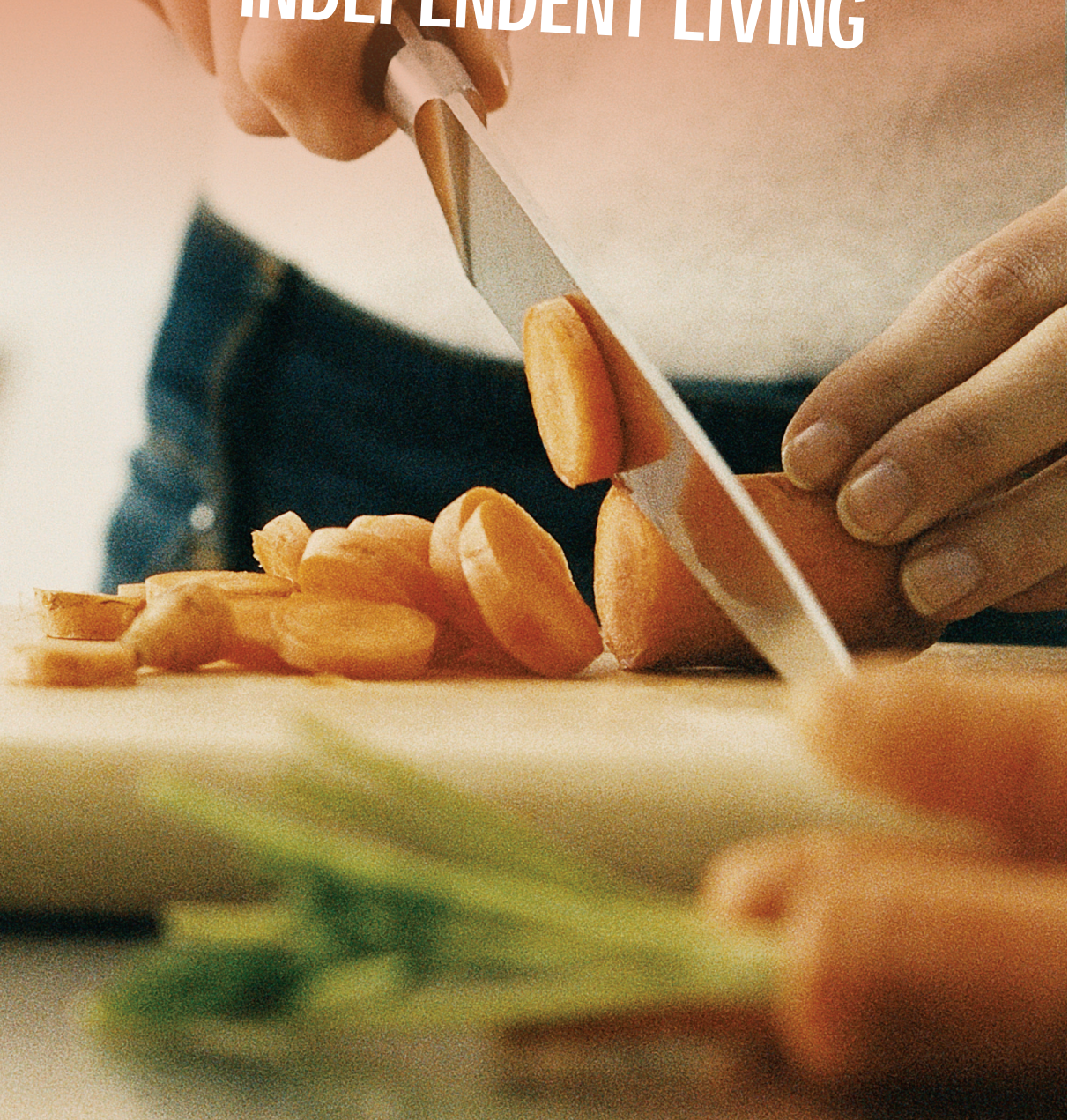


COOKING TOGETHER RECIPES

SKILLS FOR LIFE
INDEPENDENT LIVING



HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

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Introduction

This pack contains the recipes for the food that you have been preparing, cooking and eating throughout the Independent Living programme. These are yours to use and enjoy, safe in the knowledge that you have already tried and tested the recipes – so you know they work.

