

thyme to COOK!

7 easy-to-follow,
low-cost recipes



Hints and tips
to make cooking with
the family easier, healthier
and much more fun!



Hi there!

You don't need much in the way of cookery skills to use this recipe booklet – it's all very simple. It's a 'have a go' – 'don't worry' – confidence type of thing, rather than Masterchef (leave that till later!).

If you are interested in learning how to cook, my advice is to watch the cookery programmes, look at the websites, make the mistakes, claim the victories and generally have fun and learn. I've included a list of websites at the back of this booklet for further reading.

So, where do we start with very little time, very little money and potentially some fussy kids who refuse to eat green things (mine would only eat orange things for a while when he was small!)? This little booklet covers some simple recipes and some suggestions for making food go further on a budget.

I stick to veggie recipes. This is better for our planet and the ingredients are cheaper. Veggies are also easier to cook with the kids as there are fewer health risks than if they were handling raw meat.

I often hear the cry 'What can we do with lentils and beans?' Well, here's your chance to find out.

Great!

Sam

Sam spent many years as a chef and is passionate about healthy, affordable and sustainable food. She is the Food Partnership Coordinator for Cambridge Sustainable Food.



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Store cupboard ingredients

Nothing beats cooking from scratch. To do that with as little time, little money and little effort as possible, the store cupboard list is your friend.

If some weeks you have a little more cash, then buy something from the list. Then on weeks when you have no spare cash, you have ingredients to cook with.

Here is a suggested list. No need to buy it all and no need to go for fancy labels. The basics will do. If you or your family don't like certain things, don't buy them.

Store cupboard ingredients are those standby, often dry ingredients that'll keep (you guessed it!) in your cupboard.

That's it – easy!

Dried goods

- Noodles
- Dried pasta
- Quick-cook couscous
- Basmati rice
- Brown rice
- Porridge oats
- Red lentils
- Corn-starch



Nuts and seeds

- Almonds, hazelnuts or mixed nuts
- Mixed seeds



Condiments

- Wholegrain mustard
- Dijon mustard
- Ketchup
- Mayonnaise



Baking

- White sugar
- Brown sugar
- Unsweetened cocoa powder
- Flour – plain and self-raising
- Baking powder
- Bicarbonate of soda

Oils and vinegars

- Extra-virgin olive oil
- Sesame oil
- Rapeseed or sunflower oil
- White wine vinegar
- Red wine vinegar
- Balsamic vinegar



Canned goods

- Cannellini beans
- Coconut milk
- Tomatoes

Herbs and spices

- Sweet smoked paprika
- Basil
- Cumin
- Turmeric
- Dried thyme

Flavourings

- Stock cubes
- Tomato purée
- Soy sauce
- Tabasco sauce
- Honey
- Maple syrup



Lentil and tomato soup

Serves 4

Portion price 36p

Here is an example of what you can make out of store cupboard ingredients if you have an onion and some garlic.

Ingredients

- 2 tbsp oil
- 1 onion, roughly chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, crushed
- ½ tsp dried thyme
- 2 tsp smoked sweet paprika
- 175g split red lentils
- 1.2 litres vegetable stock
- 400g canned plum tomatoes
- 2 tsp tomato purée
- salt and pepper to taste



Method

1. Heat the oil in a saucepan. Add the onion and cook over a low heat for 7–8 minutes, stirring occasionally, until beginning to soften.
2. Add the garlic, thyme and smoked paprika and cook for a further minute, stirring constantly.
3. Add the lentils, stock, tomatoes with their juice and tomato purée. Bring to the boil, reduce the heat, then half-cover the pan with a lid and simmer for 25–30 minutes until the lentils are very soft.
4. Blend the soup in the pan using a hand-held blender, or tip into a blender or food processor and process until smooth, then return the soup to the pan.
5. Check the consistency; it will be fairly thick, so if you prefer it thinner, dilute with a little more stock.
6. Season to taste, then reheat until just bubbling.



