



# THE HEART OF IT

A Fit Foodie Guide to Women 40+



BY MAREYA IBRAHIM-JONES



This eBook is for educational purposes and is not medical advice. Always consult your healthcare provider for personal guidance, especially if you have a medical condition or take medications.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Welcome: Why I Wrote This .....	03
2. The Wake-Up Call: Heart Health After 50 .....	04
3. The Stats Every Woman Needs to Know .....	04
4. What Changes After Menopause (and Why It Matters) .....	05
5. Your “Big Rocks” Blueprint (the habits that move the needle) .....	06
6. The Fit Foodie Pantry for a Heart-Smart Kitchen .....	08
7. How to Build a Heart-Healthy Plate (without sadness) .....	09
8. The Recipes .....	10
9. A 7-Day Heart-Smart Meal Plan .....	22
10. Grocery List + Simple Swaps 11. Your Next Good Step .....	24



## WELCOME: WHY I WROTE THIS

Hi, I'm Chef Mareya—The Fit Foodie. I've spent my career helping people eat in a way that feels doable, delicious, and empowering. But heart health isn't just another wellness topic for me.

It's personal.

I lost both grandmothers and my mother to heart disease and I've made it my mission to share how we can do our part to everyone who will listen for the rest of my life.

When you hit midlife, something shifts. You realize your health isn't just about jeans fitting or energy levels—it's about staying here for the people you love, and living with strength and purpose while you are. This book is for the woman who:

- is 40+ (or close to it),
- wants to feel confident in her body again,
- doesn't want fear to run the show,
- and is ready to take one good step at a time.

No shame. No perfection. No "boiled chicken and regret." Just real food, real talk, and a plan.



# THE WAKE-UP CALL: HEART HEALTH AFTER 40

We're amazing at taking care of everyone else. We'll track our kid's schedule, our spouse's needs, our parents' appointments... then treat our own bodies like a side hustle.

**But here's the truth:** after 50, heart health deserves main-character energy. Heart disease risk rises with age for everyone, but women have a specific midlife curveball: the menopause transition. Hormonal changes can affect cholesterol, body fat distribution, blood vessel function, and metabolic risk factors—all connected to cardiovascular disease risk.

The good news? Food and lifestyle are powerful levers. And you don't need to be perfect—you just need to be consistent.

## THE STATS EVERY WOMAN NEEDS TO KNOW

**Let's talk facts—because denial is not a strategy.**

- Cardiovascular disease is the No. 1 killer of women, causing about 1 in 3 deaths each year.
- In the U.S., heart disease is the leading cause of death for men and women.
- The CDC reports that in 2023, heart disease was responsible for 304,970 deaths among women—about 1 in 5 female deaths.
- **Also from CDC:** over 60 million women (44%) in the U.S. are living with some form of heart disease.
- **And here's the awareness gap:** only about 56% of U.S. women recognize heart disease as their #1 killer.

If those numbers feel heavy, I get it. But knowledge isn't meant to scare you—it's meant to equip you.



