

WEEKLY MEAL PLAN

Meal Plan 8

A week of warming, healthy, beginner-level meals for autumn and winter: soups, pies, bakes and slow-cooked roasts, with a shopping list for every recipe.

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MEAL PLAN 8

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Meal Plan 8: Autumn and Winter Comfort

Day 1 · Monday

Today at a glance. Welcome to Autumn and Winter Comfort: warming food that is still light and healthy. Breakfast takes 6 minutes, lunch is a soup that simmers while you do something else, and dinner is a one-dish hotpot with about **15 minutes of work** and the oven doing the rest. One small **onion** is shared between lunch and dinner. Every quantity below is for **one portion**, in metric with UK names.

Breakfast

BREAKFAST · VEGETARIAN

Pear and Ginger Porridge

6 minutes | 1 pan or microwave | 5 ingredients | Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

40 g	porridge oats
200 ml	semi-skimmed milk
1	ripe pear
½ tsp	ground ginger
1 tsp	honey (optional)

METHOD

1. Wash the pear, cut out the core and chop it into small cubes, skin on.
2. Put the oats, milk and ginger in a small saucepan over a medium heat. Stir for 3 to 4 minutes, until thick and creamy. (Or put them in a microwave-safe bowl and microwave for 2 minutes, stirring halfway.)
3. Stir in most of the pear for the last minute so it softens a little. Spoon into a bowl, top with the rest of the pear and drizzle with the honey if you like.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY START

Oats give slow-release energy and fibre that keeps you full, and the pear adds natural sweetness and more fibre, so you need little or no added sugar. Ginger is a warming spice for a cold morning.

SWAPS

An apple in place of the pear. Cinnamon in place of the ginger. A spoonful of Greek yoghurt on top for protein.

Shopping list for this recipe

Lunch

LUNCH · VEGETARIAN

Carrot, Red Lentil and Ginger Soup

25 minutes | 1 pan, mostly hands-off | Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

1 tsp	olive oil
½	small onion (the other half goes into tonight's hotpot)
2	carrots (about 200 g)
1 tsp	grated fresh root ginger, or ½ tsp ground ginger
40 g	dried red lentils
½ cube	reduced-salt vegetable stock cube
350 ml	hot water for the stock
1 slice	wholemeal bread, to serve
1 pinch	black pepper

METHOD

1. Peel the carrots and slice them thinly. Peel and chop the onion.
2. Heat the oil in a medium saucepan over a medium heat. Cook the onion for 3 minutes, until soft. Stir in the ginger for 30 seconds.
3. Add the carrots, rinsed lentils and the hot stock. Bring to the boil, then turn the heat down, put the lid on and simmer for 18 to 20 minutes, until the carrots and lentils are very soft.
4. Blend with a stick blender until smooth, or mash roughly with a potato masher for a chunkier soup. Add a splash of hot water if it is too thick. Season with the pepper.
5. Toast the bread and serve it alongside.

> **SAVE THE OTHER HALF OF THE ONION**
>
> Wrap the other half of the onion and keep it in the fridge. Tonight's hotpot uses it.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY LUNCH

Red lentils give protein and fibre, and the carrots give vitamin A. It is a thick, filling soup with only 1 tsp of oil, and the stock is the only salty ingredient.

SWAPS

Half a teaspoon of ground cumin in place of the ginger. A swede or a parsnip in place of one carrot. A spoonful of yoghurt swirled in at the end.

Shopping list for this recipe

Dinner

DINNER · BEEF · OVEN BAKE

Beef and Root Vegetable Hotpot with a Potato Topping

Prep: 10 minutes | Cooking: about 40 minutes | About 15 minutes of hands-on work | 1 pan plus 1 small dish

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

125 g	lean beef mince (5% fat)
½	small onion (the other half from lunch)
1	carrot
75 g	swede (about a slice 2 cm thick)
200 g	potato (1 medium), unpeeled is fine
1 tbsp	tomato purée
½ tsp	dried thyme
½ cube	reduced-salt beef stock cube
150 ml	hot water for the stock
2 tsp	olive oil
1 pinch	salt and black pepper

PREP (ABOUT 10 MINUTES, ANY TIME THAT DAY)

1. Peel the carrot and swede and cut them into 1 cm cubes. Chop the onion. Scrub the potato and slice it as thinly as you can, about 3 mm thick. Keep the potato slices in a bowl of cold water so they do not go brown, or cover the vegetables and chill them. Wash your hands and the board.
2. If you are going out first, you can stop here. Keep the raw mince on the **bottom shelf** of the fridge.

AT DINNER TIME (ABOUT 15 MINUTES OF WORK, THEN THE OVEN DOES THE REST)

1. Heat the oven to 200°C (180°C fan). Heat 1 tsp of the oil in a small frying pan or saucepan over a medium-high heat.
2. Add the mince and cook for 4 minutes, breaking it up with a wooden spoon, until it is brown all over.

3. Add the onion, carrot and swede and cook for 3 minutes. Stir in the tomato purée and thyme for 30 seconds, then pour in the hot stock. Simmer for 5 minutes, until the sauce is thicker. Season.
4. Spoon the mixture into a small ovenproof dish (about 18 cm wide and 6 cm deep). Drain and pat dry the potato slices and lay them in overlapping rows over the top. Brush or drizzle with the remaining 1 tsp of oil and add a little pepper.
5. Cover with foil and bake for 15 minutes. Take the foil off and bake for another 15 to 18 minutes, until the potatoes are tender when pierced with a knife and golden at the edges.
6. Rest for 2 minutes, then eat from the dish.

> **COOKING MINCE SAFELY**
>
> Cook the mince until there is no pink left, and make sure the hotpot is bubbling and steaming hot in the middle before you eat. If you prepared the raw mince ahead, cook it the same day.

> **MAKE IT AHEAD**
>
> On a day when you are home in the morning, you can assemble the whole hotpot (steps 2 to 4), cool it, cover and chill it, and bake it from cold in the evening: 20 minutes covered, then 20 minutes uncovered.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY DINNER

Lean mince with plenty of root vegetables gives protein, fibre and vitamins with little fat. The potato slices replace a pastry lid and keep it light and hearty.

SWAPS

A parsnip in place of the swede. A handful of frozen peas stirred in with the stock. Lean lamb mince for a traditional hotpot.

Shopping list for this recipe

COMING UP TOMORROW

Tuesday has stewed apple with yoghurt, a sweet potato with houmous, and a chicken, leek and mushroom pie with a crisp filo lid. If your chicken is frozen, take it out tonight to defrost in the fridge.

