



How to eat well with limited cooking equipment

crawley wellbeing



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We realise that living in accommodation where there is limited access to cooking equipment or resources has many challenges, not least being able to provide nutritious food for yourself and family.

Not having enough food and not feeling confident to cook in your environment are just some of the ways that can get in the way of eating well.

However, regularly skipping meals and not eating enough nutritional food can affect how our body's function and affect our mood and mental health.

What we eat can help us to feel better and healthier. Cooking tasty food which is good for you is possible when money is tight and cooking facilities are limited. We hope that these easy and cheap recipes will help the whole family feel good.

Possible types of equipment

- slow cooker
- kettle
- microwave
- air fryer
- large spoon/spatula

Easy to cook ingredients

Rice, pasta, noodles, potatoes

Tinned food – tuna, sardines, salmon, beans pulses, tinned vegetables such as peas, carrots, potatoes.

Jars of dried spices/herbs

Porridge oats, breakfast cereals (not too much sugar)

Not all food needs to be cooked - salads, tinned food and sandwiches/wraps

Bread

The key to working with limited equipment is to prioritise ingredients that have a high nutritional value. Focus on foods that require minimal preparation such as fresh fruit, vegetables, canned beans, wholegrains and pre-cooked protein such as rotisserie chicken.

A sandwich made with wholemeal bread containing some protein such as tuna with tomato and cucumber is a very healthy balanced meal.

Porridge

Porridge oats do not have to be heated they can just be soaked in milk with added fruit if you have it.

Potatoes

Jacket potatoes – can be cooked in a microwave or air fryer – many different toppings can be added from a range of tinned food.

Other quick and easy to prepare ideas could be:

- overnight oats
- beans on toast
- egg on toast
- tomatoes on toast
- soup

Protein on a budget

Plant proteins – like beans, lentils and tofu – are generally the cheapest way to get protein.

Because they're lower in saturated fat than meat, they're a great choice for your heart health too.

Adding healthy carbs

Wholegrain versions of bread, pasta, or rice don't necessarily cost more than the white versions. They'll help to keep your digestive system healthy, and can be more filling too.

Porridge oats are a healthy choice, and cheaper than many cereals. If you don't want to make porridge, you could try overnight oats (just soak porridge oats overnight in water, or low-fat milk or plant milk, mix in a pinch of cinnamon and some fruit).





Cheap and healthy snacks

If you have three nutritious, balanced meals each day, you might find that you don't need to snack.

But if snacks are part of your diet (or your family's), try to choose fruit, plain low-fat yoghurt and unsalted nuts for a more filling and nutritious choice.

Bananas, satsumas and apples make good-value snacks and don't need any preparation, or if you have a little more time, making carrot and celery sticks can be even cheaper per portion, and any leftovers can be used in soups or stews.

Healthy canned foods

1. Baked beans

Beans on toast is a classic British comfort food. But did you know that half a tin of baked beans counts as one of your five-a-day?

Just like other canned beans, such as kidney or black beans, baked beans are a good source of plant-based protein and fibre.

A 200g serving of baked beans can contain around 10g of fibre, which is a third of your daily recommended intake.

However, the tomato sauce they come in often contains added sugar and salt. So make sure to check the label and choose one with reduced sugar and salt.

2. Canned fish

Canned seafood, such as tinned tuna, sardines, salmon or mussels, is a cheap and convenient way to get more fish in your diet.

The NHS recommends eating at least two portions of fish a week, because it's high in protein and vitamins and minerals.

This includes at least one portion (140g) of oily fish like mackerel or sardines due to their high levels of omega-3s.

Again, keep an eye on food labels, and choose canned fish in water instead of brine, which can have a lot of added salt. If you choose fish canned in oil, drain before using to avoid unnecessary calories from fat.

3. Canned fruit

Canned fruits like tinned pineapples, peaches and pears are an easy way to get more of your five-a-day. One portion is around three heaped tablespoons.

They're often just as nutritious as fresh and frozen fruit, and last longer in your cupboard too.

Try to choose fruits canned in water or natural juice instead of syrup, which contains more added sugar.

4. Canned vegetables

Whether it's carrots, peas, sweetcorn or mushrooms, it can be handy to have some tinned vegetables in your cupboard as they last much longer than fresh ones. They all count towards your five-a-day!

Make sure to choose vegetables that come in water and have no added salt.

5. Tinned tomatoes

Chopped or plum tomatoes are another store cupboard staple that count as one of your five-a-day.

