



MEAL PLAN

Meal Plan 6

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

8 Chapters

Philip Osztramok

Generated with Claude

Contents

Chapter 1	Monday	2
Chapter 2	Tuesday	10
Chapter 3	Wednesday	18
Chapter 4	Thursday	26
Chapter 5	Friday	32
Chapter 6	Saturday	40
Chapter 7	Sunday	48
Chapter 8	Weekly Shopping	56

Meal Plan 6: Quick and Cheap

Day 1 · Monday · Prep ahead, then leave it

Today at a glance. Cheap, quick and nothing wasted. Breakfast is made **the night before** in 5 minutes, and lunch takes 10. Dinner is a one-pot rice dish that stretches just 125 g of beef: **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

Apple and Raisin Overnight Oats

5 minutes the night before

No cooking

4 ingredients

Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

40 g porridge oats

100 ml semi-skimmed milk

50 g plain Greek-style yoghurt

1 eating apple

15 g raisins

¼ tsp ground cinnamon

METHOD

1. **The evening before:** wash the apple and grate half of it, skin and all, avoiding the core. Cut the other half into small cubes and keep them in the fridge in a small covered container.
2. In a jar or a bowl with a lid, stir together the oats, milk, yoghurt, raisins, cinnamon and grated apple until no dry oat is left.
3. Cover and put it in the fridge for at least 6 hours, or overnight. The oats soak up the liquid and soften without any cooking.
4. **In the morning:** stir, add a splash of milk if it is too thick, and top with the apple cubes. Eat it cold, or warm it in the microwave for 1 minute.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY START

Soaked oats are gentle on the stomach and full of fibre, and the grated apple and raisins sweeten them, so no sugar is needed. The yoghurt adds protein.

SWAPS

A pear or banana in place of the apple. Use all milk if you have no yoghurt. A teaspoon of peanut butter stirred in for extra protein.

SAVE MONEY

Plain porridge oats from the supermarket's own range cost a few pence a portion. Raisins are cheaper than most other dried fruit, and a small bag lasts many breakfasts.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

Lunch

Egg, Tomato and Spinach Wrap

10 minutes

1 small pan

Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

1 wholemeal tortilla wrap

2 eggs

1 small tomato

15 g baby spinach

20 g plain Greek-style yoghurt

Salt and black pepper

METHOD

1. Lower the eggs into a small pan of boiling water and cook them for 9 minutes, so they are hard-boiled. You can do this in the morning and keep the cooled, unpeeled eggs in the fridge.
2. Run the eggs under cold water for 1 minute, then peel them and chop them roughly into a bowl.
3. Stir in the yoghurt, a pinch of salt and plenty of pepper, and mash it all together roughly with a fork.
4. Chop the tomato. Lay the wrap flat, spoon the egg along the middle, and top with the tomato and spinach.
5. 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

Eggs are one of the cheapest sources of protein, and swapping mayonnaise for yoghurt keeps the fat low. The tomato and spinach add vitamins and a fresh crunch.

SWAPS

A little mustard or some chopped cress or spring onion in the egg mix. Grated carrot or sliced cucumber in the wrap. Serve the egg mixture on toast if you have no wrap.

SAVE MONEY

Buy eggs in a box of 10 or 12, because that costs less per egg than a box of 6. The week uses most of a box, so none goes to waste.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

Dinner

One-Pot Beef and Vegetable Rice

Prep ahead: 10 minutes

At dinner: 5 minutes of work

Simmers: 15 minutes

1 pan

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

125 g lean beef mince (5% fat)

60 g long-grain white rice

1 small onion

1 carrot

1 clove garlic

60 g frozen peas

1 tsp smoked paprika

½ tsp ground cumin

½ reduced-salt vegetable stock cube

350 ml boiling water

1 tsp olive oil

Salt and black pepper

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

1. Peel the onion and chop it small. Peel the carrot and grate it on the coarse side of a grater. Peel and finely chop the garlic. Put them together in a covered container in the fridge.
2. Keep the mince in its pack, or tip it into a covered container, on the **bottom shelf** of the fridge, away from other food. If it was frozen, make sure it has fully defrosted.
3. Stand a wide saucepan or deep frying pan with a lid on the hob, ready, with the rice, the spices, the stock cube and the peas next to it.

AT DINNER TIME (ABOUT 5 MINUTES OF WORK)

1. Heat the oil in the pan over a medium-high heat. Add the mince and cook for 4 minutes, breaking it up with a spoon, until it is brown all over with no pink left.

2. Add the onion, carrot and garlic and cook for 3 minutes, stirring. Stir in the paprika and cumin for 30 seconds.
3. Add the rice and stir for 1 minute. Crumble in the stock cube, pour over the boiling water, and add a pinch of salt and some pepper.
4. Bring to the boil, then turn the heat right down, cover, and leave it for 12 minutes. Do not lift the lid.
5. Scatter the peas over the top, put the lid back on, and cook for 3 more minutes, until the rice is tender and has soaked up the liquid. Add a splash of water if it looks dry before the rice is cooked.
6. Fluff it with a fork and serve from the pan.

RICE AND MINCE SAFETY

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

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY DINNER

Only 125 g of lean mince is used, and the grated carrot, onion and peas make up the bulk of each spoonful, so it is lower in saturated fat than a plain meat dish. The rice cooks in the stock, so every grain carries flavour, and you need just 1 tsp of oil.

SWAPS

A handful of sweetcorn or chopped pepper with the peas. Turkey mince for a lighter version. A pinch of chilli flakes or a squeeze of lime at the end. Brown rice needs about 10 more minutes and 100 ml more water.

SAVE MONEY

A pack of mince is the dearest item in the week's shop, so using 125 g per portion and filling the pan with rice and vegetables makes it go much further. Buy frozen peas in a big bag, because you only take out what you need.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

COMING UP TOMORROW

Tuesday has porridge with raisins, a tuna and sweetcorn pitta, and a chicken, chickpea and tomato stew with couscous. If your chicken thighs are frozen, take them out tonight to defrost in the fridge.

