



MEAL PLAN

Meal Plan 5

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

8 Chapters

Philip Osztromok

Generated with Claude

Contents

Chapter 1	Monday	2
Chapter 2	Tuesday	8
Chapter 3	Wednesday	15
Chapter 4	Thursday	22
Chapter 5	Friday	29
Chapter 6	Saturday	35
Chapter 7	Sunday	42
Chapter 8	Weekly Shopping	50

Meal Plan 5: Quick Around the World

Day 1 · Monday · Thailand

Today at a glance. Thailand, adapted for beginners and a UK supermarket. Breakfast takes 3 minutes and lunch takes 10. Dinner is the main event: **10 minutes of prep any time during the day**, then about **5 minutes of work** at dinner time and 12 minutes of simmering. A single **lime** covers both lunch and dinner. Every quantity below is for **one portion**, in metric with UK names.

Breakfast

BREAKFAST

Pineapple, Yoghurt and Oat Bowl

3 minutes

No cooking

3 ingredients

Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

150 g plain Greek-style yoghurt

100 g frozen pineapple chunks

30 g porridge oats

METHOD

1. Take the pineapple out of the freezer and put it in a bowl. Microwave it for 30 seconds, or leave it for 10 minutes, until it is soft enough to cut but still cold. Chop it into smaller pieces.
2. Spoon the yoghurt into a bowl and stir in the oats.
3. Top with the pineapple and the juice from the bowl. Eat straight away, or stir it all together the night before for softer oats.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY START

Pineapple gives sweetness and vitamin C with no added sugar, and the Greek yoghurt gives protein. The oats add fibre, so it keeps you full until lunch.

SWAPS

Frozen mango or mixed berries in place of the pineapple. A spoonful of desiccated coconut or a few peanuts on top. A squeeze of lime if the pineapple is not sweet.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

Lunch

LUNCH · VEGETARIAN

Peanut Noodle Salad with Carrot and Cucumber

10 minutes

1 pan, 4 minutes of boiling

Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

1 nest dried egg noodles (about 60 g)

1 carrot

50 g cucumber (about 5 cm)

1 tbsp peanut butter (about 15 g)

1 tbsp reduced-salt soy sauce

1 tsp honey

½ lime, juiced (the other half is for dinner)

1 tbsp warm water

METHOD

1. Cook the noodles in boiling water for 4 minutes, or following the packet. Drain, run cold water over them for 30 seconds to cool them, and shake off the water.
2. While they cook, make the dressing: in a small bowl, whisk the peanut butter, soy sauce, honey, lime juice and warm water with a fork until smooth. Add a little more water if it is too thick to pour.
3. Peel the carrot and grate it on the coarse side of a grater. Cut the cucumber into thin sticks.
4. Toss the noodles with the dressing, carrot and cucumber until everything is coated, and eat at once or pack it into a container to take with you.

SAVE THE OTHER HALF OF THE LIME

Wrap the other half of the lime, cut side down, in a small container in the fridge. Tonight's curry uses it.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY LUNCH

Peanut butter gives protein and unsaturated fat, and the raw carrot and cucumber add crunch and vitamins. The dressing uses soy sauce, honey and lime instead of a sugary

bottled sauce.

SWAPS

A pinch of chilli flakes for heat. A boiled egg, a handful of edamame beans or some leftover chicken for extra protein. Thin slices of red pepper or spring onion in place of the cucumber.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

Dinner

Thai-Style Beef and Green Bean Curry with Rice

Prep ahead: 10 minutes

At dinner: 5 minutes of work

Simmers: 12 minutes

1 pan plus a rice pan

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

150 g	lean beef steak (sirloin or rump)
100 g	green beans
1	small onion
1 clove	garlic
1 tbsp	Thai red curry paste (about 15 g)
200 ml	reduced-fat coconut milk (a small carton)
100 ml	water
½	lime, juiced (the other half from lunch)
60 g	long-grain white rice (basmati cooks fastest)
1 tsp	olive oil

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. Put it in a bowl, stir in half the curry paste, cover the bowl and put it on the **bottom shelf** of the fridge.
2. Peel the onion and slice it thinly. Peel and finely chop the garlic. Trim the tops off the green beans and cut them in half. Put the onion, garlic and beans in a covered container in the fridge. Wash your hands, the board and the knife.
3. Stand a wide saucepan with a lid on the hob, ready, with the rest of the curry paste and the coconut milk next to it.

AT DINNER TIME (ABOUT 5 MINUTES OF WORK)

1. Put the rice in a pan of boiling water and cook it for 10 to 11 minutes, or following the packet. Drain it.
2. Heat the oil in the wide pan over a medium-high heat. Cook the onion and garlic for 2 minutes. Add the rest of the curry paste and stir for 30 seconds.

3. Add the beef with its paste and stir for 2 minutes, until it is brown all over. Pour in the coconut milk and water, add the green beans, and bring to a gentle simmer.
4. Put the lid on and simmer for 8 minutes, stirring once, until the beans are tender and the sauce has thickened slightly. Check that the beef is cooked through, with no pink left.
5. Stir in the lime juice, taste, and add a little more if you like it sharper.
6. Spoon the rice into a bowl and pour the curry over the top.

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 paste on the beef goes into the pan and is simmered with the beef, so it is safe to eat. Do not use any paste left in the bowl as a sauce.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY DINNER

Reduced-fat coconut milk gives the creamy sauce with much less saturated fat than the full-fat kind, and thin strips of lean beef go a long way. The curry is more than half vegetables, with just 1 tsp of oil.

SWAPS

Red peppers, mushrooms or baby corn in place of some of the beans. Chicken strips in place of the beef (cook them for 10 minutes and check they are white all the way through). Curry pastes vary in heat, so start with 1 tbsp and add more next time if you want it hotter.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

COMING UP TOMORROW

Tuesday goes to Greece: yoghurt with honey and walnuts, a Greek salad pitta with feta, and a lemon chicken and orzo pot. Marinate the chicken ahead, and if your chicken is frozen, take it out tonight to defrost in the fridge.

