



LOSE THE SUGAR, OIL, AND SALT!



Find the True Taste of Healthy Food

Ramses Bravo has guided hundreds of guests at TrueNorth Health Center toward better health by transforming their eating habits. Now home cooks can enjoy his tempting plant-based dishes with these simplified recipes that anyone can prepare, regardless of time constraints or cooking expertise.



His secret? Remove the three most addictive, pervasive, and damaging ingredients in modern diets—sugar, oil, and salt—and use herbs, spices, and creative culinary combinations to enhance fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and legumes. The results? Improved weight management, lower blood pressure, reduced mood swings, increased energy, and better control over type 2 diabetes.



The recipes in *Bravo Express!* deliver on the promise of appeal and satisfaction. Included are tips from the chef for how to bring out the best in foods without having to sweeten, salt, or fry. Add a wow factor to your dishes by learning how to brown vegetables without fat, make silky dressings and sauces without oil, and use fruits and nuts to create spectacular desserts.

The section on cooking fundamentals will help make food prep a snap, and with two weeks of sample menus, it will be easy to plan what's for breakfast, lunch, and dinner.



Ramses Bravo has been the executive chef at TrueNorth Health Center in Santa Rosa, California, since 2007. His recipes feature simple foods with bold flavors that serve as the foundation of dietary rebirth for people who want to transform their health. Visit ChefRamses.com.



978-1-57067-362-7
\$21.95 US • \$28.95 CAN
BOOK PUBLISHING COMPANY

BRAVO

EXPRESS!

Ramses Bravo

BOOK
PUBLISHING
COMPANY

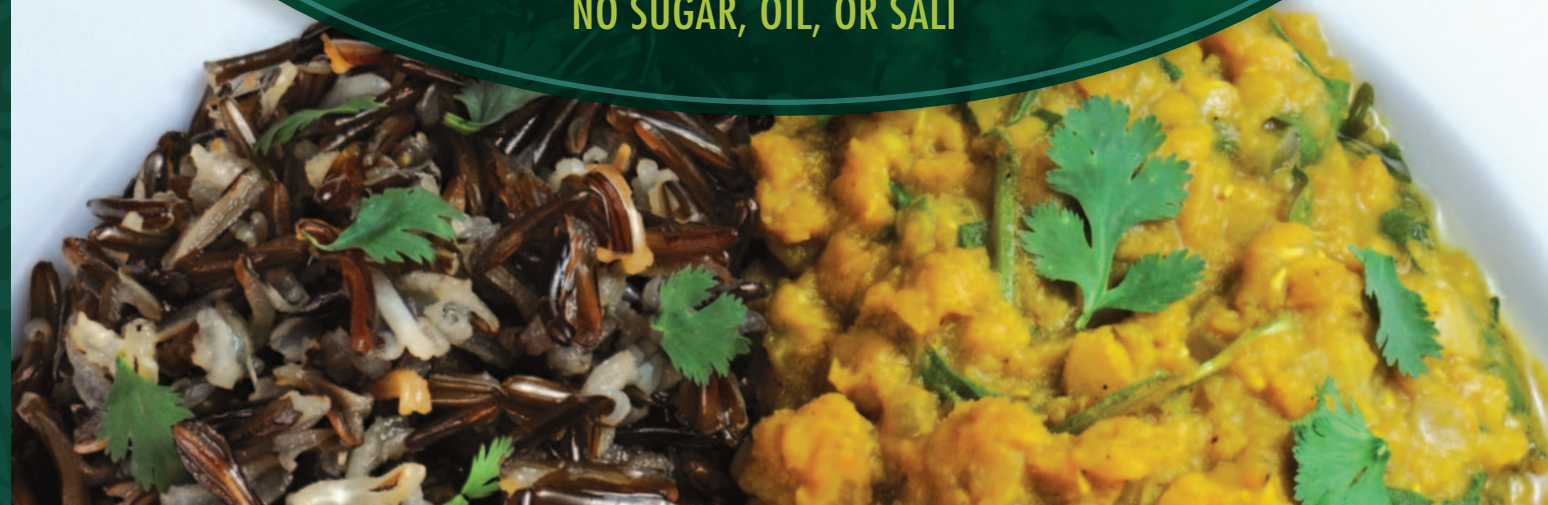


LAY-FLAT BINDING

VEGAN • SOS-FREE

Bravo EXPRESS!

