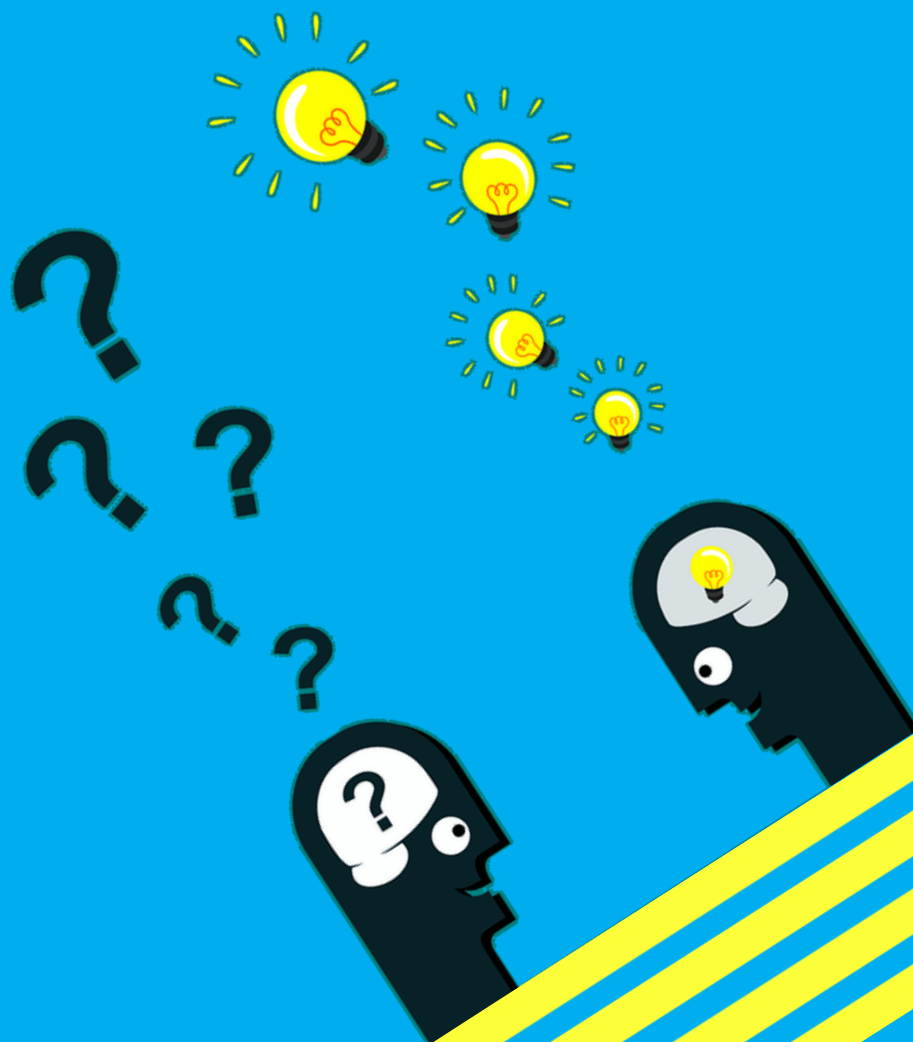


# **YOUNG ADULT COUNCIL**

## **# LIFE HACKS, RECIPES AND TIPS**



# FOREWORD

In November 2017, our Young Adult Council (YAC) met to discuss research released by Centrepont, a charity that helps to support care leavers at risk of homelessness. The report, 'Views from the frontline; what do young people need to move on from care successfully?' listed nine key recommendations to help support care leavers as they begin living independently.

After reading this report, YAC wanted to highlight the challenges young people face as they leave care. They noted how they are expected to grow up and support themselves to buy and cook food, clean and maintain a property, pay bills and manage money, sometimes for the first time and sometimes without much help.

YAC members were clear that young people need support and help to prepare for this change. Some of their ideas included a training flat for care leavers, a buddy scheme to guide young people through leaving the care system and a transitions fair, as well as information guides and booklets with practical, useable information.

