



# Simple Secrets

TO GETTING YOUR FAMILY  
TO EAT HEALTHY FOODS

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Method 2 - Leveling Up

# Method 2

## Leveling Up

Instead of focusing on the  
"perfect" meal,  
find ways to "level it up."



"Leveling up" is when you swap or add, without necessarily hiding, whole foods into the meals your family already eats. Rather than going completely incognito, like you do with pureeing, leveling up allows you to openly incorporate whole foods into your family's meals as an ingredient. This is our absolute favorite method because it's simple to do on the fly and doesn't require much time or thought, just a little culinary creativity.

This is a great way for your family to acquire a taste for new foods because they see them as a part of the meal, rather than as an unwanted addition to their plate (such as a side helping of broccoli). This method works best if your family is more concerned with how the food tastes, rather than what's in it. For example, if their cheesy egg casserole tastes delicious, they're perfectly fine eating it despite the bite-size broccoli pieces being visible.

In some cases, however, your picky eaters may not even be willing to try the casserole if they can see the broccoli. If this is your situation, the incognito method may work better, such as hiding the broccoli among the other ingredients in a quesadilla. If your picky eaters are masters at dissecting and still find your secret addition, pureeing may be for you. You know what you're dealing with, so use what works best for you and your family. Choose the recipes you want to make on the basis of which meals you think you can successfully introduce to your family.

# HOW TO ADD WHOLE FOODS TO MEALS

Whole foods, especially vegetables, are a lot more versatile than we often give them credit for. You can put them in just about anything you're making for dinner and dessert, boosting the meal's nutritional value for you and your loved ones.

- **Start by leveling up the favorite meals and regular staple dishes that they already enjoy.** (Research shows that repeatedly pairing new, healthy, whole foods with familiar flavors increases your preference for those foods.)
- **When initially adopting this method, ease them into it by only swapping or adding one or two new foods into their meals at a time.** (This could be fruits, vegetables, whole grains and other nutrient-dense foods.) If your family isn't a fan of certain foods, don't lump them together in one meal.
- **When it comes to adding fruits and veggies, bite-size works best.** Whether it's asparagus, spinach or apples, smaller bite-size pieces tend to yield a more positive response. This is where a sharp knife and a large cutting board become your new best friends.
- **You still want the meal to taste somewhat similar to what they're accustomed to.** Add just enough (you may have to taste test) so that you increase the nutritional benefits but still retain the flavor and appeal of the original dish.
- **Aim for progress, not perfection!** Rome wasn't built in a day and neither were our family's flavor preferences. Compromise where you have to. If adding a little more cheese to their dish will make the meal enjoyable and they'll eat all those veggies, let them. You can cut it back over time.
- **Don't make a big deal about it.** Just serve the "leveled up" meal like you would any other dish.
- **Wait until AFTER they're finished eating (and hopefully enjoying it) to talk to them about it.** Then, keep it light and briefly share how their scrumptious meal included a few stellar ingredients, which help fuel their body and make them strong. Whether it's your children or your spouse, let them know how much you appreciate them trying something new.



## WHAT THIS MIGHT LOOK LIKE FOR YOU

If grilled cheese sandwiches and soup are a family favorite, try adding a teaspoon of mashed avocado in their sandwich. The mashed avocado paired with melted cheese doesn't significantly alter the creamy flavor or texture. If you don't receive pushback, try adding avocado AND a thin slice of tomato next time you make them. Once you've mastered avocado and tomato, mix a few chia seeds into their mashed avocado. Lastly, level it up one more time by using whole wheat bread rather than white bread.

The transition will be gradual, but with a little patience and consistency, the grilled cheese sandwich that they would have turned their nose up at will become one they love and enjoy.

*By making one small change  
at a time, you'll bridge the gap  
between happy and healthy.*

Remember, small steps lead to HUGE transformation. The goal here is to show them that real food CAN taste good. As time goes by, your family will WANT vegetables, whole grains and nutritious foods because they've acquired a taste for them on their own accord, and they're used to having them in, or along with, each meal.

As your family's palate adjusts, you can push the envelope and move on to Method 3—getting them involved in choosing (and possibly preparing) healthy meals. It will happen soon, we promise!





# How to level up meals with healthier versions of the food your family already enjoys

Use the "leveling up" concept whenever you make a meal or recipe. Take a look at the ingredients to see if you can slip in a few additional ingredients or swap one or two to make the dish more nutritious. Remember, consistent, SMALL changes lead to a sustainable (and enjoyable) transformation; we're not shooting for abrupt, complete diet overhauls. You know your family best and what they will and won't welcome.

