
CHEAP · CHEERFUL · FAMILY-SIZED

Cooking on a Budget

*Low-cost family recipes for 1, 2, 4 or 6 people, with jobs
for little helpers*



30 EVERYDAY RECIPES · FREE

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Welcome

Good food doesn't have to cost a lot. This free book is full of cheap, filling family meals made from everyday ingredients you can find in most UK supermarkets.

Everything here is built on low-cost basics: oats, lentils, beans, potatoes, pasta, rice, eggs, frozen veg and tins. There are no pricey extras and no fancy kit, just a pan, a baking tray and a wooden spoon.

Cook for 1, 2, 4 or 6

Every recipe has a small table with amounts for **1, 2, 4 or 6 people**, so you can cook for one or feed a crowd without doing sums. Amounts are rounded to sensible sizes. Where a table says $\frac{1}{2}$ tin or $\frac{1}{4}$ onion, pop the rest in a covered tub in the fridge and use it within a couple of days.

How to read a recipe

- **V** means veggie (no meat or fish). Recipes without it contain meat or fish, and many give a veggie swap.
- **KIDS** marks a step that children can do, with an adult nearby. Each recipe also has a yellow **Kids can help** box listing the safe jobs.
- **Freezes** tells you if it's good for batch cooking.
- **Money tips** under each recipe help you spend less.

A QUICK WORD ON PRICES

We haven't printed prices, because they change every week and differ from shop to shop. Every ingredient in this book is low cost, and the tips show you how to make it go further.

SAFETY FIRST

Cook meat and fish until piping hot all the way through with no pink, wash hands after touching raw meat, and check labels if anyone has a food allergy. These are recipes, not medical or dietary advice.

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Money-Saving Shopping Tips

Small habits add up to big savings over a month.

Before you shop

- **Check the cupboards and fridge first**, then plan meals around what you already have.
- **Plan the week and write a list.** Stick to it and you'll buy less on impulse. See the sample week near the back.
- **Don't shop hungry.** It really does make you spend more.
- **Set a budget** and keep a running total on your phone as you go round.

In the shop

- **Go for own brands and "value" ranges.** Tins, pasta, rice, flour, oats and frozen veg are often just as good as big brands for much less.
- **Look for yellow stickers.** Reduced food near its date is a bargain if you'll eat it that day, or freeze it the same day.
- **Buy frozen.** Frozen veg, fruit and fish are cheap, already prepared, keep for months and mean less waste.
- **Compare the unit price** (price per kg or per 100g) on the shelf label, not just the pack price. Bigger isn't always cheaper.
- **Buy loose fruit and veg** so you only get what you need.
- **Look high and low.** The cheapest products are often on the top and bottom shelves, not at eye level.

- **Try the world food aisle** for bigger, cheaper bags of rice, lentils, spices and chickpeas.
- **Use loyalty schemes** if your shop has one, and only buy multi-buy deals for things you'll really use.

At home

- **Cook from scratch.** A pot of soup or chilli costs far less than ready meals or takeaways.
- **Stretch meat** with lentils, beans or extra veg. Half and half is a good rule.
- **Freeze before it spoils:** bread, bananas, cheese, cooked rice (within an hour of cooking) and leftovers.
- **“Best before” is about quality; “use by” is about safety.** Food past its best before date is often fine. Never eat food after its use by date.

The Cheap Store Cupboard

Keep these in and you can always make a meal. Build it up a few items a week.

Dry goods

- Porridge oats
- Pasta and spaghetti
- Rice (and pudding rice)
- Dried noodles
- Red lentils
- Pearl barley
- Plain and self-raising flour
- Sugar
- Stock cubes

Tins and jars

- Chopped tomatoes
- Passata and tomato purée
- Baked beans
- Chickpeas, kidney and mixed beans
- Sweetcorn
- Tuna

- Soy sauce

Freezer

- Peas and mixed veg
- Spinach
- Berries or mixed fruit
- Bread (toast it from frozen)
- Leftover portions, labelled and dated

Fridge and fresh

- Eggs and milk
- A block of cheddar
- Plain yoghurt
- Butter or spread
- Potatoes, onions, carrots
- Cabbage or leeks in season
- Bananas and apples

Flavour for pennies

- Oil

THE CHEAP STORE CUPBOARD

Cooking on a Budget

- Garlic
- Mild curry powder
- Chilli powder and cumin
- Paprika
- Dried mixed herbs
- Cinnamon
- Salt and pepper

Batch Cooking and Leftovers

Cook once, eat twice. Batch cooking saves money, time and energy.

Batch cooking

- **Double up.** Soups, Lentil Bolognese, chilli, curry and casseroles all freeze well, so make twice as much and freeze half in portions.
- **Use the oven fully.** If it's on for a traybake, bake jacket potatoes or a crumble at the same time.
- **Cool food quickly,** ideally within an hour or two, then get it into the fridge or freezer.
- **Label and date** everything you freeze. Most cooked dishes are best eaten within about 3 months.
- **Defrost in the fridge** overnight, then reheat until piping hot all the way through. Only reheat once.

Leftover ideas

- **Mash or potatoes** make Bubble and Squeak Patties or Tuna Fishcakes.
- **Roast chicken** makes Chicken and Sweetcorn Soup, a stir-fry or quesadillas. Boil the bones for free stock.
- **Rice** makes Egg Fried Rice the next day (keep it in the fridge and use within a day).
- **Chilli, curry or bolognese** can top jacket potatoes or fill wraps.

- **Stale bread** makes breadcrumbs. Whizz them up and freeze.
- **Soft veg** can go into soup. **Brown bananas** go into pancakes or overnight oats.

FRIDGE-RAID TIP

Stuck for an idea? Make a note of what's in your fridge and cupboard and ask everyday AI tools like Grok to suggest a cheap meal that uses it up. Always use your own judgement on food safety.

