

Food Parcel Meal Ideas

**FOOD
ACTIVE**

Stuck for ideas on what you can make with the ingredients in your food parcel? Look no further. Here we provide you with some basic but tasty meal ideas for breakfast, lunch, dinner, snacks and dessert using some of the **non-perishable** ingredients you might find in your food parcel. The scale to the right indicates certain meals and dietary requirements of each suggestion.

KEY

B: Breakfast	P: Pudding
L: Lunch	v: Vegetarian
D: Dinner	ve: Vegan
S: Snacks	gf: Gluten Free

TINNED VEGETABLES

Mushrooms

- B: Drained and grilled, served with scrambled, poached or fried eggs and brown toast (v)
- B: Drained and fried, added to complete your full English breakfast (gf without toast)
- D: Delicious added to pasta dishes, especially tomato-based sauces (v).
- D: Perfect addition to any stews or casserole
- D: Mushroom Bolognese. Make one quantity of the tomato sauce recipe under 'tinned tomatoes', but add finely chopped drained tinned mushrooms along with the rest of the vegetables at the start. Serve with brown pasta or spaghetti and a sprinkle of cheese (v, ve without cheese)



Carrots

- D: Perfect accompaniment to any meat or fish meal
- D: Perfect addition to any stews, soup or casseroles

Green beans

- D: Perfect accompaniment to any meat or fish meal
- D: Delicious added to pasta dishes, especially tomato-based sauces. See recipe under 'Tinned Tomatoes' (ve)

Peas

- D: Perfect accompaniment to any meat or fish meal
- D: Delicious added to rice or pasta dishes, especially tomato-based sauces. See recipe under 'Tinned Tomatoes' (ve)

Sweetcorn

- L/D: Mix with a tin of drained tuna and tablespoon of mayo for a tasty filling for a jacket potato (gf) or sandwich
- D: Perfect accompaniment to any meat or fish meal
- D: Delicious added to pasta dishes, especially tomato-based sauces. See recipe under 'Tinned Tomatoes' (ve).
- L: Corn, chickpea and mayo sandwich filling: Heat tsp oil in a pan, add in mixed herbs, 1 garlic clove and 1 onion. Fry until soft then remove from heat and set aside. In a bowl, mash the onion mixture with a tin of sweetcorn, tin of chickpeas, ¼ tsp salt and 3 tbsp's of mayo (v).

DID YOU KNOW?

Tinned, frozen and fresh fruit and vegetables all count as a portion. Try to aim for a variety and at least 5 portions every day!



TOP TIP: When making pasta or rice dishes, it can be useful to make extra portions and use the leftovers for meals across the next few days. Store any leftovers in the fridge in a sealed container and consume within 3 days maximum. When reheating ensure food is piping hot before serving.

TINNED VEGETABLES (cont.)

Tomatoes

- B: Plum tinned tomatoes, warmed and served on two slices of brown toast (ve)
- L/D: Perfect for making your very own homemade tomato sauce to be served with pasta. Recipe to the right and some variations could include:
 - Adding fresh diced courgettes, aubergines, peppers or tinned mushrooms and/or sweetcorn would all work well (v/ve if no cheese is added).
 - Chunks of tinned or cooked fresh meat added is a tasty and filling addition
 - Flaked tinned tuna, salmon, mackerel and sardines are also delicious added to this sauce

Spinach leaves

- B: Added to a two-egg omlette (v, gf)
- B: Added to scrambled egg (v, gf)
- D: Delicious added to pasta dishes, especially tomato based sauces! (v/ve if using dried pasta)

Mushy Peas

- D: Perfect accompaniment to any meat or fish meal



Homemade tomato sauce

Serves 4-6 (ve)

Prep time: 10m / Cook time: 45m

Chop 1 onion, along with 3 stalks of celery and 1 carrot into small chunks if you have them. Fry all together in a medium saucepan with a little oil for 10 minutes on a low-medium heat until soft. Add 2 chopped garlic cloves and cook for another 2 minutes. Add 1 tin of tomatoes (plum or chopped), and one tin of water. Add 1 tsp of sugar and crumble in half a stock cube (any flavour), if you have one. If not, just add a pinch of salt. Simmer on a low heat for 30 minutes and season with black pepper. If available, add any dried herbs you have in stock – roughly around 2 teaspoons worth (mixed herbs, Italian herbs or even a pinch of chilli flakes would all work well). Any leftovers are perfect and easy option for tomorrow's lunch or dinner – just make sure you reheat until piping hot in the microwave, hob or oven.

