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Opening Extract from...

The Ultimate Student Cookbook

Written by studenbeans.com

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WELCOME

We are delighted to present to you what we feel is the country's first serious student cookbook.

Combining the knowledge and expertise of studentbeans.com with that of leading recipe technician Rob Allison, we hope we have indeed created the ultimate student cookbook.

Taking our inspiration from the staple student diet of 'beans on toast', studentbeans.com was born in 2005. A few years on, millions of students visit us every month for savings, advice and entertainment – and it is so exciting for us now to have published our very first cookbook. You will be pleased to know that its scope is rather more wide-ranging than 'beans on toast'! As well as revealing new culinary delights, this book will teach you the basics of preparing and eating healthier, tastier food without stretching your budget too far.

Leaving home and being away from our Mum's cooking was a real challenge during our student years. We only wish that there had been something like this around when we were at uni – a clear and simple-to-follow cookbook with properly designed recipes for wholesome and great-tasting food.

In building studentbeans.com, and in all that we do, we have used the idea of 'making life a little more awesome' as a cornerstone. We very much hope that with this book your culinary journey through student life and beyond is a little more awesome too.

– Michael and James Eder and the team at studentbeans.com



INTRODUCTION

There will come a time when the heady first days of new stationery and friends gives way to the realities of university. You are on your own now, left to fend for yourself in among new peers who may seem more prepared and more confident than you. From learning to change your duvet cover to remembering to buy toilet roll, you will pick up new life skills every day. The point of this book is to help you with one of the most daunting: cooking.

From this moment forth, you should regard food as a fun challenge. Shopping, preparing and eating should become an integral part of your life.

Food is so much more than just the fuel that makes our bodies work – it influences everything from our moods to our bank balance, and so should be taken seriously. If you look after your food then it will look after you in so many different ways; be it the familiar taste that cures homesickness, or the delicious chocolate mousse that wins the heart of your future wife or husband. Transforming simple ingredients into meals can be a hugely rewarding endeavour during your time at university and beyond.

We don't want you to be one of those students who grazes on instant noodles and toast because that is the only thing you can prepare without setting the fire alarm off. We want to help you become a student who struts confidently about the kitchen, cooking (and sometimes burning) delicious dishes that will enhance every facet of your university life. So put down the microwave meals and read on to start your culinary journey.

EATING WELL DURING EXAM TIME AND BEYOND

It is tempting for anyone who has left home to exist on pizza, kebabs and lager alone. As fun as this may be, it will soon leave you with gout, diabetes or at least an acne-ridden face and a rapidly expanding waistline – not cool. During busy times it might be tempting to just give up on preparing and eating proper meals, substituting them for a trip to the takeaway. Try instead to consider the time spent cooking yourself a healthy meal as the perfect time to de-stress; concentrate on the cooking and preparation, leaving all your exam worries at the kitchen door.

We will not presume to take the place of your mum and nag you to eat more fruit and vegetables, but do try; they help your brain and improve energy levels. It is worth considering the following when choosing what to cook:

Colour is an excellent guide to a healthy diet. The more colourful the food on your plate, the better it is for you. Try to add greens (spinach, cabbage, pak choi) and reds (beetroot, tomatoes) to your plate – not only will they add nutrients, but they will taste good.

Processed foods like ready meals really are the foodstuff of the devil. Try not to eat more than one a week, if any.

Consider the idea of going vegetarian for a day. Not only is it good for your body, and the environment, but it is also excellent for your bank balance.

Try to eat a range of food groups. Too many carbs and you'll feel sluggish, too much meat and you'll need a colonic. A little of everything does you good.

SURVIVAL SKILLS

Food is a perishable good that has to be dealt with properly. From storage to reheating, if you follow some very basic principles you will avoid poisoning yourself and wasting perfectly good food.



Plan ahead and cook more food than you need so that leftovers can be enjoyed the next day or frozen for another time.



Freeze in small portions so that you don't have to defrost your entire stock at once.



