

Eat well on a tight budget

To ensure we all have access to food that is affordable & healthy our food system, along side social and economic factors, need to change. Whilst the change happens there are steps you can take to help ensure healthy eating on a budget. Seeds of all sorts can be sprouted vastly improving the nutrition. Seasonal vegetables and potential waste trimmings can be fermented into foods and drinks that support a healthy gut and robust immune system and you can wild gather super healthy plants like nettles, wild garlic and blackberries for free. The following tips and recipes can help steer you towards achieving a healthier diet within a tight food budget.

12 tips for thrifty cooking

Eat seasonal

Fruit & vegetables are cheaper when in season. It's fresher, healthier - better for you and the planet. Check out the UK food season at eattheseasons.co.uk
Learn how to make good use of seasonal abundance.

Keep essentials well stocked

Keep your store cupboard stocked with essentials; it makes it easy to cook a budget friendly supper. Versatile ingredients to have on hand include tinned tomatoes, tinned pulses, whole wheat pasta, brown rice, cous cous, potatoes, stock cubes, soy sauce, herbs & spices. Store frozen peas & sweetcorn in the deepfreeze.

Think oven efficiency

When you use the oven make sure you fill it up. If you are cooking a tray bake, roast a tray of vegetables at the same time to add to meal the next day. Turn the oven off 10 minutes before your dish is cooked. The residual heat will be enough to finish the dish.

Eat less meat (or cut out meat)

If you decide to include meat in your diet organic is essential for you and the planet. High animal welfare is integral to organic farming systems. Organic meat has greater nutritional benefits and no antibiotics, synthetic growth hormones, GMO's or pesticides to compromise the immune system.

Eat more legumes

Beans, peas and lentils are all legumes. They are affordable, super-versatile and a source of protein and fibre. You can buy them in tins or dried. Make sure you soak dried lentils, beans and peas overnight before using. Sprouting makes them even more nutritious.

Love your leftovers

Turn supper leftovers into a simple lunch of frittata, soup or salad. Vegetables can be added to a buckwheat, rice or pasta dish for supper the next day. Left over lentils or beans can be blitzed, mixed with flour and turned into flatbreads.

Learn to preserve

Preserving food is a fantastic way to stretch your budget, help the environment and live a healthier life all at the same time. A well-stocked larder will ensure that you have something to eat, despite the absence of a fair and resilient food system.

Batch cook

If you can, set aside time to batch cook. It saves time, energy and waste. It's very easy to make a big batch of soup or stew. Store some in the fridge to use over a couple of days and freeze the rest in manageable serving sizes. When you are super busy at work & with family, it's great to know you have something prepared for supper.

Plan meals

It is worth planning your meals for a whole week. Try and connect your meals throughout the week, how you can use the same ingredients more than once and how leftovers can be turned into a new meal. Make a comprehensive shopping list. Most supermarkets have on line delivery.

Avoid ultra processed foods

Avoid buying ultra processed foods like mass produced breads, cakes and biscuits, processed meat products, soda drinks and ready meals. Made through industrial processes with a whole range of modified ingredients they lack nutritional value.

Forage and glean

Foraged nettles, wild garlic, mushrooms, mallow, ground elder, blackberries, nuts and rose-hips all aid your wellbeing, and boost the health of body and mind. Gleaning salvages surplus food left on farms after harvest. Find out more <https://gleaning.feedbackglobal.org>

Grow your own

Growing your own vegetables and fruit is a fantastic way to save money and the gentle exercise is good for your health. If you don't have a garden you could go for an allotment and if the thought of that is too onerous you could share an allotment with friends.

A cheaper way to cook

There are ways of preparing and cooking food that can significantly cut your energy bills
Slow cookers use less energy than conventional cookers & Wonderbags use no energy at all!

Energy efficient cooking

Wonderbag is a brilliant non-electric, portable slow cooker.
It continues to cook food (which has been brought to a boil by conventional methods) for up to 8 hours without the use of additional energy.