Soda bread

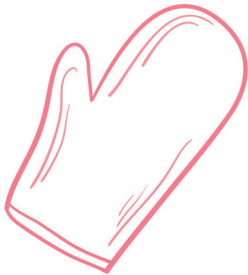
Serves 4

Loaf price 42p

And something to go with the soup? Look in the cupboard and find the ingredients – no need to go to the shops. The kids love this one – hands-on baking, so simple, so delicious.

Ingredients

- 170g self-raising flour
- 170g plain flour
- ½ tsp salt
- ½ tsp bicarbonate of soda
- 290ml milk
- 2 tsp lemon juice



Method

1. Preheat the oven to 200°C/Gas 6.
2. Tip the flours, salt and bicarbonate of soda into a large mixing bowl and stir.
3. Mix the milk and lemon juice in a jug.
4. Make a well in the centre of the flour mixture and pour in the milk, mixing quickly with a large fork to form a soft dough. (Depending upon the absorbency of the flour, you may need to add a little more milk if the dough seems too stiff but it should not be too wet or sticky. If the dough is too wet add more flour.)
5. Turn the dough onto a lightly floured surface and knead briefly.
6. Form the dough into a round and flatten it slightly before placing on a lightly oiled and floured baking sheet.
7. Cut a cross on the top and bake for about 30 minutes or until the loaf sounds hollow when tapped. Cool on a wire rack.

Chickpea and vegetable curry

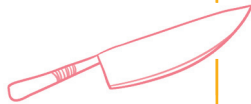
Serves 4

Portion price 57p

Fond of a takeaway? How much does a portion cost you at your local? £6? £7? Here's a recipe for a tasty and healthy curry that can be made for pence rather than pounds...

Ingredients

- 4 cloves of garlic
- 1 onion
- 1 aubergine
- 1–2 tbsp oil
- 2 tbsp curry paste of your choice
- 1 green pepper
- 400g tin of tomatoes
- 200ml veg stock
- 400g tin chickpeas
- ½ block creamed coconut, chopped
- ½ bag of spinach
- coriander to finish (optional)



Method

1. Finely chop the garlic and onion, roughly chop the aubergine, and sauté together gently in the oil and curry paste for 5–10 minutes. Be careful not to burn them.
2. Add the chopped green pepper. Continue to sauté until the pepper and aubergines are softening. Add a drop more oil or a splash of water if they are sticking.
3. Add the tomatoes and veg stock, bring to the boil, turn down the heat and simmer for 20 minutes. (If you are using different veg, add them at this stage and leave to cook until the veg is done.)
4. Add the chickpeas and creamed coconut. Continue to cook until the coconut has fully melted. Add the spinach and let it wilt.
5. Finish with chopped coriander and serve with rice or couscous.

Top tip...

You don't have to use aubergines or green peppers. You can use any vegetables you have in the fridge. How about potato and cauliflower? Just remember that different veg have different cooking times. So potatoes are going to have to simmer for a lot longer than peppers. One way of getting round this is to cook your potatoes separately and add them to the tomato mix later.

Bean burgers

Serves 4

15p per burger

Here is another favourite. Cook the mixture from scratch and the kids can help shape the burgers. I've seen heart-shaped ones, flower-shaped ones and snakey looking ones.

See what you can come up with!

Ingredients

- 1 small onion, peeled and finely chopped
- 1 large carrot, grated
- 1 tsp ground cumin
- 1 tsp smoked paprika
- 1 stem fresh coriander or parsley, finely chopped
- 1 tbsp veg or sunflower oil, plus
- 2 tbsp to fry the burgers
- 400g tin of kidney beans
- 1 tsp flour, plus another to (heaped) shape the burgers

This one is taken from Jack Monroe. If you haven't come across her **Cooking on a Bootstrap** then I would really recommend it. The website link is in the back of the booklet.



