



THE

ORGANIZED COOK

how to prepare for the busy week ahead

For my tiny family xx

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CONTENTS

Recipe Index

MODULE 1. Getting Started

MODULE 2. Building Blocks

MODULE 3. Do Ahead Meals

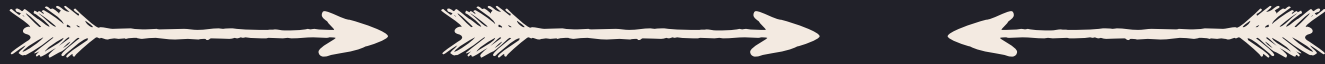
MODULE 4. Meal Plans

MODULE 5. Leftover Love

About the Author

interactive document
clickable links

RECIPE



INDEX

RECIPE INDEX

'Building Blocks'

VEGETABLES

Cooked Greens
Ready-to-Eat Veg
Whole Roast Veg
Char Grilled Zucchini
Smoky Red Peppers
Caramelised Onions
Roast Eggplant (Aubergine)
Roast Beets
Roast Butternut
Roast Diced Veg
Sofrito

GRAIN & LEGUMES

Lovely Lentils
Cooked Quinoa
A Big Pot of Beans
Green Split Peas
Perfect Fluffy Rice
Sprouts!
Legume Ragu

PROTEIN

Boiled Eggs
Home 'Canned' Fish
Poached Chicken Breasts
Roast or BBQ Chicken
Quick Pork Ragu
Slow Roast Brisket

SAUCES

Chilli Oil
Pesto
Hummus
Homemade Ketchup
Cheat's Hollandaise
Preserved Lemons
Easy Olive Tapenade
Onion Dressing
Lemon Tahini Sauce

SWEET TREATS

Vanilla Roast Fruit
Home Frozen Fruit

interactive document
clickable links

RECIPE INDEX

'Do Ahead Meals'

Lesh's Nourishing Dahl

Mushroom Ragu

Sweet Potato & Chickpea Tajine

Simple Fish Stew

Quick Fish Pie

Roast Chicken Soup

Easy Mushroom Chicken

Summer Meatballs

The Magic Sausage Supper

Polpettone

Rosemary Lamb Shanks

Chipotle Beef

interactive document
clickable links

Getting Started

MODULE ONE

OVERVIEW

Before we get started I just want to say a huge WELCOME to the Organized Cook. If you're ready to get more organized in the kitchen then you're totally in the right place. This program is all about helping you prepare food for the busy week ahead so you can still eat well and be well.

In Module 1 we're going to get you started and really set you up for success but before we dive into the module 1 content I just wanted to give you a quick overview of the program so you know what's ahead.

MODULE 1: Getting Started

You'll discover a secret that chefs use that will give you a head start in getting ahead of your cooking. And the good news is you won't necessarily have to sacrifice your precious free time and spend the whole weekend locked in the kitchen to make it work.

MODULE 2: Prepping Ingredients for Multiple Meals with 'Building Block' Recipes

Building block recipes are a key tool to helping you be ready to pull together delicious, healthy meals with minimum effort. Perfect for weeknight dinners. Preparing ingredients like this means you're prepared without being confined to specific meals. They're also brilliant because they also generally help to 'preserve' your ingredients meaning you'll be less likely end up with waste!



OVERVIEW...

For those days when you just want to come home and have dinner already made. This module is all about arming you with a collection of new ideas to help you get ahead and 'cook once, eat twice' or more...

MODULE 4. Meal Planning

For those weeks when you can't be bothered to 'think' about what to cook, this module has you covered! Even though I normally don't like to be told what to do, every time I use one of my pre-prepared meal plans, I'm surprised just how nice it is to buy the ingredients on the shopping list and then walk into the kitchen each night and just cook from the plan.

MODULE 5. Leftover Love

In this surprise bonus module we're going to be doing a deep dive on leftovers. This includes 6 tips for Keeping leftovers safe, How to handle leftover ingredients and my favourite ways to use leftovers.

BONUSES If you haven't already, make sure you check out the 'bonues' page and download your complimentary copy of my ecookbook 'The Tired & Hungry Cook's Companion'. And there's also the Soupstones Pantry eCookbook which is all about setting yourself up with a life saving pantry. I'm a huge believer in having a well stocked pantry to help in the organization department so if you think you could do with some help I highly recommend checking out that bonus.

There will also be some 'graduation bonuses' which will be released after module 5 is complete. These include the ebook for the entire class which you will be able to download and keep forever. Your eCookbook includes links to all the videos and audio as well as the written content. There will also be surprise bonuses but we'll keep them a surprise for now :)

MAKING IT WORK



The easy way to make 'mise en place' work for you.

When it comes to getting results from this program, I have two words for you. Take. Action.

It's all well and good to watch these videos or read through the content but unless you actually take action you're not going to see any results.

So now that you're going to take action the next question is what action to take?

Here's what I recommend...

1. Make a regular 'date' with yourself for some 'mise en place'.

Think about your schedule and what is going to work best for you. It might be every Sunday afternoon or every Monday evening. Making a regular time in your schedule will help embed this as a new habit.

It doesn't need to be loads of time either. You could get away with just 15 minutes and still be able to get a few things done. But if you can allow 1/2 hour that would open up a lot more possibilities.

I recommend choosing a time when you would already be in the kitchen if you can. This way you're not creating extra cleanup work for yourself.

The easy way to make 'mise en place'
work for you...

2. Choose 1 thing to make.

Have a look through the recipes section of this module. I've started you out slowly with 7 of my favourite 'mise en place' recipes that I make on the most regular basis. I've kept the list concise for this module on purpose so you don't get overwhelmed.

In module 2 you're going to get the full compliment of over 20 different options but I really recommend choosing 1 recipe this week, buying the ingredients and then making it during your 'date' with yourself.

3. Use your chosen item during the week.

Check out the 'usage suggestions' that come with each building block recipe for ideas.

And that's it.

HABIT CHANGE



How to form life changing habits that will put the whole process on autopilot and set you up for success.

I'm a huge believer in the benefits of developing healthy habits as a way to set yourself up for success. We go into the whole psychology of habit change in great depth in the [Healthy Meal Method Program](#). So if you'd like to really go deep with habit change, I highly recommend checking out that program once you're done with The Organized Cook.

But since habit formation is so important I thought I'd run through the basics with you now...

1. Choose the habit you want to change. Since you're in this class it's probably being more organized with your shopping and cooking. But try and be more specific than that. The clearer the better.

For example your habit might be that you want to have at least 2 meals per week that you completely 'do ahead'. Or it might be that you want to get into the habit of preparing at least one 'mise en place' or building block ingredient each week.

How to form life changing habits that will put the whole process on autopilot and set you up for success...

2. Make a commitment to change. And make it public! Research shows people who share their commitment with one or more people that they care about are far more likely to succeed with their habit change.

3. Start small. This is SUPER IMPORTANT. The number 1 reason for failure in starting any new habit is that we 'bite off more than we can chew'. If we get over excited and over ambitious and you know where that leads... It's key to remind ourselves to take baby steps. It's all about progress not perfection.

4. Expect failure. Even though I consider myself to be pretty organized, there are still times when I buy too much food. Or I just cant be bothered roasting those beets and they end up going bad in the fridge. The thing with failure is that the important thing is to pick ourselves up and keep going rather than getting discouraged and giving up.

5. Keep trying. One of my favourite words is perseverance. And that's what it's all about :)

INGREDIENTS HANDLING

How to best handle fresh ingredients

One of the biggest challenges with healthy cooking is that fresh produce doesn't stay fresh forever.

You've probably had the experience of getting excited about eating healthier and gone out and stocked up on fresh veg and fruit. Only to feel overwhelmed every time you look in the fridge. And a few weeks later, you're throwing out a heap of veg gone bad with that guilty feeling.

I've been there too. And it's not great.

So we want to make sure you avoid that whole fresh produce trap. Here's how...

1. Resist the urge to over buy.

Remember when we were talking about habit change and I said how it's important to start small. I really wasn't kidding.

So when you're at the market and you're feeling excited about your new organized cooking habit. All that great looking veg will be tempting but for now it's important to take it slow. Only buy what you know you'll actually cook and eat. It's all about baby steps. About gradually building your new habit and making sure you don't go into overwhelm.



How to best handle fresh ingredients...

2. Refrigerate ASAP.

If you're not sure where to store something, the best bet it is to pop it in the refrigerator. The rule of thumb to remember is that at lower temperatures everything happens more slowly. This includes the three main causes of food spoilage: microbe growth, dehydration and oxidation.

3. Protect from exposure to the air.

Uncovered food dries out very quickly, especially in the dry air of the refrigerator. And since fresh produce, like humans, is mostly made out of water, the best thing we can do to keep our fresh things fresh is to prevent drying as much as possible.

I keep pretty much all my fruit and veg wrapped in either the plastic bags I purchased them in or I transfer them when I get them home. Having a fridge full of veg in plastic bags doesn't look as nice as having the crisper overflowing with uncovered veg. But at the end of the week when I can still pull out a head of broccoli that looks just as fresh as when I got it home from the market, I know it's worth it!

The same goes for protein.

I generally just keep my meat, fish and poultry wrapped in the packaging they were purchased in. With cheese I tend to leave it again in sealed packs. But if I buy a loose piece of parmesan I wrap it in waxed paper or baking paper and then keep in an airtight container or ziplock bag. This way the cheese can breathe but won't get dried out.

If you follow these three guidelines, you'll have most things covered.

4. Follow the 'Waste Avoidance Strategy'.

To make life easier for you and really embed these principles, I've included a 'Waste Avoidance Strategy' section with each recipe. This gives you detailed instructions for how to best store each ingredient and what to do if your plans change and you aren't going to be able to cook that meal or building block. You'll know exactly how to 'preserve' your ingredients and avoid needless waste.

However, if you're interested in learning more about minimizing waste I recommend checking out [Module 4 of Master Your Meal Plan](#).

FOOD STORAGE

4 Food storage best practices to help you minimize waste.

In the previous tab we went through the best way to handle fresh ingredients. Now we're going to focus on storage tips for cooked ingredients and meals. You'll notice a lot of common ground but I wanted to talk about them separately because there are some subtle differences.

1. Chill asap

Once something is cooked and you know it's not going to be eaten, the safest thing is to chill it quickly. Food spoilage and disease causing microbes thrive in 'warm' food so the less time spent at room temperature and above the better.

I usually leave food on the stove or bench top until it is cool enough to touch and then cover and refrigerate as soon as I can. But if I'm not going to be around, I prefer to put warm food straight into the fridge. Modern refrigerators are designed to cope.

2. Cover

As with fresh produce, uncovered cooked food quickly dries out so it's important to protect it in the fridge and freezer. I like to keep cooked food in pyrex containers with plastic lids so my food is touching glass not plastic. They're also great for stacking in the fridge. But covering a bowl with cling wrap will do the job.



4 Food storage best practices to help you minimize waste...

Just remember if you cover something hot, you'll get condensation which generally isn't a big problem but can make things soggy down the track. And longer term the higher moisture area can make it easier for mould to grow.

3. Freeze ASAP.

If you are planning to freeze something, now is better than later. Unfortunately no one has invented a freezer which magically makes food fresher than when it went into the freezer. So the earlier you freeze, the better your food will be when it gets defrosted.

We'll be covering the '7 Golden Rules of Freezing Food' and 'Defrosting 101' in Module 3 when we focus on 'Do Ahead' meals.

4. Follow the 'Storage Best Practices.'

Every recipe comes with details of how to best store and reheat. So if you're unsure just check out the recipe page and you'll know exactly what to do.

ACTION



Your Actions

Basically this is repeating how to make 'mise en place' work for you...

1. Make a regular 'date' with yourself for some 'mise en place'.
2. Choose 1 thing to make.
3. Use your chosen item during the week.
4. Share your results in the comments below or if you have a photo share on the [SVCS facebook page](#).



lovely lentils

LOVELY LENTILS

I've used French style 'Puy' lentils in the video but the recipe works equally well with all types of lentils so feel free to explore. Lentils are a brilliant source of protein and fiber so a much healthier choice than pasta or rice.

TAKES: about 30 minutes

MAKES: about 4 cups

500g (1lb) green or brown lentils, rinsed

2 brown onions, peeled & chopped

2 carrots, chopped, optional

2 sticks celery, chopped, optional

3 - 4 tablespoons soy sauce

3 - 4 tablespoons sherry or rice wine vinegar

1. Place lentils in a large saucepan with enough cold water to cover generously.
2. Add onion, carrots & celery (if using), and bring to the boil.
3. Turn the heat down to medium high and simmer rapidly for 15-20 minutes or until the lentils are cooked. I like them al dente like pasta but its up to you. If the lentils look dry add more water.
4. Drain the lentils well and place in a mixing bowl or back into the saucepan.
5. Stir in 3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil. Season with soy sauce, vinegar, and a little salt and pepper if you like.

VARIATIONS

gluten-free – make sure you use a gluten-free soy sauce such as tamari.

carnivore – lentils love pork products so feel free to serve with prosciutto, jamon or even some cooked bacon.

less veg – the veg add flavour to the lentils but aren't critical. Feel free to boil lentils on their own if you're out of veg or short on time.

herby – I often add a couple of bay leaves from the garden to my lentils. A sprig of rosemary or thyme can also add lovely fragrance.

VIDEO

LOVELY LENTILS...

USAGE SUGGESTIONS

canned alternative – anywhere that calls for canned lentils or beans. Note: 1 can drained = approx 240g / 9oz of cooked lentils.

salads – such as this [peas & lentil salad](#) or [tuna & lentil salad](#).

breakfast – as a ‘slow carb’ breakfast such as these [spinach & lentils](#). I also love them with a poached egg.

lasagne – use as a vegetarian alternative to ground or minced beef such as in this [\(almost\) 15 minute veggie lasagne](#).

chilli – instead of canned lentils in this [vegetarian chilli](#).

rice alternative – in these [egg fried lentils](#).

pasta alternative – serve with your favourite pasta sauce.

PREPARE AHEAD?

Absolutely. Takes about 30 minutes. I like to make up a big batch to have on hand for quick meals during the week.

STORAGE BEST PRACTICES

Store in an airtight container or ziplock bag. Will keep in the fridge for 2 weeks or so. Can be frozen for up to 12 months. Lentil freeze really well, similar to frozen peas and so they’re easy to defrost in a warm pan.

WASTE AVOIDANCE STRATEGY

lentils, soy, vinegar, onions – pantry.

carrots, celery – keep for months in a plastic bag in the fridge.

PROBLEM SOLVING GUIDE

mushy lentils – some lentils fall to mush very easily so you need to keep an eye on them. Next time only cook until they are al dente – so tender but still a little firm. The other option is to seek out French-style green lentils (also sometimes called puy lentils) or Italian castellecircco lentils. Both of these more expensive lentils have the advantage of not falling apart even when over cooked a little.

lentils taking forever to cook – the cooking time will vary greatly depending on the type of lentil and how long they’ve been sitting around for. I’ve also noticed that the less water you have available, the longer they take to cook so be generous with the water. You don’t need as much as you would for pasta but make sure your lentils have space to swim freely.

bland - lentils need generous seasoning which is why we’re using soy and vinegar. Feel free to add more. And don’t forget the salt.

no sherry vinegar? – no problem. Any wine vinegar including balsamic will work here or even lemon juice.

crunchy lentils – just means your lentils are undercooked. You could pop them back in the saucepan with more water or just chalk it as a lesson for next time.

burning on the bottom – not enough water. Quick add some!

Cooked greens



COOKED GREENS

Pretty much any green leafy veg can be cooked this way. Pre-cooked greens will keep in the fridge twice as long as fresh. And they take up much less space!

TAKES: 10–15 minutes

MAKES: 3–4 handfuls

3–4 tablespoons olive or coconut oil

1–2 cloves garlic, finely sliced, optional

*1 large bunch greens, washed & finely sliced
squeeze of lemon, optional*

1. Heat olive oil in a large frying pan on a medium high heat.
2. Add the garlic (if using) and the greens and a splash of water. Cover and allow to cook for about 2 minutes.
3. Stir, add more water if the greens are starting to burn then recover and cook for another few minutes. Continue to cook and stir every few minutes until the greens are just wilted.
4. Remove from the heat. Taste and season with salt, pepper and a little lemon juice, if you like.

VARIATIONS

different greens – I've used beet tops in the photo. Other options include cavolo nero, or black Tuscan cabbage, silverbeet (chard) or rainbow chard, spinach, or curly kale. I've read that radish or turnip tops can also be used but haven't ever tried.

add protein – a fried or poached egg can be a lovely accompaniment. Or serve as a side to roast meats. Or toss in a can of drained beans or lentils to heat through at the end.

change the cooking method – simmer the greens in boiling water until tender. Drain and toss in some extra virgin olive oil. I'm not a huge fan of this because you lose your water soluble vitamins.

summer greens – skip the whole cooking part and just slice the greens as finely as possible and dress with lemon juice and olive oil.

VIDEO

COOKED GREENS...

USAGE SUGGESTIONS

healthy meal – one of my favourite ‘single girl’ meals is to cook up a huge plate of greens and serve with a generous topping of grated parmesan. Or if I need more protein I add a drained can of tuna or [a poached egg](#).

warming side – use as a winter side anywhere you’d normally serve a green salad.

curry – use instead of frozen spinach in an [Indian ‘saag’](#).

with lentils – toss in a can of drained lentils or some [cooked lentils](#).

with roast veg – serve scattered with roast root veg or pumpkin and possibly a handful of almonds and a squeeze of lemon for a quick veggie meal.

PREPARE AHEAD?

Absolutely. Takes 10-15 minutes. I like to make up a big batch to have on hand for quick meals during the week.

STORAGE BEST PRACTICES

Store in an airtight container or ziplock bag. Will keep in the fridge for 2 weeks or so. Can be frozen for up to 12 months.

WASTE AVOIDANCE STRATEGY

oil, garlic – pantry.

greens – will keep in a plastic bag in the fridge for at least 2 weeks. Can be frozen if needed. If you get time to slice before freezing that will make it super easy to defrost in the pan.

lemon – will keep in a plastic bag in the fridge for months.

PROBLEM SOLVING GUIDE

burning / crispy greens – reduce the heat asap and add in a few splashes of water to generate some steam which will help the cooking process.

bitter flavours – this is probably the greens themselves, although be careful not to burn your flavourings as garlic and ginger will go bitter if burnt.

bland – don’t forget to season!

too acidic – I’ve ruined a few batches of greens by overdoing the lemon juice, A little goes a long way. Extra olive oil can help calm the situation.



cooked quinoa

COOKED QUINOA

Quinoa is actually a seed from South America. It's super high in protein and has a lovely 'chewy' texture. It only takes about 15 minutes to cook but I like to make a batch on the weekends to use for breakfasts and lunches during the week. It's great both with sweet and savoury seasonings.

TAKES: about 20 minutes

MAKES: about double the dried weight

approx 250g / 7oz quinoa

1. Bring a medium pot of water to the boil.
2. Meanwhile, Place quinoa in a fine sieve and rinse well under running water. Drain.
3. When the water is boiling, add the quinoa and simmer for 10-12 minutes or until quinoa is almost tender.
4. Drain and allow to steam and cool.
5. Transfer to an airtight container and keep in the fridge until ready to use.

VARIATIONS

different colours – quinoa comes in red, black and white. I've used a combo of all three in the picture. To be honest I can't taste much of a difference between the different varieties.

savoury – season the hot, drained quinoa with a few tablespoons each of extra virgin olive oil, sherry vinegar and soy sauce.

sweet – season the hot drained quinoa with a few pinches of brown sugar and a teaspoon or two of vanilla extract or vanilla bean paste. You could also simmer a cinnamon stick in with the quinoa.

milky - simmer in milk or half milk half water instead of just using straight water. A cinnamon stick or vanilla bean wouldn't go astray.

can't find quinoa? – you could do the same thing with brown rice or barley or even spelt. The cooking times will vary for larger grains, probably more like 30-45 minutes or even longer.

VIDEO

COOKED QUINOA...

USAGE SUGGESTIONS

breakfast – serve either cold or warm with natural yoghurt, berries and possibly some roasted almonds.

carby side – serve anywhere you'd normally serve steamed rice such as curries, stir fries or slow cooked dishes.

egg fried quinoa – brilliant alternative to rice in [egg fried rice](#).

salad – use cooked quinoa in any salad that called for canned lentils or beans such as [salmon & butter beans](#) or this [brown rice salad](#). Note: one can = 240g (9oz) cooked quinoa.

broccoli salad - one of my all time favourites.

PREPARE AHEAD?

Absolutely. Takes about 20 minutes. I like to make up a big batch to have on hand for quick meals during the week.

STORAGE BEST PRACTICES

Store in an airtight container or ziplock bag. Will keep in the fridge for 2 weeks or so. Can be frozen for up to 12 months.

WASTE AVOIDANCE STRATEGY

quinoa - pantry.

PROBLEM SOLVING GUIDE

hard / crunchy – sounds like undercooked quinoa, pop back in the saucepan with some fresh water and simmer until tender.

sticking together – this hasn't ever happened to me, but I assume if you overcook quinoa it could turn mushy. Not much you can do at this stage. But next time set your timer and be more vigilant.

bland - it's important to season the quinoa before using. You can go either sweet or savoury.

Chilli oil



CHILLI OIL

This oil has a million uses. It's lovely with pretty much everything and anything from the BBQ and makes an instant sauce for meat and fish. It's great to have around if you are living with someone like my Irishman who loves chilli with every meal.

TAKES: 20 minutes

MAKES: 2 cups

200g (7 oz) long red chillies

3 cloves garlic

2 cups extra virgin olive oil

1. Remove stems and roughly chop chillies. Peel and smash garlic.
2. Place chilli, garlic and oil in a medium saucepan and bring to a simmer over a medium heat.
3. Simmer for 5-10 minutes or until garlic is golden brown. Remove from the heat and allow to cool a little.
4. Remove half the oil and puree the chilli and garlic with a stick blender or food processor. Return solids to the oil and store in an airtight container.

VARIATIONS

short on time – make a fresh chilli oil by slicing some red chilli and cover with extra virgin olive oil. Stand for at least 5 minutes and then it's good to go. If you can let it marinate for longer you'll be rewarded with more chilli flavour.

garlic-free – sometimes I just skip the garlic.

budget – replace some, half or all the olive oil with a cheaper oil such as vegetable, rice bran, or peanut oil.

milder – deseed the chillies before adding to the pan.

hotter – toss in a handful or small red birds eye or other super hot chillies.

smooth – allow the oil to cool completely with the chilli and garlic then strain and discard the solids.

VIDEO

CHILLI OIL...

USAGE SUGGESTIONS

drizzle – drizzle the cooled oil and solids over everything from grilled halloumi, to BBQ vegetables to roast chicken. Pretty much anything that will benefit from some chilli warmth.

chilli oil eggs – use the oil to fry eggs and serve with some of the chilli solids spooned over the top.

dressings – make a warming salad dressing with 1 tablespoon lemon juice and 3-4 tablespoons chilli oil. Season well and toss through salad leaves or boiled spuds or both.

sauce for fish or chicken – stir some lemon zest through a little chilli oil and use as a sauce for steamed, grilled or pan fried fish or pan fried chicken.

PREPARE AHEAD?

Absolutely. Takes about 20 minutes. One of those things that tastes better with a bit of age!

STORAGE BEST PRACTICES

Store in a glass jar in the fridge. Better to use a wider necked jar rather than a bottle so you can spoon out the lovely solids. Will keep in the fridge for 4 weeks or so. Can be frozen for up to 12 months.

WASTE AVOIDANCE STRATEGY

chilli – freeze whole or sliced in a ziplock bag.

oil, garlic – pantry.

PROBLEM SOLVING GUIDE

too hot – dilute with more olive oil.

don't have a food processor? – finely chop the cooled chilli and garlic by hand and add back to the oil.

Whole *roast* Veg



WHOLE ROAST VEG

I used to struggle with 'good intentions' when it came to roasting veg. Often the poor things would sit there for weeks waiting for me to chop and peel and pop them in the oven. Then one day I had the bright idea to just pop the veg in the oven and deal with them later. And I haven't looked back. This is a great thing to add to the oven when you already have it on the go. Just remember to set a timer so you don't forget about them like I have on the odd occasion!

TAKES: about an hour

MAKES: as much as you cook!

whole root vegetables

1. Place veg in a baking dish or oven proof tray. Pop in the oven and heat it to 180C (350F).
2. Bake until the veg are very soft. Usually somewhere from 45 minutes to an hour.
3. Eat warm or cool and see the 'storage best practices'.

VARIATIONS

short on time – you could chop the veg into chunks (and peel too if you're into that) you'll save on cooking time but will spend extra in prep!

different veg – sweet potatoes are my favourite but you can also use whole butternut or other pumpkin, parsnip, swede (rutabaga), turnip, beets, carrots, regular potatoes or fennel (not technically a root veg but still delicious), onions and garlic are also great.

flavourings – I usually don't bother but feel free to play around with chilli, garlic, lemon zest, thyme, rosemary, sage, coriander seeds, cumin seeds or fennel seeds.

VIDEO

WHOLE ROAST VEG...

USAGE SUGGESTIONS

mash - just scoop the flesh out and use a fork to mash in some butter. Lovely as a side to BBQ meats or sausages.

alternative to pasta – serve chunks of your roast veg with your favourite pasta sauces – try it with bolognese or this [quick pork ragu](#).

soup – scoop the flesh out and use to make a soup like the [recipe over here](#). Note: the recipe linked to is a ‘template’ recipe so you’ll need to read the variations for it to make sense.

salads – chop into bite sized pieces and toss in your favourite green salad.

wraps / sandwiches – mash and use as a filling.

roast veg hummus – whizz 250g of your cooked veg with 3 tablespoons each tahini, lemon juice and extra virgin olive oil. Taste and season and use as you would use hummus.

baby food – Fergal is a big fan!

PREPARE AHEAD?

Absolutely. Takes about 60 minutes.

STORAGE BEST PRACTICES

Store with the skins still on in an airtight container or ziplock bag. Will keep in the fridge for 2-3 weeks or so. Can be frozen for up to 12 months.