TINNED FRUIT

There are many different types of tasty tinned fruit available, and most will work across the selection of meal ideas below. Some varieties you may receive include tinned peaches, mandarin segments, pineapple (chunks and rings), pear halves, apple slices, prunes, strawberries, grapefruit and more. You can also get tins of fruit salad which contains a selection of fruit. -

- B: Perfect topping on cereal or porridge - apple slices and mandarin segments are a tasty option.
- B: Delicious served on top of yogurt - try strawberries or pineapple chunks (v, gf)
- S: Bowl of fruit, served with yogurt if available or on its own - a mixture of any fruit! (v, gf)
- P: Delicious swirled into rice pudding - chopped peaches or pear halves are a great choice
- P: Fruit salad (ve, gf)



BAKED BEANS

- B: Baked beans on brown toast, topped with some grated cheese if available (v)
- B: Perfect accompaniment to your full English breakfast to boost the vegetable content
- L/D: Delicious filling for your jacket potato, topped with some grated cheese if available (gf, v)
- D: Perfect served alongside slices of corned beef or tinned pork/ham and mashed potato (gf)
- D: Vegetable chilli made with chopped tomatoes, baked beans, mixed beans, peas and condiments including tomato puree, chilli powder and pepper – delicious served with rice (ve, for gf serve in a jacket potato).



3 tablespoons
= 1 of your 5-a-day!



TOP TIP: If you have any leftover tinned food that you want to save for another meal, decant into a resealable, non-metallic container and store in the fridge, consuming within two days of opening.

TINNED PASTA

- L/D: Spaghetti hoops or strands on brown toast and two fried eggs (v)
- L/D: Spaghetti hoops or strands on brown toast with grilled mushrooms and grated cheese (v)
- D: Perfect served alongside slices of corned beef or tinned pork/ham and boiled vegetables

TINNED SOUP



- L: Soup with slices of brown bread with spread or toast (v depending on soup)
- L: Soup and a sandwich (any filling; cheese (v), ham, egg (v), tuna served on brown bread with sliced tomato, cucumber and/or salad) (v depending on soup and filling)
- D: Soup served with cheese and slices of fresh tomato or sliced tinned mushrooms on brown toast and grilled until melted and golden (v depending on soup)

TINNED PULSES AND LENTILS

- D: Lentil bolognese and pasta: Add one tin of lentils (any kind) to a quantity of homemade tomato sauce (found under tinned tomatoes) when the chopped tomatoes are added and continue the recipe as usual (ve).
- D: Chickpea fried rice: Cook rice according to packet instructions. Heat 2tbsp butter in a large frying pan and stir in 1 chopped onion, 1 garlic clove and 2 carrots. Continue stirring for 5 minutes. Add chickpeas and tinned peas/sweetcorn and cook for 1 more minute. Spoon the cooked rice into frying pan and stir well. Serve with soy sauce and or/lemon juice for flavour (gf without soy sauce, v/ve depending on butter/margarine used).

