

Cooking on a Budget, Eating Like Royalty



What to Make With:

Canned Tomatoes, Pasta, Rice, and Yeast Dough

When you're running on a budget, there are plenty of ways to create delicious meals with simple ingredients. Adding flour and yeast into the mix can stretch meals even further, letting you feed yourself or others with ease.

Note: I'm vegan/vegetarian, but these recipes use general terms. Adapt them to suit your diet! For example, swap milk for oat milk or use vegetable stock. Vegetarian living in Scotland is incredibly affordable - veg is inexpensive, and it's a healthier option to try! 😊

Canned Tomatoes

These versatile gems are the base for countless dishes. Here are a few simple and quick ideas:



Tomato Base/Sauce

- **Ingredients:**
 - 1 can of tinned tomatoes (plum tomatoes are best)
 - 1 tbsp tomato purée (optional but enhances flavour)
 - 1 good pinch of oregano
 - 1 pinch of parsley
 - 1 pinch of garlic granules
 - 1 pinch of salt
 - Freshly cracked black pepper
 - *Optional:* 1 tbsp olive oil or a little real butter (adds flavour, not just sustenance)
- **Method:**

Add all ingredients, except the fat, salt and pepper, to a blender, bullet, or immersion blender bowl and blitz until smooth. (If you don't have these, use a fine sieve, potato masher, or even your hands.) Season to taste with salt and pepper, and add the olive oil or butter. Simmer on lowest heat for some five minutes. Done!

💡 This sauce is ready for pasta as-is. For a heartier flavour, add rosemary and thyme. To make it creamier, stir in a splash of milk or cream.

Tomato Soup

Transform the above tomato base into a comforting soup:

1. Add one can of water (use the tomato tin to measure) to the tomato base.
2. Make sure you add the tomato purée for much more flavour.

3. Mix in two stock cubes (vegetable or your choice).
4. *Optional:* Boil and add broken spaghetti, macaroni, or soup noodles.
5. *Optional:* Serve with a dollop of soured cream or cream cheese.

💡 For a variation, replace the pasta with rice. Prepare the rice as follows:

Flavourful Rice

Make this versatile rice for soups, fried rice, or as a side dish:

1. Heat 1 tsp of oil in a small, non-stick saucepan.
 2. Add 1 cup of rice, stirring until some grains turn white - this is the moment to
 3. Add 2 cups of stock (or 2 cups of water with a crumbled stock cube).
 4. Bring to a boil, reduce heat to the lowest setting, and simmer until the liquid is absorbed. Done.
 5. Add about one heaped tbsp per plate to your tomato soup (4 on the litre of soup).
 6. Store the rest for other dishes, like the following:
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Fried Rice

- Heat oil in a pan or wok. Add 1–2 eggs (if available) and scramble lightly.

- Add your prepared rice and stir-fry on high heat for 3–4 minutes.
- Add peas, carrots, and (if you have them) bean sprouts.
- Season with:
 - 1 tbsp soy sauce
 - ½ tbsp rice vinegar (or cider/malt vinegar)
 - 1 tsp brown sugar
 - A pinch of Chinese 5-spice

Tips:

- Only heat tinned veg briefly; don't fry for long.
 - For fresh carrots, thinly slice and fry with the rice. Add fresh/frozen peas at the end to defrost and heat through (takes about 2 minutes).
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Yeast Dough



Yeast dough is your ticket to homemade bread, pizza, and more. Follow these rules for success:

1. Keep the dough warm and away from drafts.
2. Use lukewarm water - never hot - to avoid killing the yeast.
3. Add water and flour gradually to get the right consistency. Every new batch of flour behaves differently, and so does the yeast. It's better to be cautious than having to throw away valuable food.