Meal Plan 6: Quick and Cheap

Day 2 · Tuesday · Prep ahead, then leave it

Today at a glance. Breakfast takes 4 minutes in the microwave and lunch takes 8. Dinner is a one-pot chicken stew: **10 minutes of prep any time during the day**, then about **5 minutes of work** at dinner time and 12 minutes of simmering. It uses **half a tin of chickpeas** and **half a tin of tomatoes**, and the other halves are kept for Wednesday and Thursday. Every quantity below is for **one portion**, in metric with UK names.

Breakfast

BREAKFAST

Porridge with Raisins and Cinnamon

4 minutes

Microwave

4 ingredients

Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

40 g porridge oats

200 ml semi-skimmed milk

15 g raisins

¼ tsp ground cinnamon

Pinch of salt

METHOD

1. Put the oats, milk, raisins, cinnamon 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. Leave it for 1 minute so that the raisins plump up, stir, and eat. On the hob, cook it in a pan over a medium heat for 4 to 5 minutes, stirring.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY START

Oats are a whole grain and the fibre in them keeps you full for hours. The raisins sweeten the porridge naturally, so no sugar is needed.

SWAPS

Half milk and half water. A chopped apple or banana stirred in. A spoonful of plain yoghurt or peanut butter on top.

SAVE MONEY

Porridge made with milk and a handful of raisins costs a fraction of a shop-bought cereal bar or a flavoured sachet, and you control the sugar.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

The image shows a dark blue background. A thin, light blue horizontal line is positioned near the top edge. A thin, light blue vertical line is positioned on the left side, starting from the top and extending downwards. These two lines intersect to form a header area at the top left and a sidebar area on the left side of the page.

LUNCH

Tuna and Sweetcorn Pitta with Yoghurt Dressing

8 minutes

Toaster

4 ingredients

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

1 wholemeal pitta bread

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

60 g frozen sweetcorn

30 g plain Greek-style yoghurt

20 g baby spinach

Black pepper

METHOD

1. Put the sweetcorn in a bowl, cover it with boiling water from the kettle and leave it for 2 minutes, then drain. This thaws and warms it without any cooking.
2. Drain the tuna and flake it with a fork in a bowl. Stir in the sweetcorn, the yoghurt and plenty of black pepper.
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. Tuck the spinach into the pitta, then spoon in the tuna mixture. To take it with you, pack the filling separately and fill the pitta just before eating.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY LUNCH

Tuna in spring water is almost pure protein with no added oil, and swapping mayonnaise for yoghurt keeps the dressing light. The wholemeal pitta and sweetcorn add fibre.

SWAPS

A chopped tomato or some cucumber in the pitta. Tinned mackerel or a boiled egg in place of the tuna. Use two slices of wholemeal bread if you have no pitta.

SAVE MONEY

Own-brand tuna in spring water is much cheaper than a branded tin and tastes the same once it is mixed. Frozen sweetcorn costs less than tinned, and you only take out what you need.

Shopping list for this recipe

Dinner

Chicken, Chickpea and Tomato Stew with Couscous

Prep ahead: 10 minutes

At dinner: 5 minutes of work

Simmer: 12 minutes

1 pan

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

2	boneless, skinless chicken thighs (about 200 g)
120 g	chickpeas from a tin, drained and rinsed (half a tin; Wednesday uses the rest)
200 g	chopped tomatoes (half a 400 g tin; Thursday uses the rest)
1	small onion
1	carrot
1 clove	garlic
1 tsp	ground cumin
½ tsp	smoked paprika
½	reduced-salt vegetable stock cube
200 ml	boiling water
1 tsp	olive oil
60 g	couscous
80 ml	boiling water, for the couscous
Salt and black pepper	

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

1. Trim any hard fat from the chicken and cut each thigh into 4 or 5 pieces, about 3 cm. Peel and finely chop the garlic. Mix the chicken with the garlic, half the cumin, the paprika and a pinch of salt in a bowl, cover it, and put it on the **bottom shelf** of the fridge. Wash your hands, the board and the knife.
2. Peel the onion and chop it small. Peel the carrot and cut it into small cubes, about 1 cm. Put them in a covered container in the fridge.
3. 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 Thursday. Do the same with the

chickpeas: measure out 120 g for tonight, and put the rest in a covered container for Wednesday.

AT DINNER TIME (ABOUT 5 MINUTES OF WORK)

1. Heat the oil in a saucepan with a lid over a medium-high heat. Add the onion and carrot and cook for 3 minutes. Add the chicken and cook for 3 minutes, turning, until it is pale gold on the outside.
2. Stir in the remaining cumin, then add the tomatoes and chickpeas. Crumble in the stock cube, pour over the 200 ml of boiling water, and add pepper. Bring to a simmer.
3. Put the lid on, turn the heat down to a steady simmer and leave it for 12 minutes, stirring once, until the chicken is cooked and the sauce is thick. 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. Cut into the largest piece of chicken to check that it is white all the way through with no pink, and that the juices run clear. Spoon the couscous into a bowl and pour the stew over the top.

KEEPING PREPPED RAW CHICKEN SAFE

Keep the seasoned 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. Keep the half tins of tomatoes and chickpeas in covered containers (not in the open tins) and use them by Thursday.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY DINNER

Chicken thighs stay juicy in a stew, and the chickpeas add fibre and make the 200 g of chicken go further. The tomato sauce and carrot give two vegetables, and the dish needs only 1 tsp of oil.

SWAPS

A handful of baby spinach stirred in at the end. Rice or a baked potato in place of the couscous. A pinch of chilli flakes. A spoonful of plain yoghurt on top.

SAVE MONEY

Thighs cost much less than breasts and are harder to overcook. A tin of chickpeas stretches the chicken, and because the tin is split over two meals nothing is thrown away.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

COMING UP TOMORROW

Wednesday has egg and tomato on toast, a cheese, tomato and cucumber pitta, and a vegetarian spiced cauliflower, chickpea and potato tray bake. It uses the other half tin of chickpeas, so keep it.

Meal Plan 6: Quick and Cheap

Day 3 · Wednesday · Prep ahead, then leave it

Today at a glance. A vegetarian day. Breakfast takes 8 minutes and lunch takes 5 with no cooking. 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 roasting. It uses **the other half tin of chickpeas from Tuesday**, and it uses half a cauliflower, so keep the other half for Saturday. Every quantity below is for **one portion**, in metric with UK names.