TINNED FISH

Tuna (chunks or steak)

- L/D: Mix with sweetcorn or red onion and a tablespoon of low fat mayonnaise for a tasty and healthy filling for your jacket potato (gf).
- L/D: Flakes of tuna added to a two-egg omelette, along with some sweetcorn, red onion or chopped fresh tomatoes (gf).
- L/D: Delicious added to pasta sauce, especially tomato-based sauces. See recipe under 'Tinned Tomatoes' (v)

Sardines and mackerel

- L/D: Sardines or Mackerel on toast; mix a tin of mackerel or sardines with a tablespoon of low fat mayonnaise, season with pepper and spread across two slices of brown toast. Serve with a 150ml glass of orange juice.
- D: Flakes of mackerel or sardines added to a tomato pasta dish. See recipe under 'Tinned Tomatoes'
- D: Mackerel or sardines served with boiled rice served and with boiled vegetables of your choice (carrots, peas, cabbage, broccoli etc.)
- L/D: Chunks of mackerel or sardines added to a two-egg omelette. Add some diced fresh red onion or tomatoes, tinned sweetcorn or spinach (gf).
- D: Mackerel and sardines mixed with mashed potato and served with boiled vegetables of your choice served on the side (gf)

DID YOU KNOW?

It is recommended that we eat at least two portions of fish every week, of which one should be oily - including sardines, mackerel and salmon. Tinned varieties of these fish are a quick and easy way to make sure we meet this!



TINNED FISH (cont.)

Salmon (red or pink)

- L/D: Flakes of tinned salmon added to a two-egg omelette, along with some sweetcorn, peas or chopped fresh tomatoes (gf).
- L/D: Delicious added to pasta sauce, especially tomato-based sauces. See recipe under 'Tinned Tomatoes'
- L: Salmon and tomato sandwich, served on brown bread
- L: Mix a tin of salmon with a dollop of mayonnaise, lots of pepper and spread on slices of brown toast. Serve with a 150ml glass of orange juice.
- D: Mix tinned salmon with mashed potato, add tinned peas, chopped onion and season with lots of pepper. Add any dried or fresh herbs such as mixed herbs, form into small patties, roll in a little milk and then roll in breadcrumbs (grate any leftover or stale bread on a box grater) and fry in oil for 10 minutes, or until golden. Serve with boiled vegetables.
- D: Flakes of tinned salmon mixed with boiled brown rice and any boiled vegetables (gf).



TINNED MEAT

Corned beef

- L: Corned beef sandwiches with sliced tomato, served on brown bread.
- D: Slices of corned beef with tinned new potatoes, instant or fresh mashed potato and any boiled vegetables (fresh or tinned) (gf - double check packet on instant)
- D: Corned beef hash made with tinned new potatoes, instant or fresh mashed potato, onions and topped with sliced tomatoes and a ½ tin of baked beans on the side (gf - double check packet on instant).

Tinned ham, pork, chicken and turkey

- D: Sliced ham/chicken/turkey, beef with tinned new potatoes, instant or fresh mashed potato and any boiled vegetables (fresh or tinned) (gf - double check packet on instant)
- D: Chunks of meat swirled into a tomato pasta dish. See recipe under 'Tinned Tomatoes'.
- L: Ham and tomato sandwich, served on brown bread, delicious with a dollop of mayonnaise and/or mustard if available
- L: Chicken or Turkey salad sandwich, served on brown bread, delicious with a dollop of mayonnaise if available

PASTA, RICE AND NOODLES

Rice

- D: Boiled rice is a perfect accompaniment to any meat or fish meal (gf)
- D: Egg fried rice – cooked rice mixed with a selection of cooked veg, with an egg added at the end and scrambled into the rice (gf, v).
- D: Savoury rice – mix cooked rice and diced vegetables (carrots, celery, cauliflower, peas and sweetcorn, kidney beans and/or chickpeas are good options) together in a pan. Season with pepper, and a touch of salt a sprinkle of mixed herbs can add flavour. Adding a tin of flaked mackerel, sardines, tuna or salmon can be a tasty addition. Make enough for two portions and keep the rest in a resealable box and ensure you consume within 2 days. If reheating, make sure the food is piping hot before serving (gf).

DID YOU KNOW?