Following this discussion, the Participation Team with the support of YAC members went away to create this booklet, 'Life Hacks, Recipes and Tips'. Full of simple recipes, handy hints and nifty tricks, some light hearted, some more serious, we hope that it proves a useful and enjoyable read for care leavers and those preparing to leave care in Kent.



# CLEANING AND MAINTENANCE

## Glass cleaner

All you need is some tea bags, hot water and some cloths. Put 3-4 teabags in about 500ml of hot water and leave for a few minutes to cool, then get a dry cloth, apply the black tea and wipe away (using used teabags saves money too).

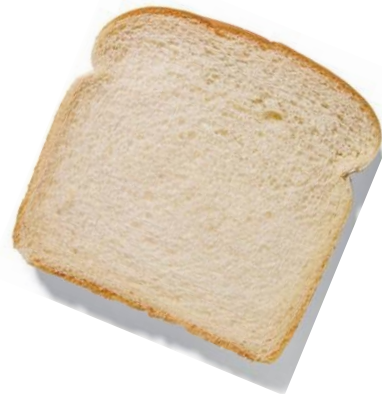


## All purpose cleaner

White vinegar is actually an amazing thing to keep around. You can use it to clean your bathroom, stains in your sink, bath rings or marks in your shower. Just soak an ordinary bath sponge in the vinegar and scrub away!

## Safely pick up broken glass

A simple piece of bread is actually one of the best ways to pick up broken glass. Just carefully press it down on the glass, whether it be tiny fragments or bigger shards.



## Keep it clean

Line your grill pan with foil to make cleaning up easy!

## Keyboard cleaning

Use an old (and clean) toothbrush to clean the fiddly bits on your computer keyboard.



### **Get rid of creases**

Iron clothes when they are still damp (or use the spray feature on your iron). The moisture helps release the wrinkles!

### **Make it sparkle**

Noticed that your favourite ring or bracelet is looking a bit dull? Wet it, rub it with a little toothpaste, rinse and dry with a clean cloth. This works on bathroom fixtures too (although some people prefer using lemons!)



### **Getting into a mess putting a quilt cover on?**

An easy way of doing it is to:

1. Have the cover turned inside-out.
2. Then put your arms into the cover and hold the top corners.
3. Once you have those, get the corresponding corners of the duvet and grab them through the cover.
4. Hold onto them while you pull the cover the right side out.
5. Finally, hold it up as high as you can, give the lot a good shake and let gravity put the thing on for you. Just don't let go of the corners until you have it on!



### **Wait before you tackle mud**

Dry mud is much easier to deal with than wet mud so don't bother cleaning it until the mud becomes crusty! If any dried mud won't come out of carpet, blot lingering spots with water and a little washing up liquid.

### **Cleaning your microwave**

Cut a lemon in half and squeeze it into a shallow bowl of water. Place the lemon halves in the water too then place the bowl in the microwave for 3 minutes. Leave to stand then wipe all the grime off with a clean dry cloth. Hey presto, the dirt is gone!

# MONEY



## **Trick to get a 16-25 Railcard until you're almost 27**

The 16-25 Railcard costs £30 for a year (or £70 for three years). Despite its name though, there's a great loophole which lets you keep on using it even after you've turned 26. Simply make sure to buy a three-year Railcard the day before your 24th birthday (or a one-year Railcard before your 26th) to get the discount until you're almost 27. If you are a full time student, you can receive the Railcard after 25 too. Find out more at <https://www.16-25railcard.co.uk>.

## **Get a years 2 for 1 cinema ticket using Meerkat Movies**

Cinema tickets can be expensive. If you buy insurance through Compare the Market, it entitles you to a years 2 for 1 cinema tickets on Tuesday or Wednesday at most of the big chains. But Compare the Market isn't always the cheapest place to get the insurance you need, so this trick is about finding the cheapest product (not necessarily one you'll use). According to [moneysavingexpert.com](https://moneysavingexpert.com), there are travel insurance deals costing as little as £2 available!

