



MEAL PLAN

Meal Plan 3

A week of cheap, healthy, beginner-friendly meals, with a money-saving tip and a shopping list for every recipe.

8 Chapters

Philip Osztramok

Generated with Claude

Contents

Chapter 1	Monday	2
Chapter 2	Tuesday	10
Chapter 3	Wednesday	16
Chapter 4	Thursday	23
Chapter 5	Friday	30
Chapter 6	Saturday	37
Chapter 7	Sunday	44
Chapter 8	Weekly Shopping	51

Meal Plan 3: Budget Week

Day 1 · Monday · Cheap and filling

Today at a glance. The week starts with three very cheap staples: oats, red lentils and potatoes. Three recipes, about 1 hour 20 minutes of cooking in total. Breakfast takes 5 minutes, lunch is a one-pot soup, and dinner makes **two portions** of cottage pie: one to eat tonight and one for the freezer. Every quantity below is for **one portion** unless the recipe says otherwise, in metric with UK names.

Breakfast

BREAKFAST

Banana Porridge with Cinnamon

6 minutes

1 pan or microwave

4 ingredients

Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

40 g porridge oats

200 ml semi-skimmed milk

1 banana

¼ tsp ground cinnamon

Pinch of salt

METHOD

1. Peel the banana. Slice half of it into rounds and set them aside. Mash the other half in the pan with a fork.
2. Add the oats, milk, cinnamon and a pinch of salt to the pan. Put it over a medium heat and stir.
3. Bring it to a gentle bubble and cook for 4 to 5 minutes, stirring often, until it is thick and creamy. If it sticks or gets too thick, add a splash of water.
4. Spoon it into a bowl and top with the banana slices. In a microwave, put everything in a large bowl and heat for 2 minutes, stir, and heat for 1 more minute.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY START

Oats contain beta-glucan, a fibre that keeps you full until lunch. The mashed banana sweetens the porridge, so you do not need any sugar or honey.

SWAPS

Use half milk and half water if you want it lighter and cheaper. A spoonful of plain yoghurt on top. A teaspoon of peanut butter stirred in for protein.

SAVE MONEY

Buy plain porridge oats in a big bag, ideally the supermarket's own brand. A portion costs only a few pence, which is much less than a sachet or a packet cereal, and the bag lasts all week with some left over.

Shopping list for this recipe

Lunch

LUNCH · VEGETARIAN

Red Lentil and Carrot Soup

10 minutes prep

25 minutes cooking

1 pan

Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS (1 LARGE BOWL)

60 g dried red split lentils

2 carrots (about 200 g)

1 small onion

½ reduced-salt vegetable stock cube

1 tsp olive oil

½ tsp ground cumin

500 ml water

Black pepper

METHOD

1. Rinse the lentils in a sieve under cold water until the water runs clearer.
2. Peel the onion and chop it small. Peel the carrots and cut them into rounds about 1 cm thick.
3. Heat the oil in a saucepan over a medium heat. Cook the onion for 4 minutes until soft. Stir in the cumin for 20 seconds.
4. Add the carrots, lentils, water and the crumbled stock cube. Bring to the boil, then turn down and simmer for 20 minutes with the lid half on, until the carrots and lentils are very soft.
5. Blend the soup with a stick blender until smooth, or mash it well with a potato masher for a rougher soup. Add a splash of water if it is too thick.
6. Season with pepper and taste before adding salt, because the stock cube already contains some.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY LUNCH

Red lentils are cheap, cook in 20 minutes without soaking, and give plenty of protein and fibre. The carrots add vitamin A, and the soup has almost no fat.

SWAPS

A pinch of chilli flakes for heat. A squeeze of lemon at the end. Swap a carrot for a handful of frozen peas or sweetcorn. Toast makes it a bigger meal.

SAVE MONEY

Buy carrots and onions loose rather than in a pre-packed bag if you can, so that you only pay for what you need. Red lentils also go into tonight's cottage pie and on Saturday, so a single bag does three meals.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

Dinner

DINNER • BEEF

Beef and Lentil Cottage Pie

25 minutes prep

50 minutes cooking

Makes 2 portions

1 pan plus oven dish

INGREDIENTS (MAKES 2 PORTIONS)

250 g lean beef mince (5% fat)

80 g dried red split lentils

1 onion

2 carrots

1 tin chopped tomatoes (400 g)

300 ml water

½ reduced-salt vegetable stock cube

1 tsp dried oregano

1 tsp olive oil

100 g frozen peas

500 g potatoes (for the topping)

40 ml semi-skimmed milk

Salt and black pepper

METHOD

1. Peel the potatoes and cut them into chunks about 4 cm across. Put them in a pan of cold water with a pinch of salt, bring to the boil and cook for 15 to 20 minutes, until a knife slips in easily.
2. Meanwhile, peel and chop the onion small. Peel the carrots and cut them into small cubes, about 1 cm. Rinse the lentils in a sieve.
3. Heat the oil in a large frying pan or wide saucepan over a medium-high heat. Add the mince and cook for 5 minutes, breaking it up with a spoon, until it is brown all over with no pink left. Tip off any extra fat.
4. Add the onion and carrots and cook for 4 minutes. Stir in the lentils, tomatoes, water, oregano and the crumbled stock cube.

5. Bring to a simmer and cook for 20 minutes with the lid half on, stirring now and then, until the lentils are soft and the mixture is thick. Add a splash of water if it gets dry. Stir in the peas and cook for 2 more minutes. Season with pepper and a little salt.
6. Heat the oven to 200°C (180°C fan, gas mark 6). Drain the potatoes, add the milk and mash until smooth, with a pinch of salt and some pepper.
7. Divide the filling into two halves. Put one half in a small ovenproof dish and the other in a freezer-safe container. Spread half the mash over each, and rough up the top with a fork.
8. Bake the dish for 20 minutes, until the topping is golden and the filling is bubbling at the edges. Eat it tonight.
9. Let the container cool for up to an hour, put on the lid, label it with the date and freeze it within a few hours.

FREEZING AND REHEATING THE SECOND PORTION

Use it within 3 months. Defrost it overnight in the fridge, then bake it at 200°C (180°C fan) for about 30 minutes, until it is steaming hot all the way through. Do not freeze it a second time once it has defrosted.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY DINNER

The lentils replace nearly half the meat, so the pie has far less saturated fat and more fibre. The potato topping uses milk rather than butter, and the filling holds two vegetables and peas.

SWAPS

Add a diced celery stick or some mushrooms with the onion. A spoonful of tomato purée makes the filling richer. Top with sliced sweet potato in place of the mash. Turkey mince works for a lighter version.

