



MEAL PLAN

Meal Plan 7

Cook the weekend, freeze the portions, and reheat a quick dinner on every busy weeknight, with a shopping list for every recipe.

8 Chapters

Philip Osztramok

Generated with Claude

Contents

Chapter 1	Monday	2
Chapter 2	Tuesday	7
Chapter 3	Wednesday	13
Chapter 4	Thursday	18
Chapter 5	Friday	24
Chapter 6	Saturday	30
Chapter 7	Sunday	40
Chapter 8	Weekly Shopping	47

Meal Plan 7: Quick, from the Freezer

Day 1 · Monday · Reheat and eat

START HERE: COOK THE WEEKEND FIRST

This plan works as a cycle. Monday to Friday you reheat dinners that were cooked and frozen the weekend before, and Saturday and Sunday (chapters 6 and 7) are the batch-cooking days that stock the freezer for the following week. The first time you use it, **cook the weekend chapters first**, then start on Monday. If you already have frozen portions of the same dishes from earlier plans, you can use those instead for the first week. Chapter 8 has a one-page "start here" schedule.

Today at a glance. Breakfast is made **the night before**, lunch takes 5 minutes and dinner needs only about **5 minutes of work**. The ragu comes from the freezer, so all you do is defrost it overnight and reheat it while the pasta cooks. Every quantity below is for **one portion**, in metric with UK names.

Breakfast

Peanut Butter and Banana Overnight Oats

5 minutes the night before

No cooking

4 ingredients

Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

40 g porridge oats

120 ml semi-skimmed milk

50 g plain Greek-style yoghurt

1 tbsp peanut butter (about 15 g)

1 ripe banana

METHOD

1. **The evening before:** mash half the banana in a jar or bowl with a fork until smooth, then stir in the peanut butter. Slice the other half and keep it for the morning, covered, in the fridge.
2. Add the oats, milk and yoghurt and stir until no dry oat is left.
3. Cover and put it in the fridge for at least 6 hours, or overnight.
4. **In the morning:** stir, add a splash of milk if it is too thick, and top with the banana slices. Eat it cold, or warm it in the microwave for 1 minute.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY START

Soaked oats are filling and gentle on the stomach, and the peanut butter and yoghurt add protein. The mashed banana sweetens it, so no sugar is needed.

SWAPS

A pinch of cinnamon. Chopped apple or a few frozen berries in place of the banana. Use all milk if you have no yoghurt.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

Lunch

LUNCH · VEGETARIAN

Hummus and Carrot Pitta

5 minutes

Toaster only

Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

1 wholemeal pitta bread

60 g hummus (about 3 tbsp)

1 carrot

20 g baby spinach

Black pepper

METHOD

1. Peel the carrot and grate it on the coarse side of a grater.
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. Spread the hummus inside, then fill it with the carrot 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

Hummus is made from chickpeas, so it gives plant protein and fibre. The raw carrot and spinach add crunch, vitamins and very few calories.

SWAPS

Cucumber or a sliced tomato in place of the carrot. A squeeze of lemon. A boiled egg or some cottage cheese for more protein.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

Dinner

Beef and Mushroom Ragu with Pasta

Night before: 1 minute

At dinner: 5 minutes of work

Ready in 10 minutes

1 pan plus a pasta pan

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

1 portion beef and mushroom ragu from the freezer (one quarter of Sunday's batch, about 350 g)

75 g dried pasta shapes or spaghetti (wholewheat if you like it)

Splash of water, black pepper

THE NIGHT BEFORE, OR IN THE MORNING (1 MINUTE)

1. Take one portion of ragu out of the freezer and put it on a plate or in a bowl on the **bottom shelf of the fridge**, to defrost slowly. A frozen portion needs about 8 hours, so overnight or from the morning is about right. Never defrost it on the worktop.

AT DINNER TIME (ABOUT 5 MINUTES OF WORK)

1. Put the pasta in a large pan of boiling water and cook it following the packet (usually 10 to 12 minutes for wholewheat).
2. Tip the ragu into a saucepan with 2 tbsp of water. Heat it over a medium heat, stirring now and then, for 6 to 8 minutes, until it is bubbling and steaming hot all the way through. In the microwave, put it in a covered bowl and heat it for 3 minutes, stir, and heat for a further 1 to 2 minutes.
3. Save a small cupful of the pasta water, then drain the pasta.
4. Toss the pasta with the hot ragu, adding a splash of the pasta water if it looks dry. Season with black pepper and serve.

DEFROSTING AND REHEATING SAFELY

Defrost frozen food in the fridge, not on the worktop. Make sure the ragu is steaming hot all the way through (75°C in the middle if you have a thermometer) before you eat it, and reheat it only once. Do not refreeze it after it has defrosted, and throw away any left over. If the portion has been in the fridge for more than 2 days after defrosting, do not use it.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY DINNER

The mushrooms and vegetables in the ragu mean each portion has less beef than a plain mince sauce, with lots of fibre and very little added oil. Cooking the pasta fresh gives you a

proper hot meal with almost no effort.

SWAPS

Serve it over a jacket potato or rice in place of pasta. A handful of baby spinach stirred in as it heats. A little grated cheese on top, or a pinch of chilli flakes.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

COMING UP TOMORROW

Tuesday has microwave porridge, an egg and tomato wrap, and a chicken and vegetable casserole reheated with couscous. Take one portion of casserole out of the freezer tonight and put it in the fridge to defrost.

Meal Plan 7: Quick, from the Freezer

Day 2 · Tuesday · Reheat and eat

Today at a glance. Breakfast takes 4 minutes in the microwave and lunch takes 10. Dinner is a casserole from the freezer: **defrost it overnight** (you put it in the fridge last night), then reheat it while the couscous soaks, with about **5 minutes of work**. Every quantity below is for **one portion**, in metric with UK names.

Breakfast

BREAKFAST

Microwave Porridge with Raisins

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.