## **Register to vote to improve your credit score.**

Getting credit is tough but being on the electoral register confirms to financial advisers that you are who you say you are. You don't need to vote (although you should!) but it will improve your credit rating! Just use the link below to register to vote if you haven't already registered. <https://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote>

## **Change your gas and electricity suppliers**

Switching energy providers is easy to do and can save you hundreds of pounds. Try changing bank accounts too. Some even offer new customers money for switching. Have a look at [moneysavingexpert.com](https://moneysavingexpert.com) for advice.

## Money off

Use voucher sites or money off coupons to cut down on your shopping bills or eating out.

Websites like <https://www.moneysavingexpert.com/deals/supermarket-coupons> show you the latest deals whilst apps like 'Voucher Cloud' give you plenty of options for well-known restaurants and shops near to you. Wowcher and Groupon offer daily deals and discounts too.

## Double check if you really need a TV licence

A standard TV licence costs £150.50 a year. If your tv watching habits centre around Netflix and Amazon Prime, think carefully about whether you need to spend the cash on a TV licence.

BUT you **must** buy one if you:

- watch or record programmes as they're being shown on TV or live on an online TV service
- download or watch BBC programmes on iPlayer.

Check out the rules at <http://www.tvlicensing.co.uk/check-if-you-need-one>.

## Can you find it for free?

Before you buy anything, have a look at online selling groups to see if anyone is offering unwanted items at a low cost or even for free.

Facebook's Market Place is a great place to start. And if you love a bargain, try any of the numerous charity shops on the high street. You never know what you'll find!

And whilst you're at it, why not try selling some of your own unwanted belongings online (but always check out the terms and conditions). Ebay is the most well known online selling site but there are many others available.

## Find other great tips at

[https://  
www.moneysavingexpert.c  
om/family/young-adults-  
moneysaving](https://www.moneysavingexpert.com/family/young-adults-moneysaving)

The screenshot shows the MoneySavingExpert.com website. The header includes navigation links like WEEKLY EMAIL, NEWS, BLOGS, MSE STUFF, STUDENTS, FINANCIAL ED, CONTACT US, and FORUM. A search bar is on the right. Below the header, there's a banner for 'Under-25s' MoneySaving Tips with the headline 'Under-25s' MoneySaving Tips' and 'Save through savvy spending'. A call to action says 'Get Our Free Money Tips Email!' with an email input field and a 'GET IT' button. Below this, there's a section titled 'There are bundles of tips and tricks for 16- to 25-year-olds to plot the path to financial independence without getting ripped off.' and a link to 'Student Checklist'. On the right side, there's a 'FREE MoneySaving email' section with a list of tips like 'Bank holiday bargains', 'STOP overpaying for your mobile', and 'Over 65s' travel insurance'. At the bottom, there's a '46 under-25s' MoneySaving tips, including...' section.



# SHOPPING

## Pay by cash

Research shows if you pay in cash rather than by card you will likely spend less. The reason? You can actually see what you're spending when you use cash. And to take it a step further, if you only carry £20 notes you are less likely to use them, which saves you from making impulse buys.



## Forget the basket

When you run to the supermarket to "pick up a few items," literally "pick them up" rather than use a trolley or basket. By forcing yourself to carry your purchases, you'll be less likely to buy things you didn't intend to buy and don't need.



## More for your money

When looking for good deals, always look at the 'price per unit' on the label. This allows you to compare products to get the best bargains! You can also use scan and shop which means you can see the total as you go.



## Buying in bulk

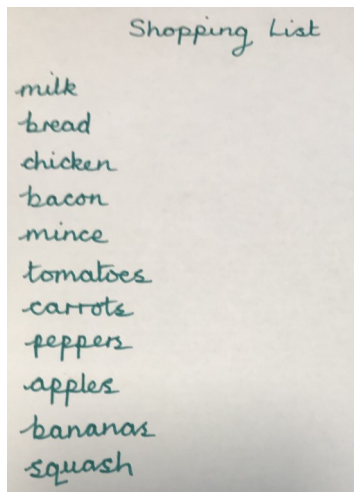
Buy the biggest bag of pasta or rice you can find. It will last for ages and cost you less in the long run. You can also buy large loaves of bread or packets of meat and freeze some to keep for later saving you money.