Kids Can Help

Cooking together is fun and cheap, and kids who help make dinner are often keener to eat it.

Look for the yellow **Kids can help** box on every recipe and the **KIDS** marker on the steps they can do. Here is a rough guide by age, but you know your child best. Always keep an adult nearby.

AGES 2 TO 4

Washing veg, tearing lettuce and cabbage, stirring cold mixtures, mashing bananas and potatoes, sprinkling toppings, counting things out.

AGES 5 TO 7

All of the above, plus weighing and measuring, cracking eggs into a cup first, whisking, spreading, kneading and shaping dough, patties and dumplings.

AGES 8 TO 11

Reading the recipe aloud, using a safe peeler and a can opener, grating with care, simple chopping with a child-safe knife, rubbing in crumble mix, setting the table and tidying up.

AGES 12 AND UP

Using the hob, oven and sharp knives with an adult close by, and cooking a whole simple recipe like pizza, pancakes or soup.

Kitchen safety rules

- Wash hands before cooking and after touching raw meat, fish or eggs.
- Tie long hair back and roll up sleeves.
- Adults handle hot pans, the oven, boiling water and sharp knives.
- Turn pan handles inwards, away from the edge of the hob.
- Taste food only when it's cooked, and never eat raw dough or batter with raw egg or flour in it.

Make it fun

- Let kids choose the pizza toppings or jacket potato fillings.
- Give each helper a job title: Chief Masher, Head Stirrer, Topping Captain.
- Play “guess the veg” with eyes closed, or count how many colours are on the plate.



SECTION

Breakfasts

Cheap, filling starts to the day.

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Overnight Oats

READY IN 5 MINS + OVERNIGHT • FREEZES: NO



Kids can help: measuring oats, mashing bananas, stirring, adding toppings.

INGREDIENTS	PEOPLE			
	1	2	4	6
Porridge oats	50g	100g	200g	300g
Milk (any kind)	120ml	250ml	500ml	750ml
Ripe bananas or apples	½	1	2	3
Ground cinnamon (optional)	¼ tsp	½ tsp	1 tsp	1½ tsp
Frozen berries or raisins	1 tbsp	2 tbsp	4 tbsp	6 tbsp

METHOD

- 1** **KIDS** Tip the oats into a bowl or jars and pour over the milk.
- 2** **KIDS** Mash the banana (or grate the apple) and stir it in with the cinnamon.
- 3** Cover and leave in the fridge overnight.
- 4** **KIDS** In the morning, stir, add a splash more milk if it is thick, and top with berries or raisins.

Money tip: Frozen berries are usually much cheaper than fresh, and they thaw overnight in the oats.

Banana Oat Pancakes

READY IN 20 MINS • FREEZES: YES, 1 MONTH



Kids can help: mashing, cracking eggs into a cup first, whisking, weighing flour.

INGREDIENTS	PEOPLE			
	1	2	4	6
Very ripe bananas	$\frac{3}{4}$	$1\frac{1}{2}$	3	$4\frac{1}{2}$
Eggs	1	2	3	5
Self-raising flour	40g	75g	150g	220g
Porridge oats	10g	25g	50g	75g
Milk	50ml	100ml	200ml	300ml
Oil, for the pan	$\frac{1}{4}$ tbsp	$\frac{1}{2}$ tbsp	1 tbsp	$1\frac{1}{2}$ tbsp

METHOD

- 1 KIDS** Mash the bananas in a big bowl until smooth.
- 2 KIDS** Crack in the eggs and whisk, then whisk in the milk.
- 3 KIDS** Stir in the flour and oats to make a thick batter.
- 4** An adult heats a little oil in a frying pan over a medium heat and cooks small ladles of batter for 2 minutes a side, until golden.

Money tip: This is the best use for brown, spotty bananas. Look for them on the reduced shelf.

Cheesy Beans on Toast

READY IN 10 MINS • FREEZES: NO



Kids can help: buttering toast, sprinkling cheese, counting out slices.

INGREDIENTS	PEOPLE			
	1	2	4	6
Baked beans (400g tins)	½ tin	1 tin	2 tins	3 tins
Slices of bread	2	4	8	12
Cheddar, grated	20g	40g	80g	120g
Butter or spread	Thin scrape	Thin scrape	Thin scrape	Thin scrape

METHOD

- 1 Warm the beans in a pan over a low heat, stirring now and then, until piping hot.
- 2 **KIDS** Toast the bread and spread it thinly.
- 3 **KIDS** Spoon the beans over the toast and sprinkle with the cheese.

Money tip: Own-brand beans are just as good. Grate a block of cheese yourself rather than buying it ready-grated: it is cheaper and goes further.

Breakfast Egg Muffins

READY IN 25 MINS • FREEZES: YES, 1 MONTH



Kids can help: cracking and whisking eggs, sprinkling veg and cheese into the tin.

INGREDIENTS	PEOPLE			
	1	2	4	6
Eggs	2	4	8	12
Milk	1 tbsp	2 tbsp	4 tbsp	6 tbsp
Pepper or tomato, chopped small	¼	½	1	1½
Frozen peas or sweetcorn	25g	50g	100g	150g
Cheddar, grated	10g	25g	50g	75g
Oil, for the tin	¼ tsp	½ tsp	1 tsp	1½ tsp

METHOD

- 1 Heat the oven to 180°C (160°C fan, gas 4) and oil a 12-hole muffin tin (allow 2 muffins each).
- 2 **KIDS** Crack the eggs into a jug, add the milk and whisk.
- 3 **KIDS** Share the veg and cheese between the holes, then pour the egg over.
- 4 Bake for 18 to 20 minutes, until set in the middle.

Money tip: A great home for odds and ends: a spoon of leftover veg, half an onion, or the end of a block of cheese.



SECTION

Soups

A big pot of soup is the cheapest meal there is.

