

The Freshwell **LOW CARB BUDGET MEAL PLANNER**

— DR KIM ANDREWS —





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She graduated from Liverpool University with an Honours degree in Medicine in 2000 and completed her medical training in Merseyside and Essex before settling into rural general practice and specialising in diabetes.

Dr Andrews and her colleague Dr David Oliver, discovered low carb lifestyle medicine in late 2018 and together they founded the Freshwell Low Carb Project in 2019. They have been promoting this method ever since.

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Introduction

So here we are. 2023 in the UK and life is pretty difficult for many. With the cost of gas and electricity doubling, food prices spiralling, and inflation at its highest for 40 years – it is no wonder that people are struggling to make ends meet.



And all this on the back of the recent Coronavirus pandemic – a time when metabolic health and a strong immune system have been of the utmost importance. It is estimated that 40% of adults in England gained weight during the pandemic, with the average gain being half a stone (just over 3kg). Maybe you are one of these people and that is why you are here? Or maybe you want to start eating more healthily, reduce your prescription medications or get better control of a long-term health condition such as high blood pressure, arthritis, IBS or diabetes?

My name is Dr Kim Andrews, I grew up in Essex and have been a doctor since 2000. I had my eyes opened to low carb in 2019 when my father managed to lose 4 stone using this method despite a lifetime of yo-yo dieting. He has kept off all the weight to this day, and as a result is off all his blood pressure medications, with his pre-diabetes in remission. It has been a wonder to watch, and seeing my dad achieve and maintain this weight loss has consequently changed the way I manage my patients.

As a GP in Essex, it has become all too apparent that the health of the population is not in a good place. Around 2/3 of the UK population aged over 16 are now overweight or obese, giving Britain the bronze medal for obesity in Europe – only trailing behind Turkey and Malta. The Government will need to work quickly if the UK is to avoid becoming the fattest nation on Earth in due course.....Even more shockingly, more than 4.9 million people in the UK now have diabetes (1 in 10 people aged over 40!) and it is estimated that 850,000 people are living with diabetes but have yet to be diagnosed – and we know that obesity is one of the main risk factors. The NHS is under immense pressure at present and diabetes alone utilises 10% of the NHS budget.....

Well, you are in the right place if you want to start making some positive changes – it's not all doom and gloom! Some of you may have already seen the Freshwell Low Carb 4 Week Rotating Meal Planner or The Freshwell Low Carb Manual – these were written during the first and second Lockdowns and have been downloaded thousands of times to date with some excellent, life-changing results. However, as money has become tighter, it has become very clear to me that purchasing many of these lower carb/higher protein foods is now out of reach for many – and many of those people need access to a more nutritious diet on a bootstrap. It still remains more cost effective to “fill up” on starchy carbohydrates like bread, rice and potatoes – but these products may potentially be playing havoc with our metabolic health. So, I want people to fill up on protein and natural fat whenever possible – and this manual attempts to address this in the least expensive way. I am aiming for most main meals to come in at **£1.25 or less per head or £5 for a family of four** (the recipes have a price per portion attached but please note these are approximate as prices will vary depending on the supermarket used and the portion size). I have also tried to incorporate the use of frozen or tinned vegetables and utilised the power of lentils and pulses to bulk up meals without causing a huge sugar spike in the bloodstream. More and more people in the UK are now having to turn to food banks for the first time – in 2008, around 26,000 people were accessing food banks, and in 2021 this has increased to 2.17 million people. Our local foodbanks in the Braintree District are seeing their highest ever demand. I am sure this number will continue to climb over the winter and spring of 2023, so I have also tried to incorporate recipes that use some of the canned products you might obtain from a food bank, such as tinned lentils, tinned beans and tinned vegetables.

I am also aware that many people lack cooking skills due to minimal experience in the kitchen, and that fear prevents many from following recipes or trying new things. Hence, I have also included recipes on “basics” like boiling an egg, a red sauce, a cheese sauce etc. Just by making your own, you can save money and cut out many of the nastier ingredients in these “ultra processed ” foods – plus as a bonus, they also taste much better too!

None of these recipes need to be followed exactly. In most cases you can substitute with what you can find in your cupboard and as time goes on and you gain experience, you will know what other herbs or spices might work for the flavours you are trying to recreate. Use any veg you can

find in the bottom of your salad drawer – just remember that harder veg like squash, swede and carrots will take longer to cook than soft veg like peppers or aubergine. Salt and black pepper are pretty essential cupboard staples but if you lack other herbs you can always remove them (although the recipes will taste better if you can add them). As a minimum, some garlic powder, paprika, and dried mixed Italian herbs would be useful – and these can all be picked up relatively cost effectively and easily at all supermarkets – a little goes a long way and they can be stored in the cupboard for months so they won't be wasted.

I have planned my recipes around the use of basic kitchen tools, taking into account the current cost of gas and electricity. At a time when money is tight, many are unable to consider leaving the oven on for hours and may not even have access to one. Many of my casserole/curry type dishes can be cooked in a slow cooker instead of the oven, and I have also tried to use a microwave when possible. Where there's a will, there's a way!

I have been very fortunate to have had the support of some amazing low carb chefs, who have allowed me to use some of their fantastic recipes in this planner. Katie Caldesi helped her husband Giancarlo lose 3 stone and put his type 2 diabetes into remission, and has written multiple recipe books to help others to achieve the same. Dr Jen Unwin (a clinical psychologist and wife of low carb pioneering GP Dr David Unwin) suffered her own journey with carb addiction and now spends her time supporting patients to give up sugar and carbohydrates to improve their health. Emma Porter has type 1 diabetes and was struggling with her control using standard NHS advice and is now a food writer developing recipe books and running online cooking sessions to help others in the same position. I am very grateful to them all. More locally, it also brings me great joy to include some recipes devised by The Gateway Project, whose Soul Food initiative serves up free meals to the Halstead community in any sort of need (generously supported by the local foodbank), and also recipes from Colchester Foodbank and Salvation Army. Last but certainly not least, I have also incorporated some recipes from inspiring members of the Colne Valley PCN low carb Group – an online Facebook group of over 600 patients looking to improve their health and quality of life – if they can do it, so can you!

If you want to look deeper at the science of low carb, then please do check out The Freshwell Low Carb Manual if you haven't already (free to download via our website <https://lowcarbfreshwell.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Freshwell-Meal-Planner-Manual.pdf>), or check out the free Freshwell app on your phone or tablet where you can work through 6 educational modules in your own time. Amongst other things, this may help you to quell concerns about increasing the fat content of your diet, understand why lowering blood sugar is so important, and help support you if you want to move towards other potentially beneficial methods such as Time Restricted Eating (TRE) or Intermittent Fasting (IF).

So, brush your worries and apprehensions aside, and open your mind to learning about a new way of eating that will probably blow out of the water most things that you have previously been taught about healthy eating. This way of eating works like nothing I have seen in my twenty year medical career to date – I no longer “stick plasters” over my patients health problems – I now direct treatment at the source of the issue – and in many cases this starts with what is being eaten. You wouldn't put the wrong fuel in your car and expect it to perform, so don't do the same to your precious body – you only have one. I hope this book helps you to change the way you look at food and your relationship with cooking, and I hope along with that comes new-found vitality, less medications and in general a brighter future. Making a meal delicious and healthy does not require the skills of a chef – **you've got this! Good luck!**

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As with any adjustment to your diet or exercise regime, consult your doctor before implementing significant changes, particularly if you take medication for diabetes or high blood pressure. This manual should not be considered personal medical advice - if you have a medical issue that you are concerned about, please consult with your GP.

With gratitude to NHS Mid and South Essex Integrated Care Board (ICB) – particularly Emily Fallon (Transformation and Engagement Manager) and her team - who believe in our low carb project and have been hugely supportive in getting this meal planner out there to benefit as many members of our local community as possible. Thank you!

It is really important to us that we work with local people to produce these meal planners and any future materials, as well as finding out whether you have enjoyed the content, and whether it has helped you to work towards your health goals. We would love to hear from you. Please email any general feedback to mseicb-me.lowcarb.cvpcn@nhs.net, such as what recipes you have tried out, what you liked, or disliked, and any improvements you may have seen with your health. If you have a little bit longer and would be so kind as to complete a quick survey for us- please follow the link: <https://forms.office.com/r/yWbVSh7hdG> or scan the QR code below. We can then share this feedback with our project team and the NHS funders that supported the project.



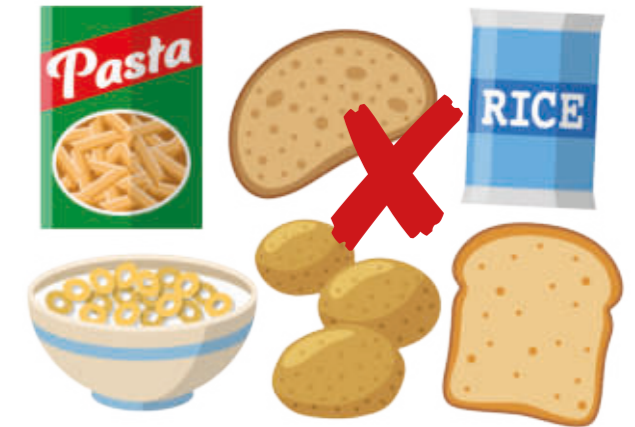
To thank you for taking the time to complete the survey, if you live in the Braintree District we have free gym passes (to be used in Fusion Leisure Centres) at the ready - one of the team will get in touch to distribute this to you if you kindly add your contact details at the end of the survey. Thanks for your time, we really look forward to hearing your feedback and continuing to improve our materials.

Low Carb Basics

In the most basic of forms, a low carb way of eating comprises of the following rules:

- No bread or wheat based bread products** such as wraps, pittas, crackers etc (and it doesn't matter if the bread is wholemeal, seeded, artisan sourdough – sorry, but all must be avoided!).
- No potatoes** (including sweet potatoes).
- No rice** (again this includes brown rice).
- No breakfast cereals including porridge oats** (I know - I thought it was good for me too!).
- No pasta** – other pasta options are now available in most supermarkets. Aldi stock a good soy spaghetti or mungbean fettucini. The larger supermarkets tend to stock pasta shapes made of pea or lentil – a better option for most as they have much higher protein levels – but are best avoided if you have pre-diabetes or diabetes, as they have a moderate carbohydrate content.
- Avoid Ultra Processed Foods (UPFs)** – I class this as any packaged food in the supermarket that has a list of 5 or more ingredients – particularly if you don't recognise the name of those ingredients or have them in your cupboard at home.
- Avoid sugar** (the food companies have over 100 names for sugar so don't let them trick you! – as well as standard white table sugar this would include brown sugar, coconut sugar, molasses, fructose, maltose, sucrose, maltodextrin, brown rice syrup – to name a few!). Also try to avoid most artificial sweeteners as evidence has shown some of these cause levels of blood glucose to rise and to light up those addiction areas of the brain that can crave sweetness. If you want to add sweetness, then use sweeteners such as Stevia, Xylitol or Erythritol (sugar alcohols, used as low calorie sweeteners) – these are more expensive but you won't need much so it will last.
- Eat above ground vegetables** – these are far less starchy than their “below ground” counterparts.
- Be careful with fruit** – we are told to eat fruit and obtain our “5 a day” but we believe fruit is nature's “dessert” and should be treated accordingly. When eating fruit, stick to fruit that grows in the UK – mainly berries and the occasional apple, pear or plum. Avoid any tropical fruits like mango, pineapple, bananas and grapes as these are packed full with natural sugars. Avoid fruit juice at all costs.
- Avoid vegetable and seed oils** including sunflower oil, rapeseed oil, corn oil, soybean oil etc.

These have been promoted to us as healthy but increasing evidence suggest they are very inflammatory within our bodies and are best avoided. Stick to natural saturated fats like olive oil, butter, lard, beef dripping and coconut oil.
- When looking at food packaging, aim for products that contain 10g or less of total carbohydrate in 100g.** The food manufacturers will try and trick you with their “food traffic light” system- so ignore that!



My 10 Low Carb Mottos

- 1 **Only eat when hungry** - not when a mealtime dictates it.
- 2 **Breakfast is not the most important meal of the day** – only Mr Kellogg said this and I think he had an ulterior motive! If you are not hungry when you wake, it is ok to skip breakfast and try to have a brunch followed by an evening meal.
- 3 **Don't snack** – it's unnecessary and probably means you didn't eat enough fat and/or protein at your last meal.
- 4 **Prioritise protein** – I was shocked to recently find out that a man needs 1.8g protein per kg bodyweight per day, and women around 1.6g per kg – your body will keep telling you to eat until you hit these targets, so aim to do it in the most efficient way!
- 5 **When in doubt, eat meat, fish or eggs** – aim to limit meat preserved with nitrates such as salami and cured sandwich meats.
- 6 **Eat larger portions for your main meals so you feel full**, and aim to reduce/stop snacking in between. Ultimately you may wish to achieve 2 larger meals per day instead of 3 smaller ones.
- 7 **If there are more than 5 ingredients on the packet and/or you don't recognise the chemical names, then don't eat it** (L-Cysteine hydrochloride or Glycerol Mono Stearate anyone??).
- 8 **Avoid low fat diet options whenever possible** – such as yoghurts, mayonnaise, cream cheese, cottage cheese etc. In general, low fat options contain more sugar and the reduction in fat means less control of hunger. If you are not diabetic and are more concerned about weight loss, then using low fat products may be an option if weight loss stalls.
- 9 **Avoid processed snack products claiming to be low carb such as protein bars, smoothies or shakes** – they have a ridiculously large ingredients list, are heavily processed and are often still quite high in “natural sugars”.
- 10 **Eat food that you buy as it was originally produced/as nature intended it** – and you can't go far wrong!

Eat. Real. Food.

Drinks

So, what to drink on a low carb lifestyle?

In general, you can have unlimited water (still or sparkling) plus tea and coffee (with or without milk). Limit very milky drinks like lattes and cappuccinos to one daily and use full fat milk for satiety and lower sugar levels. Sugar free cordials are acceptable but do contain artificial sweeteners, so for those who are trying to eliminate sugar from their diets, this is better to avoid if possible – why not try a squeeze of lime or lemon instead?

Avoid fruit juices or smoothies of any kind – if you want to have the fruit then eat it. Fruit juice is basically fruit with all the good stuff removed so it is easy to digest and will cause large spikes in your blood sugar. If you enjoy a smoothie, then make your own using yoghurt and berries/nuts – but still better to just eat the ingredients in the first place as your body will have to use energy to break them down.

And what about alcohol you ask?!

You will be pleased to hear that alcohol is allowed as part of a low carb lifestyle. However, it is important to remember that despite certain alcohols not increasing your blood sugar, they do contain lots of calories – so if weight loss is your aim, you will need to carefully consider your alcohol consumption.

I am afraid that lager, cider, bitter, port and liqueurs are out (this includes cream liqueurs). Sparkling wines however, are very low in carbohydrates – so see if you can move towards prosecco and cava! Red, rose and white wines are fine – try to stick to dry white wine, and for reds – pinot noir, merlot and cabernet sauvignon work best.

Obviously, whatever you are drinking, you need to keep within safe drinking levels which is 14 units per week – this equates to around 14 single measures of spirits (use a spirit measure or jigger if you can, as home measures tend to be on the large size!) or 1-2 bottles of wine.

If you are someone who really cannot face eliminating beer from their diet completely, there are some lower carb beers out there that can be consumed minimally. These include SkinnyBrands lager, Amstel Light, Becks Premier Light, Marstons Resolution Lager, Michelob Ultra Light, Bud Light and Coors Light.

Most spirits (not liqueurs) are fine, either neat or with a mixer that is diet/slimline – such as diet cola or diet lemonade, or slimline tonic etc.

Snacks and Desserts

Wherever possible, try not to snack. We often snack out of habit or boredom – with that time period between the evening meal and bedtime being the most dangerous for most people. If you are thinking about snacking, always start with a large glass of water and then see if the urge is still there.

If you are bored, then take up a hobby to take your mind off the food cupboard – Macrame? Knitting? Woodwork? Crosswords?

If you really are hungry, then consider one of the snacks below as opposed to carb laden treats. Also consider your last meal – if you are hungry before your next meal time, this indicates there was not enough satiating fat or protein in your last meal so you may need to adjust it the next time you eat it.

There are plenty of very tasty low carb desserts available – but in almost all cases you will need to make these yourself as they will not be available to purchase in supermarkets. Strawberries and cream is always a good option and cheesecake can often be made into a low carb alternative with ease. It is important to remember though, that no-one should be eating dessert every day even if it is low carb! It should be considered a treat to have every now and again or for a special occasion such as a birthday or Christmas. For those people who know they are addicted to sugar – having a dessert is a sure fire way to send them into freefall, so think very carefully about any desserts if you think you may be one of these people.

