

30 MEALS UNDER £3



Affordable, student-friendly recipes with
vegetarian, meat and fish choices

A PRACTICAL BUDGET RECIPE GUIDE

Clear costs • Quick methods • Flexible swaps • Faith-aware options

UK edition • Prices checked 12 August 2026

Start here

Every recipe in this guide costs an estimated £3 or less per adult portion. Most serve two, so you can eat with a friend, save lunch for tomorrow or freeze a portion.

WHAT THE PRICE MEANS

The figure is the estimated cost of the quantity used, not the checkout price of every full packet. It includes a small allowance for oil, salt, pepper and listed dried spices. It excludes cooking energy, optional garnishes, delivery charges and special-offer membership. Prices vary by shop, region and date.

The simple rules

1. Read the whole recipe before starting and check that you have a pan, knife, board and measuring mug.
2. Use supermarket own-brand staples, frozen vegetables and tinned pulses; compare the price per 100g or per kg.
3. If a recipe serves two, cool the spare portion promptly and refrigerate or freeze it in a labelled container.
4. Taste before adding salt. Stock cubes, soy sauce, cheese and tinned fish can already be salty.
5. Check every label when cooking for an allergy, intolerance or religious requirement; brands can change recipes.

Diet key

Label	Meaning
Vegan	No meat, fish, eggs or dairy in the recipe as written.
Vegetarian	No meat or fish; may contain eggs or dairy.
Meat	Chicken, turkey, beef or pork as written; a specific swap is supplied where relevant.
Pescatarian	Contains fish but no meat as written.

Cooking with respect

Religious and cultural food practice is personal and varied. A swap can remove a restricted ingredient, but it cannot by itself make a meal halal, kosher or suitable for every tradition. Certification, preparation, utensils and cross-contact may also matter. When cooking for someone else, ask them what they need.

Halal

Use halal-certified meat and check stock cubes, sauces, flavourings and processed foods. Pork and alcohol are not halal. Keep non-halal foods and utensils separate where required.

Kosher

Use kosher-certified meat and ingredients, follow meat-and-dairy separation, and use suitable utensils. Fish generally needs fins and scales; processed fish still needs checking.

Hindu traditions

Practice varies. Many Hindus avoid beef and some are vegetarian. Beef recipes include chicken, lamb or pulse alternatives.

Other traditions

Some Sikh, Buddhist and Jain diners follow vegetarian diets or avoid particular ingredients such as onion, garlic or root vegetables. The person eating the meal is the best guide to their practice.

Allergies

Religious suitability is not the same as allergen safety. Always read labels and prevent cross-contact. The guide does not provide a full allergen analysis.

A GOOD DEFAULT

If you are unsure, choose one of the vegan recipes, use certified packaged ingredients where requested, clean the work area and ask the diner before cooking.

Budget kitchen and food safety

Cheap meals only save money when the food is stored and reheated safely.

Five useful habits

1. Cook chicken, turkey, sausages, burgers and meatballs until steaming hot throughout, with no pink meat in the centre.
2. Cool cooked rice as quickly as possible, ideally within one hour; refrigerate it, use within 24 hours and reheat only once until steaming hot.
3. Reheat leftovers once, stirring during microwave heating so there are no cold spots.
4. Keep raw meat and fish away from bread, salad and cooked food. Wash hands, knives and boards thoroughly.
5. Follow packet instructions and use food by the stated date. If in doubt, do not risk it.

Low-cost starter cupboard

1. Rice, pasta, couscous and noodles
2. Tinned tomatoes, beans, chickpeas and fish
3. Red lentils
4. Frozen peas, spinach and mixed vegetables
5. Onions and carrots
6. Oil, black pepper, curry powder, paprika, cumin and dried herbs
7. Stock cubes, soy sauce and tomato puree

NO FULL SPICE RACK?

Start with curry powder, smoked paprika and dried mixed herbs. They cover most recipes in this guide; add cumin, chilli or garlic later.

30 recipes at a glance

Costs are per portion. Total time includes preparation and cooking; appliance power and pan size can change it.