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Red Lentil and Carrot Soup

READY IN 35 MINS • FREEZES: YES, 3 MONTHS



Kids can help: washing and peeling carrots, rinsing lentils in a sieve, measuring.

INGREDIENTS	PEOPLE			
	1	2	4	6
Onion, chopped	¼	½	1	1½
Carrots, chopped	1	2	4	6
Red lentils	50g	100g	200g	300g
Vegetable stock (from a cube)	300ml	600ml	1.2L	1.8L
Ground cumin (optional)	¼ tsp	½ tsp	1 tsp	1½ tsp
Oil	¼ tbsp	½ tbsp	1 tbsp	1½ tbsp

METHOD

- 1 Soften the onion in the oil in a big pan for 5 minutes.
- 2 Add the carrots, cumin, rinsed lentils and stock.
- 3 Simmer for 25 minutes, stirring now and then, until the lentils are soft.
- 4 Blend, or mash for a chunkier soup. Season to taste.

Money tip: Red lentils need no soaking, cook fast and are one of the cheapest proteins in the shop.

Veg and Barley Broth v

READY IN 1 HOUR 15 MINS • FREEZES: YES, 3 MONTHS



Kids can help: washing leeks, rinsing barley, adding the veg to the pot (before it is on the heat).

INGREDIENTS	PEOPLE			
	1	2	4	6
Onion, chopped	¼	½	1	1½
Carrots, diced	½	1	2	3
Leek, sliced	¼	½	1	1½
Turnip (swede), diced	60g	120g	250g	380g
Pearl barley	25g	50g	100g	150g
Vegetable stock	380ml	750ml	1.5L	2.25L
Oil	¼ tbsp	½ tbsp	1 tbsp	1½ tbsp

METHOD

- 1 Soften the onion and leek in the oil for 5 minutes.
- 2 **KIDS** Add the carrot, turnip, rinsed barley and stock.
- 3 Simmer with a lid on for about an hour, until the barley is tender.
- 4 Season and serve with bread.

Money tip: A warming Scottish classic. Swap in any root veg that is cheap that week.

Potato and Leek Soup

READY IN 35 MINS • FREEZES: YES, 3 MONTHS



Kids can help: washing leeks, counting potatoes, mashing, tasting.

INGREDIENTS	PEOPLE			
	1	2	4	6
Potatoes, peeled and diced	150g	300g	600g	900g
Leeks, sliced	½	1	2	3
Onion, chopped	¼	½	1	1½
Vegetable stock	250ml	500ml	1L	1.5L
Milk	25ml	50ml	100ml	150ml
Butter or oil	¼ tbsp	½ tbsp	1 tbsp	1½ tbsp

METHOD

- 1 Soften the leeks and onion in the butter for 8 minutes.
- 2 Add the potatoes and stock and simmer for 20 minutes.
- 3 Stir in the milk, then blend or mash.
- 4 Season to taste.

Money tip: Loose potatoes and leeks are often cheaper than bagged. Weigh them at the till.

Minestrone with Beans and Pasta V

READY IN 35 MINS • FREEZES: YES, 3 MONTHS (WITHOUT THE PASTA)



Kids can help: breaking spaghetti into bits, draining beans in a sieve, measuring frozen veg.

INGREDIENTS	PEOPLE			
	1	2	4	6
Onion, chopped	¼	½	1	1½
Carrot, diced	¼	½	1	1½
Chopped tomatoes (400g)	¼ tin	½ tin	1 tin	1½ tins
Beans, drained (any kind)	¼ tin	½ tin	1 tin	1½ tins
Small pasta or broken spaghetti	25g	50g	100g	150g
Frozen mixed veg	40g	75g	150g	220g
Vegetable stock	250ml	500ml	1L	1.5L
Oil	¼ tbsp	½ tbsp	1 tbsp	1½ tbsp

METHOD

- 1 Soften the onion and carrot in the oil for 5 minutes.
- 2 Add the tomatoes, stock and beans and simmer for 10 minutes.
- 3 Add the pasta and frozen veg and cook for 10 minutes more.
- 4 Season and serve.

Money tip: Use up the broken bits at the bottom of pasta bags.

Chicken and Sweetcorn Soup

READY IN 30 MINS • FREEZES: YES, 2 MONTHS



Kids can help: draining sweetcorn, mixing the cornflour paste, shredding cooked (cooled) chicken with clean hands.

INGREDIENTS	PEOPLE			
	1	2	4	6
Cooked chicken, shredded (or 2 raw thighs)	50g	100g	200g	300g
Sweetcorn (around 200g drained)	¼ tin	½ tin	1 tin	1½ tins
Chicken stock	250ml	500ml	1L	1.5L
Cornflour	½ tbsp	1 tbsp	2 tbsp	3 tbsp
Spring onions, sliced	½	1	2	3
Egg (optional)	1	1	1	2

METHOD

- 1 Bring the stock to the boil. If using raw thighs, simmer them in it for 20 minutes, then lift out and shred.
- 2 Add the sweetcorn and chicken.
- 3 **KIDS** Mix the cornflour with 3 tablespoons of cold water in a cup. An adult stirs it into the soup and simmers it for 2 minutes until it thickens.

- 4 For egg ribbons, an adult slowly pours in a beaten egg while stirring. Top with spring onion.

Money tip: Perfect for the last of a roast chicken. Boil the carcass with an onion and carrot for free stock.



SECTION

Mains



Family dinners from everyday ingredients.

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Lentil Bolognese

READY IN 40 MINS • FREEZES: YES, 3 MONTHS



Kids can help: rinsing lentils, opening tins with a safe can opener, stirring the sauce off the heat.