Meal Plan 5: Quick Around the World

Day 2 · Tuesday · Greece

Today at a glance. Greece, adapted for beginners. Breakfast takes 2 minutes and lunch takes 8, both with no cooking. Dinner is a one-pot chicken and orzo dish: **10 minutes of prep any time during the day**, then about **5 minutes of work** at dinner time and 15 minutes of simmering. Every quantity below is for **one portion**, in metric with UK names.

Breakfast

BREAKFAST

Greek Yoghurt with Honey and Walnuts

2 minutes

No cooking

3 ingredients

Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

200 g plain Greek-style yoghurt

1 tsp honey

15 g walnut pieces

¼ tsp ground cinnamon (optional)

METHOD

1. Spoon the yoghurt into a bowl.
2. Drizzle the honey over the top and scatter on the walnuts.
3. Dust with the cinnamon if you like. Eat straight away.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY START

Thick Greek yoghurt has about twice the protein of ordinary yoghurt, and walnuts give healthy fats. Only a teaspoon of honey is needed, because you have the nuts for texture.

SWAPS

A handful of berries, a sliced banana or an apple, or a spoonful of oats stirred in to make it more filling. Chopped almonds in place of the walnuts.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

Lunch

LUNCH · VEGETARIAN

Greek Salad Pitta with Feta

8 minutes

Toaster

Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

1 wholemeal pitta bread

40 g feta cheese

1 medium tomato

50 g cucumber (about 5 cm)

½ tsp dried oregano

1 tsp olive oil

Black pepper

METHOD

1. Chop the tomato and the cucumber into small pieces, about 1 cm. Crumble the feta into the bowl with them.
2. Add the oil, oregano and some black pepper, and toss. The feta is salty, so you will not need extra salt.
3. Warm the pitta in the toaster for 30 to 60 seconds until it puffs, then cut along one long edge to open a pocket.
4. Spoon the salad into the pitta. Pack it separately and fill it just before eating if you are taking it with you, so the bread does not go soggy.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY LUNCH

This is the classic Greek salad in a wholemeal pitta. Feta is strongly flavoured, so a small amount is enough, and the tomato and cucumber make the lunch light and refreshing.

SWAPS

A few black olives or some thin slices of red onion. A handful of baby spinach. A spoonful of houmous inside the pitta, or a boiled egg for extra protein.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

The image shows a dark blue background. A thin red horizontal line is positioned near the top edge. A thin white vertical line is positioned on the left side, extending from the top to the bottom. This layout suggests a header and a sidebar area for a document or application.

Greek Lemon Chicken and Orzo Pot

Prep ahead: 10 minutes

At dinner: 5 minutes of work

Simmer: 15 minutes

1 pan

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

150 g skinless chicken breast fillet

60 g dried orzo

100 g cherry tomatoes

1 small onion

1 clove garlic

1 lemon

½ tsp dried oregano

1 tsp olive oil

½ reduced-salt vegetable stock cube

300 ml boiling water

30 g baby spinach

20 g feta cheese, to serve

Black pepper

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

1. Cut the chicken into 2 cm cubes. Peel and finely chop the garlic. Grate the zest of the lemon into a bowl, squeeze in the juice of half of it, and stir in the garlic, oregano and some pepper. Add the chicken, turn it to coat, cover and put it on the **bottom shelf** of the fridge. Wrap the other half of the lemon for later.
2. Peel the onion and chop it small. Halve the cherry tomatoes. Put them in a covered container in the fridge. Wash your hands, the board and the knife.
3. Stand a wide saucepan or deep frying pan with a lid on the hob, ready, with the orzo, the stock cube and the spinach next to it.

AT DINNER TIME (ABOUT 5 MINUTES OF WORK)

1. Heat the oil in the pan over a medium-high heat. Cook the onion for 2 minutes. Add the chicken with its marinade and cook for 3 to 4 minutes, turning, until it is pale gold on the outside.
2. Stir in the orzo and the tomatoes. Crumble in the stock cube and pour over the boiling water. Bring to a simmer.
3. Put the lid on, turn the heat down to a steady simmer and leave it for 10 to 12 minutes, stirring once or twice so that the orzo does not stick, until the orzo is tender and most of the liquid has been absorbed. Add a splash of water if it gets dry.
4. Stir in the spinach for 1 minute until it wilts. Cut open the largest piece of chicken to check that it is white all the way through with no pink, and that the juices run clear.
5. Squeeze in some juice from the other half of the lemon, to taste. Spoon it into a bowl and crumble the feta over the top.

KEEPING PREPPED RAW CHICKEN SAFE

Keep the marinating chicken 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 chicken and is simmered with it, so it is safe to eat.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY DINNER

Chicken breast gives lean protein, and orzo is a small pasta that cooks in the same pot as everything else, so there is no draining. Lemon, garlic and oregano bring a lot of flavour for just 1 tsp of oil.

SWAPS

Chicken thigh in place of the breast, for a juicier pot. A few olives or a handful of peas stirred in at the end. Wholewheat pasta shapes in place of the orzo if you need to, though they need longer. A spoonful of plain yoghurt on top in place of the feta.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

COMING UP TOMORROW

Wednesday goes to Morocco: date and almond porridge, a couscous and chickpea salad, and a vegetarian sweet potato and lentil stew. Half a tin of chickpeas is used at lunch, and the other half goes into Friday's lunch, so keep it.

Meal Plan 5: Quick Around the World

Day 3 · Wednesday · Morocco

Today at a glance. Morocco, adapted for beginners, and a vegetarian day. Breakfast takes 6 minutes and lunch takes 10. Dinner is the vegetarian one: **10 minutes of prep any time during the day**, then about **5 minutes of work** at dinner time and 15 minutes of simmering. Two half tins are kept for Friday: **half a tin of chickpeas** (from lunch) and **half a tin of chopped tomatoes** (from dinner). Every quantity below is for **one portion**, in metric with UK names.