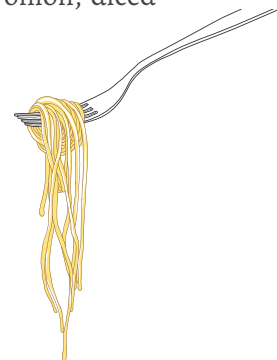
Around a third of what we eat should be carbohydrates, such as bread, pasta, rice and cereals. Try to consume wholegrain varieties as much as possible as they contain more fibre, which is important for our digestive system!



PASTA, RICE AND NOODLES (cont.)

Pasta

- L/D: Boil and serve with a quantity of homemade tomato sauce, or jarred sauce, with vegetables such as tinned sweetcorn, peas, cooked onions and/or celery (v/ve). Add chunks of tinned meat or any tinned fish if you prefer. Make enough for two portions and keep the rest in a resealable box for lunch or dinner the next day and ensure you consume within 2 days. If reheating, make sure the food is piping hot before serving.
- L/D: Add a handful of leftover cooked pasta to a two-egg omlette, along with veg such as red onion, diced fresh tomato, tinned sweetcorn, spinach or mushrooms (v).
- L/D: Serve with a quantity of mushroom bolognese. See recipe under 'Tinned Mushrooms' (ve)
- L/D: Serve with a creamy sauce made from low fat cream cheese, fried garlic, lots of pepper and any cooked green vegetables (fresh or tinned) such as broccoli, peas or spinach. Sliced fresh or tinned mushrooms are also a nice addition (v). Add chunks of tinned chicken, turkey or ham/pork if you prefer.
- L/D: Serve with boiled cabbage, peas and/or broccoli, chunks of tinned ham/pork, lots of black pepper and mixed together in a tablespoon of margarine or oil.



Noodles

- L/D: Simple stir fry – easy way to use up any leftover veg in bottom of the fridge and avoid waste – chop into small chunks 1 onion, 1 garlic clove and 1 small chilli (or 1/2 tsp flakes) and fry in pan on a medium heat for 5 minutes. Add in any other veg you want to use up, chopped into small pieces. Mix 3 tbsp of peanut butter with warm water and stir to make a runny sauce, add in 3-4 tbsp on soy sauce if available. Pour sauce over veg and add in noodles. Fry for a further 6-8 minutes until noodles are soft (v). You can also add chunks of tinned chicken, turkey or ham/pork too if you like.

JARRED SAUCES

Pasta sauce

- L/D: Warm through with vegetables such as tinned sweetcorn, peas, cooked onions and/or celery. Add chunks of tinned meat or any tinned fish if you prefer. Make enough for two portions and keep the rest in a resealable box and ensure you consume within 2 days. If reheating, make sure the food is piping hot before serving.
- T: Use as a sauce on top of tinned sliced pork, ham, chicken or turkey and serve with boiled brown rice or pasta and boiled vegetables.

Curry sauce

- D: Add cooked onion, tinned or frozen peas and chunks of boiled potatoes (fresh or tinned) to the sauce and heat through for a delicious potato and pea vegetarian curry. Serve with boiled brown rice (v, gf and ve depending on type of sauce).
- D: Slice chunks of tinned or fresh cooked chicken and add to the sauce. Add any of the following cooked vegetables to boost the veg content: onion, mushrooms (fresh or tinned), peas (tinned or frozen), green beans (fresh, tinned or frozen), cauliflower (fresh or frozen) and/or peppers (fresh or frozen). Serve with boiled brown rice (v, gf and ve depending on type of sauce)

Chilli con carne

- D: Make a vegetable chilli by adding a tin of baked beans to the sauce and/or a tin of red kidney beans, chickpeas or butter beans. Don't forget to add some tinned sweetcorn for a splash of colour and nutrients! Serve with boiled brown rice (ve, gf depending on type of sauce).



TOP TIP: Planning your meals can make it easier to prepare healthier, home-cooked meals and saves any last minute stress on what to make for dinner. Use these ideas and inspiration above to plan out your breakfast, lunch and dinner across the week.

