

Let's get
COOKING



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Food for Families

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Food for

Introduction

Over 8 million people in the UK struggle to get enough to eat.

The average weekly shop for a family of three in the **UK costs £78**. In comparison, the average monthly food bill for a family of four is **£654**; **£431** of this is spent on groceries and **£223** is spent on food prepared out of the house.





Families



This equates to 260 kilograms avoidable food waste per household, or the equivalent of £700 (per average household with children) ending up in the bin.

So if you're feeling the pinch when it comes to your food budget, Let's Get Cooking can suggest some easy ways to keep more pounds in your pocket next time you head to the shops.

The aim of this project is to help the residents of Essex to make more of the food they buy and reduce their food waste, by raising awareness of key issues and giving tips and ideas to support change.

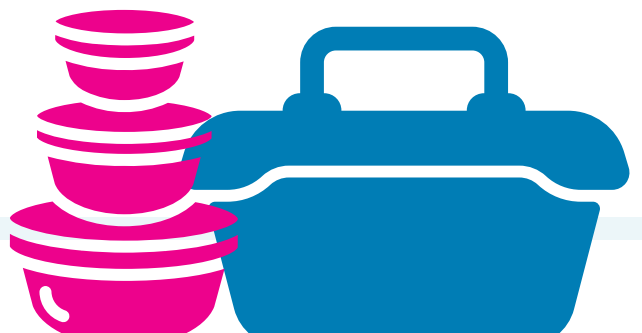
With just a few changes to your buying and cooking habits, we hope to enable you to reduce your food costs without cutting the flavour and nutritional value of your food.

We would like to thank Essex Community Foundation for their support which has enabled us to produce the Food for Families recipe and information pack.

We hope the pack will show that it is possible to cook great tasting, nutritious meals on a budget while supporting sustainability and the reduction of household food waste. We trust you will enjoy trying these healthy, well-balanced, cost-effective meals.

By using the tips and recipes in this pack we can work together to help reduce the amount of wasted food, learn new skills, have fun cooking the recipes and enjoy eating the meals.

So, Let's Get Cooking!



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At a glance information



Non-cook activity



Hob or stove required



Oven required



Microwave required



Grill required



Bag it up!



Vegetarian



Allergy warning



Quick activity up to 1/2 hour



Medium-length activity up to 1 hour



Longer activity up to 1½ hours



Contains no ingredients that need to be limited/avoided in 1–5-year-olds' diets, eg stock cubes

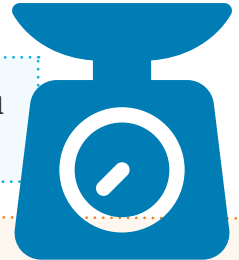


Equipment Tips

and Temperatures

All our recipes include a comprehensive equipment list but don't worry if you haven't got all the kitchen kit listed. You can often make do with an alternative kitchen item you have available. A few simple swaps and tricks will mean you can still make the recipe. For example, you can swap a masher for a fork.

A set of measuring spoons and cups are very useful as you can measure liquid and solids easily and accurately and you will be able to **dispense with having some scales**

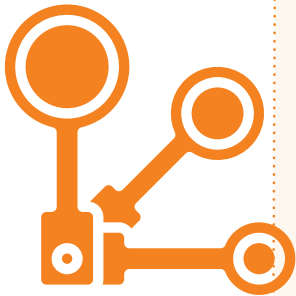


Measuring spoons are great for accuracy, especially when baking but you can often use ordinary cutlery spoons instead. See the chart below

5 ml spoon = 1 heaped teaspoon
15ml spoon = 1 heaped table spoon

Measuring rice with no scales

One portion of rice = 75 grams
75 grams of uncooked rice = 3 rounded tablespoons of rice or a 1/3 of an average sized mug.
80 grams (one portion) of uncooked pasta will fill an average sized mug.



If you don't have a food processor, often a stick blender will work just as well. Breadcrumbs, for example, can be made with a processor, stick blender or by grating stale bread on a grater.

Don't have a juicer? Cut the lemon/orange in half. Put a fork into the cut side, cup it in one hand and with the other rotate the fork and squeeze the fruit.

No biscuit or cookie cutter? Try using a small glass or an empty glass jar. Dip the rim in flour to stop the dough sticking.