WASTE AVOIDANCE STRATEGY

root veg – will keep in a plastic bag in the fridge for months. For potatoes and onions I just keep them in the pantry.

PROBLEM SOLVING GUIDE

veg burning – if they’re browning too much before getting tender, just cover with foil and keep cooking. This is why I like to set my timer so I remember to check on them every 30 minutes or so.

crunchy veg – not cooked long enough! back to the oven.

Vanilla *roast* Fruit



VANILLA ROAST FRUIT

Roasting fruit like this is brilliant for enhancing the natural sweetness without having to rely on adding processed sugar. Fergal just loves these pears and will happily gobble up 4 or 5 quarters in one sitting. But they make a super lovely dessert for adults too. I'm also quite partial to serving them with yoghurt and granola for breakfast. The quantities are totally a guideline, you can totally double or halve the recipe depending on how much fruit you need to have on hand.

TAKES: about an hour

MAKES: about 24 pieces

6-8 pears, apples, peaches, nectarines, apricots or plums

2-4 hunks of butter

1 vanilla bean, finely sliced or 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

1. Preheat your oven to 180C (350F). Quarter your fruit or chop into smaller or larger pieces as you prefer. Remove any seeds or stones.
2. Layer fruit in a baking dish. Top with butter and vanilla. Cover with foil and baked for 30 minutes.
3. Remove foil and stir. Return to the oven uncovered this time and bake for another 20-30 minutes or until the fruit is soft and slightly browned.
4. Serve warm or allow to cool and see the 'storage suggestions' below.

VARIATIONS

no vanilla? - just skip it or replace with a cinnamon stick.

dairy-free – replace butter with coconut oil or just skip it.

vanilla 'essence' – this is basically fake vanilla flavour. I prefer to use real vanilla beans or real vanilla extract. But if 'essence' is all you can get a little will be OK.

different flavourings – replace the vanilla with lemon zest, a cinnamon stick, a very small piece of star anise.

more 'saucy' – add 1/2 cup dessert wine to the pears before covering with foil.

VIDEO

VANILLA ROAST FRUIT...

USAGE SUGGESTIONS

quick dessert – serve the fruit either warm or cold with your choice of cream or ice cream.

roast fruit ‘ice cream’ – freeze cooked fruit then when you’re ready to serve whizz it in the food processor with a little cream or coconut milk until you have a lovely icecreamy texture. Eat ASAP.

breakfast – serve cold with natural yoghurt and granola or roasted nuts.

as a side – works as a wonderful dessert accompaniment to things like [panna cotta](#) or my [favourite fudgey chocolate cake](#).

pear & chocolate tart – see [recipe over here](#).

almost instant crumble – use your roast fruit in place of the canned apples in [this recipe](#).

PREPARE AHEAD?

Absolutely. Takes about 60 minutes. I like to make up a big batch to have on hand for quick healthy desserts during the week.

STORAGE BEST PRACTICES

Store in an airtight container or ziplock bag. Will keep in the fridge for 2 weeks or so. Can be frozen for up to 12 months.

WASTE AVOIDANCE STRATEGY

pears, apples, peaches, nectarines, apricots or plums – will keep for a few weeks (depending on how ripe they are) in a plastic bag in the fridge. For longer storage just pop them in the freezer to defrost and cook later.

butter – keeps in the fridge for months.

vanilla bean – pantry.

PROBLEM SOLVING GUIDE

too dry – next time make sure your foil is well sealed around the edges. For now serve with a little extra butter or cream.

burning – oven temp too hot or in there for too long!

bland – it’s all about the quality and ripeness of your fruit. Next time use riper fruit. For now serve with ice cream can hide a multitude of sins. Adding a little sugar can help as well.

not sweet enough – add a little sugar, stevia, maple syrup or honey. Better to sweeten before baking so the flavour goes through the fruit but can be done at the end.

don’t like vanilla chunks – you could scrape the seeds from the vanilla bean and discard the pods but you’ll be missing out on the extra flavour!

Ready-To-Eat *veg*



READY-TO-EAT VEG

I've been a big fan of using raw grated cauliflower as a healthy alternative to steamed rice. Over time I started grating more than I needed for the meal ahead to save getting the food processor out a second time. The surprise bonus was that having the raw grated veg in the fridge, I found myself adding them to whatever I was making. I like to think of it as a little 'veg' injection.

TAKES: 10 minutes or so

MAKES: how long is a piece of string?

raw vegetables such as cauliflower, broccoli, zucchini, carrot, cabbage, brussels sprouts, fennel, beetroot

VARIATIONS

different veg – cauliflower, broccoli, zucchini, carrot, cabbage, brussels sprouts, fennel, beetroot.

mix it up! – make a combo of any of the above.

1. Grate veg finely using your food processor. Or a coarse box grater or microplane grater. Serve ASAP or store in an airtight container in the fridge.

READY-TO-EAT VEG...

USAGE SUGGESTIONS

steamed rice alternative – just serve cold grated cauli with your hot curry or stir fry. Sometimes I almost can't tell the difference.

breakfast – I love my raw veg with [a poached egg](#) and a little mayo and sometimes a sprinkling of nutritional yeast or grated parmesan.

salads – just toss a handful in with your favourite green salad to have a boost in the veg department.

'slaw - like this [brocco-slaw](#).

PREPARE AHEAD?

Absolutely. Takes about 10 minutes.

STORAGE BEST PRACTICES

Store in an airtight container or ziplock bag. Will keep in the fridge for 1-2 weeks. The fresher they are the more nutrients will be present so best not to prep too far in advance. Can be frozen but the texture will be soft when defrosted so I usually don't freeze.

WASTE AVOIDANCE STRATEGY

veg – most whole veg will keep in the fridge in a plastic bag for 2 weeks or longer for carrots and beets. If you need to you can freeze but I generally don't because I don't like the texture of defrosted veg.

PROBLEM SOLVING GUIDE

hard to eat – it's important to grate the veg finely, so you end up with tiny pieces about the size of a grain of rice.

bland – it's meant to be used as an accompaniment to more fully flavoured dishes.

don't have a food processor with a grater blade? – you can grate by hand but it can be hard work! The alternative is to super finely chop the veg using a sharp knife.

Building Blocks

MODULE TWO

MODULE 2 VIDEO & AUDIO



Module 2 Video

[CLICK HERE](#) to view the video for Module 2.

Module 2 Audio

No audio for this module because this week we're focusing on the building block recipes.

VEG





Char *grilled* Zucchini

CHAR GRILLED ZUCCHINI

In the Summer time this is one of my favourite veg from the BBQ. Smoky and buttery and so good!

TAKES: about 30 minutes

MAKES: as many as you cook!

*2-4 medium zucchiní (courgettes)
extra virgin olive oil, optional*

1. Preheat a char grill pan or BBQ until very hot.
2. Slice zucchini into thin ribbons using a knife or mandoline. Drizzle generously with olive oil.
3. Char zucchini until well marked on both sides, about 3-4 minutes a side. Season.
4. Pack into super clean glass jars while still hot and cover with a little olive oil if you prefer to keep them for longer.

VARIATIONS

mixed veg – I sometimes cook red capsicum (bell peppers) and halved baby eggplant with the zucchini and toss them all together before serving.

post-grill marinade – lovely if warm zucchini are tossed in a dressing of 1-2 tablespoons each good quality balsamic and extra virgin olive oil + a crushed clove of garlic. Just don't forget to fish the garlic out before serving.

don't have a BBQ? Try zucchini 'coins' – if you don't have a char grill pan or BBQ, cut the zucchini into round coins and cook over a medium heat in a saucepan with plenty of olive oil until super soft and buttery.

VIDEO

CHAR GRILLED ZUCCHINI...

USAGE SUGGESTIONS

as a side dish – just drizzle with olive oil and a squeeze of lemon and tear over some mint leaves. So good!

soup – great as a [chunky veg soup](#) served with pesto.

on sandwiches – team up with grilled peppers and your favourite cheese for a killer veggie ‘sanga’ (that’s Aussie for sandwich)

veggie ‘noodles’ – pile charred zucchini on a plate and top with your favourite pasta sauce. Especially great with ragus.

smoky ratatouille – combine with roast eggplant and charred peppers and simmer in tomato puree or passata until you have a lovely thick veggie ‘stew’.

on pizza – great with lashings of mozzarella and fresh mint once it comes out of the oven.

PREPARE AHEAD?

Absolutely. Takes about 30 minutes. I like to make up a big batch to have on hand for quick meals during the week.

STORAGE BEST PRACTICES

Pack into glass jars and cover with olive oil. Will keep in the fridge for a few weeks, longer if using sterilised jars (not from the dishwasher).

Can be frozen for up to 12 months.

WASTE AVOIDANCE STRATEGY

zucchini – will keep for 2 weeks or so in a plastic bag in the fridge. For longer storage best to cook and store under oil as per the recipe.

PROBLEM SOLVING GUIDE

zucchini sticking to the BBQ – sounds like you need more oil!

crunchy in the middle but charred on the outside – either your temperature is too high, or more likely, the zucchini aren’t cut thinly enough. You could pop them in the oven to roast until they’re tender if you like.

too bland? - add in a little more salt. And next time try using smaller, fresher zucchini.

Smoky *red* Peppers



SMOKY RED PEPPERS

I often buy these in a jar from the supermarket or deli. But I'm always glad I took the extra time when I make my own. The flavour tends to be much fresher and more deeply smoky.

TAKES: about 30 minutes

MAKES: as many as you cook!

2 or more red capsicum (bell peppers)

extra virgin olive oil, optional

1. Preheat an overhead grill (broiler) on its highest setting.
2. Place whole capsicum (peppers) on a tray and cook until the skin is really black, about 5 minutes or so.
3. Rotate so the next side gets exposed to the heat. Repeat until all sides are well blackened.
4. Place hot peppers in a heatproof bowl and cover with the tray or cling wrap. Allow to cool so you can touch them.
5. Peel peppers, discarding the blackened skins and any seeds. Pack into super clean glass jars while still hot and cover with a little olive oil if you prefer to keep them for longer.

VARIATIONS

short on time? - chop peppers into flat pieces and grill skin side up all at once.

chilli peppers – larger chillies can be lovely instead or or as well as capsicum (bell peppers).

yellow or green peppers – can be cooked in the same manner but I find the flavour of red peppers to be the best.

VIDEO

SMOKY RED PEPPERS...

USAGE SUGGESTIONS

fiery harissa paste – puree into a [superhot Moroccan sauce](#).

salads – tear or slice into strips and toss in a green salad.

baked frittata – lovely to give a spanish vibe to a baked frittata, some chopped chorizo wouldn't go astray.

smoky soups – makes a lovely [smooth soup](#).

veggie alternative to cured meats or sausages – makes a great veggie alternative to crispy bacon or chorizo.

PREPARE AHEAD?

Absolutely. Takes about 30 minutes. I like to make up a big batch to have on hand for quick meals during the week.

STORAGE BEST PRACTICES

Pack into glass jars and cover with olive oil. Will keep in the fridge for a few weeks, longer if using sterilised jars (hot from the dishwasher).

Can be frozen for up to 12 months.

WASTE AVOIDANCE STRATEGY

peppers (capsicum) – will keep for 2 weeks or so in a plastic bag in the fridge. For longer storage best to cook and store under oil as per the recipe.

PROBLEM SOLVING GUIDE

difficult to peel – if the peppers aren't cooked and charred enough, the peels can be difficult to remove. In that case I just forget about peeling them. Allowing them to 'steam' in a covered container as they cool really makes a difference to the ease of peeling.

hard peppers – another sign of undercooking. It's important to leave them under the grill until really black everywhere.

over-charred peppers – it is possible to go too far. If the flesh under the skin also gets charred, you can either cut out the really burnt bits and discard. Or just start again.

not smoky enough – again, undercharring is to blame. A good quick fix-it is to add a teaspoon or two of Spanish smoked paprika to your dish to boost the 'smoky' flavours.



Caramelised onions

CARAMELISED ONIONS

Onions are one of the biggest gifts to cooks on a budget because they pack amazing flavour for their tiny price tag. These onions may seem like a bit of work, but you'll be well rewarded with a super versatile condiment. Feel free to halve or quarter this recipe if you don't feel like chopping up so many onions.

TAKES: about 70 minutes

MAKES: heaps

1.5kg (3lb) onions

6 tablespoons cheap balsamic vinegar

1. Chop onions in half, lengthwise. Cut off the top and tail and peel the skins. Slice onions into thin half moon shapes.
2. Heat about 6 tablespoons oil in a large pot and fry the onions, covered over a medium low heat until the onions are super soft. About 40 minutes.
3. Remove the lid and add balsamic, cook the onions uncovered on a medium heat until the onions are well browned and caramelised. Another 15-20 minutes.
4. Taste & season. And pack into a super clean glass jar while still hot.

VARIATIONS

different vinegar – by all means replace the balsamic with a cheaper vinegar. Malt vinegar would be lovely just start with about 3 tablespoons and add from there.

thyme – if you have access to a garden with fresh thyme, a few sprigs add a lovely fragrance.

rosemary – if you have access to a garden with fresh rosemary, a few sprigs add a lovely fragrance.

onion jam – for something sweeter and more chutney like, add in about 1/4 cup brown sugar with the balsamic.

VIDEO

CARAMELISED ONIONS...

USAGE SUGGESTIONS

with burgers – brilliant instead of or as well as ketchup with a [salt crusted burger](#).

as a spread - on sandwiches, especially grilled cheese.

on a cheeseboard - a different alternative to pickled onions or quince paste.

in salads – just lovely with [beets and lentils](#) or in a green salad with goats cheese or with [lentils and walnuts](#).

with bangers & mash – an oldie but a goodie! Also great as a [slow carb alternative](#).

soups & stews – stir in a few tablespoons to add richness and instant depth of flavour.

PREPARE AHEAD?

Absolutely. Takes about 70 minutes. I like to make up a big batch to have on hand during the week.

STORAGE BEST PRACTICES

Store in a glass jar or airtight container. If you use a super clean jar and pack the onions in while hot, they'll keep in the fridge for months. Covering with a little olive oil can help prevent mold growth. Can be frozen for up to 12 months.

WASTE AVOIDANCE STRATEGY

onions, balsamic – pantry.

PROBLEM SOLVING GUIDE

too bland? – add in a little more vinegar and salt. And keep cooking until you have lovely caramelised flavours.

bitter - this means you've either burnt the onions too much or the vinegar is overpowering. Try adding a little white sugar to balance but it may not help the situation if it's gone too far.

watery eyes – the hardest part is definitely chopping the onions. Pop a slice of bread in your mouth to hang down while you chop the onions. It's weird but I'll guarantee you no tears every time..

short on time – try slicing the onions in the food processor and try a higher heat for the first cooking stage, just keep a super close eye on them to make sure they don't burn too much.



Roast *eggplant* (Aubergine)

ROAST EGGPLANT (AUBERGINE)

I love roast eggplant. Such a lovely comforting texture. But I rarely think to cook it during the week. Roasting a batch of eggplant like this is perfect to have on hand for super quick veggie dinners.

TAKES: about 60 minutes

MAKES: 4 or more halves

2 or more medium eggplant, halved

1. Preheat oven to 200C (400F).
2. Score eggplant flesh in a diamond pattern. Drizzle with olive oil and place on a roasting tray. Season generously.
3. Bake for 30-45 minutes or until eggplant is browned & super tender.

VARIATIONS

chilli – feel free to sprinkle eggplant liberally with finely chopped chilli or dried chilli.

spices – sprinkle eggplant with cumin or coriander seeds or both. Sumac is also really lovely with eggplant.

herbs – scatter over some rosemary or thyme.

BBQ – for a more smoky eggplant. Char whole eggplant on all sides on the BBQ until well blackened and soft. Remove charred skin before using.

sliced / short on time – sometimes I slice the eggplant instead of halving. This decreases the cooking time to 20-30 minutes.

VIDEO

ROAST EGGPLANT (AUBERGINE)...

USAGE SUGGESTIONS

pasta sauce – chop eggplant and simmer for 5-10 minutes in your favourite commercial tomato pasta sauce or a can of tomatoes. Also lovely with tuna in [this recipe](#).

main event – serve half an eggplant per person with a sauce such as pesto or this [miso dressing](#).

curry – replace the protein with chopped cooked eggplant in this [hot & fiery curry](#) or even this [creamy curry](#).

sauce – scoop flesh from the skins of 2 halves, finely chop and stir in 1-2 finely chopped garlic cloves, some lemon juice and a few tablespoons tahini for a less smoky version of babaganoush.

with legumes – great stirred through these [braised beans](#) or some [cooked lentils](#).

soup – wonderful in a [white bean and eggplant soup](#).

PREPARE AHEAD?

Absolutely. Takes about 60 minutes.

STORAGE BEST PRACTICES

Store in an airtight container or ziplock bag. Will keep in the fridge for 3-4 weeks or so. To extend the shelf life cover with extra virgin olive oil. Can be frozen for up to 12 months.

WASTE AVOIDANCE STRATEGY

eggplant – raw will keep for a few weeks in a plastic bag in the fridge for a few weeks. The best bet is to roast it like this and cover with oil to keep for longer.

PROBLEM SOLVING GUIDE

bland? – add in a little more salt and pepper.

eggplant burning – reduce the heat or cook for a shorter time.

eggplant hard – make sure you leave the eggplant until the flesh is super soft. There's nothing worse than undercooked eggplant.



Roast Beets

ROAST BEETS

Beets are my favourite root veg for roasting. Great to do on a Sunday afternoon so you have roast veg at your disposal for super quick lunches and dinners.

TAKES: about 60-70 minutes

MAKES: as many as you cook!

1-2 bunches beets

1-2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar, optional

2-3 tablespoons olive oil

1. Preheat oven to 200C.
2. Remove any stalks from the veg and scrub them well. Chop into bite sized wedges – either quarters, sixths or eighths. The smaller you chop, the faster they will cook.
3. Splash with balsamic vinegar, if using and the olive oil.
4. Cover tightly with foil and roast for 45 minutes to 1 hour or until the veg are tender. Season.

VARIATIONS

different root veg - beets, carrots, sweet potato, pumpkin (not strictly a root vegetable), parsnips, swedes (rutabagas). You could also use a mixture of the above. Potatoes can be cooked this way but the texture is better if you boil them first and roast uncovered.

different vinegar – balsamic is brilliant with beets but feel free to use other vinegar such as sherry vinegar, rice wine vinegar or red wine vinegar.

carnivore – sprinkle a little chopped pancetta or bacon over the veg before covering and roasting.

to peel or not to peel? – I pretty much never peel any root veg, Just give them a good scrub. There's heaps of flavour and nutrients in the skins so much better, and not to mention easier to leave the skins on. Even pumpkin skins are delicious when roasted in this way.

uncovered – I find that covering helps keep the beets moist and tender and you still get enough browning deliciousness. Feel free to uncover for some or all of the baking if you like. Just be careful your beets don't dry out too much and go woody.

VIDEO

ROAST BEETS...

USAGE SUGGESTIONS

salads – wonderful with [soft goats cheese](#).

with greens – use the beet tops to make wilted greens and toss the beets in.

charred beet salad – BBQ cooked beets until charred on the outside and [toss in a salad](#) with rocket and balsamic dressing.

beet hummus – replace the chickpeas in a classic hummus with roast beets.

beet pesto – replace the basil in pesto for a heavenly coloured sauce – tastes much better than you'd think.

beet curry – a Sri Lankan classic. Use roast beets instead of protein in this [lovely creamy curry](#).

soup – replace the canned beets with roast beets in [this unusual soup](#).

PREPARE AHEAD?

Absolutely. Takes 60-70 minutes. I like to make up a big batch to have on hand for quick meals during the week.

STORAGE BEST PRACTICES

Store in an airtight container or ziplock bag. Will keep in the fridge for 3-4 weeks or so. Can be frozen for up to 12 months.

WASTE AVOIDANCE STRATEGY

beets – keep in a plastic bag in the fridge for 3-4 weeks. If you chop off the tops the beets will last even longer.

vinegar, olive oil – pantry.

PROBLEM SOLVING GUIDE

burning – reduce the heat and turn the veg more frequently. Make sure your foil is well sealed to prevent drying out. A splash of water can retard the burning process.

hard / dry veg – not cooked for long enough OR cooked at too high a temperature and not covered enough. Veg are much less sensitive to overcooking than meat.

Roast Butternut Squash



ROAST BUTTERNUT SQUASH

I adore roast pumpkin, sweet potato or butternut squash. But I used to hardly make it because it always felt like a huge hassle to peel the damn things. So one day I thought I'd cook them peel and all and take the peel off once they were done. The good news is the roast skins actually taste really lovely. Since then I haven't ever peeled. So much quicker. I also leave the seeds in partly to save time, but mostly because I love to eat roast pumpkin seeds.

TAKES: about 60 minutes

MAKES: makes 12-16 wedges

1/2 butternut squash

1-2 teaspoons cumin or coriander seeds, optional

1-2 teaspoons chilli flakes or powder, optional

1. Preheat oven to 200C (400F).
2. Chop butternut squash (pumpkin) in half, crosswise. Then chop each half into 6-8 wedges.
3. Place wedges on a baking tray. Drizzle generously with oil and sprinkle over spices, if using. Scatter liberally with sea salt flakes.
4. Bake for 30 – 45 minutes or until wedges are deeply browned on the edges and tender in the middle.

VARIATIONS

different veg – any pumpkin such as Jap or Queensland blue. Sweet potato or yams are also lovely like this.

short on time? - chop into cubes about 2cm (1in). Should only take about 20 minutes to roast. Otherwise you could save on chopping time... just pop the whole unchopped butternut in the oven and let the oven work its magic. Will take about an hour or longer to cook.

VIDEO

ROAST BUTTERNUT SQUASH...

USAGE SUGGESTIONS

salads – lovely when tossed into a green salad with a [nutty tahini dressing](#). Super delicious with sprouts.

soup – use as a base for a [smooth veggie soup](#).

hummus – use instead of chickpeas in a different take on the [lebanese classic](#).

curry – the most divine [veggie curry](#).

PREPARE AHEAD?

Absolutely. Takes about 60 minutes.

STORAGE BEST PRACTICES

Store in an airtight container or ziplock bag. Will keep in the fridge for 3-4 weeks or so. Can be frozen for up to 12 months.

WASTE AVOIDANCE STRATEGY

butternut squash – keeps in a plastic bag in the fridge for months. Can be frozen but I generally wouldn't bother because it takes up so much space!

cumin, coriander chilli – pantry.

PROBLEM SOLVING GUIDE

burning – reduce the heat and turn the veg more frequently. Make sure your foil is well sealed to prevent drying out. A splash of water can retard the burning process.

hard / dry veg – not cooked for long enough OR cooked at too high a temperature. Veg are much less sensitive to overcooking than meat.

too bland? - add in a little more salt. And next time try buying a smaller butternut extra large ones can be lacking in flavour.

Roast *diced* Veg



ROAST DICED VEG

Chopping veg into a smaller dice allows them to cook more quickly. AND increases the surface area so you get lots of lovely roasted flavour.

TAKES: about 45 minutes

MAKES: as many as you cook!

3 parsnips

1 turnip / swede / rutabaga

1 head garlic, optional

small bunch thyme, leaves picked, optional

1. Preheat oven to 200C (400F).
2. Wash veg well then chop into cubes, about 2cm (1in) square. Break garlic into individual cloves, but don't worry about peeling.
3. Toss veg on a roasting tray with a generous glug of olive oil. Sprinkle with thyme. Season.
4. Roast for 25-35 minutes, stirring once or twice. They're done when the veg are tender and golden brown.

VARIATIONS

potatoes – waxy potatoes are lovely here as well – don't worry about peeling them.

beets – chop beets small so they cook at the same time as the rest of the veg.

sweet potato – a lovely addition.

carrots – another sweet veg that doesn't get roasted often enough.

pumpkin / winter squash – much better if left unpeeled. Butternut is my favourite here.

cauliflower - don't worry about getting it into 'cubes'. One of my favourite roast veg.

brussels sprouts – another that don't 'cube' well. Chop in half and be amazed how tasty they are.

VIDEO

ROAST DICED VEG...

USAGE SUGGESTIONS

risotto – stir into your favorite risotto or for something different (and slow carb!) try [this lentil 'risotto'](#).

baked frittata – just lovely with eggs and a little parmesan like the [frittata over here](#).

stir fry – toss into your fav [stir fry](#) to warm through before serving.

hummus - use instead of or as well as chickpeas in a different take on [hummus](#).

soup – delicious in both [chunky](#) and [smooth veggie soups](#).

pizza – especially good on [pizza](#) with blue cheese and mozzarella.

PREPARE AHEAD?

Absolutely. Takes about 45 minutes. I like to roast up a big batch to have on hand for quick meals during the week..

STORAGE BEST PRACTICES

Store in an airtight container or ziplock bag. Will keep in the fridge for 3-4 weeks. Can be frozen for up to 12 months.

WASTE AVOIDANCE STRATEGY

parsnips / turnip / swede / rutabaga – all keep for months in a plastic bag in the fridge.

garlic – pantry in a brown paper bag to protect from light which causes them to shoot.

thyme – keeps for weeks in a plastic bag in the fridge. Freezes well.

PROBLEM SOLVING GUIDE

burning – reduce the heat and turn the veg more frequently. Make sure your foil is well sealed to prevent drying out. A splash of water can retard the burning process.

hard / dry veg – not cooked for long enough OR cooked at too high a temperature and not covered enough. Veg are much less sensitive to overcooking than meat.

too bland? - add in a little more salt.

Sofrito



SOFRITO

Sofrito is the Italian name for onion, carrot and celery that has been sweated until tender. It's the base for so many wonderful dishes from stews to soups and sauces. Having a jar of this in the fridge can save you a good 15-20 minutes prep time for mid week dinners.

The star anise is an unusual ingredients. It's totally optional but as I learned from Heston Blumenthal, chef at the 2nd best restaurant in the world, it really enhances the 'meaty' flavours in the onions, rather than adding any actual anise flavours.