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KEY

B: Breakfast	P: Pudding
L: Lunch	v: Vegetarian
D: Dinner	ve: Vegan
S: Snacks	gf: Gluten Free

FRESH VEGETABLES

Mushrooms

- B: Sliced and grilled, served with scrambled, poached, boiled or fried eggs and brown toast (v)
- B: Sliced and fried, added to complete your full English breakfast (gf without toast)
- B/L: Diced and cooked in a little oil or margarine, black pepper and served on brown toast
- D: Delicious added to pasta dishes, especially tomato-based sauces (ve).
- D: Perfect addition to any stews or casserole
- D: Mushroom Bolognese. Make one quantity of the tomato sauce recipe under 'tinned tomatoes', but add finely chopped drained tinned mushrooms along with the rest of the vegetables at the start. Serve with brown pasta or spaghetti (ve) and a sprinkle of cheese (v).



Carrots

- D: Perfect accompaniment to any meat or fish meal, cut into batons or rounds and boiled or steamed.
- D: Perfect addition to any stews or casseroles
- S: Raw carrot cut into sticks makes for a quick and healthy snack (gf, ve)

Green beans

- D: Perfect accompaniment to any meat or fish meal, boiled or steamed
- D: Delicious added to pasta dishes, especially tomato-based sauces. See recipe under 'Tinned Tomatoes' (ve)

Onions (red or white)

- D: A great base for any sauce, stew, casserole or soup, diced into small chunks and fried in a little oil or margarine/butter for about 10 minutes until softened.
- D: Delicious added to gravy for an onion gravy
- L: Mix with cheddar cheese and a tablespoon of low fat mayonnaise and some ground black pepper for a tasty sandwich filling (v).

Cabbage

- D: Perfect accompaniment to any meat or fish meal
- D: Delicious boiled and finely chopped, then mixed into mashed potato (v, gf)
- L/D: Serve a portion of boiled cabbage with brown cooked pasta, chunks of tinned ham/pork or bacon chopped into small pieces and then mix all together with lots of black pepper and a tablespoon of margarine or oil. Serve with some grated cheese on top.

DID YOU KNOW?

Portion sizes that count towards your five-a-day are typically 80g. A rough estimate is approximately a handful, so try to use this as a guide when adding fruit and veg to your meals!



TOP TIP: If you have any leftover fresh vegetables that are past their best, making a soup is a great way to use them up, reduce your food waste and make a healthy and tasty lunch or dinner at the same time. All you need is some stock cubes, seasoning and a blender/food processor (if you like your soup smooth)

FRESH VEGETABLES (cont.)

Celery

- D: Delicious added to pasta dishes, especially tomato based sauces! See recipe under 'Tinned Tomatoes' (ve).
- L: Grated cheese and finely sliced celery sandwich on brown bread (v)
- S: Celery sticks stuffed with grated cheese (v, gf)
- D: A great addition to stews and casseroles.
- L/D: Celery soup - see right for recipe! (v)

Spinach

- B: Added to a two-egg omlette (v, gf)
- B: Added to scrambled egg (v, gf)
- D: Delicious added to pasta, especially tomato based sauces! See recipe under 'Tinned Tomatoes' (ve).

Tomatoes

- B: Slices of tomato served on two slices of brown toast with pepper and a touch of salt (ve)
- L: Slices added to sandwiches including egg mayonnaise (v), cheese (v) and ham.
- L/D: A great addition to any salad

Broccoli and cauliflower

- D: Perfect accompaniment to any meat or fish meal, cut into stems and boiled or steamed.
- D: Perfect addition to any stews or casseroles
- D: For an extra tasty side dish, boil and place in an ovenproof dish, top with grated cheese and grill until golden (v, gf).

