

Pan & Pantry

A Simple Global Cookbook

Cheap, beginner-friendly recipes that need only a pan, a knife and a hungry appetite.

64 recipes • Indian • Italian • Chinese • Mexican • Pet-Friendly

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Indian

Indian home cooking is built on a handful of aromatic spices bloomed in hot oil, a technique called 'tadka'. These dishes are cheap, forgiving and come together in one pan. Expect earthy cumin, warming turmeric and a gentle heat from chilli.

15 recipes



INDIAN

Aloo Gobi

Dry-spiced potatoes and cauliflower cooked in one pan.

Cook time: 30 min | Difficulty: Easy | Entree

Origin & Story

A classic North Indian dry curry, aloo gobi ('potato-cauliflower') is a homely staple loved for its simplicity and the way the spices cling to the tender vegetables.

Main Spices & Their Role

- **Turmeric** — Colours the vegetables golden.
- **Cumin** — Bloomed at the start for an earthy base.
- **Garam masala** — A finishing pinch for warmth.

Ingredients

- 2 potatoes, cubed
- 1/2 cauliflower, florets
- 1 tsp cumin
- 1/2 tsp turmeric
- 1/2 tsp chilli powder
- 1/4 tsp garam masala
- 3 tbsp oil
- Salt
- Coriander

Method

- 1 Heat oil and crackle the cumin seeds.
- 2 Add potatoes and cauliflower with turmeric, chilli and salt.
- 3 Toss to coat, then cover and cook on low, stirring occasionally.
- 4 Cook 15-18 minutes until tender and lightly browned.
- 5 Finish with garam masala and coriander.

Vegetarian

This dish is already vegetarian.

Vegan

Already vegetarian and vegan — cook in oil (not ghee/butter) to keep it fully plant-based.



INDIAN

Aloo Jeera

Soft potatoes tossed with toasted cumin, a five-ingredient classic.

Cook time: 20 min | Difficulty: Easy | Entree

Origin & Story

A staple of North Indian home kitchens, aloo jeera ('potato-cumin') is the dish cooks reach for when the fridge is nearly empty. Its popularity spread through roadside dhabas where it is served with hot rotis.

Main Spices & Their Role

- **Cumin seeds** — Toasted whole in oil to release a nutty, earthy aroma that defines the dish.
- **Turmeric** — Adds golden colour and a mild warmth.
- **Red chilli powder** — Brings gentle, adjustable heat.

Ingredients

- 3 boiled potatoes, cubed
- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- 1/2 tsp turmeric
- 1/2 tsp red chilli powder
- 2 tbsp oil
- Salt to taste
- Fresh coriander

Method

- 1 Heat oil in a pan and add cumin seeds; let them sizzle for 20 seconds.
- 2 Add turmeric and chilli powder, stir once.
- 3 Tip in the boiled potato cubes and salt.
- 4 Toss on medium heat for 5-6 minutes until edges crisp.
- 5 Garnish with coriander and serve hot.

Vegetarian

This dish is already vegetarian.

Vegan

Already vegetarian and vegan — cook in oil (not ghee/butter) to keep it fully plant-based.



INDIAN

Bhindi Fry

Crisp pan-fried okra with a light dusting of dry spices.

Cook time: 20 min | Difficulty: Easy | Entree

Origin & Story

Bhindi fry is a beloved dry vegetable side across India. The trick, passed down in home kitchens, is to keep the okra dry and cook it uncovered so it turns crisp rather than slimy.

Main Spices & Their Role

- **Coriander powder** — Adds a citrusy, mildly sweet earthiness.
- **Red chilli powder** — For colour and gentle heat.
- **Amchur (dry mango)** — A tangy finishing note (optional).

Ingredients

- 400g okra, sliced
- 1 tsp coriander powder
- 1/2 tsp chilli powder
- 1/2 tsp amchur
- 1/4 tsp turmeric
- 3 tbsp oil
- Salt

Method

- 1 Wash and thoroughly dry the okra, then slice.
- 2 Heat oil in a wide pan and add the okra.
- 3 Fry on medium heat, stirring occasionally, for 8-10 minutes.
- 4 Sprinkle in the spices and salt.
- 5 Cook uncovered until crisp and serve.

Vegetarian

This dish is already vegetarian.

Vegan

Already vegetarian and vegan — cook in oil (not ghee/butter) to keep it fully plant-based.



INDIAN

Cabbage Sabzi

Quick stir-fried cabbage with cumin, turmeric and peas.

Cook time: 20 min | Difficulty: Easy | Entree

Origin & Story

Patta gobi ki sabzi is a humble, everyday dry vegetable dish across Indian homes, valued for being cheap, fast and endlessly comforting with roti.

Main Spices & Their Role

- **Cumin** — Bloomed in oil to open the dish.
- **Turmeric** — Adds warmth and colour.
- **Green chilli** — Fresh heat stirred through.

Ingredients

- 1/2 cabbage, shredded
- 1/4 cup peas
- 1 tsp cumin
- 1/4 tsp turmeric
- 1 green chilli
- 2 tbsp oil
- Salt
- Coriander

Method

- 1 Heat oil and crackle the cumin with green chilli.
- 2 Add turmeric, then the shredded cabbage and peas.
- 3 Season with salt and toss well.
- 4 Cover and cook on low 8-10 minutes until tender.
- 5 Garnish with coriander and serve.

Vegetarian

This dish is already vegetarian.

Vegan

Already vegetarian and vegan — cook in oil (not ghee/butter) to keep it fully plant-based.



INDIAN

Chana Masala

Hearty spiced chickpeas simmered in an onion-tomato gravy.

Cook time: 30 min | Difficulty: Medium | Entree

Origin & Story

Chana masala hails from the Punjab region and is a protein-packed favourite across North India, often paired with fluffy bhature or steamed rice.

Main Spices & Their Role

- **Garam masala** — A warming blend that defines the finished dish.
- **Cumin** — Bloomed at the start to build a savoury base.
- **Coriander powder** — Thickens the gravy with earthy flavour.

Ingredients

- 1 can chickpeas, drained
- 1 onion, chopped
- 2 tomatoes, pureed
- 1 tsp cumin
- 1 tsp coriander powder
- 1/2 tsp garam masala
- 2 tbsp oil
- Salt

Method

- 1 Heat oil and crackle the cumin seeds.
- 2 Saute onion until golden brown.
- 3 Add tomato puree, coriander powder and salt; cook until oil separates.
- 4 Stir in chickpeas and a splash of water.
- 5 Simmer 10 minutes, finish with garam masala and serve.

Vegetarian

This dish is already vegetarian.

Vegan

Already vegetarian and vegan — cook in oil (not ghee/butter) to keep it fully plant-based.



INDIAN

Dal Tadka

Creamy yellow lentils finished with a sizzling garlic tempering.

Cook time: 30 min | Difficulty: Easy | Entree

Origin & Story

Dal tadka is the comfort food of the entire subcontinent. The 'tadka' is a final flourish of spices fried in ghee and poured over the lentils just before serving for maximum aroma.

Main Spices & Their Role

- **Cumin** — The heart of the tadka, toasted until fragrant.
- **Turmeric** — Cooked with the lentils for colour and warmth.
- **Dried red chilli** — Fried whole for a smoky heat.

Ingredients

- 1 cup toor/yellow lentils
- 1/2 tsp turmeric
- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- 2 dried red chillies
- 4 garlic cloves, sliced
- 2 tbsp ghee or oil
- Salt
- Coriander

Method

- 1 Boil lentils with turmeric and salt until soft and mushy.
- 2 In a separate pan heat ghee and add cumin, garlic and chillies.
- 3 Fry until garlic turns golden and fragrant.
- 4 Pour the sizzling tadka over the cooked dal.
- 5 Stir, garnish with coriander and serve with rice.

Vegetarian

This dish is already vegetarian.

Vegan

Fry the tadka in oil instead of ghee and the whole dish is fully vegan.



INDIAN

Egg Bhurji

Indian-style scrambled eggs with tomato, onion and spices.