- **3 squares of dark chocolate** – aim for minimum 75% cocoa solids but the higher the better!
- **Small handful of nuts** – brazils, almonds, hazelnuts, pistachios and walnuts work well. Peanuts are ok but shouldn't be consumed in large quantities as they are higher in carbohydrate. Avoid cashews.
- **Small bowl of berries** – strawberries, raspberries, blueberries, blackberries, cherries
- **Small bowl of full fat Greek yoghurt** (you can add berries or nuts if you like)
- **Sugar free jelly**
- **A small piece of cheese**
- **Small apple or pear**
- **Cucumber or celery sticks**
- **Small bowl of olives**
- **Seed crackers with hummus, guacamole, or peanut butter**
- Try out some of your own **low carb biscuits**, or batch cook low carb brownies and keep them in the freezer to defrost in times of emergencies!



103 Names For Sugar

Low Carb at its most simplistic, is about reducing the sugar in your diet. When you are cooking from scratch, it's much easier to see what sugar and starch you are adding from your basic ingredients. However, on occasion it may make life easier to reach for a store bought sauce, or you might be tempted to reach for a snack bar advertised as "keto" or "no added sugars". If there's no added sugars, it must be okay right?! Well, sugar can go by a deluge of different names and food manufacturers will go out of their way to try and trick you. Generally, the population is aware that added sugar isn't a good idea, so food companies will do their best to hide how much sugar is actually in a product.

Sugar is sneaky and can appear where you least expect it. Over half the barcoded food products sold in the UK contain added sugars or sweeteners even when labelled as "healthy" or "natural". The list below contains in alphabetical order, 103 other names for sugar that a food company might list on a label. Start analysing ingredient labels in the supermarket and you will be shocked. Avoiding products with any of these ingredients is a good plan – don't let them trick you!



103 Names For Sugar



- | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 Agave nectar | 22 Corn syrup solids | 44 Fruit juice concentrate | 65 Maltitol | 86 Rice malt |
| 2 Anhydrous dextrose | 23 Crystal dextrose | 45 Galactose | 66 Maltodextrin | 87 Rice syrup |
| 3 Barbados sugar | 24 Crystalline Fructose | 46 Glucitol | 67 Maltol | 88 Rice syrup solids |
| 4 Barley malt | 25 Date sugar | 47 Glucoamine | 68 Maltose | 89 Saccharose |
| 5 Barley malt syrup | 26 Dehydrated cane juice | 48 Glucose (solids) | 69 Malts | 90 Secanet |
| 6 Beet sugar | 27 Demerara sugar | 49 Golden sugar/syrup | 70 Mannitol | 91 Sorbitol |
| 7 Blackstrap Molasses | 28 Dextran | 50 Granulated Sugar | 71 Mannose | 92 Sorghum Syrup |
| 8 Brown sugar | 29 Dextrin | 51 Grape Juice Concentrate | 72 Maple syrup | 93 Sucanat |
| 9 Buttered syrup | 30 Dextrose | 52 Grape sugar | 73 Molasses | 94 Sucrose |
| 10 Cane crystals | 31 Diastatic Malt | 53 Hexitol | 74 Muscovado | 95 Sugar |
| 11 Cane juice | 32 Diatase | 54 HFCS | 75 Muscovado Syrup | 96 Sweet Sorghum |
| 12 Cane juice crystals | 33 Diglycerides | 55 High-Fructose Corn Syrup | 76 Nectars | 97 Syrup |
| 13 Cane sugar | 34 Disaccharides | 56 Honey | 77 Palm sugar | 98 Table Sugar |
| 14 Caramel | 35 Ethyl Maltol | 57 Icing sugar | 78 Pancake syrup | 99 Treacle |
| 15 Carbitol | 36 Evaporated cane juice | 58 Inversol | 79 Panocha | 100 Turbinado sugar |
| 16 Carob syrup | 38 Florida crystals | 59 Invert sugar | 80 Pentose | 101 White sugar |
| 17 Castor sugar | 39 Free-flowing brown sugars | 60 Isomalt | 81 Powdered sugar | 102 Yellow sugar |
| 18 Coconut sugar | 40 Fructooligosaccharides | 61 Lactose | 82 Raisin syrup | 103 Zylose |
| 19 Coconut palm sugar | 41 Fructose | 62 Liquid fructose | 83 Raw sugar | |
| 20 Confectioner's sugar | 42 Fructose sweetener | 63 Malt syrup | 84 Refiner's syrup | |
| 21 Corn sweetener/syrup | 43 Fruit juice | 64 Malt Barley | 85 Ribose Rice syrup | |

Basic Store Cupboard Ingredients

If you haven't done much homemade cooking up until now, the thought of starting can be a bit daunting! However, a well-stocked and organised food cupboard will ease the stress of making midweek meals and will also mean that you are less likely to grab carb laden snacks or return to your former way of eating. To make cooking more cost effective, stick to basic and long-life products so you will always have a meal to hand. Low carb generally does incorporate a fair amount of fresh food (however, you can always substitute with frozen or canned in many situations), but you can pick this up as part of a weekly shop and bulk up with tinned ingredients as needed.

The list below is certainly not exhaustive, but gives an idea of the products you will be reaching for time and time again.

Fridge

- Eggs (Asda, £1.70 15pk)
- Plain Yogurt (Aldi, 45p 500g)
- Cheese (Aldi, £2.69 400g)
- Butter (Asda, £1.99 250g)



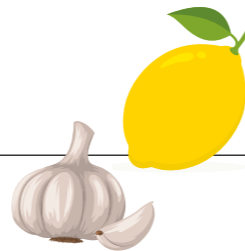
Tins

- Baked Beans (Asda, 26p per tin)
- Chickpeas (Asda, 41p per tin)
- Tomatoes (Asda, 32p per tin)
- Tuna (Asda, 55p per tin)
- Lentils (Tesco, 54p per tin)



Fruit & Vegetables

- Garlic Cloves (Asda, 75p 3pk)
- Onions (Asda, 85p 1kg)
- Lemons (Asda, 90p 4pk)



Oils & Condiments

- Extra Virgin Olive Oil (Tesco, £1.90 250ml)
- Soy Sauce (Aldi, 55p 150ml)
- Mixed Herbs (Aldi, 49p 11g)
- Salt (Aldi, 39p 750g)
- Pepper (Asda, £1.25 104g)
- Mustard (Aldi, 49p 200g)
- Worcester Sauce (Aldi, 69p, 150ml)



Pasta Alternatives

- Red Lentil & Beetroot Pasta (Aldi, £1.49 250g)
- Dried Soybean Spaghetti (Aldi, £1.99 200g)
- Green Pea Penne (Aldi, £1.49 250g)
- Chickpea Fusilli (Aldi, £1.49 250g)



Store Cupboard Staples

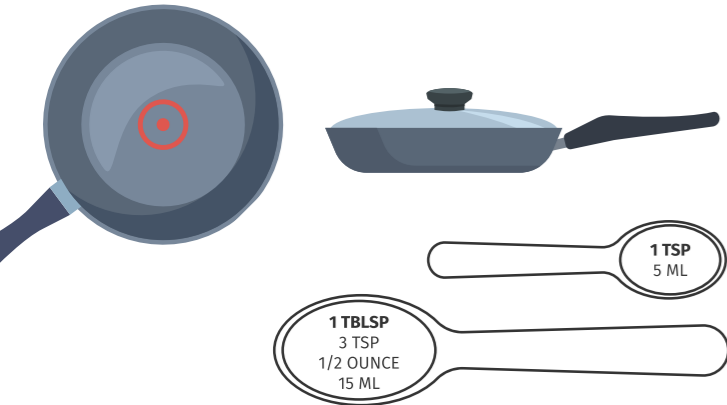
- Tomato Puree (Aldi, 45p 200g)
- Stock Cubes (Aldi, 52p 12pk)
- Gram Flour (A pulse flour made from chickpeas) (Asda, £2.50 2kg)
- Erythritol (sugar alcohols, used as low calorie sweeteners) (Tesco, £3.20 250g)
- Baking Powder (Asda, 95p 170g)
- Selection of Spices (Aldi, on average 60p per jar)
- Passata (Thick tomato sauce) (Aldi, 42p 500g)



Basic Kitchen Utensils

What's the difference between a sieve and a colander? Is the spoon in your cutlery drawer any good for measuring out tablespoons? These questions might be going through your mind if you haven't spent much time cooking in your kitchen to date.

There are a lot of gimmicky kitchen utensils out there and to be honest, most are totally unnecessary and will likely end up gathering dust like the home gym equipment you bought in 2009! There are a few items that you will need to be able to rustle up nutritious meals – and although not absolutely essential – they will make your cooking journey more efficient and enjoyable. Again, the list is not exhaustive but might give you an idea of the sorts of items you might find useful.



- 1 Baking Tray
- 2 Tin Foil
- 3 Greaseproof Paper
- 4 Cheese Grater
- 5 Chopping Board
- 6 Kitchen Knives
- 7 Mixing Bowl
- 8 Measuring Jug
- 11 Potato Peeler
- 12 Frying Pan
- 13 Potato Masher
- 14 Saucepans
- 15 Mixing Spoon
- 16 Colander
- 17 Tin Opener
- 18 Rolling Pin
- 19 Oven Dish
- 20 Kitchen Scales
- 21 Teaspoon
- 22 Tablespoon
- 23 Small Handheld Spiraliser



Use By and Best Before Dates

Food labels provide a wide range of information about foods. A quick guide has been provided below as use by and best before dates can often be confused:

Use By Dates

- States the date up to which a food is safe to eat.
- It is generally found on high-risk foods which require refrigeration such as meat, fish and dairy products.
- Foods that has passed their use by date will contain harmful bacteria that cannot be seen and does not smell.
- Freezing food before its use by date extends its life but once defrosted it should be eaten within 24 hours.
- Do not freeze food after its use by date.

Best Before Dates

- Best before dates indicate the length of time food will be at its best quality.
- Food that has passed its best before date is not unsafe to eat but its flavour, texture and quality may be affected.

The Cost to Run Your Kitchen Appliances

How much does it cost to run the 6 main cooking appliances most commonly found in British homes? Most people (myself included) have no idea which of their appliances cost the most to use. A recent study of 2000 households showed that Britons could save up to £600 per year off their utility bills just by changing the appliances they use to cook, with the electric cooker being the most energy intensive of them all.

Simple behavioural changes like batch-cooking larger quantities, using well-fitting lids on pans, and not overfilling the kettle can also help to bring costs down. Think about digging out that slow cooker you have hiding at the back of a cupboard as it might save you some money. Air Fryers are also popular right now and if you can source one cost effectively it might save you in cooking costs over the long term.

This page is here to highlight the average cost to a family of using these appliances over a 12 month period and are based on the average amount of time each appliance is used during each day (daily, weekly and monthly cost may not add up to the annual cost due to rounding). By taking these into account you may be able to reduce your own consumptions costs and help the environment too – win win!

Microwave

Cost per day to run: 8p
Cost per week to run: 58p
Cost per month to run: £2.50
Cost per year to run: £30.02



Air fryer

Cost per day to run: 14p
Cost per week to run: £1.01
Cost per month to run: £4.40
Cost per year to run: £52.74



Slow cooker

Cost per day to run: 16p
Cost per week to run: £2.32
Cost per month to run: £10.07
Cost per year to run: £120.83



Gas cooker

Cost per day to run: 33p
Cost per week to run: £2.32
Cost per month to run: £10.17
Cost per year to run: £120.83



Dual cooker (part electric, part gas)

Cost per day to run: 72p
Cost per week to run: £5.08
Cost per month to run: £22
Cost per year to run: £264.03



Electric cooker

Cost per day to run: 87p
Cost per week to run: £6.09
Cost per month to run: £26.38
Cost per year to run: £316.54



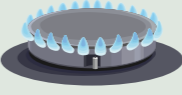





Source: (The Independent, August 2022)
Energy prices: Swapping oven for microwave could cut hundreds of pounds off bills.

Converting Cooking Times

With the cost of gas and electricity reaching eye watering levels - the cost of living crisis continues to be the biggest national issue facing most families at this time. But luckily, there are savings to be made by thinking about how you cook your food. If you have read the section on the cost of running your kitchen appliances and want to try using cost effective methods, then this chart might help you convert oven cooking times to slow cooker times. And even better, you will have a delicious home cooked meal awaiting you when you return home after a busy day.....



Pressure Cooker High pressure (15 P SI)	Oven 160°C Fan/180°C Gas mark 4 (350 °F)	Oven 140°C Fan/ 160°C Gas mark 3 (325°F)	Slow Cooker High 90°C / 194.F	Slow Cooker Medium 84°C / 184°F	Slow Cooker Low 77°C / 171°F
					
10 MINS	30 MINS	35 MINS	2 HOURS	3 HOURS	4 HOURS
20 MINS	1 HOUR	1 HOUR & 10 MINS	2 ½ HOURS	4 HOURS	5 HOURS
30 MINS	1 ½ HOURS	1 HOUR & 45 MINS	3 HOURS	4 ½ HOURS	6 HOURS
40 MINS	2 HOURS	2 HOURS & 20 MINS	3 ½ HOURS	5 HOURS	7 HOURS
50 MINS	2 ½ HOURS	2 HOURS & 55 MINS	4 HOURS	6 HOURS	8 HOURS
1 HOUR	3 HOURS	3 ½ HOURS	4 ½ HOURS	7 HOURS	9 HOURS

Appliances may vary, all cooking times are provided as a guide. The cooking methods listed above will not be suitable for all recipes. Check food regularly during cooking to prevent burning and ensure food is fully cooked and piping hot throughout before serving.

Contributors

So many people have helped bring this book together. Firstly, it would not have come about without the kind support of Mid and South Essex Integrated Care Board (ICB) (a statutory body that brings the NHS together locally with partner organisations), who had faith in the Freshwell Low Carb Project, and wanted to help us roll it out throughout the wider area to help more people reap the health benefits of improving their diet.

Katie Caldesi and Octopus Books were kind enough to let me use some of their published low carb recipes. Dr Jen Unwin, a health psychologist, has also donated recipes from her book “Fork in the Road”. Emma Porter, a low carb recipe designer and blogger who herself has type 1 diabetes, has provided some lovely recipes including her super simple “2 Ingredient Chocolate Mousse” – an absolute must try!

Members of our low carb Facebook group have also kindly donated recipes, with Viv and Pam being two of our patient expert volunteers. If you would like to know a little more about their personal low carb stories, then do read on.

Our local foodbanks and groups working with them have also allowed us to tweak some of their recipes and include them here. I am very grateful to everyone that has worked with us and contributed to make this book happen. If you would like to know more about the contributors, please read on – you will also find more information on available books by these contributors in our Recommended Reading list.

Mid and South Essex Integrated Care Board

Dan Doherty, Mid Essex Alliance Director, has been the project sponsor of this work and first challenged us to produce additional meal planners that could be used and enjoyed by even more people across Essex. Dan was first told about the low carb diet and the science behind it by my colleague and fellow GP Partner Dr Oliver and was shocked as to the impact of certain foods on health, such as ultra-processed carbohydrates. Dan has enjoyed trying out low carb meals himself but recognised that some of the recipes and ingredients were expensive, so wondered what meals could be made with a lower budget and/or more ethnically diverse. He challenged colleague Emily Fallon, Mid Essex Alliance Transformation Manager, to work with us to develop this project and develop more low-carb materials. Emily has coordinated the project since, kept us on track, and supported us to map out the project plan, delivery plan, and evaluation. As a Registered Associate Nutritionist, Emily is passionate about good food and nutrition, and understands how vital nutrition is for good health, wellbeing, and disease management. Emily is an advocate for the low carb lifestyle, particularly for the purposes of weight management and Type 2 diabetes control; she has even shared the manuals with her Grandma, a Type 2 Diabetic, who has enjoyed cooking the new recipes with Emily, and feels much better for doing so. We have all received

great support from Emily and Dan’s colleague Megan Cornish, Mid Essex Alliance Administrator, who has helped with research and edited various documents within the planners, which we hope you will enjoy reading and learning from. Megan is new to the team and has loved being involved in this project and can’t wait to try out some of the recipes – perfect for lunch at work!

Local Partners

Special thanks go to those who helped us right at the start of the project, when we were exploring what to focus on in the manuals and understand what matters most to people when it comes to eating good food.

Survey distribution

Thank you very much to the local organisations that helped us to gather views about the project. We wrote a survey to find out what people thought about ‘healthy eating’, and what might help them to eat well. We are so grateful to local Community Pharmacies, GP practices, churches, leisure centres, community fridges, plus parish and town Councils within the Braintree District for displaying our survey poster in their windows/noticeboards, and some on their social media. Special thanks also go to **BRAINTREE FOODBANK**, specifically Project Manager Lee Ranson, who not only helped us to write the survey to ensure that it made sense,

but also with his team of volunteers who added copies of the survey to hundreds of food bank parcels, so that we could hear the views of as many local people as possible. We are pleased to have received very helpful feedback that we have directly used in the meal planners, such as how our recipes are written and formatted, as well as people’s favourite recipes.