## Cooking more than you need

When cooking your evening meal, cook a little more than you need. You can eat it later in the week, freeze it for the future or take it for lunch the next day. Making your own lunch is always much cheaper than buying a sandwich!

## Look for the best deals

When you're looking for the best deal make sure that you look at the top and bottom shelves. Supermarkets put the best deals away from eye level to make you go for the not so great deals.



## Go in with a plan

Go to the supermarket with a shopping list. It will make your trip quicker and easier, help you plan healthy, well balanced meals and stop expensive impulse buying. But don't forget to check out the weekly discounts, deals and reduced section in the supermarket at the start of your shopping trip for some bargains!

## Make your money go further

Look for supermarket own brands for a cheaper alternative to high cost branded goods whilst frozen fish and some vegetables can also save you money. Compare prices when you next go to the supermarket.



## Exchange fresh for dried

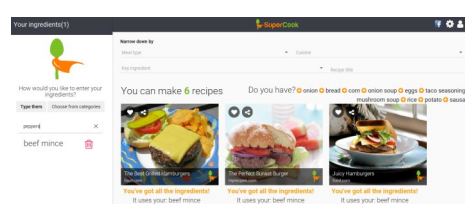
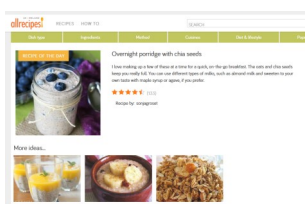
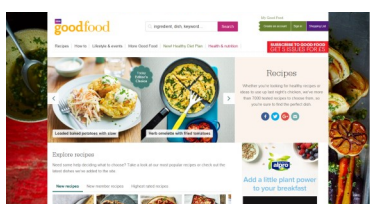
Buying fresh herbs and chillies is great but dried versions last much longer leading to less waste and you saving money in the long run.

## Cookery books

There's no need to buy expensive cookery books full of ingredients you'll only use once. There are plenty of great websites out there with cheap, quick recipes.

Try <https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes> or <http://allrecipes.co.uk> for lots of ideas for every occasion, skill level and budget.

<http://www.supercook.com/#/recipes> allows you to put in the ingredients in your cupboards to find a recipe!





# FOOD



## Strawberries

Use a straw to remove the green part of a strawberry. Push the straw up through the bottom of the strawberry and then out the top, removing the stalk as you go.

## Eggcellent ideas

Need to separate the yolk from the white of an egg? Use an empty plastic bottle. Place the open end over the yolk and squeeze and release drawing the egg yolk into the bottle. Now do the same again to place it in a separate container. No mess!



## Cherry tomato ninja

Cut cherry tomatoes easily and quickly. Put them between two plates and cut across (very carefully!). Slice tomatoes like a ninja!



### Have you nearly finished your jar of nutella?

When you're nearing the end of a nutella jar, add ice cream and mix it well. You will have the best ice-cream and get the most out of the jar.



### Pancakes with ease

Next time you finish using a condiment bottle DON'T THROW IT AWAY, simply wash it out and reuse as a pancake mix dispenser. No more splashes and mess, just perfect pancakes.

A 1 pint milk bottle also makes a great measuring container if you don't have one!



#### Butter it up

Butter too hard to spread or cut? Place a hot glass over it and it will become soft and easy to use.

#### Slice like a pro

If you're cutting a loaf of bread, turn it upside down for much neater slices.



### Crispy jackets

Want a crispy jacket potato but don't have an hour and a half to cook it in the oven? Pierce the potato several times with a sharp knife. Put it in the microwave for 10 minutes then finish it at a high heat (250°C) in the oven for roughly 15 minutes for a similar effect.

