

Budget bites: Five fast and affordable family dinners



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Creating a balanced, family-focused weekly meal plan that is nutritious, quick and affordable can require extra time and planning. However, eating at home more often supports improved health and wellbeing, gives families the opportunity to enjoy balanced meals together, and is usually more cost-effective than eating out.

To support busy families, Cancer Council SA has developed a series of simple recipes, along with a meal planner and shopping list, to make preparing homemade meals easier. These five recipes can be prepared in 15 minutes or less and average less than \$5 per serve.

Other ways to help keep grocery bills down include:

- Check your fridge, pantry and freezer before going to the shop.
- Leftovers like tomato paste, pesto, curry pastes, coconut milk, ginger or garlic can all be frozen in ice-cube trays or small containers to use later.
- Bulk up or stretch out meals with frozen veggies or tinned legumes like lentils or beans.
- Shop with a list—or use services like collection or delivery—to avoid impulse purchases.
- Choose tap water as your main drink.



Fast weekly family dinner plan

Monday



Quick vegetarian laksa soup

A satisfying take on this popular South-East Asian dish, ready in 15 minutes. Perfect for meat-free Monday.

Tuesday



Chicken fajita tray bake

A family-friendly chicken fajita tray bake that's quick, colourful and full of flavour. A great, Mexican-inspired alternative to taco Tuesday.

Wednesday



Fried rice

A 15-minute fried rice that turns simple ingredients into a satisfying mid-week meal.

Thursday



10-minute prawn pasta

This pasta dish is zesty, fresh and packed with greens.

Friday



Satay tofu noodles

Put the tasty into tofu with this healthy "fakeaway" dish, perfect for Friday night.

Recipe shopping list

Fruits and vegetables

- 2 zucchinis
- 1 bunch asparagus
- 1 lemon
- 100g bean shoots
- 5 green shallots
- 400g fresh stir-fry vegetable mix
- Small piece fresh ginger[^]
- 1 red capsicum
- 1 red onion
- 1 avocado

Dairy, fridge and freezer

- 7 eggs
- 150g frozen green peas
- 450g frozen peas, corn and carrots mix
- 200g light cream cheese
- 220g fried tofu puffs*
- 400g marinated satay tofu
- 85g light sour cream

Meat

- 460g green peeled prawns
- 400g chicken tenderloins

Shelf-stable ingredients

- 250g packet spaghetti
- 30g red curry paste
- 270ml can light coconut milk
- 450g pkt microwavable brown rice
- 150g rice stick noodles
- 400g wok-ready wholemeal noodles
- 4 regular flour tortillas
- 30g reduced-salt taco seasoning
- 80ml reduced salt soy sauce

Pantry staples you may have at home

- Olive oil
- Curry powder
- Sugar
- Reduced-salt chicken stock cubes
- Fish sauce
- Sesame oil
- Minced garlic
- Minced ginger
- Crunchy peanut butter (100% nuts)
- Sweet chilli sauce
- Maple syrup

[^] substitute with minced ginger

* Puffed fried tofu can be found at your local greengrocers or Asian grocery stores



How to create a balanced dinner



cancersa.org.au

Refer to the Australian Dietary Guidelines for information on how to eat a well balanced diet.



Simple tips for healthy meals

A balanced diet can give you and your family more energy to take on the day. Choosing nutritious meals and snacks throughout the day also helps contribute to good gut health and can reduce the risk of certain cancers.

BREAKFAST	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• choose wholemeal or wholegrain breads and cereals• top cereals with fruit• top grainy toast with nutritious spreads (e.g. eggs, tomato, avocado, peanut butter or baked beans)		
LUNCH	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• choose wholemeal or wholegrain bread or crackers• include salad or vegetables		
DINNER	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• include plenty of vegetables• choose lean meats or meat alternatives, trim visible fat, remove chicken skin• choose high fibre grain foods		
SNACKS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• choose a variety from the five food groups (e.g. fruit, vegetables, grainy crackers, low fat cheese and yoghurt, nuts and seeds)		
LIMIT OR AVOID	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• foods high in fat, sugar or salt• sugary drinks• alcohol		

For these recipes and more head to cancersa.org.au/cancer-prevention/recipes

Quick vegetarian laksa soup

A satisfying take on this popular South-East Asian dish.



Serves: 4

Preparation time: 5 minutes

Cooking time: 10 minutes

Diet and allergies: Nut free. Vegetarian*. Gluten free. Dairy free.

