

COOKING GOOD FOOD ON A BUDGET!

PART 2

More information for creating good food on a budget.

Hopefully now you're getting the basics? Hopefully it's not been too difficult either?

Continuing to show how to cook basic but tasty meals on a really low budget!
Including a weeks evening meals for three for £27



INTRODUCTION:

- ❑ Hopefully Part 1 has given you a few of the basics and by now you're cooking some different meals.
- ❑ Part 2 will hopefully show a few more variations on a theme.
- ❑ Some more guides for creating food from newer ingredients.
- ❑ Basic enhancements for staple accompaniments to your creations.
- ❑ Some things you never thought to try before.
- ❑ Simply give you more confidence to be creative with your budget!
- ❑ Grow a little food and herbs in the garden, conservatory or kitchen!

Remember!

I have no training as a chef, I just picked it up along the way.

Shown through this booklet are the rough costs in August 2009

MORE MEALS TO START:

There are many countries you may or may not have been to around the world, or simply seen one of the great TV cookery programs available showing how to throw something together with the most basic of ingredients. The trouble is there's always that one ingredient you're missing.



I have long since found that for all the cookbooks I have at home they are seldom used in full anymore. Being fortunate enough to have travelled Europe, China and India on business when I was employed, I have been exposed to a large variety of influences. However, picking up only from what is eaten and tips from TV programs in the UK, my somewhat naive way of cooking has evolved over 15 years.

At one point we earned enough to not have to worry about the cost of our ingredients albeit we still shopped wisely.

Since the plague that sweeps our nation of redundancy caught us out and other runs of bad luck in the past, our priorities have changed.

We find ourselves now still wanting a similar class of food as we have always enjoyed but require it at a fraction of the cost.

We also want free range chicken and have found practical ways to butcher our own full bird to enjoy morally favourable meat.

Do not take this as a campaign for free range though. We realise people are in much worse positions than ourselves but they may wish they could use free range for flavour and moral issues but cannot justify the cost. In some way we try to show later that learning to make maximum use of the chicken can be sometimes cheaper than buying budget pre-cut pieces.

Now, I do have a diverse set of ingredients at hand, built up over the years, but it is still the case that I cannot keep every possible item in the cupboard or fridge for every eventuality. I search the books for inspiration and may or may not find something, but there's always that one ingredient short.

Plus to write the somewhat naive Part 1 for our friend we had to ensure we did not do the same.

To buy just a small item for one meal that might not be to your liking stops you from doing it at all for fear of waste.

So what to do?

We shall look at similar ingredients bases throughout this issue, add a couple of extras that are easy to find and store and maybe, with enough support to get to produce Part 3, we will add some other products to our store cupboard.

Only buying extras though, as we gain the confidence to use them with flavours we have already decided we like.

There is nothing worse than the age old case of buying a set of expensive ingredients that may take 5 or 6 meals to use up cost effectively, only to find the meal tastes awful either through cooking without experience of certain ingredients or simply not liking the dish.

If you've spent £20 on ingredients to cook one meal and the rest goes to waste, then that's a very expensive meal all of a sudden.

If it works, then divided by 5 or 6 makes it a bargain.

The other day with this booklet in mind we went to buy ingredients for a good Mexican meal, featured later in this publication. We found Crème Fraiche only available in larger tubs and what you normally don't use goes to waste in our case. Therefore, thinking out of the box with Mexican spices, we bought natural yoghurt and lemon to mix together so made a dip with that instead. Curry with yoghurt later in the week or Lasses?

AT A LOSS WITH MY LAMB

Say for instance I have some Lamb mince for a meal.

There is little for Lamb mince in most of my books apart from shepherd's pie or kebabs! Not on a summer evening for me I'm afraid. I really wanted something with pasta and a Cannelloni style seems to appeal but I cannot find anything.

The pack of lamb sits there.

There are some fresh lasagne sheets in the fridge left over from a lasagne earlier in the week. (Dried will do just as well!)

I have onion, garlic, chopped tomatoes and Red pepper.

I wonder if lamb rolled into tubes of lasagne with a tomato and red pepper topping covered in a little grated cheese would work?

So I give it a try.

It is not a recipe I've heard of before but lamb with a little thyme we have growing in the garden and some basic seasoning should do.

Tomato and Red pepper sauce is easy enough.

Cheese on the top and in the oven for 15 minutes to brown.

Sounds OK?

LAMB CANNELLONI:

Lamb Cannelloni with tomato and red pepper sauce

Lamb 400g	1	£ 2.10
Onion (1 medium) finely chopped	1	£ 0.08
Garlic (2 clove)	2	£ 0.07
Fresh or dried thyme (1-2tsp to taste)	2	£ 0.10
Tomato Puree (2tbsp)	2	£ 0.02
Chopped tomatoes (440g)	1	£ 0.33
Red Pepper 1/2 finely diced	0.5	£ 0.30
Olive oil 2 tsp	10ml	£ 0.04
Cheddar cheese grated (100g)	100g	£ 0.63
Mixed Herbs (2tsp)	2	£ 0.10
Lasagne sheets 1 pack	1	£ 0.80



Total for 3 people £ 4.57



Don't buy cannelloni tubes if the box rattles like it's full of bits. When checking gently tip side to side to listen for all the broken bits. If all is quiet then the tubes are OK. Also don't forget, you can change the lamb and thyme for beef and mixed herbs and it feeds more than 3!



CANNELLONI CONTINUED

1. Finely chop your onion, squash your garlic and chop up.
2. Dice up $\frac{1}{2}$ the red pepper into small chunks about the size of raisins.
3. If your using dried lasagne sheets (about 8 -10 medium sized ones) boil them as instructed on the packet.
4. Get your thyme chopped if fresh.
5. Have the cheese, mixed herbs, tomato puree and chopped tomatoes at the ready.
6. Put a splash of olive oil (1tsp) in a pan.
7. Turn on the heat to medium and put in half the onion.
8. Once they begin to sizzle add your peppers, chopped tomatoes, 1 tbsp of tomato puree, mixed herbs and $\frac{1}{2}$ your garlic, then stir until back up to a simmer.
9. Add a pinch of sugar, salt and pepper to taste then leave to simmer gently.
10. Using a wok or other pan add another splash of olive oil and bring to a medium heat.
11. Add the rest of your onion and once sizzling add the lamb, remaining garlic and stir until browned.
12. Add the thyme and the other tablespoon of tomato puree, stir in and take off the heat.
13. Take your lasagne sheets one at a time holding in a V and place some of the lamb along the centre then roll it into a tube and place in a square roasting dish.
14. Continue until all the tubes are made and lying in the roasting dish.
15. Take your sauce and cover the tubes over, sprinkle on your grated cheese and pop in a pre-heated oven for 15 minutes at high heat to brown. Serve with crusty bread and a bit of salad and enjoy.