No.	Meal	Type	Cost	Total
01	Red lentil tomato dal with rice	Meat-free	£0.95	30 min
02	Chickpea coconut curry	Meat-free	£1.30	25 min
03	Smoky bean chilli and rice	Meat-free	£0.95	25 min
04	Tomato and white bean pasta	Meat-free	£0.90	20 min
05	Peanut vegetable noodles	Meat-free	£1.20	15 min
06	Egg fried rice with peas	Meat-free	£1.00	20 min
07	Microwave jacket potato with beans and cheese	Meat-free	£1.15	15 min
08	Lentil bolognese	Meat-free	£0.85	35 min
09	Chickpea vegetable couscous	Meat-free	£1.10	15 min
10	Tomato eggs with toast	Meat-free	£1.15	20 min
11	Mushroom and pea risotto	Meat-free	£1.35	35 min
12	Sweet potato and black bean quesadillas	Meat-free	£1.40	25 min
13	Chicken and vegetable stir-fry noodles	Meat	£1.65	20 min
14	One-pan chicken tomato rice	Meat	£1.55	35 min
15	Quick chicken and pea curry	Meat	£1.60	30 min
16	Turkey mince chilli	Meat	£1.70	30 min
17	Sausage and bean casserole	Meat	£1.45	30 min
18	Beef keema with peas and rice	Meat	£1.90	30 min
19	Beef and lentil spaghetti ragu	Meat	£1.55	35 min
20	Sausage tomato pasta	Meat	£1.50	25 min
21	Chicken fajita rice bowl	Meat	£1.75	25 min
22	Turkey meatballs with tomato couscous	Meat	£1.60	30 min
23	Tuna tomato pasta	Fish	£1.35	20 min
24	Tuna and sweetcorn jacket potatoes	Fish	£1.50	15 min
25	Mackerel tomato rice	Fish	£1.20	20 min
26	Fish finger wraps with crunchy slaw	Fish	£1.55	20 min
27	White fish curry	Fish	£1.95	30 min
28	Sardine lemon spaghetti	Fish	£1.25	15 min
29	Salmon and pea fishcakes	Fish	£1.50	35 min
30	Tuna, bean and couscous bowl	Fish	£1.30	15 min

Red lentil tomato dal with rice

EST. COST	SERVES	ACTIVE TIME	TOTAL TIME	STYLE
£0.95 per portion	2	10 min	30 min	Vegan

Ingredients

1. 150g long-grain rice
2. 120g red lentils, rinsed
3. 1/2 onion, finely chopped
4. 1 garlic clove, crushed
5. 200g chopped tomatoes (about 1/2 tin)
6. 1 tsp curry powder
7. 450ml water or vegetable stock
8. 80g frozen spinach

Method

1. Cook the rice according to the packet instructions.
2. Meanwhile, soften the onion in 1 tsp oil for 4 minutes. Add the garlic and curry powder; stir for 30 seconds.
3. Add the lentils, tomatoes and water or stock. Simmer for 18–20 minutes, stirring now and then. Stir in the spinach for the final 3 minutes and serve with the rice.

Budget move: Double the recipe if you have freezer space; portion and cool leftovers promptly. The cost shown is for the food used, not the full packets bought.

MAKE IT WORK FOR YOU

Already vegan. For halal or kosher observance, use a suitable certified stock cube and check spice blends. For a Jain-friendly version, omit onion and garlic and use a pinch of asafoetida only if it meets your dietary requirements.

Chickpea coconut curry

EST. COST	SERVES	ACTIVE TIME	TOTAL TIME	STYLE
£1.30 per portion	2	10 min	25 min	Vegan

Ingredients

1. 150g rice
2. 1 x 400g tin chickpeas, drained
3. 1/2 onion, chopped
4. 200g chopped tomatoes
5. 200ml light coconut milk
6. 100g frozen mixed vegetables
7. 1 tsp curry powder

Method

1. Cook the rice according to the packet instructions.
2. Soften the onion in 1 tsp oil for 4 minutes. Add the curry powder and stir for 30 seconds.
3. Add the chickpeas, tomatoes, coconut milk and frozen vegetables. Simmer for 12-15 minutes until thickened and piping hot, then serve with rice.

Budget move: Double the recipe if you have freezer space; portion and cool leftovers promptly. The cost shown is for the food used, not the full packets bought.

MAKE IT WORK FOR YOU

Meat- and dairy-free as written. Check coconut milk, curry powder and stock labels if you need halal or kosher certification. Omit onion for dietary traditions that avoid it.

Smoky bean chilli and rice

EST. COST	SERVES	ACTIVE TIME	TOTAL TIME	STYLE
£0.95 per portion	2	8 min	25 min	Vegan

Ingredients

1. 150g rice
2. 1 x 400g tin kidney beans, drained
3. 1 x 400g tin chopped tomatoes
4. 1/2 onion, chopped
5. 100g frozen sliced peppers or mixed vegetables
6. 1 tsp smoked paprika
7. 1/2 tsp ground cumin

Method

1. Cook the rice according to the packet instructions.
2. Soften the onion in 1 tsp oil for 4 minutes. Stir in the paprika and cumin.
3. Add the beans, tomatoes and frozen vegetables. Simmer for 12-15 minutes, season to taste and serve with rice.

Budget move: Double the recipe if you have freezer space; portion and cool leftovers promptly. The cost shown is for the food used, not the full packets bought.

MAKE IT WORK FOR YOU

Vegan as written. Check spice blends and stock if certification matters. If smoked paprika is unavailable, use ordinary paprika plus a little black pepper.