You might think canned tomatoes are less healthy than fresh ones. But your body can absorb more of a heart-healthy nutrient called lycopene from tinned varieties than it can from fresh, uncooked tomatoes.

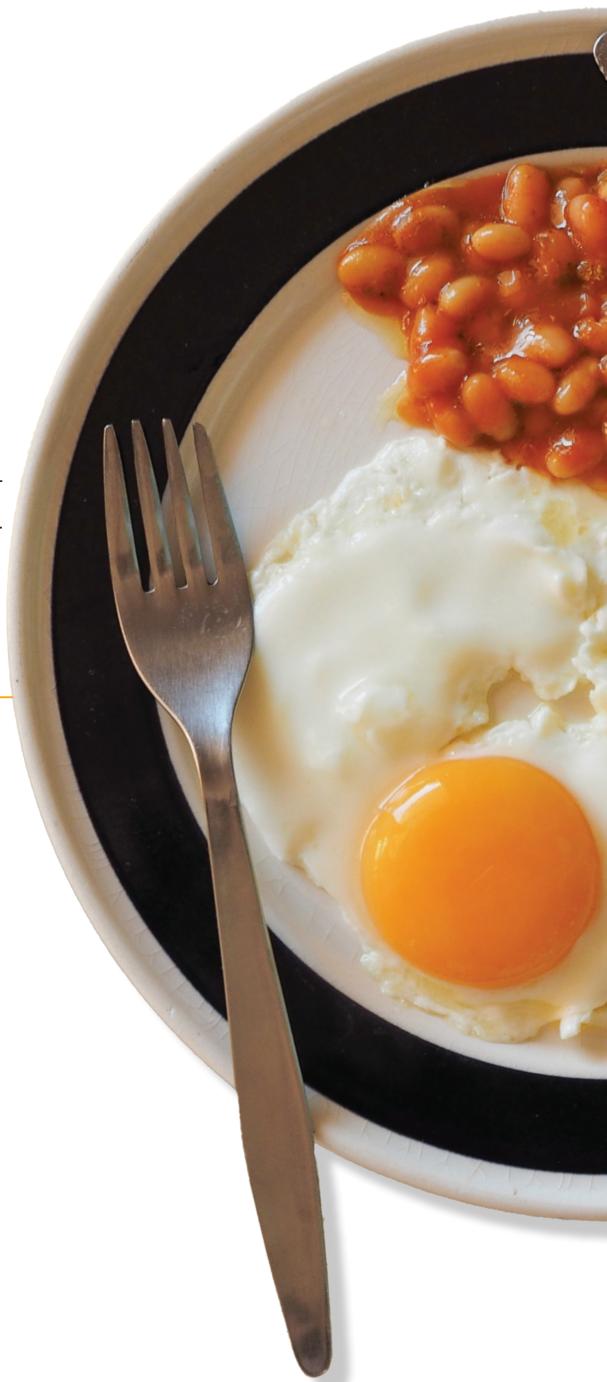
You can use them instead of using pre-made tomato sauces, which are more processed and higher in sugar and salt.

6. Tinned potatoes

Canned potatoes are already boiled, so they can be more convenient than raw potatoes.

You can add them to a salad, curry or soup. Or you can cook them in an air-fryer with a tablespoon of vegetable oil for crispy, golden potatoes without too much saturated fat.

However, keep in mind that the potatoes will usually have had their skins removed before they're canned, which does remove most of their fibre.



Baked beans with poached eggs (serves two)

This dish can be enjoyed for breakfast, lunch or supper, and counts as one of your five-a-day.

Preparation time: 15 minutes

Cooking time: 35 minutes



Step one.

Heat rapeseed oil in a non-stick saucepan. Add onion, carrot and celery; sauté over a medium heat for about 10 minutes or until softened. Carefully stir in vinegar; cook for one minute. Stir in tomatoes, sugar, paprika, Worcestershire sauce and black pepper. Bring to a simmer; cover and cook gently for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Step two.

Stir in beans; add stock if sauce is looking a little thick. Bring back to a simmer; cover and cook gently for a further 8 to 10 minutes, until sauce is cooked and beans are hot.

Step three.

Meanwhile, poach eggs in a separate pan of gently simmering water for a few minutes or until cooked to your liking. Remove from water using a slotted spoon.

Step four.

Serve baked beans with poached eggs on top or alongside. Serve with fresh crusty bread or toast.