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.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

Lunch

LUNCH · VEGETARIAN

Egg and Hummus Wrap

10 minutes

1 small pan

Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

1 wholemeal tortilla wrap

2 eggs

30 g hummus (about 1½ tbsp)

1 small tomato

20 g baby spinach

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 and slice them. Slice the tomato.
3. Lay the wrap flat and spread the hummus over it, leaving a gap of about 2 cm at the edge.
4. Lay the egg, tomato and spinach over the middle, and season with salt and pepper.
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

Two eggs and the hummus give protein, and the wrap, tomato and spinach add fibre and vitamins. The hummus replaces mayonnaise, so the fat stays low.

SWAPS

Grated carrot or sliced cucumber in the wrap. A pinch of smoked paprika on the egg. Use two slices of wholemeal bread if you have no wrap.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

The image shows a dark blue background. A thin green 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.

Chicken and Vegetable Casserole with Couscous

Night before: 1 minute

At dinner: 5 minutes of work

Ready in 10 minutes

1 pan

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

1 portion chicken and vegetable casserole from the freezer (one quarter of Saturday's batch, about 350 g)

60 g couscous

80 ml boiling water, for the couscous

Splash of water, salt and black pepper

THE NIGHT BEFORE, OR IN THE MORNING (1 MINUTE)

1. Take one portion of casserole out of the freezer and put it in a covered container on the **bottom shelf of the fridge**, to defrost slowly. This takes about 8 hours, so overnight or from the morning is about right. Never defrost it on the worktop.

AT DINNER TIME (ABOUT 5 MINUTES OF WORK)

1. Tip the casserole into a saucepan with 2 tbsp of water. Heat it over a medium heat, stirring now and then, for 8 to 10 minutes, until it is bubbling and steaming hot all the way through. In the microwave, heat it in a covered bowl for 3 minutes, stir, and heat for a further 2 minutes.
2. About 8 minutes before it is ready, 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.
3. Check that the chicken is piping hot all the way through, with no cold spots, and that there is no pink in any piece. Season with black pepper.
4. Spoon the couscous into a bowl and pour the casserole over the top.

REHEATING CHICKEN SAFELY

Chicken must be steaming hot all the way through when you reheat it (75°C in the middle if you have a thermometer). Stir it well, cut a thick piece in half to check, and reheat it only once. Do not refreeze it after it has defrosted, and throw away any left over. If the portion has been in the fridge for more than 2 days after defrosting, do not use it.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY DINNER

Chicken thighs, butter beans and vegetables make a casserole that is rich in protein and fibre but low in fat, and the sauce is just tomato and stock. The couscous is ready in 5 minutes, so the meal is quick as well.

SWAPS

Serve it over rice, a baked potato or a slice of wholemeal toast in place of couscous. A handful of baby spinach stirred in as it heats. A spoonful of plain yoghurt on top.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

COMING UP TOMORROW

Wednesday has toast with banana and cinnamon, a cheese and cucumber sandwich, and a vegetarian minestrone reheated from the freezer with toast. Take one portion of minestrone out of the freezer tonight and put it in the fridge to defrost.

Meal Plan 7: Quick, from the Freezer

Day 3 · Wednesday · Reheat and eat

Today at a glance. A vegetarian day. Breakfast takes 5 minutes and lunch takes 5 with no cooking. Dinner is the vegetarian one: a minestrone from the freezer, **defrosted overnight**, then simmered for about 10 minutes with a handful of fresh pasta. It needs about **5 minutes of work**. Every quantity below is for **one portion**, in metric with UK names.

Breakfast

BREAKFAST

Banana and Cinnamon Toast

5 minutes

Toaster only

3 ingredients

Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

2 slices wholemeal bread

1 ripe banana

¼ tsp ground cinnamon

1 tbsp plain Greek-style yoghurt (optional)

METHOD

1. Toast the bread until golden.
2. Peel the banana and mash it with a fork on a plate, until it is a rough purée.
3. Spread the banana over the hot toast, dust with the cinnamon, and add a spoonful of yoghurt on top if you like.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY START

A ripe banana sweetens the toast completely, so there is no jam or sugar. The wholemeal bread adds fibre, and the yoghurt adds a little protein.

SWAPS

A teaspoon of peanut butter under the banana. Sliced apple or a few berries in place of the banana. A pinch of nutmeg or a drizzle of honey.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

Lunch

LUNCH · VEGETARIAN

Cheese and Cucumber Sandwich

5 minutes

No cooking

Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

2 slices wholemeal bread

30 g mature Cheddar cheese

50 g cucumber (about 5 cm)

20 g baby spinach

1 tsp wholegrain or Dijon mustard (optional)

Black pepper

METHOD

1. Slice the cheese thinly, or grate it. Slice the cucumber thinly.
2. Spread the mustard on one slice of bread if you are using it.
3. Layer the cheese, cucumber and spinach on top, add some black pepper, and put the second slice on top. Cut the sandwich in half.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY LUNCH

Mature cheese is strongly flavoured, so a small amount goes a long way. The cucumber and spinach make the sandwich fresh and filling, and the wholemeal bread adds fibre.

SWAPS

A sliced tomato or some grated carrot. A spoonful of hummus in place of mustard. Use a wholemeal pitta or a wrap.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

Dinner

Vegetable and Butter Bean Minestrone with Toast

Night before: 1 minute

At dinner: 5 minutes of work

Ready in 10 minutes

1 pan

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

1 portion vegetable and butter bean minestrone from the freezer (one quarter of Saturday's batch, about 350 g)

30 g small dried pasta (macaroni, small shells or broken spaghetti)

100 ml boiling water

2 slices wholemeal bread, to serve

Black pepper

THE NIGHT BEFORE, OR IN THE MORNING (1 MINUTE)

1. Take one portion of minestrone out of the freezer and put it in a covered container on the **bottom shelf of the fridge**, to defrost slowly. This takes about 8 hours, so overnight or from the morning is about right. Never defrost it on the worktop.

