

Midweek Miracles

Providing dinner from scratch every day can be hard, but it's a lot easier with these 10 delicious Midweek Miracles that the whole family can eat together.

All of these recipes:

- serve 4;
- are very easy, having just six main ingredients;
- use just one saucepan/frying pan;
- can be on the table in 30 minutes (hob) or 60 minutes (oven);
- have suggestions for variations, sides, leftovers or how you can get ahead;
- use familiar ingredients, recipes and skills;
- are exciting but simple dishes that the whole family will enjoy.

Five meals you can cook on the hob in under 30 minutes

Spanish Prawns and Rice

1 large peeled onion; 2 peeled cloves of garlic; paprika; a mug of white rice; 1x 400g tin of chopped tomatoes; two handfuls of cooked prawns, defrosted

1. Boil the kettle. Quickly chop up the onion and garlic quite small, and fry gently in oil until soft.
2. Add in a tablespoon of paprika, the rice; the tomatoes and then refill the empty tomato tin with boiling water and add that too.
3. Leave to simmer for 15 minutes, throwing in the cooked prawns for a few minutes at the end. Divide between four bowls and tuck in.

Added zing! Why not try adding cubes of chorizo sausage when you fry the onion and garlic?

Chicken and Vegetable Fajitas

2 large peeled onions; 2 large deseeded (bell) peppers; 4 large skinless chicken breasts; 1x 30g packet fajita seasoning; 8 tortilla pancakes; 200g feta cheese; to serve: salsa, sour cream or guacamole (optional)

1. Chop the onions and peppers into bite-sized chunks and put to one side. Next, slice the chicken breasts into finger-sized strips. (If you do it in this order, you can use the same chopping board and knife, but if you do the chicken first then you must wash the board and knife in between).
2. Toss the chicken pieces with the fajita spice; do this in a Ziploc bag and you'll save the mess.
3. Fry the chicken in a little oil on a medium heat until cooked (about 8-10 minutes); then, add the onion and peppers to the cooked chicken and fry further until they are softened (about 3-4 minutes more).
4. Divide the cooked chicken/vegetable mix equally between the 8 pancakes, in a line down the centre of each. Crumble over a little feta cheese, roll up and enjoy – each diner gets two. You can serve with salsa, sour cream or guacamole, if you like.

Get ahead! Chop your onions and peppers ready at the start of the week and chill – or freeze – until you need them.

Asparagus Cream Pasta

A pack of Asparagus spears; 400g fresh penne or similar; a large handful of frozen peas; 2 tbsp. ricotta cheese; 100ml double (heavy) cream; half a lemon; to serve: grated parmesan and garlic bread (optional)

1. Put a large saucepan of salted water on to boil and, while you're waiting, chop the asparagus into 1-inch pieces.
2. When the water has come to the boil, throw in the fresh pasta and chopped asparagus together, for about three minutes. Then, add the frozen peas for about another 3 minutes. It's all cooked when the pasta is *al dente* and the asparagus and peas are soft, but not slushy.
3. Drain the pasta and veggies, then return them to the saucepan and stir through the ricotta, cream and some black pepper. Place back on a low heat for 1 minute to warm through.
4. Divide between four bowls, squeeze over some lemon juice and top with grated parmesan, if you like. It's great served with garlic bread.

Leftovers! Why not make twice as much and take some for lunch tomorrow? Cold pasta salads are much more exciting than sandwiches and travel really well!

Beef Stroganoff with French Beans

1 large onion; 150g chestnut mushrooms; 2 tsp. paprika; 500g quick-fry beef steaks; 200ml sour cream; 1x 220g pack French beans; to serve: brown rice (optional)

1. Slice the onion finely, clean and chop the mushrooms into quarters, slice the beef thinly and chop the beans into 1-inch pieces. Put the kettle on to boil.
2. Put a large frying pan on a medium heat, add a little oil and gently fry the onion until soft. Add the mushrooms for another couple of minutes and then the paprika and beef for 5 minutes more, stirring occasionally.
3. When most of the liquid has gone and everything is coated in the paprika, pour in 100ml boiled water from the kettle, stir in the sour cream, and add the bean pieces. Let it come back to the boil and then turn down to simmer for 4 minutes.
4. When you're ready to serve, you can serve it just like this – or why not offer some brown or wild rice on the side?

Variation! Just when you come to add the sour cream, stir through a tin of tomatoes instead, along with a beef stock cube, and simmer in the same way. Hey presto, beef goulash!

Superfood Korma

1 large onion, chopped; 2 heaped tbsp. Korma curry paste; 1x 400g tin coconut milk; 2 sweet potatoes, peeled and diced small; 1x 400g tin chick peas; a handful of fresh spinach; to serve: a handful of flaked almonds and naan bread (optional)

1. Heat some oil in a large frying pan and add the onion. Fry gently until golden and soft.
2. Stir in the korma paste and fry for a few more minutes to release the fragrance.
3. Add the coconut milk and sweet potatoes, bring to the boil and then turn down to simmer for 20 minutes, until the potatoes are cooked.
4. A few minutes before the end, add in the chick peas and spinach.
5. Divide between four bowls and garnish with the almonds, if using; offer naan bread for dipping, if you like.

