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Good Housekeeping:
Family Meals for a Fiver!

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Extract

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INTRODUCTION

My mother is a list maker and I've picked up on this now I run my own home. Routine and planning are what keep me going through the week when, even after a day of tasting the recipes cooked in the *Good Housekeeping* kitchens, I still have to prepare supper at home.

With so many women juggling work and home commitments, the emphasis on knowing how to cook with fresh ingredients – and passing on those skills to our children – is as important now as it was in 1924 when the Good Housekeeping Institute was set up to help women around the home. This is what works for me: I do my weekly shop on a Sunday when we have a Sunday roast, usually shared with my sister and her daughters. If the oven's on anyway, I might make a stew to cook at the same time as the meat, to freeze or eat later in the week. I'll write a brief menu plan to make sure everything I've bought is used up and nothing is wasted. Monday is usually leftovers, Tuesday might be pasta, another night it's a stir-fry with rice and another night wraps, with a meaty salad and hummus.

This book includes everything you'll need for family cooking – inspirational recipes to shake up the weekday staples and classics to cook at the weekend – it will last for years and years in the kitchen and become a firm favourite. Happy cooking!

Emma

Emma Marsden
Cookery Editor
Good Housekeeping

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GETTING STARTED

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KITCHEN KNOW-HOW

The family kitchen is also frequently the family dining room and meeting place, but as well as making it a comfortable room, you also need to ensure that it is practical. Cleanliness and hygiene are very important, but with the family traipsing in and out it's bound to be hard to keep the kitchen spotless; below are some basic rules of food hygiene that, if followed, will keep you and your family safe.

KEEPING THE KITCHEN CLEAN

- It's best and safest to give worksurfaces, cupboards, sink and floor a daily clean to get rid of dirt and germs. This is especially important if you own pets that have access to the kitchen.
- Keep all utensils and equipment clean. Check those that are used infrequently – they become dust-gatherers.
- Replace washing-up cloths and brushes frequently. Change teatowels regularly and wash them at a high temperature.

PREPARING FOOD

- Always wash your hands with soap before and after handling food, and when handling different types of food (see below).



- To avoid cross-contamination, keep separate chopping boards for raw meat, fish or poultry and vegetables and cooked food – buy them in different colours to help you remember.
- After each use and in between handling raw meat, fish or poultry, scrub the board with hot, soapy water, then rinse with very hot, clean water.
- Never put cooked or ready-to-eat food on a surface that has just had raw meat, chicken or fish on it – wash the surface thoroughly first.

STORING RAW FOOD
(see also How to Shop, page 17)

- Check the 'best-before' or 'use-by' dates and any other storage instructions on the label.
- All perishable food should be put in the fridge or freezer as soon as possible after purchase.
- Store food in the fridge in the correct place (see page 12) and check that the fridge is at the correct temperature.
- To prevent one food from contaminating another, store each in plastic food bags, freezer bags or in rigid polythene containers, or wrap in aluminium foil or clingfilm. Store eggs in their box to stop them absorbing odours from other food.

STORING COOKED FOOD IN THE FRIDGE

- Cool cooked food as quickly as possible before storing it in the fridge. If convenient, divide it among several shallow containers – it will cool faster.
- Store cooked food on a higher shelf than raw food.
- Wrap and store leftovers immediately and use up as soon as possible.

REHEATING COOKED FOOD

- To kill any bacteria, food should be reheated until piping hot throughout, so check before serving.
- Reheat food once only.

STORING FISH, CHICKEN AND MEAT IN THE FRIDGE AND FREEZER

FISH

- Although fish tastes best when it's cooked and eaten on the day it's caught, most varieties can be stored for a day or two. Always check the use-by date on packaged fish, or ask the fishmonger's advice if buying from the counter.
- To store fish, remove it from its original wrapping, rinse in cold water and pat dry, then cover and place towards the bottom of the fridge.
- Frozen fish should be stored in the freezer at a minimum temperature of –18ºC. White and smoked fish can be frozen for up to three months, oil-rich fish and shellfish for two months.
- To defrost fish and shellfish, leave it in the fridge overnight to thaw. Thawing fish in water leads to loss of texture, flavour and nutrients. Never refreeze it once it has defrosted. You can cook fish straight from the freezer – just add a couple of extra minutes to the cooking time.

