



BACK ON BUDGET

MEAL PLAN

WELCOME

ABOUT ME

My name is Katherine. I live in Sydney, Australia with my Irish husband and three beautiful kids – now aged 11, 9 and 6. Yes, life is busy, but I am determined to feed my family real, healthy food – and not break the bank while doing it!

I have always loved to cook, and my passion for whole foods came about after I decided to improve my health after my first child was born. I realised how much better I felt when I ate well, and I wanted my family to benefit from that. I want my kids to grow up knowing that real food doesn't come from packets and that healthy eating doesn't have to be difficult.

After years of friends asking “how do you do it?” and requesting recipes and meal plans, I decided to create Fresh Fast & Frugal to help others see that providing your family with a week's worth of real food that is good for them doesn't have to cost you the earth, all your spare time or your sanity.

The Back on Budget Meal Plan features some of the best strategies I use to serve up real food on a budget.



Katherine x

ESSENTIAL GROCERY BUDGET TIPS

STRATEGIES FOR KEEPING COSTS DOWN

...WHILE STILL EATING WELL

There can be a misconception that eating healthy food is expensive - or that eating on a budget means that you have to resort to filling up meals with loads of simple white carbs. But with some thought and planning, eating well can be cheaper than you think.

SHOPPING

- *Shop around* - although this is something that needs to be balanced against your time, it can really pay to shop around at places other than the big supermarkets. Using co-ops, local greengrocers or Middle Eastern/Asian/Indian grocers can be a way to find great bargains.
- *Buy in season and local* - in-season produce is more abundant and therefore cheaper. And local means you're not paying for huge transport costs on top.
- *Buy in bulk if possible* - this can be a great way to save - but only if you have space to store the food safely.
- *Shop your pantry first* - use what you have before you buy more.
- *Keep a basic pantry of flavour boosters* - staples such as spices, sauces such as tamari or Worcestershire, mustard etc can all bring an otherwise boring budget meal to life.

PLANNING

- *Use a meal plan* - it doesn't have to be a strict day-by-day plan, but having an idea of 3, 4 or 5 meals for the week that you have the ingredients for can save you those last-minute trips to the shops that really add up
- *Use the same ingredients in several meals across the week* - this saves you ending up with half a bunch of this or that going to waste at the end of the week. For example, using a whole pumpkin to serve with a roast, use in salads and make a soup.
- *Stretch your proteins across the week* - a large slow-cooked piece of meat or roast can be used in two or more meals by repurposing the leftovers.

PREPARING

- *Wash and chop veggies in advance* - you'll be more likely to use them if they're convenient!
- *Pre-cook some elements of meals in advance* - eg roast veggies, rice or quinoa, pie fillings, etc. Taking some time to do these prep tasks makes mid-week cooking quicker and less stressful - which means you'll be more likely to avoid expensive takeaway meals.

STORING

- *Use your freezer space wisely* - batch meals and freeze for easy dinners on busy nights to save you reaching for takeaway. A freezer is a great option for bulk purchases of meat, and it will also prolong the life of nuts, seeds and flours you buy in bulk.
- *Store packets correctly* - avoid food wastage by making sure you reseal packets or decant the contents into an airtight container. There's not much point picking up a bargain if it goes stale!
- *Keep your scraps* - veggie peelings and trimmings can be kept in a freezer bag to make stock, parmesan rinds can give a great flavour to soups, bread ends can be blitzed to make breadcrumbs - waste not, want not!

MEAL PLAN & PREP GUIDE

DINNER

OTHER ITEMS TO PREP

LUNCH LEFTOVERS PREP

1

Roast Chicken & Veg
with Gravy & Baby Peas

- While your oven is on for the roast: roast extra pumpkin for tomorrow's Frittata and whole sweet potatoes for the Cottage Pie
- Shred leftover chicken ready for Fried Rice and store in fridge.
- Cook rice for Fried Rice - store in fridge.
- Make Broth in slow cooker overnight to use in Cottage Pie and Soup

2

Pumpkin, Pea & Feta Frittata
with Salad

- (Morning) Strain broth and store in glass jars in fridge for use throughout the week. Store excess in freezer.

- Make extra (undressed) salad and add some leftover frittata for an easy lunch. Pack dressing separately.

3

Chicken Fried Rice

- If you haven't already, roast some whole sweet potatoes for tomorrow night's Cottage Pie.

- Store leftover fried rice in a sealed container in the fridge. Can be reheated or served cold for lunch.

4

Sweet Potato Cottage Pie

- (Optional) Pre-chop veggies for tomorrow's soup while you chop veggies for the Cottage Pie filling. Store in an airtight container in the fridge.

