FULL PLATE, SMALL BILL

Big-flavor cooking with Caleb Hammer



BOOKFORGE STUDIO

About this book



For everyone who wants dinner to taste like the best part of the day.

48 colorful, generous recipes with affordable ingredients, crisp edges, bright sauces and practical shopping. An original Caleb Hammer-inspired cookbook concept by BookForge Studio.

By BookForge Studio

Contents



Dinner Should Be Worth Looking Forward To 5

Build Flavor Before You Buy More 7

Make the Cart Work for Dinner 9

A Small Fridge, a Useful Freezer 11

What a Serving Really Costs 13

Breakfast Worth Getting Up For 16

Crispy Potato and Egg Breakfast Tacos 17

Banana-Oat Pancakes with Warm Berry Sauce 21

Roasted Pepper and Spinach Frittata 25

Savory Chili-Garlic Oats with Fried Eggs 29

Apple-Cinnamon Overnight Oats 33

Peanut-Banana French Toast 37

Lunch That Travels Well 41

Lemon-Herb Chickpea Chopped Salad 42

Crispy Black Bean Quesadillas with Lime Slaw 46

Chili-Lime Tuna and White Bean Bowls 51

Ginger-Peanut Noodles with Crunchy Cabbage 55

Roasted Vegetable Couscous with Lemon Yogurt 59

Toasty Tomato and Chickpea Melts 64

Chicken with Main-Character Energy 68

Caleb's Honey-Paprika Chicken Thighs 69

Lemon Chicken Orzo with Peas 73

Chicken Tinga Tostadas 77

Ginger-Soy Chicken and Broccoli 81

Coconut-Lime Tray-Bake Chicken 85

Yogurt-Spiced Chicken with Rice and Cucumber 89

Contents



A Little Meat, a Lot of Dinner — 93

- Crisp-Edged Pork Carnitas Tacos 94
- Beef-and-Lentil Smash Burgers — 98
- Sausage, White Bean and Cabbage Skillet 102
- Chipotle Turkey and Black Bean Chili 106
- Ginger Pork Lettuce Cups with Rice 110
- Beef, Mushroom and Potato Skillet Pie 114

Meatless Meals That Deliver — 118

- Crispy Chickpeas and Cauliflower with Lemon Tahini 119
- Red Lentil Coconut Curry — 123
- Mushroom and Black Bean Enchiladas 127
- Charred Cabbage and Garlicky White Beans 131
- Sweet Potato and Peanut Stew — 135
- Cheesy Polenta with Roasted Tomatoes and Spinach 139

Rice, Noodles and Pantry Magic 143

- Gochujang Egg Fried Rice — 144
- Tomato-Butter Pasta with Crispy Chickpeas 148
- Cabbage and Pork Noodles — 152
- One-Pot Smoky Rice and Beans 156
- Lemon-Garlic Broccoli Farfalle — 160
- Roasted Pepper and Lentil Bolognese 164

The Smart Seafood Chapter — 167

- Crispy Fish Tacos with Lime Slaw 168
- Lemon Pollock with Potatoes and Peas 172
- Tomato-Braised Sardines on Toast 176
- Shrimp, Corn and Rice Skillet — 180
- Salmon-Potato Cakes with Dill Yogurt 183
- Coconut-Tomato Fish Curry — 186

Contents



Something Sweet, Still Sensible 189

- Skillet Apple Crumble 190
- Dark Chocolate Oat Cookies 193
- Lemon-Yogurt Loaf 196
- Brown Butter Banana Bread 199
- Peanut Butter Chocolate Frozen Yogurt Bark 202
- Roasted Pears with Cinnamon Ricotta 205
- Five Dinners from One Sensible Cart 208
- A Freezer Plan for the Busy Week 210
- The Shopping List You Will Actually Use 212
- Keep the Crunch, Save the Sauce 214
- Sources and the Next Good Dinner 216

Dinner Should Be Worth Looking Forward To

A good dinner gives you something to anticipate: potatoes with crisp, golden edges, chicken with a glossy paprika glaze, or a bowl of lentils brightened with lime. Affordable cooking should still have contrast, color and enough flavor to make the next bite interesting. This book starts there—with the food.

Full Plate, Small Bill brings together 48 recipes built around familiar groceries and useful cooking techniques. Beans give a skillet substance; cabbage brings sweetness when browned and crunch when sliced raw; frozen peas add color without leaving half a bag of produce wilting in the fridge. Ingredients appear across different meals, but they do different work. A tub of yogurt can become a lemony sauce, a spiced marinade or part of a tender loaf.



Begin with the short guides that follow. They explain how to build flavor, shop with the coming meals in mind, use cold storage well and compare serving costs without pretending every store charges the same price. Then browse by appetite: breakfast, packable lunches, chicken, meals that stretch a little meat, meatless dinners, pantry staples, seafood and something sweet. The closing sections bring those dishes together into practical shopping and freezer plans.

Dinner Should Be Worth Looking Forward To (continued)



Each recipe gives you quantities, equipment, preparation order and clear cooking cues. Read the method before starting, especially when ingredients are divided between components. Look for the physical signs as well as the clock: a dry surface ready to brown, a sauce that coats a spoon, a center that reaches its safe temperature. Substitutions and storage notes help you adapt the meal and look after what remains.

Choose a first dish that sounds good, not one that feels like homework. Give it room in the pan, taste where directed and keep the finishing lemon or sauce within reach. Small, deliberate actions can make ordinary groceries into dinner worth sitting down for.

An independent Caleb Hammer-inspired cookbook concept by BookForge Studio; no endorsement or personal food history is implied.

Build Flavor Before You Buy More

A short ingredient list can deliver a generous dinner when each ingredient has a job. Before adding another condiment to the cart, build flavor with heat, seasoning and contrast.

Give browning some room. Pat chicken or drained chickpeas dry, and let the skillet heat before adding oil and food. Arrange pieces in one layer with gaps; crowded food releases moisture faster than it can evaporate. Leave the first side undisturbed until it develops color and releases readily. If the pan fills with liquid, stop adding food and cook in batches. Brown is flavorful; blackened garlic and smoking spices are signals to lower the heat.



Season in stages. Add a little salt as vegetables soften, then taste again after adding beans, tomatoes or broth. Canned ingredients and bottled sauces bring their own salt, so wait until the sauce has reduced before making the final adjustment. Never taste a mixture containing raw meat, poultry or eggs.

Use acid to sharpen, not overwhelm. When cooked beans or a rich sauce taste heavy, try a small squeeze of lemon or a splash of vinegar, stir and taste before adding more salt. Add ground cumin, smoked paprika or chili flakes briefly to warm oil, stirring just until fragrant; have the next ingredient ready so the spices do not scorch.

Build Flavor Before You Buy More (continued)



Build contrast from what is already useful. Crisp cabbage brightens soft beans. Toasted oats give a crumble its rough-edged crust. Plain yogurt stirred with lemon, grated garlic and a pinch of salt becomes a cool sauce for roasted vegetables or chicken. Thin it a teaspoon of water at a time until it drizzles.

Start with dependable tools: a 12-inch skillet for browning, a heavy pot for simmering, a sheet pan for roasting, a sharp knife and a food thermometer. Spend attention before spending on equipment: dry surfaces, manageable batches and a final taste do more than another gadget.

Make the Cart Work for Dinner

Start with dinners, not deals. Choose a few recipes that share ingredients: cabbage for noodles and slaw, yogurt for a marinade and a sauce, lemons for beans and fish. Check the fridge first, then shop for the missing pieces. An ingredient earns its place when you know where the rest of the package will go.

A saved online pickup cart makes a useful starting list. Add store-brand beans, oats, rice, canned tomatoes and frozen vegetables; review quantities and prices before each checkout rather than repeating the cart unchanged. Compare unit prices across similar products, but buy the larger package only when you can use or store it. Set acceptable substitutions, watch for replacement notices and decline anything that will not suit the dish. A substituted item may change the final charge.



Discount and international grocers can be useful for lentils, spices, rice and produce. Compare the ingredients you actually need rather than assuming any store is always cheapest. Choose seasonal vegetables when their quality and price appeal; frozen peas, spinach and broccoli offer dependable alternatives. Match the form to the method: frozen spinach suits a curry better than a crisp chopped salad.

Make the Cart Work for Dinner (continued)



Compare the complete checkout, including delivery charges, service fees, tips and the trip required for pickup. Consider waste, too: a smaller usable package can be the better purchase. Amazon can be convenient for familiar pantry replenishment, but check the final unit price, package count and storage space. Review any recurring shipment before dispatch; skip or cancel when supplies are already sufficient.

Flashfood lists specific surplus groceries at participating stores for pickup. Buy only what fits a meal or a prompt freezer plan. Too Good To Go Surprise Bags have unpredictable contents and set pickup windows: treat them as optional extras, not the foundation of dinner. Confirm allergen information with the store before buying; an unknown assortment is not a dependable dietary substitution.

A Small Fridge, a Useful Freezer

A useful fridge makes tomorrow's dinner easy to find. Keep ready-to-eat food and cooked leftovers above raw meat, poultry and seafood; contain raw foods in leakproof containers on the lowest shelf. Leave space for cold air to circulate. An appliance thermometer—not the temperature dial—tells you whether the fridge is cold enough.

Keep this temperature card handy. Check food in its thickest part, away from bone, and clean the thermometer probe between readings.



Refrigerator: 40°F / 4°C or below.
Freezer: 0°F / −18°C or below.
Poultry, including ground poultry: 165°F / 74°C.
Ground beef and pork: 160°F / 71°C.
Whole pork cuts: 145°F / 63°C, followed by a 3-minute rest.
Fish: 145°F / 63°C.
Egg dishes: 160°F / 71°C.
Reheated leftovers: 165°F / 74°C.

Cool dinner promptly. Divide a deep pot of soup, beans or stew among shallow containers and refrigerate without waiting for it to reach room temperature. Refrigerate perishables within 2 hours of cooking or serving, or within 1 hour when the surrounding temperature exceeds 90°F / 32°C. Do not put one large, hot stockpot into a crowded fridge and expect its center to cool quickly.

A Small Fridge, a Useful Freezer (continued)



Treat cooked rice with the same urgency: portion it into shallow containers and refrigerate promptly, rather than leaving it in the saucepan overnight. Reheating cannot reliably rescue improperly stored rice.

Use refrigerated leftovers within 3–4 days. If you will not eat them in that window, freeze them early, in meal-size portions, with the dish name and date. Freeze sauces separately from crisp toppings; leave expansion space in containers of soup. Thaw in the refrigerator, not on the counter. When reheating, stir saucy dishes to distribute heat and check several spots for 165°F / 74°C.

Official references: FoodSafety.gov, Safe Minimum Internal Temperatures and Cold Food Storage Charts; USDA FSIS, Leftovers and Food Safety, and Freezing and Food Safety.

What a Serving Really Costs

A generous dinner has two useful prices: what the ingredients in the dish cost, and what you paid to bring the groceries home. Those numbers answer different questions. The first helps compare meals; the second tells you what this shopping trip requires.

For a recipe estimate, count only what goes into the food. If you use one-quarter of a bag of rice, assign one-quarter of that bag's price. Count the whole onion if you use it all, and include the oil, spices and toppings rather than treating pantry ingredients as free. Small amounts can be estimated; consistency is more useful than false precision.



Here is a hypothetical example, not a current price claim: a recipe using $12 worth of ingredients and yielding four servings costs $3 per serving. The checkout total may be higher because you bought full packages of rice, oil and seasonings. Those remaining ingredients belong to future meals, provided you actually use them.

Start with your receipt and the package size. Divide the package price by its ounces, pounds or count, then multiply by the amount used. Keep the measurement basis consistent: a recipe calling for dry rice needs a dry-rice calculation, not the weight after cooking. For canned beans, compare drained yields when the liquid is discarded.

What a Serving Really Costs (continued)



Finally, check the real yield. Four intended servings that become three generous dinners should be counted as three. Include sides when comparing complete meals, and account for purchases that spoil unused. A larger package is useful only when its contents have somewhere to go.

Building a pantry can make the first few trips more expensive. Start with seasonings and staples that recur across several dishes, then replenish as needed. The aim is not a perfect spreadsheet. It is a kitchen where the groceries become satisfying food—and tomorrow's ingredients already have a purpose.

Three worked recipe examples

These use deliberately illustrative ingredient-cost assumptions, not prices promised at any store. Each includes the oil, seasonings and other ingredients used. Full ingredient-by-ingredient inputs are saved with the editable recipes so you can substitute your own receipt figures.

Caleb's Honey-Paprika Chicken Thighs: chicken $5.37; oil and seasonings $0.45; honey $0.45; vinegar $0.10; water $0.00. Total $6.37 / four portions = about $1.59 each, for chicken and glaze only. Sides require their own ingredients and cost.

Crispy Black Bean Quesadillas with Lime Slaw: beans $1.70; onion $0.65; oil and seasonings $0.25; tortillas $1.00; cheese $1.76; cabbage $0.48; carrot $0.15; lime juice $0.70; cilantro $0.20. Total $6.89 / four portions = about $1.72 each, including the slaw.

What a Serving Really Costs (continued)



Salmon-Potato Cakes with Dill Yogurt: salmon $5.40; potatoes $0.85; eggs $0.50; breadcrumbs $0.25; scallions $0.30; oil and seasonings $0.22; yogurt $0.85; lemon $0.45; dill $0.35. Total $9.17 / four portions = about $2.29 each, including sauce.

Buying every package from an empty pantry costs more than the quantities used here. Local prices, package yields and portions change the result; do not treat these examples as a universal dinner-price guarantee.

Breakfast Worth Getting Up For

Breakfast can be crisp-edged, warmly spiced or cool and ready in the fridge. These six dishes give you that range without sending you shopping for six separate pantries.

Crispy Potato and Egg Breakfast Tacos start with golden potatoes and soft eggs. Roasted Pepper and Spinach Frittata takes eggs in another direction, with tender vegetables in every slice. Savory Chili-Garlic Oats with Fried Eggs makes a familiar grain into a hearty, savory bowl.



On the sweeter side, Banana-Oat Pancakes with Warm Berry Sauce pairs a tender stack with tart fruit. Apple-Cinnamon Overnight Oats offers a make-ahead option, while Peanut-Banana French Toast brings browned bread, creamy banana and peanut richness to the table.

Oats, eggs, milk, fruit and everyday seasonings recur across the chapter. That overlap makes it easier to use what you buy while still eating distinctly different breakfasts.

One useful technique carries through the hot dishes: let the cooking surface heat before adding food, then adjust the heat once browning begins. Color builds flavor; excessive heat scorches the outside before the center sets. The flavor strategy is contrast—crisp against soft, rich against bright, warm spice against fresh fruit—rather than sweetness or salt alone.

Crispy Potato and Egg Breakfast Tacos

Roasted potatoes, gently scrambled eggs and cheddar tucked into warm corn tortillas with tomato salsa and lime. Makes 12 tacos; three tacos per serving, with no additional sides included.

Serves 4 · servings of 3 tacos
Prep: 15 min **Cook:** 35 min **Rest:** 0 min **Total:** 50 min

Equipment: Oven, Stovetop, 18-by-13-inch rimmed sheet pan, 12-inch nonstick skillet, Knife, Cutting board, Large mixing bowl, Medium mixing bowl, Measuring cups and spoons, Fork, Wide spatula, Heatproof flexible spatula, Clean kitchen towel, Food thermometer

Ingredients

1 1/2 pounds (680 g) Yukon Gold potatoes, unpeeled, scrubbed and cut into 1/2-inch cubes
3 tablespoons (45 ml) neutral cooking oil, divided: 2 tablespoons for potatoes, 1 tablespoon for eggs
1 teaspoon fine salt, divided: 3/4 teaspoon for potatoes, 1/4 teaspoon for eggs
1 teaspoon smoked paprika
1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
8 eggs large eggs, cracked into a medium bowl
4 ounces (113 g) sharp cheddar, shredded
12 tortillas 6-inch corn tortillas
3/4 cup chunky tomato salsa, stirred before measuring
1 lime lime, cut into 4 wedges



Tip: For more reliable browning, use a bare metal sheet pan rather than a silicone baking mat. If doubling the recipe, use two pans and rotate their positions; piling potatoes onto one pan makes them steam.

Crispy Potato and Egg Breakfast Tacos (continued)



Method

1. **Heat the oven** to 425°F with a rack in the middle. Scrub the potatoes and cut them on a cutting board into even 1/2-inch cubes; larger pieces will lag behind. Dry thoroughly with a clean towel. Set out an 18-by-13-inch rimmed sheet pan so the potatoes can roast in one uncrowded layer.

2. **In a large** bowl, toss the potatoes with 2 tablespoons oil, 3/4 teaspoon salt, the paprika and cumin for about 30 seconds, scraping seasoning from the bottom onto the cubes. Spread across the sheet pan, leaving small gaps. Put broad cut surfaces against the metal wherever possible; those contact points develop the best crust.

3. **Roast for** 20 minutes without stirring. Using a wide spatula, loosen and turn the potatoes in sections, then spread them out again. Roast another 10–15 minutes, until deeply golden underneath and easily pierced with a fork. If they resist lifting, give them another 2 minutes before trying again rather than scraping off the crust.

4. **While the potatoes** roast, beat the eggs and remaining 1/4 teaspoon salt in a medium bowl with a fork for about 45 seconds, until the whites and yolks blend evenly. Measure the cheddar and salsa separately and cut the lime into wedges. Keep the eggs refrigerated until the potatoes have about 10 minutes left.

5. **With about** 10 minutes of roasting left, heat the dry 12-inch skillet over medium heat for **1** minute. Warm the tortillas in batches in a single layer, about 20–30 seconds per side, until flexible with a few toasted spots. Stack inside a clean towel, folding it closed after each batch to retain steam and prevent cracking.

6. **Reduce the skillet** heat to medium-low and add the remaining tablespoon oil. Pour in the beaten eggs. Wait 15–20 seconds for a thin layer to set, then use a flexible spatula to draw that layer toward the center. Tilt the skillet gently so uncooked egg flows into the cleared spaces.

7. **Continue slow**, broad sweeps for 3–5 minutes, folding rather than chopping the curds. If the eggs hiss or brown, briefly lift the skillet off the burner and lower the heat. Cook until no liquid egg remains and a thermometer inserted sideways into a gathered mound reads **160**°F/71°C. Remove the skillet from the heat immediately.

Crispy Potato and Egg Breakfast Tacos (continued)



8. **Check the potatoes** before assembling: their centers should be creamy, not firm. If still firm, roast another 5 minutes; keep the eggs off the heat meanwhile. Divide the cheddar over the warm eggs and fold once or twice for about 30 seconds, leaving soft curds and streaks of melting cheese rather than a smooth mixture.

9. **Open the towel** and place three warm tortillas on each of four plates. Divide the potatoes among them, then add the cheesy eggs. Spoon 1 tablespoon salsa onto each taco rather than soaking the tortilla underneath. Serve with one lime wedge per plate for squeezing over the filling; leave the tacos loosely folded so their crisp potato edges stay exposed.

Tip: Judge the potatoes by two separate cues: a fork should slide easily into the center, and a cut face should have a firm golden crust. Color alone can disguise an undercooked center.

Tip: If your salsa is very watery, lift out the chunky portion with a spoon and let excess liquid drip back into the jar before measuring. Reserve the thinner liquid for stirring into beans rather than wetting the tacos.

Tip: Compare block and pre-shredded cheddar by unit price. Freeze surplus shredded cheese in small portions for future eggs or quesadillas; it can go into this hot filling directly from frozen.

Substitution for Yukon Gold potatoes: An equal weight of russet potatoes. Scrub and leave unpeeled, then dice and dry as directed. Turn gently because their cooked edges are more fragile.

Substitution for sharp cheddar: 4 ounces shredded Monterey Jack. Use the same quantity and fold into the hot eggs off the heat.

Substitution for 6-inch corn tortillas: 12 small flour tortillas. Warm just until pliable. This substitution adds wheat; check the package for other allergens.

Storage: Store potatoes, cheesy eggs, tortillas and salsa separately. Refrigerate perishable components in shallow containers within 2 hours, or within 1 hour above 90°F. Keep at **40**°F/4°C or below and use cooked leftovers within 3–4 days. Follow the salsa label if it gives a shorter storage period.

Crispy Potato and Egg Breakfast Tacos (continued)



Reheating: Reheat potatoes on a sheet pan at 425°F for about 8–12 minutes, turning once, until crisp and 165°F/74°C. Reheat eggs in a nonstick skillet over low heat, folding frequently, until 165°F/74°C; remove promptly to limit toughening. Warm tortillas separately and assemble with cold salsa and lime.

Freezing: For better texture, freeze only the cooked potatoes: spread in a single layer, freeze until firm, then transfer to a freezer container for up to 2 months. Reheat from frozen at **425**°F until crisp and 165°F/74°C throughout. Make fresh eggs for serving; thawed scrambled eggs tend to release water.

Declared allergens: egg, milk. Check labels and cross-contact.
Meatless; contains egg and milk. Check the actual tortilla and salsa labels for wheat and any other declared allergens or cross-contact information. Corn tortillas are not automatically certified gluten-free.

Banana-Oat Pancakes with Warm Berry Sauce

Tender banana pancakes made with quick oats and flour, served with a lightly sweetened lemon-berry sauce. Yield: twelve approximately 4-inch pancakes and about 2 cups sauce.

Serves 4 · 3 pancakes with berry sauce
Prep: 15 min **Cook:** 25 min **Rest:** 5 min **Total:** 45 min

Equipment: Stovetop, 12-inch nonstick or well-seasoned skillet, Saucepan, Large mixing bowl, Medium mixing bowl, Fork, Whisk, Measuring cups and spoons, Flexible spatula, Ladle or quarter-cup measure, Serving plate, Food thermometer



Tip: For easy morning preparation, combine the dry ingredients the night before, but keep the banana, eggs and milk separate until cooking. Mixed batter loses lift overnight.

Ingredients

For Pancakes:

240 g (about 2 large bananas, yielding 1 cup mashed) ripe bananas, peeled; weight is without skins
2 eggs large eggs
1 cup milk, divided: 3/4 cup initially, 1/4 cup after resting
1 cup (90 g) quick-cooking oats, dry; not instant oatmeal packets or steel-cut oats
1 cup (120 g) all-purpose flour, spooned into the cup and leveled
2 tsp baking powder
1/2 tsp ground cinnamon
1/4 tsp fine salt
1 tbsp neutral cooking oil, divided into three **1**-teaspoon portions for the skillet

For Berry sauce:

12 oz (340 g) frozen mixed berries, unsweetened; use directly from frozen
2 tbsp granulated sugar
2 tbsp water
1 tbsp lemon juice, freshly squeezed

Banana-Oat Pancakes with Warm Berry Sauce (continued)



Method

1. **Prepare the batter** ingredients off the heat. In the large bowl, mash the peeled bananas with a fork for 1–2 minutes, until mostly smooth with small soft lumps. Measure the milk into separate 3/4-cup and 1/4-cup portions. Keep the smaller portion beside the bowl for after the oats hydrate.

2. **Whisk the eggs** and 3/4 cup milk into the banana for about 30 seconds, until no separate streaks of egg remain. Stir in the dry quick oats with the fork. Leave this mixture at room temperature while you measure the dry ingredients; the oats will begin absorbing the liquid.

3. **In the medium** bowl, whisk the flour, baking powder, cinnamon and salt for 30 seconds to distribute the leavener. Add them to the banana mixture. Fold with the spatula, scraping the bottom and turning the batter over, just until no dry flour remains. Rest off the heat for 5 minutes.

4. **During that rest**, put the frozen berries, sugar and measured water into the saucepan. Set over medium heat and stir every minute for 4–5 minutes, until the berries release juice and the liquid bubbles throughout. Break apart any frozen clusters with the spatula so their centers thaw evenly.

5. **Lower the saucepan** heat to medium-low. Simmer uncovered for 5–7 minutes, stirring across the bottom frequently and crushing about one-third of the berries. Stop when the juices lightly coat the spatula but still pour easily; cooling thickens them further. Stir in the lemon juice, then remove from heat before the sauce becomes jammy.

6. **After the batter's** full 5-minute rest, fold in the reserved 1/4 cup milk. It should fall from the spatula in thick ribbons rather than stand in stiff peaks. Heat the empty skillet over medium-low for 2 minutes. Add 1 teaspoon oil and tilt to coat the cooking surface.

7. **Scoop four scant** 1/3-cup portions of batter into the skillet, spacing them apart. Gently spread each to about 4 inches wide. Cook over medium-low for 3–4 minutes, until the edges look matte, bubbles remain open on top and the undersides are golden. If they darken before bubbles appear, lower the heat.

Banana-Oat Pancakes with Warm Berry Sauce (continued)



8. **Slide the spatula** fully beneath each pancake and turn it in one low, confident motion. Cook for another **2–3** minutes without pressing. The centers should spring back lightly and reach 160°F/71°C. If the outside is browned but the center is wet, reduce the heat and cook 1–2 minutes longer.

9. **Transfer cooked pancakes** to the serving plate. Repeat with the remaining batter in two more batches, adding 1 teaspoon oil before each batch. Stir the batter gently before portioning; it thickens as it stands. Keep the skillet at medium-low, reducing the heat slightly if later batches brown faster than the first.

10. **Return the berry** saucepan to low heat for 1–2 minutes, stirring until warm and pourable; do not boil it down further. Divide the twelve pancakes among four plates, three per person. Spoon approximately 1/2 cup warm sauce over each serving, distributing both berries and juices rather than pouring off the liquid first.

Tip: Bananas with abundant brown speckles mash more evenly and taste sweeter than firm yellow ones. Freeze peeled overripe bananas to reduce waste; thaw and include their released liquid in the measured mashed banana.

Tip: The sauce should look slightly looser in the hot saucepan than you want on the plate. Berry pectin thickens it as it cools, especially when the mix contains raspberries or blackberries.

Tip: Buy plain quick oats rather than flavored packets: they work here and in everyday oatmeal without adding extra sugar or requiring another specialty ingredient.

Tip: For a larger batch, avoid crowding extra pancakes into the skillet. Closely packed pancakes are harder to turn and cook less evenly; allow additional cooking time instead.

Substitution for frozen mixed berries: 12 ounces frozen blueberries. Use the same method. Crush some berries deliberately to release their juices; the finished sauce will be less tart.

Banana-Oat Pancakes with Warm Berry Sauce (continued)



Substitution for milk: 1 cup unsweetened oat beverage. Use the same divided quantities. Check the beverage label for allergens; the pancakes still contain egg and wheat.

Storage: Refrigerate pancakes and sauce separately in shallow, covered containers within 2 hours of cooking, or within 1 hour above 90°F. Keep at 40°F/4°C or below and use within **3–4** days. Let pancakes stop steaming before stacking so condensation does not make them soggy.

Reheating: Arrange pancakes in a single layer on a sheet pan, cover loosely with foil and heat in a 325°F oven for approximately 10–15 minutes, until the centers reach 165°F/74°C. Reheat sauce in a saucepan over low heat, stirring frequently, until it reaches 165°F/74°C; add a small splash of water if it has become too thick.

Freezing: Freeze cooled pancakes in a single layer, then transfer to a freezer container with parchment between layers; freeze sauce separately with expansion space. Use within 2 months for best quality. Thaw overnight in the refrigerator and reheat as directed.

Declared allergens: milk, egg, wheat. Check labels and cross-contact.
Vegetarian. Contains wheat, milk and egg. Oats do not make this recipe gluten-free. Check the actual labels on oats, baking powder and any substituted beverage for additional allergens or cross-contact information.

Roasted Pepper and Spinach Frittata

A skillet frittata with jarred roasted peppers, fresh spinach and cheddar, started on the stove and finished gently in the oven. Makes four generous quarters; sides are not included.

Serves 4 · generous quarter
Prep: 15 min **Cook:** 25 min **Rest:** 5 min **Total:** 45 min

Equipment: Oven, Stovetop, 12-inch oven-safe skillet, Knife, Cutting board, Colander, Large mixing bowl, Fork, Measuring cups and spoons, Heatproof spatula, Food thermometer, Oven mitts

Ingredients

10 eggs large eggs, cracked into a mixing bowl
1/4 cup whole milk
1/2 teaspoon fine salt, divided: 1/4 teaspoon for eggs, **1/4 teaspoon** for vegetables
1/4 teaspoon black pepper, ground
2 tablespoons olive oil, divided
1 medium onion (about 6 ounces) yellow onion, peeled and cut into 1/4-inch dice
6 ounces (drained weight) jarred roasted red peppers, drained thoroughly and cut into short, 1/2-inch-wide strips
5 ounces baby spinach, washed and thoroughly dried
4 ounces sharp cheddar cheese, cut into 1/4-inch cubes; divided equally



Tip: For the best pepper texture, choose roasted peppers packed in water or brine rather than sweet pickled peppers. Compare drained weights, not just jar sizes, when shopping.

Roasted Pepper and Spinach Frittata (continued)



Method

1. **Prepare the kitchen**. Set an oven rack in the middle and heat the oven to 375°F. Check that the entire 12-inch skillet, including its handle, is oven-safe at this temperature. On the cutting board, dice the onion and cube the cheddar. Divide the cheese into two equal piles. Keep oven mitts beside the stove.

2. **Drain and dry**. Leave the roasted peppers in the colander for about 2 minutes, gently pressing out trapped liquid, then slice them on the board. Shake washed spinach thoroughly dry in the colander. Wet vegetables dilute the eggs, so let any visible droplets drain before cooking; do not add the pepper packing liquid.

3. **Mix the eggs**. In the large bowl, beat the eggs, milk, 1/4 teaspoon salt and black pepper with a fork for about 1 minute. Break every yolk and lift the fork through the whites until the mixture is evenly yellow with no thick clear strands. Avoid beating it into a large cap of foam.

4. **Soften the onion**. Heat 1 tablespoon oil in the skillet over medium heat for about 1 minute. Add the onion and remaining 1/4 teaspoon salt. Cook for 5–6 minutes, stirring and scraping across the bottom with the spatula every minute. The onion should look translucent with lightly golden edges; lower the heat if it browns before softening.

5. **Remove vegetable moisture**. Add the peppers and stir for 2 minutes. Add the spinach in two batches, turning each batch from the hot bottom toward the top until it collapses. Cook for another 2–3 minutes, stirring, until no liquid pools when you draw the spatula through the vegetables. If liquid remains, continue uncovered before adding eggs.

6. **Start the frittata**. Reduce the heat to medium-low. Move the vegetables aside in sections and drizzle the remaining tablespoon oil over the exposed skillet bottom, then spread everything evenly. Stir half the cheese into the eggs and pour them into the skillet. Gently redistribute vegetables with the spatula during the first 20 seconds, then stop stirring.

7. **Set the edge**. Scatter the remaining cheese evenly over the surface. Cook over medium-low heat for 2–3 minutes without stirring, until a narrow opaque rim forms around the edge but the center remains liquid. If the bottom smells strongly toasted or the edges puff rapidly, remove the skillet from the burner and transfer directly to the oven.

Roasted Pepper and Spinach Frittata (continued)



8. **Bake gently**. Using oven mitts, place the skillet on the middle rack. Bake for 10–13 minutes, checking at **10** minutes. The surface should be set with a slight central tremble, not a liquid slosh. Insert the thermometer into the center without touching the skillet; it must reach 160°F/71°C. If cooler, bake in **2**-minute increments and check again.

9. **Rest and portion**. Move the skillet to a heatproof stovetop surface with the burner off. Leave an oven mitt over the handle as a hot-handle warning. Rest for 5 minutes so the slices hold together. Run the spatula around the edge, cut into four quarters and slide it fully beneath each wedge to lift onto plates.

Tip: A well-seasoned cast-iron or oven-safe nonstick skillet releases eggs more easily than bare stainless steel. A 12-inch pan gives this quantity a relatively shallow, evenly cooking layer.

Tip: A little surface puffing is normal; deep cracks and a sponge-like center suggest overcooking. Begin checking at 10 minutes rather than waiting for uniform browning.

Tip: Cube cheese from a larger block used elsewhere in the week; small cubes create distinct melted pockets without needing a grater. Prepare the onion and peppers a day ahead and refrigerate separately.

Substitution for baby spinach: 5 ounces frozen chopped spinach, thawed. Squeeze very dry before adding with the peppers. Heat through and evaporate any remaining moisture before pouring in the eggs.

Substitution for sharp cheddar cheese: 4 ounces Monterey Jack, cut into 1/4-inch cubes. Use the same divided additions. The flavor will be milder.

Substitution for whole milk: 1/4 cup water. The result will be slightly less rich; retain the same cooking temperature and thermometer endpoint.

Storage: Refrigerate wedges in shallow covered containers within 2 hours of cooking, or within 1 hour when the ambient temperature exceeds 90°F. Keep at 40°F/4°C or below and use within 3–4 days.

Roasted Pepper and Spinach Frittata (continued)



Reheating: Place refrigerated wedges in an oven-safe skillet, cover with foil and heat at **325**°F for about 15–20 minutes, until the center reaches 165°F/74°C. Avoid prolonged heating once hot, which toughens the eggs.

Freezing: Freeze chilled individual wedges in airtight containers for up to 2 months for best quality. Thaw overnight in the refrigerator, then reheat to 165°F/74°C. Spinach may release a little moisture after thawing.

Declared allergens: egg, milk. Check labels and cross-contact.
Vegetarian when made with vegetarian-rennet cheddar. Contains eggs and milk. Check the actual cheese and jarred pepper labels for additional allergens and dietary requirements.

Savory Chili-Garlic Oats with Fried Eggs

Creamy savory rolled oats with scallions, crisp-edged eggs and a spooned-over garlic-chili oil. Four complete breakfast bowls.

Serves 4 · bowls
Prep: 10 min **Cook:** 20 min **Rest:** 0 min **Total:** 30 min

Equipment: Stovetop, Large saucepan, 12-inch nonstick skillet, Knife, Cutting board, Measuring cups and spoons, Heatproof spoon, Wide spatula, Small heatproof bowl, Four serving bowls, Food thermometer



Tip: Slice garlic across the clove rather than lengthwise; the smaller pieces are easier to distribute among four bowls. A knife gives better control here than crushing or grating.

Ingredients

For Oats:

- **2 cups** Old-fashioned rolled oats, dry; not instant or steel-cut
- **5 cups** Water, divided: 4 1/2 cups for cooking and 1/2 cup reserved for thinning
- **4** medium Scallions, trimmed and thinly sliced, whites and greens kept separate
- **2 tablespoons** Reduced-sodium soy sauce
- **2 teaspoons** Unseasoned rice vinegar

For Eggs and chili-garlic oil:

- **4 tablespoons** (Canola or vegetable oil) Neutral cooking oil, divided: 2 tablespoons for garlic and 1 tablespoon for each egg batch
- **6** cloves Garlic, peeled and sliced thinly and evenly
- **1/2 teaspoon** Crushed red pepper flakes
- **8** eggs Large eggs
- **1/4 teaspoon** Fine salt, divided evenly between the two egg batches

Savory Chili-Garlic Oats with Fried Eggs (continued)



Method

1. **Prepare the ingredients** before heating the pans. On the cutting board, thinly slice the scallions, separating whites from greens, then slice the garlic into even, thin pieces. Measure 4 **1/2 cups** water into the saucepan and keep the remaining 1/2 cup nearby. Set out the small heatproof bowl for the garlic oil. This takes about 10 minutes; even garlic slices will brown together rather than scorch in patches.

2. **Bring the saucepan** of water to a boil over high heat, about 4–5 minutes. Stir in the oats and scallion whites with the heatproof spoon. Lower to medium-low as soon as bubbling resumes. Simmer uncovered for 8–10 minutes, stirring across the bottom every minute, until the flakes are tender and the liquid looks creamy. If bubbling throws oats up the sides, lower the heat.

3. **While the oats** simmer, put 2 tablespoons oil and the sliced garlic in the cold skillet. Set over medium-low heat and cook for 3–5 minutes, gently moving the slices with the spoon so they color evenly. At the first pale-golden edges, remove the skillet from the burner. Deep-brown garlic tastes bitter; if it burns, discard it and remake this component.

4. **Let the skillet** stand off heat for 20 seconds, then stir in the chili flakes for about 10 seconds. Scrape all the garlic, flakes and oil into the heatproof bowl immediately; the garlic will darken slightly as it cools. Do not leave it in the hot skillet, where residual heat can burn the thin slices.

Savory Chili-Garlic Oats with Fried Eggs (continued)



5. **Stir the soy** sauce and vinegar into the tender oats over low heat for 30 seconds. Add the reserved water 2 tablespoons at a time until a spoon drawn through the oats leaves a track that slowly closes. Keep on the lowest heat while frying the eggs, stirring occasionally. Use any remaining reserved water as needed; the oats should flow into bowls, not stand in a mound.

6. **Return the skillet** to medium heat with 1 tablespoon oil. Crack in four eggs, spacing them around the pan, and sprinkle with half the salt. Cook 2–3 minutes until the whites underneath are opaque and the edges lightly golden. If the edges brown before the upper whites set, reduce to medium-low. Slide the spatula fully beneath each egg, then turn gently.

7. **Cook the turned** eggs for another 1–2 minutes, until both whites and yolks are firm. Divide the hot oats among four bowls and place two eggs on each of two bowls. Repeat the frying process with the remaining tablespoon oil, four eggs and salt, adjusting the heat downward if the skillet smokes. Finish the remaining two bowls with the second batch.

8. **Stir the reserved** chili-garlic oil with the spoon so the flakes are redistributed, then spoon one-quarter over each bowl, including the garlic slices. Scatter the scallion greens evenly over all four portions and serve while hot. Carry the oil across both eggs and exposed oats so every spoonful gets some heat and garlic crunch rather than one concentrated patch.

Tip: Oats keep thickening after leaving the saucepan. For the best bowl texture, stop when they look slightly looser than you want to eat them.

Tip: For advance preparation, cook only the oats and refrigerate them separately from the scallion greens. Make the garlic oil and eggs fresh so the garlic stays crisp.

Tip: Store-brand old-fashioned oats work well here. Buy a larger container only if you will also use it for the chapter’s pancakes or overnight oats; instant packets are not a like-for-like replacement.

Substitution for Reduced-sodium soy sauce: 2 tablespoons reduced-sodium tamari. Check the actual label for soy and wheat; tamari is not automatically wheat-free.

Savory Chili-Garlic Oats with Fried Eggs (continued)



Substitution for Unseasoned rice vinegar: 2 teaspoons fresh lime juice. Stir in at the same stage for a brighter citrus finish.

Substitution for Crushed red pepper flakes: 1/8 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes. Use this smaller amount for gentler heat without changing the garlic-oil technique.

Storage: Refrigerate leftover oats and fully cooked eggs in separate shallow, covered containers within 2 hours, or 1 hour above 90°F. Keep at 40°F / 4°C or below and use within **3–4** days. Refrigerate any leftover garlic oil promptly in a separate covered container and use within the same period; never store it at room temperature.

Reheating: Reheat oats in a saucepan over medium-low heat, stirring and adding water 1 tablespoon at a time to loosen, until they reach 165°F / 74°C. Reheat leftover eggs in a skillet over low heat, turning as needed, to 165°F / 74°C; their yolks will become firmer. For better texture, reheat the oats and cook fresh eggs instead. Warm refrigerated garlic oil gently and add after reheating.

Freezing: Freeze cooled oats without eggs or garnishes in individual airtight portions for up to 2 months. Thaw overnight in the refrigerator and reheat as directed. Freezing the fried eggs or garlic garnish is not recommended for texture.

Declared allergens: egg, soy, wheat. Check labels and cross-contact.
Vegetarian and dairy-free as written. Contains egg, soy and typically wheat from soy sauce. Check the actual soy sauce label and any substitutions for allergens. For a gluten-free version, use certified gluten-free oats and a verified gluten-free tamari.

Apple-Cinnamon Overnight Oats

Creamy rolled oats with grated apple, plain yogurt and cinnamon, finished with crisp apple cubes. Makes four generous breakfasts; no sides are included.