4. Make this dough in a food processor with a dough hook for best results, or with a hand mixer or even by hand. With the latter two, it's important that once a dough has formed, you need to knead it for about 10 minutes. (A great excuse to not go to the gym that day 😊).
5. Mix the dry ingredients well (either with a spoon, by hand or let the machine do it) before slowly and gradually pouring in the water.
6. When you have used too much water, add flour until the dough becomes a nice, non-sticky clump of dough. Test this by turning the machine off (safety first!) and poking the dough. If it sticks to your fingers or feels too moist, it needs more flour.

Basic Yeast Dough Recipe

- **Ingredients:**

1. 400g plain flour (+ extra, for either dusting or if the dough is too sticky)
2. 1 sachet dried yeast
3. 1 tsp brown sugar
4. ½ tsp salt
5. ~330ml lukewarm water

- **Method:**

1. Combine flour, yeast, sugar, and salt in a bowl.
2. Slowly add lukewarm water, mixing until a dough forms. Stop adding water once it becomes a clump.
3. Knead for 5–10 minutes until smooth and elastic.
4. In the meanwhile, prepare a tray with baking paper, get a clean and dry kitchen towel, and prepare a space at a warm, draft-free place for the dough. I for example put a chair against my radiator and place the baking tray there for the dough to proof.
5. After the kneading time, work the dough a little with your hands on a clean worktop.
6. Divide it in two, and for example freeze the other half, store in the fridge for the next meal (not longer than 12 hours), or directly prepare something else for the baking.
7. Roll the dough out on a floured surface to fit your baking tray. Use a rolling pin or a bottle for this.
8. Cover the dough with a clean kitchen towel and leave in a warm, draft-free spot for 1½–2 hours until it has doubled in size.

Pizza Bread or Pizza

1. If you have made the tomato base/sauce according to the above recipe, divide that into two or three portions, and freeze the ones you don't need.

2. Thinly spread the left portion on your dough, taking care not to press the dough down. Sprinkle olive oil on top by using your thumb as a bottle stopper and carefully dripping the oil on top.
 3. You can already bake it at this stage as-is, or add pizza toppings. For tomato pizza bread simply add more garlic for example, and when you get your hands on fresh basil (or dried one for that matter), use that.
 4. Bake in a preheated oven for about 15 minutes on highest temperature (about 230 degrees / depending on your oven!)
 5. **Always check - the dough needs to get crisp and light brown on the outside. This can take longer or shorter. (Best results are achieved in a convection oven).**
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Bonus: Variations for Dough

While your pizza bakes, try these options with the remaining dough:

Simple Bread

Shape into a loaf, score the top, and bake at 200°C for 25–40 minutes. Check for doneness by tapping the bottom with a knife or fork - it should sound hollow.

Bread Rolls

Shape into rolls, brush with oil, and sprinkle seeds (caraway, sesame, etc.). Bake for 15–25 minutes. Use the method above to check if they are done.

Focaccia-Inspired Bread

Roll out dough, poke dents with your fingers, drizzle with olive oil, and sprinkle with rosemary, black pepper, and sea salt. Bake like pizza bread until crispy and golden.

General Info/Nifty Tipps 😊

The recipes serve at least 2, resp. make at least 2 portions, but are easily scalable for more portions.

Cooking on a Budget, Eating Like Royalty:

When you're on a budget but love good food, it's important to choose quality herbs and spices. This doesn't mean spending a fortune, though. For example, a certain supermarket on Waterside Street offers a very nice, affordable paprika, while the budget option at another well-known supermarket up the road isn't as good and costs more.

Olive oil is worth the investment. Look for dark olive oil, which can be used sparingly to enhance dishes like the tomato sauce, salads, or other meals you want to refine.

If possible, buy your favorite spices and herbs in bulk online (yes, even from Amazon). While not perfect, it can save you money and ensure better quality. For instance, I buy parsley and Madras curry powder in bulk, saving about 90% compared to supermarket prices while gaining much better flavour.

You *can* eat well without sacrificing quality - just make small, mindful choices. Good food on a budget is achievable, and immensely delicious and satisfying.