INGREDIENTS	PEOPLE			
	1	2	4	6
Onion, chopped	¼	½	1	1½
Carrots, grated	½	1	2	3
Garlic cloves, crushed	½	1	2	3
Red lentils	40g	75g	150g	220g
Chopped tomatoes (400g)	½ tin	1 tin	2 tins	3 tins
Tomato purée	¼ tbsp	½ tbsp	1 tbsp	1½ tbsp
Water or stock	100ml	200ml	400ml	600ml
Spaghetti	75g	150g	300g	450g
Oil	¼ tbsp	½ tbsp	1 tbsp	1½ tbsp

METHOD

- 1 Soften the onion, carrot and garlic in the oil for 5 minutes.
- 2 Add the rinsed lentils, tomatoes, purée and water.
- 3 Simmer for 25 minutes, stirring, until thick.

- 4** Cook the spaghetti as the pack says, drain and serve with the sauce.
-

Money tip: Make double and freeze half: it makes a fast lasagne or chilli base another night.

Mince and Tatties

READY IN 45 MINS • FREEZES: YES, 3 MONTHS (THE MINCE)



Kids can help: peeling carrots with a safe peeler, mashing the tatties.

INGREDIENTS	PEOPLE			
	1	2	4	6
Beef mince	120g	250g	500g	750g
Onion, chopped	¼	½	1	1½
Carrots, diced	½	1	2	3
Plain flour	¼ tbsp	½ tbsp	1 tbsp	1½ tbsp
Beef stock	120ml	250ml	500ml	750ml
Potatoes	250g	500g	1kg	1.5kg
Butter	10g	15g	30g	45g
Milk	10ml	25ml	50ml	75ml

METHOD

- 1 Brown the mince in a large pan, breaking it up, then add the onion and carrot for 5 minutes.
- 2 Stir in the flour, then the stock. Simmer for 30 minutes until rich and thick.
- 3 Meanwhile, boil the peeled potatoes for 20 minutes until soft.

4

KIDS

Drain and mash the tatties with the butter and milk.
Serve with the mince.

Money tip: Add a tin of drained lentils or beans to the mince and it will feed two extra people.

Sausage and Bean Casserole

READY IN 45 MINS • FREEZES: YES, 3 MONTHS



Kids can help: opening and pouring tins, setting the table, choosing the side dish.

INGREDIENTS	PEOPLE			
	1	2	4	6
Sausages	2	4	8	12
Onion, sliced	¼	½	1	1½
Chopped tomatoes (400g)	½ tin	1 tin	2 tins	3 tins
Baked beans or haricot beans	¼ tin	½ tin	1 tin	1½ tins
Paprika	¼ tsp	½ tsp	1 tsp	1½ tsp
Oil	¼ tbsp	½ tbsp	1 tbsp	1½ tbsp

METHOD

- 1 Brown the sausages in the oil, then cut each one into 3.
- 2 Add the onion and cook for 5 minutes.
- 3 Add the tomatoes, beans and paprika and simmer for 25 minutes.
- 4 Check the sausages are cooked through, with no pink, and serve with mash, rice or bread.

Money tip: Use veggie sausages to make it V.

Chickpea and Spinach Curry

READY IN 30 MINS • FREEZES: YES, 3 MONTHS



Kids can help: draining chickpeas, measuring rice, popping frozen spinach blocks into the pan before it is hot.

INGREDIENTS	PEOPLE			
	1	2	4	6
Onion, chopped	¼	½	1	1½
Garlic cloves, crushed	½	1	2	3
Mild curry powder	¼ tbsp	½ tbsp	1 tbsp	1½ tbsp
Chopped tomatoes (400g)	¼ tin	½ tin	1 tin	1½ tins
Chickpeas, drained	½ tin	1 tin	2 tins	3 tins
Frozen spinach	25g	50g	100g	150g
Rice	60g	120g	250g	380g
Oil	¼ tbsp	½ tbsp	1 tbsp	1½ tbsp

METHOD

- 1 Soften the onion and garlic in the oil for 5 minutes, then stir in the curry powder for 1 minute.
- 2 Add the tomatoes, chickpeas, spinach and a splash of water.
- 3 Simmer for 15 minutes.

- 4** Meanwhile, cook the rice as the pack says. Serve together.
-

Money tip: Frozen spinach costs less than fresh and does not wilt in the fridge.

Chicken Thigh Traybake

READY IN 55 MINS • FREEZES: NO



Kids can help: washing veg, tossing the veg in oil and herbs (before the chicken goes in), washing hands after.

INGREDIENTS	PEOPLE			
	1	2	4	6
Chicken thighs, bone in	2	4	8	12
Potatoes, in chunks	200g	400g	800g	1.2kg
Onions, in wedges	½	1	2	3
Carrots, in chunks	½	1	2	3
Oil	½ tbsp	1 tbsp	2 tbsp	3 tbsp
Dried mixed herbs	¼ tsp	½ tsp	1 tsp	1½ tsp

METHOD

- 1 Heat the oven to 200°C (180°C fan, gas 6).
- 2 **KIDS** Toss the potatoes, onions and carrots with the oil and herbs in a big roasting tin.
- 3 Sit the chicken on top, skin up, and roast for 45 minutes.
- 4 Check the chicken is cooked through: the juices run clear and there is no pink.

Money tip: Thighs are cheaper than breasts and stay juicier. Wash hands well after touching raw chicken.

Tuna Pasta Bake

READY IN 35 MINS • FREEZES: YES, 2 MONTHS



Kids can help: draining tins, mixing everything in the dish, sprinkling cheese.

INGREDIENTS	PEOPLE			
	1	2	4	6
Pasta shapes	75g	150g	300g	450g
Tuna, drained	½ tin	1 tin	2 tins	3 tins
Sweetcorn, drained	¼ tin	½ tin	1 tin	1½ tins
Passata or chopped tomatoes	120g	250g	500g	750g
Cheddar, grated	20g	40g	80g	120g

METHOD

- 1 Heat the oven to 200°C (180°C fan, gas 6). Cook the pasta for 2 minutes less than the pack says, then drain.
- 2 **KIDS** Mix the pasta, tuna, sweetcorn and passata in an ovenproof dish.
- 3 **KIDS** Sprinkle with the cheese.
- 4 Bake for 20 minutes until bubbling.

