

CAN'T COOK



WANT TO LEARN

Carolyn Humphries



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all about this book

At last! A book that actually tells you not only what and how to cook but exactly when to cook it so that you produce perfect main meals with all the trimmings. Most cookery books you look at are full of technical jargon, complicated methods and lists of ingredients as long as your arm. What's more, they tell you to serve your masterpiece with umpteen vegetables and a sauce, but they don't explain how and when are you supposed to prepare them.

This book is designed for anyone and everyone who wants to prepare complete, everyday meals. It tells you exactly what you'll need, shows you how to prepare the ingredients and guides you step by step through the cooking method so that everything is ready to dish up all at the same time. There is no fuss and no frills, just your favourite meals – and many more besides – ready to be tackled with ease.

This book is about cooking, starting from scratch. So, in Your Storecupboard, we show you how to build up a collection of useful ingredients you should keep in your kitchen cupboard, ready for whenever you want to make a meal. The list is intended only as a guide – you are bound to find other favourite items that you will want to add.

Most cookery books assume that you have some knowledge and experience of cooking. But not everyone does, so in this book we devote a whole section, Basic Cooking Skills, to giving you step-by-step instructions on simple techniques that you will need to use over and over again.

Even with a recipe book in front of you, it is not always easy to understand exactly what is meant, especially if you are a bit hazy about cooking terminology; and a small mistake in a crucial stage can make a meal inedible. Our Notes on the Recipes provide you with some useful hints and tips to help you follow each recipe correctly. The section on Simple Food Hygiene gives you the essentials to follow to ensure healthy cooking and eating – make sure they become second nature too.

In the recipe section, each recipe is organised in the simplest possible way and includes everything you need to do to create a complete meal, in the order you will do it. So, no more getting to the last stage and finding you should have boiled the pasta 20 minutes earlier!

Once you have chosen your recipe, you will find that it contains two lists of ingredients: the first one includes items you will probably have in your storecupboard, and the second is a shopping list of extra ingredients and fresh produce you may need to buy. Make sure you assemble all these items before you start.

Equipment

Of course, you will need some cookery equipment. There are dozens of kitchen utensils and appliances on the market, but only a small number of basic tools are really necessary. Make sure you always have the following to hand:

- chopping board
- sharp kitchen knives
- scales

- wooden spoons
- fork, tablespoon and teaspoon
- tongs
- can opener
- foil, kitchen paper (paper towels) and clingfilm (plastic wrap)
- cups, plates, serving dishes and bowls

Where other items of special equipment are required in a recipe, you will find a reminder at the beginning.

In the final chapter, you will learn how to turn some of the recipes into impressive three-course meals with very little extra effort.

With all the help in this book, you will quickly learn just how easy it is to put complete meals together. Soon you will be confident enough to begin to experiment with your own ideas and discover how you can mix and match the basic elements of my recipes to create your own range of new meals. There really is no excuse any more for saying you can't cook.

simple food hygiene

A hygienic cook is a healthy cook and an unhygienic cook may make everyone ill – so please bear the following in mind.

- Always wash your hands before preparing food.
- Always wash and dry fresh produce before use.
- Don't lick your fingers.
- Don't keep tasting and stirring with the same spoon. Use a clean spoon every time you taste.
- Never use a cloth to wipe down a dirty chopping board and then use the same one to wipe down your work surfaces – you will simply spread germs. Always wash your cloth well in hot, soapy water and, better still, use an anti-bacterial cleaner on all work surfaces and chopping boards as well.
- Always transfer leftovers to a clean container and cover with a lid, clingfilm (plastic wrap) or foil. Leave until completely cold, then store in the fridge. Never put any warm food into the fridge.
- Don't store raw and cooked meat on the same shelf in the fridge. Put raw meat on the bottom shelf, so it can't drip over other foods. Keep all perishable foods wrapped separately. Don't overfill the fridge or it won't maintain a low enough temperature.
- When reheating food, always make sure it is piping hot throughout, never just lukewarm.
- Don't re-freeze foods that have defrosted unless you cook them first. Never reheat previously cooked food more than once.

your storecupboard

It's a good idea to keep a selection of basic ingredients always to hand – it gives you more choice and it makes life much easier! However, there's no need to go out and buy everything on these lists. Build up your storecupboard gradually, to include your favourite items. Don't forget to replace them as you use them.

