

Cooking Basics

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Hey McKids! Have you been raised all your life thinking that food comes from the drive through window? Do you grocery shop in the campus bookstore and 7-Eleven? Is your idea of home made food baking a cake from a box? Have you or your family just been dumped onto the street with no cash, or did you run out of cash on a trip across the country? No problem! This section will teach you tips on how to cook food for yourself, your family, your commune, your protest team, or your whole neighborhood with what is available. Also included are tips on getting ingredients or precooked foods, as well as tips on living independently of the prepackaged, super-processed existence that is the Amerikan food market. To make them easier to find Cheap Chow and Roadside Chow are in the appendix at the end of the book, these appendixes are not so much a recipe book than a diverse collection of low impact low cost lessons on preparing different easy to acquire foods.

A Few Helpful Hints on Cooking

Keep any loose clothing away from open flames, wash everything (especially your hands) that comes in contact with the food, always wash your hands after touching raw meats and eggs while cooking, use oven mitts, be careful how you handle anything sharp, keep a fire extinguisher handy, and remember that "Baking Powder" and "Baking Soda" are two completely different things (as are "Cream of Tartar" and "Tartar Sauce").

Grease and oil fires cannot be put out with water (It will actually make them worse by spreading the grease or oil over the surface of the water). If you don't have access to a fire extinguisher, be sure to keep a decent supply of baking soda or sand on hand whenever you cook, to control these fires. If need be you can also put them out by cutting off their oxygen supply, such as placing a lid on the pan. Always be careful of your appliances. Regularly check for gas leaks, holes, stripped cords, or other hazardous malfunctions. You may also want to see Cheap Chow and Low Impact Crashing for tips on living on your own and Farm It for tips on growing your own produce.

For consistency purposes, when reading the following recipes:

- **tbs** represents tablespoon(s)
- **tsp** represents teaspoon(s)
- **qt** represents quart(s)
- **gal** represents gallon(s)
- **lbs.** represents pounds
- **oz** represents ounce(s)
- **c** represents cup(s)
- **C** represents temperature in Celsius
- **F** represents temperature in Fahrenheit

Measurement Conversion Tables

Cup (c)	Fluid Ounce (oz)	Tablespoons (tbs)	Teaspoons (tsp)	Milliliters (ml)
1 c	8 oz	16 tbs	48 tsp	237 ml
3/4 c	6 oz	12 tbs	36 tsp	177 ml
2/3 c	5 1/3 oz	10 tbs + 2 tsp	32 tsp	158 ml
1/2 c	4 oz	8 tbs	24 tsp	118 ml
1/3 c	2 2/3 oz	5 tbs + 1 tsp	16 tsp	79 ml
1/4 c	2 oz	4 tbs	12 tsp	59 ml
1/8 c	1 oz	2 tbs	6 tsp	30 ml
1/16 c	0.5 oz	1 tbs	3 tsp	15 ml
USA Standard Fluid Ounce (fl oz)	Multiplied by 29.75	= Metric Milliliter (mL)		
Gallon (gal)	3.785	Liter (L)		
Ounce (oz)	28.35	Gram (g)		
Pound (lb)	4.54	Kilogram (kg)		
Metric	Multiplied by	= USA Standard		
Milliliter (mL)	0.043	Fluid Ounce (fl oz)		
Liter (L)	0.264	Gallon (gal)		
Gram (g)	0.035	Ounce (oz)		
Kilogram (kg)	2.202	Pound (lb)		
			Approximate Measurements (Used casually)	

- "Tad" = 1/4 tsp
- "Dash" = 1/8 tsp
- "Pinch" = 1/16th tsp
- "Smidgin" = 1/32nd tsp

Temperature Conversions

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- Fahrenheit - 32 + 1.8 = Celsius

- Celsius $\times 1.8 + 32 =$ Fahrenheit

For times when you are moving around or on the road learn how to pinch out a teaspoon and tablespoon from your ingredients, it is not hard to learn just start by first pouring the measured dry ingredients into your hand when cooking so you get the feel for that volume liquids you just need to learn how much to pour to get the right amount. Mark your cup with measurements to use in cooking, get an idea of what one cup looks like, many small cheap disposable or kids cups are 8-9 ounces and might even be marked as such on the bottom.

