



MEAL PLAN

Meal Plan 4

A week of quick, healthy meals you prepare ahead and then leave to cook, with a shopping list for every recipe.

8 Chapters

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Meal Plan 4: Quick Weeknights

Day 1 · Monday · Prep ahead, then leave it

Today at a glance. Breakfast takes 3 minutes and lunch takes 5. Dinner is the main event: **10 minutes of prep any time during the day**, then about **5 minutes of work** at dinner time and 10 minutes of roasting. Every quantity below is for **one portion**, in metric with UK names.

Breakfast

BREAKFAST

Berry Yoghurt Oat Pot

3 minutes

No cooking

3 ingredients

Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

150 g plain Greek-style yoghurt

30 g porridge oats

80 g frozen mixed berries

1 tsp honey (optional)

METHOD

1. Spoon the yoghurt into a bowl or jar and stir in the oats.
2. Tip the frozen berries on top. They will thaw as you get ready, and their juice colours the yoghurt.
3. Drizzle with the honey if you want it sweeter, and eat straight away. If you want softer oats, stir it all together the night before and keep it covered in the fridge.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY START

Greek yoghurt is high in protein and the oats add slow-release fibre, so the pot keeps you full all morning. The berries give sweetness and vitamin C without sugar.

SWAPS

Chopped banana or apple in place of the berries. A spoonful of peanut butter stirred in. A pinch of cinnamon on top.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

Lunch

LUNCH · VEGETARIAN

Houmous, Cucumber and Carrot Wrap

5 minutes

No cooking

Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

1 wholemeal tortilla wrap

60 g houmous (about 3 tbsp)

1 carrot

50 g cucumber (about 5 cm)

20 g baby spinach

Black pepper

METHOD

1. Peel the carrot and grate it on the coarse side of a grater. Cut the cucumber into thin sticks.
2. Lay the wrap flat and spread the houmous over it, leaving a gap of about 2 cm at the edge.
3. Scatter the spinach, carrot and cucumber over the middle of the wrap, and add some black pepper.
4. Fold in the two sides, then roll it up tightly from the bottom. Cut it in half. To take it with you, wrap it in baking paper or foil and keep it cool.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY LUNCH

Houmous is made from chickpeas, so the wrap has plain plant protein and fibre. The raw carrot, cucumber and spinach add crunch, vitamins and very few calories.

SWAPS

Grated beetroot or a sliced tomato in place of the cucumber. A squeeze of lemon juice. Cottage cheese or a boiled egg in the wrap for more protein.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

Dinner	

Sticky Soy Beef and Broccoli Tray Bake with Rice

Prep ahead: 10 minutes

At dinner: 5 minutes of work

Cooks: 10 minutes

1 tray plus a pan

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

150 g lean beef steak (sirloin or rump)

150 g broccoli (about half a head)

60 g long-grain white rice (basmati cooks fastest)

1 tbsp reduced-salt soy sauce

1 tsp honey

1 clove garlic

2 tsp olive oil

Black pepper

PREP AHEAD (ABOUT 10 MINUTES, ANY TIME THAT DAY)

1. Trim any hard fat from the steak. Slice it across the grain into thin strips, about 3 mm thick and 5 cm long. It slices more easily if it has been in the freezer for 20 minutes.
2. Peel and finely grate the garlic into a bowl. Stir in the soy sauce, honey, 1 tsp of the oil and some pepper. Add the beef, turn it until it is coated, cover the bowl and put it on the **bottom shelf** of the fridge.
3. Cut the broccoli into small florets, about 2 cm across, and slice the stalk into thin rounds. Put them in a covered container in the fridge. Wash your hands, the board and the knife.

AT DINNER TIME (ABOUT 5 MINUTES OF WORK)

1. Switch the oven on to 220°C (200°C fan, gas mark 7) as soon as you get in. It takes about 10 minutes to heat. Line a large baking tray with foil or baking paper.
2. When the oven is hot, tip the broccoli on to the tray, toss it with the remaining 1 tsp of oil, and spread it out. Add the beef and all of its marinade, spreading the strips out in a single layer so that they roast rather than steam. Roast for 5 minutes.
3. Meanwhile, put the rice in a pan of boiling water and cook it for 10 to 11 minutes, or following the packet. Drain it.

4. Take the tray out, turn the beef and broccoli over, and roast for 4 to 5 more minutes, until the beef is brown and sticky with no pink left and the broccoli has browned edges.
5. Spoon the rice into a bowl and tip the beef, broccoli and any sticky juices from the tray over the top.

KEEPING PREPPED RAW MEAT SAFE

Keep the marinating beef covered on the bottom shelf of the fridge, away from other food, and cook it the same day (within 8 hours is a good rule). Do not leave it on the worktop. The marinade goes into the oven with the beef and is cooked until it bubbles, so it is safe to eat. Do not use any marinade left in the bowl as a sauce.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY DINNER

Thin strips of lean steak mean a modest 150 g of beef is plenty, and the broccoli supplies vitamin C, folate and fibre. The sauce is only soy sauce and a little honey, so there is no sugary bottled sauce and just 2 tsp of oil.

SWAPS

A ready-cooked microwave rice pouch is quicker, but a 250 g pouch is two portions, so eat it all or cool the rest within an hour and use it within a day. Egg noodles (4 minutes) in place of the rice. Green beans, peppers or sugar snap peas in place of the broccoli. A pinch of chilli flakes or a squeeze of lime to finish.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

COMING UP TOMORROW

Tuesday has microwave porridge, a chicken and avocado wrap, and lemon and garlic chicken and vegetable foil parcels with couscous. The parcels are assembled ahead and bake for 20 minutes. The parcels use the other half of tonight's broccoli, so keep it. If your chicken is frozen, take it out tonight to defrost in the fridge, and have foil ready.

Meal Plan 4: Quick Weeknights

Day 2 · Tuesday · Prep ahead, then leave it

Today at a glance. Breakfast takes 4 minutes in the microwave and lunch takes 5 minutes with no cooking. Dinner is a foil parcel: **10 minutes of prep any time during the day**, then about **5 minutes of work** at dinner time. It goes into the oven cold and bakes for 25 minutes without you. It uses **the other half of Monday's broccoli**. Every quantity below is for **one portion**, in metric with UK names.

