

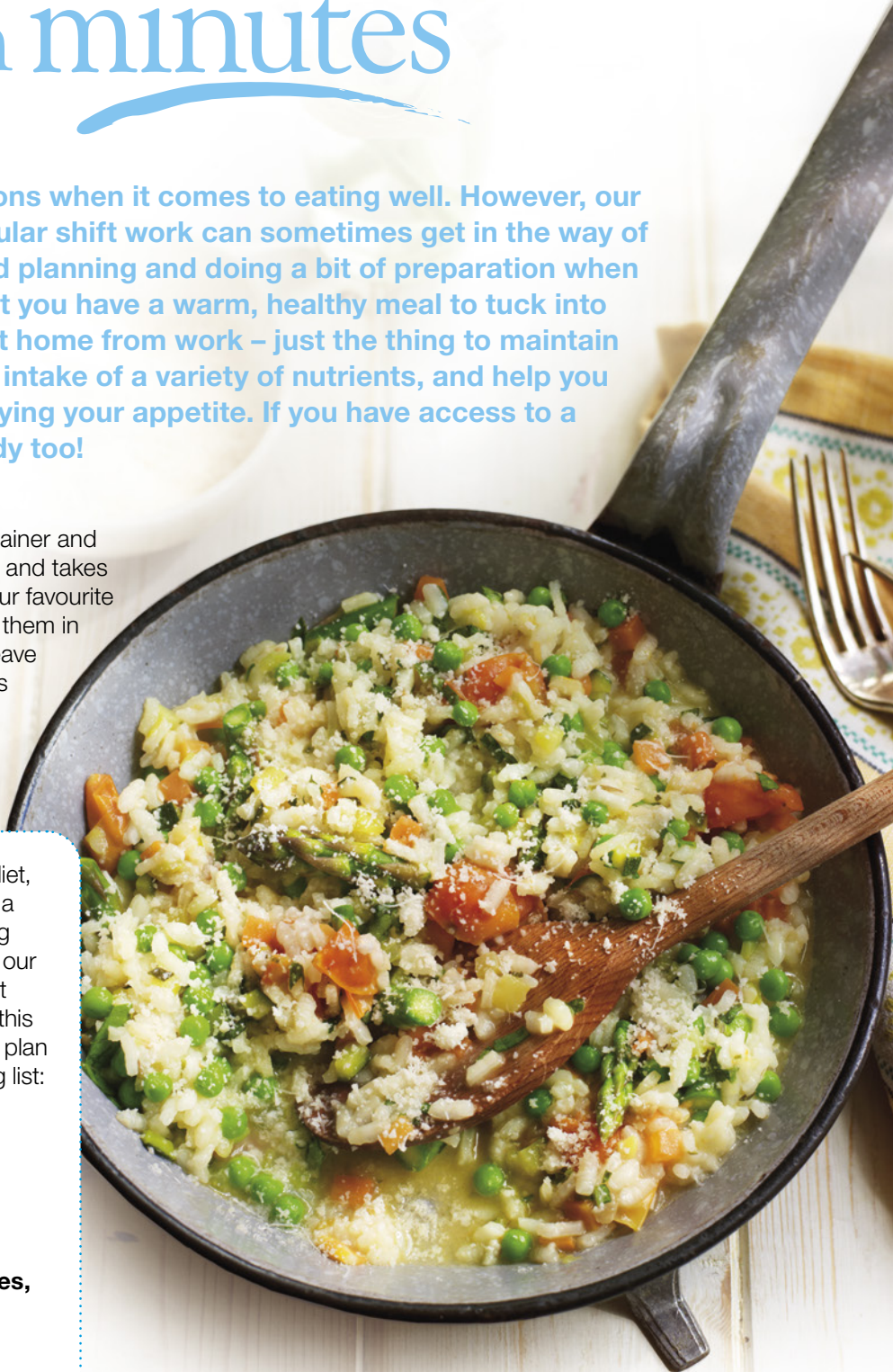
# healthy and filling meals in minutes

Many of us have the best intentions when it comes to eating well. However, our increasingly busy lives and irregular shift work can sometimes get in the way of making healthy choices. Forward planning and doing a bit of preparation when you do have time can ensure that you have a warm, healthy meal to tuck into during your shift or when you get home from work – just the thing to maintain your energy levels, support your intake of a variety of nutrients, and help you manage your weight while satisfying your appetite. If you have access to a microwave it can be super speedy too!