Chickpeas after a 15 minute boil take 4-5 hours,
lentils after a 10minute boil take 1-2 hours
Wonderbags come in 2 sizes and you can find out more at
<https://www.wonderbagworld.com>

Slow cookers are an energy efficient way to cook with many different designs and functions to choose from.

You can buy online or in shop from
<https://www.nisbets.co.uk> or <https://www.argos.co.uk>

Sprouted seeds

Sprouting seeds use no energy and they are very simple to grow. All edible grains, seeds (with the exception of the deadly nightshade family – tomatoes, aubergine, potatoes and peppers) and legumes (with the exception of kidney beans) can be sprouted.

By sprouting seeds, nutrients, including amino acids (the building blocks of proteins), sugars in the form of glucose, and vitamins and minerals become more available and absorbable. Sprouting can increase beta carotene, vitamin C & vitamin B content significantly.

Including sprouts in your diet helps increase the nutritional value of your food. They can be eaten raw or cooked. Sprouting before cooking reduces cooking time.

How to sprout

All you need are seeds, water, a jar and some fine net, alternatively you can buy sprouting jars with a mesh top but it's not necessary.

Pop a couple of tablespoons of seeds into the sprouting jar and cover generously with filtered water. Fasten a piece of net over the top or screw on a mesh filter lid. Soak overnight (only soak buckwheat for 1 hour). Pour off the soak water and rinse well through the net or mesh. Prop the jar at an angle to drain. Rinse the sprouts morning and evening. Keep moist at room temperature until the desired sprout length. Once the sprouts are ready, rinse in a colander, wash thoroughly, drain, put in a bowl, cover and store in the fridge.

Recipes

Sprouted mung bean kitchari

serves 4-6

200g brown basmati
300g mung beans - sprouted
2 tablespoons olive oil
2 red onions diced
2 cloves garlic finely diced
1 carrot sliced
2 sticks celery sliced
1 level dessertspoon each turmeric, cumin and coriander
1 dessertspoon grated fresh ginger
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1 teaspoon ground cardamom
juice of 1 lemon
sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

Cook the onions and garlic in the olive oil until soft, add the carrot and celery and cook for a further 2 minutes. Add all the spices, mix well then add the rice & sprouted mung beans, stir until all of the ingredients and spices are combined. Add 500ml water. Bring to a boil, then allow to simmer for 30 minutes. Adding more water as needed. When ready stir in the lemon juice and season well with salt & pepper and serve as is or top with either coriander, chilli sauce or yogurt.

Sprouted seed salad

serves 2

1 handful sprouted green lentils
1 handful sprouted mung beans
1 small handful sprouted broccoli
1 yellow pepper diced
1 red pepper diced
1 clove garlic crushed
2 teaspoons grated fresh ginger
splash of tamari soy sauce
2 tablespoons olive oil

In a bowl combine the sprouts and the peppers. Whisk the remaining ingredients together, pour over the sprouts and peppers and gently toss together. Delicious piled on top of jacket potato or serve as a side salad.

Nettle soup

serves 4

400 g nettle tops
200 g potatoes peeled if necessary & roughly chopped (you could also use sweet potatoes)
750ml well flavoured vegetable stock
salt & pepper

Plunge the nettle tops into 500ml boiling water for 30 seconds, drain reserving the water for cooking the potatoes. Refresh the nettles in cold water. Set aside.

Put the potatoes, stock and reserved nettle water into a pan, bring to the boil, then reduce the heat and simmer until the potatoes are tender. Remove from the heat, cool slightly, add the nettle tops to the pan, then process to a purée in a food processor. Return to the pan and gently bring back to the boil. Season as necessary with salt and pepper. Ladle into bowls and top with a dollop of hemp cream.

Potato colcannon gratin

serves 4/6

1 kilo potatoes
small head of spring cabbage
4 spring onions, chopped finely
4 cloves garlic, chopped finely
bunch parsley roughly chopped
8 sage leaves shredded
2 tablespoons olive oil
2 tablespoons butter
salt & pepper
200ml oat milk
extra olive oil

Scrub potatoes and boil until tender. Chop the cabbage and steam until tender. Cook the onion and garlic in the olive oil for a few minutes. Toss in the cabbage then remove from heat. Remove the skin if you prefer or mash the potatoes with their skin. Heat milk and butter and beat into mash with cabbage mixture, season well. Put into oven proof dish, sprinkle oil over top and bake 15 minutes. Serve as is or with pesto, chutney or kimchi & a salad.