TAKES: about 60 minutes

MAKES: about 2 cups

2 large onions, diced

2 carrots, diced

2 sticks celery, diced

1/2 star anise, optional

1. Heat a few generous glugs of olive oil in a large saucepan. Add veg and the star anise, if using.

2. Cook, covered over a low-medium heat, stirring every 10 minutes or so until the veg are super soft and lightly golden. Will take about 30-45 minutes.

3. Pack the hot sofrito into clean glass jar and refrigerate until needed.

VARIATIONS

just onion – skip the carrot and celery and cook up a big batch of onion to have on hand.

onion-free – replace the onion with extra celery.

garlicky – feel free to add in a few cloves of finely chopped garlic.

VIDEO

SOFRITO...

USAGE SUGGESTIONS

head start – use anywhere that you'd normally soften and onion to begin a dish like soups, stews, curries or pasta sauces.

soup – try it in this [chunky veg soup](#).

stews – great in a [slow cooked meat ragu](#) or [vegetarian ragu](#).

lentils – stir into cooked lentils.

PREPARE AHEAD?

Absolutely. Takes about 60 minutes.

STORAGE BEST PRACTICES

Store in a clean glass jar or other airtight container. Will keep in the fridge for 3-4 week, longer if you pack it into the jar while still hot. Can be frozen for up to 12 months.

WASTE AVOIDANCE STRATEGY

onions, star anise – pantry.

2 carrots, celery – keep for weeks and weeks in a plastic bag in the fridge. I usually don't freeze because the texture goes rubbery when defrosted.

PROBLEM SOLVING GUIDE

too bland? - make sure you keep cooking until everything is super soft.

too sweet? – the carrots tend to add loads of sweetness, you may prefer next time to skip the carrot or reduce the carrot by half.

burning – reduce the heat and add a little more olive oil or a splash of water. Remember to stir regularly and keep the pot covered.

GRAIN & LEGUME



A BIG *pot* of Beans



A BIG POT OF BEANS

It's not often that I bother to cook up a big pot of beans. But every time I do, I'm glad I went to the extra effort. Home cooked beans always have a much nicer flavour and texture than canned beans. The soaking does require a little pre-planning but I highly recommend taking the time because it reduces the presence of chemicals called 'phytates' which can cause problems with our digestion. It's also supposed to reduce any bean-related digestive issues or 'gassiness'.

TAKES: 6 hours soaking + 1.5 hours cooking

MAKES: heaps

500g (1lb) dried beans

2 bay leaves, optional

VARIATIONS

other herbs – skip the bay leaf or replace with other flavourings such as thyme, rosemary or sage.

chickpeas – use dried chickpeas instead of the beans.

1. Cover beans with plenty of cold water and soak for at least 6 hours and up to 48 hours.
2. Drain beans and place in a large pot. Cover generously with clean cold water and add the bay leaf, if using.
3. Simmer, uncovered until beans are tender – anywhere from 45 minutes to 1 1/2 hours. Drain.

VIDEO

A BIG POT OF BEANS...

USAGE SUGGESTIONS

canned bean replacement – use anywhere that calls for canned beans. As a rule of thumb, 1 drained can = 250g (9oz) cooked beans.

braised beans – recipe over here – NEW!

soups – brilliant in soups like this roast eggplant and white bean soup.

pasta alternative – serve with your favourite pasta sauce or in your favourite pasta bake like this white bean & onion bake.

salads – toss into your favourite salad for an extra protein hit.

PREPARE AHEAD?

A must! Takes about 90 minutes cooking + 6 hours soaking. I like to make up a big batch to have on hand for quick meals during the week.

STORAGE BEST PRACTICES

Store in an airtight container or ziplock bag. Will keep in the fridge for 2 weeks or so. Can be frozen for up to 12 months.

Can be stored either in the cooking liquid or drained. I tend to drain before storing.

WASTE AVOIDANCE STRATEGY

beans – pantry.

PROBLEM SOLVING GUIDE

too bland? – add in a little more salt.

beans still tough – some beans just don't want to soften. Blame the beans! Adding a little bicarb soda to the cooking water can help.

beans mushy – means they've been overcooked. Not much you can do now except serve them as a puree. Next time watch more closely.

green split peas



GREEN SPLIT PEAS

Green split peas were a completely new ingredient to me until I made this dish for a challenge I did to feed myself with \$25 for 5 days. Like large lentils, it wasn't really surprising that I was instantly addicted. The secret to loving these legumes is to not over cook them down to a greenish goop, often associated with pea & ham soup.

TAKES: 45 minutes

MAKES: heaps

500g (1lb) dried green split peas

3 ribs celery, diced, optional

1 onion, diced

1 sprig rosemary, optional

1. Rinse split peas and place in a large pot. Cover generously with water and bring to a boil.
2. Add onion, rosemary & celery, if using and simmer for 25-35 minutes or until lentils are al dente like cooked pasta . Tender but still with some bight.
3. Drain well and return to the pot. Season generously with salt and a few tablespoons olive oil.

VARIATIONS

other lentils – feel free to use pretty much any other lentil such as red lentils, green lentils, yellow split peas, or brown lentils. Some may take slightly less or more time.

onion-free – just boil the lentils with rosemary.

carnivore – if you happen to have a ham hock or some soup bones floating around. By all means add them in to simmer with the lentils.

super-budget – just boil the lentils on their own and season with salt – skip the olive oil at the end.

VIDEO

GREEN SPLIT PEAS...

USAGE SUGGESTIONS

canned alternative – anywhere that calls for canned lentils or beans. Note: 1 can drained = approx 240g / 9oz of cooked lentils.

stew – skip the cooking first and just use dried split peas in this [yellow split pea stew](#).

salads – such as this [double green salad](#) or [crunchy, creamy salad](#).

veggie ragu – as an alternative to meat in this [veggie ragu](#).

PREPARE AHEAD?

Absolutely. Takes about 45 minutes. I like to make up a big batch to have on hand for quick meals during the week.

STORAGE BEST PRACTICES

Store in an airtight container or ziplock bag. Will keep in the fridge for 2 weeks or so. Can be frozen for up to 12 months.

WASTE AVOIDANCE STRATEGY

split peas, onion – pantry.

celery – keeps for months in a plastic bag in the fridge.

rosemary – keeps in the fridge in a plastic bag for weeks. Freezes really well so when I don't have a pot growing, I often have a bag of rosemary in the freezer.

PROBLEM SOLVING GUIDE

too bland? - season with more salt.

mushy - oh no! You've over cooked the lentils. Next time keep a closer eye on them and start checking for doneness earlier. For now, invite some friends over for a lentil 'soup' party.

short on time – soaking the lentils overnight can reduce the cooking time by 10 minutes or so.

crunchy lentils – this means they're undercooked. A little bight might be OK but if it's too much, just return to the pan with a little water and simmer until you're happy.



Perfect *fluffy* Rice

PERFECT FLUFFY RICE

For years I struggled to make decent 'steamed' rice using the absorption method. Some days I'd get it OK but others would be soggy rice central. Then for some reason I decided to try the boiling method. Lets just say I haven't looked back. Not only is this way far more reliable, it's quicker and easier too! I tend to prefer basmati because it is the lowest GI rice. Traditionally, however basmati rice is traditionally served with Indian food and jasmine rice with Thai.

TAKES: 15 minutes

MAKES: enough for 2-3 as a side

250g (9oz) basmati or jasmine rice

1. Bring a medium saucepan of water to the boil.
2. Add rice and boil for exactly 10 minutes (set your timer).
3. Drain rice well then keep the colander or strainer for the excess steam to evaporate until you're ready to serve.

VARIATIONS

for fried rice to serve with curry – cook rice as above then allow to cool on a tray. Heat a few tablespoons peanut oil in a frying pan and cook a couple of beaten eggs for 15 seconds or so. Add cooled rice and keep stir-frying until the rice is hot and the egg is cooked. Season with one or two tablespoons soy sauce.

brown rice – use brown rice and increase the cooking time to about 30 minutes. It may take up to 45 minutes.

different grains – this 'quick boil' method is my go-to for cooking most grains because it's much easier to get right than the 'absorption method'. You'll just need to adjust the cooking time, looking on the pack of your grain will give you a good starting place but I'd start testing about 5 minutes before the pack recommended time.

VIDEO

PERFECT FLUFFY RICE...

USAGE SUGGESTIONS

as a side - the traditional accompaniment to stir fries and curries.

salad - toss cooked rice into any salad to make it more substantial. I love it in [this 'tabbouleh'](#).

rice & greens – [recipe over here](#).

with salmon – and zucchini. [Recipe over here](#).

in soups – add a handful at the end of cooking to thicken up soups. Be careful as the bland rice can easily sap all the flavour and colour out of your soup!

egg fried rice! – my Irishman's favourite. [Recipe here](#).

PREPARE AHEAD?

To be honest I prefer freshly cooked rice but you can (and I do) cook it ahead. Takes about 15 minutes. To reheat the microwave is great or if you don't have a microwave like I do, you can either fry it in a little oil in a frying pan or pop it in the oven in a covered oven proof pot for 10 minutes at about 180C (350F).

STORAGE BEST PRACTICES

Store in an airtight container or ziplock bag. Will keep in the fridge for 1-2 weeks. Can be frozen for up to 12 months. When reheating you can go straight from the freezer to the oven / microwave / pan.

WASTE AVOIDANCE STRATEGY

rice – pantry.

PROBLEM SOLVING GUIDE

gluggy – either the rice you've used was poor quality, or it's overcooked. Next time try another brand and be sure and only cook for 10 minutes.

dry & hard centred – If the rice has lots of chalky stuff in the middle it could have been cooked a little longer. Although I like my rice to have a little bite to it like a good al dente pasta so you may be surprised that it will taste fine.

need cold rice in a hurry? – If you're planning on making fried rice, don't make the mistake of trying to cool it down more quickly by running cold water over it. The cold water won't evaporate and you'll end up with very soggy rice. The best method is to spread it out on the biggest tray you have and fan it enthusiastically.

can't find basmati rice? – Basmati rice tends to have the most lovely flavour but jasmine rice can be used for Thai dishes. Or just plain long grain rice will work as well. Just don't try and use arborio rice or short grain rice – it won't end up fluffy.

home made sprouts



SPROUTS

Sprouting is something I've only recently gotten into. But it's heaps of fun. A brilliant way to have access to super 'fresh' food if you don't happen to have space for a veggie garden. I can imagine it would be a really fun project to do with kids. And the best thing is home made sprouts taste wonderfully fresh and sweet with none of the 'dirty' flavours you often find in commercially produced sprouts.

TAKES: 3-4 days

MAKES: a few handfuls

a few handfuls dried legumes

Day 1. Rinse legumes and place in a bowl. Cover generously with clean cold water and stand for anywhere from 8-36 hours.

Day 2 AM. Drain sprouts. Place a clean tea towel inside a strainer or colander. Add sprouts and place on top of a bowl to collect any water that drains out. Cover with one end of the cloth and leave somewhere out of direct sunlight.

Day 2 PM. Rinse sprouts under cold running water. Place back on top of the bowl and recover.

Day 3 AM. You should have some legumes sprouting. If so they can be eaten now or refrigerated. Or if you want more sprouting action continue to rinse and stand every morning and evening until you're happy.

VARIATIONS

lentil sprouts – pretty much any lentil can be sprouted.

chickpea sprouts – I can't believe I haven't tried these yet! Make sure you soak for long enough to fully rehydrate the chickpeas.

alfalfa sprouts – same principle. Just need some alfalfa seeds to start.

bean sprouts – pretty much all dried beans can be sprouted, but I'd avoid red kidney beans because they can be toxic unless cooked sufficiently.

split pea sprouts – both green and yellow should sprout fine.

VIDEO

SPROUTS...

USAGE SUGGESTIONS

salad – like this [sprout & roast pumpkin salad](#). – NEW!

canned legume substitute – a wonderful fresh alternative to canned beans, lentils and chickpeas. Can be used in warm and cold dishes.

soup – toss a few handfuls into your favourite veggie soup for a protein boost.

nut-substitute – add for extra crunch and protein anywhere you'd normally add nuts.

stir fry – use as a protein source in your favourite [stir fry](#).

PREPARE AHEAD?

No other option! Takes about 3-4 days. Even though they take a bit of work, resist the temptation to make more than you would use over a few days because they're much nicer when freshly sprouted.

STORAGE BEST PRACTICES

Keep in an airtight container in the fridge. Best when fresh but will last for about 5 days. Texture will go watery if frozen.

WASTE AVOIDANCE STRATEGY

dried legumes – pantry.

PROBLEM SOLVING GUIDE

no sprouting action – it's more than likely that your legumes were too old. I've had a problem with old green split peas that were in the pantry for longer than I could remember. Buy some new legumes from a busy shop and try again. Also remember that different legumes will sprout at different rates, so it may just be you've chosen slower legumes. Another cause could be that the legumes weren't hydrated enough during the initial soaking. If you suspect this is the case, soak for another 8 hours or so and see if that makes a difference.

legumes 'smelly' – sounds like you haven't been rinsing often enough. Try giving a good rinse and then rinse every few hours for a while. It could also be that the legumes aren't draining properly. If they're too wet they will start to rot. If this happens, time to start again from scratch. Another cause is if the temperature is too hot. If you're trying to sprout in a very warm climate or it's the middle of summer, try and find a cool place for sprouting. The fridge will be too cold.

legumes going mouldy – I haven't come across this but throw them out and start again with fresh new legumes. Mold indicates things are too warm and /or too moist so make sure the legumes are well drained between rinses.

legume ragu



LEGUME RAGU

The 'ragu' in the picture is using green 'French-style' or Puy lentils. It's easily my favourite. But don't let that deter you from exploring other beans or split peas or even chickpeas.

TAKES: about 40 minutes

MAKES: enough for 3-4

2 onions, diced

3-4 tablespoons butter

dash of flavouring highlight (see variations), optional

2 cans tomatoes (400g / 14oz each)

*500g (1lb) cooked **beans** or **lentils** (or 2 cans)*

1. Cook onions, butter, a little olive oil and the flavouring highlight (if using) in a large frying pan or skillet on a low to medium heat for 5-10 minutes until onions are soft but not well browned.

2. Remove flavouring highlight, if using. Add tomatoes and simmer for 15-20 minutes on a medium heat until the sauce has thickened.

3. Add legumes and simmer for another 5 minutes or until hot. Taste and season.

VARIATIONS

onion-free – just skip the onion (but not the butter!) or replace onions with celery or diced carrots or a combo of both.

dairy-free – replace butter with olive oil. Be generous!

flavouring highlight – a small star anise is great for boosting the 'meaty' flavours of the onion. Other options include chilli, rosemary leaves, thyme, bay leaves or sage.

tomato-free – I much prefer tomato based ragus, but if you needed to make it tomato-free for some reason I'd double the onions and replace the two cans of tomatoes with 1 1/2 cups vegetable or chicken stock.

cooked or canned legumes – any cooked or canned legumes are good. Try green lentils, red lentils, brown lentils, yellow split peas, green split peas, cannellini beans, chickpeas, butter beans, lima beans, black beans or red kidney beans. Just be careful with red lentils and brown because they turn to mush easily.

VIDEO

LEGUME RAGU...

USAGE SUGGESTIONS

main course – I like to serve on a bed of either baby spinach, carrot ‘noodles’ or zucchini ‘noodles’ or our ‘ready-to-eat’ veg.

pasta – serve with your favorite cooked pasta.

lasagne – replace the meat sauce in your favourite lasagne recipe. You might like to try my ‘15 minute’ lasagne for something different.

middle eastern – serve on a bed of hummus with toasted pine nuts and some flat leaf parsley.

soup – turn the ‘ragu’ into an instant soup by diluting with a little water or stock. Serve with lashings of freshly grated parmesan.

PREPARE AHEAD?

Absolutely. Takes about 40 minutes. I like to make up a big batch to have on hand for quick meals during the week.

STORAGE BEST PRACTICES

Store in an airtight container. Will keep in the fridge for 2 weeks or so. Can be frozen for up to 12 months.

WASTE AVOIDANCE STRATEGY

onions, tomato, dried legumes – pantry.

butter – keeps in the fridge for months.

cooked legumes – freeze really well.

PROBLEM SOLVING GUIDE

bland – keep simmering to reduce and concentrate the flavours. If you’re short on time you may like to add a few tablespoons of tomato paste. An extra tablespoon or two of butter may also help.

too thick – add water if too thick.

too runny – keep simmering and next time use a more shallow pan to get maximum evaporation.

mushy legumes – be careful not to overcook the legumes next time.

hard legumes – keep simmering until they are just tender. Crunchy legumes can be difficult to digest. Next time cook the legumes for longer before adding to the ragù.

PROTEIN



Boiled eggs



BOILED EGGS

If you have more time, you can also bring the eggs to a simmer. Cover the pot and remove from the heat and stand for 20 minutes.

TAKES: 15 minutes

MAKES: as many as you cook!

as many eggs as you need

VARIATIONS

different eggs - these instructions are for hen eggs. You can use this method for other eggs such as quail or duck, you'll just need to adjust the cooking time.

soft boiled – reduce cooking time to 4 minutes for really runny and 6 minutes for less so.

1. Place eggs in a small saucepan. Cover with cold water. Bring to a simmer.
2. When the eggs start simmering, set your timer for 8 minutes.
3. As soon as your timer rings, drain the eggs and transfer to a bowl. Run cold water over the eggs for a minute and then let the eggs sit in the water until cool.
4. Bash the eggs on the side of your sink to crack the shells all over.
5. Roll the egg between your hands to help loosen the membrane. Gently peel the membrane and shell from the eggs.

VIDEO

BOILED EGGS...

USAGE SUGGESTIONS

breakfast on the go – just boil up a batch and keep them in their shells in the fridge to grab for breakkie on the go.

healthy snack – as above for snack time.

with chickpeas – in this [curried chickpea recipe](#).

in salads – halve and add to your favourite salad or chop and use as the dressing for a [potato salad](#).

in curries – use as a vegetarian alternative to meats in curries like this [massaman curry](#). Just make the sauce and add the peeled and halved eggs just before serving.

PREPARE AHEAD?

Absolutely. Takes about 15 minutes. I like to make up a big batch to have on hand for quick meals during the week.

STORAGE BEST PRACTICES

Store either with the shell on or peeled in an airtight container or ziplock bag. Will keep in the fridge for 1 week if peeled or 2 weeks or so if left in the shell. Not great to freeze.

WASTE AVOIDANCE STRATEGY

eggs – boiling will help them keep longer! Raw egg can be frozen, just break and put in a container as whole eggs will crack in the freezer.

PROBLEM SOLVING GUIDE

eggs too runny – they weren't simmered for long enough (a bit of premature timer starting). Just rename them 'soft' boiled eggs.

shells difficult to peel – its probably because your eggs were too fresh. If you're lucky enough to be sourcing eggs straight from the chicken, I find it's best to poach the super-fresh ones and leave the older eggs for boiling.

funny dark colour around the yolk – this is a sulfide (I can't remember which one) but it is likely to form if your boiled eggs aren't cooled quickly enough. To prevent this next time make sure you rinse the eggs under the running water for a few minutes and then pop straight into a bowl of cold water.

yolks dry and crumbly – this is what an overcooked egg looks like. Not much we can do now, but next time be more vigilant in watching for the water to come to a simmer and set your timer asap!

Home 'canned' Fish



HOME 'CANNED' FISH

This is a great way to keep fish 'fresh' for longer than a few days. If you don't over cook it you'll be rewarded with the 'Rolls Royce' of 'canned' fish. Use anywhere you'd normally use canned tuna or salmon. Can also be pan fried to brown the outside and serve anywhere you'd normally use a fresh fish fillet - just be careful not to overcook when browning.

TAKES: 20 minutes

MAKES: 2 or more fillets

2 or more fish fillets

inexpensive olive oil, to cover

few sprigs thyme, optional

1. Place fish in a small saucepan large enough to hold them snugly. Cover with oil and add thyme, if using.
2. Place on a medium low heat and gently cook for 5-10 minutes. Keep the temperature so the liquid stays below a gentle simmer.
3. When the fish is cooked, the colour will turn opaque and the flesh will feel firm and should flake when you touch with your finger.
4. Drain fish and serve immediately or refrigerate in the oil.
5. To reheat either gently warm in the oil over a low-medium heat. Or drain and rub with oil before searing in a hot pan or on the BBQ.

VARIATIONS

different fish – salmon & tuna are the obvious choices. White fish such as snapper, blue eye or swordfish can also be used.

chicken – chicken breasts or thighs can also be poached in this manner. May take a little longer than 10 minutes.

budget – simmer fish in water instead of olive oil. Or use a cheaper unflavoured oil.

VIDEO

HOME 'CANNED' FISH...

USAGE SUGGESTIONS

canned fish substitute – use anywhere you'd normally use canned salmon or tuna like this [salmon with brown rice & zucchini](#).

salads – like this [tuna & bok choy salad](#) or [tuna & lentil salad](#).

fish burgers – use as a replacement to canned tuna in these ['tuna burgers'](#).

main course – lightly pan fry to reheat and serve with a wedge or lemon or some good aioli or mayo.

PREPARE AHEAD?

Absolutely. Takes about 20 minutes. Great for getting more fish in your diet!

STORAGE BEST PRACTICES

Will keep in the fridge in oil for a week. Can be frozen for up to 12 months but the texture may dry out a little.

WASTE AVOIDANCE STRATEGY

fish – freeze it

oil – pantry.

thyme – will keep in a plastic bag in the fridge for months or can be frozen.

PROBLEM SOLVING GUIDE

fish dry or falling apart – either you've cooked it too quickly (at too high a temperature) OR you've cooked it for too long. For now just serve with a creamy sauce like mayo or aioli to moisten things up. Next time use a much lower heat and make sure your fish is covered completely in the liquid.

flavour too 'fishy' – different fish have different flavour strengths so next time try a different type. Fishy flavours and aromas also tend to increase with age so it's a sign your fish wasn't as fresh as it could be. A strong flavoured sauce can help the situation.

bland – season with a little more salt & pepper. Consider using a different fish next time.



Poached *chicken* Breasts

POACHED CHICKEN BREASTS

I'm not a huge fan of poached meat as I find lots of the flavour can be lost to the poaching liquid. Chicken, though is an exception because it prevents the dryness often associated with cooked chicken breasts. And the poaching liquid can be used as a light chicken stock.

TAKES: 30 minutes

MAKES: 2 or more fillets

2 or more chicken breasts

1. Bring 4 cups water to the boil in a medium saucepan.
2. Add chicken. Cover with a lid and simmer very gently for 5 minutes.
3. Turn heat off and allow chicken to stand for 20 minutes.
4. Either cool in the liquid or slice and serve warm.

VARIATIONS

vegetarian - try boiled or poached eggs instead.

vegan – you could poach tofu in this manner, but the poaching liquid would need to add lots of flavour.

flavoured poaching liquid – try some fresh chilli, thyme leaves, bay leaves or rosemary.

short on time? – leave the heat on and simmer the chicken breasts until just cooked through. About 10 minutes. Be careful not to overcook.

chicken thighs – a better choice for more flavour. Since they're smaller, just simmer for 2 minutes then stand for 15-20 minutes.

whole chicken - can be cooked in this way as well. Double the water and use a large pot, make sure there's enough water to completely submerge the chicken. Simmer very gently for 10 minutes then stand, covered for 1 hour.

VIDEO

POACHED CHICKEN BREASTS...

USAGE SUGGESTIONS

salads – the obvious choice – slice or tear and toss in your favourite salad.

canned fish replacer – use anywhere you'd normally use canned tuna or salmon.

sandwiches – an all time favourite – with lashings of good quality mayo and rocket (arugula) leaves.

soups – finely slice and add to soups just before serving. Like this [Thai chicken soup with lime](#).

PREPARE AHEAD?

Absolutely. Takes about 30 minutes.

STORAGE BEST PRACTICES

Store in an airtight container with the poaching liquid to keep it moister. Will keep in the fridge for up to 5 days. Can be frozen for up to 12 months. I generally freeze without the poaching liquid so they don't take up as much space in the freezer.

WASTE AVOIDANCE STRATEGY

chicken breasts – freeze.

PROBLEM SOLVING GUIDE

chicken dry / tough – a sign of overcooking. Next time watch that the simmering for the first 5 minutes is VERY gentle. For now, finely slice the chicken across the 'grain' (or muscle fibers) and serve with lots of sauce!

too bland? - that can be a problem with chicken. Next time try a better quality, preferably free range chicken. For now, serve with flavorsome accompaniments. And remember that we haven't yet seasoned the chicken so a little salt may help the situation.

chicken undercooked or pink – it's a good idea to test your chicken. If when you cut into it it's still pink add back to the pot and bring back to a simmer. Stand for another 5 minutes or until the chicken is cooked to your liking.

roast or BBQ chicken



ROAST OR BBQ CHICKEN

Brining the chicken takes it to a whole new level of tenderness and juiciness. So even though it's a bit of a hassle, I tend to make the effort if I have time. But no dramas if you don't. It will still be delicious!

TAKES: Brining 6-12 hours (optional).

Cooking 60 minutes.

MAKES: enough for 4

80g (2.5oz) salt

1 medium chicken

1. Combine salt with 4 cups cold water (1L). Stir until dissolved.
2. Butterfly chicken by chopping down the backbone to open the bird out like a book.
3. Place chicken and salty water in a large ziplock bag and pop in the fridge for 6-12 hours.
4. Remove the chicken from the fridge an hour before you're ready to cook.
5. Preheat your BBQ or oven to 220C (450F). Remove chicken from the brine. Pat dry and rub with a little oil. Don't season.
6. Cook chicken on a preheated BBQ plate for about 15 minutes each side, or until cooked through. OR roast breast side up for about 30 minutes or until cooked through. Rest before serving.