Cook time: 15 min | Difficulty: Easy | Quick Dish

Origin & Story

Egg bhurji is Mumbai street-food royalty, cooked to order on giant flat tawas and scooped up with pav (bread rolls). It turns a few eggs into a satisfying, spicy scramble.

Main Spices & Their Role

- **Cumin** — Adds a warm, toasty backbone.
- **Turmeric** — Colours the eggs a rich yellow.
- **Garam masala** — A finishing pinch for fragrant depth.

Ingredients

- 3 eggs
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 1 tomato, chopped
- 1/2 tsp cumin
- 1/4 tsp turmeric
- 1/4 tsp garam masala
- 2 tbsp oil
- Salt

Method

- 1 Heat oil, add cumin and let it crackle.
- 2 Saute onion until soft, then add tomato and spices.
- 3 Cook until the tomato breaks down.
- 4 Pour in beaten eggs and scramble on medium heat.
- 5 Finish with garam masala and coriander.

Vegetarian

Already vegetarian for egg-eaters.

Vegan

For tofu bhurji, crumble firm tofu in place of the eggs and add a pinch of turmeric plus a splash of water for colour and moisture.



INDIAN

Jeera Rice

Fragrant basmati rice studded with toasted cumin seeds.

Cook time: 25 min | Difficulty: Easy | Entree

Origin & Story

Jeera rice is the everyday aromatic rice of North India, a simple upgrade on plain boiled rice that pairs with almost any curry or dal.

Main Spices & Their Role

- **Cumin seeds** — Toasted in ghee to perfume every grain of rice.
- **Bay leaf** — Adds a subtle background fragrance.

Ingredients

- 1 cup basmati rice, soaked
- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- 1 bay leaf
- 2 tbsp ghee or oil
- 2 cups water
- Salt
- Coriander

Method

- 1 Heat ghee and add cumin seeds and bay leaf until fragrant.
- 2 Add the drained rice and toss gently for a minute.
- 3 Pour in water and salt, bring to a boil.
- 4 Cover and simmer on low until fluffy and water is absorbed.
- 5 Fluff with a fork and garnish with coriander.

Vegetarian

This dish is already vegetarian.

Vegan

Use oil in place of ghee for a fully vegan jeera rice.



INDIAN

Masala Omelette

A fluffy omelette loaded with onion, chilli and Indian spices.

Cook time: 10 min | Difficulty: Easy | Quick Dish

Origin & Story

Found at every Indian breakfast cart and railway platform, the masala omelette is the country's answer to a quick, protein-rich meal, given personality by chopped green chilli and coriander.

Main Spices & Their Role

- **Turmeric** — Lends colour and an earthy base note.
- **Green chilli** — Fresh, sharp heat folded through the eggs.
- **Black pepper** — Rounds out the savoury flavour.

Ingredients

- 3 eggs
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 1 green chilli, minced
- 1/4 tsp turmeric
- Pinch of black pepper
- 1 tbsp oil
- Salt
- Coriander

Method

- 1 Whisk eggs with turmeric, pepper and salt.
- 2 Stir in onion, chilli and coriander.
- 3 Heat oil in a pan and pour in the mixture.
- 4 Cook on low until the base sets, then flip.
- 5 Fold and serve with toast or bread.

Vegetarian

Already vegetarian for egg-eaters.

Vegan

Make a vegan besan (chickpea flour) omelette: whisk 1 cup besan with water, the same onion, chilli and spices, then pan-fry like a pancake.



INDIAN

Palak Dal

Yellow lentils cooked with spinach and a garlic tempering.

Cook time: 30 min | Difficulty: Easy | Entree

Origin & Story

Palak dal marries protein-rich lentils with iron-rich spinach, a nourishing everyday dish found across Indian homes for a balanced, budget meal.

Main Spices & Their Role

- **Cumin** — The base of the tempering.
- **Turmeric** — Cooked with the lentils for colour.
- **Garlic** — Fried until golden for a punchy finish.

Ingredients

- 1 cup yellow lentils
- 2 cups chopped spinach
- 1/2 tsp turmeric
- 1 tsp cumin
- 4 garlic cloves, sliced
- 1 dried red chilli
- 2 tbsp oil
- Salt

Method

- 1 Boil lentils with turmeric and salt until soft.
- 2 Stir the chopped spinach into the hot dal and cook 3 minutes.
- 3 In a pan heat oil and fry cumin, garlic and chilli until golden.
- 4 Pour the tempering over the dal.
- 5 Stir and serve with rice or roti.

Vegetarian

This dish is already vegetarian.

Vegan

Already vegetarian and vegan — cook in oil (not ghee/butter) to keep it fully plant-based.



INDIAN

Poha

Light flattened-rice breakfast tossed with onion, peanuts and lime.

Cook time: 15 min | Difficulty: Easy | Quick Dish

Origin & Story

Poha is the quintessential quick breakfast of central and western India, especially Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh, sold everywhere from home kitchens to morning stalls.

Main Spices & Their Role

- **Mustard seeds** — Popped in oil for the classic tempering.
- **Turmeric** — Tints the flattened rice yellow.
- **Curry leaves** — Add a fragrant, savoury lift.

Ingredients

- 2 cups flattened rice (poha)
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 tsp mustard seeds
- 1/4 tsp turmeric
- Handful peanuts
- 8 curry leaves
- 1 green chilli
- 2 tbsp oil
- Lime & coriander

Method

- 1 Rinse the poha briefly and drain; it should be soft, not soggy.
- 2 Heat oil and pop mustard seeds with peanuts, curry leaves and chilli.
- 3 Add onion and cook until soft, then turmeric and salt.
- 4 Fold in the poha gently and warm through.
- 5 Finish with lime juice and coriander.

Vegetarian

This dish is already vegetarian.

Vegan

Already vegetarian and vegan — cook in oil (not ghee/butter) to keep it fully plant-based.



INDIAN

Rajma

Red kidney beans simmered in a spiced onion-tomato gravy.

Cook time: 35 min | Difficulty: Medium | Entree

Origin & Story

Rajma-chawal (kidney beans with rice) is the ultimate comfort meal of North India, especially Punjab, where Sunday lunch is unthinkable without it.

Main Spices & Their Role

- **Cumin** — The aromatic starting note.
- **Coriander powder** — Builds the earthy body of the gravy.
- **Garam masala** — A warming finish.

Ingredients

- 1 can red kidney beans
- 1 onion, chopped
- 2 tomatoes, pureed
- 1 tsp cumin
- 1 tsp coriander powder
- 1/2 tsp garam masala
- 1 tsp ginger-garlic paste
- 2 tbsp oil
- Salt

Method

- 1 Heat oil and crackle the cumin.
- 2 Saute onion, then ginger-garlic until golden.
- 3 Add tomato puree, coriander powder and salt; cook until thick.
- 4 Add the beans with a cup of water and simmer 15 minutes, mashing a few for creaminess.
- 5 Finish with garam masala and serve with rice.

Vegetarian

This dish is already vegetarian.

Vegan

Already vegetarian and vegan — cook in oil (not ghee/butter) to keep it fully plant-based.



INDIAN

Tomato Rice

Tangy South Indian rice cooked with tomatoes and a simple tempering.

Cook time: 25 min | Difficulty: Easy | Entree

Origin & Story

A South Indian lunchbox favourite, tomato rice (thakkali sadam) is a clever way to use up leftover rice, tempered with mustard seeds and curry leaves.

Main Spices & Their Role

- **Mustard seeds** — Popped in oil for a nutty crackle.
- **Curry leaves** — Add an unmistakable citrus-herb aroma.
- **Red chilli powder** — Balances the tomato's tang with heat.

Ingredients

- 2 cups cooked rice
- 2 tomatoes, pureed
- 1 tsp mustard seeds
- 8 curry leaves
- 1/2 tsp chilli powder
- 1 onion, sliced
- 2 tbsp oil
- Salt

Method

- 1 Heat oil and splutter mustard seeds with curry leaves.
- 2 Add onion and cook until golden.
- 3 Pour in tomato puree and chilli powder; cook until thick.
- 4 Fold in the cooked rice and salt.
- 5 Toss gently until evenly coated and serve.