Apart from the three recipes for sweet treats at the end of the pack, all of the food shown is healthy and can be cooked on a budget. There is more information about healthy eating and a guide to portion sizes to help you make sure you have a better idea of how to maintain a balanced diet.

Also in the pack are answers for some of the more common questions that are asked as people learn to cook. Hopefully these will help you – but remember, everyone makes mistakes, the important part is to learn from them and gain skills until you can confidently cook for yourself and your friends / family.

Reasons to cook your own food

One of the first questions a lot of people ask is ‘why bother?’ especially considering how many ready meals and takeaway restaurants there are in Hertfordshire. Here are a few good reasons to cook your own -

1. It is usually cheaper to cook at home
2. You can cook food you like, the way that you like it
3. Meals prepared from scratch usually contain more nutrients and less calories than ready meals
4. Eating takeaway meals all the time can mean that you are not getting your 5 fruit and vegetables a day
5. Cooking your own gives you the opportunity to experiment with food and try out new things
6. Cooking can be relaxing
7. The sooner you learn to cook, the sooner you learn another really important life skill on the route to independence

Basic store cupboard

It is a good idea to gradually build up a store cupboard of tins and dry ingredients so that you always have something to fall back on and cooking a meal won't cost you a fortune.

Store cupboards are going to look different dependent on things like people's tastes, whether they are vegetarian or if they don't eat certain foods. However, basic food stuffs could include –

- ✓ Pasta
- ✓ Rice
- ✓ Noodles
- ✓ Couscous
- ✓ Tinned tomatoes
- ✓ Tinned sweet corn
- ✓ Tinned tuna
- ✓ Tin of kidney beans
- ✓ Salt and pepper
- ✓ Mixed herbs
- ✓ Jar of pesto sauce
- ✓ Sugar
- ✓ Flour
- ✓ Stock cubes
- ✓ Tomato puree
- ✓ Olive oil
- ✓ Vinegar

Portion control

Even if you want to eat healthily it can be hard to know how much you should cook, especially with things like rice and pasta. It's a good idea to try to get this balance right every day, but you don't need to do it at every meal. And you might find it easier to get the balance right over a longer period, say a week. Eating healthily is all about eating the right amount of food for you to stay fit and healthy.

This 'eatwell plate', designed by the Food Standards Agency (www.food.gov.uk), highlights the different types of food that make up a healthy diet, and shows the proportions required for a well-balanced and healthy meal. You may want to make a copy of this and stick it onto your fridge to remind you.

The eatwell plate

Use the eatwell plate to help you get the balance right. It shows how much of what you eat should come from each food group.



Common cooking questions answered

Q. How do I know when meat is cooked?

A. Although some meat, e.g. steak, can be served rare, many types need to be cooked thoroughly to reduce the risk of food poisoning. In particular it is important to always make sure that chicken is fully cooked before eating. One way to check that the meat is ready is to follow the timing instructions on the packet, and then when you think it is done gently stick a fork in to the thickest part of the meat. If the meat juices run clear then the meat is cooked, if blood still runs from it then it needs to go back in the oven.

Q. How long does it take to cook a jacket potato in the oven?

A. This does depend on the size of the potato. The bigger the potato, the longer it will need. But, my tip for baking a potato in the oven so that it is crispy on the outside and nice and fluffy on the inside is this - heat the oven to 180. Whilst it is heating wash the potato and prick a few times with a fork. Stick it in the oven for about an hour, then check to see if it is done. Using a heatproof glove, squeeze the potato – it should be soft, if not return to the oven for another 15 minutes.

Once it is done, cut across the potato and give it a squeeze to loosen the potato inside its skin. Add your favourite toppings and eat.

Q. What does 'al dente' mean in a pasta recipe?

A. Al dente means that the pasta (or rice or vegetables) has been cooked so it is still firm, rather than soft and floppy. The term 'al dente' comes from Italian and means 'to the tooth' or 'to the bite' referring to the need to chew the pasta due to its firmness.

Q. Can I re-freeze food that has been frozen if I don't eat it all?

A. Unless otherwise stated on the food label, food can only be frozen once. It is better to divide food into smaller portions and freeze separately to prevent waste. If frozen food becomes de-frosted then it will need to be cooked and eaten. De-frosted food should never be put back into the freezer to re-freeze.