Allow hot food to cool completely before covering and transferring to the fridge or freezer.



When reheating (especially meat) make sure it is brought to a high temperature (above 75°C) for at least 2 minutes.



DON'T refreeze defrosted food.



Trust your senses – don't cook or eat something if it smells or looks bad. Chances are, if it smells bad, and it looks bad, it probably is bad.

ANY WHICH WAY WITH EGGS

We do not know who first thought to crack open the egg from a chicken and begin experimenting with them, but what we do know is that we owe them a huge debt of gratitude. Over the years eggs have become essential to all areas of cookery. We want you to tap into this magical foodstuff, so below are key methods of cooking eggs, which are too often overlooked by other cookbooks as too simple to include. Well not us. We think the simpler the better. All of the below egg recipes are enough to serve one.

BOILED EGG

1 egg (the best quality you can afford)

Salt and pepper

- **Fill** a small pan two thirds of the way up with water and bring to the boil.
- **Lower** the egg into the pan carefully.
- **Simmer** briefly for 3 minutes for a really soft and gooey egg, 5 minutes for a rich runny yolk and 10–12 minutes for a hard-boiled egg you can slice up.

SCRAMBLED EGG

There is only one secret to sublime scrambled eggs, and that is using lots of butter. Get ready for the creamiest and most delicious plate of eggs you could wish for.

2 eggs (the best quality you can afford)

Generous knob of butter

1 slice of buttered toast

Salt and pepper

- **Crack** the eggs into a bowl, season generously, then use a fork to whisk together well.
- **Heat** the butter in a saucepan over a medium to high heat. Once melted and bubbling pour in the whisked eggs.
- **You** now have to stir the eggs almost constantly as they begin to come together. The secret is to turn the heat off when the eggs still look a little liquid, this should take about 4–5 minutes. Once the heat is off continue to stir the eggs and the residual heat will finish off the cooking.
- **Now spoon** your incredibly creamy scrambled eggs over hot toast, top with a little extra black pepper and get stuck in.



BEAN CASSOULET



Cassoulet is so traditionally French that you can sometimes almost see it wearing a beret. The classic version involves a whole pile of meat and some mystic chanting. You'll be happy to know that the meat has been omitted to make this hearty dish both affordable and vegetarian, but you can make up your own mind on the chanting.

SERVES 4

3 tbsp oil

1 onion, peeled and diced

2 celery sticks, diced

1 large carrot, peeled and diced

2 garlic cloves, peeled and finely chopped

3 fresh thyme sprigs

2 dried bay leaves

1 tbsp balsamic vinegar

½ glass of red wine

2 x 400g tin of chopped tomatoes

200ml vegetable stock

1 x 400g tins of cannellini beans, rinsed and drained

2 x 400g tins of butter beans

Small handful of Parmesan cheese (about 60g), grated

Small handful of breadcrumbs (optional)

Salt and pepper

• **Preheat** the oven to 200°C (gas mark 6).

• **Heat** the oil in a large saucepan over a medium to high heat. Once hot, add the onion, celery and carrot. Fry the mixture, stirring regularly, for 8 minutes until the vegetables have softened. Add the chopped garlic, thyme and bay leaves and continue to fry for a further 3 minutes before pouring in the vinegar and red wine and letting it reduce to almost nothing.

• **Pour** the tinned tomatoes into the saucepan. Fill the empty tin with vegetable stock and tip that in too. Bring the mixture to the boil before tipping in the beans. Let the mixture come back to the boil before reducing to a simmer and cooking like this for 5 minutes. Season generously with salt and pepper.

• **Pour** the mixture into an ovenproof dish and scatter with the grated Parmesan and breadcrumbs (if using). Bake in the preheated oven for 20 minutes, or until the Parmesan is golden and bubbling.

• **Serve** with a light salad amidst Gallic chanting.



MAC 'N' CHEESE

How could we have even conceived of writing a student cookbook without the cheap and cheerful macaroni cheese? When funds are low and you're missing the luxuries of home, cook this up and get an instant cure.

