

Prep Time: 15 Minutes

Cook Time: 10 Minutes

Total Time: 25 Minutes

Intensity Level: Easy / Beginner

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Introduction

If you're tired of sad, soggy salads and boring chicken breast, let me introduce you to your new lunchtime obsession: the Garlic Herb Shrimp Jar.

This isn't just a salad; it's a layered masterpiece. By packing the ingredients in a specific order—dressing at the bottom, sturdy veggies in the middle, and delicate proteins and greens at the top—you create a self-marinating meal that stays fresh for days. When you're ready to eat, simply shake the jar and pour it into a bowl.

The star of this show is the shrimp. Bathed in a vibrant marinade of fresh garlic, zesty lemon, and aromatic herbs, these shrimp cook in a flash (literally under 5 minutes!). Paired with

fluffy quinoa, creamy avocado, and sweet cherry tomatoes, this jar offers the perfect balance of macronutrients to keep you energized all afternoon.

Let's get jarring!

Ingredients

For the Shrimp & Marinade:

- 1 lb (450g) large shrimp, peeled and deveined (tails removed)
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 1 tbsp fresh lemon juice
- 1 tsp lemon zest
- 1 tsp dried oregano
- 1/2 tsp dried thyme
- 1/2 tsp red pepper flakes (optional, for heat)

- Salt and black pepper, to taste

For the Jars (Assembly):

- 2 cups cooked quinoa (or brown rice), cooled
- 1 cup cherry tomatoes, halved
- 1 large cucumber, diced
- 1/2 red onion, thinly sliced
- 1 avocado, diced (toss in lemon juice to prevent browning)
- 4 cups fresh arugula or baby spinach
- 4 tbsp crumbled feta cheese (optional)

For the Lemon Vinaigrette (Divided):

- 4 tbsp olive oil
- 2 tbsp apple cider vinegar

- 1 tbsp Dijon mustard
 - 1 tbsp honey (or maple syrup)
 - Salt and pepper to taste
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Instructions

Phase 1: The Marinade & Prep (Time: 10 Minutes | Intensity: Low)

1. Prep the Shrimp: Pat your shrimp dry with a paper towel. This is crucial for getting a good sear and ensuring the marinade sticks.
2. Mix the Marinade: In a medium bowl, whisk together the minced garlic, 2 tbsp olive oil, lemon juice, lemon zest, oregano, thyme, red pepper flakes (if using), salt, and pepper.
3. Coat: Add the shrimp to the bowl and toss until fully coated. Let them sit for 10 minutes at room temperature. (If you are meal prepping for later, you can marinate them in the fridge for up to 2 hours, but no longer, as the acid in the lemon will start to “cook” the shrimp).
4. Make the Dressing: In a small jar or bowl, shake/whisk together the vinaigrette ingredients: 4 tbsp olive oil, vinegar, mustard, honey, salt, and pepper. Set aside.

Phase 2: The Cook (Time: 5-7 Minutes | Intensity: High)

1. Heat the Pan: Place a large skillet over medium-high heat. You want the pan hot before the shrimp goes in.
2. Sear: Add the shrimp to the pan in a single layer (do this in batches if your pan is small; overcrowding steams the shrimp instead of searing it).
3. The Flip: Cook for 2 minutes on the first side. You should see the shrimp turning opaque pink and the edges curling.
4. Finish: Flip the shrimp and cook for another 1 to 2 minutes until they are opaque throughout and slightly charred.
5. Cool: Remove the shrimp from the heat immediately and set them aside to cool while you assemble the jars. *Note: Do not overcook, or they will become rubbery.*

Phase 3: The Assembly (Time: 10 Minutes | Intensity: Low)

The order of layers is the secret to a non-soggy jar.

1. Layer 1 (The Dressing): Pour 1 tablespoon of the Lemon Vinaigrette into the bottom of each of the 4 pint-sized Mason jars.
2. Layer 2 (The Base): Add 1/2 cup of cooked quinoa to each jar. This acts as a sponge to soak up the dressing and flavor the grain.

3. Layer 3 (The Crunch): Divide the diced cucumber, halved cherry tomatoes, and sliced red onion among the jars. Pack them down gently.
4. Layer 4 (The Protein): Place the cooked shrimp on top of the vegetables. Divide the 1 lb of shrimp evenly (about 4-5 large shrimp per jar).
5. Layer 5 (The Greens): Stuff the arugula or spinach into the top of the jar. It will look like a lot, but it will compress when you seal the lid.
6. The Garnish: Sprinkle the feta cheese (if using) over the greens. If you are adding avocado, wait to add it until you are ready to eat (see notes below).

Phase 4: Storage & Serving (Time: 0 Minutes | Intensity: N/A)

1. Seal: Screw the lids on tight and refrigerate. These jars will last for 3 to 4 days in the fridge.
2. Serve: When you are ready to eat, shake the jar vigorously to distribute the dressing. Pour the contents into a bowl, add your fresh avocado, and enjoy!

Recipe Notes & Tips

- The Avocado Rule: Avocado does not freeze well and browns quickly once cut. If you are meal prepping, do not put the avocado in the jar. Instead, dice it fresh when you are

ready to eat. If you must pack it, coat it heavily in lemon or lime juice and place it at the very top, but eat within 24 hours.

- **Shrimp Size:** I recommend using “Large” (31-40 count per pound) or “Extra Large” (26-30 count) shrimp. Smaller shrimp tend to overcook too quickly.
- **Swaps:** Not a fan of quinoa? White rice, farro, or even zucchini noodles work great. Want it dairy-free? Skip the feta or use a dairy-free alternative.
- **Intensity Adjustment:** If you want a spicy kick, double the red pepper flakes in the marinade or add a drizzle of Sriracha to the vinaigrette.

Nutrition Information

Disclaimer: The nutritional information below is an estimate and will vary based on specific ingredients and brands used.

Serving Size: 1 Jar (with dressing and feta included)

Calories: 420

Total Fat: 24g

- Saturated Fat: 5g
- Trans Fat: 0g
- Cholesterol: 145mg
- Sodium: 480mg

Total Carbohydrates: 32g

- Dietary Fiber: 5g
- Sugars: 8g
- Protein: 22g

Vitamins & Minerals:

- Vitamin A: 20% DV
- Vitamin C: 35% DV
- Calcium: 12% DV
- Iron: 15% DV