Planning Meals

If you will be feeding a group it is useful to know some ways to get your crew to fill up on the cheap stuff so you can save on the expensive stuff. If possible start your meals with bread and simple soup, then let everyone fill up on the cheap starch like potato, rice, or easy steamed vegetables, finally serve the more expensive protein and fats. Many dishes can be served on a bed of rice which will absorb the gravy or drippings and prevent the waste. Make an attempt to serve meals that combine dark leafy vegetables, citrus fruits, healthy fats, and protein as well as meeting daily minimum calories for the work being done but not so far over that your group gets that All-American fatbody look. The kitchen is an egalitarian place and everyone is expected to take their turn, so if you are not cooking you should be cleaning up.

Waste Not

While dumpster diving can yield good stuff to eat even a trip into your fridge full of expired or soured foods can supply you with ingredients many people would throw out to help you stretch til your next paycheck or properly stored for tight times. Plenty more ideas in the appendixes Cheap Chow and Roadside Chow.

- Sour milk actually lasts pretty long once it glops up, use it in recipes that call for buttermilk, it is also a rising agent when used with baking soda(sodium bicarbonate) so in a way better to bake with than fresh milk
- Sour juice is just fermenting, you can keep it around with a loose cap for prison hooch but it can be subbed in for water when baking a cake adding flavor.
- moldy solid foods, don't eat unknown mold, cheeses and vegetables can be trimmed or scraped of mold or soft spots often saving the majority.
- Discolored meat, not a problem, even if it takes on a nasty smell washing and either long boiling or roasting it will make it safe to attempt to eat killing bacteria and toxins.
- Smelly fish can sometimes be washed with vinegar, again boiling in a soup for 30 min will sterilize any food
- Stale cereal, bread, cake, and snacks can often be put into a oven on low to bake dry to return crispness, cake and bread can be toasted for a snack or use in recipes.
- Most random vegetables and meats can be chopped and combined in a stir fry, if they are limp or flavorless just add garlic, soy sauce, honey, pepper, or sugar to spice it up a bit.
- For some people pressure canning leftovers in glass jars is less expensive than running or acquiring a refrigerator and leads to a far longer shelflife for food that just needs to be heated for a quick meal.
- Many leftovers can be boiling water bath canned without a pressure cooker using canning jars and a pot of boiling water by vinegar or salt brine canning, consult a recent canning recipe book.

Protein

Instant potatoes, corn, and instant rice might fill us up and give us starch to burn as energy, you might skip a few days but your body needs protein to survive and be effective, here is a quick way to estimate your minimum daily protein requirement, either multiply your weight in kilograms by .8, or weight in pounds by .37, so a person who weighs 100 lbs needs 37 grams of protein per day, one who weighs 150 lbs. should eat 55 grams, and a 200-pound person should get 74 grams. Below is a table of foods to help you calculate your minimum protein intake.

- Tuna, 6 oz can - 40 grams of protein
- Tofu, 1/4 cup - 20 grams protein
- Tofu, 1 oz, 2.3 grams
- Soy milk, 1 cup - 6-10 grams
- Most beans (black, pinto, lentils, etc) about 7-10 grams protein per half cup of cooked beans
- Soy beans, 1/4 cup cooked - 14 grams protein
- Split peas, 1/4 cup cooked - 8 grams
- Peanut butter, 2 Tablespoons - 8 grams protein
- Almonds, 1/2 cup - 8 grams
- Peanuts, 1/2 cup - 9 grams
- Cashews, 1/4 cup - 5 grams
- Pecans, 1/4 cup - 2.5 grams
- Sunflower seeds, 1/2 cup - 6 grams
- Pumpkin seeds, 1/2 cup - 19 grams
- Flax seeds - 1/2 cup - 8 grams
- Egg, large - 6 grams protein
- Milk, 1 cup - 8 grams
- Cottage cheese, 1/4 cup - 15 grams
- Yogurt, 1 cup - usually 8-12 grams, check label
- Soft cheeses (Mozzarella, Brie, Camembert) - 6 grams per oz
- Medium cheeses (Cheddar, Swiss) - 7 or 8 grams per oz
- Hard cheeses (Parmesan) - 10 grams per oz