Breakfast

BREAKFAST

Date and Almond Porridge

6 minutes

1 pan or microwave

4 ingredients

Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

40 g porridge oats

200 ml semi-skimmed milk

2 soft dates (such as Medjool), stoned

10 g flaked or chopped almonds

¼ tsp ground cinnamon

METHOD

1. Chop the dates into small pieces, removing the stones if they have any.
2. Put the oats, milk, cinnamon and half the dates in a pan over a medium heat and stir.
3. Bring to a gentle bubble and cook for 4 to 5 minutes, stirring often, until thick and creamy. The dates melt in and sweeten it. In a microwave, heat everything in a large bowl for 2 minutes, stir, and heat for 1 more minute.
4. Spoon it into a bowl and top with the remaining dates and the almonds.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY START

Dates are very sweet, so there is no need for sugar, and they add fibre and potassium. The oats keep you full, and the almonds give a little protein and healthy fat.

SWAPS

Dried apricots or figs in place of the dates. Walnuts or pumpkin seeds in place of the almonds. A pinch of ground cardamom if you have some.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

Lunch

LUNCH · VEGETARIAN

Couscous Salad with Chickpeas, Apricots and Mint

10 minutes

No cooking, just soaking

Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

60 g	couscous
80 ml	boiling water
120 g	chickpeas from a tin, drained and rinsed (half a tin; Friday uses the rest)
3	dried apricots (about 30 g)
50 g	cucumber (about 5 cm)
½	lemon, juiced
2 tsp	olive oil
½ tsp	dried mint
½ tsp	ground cumin
Salt and black pepper	

METHOD

1. Put the couscous in a heatproof bowl with a pinch of salt. Pour over the boiling water, cover with a plate and leave for 5 minutes. Fluff it with a fork and leave it to cool a little.
2. Meanwhile, chop the apricots into small pieces and the cucumber into small cubes, about 1 cm.
3. Mix the lemon juice, oil, mint, cumin and some pepper in a cup.
4. Add the chickpeas, apricots and cucumber to the couscous, pour over the dressing and toss well. Taste and add a pinch of salt if you need it.

KEEP THE OTHER HALF TIN

Put the rest of the chickpeas in a covered container in the fridge. Friday's lunch uses them. Never leave them in the open tin, because the metal can taint the food.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY LUNCH

Chickpeas give protein and fibre, and the dried apricots add sweetness and a little iron. The salad needs no cooking, and it tastes even better after an hour, so you can make it in the morning.

SWAPS

Raisins or chopped dates in place of the apricots. A handful of baby spinach. A spoonful of plain yoghurt on top, or some crumbled feta. Use fresh mint if you have it.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

Dinner

Moroccan-Style Sweet Potato and Lentil Stew with Couscous

Prep ahead: 10 minutes

At dinner: 5 minutes of work

Simmers: 15 minutes

1 pan

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

200 g sweet potato

50 g dried red split lentils

200 g chopped tomatoes (half a 400 g tin; Friday uses the other half)

1 small onion

1 clove garlic

1 tsp ground cumin

½ tsp ground cinnamon

½ tsp smoked paprika

½ reduced-salt vegetable stock cube

250 ml boiling water

1 tsp olive oil

½ lemon, juiced

60 g couscous

80 ml boiling water, for the couscous

Salt and black pepper

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

1. Peel the sweet potato and cut it 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 minutes, until they are just starting to soften. Drain and let them cool.
2. Peel the onion and chop it small. Peel and chop the garlic. Rinse the lentils in a sieve under cold water until the water runs clearer.
3. Put the onion, garlic and sweet potato in a covered container in the fridge, and the lentils in a cup or small bowl. Open the tin of tomatoes, spoon half (200 g) into a small

bowl for tonight, and put the other half in a covered container in the fridge for Friday.

AT DINNER TIME (ABOUT 5 MINUTES OF WORK)

1. Heat the oil in a saucepan with a lid over a medium heat. Cook the onion for 3 minutes until soft. Add the garlic, cumin, cinnamon and paprika and stir for 30 seconds.
2. Add the sweet potato, the lentils and the tomatoes. Crumble in the stock cube, pour over the 250 ml of boiling water and add a pinch of salt and some pepper. Bring to a simmer.
3. Put the lid on, turn the heat down to a steady simmer, and leave it for 12 to 15 minutes, stirring once, until the lentils have broken down and the sweet potato is soft. Add a splash of water if it gets dry.
4. About 8 minutes before the end, put the couscous in a heatproof bowl with a pinch of salt. Pour over the 80 ml of boiling water, cover with a plate and leave for 5 minutes. Fluff it with a fork.
5. Stir the lemon juice into the stew, taste, and add more salt or pepper if you need it. Spoon the couscous into a bowl and pour the stew over the top.

KEEPING THE PREPPED VEGETABLES SAFE

The partly cooked sweet potato should be cooled quickly and kept covered in the fridge until dinner time. Do not leave it out on the worktop for hours. Keep the other half tin of tomatoes in a covered container (not in the open tin) and use it by Friday.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY DINNER

Red lentils give protein and fibre, and sweet potato adds vitamin A and natural sweetness. Warm spices give the stew the flavour of a Moroccan tagine for just 1 tsp of oil, and it is completely vegetarian.

SWAPS

A handful of baby spinach stirred in at the end. Butternut squash or carrots in place of the sweet potato. A pinch of chilli flakes. A spoonful of plain yoghurt on top, or a few chopped apricots stirred in.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

COMING UP TOMORROW

Thursday goes to Japan: a folded egg omelette with toast, a cold noodle salad with edamame, and a gyudon-style beef and onion rice bowl. Keep the two half tins in the fridge for Friday.

Meal Plan 5: Quick Around the World

Day 4 · Thursday · Japan

Today at a glance. Japan, adapted for beginners. Breakfast takes 10 minutes and lunch takes 8. 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 8 minutes of simmering. A bunch of **spring onions** covers breakfast and dinner. Every quantity below is for **one portion**, in metric with UK names.