Q. How do I make a quick seafood sauce?

A. The quickest (and cheapest) way to make a simple seafood or "Marie Rose" pink sauce is to mix one part tomato ketchup to three parts mayonnaise. You can adjust the recipe to taste.

Q. Which bit is the 'zest' of a lemon?

A. The zest is the yellow part of the skin, and is often used grated in recipes to give an extra lemon taste (see the lemon cheesecake recipe)

Q. Is it OK to wrap food in foil before putting in the microwave to cook or defrost?

A. NEVER put foil or anything metal in a microwave or you are likely to make it explode.
It is very dangerous.

Q. What is the difference between the 'use by date' and the 'sell by date'?

A. Use by dates are applied to foods that are perishable and may cause food poisoning if consumed after that date. It is a criminal offence to sell, or display food past its use by date.

Sell by dates are used as a stock control measure in shops and have no legal standing. The exception to this is eggs. It is an offence to sell eggs beyond their sell by date.

Q. Why is brown bread a healthier option than white?

A. Brown bread generally contains more whole grains than white because the flour used to make it has not been refined (meaning treated). Whole grains are important for health because they contain fibre. If you don't like brown bread but want a healthier option, choose a whole-grain white bread.

LET'S GET COOKING

RECIPES TO COOK AT HOME



Homemade pizza

This is a basic recipe for a simple margherita pizza. Different toppings including ham, onions, mushrooms and olives can be added to taste at stage 3.

Ingredients

300g strong bread flour
1 teaspoon instant yeast (from a sachet or a tub)
1 teaspoon salt
1 tablespoon olive oil, plus extra for drizzling
100ml passata
1 handful of fresh basil or 1 teaspoon dried
1 garlic clove, crushed
125g ball mozzarella, sliced
1 handful grated or shaved parmesan
1 handful cherry tomatoes, halved

Equipment needed

An oven, tea towel, a large bowl, chopping board, knife, garlic press, rolling pin, teaspoon, measuring jug, wooden spoon, weighing scales, grater, baking tray and a spoon.

Method

1. Put the flour into a large bowl and then stir in the yeast and salt. Make a well, pour in 200ml warm water and the olive oil and bring together with a wooden spoon until you have soft, fairly wet dough.
2. Turn onto a lightly floured surface and knead for 5 minutes until smooth. Cover with a tea towel and set aside.
3. Mix the passata, basil and crushed garlic together, then season to taste with salt and pepper. Leave to stand at room temperature until ready to use.
4. On a floured surface, roll out the dough into large rounds, about 25cm across, using a rolling pin. The dough needs to be rolled out thinly as it will rise in the oven. Lift the rounds onto floured baking sheets.
5. Heat oven to 240C/fan 220C /gas 8.
6. Smooth the sauce over the bases with the back of a spoon. Scatter with cheese and tomatoes, drizzle with olive oil and season.
7. Put one pizza, still on its baking sheet into the oven and bake for 8-10 minutes or until the dough is fully cooked and crisp.
8. Take out of the oven, cut into slices and serve with a little more olive oil, and basil leaves if available.
9. Repeat for the remaining pizza.

What else can I make using this method?

Roll out the dough a bit thicker, brush with oil and stud with rosemary sprigs, and then bake for 15 minutes or until risen and golden. To make garlic bread crush garlic into softened butter or margarine and brush this onto the dough before baking for 15 minutes.



Vegetable kebabs

Ingredients

- 1 x tablespoon of clear honey
- 1 x teaspoon of wholegrain mustard
- 2 x tablespoons of oil
- 1 x courgette
- 1 x small aubergine
- 1 x small red onion
- 8 x cherry tomatoes
- 1 x red pepper

Equipment needed

An oven, tablespoon and teaspoon, chopping board, knife, wooden skewers, a bowl and a pastry brush.

Method

1. Soak 4 wooden skewers in water for 30 minutes (this stops them burning.)
2. Heat the oven to 200C/180C fan/gas 6.
3. Chop the vegetables
4. Blend the honey, mustard and oil with seasoning.
5. To assemble, thread vegetables onto skewers and brush with the honey glaze.
6. Cook for 25-30 minutes in the oven, brushing with any remaining glaze before serving.