Method

1. Put the onion, carrot, cumin, paprika and coriander or parsley into a pan. Add a splash of oil and cook on a low heat to soften.
2. Drain and rinse the kidney beans and add to a bowl with the cooked carrots and onion. Mash together until you have a smoothish purée, like mashed potato consistency. Stir in the flour to stiffen.
3. If you have time, pop the mixture in the fridge for an hour – it'll handle better. No worries though if not.
4. With floured hands, take a quarter of the burger mixture and roll it into a ball. Make three more balls with the remaining mixture and flatten into a burger shape.
5. Heat the remaining oil in the frying pan on a medium heat.
6. Place the burgers into the pan. Depending on the size of your pan, you may be able to cook all the burgers at once; otherwise do them in batches. You can freeze uncooked patties if you don't need them all.
7. Cook each patty for a few minutes on one side, before turning. When cooked and slightly crisp on both sides, remove from the pan and serve.

Be a freezer hero!

You can safely freeze almost any food you haven't had time to eat at any time before the date on the packaging. This acts like a pause button, buying you more time to eat the food you've bought.

Defrost the food in the fridge when you want to eat it.

Try doubling up the curry, soup and burger recipes and freezing the extra. That way you will always have a meal in the freezer.



Top tips...

Portion up food before it goes into the freezer. That way you can take out exactly how much you need.

Label what goes in the freezer. Sticky labels and a pen are your friends. That way you will know what you have, rather than having to guess what the unidentified lump of green/red/brown stuff is!

Most food is freezable and there is no date by which you need to use it. Quality will decrease over time though.

Freezer burn – those ice crystals that form on food – is not harmful; it just affects the taste of the food. To avoid freezer burn, make sure you wrap things carefully in the freezer.

You can use cling film, plastic boxes and tin foil to freeze things in.

Refried beans

Serves 4

Portion price 54p

Wondering what to do with that can of kidney beans?

Here's a great recipe that can be used to fill tortilla wraps and put in the lunchbox.

Ingredients

- 1 onion
- 2 cloves of garlic
- olive oil
- 1 tsp cumin
- 1 tsp turmeric
- 400g tin kidney beans (or try other beans e.g. butter beans, cannellini, pinto)
- 1 tin sweetcorn
- 200ml hot water with a veg stock cube dissolved in it
- few sprigs of coriander (optional)

Method

1. Chop onion and garlic. Fry gently with a good glug of olive oil (or sunflower oil).
2. Add spices and cook for a few minutes more. Be careful not to burn them.
3. Add the drained and rinsed beans and sweetcorn.
4. Add the veg stock and simmer for 10 minutes.
5. Mash with a potato masher or blend with a hand blender.
6. Add chopped coriander.

I prefer olive oil as it tastes good but you could use sunflower oil!



This mix can be portioned out and frozen. Ideal for packed lunch wraps. Just take out the night before and leave in the fridge to defrost. Ice cube trays are excellent for freezing small portions.



Lunchbox tips

Keep them fuller for longer

Base the lunchbox on foods like bread, rice, pasta and potatoes. Choose wholegrain where you can.

Mix your slices

If your child doesn't like wholegrain, try making a sandwich from one slice of white bread and one slice of wholemeal/ brown bread.



DIY lunches

Wraps and pots of fillings can be more exciting for kids when they get to put them together. Dipping foods are also fun and make a change from a sandwich each day.

Always add veg

Cherry tomatoes, or sticks of carrot, cucumber, celery and peppers all count towards their **5-a-day**. Adding a small pot of hummus or other dips



Freeze your bread

Keep a small selection of bread in the freezer. Make lunchboxes more interesting by using different shapes, like bagels, pittas and wraps, and different types of bread such as granary, wholemeal and multi-grain.

Ever green

Always add salad to sandwiches – it all counts towards your child's **5-a-day**.

Cut down on crisps

If your child really likes crisps, try reducing the number of times you include them in their lunchbox and swap them for homemade plain popcorn or plain rice cakes instead.