VARIATIONS

no brine – if you're short on time just skip the brining process.

not up for 'butterflying' – if the thought of 'butterflying' the chicken is a bit scary, or your knife just isn't just up for cutting through bone, don't stress. You can cook the chicken whole, it will just take a lot longer because there is less surface area for the heat to penetrate. If roasting I usually preheat a cast iron pan in the oven so it's super hot then add the whole chicken breast side up and just leaves it for 50 minutes to an hour. On the BBQ, it's a similar approach, leave the chicken breast side up for the whole time and keep the lid of the BBQ closed as much as possible. Expect it to take around an hour.

flavoured brine – flavours added to the brine tend to really be absorbed by the flesh, a little like a 'super charged marinade'. Slices of lime or lemon are good. As are dried or fresh chilli, kaffir lime leaves, thyme leaves, sage leaves, garlic. Pretty much anything that works with roast chicken.

short on time? – either cut the chicken into quarters or use drumsticks instead of the whole chicken. Should take the cooking time down to about 20 minutes. And if you're brining pieces, they'll only need about 3 hours.

different birds – chicken is a family favourite but you could also use spatchcocks (baby chickens) or jumbo quail. Adjust the cooking and brining time accordingly.

VIDEO

ROAST OR BBQ CHICKEN...

VARIATIONS...

vegetarian / vegan – roast or BBQ a couple of portabello or field mushrooms along with the chicken. Using a separate pan. Roast or BBQ mushies will be delicious with any accompaniments you'd normally serve with chicken.

USAGE SUGGESTIONS

whole meal – serve with a salad and possibly some cheat's hollandaise.

salads – remove meat from the bone and toss into salads like this chicken & broccolini salad

soups – one of my favourite ways to use up leftover chicken is a simple chicken & veg soup.

canned replacer – use shredded chicken anywhere you'd normally use a can of tuna or salmon.

PREPARE AHEAD?

Absolutely. Takes 6-12 hours for brining (optional) and 60 minutes for cooking.

STORAGE BEST PRACTICES

Store in an airtight container in the fridge or just cover the roasting pan with foil. Will keep in the fridge for 5 days or so. Can be frozen for up to 12 months..

WASTE AVOIDANCE STRATEGY

chicken – freeze it. Or cook and serve cold later on. Will keep for 5 days in the fridge once cooked.

PROBLEM SOLVING GUIDE

too bland – next time buy a better quality chicken I've found it really makes a huge difference in terms of flavour. For now, just season with more salt and pepper.

chicken not browning – if you don't dry thoroughly enough the chicken will steam rather than brown. Next time make sure you dry carefully. The other problem may be your BBQ / oven isn't hot enough. Use the fan assisted setting or if your oven doesn't have a fan, increase the temperatures in the recipe by 20C (50F).

chicken too pink inside – either it wasn't cooked for long enough or the chicken was too cold before you started cooking, Next time make sure you allow the chicken to come to room temperature before you start cooking.

too dry – some chickens are naturally less moist. Next time try another supplier. It could also mean your chicken is over cooked.

not sure if the chicken is cooked? – don't stress. When the chicken looks cooked and the the legs wiggle freely, just chop in half lengthwise and make sure there are no pink bits. If it looks fine, rest before finishing your carving. If the flesh is still pink, return to the oven for another 10 minutes or so. If there is a little red in the actual bone that's fine, it's the flesh that needs to be well cooked.

Quick *pork* Ragu



QUICK PORK RAGU

If you're not normally a huge sausage fan, I highly recommend seeking out a super good quality butcher who preferably makes their own sausages and trying them out. Trust me there's a whole world of difference between a cheap and nasty banger and one made with love.

TAKES: 20 minutes

MAKES: enough for 2

3-4 thick pork sausages

1 can tomatoes

2-3 tablespoons butter

4 large handfuls baby spinach leaves

1. Heat a little oil in a large frying pan or skillet on a medium high heat.
2. Remove sausage meat from the casings and crumble into the pan. Discard casings.
3. Cook for 3-5 minutes, stirring to break up the chunks, until the meat is starting to brown.
4. Add tomatoes and butter and cook for another 10 minutes for the sauce to reduce a little.
5. Serve on a bed of baby spinach.

VARIATIONS

vegetarian – replace pork with drained canned chickpeas.

vegan – replace sausages with 1 drained can of lentils or about 250g (9oz) of cooked red or green lentils and swap the butter for olive oil.

different sausages – pork are a firm favourite in our house but feel free to use other sausages such as beef or chicken if you like them.

pescetarian – replace sausages with peeled green prawns (shrimp) simmer until just cooked.

herby – cook a few thyme leaves or rosemary in with the sausages.

budget – replace half of the sausages with cooked or canned white beans.

more substantial - feel free to serve the ragu with your favourite cooked pasta, preferably something short like rigatoni or penne.

gluten-free – use GF sausages or replace with about 400g (14oz) minced (ground) pork or other meat.

VIDEO

QUICK PORK RAGU...

USAGE SUGGESTIONS

quick meal – serve as per the recipe or replace baby spinach with finely sliced cabbage, carrot 'noodles' or zucchini 'noodles' or our 'ready-to-eat' veg.

pasta – serve with your favorite cooked pasta.

lasagne – replace the meat sauce in your favourite lasagne recipe.

middle eastern – serve on a bed of hummus with toasted pine nuts and some flat leaf parsley. Add in a little chilli or ground coriander for some extra spice.

on toast – serve on hot buttered toast with lashings of freshly grated parmesan.

PREPARE AHEAD?

Absolutely. Takes about 20 minutes.

STORAGE BEST PRACTICES

Store in an airtight container or ziplock bag. Will keep in the fridge for 2 weeks or so. Can be frozen for up to 12 months.

WASTE AVOIDANCE STRATEGY

sausages – freeze 'em.

tomatoes – pantry.

butter – keeps in the fridge for months.

baby spinach – either use for another meal or wilt them down in a covered pot with a little olive oil. Wilted spinach will keep for weeks in the fridge. Can be frozen.

PROBLEM SOLVING GUIDE

too bland – season with salt & pepper. A little tomato paste can help.

too tomatoey – I like my ragu quite tomatoey – feel free to use less tomatoes if you prefer a more porky flavour. Extra butter or a good drizzle of extra virgin olive oil can help to tame the tomatoes.

Slow *roast* Brisket



SLOW ROAST BRISKET

It wasn't until I went to a BBQ restaurant in Brooklyn called Fette Sau that I learned to have an appreciation for beef brisket. You may need to order it in from your butcher but it's worth the hassle. Trust me.

TAKES: Brining 6-12 hours (optional).

Cooking 6-7 hours.

MAKES: enough for 6 people

2kg (4lb) beef brisket

50g (2oz) salt

30g (1oz) sugar

BBQ sauce, to serve

VARIATIONS

short on time? – skip the brining and cook brisket for 3-4 hours at 150C (250F).

spiced – add a little chilli or ground cumin or coriander.

different cuts of meat – works well with beef short ribs, pork shoulder, osso buco, pork ribs, lamb shoulder.

1. Place brisket in a ceramic dish. Combine salt, sugar and 4 cups (1kg) water. Stir well and pour over the brisket.
2. Cover and refrigerate for 8-12 hours.
3. Preheat oven to 130C (260F). Drain brisket and wrap tightly in 2 layers of al foil.
4. Place in a baking tray and cook for 4-5 hours or until brisket can literally be cut with a spoon.
5. Unwrap brisket and discard the fat and juices. Then either roast at 180C (350F) OR smoke in your BBQ for 1-2 hours or until browned on the outside.
6. Slice thickly and serve with BBQ sauce.

SLOW ROAST BRISKET...

USAGE SUGGESTIONS

classic brisket – my favourite is to serve it finely sliced with mayo, BBQ sauce and some 'slaw or potato salad or both.

sandwiches – a brilliant sandwich filling with your favourite sauce.

pulled meat – use in burritos, sandwiches, on nachos, or cook into your favourite ragu.

PREPARE AHEAD?

Absolutely. Brining takes 6-12 hours (optional). Cooking takes 6-7 hours.

STORAGE BEST PRACTICES

Store in an airtight container or wrapped in foil. Will keep in the fridge for a week or two. Warm up in the oven or a fry pan before serving or eat it cold. Fine to freeze too.

WASTE AVOIDANCE STRATEGY

brisket – freeze.

salt, sugar, BBQ sauce – pantry.

PROBLEM SOLVING GUIDE

tough – brisket needs lots of time to cook to tenderise. Keep cooking until the texture is soft and melting.

dry – it's super important to keep the brisket tightly wrapped in foil so it keeps the moisture in. This helps to get the perfect soft melting texture you're looking for. Next time be more diligent in your wrapping. For now serve with mayo to moisten the brisket.

too salty – using the mixture of sugar and salt in the brine helps keep the salt flavour in balance. If you find it too salty, next time replace some of the salt with sugar.

too bland – season with a little more salt & pepper.

SAUCES



Pesto



PESTO

We all know and love pesto, that classic combo of fresh basil, garlic, pinenuts and parmesan. But it's just the beginning. The possibilities are endless!

TAKES: 15 minutes

MAKES: about 1 cup

1 big bunch basil

1-2 cloves garlic, optional

1 large handful pine nuts

1/4 - 1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil

1 large handful grated parmesan or extra nuts

1. Whizz herbs, garlic and nuts in a food processor until finely chopped.
2. Add enough oil to make a loose paste.
3. Stir in cheese. Taste & season.

VARIATIONS

herbs – other leafy herbs work well. Parsley, mint and coriander leaf (cilantro) are all great. Stronger herbs like sage or oregano can be used sparingly – best if combined with parsley so the flavour isn't too crazy.

wintery – make a winter pesto with flat leaf parsley instead of basil.

nuts – pine nuts are number 1 choice. Almonds, cashews, brazil nuts, walnuts, pecans, peanuts. I prefer unroasted so the nut flavour doesn't dominate, but feel free to experiment with roasted nuts too.

dairy-free - replace the parmesan with extra nuts.

nut-free – replace the nuts with extra parmesan or fresh breadcrumbs.

budget - replace the nuts with breadcrumbs and reduce the cheese. A combination of basil, which tends to be expensive, as well as other cheaper herbs like parsley or mint can help.

don't have a food processor? – just chop everything by hand and stir together. Aim for a more rustic, chunky pesto.

VIDEO

PESTO...

PREPARE AHEAD?

Absolutely. Takes about 15 minutes. A great way to prevent basil going bad in the fridge.

STORAGE BEST PRACTICES

Good. Pop in a clean glass jar or other airtight container and cover with a layer of oil to prevent browning and mold growth. Should keep in the fridge for a few weeks. I haven't had much luck freezing it.

WASTE AVOIDANCE STRATEGY

basil – cover with oil and store in the fridge. Or you can freeze the leaves, they'll wilt but will still be delicious.

parmesan – wrap in waxed paper or baking paper and store in the fridge in a sealed paper bag or airtight container. Will keep for months. Can be frozen if you're going away.

pinenuts – will keep in the fridge for months and longer in the fridge but I don't bother refrigerating them.

garlic – will keep for months in the pantry. I wrap in a brown paper bag to protect from light and prevent shooting.

olive oil - lasts for years in the pantry. But nicer when fresher so don't go too crazy buying in bulk.

PROBLEM SOLVING GUIDE

too bland – season with salt & pepper or a little more parmesan. A splash of lemon juice can also help bring it to life. Next time try a different source of herbs.

too dry – add a little more oil.

fluoro green colour – if you're using a blender or liquidiser it can mash up the herbs too much so you get a crazy-coloured puree. Next time just chop everything by hand and stir together.

A top-down photograph of a white ceramic bowl filled with a thick, creamy, light-colored hummus. The hummus has a slightly textured surface with some small air bubbles. The bowl is placed on a light-colored, textured fabric napkin with a decorative stitched border. To the right of the bowl, a silver spoon is lying on the napkin, its bowl facing upwards. The background is a dark, possibly wooden, surface. The text "Home made Hummus" is overlaid in the center of the bowl in a simple, lowercase font.

Home *made* Hummus

HOME MADE HUMMUS

While it is easier to buy commercial hummus, I pretty much always make my own because it tastes so much fresher. And it's really not much bother. If you don't have a food processor you could mash everything together with a fork for a more chunky rustic version.

TAKES: 5-10 minutes

MAKES: enough for 2 as an accompaniment

1 can chickpeas (400g / 14oz) + liquid

1-2 cloves garlic, peeled

3 tablespoons lemon juice

3 tablespoons tahini

1. Whizz all ingredients in a food processor with 3 tablespoons of the canning liquid. Use a high speed and keep whizzing until the hummus is creamy and smooth.

2. Taste and season, adding a little more lemon juice or tahini if needed.

VARIATIONS

different legumes – chickpeas are traditional but white beans are equally as good. Lentil hummus takes on a more earthy, interesting flavour. I haven't tried red or black beans but they should work just as well.

vegetable hummus – replace some or all of the legumes with cooked vegetables. You need about 250g (1/2 lb) cooked veg. Roast carrots or beets are really lovely. Sweet potato, pumpkin, butternut squash, cauliflower or parsnip are also great.

can't find tahini? – tahini is a paste made from ground sesame seeds. Replace with ground nut butters such as almond, cashew or brazil nut. Peanut butter could also be used but the flavour will be completely different.

home cooked chickpeas – feel free to use your own chickpeas. If you forget to save the cooking liquid like I often do then just use water.

VIDEO

HOME MADE HUMMUS...

USAGE SUGGESTIONS

as a dip - serve on a platter with pita bread or chopped raw veg such as carrots, celery, capsicum (bell peppers), or radish.

as a sauce / side – to serve with roast or grilled vegetables or meat. Like [this chilli chicken with hummus](#), [lamb fillet](#), or [kofta kebabs](#) or one of my all time favourites [spiced beef with hummus](#).

on sandwiches – also lovely as a spread on sandwiches, wraps or hot buttered toast.

PREPARE AHEAD?

Absolutely. Takes 5-10 minutes.

STORAGE BEST PRACTICES

Store in an airtight container. Will keep in the fridge for 2 weeks or so. Can be frozen for up to 12 months.

WASTE AVOIDANCE STRATEGY

chickpeas, garlic, tahini – pantry.

lemon – will keep in a plastic bag in the fridge for months.

PROBLEM SOLVING GUIDE

lumpy hummus – keep whizzing until the hummus is super smooth.

bland – be generous with the seasoning. And add a little more tahini and lemon juice if you think it will help.

don't have a food processor? – make a more chunky style hummus by just mashing everything together with a fork. Make sure you chop the garlic nice and fine.

Homemade *ketchup*



HOMEMADE KETCHUP

Here we're using roast tomatoes and red wine to make a ketchup with a difference!

TAKES: about 4 hours

MAKES: about 8 cups

2kg (4lb) tomatoes

1.5kg (3lb) tomato passata or puree

2 cups rice wine vinegar

2 cups red wine

750g (1 1/2lb) brown sugar

1. Pop 4 bottles and a funnel in the dishwasher to sterilise.
2. Preheat oven to 180C (350F). Halve tomatoes and place on 2 baking trays. Roast for 90 minutes or until browned on the edges.
3. Place passata or puree, vinegar, wine and sugar in a large pot and bring to the boil.
4. Transfer roasted tomatoes to the pot. Simmer for 90 minutes or until you're happy with the consistency. Taste & season with 1 tablespoon salt.
5. Puree with a stick blender. Bring back to a simmer.
6. Divide hot ketchup between warm bottles straight from the dishwasher. Seal immediately.

VARIATIONS

kid-friendly - skip the red wine.

rosemary ketchup – add a few sprigs of rosemary in to simmer with the tomatoes. Remember to remove the stalks before pureeing.

tomato & onion ketchup – roast 3-4 red onions until super tender and add to the sauce.

different quantities – feel free to either halve or double or quadruple this recipe, the cooking time may need adjusting slightly with more or less in the pot.

VIDEO

HOMEMADE KETCHUP...

USAGE SUGGESTIONS

'baked' beans – the 'secret' ingredient in these [Ketchup 'Baked' Legumes](#)

burgers – classic accompaniment to a [salt crusted burger](#).

fries / chips – a [home made version](#) of the fast food classic combo.

other suggested use – anywhere you'd normally use ketchup.

PREPARE AHEAD?

Essential! Takes about 4 hours.

STORAGE BEST PRACTICES

Unopened jars will keep in the pantry for 6-12 months, or longer. Once opened will keep in the fridge for a few months.

WASTE AVOIDANCE STRATEGY

tomatoes – either use for something else or roast them anyway and pack into jars and cover with oil. Will keep for weeks like this in the fridge. Cooked tomato can be frozen.

tomato passata or puree, vinegar, brown sugar, wine – pantry.

PROBLEM SOLVING GUIDE

burning – remember to stir the ketchup every 10-15 minutes to avoid burning.

too runny / not setting – we're just looking at removing the water to make the ketchup thicken. So keep cooking until you're happy.

too chunky – if you prefer a super smooth sauce, like commercial ketchup, sieve to remove any seeds or lumps after pureeing. Return to a boil before bottling,

mould growing – this is a sign that something is wrong with your preserving system. It could be the jars weren't cleaned enough in the dishwasher, the temperature wasn't high enough when you bottled. Or the lids weren't sealed properly. Another problem can be if the jars aren't filled completely. For now, best not to eat the mouldy jar. Next time be more careful or just store in the fridge.



cheat's hollandaise

CHEAT'S HOLLANDAISE

Hollandaise sauce may seem a little 'fancy' for a cooking budget. But the thing is it doesn't take very long AND is so much more cost effective than buying premade hollandaise or mayonnaise.

TAKES: 15 minutes

MAKES: almost 2 cups

100g (3.5 oz) butter

2 eggs

2-3 tablespoons rice wine vinegar

1 1/2 cups neutral flavoured oil, such as rice bran, vegetable or peanut

1. Melt butter in a small saucepan.
2. Place eggs and vinegar in a food processor or large bowl. Whizz (or whisk) for a few seconds.
3. Very carefully and slowly add hot butter to the egg mixture, whizzing (or whisking) as you go.
4. Add the oil in a gradual stream, continuing to whizz or whisk.
5. Taste & season with salt and a little more vinegar, if needed.

VARIATIONS

dairy-free – skip the butter and replace with an extra half cup of oil. Make sure your eggs are super fresh, though because they won't be getting any cooking.

lemon juice – replace the vinegar with lemon juice. For a more lemony sauce add the grated zest of a lemon as well.

decadent – replace most or all of the oil with butter.

vegan - I'm afraid the egg is critical here. You'll have to substitute in a commercial vegan mayonnaise.

VIDEO

CHEAT'S HOLLANDAISE...

USAGE SUGGESTIONS

eggs – a 'must' to serve with [poached eggs](#).

almond 'cream' – combine with equal parts almond meal to make '[almond cream](#)'.

mayonnaise – use pretty much anywhere you'd use mayonnaise.

'slaw – essential for a lovely [classic 'slaw](#) or [brocco-'slaw](#).

creamy dressing – just replace some or all of the olive oil in your salad dressing with cheat's hollandaise.

PREPARE AHEAD?

Absolutely. Takes about 15 minutes.

STORAGE BEST PRACTICES

Store in a glass jar. Will keep in the fridge for 1-2 weeks, depending on the freshness of your eggs. Do not freeze as it will split.

WASTE AVOIDANCE STRATEGY

butter – fridge.

eggs – use for another meal or keep in the fridge for about 4 weeks.

vinegar, oil – pantry it up!

PROBLEM SOLVING GUIDE

too bland? – add a little more salt and possibly some more vinegar.

too sharp – if you're using a regular white vinegar the flavour can be a lot harsher than wine vinegars. If you're finding it too much add in a little more oil.

mixture separating or splitting – the trick to making egg based sauces like this is to add the oil very gradually in the beginning. If you find it curdling or separating out (ie not being smooth and creamy). Start again with another egg and gradually add the split mixture on little spoon at a time.

oil flavour too strong – I find olive oils to be too intense in flavour for delicate sauces like this (and too expensive). I've used a rice bran oil here but any neutral flavoured oil like peanut or vegetable oil will work.

Preserved lemons



PRESERVED LEMONS

Of all the recipes in this class, preserved lemons are the most magical. If you haven't ever used them as an ingredient be prepared to be amazed! This is not the time to be squandering your precious Maldon or other fancy sea salt flakes. Any fine sea salt or kosher salt will do or even cheap table salt.

TAKES: 15 minutes + jar washing time + 4 weeks to 'mature'

MAKES: 1 jar

3 - 4 thick skinned lemons

extra lemon juice

6 - 8 tablespoons fine sea salt

1-2 bay leaves, optional

1. Sterilise a medium jar (with a good lid or seal) by popping in the dishwasher on the hottest cycle, or using your favourite sterilisation method.
2. Place the thick skinned lemons in a strainer and pour boiling water over the lemons to get rid of any dirt or bugs. Drain.
3. Chop a lemon into quarters, lengthwise.
4. Place a tablespoon salt in the bottom of the jar and pack in the lemon quarters, squashing them in to release as much juice as possible. Scatter with another tablespoon salt.
5. Repeat with the other 2 - 3 lemons, until the jar is full. If using the bay leaves, poke them in along the sides of the jar while layering.
6. Finish with a final tablespoon or two of salt. Cover with lemon juice. Seal jar and store at room temperature for 4 weeks before using.

VARIATIONS

limes – replace lemons and lemon juice with limes and lime juice.

spiced – add a few teaspoons of cumin seeds and peppercorns.

VIDEO

PRESERVED LEMONS...

USAGE SUGGESTIONS

to use – remove one quarter from the jar. Discard the flesh and finely slice or dice the skins. They're quite salty so go easy with the seasoning.

in general – use them anywhere you'd normally use lemon zest for a more intense, lemon kick.

in salads – finely chopped and tossed in with your salad dressing for a fragrant surprise.

sauce for fish – combine 2 tablespoons lemon juice with 4 tablespoons olive oil and 1/4 preserved lemon finely chopped.

chicken tajine – toss 1/2 preserved lemon, finely sliced in a chicken stew with tomatoes & olives.

wilted greens – finely slice and toss through greens such as a simple plate of greens.

preserved lemon & yoghurt sauce – finely mince and stir a little into some natural yoghurt – great with fish, chicken or vegetables.

couscous, lentils or rice – finely chop 1/4 lemon and stir through cooked couscous or lentils or steamed rice.
go here.

PREPARE AHEAD?

Absolutely. Takes about 4 weeks before they're ready. Although I have rushed it and used them sooner, the texture wasn't as good.

STORAGE BEST PRACTICES

Store in the glass jar in a dark pantry. Will keep in the pantry unopened for a year but I've had a few last twice as long as that when they got lost in the back of the cupboard. Once opened they need to be refrigerated.

WASTE AVOIDANCE STRATEGY

lemons – will keep in a plastic bag in the fridge for months.

salt – pantry.

bay leaves – if dried in the pantry but if fresh either dry them yourself or pop in the freezer.

PROBLEM SOLVING GUIDE

mould growing on the lemons – if the lemons aren't covered with the salty lemon juice they can get a white mould growing on them. Discard these lemons but the ones on the bottom should be fine.

short on time – soak whole lemons in boiling water for an hour before draining and preserving as above. Should shorten the curing time by about 2 weeks.

Easy *olive* Tapenade



EASY OLIVE TAPENADE

Olive tapenade is something I don't make very often. I'm not sure why because every time I do it gets used very quickly. While you can save time using pitted olives, I find they're never as nice as olives with the stones still in.

TAKES: 15 minutes

MAKES: about 1 cup

2 handfuls olives

1 small clove garlic, optional

8 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

lemon juice, to taste

1. Remove pits from olives and chop the flesh coarsely.
2. Transfer the chopped flesh to a bowl and stir in the garlic (if using), olive oil and about 2 tablespoons lemon juice.
3. Taste and add extra lemon if needed. Use straight away or store in a clean airtight jar in the fridge.

VARIATIONS

optional extras – add any or all of the following: 1 tablespoon capers, 1/4 small red onion finely chopped, 2-3 finely chopped anchovies.

tuna tapenade – toss in a small drained can of tuna in oil.

different olives – I've used large green sicilian olives in the picture but any olive will work. Again, the flavour and texture is better if you pit the olives yourself.

herby - a little thyme or oregano can add lovely freshness.

sun dried tomato tapenade – replace olives with sun or semi dried tomatoes.

smooth tapenade / short on time – whizz everything together in the food processor.

VIDEO

EASY OLIVE TAPENADE...

USAGE SUGGESTIONS

with fish – surprisingly lovely with pan fried fish like [this recipe](#).

as a dip – serve with crusty bread for a lovely starter.

as a sauce – lovely with pan fried or grilled lamb cutlets, steak, chicken breast or pork chops. For vegetarians try it with roast eggplant or mushrooms.

for breakfast - dollop on your favourite fried eggs.

PREPARE AHEAD?

Absolutely. Takes about 15 minutes.

STORAGE BEST PRACTICES

Store in a glass jar. Will keep in the fridge for 3-4 weeks.

WASTE AVOIDANCE STRATEGY

olives, garlic, oil – pantry.

lemon – keeps in a plastic bag in the fridge for months.

PROBLEM SOLVING GUIDE

too salty – extra oil can help.

bland – a little more lemon can help as can adding the optional extras suggested in the variations. Next time use olives from a different deli.



Onion dressing

ONION DRESSING

This is a lovely hearty, almost meaty dressing. I love it to dress a salad of warm lentils but it's also good on leaves. This one keeps well in the fridge which is just as well since it takes a while to make. I LOVE how the onions soak up the vinegar and give little acidic bursts of freshness.

TAKES: 20 minutes

MAKES: about 1 cup, serves 2 as an accompaniment

1 onion, finely chopped

250mL (1C) olive oil

60mL (1/4C) sherry or other wine vinegar

VARIATIONS

balsamic onions - use balsamic vinegar instead of the sherry vinegar.

herby – add in a handful of thyme, oregano or flat leaf parsley leaves at the end.

1. Heat oil in a small saucepan and add onion. Simmer over a low heat until onion is soft but not brown. About 10 minutes.
2. Remove from the heat and add vinegar and season.
3. Allow to sit for at least 10 minutes before using for the onions to soak up the vinegar.

VIDEO

ONION DRESSING...