- Store leftovers in a sealed container in the fridge to be reheated for lunch. (Send in a thermos for school)

5

Tomato, Veg & Lentil Soup
with Grilled Cheese Toast

- Pop containers of extra soup in freezer for another night (or two) - or for lunches (perfect in a thermos).

EXTRA
PREP

Want to do a Sunday Prep Session? Here's what you can prepare ahead for the week to make things easier.

- Pre-cook the mince mixture for the Cottage Pie. Store in fridge for up to 5 days or freeze.
- Pre-cook rice for Fried Rice. Store in fridge for up to 3 days or freeze
- Pre-roast pumpkin for Frittata and sweet potatoes for Cottage Pie.
- Tomato Veg & Lentil Soup can be made at any time after you have made the broth (or, use store-bought broth/stock and make it in advance). Soup can be stored in the fridge for up to 5 days or frozen for longer.

Other items you can prep ahead to make the week easier:

- Wash and chop veggie sticks – eg carrot, celery, snow peas, cherry tomatoes ready for lunchboxes or easy snacks and dinner sides. Store wrapped in damp cloths in a sealed container in the fridge.
- Bake a snack for the week and store in the freezer to pop straight into lunchboxes. [Try one of Lunchbox recipes from the Fresh Fast & Frugal website.](#)
- Prep something for breakfasts - eg my [Almond & Maple Granola](#)

SHOPPING LIST



RECIPES

1. Roast Chicken & Veg with Gravy & Baby Peas
2. Chicken Broth
3. Roast Pumpkin, Pea & Feta Frittata with Salad
4. Chicken Fried Rice
5. Sweet Potato Cottage Pie
6. Tomato Vegetable & Lentil Soup with Grilled Cheese Toast

FRUIT & VEG

- 5 brown onions (1, 2, 4, 5, 6)
- 1 red onion (3)
- 4 cloves garlic (4, 6)
- 4-6 medium washed potatoes (1)
- 3-4 small-medium sweet potatoes (6)
- 1 small butternut pumpkin - or large wedge of jap/kent (1, 3)
- 6-7 carrots (1, 2, 4, 5, 6)
- handful green beans (or other veg for fried rice) (4)
- 1/2 bunch celery (2, 5, 6)
- 1 zucchini (6)
- 1/2 red capsicum (6)
- 1 lemon (1)
- salad ingredients of your choice to serve with Frittata (3)
- green veg to steam to serve with Cottage Pie (5)

MEAT & DAIRY

- 1 whole chicken (1.5 - 2kg - or 2 smaller chickens) (1, 4)
- 500g beef mince (5)
- 2 slices bacon (4)
- 10 eggs (3, 4)
- 100g feta (3)
- tasty cheese (5, 6)
- 1/3 cup milk (3)

OTHER

- 1kg bag frozen baby peas (1, 3, 4)
- 2 cups chicken broth/stock (1)
- 2 cups brown rice (4)
- small tub/tube tomato paste (5, 6)
- 2 x 400g tins diced tomatoes (6)
- 400g tin brown lentils (5)
- 1/2 cup dry red lentils (6)
- sourdough or other bread (6)

PANTRY

- olive oil
- macadamia or coconut oil
- salt & pepper
- paprika (1)
- garlic powder (1)
- onion powder (1)
- parsley flakes (1)
- chilli flakes (optional) (6)
- plain or spelt flour (1)
- rapadura (or other) sugar (6)
- Worcestershire sauce (5)
- tamari or soy sauce (4)
- apple cider vinegar (2)



A NOTE ABOUT INGREDIENTS, SHOPPING AND SUBSTITUTES

My recipes - whether in this plan or on my website - are intended to be FLEXIBLE. With the exception of ingredient ratios in sauces and marinades or baking recipes, most recipes can be adapted to suit your family's tastes and appetites. Don't like a particular vegetable? Swap it for another. Found a cheaper vegetable on special or in season? Use that one instead - or swap for economical frozen veg. Don't like pork? Use beef or chicken. Feeding littlies who don't eat much? Reduce the quantities. Have a family of hungry hungry hippos or want some extras for lunch the next day? Add some extra protein or veg. Think coriander is the devil's herb? Leave it out or swap for parsley. Don't want to buy something you're not sure you'll continue to use up? Then we'll find an alternative so you can shop within your budget.

Each recipe has suggestions for additions or substitutions listed in the Tips & Tricks section below the recipe itself, so check there before you head out shopping. If you still need to swap something out or you're not sure if what you have will work, just drop me a message on Fresh Fast & Frugal via Instagram or Facebook. I'm here to help.