Serves 4 · bowls
Prep: 15 min **Cook:** 0 min **Rest:** 480 min **Total:** 495 min

Equipment: Large mixing bowl, Measuring cups and spoons, Box grater, Knife, Cutting board, Mixing spoon, Four lidded containers, each at least 2 cups, Refrigerator

Ingredients

2 cups (approximately 180 g) Old-fashioned rolled oats, dry; not steel-cut or instant
2 cups Milk, cold
1 cup Plain regular yogurt, cold; not Greek-style
2 medium (about 360 g total before coring) Sweet-tart apples, washed; one grated at night, one diced before serving
2 tablespoons Maple syrup
1 teaspoon Ground cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon Fine salt



Tip: Use the coarse grater holes: fine holes turn the apple into wet pulp, while coarse shreds remain noticeable after soaking. Grate over the bowl to retain the flavorful juice.

Apple-Cinnamon Overnight Oats (continued)



Method

1. **Set up the** evening preparation. Set a large mixing bowl, measuring tools, spoon and four clean, lidded containers on the counter. Each container should hold at least 2 cups so there is room to stir. Keep the milk and yogurt refrigerated until needed; no heat is used anywhere in this recipe.

2. **Prepare the first** apple. Wash both apples under running water and dry them. On a cutting board, quarter and core one apple with a knife, leaving its skin on. Coarsely grate the quarters into the mixing bowl, keeping fingertips clear of the grater. Include any released juice; refrigerate the second apple whole for tomorrow.

3. **Make the creamy** base. Add the cold yogurt, maple syrup, cinnamon and salt to the grated apple. Stir with the spoon for about 30 seconds, scraping along the bottom and sides, until the cinnamon is evenly dispersed. Press any cinnamon pockets against the bowl with the back of the spoon rather than leaving dry, bitter clumps.

4. **Add the oats** and milk. Pour the milk into the bowl and stir until the yogurt loosens into a smooth liquid. Add the dry rolled oats, then stir for about 1 minute, lifting from the bottom so every flake becomes wet. The mixture should look loose and spoonable, not like finished oatmeal; the oats will absorb liquid overnight.

5. **Portion evenly**. Immediately spoon the mixture among the four containers, alternating between containers rather than filling one completely at a time. This distributes the apple and oats before they settle. Scrape out the bowl and divide any remaining liquid equally. Leave at least 1 inch of headspace, then close the lids securely.

6. **Refrigerate for** 8 hours. Place the covered containers on a level refrigerator shelf at **40**°F/4°C or below, not in the door. Do not leave them on the counter to soften. After the overnight rest, the flakes should be swollen and tender, with no dry, chalky centers; this waiting time is essential to the texture.

7. **Check and loosen**. In the morning, stir each portion thoroughly for about 20 seconds, reaching the bottom corners. A little separated liquid is normal and should blend back in. If the oats are unusually stiff, stir in cold drinking water 1 teaspoon at a time, up to 1 tablespoon per portion, stopping when a spoonful slowly settles rather than standing rigidly.

Apple-Cinnamon Overnight Oats (continued)



8. **Finish and serve** cold. Core the reserved apple on the cutting board and cut it into roughly 1/4-inch cubes. Divide the cubes evenly over the four portions just before eating, keeping their crunch distinct from the soft oats. Serve in the containers or transfer to bowls. For breakfasts on different days, cut only the apple needed and refrigerate the remainder tightly covered.

Tip: Old-fashioned oats give a distinct, tender flake. Instant oats become much softer, and raw steel-cut oats will not reach the intended texture with this method.

Tip: For a less-sweet breakfast, use a tart apple rather than reducing the yogurt or milk; changing the liquid proportions affects hydration.

Tip: Store-brand rolled oats and a large tub of plain yogurt are useful budget choices. Compare unit prices, and buy only the yogurt quantity you can use before it spoils.

Substitution for Milk: 2 cups unsweetened oat milk. Use the same volume. This substitution alone does not make the recipe dairy-free because the yogurt still contains milk; check the beverage label for allergens.

Substitution for Maple syrup: 2 tablespoons honey. Stir thoroughly into the yogurt so it does not remain in sticky streaks. Do not serve honey to children younger than 12 months.

Substitution for Sweet-tart apples: 2 medium firm-ripe pears, about 360 g total. Core and grate one pear at night; dice the second before serving. Avoid very soft pears, which release excessive juice.

Storage: Refrigerate immediately after mixing at 40°F/4°C or below and eat within 3–4 days of preparation. Keep the fresh apple topping separate until serving. Discard portions left unrefrigerated longer than 2 hours, or 1 hour above 90°F/32°C.

Reheating: Designed to be eaten cold; reheating is not needed. Stir thoroughly before serving.

Freezing: For best texture, do not freeze the assembled oats; thawed raw apple and yogurt can become watery. Keep the dry oats in the pantry and prepare a fresh batch instead.

Declared allergens: milk. Check labels and cross-contact.

Apple-Cinnamon Overnight Oats (continued)



Vegetarian. Contains dairy. For a gluten-free version, use certified gluten-free rolled oats and check all packaged ingredient labels.

Peanut-Banana French Toast

Cinnamon French toast with fresh bananas and an easy warm peanut sauce. Makes four complete breakfast portions, with two slices of toast per person.

Serves 4 · portions
Prep: 20 min **Cook:** 25 min **Rest:** 0 min **Total:** 45 min

Equipment: Oven, Sheet pan, 12-inch skillet, Small saucepan, Shallow mixing dish, Small bowl, Fork, Measuring cups and spoons, Wide spatula, Knife, Cutting board, Food thermometer



Tip: Choose sturdy everyday bread rather than very airy, thin slices. A discounted day-old loaf works well; freeze unused slices with separators for another breakfast.

Ingredients

For French toast:

- **8** slices (About 14 ounces total; white or whole-wheat bread) Sturdy sandwich bread, Approximately 1/2 inch thick, preferably a day old
- **4** eggs Large eggs, Cracked into a shallow mixing dish

Other ingredients:

- **1 cup** Whole milk, Divided: 3/4 cup for custard and 1/4 cup for sauce

For French toast:

- **1 tablespoon** Granulated sugar
- **1 teaspoon** Ground cinnamon
- **1/8 teaspoon** Fine salt
- **2 tablespoons** Unsalted butter, Divided into four portions of 1 1/2 teaspoons

For Peanut sauce:

- **1/4 cup** Smooth peanut butter, Stirred thoroughly if separated
- **2 tablespoons** Maple syrup

For To finish:

- **4** bananas Medium bananas, Ripe but firm; peeled and sliced just before serving

Peanut-Banana French Toast (continued)



Method

1. **Set up the** holding area. Heat the oven to 200°F and place a clean sheet pan on the middle rack. Set the bread beside your shallow mixing dish. If the slices feel unusually soft or moist, leave them spread out at room temperature for 10 minutes while preparing the custard and sauce; slightly dry surfaces absorb custard more evenly.

2. **Make the custard**. In the shallow dish, beat the eggs with a fork for about 1 minute, breaking up every visible strand of white. Beat in 3/4 cup milk, sugar, cinnamon and salt. Scrape the fork along the bottom to disperse the sugar. Reserve the remaining 1/4 cup milk separately for the peanut sauce.

3. **Warm the sauce**. Put the peanut butter, maple syrup and reserved 1/4 cup milk in the small saucepan. Stir over low heat for 2–3 minutes, pressing out lumps, until glossy and pourable in a thick ribbon. Do not boil: bubbling can make it grainy. Remove from the heat; it will thicken slightly while standing.

4. **Heat the skillet** and soak the first batch. Warm the 12-inch skillet over medium-low heat for 2 minutes. Add one 1 1/2-teaspoon portion of butter and tilt to coat. Meanwhile, dip two bread slices in the custard for about 10 seconds per side, lifting each over the dish to let excess drip away. Very soft bread needs only 3–5 seconds per side.

5. **Cook the first** side. Lay the soaked slices flat in the skillet, leaving space between them. Cook over medium-low heat for approximately 3 minutes without moving them. Slide the spatula underneath and lift a corner: the underside should be evenly golden, not dark brown. If it colors before 2 minutes, lower the heat before continuing.

Peanut-Banana French Toast (continued)



6. **Turn and check** the center. Flip each slice with the wide spatula and cook for another 2–3 minutes. The centers should feel lightly springy rather than wet or squishy. Insert the thermometer horizontally into the center of a slice; the egg custard must reach **160**°F/71°C. If browned but under temperature, lower the heat and turn every minute until ready.

7. **Finish the remaining** batches. Transfer cooked toast to the warm sheet pan in a single layer, uncovered to preserve its edges. Repeat soaking and cooking with the remaining six slices in three batches, adding one butter portion each time. Stir the custard before every dip. If butter residue starts smoking, remove the skillet from the heat briefly and reduce the burner setting. Discard leftover raw custard.

8. **Slice**, drizzle and serve. Peel the bananas and cut them crosswise into 1/4-inch rounds on the cutting board. Stir the peanut sauce; if too stiff to drizzle, warm over low heat for 20–30 seconds while stirring. Put two toast slices on each plate, divide the banana rounds evenly, and spoon one-quarter of the sauce across each portion.

Tip: Natural peanut butter must be stirred from the bottom of the jar before measuring. Otherwise, an oily spoonful can make the sauce separate while a dry spoonful makes it pasty.

Tip: Use bananas with yellow skins and a few brown freckles. Very soft, heavily spotted bananas are better saved for baking because their slices collapse under the warm sauce.

Tip: For advance preparation, cook and cool the toast without toppings. Freshly sliced bananas and separately warmed sauce restore the contrast between crisp bread and creamy topping.

Substitution for Maple syrup: 2 tablespoons packed light brown sugar. Stir into the sauce over low heat until fully dissolved; the sauce will taste more caramel-like.

Substitution for Whole milk: 1 cup unsweetened oat beverage, divided as directed. Use 3/4 cup in the custard and 1/4 cup in the sauce. Check the beverage label for allergens; this change alone does not remove the butter or other milk potentially present in the bread.

Peanut-Banana French Toast (continued)



Substitution for Sturdy sandwich bread: 8 slices sturdy whole-wheat sandwich bread, approximately 14 ounces total. A dense loaf may need a few extra seconds in the custard. Lift a soaked slice carefully; it should remain intact rather than sag apart.

Storage: Store toast and sauce separately, without banana. Refrigerate in shallow, covered containers within 2 hours of cooking, or within 1 hour above 90°F. Keep at 40°F/4°C or below for up to 3 days. Slice fresh banana when serving.

Reheating: Place refrigerated toast in a single layer on a sheet pan in a 350°F oven for about **10–15** minutes, turning once, until the center reaches 165°F/74°C. Warm sauce gently in a saucepan, stirring frequently, to 165°F/74°C; add milk 1 teaspoon at a time if needed to loosen it.

Freezing: Freeze cooled, untopped toast in a single layer, then transfer to a freezer container with separators for up to 2 months. Reheat from frozen at 350°F for approximately 18–22 minutes, turning once, until 165°F/74°C in the center. Make the sauce fresh and add fresh banana.

Declared allergens: peanut, egg, milk, wheat. Check labels and cross-contact. Vegetarian. Contains peanuts, eggs, milk and wheat. Check actual bread, peanut butter and any substitute beverage labels for additional allergens, including soy or sesame.

Lunch That Travels Well

A good packed lunch needs more than a lid. It needs contrast that survives the trip: beans with bite, crisp cabbage, a bright dressing, and something toasted that stays separate until you eat.

This chapter starts with Lemon-Herb Chickpea Chopped Salad and Crispy Black Bean Quesadillas with Lime Slaw, then moves to Chili-Lime Tuna and White Bean Bowls and Ginger-Peanut Noodles with Crunchy Cabbage. Roasted Vegetable Couscous with Lemon Yogurt brings tender vegetables and a cool, tangy finish; Toasty Tomato and Chickpea Melts offer a warm lunch when a kitchen is within reach.



The groceries overlap without making every lunch taste alike. Cabbage supplies crunch for slaw and noodles; chickpeas anchor both salad and melts. Lemon and lime sharpen creamy dressings and hearty beans. The useful technique is separating wet from crisp: drain beans thoroughly, let cooked components stop steaming before packing, and carry slaw or sauce separately when it would soften a toasted surface.

Pack perishable lunches cold in an insulated bag with ice packs, then refrigerate on arrival. Keep the final squeeze of citrus or spoonful of dressing for lunchtime—it restores brightness without another round of cooking.

Lemon-Herb Chickpea Chopped Salad

A substantial, no-cook chickpea salad with crunchy vegetables, parsley, feta and a lemon-oregano dressing. Four main-course portions; no additional side is included.

Serves 4 · generous main-course servings
Prep: 30 min **Cook:** 0 min **Rest:** 10 min **Total:** 40 min

Equipment: Can opener, Colander, Knife, Cutting board, Large mixing bowl, Small bowl, Measuring cups and spoons, Fork, Large spoon, Clean kitchen towel, Refrigerator



Tip: For the best packed-lunch texture, prepare the vegetables and dressing separately the night before. Keep the tomatoes in their own container and combine everything shortly before packing or eating.

Ingredients

- **3** 15-ounce cans (4 1/2 cups cooked chickpeas, drained) canned chickpeas, drained and rinsed; about 4 1/2 cups total
- **1** medium (about 12 ounces) English cucumber, washed; ends trimmed
- **1** pint (about 10 ounces) cherry tomatoes, washed and dried
- **1** large (about 7 ounces) red bell pepper, washed, stemmed and seeded
- **1/2 cup** red onion, finely chopped
- **1 cup** flat-leaf parsley, loosely packed leaves and tender stems, washed and thoroughly dried before measuring
- **4 ounces** feta cheese, drained and crumbled

For Dressing:

- **1/4 cup** fresh lemon juice, squeezed and seeds removed; from about 2 lemons
- **1/4 cup** extra-virgin olive oil
- **1 teaspoon** dried oregano
- **1/2 teaspoon** fine salt, divided, plus more to taste if needed
- **1/4 teaspoon** ground black pepper

Lemon-Herb Chickpea Chopped Salad (continued)



Method

1. **Drain and dry** the chickpeas. No heat is needed for this recipe. Empty the canned chickpeas into a colander and rinse under cool running water, gently moving them with your hand until the foamy liquid disappears. Shake well, then leave over the sink for 5 minutes while you begin the vegetables. Excess rinse water would dilute the dressing.

2. **Cut the crunchy** vegetables. On a cutting board, halve the cucumber lengthwise and cut into roughly 1/2-inch pieces. If its center is unusually watery, scrape out the loose seeds with a spoon first. Dice the bell pepper into similar-size pieces. Transfer both to a large mixing bowl; allow about 5 minutes for this preparation.

3. **Prepare the tomatoes** and onion. Using the knife and board, quarter the cherry tomatoes, cutting especially large ones into six pieces. Add them to the bowl. Finely chop enough red onion to measure 1/2 cup. Taste a small piece; if sharply biting, rinse the chopped onion in the colander after transferring the chickpeas to a clean towel. Drain thoroughly before adding the onion.

4. **Chop the parsley** and finish drying. Pat the chickpeas gently with the towel, then add them to the vegetables. On the board, gather the dry parsley into a loose mound and chop with repeated downward cuts for about 1 minute. Stop when the pieces are small but still leafy, not crushed into a wet paste. Keep the parsley aside on the board.

5. **Mix the dressing**. In a small bowl, combine the measured lemon juice, olive oil, oregano, black pepper and 1/4 teaspoon of the salt. Beat briskly with a fork for 30–45 seconds, until slightly cloudy and blended. Rub the oregano between your fingers as you add it to release its aroma. The dressing should taste bright; the chickpeas and feta will soften its sharpness.

Lemon-Herb Chickpea Chopped Salad (continued)



6. **Dress and rest**. Pour all the dressing over the chickpea mixture. With a large spoon, scoop from the bottom and turn the ingredients over for about 1 minute, rotating the bowl so every section is coated. Avoid pressing down and breaking the beans. Refrigerate the bowl for 10 minutes; this gives the chickpeas time to absorb seasoning while the vegetables remain crisp.

7. **Fold in the** finishing ingredients. Add the chopped parsley and crumbled feta to the chilled bowl. Fold gently with the large spoon for about 30 seconds, leaving visible pieces of cheese. Taste a chickpea together with a vegetable and some feta. Add the remaining 1/4 teaspoon salt gradually, stopping early if the cheese has already provided enough saltiness.

8. **Portion and serve**. Give the salad one final bottom-to-top turn with the spoon, then divide among four bowls, distributing chickpeas and vegetables evenly. Spoon a little dressing from the mixing bowl over each portion. If the vegetables have released a large puddle, leave the excess behind rather than flooding the servings. For packed lunches, portion into covered containers and refrigerate promptly.

Tip: A properly dressed salad looks glossy, not submerged. If using large garden tomatoes instead of cherry tomatoes, remove the watery seed pockets before dicing.

Tip: Tender parsley stems add crunch and flavor; discard only the thick, tough lower stalks. Dry the parsley before chopping so it stays loose rather than clumping.

Tip: Compare canned chickpeas by drained yield rather than can size alone. Home-cooked chickpeas also work well: use 4 1/2 cups fully tender, drained beans, cooled before mixing.

Substitution for English cucumber: 12 ounces regular cucumber. Peel if the skin is tough, halve lengthwise and scrape out watery seeds before dicing.

Substitution for red bell pepper: 1 large yellow or orange bell pepper. Use the same preparation and quantity; green pepper will give a less sweet, more assertive flavor.

Lemon-Herb Chickpea Chopped Salad (continued)



Substitution for feta cheese: 4 ounces crumbled goat cheese. Fold in very gently at the end; softer cheese will make the dressing creamier. This substitution still contains milk.

Storage: Refrigerate in covered containers at 40°F/4°C or below for up to 3 days; the vegetables soften with time. Refrigerate within 2 hours of preparation, or within 1 hour when the temperature is above 90°F/32°C. Transport with an ice pack and keep chilled until lunch.

Reheating: Do not reheat; this salad is intended to be eaten cold. Stir before eating to redistribute the dressing.

Freezing: Do not freeze the assembled salad: cucumber and tomatoes become watery after thawing. Plain cooked chickpeas may be frozen separately for up to 3 months, then thawed in the refrigerator and drained well.

Declared allergens: milk. Check labels and cross-contact.
Vegetarian when made with feta labeled as using vegetarian or microbial rennet. Contains milk from feta; check the actual cheese and canned chickpea labels for ingredients and any additional allergens.

Crispy Black Bean Quesadillas with Lime Slaw



Golden skillet quesadillas filled with smoky black beans and Monterey Jack, served with a crunchy cabbage-carrot slaw. The slaw is included in the yield; no other sides are required. Illustrative ingredient estimate: $6.89 for the batch, about $1.72 per portion. These are hypothetical ingredient-cost assumptions, not live grocery prices.

Serves 4 · quesadilla with slaw
Prep: 20 min **Cook:** 30 min **Rest:** 0 min **Total:** 50 min

Equipment: Stovetop, 12-inch skillet, Knife, Cutting board, Colander, Large mixing bowl, Medium bowl, Measuring cups and spoons, Box grater, Fork, Wide spatula, Sheet pan, Food thermometer

Ingredients

For Quesadillas:

2 15-ounce cans (3 cups cooked black beans, drained) canned black beans, rinsed and well drained; about 3 cups total
1 medium yellow onion, finely diced, about 1 cup

Other ingredients:

2 tablespoons (canola or vegetable oil) neutral cooking oil, divided: 2 teaspoons for slaw, 2 teaspoons for onion, 1 teaspoon for each quesadilla

Crispy Black Bean Quesadillas with Lime Slaw (continued)



For Quesadillas:

1 teaspoon ground cumin

1 teaspoon smoked paprika

Other ingredients:

3/4 teaspoon fine salt, divided: 1/4 teaspoon for slaw and 1/2 teaspoon for beans

For Quesadillas:

1/4 cup water, plus 1 tablespoon only if needed to loosen the filling

4 10-inch tortillas flour tortillas, at room temperature

8 ounces Monterey Jack cheese, coarsely grated, about 2 cups

For Lime slaw:

12 ounces green cabbage, cored and finely shredded, about 5 loosely packed cups

1 medium carrot, scrubbed and coarsely grated

3 tablespoons lime juice, freshly squeezed from about 2 limes

1/4 cup cilantro, chopped leaves and tender stems

Method

1. **Prepare the ingredients** before heating the skillet. On the cutting board, finely dice the onion and shred the cabbage into thin ribbons, discarding the tough core. Grate the carrot and cheese separately. Rinse the beans in the colander, shake well and let drain while you work; excess water would make the filling loose.

2. **In the large** bowl, stir the lime juice, 2 teaspoons oil and 1/4 teaspoon salt together with a fork. Add the cabbage, carrot and cilantro. Toss thoroughly for about 1 minute, lifting from the bottom so the dressing coats everything. Set aside at room temperature during cooking; the cabbage should soften slightly but retain a firm crunch.

3. **Heat the** 12-inch skillet over medium heat for 1 minute. Add 2 teaspoons oil and the onion. Cook for 5–6 minutes, stirring and scraping across the pan with the spatula every minute, until translucent with a few pale golden edges. If the edges darken before the onion softens, lower the heat to medium-low.

Crispy Black Bean Quesadillas with Lime Slaw (continued)



4. **Stir the cumin** and smoked paprika into the onion for 30 seconds, just until fragrant. Add the drained beans, 1/4 cup water and remaining 1/2 teaspoon salt. Cook over medium-low heat for 3–4 minutes, folding from the edges toward the center. The beans should be steaming and the liquid mostly absorbed, not pooling.

5. **Remove the skillet** from the heat. Press roughly half the beans against its bottom with the spatula, leaving the rest whole. The mixture should hold a soft mound; if crumbly, stir in 1 tablespoon water, but if wet, return to medium heat for 1–2 minutes. Transfer to the medium bowl and scrape the skillet clean.

6. **Lay the tortillas** on the board. On one half of each, scatter 1/4 cup cheese, spread one-quarter of the bean mixture in an even layer, then add another 1/4 cup cheese. Leave a **1/2**-inch border and fold the bare half over. Press gently flat without forcing filling out; the cheese on both sides helps seal the beans inside.

7. **Return the skillet** to medium-low heat. Add 1 teaspoon oil and tilt to spread it. Slide in one folded quesadilla and cook for 2–3 minutes, pressing lightly once with the spatula. Lift an edge to check: the underside should be mottled golden brown. If it browns in under a minute, reduce the heat before continuing.

8. **Slip the spatula** well underneath and turn the quesadilla toward its folded edge to contain the filling. Cook another 2 minutes, until the second side is crisp and the cheese has melted at the open edge. Transfer to the sheet pan, uncovered. Repeat with the remaining three, adding **1 teaspoon** oil each time; do not stack, which traps steam.

9. **Let the last** quesadilla stand for 1 minute on the sheet pan so its filling settles. On the board, cut each into three wedges with the knife. Toss the slaw again, lifting it out of any collected dressing. Divide wedges and slaw among four plates, keeping the slaw beside rather than over the tortillas to preserve their crisp edges.

Crispy Black Bean Quesadillas with Lime Slaw (continued)



Tip: Shred the cabbage across the grain into narrow ribbons; thick strips are harder to eat alongside the wedges. A bag of plain shredded cabbage and carrot can replace the same prepared weight.

Tip: Grating a block of Monterey Jack usually gives a smoother melt than coated, preshredded cheese. Compare unit prices rather than assuming either format costs less.

Tip: For a skillet that stays evenly hot, keep the tortilla centered and rotate it a quarter turn if one edge browns faster. Add oil only between batches, not over the tortilla.

Tip: For packed lunches, cool the wedges in a single layer, then refrigerate and pack the slaw separately. Transport with an ice pack; cold quesadillas will be softer, while skillet reheating restores their crispness.

Substitution for canned black beans: 3 cups cooked pinto beans, drained. Mash and reduce as directed; pintos may become creamy slightly faster.

Substitution for Monterey Jack cheese: 8 ounces mild or medium cheddar, grated. Use the same layering method. Cheddar gives a sharper filling and may release a little more oil.

Substitution for cilantro: 1/4 cup thinly sliced scallion greens. Provides a fresh finish without cilantro; stir into the slaw at the same stage.

Storage: Refrigerate quesadillas and slaw in separate shallow covered containers within 2 hours of cooking, or within 1 hour above 90°F. Keep at 40°F/4°C or below. Use quesadillas within 3–4 days; the slaw is best within 2 days and becomes softer as it sits.

Reheating: Reheat refrigerated wedges in a dry skillet over medium-low heat for about 3–4 minutes per side, adjusting heat to avoid scorching, until the center reaches 165°F/74°C. Reheat in batches without crowding. Keep the slaw cold.

Freezing: Freeze cooled quesadillas without slaw in a single layer, then transfer to a freezer container with parchment between portions. Freeze for up to 2 months for best quality. Thaw overnight in the refrigerator and reheat as directed to 165°F/74°C. Do not freeze the slaw.

Crispy Black Bean Quesadillas with Lime Slaw (continued)



Declared allergens: milk, wheat. Check labels and cross-contact.
Meatless; choose cheese made with vegetarian rennet if needed. Contains wheat and milk. Check the actual tortilla, cheese and seasoning labels for additional allergens, including soy, and for dietary suitability.

Chili-Lime Tuna and White Bean Bowls

A no-cook lunch of tuna and white beans with crisp vegetables and a bright chili-lime dressing. Makes four complete lunch bowls without additional sides.

Serves 4 · generous bowls
Prep: 25 min **Cook:** 0 min **Rest:** 0 min **Total:** 25 min

Equipment: Can opener, Colander, Knife, Cutting board, Measuring cups and spoons, Large mixing bowl, Small bowl, Fork, Large spoon, Four serving bowls or lidded lunch containers



Tip: Dry lettuce without a salad spinner by spreading washed leaves on a clean kitchen towel, rolling loosely and patting before chopping. Surface water dilutes this small amount of dressing.

Ingredients

3 15-ounce cans canned cannellini beans, drained and rinsed; about 4 1/2 cups drained
2 5-ounce cans chunk light tuna in water, drained; about **8 ounces** total drained
8 cups romaine lettuce, washed, thoroughly dried and chopped into bite-size pieces
1 medium English cucumber, about 12 ounces, cut into **1/4**-inch quarter-moons
1 pint cherry tomatoes, about 10 ounces, halved
1/4 cup red onion, finely diced
1/2 cup fresh cilantro, loosely packed leaves and tender stems, chopped

For Dressing:

1/4 cup fresh lime juice, from about 2–3 limes
3 tablespoons olive oil
1 1/2 teaspoons mild chili powder blend, not pure ground hot chile
1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
1/2 teaspoon fine salt, divided; use less if the canned ingredients are salty

Chili-Lime Tuna and White Bean Bowls (continued)



Method

1. **Drain the pantry** ingredients. Set a colander in the sink and add the beans. Rinse under cool running water for about 30 seconds, gently moving them with your fingers until the foamy canning liquid disappears. Shake lightly, then leave to drain for 3 minutes. Drain the tuna separately, using its lid carefully or the colander, without squeezing the fish dry. No heat is needed anywhere in this recipe.

2. **Prepare the crisp** base. On a cutting board, chop the washed, thoroughly dried romaine into roughly 1-inch pieces. Cut the cucumber lengthwise into quarters, then crosswise into 1/4-inch slices. Halve the tomatoes. Allow about 6 minutes for this work. If the cucumber has a loose, watery seed channel, scrape that out with a spoon before slicing so the finished bowls do not collect excess liquid.

3. **Cut the aromatics**. Using the knife and board, dice the onion into pieces about 1/8 inch across; large chunks can overwhelm a bite. Chop the cilantro leaves and tender stems, discarding thick, tough stems. This takes about 2 minutes. Keep both separate from the lettuce for now, so they can season the beans rather than getting stranded at the bottom of the bowls.

4. **Mix the dressing**. In a small bowl, combine the lime juice, olive oil, chili powder, cumin and 1/4 teaspoon of the salt. Beat briskly with a fork for about 30 seconds, scraping around the bottom to disperse spice clumps. The dressing should look cloudy and lightly red, without pockets of dry powder. Stir the diced onion into it and leave it there while you combine the beans.

Chili-Lime Tuna and White Bean Bowls (continued)



5. **Season the beans** first. Transfer the drained beans to the large mixing bowl. Stir the dressing again, measure out 2 tablespoons into the small bowl to reserve for the lettuce, and pour the remainder, including the onion, over the beans. Fold with a large spoon for about 1 minute, scooping from underneath rather than pressing down. Stop when the beans look evenly glossy but remain mostly whole.

6. **Finish the topping**. Add the cucumber, tomatoes and cilantro to the beans. Break the drained tuna into bite-size flakes with a fork and add it last. Fold gently four or five times, taking about 1 minute, until the vegetables and fish are distributed. Taste a bean and a piece of cucumber together. Add the remaining 1/4 teaspoon salt only if needed; if liquid has pooled underneath, lift portions out with the spoon rather than pouring it into the bowls.

7. **Build four bowls**. For eating now, divide the romaine among four serving bowls, about 2 cups each. Stir the reserved dressing and drizzle 1/2 tablespoon over each portion of lettuce. Turn the leaves gently with the spoon to coat their edges. Divide the tuna-bean mixture evenly over the greens, lifting from different parts of the mixing bowl so every serving gets fish, beans and vegetables.

8. **Pack without losing** crunch. If making lunches instead, leave the lettuce undressed. Portion it into separate dry containers, pack the tuna-bean mixture separately, and divide the reserved dressing among small leakproof containers. Refrigerate promptly rather than leaving the assembled ingredients on the counter. At lunchtime, dress the lettuce, spoon the topping over it and eat cold; there is no cooking or reheating stage.

Tip: Choose chunk tuna rather than finely shredded tuna when possible. Larger pieces stay distinct against the creamy beans and make the bowl feel more substantial.

Tip: For the best packed-lunch texture, keep halved tomatoes in their own compartment if preparing more than a day ahead; their juices otherwise gradually loosen the dressing.

Chili-Lime Tuna and White Bean Bowls (continued)



Tip: Compare canned beans with home-cooked beans by drained yield, not package weight. About 4 1/2 cups cooked, well-drained white beans replaces all three cans; freeze extra cooked beans in measured portions.

Substitution for canned cannellini beans: Three 15-ounce cans great northern beans, drained and rinsed. Use the same method; fold gently because softer beans can split.

Substitution for fresh cilantro: 1/2 cup loosely packed chopped flat-leaf parsley. The flavor becomes less citrusy and herbal, but the quantity and method stay the same.

Substitution for chunk light tuna in water: Two 5-ounce cans salmon, drained. Remove any skin or bones if preferred, then flake gently. Fish remains a declared allergen.

Storage: Refrigerate the topping, dry lettuce and reserved dressing separately in covered containers at 40°F / 4°C or below for up to 3 days. Refrigerate within 2 hours of preparation, or within 1 hour when the temperature is above 90°F / 32°C. Carry packed lunches with ice packs and keep cold until eating. Dressed lettuce is best eaten the day it is assembled.

Reheating: Serve cold; reheating the assembled salad wilts the lettuce and cucumber. Keep chilled until ready to assemble.

Freezing: Do not freeze the assembled bowls: cucumber, tomatoes and lettuce lose their crisp texture. Extra plain cooked beans can be frozen separately for up to 3 months, then thawed in the refrigerator and drained before use.

Declared allergens: fish. Check labels and cross-contact.
Contains fish. Made without dairy or wheat ingredients as written; check the actual tuna and chili-powder labels for added ingredients and allergen statements.

Ginger-Peanut Noodles with Crunchy Cabbage

Cool, creamy peanut noodles with lime, fresh ginger and a generous tangle of crisp vegetables. Four complete main-course portions.

Serves 4 · main-course portions
Prep: 20 min **Cook:** 10 min **Rest:** 0 min **Total:** 30 min

Equipment: Stovetop, Heavy pot, Colander, Knife, Cutting board, Large mixing bowl, Medium mixing bowl, Small bowl, Measuring cups and spoons, Whisk, Tongs

Ingredients

12 ounces dried spaghetti, dry weight
3 quarts water, for boiling noodles; discarded
12 ounces (about 5 loosely packed cups shredded) green cabbage, cored and very thinly sliced
6 ounces (about 2 medium carrots) carrots, scrubbed and cut into thin matchsticks
4 whole scallions, trimmed and thinly sliced

For Dressing:

1/2 cup smooth peanut butter, well stirred before measuring
3 tablespoons reduced-sodium soy sauce
3 tablespoons fresh lime juice
2 teaspoons light brown sugar, packed
1 tablespoon fresh ginger, peeled and very finely minced
1 clove garlic, finely minced
1/2 cup warm water, divided: 6 tablespoons initially, 2 tablespoons reserved

For Finish:

1/4 cup unsalted roasted peanuts, roughly chopped



Tip: For easier cabbage slicing, cut the cored wedge into two smaller wedges and place a broad cut face flat against the board. Shorter ribbons are easier to toss and eat.

Ginger-Peanut Noodles with Crunchy Cabbage (continued)



Method

1. **Set up the** cooking water. Put 3 quarts water in a heavy pot over high heat and cover if you have a lid; bringing it to a full boil takes about 8–12 minutes. Meanwhile, measure the dressing ingredients. Do not salt the water: the soy sauce will season the finished noodles.

2. **Prepare the crunch** while the water heats. On a cutting board, slice the cabbage into fine ribbons, about 1/8 inch wide. Cut the carrots into slender matchsticks, not thick batons, so they bend with the noodles. Thinly slice the scallions. Put all three in the large mixing bowl; allow about 8 minutes for this preparation.

3. **Make the concentrated** dressing. In the medium bowl, whisk the peanut butter, soy sauce, lime juice and brown sugar for about 1 minute. Add the finely minced ginger and garlic. The mixture may tighten into a stiff paste; this is normal. Stir firmly around the bottom and sides until no separate streaks of peanut butter remain.

4. **Loosen and divide** the sauce. Off the heat, whisk 6 tablespoons warm water into the dressing, adding it in three portions over about 1 minute. It should fall from the whisk in a thick, continuous ribbon rather than clumps. Transfer 1/4 cup dressing to a small bowl for serving. Keep the remaining 2 tablespoons water separately for adjustments.

5. **Cook the spaghetti**. Add it to the vigorously boiling water, easing the strands down with tongs as they soften. Keep the pot uncovered over medium-high heat, maintaining a lively boil. Stir thoroughly during the first minute, then every 2 minutes. Cook for the package time, usually 9–11 minutes, until a bitten strand is tender with no chalky center.

6. **Cool and drain** thoroughly. Pour the noodles into the colander, then rinse under cold running water for 30–60 seconds, lifting and separating the strands with tongs until no warmth remains. Shake the colander several times and let it drain for 1 minute. Excess rinse water dilutes the dressing, so check that water is no longer streaming from the bottom.

Ginger-Peanut Noodles with Crunchy Cabbage (continued)



7. Dress the noodles and vegetables. Add the drained spaghetti and the larger portion of dressing to the large bowl of vegetables. Using tongs, lift from the bottom and fold over the top repeatedly for about 2 minutes, rotating the bowl to distribute the cabbage. If the noodles cling in stiff bundles, add the reserved water 1 tablespoon at a time, only until they separate easily.

8. Finish and portion. Roughly chop the peanuts on the board, if not already prepared. Divide the noodles among four bowls, lifting vegetables from the bottom so each portion gets an equal share. Spoon the reserved dressing over the portions and scatter with peanuts. For packed lunches, refrigerate the noodles promptly and carry the dressing and peanuts separately to add just before eating.

Tip: For cold noodles, cook spaghetti fully tender rather than very firm: chilling makes the strands feel firmer. Rinsing is intentional here and prevents excess starch from turning the peanut sauce gummy.

Tip: If natural peanut butter has a hard layer at the bottom, stir the entire jar thoroughly before measuring. Scooping mostly oil or mostly solids makes the dressing unpredictable.

Tip: Buy a whole cabbage when its unit price is favorable; the unused portion can go into quesadilla slaw or a cabbage skillet elsewhere in the book. Whole carrots also avoid the extra cost of prepared matchsticks.

Substitution for dried spaghetti: 12 ounces dry linguine. Cook to full tenderness using the package directions, then rinse and drain as described.

Substitution for fresh lime juice: 3 tablespoons rice vinegar. The dressing will be less citrusy but still bright. Use unseasoned rice vinegar.

Substitution for green cabbage: 12 ounces thinly sliced red cabbage. It stays crisp but may tint the noodles purple during storage.

Ginger-Peanut Noodles with Crunchy Cabbage (continued)



Storage: Refrigerate in shallow airtight containers within 2 hours of preparation, or within 1 hour when the temperature is above 90°F. Keep at 40°F / 4°C or below and eat within 3–4 days. Store reserved dressing and chopped peanuts separately. Transport with ice packs and keep chilled until lunchtime.

Reheating: Designed to be eaten cold; no reheating is needed. Toss chilled noodles with the reserved dressing before eating. If serving warm leftovers instead, heat with a small splash of water, stirring frequently, until they reach 165°F / 74°C throughout; the cabbage will soften.

Freezing: Freezing the assembled dish is not recommended: thawed cabbage releases water and loses its crunch. The dressing alone can be frozen for up to 2 months; thaw in the refrigerator and whisk smooth before using.

Declared allergens: peanut, soy, wheat. Check labels and cross-contact.
Vegan when made with egg-free spaghetti and vegan-labeled ingredients. Contains peanut, soy and wheat. Check the actual noodle, peanut butter, soy sauce and roasted peanut labels for ingredients and allergen statements; substitutions can change the allergens.

Roasted Vegetable Couscous with Lemon Yogurt



Cumin-roasted vegetables and chickpeas folded through lemony couscous, served with a cool yogurt sauce. A complete vegetarian lunch for four.

Serves 4 · generous bowls
Prep: 20 min **Cook:** 30 min **Rest:** 5 min **Total:** 55 min

Equipment: Oven, Stovetop, Two 13-by-18-inch rimmed sheet pans, Saucepan with lid, Knife, Board, Colander, Measuring cups and spoons, Fine grater, Large mixing bowl, Small bowl, Fork, Large spoon, Spatula, Oven mitts, Food thermometer

Ingredients

For Roasted vegetables:

12 ounces carrots, scrubbed, ends trimmed, cut into 1/4-inch half-moons
1 large red bell pepper, stemmed, seeded and cut into 1-inch squares
12 ounces zucchini, trimmed and cut into 3/4-inch chunks
15 ounces canned chickpeas, can weight; drained, rinsed and dried, yielding about 1 1/2 cups

Other ingredients:

3 tablespoons olive oil, divided: 2 tablespoons for roasting, 1 tablespoon for couscous

For Roasted vegetables:

1 1/2 teaspoons ground cumin
1 teaspoon smoked paprika

Roasted Vegetable Couscous with Lemon Yogurt (continued)



Other ingredients:

1 teaspoon fine salt, divided: 1/2 teaspoon for vegetables, 1/4 teaspoon each for couscous and yogurt

For Roasted vegetables:

1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper

For Couscous:

1 1/2 cups plain instant couscous, dry; small-grain, not pearl couscous; choose a package calling for equal volumes of water and couscous

1 1/2 cups water, for hydrating couscous

For Lemon yogurt:

1 cup plain whole-milk yogurt, stirred smooth; regular, not Greek

Other ingredients:

1 large lemon, washed; finely grate 1 teaspoon zest and squeeze 3 tablespoons juice, divided

For Lemon yogurt:

1 small clove garlic, peeled and finely minced

For Couscous:

1/2 cup flat-leaf parsley, chopped leaves and tender stems, loosely packed

Method

1. **Heat the oven** to 425°F with racks in the upper and lower thirds. On the board, prepare the carrots, pepper and zucchini as listed; allow about 10 minutes. Keep the carrots thin so they soften before the zucchini collapses. Drain and rinse the chickpeas in the colander, shake thoroughly, then spread them on a sheet pan for a few minutes until no longer dripping.

2. **Divide the vegetables** and chickpeas between the two sheet pans. Drizzle each pan with **1 tablespoon** oil, then divide the cumin, paprika, black pepper and 1/2 teaspoon salt between them. Toss with a large spoon for 1–2 minutes, coating the corners and undersides. Spread into single layers with small gaps; piled vegetables steam rather than brown.