Breakfast

BREAKFAST

Fried Egg on Toast with Tomato

8 minutes

1 small pan

3 ingredients

Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

1 egg

2 slices wholemeal bread

1 small tomato

1 tsp olive oil

Salt and black pepper

METHOD

1. Slice the tomato in half. Put the bread in the toaster.
2. Heat the oil in a small non-stick pan over a medium heat. Put the tomato halves in cut side down and cook for 2 minutes.
3. Turn the tomato over, push it to one side, and crack the egg into the empty half of the pan. Fry for 2 to 3 minutes, until the white is set and the yolk is as runny as you like. Cover the pan with a lid or plate for the last minute to cook the top of the egg.
4. Put the toast on a plate, top with the egg and tomato, and season with salt and pepper.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY START

An egg and a tomato on wholemeal toast give protein, fibre and vitamin C for very little. Cooking in one teaspoon of oil keeps the fat low.

SWAPS

Two eggs if you are hungry. A handful of spinach wilted in the pan. A little grated cheese on top, or a spoonful of baked beans on the side.

SAVE MONEY

A fried egg on toast costs a fraction of a café breakfast, and it uses the heels of the loaf as well as any slice. Keep the bread in the freezer and toast slices straight from frozen.

Shopping list for this recipe

Lunch

LUNCH · VEGETARIAN

Cheese, Tomato and Cucumber Pitta

5 minutes

Toaster only

Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

1 wholemeal pitta bread

30 g mature Cheddar cheese

1 medium tomato

50 g cucumber (about 5 cm)

20 g baby spinach

Black pepper

METHOD

1. Grate the cheese. Slice the tomato and the cucumber thinly, and pat the tomato slices dry with kitchen paper so the pitta does not go soggy.
2. Warm the pitta in the toaster for 30 to 60 seconds until it puffs, then cut along one long edge to open a pocket.
3. Fill it with the cheese, tomato, cucumber and spinach, and add some black pepper. To take it with you, pack the filling separately and fill the pitta just before eating.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY LUNCH

Mature cheese is strongly flavoured, so a small amount goes a long way, and the vegetables make up most of the pitta. Wholemeal bread adds fibre, and the lunch is quick enough for a busy day.

SWAPS

A spoonful of houmous or plain yoghurt in the pitta. Grated carrot in place of the cucumber. Sliced boiled egg for extra protein.

SAVE MONEY

Buy a block of mature Cheddar rather than pre-grated cheese. It costs less per 100 g, and the strong taste means you use less.

Shopping list for this recipe

Dinner

Spiced Cauliflower, Chickpea and Potato Tray Bake with Yoghurt Dip

Prep ahead: 10 minutes

At dinner: 5 minutes of work

Roasts: 15 minutes

1 baking tray

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

250 g cauliflower florets (about half a medium cauliflower; Saturday's soup uses the other half)

150 g potatoes

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

1 clove garlic

1 tsp ground cumin

½ tsp smoked paprika

2 tsp olive oil

60 g plain Greek-style yoghurt, for the dip

Salt and black pepper

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

1. Cut the cauliflower into small florets, about 3 cm, and cut the stalk into small pieces. Scrub the potatoes (peel them if you prefer) and cut them into cubes of about 2 cm.
2. Put the cauliflower and potatoes in a microwave-safe bowl with a splash of water, cover with a plate and microwave for 5 minutes, until they are just starting to soften. Drain well and let them cool a little.
3. Peel and crush the garlic. In a large bowl, mix the garlic, cumin, paprika, oil, a pinch of salt and some pepper. Add the cauliflower, potatoes and chickpeas and toss until everything is coated.
4. Spread it out on a baking tray lined with foil or baking paper. Cover the tray tightly with another sheet of foil and put it in the fridge. Put the 60 g of yoghurt (about 4 tbsp) aside in a small covered bowl in the fridge for the dip.

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. Take the foil cover off the tray.

2. When the oven is hot, put the tray on the top shelf and roast for 15 minutes, turning everything over halfway, until the vegetables are golden at the edges and the chickpeas are crisp.
3. Meanwhile, stir the yoghurt with a pinch of salt, some pepper and a pinch of paprika in a small bowl, to make the dip.
4. Tip the tray bake onto a plate and serve with the dip on the side.

KEEPING THE PREPPED VEGETABLES SAFE

The partly cooked cauliflower and potatoes should be cooled quickly and kept covered in the fridge until dinner time. Do not leave them out on the worktop for hours. Keep the other half tin of chickpeas in a covered container, not the open tin, and use it today.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY DINNER

Cauliflower is cheap, and roasting it with spices makes it sweet and crunchy. The chickpeas and the yoghurt give protein, so this vegetarian dinner is filling, and it uses only 2 tsp of oil.

SWAPS

Carrots or sweet potato in place of the potato. A pinch of chilli flakes or turmeric in the spices. A handful of baby spinach stirred in as it comes out of the oven. A boiled egg on the side for extra protein.

SAVE MONEY

A whole cauliflower costs about the same as a small pack of florets and makes two meals: half for tonight and half for Saturday's soup. Tinned chickpeas are a cheap protein, and splitting the tin between two dinners means none is wasted.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

COMING UP TOMORROW

Thursday has yoghurt, oats and berries, a banana and peanut butter sandwich, and a beef and bean burrito filling that makes two portions: tonight's dinner and Friday's lunch. It uses the other half tin of tomatoes from Tuesday, and if your mince is frozen, take it out tonight to defrost in the fridge.

Meal Plan 6: Quick and Cheap

Day 4 · Thursday · Prep ahead, then leave it

Today at a glance. Breakfast and lunch need no cooking at all. Dinner is the second beef dish of the week, and it makes **two portions** of filling: one to eat tonight with rice and one for *tomorrow's lunch*. **10 minutes of prep any time during the day**, then about **5 minutes of work** at dinner time and 12 minutes of simmering. It uses **the other half tin of tomatoes from Tuesday**. Every quantity below is for **one portion** unless the recipe says otherwise, in metric with UK names.

Breakfast

BREAKFAST

Yoghurt, Oats and Frozen Berries

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

METHOD

1. Spoon the yoghurt into a bowl or jar and stir in the oats.
2. Tip the frozen berries on top. They thaw as you get ready, and their juice colours the yoghurt. Microwave them for 30 seconds first if you want them soft.
3. Eat straight away, or stir everything together the night before for softer oats.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY START

Greek yoghurt gives protein and the oats give fibre, so the bowl keeps you full all morning. The berries add sweetness and vitamin C with no sugar.