Waste not kimchi

Almost any vegetable can be fermented. The following recipe works best with root vegetables, it is a simple technique to ensure all your vegetables are used up and never wasted.

Beets, sweet potatoes, turnip, carrots, peppers, turnips, kohlrabi, swede, pumpkin, parsnip whatever needs using up!

spices & herbs to use for each 500g of vegetables.

2 tablespoons grated ginger, 4 cloves garlic, chopped, 1 tablespoon chilli flakes,
2 tablespoons chopped chives, 2 tablespoons chopped parsley

Grate the vegetables. Add a scant tablespoon salt (10g) for every 500g of vegetables.

Massage well together to pull the juices out of the vegetables.

Mix in the spices & herbs. Pack into a wide neck jar like a Kilner. Press down well to ensure the vegetables are covered with brine adding a little water if necessary.

Weigh down to keep the vegetables submerged. Cover with a cloth. Ferment in a warm place away from direct sunlight for 7 days.

Fasten lid & store in a cool dry place or refrigerate. Unopened will last for at least 6 months.

Shakshuka

In late summer when there are an abundance of tomatoes and peppers, prepare a bulk batch of sauce and freeze in serving size containers to use in the winter.

serves 4

2 tablespoons olive oil
2 red onions diced
1 red pepper, deseeded and diced
1 green pepper, deseeded and diced
1 yellow pepper, deseeded and diced
2 garlic cloves, peeled and finely diced
1 red chilli, deseeded and finely diced
1 tsp ground cumin
6 ripe tomatoes, roughly chopped (used tinned or your own preserved tomatoes in the winter)
4 eggs
salt and black pepper

Heat oil in a medium frying pan. Add the onion and peppers and cook over a medium to high heat for 5 minutes until soft. Stir in the garlic, chilli and cumin and cook for a minute.

Add the tomatoes and 100ml of water and bring to the boil. Simmer gently until the tomatoes are broken down and the sauce is thick - taste and season.

Using the back of a large spoon, make 4 dips in the sauce, then crack an egg into each one. When the whites turn white cover the pan with a lid and over a low heat finish cooking the eggs to your liking.

Potato & spinach frittata

serves 4

1 large cooked potato diced
350g spinach stems removed and finely shredded
2 cloves garlic crushed
1 oz parmesan cheese grated
1 teaspoon chopped rosemary
salt and pepper
6 eggs
1 tablespoon olive oil
25g butter.
oven 180 C

Wilt the spinach in the olive oil. Stir in the crushed garlic, rosemary and season well. Put into a bowl with the potato and cheese. Beat the eggs and stir into the spinach and potato mixture. Melt the butter in a sauté pan and when foaming pour in the egg mixture. Cook over a low heat for a couple of minutes or until the sides begin to set. Transfer to the oven and cook for 10 – 12 minutes or until set and golden. Leftovers are a good addition to a lunchbox.

Chana masala

serves 4

400g tin chickpeas
3 tablespoons olive oil
2 bay leaves
1 onion roughly chopped
1 tomato roughly chopped
1 inch piece fresh ginger, peeled & grated
4 cloves garlic, chopped
1 inch piece fresh turmeric, peeled & grated
1 green chilli pepper, chopped
1 teaspoon ground chilli
1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
1 teaspoon garam masala
pinch salt
handful of fresh coriander roughly chopped (or use flat leaf parsley)

Pulse the onion, tomato, ginger, garlic, turmeric and chilli pepper together in a food processor into a paste. Gently warm the bay leaves in the olive oil until fragrant. Add the paste and cook for 2-3 minutes.