Meal Plan 8: Autumn and Winter Comfort

Day 2 · Tuesday

Today at a glance. Breakfast is a quick stewed apple, lunch is a microwave sweet potato with 10 minutes of effort, and dinner is a light pie with a filo lid: about **15 minutes of work** and 15 to 18 minutes in the oven. You will use **leeks** and **mushrooms**, which come back on Wednesday and Saturday. Every quantity below is for **one portion**, in metric with UK names.

Breakfast

BREAKFAST · VEGETARIAN

Spiced Stewed Apple with Yoghurt and Oats

8 minutes | 1 small pan or microwave | 5 ingredients | Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

1	eating apple
3 tbsp	water
½ tsp	ground cinnamon
150 g	plain Greek-style yoghurt
25 g	porridge oats

METHOD

1. Wash the apple, cut out the core and chop it into small cubes, skin on.
2. Put the apple, water and cinnamon in a small saucepan with a lid. Cook over a medium-low heat for 6 minutes, stirring once, until the apple is soft. (Or microwave in a covered bowl for 2 to 3 minutes.)
3. Spoon the yoghurt into a bowl, stir in the oats, and top with the warm apple and its juices.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY START

The apple is sweet without added sugar, and the yoghurt gives protein while the oats give fibre. It is like a light crumble you can eat for breakfast.

SWAPS

A pear in place of the apple. A few raisins or chopped walnuts on top. Frozen blackberries stirred in for the last 2 minutes.

Shopping list for this recipe

Lunch

LUNCH · VEGETARIAN

Baked Sweet Potato with Houmous and Spinach

10 minutes | Microwave | 3 ingredients | Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

1	sweet potato (about 250 g)
2 tbsp	houmous (about 40 g)
40 g	baby spinach
1 pinch	black pepper

METHOD

1. Scrub the sweet potato and prick it all over with a fork. Microwave it on a plate for 5 minutes, turn it over, then microwave for another 2 to 4 minutes, until it feels soft when squeezed (use a tea towel, it will be hot).
2. Cut it open lengthways and put the spinach on top of the hot potato. Leave it for 1 minute, so the heat wilts the spinach.
3. Spoon the houmous on top and finish with pepper.

> **CRISPIER SKIN**
>
> If the oven is on, or you have 10 minutes spare, put the microwaved potato in a 220°C oven for 8 to 10 minutes to crisp the skin.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY LUNCH

Sweet potato gives fibre, vitamin A and slow-release carbohydrate, and the spinach adds iron. Houmous brings plant protein and healthy fat, so it is filling for a meal with so few ingredients.

SWAPS

A spoonful of Greek yoghurt in place of the houmous. A sprinkle of grated cheese. A handful of frozen sweetcorn warmed with the potato.

Shopping list for this recipe

Dinner

DINNER · CHICKEN · OVEN BAKE

Chicken, Leek and Mushroom Filo Pie with Green Beans

Prep: 10 minutes | Cooking: about 30 minutes | About 15 minutes of hands-on work | 1 pan plus 1 small dish

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

150 g	chicken breast
1	small leek (about 120 g)
80 g	mushrooms
2 tsp	olive oil (1 tsp for the pan, 1 tsp for the filo)
1 tbsp	plain flour (about 10 g)
½ cube	reduced-salt chicken stock cube
100 ml	hot water for the stock
50 ml	semi-skimmed milk
½ tsp	dried thyme
2 sheets	filo pastry (chilled or defrosted)
100 g	green beans

PREP (ABOUT 10 MINUTES, ANY TIME THAT DAY)

1. Cut the chicken into 2 cm chunks. Put it in a covered container on the **bottom shelf** of the fridge. Wash your hands, the board and the knife.
2. Trim the leek, slit it lengthways and rinse it well under cold water to remove any soil. Slice it thinly. Wipe the mushrooms and slice them. Trim the tops off the green beans. Keep the vegetables in the fridge.

AT DINNER TIME (ABOUT 15 MINUTES OF WORK)

1. Heat the oven to 200°C (180°C fan). Heat 1 tsp of the oil in a frying pan over a medium heat. Cook the leek and mushrooms for 5 minutes, until soft.
2. Add the chicken and cook for 4 minutes, turning, until it is white on the outside. Sprinkle over the flour and thyme and stir for 1 minute.

3. Add the stock a little at a time, stirring, then the milk. Simmer for 3 minutes, until the sauce is thick. Check that a piece of chicken is white all the way through, with no pink.
4. Spoon the filling into a small ovenproof dish. Crumple the 2 filo sheets loosely and lay them over the top. Brush them with the other 1 tsp of oil.
5. Bake for 15 to 18 minutes, until the filo is golden and crisp and the filling is bubbling.
6. While it bakes, steam or boil the green beans for 5 minutes, until tender. Drain and serve with the pie.

RAW CHICKEN AND FILO

Keep the raw chicken on the bottom shelf and cook it the same day. Wash the board, knife and your hands after handling it, and never brush the filo with anything that has touched raw chicken. The pie is ready when the filling is steaming hot in the middle.

FILO THAT IS LEFT OVER

A packet has more than 2 sheets. Buy chilled filo, wrap the rest tightly in cling film or a freezer bag, and freeze it. Defrost it overnight in the fridge when you want it again, and never refreeze it after defrosting.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY DINNER

Filo is crisp with very little fat, so you get the comfort of a pie without a heavy pastry case. The sauce is made with a little flour and stock rather than cream, and the leek, mushrooms and green beans add up to a plate that is mostly vegetables.

SWAPS

Chicken thighs in place of the breast (cook for 2 minutes longer). A carrot or a handful of frozen peas in the filling. Broccoli or cabbage in place of the green beans.

Shopping list for this recipe

COMING UP TOMORROW

Wednesday is the vegetarian day: mushroom scramble on toast, a mushroom soup, and a pearl barley, butternut squash and sage risotto. Buy a 300 g pack of diced squash: half goes in the risotto and half goes into Saturday's broth.

Meal Plan 8: Autumn and Winter Comfort

Day 3 · Wednesday

Today at a glance. Wednesday is the **vegetarian dinner** and a mushroom day. Breakfast takes 8 minutes, lunch is a soup that simmers for 12 minutes, and dinner is a one-pan barley risotto with about **12 minutes of work** and the rest of the time on a gentle simmer. Half an **onion** is used at lunch and half at dinner. Every quantity below is for **one portion**, in metric with UK names.

Breakfast

BREAKFAST · VEGETARIAN

Mushroom Scramble on Toast

8 minutes | 1 frying pan | 4 ingredients | Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

60 g	mushrooms
1 tsp	olive oil
2	eggs
2 slices	wholemeal bread
1 pinch	black pepper

METHOD

1. Wipe the mushrooms with a damp paper towel and slice them thinly.
2. Heat the oil in a small non-stick frying pan over a medium-high heat. Cook the mushrooms for 4 minutes, stirring now and then, until they are golden and the water has gone.
3. Put the bread in the toaster. Crack the eggs into a cup, beat them with a fork and a little pepper, and pour them into the pan.
4. Turn the heat down. Stir gently for 1 to 2 minutes, until the egg is just set but still soft. Pile it onto the toast.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY START

Eggs give protein that keeps you full all morning, and mushrooms add flavour and B vitamins for very few calories. Wholemeal bread adds fibre.