Focus group



We ran a focus group at **HEALTHWATCH ESSEX** and invited local people and organisations to attend to share their views. Healthwatch Essex really helped us to plan out our focus group, and Engagement Manager Dan Potts was particularly helpful, sharing his suggestions on specific questions to ask the participants. We

were supported by **BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL** staff to deliver this focus group, specifically engagement officer Jo Norris and Health Improvement Officer Katie Bright. We were also supported by Colne Valley Primary Care Network Health and Wellbeing Coach, Sharon Withnell, who has been fundamental in delivering our low carb service for our registered patients, and helped to expand this work across the whole of Essex. Our team of facilitators are shown above, and our full group with attendees are shown below.



We are so pleased to have had great attendance and really useful suggestions shared, which we have used to shape the project. Attendees (shown above) included **ACTIVE ESSEX, PURPLE OLIVE CATERING, ESSEX WELLBEING SERVICE – PROVIDE CIC, and EASTLIGHT COMMUNITY HOMES**. We discussed what the barriers and facilitators are to eating well, as well as what we could add to our planners for them to be used and enjoyed as much as possible. The group gave us great ideas for the language, content, and format of our materials.

Soul Food

The Gateway Project is a Christian community in Halstead, grown out of St Andrew's Church, Halstead. The project has been running a food outreach programme in their local community since June 2021.



Soul Food provides a beautiful free weekly two course take away service and it's available to anyone who needs it. Since the project's launch it has served over 2,000 meals, some of which have been included in our meal planners- we selected the ones that Halstead residents loved the most!

The idea for Soul Food developed out of a door-step conversation between Rev Jo Parrot (St Andrew's Curate) and Rachael Simpson (Community Outreach Worker) about the impact that the Covid pandemic was having locally, and the church wanted to help meet the needs of the community.

Soul Food is supported by a team of volunteers who give their time and culinary skills to prepare meals for the local community and is led by Rachael Simpson the Community Outreach worker. In 2022, the team started an allotment to grow produce for the takeaway meals and regularly features produce in their meals.

Rachael explains more about the Soul Food project: "We set up Soul Food takeaway service to help people in our local community who needed support with meals after the first lockdown. If the last couple of years has taught us anything, it's the importance of community, Jesus was big in community and sharing life together. Soul Food is open to all in the

local area, and everyone is welcome. Hospitality is key to our ministry and is at the centre of what do. We hope that Soul Food is more than a takeaway and that it helps build community. We are widening our services in November 2022 to offer sit down meals and hope this will help people connect and build friendships – watch this space!"

Contact: @GatewayHalstead on Facebook

The Salvation Army (Colchester)

Thank you to all our lovely colleagues at **THE SALVATION ARMY** in Colchester for sharing their "Cooking on a budget" resource which helped to influence some of the recipes we created. It encouraged us to explore how we can utilise our store cupboard staples to create nutritious options, which taste good and do good, on a budget.

Katie & Giancarlo Caldesi

Katie and Giancarlo Caldesi own London's Caffé Caldesi as well as Caldesi in Campagna in Bray. They co-authored The Gentle Art of Preserving and Around The World in Salads which was nominated for the André Simon Food Book Award and the Guild of Food Writers' Cookbook of the Year award. They have both appeared on Saturday Kitchen. Katie is also the author of The Italian Cookery Course.

Giancarlo was diagnosed with type 2 diabetes in 2012. Since then, he has lost nearly 4 stone and his diabetes is in remission after adopting a low carb diet.

Both Katie and Giancarlo are passionate in wanting to share their story and spread the word that type 2 diabetes should be taken seriously, but at the same time reinforce that you can help yourself back to health and away from this condition through diet, not drugs. They have loved creating recipes that satiate and are easy to produce. "Quality, quantity, movement" is Giancarlo's mantra, and I wholeheartedly agree!

Check out their wonderful, low carb cookbooks: The Diabetes Weight-Loss Cookbook, The Reverse Your Diabetes Cookbook, The 30 Minute Diabetes Cookbook, and The Low Carb Weight-Loss Cookbook.



Dr Jen Unwin

Dr Jen Unwin is a clinical psychologist. And a lifelong carbohydrate addict. Jen wrote "Fork in the Road" which guides you in a clear way to identifying if you have carbohydrate addiction, finding the motivation to change your life, understanding how to build the right daily eating plan, the strategies for long-term success, and where to go for more information and support. In this beautifully illustrated book, Jen teams up with top clinicians in the field and with creative low-carbers who share what they have learned about freeing yourself from the emotional and physical dangers of overeating sugars, flours, and processed foods.

Check out the book and Jen's website at <https://forkintheroad.co.uk>

Emma Porter

Emma lives in Cheltenham with her two daughters and husband. Just before her eighteenth birthday, Emma was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes and found it a very challenging disease to live with, with as many ups and downs as she has had high and low blood sugars. Emma came across Paleo low carb through her trainer and friend and within 10 months, she fell in love with this lifestyle. Her once erratically controlled diabetes was suddenly in the best shape of it's life and she wasn't having to calculate the amount of carbohydrate she was ingesting all the time – managing to cut her insulin intake by approximately 60%.

Emma is the co-author of The Low Carb Diabetes Cookbook and has a website The Low Carb Kitchen, which has a collection of delicious, nutritious recipes and blogs. Check it out at

<https://thelowcarbkitchen.co.uk>

The Low Carb Diabetes Cookbook – Dr David Cavan and Emma Porter



Our Low Carb Patient Experts

Viv and Pam are both members of our low carb PCN Facebook group and are true advocates for low carb after obtaining truly life changing results from this lifestyle. They are both vegetarian and have contributed some lovely recipes to this planner, and our new vegetarian planner. You can read a little more about their own personal journeys here.....

Pam Moore

I started my low carb journey after years of feeling unwell. I had heard of low carb helping to put diabetes into remission, but I didn't think it would be easy to do. At 63 years old, I decided it was time to look after myself after spending all my adult life nursing and looking after my family.

I discovered the work of Dr David Unwin and found him to be so incredibly inspiring. A friend then discovered the Freshwell Low Carb Project locally to me and I went along to a meeting at the Guildhall in Finchingfield. I met Viv and Daryl (the group leaders) and thought that the work they were doing was incredible.

I got on the low carb journey straight away! I had a bit of a clear out of my pantry so I was not tempted by eating high carb foods. Within a few days I noticed my arthritic joints were not as painful, and my sugar levels and blood pressure had dropped. I weaned off my medication under my GP's supervision and the saving for the NHS for my drugs alone was £1,500 per year.

I felt rejuvenated and my daily activities became enjoyable and so I decided after just five months to start running again. I hadn't been able to do that for a few decades due to the aches and pains. I also found I was not waking up to use the bathroom at night and felt more refreshed in the morning. I enjoy food very much and I dine out and still stick to the plan. When choosing a new restaurant, I look at the menu first to see what I can eat and if I need to make substitutions, I ring the restaurant and ask. I find that the smaller places will be more than happy to help if you make the request in advance.

As a grandmother, I can enjoy my days with my grandson who is a very active toddler and still have enough energy to go to the gym for a Bounce Class and Pilates. I do about 8-10 gym sessions per week but I do mix the activities up every six weeks or so.

I am forever grateful to all the support and encouragement I have had from the Colne Valley Low Carb Group and I have definitely made some new friends too. Daryl is always there to give me some helpful advice and listen to me when I need someone. 2022 has been a tough year and I couldn't have achieved what I have without everyone's help.

I have gone down from a size 18 to a size 10/12 now. I love the new figure I have and the feeling of being alive is incredible. Shopping for clothes has become so much easier too. My endocrinologist has told me that I have extended my life by about twenty years.

Thank you for reading a bit about me. Now, for your wellbeing - just do it, you have so much to gain!



Viv Hamilton

I have been a vegetarian for practically all of my adult life. I started to slowly gain weight in my late twenties and had the usual experience of yo-yo dieting. I had been obese for about twenty years before finding out about low carb from the Freshwell surgery and my husband and I made the switch to a low carb lifestyle together. Initially we just cut back on starchy carbs - there didn't seem to be any guidance for how to be low carb AND vegetarian. Cutting out wholegrains went against the traditional advice for vegetarians who are told to combine pulses with wholegrains to obtain complete proteins from plants. I did some research and found out that small seeds (flax, hemp, sesame, chia etc) are not only low carb, they have a better nutritional profile than starchy grains and they are at least as good in complementing the profile of amino acids in pulses.

Low carb has been transformational for me. I have lost over 6 stone, feel a lot younger and am now in the healthy weight range. My IBS symptoms have disappeared, I have been decribed most of my blood pressure medicine and I no longer have arthritis pain in my knee. As my way of saying thank you, I now help others on their low carb journey.



Recommended Reading and Resources List

Books

- **The Obesity Code**, Dr Jason Fung
- **Why We Get Fat and What to Do About It**, Gary Taubes
- **Metabolical**, Robert Lustig
- **Why We Get Sick**, Benjamin Bikman
- **The Big Fat Surprise**, Nina Teicholz
- **Wheat Belly**, William Davis MD
- **Eat Rich, Live Long**, Ivor Cummins and Jeffry Gerber
- **The Complete Guide to Fasting**, Jason Fung and Jimmy Moore
- **The P:E Diet**, Ted Naiman
- **Fork In The Road**, Jen Unwin (food addiction)
- **The Diabetes Weight-Loss Cookbook**, Katie Caldesi and Giancarlo Caldesi
- **The Reverse Your Diabetes Cookbook**, Katie Caldesi and Giancarlo Caldesi
- **The 30 Minutes Diabetes Cookbook**, Katie Caldesi and Giancarlo Caldesi
- **The Low Carb Weight-Loss Cookbook**, Katie Caldesi and Giancarlo Caldesi

- **The Low Carb Diabetes Cookbook**, Dr David Cavan and Emma Porter
- **The Low Carb Baking Bible**, Emma Porter
- **Paleo Canteen Low Carb on a Budget**, John Meechan and Ally Houston

Local bookshop

Between the Lines, Vine Street, Great Bardfield, Essex, CM7 4SR (stocks a variety of the above suggested low carb books)

Websites

www.lowcarbfreshwell.co.uk
www.dietdoctor.com
www.sugarfreelondoner.com
www.wholesomeyum.com
www.lowcarbtogether.com
www.thelowcarbkitchen.co.uk
www.colnevalleypcn.nhs.uk
www.phcuk.org



Online peer support groups

- **Colne Valley PCN low carb support group** - Colne Valley Low Carb Support Group, Facebook <https://en-gb.facebook.com/groups/382235179606729/>
- **Low Carb Programme Essex Wellbeing Service** <https://www.facebook.com/groups/507672944551889/?ref=share>

Local restaurants and bakeries

As our low carb project has picked up pace, it has been amazing to get involved with our community via our local eateries and shops. Many of our local restaurants and pubs now offer low carb options to help support our project and the very many patients and members of our community who have chosen to embark upon a low carb lifestyle. Please support them!

- **The Fox Inn**
The Green, Finchingfield, Essex, CM7 4JX
- **Finchingfield Post Office**
(stocks all your low carb pantry essentials)
Bardfield Road, Finchingfield, Essex, CM7 4LS
- **Unikorn low carb Bakery Ltd**
(for bread, bread mixes and croissants)
5 The Links Business Centre, Bishops Stortford, Hertfordshire, CM23 5NZ

Also order online at www.lowcarb-bakery.com

- **Fox and Herb** – Deli and Gourmet Food Emporium
95-97 High Street, Halstead, Essex, CO9 2JQ

App

Freshwell – available on Android and iOS



There is support available for the use of technology and use of digital products, such as:

- help sessions in local libraries
- remote training and support for people who require help with essential IT skills, offered by we are digital - call 0114 551 2551 to get started
- <https://www.learnmyway.com/> - online training
- <https://aclessex.com/digital-skills> - can be delivered online with tutor support or at a centre
- To be directed to support contact Community360 on 01206 505250 or misp@community360.org.uk

Library

To print this meal planner or pick up a free copy (limited number of copies available in libraries within the Colne Valley area) visit a local library listed within Library locations and opening times <https://libraries.essex.gov.uk/library-locations-and-opening-times/>



Services

There are **free, local weight management services** to offer further support from trained staff, as follows.

- **Colne Valley PCN Freshwell Low Carb Programme** - for patients registered to either Coggeshall Surgery, Pump House, Kelvedon and Feering, Freshwell Health Centre, Elizabeth Courtauld, or Hedingham Medical Centre. The programme incorporates the easy-to-use Freshwell App, educational video modules, and a dedicated health and wellbeing coach offering 1-2-1 support in engaging with the educational materials, the setting of SMART goals, reviewing successes and challenges, and moving forward towards desired outcomes over a 12-week period. A smart phone or laptop with access to the internet is required. The service incorporates modules for weight management, education for prediabetes and structured education for type 2 Diabetes. More information can be found at <https://www.colnevalleypcn.nhs.uk/local-support-advice/colne-valley-low-carb-lifestyle/>

- **Essex Wellbeing Service (EWS) Low Carb Programme** - The Low Carb Programme is a self-guided programme that uses Freshwell resources. Participants can benefit from information, skills, tips and support to help them to adopt a low-carb approach and achieve their health goals. By signing up to the Low Carb Programme you will receive educational videos and get access to the Freshwell App where you can find additional information, tips and recipes. You will also be assigned a Wellbeing Practitioner and have up to six telephone sessions. You will be invited to join the EWS Low Carb Facebook group and be part of the supportive online community of clients all on the Low Carb programme. Essex Wellbeing Service also supports with lots of other health and wellbeing related areas, such as smoking cessation, emotional health and wellbeing support, and much more. Information can be found at www.essexwellbeingsservice.co.uk/services/weight-management

There are also many other free services available to support you with your overall health and wellbeing:

- **Eating disorder** - Beat offers a free helpline, open every day of the year from 9am to midnight during the week, and 4pm to midnight on weekends and bank holidays 0808 801 0677 or a 1-2-1 web chat via **One-to-One Web Chat - Beat** (beateatingdisorders.org.uk)

- **Citizens Advice** support with debt management, tackling fuel poverty, and many other areas. Each area has their own citizens advice, but their general contact number is 808 223 1133.
 - **Talking therapy** - free and confidential talking therapy and practical support for adults with common mental health problems including anxiety and depression. For more information, visit: **Health in Mind - Mid Essex IAPT HPFT IAPT Services** (hpftiapt.nhs.uk)
-

4 week

ROTATING MEAL PLANNER

WEEK ONE

(see recipes in bold found in this meal planner)

	BREAKFAST	LUNCH	DINNER
MONDAY	Greek yoghurt with blueberries	Basic Salad with Easy Salad Dressing served with ham, cheese or tinned tuna	Ben's Chilli Con Carne +/- Cauliflower Rice
TUESDAY	Microwave Cheesy Scrambled Egg	Smoked Mackerel Pate with cucumber or carrot sticks	Cheeseburger Meatzza +/- Basic Salad
WEDNESDAY	Microwave Mug Muffin with berries of your choice	Bean and Chilli Soup	Basic Meat Bolognese Sauce with soy or lentil pasta
THURSDAY	Infamous Chaffles with topping of your choice – try peanut butter or cream cheese	1 or 2 Basic Bread Rolls with low carb filling of your choice	Cottage Pie
FRIDAY	Boiled Eggs dipped in mayo and salt	Gram Flour Pancakes with filling of your choice	Basic Beefburgers with Basic Bread Rolls
SATURDAY	Microwave Cheesy Scrambled Egg with bacon	2-3 high meat content sausages with baked beans	Butter Chicken with Cauliflower Rice
SUNDAY	TWO MEAL DAY – eat brunch and evening meal	Fry Up! (No toast, hash browns or fried bread)	Grain Free Toad in the Hole with Swede Mash

WEEK TWO

(see recipes in bold found in this meal planner)

	BREAKFAST	LUNCH	DINNER
MONDAY	Greek yoghurt with raspberries	Microwave Mug Bread sliced and toasted with low carb topping of your choice	Luxury Chocolate Chilli served with Cauliflower Rice
TUESDAY	Microwave Mug Muffin with berries of your choice	Infamous Chaffles with topping of your choice – try peanut butter or cream cheese – or use to make a sandwich	One Pot Sausage, Pepper and Tomato Stew
WEDNESDAY	Soft Boiled Eggs with toasted Microwave Mug Bread	Basic Salad with Easy Salad Dressing served with ham, cheese or tinned tuna	Basic Cheese Sauce served with lentil or soy pasta
THURSDAY	Greek yoghurt with raspberries	1 or 2 Basic Bread Rolls with filling of your choice	Lentil Bolognese
FRIDAY	Microwave Cheesy Scrambled Egg	Bean and Chilli Soup	Basic Beefburgers served with salad, veg or Basic Bread Rolls
SATURDAY	Gram Flour Pancakes with cream and berries	2-3 high meat content sausages with baked beans	Grandma's Soya Sauce Chicken with Cauliflower
SUNDAY	TWO MEAL DAY – eat brunch and evening meal	Fry Up! (No toast, hash browns or fried bread)	Chicken Tray Bake