Ingredients

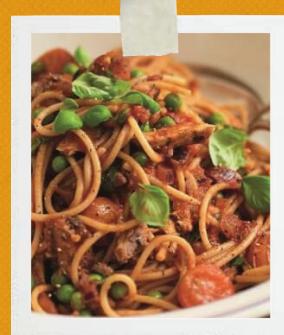
- 2 tsp rapeseed oil
- 1 small red onion, finely chopped
- 1 carrot (about 85g/3oz total/unprepared weight), peeled and finely diced
- 1 stick celery, finely diced
- 1 tbsp red wine vinegar
- 227g (8oz) can chopped tomatoes in rich natural juice
- 1½ tsp light brown soft sugar
- 1 tsp paprika
- ½ tsp Worcestershire sauce, or vegetarian alternative
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste (**optional**)
- ½ x 400g (14oz) can haricot beans in water, drained and rinsed (about 115g/4oz drained weight)
- About 4 tbsp hot home-made or reduced-salt vegetable stock (**optional**)
- 2 large eggs

Wholewheat spaghetti with sardines and cherry tomatoes (serves two)

This quick pasta dish is an easy to prepare dish giving you a taste of the heart healthy Mediterranean diet.

Preparation time: 10 minutes

Cooking time: 15 minutes



Step one.

Cook spaghetti in a large pan of boiling water for 10 to 12 minutes or according to packet instructions, until tender.

Step two.

Meanwhile, make sauce. Heat olive oil in a non-stick saucepan; add onion and garlic (if using) and sauté for five to seven minutes or until onion is softened.

Step three.

Stir in chilli flakes, tomatoes, peas, passata and sardines with their sauce, breaking up sardines roughly. Cover and simmer for about five minutes or until sauce is hot and tomatoes are softened. Stir in basil; season with black pepper.

Step four.

Drain spaghetti, reserving two tablespoons of the cooking water; add reserved cooking water to sardine sauce in pan. Add spaghetti to sauce, toss to mix well. Serve immediately, sprinkled with extra shredded basil.

Ingredients

150-175g (5½ - 6oz) dried wholewheat spaghetti

2 tsp olive oil

1 small red onion, finely chopped

1 clove garlic, crushed (**optional**)

A good pinch or two of dried chilli flakes

175g (6oz) ripe cherry tomatoes, halved

85g (3oz) frozen peas

150ml (1/4 pint) passata

120g (4 1/4oz) can sardines in tomato sauce

1 tbsp shredded fresh basil leaves, plus extra to garnish

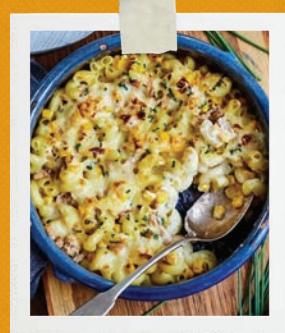
Freshly ground black pepper, to taste (**optional**)

Tuna and sweetcorn pasta bake (serves two)

This pasta bake is a quick and easy meal the whole family can enjoy, with crunchy sweetcorn and a creamy cheese sauce.

Preparation time: 15 minutes

Cooking time: 30 minutes



Step one.

Cook the pasta in boiling water until almost tender.

Step two.

Meanwhile, put the reduced-fat spread, flour and milk in a small saucepan. Set over a medium heat and whisk constantly until the mixture comes to the boil. Reduce the heat, continue whisking until the sauce is thickened and smooth. Stir in all but a teaspoon of the cheese. Season with black pepper.

Step three.

Drain the pasta, mix with the sauce, tuna, sweetcorn and chives, if using.

Step four.

Transfer to two ovenproof baking dishes and top with the remaining cheese. If freezing for future use, freeze now, and then defrost overnight in the fridge before cooking.

Step five.

If eating immediately, grill until golden. Alternatively, keep chilled for up to one day. When ready to use, bake at 170°C/150°C fan/gas mark 3 for 30 minutes until piping hot.

Ingredients

- 115g (4oz) dried wholewheat pasta shapes
- 25g (1oz) reduced-fat spread
- 25g (1oz) plain flour
- 250ml (9floz) semi-skimmed milk
- 25g (1oz) reduced-fat mature cheddar cheese
- 160g can tuna in spring water, drained
- 198g canned sweetcorn, drained
- 1 tbsp chopped fresh chives (**optional**)

Vegetable Balti (serves two)

This balti-style vegetable curry is warming but not overly spicy and makes a complete meal.

Preparation time: 15 minutes

Cooking time: 25 minutes



Step one.