Vegetarian

This dish is already vegetarian.

Vegan

Already vegetarian and vegan — cook in oil (not ghee/butter) to keep it fully plant-based.



INDIAN

Upma

Savoury semolina porridge with vegetables and a mustard tempering.

Cook time: 20 min | Difficulty: Easy | Entree

Origin & Story

Upma is a beloved South Indian breakfast made from roasted semolina (rava), quick to cook and endlessly adaptable with whatever vegetables are on hand.

Main Spices & Their Role

- **Mustard seeds** — The foundation of the tempering.
- **Curry leaves** — Add aroma and a subtle bitterness.
- **Green chilli** — Provides fresh heat.

Ingredients

- 1 cup semolina (rava)
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 tsp mustard seeds
- 8 curry leaves
- 1 green chilli
- Handful peas/carrot
- 2 tbsp oil
- 3 cups water
- Salt

Method

- 1 Dry-roast the semolina until lightly golden; set aside.
- 2 Heat oil and pop mustard seeds, curry leaves and chilli.
- 3 Saute onion and vegetables until soft.
- 4 Add water and salt, bring to a boil.
- 5 Slowly stir in the semolina and cook until thick and fluffy.

Vegetarian

This dish is already vegetarian.

Vegan

Already vegetarian and vegan — cook in oil (not ghee/butter) to keep it fully plant-based.



INDIAN

Vegetable Pulao

One-pot spiced rice cooked with mixed vegetables.

Cook time: 30 min | Difficulty: Easy | Entree

Origin & Story

Pulao is the Indian one-pot rice dish descended from Persian pilaf, a fragrant, mildly spiced meal that turns rice and a few vegetables into a complete plate.

Main Spices & Their Role

- **Whole garam masala** — Cinnamon, cloves and cardamom perfume the rice.
- **Cumin** — Toasted at the start for depth.
- **Bay leaf** — Rounds out the aromatic base.

Ingredients

- 1 cup basmati rice, soaked
- 1 cup mixed vegetables (peas, carrot, beans)
- 1 onion, sliced
- 1 tsp cumin
- Whole spices (cinnamon, cloves, cardamom)
- 2 tbsp oil
- 2 cups water
- Salt

Method

- 1 Heat oil and add the whole spices and cumin.
- 2 Saute onion until golden, then add the vegetables.
- 3 Add the drained rice and toss for a minute.
- 4 Pour in water and salt, bring to a boil.
- 5 Cover and simmer on low until fluffy.

Vegetarian

This dish is already vegetarian.

Vegan

Already vegetarian and vegan — cook in oil (not ghee/butter) to keep it fully plant-based.

Italian

Italian cooking celebrates simplicity: good olive oil, garlic, tomatoes and fresh herbs. Most of these recipes need nothing more than a pot of pasta water and a hot pan, proving that a memorable meal can cost very little.

15 recipes



ITALIAN

Bruschetta

Toasted bread topped with fresh tomato, garlic and basil.

Cook time: 10 min | Difficulty: Easy | Quick Dish

Origin & Story

Bruschetta dates back to ancient Rome, where it was a way to test freshly pressed olive oil on grilled bread rubbed with garlic. Tomatoes joined the party much later.

Main Spices & Their Role

- **Black pepper** — Seasons the tomato topping.
- **Dried oregano** — Optional herbal lift for the tomatoes.

Ingredients

- 4 slices rustic bread
- 3 tomatoes, diced
- 1 garlic clove
- Fresh basil
- 3 tbsp olive oil
- Salt & pepper

Method

- 1 Toast bread slices in a dry pan until golden.
- 2 Rub each slice with the raw garlic clove.
- 3 Mix diced tomato, basil, olive oil, salt and pepper.
- 4 Spoon the tomato over the toast.
- 5 Drizzle with extra oil and serve right away.

Vegetarian

This dish is already vegetarian.

Vegan

Already vegan — use a plant-based bread and you're set.



ITALIAN

Cacio e Pepe

Roman pasta with a creamy cheese-and-pepper sauce, no cream needed.

Cook time: 20 min | Difficulty: Medium | Entree

Origin & Story

A Roman classic, cacio e pepe ('cheese and pepper') was shepherds' food, made from ingredients that kept well on the road. The 'cream' comes purely from cheese emulsified with starchy pasta water.

Main Spices & Their Role

- **Black pepper** — Freshly cracked and toasted, it is the star flavour.

Ingredients

- 200g spaghetti
- 60g grated pecorino or parmesan
- 1 tbsp black peppercorns, cracked
- Reserved pasta water
- Salt

Method

- 1 Cook pasta in salted water; reserve plenty of starchy water.
- 2 Toast cracked pepper in a dry pan.
- 3 Add a ladle of pasta water to the pan.
- 4 Off the heat, stir in the cheese to form a glossy sauce.
- 5 Toss with the pasta, loosening with water as needed.

Vegetarian

Already vegetarian — use a vegetarian (rennet-free) hard cheese.

Vegan

Blend soaked cashews with nutritional yeast and a little pasta water to mimic the cheese sauce, then toss with plenty of black pepper.



ITALIAN

Caprese Salad

Tomato, mozzarella and basil dressed in olive oil.

Cook time: 10 min | Difficulty: Easy | Quick Dish

Origin & Story

Named after the island of Capri, this salad mirrors the colours of the Italian flag. It is a no-cook celebration of peak-summer tomatoes and fresh mozzarella.

Main Spices & Their Role

- **Black pepper** — A final crack for gentle bite.
- **Sea salt** — Draws out the sweetness of the tomatoes.

Ingredients

- 2 large tomatoes, sliced
- 1 ball mozzarella, sliced
- Fresh basil leaves
- 3 tbsp olive oil
- Sea salt & pepper

Method

- 1 Slice tomatoes and mozzarella into even rounds.
- 2 Arrange them alternately on a plate.
- 3 Tuck basil leaves between the slices.
- 4 Drizzle generously with olive oil.
- 5 Season with salt and pepper and serve.

Vegetarian

Already vegetarian — use a rennet-free mozzarella if needed.

Vegan

Replace the mozzarella with slices of plant-based mozzarella or firm marinated tofu.



ITALIAN

Frittata

An open-faced Italian egg omelette packed with vegetables.

Cook time: 20 min | Difficulty: Medium | Entree

Origin & Story

The frittata is Italy's thrifty egg dish, designed to use up odds and ends of vegetables and cheese. Unlike a French omelette, it is cooked slowly and served in wedges.

Main Spices & Their Role

- **Black pepper** — Seasons the egg base.
- **Dried herbs** — Oregano or thyme add gentle aroma.

Ingredients

- 5 eggs
- 1 onion, sliced
- 1 courgette or potato, diced
- Handful grated cheese
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- Salt & pepper
- Herbs

Method

- 1 Saute onion and vegetables in an oven-safe pan until tender.
- 2 Whisk eggs with salt, pepper and cheese.
- 3 Pour eggs over the vegetables and cook on low.
- 4 When almost set, finish under a grill or covered lid.
- 5 Slide out and slice into wedges.

Vegetarian

Already vegetarian — simply leave out any meat and use a vegetarian cheese.

Vegan

Make a chickpea-flour (besan) frittata: whisk 1 cup chickpea flour with 1 cup water, season, add the vegetables and pan-bake until set.



ITALIAN

Insalata di Riso

Chilled Italian rice salad with crunchy vegetables.

Cook time: 20 min | Difficulty: Easy | Entree

Origin & Story

Insalata di riso is the Italian summer picnic staple, a cold rice salad packed with whatever crisp vegetables and pickles are around.

Main Spices & Their Role

- **Black pepper** — Seasons the salad.
- **Dried oregano** — A herby note.

Ingredients

- 1.5 cups cooked rice, cooled
- 1 bell pepper, diced
- Handful peas & corn
- Cherry tomatoes, halved
- Olives
- 3 tbsp olive oil
- Lemon juice
- Salt & pepper

Method

- 1 Cook and cool the rice completely.
- 2 Chop all the vegetables into small even pieces.
- 3 Combine rice, vegetables and olives in a bowl.
- 4 Dress with olive oil, lemon, salt and pepper.
- 5 Chill for 20 minutes and serve cold.