Popping leftovers into a microwavable container and reheating them at work or at home is quick and takes barely any effort. Make extra portions of your favourite dinners for the next couple of days, or pop them in the freezer and take them out before you leave for your shift. By the time your break comes round or you arrive home after work, they'll be defrosted and ready to heat.

Whether you're looking to improve your diet, maintain a healthy weight or lose weight, a little planning and preparation goes a long way. Click on the links below for some of our favourite make-ahead meals or check out the quick and easy recipes at the end of this article. Choose your favourite dishes and plan the ingredients into next week's shopping list:

- [Chilli con carne](#)
- [veggie chilli](#)
- [Beef ragu pasta bake](#)
- [Creamy tomato sauce – add in chunks of chicken or Quorn pieces, plus your favourite veggies and some pasta](#)
- [Vegetable dhansak](#)
- [Chicken saag](#)
- [Caribbean pepperpot stew](#)
- [Rustic minestrone with bacon](#)



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Add a packet of microwavable rice or other grains such as quinoa to dishes like homemade leftover chilli con carne or curry. If you have access to a kettle, couscous is easy to make – simply place the dried couscous into a bowl, pour over boiling water and leave to rest for 5 minutes. Once the water has all been absorbed, fluff the grains up with a fork and enjoy with your meal.

For extra veggies, check out the supermarket shelves. Many tend to do bags of prepared vegetables which can be quickly cooked in the microwave, or you could add a crunchy side salad to your dishes. Or if you're looking to keep costs low, take a couple of minutes when you're preparing your main meal to chop extra vegetables such as carrots or peppers and store in a microwavable container, ready to use as an addition to your meals or a healthy snack.

**You can also use the microwave to cook some quick dishes from scratch.**

- **Easy eggs.** Spray a microwave-safe bowl or large mug with cooking spray. Crack a couple of eggs into it and to mix things up add extras like chopped peppers, sweetcorn and spring onion, ham and mushrooms, or cheese and tomato. Season and whisk together. Pop into the microwave and heat on full power for 2 minutes. Serve on some wholemeal toast for a more filling meal.
- **Comforting porridge.** In a large microwave-safe mug or bowl add 40g porridge oats and 150-200ml milk and give it a good stir. Pop it in the microwave and heat on full power for 1½ minutes, remove and stir again. Return the porridge to the microwave and heat on full power for another minute. Allow the porridge to cool for a couple of minutes before topping with fresh fruit, yoghurt, or a small handful of nuts. Take a quiet moment to enjoy a warming energy boost.
- **Jacket potato with your favourite filling.** Scrub the potato skin and prick all over with a fork then pop it into a microwave oven and cook on full power for 4-5 minutes, turn the potato over (using a fork or oven glove – it'll be hot!) and return to the microwave for a further 4-5 minutes. Leave to stand for a minute, then check it's soft and cooked all the way through. Add a tasty filling, such as baked beans (also heated in a microwavable bowl), cheese, tuna mixed with light mayo, or fat free cottage cheese and spring onions. Mix in chopped peppers, sweetcorn, cherry tomatoes, celery etc for added variety. Choose a sweet potato if you fancy a change and enjoy with a salad on the side.



**If you'd like more recipes and ideas for quick, healthy meals then please visit [slimmingworld.co.uk](http://slimmingworld.co.uk)**



# beef ragu pasta bake

**Serves: 4**

**Ready in: Over 60 Minutes**

## Ingredients

Low-calorie cooking spray  
1 onion, finely chopped  
2 celery sticks, finely chopped  
1 large carrot, peeled and finely chopped  
3 garlic cloves, finely chopped  
250g chestnut mushrooms, finely chopped  
500g lean beef mince (5% fat or less)  
700g jar passata  
8 tbsp tomato purée  
250ml beef stock  
1 tsp dried mixed herbs  
400g dried conchiglioni pasta  
A handful of fresh basil leaves, finely chopped  
200g mozzarella, cubed

## Method

- Preheat your oven to 180°C/160°C fan/Gas 4. Place a large frying pan sprayed with low-calorie cooking spray over a high heat. Add the onion, celery, carrot, garlic, chestnut mushrooms and beef mince and stir-fry for 6-7 minutes.
- Add the passata, tomato purée, stock, and dried herbs and bring to the boil. Season well, reduce the heat to medium, cover and cook for 20-30 minutes, stirring occasionally.
- Meanwhile, cook the conchiglioni according to the packet instructions, then drain.
- Remove the ragu from the heat and stir in the basil. Spoon half the sauce into a medium baking dish, spread out evenly, then top with the pasta. Spoon over the remaining sauce and scatter over the mozzarella. Bake for 25-30 minutes, or until bubbling, and serve.