PHILOSOPHY:

Now I realise these booklets require a certain amount of diversity in taste.

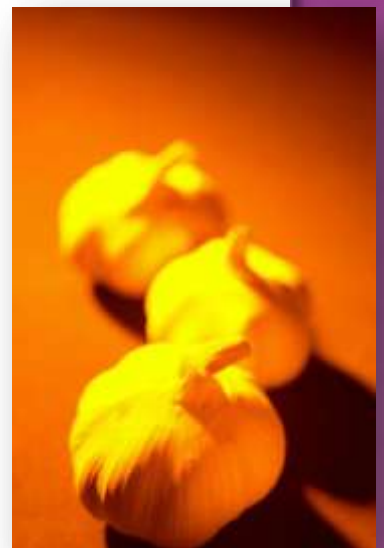
Not everyone likes garlic or tomatoes or pasta or rice but you should always try to be open minded.

I have a daughter who fortunately tries everything, but the really great thing is she will try something she really dislikes after a while to see if her tastes have changed.

Sometimes they have, and she now likes a new food, sometimes she still dislikes it with a passion. Also sometimes she goes off things she's always liked.

The thing to remember also is the simply not knowing factor. A family friend cannot stand garlic he says, but every meal he's had here has it in it and he's always impressed by the taste of whatever meal is served.

The mind is a powerful deterrent to trying new tastes, but it must also be as powerful in trying to overcome the problem.



Take for example my own issue of finding no great delight in fish dishes.

I simply find many too delicate a taste for my likings I think.

However my wife and daughter love fish so I persevere trying to find a dish that I can at least eat.

I don't particularly enjoy it as much as say a good steak, but it's edible for me and they are happy. It's a case of having the maturity to keep trying and instilling the same in others.

When friends come around make little bits of everything for all to try, the next time one of the dishes could be the main part of the meal.

I for one now find squid and shellfish enjoyable, which I would never have done in years past, plus there is the odd piece of fish I really enjoy without it requiring to be battered first!

My daughters' friends come around and many times it has been commented on by parents that the children eat food at our house they would never touch at home.

It is difficult to create this change at home.

I cannot deny we are lucky that we had a varied diet that our daughter grew up with, but equally sometimes we simply refuse to tell her what's in something until she's tried it.

Also hopefully as this series grows it will also bring the tastes of the world into your home, for a budget, with limited ingredients and packed with flavour.

A BASIC WEEKLY SHOP

Some of you may have heard our Radio piece live? Cooking from 6am is a strange concept and we have a new appreciation for TV chefs who must be ready for dinner at 10 in the morning. But to stick to the point we bought a range of ingredients the night before to prepare something for the show as requested. It cost £26!

Our list consisted of;

£26 Shopping	Weight/Qty	Cost/kg	Cost
Pork leg steaks	500g	£3.99	£1.98
Whole free range chicken	1.75kg	£3.99	£6.93
Beef brisket	1.03kg	£5.48	£5.67
Own brand value potatoes	2.5kg	£0.51	£1.28
Large onions	2	£0.74	£0.52
Chorizo Pamplona	1	£9.90	£1.98
Marinated Peppers	700g	£1.70	£1.19
Mixed four leaf salad	1 pack	£7.40	£1.00
Special offer strong cheddar	400g	£5.00	£2.00
French stick full length	1	N/A	£0.60
Free range eggs	12	N/A	£2.62
Kidney beans	400g	£0.70	£0.28
			£26.05

You may notice that some of the calculations do not match, it's in my favour so who was I to argue! The big chains make quite a bit from me I have no doubt, if they get it wrong occasionally, well.

WHAT TO DO WITH OUR SHOP? A BIT OF BUTCHERY



It doesn't look much does it?

So we set ourselves the challenge of trying to make 7 meals.

We may have to add a bit or two but the theory is there.

Firstly we'll cube and mince the beef into 3 portions, butcher the chicken up into 4 sections, divide the pork in two and see what we get!

Don't worry. It is not as daunting as it seems! Plus bear in mind if you do not wish to go to these lengths or simply cannot afford to.

Buy beef mince, frying or stewing steak bits and budget chicken bits plus your pork leg.

Starting with the beef, trim away the really rubbery sinewy layers, keep the more solid fat and set to one side.

(The red circle shows the waste)

Looking carefully at our meat we only lost 70g to waste there.

If you can afford it, get a mincer. It may not be the cheapest way, but you have control of the contents of your mince!!



Cube the meat and set aside 300g. The more solid bits of fat are to add as you mince.



A little helps with the cooking, leave it out if you wish for lean mince.



Mince the remaining meat adding a little of the fat here and there and you'll end with 630g of mince for £3.78.

Now that's not the cheapest mince but; You know what's in it.

There is less included fat than cheaper mince so no oil slick in your cooking.



It will be better texture and eating than budget and no added water!! We use less mince now and have the same size meal at the end.

Once meat is processed it can be hydrated or as the sales say 'Flavouring solution added'. Look at chicken pieces now especially breast meat.

Chicken breasts pieces can have an ingredients list on the pack stating;

Chicken 80% - Water 20%

This is the case in some places and if you think about it, you can add 20% to the cost of that cheaper meat because it will evaporate when you cook it, but guidelines are tightening up. So read your labels and see what's been added.

Not for everyone the next part, but taking a chicken to pieces gets you better quality meat for your money.

You just need a sharp knife and some practice.