AT DINNER TIME (ABOUT 5 MINUTES OF WORK)

1. Tip the minestrone into a saucepan and add the 100 ml of boiling water. Bring it to a simmer over a medium heat.
2. Add the pasta, stir, and simmer for 8 to 10 minutes, stirring now and then, until the pasta is tender and the soup is steaming hot all the way through. Add a splash more water if it gets too thick.
3. While it simmers, toast the bread.
4. Season with black pepper, ladle the soup into a deep bowl, and serve with the toast.

WHY THE PASTA IS ADDED FRESH

Pasta goes soft and mushy if it is frozen in a soup, so the batch is frozen without it. Adding a small handful as you reheat takes no extra time, and it tastes freshly made.

DEFROSTING AND REHEATING SAFELY

Defrost frozen food in the fridge, not on the worktop. Make sure the minestrone is steaming hot all the way through before you eat it, and reheat it only once. Do not refreeze it after it has

defrosted, and throw away any left over. If the portion has been in the fridge for more than 2 days after defrosting, do not use it.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY DINNER

Minestrone is mostly vegetables and beans, so this vegetarian dinner is high in fibre and protein and very low in fat. Reheated soup with toast is warming and ready in 10 minutes.

SWAPS

A spoonful of plain yoghurt or a little grated cheese on top. A handful of baby spinach stirred in at the end. A splash of olive oil and some black pepper.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

COMING UP TOMORROW

Thursday has apple and cinnamon porridge, a tuna and sweetcorn pitta, and a beef keema with peas reheated from the freezer with rice. Take one portion of keema out of the freezer tonight and put it in the fridge to defrost.

Meal Plan 7: Quick, from the Freezer

Day 4 · Thursday · Reheat and eat

Today at a glance. Breakfast takes 6 minutes and lunch takes 8. Dinner is the last beef dish of the busy week: a keema from the freezer, **defrosted overnight**, then reheated with peas while the rice cooks. It needs about **5 minutes of work**. Every quantity below is for **one portion**, in metric with UK names.

Breakfast

BREAKFAST

Apple and Cinnamon Porridge

6 minutes

Microwave or pan

4 ingredients

Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

40 g porridge oats

200 ml semi-skimmed milk

1 eating apple

¼ tsp ground cinnamon

Pinch of salt

METHOD

1. Wash the apple. Grate half of it, skin and all, avoiding the core, and cut the other half into small cubes.
2. Put the oats, milk, grated apple, cinnamon and a pinch of salt in a large microwave-safe bowl and stir. Microwave on high for 2 minutes, stir, then microwave for another 1 minute, until thick and creamy. On the hob, cook it in a pan over a medium heat for 4 to 5 minutes, stirring.
3. Spoon it into a bowl and top with the apple cubes.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY START

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

SWAPS

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

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

Lunch

LUNCH

Tuna and Sweetcorn Pitta

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.
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 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.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

The image shows a dark blue background. A thin green 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 of the image. This layout typically represents a header and a sidebar in a web application or document template.

Beef Keema with Peas and Rice

Night before: 1 minute

At dinner: 5 minutes of work

Ready in 12 minutes

1 pan plus a rice pan

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

1 portion beef keema from the freezer (one quarter of Saturday's batch, about 250 g)

60 g frozen peas

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

Splash of water, black pepper

THE NIGHT BEFORE, OR IN THE MORNING (1 MINUTE)

1. Take one portion of keema out of the freezer and put it in a covered container on the **bottom shelf of the fridge**, to defrost slowly. This takes about 8 hours, so overnight or from the morning is about right. Never defrost it on the worktop.

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. Tip the keema into a saucepan with 2 tbsp of water. Heat it over a medium heat, stirring now and then, for 6 to 8 minutes, until it is bubbling and steaming hot all the way through.
3. Stir in the frozen peas and cook for 3 more minutes, until the peas are hot. Check that the keema is piping hot all the way through, with no cold spots. In the microwave, heat the keema in a covered bowl for 3 minutes, stir in the peas, and heat for a further 2 minutes.
4. Spoon the rice into a bowl, pour the keema over the top, and add some black pepper.

RICE AND MINCE SAFETY

The keema must be steaming hot all the way through (75°C in the middle if you have a thermometer) and reheated only once. Cook the rice fresh and eat it straight away. Do not keep or reheat leftover rice, and do not refreeze the keema after it has defrosted. If the portion has been in the fridge for more than 2 days after defrosting, do not use it.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY DINNER

The keema is made with lean mince and plenty of onion, carrot and spices, and the peas add fibre and protein. The warm spices give big flavour without cream or much oil.

SWAPS

Serve it in a wholemeal wrap or over a jacket potato in place of rice. A spoonful of plain yoghurt on top. A handful of baby spinach stirred in with the peas. A pinch of chilli flakes if you like it hotter.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

COMING UP TOMORROW

Friday has scrambled eggs on toast, a bean and cheese quesadilla, and a fish and sweetcorn chowder reheated from the freezer with bread. Take one portion of chowder out of the freezer tonight and put it in the fridge to defrost. Fish chowder is best defrosted slowly, so do not rush it.

Meal Plan 7: Quick, from the Freezer

Day 5 · Friday · Reheat and eat

Today at a glance. The fish day, and the last weekday of the busy week. Breakfast takes 8 minutes and lunch takes 8. Dinner is a fish chowder from the freezer, **defrosted overnight**, then warmed gently for about 10 minutes with only **5 minutes of work**. Every quantity below is for **one portion**, in metric with UK names.

Breakfast

BREAKFAST

Scrambled Eggs on Toast

8 minutes

1 small pan

4 ingredients

Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

2 eggs

2 slices wholemeal bread

1 tbsp semi-skimmed milk (15 ml)

1 tsp olive oil

Salt and black pepper

METHOD

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

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY START

Two eggs and wholemeal toast give protein and fibre for very little, and the eggs need only a teaspoon of oil.