SWAPS

A handful of spinach stirred in at the end. A grilled tomato on the side. A fried or poached egg in place of the scramble.

Shopping list for this recipe

Lunch

LUNCH · VEGETARIAN

Mushroom Soup on Toast

22 minutes | 1 pan, mostly hands-off | Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

1 tsp	olive oil
½	small onion (the other half goes into tonight's risotto)
100 g	mushrooms
1 clove	garlic
1	small potato (about 80 g), peeled and cut into 1 cm cubes
½ cube	reduced-salt vegetable stock cube
300 ml	hot water for the stock
¼ tsp	dried thyme
1 slice	wholemeal bread, to serve
1 pinch	black pepper

METHOD

1. Peel and chop the onion and garlic. Wipe the mushrooms and slice them.
2. Heat the oil in a medium saucepan over a medium-high heat. Cook the onion and mushrooms for 5 minutes, stirring, until the mushrooms are golden. Add the garlic and thyme for 30 seconds.
3. Add the potato and the hot stock. Bring to the boil, then turn down the heat, cover and simmer for 12 minutes, until the potato is soft.
4. Blend about two thirds of the soup with a stick blender, so it is creamy but still a little chunky. Season with pepper.
5. Toast the bread, put it in a bowl and pour the soup around it.

> **SAVE THE OTHER HALF OF THE ONION**
>
> Keep the other half of the onion in the fridge for tonight's risotto.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY LUNCH

The potato makes the soup creamy, so it needs no cream or butter at all, and the mushrooms give a deep, savoury flavour, so the only salt comes from half a stock cube.

SWAPS

A spoonful of Greek yoghurt swirled on top. A handful of spinach stirred in at the end. Chestnut mushrooms for a stronger flavour.

Shopping list for this recipe

Dinner

DINNER · VEGETARIAN · ONE POT

Pearl Barley, Butternut Squash and Mushroom Risotto with Sage

Prep: 8 minutes | Simmers: about 30 minutes | About 12 minutes of hands-on work | 1 pan

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

60 g	pearl barley
150 g	diced butternut squash (half of a 300 g ready-diced pack)
½	small onion (the other half from lunch)
80 g	mushrooms
1 clove	garlic
1 tsp	olive oil
½ cube	reduced-salt vegetable stock cube
400 ml	hot water for the stock
½ tsp	dried sage
40 g	baby spinach
15 g	strong Cheddar, finely grated
1 pinch	black pepper

PREP (ABOUT 8 MINUTES, ANY TIME THAT DAY)

1. Chop the onion and garlic. Wipe and slice the mushrooms. Put them in a covered container in the fridge, with the squash (already diced in the pack) beside them.
2. Stand a medium saucepan with a lid on the hob, ready, with the barley, oil and sage next to it. Put the kettle on at dinner time.

AT DINNER TIME (ABOUT 12 MINUTES OF WORK)

1. Dissolve the stock cube in 400 ml of boiling water and keep it hot. Rinse the barley in a sieve under cold water.
2. Heat the oil in the saucepan over a medium heat. Cook the onion and mushrooms for 4 minutes, until soft and starting to brown. Add the garlic and sage for 30 seconds.
3. Add the barley and the squash and stir for 1 minute. Pour in about two thirds of the stock, bring to the boil, then turn the heat down to low. Cover and simmer for 20

minutes, stirring now and then.

4. Add most of the rest of the stock and simmer for another 8 to 10 minutes, until the barley is tender with a little bite and the squash is soft. Add a splash more stock or water if it gets dry.
5. Stir in the spinach for 1 minute until it wilts. Take the pan off the heat, stir in half the cheese and season with pepper.
6. Spoon into a bowl and scatter with the rest of the cheese.

> **SAVE THE REST OF THE SQUASH**
>
> Seal the other half of the squash pack (150 g) and keep it in the fridge for Saturday's vegetable and barley broth. Check the use-by date when you buy it. It can also be frozen.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY DINNER

Pearl barley is a whole grain that keeps its bite and is full of fibre, so the dish is filling for a little cheese and almost no oil. Squash adds vitamin A and sweetness, and the spinach tops up the greens.

SWAPS

A drained tin of butter beans stirred in for extra protein. Sweet potato in place of the squash. Pearl barley can be replaced with brown rice (it needs about 30 to 35 minutes).

Shopping list for this recipe

> **COMING UP TOMORROW**
>
> Thursday has banana and walnut porridge, a tuna melt on toast, and a beef goulash with potatoes and peppers. Take the mince out of the freezer tonight to defrost in the fridge if it is frozen.

Meal Plan 8: Autumn and Winter Comfort

Day 4 · Thursday

Today at a glance. Breakfast takes 5 minutes, lunch is a grilled tuna melt in 8, and dinner is a one-pot goulash with about **12 minutes of work** and 25 minutes of simmering. It is the second of this week's three beef dinners. Every quantity below is for **one portion**, in metric with UK names.

Breakfast

BREAKFAST · VEGETARIAN

Banana and Walnut Porridge

5 minutes | 1 pan or microwave | 4 ingredients | Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

40 g	porridge oats
200 ml	semi-skimmed milk
1	ripe banana
10 g	walnut pieces (about 1 tbsp)
1 pinch	ground cinnamon

METHOD

1. Put the oats and milk in a small saucepan over a medium heat. Stir for 3 to 4 minutes, until thick and creamy. (Or microwave in a bowl for 2 minutes, stirring halfway.)
2. Peel the banana. Mash half of it with a fork and stir it into the porridge for sweetness. Slice the rest.
3. Spoon into a bowl, top with the sliced banana and walnuts and finish with the cinnamon.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY START

The banana sweetens the porridge so you do not need sugar, and the walnuts give healthy fats and a satisfying crunch. Oats keep you full and are good for your heart.

SWAPS

Pecans or flaked almonds in place of the walnuts. A spoonful of peanut butter stirred in. A few raisins.