### Get it just right

Weigh or measure rice or pasta to avoid cooking too much. Check out the packets for the recommended per person portion. Half a mug of rice is normally enough for one person!

# STORE CUPBOARD ESSENTIALS

**Keep your cupboards stocked with these essentials to make cooking healthy and nutritious meals easier.**

## **Flavourings and sauces**

Salt

Pepper

Tub of mixed herbs

Tub of medium chilli powder

Other dried herbs and spices  
e.g. cumin, oregano, basil,  
coriander

Cooking oil (sunflower or  
vegetable oil)

Stock cubes (beef, chicken,  
vegetable)

Vinegar

Soy sauce

Mustard

Tomato puree

## **Tins**

Chopped tomatoes

Baked beans

Tuna

Sweetcorn

Soup

## **Carbohydrates**

Pasta

Rice

Cous Cous

## **Frozen Food**

Peas and other frozen veg

Bread (bought and frozen by you)

# EGGS

**Packed full of protein, good fats, vitamins and nutrients, eggs make a super base for a healthy breakfast or dinner.**

## Scrambled Eggs

### Ingredients

2 eggs  
6 tablespoons of milk  
A knob of butter  
Salt and pepper to season

### Directions

1. Beat the eggs, milk, salt and pepper in a medium bowl using a metal fork until it is blended.
2. Heat the butter in a large non-stick pan over a medium heat until it is hot (but don't let it go brown).
3. Pour in the egg mixture.
4. Continue cooking, stirring the eggs with a wooden spoon, until thickened and no visible liquid egg remains. BUT do not stir constantly.

**Top Tip: Add ham or smoked salmon to the mixture and serve on toast or an English muffin for a more filling breakfast or dinner.**

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## Boiled Eggs

Place the egg in boiling water.

### How long to boil an egg:

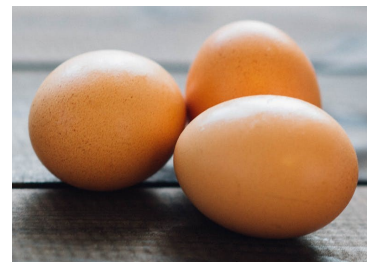
5 minutes - set white, runny yolk, just right for dipping toast soldiers into

6 minutes - liquid yolk, just a little less oozy

7 minutes - almost set, but still sticky

8 minutes - softly set

9 minutes - hard-boiled egg



# Omelette

## Ingredients

3 eggs

4 dessert spoons of milk

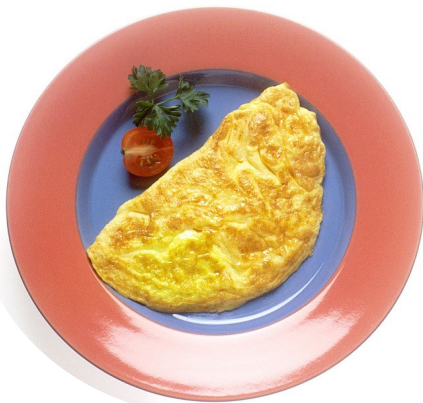
Salt and pepper

Butter or oil

## Directions

1. Crack 2 to 3 eggs into a bowl or a cup.
2. Beat the eggs.
3. Add milk.
4. Add some salt and pepper.
5. Mix together until blended.
6. Melt some butter into a frying pan over a medium heat until it is melted and foaming.
7. Pour the mixture into the pan.
8. Tilt the pan slightly to allow the eggs to swirl and cover the surface of the pan.
9. Cook until the middle of the omelette is no longer runny.

When the bottom is cooked, press down on the side of the omelette with a spatula to let some of the runny middle run underneath to cook or alternatively flip your omelette over.



**Top Tip:** Add some grated cheese, ham, mushrooms or tomatoes to make your omelette even tastier. Scatter the filling over the top of the omelette when it's cooking and fold gently in half with a spatula.