Vegetarian

This dish is already vegetarian.

Vegan

Already vegetarian and vegan — cook in oil (not ghee/butter) to keep it fully plant-based.



ITALIAN

Minestrone

A hearty Italian vegetable soup with beans and pasta.

Cook time: 35 min | Difficulty: Easy | Entree

Origin & Story

Minestrone is Italy's classic 'big soup', a thrifty, ever-changing pot of seasonal vegetables, beans and a little pasta that has fed families for centuries.

Main Spices & Their Role

- **Bay leaf** — Adds background aroma to the broth.
- **Black pepper** — Seasons the soup.
- **Dried oregano** — A herby lift.

Ingredients

- 1 onion, carrot & celery, diced
- 1 can chopped tomatoes
- 1 can beans
- Handful small pasta
- 2 garlic cloves
- 1 bay leaf
- 3 tbsp olive oil
- Salt & pepper

Method

- 1 Saute onion, carrot, celery and garlic in olive oil.
- 2 Add tomatoes, bay leaf and enough water to make a broth.
- 3 Simmer 15 minutes, then add the beans.
- 4 Cook the pasta directly in the soup until tender.
- 5 Season and serve with olive oil.

Vegetarian

This dish is already vegetarian.

Vegan

Already vegan — use vegetable stock and finish with olive oil rather than cheese.



ITALIAN

Panzanella

Tuscan bread salad with juicy tomatoes and a sharp dressing.

Cook time: 15 min | Difficulty: Easy | Quick Dish

Origin & Story

Panzanella is a Tuscan summer salad invented to use up stale bread, soaked in tomato juices and vinegar so nothing goes to waste.

Main Spices & Their Role

- **Black pepper** — Seasons the salad.
- **Dried oregano** — Adds a herby lift.

Ingredients

- 3 cups stale bread, cubed
- 3 tomatoes, chopped
- 1/2 red onion, sliced
- Cucumber, chopped
- Fresh basil
- 3 tbsp olive oil
- 1 tbsp vinegar
- Salt & pepper

Method

- 1 Toast the bread cubes in a dry pan until crisp.
- 2 Combine tomato, onion, cucumber and basil in a bowl.
- 3 Whisk olive oil, vinegar, salt and pepper.
- 4 Toss the bread through the vegetables and dressing.
- 5 Let it sit 10 minutes so the bread softens, then serve.

Vegetarian

This dish is already vegetarian.

Vegan

Already vegetarian and vegan — cook in oil (not ghee/butter) to keep it fully plant-based.



ITALIAN

Pasta Aglione

Tuscan garlic-and-tomato pasta with a mellow, roasted sweetness.

Cook time: 25 min | Difficulty: Easy | Entree

Origin & Story

From the Val di Chiana in Tuscany, aglione is a rustic sauce built on a large, sweet local garlic. It is traditionally paired with hand-rolled pici pasta.

Main Spices & Their Role

- **Chilli flakes** — A pinch of heat to lift the sweet garlic.
- **Black pepper** — Balances the tomato base.

Ingredients

- 200g pasta
- 6 garlic cloves, sliced
- 1 can chopped tomatoes
- 1/2 tsp chilli flakes
- 3 tbsp olive oil
- Salt
- Parsley

Method

- 1 Boil pasta until al dente.
- 2 Slowly cook garlic in olive oil until soft and sweet.
- 3 Add chilli flakes and tomatoes; simmer 15 minutes.
- 4 Season and toss with the drained pasta.
- 5 Finish with parsley and olive oil.

Vegetarian

This dish is already vegetarian.

Vegan

Already vegan — no cheese needed for this rustic sauce.



ITALIAN

Pasta Pomodoro

Silky tomato-basil sauce clinging to a bowl of pasta.

Cook time: 25 min | Difficulty: Easy | Entree

Origin & Story

Pomodoro sauce is the soul of southern Italian cooking, a slow-simmered blend of tomatoes, garlic and basil that turns four cheap ingredients into something greater than the sum of its parts.

Main Spices & Their Role

- **Black pepper** — Simple seasoning that lets the tomato shine.
- **Chilli flakes** — An optional pinch for background warmth.

Ingredients

- 200g pasta
- 1 can chopped tomatoes
- 2 garlic cloves
- Fresh basil
- 3 tbsp olive oil
- Salt & pepper

Method

- 1 Cook pasta in salted water until al dente.
- 2 Soften garlic in olive oil, then add the tomatoes.
- 3 Simmer 15 minutes until thick, seasoning with salt and pepper.
- 4 Tear in basil and toss with the drained pasta.
- 5 Serve with a drizzle of olive oil.

Vegetarian

This dish is already vegetarian.

Vegan

Already vegan — skip the parmesan and finish with olive oil instead.



ITALIAN

Pasta Primavera

Bright pasta tossed with a medley of spring vegetables.

Cook time: 20 min | Difficulty: Easy | Entree

Origin & Story

Pasta primavera ('spring pasta') celebrates fresh seasonal vegetables in a light garlic-and-oil toss, a colourful, healthy plate that's easy on the budget.

Main Spices & Their Role

- **Black pepper** — Simple seasoning.
- **Chilli flakes** — An optional pinch of heat.

Ingredients

- 200g pasta
- 1 courgette, sliced
- 1 bell pepper, sliced
- Handful peas
- 2 garlic cloves
- 3 tbsp olive oil
- Lemon zest
- Salt & pepper
- Basil

Method

- 1 Cook the pasta until al dente; reserve some water.
- 2 Saute garlic then the vegetables in olive oil until just tender.
- 3 Add the pasta with a splash of the reserved water.
- 4 Toss with lemon zest, salt and pepper.
- 5 Finish with basil and serve.

Vegetarian

This dish is already vegetarian.

Vegan

Already vegan — skip any parmesan and add a squeeze of lemon for brightness.



ITALIAN

Pasta al Burro

The simplest comforting pasta: butter, parmesan and starchy water.

Cook time: 15 min | Difficulty: Easy | Quick Dish

Origin & Story

Pasta al burro ('pasta with butter') is the Italian equivalent of a warm hug, the first dish many Italian children learn to love and the ultimate quick supper.

Main Spices & Their Role

- **Black pepper** — A gentle grind to finish.
- **Nutmeg** — An optional whisper of warmth (traditional).

Ingredients

- 200g pasta
- 3 tbsp butter
- 50g grated parmesan
- Reserved pasta water
- Salt & pepper

Method

- 1 Cook the pasta in salted water until al dente; reserve some water.
- 2 Melt the butter in a wide pan.
- 3 Add the drained pasta and a splash of pasta water.
- 4 Toss with the parmesan until glossy and creamy.
- 5 Season with pepper and serve at once.

Vegetarian

Already vegetarian — use a vegetarian hard cheese.

Vegan

Use vegan butter and swap the parmesan for nutritional yeast or plant-based parmesan.



ITALIAN

Pasta e Ceci

A rustic Roman one-pot of pasta cooked with chickpeas.

Cook time: 25 min | Difficulty: Easy | Entree

Origin & Story

Pasta e ceci is cucina povera ('poor kitchen') at its finest, a hearty Roman dish that stretches a can of chickpeas and a handful of pasta into a filling meal.

Main Spices & Their Role

- **Rosemary** — Infuses the broth with woody aroma.
- **Black pepper** — Adds gentle bite.
- **Chilli flakes** — Optional warmth.

Ingredients

- 150g short pasta
- 1 can chickpeas
- 2 garlic cloves
- 1 sprig rosemary
- 1 tbsp tomato paste
- 3 tbsp olive oil
- Salt & pepper

Method

- 1 Soften garlic and rosemary in olive oil.
- 2 Stir in tomato paste, then the chickpeas and their liquid plus water.
- 3 Bring to a simmer and mash a few chickpeas to thicken.
- 4 Add the pasta and cook directly in the broth, stirring.
- 5 Season and serve loose and soupy with olive oil.

Vegetarian

This dish is already vegetarian.

Vegan

Already vegan — finish with olive oil rather than cheese.