Just remember!
It doesn't need to look pretty.
Whatever cuts of meat you get can be used firstly in a stir-fry, you're going to chop the meat into bits anyway!

So all you'll be left with is, 4 portions of meat, a carcass to make your own stock with, or make a chicken soup, and the skin.

I used to throw the skin away, until a friend told me to cut it in strips, drop it in salted flour, toss it around, and then deep fry it for a crispy chicken version of Pork Scratchings!



First cut down through the skin between the thigh and body. When you get to the bottom you'll find the bone so work your way around and cut through the joint.



Cut around the wing and through the joint. Some cut into the breast slightly but we're trying to maximise our cut.

Find the centre of the bird by feeling for the breast plate. Then make a shallow cut all the way along the line.



Slowly slice away one breast, then the other from the rib cage. Remove any skin and trim all excess meat you can find for a stir fry mix.

PORTIONING UP

Remember now to take the two little fillet sections from the back of the breast and separate them out. As you'll see in the bottom of the photo they and all the little trimmings are kept aside.



Now to divide it up.

Two chicken breasts - 350g

Two chicken thighs - 620g

Two chicken wings - 200g

Two chicken fillets and trimmings - 240g

Beef cubed - 300g

Beef mince - 320g

Beef mince - 320g

Pork leg - 250g

Pork leg - 250g

Now take the chicken trimmings, if you wish, and pack with only 150g of the pork leaving a 350g portion of pork also.

This gives you a last pack of pork and chicken mix for a stir fry or anything you like, although you can keep them separate and use individually. Then pack and freeze whatever you aren't going to use tonight.

WE'D BETTER GET ON AND COOK SOMETHING THEN.

Now, you may have noticed a more than common theme in some dishes.

Onions, garlic, tomatoes, red peppers and some form of meat.

It's our staple ingredients and I apologise to vegetarians but I am a meat eater.

Whilst I have friends and family who are vegetarian and I have tried in Part 1 to make some suggestions, the booklets are mainly about meat dishes.

They do however stand up to the removal of the meat and the addition of such items as sautéed mushrooms, courgette, aubergine and much more because of what I would suppose is a predominantly Mediterranean influence to most of my dishes.

This has proven out on many occasions when all vegetarian meals have been called for in an evening of vegetarian visitors.

Plus, meat eaters, give vegetarian options a try. They taste just as good and can reduce costs considerably.

So we'll start with what we've got for a menu from all of this so far.

Plus we'll try to add a few vegetarian suggestions.

THE £26.05 MENU

- Spanish tortilla with stir fried paprika pork.
- Beef and Paprika Stew with baked potatoes.
- Chicken and pasta bake, salad and crusty bread.
- Mexican style wraps, sweetcorn and salad.
- Chicken and pork strips with sautéed potatoes
- Cottage pie.
- Spanish inspired chicken stew.

Anyone who heard our live radio slot would by now be expecting a Spanish omelette, my apologies. In the immense panic of suddenly having to do a live spot cooking for a radio interview, not only once but twice, my mind was in turmoil and it just came out.

Having only the night before to prepare, and with no idea of what best to do, it was only luck that I could speak at all.

We had to make additional purchases of the following during the week.

Avocado - £0.55 (buy two value ones)

Pinto Beans - £0.49 (300g tin)

Lemon - £0.20 (1 in a pack of 6 value range)

Tortilla wraps - £0.55 (2 for 1 - keep for ages)

Total = £1.79

So all in £27.84 (apologies)

SPANISH TORTILLA AND STIR FRIED PAPRIKA PORK

A lovely dish consisting of finely sliced potatoes, sliced onions, garlic, eggs, red pepper and chorizo (optional). All fried in sequence to finally end up with a beautiful looking thick and tasty dish. Served up with strips of pork marinated in olive oil, paprika and oregano. Followed by a side of mixed four leaf salad and crusty French stick.



The turning of the tortilla half way though cooking is a bit of a skill without practice but we'll try to get you through it. We all had to start somewhere.

Our ingredients:

Eggs 3 (Free range £2.62 for 12)	3 large	£ 0.65
Onion (1/4 large) finely sliced	1/4	£ 0.07
Garlic (1 clove)	1	£ 0.04
Medium potatoes (waxy) 2	450g	£ 0.18
Milk 3tbsp	3	£ 0.01
Water 2tbsp	2	£ -
Red Pepper 1/4 finely diced (Jar pieces)	1/4	£ 0.17
Chorizo 2" long finely diced (£1.98/200g)	50mm	£ 0.39
Pork leg strips (£3.99/kg)	250g	£ 1.00
Olive oil 4 tbsp	20ml	£ 0.12
Oregano (1tsp or maybe 2)	1tsp	£ 0.10
Paprika (2-3tsp)	2tsp	£ 0.02
Salad (Mixed 4 leaf or iceberg will do)	1/3	£ 0.33
French bread stick	1/3	£ 0.20

Vegetarians use 1tsp of paprika instead of chorizo, perhaps add a half cup of petit pois.
Value free range eggs will reduce the cost by 20p.

Total for 3
people

£ 3.27

Chorizo is not for everyone, but if you look around there are some finer minced versions which we use and do not have the large lumps of fat in them.

1. Slice your onion into fine long slivers.
2. Halve your potatoes or even quarter them and slice into 3mm (1/8") thick crisp like pieces.
3. Crush your garlic and finely dice your pepper, using either the jar type marinated which will give the tortilla a sweeter taste or normal peppers.
4. Dice a 50mm (2") long piece of chorizo into small cubes about 6mm square then slice your pork leg steak into 12-15mm (1/2") strips.