SWAPS

A grated apple or a chopped banana in place of the berries. A few raisins. A pinch of cinnamon on top.

SAVE MONEY

Frozen berries cost much less than fresh ones, they keep for months, and they are just as nutritious. A big tub of plain yoghurt is cheaper per portion than small pots.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

Lunch

LUNCH · VEGETARIAN

Banana and Peanut Butter Sandwich with Carrot Sticks

5 minutes

No cooking

Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

2 slices wholemeal bread

1 tbsp peanut butter (about 15 g)

1 banana

1 carrot

METHOD

1. Spread the peanut butter over one slice of bread.
2. Peel the banana, slice it into rounds and lay them over the peanut butter. Press them in lightly, then put the other slice on top and cut the sandwich in half.
3. Peel the carrot and cut it into sticks. Eat them on the side, or pack them in a container to take with you.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY LUNCH

Peanut butter and banana give protein, potassium and slow energy, and the carrot sticks add crunch and vitamin A. It is simple, but it fills you up for a few pence.

SWAPS

Sliced apple in place of the banana. A wholemeal wrap in place of the bread. A spoonful of plain yoghurt on the side, or a pinch of cinnamon on the banana.

SAVE MONEY

Buy bananas by the bunch and use the ripest first, because spotty ones are sweeter and are often reduced. Peanut butter made of only peanuts is usually the cheapest and the most filling.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

Dinner

Beef and Bean Burrito Filling with Rice

Prep ahead: 10 minutes

At dinner: 5 minutes of work

Simmers: 12 minutes

Makes 2 portions

INGREDIENTS (MAKES 2 PORTIONS OF FILLING; RICE FOR TONIGHT ONLY)

200 g	lean beef mince (5% fat)
1 tin	kidney beans (400 g), drained and rinsed
200 g	chopped tomatoes (the other half tin from Tuesday)
120 g	frozen sweetcorn
1	onion
1 clove	garlic
1 tsp	ground cumin
1 tsp	smoked paprika
1 tsp	olive oil
100 ml	water
60 g	long-grain white rice (tonight's portion only)

Salt and black pepper

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

1. Peel the onion and chop it small. Peel and finely chop the garlic. Put them in a covered container in the fridge.
2. Drain and rinse the beans, and put them in a covered container. Keep the mince in its pack, or in a covered container, on the **bottom shelf** of the fridge, away from other food. If it was frozen, make sure it has fully defrosted.
3. Stand a wide saucepan with a lid on the hob, ready, with the spices, the tomatoes and the sweetcorn 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. Add the mince and cook for 4 minutes, breaking it up with a spoon, until it is brown all over with no pink left.
3. Add the onion and garlic and cook for 2 minutes. Stir in the cumin and paprika for 30 seconds.
4. Add the beans, tomatoes, sweetcorn and water, with a pinch of salt and some pepper. Bring to a simmer, then put the lid on and cook for 10 to 12 minutes, stirring once, until the sauce is thick.
5. Spoon half of the filling over the rice and eat it.
6. Put the other half in a container and let it cool for up to an hour. Cover it and put it in the fridge. It is tomorrow's lunch.

SAVING TOMORROW'S PORTION SAFELY

Cool the second portion quickly (it should be in the fridge within an hour or two of cooking) and keep it covered. Tomorrow, heat it until it is steaming hot all the way through, and do not reheat it more than once. Throw it away if it has been in the fridge for more than 2 days.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY DINNER

The kidney beans give protein and fibre, so just 100 g of beef is enough for each portion. The tomato, onion and sweetcorn add vegetables, and there is only 1 tsp of oil in the whole pot.

SWAPS

Black beans or pinto beans in place of the kidney beans. Chopped red pepper or grated carrot with the onion. A pinch of chilli flakes. Plain yoghurt on top, in place of soured cream.

SAVE MONEY

Beans make the beef go twice as far, and cooking a double batch uses one pan, one burner and one lot of washing up for two meals. Tomorrow's lunch costs almost nothing extra.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

COMING UP TOMORROW

Friday has peanut butter toast with apple slices, a burrito made with tonight's second portion of filling, and an oat-crusted baked fish with potato wedges and peas. If your fish is frozen, take it out tonight and defrost it in the fridge on a plate.

Meal Plan 6: Quick and Cheap

Day 5 · Friday · Prep ahead, then leave it

Today at a glance. The fish day, and the last weekday of the week. Breakfast takes 5 minutes, and lunch is **last night's beef and bean filling** in a wrap. Dinner is prepared ahead in 10 minutes, then needs about 5 minutes of work at dinner time and 20 minutes in the oven, so it is on the table about 30 minutes after you get in. Every quantity below is for **one portion**, in metric with UK names.

Breakfast

BREAKFAST

Peanut Butter Toast with Apple Slices

5 minutes

Toaster only

3 ingredients

Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

2 slices wholemeal bread

1 tbsp peanut butter (about 15 g)

1 eating apple

Pinch of ground cinnamon (optional)

METHOD

1. Toast the bread until golden.
2. Spread the peanut butter over the hot toast, while it is still warm, so it melts a little and spreads thinly.
3. Wash the apple, core it and slice it thinly, skin and all. Lay the slices over the toast, and dust with the cinnamon if you like it.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY START

Peanut butter brings protein and unsaturated fat, and the apple adds fibre and crunch with natural sweetness. The wholemeal toast keeps you full until lunch.

SWAPS

A sliced banana or pear in place of the apple. A spoonful of plain yoghurt on the side. A few raisins on top.