# black eyed bean and vegetable chilli

**Serves: 4**

**Ready in: Less than 30 Minutes**

## Ingredients

Low-calorie cooking spray  
4 shallots, peeled and finely chopped  
2 garlic cloves, peeled and crushed  
2 celery sticks, cut into 1.5cm dice  
1 large carrot, peeled and cut into 1.5cm pieces  
1 red pepper, deseeded and cut into 1.5cm pieces  
1 tsp each of dried mixed herbs, ground cumin, ground cinnamon and chilli powder  
400g can chopped tomatoes  
200ml vegetable stock  
400g can black-eyed beans in water, drained  
400g can red kidney beans in chilli sauce  
4 tbsp finely chopped fresh coriander leaves  
Cooked white or brown basmati rice, to serve  
Lime wedges, to serve

## Method

- Spray a large frying pan with low-calorie cooking spray and place over a medium heat.
- Add the shallots, garlic, celery, carrots and red pepper and stir-fry for 2-3 minutes.
- Add the dried herbs, ground cumin, ground cinnamon, chilli powder, tomatoes and stock and bring to the boil.
- Reduce the heat, cover and allow to cook gently for 10-12 minutes or until the vegetables are tender.
- Stir in the beans and cook for 2-3 minutes or until piping hot.
- Season well, remove from the heat and sprinkle over the coriander.
- Serve with cooked rice and lime wedges to squeeze over.





## thai yellow vegetable curry

**Serves: 4**

**Ready in: Less than 30 Minutes**

### Ingredients

200g baby sweetcorn  
 1 aubergine, cubed  
 2 courgettes, cubed  
 1 red pepper, deseeded and cut into bite-sized pieces  
 Fresh coriander sprigs, to garnish  
 1 red chilli, deseeded and sliced, to garnish

### For the yellow curry paste

1-2 green chillies, deseeded and roughly chopped  
 2 shallots, roughly chopped  
 2cm piece of root ginger, peeled and grated  
 4 garlic cloves, crushed  
 1 tsp ground coriander  
 1 tsp ground cumin  
 ¼ tsp ground cinnamon  
 3 tbsp dark soy sauce/tamari  
 1 tsp turmeric  
 ¼ tsp sweetener  
 4 kaffir lime leaves, stems discarded  
 100ml reduced-fat coconut milk  
 200ml boiling vegetable stock  
 1 lemon grass stalk, outer leaves removed, roughly chopped

### Method

- First put all the curry paste ingredients in a food processor and blend until smooth. Transfer to a saucepan over a medium heat and gently bring to the boil.
- Add the sweetcorn, aubergine, courgettes and red pepper to the curry paste and bring back to the boil. Reduce the heat to low and simmer for 10-12 minutes, stirring frequently until the vegetables are cooked.
- Garnish with the coriander sprigs and sliced chilli and serve hot, with boiled Thai fragrant or jasmine rice.

## chicken saag

**Serves: 4**

**Ready in: 30-60 Minutes**

### Ingredients

Low-calorie cooking spray  
 2 medium onions, finely chopped  
 200g closed-cup mushrooms, sliced  
 6cm piece of root ginger, peeled and finely chopped  
 3 large garlic cloves, finely chopped  
 2 tbsp medium curry powder  
 3 tbsp tomato puree  
 1 chicken stock cube  
 700g skinless and boneless chicken breasts, cut into bite-sized chunks  
 1 ripe tomato, roughly chopped  
 100g baby leaf spinach, roughly chopped  
 Large handful of roughly chopped fresh coriander  
 4 tbsp fat-free natural Greek yogurt

### Method

- Spray a large, deep non-stick frying pan with low-calorie cooking spray and place over a medium heat.
- Add the onions and fry for 5 minutes, adding a little water if they start to stick.
- Add the mushrooms, ginger and garlic and cook for a further 5 minutes.
- Stir in the curry powder, tomato puree, stock cube and 300ml of water and cook for 2 minutes.
- Add the chicken and simmer for 10 minutes.
- Add the tomato, spinach and coriander and cook for a further 5 minutes or until the chicken is cooked through.
- Take the pan off the heat, stir the yogurt into the curry and season to taste. Serve hot with rice and your favourite vegetables.