Shopping list for this recipe

Lunch

LUNCH

Tuna Melt on Toast with Tomato

8 minutes · Grill · 5 ingredients

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

1 small tin	tuna in spring water (about 100 g drained)
1 tbsp	plain Greek-style yoghurt
2 slices	wholemeal bread
1	tomato
30 g	strong Cheddar, grated
1 pinch	black pepper

METHOD

1. Heat the grill to high. Toast the bread lightly on both sides under the grill and put it on a baking tray.
2. Drain the tuna well and mix it in a bowl with the yoghurt and pepper.
3. Slice the tomato. Spread the tuna mixture on the toast, lay the tomato slices on top and cover with the cheese.
4. Grill for 2 to 3 minutes, until the cheese is melted and bubbling. Let it cool for a minute before you eat it.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY LUNCH

Tuna is lean protein, and yoghurt makes the mixture creamy instead of mayonnaise. The tomato adds a juicy layer and some vitamin C.

SWAPS

Tinned sweetcorn in the tuna mix. A pinch of paprika. A slice of red onion under the cheese.

Shopping list for this recipe

Dinner

DINNER · BEEF · ONE POT

Beef Goulash with Potatoes and Peppers

Prep: 10 minutes | Simmers: about 25 minutes | About 12 minutes of hands-on work | 1 pan

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

125 g	lean beef mince (5% fat)
1	small onion
1	red pepper
150 g	potato (1 small), peeled and cut into 2 cm chunks
1 clove	garlic
1½ tsp	smoked paprika
1 tbsp	tomato purée
½ cube	reduced-salt beef stock cube
250 ml	hot water for the stock
1 tsp	olive oil
1 tbsp	plain Greek-style yoghurt, to serve
1 pinch	black pepper

PREP (ABOUT 10 MINUTES, ANY TIME THAT DAY)

1. Peel and chop the onion and garlic. Cut the pepper in half, remove the seeds and cut it into 2 cm pieces. Peel the potato, cut it into chunks and keep it in a covered container of cold water in the fridge (drain it before cooking).
2. Keep the raw mince on the **bottom shelf** of the fridge. Stand a medium saucepan with a lid on the hob, ready.

AT DINNER TIME (ABOUT 12 MINUTES OF WORK)

1. Dissolve the stock cube in 250 ml of boiling water. Heat the oil in the saucepan over a medium-high heat.
2. Add the mince and cook for 4 minutes, breaking it up, until it is brown all over. Add the onion and pepper and cook for 4 minutes, until soft.

3. Stir in the garlic, paprika and tomato purée for 1 minute. Add the drained potato and the hot stock and stir well.
4. Bring to the boil, then turn down the heat, cover and simmer for 20 to 25 minutes, stirring once or twice, until the potato is tender and the sauce is thick. If it gets too dry, add a splash of water.
5. Season with pepper. Spoon into a bowl and finish with the yoghurt on top.

> **COOKING MINCE SAFELY**
>
> Cook the mince until there is no pink left and the goulash is steaming hot all the way through. Wash your hands and the board after handling raw mince. Cook any prepped raw mince the same day.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY DINNER

Paprika, onion and pepper make a rich sauce with no cream and almost no oil, and the potato makes it filling. A spoonful of yoghurt replaces the soured cream usually served with goulash.

SWAPS

A carrot or some green cabbage in place of the pepper. Add ½ tsp of caraway seeds if you like the traditional flavour. Serve with a slice of wholemeal bread to mop up the sauce.

Shopping list for this recipe

> **COMING UP TOMORROW**
>
> Friday has porridge with apple and cinnamon, a parsnip and apple soup, and a fish pie with a sweet potato topping. Take the fish out of the freezer tonight to defrost in the fridge if it is frozen.

Meal Plan 8: Autumn and Winter Comfort

Day 5 · Friday

Today at a glance. Friday is the **fish day**. Breakfast takes 6 minutes, lunch is a soup that simmers for 15, and dinner is a lighter fish pie with about **15 minutes of work** and about 15 minutes in the oven. Every quantity below is for **one portion**, in metric with UK names.

Breakfast

BREAKFAST · VEGETARIAN

Porridge with Grated Apple, Cinnamon and Raisins

6 minutes | 1 pan or microwave | 5 ingredients | Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

40 g	porridge oats
200 ml	semi-skimmed milk
1	eating apple
½ tsp	ground cinnamon
15 g	raisins

METHOD

1. Wash the apple and grate it on the coarse side of a grater, skin on, avoiding the core.
2. Put the oats, milk, raisins and about two thirds of the apple in a small saucepan over a medium heat. Stir for 3 to 4 minutes, until thick and creamy. (Or microwave in a bowl for 2 minutes, stirring halfway.)
3. Spoon into a bowl, top with the rest of the grated apple and sprinkle over the cinnamon.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY START

Grated apple melts into the porridge and sweetens it, and the raisins add sweetness and iron. Oats keep you full until lunch, and there is no added sugar.

SWAPS

A pear in place of the apple. Chopped walnuts on top. A spoonful of Greek yoghurt for extra protein.

Shopping list for this recipe

Lunch

LUNCH · VEGETARIAN

Parsnip and Apple Soup with Toast

25 minutes | 1 pan, mostly hands-off | Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

1 tsp	olive oil
1	small onion
2	small parsnips (about 200 g)
1	eating apple
½ tsp	ground ginger
½ cube	reduced-salt vegetable stock cube
350 ml	hot water for the stock
1 slice	wholemeal bread, to serve
1 pinch	black pepper

METHOD

1. Peel and chop the onion. Peel the parsnips, cut off the woody core if they are large, and cut them into 1 cm cubes. Core and chop the apple, skin on.
2. Heat the oil in a medium saucepan over a medium heat. Cook the onion for 3 minutes, then add the ginger and stir for 30 seconds.
3. Add the parsnip, apple and hot stock. Bring to the boil, then turn down the heat, cover and simmer for 15 minutes, until the parsnip is very soft.
4. Blend with a stick blender until smooth, adding a splash of hot water if it is too thick. Season with pepper.
5. Toast the bread and serve it alongside.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY LUNCH

Parsnips make the soup creamy and sweet without cream, and they give fibre and vitamin C. The apple adds a fresh, slightly sharp note that balances them.

SWAPS

A carrot in place of one parsnip. A teaspoon of curry powder in place of the ginger for a spicier soup. A spoonful of yoghurt swirled on top.

Shopping list for this recipe

Dinner

DINNER · FISH · OVEN BAKE

Fish Pie with a Sweet Potato Topping

Prep: 10 minutes | Cooking: about 35 minutes | About 15 minutes of hands-on work | 1 pan plus 1 small dish

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

150 g	skinless white fish fillet (coley, pollock or cod), fresh or defrosted
1	small leek (about 100 g)
60 g	frozen peas
200 g	sweet potato (1 medium)
150 ml	semi-skimmed milk
1 tbsp	plain flour (about 10 g)
1 tsp	olive oil
15 g	strong Cheddar, finely grated
1 pinch	black pepper

PREP (ABOUT 10 MINUTES, ANY TIME THAT DAY)

1. Peel the sweet potato and cut it into 2 cm chunks. Keep it in a covered container in the fridge. Trim the leek, slit it lengthways, rinse it well and slice it thinly.
2. Cut the fish into 3 cm chunks and check for bones. Put it in a covered container on the **bottom shelf** of the fridge. Wash your hands, the board and the knife.