Money tip: Tuna in water or brine is usually cheaper than in oil.

Easy Veggie Chilli

READY IN 35 MINS • FREEZES: YES, 3 MONTHS



Kids can help: draining beans, measuring spices, stirring (off the heat).

INGREDIENTS	PEOPLE			
	1	2	4	6
Onion, chopped	¼	½	1	1½
Pepper, chopped	¼	½	1	1½
Kidney or mixed beans, drained	½ tin	1 tin	2 tins	3 tins
Chopped tomatoes (400g)	¼ tin	½ tin	1 tin	1½ tins
Mild chilli powder	¼ tsp	½ tsp	1 tsp	1½ tsp
Ground cumin	¼ tsp	½ tsp	1 tsp	1½ tsp
Rice	60g	120g	250g	380g
Oil	¼ tbsp	½ tbsp	1 tbsp	1½ tbsp

METHOD

- 1 Soften the onion and pepper in the oil for 5 minutes.
- 2 Stir in the spices, then add the beans and tomatoes.
- 3 Simmer for 20 minutes until thick.
- 4 Serve with the cooked rice, or on jacket potatoes.

Money tip: Keep the chilli mild for kids. Grown-ups can add hot sauce at the table.

Egg Fried Rice

READY IN 15 MINS • FREEZES: NO



Kids can help: cracking and beating eggs, slicing spring onions with scissors.

INGREDIENTS	PEOPLE			
	1	2	4	6
Rice, cooked and cooled the day before	60g	120g	250g	380g
Eggs	1	2	3	5
Frozen peas	50g	100g	200g	300g
Spring onions, sliced	1	2	4	6
Soy sauce	½ tbsp	1 tbsp	2 tbsp	3 tbsp
Oil	¼ tbsp	½ tbsp	1 tbsp	1½ tbsp

METHOD

- 1 Heat the oil in a big frying pan or wok and fry the peas and spring onion for 2 minutes.
- 2 Add the rice and stir-fry until piping hot all the way through.
- 3 Push it to one side, scramble the beaten eggs in the space, then mix through.
- 4 Add the soy sauce and serve.

Money tip: Leftover rice: cool it quickly, keep it in the fridge, eat it within a day and only reheat it once.

Half and Half Cottage Pie

READY IN 1 HOUR • FREEZES: YES, 3 MONTHS



Kids can help: mashing, spreading the mash, making fork patterns on top.

INGREDIENTS	PEOPLE			
	1	2	4	6
Beef mince	60g	120g	250g	380g
Red lentils	25g	50g	100g	150g
Onion, chopped	¼	½	1	1½
Carrots, diced	½	1	2	3
Tomato purée	¼ tbsp	½ tbsp	1 tbsp	1½ tbsp
Beef stock	120ml	250ml	500ml	750ml
Potatoes	250g	500g	1kg	1.5kg
Butter	10g	15g	30g	45g
Milk	10ml	25ml	50ml	75ml

METHOD

- 1 Brown the mince, add the onion and carrot and cook for 5 minutes.
- 2 Add the rinsed lentils, purée and stock and simmer for 25 minutes. Heat the oven to 200°C (180°C fan, gas 6).
- 3 **KIDS** Boil and mash the potatoes with the butter and milk.

4

KIDS

Put the mince in a dish, spread the mash on top and fork the top. An adult bakes it for 25 minutes.

Money tip: Half mince, half lentils: the same pie for less money, and nobody notices.

Two-Ingredient Dough Pizza

READY IN 30 MINS • FREEZES: YES, 1 MONTH (BASES)



Kids can help: mixing, kneading, rolling out, spreading sauce, choosing toppings.

INGREDIENTS	PEOPLE			
	1	2	4	6
Self-raising flour	75g	150g	300g	450g
Plain yoghurt	75g	150g	300g	450g
Tomato purée or passata	1½ tbsp	3 tbsp	6 tbsp	9 tbsp
Cheese, grated	30g	60g	120g	180g
Pepper or a few mushrooms, sliced	¼	½	1	1½

METHOD

- 1 Heat the oven to 220°C (200°C fan, gas 7) and flour two baking trays.
- 2 **KIDS** Mix the flour and yoghurt to a soft dough, then knead for 1 minute.
- 3 **KIDS** Split, then press or roll out into bases on the trays.
- 4 **KIDS** Spread with sauce and add cheese and toppings. An adult bakes them for 12 to 15 minutes.

Money tip: Cheaper than a takeaway and the most fun recipe in the book for little helpers.

Tuna Fishcakes

READY IN 40 MINS • FREEZES: YES, 2 MONTHS (UNCOOKED)



Kids can help: mashing, shaping cakes, dipping in egg and crumbs (wash hands after).

INGREDIENTS	PEOPLE			
	1	2	4	6
Potatoes	150g	300g	600g	900g
Tuna, drained	½ tin	1 tin	2 tins	3 tins
Spring onions, sliced	½	1	2	3
Egg, beaten	1	1	1	2
Breadcrumbs (whizz up stale bread)	10g	25g	50g	75g
Oil	½ tbsp	1 tbsp	2 tbsp	3 tbsp

METHOD

- 1 KIDS** An adult boils the peeled potatoes until soft and drains them. Once they have steamed dry, mash them.
- 2 KIDS** Mix in the tuna and spring onion and shape into 8 cakes (allow 2 each).
- 3 KIDS** Dip in egg, then breadcrumbs.
- 4** Fry in the oil for 3 to 4 minutes a side, or bake at 200°C (180°C fan) for 20 minutes.

Money tip: Stale bread makes free breadcrumbs. Keep a bag of them in the freezer.

Jacket Potatoes, Four Ways

READY IN 1 HOUR 10 MINS • FREEZES: NO



Kids can help: scrubbing potatoes, pricking with a fork, choosing and adding toppings.