# POTATOES

**Super versatile, cheap and easy to cook, experiment with different methods of cooking potatoes!**

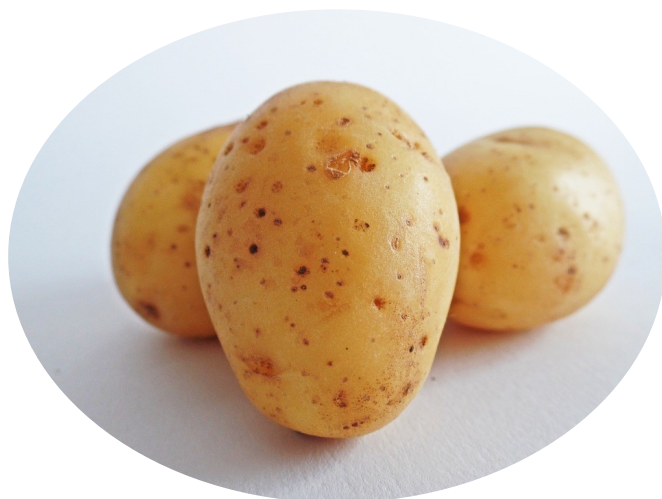
**Look on the packet for recommendations about which type of potato suits which method of cooking.**

## Mashed Potatoes

1. Peel the potatoes and cut into chunks of roughly the same size.
2. Place the potatoes in a large pot and cover with water.
3. Add salt if required.
4. Bring to the boil.
5. Leave to simmer for 15 – 25 minutes until they are tender but still firm (use a knife or fork to check).
6. Drain the potatoes using a colander.
7. Place the potatoes with milk, butter and salt in a bowl and mash using a potato masher if you have one or a fork if you don't.
8. Continue to mash until smooth and creamy. You will need to work hard to get rid of the lumps.

**Top Tip: Add some grainy mustard to give your mashed potatoes a kick!**

**Or for a healthier option, follow the above steps but with sweet potato.**





## Roast Potatoes

1. Pour a thin layer of sunflower oil into a large baking tray (make sure it has sides!).
2. Peel the potatoes and chop into pieces of roughly the same size.
3. Place in a pan and cover with water.
4. Bring to the boil and simmer for 10 - 15 minutes.
5. Meanwhile, heat the oven to 200°C (180°C if you have a fan oven) and preheat your baking tray and sunflower oil.
6. Drain using a colander and shake the potatoes a little to roughen the edges.
7. Place them carefully in the baking tray. Remember it and the oil will be very hot so try to avoid splashes!
8. Put back in the oven for approximately 1 hour or until the potatoes are golden and crispy. Turn once or twice during cooking.

## Baked Potatoes

1. Heat the oven to 220°C (200°C if you have a fan oven).
2. Rub a little oil over each baking potato and pierce several times with a sharp knife.
3. Bake for 20 minutes.
4. Turn the heat down to 190°C (170°C fan) and bake for 45 minutes – 1 hour.

**Top Tip: Try scooping out the fluffy potato and adding cheese and fried bacon cut into pieces or adding sour cream and chives before putting the mixture back in the skins.**

# BURGERS

## Ingredients

1 onion  
500g beef mince  
1 egg  
Salt and pepper  
4 burger buns



## Directions

1. Peel and finely chop the onion.
2. Lightly wet your hands to stop the mixture sticking to them.
3. Put the beef mince, onion and egg in a large bowl and mix.
4. Add some salt and pepper.
5. Divide the mixture into four.
6. Carefully roll the mixture into a ball.
7. Set on a flat surface or the palm of your hand and gently squeeze the 4 balls of mixture to flatten them.
8. Put the burgers on a plate, cover them in cling film and leave them in the fridge to firm up for at least 30 minutes.
9. Heat the grill to medium hot.
10. Grill the burgers for about 15 minutes turning occasionally.
11. Serve in a bun with sauces and salad.