SAVE MONEY

A bruised or wrinkled apple works perfectly well here, and shops often reduce them at the end of the day. One 15 g spoonful of peanut butter on each slice makes a jar last for many breakfasts.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

Lunch	

Beef and Bean Burrito

8 minutes

Microwave and pan

4 ingredients

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

1 portion beef and bean filling, kept from Thursday's dinner

1 wholemeal tortilla wrap

20 g mature Cheddar cheese

20 g baby spinach

20 g plain Greek-style yoghurt

METHOD

1. Put the filling in a bowl, cover it, and microwave it for 2 minutes. Stir, and microwave for a further 1 minute, until it is steaming hot all the way through, with no cold spots. Add a splash of water if it looks dry.
2. Grate the cheese. Warm the wrap for 15 seconds in the microwave so it folds without cracking.
3. Lay the wrap flat and spoon the hot filling along the middle. Top with the spinach, cheese and yoghurt.
4. Fold in the two sides, then roll it up tightly from the bottom. For a crisp finish, put it seam side down in a dry frying pan for 1 minute each side.

REHEAT ONCE ONLY

This filling was cooked last night and has been in the fridge since. Heat it until it is steaming hot all the way through, and eat it straight away. Do not reheat it again, and throw away any that is left over. If it has been in the fridge for more than 2 days, do not eat it.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY LUNCH

The filling is mostly beans and tomato, so it gives plenty of fibre and protein from a modest amount of beef. The spinach and yoghurt add freshness, and the lunch costs almost nothing extra because the work was done last night.

SWAPS

Serve the filling over a baked potato or a handful of leaves instead of in a wrap. Grated carrot or sliced tomato in the burrito. A pinch of chilli flakes if you like it hot.

SAVE MONEY

Cooking double last night means today's lunch is nearly free, and it is far better than a sandwich from a shop. Leftovers are the cheapest meal you can make.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

Dinner

Oat-Crusted Baked White Fish with Potato Wedges and Peas

Prep ahead: 10 minutes

At dinner: 5 minutes of work

Bakes: 20 minutes

1 baking tray

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

1 fillet	skinless white fish, such as coley, pollock or cod (about 150 g), frozen or fresh
250 g	potatoes
100 g	frozen peas
20 g	porridge oats (about 3 tbsp)
30 g	plain Greek-style yoghurt
1 tsp	smoked paprika
2 tsp	olive oil
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. Put it on a plate, cover it, and put it on the **bottom shelf** of the fridge.
2. Scrub the potatoes (peel them if you prefer) and cut them into wedges, about 2 cm thick. Put them in a microwave-safe bowl with a splash of water, cover with a plate and microwave for 4 minutes, until they are nearly tender. Drain well.
3. Toss the wedges with the oil, half the paprika, a pinch of salt and some pepper, and spread them out on a baking tray lined with baking paper. Leave them to cool, then cover and keep in the fridge.
4. On a plate, mix the oats with the remaining paprika, a pinch of salt and some pepper. Put the yoghurt in a small bowl. Cover both and keep them ready. 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. Take the cover off the wedge tray.

2. When the oven is hot, put the wedges in on the top shelf for 5 minutes. Meanwhile, brush the fish on both sides with the yoghurt and press it firmly into the oat mixture, so that it is coated all over.
3. Take the tray out, push the wedges to one side, add the fish, and put it back in. Bake for 15 minutes, turning the wedges once, until the wedges are golden and the fish is opaque all the way through and flakes easily with a fork.
4. While it bakes, cook the peas in boiling water for 3 minutes and drain.
5. Serve the fish and wedges with the peas.

KEEPING PREPPED RAW FISH SAFE

Raw fish spoils faster than meat. Keep it covered 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. Coat the fish with yoghurt and oats only at dinner time, because the crust goes soggy if it waits. 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 oat crust gives crunch and fibre without the oil of a breadcrumb coating. The wedges are baked with just 2 tsp of oil, and the peas add fibre and vitamins.

SWAPS

A pinch of dried oregano or thyme in the crust. Sweet potato wedges in place of the potato. Green beans or sweetcorn in place of the peas. A spoonful of plain yoghurt with a pinch of salt as a dip.

SAVE MONEY

Frozen coley and pollock fillets cost far less than fresh cod, and the crust and wedges make them just as good. Keep the fish in the freezer and defrost one fillet the evening before.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

COMING UP TOMORROW

Saturday is slower: a spinach and cheese omelette, a leek, potato and cauliflower soup that makes two portions (using the other half of Wednesday's cauliflower), and a slow-cooked beef and barley stew

that makes two portions. If your braising beef is frozen, take it out tonight to defrost in the fridge.

Meal Plan 6: Quick and Cheap

Day 6 · Saturday · A slower weekend day

Today at a glance. The weekend does not have to be quick, and batch cooking is the cheapest way to eat. Lunch makes **two portions** of soup (one for tomorrow's lunch), and uses **the other half of Wednesday's cauliflower**. Dinner is a beef and barley stew that cooks mostly by itself for 2 hours and also 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

Spinach and Cheese Omelette

10 minutes

1 frying pan

Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

2 eggs

30 g baby spinach

20 g mature Cheddar cheese

1 tsp olive oil

Salt and black pepper

METHOD

1. Grate the cheese and roughly chop the spinach. Beat the eggs in a bowl with a pinch of salt and some pepper.
2. Heat the oil in a small non-stick frying pan, about 20 cm across, over a medium heat. Pour in the eggs and tilt the pan so that they cover the base.
3. 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, scatter the spinach and cheese over one half.
5. Fold the empty half over the filling, cook for 30 more seconds so that the spinach wilts and the cheese melts, and slide the omelette onto a plate.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY START

Eggs give protein, spinach adds iron and folate, and a little strong cheese gives a lot of flavour. The omelette cooks in only a teaspoon of oil.

SWAPS

A chopped tomato or a few mushrooms in the filling. A slice of wholemeal toast on the side. Leave out the cheese for a lighter breakfast.

SAVE MONEY

An omelette is a good way to use up the last of the spinach, a corner of cheese and a couple of eggs. Whatever is left in the fridge on Saturday morning can go in.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

Lunch

Leek, Potato and Cauliflower Soup

10 minutes prep

25 minutes cooking

Makes 2 portions

Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS (MAKES 2 LARGE BOWLS)

2 medium leeks (about 300 g once trimmed)

300 g potatoes

250 g cauliflower florets (the other half of Wednesday's cauliflower)

1 reduced-salt vegetable stock cube

2 tsp olive oil

700 ml boiling water

Black pepper

METHOD

1. Cut the root and the tough dark green top off each leek. Slice them in half lengthways and rinse them well under cold running water, because soil hides between the layers. Slice them thinly.
2. Peel the potatoes and cut them into 2 cm cubes. Cut the cauliflower into small florets.
3. Heat the oil in a large saucepan over a low to medium heat. Add the leeks and a splash of water, cover, and cook for 8 minutes, stirring now and then, until soft but not brown.
4. Add the potatoes and cauliflower, crumble in the stock cube, and pour in the boiling water. Bring to a simmer, cover, and cook for 15 minutes, until a knife slips easily into the potato.
5. Blend the soup with a stick blender until smooth, or mash it well and leave it chunky. Season with plenty of black pepper and taste before adding any salt.
6. Eat one bowl now. Let the rest cool for up to an hour, then cover it and put it in the fridge for tomorrow's lunch.

