

CLARITY EDUCATION SERIES · CLASSROOM PACK

Cooking on a Budget

A ready-to-teach lesson on eating well for less: planning, shopping smart and using every leftover

PLAN THE WEEK**11+**

S1-S3

YELLOW STICKERS**COOK ONCE, EAT TWICE****USE BY = SAFETY**

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Scotland · Curriculum for Excellence · S1-S3 · Health and wellbeing, numeracy and Home Economics

COOK MORE. SPEND LESS.

Eat well, spend less

LEARNING INTENTIONS

- We are learning how planning and shopping habits make food go further.
- We are learning the difference between “best before” and “use by”.
- We are learning to scale a recipe and plan leftovers so less food is wasted.

SUCCESS CRITERIA · I CAN...

- name four shopping habits that save money and explain why each works;
- compare two packs by unit price, not pack price;
- scale a recipe for a different number of people;
- plan a meal that uses up a leftover safely.

Curriculum for Excellence links

Third and fourth level (S1–S3). **Health and wellbeing: food and health** (planning, food choices, food safety and hygiene). **Numeracy: money and measurement** (unit prices, scaling quantities). Suits Home Economics or PSE time. Check the exact experiences and outcomes and benchmarks against your school’s own planning.

Time	What happens	Resources
0–5	Starter. On the board: “Good food doesn’t have to cost a lot.” Pupils list in pairs the cheapest filling foods they can think of. Compare with the guide’s basics: oats, lentils, beans, potatoes, pasta, rice, eggs, frozen veg and tins. Share the learning intentions.	Board
5–15	Teach: shop smart. Plan the week and write a list; don’t shop hungry; own brands; yellow stickers; frozen veg; unit price; top and bottom shelves. Pupils complete worksheet Parts A and B.	Worksheet p4
15–30	Cook for 1, 2, 4 or 6. Pupils use the soup table to scale amounts, then answer the questions. Pairs check each other’s sums.	Activity p5, key p9
30–40	The leftover chain. In groups, pupils turn one big cook into three meals using the sample-week ideas and the store cupboard list.	Activity p6, key p9
40–50	Kitchen sense quiz. On their own, true or false. Go through the answers, spending time on use by, cooling and reheating.	Quiz p7, key p8
50–55	Plenary. Worksheet Part D exit ticket. Hand out the takeaway card.	Card p10

Short version (about 30 minutes): starter (3 minutes), shop smart with worksheet Part B (8), quiz questions 1–8 (10), exit ticket and card (9). Leave out the two activities.

Extension: pupils plan their own three-day menu from the store cupboard list, using at least one leftover on purpose, and explain how it saves money.

Resources: one worksheet, both activity pages, the quiz and a card per pupil; calculators for page 5. Answer keys (p8–9) are for the teacher only.

Background, sensitivity and further reading

SENSITIVITY: READ BEFORE THE LESSON

Food and money can be a hard subject. Some pupils may live in homes where money for food is short, or where a food bank or free school meals are part of normal life.

- Don't ask pupils what they eat at home, how much their family spends or who gets free meals. Keep every task about made-up households.
- Use the guide's message: **everyone can hit a hard patch, and there is no shame in asking for help.**
- If a pupil seems hungry, or tells you there isn't enough food at home, follow your school's child protection and wellbeing procedures and speak to your guidance or pastoral lead the same day. Pupils can also talk in confidence to **Childline on 0800 1111** (free, 24/7, [childline.org.uk](https://www.childline.org.uk)).
- Check for food allergies before any tasting or practical work, and follow your department's hygiene rules. Every recipe in the guide now lists which of the UK's 14 major allergens it contains, with easy swaps (guide pages 13–16).