ROAST CHICKEN & VEGETABLES WITH GRAVY & BABY PEAS



A classic meal. And not as scary to cook as you might think! It's actually really easy - and with a bit of planning and smart use of leftovers, will set you up for a few different dinners, too.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 whole chicken (approx 1.5-2kg – or two smaller chickens)
- 1 tsp each salt, pepper, paprika, onion powder, garlic powder, parsley flakes
- 1 whole lemon
- olive oil
- vegetables for roasting (4-6 medium washed potatoes, 2 carrots, 1 brown onion, ¼ pumpkin)
- 1-2 tablespoons flour (plain wheat or spelt works fine)
- 2 cups (approx) chicken stock/broth
- 2 cups frozen baby peas

METHOD

1. Preheat your oven to about 180 degrees Celsius (fan forced). Remove chicken from packaging and pat dry.
2. Mix salt, pepper and spices in a small bowl.
3. Drizzle some olive oil over the chicken and rub in. Then sprinkle with the seasoning mix and rub all over. Pierce the lemon a few times with a knife and place inside the cavity of the chicken. Place the chicken in a roasting tin and pour a little water around (just enough to cover the base of the tin). Place in oven for approximately 20-30 minutes.
4. Chop veggies into large chunks for roasting, then toss in olive oil. Set aside.
5. Remove roasting pan from oven and add the vegetables to the pan. (if you have one, you can place the chicken on a roasting rack above the vegetables). Return to oven for another 30-40 minutes. Turn vegetables, then cook for another 30-40 minutes.
6. Depending on the size of your chicken, it may be cooked at this point. Check that it is cooked through by piercing it near the thigh and checking that the juices run clear (not pink!). If cooked, take your chicken out, cover in foil and rest for at least 20 minutes before carving. Otherwise, return the chicken to the oven until cooked.
7. After removing chicken, increase oven temperature to 200-220 degrees. Remove vegetables from roasting pan, spread on a baking tray and return to oven to crisp up.
8. Meanwhile, use the chicken pan juices to make a delicious gravy. Place the roasting pan on the stovetop over medium heat. Add a tablespoon or two of flour to the remaining juices and stir to a paste. Cook for a minute or two, then slowly add broth/stock while stirring constantly, until you get your desired consistency – add salt to taste if required. Make sure you scrape out all the yummy crispy brown stuff left in the roasting pan – that's the flavour!!! (If you don't have a roasting tin that can be used on a cooktop, transfer your pan juices to a frying pan to make the gravy.)
9. Place baby peas with water in a saucepan, add a pinch of salt and bring to the boil. Reduce and simmer until tender. Drain.
10. Now, carve your deliciously moist chicken, take your crispy roast veggies out of the oven, serve up with your baby peas and smother the lot in your awesome gravy, whilst feeling like an absolute rock star!

TIPS & TRICKS

- Swap out the veggies for anything you have on hand or whatever your family prefers - sweet potato, beetroots, parsnips, etc for roasting, or choose in-season fresh green veggies of your choice. I've used frozen peas because they are available all year round and are cheap to buy.
- You can also mix up the spices in larger quantities in a jar to make this meal quicker to prepare later. This seasoning mix also works well on roast veggies or wedges.
- Your total cooking time for this recipe will depend on the size of your chicken(s). Allow approx 30 minutes per 500g of chicken – ie 1 hour per kg. So to know what time to start cooking, work backwards from when you want to serve (and give yourself a bit extra just in case!)

CHICKEN BROTH



Making your own broth is a fabulous way of getting even more value out of your roast chicken. Using the bones, a few veggies and veggie scraps in your slow cooker, you can create a nourishing base for soups and you can also use it in loads of other dishes.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 -2 chicken carcasses (leftover from your roast – meat removed)
- 1-2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
- 1 brown onion, quartered (leave some skin on for a richer colour in your broth)
- 1 -2 large carrots, roughly chopped
- 2-3 stalks celery, roughly chopped
- (plus other veggie scraps you may have – eg zucchini ends, etc)
- a few sprigs of herbs (if you have them – eg parsley, bay leaf)
- 2L (approx) filtered water – enough to cover your chicken and veggies

METHOD

1. Add all the ingredients to a slow cooker, pour in enough filtered water to just cover the bones and cook on low for approximately 12 hours. You can also cook this on the stove top by simmering for 4-6 hours.
2. Strain the cooked stock into a large bowl, leave to cool until no longer steaming, then transfer to jars and cool completely in fridge.