Add bite-size fruit

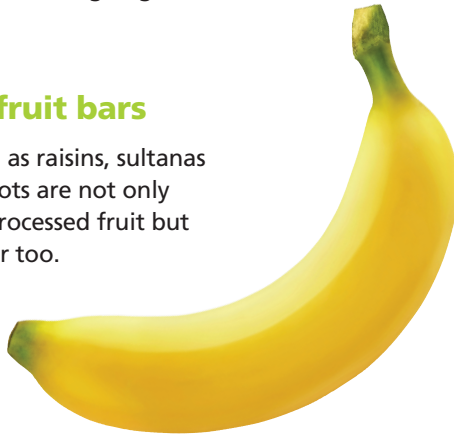
Try chopped apple, peeled satsuma segments, strawberries, blueberries, halved grapes or melon slices, to make them easier to eat. Add a squeeze of lemon juice to stop them from going brown.

Tinned fruit counts

A small pot of tinned fruit in juice – not syrup – is perfect for their lunchbox and is easily stored in the cupboard.

Swap the fruit bars

Dried fruit such as raisins, sultanas and dried apricots are not only cheaper than processed fruit but can be healthier too.



Watch the teeth

Dried fruit can get stuck in their teeth so should be only eaten at mealtimes to reduce the risk of tooth decay.

Go lower sugar

Swap cakes, chocolate, cereal bars and biscuits for malt loaf, fruited teacakes, fruit breads or fruit (fresh, dried or tinned – in juice not syrup). Go for lower sugar yoghurts or fromage frais and add your own fruit.

Get them involved

Let your kids help choose and prepare what goes in their lunchboxes. They are more likely to eat it if they have helped make it.

Variety is the spice of lunchboxes

Be adventurous and creative to mix up what goes in your kids' lunchboxes.

Vegetable stir-fry

Here is a more complex recipe but everyone loves noodles, don't they? Forget all those takeaways loaded with sugar and salt. Try this one for a veg-packed super meal. Again you can use any veg you like or have left over in the fridge. Try courgettes or mushrooms.

Ingredients

- 150g noodles – I like the thick white rice ones
- 1 red onion
- 2 cloves garlic
- 5cm piece of ginger
- ½ bunch fresh coriander
- 1 small head of broccoli
- ½ red or yellow pepper
- 1 carrot
- 150g spinach
- ½ a fresh red chilli (optional)
- 60g unsalted cashew nuts (ie 1 small packet)
- vegetable oil
- 100g spinach
- 1 lime
- 1 tsp sesame oil
- 2 tbsps low-salt soy sauce

Method

1. Cook the noodles according to the packet instructions, then drain and run under cold water (this stops them from overcooking) and place to one side. If you are going to leave them more than the time it takes to cook the veg, then put a teaspoon or two of oil over them and mix through. This will stop them sticking.
2. On a chopping board, peel and finely slice the onion, then peel and finely chop the garlic. Peel the ginger then chop into matchsticks. Pick the coriander leaves and finely chop the stalks.
3. Cut the broccoli florets off the stalk, halve any larger florets, then thinly slice the stalk. Slice the pepper into strips. Using a peeler, peel the carrot lengthways into long ribbons.
4. Trim and halve the chilli lengthways (if using), then scoop out the seeds and white pith. Finely slice at an angle, then wash your hands thoroughly.



Serves **4**

Portion price **£1.10**



5. Place a large non-stick frying pan on a medium heat, add the cashew nuts, and toast until golden, stirring regularly. Tip into a small bowl.
6. Place the pan back on a high heat and drizzle in 1 tablespoon of vegetable oil. Add the red onion, garlic, ginger and coriander stalks, then fry for 2 minutes, or until lightly golden, stirring regularly.
7. Throw in the broccoli and pepper and fry for 2 minutes, stirring regularly. Stir in the spinach and allow it to wilt, then add the noodles and carrot ribbons. Toss well for a minute to heat through.
8. Squeeze over the juice from half the lime, add 1 teaspoon of sesame oil and 2 tablespoons of soy sauce, and then toss to coat.
9. Sprinkle over the sliced chilli (if using), toasted nuts and the reserved coriander leaves, then serve with lime wedges (optional) for squeezing.



Did you know... date labels?

Best before:

These dates refer to quality rather than food safety. Foods with a 'best before' date should be safe to eat after the 'best before' date, but they may no longer be at their best.