What else can I make using this method?

Serve the vegetables with instant couscous to make a more filling meal, or place the roasted vegetables in pitta bread and serve with feta cheese.



Chicken stir-fry

Ingredients

100g noodles
1 x chicken breast cut into thin strips
1 clove garlic
½ red chilli (optional)
1cm fresh ginger (or use ½ teaspoon of dried ginger)
½ red onion
3 mushrooms
½ yellow pepper
1 pak choi (or cabbage)
2 x teaspoons oil
2 x teaspoons soy sauce (reduced salt)

Equipment needed

Saucepan, 2 chopping boards (one for meat, one for vegetables), 2 knives, garlic press, teaspoon, wok, wooden spoon and a colander.

Method

1. Cook the noodles in boiling water. Check the packet for details.
2. While the noodles are cooking (remove the skin from the chicken for a low fat option) and cut into thin strips. Place in the fridge, covered, until needed.
3. Wash, then prepare the vegetables with a clean knife on a clean chopping board:
 - Peel and crush the garlic
 - De-seed and chop the chilli, taking care not to touch eyes or skin. Wash hands.
 - If you are using fresh ginger, peel and slice
 - Thinly shred the pak choi (or cabbage)
 - Slice mushrooms and onions
4. Heat the oil in the wok (or frying pan if you don't have a wok). Wait for it to get hot and then add the onion, garlic, chilli and ginger. Allow them to sizzle for 1 minute; moving the ingredients around to make sure it doesn't burn.
5. Add the chicken and stir-fry for 3 – 4 minutes. Check that the chicken is cooked.
6. Add the remaining vegetables and soy sauce and continue to cook for a further 2 minutes.
7. Drain the boiling hot water away from the noodles into a colander in the sink.
8. Stir in the cooked noodles and cook for 2 minutes until hot.
Serve and enjoy!

What else can I make using this method?

Using the same method, but leaving out the ginger, chilli, soy sauce and cabbage, you can make sizzling fajitas too. Simply add peppers to the chicken, along with the other ingredients, and fajita spice (which you can buy in the supermarket) and wrap the cooked food in tortillas to serve. You can also add grated cheese to make it more authentic. If you do not eat meat, then use an alternative source of protein, such as tofu instead of chicken.



Vegetarian savory rice

Ingredients

- 1 x onion
- 3 x mushrooms
- ½ red pepper
- 1 x tomato
- 1 x tablespoon oil
- 150g long grain rice
- 550ml water, boiling
- 1 x vegetable stock cube
- 50g peas
- 1 x teaspoon curry powder (add more if required)

Equipment

Chopping board, knife, saucepan, and a wooden spoon, weighing scales, measuring jug, teaspoon, tablespoon and a kettle.

Method

1. Prepare the vegetables:
 - Peel and chop the onion
 - Wipe clean then slice the mushrooms
 - Wash then dice the pepper
 - Wash then chop the tomato
2. Fry the onion in oil until soft.
3. Add the mushrooms and red pepper and cook for a further 2 minutes.
4. Stir in the rice.
5. Mix the stock cube with the boiling water.
6. Add the stock, peas and curry powder to the rice and vegetables.
7. Simmer for 15 minutes, until the rice is tender.
8. To serve place the rice in a bowl and sprinkle the chopped tomato on top.

What else can I make using this method?

This is a basic rice dish that can be adapted in lots of ways. You can leave out the tomato and add cooked chicken, ham or prawns to the pan during stage 7, or serve instead of pasta or potatoes. Alternatively, wait for the rice to cool, and use the mix to stuff peppers, which should then be baked in the oven until soft (about 15 minutes) or add tomatoes and serve cold as a rice salad.

Spaghetti bolognaise

There are loads of recipes for spaghetti bolognaise, and once you have tried this one a few times you will probably adjust it by adding things you like, e.g. mushrooms or peppers, or cutting ingredients out to make your own version. You can buy jars of sauce, which may look like a cheaper option at first, but to really make your money stretch it is better to make the bolognaise in bigger quantities and freeze some for later.