Breakfast

BREAKFAST

Folded Egg Omelette with Toast

10 minutes

1 small pan

Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

2	eggs
1	spring onion
1 tsp	reduced-salt soy sauce
½ tsp	honey
1 tsp	olive oil
2 slices	wholemeal bread

METHOD

1. Trim the spring onion and slice it thinly. Beat the eggs in a bowl with the soy sauce, honey and most of the spring onion until no streaks of white remain.
2. Put the bread in the toaster.
3. Heat half the oil in a small non-stick frying pan over a medium-low heat. Pour in about half of the egg to make a thin layer. When it is almost set but still slightly wet on top, roll or fold it over from one side to the other with a spatula.
4. Push the folded egg to one side, add the rest of the oil to the pan and pour in the remaining egg, lifting the folded part so that the new egg runs underneath. When it is nearly set, roll the first fold over it to make a thicker roll.
5. Slide the omelette onto a plate, slice it into pieces, and scatter over the remaining spring onion. Serve with the toast.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY START

It is a simple egg breakfast with soy sauce and a little honey for flavour, so it needs no butter or sugar. Two eggs give protein, and the wholemeal toast adds fibre.

SWAPS

Skip the folding and make a simple flat omelette if it does not go to plan, because it tastes the same. A pinch of black pepper, or a few sesame seeds on top.

Shopping list for this recipe

Lunch

LUNCH · VEGETARIAN

Cold Noodle Salad with Edamame and Sesame

8 minutes

1 pan, 4 minutes of boiling

Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

1 nest dried egg noodles (about 60 g)

60 g frozen shelled edamame beans

50 g cucumber (about 5 cm)

1 tbsp reduced-salt soy sauce

1 tsp honey

1 tsp lemon juice

1 tsp sesame seeds

1 tsp olive oil

METHOD

1. Cook the noodles in boiling water for 4 minutes, or following the packet. Add the edamame to the pan for the last 2 minutes, then drain both. Run cold water over them for 30 seconds to cool them, and shake off the water.
2. Toast the sesame seeds in a dry frying pan over a medium heat for 30 to 60 seconds, shaking, until golden. Tip them onto a plate straight away, because they burn quickly.
3. Cut the cucumber into thin sticks. Whisk the soy sauce, honey, lemon juice and oil in a small bowl.
4. Toss the noodles, edamame and cucumber with the dressing, scatter over the sesame seeds, and eat at once or pack it to take with you.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY LUNCH

Edamame are young soya beans, which are one of the few plant foods with complete protein, and they add fibre too. The dressing is light, with soy sauce, honey and lemon.

SWAPS

A grated carrot or a handful of baby spinach. A boiled egg on top. A pinch of chilli flakes. Use the sesame seeds from the jar without toasting if you are in a hurry.

Shopping list for this recipe

Dinner

Gyudon-Style Beef and Onion Rice Bowl

Prep ahead: 10 minutes

At dinner: 5 minutes of work

Simmers: 8 minutes

1 pan plus a rice pan

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

150 g lean beef steak (sirloin or rump)

1 large onion

1 clove garlic

1½ tbsp reduced-salt soy sauce

1 tsp honey

150 ml water

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

1 spring onion

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 very thin strips, about 2 to 3 mm thick. Put them in a covered container on the **bottom shelf** of the fridge.
2. Peel the onion and slice it into thin half-moons. Peel and finely chop the garlic. Put the onion and garlic in the saucepan you will use, pour in the soy sauce, honey and water, and stir. Cover the pan with a lid or plate and put it in the fridge. Wash your hands, the board and the knife.
3. Trim and slice the spring onion and put it in a small covered container for the topping.

AT DINNER TIME (ABOUT 5 MINUTES OF WORK)

1. Put the rice in a pan of boiling water and cook it for 10 to 11 minutes, or following the packet. Drain it.
2. Put the pan with the onion and sauce on a medium heat, bring it to a simmer and cook for 5 minutes, stirring once, until the onion is soft.
3. Add the beef, pushing it down into the sauce. Simmer for 2 to 3 minutes, stirring, until the beef is no longer pink anywhere and the sauce has reduced a little. Do not overcook it, or the thin slices go tough.

4. Spoon the rice into a bowl and pour the beef, onion and sauce over the top. Scatter with the spring onion and some black pepper.

KEEPING PREPPED RAW BEEF SAFE

Keep the sliced 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 beef is simmered in the sauce until there is no pink left, which also cooks the sauce. Keep the onion and sauce pan covered in the fridge too, and do not let the beef touch it until the pan is on the heat.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY DINNER

Gyudon is a classic quick Japanese dish. It uses thin slices of lean steak and a lot of onion in a light sauce, so a modest 150 g of beef feeds one person with little fat. The sauce is soy sauce, honey and water, and there is no added oil.

SWAPS

A soft-boiled or fried egg on top. A spoonful of pickled ginger or some grated fresh ginger in the sauce. Sliced mushrooms or a handful of spinach added with the beef. Chicken thigh strips in place of beef, cooked for 5 minutes until white all the way through.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

COMING UP TOMORROW

Friday goes to Portugal: tomato and olive oil toast with an egg, a chickpea and tomato salad on toast (using the half tin of chickpeas kept from Wednesday), and a piri-piri-style baked white fish with potatoes and peas that uses the other half tin of tomatoes. If your fish is frozen, take it out tonight and defrost it in the fridge.

Meal Plan 5: Quick Around the World

Day 5 · Friday · Portugal

Today at a glance. Portugal, adapted for beginners, and the fish day. Breakfast takes 8 minutes and lunch takes 8. Lunch uses **the half tin of chickpeas from Wednesday**, and dinner uses **the half tin of chopped tomatoes from Wednesday**. Dinner is assembled ahead in 10 minutes, then bakes by itself for 25 minutes. Every quantity below is for **one portion**, in metric with UK names.

Breakfast

BREAKFAST

Tomato and Olive Oil Toast with a Boiled Egg

8 minutes

1 small pan and a toaster

Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

2 slices wholemeal bread

1 medium tomato

1 egg

1 tsp olive oil

Salt and black pepper

METHOD

1. Lower the egg into a small pan of boiling water with a spoon and set a timer for 7 minutes for a just-set yolk, or 6 minutes for a runny one.
2. While it cooks, toast the bread and slice the tomato thinly.
3. Lay the tomato slices on the hot toast, drizzle with the olive oil and add a pinch of salt and some pepper.
4. Run the egg under cold water for 10 seconds, peel it, and serve it on the side, or slice it over the tomatoes.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY START

Tomato and olive oil is a simple Mediterranean combination. The egg adds protein, and the tomato gives vitamin C, so the breakfast is light and fresh and needs hardly any cooking.