cans, jars, bottles and packets

- tuna fish
- corned beef
- hot dog sausages
- chopped tomatoes
- carrots
- sweetcorn (corn)
- baked beans
- pulses, including red kidney beans and lentils
- fruit in natural juice, including pineapple rings
- condensed soups: tomato and mushroom
- condensed milk
- evaporated milk
- passata (sieved tomatoes)
- caster (superfine) sugar
- plain (all-purpose) flour
- self-raising (self-rising) flour
- cornflour (cornstarch)
- shredded vegetable suet
- baking powder
- bicarbonate of soda (baking soda)
- long-grain rice
- pasta
- dried fruit
- sunflower or good-quality vegetable oil
- olive oil
- wine vinegar, red and white
- lemon juice
- clear honey
- golden (light corn) syrup
- black treacle (molasses)
- jam (conserve)
- marmalade

- stuffing mix
- flaked (slivered) almonds
- desiccated (shredded) coconut
- walnut pieces
- toasted, chopped mixed nuts

herbs, spices, seasonings and flavourings

- dried herbs, including oregano, basil, mint and mixed herbs and bouquet garni sachets
- curry powder
- spices: chilli powder, paprika; ground cinnamon, ginger, cumin and coriander (cilantro); grated nutmeg
- dried onion granules
- soy sauce
- tomato ketchup (catsup)
- pickles and chutneys
- Worcestershire sauce
- brown table sauce
- horseradish sauce
- tartare sauce
- Tabasco sauce
- salt and pepper, preferably black peppercorns in a grinder
- mustard, preferably both English and Dijon
- stock cubes: chicken, vegetable and beef
- gravy block or browning
- tube of tomato purée (paste)
- tube of garlic purée

fridge

- medium eggs
- butter or margarine
- milk
- Cheddar cheese
- tub of grated Parmesan cheese
- mayonnaise
- orange juice

freezer compartment

- pastry (paste): shortcrust (basic pie crust), filo and puff
- peas
- chopped parsley
- bread
- ice cream

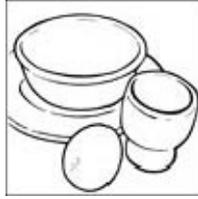
notes on the recipes

- Always assemble your ingredients and equipment before you start.
- Ingredients are given in metric, imperial and American measures. Use only one set per recipe.
- American terms are given in brackets.
- All can sizes are approximate – they differ slightly from brand to brand. For example, if the recipe calls for 400 g/14 oz/1 large can of chopped tomatoes and yours is a 413 g can – that’s fine.
- When a tablespoonful or teaspoonful of an ingredient is called for, ideally you should use cookery measuring spoons; level off the ingredient in the spoon to get an accurate measure. Ordinary spoons can be used, although you may find you have to add a little more.
- Purées (pastes), such as garlic and tomato, are very concentrated and should be used with caution as their flavours may completely overpower a dish. If a squeeze of garlic purée is called for, start with about 1 cm/½ in; a squeeze of tomato purée should be about 1 tablespoonful. Remember, all flavourings are a matter of preference, so taste your dish when it is cooked and then add more as you like.
- Use medium eggs unless otherwise stated.
- Preparation and cooking times are approximate.
- Most recipes are for four servings. Just halve or double all the quantities as necessary.

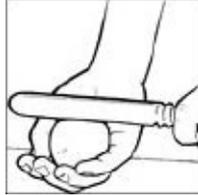
basic cooking skills

Like so many things, cooking is very simple when you know how. So this section shows you, step by step, exactly how to master some of the basic skills and methods you will use over and over again when you are preparing a meal.

separating an egg



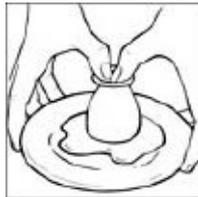
1 You will need a saucer, an egg cup and a small bowl.



2 Crack the shell of the egg by tapping sharply in the middle with a knife.

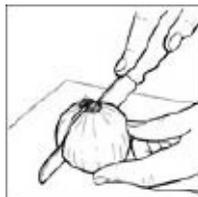


3 Holding the two halves of the shell over the saucer, gently pull them apart so that the contents fall on the saucer.



4 Invert an egg cup over the yolk and press firmly on to the saucer. Pick up the saucer and drain off the white into the small bowl.

chopping an onion



1 Cut the point off the top of the onion. Pull off all the outer skin, leaving the root intact (this will help stop you crying). Cut the onion in half lengthways through the root.