SAVING TOMORROW'S SOUP SAFELY

Cool the second portion quickly (it should be in the fridge within an hour or two of cooking) and keep it covered. Tomorrow, heat it until it is steaming hot all the way through, and do not reheat it more than once. Throw it away if it has been in the fridge for more than 2 days.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY LUNCH

The potato and cauliflower make the soup creamy without any cream, and leeks add fibre and folate. It has very little fat, and the cauliflower adds a vegetable portion without an added cost.

SWAPS

A handful of baby spinach or frozen peas stirred in at the end. A spoonful of plain yoghurt on top. A slice of wholemeal toast on the side for a bigger meal.

SAVE MONEY

This soup uses the second half of Wednesday's cauliflower and a few potatoes, so it costs very little, and one pan gives two lunches. Soup freezes well too, so you can freeze the second portion if you will not eat it tomorrow.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

Dinner

Slow-Cooked Beef and Barley 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 shin or chuck), trimmed and cut into 3 cm cubes

60 g pearl barley

1 onion

2 carrots

2 cloves garlic

1 tsp dried thyme

1 reduced-salt vegetable stock cube

600 ml boiling water

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. Rinse the barley in a sieve.
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 and thyme for 30 seconds.
4. Return the beef to the dish and add the barley. Crumble in the stock cube, pour over the boiling water, add some pepper, and stir. Bring to the boil.
5. Put the lid on and cook in the oven for 2 hours, stirring once halfway, until the beef is very tender and the barley is soft and has thickened the stew. Add a splash of water if it

gets too thick.

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 good splash of water because the barley soaks up liquid. 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 in a slow cooker and cook on low for 8 hours. On the hob, simmer it gently with the lid on for 2 hours, stirring now and then and adding water if it gets dry.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY DINNER

Barley is a whole grain with plenty of fibre, and it thickens the stew so that no flour or cream is needed. The cheap cut of beef becomes very tender, and half of each portion is vegetables and barley.

SWAPS

A parsnip or swede with the carrots. A bay leaf in the pot. A handful of frozen peas stirred in at the end. Serve it over boiled potatoes in place of the bread.

SAVE MONEY

Braising beef and pearl barley are among the cheapest ingredients in the shop, and slow cooking does the work that expensive cuts do. Making two portions gives you a ready meal for a busy night for the cost of a few extra pence.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

COMING UP TOMORROW

Sunday has banana pancakes, tonight's second portion of soup for lunch, and a roast whole chicken with potatoes and carrots. A whole chicken gives four portions, and cold chicken for next week. If your chicken is frozen, take it out tonight and defrost it in the fridge. A whole chicken can take 24 hours or more to defrost, so check the pack.

Meal Plan 6: Quick and Cheap

Day 7 · Sunday · A slower weekend day

Today at a glance. The week ends with the best-value roast there is: a whole chicken. Breakfast is a 15-minute pancake, and lunch is **yesterday's soup**, so there is nothing to cook. Dinner gives **four portions of chicken**: one to eat tonight and three to keep for next week's quick lunches, plus a pot of stock. It takes about 1 hour 30 minutes in the oven, but only about 20 minutes of your time. Every quantity below is for **one portion** unless the recipe says otherwise, in metric with UK names.

Breakfast

BREAKFAST

Banana and Oat Pancakes

15 minutes

1 frying pan

4 ingredients

Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION, ABOUT 4 SMALL PANCAKES)

1 ripe banana

1 egg

40 g porridge oats

¼ tsp ground cinnamon

1 tsp olive oil

METHOD

1. Peel the banana and mash it very well in a bowl with a fork, until it is a smooth purée with no lumps.
2. Beat in the egg, then stir in the oats and cinnamon. Leave the mixture for 5 minutes so that the oats soften. If you have a stick blender, blitz it for a smoother batter.
3. Heat a non-stick frying pan over a medium-low heat and brush it lightly with some of the oil.
4. Spoon 4 small rounds of batter into the pan, each about 8 cm across. Cook for 2 to 3 minutes until the underneath is golden and the edges look set, then flip carefully and cook for another 1 to 2 minutes. They are softer than ordinary pancakes, so keep them small.
5. Stack them on a plate. Serve plain, or with a little yoghurt or a sliced fruit on top.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY START

The banana sweetens them completely, so there is no flour, sugar or butter. The oats give fibre and the egg gives protein, which makes this a filling breakfast for a few pence.

SWAPS

A spoonful of peanut butter or plain yoghurt on top. A few raisins stirred into the batter. A little grated apple in place of half the banana.

SAVE MONEY

The very ripe banana at the bottom of the bunch is the best one to use here, and it is the cheapest, because shops mark down spotty ones. This uses it before it is thrown away.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

Lunch

Reheated Leek, Potato and Cauliflower Soup with Toast

5 minutes

Microwave or pan

Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

1 portion leek, potato and cauliflower soup, kept from Saturday's lunch

2 slices wholemeal bread

Black pepper

METHOD

1. Tip the soup into a pan or a microwave-safe bowl. Add a splash of water if it has thickened in the fridge.
2. Heat it over a medium heat, stirring, for 4 to 5 minutes, or microwave it for 2 minutes, stir, and microwave for another 1 to 2 minutes, until it is steaming hot all the way through.
3. Toast the bread. Pour the soup into a bowl, add black pepper, and eat it with the toast.

REHEAT ONCE ONLY

This soup was cooked yesterday and has been in the fridge since. Heat it until it is steaming hot all the way through, and eat it straight away. Do not reheat it again, and throw away any that is left over. If it has been in the fridge for more than 2 days, do not eat it.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY LUNCH

A bowl of vegetable soup with wholemeal toast is filling, low in fat and full of fibre. Because the work was done yesterday, this lunch costs almost nothing and takes 5 minutes.