Roasted Vegetable Couscous with Lemon Yogurt (continued)



3. **Roast for** 15 minutes. Using oven mitts, remove the pans and use a spatula to turn the vegetables, scraping underneath browned pieces rather than pushing them around. Swap the pans between racks and rotate front to back. Roast 10–15 minutes more, until carrot centers yield to a fork and zucchini edges brown. Remove any smaller pieces that darken early.

4. **While the vegetables** roast, use the fine grater and board to prepare the lemon and garlic. In the small bowl, stir the yogurt with 1 tablespoon lemon juice, the garlic and 1/4 teaspoon salt for about 30 seconds, until smooth. Refrigerate while finishing the meal. Reserve the remaining 2 tablespoons juice and all the zest for the couscous.

5. **About** 10 minutes before the vegetables finish, put the measured water, remaining 1 tablespoon oil and remaining 1/4 teaspoon salt in the saucepan. Bring to a full boil over high heat, about 3–5 minutes. Turn off the heat, stir in the dry couscous so every grain is wet, then cover. Leave undisturbed for 5 minutes to absorb the water.

6. **Uncover the saucepan** and rake a fork gently through the couscous for 1–2 minutes, lifting from the bottom to separate clumps without mashing. The grains should be tender and the pan free of standing water. If damp, leave uncovered off heat for 2 minutes. If still firm, cover again for another 2 minutes before transferring to the large bowl.

7. **Add the reserved** 2 tablespoons lemon juice, zest and chopped parsley to the warm couscous. Fold with the large spoon, scooping from underneath and turning over, for about 1 minute. Add the roasted vegetables and chickpeas, including their seasoned pan juices. Fold gently again so the tender zucchini stays in pieces and the chickpeas are distributed throughout.

8. **Divide the warm** mixture among four bowls, giving each a similar share of vegetables and chickpeas. Spoon one-quarter of the cold lemon yogurt alongside each serving rather than stirring it through; the contrast keeps each bite distinct. For packed lunches, portion into shallow containers and refrigerate promptly, with the yogurt in separate sealed containers; do not wait for the couscous to reach room temperature.

Roasted Vegetable Couscous with Lemon Yogurt (continued)



Tip: Dry the washed parsley before chopping. Wet herbs cling in dark clumps instead of distributing through the small couscous grains.

Tip: A little wrinkling on the chickpeas is desirable; they should remain creamy inside, not become hard snack-style roasted chickpeas.

Tip: Use carrot tenderness as the roasting checkpoint. Browning alone can hide a firm center, especially if the slices are thicker than 1/4 inch.

Tip: For economical shopping, loose carrots and a whole bunch of parsley can serve several meals. Chop and freeze leftover parsley for a future soup rather than buying a second herb for this dish.

Substitution for red bell pepper: 8 ounces additional zucchini. Cut into 3/4-inch chunks and keep well spaced; the finished bowl will be less sweet.

Substitution for canned chickpeas: 1 1/2 cups cooked, drained chickpeas. Use chickpeas cooked without sauce; dry them well before roasting.

Substitution for plain whole-milk yogurt: 3/4 cup plain Greek yogurt mixed with 1/4 cup water. Stir smooth before adding the lemon, garlic and salt. Contains milk.

Storage: Refrigerate the couscous mixture and yogurt separately in shallow, covered containers at 40°F/4°C or below within 2 hours of preparation, or within 1 hour above 90°F. Use within 3–4 days. Transport with ice packs and keep chilled until eating.
Reheating: Eat chilled, or reheat only the couscous mixture in a saucepan over medium-low heat with 1 tablespoon water per portion. Cover and stir frequently for about 5–8 minutes, until the center reaches 165°F/74°C; add another small splash of water if sticking. Add cold yogurt after heating.
Freezing: Freeze the couscous and vegetable mixture without yogurt in individual airtight portions for up to 2 months for best quality. Zucchini will soften after thawing. Thaw overnight in the refrigerator and reheat to 165°F/74°C. Make fresh lemon yogurt rather than freezing the sauce.

Roasted Vegetable Couscous with Lemon Yogurt (continued)



Declared allergens: milk, wheat. Check labels and cross-contact.
Vegetarian. Contains wheat and milk. Check the actual couscous and yogurt labels for ingredients and any additional allergens; use plain, unseasoned couscous.

Toasty Tomato and Chickpea Melts

Eight crisp, open-faced melts with a thick tomato-chickpea filling and bubbling sharp cheddar. Serves four as a generous lunch; sides are not included.

Serves 4 · servings of 2 open-faced melts
Prep: 15 min **Cook:** 25 min **Rest:** 0 min **Total:** 40 min

Equipment: Oven, Stovetop, Large rimmed sheet pan, 12-inch skillet, Knife, Cutting board, Colander, Measuring spoons, Wooden spoon, Box grater, Wide spatula, Food thermometer

Ingredients

8 slices (about 16 ounces total) rustic bread, cut 3/4 inch thick
3 tablespoons olive oil, divided: 2 tablespoons for bread, 1 tablespoon for filling
2 15-ounce cans (about 3 cups drained cooked chickpeas) canned chickpeas, drained and rinsed
1 pound grape tomatoes, halved lengthwise
3 cloves garlic, finely chopped
2 tablespoons tomato paste
1 teaspoon dried oregano
1/2 teaspoon fine salt, plus more to taste
1/4 teaspoon black pepper, freshly ground
2 teaspoons red wine vinegar
6 ounces sharp cheddar, coarsely grated
2 tablespoons flat-leaf parsley, finely chopped



Tip: Choose a loaf with a fairly close crumb. Very large holes let the tomato filling fall through; day-old bread is especially useful here and often available at a lower price.

Toasty Tomato and Chickpea Melts (continued)



Method

1. **Set an oven** rack in the upper-middle position and heat the oven to 425°F. During the approximately 15-minute preparation period, drain and rinse the chickpeas in a colander, shaking until they stop dripping. On the cutting board, halve the tomatoes and chop the garlic and parsley. Grate the cheddar, keeping it separate from the vegetables.

2. **Arrange the bread** in one layer on a large rimmed sheet pan. Drizzle 2 tablespoons oil across the slices, spreading it with the back of a spoon over both faces. Bake for 8–10 minutes, turning with a spatula halfway through, until the surfaces feel dry and the edges are pale gold. Leave the oven on.

3. **Meanwhile**, heat the remaining 1 tablespoon oil in the 12-inch skillet over medium heat for about 1 minute. Add the garlic and stir for 30 seconds, just until fragrant, not brown. Stir in the tomato paste and oregano for 1 minute, smearing the paste across the pan until it turns slightly darker red.

4. **Add the tomatoes**, salt and pepper to the skillet. Cook over medium heat for 6–8 minutes, stirring and scraping the bottom every minute. Press softened tomatoes gently with the spoon to release their juices. They should slump into a chunky sauce; if the paste begins catching, lower the heat and stir the released tomato juice across that spot.

5. **Add the drained** chickpeas to the skillet. Over medium heat, press roughly one-third of them against the pan with the spoon, leaving the rest whole. Fold the crushed chickpeas through the tomatoes, then cook for 3–4 minutes, stirring from the edges inward. Crushing some beans binds the topping without turning it into a smooth spread.

Toasty Tomato and Chickpea Melts (continued)



6. **Stir the vinegar** into the skillet and cook for 1 minute. Drag the spoon through the filling: the path should stay visible briefly, without watery liquid immediately flooding it. If loose, cook another 1–2 minutes, stirring frequently; if too stiff, crush a few more tomato pieces. Turn off the heat, taste, and adjust the salt if needed.

7. **Keep the toasted** bread on its sheet pan, leaving small gaps between slices. Divide the hot filling into eight roughly equal portions in the skillet, then spoon one onto each toast. Spread almost to the edges without packing it down. Divide the cheddar evenly over the filling, keeping stray shreds off the pan so they do not burn.

8. **Bake the assembled** melts at 425°F for 5–7 minutes, until the cheese is fully melted with small golden patches and the bread edges are deeply toasted. Rotate the sheet pan if one end browns faster. Transfer with a wide spatula to four plates, two melts per person, and scatter the parsley over the warm cheese.

Tip: For the cleanest texture, crush chickpeas against a bare patch of skillet rather than chasing them through the sauce. Keep most intact so the filling still has bite.

Tip: Grate cheddar while it is cold for easier handling. A fine dust of cheese melts quickly but gives less distinct browned texture than coarse shreds.

Tip: For packed lunches, transport chilled filling, bread and cheese separately in an insulated bag with ice packs. Assemble and heat at the destination when an oven is available; storing assembled melts softens the toast.

Substitution for grape tomatoes: One 14.5-ounce can diced tomatoes, including juices. Simmer until the spoon leaves a clear path before adding the chickpeas; canned tomatoes may need several extra minutes to reduce.

Substitution for sharp cheddar: 6 ounces coarsely grated Monterey Jack. It melts readily but tastes milder. Keep the vinegar for brightness.

Substitution for canned chickpeas: 3 cups drained cooked white beans. Fold gently and crush only a small portion because white beans break down more easily.

Toasty Tomato and Chickpea Melts (continued)



Storage: Refrigerate filling and assembled leftovers in shallow covered containers within 2 hours, or 1 hour above 90°F. Keep at 40°F / 4°C or below and use within 3–4 days. Store untopped bread separately at room temperature according to its package instructions.

Reheating: Reheat assembled melts on a sheet pan at 375°F for approximately 12–18 minutes, until the center of the filling reaches 165°F / 74°C; loosely cover if the cheese darkens too soon. Alternatively, reheat refrigerated filling in a skillet, stirring, to 165°F / 74°C, then assemble on freshly toasted bread and melt the cheese as directed.

Freezing: Freeze the cooled filling separately in an airtight container for up to 2 months for best quality. Freeze bread separately. Thaw filling overnight in the refrigerator, reheat to **165**°F / 74°C, and assemble with freshly grated cheese. Freezing assembled melts gives a softer bread base.

Declared allergens: wheat, milk. Check labels and cross-contact.
Meatless; choose cheddar made with vegetarian rennet if required. Contains wheat and milk. Check bread, tomato paste and all packaged ingredient labels for additional allergens.

Chicken with Main-Character Energy



Chicken earns its place at the center of dinner through contrast: browned edges and a bright sauce, warm spices and cool cucumber, tender meat and a crisp tostada. These six meals build those contrasts with groceries that work across the chapter.

Caleb's Honey-Paprika Chicken Thighs pairs smoky seasoning with a sweet glaze. Lemon Chicken Orzo with Peas takes a softer, spoonable direction, while Chicken Tinga Tostadas brings tomato-chile depth and crunch. Ginger-Soy Chicken and Broccoli delivers savory gloss; Coconut-Lime Tray-Bake Chicken balances richness with acidity. Yogurt-Spiced Chicken with Rice and Cucumber finishes the lineup with fragrant seasoning and a cooling counterpoint.

Keep garlic, citrus and a few dependable spices moving between dishes rather than buying a separate pantry for each meal. The shared technique is surface management: pat chicken dry before browning, leave space around the pieces and let color develop before turning. Crowding traps steam; a little breathing room builds flavor.

Then balance the finish. Sweetness needs acidity, rich sauces welcome something fresh, and spice benefits from contrast. Check poultry with a food thermometer for 165°F / 74°C; color alone cannot confirm doneness.

Caleb's Honey-Paprika Chicken Thighs

Oven-roasted, bone-in chicken thighs with smoky seasoning, browned skin and a late-applied honey–cider vinegar glaze. Makes eight thighs, two per serving; sides are not included. Illustrative ingredient estimate: $6.37 for the batch, about $1.59 per portion. These are hypothetical ingredient-cost assumptions, not live grocery prices; sides are excluded.

Serves 4

Prep: 15 min **Cook:** 50 min **Rest:** 5 min **Total:** 70 min

Equipment: Oven, 18-by-13-inch rimmed sheet pan, Small saucepan, Food thermometer, Measuring cups and spoons, Small bowl, Spoon, Tongs, Paper towels, Serving platter, Oven mitts

Ingredients

For Chicken:

- **3 pounds** (8 thighs, approximately 6 ounces each) Bone-in, skin-on chicken thighs, thawed completely if frozen; excess loose skin trimmed
- **1 tablespoon** Neutral oil
- **2 teaspoons** Smoked paprika
- **1 teaspoon** Garlic powder
- **1 teaspoon** Fine salt
- **1/2 teaspoon** Ground black pepper

For Glaze:

- **3 tablespoons** Honey
- **2 tablespoons** Apple cider vinegar
- **2 tablespoons** Water



Tip: For drier skin, pat the thighs dry and refrigerate on a rimmed tray, uncovered on the lowest shelf, for up to 8 hours before cooking. Keep them away from ready-to-eat foods; this optional preparation adds waiting time.

Caleb's Honey-Paprika Chicken Thighs (continued)



Method

1. **Set an oven** rack in the middle and heat the oven to **425**°F. Set out an 18-by-13-inch rimmed sheet pan; its raised edges must contain the rendered chicken fat. During the roughly 15-minute preheat, measure the seasonings and glaze ingredients. Keep the honey mixture separate from the raw-chicken work area.

2. **Pat the chicken** thoroughly dry with paper towels, especially inside skin folds; do not rinse it. Place on the sheet pan, rub all over with the oil, then arrange skin-side up with gaps between pieces. Spread the skin smoothly over the meat. Wash your hands and clean surfaces touched by raw poultry before handling anything else.

3. **Stir the paprika**, garlic powder, salt and pepper together in a small bowl. Sprinkle over both sides of the thighs, using most on the skin, and rub gently to distribute. Return every piece skin-side up. Roast at 425°F for 25 minutes without turning; the skin should begin looking dry and bronze around the edges.

4. **While the chicken** roasts, combine the honey, vinegar and measured water in the small saucepan. Heat over medium-low for 2–3 minutes, stirring with a spoon until fluid and completely blended. Do not reduce it to syrup: it will thicken in the oven. Remove from the heat and keep the spoon with the saucepan.

5. **After** 25 minutes, use oven mitts to rotate the sheet pan front to back for even browning. Roast another 10 minutes, then insert the thermometer sideways into the thickest meat without touching bone. If it reads below 155°F, continue in 5-minute intervals before glazing. If the paprika is blackening rather than browning, lower the oven to 400°F.

6. **Once the chicken** reaches at least 155°F, spoon about half the glaze thinly over the skin, keeping the spoon from touching the chicken. Roast 5 minutes, then spoon on the remaining glaze. Roast another 3–5 minutes, until glossy and bubbling. Check several thighs: each must reach at least 165°F/74°C; thighs are often more tender around 175–185°F.

Caleb's Honey-Paprika Chicken Thighs (continued)



7. **Transfer fully cooked** thighs with tongs to a serving platter and rest uncovered for 5 minutes. Leave any underdone pieces in the oven, checking every 3–5 minutes. Carefully tilt the sheet pan and spoon off the clear surface fat, leaving the darker juices. If these look watery, simmer them in the saucepan over medium heat for 1–3 minutes, until lightly coating the spoon.

8. **Divide the chicken** into four portions of two thighs each. Spoon the hot pan sauce around the meat rather than flooding the skin, preserving its browned texture. The sauce should flow freely, not form sticky threads; stop reducing as soon as it lightly coats a spoon. Serve after the rest, with any separately prepared sides alongside.

Tip: Paprika makes color an unreliable doneness test. Check the largest thighs and any pieces in the coolest part of the pan, avoiding the bone with the thermometer tip.

Tip: For make-ahead chicken, reserve the pan sauce separately. Reheat the thighs uncovered so the skin does not steam beneath the sauce.

Tip: Compare the unit price of family packs of bone-in thighs. Freeze unused raw thighs in meal-size portions rather than buying a separate cut solely for this recipe.

Substitution for Smoked paprika: 2 teaspoons sweet paprika. Keeps the warm color and pepper flavor but removes the smoky note; avoid hot paprika unless you want a noticeably spicier dish.

Substitution for Apple cider vinegar: 2 tablespoons white wine vinegar. Use the same quantity and method for a similarly bright glaze.

Storage: Refrigerate chicken and sauce in separate shallow containers within 2 hours of cooking, or within 1 hour if the surroundings exceed 90°F. Keep at 40°F/4°C or below and use within 3–4 days.

Caleb's Honey-Paprika Chicken Thighs (continued)



Reheating: Place refrigerated thighs skin-side up on a rimmed sheet pan in a 350°F oven for approximately 20–25 minutes, until the thickest part reaches 165°F/74°C. Warm the sauce separately in a saucepan, stirring; add a small splash of water if needed to loosen it, and heat to 165°F/74°C.

Freezing: Freeze cooled chicken and sauce separately in airtight containers for up to 3 months for best quality. Thaw overnight in the refrigerator before reheating. The skin will be softer after freezing.

Allergens: not certified free of allergens; check ingredients and packaged-food labels. Contains no intentionally added major U.S. allergens. Check the actual spice and vinegar labels for ingredients and cross-contact information; separately served sides may introduce allergens.

Lemon Chicken Orzo with Peas

A complete one-skillet dinner of browned chicken, broth-cooked orzo and peas, finished with lemon, butter and Parmesan.

Serves 4 · generous portions
Prep: 15 min **Cook:** 30 min **Rest:** 5 min **Total:** 50 min

Equipment: Stovetop, 12-inch deep skillet, Knife, Cutting board, Food thermometer, Measuring cups and spoons, Wooden spoon, Plate, Small bowl



Ingredients

1 1/4 pounds Boneless, skinless chicken thighs, trimmed and cut into 1-inch pieces
3/4 teaspoon Fine salt, divided; reduce if using salted broth
1/2 teaspoon Ground black pepper
2 tablespoons Olive oil, divided
1 medium onion (about 6 ounces) Yellow onion, finely diced
3 cloves Garlic, finely chopped
12 ounces Dry orzo, uncooked
1/2 cup Water, for loosening the browned pan juices
3 cups Unsalted chicken broth
2 cups Frozen peas, kept frozen until added
2 tablespoons Unsalted butter, cut into small pieces
1 1/2 ounces (about 1/2 cup) Finely grated Parmesan, divided
3 tablespoons Fresh lemon juice, seeds removed
1/4 cup Flat-leaf parsley, finely chopped

Tip: For easier, more even chicken pieces, cut each thigh into strips first, then cut across the strips. Trim hard fat and loose connective tissue rather than trying to remove every soft seam.

Tip: Use a deep skillet with at least a 3-quart capacity. A shallow frying pan can overflow when the peas and chicken return; do not double the recipe in the same pan.

Lemon Chicken Orzo with Peas (continued)



Method

1. **Prepare everything before** heating the skillet. Dice the onion, chop the garlic and parsley, and measure the liquids. Reserve 2 tablespoons of the Parmesan in a small bowl for serving. Cut the chicken into even 1-inch pieces on a separate board or after preparing the vegetables; wash the knife, board and hands afterward.

2. **Season the chicken** with 1/2 teaspoon salt and all the pepper. Heat the 12-inch deep skillet over medium-high heat for about 2 minutes, then add 1 tablespoon oil. Add half the chicken in one layer, leaving small gaps so moisture can escape rather than steam the meat.

3. **Brown the first** batch for 4–5 minutes, turning with the wooden spoon after about 2 minutes. Transfer to a plate. Add the remaining tablespoon oil and repeat with the second batch. The chicken should have golden patches but need not be cooked through yet. Lower the heat if the pan deposits turn dark brown.

4. **Reduce the skillet** heat to medium. Add the onion and cook for 3–4 minutes, stirring and scraping gently, until softened and translucent at the edges. Add the garlic and dry orzo; stir constantly for 1 minute, coating the pasta in the pan fat. The garlic should smell fragrant, not become brown.

5. **Pour in the** measured 1/2 cup water, keeping your face away from the steam. Scrape the skillet bottom with the spoon for about 30 seconds to dissolve the golden deposits. Add the broth and remaining 1/4 teaspoon salt. Raise the heat to medium-high just until bubbles break across the surface.

6. **Reduce to medium-low** and simmer uncovered for 7 minutes. Stir every minute, sweeping the spoon across the entire skillet bottom and folding the outer pasta toward the center. Maintain gentle bubbling, not a hard boil. If the bottom begins catching, lower the heat and stir more frequently.

Lemon Chicken Orzo with Peas (continued)



7. **Add the chicken** with its collected juices and the frozen peas. Simmer gently for 4–6 minutes, stirring frequently to distribute the heat. The orzo should be tender with a slight bite. Check several large chicken pieces through their centers with a food thermometer: each must reach 165°F / 74°C.

8. **Check the sauce** before finishing. A spoon drawn through the pasta should leave a trail that slowly fills with glossy liquid. If soupy, simmer another 1–2 minutes, stirring. If dry before the pasta softens, add extra water 2 tablespoons at a time. Continue gentle cooking if the chicken has not reached its safe temperature.

9. **Remove the skillet** from the heat. Fold in the butter, lemon juice and Parmesan except the reserved garnish until melted and evenly distributed. Rest off heat for 5 minutes; the sauce will thicken as the pasta absorbs liquid. Fold in the parsley, divide among four bowls and scatter the reserved Parmesan over each portion.

Tip: Judge the orzo by biting a piece, not by appearance alone. A chalky center needs more gentle simmering; fully swollen, splitting pasta has gone past the ideal endpoint.

Tip: Buy a larger bag of frozen peas if its unit price is better and keep the remainder frozen. Measure out this recipe's portion without thawing the whole bag.

Tip: If preparing ahead, keep the serving Parmesan separate. Reheated pasta benefits from its fresh, dry finish after the sauce has been loosened.

Substitution for Boneless, skinless chicken thighs: 1.25 pounds boneless, skinless chicken breast, cut into 1-inch pieces. Brown briefly and begin checking early after returning it to the skillet; breast meat dries out more readily. It must still reach 165°F / 74°C.

Substitution for Unsalted chicken broth: 3 cups low-sodium chicken broth. Omit the final 1/4 teaspoon salt initially and adjust after adding Parmesan. Check the broth label for allergens.

Substitution for Flat-leaf parsley: 2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh dill. Fold in off heat for a different but complementary herbal finish.

Storage: Refrigerate in shallow containers within 2 hours of cooking, or within 1 hour if the ambient temperature exceeds 90°F. Keep at 40°F / 4°C or below and use within 3–4 days.

Lemon Chicken Orzo with Peas (continued)



Reheating: For each portion, add 2–3 tablespoons water in a saucepan. Warm over medium-low heat, stirring frequently, until steaming throughout and reaching 165°F / 74°C. Add more water a tablespoon at a time if the pasta remains stiff.

Freezing: Freeze promptly in individual airtight portions for up to 2 months for best quality. Thaw overnight in the refrigerator before reheating. The orzo will be softer and the peas less bright after freezing.

Declared allergens: wheat, milk. Check labels and cross-contact.
Contains wheat and milk. Orzo may also contain egg; check its package. Check the actual broth and Parmesan labels for additional allergens and dietary suitability. This recipe is not gluten-free or dairy-free.

Chicken Tinga Tostadas

A chunky, no-blender chicken tinga with crisp corn tostadas, cabbage, queso fresco and lime. Makes eight tostadas, enough for four generous servings.

Serves 4

Prep: 20 min **Cook:** 35 min **Rest:** 5 min **Total:** 60 min

Equipment: Stovetop, Oven, 12-inch skillet with lid, Sheet pan, Knife, Cutting board, Food thermometer, Measuring cups and spoons, Wooden spoon, Two forks, Plate, Small bowls

Ingredients

For Tinga:

1 1/2 pounds boneless, skinless chicken thighs, raw, excess fat trimmed
1 tablespoon neutral cooking oil
1 large onion yellow onion, about 10 ounces before trimming; peeled, halved and thinly sliced
3 cloves garlic, peeled and finely chopped
1 teaspoon dried oregano
15 ounces canned crushed tomatoes, undrained
1 pepper canned chipotle pepper in adobo, finely chopped, about 1 tablespoon
2 teaspoons adobo sauce from the chipotle can
1/2 cup water, plus additional only if needed to prevent scorching

Other ingredients:

3/4 teaspoon fine salt, divided: 1/2 teaspoon for sauce, 1/4 teaspoon for cabbage

For Tostadas and toppings:

3 cups green cabbage, finely shredded, about 8 ounces
2 medium limes lime, juice one to yield 2 tablespoons; cut the other into 4 wedges
8 shells plain corn tostada shells, packaged, ready to eat, approximately 6 inches across
3 ounces queso fresco, crumbled; use cheese made with pasteurized milk



Tip: For consistent cabbage ribbons, cut the wedge into manageable sections and slice across the leaves; remove the dense core before measuring the shredded cabbage.

Chicken Tinga Tostadas (continued)



Method

1. **Prepare the vegetables** before handling raw chicken. On a cutting board, slice the onion into thin half-moons and finely chop the garlic and chipotle. Measure the tomatoes, adobo, oregano and water. Shred the cabbage into a bowl; prepare the lime juice and wedges. Allow about 12 minutes, with no heat yet.

2. **Trim large loose** pieces of fat from the chicken with your knife; leave the thighs whole. Do not rinse them. Wash your hands and clean the knife, board and work surface after raw-chicken contact. Set a clean plate and two forks aside for the cooked chicken. This takes about 3 minutes.

3. **Heat the oil** in the 12-inch skillet over medium heat for 1 minute. Add the onion and cook for 7–9 minutes, stirring and separating the strands with a wooden spoon every minute. Look for softened, translucent ribbons with light golden edges. If they brown sharply, lower the heat.

4. **Stir the garlic**, oregano and chopped chipotle into the onions over medium-low heat for **30** seconds, just until fragrant. Add the tomatoes, adobo, measured water and 1/2 teaspoon salt. Scrape the skillet bottom with the spoon, then bring to a gentle bubbling simmer over medium heat, about 2 minutes.

5. **Nestle the chicken** into the sauce in one layer and spoon sauce over the tops. Cover and reduce to low heat. Simmer gently for 18–22 minutes, turning each thigh with the forks halfway through. Check the thickest pieces with a thermometer: each must reach 165°F / **74**°C. Continue cooking if needed.

6. **While the chicken** simmers, heat the oven to 350°F. Toss the cabbage in its bowl with 2 tablespoons lime juice and the remaining 1/4 teaspoon salt for about 30 seconds. Let stand at room temperature until assembly; the strands should soften slightly but remain crunchy. Crumble the cheese into a separate bowl.

7. **Transfer the safely** cooked chicken to the clean plate and rest for 5 minutes. Meanwhile, simmer the sauce uncovered over medium-low heat for 3–5 minutes, stirring across the bottom frequently. Stop when a spoon drawn through leaves a brief trail. If it starts sticking, add water 1 tablespoon at a time.

Chicken Tinga Tostadas (continued)



8. **Pull the rested** chicken apart with two forks into short, bite-size shreds, about 3 minutes. Return it and its juices to the skillet. Fold through the sauce over low heat for 2 minutes, lifting from the bottom until evenly coated. The filling should mound on a spoon without releasing a puddle.

9. **Arrange the tostada** shells on a sheet pan, overlapping slightly if necessary. Warm in the **350**°F oven for 3–4 minutes, until crisp and fragrant, not darkened. Keep the chicken over the lowest heat during this step; if the filling looks dry, fold in 1 tablespoon water and turn off the heat.

10. **Place two warm** shells on each plate. Divide the chicken evenly among all eight, spreading it gently without pressing on the shells. Lift cabbage from its bowl, leaving excess liquid behind, and distribute over the chicken. Finish with the cheese and a lime wedge per serving. Assemble only what you will eat now.

Tip: Judge the sauce before adding the shredded chicken: a watery sauce soaks the shells, while an overly reduced sauce cannot coat the meat. The spoon trail should close slowly rather than remain completely dry.

Tip: For less heat, scrape the chipotle open and remove its seeds before chopping. Adobo still contributes heat, so choose a mild-labeled product if needed.

Tip: Freeze the remaining chipotles with their sauce in tablespoon-size portions. Compare the unit price of larger chicken packages and freeze unused raw thighs in meal-size portions rather than buying extra ingredients just for this dish.

Substitution for boneless, skinless chicken thighs: 1.5 pounds raw boneless, skinless chicken breasts. Cut very thick breasts horizontally into thinner pieces. Begin checking after 12 minutes of simmering and remove each piece once it reaches 165°F / 74°C; breasts dry out more quickly than thighs.

Substitution for queso fresco: 3 ounces crumbled mild feta made with pasteurized milk. Feta is saltier; omit the cabbage's 1/4 teaspoon salt initially and taste before adding any. Contains milk.

Chicken Tinga Tostadas (continued)



Substitution for canned crushed tomatoes: 15 ounces canned petite diced tomatoes with their juices. Press the softened tomatoes against the skillet with the wooden spoon during reduction. The finished sauce will be chunkier.

Storage: Store the chicken, cabbage and cheese separately in covered containers at 40°F / 4°C or below. Refrigerate perishables within 2 hours, or 1 hour above 90°F. Use within 3–4 days; dressed cabbage has its best crunch within 1 day. Keep tostada shells dry in an airtight container according to package directions.

Reheating: Reheat only the chicken filling in a skillet over medium-low heat with 1–2 tablespoons water per portion, stirring frequently, until it reaches 165°F / 74°C throughout. Recrisp shells at 350°F for 3–4 minutes, then assemble with cold toppings.

Freezing: Freeze cooled chicken filling promptly in meal-size airtight containers for up to 3 months for best quality. Thaw in the refrigerator and reheat to 165°F / 74°C. Do not freeze assembled tostadas or the dressed cabbage.

Declared allergens: milk. Check labels and cross-contact.
Contains milk from queso fresco. Check the actual chipotle-in-adobo and tostada labels for wheat, soy and other allergens; formulations vary. Choose verified gluten-free shells and adobo if needed. No stock, kimchi or curry paste is used.

Ginger-Soy Chicken and Broccoli

A skillet chicken-and-broccoli dinner with a glossy ginger-soy sauce and fluffy white rice, all included in four generous servings.

Serves 4 · complete dinner portions
Prep: 20 min **Cook:** 25 min **Rest:** 0 min **Total:** 45 min

Equipment: Stovetop, 12-inch skillet with lid, Saucepan with lid, Knife, Cutting board, Colander, Food thermometer, Measuring cups and spoons, Small bowl, Mixing spoon, Spatula, Clean plate, Fork



Tip: Peel the broccoli stalk deeply enough to remove its fibrous outer layer. The pale center, sliced about 1/8 inch thick, cooks alongside the florets and stretches the vegetable portion without buying another ingredient.

Ingredients

For Rice:

- **1 1/2 cups** long-grain white rice, dry, rinsed and drained
- **3 cups** water, for cooking rice

For Chicken and broccoli:

- **1 1/2 pounds** boneless, skinless chicken thighs, trimmed and cut into 1-inch pieces
- **1 pound** broccoli, florets cut into 1 1/2-inch pieces; tender stalk peeled and thinly sliced
- **3 tablespoons** (Canola or vegetable oil) neutral cooking oil, divided into three 1-tablespoon portions
- **1/4 cup** water, for steaming broccoli

For Sauce:

- **1/4 cup** reduced-sodium soy sauce
- **1/2 cup** water, cold, for sauce
- **2 tablespoons** honey
- **1 tablespoon** unseasoned rice vinegar
- **2 teaspoons** cornstarch
- **2 tablespoons** fresh ginger, peeled and finely minced
- **4** cloves garlic, finely minced

Ginger-Soy Chicken and Broccoli (continued)



Method

1. **Prepare before heating**. On the cutting board, cut the broccoli and mince the ginger and garlic, keeping them separate. Cut the chicken last into evenly sized 1-inch pieces; blot dry so it browns rather than steams. Wash the knife, board and hands after raw chicken contact. Allow about 15 minutes for this preparation.

2. **Start the rice**. Rinse the rice in the colander until the runoff looks less cloudy. Put it in the saucepan with the 3 cups rice water. Bring to a boil over high heat, then cover and reduce to the lowest heat. Cook for 15–18 minutes, until water is absorbed and the grains are tender.

3. **Mix the sauce** while the rice cooks. In the small bowl, stir together the soy sauce, 1/2 cup cold sauce water, honey, vinegar and cornstarch for about 30 seconds. Scrape the bowl's bottom until no dry starch remains. Keep beside the stove; the starch will settle and must be stirred again before pouring.

4. **Brown the first** batch. Heat the skillet over medium-high for 2 minutes. Add 1 tablespoon oil, then half the chicken in one layer with gaps. Leave undisturbed for 3 minutes; turn with the spatula and cook 2–3 minutes more. Transfer to the clean plate. Lower the heat slightly if the browned residue begins turning black.

5. **Repeat with the** remaining chicken and another tablespoon oil, allowing 5–6 minutes. Transfer to the same plate; the chicken will finish cooking later, so do not sample it yet. Meanwhile, when the rice is tender, remove its saucepan from the heat and leave covered for at least 5 minutes while you finish the skillet.

6. **Steam the broccoli**. Reduce the skillet to medium, add the broccoli and 1/4 cup steaming water, then cover promptly. Cook for 3 minutes. Uncover carefully, directing steam away from your face, and stir for 1–2 minutes until the water evaporates. The broccoli should be bright green and just pierceable, not limp.

7. **Add the aromatics**. Push broccoli toward the skillet's edges. Pour the final tablespoon oil into the center and add ginger and garlic. Stir them in that central space over medium heat for **30–45** seconds, until fragrant but not browned, then fold through the broccoli. If they darken rapidly, take the skillet off the burner briefly.

Ginger-Soy Chicken and Broccoli (continued)



8. **Finish the chicken** and sauce. Return chicken and accumulated juices to the skillet. Stir the sauce again, pour it in, and bring to a gentle simmer over medium heat. Fold from the bottom every 20–30 seconds for 3–5 minutes, until glossy and lightly coating everything. Check several large chicken pieces with the thermometer: each must reach 165°F/74°C. Lower heat if the sauce thickens before the chicken is ready.

9. **Assemble four dinners**. Turn off the skillet heat once the chicken is safe and the broccoli is tender-crisp. Uncover the rice and fluff gently with a fork, lifting rather than pressing the grains. Divide among four bowls, then distribute the chicken and broccoli evenly over each. Spoon the remaining glossy sauce from the skillet over the rice.

Tip: Look for sauce that clings in a thin, shiny film rather than a sticky glaze. If it becomes pasty, stir in additional water 1 tablespoon at a time over low heat until it flows again.

Tip: For advance preparation, cut the broccoli and mix the sauce up to a day ahead; refrigerate separately. Keep raw chicken in its own sealed container and stir the sauce thoroughly before using.

Tip: Compare the unit price of boneless thighs with larger value packs rather than assuming either is cheaper. Portion and freeze any extra raw chicken promptly for another dinner.

Substitution for boneless, skinless chicken thighs: 1 1/2 pounds boneless, skinless chicken breasts. Cut into the same 1-inch pieces. Begin checking sooner during the final simmer and stop cooking when several large pieces reach 165°F/74°C.

Substitution for unseasoned rice vinegar: 1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar. Provides a slightly fruitier acidity without requiring a separate specialty purchase.

Substitution for reduced-sodium soy sauce: 1/4 cup reduced-sodium tamari. Check the actual label for soy, wheat and any other relevant allergens; tamari is not automatically wheat-free.

Ginger-Soy Chicken and Broccoli (continued)



Storage: Refrigerate chicken, broccoli and rice in shallow containers within 2 hours of cooking, or within 1 hour above 90°F. Do not leave rice on the counter to cool. Keep at **40**°F/4°C or below and use within 3–4 days.

Reheating: Reheat only the portions needed in a covered skillet over medium-low heat, adding 1–2 tablespoons water per portion and stirring occasionally. Heat both rice and chicken throughout to 165°F/74°C; add another small splash of water if the sauce tightens.

Freezing: Freeze promptly in individual airtight portions for up to 2 months for best texture. Thaw overnight in the refrigerator before reheating. Broccoli will soften and the sauce may need a little water and stirring to become smooth again.

Declared allergens: soy, wheat. Check labels and cross-contact.
Contains soy and usually wheat from soy sauce. Check the actual soy sauce or tamari label for allergens. Rice and the full chicken-and-broccoli topping are included in the yield.

Coconut-Lime Tray-Bake Chicken

Browned chicken thighs, broccoli and sweet peppers with a quick coconut-lime pan sauce and coconut rice. A complete dinner for four.

Serves 4 · generous dinner portions
Prep: 20 min **Cook:** 30 min **Rest:** 5 min **Total:** 55 min

Equipment: Oven, Stovetop, 18-by-13-inch rimmed sheet pan, Saucepan with tight-fitting lid, Knife, Cutting board, Colander, Food thermometer, Measuring cups and spoons, Small bowl, Spoon, Tongs, Fork, Fine grater, Paper towels

Ingredients

For Chicken and vegetables:

1 1/2 pounds (About 8 small thighs) boneless, skinless chicken thighs, excess fat trimmed; left whole
1 pound broccoli, cut into 2-inch florets; tender stems peeled and sliced 1/4 inch thick
2 medium (About 12 ounces total before trimming) red bell peppers, cored and cut into 1-inch-wide strips
2 tablespoons neutral cooking oil, divided

Other ingredients:

1 1/2 teaspoons fine salt, divided

For Chicken and vegetables:

1 teaspoon sweet paprika

For Coconut rice:

1 1/2 cups long-grain white rice, dry, uncooked
2 1/2 cups water

Other ingredients:

13.5 fluid ounces (One approximately 400-milliliter can) unsweetened full-fat coconut milk, stirred smooth; 1/2 cup for rice, remainder for sauce

For Coconut-lime sauce:

1 large lime, finely grate 1 teaspoon zest and squeeze 2 tablespoons juice
3 cloves garlic, finely chopped
1/4 teaspoon red pepper flakes



Tip: Use a sturdy metal sheet pan with a rim at least 1 inch high to contain the sauce. For a doubled recipe, use two pans rather than crowding one; rotate them between oven racks.

Coconut-Lime Tray-Bake Chicken (continued)



Method

1. **Heat the oven** to 425°F with a rack in the middle. During the roughly 15-minute preheat, cut the broccoli and peppers on the cutting board. Dry them thoroughly so they roast rather than steam. Grate and juice the lime before handling raw chicken; reserve the juice separately from the zest.

2. **Stir the coconut** milk smooth with a spoon, scraping any thick cream from the can. Measure 1/2 cup into the saucepan. In the small bowl, combine the remaining coconut milk with the garlic, lime zest, chili flakes and 1/4 teaspoon salt. Keep this sauce at room temperature while the tray begins roasting; hold back all the lime juice.

3. **Rinse the rice** in the colander until the runoff looks less cloudy, then drain well. Add it to the saucepan with the measured water and 1/2 teaspoon salt. Bring to a gentle boil over medium-high heat, stirring once across the bottom to separate the grains. Cover, reduce to the lowest heat and cook for 18 minutes without lifting the lid.

4. **On the rimmed** sheet pan, toss the broccoli and peppers with 1 tablespoon oil and 1/4 teaspoon salt. Spread them toward the edges. Pat the chicken dry with paper towels, unfold each thigh and rub with the remaining tablespoon oil, remaining 1/2 teaspoon salt and paprika. Arrange flat in the center without overlapping; wash hands and raw-chicken utensils.

5. **Roast the uncovered** tray for 15 minutes. Using tongs, turn the vegetables, moving darker pieces inward and pale pieces toward the hotter edges. Leave the chicken facing upward to develop color. If vegetables are piled together, spread them apart now; exposed pan space lets moisture escape instead of collecting beneath them.

6. **Carefully pour the** reserved coconut mixture around the chicken, not over its browned tops. Return the tray to the oven for 10–15 minutes. The sauce should bubble gently and the broccoli stems should yield to a fork. Check the thickest part of several thighs with the thermometer: each must reach at least 165°F / 74°C. Continue roasting in 3-minute increments if needed.

7. **When the rice's** 18 minutes are up, remove the covered saucepan from the heat and rest for 10 minutes. Then uncover and fluff gently with a fork. If the grains are still firm with water visible, cover and cook on low for another 2–3 minutes before resting again.