Tomato and white bean pasta

EST. COST	SERVES	ACTIVE TIME	TOTAL TIME	STYLE
£0.90 per portion	2	8 min	20 min	Vegan

Ingredients

1. 180g penne or spaghetti
2. 1 x 400g tin cannellini beans, drained
3. 250ml passata
4. 1/2 onion, chopped
5. 1 garlic clove, crushed
6. 80g frozen spinach
7. 1 tsp dried mixed herbs

Method

1. Boil the pasta until just tender. Save a mugful of cooking water, then drain.
2. Soften the onion in 1 tsp oil for 4 minutes. Add the garlic, herbs, passata and beans; simmer for 8 minutes.
3. Stir in the spinach and cooked pasta. Loosen with a splash of pasta water and heat until piping hot.

Budget move: Double the recipe if you have freezer space; portion and cool leftovers promptly. The cost shown is for the food used, not the full packets bought.

MAKE IT WORK FOR YOU

Vegan as written. If adding cheese, choose vegetarian cheese where required; kosher diners should use appropriately certified dairy products.

Peanut vegetable noodles

EST. COST	SERVES	ACTIVE TIME	TOTAL TIME	STYLE
£1.20 per portion	2	8 min	15 min	Vegan

Ingredients

1. 2 noodle nests (about 130g)
2. 250g frozen stir-fry vegetables
3. 2 tbsp peanut butter
4. 1 tbsp soy sauce
5. 1 tsp vinegar or lemon juice
6. 1 tsp sugar or honey
7. A pinch of chilli flakes (optional)

Method

1. Cook the noodles according to the packet instructions. Add the frozen vegetables for the final 3–4 minutes, then drain.
2. Mix the peanut butter, soy sauce, vinegar, sugar and 2 tbsp hot water in the pan.
3. Return the noodles and vegetables to the pan. Toss over a low heat until coated and piping hot.

Budget move: Double the recipe if you have freezer space; portion and cool leftovers promptly. The cost shown is for the food used, not the full packets bought.

MAKE IT WORK FOR YOU

Contains peanuts, wheat and usually soya. For a nut-free version use tahini or seed butter only if suitable for your allergy needs. Check soy sauce and noodles for halal or kosher certification; use sugar rather than honey for a fully vegan dish.

Egg fried rice with peas

EST. COST	SERVES	ACTIVE TIME	TOTAL TIME	STYLE
£1.00 per portion	2	10 min	20 min	Vegetarian

Ingredients

1. 150g dry rice, freshly cooked and cooled briefly
2. 3 eggs, beaten
3. 150g frozen peas
4. 1/2 onion, finely chopped
5. 1 tbsp soy sauce
6. 1 tsp oil

Method

1. Cook the rice, drain well and spread it on a plate for a few minutes so excess steam escapes.
2. Soften the onion in the oil for 3 minutes. Push it aside, add the eggs and stir until almost set.
3. Add the rice, peas and soy sauce. Stir-fry for 4–5 minutes until the peas are cooked and everything is steaming hot.

Budget move: Double the recipe if you have freezer space; portion and cool leftovers promptly. The cost shown is for the food used, not the full packets bought.

MAKE IT WORK FOR YOU

Vegetarian as written. Check soy sauce for certification if required. For vegan diners, replace the eggs with 150g crumbled tofu; this may add around 35p per portion.

Microwave jacket potato with beans and cheese

EST. COST	SERVES	ACTIVE TIME	TOTAL TIME	STYLE
£1.15 per portion	2	5 min	15 min	Vegetarian

Ingredients

1. 2 large baking potatoes (about 300g each)
2. 1 x 420g tin baked beans
3. 60g grated vegetarian cheddar
4. Black pepper

Method

1. Prick the potatoes all over. Microwave on a plate for 8-12 minutes, turning halfway, until soft throughout. Rest for 2 minutes.
2. Heat the beans in a pan or microwave until steaming hot.
3. Split the potatoes, fluff the middle, spoon over the beans and finish with cheese and black pepper.

Budget move: Double the recipe if you have freezer space; portion and cool leftovers promptly. The cost shown is for the food used, not the full packets bought.

MAKE IT WORK FOR YOU

Use vegan cheese or skip the cheese for a vegan meal. Choose vegetarian cheese if you avoid animal rennet. For kosher observance, check both the beans and cheese are suitably certified.

Lentil bolognese

EST. COST	SERVES	ACTIVE TIME	TOTAL TIME	STYLE
£0.85 per portion	2	10 min	35 min	Vegan

Ingredients

1. 180g spaghetti
2. 100g red lentils, rinsed
3. 300ml passata
4. 1/2 onion, chopped
5. 1 carrot, grated
6. 1 garlic clove, crushed
7. 1 tsp dried mixed herbs
8. 300ml water

Method

1. Soften the onion and carrot in 1 tsp oil for 5 minutes. Add the garlic and herbs.
2. Add the lentils, passata and water. Simmer for 20-25 minutes, stirring regularly, until the lentils are soft.
3. Cook the spaghetti, drain and serve with the sauce. Add a little pasta water if the sauce becomes too thick.

Budget move: Double the recipe if you have freezer space; portion and cool leftovers promptly. The cost shown is for the food used, not the full packets bought.