SWAPS

A handful of spinach wilted in the pan first. A grated tomato or a little grated cheese stirred in. A pinch of smoked paprika on top.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

Lunch

LUNCH · VEGETARIAN

Baked Bean and Cheese Quesadilla

10 minutes

1 dry pan

3 ingredients

Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

1 wholemeal tortilla wrap

200 g baked beans, reduced sugar and salt (a small 200 g tin, or half a 400 g tin)

30 g mature Cheddar cheese

½ tsp ground cumin

Black pepper

METHOD

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

THE OTHER HALF TIN

If you opened a large tin, put the rest of the beans in a covered container in the fridge and eat them on toast within 2 days. Never leave them in the open tin, because the metal can taint the food.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY LUNCH

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

SWAPS

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

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

Dinner

Fish and Sweetcorn Chowder with Toast

Night before: 1 minute

At dinner: 5 minutes of work

Ready in 10 minutes

1 pan

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

1 portion fish and sweetcorn chowder from the freezer (one quarter of Sunday's batch, about 350 g)

50 ml semi-skimmed milk

2 slices wholemeal bread, to serve

Black pepper

THE NIGHT BEFORE, OR IN THE MORNING (1 MINUTE)

1. Take one portion of chowder out of the freezer and put it in a covered container on the **bottom shelf of the fridge**, to defrost slowly. This takes about 8 hours, so overnight or from the morning is about right. Never defrost it on the worktop.

AT DINNER TIME (ABOUT 5 MINUTES OF WORK)

1. Tip the chowder and the milk into a saucepan. Heat it over a medium-low heat, stirring gently so that the fish stays in chunks, for 8 to 10 minutes, until it is steaming hot all the way through. Do not let it boil hard. In the microwave, heat it in a covered bowl for 3 minutes, stir gently, and heat for a further 2 minutes.
2. While it heats, toast the bread.
3. Check that the fish is hot all the way through and flakes easily, with no cold spots in the middle. Season with black pepper.
4. Ladle the chowder into a deep bowl and serve with the toast.

REHEATING FISH SAFELY

Fish dishes should be frozen for no more than 2 months. Defrost the chowder fully in the fridge, heat it until it is steaming hot all the way through (75°C in the middle if you have a thermometer), and reheat it only once. Do not refreeze it after it has defrosted, and throw away any left over. If the portion has been in the fridge for more than 2 days after defrosting, do not use it.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY DINNER

White fish is very lean and high in protein, and the chowder is thickened with beans and vegetables rather than cream or butter. It is warming, filling and low in fat, and it is ready in 10 minutes.

SWAPS

A handful of frozen peas stirred in as it heats. A squeeze of lemon and some chopped parsley. A spoonful of plain yoghurt on top. A little grated cheese on the toast.

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

COMING UP THIS WEEKEND

That is the busy week done. Saturday and Sunday are the batch-cooking days that restock the freezer: a minestrone, a chicken casserole and a beef keema on Saturday, and a fish and sweetcorn chowder and a beef and mushroom ragu on Sunday. Before you start, check you have 16 freezer bags or containers and a freezer with room for them.

Meal Plan 7: Quick, from the Freezer

Day 6 · Saturday · Batch day 1

Today at a glance. This is the first of two batch-cooking days. Today you cook **three pots of four portions each**: a minestrone, a chicken casserole and a beef keema. You eat one portion of the minestrone for lunch and one portion of the casserole for dinner, and the rest goes into the freezer for next week's busy days. The keema is frozen entirely. Plan on about 2 hours 30 minutes in the kitchen, but most of it is simmering time. Every quantity in the three batch recipes is for **four portions**, in metric with UK names.

BEFORE YOU START

You need about 10 freezer bags or shallow containers today (and 6 more tomorrow), a permanent marker for labels, and room in the freezer. Freezer bags laid flat take up the least room and defrost fastest. Read the "Freezing guide" at the end of this chapter before you cook.

Breakfast

BREAKFAST

Tomato, Spinach and Cheese Omelette

10 minutes

1 frying pan

Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

2 eggs

1 small tomato

20 g baby spinach

20 g mature Cheddar cheese

1 tsp olive oil

Salt and black pepper

METHOD

1. Grate the cheese, chop the tomato, 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 tomato, spinach and cheese over one half.
5. Fold the empty half over the filling, cook for 30 more seconds, and slide the omelette onto a plate.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY START

Eggs give protein, the tomato and spinach add vitamins and iron, and a little strong cheese adds a lot of flavour. It is a quick, light start before a long cooking day.

SWAPS

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

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

The image consists of a solid dark blue background. A thin, horizontal green line is positioned near the top edge. In the upper-left corner, the text "Lunch: batch 1" is displayed in a white, sans-serif font.

Vegetable and Butter Bean Minestrone

15 minutes prep

35 minutes cooking

Makes 4 portions

1 large pan

INGREDIENTS (MAKES 4 PORTIONS, ABOUT 350 G EACH)

2 onions**3** carrots**2** courgettes**3 cloves** garlic**1 tin** chopped tomatoes (400 g)**1 tin** butter beans (400 g), drained and rinsed**1** reduced-salt vegetable stock cube**600 ml** boiling water**1 tsp** dried oregano**2 tsp** olive oil

Black pepper

30 g small dried pasta, for today's bowl only

METHOD

1. Peel the onions and carrots and cut them into small cubes, about 1 cm. Trim the courgettes and cut them into similar cubes. Peel and chop the garlic.
2. Heat the oil in a very large pan over a medium heat. Cook the onions and carrots for 8 minutes, stirring now and then, until the onions are soft.
3. Add the garlic and oregano and stir for 30 seconds. Add the courgettes, tomatoes, beans, the crumbled stock cube and the boiling water. Add plenty of black pepper.
4. Bring to a simmer, partly cover, and cook for 25 minutes, stirring now and then, until the carrots are very tender. Crush a few of the beans against the side of the pan to thicken the soup.
5. Taste, and add a little salt if you need it. This is the soup without pasta, so you can freeze it.

6. For today's lunch, ladle one portion (about 350 g) into a small pan, add 100 ml of water and the 30 g of pasta, and simmer for 8 to 10 minutes until the pasta is tender. Eat it with a slice of wholemeal toast if you like.
7. Let the rest of the pot cool, then divide it into 3 portions and freeze it, following the freezing guide at the end of this chapter. Label them "Minestrone, no pasta" with the date.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY LUNCH

It is mostly vegetables and beans, so it is high in fibre and protein and very low in fat. The soup freezes well, and adding the pasta on the day means it tastes freshly made.