Lettuce and salad leaves

- D: Washed and served as accompaniment to any meat or fish meal. Add any sliced red onion, tomato, cucumber and/or peppers if you like (gf).
- D: Add slices of tinned or fresh chicken or ham/pork and/or one or two boiled eggs along with sliced red onion, tomato, cucumber and/or peppers if you like (gf).
- L: Great addition to any sandwich filling

Cucumber

- D: Great addition to any salad
- L: Delicious sliced in a cheese sandwich, served on brown bread (v)
- S: Sliced into sticks is a quick and tasty snack to tie you over until dinner time! (ve, gf)

Red, yellow and green peppers

- D: Great addition to any salad
- L/D: Delicious added to pasta dishes, especially tomato-based sauces. See recipe under 'Tinned Tomatoes' in the non-perishable meal ideas sheet (ve).
- S: Sliced into sticks is a quick and tasty snack to tie you over until dinner time! (ve, gf)

Garlic

- D: A great base for any sauce, soup, noodle or rice dish, diced into small chunks and fried on a low heat in a little oil or margarine/butter for about 2 minutes until softened.

Ginger

- S: Sliced and placed in a mug with some boiling water and lemon for a soothing and comforting drink (ve, gf).
- L/D: Peel off the skin and grate into stir fry's or rice dishes.

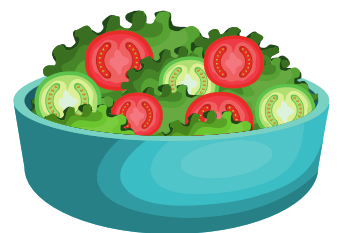


Homemade celery soup

Serves 4-6 (v)

Prep time: 15m / Cook time: 40m

Chop up a whole head of celery into medium chunks (leaves included), dice 1 garlic clove and dice one medium sized potato in small chunks and fry in a tablespoon of oil, butter or margarine. Cook on a medium heat for 15-20 minutes, stirring frequently to ensure the veg doesn't burn. Add in 500ml vegetable stock, bring to the boil and then reduce to a simmer for another 20 minutes, or until all the vegetables are soft. Blend with a hand blender or a food processor until smooth, add 100ml milk, season with pepper and blitz for a further minute. Serve with brown bread. Leftovers can be kept in a sealed container the fridge for up to 3 days or frozen and can be a perfect and easy option for lunch or dinner. If freezing, defrost overnight in the fridge and make sure to reheat thoroughly before serving.



FRESH FRUIT

There are many different types of fresh fruit available, and most will work across the selection of meal ideas below. You may receive apples, oranges, bananas, plums, strawberries, grapes, blueberries, raspberries and more.

- B: Perfect topping on cereal or porridge - sliced bananas and blueberries are tasty options (ve).
- B: Delicious served on top of yogurt - try strawberries or raspberries (v, gf)
- S: Bowl of fruit, served with yogurt if available or on its own - a mixture of anything you have got! (v, gf)
- S: Whole fruit is a filling snack - try an orange or apple (ve, gf)
- P: Delicious swirled into rice pudding - sliced plums and pears are a great choice (v)
- P: Fruit salad - dice up any fresh fruit you have, apples, plums, bananas and mix with grapes, strawberries, raspberries - whatever you have going spare! (ve, gf)



EGGS

- B: Scrambled, poached, fried or boiled eggs on wholemeal toast/soldiers. Serve with add a 150ml glass of orange juice for one of your five-a-day (v)
- B/L: Two-egg omelette (add in some a handful of diced fresh tomatoes, fresh or tinned spinach, or fresh or tinned mushrooms for one of your five-a-day) (v, gf)
- B: Eggy bread (made with two eggs and brown bread). Serve with a 150ml glass of orange juice for one of your 5-a-day (v).
- L: Sliced boiled egg and tomato sandwich, served on brown bread (v)
- L: Egg mayonnaise made with two boiled eggs, lots of black pepper and a tablespoon of low fat mayonnaise. Serve on two slices of brown bread and sliced tomato, cucumber and/or salad (v).
- S: Boiled egg as a snack (v, gf)

