

10 Simple, Healthy, And Cheap Recipes



Delicious recipes and cooking techniques



Introduction

Welcome to **10 Simple, Healthy, And Cheap Recipes**. Whether you're just starting out or looking to refine your skills, each chapter delivers actionable knowledge you can apply immediately.



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Fundamentals of Simple, Healthy, and Cheap Cooking

Mastering simple, healthy, and budget-friendly cooking starts with understanding core principles that balance nutrition, flavor, and cost-effectiveness. This chapter introduces essential ingredient selection strategies and fundamental preparation techniques to build dishes that are both satisfying and economical. A foundational recipe illustrates these concepts in practice, equipping cooks to create meals with minimal complexity yet maximal health benefits.

Foundations

Creating meals that are straightforward, nutritious, and affordable hinges on choosing ingredients that offer versatility, nutrient density, and extended shelf life. Emphasizing whole foods - such as legumes, seasonal vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins - ensures balanced nutrition without excessive expense. This approach reduces reliance on processed ingredients while simplifying shopping lists and minimizing waste.

Ingredient Selection

LEGUMES

Beans, lentils, and chickpeas are excellent plant-based protein sources that are inexpensive and rich in fiber. Dry or canned legumes provide flexibility: dry beans require soaking and longer cooking but are cheaper per serving, while canned beans offer convenience.

WHOLE GRAINS

Grains like brown rice, quinoa, and oats contribute complex carbohydrates and fiber. Buying in bulk reduces cost and allows portion control. Whole grains support sustained energy and digestive health.

FRESH AND FROZEN VEGETABLES

Seasonal fresh vegetables maximize flavor and nutrient content while limiting cost. Frozen vegetables often retain nutrients and offer year-round affordability, especially outside peak seasons.

LEAN PROTEINS

Affordable proteins such as eggs, canned tuna, tofu, and skinless poultry provide essential amino acids with relatively low fat content, supporting muscle maintenance and overall health.

PANTRY STAPLES

Basic pantry items like olive or vegetable oil, garlic, onions, and spices amplify flavor without adding significant calories or cost, enabling simple ingredients to taste satisfying.

Foundational Recipe: Lentil and Vegetable Stew

This recipe demonstrates how to combine economical ingredients into a nutritious, balanced dish that is easy to prepare. Lentils provide plant-based protein and fiber, while seasonal vegetables contribute vitamins and minerals. The recipe yields 4 servings, suitable for batch cooking and leftovers.

Ingredients

- 200 g dried brown or green lentils, rinsed and drained
- 2 tablespoons olive oil (30 ml)
- 1 medium yellow onion (150 g), diced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced (6 g)
- 2 medium carrots (150 g), diced
- 2 stalks celery (120 g), diced
- 400 g canned diced tomatoes (with juice), no salt added
- 750 ml low-sodium vegetable broth or water
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin (2 g)
- 1 teaspoon smoked paprika (2 g)
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme (1 g)
- Salt, to taste (start with ½ teaspoon / 3 g)
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- Optional: 100 g chopped kale or spinach (for added greens)

Instructions

- Heat olive oil in a large pot over medium heat (approximately 160°C / 320°F). Add diced onion, garlic, carrots, and celery. Sauté for 5-7 minutes until vegetables soften and onions become translucent.
- Add cumin, smoked paprika, and dried thyme. Stir for 30 seconds to release the spices' aroma.
- Pour in rinsed lentils, canned tomatoes (including juice), and vegetable broth. Stir well to combine.
- Bring the mixture to a boil over high heat, then reduce heat to low, cover, and simmer gently for 25-30 minutes. Check lentils for tenderness; they should be soft but not mushy.
- If using greens, add chopped kale or spinach during the last 5 minutes of cooking to wilt.
- Season with salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste. Adjust seasoning gradually, tasting as you go.
- Remove from heat and let stew rest, covered, for 5 minutes before serving.

Chef Notes & Variations

- **Storage:** Cool completely and refrigerate in an airtight container for up to 4 days. Freeze portions for up to 3 months; thaw overnight in the refrigerator before reheating.
- **Plating:** Serve hot with a side of whole-grain bread or over cooked brown rice or quinoa for a more substantial meal.

- **Variation 1 - Gluten-Free:** The base recipe is naturally gluten-free; confirm broth choice to avoid hidden gluten.
- **Variation 2 - Vegan:** This recipe is vegan-friendly as written.
- **Variation 3 - Flavor Twist:** Add 1 teaspoon of curry powder or a splash of soy sauce for a different flavor profile.
- **Variation 4 - Protein Boost:** Stir in 100 g cooked shredded chicken or tofu cubes at the end for additional protein.

Technique Tips

- **Problem:** Lentils remain hard after simmering.

SOLUTION: Increase simmering time by 10-15 minutes and ensure the pot is covered to retain steam. Check broth level; add hot water if needed.

- **Problem:** Stew tastes bland.

SOLUTION: Gradually add salt in small increments near the end of cooking, as salt can concentrate and intensify flavors over time. Fresh herbs or a squeeze of lemon juice can brighten flavor.

- **Problem:** Vegetables are mushy.

SOLUTION: Dice vegetables uniformly and avoid overcooking. Add delicate greens last to prevent over-softening.

- **Problem:** Stew is too watery.

SOLUTION: Simmer uncovered for 5-10 minutes to reduce liquid, stirring occasionally to prevent burning.

WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED: Selecting nutrient-rich, affordable ingredients and combining them with simple cooking techniques can produce satisfying, healthful meals with minimal fuss. Understanding how to balance flavors and textures while managing cooking times optimizes results. The lentil and vegetable stew exemplifies these principles, laying a foundational skill set for the recipes ahead.

This foundation prepares you to explore variations and more complex dishes that build on these core methods and ingredient choices.

Next, you will discover how to diversify meal options while maintaining simplicity, healthfulness, and cost control.