2 Hold one half between your thumb and fingers, flat side down on a board, and slice at intervals from the root end to the tip.



3 Now turn the onion so that you can slice across the first set of cuts. Discard the root end. To chop finely, make the cuts closer together in both directions. To chop coarsely, make the cuts wider apart.

slicing an onion into rings



1 Don't peel the onion. Hold it firmly between your thumb and middle finger, with the root end in your hand.



2 Cut into fairly thin slices, starting at the tip end. When you get to the root end, discard it.

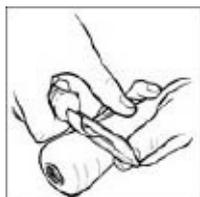


3 Peel off the brown outer layer and the next layer, if it seems tough, from each slice.



4 Separate the slices into rings. Cut the slices in half if you don't want rings.

dicing vegetables



1 Peel thinly with a potato peeler or sharp knife, if necessary.



2 Cut in half lengthways.



3 Hold between your thumb and middle finger and cut into strips.



4 Turn the vegetable, still holding it firmly together, and cut at right angles to the first cuts. For larger dice, make the cuts wider apart. For smaller dice, make them closer together.

boiling potatoes and root vegetables



1 Peel thinly with a potato peeler or sharp vegetable knife, or scrape, or scrub, as necessary.



2 Cut into even-sized pieces. Leave baby new potatoes or carrots whole. Place in a pan with just enough cold water to cover all the vegetable pieces and add a very little salt.



3 Cover with a lid and bring up to the boil over a high heat. When the water is bubbling, turn the heat down so that the vegetables boil gently. Leave to cook until they feel tender when a knife is inserted in them – anything from 5 to 15 minutes.



4 Tip carefully into a colander in the sink to drain.

making chips (fries)



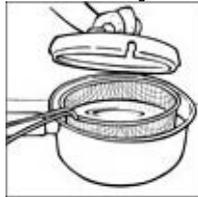
1 Wash or scrub the potatoes (don't peel them unless you want to). Cut each one into four thick slices, then cut the slices into strips to make chips. Wrap in a clean tea towel (dish cloth) to dry.



2 Pour about 2.5 cm/ 1 in oil into a deep frying pan (skillet) and heat until your hand feels hot when held 5 cm/2 in above the surface.

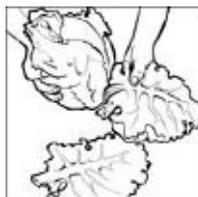


3 Slide the chips gently down a fish slice into the pan (to prevent splashing) and allow to cook until golden, turning them occasionally. Drain on kitchen paper (paper towels).



NOTE: If you have a deep-fat fryer, follow the manufacturer's instructions.

cooking green leafy vegetables



1 Pull or cut off any outer, damaged leaves. Separate into leaves, discarding any thick stalks. Whole cabbage may be cut in half and the thick stalk removed. Rinse in cold water and drain.



2 Cut the leaves into pieces or thin shreds as appropriate.

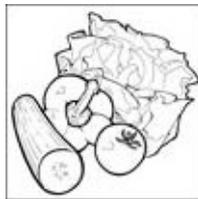


3 Put about 2.5 cm/1 in water in a saucepan with a good pinch of salt. Heat until it is boiling rapidly. Add the greens and push down well as they begin to soften. Boil over a high heat until they are just tender but still have some texture. This will take 3–5 minutes.

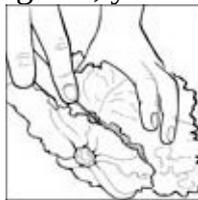


4 Drain in a colander.

making a mixed salad



1 Choose a selection of differently coloured salad stuffs such as lettuce, tomatoes, cucumber, onion and green, yellow or red (bell) pepper.



2 Cut the root off the lettuce and separate into leaves. Wash, pat dry on kitchen paper (paper towels), then tear into pieces.



3 Slice the cucumber. Halve the tomatoes, then cut them into wedges.



4 Cut slices off an unpeeled onion, then separate into rings, discarding the outer tough skin and first layer.



5 Cut a slice off the top of a pepper and pull out the core, seeds and any white membranes. Cut the pepper into thin rings.