SWAPS

A handful of green beans, some cabbage or a stick of celery with the carrots. Cannellini beans in place of the butter beans. A spoonful of pesto or a little grated cheese on top when serving.

Shopping list for this recipe (batch of 4)

Dinner: batch 2

Chicken and Vegetable Casserole with Couscous

20 minutes prep

45 minutes cooking

Makes 4 portions

1 large pan

INGREDIENTS (MAKES 4 PORTIONS, ABOUT 350 G EACH)

600 g boneless, skinless chicken thighs

2 onions

3 carrots

2 cloves garlic

1 tin chopped tomatoes (400 g)

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

1 reduced-salt vegetable stock cube

400 ml boiling water

1 tsp smoked paprika

1 tsp dried thyme

2 tsp olive oil

Salt and black pepper

60 g couscous, for today's bowl only

80 ml boiling water, for today's couscous

METHOD

1. Trim any hard fat from the chicken and cut each thigh into 4 or 5 pieces, about 3 cm. Peel and chop the onions and garlic. Peel the carrots and cut them into chunks about 1.5 cm thick.
2. Heat 1 tsp of the oil in a large flameproof casserole or pan over a medium-high heat. Brown half the chicken for 4 minutes, turning, and move it to a plate. Repeat with the rest of the oil and chicken. Wash your hands, the board and the knife.
3. Add the onions to the same pan and cook for 5 minutes until soft. Add the carrots and cook for 3 more minutes, then stir in the garlic, paprika and thyme for 30 seconds.

4. Return the chicken and any juices to the pan. Add the tomatoes, beans, the crumbled stock cube, the boiling water and some pepper. Stir and bring to a simmer.
5. Partly cover and cook gently for 35 minutes, stirring now and then, until the chicken is very tender and the sauce is thick. Add a splash of water if it gets too dry.
6. 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. Taste, and add a little salt if you need it.
7. For today's dinner, 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, then fluff it with a fork. Serve one portion (about 350 g) of casserole over the couscous.
8. Let the rest of the pot cool, then divide it into 3 portions and freeze it, following the freezing guide at the end of this chapter. Label them "Chicken casserole" with the date.

CHICKEN SAFETY

Cook the chicken through before you cool it, and get the rest into the fridge within an hour of the end of cooking. Wash your hands, the board and the knife after handling raw chicken, and do not rinse the raw chicken in the sink. Never leave the pot on the worktop to cool for hours.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY DINNER

Chicken thighs stay juicy when reheated, and the beans and vegetables mean each portion is half vegetables and beans. There is no flour or cream, and only 2 tsp of oil between four portions.

SWAPS

A red pepper or some mushrooms in place of one carrot. A bay leaf in the pot. Use drained chickpeas in place of the butter beans.

[Shopping list for this recipe \(batch of 4\)](#)

Freezer only: batch 3

Beef Keema with Peas

15 minutes prep

35 minutes cooking

Makes 4 portions

All frozen

INGREDIENTS (MAKES 4 PORTIONS, ABOUT 250 G EACH; THE PEAS ARE ADDED WHEN YOU REHEAT IT)

500 g lean beef mince (5% fat)

2 onions

2 carrots

3 cloves garlic

1 tin chopped tomatoes (400 g)

2 tsp ground cumin

2 tsp ground coriander

1 tsp ground turmeric

1 tsp smoked paprika

1 reduced-salt vegetable stock cube

200 ml boiling water

2 tsp olive oil

Salt and black pepper

METHOD

1. Peel and finely chop the onions and garlic. Peel the carrots and grate them on the coarse side of a grater.
2. Heat the oil in a large pan over a medium-high heat. Add the mince and cook for 6 minutes, breaking it up with a spoon, until it is brown all over with no pink left. Tip off any extra fat.
3. Add the onions and carrots and cook for 5 minutes. Stir in the garlic, cumin, coriander, turmeric and paprika for 1 minute.
4. Add the tomatoes, the crumbled stock cube, the boiling water, a pinch of salt and some pepper. Bring to a simmer, partly cover, and cook for 25 minutes, stirring now and then,

until the sauce is thick and the mince is tender.

5. Taste, and add a little more salt if you need it. Let it cool, then divide it into 4 portions and freeze it, following the freezing guide below. Label them "Keema (add peas)" with the date.

WHY IT IS HEALTHY

Lean mince with plenty of onion and carrot and a blend of warm spices gives a lot of flavour without cream or much oil. The peas added when you reheat it give fibre and protein.

SWAPS

Turkey mince for a lighter keema. A teaspoon of grated ginger with the garlic. A pinch of chilli flakes for heat.

Shopping list for this recipe (batch of 4)

Plan of attack

Three pots at once sounds like a lot, but the work is mostly chopping and then waiting. A sensible order is:

1. **Start with the casserole** (it takes the longest): chop, brown the chicken and get it simmering. About 30 minutes of work.
2. **While it simmers, chop for the minestrone** and start it in a second pan. About 20 minutes of work.
3. **Brown the mince for the keema** in the first free pan, and get it simmering. About 15 minutes of work.
4. **Eat lunch** (a bowl of minestrone) and then **dinner** (a bowl of casserole). Cool and freeze the rest as each pot finishes.

Freezing guide

1. **Cool quickly.** Hot food must cool to room temperature within about an hour. Divide it into freezer bags or shallow containers, or stand the pot in a sink of cold water and stir it now and

then. Never put a hot pot straight into the freezer, because it warms the other food.

2. **Portion.** Fill each bag with one portion (about 350 g of minestrone or casserole, about 250 g of keema). Press the air out, seal it, and lay it flat.
3. **Label.** Write the dish, the date and "reheat once" on each bag with a permanent marker.
4. **Chill, then freeze.** Put the cooled portions in the fridge for up to an hour, then in the freezer, laid flat on a tray until solid, and stack them afterwards. Aim to freeze everything within 2 hours of cooking.
5. **Use within 3 months.** Defrost in the fridge overnight, reheat until steaming hot all the way through, reheat only once, and never refreeze a defrosted portion.