Coconut-Lime Tray-Bake Chicken (continued)



8. **Rest the cooked** chicken on its tray for 5 minutes. Stir the reserved 2 tablespoons lime juice into the sauce around it, scraping up the golden pan juices with a spoon. The sauce should be pourable, not thick like gravy; stir any separated coconut fat back into the liquid.

9. **Divide the fluffed** rice among four plates. Add equal portions of chicken, broccoli and peppers, then spoon the coconut-lime sauce over the chicken and rice rather than drenching the crisp broccoli tips. Serve with both vegetables and rice on each plate; no additional side is needed.

Tip: Keep a little broccoli stem attached to each floret. It gives you a reliable place to test tenderness without breaking apart the browned crown.

Tip: Full-fat coconut milk gives this relatively small amount of sauce body. Avoid sweetened cream of coconut, which is a different product and will make the dish overly sweet.

Tip: For economical prep, buy whole broccoli crowns and use the peeled tender stems here. Cut the vegetables up to two days ahead and refrigerate them dry; keep raw chicken separately.

Substitution for red bell peppers: 2 medium yellow or orange bell peppers. Cut to the same width and follow the same roasting method.

Substitution for broccoli: 1 pound cauliflower. Cut into 1 1/2-inch florets so the denser stems soften within the chicken's cooking time.

Substitution for lime: 1 large lemon. Use the same measured zest and juice; the sauce will have a gentler citrus flavor.

Storage: Refrigerate chicken, vegetables, sauce and rice in shallow containers within 2 hours of cooking, or within 1 hour above 90°F. Cool rice promptly rather than leaving it in the saucepan. Keep at 40°F / 4°C or below and use within 3–4 days.

Coconut-Lime Tray-Bake Chicken (continued)



Reheating: Place one portion in a covered skillet over medium-low heat with 1–2 tablespoons water to loosen the rice. Heat for approximately 8–12 minutes, stirring the rice and sauce and turning the chicken, until leftovers reach 165°F / 74°C throughout. The broccoli will be softer after reheating.

Freezing: Freeze cooled portions promptly in airtight containers for up to 2 months for best quality. Thaw overnight in the refrigerator and reheat to 165°F / 74°C. Coconut sauce may separate slightly; stir it after heating. Broccoli loses its crisp edges when frozen.

Allergens: not certified free of allergens; check ingredients and packaged-food labels. Made without dairy or wheat ingredients. Contains coconut. Check the actual coconut milk and spice labels for allergens and cross-contact statements when cooking for someone with an allergy.

Yogurt-Spiced Chicken with Rice and Cucumber



Oven-roasted yogurt-spiced chicken thighs with steamed rice, lemony cucumber and a separate cool yogurt sauce. Includes all sides. Makes four generous dinner portions.

Serves 4 · dinner portions
Prep: 25 min **Cook:** 30 min **Rest:** 25 min **Total:** 80 min

Equipment: Oven, Rimmed sheet pan, Saucepan with lid, Knife, Cutting board, Colander, Food thermometer, Large mixing bowl, Two small bowls, Measuring cups and spoons, Mixing spoon, Fork, Tongs

Ingredients

For Chicken and yogurt sauce:

- **1 1/2 pounds** Boneless, skinless chicken thighs, fully thawed; excess hanging fat trimmed
- **1 cup** Plain whole-milk yogurt, stirred smooth; divided

Other ingredients:

- **3 tablespoons** Lemon juice, divided

For Chicken and yogurt sauce:

- **3** cloves Garlic, finely minced; divided

Other ingredients:

- **2 tablespoons** Olive oil, divided

Yogurt-Spiced Chicken with Rice and Cucumber (continued)



For Chicken and yogurt sauce:
2 teaspoons Ground cumin
2 teaspoons Sweet paprika
Other ingredients:
1 3/4 teaspoons Fine salt, divided
For Chicken and yogurt sauce:
1/2 teaspoon Ground black pepper

For Rice:
1 1/2 cups Long-grain white rice, dry, not instant
2 1/4 cups Water, for cooking rice
For Cucumber:
1 pound English cucumber, washed; cut into 1/2-inch pieces
1/4 cup Flat-leaf parsley, finely chopped

Method

1. **Make the cool** sauce first. In a small bowl, stir 1/2 cup yogurt with 1 tablespoon lemon juice, 1 minced garlic clove and 1/4 teaspoon salt for about 30 seconds, until smooth. Cover and refrigerate. This portion must stay separate from raw chicken; never use leftover chicken marinade as a finishing sauce.

2. **In a large** bowl, combine the remaining 1/2 cup yogurt, 1 tablespoon lemon juice, remaining 2 minced garlic cloves, 1 tablespoon oil, cumin, paprika, pepper and 3/4 teaspoon salt. Add the trimmed chicken and turn with tongs for 1–2 minutes, unfolding each thigh so both sides receive a thin, even coating.

3. **Cover and refrigerate** the chicken for 20 minutes. Meanwhile, heat the oven to 425°F with a rack in the upper-middle position. Spread 1 teaspoon oil over a rimmed sheet pan. Rinse the rice in a colander under cool running water for about 1 minute, until the runoff looks less cloudy; drain thoroughly.

Yogurt-Spiced Chicken with Rice and Cucumber (continued)



4. **After marinating**, use tongs to lay the thighs unfolded on the sheet pan, leaving space between pieces. Leave pooled marinade in the bowl and discard it. Roast at 425°F for 22–30 minutes. Wash the tongs, bowl and any raw-chicken contact surfaces before handling cooked food. Thin coating and open space encourage browning rather than steaming.

5. **As soon as** the chicken enters the oven, combine drained rice, 2 1/4 cups water and 1/2 teaspoon salt in the saucepan. Bring to a full boil over medium-high heat, about 4–6 minutes. Stir once, cover and reduce to the lowest heat. Cook 15 minutes without lifting the lid; steam needs to remain trapped.

6. **While the rice** simmers, place the chopped cucumber and parsley in the second small bowl. Add the remaining 1 tablespoon lemon juice, 2 teaspoons oil and 1/4 teaspoon salt. Toss with a clean spoon for 30 seconds, until evenly glossy. Refrigerate while the chicken finishes; leave any accumulated watery dressing behind when serving.

7. **At** 15 minutes, briefly check the rice: the surface should show steam holes with no visible water. Remove from heat and leave covered for 5 minutes. If water remains, cover and cook on low for 2–3 minutes more. If dry but crunchy, add 2 tablespoons water, cover and cook on low for 3 minutes before resting.

8. **Begin checking chicken** at 22 minutes. Insert the food thermometer sideways into the thickest part of each thigh; every piece must reach 165°F / 74°C. Return under-temperature pieces to the oven for 3-minute intervals. Rotate the pan if browning is uneven. If the coating darkens too quickly, move the pan down one rack.

9. **Rest cooked chicken** on the pan for 5 minutes, then transfer to a clean cutting board and slice across the grain. Fluff rice gently with a fork, lifting rather than mashing. Divide rice and cucumber among four plates, add chicken and any clear pan juices, and spoon the refrigerated yogurt sauce alongside.

Tip: For more even roasting, choose similarly sized thighs and unfold tucked-under edges. Use a second sheet pan if scaling up would eliminate the gaps between pieces.

Yogurt-Spiced Chicken with Rice and Cucumber (continued)



Tip: A lightly browned, slightly pebbled yogurt coating is desirable; it will not become crisp like chicken skin. Chasing a dry crust can overcook the meat.

Tip: If using thick Greek yogurt, spread the marinade over the thighs with the back of a spoon rather than adding more yogurt; heavy clumps scorch before the chicken cooks.

Tip: A regular cucumber is a useful budget substitute: scrape out its watery seed channel before weighing and chopping. Tender parsley stems can be finely chopped with the leaves.

Substitution for Plain whole-milk yogurt: 1 cup plain whole-milk Greek yogurt. Use the same divisions; spread the thicker marinade into a thin coat.

Substitution for Flat-leaf parsley: 1/4 cup finely chopped fresh cilantro. Use tender stems as well as leaves for a different bright herbal finish.

Substitution for Sweet paprika: 2 teaspoons smoked paprika. Gives the chicken a smokier flavor without changing the cooking method.

Storage: Refrigerate chicken, rice, cucumber and yogurt sauce in separate shallow covered containers at 40°F / 4°C or below within 2 hours of cooking, or within 1 hour above 90°F. Cool rice promptly in a shallow layer rather than leaving it in the saucepan. Use within 3–4 days; cucumber has its best texture within 1 day.
Reheating: Reheat only the chicken and rice. Place in a covered skillet with 1–2 tablespoons water per portion over medium-low heat, turning chicken and gently loosening rice occasionally, until both reach 165°F / 74°C throughout. Add cold cucumber and yogurt sauce after heating.
Freezing: Freeze chicken and rice promptly in separate meal-size airtight containers for up to **2** months for best quality. Thaw overnight in the refrigerator and reheat to 165°F / 74°C. Do not freeze the cucumber or yogurt sauce; prepare those fresh.
Declared allergens: milk. Check labels and cross-contact.
Contains milk. Made without wheat-containing ingredients; check actual yogurt and spice labels for additives and allergen cross-contact information if needed.

A Little Meat, a Lot of Dinner

A little meat can give a whole dinner its character: browned edges, savory juices and enough richness to carry beans, vegetables or rice. The point is not to make a smaller meal. It is to build a generous one with more than one good thing on the plate.



Crisp-Edged Pork Carnitas Tacos put tender pork against a crisp finish. Beef-and-Lentil Smash Burgers bring lentils into the patty without giving up the browned crust. Sausage, White Bean and Cabbage Skillet turns a few bold ingredients into a substantial supper, while Chipotle Turkey and Black Bean Chili builds smoky depth around pantry beans. Ginger Pork Lettuce Cups with Rice offer a fresh, crunchy contrast. Beef, Mushroom and Potato Skillet Pie finishes the chapter with a savory filling beneath a comforting potato topping.

The shared technique is browning without crowding: give meat and mushrooms contact with a hot pan, and let moisture escape before stirring. That color becomes the foundation for everything added next. Onions, cabbage, beans and rice recur in different roles; smoke, ginger and bright finishing accents keep the dinners distinct. Familiar groceries, six genuinely different meals.

Crisp-Edged Pork Carnitas Tacos



Orange-and-garlic-braised pork shoulder, skillet-crisped and tucked into warm corn tortillas with lime cabbage, onion and cilantro. Makes 12 tacos; no additional sides included.

Serves 4 · servings of 3 tacos
Prep: 25 min **Cook:** 180 min **Rest:** 10 min **Total:** 215 min

Equipment: Oven, Stovetop, Heavy oven-safe pot with oven-safe lid, approximately 5 quarts, 12-inch skillet, Knife, Cutting board, Food thermometer, Measuring cups and spoons, Large bowl, Shallow dish, Tongs, Two forks, Wooden spoon, Clean kitchen towel

Ingredients

For Pork:

2 pounds Boneless pork shoulder, cut into 2-inch chunks; remove rind and thick exterior fat, leaving thin seams

Other ingredients:

1 1/4 teaspoons Fine salt, divided: 1 teaspoon for pork, 1/4 teaspoon for cabbage

For Pork:

2 teaspoons Ground cumin
1 teaspoon Dried oregano
1/2 cup Orange juice, freshly squeezed or bottled, unsweetened
2 cups Water, for braising; additional water only if needed to prevent drying
4 cloves Garlic, peeled and lightly crushed

Crisp-Edged Pork Carnitas Tacos (continued)



Other ingredients:

1 medium White onion, approximately 8 ounces; half cut into wedges for braising, half finely diced for serving

For Tacos:

8 ounces Green cabbage, cored and very thinly sliced, approximately 3 packed cups

2 medium Limes, squeeze one to yield 2 tablespoons juice; cut the other into wedges

1/4 cup Cilantro, chopped leaves and tender stems

For Pork:

1 tablespoon Neutral cooking oil, divided between two crisping batches

For Tacos:

12 6-inch tortillas Small corn tortillas

Method

1. **Heat the oven** to 325°F. On a cutting board, prepare the pork, garlic and onion as listed, keeping the diced serving onion separate. Put the pork in a 5-quart oven-safe heavy pot. Sprinkle with 1 teaspoon salt, cumin and oregano; turn with tongs for about 1 minute to coat all sides.

2. **Add the orange** juice, 2 cups water, garlic and onion wedges. On the stovetop, bring to a gentle simmer over medium-high heat, about 10 minutes. Liquid should reach roughly halfway up the meat. Cover tightly and transfer to the oven; the covered, moist environment softens the shoulder without drying its surface.

3. **Braise for about** 2 1/2 hours, turning the chunks with tongs after 75 minutes. Check the liquid then; if the bottom is nearly dry, add water 1/4 cup at a time. The pork is ready when a fork twists easily and separates the fibers, usually around 195–205°F. If resistant, cover and continue in 15-minute intervals.

4. **During the final** 20 minutes of braising, combine the cabbage, 2 tablespoons lime juice and remaining 1/4 teaspoon salt in a large bowl. Toss and squeeze gently with clean hands for **30** seconds, just until slightly softened. Refrigerate with the reserved diced onion, cilantro and lime wedges until assembly.

Crisp-Edged Pork Carnitas Tacos (continued)



5. **Transfer the tender** pork with tongs to a shallow dish and rest for 10 minutes. Meanwhile, simmer the uncovered pot over medium-high heat for about 10 minutes, stirring and crushing the soft garlic and onion with a wooden spoon. Reduce to approximately 3/4 cup of glossy juices; stop before the orange sugars become sticky or scorched.

6. **Pull the rested** pork into chunky shreds using two forks, discarding any large rubbery fat pieces. Toss with 1/4 cup reduced juices in the shallow dish, reserving the remainder in the pot. Keep the shreds broad rather than finely stringy: larger pieces retain a juicy center when their edges hit the skillet.

7. **Heat a dry** 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat for 2 minutes. Add half the oil and half the pork in a loose layer. Press lightly with a wooden spoon, then leave untouched for 3 minutes. Turn in sections and cook 2 minutes more, until browned and crisp. Repeat with remaining oil and pork. Lower heat if juices blacken.

8. **Transfer the crisp** pork back to the shallow dish, keeping browned surfaces uppermost. Reduce the skillet to medium and warm tortillas in batches for 20–30 seconds per side, until pliable with scattered toasted spots. Stack in a clean towel. If pork seems dry, spoon reserved warm juices underneath it rather than over the crisp edges.

9. **Assemble** 12 tacos, dividing the pork evenly among warm tortillas. Lift cabbage from its bowl, leaving pooled dressing behind, and distribute over the meat. Finish with diced onion and cilantro; serve with lime wedges. Keep unused braising juices for moistening stored pork rather than pouring them into the tortillas, where they would soften the bases.

Tip: For easier, more even cutting, chill the pork well before trimming. Remove hard exterior fat, but keep fine internal seams; they help the shoulder stay succulent.

Tip: A thermometer confirms temperature, but fork tenderness determines whether shoulder will shred. Pork is safe at 145°F with a 3-minute rest, yet this cut needs substantially more cooking to soften its connective tissue.

Tip: For make-ahead tacos, stop before skillet-crisping. Refrigerate the shredded pork with its juices, then reheat and crisp only the amount needed; repeated crisping dries the thin edges.

Crisp-Edged Pork Carnitas Tacos (continued)



Tip: Compare boneless shoulder with bone-in shoulder by usable yield, not package price alone. A larger shoulder can be portioned into 2-pound boneless batches and frozen for another dinner.

Substitution for Orange juice: 1/2 cup unsweetened pineapple juice. Use the same braising method. Watch the reducing juices closely because their sugars can scorch.

Substitution for Cilantro: 1/4 cup thinly sliced scallion greens. Scatter over the assembled tacos for a fresh, oniony finish.

Substitution for Small corn tortillas: 12 small flour tortillas. Warm until flexible without drying them out. This substitution introduces wheat; check the package for other allergens.

Storage: Refrigerate pork and juices together in shallow containers within 2 hours of cooking, or within 1 hour above 90°F. Keep at 40°F or below and use within 3–4 days. Store cabbage and garnishes separately; use dressed cabbage within 2 days for the best texture. Store tortillas according to their package directions.
Reheating: Heat pork and juices in the heavy pot over medium-low heat, stirring and adding a splash of water if needed, until the meat reaches 165°F throughout. Lift out the meat and crisp in the skillet as directed. Warm only the tortillas needed and assemble fresh.
Freezing: Freeze pork with its juices in meal-size airtight portions for up to 3 months for best quality. Thaw overnight in the refrigerator before reheating. Freeze tortillas separately if their package permits; do not freeze the dressed cabbage or fresh garnishes.
Allergens: not certified free of allergens; check ingredients and packaged-food labels. Made without dairy or eggs. No listed major allergens are inherent in the specified ingredients, but check actual tortilla, juice and spice labels for ingredients and cross-contact information. Flour tortilla substitutions introduce wheat.

Beef-and-Lentil Smash Burgers

Four double burgers made with beef, well-drained cooked lentils, cheddar and a quick pickle sauce. No side dish included.

Serves 4 · double burgers
Prep: 20 min **Cook:** 25 min **Rest:** 0 min **Total:** 45 min

Equipment: Stovetop, 12-inch heavy skillet, Colander, Knife, Cutting board, Measuring cups and spoons, Large mixing bowl, Small bowl, Fork, Wide, sturdy metal spatula, Parchment paper, Clean plate, Paper towels, Food thermometer

Ingredients

For Burgers:

1 cup (about 180 g after draining) Cooked brown or green lentils, canned, rinsed and thoroughly drained; not dry lentils
1 lb Ground beef, 80–85% lean, kept refrigerated until mixing
3/4 tsp Fine salt
1/2 tsp Ground black pepper
1 tsp Garlic powder
2 tsp Neutral cooking oil, divided among four skillet batches

For Assembly:

4 slices (about 3 oz total) Cheddar cheese, each slice halved
4 buns Plain hamburger buns, split
2 cups Iceberg lettuce, thinly shredded, washed and dried

For Pickle sauce:

1/4 cup Mayonnaise
2 tbsp Ketchup
2 tsp Yellow mustard
2 tbsp Dill pickle, finely chopped and drained



Tip: For economical preparation, use leftover home-cooked brown or green lentils: measure 1 cup cooked, not dry. Freeze additional well-drained lentils in recipe-size portions.

Beef-and-Lentil Smash Burgers (continued)



Method

1. **With the stove** off, rinse the lentils in a colander and shake thoroughly. Spread on paper towels, blot and leave for 5 minutes while preparing the sauce. They should feel damp rather than wet; surface water makes fragile patties and delays browning. Measure 1 cup after draining.

2. **In a small** bowl, stir the mayonnaise, ketchup, mustard and chopped pickle with a fork for about 30 seconds, until evenly pink and flecked with pickle. Refrigerate while cooking. Keep the lettuce dry and chilled, and halve each cheddar slice on the cutting board so eight pieces are ready.

3. **Transfer the lentils** to the large bowl. Mash with a fork for 1–2 minutes until most are broken into a coarse paste with a few recognizable pieces. Add the cold beef, salt, pepper and garlic powder. Fold gently by hand just until evenly distributed; prolonged squeezing makes the burgers dense.

4. **Divide the mixture** into eight equal portions, about 80 g each, and loosely round them without packing firmly. Refrigerate while toasting the buns. Wash hands and clean the board and any surfaces that touched raw beef before handling ready-to-eat ingredients. Cut eight roughly 6-inch parchment squares for pressing.

5. **Heat the dry** 12-inch skillet over medium heat for 2 minutes. Toast the split buns cut-side down, in batches, for 30–60 seconds until golden. Transfer to a clean plate. Increase the heat to medium-high, add 1/2 teaspoon oil and swirl into a thin film; it should shimmer without smoking heavily.

6. **Place two meat** portions well apart in the skillet. Immediately cover each with parchment and press firmly with the wide spatula into a roughly 4-inch patty, about 1/4 inch thick. Peel away and discard the parchment. Press only now, not later, to establish contact without squeezing out cooking juices.

7. **Cook undisturbed for** 2–3 minutes, until the edges look brown and the tops begin losing their raw sheen. Slide the spatula firmly beneath each patty, scraping along the skillet to preserve its crust, then flip once. If it tears, push the pieces together and leave them to set rather than repeatedly moving them.

Beef-and-Lentil Smash Burgers (continued)



8. **Top each patty** with half a cheddar slice. Cook 1–2 minutes more, until the cheese softens and a thermometer inserted sideways into each patty's center reads 160°F/71°C. Lower the heat if the crust darkens before the center reaches temperature. Stack the cooked pair on a clean plate; never reuse the raw-meat surface.

9. **Repeat with the** remaining portions in three batches, adding 1/2 teaspoon oil before each. Reduce the heat slightly if residue starts blackening. Meanwhile, spread sauce over the toasted buns. Add lettuce to each bottom bun, followed by two hot patties and the top bun. Serve each completed burger while continuing the remaining batches.

Tip: Choose a heavy stainless-steel or cast-iron skillet for this method. A sturdy metal spatula can scrape up the browned crust; avoid metal utensils on nonstick coatings.

Tip: Do not substitute soft red lentils directly. Their wetter, smoother texture makes the thin patties harder to turn intact.

Tip: The mixture can be portioned up to 24 hours ahead and refrigerated, covered. Keep sauce and lettuce separate so the buns remain crisp when assembled.

Substitution for Cheddar cheese: 4 slices Monterey Jack. Halve each slice and use one half per patty.

Substitution for Iceberg lettuce: 2 cups very finely shredded green cabbage. Use dry, tender shreds for a crunchier topping that keeps longer in the refrigerator.

Substitution for Ground beef, 80–85% lean: 1 lb ground turkey. Use dark-meat turkey if available. Cook every patty to 165°F/74°C rather than the beef temperature.

Storage: Store cooked patties and sauce separately in covered containers at 40°F/4°C or below for 3–4 days. Refrigerate perishables within 2 hours, or within 1 hour above 90°F. Keep buns and lettuce separate; assembled burgers do not store well.

Reheating: Reheat patties in a covered skillet over medium-low heat with 1 tablespoon water for about 4–6 minutes, turning once, until the centers reach 165°F/74°C. Uncover briefly to evaporate moisture, then assemble with freshly toasted buns, chilled sauce and lettuce.

Beef-and-Lentil Smash Burgers (continued)



Freezing: Freeze cooled cooked patties in a single layer, then transfer to a sealed freezer container with parchment between layers. Use within 2 months for best quality. Thaw overnight in the refrigerator and reheat to 165°F/74°C. Do not freeze assembled burgers.

Declared allergens: milk, egg, wheat. Check labels and cross-contact.
Contains beef and dairy. Standard buns contain wheat and may contain milk, egg, soy or sesame; mayonnaise commonly contains egg. Check the actual bun, mayonnaise, mustard, ketchup and pickle labels for their complete ingredients and allergen declarations.

Sausage, White Bean and Cabbage Skillet

Browned Italian sausage, tender cabbage and creamy canned beans come together in one skillet with a bright mustard-cider finish. Four generous main-course servings; bread is optional and not included.

Serves 4 · generous servings
Prep: 15 min **Cook:** 30 min **Rest:** 0 min **Total:** 45 min

Equipment: 12-inch skillet, Stovetop, Knife, Cutting board, Colander, Measuring cups and spoons, Wooden spoon, Plate, Food thermometer



Tip: For even cooking, cut thick cabbage ribs crosswise into smaller pieces before slicing the leafy sections into ribbons.

Ingredients

- **1 tablespoon** (neutral cooking oil) olive oil
- **12 ounces** raw mild Italian pork sausage, bulk sausage, or links with casings removed
- **1** medium yellow onion, about 6 ounces; peeled and thinly sliced
- **1 1/2 pounds** green cabbage, trimmed weight, cored and cut into 1/2-inch ribbons
- **1/4 teaspoon** fine salt, plus more only if needed at the finish
- **3** cloves garlic, finely chopped
- **1/4 teaspoon** crushed red pepper flakes
- **2** 15-ounce cans (canned great northern beans) canned cannellini beans, drained and rinsed; about 3 cups drained beans
- **3/4 cup** water, divided: 1/2 cup for simmering and 1/4 cup reserved
- **2 teaspoons** Dijon mustard
- **2 teaspoons** apple cider vinegar

Sausage, White Bean and Cabbage Skillet (continued)



Method

1. **Prepare everything before** heating the skillet. On the cutting board, slice the onion and cut the trimmed cabbage into 1/2-inch ribbons, separating any tightly packed layers. Chop the garlic. Drain and rinse the beans in the colander, then leave them to drain. Measure the water, keeping 1/4 cup separate for later adjustment.

2. **Heat the** 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat for about 1 minute. Add the oil and sausage. Press the sausage into several broad, roughly 3/4-inch-thick pieces with the wooden spoon. Leave them undisturbed for 3 minutes so their undersides develop a brown crust rather than breaking them into tiny pieces immediately.

3. **Turn the sausage** pieces, then break them into bite-size chunks. Cook for another 3–4 minutes, stirring occasionally, until browned and the largest pieces register 160°F/71°C in the center. Transfer to a clean plate. Leave about 1 tablespoon of fat in the skillet, spooning away any excess; keep the browned deposits.

4. **Reduce the heat** to medium. Add the onion and stir for 2 minutes, scraping across the skillet bottom. Add half the cabbage and the salt. Turn the ribbons from bottom to top for about 2 minutes, until they begin to wilt and make room for the remaining cabbage.

5. **Add the remaining** cabbage. Cook uncovered over medium-high heat for 7–9 minutes, turning with the spoon every 2 minutes rather than constantly stirring. Press the cabbage lightly against the skillet between turns. Look for golden patches and softened ribbons. If deposits start turning black, lower the heat and add a splash of the reserved water.

Sausage, White Bean and Cabbage Skillet (continued)



6. **Reduce the heat** to medium. Clear a small space in the center and add the garlic and pepper flakes. Stir them through the hot fat for 30 seconds, just until fragrant, then fold into the cabbage. Do not let the garlic brown; immediately proceed to the water if it begins catching.

7. **Add the beans**, cooked sausage and any juices from the plate, 1/2 cup water and mustard. Scrape up the brown deposits, then fold gently from the skillet edges toward the center to avoid crushing the beans. Bring to a bubbling simmer over medium-high heat, then lower to medium-low.

8. **Simmer uncovered for** 5–7 minutes, gently turning the mixture twice, until the beans are hot and the cabbage is tender with a little bite. The liquid should lightly coat the ingredients. If dry, add the remaining reserved water a tablespoon at a time; if soupy, increase the heat and simmer another 1–2 minutes.

9. **Turn off the** heat and fold in the vinegar. Taste a spoonful containing both bean and cabbage before adding any extra salt, since sausage and canned beans vary. Divide among four shallow bowls, distributing the sausage evenly and spooning the glossy pan juices over each portion. No additional side is necessary.

Tip: Choose beans with intact skins when possible. Very soft canned beans should be folded in with especially broad, gentle turns rather than stirred in circles.

Tip: For make-ahead preparation, slice the cabbage and onion and refrigerate separately for up to two days. Keep the cabbage dry so it browns instead of steaming.

Tip: Freeze unused raw sausage in a flattened, well-wrapped portion for another meal. Compare package unit prices rather than assuming bulk sausage is always the better buy.

Substitution for canned cannellini beans: 3 cups cooked, drained great northern or navy beans. Use fully tender beans, not soaked uncooked beans. Smaller navy beans may break down more and thicken the pan juices.

Sausage, White Bean and Cabbage Skillet (continued)



Substitution for raw mild Italian pork sausage: 12 ounces raw Italian turkey sausage. Cook to 165°F/74°C rather than the pork sausage temperature. Lean turkey sausage may leave less fat; reduce the heat if the onion starts sticking.

Substitution for apple cider vinegar: 2 teaspoons lemon juice. Fold in off the heat at the same stage.

Storage: Refrigerate leftovers in shallow containers within 2 hours of cooking, or within 1 hour when the ambient temperature exceeds 90°F. Keep at 40°F/4°C or below and use within 3–4 days.

Reheating: Reheat in a skillet over medium-low heat with 1–2 tablespoons water per serving, stirring gently until the center reaches 165°F/74°C. Add more water only if the beans begin sticking.

Freezing: Freeze promptly in meal-size airtight containers for up to 2 months for best quality. Thaw overnight in the refrigerator and reheat to 165°F/74°C. The cabbage will soften further, but the beans and sausage hold up well.

Allergens: not certified free of allergens; check ingredients and packaged-food labels. Contains pork and mustard. No major U.S. allergens are inherent in the specified basic ingredients, but sausage and Dijon formulations vary: check actual labels for milk, wheat, soy and any other allergens. Optional bread is not included in the recipe or allergen declaration.

Chipotle Turkey and Black Bean Chili

A thick, smoky, Mexican-inspired turkey chili with black beans, red pepper and a bright lime finish. Makes four generous main-course bowls; sides are not included.

Serves 4 · generous bowls
Prep: 15 min **Cook:** 45 min **Rest:** 0 min **Total:** 60 min

Equipment: Stovetop, 5- to 6-quart heavy pot, Knife, Cutting board, Colander, Measuring cups and spoons, Wooden spoon, Food thermometer, Serving bowls

Ingredients

1 tablespoon canola oil
1 medium (about 8 ounces) yellow onion, cut into **1/4**-inch dice
1 large (about 7 ounces) red bell pepper, stemmed, seeded and cut into 1/2-inch dice
1 pound 93% lean ground turkey, raw, refrigerated until needed
1 teaspoon fine salt, divided, plus more to taste
4 cloves garlic, finely chopped
2 tablespoons tomato paste
1 tablespoon canned chipotle pepper in adobo, finely chopped, including clinging sauce
2 teaspoons ground cumin
1 teaspoon smoked paprika
28 ounces crushed tomatoes, canned, undrained
30 ounces (Two 15-ounce cans) canned black beans, drained and rinsed; about 3 cups drained beans
1 1/2 cups water, divided: 1 cup for simmering, 1/2 cup reserved for adjustments
1 medium lime, halved; use half for juice and cut the other half into 4 wedges
1/4 cup sour cream, for serving
1/4 cup cilantro, roughly chopped leaves and tender stems



Tip: Freeze leftover chipotles with their adobo in tablespoon-size portions, then transfer to a sealed container. One can can season several future pots rather than becoming a single-use purchase.

Chipotle Turkey and Black Bean Chili (continued)



Method

1. **Prepare the vegetables** on a cutting board: dice the onion and pepper, then chop the garlic and chipotle separately. Rinse the beans in a colander and let them drain. Measure the spices and tomato paste. Set aside 1 cup water for the pot and 1/2 cup for adjustments. Allow about 15 minutes; keep the turkey refrigerated.

2. **Set the heavy** pot over medium heat for 1 minute. Add the oil, onion, pepper and 1/2 teaspoon salt. Cook for 7–9 minutes, stirring with a wooden spoon every minute and sweeping the bottom. The onion should look translucent and the pepper should soften. If edges darken quickly, lower the heat rather than adding more oil.

3. **Increase to medium-high** and add the turkey. Press it against the pot bottom, leave undisturbed for 2 minutes, then break it into roughly 1/2-inch crumbles. Cook for another **4–6** minutes, turning and scraping until no pink remains and some pieces brown. If liquid collects, let it evaporate before proceeding; color alone does not establish safe doneness.

4. **Lower the heat** to medium. Clear a small space in the pot and add the tomato paste. Stir it against the hot surface for 1 minute, then mix through the turkey. Add the garlic, chipotle, cumin and paprika; stir for 30–60 seconds until fragrant. If spices catch, immediately loosen them with a splash from the measured simmering water.

5. **Add the crushed** tomatoes, drained beans, remaining 1/2 teaspoon salt and the rest of the measured 1 cup simmering water. Scrape firmly across the bottom to release browned bits, but leave any black, burned patches undisturbed. Bring to a gentle bubble over medium-high heat, about 3–5 minutes, stirring to distribute the beans without crushing them.

6. **Reduce to medium-low** and simmer uncovered for 20 minutes. Look for small, steady bubbles rather than vigorous boiling. Stir every 4–5 minutes, reaching across the bottom and into the corners. If the chili sticks or spits heavily, lower the heat and add reserved water 2 tablespoons at a time. Keep any remaining adjustment water nearby.

7. **Check the thickest** clusters of turkey with a food thermometer; they must reach 165°F / **74**°C. The finished chili should mound softly on a spoon, with no watery rim. If thin, simmer uncovered another 3–5 minutes, stirring frequently. If too thick, stir in reserved water a little at a time until comfortably spoonable.

Chipotle Turkey and Black Bean Chili (continued)



8. **Turn off the** heat. Squeeze half the lime into the pot, stir and taste a cooled spoonful. Add extra salt only if needed. Divide among four bowls, distributing beans and turkey evenly. Top each with 1 tablespoon sour cream and one-quarter of the cilantro; add a lime wedge alongside. Swirl the cream into individual bites to soften the chipotle heat.

Tip: For a thicker bean-rich texture without extra simmering, mash 1/2 cup of the drained beans with the back of a spoon before adding them in step 5.

Tip: Choose crushed tomatoes rather than tomato purée for a little texture. If your brand is especially acidic, let the chili finish simmering before adjusting the lime; taste first and squeeze in less.

Tip: For a milder pot, scrape the seeds from the chipotle before measuring. The sour cream rounds out heat at the table but does not remove it.

Substitution for 93% lean ground turkey: 1 pound raw ground chicken. Use the same method and verify 165°F / 74°C in the thickest meat clusters.

Substitution for canned black beans: Two 15-ounce cans pinto beans, drained and rinsed. Use the same quantity and simmering time; fold gently because pinto beans can break apart more easily.

Substitution for sour cream: 1/4 cup plain whole-milk yogurt. Spoon onto individual bowls off the heat. Contains milk.

Storage: Refrigerate chili separately from the garnishes in shallow containers within 2 hours of cooking, or within 1 hour above 90°F. Keep at 40°F / 4°C or below and use within 3–4 days. Refrigerate sour cream and prepared garnishes separately.

Reheating: Reheat only the portion needed in a saucepan over medium-low heat, adding a little water to loosen it. Stir frequently until the chili reaches 165°F / 74°C throughout. Add cold garnishes after reheating.

Freezing: Freeze chili without sour cream, cilantro or lime in portion-size containers for up to **3** months for best quality. Leave expansion space. Thaw overnight in the refrigerator and reheat to 165°F / 74°C.

Chipotle Turkey and Black Bean Chili (continued)



Declared allergens: milk. Check labels and cross-contact.
Contains dairy. Check the actual chipotle-in-adobo, tomato paste and other packaged ingredient labels for allergens; composite sauces vary by brand. No stock is required.

Ginger Pork Lettuce Cups with Rice



Savory ginger-garlic pork and mushrooms tucked into romaine with rice and quick-pickled carrots. Makes four generous dinner portions, with rice and toppings included.

Serves 4 · dinner portions
Prep: 15 min **Cook:** 20 min **Rest:** 10 min **Total:** 45 min

Equipment: Stovetop, 12-inch skillet, Saucepan with lid, Knife, Cutting board, Colander, Food thermometer, Measuring cups and spoons, Heatproof spatula, Small bowls, Fork

Ingredients

For Rice:

1 cup long-grain white rice, dry, uncooked

Other ingredients:

2 cups water, divided: 1 3/4 cups for rice and 1/4 cup for sauce

For Rice:

1/4 teaspoon fine salt, for rice

For Pickles:

2 medium (about 6 ounces total) carrots, scrubbed and cut into thin matchsticks
3 tablespoons unseasoned rice vinegar

Other ingredients:

2 teaspoons granulated sugar, divided equally between pickles and sauce

Ginger Pork Lettuce Cups with Rice (continued)



For Pork:

3 tablespoons reduced-sodium soy sauce
1/4 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
1 tablespoon neutral cooking oil
8 ounces white button mushrooms, trimmed and finely chopped
12 ounces ground pork, raw, thawed if frozen
2 tablespoons fresh ginger, peeled and finely minced
3 cloves garlic, peeled and finely minced

For Pork and serving:

4 whole scallions, thinly sliced, whites and greens kept separate

For Serving:

2 whole romaine hearts, separated into leaves, washed and thoroughly dried

Method

1. **Prepare the vegetables** before handling raw pork. On a cutting board, cut the carrots into slender matchsticks, finely chop the mushrooms, mince the ginger and garlic, and slice the scallions, separating whites from greens. Allow about 10 minutes. Wash the romaine leaves in a colander, drain and dry thoroughly; wet leaves make slippery cups.

2. **Make the quick** pickles in a small bowl: stir the vinegar with 1 teaspoon sugar until mostly dissolved, about 30 seconds. Add the carrots and toss thoroughly. Leave at room temperature while cooking, at least 20 minutes, turning occasionally so the exposed carrots also soften. They should remain crunchy, not limp.

3. **Put the dry** rice, 1 3/4 cups water and salt in a saucepan. Bring to a boil over high heat, then immediately cover and reduce to the lowest heat. Simmer gently for 15–18 minutes, until the water is absorbed. Keep the lid closed; vigorous bubbling means the heat needs lowering.

4. **While the rice** simmers, combine the soy sauce, remaining 1/4 cup water, remaining 1 teaspoon sugar and red pepper flakes in another small bowl. Stir for 30 seconds. Keep this sauce beside the stove. It will loosen the browned bits later; do not add it before the pork has browned.

Ginger Pork Lettuce Cups with Rice (continued)



5. **Heat the oil** in the 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat for about 1 minute, until shimmering. Add the mushrooms, spread evenly and cook for 5–6 minutes, stirring every minute. Their released liquid should evaporate and their edges begin browning. If liquid pools, continue uncovered before adding the pork.

6. **Add the pork** to the skillet and spread it across the mushrooms with a spatula. Leave undisturbed for 2 minutes, then turn and break into small crumbles. Cook another 4–5 minutes, stirring occasionally, until browned. Check several thicker clusters with a food thermometer: ground pork must reach 160°F/71°C. Lower the heat if the pan starts smoking.

7. **Reduce the skillet** heat to medium. Stir in the ginger, garlic and scallion whites for 1 minute, scraping across the bottom to prevent scorching. Pour in the prepared sauce and scrape up browned bits. Simmer for 2–3 minutes, stirring, until glossy and lightly coating the crumbles rather than pooling. If too dry, add a spoonful of carrot pickling liquid.

8. **When the rice** has absorbed its water, remove its saucepan from the heat and leave covered for 10 minutes. If the grains are still firm and the pan is dry, sprinkle in 2 tablespoons hot water and cook covered over low heat for another 3 minutes before resting. Fluff gently with a fork, lifting rather than mashing.

9. **Turn off the** skillet heat. Divide the rice and pork among four plates with the romaine leaves alongside. Spoon a little rice into each leaf, add pork, then lift carrots from their liquid and scatter over the top with scallion greens. Allow two or three cups per person; serve remaining rice and filling alongside rather than overfilling the leaves.

Tip: Choose broad inner romaine leaves with intact ribs. Nest a smaller leaf inside any split leaf to make a sturdier cup without adding another ingredient.

Tip: Chop mushrooms into roughly 1/4-inch pieces rather than a paste: small pieces mingle with the pork, while pulverized mushrooms release more liquid and brown less readily.

Tip: For less expensive preparation, buy whole carrots and mushrooms rather than precut versions; weigh loose mushrooms if you do not need a full package.

Ginger Pork Lettuce Cups with Rice (continued)



Tip: For a packed lunch, cool and pack rice and pork separately from lettuce and carrots. Reheat only the cooked components so the leaves retain their crunch.

Substitution for ground pork: 12 ounces raw ground turkey. Cook to 165°F/74°C rather than the pork temperature. Lean turkey may brown faster, so reduce the heat if it begins sticking.

Substitution for unseasoned rice vinegar: 3 tablespoons apple cider vinegar. Use the same quantity; the pickles will have a slightly fruitier, sharper flavor.

Substitution for reduced-sodium soy sauce: 3 tablespoons reduced-sodium gluten-free tamari. Check the actual label for wheat and other allergens. Tamari usually still contains soy.

