

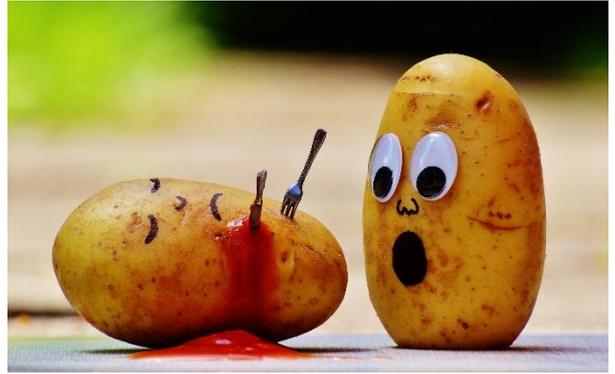
How to Cook on a Student Budget

Top Tips to Get Started

- Plan your meals in advance:
 - o Are you only going to be cooking three nights this week? Great, plan for them. How much time will you have to cook? Look for recipes that will suit that timeframe.
 - o Make an actual written meal plan, that will help you write a shopping list
 - o Cook at least one meal a week that will provide you with enough for an extra meal. That way, you have a ready made meal for when you have less time. Freeze if you are not going to eat it within two days.
 - o Don't forget lunches... Plan to use up your leftover ingredients for lunch. This is a big money saver, and it's so much nicer to have a lovely home-made lunch to look forward to! Healthier too, usually!
- Shopping
 - o Buy only what you need for your meals, but make sure you remember to get some snacks in for the week too, to avoid impulse buys when you get cravings!
 - o Supermarkets would have you believe that they have the cheapest prices on everything – but check out some of the local shops, farmers markets and so on to see how the prices compare, it's not always the case.
 - o When certain foods are in season, it's much cheaper (and the carbon footprint is much lower!) to buy locally farmed produce. You can find information online about what is in season and when, specifically for Scotland. Or pop into your local greengrocers/butchers and ask!
 - o We all know that meat and dairy have a much higher carbon footprint when compared with vegetables or other plant-based foods, and they're also much more expensive! Why not try incorporating #meatfreemondays into your diet, or using meat/dairy as a treat once or twice a week? There are plenty of lower carbon, cheaper options out there such as Tofu, Quorn or...
 - o Pulses and legumes such as lentils, beans, chickpeas are great alternatives to meat, much cheaper and just as high in protein, which helps you feel fuller after each meal. They are also great store-cupboard ingredients, keep spare tins or packets of dried ingredients in the cupboard!
- Cut down on waste
 - o If you plan your meals correctly you will have very little waste
 - o Cannot stress enough how handy it is to freeze stuff - you can freeze much more than you think, in fact almost anything!
 - o Most people think they don't waste all that much food, but if you keep a food waste diary you might see it is higher than you think! Check out Zero Waste Scotland for a guide how to do this.

Why waste less?

- Throwing good food away costs the average person in Scotland around £200 a year
- There is enough edible food wasted to make another 800 million meals, in Scotland alone!
- Food waste is a huge problem world wide. Saving food from going to waste saves money and helps to slow down global warming and deforestation. Reducing the amount of food that ends up in the bin also means you use up less unnecessary packaging. If we all make a few small changes and start using up all the food we buy, together we can make a big difference!!



Top Money-saving dishes!

Soup – budget cooking wouldn't be complete without talking about soup... soups are a great way of using up left-over veggies or other foods in the fridge. You can put almost anything in and it's guaranteed to be tasty! All you need is some vegetables, some stock cubes (or bouillon powder) and water, it can be very cheap but really nutritious. Why not try adding some lentils, beans, noodles or potatoes for a different texture and flavour?



Stew/Casserole – Again really easy and great for using up whatever needs used in the fridge. You can use any kind of vegetables, some meat if you like, chickpeas or other legumes... chuck in a tin of chopped tomatoes and some herbs, grab some crusty bread and you've got a very hearty meal (and probably leftovers for tomorrow, or to freeze for another day!).

Fried rice/noodles – Another way to use up leftover veggies, fry them up in a pan and add some cooked rice or noodles along with some soy sauce and garlic, or whatever flavouring you like! Add in some eggs for some extra protein. Very fast and very cheap, win win!

Smoothies – Brilliant way to use up leftover fruit! Buy fruit when in season, discounted at the supermarket at the end of the day or bags of frozen fruit from supermarket are also much cheaper than fresh! Got left over bananas? Slice them up and place them flat out on a baking tray in the freezer until frozen, then pop them in a freezer bag and keep them for adding to smoothies (or porridge, muesli, topping pancakes with...). Put whatever fruit you have in a blender, add a bit of liquid (fruit juice/milk/water) and blend until smooth. As an extra nutrient boost you could add a spoonful of peanut or almond butter, or a handful of spinach or kale!