AT DINNER TIME (ABOUT 15 MINUTES OF WORK)

1. Heat the oven to 200°C (180°C fan). Put the sweet potato in a saucepan, cover with water and boil for 10 to 12 minutes, until soft. Drain, return to the pan and mash with a splash of milk and a little pepper.
2. While it boils, heat the oil in a frying pan over a medium heat. Cook the leek for 4 minutes, until soft. Stir in the flour for 1 minute.
3. Add the milk a little at a time, stirring, until you have a smooth sauce. Simmer for 2 minutes. Add the fish and the peas and simmer gently for 3 minutes, turning once, until the fish is just opaque.

4. Tip it into a small ovenproof dish. Spoon the mash over the top, roughly level it with a fork and scatter over the cheese.
5. Bake for 15 to 18 minutes, until the top is lightly golden and the filling is bubbling at the edges.

> **PREPPED RAW FISH**
>
> Keep the prepped fish covered on the bottom shelf of the fridge, away from other food, and cook it the same day (within about 6 hours). If the fish was frozen, defrost it in the fridge overnight and never refreeze it. The pie is ready when the fish is opaque all the way through and the filling is steaming hot.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY DINNER

White fish is very lean protein, and the sweet potato topping adds fibre and vitamin A in place of the usual buttery mash. The sauce uses milk and a little flour, with no cream or butter.

SWAPS

Frozen sweetcorn or spinach in place of the peas. Ordinary potato in place of the sweet potato. A handful of cooked prawns added with the fish.

Shopping list for this recipe

> **COMING UP TOMORROW**
>
> Saturday is the first slow cooking day: a cooked breakfast, a big pot of vegetable and barley broth (two portions, one for Sunday) and a beef pot roast that cooks for over two hours and makes a second portion for the freezer. Take the beef out of the freezer tonight to defrost in the fridge if it is frozen.

Meal Plan 8: Autumn and Winter Comfort

Day 6 · Saturday

Today at a glance. Saturday is the first **slow cooking day**, so there is time for a proper breakfast and a big pot of broth. Lunch makes **2 portions** (one for Sunday), and dinner is a pot roast that makes **2 portions** (one for the freezer). The oven does most of the work for dinner: about **20 minutes** of your time. Quantities are marked for one or two portions on each recipe.

Breakfast

BREAKFAST

Weekend Cooked Breakfast: Egg, Tomato, Mushrooms and Beans on Toast

15 minutes | Grill, 1 pan | 5 ingredients

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

1	egg
1	tomato
60 g	mushrooms
200 g	reduced-sugar and reduced-salt baked beans (1 small tin)
2 slices	wholemeal bread
1 tsp	olive oil
1 pinch	black pepper

METHOD

1. Heat the grill to high. Halve the tomato. Wipe the mushrooms and cut them in half if they are large. Put both on a baking tray, brush with half the oil and add pepper.
2. Grill for 6 to 8 minutes, turning the mushrooms once, until the tomato is soft and the mushrooms are golden.
3. Meanwhile, tip the beans into a small saucepan and warm them over a low heat for 4 minutes, stirring, until hot all the way through. Put the bread in the toaster.
4. Heat the rest of the oil in a small non-stick frying pan over a medium heat and fry the egg for 2 to 3 minutes, until the white is set. (Or poach it in simmering water for 3 minutes.)
5. Put the toast on a plate, pour the beans over it and add the tomato, mushrooms and egg.

WHY IT IS A LIGHTER FRY-UP

Grilling the tomato and mushrooms and choosing reduced-sugar beans keeps the fat and salt low, so it feels like a proper weekend breakfast without the sausages and bacon. The beans add protein and fibre.

SWAPS

Half the tin of beans if you want a smaller breakfast (keep the rest covered in the fridge for a day). A handful of spinach wilted under the egg. A poached egg in place of the fried one.

Shopping list for this recipe

Lunch

LUNCH · VEGETARIAN · MAKES 2 PORTIONS

Scotch-Style Vegetable and Barley Broth

About 45 minutes | 1 pan | Makes 2 portions: 1 today, 1 tomorrow | Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS (2 PORTIONS)

2 tsp	olive oil
1	small onion
2	carrots
1	small leek (about 100 g)
100 g	swede (about 2 cm thick slice)
150 g	diced butternut squash (the other half of the pack from Wednesday)
40 g	pearl barley
1 cube	reduced-salt vegetable stock cube
800 ml	hot water for the stock
½ tsp	dried thyme
1 slice	wholemeal bread, to serve (Sunday's slice is listed on Sunday)
1 pinch	black pepper

METHOD

1. Peel and chop the onion. Peel the carrots and swede and cut them into 1 cm cubes. Trim the leek, slit it lengthways, rinse it well and slice it thinly. Rinse the barley in a sieve.
2. Heat the oil in a large saucepan over a medium heat. Cook the onion and leek for 5 minutes, until soft. Stir in the thyme.
3. Add the carrots, swede, squash, barley and the stock made with the cube and 800 ml of boiling water. Bring to the boil, then turn down the heat, cover and simmer for 30 to 35 minutes, until the barley and vegetables are tender. Add a splash of water if it gets too thick.
4. Season with pepper. Ladle half into a bowl and eat it with a slice of toast.

5. Cool the other half quickly, ideally within 1 hour: pour it into a shallow container, leave it to steam for 10 minutes, then cover and chill it in the fridge. It is Sunday's lunch.

> **COOLING AND REHEATING**
>
> Chill the second portion within 1 to 2 hours, keep it in the fridge and eat it tomorrow. Reheat it once, until it is steaming hot all the way through. Barley soaks up liquid, so add a splash of water when you reheat it.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY LUNCH

A broth that is full of vegetables and whole-grain barley, with only 1 tsp of oil per portion. The barley is slow to digest, so it keeps you full, and the five different vegetables count towards your five a day.

SWAPS

A handful of green cabbage or kale in the last 5 minutes. A tin of lentils or butter beans for extra protein. A little diced lamb or chicken browned with the onion, if you want a non-vegetarian version.