Storage: Refrigerate cooked pork and rice in separate shallow containers within 2 hours of cooking, or within 1 hour above 90°F. Do not leave rice on the counter to cool completely. Keep at 40°F/4°C or below and use within 3–4 days. Refrigerate lettuce dry and separately; refrigerate carrots in their pickling liquid and use within 3–4 days.
Reheating: Reheat rice and pork separately in a covered saucepan or skillet over medium-low heat, adding a little water to prevent drying and stirring frequently. Heat both to **165**°F/74°C throughout. Assemble with cold lettuce and drained carrots only after reheating.
Freezing: Freeze cooled rice and pork separately in meal-size airtight containers promptly, for best quality within 2 months. Thaw overnight in the refrigerator and reheat to **165**°F/74°C. Do not freeze the lettuce or quick-pickled carrots; prepare those fresh.
Declared allergens: soy, wheat. Check labels and cross-contact.
Contains pork. No dairy is used. Standard soy sauce contains soy and wheat; check the actual sauce label and any replacement sauce for all declared allergens.

Beef, Mushroom and Potato Skillet Pie

A complete four-serving skillet supper with beef-and-mushroom gravy, vegetables and a golden mashed-potato lid.

Serves 4 · generous portions
Prep: 20 min **Cook:** 45 min **Rest:** 5 min **Total:** 70 min

Equipment: Stovetop, Oven, 12-inch ovenproof skillet rated for 425°F, Heavy pot, Colander, Knife, Cutting board, Measuring cups and spoons, Wooden spoon, Potato masher, Food thermometer, Oven mitts

Ingredients

For Potato topping:

2 lb russet potatoes, peeled and cut into 1-inch chunks
3 quarts water, for boiling potatoes in a heavy pot

Other ingredients:

2 tsp fine salt, divided: 1 teaspoon for boiling water, **1/2 teaspoon** for potatoes, 1/2 teaspoon for filling

For Potato topping:

3 tbsp unsalted butter, cut into small pieces
1/2 cup whole milk

For Filling:

1 tbsp neutral cooking oil
3/4 lb 90% lean ground beef, raw
12 oz white button mushrooms, cut into approximately **1/4**-inch pieces
1 medium yellow onion, finely diced, about 1 cup
2 medium carrots, cut into 1/4-inch dice, about 1 cup
3 cloves garlic, finely chopped
2 tbsp tomato paste
2 tbsp all-purpose flour
1 tsp dried thyme
1/2 tsp ground black pepper
1 1/2 cups low-sodium beef stock
1 tbsp Worcestershire sauce, choose an anchovy-containing sauce; check label
1 cup frozen peas, use directly from frozen



Tip: Cut carrots no larger than **1/4** inch: larger pieces may remain firm beneath the potato lid even when the gravy is ready.

Tip: For inexpensive mushroom flavor, use ordinary white buttons and chop the stems along with the caps. Browning matters more here than buying a specialty variety.

Beef, Mushroom and Potato Skillet Pie (continued)



Method

1. **Heat the oven** to 425°F with a rack in the middle. Using a knife and board, prepare the potatoes and vegetables as listed; keep mushrooms separate from onion and carrots. Put potatoes in the heavy pot with 3 quarts cold water and 1 teaspoon salt. The water should cover them by about an inch; adjust if necessary.

2. **Bring the potatoes** to a boil over high heat, then reduce to medium for a steady, gentle boil. Cook uncovered for 12–15 minutes, until a knife slides through several pieces without resistance. Begin the filling while they cook. Drain through the colander, return potatoes to the hot pot off heat, and let steam escape for 2 minutes.

3. **Meanwhile**, heat the oil in the ovenproof skillet over medium-high heat for 1 minute. Add beef, pressing it into a broad layer with the wooden spoon. Leave untouched for 3 minutes, then break into small crumbles and cook 2–3 minutes more. Brown patches should form; the beef will finish cooking in the gravy.

4. **Add mushrooms**, onion and carrots to the skillet. Cook over medium-high heat for 8–10 minutes, stirring and scraping the bottom every minute. The mushrooms will release liquid before it evaporates. Continue until the pan looks mostly dry and mushrooms show brown edges. Lower the heat to medium if the onion begins catching.

5. **While the vegetables** cook, mash the drained potatoes in their pot with butter, milk and **1/2 teaspoon** salt. Work with a potato masher just until no large lumps remain, about 2 minutes; vigorous prolonged mixing makes potatoes gluey. The topping should be soft enough to spread but hold ridges. Cover off heat.

6. **Reduce the skillet** heat to medium. Stir garlic and tomato paste through the filling for 1 minute, until the paste darkens slightly. Sprinkle in flour, thyme, pepper and the remaining 1/2 teaspoon salt. Stir for another minute, coating the vegetables and beef evenly so no dry flour pockets remain.

7. **Slowly pour in** stock while scraping browned bits from the skillet bottom, then stir in Worcestershire sauce and peas. Simmer over medium-low heat for 4–5 minutes, stirring often. The gravy should coat the filling without a watery rim. If loose, simmer 1–2 minutes longer. Check that the beef mixture reaches 160°F / 71°C.

Beef, Mushroom and Potato Skillet Pie (continued)



8. **Turn off the** heat and level the filling with the spoon. Place small spoonfuls of potato across its entire surface, then gently join them without pushing down into the gravy. Sweep shallow ridges across the topping. Using oven mitts, transfer the skillet to the oven and bake for 18–22 minutes, until edges bubble and potato tips turn golden.

9. **Set the hot** skillet on a heatproof surface and leave for 5 minutes so the gravy settles. Keep an oven mitt over the handle as a reminder that it remains hot. Divide the pie into four quarters with a serving spoon, scooping through both layers and distributing any gravy left in the skillet among the plates.

Tip: Drain potatoes as soon as they are tender. Leaving them sitting in cooking water makes a wetter topping that is harder to ridge and brown.

Tip: For make-ahead cooking, refrigerate the filling and topping separately in shallow containers. Reheat the filling before assembling, loosen the potatoes with a little milk if needed, and bake until the center reaches 165°F / 74°C.

Substitution for 90% lean ground beef: 12 ounces raw ground turkey. Cook the filling to **165**°F / 74°C before topping; turkey may need an additional teaspoon of oil if it sticks.

Substitution for white button mushrooms: 12 ounces cremini mushrooms. Chop to the same size and cook until their released liquid evaporates.

Substitution for low-sodium beef stock: 1 1/2 cups low-sodium vegetable stock. Choose a savory stock and check its allergen label.

Storage: Refrigerate leftovers in shallow covered containers within 2 hours, or within 1 hour when the temperature is above 90°F. Keep at 40°F / 4°C or below and use within 3–4 days.

Reheating: Reheat individual portions covered in a 350°F oven in an oven-safe dish until the center reaches 165°F / 74°C, approximately 25–35 minutes from refrigerated. Add a tablespoon of water around the filling if dry; uncover for the final 5 minutes.

Freezing: Freeze cooled portions promptly in airtight containers for up to 2 months for best texture. Thaw overnight in the refrigerator, then reheat as directed. The potato topping may become slightly softer after freezing.

Beef, Mushroom and Potato Skillet Pie (continued)



Declared allergens: milk, wheat, fish. Check labels and cross-contact.
Contains beef, milk, wheat and fish from anchovy-containing Worcestershire sauce. Check the actual stock, tomato paste and Worcestershire labels for additional allergens, including soy or wheat; formulations vary.

Meatless Meals That Deliver



A satisfying meatless dinner needs contrast: crisp edges against something creamy, earthy beans against a bright sauce, soft lentils with enough spice to keep each spoonful interesting. These six meals build that contrast from everyday groceries rather than a long list of specialty ingredients.

Crispy Chickpeas and Cauliflower with Lemon Tahini pairs a browned tray of vegetables and beans with a tangy finish. Red Lentil Coconut Curry turns quick-cooking lentils into a rich, spoonable dinner. Mushroom and Black Bean Enchiladas bring savory filling beneath a blanket of sauce. Charred Cabbage and Garlicky White Beans gives an inexpensive vegetable the center of the plate. Sweet Potato and Peanut Stew balances sweetness with nutty depth, while Cheesy Polenta with Roasted Tomatoes and Spinach finishes the chapter with creamy comfort and juicy acidity.

The groceries overlap naturally: beans, lentils, garlic, greens and canned tomatoes earn their space across the chapter. One technique carries especially far: give vegetables room to brown. Crowding traps steam; contact with a hot pan builds a deeper crust. Then balance that richness with lemon, tomato or another sharp finish. The goal is not to imitate meat, but to make every component worth eating.

Crispy Chickpeas and Cauliflower with Lemon Tahini



Two-pan roasted cauliflower and chickpeas with smoky spices, parsley and a bright tahini sauce. A complete meatless dinner for four, without an additional side.

Serves 4 · main-course portions
Prep: 20 min **Cook:** 35 min **Rest:** 0 min **Total:** 55 min

Equipment: Oven, Two 13-by-18-inch rimmed sheet pans, Knife, Cutting board, Colander, Clean kitchen towels, Large mixing bowl, Small mixing bowl, Measuring cups and spoons, Wide spatula, Spoon

Ingredients

For Roasted vegetables:

2 pounds (About 1 large head, weighed after trimming) cauliflower, leaves removed; florets and tender core cut into 1 1/2-inch pieces
3 15-ounce cans (About 4 1/2 cups cooked, drained chickpeas) canned chickpeas, drained, rinsed and thoroughly dried
4 tablespoons olive oil, divided: 2 tablespoons for each sheet pan
2 teaspoons ground cumin, divided equally between pans
1 teaspoon smoked paprika, divided equally between pans

Other ingredients:

1 teaspoon fine salt, divided: 3/4 teaspoon for roasting and 1/4 teaspoon for sauce

For Roasted vegetables:

1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper, divided equally between pans

For Lemon tahini:

0.333 cup tahini, stirred thoroughly before measuring
3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice, seeds removed
1 clove garlic, finely minced
4–6 tablespoons cold water, added gradually to sauce

For To finish:

1/4 cup flat-leaf parsley, finely chopped leaves and tender stems, loosely packed

Crispy Chickpeas and Cauliflower with Lemon Tahini (continued)



Method

1. **Set up and** cut. Heat the oven to 425°F with racks in the upper and lower thirds. Set out two unlined 13-by-18-inch rimmed sheet pans. On a cutting board, cut the trimmed cauliflower into roughly 1 1/2-inch florets, giving larger pieces a flat face for browning. Slice the tender core into 1/2-inch pieces. Aim for similar thickness rather than identical shapes.

2. **Dry the chickpeas**. Drain and rinse the chickpeas in a colander, shaking it several times to release trapped water. Spread them over a clean kitchen towel and gently roll beneath another towel for 2–3 minutes, until their surfaces look matte rather than wet. Discard skins that fall loose, but do not peel each chickpea. Moisture left here delays crisping.

3. **Season and spread**. In a large bowl, toss the cauliflower with 2 tablespoons oil, 1 teaspoon cumin, 1/2 teaspoon paprika, 3/8 teaspoon salt and 1/4 teaspoon pepper. Spread on one sheet pan, flat faces down. Use the same bowl to toss chickpeas with the remaining oil, cumin, paprika, pepper and another 3/8 teaspoon salt. Spread on the second pan in one layer.

4. **Start roasting**. Put cauliflower on the lower rack and chickpeas on the upper rack. Roast undisturbed for 15 minutes; keeping the cauliflower still builds a browned underside. Meanwhile, mince the garlic and chop the parsley on the cutting board. If your oven produces smoke rather than a light roasted aroma, check for fallen food or scorched edges and reduce the temperature to 400°F.

Crispy Chickpeas and Cauliflower with Lemon Tahini (continued)



5. **Make the sauce**. In a small bowl, stir the tahini, lemon juice, garlic and remaining 1/4 teaspoon salt with a spoon for about 1 minute. The mixture may seize into a thick paste; this is normal. Stir in 4 tablespoons cold water, one tablespoon at a time, until smooth. Add up to 2 tablespoons more water gradually: the sauce should fall from the spoon in a broad ribbon.

6. **Turn and redistribute**. After the first 15 minutes, use a wide spatula to turn cauliflower pieces, loosening them gently rather than tearing off browned faces. Shake the chickpea pan to roll the beans, then spread them out again. Swap the pans between racks and rotate front to back. Roast another 10 minutes, watching the smaller cauliflower pieces for dark edges.

7. **Check each pan** separately. Test the cauliflower with a knife: it should enter the thickest stems easily, with deep golden patches outside. Remove it when ready, usually after 25–35 minutes total. Chickpeas need about 30–35 minutes total; taste one carefully for a lightly crisp skin and creamy center. If still damp, spread them apart and roast 5 minutes longer, checking frequently.

8. **Assemble four portions**. As soon as both pans are ready, divide about half the sauce among four plates, spreading it with the back of a spoon. Divide the cauliflower and chickpeas evenly over it, keeping most browned surfaces exposed. Scatter with parsley and pass the remaining sauce alongside. Avoid tossing everything in sauce, which quickly softens the chickpea skins.

Tip: Dry the chickpeas before cutting the cauliflower so they can air-dry a little longer during preparation. Use a towel without loose fibers.

Tip: These chickpeas should have crisp skins and tender centers, not the hard, dry crunch of packaged chickpea snacks. Chasing that texture can burn the spices.

Tip: If your tahini has a firm layer beneath its oil, stir the whole jar thoroughly before measuring; scooping only the bottom produces an unusually thick, bitter sauce.

Tip: Compare the unit price of whole cauliflower with prepared florets. The tender core belongs on the pan too; slice it thinner than the florets to help it cook evenly.

Crispy Chickpeas and Cauliflower with Lemon Tahini (continued)



Substitution for cauliflower: 2 pounds trimmed broccoli. Cut into similar-size florets and begin checking after 20 minutes; broccoli tips brown faster.

Substitution for smoked paprika: 1 teaspoon sweet paprika. Use the same divided amounts. The dish will be less smoky but still well seasoned.

Substitution for flat-leaf parsley: 1/4 cup chopped cilantro. Use leaves and tender stems, loosely packed.

Storage: Store roasted components separately from sauce in shallow airtight containers. Refrigerate within 2 hours, or within 1 hour above 90°F, at 40°F or below. Use within 3–4 days. Chickpeas soften during storage.

Reheating: Spread the roasted components on a rimmed sheet pan and heat at 400°F for about 10–15 minutes, turning once, until the centers reach 165°F. Keep the sauce cold; stir in a little water if it has thickened, then add after reheating.

Freezing: Freeze the cooled roasted components separately from sauce for up to 2 months for best quality. Thaw overnight in the refrigerator and reheat as directed. Cauliflower will be softer and chickpeas less crisp. Make fresh sauce for the best texture.

Declared allergens: sesame. Check labels and cross-contact.

Vegan and made without wheat ingredients. Tahini contains sesame; check its actual label and all packaged spice labels for additional allergens or cross-contact information.

Red Lentil Coconut Curry

A generous one-pot lentil curry with coconut milk, tomatoes, spinach and lime. Makes four main-course bowls; optional rice or flatbread is not included.

Serves 4 · generous bowls
Prep: 15 min **Cook:** 35 min **Rest:** 0 min **Total:** 50 min

Equipment: Stovetop, Heavy pot, approximately 5-quart, Knife, Cutting board, Fine-mesh strainer, Measuring cups and spoons, Wooden spoon, Ladle, Food thermometer



Tip: Split red lentils are essential for this texture: whole brown or green lentils will not dissolve into the same creamy base or finish within this cooking time.

Tip: A broad, heavy pot releases moisture faster than a narrow one. If using a narrow pot, judge the final thickness by the spoon cue rather than extending cooking automatically.

Ingredients

1 1/2 cups (approximately 300 g) dry split red lentils, picked over and rinsed
2 tablespoons neutral cooking oil
1 medium (approximately 200 g) yellow onion, peeled and diced into 1/4-inch pieces
4 cloves garlic, peeled and finely chopped
1 tablespoon fresh ginger, peeled and finely minced
2 teaspoons mild curry powder
1 teaspoon ground cumin
1/4 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
14 1/2 ounces (one 14.5-ounce can) canned diced tomatoes, undrained
13 1/2 ounces (one 13.5-ounce can) unsweetened full-fat coconut milk, stirred to combine cream and liquid
3 cups water, divided: 2 1/2 cups for cooking and 1/2 cup reserved for adjustments
1 teaspoon fine salt, divided
5 ounces baby spinach, washed and drained
1 large lime, half juiced to yield 1 tablespoon; remaining half cut into 4 wedges
1/4 cup fresh cilantro, leaves and tender stems chopped

Red Lentil Coconut Curry (continued)



Method

1. **Prepare before heating**. Pick through the dry lentils on a plate, discarding stones or debris. Rinse in a fine-mesh strainer under cool running water for about **30** seconds, until the runoff looks less cloudy; drain. Dice the onion, chop the garlic and mince the ginger on the cutting board.

2. **Set up the** remaining ingredients, allowing about 5 minutes. Open the tomatoes and coconut milk; stir the coconut milk in its can to loosen any solid cream. Measure 2 1/2 cups water and reserve the remaining 1/2 cup separately. Measure the spices, keeping them ready beside the stove.

3. **Soften the onion**. Heat the oil in the heavy pot over medium heat for 1 minute. Add the onion and 1/2 teaspoon salt. Cook for 6–8 minutes, stirring and scraping the bottom every minute, until translucent with a few golden edges. Lower the heat if the edges darken before the centers soften.

4. **Build the spice** base. Reduce the heat to medium-low. Stir in the garlic and ginger for 1 minute, then add the curry powder, cumin and pepper flakes. Stir continuously for 30 seconds, coating the onion evenly. The spices should smell fragrant, not smoky; immediately add the tomatoes if they begin catching.

5. **Start the curry**. Add the tomatoes with their juices if not already added, scraping up the golden coating on the pot bottom. Stir in the drained lentils, all the coconut milk and 2 1/2 cups water. Raise the heat to medium-high for 4–5 minutes, stirring occasionally, until gentle bubbles appear across the surface.

6. **Simmer gently**. Lower the heat to maintain slow, steady bubbles and cook uncovered for **15** minutes. Stir every 2–3 minutes, sweeping the spoon across the entire bottom and into the corners. If the curry spits vigorously, reduce the heat; a hard boil encourages sticking and reduces the liquid before the lentils soften.

7. **Check the lentils** and thickness. Continue simmering for 3–5 minutes, until a spoonful cooled briefly contains no firm, chalky centers. The lentils should be mostly broken down. If stiff or still firm, add reserved water 2 tablespoons at a time and simmer longer. If soupy but tender, simmer uncovered for another 2–3 minutes.

Red Lentil Coconut Curry (continued)



8. **Add the greens**. With the pot over low heat, fold the spinach into the curry in two handfuls, pressing each beneath the surface before adding the next. Cook for 2–3 minutes, stirring gently, until every leaf has wilted and the curry is steaming throughout. Stop reducing once it falls from the spoon in thick ribbons.

9. **Brighten and serve**. Turn off the heat. Stir in 1 tablespoon lime juice, then taste a cooled spoonful and add the remaining 1/2 teaspoon salt gradually, stopping when balanced. Loosen with any remaining reserved water if needed. Ladle into four bowls, divide the cilantro over them and add one lime wedge to each.

Tip: For economical ginger prep, freeze leftover peeled ginger in tablespoon-size minced portions. Add a frozen portion directly at the aromatic stage, allowing it to thaw before adding the dry spices.

Tip: If the bottom scorches, transfer the unstuck curry to a clean pot without scraping up the burned layer. Add a little water and resume over low heat; stirring the burned bits back in spreads their bitterness.

Substitution for baby spinach: 5 ounces frozen chopped spinach. Thaw and squeeze out excess water, then add at the spinach stage and heat until steaming throughout.

Substitution for canned diced tomatoes: 14.5 ounces canned crushed tomatoes. Use undrained for a smoother curry; monitor the bottom closely because a thicker tomato base catches more readily.

Substitution for fresh cilantro: 1/4 cup chopped flat-leaf parsley. Use the same amount for a different but fresh finish.

Storage: Refrigerate in shallow containers within 2 hours of cooking, or within 1 hour if the temperature is above 90°F. Keep at 40°F / 4°C or below and use within 3–4 days. Store lime wedges and cilantro separately when practical.

Reheating: Reheat only the portion needed in a saucepan over medium-low heat, adding **2–4 tablespoons** water per serving to loosen. Stir frequently until the center reaches 165°F / 74°C on a food thermometer. Add fresh lime after reheating if desired.

Red Lentil Coconut Curry (continued)



Freezing: Freeze cooled curry promptly in meal-size freezer-safe containers, leaving room for expansion, for up to 3 months for best quality. Thaw overnight in the refrigerator and reheat as directed. Freeze without the fresh cilantro and lime wedges.

Allergens: not certified free of allergens; check ingredients and packaged-food labels. Vegan as written. No major U.S. allergens are intentionally included; coconut is present. Check the actual coconut milk, canned tomato and curry powder labels for ingredients and allergen statements. Optional bread or other sides may introduce additional allergens.

Mushroom and Black Bean Enchiladas

Soft flour tortillas wrapped around browned mushrooms, black beans and onion, baked under red enchilada sauce and Monterey Jack. Makes eight enchiladas; no additional sides are included.

Serves 4 · servings of 2 enchiladas
Prep: 25 min **Cook:** 40 min **Rest:** 5 min **Total:** 70 min

Equipment: Oven, Stovetop, 12-inch skillet, 9-by-13-inch baking dish, Knife, Cutting board, Colander, Measuring cups and spoons, Wooden spoon, Cheese grater, Large plate, Microwave-safe plate, Microwave, Clean kitchen towel, Foil, Spatula, Food thermometer

Ingredients

For Filling:

2 tablespoons (Canola or vegetable oil) neutral cooking oil, divided
16 ounces (White button mushrooms) cremini mushrooms, trimmed and chopped into 1/4-inch pieces
1 medium yellow onion, finely diced, about 1 cup
3 cloves garlic, finely chopped
2 teaspoons ground cumin
1 teaspoon smoked paprika
1/4 teaspoon fine salt
2 15-ounce cans canned black beans, drained and rinsed; about 3 cups drained beans

For Assembly:

3 cups mild red enchilada sauce, divided; check actual label for allergens and vegetarian ingredients
8 tortillas 8-inch flour tortillas
8 ounces Monterey Jack cheese, coarsely grated, about **2** cups, divided

For To finish:

1/4 cup cilantro, chopped leaves and tender stems
1 medium lime, cut into 4 wedges



Tip: For economical shopping, compare white button mushrooms with cremini by unit price. Both work here; choose firm mushrooms without wet, dark patches.

Mushroom and Black Bean Enchiladas (continued)



Method

1. **Set an oven** rack in the middle and heat to 400°F. On a cutting board, chop the mushrooms, onion and garlic, keeping them separate. Drain and rinse the beans in a colander; shake well so water will not dilute the filling. Grate the cheese and measure the sauce before heating the skillet.

2. **Heat** 1 tablespoon oil in the 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat for 1 minute. Add half the mushrooms and spread them across the bottom. Cook for 4–5 minutes, stirring every minute, until their liquid evaporates and brown patches appear. Transfer to a large plate. Repeat with the remaining oil and mushrooms.

3. **Return all mushrooms** to the skillet and reduce the heat to medium. Add the diced onion and salt; cook for 5–6 minutes, stirring and scraping the bottom with a wooden spoon, until the onion softens. If the pan begins scorching rather than browning, lower the heat. Add garlic, cumin and paprika; stir for 30 seconds until fragrant.

4. **Add the drained** beans and 1/2 cup enchilada sauce to the skillet. Stir over medium-low heat for 2–3 minutes, pressing about one-quarter of the beans against the pan with the spoon. The filling should mound rather than flow. If liquid pools underneath, cook another minute, stirring. Turn off the heat and fold in 1/2 cup cheese.

5. **Spread** 1/2 cup sauce across the bottom of the 9-by-13-inch baking dish. Stack the tortillas on a microwave-safe plate, cover with a barely damp clean kitchen towel and microwave for 30–45 seconds. They should bend easily without splitting; heat in additional **10**-second bursts if necessary. Keep covered while assembling.

6. **Divide the warm** skillet filling visually into eight portions. Place one tortilla on the work surface and spoon one portion in a narrow line just below its center, leaving the ends clear. Roll snugly without folding the ends, then place seam-side down in the dish. Repeat, arranging all eight side by side; avoid squeezing out the filling.

7. **Pour the remaining** 2 cups sauce evenly over the rolls, using the spoon to coat exposed tortilla edges so they do not become hard. Scatter the remaining 1 1/2 cups cheese over the top. Loosely cover the dish with foil, doming it slightly so it does not stick to the cheese.

Mushroom and Black Bean Enchiladas (continued)



8. **Bake on the** middle rack for 15 minutes. Carefully remove the foil, directing escaping steam away from your face, and bake for another 8–10 minutes. Look for bubbling sauce around the center rolls and fully melted cheese with a few golden spots. If the top darkens before the center bubbles, replace the foil and continue baking.

9. **Rest the baking** dish on a heatproof surface for 5 minutes so the filling settles. Meanwhile, chop the cilantro and cut the lime on the board. Use a spatula to lift two enchiladas onto each plate, spooning over sauce left in the dish. Finish with cilantro and a lime wedge for squeezing.

Tip: Chop mushrooms rather than slicing them: small pieces distribute through the beans and let each roll close without bulky, slippery layers.

Tip: Use a mild sauce whose flavor you enjoy on its own. Baking concentrates its salt and heat; taste it before deciding whether the filling needs the full measured salt.

Tip: For make-ahead filling, refrigerate it separately for up to 2 days. Warm it in the skillet before assembly so the stated baking time still gives a hot center.

Substitution for canned black beans: 3 cups cooked, drained pinto beans. Use the same method, lightly crushing a portion to bind the filling.

Substitution for Monterey Jack cheese: 8 ounces mild cheddar. Grate and divide as directed; cheddar may release a little more oil when baked.

Substitution for cilantro: 1/4 cup thinly sliced scallion greens. Scatter over the rested enchiladas for a fresh finish.

Storage: Refrigerate leftovers in shallow covered containers within 2 hours of cooking, or within 1 hour when the ambient temperature exceeds 90°F. Keep at 40°F or below and use within 3–4 days.

Reheating: Place refrigerated portions in a baking dish, cover with foil and heat at 350°F for about 20–30 minutes, until the center reaches 165°F / 74°C on a food thermometer. Alternatively, microwave a covered portion in short intervals, checking the center temperature. Tortillas will soften during storage.

Mushroom and Black Bean Enchiladas (continued)



Freezing: Freeze cooled individual portions promptly in airtight freezer-safe containers for up to 2 months for best quality. Thaw overnight in the refrigerator, then reheat as directed to **165**°F / 74°C.

Declared allergens: wheat, milk. Check labels and cross-contact.
Meatless; for a vegetarian dish, choose enchilada sauce without meat stock and cheese made with vegetarian enzymes. Contains wheat and milk. Check the actual tortilla, enchilada sauce and cheese labels for additional allergens; packaged sauces vary.

Charred Cabbage and Garlicky White Beans

Pan-charred cabbage wedges over lemony white beans, with softened garlic and a lightly thickened sauce. Makes four generous portions without additional sides.

Serves 4 · portions
Prep: 15 min **Cook:** 40 min **Rest:** 0 min **Total:** 55 min

Equipment: 12-inch skillet with lid, Stovetop, Knife, Cutting board, Colander, Measuring cups and spoons, Wide spatula, Wooden spoon, Plate, Serving bowls



Ingredients

900 g (about 2 pounds) green cabbage, loose outer leaves removed; cut into 8 wedges with core attached
4 tablespoons olive oil, divided: 1 tablespoon for each cabbage batch and 2 tablespoons for the garlic
6 cloves garlic, peeled and thinly sliced
3 15-ounce cans (about 750 g drained beans total) canned cannellini beans, drained and rinsed
1 1/2 cups water, divided: 1/2 cup for steaming cabbage and 1 cup for beans
1 teaspoon smoked paprika
3/4 teaspoon fine salt, divided; adjust to taste
1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper
2 tablespoons lemon juice, freshly squeezed
1/4 cup flat-leaf parsley, finely chopped, loosely measured

Tip: Choose a compact cabbage with tightly packed leaves. A very loose head sheds leaves during turning; retain a little more core on those wedges to help them hold together.

Charred Cabbage and Garlicky White Beans (continued)



Method

1. **Prepare everything before** heating the skillet, allowing about 15 minutes. On the cutting board, halve the cabbage through its core, then cut each half into four wedges. Keep a thin strip of core on each so the leaves stay together. Rinse, drain and dry thoroughly; wet surfaces steam rather than brown. Slice the garlic, drain and rinse the beans in the colander, and measure the remaining ingredients.

2. **Heat the dry** 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat for 2 minutes. Add 1 tablespoon oil and tilt to coat. Lay four cabbage wedges on one cut face with space between them. Cook undisturbed for 4 minutes, then lift one with the spatula: the underside should have broad, dark golden patches. If smoking heavily, lower the heat to medium.

3. **Turn each wedge** onto its second cut face with the wide spatula. Brown for 3–4 minutes, then transfer to a plate; the centers will still be firm. Add another 1 tablespoon oil and repeat with the remaining four wedges for 7–8 minutes. Aim for deep brown, not uniformly black; reduce the heat if the edges scorch before the flat surfaces color.

4. **Return all cabbage** to the skillet, overlapping as necessary. Sprinkle with 1/4 teaspoon salt. Lower the heat to medium-low, carefully pour 1/2 cup water around the wedges, and cover. Steam for 6–8 minutes, until a knife enters the thickest core with only slight resistance. Transfer to the plate. Pour any remaining steaming liquid over the cabbage rather than discarding it.

Charred Cabbage and Garlicky White Beans (continued)



5. **Let the empty** skillet cool off the heat for 1 minute. Return it to low heat, add the remaining 2 tablespoons oil and the sliced garlic, and stir gently for 2 minutes. The garlic should soften and smell sweet without turning dark brown. Stir in the smoked paprika for 15 seconds, then immediately add the remaining 1 cup water to prevent scorching.

6. **Add the drained** beans, remaining 1/2 teaspoon salt and pepper. Increase to medium heat until small bubbles appear, then lower to medium-low. Simmer uncovered for 5 minutes, stirring across the bottom twice. Using the wooden spoon, crush roughly 1/2 cup beans against the skillet wall and stir them back in; this thickens the liquid without cream.

7. **Return the cabbage** and its collected juices to the beans, browned faces upward. Simmer uncovered over low heat for 3–4 minutes. Gently nudge beans between the wedges rather than breaking the cabbage apart. The sauce should coat a spoon but still flow. If watery, simmer another minute; if pasty, loosen with a spoonful of the measured lemon juice.

8. **Turn off the** heat. Stir the lemon juice, including any not already used, and half the parsley into the beans around the cabbage. Taste a bean and adjust salt if needed. Divide the beans and sauce among four bowls, place two cabbage wedges on each portion, and scatter with the remaining parsley. Serve hot, with the browned cabbage faces visible above the sauce.

Tip: Judge tenderness at the core, not the thin outer leaves. The leaves soften first; the core should yield to a knife while retaining enough structure to support the wedge.

Tip: If a few detached leaves darken faster than the wedges, lift them onto the holding plate early and return them with the beans.

Tip: For a lower-cost pantry variation, use 750 g home-cooked, drained white beans. Cook a larger batch separately and freeze the excess in recipe-size portions; compare dry and canned options by usable yield rather than package price.

Substitution for canned cannellini beans: Three 15-ounce cans great northern beans, drained and rinsed. Use the same method; these may soften faster, so fold gently.

Charred Cabbage and Garlicky White Beans (continued)



Substitution for smoked paprika: 1 teaspoon sweet paprika. The dish will be less smoky, but the browned cabbage still supplies depth.

Substitution for flat-leaf parsley: 2 tablespoons chopped fresh dill. Add off the heat for a brighter, more pronounced herbal finish.

Storage: Refrigerate in shallow containers within 2 hours of cooking, or within 1 hour when the temperature is above 90°F. Keep at 40°F / 4°C or below and use within 3–4 days. Store cabbage above the beans to preserve its shape.

Reheating: Place a portion in a covered skillet with 1–2 tablespoons water. Warm over medium-low heat, gently turning the cabbage once, until the beans and the centers of the wedges reach 165°F / 74°C. Add a little more water if the beans catch before heating through.

Freezing: Freeze cooled portions promptly in airtight containers for up to 2 months for best quality. Thaw overnight in the refrigerator and reheat to 165°F / 74°C. The beans freeze well; the cabbage will be softer and its browned edges will no longer be crisp.

Allergens: not certified free of allergens; check ingredients and packaged-food labels. Vegan as written. No major U.S. allergens are intentionally included; check canned-bean and spice labels for added ingredients and any relevant allergen information. Optional bread is not included in the recipe or allergen declaration.

Sweet Potato and Peanut Stew

A hearty, tomato-rich stew with sweet potato, chickpeas, spinach and a smooth peanut broth, finished with lime and crunchy peanuts. Makes four generous main-course servings without additional sides.

Serves 4 · generous bowls
Prep: 15 min **Cook:** 40 min **Rest:** 0 min **Total:** 55 min

Equipment: Stovetop, 5- to 6-quart heavy pot with lid, Knife, Cutting board, Colander, Measuring cups and spoons, Heatproof stirring spoon, Medium heatproof bowl, Ladle, Food thermometer

Ingredients

2 tablespoons canola oil
1 medium (about 8 ounces) yellow onion, finely diced
1 teaspoon fine salt, divided; plus additional to taste
4 cloves garlic, finely chopped
1 tablespoon fresh ginger, peeled and finely chopped
2 teaspoons ground cumin
1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper
1 14.5-ounce can diced tomatoes, undrained
1 1/2 pounds sweet potatoes, peeled and cut into **3/4**-inch cubes
2 15-ounce cans canned chickpeas, drained and rinsed; about 3 cups drained
3 cups water, plus extra only if needed to adjust consistency
1/2 cup smooth unsweetened peanut butter, stirred thoroughly before measuring
5 ounces baby spinach, washed and drained
1 large lime, cut in half; reserve one half for wedges
1/4 cup unsalted roasted peanuts, roughly chopped



Tip: For tidy cubes, cut a thin slice from one side of each peeled sweet potato, set that flat side on the board, then cut slabs, sticks and cubes.

Sweet Potato and Peanut Stew (continued)



Method

1. **Prepare the vegetables** before heating the pot, allowing about 15 minutes. On a cutting board, dice the onion, chop the garlic and peeled ginger, and cut the peeled sweet potatoes into even 3/4-inch cubes. Rinse the chickpeas in a colander and drain well. Keep the garlic and ginger separate from the onion because they cook faster.

2. **Set a** 5- to 6-quart heavy pot over medium heat and add the oil. After about 1 minute, add the onion and 1/2 teaspoon salt. Cook for 6–8 minutes, stirring across the bottom every minute, until softened and lightly golden at the edges. If it browns sharply, lower the heat.

3. **Reduce the heat** to medium-low. Add the garlic, ginger, cumin and cayenne to the pot. Stir continuously for 1 minute, scraping the bottom so the spices mingle with the onion and oil. They should smell warm and fragrant, not scorched; add the tomatoes immediately if the mixture starts sticking.

4. **Add the tomatoes** with all their juice, then scrape up any golden residue with the spoon. Stir in the sweet potatoes, chickpeas, 3 cups water and remaining 1/2 teaspoon salt. Raise the heat to medium-high and bring to a steady simmer, about 5–7 minutes; stir once or twice so nothing settles.

5. **Lower the heat** to maintain gentle bubbling and partially cover the pot. Simmer for 15–18 minutes, stirring every 5 minutes and moving cubes from the bottom to the surface. A knife should enter a sweet potato with slight resistance. If the liquid drops below most vegetables, add water 1/4 cup at a time.

6. **Put the peanut** butter in a heatproof bowl. Carefully ladle 1 cup hot cooking liquid from the pot into it, adding a little at a time and stirring until smooth. Keep the pot at a low simmer while you work. This loosens the peanut butter so it blends without leaving dense lumps.

Sweet Potato and Peanut Stew (continued)



7. Stir the peanut mixture back into the pot. Simmer uncovered over low heat for 5–7 minutes, stirring frequently across the bottom; peanut-thickened broth can catch. The sweet potatoes should now yield easily to a knife, and the broth should coat a spoon. If too thick, stir in water 2 tablespoons at a time.

8. Add the spinach in two handfuls, folding each beneath the hot broth with the spoon. Cook over low heat for 2–3 minutes until wilted and evenly distributed. Remove the pot from the heat. Squeeze in the juice from half the lime, avoiding seeds, then taste and adjust with additional salt if needed.

9. Check the finished consistency in the pot: the stew should fall from the ladle in a thick ribbon but still pool around the vegetables. Loosen with a little water if necessary. Divide among four bowls, distributing sweet potatoes and chickpeas evenly. Top with chopped peanuts and serve with wedges cut from the reserved lime half.

Tip: Choose unsweetened peanut butter: sweetened varieties can make the sweet potato taste dessert-like. For natural peanut butter, fully incorporate the separated oil before measuring.

Tip: If the potatoes are tender but the broth is thin, mash a few cubes against the side of the pot and stir them back in rather than boiling hard and breaking up the whole batch.

Tip: Frozen chopped spinach is a practical alternative that avoids a partly used bag of greens. Use 5 ounces, thaw and squeeze dry, then separate the clumps before adding.

Tip: The stew thickens overnight. Store the peanut topping separately so it stays crunchy, and plan to add a little water when reheating.

Substitution for canned chickpeas: 3 cups cooked, drained chickpeas. Use fully cooked chickpeas, not soaked dried beans; the simmering time is not sufficient to cook dried chickpeas.

Substitution for baby spinach: 5 ounces frozen chopped spinach, thawed and squeezed dry. Add at the same stage and heat until steaming throughout.

Sweet Potato and Peanut Stew (continued)



Substitution for lime: 1 tablespoon lemon juice, plus lemon wedges. Stir in the measured juice off the heat and offer wedges alongside.

Storage: Refrigerate in shallow airtight containers within 2 hours of cooking, or within 1 hour above 90°F. Keep at 40°F / 4°C or below for 3–4 days. Store chopped peanuts separately.

Reheating: Reheat only the portion needed in a saucepan over medium-low heat, adding water 1 tablespoon at a time to loosen. Stir frequently until the center reaches 165°F / 74°C on a food thermometer. Add the peanut topping after heating.

Freezing: Freeze cooled stew promptly in meal-size containers with expansion space for up to 3 months for best quality. Keep the peanut topping separate. Thaw overnight in the refrigerator, then reheat as directed; the sweet potatoes will be softer.

Declared allergens: peanut. Check labels and cross-contact.
Vegan as written. Contains peanuts. Check the actual peanut butter, roasted peanut and spice labels for additional allergens and cross-contact information relevant to your needs.

Cheesy Polenta with Roasted Tomatoes and Spinach



Creamy Parmesan polenta topped with garlicky roasted tomatoes and tender spinach, with the roasting juices used as a bright, simple sauce.

Serves 4 · generous bowls
Prep: 10 min **Cook:** 40 min **Rest:** 0 min **Total:** 50 min

Equipment: Oven, Stovetop, Rimmed 13-by-18-inch sheet pan, 4-quart heavy pot with lid, **12**-inch skillet, Knife, Cutting board, Colander, Measuring cups and spoons, Whisk, Wooden spoon, Heatproof spatula, Fine grater, Food thermometer

Ingredients

For Tomatoes and spinach:

1 1/2 pounds cherry or grape tomatoes, halved lengthwise
3 tablespoons olive oil, divided: 2 tablespoons for tomatoes, 1 tablespoon for spinach
4 cloves garlic, finely chopped

Other ingredients:

1 1/2 teaspoons fine salt, divided: 1/2 teaspoon for tomatoes, 3/4 teaspoon for polenta, 1/4 teaspoon for spinach
1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper, divided equally between tomatoes and polenta

For Polenta:

6 cups water
1 1/2 cups medium-ground yellow cornmeal, dry; not instant polenta or cornmeal mix
1 cup whole milk, divided: 3/4 cup during cooking, 1/4 cup for finishing

For Tomatoes and spinach:

10 ounces fresh spinach, washed, drained well and any thick stems removed

For Polenta:

2 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into small pieces
4 ounces (Vegetarian Italian-style hard cheese made with microbial rennet) Parmesan cheese, finely grated; reserve 1 ounce for serving

Cheesy Polenta with Roasted Tomatoes and Spinach (continued)



Method

1. **Heat the oven** and prepare the toppings. Set an oven rack in the middle and heat to **425**°F. During the roughly 10-minute preheat, halve the tomatoes on the cutting board, chop the garlic and grate the cheese. Wash and drain the spinach thoroughly in the colander; excess water would dilute the finished topping. Keep 1 ounce of cheese separate for serving.