MAKE IT WORK FOR YOU

Vegan as written. Check stock or seasoning mixes for certification. Omit onion and garlic where required and add extra carrot, herbs and black pepper for flavour.

Chickpea vegetable couscous

EST. COST	SERVES	ACTIVE TIME	TOTAL TIME	STYLE
£1.10 per portion	2	8 min	15 min	Vegan

Ingredients

1. 140g couscous
2. 1 x 400g tin chickpeas, drained
3. 200g frozen mixed vegetables
4. 200ml vegetable stock
5. 1 tsp curry powder or mixed herbs
6. 1 tbsp lemon juice or vinegar

Method

1. Put the couscous in a bowl. Pour over 160ml boiling stock, cover and leave for 5 minutes.
2. Simmer the chickpeas and frozen vegetables in the remaining stock with the seasoning for 5-6 minutes; drain any excess liquid.
3. Fluff the couscous with a fork, mix everything together and sharpen with lemon juice or vinegar.

Budget move: Double the recipe if you have freezer space; portion and cool leftovers promptly. The cost shown is for the food used, not the full packets bought.

MAKE IT WORK FOR YOU

Vegan as written. Couscous contains wheat. For gluten-free diners use rice instead, allowing extra cooking time; check stock and seasoning certification if required.

Tomato eggs with toast

EST. COST	SERVES	ACTIVE TIME	TOTAL TIME	STYLE
£1.15 per portion	2	8 min	20 min	Vegetarian

Ingredients

1. 4 eggs
2. 1 x 400g tin chopped tomatoes
3. 1/2 onion, chopped
4. 1/2 tsp paprika
5. 4 slices bread
6. A pinch of chilli flakes (optional)

Method

1. Soften the onion in 1 tsp oil for 4 minutes. Add the tomatoes and paprika; simmer for 7 minutes.
2. Make four hollows in the sauce and crack in the eggs. Cover and cook gently for 5–7 minutes, until the whites are set.
3. Toast the bread and serve alongside.

Budget move: Double the recipe if you have freezer space; portion and cool leftovers promptly. The cost shown is for the food used, not the full packets bought.

MAKE IT WORK FOR YOU

Vegetarian and meat-free. Check bread and spice blends if certification matters. If serving eggs with runny yolks, use British Lion-marked eggs or an equivalent assurance scheme and follow current food-safety advice.

Mushroom and pea risotto

EST. COST	SERVES	ACTIVE TIME	TOTAL TIME	STYLE
£1.35 per portion	2	10 min	35 min	Vegetarian

Ingredients

1. 160g risotto rice or ordinary short-grain rice
2. 200g mushrooms, sliced
3. 100g frozen peas
4. 1/2 onion, chopped
5. 750ml hot vegetable stock
6. 30g vegetarian hard cheese (optional)

Method

1. Soften the onion and mushrooms in 1 tsp oil for 5 minutes. Stir in the rice for 1 minute.
2. Add the hot stock a ladle at a time, stirring regularly and waiting until it is mostly absorbed before adding more.
3. After about 20 minutes, stir in the peas. Cook until the rice is tender, then add the cheese if using.

Budget move: Double the recipe if you have freezer space; portion and cool leftovers promptly. The cost shown is for the food used, not the full packets bought.

MAKE IT WORK FOR YOU

Choose cheese labelled vegetarian if you avoid animal rennet, or omit it for a vegan version. For kosher observance, use certified stock and dairy products.

Sweet potato and black bean quesadillas

EST. COST	SERVES	ACTIVE TIME	TOTAL TIME	STYLE
£1.40 per portion	2	10 min	25 min	Vegetarian

Ingredients

1. 4 medium tortilla wraps
2. 300g sweet potato, peeled and diced
3. 1 x 400g tin black beans, drained
4. 50g grated vegetarian cheddar
5. 1/2 tsp ground cumin
6. 1/2 tsp paprika

Method

1. Microwave the sweet potato with 2 tbsp water in a covered bowl for 7–9 minutes until soft. Mash with the cumin and paprika.
2. Spread the mash over two wraps. Top with beans and cheese, then add the remaining wraps.
3. Dry-fry each quesadilla for 2–3 minutes per side until crisp and hot. Cut into wedges.

Budget move: Double the recipe if you have freezer space; portion and cool leftovers promptly. The cost shown is for the food used, not the full packets bought.

MAKE IT WORK FOR YOU

Use vegan cheese or omit it for a vegan version. Check wraps and cheese for certification if required. A frying pan used for meat may need separate preparation under some kosher or halal practices.

Chicken and vegetable stir-fry noodles

EST. COST	SERVES	ACTIVE TIME	TOTAL TIME	STYLE
£1.65 per portion	2	12 min	20 min	Chicken

Ingredients

1. 250g chicken breast or thigh, thinly sliced
2. 2 noodle nests (about 130g)
3. 300g frozen stir-fry vegetables
4. 1 tbsp soy sauce
5. 1 garlic clove, crushed
6. 1 tsp oil

Method

1. Cook the noodles according to the packet instructions, then drain.
2. Heat the oil and cook the chicken for 6–8 minutes until browned, steaming hot and with no pink meat. Add the garlic.
3. Add the vegetables and stir-fry for 4 minutes. Toss through the noodles and soy sauce until piping hot.