SAVE MONEY

Mince costs the most per kilo of anything in this week's shop. Here 125 g per portion tastes like more because the lentils soak up the flavour. Cooking two portions at once also uses the oven once, and saves a whole night's cooking later.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

COMING UP TOMORROW

Tuesday has peanut butter and banana on toast, a jacket potato with baked beans for lunch, and a one-pot chicken, tomato and rice dinner. If your chicken thighs are frozen, take them out tonight and defrost them in the fridge.

Meal Plan 3: Budget Week

Day 2 · Tuesday · Cheap and filling

Today at a glance. Three of the cheapest foods you can buy: bread, potatoes and chicken thighs. Three recipes, about 1 hour 15 minutes in total, but most of it is waiting for the potato and the pot. Lunch is vegetarian. Every quantity below is for **one portion**, in metric with UK names.

Breakfast

BREAKFAST

Peanut Butter and Banana on Toast

5 minutes

Toaster only

3 ingredients

Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

2 slices wholemeal bread

1 tbsp peanut butter (about 15 g), 100% peanuts

1 banana

METHOD

1. Toast the bread until golden.
2. Spread the peanut butter over the hot toast while it is still warm, so it melts a little and spreads thinly.
3. Peel the banana, slice it into rounds and lay them over the top. Press them in gently with the back of a fork.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY START

Peanut butter brings protein and unsaturated fat, the banana adds potassium and natural sweetness, and the wholemeal toast keeps you full. Using one level tablespoon keeps the calories sensible.

SWAPS

A pinch of cinnamon on top. Sliced apple in place of the banana. Mash the banana on the toast with a fork if it is very ripe.

SAVE MONEY

Choose a peanut butter that lists only peanuts (and perhaps salt). The supermarket's own-brand jar is usually the cheapest, and it lasts for many breakfasts. Very ripe bananas with brown spots are often sold cheaper, and they are sweeter, which suits porridge and toast.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

Lunch

LUNCH · VEGETARIAN

Jacket Potato with Baked Beans and Cheese

5 minutes prep

25 minutes cooking

Microwave and oven

Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

- 1 large baking potato (about 250 g)
- 200 g baked beans, reduced sugar and salt (half a 400 g tin)
- 20 g mature Cheddar cheese
- Black pepper

METHOD

1. Heat the oven to 200°C (180°C fan, gas mark 6). Scrub the potato, dry it and prick it all over with a fork.
2. Microwave it for 6 to 8 minutes, turning it halfway, until it is soft when you squeeze it (use a tea towel, it is hot). Without a microwave, bake it for 1 hour 15 minutes instead and skip step 3.
3. Put it straight on the oven shelf for 15 minutes, until the skin is crisp.
4. While it crisps, grate the cheese. Warm the beans in a small pan over a medium heat for 3 to 4 minutes until they are bubbling and hot all the way through.
5. Cut a deep cross in the top of the potato and squeeze the ends to open it. Spoon in the beans, scatter over the cheese and finish with black pepper.

THE OTHER HALF TIN

Put the rest of the beans in a covered container in the fridge and eat them within 2 days, or freeze them flat in a small bag. Saturday's quesadilla uses them, so freeze them for that if you want to.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY LUNCH

A baked potato with its skin on is a filling source of fibre and potassium, and beans add protein. Strong cheese goes a long way, so 20 g gives plenty of flavour.

SWAPS

A spoonful of plain yoghurt in place of cheese. Cottage cheese or tinned sweetcorn on the potato. A sweet potato works the same way.

SAVE MONEY

A baking potato and half a tin of beans cost very little for a meal that fills you up. Buy mature cheese: a small amount is as tasty as a lot of mild cheese, so one block lasts longer.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

Dinner

DINNER · CHICKEN

One-Pot Chicken, Tomato and Rice with Peas

10 minutes prep

30 minutes cooking

1 portion

1 pan

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

2 boneless, skinless chicken thighs (about 200 g)

60 g long-grain rice

1 tin chopped tomatoes (400 g)

1 small onion

1 clove garlic

60 g frozen peas

1 tsp smoked paprika

1 tsp olive oil

100 ml water

Salt and black pepper

METHOD

1. Trim any hard fat from the chicken and cut each thigh into 4 or 5 chunks. Peel and chop the onion small, and peel and chop the garlic.
2. Heat the oil in a wide saucepan or deep frying pan with a lid, over a medium-high heat. Add the chicken with a pinch of salt and cook for 4 minutes, turning, until browned on all sides. Move it to a plate. Wash your hands, the board and the knife.
3. Turn the heat to medium, add the onion to the same pan and cook for 4 minutes until soft. Stir in the garlic and paprika for 30 seconds.
4. Add the rice and stir it for 1 minute, then pour in the tomatoes and the water. Return the chicken to the pan and add some pepper.
5. Bring to the boil, then turn the heat right down, cover and cook for 18 to 20 minutes, stirring once or twice, until the rice is tender and has soaked up most of the liquid. Add a splash of water if it looks dry.
6. Stir in the peas and cook for 3 more minutes. Cut open the largest piece of chicken to check: it must be white all the way through with no pink, and the juices must run clear.

7. Take it off the heat, put the lid back on for 3 minutes, then serve from the pan.

RICE SAFETY

Eat this the day it is cooked. If you save any, cool it quickly (spread it on a plate and chill it within an hour), keep it in the fridge for no more than a day, reheat it once until steaming hot all the way through, and throw away anything left after that.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY DINNER

Chicken thighs are rich in protein, and in this recipe the tomatoes and peas supply most of the vegetables. Everything cooks in one pan, so there is little washing up and no extra fat for frying.

SWAPS

Brown rice is higher in fibre but needs about 10 more minutes and 50 ml more water. Chopped peppers or a handful of sweetcorn with the onion. A pinch of chilli flakes for heat. A spoonful of plain yoghurt on top.

SAVE MONEY

Chicken thighs cost far less than breasts and stay moist, so beginners rarely overcook them. A family pack is often cheaper per kilo, so if you buy one, split it into portions and freeze each portion in its own bag.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

COMING UP TOMORROW

Wednesday has a boiled egg with toast soldiers, a tuna, sweetcorn and tomato pasta salad, and a butter bean and tomato pasta bake, which is the vegetarian dinner. Nothing needs preparing tonight.