ITALIAN

Pasta e Fagioli

Thick, cosy pasta-and-bean soup from the Italian countryside.

Cook time: 30 min | Difficulty: Easy | Entree

Origin & Story

Pasta e fagioli ('pasta and beans') is a classic peasant dish found all over Italy, a nourishing one-pot that costs almost nothing to make.

Main Spices & Their Role

- **Rosemary** — Perfumes the broth.
- **Black pepper** — Adds warmth.

Ingredients

- 150g short pasta
- 1 can borlotti or cannellini beans
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 carrot, diced
- 1 tbsp tomato paste
- 1 sprig rosemary
- 3 tbsp olive oil
- Salt & pepper

Method

- 1 Saute onion and carrot in olive oil until soft.
- 2 Stir in tomato paste and rosemary.
- 3 Add the beans and enough water to make a broth; simmer 10 minutes.
- 4 Cook the pasta directly in the soup until tender.
- 5 Season and serve with a drizzle of olive oil.

Vegetarian

This dish is already vegetarian.

Vegan

Already vegan — use a vegetable stock base and finish with olive oil.



ITALIAN

Spaghetti Aglio e Olio

Spaghetti tossed with golden garlic, olive oil and chilli flakes.

Cook time: 15 min | Difficulty: Easy | Quick Dish

Origin & Story

Born in Naples, aglio e olio ('garlic and oil') is the definition of Italian frugal cooking, a satisfying midnight meal made from pantry staples in under fifteen minutes.

Main Spices & Their Role

- **Red chilli flakes** — Peperoncino adds a gentle, warming heat.
- **Black pepper** — A final grind for sharpness.

Ingredients

- 200g spaghetti
- 5 garlic cloves, thinly sliced
- 4 tbsp olive oil
- 1/2 tsp chilli flakes
- Salt
- Parsley
- Reserved pasta water

Method

- 1 Boil spaghetti in salted water until al dente; reserve a cup of water.
- 2 Gently warm olive oil and slice garlic until pale gold.
- 3 Add chilli flakes and a splash of pasta water.
- 4 Toss in the drained pasta and emulsify with more water.
- 5 Finish with parsley and serve immediately.

Vegetarian

This dish is already vegetarian.

Vegan

Already vegan as written — just skip any parmesan garnish.



ITALIAN

Spaghetti Puttanesca

Bold pasta with tomatoes, olives, capers and garlic.

Cook time: 20 min | Difficulty: Easy | Entree

Origin & Story

Puttanesca is a punchy Neapolitan sauce, famously thrown together from cupboard staples. Its salty, savoury depth comes from olives and capers.

Main Spices & Their Role

- **Chilli flakes** — Brings the signature heat.
- **Black pepper** — Rounds out the sauce.

Ingredients

- 200g spaghetti
- 1 can chopped tomatoes
- 2 garlic cloves
- Handful olives, sliced
- 1 tbsp capers
- 1/2 tsp chilli flakes
- 3 tbsp olive oil
- Parsley

Method

- 1 Cook spaghetti until al dente.
- 2 Soften garlic and chilli flakes in olive oil.
- 3 Add olives, capers and tomatoes; simmer 12 minutes.
- 4 Toss the drained pasta through the sauce.
- 5 Finish with parsley and serve.

Vegetarian

Already vegetarian — traditional recipes add anchovy, so simply leave it out (as done here).

Vegan

Already vegan in this version; a dash of soy sauce restores the savoury depth of the omitted anchovy.

Chinese

Chinese stir-fries are the ultimate quick meal: high heat, a splash of soy sauce and a few minutes in the pan. Garlic, ginger and spring onion form the flavour base for dishes that are light on the wallet and ready in minutes.

15 recipes



CHINESE

Chow Mein

Stir-fried noodles with crunchy vegetables and savoury sauce.

Cook time: 20 min | Difficulty: Easy | Entree

Origin & Story

Chow mein means 'stir-fried noodles' in Cantonese. Carried abroad by Chinese immigrants, it became one of the most recognisable dishes in the world while remaining a cheap home favourite.

Main Spices & Their Role

- **Ginger** — Fresh, zingy warmth in the aromatic base.
- **White pepper** — Rounds out the savoury sauce.

Ingredients

- 200g noodles
- 1 carrot, julienned
- 1 cup shredded cabbage
- 2 garlic cloves
- 1 tsp grated ginger
- 2 tbsp soy sauce
- 2 tbsp oil

Method

- 1 Boil the noodles, drain and set aside.
- 2 Stir-fry garlic and ginger in hot oil.
- 3 Add carrot and cabbage; toss on high heat.
- 4 Add noodles and soy sauce.
- 5 Toss until everything is coated and serve.

Vegetarian

This dish is already vegetarian.

Vegan

Already vegan — check your noodles are egg-free (use rice or wheat noodles without egg).



CHINESE

Congee

Comforting rice porridge simmered until silky and soft.

Cook time: 45 min | Difficulty: Easy | Entree

Origin & Story

Congee is the ultimate Chinese comfort food and breakfast staple, a slow-simmered rice porridge eaten across Asia and endlessly customised with toppings.

Main Spices & Their Role

- **Ginger** — Simmered in for a warming, soothing base.
- **White pepper** — The traditional finishing seasoning.

Ingredients

- 1/2 cup rice
- 6 cups water or stock
- 1 tsp grated ginger
- 1/4 tsp white pepper
- Salt
- Spring onion & soy sauce to top
- Sesame oil

Method

- 1 Rinse the rice and add to a pot with the water and ginger.
- 2 Bring to a boil, then simmer on low, stirring occasionally.
- 3 Cook 40 minutes until the grains break down and it turns creamy.
- 4 Season with salt and white pepper.
- 5 Top with spring onion, soy sauce and sesame oil.

Vegetarian

Already vegetarian — use water or vegetable stock as the base.

Vegan

Already vegetarian and vegan — cook in oil (not ghee/butter) to keep it fully plant-based.



CHINESE

Egg Drop Soup

Silky broth with delicate ribbons of egg.

Cook time: 15 min | Difficulty: Easy | Quick Dish

Origin & Story

Egg drop soup (danhuatang, 'egg flower soup') is a soothing Chinese classic, made by streaming beaten egg into hot broth to form soft, feathery strands.

Main Spices & Their Role

- **White pepper** — The classic warming seasoning.
- **Ginger** — Adds a gentle aromatic base.

Ingredients

- 3 cups vegetable stock
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 1 tsp grated ginger
- 1 tbsp cornflour + water
- 1/4 tsp white pepper
- 2 spring onions
- Salt
- Sesame oil

Method

- 1 Bring the stock to a gentle simmer with ginger.
- 2 Thicken slightly with the cornflour slurry.
- 3 Turn off the heat and slowly stream in the beaten egg while stirring.
- 4 Season with white pepper and salt.
- 5 Top with spring onion and a drop of sesame oil.

Vegetarian

Already vegetarian — use vegetable stock (as here) rather than chicken stock.

Vegan

For a vegan version, skip the egg and stir in silken tofu strands or a swirl of cornflour slurry for body.



CHINESE

Egg Fried Rice

Wok-tossed rice with fluffy egg and spring onion.

Cook time: 15 min | Difficulty: Easy | Quick Dish

Origin & Story

Egg fried rice is the classic way Chinese cooks revive day-old rice. Its origins trace to the Sui dynasty, and every household has its own quick version.

Main Spices & Their Role

- **White pepper** — Adds a subtle, floral heat typical of Chinese cooking.
- **Spring onion** — Fresh, mild onion aroma stirred in at the end.

Ingredients

- 2 cups cold cooked rice
- 2 eggs
- 2 spring onions, sliced
- 1 tbsp soy sauce
- 1/4 tsp white pepper
- 2 tbsp oil
- Salt

Method

- 1 Heat oil in a wok until very hot.
- 2 Scramble the eggs, then push to one side.
- 3 Add the cold rice and break up any lumps.
- 4 Stir in soy sauce, white pepper and salt.
- 5 Toss through spring onion and serve hot.

Vegetarian

Already vegetarian for egg-eaters.