2. **Roast the tomatoes**. On the rimmed sheet pan, toss the tomatoes and garlic with 2 tablespoons oil, 1/2 teaspoon salt and 1/4 teaspoon pepper. Spread into one layer, keeping garlic nestled against the moist tomatoes. Roast for 25–30 minutes, turning the pan halfway through, until the tomatoes collapse and develop browned edges. If garlic darkens early, tuck it beneath a tomato with the spatula.

3. **Start the polenta** while the tomatoes roast. Bring the 6 cups water and 3/4 teaspoon salt to a boil in the heavy pot over high heat, about 6–8 minutes. Lower to medium-low. Sprinkle in the dry cornmeal in a thin, steady stream over about 1 minute, whisking continuously across the bottom. Do not dump it in: gradual addition keeps dry pockets from forming.

4. **Simmer gently**. Stir 3/4 cup milk into the polenta, then reduce the heat to low. Cook for **25–30** minutes with the lid slightly ajar, stirring every 2–3 minutes with the wooden spoon. Scrape the bottom and corners each time. Expect slow, thick bubbles, not vigorous spattering; lower the heat if it spits. Press any small lumps against the pot wall to break them apart.

Cheesy Polenta with Roasted Tomatoes and Spinach (continued)



5. **Wilt the spinach** near the end of the polenta cooking time. Heat the remaining 1 tablespoon oil in the skillet over medium heat for about 1 minute. Add spinach in three batches, turning with the spatula until each batch shrinks enough for the next. Add the remaining 1/4 teaspoon salt. Cook for 3–5 minutes total, until tender; let any standing liquid evaporate before lowering the heat.

6. **Combine the topping**. When the tomatoes are browned and juicy, remove the sheet pan from the oven. Carefully scrape the tomatoes, garlic and every spoonful of pan juices into the spinach skillet. Fold gently over low heat for 1–2 minutes, keeping some tomato halves intact. If the roasting juices are sticky, loosen them with a little liquid from the skillet rather than leaving their flavor behind.

7. **Finish the polenta** off the heat. Taste a small cooled spoonful: the grains should be tender, without a gritty center. If gritty, cover and cook another 3–5 minutes on low. Remove from the heat and stir in the butter, 3 ounces cheese, remaining 1/4 cup milk and remaining **1/4 teaspoon** pepper. It should fall from the spoon in soft folds, not stand upright.

8. **Assemble four generous** bowls. Spoon one-quarter of the hot polenta into each bowl and spread with the back of the spoon. Divide the warm spinach and tomatoes over the centers, distributing their juices equally. Scatter the reserved 1 ounce cheese over all four portions. Serve while the polenta is loose and the tomato juices can mingle with its surface.

Tip: Choose ordinary medium-ground cornmeal rather than individually packaged instant polenta for a versatile pantry purchase. Use the remaining cornmeal for cornbread or a crisp coating.

Cheesy Polenta with Roasted Tomatoes and Spinach (continued)



Tip: A light-colored metal sheet pan makes it easier to spot garlic browning. Avoid spreading the chopped garlic alone around the dry edges of the pan.

Tip: Polenta thickens quickly as it cools. If dinner is delayed, keep it covered off the heat for up to 10 minutes, then loosen over low heat with milk added 1 tablespoon at a time.

Tip: For less expensive tomatoes, substitute the same weight of ripe plum tomatoes, cut into **3/4**-inch pieces. Roast until their watery juices become glossy, allowing about 5 additional minutes if needed.

Substitution for fresh spinach: 10 ounces frozen chopped spinach, thawed and squeezed dry. Warm in the skillet with the oil and salt for 3–4 minutes before adding the roasted tomatoes.

Substitution for Parmesan cheese: 4 ounces finely grated vegetarian Italian-style hard cheese. Choose microbial or vegetable rennet for a strictly vegetarian meal; traditional Parmesan commonly uses animal rennet. Milk remains an allergen.

Storage: Refrigerate polenta and topping in separate shallow airtight containers within 2 hours of cooking, or 1 hour if the surroundings exceed 90°F. Keep at 40°F or below and use within 3–4 days.
Reheating: For each portion, warm the polenta in a saucepan over low heat with 2–4 tablespoons water or milk, stirring and pressing out lumps until creamy. Reheat the topping separately in a skillet over medium-low heat. Both should reach 165°F, checked with a food thermometer; add the topping after reheating.
Freezing: Freeze cooled polenta and topping separately in airtight portions for up to 2 months. Thaw overnight in the refrigerator. Reheat as directed; the polenta may need extra whisking and liquid, and the spinach will be softer.
Declared allergens: milk. Check labels and cross-contact.
Meatless; use cheese made with microbial or vegetable rennet for a strictly vegetarian version. Contains dairy. Cornmeal is naturally gluten-free, but check cornmeal and cheese labels for ingredients and cross-contact information if needed.

Rice, Noodles and Pantry Magic

Rice and noodles give bold flavors somewhere to land. These six dinners turn familiar staples into generous plates, with vegetables doing real work and sauces that cling rather than pool.



Gochujang Egg Fried Rice brings chile heat and savory depth to rice and eggs. Tomato-Butter Pasta with Crispy Chickpeas pairs a glossy sauce with a crunchy finish. Cabbage and Pork Noodles stretches savory browned pork through ribbons of tender cabbage. One-Pot Smoky Rice and Beans builds flavor as the grains absorb their cooking liquid. Lemon-Garlic Broccoli Farfalle keeps things bright, while Roasted Pepper and Lentil Bolognese gives a pantry-centered sauce substantial texture.

Onions, garlic, canned tomatoes, beans and lentils recur across the chapter; cabbage and broccoli bring freshness without demanding elaborate preparation. The useful technique is simple: briefly warm spices or sturdy aromatics in fat before adding liquid. Stir and watch closely—the goal is a fuller fragrance, not darkened garlic.

Then balance richness with brightness. Lemon sharpens broccoli, tomatoes lift butter, and fermented chile paste gives eggs and rice a lively edge. Keep crisp toppings separate until serving so the last bite has as much contrast as the first.

Gochujang Egg Fried Rice

A complete skillet meal of chilled rice, eggs and inexpensive vegetables coated in a spicy-sweet Korean-inspired sauce. Cook the rice in two batches so a standard skillet can brown it rather than steam it.

Serves 4 · generous servings
Prep: 15 min **Cook:** 20 min **Rest:** 0 min **Total:** 35 min

Equipment: Stovetop, 12-inch skillet, Knife, Cutting board, Measuring cups and spoons, Small bowl, Medium bowl, Large heatproof serving bowl, Fork, Wide spatula, Food thermometer



Tip: For this yield, cook about 2 cups dry rice according to its package, then measure 6 cups cooked. Spread fresh rice in shallow containers and refrigerate promptly; never leave it on the counter to dry overnight. Cooking and chilling are additional to the listed time.

Ingredients

6 cups cooked long-grain white rice, fully chilled, approximately 900 g; not dry rice
6 eggs large eggs
4 tablespoons (canola or vegetable oil) neutral cooking oil, divided: 1 tablespoon for eggs, 1 for vegetables and 1 for each rice batch
3 cups green cabbage, thinly shredded, approximately 210 g
1 cup carrot, cut into 1/4-inch dice, approximately 130 g
1 cup frozen peas, kept frozen until needed
4 scallions scallions, thinly sliced, whites and greens separated
3 cloves garlic, finely chopped

For Sauce:

3 tablespoons gochujang, check label for wheat and soy
2 tablespoons reduced-sodium soy sauce
1 tablespoon unseasoned rice vinegar
1 teaspoon granulated sugar
2 tablespoons water

Gochujang Egg Fried Rice (continued)



Method

1. **Prepare before heating**. On a cutting board, dice the carrot, shred the cabbage, chop the garlic and slice the scallions, separating whites from greens. Using clean fingers, gently break the cold rice into loose grains in a large heatproof serving bowl. Allow about 8 minutes; crush clumps, not individual grains. Keep the peas frozen. Have all ingredients beside the stove before proceeding.

2. **Mix the sauce**. In a small bowl, use a fork to blend the gochujang, soy sauce, vinegar, sugar and 2 tablespoons water until no thick paste remains, about 1 minute. In a separate medium bowl, beat the eggs until whites and yolks are evenly blended. Neither mixture needs heat yet; the diluted sauce will spread more evenly over the rice.

3. **Scramble the eggs**. Heat the 12-inch skillet over medium heat for 1 minute, then add 1 tablespoon oil. Pour in the eggs. With a wide spatula, sweep slowly across the bottom, folding set egg toward the center for 2–3 minutes. When firm with no liquid egg and 160°F / 71°C at the center of the gathered curds, transfer to the emptied egg bowl.

4. **Cook the vegetables**. Return the skillet to medium-high heat and add 1 tablespoon oil, carrot and cabbage. Stir and turn from bottom to top every 30 seconds for 4–5 minutes, until cabbage edges brown and carrot loses its raw crunch. Add peas, scallion whites and garlic; stir for 1 minute. Transfer to the egg bowl. If garlic darkens, lower the heat immediately.

5. **Brown the first** rice batch. Add 1 tablespoon oil to the skillet over medium-high heat. Add half the rice, leaving the rest in the serving bowl. Spread into an even layer with the spatula and leave undisturbed for 90 seconds. Turn broad sections, then cook another 90 seconds. The grains should separate and show scattered golden patches; reduce to medium if they scorch.

Gochujang Egg Fried Rice (continued)



6. **Coat the first** batch. Lower the heat to medium. Stir the sauce again and add half to the skillet. Fold the rice repeatedly for 1 minute, scraping underneath so the paste cannot sit against the hot pan. Once evenly red and without puddles, transfer to the serving bowl alongside the remaining plain rice, keeping the cooked portion to one side.

7. **Finish the remaining** rice. Return the skillet to medium-high and add the final tablespoon oil. Scoop in the remaining plain rice, leaving the sauced portion behind. Repeat the 3-minute browning process, then lower to medium and fold in the remaining sauce for 1 minute. Scrape any browned, not blackened, bits into the rice for extra flavor.

8. **Combine and heat** through. Return the first rice batch, vegetables and eggs to the skillet over medium heat. Fold gently for 2–3 minutes, breaking eggs into bite-size curds and bringing rice from the bottom to the top. Check several places for 165°F / 74°C. If still cool, continue folding over medium-low heat; if wet, spread out and cook uncovered another minute.

9. **Serve**. Turn off the heat and fold in half the scallion greens. Divide the rice among four plates, scooping down through the mixture so each serving gets eggs and vegetables. Scatter the remaining greens over the tops. The finished rice should be moist but separate, with no sauce collecting beneath it.

Tip: Choose regular gochujang paste rather than a bottled gochujang dipping sauce. Heat and sweetness vary by brand; a mild paste is the simplest way to keep the stated quantity beginner-friendly.

Tip: Cold rice that feels slightly firm separates best. Very soft rice will still taste good, but pressing or repeatedly chopping it with the spatula makes it pasty.

Tip: Buy a whole cabbage when it suits your week's meals and shred only what you need. The remaining cabbage can supply slaw, noodle dishes or another skillet meal without buying a separate bagged mix.

Substitution for cooked long-grain white rice: 6 cups cooked, chilled long-grain brown rice. Use the same method; its firmer grains may need another 1–2 minutes to heat through.

Gochujang Egg Fried Rice (continued)



Substitution for unseasoned rice vinegar: 1 tablespoon fresh lime juice. Use in the sauce as directed; the flavor will be more citrus-forward.

Substitution for frozen peas: 1 cup frozen shelled edamame. Thaw first and add with the scallion whites. Adds soy; cook until hot and tender.

Storage: Use properly refrigerated cooked rice, preferably cooked the previous day. Refrigerate finished rice in shallow containers within 2 hours, or within 1 hour above 90°F. Keep at 40°F / 4°C or below and use within 3–4 days of the original rice cooking date, not **3–4** additional days after frying.

Reheating: Reheat only the portion needed in a skillet over medium-low heat with 1 tablespoon water per serving. Cover briefly to loosen the rice, then uncover and fold until steaming and 165°F / 74°C throughout.

Freezing: Freeze promptly in shallow, meal-size containers for up to 2 months for best quality. Thaw overnight in the refrigerator and reheat to 165°F / 74°C. Scallion greens soften after freezing.

Declared allergens: egg, wheat, soy. Check labels and cross-contact.
Meatless as written. Check the actual gochujang and soy sauce labels for wheat, soy and any additional allergens; formulations vary. No sesame oil or sesame garnish is used.

Tomato-Butter Pasta with Crispy Chickpeas

Rigatoni in a silky garlic tomato-butter sauce, finished with oven-crisped chickpeas. Four generous main-course servings.

Serves 4 · portions
Prep: 10 min **Cook:** 35 min **Rest:** 0 min **Total:** 45 min

Equipment: Oven, Stovetop, 18-by-13-inch rimmed sheet pan, 12-inch skillet, Heavy pot, Colander, Knife, Cutting board, Measuring cups and spoons, Heatproof measuring cup, Wooden spoon, Clean kitchen towel, Food thermometer

Ingredients

15 ounces (One 15-ounce can; approximately 250 grams drained) canned chickpeas, drained, rinsed and thoroughly dried
2 tablespoons olive oil, divided: 1 tablespoon for chickpeas and 1 tablespoon for sauce
2 1/2 teaspoons fine salt, divided: 2 teaspoons for pasta water, 1/4 teaspoon each for chickpeas and sauce
4 cloves garlic, peeled and finely chopped
1/4 teaspoon crushed red pepper
28 ounces canned crushed tomatoes, undrained
4 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into 4 pieces; divided
12 ounces dry rigatoni, uncooked
3 quarts water, for boiling pasta; reserve 1 cup before draining



Tip: Dry the rinsed chickpeas before chopping the garlic; the extra air-drying time helps their skins roast more evenly.

Tomato-Butter Pasta with Crispy Chickpeas (continued)



Method

1. **Heat the oven** to 425°F with a rack in the middle. Drain and rinse the chickpeas in a colander, then spread on a clean kitchen towel. Pat and gently roll them dry for 2–3 minutes; damp skins steam instead of crisping. Discard any loose skins that come away easily, without peeling every chickpea.

2. **On an** 18-by-13-inch rimmed sheet pan, toss the chickpeas with 1 tablespoon olive oil and **1/4 teaspoon** salt. Spread in one layer with space between them. Roast for 25–30 minutes, shaking the pan carefully halfway through, until golden with dry, lightly crisp surfaces. If still soft outside, roast another 3 minutes.

3. **While the chickpeas** roast, put 3 quarts water in a heavy pot over high heat. Finely chop the garlic on a cutting board and cut the butter into four pieces. Set a heatproof measuring cup beside the stove for reserving pasta water later; do not drain the pasta before collecting it.

4. **Heat the remaining** tablespoon olive oil in a 12-inch skillet over medium-low heat. Add the garlic and crushed red pepper. Stir continuously for 45–60 seconds, until fragrant but not browned. If the garlic starts coloring, lift the skillet off the burner briefly and add the tomatoes promptly to stop the frying.

5. **Carefully add the** crushed tomatoes, 1/4 teaspoon salt and two pieces of butter to the skillet. Bring to gentle bubbling over medium heat, then reduce to low. Simmer uncovered for **18–20** minutes, scraping the bottom every few minutes. The sauce should thicken enough that a spoon drawn through it leaves a brief trail; lower the heat if it spatters heavily.

6. **Once the pot** boils vigorously, add the remaining 2 teaspoons salt and the dry rigatoni. Stir along the bottom immediately and several times during cooking to prevent sticking. Maintain a steady boil and cook 1 minute less than the package's al dente time, usually 10–12 minutes. A bitten piece should have a firm center without a chalky crunch.

Tomato-Butter Pasta with Crispy Chickpeas (continued)



7. Scoop 1 cup pasta water into the heatproof measuring cup, then drain the rigatoni in the colander without rinsing. Add it directly to the simmering sauce with 1/4 cup reserved water. Fold gently with the wooden spoon for 1–2 minutes over medium-low heat, lifting pasta from the bottom so every tube becomes coated.

8. Turn off the skillet heat and fold in the remaining two butter pieces until melted and glossy, about 30 seconds. If the sauce looks stiff or pasty, add reserved water 1 tablespoon at a time. If watery, simmer briefly before adding more water. Stop when sauce clings to the ridges without pooling beneath the pasta.

9. Remove the chickpeas from the oven when their surfaces are crisp and their centers remain slightly tender. Divide the hot pasta among four bowls and scatter the chickpeas evenly over each portion. Keep them on the surface rather than folding them into the sauce, which quickly softens their crusts.

Tip: Judge roasted chickpeas by their dry exterior, not a completely hard center. Baking until hard throughout makes them unpleasantly tough as they cool.

Tip: For a head start, make the tomato sauce up to 3 days ahead. Reheat it before adding freshly cooked pasta, and roast the chickpeas just before serving for the best contrast.

Tip: Store-brand crushed tomatoes and chickpeas work well here. Compare drained yields when choosing beans; a larger can is only useful if the extra beans have another planned meal.

Substitution for dry rigatoni: 12 ounces dry penne or fusilli. Use the package cooking time as your starting point and finish in the sauce as directed.

Substitution for canned crushed tomatoes: 28 ounces canned whole peeled tomatoes, including their juice. Crush thoroughly by hand in a bowl before adding; simmer until the pieces soften and the sauce reaches the stated thickness.

Tomato-Butter Pasta with Crispy Chickpeas (continued)



Substitution for unsalted butter: 3 tablespoons olive oil. Use 1 tablespoon in the tomato simmer and 2 tablespoons off heat at the finish. This replaces only the butter; retain the original 2 tablespoons olive oil.

Storage: Refrigerate pasta and chickpeas in separate shallow containers within 2 hours of cooking, or within 1 hour above 90°F. Store at 40°F / 4°C or below and use within 3–4 days. Chickpeas lose crispness in storage.

Reheating: Reheat pasta in a skillet over medium-low heat with 2 tablespoons water per portion, stirring gently and adding more water as needed, until it reaches 165°F / 74°C. Re-crisp chickpeas on a sheet pan at 400°F for 8–12 minutes, until hot throughout; check for **165**°F / 74°C. Add them after reheating the pasta.

Freezing: Freeze cooled pasta and sauce together in meal-size airtight containers for up to 2 months. Thaw overnight in the refrigerator and reheat as directed; pasta will be softer. For better texture, freeze only the sauce and cook fresh pasta and chickpeas when serving.

Declared allergens: milk, wheat. Check labels and cross-contact.
Meatless. Contains wheat and milk; some pasta also contains egg. Check the actual pasta and canned-product labels for allergens and dietary suitability. The olive-oil substitution removes the butter but does not establish allergy safety.

Cabbage and Pork Noodles

Ginger-garlic pork, browned cabbage and pantry noodles tossed in a bright, savory sauce. Makes four generous main-course portions.

Serves 4 · portions
Prep: 15 min **Cook:** 25 min **Rest:** 0 min **Total:** 40 min

Equipment: Stovetop, Heavy pot, 12-inch skillet, Knife, Cutting board, Colander, Food thermometer, Large plate, Small bowl, Heatproof measuring cup, Measuring spoons, Long-handled cooking spoon, Tongs



Tip: Cut thick cabbage ribs more thinly than the leaves so both soften at roughly the same rate. Save the core and unused cabbage for soup or slaw.

Ingredients

12 ounces Spaghetti, dry
3 quarts Water, for boiling noodles; reserve 1 cup before draining
12 ounces Ground pork, raw, preferably about 80–85% lean
1 1/2 pounds Green cabbage, trimmed weight, core removed, leaves cut into 1/2-inch ribbons
2 tablespoons Canola oil, divided into three 2-teaspoon portions
4 medium Scallions, thinly sliced, whites and greens kept separate
4 cloves Garlic, finely chopped
1 tablespoon Fresh ginger, peeled and finely chopped

For Sauce:

3 tablespoons Reduced-sodium soy sauce
2 tablespoons Unseasoned rice vinegar, divided
2 teaspoons Light brown sugar, packed
1/4 teaspoon Crushed red pepper flakes

Cabbage and Pork Noodles (continued)



Method

1. **Prepare before heating**. On the cutting board, slice the cabbage into 1/2-inch ribbons, cutting long ribbons crosswise once for easier tossing. Slice the scallions and chop the garlic and ginger; keep everything separate. Allow about 10 minutes. Dry wet cabbage thoroughly so it browns rather than steams. Wash hands and any surfaces that contact raw pork.

2. **Start the water** and sauce. Put the 3 quarts water in the heavy pot over high heat. While it approaches a boil, stir the soy sauce, 1 tablespoon vinegar, brown sugar and pepper flakes in the small bowl for about 30 seconds, until the sugar mostly dissolves. Reserve the remaining tablespoon vinegar for finishing; do not salt the water.

3. **Brown the pork**. Heat the skillet over medium-high for 1 minute, then add 2 teaspoons oil and the pork. Press into a loose layer with the cooking spoon. Leave undisturbed for 2 minutes, then break into small crumbles and cook 3–4 minutes longer. Check several larger clumps with the thermometer for 160°F/71°C. Transfer to the plate, leaving the drippings.

4. **Brown the first** cabbage batch. Add 2 teaspoons oil and half the cabbage to the skillet over medium-high heat. Spread it out, leave for 2 minutes, then turn with tongs every minute for another 2–3 minutes. Look for golden patches and flexible leaves with firm centers. If liquid pools, stop stirring briefly and let it evaporate. Transfer to the pork plate.

5. **Cook the noodles** while finishing the cabbage. Add spaghetti to the boiling pot and stir with tongs until submerged and separated. Boil for 1 minute less than the package's minimum time, stirring occasionally. Meanwhile, add the final 2 teaspoons oil and remaining cabbage to the skillet; brown as before, about 4–5 minutes. Lower the skillet heat if edges blacken rather than turn golden.

Cabbage and Pork Noodles (continued)



6. **Add the aromatics**. Reduce the skillet to medium. Push cabbage aside, then stir scallion whites, garlic and ginger through the oily center for 45–60 seconds, until fragrant but not browned. Fold them through the cabbage. Return pork, its juices and the first cabbage batch; stir for 1 minute. If the noodles need longer, take the skillet off the heat.

7. **Reserve water and** drain. Taste a noodle: it should bend easily but retain a thin firm center. Using the heatproof measuring cup, carefully reserve 1 cup cooking water before draining through the colander. Do not rinse. Return the empty pot to the stovetop; its larger capacity will make the final toss easier than using the full skillet.

8. **Toss and reduce**. Put noodles, the skillet contents, sauce and 1/2 cup reserved water into the pot over medium heat. Lift and turn repeatedly with tongs for 2–3 minutes, separating tangled strands and scraping the bottom. Stop when noodles are tender and glossy with no watery puddle. If dry or sticky, add reserved water 2 tablespoons at a time; if soupy, toss another minute.

9. **Finish and portion**. Turn off the heat. Fold in the remaining tablespoon vinegar and half the scallion greens for about 20 seconds. Taste a strand with a piece of cabbage; the finish should be savory and bright. Divide among four bowls with tongs, then spoon the pork and cabbage left at the bottom over each portion. Scatter with the remaining scallion greens.

Tip: Cabbage shrinks substantially, but crowding all of it into the skillet at once traps steam. Two batches give browned flavor without requiring a larger pan.

Tip: The noodles continue absorbing sauce after cooking. Leave them slightly looser in the pot than you want them in the bowl, especially if serving takes several minutes.

Tip: For economical shopping, compare dry spaghetti with specialty noodles by unit price. If pork comes in a 1-pound package, freeze the unused 4 ounces promptly in a thin, labeled packet for another meal.

Substitution for Ground pork: 12 ounces ground turkey. Cook to 165°F/74°C rather than the pork temperature. Lean turkey may brown less deeply; avoid overcooking it while waiting for dark color.

Cabbage and Pork Noodles (continued)



Substitution for Spaghetti: 12 ounces dry linguine. Use its package timing and reserve cooking water as directed. Wheat remains an allergen.

Substitution for Unseasoned rice vinegar: 2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar. Divide as directed; the finished sauce will have a slightly fruitier acidity.

Storage: Refrigerate leftovers in shallow containers within 2 hours of cooking, or within 1 hour if the room or outdoor temperature exceeds 90°F. Keep at 40°F/4°C or below and use within 3–4 days.

Reheating: For each portion, add 2 tablespoons water to a skillet with the noodles. Heat over medium-low, turning frequently for about 5–7 minutes and adding small splashes of water if needed, until the center reaches 165°F/74°C. Reheat only the portion needed.

Freezing: Freeze promptly in individual airtight portions for up to 2 months for best quality. Thaw overnight in the refrigerator before reheating. The cabbage will be softer and the noodles less springy than when freshly cooked.

Declared allergens: wheat, soy. Check labels and cross-contact.
Contains pork, wheat and soy. Check the actual noodle and soy sauce labels for ingredients and additional allergens; some noodles contain egg. No additional side dish is included.

One-Pot Smoky Rice and Beans

A generous, Mexican-inspired pantry dinner of smoky tomato rice, black beans and sweet pepper, finished with lime and cilantro. Makes four complete main-course servings; no additional sides are included.

Serves 4 · generous servings
Prep: 15 min **Cook:** 35 min **Rest:** 10 min **Total:** 60 min

Equipment: 4- to 5-quart heavy pot with tight-fitting lid, Stovetop, Knife, Cutting board, Colander, Measuring cups and spoons, Wooden spoon, Fork, Food thermometer

Ingredients

2 tablespoons olive oil
1 medium yellow onion, cut into 1/4-inch dice, about 1 cup
1 large red bell pepper, stemmed, seeded and cut into **1/2**-inch dice
3 cloves garlic, finely chopped
2 tablespoons tomato paste
2 teaspoons smoked paprika
1 teaspoon ground cumin
1 1/2 cups dry long-grain white rice, rinsed and drained thoroughly
14 1/2 ounces (One 14.5-ounce can) canned diced tomatoes, undrained
2 cups water
30 ounces (Two 15-ounce cans) canned black beans, rinsed and drained; about 3 cups drained beans
3/4 teaspoon fine salt, plus more to taste
1 large lime, half for squeezing, half cut into 4 wedges
1/4 cup cilantro, chopped leaves and tender stems, loosely packed; divided



Tip: Choose a heavy pot with a lid that sits snugly. A wide, shallow pan loses more steam and is not a direct substitute for this covered-rice method.

One-Pot Smoky Rice and Beans (continued)



Method

1. **Prepare everything before** heating the pot. Dice the onion and pepper and chop the garlic on the cutting board. Rinse the rice in a fine-holed colander until the runoff is mostly clear, then drain for 2 minutes. Rinse and drain the beans separately. Measure the spices, tomato paste and water so nothing waits while the garlic cooks.

2. **Set the heavy** pot over medium heat and add the oil, onion and pepper. Cook for 7–9 minutes, stirring with the wooden spoon every minute and scraping across the bottom. The onion should turn translucent and the pepper soften around its edges. If the onion browns sharply before softening, reduce the heat to medium-low.

3. **Add the tomato** paste and stir for 2 minutes over medium-low heat, smearing it across the pot bottom so it darkens slightly from bright red to brick red. Add the garlic, smoked paprika and cumin; stir for 30 seconds, just until fragrant. Do not let the spices blacken; move the pot briefly off the burner if they catch.

4. **Add the drained** rice to the pot. Stir over medium heat for 1 minute, folding from the bottom until the grains are evenly coated with the red seasoning. This distributes the flavor before liquid goes in. Add the undrained tomatoes and measured water, scraping up any reddish deposits while leaving any genuinely burned black patches undisturbed.

5. **Fold in the** drained beans and measured salt. Bring to a steady simmer over medium-high heat, about 3–4 minutes, stirring once to separate rice clumps. Level the mixture with the spoon. Once bubbles break across the surface, cover tightly and immediately turn the burner to its lowest setting; sustained boiling can scorch the bottom before the rice softens.

One-Pot Smoky Rice and Beans (continued)



6. **Cook covered for** 18–20 minutes without stirring or repeatedly lifting the lid. Listen for a gentle simmer rather than vigorous bubbling. Check at 18 minutes: the surface should show small steam holes with no standing liquid. Taste a few grains from the center; they should be tender without a chalky core.

7. **If the rice** is firm and liquid remains, cover and cook on low for another 3–5 minutes. If firm but dry, add 2 tablespoons water and cover for 3–5 minutes. If tender but visibly wet, cook uncovered on low for 1–2 minutes. Turn off the heat, cover and rest for 10 minutes so moisture redistributes.

8. **Uncover and gently** lift and separate the rice with a fork, working from the edges inward without mashing the beans. Squeeze in the juice from half the lime and fold in 2 tablespoons cilantro. Taste and adjust salt. Divide among four bowls, scatter over the remaining cilantro and add the lime wedges for squeezing at the table.

Tip: Judge the rice itself rather than the softness of the beans: canned beans are already cooked, while a chalky rice center means the covered cooking stage needs longer.

Tip: If you smell scorching, turn off the heat and transfer the unburned upper portion to another pot without scraping the bottom. Add 2 tablespoons water if the rice is still firm, cover and finish over low heat.

Tip: For a lower-cost pantry variation, replace the canned beans with 3 cups fully cooked, drained black beans. Freeze extra cooked beans in 3-cup portions for another batch.

Tip: Freeze leftover tomato paste in measured 1-tablespoon portions so an opened can can supply several dinners without waste.

Substitution for canned black beans: Two 15-ounce cans pinto beans, rinsed and drained. Use the same method; fold gently because pinto beans can split more readily.

Substitution for red bell pepper: 1.5 cups frozen diced bell pepper. Add directly from frozen and cook until released moisture evaporates before adding the tomato paste.

Substitution for cilantro: 1/4 cup chopped flat-leaf parsley. Use the same divided amounts for a milder herbal finish.

One-Pot Smoky Rice and Beans (continued)



Storage: Promptly divide leftovers into shallow containers and refrigerate within 2 hours of cooking, or within 1 hour if the room is above 90°F. Do not leave rice on the counter to cool completely. Keep at 40°F / 4°C or below and use within 3–4 days.

Reheating: Put each portion in a saucepan with 1–2 tablespoons water. Cover and heat over medium-low, stirring gently several times, until steaming throughout and a food thermometer reads 165°F / 74°C. Add another small splash of water if the rice sticks before it is hot.

Freezing: After prompt cooling, freeze in shallow, airtight meal-size containers for up to 2 months for best texture. Thaw overnight in the refrigerator and reheat as directed. Add fresh lime and cilantro after reheating if available.

Allergens: not certified free of allergens; check ingredients and packaged-food labels. Vegan as written. No major U.S. allergens are intentionally included. Check actual canned bean, tomato and tomato paste labels for added ingredients and allergen statements. Brown rice is not a direct substitution because its liquid and cooking requirements differ.

Lemon-Garlic Broccoli Farfalle

Bow-tie pasta and broccoli tossed with gently cooked garlic, lemon and a light Parmesan sauce made with reserved pasta water. A complete meatless main course.

Serves 4 · generous servings
Prep: 15 min **Cook:** 20 min **Rest:** 0 min **Total:** 35 min

Equipment: Stovetop, Heavy pot, at least 6-quart capacity, 12-inch skillet, Knife, Cutting board, Colander, Measuring cups and spoons, Heatproof measuring jug, Fine grater, Wooden spoon



Ingredients

4 quarts Water, for boiling pasta; reserve 2 cups before draining
2 teaspoons Fine salt, for the cooking water, plus additional to taste
12 ounces Dry farfalle, uncooked
1 1/2 pounds Broccoli, whole purchase weight; tough stem ends discarded, remaining stems peeled and diced, florets cut small
4 tablespoons Olive oil
6 cloves Garlic, peeled and thinly sliced
1/4 teaspoon Crushed red pepper flakes
2 teaspoons Finely grated lemon zest, from approximately 1 large lemon, yellow surface only
3 tablespoons Lemon juice, freshly squeezed; divided
3 ounces Parmesan cheese, finely grated; divide into 2 ounces for sauce and 1 ounce for serving
1/2 teaspoon Ground black pepper

Tip: Use the broccoli stems: their peeled centers are sweet and tender. Dice them smaller than the florets so both finish together, reducing waste without adding another ingredient.

Tip: Farfalle's pinched center stays firmer than its wings. Test that center rather than judging doneness from a soft outer edge.

Lemon-Garlic Broccoli Farfalle (continued)



Method

1. **Set the heavy** pot over high heat with 4 quarts water and cover if a lid is available. While it heats, prepare the broccoli on a cutting board: cut florets into 1-inch pieces, peel the fibrous outside from the stems, then dice the tender centers into 1/4-inch pieces. Small, even pieces will cook alongside the pasta.

2. **During the remaining** heating time, slice the garlic thinly with a knife. Finely grate the lemon's yellow skin, avoiding bitter white pith, and measure the juice separately. Finely grate the Parmesan and separate the sauce and serving portions. Have everything beside the stove before cooking the garlic; it can darken quickly.

3. **Once the water** boils vigorously, add the salt and farfalle. Stir thoroughly with a wooden spoon, reaching across the pot bottom to separate the pieces. Maintain a steady boil over medium-high heat, uncovered. Set a timer for 5 minutes less than the package's al dente time; the broccoli will join the pasta for its final minutes.

4. **Meanwhile**, combine olive oil and sliced garlic in the cold 12-inch skillet. Set over medium-low heat and cook for 3–5 minutes, stirring frequently, until the garlic smells sweet and its edges turn pale gold. Add pepper flakes for the final 20 seconds. Remove the skillet from the heat immediately; if garlic turns dark brown, replace it and the oil rather than carrying bitterness into dinner.

5. **When the pasta** timer rings, add all the broccoli to the pot and stir carefully. Return to a boil and cook for about 4–5 minutes. Bite a cooled bow tie: its thick center should have slight resistance but no chalky core. Broccoli stems should yield to a knife. If needed, continue boiling in 1-minute increments.

6. **Before draining**, scoop 2 cups cooking water into a heatproof measuring jug. Drain the pasta and broccoli in a colander without rinsing. Return the skillet to medium-low heat, carefully add 3/4 cup reserved water, then add the drained mixture. Stir and fold from the bottom for 1–2 minutes, lightly crushing a few broccoli pieces to help thicken the sauce.

Lemon-Garlic Broccoli Farfalle (continued)



7. Remove the skillet from the heat and wait 30 seconds for vigorous bubbling to stop. Add the zest, 2 tablespoons lemon juice and black pepper. Sprinkle in the 2-ounce Parmesan portion in three additions, stirring thoroughly between each. Add reserved water 2 tablespoons at a time until the cheese melts into a glossy coating; avoid direct heat, which can make it clump.

8. Taste a forkful and stir in the remaining tablespoon lemon juice. Add salt only if needed. The sauce should cling to the folds with a little moisture beneath; if tight or sticky, fold in another splash of reserved water. Divide among four bowls, distributing broccoli evenly, and finish with the remaining 1 ounce Parmesan. Serve hot.

Tip: Grate Parmesan into a fluffy pile rather than coarse shreds. Shelf-stable powdered cheese and coarse shreds are less reliable for this light emulsion.

Tip: For a make-ahead shortcut, cut the broccoli and grate the cheese up to 2 days ahead; refrigerate separately. Cook and sauce the pasta together just before eating.

Substitution for Dry farfalle: 12 ounces dry penne or rotini. Use the package’s al dente timing and add broccoli for the final 4–5 minutes.

Substitution for Broccoli: 20 ounces plain frozen broccoli florets. Add directly from frozen for the final 3–4 minutes, allowing the water to return to a boil. Large florets may need longer; check that the centers are hot and tender.

Substitution for Parmesan cheese: 3 ounces finely grated Grana Padano. Use the same divided amounts and off-heat method. Contains milk; check the actual cheese label.

Storage: Refrigerate in shallow airtight containers within 2 hours of cooking, or within 1 hour when the ambient temperature exceeds 90°F. Keep at 40°F/4°C or below and use within 3–4 days.

Lemon-Garlic Broccoli Farfalle (continued)



Reheating: For each portion, add 2 tablespoons water to a skillet with the pasta. Cover and warm over medium-low heat, stirring occasionally and adding more water as needed, until the center reaches 165°F/74°C. The broccoli will soften further.

Freezing: Best freshly cooked, but portions can be frozen promptly in airtight containers for up to 2 months for best quality. Thaw overnight in the refrigerator and reheat as directed; expect softer broccoli and a less silky sauce.

Declared allergens: wheat, milk. Check labels and cross-contact.
Contains wheat and milk. Choose Parmesan made with vegetarian rennet if a strictly vegetarian dish is required. Check actual pasta and cheese labels for ingredients and any additional allergens.

Roasted Pepper and Lentil Bolognese

A deep tomato and roasted-pepper sauce with tender lentils and enough texture to cling to pasta. Makes four generous complete dinner portions.

Serves 4 · portions
Prep: 15 min **Cook:** 50 min **Rest:** 0 min **Total:** 65 min

Equipment: Stovetop, 12-inch skillet, Saucepan with lid, Knife and cutting board, Measuring cups and spoons, Food thermometer

Ingredients

2 tablespoons Olive oil
1 medium Yellow onion, finely diced
1 medium Carrot, scrubbed and finely diced
3 cloves Garlic, finely chopped
2 tablespoons Tomato paste
1 cup Red lentils, dry, rinsed and drained
28 ounces Crushed tomatoes, canned, undrained
8 ounces Roasted red peppers, drained jarred weight, finely chopped
3 cups Water, for sauce; pasta cooking water additional as directed
1 teaspoon Dried oregano
1 teaspoon Fine salt, divided: 1/2 teaspoon sauce, 1/2 teaspoon pasta water
12 ounces Dry spaghetti
2 teaspoons Red wine vinegar



Tip: Jarred roasted peppers are convenient; buy a size used by several recipes and refrigerate the remainder according to its label.

Tip: Red lentils soften into this sauce. Green or brown lentils require different cooking time and liquid and are not a direct swap.

Roasted Pepper and Lentil Bolognese (continued)



Method

1. **Set a large** saucepan over medium heat and add the oil. Add the onion and carrot and cook for 8–10 minutes, stirring frequently, until softened and lightly golden. Keep the pieces small so they disappear into the sauce. If the edges darken while the centers stay hard, lower the heat rather than adding more oil.

2. **Stir in the** garlic for 30 seconds, then add the tomato paste. Spread the paste across the pan and cook for 1–2 minutes, stirring, until it turns brick red and smells sweet rather than raw. Do not let the garlic blacken; have the tomatoes ready to stop the frying promptly.

3. **Add the rinsed** lentils, crushed tomatoes, chopped roasted peppers, measured water, oregano and 1/2 teaspoon salt. Scrape the bottom thoroughly with a wooden spoon. Bring just to a boil, then reduce to a gentle uncovered simmer. The surface should make occasional soft bubbles rather than splash across the stove.

4. **Simmer for** 25–35 minutes, stirring every few minutes and scraping the corners where lentils settle. Test several lentils: they should crush easily without a chalky center. If the sauce becomes stiff before they soften, stir in additional water 1/4 cup at a time; do not simply turn the heat higher.

5. **While the sauce** simmers, bring a separate pot of water to a boil. Add the remaining 1/2 teaspoon salt and the spaghetti. Stir well to separate the strands and cook according to its package, testing a minute before the stated time. The center should retain a little firmness but not crunch.