- Add additional veggies into your family's meals. We've had a lot of success doing this without drastically changing the taste or texture of eggs, hash browns, pasta dishes, macaroni and cheese, casseroles, soup, quesadillas and rice. (Pro tip: Anytime you make veggies, double the amount so you have leftovers to level up future meals.)
- Put some spinach or a few chunks of cauliflower in their smoothies.
- Add fruits and fruit purees to baked goods, cereals and pancakes.
- Try a few roasted vegetables (maybe leftovers from the night before?) served underneath eggs with a side of bacon and toast.
- Fold leftover salmon, burger meat or beans into eggs in the morning.
- Add or substitute pork or beef with leaner meats such as ground turkey or chicken. You can try a 1:1 ratio or substitute it entirely.





- If you order a pizza for take-out, ask for half the amount of cheese—no need to divulge the details. We promise, it'll still have that great cheesy flavor your family loves.
- Use a combination of white and whole wheat pasta. As they become accustomed to it, transition to purely whole wheat.
- Rather than white rice, transition to whole grain or cauliflower rice (or a mixture of the two). Start with a 2:1 white to whole grain/cauliflower ratio, then move to 1:1, and finally, completely transition away from white rice.
- Make your own trail mix with dried fruits and nuts instead of store-bought trail mix, which is filled with refined sugars and preservatives.
- Replace packets of buttered popcorn (often loaded with fat and sodium) with homemade popcorn cooked on the stovetop with a little coconut oil.
- Rather than spreading mayo on a sandwich, add a few slices of avocado, which is just as creamy and full of good fats.
- Swap out sour cream or mayo for protein-packed Greek yogurt.
- Add chia seeds and/or flax meal to your dish. Not only do they have SO MANY health benefits, they help you feel full. Smoothies, eggs, casseroles and meatloaf are great meals to add these to. Start by adding a ½ tsp. and see if they even notice.

Whenever you cook, be on the lookout for how you can up the ante a little bit more. Once they get used to you SLOWLY incorporating whole foods into their meals, it won't seem as foreign to them (we promise!).

# Level-up Recipes

## BREAKFAST

### FLAVORED YOGURT

Swirl a big spoonful of blueberry compote in plain Greek yogurt instead of purchasing a sugary, artificially flavored and sweetened option. Once they give it the stamp of approval, swap out the store-bought granola for a simple, homemade one.

### *Recipes to try:*

- [BLUEBERRY COMPOTE](#)
- [HOMEMADE CRANBERRY SAUCE WITH APPLES](#)
- [CHOCOLATE LOVER'S GRANOLA](#)
- [CRUNCHY PUMPKIN SPICE GRANOLA](#)
- [CRUNCHY MAPLE COCONUT GRANOLA](#)

\*All of the recipes can be found on [FULLforLife.com](http://FULLforLife.com).  
Click the recipe title to be taken to the actual recipe page.





## OMELETS OR QUICHE

Because it's normal to serve vegetables in omelets, quiches and scrambled eggs, they're a pretty "safe" way to add an array of veggies (plus a spoonful of chia seeds) into your family's breakfast without a whole lot of pushback. Include a waffle (possibly leftover from the freezer) or a slice of peanut butter toast as a side, and your family shouldn't be too upset by the nutrient-dense additions.

### *Recipes to try:*

- [A SIMPLE QUICHE RECIPE](#)
- [CHEESE OMELET \(+ 6 FILLING IDEAS\)](#)
- [GREEK-STYLE VEGGIE FRITTATA](#)
- [MEXICAN STYLE EGG BAKE](#)
- [QUICHE WITH SWEET POTATO CRUST](#)
- [EASY EGG CASSEROLE](#)
- [MEDITERRANEAN EGG MUFFLETS](#)

## BREAKFAST BURRITOS (OR BREKKI QUESADILLAS)

Just like a quiche or omelet, breakfast burritos are a perfect vehicle for an out-of-this-world, veggie-loaded meal. Rather than just eggs and cheese, add in an array of other nutrient-dense ingredients and slice up an avocado to sit on the table for everyone to add a little healthy fat.

### *Recipes to try:*

- [SOUTHWESTERN BREAKFAST BURRITOS](#)
- [SUNRISE BREAKFAST BURRITOS](#)

## BREAKFAST PATTIES

Trade in the highly processed, prepackaged sausage patties you often find at the grocery store for a healthier, homemade version.