# WHAT CHANGES AFTER MENOPAUSE (AND WHY IT MATTERS)

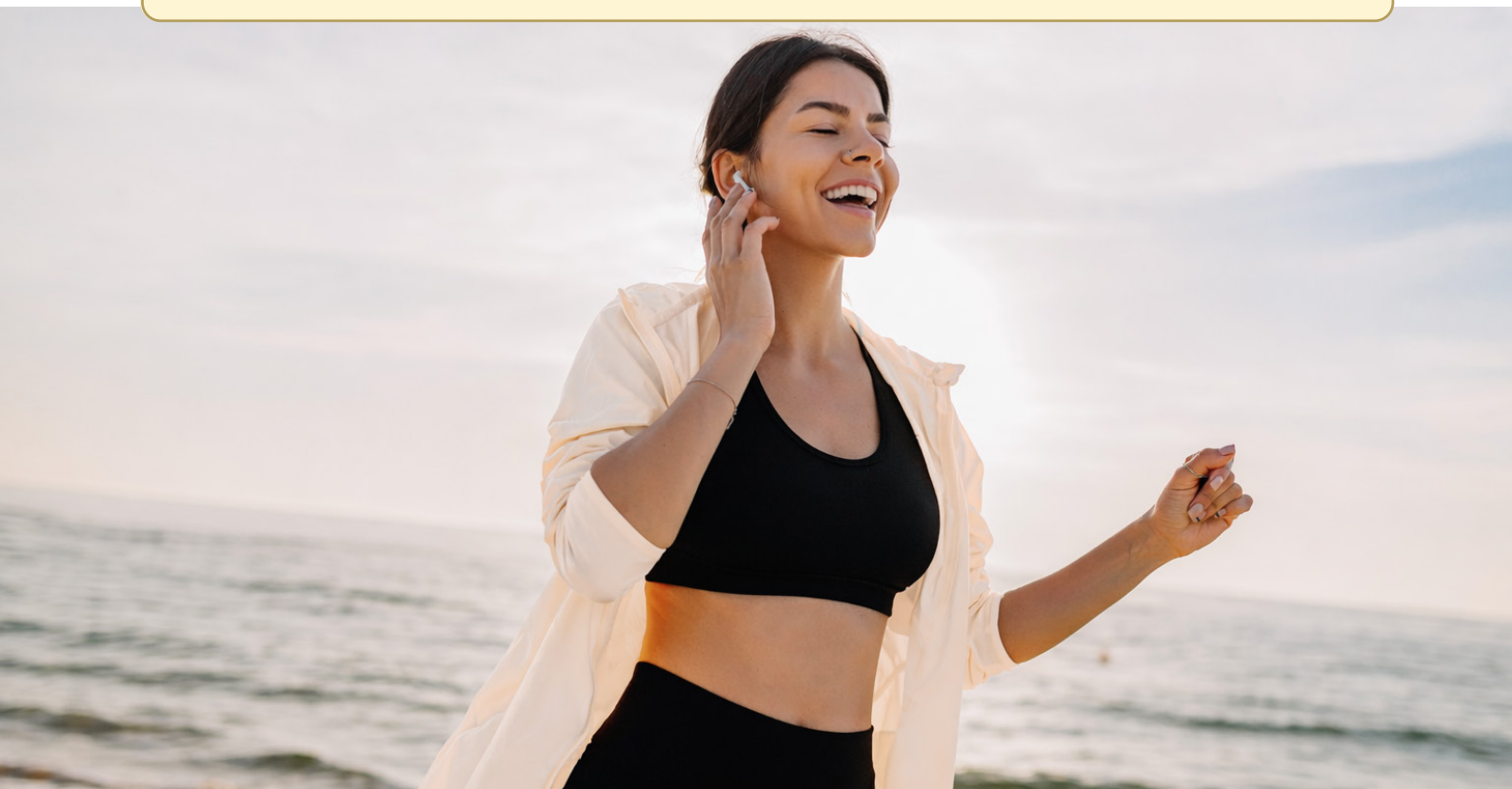
Menopause isn't a problem to fix—it's a season to understand.

**During the menopause transition, research and clinical guidance note:**

- LDL cholesterol (the "bad" cholesterol) and related lipids often increase
- visceral (belly) fat tends to rise
- lean muscle mass tends to decline
- overall cardiovascular risk can climb even in women with a "normal" body weight

Translation: you can be doing "all the same things" and suddenly your labs or waistline shift. It's not because you're failing. It's because your physiology is changing—and you need a new playbook.

That playbook is what we're building here.





# YOUR “BIG ROCKS” BLUEPRINT

If you do nothing else, focus on these “big rocks.” They’re not trendy. They’re effective.

## BIG ROCK #1: CONTROL WHAT YOU CAN

- Blood pressure
- Blood sugar
- Cholesterol and triglycerides
- Inflammation drivers (highly processed foods, excess added sugars, sleep deprivation, chronic stress)

## BIG ROCK #2: EAT FOR FIBER + HEALTHY FATS + PROTEIN

A heart-smart plate often looks like:

- Fiber (plants, beans, whole grains, seeds)
- Healthy fats (olive oil, avocado, nuts, fatty fish)
- Protein (fish, poultry, beans, yogurt, tofu/tempeh)

## BIG ROCK #3: MOVE YOUR BODY

- Consistency beats intensity. Daily movement has a greater impact on heart health than occasional “all-out” workouts.
- Walking counts. Just 20–30 minutes of brisk walking most days supports blood pressure, circulation, and cholesterol levels.
- Strength training is non-negotiable after 40. Preserving lean muscle supports metabolic health, insulin sensitivity, and cardiovascular resilience.



- Muscle protects your heart. More muscle mass is associated with better glucose control and lower cardiometabolic risk.
- Short bouts still matter. Three 10-minute movement breaks can be just as beneficial as one longer session.
- Post-meal movement helps. A gentle walk after eating supports blood sugar balance and digestion.
- You don't have to earn your food. Movement is about circulation, strength, and vitality – not burning calories to “deserve” meals.