NO SUGAR, OIL, OR SALT



Ramses Bravo

EXECUTIVE CHEF TRUENORTH HEALTH CENTER

CONTENTS

Welcome to Bravo Express! v

Acknowledgments vi

My Story	1
How Bravo Express! Came to Be	5
The Philosophy behind the Diet	7
Getting Started in the Bravo Express Kitchen	11
Bravo Express Cooking Fundamentals	13
Sample Menus for Two Weeks	20

1 SOUPS	25
2 SALADS	37
3 SALAD DRESSINGS	50
4 STARCH AND STARCH-ISH	61
5 WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR PROTEIN?	76
6 VEGETABLE DISHES	87
7 COMFORT FOODS	107
8 SAUCES, SALSAS, RELISHES, AND CHUTNEYS	120
9 SNACKS AND TREATS	133

Index 148

Welcome to ***BRAVO EXPRESS!***

The concept behind this cookbook is very simple: healthy, delicious food made possible by using only a few ingredients and a few steps. That's it.

Who are these recipes ideal for? If you like simple-to-follow recipes, don't want to spend a lot of time in the kitchen, love delicious meals, want ideas for quickly transforming leftovers into great dishes, need a yummy dish to take to a party that no one would single out as "healthy," or just enjoy good food, then this is the cookbook for you. If you suffer from diabetes or high blood pressure, have a heart condition, are struggling with your weight, or simply want to improve your quality of life, then this is the book for you as well. May these recipes bring you joy and health!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ruben', is positioned on the right side of the page. The background of the lower half of the page features a light green floral pattern.

The Philosophy behind the Diet

THE GENERAL PLAN

The diet I'm proposing for you is simple. It's a healthy diet that calls for minimal sacrifices. I call it the SOS-free whole-plant-foods diet. Now let me explain what this means:

- **SOS-free.** This refers to cooking without using refined salt (S), oil (O), or sugar (S), and not eating anything that contains them, including refined carbohydrates, such as breads, chips, cookies, crackers, and so forth.
- **Why no refined sugar?** Sweeteners and syrups, such as sugar, honey, maple syrup, and agave nectar, offer no nutritive value, stimulate the body's insulin response, and cause blood glucose levels to rise. Eating these sweeteners results in cravings and mood swings that can lead to overeating, obesity, and diseases of excess. The human body ages more quickly when it has to process too many empty calories. In addition, when have you seen a cake or a doughnut with sugar but without added fats, such as oil or butter?
- **Why no oil?** A diet high in refined oil increases the risk of diabetes. It also contributes a large number of empty calories. Plus, it forces you to eat more salt. When oil goes into your mouth, it acts as a blanket that prevents other flavors from being detected by your taste buds. Consequently, salt is needed to override this blanket and make food taste more flavorful. When you use oil in your food, it's almost impossible to avoid adding salt.
- **Why no salt?** Have you ever had a meal with people who grab the salt shaker and liberally sprinkle their food without tasting it first? Unfortunately, our bodies develop a tolerance to the taste of salt in food, but the addition of salt results in passive overeating and excess weight gain. Salt also elevates blood pressure, increasing the risk of heart attack, stroke, kidney disease, and osteoporosis.

- **Whole foods.** This refers to eating unrefined foods and whole grains, such as brown rice versus white rice, whole potatoes versus potato chips, whole greens versus shake powders, and whole dates versus maple syrup or agave nectar.
- **Plant foods.** This is simple—no animal products. It means no meat, no cheese, no milk, no cream, no eggs, no bacon (I know this is one of the hardest), and no seafood. If it had eyes (potatoes don't count), you leave it alone.
- **Do you have to be perfect at it?** No, I'm not asking you to be perfect. If I did, I would be setting you up for failure. Instead, I'm asking you to take an interest in your health and in the quality of your life. Yes, I know we're all going to eventually die of something. But during your golden years, do you want your pharmacist to know you by your first name because you have so many prescriptions that need to be filled on a regular basis? If there's an opportunity for sex, do you want to be able to rise (pun intended) to the occasion? Do you wish to keep your relationship with the toilet paper a private matter?

