



The persistent cost of living crisis remains a concern, with food prices surging by nearly 50% since the beginning of 2023. Feeding a family with nutritious meals on a tight budget remains a challenge. To help you eat well without breaking the bank, we've compiled a selection of budget-friendly recipes, each costing less than £1 per person. Our sources for this information include The British Heart Foundation and The Eatwell guide.

The Eatwell guide helps us understand how much of different types of food we should eat to stay healthy. It's like a food balance. We need different nutrients from each group. To keep the balance right, eat lots of fruits, veggies, and starchy foods. Add some lean meat, fish, eggs, or veggie options, and low-fat dairy. Try to avoid too much fatty or sugary food. This guide is good for most people, even if you want to lose weight. It makes sure you get all the good stuff your body needs. Kids under two need different foods, but those between two and five should eat like this. You can visit the Eatwell guide to check your food balance.

Goodto.com has curated a selection of affordable family meals, each costing less than £1 per portion. These budget-friendly recipes feature ingredients from popular supermarkets like Tesco, Morrisons, Asda, Sainsbury's, and Aldi. You can explore these economical family meal ideas on their website at www.goodto.com.

BASIC STORE CUPBOARD INGREDIENTS

"Basic store cupboard ingredients" refers to essential food items and cooking supplies that are typically kept on hand in a kitchen's pantry or cupboard. These are items that are commonly used in various recipes and meals and can serve as a foundation for cooking and meal preparation. Basic store cupboard ingredients often include items like flour, sugar, salt, rice, pasta, canned goods (such as tomatoes or beans), oils, spices, and other non-perishable items that are versatile and have a long shelf life. These ingredients are important for everyday cooking and can help you quickly put together a meal without needing to make a special trip to the grocery store.

A well-stocked store cupboard is the first step towards being able to cook tasty and healthy meals. Here's a dietitian's guide to 16 of the best.

1. Tinned tomatoes

Tinned tomatoes in juice are a versatile ingredient. They can take centre stage as a simple sauce for pasta as well as being an ingredient in dishes like Bolognese or chilli.

2. Tinned tuna in water

Tinned tuna is a useful ingredient to have to hand, whether you use it for a simple tuna sandwich filling, to top a salad or jacket potato or for more substantial meals like a tuna bake or in a tomato based pasta sauce. Don't just stick to tuna: oily fish like salmon, sardines and pilchards are also a good choice. The important thing is to choose fish that have been tinned in water, tomato sauce or unsaturated fats like sunflower or olive oil rather than in brine to keep the salt down.



3. Herbs and spices

Adding flavour is important when it comes to cooking with less salt. Dried herbs and spices are an inexpensive way of doing that and have the advantage of keeping for a while if they are kept well sealed and out of direct sunlight.

4. Unsaturated oil



Choose unsaturated fats like rapeseed, sunflower and olive oils for cooking rather than butter, lard or ghee.

5. Whole wheat pasta



Higher in fibre than white pasta, whole wheat pasta is a filling choice and will keep for a long time in your cupboard ready for a quick evening meal. Use it as a starchy accompaniment for main meals as well as having it cold in pasta salads.

6. Onions

A basic ingredient that contributes towards your five a day, onions are a versatile ingredient whether you are making a cooked dish or a salad. They keep well stored in a cool, dark place without needing to be refrigerated.

7. Tinned pulses



Pulses are a good ingredient to bulk out meat dishes as well as being a vegetarian source of protein. Dried pulses keep well too but when they are tinned in water they are ready to eat making them a quick and easy choice.

8. Plain flour

A bag of plain flour can be useful for making pancakes and scones, as well as to thicken a white sauce or casserole.

9. Potatoes



Whether they are baking potatoes, sweet potatoes or new potatoes, these root vegetables keep well when stored in a cool, dark place. Eat them with their skins on to benefit from some extra fibre.

10. Tinned fruit in juice

Tinned fruit keeps for ages and will count towards your five a day. During the winter it can be a good way of getting more exotic fruits in your diet like peaches, apricots and pineapple. Just make sure the fruit is tinned in fruit juice rather than syrup.

11. Dried fruit



Dried fruits such as sultanas, apricots, figs and dates are all useful for adding sweetness to breakfasts, stewed fruit and adding to stews and casseroles. While dried fruit won't have the vitamin C that fresh fruit does, dried fruit still contributes to your five a day and can also be a source of nutrients like fibre and iron.

IN YOUR FREEZER:

12. Frozen peas



Frozen vegetables can sometimes have more nutrients in them than fresh and will count towards your five a day. Having a bag of peas in the freezer means you will never be short of a vegetable to serve with your main meals and you can also use defrosted frozen peas as an addition

to salads as well as to make a filling soup.

13. Bread



IN YOUR FRIDGE:

14. Eggs



At breakfast, lunch and dinner eggs are a quick to cook source of protein and keep well. Use them when they are at their freshest for poaching and for a Spanish omelette, boiled or scrambled if they are nearing their use by date.