SERVES 3

500g **macaroni**

1 quantity of **Cheese Sauce** (see page 000)

Generous splash of milk

2 **tomatoes**, sliced thinly

Handful of **grated Cheddar and Parmesan cheese**, for sprinkling

Salt and pepper

- **Preheat** the oven to 200°C (gas mark 6).

- **Bring** a large saucepan of lightly salted water to boiling point. Tip in the macaroni and cook according to the packet instructions until al dente.

- **Once** cooked, drain through a colander, then tip straight into a roasting dish. Pour the prepared cheese sauce over the pasta and add a good splash of milk and turn with a spoon so that the pasta is well coated in sauce.

- **Sprinkle** over the cheese then top with slices of tomato and season. Bake in the preheated oven for 15–20 minutes until golden and bubbling.

- **Variation:** Cooked streaky bacon, fried mushrooms, sweetcorn, truffle oil and chopped fresh parsley are all good additions to this basic Mac 'n' Cheese recipe.



CHICKEN DINNER ON A TRAY

Straightforward to cook, simple to clean up, deliciously warming and reasonably healthy . . . you couldn't ask for anything more.

SERVES 2

4 tbsp oil

2 potatoes, washed, sliced in half lengthways and into wedges

6 chicken thighs, skin on, bone in

3 sprigs of thyme, leaves only

1 red onion, peeled and roughly chopped into wedges

4 garlic cloves, left whole, but bashed with your palm

12 cherry tomatoes or 3 quartered normal tomatoes

Large handful of baby spinach (about 100g), washed (optional)

Salt and pepper

Preheat the oven to 200°C (gas mark 6).

Drizzle a roasting tray with the oil. Scatter the potato wedges on to the tray, season with salt and pepper and mix around with your hands so all the potato is coated in the oil. Roast in the preheated oven for 20 minutes.

Remove the tray from the oven and add the chicken thighs, skin side down. Place into the oven to cook for a further 15 minutes.

Remove from the oven and scatter over the thyme, red onion and garlic cloves. Mix around a little with a spoon before returning to the oven for a further 15 minutes.

Finally, remove the tray from the oven again and dot the tomatoes around the potatoes. Put your tray back in the oven and roast for a further 8 minutes.

Divide the spinach between 4 plates and top with a little of everything from the roasting tray.

Serve up to appreciative friends. If they don't show appreciation, they are not a real friends and should be replaced as soon as possible.



GOOD OLD BURGER 'N' SAUCE

It is no secret that Big Macs are delicious, but it is less known that the undeniable flavour comes not from the meat patties, nor the buns, but mostly from the secret sauce. That's why we've included our version of the tasty condiment. These burgers cook just as well on a barbecue as they do in the pan. Take them, and the sauce, along to any summer get together and you will soon be heralded as the new Burger King – apologies, we couldn't resist.

MAKES 4 BURGERS

1kg minced **beef**

1 **red onion**, peeled and grated

2 tbsp **oil**

4 burger **baps**

2 tbsp shop-bought **tomato relish**

4 tbsp **mayonnaise**

1 **shallot**, peeled and finely diced

1 tbsp **white wine vinegar**

Salt and pepper

TO SERVE:

1 **tomato**, thinly sliced

Gherkins

1 round **lettuce**, leaves separated or shredded



- **Put** the minced beef, onion and generous amounts of salt and pepper into a large bowl. Mix well with your hands for at least 2 minutes – this mixing will help keep the burgers together.
- **Divide** the mixture into 4 equal balls. Shape each ball into a patty roughly 12cm across and 3cm thick.
- **Heat** the oil in a large non-stick frying pan over a medium to high heat. Once hot, add your burgers. If your pan is not big enough to accommodate all of the burgers at once then you will have to cook them in batches.
- **Fry** your burgers for 5 minutes on both sides. Reduce the heat to medium and continue to cook for a further 4 minutes on each side. Remove the burgers to a plate and leave to rest while you continue with the remaining components.
- **Slice** the burger buns in half and place them, cut side down, into the same pan that the burgers were cooked in. Fry over a medium heat for 2 minutes. This may well have to be done in batches. Once the buns are done, place them to one side.
- **Mix** together the tomato relish, mayonnaise, diced shallot and white wine vinegar. This is how easy it is to create your favourite burger sauce!
- **Now** you have all the components in front of you to build your ultimate burger, go forth and make the best darned burger you can.