#### **BIG ROCK #4: SLEEP AND STRESS ARE NOT OPTIONAL**

- Your heart responds to how you live, not just what you eat.
- Sleep is cardiovascular care. Inadequate sleep is linked to higher blood pressure, inflammation, insulin resistance, and heart disease risk. Aim for 7–9 hours – but quality matters too. Consistent sleep and wake times support hormonal balance and heart rhythm.
- Stress is a physical load on the heart. Chronic stress keeps cortisol elevated, which can negatively impact blood sugar, blood pressure, and fat distribution.
- Even small stress-reset rituals help. Deep breathing, prayer, journaling, stretching, or time outdoors can shift your nervous system.
- Screens late at night cost you sleep. Blue light and mental stimulation interfere with melatonin production.
- Caffeine timing matters. Keep caffeine earlier in the day to protect sleep quality.
- Permission to slow down is powerful. A rested woman makes stronger, healthier decisions.



# THE FIT FOODIE PANTRY FOR A HEART-SMART KITCHEN STOCK YOUR KITCHEN

like someone who respects her future self.

## Staples

- Extra virgin olive oil
- Avocado oil (for higher-heat cooking)
- Canned wild salmon/sardines/tuna
- Low-sodium beans + lentils
- Oats (old-fashioned)
- Quinoa or brown rice
- Chia seeds + ground flax
- Walnuts + almonds
- Garlic, onions, lemons
- Frozen berries + frozen greens
- Greek yogurt (plain)
- Spices (cinnamon, turmeric, cumin, black pepper) Sodium note (without the food police)

Sodium matters for blood pressure, but instead of flavorless food, we use: citrus + vinegar + herbs + spices + aromatics to make everything taste like "YES."

**SUPERFOOD SPRINKLE  
SPICE BLENDS – CREATED  
JUST FOR YOU,  
BY YOURS TRULY.**

**Made with organic & natural ingredients**

- Ground black cumin seed
- Organic Black Sesame Seed
- Ground Turmeric
- Nutritional Yeast
- Ground Black Mustard
- Organic Lion's Mane Mushroom
- Organic Chaga Mushroom
- Organic White Sesame Seed
- Kelp Flake
- Himalayan Pink Salt
- Organic Ground Black Pepper
- Cayenne Pepper
- Organic Reishi Mushroom



# HOW TO BUILD A HEART-HEALTHY PLATE (WITHOUT SADNESS)

Use this simple formula:

- $\frac{1}{2}$  plate: non-starchy vegetables
- $\frac{1}{4}$  plate: protein
- $\frac{1}{4}$  plate: high-fiber carbs (beans, lentils, quinoa, oats, sweet potato) + 1–2 thumbs of healthy fat (olive oil, nuts, avocado)

And if you want dessert? Cool. We build the foundation first.





# THE RECIPES

(Each recipe: heart-smart, flavorful, and realistically doable.)

## RECIPE 1: CITRUS-SALMON POWER SALAD WITH OLIVE OIL VINAIGRETTE

Serves 2

Why it loves your heart: omega-3s + fiber + antioxidant-rich greens

### Ingredients

- 2 salmon fillets (4–6 oz each)
  - 6 cups mixed greens
  - 1 orange, segmented
  - ½ avocado, sliced
  - ¼ cup walnuts, chopped
  - ½ cucumber, sliced
  - Optional: 2 tbsp crumbled feta
  - Vinaigrette
  - 2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
  - 1 tbsp lemon juice
  - 1 tsp Dijon
  - ½ tsp honey
  - Salt + pepper to taste
- Instructions



1. Season salmon lightly with salt/pepper. Pan-sear 3–4 min per side or bake at 400°F for 10–12 min.

2. Whisk vinaigrette ingredients.

3. Toss greens with cucumber, orange, walnuts. Top with salmon + avocado. Drizzle vinaigrette.

**Fit Foodie tip:** Add a spoon of quinoa if you need more staying power.



## RECIPE 2: MEDITERRANEAN LENTIL SOUP (WEEKNIGHT “HEART HUG”)

Serves 6

Why it loves your heart: lentils = fiber + plant protein; easy on blood sugar

### Ingredients

- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 onion, diced
- 2 carrots, diced
- 2 celery stalks, diced
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1½ cups dry lentils (brown/green), rinsed
- 1 can diced tomatoes (no salt added if possible)
- 6 cups low-sodium broth or water
- 1 tsp cumin
- 1 tsp smoked paprika
- 2 cups spinach
- Lemon wedges

### Instructions

1. Sauté onion/carrots/celery 6–8 min. Add garlic 30 sec.
2. Add lentils, tomatoes, broth, spices. Simmer 25–30 min.
3. Stir in spinach. Finish with lemon.