Heat the oil in a large pan. Add the onions and cook over a medium heat until soft. Add the spices, ginger, one clove of garlic and tomato puree, fry for one minute.

Step two.

Add the cauliflower, parsnip, pepper, tomatoes and chickpeas, along with 100ml (3fl oz) water and bring to the boil. Lower the heat and simmer for 15 to 20 minutes, while you make the sauce.

Step three.

Put the yogurt, coriander, garlic and lime juice in a food processor or blender until the sauce turns green and the leaves are finely chopped.

Step four.

Stir the kale into the curry and cook for two minutes more. Serve with the coriander sauce.

Ingredients

1 tsp vegetable oil
1 onion, chopped
½ tsp ground coriander
¼ tsp cayenne pepper
Pinch of cinnamon
½ tsp freshly grated ginger
1 clove garlic, crushed
2 tbsp tomato puree
½ small cauliflower, cut into small pieces (you can use the stem)
1 parsnip, peeled and diced
½ red pepper, deseeded and sliced
400g (14oz) can chopped tomatoes
400g (14oz) can chickpeas, drained
100g (4oz) kale, shredded and with any tough stalks removed

For the coriander sauce:

150ml (5fl oz) low-fat Greek-style yogurt
15g (½ oz) fresh coriander, plus a few extra leaves to garnish
1 clove garlic, crushed
1 tsp lime juice

Air fryer chicken fajitas (serves two)

Spicy, colourful chicken fajita wraps are so quick and easy to make in the air fryer, you can whip them up at any time of day. Make your own guacamole or use shop-bought. You could skip the wraps and have the spicy chicken with crisp tacos or rice instead.



Preparation time: 30 minutes

Cooking time: 10 to 30 minutes

Step one.

Coat the chicken, peppers and chilli in the oil, spices and salt.

Step two.

Air-fry at 200°C for 15 minutes, shaking the air fryer basket twice during this time.

Step three.

Divide the mixture among the wraps, top with guacamole and sour cream and roll up.

Step four.

Cut in half and serve hot.

Ingredients

3 skinless chicken breasts, sliced into strips

1 red pepper, seeds removed, sliced

1 yellow pepper, seeds removed, sliced

1 red chilli, seeds removed, sliced

1 tbsp vegetable oil

1 tsp garlic granules

1 tsp ground cumin

1 tbsp paprika

1 tsp Cajun seasoning

1 tsp ground coriander

salt

To serve:

4 tortilla wraps, warmed

200g/7oz guacamole

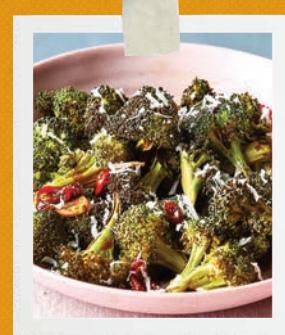
8 tsp soured cream

Air fryer broccoli with chilli and garlic (serves four)

A great and simple way to serve broccoli, this chilli-spiked side dish is just as delicious warm or served cold.

Preparation time: 30 minutes

Cooking time: 10 minutes



Step one.

Preheat the air fryer to 180°C.

Step two.

Lay the broccoli over the base of the air fryer like a carpet and spray all over with olive oil, then cook for 4 minutes.

Step three.

Mix together the balsamic, honey garlic and chilli in a bowl. Remove the air fryer drawer and sprinkle over the garlic, chilli and balsamic and honey mixture, then cook for another four minutes.

Step four.

Serve warm or cold with the Parmesan grated over.

Ingredients

1 head broccoli, cut into florets

olive oil spray

1 tbsp balsamic vinegar

1 tsp honey

1 garlic clove, thinly sliced

1 red chilli, thinly sliced (remove seeds for less heat)

a few gratings of Parmesan or vegetarian hard cheese, to serve

Slow cooker pea and ham soup (serves six)

An old-fashioned classic brought up to date in a slow cooker. Perfect for a wintry day, this filling, budget-friendly soup is made with dried split green peas and smoky gammon. Freeze any leftovers for reheating on another day.

Preparation time: 30 minutes

Cooking time: over two hours

Step one.

Heat the oil in a large non-stick frying pan and fry the onion, celery and carrots over a high heat for four to five minutes, or until beginning to soften. Tip into a slow cooker.

Step two.

Put the split peas in a sieve and rinse under cold water. Tip into the slow cooker pot with the vegetables and add the water and mixed herbs. Season with lots of pepper and stir well.

