



# Let Him Cook

The Art of Making  
Something  
Out of Nothing

2026

A Jailhouse Cookbook  
Chance 4 Change

vol. 1



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*Chance 4 Change*  
Louisville Metro Department of Corrections  
Erica V. P. Lewis | EVPL

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Erica V. P. Lewis".

## The Project: *Human, Too*

This book was produced in the spring of 2026 within a weekly series of collaborative workshops in *Chance 4 Change*, a substance abuse recovery program in Louisville Metro Department of Correction. Here, incarcerated artists explored hand printing, book binding, found object assemblage, poetry, and prose to produce artworks and curate their own exhibition titled *Human, Too*.

## Contributors

|               |                |
|---------------|----------------|
| William Baker | John Johnson   |
| Jack Elliott  | James Merideth |
| John Gorman   | David Wheatley |

## Thanks

We want to extend the utmost gratitude to *Chance 4 Change* Coordinators, Iyan Wickel & Kelsey O'Neal, and visiting artist, Erica Lewis, without whom this project would not be possible. Thanks as well to the Louisville Metro Department of Corrections for its material and financial support of *Human, Too*.

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*Illustration by James Merideth*

# Introduction

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While food is served in correctional institutions, it often does not satisfy the quality, quantity, or personal preferences of those consuming it. As such, incarcerated people often turn to the foods purchased in commissary, innovatively appropriating these items into ingredients for new dishes.

Developing these recipes requires ongoing experimentation in addition to knowledge sharing among peers. While these processes may seem to be mere cheap imitations or simply more trouble than they are worth, these recipes not only foster culinary creativity as an expressive outlet, but they also serve as an empowering assertion of autonomy over what one consumes when they can make few other decisions for their bodies.

# Tips

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*As with any recipe, you may find yourself needing substitutions. Inherent to our current circumstances, you will find that we made a few substitutions of our own to make a little something out of nothing.*

## **Chop**

It may surprise you, but knives are contraband in jail. As such, we advise using alternatives, such as your ID card or a spork (if you can source one), for chopping.

## **Garbage Bag**

Oh, the many uses of a garbage bag! From mixing bowl to a clean, nonstick surface, the humble garbage bag is a vital kitchen tool.

## Hot Water

Funny enough, we get our hot water from a water cooler—the irony is not lost on us. With this in mind, hot water can become a bit of a commodity, so try to time your hot water use and allocation wisely.

## Microwave

While not a microwave in a traditional sense, food can be “microwaved” using hot water. You can either place your food in a garbage bag or wrap it up in a zabo\* wrapper and then place the wrapped food in a bowl of hot water or, if your cooler came with a bag, place your wrapped food item inside the cooler with hot water between the wall of the cooler and the bag holding the water.

*\* Zabo refers to plastic-wrapped bologna sandwiches served in Louisville Metro Department of Corrections, originally supplied by Szabo Food Services. Years later, the term “Zabo” persists for this staple food item, despite the shift in food service providers.*

## Fridge

The good ol’ bean flap is the coldest place in the dorm! When you need to refrigerate an item, place it in the food slot that connects to the hallway, AKA “the bean flap,” to let it sit and get chilly. The window sill can serve as a close second.

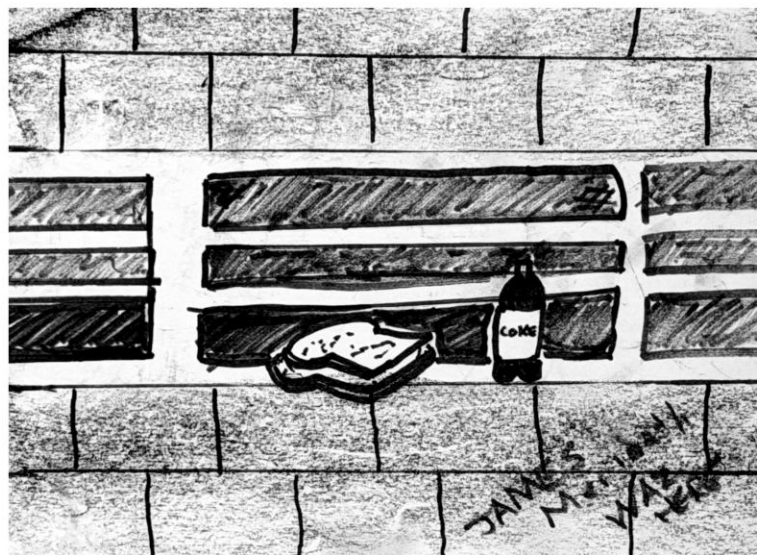


*Illustration by James Merideth*

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# CHICKEN CHILI TAMALES

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## INGREDIENTS

Serves 1

**1 hot pickle**

**1 Tbsp. hot pickle juice**

**1 pk. shredded chicken**

**1 pk. sliced jalapeños**

**2 pkts. mayonnaise**

**2 pkts. ranch dressing**

**2 bags Fritos**

**1 Tbsp. hot water**

**1 pk. chili**

Crush both bags of Fritos and combine together into one bag. Add hot water and pickle juice to the crushed Fritos. Knead, flatten out through the bag, and set aside.