USAGE SUGGESTIONS

salads – use instead of your regular salad dressing on green leaves.

sauce – brilliant as a sharp sauce with grilled or pan fried meats such as lamb, beef or chicken.

PREPARE AHEAD?

Absolutely. Takes about 20 minutes.

STORAGE BEST PRACTICES

Store in a glass jar. Will keep in the fridge for 4 weeks or so. Can be frozen for up to 12 months.

WASTE AVOIDANCE STRATEGY

onion, oil, vinegar – pantry.

PROBLEM SOLVING GUIDE

bland – season more generously with salt and next time consider using a better quality olive oil.

too vinegary – it's meant to be quite punchy but if it's too much add a little extra olive oil to balance.



Lemon *tahini* Sauce

LEMON TAHINI SAUCE

This is my go-to sauce when I'm in the mood for something nutty, creamy and zesty. It's super handy if you're ever cooking for anyone who needs to avoid dairy.

TAKES: 5 minutes

MAKES: about 1 cup, serves 2 as an accompaniment

1 clove garlic finely pounded, optional

4 tablespoons lemon juice

4 tablespoons tahini

2-4 tablespoons water

2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

VARIATIONS

no tahini – replace with peanut butter, cashew butter or almond butter.

1. Combine garlic (if using), lemon juice, tahini, 2 tablespoons water and the olive oil in a small bowl. Taste and season with salt.
2. Add extra water if you think it needs it but skip it if you prefer a thicker sauce.

VIDEO

LEMON TAHINI SAUCE...

USAGE SUGGESTIONS

with roast veg - lovely as a sauce or dressing to drizzle over diced roast veg.

hummus alternative – works most places you'd consider using hummus.

with fish - lovely with pan fried or grilled fish.

PREPARE AHEAD?

Absolutely. Takes about 5 minutes.

STORAGE BEST PRACTICES

Store in a glass jar or bowl covered with cling wrap. Will keep in the fridge for 3-4 weeks. Can be frozen for up to 12 months.

WASTE AVOIDANCE STRATEGY

garlic, tahini, oil – pantry.

lemon – will keep in a plastic bag in the fridge for months.

PROBLEM SOLVING GUIDE

too thick – add more water.

bitter – probably because of your oil. Next time use a better quality extra virgin olive oil. For now, adding a little more tahini can help. Oh and make sure you use hulled tahini as it has a cleaner, milder flavour.

bland – hit it with more lemon juice and salt.

SWEET TREATS





Home *frozen* Fruit

HOME FROZEN FRUIT

A stash of frozen fruit is a wonderful thing to have in the freezer. And the great thing about doing it yourself is that you can go way beyond the usual super market array of frozen berries. It's also a wonderful way to make sure any excess ripe fruit you have hanging around doesn't get wasted.

TAKES: 5 minutes

MAKES: as much as you use

fruit you want to freeze

VARIATIONS

different fruit - all berries, peaches, pears, nectarines, cherries, bananas, plums, mango, pineapple, oranges, apples.

roast fruit – take [vanilla roast fruit](#) and freeze it.

1. If you're not going to eat the skins when defrosted like bananas or mango, peel the fruit.
2. Chop fruit into bite sized chunks.
3. Place in a ziploack bag or other container and pop in the freezer.

HOME FROZEN FRUIT...

USAGE SUGGESTIONS

fruit sorbet – pop frozen fruit chunks in your food processor and whizz with a splash of water until you have a lovely sorbet. Taste and add a little sugar and whizz again if needed. It might take a while so be patient.

ice cream – pop frozen fruit chunks in your food processor and whizz with a splash of cream or coconut milk until you have a lovely ‘ice cream’.

sauce – defrost fruit first then whizz with a little sugar until you have a smoothish sauce. Great drizzled over ice cream. Sometimes I add a splash of lemon juice if I feel it needs some freshness.

mousse – take the sauce and fold it through whipped cream so you have pretty swirls.

smoothies - add chunks of fruit to your favourite smoothie instead of ice.

PREPARE AHEAD?

Absolutely. Takes about 6 hours to freeze, depending on your freezer strength and the size of your fruit chunks.

STORAGE BEST PRACTICES

Store frozen fruit in an airtight container or ziplock bag to prevent freezer burn. You want the container to just fit the amount of fruit because extra space is wasted in the freezer. Can be frozen for up to 12 months.

WASTE AVOIDANCE STRATEGY

fruit – freeze it!

PROBLEM SOLVING GUIDE

fruit sticking together – if you get a big lump, next time place your fruit on a tray and leave it to freeze into individual pieces for 24 hours and then transfer to a container or ziplock bag to protect from freezer burn.

watery fruit – when defrosted frozen fruit does tend to be watery and quite different from fresh fruit. This is an unavoidable part of the freezing process caused by cell walls breaking when the ice expands in the fruit. The only solution is to freeze super quickly using liquid nitrogen OR just expect the fruit to be watery.

ACTION



Your Actions

OK so this is going to sound very similar to module 1. It's all about using repetition to build your habits...

- 1.** Make a regular 'date' with yourself for some 'mise en place'.
- 2.** Choose at least 1 thing to make. Either a new building block or the same as last week. If you think you can handle more than 1 without getting overwhelmed by all means go for it!
- 3.** Use your chosen item during the week.
- 4.** Share your results in the comments below or if you have a photo share on the [SVCS facebook page](#).

Do Ahead Meals

MODULE THREE

MODULE 3 VIDEO & AUDIO

Module 3 Video

[CLICK HERE](#) to view the video for module 3.

Module 3 Audio

[CLICK HERE](#) to download the MP3.



REHEATING



The DOs and DON'Ts of Reheating Meals.

DO

* **DO Use a low to medium heat.**

When we're reheating the trick is to get the food warm all the way through without overcooking. This is particularly tricky with larger pieces of food. By using lower temps we allow time for the heat to transfer to the middle while minimizing exposure to the edges.

* **DO Cover your food**

As you'd expect this prevents over browning and drying out. The steam trapped around the food acts as a nice buffer.

* **DO Be wary of drying out and add water if needed**

Even when we have dishes covered while heating, there is still a risk of drying out. Particularly for dishes like cooked beans that like to suck up moisture while they are being stored in the fridge. The easy solution is to add back some water a little at a time so you don't go too far and end up with a diluted watery mess.

The DOs and DON'Ts of Reheating Meals.

* **DO Store and heat different components separately**

This is HUGE! The biggest cause of reheated meals and leftovers being perceived as 'boring' is when everything has been lumped in together and you lose the textural and flavour variety of the different components. By taking the time to store different elements separately, you give yourself options to add back variety when you serve.

For example the sweet potato and chickpea tajine in this module will be much fresher and more vibrant if you keep the coriander (cilantro) separate and just sprinkle it over the top of your warm tajine.

* **DO Only reheat as much as you think you'll eat now**

This is from a food quality and food safety perspective. The more times you cool and reheat a meal the more likely you're going to overcook or dry it out. And the more it is sitting around at warm temps the more risk of food spoilage microbes growing.

* **DO Chill leftovers asap**

Of course sometimes there will be leftovers so make sure you keep them as safe as possible and chill as soon as is reasonable.

DON'T

* **DON'T Leave warm food sitting around for more than 2 hours.**

I know we've already covered this but I can't emphasize the quality and safety implications enough.

* **DON'T Serve everything at the same temperature.**

This is about keeping reheated meals and leftovers as delicious as possible. I try and serve something raw and fresh with every meal, even cheese on toast!

My go to options are:

- serving a green or other type of salad as a side
- sprinkling over leafy herbs such as mint, parsley, coriander or basil
- toasted nuts – not raw as such but they do provide textural contrast and that super delicious 'crunch'
- serving on a bed of baby spinach, cauliflower rice, shaved cabbage or other raw bite sized veg.

The DOs and DON'Ts of Reheating Meals.

* **DON'T Reheat straight from frozen.**

There are exceptions for this one. Meals with lots of liquid like soups and stews are usually OK to go from the freezer to the pot. This is because the liquid means you can stir the food and quickly transfer heat from the hot to the colder parts. As opposed to a large chunk of meat.

The other exception is small particles like rice or peas, again because they can easily be stirred. We'll go deeper into the best methods for defrosting soon.

FREEZING



7 Golden Rules of Freezing Food.

1. Don't Refreeze Raw Food

Freezing doesn't kill food spoilage yeasts and bacteria. It slows them down dramatically but, they're still alive. Once food is defrosted, the little critters can get going quite quickly, so if you freeze the food again, you can be freezing much higher levels of microbes that may make the food unsafe to eat.

2. It is OK to Thaw Food, Cook It and Then Refreeze

By cooking the food you're effectively killing the yeasts and bacteria and bringing the food back to safe levels. So think of it as starting with a clean slate.

3. Cool Your Food Before Freezing

The problem with putting hot food in the freezer is that it can increase the internal freezer temperature for a while and possibly start to defrost the already frozen food. It makes more sense to cool first but make sure you're not leaving food sitting around for long periods of time at room temperature.

7 Golden Rules of Freezing Food.

4. Freeze Things ASAP.

Freezing is a great food preservation technique but it's only going to be as good as the food that goes in. Best to freeze food at it's freshest so that it will be at it's best once defrosted. The wonderful sweetness we take for granted in frozen peas wouldn't be possible if the peas were old when frozen.

5. Choose Appropriate Packaging / Containers

The air in your the freezer is very dry, otherwise you end up with the insides of your freezer looking more like an igloo. If your food is exposed to the air, it's going to loose moisture, dry out and get that awful freezer burn look and flavour.

Don't assume that all plastic bags are going to protect your food in the freezer. Best to go with bags that are designed for freezer use such as thick ziplock bags. Or better yet, invest in some pyrex containers that can go from freezer to oven.

6. Allow for Expansion

Water, and therefore food, expands when it freezes. This is why isn't not a good idea to leave bottles of wine in the freezer. Make allowances for this and avoid messy explosions.

7. Freeze Smaller Portions

There are 2 benefits here. First is that smaller volumes will freeze and defrost more quickly. Second is that you can just defrost and use what you need rather than having a whole heap of food on your hands. As my Dad found out recently when he splurged on gluten free bread and popped the loaves all in the freezer without slicing.

DO FREEZE

- * **Bread.** Just slice it first so you can quickly defrost in the toaster.
- * **Soups, stews and stocks.**
- * **Cooked rice.** Great to have on hand for egg fried rice.
- * **Raw Meat & fish** – although they will loose some moisture upon thawing,
- * **Bacon.** Great to keep on hand for when there's an emergency call for pork products
- * **Bananas.** Great for making banana bread or if you remember to peel them first almost instant 'ice cream'
- * **Berries.** If you ever find yourself with a berry glut, freeze them in a single layer on a tray. Then pop them in a freezer bag or container.

7 Golden Rules of Freezing Food.

* **Pastry.** I always make more than I need then freeze the rest for later. If you'd like to explore making your own pastry, check out our [Super Simple Baking](#) class.

* **Fresh chilli, horseradish, tumeric & ginger.** Great to have on hand.

* **Herbs.** While they will lose their fresh appearance, the flavour will still be great. Especially good for the woody herbs like rosemary & thyme.

DON'T FREEZE

* **Dairy products** – except for butter and hard cheese.

* **Whole eggs** – because they crack on expanding.

* **High moisture fruit & vegetables** – like celery or lettuce. When the water expands it damages the vegetable cell walls which turns them to mush when they thaw out.

* **Jam.** - the pectin which causes the jam to gel breaks down at freezing temperatures.

* **Mayonnaise.**

DEFROSTING

Defrosting 101

I'm not a big fan of the whole microwave thing. They take up heaps of space and most people rarely cook with them. But for years I kept one cluttering my tiny kitchen because I thought I needed it for defrosting things from the freezer.

It's been years since I sold my microwave on ebay. And I haven't missed it one bit.

I especially haven't missed the feeling when you're defrosting raw meat in the microwave and leave it in too long so that the edges get overcooked while the middle is still icy. Ick.

The Quickest and Safest Methods for Defrosting Without a Microwave

1. In the Fridge

Most of the time I try to get things out of the freezer the night before and let them safely and slowly defrost in the fridge, like a good food-safety-law-abiding citizen. The only problem with defrosting food in the fridge is that it can take 24 hours or more.

There are times when I forget or my plans change, and that's when I use the following methods...



The Quickest and Safest Methods for Defrosting Without a Microwave

2. Straight Into a Pan / Oven

If I want to defrost something like a soup or stew, I just run the bottom of the freezer container under the hot water tap for a little while, enough to loosen. I then deposit the frozen chunk into a saucepan and slowly allow it to defrost over the lowest heat with the lid on. Too easy.

Most frozen veg, like peas, are best popped straight into a pan with a little olive oil, or into a saucepan of boiling water. Frozen chickpeas, lentils and beans all work in a similar manner.

3. Defrosting on a Metal Surface

I used to think meat and fish were more tricky to defrost, than tubs of soup, until I learned this wonderful new method. I picked up the idea from a food science book called 'What Einstein Told His Chef'.

Basically, things will defrost faster the quicker their coldness is taken away from them. So you want a surface that will conduct heat to the frozen item (or take the cold away) as efficiently as possible.

While a metal sink is better than a wooden bench top at conducting heat, the ridged surface means that only part of the food is in contact with the metal. Much better to use a heavy cast iron frying or roasting pan for the maximum heat/cold transfer.

I recently put this to the test defrosting 2 similar sized steaks. One, I unwrapped and placed directly on my cast iron roasting pan. The other I left wrapped in it's Styrofoam tray from the butcher. I turned both every 20 minutes or so. And the winner was undoubtedly the steak on the roasting pan which took about an hour to defrost fully. Whereas the other steak took about 3 1/2 hours to get to the same state. I love it when an experiment proves the point!

DO AHEAD RECIPES



Lesh's *nourishing* Dahl



LESH'S NOURISHING DAHL

I've been looking for a good authentic dahl recipe for a long time. I'm happy to say this one ticks all the boxes. It was inspired by one of my blogging friends, [Lesh Karan](#). It does have a few more ingredients than my usual Stonesoup recipes but I think in this case its worth it. Although, I've also included a super simple option in the variations below.

TAKES: 30 minutes

MAKES: enough for 4

300g (1 1/2 cups) red lentils

1 bunch baby carrots, chopped

1 teaspoon each turmeric, ground cumin, salt

4 cloves garlic

4 cups water or stock

4 handfuls baby spinach

2-4 tablespoons lemon juice

1-2 tablespoons soy sauce

natural yoghurt, to serve

1. Wash lentils thoroughly under the cold tap and drain.
2. Place lentils in a medium saucepan with the water or stock. Bring to a simmer, skimming the foam that arises.
3. Add carrots, turmeric, cumin, salt and garlic.
4. Simmer for another 15-20 minutes more until the lentils and carrots are totally cooked. Make sure you stir along the way so the dahl doesn't stick.
5. Stir in the spinach leaves and allow them to wilt.
6. Taste and season with lemon juice and soy. Serve with yoghurt if eating now or store yoghurt separately.

VARIATIONS

dairy-free / vegan – use coconut yoghurt or mashed avocado instead.

carnivore – serve as a side to a meat based curry or add in a few handfuls of cooked chicken.

different veg – feel free to play around. I love the carrots though.

budget – use water instead of the stock (i did).

5 ingredients – just use the lentils, turmeric, garlic, soy sauce and lemon juice.

different spices – use a mild curry powder instead of the spices listed.

LESH'S NOURISHING DAHL...

STORAGE BEST PRACTICES

If making ahead, cook the dahl but don't add the yoghurt. Store in an airtight container. Will keep in the fridge for 2-3 weeks. Easy freeze meal? Can be frozen for up to 12 months. Best to defrost in the refrigerator but can be reheated straight from frozen in the microwave or on a low heat in a saucepan.

REHEATING GUIDELINES

The dahl may thicken with storage so be prepared to add a little more water as you reheat. I generally just pop it in a saucepan over a medium heat and gently bring it back to a simmer, stirring every few minutes.

SERVING SUGGESTION

Lovely in deep bowls with the yoghurt spooned on top. For a more substantial meal serve with warmed naan bread, roti or if you can't find them pita bread or warm tortillas will work.

WASTE AVOIDANCE STRATEGY

lentils, spices, salt, garlic, soy sauce – keep in the pantry.

carrots – will keep for weeks in the fridge wrapped in a plastic bag. Can be frozen.

carrot tops – can be used as a salad green pretty much anywhere you'd normally use flat leaf parsley. Makes a great carrot top pesto.

baby spinach – freeze it. Will wilt but that was going to happen once it was cooked into the dahl anyway.

lemon – keeps in the fridge for ages.

yoghurt – keeps in the fridge for weeks. Best to use for another meal as it doesn't freeze well.

PROBLEM SOLVING GUIDE

bland – be more generous with the salt and consider adding a little more of the turmeric and cumin but be careful as it's easy to go too far.

burning – the lentils do like to stick to the bottom of the pan so be careful to stir on a regular basis. If you do burn, remove from the heat and immediately transfer the non burnt portion to a clean saucepan.

too thick – add a little more water or stock.

too watery – simmering a little longer can help or consider adding in a handful of soft bread crumbs or almond meal to thicken it up. Adding a drained can of beans or chickpeas is another option.

Mushroom ragu



MUSHROOM RAGU

A few years ago I spent a month being vegetarian. If I had this recipe in my repertoire back then it would have made vegetarian life much more pleasurable! If you can seek out some exotic mushrooms, you will be well rewarded but it's really great with an old supermarket mushies.

TAKES: 2.5 hours

MAKES: enough for 4-6

1kg (2lb) mixed mushrooms

1 can tomatoes (400g / 14oz)

1 head garlic, broken into individual cloves

2-4 hunks butter

thyme or bay leaves, optional

1. Place mushrooms, tomato, unpeeled garlic cloves, butter and herbs (if using) in a large oven proof dish. Cover with a lid or foil.
2. Turn oven to 150C (300F) and bake mushrooms for 1 hour.
3. Stir mushrooms and remove the lid. Bake for another 1 to 1 1/2 hours or until the sauce is reduced and the mushrooms are lovely and deep golden. Taste and season.
4. Either serve hot or cool and refrigerate or freeze.

VARIATIONS

carnivore - add few chopped rashers of bacon, chopped pancetta or crumbled raw pork sausages at the beginning.

dairy-free - replace the butter with a very generous drizzle of extra virgin olive oil.

super mushroom – take the mushroominess to another level with a small handful of dried porcini mushrooms. Soak first in warm water for about 10 minutes then add to the pot along with the the soaking liquid.

VIDEO

MUSHROOM RAGU...

STORAGE BEST PRACTICES

Like all slow cooked dishes, this will improve with a little time sitting in the fridge.

Store in an airtight container or ziplock bag. Will keep in the fridge for 2-3 weeks or so.

Easy freeze meal? Can be frozen for up to 12 months.

REHEATING GUIDELINES

Either pop in the oven with a lid on for 15 minutes or so (180C / 350F). Or place in a saucepan and reheat over a medium heat, stirring every few minutes.

If it is a little dry, add a splash of water or some more butter.

SERVING SUGGESTION

as a ragu – Lovely with cooked pasta, mashed potatoes, zucchini noodles or carrot noodles.

with lentils – I had it last night on a bed of lovely lentils with a salad on the side and was really happy!

light – serve on a bed of baby spinach leaves.

cheesy – this is right at home with a generous dusting of parmesan cheese.

protein boost – serve with a poached egg or fried egg on top.

WASTE AVOIDANCE STRATEGY

mushrooms – best to cook them in the ragu.

tomatoes, garlic – pantry.

butter – keeps in the fridge for months.

thyme or bay leaves – keep in a plastic bag in the fridge for weeks. Freezes well.

PROBLEM SOLVING GUIDE

too watery - just keep cooking with the lid off until the sauce is how you'd like it to be.

mushrooms chewy - if your mushrooms aren't cooked properly the texture can end up being a little chewy. Keep cooking. And remember if you're using different mushrooms varieties, try and chop them so they're about the same size so they cook in roughly the same amount of time.

mushrooms burnt - you'll need to keep an eye on the mushrooms for the last 1/2 hour of cooking to make sure they don't burn. If they're not too bad, stirring in a little water can help moisten them up again but if they're really black, you might need to scrap them.

bland - season with more salt and pepper or try a little tomato paste.



Sweet Potato & chickpea Tagine

SWEET POTATO & CHICKPEA TAGINE

A tajine is just the Moroccan version of a stew. They come in all sorts of varieties but I particularly love this combo of chickpeas and sweet potato. The spices really bring this dish to life. If you can get your hands on the Moroccan spice blend 'ras el hanout' that's great but if not see the variations for alternatives.

TAKES: 20 minutes

MAKES: enough for 2

1 can chickpeas (400g / 14oz), drained
1 tablespoon ras el hanout (or see variations below)
1 can tomatoes (400g / 14oz)
2 small sweet potato, roasted (450g)
1 bunch coriander (cilantro)

1. Heat a medium pot on a medium heat. Add a little oil and cook chickpeas for a few minutes.
2. Add spice and cook another minute. a
3. Add tomatoes simmer uncovered for 10-15 minutes or until the sauce is reduced and thickened slightly.
4. Chop the sweet potato into chunks and add to the pot. Allow to warm through. Taste. Season.
5. Cool and store or serve with coriander on top.

VARIATIONS

no roasted sweet potato? – replace with raw sweet potato cut into chunks. Simmer in the sauce with the lid on for 30 minutes or until sweet potato is cooked.

no ras el hanout? – replace with 1 tablespoon baharat (lebanese spice blend) or 1 teaspoon each of ground turmeric, coriander and ginger.

home cooked chickpeas – soak and cook chickpeas using the method for [a big pot of beans](#). You'll need 240g (9oz) cooked chickpeas.

different legumes – replace chickpeas with 240g (9oz) cooked or canned lentils or beans.

different herbs – mint or basil are also lovely here. Or use baby spinach or some salad for the greenery.

more veg – feel free to add in whatever veg you feel like. If they need cooking, allow extra time to simmer in the sauce with the lid on.

more protein - serve with toasted pine nuts or almonds. Some cooked chicken or sausages can also be a nice addition.

more authentic – add in 1/4 [preserved lemon](#) finely sliced.

VIDEO

SWEET POTATO & CHICKPEA TAGINE...

STORAGE BEST PRACTICES

Store tajine without the coriander in an airtight container. Will keep in the fridge for 3-4 weeks. Wrap coriander leaves in paper towel and store in a plastic bag in the fridge for up to a week.

Easy freeze meal? Tajine without the coriander can be frozen for up to 12 months.

REHEATING GUIDELINES

Place in a saucepan and reheat over a medium heat, stirring every few minutes. Or pop in the oven with a lid on for 15 minutes or so (180C / 350F).

If it is a little dry, add a splash of water or some extra virgin olive oil.

SERVING SUGGESTION

simple meal – great with the herbs on top as a meal on its own.

carb lovers – serve on a bed of couscous cooked according to the packet or with [steamed rice](#) or warm flat bread.

carnivore – serve as a side to roast, pan fried or grilled meat. Great with chicken or spicy sausages.

WASTE AVOIDANCE STRATEGY

chickpeas, ras el hanout, tomatoes – pantry.

roast sweet potato – will keep in the fridge for a few weeks. OK to freeze.

coriander (cilantro) – best to use for another meal. Can be frozen but will wilt when defrosted.

PROBLEM SOLVING GUIDE

bland – be generous with the salt and pepper and possibly add a little more spice.

sharp / too much tomato – simmer for a little longer or add in a good drizzle of olive oil or some butter to soften the acid.

sweet potato falling apart – roast sweet potato can be quite mushy, next time be more gentle once the sweet potato is added.

Simple *fish* Stew



SIMPLE FISH STEW

I like to serve this stew in deep bowls with a fresh green salad on the side. But feel free to serve with crusty bread if you prefer. I've written the method for those that want to make this in advance and reheat. Of course if you're ready to eat it straight away just simmer until the fish is just cooked. Then serve.

TAKES: 30-40 minutes

MAKES: enough for 2-3

2 onions, peeled & chopped

*1 large bulb fennel, trimmed & finely sliced crosswise,
green fronds reserved*

*1 jar commercial tomato pasta sauce or tomato puree
(about 1 1/2 cups)*

large pinch saffron threads

450g (1lb) white fish fillets such as flathead, chopped

1. Heat a generous glug of oil in a large pot. Add onions and cook over a medium low heat, covered for about 5 minutes.
2. Add the fennel and continue to cook, covered and stirring occasionally for 10-15 minutes or until the onion and fennel are soft but not browned.
3. Add the tomato puree, 1 1/2 cups water and saffron. Bring to a simmer.
4. Add fish and cook for about 1 minute. Then remove from the heat. Cool and refrigerate until you're ready to serve (will keep for 3-4 days, possibly longer).
5. To reheat, bring back to a gentle simmer and cook until fish is cooked through. Taste & season. Top with reserved fennel fronds if you have them.

VARIATIONS

short on time? – skip the veg and just simmer the fish in the tomato / water / saffron mixture.

vegetarian / vegan – replace the fish with firm tofu. It will just need to simmer until hot.

keeping the Irish happy – add steamed, sliced potatoes in with the fish.

mixed seafood – feel free to add in some prawns (shrimp), clams or mussels. Adjust the cooking time accordingly.

VIDEO

SIMPLE FISH STEW...

STORAGE BEST PRACTICES

Store in an airtight container. Because the fish isn't completely cooked through it will keep in the fridge for 4-5 days or so.

Easy freeze meal? Can be frozen for up to 12 months.

REHEATING GUIDELINES

Bring back to a gentle simmer and cook until fish is cooked through.

If reheating from frozen best to defrost first.

SERVING SUGGESTION

In deep bowls with fennel fronds on top and a green salad on the side.

Also good with crusty bread and butter for dipping into the stew.

WASTE AVOIDANCE STRATEGY

onions, tomato pasta sauce or tomato puree, saffron – pantry it up!

fennel – will keep for a few weeks in a plastic bag in the fridge.

fish fillets – best if used on the day you buy them. Can be frozen. Or cook the dish anyway and gently reheat, once cooked the fish will keep well for 4-5 days in the fridge.