Step three.

Place the gammon in the centre of the slow cooker pot and nestle into the other ingredients. Cover with a lid and cook on High for five to six hours. If the peas are looking a little dry after three to four hours, add an extra 100ml/3½fl oz or so just-boiled water and continue cooking. By the end of the cooking time, the peas should be completely softened and the gammon fall-apart tender.

Step four.

Carefully take the gammon out of the slow cooker using tongs and place on a board. Stir the soup well with a wooden spoon, crushing all the peas to make a thick purée. You can add some more just-boiled water at this point to reach the right consistency for a soup. (For an extra smooth soup, blitz with a stick blender.) Season with salt and pepper.



Step five.

Shred the gammon and stir a handful through the soup. Ladle the soup into warmed bowls and serve the remaining gammon on top. Sprinkle with a little of the parsley and an extra grind of black pepper, if preferred. If making ahead, add extra water when reheating, as the soup will thicken as it cools.

Top tip:

This soup is traditionally made with stock from a ham bone but this version uses a small gammon joint which is far easier to get hold of these days. As modern gammons vary so much in flavour, be bold with the seasoning to get the classic pea soup flavour. Freeze leftovers in portions in sealed containers and add a little extra hot water or stock when reheating.

Ingredients

1 tbsp sunflower oil
1 onion, finely chopped
1 celery stick, thinly sliced
2 carrots (around 175g/6oz), peeled and diced
400g/14oz dried split peas
850ml/1½ pints just-boiled water from a kettle
½ tsp dried mixed herbs
600–750g/1lb 5oz–1lb 10oz smoked gammon joint
salt and freshly ground black pepper
chopped fresh flatleaf parsley, to serve (**optional**)

Air fryer roasted red pepper soup (serves four)

Roasting the vegetables in an air fryer creates extra sweetness and a deep yet bright flavour. This soup can be enjoyed hot or chilled.

Preparation time: 30 minutes

Cooking time: 1 hour

Step one.

To make the croûtons, preheat the air fryer to 200°C. Place the bread into a large bowl and season with salt and pepper, then mix in the olive oil, thyme and Parmesan.

Step two.

Spread the bread in a single layer in your air fryer basket. Put the bowl aside. Cook for six to eight minutes, shaking halfway through cooking. The croûtons should be a light golden colour and crunchy. Remove the croûtons from the air fryer, leaving it switched on.

Step three.

To make the soup, use the same bowl to combine the chopped peppers, onion, thyme, tomatoes and olive oil and season well with salt and pepper.

Step four.

Tip the vegetables into your air fryer basket, turning the tomatoes cut-side up. The vegetables can be tightly packed but need to be in a single layer to cook evenly. If necessary, cook the vegetables in two batches.

Step five.

Air fry for 30 minutes, checking halfway through and shaking the vegetables a little.

Step six.

When cooked, heat the stock in a pan on the hob over a medium heat, then add the roasted vegetables. Bring to a simmer then turn off the heat.



Step seven.

Use a stick blender to blend until smooth. Check the seasoning and season with a little more salt and pepper if necessary.

Step eight.

To serve, divide the soup between four bowls and top each with a handful of croûtons, a spoonful of crème fraîche, a drizzle of olive oil and sprinkling of thyme.

Ingredients

For the croûtons:

2 slices white bread (approx. 80g/2¾oz), cut into 1cm/½in cubes

2 tbsp olive oil

1 tsp finely chopped fresh thyme

1 tbsp finely grated Parmesan or vegetarian alternative

For the soup:

4 red peppers, seeds removed and chopped into 2cm/¾in chunks

2 medium red onions, finely chopped

4 tsp finely chopped fresh thyme

2 medium tomatoes (approx. 200g/7oz), sliced in half

2 tbsp olive oil

600ml/20fl oz chicken or vegetable stock

salt and freshly ground black pepper

To serve:

4 tbsp crème fraîche

4 tsp olive oil

1 tsp finely chopped fresh thyme

Air fryer cauliflower 'wings' (serves four)

Delicious right out of the air fryer, these vegan cauliflower 'wings' are crunchy and spicy drizzled with hot sauce. Add the water slowly and ensure you have a really thick batter that clings to the florets so it doesn't drip through the air fryer basket holes.

Preparation time: less than 30 minutes

Cooking time: 10 to 30 minutes

Step one.

Preheat the air fryer to 200°C.

Step two.