Shopping list for this recipe

Dinner

DINNER · BEEF · SLOW COOKED · MAKES 2 PORTIONS

Beef Pot Roast with Carrots, Swede and Potatoes

Prep: 15 minutes | Oven: about 2 hours 15 minutes | About 20 minutes of hands-on work | Makes 2 portions: 1 tonight, 1 for the freezer

INGREDIENTS (2 PORTIONS)

450 g	beef brisket or silverside joint, fat trimmed
1	small onion
2	carrots
150 g	swede
300 g	potatoes (2 medium)
1 tbsp	tomato purée
1 tsp	dried thyme
1 cube	reduced-salt beef stock cube
300 ml	hot water for the stock
2 tsp	olive oil
1 pinch	black pepper

PREP (ABOUT 15 MINUTES)

1. Heat the oven to 160°C (140°C fan). Take the beef out of the fridge 15 minutes before you start. Pat it dry with kitchen paper and rub it with a little pepper.
2. Peel the onion and cut it into thick slices. Peel the carrots and swede and cut them into large chunks (about 4 cm). Scrub the potatoes and cut them into large chunks too. Large pieces will not turn to mush in the long cooking.

COOKING (ABOUT 2 HOURS 15 MINUTES, MOSTLY HANDS-OFF)

1. Heat the oil in a flameproof casserole dish with a lid (or a large frying pan, then transfer to a lidded baking dish) over a medium-high heat. Brown the beef for 2 minutes on each side and take it out.
2. Add the onion to the dish and cook for 3 minutes. Stir in the tomato purée and thyme for 30 seconds. Dissolve the stock cube in 300 ml of boiling water, pour it in and scrape

up anything stuck to the bottom.

3. Put the beef back in, and arrange the carrots, swede and potatoes around it. Cover with the lid (or foil).
4. Cook in the oven for 2 hours, then check: the beef should be very tender when you push a knife into it and the vegetables soft. If not, cook for another 15 to 20 minutes.
5. Lift the beef onto a board, cover with foil and rest it for 10 minutes. Slice it against the grain into thick slices.
6. Serve half of the beef and half of the vegetables with plenty of the juices poured over.

> **COOLING AND FREEZING THE SECOND PORTION**
>
> Put the other half of the beef, vegetables and juices into a shallow container and cool it quickly, within 1 to 2 hours. Cover it, chill it and freeze it the same evening. Label it with the date and eat it within 3 months. Defrost it in the fridge overnight, reheat it once in a pan or the microwave until steaming hot all the way through, and never refreeze it.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY DINNER

A lean, slow-cooked joint with plenty of vegetables and almost no added fat, with all the flavour in the cooking juices. Half a joint is a sensible portion of beef, and the vegetables fill the rest of the plate.

SWAPS

A parsnip in place of the swede. A handful of frozen peas added to the juices for the last 5 minutes. Beef shin, cut into big pieces, is a cheaper alternative that needs another 30 minutes.

Shopping list for this recipe

COMING UP TOMORROW

Sunday has an apple and blackberry crumble pot, today's broth reheated, and a slow-roast pork shoulder with roast apple and root vegetables. It makes 4 portions: one for tonight, one for a pulled-pork sandwich and two for the freezer. Take the pork out of the freezer on Friday evening if it is frozen, so it is fully defrosted.

Meal Plan 8: Autumn and Winter Comfort

Day 7 · Sunday

Today at a glance. Sunday is the second **slow cooking day**. Breakfast is a crumble-style pot in 12 minutes, lunch is yesterday's broth reheated in 8, and dinner is a slow-roast pork shoulder that makes **4 portions**: one for tonight, one for a pulled-pork sandwich this week, and two for the freezer. The oven does most of the work, so it takes about **20 minutes** of your time.

Breakfast

BREAKFAST · VEGETARIAN

Apple and Blackberry Crumble Pot

12 minutes | 1 small pan, 1 frying pan | 5 ingredients | Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

1	eating apple
100 g	frozen blackberries
30 g	porridge oats
½ tsp	ground cinnamon
150 g	plain Greek-style yoghurt
1 tsp	honey (optional)

METHOD

1. Core and chop the apple into small cubes, skin on. Put it in a small saucepan with the frozen blackberries and 2 tbsp of water. Cover and cook over a medium heat for 6 minutes, stirring once, until the apple is soft and the fruit is juicy.
2. While it cooks, toast the oats in a dry frying pan over a medium heat for 3 minutes, stirring, until they smell nutty and are lightly golden. Stir in the cinnamon and take the pan off the heat.
3. Spoon half the yoghurt into a glass or a bowl, add half the warm fruit, then repeat the layers.
4. Scatter the toasted oats over the top as the crumble and drizzle with the honey if you like.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY START

This is a crumble in spirit with no butter or sugar. The fruit gives fibre and vitamins, the yoghurt gives protein, and toasting the oats gives a crunchy topping.

SWAPS

Frozen raspberries or a chopped pear in place of the blackberries. A few chopped walnuts on top of the oats.

Shopping list for this recipe

Lunch

LUNCH · VEGETARIAN · FROM SATURDAY

Reheated Vegetable and Barley Broth with Toast

8 minutes | Hob or microwave | From Saturday's batch | Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

1 portion Scotch-style vegetable and barley broth, from Saturday's lunch (kept in the fridge)

1 slice wholemeal bread

1 pinch black pepper

METHOD

1. Tip the cold broth into a saucepan. Add a splash of water (about 50 ml), because the barley will have soaked up some of the liquid.
2. Heat it over a medium heat for 5 to 6 minutes, stirring, until it is bubbling and steaming hot all the way through. (Or microwave, covered, for about 3 minutes, stirring halfway.)
3. Toast the bread. Season the broth with a little pepper and serve with the toast.

> **REHEAT ONCE ONLY**
>
> The broth must have been chilled within 1 to 2 hours on Saturday and kept in the fridge. Reheat it once only, until steaming hot, and throw away anything you do not eat.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY LUNCH

It is the easiest lunch of the week, and the flavours are even better the next day. Five vegetables and a whole grain, with no extra cooking.

SWAPS

Grated cheese on top. A slice of cold roast pork or a spoonful of leftover beans stirred in. A swirl of yoghurt.

Shopping list for this recipe

Dinner

DINNER · PORK · SLOW ROAST · MAKES 4 PORTIONS

Slow-Roast Pork Shoulder with Roast Apple and Root Vegetables

Prep: 15 minutes | Oven: about 3 hours | About 20 minutes of hands-on work

Makes 4 portions: 1 tonight, 1 sandwich, 2 for the freezer

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS OF PORK; THE VEGETABLES ARE FOR TONIGHT'S PORTION)

1 kg	boneless pork shoulder joint, fully defrosted if frozen
1	small onion
½ cube	reduced-salt chicken stock cube
150 ml	hot water for the stock
1 tsp	olive oil, for the joint
½ tsp	dried sage
1 pinch	black pepper

- 1 carrot, cut into large chunks (tonight's portion)
- 1 parsnip (about 100 g), cut into large chunks (tonight's portion)
- 200 g potato (1 medium), cut into chunks (tonight's portion)
- 1 eating apple, cut into 6 wedges (tonight's portion)
- 1 tsp olive oil, for the vegetables (tonight's portion)

PREP (ABOUT 15 MINUTES)

1. Heat the oven to 220°C (200°C fan). Take the pork out of the fridge 20 minutes before cooking. Trim off any big pieces of hard fat, pat the joint dry with kitchen paper and rub it with the 1 tsp of oil, the sage and a good grind of pepper.
2. Peel the onion and cut it into thick slices. Put the slices in the middle of a roasting tin and sit the pork on top. Dissolve the stock cube in 150 ml of boiling water and pour it around the joint (not over the top).
3. Prepare the carrot, parsnip, potato and apple now and keep them in a covered bowl in the fridge until you need them.

