

Healthy Eating on a Budget

Healthy eating doesn't mean buying expensive food. Here are some things you can do to keep costs down:

Dates

- It is important to be familiar with food date labels and what they mean in order to ensure food is not being chucked unnecessarily!
- “Display until” and “sell by” labels can confuse us, but they are meant for shopkeepers only.
- “Use By”: This is found on foods where there is a safety risk, and the food should not be eaten after this date, even if it looks or smells fine, as it may cause us to become ill. These foods usually go off sooner, so plan to use these soon after purchase.
- “Best Before”: This date refers only quality rather than safety. After this date the product will be perfectly safe for us to eat but there may be losses to quality, such as texture or colour.
- Try writing on food packs when they were opened, for example, ham, as this avoids confusion.

Storage

- Store the oldest foods to front so that they are used first
- If you aren't going to use a food by its use by date, wrap it and freeze it for when needed
- Most fruit and vegetables can last up to two weeks longer in the fridge (except bananas, pineapples, onions and potatoes) particularly when kept in their packaging, compared to out in the fruit bowl.
- Don't store bread in the fridge, as it goes stale up to six times faster than when at ambient temperatures (e.g. in a bread bin). Freezing bread is a great option especially if you live alone, defrosting only as you need it. You can toast bread directly from the freezer.
- Our fridges should be kept at 0–5°C. Many of our fridges are set to higher than this, causing food to go off quicker.
- Save leftovers by cooling as quickly as possible, transferring to an airtight container and either storing the fridge for up to 2 days, or in the freezer until needed.

- Make yourself aware of correct portion sizes, by using a portion calculator or app, so you are only cooking what's needed. Not only is it healthier, but you will also reduce waste.

Shopping Tips

- A deal is only a bargain if you need the extra supplies!
- Collect money off–coupons from supermarkets' own magazines and local newspapers
- Before you shop, make sure to check your supplies to see what you already have
- Could you buy in bulk, and if so do you have room to store it properly?
- Write a shopping list based on a meal plan and stick to it!
- Don't go shopping hungry, as you will most likely buy more
- Own brands are often much cheaper and usually very similar to the more expensive options
- Round prices to the nearest pound, and keep a tally as you shop as an indication of how much you're spending
- Frozen and tinned fruit and vegetables have the same nutritional value as fresh but last longer, have no waste and are much cheaper. Make sure to avoid those in syrup, as it is high in sugar.
- Buy fruit and vegetables when they are in season, as they are cheaper
- Tinned tomatoes can be cheap and versatile. Use them to make soup, sauces and stews.
- Lower cost vegetables include onions, carrots, cabbage, frozen mixed veg and frozen peas. Bulk up meals with veg and pulses. They are cheaper than meat.
- Apples and bananas cost less than chocolate and crisps so choosing healthy snacks will save money.
- Cheap cuts of red meat can be high in fat. It is better to buy a smaller amount of lean meat. You'll get more out of it as you don't have to cut the fat off.
- If you do buy cheaper cuts of meat, cut the fat off beforehand and skim off the fat while cooking. Ask the butcher for advice on the best way to cook cheap cuts.
- Tinned salmon contains the same heart friendly omega 3 oils but is cheaper than fresh fish. But buy tins with the fish in fresh spring water, not brine (salt water) or oil.
- Make your own sandwiches instead of buying them.

- Porridge oats (hot or cold with low fat yoghurt) are a cheap, filling and healthy breakfast.

Using up leftovers

- Use up bread that's going stale by using as breadcrumbs on top of casseroles or bakes.
- Don't throw bruised fruit away – simply cut away the bruised parts! Fruit which is getting old can often be stewed or used in cooking, such as fruit crumbles or banana cake, as well as in smoothies.
- If you've cooked too much pasta, rinse it in cold water and freeze it in meal sized portions to use when needed.
- Leftover beans can be made more exciting by adding curry or chilli powder
- Leftovers can almost always be used in a sandwich for lunch the next day
- Use up pasta or potatoes in a salad
- Use up leftover vegetables or cheese in an omelette or as part of a bake

Store Cupboard Essentials

- Here are some storage cupboard essentials to ensure you will always be prepared for a great home-cooked meal:
- When you can afford to, stock up on pasta (wholewheat is best), rice and tinned fruit, veg or beans. Or buy them when there is an offer on. They last for ages.
- Balsamic Vinegar
- Chutney
- Crushed chillies flakes
- Curry Paste
- Flour
- Herbs & spices (such as paprika, curry powder, cumin, turmeric, chilli powder, rosemary, basil)
- Honey
- Ketchup
- Worcestershire Sauce
- Marmite

- Mustard
- Noodles
- Olive Oil
- Peppercorn
- Raisins
- Salt
- Sardines
- Stir-fry sauce
- Sesame oil
- Soy sauce
- Stock cubes
- Sunflower oil
- Tabasco
- Beans & pulses (such as butter beans, kidney beans, chickpeas etc)
- Coconut milk
- Tinned tomatoes

Store Cupboard Meals

Spicy Tomato & Lentil Soup

Ingredients:

1 onion

2 cloves garlic

Olive oil

Tsp ground coriander

Tsp ground cumin

Tsp tumeric

Tsp paprika

Pinch chilli flakes

½ bad dried lentils

1 ½ pints stock

1 or 2 tins chopped tomatoes (depending on preference)

Dollop tomato puree

Method:

1. Finely chop onion and gently fry with the garlic with some oil until soft
2. Add spices and stir them in with the onions
3. Rinse lentils in a sieve and add them to the pan with stock
4. Bring to the boil, stirring occasionally and then turn the heat down and simmer for about 15 – 20 mins (keep stirring now and then to prevent burning!)
5. You may need to add more water as the soup cooks, as the lentils may absorb some and begin to stick to the bottom
6. Stir in the chopped tomatoes and tomato puree and simmer for another 10 minutes
7. Once lentils are soft, remove from the heat and blend with a blender
8. Note: You could also use tinned lentils if that's what you have, but you'll need to reduce the cooking time and amount of fluid

Pesto & Tomato Pasta

Ingredients

- 1 onion
- 3 garlic cloves
- 4 tbsp olive oil
- 2 cans chopped tomatoes
- 190g jar basil pesto
- few capers or olives (optional)
- 140g white bread – stale or fresh, whizzed into crumbs (or 140g/5oz breadcrumbs)
- 50g pine nuts, roughly chopped
- 4 tbsp grated parmesan, or vegetarian alternative (optional)
- 25g butter
- 350g pasta (preferably wholewheat)

Method

1. Finely chop onion and crush garlic. Gently cook the onion and half the garlic in 2 tbsp olive oil for 10 mins until soft.
2. Stir in the tomatoes and simmer for 15–20 mins. Add in half the pesto, seasoning and a few capers or olives, if you have them. Cover and keep warm.
3. While the sauce is simmering, heat oven to 220oC/200oC fan/gas 7. Toss the crumbs in a large baking tray with the remaining 2 tbsp olive oil, the rest of the garlic, the pine nuts and Parmesan. Bake for 10 mins, stirring a few times, until golden. Dot over the butter and return to the oven for 2 mins more.
4. Meanwhile, bring a pan of water to the boil and cook pasta. Drain, reserving a little cooking water. Stir through the sauce with a splash of cooking water to loosen if needed, ripple through the remaining pesto and serve scattered with golden crumbs.

Tuna Bean Salad

Ingredients:

- 500g salad potatoes
- 4 tbsp olive oil, plus extra for drizzling
- 1 tbsp lemon juice
- ½ tsp chilli powder
- 1 garlic clove, crushed
- 410g can cannellini beans, drained and rinsed (or any similar beans you have such as kidney beans)

1 small red onion, finely chopped (or half medium one)
handful of parsley, chopped
200g tin tuna, drained
110g bag mixed salad leaves and herbs

Method:

1. Boil potatoes for about 15 minutes until tender. Meanwhile, make the dressing: Whisk the oil, lemon juice, chilli powder and garlic in a bowl big enough to take all the salad. Tip in the beans, onion and parsley.
2. Drain potatoes and once cool enough to handle, cut them in half lengthways.
3. Gently stir potatoes into salad and flake in tuna. Pile on to a bed of salad leaves, drizzled with a little extra olive oil.

Tuna Pasta Bake

Ingredients:

600g wholewheat pasta (any type you have on hand)
50g butter
50g plain flour
600ml milk
250g strong cheddar, grated
2 x 160g tins tuna, drained
330g tin sweetcorn, drained
large handful chopped parsley

Method:

1. Heat oven to 180oC/fan 160oC/gas 4. Boil pasta for 2 minutes less time than stated on the pack.
2. For the sauce, melt butter in a saucepan & stir in the flour. Cook for 1 minute, then gradually stir in the milk to make a thick white sauce. Remove from the heat and stir in all but a handful of cheese.
3. Drain pasta, mix with white sauce, tuna, sweetcorn and parsley, and season. Transfer to baking dish and top with remaining cheese. Bake for 15–20 minutes until golden.

Store Cupboard Curry

Ingredients:

1 large potato, cleaned and peeled
½ onion
2 tbsp oil
1 garlic clove, crushed
1 small tin chopped tomatoes
1 tbsp curry powder
1 tin chickpeas, drained
50 grams frozen veg (peas and spinach are ideal)
100mL vegetable stock

Method:

1. Cut potato into cubes and boil in saucepan for around 10 minutes. Drain and set aside
2. Heat oil in a large frying pan, add onion and cook for a few minutes until soft
3. Add the garlic and curry powder and cook for 1–2 minutes
4. Add chickpeas and potatoes, ensuring they take on the colour of the curry powder for 1–2 minutes.
5. Add the tomatoes and stock, stir thoroughly. Bring to the boil and simmer for 10 minutes
6. Place the peas and spinach in with the chick pea curry mix and cook for a further 3–4 minutes before serving.

Tuna Patties

Ingredients:

- 1 tin tuna
- 1 large potato
- 20g dried parsley
- ½ lemon for juice
- 1 egg
- 10g frozen peas (defrosted)
- 20g dried Parmesan
- 2 tbsp oil

Method:

1. Pre heat the oven to 170oC
2. Drain tuna in a sieve. Prick potato all over with a fork and cook on high in the microwave for 10–15 minutes until soft then leave out to cool.
3. Once cool enough to handle, cut potato in half and scoop out the flesh into a bowl. Add tuna, lemon zest, juice, parmesan, chopped parsley, egg and peas to the bowl as well. Mix thoroughly with your hands.
4. Split the mix in two and roll into balls. Place on a lined baking tray and gently squash to form a patty re frigerate for 10 minutes.
5. Put a frying pan on a medium heat with 2 tbsp oil. When hot, fry your cakes on both sides until golden then put back on the tray and place in the oven for 25 minutes.
6. Remove from the oven and serve.