Chop hot pickle and jalapeños. In a bowl, combine your pickles, jalapenos, chicken, chili, mayonnaise, and ranch. Mix until combined. Spoon into masa and roll up. Enjoy.

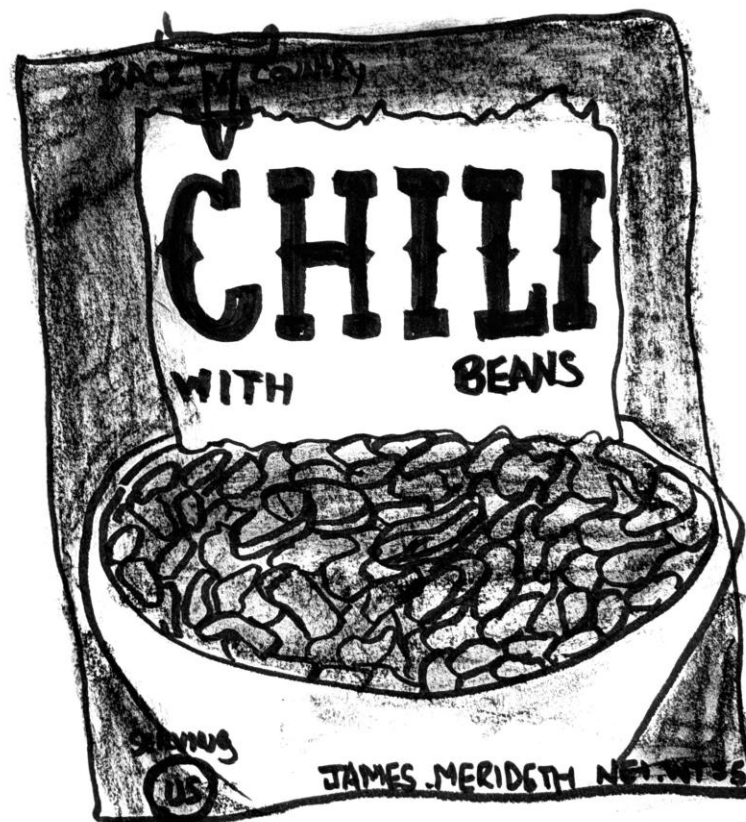




*Illustration by James Merideth*

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## WALK-AROUND BURRITO

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### INGREDIENTS

Serves 1

**1 bag chips** (of your choice)

**1 pk. instant noodles** (of your choice)

**hot water**

Crush your bag of chips and your pack of instant noodles. Combine together in the chip bag. Add as much of the instant noodle flavor packet as you like and mix. Pour hot water over the mixture in the bag until covered. Set aside for 15 minutes. Enjoy.

*John Gorman*

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# NACHOS

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## INGREDIENTS

Serves 1

**2 bags Sweet & Spicy Doritos**  
**2 bags Chili Cheese Fritos**  
**2 bags Doritos**  
**1 hot pickle**  
**1 pk. chili**  
**1 pk. shredded chicken**  
**2 pk. sliced jalapeños**  
**1 pk. sliced pepperoni**  
**1 brick cheese** (of your choice)  
**2 pkts. jalapeño squeeze cheese**  
**2 pkts. cheddar squeeze cheese**

Chop the hot pickle and brick cheese into their own separate bowls and set aside.

Rip a garbage bag down its seam. Use it to cover a table. Then, spread out an even layer of your various chips, mixed together.

Layer chili, pickle, chicken, jalapeños, and pepperoni over the chips. Top with chopped and squeeze cheeses. Enjoy.





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## FUN CHEESE DIP

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### INGREDIENTS

Serves 1

- 1 pk. sliced jalapeños**
- 1 bag cheese puffs**
- 1 bag jalapeño Cheetos**
- 1 pkt. jalapeño squeeze cheese**
- 1 c. hot water**

Microwave water until boiling. Meanwhile, crush your chips into a fine powder and pour into a bowl. Mix in squeeze cheese until combined. Slowly stir in boiling water until the mixture reaches your desired thickness. Let it set up for a few minutes to cool down. Top with jalapeños. Enjoy.