Use by:

These dates refer to safety. Food can be eaten up to the end of this date but not after, even if it looks and smells fine. Always follow the storage instructions on packs.

Display until and Sell by:

You can ignore these dates as they are for shop staff not for shoppers.

To extend the life of food beyond its date, freeze it before the 'use by' date. After defrosting it, use within 24 hours.

For foods with a 'best before' date, it's OK to use your sense to check if food is good to eat. For those that carry a 'use by' date, sticking to that date is really the only safe bet.



Veg chilli with cocoa

Serves 4

Portion price 56p

I was recently told by a parent at one of our cookery workshops that her young daughter would never eat courgettes – but here she was tucking into this chilli and asking for seconds

Ingredients

- 1 small onion
- 3 cloves garlic
- 1 red pepper
- 3 or 4 mushrooms
- 1 courgette
- 400g tin chopped tomatoes
- 400g tin kidney beans
- 1 red chilli or a pinch of chilli flakes
- sunflower oil
- 1 tsp cumin
- 1 tsp smoked sweet paprika
- 1 veg stock cube, **or**,
- 1 tsp powdered stock
- 2 tsp cocoa powder
- salt and pepper



Method

1. Finely chop the onions and garlic and set aside. Then chop the rest of the veg in bite-size pieces. Open the tins; drain and rinse the kidney beans.
2. Gently fry the onion, garlic and chilli on a low heat in about 2 dessertspoons of oil. Do not brown them but gently cook until translucent – about 5–10 minutes. Add cumin and smoked paprika and cook for a further 2–3 minutes.
3. Add the rest of the veg and continue to fry until just turning soft. Remember to stir so they don't burn.
4. Add tomatoes and then simmer for 30 minutes.
5. Add the kidney beans, veg stock and cocoa and simmer for a further 10 minutes.
6. Add salt and pepper to taste.

Serve with rice, flour tortillas or baked potatoes, plus cheese and salad.



Top tips to get **5-a-day** on a budget...

Buy fruit and vegetables **loose** rather than pre-packaged. Loose fruit and veg can be as little as half the price.

Fruit and vegetables are usually cheaper when they're **in season**.

Fruit and vegetables are often cheaper at the **local market**. Cambridge market has some good fruit and veg stalls.

Replace your morning or afternoon **snack with a piece of fruit**. A banana or an apple costs around 20p or less in season, about half the price of most chocolate bars or packets of crisps. The savings add up and so do the health benefits.

Don't throw away vegetables that are about to go out of date. Use them in stews, soups and casseroles, which you can freeze and eat another time.

Look for **supermarket deals** on fruit and vegetables.

Look for good deals on **frozen and dried fruit and veg**, such as frozen peas and dried pulses and beans. They are often cheaper than fresh varieties.

Swap ready meals for **homemade** alternatives. Vegetables in dishes such as stews, bakes, casseroles and curries count towards your **5-a-day**, and cooking these dishes yourself is often cheaper than buying them ready-made.

Stock up on **canned fruit and vegetables**. They count towards your **5-a-day** and won't go off, so you can buy them in bulk. Buy canned fruit and veg in water or fruit juice, without added salt or sugar.



Useful websites

Change4Life

If you're stuck for some healthier meal ideas and need some help getting started, the Change4Life website has some great food tips and information.

www.nhs.uk/change4life

Jamie's Home Cooking Skills

Jamie Oliver has produced some useful short videos showing basic cooking techniques, from how to chop an onion, to tips for cooking great pasta.

www.jamieshomecookingskills.com/skills-specific.php?skill=howto-videos

Cooking on a Bootstrap

One of my favourite websites. Jack Monroe prices up all the recipes.

<http://cookingonabootstrap.com>

Love Food Hate Waste

A great site with lots of recipes and ideas to help us all make the most of the food we love.

www.lovefoodhatewaste.com





Want a cookery workshop in your area?

contact: sam@cambridgesustainablefood.org

For more information www.cambridgesustainablefood.org
or info@cambridgesustainablefood.org

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