Vegan

Leave out the egg and add extra vegetables, or scramble crumbled firm tofu with a pinch of turmeric in its place.



CHINESE

Garlic Bok Choy

Tender greens flash-fried with plenty of garlic.

Cook time: 10 min | Difficulty: Easy | Quick Dish

Origin & Story

Stir-fried bok choy with garlic is a staple green side on Chinese tables, cooked in minutes to keep the stems crisp and the leaves silky.

Main Spices & Their Role

- **Garlic** — The dominant, fragrant flavour.
- **White pepper** — A subtle seasoning.

Ingredients

- 4 heads bok choy, halved
- 4 garlic cloves, sliced
- 1 tbsp soy sauce
- 1 tsp sesame oil
- 2 tbsp oil
- Pinch of sugar
- Salt

Method

- 1 Wash the bok choy and shake dry.
- 2 Heat oil and fry the garlic until just golden.
- 3 Add the bok choy and toss on high heat.
- 4 Add soy sauce, sugar and a splash of water; cover 1 minute.
- 5 Finish with sesame oil and serve.

Vegetarian

This dish is already vegetarian.

Vegan

Already vegetarian and vegan — cook in oil (not ghee/butter) to keep it fully plant-based.



CHINESE

Garlic Noodles

Simple noodles glossed in a punchy garlic-soy butter sauce.

Cook time: 15 min | Difficulty: Easy | Quick Dish

Origin & Story

A modern Chinese-American favourite, garlic noodles were popularised in San Francisco. They pack maximum garlic flavour into a dish that costs next to nothing.

Main Spices & Their Role

- **Garlic** — Used generously as the dominant flavour.
- **White pepper** — A gentle finishing heat.

Ingredients

- 200g noodles
- 6 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 tbsp soy sauce
- 1 tbsp butter or oil
- 1 tsp sugar
- 1/4 tsp white pepper
- Spring onion

Method

- 1 Cook the noodles and drain.
- 2 Gently fry the minced garlic in butter until fragrant.
- 3 Add soy sauce, sugar and white pepper.
- 4 Toss the noodles through the sauce.
- 5 Top with spring onion and serve.

Vegetarian

This dish is already vegetarian.

Vegan

Use oil or vegan butter instead of dairy butter and choose egg-free noodles.



CHINESE

Kung Pao Tofu

Crispy tofu with peanuts in a sweet, spicy Sichuan sauce.

Cook time: 25 min | Difficulty: Medium | Entree

Origin & Story

Kung Pao originates from Sichuan province and is named after a Qing dynasty official. This tofu version keeps the signature tingle of the sauce while being kind to your budget.

Main Spices & Their Role

- **Dried red chilli** — Provides the dish's fiery heat.
- **Sichuan pepper** — Delivers the characteristic numbing tingle.
- **Ginger & garlic** — The aromatic base of the sauce.

Ingredients

- 1 block firm tofu, cubed
- Handful roasted peanuts
- 3 dried red chillies
- 1/2 tsp Sichuan pepper
- 2 tbsp soy sauce
- 1 tsp sugar
- 1 tsp vinegar
- 3 tbsp oil

Method

- 1 Pan-fry tofu cubes until golden on all sides.
- 2 In the same pan toast chillies and Sichuan pepper.
- 3 Add garlic and ginger, then the soy, sugar and vinegar.
- 4 Return the tofu and toss to coat.
- 5 Stir in peanuts and serve with rice.

Vegetarian

This dish is already vegetarian.

Vegan

Already vegan — just confirm your sugar and sauces are plant-based.



CHINESE

Mapo Tofu

Silky tofu in a spicy, savoury Sichuan bean sauce.

Cook time: 20 min | Difficulty: Medium | Entree

Origin & Story

Mapo tofu is a famous Sichuan dish said to be created by a pockmarked ('mapo') old woman. This vegetarian version keeps the numbing, spicy magic without the pork.

Main Spices & Their Role

- **Sichuan pepper** — Delivers the trademark tingling numbness.
- **Chilli bean paste (doubanjiang)** — The spicy, savoury heart of the sauce.
- **Ginger & garlic** — Build the aromatic base.

Ingredients

- 1 block soft tofu, cubed
- 1 tbsp chilli bean paste
- 1/2 tsp Sichuan pepper
- 2 garlic cloves
- 1 tsp ginger
- 1 tbsp soy sauce
- 1 tsp cornflour + water
- 2 spring onions
- 2 tbsp oil

Method

- 1 Heat oil and fry garlic, ginger and chilli bean paste until fragrant.
- 2 Add a cup of water and soy sauce to make a sauce.
- 3 Toast and crush the Sichuan pepper, then add it.
- 4 Gently slide in the tofu and simmer 5 minutes.
- 5 Thicken with the cornflour slurry, top with spring onion.

Vegetarian

Already vegetarian in this version (traditional mapo tofu uses pork, which is omitted here).

Vegan

Already vegan as written — confirm your chilli bean paste has no added meat.



CHINESE

Sesame Noodles

Cold noodles tossed in a nutty sesame-soy dressing.

Cook time: 15 min | Difficulty: Easy | Quick Dish

Origin & Story

Sesame noodles are a beloved cold dish from northern China, dressed in a creamy sesame paste sauce that's perfect for warm days and quick lunches.

Main Spices & Their Role

- **Sesame paste** — The rich, nutty base of the sauce.
- **Garlic** — Adds a sharp savoury kick.
- **Chilli oil** — An optional drizzle of heat.

Ingredients

- 200g noodles
- 2 tbsp sesame paste or tahini
- 1 tbsp soy sauce
- 1 tsp vinegar
- 1 garlic clove, grated
- 1 tsp sugar
- Sesame oil
- Spring onion & cucumber

Method

- 1 Cook the noodles, rinse under cold water and drain.
- 2 Whisk sesame paste, soy, vinegar, garlic and sugar with a little water.
- 3 Toss the cold noodles in the sauce.
- 4 Top with sliced cucumber and spring onion.
- 5 Drizzle with sesame oil and serve.

Vegetarian

This dish is already vegetarian.

Vegan

Already vegan — use egg-free noodles to keep it fully plant-based.



CHINESE

Smashed Cucumber Salad

Crunchy smashed cucumber in a tangy garlic dressing.

Cook time: 15 min | Difficulty: Easy | Quick Dish

Origin & Story

Pai huang gua ('smashed cucumber') is a refreshing Chinese side. Smashing the cucumber creates craggy surfaces that soak up the punchy dressing.

Main Spices & Their Role

- **Garlic** — The bold, savoury base of the dressing.
- **Chilli oil** — Adds gentle heat and colour.

Ingredients

- 2 cucumbers
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 tbsp soy sauce
- 1 tbsp vinegar
- 1 tsp sugar
- 1 tsp sesame oil
- Chilli oil
- Salt

Method

- 1 Smash the cucumbers with the flat of a knife, then chop into chunks.
- 2 Salt them and let sit 10 minutes; drain the water.
- 3 Whisk garlic, soy, vinegar, sugar and sesame oil.
- 4 Toss the cucumber in the dressing.
- 5 Finish with chilli oil and serve cold.

Vegetarian

This dish is already vegetarian.

Vegan

Already vegetarian and vegan — cook in oil (not ghee/butter) to keep it fully plant-based.



CHINESE

Spring Onion Pancake

Flaky, chewy pan-fried flatbread layered with spring onion.

Cook time: 30 min | Difficulty: Medium | Entree

Origin & Story

Cong you bing is a beloved Chinese street snack. Rolling oil and spring onion into the dough creates the signature flaky layers when it hits the hot pan.

Main Spices & Their Role

- **Spring onion** — The star flavour, layered through the dough.
- **White pepper** — A subtle seasoning in the filling.

Ingredients

- 2 cups flour
- 3/4 cup hot water
- 3 spring onions, chopped
- 1/4 tsp white pepper
- 3 tbsp oil
- Salt

Method

- 1 Mix flour with hot water to form a soft dough; rest 20 min.
- 2 Roll out, brush with oil and scatter spring onion.
- 3 Roll into a rope, coil it up and flatten again.
- 4 Pan-fry in oil until golden and crisp on both sides.
- 5 Cut into wedges and serve.