15. Low fat milk

Whether it's for hot drinks, on cereal, or to make a white sauce, milk is in most of our fridges. Using low-fat milks like semi-skimmed, 1% or skimmed milk will help to reduce the amount of saturated fat in your diet. It might seem like a small change but because milk is such an everyday food the benefits can add up.



16. Low-fat yoghurt

Use it for breakfast with cereals, to make dips or to have with fruit as a pudding. A pot of low fat natural yogurt is useful to keep in the fridge and can be more versatile than fruit flavoured ones.

10 SIMPLE WAYS TO EAT WELL AND SAVE MONEY



With many of us currently feeling a financial pinch, saving money on our food shop can make a real difference. Read our dietitian's tips for shopping and cooking healthily for less.

1. Shop smart

Review prices online to find the best bargains. Using supermarket budget ranges for items such as tinned and fresh fruit and vegetables, pasta and rice is a real help too. Don't overlook greengrocers for cheaper fruit and veg.

2. Beware multi-buys

These offers aren't a great deal if you end up with a mountain of food that you can't eat before it goes off. Think before you go for a multiple offer such as 'two for one' or 'buy two get one free'.

3. Compare like with like

Compare prices per 100g to make sure you really are getting a deal – use the price tabs on the supermarket shelves to give you this information so you can compare across different size packs. Larger packs are often better value, but only if you are going to use it all.

4. Use seasonal fruit and veg

Prices come down when there is a glut of any kind of food and, when it comes to fruit and veg, an extra bonus is that produce tastes much better when it's in season.

5. Plan everything

Don't underestimate the humble shopping list, based on a meal plan for the week. This ensures you have everything you need and also helps you to avoid temptation in the supermarket.

6. Only cook one meal

Don't get into the habit of catering for a variety of likes and dislikes. Make one meal for everyone. It costs more to buy the different foods and cook separate dishes.

7. Freeze leftovers

Cooked too much? Leftover bread? Don't bin it, freeze it. Enjoy casseroles, soups and curries another day and use up bread as breadcrumbs, toast or chunky baked croutons in soup.

8. Add pulses to stretch out the meat

One of the most expensive items in your basket is meat, so learning to make a little stretch a long way is a good idea. Beans and lentils are vegetarian sources of protein and iron, but shouldn't be exclusive to non-meat eaters. By adding pulses to your dishes in place of some of the meat, you'll bulk them up and get plenty of protein, plus the flavour of meat, but it costs you less.

9. Fill your oven

If you're putting the oven on, don't just use it to cook a couple of jacket potatoes. Cook a casserole to freeze for another day and bake some fruit to eat over the next couple of days.

10. Claim your benefits

Make sure that you are receiving any benefits that you are eligible for and, if you find yourself in an emergency situation, look for food banks in your local area and find out how you can access them.

7 DAYS OF HEALTHY MEALS ON A BUDGET

Our dietitian has costed out a week of healthy meals and snacks for under £50 for two people.

Monday



Breakfast: Porridge made with skimmed milk; banana; glass of pure, unsweetened orange juice. Get our tips for livening up porridge, and other healthy breakfasts.

Lunch: Lentil soup, tinned or home-made (pictured); wholemeal roll with unsaturated fat spread.

Evening meal: Jacket potato with baked salmon and frozen peas.

Snacks: 2 satsumas; small handful of unsalted peanuts; low-fat fruit yoghurt.

Tuesday



Breakfast: 2 slices of wholegrain toast with unsaturated spread and a boiled egg; glass of pure, unsweetened orange juice.

Lunch: Jacket potato with baked beans (reduced sugar and salt); salad.

Evening meal: Homemade chunky vegetable goulash (pictured); brown rice; broccoli.

Snacks: 3 oatcakes with low fat cream cheese; pear.

Wednesday



Breakfast: Poached egg (pictured) on two slices of wholegrain toast; glass of pure, unsweetened orange juice.

Lunch: Egg, tomato and cucumber wholemeal bread sandwich.

Evening meal: Spaghetti Bolognese; salad.

Snacks: Carrot sticks; small handful of unsalted peanuts; 2 satsumas.

Thursday



Breakfast: 2 slices of wholegrain toast with sunflower spread, honey and banana; glass of pure, unsweetened orange juice.

Lunch: Lentil soup (tinned or home-made); wholemeal roll with unsaturated fat spread.

Evening meal: Slice of homemade vegetarian pizza (pictured) with salad and a jacket potato.

Snacks: Low fat yoghurt; 2 plums; scone with unsaturated fat spread; pear.

Friday



Breakfast: Muesli with skimmed milk and a banana; glass of pure, unsweetened orange juice.

Lunch: Cheese and salad sandwich made with reduced-fat cheddar-style cheese, salad, wholegrain bread and unsaturated fat spread.

Evening meal: Homemade cottage pie (pictured) served with peas and carrots.

Snacks: 3 oatcakes with low-fat cream cheese; 2 plums.