5. Break 3 eggs into a bowl and mix with 1 tbsp of the water and all of the milk, seasoning then with a little salt and pepper. (About 10 cracks of pepper and we use just a shake of salt, but pretty much as you would season your scrambled eggs).
6. Take your pork strips and mix in a bowl with 2tbsp of the olive oil, paprika, oregano and season with a little salt and pepper.
7. Take a tablespoon of olive oil and heat in a pan or wok on a medium heat.
8. Stir in the onions and soften for a minute or two.
9. Add the potatoes and continue on a medium heat for 3-5 minutes until soft, stirring from time to time. (Note: Most budget potatoes are waxy)
10. Add the red pepper, garlic, chorizo (or paprika and peas), and a little salt and pepper and stir for a further 5 minutes.
11. Take off the heat and allow to cool for at least 10-15 minutes.
12. Using a non-stick 250mm(8") deep sided saucepan (or even the wok would do) add 1tbsp of the oil and bring to a low to medium heat.
13. Mix your egg mix with the potato mix thoroughly and pour in. Once it simmers around the edges press down a little to keep it tidy, turn to a low heat for 5 minutes.
14. Remove and place under a grill to slightly cook the top for a minute or two.
15. Now the difficult bit! This comes with a warning! You will be turning over a pan with hot food and hot oil residue. Ensure you are protected and careful! H&S warning out of the way we shall continue.

16. Using a large plate, pan lid or other flat object you could slide the part cooked tortilla off, place it over the tortilla and whilst holding the two firmly together flip it upside down. (You can finish it in the oven if the pan is OK in the oven)
17. You now should be looking at a nicely browned half done tortilla.
18. Return the pan or wok to the heat and carefully slide the tortilla into the pan using a spatula to push it and keep the ingredients under the tortilla.
19. Leave to cook on a low heat for a further 5 minutes or so.
20. During this time take your pork mixture and cook on a medium to high heat until the meat is brown and firm. Checking when it's done by pressing your spatula edge through the meat and when it easily breaks apart, looks white through, it's done.
21. Slide out the tortilla onto a plate, the pork into a bowl and serve with a third of your lettuce and a third of the crusty French stick.

If you're short on pans make the tortilla first, set aside and re-heat when the meat is done.



Plus it will be just as nice cold later for supper. Vegetarians stir fry some strips of large field mushrooms in olive oil and butter instead of the pork.

TORTILLA ALTERNATIVE

Alternatively you could add a cup of peas or petit pois as we prefer. Cook the same way as the tortilla, then put the mix in a roasting dish to cool.



Brown some sausages in the same pan to pick up the flavour whilst the mixture cools.

Pour the egg mix into your roasting dish and stir in well.

Place the sausages on top and pop in the oven on a moderately hot heat for 25 minutes.



One tasty all in one offering. Serve with a little crusty bread and some salad.

BEEF & PAPRIKA STEW

A hearty dish that goes well with rice, baked potatoes or some really fine fries.

Try going vegetarian for a change and use mushrooms or courgette instead of beef.



Onion large	1/4	£ 0.07
Garlic clove	1	£ 0.04
Red Pepper	1/4	£ 0.17
Large potatoes	3	£ 0.18
Carrot large	1	£ 0.06
Chopped tomatoes	200g	£ 0.17
Beef or vegetable stock	350ml	£ 0.10
Beef chunks	300g	£ 1.65
Tomato puree	1tbsp	£ 0.03
Oregano	1tsp	£ 0.03
Paprika	1.5tsp	£ 0.02
Mixed herbs	1tsp	£ 0.03
Olive oil	1tsp	£ 0.02
Plain flour	2 tbsp	£ 0.02

Vegetarians use mushrooms or courgette instead of beef.



Total for 3 people £ 2.59

1. Take your onion and slice it into small chunks, crush the garlic, dice up the red pepper into small fingernail size pieces and the same with the carrot.
2. Dice up the beef into fingertip size pieces and if you want a slightly smoother sauce blend the chopped tomatoes a little.
3. Heat the pan to a medium heat with 1tsp of olive oil.
4. Put in the onions for a minute so to soften.
5. Add the beef and brown the pieces all over.
6. Add the flour, paprika, tomato puree and stir in well.
7. Add the stock a quarter at a time until it begins to simmer each time.
8. Add the oregano, mixed herbs, garlic, red pepper, carrot, chopped tomatoes, a pinch of sugar and season with a touch of salt and pepper to taste.
9. Turn down the heat to a low simmer and leave for at least 1 hour. (Pop it in the oven if you like or make it in a slow cooker). Check it every so often to make sure the sauce is not drying out too much. If it looks a little thick then add a $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of water at a time.
10. Serve with your baked potatoes, or alternatively rice or fries.



CHICKEN AND PASTA BAKE, SALAD AND CRUSTY BREAD

A great simple pasta dish with a little optional cheese topping. Using your chicken breast you cut from the chicken earlier in the week.



Onion large	1/4	£ 0.07
Garlic clove	1	£ 0.04
Red Pepper	1/3	£ 0.17
Pasta shapes of any kind (dried type weight shown)	240g	£ 0.18
Cheddar cheese grated (please grate your own?)	80g	£ 0.40
Chopped tomatoes	200g	£ 0.17
Beef or vegetable stock	350ml	£ 0.10
Chicken	350g	£ 1.40
Olive oil	1tsp	£ 0.02
Tomato puree	1tbsp	£ 0.03
Mixed herbs	1tsp	£ 0.03
Mixed four leaf salad (or iceberg will do just fine)	1/3	£ 0.33
French stick	1/3	£ 0.20

Vegetarians use aubergine instead of chicken.

Total for 3 people £ 3.14

1. Dice your onion, chop the garlic finely and dice up the red pepper into small chunks.
2. Slice the chicken into strips about the size of your little finger.
3. Take your chopped tomatoes and puree slightly, if you wish, then add the tomato puree and mixed herbs. (Hey, now that's herbed passata, no need to buy it packed and pay a premium)
4. Heat the pan to a medium heat with 1tsp of olive oil.
5. Put in the onions for a minute so to soften.
6. Add the chicken and brown the pieces all over.
7. Add chopped or pureed tomato mixture, red pepper, a pinch of sugar and season with a touch of salt and pepper to taste.
8. Turn down the heat to a low simmer.
9. Boil some water and cook your pasta according to instructions.
10. Mix the pasta and meat sauce together in a medium roasting dish, sprinkle with the grated cheese and place under the grill or in the oven at a medium to high temperature until the top just browns.
11. Take out and serve with the salad and crusty bread.



More later but for now we'll go on to other tips.

SAVING MONEY!

So what else can we do to minimise our bills?