Meal Plan 3: Budget Week

Day 3 · Wednesday · Cheap and filling

Today at a glance. Eggs, tinned fish and dried pasta, three of the best-value foods in the shop. Three recipes, about 1 hour 10 minutes of cooking in total, and dinner is the vegetarian one. Dinner makes **two portions**: one to eat tonight and one for the freezer. Every quantity below is for **one portion** unless the recipe says otherwise, in metric with UK names.

Breakfast

BREAKFAST

Boiled Eggs with Wholemeal Toast Soldiers

10 minutes

1 small pan

2 ingredients

Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

2 eggs

2 slices wholemeal bread

Black pepper

METHOD

1. Fill a small saucepan with enough water to cover the eggs by about 2 cm, and bring it to a gentle boil.
2. Lower the eggs in carefully with a spoon. Set a timer: 6 minutes gives a soft, runny yolk, and 8 minutes gives a firm one.
3. Put the bread in the toaster about 2 minutes before the eggs are ready, then cut each slice into 4 strips.
4. Lift the eggs out with the spoon, run them under cold water for 10 seconds, and put them in egg cups or mugs. Tap the top of each with a spoon to crack it, peel it off and dip in the toast.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY START

Two eggs give about 12 g of protein and a good amount of vitamin D and B12, for a few pence each. Boiling needs no oil.

SWAPS

Poach or scramble the eggs. A handful of cherry tomatoes or a sliced apple on the side. Sprinkle a little black pepper or a pinch of smoked paprika on the yolk.

SAVE MONEY

Eggs are one of the cheapest proteins. A box of 10 or 12 costs less per egg than a box of 6, and the week uses 7, so a box of 10 covers it with a few spare. Check the date on the box and keep them in the fridge.

Shopping list for this recipe

Lunch

LUNCH

Tuna, Sweetcorn and Tomato Pasta Salad

10 minutes prep

12 minutes cooking

1 pan

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

60 g dried pasta shapes (fusilli or penne), wholewheat if you like it

1 small tin tuna in spring water (about 145 g)

60 g frozen sweetcorn

1 medium tomato

30 g plain Greek-style yoghurt

1 tsp olive oil

Black pepper

METHOD

1. Cook the pasta in plenty of boiling water following the packet. Add the sweetcorn to the pan for the last 3 minutes, then drain both in a colander.
2. Run cold water over the pasta and sweetcorn for 30 seconds to cool them, and shake off the water.
3. Drain the tuna and flake it with a fork. Chop the tomato into small pieces.
4. In a bowl, mix the yoghurt, oil and plenty of black pepper to make the dressing.
5. Add the pasta, sweetcorn, tuna and tomato to the bowl and stir until everything is coated. Taste and add more pepper if you need it.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY LUNCH

Tuna in spring water is almost pure protein, with no added oil. Wholewheat pasta and sweetcorn add fibre, and yoghurt gives a creamy dressing with far less fat than mayonnaise.

SWAPS

A squeeze of lemon juice in the dressing. A little grated carrot or chopped cucumber if you have one. Tinned mackerel or sardines in place of the tuna. Eat it warm if you are in a hurry.

SAVE MONEY

Frozen sweetcorn costs less than tinned, and you only take out what you need, so none goes to waste. Own-brand tuna in spring water is much cheaper than a branded tin, and it tastes the same once it is mixed in.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

Dinner

DINNER · VEGETARIAN

Butter Bean and Tomato Pasta Bake

15 minutes prep

45 minutes cooking

Makes 2 portions

1 pan plus oven dish

INGREDIENTS (MAKES 2 PORTIONS)

120 g dried pasta shapes (penne or fusilli)

1 tin butter beans (400 g), drained and rinsed

1 tin chopped tomatoes (400 g)

1 onion

2 cloves garlic

100 g frozen peas

1 tsp dried oregano

1 tsp olive oil

40 g mature Cheddar cheese

100 ml water

Salt and black pepper

METHOD

1. Heat the oven to 200°C (180°C fan, gas mark 6). Peel and chop the onion small, peel and chop the garlic, and grate the cheese.
2. Cook the pasta in plenty of boiling water for 2 minutes less than the packet says, so that it is still firm. Drain it.
3. Heat the oil in a large saucepan over a medium heat. Cook the onion for 5 minutes until soft, then add the garlic and oregano and stir for 30 seconds.
4. Add the tomatoes, water, butter beans and a pinch of salt. Bring to a simmer and cook for 10 minutes, stirring now and then. Mash about a quarter of the beans against the side of the pan to thicken the sauce.
5. Stir in the peas and the pasta and season with pepper. Taste, and add salt if you need it.
6. Divide the mixture into two halves. Put one half in a small ovenproof dish, and the other in a freezer-safe container. Scatter half the cheese over each.

7. Bake the dish for 20 minutes, until the cheese is golden and the sauce is bubbling at the edges. Eat it tonight.
8. Let the container cool for up to an hour, put on the lid, label it with the date and freeze it within a few hours.

FREEZING AND REHEATING THE SECOND PORTION

Use it within 3 months. Defrost it overnight in the fridge, then bake it at 200°C (180°C fan) for about 30 minutes, until it is steaming hot all the way through. Do not freeze it a second time once it has defrosted.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY DINNER

Butter beans give protein and fibre without meat, and with a little cheese this is a filling vegetarian meal. The sauce is mostly tomato and vegetables, with very little added fat.

SWAPS

Cannellini beans or chickpeas in place of the butter beans. A handful of spinach or sliced mushrooms with the onion. A pinch of chilli flakes for heat. Leave the cheese off for a dairy-free version.

SAVE MONEY

Tinned beans, dried pasta and a tin of tomatoes make a meal for very little. A batch of two portions uses the oven once and gives you a dinner for another night, which stops you reaching for a takeaway.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

COMING UP TOMORROW

Thursday has apple and cinnamon porridge, a chickpea and carrot wrap, and a beef and potato hash with a fried egg. If your beef mince is in the freezer, take it out tonight and defrost it in the fridge.

Meal Plan 3: Budget Week

Day 4 · Thursday · Cheap and filling

Today at a glance. Oats, chickpeas and potatoes again, with just 100 g of beef at dinner. Three recipes, about 55 minutes of cooking in total, and lunch needs no cooking at all. Lunch uses **half a tin of chickpeas**, and the other half goes into *tomorrow's chowder*, so keep it. Every quantity below is for **one portion**, in metric with UK names.