Breakfast

BREAKFAST

Microwave Porridge with Frozen Berries

4 minutes

Microwave

3 ingredients

Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

40 g porridge oats

200 ml semi-skimmed milk

60 g frozen mixed berries

Pinch of salt

METHOD

1. Put the oats, milk and a pinch of salt in a large microwave-safe bowl. Use a bigger bowl than you think you need, because porridge rises as it heats.
2. Microwave on high for 2 minutes, then stir. Microwave for another 1 minute, until thick and creamy.
3. Stir in the frozen berries. They cool the porridge and turn it purple. Leave it for 1 minute to soften the berries, then eat.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY START

Oats are a whole grain, and the fibre in them keeps you full. The berries add sweetness, vitamin C and colour without any sugar.

SWAPS

Use half milk and half water. A teaspoon of peanut butter or a spoonful of yoghurt on top. A pinch of cinnamon.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

Lunch

LUNCH

Chicken, Avocado and Spinach Wrap

5 minutes

No cooking

4 ingredients

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

1 wholemeal tortilla wrap

60 g cooked sliced chicken breast (from a pack, or left over from a roast)

1 small ripe avocado

20 g baby spinach

Black pepper

METHOD

1. Halve the avocado, remove the stone and scoop the flesh into a small bowl. Mash it with a fork, adding plenty of black pepper.
2. Lay the wrap flat and spread the avocado over it, leaving a gap of about 2 cm at the edge.
3. Lay the chicken and the spinach over the middle.
4. Fold in the two sides, roll it up tightly from the bottom and cut it in half. To take it with you, wrap it in baking paper or foil and keep it cool.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY LUNCH

Chicken breast gives lean protein, and avocado is a source of unsaturated fat and fibre, so the wrap keeps you full through the afternoon.

SWAPS

A squeeze of lemon or lime in the avocado stops it going brown. A sliced tomato or some cucumber for extra crunch. Use a boiled egg or tinned tuna in place of the chicken.

CHOOSING AVOCADOS

A ripe avocado gives slightly when you press the end near the stalk. If yours is still hard, buy it a few days ahead and leave it on the worktop.

Shopping list for this recipe

Dinner

Lemon and Garlic Chicken and Vegetable Parcels with Couscous

Prep ahead: 10 minutes

At dinner: 5 minutes of work

Bakes: 25 minutes

1 foil parcel

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

150 g skinless chicken breast fillet**150 g** broccoli (the other half of Monday's head)**1** carrot**1** lemon**1 clove** garlic**1 tsp** olive oil**½ tsp** dried oregano**60 g** couscous**½** reduced-salt vegetable stock cube**80 ml** boiling water, for the couscous

Salt and black pepper

PREP AHEAD (ABOUT 10 MINUTES, ANY TIME THAT DAY)

1. Tear off a sheet of foil about 40 cm long and lay it on a baking tray. Peel and grate the garlic into a small bowl, grate in the zest of half the lemon, squeeze in the juice of that half, and stir in the oil, oregano, a pinch of salt and some pepper.
2. Slice the chicken across into pieces about 1 cm thick. Thin pieces cook through in the time the parcel takes. Mix them into the lemon and garlic. Wash your hands, the board and the knife.
3. Cut the broccoli into small florets, about 2 cm. Peel the carrot and cut it into thin batons, about 5 mm thick. Cut the other half of the lemon into 2 or 3 slices.
4. Put the broccoli and carrot in the middle of the foil, put the chicken and its lemon and garlic mixture on top, and lay the lemon slices over it. Add 1 tbsp of water.
5. Bring the long edges of the foil together over the top and fold them over twice. Fold in the two ends to seal it into a loose, sealed parcel with some space inside for steam. Keep it on the tray, covered, on the **bottom shelf** of the fridge.

AT DINNER TIME (ABOUT 5 MINUTES OF WORK)

1. Put the tray with the parcel into the **cold oven**, then switch the oven on to 200°C (180°C fan, gas mark 6). Set a timer for 25 minutes and leave it alone. Starting cold means no waiting for the oven to heat.
2. About 8 minutes before the end, put the couscous in a heatproof bowl with the crumbled stock cube. Pour over the 80 ml of boiling water, cover with a plate and leave for 5 minutes. Fluff it with a fork.
3. When the timer goes, take the tray out. Open one end of the parcel carefully, because the steam is very hot. Cut into the thickest piece of chicken to check that it is white all the way through with no pink, and that the juices run clear. If not, re-seal it and bake for 5 more minutes.
4. Spoon the couscous into a bowl and tip the chicken, vegetables and all the juices over the top.

KEEPING PREPPED RAW CHICKEN SAFE

Keep the sealed parcel in the fridge on the bottom shelf, away from other food, until you cook it, and cook it the same day (within 8 hours is a good rule). Never leave it out on the worktop. Raw chicken must be cooked through, so check it before you eat.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY DINNER

Everything steams in its own juices, so you need only 1 tsp of oil. Chicken breast is lean, and the parcel is half vegetables. Lemon and garlic give plenty of flavour without sauce or added salt.

SWAPS

Green beans, courgette or peppers in place of the broccoli or carrot. A teaspoon of honey or a spoonful of mustard in the lemon mixture. Rice or a baked potato for the couscous. Use chicken thighs, cut into small pieces, for a juicier parcel.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

COMING UP TOMORROW

Wednesday has a cheese and tomato toastie, a tomato and white bean soup, and a vegetarian shakshuka. The shakshuka sauce is made ahead and kept in the fridge, so you only heat it and add the

eggs at dinner time.

Meal Plan 4: Quick Weeknights

Day 3 · Wednesday · Prep ahead, then leave it

Today at a glance. A vegetarian day. Breakfast and lunch each take about 10 minutes. Dinner is the vegetarian one: **make the sauce ahead** (15 minutes any time in the day), then at dinner time you only reheat it, add the eggs and leave it for 6 minutes. A **400 g tin of chopped tomatoes** covers both lunch and dinner, and half a tin of **cannellini beans** is saved for Friday. Every quantity below is for **one portion**, in metric with UK names.