Wastage is a big issue and it is something we have always personally managed quite well, but with the introduction of composters, recycling, our conservatory and a dog, there is nothing other than fat that goes in the bin.

If it's bacon rind, that goes to the birds too.

A composter is very handy if you're the slightest bit green fingered. Just take all your veg waste and trimmings, throw it in a big pot shaped object, a year on? Free compost from 100-150ltrs, not bad. Even throw in cardboard egg boxes and eggshells. If you're worried about identity theft, tear off the address on your envelopes and chuck that in too if it's paper!

Now you can pot up plants in your own compost and where better to start than with peppers, garlic and chillies.

Take your seeds from a pepper or chilli and dry them on the window sill. Pot them up into small pots and put them in the conservatory or on your window sill in the sun and usually you'll get a few plants a year. It won't stop you going to the supermarket at some point, but it's free and you grew them.

If you have a few cloves left on your old garlic that are just starting to sprout green shoots plant them in the same way.

We take a whole bulb, with about 8 or so cloves on it and get 8 full garlic bulbs in return.

Granted they are a little smaller but the flavour and strength is so much better and your return for one bulb is about 4 times for what? A little time, some compost and a regular watering.

We grow maize (sweetcorn) in pots, carrots (although they do not come out EU shaped I'm afraid, and even potatoes.

Tomatoes up the wall and free herbs in the garden such as thyme, parsley and rosemary.

It's amazing what you can do and you only need a tiny area to do it in or even inside the house.

As I said, it won't keep you from the supermarket but it's free and takes little effort to accomplish.

Start also carefully looking at sell by dates. I know there is an argument by the stores against this but the amount of times I've picked up something with a day left to go and by the time I open it the next day it is already off, I'm afraid I check.

We waste so much by assuming the product we buy has a few days life left in it but it is more likely the meat is just on the limit and the veg has been taken down to near frozen to the point it warms up and goes off very quickly.

All these seeds from one red pepper, they're free, and if you only get 10 small peppers off them as we did last year, it's still saved you £5 or more!



Packaging:

Not only is it very non friendly to the environment but it also is used to disguise a multitude of sins in the product you are buying.

Take for example our pork leg.

It had a big label at the one end, normal and standard, but why is it I always find the piece of meat under that label has the worst wastage of all.



The large label to the right is covering one last steak.

The two piles of trimmings shown in the image to the right is one from the

visible product and the other pile is from the hidden piece under the label. Same size!

Use the butchers counter to really see what you're getting.



Bacon is a recent bargain point.

I found that the packs of 'rind on' bacon are substantially cheaper than 'rind less'.

More than enough to justify trimming it off, if you do not like really crispy rind.

Also use the bacon bits.

Just trimmings in pack but remarkably cheap by comparison to packed slices.

Replace your chicken for bacon bits in a pasta and cheese sauce recipe.

Remember Part 1? Take your cheese sauce from the Lasagne, boil some pasta, fry off some bacon bits, mix it all together, serve with salad and crusty bread. (Only make half the sauce)

Constantly check the bargains, some are, some aren't. The BOGOF offer (Buy one get one free) is apparently to be phased out, so rumour has it and not before time. Although 'three for two' will probably still slip through the net if the wording in the legislation isn't watertight.

Most schemes simply promote two products for the price of the pack twice as large on the shelf. Or to move on stock that is coming to the end of its shelf life or did not sell well to start with.

Two 500g tubs of margarine - BOGOF - price? 4 pence more than the kilo tub.

There are genuine bargains but just check what else is on the aisles. There is a reason it is placed away from the similar products.

Check the weight of the vegetables in packs also. When shopping recently a bag of carrots worked out 30% cheaper to buy than loose and likewise baking potatoes which were £1.76/kg and yet four in a plastic tray with film covering were 50p/pack. I duly weighed the tray full and it was just over 1kg.

There was no label or sign to indicate the standard of the loose ones or the ones in bags were any different in quality.

But this is the rub.

I was persuaded to buy two trays, saving a substantial amount, but added to the environmental problems in doing so.

But how can it be cheaper to take 4 potatoes off a line, place them in a tray, wrap them in film and put a price label, over a 50kg open tray of spuds the customer has to sort and pack themselves?

Also a notable saving, if you have the room to store it, is Rice.

Shopping around I found it for £4.99 for 5kg on the world food section of a local supermarket.

That's £1/kg or at 200g per meal for 3, as we do, that's 25 meals at 20p per meal.



CHICKEN MATHS

So earlier on we butchered up a free range chicken.

We got from it

240g Chicken fillets and trimmings

350g Chicken breast

620g Chicken thighs

220g Chicken wings

1410g in total

Leaving: 80g of skin and 260g carcass.

The chicken cost £6.93 which works out at 40p/ 100gram (£3.99/kg).

Our pack price would be then

240g fillets - £0.95

350g breast - £1.39

620g thighs - £2.45

220g wings - £0.87

260g carcass - £1.02

80g skin - £0.32

It can be done cheaper with budget options but it's not bad. Just boil a pot of veg with your carcass and you have chicken soup for less than £1.50 all in. If you have to go budget you'll halve it again on the jointed parts.

ADDITIONAL INGREDIENTS

In this issue we add a few more ingredients to the mix.

Additional	Amount	Price Avg	Servings	Cost/serving
Fresh Coriander	120g	£1.19	10	£0.12
Tortillas	6 pack	£0.80	1	£0.60
Natural cows milk yoghurt	500ml	£0.70	3	£0.23
Loose lemons	6 pack	£1.19	6	£0.20
Tomatoes loose	6 pack	£1.00	3	£0.33
Sweetcorn	3 pack	£1.00	2	£0.33
French stick	1 large	£0.60	3	£0.20
Mixed salad	1 pack	£1.00	3	£0.33
		£7.48		

Coriander is a great ingredient for salsa's and curries to name a couple of immediate uses. It adds that authentic flavour and you can freeze it just chopping off what you need when you want it.

Fresh chopped tomatoes make a great cold salad addition or salsa ingredient.

Sweetcorn is a great side nibble for a Mexican or Spanish dish.