CHEESE

- B/L: Brown toast topped with sliced tomato or diced tinned/fresh mushrooms and grated cheese, grilled (v).
- S: Slices of cheese (v, gf)
- L: Cheese and tomato sandwich, served on brown bread (v)
- L: Cheese and onion sandwich, served on brown bread and a piece of fruit (v)
- L: Cheese and cucumber or salad sandwich, served on brown bread (v)
- L/D: Delicious thrown into omelettes or sprinkled on any pasta dish (v).
- P: Slices of cheese, crackers and sliced tomato, cucumber, celery, grapes and/or any chutney or pickle for a DIY cheeseboard (v)



YOGURT

- B: Add 125g (4 tablespoons) of yogurt from a large pot, or one single individual pot, to a bowl and add a portion of fruit that you have handy - strawberries, blueberries and raspberries are a great choice (v, gf).
- B: Add one or two tablespoons on top of your cereal or porridge, along with any fresh fruit.
- S: An individual pot of yogurt is a tasty and filling snack in between meals (v, gf).



TOP TIP: Some types of fruit can be frozen. If you have any bananas that are going brown, slice them up and place in a bag in the freezer for up to 3 months. You can get these out and use as a topping for your cereal, porridge or yogurt later.

Food Parcel Meal Ideas



**FOOD
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FAQs

Have a question about the contents of your food parcel, how to store certain ingredients, how much of certain types of food you should be eating or specific dietary requirements? Look no further. Below we have tried to answer common questions relating to food, cooking, storage and more.

HEALTHY EATING

How can I get my five portions of fruit and veg a day?

Getting your five-a-day through your food parcel doesn't have to be difficult. Below are some tips and ideas on how you get boost the fruit and veg content of your meals and snacks across the day, to help you reach five portions.

- Feeling peckish? A portion of fruit, such as an orange, apple, pear or bowl of tinned fruit is an ideal snack to tie you over to your next meal.
- Carrot, cucumber and celery sticks are also a tasty and healthy snack.
- Only 30g of dried fruit counts as one of your five-a-day, as it contains lots of sugar. Try to consume at mealtimes to reduce the risk of tooth decay.
- Only 150ml unsweetened fruit juice counts towards one of your-five-a-day, as it contains lots of sugar. Try to consume at mealtimes to reduce the risk of tooth decay.
- We all like pudding – and whilst many puddings can be high in sugar or fat, you can make them more nutritious by adding a portion of fresh, tinned or frozen fruit. Tinned peach slices are delicious swirled into rice pudding.
- Try to include at least one portion of fruit or vegetables in each meal – that way you are way over half your way to meeting your five-a-day. Here are some ideas:

Breakfast: Add a 150ml glass of orange juice, portion of baked beans or some mushrooms and tomatoes to your dish.

Lunch: Soup is an easy way to consume a portion of vegetables, but you can also add salad, cucumber, sliced tomato and/or sliced celery to your sandwich too. A portion of fruit with your lunch is also an easy way to incorporate more fruit into your meals.

Dinner: Try to always serve a portion of vegetables whether it be fresh, frozen or tinned with every evening meal. Stews, soups, casseroles and tomato pasta sauces are a great way to incorporate lots of vegetables and use up any odd ends you have in the fridge, adds another flavour and texture, not to mention help you on your way towards your five-a-day.

I prefer white bread, rice and pasta. Why are brown versions better for me?

Wholegrain varieties contain more fibre, and usually more vitamins and minerals than white varieties, they also keep you fuller for longer. You can mix half white pasta with half brown pasta to start if you don't like the taste or texture, however many people say they can't tell the difference most of the time. You can't do this for rice as brown rice usually takes longer than white rice to cook, but perhaps try swapping to brown - you may even prefer it.

What drinks are good options for me?

It's easy to overlook, but choosing healthier drinks is a key part of getting a balanced diet. Many soft drinks, such as fizzy pop, juices and instant powdered drinks are high in sugar which, if consumed regularly, can be bad for our teeth and cause us to consume too many calories. Keeping hydrated is essential for bodily functions and can help to control our appetite. We should aim to drink 6 to 8 glasses of fluid a day. Tap water, lower fat milk and sugar-free drinks, including tea and coffee, all count.