Ingredients

- 4 eggs
- 1½ tbsp red curry paste
- 1 tbsp curry powder
- 270ml can light coconut milk
- 2 reduced-salt chicken stock cubes, crumbled
- 150g rice stick noodles
- 220g fried tofu puffs
- 2 tsp **fish*** sauce
- 1 tsp sugar
- 100g bean shoots

*Vegetarian if using plant-based fish sauce

Method

1. Soft boil the eggs by gently dropping them into a pot of boiling water for 8 minutes. Remove eggs using a slotted spoon and transfer them to a large bowl of cold tap water to cool. Peel and halve once cooled.
2. Meanwhile, lightly spray a large pot with olive oil and heat over medium-high heat. Add the curry paste and powder. Cook, stirring, for 1 minute or until fragrant.
3. Add the coconut milk, stock cubes and 3 cups (750ml) boiling water and simmer for 5 minutes.
4. While the soup is simmering, prepare the noodles following the packet instructions.
5. Stir the tofu, fish sauce and sugar into the soup and simmer for 2–3 minutes, until the tofu is heated through.
6. Divide the noodles among bowls and ladle your soup over the noodles. Top with the bean shoots and egg. Serve.



Variations

Add cooked chicken or prawns to the soup.



Serving tip

Serve with fresh coriander leaves, lime wedges and extra chilli if you like a bit of heat.



Cooking tip

Puffed fried tofu can be found at your local greengrocers or Asian grocery stores. If you cannot find it, simply use pan-fried firm tofu instead.



Money-saving tips

Don't waste the unused curry paste. Simply freeze it in ice cube trays and use it at a later date.



Storage tip

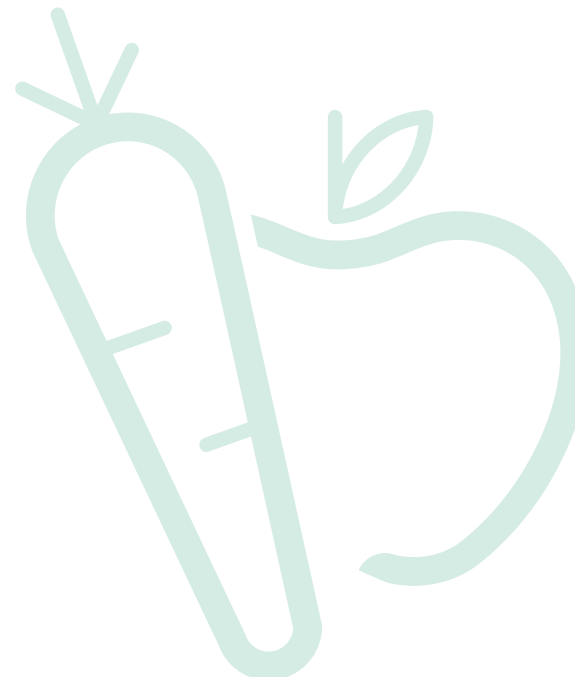
TO REFRIGERATE: Store laksa in a reusable container for up to 2 days. Reheat in the microwave until heated through to serve.

TO FREEZE: Store laksa, as above, for up to 3 months. Thaw in the refrigerator overnight and reheat as above to serve.



Nutrition tips

Use zucchini noodles instead of rice stick noodles to add extra veggies.



15-minute chicken fajita tray bake



Serves: 4

Preparation time: 5 minutes

Cooking time: 10 minutes

Diet and allergies: *Gluten free if using gluten free tortillas. Nut free.

Ingredients

- 400g chicken tenderloins
- 1 red capsicum, cut into thin strips
- 1 red onion, cut into thin wedges
- 1½ tbsp reduced-salt taco seasoning
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 avocado
- 4 x regular **flour tortillas**
- ⅓ cup light **sour cream**

Method

1. Preheat the oven to 200 degrees Celsius. Line a large baking tray with baking paper. Place the chicken, capsicum, onion, seasoning and oil in a large bowl and toss well to combine.
2. Spread chicken mixture in a single layer on the prepared tray and bake for 12 minutes or until chicken is cooked through and vegetables are tender.
3. Meanwhile, mash the avocado in a small bowl and lightly season with salt and pepper. Warm the tortillas following packet instructions. Serve the chicken fajita mixture with avocado sour cream and tortillas.



Variations

Use turkey breast or beef rump strips instead of chicken.



Serving tip

Serve with lime wedges and sprinkled with fresh coriander leaves.



Cooking tip

You could also use chicken breast cut into thick strips for the same result.