- Ground pork 100%(check for fillers), 1 oz raw - 5 grams; 3 oz cooked - 22 grams
- Bacon, 1 slice - 3 grams
- Ham, 3 oz serving - 19 grams
- Most cuts of 100% beef(hamburger may contain filler) - 7 grams of protein per ounce
- Chicken meat, cooked, 4 oz - 35 grams
- Most fish fillets or steaks are about 22 grams of protein for 3 14 oz (100 grams) of cooked fish, or 6 grams per ounce

Flavors and Spices

Since most quality spices and flavors tend to be expensive when purchased it is useful to learn how to evaluate available flavor enhancers and improvise. Firstly learn what spices grow naturally around your location, you can have several kilograms of free spices hanging around drying in your place. Learn to use leftovers like citrus peels in your cooking. Sometimes you will be presented with a new herb or spice, a sniff and taste test may be useful for integrating that missing link into your recipes. Often candies and processed foods have useful natural and artificial flavors that can be used either whole, crushed, or dissolved in boiling water although allergy problems may result from the artificial flavors or colors. Chocolate and nuts can be found in many forms but can be chunked or ground to use as a flavoring. Absent chocolate powder freeze dried coffee or even a cup of strong coffee can add color and flavor to your recipe.

Pressure Cooking

Consider acquiring a quality pressure cooker, if you can find a 15 psi model it will cut your cooking time for beans and meats to 1/4 the time making a hour of boiling in an open pot only take 15 minutes. Look at department stores and at Hispanic or India food shops, don't bother with the old steam bombs made from the 50's through the 70's. It is pretty cool when you can do lentils and rice in about 15 minutes, or a pot roast that tastes like it ran overnight in around an hour even with the cheapest meat. The real bonus is the fuel savings if you have had your electricity and gas turned off and you are using a camp stove. Just be sure that there is always some liquid at the bottom of the cooker to start with or you wont be able to build pressure and might scorch your food.

Solar Cooking

Cooking food with the sun can be one of the cheapest ways to cook a meal, other than by making fire by rubbing two sticks together. If you have the free time, you can make a decent meal once you have your solar oven set up.

Basic Solar Cooker

Don't fall for expensive solar cookers; There's little that they can do that a cheap homemade solar cooker can't. At least nothing that would make them worth \$100+. An effective solar cooker can be made out of a car windshield reflector for less than \$15. If you can't even afford that, you can cut/collapse a cardboard box and tape or paste aluminum foil to it. The advantage to the windshield reflector is that it is collapsible and more durable. If you're into long hikes in unknown territory, having a windshield reflector solar cooker may be a good way to conserve fuel, but unless you have a few weeks of experience and very hot and clear weather you will be eating cold or spoiled food.

The only other part you'll need for your solar cooker will be some kind of oven/microwave resistant bag or container for the food.

It's entirely possible to cook a whole chicken in a few hours using a solar cooker if there is enough sunlight. Place the windshield reflector in a way that is parabolic in nature (sunlight should enter and reflect inward onto the food). Fill your container with your chicken, and whatever seasonings you choose, and place it in the middle of your solar cooker. Then just aim it towards the sun. You will probably have to adjust the direction your cooker is facing due to the changing position of the sun in the sky. After 3 to 4 hours, with the right conditions, you will have a fully-cooked chicken ready to eat.

The possibilities with a solar cooker are seemingly endless. If the only fowl you have access to are wild birds and park ducks, a solar cooker will work perfectly to cook your lunch or dinner while you're trying to catch more food. Should also work well with fish.

While you will not get to boiling temperatures, the temperature created by a solar cooker should be sufficient for killing germs. If you can, obtain a thermometer and use it to make sure the food temperature reaches around 165 F or finish up by cooking to a boil over a fire.