Make no mistake—all of the above factors can and will have a powerful effect on the quality of your life. The closer you adhere to being SOS-free, the trimmer, healthier, and happier you'll be.

Vegetable Broth and Sodium

The purpose of this book is to give you simple recipes that can be prepared quickly. If you make your own veggie broth at home, kudos to you. But if you decide it's more convenient to buy it at the store, make sure to get no-salt-added vegetable broth or a low-sodium version at the very least. Using regular commercial vegetable broth will significantly increase your sodium intake, and it will also change the intended flavor of the recipes.

ADVICE FROM THE CHEF

About Nutrition

Although a nutritional analysis for each recipe is provided, don't get too caught up in it. When it comes to food, it doesn't matter how nutritious it is if it doesn't taste good. You and I both know that. If it's not tasty, you're not going to eat it!

Bravo Express Cooking Fundamentals

THE ART OF DRY SAUTÉING

By definition, *sauté* means to fry quickly in a little hot fat. Such is the practice of putting oil or butter in a pan before adding food, and it's widely accepted that this is the only way to sauté. But just because everyone else seems to be doing it this way doesn't mean you have to!

Allow me to introduce a new concept: dry sautéing. This means to sauté without using any oil. *Say what?* I get it. This new concept may sound strange to you. You might fear that sautéing without oil can't be done because the food will burn and stick to the pan. But let me assure you that I have been dry sautéing both on the job and at home since 2007, and it works every time. I invite you to be one of the few who know how to sauté in a much healthier way.

How to do it: Preheat the pot or sauté pan for a couple of minutes. You'll know that it's ready to go when you put your hand near the inside bottom of the pot or pan (without touching it!) and can feel that it's hot. Put the veggies in the pan as instructed in the recipe. You should instantly hear a sizzle that's almost identical to the sound of sautéing with oil.

Why it works: When each piece of onion, celery, mushroom, or other veggie starts to heat up inside a hot pan, it begins to release its water content. You'll notice that as the veggies cook, steam escapes from the pan. This small bit of water coming out of the veggies prevents them from burning or sticking. Eventually, enough water will evaporate that the veggies, along with the bottom of the pan, will begin to brown nicely. This process will always give you a wide enough window to dry sauté your veggies without burning them.



Cream of Spinach Soup

cream of SPINACH SOUP

MAKES 2 SERVINGS

This soup is a terrific way to get your daily dose of greens without having to eat them raw. For a different twist, replace the spinach with an equal amount of kale.

- ½ cup chopped shallots
- 2 tablespoons chopped garlic
- 6 cups no-salt-added vegetable broth
- ½ cup raw cashews
- 4 cups spinach, firmly packed

- 1 Dry sauté the shallots and garlic in a medium pot over medium heat for 3 minutes.
- 2 Add the broth and cashews and bring to a simmer. Cook for 5 minutes.
- 3 Transfer to a blender. Add the spinach and process until smooth. Serve hot.

per serving

CALORIES

310

PROTEIN

12g

FAT

15g

CARBOHYDRATE

31g

DIETARY FIBER

5g

CALCIUM

220mg

SODIUM

141mg



Spicy Soba Noodles

spicy

SOBA NOODLES

MAKES 4 SERVINGS



soba noodles work well in this recipe because they cook quickly, but any type of noodle can be substituted if you prefer.

6 ounces **soba noodles**

2 cups **Jalapeño-Peanut Dressing** (page 60)

1 cup shredded **carrots**

1 cup **fresh basil leaves**, lightly packed

¼ cup peeled and chopped **fresh ginger**

1 teaspoon **sesame seeds**, toasted (see page 16; optional)

- 1 Cook the noodles according to the package instructions. Drain in a colander and rinse under cold water.
- 2 Transfer the noodles to a medium bowl. Add the dressing, carrots, basil, ginger, and optional sesame seeds and stir gently until well combined.

	CALORIES	PROTEIN	FAT	CARBOHYDRATE	DIETARY FIBER	CALCIUM	SODIUM
per serving	229	9g	5g	38g	2g	51mg	345mg