Vegetarian

This dish is already vegetarian.

Vegan

Already vegetarian and vegan — cook in oil (not ghee/butter) to keep it fully plant-based.



CHINESE

Stir-Fried Vegetables

Crisp mixed vegetables in a light garlic-soy glaze.

Cook time: 15 min | Difficulty: Easy | Quick Dish

Origin & Story

The vegetable stir-fry embodies the Chinese wok principle of 'wok hei', high, fast heat that keeps vegetables bright, crunchy and full of flavour.

Main Spices & Their Role

- **Garlic** — The aromatic backbone of the stir-fry.
- **Ginger** — Adds warmth and cuts through the vegetables.

Ingredients

- Mixed vegetables (pepper, carrot, broccoli)
- 2 garlic cloves
- 1 tsp ginger
- 1 tbsp soy sauce
- 1 tsp sesame oil
- 2 tbsp oil
- Salt

Method

- 1 Chop all vegetables into even, bite-sized pieces.
- 2 Heat oil in a wok until smoking.
- 3 Add garlic and ginger, then the firmest vegetables first.
- 4 Stir-fry on high heat for 3-4 minutes.
- 5 Add soy sauce and sesame oil, toss and serve.

Vegetarian

This dish is already vegetarian.

Vegan

Already vegetarian and vegan — cook in oil (not ghee/butter) to keep it fully plant-based.



CHINESE

Sweet and Sour Tofu

Crispy tofu and peppers in a glossy sweet-sour sauce.

Cook time: 25 min | Difficulty: Medium | Entree

Origin & Story

Sweet and sour is one of the best-known Chinese flavour profiles worldwide. This tofu version delivers the sticky, tangy glaze without any meat.

Main Spices & Their Role

- **Ginger** — Warms the sweet-sour sauce.
- **Garlic** — Adds savoury depth.

Ingredients

- 1 block firm tofu, cubed
- 1 bell pepper, chunks
- 1/2 onion, chunks
- 3 tbsp ketchup
- 1 tbsp vinegar
- 1 tbsp sugar
- 1 tsp soy sauce
- 1 tsp cornflour + water
- 3 tbsp oil

Method

- 1 Pan-fry the tofu cubes until golden and crisp; set aside.
- 2 Stir-fry onion and pepper in the same pan.
- 3 Mix ketchup, vinegar, sugar and soy into a sauce and add it.
- 4 Return the tofu and toss to coat.
- 5 Thicken with the cornflour slurry and serve with rice.

Vegetarian

This dish is already vegetarian.

Vegan

Already vegan — just confirm your sugar and sauces are plant-based.



CHINESE

Tomato Egg Stir Fry

Soft scrambled egg with sweet-tart stewed tomatoes.

Cook time: 15 min | Difficulty: Easy | Quick Dish

Origin & Story

Fanqie chao dan is one of the first dishes Chinese children learn to cook. It is the ultimate homey comfort food, balancing sweet, savoury and tangy notes.

Main Spices & Their Role

- **White pepper** — A light seasoning for the eggs.
- **Sugar** — A pinch balances the acidity of the tomatoes.

Ingredients

- 3 eggs
- 2 tomatoes, wedged
- 1 spring onion
- 1/2 tsp sugar
- 1/4 tsp white pepper
- 2 tbsp oil
- Salt

Method

- 1 Beat eggs with salt and white pepper.
- 2 Scramble softly in hot oil and set aside.
- 3 Cook tomato wedges until they release juice.
- 4 Add sugar and salt, then return the eggs.
- 5 Toss gently, scatter spring onion and serve.

Vegetarian

Already vegetarian for egg-eaters.

Vegan

Swap the eggs for crumbled firm tofu with a pinch of turmeric — 'tomato tofu stir fry' works beautifully.



CHINESE

Vegetable Fried Rice

Colourful fried rice loaded with peas, carrot and corn.

Cook time: 15 min | Difficulty: Easy | Quick Dish

Origin & Story

A meat-free cousin of egg fried rice, vegetable fried rice is the ultimate fridge-clearing wok dish, popular across China and Chinese restaurants worldwide.

Main Spices & Their Role

- **White pepper** — The signature warm, floral seasoning.
- **Ginger** — A little grated ginger lifts the whole dish.

Ingredients

- 2 cups cold cooked rice
- 1 cup mixed veg (peas, carrot, corn)
- 2 spring onions
- 1 tsp grated ginger
- 1 tbsp soy sauce
- 1/4 tsp white pepper
- 2 tbsp oil

Method

- 1 Heat oil in a wok until hot.
- 2 Stir-fry the ginger and vegetables for 2 minutes.
- 3 Add the cold rice and break up any clumps.
- 4 Season with soy sauce and white pepper.
- 5 Toss through spring onion and serve.

Vegetarian

This dish is already vegetarian.

Vegan

Already vegetarian and vegan — cook in oil (not ghee/butter) to keep it fully plant-based.

Mexican

Mexican staples lean on beans, corn, tomatoes and chilli, cheap ingredients that deliver huge flavour. A squeeze of lime and a scatter of coriander turn the humblest pan of beans into a fiesta.

15 recipes



MEXICAN

Bean & Cheese Burrito

A big tortilla rolled around spiced beans, rice and cheese.

Cook time: 20 min | Difficulty: Easy | Entree

Origin & Story

The burrito ('little donkey') comes from northern Mexico, where a whole meal is wrapped in a large flour tortilla for a portable, satisfying feast.

Main Spices & Their Role

- **Cumin** — Seasons the beans.
- **Chilli powder** — Adds warmth and colour.

Ingredients

- 2 large tortillas
- 1 can beans
- 1 cup cooked rice
- 1/2 cup grated cheese
- 1/2 tsp cumin
- 1/4 tsp chilli powder
- Salsa
- 2 tbsp oil

Method

- 1 Warm the beans with oil, cumin, chilli powder and salt; mash lightly.
- 2 Warm the tortillas so they fold without cracking.
- 3 Layer beans, rice, cheese and salsa down the centre.
- 4 Fold in the sides and roll up tightly.
- 5 Toast the burrito seam-side down in a dry pan until golden.

Vegetarian

Already vegetarian — use a vegetarian cheese.

Vegan

Leave out the cheese or use plant-based cheese, and add extra beans, salsa and avocado.



MEXICAN

Bean Tacos

Warm tortillas filled with spiced beans and fresh toppings.

Cook time: 20 min | Difficulty: Easy | Entree

Origin & Story

Tacos are the cornerstone of Mexican street food, dating back to the silver mines of the 18th century. Bean tacos are the everyday, budget-friendly staple of home kitchens.

Main Spices & Their Role

- **Cumin** — Gives the beans their earthy, savoury depth.
- **Smoked paprika** — Adds smokiness and colour.
- **Chilli powder** — For adjustable heat.

Ingredients

- 1 can beans, drained
- 4 small tortillas
- 1/2 tsp cumin
- 1/2 tsp smoked paprika
- 1/4 tsp chilli powder
- 1 tomato, diced
- Onion & coriander
- 2 tbsp oil

Method

- 1 Heat oil and add the spices for a few seconds.
- 2 Add beans with a splash of water and mash lightly.
- 3 Simmer until thick and season with salt.
- 4 Warm the tortillas in a dry pan.
- 5 Fill with beans, tomato, onion and coriander.

Vegetarian

This dish is already vegetarian.

Vegan

Already vegan — skip any cheese or sour cream topping, or use plant-based versions.



MEXICAN

Bean Tostada

A crisp flat tortilla topped with beans and fresh salad.

Cook time: 15 min | Difficulty: Easy | Quick Dish

Origin & Story

The tostada ('toasted') is a crunchy fried or toasted tortilla used as an edible plate, piled high with beans and toppings across Mexico.

Main Spices & Their Role

- **Cumin** — Warms the bean layer.
- **Chilli powder** — Adds a smoky kick.