Breakfast

BREAKFAST

Cheese and Tomato Toastie

8 minutes

1 pan or sandwich toaster

3 ingredients

Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

2 slices wholemeal bread

30 g mature Cheddar cheese

1 small tomato

½ tsp olive oil

Black pepper

METHOD

1. Grate the cheese. Slice the tomato thinly and pat the slices dry with kitchen paper so that the toastie does not go soggy.
2. Lay the cheese on one slice of bread, then the tomato slices, then some pepper, and put the second slice on top.
3. Brush the outside of the sandwich very lightly with the oil. With a sandwich toaster, close it and cook for 3 to 4 minutes.
4. In a frying pan, cook the sandwich over a medium heat for 2 to 3 minutes on each side, pressing down with a spatula, until golden and the cheese has melted.
5. Let it cool for a minute before cutting it, because the tomato is very hot.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY START

Mature cheese gives plenty of flavour from a small amount, and the tomato adds vitamin C. Using wholemeal bread and only a trace of oil makes this a much lighter toastie than a butter-fried one.

SWAPS

A handful of baby spinach or a few slices of mushroom with the cheese. A teaspoon of mustard on the bread. Use a wholemeal wrap folded in half for a quesadilla.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

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LUNCH · VEGETARIAN

Tomato and White Bean Soup with Toast

10 minutes

1 pan

Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS (1 LARGE BOWL)

200 g	chopped tomatoes (half a 400 g tin; the other half goes into tonight's shakshuka)
120 g	cannellini beans from a tin, drained and rinsed (half a tin; Friday uses the rest)
1 clove	garlic
20 g	baby spinach
½	reduced-salt vegetable stock cube
½ tsp	dried oregano
1 tsp	olive oil
150 ml	boiling water
2 slices	wholemeal bread, to serve
	Black pepper

METHOD

1. Peel and finely chop the garlic. Heat the oil in a saucepan over a medium heat and cook the garlic and oregano for 30 seconds.
2. Add the tomatoes, the beans, the crumbled stock cube and the boiling water. Bring to a simmer and cook for 7 minutes.
3. Crush about a third of the beans against the side of the pan with a fork to thicken the soup.
4. Stir in the spinach for 1 minute until it wilts. Season with pepper, and taste before adding salt.
5. Toast the bread while the soup finishes and serve it alongside.

TWO HALF TINS

Put the other half of the tomatoes in a covered container in the fridge for tonight's shakshuka, and the other half of the beans in another for Friday's salad. Never leave them in the open tin,

because the metal can taint the food.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY LUNCH

Beans give protein and fibre, and cooked tomatoes are a good source of lycopene. The soup has very little fat and is filling enough to be a complete lunch with the toast.

SWAPS

A grated carrot cooked with the garlic. A pinch of chilli flakes. A spoonful of plain yoghurt stirred in at the end. Use kale or cabbage in place of the spinach, and cook it for 3 minutes more.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

Dinner

Shakshuka with Toast

Prep ahead: 15 minutes

At dinner: 5 minutes of work

Cooks: 8 minutes

1 pan

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)**2** eggs**200 g** chopped tomatoes (the other half of the tin from lunch)**½** red pepper (the other half is for Thursday)**½** onion**1 clove** garlic**½ tsp** ground cumin**½ tsp** smoked paprika**1 tsp** olive oil**2 slices** wholemeal bread, to serve

Salt and black pepper

PREP AHEAD (ABOUT 15 MINUTES, ANY TIME THAT DAY)

1. Cut the pepper in half, remove the seeds, and chop one half small. Wrap the other half for Thursday. Peel and chop the onion and garlic.
2. Heat the oil in a frying pan with a lid over a medium heat. Cook the onion and pepper for 6 minutes, stirring now and then, until soft. Add the garlic, cumin and paprika and stir for 30 seconds.
3. Pour in the tomatoes with a pinch of salt and some pepper. Simmer for 6 to 8 minutes until the sauce is thick. Do not let it get too dry.
4. Spoon the sauce into a container and let it cool for up to an hour. Cover it and put it in the fridge. Wash the pan.

AT DINNER TIME (ABOUT 5 MINUTES OF WORK)

1. Tip the cold sauce back into the frying pan with 2 tbsp of water. Heat it over a medium heat, stirring, for 3 to 4 minutes until it is bubbling and steaming hot all the way through.

2. Make two hollows in the sauce with the back of a spoon and crack an egg into each. Season the eggs with a little pepper.
3. Cover the pan with its lid, turn the heat to low, and leave it for 5 to 6 minutes, until the whites are set and the yolks are as runny as you like. Leave it for 2 minutes longer if you want the yolks firm.
4. Toast the bread while the eggs cook, and serve straight from the pan with the toast to mop up the sauce.

KEEPING THE PREPPED SAUCE SAFE

Cool the sauce quickly (it should be in the fridge within an hour or two of cooking) and keep it covered. Heat it until it is steaming hot all the way through before you add the eggs, and do not reheat it more than once.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY DINNER

Two eggs give protein, and the tomato and pepper sauce counts as a vegetable portion or two, with only 1 tsp of oil. It costs very little and is a complete meal with the toast.

SWAPS

A handful of baby spinach stirred into the sauce at the end. A pinch of chilli flakes for heat. Crumbled feta or a spoonful of plain yoghurt on top. Add a few chickpeas or white beans for extra protein.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

COMING UP TOMORROW

Thursday has a banana and peanut butter smoothie, a quick egg fried rice, and a beef and vegetable noodle pot that uses the other half of the pepper. For the noodle pot, remember to keep the pepper, and take frozen beef out tonight to defrost in the fridge.

Meal Plan 4: Quick Weeknights

Day 4 · Thursday · Prep ahead, then leave it

Today at a glance. Breakfast takes 3 minutes, lunch uses a ready-cooked rice pouch and takes 10 minutes. Dinner is the second beef dish of the week: **10 minutes of prep any time during the day**, then about **5 minutes of work** at dinner time and a further 8 minutes of simmering. It uses **the other half of Wednesday's red pepper**. Every quantity below is for **one portion**, in metric with UK names.