SWAPS

A pinch of dried oregano or smoked paprika on the tomato. A slice of cheese or a spoonful of cottage cheese on the toast. A little chopped spring onion.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

Lunch

LUNCH · VEGETARIAN

Chickpea and Tomato Salad on Toast

8 minutes

No cooking

Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

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

1 medium tomato

1 spring onion

½ tsp smoked paprika

1 tsp olive oil

1 tsp lemon juice

2 slices wholemeal bread

Salt and black pepper

METHOD

1. Put the chickpeas in a bowl and crush about half of them roughly with a fork, leaving the rest whole.
2. Chop the tomato into small pieces. Trim the spring onion and slice it thinly. Add both to the chickpeas.
3. Stir in the paprika, oil, lemon juice, a pinch of salt and some pepper.
4. Toast the bread and spoon the salad over the top. Eat straight away, or pack the salad separately and spoon it onto the toast just before eating.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY LUNCH

Chickpeas give protein and fibre, and the tomato and spring onion add freshness. The crushed chickpeas hold together like a spread, so the toast stays crisp and the lunch is filling.

SWAPS

A few olives, or a spoonful of plain yoghurt or houmous under the salad. A boiled egg on top. A handful of baby spinach in the salad.

Shopping list for this recipe

Dinner

Piri-Piri-Style Baked White Fish with Potatoes and Peas

Prep ahead: 10 minutes

At dinner: 5 minutes of work

Bakes: 25 minutes

1 dish

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

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

200 g waxy potatoes (new or baby potatoes)

200 g chopped tomatoes (the other half tin from Wednesday)

1 clove garlic

1 tsp smoked paprika

1 tsp piri-piri sauce (or ¼ tsp chilli flakes for a similar heat)

½ lemon, juiced

1 tsp olive oil

100 g frozen peas

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 small bones, pulling out any you find.
2. Scrub the potatoes and slice them into thin coins, about 4 mm thick. Put them in a microwave-safe bowl with a splash of water, cover with a plate and microwave for 4 minutes, until nearly tender. Drain and let them cool a little.
3. Peel and finely chop the garlic. In a small ovenproof dish, mix the tomatoes, garlic, paprika, piri-piri sauce, half the lemon juice, the oil, a pinch of salt and some pepper. Stir in the potatoes and spread them out.
4. Lay the fish on top, season it lightly, and spoon a little of the sauce over it. Squeeze the remaining lemon juice over the fish. 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 25 minutes and leave it alone.

2. About 5 minutes before the end, cook the peas in boiling water for 3 minutes and drain.
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. Serve the fish, potatoes and sauce from the dish, with the peas on the side.

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. Cool the partly cooked potatoes before adding the fish. If the fish 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, and the tomato sauce makes a vegetable base with just 1 tsp of oil. Piri-piri is a Portuguese chilli sauce, so a small amount gives a lot of warmth and flavour.

SWAPS

Leave out the piri-piri for a milder dish, because the smoked paprika still gives flavour. A few olives or capers in the sauce. Sweet potato in place of the white potato. Use green beans or broccoli in place of the peas.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

COMING UP TOMORROW

Saturday goes to France and does not have to be quick: banana crêpes with yoghurt, a lighter French onion soup with toast, and a steak with oven chips, a green salad and a mustard yoghurt sauce. If your steak is frozen, take it out tonight and defrost it in the fridge.

Meal Plan 5: Quick Around the World

Day 6 · Saturday · France

Today at a glance. France, taken at a weekend pace: no prepping ahead and no rushing. Breakfast takes 20 minutes, lunch is a slow-cooked onion soup, and dinner is the third beef dish of the week, a steak with oven chips. Every quantity below is for **one portion**, in metric with UK names.

Breakfast

BREAKFAST

Banana Crêpes with Yoghurt

10 minutes prep

10 minutes cooking

Makes 2 crêpes

Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION, 2 CRÊPES)

40 g plain flour (wholemeal or white)

1 egg

100 ml semi-skimmed milk

1 banana

30 g plain Greek-style yoghurt

1 tsp olive oil

METHOD

1. Put the flour in a bowl, make a well in the middle, and crack in the egg. Pour in half of the milk and whisk, gradually drawing in the flour, until you have a thick, smooth paste. Whisk in the rest of the milk to make a thin batter, like single cream. Leave it to stand for 5 minutes if you have time.
2. Peel the banana and slice it into rounds.
3. Heat a non-stick frying pan, about 20 cm across, over a medium heat and brush it very lightly with some of the oil.
4. Pour in half of the batter and tilt the pan so that it spreads thinly over the base. Cook for 1 to 2 minutes until the underneath is golden and the edges lift, then flip and cook for another 30 to 60 seconds. Slide it onto a plate and repeat with the rest of the batter.
5. Fill each crêpe with banana slices and a spoonful of yoghurt, fold it into quarters, and serve.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY START

A crêpe is a thin pancake, so it needs only a teaspoon of oil and a little flour. The banana sweetens it without sugar, and the egg and yoghurt add protein.

SWAPS

Frozen berries, warmed in the microwave, in place of the banana. A squeeze of lemon and a teaspoon of honey. The first crêpe is often a failure, so do not worry if it tears.

Shopping list for this recipe

Lunch

LUNCH · VEGETARIAN

Lighter French Onion Soup with Cheese Toast

10 minutes prep

40 minutes cooking

1 pan

Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS (1 LARGE BOWL)

2 large onions (about 300 g)

1 clove garlic

1 tsp olive oil

½ tsp dried thyme

1 reduced-salt vegetable stock cube

400 ml boiling water

2 slices wholemeal bread

20 g mature Cheddar cheese

Black pepper

METHOD

1. Peel the onions, cut them in half through the root, and slice them thinly. Peel and chop the garlic.
2. Heat the oil in a large saucepan with a lid over a medium-low heat. Add the onions and a splash of water, cover, and cook for 10 minutes, stirring now and then, until they are soft and floppy.
3. Take the lid off, turn the heat to medium and cook for another 15 minutes, stirring often and adding a splash of water whenever the pan looks dry, until the onions are a deep golden brown. Do not hurry this step, because it gives the soup its flavour.
4. Stir in the garlic and thyme for 30 seconds. Crumble in the stock cube, pour in the boiling water and add pepper. Simmer for 10 minutes.
5. Heat the grill to high. Toast the bread on both sides, sprinkle the grated cheese on top, and grill for 1 to 2 minutes until it bubbles.
6. Ladle the soup into a bowl and serve with the cheese toast on the side, or floating on top.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY LUNCH

A classic French onion soup is made with butter and a lot of cheese. This lighter version browns the onions in a teaspoon of oil and uses a thin layer of strong cheese, so you still get the flavour with much less fat.