WEEK THREE

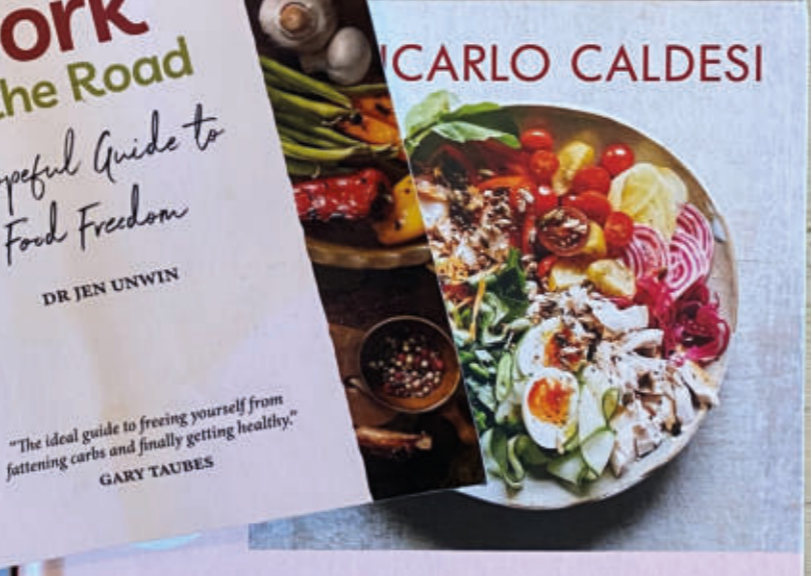
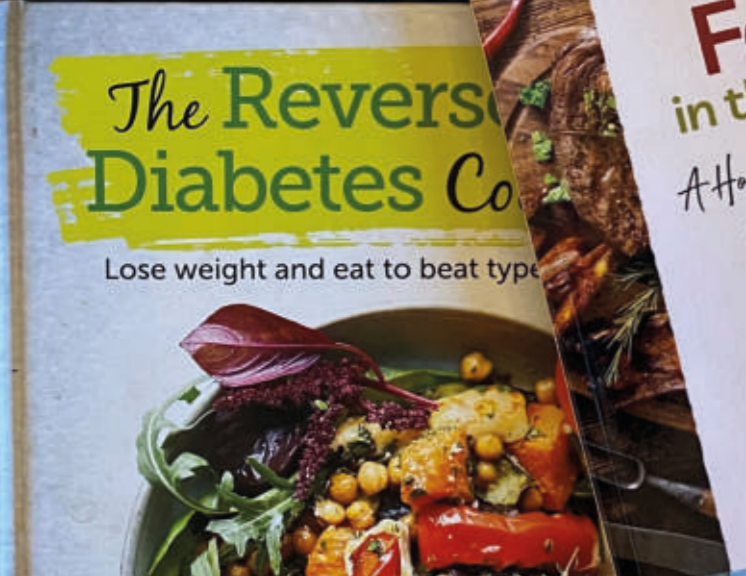
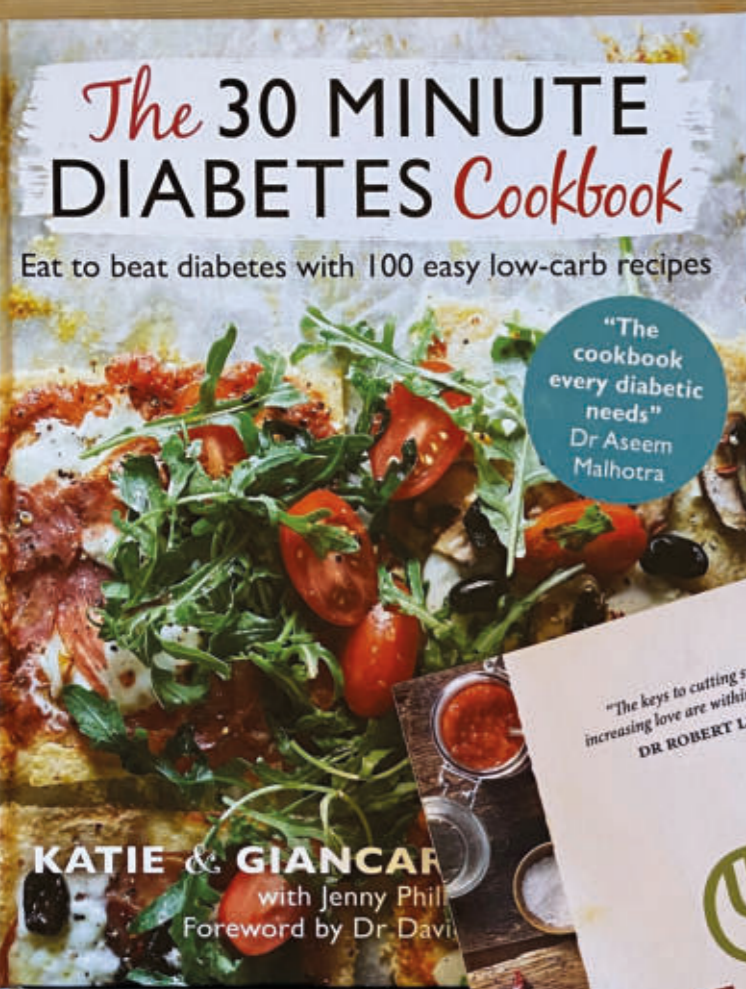
(see recipes in bold found in this meal planner)

	BREAKFAST	LUNCH	DINNER
MONDAY	Greek yoghurt with pecans and blueberries	Basic Salad with Easy Salad Dressing served with ham, cheese or tinned tuna	Basic Beefburgers with Basic Red Sauce and salad or veg
TUESDAY	Microwave Cheesy Scrambled Egg	Bean and Chilli Soup	Butter Chicken with Cauliflower
WEDNESDAY	Boiled Eggs dipped in mayo and salt	Gram Flour Pancakes with filling of your choice	Ben's Chilli Con Carne +/- cauliflower rice
THURSDAY	Microwave Mug Muffin with berries of your choice	1 or 2 Basic Bread Rolls with filling of your choice	Basic Meat Bolognese Sauce with soy or lentil pasta
FRIDAY	Greek yoghurt with raspberries	Microwave Mug Bread sliced and toasted with low carb topping of your choice	Lamb Dhansak served with Cauliflower Rice
SATURDAY	Infamous Chaffles with topping of your choice – try peanut butter or cream cheese	2-3 high meat content sausages with baked beans	Cottage Pie
SUNDAY	TWO MEAL DAY – eat brunch and evening meal	Fry Up! (No toast, hash browns or fried bread)	One Pot Sausage, Pepper and Tomato Stew

WEEK FOUR

(see recipes in bold)

	BREAKFAST	LUNCH	DINNER
MONDAY	Greek yoghurt with blueberries	1 or 2 Basic Bread Rolls with filling of your choice	Grain Free Toad in the Hole
TUESDAY	Microwave Mug Muffin with berries of your choice	Smoked Mackerel Pate with cucumber or carrot sticks	Chicken Tray Bake
WEDNESDAY	Microwave Cheesy Scrambled Egg	Gram Flour Pancakes with filling of your choice	Grandma's Soya Sauce Chicken with Cauliflower rice
THURSDAY	Boiled Eggs dipped in mayo and salt	Basic Salad with Easy Salad Dressing served with ham, cheese or tinned tuna	High meat content sausages with Swede Mash and veg or beans
FRIDAY	Greek yoghurt with raspberries	Bean and Chilli Soup	Cheeseburger Meatzza +/- Basic Salad
SATURDAY	Microwave Cheesy Scrambled Egg with bacon	2-3 High meat content sausages with baked beans	Green Beanguine All'Amatriciana
SUNDAY	TWO MEAL DAY – eat brunch and evening meal	Fry Up! (No toast, hash browns or fried bread)	Roast Chicken Legs with Easy Ratatouille



Budget RECIPES

How to Boil an Egg

Serves 1

Right – let's start this cooking malarkey with a basic cooking technique – how to boil an egg. Eggs are packed full of protein and make fantastic additions to salads or as a breakfast or a snack with its own natural wrapper! I often advise people to make up a batch of boiled eggs on Sunday night and keep them in a bowl in the fridge for up to 7 days– they can be placed in a lunchbox for a snack at work or just grabbed when you need something super quick! Dip in mayo with a pinch of salt to really hit the spot...

INGREDIENTS

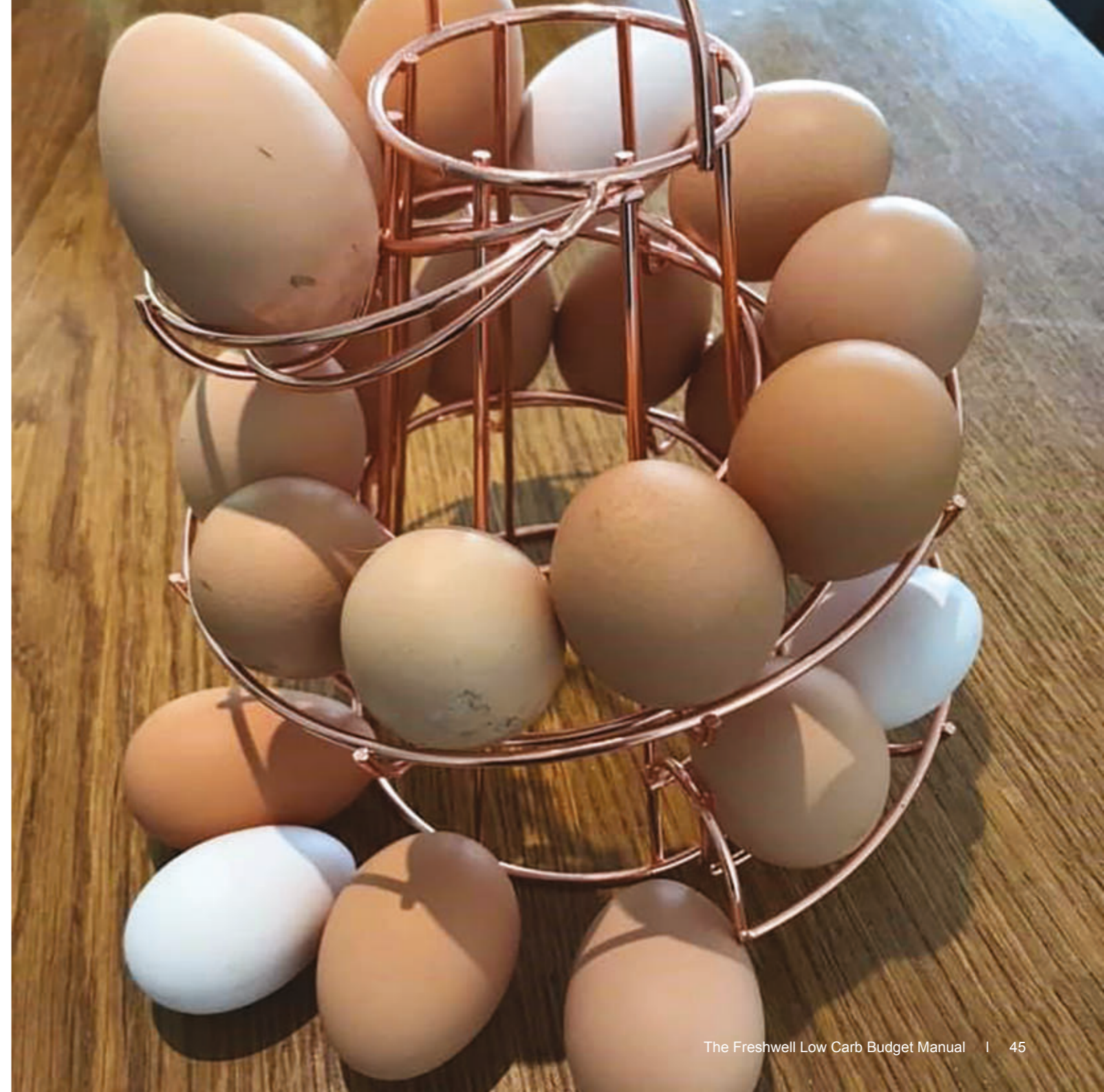
- Saucepan
- Boiling water
- An egg (room temperature preferable)

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Bring a pan of water to the boil – you need enough water to cover the egg.
- 2 Once boiling, gently place your egg on a spoon and lower it gently into the water.
- 3 Turn the heat down to a gentle simmer – you don't want the egg to be hammering around in the pan.
- 4 If you want a soft boiled egg then remove after 4 minutes.
- 5 If you want a hard boiled egg then remove after 6 minutes.

Adaption alert

You can also use a microwave to make boiled eggs – place the eggs in a microwave safe bowl and cover the eggs with hot water. Add ½ teaspoon (small spoon) of salt to the water for each egg (this is an **absolute must** as it stops them exploding and making a terrible mess!). Microwave on high for 4 minutes for two eggs, adding an additional minute for every additional 2 eggs). Let them rest in the bowl for an additional 2-3 minutes unless you want them soft boiled – in which case plunge them into a bowl of cold water once cooked.



Basic Red Sauce

Serves 2-3

72p
per
portion

A red sauce is the backbone of so many quick and easy meals and is very cost effective to make at home. Hopefully you will try this and never buy a jar of ready made sauce again!

Use as your basic “pasta sauce”, and add minced meat (see basic bolognese), chopped sandwich meats, or just eat plain with some grated cheddar cheese on the top.

Use as a topping for Meatzza (see recipe page 68).

Use as a sauce over burgers, chicken breasts or sausages or even roast veg– the list is endless!

INGREDIENTS

- 1 tin of chopped tomatoes
- 1 large clove of garlic – finely chopped
- ½ small onion – finely chopped (optional)
- 2 tablespoon (big spoon) olive oil or lard
- Pinch of salt to taste
- 1 tablespoon (big spoon) dried herbs of your choice – oregano, basil, mixed italian, herbes de provence etc
- Few grinds of black pepper
- A good squeeze of tomato puree (optional)

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Add the olive oil or lard to a saucepan and heat
- 2 Add the onion if using and stir until softened
- 3 Add the tin of chopped tomatoes and combine well.
- 4 Add all the other ingredients and stir
- 5 Turn down the heat and simmer with the lid off – the longer you do this the thicker the sauce will become. Aim for between 20-40 minutes depending on the time you have.
- 6 Serve with lentil pasta, soy spaghetti or as a Meatzza base or tomato sauce for meat or veg.

Adaption alert

You can use fresh tomatoes if you prefer – mash them in the pan using a potato masher.

A carton of tomato passata will also work well.

Use garlic granules or powder if you don't have any fresh.

Ketchup is an option instead of puree.



Basic Cheese Sauce

Makes 2 servings

80p
per
portion

This is one example where the low carb option is actually easier to make than the standard version as there's no need for a roux! Shop bought white sauces tend to be full of vegetable oils that are best avoided. This sauce works well over low carb pasta alternatives, or as a base for cauliflower cheese.

INGREDIENTS

- 300ml pot of full fat crème fraiche or sour cream (must be full fat to avoid the risk of curdling!)
- A knob of butter or a glug of olive oil
- A few handfuls of grated cheddar
- A few grinds of black pepper
- 1 teaspoon (small spoon) mustard (optional)
- Pinch of garlic powder (optional)

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Add the creme fraiche or sour cream to a saucepan and gently heat taking care not to boil!
- 2 When warm, add the butter or oil and stir until melted in.
- 3 Then add the grated cheese and combine well until the cheese has melted.
- 4 Add the black pepper, mustard and garlic powder (if using)
- 5 That's it!

Adaption alert

You could attempt using full fat natural or Greek yoghurt, but there is a high danger of curdling/splitting if you overheat, as the fat content isn't quite high enough - warm gently and don't leave the pan unattended!

Single cream is another option if you have some in the fridge.

Add chopped ham or leftover cooked chicken, and/or a small handful of frozen peas to make a more substantial sauce to use over pasta alternatives.

Pour over roasted veg of your choice and bake in the oven - cauliflower and broccoli work really well..



Easy Salad Dressing

Makes 2 servings

40p
per
portion

I'll admit I never really used to enjoy salad. And then I realised that it was a great dressing that brought salad alive! This is my basic "go to" salad dressing. I make it so often that I no longer have to measure the ingredients as I know by eye how much to use.

Shop bought salad dressings can be quite expensive and often contain vegetable oil and sugar. You can make your own delicious dressing with a few ingredients and a jam jar. It can be stored in the fridge for a couple of weeks. If you need larger quantities, essentially work on a ratio of 3 parts oil to 1 part vinegar and all should be well!