Put the flour, baking powder and paprika in a bowl with some salt and pepper. Whisk in 150ml/1/4 pint cold water to make a thick batter. Dip the cauliflower florets in to coat them and set aside on a plate.

Step three.

Spray the air fryer basket with oil, then add the florets in a single layer (they can be touching: you can break them apart after cooking). Spray the tops with more oil and air-fry for 10 minutes, or until golden brown and crispy but cooked through. (You may need to cook in two batches.)

Step four.

Meanwhile, make the dip. Mix the yoghurt, garlic, lemon zest and juice together in a bowl, then stir in the chopped herbs and season to taste.

Step five.

If you cooked the cauliflower in batches, put all the florets back into the air fryer and heat for 1 minute.

Step six.

Put two tablespoons of the hot sauce into a big bowl. Tip in the hot cauliflower florets and mix to coat all of the pieces. Serve immediately, drizzled with the third tablespoon of hot sauce if you dare, and the cooling dip alongside.



Ingredients

1 small–medium cauliflower, cut the cauliflower into florets, approx. 4–6cm/1½–2½in, save the stalk and leaves for another recipe

125g/4½oz plain flour

1 tsp baking powder

1 tsp paprika

cooking oil spray

2–3 tbsp buffalo hot sauce (check that it's vegan)

salt and freshly ground black pepper

For the dip:

175g/6oz unsweetened oat-based yoghurt

1 small garlic clove, crushed or finely grated

1 lemon, zest only, plus juice of ½ lemon

3 tbsp finely chopped fresh herbs, such as coriander, chives, dill, mint – or a mix



Slow cooker dal (serves four)

Tasty and filling, dal makes a cheap, healthy and satisfying meal. Try freezing it in portion-sized containers - it will keep for up to two months.

Preparation time: 30 minutes

Cooking time: Over two hours



Step one.

Place the split peas, onion, tomatoes, ginger, ground cumin, turmeric, crushed garlic, curry leaves and stock into a slow cooker.

Step two.

Add most of the chilli and stir to combine. Cook on high for four hours, until the split peas are tender.

Step three.

Season the dal generously with salt and freshly ground black pepper. Just before serving, heat the oil in a saucepan. When the oil is very hot, add the whole cumin seeds and the sliced garlic. Fry until the garlic is golden-brown and the cumin smells toasty and almost smoky.

Step four.

Spoon the hot spiced oil over the dhal, scatter with the remaining green chilli, then serve with lemon wedges for squeezing

Ingredients

300g/10½oz yellow split peas

1 onion, chopped

200g/7oz chopped tomatoes
(from a tin or fresh)

thumb of fresh root ginger, finely grated

2 tsp cumin seeds, 1 tsp
crushed finely in a mortar

2 tsp ground turmeric

2 garlic cloves, one crushed,
one thinly sliced

10 freeze-dried curry leaves

700ml/1¼ pts hot vegetable stock

1 hot green finger chilli, thinly sliced

2 tbsp vegetable or sunflower oil

lemon wedges, to serve

Easy slow cooker beef stew (serves six)

An easy slow cooker beef stew that's ready when you are. Throw store cupboard ingredients into the slow cooker with some inexpensive braising steak and serve with mash.

Preparation time: 30 minutes

Cooking time: Over two hours



Step one.

Pour the just-boiled water into a heatproof measuring jug, add the stock cube, tomato purée and yeast extract. Stir well until the cube has dissolved and set aside.

Step two.

Put the beef, bacon and vegetables in a slow cooker, sprinkle over the flour and add the salt, herbs and plenty of freshly ground black pepper. Toss together. Add the stock mixture and stir well.

Step three.

Cover with the lid and cook on low for 8 to 10 hours, until the beef and vegetables are tender. Serve the beef stew with mashed potatoes.

Ingredients

600ml/20fl oz just-boiled water

1 beef stock cube

2 tbsp tomato purée

1 tbsp yeast extract

900g/2lb good-quality braising steak, trimmed and cut into roughly 4cm/1½in chunks

100g/3½oz smoked bacon lardons, or sliced smoked back bacon

2 onions, thinly sliced

4 carrots (about 400g/14oz), peeled and cut into roughly 3cm/1½in chunks

4 celery sticks, trimmed and cut into roughly 3cm/1½in lengths

3 tbsp plain flour (25g/1oz)

1 tsp flaked sea salt, plus extra to season

1 tsp dried mixed herbs

1 bay leaf (dried or fresh)

ground black pepper

mashed potatoes, to serve

For more information and support:

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