Money-saving tips

If there's leftover avocado, squeeze some extra lime over it before storing in the fridge to prevent it from going brown and being wasted.



Storage tip

TO REFRIGERATE: Store fajita mixture in a reusable container for up to 2 days. Reheat in the microwave until heated through to serve.

TO FREEZE: Store fajita mixture, as above, for up to 3 months. Thaw in the refrigerator overnight and reheat as above to serve.



Nutrition tips

- Swap the flour tortillas for a wholegrain wrap for more fibre.
- Look for reduced salt taco seasoning. Choose products with less than 120mg sodium per 100 grams as the best choice. More than 400mg sodium per 100g is too high.
- Swap store-bought taco seasoning for homemade using spices from your pantry. Try paprika, garlic powder, onion powder, chilli powder, cumin.



15-minute fried rice

A fast fried rice that turns simple ingredients into a satisfying meal.



Serves: 4

Preparation time: 5 minutes

Cooking time: 10 minutes

Diet and allergies: Nut free. Gluten free. Dairy free. Vegetarian.

Ingredients

- 3 **eggs**, lightly beaten
- 2 tsp **sesame oil**
- 1 tsp minced garlic
- 1 tsp minced ginger
- 3 cups frozen peas, carrots and corn mix, thawed
- green shallots, finely sliced
- 450g pkt microwaveable brown rice
- ¼ cup (60ml) reduced-salt **soy sauce**

Method

1. Add the eggs and a small splash of water to a small bowl and beat with a fork until combined.
2. Heat 1 teaspoon oil in a large non-stick wok over medium-high heat. Pour in half of the egg mixture and cook for 1 minute or until the egg is just set. Use a spatula to flip the egg and cook for an extra 30 seconds or until cooked. Remove from the pan and set aside. Repeat with the remaining egg mixture. Cut the egg into bite-sized pieces.
3. Add the remaining oil, garlic and ginger to the same wok. Cook, stirring, for 30 seconds or until fragrant.
4. Add the vegetable mix and cook, stirring, for 3 minutes or until tender. Add the shallots and cook, stirring, for a further 1 minute.
5. Add the rice, reserved egg and soy sauce and cook, stirring, for 2 minutes or until the rice is heated through. Serve.



Variations

Add chicken breast or prawns to the rice.

**Serving tip**

Serve with shredded chicken breast.

**Cooking tip**

Use a large non-stick frying pan if you don't have a wok handy.

**Money-saving tips**

Instead of microwave rice, cook white or brown rice the day before and leave it in the fridge. This dries out the rice, giving it just the right texture for fried rice.

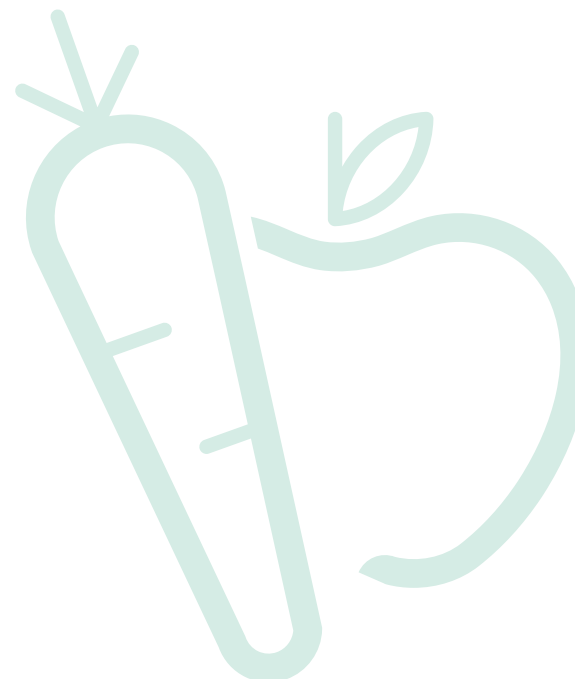
**Storage tip**

TO REFRIGERATE: Store fried rice in a reusable container for up to 3 days. Reheat in the microwave until hot to serve.

TO FREEZE: Store fried rice, as above, for up to 6 months. Thaw in the refrigerator overnight and reheat as above to serve.

**Nutrition tips**

Add extra veggies like capsicum, zucchini and green beans to the mix.



10-minute prawn pasta

This pasta dish is zesty, fresh, and packed with greens.



Serves: 4

Preparation time: 5 minutes

Cooking time: 10 minutes

Diet and allergies: Nut free. Gluten free*.