TIPS & TRICKS

- Add extras like chicken wings, feet or necks to add more gut-friendly goodies to your stock. It is more likely to turn in to “jelly” if you use more of these.
- Cook this overnight to save time. I actually cook mine in the laundry with the door closed so that the smell isn't so overpowering first thing in the morning!
- Make broth a regular part of your food prep. Buy chicken carcasses (or “frames”), feet and wings from the supermarket or butcher to make extra stock (they are usually super cheap). Keep the stock on hand to avoid buying store-bought stock, which often contains additives. Freeze it in smaller portions (ice cube trays or recycled glass jars work well for different sized portions).
- Keep broth on hand to use for soups, or add to add to other cooked dishes such as stews or sauces, or use to cook grains like rice or quinoa for added nutrition.

ROAST PUMPKIN, PEA & FETA FRITTATA WITH SALAD



This is a quick to prep vegetarian meal that makes great use of leftover roast pumpkin and that good old freezer staple, frozen peas. It makes fantastic lunch, too.

INGREDIENTS

- olive oil
- 1 red onion, finely sliced
- 2 cups (approx) cubed roasted pumpkin
- 100g feta, crumbled
- 1 cup frozen baby peas
- 8 eggs
- 1/3 cup milk
- salt & pepper

To serve:

- salad

METHOD

1. Heat a medium sized non-stick or seasoned cast iron frying pan over medium heat.
2. Add a small amount of olive oil to the frying pan, add onion and cook until soft.
3. Meanwhile, in a mixing bowl, add eggs, milk, salt & pepper and whisk together.
4. Add other ingredients and stir to combine.
5. When onion is soft, add the egg mixture to the pan, ensuring the vegetables are well distributed through the mix.
6. Cover with a lid and cook over low-medium heat until set around the edges (the middle will still be wet). Meanwhile, preheat an overhead grill to medium heat.
7. When edges of frittata are set, remove lid and place the pan under the pre-heated grill.
8. When top of frittata is set and golden brown, remove carefully from grill, and slide it out of the pan with the help of a spatula.
9. Slice and serve with salad.

TIPS & TRICKS

- This is an easily customisable recipe. You can swap out the veggies for anything you have on hand - leftover roasted veg, broccoli or spinach or asparagus instead of peas. (We've added frozen peas because they are available all year round and are cheap to buy). You could add grated tasty cheese or crumbled goats' cheese or blue cheese instead of feta. And some diced bacon is always a hit if you don't need your frittata to be meat-free.
- This makes a great lunch if you have any leftover. Just refrigerate in a sealed container and reheat in the oven or microwave - or just eat it cold.
- You can also cook this entirely in the oven if you prefer - just pour into a lined/greased baking dish. Make sure the onion is very finely diced so that it cooks through - or roast some onion alongside the pumpkin.

CHICKEN FRIED RICE



Fried rice is a classic family dish. For good reason: it's kid-friendly, super versatile, and a great way to use up leftover roast chicken and whatever veggies you have on hand to help your budget.

INGREDIENTS

- macadamia or other neutral-tasting oil
- 2 eggs
- 1 brown onion, finely diced
- 2-3 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 slices bacon, diced
- 1 large carrot, finely diced
- handful green beans, sliced into 2-3cm pieces
- 1 cup frozen peas
- 2-3 cups cold cooked rice
- 1 cup (or more) shredded roast chicken
- 2 tbsp tamari (or soy sauce)

METHOD

1. Heat oil in a large frying pan over medium heat.
2. Whisk eggs in a bowl and pour into the pan. When egg is almost set, flip omelette over to cook on the other side. Remove from pan and set aside. to cool slightly. Roughly chop.
3. Add a dash more oil to the pan and cook onion and garlic for a few minutes until softened.
4. Add bacon or ham and cook for a further minute.
5. Add vegetables to the pan and cook, tossing frequently, until just cooked through.
6. Add rice to pan and cook, tossing frequently for a few minutes, until beginning to brown.
7. Return egg to pan, along with shredded chicken. Toss to combine.
8. Stir through tamari. Cook for another minute to warm through.

TIPS & TRICKS

- The key to fried rice is having your cooked rice cold and dry - if it's still warm or soggy it won't fry well. When I cook rice I always make double and freeze half so I can use it later. Or I cook the rice ahead separately and give it time to cool. I always use brown rice for this, but white rice works fine too.
- Use any combination of veggies you have for this. Frozen peas, carrots and corn make this super budget friendly too.