Lemons we'll use for our Mexican meal, a Lasse drink to go with a curry and a rather extravagant cheese cake mix to treat ourselves.

Tortillas can be made easily at home with practice.

RICE, PASTA AND SEASONING TRICKS

Rice can be flavoured in many ways. It soaks up flavour and seasoning as it cooks. Try flavouring your water with new herbs or spices.

Pilau rice seasoning is about £0.70 if you shop around and a couple of teaspoons in the water before you boil your rice makes for a pleasant variation (about 10-15p per meal for 3)

Most any flavouring spice mix can be added to the water to give the rice a little something. Cajun spice mix, Curry spice mix, Chinese spice mix, just experiment.

The juice of a lemon for instance, or lemon juice from the bottle is just fine, but it will create a lovely rice dish to go with a spicy bit of chicken and some salad.

Keep trying your rice after 5 minutes or so, once the crunch has just about gone it's ready.

Rice is so much more satisfying cooked just right than a squishy dough of overdone mush.

Or, boil it until cooked, rinse immediately in cold water to take all of the heat out and save it overnight for a stir fry or dry curry mix.

You can also freeze it at this point.

Rice bacteria multiply quickly so store carefully!

Pasta is just fine in it's dried state.

Boiled correctly, similar to the rice instructions, it is a good staple for your diet.

Pasta is an excellent source of complex carbohydrates, provides some protein, vitamin B, and iron.

It contains almost no fat, cholesterol, or sodium - providing around 200 calories per cup of cooked pasta.

There are plenty of varieties to choose from and children seem to go for it well.

You cannot flavour it like rice but cook it well and served with a tomato and red pepper sauce it will work with most any addition vegetable of meat.

Buy bigger packs if you can fit 3kg somewhere (it stores forever), however budget pasta quills cannot be beaten and are £0.43 per pack currently for 500g.

Spaghetti follows the same format really.

Cannelloni is a nice way to serve a dish either in a tomato based sauce or a cheese sauce.

The pre-made tubes are not such a good idea though. Most every time I gently tip the box of tubes from side to side only to hear all the bits floating around in the box.

Buy dried lasagne sheets and part boil until soft enough to roll up. Hand fill them with your mixture, place seam side down and cover with your favourite sauce, cheese topping? Oven for 15min.

MORE SPICE IDEAS

Hopefully by now you've played about with a few spices and seasonings.

To cost effectively increase your store cupboard range start to read the ingredients on the label.

A well known brand of Cajun seasoning uses the following:

Salt, chilli powder, pepper, ginger, allspice, coriander seed, cumin, fennel seed, cardamom, mustard, thyme, sage and oregano.

It also uses dried pimientos (red peppers) and garlic, but you can add these separately.

If you like the mix try making your own up.

It will increase your range in the store cupboard.

Get ground coriander because it will work well in a curry for one thing, as will cardamom pods.

Cumin and chilli powder you should have by now.

Try then a Cajun style meal using a green pepper chopped into largish chunks, large stalk of celery sliced, medium onion diced, garlic clove, 500ml of stock, $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1tsp chilli powder, 1tsp ground coriander and same of cumin, 1/4tsp of fennel seed, pinch of thyme and sage, 1/2tsp mustard and oregano, then a pinch of ginger and allspice. Start with your onions as usual, brown the meat of your choice, add the pepper and celery, mix with 2tbsp of flour, chuck in the rest, mix, add the stock and simmer for 30-40 minutes.

THE REST OF THE £26 SHOPPING MEALS

Continuing our theme then is the rest of our meals from the shop.

A nice little Mexican inspired offering with our mince beef, chicken or pork strips would go just as well.

Using up our chicken bits, fillets and pork for a tasty stir fry of meat with little potatoes flicked around the pan in olive oil to cook, some salad and bread.

The good old cottage pie where you will see how much a touch of garlic and tomato puree enhances a flavour.

Finishing with a Spanish inspired stew of our chicken thighs with the option of eggs, some rice and fresh bread.

Remember, you can freeze your bread in portions so when defrosted you will have nice fresh soft bread at the table and waste nothing.

Later on we'll show you how to do your own garlic bread as well.

Plus a few tips on veg for roasts and a simple albeit a little extravagant cheesecake to finish off with in Part 3.

MEXICAN BEEF WRAPS WITH SALSA, GUACAMOLE AND REFRIED BEANS.

Tasty Mexican wraps (2 per person) with some interesting toppings all hand made.

Sweetcorn is a tasty optional addition, even sweeter when given to us by our friend Neil from his allotment!



Onion medium	1/2	£0.07
Garlic clove	2	£0.04
Red Pepper	1/4	£0.15
Avocado	1	£0.40
Tortilla wraps	6	£0.80
Cheddar cheese grated (please grate your own?)	40g	£0.20
Fresh tomato	1	£0.12
Pinto beans (tin)	300g	£0.49
Beef mince	320g	£1.75
Tomato puree	1-2 tbsps	£0.03
Olive oil	2tsp	£0.04
Fresh coriander	handful	£0.15
Cumin	1-2tsp	£0.03
Chilli powder	1tsp	£0.03
Lemon	1	£0.33
Natural yoghurt	60ml	£0.10
Lettuce	1/4	£0.12

Vegetarians use sliced red peppers stir fried with diced sweet potato instead of beef

Total for 3 people

£4.83

A little pricier but in the weekly scheme the costs overall are the important thing, save a little here, indulge a little there.

Beef mix recipe

1. Take your beef mince and brown in the pan with 1tsp of oil (Olive or vegetable) on a medium heat.
2. Add 1 tsp of cumin, 1/2tsp chilli powder (more if you like it spicier), 1tbsp of flour, 1tsp of tomato puree and mix thoroughly.
3. Slowly add $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of water until well stirred in and simmering, salt and pepper to taste, then lower the heat to a slight simmer for 10 minutes adding a little water if it looks too dry. You just want a little sauce to run through your wrap mixture.
4. Set aside and keep warm or heat it back up just before serving.