Breakfast

BREAKFAST

Banana and Peanut Butter Oat Smoothie

3 minutes

Blender

4 ingredients

Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

1 ripe banana

1 tbsp peanut butter (about 15 g)

30 g porridge oats

250 ml semi-skimmed milk

METHOD

1. Peel the banana and break it into pieces.
2. Put the banana, peanut butter, oats and milk in a blender or a tall jug.
3. Blend for 30 to 45 seconds with a blender or a stick blender, until smooth and thick.
4. Pour it into a glass or a travel cup. Without a blender, mash the banana and peanut butter well in a bowl, whisk in the milk, and stir in the oats. Leave it for 5 minutes so the oats soften.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY START

The oats give slow-release fibre and the peanut butter gives protein and unsaturated fat, so this drinkable breakfast keeps you going until lunch. The banana sweetens it, so there is no need for sugar.

SWAPS

A pinch of cinnamon. A frozen banana makes it thick and cold like a milkshake. A handful of spinach disappears into the flavour and turns it green. A spoonful of plain yoghurt for more protein.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

Lunch

Egg and Sweetcorn Fried Rice

10 minutes

1 pan plus microwave

Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

250 g ready-cooked microwave rice pouch (one pouch)

2 eggs

80 g frozen sweetcorn

1 clove garlic

1 tbsp reduced-salt soy sauce

2 tsp olive oil

Black pepper

METHOD

1. Heat the rice in its pouch in the microwave, following the packet (usually 2 minutes). Beat the eggs. Peel and finely chop the garlic.
2. Heat 1 tsp of the oil in a large frying pan or wok over a medium-high heat. Pour in the eggs and stir for 30 to 60 seconds until just set. Tip them onto a plate.
3. Add the remaining oil, the garlic and the sweetcorn to the pan and cook for 2 minutes, stirring.
4. Add the hot rice and stir-fry for 2 minutes until it is steaming hot all the way through.
5. Return the egg to the pan, breaking it into pieces, add the soy sauce and some pepper, and toss for 30 seconds. Serve at once.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY LUNCH

It is a full meal of grain, protein and vegetable in one pan. Ready-cooked rice is good for fried rice because the grains stay separate, and a single pouch is a generous portion for one hungry person.

SWAPS

A handful of frozen peas or spinach with the sweetcorn. A chopped spring onion or some grated carrot. A pinch of chilli flakes. Use leftover cooked rice from the night before in place of the pouch, if it was chilled quickly.

Shopping list for this recipe

Dinner

Beef and Vegetable Noodle Pot

Prep ahead: 10 minutes

At dinner: 5 minutes of work

Cooks: 10 minutes

1 pan

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

150 g lean beef steak (sirloin or rump)

1 nest dried egg noodles (about 60 g)

½ red pepper (the other half from Wednesday)

1 carrot

50 g baby spinach

1 clove garlic

2 tbsp reduced-salt soy sauce

1 tsp honey

1 tsp olive oil

350 ml boiling water

Black pepper

PREP AHEAD (ABOUT 10 MINUTES, ANY TIME THAT DAY)

1. Trim any hard fat from the steak and slice it across the grain into thin strips, about 3 mm thick. Peel and grate the garlic into a bowl, stir in 1 tbsp of the soy sauce, the honey and some pepper, add the beef and turn it to coat. Cover and put it on the **bottom shelf** of the fridge. Wash your hands, the board and the knife.
2. Slice the red pepper into thin strips. Peel the carrot and cut it into thin matchsticks, or grate it coarsely. Put the pepper and carrot in a covered container in the fridge.
3. Stand the pan you will use (a wide saucepan or deep frying pan with a lid) on the hob, ready. Put the nest of noodles, the spinach and the other tablespoon of soy sauce next to it.

AT DINNER TIME (ABOUT 5 MINUTES OF WORK)

1. Heat the oil in the pan over a high heat. Add the beef with its marinade and stir for 2 minutes, until it is brown all over.

2. Add the pepper and carrot and stir for 1 minute. Pour in the boiling water and the other tablespoon of soy sauce, and add the noodles, pushing them down so they are covered.
3. Turn the heat down to a steady simmer, put the lid on and leave it for 4 to 5 minutes, until the noodles are tender. Stir once, halfway through, to separate them.
4. Add the spinach, stir it in for 1 minute until it wilts, and check that the beef is cooked through with no pink left.
5. Spoon it into a deep bowl with all of the broth.

KEEPING PREPPED RAW BEEF SAFE

Keep the marinating beef covered on the bottom shelf of the fridge, away from other food, and cook it the same day (within 8 hours is a good rule). Never leave it on the worktop. The marinade goes into the pan with the beef and is boiled with the noodles, so it is safe to eat.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY DINNER

A modest portion of lean beef sliced thin goes a long way, and the dish is built around vegetables and a light broth instead of a heavy sauce. Because the soy sauce is reduced-salt and there is no stock cube, the salt stays low.

SWAPS

Sliced mushrooms, pak choi or sugar snap peas in place of the pepper. A pinch of chilli flakes or a squeeze of lime at the end. Rice noodles in place of egg noodles (they need soaking instead). A teaspoon of grated ginger in the marinade.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

COMING UP TOMORROW

Friday has scrambled eggs on toast with spinach, a tuna, bean and tomato salad (with the half tin of cannellini beans from Wednesday), and a fish dinner baked with tomatoes, olives and couscous. If your fish is frozen, take it out tonight and defrost it in the fridge on a plate.

Meal Plan 4: Quick Weeknights

Day 5 · Friday · Prep ahead, then leave it

Today at a glance. The fish day, and the last weekday of the week. Breakfast takes 8 minutes and lunch needs no cooking, using **the half tin of cannellini beans from Wednesday**. Dinner is assembled in 10 minutes any time in the day, then you put it in the oven and spend 5 minutes on the couscous while it bakes. Every quantity below is for **one portion**, in metric with UK names.

Breakfast

BREAKFAST

Scrambled Eggs on Toast with Spinach

8 minutes

1 small pan

4 ingredients

Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

2 eggs

2 slices wholemeal bread

20 g baby spinach

1 tbsp semi-skimmed milk (15 ml)

1 tsp olive oil

Salt and black pepper

METHOD

1. Beat the eggs in a bowl with the milk, a pinch of salt and some pepper. Roughly chop the spinach.
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 spinach and stir for 30 seconds until it wilts.
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 eggs over the toast and eat straight away.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY START

Two eggs and wholemeal toast give protein and fibre, and the spinach adds iron and folate for almost no calories. It needs only a teaspoon of oil.