CHICKEN

- To avoid the potential risk of food poisoning, particular care must be taken when handling raw poultry because bacteria that can cause food poisoning may be present.
- Remove the fresh chicken from its wrapping and make a note of the use-by date instructions on the label. Take out any giblets, then place on a plate, cover and store on a low shelf in the fridge. Store the giblets in a separate covered bowl in the fridge. Cook thoroughly within two days.
- Freeze chicken on the day it is purchased. Remove from its original wrapping and take out the giblets, then re-wrap in a strong freezer bag, seal and date. It will keep for up to six months. Freeze the giblets separately.
- To defrost a whole chicken, leave it in its wrapping, place on a plate and put in the refrigerator for a minimum of 12 hours. Chicken joints will take less time. Use as soon as it has defrosted. Never refreeze it once it has defrosted.

MEAT

- Remove the fresh meat from its original wrapping and make a note of the use-by date and instructions on the label. Place the meat on a plate or dish and cover loosely, then put on a low shelf in the fridge.
- Joints, steaks and chops will keep for up to three days, depending on the use-by date. Minced or cubed meat should be used within one to two days.
- Freeze meat on the day it is purchased. Wrap in a strong freezer bag, seal and date. Refer to your freezer's instructions for the keeping times of the various cuts.
- To defrost frozen meat, leave it in its wrapping, place on a plate and put in the refrigerator. Use as soon as it has defrosted. Never refreeze it once it has defrosted.

BASIC EQUIPMENT

Having the right equipment can make life so much easier in the kitchen, so always buy the best-quality equipment you can afford – it will last longer and give better results.

Consider the practicality of a separate fridge and freezer, and the size of each. Whether you cook with gas or electricity will depend on where you live, but consider a combination gas hob and electric oven; and perhaps you need a double oven. There are also various types of microwave oven available. It all depends on how and what you cook most often.

Consider the weight and balance of knives and the comfort of their handles. Always keep your knives sharp – a blunt knife will not only cause frustration, but is also more likely to slip and cut you.

Check that the pans you buy are suitable for your hob (i.e. gas or electric). The bases should be thick enough to ensure maximum heat conduction.

Select kitchen scales that can weigh both small and large amounts, and that show the weight in both imperial and metric measurements.

THE FRIDGE

The fridge is a vital piece of equipment, which keepS food fresh for longer. However, it is the main culprit for waste, and the bigger it is the more it becomes a repository for out-of-date condiments and bags of wilted salad leaves that lurk in its depths. Check the shelves and salad drawer regularly and rotate foods as you buy fresh supplies.

To ensure that you can rustle up something simple and satisfying to eat at short notice, try always to have the following ingredients in the fridge:

- Fresh produce: celery, tomatoes, garlic, onions, carrots and lemons.
- Dairy produce: cheese, eggs, butter, milk.
- Cured meats: vacuum-packed salami, chorizo and Parma ham.

How to store food in the fridge

- Cool cooked food to room temperature before putting in the fridge.
- Wrap or cover all food except fruit and vegetables.
- Practise fridge discipline. The coldest shelves are at bottom – store raw meat, fish and poultry there.
- Separate cooked foods from raw foods – put the cooked foods towards the top of the fridge.
- Use the salad drawer for leafy and salad vegetables and other vegetables such as leeks and cauliflower. Don't store potatoes or bananas in the fridge.

To make sure the fridge works properly

- Don't overfill it.
- Don't put hot foods in it.
- Don't open the door more than necessary.
- Do clean it regularly.

THE FREEZER

The freezer is an invaluable storage tool and if you use your freezer properly – particularly with batch-cooking (see page 11) – you can save precious family time and prevent a lot of wastage.

Basic freezer standbys

HERBS Frozen herbs are great timesavers. There's no wastage and the flavour is a lot better than dried herbs.
SPICES Chillies, lemongrass and ginger freeze well and can be used directly from the freezer. Grate ginger unpeeled; lemongrass and chillies can be chopped while frozen.
STOCKS There's nothing like a good home-made stock to transform the flavour of a soup, sauce or savoury dish. Boil until very reduced and concentrated in flavour, then freeze in 300ml/10fl oz quantities. Allow room for expansion in the container.
SOUPS Freeze in usable portions or buy fresh soups in cartons – these also freeze well and can be cooked from frozen. Allow room for expansion in the container.
BACON Pack in single layers between sheets of greaseproof paper, so it's easy to remove the right amount.
PASTRY Ready-made bought puff, filo and sweet dessert pastry freeze well. Make your own shortcrust, wrap in clingfilm and seal in freezer bags.
CREAM Lightly whip double cream and freeze in usable amounts in sealed containers.
FRUIT Bags of summer and tropical fruit are great for purées and quick desserts.
BREAD, CAKES AND SCONES Slice bread and cakes before freezing so that it is easy to remove just as much as you need. Sliced bread can be toasted from frozen.