COOKING (ABOUT 3 HOURS, MOSTLY HANDS-OFF)

1. Put the tin in the oven for 20 minutes to brown the outside. Take it out, cover it tightly with foil and turn the oven down to 150°C (130°C fan).
2. Return it to the oven and cook for 2 hours. Check that there is still liquid in the bottom of the tin, and add a splash of hot water if it looks dry.
3. Take the foil off. Toss the carrot, parsnip and potato with the 1 tsp of oil and add them to the tin around the pork, with the apple wedges. Turn the oven up to 200°C (180°C fan) and roast, uncovered, for 40 to 45 minutes, turning the vegetables once, until the pork is very tender and golden and the vegetables are soft.
4. Check the pork is cooked: it should be piping hot and white all the way through, with no pink, and fall apart easily when you push a fork into it.
5. Rest the pork on a board under foil for 15 minutes, then slice or pull it apart with two forks. Serve one quarter with the roast vegetables and apple, and spoon over some of the juices from the tin.
6. Divide the rest of the pork into three containers, with a little of the juices on each, to keep it moist.

COOLING, CHILLING AND FREEZING THE OTHER 3 PORTIONS

Cool the other portions quickly, within 1 to 2 hours. Cover them and chill them. Keep one in the fridge for a pulled-pork sandwich within the next 2 days, and freeze the other two the same evening, labelled with the date. Eat the frozen portions within 3 months. Defrost in the fridge overnight, reheat once until steaming hot all the way through, and never refreeze.

PULLED-PORK SANDWICH

Warm a portion of the pork in a pan with a splash of the juices, shred it with two forks and pile it into a wholemeal roll with a few slices of apple or some salad. It makes a quick lunch or dinner on a busy day.

WHY IT IS A HEALTHY DINNER

A single joint cooked slowly gives four meals with no extra effort, and trimming the fat keeps it lean. Roast apple and root vegetables make the plate sweet and filling with no gravy mix or added sugar.

SWAPS

Boneless chicken thighs, cooked for about 1 hour at 180°C, if you want a lighter and quicker version. A swede or a sweet potato in place of the potato.

Shopping list for this recipe

COMING UP NEXT

Chapter 8 is the combined weekly shopping list, grouped by shop section, with a freeze-and-defrost schedule, a plan for the leftovers and a short food-safety reminder.

Meal Plan 8: Autumn and Winter Comfort

Chapter 8 · Weekly shopping list

How to use this list. It merges the shopping lists of all 21 recipes from Monday to Sunday, so you can shop once. Amounts are totals for the week, and the last column says where each item is used. Check the cupboard section before you go, because oil, flour and spices are probably already at home. Every recipe is for one portion except Saturday's broth (2) and pot roast (2) and Sunday's pork (4), which make extra portions. Each recipe page still has its own list.

DOWNLOAD

A plain-text copy of this whole list is here: Weekly shopping list (text file)

Meat and fish

ITEM	BUY	USED IN
Lean beef mince (5% fat)	1 pack, 250 g	Mon 125 g (hotpot), Thu 125 g (goulash)
Chicken breast	1 fillet, about 150 g	Tue (filo pie)
Beef brisket or silverside joint	450 g	Sat (pot roast, 2 portions)
Boneless pork shoulder joint	1 kg	Sun (slow roast, 4 portions)
White fish fillet (coley, pollock or cod), skinless	1 fillet, about 150 g, fresh or frozen	Fri (fish pie)

Fruit and vegetables

ITEM	BUY	USED IN
Small onions	7	Mon 1 (½ lunch, ½ dinner), Wed 1 (½ lunch, ½ dinner), Thu 1, Fri 1, Sat 2 (broth, pot roast), Sun 1

ITEM	BUY	USED IN
Garlic	1 head (3 cloves needed)	Wed 2 (soup, risotto), Thu 1
Carrots	8	Mon 3 (soup 2, hotpot 1), Sat 4 (broth 2, pot roast 2), Sun 1
Swede	1 small (325 g needed)	Mon 75 g, Sat 100 g (broth) and 150 g (pot roast)
Parsnips	3 (about 300 g)	Fri 2 (soup), Sun 1 (roast)
Potatoes	1 bag, 1.5 kg (930 g needed)	Mon 200 g, Wed 80 g, Thu 150 g, Sat 300 g, Sun 200 g
Sweet potatoes	2 (about 450 g)	Tue 1 (250 g, lunch), Fri 200 g (fish pie)
Leeks	3 small	Tue 1 (pie), Fri 1 (fish pie), Sat 1 (broth)
Diced butternut squash	1 pack, 300 g	Wed 150 g (risotto), Sat 150 g (broth)
Mushrooms	2 packs of 250 g (380 g needed)	Tue 80 g, Wed 240 g (scramble 60, soup 100, risotto 80), Sat 60 g
Baby spinach	1 bag, at least 80 g	Tue 40 g (lunch), Wed 40 g (risotto)
Green beans	100 g	Tue (with the pie)
Red pepper	1	Thu (goulash)
Tomatoes	2	Thu 1 (tuna melt), Sat 1 (breakfast)
Eating apples	5	Tue 1 (breakfast), Fri 2 (porridge, soup), Sun 2 (crumble pot, roast)
Pear	1 ripe	Mon (porridge)
Banana	1 ripe	Thu (porridge)
Fresh root ginger	1 small piece (about 3 cm), or use ground ginger	Mon lunch (1 tsp, grated)

Dairy and eggs

ITEM	BUY	USED IN
Eggs	1 box of 6 (3 needed)	Wed 2 (scramble), Sat 1 (breakfast). 3 spare
Plain Greek-style yoghurt	1 tub, 500 g (330 g needed)	Tue 150 g, Thu 30 g, Sun 150 g. About 170 g spare
Semi-skimmed milk	1 litre (800 ml needed)	Mon 200 ml, Tue 50 ml, Thu 200 ml, Fri 350 ml (porridge 200, fish pie 150)
Strong Cheddar cheese	1 small block, about 200 g (60 g needed)	Wed 15 g, Thu 30 g, Fri 15 g. About 140 g spare
Houmous	1 small tub (40 g needed)	Tue (lunch)