INGREDIENTS

- 6 tablespoon (big spoon) olive oil
- 2 tablespoon (big spoon) vinegar - red wine, white wine or apple cider
- 1 teaspoon (small spoon) Dijon mustard (optional)
- ½ finely crushed garlic clove
- Pinch of salt
- A few grinds of black pepper
- Pinch of onion powder (optional)



INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Add all ingredients to a clean jam jar.
- 2 Secure the lid and shake well until the contents are well mixed and the solution goes from clear to cloudy.
- 3 Pour over salad and store anything left over in the fridge. Shake well before using.

Adaption alert

Use garlic powder if you don't have fresh garlic.

Most vinegars will do the trick – even malt vinegar for chips - so use what you have indoors.

Once you get the hang of it you will be able to chuck things in a jar with no measuring and you can choose other herbs to flavour it – dried Italian herbs work well too!

Yellow mustard and wholegrain mustard would also work if you have them.

Luxury Chocolate Chilli

Serves 2-3

£1.53
per
portion

A tasty vegetarian recipe, kindly donated by SoulFood – a project run by the Gateway Project in Halstead, Essex – serving up meals to those in need in the community.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 can of red kidney beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 onion, chopped
- 2 tablespoon (big spoon) oil of choice – olive oil or butter (lard is an option if you are not vegetarian)
- 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1 can chopped tomatoes
- 1/2 teaspoon (small spoon) paprika
- 1/2 teaspoon (small spoon) cumin
- Pinch of chilli flakes (optional, can be more if you prefer your chilli more spicy)
- 1 vegetable stock cube
- 1 tablespoon (big spoon) tomato puree
- A glass of red wine (or strong brewed black tea)- optional
- 3 squares dark chocolate to taste (minimum 75% cocoa) or alternatively add a couple of teaspoon (small spoon) of cocoa or cacao powder
- Sour Cream or yoghurt to serve
- Cheddar cheese grated to serve

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Soften onions in the oil in a deep drying pan or saucepan.
- 2 Add the garlic, paprika and cumin and chilli flakes (if using).
- 3 Mix well and cook for a few minutes.
- 4 Add the tin of chopped tomatoes and kidney beans.
- 5 Add the crumbled stock cube, tomato puree, and a splash or two of wine (if using – strong brewed tea also works!).
- 6 Combine well and simmer on low heat for 15 mins, adding a little water if needed to get the desired consistency.
- 7 When nearly ready, add three squares of dark chocolate and stir in until melted. Either eat as is in a deep bowl with a good dollop of sour cream, topped with grated cheese, or serve on top a bed of cauliflower rice.

Adaption alert

As well as cooking on the hob, you could also pop this in your slow cooker for 4 hours and add the chocolate at the last minute before serving.

Strong brewed black tea is an excellent alternative to beer or wine in a recipe if you don't have any wine to hand. You could use tomato ketchup if you don't have any puree. Use dried garlic powder or "easy" garlic if you don't have any fresh.

You could use dried kidney beans, soaked overnight in water.

Basic Salad

Serves 2 as a main, more as a side

65p
per
portion

Salad can be tweaked in so many ways to make so many different eating experiences. This is my “go to” basic salad that can be dressed up or down as you please. I eat this every day for lunch at work with a tin of tuna, a good glug of olive oil and lashings of apple cider vinegar!

INGREDIENTS

- 1 small cos or iceberg lettuce (or a bag of salad leaves or fresh spinach leaves)
- 10 cherry tomatoes or 4 standard sized tomatoes
- 1/3 to 1/2 a cucumber sliced into 1cm slices (I like to quarter each slice to make smaller bite sized pieces)
- 1 medium pepper (I prefer red or yellow)
- Good sprinkle of sunflower seeds and pumpkin seeds (optional)
- Sprinkle of dried onions (optional)

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Chop the lettuce into thin 1cm strips, starting at the top and heading down towards the base.

You should be left with lots of thin strips of lettuce.
- 2 Add to a large serving bowl (go straight to this part if using a bag of salad or spinach leaves).
- 3 Cut the cherry tomatoes into halves, or standard sized tomatoes into slices or quarters. Add to the bowl.
- 4 Chop the cucumber into 1cm slices (and then quarter each slice if you prefer smaller pieces like me). Add to the bowl.
- 5 Chop the pepper into small slices or chunks. Add to the bowl.
- 6 Use your clean hands to toss the salad, trying to make a good even spread of ingredients.
- 7 Sprinkle the seeds and/or dried onion on to the top (optional).
- 8 Serve with my basic salad dressing or just pour a combination of 2/3 olive oil to 1/3 vinegar of your choice.



Salad Addition Suggestions for something meal worthy

- A tin of tuna
- Feta cheese chopped up into small chunks
- Hard boiled eggs
- Ham or bacon
- Grated cheddar
- Chopped chicken breast
- Sliced beef steak
- Chopped walnuts





Can be stored in an airtight container for 2-3 days or frozen and defrosted when required.

Make perfect burger buns but can also be enjoyed as sandwiches. Their nut free ingredients also make them ideal for school lunchboxes.

Basic Bread Rolls

Makes 4 small buns or 2 larger rolls

approx
77p
a roll if you are
making 4

I am pushing my luck a bit with this recipe, as it does require a few specialist ingredients which are more difficult to find in supermarkets and are a bit more expensive. However, I thought I would include it, as in my experience, bread is something that people really miss, so it may be worth giving them a try. They freeze well and are great with burgers as well as sandwiches for lunch.

INGREDIENTS

- 35g coconut flour
- 2 tablespoons milled/ground flaxseed
- 2 large pinches of salt
- 1 teaspoon (small spoon) baking powder
- 125g of grated mozzarella
- 2 tablespoons full fat cream cheese
- 2 medium eggs
- 1 tablespoon sesame or poppy seeds (optional)

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Preheat oven to 190C.
- 2 Line a baking sheet with greaseproof paper.
- 3 In a bowl mix together the coconut flour, flaxseed, baking powder and salt and put aside.
- 4 In another bowl combine the grated mozzarella and cream cheese.
- 5 Microwave for 45 seconds, stir and continue to repeat until the cheeses are melted and well combined.
- 6 Beat the eggs and add to the dry ingredients.
- 7 Add the cheese mixture and mix until well combined.
- 8 Knead with your hands until a dough forms.
- 9 Divide the dough into 4 equal balls.
- 10 Place the balls on to the baking sheet and gently press down into a roll shape.
- 11 Top with sesame or poppy seeds.
- 12 Bake for 18 minutes or until lightly browned.
- 13 Allow to cool before slicing in half.



Gram Flour Pancakes/Wraps

Makes two large pancakes

approx
60p
per
pancake

This is a great wrap that can be used for a savoury meal, or even sweetened slightly with erythritol (sugar alcohols, used as low calorie sweeteners) to make it suitable for breakfast or dessert (or Shrove Tuesday!). It can be stored and used to make wraps for picnics and lunchboxes for convenient meals on the go. They would even work as a thin pizza type base when garnished with tomato puree, grated cheese and your toppings of choice.

INGREDIENTS

- 50 g gram (besan) flour (available quite cost effectively in the foreign section of most larger supermarkets)
- Pinch of salt
- 1 egg beaten
- 125ml milk
- Coconut oil to cook (olive oil or butter are possibilities but be careful not to burn the oil as you will be working at high heat)
- 1-2 tablespoon (big spoon) erythritol or xylitol if you want to make pancakes more suitable for breakfast or desserts

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Place the flour into a bowl and add the salt.
- 2 Add the beaten egg and mix until well combined.
- 3 Add the milk a little at a time, stirring well, to prevent any lumps, resulting in a thin batter.
- 4 Add your cooking oil to a non-stick frying pan and when hot, pour half the batter in, spreading it out over the base of the pan.
- 5 Cook for 3-4 minutes until the edges of the pancake start to brown.
- 6 Flip the pancake over and cook for a further minute or so until you can see brown circles on the underside.
- 7 Set aside and repeat for the second pancake.

“I love mine with peanut butter and grated cheese – any traditional sandwich filling should work a treat. Sprinkle with erythritol (sugar alcohols, used as low calorie sweeteners) and lemon juice or roll up with raspberries and whipped double cream – yum!”

Microwave Mug Muffins/Bread

Serves 1

85p
per
portion

These little muffins made in a mug are super quick and easy and I ate them a lot when I first started out on low carb. They make a great breakfast served with a side of Greek yoghurt, and are equally good as a little dessert after dinner. The basic recipe can be tweaked in many ways – you can even make simple microwave low carb bread by using the oil, egg, ground almonds and baking powder and cooking for 90 seconds – toast and enjoy with butter or marmite!

INGREDIENTS

- 1 egg
- 1 knob of butter or 2 teaspoon (small spoon) extra virgin olive oil
- 50g ground almonds (find in the baking section at the supermarket)
- ½ teaspoon (small spoon) baking powder
- ½ teaspoon (small spoon) vanilla extract or almond extract
- ½ apple or pear, grated

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Mix the egg and butter together in a mug. If using butter, you may wish to gently melt this in the microwave first.
- 2 Add other ingredients and stir well.
- 3 Spoon into a mug and microwave on full power for three minutes.

Tip out and enjoy!

VARIATIONS

- **Sweet:** Add a small handful of berries such as raspberries or blueberries and serve with a dollop of double cream or Greek yoghurt.
- **Savoury:** Use the standard recipe but instead of the apple add half a grated courgette and add ingredients of your choice like cheese, walnuts, dried onions etc. After cooking the muffin, you can toast it and cut it into slices and top with cream cheese or other topping of your choice.
- **Chocolate:** Use the standard recipe and add a teaspoon cocoa or cacao powder and pieces of 85 per cent dark chocolate. You could also add a few cherries which works well.
- **Basic Bread** – only use the oil, egg, ground almonds and baking powder – slice, toast and top as you choose! Or use as soldiers with a soft-boiled egg.

Adaption alert

If you prefer a crunchy muffin or are cooking for more than one, then you can cook in the oven for 12-15 mins at 180C – in this situation grease or line the mug first to prevent it sticking such as with butter. You could also use a small loaf tin too if making 4 or more, but in this case cook for 25 mins or until a fork comes out clean.

Infamous Chaffles!

Serves 1

£1.05
per
portion

Chaffles – a low carb wonder! You must give these a go if you have a waffle maker. They can be made sweet or savoury and can also act as the “bread” for a sandwich or scrambled eggs etc. There are so many flavour combinations but essentially they are made of egg and mozzarella cheese.....add a variety of different flavour combinations to come up with the right chaffle for the occasion!

INGREDIENTS

- 1 egg
- ½ cup (110g) grated mozzarella (ready grated works much better as I find the blocks too wet once grated). Cream cheese is an option here – see adaptations below.
- 1 tablespoon (big spoon) coconut flour or almond meal (optional but gives a better texture)
- ½ teaspoon (small spoon) baking powder (optional but gives a better texture)

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Crack the egg into a bowl and whisk.
- 2 Add the grated mozzarella and stir to combine.
- 3 Pour into waffle maker and cook until lightly browned. This might take a few attempts to master – on my first attempts, I ended up with waffle mixture everywhere – my advice is to err on the side of not enough batter as it does swell when cooked....
- 4 Remove and serve!

Adaption alert

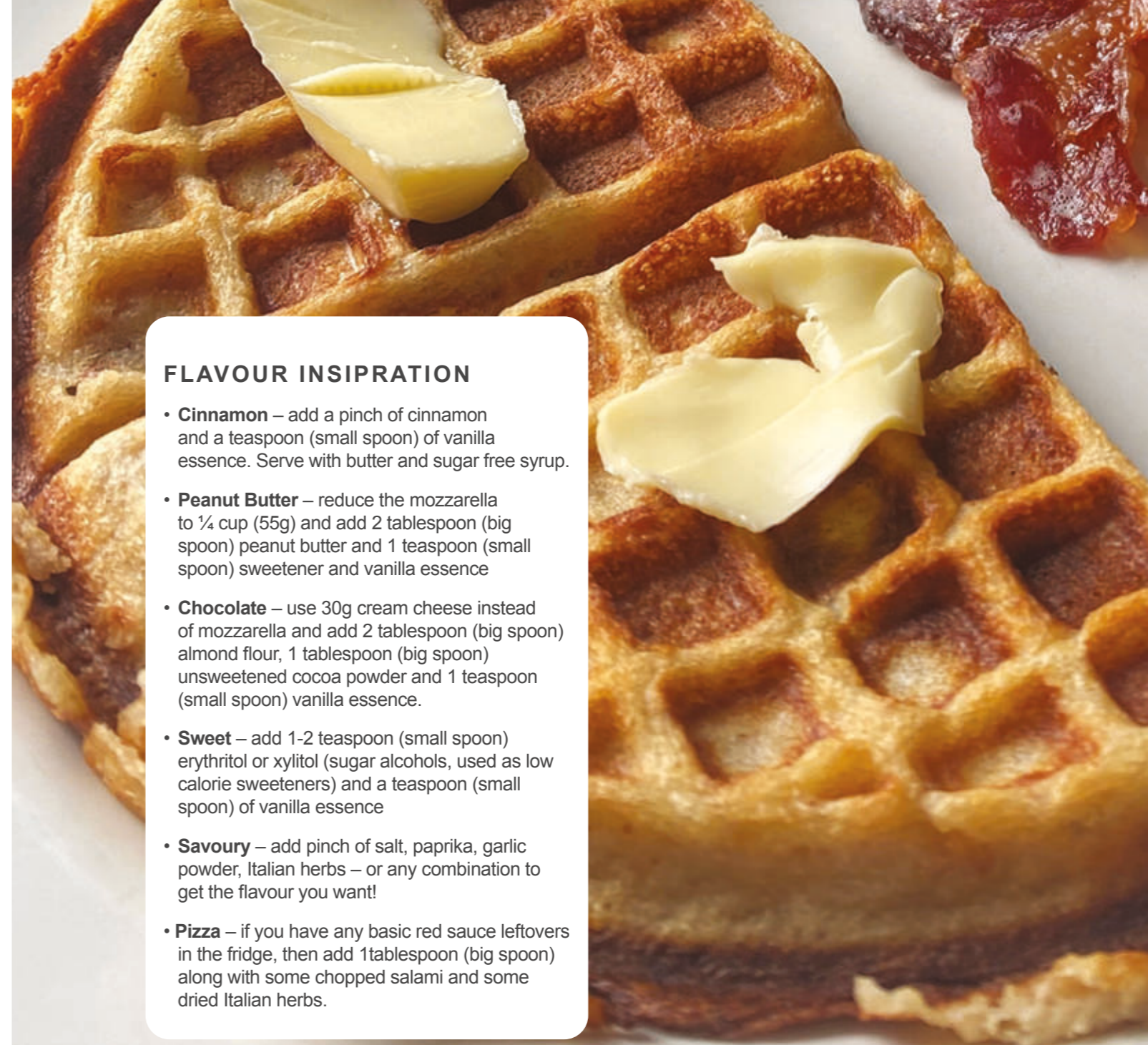
Just egg and cheese will work fine, but the addition of some coconut flour or ground almonds and baking powder gives a much better texture, so I would recommend it if you can.

Mozzarella cheese works best for “sweet” chaffles as it has the most neutral flavour, but if you are making a “savoury” chaffle and would enjoy a more cheesy flavour - then any grated cheese like Cheddar or Red Leicester would work well.

If you don't have mozzarella, then 30g cream cheese works well as an alternative but in this situation you must use the flour too.

FLAVOUR INSPIRATION

- **Cinnamon** – add a pinch of cinnamon and a teaspoon (small spoon) of vanilla essence. Serve with butter and sugar free syrup.
- **Peanut Butter** – reduce the mozzarella to ¼ cup (55g) and add 2 tablespoon (big spoon) peanut butter and 1 teaspoon (small spoon) sweetener and vanilla essence
- **Chocolate** – use 30g cream cheese instead of mozzarella and add 2 tablespoon (big spoon) almond flour, 1 tablespoon (big spoon) unsweetened cocoa powder and 1 teaspoon (small spoon) vanilla essence.
- **Sweet** – add 1-2 teaspoon (small spoon) erythritol or xylitol (sugar alcohols, used as low calorie sweeteners) and a teaspoon (small spoon) of vanilla essence
- **Savoury** – add pinch of salt, paprika, garlic powder, Italian herbs – or any combination to get the flavour you want!
- **Pizza** – if you have any basic red sauce leftovers in the fridge, then add 1tablespoon (big spoon) along with some chopped salami and some dried Italian herbs.





Microwave Cheesy Scrambled Egg

Serves 1

50p
per
portion

The joy of this dish is that as well as being tasty, it is super quick and will only leave you with one bowl to wash up! The recipe comes well recommended by Viv – a low carb patient expert and a Public Health Collaboration (PHC) ambassador. An excellent way to start the day.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 eggs
- pinch salt
- 20g, a small cube, or 3 tablespoons if grated of any cheese (eg mozzarella, cheddar, feta, goats cheese)

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Break the eggs into a jug or bowl that can go in the microwave.
- 2 Add the salt and beat with a fork until the yellow yolks are broken and starting to mix with the whites.
- 3 Slice the cheese into thin slices and add to the eggs.
- 4 Microwave for 20 seconds on full power, then stir with the fork, breaking up any lumps that have formed and mixing the melting cheese with the eggs. Repeat 3 or 4 times until the whole mixture has become solid but is still moist.