Oven temperatures:

Gas Mark	° Celsius	° Celsius Fan	° Fahrenheit
¼	110° C	100° C	225° F
½	130° C	120° C	250° F
1	140° C	130° C	275° F
2	150° C	140° C	300° F
3	170° C	155° C	325° F
4	180° C	165° C	350° F
5	190° C	180° C	375° F
6	200° C	190° C	400° F
7	220° C	200° C	425° F
8	230° C	210° C	450° F
9	240° C	220° C	475° F

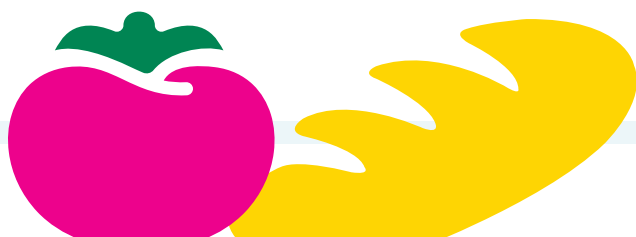


Top Tips for Reducing Food Waste

→ Perfectly Planned

A great way to save money and time and to reduce food waste is to spend a little time planning your weekly meals. This also removes the hassle of having to think about what to eat every day, reduces the temptation to eat junk food and means you can enjoy food at its freshest.

- Check what's already in your cupboards, fridge and freezer and then make a shopping list.
- When you're at the shops make sure you stick to your list and avoid tempting promotional offers. 'Buy One Get One Free' isn't a bargain unless you are going to use it.
- Don't be afraid to adapt recipes to suit your needs. Do you really need all of the ingredients listed or can you swap some ingredients to use what you already have?
- If you live with friends or family, save time and money by taking it in turns to cook for everyone. Try and plan your food shopping together to minimise unwanted waste and cut the food bill.
- Fruit and vegetables are cheaper when in season and eating locally sourced seasonal food is also environmentally friendly. Try and eat seasonally, for example apples, pears and root vegetables in winter and salads and berries in the summer months.
- Always include a 'store cupboard' meal in your weekly plans as a back-up in case anything changes.
- On page 7 we've shared a weekly meal planner that you might find useful.



Weekly meal planner



Weekly cooking plan	What's for dinner? What ingredients do I need to make it?	Do I have these ingredients in my fridge/freezer/cupboard?	Add to shopping list?	Other leftover ingredients in my fridge I could add?
Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				
Saturday				
Sunday				

Understanding Your Dates

One of the main reasons food ends up in our bins is because it goes out of date. But do we understand what these use by and best before dates really mean?

- When shopping **check the dates of fresh food** before you buy it. Items with a later use by or best before date tend to be at the back of the shelf. If you're not happy with what's on the shelves, why not ask staff if they have anything fresher?
- **Use by dates** – this means food can be eaten or frozen right up to this date. It is normally found on perishable products such as dairy or meat.
- **Best before** – these dates refer to quality, rather than food safety. You can eat foods after their best before date, however they may not taste or look their best. Eggs are an exception and shouldn't be eaten after their best before date.
- When fruit and vegetables are **past their best before date**, they are often still great for baking or for making soups, casseroles and stir fries. For example, black bananas are really sweet and can be enjoyed in banana cakes, pancakes or smoothies.



Super Storage Solutions



Storing our food in the right way can make it last much longer.

- To maximise the shelf life of your chilled food, your fridge should be kept at a temperature of less than 5 degrees. If you're not clear about what temperature your fridge is set at, it's a good idea to invest in a small fridge thermostat.
- Store your food according to the instructions on the pack. Leaving chilled food out of the fridge can massively reduce its shelf life. Know what's inside your fridge – be mindful of what perishable food you have and plan meals around those coming up to their use by dates.
- Sometimes even when we've planned to perfection we just don't manage to eat all of the fresh food before the use by date. This is when the freezer becomes your best friend! You can freeze almost anything, including milk, cheese and yoghurts.
- Many people don't store their fruit and vegetables correctly. For example, all fruit, except bananas, should be kept in the fridge. Potatoes should be kept somewhere dry and dark. Eggs should be kept either in the fridge or in a place like a pantry where the temperature doesn't fluctuate regularly.
- Make use of frozen or canned fruit and vegetables. They last longer, are just as nutritious and are often cheaper.
- Keep a well-stocked and organised store cupboard. You can whip up many quick and easy meals from some staple store cupboard ingredients. But make sure you regularly check your cupboard so cans and jars don't get forgotten about. If you find stuff in your cupboard that you know you aren't going to use, why not support your community by donating to your local food bank?



Portion Perfection

Another reason why food gets wasted is because we cook too much. You can avoid this pitfall by getting to know your portion sizes or by using your leftovers for other meals or recipes.