How to store food in the freezer

- Freeze food as soon as possible after purchase.
- Freeze food in portions – pack in freezer bags or rigid plastic containers and label with name and date.
- Never put foods that are still warm into the freezer.
- Check the manufacturer's instructions for maximum freezing times.
- Do not refreeze food once it has thawed.

What not to store in the freezer

Some of the foods that don't store well are:
WHOLE EGGS Freeze whites and yolks separately.
FRIED FOODS These lose their crispness and can go soggy.
POTATOES In stews and casseroles potatoes lose their texture.
VEGETABLES Cucumber, lettuce and celery, and fruit such as bananas have too high a water content.
OTHER VEGETABLES Blanch first or they will lose their colour, flavour and texture.
CHEESE Hard cheeses will become crumbly once defrosted, but can be used for grating or in cooking.
SAUCES Mayonnaise and similar sauces will separate when defrosted.

To make sure the freezer works properly

- Defrost it regularly.
- Never put foods that are still warm into the freezer.
- Keep the freezer as full as possible.

Defrosting and reheating food

- Some foods, such as vegetables, soups and sauces, can be cooked from frozen – dropped into boiling water, or heated gently in a pan until thawed. Defrost other food in the refrigerator or a cold larder; never leave out in a warm room. Place food on a plate to collect any drips.
- Ensure the food is thoroughly defrosted before cooking.
- Cook food as soon as possible after defrosting.
- Ensure the food is piping hot all the way through after cooking.

THE HOB AND OVEN

These can be freestanding, integral or two separate units. Gas hobs are more easily controlled than electric, where residual heat is retained in the plates. This is an important factor if the temperature of what's being cooked is critical. It's down to personal choice and availability.

Whether your oven is gas or electric, fan-assisted, multi-functional or conventional, you'll invariably have to cook with it for a while to get to know its idiosyncrasies, since all ovens vary. Fan ovens produce a more even distribution of heat and so cook more quickly than conventional ovens. When following a recipe, you can either adjust the temperature or the cooking time – check the manufacturer's instructions.

A self-cleaning oven will certainly make spills easier to clean, but otherwise, to prevent smoke and fumes, clean the oven regularly, not forgetting to clean the inside of the door.

To cope with spills in the oven, line the bottom with aluminium foil (keep away from any electric element), or line a baking sheet with foil and place on the shelf underneath the item being cooked.

THE MICROWAVE

A conventional microwave oven cooks by microwaves that pass through glass, paper, china and plastic and are absorbed by moisture molecules in the food. They penetrate the food to a depth of about 5cm/2in, where they cause the molecules to vibrate and create heat within the food, which in turn cooks it.

Metal deflects microwaves and so nothing metallic or containing metal decoration should be used in the oven.

The manufacturer's instruction booklet will tell you all you need to know to get the best out of the microwave oven, but below are a few handy tips.

Microwave safety

- The oven will work only if the door is closed.
- The door has a special seal to prevent microwaves from escaping.
- Never switch on the microwave oven when there is nothing inside – the waves will bounce off the walls of the oven and could damage the magnetron (the device that converts electricity into microwaves).
- Allow sufficient space around the microwave oven for ventilation through the air vents.
- If using plastic containers, use only microwave-proof plastic – ordinary plastics can buckle.

What to use a microwave for

- Cooking ready-prepared meals.
- Cooking vegetables and fish.
- Reheating cooked foods and drinks.
- Softening butter and melting chocolate.
- Drying herbs.
- Toasting nuts.
- Scrambling eggs.

What not to use a microwave for

- Browning meat (unless the oven comes with a browning unit).
- Soufflés.
- Puff pastry.
- Breaded or battered foods.

Containers for microwaving

- Any microwave-proof containers, or ovenproof glass and ceramic dishes. Choose shallow, oval or round dishes with straight sides, so that the microwaves are unable to concentrate in any corners and cook food unevenly. Choose light-coloured cookware – dark containers tend to absorb too much heat, preventing the food from cooking properly.
- Special cooking bags (pierce the bag to allow steam to escape).