INGREDIENTS	PEOPLE			
	1	2	4	6
Large baking potatoes	1	2	4	6
Baked beans (topping 1)	¼ tin	½ tin	1 tin	1½ tins
Cheddar, grated (topping 2)	20g	40g	80g	120g
Tuna mixed with 2 tbsp mayo (topping 3)	¼ tin	½ tin	1 tin	1½ tins
Leftover chilli or curry (topping 4)	1 tbsp	2 tbsp	4 tbsp	6 tbsp

METHOD

- 1** **KIDS** Wash the potatoes and prick them with a fork while an adult heats the oven to 200°C (180°C fan, gas 6).
- 2** Bake for 1 hour, until soft inside. Or microwave each for 5 to 8 minutes, then crisp in the oven.
- 3** Split them open (an adult, they are very hot).
- 4** **KIDS** Let everyone add their own toppings.

Money tip: A tray of jackets is a good way to use up leftovers. Topping 3 is not V.

Macaroni Cheese with Peas

READY IN 30 MINS • FREEZES: YES, 2 MONTHS



Kids can help: weighing pasta and cheese, stirring in the cheese once the pan is off the heat.

INGREDIENTS	PEOPLE			
	1	2	4	6
Macaroni	75g	150g	300g	450g
Butter	10g	20g	40g	60g
Plain flour	10g	20g	40g	60g
Milk	150ml	300ml	600ml	900ml
Cheddar, grated	30g	60g	120g	180g
Frozen peas	40g	75g	150g	220g

METHOD

- 1 Cook the macaroni as the pack says, adding the peas for the last 2 minutes. Drain.
- 2 Melt the butter in a pan, stir in the flour for 1 minute, then whisk in the milk a bit at a time until thick.
- 3 **KIDS** Take off the heat and stir in most of the cheese.
- 4 Mix with the pasta, top with the rest of the cheese and grill until golden, if you like.

Money tip: Strong cheddar gives more flavour from less cheese.

Chicken and Veg Noodle Stir-fry

READY IN 20 MINS • FREEZES: NO



Kids can help: washing veg, tearing cabbage leaves, mixing the sauce, tossing with tongs at the end.

INGREDIENTS	PEOPLE			
	1	2	4	6
Boneless chicken thighs, in strips	1	2	4	6
Dried noodles	60g	120g	250g	380g
Veg: pepper, carrot, cabbage, sliced thin	75g	150g	300g	450g
Garlic cloves, crushed	½	1	2	3
Soy sauce	¾ tbsp	1½ tbsp	3 tbsp	4½ tbsp
Oil	¼ tbsp	½ tbsp	1 tbsp	1½ tbsp

METHOD

- 1 Cook the noodles as the pack says, then drain.
- 2 Stir-fry the chicken in the oil over a high heat for 6 to 8 minutes until cooked through.
- 3 Add the garlic and veg and stir-fry for 3 minutes.
- 4 Toss in the noodles and soy sauce and serve.

Money tip: Swap the chicken for 3 eggs or a tin of chickpeas to make it V.

Bean Stew with Dumplings

READY IN 1 HOUR • FREEZES: YES, 2 MONTHS (STEW ONLY)



Kids can help: rubbing in the flour, rolling dumpling balls.

INGREDIENTS	PEOPLE			
	1	2	4	6
Onion, chopped	¼	½	1	1½
Carrots, chopped	½	1	2	3
Potatoes, diced	½	1	2	3
Mixed beans, drained	¼ tin	½ tin	1 tin	1½ tins
Chopped tomatoes (400g)	¼ tin	½ tin	1 tin	1½ tins
Vegetable stock	150ml	300ml	600ml	900ml
Self-raising flour (dumplings)	25g	50g	100g	150g
Vegetable suet or cold butter (dumplings)	10g	25g	50g	75g
Oil	¼ tbsp	½ tbsp	1 tbsp	1½ tbsp

METHOD

- 1 Soften the onion and carrot in the oil, then add the potato, beans, tomatoes and stock. Simmer for 20 minutes.
- 2 **KIDS** Rub the flour and suet together with a pinch of salt, then add just enough cold water to make a soft dough.
- 3 **KIDS** Roll into small balls (allow 2 each).

- 4** Sit the dumplings on the stew, cover and simmer for 20 minutes until fluffy.

Money tip: Dumplings turn a pot of veg into a filling dinner for very little.



SECTION

Lunches and Leftovers

Use it up, don't throw it out.

Bubble and Squeak Patties	47
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Bubble and Squeak Patties V

READY IN 25 MINS • FREEZES: YES, 1 MONTH



Kids can help: mashing, shaping patties, dusting with flour.

INGREDIENTS	PEOPLE			
	1	2	4	6
Leftover mash or boiled potatoes	120g	250g	500g	750g
Leftover cabbage, sprouts or greens	50g	100g	200g	300g
Egg	1	1	1	2
Plain flour	½ tbsp	1 tbsp	2 tbsp	3 tbsp
Oil	½ tbsp	1 tbsp	2 tbsp	3 tbsp

METHOD

- 1 KIDS** Mash the potato with the chopped greens and egg.
- 2 KIDS** Shape into patties (allow 2 each) and dust with flour.
- 3** Fry in the oil for 4 minutes a side until crisp and golden.
- 4** Serve with beans or a fried egg.

Money tip: A tasty way to use up leftover veg instead of throwing it out.

Potato and Onion Tortilla

READY IN 35 MINS • FREEZES: NO



Kids can help: cracking and beating eggs, counting slices.