Enjoy straight from the bowl!



Easy Ratatouille

Serves 4 as a side

74p
per
portion

Ratatouille is a French dish of stewed vegetables - it can be made in many ways and can incorporate many different vegetables but classically includes aubergine and tomatoes. It isn't always the prettiest dish to look at but is extremely versatile and can be served as a side with multiple dishes or topped with a few fried eggs to make a dish of its own. It is naturally vegetarian and vegan so can be enjoyed by all.

Recipe donated by the Soulfood project in conjunction with The Gateway Project.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 large aubergine chopped into cubes (leave the skin on!)
- 3-4 courgettes chopped into slices (again no need to peel)
- 2 red peppers deseeded and chopped into large pieces
- 2 large onions diced (red or white is fine)
- 3-4 garlic cloves crushed
- 1 tablespoon (big spoon) dried oregano
- 1 tin chopped tomatoes
- 1 pack tomato passata
- Olive oil or butter for cooking (can use lard if not vegetarian)
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Pinch of erythritol or xylitol (optional, to taste)

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Cube the aubergine, rough chop the peppers and slice the courgettes.
- 2 Lightly salt and toss in a few tablespoons of olive oil or melted butter/lard (just enough to coat lightly).
- 3 Place on a deep baking sheet/tray.
- 4 Preheat the oven to 200 C and add the vegetables, cooking for around 30 minutes until softened and almost browning – give them a shake half way through.
- 5 In a saucepan, fry the chopped onion, crushed garlic and oregano in a little oil until clear and then add the tomatoes (tinned and passata).
- 6 Bring to the boil (hopefully your courgettes and aubergines should be ready around now).
- 7 Tip the cooked veg into the tomato sauce including the oil and juices in the tray, put the lid on and turn down the heat to simmer. As the courgettes and aubergines start to 'melt down' into the sauce all the flavours should have mixed together - don't rush this bit – obviously you don't want a mush but I'd give it at least 45 mins.
- 8 If the sauce looks a little dry then add a little water (this will depend on how big your courgettes and aubergines are, as they give out a lot of water). If you feel the sauce is too watery you can remove the lid, turn up the heat and effectively evaporate off the excess water (be careful it doesn't burn).
- 9 Then taste – you should add the salt and pepper here to taste – probably around 1-2 teaspoon (small spoon) of salt and a good few grinds of black pepper. If the tomatoes are very acidic you may need a ½ to 1 teaspoon (small spoon) of erythritol or xylitol (sugar alcohols, used as low calorie sweeteners) to balance it out but this is entirely optional and often not required.

Adaption alert

If you just want to fry the veg on the hob and add the sauce and miss the oven stage you can (you will get a softer finish in the oven).

You can also use a slow cooker - fry everything on the hob for 5-10 minutes, then add to the slow cooker and cook on low for 4-6 hours.

You can use most vegetables in this dish - fresh, frozen or tinned – mushrooms, carrots, turnip, butternut squash, spinach or kale etc

Basic Meat Bolognese Sauce

Serves 2-3 depending on how it is served

£1.35
per
portion

My husband has Italian roots and this is the sauce he has been making for me since we met. I have finally perfected it myself! So much tastier than anything you would ever find in a jar. The longer you simmer (keeping it cooking on a low heat) the mixture, the thicker and richer it becomes!

Serve in a bowl spooned over cooked broccoli, use spirals of courgettes as spaghetti (microwave for 2 minutes to warm through), or serve with cooked dried lentil or soy pasta bought from a supermarket (this option will increase the cost of the recipe).

INGREDIENTS

- 500g minced beef
- 1 teaspoon (small spoon) salt
- 1 small onion chopped finely
- 2 large cloves of garlic - peeled and finely chopped (you could use 2 teaspoons of "lazy garlic" as an alternative)
- 2 tablespoon (big spoon) dried oregano and 1 tablespoon (big spoon) dried basil (or 3 tablespoon (big spoon) dried mixed Italian herbs)
- 5 tablespoon (big spoon) olive oil or lard
- 400g tin of chopped tomatoes
- 3 tablespoon (big spoon) of tomato purée (a good squeeze)
- 2 dried bay leaves (optional)
- Grated cheddar cheese to serve (optional)

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Add the olive oil or lard to a large saucepan and heat on high until melted but not smoking.
- 2 Add the chopped onion and stir until the onion is soft and clear.
- 3 Add the minced beef and salt and stir well until the meat changes colour and is lightly browned.
- 4 Add the tin of chopped tomatoes and stir well.
- 5 Turn the heat down to medium and add the garlic.
- 6 Add the dried herbs and bay leaves (the bay isn't essential).
- 7 Add the tomato purée.
- 8 Stir well and turn the heat down to a simmer (lightly cooking but not boiling).
- 9 Continue to cook with the lid off, stirring every now and then.
- 10 Cook for around 25 minutes. It can be left for up to 45 minutes, and will become thicker and richer the longer it is cooked.
- 11 Serve over steamed/boiled broccoli, spiralise a courgette and warm in the microwave for 2 minutes before using as "spaghetti", or use cooked dried lentil or soy pasta as another option.
- 12 I love to top mine with a good sprinkle of cheddar cheese!
- 13 Can be stored in the fridge and eaten for up to 5 days after heating well.

Adaption alert

You could use your slow cooker for this recipe by browning off the meat and then adding it with the other ingredients.

Instead of minced beef, you could use chicken or pork mince.

Instead of mince, you could also use cut up cooking bacon, chopped sandwich meats like ham or chorizo, or even high meat content sausages chopped into chunks.

If you don't have any tomato puree then use low sugar ketchup instead.



One-pot sausage, pepper and tomato stew

Serves 4

£1.20
per
portion

This is a lovely, comforting stew, perfect for autumnal and winter days. It has been kindly donated by Katie Caldesi and can be found in her book “The Low Carb Weight-Loss Cookbook”. To keep the carbs down, buy the best sausages you can afford and look for a high meat content, rather than cheaper varieties padded out with rusk and flour. You can add a tin of chickpeas or beans to make it even more filling if needed.

This lazy one-pot dish is loosely based on *katino meze*, a Bulgarian appetizer which we loved on our trip to the wonderful cities of Sofia and Plovdiv.

It is usually made with pork, but I find chopped sausages even easier to use and they add more flavour. I add green leaves to the dish to make it a whole meal, which I serve in bowls.

If I am making this for the family, I take some out for Giancarlo and then add the can of drained chickpeas or beans for the boys to make it more filling. It is a great way to use up soft tomatoes too. The paprika can be sweet (mild), hot, smoked or unsmoked – in fact I like mainly sweet with a pinch of hot for flavour and heat. Serve it as it is or add grated cheese or soured cream.

INGREDIENTS

- 3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 1 onion, finely sliced into half-moons
- 1 green or yellow pepper, roughly cubed into bite-sized pieces
- 200g (7oz) mushrooms, halved or quartered if large (optional)
- 400g (14oz) high-meat-content pork or beef sausages or lean diced (chopped into small squares) pork
- 1 fat garlic clove, finely sliced or crushed and a few sprigs of thyme or 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1–2 teaspoons sweet, hot or smoked paprika, or a pinch of each
- 400g (14oz) fresh or can of chopped tomatoes
- 400g (14oz) can of chickpeas, drained
- 100g (3 ½ oz) spinach, chard or beet leaves
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Per serving

17g net carbs, 4.8g fibre, 27g protein, 33g fat, 483kcal

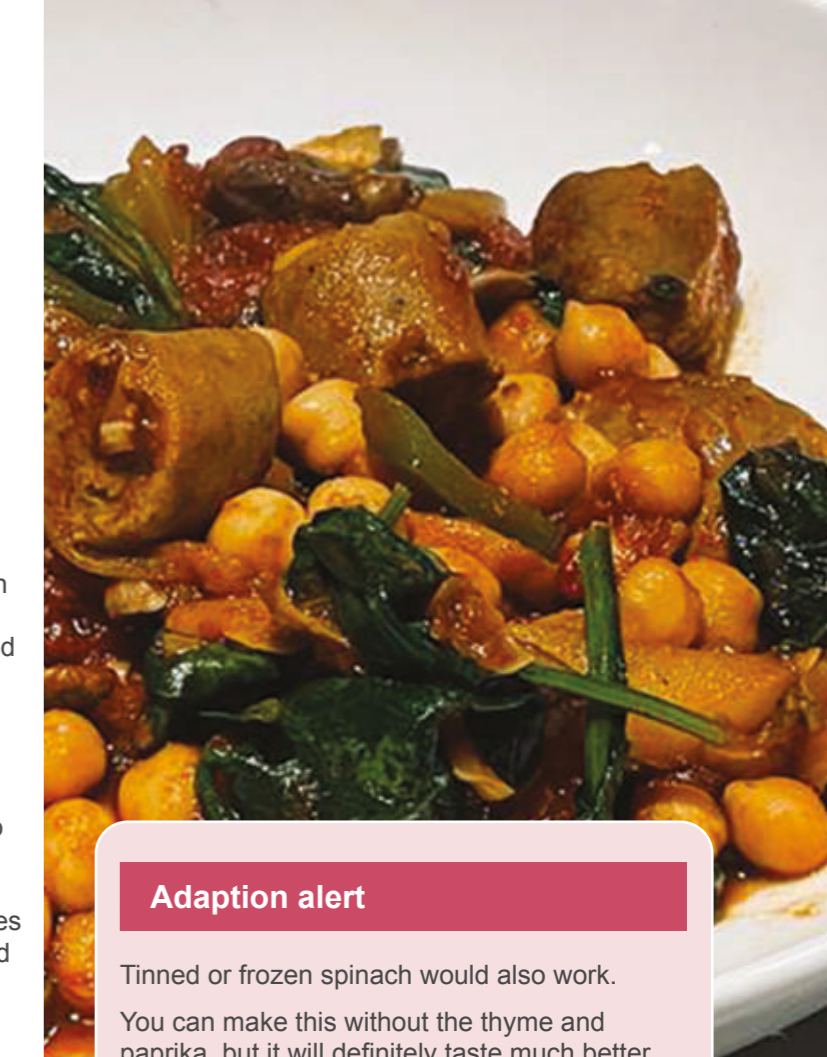
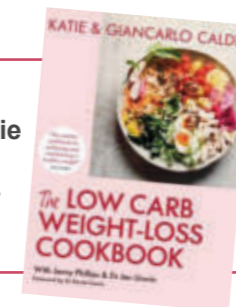
INSTRUCTIONS

Heat the oil in a large frying pan or wok over a medium–high heat. Add the onion and a little seasoning and cook for about 5 minutes before adding the pepper and mushrooms, if using. Stir occasionally.

Meanwhile, cut the sausages into bite-sized pieces; depending on the strength of the skins you can do this with scissors straight into the pan or sometimes it's easier to squeeze the sausage meat out of the skins and drop it into the pan. Add the garlic and stir through, then cook for 7–10 minutes, stirring frequently, until the sausages are browned on all sides. Stir in the thyme and 1 teaspoon of the paprika.

Coarsely grate the fresh tomatoes, if using, on to a plate and discard the skins. Add these or the canned tomatoes and drained chickpeas. Stir again and bring to the boil. Cook for a few minutes until the sausages are cooked through. Taste and add seasoning and paprika as necessary. Stir in your choice of leaves and pop the lid back on. As soon as the leaves have wilted – spinach will take about 3 minutes and kale will take up to 10 minutes – the stew is ready to serve.

The Low Carb Weight-Loss Cookbook by Katie & Giancarlo Caldesi is published by Kyle Books (£20)



Adaption alert

Tinned or frozen spinach would also work.

You can make this without the thyme and paprika, but it will definitely taste much better with them!

If you don't have chickpeas – a can of beans such as kidney, butter or cannellini beans would also work.

Top with grated cheese and sour cream to bulk up the protein content.

You could also brown the sausages first on the hob and add all ingredients to a slow cooker.

Cheeseburger Meatzza

Serves 2 as a main

£1.92
per
portion

Meatzza – a meat crust pizza – my discovery of this possibility was like a light bulb moment and I now eat this at least once a week. Cheeseburger and pizza together - what's not to like! Feel free to experiment with toppings to create your pizza of preference.

If there is any left (unlikely!) then it is delicious eaten cold the next day and great for picnics.

Serve with a side salad for a tasty dinner experience!

INGREDIENTS

Meatzza Base

- 500g minced beef
- 1/2 teaspoon (small spoon) salt
- Few good grinds of black pepper

Meatzza Topping

- 1/3 tube tomato purée
- 3 small pickled jarred gherkins (optional) chopped finely
- 1/2 small onion (white or red is fine) chopped into small pieces
- 1 cup basic mild cheddar - grated

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Preheat the oven at 180 C.
- 2 Place the minced beef in a large mixing bowl.
- 3 Add the salt and pepper and then work hard with your hands - aiming to squeeze the meat together until it becomes a thick paste.
- 4 Line a medium sized baking tray with greaseproof paper and squash the beef mixture into a flat rectangular patty. Press as flat and smooth as you can without making any holes.
- 5 Place in the oven and cook for 15 minutes.
- 6 Remove from the oven and turn the base over.
- 7 Cook for a further 5 minutes (it is normal for the meat to shrink - don't worry!).
- 8 Remove from the oven.
- 9 Spread the tomato purée with a butter knife over the base.
- 10 Sprinkle the chopped gherkins over the puree.
- 11 Sprinkle the grated cheese over the top.
- 12 Finally, sprinkle the onions as a topping.
- 13 Put back in the oven and cook for a further 10 minutes until the cheese is melted and slightly browned.
- 14 Remove and cut into slices with a knife or pizza cutter.
15. Enjoy whilst warm or eat cold for lunch!

Adaption alert

Other meat minces will also work – I like minced pork, but try chicken or turkey mince if that's what you have!

Sliced meats like ham, salami and chorizo make a nice topping.

Feel free to try different vegetables, sliced mushrooms or olives (you can buy these in a tin, or most veg frozen)

Use mozzarella cheese instead of cheddar (but this will probably work out a little more expensive).

Grandma's Soya Sauce Chicken

Serves 4

£1.92
per
portion

My mother is Chinese, so I spent most of my childhood eating home cooked Chinese food. This recipe for Soya Sauce chicken has always been one of my favourites, and it is now loved by my children too. My mum cuts up a whole chicken into parts but I have yet to master this technique, so purchase chicken parts as an alternative.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 whole chicken cut into parts or 4 drumsticks and 8 thighs.
- 1 medium onion diced (chopped into small squares).
- 3 cloves of garlic - 2 crushed but left in one piece, and 3rd piece chopped finely.
- 2 tablespoons (big spoon) dark soya sauce.
- Salt to taste - 1 teaspoon (small spoon).
- 2 grinds of ground black pepper.
- 1 tablespoon (big spoon) oyster sauce.
- 1 tablespoon (big spoon) lard or refined olive oil.
- 1 cup water.

Option:

- 2 teaspoon (small spoon) arrowroot to thicken. (starch from plants and can be bought ground from Sainsburys for £1).

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Add the soya sauce, salt, oyster sauce, and pepper to the chicken, and mix it all together.
- 2 Leave to sit for at least 1 hour, but the longer the better (overnight is good!).
- 3 Add the lard or olive oil to a large saucepan on a medium heat.
- 4 Add the diced (chopped into small squares) onion and fry until soft but not browned.
- 5 Add the chopped garlic and stir until the aroma is released - be careful not to brown/burn.
- 6 Add the whole pieces of crushed garlic.
- 7 Add the marinated chicken.
- 8 Add 1 cup of water and stir until well combined.
- 9 Add more water if needed to cover the chicken.
- 10 Bring to the boil (approx 3 minutes).
- 11 Simmer for a minimum of 30 minutes until the liquid thickens.
- 12 Add in the arrowroot and let simmer for another 2 minutes until combined.
- 13 Add more salt to taste if needed.
- 14 Serve with cauliflower rice.

Leftovers can be kept in the fridge overnight and rewarmed.

Adaption alert

The oyster sauce is not a deal breaker, so use just soya sauce if that's what you have.

If you don't have arrowroot, then xanthan gum (which can be bought in Sainsburys or Tesco, £2.80 for 100g, or sometimes Ebay for even less) or even almond or coconut flour should do the trick. Aldi sell coconut and almond flour in their baking or gluten free section, and Asda sells coconut flour.

I have never made this in a slow cooker, but suspect you could move everything to the cooker after browning the meat (step 8).



Lamb Dhansak

Serves 4

£2.00
per
portion

A takeaway curry without the guilt – why not!

This is a lovely lamb curry, courtesy of SoulFood - a scheme based in Halstead, Essex – working with the Gateway Project to offer simple, nutritious meals to those in need in the community.