What are pulses and lentils?

Pulses, such as beans, lentils and peas, are some of the cheapest foods on the supermarket shelf. These pulses are low in calories and fat but packed with fibre, vitamins and minerals, and also count towards your 5-a-Day. Use them in dishes to replace some of the chicken or meat, such as a chilli con carne with kidney beans or a chicken curry with chickpeas. White beans such as butter beans or cannellini beans also make a great alternative to mashed potato.

KEEPING MEALS INTERESTING

I am getting bored of eating the same meals. What can I do to spice things up?

If you have herbs and spices in the cupboard then now is a great time to start using them a little more. Start by adding herbs to stews and tomato based sauces, you can add spices such as cumin, paprika and chilli powder to tomato based sauces to make a tasty alternative to serve with pasta or rice. Jazz up baked beans with a sprinkle of curry or chilli powder, or with a grating of cheese. As a rule of thumb, try not to eat the same meal more than once or twice a week - try and mix things up, even if it's adding sliced cucumber to your sandwich instead of tomato. Every little helps!

Try different ways of cooking your ingredients, if you have the equipment available. Try roasting vegetables rather than boiling them, you could even try a tray bake with a portion of meat, potatoes and vegetables tossed in some oil and cooked in the oven. Adding salad to a sandwich can really make a difference to the taste and texture, and trying a different type of pasta with your meal can also change things up a little.

You can also look for more meal ideas and inspiration online. BBC Good Food has a great selection of tried-and-tasted recipes to suit a range of taste, budget and ability. Take a look through any old magazines or papers lying about which may also have some recipes under the Lifestyle section.

LEFTOVERS AND FOOD WASTE

I only cook for myself and have a small appetite. Is there much point in cooking a meal?

Don't be worried about cooking too much food and it going to waste. You can always use any leftovers for meals the next day and this will make a quick and easy lunch or dinner option for you to choose. Store any leftovers in a resealable container for up to two days in the fridge, and when reheating ensure the food is piping hot before serving. You can store any leftover tinned food in the fridge ready to be used for another meal – just make sure you transfer into a resealable container or bowl and cover with clingfilm, foil or a plate and make sure you consume within two days.

What can I do to stop throwing away fresh ingredients that I haven't used?

Some fresh vegetables can be easily frozen and stored in the freezer until you need them next, if you have access to one. Hardy vegetables like carrots, green beans, broccoli and cauliflower freeze well for up to 2 months and can be boiled straight from frozen. You can also freeze some types of fruit and use to make a smoothie or a tasty topping for your cereal or yogurt at a later date. For example, browning bananas for example can be sliced, stored in a zip lock bag and frozen for up to 2 months. Leave out to defrost for 15 minutes and top with your cereal, porridge or yogurt, or blend with skimmed or semi skimmed milk to create a nutritious smoothie.

GROW YOUR OWN!

I'd like to start growing some vegetables, but I don't have a garden. What can I do?

You don't need to have a lush green garden to grow your own produce. A little bit of space on a window sill will work just fine for small things like herbs, lettuce and cress, and you can grow smaller veg like tomatoes in plant pots in the kitchen. If you do you have room for planting outside on your balcony however, a hanging basket can give you above-ground growing space. Either way, growing your own produce can be a satisfying, handy and cost-effective way of always making sure you have fruit, vegetables and/or herbs to hand, which can be used for all different types of meals and snacks. Flowers can also be grown too, which can help to brighten up the room.

If you're growing indoors, you'll just need some appropriate pots, seeds and good quality soil, but that really is about it. There are lots of great veg you can grow on your window sill including herbs (basil, parsley, chives and more), salad leaves, chillies, peppers, celery, tomatoes, onions and much more. Choose your windowsill that gets the most sun - ideally around 5 hours a day, but be careful not to overcrowd.