Using Old Cookbooks

When looking for something out of the ordinary to make for a meal, you may come across a few older cookbooks. A number were written during the Great Depression using simple ingredients (such as "Aunt Sammy's Radio

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Recipes" produced by the US Department of Agriculture). Some written during World War 2 may feature a number of meatless recipes since civilian sales of many foods were rationed so the Armed Forces could be fed. You may have to cut back on some of the fatty ingredients since such things as "cholesterol" and "trans fats" were not as widely known as they are today. Many of the older cookbooks were written back in the days before microwave ovens, and some terms may seem unfamiliar to folks today. Here are a few that you may come across.

- **Double Boiler:** This is a two-tiered saucepan that is used to melt things like cheese and chocolate. It uses the heat from boiling water in the bottom to melt the item in the top pan, since direct heat from the flames can bum it. If a recipe says to mix something "over boiling water", this is what they mean. These are still being made, but you may have to buy yours at a specialty cooking store. You can also make your own by placing a pan over another pan, but be careful that they fit properly so that they won't slip or bum you from the steam.
- **Double Cream:** An old term for Heavy Cream.
- **Hard-Wheat and Soft-Wheat Flours:** Hard-Wheat flour was used for yeast breads and Soft-Wheat was used for pastries, cakes and quick-breads. Just use All-Purpose or Whole Wheat flour.
- **Nutmeats:** These are nuts (often walnuts or almonds) chopped into little pieces. (Note: Peanuts aren't nuts; they're legumes, a kind of bean.)
- **Rich Milk:** Back in the day when almost all milk delivered by the milkman was Certified (that is, nonhomogenized), the cream in the milk would rise and collect in the neck of the bottle. This was called "Rich Milk", "Top Milk" or "Top of Milk" and was used in a number of recipes. You can substitute Light Cream for this.
- **Scalded Milk:** You're to bring the milk almost to a boil (using a Double Boiler). This often helps the cooking process in some recipes.
- **Single Cream:** An old term for Light Cream.
- **Skim (or Skimmed) Milk:** Another term for "Fat Free" Milk.
- **Soda:** Not a soft drink, but Baking Soda, also known as Sodium Bicarbonate or Bicarbonate of Soda.
- **Top Milk (or Top of Milk):** See "Rich Milk".

- **Yeast Cake:** This is a small 0.6 ounce block of active yeast (about a tablespoon) that is used in baking. It is rarely seen in supermarkets anymore, since it is highly perishable and doesn't transport very well. Substitute it with 2 1/4 teaspoons of Active Dry Yeast (what you'll find in those yeast packets in the store). If the recipe calls for a 2 ounce yeast cake, use three packets or 6 3/4 teaspoons of Active Dry Yeast.
- **A Note About Pasta:** Some cookbooks from back in the 1930's mention cooking pasta for as much as 20 minutes. This was when pasta was made with much denser dough than today. Ignore the time suggestion and just boil until tender unless you are using our home made pasta recipe. If the pasta is to be used in a casserole, undercook it, since it will continue to cook when it's in the oven.

External Links

Budget 101: Make Your Own Mixes and Convenience Foods - <http://www.budget101.com/frugal/mix-recipes-166/>

The Cook's Thesaurus: <http://www.foodsubs.com/> "*(A) cooking encyclopedia that covers thousands of ingredients and kitchen tools. Entries include pictures, descriptions, synonyms, pronunciations, and suggested substitutions.*"

Fankhauser's Cheese Page - <http://biology.clc.uc.edu/Fankhauser/Cheese/cheese.html> College level cheese making with some easy Italian recipes.

Great Depression Cooking with Clara - <http://www.greatdepressioncooking.com> YouTube videos of recipes from hard times, demonstrated by a woman who lived through those years.

Instructables: Home Made Bread without Breadmaker - <http://www.instructables.com/id/EF95ZHYP3435TlQ/>

Instructables: Solar Powered Parabolic Cooker - <http://www.instructables.com/id/ESNVF-BHF48U7G77/> An Instructable on zero-impact cooking.

Open Cola - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/OpenCola_%28drink%29 The only home made cola released under the GNU General Public License!

Recipe Goldmine - <http://www.recipegoldmine.com/> "*Better Than A Thousand Cookbooks!*"

RecipeSource - <http://www.recipesource.com/> "*Your Source for Recipes on the Internet*"

Wikibooks: Cookbooks - <http://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Cookbook> Recipes from Wikimedia



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Last updated: 8 September 2011

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