SWAPS

A grated tomato or a few mushrooms with the spinach. A sprinkle of grated cheese. A pinch of smoked paprika on top.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

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LUNCH

Tuna, Bean and Tomato Salad

8 minutes

No cooking

5 ingredients

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

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

120 g cannellini beans (the other half tin from Wednesday), drained and rinsed

80 g cherry tomatoes

20 g baby spinach

1 tsp olive oil

½ tsp dried oregano

Black pepper

METHOD

1. Drain the tuna and flake it with a fork into a bowl. Halve the cherry tomatoes.
2. Add the beans, tomatoes and spinach to the bowl.
3. Drizzle over the oil, scatter the oregano and add plenty of black pepper, then toss gently so that the beans do not break up.
4. Taste it and add a pinch of salt only if you need it, because the tuna is already a little salty. Eat it straight away, or pack it into a container to take with you.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY LUNCH

Tuna in spring water is a very lean source of protein, and the beans add fibre and slow-release energy, so this salad is filling without a lot of calories.

SWAPS

A squeeze of lemon or a splash of vinegar in the dressing. Some thin slices of red onion or cucumber. A wholemeal wrap, or a slice of toast on the side, to make it a bigger meal. Use drained tinned chickpeas if you have no cannellini beans.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

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Oven-Baked White Fish with Tomatoes, Olives and Couscous

Prep ahead: 10 minutes

At dinner: 5 minutes of work

Bakes: 20 minutes

1 dish

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

1 fillet skinless white fish, such as cod, haddock or pollock (about 150 g)

150 g cherry tomatoes

30 g pitted black olives

1 clove garlic

1 tsp olive oil

½ tsp dried oregano

60 g couscous

½ reduced-salt vegetable stock cube

80 ml boiling water, for the couscous

Salt and black pepper

PREP AHEAD (ABOUT 10 MINUTES, ANY TIME THAT DAY)

1. If your fish was frozen, make sure it has fully defrosted in the fridge. Pat it dry with kitchen paper and check it for any small bones, pulling out any you find with clean tweezers or your fingertips.
2. Halve the cherry tomatoes. Peel and finely chop the garlic. Put the tomatoes, olives, garlic, oil, oregano, a pinch of salt and some pepper in a small ovenproof dish, and stir.
3. Lay the fish on top of the tomatoes, season it lightly, and spoon a little of the tomato mixture over it.
4. Cover the dish tightly with foil and put it on the **bottom shelf** of the fridge. Wash your hands, the board and the knife.

AT DINNER TIME (ABOUT 5 MINUTES OF WORK)

1. Put the covered dish into the **cold oven**, then switch the oven on to 200°C (180°C fan, gas mark 6). Set a timer for 20 minutes and leave it alone.
2. About 8 minutes before the end, put the couscous in a heatproof bowl with the crumbled stock cube. Pour over the 80 ml of boiling water, cover with a plate and leave

for 5 minutes. Fluff it with a fork.

3. When the timer goes, lift the foil carefully, because the steam is very hot. The fish is ready when it is opaque all the way through and flakes easily with a fork. If it still looks glassy in the middle, cover it and give it 3 more minutes.
4. Spoon the couscous onto a plate and lift the fish and the tomato and olive juices over the top.

KEEPING PREPPED RAW FISH SAFE

Raw fish spoils faster than meat. Keep the covered dish on the bottom shelf of the fridge, away from other food, and cook it the same day, within about 6 hours. Never leave it on the worktop. If it smells strongly of anything other than the sea, do not eat it.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY DINNER

White fish is very lean and high in protein. The tomatoes and olives make their own sauce, so the dish needs only 1 tsp of oil, and it is half vegetables.

SWAPS

A few capers or some thin slices of courgette in the dish. A pinch of chilli flakes. A squeeze of lemon over the fish at the end. A rice pouch or new potatoes in place of the couscous.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

COMING UP TOMORROW

Saturday is slower and more relaxed: a vegetable omelette, a leek, potato and bean soup, and a slow-cooked beef and vegetable stew that makes two portions, one for the freezer. The stew cooks for about 2 hours, so you could start it mid-morning or early afternoon.

Meal Plan 4: Quick Weeknights

Day 6 · Saturday · A slower weekend day

Today at a glance. The weekend does not have to be quick, so today's meals take a little longer and taste better for it. Lunch uses **half a tin of cannellini beans**, and the other half goes into dinner. Dinner is a beef stew that cooks mostly by itself for 2 hours and makes **two portions**: one to eat tonight and one for the freezer, ready for your next busy week. Every quantity below is for **one portion** unless the recipe says otherwise, in metric with UK names.

Breakfast

BREAKFAST

Mushroom, Spinach and Cheese Omelette

15 minutes

1 frying pan

Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

2 eggs

60 g mushrooms

20 g baby spinach

20 g mature Cheddar cheese

1 tsp olive oil

Salt and black pepper

METHOD

1. Wipe the mushrooms clean with kitchen paper and slice them thinly. Grate the cheese. Beat the eggs in a bowl with a pinch of salt and some pepper.
2. Heat half the oil in a small non-stick frying pan, about 20 cm across, over a medium heat. Cook the mushrooms for 4 minutes until they are soft and the liquid has gone. Add the spinach for 30 seconds until it wilts, then tip it all onto a plate.
3. Wipe the pan, add the remaining oil, and pour in the eggs. Tilt the pan so that they cover the base. Cook for 1 to 2 minutes, drawing the set edges to the middle with a spatula and letting the runny egg flow underneath.
4. When the top is nearly set but still a little creamy, spoon the mushrooms and spinach over one half and scatter on the cheese.
5. Fold the empty half over the filling, cook for 30 more seconds, and slide the omelette onto a plate.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY START

Eggs give protein, mushrooms add B vitamins and a savoury taste for almost no calories, and the spinach adds iron. A little strong cheese is enough, so the omelette stays light.

SWAPS

A chopped tomato in the filling. A pinch of dried oregano or a few chopped herbs. Serve with a slice of wholemeal toast. Leave the cheese out for a lighter breakfast.