Budget move: Double the recipe if you have freezer space; portion and cool leftovers promptly. The cost shown is for the food used, not the full packets bought.

MAKE IT WORK FOR YOU

Use halal- or kosher-certified chicken and check the soy sauce and noodles. For a meat-free version, use a drained tin of chickpeas or 200g tofu. Keep raw chicken and ready-to-eat foods separate.

One-pan chicken tomato rice

EST. COST	SERVES	ACTIVE TIME	TOTAL TIME	STYLE
£1.55 per portion	2	10 min	35 min	Chicken

Ingredients

1. 250g chicken thigh or breast, diced
2. 150g long-grain rice
3. 200g chopped tomatoes
4. 1/2 onion, chopped
5. 100g frozen peas
6. 350ml chicken or vegetable stock
7. 1 tsp paprika

Method

1. Brown the chicken in 1 tsp oil for 5 minutes. Add the onion and cook for 3 minutes.
2. Stir in the rice, tomatoes, stock and paprika. Cover and simmer gently for 18 minutes, stirring once.
3. Add the peas and cook for 4-5 minutes more, until the rice is tender and the chicken is fully cooked.

Budget move: Double the recipe if you have freezer space; portion and cool leftovers promptly. The cost shown is for the food used, not the full packets bought.

MAKE IT WORK FOR YOU

Use certified chicken and stock for halal or kosher needs. For a plant version, replace the chicken with a drained tin of chickpeas and use vegetable stock.

Quick chicken and pea curry

EST. COST	SERVES	ACTIVE TIME	TOTAL TIME	STYLE
£1.60 per portion	2	10 min	30 min	Chicken

Ingredients

1. 250g chicken, diced
2. 150g rice
3. 1/2 onion, chopped
4. 200g chopped tomatoes
5. 100g frozen peas
6. 1 tsp curry powder
7. 150ml water or stock

Method

1. Cook the rice according to the packet instructions.
2. Brown the chicken in 1 tsp oil for 5 minutes. Add the onion and cook for another 3 minutes, then stir in the curry powder.
3. Add the tomatoes and water or stock. Simmer for 10 minutes, add the peas, then cook for 4 minutes more until the chicken is fully cooked.

Budget move: Double the recipe if you have freezer space; portion and cool leftovers promptly. The cost shown is for the food used, not the full packets bought.

MAKE IT WORK FOR YOU

Use halal- or kosher-certified chicken, stock and spice blends as required. Replace the chicken with chickpeas for a vegan version. For Jain diners, omit onion and check the spice blend.

Turkey mince chilli

EST. COST	SERVES	ACTIVE TIME	TOTAL TIME	STYLE
£1.70 per portion	2	10 min	30 min	Turkey

Ingredients

1. 250g turkey mince
2. 150g rice
3. 1 x 400g tin kidney beans, drained
4. 1 x 400g tin chopped tomatoes
5. 1/2 onion, chopped
6. 1 tsp paprika
7. 1/2 tsp cumin

Method

1. Cook the rice according to the packet instructions.
2. Cook the turkey and onion in 1 tsp oil for 7-8 minutes, breaking up the mince, until no pink remains.
3. Add the spices, beans and tomatoes. Simmer for 12 minutes until thick and steaming hot, then serve with rice.

Budget move: Double the recipe if you have freezer space; portion and cool leftovers promptly. The cost shown is for the food used, not the full packets bought.

MAKE IT WORK FOR YOU

Turkey is a useful pork-free and beef-free option, but halal and kosher diners still need appropriately certified meat. Replace the turkey with an extra tin of beans for a vegan chilli.

Sausage and bean casserole

EST. COST	SERVES	ACTIVE TIME	TOTAL TIME	STYLE
£1.45 per portion	2	10 min	30 min	Pork as written

Ingredients

1. 4 budget pork sausages
2. 1 x 400g tin cannellini beans, drained
3. 1 x 400g tin chopped tomatoes
4. 1/2 onion, chopped
5. 1 carrot, sliced
6. 1/2 tsp dried herbs

Method

1. Brown the sausages in a lidded pan for 6–8 minutes. Add the onion and carrot; cook for 4 minutes.
2. Add the beans, tomatoes, herbs and 100ml water. Cover and simmer for 12 minutes.
3. Check the sausages are steaming hot with no pink centre. Season and serve with bread if wanted.

Budget move: Double the recipe if you have freezer space; portion and cool leftovers promptly. The cost shown is for the food used, not the full packets bought.

MAKE IT WORK FOR YOU

Pork is not halal or kosher and is avoided by some other diners. Use halal-certified chicken sausages, kosher-certified turkey sausages, or vegan sausages, and check the stock and sauce labels.