Key facts (from the guide)

- The guide prints no prices, because they change every week and differ from shop to shop.
- “Best before” is about quality; “use by” is about safety. Food past its best before date is often fine. Never eat food after its use by date.
- Cool batch-cooked food quickly, ideally within an hour or two. Most frozen cooked dishes are best eaten within about 3 months. Defrost in the fridge overnight, reheat until piping hot, and only reheat once.
- Freeze cooked rice within an hour of cooking. Leftover rice for egg fried rice should be kept in the fridge and used within a day.
- **Best Start Foods** (Scotland) gives money on a prepaid card every 4 weeks for healthy food to people who are pregnant or have a child under 3, usually with a qualifying benefit. **Healthy Start** covers England, Wales and Northern Ireland; in Scotland, use Best Start Foods instead.
- Trussell's foodbank finder lists food banks across the UK. Food banks usually work through referrals from a support worker or advice service.

Where to read more in the guide

Page numbers refer to the A4 edition of *Cooking on a Budget* (76 pages).

Topic	Page
Money-saving shopping tips	5–6
The cheap store cupboard	7–8
Batch cooking and leftovers	9–10
Kids can help and kitchen safety rules	11–12
Allergies and intolerances (the 14 major allergens, swaps)	13–16
Red Lentil and Carrot Soup (used on page 5)	22–23
A week of budget meals	68–69
Free food help (the guide's examples are local to Fife)	70–73

The guide: clarityhq.uk/guides/cooking-on-a-budget.html. Recipes and tips only, not medical or dietary advice. Help details in the guide were checked on 18 October 2026; rules and amounts change, so check before you signpost.

Shop smart

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

■ Part A · Best before or use by?

BEST BEFORE is about quality. **USE BY** is about safety. Tick what you would do with each one.

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| 1 | A tub of yoghurt is one day past its use by date. | ☐ Eat ☐ Bin ☐ Freeze |
| 2 | A packet of oats is a month past its best before date and looks and smells fine. | ☐ Eat ☐ Bin ☐ Freeze |
| 3 | A loaf is near its date, so you freeze half of it today. | ☐ Eat ☐ Bin ☐ Freeze |
| 4 | Cooked chicken from the fridge is past its use by date. | ☐ Eat ☐ Bin ☐ Freeze |

■ Part B · Compare the unit price

Shelf labels show the unit price (per kg or per 100g) as well as the pack price. Bigger isn't always cheaper. These shelf labels are **made up for practice**.

Item	Pack A	Pack B	Cheaper per kg?
Rice	500g for 90p	2kg for 240p	
Red lentils	1kg for 180p	500g for 80p	
Frozen peas	1kg for 120p	750g for 100p	

■ Part C · Stretch it

The guide says “**half and half is a good rule**” for meat. A family recipe uses 500g of beef mince. What could you swap in for half of it, and why does that save money?

■ Part D · Exit ticket

One shopping habit I'll remember:

Best before means...

One leftover I could turn into a new meal:

Cook for 1, 2, 4 or 6

Every recipe in *Cooking on a Budget* has a small table with amounts for 1, 2, 4 or 6 people, so you can cook for one or feed a crowd. This is the table for **Red Lentil and Carrot Soup** (ready in 35 minutes, freezes for 3 months).

Ingredient	1	2	4	6	For 3 people
Onion, chopped	$\frac{1}{4}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	1	$1\frac{1}{2}$	
Carrots, chopped	1	2	4	6	
Red lentils	50g	100g	200g	300g	
Vegetable stock (from a cube)	300ml	600ml	1.2L	1.8L	
Ground cumin (optional)	$\frac{1}{4}$ tsp	$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp	1 tsp	$1\frac{1}{2}$ tsp	
Oil	$\frac{1}{4}$ tbsp	$\frac{1}{2}$ tbsp	1 tbsp	$1\frac{1}{2}$ tbsp	

Your tasks

- Fill in the last column: the amounts you would need to make the soup for **3 people**. Show how you worked out the lentils and the stock.
- The method is: soften the onion in the oil for 5 minutes, add everything else, simmer for 25 minutes, then blend or mash. A family wants soup for dinner tonight **and** lunch tomorrow for 4 people each time. Which column would you cook from, and why?
- The guide's money tip says red lentils need no soaking, cook fast and are one of the cheapest proteins in the shop. Give **two** reasons this makes the soup a good budget meal.

Half an onion left over? The guide says: where a table says $\frac{1}{2}$ tin or $\frac{1}{4}$ onion, pop the rest in a covered tub in the fridge and use it within a couple of days.