COMING UP TOMORROW

Sunday is batch day 2: a berry yoghurt pot for breakfast, a fish and sweetcorn chowder for lunch, and a beef and mushroom ragu with pasta for dinner. Each makes four portions, with one eaten fresh and three frozen. If you bought frozen fish, take it out of the freezer tonight to defrost in the fridge.

Meal Plan 7: Quick, from the Freezer

Day 7 · Sunday · Batch day 2

Today at a glance. The second batch-cooking day. Today you cook **two pots of four portions each**: a fish and sweetcorn chowder and a beef and mushroom ragu. You eat one portion of each fresh, and freeze the other three. Together with yesterday's pots, that gives you 16 portions in the freezer. Plan on about 1 hour 45 minutes in the kitchen, mostly simmering. Every quantity in the two batch recipes is for **four portions**, in metric with UK names.

BEFORE YOU START

You need 6 freezer bags or shallow containers today, a permanent marker, and room in the freezer. If the fish is frozen, it should have been defrosting in the fridge since last night. Read the "Freezing guide" in Saturday's chapter if you have not already.

Breakfast

BREAKFAST

Berry Yoghurt Pot

3 minutes

No cooking

3 ingredients

Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

150 g plain Greek-style yoghurt

30 g porridge oats

80 g frozen mixed berries

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.
3. Eat straight away. Remember to make Monday's overnight oats (chapter 1) before bed tonight.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY START

Greek yoghurt gives protein and the oats give fibre, so the pot keeps you full through a busy cooking morning. The berries add sweetness and vitamin C with no sugar.

SWAPS

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

[Shopping list for this recipe](#)

Lunch: batch 4

Fish and Sweetcorn Chowder

15 minutes prep

25 minutes cooking

Makes 4 portions

1 large pan

INGREDIENTS (MAKES 4 PORTIONS, ABOUT 350 G EACH)

500 g skinless white fish fillets (cod, haddock or pollock), fresh or fully defrosted

2 medium leeks (about 300 g once trimmed)

1 onion

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

300 g frozen sweetcorn

1 reduced-salt vegetable stock cube

500 ml boiling water

2 tsp olive oil

Black pepper

50 ml semi-skimmed milk, for today's bowl only

2 slices wholemeal bread, for today's bowl only

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. Peel the onion and chop it small.
2. Pat the fish dry with kitchen paper, check it for small bones, and cut it into chunks of about 3 cm. Wash your hands, the board and the knife.
3. Heat the oil in a large pan over a medium heat. Add the leeks and onion with a splash of water, cover, and cook for 8 minutes, stirring now and then, until soft.
4. Add the beans, sweetcorn, the crumbled stock cube, the boiling water and some pepper. Bring to a simmer and cook for 10 minutes.
5. Use a stick blender to blitz about a third of the soup, or mash some of the beans against the side of the pan, to thicken it and leave the rest chunky.

6. Add the fish, push it down into the soup, and simmer gently for 4 to 5 minutes, until it is opaque all the way through and flakes easily with a fork. Do not stir hard, or it breaks up. It will cook a little more when you reheat it, so do not overcook it now.
7. Taste, and add a little salt if you need it. This is the chowder without the milk, which is added when you serve or reheat it, so it does not split in the freezer.
8. For today's lunch, ladle one portion (about 350 g) into a small pan, add the 50 ml of milk, heat it gently for 2 minutes until steaming hot, and eat it with the toast.
9. Let the rest of the pot cool, then divide it into 3 portions and freeze it, following the freezing guide in Saturday's chapter. Label them "Fish chowder" with the date and "use within 2 months".

FISH SAFETY

Fish spoils quickly, so cool and chill the chowder within an hour of cooking, and freeze it within 2 hours. Never leave it on the worktop to cool for hours. A fish dish should be frozen for no more than 2 months. Defrost it fully in the fridge, reheat it once until steaming hot all the way through, and never refreeze it.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY LUNCH

White fish is lean and high in protein, and the beans and blended vegetables thicken the chowder without cream or butter. Using milk only at serving keeps the freezer batch light.

SWAPS

Smoked haddock or coley in place of half the white fish, for more flavour. A handful of frozen peas stirred in at the end. A squeeze of lemon and some chopped parsley when serving.

Shopping list for this recipe (batch of 4)

Dinner: batch 5

Beef and Mushroom Ragu with Pasta

15 minutes prep

40 minutes cooking

Makes 4 portions

1 large pan plus a pasta pan

INGREDIENTS (MAKES 4 PORTIONS, ABOUT 350 G EACH)

500 g lean beef mince (5% fat)**250 g** mushrooms (button or chestnut)**2** onions**2** carrots**3 cloves** garlic**2 tins** chopped tomatoes (400 g each)**1** reduced-salt vegetable stock cube**100 ml** boiling water**1 tsp** dried oregano**2 tsp** olive oil

Salt and black pepper

75 g dried pasta shapes or spaghetti, for today's bowl only

METHOD

1. Peel and chop the onions and garlic. Peel the carrots and grate them on the coarse side of a grater. Wipe the mushrooms with kitchen paper and chop them small.
2. Heat 1 tsp of the oil in a very large pan over a medium-high heat. Add the mushrooms and cook for 5 minutes, until they are soft and the liquid has gone. Tip them onto a plate.
3. Add the remaining oil and the mince to the pan and cook for 6 minutes, breaking it up with a spoon, until it is brown all over with no pink left. Tip off any extra fat.
4. Add the onions and carrots and cook for 5 minutes. Stir in the garlic and oregano for 30 seconds. Return the mushrooms to the pan.
5. Add the tomatoes, the crumbled stock cube, the boiling water, a pinch of salt and some pepper. Bring to a simmer and cook for 30 minutes with the lid off, stirring now and

then, until the sauce is thick and the mince is tender.