Lamb is not a cost effective meat, but stewing or casserole lamb can be picked up for £3 to £4. It can also be bought frozen and left to defrost. Cook cost effective cuts in your slow cooker to make it soft and avoid chewiness! You can also switch to cost effective meats such as chicken or beef as an alternative that's just as delicious.

INGREDIENTS

- 500g pre-cooked lamb (shoulder or leg works best, but cost effective cuts will also work) cut into chunks.
- 70g dried red lentils
- 70g dried green speckled lentils – also known as Puy or French lentils. Chana Dal lentils will also work well
- 1 tablespoon (big spoon) ground coriander
- 1 tablespoon (big spoon) ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon (small spoon) salt
- 1 teaspoon (small spoon) chilli powder – or more depending on heat required
- 1 lamb or beef stock cube
- 1 can chopped tomatoes
- 1 leek or 1 onion chopped
- 1 tablespoon (big spoon) olive oil or lard or butter or ghee (a type of butter)
- 1 bag spinach

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Tip both types of lentils into a large saucepan with the ground coriander, ground cumin, chilli powder (if using), salt and stock cube.
- 2 Cover with water then boil rapidly for 10-15 mins until the water is absorbed.
- 3 In another pan, fry the onions or leeks in your choice of fat until starting to caramelize and brown.
- 4 Stir in the tinned tomatoes and heat gently.
- 5 Add the tomatoes and onion mixture to the cooked spiced lentils.
- 6 Tip in the cooked meat and heat through – be careful not to stir to break the meat up.
- 7 Wash the spinach if needed and add into the heated meat mixture.
- 8 Put the lid on the pan and allow the spinach to wilt into the sauce.
- 9 Leave for a further 15 mins with the lid on, for the lentils to swell further and take up the water from the spinach.
- 10 It's ready to serve!

Serve on a bed of cauliflower rice or with a side of Keto Naan Bread (see the Freshwell Low Carb Manual for recipe).

Adaption alert

Use cost effective cuts of stewing lamb if needed – cut into chunks and fry in a pan of lard and chopped garlic, before adding water to cover and simmering for 1 and a half hours.

Instead of lamb, you could use also use pre-cooked steak or chicken chunks.

Use a bag of frozen spinach or a tin of spinach if you don't have fresh.

You can use tinned lentils but these will not need boiling in water, so you can miss that step.

Instead of the hob, add all the ingredients apart from the meat to the slow cooker. Add the meat at the end and ensure it is completely heated through before serving.

You could try adding 3-4 whole cardamom pods and 1 teaspoon (small spoon) turmeric powder whilst cooking for a more authentic taste if you have them in the house.

Stir through some plain yoghurt for extra creaminess and additional protein!

Butter Chicken

Serves 4

£1.26
per
portion

This is a beautiful creamy chicken curry that tastes even better the next day! Taken from Katie Caldesi's Diabetes Weight-Loss Cookbook. Enjoy with a side of fluffy cauliflower rice or some low carb naan bread.

INGREDIENTS

- 8 chicken thighs, skin on and bone in
- 1 teaspoon (small spoon) salt
- 2 teaspoons chilli powder
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 4 fat garlic cloves, grated
- 1 tablespoon fresh ginger, peeled (skin off) and grated
- 2 tablespoons ghee (a type of butter), butter or coconut oil (optional)
- 2 onions, finely chopped
- 1–2 small green or red chillies, split in half, added according to taste
- 2 teaspoons ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon ground turmeric
- 1 teaspoon ground coriander
- 50g (2oz) butter
- 1 x 400g (14oz) can of plum tomatoes, chopped a few fresh coriander leaves (optional)

Per serving 10g carbs, 67g protein, 60g fat, 2.5g fibre, 857kcal

We love this creamy, golden curry that delivers a spicy punch in a velvet glove. It is easy to make and doesn't have the sugar or commercial oil that a takeaway contains. It can be made in advance and kept in the fridge or freezer. Use breast meat if you prefer it to thighs and cut the cooking time down accordingly. The sauce can be left as it is or blended.

INSTRUCTIONS

Preheat oven to 180 C

Put the chicken thighs into a bowl and scatter over 1 flat teaspoon of salt, the chilli powder, lemon juice and half the garlic and ginger. Mix thoroughly and set aside to infuse for 15 minutes.

Put the chicken thighs skin-side down into a large frying pan over a medium heat. When golden brown turn to the other side and repeat – it will take about 20 minutes to do this. Remove the chicken from the pan and set aside while you make the sauce.

Add the ghee (a type of butter) to the pan (unless there is enough remaining chicken fat) and fry the onion with a little salt until softened – this will take about 10 minutes. Add the remaining garlic, ginger and chilli and fry for a couple of minutes. Stir in the spices and cook for another couple of minutes.

Add the butter and tomatoes and fill the can halfway with water and swirl it around, add this to the pan and cook for 15 minutes, or until the tomatoes are soft, stirring frequently. Add the thighs to the pan and continue to cook, covered with a lid, for 45 minutes or until they are cooked through and the meat falls easily from the bones. Season to taste. Add the coriander and serve straight away.

Adaption alert

Chicken drum sticks could also be used instead of thighs.

The lemon juice can be freshly squeezed or from a bottle.

If you have no chillies, then chilli flakes would be an alternative option.

If you don't have fresh garlic, then using "easy garlic" or even garlic granules, should give the required flavour.

If you don't have fresh ginger, using "easy ginger" which you can buy in a tin (£1.10 from Asda) or ginger paste, which you can buy in a tube (75p from Asda), both to go in the fridge when open, or ground ginger (70p in a tube from Asda), should add the same flavour and last for longer. If you do have fresh ginger, you can freeze it (after you have peeled the skin off) so that it lasts longer, and grate it from frozen, directly into your food.

The Diabetes Weight-Loss Cookbook by Katie & Giancarlo Caldesi is published by Kyle Books (£20)



Photography credit:
Photography by Susan Bell

Basic Beefburgers

Serves 2-3

£1.19
per
portion

A quick and easy meal, loved by children and adults alike. More cost effective supermarket burgers are often filled with rusk to bulk them up and ready-made fresh burgers can be unnecessarily expensive. These burgers can be baked in the oven or shallow fried depending on your preference – frying will be quicker but you may choose to bake if you already have the oven on for something else.

If you must have a bun, then consider making the flaxseed bread roll recipe but that will increase the cost.

I like mine with a basic red sauce poured over the top, grated cheese and a side of roasted veg. Or build a burger as you would normally, but using sliced cheese as the base and lid and topping with gherkins, ketchup, mustard, lettuce and tomatoes – I wouldn't try and pick it up though – this is a burger that needs a knife and fork!

INGREDIENTS

- 500g minced beef (I use 20% fat - try to avoid anything too lean as it will make the burgers dry)
- 1 small onion, finely diced (chopped into small squares) (optional)
- 1 teaspoon (small spoon) salt
- Grind of black pepper.
- 1 egg (optional)
- Lard, butter or olive oil (if you are frying and not baking)

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Place all the ingredients into a large bowl and mix well – I find this much easier to do with my hands. An egg helps the ingredients to bind together but isn't essential so don't worry if you don't have one.
- 2 Portion out the mixture depending on the size of burger you want – remember they will shrink a bit when cooked – I aim for a good handful but smaller than a fist.
- 3 Roll each portion into a ball and then place on a baking tray lined with greaseproof paper (just put on a plate if you are planning to fry).
- 4 You can either place them in the oven to bake for approximately 25-30 minutes at 180C.
- 5 Or heat the cooking oil in a frying pan and fry the burgers for approximately 10 – 15 minutes until browned and cooked through. You can then turn off the heat and lid the lid on for 10 minutes or so to allow the burgers to soak up the cooking juices (but this isn't essential).



Adaption alert

You can use this meat mixture to make meatballs too – roll into smaller balls and fry before topping with basic red sauce or basic cheese sauce with a side of veg or salad, or on a bed of spiralised veg or lentil pasta.

Or use it to make meatloaf by adding a good squirt of ketchup or tomato puree and then putting the mixture into a loaf tin and baking at 180C for 45-60 minutes.

Green Beanguine All'Amatriciana

Serves 4

93p
per
portion

This is another lovely recipe donated from Katie Caldesi. Think of it as a smoky bacon pasta sauce, laid on top of a bed of green beans instead of spaghetti.

The world-famous tomato and onion sauce, Amatriciana, comes from Amatrice, a town in the mountainous region of Lazio. This area was Abruzzo before Mussolini changed the border lines. The mountain people who lived there called the sauce la gricia, which was simply fried guanciale, black pepper, Pecorino and sometimes vinegar. Tomatoes were a later addition by the wealthier people of the area who could afford them, and it then became known as amatriciana.

Guanciale, or cured pig's cheeks, is the background meaty flavour imparted by the layers of fat and meat in a cheek that has been coated in pepper and hung in a curing cabinet for months. This renders the guanciale sweet, firm to slice and with a kick of umami that is not delivered by mass-produced bacon. If you can't find this, or pancetta, buy pancetta lardons or the best unsmoked streaky, fatty bacon you can find.

The sauce makes enough for 6 portions, but it keeps in the fridge for up to 5 days and can be frozen for up to 3 months.

INGREDIENTS

- 5 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 500g (1lb 2oz) onion, finely sliced into half-moons
- 250g (9oz) guanciale, pancetta or streaky bacon, cut into 5mm (¼ in) strips
- 100ml (3 ½ fl oz) white wine
- 2 x 400g (14oz) cans of Italian plum tomatoes
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper

For the green beanguine (Serves 2)

- 280g (10oz) green, runner or flat beans
- A knob of butter
- 15g (½ oz) Pecorino Romano or Parmesan cheese, finely grated



INSTRUCTIONS

Heat the olive oil in a large frying pan and add the onion, guanciale (or bacon), a pinch of salt and a generous amount of pepper. Fry over a medium heat for about 15 minutes until the onion has until completely softened.

Add the wine and allow to reduce for about 5 minutes, then add the tomatoes. Use a potato masher to crush the tomatoes to a rough pulp and gently simmer for 30 minutes until the sauce reduces and thickens. Taste and add more seasoning as necessary.

Meanwhile, prepare the beans. Green beans should be topped but the tails can be left intact. Either leave them long or cut the beans into short lengths like penne pasta if you find that easier to eat. String and slice runner and flat beans into long lengths using a vegetable peeler, sharp knife or bean slicer. Put the beans into a small saucepan with the butter, a pinch of salt and 3 tablespoons of water. Cover with a lid and cook over a medium heat for 5–8 minutes or until soft and no longer squeaky.

Remove the lid and set aside.

Reheat 2 portions of the sauce in a frying pan. Drain the beans and mix with the sauce or put the sauce on top of the beans, scatter over the cheese and serve.

Per serving of sauce

9.9g net carbs, 3.7g fibre,
8.3g protein, 30.5g fat, 364kcal

of beanguine and cheese

6.6g net carbs, 4.5g fibre,
4.8g protein, 6.5g fat, 111kcal

Adaption alert

You could use lard instead of olive oil to cook.

Use a tin of chopped tomatoes and forego the mashing stage.

Cooking bacon is the cost effective way of obtaining bacon – try and find a pack containing smoky bacon (it is browner in colour) as it will really offset the flavours.

If you don't have any wine, then you could use a vegetable or meat stock cube diluted to 100ml instead. Add a dash of vinegar to give a tangy edge. If you have neither then use around 75mls water instead to make sure the dish isn't too dry.

If you don't have any parmesan cheese – you could also use a cheese like cheddar to scatter on the top.

The Low Carb Weight-Loss Cookbook by Katie & Giancarlo Caldesi is published by Kyle Books (£20)





Grain Free Toad in the Hole

Serves 2

£1.72
per
portion

Who doesn't love a comforting Yorkshire pudding with sausages? A quick and easy recipe that should keep everyone happy at a midweek dinner – kids and grown-ups alike! Serve with a side of veg and you are good to go.

INGREDIENTS

For the batter

- 4-6 sausages (minimum 85% meat – buy the best you can afford. You can also use a veggie alternative if you wish)
- 100g chickpea (gram/besan) flour (find this is the foreign section in larger supermarkets)
- 2 eggs
- 250ml milk
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon (big spoon) Olive oil or lard for greasing the tin

For the gravy (optional)

- 1 large chopped onion
- 1 tablespoon (big spoon) butter
- Pinch of salt
- 6 teaspoon (small spoon) beef or onion gravy granules
- Water
- ½ teaspoon (small spoon) wholegrain mustard

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Preheat oven to 220C.
- 2 Grease a roasting tin or oven proof deep tray with olive oil or lard.
- 3 Add sausages and toss in oil.
- 4 Bake sausages for 15 minutes.
- 5 Whilst sausages are baking, prepare the batter. In a large bowl add the flour and salt and gently whisk. Add the eggs and whisk again. Slowly pour in the milk and whisk until no lumps remain. The batter should be the consistency of thick double cream – if it's too thick add more milk.
- 6 Take the sausages out of the oven and quickly pour the batter into the roasting tin with the sausages.
- 7 Return the tin to the oven and bake for 30-40 mins.
- 8 **To make the gravy:**
 - a Melt the butter in a frying pan and stir in the onions.
 - b Cook until onions are soft and browned caramelised. Stir often to prevent sticking.
 - c Add a pinch of salt and gravy granules.
 - d Add water until the gravy reaches the required consistency.
 - e Before serving add a further knob of butter and the mustard.

Adaption alert

If you don't have time to cook onions for the gravy, go ahead and use gravy granules as they come.

The batter mix can also be used for Yorkshire Puddings to enjoy with a roast dinner.

Remember not to open the oven door once the batter goes in or it might deflate!

Chicken Tray Bake

Serves 4

£1.12
per
portion

This is a patient favourite recipe from my first low carb rotating meal planner. It uses cost effective cuts of chicken and lots of veg. You can use any veg you like, just make sure hard veg is chopped up into smaller pieces so it cooks through and doesn't come out too solid! A complete meal on one tray – serve with lashings of gravy or even a basic red sauce.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 small sliced onion
- 1 medium sliced red pepper
- 1-2 medium sliced courgettes
- 1 head of broccoli cut into florets
- ½ small butternut squash, cubed
- 8 chicken thighs, with skin and bone
- 1 tablespoon butter
- ¼ cup (60mls) water – pour into the frying pan to get the flavours of the meat if you can.
- 2 tablespoon (big spoon) (30mls) lemon juice
- Salt and black pepper
- Basil, oregano, garlic powder (optional)

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Preheat oven to 200C.
- 2 Place onion and veg into a large baking dish. I use the veg above but ultimately you can use any veg that you enjoy roasted.
- 3 Pat the chicken thighs dry and season with salt and pepper.
- 4 Heat butter in a large frying pan and add the chicken thighs skin side down and cook in batches for about 5 minutes or until the skin is golden and crispy. You can omit this stage if you want but this crisps up the skin wonderfully if you have the time.
- 5 Turn over and cook for another minute.
- 6 Place the chicken skin side up on top of the vegetables.
- 7 Pour the water into the frying pan to clean the pan and pour the resulting fluid over the veg and chicken in the tray.
- 8 Drizzle with the lemon juice and sprinkle with herbs and garlic powder.
- 9 Bake for 20-25 minutes, tossing halfway through.

Adaption alert

You do not have to fry the chicken first if you don't want to, but it lends a lovely crispiness to the skin.

The lemon juice can be freshly squeezed or from a bottle.

Any veg will do – other options include swede, celeriac, cauliflower, mushrooms etc – see what's lurking in your salad drawer..... just make sure hard veg is chopped smaller – you could even parboil it for 5 minutes prior to baking if you want to make sure.

Frozen veg is sufficient, as often cost effective, and has equal nutritional value to fresh veg (contrary to belief!).



Ben's Chilli Con Carne

Serves 4

£1.05
per
portion

This recipe is racked out time and time again at my house. It's an easy weekday dinner and also brilliant if you have a larger party of people coming over to eat, as you can make it the day before and reheat it when needed - leaving more time to spend with your guests!

Serve with cauliflower rice, or just eat straight from the bowl with a good dollop of sour cream and some grated cheddar. There is a recipe for chickpea nachos in the Freshwell 4 Week Rotating Meal Planner that you might want to try - they are brilliant for scooping up the chilli!

INGREDIENTS

- 500g beef mince
- 1 tin kidney beans
- 1 tin chopped tomatoes
- 1 medium onion chopped
- 2 large carrots cut into small pieces (optional)
- 1 bell pepper chopped into small pieces (any colour)
- 1 teaspoon (small spoon) salt
- 2-3 tablespoon (big spoon) lard or olive oil.
- 2 tablespoon (big spoon) cumin powder
- 1 tablespoon (big spoon) dried oregano
- 1 tablespoon (big spoon) smoked paprika (plain paprika also works if you don't have any that is smoked)
- 1 teaspoon (small spoon) garlic powder or 1 large clove finely chopped
- Ground black pepper
- Chilli powder (to taste)

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Heat up the lard/oil in a large saucepan.
- 2 Add the chopped onion and stir until softened.
- 3 Add the meat and salt and stir well until browned.
- 4 Add the chopped carrot and pepper (if using).
- 5 Add the cumin, paprika, garlic and oregano and combine well. If you are using chilli powder then add at this stage according to how spicy you would like it to be.
- 6 Add the tin of tomatoes and the kidney beans (no need to drain the water away - tip it all in!).
- 7 Turn the heat down and simmer with the lid off stirring occasionally.
- 8 Cook for a minimum of 30 minutes but ideally for an hour or so to really bring out the flavours and reduce the ingredients down.
- 9 Add a few grinds of black pepper and serve with sour cream/yoghurt and grated cheddar.