Breakfast

BREAKFAST

Apple and Cinnamon Porridge

8 minutes

1 pan or microwave

4 ingredients

Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

40 g porridge oats

200 ml semi-skimmed milk

1 eating apple

¼ tsp ground cinnamon

Pinch of salt

METHOD

1. Wash the apple. Grate half of it on the coarse side of a grater, skin and all, avoiding the core. Cut the other half into thin slices or small cubes.
2. Put the oats, milk, grated apple, cinnamon and a pinch of salt in a pan over a medium heat and stir.
3. Bring it to a gentle bubble and cook for 4 to 5 minutes, stirring often, until it is thick and creamy. Add a splash of water if it gets too thick.
4. Spoon it into a bowl and top with the apple pieces. In a microwave, heat everything in a large bowl for 2 minutes, stir, and heat for 1 more minute.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY START

Grated apple melts into the porridge and sweetens it, so there is no added sugar, and the skin adds fibre. The oats keep you full until lunch.

SWAPS

A pear in place of the apple. A few raisins or sultanas, if you have them. A spoonful of plain yoghurt on top.

SAVE MONEY

Buy apples loose, so you only take what you need, or pick the cheapest variety in the bag. A bruised or wrinkled apple is perfect for porridge, and some shops mark down fruit at the end of the day.

Shopping list for this recipe

Lunch

LUNCH · VEGETARIAN

Smashed Chickpea and Carrot Wrap

10 minutes

No cooking

Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

1 wholemeal tortilla wrap

120 g chickpeas from a tin, drained and rinsed (about half a 400 g tin)

1 carrot

40 g plain Greek-style yoghurt

½ tsp ground cumin

Salt and black pepper

METHOD

1. Drain and rinse the chickpeas. Put them in a bowl and crush about two thirds of them with a fork or the back of a spoon, leaving the rest whole.
2. Peel the carrot and grate it on the coarse side of a grater.
3. Stir the yoghurt, cumin, a pinch of salt and some pepper into the chickpeas, then mix in the carrot.
4. Warm the wrap for 15 seconds in the microwave so it folds without cracking. Spoon the filling along the middle, fold in the two sides and roll it up tightly. Cut it in half.

THE OTHER HALF TIN

Put the remaining chickpeas in a covered container in the fridge. Tomorrow's chowder uses them, so they will not go to waste.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY LUNCH

Chickpeas provide protein and a lot of fibre, and the grated carrot adds sweetness and vitamin A. Yoghurt does the job of mayonnaise with far less fat.

SWAPS

A handful of baby spinach or shredded lettuce in the wrap. A squeeze of lemon juice or a pinch of chilli flakes in the mixture. Put it in a pitta or on toast, or eat it as a salad in a bowl.

SAVE MONEY

Tinned chickpeas cost less than any ready-made sandwich filling, and the other half tin means tomorrow's lunch has extra protein at no extra cost. Check the cheapest own-brand tin, because they are all the same chickpeas.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

Dinner

DINNER • BEEF

Beef and Potato Hash with a Fried Egg

10 minutes prep

25 minutes cooking

1 portion

1 pan

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

100 g lean beef mince (5% fat)

250 g potatoes

1 small onion

60 g frozen peas

1 egg

1 tsp smoked paprika

2 tsp olive oil

Salt and black pepper

METHOD

1. If your mince was frozen, check that it has fully defrosted in the fridge. Scrub the potatoes (peel them if you prefer) and cut them into cubes of about 1.5 cm. Peel and chop the onion small.
2. Put the potato cubes in a microwave-safe bowl with a splash of water, cover with a plate and microwave for 5 minutes, until almost tender. Drain well. (Without a microwave, simmer them for 6 minutes and drain.)
3. Heat 1 tsp of the oil in a large non-stick frying pan over a medium-high heat. Add the mince and onion and cook for 5 minutes, breaking up the mince with a spoon, until it is brown all over with no pink left.
4. Add the potatoes, paprika, a pinch of salt and some pepper. Press the mixture flat with the spoon and leave it for 3 to 4 minutes without stirring, so that the underside goes crisp. Turn it over in sections and repeat for another 3 minutes.
5. Stir in the peas and cook for 2 minutes until they are hot. Push the hash to one side of the pan.
6. Add the remaining oil to the empty half, crack in the egg and fry for 2 to 3 minutes until the white is set. Cover the pan with a lid or plate for the last minute to cook the top of the egg.

7. Serve the hash on a plate with the egg on top.

COOK MINCE THROUGH

Minced meat is ground up, so any germs on the outside get mixed inside. Cook it until there is no pink left. Wash your hands, and anything that touched the raw mince, before you crack the egg.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY DINNER

The 100 g of beef gives enough flavour and iron, and the potatoes and peas make up the bulk of the plate. The egg adds protein, and the hash needs only 2 tsp of oil.

SWAPS

A grated carrot or a handful of spinach stirred in with the peas. A pinch of chilli flakes. Swap the egg for a spoonful of baked beans or a tomato, or skip it for a lighter meal.

SAVE MONEY

A hash makes 100 g of mince feel like a proper meal because the potato does most of the filling. Potatoes cost less per portion than almost any other fresh food, and a hash is also a good way of using up cooked potatoes in future.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

COMING UP TOMORROW

Friday has scrambled egg on toast with tomato, a sweetcorn and potato chowder (with tonight's other half tin of chickpeas), and the fish dinner: tinned mackerel and potato fishcakes with peas.

Meal Plan 3: Budget Week

Day 5 · Friday · Cheap and filling

Today at a glance. The fish day, made with a tin. Three recipes, about 1 hour 10 minutes of cooking in total. Lunch finishes **yesterday's half tin of chickpeas**, so nothing is wasted. Dinner is a tin of mackerel stretched into two fishcakes with potato. Every quantity below is for **one portion**, in metric with UK names.

Breakfast

BREAKFAST

Scrambled Egg on Toast with Tomato

10 minutes

1 small pan

4 ingredients

Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

2 eggs

2 slices wholemeal bread

1 small tomato

1 tbsp semi-skimmed milk (15 ml)

1 tsp olive oil

Salt and black pepper

METHOD

1. Chop the tomato into small pieces. Beat the eggs in a bowl with the milk, a pinch of salt and some pepper.
2. Put the bread in the toaster.
3. Heat the oil in a small non-stick pan over a low to medium heat. Add the tomato and cook for 1 minute.
4. Pour in the eggs. Stir gently with a spatula, pulling the egg from the edges to the middle, for 1 to 2 minutes until it is set in soft curds. Take it off the heat while it still looks slightly moist, because it keeps cooking in the pan.
5. Spoon the egg over the toast and eat it straight away.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY START

Two eggs and wholemeal toast give you protein and fibre. The tomato adds vitamin C, and the egg needs only a teaspoon of oil.