6. Taste, and add a little more salt if you need it.
7. For today's dinner, cook the 75 g of pasta in boiling water following the packet, drain it, and toss it with one portion (about 350 g) of the ragu.
8. Let the rest of the pot cool, then divide it into 3 portions and freeze it, following the freezing guide in Saturday's chapter. Label them "Beef ragu" with the date.

MINCE SAFETY

Cook the mince until there is no pink left, and wash your hands and anything that touched the raw mince. Cool the pot quickly and freeze the portions within 2 hours of the end of cooking. Cook the pasta fresh on the day you eat each portion, and do not freeze it in the sauce.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY DINNER

The mushrooms and vegetables mean each portion has less beef than a plain mince sauce, with lots of fibre and very little added oil. Four portions come from one pot, and the pasta is cooked fresh each time.

SWAPS

Green lentils or a tin of drained brown lentils, for a vegetarian ragu or to stretch the mince. A grated courgette with the carrots. A splash of balsamic vinegar or a spoonful of tomato purée for a richer sauce.

[Shopping list for this recipe \(batch of 4\)](#)

Plan of attack

1. **Start with the ragu** (it takes the longest): brown the mushrooms and mince and get the sauce simmering. About 30 minutes of work.
2. **While it simmers, start the chowder**: chop the leeks, soften them, and simmer the base. About 20 minutes of work, and the fish goes in just before you eat.
3. **Eat lunch** (a bowl of chowder), then **dinner** (ragu with pasta). Cool and freeze the rest as each pot finishes.

Your freezer after this weekend

When you have finished, you should have 16 labelled portions:

- **Minestrone, no pasta:** 3 portions
- **Chicken casserole:** 3 portions
- **Beef keema (add peas):** 4 portions
- **Fish chowder:** 3 portions
- **Beef ragu:** 3 portions

Next week's five dinners use one of each (the ragu, the casserole, the minestrone, the keema and the chowder), leaving 11 portions for later busy weeks.

THAT IS THE WEEKEND

You have cooked and frozen a whole busy week of dinners. Chapter 8 is the combined shopping list for the whole plan, with the freezer plan and a one-page "start here" schedule.

Meal Plan 7: Quick, from the Freezer

Chapter 8 · Weekly shopping list

How to use this list. It merges the shopping lists of all 22 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. Monday to Friday are one portion each, reheated from the freezer, and need no shopping beyond the sides. Saturday and Sunday are the batch-cooking days, and their quantities are for four portions, so they carry most of this list. The weekly cycle below shows when to defrost and when to cook. 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)	2 packs of 500 g (1 kg)	Sat 500 g (keema), Sun 500 g (ragu)
Boneless, skinless chicken thighs	600 g	Sat (casserole)
White fish fillets, skinless (cod, haddock or pollock)	500 g, fresh or frozen	Sun (chowder)
Tuna in spring water (about 145 g tin)	1 small tin	Thu (pitta)

Fruit and vegetables

ITEM	BUY	USED IN
Onions	9	Sat 6 (minestrone 2, casserole 2, keema 2), Sun 3 (chowder 1, ragu 2)

ITEM	BUY	USED IN
Garlic	2 small heads (11 cloves needed)	Sat 8, Sun 3
Carrots	11	Mon 1, Sat 8, Sun 2
Courgettes	2	Sat (minestrone)
Leeks	2 medium	Sun (chowder)
Mushrooms (button or chestnut)	1 punnet, 250 g	Sun (ragu)
Tomatoes	2 small	Tue (wrap), Sat (omelette)
Cucumber	1 small (5 cm needed)	Wed (sandwich)
Baby spinach	1 bag, at least 100 g	Mon, Tue, Wed, Thu and Sat, 20 g each
Bananas	2	Mon (overnight oats), Wed (toast)
Eating apple	1	Thu (porridge)

Dairy and eggs

ITEM	BUY	USED IN
Eggs	1 box of 6	6 needed: Tue 2, Fri 2, Sat 2
Plain Greek-style yoghurt	1 pot, 500 g (about 245 g needed)	Mon 50 g, Wed 1 tbsp, Thu 30 g, Sun 150 g
Semi-skimmed milk	1 litre (about 635 ml needed)	Mon 120 ml, Tue 200 ml, Thu 200 ml, Fri and Sun 65 ml
Mature Cheddar cheese	1 small block, about 200 g (80 g needed)	Wed 30 g, Fri 30 g, Sat 20 g
Hummus	1 small tub, 90 g needed	Mon 60 g, Tue 30 g

Bread and bakery

ITEM	BUY	USED IN
Wholemeal bread	1 small loaf	About 13 slices: Wed 6, Fri 4, Sat 1, Sun 2
Wholemeal pitta bread	1 pack	Mon 1, Thu 1. Freeze the rest
Wholemeal tortilla wraps	1 pack	Tue 1, Fri 1. Freeze the rest

Frozen

ITEM	BUY	USED IN
Sweetcorn	1 bag, at least 360 g	Thu 60 g (pitta), Sun 300 g (chowder)
Peas	1 small bag, at least 60 g	Thu (keema)
Mixed berries	1 small bag, at least 80 g	Sun (breakfast)

Tins, jars and bottles

ITEM	BUY	USED IN
Chopped tomatoes (400 g tin)	5 tins	Sat 3 (minestrone, casserole, keema), Sun 2 (ragu)
Butter beans (400 g tin)	2 tins	Sat 1 (minestrone), 1 (casserole)
Cannellini beans (400 g tin)	1 tin	Sun (chowder)
Baked beans, reduced sugar and salt	1 small tin (200 g), or half of a 400 g tin	Fri (quesadilla)
Peanut butter, 100% peanuts	1 small jar	Mon 1 tbsp
Wholegrain or Dijon mustard	1 small jar (optional)	Wed 1 tsp