Shopping list for this recipe

Lunch

LUNCH · VEGETARIAN

Leek, Potato and White Bean Soup

10 minutes prep

25 minutes cooking

1 pan

Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS (1 LARGE BOWL)

- 1** medium leek (about 150 g once trimmed)
- 150 g** potatoes
- 120 g** cannellini beans from a tin, drained and rinsed (half a tin; dinner uses the rest)
- ½** reduced-salt vegetable stock cube
- 1 tsp** olive oil
- 350 ml** boiling water
- Black pepper

METHOD

1. Cut the root and the tough dark green top off the leek. Slice it in half lengthways and rinse it well under cold running water, because soil hides between the layers. Slice it thinly.
2. Peel the potatoes and cut them into 2 cm cubes.
3. Heat the oil in a saucepan over a low to medium heat. Add the leek and a splash of water, cover, and cook for 8 minutes, stirring now and then, until soft but not brown.
4. Add the potatoes, the beans, the crumbled stock cube and the boiling water. Bring to a simmer, cover, and cook for 15 minutes, until a knife slips easily into the potato.
5. Blend about two thirds of the soup with a stick blender, leaving some chunks. Or mash it with a potato masher. Season with plenty of black pepper and taste before adding any salt.

THE OTHER HALF TIN

Put the rest of the beans in a covered container in the fridge. Tonight's stew uses them. Never keep food in an opened tin, because the metal can taint it.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY LUNCH

The potato and beans make the soup creamy without any cream, and the beans add protein and fibre. Leeks are a source of fibre and folate.

SWAPS

A handful of spinach stirred in at the end. A spoonful of plain yoghurt on top. Eat a slice of wholemeal toast with it if you want a bigger meal.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

Dinner

Slow-Cooked Beef and Bean Stew

20 minutes prep

2 hours in the oven

Makes 2 portions

1 casserole

INGREDIENTS (MAKES 2 PORTIONS)

300 g braising or stewing beef (such as chuck), trimmed and cut into 3 cm cubes

1 onion

2 carrots

2 cloves garlic

1 tin chopped tomatoes (400 g)

120 g cannellini beans (the other half tin from lunch)

1 reduced-salt vegetable stock cube

300 ml boiling water

1 tsp smoked paprika

1 tsp dried thyme

2 tsp olive oil

2 slices wholemeal bread, to serve (tonight's portion only)

Salt and black pepper

METHOD

1. Heat the oven to 160°C (140°C fan, gas mark 3). Trim any hard fat from the beef and pat it dry with kitchen paper. Peel and chop the onion and garlic. Peel the carrots and cut them into chunks about 2 cm thick.
2. Heat 1 tsp of the oil in a flameproof casserole dish with a lid, over a medium-high heat. Brown half the beef for 4 to 5 minutes, turning, and move it to a plate. Repeat with the rest of the oil and beef. Do not crowd the pan, or the beef steams rather than browns.
3. Turn the heat to medium, add the onion and carrots to the same dish and cook for 5 minutes. Stir in the garlic, paprika and thyme for 30 seconds.
4. Return the beef to the dish. Crumble in the stock cube, add the tomatoes and the boiling water with some pepper, and stir. Bring it to the boil.

5. Put the lid on and cook in the oven for 1 hour 30 minutes. Stir in the beans, put the lid back on and cook for a further 30 minutes, until the beef is very tender and falls apart when you press it with a spoon.
6. Taste, and add a little salt if you need it. Serve half of the stew with the bread.
7. Spoon the other half into 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 reheat it in a pan or in the microwave until it is steaming hot all the way through, adding a splash of water. Do not freeze it a second time once it has defrosted.

NO OVEN OR WANT TO LEAVE IT ALL DAY?

Brown the beef and vegetables in a frying pan, then put everything except the beans in a slow cooker and cook on low for 7 to 8 hours, stirring in the beans for the last 30 minutes. On the hob, simmer it gently with the lid on for 2 hours, stirring now and then.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY DINNER

Slow cooking turns a cheap, lean cut into very tender meat, and the beans and vegetables make up more than half of each portion. There is no flour or cream, and only 2 tsp of oil between two portions.

SWAPS

Mushrooms or a parsnip with the carrots. A bay leaf in the pot. Serve over boiled potatoes, rice or couscous in place of the bread, or with a handful of frozen peas stirred in at the end.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

COMING UP TOMORROW

Sunday has cinnamon and apple pancakes, a jacket potato with cheese and a carrot salad, and a roast chicken dinner that makes two portions. If your chicken is frozen, take it out tonight and defrost it in the fridge.

Meal Plan 4: Quick Weeknights

Day 7 · Sunday · A slower weekend day

Today at a glance. Another unhurried day to end the week. Breakfast is a stack of pancakes, lunch is a jacket potato, and dinner is a roast that cooks two portions of chicken: one to eat tonight and one to keep cold for a wrap or salad next week. Every quantity below is for **one portion** unless the recipe says otherwise, in metric with UK names.

Breakfast

BREAKFAST

Cinnamon and Apple Pancakes

10 minutes prep

10 minutes cooking

Makes 3 pancakes

Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION, 3 PANCAKES)

50 g wholemeal self-raising flour

1 egg

80 ml semi-skimmed milk

1 eating apple

¼ tsp ground cinnamon

1 tsp olive oil

30 g plain Greek-style yoghurt, to serve

METHOD

1. Wash the apple. Coarsely grate half of it, skin and all, avoiding the core. Slice the other half into thin wedges.
2. Put the flour and cinnamon in a bowl. Make a well in the middle, crack in the egg and pour in the milk. Whisk, gradually drawing in the flour, until you have a thick, smooth batter with no lumps. Stir in the grated apple.
3. Heat a non-stick frying pan over a medium heat and brush it very lightly with some of the oil.
4. Drop in a tablespoon or two of batter per pancake, to make three pancakes. Cook for 2 minutes until bubbles appear on the surface and the underneath is golden, then flip and cook for another 1 to 2 minutes. Re-oil the pan lightly between batches.
5. Stack the pancakes, top with the apple wedges and the yoghurt, and serve.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY START

Wholemeal flour and grated apple add fibre, and the egg and yoghurt add protein. The apple sweetens the batter, so there is no need for sugar or syrup.

SWAPS

A mashed ripe banana in place of the apple. A handful of frozen berries heated in the microwave as a topping. A spoonful of peanut butter on top.