Beef keema with peas and rice

EST. COST	SERVES	ACTIVE TIME	TOTAL TIME	STYLE
£1.90 per portion	2	10 min	30 min	Beef as written

Ingredients

1. 250g beef mince
2. 150g rice
3. 1/2 onion, chopped
4. 100g frozen peas
5. 200g chopped tomatoes
6. 1 tsp curry powder
7. 1/2 tsp ground cumin

Method

1. Cook the rice according to the packet instructions.
2. Cook the mince and onion for 8 minutes, breaking it up, until browned. Spoon off excess fat if needed.
3. Add the spices and tomatoes; simmer for 8 minutes. Stir in the peas and cook for 4 minutes more.

Budget move: Double the recipe if you have freezer space; portion and cool leftovers promptly. The cost shown is for the food used, not the full packets bought.

MAKE IT WORK FOR YOU

Many Hindus avoid beef; use chicken or turkey mince, lamb, or a drained tin of lentils. For halal or kosher observance, use suitably certified meat and spices. For a Jain version, choose lentils and omit onion and garlic.

Beef and lentil spaghetti ragu

EST. COST	SERVES	ACTIVE TIME	TOTAL TIME	STYLE
£1.55 per portion	2	12 min	35 min	Beef as written

Ingredients

1. 150g beef mince
2. 80g red lentils, rinsed
3. 180g spaghetti
4. 300ml passata
5. 1/2 onion, chopped
6. 1 carrot, grated
7. 300ml water
8. 1 tsp dried herbs

Method

1. Cook the beef, onion and carrot for 7-8 minutes until the meat is browned.
2. Add the lentils, passata, water and herbs. Simmer for 20 minutes, stirring often, until the lentils are soft.
3. Cook and drain the spaghetti. Serve with the ragu.

Budget move: Double the recipe if you have freezer space; portion and cool leftovers promptly. The cost shown is for the food used, not the full packets bought.

MAKE IT WORK FOR YOU

For diners who avoid beef, use turkey or chicken mince, or replace the meat with another 80g lentils. Use certified meat for halal or kosher observance. If adding cheese to a kosher meat meal, use a non-dairy alternative that meets your requirements.

Sausage tomato pasta

EST. COST	SERVES	ACTIVE TIME	TOTAL TIME	STYLE
£1.50 per portion	2	10 min	25 min	Pork as written

Ingredients

1. 4 budget pork sausages
2. 180g pasta
3. 250ml passata
4. 1/2 onion, chopped
5. 80g frozen spinach
6. 1 tsp dried herbs

Method

1. Cook the pasta until tender, then drain.
2. Remove the sausage meat from the skins. Cook it with the onion for 8-10 minutes, breaking it into small pieces, until fully cooked.
3. Add the passata, herbs and spinach. Simmer for 5 minutes, then stir through the pasta.

Budget move: Double the recipe if you have freezer space; portion and cool leftovers promptly. The cost shown is for the food used, not the full packets bought.

MAKE IT WORK FOR YOU

Use certified chicken or turkey sausages for pork-free, halal or kosher versions, or use vegan sausages. Check sausage seasonings and casings; not every chicken or turkey sausage is automatically suitable.

Chicken fajita rice bowl

EST. COST	SERVES	ACTIVE TIME	TOTAL TIME	STYLE
£1.75 per portion	2	12 min	25 min	Chicken

Ingredients

1. 250g chicken, sliced
2. 150g rice
3. 200g frozen peppers and onions
4. 1/2 x 400g tin kidney beans, drained
5. 1 tsp paprika
6. 1/2 tsp cumin
7. 1 tbsp tomato puree

Method

1. Cook the rice according to the packet instructions.
2. Cook the chicken in 1 tsp oil for 6 minutes. Add the frozen vegetables and cook for another 5 minutes.
3. Stir in the beans, spices, tomato puree and 2 tbsp water. Cook until the chicken is fully cooked and everything is hot; spoon over rice.

Budget move: Double the recipe if you have freezer space; portion and cool leftovers promptly. The cost shown is for the food used, not the full packets bought.

MAKE IT WORK FOR YOU

Use halal- or kosher-certified chicken and seasoning. For a vegan bowl, use the whole tin of beans instead of chicken. Keep any dairy toppings separate where kosher meat-and-dairy rules apply.

Turkey meatballs with tomato couscous

EST. COST	SERVES	ACTIVE TIME	TOTAL TIME	STYLE
£1.60 per portion	2	15 min	30 min	Turkey

Ingredients

1. 250g turkey mince
2. 140g couscous
3. 1/2 onion, very finely chopped
4. 250ml passata
5. 1 tsp dried herbs
6. 1 tbsp breadcrumbs
7. 200ml hot stock

Method

1. Mix the turkey, half the onion, breadcrumbs and half the herbs. Shape into 10 small meatballs.
2. Brown the meatballs in 1 tsp oil for 6 minutes. Add the remaining onion, passata and 100ml water; cover and simmer for 10 minutes until cooked through.
3. Cover the couscous with hot stock for 5 minutes, fluff with a fork and serve with the meatballs.