PROBLEM SOLVING GUIDE

fish dry or falling apart – this means your fish was overcooked. It can happen easily so next time be super careful with the cooking times and when reheating err on the side of using a lower heat.

bland - use more salt to season. A splash of lemon juice will help.

Quick fish Pie



QUICK FISH PIE

I've been on a mission to include more fish in my diet recently and I have to say while I do love cooking fresh fish, there's something so lovely about canned tuna.

TAKES: 45 minutes

MAKES: enough for 4

1 large can tuna in oil (425g / 14oz)

1/4 cauliflower, grated

500g (1lb) full fat ricotta

2 tablespoons lemon juice

1. Preheat your oven to 180C (350F). In a large bowl combine tuna, ricotta, cauliflower and lemon juice. Season.
2. Divide mixture between 4 x 1cup ramekins.
3. Cover and bake for 20 minutes then remove the cover and bake for 10-20 minutes or until pies are bubbling and hot.
4. Serve in the ramekins with a green salad or cool and store.

VARIATIONS

different fish - canned salmon also works well. You could also use chopped fresh fish fillets, just be careful you don't overcook them (test after 20 minutes).

ricotta alternatives – cottage cheese or home made bechamel sauce (or store bought sauce).

vegetarian – replace tuna with drained canned chickpeas.

carb lovers / budget – toss in some cooked pasta with the mixture before popping in the ramekins.

cheesey – sprinkle over grated cheese when you remove the cover and bake until golden and melted.

crunchy top – sprinkle over bread crumbs or almond meal either before popping in the oven or after you remove the cover.

VIDEO

QUICK FISH PIE...

STORAGE BEST PRACTICES

Store in the ramekins in an airtight container or just cover with foil.

Will keep in the fridge for 2 weeks or so.

Easy freeze meal? Can be frozen for up to 12 months.

REHEATING GUIDELINES

Pop in the oven (180C / 350F) with a cover on for 20 minutes or until warmed through.

If frozen, allow to defrost in the fridge before heating in the oven. Do not try to go straight from freezer to oven because the outsides will overcook before the insides have had a chance to defrost.

SERVING SUGGESTION

I like to serve in the warm ramekins with a green salad on the side and a wedge of lemon.

WASTE AVOIDANCE STRATEGY

tuna – pantry.

cauliflower – ungrated cauli will keep for weeks in a plastic bag in the fridge. Can be frozen but the texture isn't as good when defrosted.

ricotta – unopened tubs of ricotta usually have a shelf life of a few weeks. Otherwise use for another meal. Great on toast with honey for a decadent breakfast or use instead of cream with desserts.

lemon – whole lemon will keep wrapped in a plastic bag in the fridge for months.

PROBLEM SOLVING GUIDE

dry – make sure you use full fat ricotta and tuna in oil next time. And bake covered at first. For now, serve with some good quality mayo to balance the dryness. A drizzle of extra virgin olive oil can help too.

bland – it's a relatively mild flavoured dish – to spice it up serve with some chilli oil or your favourite hot sauce.



Roast *chicken* Soup

ROAST CHICKEN SOUP

I used to freeze leftover chicken bones thinking I'd make stock 'one day'. Which of course never came. Recently I've started collecting the bones and keeping them in the fridge so I remember to use them. Makes all the difference. This soup is so nurturing and lovely I've found myself planning a roast or BBQ chicken just so I could have leftovers for the soup!

TAKES: 60 minutes

MAKES: enough for 2-3

bones from 1 roast or BBQ chicken + meat

from 1/4 of the chicken

2 carrots, finely diced

2 onions, finely diced

2 tomatoes, diced

1-2 tablespoons thyme leaves, optional

1. Pop the meat from the chicken, carrots, onion, tomato and 4 cups water in a medium saucepan. Place the bones in a small strainer that will fit in your saucepan. Then pop it on top of the soup so the bones are mostly covered with the liquid. You might need to move the veg around a bit to fit it in.

2. Simmer, covered for 45 minutes to an hour or until the soup tastes heavenly and the veg are tender.

3. Remove the bones. Season. Serve with thyme on top or cool and store in the fridge or freezer.

VARIATIONS

different veg – play around with the veg you use. Celery is always great. You could also try fresh corn, cauliflower, zucchini, even eggplant.

no fresh tomatoes – pop in a tablespoon or two of tomato paste.

vegetarian / vegan – make a chickpea soup. Replace the chicken and bones with 2 cans of chickpeas + their juices. You'll only need 3 cups water and simmer uncovered so it reduces down nicely.

different herbs – thyme is one of my all time favourite herbs, but you could serve with fresh parsley or mint for something different.

chicken broth / stock – save the chicken meat for another use. Simmer the bones and veg. Then strain everything and discard the solids.

roast chicken & lemon – skip the tomato and simmer a finely sliced lemon in with the veg for a different freshness.

VIDEO

ROAST CHICKEN SOUP...

STORAGE BEST PRACTICES

Store in an airtight container. Will keep in the fridge for 1-2 weeks.

Easy freeze meal? Can be frozen for up to 12 months.

REHEATING GUIDELINES

Bring back to a gentle simmer and cook until everything is hot.

If reheating from frozen either defrost first or add straight to the pot and cook on a medium heat with the lid on. Remember to stir every few minutes and break the ice lump up with a spoon if possible to speed up the process.

SERVING SUGGESTION

Lovely on its own. OR with crusty bread and butter.

WASTE AVOIDANCE STRATEGY

chicken – freeze bones and meat separately if you can or together if you're short on time.

carrots – keep for weeks in a plastic bag in the fridge. I generally don't freeze because they go rubbery when defrosted.

onions – pantry.

tomatoes – for best flavour store at room temp. For longer storage can be frozen.

thyme - will keep for weeks in a plastic bag in the fridge. Can be frozen.

PROBLEM SOLVING GUIDE

bland – use more salt to season. A splash of lemon juice will help. Next time try to use more chicken and/or replace the water with chicken stock.

too watery – it's meant to be a very liquid soup. If you prefer a thicker soup add in a few handfuls of breadcrumbs, couscous or short pasta and simmer until thick or the pasta is cooked.

Easy *mushroom* Chicken



EASY MUSHROOM CHICKEN

Please don't be put off by the long time associated with this recipe. Like most slow cooked dishes it does take time but the actual active time is minimal. Slow cooking chicken on the bone like this gives really moist lovely texture but if you're short on time see the variations below for a quicker option.

TAKES: 2 hours

MAKES: enough for 4

4 chicken marylands or 8 drumsticks

500g (1lb) mushrooms

2 onions, chopped

2T butter

small bunch thyme, optional

1. Preheat your oven to 150C (300F).
2. Place chicken, mushrooms, onions, butter, thyme, 1 cup water and some salt and pepper in a large oven proof pot. Cover and cook for 1 1/2 hours.
3. Remove lid and push the veg down into the cooking liquid. Return to the oven and cook uncovered for 30 minutes or until the chicken is browned and well cooked.
4. Either serve hot or cool and refrigerate or freeze.

VARIATIONS

different cuts of chicken – you could use a whole chicken jointed into 8 pieces (get your butcher to do this) or drumsticks or thighs on the bone or wings. You could also use chicken breast fillets or thigh fillets but they may dry out when cooking and won't take as long.

short on time? – increase the oven temp to 200C (400F). Cook for 40 minutes with the lid on and 20 minutes with the lid off.

different veg – carrots, celery, potatoes, sweet potato, parsnips, red capsicum (bell peppers) are all great additions.

dairy-free – replace butter with extra virgin olive oil.

vegan / vegetarian – try [these roast mushrooms](#) instead.

VIDEO

EASY MUSHROOM CHICKEN...

STORAGE BEST PRACTICES

Store in an airtight container. Will keep in the fridge for 4-5 days.
Can be frozen for up to 12 months.

REHEATING GUIDELINES

Pop in the oven (180C / 350F) with a lid on for 20 minutes or until warmed through.

If frozen, allow to defrost in the fridge before heating in the oven. Do not try to go straight from freezer to oven because the outside will overcook before the insides have had a chance to defrost.

SERVING SUGGESTION

with a salad – I like it served in shallow bowls with a green salad on the side.

with greens – serve on a bed of [cooked greens](#).

with crusty bread – and butter for soaking up the lovely sauces.

carb lovers – serve on a bed of [steamed rice](#), [cooked quinoa](#) or cooked pasta.

cheesy – lovely with some crumbled feta or goats cheese sprinkled over.

WASTE AVOIDANCE STRATEGY

chicken, mushrooms – freeze.

onions – pantry.

butter - keeps in the fridge for months.

thyme – keeps for weeks in a plastic bag in the fridge. Can be frozen without problem.

PROBLEM SOLVING GUIDE

too watery – the sauce it meant to be quite ‘soupy’. If you prefer less sauce next time halve the water. For now just don’t serve all the sauce and use it for another recipe where you would use chicken stock.

chicken tough / dry – either overcooked or poor quality chicken. For now just serve with a dollop of mayo or aioli.

chicken pink – slow cooked chicken can have a slight pinkish colour even when fully cooked so this may not be a problem. If the colour is dark pink, it means the chicken isn’t cooked and will need to go back in the oven with the lid on.

bland – next time try a different chicken supplier. For now use more salt.



Summer *meatballs*

SUMMER MEATBALLS

I don't know about you but I tend to think of meatballs as a wintery type dish. But they can be given a summery makeover. All it takes is a super fresh lemony sauce and serving on a bed of baby spinach instead of the more usual, hearty meatball accompaniments.

TAKES: 45 minutes

MAKES: enough for 2-3

500g (1lb) minced (ground) beef

75g (3oz) almond meal

2 cups chicken stock

1/3 cup lemon juice

natural yoghurt, to serve

2 large handfuls baby spinach, to serve

1. Preheat your oven to 200C (400F). Mix beef and almonds. Season. Form into meatballs using a tablespoon and your hands.
2. Place meatballs in a medium baking tray. Top with lemon juice and stock. Bake for 30-40 minutes or until well browned and cooked through.
3. Serve on a bed of baby spinach with yoghurt drizzled over the top.

VARIATIONS

vegetarian – make these lentil balls and cook with the lemon + vegetable stock mixture on this page instead of the tomato based sauce.

less 'meaty' - soften 2 large chopped onions in a little oil. Combine cooked onions with the beef and almond meal mixture.

nut-free – replace almond meal with soft bread crumbs.

budget – make the meatballs go further by serving on a bed of mashed potatoes, with pasta or with crust bread and butter.

wintery meatballs – replace stock and lemon juice with tomato puree or canned tomatoes and serve with grated parmesan instead of the yoghurt.

dairy-free – make a gremolata by chopping together a handful of parsley, zest of one lemon and 1/2 clove garlic. Sprinkle on top instead of the yoghurt.

SUMMER MEATBALLS...

STORAGE BEST PRACTICES

Store in an airtight container. Will keep in the fridge for 2 weeks or so.

Easy freeze meal? Can be frozen for up to 12 months.

REHEATING GUIDELINES

Pop in the oven (180C / 350F) with a cover on for 20 minutes or until warmed through.

If frozen, allow to defrost in the fridge before heating in the oven. Do not try to go straight from freezer to oven because the outsides of the meatballs will overcook before the insides have had a chance to defrost.

SERVING SUGGESTION

straight up – as per the image above.

with bread – serve meatballs, baby spinach and yoghurt wrapped in pita bread with the sauce for dipping.

carb lovers – serve on a bed of cooked spaghetti or cooked quinoa or couscous cooked according to the packet.

WASTE AVOIDANCE STRATEGY

beef – pop it in the freezer.

almond meal – keep in the pantry.

chicken stock – fresh stock will need to be frozen. Tetra pack or cubes will keep in the pantry.

lemons – will keep for weeks in the fridge.

yoghurt – will keep for weeks in the fridge. Doesn't freeze well so eat it for breakfast or another meal.

baby spinach – either wilt down the leave in a pot with a little oil and keep in the fridge for a few weeks or just pop the bag in the freezer and use as wilted greens when defrosted.

PROBLEM SOLVING GUIDE

balls falling apart – next time compact the balls more firmly together with your hands. And make sure you don't stir them too early on in the cooking process.

bland – be generous with the seasoning. Next time use better quality meat.

sauce too acidic or sharp? – add a few tablespoons of olive oil or butter for extra richness.

balls browning too much – cover with foil and cook until done.

The Magic *sausage* Supper



THE MAGIC SAUSAGE SUPPER

So you're probably wondering where the 'magic' comes from. It's all about how this dish turns some pretty common ingredients into something truly delicious. All it takes is a little time in the oven. This is one of those dishes that's best served at the table in the roasting pan so everyone can help themselves and pick at the crispy bits on the bottom of the pan.

TAKES: 60–70 minutes

MAKES: enough for 2–3

1/2 butternut pumpkin (squash)

2 medium onions, quartered lengthwise

1/2 teaspoon dried chilli flakes

4 thick sausages

1 small bunch flat leaf parsley, leaves picked

1. Preheat your oven to 180C (350F).
2. Halve pumpkin crosswise then chop into wedges. Place pumpkin, onion, chilli and sausages in a roasting dish. Drizzle generously with olive oil.
3. Roast for about an hour, stirring at the half way mark. It's ready when everything is golden and tender.
4. Serve with parsley leaves sprinkled over the top.

VARIATIONS

different veg – feel free to play around. Parsnips and sweet potato are lovely. Unpeeled cloves of garlic are also great.

no sausages? – use chicken drumsticks or thighs instead.

spanish – use fresh chorizo as your sausage and toss in a can of drained chickpeas instead of the pumpkin.

vegan – replace sausages with field mushrooms.

vegetarian - skip the sausages and serve the roast veg with a poached or fried egg on top.

carb lovers / more substantial – add scrubbed halved potatoes.

VIDEO

THE MAGIC SAUSAGE SUPPER...

STORAGE BEST PRACTICES

Store in an airtight container without the parsley. Will keep in the fridge for 2 weeks or so.

Wrap coriander leaves in paper towel and store in a plastic bag in the fridge for 2-3 weeks.

Easy freeze meal? Can be frozen for up to 12 months.

REHEATING GUIDELINES

Pop in the oven (180C / 350F) with a cover on for 20 minutes or until warmed through. Then serve with the parsley.

If frozen, allow to defrost in the fridge before heating in the oven. Do not try to go straight from freezer to oven because the outsides of the sausages will overcook before the insides have had a chance to defrost.

SERVING SUGGESTION

Great as a meal on it's own. Or you could serve a green salad on the side.

WASTE AVOIDANCE STRATEGY

butternut pumpkin (squash) – will keep in the fridge for weeks. Best not to freeze.

onions, chilli flakes – pantry.

sausages – freeze.

parsley – will keep for a few weeks in a plastic bag in the fridge. Can be frozen but will wilt when defrosted.

PROBLEM SOLVING GUIDE

burning – the heat is probably too high, or you haven't been stirring often enough. If things aren't cooked through yet, cover with foil for the remainder of the cooking time.

too dry – drizzle over some extra virgin olive oil. Next time consider cooking less.

too bland? – don't forget to season. Salt, pepper and lemon juice are all your friends here.



Polpettone

POLPETTONE

When I was at boarding school one of my least favourite things to eat was meatloaf. But as I've learned over the years just because I didn't like something when I was younger doesn't mean there isn't a better version that I can love... And here it is! I still can't bring myself to call it meatloaf though. Besides it's much more fun to say 'polpettone' - the Italian for large meatball.

TAKES: 60 minutes

MAKES: enough for 4-6

1kg (2lb) minced (ground) beef

150g (5oz) almond meal

1 teaspoon onion powder, optional

1 jar tomato passata (puree), about 3 cups

3-4 knobs (hunks) butter

150g (5oz) grated cheese

1. Preheat your oven to 200C (400F). Combine beef, almond meal, onion powder (if using) and a few pinches of salt in a bowl. Mix well and form into a loaf.
2. Place tomato and butter in a baking dish and top with your loaf.
3. Bake uncovered for 30 minutes.
4. Spoon sauce over the top of the loaf and scatter over the cheese. Bake for another 20 minutes or until cheese is melted and the polpettone is cooked through. I like it a little pink.
5. Eat now or allow to cool before storing in the fridge or freezer.

VARIATIONS

no onion powder? – just skip it or soften a chopped onion in a little butter and add to the raw beef.

vegetarian – try these lentil balls instead.

nut-free – replace almond meal with soft breadcrumbs.

different cheese – any good melting cheese works well. I used a mixture of gruyere, parmesan and emmental.

VIDEO

POLPETTONE...

STORAGE BEST PRACTICES

If you like you could skip adding the cheese initially and wait to sprinkle it on before you reheat. Either way is OK. Store in an airtight container or covered with foil. Will keep in the fridge for 2 weeks or so.

Easy freeze meal? Can be frozen for up to 12 months.

REHEATING GUIDELINES

Pop in the oven (180C / 350F) with a cover on for 20 minutes or until warmed through.

If frozen, allow to defrost in the fridge before heating in the oven. Do not try to go straight from freezer to oven because the outsides of the polpettone will overcook before the insides have had a chance to defrost.

SERVING SUGGESTION

straight up – I like thick slices with the sauce spooned over and a green salad on the side.

sandwich filling – great thinly sliced and used for a sandwich filling either warm or cold.

carb lovers – serve on a bed of buttered spaghetti.

WASTE AVOIDANCE STRATEGY

beef – freeze it.

almond meal, onion powder, passata (puree) – pantry.

butter – keeps in the fridge for months.

cheese – most hard cheese will keep in the fridge for months. Can be frozen.

PROBLEM SOLVING GUIDE

falling apart – next time compact the loaf more firmly together with your hands.

bland – be generous with the seasoning. Next time use better quality meat.

sauce too acidic or sharp? – add a few tablespoons of olive oil or butter for extra richness.

loaf browning too much – cover with foil and cook until done.

loaf pink inside – I like it a little bit pink but if you prefer your minced meat cooked through just pop it back in the oven for another 5-10 minutes.

loaf dry – next time use fattier beef or try cooking for less time. For now be generous with the butter!

Rosemary Lamb Shanks



ROSEMARY LAMB SHANKS

Lamb shanks are one of my all time favourite cuts of meat. And the best part is they're generally really inexpensive. If lamb isn't readily available in your area, you could easily substitute beef shin on the bone also called 'osso buco'. Goat shanks are another great option or for a completely different vibe a couple of ham hocks would be delish!

TAKES: 4-5 hours

MAKES: enough for 4

500g (1lb) white beans, soaked in water overnight

4 lamb shanks

4 onions, quartered

2 cans tomatoes (400g / 14oz each)

2 cups water

4 sprigs rosemary

1. Drain the bean and place in a large oven proof pot. Add shanks, onions, tomato, water, rosemary and some salt and pepper.
2. Cover and pop in the oven at 160C (325F) for 4-5 hours.
3. When the shanks are super tender and the beans are cooked, taste and season.
4. Serve hot or cool and store in the fridge or freezer.

VARIATIONS

short on time? – you can skip the soaking step and allow an extra hour of cooking time. But don't be surprised if your beans cause 'gassiness'.

different beans – I like white navy beans but most dried beans will work well here.

different meat – beef shin on the bone also called 'osso buco'. Goat shanks are another great option or for a completely different vibe a couple of ham hocks would be delish!

vegetarian – skip the shanks and replace the water with vegetable stock. Serve the beans with a poached egg or some crumbled feta.

VIDEO

ROSEMARY LAMB SHANKS...

STORAGE BEST PRACTICES

Store in an airtight container or ziplock bag. Will keep in the fridge for 2 weeks or so.

Easy freeze meal? Can be frozen for up to 12 months

REHEATING GUIDELINES

Pop in the oven (180C / 350F) with a cover on for 20 minutes or until warmed through. Or allow to come up to a simmer on the stove top.

If frozen, allow to defrost in the fridge before heating in the oven. Do not try to go straight from freezer to oven because the outsides of the shanks will overcook before the insides have had a chance to defrost.

SERVING SUGGESTION

In shallow bowls with a green salad on the side. Also good with some parmesan grated over.

WASTE AVOIDANCE STRATEGY

unsoaked beans, onion, tomato – pantry.

soaked beans – will keep in the fridge for 2 weeks and can be frozen.

lamb shanks – freeze.

rosemary – will keep in a plastic bag in the fridge for weeks. Also freezes well.

PROBLEM SOLVING GUIDE

too dry – The tricky thing with beans is that they sometimes need more water to cook through. Just add more water as you need. If the shanks are dry it's more likely to be a result of the quality of your lamb than anything the cook has done!

bland? – Don't forget to season with lots of salt and pepper. Serving with lots of grated parmesan can help boost the flavour too.

too watery – again this is a bean variation thing. Just cook in the oven with the lid off to reduce the sauce down to your liking.

lamb tough – this means you haven't cooked the lamb for long enough. Just pop it back in the oven and keep going.

Chipotle Beef



CHIPOTLE BEEF

Chipotle chillies are dried, smoked jalapenos that have the most lovely smoky flavour and subtle heat. They can be tricky to find, your best bet is to order online. Or see the variations below for other ideas.

TAKES: 4 hours

MAKES: enough for 4-6

1.5kg (3lb) beef short ribs

2 cans tomato (400g / 14oz each)

2 onions, chopped

2-4 chipotle chillies

1. Preheat your oven to 150C (300F). Place beef, tomatoes, onions and chilli in an oven proof pot.
2. Cover and bake for 2 hours.
3. Then stir and bake for another 2 hours uncovered or until beef is super tender and the sauce has reduced.
4. Taste, season and serve hot or cool and store.

VARIATIONS

no chipotle – replace with 1-2 tablespoons hot smoked paprika and a little fresh chilli if you prefer more heat.

different meat – beef short ribs are my favourite but you could use pork ribs, lamb ribs, brisket, osso buco, chicken drumsticks or pork shoulder.

vegetarian / vegan – make chipotle lentils. Cook the onion, tomatoes and chilli until reduced about 1/2 hour then stir in 500g [cooked lovely lentils](#).

VIDEO

CHIPOTLE BEEF...

STORAGE BEST PRACTICES

Store in an airtight container or ziplock bag. Will keep in the fridge for 2 weeks or so.

Easy freeze meal? Can be frozen for up to 12 months.

REHEATING GUIDELINES

Pop in the oven (180C / 350F) with a cover on for 20 minutes or until warmed through. Or allow to come up to a simmer on the stove top.

If frozen, allow to defrost in the fridge before heating in the oven. Do not try to go straight from freezer to oven because the outsides of the shanks will overcook before the insides have had a chance to defrost.

SERVING SUGGESTION

with tortillas – warm some tortillas as per the packet and serve with beef, sour cream and coriander leaves (cilantro).

with avocado & lime – serve ribs in bowls topped with avocado, lime and mint or coriander (cilantro) leaves.

fancy nachos – serve on a bed of corn chips with grated cheese, sour cream and a green salad.

smoky ragu – also great with pasta (papadelle is lovely) or on a bed of mashed potato or whole roast sweet potato.

WASTE AVOIDANCE STRATEGY

beef short ribs – freeze.

tomato ,onions, chillies – pantry.

PROBLEM SOLVING GUIDE

too dry – If the beef is too dry just add a splash of water.

bland? – don't forget to season with lots of salt and pepper.

too watery – again this is a bean variation thing. Just cook in the oven with the lid off to reduce the sauce down to your liking.

beef tough – this means you haven't cooked the beef for long enough. Just pop it back in the oven and keep going.

MORE



More Do Ahead Recipes on the SVCS.

SOUP DO AHEAD

[Addictive Green Curry of Broccoli Soup](#)

[Anti-Cancer Mushroom Soup](#)

[Hearty Red Lentil Soup](#)

[Minimalist Minestrone Soup](#)

[Smoky Tomato & Lentil Soup](#)

[White Bean & Eggplant Soup](#)

[Baby Carrot Soup](#)

[No Chop Butternut Soup](#)

[Sweet Potato & Red Curry Soup](#)

More Do Ahead Recipes on the SVCS.

VEGGIE DO AHEAD

[Killer Kale Gratin](#)

[Pecan Crusted Sweet Potato with Sour Cream](#)

[Black Quinoa & Broccoli Salad](#)

[Addictive Lemony Kale](#)

[Broccoli Pantry Curry](#)

[\(Almost\) 15 Minute Veggie Lasagne](#)

[Eggplant Parmigiana](#)

[Hugh's Sweet Potato Gratin](#)

[Red Lentils with Tomato & Spinach](#)

[Veggie Chilli](#)

CARNIVORE DO AHEAD

[Chicken & Peppers](#)

[Coconut Chicken with Greens](#)

[Apricot Chicken](#)

[June's Chinese Chicken](#)

[Coq Au Vin](#)

[Chicken Tajine](#)

[Vietnamese Meatballs](#)

[Slow Baked Bangers](#)

[Succulent Slow Roast Lamb](#)

[Lamb Shanks with Chickpeas](#)

[Lamb Shanks with Prunes](#)

[Lamb Shanks with Apricot](#)

More Do Ahead Recipes on the SVCS.

CARNIVORE DO AHEAD

[Skillet Shepherds Pie](#)

[Osso Buco in Bianco](#)

[Beef Vindaloo](#)

[Chilli Con Carne](#)

[Spanish Beef Stew](#)

[Beef & Balsamic](#)

SWEET TREAT DO AHEAD

[Croissant Surprise Birthday Cake](#)

[Chocolate Pecan 'Pie'](#)

[Cookie Dough Ice Cream Cake](#)

[Spiced Parsnip Cake](#)

[Ultimate Chocolate Brownie](#)

[Peanut Butter Slice](#)

[Classic Baked Cheesecake](#)

[Zucchini Cake](#)

ACTION



Your Actions

This week I really encourage you to keep going with your regular 'mise en place' date and add something new as well...

1. Review the module 3 Do Ahead Recipes.
2. Choose 1 thing to make. Get your ingredients, make and store it!
3. Reheat and eat your 'do ahead' meal.
4. Share your results in the comments below or if you have a photo share on the [SVCS facebook page](#).

Meal Plans

MODULE FOUR

A
WINTERY
MEAL PLAN



Module 4. A WINTER MEAL PLAN

NOTE: A more Summery Meal Plan and recipes will be included in Module 5.