**Top Tip: Make sure all the burger patties are the same thickness so they take the same length of time to cook.**

# BOLOGNESE

**Serves 4**

## Ingredients

2 tablespoons of vegetable oil  
500g of mince  
1 medium onion  
2 garlic cloves

## Version 2

1 tin of chopped tomatoes  
3 tablespoons of tomato puree  
1 teaspoon of mixed Italian herbs  
Salt and pepper

## Version 1

1 jar of Bolognese sauce

Approximately 100g of pasta per person

## Directions

1. Finely chop the onion and garlic.
2. Fry the mince and the onions in the oil in a large pan for 5 minutes.
3. Add the garlic and tomato puree and cook for a further 2 minutes.
4. Add the jar of Bolognese sauce OR the chopped tomatoes, dried herbs and seasoning.
5. Leave simmering (gently bubbling on a low heat) for at least 15 minutes but preferably longer.
6. Whilst the Bolognese is simmering, cook the pasta according to the pack instructions.



**Top Tip: Add sliced mushrooms, chopped peppers, finely sliced celery, finely chopped or grated carrot or even pancetta (a type of bacon) to add flavour and some of your five a day.**

# CHILLI

## Ingredients

2 tablespoons of vegetable oil  
500g of beef mince  
1 medium onion  
2 - 3 garlic cloves  
1 tin of chopped tomatoes

## Version 1

1 packet of chilli mix or

## Version 2

1–2 teaspoons chilli powder  
2 teaspoons ground cumin  
2 teaspoons ground coriander

**Serves 4**

## Directions

1. Finely chop the onion and garlic.
2. Fry the mince and the onions in the oil over a medium heat for 5 minutes.
3. Add the garlic.
4. Add your spices or chilli packet mix.
5. Fry for a further few minutes until the mince is cooked through.
6. Add the tomatoes and lower the heat.
7. Simmer for at least 15 minutes (but longer if you have time)
8. Serve with a jacket potato or rice or inside wraps or tacos.



**Top Tip:** If your chilli is looking a little thick or sticking to the pan, add a little bit of water.

**Top Tip:** Add vegetables such as finely chopped peppers or sliced mushrooms to your chilli to help you get one of your five a day!

**Top Tip:** Chilli and Bolognese are great for freezing and keeping for later or put leftovers in the fridge and take for lunch the next day.



# COTTAGE PIE

## Ingredients

2 tablespoons of vegetable oil	1 teaspoon dried mixed herbs
500g lean minced beef	350ml hot beef stock, made with a stock cube
1 onion, finely chopped	900g floury potatoes, peeled and cut into small chunks
1 large carrot, peeled and grated	100ml milk
1 celery stick, finely chopped	25g butter
1 tablespoon of tomato puree	
1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce (if you have it!)	

**Serves 4**

## Directions

1. Fry the mince and vegetables in the oil in a large frying pan for 5 minutes or until the mince is browned.
2. Add the stock cube to 350ml of boiling water.
3. Add the tomato puree, dried herbs and Worcestershire sauce if using to the stock and stir.
4. Pour over the mince and vegetables and simmer for approximately 25-30 minutes.
5. Meanwhile, peel and cut the potatoes into similar sized chunks.
6. Cover with water and bring to the boil for 15 – 25 minutes until soft.
7. Drain the potatoes using a colander.
8. Place the potatoes back in the pan and add the butter and milk.
9. Mash!
10. Spoon the cooked mince mixture into an oven proof dish and then add the mash potato layer on top.
11. Put under the grill for 5 – 10 minutes to brown and crisp up the top.

# HOME MADE PIZZA

## Ingredients

1 packet pizza mix or 1 ready made base

Tomato puree or pizza topping

Mixed dried herbs

Grated cheddar cheese

Toppings of your choice

## Directions

1. Preheat the oven according to the instructions on the packet or the pizza base.
2. Make the base following the packet instructions or use a ready made base.
3. Spread the tomato topping evenly over the pizza base.
4. Sprinkle with the dried herbs.
5. Arrange the toppings and cheese over the pizza.
6. Cook on a metal baking tray according to the packet instructions.  
Pizzas are usually cooked for a short period of time at a high heat.

