swaps take less time than that.

Samantha

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HABIT ONE

The salt you can't taste

Ask most people where their salt comes from and they'll point to the shaker. It's a reasonable guess, and it's wrong.

The FDA estimates that more than 70 percent of the sodium Americans eat comes from packaged and prepared foods, not from the shaker on the table. And some of the saltiest foods in a careful kitchen are the ones that look the healthiest. Here is what some everyday favorites typically carry:

Cottage cheese, ½ cup	**350–450 mg**
Canned chicken noodle soup, 1 cup	**700–900 mg**
Deli turkey, 2 ounces	**400–600 mg**
Whole-grain bread, 2 slices	**200–400 mg**
For comparison: potato chips, 1-ounce bag	**150–170 mg**

Half a cup of cottage cheese can carry more than twice the salt of a small bag of chips.

Why it matters more after 60

Blood pressure tends to rise as we age, and many of us become more sensitive to salt along the way. The American Heart Association recommends no more than 2,300 mg of sodium a day, with an ideal limit of 1,500 mg for most adults. A breakfast of cottage cheese and toast, followed by a cup of canned soup at lunch, can reach that 1,500 mg before dinner. And none of it tastes especially salty.

> THE SWAP: THE 10-SECOND LABEL CHECK
>
> Turn the package over and find **Sodium**. Ignore the milligrams and look at the **% Daily Value** beside it. **5% or less is low. 20% or more is high.** Anything over 20% gets swapped, or saved for a special occasion.
>
> On cans of beans, tomatoes and broth, look for **"no salt added."** Be careful with "reduced sodium": it only means 25% less than the original, which can still be a lot.

Soup is the easiest place to start. The recipe on the next page has about 215 mg in a generous two-cup bowl. A single cup from a can often has four times that.

RECIPE FOR HABIT ONE



Garden White Bean Soup

Prep 15 minutes | Cook 25 minutes | Serves 4 (about 2 cups each)

INGREDIENTS

- 1 medium onion, diced
- 2 medium carrots, diced
- 2 celery stalks, diced
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 4 cups unsalted chicken or vegetable broth, divided
- 1 can (14.5 oz) no-salt-added diced tomatoes, with juice
- 2 cans (15 oz each) no-salt-added cannellini beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 teaspoon dried Italian herbs
- 3 cups baby spinach
- 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
- Black pepper, to taste

INSTRUCTIONS

1. **Soften the vegetables without oil.** Put the onion, carrots, celery and ¼ cup of the broth in a large pot over medium heat. Cook for 6 to 8 minutes, stirring often, until soft. Add another splash of broth if the pot gets dry.
2. **Add the garlic** and cook for 1 minute, until fragrant.
3. **Simmer.** Add the remaining broth, the tomatoes with their juice, the beans and the Italian herbs. Bring to a gentle boil, then lower the heat and simmer for 15 minutes.
4. **Thicken.** Use the back of a spoon to mash about a cup of the beans against the side of the pot. This makes the soup creamy without any cream.
5. **Finish.** Stir in the spinach and cook for 1 to 2 minutes, until wilted. Take the pot off the heat, then stir in the lemon juice and season with pepper.

216	14 g	1 g	40 g	13 g	215 mg
CALORIES	PROTEIN	FAT	CARBS	FIBER	SODIUM

Samantha's tip: the lemon juice at the end is the secret. A little acid brightens every other flavor in the pot, so you don't miss the salt. The soup keeps 4 days in the fridge and up to 3 months in the freezer, so make the full pot and freeze half.

HABIT TWO

The pour

Olive oil earned its good name. It's a healthy fat, and it belongs in your kitchen. The trouble isn't the oil. It's the pour.

Nobody measures. We tip the bottle over the pan, again over the roasting tray, and once more over the salad. A tablespoon of olive oil is about 120 calories. Between the pan, the tray and the dressing, it's easy to use two and a half tablespoons in a single dinner without noticing.

That's about **300 calories**, close to a small extra meal, hidden inside a dinner you thought of as light.

Why it matters more after 60

Most of us need fewer calories as we get older. We carry a little less muscle and move a little less, so there's less room for extras. The pour that never showed up on the scale at 40 shows up now, a little more each year.

> THE SWAP: MEASURE IT, OR SKIP IT
>
> **Measure with a spoon, not the bottle.** A teaspoon is plenty for a pan of vegetables, and a tablespoon of dressing will do a salad for two.
>
> **For chicken, fish and onions, you often need none at all.** A hot, dry nonstick or well-seasoned cast-iron pan browns food beautifully. When it's done, a splash of broth, wine or lemon juice lifts the browned bits off the pan and turns them into a quick sauce.

The recipe on the next page shows you how. Cooked the usual way, in two tablespoons of oil, each serving would carry about 60 more calories. Cooked dry, it's 179 calories with 32 grams of protein, and nobody at the table will know the difference.

RECIPE FOR HABIT TWO



Dry-Pan Lemon Herb Chicken

Prep 10 minutes | Cook 15 minutes | Serves 4

INGREDIENTS

- 1¼ pounds boneless, skinless chicken breasts (4 small, or 2 large sliced in half horizontally)
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- ½ cup unsalted chicken broth
- 3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley

INSTRUCTIONS

1. **Even it out.** Place the chicken between two sheets of plastic wrap and pound it to an even ¾ inch thick. Even pieces cook evenly and stay juicy.
2. **Season** both sides with the paprika, oregano and pepper.
3. **Heat the pan dry.** Set a nonstick or well-seasoned cast-iron skillet over medium-high heat for 2 minutes. Add the chicken and leave it alone for 5 to 6 minutes, until it's golden underneath and lifts away easily.
4. **Turn and finish.** Flip the chicken, lower the heat to medium, and cook 4 to 6 minutes more, until a thermometer in the thickest part reads 165°F. Move it to a plate.
5. **Make the pan sauce.** Add the garlic to the hot pan for 30 seconds. Pour in the broth and lemon juice, scrape up the browned bits, and simmer 1 to 2 minutes until slightly reduced. Spoon over the chicken and scatter with parsley.