Ingredients

- 1 onion
- 1 clove garlic
- 1 carrot
- 1 celery stick
- 1 x tablespoon of oil
- 250g lean minced beef
- 1 can chopped tomatoes (400g)
- 1 x tablespoon tomato purée
- 100ml water
- 1 x teaspoon mixed herbs
- Black pepper
- Grated cheese / Parmesan (optional)
- 150g spaghetti or pasta shapes

Equipment needed

2 x chopping boards (one for meat, one for vegetables), knife, garlic press, peeler, teaspoon and tablespoon, 2 saucepans, measuring jug, wooden spoon and a colander.

Method

1. Prepare the vegetables:
 - Peel and chop the onion
 - Peel and chop the carrot
 - Crush the garlic
 - Wash then chop the celery stick
2. Fry the onion, garlic and carrot and celery in the oil.
3. Add the meat and cook until the mince is lightly browned, breaking up any lumps with the wooden spoon as you go along.
4. Add the tomatoes, tomato purée, mixed herbs and water and mix all the ingredients together. Then add a few sprinkles of black pepper.
5. Bring to the boil and then simmer for 20 minutes. If at any time it looks a bit dry, add a few tablespoons of water from the pasta saucepan.
6. Meanwhile place the spaghetti in a separate saucepan of boiling water. Cook for 10 – 12 minutes or until the spaghetti is tender but not sloppy.
7. Drain the boiling water away from the spaghetti into a colander in the sink.
8. To serve, plate up a portion of spaghetti and then pour some of the bolognaise sauce over it.
9. Add grated cheese or parmesan to taste

What else can I make using this recipe?

If you buy a large pack of minced beef it is easy to make chilli or the filling for a shepherds pie / cottage pie with one half and bolognaise with the other. For chilli, follow the recipe up to step 2, adding strips of green pepper and add chilli powder, flakes or a de-seeded red or green chilli to taste (remember you can always add more). Carry on with the recipe to step 4, and at this point add a small, drained can of kidney beans along with the tomatoes etc. Cook as the recipe instructs and then serve with rice or garlic bread.

To make the filling for a shepherd's pie, follow the recipe up to stage 2, adding a sliced carrot along with the other vegetables to fry. Once you have browned the mince and get to stage 4, add a beef stock cube made up with boiling water as instructed on the packet. Add the mixed herbs and season with salt and pepper and cook as explained in stage 6. You can freeze it at this stage to use later.

Alternatively, to make into shepherds pie straight away, boil and mash potato with a little milk and low-fat spread. Drain the mince over a saucepan, so that you keep the stock and cooking juices for making gravy later. Place the drained mince into an oven proof dish and top with the mashed potato. It can then be cooked in the oven at 180 for 30-40 minutes. It is ready when it is piping hot all the way through and the potato is nicely browned.

To make the gravy, add a little cornflour mixed with water (directions will be on the packet) to the cool stock. Re-heat the stock, stirring to mix in the cornflour. This is a thickening agent, so as you stir you will see the liquid starting to thicken and look more like gravy.

Serve the shepherds pie with plenty of gravy and a vegetable of your choice.



Penne with tomato sauce

This is a great sauce to make when there are loads of tomatoes on offer in the supermarket as it can be made and frozen in batches. You can use any pasta you choose, but I have chosen penne as the sauce clings well to the pasta .

Ingredients

1 onion
1 clove garlic
1 carrot
1 celery stick
1 x tablespoon of oil
1 can chopped tomatoes (400g)
1 x tablespoon tomato purée
100ml water
Fresh basil (or dried if that's what you have)
Black pepper
Grated cheese / Parmesan (optional)
150g pasta shapes

Equipment needed

One chopping board, knife, garlic press, peeler, teaspoon and tablespoon, 2 saucepans, measuring jug, wooden spoon and a colander.