SWAPS

A teaspoon of balsamic vinegar or a splash of apple juice in the onions for extra sweetness. A bay leaf in the pan. A little grated Parmesan in place of the Cheddar.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

Dinner

Steak with Oven Chips, Green Salad and Mustard Yoghurt Sauce

15 minutes prep

40 minutes cooking

1 portion

1 tray plus a pan

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

175 g sirloin steak, about 2 cm thick

250 g potatoes, for the chips

2 tsp olive oil

½ tsp smoked paprika

Salt and black pepper

MUSTARD YOGHURT SAUCE AND GREEN SALAD

30 g plain Greek-style yoghurt

1 tsp Dijon mustard (and a little more for the dressing)

30 g baby spinach

50 g cucumber (about 5 cm)

METHOD

1. Take the steak out of the fridge 20 minutes before cooking so it is not stone cold in the middle. Heat the oven to 220°C (200°C fan, gas mark 7).
2. Scrub the potatoes (peel them if you prefer) and cut them into chips about 1 cm thick. Toss them on a large baking tray with 1 tsp of the oil, the paprika and a pinch of salt, and spread them in a single layer.
3. Roast the chips for 35 minutes, turning them once halfway, until they are golden and crisp at the edges.
4. While they roast, mix the yoghurt with the mustard and some pepper in a small bowl. Slice the cucumber and put it with the spinach in a bowl. Dress it just before serving with a drizzle of oil from the 2 tsp, a dab of mustard and a pinch of salt.
5. About 10 minutes before the chips are ready, pat the steak dry with kitchen paper and season both sides with salt and pepper. Heat a frying pan over a high heat until it is very hot and add the remaining oil.

6. Cook the steak for 2 to 3 minutes on each side for medium, a little less for rare and a little more for well done, depending on how you like it. Lift it onto a plate and leave it to rest for 3 minutes.
7. Slice the steak against the grain. Serve with the chips, the salad and a spoonful of the sauce.

ABOUT COOKING STEAK

A whole steak can be eaten rare, because any germs are on the outside and the hot pan kills them. Minced meat, burgers and rolled or pierced joints must always be cooked all the way through. Wash your hands, the board and the knife after handling the raw steak, and use a clean plate for the cooked meat.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY DINNER

Sirloin is a lean cut, and a 175 g steak is a satisfying portion. Chips baked in the oven with 1 tsp of oil have far less fat than fried ones, and the salad and yoghurt sauce add freshness without a creamy sauce.

SWAPS

A rump or flat-iron steak in place of the sirloin. Sweet potato chips. A few grilled tomatoes or mushrooms on the side. Wholegrain mustard in place of Dijon.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

COMING UP TOMORROW

Sunday goes to Lebanon: beans and egg on toast in the style of ful medames, a fattoush-style salad with toasted pitta, and a garlic and lemon chicken tray with rice that makes two portions. The chicken tastes best marinated overnight, so you could prepare it this evening, and if it is frozen, take it out tonight.

Meal Plan 5: Quick Around the World

Day 7 · Sunday · Lebanon

Today at a glance. Lebanon, at a weekend pace. Breakfast and lunch both use a tin of white beans: **half at breakfast and half at lunch**, so nothing is wasted. Dinner is a chicken tray that is best marinated for a few hours or overnight, and it cooks **two portions**, one for tonight and one to keep cold for tomorrow. Every quantity below is for **one portion** unless the recipe says otherwise, in metric with UK names.

Breakfast

BREAKFAST

Warm Beans and Egg on Toast (Ful Medames Style)

12 minutes

1 small pan

Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

120 g cannellini beans from a tin, drained and rinsed (half a tin; lunch uses the rest)

1 egg

1 clove garlic

½ tsp ground cumin

1 tsp olive oil

1 tsp lemon juice

2 slices wholemeal bread

Salt and black pepper

METHOD

1. Put the egg in a small pan of boiling water and cook it for 7 minutes. Run it under cold water and peel it.
2. While it cooks, peel and finely chop the garlic. Heat the oil in a small pan over a medium heat and cook the garlic and cumin for 30 seconds.
3. Add the beans and 3 tbsp of water, and warm for 3 to 4 minutes, until hot all the way through. Mash about half of them with a fork so they turn creamy.
4. Stir in the lemon juice, a pinch of salt and some pepper. Toast the bread.
5. Spoon the beans over the toast and top with the sliced egg.

KEEP THE OTHER HALF TIN

Put the remaining beans in a covered container in the fridge, because lunch uses them. Never leave them in the open tin, because the metal can taint the food.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY START

Beans, egg and wholemeal toast together give protein, fibre and slow-release energy. In the Middle East this kind of dish is a common breakfast, and it keeps you full for hours.

SWAPS

Traditionally it is made with dried fava beans, but cannellini beans or chickpeas work well. A chopped tomato or a pinch of chilli flakes. A spoonful of plain yoghurt on top.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

Lunch

LUNCH · VEGETARIAN

Fattoush-Style Salad with White Beans

10 minutes

Toaster

Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

1	wholemeal pitta bread
120 g	cannellini beans (the other half tin from breakfast)
1	medium tomato
50 g	cucumber (about 5 cm)
30 g	baby spinach
1 tbsp	lemon juice
1 tsp	olive oil
½ tsp	dried mint
Salt and black pepper	

METHOD

1. Toast the pitta for 1 to 2 minutes until it is crisp and golden all over. Break it into bite-size pieces.
2. Chop the tomato and cucumber into small pieces. Roughly chop the spinach.
3. Whisk the lemon juice, oil, mint, a pinch of salt and some pepper in a large bowl.
4. Add the beans, tomato, cucumber and spinach and toss until they are coated. Add the pitta pieces just before serving so they stay crunchy.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY LUNCH

Fattoush is a Lebanese bread salad, and this version swaps the fried bread for toasted pitta, so it has much less fat. The beans add protein and fibre, and the salad is mostly fresh vegetables.