### RECIPE 3: GREEK YOGURT “RANCH” DIP + CRUNCHY VEG TRAY

Serves 4

**Why it loves your heart:** protein + lower saturated fat; a snack that actually satisfies

#### Ingredients

- 1 cup plain Greek yogurt
- 1 tsp garlic powder
- 1 tsp onion powder
- 1 tbsp chopped dill or parsley
- 1 tbsp lemon juice
- Salt/pepper
- **Veggies:** carrots, peppers, cucumbers, radishes

#### Instructions

Mix, dip, devour. (Yes, that’s the method.)

## RECIPE 4: AVOCADO-LIME CHICKPEA SMASH TOAST



Serves 2

Why it loves your heart: fiber + potassium + healthy fats

### Ingredients

- 1 can chickpeas, rinsed
- 1 avocado
- 1 lime
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- Chili flakes + garlic powder
- high quality whole grain or sourdough bread

### Instructions

1. Smash chickpeas + avocado with lime, olive oil, seasoning.
2. Toast bread. Pile it high.



## RECIPE 5: BERRY-CHIA HEART BOWL

Serves 1

Why it loves your heart: fiber + omega-3s (chia) + antioxidants

### Ingredients

- ¾ cup Greek yogurt (or unsweetened plant yogurt)
- 1 cup berries
- 1 tbsp chia seeds
- 1 tbsp ground flax
- Cinnamon + drizzle of honey (optional)

### Instructions

Assemble. Let sit 5 minutes so chia thickens.





## RECIPE 6: OLIVE OIL SHEET-PAN CHICKEN WITH RAINBOW VEG



Serves 2

**Why it loves your heart:** lean protein + high-volume vegetables + simple fats

### Ingredients

- 1½ lb chicken breast or thighs
- 2 cups broccoli
- 1 zucchini, sliced
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 red onion, wedges
- 1 tsp oregano + 1 tsp garlic powder
- 1 bell pepper, strips
- Lemon slices

### Instructions

1. Toss everything with oil + seasonings.
2. Roast 425°F for 20–25 min.
3. Finish with lemon.



## RECIPE 7: “CARDIO” QUINOA TABBOULEH

Serves 4

Why it loves your heart: fiber + plant diversity + olive oil

### Ingredients

- 2 cups cooked quinoa
- 1 cup chopped cucumber
- 1 cup chopped tomato
- ½ cup parsley
- 2 tbsp mint
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 2 tbsp lemon juice
- Salt/pepper

### Instructions

Mix. Chill. Eat with everything.





## RECIPE 8: SARDINE-CAPER PASTA (DON'T KNOCK IT TILL YOU TRY IT)

Serves 2

**Why it loves your heart:** sardines = omega-3s + calcium; capers/lemon = flavor without heavy

### Ingredients

- 4 oz chickpea pasta (or whole wheat)
- 1 can sardines in olive oil (drained slightly)
- 1 tbsp capers
- 2 cloves garlic, sliced
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- Lemon zest + juice
- Parsley

### Instructions

1. Cook pasta.
2. Sauté garlic in oil 30–60 sec. Add sardines + capers.
3. Toss with pasta, lemon, parsley.





## RECIPE 9: WALNUT “MEAT” LETTUCE CUPS



Serves 3-4

**Why it loves your heart:** walnuts + plants + crunch satisfaction

### Ingredients

- 1½ cups walnuts, chopped
- 1 cup mushrooms, finely chopped
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 2 tbsp low-sodium tamari
- 1 tsp smoked paprika
- Romaine or butter lettuce leaves
- **Optional Toppings:** Shredded carrots, Sliced cucumber, Chopped scallions, Sesame seeds, Squeeze of lime

### Instructions

Sauté mushrooms in oil. Add walnuts + seasonings. Spoon into lettuce cups + toppings.



## RECIPE 10: CINNAMON OAT “POWER BAKE”

Serves 6

**Why it loves your heart:** oats = soluble fiber; supports cholesterol management patterns

### Ingredients

- 2 cups rolled oats
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- 2 eggs
- 1½ cups milk of choice
- 1 mashed banana
- ½ cup berries
- 2 tbsp ground flax

### Instructions

1. Mix, pour in baking dish.
2. Bake 350°F for 30–35 min.
3. Serve hot or enjoy cold – they're both delish.





## RECIPE 11: DARK CHOCOLATE + ALMOND “HEART BITES”

Serves 2

**Why it loves your heart:** portioned sweetness + healthy fats **Ingredients**

### Ingredients

- 1 cup almond flour
- 2 tbsp cocoa powder
- 2 tbsp almond butter
- 2 tbsp honey/maple
- Pinch salt

### Instructions

- 1.) Mix until a thick, uniform dough forms. If the mixture feels dry, add 1–2 teaspoons of water or almond milk.
- 2.) Scoop about 1 tablespoon of mixture and roll into bite-size balls or press into heart shaped candy molds.
- 3.) Chill in the refrigerator for 15–20 minutes to set.
- 4.) Optional: Dip in sugar-free melted dark chocolate and finish with edible gold leaf for that 'chef's kiss.'