The leftover chain

Cook once, eat twice. The guide's sample week uses leftovers on purpose, so nothing goes to waste. For example, a Chicken Thigh Traybake with two extra thighs on Tuesday becomes a Chicken and Veg Noodle Stir-fry on Wednesday.

LEFTOVER IDEAS FROM THE GUIDE

- Mash or potatoes → Bubble and Squeak Patties or Tuna Fishcakes
- Roast chicken → soup, a stir-fry or quesadillas; boil the bones for free stock
- Rice → Egg Fried Rice the next day (fridge, use within a day)
- Chilli, curry or bolognese → top jacket potatoes or fill wraps
- Stale bread → breadcrumbs; soft veg → soup; brown bananas → pancakes or overnight oats

STORE CUPBOARD (A FEW OF THE GUIDE'S LIST)

Porridge oats · pasta · rice · red lentils · pearl barley · flour · stock cubes · chopped tomatoes · baked beans · chickpeas · tuna · frozen peas and mixed veg · eggs and milk · cheddar · potatoes, onions, carrots · curry powder · paprika · dried mixed herbs

Plan your chain

Your group is cooking for a made-up family of four. Start with **one big cook**, then turn what is left into two more meals. Use only the store cupboard and the leftover ideas.

Day	Meal	What it uses up	Safety step
Day 1		The big cook	
Day 2			
Day 3			

Think about it

- 1 Explain how your chain saves money compared with buying a ready meal each night.

- 2 Which step in your chain needs the most care with food safety, and what should you do?

Kitchen sense quiz

True or false? Tick one box for each statement.

- | | | |
|-----------|---|--|
| 1 | Food past its best before date is often fine to eat. | ☐ True ☐ False |
| 2 | Food past its use by date is fine if it smells all right. | ☐ True ☐ False |
| 3 | Shopping when you are hungry makes you spend more. | ☐ True ☐ False |
| 4 | The biggest pack is always the cheapest way to buy. | ☐ True ☐ False |
| 5 | The cheapest products are often on the top and bottom shelves. | ☐ True ☐ False |
| 6 | Frozen veg is a waste of money compared with fresh. | ☐ True ☐ False |
| 7 | Leftover cooked rice should be cooled and put in the fridge or freezer quickly, ideally within an hour. | ☐ True ☐ False |
| 8 | You can safely reheat a portion of leftovers several times. | ☐ True ☐ False |
| 9 | Batch-cooked food should be cooled quickly, ideally within an hour or two. | ☐ True ☐ False |
| 10 | Red lentils need soaking overnight before you cook them. | ☐ True ☐ False |
| 11 | Best Start Foods is a Scottish scheme for people who are pregnant or have a child under 3. | ☐ True ☐ False |
| 12 | Wash your hands before cooking and after touching raw meat, fish or eggs. | ☐ True ☐ False |

My score: _____ / **12** The one that surprised me most: _____

Quiz and worksheet answers

■ Kitchen sense quiz

- 1 True.** Best before is about quality, not safety.
- 2 False.** Use by is about safety. Never eat food after its use by date.
- 3 True.** The guide says it really does.
- 4 False.** Compare the unit price (per kg or per 100g); bigger isn't always cheaper.
- 5 True.** Not at eye level, so look high and low.
- 6 False.** Frozen veg is cheap, already prepared, keeps for months and means less waste.
- 7 True.** Rice kept in the fridge should be eaten within a day.
- 8 False.** Reheat until piping hot all the way through, and only reheat once.
- 9 True.** Then get it into the fridge or freezer.
- 10 False.** They need no soaking and cook fast.
- 11 True.** It is paid on a prepaid card every 4 weeks for healthy food.
- 12 True.** One of the guide's kitchen safety rules.

WORKSHEET PART A

1 Bin (use by is about safety). 2 Eat: past best before but fine. 3 Freeze: freeze before it spoils. 4 Bin. Food past its use by date can't be frozen to save it.

WORKSHEET PART B

Rice: A is 180p per kg, B is 120p per kg, so **B**. Lentils: A is 180p per kg, B is 160p per kg, so **B**. Peas: A is 120p per kg, B is about 133p per kg, so **A**. The point: check the unit price, because bigger isn't always cheaper.