Budget move: Double the recipe if you have freezer space; portion and cool leftovers promptly. The cost shown is for the food used, not the full packets bought.

MAKE IT WORK FOR YOU

Use certified turkey, breadcrumbs and stock for halal or kosher needs. Turkey can suit diners avoiding pork or beef, but certification still matters. For a plant version, serve the tomato couscous with chickpeas.

Tuna tomato pasta

EST. COST	SERVES	ACTIVE TIME	TOTAL TIME	STYLE
£1.35 per portion	2	8 min	20 min	Pescatarian

Ingredients

1. 1 x 145g tin tuna, drained
2. 180g pasta
3. 250ml passata
4. 1/2 onion, chopped
5. 100g frozen peas
6. 1 tsp dried herbs

Method

1. Cook the pasta until tender, adding the peas for the final 3 minutes. Drain.
2. Soften the onion in 1 tsp oil for 4 minutes. Add the passata and herbs; simmer for 5 minutes.
3. Fold in the tuna and pasta. Heat gently until piping hot.

Budget move: Double the recipe if you have freezer space; portion and cool leftovers promptly. The cost shown is for the food used, not the full packets bought.

MAKE IT WORK FOR YOU

Tuna has fins and scales, but kosher diners should still choose a suitable certified product and follow their own practice. Check flavourings and stock for halal needs. Replace tuna with white beans for a vegan version.

Tuna and sweetcorn jacket potatoes

EST. COST	SERVES	ACTIVE TIME	TOTAL TIME	STYLE
£1.50 per portion	2	7 min	15 min	Pescatarian

Ingredients

1. 2 large baking potatoes
2. 1 x 145g tin tuna, drained
3. 1 x 198g tin sweetcorn, drained
4. 2 tbsp mayonnaise or plain yoghurt
5. Black pepper

Method

1. Prick the potatoes and microwave for 8-12 minutes, turning halfway, until soft. Rest for 2 minutes.
2. Mix the tuna, sweetcorn, mayonnaise or yoghurt and black pepper.
3. Split the potatoes and spoon in the filling.

Budget move: Double the recipe if you have freezer space; portion and cool leftovers promptly. The cost shown is for the food used, not the full packets bought.

MAKE IT WORK FOR YOU

Choose certified tuna and mayonnaise where required, and follow your own community's practice around fish and dairy. For an egg-free filling use plain yoghurt or a suitable vegan mayonnaise.

Mackerel tomato rice

EST. COST	SERVES	ACTIVE TIME	TOTAL TIME	STYLE
£1.20 per portion	2	8 min	20 min	Pescatarian

Ingredients

1. 1 x 125g tin mackerel in tomato sauce
2. 150g rice
3. 150g frozen mixed vegetables
4. 1/2 onion, chopped
5. 1/2 tsp paprika
6. A squeeze of lemon or dash of vinegar

Method

1. Cook the rice, adding the frozen vegetables for the final 4 minutes, then drain well.
2. Soften the onion in 1 tsp oil for 4 minutes. Add the mackerel and paprika; break the fish into chunks and warm through.
3. Fold in the rice and vegetables. Heat until steaming and finish with lemon juice or vinegar.

Budget move: Double the recipe if you have freezer space; portion and cool leftovers promptly. The cost shown is for the food used, not the full packets bought.

MAKE IT WORK FOR YOU

Mackerel has fins and scales; kosher diners should choose a suitable certified tin and follow their own practice. Check flavoured sauces for certification. White beans make a good fish-free alternative.

Fish finger wraps with crunchy slaw

EST. COST	SERVES	ACTIVE TIME	TOTAL TIME	STYLE
£1.55 per portion	2	10 min	20 min	Pescatarian

Ingredients

1. 6 fish fingers
2. 4 tortilla wraps
3. 100g finely sliced cabbage
4. 1 carrot, grated
5. 2 tbsp mayonnaise or plain yoghurt
6. 1 tsp vinegar

Method

1. Cook the fish fingers according to the packet instructions until crisp and piping hot.
2. Mix the cabbage and carrot with the mayonnaise or yoghurt and vinegar.
3. Warm the wraps, divide the slaw between them, add the fish fingers and roll up.

Budget move: Double the recipe if you have freezer space; portion and cool leftovers promptly. The cost shown is for the food used, not the full packets bought.

MAKE IT WORK FOR YOU

Breaded fish may contain wheat, milk or other flavourings, so check the label and choose halal- or kosher-certified products if needed. Use falafel or crispy beans for a fish-free version.