Method

1. Prepare the vegetables:
 - Peel and chop the onion
 - Peel and dice the carrot
 - Crush the garlic
 - Wash and dice the celery
2. Fry the onion, garlic, carrot and celery in the oil. Take care not to burn the garlic, as it will make the taste of the sauce bitter.
3. Add the tomatoes, tomato purée and water and mix all the ingredients together. Then if you are using dried basil add this along with salt and black pepper.
4. Bring to the boil and then simmer for 20 minutes. If at any time it looks a bit dry, add a few tablespoons of water from the pasta saucepan.
5. Meanwhile place the penne in a separate saucepan of boiling water. Cook for 10 – 12 minutes or use the timings on the packet.
6. Just before the penne is ready, chop and add the fresh basil, stirring it through so it begins to wilt.
7. Drain the boiling water away from the penne into a colander in the sink then place back in the pan.
8. Pour the sauce onto the drained pasta in the pan and stir through so that all of the pasta is coated in sauce.
9. Serve; then add grated cheese or Parmesan to taste.



What else can I make using this recipe?

This is a basic tomato sauce recipe that can be eaten with pasta or rice, either hot as above or as a cold salad. You can also use it as a sauce for meat or fish.

Chicken curry

Ingredients

- 2 x chicken breasts
- 2 x chicken stock cubes
- 2 x 400g tins of chopped tomatoes
- 3 x tablespoons of chicken tikka curry paste
- 3 x tablespoons of mango chutney
- 2 x cloves of garlic
- ½ x teaspoon chilli flakes (add more for a hotter curry)
- 2 x teaspoons of dried coriander
- 150ml water
- 1 x large onion

Equipment needed

2 chopping boards, 2 x knives (one for meat, one for the vegetables), garlic press, teaspoon and tablespoon, a large frying pan, measuring jug and a wooden spoon.

Method

1. Prepare the vegetables:
 - Peel and chop the onion.
 - Peel and crush the garlic.
2. In a large frying pan heat the olive oil.
3. Chop the chicken and then place in the hot oil and brown, turning it to prevent it burning.
4. Add the onions and cook for a further 5 minutes until the onions are brown too.
5. Stir in the curry paste and garlic.
6. Add the tomatoes and stock and simmer for 15 minutes.
7. Dissolve the stock cubes in boiling water and add.
8. If the curry gets too thick, add more water to thin the sauce.
9. Add coriander leaf and chilli flakes to taste.
10. Serve with rice or garlic bread.

What else can I make using this method?

To make a vegetarian version of this leave out the chicken and add a selection of vegetables, or left over cooked potatoes. Alternatively use prawns to make a simple fish curry.



Three bean chilli

Ingredients

1 x green pepper
1 x onion
2 x garlic cloves
½ x tablespoon olive oil
1 small tin kidney beans, rinsed and drained
1 small tin black eyed peas, rinsed and drained
1 small tin chickpeas, rinsed and drained
400g tin of chopped tomatoes
2 x tablespoons of tomato puree
½ x tablespoon chilli powder
1 x teaspoon sugar
1 x teaspoon of dried basil
100ml water

Equipment needed

One chopping board, knife, garlic press, teaspoon and tablespoon, a large saucepan, measuring jug and a wooden spoon.

Method

1. Prepare the vegetables:
 - Peel and chop the onion.
 - Peel and crush the garlic.
 - Wash and chop the green pepper.
2. In a large pot heat the olive oil.
3. Add the green pepper, onion and garlic.
4. Cook, continuously stirring, until the pepper, onion, and garlic are soft.
5. Open the tinned beans and add to the rest of the ingredients.
6. Cover and cook on medium-high for about 10 minutes until the mixture just begins to bubble, stirring occasionally.
7. Check the food is cooked through by tasting with a clean spoon.
8. Serve with salad or garlic bread.

What else can I make using this method?

The chilli beans can be served with rice or pasta too.



Homemade burgers

Ingredients

700g minced beef
1 teaspoon French mustard
½ onion
1 clove of garlic
1 x tablespoon flat leaf parsley
1 x egg
Fresh chilli (optional)
Olive oil
Salt and pepper

Equipment needed

A BBQ or grill, pastry brush, garlic press, 2 x chopping boards (one for meat, one for vegetables), plate, wooden spoon, BBQ tongs, oven glove, knife, kitchen roll, cling film / foil and a large mixing bowl.