Ingredients

- 250g **spaghetti***
- 2 cups frozen green peas
- 2 tsp olive oil
- 2 zucchinis, thinly sliced
- 1 bunch asparagus, trimmed, cut into 3cm pieces
- 2 tsp jarred minced garlic
- 460g green peeled **prawns**
- 200g light **cream cheese**
- 1 lemon, zested and juiced

* If using gluten-free spaghetti

Method

1. Bring a large saucepan of water to the boil. Boil the spaghetti for 6 minutes.
2. Add the peas and boil for a further 3 minutes or until the spaghetti is al dente. Reserve ½ cup (125ml) cooking water, then drain and rinse under cold water. Drain well.
3. Meanwhile, heat the oil in a large, deep frying pan over medium-high heat. Add the zucchini, asparagus and garlic and cook, stirring, for 2 minutes or until starting to soften.
4. Add the prawns and cook, stirring, for 4 minutes or until the prawns are just cooked.
5. Add the cream cheese, lemon zest and juice to the prawn mixture and stir until the cheese has melted.
6. Add the spaghetti mixture and reserved cooking water. Toss to combine. Divide among bowls and serve.



Variations

Use a marinara seafood mix instead of prawns if preferred.

**Serving tip**

Serve sprinkled with fresh mint and parmesan cheese.

**Cooking tip**

You can buy the prawns already peeled to save you prep time. If you can't find peeled prawns, buy double the amount of shelled prawns and peel them.

**Money-saving tips**

Use frozen prawns and dried herbs as a budget-friendly option.

**Storage tip**

TO REFRIGERATE: Store spaghetti in a reusable container for up to 2 days. Reheat in the microwave until heated through to serve.

**Nutrition tips**

Add extra veggies like capsicum, eggplant or tomatoes for an extra nutrient boost!



Satay tofu noodles

Put the tasty into tofu with this healthy “fakeaway” dish.



Serves: 4

Preparation time: 5 minutes

Cooking time: 10 minutes

Diet and allergies: Dairy free. Vegetarian. Contains nuts.

Ingredients

- 400g wok-ready wholemeal noodles
- 400g marinated **satay tofu**, cut into triangles
- 400g fresh stir-fry vegetable mix
- 2 green shallots, finely sliced (optional)

SATAY SAUCE

- 2 tbsp crunchy **peanut butter** (100% nuts)
- 2 tbsp sweet chilli sauce
- 2 tbsp maple syrup
- 1 tbsp reduced-salt **soy sauce**
- 2 tsp fresh grated ginger

Method

1. To make the satay sauce, combine all ingredients and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup (60ml) water in a bowl.
2. Prepare the noodles following packet instructions.
3. Meanwhile, lightly spray a large non-stick frying pan or wok with olive oil and heat over medium-high heat. Cook the tofu for 1–2 minutes each side, until light golden. Transfer to a plate and set aside.
4. Add the vegetable mix to the same pan and stir-fry for 3–4 minutes, until tender and crisp. Add the satay sauce and noodles and toss until combined. Add the reserved tofu and shallots and toss to combine.
5. Divide the noodle stir-fry among serving bowls and sprinkle with peanuts. Serve.



Variations

Swap tofu for sliced chicken breast, if preferred.



Serving tip

For more crunch, sprinkle with extra chopped peanuts before serving.



Cooking tip

You can also use fresh egg or rice noodles from the fridge section in the supermarket.



Money-saving tips

Use a frozen vegetable stir-fry mix instead of fresh.



Storage tip

TO REFRIGERATE: Store stir-fry in a reusable container for up to 2 days. Reheat in the microwave until heated through to serve.



Nutrition tips

Peanuts are a nutrition powerhouse packed with vitamins and minerals that support overall good health. Regularly eating peanuts has been shown to help lower your cancer risk. When selecting peanut butter, buy one that's 100 per cent peanuts, with no added sugar or salt.





About Cancer Council SA

As South Australia's leading cancer charity, we have been working across every aspect of every cancer for more than 90 years. Our purpose is to reduce the rate and impact of cancer for all South Australians through cancer prevention, research and support.

This collection of dinner recipes can help you and your family incorporate more nutritious ingredients in your diet. While no single recipe or food can protect against cancer, we know that a healthy, balanced diet can help lower your overall cancer risk. Home cooking means you can build meals around a variety of vegetables, legumes, wholegrains and antioxidants which are all bursting with flavour.

We hope you enjoy our quick and easy recipes. For even more healthy food and snack options, visit our website: cancersa.org.au

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