Weekly Meals

[1] **MONDAY:** [Balsamic Onion Soup](#)

[2] **TUESDAY:** [Warming Onion & White Bean Bake*](#)

[3] **WEDNESDAY:** [Quick Sausages & Lentils](#)

[4] **THURSDAY:** [Bean Bowl with a Poached Egg](#)

[5] **FRIDAY:** [Burgers with Mashy Peas](#)

[6] **SWEET TREAT:** [Vanilla Pears with Ice Cream*](#)

* Takes longer than 1/2 hour. See short on time guide for alternatives.

VARIATIONS

Vegetarian: [3] Skip the sausages and double everything else. [5] Serve lentil burgers with mashy peas and onion.

Carb Lovers / More Substantial: [1] Serve with crusty bread & butter. [2] Toss in cooked pasta with the beans. [3] Increase the lentils. [4] Serve on hot buttered toast. [5] Serve in burger buns.

Budget: See vegetarian and carb lovers suggestions.

Carnivore: [1] Simmer chopped chicken thighs in the soup until cooked. [2] Brown bacon or chorizo and add to the onion. [4] Serve with finely sliced prosciutto draped over.

Short on time: [1] Use commercial caramelized onions. [2] Use canned beans. [3] Use canned lentils. [4] Use canned beans. [5] Use commercial caramelized onions. [6] Serve fresh berries with ice cream instead.

WINTERY
MEAL PLAN
SHOPPING
LIST



Your Weekly Shopping List.

VEGGIES

750g (1.5lb) onions [1]
1.5kg (3lb) onions [2]+
4 sprigs thyme [2]+
1 bag salad leaves [2]+
1 bunch flat leaf parsley [3]
1 onion [4]
sm bunch cavalo nero, kale or greens [4]
1 lemon [5]
750g (1.5lb) onions [5]
4-6 pears [6]

PROTEIN

4 pork sausages [3]
4 eggs [4]
400g (14oz) ground (minced) beef [5]

DAIRY

large handful cheddar cheese [1]
150g (5oz) cheddar cheese [2]+
2 hunks butter [5]
3 hunks butter [6]*
vanilla ice cream [6]*

PANTRY

extra virgin olive oil
salt & pepper
3T cheap balsamic vinegar [1]
2C chicken or veg stock [1]
6T cheap balsamic vinegar [2]+
400g (14oz) dried beans or 3 cans [2]+
1/2C chicken or veg stock [2]+
125g (5oz) dried lentils or 1 can [3]
1T sherry or wine vinegar [3]
1T soy sauce [3]
125g (5oz) dried beans or 1 can [4]
1/2C chicken or veg stock [4]
2T vinegar [4]
2 large handfuls frozen peas [5]
3T cheap balsamic vinegar [5]
1 vanilla bean or 1t vanilla extract [6]*

OTHER

____ COOK'S NOTES ____

't' = teaspoon 'T' = tablespoon

Unless otherwise stated all cans are 400g / 14oz

+ [2] serves 4

* [6] serves 4-6.

MISE EN PLACE



Mise en Place Possibilities.

Caramelized Onion (70 minutes)

Cook the onion and balsamic vinegar as per the recipe over here. Can be done up to a month ahead and stored in the fridge or frozen.

Home Cooked Beans (6 hours soaking + 90 minutes cooking)

Soak beans over night and cook as per the recipe over here.

[2] Onion Bake (60 minutes)

Make bake as per the recipe. Cool and store in the fridge for up to 2 weeks. See reheating guide before serving.

Home Cooked Lentils (30 Minutes)

Cook the lentils as per the recipe [HERE](#). Will keep in the fridge for 2 weeks or so.

INGREDIENT STORAGE

Ingredient Storage Best Practices.

VEGETABLES

onions – in a dark pantry.

thyme – in the fridge wrapped in a plastic bag.

salad leaves – store sealed bag in the fridge. If buying loose leaves, wash and spin dry in a salad spinner then wrap loosely in paper towel and place inside plastic bag. Push out most of the air and seal. Store in the fridge.

flat leaf parsley – in the fridge wrapped in a plastic bag.

cavalo nero, kale or greens – in the fridge wrapped in a plastic bag.

lemons – in the fridge wrapped in a plastic bag. Can be kept at room temp if you prefer but will last longer in the fridge.

pears – in the fridge wrapped in a plastic bag.

PROTEIN

pork sausages – in the fridge in the packaging they were purchased in.

eggs – I keep mine in the pantry because we eat a lot of eggs. Will last much longer in the fridge.

minced (ground) beef – in the fridge in the packaging it was purchased in.

DAIRY

cheese – in the fridge. I prefer to wrap in baking paper or waxed paper and then store inside a sealed plastic bag or other container.

butter – in the fridge in the packaging it was purchased in.

ice cream - in the freezer in the packaging it was purchased in.



DOWNLOADS



MEAL PLAN DOWNLOADS

[Full Colour PDF Meal Plan](#)

[Print Friendly' Meal Plan](#)

You'll need to 'Right Click' and 'Save Link As' – see below for detailed instructions.

****Super Important!****

Make sure you use Adobe Reader to open you meal plan pdfs – its FREE!

For your computer: www.get.adobe.com/reader/

For your mobile device: www.adobe.com/au/products/reader-mobile.html

ACTIONS



Your Actions

This week I really encourage you to keep going with your regular 'mise en place' date and add something new as well...

1. Review the meal plan. Download and print or open it in Adobe Reader.
2. Edit the shopping list to suit your preferences. Get your ingredients, and follow the plan!
3. Share your results in the comments below or if you have a photo share on the [SVCS facebook page](#).



Balsamic *onion* Soup

BALSAMIC ONION SOUP

Onion soup can be such a wonderfully hearty vegetarian meal. Traditionally it's served with melted cheese on toast, but I've kept things lighter and quicker here by just throwing on a handful of grated cheese and letting it melt into the soup on its own.

TAKES: 10 minutes

MAKES: enough for 2

2 cups caramelized onions (1/2 quantity of the [recipe over here](#))

2 cups chicken or vegetable stock

large handful cheddar cheese, grated

1. Bring onions and stock to the boil. Simmer for 2 minutes. Taste. Season.

2. Divide soup between 2 bowls. Top with cheese.

VARIATIONS

healthier – add in a few handfuls of sliced kale or baby spinach. Simmer until just wilted.

vegan – skip the cheese and add a can of white beans or chickpeas in to simmer with the stock.

more substantial – serve with crusty bread and butter. Or toast some sourdough and rub with garlic and place in the bottom of the bowl before pouring soup over.

freshly made onions – finely slice 750g (1.5lb) onions. Cook in oil, covered until super soft. Add 3 tablespoons cheap balsamic vinegar and cook lid off until thickened and reduced.

carnivore – simmer chopped chicken thighs in the soup until cooked.

short on time – use commercial caramelized onions.

VIDEO

BALSAMIC ONION SOUP...

REHEATING GUIDELINES

Warm in a saucepan over a medium heat.

SERVING SUGGESTIONS

Best in shallow bowls so there is lots of surface area for the cheese. For a more substantial meal serve with crusty bread and butter or hot buttered toast.

STORAGE BEST PRACTICES

Store in an airtight container or ziplock bag. Will keep in the fridge for 2 weeks or so.

Easy freeze meal? Can be frozen for up to 12 months.

WASTE AVOIDANCE STRATEGY

onions, cheese - will keep in the fridge for weeks. Can be frozen.

balsamic vinegar – pantry.

chicken or vegetable stock – packaged stock will keep in the pantry. Fresh stock can be frozen.

PROBLEM SOLVING GUIDE

too sweet – that's the onions, remember to season with salt or try a splash of soy sauce.

onions crunchy – that means your balsamic onions weren't cooked enough. Simmering for longer will help soften them now.

bland – be generous with the seasoning and try a splash of soy sauce.



Warming *onion &* White Bean Bake

WARMING ONION & WHITE BEAN BAKE

This is wonderful reheated the next day so feel free to make it in advance and keep it in the fridge. I've used an aged cheddar here because it has a nice balance of cheesy flavour and good melting qualities but you could use your favourite melting cheese. Or even some parmesan would do the trick.

TAKES: 60 minutes

MAKES: enough for 4

5 onions or 1 quantity [caramelized onions](#)

4 sprigs thyme, leaves picked

750g (3/4lb) [home cooked beans](#) or 3 cans, drained

1/2 cup chicken or vegetable stock

150g (5oz) grated cheddar cheese

1 bag salad leaves, to serve

1. Preheat oven to 200C (400F).
2. If using raw onions, heat a generous glug of olive oil and a large frying pan or skillet. Peel and slice onion and cook onion, stirring occasionally over a medium heat until onion is melting and deep golden. Add more oil as you need it. Will take about 25 minutes. If using caramelized onions skip this step.
3. Add thyme to onion and season.
4. In a medium heatproof dish layer about a third of the onions. Add half the beans and a little cheese. Repeat until all the ingredients have been used, finishing with the cheese. Pour the stock over and season.
5. Bake uncovered for 25-30 minutes or until golden and bubbling. Serve with salad leaves on the side.

VARIATIONS

home cooked beans – use [this recipe](#). As a rule of thumb, 1 drained can = 250g (9oz) cooked beans.

vegan / dairy-free – replace the cheese with breadcrumbs, almond meal or finely sliced almonds.

carnivore – crumble some sausages or slice some chorizo or bacon. Brown in a pan and add to the onions.

bean-free – replace beans with cooked pasta such as penne or macaroni.

carb lovers / more substantial – toss in cooked pasta with the beans.

short on time – use canned beans.

VIDEO

WARMING ONION & WHITE BEAN BAKE...

REHEATING GUIDELINES

Pop covered in the oven 180C / 350F for 20 minutes or until hot.

SERVING SUGGESTIONS

Serve in shallow bowls with salad leaves on the side. OR dress your leaves in your favourite salad dressing.

STORAGE BEST PRACTICES

Store in an airtight container or ziplock bag. Will keep in the fridge for 2 weeks or so.

Easy freeze meal? Can be frozen for up to 12 months.

WASTE AVOIDANCE STRATEGY

onions, canned beans – pantry.

thyme, home cooked beans, cheese – will keep in the fridge for weeks. Can be frozen.

stock – freeze.

salad leaves – best to use for another meal.

PROBLEM SOLVING GUIDE

watery – pop back in the oven for another 10 minutes or so. Next time use a wider dish to allow more evaporation or reduce the amount of stock.

bland – for now be more generous with the seasoning. Next time use home made stock or a better brand.

dry – serve with extra virgin olive oil drizzled over. Or a little mayo. Next time use more stock.

Quick *sausgae* & Lentils



QUICK SAUSAGE & LENTILS

In our house we LOVE a good sausage. And over the years I've learned that there is a massive difference in quality between a sausage made with excellent ingredients and love and your super cheap supermarket sausage. So if you think you aren't a sausage fan, I challenge you to take the time to find a butcher who makes their own and takes pride in their bangers. Trust me, it will be like discovering a whole new ingredient. And the best thing, even super fancy bangers are reasonably priced compared to most meats.

TAKES: 15 minutes

MAKES: enough for 2

3-4 good quality pork sausages

250g (9oz) home cooked lentils or 1 can, drained

1 tablespoon sherry or wine vinegar

1 tablespoon soy sauce

1 bunch flat leaf parsley, chopped

1. Heat a little oil in your frying pan. Remove sausage from their casings and crumble the meat into the pan.
2. Cook on a highish heat, stirring every now and then for a few minutes or until sausages are well browned.
3. Add lentils, vinegar and soy. Stir and keep cooking until everything is hot and the sausages are cooked through.
4. Remove from heat. Taste and season with extra soy or vinegar if needed. Sprinkle over parsley.

VARIATIONS

not a sausage fan? – replace sausages with ground (minced) meat. Pork, veal, beef or lamb would all be fine.

different lentils – I've used home cooked French-style or Puy lentils, but you could use canned lentils. Red or brown lentils will also work, just be careful you don't overcook them as they like to turn into a mush. The best way to cook lentils is to add to a big pot of cold water then simmer until they're tender, about 15 minutes for red or green lentils, longer for brown).

soy-free – skip the soy sauce and season with salt instead.

vegetarian / vegan – skip the sausages and double everything else. Warm the lentils and season with the soy and vinegar. Serve with a generous handful of roasted nuts for extra protein and crunch.

carb lovers / more substantial – increase the lentils.

short on time – use canned lentils.

VIDEO

QUICK SAUSAGE & LENTILS...

REHEATING GUIDELINES

Warm the sausages and lentils in a saucepan over a medium heat. Keep parsley separate and sprinkle over just before serving.

SERVING SUGGESTIONS

On it's own as a quick meal.

STORAGE BEST PRACTICES

Store parsley separately. Keep sausages and lentils in an airtight container or ziplock bag. Will keep in the fridge for 2 weeks or so. Easy freeze meal? Can be frozen for up to 12 months.

WASTE AVOIDANCE STRATEGY

sausages – freeze them.

lentils – dried or canned will keep in the pantry. Cooked lentils can be frozen.

vinegar, soy sauce – pantry.

parsley - make parsley oil by covering with olive oil or freeze (will wilt when defrosted)

PROBLEM SOLVING GUIDE

bland – season with more soy and / or vinegar.

too acidic - next time use a better quality vinegar. Cheaper vinegars tend to have harsher flavours. For now drizzle over some extra virgin olive oil to soften the acidity.

mushy - lentils can fall apart if overcooked. Not much you can do now but next time ensure your lentils aren't cooked for as long.

Bean Bowl *with a* Poached Egg



BEAN BOWL WITH A POACHED EGG

Don't you love the idea of a 'bean bowl'? I think it just sounds so comforting and warming. I wish I could say I thought up the idea on my own but it was inspired by a photo on [Instagram](#) by the lovely Sarah from [My New Roots](#). This is one of those recipes you could take in any direction depending on your mood and what you happen to have in the house. So please just use this as a springboard for ideas.

TAKES: 25 minutes

MAKES: enough for 2

1 onion, peeled & diced

250g (9oz) [home cooked beans](#) or 1 can, drained

1/2 cup chicken or vegetable stock or bean cooking liquid

1 small bunch cavalo nero, kale or other greens, sliced crosswise

[poached eggs](#), to serve

1. Heat a little oil in a saucepan. Add onions and cook over a medium heat until soft.
2. Add beans and liquid or stock and cavalo nero or greens.
3. Simmer uncovered for 15 minutes or until the greens are cooked and everything is hot.
4. Taste. Season and serve with a poached egg on top.

VARIATIONS

paleo – replace cooked beans with a head of cauliflower or 2 heads broccoli cut into florettes and change the name to 'veg bowl'. Serve with extra poached eggs to make it more substantial.

vegan – replace poached eggs with a few good handfuls of cashew or other nuts.

carnivore – after the onion has cooked, fry some pancetta or bacon or crumble some sausages in and cook until browned then continue as per the recipe, OR serve with finely sliced prosciutto draped over.

egg-free – if poached eggs aren't your thing replace them with some cheese. Shaved parmesan is lovely or you could use any soft cheese like buffalo mozzarella, goats cheese, ricotta or even blue.

other greens – collards, spinach, silver beet, chard, kale, baby spinach.

different legumes – feel free to use any cooked bean or lentil here. You could also use 'non-legumes' like brown rice or quinoa or millet.

carb lovers / more substantial – serve on hot buttered toast.

short on time – use canned beans.

VIDEO

BEAN BOWL WITH A POACHED EGG...

REHEATING GUIDELINES

Warm the beans in a saucepan over a medium heat. Poached eggs can be warmed by popping in boiling water for a minute or so.

SERVING SUGGESTIONS

In a bowl! Also nice with some grated parmesan on top.

STORAGE BEST PRACTICES

Store beans and egg separately in an airtight container or ziplock bag. Will keep in the fridge for 2 weeks or so.
Easy freeze meal? Can be frozen for up to 12 months.

WASTE AVOIDANCE STRATEGY

onion - pantry.

beans – pantry if canned. If home cooked will keep for weeks in the fridge or can be frozen.

stock – freeze.

greens – will keep in a plastic bag in the fridge for a few weeks. Can be frozen.

eggs – will keep in the fridge for weeks.

PROBLEM SOLVING GUIDE

too bland? – add in a little more salt. A splash of lemon juice can help. Or sprinkle over some grated parmesan.

watery – next time use less stock but for now you can simmer uncovered for a while to reduce the sauce.

Burgers *with* Mashy Peas



BURGERS WITH MASHY PEAS

Everyone loves a good burger and the thing is they're one of the most affordable meat based dishes. So perfect for cooks on a budget. If you can't be bothered with the onion, the burgers are lovely with just the peas for both sauce and side.

TAKES: 20 minutes

MAKES: enough for 2

400g (14oz) ground beef

2 large handfuls frozen peas

2 knobs (hunks) butter

squeeze lemon juice

caramelized onion, to serve [recipe HERE](#)

1. Heat a frying pan or skillet on a super high heat for at least 3 minutes. You want it smoking hot.
2. Meanwhile divide beef into two and shape into burger patties.
3. Sprinkle a fine layer of fine salt onto the pan and slide the burgers on top. Cook for 4 minutes then turn, adding a little more salt.
4. Meanwhile, heat a little oil in a medium pan and add the peas. Cook covered on a high heat for about 4 minutes or until peas are hot.
5. Once the burgers are turned, cook for another 4 minutes or until burgers are how you like them.
6. When the peas are hot, add the butter then roughly puree with a stick blender or mash with a fork. Season with salt, pepper and lemon juice.
7. Serve burgers on a bed of mashy peas with caramelized onion, if using.

VARIATIONS

vegan / vegetarian – make lentil burgers by draining a can of lentils and roughly mashing with a fork. Mix with 2 large handfuls soft bread crumbs and form into 2 patties, using more bread if the burgers feel too wet. Fry in oil until golden on both sides (about 3 minutes a side).

chicken burgers – use good quality chicken mince instead of the beef. Serve with a dollop of mayo or aioli instead of the onion.

traditional burgers/more substantial – cook salt crusted burgers as above but serve on a burger bun with ketchup and a little mayo and some crisp lettuce.

chilli burgers – serve with chilli oil or your favourite hot sauce instead of the onion.

short on time – use commercial caramelized onions.

VIDEO

BURGERS WITH MASHY PEAS...

REHEATING GUIDELINES

I find burgers taste best when freshly cooked. Although you could warm gently in a frying pan over a medium heat if necessary.

SERVING SUGGESTIONS

quick dinner – A quick dinner in one. Although I'd be tempted to serve a green salad on the side as well.

more traditional burger – serve onion and meat inside a bun with some ketchup and mayonnaise and serve mashy peas on the side.

STORAGE BEST PRACTICES

Store burgers, onion and peas separately in airtight containers. Will keep in the fridge for 2 weeks or so.

Easy freeze meal? Can be frozen for up to 12 months.

WASTE AVOIDANCE STRATEGY

beef, peas – freeze.

butter, onion, lemon – will keep in the fridge for months.

PROBLEM SOLVING GUIDE

bland? - give it a touch more salt & pepper.

burgers dry – if your minced beef is too lean, you'll get dry burgers. Fatty beef tends to be cheaper, so next time choose the best value.

burgers too rare – next time flatten the burgers more so they cook in the allotted time. Or pop them back in the pan until you're happy. Always a good idea to cut into a burger to check. It's the best way to learn.

too salty – be careful with the salt in the pan for the salt crust, it can be sary to overdo it. For now, wipe the burgers with a damp cloth, ot just cut off the salt outsides. Next time be more sparing with the salt.

Vanilla pears with Ice Cream



VANILLA PEARS WITH ICE CREAM

Roasting fruit like this is brilliant for enhancing the natural sweetness without having to rely on adding processed sugar. Fergal just loves these pears and will happily gobble up 4 or 5 quarters in one sitting. But they make a super lovely dessert for adults too. The quantities are totally a guideline, you can totally double or halve the recipe depending on how much fruit you need to have on hand.

TAKES: about an hour

MAKES: enough for 4-6

4-6 pears

2-3 hunks of butter

1 vanilla bean, finely sliced or 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

vanilla ice cream, to serve

1. Preheat your oven to 180C (350F). Quarter your pears and remove core.
2. Layer pears in a baking dish. Top with butter and vanilla. Cover with foil and baked for 30 minutes.
3. Remove foil and stir. Return to the oven uncovered this time and bake for another 20-30 minutes or until the pears are soft and slightly browned.
4. Serve warm with big scoops of ice cream.

VARIATIONS

no vanilla? - just skip it or replace with a cinnamon stick.

dairy-free – replace butter with coconut oil or just skip it.

vanilla ‘essence’ – this is basically fake vanilla flavour. I prefer to use real vanilla beans or real vanilla extract. But if ‘essence’ is all you can get a little will be OK.

different flavourings – replace the vanilla with lemon zest, a cinnamon stick, a very small piece of star anise.

more ‘saucy’ – add 1/2 cup dessert wine to the pears before covering with foil.

short on time – serve fresh berries with ice cream.

VIDEO

VANILLA PEARS WITH ICE CREAM...

PREPARE AHEAD

Absolutely. Takes about 60 minutes. I like to make up a big batch to have on hand for quick healthy desserts during the week.

USAGE SUGGESTIONS

roast fruit 'ice cream' – freeze cooked fruit then when you're ready to serve whizz it in the food processor with a little cream or coconut milk until you have a lovely icecreamy texture. Eat ASAP.

breakfast – serve cold with natural yoghurt and granola or roasted nuts.

as a side – works as a wonderful dessert accompaniment to things like panna cotta or my favourite fudgy chocolate cake.

pear & chocolate tart – see recipe over here.

almost instant crumble – use your roast fruit in place of the canned apples in this recipe.

STORAGE BEST PRACTICES

Store in an airtight container or ziplock bag. Will keep in the fridge for 2 weeks or so. Can be frozen for up to 12 months.

WASTE AVOIDANCE STRATEGY

pears, apples, peaches, nectarines, apricots or plums – will keep for a few weeks (depending on how ripe they are) in a plastic bag in the fridge. For longer storage just pop them in the freezer to defrost and cook later.

butter – keeps in the fridge for months.

vanilla bean – pantry.

PROBLEM SOLVING GUIDE

too dry – next time make sure your foil is well sealed around the edges. For now serve with a little extra butter or cream.

burning – oven temp too hot or in there for too long!

bland – it's all about the quality and ripeness of your fruit. Next time use riper fruit. For now serve with ice cream can hide a multitude of sins. Adding a little sugar can help as well.

not sweet enough – add a little sugar, stevia, maple syrup or honey. Better to sweeten before baking so the flavour goes through the fruit but can be done at the end.

don't like vanilla chunks – you could scrape the seeds from the vanilla bean and discard the pods but you'll be missing out on the extra flavour!

SURPRISE BONUS!

Leftover Love

MODULE FIVE

MODULE 5 VIDEO & AUDIO



Module 5 Video

[CLICK HERE](#) to view the video for Module 5.

Module 5 Audio

[CLICK HERE](#) to download the MP3.

LEFTOVERS SAFE



The Dos and Don'ts of Keeping Leftovers Safe

A while ago I inadvertently sparked some controversy Stonesoup. It all started when I suggested that some roast butternut pumpkin would keep in the fridge for 'a few weeks.'

One reader commented "No way would any food be safe to eat after a few weeks in the fridge. Yuck!"

Which sparked much debate and some disparaging remarks about my food safety knowledge. (For the record, I have a degree in Food Science, majoring in microbiology. So yes I know my Listeria from my E.coli.)

The thing I found most interesting was the observation that different people have different comfort levels around how long leftovers should keep.

I think the most important factor should be whether you feel comfortable eating something or not. Not whether it fits some generic 'guidelines.'

After all, you know how it's been stored, how well it was cooked in the first place, whether your fridge is cold enough. You can see if there's any mould growth or if it looks and smells funny.

That being said, there are some actions you can take to make sure your leftovers are as safe as possible.

So here's a quick 'Dos and Don'ts' list to help you adopt food safety best practices in your kitchen.

The Dos and Don'ts of Keeping Leftovers Safe

THE DOs

DO put leftovers away ASAP Bacteria love warm environments. The sooner you refrigerate or freeze your leftovers, the sooner bacteria growth will be slowed and the longer your leftovers will last. Simple.

Do cover food well Food exposed to the air in your fridge or freezer will dry out surprisingly quickly. This doesn't tend to be a food safety issue but it does make leftovers less appealing.

I always cover with cling wrap or transfer leftovers into containers with airtight lids. I love the glass ones from Pyrex with the blue coloured plastic lids. For freezing, best to use proper 'freezer' bags or zip lock bags to prevent freezer burn.

DO trust your instincts If something smells funny, or doesn't look the right colour or has mold or other nasties growing on it, it's best to trust your senses and throw it out.

DO share the love It's important to be realistic about how many leftovers you can cope with. Better to send guests home with a little takeaway package than forcing yourself to eat the same leftovers for days.

DO properly reheat food again before eating Just as low temperature is important to minimizing bacterial growth, high temperatures are the best way to 'kill off' any sneaky fellas that have managed to grow.

THE DON'TS

DON'T eat anything that feels unsafe I still follow my Mum's rule, 'if in doubt, throw it out.' If you feel that something is unsafe, there's no point stressing yourself out and risking your health.

DON'T throw away perfectly good food Just because food has passed some arbitrary guideline of being in the fridge for 'X' days, you don't need to toss it automatically. If you know it's been handled carefully and refrigerated promptly and it looks and smells fine, then in all likelihood it will be safe.

DON'T leave things sitting around at room temperature for long periods of time I know we mentioned the 'opposite' of this in the 'Dos'. But low temperatures are really one of the most important parts of keeping food safe so I wanted to stress it again.

DON'T feel like you always have to 'obey' best before dates This applies more to packaged food than leftovers, but since we're talking safety and waste, I thought I'd throw it in. If you'd like to learn more, check out my [Insiders Guide to Use-by Dates](#).