Method

1. Peel and finely dice the onion.
2. Wash, dry on the kitchen roll and then finely chop the parsley.
3. Peel and crush the garlic.
4. De-seed and finely chop the chilli (optional)
5. Put the meat into a large mixing bowl, using the wooden spoon to break it up so there are not big lumps of mince.
6. Add all of the chopped ingredients and mix well together.
7. Add the mustard and keep stirring.
8. Make a well in the meat mix and then break the egg into it, before mixing well. Use clean, gloved hands to do this bit if you prefer. This will 'bind' the meat together and stop the burger falling apart when you cook it.
9. Once all the ingredients are well mixed, season with salt and pepper and mix again.
10. Shape the meat into burgers – you should get four from this mix.
11. Using the pastry brush lightly brush the burgers on both sides with olive oil and then grill or BBQ to cook.
12. The burgers are ready to eat once the meat is cooked through and the juices run clear.
13. Serve in a burger bun with cheese and salad ingredients of your choice.

What else can I make using this method?

If you don't like beef try making burgers using minced lamb, pork or turkey. With lamb try adding rosemary instead of the parsley, sage works well with pork and oregano with turkey. Experiment by adding a rasher of grilled bacon, sliced mushroom or melt different cheeses over the burger to make your perfect burger. For a healthy option ditch the burger bun and any cheese and serve with a fresh salad.



Coleslaw

Ingredients

½ x white cabbage
½ teaspoon French mustard
½ x onion
2 x carrots
2 x tablespoon mayonnaise
6 x tablespoon plain yoghurt
Salt and pepper

Equipment needed

A chopping board, a serving bowl, wooden spoon, vegetable peeler, vegetable knife and cling film / foil and a grater.

Method

1. Mix the yogurt, mustard and mayonnaise together in a bowl.
2. Grate the cabbage and carrots once peeled.
3. Either grate the onion or chop it finely.
4. Tip all of the vegetables into the bowl and stir through the dressing.
5. Cover with cling film / foil and put in fridge, keep in the fridge until served.

Potato salad

Ingredients

6 x large potatoes or a small bag of new potatoes
Lemon juice
6 x spring onions
6 x tablespoon mayonnaise
2 x tablespoon plain yoghurt
Salt and pepper

Equipment needed

A chopping board, a serving bowl, wooden spoon, vegetable peeler, vegetable knife and cling film / foil and a saucepan.

Method

1. If using new potatoes, cut any larger ones in half. If using any other potatoes, cut into bite sized pieces.
2. Boil the potatoes until cooked and allow them to cool. If using new potatoes there is no need to peel.
3. Chop spring onions into small pieces and add to the potatoes in a large bowl.
4. Squeeze a little lemon juice over the potatoes and spring onions.
5. Add the mayonnaise, season with salt and pepper and mix well.
6. Cover with cling film / foil, keep in the fridge until served.



Vanilla cupcakes

Using the same recipe leave out the vanilla extract and add cocoa powder to make chocolate cup cakes.

Ingredients

110g butter or margarine (softened to room temperature)
110g caster sugar
2 eggs (lightly beaten together)
1 x teaspoon vanilla extract
110g self-raising flour

For the frosting

140g of butter
280g icing sugar
1-2 tablespoons of milk
A few drops of food colouring (optional)
Small sweets to decorate (optional)

Equipment needed

Teaspoon, tablespoon, wooden spoon, bowl, weighing scales, large metal spoon, sharp knife, cake cases, 12 hole muffin or bun tin, electric whisk (optional), wire tray, icing piping bag (optional) and a oven.

Method

1. Preheat the oven to 180C/350F/Gas 4 and line a 12-hole muffin tin with paper cake cases.
2. Either by hand or using the electric whisk, cream the butter and sugar together in a bowl until pale. Beat in the eggs a little at a time and stir in the vanilla extract.
3. Fold in the flour using a large metal spoon, adding a little milk until the mixture is of a dropping consistency. This means that if you take a spoonful out of the bowl and hold it over the bowl it should easily drop off the spoon, but isn't too runny or thick.
4. Spoon the mixture into the paper cases until they are half full.
5. Bake in the oven for 10-15 minutes, or until golden-brown on top or a sharp knife inserted into one of the cakes comes out clean. Set aside to cool for 10 minutes, then remove from the tin and cool on a wire rack. If you do not have a wire tray use the wire sheet from the grilling pan of your oven.
6. For the frosting, beat the butter in a large bowl until soft. Add half the icing sugar and beat until smooth.
7. Then add the remaining icing sugar with one tablespoon of the milk, adding more milk if necessary, until the mixture is smooth and creamy.
8. Add a couple of drops of the food colouring and mix until well combined.
9. Spoon the icing into a piping bag with a star nozzle and pipe the icing using a spiralling motion onto the cup cakes in a large swirl. If you don't have a piping bag, use a teaspoon and smooth over the cake with the back of the spoon.