Curry/stir fry – Both made in a similar way but with different flavourings added at the end, they can be made very cheaply but provide some really flavoursome and healthy food! Fry up some onions, peppers, carrots (or whatever you have in the fridge!) and add either curry paste and coconut milk or a stir fry sauce. Another very quick meal but so worth it for the taste! Left-over stir fry can be great in a wrap or pita bread for lunch the next day.

Baked Potatoes – So many options with this one, firstly with the type of the potatoes! Try sweet potatoes for a completely different flavour, and much more nutritious meal. For toppings... cheese, beans, tuna, roasted vegetables, egg, prawns, ham and pineapple, chicken, pesto and tomatoes... or whatever you have in the cupboard!

Mug cakes – We all need a treat now and again! Rather than go out and buy all the baking equipment in the world, why not look up a recipe for mug-cakes? You need very little ingredients and it will make just the right amount, and very quickly as it just goes in the microwave! Here's some inspiration to drool over...



Budget Friendly Cupboard Essentials

Basics: to be able to cook your own food successfully and if you're to stick to it, you'll need a few essentials in the cupboards, here are just a few...

- Cooking oil/olive oil
- Spices and herbs – having just a few basics such as chilli, curry powder, oregano will make such a difference to your cooking!
- Salt and Pepper
- Soy sauce – this can be handy in so many recipes and worthwhile keeping some in the cupboard
- Stock cubes – helpful for all sorts of dishes but firstly soup!
- Simple baking goods such as flour and sugar can come in handy for many dishes.

Dried foods:

- Rice and obviously pasta are great cupboard essentials. The perfect accompaniment for lots of simple recipes and really filling.
- Beans, lentils, nuts etc are all far cheaper to buy this way, and buying in bulk will also save you money. Why not club together with some flatmates if you don't think you'll use it all? They do sometimes need soaked for a few hours before you cook them, so if you don't have a lot of time try using...
- Porridge Oats – one of the heartiest, but cheapest breakfasts around. Try making Overnight Oats by soaking them, you guessed it, overnight, in milk or whatever you prefer. When you get up in the morning and are rushing to class you can pick up the tub/jar, add in any fruit, cinnamon, honey etc you want and take it with you!



Tins:

- So many foods come in tins, and they are much healthier than people think. Having tins of varied beans, chickpeas, baked beans, fruit and sweetcorn etc can come in really handy and of course last for a very long time!
- Tinned chopped tomatoes or plum tomatoes in the value range in supermarkets are really cheap, but great for so many dishes... soups, stews, chilli, fajitas, curries... the possibilities are endless!

- Coconut milk – very cheap when bought from Chinese supermarket or similar and great with smoothies, soups and curries

Frozen fruit and veg: many people think these are not as healthy as fresh, but often they are actually healthier! This is because they are frozen within hours of being picked, meaning they still hold more of their nutrients. They are cheaper than buying fresh, and you don't have to worry about them going off. Stick them in the freezer at home and they will last for many months, for you to take a handful out when needed.



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- Berries and other fruit – save in the freezer for smoothies or adding to your breakfast!
- Peas, sweetcorn, spinach, peppers... all great for adding to the recipes above, or making pizza.... There are so many options by doing it this way!

Recipes

Autumn Veg Soup: we've chosen a soup of squash and carrots, because these are in season. A bowl of this soup only costs around 20p per person! Serves 4, 30 mins prep and cooking time.

1/2 pumpkin or 1 medium squash

2 carrots

½ onion

1 stock cube/teaspoon bouillon

2 cloves garlic

Pinch turmeric

1 litre water

Cut the squash in half and scoop out the seeds. Cut into slices and cut off the skin. Chop into bite-size chunks. Chop onion, carrots and finely slice the garlic. Put all the veg and stock cube into a pot with your water and let it come to the boil. Reduce the heat and let it simmer for 15-20 mins, or until all the veg is cooked thoroughly. Add in your turmeric. If desired, blend the soup and add seasoning to taste. Freeze extra portions for later meals!

Banana Ice Lollies: Cut bananas in half and insert in a lolly or kebab stick. Stick them in the freezer until mostly frozen. Melt some leftover chocolate in a bowl over a pan of hot water, let it cool a little before drizzling it over the frozen bananas. Add on some chopped nuts, coconut, nut butter... whatever you fancy. Put back in the freezer and once fully frozen put them in an airtight bag in the freezer where they will last for months!