SWAPS

A handful of fresh mint or parsley, if you have some. Crumbled feta or a spoonful of plain yoghurt. Radishes or red onion for extra crunch. Chickpeas in place of the cannellini beans.

Shopping list for this recipe

Dinner

DINNER · CHICKEN

Garlic and Lemon Chicken Tray with Rice and Yoghurt Sauce

15 minutes prep

1 hour or overnight marinating

25 minutes roasting

Makes 2 portions of chicken

INGREDIENTS (2 PORTIONS OF CHICKEN; RICE FOR TONIGHT ONLY)

300 g skinless chicken breast fillets (2 fillets)

1 red onion or onion

1 red pepper

60 g long-grain white rice (tonight's portion only)

100 g plain Greek-style yoghurt, for the marinade

2 cloves garlic

½ lemon, juiced

1 tsp smoked paprika

1 tsp ground cumin

1 tsp olive oil

Salt and black pepper

SAUCE (TONIGHT'S PORTION)

30 g plain Greek-style yoghurt

¼ tsp dried mint

Squeeze of lemon juice, pinch of salt

METHOD

1. Peel and crush the garlic. In a large bowl, mix the 100 g of yoghurt with the garlic, lemon juice, paprika, cumin, oil, a good pinch of salt and some pepper.
2. Cut each chicken fillet into 4 or 5 chunks, about 3 cm. Add them to the bowl, turn them until they are coated, cover, and put the bowl on the **bottom shelf** of the fridge for at least 1 hour, or overnight. Wash your hands, the board and the knife.
3. Heat the oven to 220°C (200°C fan, gas mark 7). Peel the onion and cut it into wedges. Cut the pepper in half, remove the seeds, and cut it into chunky strips.

4. Spread the onion and pepper on a large baking tray lined with foil or baking paper. Lift the chicken out of the marinade, shaking off the excess, and scatter it over the vegetables, leaving gaps. Do not pour the leftover marinade over the tray.
5. Roast for 25 minutes, turning everything once halfway, until the chicken is golden and the vegetables are soft. Cut into the thickest piece to check that it is white all the way through with no pink, and that the juices run clear. If not, give it 5 more minutes.
6. While it roasts, cook the rice in boiling water for 10 to 11 minutes and drain it. Mix the sauce ingredients in a small bowl.
7. Spoon the rice into a bowl, add half of the chicken and vegetables (about 150 g of chicken) and the yoghurt sauce.

MARINADE AND THE SECOND PORTION

The yoghurt marinade has touched raw chicken, so throw away what is left in the bowl, and do not use it as a sauce. That is why the sauce is made fresh in a separate bowl. Put the other half of the chicken and vegetables on a clean plate to cool, then cover it and put it in the fridge within an hour or two. Eat it cold within 2 days, for example in a wrap or a salad. If you reheat it, make sure it is steaming hot all the way through, and only do it once.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY DINNER

The yoghurt marinade tenderises chicken breast so it stays juicy without any extra fat, and the lemon and garlic give plenty of flavour. Half the tray is vegetables, and cooking two portions at once means tomorrow's lunch is already made.

SWAPS

Chicken thighs in place of the breast, which are cheaper and stay moist. Courgette or aubergine on the tray. Couscous in place of the rice, and a wholemeal pitta on the side.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

THAT IS THE WEEK

You have eaten your way round Thailand, Greece, Morocco, Japan, Portugal, France and Lebanon, with five weekday dinners that you prepare ahead and then leave to cook. Chapter 8 is the combined

shopping list for the whole week, with the prep-ahead schedule, the freezing and defrosting schedule and a plan for leftovers.

Meal Plan 5: Quick Around the World

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 Sunday's chicken tray, which makes two portions of chicken. 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 (curry), Thu 150 g (gyudon)
Sirloin steak, about 2 cm thick	1, about 175 g	Sat (steak and chips)
Skinless chicken breast fillets	3 fillets, about 450 g	Tue 1 (orzo pot), Sun 2 (chicken tray, 2 portions)
White fish fillet (cod, haddock or pollock), skinless	1 fillet, about 150 g	Fri (piri-piri baked fish)

Fruit and vegetables

ITEM	BUY	USED IN
Onions	7 (1 bag)	Mon 1, Tue 1, Wed 1, Thu 1 large, Sat 2 large, Sun 1

ITEM	BUY	USED IN
Spring onions	1 bunch (3 needed)	Thu 2 (omelette, gyudon), Fri 1 (chickpea salad)
Garlic	1 head (9 cloves)	Mon 1, Tue 1, Wed 1, Thu 1, Fri 1, Sat 1, Sun 3
Carrot	1	Mon (noodle salad)
Red pepper	1	Sun (chicken tray)
Cucumber	1 large, about 300 g	5 cm (50 g) each on Mon, Tue, Wed, Thu, Sat and Sun
Tomatoes	4 medium	Tue 1 (pitta), Fri 2 (breakfast, lunch), Sun 1 (salad)
Cherry tomatoes	1 small punnet, 100 g	Tue (orzo pot)
Baby spinach	1 bag, at least 90 g	Tue 30 g, Sat 30 g, Sun 30 g
Green beans	100 g	Mon (curry)
Sweet potato	1 small, about 200 g	Wed (stew)
Potatoes (waxy, such as baby or new)	1 bag, about 750 g (450 g needed)	Fri 200 g (fish), Sat 250 g (chips)
Lemons	4	Tue 1, Wed 1, Fri 1/2, Sun 1/2, and juice by the teaspoon on Thu, Fri and Sun
Lime	1	Mon (half in lunch, half in dinner)
Banana	1	Sat (crepes)
Frozen pineapple chunks	1 small bag, 100 g or more	Mon (breakfast)