Double up! Why not make twice as much for later in the week? Curries keep really well in the fridge and this veggie version will reheat quickly.

And five meals you can cook in the oven in under 60 minutes

(set the oven to 180C/350F, just prep and walk away)

Chicken Enchilada Bake

A mug of white rice; the breast meat from a rotisserie chicken; 2 spring onions; 1x 400g tin black beans; a jar of enchilada sauce; a handful of grated cheddar cheese; to serve: tortilla chips (optional)

1. Preheat the oven. In a large stock pot or casserole dish (Dutch oven), cook rice to packet instructions. Meanwhile, shred the chicken and chop the spring onions finely.
2. Drain the cooked rice and return to the same pan with the shredded chicken, spring onions, black beans and enchilada sauce. Half fill the black-bean tin with water and add that too. Stir it all together.
3. Grate the cheddar all over the top, put a lid on it and pop the pot in the oven for 20 minutes, until the cheese has melted and the sauce and chicken have warmed through.
4. Serve a portion to each person, with tortilla chips for dipping, if you like.

Get ahead! Cook the rice at the start of the week, freeze, and then just defrost on the day before throwing in for step 2 of the cooking.

Sausage and Bean Casserole

8 good-quality pork sausages; 2 cloves of garlic, peeled; 2 red onions, peeled; 1x 400g tin chopped tomatoes; 1x 400g tin cannellini beans; 250ml chicken stock; to serve: crusty bread

1. Preheat the oven. Using a large stock pot or flame-proof casserole dish (Dutch oven), gently fry the sausages in a little oil until browned. Remove, chop each one in half, and set aside.
2. Chop the garlic and onions finely and then add to the same pan, with a little more oil if needed. Fry until softened (3-4 minutes), then return the sausages to the pot, along with the tomatoes, cannellini beans and stock.
3. Pop the lid on and then put the whole pot/dish in the oven for 30 minutes until the sauce has thickened.
4. Divide between four bowls, making sure the sausage is shared equally, and serve with the crusty bread for dipping, if you like.

Added flavour! Add a heaped teaspoon of smoked paprika when you fry the onion to give an added warmth and depth of flavour.

Meatloaf Cheatloaf

1 large onion, peeled; 4 rashers streaky bacon; 1x 500g pack pork mince; 70g breadcrumbs; 1 tsp. dried thyme; 2 medium eggs; to serve: salad and ketchup

1. Preheat the oven. Chop the onion and bacon as small as you can be bothered!
2. Put all of the ingredients into a large mixing bowl and use your hands to combine; it should come together as a firm ball (if it's too wet, add more breadcrumbs; if it's too dry, try a little milk).
3. Grease and line a standard loaf tin and put the entire mix into it, smoothing down the top. (If you want, you can cover it with cling film/saran wrap now and freeze it for another time).
4. Bake for 1 hour, until cooked through. When you're ready to serve, turn it out, slice it thickly and serve hot or cold; great with a green salad or with tomato ketchup for dipping.

Make life easier! Meatloaf can also be frozen once cooked. Just let it cool completely and then wrap tightly and freeze whole to use another night.

Cheesy Fish Pie

4 large potatoes, peeled; 1x 400g packet fish-pie mix (fresh or defrosted); 1x 40g packet cheese-sauce mix; 300ml milk; a large handful of frozen peas; a 1-inch piece of cheddar; to serve: baked beans (optional)

1. Preheat the oven. Chop the potatoes into 1cm cubes and boil in salted water for 15 minutes, until cooked.
2. Meanwhile, spread the fish-pie mix in the bottom of a casserole dish (Dutch oven).
3. Make up the packet of cheese sauce with the milk, as per packet instructions; pour over top of the fish. Sprinkle over the frozen peas.
4. Drain and mash the now-cooked potato and spread evenly over the pie; grate the cheddar over the top. Bake in the oven for 40-50 mins, until golden and bubbling, before dividing between four plates. Fish pie is great served with baked beans on the side!

Get ahead! Boil the potatoes in the morning, drain, and then cover and keep in the fridge for the day.

Creamy Salmon-and-Tomato Pasta Bake

4 fresh, skinless salmon fillets; 2 handfuls of frozen peas; 300g fresh penne or similar; 100g mascarpone; a tin of chopped tomatoes; parmesan

1. Preheat the oven and boil the kettle. Put the salmon fillets, whole, in the bottom of a casserole dish (Dutch oven). Scatter the peas on top, then the penne or whatever pasta you are using.
2. Dot blobs of mascarpone over the top of the pasta and then pour over the jar of tomatoes; refill the jar with boiling water from the kettle and pour that over too.
3. Grate over a little parmesan cheese, put the lid on the dish and bake in the oven for 30-35 minutes, until a creamy sauce has been formed and the cheese is melted and golden. When you serve it, the salmon should flake easily into the pasta.

Substitutions! If you use dried pasta then I recommend boiling it for 6 minutes first; if you want to use whole-wheat pasta then boil it for 10 minutes first.