**Top Tip: Experiment with different cheeses (Mozzarella is good!) and vegetarian and meat toppings.**



# CHICKEN CURRY

## Ingredients

2 tablespoons vegetable oil

1 medium onion

3 garlic cloves

Half a 400g tin of chopped tomatoes

2 tablespoons of curry powder

1 teaspoon of ground ginger

400g of boneless chicken thighs or chicken breast cut into 2.5cm pieces.

100ml of Greek-style natural yoghurt

Salt and pepper

200g rice



## Directions

1. Peel and finely slice the onion and the garlic.
2. Chop the chicken into chunks.
3. Heat the oil in a frying pan and cook the onion and garlic for a few minutes.
4. Add the tomatoes, curry powder and ground ginger.
5. Cook for 3-4 minutes. If the pan gets dry, add a splash of water to make sure the spices don't burn.
6. Add the chicken and cook for 5 minutes. Make sure the chicken is completely coated and beginning to brown on all sides.
7. Add 250ml of water and bring to the boil.
8. Reduce to a medium / low heat and cook for 10 – 15 minutes.
9. Whilst the chicken is cooking, prepare the rice according to the packet instructions.
10. Take the curry off the heat, stir in the yoghurt and season with salt and pepper.
11. Serve the curry with rice or Indian breads.

# CHICKEN FAJITAS

## Ingredients

2 tablespoons vegetable oil  
3 – 4 chicken breasts  
2 peppers  
1 medium onion  
A fajita mix sachet  
8 tortilla wraps  
Guacamole, salsa, sour cream etc to serve



**Serves 3 - 4**

## Directions

1. Slice the chicken.
2. Finely chop the onion and slice the peppers.
3. Fry the chicken in the oil in a frying pan for a few minutes.
4. Add the peppers, onion and spice mix.
5. Stir to make sure the spice mix has coated all the ingredients.
6. Fry until the chicken is browned and the vegetables are crunchy, stirring and tossing the ingredients.
7. Warm the tortillas according to the packet instructions.
8. Serve and enjoy!

**Top Tip: Whilst you can buy fajita packs, it is sometimes cheaper to buy supermarket own brand wraps and a sachet of seasoning mix.**

**Top Tip: If you want to make your own fajita seasoning, try a mixture of chilli powder, cumin, paprika, cayenne pepper, garlic powder (roughly 1 teaspoon of each), salt and pepper.**

# BANANA BREAD

## Ingredients

140g butter and a little extra for the tin

140g caster sugar

2 large eggs beaten

140g self raising flour

1 teaspoon baking powder

2 very ripe bananas mashed



## Directions

1. Heat the oven to 180°C/160°C fan/gas mark 4.
2. Butter a 2lb loaf tin and line with baking paper.
3. Cream the butter and sugar until light and fluffy then slowly add the egg with a little flour.
4. Fold in the remaining flour, baking powder and bananas.
5. Pour into the tin and bake for approximately 30 mins or until golden brown.
6. Cool for 10 mins then remove from the tin and place onto a wire rack.

**Top tip: Sprinkle a little icing sugar over the top for that professional look.**



**This booklet has been produced in conjunction with the  
Young Adult Council (YAC)**

YAC is a group of young people in care and care leavers aged 16 and over living in Kent. They meet regularly to have their say on issues that affect them and others in care or those who have left care so they can make positive changes both in their own lives and for others. Elected Members, senior leaders and key professionals at Kent County Council regularly come to meet with the members of YAC to hear their views on a variety of topics affecting young people in care and care leavers and take their advice before making significant changes or introducing new policies or procedures.

The group also like to have fun! They regularly go on trips, take part in activities and fundraise for charity too!

**Have your say and get involved**

If you are interested in becoming a member of YAC or know someone who is, please contact **[VSK\\_Participation@kent.gov.uk](mailto:VSK_Participation@kent.gov.uk)**