6. **Before draining**, scoop out 1 cup of the cloudy pasta cooking water into a heatproof measuring jug. Drain the pasta without rinsing. Return it to its pot and add enough lentil sauce to coat it generously, keeping any extra sauce warm. Reserving the water before draining is much easier than correcting dry pasta afterward.

7. **Add the vinegar** to the remaining sauce and stir, then taste with a cooled spoon. Toss the sauced spaghetti over low heat for 1 minute, adding reserved pasta water 2 tablespoons at a time until the sauce clings in a glossy coating. Stop adding water when no puddle remains beneath the pasta.

Roasted Pepper and Lentil Bolognese (continued)



8. **Divide the pasta** among four warmed bowls, lifting and turning the strands with tongs rather than compressing them. Spoon any remaining sauce over the tops. Serve while the sauce is loose enough to move between the strands; lentils thicken as they stand, so loosen leftovers with water before reheating rather than adding more fat.

Tip: Freeze surplus sauce separately from pasta for better texture and a faster second dinner.

Storage: Refrigerate promptly in shallow containers within 2 hours, or 1 hour above 90 F. Keep at 40 F / 4 C or below and use within 3–4 days.

Reheating: Reheat covered in a saucepan or skillet, adding a little water as needed and stirring for even heating, until the center reaches 165 F / 74 C.

Freezing: Freeze promptly in meal-size airtight containers for up to 2 months for best quality. Thaw in the refrigerator before reheating.

Declared allergens: wheat. Check labels and cross-contact.
Check every packaged ingredient and substitution label for allergens and cross-contact.

The Smart Seafood Chapter

Seafood earns its place at dinner with crisp edges, lively sauces and enough potatoes, rice or vegetables to make a generous plate. Frozen fillets, canned fish and shrimp each offer a different starting point; choose plain products so you control the seasoning.



Crispy Fish Tacos with Lime Slaw bring crunch and cool acidity. Lemon Pollock with Potatoes and Peas pairs delicate fish with familiar staples, while Tomato-Braised Sardines on Toast turns a pantry tin into a saucy supper. Shrimp, Corn and Rice Skillet gathers dinner in one pan. Salmon-Potato Cakes with Dill Yogurt puts tender centers against browned crusts, and Coconut-Tomato Fish Curry finishes the chapter with a fragrant sauce worth catching with every bite.

Lemon, lime, cabbage, potatoes and canned tomatoes recur with purpose, not sameness. The flavor strategy is simple: build a savory base, then use citrus or tangy yogurt to brighten the finished plate.

For raw fish, learn one useful habit: check the thickest part with a food thermometer, aiming for 145°F / 63°C. Insert the probe sideways into thin fillets. Stop cooking once they reach temperature; extra time can turn a tender piece dry. Thaw frozen seafood in the refrigerator, ready for tomorrow’s dinner.

Crispy Fish Tacos with Lime Slaw

Shallow-fried white fish in a seasoned cornmeal crust, served in warm corn tortillas with lime slaw and cilantro-yogurt sauce.

Serves 4 · servings, 3 tacos each
Prep: 25 min **Cook:** 20 min **Rest:** 0 min **Total:** 45 min

Equipment: 12-inch skillet, Stovetop, Knife, Cutting board, Food thermometer, Measuring cups and spoons, Large bowl, Small bowl, Two shallow dishes, Fork, Tongs, Thin spatula, Sheet pan, Paper towels, Clean kitchen towel, Plate

Ingredients

For Fish:

1 1/2 pounds skinless, boneless pollock or cod fillets, thawed in the refrigerator if frozen; drained and patted dry

For Slaw:

4 cups green cabbage, finely shredded, about 10 ounces
1 medium carrot, trimmed and cut into fine matchsticks

Other ingredients:

4 tablespoons lime juice, from about 2 limes; divided
1 teaspoon fine salt, divided

For Sauce:

1/2 cup plain whole-milk yogurt, stirred smooth
1/4 cup cilantro, finely chopped leaves and tender stems

For Coating:

1/2 cup all-purpose flour
1/2 cup fine yellow cornmeal, not coarse polenta
1 teaspoon smoked paprika
1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
2 eggs large eggs

For Fish:

1/2 cup canola oil, for shallow-frying

For To serve:

12 tortillas 6-inch corn tortillas



Tip: For better value, compare frozen plain pollock and cod by price per pound rather than package size. Avoid pre-seasoned fillets, which change both the salt level and the coating.

Crispy Fish Tacos with Lime Slaw (continued)



Method

1. **Prepare the slaw** first. In a large bowl, toss the finely shredded cabbage and carrot matchsticks with 2 tablespoons lime juice and 1/4 teaspoon salt. Squeeze gently with clean hands for about 30 seconds, just until slightly softened but still springy. Leave at room temperature while preparing the fish; this brief standing time seasons the vegetables without making them limp.

2. **Make the sauce**. In a small bowl, stir the yogurt, remaining 2 tablespoons lime juice, cilantro and 1/4 teaspoon salt with a fork for about 30 seconds. It should fall from the fork in thick ribbons rather than sit in a stiff mound. Refrigerate while you cook; stir again before serving if liquid separates.

3. **Warm the tortillas** before frying. Heat the dry 12-inch skillet over medium heat for 2 minutes. Warm the tortillas two at a time for about 20–30 seconds per side, turning with tongs, until flexible with a few toasted spots. Stack on a plate inside a clean kitchen towel and cover completely to retain moisture. Reduce the heat if they become brittle.

4. **Set up the** coating station. Off the heat, combine flour, cornmeal, paprika, cumin and the remaining 1/2 teaspoon salt in one shallow dish. Beat the eggs in a second dish until no separate strands remain. On the cutting board, cut the dry fish crosswise into strips about 1 inch wide, keeping their thickness as even as possible.

5. **Coat the fish** in two batches. Dip each strip into egg, lift and let excess drip for several seconds, then press both sides lightly into the cornmeal mixture. Shake off loose coating and place on a dry plate. Keep one hand for egg and the other for dry coating to prevent thick, clumpy patches. Coat the second batch while the first fries.

Crispy Fish Tacos with Lime Slaw (continued)



6. **Heat the oil** in the skillet over medium-high heat for about 2 minutes. A pinch of coating should sizzle immediately without turning dark within seconds. Carefully lower half the fish into the oil, leaving space between pieces. Fry undisturbed for 2–3 minutes, until the underside is golden and releases readily when nudged with a thin spatula.

7. **Turn each strip** gently with the spatula and fry for another 2–3 minutes. Check the thickest pieces from the side with a food thermometer: fish must reach 145°F / 63°C, with opaque flesh that flakes easily. Lower the heat to medium if the crust darkens before the center reaches temperature; continue cooking and check again.

8. **Transfer cooked fish** to a paper-towel-lined sheet pan in one uncovered layer; do not stack or cover, which traps steam. Let the oil recover for about 30 seconds, then fry the remaining fish as above. If loose crumbs begin smoking, remove the skillet from the heat briefly and carefully lift out dark crumbs before continuing. Discard leftover raw coating and egg.

9. **Assemble at the** table. Toss the slaw again and lift it from its accumulated liquid with tongs. Divide the fish among the 12 warm tortillas, breaking larger strips as needed. Add a modest mound of slaw and spoon over the sauce, leaving some crisp crust exposed. Serve three tacos per person with any remaining slaw alongside.

Tip: Thaw frozen fish overnight on a tray in the refrigerator. Blot again just before coating: thawed fillets can release more moisture after the first drying.

Tip: Use fine cornmeal for a thin, crisp crust. Coarse cornmeal stays noticeably gritty during this short cooking time.

Tip: For advance preparation, shred the vegetables and mix the sauce up to a day ahead, refrigerating separately. Add the slaw's lime juice and salt only when beginning dinner.

Substitution for skinless, boneless pollock or cod fillets: 1.5 pounds skinless, boneless tilapia fillets. Cut into similar-width strips. Thin pieces may cook faster; check for 145°F / 63°C rather than relying on the clock.

Crispy Fish Tacos with Lime Slaw (continued)



Substitution for plain whole-milk yogurt: 1/2 cup sour cream. Use the same lime juice and cilantro. This makes a richer, slightly thicker sauce and still contains milk.

Substitution for cilantro: 1/4 cup finely chopped scallion greens. Provides a fresh, mild onion flavor without requiring another sauce ingredient.

Storage: Store fish, slaw, sauce and tortillas separately. Refrigerate perishables in shallow containers within 2 hours, or within 1 hour above 90°F / 32°C, at 40°F / 4°C or below. Use cooked fish within 3 days; use dressed slaw and sauce within 3 days. The slaw will soften.

Reheating: Place fish on a sheet pan in a 400°F / 205°C oven for approximately 10–15 minutes, until the center reaches 165°F / 74°C. Rewarm tortillas in a dry skillet. Keep slaw and sauce cold, and assemble only after reheating.

Freezing: Freeze cooled cooked fish in a single layer, then transfer to an airtight freezer container for up to 2 months for best quality. Reheat from frozen at 400°F / 205°C until crisp and 165°F / 74°C throughout, approximately 18–25 minutes. Do not freeze the dressed slaw or yogurt sauce.

Declared allergens: fish, wheat, egg, milk. Check labels and cross-contact.
Contains fish, wheat, egg and milk. Corn tortillas do not make this recipe gluten-free because the coating contains wheat flour. Check actual tortilla, spice and dairy labels for additional allergens and cross-contact information.

Lemon Pollock with Potatoes and Peas

Oven-roasted pollock and crisp-edged potatoes with lemon-garlic butter peas. Includes the potato and vegetable sides for a complete four-serving meal.

Serves 4 · complete plates
Prep: 15 min **Cook:** 40 min **Rest:** 0 min **Total:** 55 min

Equipment: Oven, 18-by-13-inch rimmed sheet pan, Stovetop, Small saucepan, Knife, Cutting board, Measuring cups and spoons, Spatula, Spoon, Fine grater, Food thermometer, Paper towels



Tip: Thaw frozen pollock overnight in the refrigerator on a tray. If vacuum-packed, follow the package's instructions about removing or opening the packaging before thawing.

Ingredients

1 1/2 pounds (680 g) Yukon Gold potatoes, scrubbed, skin on, cut into 3/4-inch chunks
2 tablespoons olive oil, divided: 1 1/2 tablespoons for potatoes, 1/2 tablespoon for fish
3/4 teaspoon fine salt, divided: 1/2 teaspoon for potatoes, 1/4 teaspoon for fish
1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper, divided equally between potatoes and fish
1 1/2 pounds (680 g) boneless, skinless pollock fillets, four approximately 6-ounce portions, fully thawed if frozen
1 medium lemon, finely grate 1 teaspoon zest and squeeze 2 tablespoons juice
3 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into three pieces
2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
12 ounces (340 g) frozen green peas, kept frozen until cooking
1/4 cup (60 ml) water, for steaming the peas
2 tablespoons flat-leaf parsley, finely chopped

Lemon Pollock with Potatoes and Peas (continued)



Method

1. **Heat the oven** to 425°F with a rack in the middle. During the approximately 15-minute preheat, scrub the potatoes and cut them on the cutting board into even **3/4**-inch chunks. Dry them with paper towels: surface moisture makes them steam rather than brown. Leave the skins on for texture and less preparation.

2. **On the rimmed** sheet pan, toss the potatoes with 1 1/2 tablespoons oil, 1/2 teaspoon salt and 1/4 teaspoon pepper. Spread into one layer with broad cut surfaces touching the metal. Roast for 20 minutes without moving them; the undersides should develop golden patches and release with gentle pressure from a spatula.

3. **Meanwhile**, spend about 8 minutes preparing the remaining ingredients at the counter. Grate the lemon zest before squeezing the juice; reserve the measured teaspoon of zest and 2 tablespoons juice separately. Chop the garlic and parsley. Pat the fish thoroughly dry, feel for stray bones and remove any found. Wash hands and clean the board after handling raw fish.

4. **After the potatoes'** first 20 minutes, use the spatula to turn them, scraping underneath rather than tearing off the browned crust. Roast another 5–8 minutes at 425°F, until a knife enters with slight resistance. If still hard in the center, give them another 3–5 minutes before adding the fish; pollock cooks much faster than potatoes.

5. **Push the potatoes** toward the pan's edges, keeping them in one layer. Place the fish in the cleared center without overlapping. Rub with the remaining 1/2 tablespoon oil, 1/4 teaspoon salt and 1/4 teaspoon pepper. Fold very thin tail ends underneath themselves for more even thickness. Roast at 425°F for 10–12 minutes, checking early for thin pieces.

6. **As soon as** the fish enters the oven, melt the butter in the saucepan over medium-low heat, about 1 minute. Add the garlic and stir for 30–45 seconds, just until fragrant, not brown. Immediately add the frozen peas and measured water. Raise to medium and simmer uncovered for 4–6 minutes, stirring from the bottom, until hot and tender.

7. **Check the saucepan**: there should be a shallow, glossy coating of liquid, not a pool of broth. If watery, simmer another 1–2 minutes, stirring gently. Turn off the heat and stir in the reserved lemon zest, juice and parsley. Keep off the heat while checking the fish; prolonged boiling dulls both the lemon flavor and pea color.

Lemon Pollock with Potatoes and Peas (continued)



8. **Insert the thermometer** sideways into the thickest part of each fish portion. It must reach **145**°F/63°C; the flesh should be opaque and separate into moist flakes. Return underdone portions to the oven for 2-minute intervals. Transfer any finished fish to plates while thicker pieces finish, so the thinner portions do not dry out.

9. **Divide the fish** and potatoes among four plates using the spatula. Spoon one-quarter of the warm peas beside each portion, then distribute all the lemon-garlic butter remaining in the saucepan over the fish and potatoes. Serve hot, with the potatoes beside rather than underneath the peas to preserve their browned edges.

Tip: For better browning, place freshly cut potatoes cut-side down deliberately rather than shaking the pan. Use a second sheet pan when scaling up; crowding sacrifices crisp edges.

Tip: A little white protein appearing on the fish is normal, but abundant white beads and splitting flakes suggest it is nearing overcooked. Check its temperature rather than waiting for the surface to brown.

Tip: Compare the unit price of plain frozen pollock portions with fresh fish. Unbreaded frozen portions work well here, and only the amount needed has to be thawed.

Substitution for boneless, skinless pollock fillets: 1 1/2 pounds boneless, skinless cod or haddock. Use four similar-size portions. Thicker pieces may need longer; cook to 145°F/63°C.

Substitution for Yukon Gold potatoes: 1 1/2 pounds red potatoes. Keep the same chunk size and leave the skins on. Their edges will be slightly less crisp.

Substitution for flat-leaf parsley: 1 tablespoon chopped fresh dill. Stir in off the heat with the lemon.

Storage: Refrigerate leftovers in shallow, covered containers within 2 hours of cooking, or within 1 hour above 90°F. Keep at 40°F/4°C or below and use within 3–4 days. Store potatoes separately from the peas and fish when possible to limit sogginess.

Lemon Pollock with Potatoes and Peas (continued)



Reheating: Reheat potatoes on a sheet pan at 400°F until hot, approximately 10–15 minutes. Warm fish and peas gently in a covered skillet over low heat with a small splash of water, checking frequently, until leftovers reach 165°F/74°C. Fish will be firmer after reheating.

Freezing: For best texture, cook only the fish portions needed. Cooked fish and peas can be frozen promptly in airtight containers for up to 2 months; thaw in the refrigerator before reheating. Roasted potatoes can become mealy after freezing and are better refrigerated.

Declared allergens: fish, milk. Check labels and cross-contact.
Contains fish and milk. Naturally wheat-free as written; check labels on packaged ingredients for any dietary restrictions.

Tomato-Braised Sardines on Toast

Gently warmed canned sardines in a chunky garlic-tomato sauce, spooned over crisp, olive-oil-brushed toast with lemon and parsley.

Serves 4 · servings, 2 loaded toasts each
Prep: 15 min **Cook:** 25 min **Rest:** 0 min **Total:** 40 min

Equipment: Stovetop, Oven, Sheet pan, 12-inch skillet, Knife, Cutting board, Colander, Measuring cups and spoons, Small bowl, Wooden spoon, Wide spatula, Food thermometer

Ingredients

4 3.75-ounce cans Sardines packed in olive oil, drained; approximately 12 ounces drained fish total, soft edible bones retained
3 tablespoons Olive oil, divided: 2 tablespoons for sauce, 1 tablespoon for toast
1 medium (about 8 ounces) Yellow onion, peeled and cut into 1/4-inch dice
4 cloves Garlic, peeled and finely chopped
1/4 teaspoon Crushed red pepper
28 ounces Canned diced tomatoes, undrained
1/4 teaspoon Fine salt, plus more only if needed after tasting
1/4 teaspoon Ground black pepper
8 slices (about 16 ounces total) Sturdy country bread, cut 3/4 inch thick
1 medium Lemon, washed; use 1 teaspoon finely chopped yellow peel and 1 tablespoon juice, cut remainder into wedges
1/4 cup Flat-leaf parsley, finely chopped, loosely packed; divided in half



Tip: Compare sardines by drained weight rather than can size. Store-brand cans work well here; choose plain sardines so you are not buying a second, competing sauce.

Tomato-Braised Sardines on Toast (continued)



Method

1. **Set an oven** rack in the middle and heat to 425°F. During this 5-minute setup, dice the onion and chop the garlic on a cutting board. With a knife, shave a thin strip of yellow lemon peel, avoiding bitter white pith; mince enough for 1 teaspoon. Reserve it with 1 tablespoon lemon juice in a small bowl. Chop the parsley and cut the remaining lemon into wedges.

2. **Drain the sardines** gently in a colander over the sink for about 2 minutes without shaking or pressing. Keep the fish in large pieces; the soft canned bones are edible. If you prefer to remove the central backbone, open each fish carefully along its natural seam and lift it out. Leave the drained fish ready while you build the sauce.

3. **Heat** 2 tablespoons olive oil in the 12-inch skillet over medium heat for 1 minute. Add the onion and measured salt. Cook for 7–9 minutes, stirring across the bottom every minute, until softened and lightly golden at the edges. If the edges darken before the centers soften, reduce the heat to medium-low rather than letting the onion scorch.

4. **Add the garlic** and crushed red pepper to the skillet. Stir constantly over medium-low heat for 30–45 seconds, just until fragrant; the garlic should remain pale. Immediately add the tomatoes with all their juices and the black pepper. Scrape the bottom with the wooden spoon to release the flavorful onion coating, then raise the heat to medium until gentle bubbling begins, about 2 minutes.

5. **Simmer uncovered over** medium-low heat for 10–12 minutes, stirring every 2 minutes and crushing larger tomato pieces against the skillet. Meanwhile, arrange the bread on the sheet pan and spread the remaining 1 tablespoon oil thinly over the upward-facing sides with the back of a spoon. Bake for 8–10 minutes, turning halfway with a spatula, until golden at the edges and crisp underneath.

Tomato-Braised Sardines on Toast (continued)



6. **Check the sauce** before adding the fish: draw the spoon through its center. The trail should close slowly, with no watery puddle forming around it. If watery, simmer 2–3 minutes longer; if thick enough to stick, lower the heat and stop reducing. Stir in the reserved lemon juice and chopped peel, plus half the parsley, for about 30 seconds.

7. **Lower the heat** to low. Slide the sardines into the sauce in a single layer, then spoon a little sauce over each piece. Warm gently for 3–5 minutes, until steaming throughout; canned sardines are already cooked. Avoid vigorous bubbling or repeated stirring, which breaks them apart. Taste a spoonful of sauce and add a small pinch of salt only if needed.

8. **Put two warm** toasts on each of four plates. Using the wide spatula, distribute the fish evenly among the eight slices, then spoon the tomato sauce over them, keeping some crust exposed for crunch. Scatter with the remaining parsley and place the lemon wedges alongside. Assemble just before eating; for a slower meal, bring toast and the skillet to the table separately.

Tip: Bread that is a day old is especially useful: its drier crumb resists the tomato juices. Avoid very thin sandwich slices, which soften before the topping is finished.

Tip: A little silver skin and occasional small flakes in the sauce are normal. Use a wide spatula rather than tongs to lift warmed sardines without squeezing them apart.

Tip: For make-ahead service, cook the tomato base up to 3 days ahead and refrigerate promptly. Reheat it to 165°F before lowering the heat and adding freshly opened sardines; toast the bread at serving time.

Substitution for Sardines packed in olive oil: 12 ounces drained canned mackerel. Choose plain, ready-to-eat mackerel and keep it in large flakes. Warm gently in the same way; fish remains an allergen.

Substitution for Flat-leaf parsley: 1/4 cup loosely packed chopped fresh basil. Stir half into the finished sauce and scatter the rest over the toast.

Tomato-Braised Sardines on Toast (continued)



Substitution for Sturdy country bread: 8 sturdy slices gluten-free bread. Toast until firm underneath. Check the actual bread and canned-fish labels for allergens; gluten-free bread can contain egg, milk, soy or sesame.

Storage: Store fish and sauce separately from bread. Refrigerate in shallow covered containers within 2 hours of cooking, or 1 hour above 90°F, at 40°F or below. Use within 3–4 days. Refrigerate any assembled leftover toast as well, although it will soften.

Reheating: Reheat only the portion needed in a skillet over medium-low heat, gently lifting rather than stirring the fish, until the center reaches 165°F. If the sauce sticks, add water 1 tablespoon at a time. Re-crisp reserved bread in a 375°F oven for 4–6 minutes, then assemble.

Freezing: Freeze fish and sauce together, without toast, in airtight meal-size containers for up to 2 months for best quality. Thaw overnight in the refrigerator and reheat to 165°F; the fish may break into smaller flakes. Freeze bread separately.

Declared allergens: fish, wheat. Check labels and cross-contact.
Contains fish and wheat. Choose bread without dairy or egg if needed, and check the actual bread, canned sardine and canned tomato labels for additional allergens. No stock, paste, kimchi or packaged sauce is used.

Shrimp, Corn and Rice Skillet

Sweet corn, smoky peppers and tender shrimp over fragrant skillet rice. The rice and vegetables are included in the four dinner portions.

Serves 4 · portions
Prep: 15 min **Cook:** 30 min **Rest:** 5 min **Total:** 50 min

Equipment: Stovetop, 12-inch skillet, Saucepan with lid, Knife and cutting board, Measuring cups and spoons, Food thermometer



Ingredients

- **1 pound** Raw peeled shrimp, thawed safely in refrigerator, deveined, tails removed and patted dry
- **2 tablespoons** Neutral oil, divided
- **1** medium Yellow onion, finely diced
- **1** large Red bell pepper, seeded and diced
- **3** cloves Garlic, finely minced
- **1 teaspoon** Smoked paprika
- **1 1/2 cups** Long-grain white rice, dry, rinsed and well drained
- **2 3/4 cups** Unsalted vegetable broth
- **2 cups** Frozen corn, kept frozen
- **3/4 teaspoon** Fine salt, divided
- **1** whole Lime, juice and wedges
- **1/4 cup** Cilantro, chopped

Tip: Compare the usable price of peeled frozen shrimp with shell-on shrimp; the cheapest package is not always the cheapest cooked portion.

Tip: Choose ordinary long-grain rice, not instant rice, because the liquid and covered cooking time are designed for uncooked grains.

Shrimp, Corn and Rice Skillet (continued)



Method

1. **Check that the** shrimp are fully thawed and pliable, with no icy centers. Pat them dry on paper towels, season with 1/4 teaspoon salt and return them to the refrigerator while starting the rice. Do not leave raw shrimp beside the warm stove; use a clean plate and wash anything that touched them.

2. **Choose a deep** 12-inch skillet with a tight lid. Heat 1 tablespoon oil over medium heat, then add the onion and bell pepper. Cook for 7–8 minutes, stirring, until the onion is translucent and the pepper has softened. A wide pan gives the vegetables space without scorching the eventual layer of rice.

3. **Add the garlic** and paprika and stir for 30 seconds, just until fragrant. Add the drained rice and stir for another minute so the grains are coated with the seasoned oil. Keep the heat moderate: paprika can turn bitter if left frying while you search for the broth or lid.

4. **Pour in the** broth and add the remaining 1/2 teaspoon salt. Scrape the bottom to release any stuck grains. Bring to a steady simmer, cover and reduce the heat to low. Cook for 15 minutes without lifting the lid, adjusting the burner so the liquid simmers quietly rather than boils vigorously.

5. **Lift the lid** briefly and scatter the frozen corn evenly over the rice. Replace the lid and cook for 4–5 minutes. Taste a rice grain from the middle with a clean spoon; it should be nearly tender. If still hard and dry, add 2 tablespoons water, cover and cook for another 3 minutes.

6. **Meanwhile heat the** remaining oil in a separate skillet over medium-high heat. Add the shrimp in a single uncrowded layer, using batches if necessary. Cook for about 2 minutes, turn with clean tongs and cook for 1–3 minutes more, until pearly and opaque throughout; aim for **145** F / 63 C in the thickest part.

7. **Remove the rice** skillet from the heat when the grains are tender and the liquid is absorbed. Rest covered for 5 minutes, then gently fluff with a fork, lifting from the edges toward the middle. If a few grains stick to the bottom, leave them behind rather than scraping a scorched layer into the dish.

Shrimp, Corn and Rice Skillet (continued)



8. **Fold half the** cooked shrimp into the fluffed rice and arrange the rest on top. Squeeze a little lime over the skillet and scatter with cilantro, offering the remaining lime as wedges. Divide among four plates while hot. Keep the citrus fresh and restrained so it brightens the sweet corn without making the rice sour.

Tip: Cook shrimp separately to control doneness; if the rice needs longer, the shrimp do not become rubbery waiting in it.

Storage: Refrigerate promptly in shallow containers within 2 hours, or 1 hour above 90 F. Keep at 40 F / 4 C or below and use within 3–4 days.

Reheating: Reheat covered in a saucepan or skillet, adding a little water as needed and stirring for even heating, until the center reaches 165 F / 74 C.

Freezing: Freeze promptly in meal-size airtight containers for up to 2 months for best quality. Thaw in the refrigerator before reheating.

Declared allergens: crustacean shellfish. Check labels and cross-contact.
Check every packaged ingredient and substitution label for allergens and cross-contact.

Salmon-Potato Cakes with Dill Yogurt

Golden salmon and potato cakes with a cool lemon-dill yogurt sauce. Makes eight substantial cakes: two per portion, with sauce included. Illustrative ingredient estimate: $9.17 for the batch, about $2.29 per portion. These are hypothetical ingredient-cost assumptions, not live grocery prices.

Serves 4 · portions
Prep: 25 min **Cook:** 35 min **Rest:** 15 min **Total:** 75 min

Equipment: Stovetop, Saucepan, Colander, Large bowl, Tray, Nonstick skillet, Broad spatula, Food thermometer

Ingredients

1 pound Yukon Gold potatoes, peeled and cut into 1-inch cubes
12 ounces Canned salmon, drained weight; remove skin and large bones if desired
2 whole Large eggs, beaten
1/2 cup Plain dry breadcrumbs, check label
3 whole Scallions, thinly sliced
1/2 teaspoon Fine salt, divided
1/4 teaspoon Black pepper
3 tablespoons Neutral oil, for two batches
3/4 cup Plain Greek yogurt
1 whole Lemon, 1 tablespoon juice plus wedges
2 tablespoons Fresh dill, finely chopped



Tip: Buy canned salmon by drained usable weight, not only the printed can weight; this recipe needs 12 ounces after draining.

Tip: A dry potato mash is the strongest binder. Steam-dry the potatoes rather than adding a large quantity of breadcrumbs to rescue a wet mixture.

Salmon-Potato Cakes with Dill Yogurt (continued)



Method

1. **Put the potato** cubes in a saucepan and cover with cold water by 1 inch. Bring to a boil, reduce to a steady simmer and cook for 12–15 minutes, until a fork slides through the largest pieces without resistance. Even cubes are important; small overcooked fragments absorb water while larger centers stay firm.

2. **Drain the potatoes** well, return them to the hot empty pan and let steam escape for 2 minutes off the heat. Mash with a fork until mostly smooth, then spread in a wide bowl to cool for about 10 minutes. Do not add the eggs while the potatoes are hot enough to scramble them.

3. **Flake the drained** salmon into the cooled potatoes. Add the beaten eggs, breadcrumbs, scallions, 1/4 teaspoon salt and black pepper. Fold with a spatula until evenly combined, breaking large fish clumps but leaving some texture. Do not taste this mixture because it contains raw eggs; its seasoning can be adjusted with the finished sauce.

4. **Divide the mixture** into eight equal mounds. With lightly damp hands, shape each into a cake about 3 inches across and 3/4 inch thick. Place on a tray and refrigerate for 15 minutes. Chilling firms the starch and gives the breadcrumbs time to absorb moisture, reducing cracks when the cakes are turned.

5. **While the cakes** chill, stir the yogurt with 1 tablespoon lemon juice, dill and remaining 1/4 teaspoon salt. The sauce should hold softly on a spoon, not run like milk. Refrigerate until serving. Cut the remaining lemon into wedges, keeping the wet cutting board away from the dry surface of the cakes.

6. **Heat half the** oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium heat. Add four cakes with space between them and cook for 4–5 minutes without moving. Slide a broad spatula fully underneath before turning. If the crust tears or sticks, give it another minute to set rather than prying only at one edge.

7. **Cook the second** side for 4–5 minutes, reducing the heat if the crust darkens too quickly. Check a cake at its center with a thermometer; heat to 165 F / 74 C. Transfer to a warm plate. Add the remaining oil and repeat with the other four cakes; avoid stacking them, which traps steam against the crust.

Salmon-Potato Cakes with Dill Yogurt (continued)



8. **Serve two cakes** per person with a generous spoonful of cold dill yogurt and a lemon wedge. Put the sauce beside the cakes rather than over the entire crust. If cooking ahead, keep sauce and cakes separate, cool the cooked cakes promptly in a single shallow layer and refrigerate; do not leave them warm on the counter.

Tip: For reheating, use a 375 F oven on a preheated sheet pan until the centers reach 165 F; the microwave softens the crust.

Storage: Refrigerate promptly in shallow containers within 2 hours, or 1 hour above 90 F. Keep at 40 F / 4 C or below and use within 3–4 days.

Reheating: Reheat covered in a saucepan or skillet, adding a little water as needed and stirring for even heating, until the center reaches 165 F / 74 C.

Freezing: Freeze cooked cakes in a single layer, then transfer to an airtight container for up to 2 months. Freeze without yogurt sauce; thaw in the refrigerator before reheating.

Declared allergens: fish, egg, wheat, milk. Check labels and cross-contact.
Check every packaged ingredient and substitution label for allergens and cross-contact.

Coconut-Tomato Fish Curry

Tender white fish in a gently spiced tomato-coconut sauce, with rice included. A bright, comforting dinner that works well with affordable frozen pollock.

Serves 4 · portions
Prep: 15 min **Cook:** 35 min **Rest:** 10 min **Total:** 60 min

Equipment: Stovetop, 12-inch skillet, Saucepan with lid, Knife and cutting board, Measuring cups and spoons, Food thermometer



Ingredients

- **1 1/2 pounds** Pollock fillets, thawed in refrigerator, patted dry, cut into 2-inch pieces
- **1 1/2 cups** Long-grain white rice, dry, rinsed and drained
- **2 3/4 cups** Water, for rice
- **2 tablespoons** Neutral oil
- **1** large Yellow onion, finely diced
- **3** cloves Garlic, finely minced
- **1 tablespoon** Fresh ginger, peeled and finely minced
- **2 teaspoons** Mild curry powder, check label
- **14 1/2 ounces** Crushed tomatoes, canned, undrained
- **13.5** fluid ounces Unsweetened coconut milk, stirred smooth
- **1 teaspoon** Fine salt, divided
- **1 tablespoon** Lime juice
- **1/4 cup** Cilantro, chopped

Tip: Thaw vacuum-packed fish according to its packaging; open or remove the pouch first when its instructions require it.

Tip: Choose full-fat unsweetened coconut milk for a rounded sauce; a coconut beverage has a different texture and is not a direct replacement.

Coconut-Tomato Fish Curry (continued)



Method

1. **Prepare the fish** while it is cold. Check for bones with your fingertips, remove any with clean tweezers and cut thick fillets into even 2-inch pieces. Pat dry so excess thawing water does not dilute the sauce. Keep the fish covered in the refrigerator until the sauce is ready rather than seasoning it on the warm stove.

2. **Put the rice**, measured water and 1/4 teaspoon salt in a saucepan. Bring to a boil, cover and reduce to low heat. Simmer gently for 15–18 minutes, then remove from the heat and rest covered for 10 minutes. If your rice package requires a different water ratio, follow that ratio and record the adjustment.

3. **Meanwhile heat the** oil in a deep skillet over medium heat. Add the onion and cook for **8–10** minutes, stirring frequently, until soft and lightly golden. Give it time: softened onion provides sweetness that balances the tomatoes, whereas rushing this stage leaves sharp pieces floating through the finished sauce.

4. **Stir in the** garlic and ginger and cook for 45 seconds. Sprinkle in the curry powder and stir for a further 20–30 seconds, just until fragrant. Keep the tomatoes open and within reach before starting; the spices should bloom in the oil briefly, not sit frying until they smell bitter or begin smoking.

5. **Add the crushed** tomatoes, coconut milk and remaining 3/4 teaspoon salt. Scrape the bottom and stir until the coconut cream is fully blended. Bring to a gentle simmer and cook uncovered for 10–12 minutes, stirring occasionally. The sauce should thicken slightly while remaining loose enough to surround the pieces of fish.

6. **Lower the heat** and nestle the fish into the sauce in a single layer. Spoon a little sauce over each piece, cover and cook for 6–9 minutes, depending on thickness. Keep the simmer gentle and avoid stirring vigorously. Check the thickest pieces for 145 F / 63 C; the flesh should be opaque and separate easily.

7. **Lift the lid** and check several pieces, not only the smallest one. If any center is translucent or below the target temperature, cover and cook another 1–2 minutes. Once done, remove from the heat and stir the lime juice into the sauce around the fish. Taste the cooked sauce and add citrus gradually if a brighter finish is wanted.

Coconut-Tomato Fish Curry (continued)



8. **Fluff the rested** rice with a fork and divide among four shallow bowls. Lift the fish with a broad spoon or fish slice so the tender pieces stay intact, then ladle the sauce around them. Scatter with cilantro and serve hot. Reserve leftovers before serving if planning another meal, and chill the rice and curry promptly in separate shallow containers.

Tip: Frozen pollock, hake or another firm mild white fish can work; thickness controls cooking time, so check each piece rather than relying on species alone.

Storage: Refrigerate promptly in shallow containers within 2 hours, or 1 hour above 90 F. Keep at 40 F / 4 C or below and use within 3–4 days.

Reheating: Reheat covered in a saucepan or skillet, adding a little water as needed and stirring for even heating, until the center reaches 165 F / 74 C.

Freezing: Freeze the curry promptly in meal-size containers for up to 1 month for best texture; freeze rice separately. Fish can become softer after thawing. Thaw in refrigerator and reheat gently to 165 F / 74 C without repeatedly boiling.

Declared allergens: fish. Check labels and cross-contact.
Check every packaged ingredient and substitution label for allergens and cross-contact.

Something Sweet, Still Sensible

A small dessert can make a home-cooked meal feel finished without turning the afternoon into a baking project. This chapter uses ingredients that already belong in a practical kitchen: oats, yogurt, bananas, apples, flour and a little good chocolate. The pleasure comes from contrast—warm fruit and cool ricotta, crisp cookie edges and a chewy middle, bright lemon against a tender crumb.



Read the pan size and cooling time before starting. A loaf needs time for its center to set; cutting while hot can compress an otherwise good crumb. A crumble should bubble through the middle, not only brown on top. Frozen yogurt bark belongs in the freezer until you want a portion, rather than sitting out like ordinary candy.

Buy for the actual recipe, then plan the remainder. Very ripe bananas can be peeled and frozen for another loaf. Oats work in breakfast as well as cookies and crumble. Chocolate chopped from an ordinary bar can be just as useful as a specialty baking product when its label and price suit you. Keep the portions you will eat soon and freeze the rest while they are still at their best.

Skillet Apple Crumble

Juicy apples under a rough, golden oat crumble: a warm dessert with ordinary groceries and no pastry to roll. Makes six portions.

Serves 6 · portions
Prep: 20 min **Cook:** 45 min **Rest:** 15 min **Total:** 80 min

Equipment: Oven, 10-inch ovenproof skillet, Rimmed baking sheet, Large bowl, Knife and board, Oven mitts



Ingredients

2 pounds Apples, peeled, cored and cut into 1/2-inch pieces
1 tablespoon Lemon juice
1/2 cup Light brown sugar, divided equally between fruit and topping
1 tablespoon Cornstarch
1 teaspoon Ground cinnamon, divided equally
3/4 cup All-purpose flour, spooned and leveled
3/4 cup Old-fashioned rolled oats
6 tablespoons Unsalted butter, cold, cut into small cubes
1/4 teaspoon Fine salt

Tip: A mixture of firm sweet and tart apples makes a more interesting filling; use sound fruit with cosmetic marks rather than paying for perfect appearance.

Tip: Keep the butter cold and leave some larger crumbs for crunch. A topping rubbed to dust bakes more evenly but loses its attractive texture.

Skillet Apple Crumble (continued)



Method

1. **Heat the oven** to 375 F with a rack in the middle. Set a 10-inch ovenproof skillet on a rimmed baking sheet to catch any bubbling juices. Check that its handle is oven-safe. Peel and core the apples, then cut into even 1/2-inch pieces; tiny slices collapse before larger chunks become tender.

2. **Put the apples** in a large bowl and toss with the lemon juice, half the brown sugar, cornstarch and half the cinnamon. Turn the pieces several times until no dry starch remains in the bottom. Spread in the skillet in an even layer, including any juices that collect while making the topping.

3. **In the empty** bowl, mix the flour, oats, remaining brown sugar, remaining cinnamon and salt. Break up any hard sugar lumps with your fingers before adding butter. The dry ingredients should be evenly mixed so there are no pockets of flour that will stay pale and dusty after the crumble bakes.

4. **Add the cold** butter cubes and rub them into the dry mixture using your fingertips, or cut them in with two table knives. Stop when the mixture has coarse crumbs and a few pea-size pieces of butter. Squeeze a handful lightly: it should form a loose clump, not a smooth paste.

5. **Scatter the topping** over the fruit in an uneven, craggy layer, making a few larger clumps as you go. Do not pack it down or seal the surface tightly; small gaps let steam escape and help the oats stay crisp. Keep crumbs inside the skillet rather than on the rim, where they burn quickly.

6. **Bake for** 35–45 minutes, until the topping is golden and thick juices bubble through several gaps, including near the center. Test a piece of apple with the tip of a small knife: it should yield easily. If the top browns before the fruit softens, cover loosely with foil and keep baking.

7. **Remove the baking** sheet and skillet using oven mitts, remembering that the handle stays hot after leaving the oven. Rest for at least 15 minutes on a heatproof surface. This allows the bubbling starch-thickened juices to settle; serving immediately gives a thinner sauce and makes the fruit much hotter than the topping suggests.

Skillet Apple Crumble (continued)



8. **Divide into six** portions, spooning down to the bottom so each serving includes both tender apples and crisp topping. Serve warm rather than fiercely hot. For leftovers, transfer the fruit and crumble to shallow containers promptly once portioned; do not leave the entire skillet on the counter all evening while it slowly cools.

Tip: Reheat uncovered in a 350 F oven until hot to restore the topping; a microwave warms the fruit but softens the oats.

Storage: Cover and refrigerate within 2 hours, or 1 hour above 90 F; use within 3–4 days. Keep the skillet handle protected while cooling.

Reheating: Reheat covered in a saucepan or skillet, adding a little water as needed and stirring for even heating, until the center reaches 165 F / 74 C.

Freezing: Freeze baked portions in airtight containers for up to 2 months for best quality. Thaw in refrigerator and reheat uncovered; expect softer apples.

Declared allergens: wheat, milk. Check labels and cross-contact.
Check every packaged ingredient and substitution label for allergens and cross-contact.

Dark Chocolate Oat Cookies

Chewy-centered oat cookies with crisp edges and chopped dark chocolate. Makes twelve substantial cookies; one cookie is a portion.