Dairy and eggs

ITEM	BUY	USED IN
Eggs	1 box of 6	5 needed: Thu 2, Fri 1, Sat 1, Sun 1
Plain Greek-style yoghurt	1 kg tub, or two 500 g pots (540 g needed)	Mon 150 g, Tue 200 g, Sat 60 g, Sun 130 g

ITEM	BUY	USED IN
Semi-skimmed milk	1 pint (568 ml)	Wed 200 ml, Sat 100 ml
Feta cheese	1 small block, about 100 g	Tue 40 g (pitta), 20 g (orzo pot). About 40 g spare
Mature Cheddar cheese	1 small block	Sat 20 g (onion soup toast)

Bread and bakery

ITEM	BUY	USED IN
Wholemeal bread	1 small loaf	10 slices: Thu 2, Fri 4, Sat 2, Sun 2
Wholemeal pitta bread	1 pack	Tue 1, Sun 1. Freeze the rest

Frozen

ITEM	BUY	USED IN
Shelled edamame beans	1 small bag, 60 g or more	Thu (noodle salad)
Peas	1 small bag, 100 g or more	Fri (fish)

Tins, jars and bottles

ITEM	BUY	USED IN
Chopped tomatoes (400 g tin)	1 tin	Wed half (stew) and Fri half (fish)
Chickpeas (400 g tin)	1 tin	Wed 120 g (salad), Fri 120 g (toast)
Cannellini beans (400 g tin)	1 tin	Sun 120 g (breakfast) and 120 g (lunch)
Reduced-fat coconut milk	1 small carton, 200 ml	Mon (curry)
Thai red curry paste	1 small jar	Mon 1 tbsp

ITEM	BUY	USED IN
Piri-piri (peri-peri) sauce	1 small bottle	Fri 1 tsp (or use chilli flakes)
Dijon mustard	1 small jar	Sat 1 tsp and a dab
Peanut butter, 100% peanuts	1 small jar	Mon 1 tbsp
Reduced-salt soy sauce	1 small bottle	Mon 1 tbsp, Thu about 3 tbsp in all
Honey	1 small jar	Mon 1 tsp, Tue 1 tsp, Thu 2 1/2 tsp
Sesame seeds	1 small jar	Thu 1 tsp

Dry goods and quick-cook

ITEM	BUY	USED IN
Long-grain white rice (basmati)	1 small bag	180 g: Mon, Thu and Sun, 60 g each
Couscous	1 small pack	Wed 120 g (60 g salad, 60 g stew)
Dried orzo	1 small pack	Tue 60 g
Dried egg noodles	2 nests (a pack has several)	Mon 1, Thu 1
Porridge oats	1 bag	About 70 g: Mon 30 g, Wed 40 g
Plain flour (wholemeal or white)	1 small bag	Sat 40 g (crepes)
Red split lentils	1 small bag	Wed 50 g
Dates (soft, such as Medjool)	1 small pack	Wed 2
Dried apricots	1 small pack	Wed 3
Flaked or chopped almonds	1 small bag	Wed 10 g
Walnut pieces	1 small bag	Tue 15 g
Reduced-salt vegetable stock cubes	1 small box (2 cubes needed)	Tue 1/2, Wed 1/2, Sat 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:** 3.5 tsp (Wed, Fri, Sat, Sun)
- **Ground cumin:** 3 tsp (Wed, Sun)
- **Dried oregano:** 1 tsp (Tue)
- **Dried thyme:** 1/2 tsp (Sat)
- **Dried mint:** 1 1/4 tsp (Wed, Sun). May be new
- **Ground cinnamon:** 1 tsp (Tue, Wed)

Equipment

- Foil (Fri, Sun) and baking paper (Sat, Sun)
- A large baking tray (Sat, Sun) and a small ovenproof dish (Fri)
- A wide saucepan with a lid (Mon, Tue, Thu) and a small frying pan (Thu, Sat)
- A microwave-safe bowl and a plate (Wed, Fri)
- A coarse grater and a sharp knife
- Covered containers for marinating and prepping ahead (Mon, Tue, Thu, Sun)

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 in curry paste, cut the onion, garlic and beans (10 minutes)	Rice on, brown the beef, add coconut milk and beans, simmer 8 minutes
Tue	Marinate the chicken cubes, chop the onion and tomatoes (10 minutes)	Brown, add orzo and stock, simmer 10 to 12 minutes

DAY	PREP AHEAD (ANY TIME THAT DAY)	AT DINNER TIME
Wed	Soften the sweet potato, chop the onion and garlic, rinse the lentils (10 minutes)	Soften onion, add everything, simmer 12 to 15 minutes, soak the couscous
Thu	Slice the beef, put the onion and sauce in the pan (10 minutes)	Rice on, simmer onion 5 minutes, add beef 2 to 3 minutes
Fri	Microwave the potatoes, assemble the fish dish and cover it with foil (10 minutes)	Cold oven, 200 C for 25 minutes, boil the peas

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
Sirloin steak	Sat	Fri evening
Chicken breast fillets (2)	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. Onions, peppers and cucumber keep well for a day in a covered container.
- Set a phone timer for every bake and simmer, so you can leave the kitchen without worrying.
- Keep foil, baking paper, couscous and rice in the cupboard so a busy week never leaves you short.
- Check the cupboard section first. Spices such as cumin, paprika and mint are used again from week to week.
- A few new sauces (curry paste, piri-iri, mustard) keep for weeks in the fridge, so they carry into other plans.

Using up leftovers

- Cold roast chicken and vegetables (Sunday): eat within 2 days in a wrap or salad.
- Spare yoghurt (about 460 g if you buy a 1 kg tub), feta (about 40 g), Cheddar and the opened jars of curry paste, piri-iri sauce and mustard: keep in the fridge and use by the dates on the packs.
- One egg (if you bought a box of 6), the dates, apricots, almonds and walnuts: use them in porridge or yoghurt.
- Spare pitta, noodles and couscous: keep dry goods in the cupboard, and freeze the pitta in a bag.

THAT COMPLETES MEAL PLAN 5

Seven cuisines, five weekday dinners that you prepare ahead and then leave to cook, 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.