179	32 g	4 g	2 g	0 g	82 mg
CALORIES	PROTEIN	FAT	CARBS	FIBER	SODIUM

Samantha's tip: if the chicken sticks, it isn't ready to turn. Give it another 30 seconds and it will let go on its own. And check the label when you buy chicken: some packages say "contains up to 15% chicken broth" or "solution." That's added salt, and it can multiply the sodium. Choose chicken with nothing added.

HABIT THREE

The meal you under-feed

It's breakfast.

Most of us eat it light. Toast, a piece of fruit, coffee, perhaps a small bowl of cereal. It feels sensible. But a breakfast like that often adds up to less than 10 grams of protein. Lunch is light too, and most of the day's protein ends up on the dinner plate.

Why it matters more after 60

After 60, the body loses muscle faster and becomes less efficient at building it back. Researchers have found that older adults may need more protein at each meal than younger people to get the same benefit, and many experts now suggest spreading it through the day, with around 25 to 30 grams at each meal rather than saving it all for dinner.

This isn't about bodybuilding. Muscle is what gets you up from a low chair, carries the groceries in, and keeps you steady on the stairs. It matters more with every birthday.

> THE SWAP: PROTEIN FIRST
>
> Build breakfast around a protein, then add the rest. Plain Greek yogurt, eggs or egg whites, or a slice of last night's chicken all work.
>
> Greek yogurt has a bonus that ties back to Habit One: a cup of plain Greek yogurt has about 80 mg of sodium. The same amount of cottage cheese can have 700 mg or more.

The recipe on the next page takes five minutes and gives you 23 grams of protein before your coffee's cold.

If you have kidney disease or have been told to limit protein, talk with your doctor before eating more of it.

RECIPE FOR HABIT THREE



Five-Minute Greek Yogurt Bowl

Prep 5 minutes | No cooking | Serves 1

INGREDIENTS

- A scant cup (200 g) plain nonfat Greek yogurt
- ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ½ cup blueberries, fresh or frozen and thawed
- 1 tablespoon ground flaxseed
- 1 tablespoon chopped unsalted walnuts

INSTRUCTIONS

1. **Start with the yogurt.** Spoon it into a bowl and stir in the cinnamon.
2. **Sweeten with fruit.** Mash a few of the blueberries into the yogurt with a fork. They sweeten it naturally, with no honey or sugar needed.
3. **Top and serve.** Scatter the rest of the blueberries over the top, then sprinkle with the flaxseed and walnuts.

246	23 g	9 g	22 g	5 g	75 mg
CALORIES	PROTEIN	FAT	CARBS	FIBER	SODIUM

Samantha's tip: make four at once in lidded jars, with the walnuts and flaxseed in a separate little container so they stay crisp. Breakfast is ready for most of the week. Swap the blueberries for raspberries, chopped strawberries or a diced peach as the seasons change.

WHERE TO START

Your first week

You don't have to change everything at once. Here's a simple week that puts all three swaps in place:

Day 1	Do the 10-second label check on five foods in your fridge and pantry. Move anything at 20% or more to the back of the shelf.
Day 2	Make the Five-Minute Greek Yogurt Bowl for breakfast.
Day 3	Make the Dry-Pan Lemon Herb Chicken. Put the oil bottle in the cupboard while you cook.
Day 4	Make the Garden White Bean Soup. Freeze half for next week.
Days 5–7	Repeat whatever you enjoyed. Add a protein to every breakfast, even if it's just an egg.

That's it. Three small swaps, one week, and a kitchen that finally works as hard as you do.

THE THREE SWAPS, SIDE BY SIDE

Habit One: the 10-second label check. 20% Daily Value or more is high.
Habit Two: measure the oil with a spoon, or brown in a hot, dry pan.
Habit Three: protein first at breakfast, aiming for 25 to 30 grams.

THE "CAN I ACTUALLY LIVE THIS WAY?" TEST

Before you change anything in your kitchen, ask yourself five questions:

1. Can I find these ingredients at my usual grocery store?
2. Will I actually enjoy eating this?
3. Can I make it without a special trip or a new gadget?
4. Could I still do this on a tired Wednesday in February?
5. Could I still be doing it a year from now?

If the answer to any of them is "no," it isn't the right change for you yet. All three swaps in this guide were chosen to pass this test.

Thank you!

I'm so glad you're here. I hope these three small swaps make your kitchen feel easier, and your plate a little kinder to you.

Keep an eye on your inbox. I'll be sending more recipes and kitchen notes your way.

Samantha

Want more recipes like these?

Samantha's cookbooks are written the same way: ordinary ingredients, clear steps, and a full nutrition panel with every recipe. Three good places to start:

- **For heart health and less salt:** *The All-New Pritikin Diet for Seniors After 60*
- **For more protein while losing weight:** *The All-New Low Calorie High Protein Low-Carb Diet Cookbook*, Third Edition, with 150 recipes under 500 calories
- **For the Mediterranean way of eating:** *The All-New 1200 Calorie Mediterranean Diet Cookbook for Senior Women*

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One sensible word: if you take medication for blood pressure or blood sugar, mention any change in how you eat at your next doctor's visit. This guide is general information, not medical advice.
Nutrition is calculated per serving from USDA FoodData Central values for the ingredients and amounts listed. Brands vary, so check your labels.
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