INGREDIENTS	PEOPLE			
	1	2	4	6
Eggs	2	3	6	9
Potatoes, thinly sliced	120g	250g	500g	750g
Onion, sliced	¼	½	1	1½
Oil	¾ tbsp	1½ tbsp	3 tbsp	4½ tbsp

METHOD

- 1 Cook the potatoes and onion gently in the oil in a frying pan, with a lid on, for 15 minutes until soft.
- 2 **KIDS** Beat the eggs in a big bowl, then stir in the potatoes and onion.
- 3 Pour back into the pan and cook on a low heat for 10 minutes.
- 4 Finish under the grill until set. Serve warm or cold in slices.

Money tip: Great cold in lunchboxes the next day.

Homemade Hummus and Veg Sticks

V

READY IN 10 MINS • FREEZES: YES, 1 MONTH (HUMMUS)



Kids can help: mashing or pressing the blender button with an adult, washing veg, arranging sticks.

INGREDIENTS	PEOPLE			
	1	2	4	6
Chickpeas, drained (keep the water)	$\frac{1}{4}$ tin	$\frac{1}{2}$ tin	1 tin	$1\frac{1}{2}$ tins
Garlic clove	$\frac{1}{4}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	1	$1\frac{1}{2}$
Oil	$\frac{1}{2}$ tbsp	1 tbsp	2 tbsp	3 tbsp
Lemon, juiced (or 2 tbsp bottled)	$\frac{1}{4}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	1	$1\frac{1}{2}$
Carrots, in sticks	1	2	4	6
Cucumber, in sticks	$\frac{1}{4}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	1	$1\frac{1}{2}$

METHOD

- 1 KIDS** Whizz the chickpeas, garlic, oil and lemon juice in a blender, or mash hard with a fork.
- 2 KIDS** Add a splash of the chickpea water until smooth, and season.
- 3 KIDS** Serve with the veg sticks and toast or pitta.

Money tip: Tahini is traditional but optional. Leave it out to keep costs down.

Cheesy Quesadillas V

READY IN 15 MINS • FREEZES: NO



Kids can help: spreading, sprinkling, pressing the wraps together.

INGREDIENTS	PEOPLE			
	1	2	4	6
Tortilla wraps	2	4	8	12
Beans or sweetcorn, drained	¼ tin	½ tin	1 tin	1½ tins
Cheddar, grated	25g	50g	100g	150g
Salsa or passata	1 tbsp	2 tbsp	4 tbsp	6 tbsp

METHOD

- 1 KIDS** Spread half the wraps with salsa, then add beans or sweetcorn and cheese.
- 2 KIDS** Top each with another wrap and press down.
- 3** Dry-fry each one for 2 minutes a side until the cheese melts.
- 4** Cut into triangles with a pizza wheel.

Money tip: Add leftover cooked chicken if you have it (then it is not V).



SECTION

Sweet Treats

Simple puddings from the cupboard.

Fruit Crumble

52

Creamy Rice Pudding

53



Fruit Crumble

READY IN 45 MINS • FREEZES: YES, 3 MONTHS



Kids can help: weighing, rubbing in the crumble, scattering it on top.

INGREDIENTS	PEOPLE			
	1	2	4	6
Apples, or 400g frozen or tinned fruit	1	2	4	6
Plain flour	40g	75g	150g	220g
Butter, cold	20g	40g	75g	110g
Sugar	20g	40g	75g	110g
Porridge oats	10g	25g	50g	75g

METHOD

- 1 Heat the oven to 190°C (170°C fan, gas 5).
- 2 Slice the fruit into a dish (an adult cuts apples).
- 3 **KIDS** Rub the butter into the flour until it looks like breadcrumbs, then stir in the sugar and oats.
- 4 **KIDS** Scatter it over the fruit. An adult bakes it for 30 minutes until golden.

Money tip: Frozen fruit and slightly soft apples are perfect here.

Creamy Rice Pudding

READY IN 1 HOUR 30 MINS • FREEZES: NO



Kids can help: buttering the dish, measuring rice and milk, stirring.

INGREDIENTS	PEOPLE			
	1	2	4	6
Pudding rice	25g	50g	100g	150g
Milk	250ml	500ml	1L	1.5L
Sugar	10g	25g	50g	75g
Butter	¼ tbsp	½ tbsp	1 tbsp	1½ tbsp
Nutmeg (optional)	Pinch	Pinch	Pinch	Pinch

METHOD

- 1 KIDS** Butter an ovenproof dish while an adult heats the oven to 150°C (130°C fan, gas 2).
- 2 KIDS** Add the rice, sugar and milk and stir.
- 3** Grate over a little nutmeg.
- 4** Bake for about 1 hour 30 minutes, stirring after 30 minutes, until creamy.

Money tip: Very cheap, and the oven does all the work. Top with a spoon of jam.

A Week of Budget Meals

A sample week that uses leftovers on purpose, so nothing goes to waste.

	BREAKFAST	LUNCH	DINNER
Mon	Overnight Oats	Cheesy Beans on Toast	Red Lentil and Carrot Soup with bread (make double)
Tue	Overnight Oats	Leftover lentil soup	Chicken Thigh Traybake (roast 2 extra thighs)
Wed	Breakfast Egg Muffins (bake 12)	Homemade Hummus and Veg Sticks	Chicken and Veg Noodle Stir-fry with the leftover chicken
Thu	Leftover egg muffins	Cheesy Quesadillas	Lentil Bolognese (make double, freeze half)
Fri	Overnight Oats	Jacket potato with leftover bolognese	Two-Ingredient Dough Pizza night
Sat	Banana Oat Pancakes	Potato and Onion Tortilla	Sausage and Bean Casserole with mash (make extra mash)
Sun	Cheesy Beans on Toast	Bubble and Squeak Patties	Easy Veggie Chilli with rice, then Fruit Crumble

HOW THIS WEEK SAVES MONEY

- The same basics (oats, lentils, potatoes, tins, eggs, cheese) turn up again and again, so you buy fewer things in bigger, cheaper packs.
- Cooking extra on purpose gives you free lunches and second dinners.
- Half the bolognese goes in the freezer for a busy night next week.
- Swap any meal for whatever's on offer or in a yellow sticker deal that week.