SWAPS

A handful of spinach stirred in with the tomato. A sprinkle of grated cheese or a pinch of smoked paprika. Add a slice of tomato on the side instead of cooking it in the pan.

SAVE MONEY

The heel of the loaf, or slightly stale bread, toasts perfectly well, so there is no need to throw it away. If you buy two loaves, freeze one and take out slices as you need them. They go straight

into the toaster from frozen.

Shopping list for this recipe

Lunch

LUNCH · VEGETARIAN

Sweetcorn, Potato and Chickpea Chowder

10 minutes prep

20 minutes cooking

1 pan

Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS (1 LARGE BOWL)

150 g potatoes

80 g frozen sweetcorn

120 g chickpeas (the other half tin from yesterday)

1 small onion

½ reduced-salt vegetable stock cube

½ tsp smoked paprika

1 tsp olive oil

300 ml boiling water

100 ml semi-skimmed milk

Black pepper

METHOD

1. Peel the onion and chop it small. Scrub the potatoes (peel them if you prefer) and cut them into cubes of about 1.5 cm.
2. Heat the oil in a saucepan over a medium heat. Cook the onion for 4 minutes until soft, then stir in the paprika for 20 seconds.
3. Add the potatoes, sweetcorn and chickpeas. Crumble in the stock cube and pour in the boiling water. Bring to a simmer and cook for 15 minutes, with the lid half on, until the potatoes are soft.
4. Mash about a third of the soup against the side of the pan with a masher or fork, to thicken it and leave the rest chunky.
5. Stir in the milk and heat for 1 more minute without letting it boil. Season with plenty of black pepper and taste before adding salt.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY LUNCH

A chowder is usually made with cream and bacon. This one gets its body from mashed potato and chickpeas, so it is thick and filling, vegetarian and low in fat.

SWAPS

A handful of frozen peas or some chopped carrot in with the potato. A spoonful of plain yoghurt on top. A slice of toast on the side makes it a bigger meal.

SAVE MONEY

This lunch is built from the odds and ends of the week: half a tin of chickpeas, a few potatoes and a handful of frozen sweetcorn. Planning so that no tin is opened and wasted is one of the biggest savings on a food budget.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

Dinner

DINNER · FISH

Mackerel and Potato Fishcakes with Peas

20 minutes prep

35 minutes cooking

Makes 2 fishcakes

1 baking tray

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION, 2 FISHCAKES)

1 tin mackerel fillets in spring water (about 125 g drained)

200 g potatoes

¼ onion

½ tsp smoked paprika

3 tbsp porridge oats (about 25 g), for the coating

2 tsp olive oil

100 g frozen peas, to serve

Salt and black pepper

METHOD

1. Peel the potatoes and cut them into chunks. Cook them in boiling water for 12 to 15 minutes until soft. Drain well and mash them until smooth, with a pinch of salt and some pepper. Leave them to cool for 10 minutes.
2. Heat the oven to 200°C (180°C fan, gas mark 6) and line a baking tray with baking paper.
3. Drain the mackerel and flake it in a bowl with a fork. The small soft bones are safe to eat, but pick out any you do not like. Grate the onion on the fine side of a grater.
4. Mix the mackerel, mashed potato, onion and paprika together until it just holds. Do not beat it, or it goes gluey.
5. Divide the mixture in two and shape each half into a flat round about 2 cm thick. Spread the oats on a plate and press each fishcake into them, so that both sides are coated.
6. Put the fishcakes on the tray and brush or drizzle the tops with half the oil. Bake for 10 minutes, then turn them over, brush with the remaining oil and bake for 10 to 12 more minutes, until golden and hot in the middle.

7. While they bake, cook the peas in boiling water for 3 minutes and drain. Serve the fishcakes with the peas.

SHAPING TIP

If the mixture is too soft to shape, chill it in the fridge for 15 minutes first. Wet hands stop it sticking to your fingers.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY DINNER

Mackerel is an oily fish, rich in omega-3 fats, and the tinned kind has just as many as fresh. Baking the fishcakes instead of frying them uses only 2 tsp of oil, and the oat coating adds fibre.

SWAPS

Tinned sardines or pilchards in tomato sauce also work but make a softer mix, so use less potato. Add a squeeze of lemon, a spoonful of plain yoghurt, or some chopped parsley. Tinned salmon works in the same way.

SAVE MONEY

A tin of mackerel costs much less than a fresh fish fillet, keeps in the cupboard for months, and gives you oily fish, which is worth eating about once a week. Choose the tin in spring water rather than oil or sauce for the best result here.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

COMING UP TOMORROW

Saturday has cinnamon French toast with apple, a baked bean and cheese quesadilla, and a spaghetti bolognese with lentils that makes two portions. If you froze the half tin of beans from Tuesday and the 150 g of mince, take both out tonight and defrost them in the fridge.

Meal Plan 3: Budget Week

Day 6 · Saturday · Cheap and filling

Today at a glance. A weekend treat breakfast from stale bread, a quick quesadilla, and the third and last beef dinner. Three recipes, about 1 hour 15 minutes of cooking in total. Lunch uses **the half tin of baked beans from Tuesday**. Dinner makes **two portions** of bolognese: one to eat tonight and one for the freezer. Every quantity below is for **one portion** unless the recipe says otherwise, in metric with UK names.

Breakfast

BREAKFAST

Cinnamon French Toast with Apple

15 minutes

1 pan

5 ingredients

Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

2 slices wholemeal bread (a day or two old is best)

1 egg

60 ml semi-skimmed milk

¼ tsp ground cinnamon

1 eating apple

1 tsp olive oil

METHOD

1. Beat the egg, milk and cinnamon together in a shallow dish, such as a soup plate, until there are no streaks of egg white.
2. Core the apple and slice it into thin wedges, skin on.
3. Heat half the oil in a non-stick frying pan over a medium heat. Cook the apple wedges for 4 minutes, turning once, until they are soft and golden at the edges. Tip them onto a plate.
4. Lay the bread in the egg mixture for 20 seconds on each side, until it has soaked up most of it but is not falling apart.
5. Add the remaining oil to the pan. Fry the bread for 2 to 3 minutes on each side over a medium heat, until golden brown and the egg is cooked all the way through, with no wet patches.
6. Serve the French toast with the apple on top and any juices from the pan.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY START

This is a lighter version of French toast, made with one egg and no butter or sugar. The cooked apple provides the sweetness, and the egg adds protein to the wholemeal bread.