Refried beans recipe

1. Finely chop a quarter of a medium size onion and on a medium heat soften in the pan with 1tsp of oil (Olive or vegetable).
2. Add the pinto beans, 1 small clove of finely chopped garlic, 1tbsp of tomato puree, 1/2tsp cumin, a pinch of chilli powder, a $\frac{1}{4}$ of the lemon juice and mash it up roughly (not to a puree).
3. Slowly add a little water (1/4 cup or so) until it resembles a really rough mash.
4. Set aside and keep warm or heat it back up just before serving. (Can easily be served cold)

Guacamole recipe

1. Halve your guacamole remove the seed and scoop out the flesh into a small bowl or dish.
2. Add to that about a 25mm (1") pile of finely chopped coriander, 1 small clove of finely chopped or crushed garlic, 1/4tsp of chilli powder, $\frac{1}{4}$ of the lemon juice and a good pinch of salt.
3. Mash it all together until you have a fine puree.
4. Taste and season with a little more salt if required.
5. Set aside.

Salsa recipe

1. Remove the seeds from your tomato and finely dice the flesh.
2. Dice a $\frac{1}{4}$ of red pepper, marinated or fresh (marinated will just have a sweeter taste).
3. Roughly chop a 25mm (1") pile of coriander.
4. Finely or roughly chop the other $\frac{1}{4}$ of your onion.
5. Place all the above in a bowl, add a $\frac{1}{4}$ of the lemon juice, a pinch of sugar, salt and pepper and stir.
6. Set aside.

Yoghurt dip recipe

1. Take 60ml of the natural yoghurt and simply stir in the last $\frac{1}{4}$ of your lemon juice, then set aside.

To serve

1. Take all of the ingredients in bowls and serve with the tortilla wraps (warmed according to the packet instruction), grate the cheese and put in a bowl and lastly a bowl of finely shredded $\frac{1}{4}$ of your lettuce.
2. As an option bake some fresh sweetcorn or other and serve alongside.

Convert your base ingredients into a taste of Mexico for minimal costs. Cheaper if you really bargain hunt on your shop.



If your lucky enough to get fresh sweetcorn then just pop it in the oven on a medium to high heat in it's natural covering for 30-35 minutes. Remember to cut off the hairy bits on the end though or you'll have a small fire in the oven like I did!!



Spread each of the ingredients in strips, fold over the end, fold the sides over each other and eat.

CHICKEN AND PORK STRIPS WITH SAUTÉED POTATOES

A very quick and easy stir fry delicious hot or cold.

Potato cubes stir fried in olive oil and mixed herbs.

Chicken and pork strips season only with a little chorizo.



Served with a little salad and perhaps a bit more of the French stick?

Onion medium	1/2	£0.07
Garlic clove	1	£0.04
Potatoes (large)	450g	£0.15
Chopped tomatoes (1/2 tin)	200g	£0.40
Chorizo	50g	£0.80
Tomato puree	1tsp	£0.03
Chicken fillets and trimmings	220g	£0.87
Pork leg	150g	£0.60
Olive oil	2-3 tbsp	£0.02
Mixed herbs	1 tsp	£0.12
Lettuce or salad mix	1/4	£0.12

Vegetarians use sliced aubergine or courgette strips stir fried in olive oil, and perhaps add cannellini beans to the tomato sauce mix?

Total for 3 people £3.23

Chicken and Pork stir fried with Chorizo recipe

1. Cut the chicken and pork into strips about as large as your little finger or less.
2. Season with a little salt and pepper.
3. Heat 1tsp of olive oil in a pan on a medium heat.
4. Put in the chicken and pork and toss until browned all over.
5. Dice the chorizo into small chunks 6mm (1/4") and add to the chicken and pork.
6. Toss for a further 3 or 4 minutes until you can break the meat in half easily with the tip of your spatula.
7. Set aside and keep warm.

Sautéed Potato recipe

1. Dice up your two potatoes into chunks about the size of the tip of your thumb.
2. Add 2tbsp of olive oil to a pan and raise to a medium heat.
3. Add the potato pieces with a little salt and pepper and stir until just browning.
4. Add 1tsp of mixed herbs and toss until browned and softened. Check with the tip of a knife that it goes in easily.
5. Set aside and keep warm.

Tomato sauce recipe

1. Chop the onion in small chunks.
2. Heat $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp of olive oil in a small saucepan.
3. Toss in the onions and soften for a minute.
4. Add your garlic (finely chopped), 200g of tomatoes as is or slightly mashed, 1tsp of mixed herbs, 1tsp of tomato puree and salt and pepper to taste.
5. Simmer for 5 minutes.

Such a simple set of ingredients packed with flavour for the money.

Quick to prepare and don't bother washing the pan out between the potatoes and the meat to save washing.



Almost a stir fry really and you could use fish or squid if you like pan fried with the chorizo. Squid is very good but getting pricey now. More later!



Serve it out on bowls and don't be afraid of any oil. It's lovely mopped up with a little crusty bread!

COTTAGE PIE. MMMM!

You simply cannot beat a Cottage Pie. Wholesome and filling and just what the doctor ordered on a wet and dreary day!



Onion medium	half	£0.07
Garlic clove	1	£0.04
Potatoes	1kg	£0.15
Carrot large	1	£0.06
Peas	100g	£0.18
Tomato puree	1tsp	£0.03
Beef mince	320g	£1.75
Worcestershire sauce	1/2tsp	£0.01
Flour	2tbsp	£0.60
Mixed herbs	1tsp	£0.03
Milk	100ml	£0.08
Butter (margarine would do)	65g	£0.15
Stock beef or vegeable	350ml	£0.06

Vegetarians use soya protien instead of mince with a little more stock to compensate

Total for 3 people

£3.21

This would do four at a push but we get greedy when cottage pie is on offer.

Change the beef and herbs for lamb mince and thyme for a Shepherds pie style.