RASPBERRY AND WHITE CHOCOLATE MUFFINS

Muffins can be both savoury and sweet. Having said that, what else is there better than a sweet muffin studded with white chocolate and raspberries? In fact, be careful – if you make this recipe, you may never eat savoury food ever again.

MAKES 6 MUFFINS

110g raspberries
125g caster sugar
250g self-raising flour
2 tsp baking powder
50g cold butter, cut into cubes
1 egg
175ml milk
100g white chocolate, broken into small pieces
Small handful of chopped pistachios (optional)



- **Preheat** the oven to 180°C (gas mark 4).
- **Put** the raspberries in a bowl and sprinkle with a tablespoon of the sugar. Using the back of a fork, roughly mash the raspberries and sugar together. Don't go overboard and create a purée, there should still be some lumps of raspberry in there. Leave to one side.
- **Put** the remaining sugar, flour and baking powder in a large bowl and stir to combine. Add the cubed butter, and using your fingers and thumbs, rub the butter into the flour mixture until you have a mixture that resembles breadcrumbs – this may take a few minutes.
- **Crack** the egg into the measured milk and use a fork to beat together. Pour the liquid into the dry mixture, and using a wooden spoon, gently bring the mixture together until just combined. Avoid overmixing, otherwise you will end up with a very dense muffin. Add the chocolate pieces and the crushed raspberries and fold briefly to combine.
- **Dollop** the mixture equally into a muffin tin lined with paper cases. Sprinkle chopped pistachios on top (if using) and bake in the preheated oven for 20 minutes, or until the muffins are beautifully risen, golden on top and cooked through.
- **Serve** warm, cold, chilled, blistering... doesn't matter, they are delicious any which way.
- **Tip:** These muffins can be a naughty breakfast, or a perfect sugar injection halfway through double lectures.



ETON MESS

The perfect beginners dessert because there is almost no way you can go wrong with this recipe. The clue is in the title: 'mess'. Embrace the mess, and wow your friends on a hot summers' day by producing this dessert alongside some Pimms, or cider, or Special Brew, or White Lightning... or whatever you are drinking; we're not judging you!

SERVES 4

½ jar of good-quality
strawberry jam

3 tbsp water

300ml double cream

4 shop-bought
meringue nests

8 fresh strawberries,
roughly chopped
(optional)



- **Spoon** the jam into a small saucepan and add the water. Bring the jam up to almost boiling and mix the water in. You should now have a runny strawberry sauce. Leave to cool.
- **Pour** the cream into a bowl and whisk. At this point if anybody around you has a pair of electric beaters then become their best friend. If not, then fear not, as the effort you are putting in will ensure guilt-free calorie consumption later on.
- **Whisk** the double cream until it reaches the soft peak stage. This is to say that when you pull up a bit of the cream, it almost holds itself up. Do not over whip.
- **Now**, take one of the meringues in your hands and crush it directly over the whipped cream. It really doesn't matter how big, or small the pieces are that fall into the cream. Repeat with the remaining 3 meringues, before gently folding the mixture together to incorporate the meringue pieces.
- **Pour** a quarter of your now cooled strawberry sauce in with the cream, and fold lightly, it does not all have to be mixed in.
- **Spoon** the mixture into individual glasses and pour any remaining strawberry sauce equally over the desserts. Top artistically with fresh strawberries (if using), flick on the telly and eat.
- **Tip:** You can make the component parts of this recipe the day before and put them in the fridge overnight. Try to assemble the mess as close to eating as possible.