SWAPS

A spoonful of plain yoghurt on the side. A sliced banana instead of the apple. Add a few raisins or a spoonful of peanut butter on top.

SAVE MONEY

This is the best use for bread that is going stale. Dry bread soaks up the egg better than fresh bread, and bread that is a day or two past its best is often sold for much less in the bakery section.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

Lunch

LUNCH · VEGETARIAN

Baked Bean and Cheese Quesadilla

10 minutes

1 dry pan

3 ingredients

Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

1 wholemeal tortilla wrap

200 g baked beans, reduced sugar and salt (the half tin kept from Tuesday)

30 g mature Cheddar cheese

½ tsp ground cumin

Black pepper

METHOD

1. If the beans were frozen, make sure they have fully defrosted. Grate the cheese.
2. Tip the beans into a small pan with the cumin and some pepper. Cook over a medium heat for 4 to 5 minutes, mashing roughly with a fork, until most of the sauce has gone and the mixture is thick.
3. Spread the beans over one half of the wrap, scatter the cheese over the beans, and fold the other half over to make a half moon.
4. Heat a dry non-stick frying pan over a medium heat. Cook the quesadilla for 2 to 3 minutes on each side, pressing down with a spatula, until golden and the cheese has melted.
5. Cut it into 3 wedges and let it cool for a minute before eating, because the filling is very hot.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY LUNCH

Beans give protein and fibre, and mature cheese gives plenty of taste from only 30 g. The wrap is cooked without any oil.

SWAPS

Add a handful of baby spinach, some sweetcorn or a grated carrot to the filling. A spoonful of plain yoghurt on the side as a dip. A pinch of chilli flakes for heat.

SAVE MONEY

A quesadilla turns half a tin of beans and a bit of cheese into a hot lunch. Wraps freeze well, so freeze half the pack if you will not use them within their date.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

Dinner

DINNER • BEEF

Spaghetti Bolognese with Lentils and Hidden Carrot

15 minutes prep

40 minutes cooking

Makes 2 portions of sauce

1 pan plus pasta

INGREDIENTS (MAKES 2 PORTIONS OF SAUCE; SPAGHETTI FOR TONIGHT ONLY)

150 g lean beef mince (5% fat)

80 g dried red split lentils

1 onion

2 carrots

2 cloves garlic

1 tin chopped tomatoes (400 g)

300 ml water

1 tsp dried oregano

1 tsp olive oil

75 g spaghetti (tonight's portion only)

Salt and black pepper

METHOD

1. If your mince was frozen, check that it has fully defrosted in the fridge. Peel the onion and chop it small. Peel the carrots and grate them on the coarse side of a grater. Peel and chop the garlic. Rinse the lentils in a sieve.
2. Heat the oil in a large saucepan over a medium-high heat. Add the mince and cook for 5 minutes, breaking it up with a spoon, until it is brown all over with no pink left.
3. Add the onion and carrot and cook for 5 minutes, stirring, until soft. Add the garlic and oregano and stir for 30 seconds.
4. Stir in the lentils, tomatoes and water with a pinch of salt and some pepper. Bring to the boil, then turn down and simmer for 25 minutes with the lid half on, stirring now and then, until the lentils have broken down and the sauce is thick. Add a splash of water if it gets too dry.
5. Meanwhile, cook 75 g of spaghetti in plenty of boiling water following the packet (about 10 minutes). Save a cupful of the cooking water, then drain.

6. Divide the sauce in half. Toss the spaghetti with one half, adding a splash of the pasta water if it looks dry, and serve it.
7. Put the other half in a freezer-safe container. Let it cool for up to an hour, put on the lid, label it with the date and freeze it within a few hours.

FREEZING AND REHEATING THE SECOND PORTION

Use it within 3 months. Defrost it overnight in the fridge, then heat it in a pan until it is steaming hot all the way through, adding a splash of water. Cook fresh spaghetti to go with it. Do not freeze it a second time once it has defrosted.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY DINNER

The lentils and carrot make up most of the sauce, so there is less than 75 g of beef in each portion, with lower saturated fat and more fibre than a classic bolognese. The tomatoes and carrot count as vegetables.

SWAPS

Wholewheat spaghetti for more fibre. A handful of chopped mushrooms or a diced celery stick with the onion. A pinch of chilli flakes, or a spoonful of tomato purée for a richer sauce. Serve the sauce over a baked potato.

SAVE MONEY

A small amount of mince plus lentils and grated carrot makes a sauce no one would guess was stretched. The extra portion in the freezer is a ready meal for a busy night, and costs a fraction of a shop-bought one.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

COMING UP TOMORROW

Sunday has a veg and egg breakfast hash, a tomato soup with toast, and a roast chicken drumstick dinner that makes two portions. If your chicken drumsticks are frozen, take them out tonight and defrost them in the fridge.

Meal Plan 3: Budget Week

Day 7 · Sunday · Cheap and filling

Today at a glance. The week ends with a proper Sunday roast made from chicken drumsticks, one of the cheapest cuts. Three recipes, about 1 hour 30 minutes of cooking in total, much of it hands-off. Dinner cooks **two portions of chicken**: one to eat tonight and one to keep cold for tomorrow's lunch. Every quantity below is for **one portion** unless the recipe says otherwise, in metric with UK names.

Breakfast

BREAKFAST

Vegetable and Egg Breakfast Hash

10 minutes prep

15 minutes cooking

1 pan

Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

150 g potatoes

1 carrot

½ small onion

1 egg

½ tsp smoked paprika

2 tsp olive oil

Salt and black pepper

METHOD

1. Scrub the potatoes (peel them if you prefer) and cut them into cubes of about 1.5 cm. Put them in a microwave-safe bowl with a splash of water, cover with a plate and microwave for 4 to 5 minutes, until almost tender. Drain well. (Without a microwave, simmer them for 6 minutes and drain.)
2. Peel the carrot and grate it on the coarse side of a grater. Peel the onion and chop it small.
3. Heat half the oil in a non-stick frying pan over a medium-high heat. Add the onion and potato with a pinch of salt and cook for 5 minutes, turning only now and then, until the potatoes are golden and crisp at the edges.
4. Stir in the carrot and paprika and cook for 2 minutes. Push the hash to one side of the pan.
5. Add the remaining oil to the empty half, crack in the egg and fry for 2 to 3 minutes until the white is set. Cover the pan for the last minute if you want the top of the egg cooked.
6. Serve the hash with the egg on top and some black pepper.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY START

It is a full breakfast of vegetables, potato and egg for a few pence, and it needs only 2 tsp of oil. The carrot adds vitamin A and a little sweetness.