WORKSHEET PART C

Lentils, beans or extra veg, as the guide suggests. These cost less than meat, so the same amount of food costs less and still fills people up. Credit any sensible swap with a reason.

Activities, and running a practical

■ Activity 1 · Cook for 3

Ingredient	For 3 people	How
Onion	$\frac{3}{4}$	$\frac{1}{4}$ per person, or half the 6-person amount
Carrots	3	1 per person
Red lentils	150g	50g per person, or half the 6-person amount
Vegetable stock	900ml	300ml per person, or half of 1.8L
Ground cumin	$\frac{3}{4}$ tsp	Half of $1\frac{1}{2}$ tsp
Oil	$\frac{3}{4}$ tbsp	Half of $1\frac{1}{2}$ tbsp

Task 2: two meals for 4 people is 8 portions, so cook double the 4 column (or the 6 column plus the 2 column) in one go. Credit clear reasoning, and the safety steps: cool quickly, fridge or freeze, reheat once until piping hot.

Task 3: cheap protein; no soaking, so no planning ahead; quick to cook, which uses less energy; it freezes, so a big pot gives future meals.

■ Activity 2 · The leftover chain

Example: Day 1 Lentil Bolognese (make double) → Day 2 jacket potatoes topped with the leftover bolognese → Day 3 the frozen half on a busy night. Or: Day 1 Chicken Thigh Traybake with extra thighs → Day 2 Chicken and Veg Noodle Stir-fry → Day 3 Chicken and Sweetcorn Soup from stock made with the bones.

Strong answers name a safety step for each leftover: cool quickly, label and date what is frozen, keep rice in the fridge and use within a day, defrost in the fridge overnight, reheat once until piping hot. They explain that cooking from scratch costs far less than ready meals or takeaways, and that bigger packs can be cheaper per kilo, so check the unit price.

Running it as a practical? The guide's kitchen safety rules: wash hands before cooking and after touching raw meat, fish or eggs; tie long hair back and roll up sleeves; turn pan handles inwards; taste food only when it's cooked, and never eat raw dough or batter. The guide suggests pupils aged 12 and up can use the hob, oven and sharp knives with an adult close by. Follow your department's risk assessment.

Fridge-raid tip from the guide: make a note of what's in the fridge and cupboard and ask everyday AI tools like Grok to suggest a cheap meal that uses it up. Always use your own judgement on food safety.

Eat well for less

Before you shop	Check the cupboards and fridge first. Plan the week and write a list. Don't shop hungry. Set a budget and keep a running total.
In the shop	Own brands and value ranges. Yellow stickers if you'll eat it that day or freeze it the same day. Frozen veg, fruit and fish. Compare the unit price . Look high and low on the shelves.
At home	Cook from scratch. Stretch meat with lentils, beans or extra veg: half and half . Freeze bread, bananas and cheese before they spoil.
Dates	Best before = quality. Often fine after. Use by = safety. Never eat it after.
Batch cooking	Cook once, eat twice. Cool quickly, label and date, eat within about 3 months, defrost in the fridge, reheat once until piping hot.
Leftovers	Mash → patties or fishcakes. Rice → fried rice the next day (fridge, within a day). Chilli → jacket potato topping. Stale bread → breadcrumbs.
Kitchen safety	Wash your hands. Tie hair back. Handles turned in. Never eat raw dough or batter.
Need help with food?	There is no shame in asking. Find a food bank: trussell.org.uk . In Scotland: Best Start Foods and Scottish Child Payment, mygov.scot or Social Security Scotland on 0800 182 2222 . Talk to an adult you trust, or Childline on 0800 1111 (free, 24/7, childline.org.uk).
The basics that do the heavy lifting: oats, lentils, beans, potatoes, pasta, rice, eggs, frozen veg and tins.	

Read the free Clarity guide "Cooking on a Budget", with 30 cheap family recipes: clarityhq.uk/guides/cooking-on-a-budget.html. Recipes and tips only, not medical or dietary advice. **Free to copy and use in your school. © Clarity Education**