White fish curry

EST. COST	SERVES	ACTIVE TIME	TOTAL TIME	STYLE
£1.95 per portion	2	10 min	30 min	Pescatarian

Ingredients

1. 300g frozen white fish fillets, defrosted
2. 150g rice
3. 1/2 onion, chopped
4. 200g chopped tomatoes
5. 100g frozen peas
6. 1 tsp curry powder
7. 150ml water or stock

Method

1. Cook the rice according to the packet instructions.
2. Soften the onion in 1 tsp oil for 4 minutes. Add the curry powder, tomatoes and water or stock; simmer for 7 minutes.
3. Cut the fish into chunks and add with the peas. Cover and simmer gently for 7-9 minutes until the fish is opaque, flakes easily and is steaming hot.

Budget move: Double the recipe if you have freezer space; portion and cool leftovers promptly. The cost shown is for the food used, not the full packets bought.

MAKE IT WORK FOR YOU

Pollock, cod and haddock have fins and scales, but kosher diners should confirm the species and certification. Check curry powder and stock for halal or kosher needs. Chickpeas work well instead of fish.

Sardine lemon spaghetti

EST. COST	SERVES	ACTIVE TIME	TOTAL TIME	STYLE
£1.25 per portion	2	8 min	15 min	Pescatarian

Ingredients

1. 2 small tins sardines, drained
2. 180g spaghetti
3. 100g frozen peas
4. 1 garlic clove, crushed
5. 1 tbsp lemon juice
6. A pinch of chilli flakes (optional)

Method

1. Cook the spaghetti, adding the peas for the final 3 minutes. Save a little cooking water, then drain.
2. Warm 1 tsp oil with the garlic and chilli for 30 seconds. Add the sardines and lemon juice.
3. Add the pasta and peas. Toss gently, loosening with pasta water, until hot.

Budget move: Double the recipe if you have freezer space; portion and cool leftovers promptly. The cost shown is for the food used, not the full packets bought.

MAKE IT WORK FOR YOU

Sardines have fins and scales; choose a suitably certified tin for kosher needs and check flavourings for halal needs. Use white beans for a vegan version.

Salmon and pea fishcakes

EST. COST	SERVES	ACTIVE TIME	TOTAL TIME	STYLE
£1.50 per portion	2	15 min	35 min	Pescatarian

Ingredients

1. 1 x 213g tin salmon, drained
2. 400g potatoes, peeled and diced
3. 100g frozen peas
4. 1 egg
5. 40g breadcrumbs
6. Black pepper

Method

1. Boil the potatoes for 12-15 minutes until soft, adding the peas for the final 3 minutes. Drain and mash.
2. Mix in the salmon and half the beaten egg. Shape into four patties, brush with the remaining egg and coat in breadcrumbs.
3. Cook in a lightly oiled frying pan for 4-5 minutes per side until golden and piping hot.

Budget move: Double the recipe if you have freezer space; portion and cool leftovers promptly. The cost shown is for the food used, not the full packets bought.

MAKE IT WORK FOR YOU

Choose certified salmon and breadcrumbs where required. Salmon has fins and scales. For an egg-free binder, use 1 tbsp flour mixed with 2 tbsp water; check the mixture holds before frying.

Tuna, bean and couscous bowl

EST. COST	SERVES	ACTIVE TIME	TOTAL TIME	STYLE
£1.30 per portion	2	8 min	15 min	Pescatarian

Ingredients

1. 1 x 145g tin tuna, drained
2. 140g couscous
3. 1 x 400g tin cannellini beans, drained
4. 100g frozen sweetcorn or peas
5. 180ml hot vegetable stock
6. 1 tbsp lemon juice or vinegar

Method

1. Put the couscous in a bowl, pour over the hot stock, cover and leave for 5 minutes.
2. Cook the sweetcorn or peas until hot, then drain.
3. Fluff the couscous and fold in the tuna, beans and vegetables. Add lemon juice or vinegar and black pepper.

Budget move: Double the recipe if you have freezer space; portion and cool leftovers promptly. The cost shown is for the food used, not the full packets bought.

MAKE IT WORK FOR YOU

Choose certified tuna and stock where required. Couscous contains wheat; use rice for a gluten-free version. Replace tuna with another half tin of beans for a vegan bowl.

Sources and cost notes

Price estimates were calculated from typical quantities used and current UK own-brand or budget-range prices checked on 12 August 2026. Examples used to sense-check the model included Tesco pasta, rice, chopped tomatoes, beans, chickpeas, eggs, cheese and tuna, plus Aldi budget chicken. The ONS consumer-prices dataset was used as a wider price reference. Prices can change quickly.

1. [Tesco, Essentials at Tesco Express - food cupboard](#)
2. [Tesco, Medium Free Range Eggs 12 Pack](#)
3. [Tesco, Medium Cheddar 400g](#)
4. [Aldi UK, frozen meat and poultry](#)
5. [Office for National Statistics, consumer price inflation item indices and price quotes](#)
6. [Food Standards Agency, Cooking and reheating safely](#)

Important note

This guide is general information, not medical, allergy or religious-authority advice. Check labels, current food-safety guidance and the needs of the people eating. Costs are estimates rather than guarantees.