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# SAUSAGE PIZZA

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## INGREDIENTS

Serves 2

### CRUST

**1 sleeve saltine crackers**

**1 pk. instant noodles** (of your choice)

**1 ½ c. hot water**

### TOPPINGS

**cheese**

**ranch**

**chili**

**chips** (of your choice)

**summer sausage**

**hot pickle**

Crush your noodles and crackers. Pour into a garbage bag with seasoning packets and hot water. Knead into a dough and flatten into a crust shape through the bag. Set aside until locked up. Meanwhile, chop up your sausage and pickle. Then, crush your chips into a crumble through their bags.

Once the crust has set up, spread an even layer of the chili over it to serve as the pizza sauce. Add the sausage, pickle, and chip crumble in an even layer. Top with cheese and ranch to your liking.



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# PEPPERONI PIZZA

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## INGREDIENTS

Serves 4

### CRUST

**1 sleeve saltine crackers**

**5 pks. instant noodles** (of your choice)

**hot water**

### TOPPINGS

**1 pk. sliced pepperoni**

**1 pk. chili**

**1 brick cheese** (of your choice)

**1 beef stick**

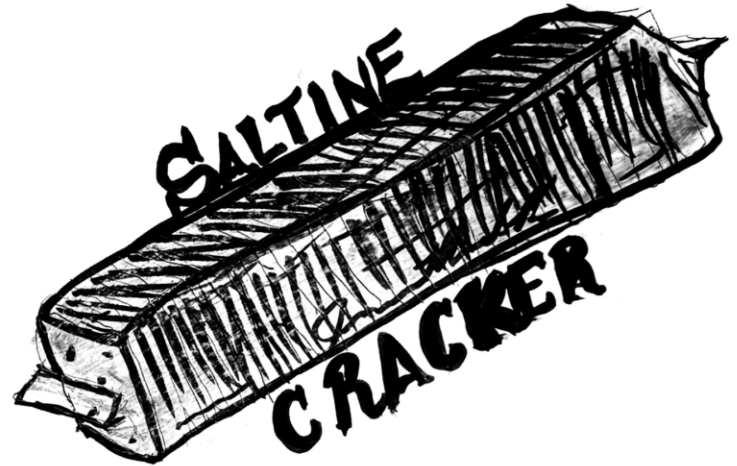
**1 pkt. jalapeño squeeze cheese**

Crush noodles into a garbage bag. Pour hot water over top, submerging the noodles. Cover with a towel and set aside for 10 minutes.

Meanwhile, chop jalapeños, beef stick, and brick cheese. Then, crush your crackers.

Once 10 minutes has passed, drain the water from the bag, add your cracker crumbs, and knead into a dough. Flatten out flat to create the pizza crust.

Mix the noodle seasoning packet into the chili and spread the mixture evenly across the crust, to serve as the pizza sauce. Add an even layer of both chopped and squeeze cheese. Top with jalapeños, pepperoni, and beef stick. Cut into slices. Enjoy.



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## “BLOW UP”

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### INGREDIENTS

Serves 3-4

**1 hot pickle**

**2 pkts. tuna**

**3 pks. mayonnaise**

**2 pks. squeeze cheese**

**4 pks. instant noodles** (of your choice)

**hot water**

Place your instant noodles into a bowl, pour hot water over top, and set aside until the noodles soften up. Meanwhile, chop up your pickle and stir it into the cooked noodles. Add tuna, cheese, and mayonnaise, to your liking. Mix.

Refrigerate\* for one hour. Once cool, eat as you would tuna salad—with crackers or on bread as a sandwich.





*Illustration by David Wheatley*

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## PEANUT BUTTER FUDGE

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### INGREDIENTS

Serves 1

**¼ c. water**

**12 oz. peanut butter**

**50 pkt. powdered coffee creamer**

**1 pk. Duplex sandwich cookies**

Combine coffee creamer and water in a bowl. Microwave\* for 1 minute, pausing to stir every 20 seconds to prevent burning. Set aside.

Microwave\* a jar of peanut butter for 1 ½ minutes. Meanwhile, crush the Duplex cookies in their packaging. Pour the hot peanut butter and crumbled cookies into the bowl of warm coffee creamer. Mix together and let sit until totally cooled. Enjoy.