6 Put all the ingredients into a salad bowl. Add a little French Dressing (see next item), then, using salad servers or a large spoon and fork gently turn the vegetables over in the dressing until it is all glistening.

making a green salad:

Prepare as for mixed salad but use all green salad stuffs. Add other ingredients, such as avocado, peeled and diced; canned artichoke hearts, drained and quartered; chopped celery sticks; watercress – anything you like, as long as it's green!

making french dressing



1 Quarter-fill a small, clean screw-topped jar with red or white wine vinegar.



2 Top up to three-quarters with olive oil. Add a good pinch of caster (superfine) sugar, a pinch of salt and some pepper.



3 Screw on the lid and shake thoroughly. Store in the fridge and use as required. Shake well before use.



NOTE: for extra flavour, try adding a squeeze of garlic purée (paste), or 1 tsp Dijon mustard or a good pinch of dried mixed herbs, tarragon or oregano to the basic mixture.

making garlic bread



1 Turn on the oven to 190°C/375°F/gas mark 5. Cut a small French stick into 12 slices but take care not to cut right through the bottom crust.



2 Using a table knife, mash 75 g/3 oz/1/3 cup butter or margarine with a small squeeze of garlic purée (paste) or more, if you like, on a small plate or saucer.



3 Spread this mixture between the slices and if there is any left over, spread it on top of the loaf.



4 Wrap in a piece of foil, shiny side in, making sure the loaf is completely covered. Bake in the oven for 15 minutes until the bread feels crisp on the outside and soft in the middle when squeezed. (Wear an oven glove!)

making a basic white sauce



1 Put 45 ml/3 tbsp plain (all-purpose) flour in a small saucepan.



2 Using a balloon whisk and stirring all the time, gradually add 300 ml/½ pt/1¼ cups milk until the mixture is smooth.



3 Add a knob of butter or margarine and a sprinkling of salt and pepper.



4 Cook over a fairly high heat, stirring with the whisk all the time, until the mixture is thick and bubbling. Continue to cook the sauce for 2 minutes. Use as required.

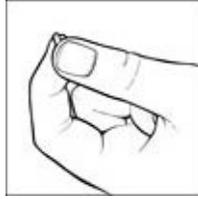
cooking rice



1 Three-quarters fill a large pan with water and add 1 tsp salt. Put over a high heat, cover with a lid and leave it until it is boiling. Meanwhile, measure the rice. Allow 50 g/2 oz/¼ cup per person.



2 Remove the pan lid. Pour the rice in a thin stream into the boiling water and stir well to separate the grains. Do not cover the pan again. Leave to boil for the time directed on the packet. Meanwhile, boil a kettle of water.



3 To test if the rice is cooked, lift out a few grains with a draining spoon and either taste or pinch a grain between your thumb and index finger. It should feel almost soft but still have some texture.



4 Place a colander in the sink and pour in the contents of the pan. Pour boiling water over the grains to rinse off excess starch, then lift up the colander and place on top of the saucepan to drain. Stir gently with a fork, then serve.

cooking spaghetti or pasta



1 Three-quarters fill a large pan with water and add 1 tsp salt and 1 tbsp oil. (This will stop it boiling over and prevent the pasta from being sticky.) Put over a high heat, cover with a lid and leave it to come to the boil.



2 While you wait, measure out the spaghetti. Allow 50–75 g/2–3 oz per person. When the water boils, remove the lid.



3 Hold the saucepan handle with one hand and the spaghetti with the other. Put the spaghetti into the water so that the ends touch the base of the pan.



4 Gently push the strands. They will gradually curl round the pan as they soften. Do

not push too hard or they will snap. Once submerged, stir gently to separate the strands. Cook for the time directed on the packet. Do not cover the pan.



5 To test the spaghetti is cooked, lift a strand out of the pan and throw it at the wall – it will stick if it is cooked. (Don't forget to remove it!) Alternatively, just bite a strand. It should feel just soft but still with a little bit of chewiness to it.