Microwave tips

- Consult the manufacturer's handbook before you use the microwave for the first time.
- Use a plastic trivet so that the microwaves can penetrate the underside of the food.
- Put food around the perimeter of the turntable, leaving a gap in the middle, so that the microwaves can penetrate from all sides.
- Cover fatty foods such as bacon and sausages with kitchen paper to soak up any fat.
- If covering foods with a lid or clingfilm, leave a gap or pierce the film to allow steam to escape.
- Stir liquids at intervals during microwaving.
- Turn over large items of food, such as joints, during cooking so that the top and bottom cook evenly.
- Clean the interior and exterior of the oven regularly.

Other electrical items

Although a food processor isn't essential, it's undoubtedly the best investment a busy cook can make. It cuts out the slog in food preparation such as chopping, grating, slicing and kneading.

Other handy electrical devices are a stick blender, blender and juicer, coffee grinder and slow-cooker.

KITCHEN EQUIPMENT

These are the items that you'll need for everyday cooking, and you've probably got a good many of them already. You can add specialist equipment as and when you need it.

POTS AND PANS

Pans: large, 20cm (8in) diameter with lid; medium, 18cm (7in) diameter with lid; small, 16cm (6½in) diameter with lid

Frying pan with 24cm (9½in) diameter

Heavy-based griddle pan

Large stockpot

Steamer

Wok

MEASURING WEIGHT, VOLUME, TIME AND TEMPERATURE

Kitchen scales

Measuring spoons

Measuring jug

Kitchen timer

Thermometers: meat, oven, deep-frying, fridge

SIFTING, SIEVING, DRAINING AND STRAINING

Sieve

Colander

Salad spinner

CUTTING, CHOPPING AND PEELING

Cook's knives, one with 19cm (7½in) blade, one with 8cm (3⅛in) blade; small serrated knife

Two-pronged carving fork

Vegetable peeler

Knife sharpener

Boards: one for vegetables or cooked food, one for raw meat, fish or poultry

Kitchen scissors

STIRRING AND TRANSFERRING

Wooden spoons

Whisks

Large metal spoon

Ladle

Rubber spatula

Fish slice

Palette knife

Tongs

Salad servers

BOWLS

Salad bowls and heatproof mixing bowls in various sizes

OVEN-COOKING

Two roasting tins

Two heavy baking trays

Large, flameproof casserole dish

Pie dish

Gratin dish

Loose-based cake tin

Springform cake tin

Swiss roll tin

Wire rack

HANDY UTENSILS AND OTHER ITEMS

Oven gloves

Corkscrew and tin opener

Skewers

Grater

Pestle and mortar

Potato masher

Rolling pin

Pastry brush

Grater

Juice squeezer and fruit zester

Kitchen paper, aluminuim foil, clingfilm, greaseproof paper, baking paper or parchment, cocktail sticks, kitchen string

Kettle and toaster

STOCKING YOUR STORECUPBOARD

Once you've got a well-stocked cupboard, you can avoid the frustration of not having the right basic ingredients when you want to rustle up a meal. However, resist the urge to get carried away. It's easy to fill the cupboard with interesting bottles you 'might use one day' and before you realize it, they're well past their use-by date. Only keep essential ingredients for everyday cooking and buy herbs and spices in tiny amounts – they lose their flavour and aroma within a couple of months. Buy small jars of sauces, otherwise you'll have numerous half-used jars and bottles. Don't be put off by the size of the chart below. Once you have the basics, you can build up your stocks as and when you need to.

THE STORECUPBOARD

DRIED

- Pasta and noodles
- Rice: long grain, arborio and carnaroli, Thai, easy-cook, basmati, pudding
- Pulses
- Nuts: pinenuts, walnuts, almonds
- Dried fruit: apricots, dates, sultanas, raisins
- Stock cubes: chicken, beef, vegetable bouillon
- Spices and herbs
- Salt: table, sea, rock
- Pepper: ground and peppercorns
- Flour: plain, self-raising, wholemeal, cornflour
- Dried yeast
- Gelatine
- Baking powder, cream of tartar, bicarbonate of soda
- Sugar: white granulated, brown, caster, icing, demerara
- Tea
- Instant coffee
- Real coffee (once opened, store in fridge or freezer)
- Cocoa powder