Saturday



Breakfast: Porridge made with skimmed milk; banana; glass of pure, unsweetened orange juice.

Lunch: Home-made carrot and parsnip soup (pictured); wholemeal roll and unsaturated fat spread.

Evening meal: Homemade tuna pasta bake; broccoli.

Snacks: Small handful of unsalted peanuts; apple; pear.

Sunday



Breakfast: Muesli with natural yoghurt and a banana; one piece of wholegrain toast with unsaturated fat spread.

Lunch: Chicken and vegetable traybake (pictured); baked apple and custard.

Evening meal: Chicken, cucumber and tomato wholemeal bread sandwiches

Snacks: Small handful of unsalted peanuts; carrot sticks; 2 satsumas

YOU CAN HAVE YOUR CAKE AND EAT IT!

It's possible for all of us to enjoy home baking as part of a balanced diet. Here are 10 tips for healthier baking.

1. Make your own bread to use less salt

Bread is probably the bakery product we eat the most, which means that, while it might not be the saltiest food you can think of, it can make a significant contribution to the salt content of our diet.

Using wholegrain flour instead of white flour will help to increase the fibre content and make your baking more satisfying to eat.

In recent years, many manufacturers have reduced the amount of salt that they add to bread, but it can still vary widely. This means we all need to check food labels carefully but, better still, why not make your own bread so that you have complete control?

A teaspoon or less of salt per 500g (1lb 2oz) of flour will keep your loaf within government targets for commercial loaves, but obviously the less you use, the better.

2. Try different flours and flavourings

Making your own bread also gives you flexibility in terms of the type of flour you use. Wholegrain flour is a healthier choice than white, but it doesn't have to be just wheat - you could try spelt, barley or oat, either on their own or mixed. Add some seeds or herbs to give an interesting crunch and flavour.

3. Make a quick soda bread

If all the kneading and waiting associated with a yeasted loaf sounds like too much effort, try wholemeal soda bread flavoured with caraway seeds. You use bicarbonate of soda as the raising agent instead of yeast, so it needs to be eaten fresh, but it's quick and easy to make. It's delicious served with soup at lunchtime or a boiled or poached egg for breakfast.

4. Bake with unsaturated fat

Cakes should really be an 'every now and then' food. However, with a few tweaks to the ingredients and toppings, baking your own can be better for you than buying them.

Using an unsaturated spread instead of butter has more benefits than simply reducing the amount of saturated fat: it actually gives a lighter texture, especially if you're making an all-in-one sponge cake. You can just swap spreads for butter in most recipes without making any other changes. Just make sure the spread you use is suitable for baking.



If you're reluctant to use a spread, then oil is a good alternative. It can make cakes lovely and moist, but as it's a liquid it will alter the balance of the mix, so find recipes that are specifically designed to use oil.

5. Add healthier ingredients to your baking

As with bread, using wholegrain flour instead of white flour will help to increase the fibre content and make your baking feel more substantial and filling. The flavour will be slightly different – some people say it tastes a bit nutty. If you want a more subtle flavour, you can try using half wholegrain and half white flour.

Using fruit and vegetables will also add fibre and sweetness. There might not be enough in a portion to count as one of your 5-a-day, but it's a nutritious way to help keep your cakes and scones moist. And by using sweet vegetables such as carrots, beetroots or courgettes, or fruit such as apples, berries or pineapples, you won't need to add so much sugar.

6. Healthier icings

Use a drizzle of glacé (water) icing rather than butter icing for cake toppings. Or, a light sprinkle of icing sugar may be all you need to give your bake the final touch. Try cutting out stencils from greaseproof paper and sifting your icing sugar over it for a professional-looking finish.

7. Watch your portion sizes

Think about portion sizes, too: making 'mini' versions will mean you get all the taste, but without as much fat and calorie content per portion. Alternatively, tray bakes such as our carrot cake recipe are really versatile, as they can easily be cut into small squares.

8. Choose the right pastry...



Pastry isn't known for being a heart-healthy choice but there's a wide variation in the amount and type of fat used to make different types. About a third of puff and shortcrust pastry is fat, and if it's made with butter or palm oil, it contains more saturated fat than if it's made

with unsaturated fats such as sunflower spread. These are our most commonly used pastries, but it's worth trying to keep them for a treat.

Not all pastry is high in fat. The filo pastry has just 3.1g of fat per 100g and is low in saturated fat. It does have a different texture from shortcrust or flaky pastry and you need to use it differently, but it gives a lovely, crunchy crust and looks impressive in small tarts with savoury or sweet fillings.

9. ...and don't use too much

Try just putting a top crust on your pies, rather than lining the entire dish, to help to cut down on the saturated fat and calories. You can also bake discs of pastry and put them on top of a filling you have cooked separately.

10. A little of what you fancy

As long as you don't find yourself tucking into the cream cakes every weekday afternoon, there's no harm in indulging in a slice of cake every so often. A healthy diet is about balance so, as long as you stick to healthy eating most of the time, you can enjoy cakes, pastry and biscuits guilt-free.