Bread and bakery

ITEM	BUY	USED IN
Wholemeal bread	1 loaf (11 slices needed)	Mon 1, Wed 3, Thu 2, Fri 1, Sat 3, Sun 1
Filo pastry, chilled	1 packet (2 sheets needed)	Tue (pie). Freeze the rest

Frozen

ITEM	BUY	USED IN
Peas	1 bag, at least 60 g	Fri (fish pie)
Blackberries	1 small bag, at least 100 g	Sun (crumble pot)

Tins, jars and bottles

ITEM	BUY	USED IN
Tuna in spring water (about 145 g tin)	1 small tin	Thu (tuna melt)
Baked beans, reduced sugar and salt	1 small tin, 200 g	Sat (breakfast)

Dry goods

ITEM	BUY	USED IN
Porridge oats	1 bag (175 g needed)	Mon 40 g, Tue 25 g, Thu 40 g, Fri 40 g, Sun 30 g
Pearl barley	1 small bag (100 g needed)	Wed 60 g (risotto), Sat 40 g (broth)
Red lentils	1 small bag (40 g needed)	Mon (soup)
Raisins	1 small bag (15 g needed)	Fri (porridge)
Walnut pieces	1 small bag (10 g needed)	Thu (porridge)
Reduced-salt vegetable stock cubes	1 small box (3 cubes needed)	Mon ½, Wed 1 (½ soup, ½ risotto), Fri ½, Sat 1
Reduced-salt beef stock cubes	1 small box (2 cubes needed)	Mon ½, Thu ½, Sat 1
Reduced-salt chicken stock cubes	1 small box (1 cube needed)	Tue ½, Sun ½

Cupboard check

You probably have these already. Check the amounts, then add to the trolley whatever has run out.

- **Olive oil**: about 18 tsp (6 tbsp, 90 ml) over the week
- **Plain flour**: 2 tbsp (Tue, Fri)
- **Tomato purée**: 3 tbsp (Mon, Thu, Sat)
- **Salt and black pepper**: used in most recipes
- **Ground cinnamon**: about 1½ tsp and a pinch (Tue, Thu, Fri, Sun)
- **Ground ginger**: 1 tsp (Mon, Fri)
- **Dried thyme**: 2¾ tsp (Mon, Tue, Wed, Sat)
- **Dried sage**: 1 tsp (Wed, Sun)
- **Smoked paprika**: 1½ tsp (Thu)

- **Honey**: 2 tsp, optional (Mon, Sun)

Equipment

- A small ovenproof dish, about 18 cm wide and 6 cm deep (Mon, Tue, Fri)
- A flameproof casserole dish with a lid, or a large frying pan and a lidded baking dish (Sat)
- A roasting tin and foil (Sun)
- A medium saucepan with a lid (Mon to Fri) and a large saucepan (Sat)
- A stick blender (Mon, Wed, Fri, optional: a potato masher works)
- A grill and a baking tray (Thu, Sat)
- A microwave-safe plate (Tue)
- Covered containers for prepping ahead, and lidded freezer containers: 1 for Saturday's pot roast and 3 for Sunday's pork

Prep-ahead schedule

Each weekday dinner can be prepared in about 10 minutes any time that day, which leaves 15 minutes or less of work at dinner time, and the oven or the simmering pan does the rest. Saturday and Sunday are unhurried: a pot roast and a slow-roast pork shoulder, with lots of waiting time.

DAY	PREP AHEAD (ANY TIME THAT DAY)	AT DINNER TIME
Mon	Cube the carrot and swede, slice the potato (in cold water), chop the onion (10 minutes)	Oven on 200°C, brown the mince, add vegetables and stock, assemble, bake 30 to 35 minutes
Tue	Cube the chicken (bottom shelf), slice the leek and mushrooms (10 minutes)	Oven on 200°C, cook the filling, top with filo, bake 15 to 18 minutes, boil the beans
Wed	Chop the onion, garlic and mushrooms (8 minutes)	Cook the vegetables, add barley and stock, simmer 30 minutes, stir in spinach and cheese
Thu	Chop the onion, pepper and garlic, cube the potato (in cold water) (10 minutes)	Brown the mince, add everything, simmer 20 to 25 minutes
Fri	Cube the sweet potato, slice the leek, cut the fish (bottom shelf) (10 minutes)	Oven on 200°C, boil and mash the sweet potato, make the sauce, add fish, top and bake 15 to 18

DAY	PREP AHEAD (ANY TIME THAT DAY)	AT DINNER TIME
		minutes

If you shop once: freeze and defrost

Raw meat and fish should not wait several days in the fridge, so buy them on your shopping day, freeze them at once, and take each one out the evening before you cook it. Defrost on a plate on the bottom shelf of the fridge, never on the worktop. Check the use-by date on the pack: if it falls before the day you need the item, freeze it. Do not refreeze raw meat that has defrosted.

ITEM	COOK ON	TAKE OUT OF THE FREEZER
Beef mince, Monday's 125 g (freeze on buying)	Mon	Sun evening
Chicken breast	Tue	Mon evening
Beef mince, Thursday's 125 g (freeze on buying)	Thu	Wed evening
White fish fillet	Fri	Thu evening
Beef brisket joint	Sat	Fri evening
Pork shoulder joint (24 hours or more)	Sun	Fri evening

PREPPING RAW MEAT AND FISH AHEAD

Cubed chicken, mince and prepared fish wait in the fridge on the **bottom shelf**, covered, away from other food. Cook meat the same day (within about 8 hours) and fish within about 6 hours. Never leave prepped raw food on the worktop. Chill any batch portions within 1 to 2 hours of cooking, reheat them once until steaming hot all the way through, and never refreeze food that has been defrosted.

Leftovers: using it all up

- **Saturday's pot roast:** 1 portion in the freezer. It is a ready dinner for a busy day: defrost it in the fridge overnight and reheat it once until steaming hot.
- **Sunday's pork:** 1 portion in the fridge for a pulled-pork sandwich within 2 days, and 2 portions in the freezer.

- **Filo pastry:** wrap the rest tightly and freeze it.
- **Spare yoghurt, cheese and eggs:** yoghurt on porridge or with fruit, cheese on a jacket potato, and the 3 spare eggs in an omelette or scrambled on toast.
- **Spare baked beans, mushrooms or spinach:** use them within 2 to 3 days (an omelette or a wrap), or freeze the spinach.
- **Bread:** freeze the rest of the loaf in slices, if you do not use it within 2 days.