LEFTOVER INGREDIENTS



3 Tricks for Leftover Ingredients

One thing I find really annoying are recipes that call for using small amounts of perishable ingredients. You know the type I mean. Recipes that leave you with half a bunch of parsley, a few tablespoons of goats cheese or half an avocado...

Apart from being annoying, these leftover bits tend to end up getting wasted as they hide in the fridge.

When I was a young food scientist, learning how to develop new breakfast cereals, I learned an important lesson. Always try to round the ingredients on your formula (I always found it funny that in food factories there were 'formulas' not 'recipes') to the nearest lot or pack size.

This made it much easier and quicker for the factory workers to just use say, 3 bags of flour, rather than fiddling around with measuring 86.335kg flour. It also meant there wouldn't be random partially used bags floating around the factory.

This practical lesson stayed with me.

Anyway, you may not have noticed, but for my recipes I try to keep leftover ingredients to a minimum. It's just a natural part of my simple cooking philosophy.

But when you do find yourself with leftover ingredients, here are my 3 favourite tricks for minimizing waste.

3 Tricks for Leftover Ingredients

1. Avoid leftover ingredients.

My first port of call is to avoid leftover ingredients all together. Often the easiest way is to just skip the ingredient.

If skipping it isn't an option, I look to use up all of the ingredient at once. So I'd use the whole bunch of herbs instead of the 1/2 bunch called for in the recipe. You get the idea.

2. Store the leftovers correctly.

The general rule of thumb is cooler temperatures are best for most fresh ingredients.

So keep them in the fridge for starters. After temperature, moisture loss is the next biggest destroyer of fresh ingredients, so make sure they're protected. I tend to store my produce in plastic bags in the crisper section.

3. Try some 'mise en place'.

If you know you aren't going to be able to use an ingredient, there's always a way to 'pre-prepare' it so it will last.

For example, a half bunch of basil can be turned into a tasty [pesto](#). Or if you don't have much time, just pop the leaves in a jar and cover with olive oil for a quick basil oil that will last for weeks rather than days.

USING LEFTOVERS

11 Ideas for Leftover Meals

Here are 11 ideas to keep leftovers in the 'fun' and tasty end of the food spectrum.

1. Take a break.

Having the same leftovers for more than one meal in a row can make even the most unadventurous eater get a little tired. But a break of even just one day can make them seem 'new' again.

Most things will keep for a week in the fridge and much longer in the freezer so don't feel pressured into eating all the leftovers before moving onto other dishes.

2. Freeze some.

If you've got way more than you can possibly eat in a week, be sure to freeze at least some. It's amazing how a few weeks spell in the freezer can make something totally 'old' seem fun again.

Most things, with the exception of raw veg dishes or salads, freeze well. So if in doubt give it a try!



11 Ideas for Leftover Meals

3. Share the love.

Either take leftovers into work to share with your colleagues. Or invite some friends over for dinner – no need to tell them they're doing you a favour by eating up your leftovers. When I was single I used to pack a leftover 'care package' to give to my guests (especially for leftover desserts) so I wouldn't be stuck eating the same thing for weeks.

4. Make a leftover leafy salad

Make a classic green salad and turn it into a meal by scattering over your leftovers, that have been chopped into bite sized pieces, if needed. Works with either cold leftovers or warm them up for a lovely warm salad.

5. Try a leftover & legume salad

If you've got some leftovers but not enough to make a meal out of them, give them a little 'stretch' by tossing warmed leftovers through cooked or canned lentils or beans. A handful of some fresh leaves, herbs or finely sliced celery can help to freshen it all up.

6. The leftover sandwich or wrap

The Earl of Sandwich was onto a good thing. Most things do taste better between two slices of bread. Just don't forget to add something fresh and something saucy to keep it moist. Slow carbers should apply the same rule to an 'ice berg lettuce wrap'.

7. The leftover 'toastie'

Without the fabulous invention that is the 'toasted sandwich maker', I would have starved to death during college. It never ceased to amaze me how a practically inedible meal could be turned into a tasty delight by popping it in a 'toastie'. The addition of a good melting cheese shouldn't be overlooked either.

8. The leftover soup

Bring a few cups of water, tomato puree or stock to the simmer and add your leftovers (chopped into bite sized pieces). Instant divinely warming soup.

9. The leftover baked frittata

Leftover cooked vegetables, legumes, starches, protein, herbs and even cheese, can all go into making the most divine baked frittata. Use the recipe over here as a base and get creative.

11 Ideas for Leftover Meals

10. Change the nationality of your dish

This can be tricky with strongly flavoured dishes like curries. But for more European style recipes, a change in nationality can make all the difference.

For example, a pot of leftover beans could have curry powder added and served with yoghurt and fresh coriander (cilantro) to become an Indian curry. A little coconut milk and Thai curry paste and you have a smiling Thai almost-native.

If you'd like to discover more on this check out Module 5 of the 'Master Your Meal Plan' program when we discuss flavour profile templates and common flavour pairings.

11. Try the 'serving with a different side / accompaniment' trick

Take example from a classic sauce of minced meat with garlic and tomatoes. Add spaghetti and a generous sprinkling of cheese and it becomes 'bolognese'. Serve over corn chips and melt some cheese on top, add a splodge of sour cream and it becomes 'nachos'. Or serve on a baked potato and it takes on an Irish vibe.

A SUMMERY MEAL PLAN



Module 5. A SUMMERY MEAL PLAN

NOTE: A more Wintery Meal Plan is included in Module 4.

Weekly Meals

[1] MONDAY: [Quinoa & Grilled Veg Salad](#)

[2] TUESDAY: [Pesto Chicken with Zucchini](#)

[3] WEDNESDAY: [Noodles with Hot Tuna & Eggplant](#)

[4] THURSDAY: [Pea & Pesto Soup](#)

[5] FRIDAY: [Steak with Ricotta & Red Peppers](#)

[6] SWEET TREAT: [Chocolate Chip Banana 'Ice Cream'](#)*

* Takes 6 hours to freeze. If short on time just serve fresh banana with chocolate chunks.

VARIATIONS

Vegetarian: [[2] Replace chicken with sliced halloumi cheese [3] Replace tuna with brazil nuts. [5] Replace the steaks with large field mushrooms or these chickpea burgers.

Carb Lovers / More Substantial: [1] Double the quinoa and dressing. [2] Serve with steamed or mashed potato [3] Double the noodles or pasta. [4] Serve with crusty bread and butter. [5] Serve steak with potato crisps or home made fries.

Budget: See vegetarian and carb lovers suggestions.

Carnivore: [1] Toss cooked chicken or sausages in with the salad. [3] Replace tuna with minced (ground) beef, cook in a little oil until well browned. [4] Simmer sliced chicken thighs or sliced chorizo in the soup until cooked.

Paleo / Gluten-free: [1] Replace quinoa with 1/4 head raw cauliflower finely grated. [2] Use dairy-free pesto. [3] Use zucchini noodles and increase the tuna to make it more substantial. [4] Use dairy-free pesto. [5] Use hummus instead of the ricotta.

A SUMMERY
MEAL PLAN
SHOPPING
LIST



Your Weekly Shopping List.

VEGGIES

4 lemons [1&2&3&5]
2 medium zucchini [2]
1 small bunch parsley [3]
500g (1lb) frozen peas [4]
1 bag salad leaves [5]
2 bananas [6]

PROTEIN

450g (1lb) chicken thigh fillets [2]
2 steaks [5]

DAIRY

200g (7oz) ricotta [5]

PANTRY

extra virgin olive oil
salt & pepper
100g (3.5oz) quinoa [1]
handful brazil nuts or almonds [1]
lge handful roast eggplant from the deli or 1 jar[1]+
lge handful grilled red peppers from the deli or 1 jar [1]#
8T pesto [2]*
200g (7oz) hokkien noodles or long pasta [3]
1 can tuna in oil (185g / 6oz) [3]
1 jar grilled eggplant (280g / 9oz) [3]+
4T pesto [4]*
4 roasted red peppers from the deli or use 1 jar [5]#
1 teaspoon vanilla extract [6]
handful dark chocolate [6]

OTHER

____ COOK'S NOTES ____

't' = teaspoon 'T' = tablespoon

Unless otherwise stated all cans are 400g / 14oz

+ [1&3] You could cook your own [eggplant](#)

[1&5] Or cook your own [peppers](#).

* [2&4] To make your own pesto you'll need a bunch basil,
handful grated parmesan, handful pine nuts and 1 clove garlic.

MISE EN PLACE



Mise en Place Possibilities.

[1&3] Roast Eggplant (60 minutes)

If you prefer to cook your own eggplant, rather than using eggplant from the deli, follow the recipe over here. Store in a container in the fridge for up to 3-4 weeks before using.

[1&5] Smoky Peppers (30 minutes)

If you prefer to cook your own peppers, rather than using grilled peppers from the deli, follow the recipe over here. Store in a container in the fridge for up to 2 weeks before using.

[2&4] Pesto (15 minutes)

For home made pesto follow the recipe over here. Keep in the fridge for up to a few weeks before using.

[1] Quinoa Salad

QUINOA (15 minutes) Simmer quinoa for 10-12 minutes then drain and store in an airtight container. Can be made up to 2 weeks ahead. Let come to room temperature before using.

WHOLE SALAD (15 minutes) Alternatively you could make the whole salad except for adding the nuts. Store in an airtight container. Can be made up to 2 weeks ahead. Let come to room temperature before serving with nuts sprinkled over.

Mise en Place Possibilities.

[6] Banana 'Ice Cream'

BANANA (6 hours freezing). Peel banana and chop into chunks. Freeze. Can be done up to a few months ahead of time.

CHOCOLATE (5 minutes) Chop chocolate into chunks and store in an airtight container or wrap in foil. Can be done weeks ahead.

INGREDIENT STORAGE

Ingredient Storage Best Practices.

VEGETABLES

lemons – in the fridge wrapped in a plastic bag. Can be kept at room temp if you prefer but will last longer in the fridge.

zucchini (courgettes) – in the fridge wrapped in a plastic bag.

parsley – in the fridge wrapped in a plastic bag.

frozen peas – keep in the freezer.

salad leaves – store sealed bag in the fridge. If buying loose leaves, wash and spin dry in a salad spinner then wrap loosely in paper towel and place inside plastic bag. Push out most of the air and seal. Store in the fridge.

banana – keep at room temperature or peel , chop and freeze.

PROTEIN

chicken thigh fillets – in the fridge in the packaging they were purchased in.

steaks – in the fridge in the packaging they were purchased in.

DAIRY

ricotta – in the fridge in the packaging it was purchased in.



DOWNLOADS



MEAL PLAN DOWNLOADS

[Full Colour PDF Meal Plan](#)

[Print Friendly' Meal Plan](#)

You'll need to 'Right Click' and 'Save Link As' – see below for detailed instructions.

****Super Important!****

Make sure you use Adobe Reader to open you meal plan pdfs – its FREE!

For your computer: www.get.adobe.com/reader/

For your mobile device: www.adobe.com/au/products/reader-mobile.html

ACTIONS



Your Actions

This week I really encourage you to keep going with your regular 'mise en place' date and add something new as well...

1. Review the meal plan. Download and print or open it in Adobe Reader.
2. Edit the shopping list to suit your preferences. Get your ingredients, and follow the plan!
3. Share your results in the comments below or if you have a photo share on the [SVCS facebook page](#).

Quinoa & *grilled veg* Salad



QUINOA & GRILLED VEG SALAD

I just love quinoa in salads as it has the most wonderful chewy texture. This is one of those salad which improves with a little time to 'marinate' in the dressing which makes it perfect as a do ahead lunch.

TAKES: 15 minutes

MAKES: enough for 2

100g (3.5oz) quinoa, any colour

2 tablespoons lemon juice

large handful roast eggplant from the deli OR use a jar, sliced & drained on paper towel

large handful grilled red capsicum (bell peppers) from the deli OR use a jar, sliced & drained on paper towel

handful brazil nuts or almonds, to serve

1. Bring a medium pot of water to the boil. Rinse quinoa well then simmer for 10-12 minutes or until al dente like pasta. Drain.

2. Combine lemon juice with 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil. Season.

3. Toss warm quinoa in the dressing. Add eggplant and red capsicum and serve with nuts sprinkled over.

VARIATIONS

roast veg – let your imagination run wild here, roast pumpkin or sweet potato, roast beets, roast parsnip are all lovely.

other grilled veg – feel free to use home grilled veg. In summer zucchini are a favourite. Fennel or grilled asparagus are good too.

home cooked eggplant – try this recipe.

home cooked red capsicum – try this recipe.

carnivore – replace nuts with finely sliced salami or cooked chicken.

nut-free – skip the nuts and use a soft goats cheese or blue cheese instead.

warm salad – either serve while still warm or reheat in the microwave or a saucepan.

leafy – toss in some flat leaf parsley leaves or a handful of baby spinach.

carb lovers / more substantial – double the quinoa and dressing OR serve with crusty bread.

short on time – use commercial eggplant and peppers.

paleo / gluten-free – replace quinoa with 1/4 head raw cauliflower finely grated.

VIDEO

QUINOA & GRILLED VEG SALAD...

SERVING SUGGESTIONS

A wonderful lunchbox salad. OR for a healthier option serve over a handful of baby spinach leaves.

PREPARE AHEAD?

Great! Will keep in the fridge for 1-2 weeks. The nuts will lose their crunch over time so best if added at the last minute.

WASTE AVOIDANCE STRATEGY

quinoa, brazil nuts, almonds – pantry.

lemons – will keep in the fridge for months.

eggplant, capsicum (bell peppers) – unopened jars will keep in the pantry. Opened will keep in the fridge for a few weeks. Can be frozen.

PROBLEM SOLVING GUIDE

can't find quinoa? – use brown rice cooked according to the packet directions.

bland – season with a little salt and possible more lemon juice

dry – drizzle in a little more olive oil.

Pesto *chicken with* Zucchini



PESTO CHICKEN WITH ZUCCHINI

Bashing the chicken like this sounds a bit harsh but it makes a big difference. First, it makes the thigh fillets roughly even in thickness so they cook evenly AND more quickly. Plus it tenderises the chicken. Win. Win.

TAKES: 15 minutes

MAKES: enough for 2

450g (1lb) chicken thigh fillets

2 tablespoons lemon juice

2 medium zucchini

6-8 tablespoons [pesto](#), to serve

1. Heat a pan on a medium high heat. Remove excess fat from the chicken. Using the palm of your hand or a meat cleaver, bash the chicken so you have an even thickness all the way though.
2. Rub chicken with a little oil and season. Sear in the pan for 3-4 minutes on each side or until chicken is well browned and cooked through.
3. While the chicken is cooking, mix lemon with 4 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil in a bowl. Season.
4. Finely slice the zucchini crosswise into 'coins' and toss in the dressing.
5. When the chicken is cooked, serve with zucchini salad on the side and pesto on top.

VARIATIONS

paleo / dairy-free – use a dairy-free pesto like this sicilian nut pesto.

vegetarian – replace chicken with sliced halloumi (no need to bash the halloumi!).

vegan – replace chicken with sliced firm tofu or seitan. Or try field mushrooms instead. OR Replace chicken with drained canned butter beans – just pan fry in a little oil until golden. And use a dairy-free pesto like this sicilian nut pesto.

nut-free – make your own nut-free pesto replacing the pine nuts with extra parmesan.

different meat – replace chicken with other tender cuts of meat like steak, lamb cutlets, lamb fillet, pork chops, pork fillet. Fish is good here too – any fish fillets will work especially tuna steaks or salmon.

different sauce – try hummus, aioli, mayonnaise or olive tapenade.

more wintery – make a winter pesto with flat leaf parsley instead of basil and serve steaks with cauliflower mash instead of the zucchini & salad.

carb lovers / more substantial - serve with steamed or mashed potato.

short on time – use commercial pesto.

VIDEO

PESTO CHICKEN WITH ZUCCHINI...

WASTE AVOIDANCE STRATEGY

chicken thighs or steak – pop them in the freezer.

zucchini – will keep for 2 weeks or longer in a plastic bag in the fridge. To keep it even longer, cook sliced zucchini in a little butter until just soft then store in an airtight container in the fridge.

lemons – will keep for a few weeks at room temp or for much longer in the fridge.

pesto – commercial jars of pesto will keep for months in the pantry. Fresh pesto will keep in the fridge for a few weeks. Cover with olive oil to prevent exposure to air and browning reactions.



Noodles *with hot tuna* & Eggplant

NOODLES WITH HOT TUNA & EGGPLANT

One of the things I've discovered in my quest for quick, simple recipes is that Asian noodles can taste delicious with Italian style sauces. For the purists out there, I know this sounds alarm bells. So by all means keep your ingredients culturally correct. This dish would be just as delicious with spaghetti or linguine.

TAKES: 10 minutes

MAKES: enough for 2

*200g (7oz) hokkien noodles or long pasta
1 medium can tuna with chilli oil (185g / 6oz)
1 jar grilled aubergine (eggplant) (280g / 9oz), drained
1 bunch flat leaf parsley, leaves picked, optional
lemon juice*

1. Cover noodles in boiling water and allow to stand. Or cook pasta as per the packet.
2. Heat a large frying pan over medium high. Add tuna, the oil from the can, and eggplant. Stir fry for a few minutes or until tuna is hot.
3. Break noodles up with a fork and drain. Add the drained noodles or cooked pasta to the sauce with 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil. Stir to combine.
4. Taste and season with a little lemon juice as well as salt and pepper.
5. Toss in parsley, if using. Serve hot.

VARIATIONS

dried pasta – cook pasta as per the directions on the packet then drain and add to the tuna at step 3.

vegan / vegetarian – replace tuna with an equal amount of crumbled tofu OR with a can of tomatoes, OR replace tuna with brazil nuts.

gluten free – replace noodles with cooked gluten free pasta OR use zucchini noodles and increase the tuna to make it more substantial.

carnivores – replace the tuna with 200g (7oz) ground beef and cook until well browned.

home cooked aubergine – try this recipe.

carb lovers / more substantial – double the noodles or pasta.

VIDEO

NOODLES WITH HOT TUNA & EGGPLANT...

WASTE AVOIDANCE STRATEGY

noodles or long pasta, tuna, eggplant – pantry.

parsley – keeps in a plastic bag in the fridge for weeks. Or make a parsley oil by packing leaves into a clean jar and covering with extra virgin olive oil.

lemon – keeps for months in a plastic bag in the fridge.

PROBLEM SOLVING GUIDE

tuna sticking to the pan / burning – an indication that the heat is too high or it's been cooking for too long. Remove from the heat immediately. Add the lemon juice and stir well if it's just brown bits. If burnt, try and scoop off the top layer of unburnt noodles, if they still seem edible.

noodles sticking together – soak for a few more minutes in boiling water, then get persuasive with a fork or chopsticks in manually separating the strands. I find this work better before you drain the noodles.

noodles falling apart – this means you've soaked them for too long OR overcooked them in the pan OR been too aggressive with your stirring. Not much can be done this time, but in the future look at addressing these points or trying another brand.

too oily – different commercial grilled eggplants vary in their oil content. Try a piece before you add to the pan. If it seems too oily, blot each slice well using paper towel before cooking. You can also refrain from adding the extra olive oil in step 3.

can't find fresh hokkien noodles? – substitute in dried egg noodles, rice noodles or pasta – cook according to the packet directions than add in at step 3.

eggplant not cooked through – unfortunately I have had the odd jar with one or two pieces of more crunchy eggplant, bleh. It's a good idea to test the eggplant first and if it's not quite cooked through, allow extra cooking time to finish it off, there are few things I hate more than undercooked eggplant.

Peas & pesto Soup



PEAS & PESTO SOUP

Frozen peas are seriously one of the best pantry (or freezer) ingredients. I love that they don't require any prep and can actually taste better than fresh peas. This is a great 'pantry' recipe to have up your sleeve. It's perfect for nights when you need dinner to be on the table in 10 minutes or less.

TAKES: 10 minutes

MAKES: enough for 2

500g (1lb) frozen peas

2-4 tablespoons [pesto](#)

1. Bring 2 1/2 cups water to the boil in a medium pot.
2. Add peas and cook for 5 minutes, or until the peas are hot and tender.
3. Puree with a stick blender. Stir in a little pesto, taste and add more if desired. Season.

VARIATIONS

vegan / dairy-free – either replace the pesto with a large handful of torn basil leaves or use a vegan pesto like this [Sicilian nut pesto](#).

no pesto? – the peas on their own make a really lovely puree soup. Or add in a few handfuls of grated parmesan.

pesto-lovers – if you are using good quality home made pesto, you might like to serve with a big dollop of pesto on top.

richer – add in a few tablespoon of butter when pureeing the soup.

carnivore – simmer sliced chicken breast, sliced chorizo or pork fillet in the soup until just cooked. Fish will also work.

carb lovers / more substantial – serve with crusty bread and butter.

VIDEO

PEAS & PESTO SOUP...

SERVING SUGGESTIONS

Wonderful on it's own. Or with crusty bread & butter.

PREPARE AHEAD?

Brilliant. Will keep for a week in the fridge.

WASTE AVOIDANCE STRATEGY

frozen peas will keep for months.

pesto - unsealed jar will keep in the pantry for months. opened jars will keep in the fridge for weeks or longer but can be frozen.

PROBLEM SOLVING GUIDE

too watery – this isn't a super thick soup. Feel free to decrease the amount of water to 2 cups and serve in smaller bowls. If the deed is already done, try stirring in some more almond meal or some grated parmesan or even a handful of couscous.

too bland – season more generously with salt & lemon. A little parmesan can help too.

Steak with *riccota and* Red Peppers



STEAK WITH RICCOTA AND RED PEPPERS

The best trick for cooking steaks in a hurry is to flatten them with the base of a saucepan until they are about 5mm thick. This not only allows them to cook in a minute on each side, it also tenderises the steak, so the cheaper, more flavoursome cuts like rump are ideal. I love this with sirloin steaks as well, but my favourite would have to be rib-eye off the bone. I've written the instructions below for cooking in a pan, but feel free to use your barbecue or a griddle pan.

TAKES: 10 minutes

MAKES: enough for 2

2 steaks, about 1cm thick

4 roasted red peppers from the deli OR use a jar, cut into ribbons

200g (7oz) ricotta

1 tablespoon lemon juice

1 bag salad leaves

1. Using the base of a saucepan, bash steaks out until they are half the thickness. Rub with olive oil. Season.
2. Preheat a frying pan on very high heat.
3. Sear steaks for a minute on each side, or until cooked to your liking. Remove from the pan and rest on warm dinner plates.
4. Cook peppers for a minute or until heated through.
5. Place a dollop of ricotta on each steak and top with warm peppers.
6. Mix lemon juice with 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil and dress salad leaves. Serve as a side.

VARIATIONS

vegetarian – replace the steaks with large field mushrooms or tofu. They'll need about 5 minutes on each side.

vegan – use mushrooms instead of the steaks and hummus instead of the ricotta.

hot! – serve with a drizzle of chilli oil or add 1-2 finely chopped red chillies to cook with the peppers.

budget – use smaller steaks or try beef sausages instead.

carb lovers / more substantial – serve steak with potato crisps or home made fries.

home cooked red peppers – try [this recipe](#).

STEAK WITH RICCOTA AND RED PEPPERS...

WASTE AVOIDANCE STRATEGY

steaks – freeze.

roasted red peppers – in an unopened jar will last in the pantry for months.

ricotta – unopened ricotta in a tub usually has a shelf life of a few weeks. Can be frozen.

lemon – will keep for months in a plastic bag in the fridge.

mixed salad leaves – use for another meal or freeze it (will wilt when defrosted though).



chocolate chip banana ice cream

CHOCOLATE CHIP BANANA 'ICE CREAM'

This is easily the healthiest 'ice cream' recipe I know. I've made it a little more decadent here with the addition of dark chocolate chunks. But really it tastes far more indulgent than it actually is.

TAKES: 6 hours

MAKES: enough for 2

2 bananas

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

handful dark chocolate

1. Peel and chop bananas and freeze overnight or for at least 6 hours.
2. When you're ready to eat, pop the bananas in your food processor with vanilla and a few tablespoons water.
3. Chop chocolate into chunks or shavings – whatever you feel like.
4. Whizz banana until smooth and 'ice creamy'.
5. Pulse in the chocolate and serve ASAP.

VARIATIONS

vegan – make sure you're using a chocolate without any milk solids.

double choc – add a few tablespoons cocoa powder with the bananas.

honey – skip the chocolate and serve ice cream drizzled with a little honey instead.

budget – skip the chocolate and vanilla and serve the banana straight up.

short on time – serve fresh banana with chocolate chunks.

VIDEO

CHOCOLATE CHIP BANANA 'ICE CREAM'...

SERVING SUGGESTIONS

Best in individual bowls served with teaspoons.

PREPARE AHEAD?

Best if freshly made.

LEFTOVER POTENTIAL

Freeze leftovers in a small container. Pop back in the food processor to whizz again and get rid of any ice crystals before serving again.

WASTE AVOIDANCE STRATEGY

banana – freeze them . Its much easier if you peel them first.

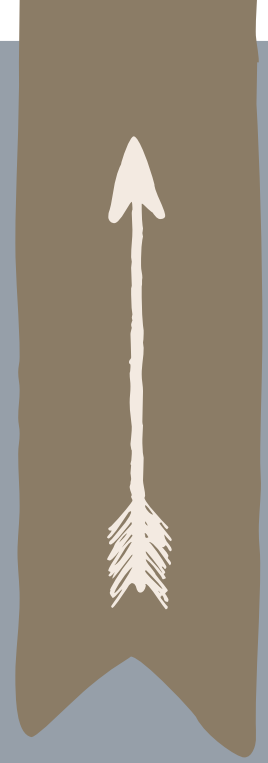
vanilla & chocolate – pantry.

PROBLEM SOLVING GUIDE

banana not whizzing – it can take a little while for the banana to melt enough to puree. Add a little more water and be patient.

bland – we're relying on the bananas here. Next time use ripe bananas. For now a little more chocolate and vanilla can help.

short on time? – don't be tempted to freeze the bananas without peeling them first – it's far more difficult to chop and peel a frozen banana (although not impossible, I've learned from experience).



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