### *Recipe to try:*

- [APPLE TURKEY BREAKFAST SAUSAGE PATTIES](#)

## TOAST

We have a Toast Tuesday each week for good reason! Toast is an easy way to add fruit, protein and healthy fats into your family's diet with little to no pushback.

### *Recipes to try:*

- [AVOCADO TOAST](#)
- [DREAMY APPLE CINNAMON TOAST](#)
- [STRAWBERRY BASIL TOAST](#)



# LUNCH & DINNER

## SANDWICHES

### *Recipes to try:*

- **BLT SANDWICH**: Move over mayo, this sandwich is here to stay! Greek yogurt replaces mayo and a slice of avocado is optional, but certainly recommended.
- **BBQ BURGERS** (with finely chopped mushrooms): This leveled-up version of a traditional burger adds finely chopped mushrooms into the mix. Hats off to anyone who would ever notice.

**Pro tip:** You can also use this idea in almost any beef recipe, such as these traditional **SLOPPY JOES**.

## CASSEROLES

Vegetables are especially easy to add to casserole dishes without a whole lot of pushback. Eyeball it and add to your heart's content.

### *Recipes to try:*

- **CHICKEN ENCHILADA CASSEROLE**
- **LASAGNA**
- **SUMMER CHICKEN PARMESAN WITH A BALSAMIC GLAZE**: Balsamic glaze is a great way to bring a subtle sweetness to almost any meal, and this dish proves it.





## PIZZA

Rather than a delivery pizza, make a homemade one—it's a super easy and fun way to level up a meal. You can mask almost any veggie underneath the flavors and texture of a warm, cheesy pizza. Over time (we did this over months), minimize the cheese so it plays a supporting role in your meal, rather than a lead. Boost the flavor (and health benefits) by adding an array of veggies or fruit (if you haven't tried it, figs taste GREAT on a pizza). Eventually, you can even try making your own whole wheat pizza crust. In the mean time, almost any mom-and-pop pizza joint will sell you a dough ball.

### CHOOSE ONE OR TWO TO START WITH:

- Swap white dough for whole wheat pizza dough, a whole wheat flatbread or whole wheat bagel (personal pizzas).
- Roughly tear up spinach and put it on first so it's UNDER all the rest of the ingredients. Once the pizza bakes, the spinach wilts and is barely noticeable.
- Finely chop veggies and slip them in before you add all that ooey, gooey cheese. Once your family praises your veggie-filled pizza, gradually minimize the amount of cheese.
- Use a cheese with a more profound flavor so you can get away with using less of it. We often use a combination of mozzarella and goat, feta, aged Havarti or mature cheddar. The flavors complement each other in a one-of-a-kind marriage that allows you to use less, without losing the mouth-watering flavor. Once it comes out of the oven, amp up the flavor even more with herbs, spices or a balsamic vinegar drizzle.

## Our staple "leveled-up" pizza

Top dough with pesto or red marinara sauce, mushrooms, green peppers, onions, cherry tomatoes and spinach. Add crushed red pepper, Italian seasoning and a mixture of mozzarella and goat cheese. Serve with a drizzle of balsamic vinegar.



## SNACKS & SIDES

- **HEALTHY HOMEMADE TRAIL MIX** (Kid-Approved): Trade in all the added oils and refined sugars for this simple, real food recipe.
- **PEANUT BUTTER AND CHOCOLATE CHIP SNACK BITES** (also a great after-dinner dessert): This is another leveled-up delight that incorporates all three macros in one delicious recipe.
- **CREAMY CAULIFLOWER RISOTTO WITH CHARRED SWEET CORN**: The creamy flavor paired with charred sweet corn will have your family asking for seconds, without knowing they're eating cauliflower rice instead of white rice.
- **BAKED PARMESAN SPINACH BALLS**: Leveled up with spinach but masked with cheesy flavor, this pre-prepped snack is here to stay.
- **FRIED RICE**
  - Method 1: 1/2 cauliflower rice, 1/2 whole grain
  - Method 2: Veggies added

## DESSERTS

- **HEALTHY PEANUT BUTTER CUP RICE KRISPIE TREATS:** Swap out refined white rice cereal for one with whole grains, and sugar-filled marshmallows for creamy peanut butter, and your family will never look back.
- **EASY BAKED APPLE CRISP (GLUTEN-FREE + NO REFINED SUGAR):** This leveled-up recipe swaps refined sugar for honey and minimizes the butter without sacrificing flavor.

### LEVELED-UP TAKE-OUT MEALS

Who needs the fried kind when these versions  
taste even better?

*Recipes to try:*

- **EGG ROLL IN A BOWL**
- **EASY ORANGE CHICKEN**