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# TAFFY

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## INGREDIENTS

Serves 1

**1 pkt. Kool-Aid mix**

**1 pkt. powdered coffee creamer**

**½ Tbsp. hot water**

Microwave water in a cup until boiling.  
Meanwhile, clean off a metal table and cover  
it with a torn-open garbage bag.

In another cup, combine Kool-Aid mix and  
coffee creamer. Stir in hot water.

Pour the mixture onto the cold, metal table  
and let it sit until totally cooled.

Scrap up. Enjoy.

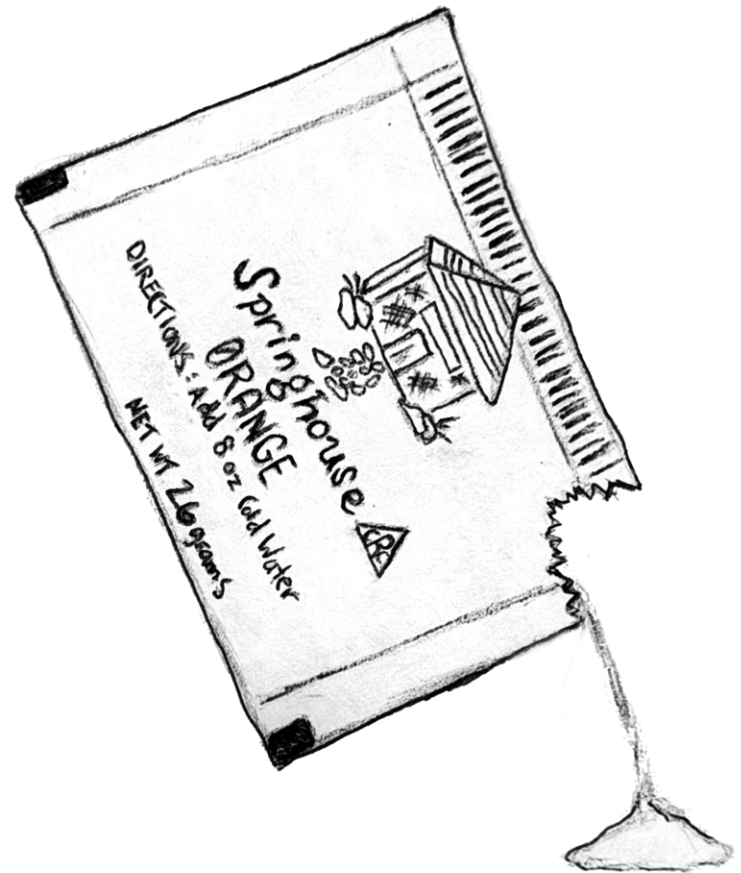




*Illustration by James Merideth*

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## COFFEE BALLS

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### INGREDIENTS

Serves 8-10

**2 Twix candy bars**

**3 Snickers candy bars**

**1 pkt. of instant coffee**

**1 pk. oatmeal**

Cut Twix into chunks, place in a bowl, and set aside. In another bowl, microwave\* your Snickers until melted. Place instant coffee into a separate bowl. Then, dip the individual Twix bits first into the melted Snickers, and then into coffee mixture to evenly coat them. Repeat this process 3-4 times to build layers. Finally, sprinkle oatmeal over top.

Let them set for 5 minutes to cool down and set up. Enjoy.

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# BIRTHDAY CAKE

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## INGREDIENTS

Serves 4

**3 bowls**

**3 cups**

**1 pk. Duplex sandwich cookies** (vanilla)

**1 pk. Duplex sandwich cookies** (strawberry)

**1 pk. Duplex sandwich cookies** (peanut butter)

**1 tsp. hot water**

**1 iced honey bun**

**1 pk. cream cheese**

Disassemble all of your cookie sandwiches, placing each of the three icing flavors into a separate cup. Evenly divide the cream cheese into these cups and mix into icings.

Crush the cookies in a garbage bag, add hot water, and knead. Once a dough forms, remove it and divide it into three equal parts. Firmly press into each of the three bowls.

Select your bottom flavor and spread that icing on top of your first layer of crust. Then, remove a second crust from its bowl to place on top, followed by a honey bun. Top with another icing mixture. Then, add your last crust layer and finally ice the top of the cake with your last icing flavor. Enjoy.

Happy birthday!



# Enjoy

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Birthday cakes offer a poetic conclusion to a jailhouse cookbook. Birthday cakes are what we make for friends to create special moments that would not exist otherwise.

It is the little things we miss the most, so we use what we have to make a little something out of nothing.

We hope this cookbook inspires you to seek out your own unconventional recipes, try ours, or even just reconsider the little things.

*Chance 4 Change*