Shopping list for this recipe

Lunch

Jacket Potato with Cheese and Carrot Salad

10 minutes prep

25 minutes cooking

Microwave and oven

Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

1 large baking potato (about 250 g)

30 g mature Cheddar cheese

1 carrot

20 g plain Greek-style yoghurt

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 onto the oven shelf for 15 minutes, until the skin is crisp.
4. While it crisps, grate the cheese, then peel and coarsely grate the carrot. Stir the carrot with the yoghurt and a good pinch of black pepper to make the salad.
5. Cut a deep cross in the top of the potato and squeeze the ends to open it. Pile in the cheese, which will melt in the heat, and serve with the carrot salad on the side.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY LUNCH

A jacket potato eaten with its skin is a good source of fibre and potassium. The raw carrot adds crunch and vitamin A, and strong cheese gives lots of flavour from a small amount.

SWAPS

Cottage cheese or tinned tuna in place of the cheese. A spoonful of baked beans. A sweet potato works the same way. Add a handful of spinach or a few sliced cherry tomatoes to the salad.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

Dinner	

Honey and Mustard Roast Chicken Thighs with Potatoes and Green Beans

15 minutes prep

45 minutes roasting

Makes 2 portions of chicken

1 baking tray plus a pan

INGREDIENTS (4 THIGHS FOR 2 PORTIONS; POTATOES AND BEANS FOR TONIGHT ONLY)

4 bone-in chicken thighs (about 600 g in total)

250 g potatoes (tonight's portion only)

100 g green beans (tonight's portion only)

1 tbsp wholegrain mustard

1 tsp honey

1 clove garlic

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 and crush the garlic.
2. Pull the skin off the chicken thighs 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 mustard, honey, garlic, 1 tsp of the oil and some pepper. Add the chicken and turn it until it is coated. Wash your hands, the board and the knife.
4. Toss the potatoes on a large baking tray with the remaining oil and a pinch of salt. Roast them for 10 minutes on the top shelf.
5. Take the tray out, push the potatoes to one side, and add the chicken. Roast for a further 35 minutes, turning the potatoes once, until the potatoes are golden and the chicken is cooked.
6. Cut into the thickest thigh, down 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. While the chicken roasts, trim the beans and cook them in boiling water for 4 to 5 minutes until just tender. Drain.
8. Rest the chicken for 3 minutes. Serve two thighs with the potatoes and the beans.

SAVING THE SECOND PORTION

Put the other two thighs 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 pulled off the bone into a wrap like Tuesday's, or in a salad. 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, chicken thighs are a lean source of protein and a good source of iron. The glaze is just mustard and a little honey, so you get flavour without a sugary sauce, and half the tray is potatoes and beans.

SWAPS

Drumsticks in place of the thighs. Carrots, parsnips or onion wedges on the tray in place of some of the potatoes. A handful of frozen peas on the plate instead of the green beans.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

THAT IS THE WEEK

You have cooked a week of quick meals: five weekday dinners that you prepare ahead and then leave to cook, and a slower weekend with a stew in the freezer ready for your next busy week. Chapter 8 is the combined shopping list for the whole week, with the prep-ahead and freezing schedule and a plan for leftovers.

Meal Plan 4: Quick Weeknights

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 Saturday's stew and Sunday's roast chicken, which make two. Monday to Friday dinners are designed to be prepared a few hours ahead, and the prep schedule below shows when. 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 steak (sirloin or rump), or stir-fry strips	300 g (2 x 150 g)	Mon 150 g (tray bake), Thu 150 g (noodle pot)
Braising or stewing beef (such as chuck)	300 g	Sat (stew, 2 portions)
Skinless chicken breast fillet	1 fillet, about 150 g	Tue (parcel)
Cooked sliced chicken breast	1 small pack, 60 g needed	Tue (wrap)
Bone-in chicken thighs	4, about 600 g	Sun (roast, 2 portions)
White fish fillet (cod, haddock or pollock), skinless	1 fillet, about 150 g	Fri (baked with tomatoes and olives)

Fruit and vegetables

ITEM	BUY	USED IN
Broccoli	1 head (about 300 g)	Mon half (tray bake), Tue half (parcel)
Carrots	6	Mon 1, Tue 1, Thu 1, Sat 2, Sun 1
Red pepper	1	Wed half (shakshuka), Thu half (noodle pot)
Onions	2	Wed half (shakshuka), Sat 1 (stew)
Garlic	1 large head (10 cloves needed), or 2 small	Mon 1, Tue 1, Wed 2, Thu 2, Fri 1, Sat 2, Sun 1
Potatoes	1 bag, about 1 kg (400 g needed)	Sat 150 g (soup), Sun 250 g (roast)
Large baking potato	1, about 250 g	Sun (jacket potato). Can come from the bag
Leek	1 medium	Sat (soup)
Cherry tomatoes	1 punnet, about 250 g (230 g needed)	Fri 80 g (salad), 150 g (fish)
Tomato	1 small	Wed (toastie)
Baby spinach	1 bag, 200 g (170 g needed)	Mon 20 g, Tue 20 g, Wed 20 g, Thu 50 g, Fri 40 g, Sat 20 g
Mushrooms (button or chestnut)	1 small punnet, 60 g or more	Sat (omelette)
Cucumber	1 small	Mon 50 g (wrap)
Avocado	1 small, ripe	Tue (wrap). Buy it a few days ahead if it is hard
Ripe banana	1	Thu (smoothie)
Eating apple	1	Sun (pancakes)
Lemon	1	Tue (parcel)
Green beans	100 g	Sun (roast chicken)

Dairy and eggs

ITEM	BUY	USED IN
Eggs	1 box of 10	9 needed: Wed 2, Thu 2, Fri 2, Sat 2, Sun 1. One spare
Semi-skimmed milk	1 litre (about 545 ml needed)	Tue 200 ml, Thu 250 ml, Fri 15 ml, Sun 80 ml
Mature Cheddar cheese	1 block, 200 g (80 g needed)	Wed 30 g, Sat 20 g, Sun 30 g. About 120 g spare needed
Plain Greek-style yoghurt	1 pot, 250 g (200 g needed)	Mon 150 g, Sun 30 g and 20 g. About 50 g spare
Houmous	1 small tub, 60 g needed	Mon (wrap). Use the rest within the date on the tub

Bread and bakery

ITEM	BUY	USED IN
Wholemeal bread	1 small loaf	10 slices: Wed 6 (toastie, soup, shakshuka), Fri 2, Sat 2
Wholemeal tortilla wraps	1 pack	Mon 1, Tue 1. Freeze the rest