SWAPS

A handful of spinach or frozen peas stirred in as it heats. A spoonful of plain yoghurt on top. A little grated cheese on the toast.

SAVE MONEY

Cooking double and eating the second portion the next day is one of the best habits on a budget. It saves washing up and fuel, and it turns a cheap soup into two lunches.

Shopping list for this recipe

Dinner

Roast Whole Chicken with Potatoes and Carrots

20 minutes prep

1 hour 20 minutes roasting

Makes 4 portions of chicken

1 roasting tin

INGREDIENTS (1 WHOLE CHICKEN; VEGETABLES FOR TONIGHT ONLY)

1 whole chicken (about 1.5 kg)

1 onion

2 cloves garlic

1 tsp smoked paprika

1 tsp dried thyme

2 tsp olive oil

250 g potatoes (tonight's portion only)

2 carrots (tonight's portion only)

Salt and black pepper

METHOD

1. Take the chicken out of the fridge, make sure it has fully defrosted if it was frozen, and heat the oven to 190°C (170°C fan, gas mark 5). Work out the cooking time: 20 minutes for every 500 g, plus 20 minutes. A 1.5 kg chicken needs 1 hour 20 minutes.
2. Peel the onion and cut it into quarters. Peel the garlic. Scrub the potatoes (peel them if you prefer) and cut them into chunks about 4 cm across. Peel the carrots and cut them into thick batons.
3. Sit the chicken in a large roasting tin, breast side up. Put two of the onion quarters and the garlic inside the cavity. Pat the skin dry with kitchen paper, then rub it with 1 tsp of the oil, the paprika, thyme, a good pinch of salt and some pepper. Wash your hands, the board and the knife.
4. Roast for 30 minutes. Toss the potatoes, carrots and remaining onion quarters in the remaining oil and a pinch of salt, and add them around the chicken in the tin.
5. Roast for a further 50 minutes, turning the vegetables once, until the skin is golden and the vegetables are tender.

6. Check that the chicken is cooked. Push a knife into the thickest part of the thigh: the juices must run clear with no pink, and the meat must be white all the way through. If not, roast for another 10 minutes and check again.
7. Rest the chicken on a board, loosely covered with foil, for 15 minutes. This keeps it juicy and makes it easier to carve.
8. Carve one leg and a few slices of breast for tonight, take the skin off the meat on your plate, and serve with the potatoes and carrots.

SAVING THE REST AND MAKING STOCK

1. While it is still warm, take all the remaining meat off the bones in large pieces. Put it on a clean plate, let it cool for no more than an hour, then divide it into 3 portions in covered containers and put them in the fridge.
2. Put the carcass, bones and any juices from the tin in a large pan with the rest of the cooked onion, cover with about 1.5 litres of cold water, and simmer gently for 1 hour. Strain it through a sieve, let it cool, and keep it covered in the fridge for up to 2 days or freeze it in a container. It makes the base of a soup next week, in place of a stock cube.

KEEPING THE COOKED CHICKEN SAFE

Get the leftover chicken into the fridge within an hour or two of cooking. Eat it cold within 2 days, for example in a wrap or salad like Tuesday's lunch in Meal Plan 4, or freeze any portion you will not eat within 2 days. Defrost it overnight in the fridge. 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

Chicken is a lean protein once the skin is off, and roasting with onion, carrot and garlic needs only a little oil. A whole bird is the cheapest way to buy chicken, and you get four portions plus a pot of stock for one shop.

SWAPS

Parsnips or swede on the tray in place of some of the potatoes. A bay leaf or a few sprigs of fresh thyme in the cavity. A handful of frozen peas or green beans on the plate.

SAVE MONEY

A 1.5 kg chicken costs a little more than two chicken breast fillets, but it feeds four, and the stock turns the bones into another meal. A chicken that is close to its date is often reduced, and you can freeze it on the day you buy it.

Shopping list for this recipe

THAT IS THE WEEK

You have cooked a week that is quick and cheap: five weekday dinners that you prepare ahead and then leave to cook, three beef dinners, a fish dinner, a vegetarian dinner, a frozen stew for your next busy week and cold chicken for the start of next week. 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 6: Quick and Cheap

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 Thursday's burrito filling, Saturday's soup and stew, and Sunday's whole chicken, which make extra portions. 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 mince (5% fat)	1 pack, 500 g (325 g needed)	Mon 125 g (rice), Thu 200 g (burrito filling). About 175 g spare: freeze it on buying
Braising or stewing beef (such as shin or chuck)	300 g	Sat (stew, 2 portions)
Boneless, skinless chicken thighs	2 thighs, about 200 g	Tue (stew)
Whole chicken	1, about 1.5 kg	Sun (roast, 4 portions of chicken plus stock)
White fish fillet (coley, pollock or cod), skinless	1 fillet, about 150 g, fresh or frozen	Fri (oat-crusted bake)

Fruit and vegetables

ITEM	BUY	USED IN
Onions	5	Mon 1, Tue 1, Thu 1, Sat 1, Sun 1
Garlic	1 head (8 cloves)	Mon 1, Tue 1, Wed 1, Thu 1, Sat 2, Sun 2
Carrots	7	Mon 1, Tue 1, Thu 1, Sat 2, Sun 2
Potatoes	1 bag, 1.5 kg (950 g needed)	Wed 150 g, Fri 250 g, Sat 300 g, Sun 250 g
Cauliflower	1 medium	Wed half (tray bake), Sat half (soup)
Leeks	2 medium	Sat (soup, 2 portions)
Tomatoes	3	Mon 1 small, Wed 2 (1 small, 1 medium)
Cucumber	1 small (you need 5 cm)	Wed (pitta)
Baby spinach	1 bag, at least 105 g	Mon 15 g, Tue 20 g, Wed 20 g, Fri 20 g, Sat 30 g
Eating apples	2	Mon (overnight oats), Fri (toast)
Bananas	2	Thu (sandwich), Sun (pancakes)