SWAPS

A handful of frozen peas or spinach stirred in at the end. A spoonful of baked beans on the side. Use a sweet potato in place of the white potato.

SAVE MONEY

A hash is a good way to use up the odds and ends of potato, carrot and onion before they go soft. Weekend breakfast made at home costs a fraction of one bought in a cafe.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

Lunch

LUNCH · VEGETARIAN

Tomato Soup with Toast

10 minutes prep

20 minutes cooking

1 pan

Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS (1 LARGE BOWL)

1 tin	chopped tomatoes (400 g)
1	small onion
1	carrot
½	reduced-salt vegetable stock cube
1 tsp	olive oil
½ tsp	dried oregano
200 ml	boiling water
2 slices	wholemeal bread, to serve
Black pepper	

METHOD

1. Peel the onion and chop it small. Peel the carrot and grate it on the coarse side of a grater, which helps it to cook quickly.
2. Heat the oil in a saucepan over a medium heat. Cook the onion and carrot for 6 minutes, stirring, until soft.
3. Add the tomatoes, oregano, the crumbled stock cube and the boiling water. Bring to a simmer and cook for 15 minutes, with the lid half on.
4. Blend the soup with a stick blender until smooth. Without one, mash it well with a potato masher for a rougher soup. Season with pepper, and taste before adding any salt.
5. Toast the bread and serve it alongside for dipping.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY LUNCH

Cooked tomatoes are a good source of lycopene, and the carrot adds sweetness so there is no need for sugar. The soup has almost no fat, and wholemeal toast makes it filling.

SWAPS

A handful of red lentils added with the water makes it thicker and higher in protein. A spoonful of plain yoghurt stirred in at the end. A grated cheese toastie on the side for a bigger meal.

SAVE MONEY

A tin of tomatoes, an onion and a carrot make a soup that costs much less than a carton or tin of ready-made soup, and tastes fresher. Own-brand chopped tomatoes are the best buy, because they are all the same tomatoes.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

Dinner

DINNER · CHICKEN

Roast Chicken Drumsticks with Carrots and Potatoes

15 minutes prep

45 minutes roasting

Makes 2 portions of chicken

1 baking tray

INGREDIENTS (4 DRUMSTICKS FOR 2 PORTIONS; VEGETABLES FOR TONIGHT ONLY)

4 chicken drumsticks (about 500 g in total)

250 g potatoes (tonight's portion only)

2 carrots (tonight's portion only)

1 clove garlic

1 tsp smoked paprika

1 tsp dried oregano

2 tsp olive oil

Salt and black pepper

METHOD

1. Heat the oven to 200°C (180°C fan, gas mark 6). Scrub the potatoes (peel them if you prefer) and cut them into chunks about 3 cm across. Peel the carrots and cut them into batons about 1 cm thick and 6 cm long. Peel and crush the garlic.
2. Pull the skin off the drumsticks with a piece of kitchen paper, which gives a better grip. Throw the skin away. This cuts the fat a lot.
3. In a large bowl, mix the oil, garlic, paprika, oregano, a good pinch of salt and some pepper. Add the drumsticks and turn them until they are coated. Wash your hands, the board and the knife.
4. Put the potatoes and carrots on a large baking tray. Spoon over any spice mixture left in the bowl, and add a splash of water to the tray. Turn the vegetables so they are lightly coated. Nestle the drumsticks among them, leaving a little space between each.
5. Roast for 40 to 45 minutes, turning everything once halfway through, until the vegetables are golden and soft and the chicken is cooked.
6. Check the thickest drumstick by cutting to the bone. The meat must be white with no pink, and the juices must run clear. If not, give it 5 more minutes.
7. Rest the chicken for 3 minutes. Serve two drumsticks with the vegetables.

SAVING THE SECOND PORTION

Put the other two drumsticks on a clean plate to cool, then cover them and put them in the fridge within an hour or two. Eat them cold within 2 days, for example sliced into a sandwich or salad for Monday's lunch. If you reheat them, make sure they are steaming hot all the way through, and only do it once.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY DINNER

With the skin taken off, drumsticks are a lean source of protein, and they are rich in iron and zinc. The tray is half vegetables, and there is no gravy or extra fat.

SWAPS

Chicken thighs instead of drumsticks. Parsnips, swede or onion wedges on the tray in place of the carrots. A teaspoon of honey or mustard in the spice mix. A handful of frozen peas on the plate.

SAVE MONEY

Drumsticks are among the cheapest cuts of chicken per kilo, and cooking four at once means you get tomorrow's lunch for the cost of a little oven time. Keep the bones, and simmer them with an onion for a free stock if you want to try it.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

THAT IS THE WEEK

You have cooked a full week on a tight budget, with three beef dinners, one fish dinner and a vegetarian one, and two batch meals in the freezer. Chapter 8 is the combined shopping list for the whole week, with the freezing and defrosting schedule and a plan for leftovers.

Meal Plan 3: Budget Week

Chapter 8 · Weekly shopping list

How to use this list. It merges the shopping lists of all 21 recipes from Monday to Sunday, so you can shop once. Amounts are totals for the week, and the last column says where each item is used. Check the cupboard section before you go, because oil, salt and spices are probably already at home. Every recipe is for one portion except Monday's cottage pie, Wednesday's pasta bake, Saturday's bolognese and Sunday's roast chicken, which make two. Each recipe page still has its own list.

DOWNLOAD

A plain-text copy of this whole list is here: [Weekly shopping list \(text file\)](#)

Meat and fish

ITEM	BUY	USED IN
Lean beef mince (5% fat)	1 pack, 500 g	Mon 250 g (cottage pie), Thu 100 g (hash), Sat 150 g (bolognese). Nothing spare
Boneless, skinless chicken thighs	2 thighs, about 200 g	Tue (one-pot chicken and rice)
Chicken drumsticks	4, about 500 g	Sun (roast, 2 portions)

Fruit and vegetables

ITEM	BUY	USED IN
Onions	9 (1 bag)	Mon 2, Tue 1, Wed 1, Thu 1, Fri 1 1/4, Sat 1, Sun 1 1/2
Garlic	1 head (6 cloves)	Tue 1, Wed 2, Sat 2, Sun 1
Carrots	11, about 1.1 kg	Mon 4, Thu 1, Sat 2, Sun 4