Dry goods

ITEM	BUY	USED IN
Porridge oats	1 bag	About 150 g: Mon 40 g, Tue 40 g, Thu 40 g, Sun 30 g
Raisins	1 small bag	Tue 15 g
Dried pasta shapes or spaghetti	1 pack	Mon 75 g, Sun 75 g
Small dried pasta (macaroni or small shells)	1 small pack	Wed 30 g, Sat 30 g
Couscous	1 small pack	Tue 60 g, Sat 60 g
Long-grain white rice (basmati)	1 small bag	Thu 60 g
Reduced-salt vegetable stock cubes	1 small box (5 cubes needed)	Sat 3, Sun 2

Cupboard check

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

- **Olive oil:** about 12 tsp (4 tbsp, 60 ml) over the week
- **Salt and black pepper:** used in most recipes
- **Smoked paprika:** 2 tsp (Sat)
- **Ground cumin:** 2 1/2 tsp (Fri, Sat)
- **Ground coriander:** 2 tsp (Sat). May be new
- **Ground turmeric:** 1 tsp (Sat). May be new
- **Dried oregano:** 2 tsp (Sat, Sun)
- **Dried thyme:** 1 tsp (Sat)
- **Ground cinnamon:** 3/4 tsp (Tue, Wed, Thu)

Equipment

- 16 freezer bags (about 1 litre) or shallow freezer-safe containers with lids, and a permanent marker for labels

- A very large pan (Sat, Sun) and a second large pan or a flameproof casserole dish with a lid (Sat)
- A stick blender (Sun, optional, a masher works)
- A baking tray or the sink, for cooling pots quickly (Sat, Sun)
- A microwave-safe bowl for reheating (Mon to Fri)
- A frying pan (Tue, Fri, Sat) and a toaster
- A sharp knife, a chopping board and a coarse grater

Start here: the weekly cycle

The first time you use this plan, cook the weekend first (Saturday and Sunday, chapters 6 and 7), then follow Monday to Friday the week after. After that, each weekend restocks the freezer for the next busy week.

DAY	NIGHT BEFORE, OR WHAT TO COOK	AT DINNER TIME, OR THE BATCH WORK
Mon	Take a ragu portion out of the freezer into the fridge. Make the overnight oats the evening before	Cook pasta, reheat the ragu 6 to 8 minutes
Tue	Take a casserole portion out of the freezer into the fridge	Reheat 8 to 10 minutes, soak the couscous
Wed	Take a minestrone portion out of the freezer into the fridge	Simmer with 30 g of small pasta and 100 ml water for 8 to 10 minutes
Thu	Take a keema portion out of the freezer into the fridge	Rice on, reheat the keema 6 to 8 minutes, add peas for 3 minutes
Fri	Take a chowder portion out of the freezer into the fridge	Warm gently with 50 ml milk for 8 to 10 minutes
Sat	Defrost the mince and chicken in the fridge if frozen	Batch day 1: cook minestrone, casserole and keema (about 2 hours 30 minutes)
Sun	Defrost the fish in the fridge if frozen	Batch day 2: cook chowder and ragu (about 1 hour 45 minutes)

Defrost schedule

Each weekday dinner is one frozen portion. Take it out of the freezer the evening before, or on the morning of the day, and put it in a covered container on the bottom shelf of the fridge. Defrost it in the fridge, never on the worktop. If you forget, defrost it in the microwave on the defrost setting and reheat it straight away. Raw meat and fish for the weekend should be defrosted in the fridge the evening before you cook it.

ITEM	COOK ON	TAKE OUT OF THE FREEZER, OR DEFROST
Beef mince, 2 packs (if frozen)	Sat and Sun	Fri evening
Chicken thighs (if frozen)	Sat	Fri evening
White fish (if frozen)	Sun	Sat evening
Beef ragu portion	Mon	Sun evening or Mon morning
Chicken casserole portion	Tue	Mon evening or Tue morning
Minestrone portion	Wed	Tue evening or Wed morning
Beef keema portion	Thu	Wed evening or Thu morning
Fish chowder portion	Fri	Thu evening or Fri morning

FREEZER SAFETY

Cool every pot within about an hour, divide it into shallow bags or containers, chill it, and freeze it within 2 hours of cooking. Use meat and vegetable dishes within 3 months and the fish chowder within 2 months. Defrost in the fridge, reheat until steaming hot all the way through (75°C in the middle if you have a thermometer), reheat only once, and never refreeze a portion that has defrosted. Throw away any portion that has been defrosted for more than 2 days.

Freezer tips

- Label every bag with the dish, the date and 'reheat once', so nothing sits in the freezer unrecognised for months.
- Lay bags flat to freeze, then stack them like files. They take up the least space and defrost the fastest.
- Keep the oldest portions at the front of the freezer and use them first.

- Cool food quickly: divide it into shallow bags, or stand the pot in a sink of cold water. Freeze within 2 hours of cooking.
- Freeze the pasta, rice and couscous separately, or not at all. Cook them fresh on the day, which takes 5 to 10 minutes.
- Use the freezer portions from Plans 3, 4 and 6 too. A pie, a pasta bake or a stew fits straight into the same weekday routine.

Using up leftovers

- After one weekend you have 16 labelled portions in the freezer: 3 minestrone, 3 casserole, 4 keema, 3 chowder and 3 ragu. The next busy week uses 5 of them, one of each dish, so 11 portions are left for later busy weeks.
- Eggs: none spare if you buy a box of 6. Hummus, yoghurt and Cheddar: use by the dates on the packs. Grated cheese freezes well.
- Half a tin of baked beans (if you opened a large tin): keep in a covered container in the fridge and use within 2 days.
- Spare pitta, wraps and bread: freeze in a bag and take out what you need.
- Defrosted portions: use within 2 days of defrosting and never refreeze them. If a plan changes, cook the portion the same day.

THAT COMPLETES MEAL PLAN 7

Five weekday dinners that are a 10-minute reheat, a weekend of batch cooking that stocks the freezer with 16 portions, three beef dinners (Monday, Thursday and Sunday), a fish dinner on Friday, a vegetarian dinner on Wednesday and a shopping list to match. This is a new way of cooking, so note what works and what does not, and we can revise any recipe once you have tried it.