
Batch Cooking for Beginners

Whether you're looking to fill your freezer or simply want to make your midweek meals a little easier, batch cooking is a great technique that can save you time and money. Spending an afternoon in the kitchen might seem like an investment, but we have a few tips and tricks to make the process easy and even enjoyable for first-timers.

What is Batch Cooking?

It's a method of cooking in bulk: you cook a large amount of food in one go, so that some of it can then be kept for another time.

What are the Advantages of Batch Cooking?

It saves time and money, reducing the amount of cooking you have to do and energy use from appliances.

It's convenient. On busy week nights you may not have the energy or time to cook, so having a meal you can easily warm up or defrost is very helpful, especially when feeding a family.

Having a pre-made meal readily available means you are more likely to opt for a healthier, homemade choice rather than ordering a takeaway.

How to Batch Cook

One of the simplest ways to approach batch cooking is to make one base recipe which can be adapted into different dishes. There's no need to eat the same thing all week – you can freeze in portions and enjoy them later. For example:

- big-batch bolognese
- tomato & mince which can be used in a ragu pasta sauce, as smoky black bean chilli or in sweet potato-topped cottage pie.
- roast cauliflower & squash which can be enjoyed as a delicious vegan curry, as cauliflower, squash & orzo gratin or as fritters with mint & feta dip.

Plan Ahead

Take a look at the week or month ahead and decide which batch cooking recipes you'd like to prepare. Check your store cupboard essentials, make a shopping list and allow time to gather your ingredients before you start cooking. You might also like to make space in your freezer.

Keep a note of what recipes you've chosen, as if they work well together you can repeat your plan to make it even easier next time.



Batch Cooking Equipment

You don't need any special equipment for batch cooking, although some people find that pressure cookers, slow cookers and soup makers can be helpful if you're preparing lots of meals at once. To start with, just check you have the following:

- **Large pans** - make sure the recipe you plan to cook will fit into the pans you have available. Read the method before you start, in case you need more than one.
- **Sharp knife and cutting board** - to prepare your ingredients.
- **Storage containers** – invest in some reusable plastic or glass containers that are freezer-friendly. You'll want to freeze your food in portions, so choose containers that are the right size for your family.
- **Labels** – it's important to label your food so you can keep track of what's in your freezer. Label your meals with the recipe, date and number of portions.

Our 5 Top Tips For Batch Cooking

1. Prepare your ingredients

Weighing, measuring and chopping your ingredients first will make cooking much easier once you start. Clear your workspace and allow yourself plenty of time to get organised before you start cooking.

2. Clean as you go

If you're making several recipes at once, tidying as you go will help your kitchen stay under control. No one wants to face a mountain of washing-up at the end!

3. Cool before you freeze

Once your recipes are ready, it's important to cool them completely on the worktop before freezing portions. Most batch cooking recipes are freezable, there are just a few exceptions to watch out for. It's best to avoid egg and cream-based sauces, for example, which may separate and curdle.

4. Serve your sides fresh

Generally, you'll want to make the main component of a meal for batch cooking like curry, bolognese or chilli, leave out the carbs before freezing. Rice and pasta won't take too long to cook fresh and they'll taste much better for it!

5. Keep your freezer organised

Once you've mastered the art of batch cooking, your freezer will be filled with beautifully homecooked food that you can defrost and reheat whenever you need a quick meal.

The labels will help you keep track of what needs using up next. Most will need to be eaten within three months. To avoid meals getting forgotten at the back of the freezer, it can be useful to put your newest portions at the back and in turn bring your older items to the front.