ITEM	BUY	USED IN
Potatoes	1 bag, 2 kg (1.5 kg needed)	Mon 500 g, Thu 250 g, Fri 350 g, Sun 400 g
Large baking potato	1, about 250 g	Tue (jacket potato). Can come from the bag
Tomatoes	2	Wed (pasta salad), Fri (scrambled egg)
Bananas	2	Mon (porridge), Tue (toast)
Eating apples	2	Thu (porridge), Sat (French toast)

Dairy and eggs

ITEM	BUY	USED IN
Eggs	1 box of 10	7 needed: Wed 2, Thu 1, Fri 2, Sat 1, Sun 1. Three spare
Semi-skimmed milk	1 litre (about 615 ml needed)	Mon 240 ml, Thu 200 ml, Fri 115 ml, Sat 60 ml
Mature Cheddar cheese	1 block, 200 g (90 g needed)	Tue 20 g, Wed 40 g, Sat 30 g. About 110 g spare
Plain Greek-style yoghurt	1 small pot, 150 g	Wed 30 g (pasta salad), Thu 40 g (wrap). About 80 g spare

Bread and bakery

ITEM	BUY	USED IN
Wholemeal bread	1 small loaf	10 slices: Tue, Wed, Fri, Sat and Sun, 2 each. Sat's French toast likes stale bread
Wholemeal tortilla wraps	1 pack	Thu 1, Sat 1. Freeze the rest

Frozen

ITEM	BUY	USED IN
Peas	1 bag, at least 420 g	Mon 100 g, Tue 60 g, Wed 100 g, Thu 60 g, Fri 100 g
Sweetcorn	1 small bag, at least 140 g	Wed 60 g, Fri 80 g

Tins, jars and bottles

ITEM	BUY	USED IN
Chopped tomatoes (400 g tin)	5 tins	Mon, Tue, Wed, Sat and Sun, 1 each
Baked beans, reduced sugar and salt (400 g tin)	1 tin	Tue 200 g, Sat 200 g (keep or freeze the half tin)
Chickpeas (400 g tin)	1 tin	Thu 120 g, Fri 120 g
Butter beans (400 g tin)	1 tin	Wed (pasta bake)
Tuna in spring water (about 145 g tin)	1 small tin	Wed (pasta salad)
Mackerel fillets in spring water (about 125 g drained)	1 tin	Fri (fishcakes)
Peanut butter, 100% peanuts	1 small jar	Tue 1 tbsp

Dry goods

ITEM	BUY	USED IN
Porridge oats	1 bag	About 105 g: Mon 40 g, Thu 40 g, Fri 25 g (fishcake coating)
Red split lentils	1 bag, 500 g	220 g: Mon 60 g (soup) and 80 g (pie), Sat 80 g (bolognese)
Long-grain rice	1 small bag	Tue 60 g
Dried pasta shapes (penne or fusilli)	1 pack, 500 g	Wed 180 g (60 g salad, 120 g bake)

ITEM	BUY	USED IN
Spaghetti	1 pack	Sat 75 g
Reduced-salt vegetable stock cubes	1 small box (2 cubes needed)	Mon 1/2 + 1/2, Fri 1/2, Sun 1/2

Cupboard check

You probably have these already. Check the amounts, then add to the trolley whatever has run out.

- **Olive oil:** about 18 tsp (6 tbsp, 90 ml) over the week
- **Salt and black pepper:** used in most recipes
- **Smoked paprika:** 4.5 tsp (Tue, Thu, Fri, Sun)
- **Dried oregano:** 4.5 tsp (Mon, Wed, Sat, Sun)
- **Ground cumin:** 1.5 tsp (Mon, Thu, Sat)
- **Ground cinnamon:** 3/4 tsp (Mon, Thu, Sat)

Equipment

- A small ovenproof dish (Mon, Wed)
- 3 freezer-safe containers with lids (Mon, Wed, Sat)
- A baking tray and baking paper (Fri, Sun)
- A coarse grater (Thu, Sat, Sun)
- A microwave-safe bowl and a plate (Thu, Sun)
- A non-stick frying pan and a large saucepan
- A stick blender (Mon, Sun, optional, a masher works)

If you shop once: freeze and defrost

Raw meat and fish should not wait several days in the fridge, so buy them on your shopping day, freeze them at once, and take each one out the evening before you cook it. Defrost on a

plate on the bottom shelf of the fridge, never on the worktop. Check the use-by date on the pack: if it falls before the day you need the item, freeze it. Do not refreeze raw meat that has defrosted.

ITEM	COOK ON	TAKE OUT OF THE FREEZER
Chicken thighs	Tue	Mon evening
Beef mince, 100 g portion (freeze on buying)	Thu	Wed evening
Beef mince, 150 g portion (freeze on buying)	Sat	Fri evening
Chicken drumsticks	Sun	Sat evening

SPLITTING THE MINCE

Buy one 500 g pack. Weigh out 100 g for Thursday's hash and 150 g for Saturday's bolognese, wrap each separately and freeze them straight away. Use the remaining 250 g on Monday for the cottage pie. If you would rather not freeze mince, buy a 250 g pack for Monday and fresh mince for Thursday and Saturday.

Saving money on the shop

- Choose the supermarket's own brand for tins, pasta, oats, lentils, rice and frozen veg. The contents are the same.
- Compare the price per kilo or per 100 g on the shelf label, not the price of the pack.
- Buy loose carrots, onions and apples if you can, so you only pay for what you use.
- Look in the reduced section for bread, fruit and chicken, and freeze what you will not cook within a day.
- Cook from the freezer: the three frozen portions are next week's easy nights, so you can plan a lighter shop.
- Check the cupboard section first. Spices and oil are used again from week to week.

Using up leftovers

- Half a tin of baked beans (Tuesday): keep covered in the fridge for 2 days, or freeze flat in a small bag for Saturday's quesadilla.
- Half a tin of chickpeas (Thursday): goes straight into Friday's chowder.
- Cottage pie, pasta bake and bolognese (Mon, Wed, Sat): one portion of each is in the freezer for next week. Use within 3 months and defrost overnight in the fridge.
- Two cold drumsticks (Sunday): eat within 2 days in a sandwich or salad.
- Cheddar (about 110 g), yoghurt (about 80 g) and three eggs: use within their dates, or grate the cheese and freeze it.
- Spare bread and wraps: freeze in a bag and take out what you need.

THAT COMPLETES MEAL PLAN 3

Three beef dinners (Monday, Thursday, Saturday), a fish dinner on Friday, a vegetarian dinner on Wednesday, three batch meals for the freezer, and a shopping list to match. Swap any recipe that does not suit you, and note what you would change before the next plan.