## RECIPE 12: “ONE GOOD STEP” MOCKTAIL (POMEGRANATE CITRUS SPRITZ)

Serves 1

### Ingredients

- ½ cup sparkling water
- Squeeze of lime
- ¼ cup 100% pomegranate juice
- Orange slice + mint

### Instructions

Build over ice. Sip like a woman with a plan.



## 9) A 7-DAY HEART-SMART MEAL PLAN

Mix and match. Repeat what you love.

 DAY	 BREAKFAST	 LUNCH	 DINNER
01	Berry-Chia Heart Bowl	Citrus-Salmon Power Salad	Mediterranean Lentil Soup + side salad
 DAY	 BREAKFAST	 LUNCH	 DINNER
02	Cinnamon Oat Power Bake	Quinoa Tabbouleh + chicken leftovers	Sheet-Pan Chicken + Rainbow Veg
 DAY	 BREAKFAST	 LUNCH	 DINNER
03	Avocado-Lime Chickpea Smash Toast	Lentil Soup	Sardine-Caper Pasta + greens
 DAY	 BREAKFAST	 LUNCH	 DINNER
04	Berry-Chia Heart Bowl	Greek Yogurt Ranch Dip + veggie plate + walnuts	Walnut "Meat" Lettuce Cups



DAY	BREAKFAST	LUNCH	DINNER
05	Oat Power Bake	Salmon Salad leftovers	Sheet-Pan Chicken + Quinoa Tabbouleh
06	Chickpea Smash Toast	Lentil Soup	Big salad + protein + olive oil dressing
07	Berry bowl	Leftovers buffet (my favorite)	Walnut lettuce cups + mocktail

Dessert option: 1–2 Heart Bites when you want something sweet.





## 10) GROCERY LIST + SIMPLE SWAPS

### Produce

Mixed greens, spinach, cucumbers, tomatoes, oranges, lemons, limes, onions, carrots, celery, broccoli, zucchini, berries, avocado, garlic, herbs

### Proteins

Salmon, chicken, Greek yogurt, sardines, eggs

### Pantry

Olive oil, oats, lentils, quinoa, chickpeas, chia, ground flax, walnuts, almond flour, capers, Dijon, spices

Swaps that keep flavor high

- Sour cream → Greek yogurt
- Croutons → toasted chickpeas or nuts
- Sugary cereal → oats + berries
- Heavy creamy dressings → olive oil + citrus + Dijon





# 11) YOUR NEXT GOOD STEP

If you've read this far, here's what I want you to know:

You're not behind. You're not "too old." You're not stuck.

You're in the exact right moment to decide:

**My health matters, and I'm willing to practice caring for it—one good step at a time. Pick one:**

- Make the lentil soup this week
- Add 1 tbsp chia to breakfast
- Walk 10 minutes after dinner
- Swap one takeout meal for a sheet-pan dinner

Small steps compound into a strong heart—and a strong life.

With love and grit,

Chef Mareya, The Fit Foodie

## THE HEART OF IT

By Mareya Ibrahim-Jones, A Fit Foodie Guide to Heart Health for Women Over 40.

### Quick note (disclaimer)

This eBook is for educational purposes and is not medical advice. Always consult your healthcare provider for personal guidance, especially if you have a medical condition or take medications.

Use code HEART for 25% off at [superfoodsprinkle.store](https://superfoodsprinkle.store)



★★★★★ 4.8/5 (100+ reviews)

**Superfood Sprinkle™ Gift Set by Chef Mareya**

**\$34.99** ~~\$34.99~~ **Limited Time Offer**

Superfood Sprinkle™ is the easy & delicious way to get the nutrients, vitamins, and minerals you need—without the hassle.

- 🍴 Simplifies Healthy Eating
- 🍷 Adds Flavor Effortlessly
- 🥣 Nutrient-Dense Ingredients
- 📦 Perfect Gift Idea

What's Inside The Gift Box:

2 Flavors	2 Refills	1 Spoon	Free Shipping