Add the ground chilli, cumin & gram masala. Season with a pinch of salt; tip in the chickpeas and enough water so the mixture makes a sauce that coats the chickpeas. Cook until the chickpeas are heated through. Stir in the fresh coriander (parsley) and serve. Serving suggestion - serve with rice or flatbread and a green vegetable.

Potato & pea curry

serves 4

2 onions chopped
2 tbsp olive oil
3 cloves garlic chopped
1 tsp chilli flakes
1 tsp ground cumin
1 tsp curry powder
400g tin chopped tomatoes
4 medium sized potatoes, scrubbed and diced
300g frozen peas
salt & black pepper

In a large pan gently cook the onion in the olive for 5 minutes. Add the garlic. Cook for a further 2 minutes. Add the spices and stir well. Add the tomatoes and 300ml water and cook for 10 minutes over a low heat.

Add the potatoes and enough water to just cover the potatoes. Cook over a gentle heat until tender. Add the peas and cook for a further 5 minutes.

Serving suggestion - serve with flatbread

Veggie chilli

serves 4/6

olive oil
2 onions chopped
2 cloves garlic
2 red peppers
2 chilli
1 level teaspoon cayenne pepper
1 heaped teaspoon ground cumin
1 level teaspoon ground cinnamon
2 x 400g tins of kidney or cannellini beans
2 x 400g tins of chopped tomatoes
400g mushrooms - roughly chopped
1 bunch of fresh coriander
squeeze of lime
salt & pepper

Peel and roughly chop the onion. Halve, deseed and roughly chop the peppers, then peel and finely slice the garlic. Cook in 2 tablespoons olive oil for 5 minutes stirring regularly.

Deseed and finely chop the chillies add to the vegetables along with the spices, cook for a further 5 minutes. Add the beans including the juice. Tip in the tomatoes and bring to the boil, reduce the heat and gently cook for 20 minutes, keeping a watch on it until nice and thick.

Whilst the sauce gently simmers, cook the mushrooms in olive oil until golden. You may have to do this in 2 batches. Season the mushrooms toss well and add to the sauce. Cook for a further 10 minutes adding a little extra liquid (water, red wine, stock) as necessary.

Roughly chop the coriander and add to the pan. Taste and if needed season. Finish with a squeeze of lime and serve with rice, flatbreads or tortilla chips. Also good with yogurt or avocado.

Lentil flatbread

use the same recipe for any left over blitzed legume.

250g leftover lentil dahl

250g spelt flour

1/2 tsp chilli flakes

handful of chopped herbs -coriander, parsley, chives olive oil pinch of salt & twist of black pepper

Put the lentils in a bowl. Add the flour, chilli, herbs, 1 tablespoon olive oil, salt & pepper and mix with enough water to make a dough that holds together. Knead for a minute to create a smooth dough and then leave to rest, covered, for 15 minutes.

Divide dough into 6 and shape each into a ball. Dust your table and the balls with flour. Roll each ball into a 6" circle.

Brush a frying pan lightly with oil; gently heat, then place a flat bread in the pan pressing down well. Cook for 1 minute, then flip over. Brush the surface of the flatbread with oil, flip again and brush the upper side with oil. Slide onto a plate and repeat with the remaining flatbreads.

Blackberry & cacao muffins

260g white spelt flour

3 teaspoons baking powder

pinch of salt

1 tablespoon raw cacao powder

80g rapadura sugar

120ml olive oil

180ml milk

handful blackberries

oven 200°C 400°F gas6

Muffin tin lined with 8 medium or 6 large muffin cases

Sift the flour, baking powder and cacao into a bowl. Add the salt and sugar.

Mix together the milk and oil and add to the dry ingredients gently mix together. Do not over mix lumpy is ok. Add the blackberries. Divide between muffin cases and bake until risen and golden.

buy organic food whenever you can
eat seasonally
source your food as locally as possible
join a box scheme
grow your own (garden, allotment or
community garden)
support food & farming campaigning
organisations

Greencuisine Trust works to bring about a transformation in the way we eat. Through practical food experiences the Trust highlights the connections between our well-being, natural resources, the environment, and our planet.



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