SWEET POTATO COTTAGE PIE WITH STEAMED GREENS



Shepherd's pie or cottage pie is staple family comfort food. This version, with sweet potato topping, is sure to be a crowd pleaser. Adding lentils helps to stretch the mince further and adds some extra fibre.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 large brown onion, diced
- 1 large carrot, diced
- 1 large celery stick, diced
- olive oil
- 500g beef mince
- 2 tbsp tomato paste
- 2 tsp Worcestershire sauce
- 1 tin brown lentils, rinsed & drained (optional)
- 1 cup chicken broth (made from roast chicken bones)
- salt & pepper
- 3-4 cups mashed sweet potato (see notes)
- 1 cup grated tasty cheese

To serve:

- steamed green veggies

METHOD

1. Pre-heat oven to 200C.
2. Heat a dash of olive oil in a frying pan over medium heat. Saute onion, carrot and celery until softened. Add beef mince and cook until brown, stirring to break up lumps.
3. Add tomato paste and cook, stirring 2 minutes.
4. Add sauce, lentils, and stock/broth. Stir to combine, then simmer for 15 minutes, stirring occasionally, until thickened. Season to taste with salt & pepper.
5. Transfer beef and lentil mixture to a baking dish, top with sweet potato mash and grated cheese.
6. Bake in a 200 degree oven 20 minutes, or until browned on top.
7. Serve with steamed green veggies.

TIPS & TRICKS

- I use a 20cm square, 7cm deep baking dish for this.
- Filling and mash can both be prepared ahead of time. Both components also freeze really well, so it's a great recipe to double-batch and freeze for an easy dinner later.
- To make sweet potato mash, simply roast whole sweet potatoes in their jackets at 180C for about an hour until cooked through, then slice open, scoop out the flesh and mash with a fork. Season with salt and pepper and add dollop of butter if desired. Alternatively, you can steam or boil chunks of peeled sweet potato for a speedier version.
- If you don't have any homemade chicken broth on hand, simply sub with store-bought chicken or beef broth (beef will give a richer flavour).

TOMATO VEGETABLE & LENTIL SOUP WITH GRILLED CHEESE TOAST



There is something so simply joyful about dipping cheese toasties into a bowl of tomato soup. This soup has the bonus goodness of extra veggies, plus fibre and protein from the lentils. A great freezer staple to have on standby for busy winter nights.

INGREDIENTS

- olive oil
- 1 onion
- 2 cloves garlic
- 1 celery stick
- 1 small zucchini
- 1 medium carrot
- ½ red capsicum
- 1 tbsp tomato paste
- 2 tins diced tomatoes
- 2 cups chicken broth (made from roast chicken bones)
- ½ cup dry red lentils, rinsed
- 1 tsp rapadura sugar (or white sugar)
- salt & pepper
- chilli flakes to garnish (optional)

To serve:

- sourdough or other bread
- tasty cheese

METHOD

1. Finely dice all of the vegetables (or blitz in a food processor to make it super quick).
2. Heat olive oil in a large pot over medium heat. Add vegetables and cook until softened.
3. Stir in tomato paste and cook for another minute.
4. Add in remaining ingredients and simmer for approximately 20-30 minutes, or until lentils have become very soft.
5. Blend soup until smooth. Adjust seasoning to taste.
6. Serve sprinkled with chilli flakes, with grilled cheese toast for dipping.

TIPS & TRICKS

- A lovely textural addition to the soup is to garnish with roasted red capsicum strips.
- An optional extra is to cook some diced bacon until crispy and serve sprinkled on top of the soup.
- Freeze leftovers in a large container for another family meal, or in portions for grab and go lunches.
- To make Grilled Cheese Toast, simply slice sourdough, top with cheese and place under the grill to melt the cheese. (If you have some pesto, spread the bread with pesto first for an extra flavour boost.)
- If you don't have any homemade chicken broth on hand, simply sub with store-bought chicken or vegetable broth.



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CUSTOMER FEEDBACK

VALESKA

'I love Katherine's real and down to earth approach to feeding a family and getting a meal on the table. I have gained so many tips and tricks to help make my weeks run more smoothly in the kitchen and I regularly use her recipes as my go-to meals when menu planning for the week.'



LORRAINE

'Using Katherine's approach to regular preparation for the week ahead has been invaluable in keeping our meals in line with my ideal of eating a variety of healthy foods. No fuss, no hours slaving in the kitchen with hundreds of dollars in exotic ingredients. We have a heavy extracurricular load with the children, and once upon a time we would have been regularly hitting the takeaway venues around us but not anymore!'

JANINE

Katherine's meal planning is genius in the way it sets you up for the entire week, providing leftover options for lunches and the freedom to use up what you've still got on hand come the end of the week. Fresh produce, quick and easy prep, nothing wasted. It's been a game-changer for me and has made my working week so much easier!



fresh fast & frugal

with Katherine McCoy

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