1. Chop your onion into fairly fine bits (it doesn't have to be pretty).
2. Slice your carrots into thin-ish slices.
3. Peel then dice up your potatoes into pieces the size of the tip of your little finger (they'll cook a lot quicker for the mash and save you energy).
4. Using 1/2tsp of olive oil (or your own preference will do just fine), bring your pan or wok to a medium to high heat.
5. Soften the onions for a minute then put in the mince and brown it.
6. Add your carrots, peas, crushed or finely chopped garlic, Worcestershire sauce, 2tbsp of flour and stir in well.
7. Slowly add your stock a quarter at a time and allow to come to a boil before adding the next.
8. Once the stock is all added put in your 1tsp of mixed herbs and 1tsp of tomato puree and stir in well.
9. Add salt and a good few twists of pepper to taste.
10. Turn the heat down to a low simmer.
11. Boil your potatoes (cut to small chunks it should take about ten minutes or so, check with the tip of a knife).
12. Drain and mash with 65g butter and slowly add your milk until a smooth-ish consistency is achieved, then season with salt and pepper to taste (white pepper if you have it and possibly a pinch of nutmeg if available).
13. Place the mince mix into a medium sized roasting dish.
14. Spoon the mash over the top in blobs until roughly covered all over.
15. Use a fork to carefully spread it around to completely cover the mince mixture.
16. Pop into the oven at Gas 5 (see chart for conversions) for 30-40 minutes until browned and serve.

Once again you can use the wok for preparation of your mix.

Boil quite hard to thicken the sauce with the flour and pop into your roasting dish.



Place the mash all over in spoon size blobs to avoid the mash sinking into the mix.



Raking over the top with the fork prongs will a good texture for browning and presentation.

We cover ours with a little grated cheddar as well.

The taste is fantastic! Plus even if you're not the best masher it still comes out smooth and creamy after cooking.



SPANISH CHICKEN STEW

Rich and tasty yet simple to create. Using up your chicken joints and for an alternative try popping an egg or three in the centre.



Onion medium	half	£0.07
Garlic clove	1	£0.04
Red pepper	half	£0.30
Carrot large	1	£0.06
Chopped tomatoes	400g	£0.33
Tomato puree	1tbsp	£0.03
Chicken thighs and drumsticks	620g	£2.45
Rice	200g	£0.20
Olive oil	1tsp	£0.02
Flour	4tbsp	£0.06
Paprika	2tsp	£0.60
Oregano	1tsp	£0.03

Vegetarians use sweet potato or squash roasted separately in large chunks and add cannellini beans to the stew mix.

Total for 3 people

£4.19

You could exchange the chicken for pork loin or leg steaks or perhaps some sausages instead. Serve with sautéed potatoes for a change as well.

The egg is optional, but makes a nice change also.

1. Dice up the onion, carrot, red pepper.
2. Mash or puree the chopped tomatoes if desired.
3. Season the flour with salt and pepper.
4. Take the chicken thigh pieces and cut between the drumstick and thigh to get 4 portions. (breast pieces will do just as well), then roll in the seasoned flour.
5. Heat 1tsp of olive oil in a pan or casserole pot (it's can go straight in the oven if it's all metal, save washing up!) on a medium to high heat.
6. Toss in the chicken pieces and brown them all over until the skin starts to crisp.
7. Once browned put in the onions to soften for a minute.
8. Add the carrot, red pepper, chopped garlic, 2tsp of paprika, tomato puree and stir for a minute.
9. Add the chopped tomatoes and 1tsp oregano and stir in.
10. Put a lid on the pan or transfer to a casserole pot and put in a pre-heated oven Gas 5 for 50-60 minutes.
11. Remove and cut open the biggest joint to just check the meat is thoroughly cooked. (if it looks bloody or your not sure, pop it back in for 10 minutes and check again)
12. Boil 200g of rice according to instructions, drain and rinse with boiling water.
13. Serve both dishes in bowls with perhaps a little crusty bread for the sauce.

Ten minutes before you are due take out the stew remove from the oven, move the joints to the edges and carefully crack 3 eggs into the middle. Return to the oven and cook for the last ten minutes.

It's not for everyone but my wife loves them.

Another simple set of ingredients that produce a tasty combination of flavours for such an easy meal.

Brown the chicken separately if you find it easier.



Any meat can be used or try using different vegetables.

Don't put the eggs in at the start unless you like them really well done!!



You could change the paprika and oregano for mixed herbs (2tsp) and serve with baked potatoes instead.



If you brown the chicken separately and just place on top the skin keeps a little of the crispy texture.



CONVERSION CHARTS

I'm always tending to just throw ingredients in without measuring nowadays. This booklet has been quite difficult to put together for this reason. Having now recorded some of my meals which traditionally I always make up on the spot. Here are some converters to help.

Temperatures			General Description
°F	°C	Gas Mark	
225	110	qtr	Very slow
250	120/130	half	Very slow
275	140	1	Slow
300	150	2	Slow
325	160/170	3	Moderate (medium)
350	180	4	Moderate (medium)
375	190	5	Moderately hot
400	200	6	Moderately hot
425	220	7	Hot
450	230	8	Hot
475	240	9	Very hot

Imperial	Metric	By cup
½ fl oz	15 ml	1 level tablespoon
1 fl oz	30 ml	1/8 cup
2 fl oz	60 ml	¼
3 fl oz	90 ml	3/8 cup
4 fl oz	125 ml	½ cup
5 fl oz / ¼ pint	150 ml	2/3 cup
6 fl oz	175 ml	¾ cup
8 fl oz	250 ml	1 cup

SPOON MEASURES	
1 Tablespoon (tbls)	3 Teaspoons
1 Desert Spoon	2 Teaspoons
1 Level Tablespoon (tbls)	15 ml
1 Level Teaspoon (tsp)	5 ml

COMING UP IN PART THREE

I think, if we can get some support, Part 3 should come along the end of October/November 2009 now. We need to get off and investigate some more of the old meals we used to conjure up, but keep in budget. We also need to find sponsorship, support for DVD production (how to's) and publishing avenues.

We'll then look at widening our range of ingredients just a little more in the herbs and spices area.

More Asian influenced dishes.

Perhaps a nice Cajun recipe in full.

The lamb, sweet potato and chilli dish we did not get to this time around.

Then we'll just see how it comes together.

We stopped this issue here so it keeps to around 50 pages per download.

I hope this has again been of help.

All the best,

Mark, Karen & Cheyenne

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And a big thanks to Les for starting it off by asking the question.

Mark Keogh © 2009

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