Use the amount tables in each recipe to shop for your family size: just check the 1, 2, 4 or 6 column.

Free Food Help

Everyone can hit a hard patch. There is no shame in asking for help, and these services are there for you.

Links, rules and phone numbers were checked on each organisation's own website on 18 October 2026. Rules and amounts can change, so check the website before you apply.

Glenrothes Foodbank

The foodbank gives three days of nutritionally balanced, non-perishable food to people in crisis. It works through **referrals**: a support worker, advice service or other referral agency refers you, then volunteers welcome you and make up your food parcel. If you're not sure who can refer you, contact the foodbank.

Caledonia House, Pentland Park, Saltire Centre, Glenrothes,
Fife KY6 2AL · 01592 631088 ·
info@glenrothes.foodbank.org.uk

Get help: glenrothes.foodbank.org.uk/get-help

Donate: glenrothes.foodbank.org.uk/give-help/donate-money

Find a foodbank anywhere in the UK

Trussell's finder helps you find your nearest food bank, whether you need emergency food or want to donate or volunteer.

trussell.org.uk/emergency-food/find-a-foodbank

Community pantries, larders and fridges in Fife

Across Fife, community pantries, larders, fridges and cafés offer free or low-cost food. Many need no referral; some ask for a small payment for a bag of shopping. Opening times change, so check Fife Council's up-to-date list before you go.

fife.gov.uk/kb/docs/articles/benefits-and-money-advice/food-banks/access-to-food-locations

Best Start Foods (Scotland)

Money on a prepaid card, every 4 weeks, for healthy food like milk, eggs, fruit, veg and pulses, and first infant formula. It's for people in Scotland who are pregnant or have a child under 3. Payments are £22.40 during pregnancy, £44.80 for each child under 1, and £22.40 for each child aged 1 to 3.

Usually you or your partner need to get Universal Credit, Housing Benefit, Income Support, Pension Credit, income-based JSA or income-related ESA. If you're under 18 you don't need to get any benefits, and there are rules for 18 and 19 year olds who don't get benefits too.

mygov.scot/best-start-grant-best-start-foods • Social Security Scotland, free on 0800 182 2222 (8am to 5pm, Monday to Friday)

Scottish Child Payment

£28.20 a week for every child under 16 you look after, paid every 4 weeks. You may get it if you live in Scotland, you or your partner are the main person looking after the child, and

you or your partner get Universal Credit or income-based JSA (or you alone are named on Pension Credit, Income Support or income-related ESA). It doesn't affect your other benefits. You can apply for it on the same form as Best Start Foods.

mygov.scot/scottish-child-payment • **0800 182 2222**

Free school meals in Fife

All children in Primary 1 to 5 get a free school lunch in term time, whatever your income, with no need to apply (you do need to apply for free school milk). Children in Primary 6 and 7 and S1 to S3 can get free meals if you get Scottish Child Payment for them. Children of any age can get them if you get Income Support, Pension Credit, income-based JSA, income-related ESA, support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, or Universal Credit with take-home pay of up to £995 a month. Apply on the Fife Council website, where you can also apply for a school clothing grant.

fife.gov.uk/education/schools-in-fife/free-school-meals-and-clothing-grants/qualifying-criteria • **help with the form: 03451 55 11 55**

Healthy Start (England, Wales and Northern Ireland)

If you're more than 10 weeks pregnant or have a child under 4, you may get a card topped up every 4 weeks to spend on milk, fresh, frozen or tinned fruit and veg, pulses and infant formula, plus free Healthy Start vitamins. You can apply online if you get

Universal Credit and your family's take-home pay is £408 a month or less. You can also apply by phone if you get Pension Credit, or if you're under 18 and pregnant. In Scotland, use Best Start Foods instead.

healthystart.nhs.uk • 0300 330 7010 (8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday)

Apps that cut food waste

Too Good To Go: reserve a "Surprise Bag" of unsold food from local shops, cafés and restaurants at a low price, then collect it at the set time. toogoodtogo.com

Olio: find free food from local shops and things neighbours are giving away, or give away your own spare food. olioapp.com

Where to Buy

You don't need special shops for this book.

Most UK supermarkets sell everything in these recipes. Own brands and value ranges keep it cheapest. **Holland & Barrett** and most supermarkets also stock dried lentils, chickpeas and other pulses.

Local in Fife

- **Macauley's Fruit & Veg**, 172 High Street, Burntisland KY3 9AP. Independent greengrocer with fruit and veg boxes (click and collect). macauleys.co.uk · 01592 873524
- **Pillars of Hercules**, near Falkland. Organic farm shop with weekly veg boxes across Fife. pillars.co.uk

Buying in bulk online

- **BuyWholefoodsOnline** sells oats, grains, lentils and pulses in larger bags, which can work out cheaper per kilo if you have the space. buywholefoodsonline.co.uk

Prices change all the time, so compare the price per kilo before you buy.

About This Book

Cooking on a Budget is a free guide from Clarity Guides.

In a world full of disinformation, get Clarity. We make plain-English guides that stick to the facts. This one is free for everyone, because nobody should have to choose between eating well and paying the bills.

Enjoyed the recipes?

A small donation to Glenrothes Foodbank helps local families in need.

Donate to Glenrothes Foodbank

glenrothes.foodbank.org.uk/give-help/donate-money · Donations go straight to the foodbank. Clarity Guides doesn't receive or handle any money.

These are recipes, not medical or dietary advice. If you have a health condition, allergy or special diet, check with your GP or a dietitian. Recipes are classic, traditional home-cooking ideas adapted for this book. Free food help details were checked on official websites on 18 October 2026. Illustrations were drawn by Clarity Guides; no images of real people are used.

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Cook more. Spend less.

30 cheap, cheerful family recipes, amounts for 1, 2, 4 or 6 people, jobs for little helpers, and where to find free food help.

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