Dairy and eggs

ITEM	BUY	USED IN
Eggs	1 box of 6 (or 10)	6 needed: Mon 2, Wed 1, Sat 2, Sun 1
Plain Greek-style yoghurt	1 tub, 500 g (360 g needed)	Mon 70 g, Tue 30 g, Wed 60 g, Thu 150 g, Fri 50 g. About 140 g spare
Semi-skimmed milk	1 pint (568 ml, 300 ml needed)	Mon 100 ml, Tue 200 ml
Mature Cheddar cheese	1 small block, about 200 g (70 g needed)	Wed 30 g, Fri 20 g, Sat 20 g. About 130 g spare

Bread and bakery

ITEM	BUY	USED IN
Wholemeal bread	1 small loaf	10 slices: Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat and Sun, 2 each

ITEM	BUY	USED IN
Wholemeal pitta bread	1 pack	Tue 1, Wed 1. Freeze the rest
Wholemeal tortilla wraps	1 pack	Mon 1, Fri 1. Freeze the rest

Frozen

ITEM	BUY	USED IN
Peas	1 bag, at least 160 g	Mon 60 g, Fri 100 g
Sweetcorn	1 bag, at least 180 g	Tue 60 g (pitta), Thu 120 g (filling)
Mixed berries	1 small bag, at least 80 g	Thu (breakfast)

Tins, jars and bottles

ITEM	BUY	USED IN
Chopped tomatoes (400 g tin)	1 tin	Tue half (stew), Thu half (filling)
Chickpeas (400 g tin)	1 tin	Tue half (stew), Wed half (tray bake)
Kidney beans (400 g tin)	1 tin	Thu (filling, 2 portions)
Tuna in spring water (about 145 g tin)	1 small tin	Tue (pitta)
Peanut butter, 100% peanuts	1 small jar	Thu 1 tbsp, Fri 1 tbsp

Dry goods

ITEM	BUY	USED IN
Porridge oats	1 bag	About 170 g: Mon 40 g, Tue 40 g, Thu 30 g, Fri 20 g (fish crust), Sun 40 g
Long-grain white rice	1 small bag	120 g: Mon 60 g, Thu 60 g
Couscous	1 small pack	Tue 60 g

ITEM	BUY	USED IN
Pearl barley	1 small bag	Sat 60 g
Raisins	1 small bag	Mon 15 g, Tue 15 g
Reduced-salt vegetable stock cubes	1 small box (3 cubes needed)	Mon 1/2, Tue 1/2, Sat 1 (soup) + 1 (stew)

Cupboard check

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

- **Olive oil:** about 16 tsp (5 tbsp, 80 ml) over the week
- **Salt and black pepper:** used in most recipes
- **Smoked paprika:** 5 tsp (Mon, Tue, Wed, Thu, Fri, Sun)
- **Ground cumin:** 3 1/2 tsp (Mon, Tue, Wed, Thu)
- **Dried thyme:** 2 tsp (Sat, Sun)
- **Ground cinnamon:** 3/4 tsp (Mon, Tue, Sun)

Equipment

- Foil, a roll (Wed, Sun) and baking paper (Wed, Fri)
- A large baking tray (Wed, Fri) and a roasting tin (Sun)
- A flameproof casserole dish with a lid, or a large pan and a lidded baking dish (Sat)
- A wide saucepan with a lid (Mon, Tue, Thu)
- A microwave-safe bowl and a plate (Wed, Fri)
- A stick blender (Sat, optional, a masher works)
- Covered containers for prepping ahead, a freezer-safe container with a lid (Sat), and containers for the cold chicken and stock (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	Chop the onion, grate the carrot, chop the garlic (10 minutes)	Brown the mince, add rice and stock, simmer 15 minutes
Tue	Season the chicken, chop the onion and carrot, measure the half tins (10 minutes)	Brown, add tomatoes and chickpeas, simmer 12 minutes, soak the couscous
Wed	Soften the cauliflower and potatoes, toss with chickpeas and spices on the tray (10 minutes)	Oven on 220 C, roast 15 minutes, stir the dip
Thu	Chop the onion and garlic, drain the beans (10 minutes)	Rice on, brown the mince, add everything, simmer 12 minutes
Fri	Microwave and season the wedges, mix the oat crust, cover the fish (10 minutes)	Oven on 220 C, wedges 5 minutes, add the coated fish for 15 minutes

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 mince, Monday's 125 g (freeze on buying)	Mon	Sun evening
Chicken thighs	Tue	Mon evening
Beef mince, Thursday's 200 g (freeze on buying)	Thu	Wed evening
White fish fillet	Fri	Thu evening
Braising beef	Sat	Fri evening
Whole chicken (24 hours or more)	Sun	Fri evening or Sat morning

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.

Saving money on the shop

- Choose the supermarket's own brand for tins, oats, rice, pasta, barley and frozen veg. The contents are the same.
- Compare the price per kilo or per 100 g on the shelf label, not the price of the pack.
- A whole chicken, braising beef and frozen white fish cost much less per portion than breasts, steak and fresh fish.
- Look in the reduced section for bread, bananas, apples and chicken, and freeze what you will not cook within a day.
- Cook double when you can: Thursday's filling, Saturday's soup and stew, and Sunday's chicken each give a second meal.
- Check the cupboard section first. Spices and oil are used again from week to week.

Using up leftovers

- Beef and barley stew (Saturday): one portion is in the freezer for your next busy week. Use within 3 months, defrost overnight in the fridge and reheat with a splash of water until steaming hot.
- Three portions of cooked roast chicken (Sunday): eat within 2 days in wraps or salads, or freeze them in separate bags. The stock keeps for 2 days in the fridge, or freeze it.
- About 175 g of beef mince (if you bought a 500 g pack): freeze it on the day you buy it.
- Yoghurt (about 140 g) and Cheddar (about 130 g): use by the dates on the packs. Grated cheese freezes well.
- Spare eggs (if you bought a box of 10), pitta, wraps and bread: freeze the bread, pitta and wraps in a bag and take out what you need.

THAT COMPLETES MEAL PLAN 6

Five weekday dinners that you prepare ahead and then leave to cook, all on a tight budget, with three beef dinners (Monday, Thursday, Saturday), a fish dinner on Friday, a vegetarian dinner on Wednesday, a stew in the freezer and cold chicken for the start of next week. Swap any recipe that does not suit you, and note what you would change before the next plan.