BOTTLES/JARS

- Mayonnaise
- Tomato ketchup and purée
- Anchovy essence
- Tabasco sauce
- Worcestershire sauce
- Good-quality pasta sauce
- Oriental sauces: soy, hoisin, oyster, nam pla (fish), tamari, ketjap manis, chilli
- Curry paste
- Chutneys
- Pickles
- Olives
- Capers
- Mustard: Dijon, English, wholegrain
- Oils: olive, vegetable, corn, groundnut, sunflower, sesame
- Vinegar: wine, malt, balsamic, sherry, cider
- Jam
- Marmalade
- Honey

CANS

- Chopped and whole tomatoes
- Fish: tuna, salmon, anchovies
- Beans and pulses: cannellini, haricot, kidney, flageolet, chickpeas
- Coconut milk/cream
- Fruit

A few rules on storage

- Keep food cupboards cool and dry. Line shelves for easy cleaning and clean regularly. Organize shelves – put new goods to the back and use up those in front first.
- Canned food, once opened, should be transferred to a bowl and, if not used at once, be covered and kept in the fridge.
- Some food in jars, once opened, can be kept in the cupboard, but other foods will need to be kept in the fridge – read the labels.
- Store dried pulses, herbs, beans and spices in sealed containers, preferably in the cupboard. Light can affect, for example, dried herbs and cause them to deteriorate.
- Check use-by dates regularly.

HOW TO SHOP

The way you shop will depend on your family's individual needs and your proximity to the shops, but whether it's once a week or more frequently, it's always best to make a list. This will not only help you stick to a budget – no impulse buying – but will also ensure that you buy everything you need and don't get home and find a vital ingredient for supper is missing.

Supermarkets now provide all manner of produce all year round – fresh strawberries at Christmas, asparagus way before June – so it's easy to forget where food comes from and when it is in season. Food bought in its true season will taste vastly different from forced produce, and you'll benefit from lower prices.

Only buy perishables that you'll be able to cook/eat before the use-by date. Select food wisely and buy it in optimum condition. Check that the packaging is undamaged, and that cans are not dented or bulging.

CHOOSING BEEF

- A light red meat doesn't necessarily indicate quality. Look for a meat that is dark red.
- Fat should be creamy white.
- A fair amount of fat should be distributed through the meat as fine marbling – this tenderizes the meat during cooking.
- Look for neat cuts; there should be no splinters of bone or ragged edges, and the cut should be trimmed of sinew.
- The thickness of the piece of meat should be uniform for even cooking.
- Look for the Quality Standard Mark as an assurance of quality.
- Select the cut of beef as follows:
  - ✱ **Roasting and braising**: rib, top rump, topside, silverside.
  - ✱ **Stews, casseroles and mince**: neck or clod, chuck steak, thin flank, shin.
  - ✱ **Grilling and frying**: rump, fillet, sirloin, entrecôte.

CHOOSING LAMB

- Meat from young English lambs is pale with a small amount of creamy white fat. There should be a light marbling of fat within the flesh.
- Joints and chops are smaller than those of imported lamb.
- Imported lamb tends to be slightly darker and coarser.
- The bones should be cleanly cut, with no splinters.
- Look for the Quality Standard Mark as an assurance of quality.
- Select the cut of lamb as follows:
  - ✱ **Roasting, grilling and frying**: all lamb cuts except middle neck and scrag.
  - ✱ **Stews and casseroles**: middle neck, scrag, shoulder, chump chops.
  - ✱ **Mince**: leg.

CHOOSING PORK

- Look for pale pink, firm, smooth-textured flesh.
- The fat should be white.
- The rind/skin should be smooth and hairless.
- Look for neat cuts; there should be no splinters of bone or ragged edges, and the cut should be trimmed evenly.
- Ask the butcher to score the rind/skin for you – with his large, super-sharp knives he can do it much quicker than you'll be able to at home.
- Select the cut of pork as follows:
  - ✱ **Roasting**: most cuts are good for roasting.
  - ✱ **Stews, casseroles and mince**: diced shoulder, spare ribs, belly, neck.
  - ✱ **Frying and grilling**: tenderloin or fillet, chops, escalopes.

CHOOSING FRUIT AND VEGETABLES

- Buy from a shop with a high turnover to get the freshest produce.
- Buy in season.
- Look for bright, fresh colours and crisp leaves.
- Avoid bruised, discoloured or damaged produce.
- Don't prod fruit and vegetables with your fingers – weigh in the palm of your hand.
- Buy unripe as well as ripe fruit to ensure that you'll have fruit to eat throughout the week.
- Don't buy more than you need for a week.