Lemon cheesecake

The secret to the success of this cheesecake is allowing enough time for the ingredients to set, so don't be tempted to cut chilling time as it is likely to collapse.

Ingredients

10 x digestive biscuits
75g butter or margarine
1 x tablespoon of clear honey
700g soft cheese
2 x lemons (zest and juice)
200g castor sugar (granulated will work but it makes the topping a bit grainy)

Equipment needed

Saucepan, tablespoon, wooden spoon, 2 x bowls, fork, 23cm/9" loose bottom cake tin, rolling pin, spoon and weighing scales.

Method

1. Melt the butter and honey together, stirring with a wooden spoon to stop them burning.
2. Use a tiny bit of butter to grease the cake tin to stop the cheesecake sticking later
3. Crush the biscuits by placing in a plastic bag and bashing with a rolling pin, taking care to keep the bag closed.
4. Mix the crushed biscuits with the melted honey and butter.
5. Press the mixture into the base of the cake tin, spreading it out by using the back of a spoon. Put in the fridge to chill.
6. Mix the soft cheese, lemon juice, lemon zest and castor sugar in a bowl using a fork to break up cheese, then stirring until well combined.
7. Spoon the mixture into the cake tin on top of the chilled biscuits and chill in the fridge for at least 2 hours.
8. When set, gently remove the cheesecake from the cake tin
9. Cut into portions and serve



Simple banoffee pie

This is another sweet treat that needs no cooking.

Ingredients

250g digestive biscuits, crushed
100g butter, melted
397g tin of ready-made caramel
4 x small bananas
300ml carton whipping cream
Grated chocolate (optional)

Equipment needed

Saucepan, electric whisk (or hand whisk), tablespoon, knife, wooden spoon, bowl, 23cm/9" loose bottomed cake tin, weighing scales and a rolling pin.

Method

1. Melt the butter, stirring with a wooden spoon to stop it burning.
2. Use a tiny bit of the melted butter to grease the cake tin to stop the banoffee pie sticking later.
3. Crush the biscuits by placing in a plastic bag and bashing with a rolling pin, taking care to keep the bag closed.
4. Mix the crushed biscuits with the melted butter.
5. Press the mixture into the base of the cake tin, spreading it out by using the back of a spoon.
6. Put in the fridge to chill.
7. When chilled, spread the tin of caramel evenly over the base.
8. Peel and thinly slice the bananas and arrange them over the layer of caramel.
9. Whip the cream and smooth over the bananas.
10. Decorate by grating chocolate over the cream.
11. Chill for at least one hour.
12. Gently tap the cake tin and remove the banoffee pie by sliding the base free, before putting on a plate.
13. Slice and serve.



Apple crumble

Ingredients

4 x cooking apples, peeled, cored and diced
250g caster sugar
200g plain flour
120g butter
1 x clove or cinnamon stick

Equipment needed

An oven, saucepan, oven proof dish, wooden spoon, chopping board, knife a bowl and weighing scales.

Method

1. Peel, core and dice the apples.
2. Put the apple chunks into a pan and add three quarters of the sugar, the cinnamon stick or clove and cover. Stew gently for half an hour, stirring occasionally with a wooden spoon to stop the apples burning.
3. Take out the clove.
4. Check that the fruit is cooked by mashing it a bit with a wooden spoon. The apples should be soft but not puréed.
5. Put the apples into an oven proof serving dish and allow to cool.
6. Set the temperature of the oven to 150 C / gas 2.
7. Mix the flour, remaining sugar and the butter with your fingers in a bowl until it becomes like a breadcrumb consistency. Cover the stewed apples with the crumble topping, without pressing down.
8. Bake for 30 minutes or until the crumble is golden brown and crunchy. Spoon a helping of crumble into a dish and serve with cream, custard or ice cream.