6 Put a colander in the sink. Pour the contents of the saucepan into the colander and allow it to drain well.



7 Lift up the colander of spaghetti and place on top of the saucepan to finish draining while you get out the plates.



NOTE: Cook other pasta in exactly the same way but simply add it slowly to the boiling water, rather than feeding it in gradually. Allow 50 g/2 oz per person. Stir well to separate before cooking.

fry-ups

Frying (sautéing) is a great way of cooking things really quickly. Use the minimum of oil, butter or margarine and always drain chips (fries) or other crisp-fried foods on kitchen paper (paper towels) to remove any excess oil before serving.

the great british fry-up for breakfast or brunch

serves 4

storecupboard ingredients

- 400 g/14 oz/1 large can of baked beans or tomatoes
- sunflower oil
- tomato ketchup (catsup) or brown table sauce
- salt and pepper
- 2 slices of bread
- 4 eggs

shopping list

- 8 rashers (slices) of rindless back bacon
- 4 large or 8 small sausages OR 8 slices of black pudding
- 100 g/4 oz button mushrooms

extra equipment

- small saucepan
- medium saucepan
- large frying pan (skillet)
- fish slice

1 Turn on the oven at the lowest setting and put a large serving platter and plates in to warm.

2 Wipe the mushrooms to remove any soil. Place in a small saucepan with 4 tbsp water and a little salt and pepper. Bring to the boil over a high heat. Turn the heat down low, cover with a lid and leave to cook for 5 minutes.

3 While the mushrooms are cooking, empty the beans or tomatoes into a medium saucepan and put over a low heat to heat through, stirring occasionally with a wooden spoon.

4 Heat a frying pan, add the sausages and dry-fry over a fairly high heat until they are

brown all over, turning frequently with a fish slice or tongs. Transfer to the large platter in the oven. If you are cooking black pudding, put a little oil in the frying pan and cook for 2 minutes on each side. Wipe out the pan before continuing with the rest of the cooking.

5 Add the bacon to the pan and cook until its fat is turning golden, turning over once. Transfer to the large platter in the oven.

6 Cut the bread slices into halves. Pour enough oil into the frying pan to cover the base. Heat until your hand feels hot when held 5 cm/2 in above it. Add the bread and fry (sauté) until brown underneath. Turn over with the fish slice and brown the other sides. Lift out of the pan, drain on kitchen paper (paper towels), then transfer to the large platter in the oven.

7 Heat a little more oil in the pan. Break the eggs into a cup, one at a time, and then gently slide into the hot oil. Cook the eggs until the whites are set and bubbling. Spoon a little of the hot oil over the yolks, if liked, to set the tops.

8 Carefully lift the eggs out of the pan on to the warmed plates with a fish slice. Divide the remaining fried ingredients between the plates and add the beans or tomatoes and mushrooms. Serve straight away with ketchup or brown table sauce.

leftovers fry-up with vegetables and crusty bread

serves 4

storecupboard ingredients

- 400 g/14 oz/1 large can of baked beans
- 225 g/8 oz cooked, leftover meat (beef, lamb, pork or chicken)
- 350 g/12 oz cooked, leftover vegetables (any combination of carrots, cauliflower, cabbage, peas etc.)
- Worcestershire sauce
- salt and pepper
- butter or margarine

shopping list

- 1 large onion
- 450 g/1 lb potatoes
- 1 crusty loaf

extra equipment

- large frying pan (skillet)
- fish slice

- 1 Peel and chop the onion.
- 2 Peel and dice the potatoes.
- 3 Cut the cooked meat into small pieces and roughly chop up the cooked vegetables.
- 4 Melt a large knob of butter or margarine in a frying pan and fry (sauté) the onion and potato over a medium heat for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally.
- 5 Turn on the oven at the lowest setting and put plates in to warm.
- 6 Add the meat and cooked vegetables, the baked beans and 1 tbsp Worcestershire sauce to the frying pan. Stir well and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Continue cooking and stirring for 5 minutes until piping hot.
- 7 Spoon the mixture on to the warm plates and serve with crusty bread.

top tip!

- If you don't have leftover cooked meat, a drained can of tuna fish or sliced hot dog sausages work equally well.

american red flannel hash with crisp salad

serves 4

storecupboard ingredients

- 350 g/12 oz/1 large can of corned beef
- sunflower oil
- salt and pepper
- milk

shopping list

- 2 rashers (slices) of rindless streaky bacon
- 2 large potatoes
- 1 onion
- 4 small cooked beetroot (red beets)
- fresh parsley
- curly endive (frisée lettuce)
- 2 large or 4 small tomatoes

extra equipment

- grater
- large frying pan (skillet)