- Buy vegetables and meat in the exact quantity that you need to save money and stop food going off before you use it.
- A mug of uncooked rice is a good measure when you're cooking for four adults.
- If you're serving up food for others, why not get them to serve themselves or ask them how much they would like before filling up a plate that might not get eaten?



Lovely Leftover Surprises

At Let's Get Cooking we love our food, and it's far too good to end up in the bin.

- If you've cooked too much food, portion it up, label it and put it in the fridge or freezer for another day.
- Turn a simple recipe into lots of different recipes. For example if you're cooking mince, why not make extra and turn it into a different meal like beef cobbler, spaghetti bolognese, chilli or lasagne?
- If you find yourself with too much food, why not donate it to neighbour or someone who would really appreciate it?
- Why not plan in a 'leftovers surprise night' and have a bit of fun using up all of your leftovers from the week by coming up with new and interesting recipes? Think anything goes pasta surprise!



Let's Get



Shopping Challenge

What are we going to eat this week?

We decided the best thing to do was to make a menu plan for the next five days. After that we thought it would be a good idea to check the store cupboard, fridge and freezer to see what we had available and what needed using up.

Finally, we wrote our shopping list and went to a well-known high street budget supermarket and did the shopping and made a note of the costs. We spent £25.41 and we have food for up to two adults and two children for 5 days.

Here is our menu plan

For the dishes marked with * **there is a recipe in this pack**. Recipes for the other dishes can be found on our website.

Breakfasts

Muesli (oats) and Banana & Sultanas
Porridge with Summer Fruits
Breakfast Smoothie
Fruity Yoghurt Pots
Banana Pancakes

Light meals

*Spiced Lentil Soup & Toast
Pea and Mint Pancakes
Tangy Tomato Dhal and Flatbreads
*French Toast (Eggy Bread) savoury with cheese & herbs.
Ribbon Salad cucumber and carrot
Pea Soup with cheese and herb muffin

Main meals

*Creamy Cheesy Pasta
Mushroom & Spinach Lasagne
*Omelette Popovers & salad & dessert - bread and butter pudding
*Chilli Enchiladas
Speedy Chicken (or Chickpea) Biryani and Cucumber Raita
Instead of some of the above you might like to swap one or more with one of the dishes below. Depending on the combination of recipes you might need a few additional ingredients or store cupboard items.
Carrot & Coriander Soup
Traffic Light Rice
Chilli con Carne
Tomato Pasta
Cottage Pie
Mushroom Stroganoff
Mince Cobbler (savoury scone topping)
Egg & Mushroom Stir Fried Rice
*Bread and Butter Pudding
Fruit Crumble

In the store cupboard and fridge freezer we already have
500g plain flour, a bottle of soy sauce, a 400g can chickpeas
vegetable oil, cumin, paprika, mustard and cider vinegar
A bag of potatoes, 2 onions, a can of green lentils, a small can of sweetcorn
A tub of reduced fat sour cream
In the freezer we had a pack of wraps, frozen peas, a chunk of root ginger



	Cost
Fridge	
Milk semi skimmed 1 x 4 pint	£1.50
Greek style Natural yoghurt 1 x 1kg	£1.09
Cheddar cheese lighter mature 400g	£1.79
Olive oil spread 500g	£0.79
Cream cheese 200g	£0.59
Frozen	
4 seasons summer fruit x 500g	£1.39
Peas 900g	£0.55
Fresh	
Beef Mince 20% fat 500g	£1.49
Eggs x 12 large free range	£1.79
Fruit & veg	
Onions 1kg	£0.62
Garlic x 4 bulbs	£0.55
Peppers mixed bag of 5	£0.82
Carrots 1kg	£0.40
Mushrooms 260g chestnut	£0.75
Cucumber	£0.72
Bananas x 6	£0.99
Spring onions (pack)	£0.37
Green beans 200g	£0.99
Cherry tomatoes mixed 250g	£0.99
Baby leaf spinach 240g bag	£0.79
Pantry aisles	
Mixed herbs dried	£0.45
Easy cook long grain rice 1kg	£0.95
Tinned tomatoes 400g x 4	£1.00
Pasta penne 500g	£0.37
Flour Self- Raising 1.5kg	£0.45
Lentils red split 500g	£0.99
Chickpeas 400g tin	£0.45
Kidney beans 400g tin	£0.30
Porridge oats 1kg	£0.75
Lasagne sheets 500g	£0.39
Wraps	
Bread soft medium wholemeal	£0.49
Stock cubes	£0.35
Curry powder	£0.79
Total	£25.41