Serves 12 · portions
Prep: 15 min **Cook:** 24 min **Rest:** 35 min **Total:** 74 min

Equipment: Oven, Two bowls, Wooden spoon, Spatula, Two baking sheets, Parchment, Cooling rack

Ingredients

6 tablespoons Unsalted butter, softened, not melted
0.333 cup Light brown sugar, packed
1/4 cup Granulated sugar
1 whole Large egg, at room temperature briefly while preparing ingredients
3/4 cup All-purpose flour, spooned and leveled
1 cup Old-fashioned rolled oats
1/2 teaspoon Baking soda
1/4 teaspoon Fine salt
3 ounces Dark chocolate, chopped into small chunks; check label



Tip: Chop a regular chocolate bar rather than buying specialty baking chunks when its unit price is better; check allergens on either product.

Tip: Rolled oats give distinct texture. Instant oatmeal packets add sugar and flavorings and are not a direct substitute.

Dark Chocolate Oat Cookies (continued)



Method

1. **Put the softened** butter and both sugars in a large bowl. Beat firmly with a wooden spoon for 2–3 minutes, scraping the sides, until creamy and slightly lighter. The butter should take a fingerprint without looking oily. If it is partly melted, refrigerate briefly until soft again; liquid butter encourages excessive spreading.

2. **Crack the egg** into a separate small bowl to check for shell, then beat it into the butter mixture until smooth and evenly combined. Scrape the bottom of the bowl where unmixed butter can hide. There is no need for a stand mixer, and excessive beating after this point is not useful.

3. **In another bowl**, combine the flour, oats, baking soda and salt. Stir thoroughly so the small amount of leavener is distributed. Add to the butter mixture and fold with a spatula just until no dry flour remains. Do not taste the raw dough: both untreated flour and uncooked egg can carry harmful germs.

4. **Fold in the** chopped chocolate, including the fine shavings, until the chunks are spread through the dough. Cover and refrigerate for 20 minutes to firm the butter. While it chills, heat the oven to 350 F and line two rimmed baking sheets with parchment, checking that the paper is suitable for the oven temperature.

5. **Divide the dough** into twelve equal mounds and place six on each baking sheet, with at least 3 inches between centers. Press each mound gently to a thick disk so the middle cooks before the edges become too dark. Keep the second tray chilled while the first bakes, particularly in a warm kitchen.

6. **Bake one tray** on the middle rack for 11–13 minutes, rotating front to back after 7 minutes. The edges should be lightly golden and the center set but still soft, without a glossy wet streak of dough. Ovens vary; if the bottoms darken early, place an empty baking sheet underneath for the next batch.

7. **Leave the cookies** on their hot tray for 5 minutes so they firm enough to move. Transfer carefully to a rack and cool for another 10 minutes. Bake the second chilled tray in the same way. Do not stack warm cookies, because trapped steam softens the edges and melted chocolate glues the surfaces together.

Dark Chocolate Oat Cookies (continued)



8. **Serve once the** chocolate is warm rather than liquid-hot and the cookies hold their shape when lifted. Pack completely cooled cookies in an airtight container. If gifting or freezing, separate layers with parchment; this protects the rough oat edges and prevents softened chocolate from marking every neighboring cookie.

Tip: Freeze individually portioned raw dough promptly, then bake from frozen with a few extra minutes; keep the same doneness cues and never eat it raw.

Storage: Store completely cooled cookies airtight for up to 3 days in a cool room. In hot conditions refrigerate and let a portion soften briefly before serving.

Reheating: Warm baked cookies in a 300 F oven for 4–6 minutes if desired, watching closely so the chocolate does not scorch.

Freezing: Freeze baked cookies airtight for up to 2 months. Freeze raw dough mounds separately, then bag and label; bake from frozen, adding time until fully set.

Declared allergens: milk, egg, wheat. Check labels and cross-contact.
Check every packaged ingredient and substitution label for allergens and cross-contact.

Lemon-Yogurt Loaf

A tender lemon loaf with a thin citrus glaze, made with plain yogurt and oil. Makes eight slices from one 9-by-5-inch loaf.

Serves 8 · portions
Prep: 20 min **Cook:** 55 min **Rest:** 70 min **Total:** 145 min

Equipment: Oven, 9-by-5-inch metal loaf pan, Parchment, Two bowls, Whisk, Spatula, Fine grater, Cooling rack



Ingredients

- **1 1/2 cups** All-purpose flour, spooned and leveled
- **2 teaspoons** Baking powder
- **1/4 teaspoon** Fine salt
- **3/4 cup** Granulated sugar
- **2** whole Large eggs
- **3/4 cup** Plain whole-milk yogurt, regular, not Greek
- **1/2 cup** Neutral oil, plus a little for greasing as directed
- **2** whole Lemons, wash; use 2 teaspoons finely grated zest and 3 tablespoons juice, divided
- **1/2 cup** Powdered sugar, sifted

Tip: Zest lemons before juicing them; a firm whole lemon is easier to grate safely than a squeezed shell.

Tip: Use regular plain yogurt at the stated thickness. Thick strained Greek yogurt needs a separately developed liquid adjustment.

Lemon-Yogurt Loaf (continued)



Method

1. **Heat the oven** to 350 F with a rack in the middle. Lightly oil a 9-by-5-inch metal loaf pan and line its long sides and base with parchment, leaving handles for lifting. A smaller pan can overflow and a dark heavy pan may brown faster, so use the stated dimensions rather than relying only on the loaf name.

2. **Wash and dry** the lemons. Finely grate 2 teaspoons zest, taking only the yellow surface and avoiding bitter white pith. Rub the zest into the granulated sugar with your fingertips for about 30 seconds to release the fragrant oils. Squeeze and strain 3 tablespoons juice; reserve **1 tablespoon** separately for the glaze.

3. **Whisk the eggs** into the lemon sugar until smooth, then whisk in the yogurt, measured **1/2 cup** oil and remaining 2 tablespoons lemon juice. Scrape the bowl to incorporate any thick yogurt at the sides. The mixture should look glossy and even, with no separated pool of oil floating on the surface.

4. **In a separate** bowl, whisk together the flour, baking powder and salt. Add to the wet mixture in two additions, folding with a spatula just until the dry flour disappears. Stop once combined; working the batter until perfectly elastic or glossy develops gluten and can make a rubbery rather than tender loaf.

5. **Scrape into the** prepared pan and smooth the surface. Bake for 45–55 minutes, checking after 40 minutes. The top should spring back gently and a skewer inserted into the center should emerge without wet batter, though a few moist crumbs are welcome. If the top becomes dark first, tent loosely with foil.

6. **Set the pan** on a rack and rest for 15 minutes. Run a thin knife along any unlined short ends, then lift with the parchment handles and cool on the rack for another 45 minutes. Do not glaze a hot loaf: the glaze soaks in or runs off instead of leaving a thin clean coating.

7. **Stir the powdered** sugar with the reserved 1 tablespoon lemon juice until smooth. It should fall from the spoon in a slow ribbon. If unusually stiff, add water a few drops at a time; if thin, wait a minute for the sugar to hydrate before deciding whether more powdered sugar is needed.

Lemon-Yogurt Loaf (continued)



8. **Drizzle the glaze** across the fully cooled loaf and let set for about 10 minutes before slicing into eight portions with a serrated knife. Wipe the blade between cuts rather than pressing down hard. Wrap remaining slices after the glaze has set, keeping parchment between them if freezing for later.

Tip: Freeze individual unglazed slices for easier packing and add a little fresh glaze only when needed.

Storage: Store covered in the refrigerator for up to 4 days. Let the serving lose its chill briefly before eating, keeping the rest refrigerated.

Reheating: A slice can be warmed gently in a 300 F oven for 5–8 minutes; warm unglazed slices for the cleanest finish.

Freezing: Freeze wrapped individual slices for up to 2 months. Thaw wrapped in refrigerator to reduce drying.

Declared allergens: wheat, egg, milk. Check labels and cross-contact.
Check every packaged ingredient and substitution label for allergens and cross-contact.

Brown Butter Banana Bread

A fragrant banana loaf with nutty browned butter and a soft crumb, using very ripe bananas. Makes eight generous slices.

Serves 8 · portions
Prep: 25 min **Cook:** 70 min **Rest:** 60 min **Total:** 155 min

Equipment: Oven, 9-by-5-inch metal loaf pan, Light saucepan, Heatproof bowl, Mixing bowl, Whisk, Spatula, Cooling rack

Ingredients

6 tablespoons Unsalted butter, plus a little for greasing as directed
1 1/2 cups Very ripe bananas, peeled and mashed; about 3–4 medium bananas
1/2 cup Light brown sugar, packed
2 whole Large eggs
1/4 cup Plain whole-milk yogurt
1 1/2 cups All-purpose flour, spooned and leveled
3/4 teaspoon Baking soda
1/2 teaspoon Fine salt
1/2 teaspoon Ground cinnamon



Tip: Freeze overripe peeled bananas in measured portions for future baking; thaw in refrigerator and include the released liquid when measuring the mash.

Tip: A light pan makes butter color easier to judge. Remove it from the saucepan immediately at the right shade because hot metal keeps cooking it.

Brown Butter Banana Bread (continued)



Method

1. **Heat the oven** to 350 F with a middle rack. Grease a 9-by-5-inch metal loaf pan lightly and line its base and long sides with parchment handles. Set a heatproof bowl beside the stove before browning the butter; having somewhere cool to pour it is the simplest way to prevent carryover scorching.

2. **Melt the measured** butter in a light-colored saucepan over medium heat. Cook for 3–5 minutes, swirling frequently, as it foams and then develops golden-brown specks with a nutty aroma. As soon as the specks reach medium brown, pour everything into the waiting bowl, scraping in the flavorful solids. Black specks and acrid smoke mean it has burned.

3. **Let the browned** butter cool for about 10 minutes until warm, not hot. Meanwhile mash the peeled bananas with a fork and measure 1 1/2 cups, leveling the cup. Do not simply count bananas of very different sizes: too much wet fruit can leave a gummy center long after the outside looks baked.

4. **Whisk the brown** sugar into the warm butter, then beat in the eggs one at a time. Stir in the mashed banana and yogurt until evenly mixed. Scrape around the bowl so there are no streaks of butter at the base. Do not add eggs to very hot butter, which can partially cook them before baking.

5. **Whisk the flour**, baking soda, salt and cinnamon in a second bowl. Fold into the banana mixture with a spatula until just combined, making sure to lift any dry flour from the bottom. A few small banana lumps are fine; beating the batter vigorously to remove them toughens the finished crumb.

6. **Scrape into the** lined pan and smooth gently. Bake for 55–65 minutes, checking the center with a skewer rather than only looking at the crust. It should come out without wet batter. If the top is deep brown before the center sets, tent with foil and continue checking at **5**-minute intervals.

7. **Leave the loaf** in its pan on a rack for 15 minutes, then loosen the unlined ends and lift out with the parchment. Cool on the rack for another 45 minutes before slicing. Cutting a very hot banana loaf compresses the still-setting crumb and can make a properly baked center seem wet or gluey.

Brown Butter Banana Bread (continued)



8. **Cut into eight** slices with a serrated knife, using a gentle sawing motion rather than pressing straight down. Wrap only after the loaf is fully cool so condensation does not collect against the crust. Freeze extra slices individually with parchment between them; warm just the portion you want instead of repeatedly heating the whole loaf.

Tip: Browned butter is already the flavor accent; this loaf does not need costly nuts, extracts or a thick frosting.

Storage: Refrigerate the completely cooled wrapped loaf or slices for up to 4 days. Keep only the serving being eaten at room temperature.

Reheating: Warm slices in a 300 F oven until pleasantly warm, about 6–10 minutes, checking thin slices sooner.

Freezing: Freeze wrapped individual slices airtight for up to 2 months. Thaw in refrigerator or gently reheat from frozen.

Declared allergens: milk, egg, wheat. Check labels and cross-contact.
Check every packaged ingredient and substitution label for allergens and cross-contact.

Peanut Butter Chocolate Frozen Yogurt Bark

Tangy frozen yogurt with peanut-butter ribbons, dark chocolate and roasted peanuts. A crisp cold snack from ordinary pantry ingredients; makes eight portions.

Serves 8 · portions
Prep: 15 min **Cook:** 5 min **Rest:** 240 min **Total:** 260 min

Equipment: Freezer, 9-by-13-inch rimmed pan, Parchment, Two bowls, Saucepan, Heatproof bowl, Table knife



Ingredients

2 cups Plain Greek yogurt, thick, cold
2 tablespoons Maple syrup
1/8 teaspoon Fine salt
0.333 cup Smooth peanut butter, stirred thoroughly if separated
2 ounces Dark chocolate, finely chopped; check milk/soy labels
1/4 cup Roasted peanuts, roughly chopped

Tip: Use yogurt already planned for other dishes, but choose the thick Greek-style yogurt specified here rather than a watery substitute.

Peanut Butter Chocolate Frozen Yogurt Bark (continued)



Method

1. **Clear a flat** space in the freezer before mixing anything. Line a rimmed 9-by-13-inch baking pan with parchment that extends slightly up the sides. Check that the pan fits level in the freezer; a sloping or bent surface makes one end thin and brittle while the other takes much longer to freeze.

2. **Stir the cold** yogurt with the maple syrup and salt until smooth. Scrape the sides and bottom so the sweetener is evenly distributed. Use thick plain Greek yogurt rather than a thin drinking yogurt, which forms a hard icy sheet. Keep the mixture cool while preparing the remaining ingredients and avoid leaving the dairy on the counter unnecessarily.

3. **Put the peanut** butter in a small bowl. Stir in 2 tablespoons of the yogurt mixture a little at a time until soft enough to spoon in ribbons. If the peanut butter is very stiff, let the bowl stand briefly in warm water; do not add hot water directly, which can make the final sheet icy.

4. **Melt the chopped** chocolate in a heatproof bowl set over a saucepan of barely simmering water, keeping the bowl above rather than touching the water. Stir for 2–4 minutes until nearly smooth, then remove from the heat and stir until the remaining pieces melt. Keep water and steam out of the chocolate.

5. **Spread the remaining** yogurt mixture over the parchment in an even rectangle about **1/4–1/3** inch thick. Leave a small border for lifting. Dot the loosened peanut butter across the surface, then draw a table knife through it in broad loose curves. Stop before the colors blend completely; distinct ribbons make each portion interesting.

6. **Drizzle the melted** chocolate in thin lines rather than thick solid patches, which are difficult to bite when frozen. Scatter the chopped peanuts evenly and press them lightly into the surface with the back of a spoon. Make sure the topping reaches the corners instead of collecting in a heavy mound at the center.

Peanut Butter Chocolate Frozen Yogurt Bark (continued)



7. **Transfer the pan** level to the freezer and freeze for at least 4 hours, until completely firm through the center. Do not stack warm food on top or move the sheet before it sets. Once hard, lift the parchment onto a board and break or cut into eight roughly equal portions without leaving the whole sheet out to soften.

8. **Serve directly from** frozen, allowing a portion only a minute or two to lose its hardest chill if desired. Return unused bark promptly to an airtight freezer container with parchment between layers. This is a frozen snack, not refrigerator-stable candy; thawed yogurt becomes soft and should not be carried loose in an unrefrigerated lunch bag.

Tip: Small chocolate shavings and thin drizzles distribute flavor more evenly than large expensive chunks in each bite.

Tip: Freeze in portion-size pieces so the whole batch is not repeatedly softened and refrozen.

Storage: Keep frozen at 0 F / -18 C or below; transfer firm portions to an airtight container promptly. Do not store as a room-temperature snack.

Reheating: Do not reheat; serve frozen. If a portion has melted, keep it refrigerated and treat it as yogurt rather than refreezing it repeatedly.

Freezing: Use within 1 month for best texture. Keep parchment between pieces and avoid repeated thawing and refreezing.

Declared allergens: milk, peanut, soy. Check labels and cross-contact.
Check every packaged ingredient and substitution label for allergens and cross-contact.

Roasted Pears with Cinnamon Ricotta

Tender roasted pear halves with caramelized edges and cool cinnamon ricotta. Makes four portions of two pear halves each.

Serves 4 · portions
Prep: 15 min **Cook:** 35 min **Rest:** 10 min **Total:** 60 min

Equipment: Oven, 9-by-13-inch baking dish, Knife, Teaspoon, Small bowl, Broad spoon, Oven mitts

Ingredients

4 whole Ripe but firm pears, washed, halved lengthwise and cored
2 tablespoons Unsalted butter, melted
2 tablespoons Light brown sugar
1/2 teaspoon Ground cinnamon, divided equally
1 whole Lemon, use 1 tablespoon juice and 1/2 teaspoon finely grated zest
3 tablespoons Water
3/4 cup Whole-milk ricotta, drain any loose whey



Tip: Choose firm ripe fruit rather than rock-hard or bruised overripe pears; uneven ripeness makes consistent roasting difficult.

Tip: A spoon removes the core neatly without special equipment, but do not dig through the bottom or the syrup will run out.

Roasted Pears with Cinnamon Ricotta (continued)



Method

1. **Heat the oven** to 400 F with a rack in the middle. Choose a 9-by-13-inch baking dish that holds eight pear halves in one layer without wedging them tightly together. Wash the pears, cut through the stem end and scoop out the seed cores with a teaspoon, leaving a shallow hollow rather than removing most of the flesh.

2. **Finely grate** 1/2 teaspoon lemon zest into a small bowl for the ricotta, then squeeze 1 tablespoon juice. Brush the cut surfaces of the pears with a little of the juice while preparing the pan. Leave the skins on to help the tender halves hold their shape when lifted after roasting.

3. **Stir the melted** butter, brown sugar, half the cinnamon, remaining measured lemon juice and water in the baking dish. Mix until the sugar is moistened and spread across the base. Set the pears cut-side down in this mixture. The small amount of water prevents the sugar scorching before the fruit releases its own juices.

4. **Roast for** 20 minutes, then remove the dish carefully with oven mitts. Lift one pear with a broad spoon or spatula: the cut surface should be beginning to turn golden. If the pan looks dry, add a tablespoon of hot water to a clear area of the dish, taking care because the syrup can spit.

5. **Turn each half** cut-side up, spoon a little pan juice into its hollow and roast for another **10–15** minutes. Test the thickest part with the tip of a small knife; it should slide in easily while the pear still holds its shape. Very firm fruit may need a few extra minutes, so use tenderness rather than color alone.

6. **While the pears** finish, stir the drained ricotta with the reserved lemon zest and remaining cinnamon. Beat with a spoon for about a minute to loosen it into soft curds. Keep refrigerated until serving. The ricotta is intentionally only lightly flavored; the roasted fruit and pan syrup provide the sweetness.

7. **Remove the cooked** pears and let stand for 5–10 minutes so the syrup settles and the fruit is warm rather than scalding. If the juices are very thin, spoon them into a small saucepan and simmer for 1–2 minutes until lightly syrupy, watching constantly. Stop before they turn sticky and dark, because they thicken as they cool.

Roasted Pears with Cinnamon Ricotta (continued)



8. **Put two pear** halves on each of four plates, add a generous spoonful of cool cinnamon ricotta beside them and drizzle with the warm pan syrup. Avoid pouring boiling syrup directly onto the cheese. Refrigerate leftover pears and ricotta separately in shallow covered containers, so the fruit can be warmed gently without heating the dairy topping.

Tip: Ricotta left from another dish can be useful here; compare the tub price and plan the remainder rather than buying a large container just for this dessert.

Storage: Refrigerate pears and ricotta separately within 2 hours, or 1 hour above 90 F; use within 3–4 days at 40 F / 4 C or below.

Reheating: Warm refrigerated pears in a covered 325 F oven until 165 F / 74 C at the center, then let lose their fiercest heat before serving with cold ricotta.

Freezing: The pears can be frozen without ricotta for up to 1 month, though they soften after thawing. Fresh ricotta gives the best topping texture.

Declared allergens: milk. Check labels and cross-contact.
Check every packaged ingredient and substitution label for allergens and cross-contact.

Five Dinners from One Sensible Cart

Three cooking sessions can cover five dinners for two adults, plus two lunch portions. Use the full four-serving versions of Lemon Chicken Orzo with Peas, Crispy Black Bean Quesadillas with Lime Slaw, and Crispy Fish Tacos with Lime Slaw. Three recipes × four portions = twelve portions: ten dinners and two lunches. This is portion planning, not a guaranteed grocery total.



Monday: cook the orzo recipe. Serve two portions. Before serving, transfer the other two to shallow containers and cool promptly under the storage guidance. Freeze those portions early for Thursday rather than keeping cooked chicken in the refrigerator all week.

Tuesday: cook the quesadillas and slaw. Serve two portions and refrigerate the other two promptly. Keep quesadillas and slaw separate; the dry tortilla stays crisper and the dressed cabbage does not soak into the filling.

Wednesday: reheat Tuesday’s quesadillas using their recipe method, checking the cooked filling reaches 165 F / 74 C. Add the cold slaw only after reheating. No new dinner needs cooking. Move the frozen orzo to the refrigerator tonight to thaw safely for Thursday.

Thursday: reheat the thawed orzo thoroughly to 165 F / 74 C, stirring and adding water as directed to loosen its sauce. Do not leave it on the counter to thaw. If it is still icy, allow additional covered reheating time and check several spots.

Five Dinners from One Sensible Cart (continued)



Friday: cook the fish tacos. Serve two portions, then refrigerate the remaining fish and slaw separately for Saturday lunch; warm the fish to 165 F / 74 C and refresh tortillas only when assembling. The extra two portions are lunch, not a hidden sixth dinner.

Build one list from the three complete recipes. Combine identical ingredients only when units and preparation states match. Check the quantity of cabbage and limes, the amount of cheese, and the actual package weights before ordering. A plan is successful when it produces meals you want to eat, not when every container is forced into the same schedule.

A Freezer Plan for the Busy Week

This second five-dinner plan uses Red Lentil Coconut Curry, Sausage, White Bean and Cabbage Skillet, and Salmon-Potato Cakes with Dill Yogurt. Make each full four-portion recipe for two adults: twelve portions again cover five dinners and one two-portion lunch. Keep the recipes’ included sides and sauces in the count; add any extra side to the shopping list separately.

Monday: cook the curry and serve two portions. Package the other two in shallow meal-size containers and freeze promptly once safely chilled, following the recipe. If rice is included, cool and store it separately so its texture and temperature are easier to control.



Tuesday: cook the sausage-and-bean skillet. Eat two portions and refrigerate the other two promptly for Wednesday. Put a clear date on the container and keep it near the front of the refrigerator, away from raw meat and leaking packages.

Wednesday: reheat Tuesday’s skillet dinner, stirring until it reaches 165 F / 74 C throughout. A small splash of water loosens beans that have thickened overnight. Finish with only the fresh components specified by the recipe.

A Freezer Plan for the Busy Week (continued)



Thursday: cook all eight salmon-potato cakes and serve four cakes, two per person, with half the sauce. Cool the remaining four promptly, then freeze in one layer and pack airtight. Prepare only the yogurt sauce you expect to use within its refrigerated window; the frozen cakes can have a fresh sauce later. Move Monday's frozen curry to the refrigerator tonight.

Friday: reheat the thawed curry gently to 165 F / 74 C, checking the center and stirring where practical. The frozen salmon cakes are a future two-portion lunch: thaw safely, then reheat in the oven to 165 F and serve with freshly made sauce.

Freeze the saved meals early, not at the end of a four-day refrigerator stay. Label the dish, date and portions so there is no guessing later. Choose containers that hold one meal without a large empty air space, and keep crisp toppings, sauces and uncooked leaves separate.

The Shopping List You Will Actually Use

Start with the meals you have chosen and the number of portions you will cook, then read their ingredient lists before opening a shopping app. Cross out what is already usable in the pantry, refrigerator and freezer. A half bag of rice is only useful if you know it is there; a jar past its safe storage window is not free food.

Combine matching items carefully. Three tablespoons of lime juice and two whole limes are related, but a small dry lime may not yield what the recipe needs. A pound of dry lentils is not a pound of cooked lentils. Canned ingredients may specify drained weight. Record the form and package size rather than adding numbers that happen to share a food name.



Compare a complete basket. In a deliberately hypothetical example, delivery groceries cost $48, a delivery fee is $6 and a tip is $4: the total is $58 before any applicable tax. A pickup basket costs $54 and the pickup trip costs $2: the comparable total is $56. The difference is $2, not the $6 suggested by looking only at the grocery prices. These are made-up figures for the method, not quotes from a retailer.

The Shopping List You Will Actually Use (continued)



Save a store-brand pickup list, but review it rather than automatically repeating last week's quantities. Set sensible substitutions and a price ceiling for items where the form matters. Frozen spinach works well in a cooked dish; it cannot become the crisp leaf in a chopped salad. Watch replacement notifications because the response window may be short.

Use recurring pantry deliveries only for stable consumption and a genuinely competitive delivered unit price. Check the next date, current stock and package count before dispatch; skipping is useful when the cupboard is already full. A discount on an unwanted item does not lower the cost of tonight's dinner.

Before paying, check the final total, fees, minimum-order rules, substitutions and pickup or delivery window. This cookbook does not connect accounts or place orders. Keep the list flexible enough to buy the best usable version of the ingredients available where you shop.

Keep the Crunch, Save the Sauce

A good leftover tastes deliberately finished, not merely warmed. Separate the components before packing: crisp tortillas away from slaw, cakes away from yogurt, noodles away from a crunchy topping when the recipe permits it. Store and reheat each component according to its own recipe, with cooked leftovers refrigerated promptly and used within 3–4 days or frozen early.

Crispy Black Bean Quesadillas: keep the slaw cold and separate. Reheat the quesadilla in the specified skillet or oven until its filling reaches 165 F / 74 C, then add slaw at the table. A sealed container of warm tortilla and wet cabbage traps exactly the steam you were trying to avoid.



Lemon Chicken Orzo with Peas: the pasta continues absorbing sauce after cooking. Add a small amount of water during covered reheating, stir gently and check several spots for 165 F / 74 C. Restore the sauce gradually; pouring in a cup at once can turn a creamy portion into soup.

Salmon-Potato Cakes: an oven restores more crust than the microwave. Heat the cooked cakes to 165 F / 74 C at their centers, and spoon cold dill yogurt alongside only after reheating. Make a fresh sauce if the saved one is outside its safe storage window.

Curry, chili and braised beans: portion before freezing so you can thaw one meal rather than a huge pot. Stir during reheating and add water in small increments to correct thickening. Follow the recipe’s temperature and thawing instructions; a warm edge does not prove the middle is hot.

Keep the Crunch, Save the Sauce (continued)



Rice: divide into shallow containers and refrigerate promptly; do not leave it sitting out to cool overnight. Reheat the portion you need to 165 F / 74 C, adding a little water and covering to distribute heat. Reheating does not reliably make badly stored rice safe.

Finish with ingredients already in the recipe: a fresh squeeze of citrus, a spoon of sauce or a scattering of chopped herbs. The goal is to recover contrast while keeping the storage history clear. If you cannot establish how long a perishable leftover has been unrefrigerated, do not use flavor or smell as proof of safety.

Sources and the Next Good Dinner

Good cooking gets easier when you repeat the useful parts: read ahead, prepare the divided ingredients, give food room to brown, check the center and save tomorrow’s portion deliberately. Choose the next recipe because it sounds delicious and fits the groceries you will actually use.

Kitchen safety references, checked October 20, 2026
FoodSafety.gov: Safe Minimum Internal Temperatures — https://www.foodsafety.gov/food-safety-charts/safe-minimum-internal-temperatures
FoodSafety.gov: Cold Food Storage Charts — https://www.foodsafety.gov/food-safety-charts/cold-food-storage-charts
USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service: Leftovers and Food Safety — https://www.fsis.usda.gov/food-safety/safe-food-handling-and-preparation/food-safety-basics/leftovers-and-food-safety



Shopping references and service mechanics
USDA MyPlate: Healthy Eating on a Budget — https://www.myplate.gov/web/eat-healthy/healthy-eating-budget
Walmart Help: Substitutions for Store Pickup and Delivery Items — https://www.walmart.com/help . Search that exact article title for the current replacement rules.
Flashfood Help: What is Flashfood? — https://help.flashfood.com/hc/en-us/articles/360049204914-What-is-Flashfood

Sources and the Next Good Dinner (continued)



Too Good To Go: How the app works — https://www.toogoodtogo.com/en-us/how-does-the-app-work
Amazon: review Subscribe & Save details, current price and your upcoming deliveries in your own account before choosing recurring pantry orders.

These references support general safety, shopping and service descriptions. The recipes and cooking prose are original writing, not extracts from another cookbook. Grocery availability, delivery fees, service areas and subscription terms change; check your actual location and checkout. Numeric shopping examples in the guides are explicitly hypothetical, not current retailer price promises.

This is a BookForge Studio cookbook concept inspired by Caleb Hammer's public persona. It does not claim his authorship, participation, personal food preferences or endorsement. No purchased membership, linked shopping account, automatic grocery order or affiliate relationship is implied.

Put a plate on the table, taste the finished sauce and keep the next meal manageable. Affordable food should still be food you are glad to eat.

Recipe index

Interior page numbers point to the recipe’s reading pages.



Apple-Cinnamon Overnight Oats · 33–36

Banana-Oat Pancakes with Warm Berry Sauce · 21–24

Beef-and-Lentil Smash Burgers · 98–101

Beef, Mushroom and Potato Skillet Pie · 114–117

Brown Butter Banana Bread · 199–201

Cabbage and Pork Noodles · 152–155

Caleb's Honey-Paprika Chicken Thighs · 69–72

Charred Cabbage and Garlicky White Beans · 131–134

Cheesy Polenta with Roasted Tomatoes and Spinach · 139–142

Chicken Tinga Tostadas · 77–80

Chili-Lime Tuna and White Bean Bowls · 51–54

Chipotle Turkey and Black Bean Chili · 106–109

Coconut-Lime Tray-Bake Chicken · 85–88

Coconut-Tomato Fish Curry · 186–188

Crisp-Edged Pork Carnitas Tacos · 94–97

Crispy Black Bean Quesadillas with Lime Slaw · 46–50

Crispy Chickpeas and Cauliflower with Lemon Tahini · 119–122

Crispy Fish Tacos with Lime Slaw · 168–171

Crispy Potato and Egg Breakfast Tacos · 17–20

Recipe index (continued)



Dark Chocolate Oat Cookies · 193–195

Ginger Pork Lettuce Cups with Rice · 110–113

Ginger-Peanut Noodles with Crunchy Cabbage · 55–58

Ginger-Soy Chicken and Broccoli · 81–84

Gochujang Egg Fried Rice · 144–147

Lemon Chicken Orzo with Peas · 73–76

Lemon Pollock with Potatoes and Peas · 172–175

Lemon-Garlic Broccoli Farfalle · 160–163

Lemon-Herb Chickpea Chopped Salad · 42–45

Lemon-Yogurt Loaf · 196–198

Mushroom and Black Bean Enchiladas · 127–130

One-Pot Smoky Rice and Beans · 156–159

Peanut Butter Chocolate Frozen Yogurt Bark · 202–204

Peanut-Banana French Toast · 37–40

Red Lentil Coconut Curry · 123–126

Roasted Pears with Cinnamon Ricotta · 205–207

Roasted Pepper and Lentil Bolognese · 164–166

Roasted Pepper and Spinach Frittata · 25–28

Roasted Vegetable Couscous with Lemon Yogurt · 59–63

Salmon-Potato Cakes with Dill Yogurt · 183–185

Sausage, White Bean and Cabbage Skillet · 102–105

Recipe index (continued)



Savory Chili-Garlic Oats with Fried Eggs · 29–32

Shrimp, Corn and Rice Skillet · 180–182

Skillet Apple Crumble · 190–192

Sweet Potato and Peanut Stew · 135–138

Toasty Tomato and Chickpea Melts · 64–67

Tomato-Braised Sardines on Toast · 176–179

Tomato-Butter Pasta with Crispy Chickpeas · 148–151

Yogurt-Spiced Chicken with Rice and Cucumber · 89–92

Ingredient index

Find recipes by their recorded ingredient names. Numbers point to their first reading page.



6-inch corn tortillas · 17, 168

8-inch flour tortillas · 127

90% lean ground beef · 114

93% lean ground turkey · 106

adobo sauce from the chipotle can · 77

all-purpose flour · 21, 114, 168, 190, 193, 196, 199

Apple cider vinegar · 69, 102

Apples · 190

baby spinach · 25, 123, 135

baking powder · 21, 196

Baking soda · 193, 199

black pepper · 25, 64, 183

Bone-in, skin-on chicken thighs · 69

Boneless pork shoulder · 94

Boneless, skinless chicken thighs · 73, 77, 81, 85, 89

boneless, skinless pollock fillets · 172

broccoli · 81, 85, 160

Ingredient index (continued)



canned black beans · 46, 106, 127, 156

canned cannellini beans · 51, 102, 131

canned chickpeas · 42, 59, 64, 119, 135, 148

canned chipotle pepper in adobo · 77, 106

canned crushed tomatoes · 77, 148

canned diced tomatoes · 123, 156, 176

Canned salmon · 183

canola oil · 106, 135, 152, 168

carrot · 46, 144, 164, 168

carrots · 55, 59, 110, 114

cauliflower · 119

cayenne pepper · 135

Cheddar cheese · 98

cherry or grape tomatoes · 139

cherry tomatoes · 42, 51

chunk light tuna in water · 51

chunky tomato salsa · 17

cilantro · 46, 94, 106, 127, 156, 168, 180, 186

cold water · 119

Ingredient index (continued)



Cooked brown or green lentils · 98

cooked long-grain white rice · 144

cornstarch · 81, 190

cremini mushrooms · 127

crushed red pepper · 148, 176

Crushed red pepper flakes · 29, 102, 110, 123, 152, 160

crushed tomatoes · 106, 164, 186

Dark chocolate · 193, 202

diced tomatoes · 135

Dijon mustard · 102

Dill pickle · 98

dried oregano · 42, 64, 77, 94, 164

dried spaghetti · 55

dried thyme · 114

Dry farfalle · 160

dry long-grain white rice · 156

Dry orzo · 73

dry rigatoni · 148

Dry spaghetti · 164

Ingredient index (continued)



dry split red lentils · 123

English cucumber · 42, 51, 89

extra-virgin olive oil · 42

feta cheese · 42

fine salt · 17, 21, 25, 29, 33, 37, 42, 46, 51, 59, 64, 69, 73, 77, 85, 89, 94, 98, 102, 106, 110, 114, 119, 123, 127, 131, 135, 139, 148, 156, 160, 164, 168, 172, 176, 180, 183, 186, 190, 193, 196, 199, 202

fine yellow cornmeal · 168

Finely grated lemon zest · 160

Finely grated Parmesan · 73

flat-leaf parsley · 42, 59, 64, 73, 89, 119, 131, 172, 176

flour tortillas · 46

fresh cilantro · 51, 123

Fresh dill · 183

fresh ginger · 55, 81, 110, 123, 135, 152, 186

fresh lemon juice · 42, 73, 119

fresh lime juice · 51, 55

fresh spinach · 139

Frozen corn · 180

frozen green peas · 172

Ingredient index (continued)



frozen mixed berries · 21

Frozen peas · 73, 114, 144

Garlic · 29, 55, 59, 64, 73, 77, 81, 85, 89, 94, 102, 106, 110, 114, 119, 123, 127, 131, 135, 139, 144, 148, 152, 156, 160, 164, 172, 176, 180, 186

Garlic powder · 69, 98

gochujang · 144

granulated sugar · 21, 37, 110, 144, 193, 196

grape tomatoes · 64

green cabbage · 46, 55, 77, 94, 102, 131, 144, 152, 168

Ground beef, 80–85% lean · 98

ground black pepper · 42, 59, 69, 73, 89, 98, 114, 119, 131, 139, 160, 172, 176

ground cinnamon · 21, 33, 37, 190, 199, 205

ground cumin · 17, 46, 51, 59, 89, 94, 106, 119, 123, 127, 135, 156, 168

ground pork · 110, 152

Honey · 69, 81

Iceberg lettuce · 98

jarred roasted red peppers · 25

Ketchup · 98

Large egg · 193

Ingredient index (continued)



large eggs · 17, 21, 25, 29, 37, 144, 168, 183, 196, 199

lemon · 59, 172, 176, 183, 205

lemon juice · 21, 89, 131, 160, 190

Lemons · 196

light brown sugar · 55, 152, 190, 193, 199, 205

lime · 17, 77, 85, 106, 123, 127, 135, 156, 180

lime juice · 46, 168, 186

Limes · 94

long-grain white rice · 81, 85, 89, 110, 180, 186

low-sodium beef stock · 114

Maple syrup · 33, 37, 202

Mayonnaise · 98

Medium bananas · 37

medium-ground yellow cornmeal · 139

mild chili powder blend · 51

mild curry powder · 123, 186

mild red enchilada sauce · 127

milk · 21, 33

Monterey Jack cheese · 46, 127

Ingredient index (continued)



neutral cooking oil · 17, 21, 29, 46, 77, 81, 85, 94, 98, 110, 114, 123, 127, 144

Neutral oil · 69, 180, 183, 186, 196

Old-fashioned rolled oats · 29, 33, 190, 193

olive oil · 25, 51, 59, 64, 73, 89, 102, 119, 131, 139, 148, 156, 160, 164, 172, 176

Orange juice · 94

Parmesan cheese · 139, 160

plain corn tostada shells · 77

Plain dry breadcrumbs · 183

Plain Greek yogurt · 183, 202

Plain hamburger buns · 98

plain instant couscous · 59

Plain regular yogurt · 33

plain whole-milk yogurt · 59, 89, 168, 196, 199

Pollock fillets · 186

Powdered sugar · 196

queso fresco · 77

quick-cooking oats · 21

raw mild Italian pork sausage · 102

Raw peeled shrimp · 180

Ingredient index (continued)



red bell pepper · 42, 59, 106, 156, 180

red bell peppers · 85

Red lentils · 164

red onion · 42, 51

red pepper flakes · 85

red wine vinegar · 64, 164

Reduced-sodium soy sauce · 29, 55, 81, 110, 144, 152

ripe bananas · 21

Ripe but firm pears · 205

Roasted peanuts · 202

Roasted red peppers · 164

romaine hearts · 110

romaine lettuce · 51

russet potatoes · 114

rustic bread · 64

Sardines packed in olive oil · 176

Scallions · 29, 55, 110, 144, 152, 183

sharp cheddar · 17, 64

sharp cheddar cheese · 25

Ingredient index (continued)



skinless, boneless pollock or cod fillets · 168

Small corn tortillas · 94

smoked paprika · 17, 46, 59, 69, 106, 119, 127, 131, 156, 168, 180

Smooth peanut butter · 37, 55, 202

smooth unsweetened peanut butter · 135

sour cream · 106

Spaghetti · 152

Sturdy country bread · 176

Sturdy sandwich bread · 37

sweet paprika · 85, 89

sweet potatoes · 135

Sweet-tart apples · 33

tahini · 119

tomato paste · 64, 106, 114, 156, 164

Unsalted butter · 37, 73, 114, 139, 148, 172, 190, 193, 199, 205

Unsalted chicken broth · 73

unsalted roasted peanuts · 55, 135

Unsalted vegetable broth · 180

Unseasoned rice vinegar · 29, 81, 110, 144, 152

Ingredient index (continued)



Unsweetened coconut milk · 186

unsweetened full-fat coconut milk · 85, 123

Very ripe bananas · 199

warm water · 55

water · 21, 29, 46, 55, 59, 69, 73, 77, 81, 85, 89, 94, 102, 106, 110, 114, 123, 131, 135, 139, 144, 148, 152, 156, 160, 164, 172, 186, 205

white button mushrooms · 110, 114

White onion · 94

whole milk · 25, 37, 114, 139

Whole-milk ricotta · 205

Worcestershire sauce · 114

Yellow mustard · 98

yellow onion · 25, 46, 73, 77, 102, 106, 114, 123, 127, 135, 156, 164, 176, 180, 186

Yukon Gold potatoes · 17, 172, 183

zucchini · 59