Adaption alert

You could use lots of different veg in this recipe - fresh or frozen - chopped celery, cubed swede or even some frozen peas would work well.

If you don't have any kidney beans, then other tinned beans like butter beans or cannellini beans would also work.

This is a great recipe for the slow cooker - once you have browned off the meat, you can chuck it all in the slow cooker and leave it to simmer down.

I do think the cumin and paprika are pretty essential for this recipe to get the right flavours. The oregano isn't essential or you could use mixed Italian herbs instead.

You could also make this recipe vegetarian by using veggie mince instead.

Cottage Pie

Serves 2-3

£1.35
per
portion

A family meal-time staple – cottage pie (as opposed to shepherd's pie) is made from beef mince which can be obtained cost effectively. Here the traditional mashed potato topping is replaced with Swede or Celeriac mash but gives the same warming effect.

INGREDIENTS

- 500g beef mince (aim for higher fat 15-20%)
- 1 medium onion finely chopped
- 1 large carrot chopped into small pieces
- 1 celery stick chopped
- 1 clove garlic finely chopped
- 1 tablespoon (big spoon) tomato puree
- 500ml stock (chicken, beef or vegetable stock cube)
- 1 serving of swede or celeriac mash (see recipe)
- Salt and ground black pepper
- Thyme and 2 bay leaves (optional)
- 2 tablespoon (big spoon) Worcestershire sauce
- 2 tablespoon (big spoon) oil to cook – olive oil, lard or beef dripping
- Grated cheese to top - optional

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Heat your oil/fat of choice in a large saucepan.
- 2 Add the onions and stir until softened.
- 3 Add the beef mince and stir until browned.
- 4 Add the chopped carrots and celery and cook until soft – around 20 minutes.
- 5 Add the chopped garlic and tomato puree.
- 6 Make the stock using a stock cube and boiling water and add to the pan.
- 7 Add Worcestershire sauce, thyme and bay leaves (if using).
- 8 Reduce heat to a simmer and cook uncovered for around 30-40 minutes.
- 9 Discard the bay leaves if you can find them but fine to leave in (we treat it a bit like finding the money in a Christmas pudding at our house!).
- 10 The gravy should be thickened by now, but if not turn up the heat and leave cooking for a little longer.
- 11 Spoon the mixture into an oven proof bowl.
- 12 Top with your prepared celeriac or swede mash and sprinkle with cheese if using.
- 13 Cook in the oven at 200C for 30 minutes or until the top is golden.

Adaption alert

If you don't have Worcestershire sauce then tomato ketchup and soy sauce make a good alternative!

You could use garlic powder or "easy garlic" if you don't have any fresh.

Use tomato ketchup instead of tomato puree.

The recipe will work well without any herbs so don't panic if you don't have any.

Feel free to add a glass of red wine for extra richness if you have any laying around!

If you want to use your slow cooker, then brown the mince by cooking in a pan on the hob first, before tipping into the slow cooker adding all the other ingredients and stirring well. Cook on high for 4-5 hours, then top with the "mash" and finish off in the oven.



Bean and Chilli Soup

Serves 4

60p
per
portion

A warming, spicy soup ideal for lunch or a cold winters evening – this recipe was adapted from the latest Colchester Food Bank and Salvation Army's Recipe book which was released in December 2022.

Choose your level of spice by either leaving out the chilli or adding more. It is so simple to make with no mixer required. Just spoon and enjoy!

INGREDIENTS

- Olive Oil for cooking
- 3 Cloves Garlic (chopped)
- 2 Medium Onions (chopped)
- 3 Cups of Water - use less water for a thicker soup
- 2 tablespoon (big spoon) Worcester Sauce
- 2 x 400g Can Chopped Tomatoes
- 1 400g Can Chickpeas (drained)
- 1 Red Chilli (chopped) or some dried chilli flakes (optional)
- 1 400g Can Cannellini Beans (drained)
- 2 x 400g Can Kidney Beans (drained)
- 1 tablespoon (big spoon) Tomato Puree

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 In a large saucepan gently fry onions, garlic and chilli in olive oil over a low heat .
- 2 Add all other ingredients and stir.
- 3 Bring to boil.
- 4 Reduce heat and simmer gently for about 10-15 minutes.
- 5 Serve as is, or with a dollop of sour cream on the top.

Adaption alert

If you don't have any Worcester sauce, then try soy sauce instead.

If you don't have any tomato puree, substitute with tomato ketchup.



Lentil Bolognese

Serves 4

65p
per
portion

A meat free version of an Italian classic designed by Colchester Food Bank and Salvation Army. Great if you need vegetarian low carb food on a budget or just if you fancy a meat free day. Serve with lentil pasta or swede mash with lashings of grated cheddar.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 Large Onion (finely chopped)
- 2 Carrots (peeled and diced)
- 4 Celery Sticks (chopped)
- 4 Garlic Cloves (crushed)
- 1 x 400g Tin Chopped Tomatoes
- ½ teaspoon (small spoon) Dried Chilli Flakes (optional)
- 4 tablespoon (big spoon) Tomato Puree
- 2 x 400g Tins of Green Lentils in water drained
- Vegetable Stock Cube
- 200ml Boiling Water
- Salt and Pepper
- Olive oil for cooking

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Heat the olive oil in a large saucepan over a medium heat.
- 2 Add onion, carrots, celery and garlic. Cook slowly until the vegetables start to soften.
- 3 Add the tomatoes, chilli flakes (if using) and tomato puree and stir-fry for 4-5 minutes.
- 4 Make stock by melting a stock cube in the boiling water.
- 5 Stir in the lentils and stock and bring to the boil.
- 6 Season to taste with salt and pepper and leave to simmer for 20-25 minutes until the sauce begins to thicken, stirring frequently.
- 7 Serve with lentil or soy pasta and sprinkle with grated cheddar.

Adaption alert

You can use tinned or frozen vegetables as an alternative.





Smoked Mackerel Pate

Serves 1-2

£1.80
per
portion

I love a good pate and this one is no exception. Scooped up with a low carb wrap, as a filling in a flax bread roll, or just as it is with vegetable sticks to dip – give it a go. It's cost effective and it keeps well and most of us would benefit from more oily fish in our diets. All you need to prepare it is a fork – no cooking required! This recipe was kindly donated by Dr Jen Unwin, from her book "Fork In The Road".

Fork In The Road
by Dr Jen Unwin



INGREDIENTS

- 200g smoked mackerel
- 150g melted butter
- 50g plain yoghurt
- 1 teaspoon (small spoon) Dijon mustard
- 1 tablespoon (big spoon) parsley – dried or fresh
- Juice of a lemon
- Salt and ground black pepper to taste

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Take the mackerel from the packet and remove the skin.
- 2 Use your fingers to break the fish into flakes and place in a bowl.
- 3 Melt the butter in a cup in the microwave and add to the bowl.
- 4 Add all remaining ingredients to the bowl and mash together with a fork.
- 5 Add a few pinches of salt and a good few grinds of black pepper.

Adaption alert

If you don't have yoghurt, then sour cream or crème fraiche would work well.

Cream cheese instead of yoghurt also works although the resulting mixture will be a little thicker.

You can leave out the mustard and parsley if you don't have any.

If you like a bit of heat then try adding 1-2 teaspoon (small spoon) of horseradish sauce.

Ready made lemon juice is just as good if you don't have fresh.



Cauliflower Rice

Makes 6-8 portions

28p
per
portion

The infamous cauliflower rice! I think this is a great alternative to rice although I know it isn't everyone's cup of tea. Always great with curries, it can be purchased ready made in packets or frozen sachets – but this works out quite expensive so I would recommend doing it yourself, allowing you to make a huge portion for the cost of a cauliflower which can be frozen for later use. As well as being low carb, it's an easy way to squeeze more veg into your day. Cook and keep in the fridge for up to 4 days in a sealed container or remove the moisture and freeze before cooking. Beware – the grating part can get very messy!

INGREDIENTS

- 1 large cauliflower
- 1-2 tablespoon (big spoon) olive oil, coconut oil or ghee (a type of butter)
- Salt/pepper/soy sauce/herbs/spices (optional)

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Remove the outer leaves from the cauliflower.
- 2 Cut into large hand sized chunks.
- 3 Use a cheese grater on the medium setting to grate the cauliflower – you are aiming for rice sized pieces.
- 4 Transfer the grated pieces to a clean tea towel or some kitchen roll, and press firmly to remove and excess moisture which might make your rice soggy.
- 5 Portion and freeze at this stage if saving for another time.
- 6 Heat your oil in a large frying pan and add the portion of “rice” you wish to cook.
- 7 Cover with a lid so the cauliflower also steams – stir occasionally, cooking for around 5-10 minutes.
- 8 That's it – it's ready!
- 9 Feel free to season as you wish with salt and pepper or soy sauce.

Adaption alert

Instead of frying, you can also cook the “rice” in the microwave on high for 3-5 minutes.

You can also roast it on an oven tray for 20 minutes.

Add an egg and mix well to make your own version of “egg fried rice”.

A squirt of lemon juice and some chopped spring onions make a lovely base for a cold rice salad.

Swede Mash

Serves 4-6

30p
per
portion

Some meals just demand a soft, creamy, comforting side, especially when it's dark and cold outside. Swede and celeriac contain about a third of the carbohydrates of potato, making it a perfect choice. This is a delicious recipe from Dr Jen Unwin – a clinical psychologist and lifelong carbohydrate addict – now helping others to health and food freedom. This recipe can also be used to create a topping for cottage or shepherd's pie or serve as is with sausages or roast meat.

INGREDIENTS

- 400g swede – peeled and chopped into 3cm cubes
- 50g butter
- 100ml double cream
- Salt and ground black pepper
- ½ teaspoon (small spoon) nutmeg (optional)

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Chop the swede and place in a saucepan (use a tea towel to protect your hands as swede is hard and can be difficult to chop!).
- 2 Cover with water and add a pinch of salt.
- 3 Bring to the boil and cook for 25-30 minutes until soft (you should be able to pierce the chunks easily with a fork).
- 4 Drain and put back in the pan – allow it to stand for a few minutes to steam dry and prevent your mash becoming watery.
- 5 Use a hand mixer or potato masher to make a smooth mixture.
- 6 Add the remaining ingredients and blend again till smooth.
- 7 Add around 1 teaspoon (small spoon) salt and a few good grinds of black pepper to taste.

Adaption alert

This recipe will also work with celeriac, butternut squash and cauliflower (cauliflower will need less time to boil or you can microwave it until soft).

If you don't have any double cream then milk is an alternative although it won't be quite as creamy.

I like to add garlic powder and grated cheese (cheddar or parmesan) to make it even more comforting!

To make it richer and increase the protein, you could whisk an egg and stir through the hot mash.



Stilton Pears

Allow 1 pear per person

30p
per
portion

A quick and delicious recipe from Viv, a founding member of our low carb group and now a hugely helpful patient expert and volunteer – quick to make and works well as a starter, a snack or even a dinner party dessert! This recipe uses the microwave, avoiding a lengthy wait on the hob and can be ready in minutes.

INGREDIENTS

- Allow 1 pear per person
- One tablespoon (big spoon) sized chunk of Stilton cheese (Gorgonzola, Roquefort or Danish Blue would work too!)



INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Cut each pear in half and remove the core.
- 2 Place a chunk of cheese in the hollow where the core was.
- 3 Microwave on full power for 3 minutes until the pear is soft and the cheese has dissolved into the pear juice (this may take longer if using underripe pears).
- 4 Serve warm.



Cinnamon and Cream Cheese Mug Cake

Serves 1

85p
per
portion

When I “need” to eat cake – this is my go-to mug cake recipe. From thought to mouth in under 5 minutes – and it hits all the right spots! You are supposed to have the cream cheese mix as a topping but I just fork out the cake and dip it in the cream cheese before devouring it all up!

INGREDIENTS

- 1 tablespoon (big spoon) butter
- 2 tablespoon (big spoon) cream cheese
- 2 tablespoon (big spoon) coconut flour
- 1 tablespoon (big spoon) erythritol or xylitol (sugar alcohols, used as low calorie sweeteners) Erythritol can be bought in Sainburys (£3.35 for 100g), Tesco (£3.20 for 100g) or Morrisons (£2.50 for 100g)
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract/essence
- ½ teaspoon (small spoon) baking powder
- 1 medium egg
- 1 teaspoon (small spoon) ground cinnamon

Cream cheese icing

- 1 tablespoon (big spoon) cream cheese
- ½ teaspoon (small spoon) erythritol or xylitol (optional)
- Dash of vanilla extract/essence

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Choose a standard microwave proof mug – no need to grease or line.
- 2 Add the butter and cream cheese to the mug and microwave for 30 secs.
- 3 Add all the remaining ingredients and mix well with a fork.
- 4 Microwave on high for 1 min 30 secs.
- 5 Whilst microwaving, make the cream cheese frosting.
- 6 Mix together the cream cheese, sweetener and vanilla extract.
- 7 Tip the cake out onto a plate and top with cream cheese topping (or do as I do and just fork straight out of the mug and dip in the cream cheese!!).
- 8 Enjoy whilst warm.....

Adaption alert

If you don't have a microwave, you can also bake in the oven at 180C for 12-14 minutes.

If you don't like cinnamon you can improvise on this recipe in many ways – consider some fresh or frozen berries, peanut or almond butter - stirred through.

The topping is not necessary – if you prefer you can pour some cream over the top instead!



2 Ingredient Chocolate Mousse

Serves 4

45p
per
portion

This very tasty mousse recipe is designed by Emma Porter and is a favourite of our low carb Community. It is super quick and easy to make and just requires chilling time in the fridge – perfect when you just need “a little something”!

Emma is a passionate cook, mother and food writer who also runs online low carb cooking sessions – check out her other delicious recipes at <https://thelowcarbkitchen.co.uk>.

The most simple, delicious, 2 ingredient dairy-free chocolate mousse, loved by the whole family. You can decorate them with whatever you want and flavour them too. A little peppermint oil or orange zest make great additions, as do chopped nuts, dark chocolate buttons and fresh fruit. The higher the % of chocolate you use, the lower the carb content will be.

Prep time: 10 mins

Cook time: 3 hours (set time in fridge)

Serves: 8-10 (depending on your portion size!)

INGREDIENTS

- 400ml / 135 fl oz tinned full fat coconut milk (or double cream)
- 120g / 4oz high % chocolate, melted (aim for 85% but don't go lower than 70%)
- 1 teaspoon (small spoon) sweetener (optional)

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 In a glass bowl, over simmering water, melt your chocolate.
- 2 In another glass bowl, pour coconut milk. Whisk it up for about 30 seconds, to get lots of air in to it.
- 3 Carefully pour the chocolate in to the coconut milk, whisking as you do it.
- 4 Continue to whisk until all combined. The more you whisk, the better the mousse will be.
- 5 Pour in to ramekins (small dish, or mug, or bowl). Decorate.
- 6 Pop in the fridge for at least 3 hours.
- 7 Serve and enjoy.

Notes:

Whether you are a 100% cocoa lover or prefer 70% cocoa with a teaspoon (small spoon) of powdered sweetener, this recipe is very straightforward and enjoyable. If you use a lower % chocolate just be mindful of any added carbs.

If you are watching your fat intake, you can use reduced fat coconut milk. Just be mindful of any added carbs and always check the back of packaging.

The mousse will keep in the fridge for up to 7 days.

You can use double cream instead of coconut milk. If you do this, please whisk only twice to get air in – anymore and it'll turn to whipped cream!

Final Feedback

It is really important to us that we work with local people to produce these meal planners and any future materials, as well as finding out whether you have enjoyed the content, and whether it has helped you work towards your health goals. We would love to hear from you. Please email any general feedback to mseicb-me.lowcarb.cvpcn@nhs.net, such as:

- what recipes you have tried out
- what you liked
- what you disliked
- any improvements you have seen with your health

If you have a little bit longer and would be so kind as to complete a quick survey for us - please follow the link:

<https://forms.office.com/r/yWbVSh7hdG>
or scan the QR code below.



To thank you for taking the time to complete the survey, if you live in the Braintree District, we have free gym passes (to be used in Fusion Leisure Centres) at the ready - one of the team will get in touch to distribute this to you if you kindly add your contact details at the end of the survey. Thanks for your time, we really look forward to hearing your feedback and continuing to improve our materials.





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