Frozen

ITEM	BUY	USED IN
Mixed berries	1 small bag, at least 140 g	Mon 80 g, Tue 60 g
Sweetcorn	1 small bag, at least 80 g	Thu (fried rice)

Tins, jars and bottles

ITEM	BUY	USED IN
Chopped tomatoes (400 g tin)	2 tins	Wed 1 (half in soup, half in shakshuka), Sat 1 (stew)

ITEM	BUY	USED IN
Cannellini beans (400 g tin)	2 tins	Wed half + Fri half (one tin), Sat half + half (one tin)
Tuna in spring water (about 145 g tin)	1 small tin	Fri (salad)
Pitted black olives	1 small jar or pack, 30 g needed	Fri (fish). Use the rest within the date
Peanut butter, 100% peanuts	1 small jar	Thu 1 tbsp (smoothie)
Wholegrain mustard	1 small jar	Sun 1 tbsp
Reduced-salt soy sauce	1 small bottle	Mon 1 tbsp, Thu 1 tbsp (lunch) and 2 tbsp (dinner)
Honey	1 small jar	Mon 2 tsp (one optional), Thu 1 tsp, Sun 1 tsp

Dry goods and quick-cook

ITEM	BUY	USED IN
Long-grain white rice (basmati)	1 small bag	Mon 60 g
Ready-cooked microwave rice pouch (250 g)	1 pouch	Thu lunch (whole pouch)
Couscous	1 small pack	Tue 60 g, Fri 60 g
Dried egg noodles	1 nest (a pack has several)	Thu (noodle pot)
Porridge oats	1 bag	About 100 g: Mon 30 g, Tue 40 g, Thu 30 g
Wholemeal self-raising flour	1 small bag	Sun 50 g (pancakes)
Reduced-salt vegetable stock cubes	1 small box (3 cubes needed)	Tue 1/2, Wed 1/2, Fri 1/2, Sat 1/2 + 1

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:** 1.5 tsp (Wed, Sat)
- **Ground cumin:** 1/2 tsp (Wed)
- **Dried oregano:** 2 tsp (Tue, Wed, Fri)
- **Dried thyme:** 1 tsp (Sat)
- **Ground cinnamon:** 1/4 tsp (Sun)

Equipment

- Foil, a lot of it (Tue, Fri) and baking paper (Mon)
- A large baking tray (Mon, Sun) and a small ovenproof dish (Fri)
- A flameproof casserole dish with a lid, or a large pan and a lidded baking dish (Sat)
- A frying pan with a lid (Wed) and a wide pan with a lid (Thu)
- A stick blender or blender (Thu smoothie, Sat soup), or a masher and a whisk
- A coarse grater and a sharp knife
- Covered containers for marinating and prepping ahead (Mon, Wed, Thu), and a freezer-safe container with a lid (Sat)

Prep-ahead schedule

Every weekday dinner is prepared a few hours ahead, in about 10 minutes, and then needs only about 5 minutes of work at dinner time. Saturday and Sunday are unhurried.

DAY	PREP AHEAD (ANY TIME THAT DAY)	AT DINNER TIME
Mon	Slice and marinate the beef, cut the broccoli (10 minutes)	Oven on 220 C, roast 10 minutes, boil the rice
Tue	Slice the chicken, assemble and seal the foil parcel (10 minutes)	Cold oven, 200 C for 25 minutes, soak the couscous

DAY	PREP AHEAD (ANY TIME THAT DAY)	AT DINNER TIME
Wed	Make and cool the shakshuka sauce (15 minutes)	Reheat, add the eggs, 6 minutes
Thu	Slice and marinate the beef, cut the pepper and carrot (10 minutes)	Brown, add water and noodles, simmer 5 minutes
Fri	Assemble the fish dish and cover it with foil (10 minutes)	Cold oven, 200 C for 20 minutes, soak the couscous

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
Beef steak (Monday's 150 g)	Mon	Sun evening
Chicken breast fillet	Tue	Mon evening
Beef steak (Thursday's 150 g)	Thu	Wed evening
White fish fillet	Fri	Thu evening
Braising beef	Sat	Fri evening
Chicken thighs	Sun	Sat evening

PREPPING RAW MEAT AND FISH AHEAD

Marinated beef, sliced chicken and the fish dish wait in the fridge on the **bottom shelf**, covered, away from other food. Cook meat the same day (within about 8 hours) and fish within about 6 hours. Never leave prepped raw food on the worktop. Keep any marinade that touched raw meat in the pan and boil it, and never serve it as a sauce unless it has cooked with the meat.

Time-savers

- Buy the beef as ready-sliced stir-fry strips if you can find them. It saves the slicing, though it costs a little more per kilo.
- Chop the vegetables for the next day while you are already at the board. Carrots, peppers and broccoli keep well for a day in a covered container.
- Set a phone timer for every bake, so you can leave the kitchen without worrying.
- Switch the oven on as you walk in only on Monday. On Tuesday and Friday the food goes into a cold oven.
- Keep foil, baking paper, couscous and rice pouches in the cupboard so a busy week never leaves you short.
- Look in the freezer before shopping, because the stew and any frozen chicken or fish may already cover a night.

Using up leftovers

- Beef and bean stew (Saturday): one portion is in the freezer for your next busy week. Use within 3 months, defrost overnight in the fridge and reheat until steaming hot.
- Two cold roast chicken thighs (Sunday): eat within 2 days pulled off the bone into a wrap or salad.
- Cheddar (about 120 g), yoghurt (about 50 g), houmous and olives: use by the dates on the packs. Grated cheese freezes well.
- One spare egg, the rest of the spinach, and a few cherry tomatoes: add them to an omelette or a soup.
- Spare couscous, noodles, wraps and bread: keep the dry goods in the cupboard, and freeze the wraps and bread in a bag.

THAT COMPLETES MEAL PLAN 4

Five weekday dinners that you prepare ahead and then leave to cook, a stew in the freezer for your next busy week, three beef dinners (Monday, Thursday, Saturday), a fish dinner on Friday, a vegetarian dinner on Wednesday and a shopping list to match. Swap any recipe that does not suit you, and note what you would change before the next plan.