Ingredients

- 4 tortillas
- 1 can beans
- 1/2 tsp cumin
- 1/4 tsp chilli powder
- Shredded lettuce
- 1 tomato, diced
- Onion, coriander & lime
- 2 tbsp oil

Method

- 1 Toast the tortillas in a dry pan until crisp and firm.
- 2 Warm the beans with oil, cumin, chilli powder and salt; mash.
- 3 Spread the beans over each crisp tortilla.
- 4 Top with lettuce, tomato and onion.
- 5 Finish with coriander and a squeeze of lime.

Vegetarian

This dish is already vegetarian.

Vegan

Already vegan — add avocado instead of any cheese or cream topping.



MEXICAN

Black Bean Soup

Hearty, smoky black bean soup finished with lime.

Cook time: 25 min | Difficulty: Easy | Entree

Origin & Story

Black bean soup is a nourishing staple across Mexico and Latin America, a cheap and filling pot that turns humble beans into a deeply satisfying meal.

Main Spices & Their Role

- **Cumin** — The earthy foundation of the soup.
- **Smoked paprika** — Lends a smoky warmth.
- **Chilli powder** — For gentle heat.

Ingredients

- 2 cans black beans
- 1 onion, chopped
- 2 garlic cloves
- 1 tsp cumin
- 1/2 tsp smoked paprika
- 1/2 tsp chilli powder
- 2 tbsp oil
- Lime & coriander
- Salt

Method

- 1 Saute onion and garlic in oil until soft.
- 2 Add the spices and cook for 30 seconds.
- 3 Tip in the beans with their liquid plus water.
- 4 Simmer 15 minutes, then blend part of the soup for creaminess.
- 5 Season, finish with lime and coriander.

Vegetarian

This dish is already vegetarian.

Vegan

Already vegan — top with avocado instead of sour cream or cheese.



MEXICAN

Calabacitas

Sauteed courgette with corn, tomato and mild spice.

Cook time: 20 min | Difficulty: Easy | Entree

Origin & Story

Calabacitas ('little squashes') is a homey Mexican vegetable dish combining summer squash, corn and tomato, a cheap and colourful way to eat your vegetables.

Main Spices & Their Role

- **Cumin** — Adds earthy warmth.
- **Chilli** — Fresh or powdered for a mild kick.

Ingredients

- 2 courgettes, diced
- 1 cup corn
- 1 tomato, chopped
- 1/2 onion
- 1 garlic clove
- 1/2 tsp cumin
- 2 tbsp oil
- Salt
- Coriander

Method

- 1 Saute onion and garlic in oil until soft.
- 2 Add the courgette and cook 4 minutes.
- 3 Stir in corn, tomato and cumin.
- 4 Cover and cook until the courgette is tender.
- 5 Season, garnish with coriander and serve.

Vegetarian

This dish is already vegetarian.

Vegan

Already vegan — traditionally finished with cheese, so simply leave it off or use a plant-based one.



MEXICAN

Cheese Quesadilla

Crispy folded tortilla with a molten cheese centre.

Cook time: 10 min | Difficulty: Easy | Quick Dish

Origin & Story

The quesadilla dates back to colonial Mexico, where wheat and corn tortillas were folded around local cheese and cooked on a hot comal. It remains the ultimate quick snack.

Main Spices & Their Role

- **Cumin** — A pinch adds warmth to the filling.
- **Chilli powder** — Optional smoky heat.

Ingredients

- 2 tortillas
- 1 cup grated cheese
- 1/4 tsp cumin
- Pinch chilli powder
- 1 tsp oil
- Salsa to serve

Method

- 1 Heat a dry pan on medium.
- 2 Place a tortilla down and scatter cheese and spices over half.
- 3 Fold over and press gently.
- 4 Cook until golden and the cheese melts, flipping once.
- 5 Slice into wedges and serve with salsa.

Vegetarian

Already vegetarian — use a vegetarian cheese.

Vegan

Use plant-based cheese, or mash spiced black beans and avocado as the filling instead of cheese.



MEXICAN

Chilaquiles

Crispy tortilla chips simmered in salsa, topped with a fried egg.

Cook time: 20 min | Difficulty: Medium | Entree

Origin & Story

Chilaquiles are the classic Mexican breakfast for using up stale tortillas. The name comes from Nahuatl, meaning 'chillies and greens', and every region has its own version.

Main Spices & Their Role

- **Chilli** — The base of the simmering salsa.
- **Cumin** — Adds earthy depth to the sauce.

Ingredients

- 4 handfuls tortilla chips
- 2 tomatoes
- 1 chilli
- 1/2 onion
- 1/4 tsp cumin
- 1 egg
- 2 tbsp oil
- Cheese & coriander

Method

- 1 Blend or cook tomato, chilli, onion and cumin into a salsa.
- 2 Simmer the salsa in a pan for 5 minutes.
- 3 Fold in the tortilla chips just until coated.
- 4 Top with a fried egg, cheese and coriander.
- 5 Serve immediately while the chips are still slightly crisp.

Vegetarian

Already vegetarian — use a vegetarian cheese and keep the egg for egg-eaters.

Vegan

Skip the egg and cheese; top with avocado, sliced onion and a drizzle of plant-based cream instead.



MEXICAN

Enfrijoladas

Tortillas bathed in a smooth, warm black bean sauce.

Cook time: 20 min | Difficulty: Easy | Entree

Origin & Story

Enfrijoladas are a humble Mexican breakfast or supper, folded tortillas dipped in a silky pureed bean sauce — comfort food that uses the cheapest of pantry staples.

Main Spices & Their Role

- **Cumin** — Deepens the bean sauce.
- **Chilli** — A dried or fresh chilli warms the sauce.
- **Garlic** — Builds the savoury base.

Ingredients

- 6 tortillas
- 1 can black beans
- 1 garlic clove
- 1/2 onion
- 1/2 tsp cumin
- 1 chilli
- 2 tbsp oil
- Onion, coriander & cheese to top
- Salt

Method

- 1 Blend the beans with garlic, cumin, chilli and a little water until smooth.
- 2 Warm the puree in an oiled pan until it thickens into a sauce.
- 3 Quickly dip each tortilla in the warm sauce to coat.
- 4 Fold the coated tortillas onto a plate.
- 5 Spoon over extra sauce and top with onion, coriander and cheese.

Vegetarian

Already vegetarian — use a vegetarian cheese on top.

Vegan

Skip the cheese or use plant-based cheese; the bean sauce itself is fully vegan.



MEXICAN

Guacamole with Chips

Creamy mashed avocado with lime, onion and chilli.

Cook time: 10 min | Difficulty: Easy | Quick Dish

Origin & Story

Guacamole traces back to the Aztecs, who mashed avocados into 'ahuacamolli'. It remains Mexico's most famous dip, celebrated for its fresh, buttery simplicity.

Main Spices & Their Role

- **Chilli** — Fresh jalapeno or serrano for bright heat.
- **Cumin** — An optional pinch for earthy depth.

Ingredients

- 3 ripe avocados
- 1/2 onion, minced
- 1 chilli, minced
- 1 tomato, diced
- Lime juice
- Coriander
- Salt
- Tortilla chips to serve

Method

- 1 Scoop the avocado flesh into a bowl.
- 2 Mash to your preferred texture with a fork.
- 3 Stir in onion, chilli, tomato and coriander.
- 4 Season with lime juice and salt.
- 5 Serve immediately with tortilla chips.

Vegetarian

This dish is already vegetarian.

Vegan

Already vegetarian and vegan — cook in oil (not ghee/butter) to keep it fully plant-based.



MEXICAN

Huevos Rancheros

Fried eggs over tortillas smothered in warm tomato-chilli salsa.

Cook time: 20 min | Difficulty: Easy | Entree

Origin & Story

Huevos rancheros ('ranch-style eggs') was the hearty mid-morning meal of Mexican farm workers, built to fuel a long day in the fields.

Main Spices & Their Role

- **Cumin** — Deepens the tomato salsa.
- **Chilli** — Fresh or dried, it brings the signature heat.

Ingredients

- 2 eggs
- 2 tortillas
- 2 tomatoes, chopped
- 1 chilli, minced
- 1/2 tsp cumin
- 1/2 onion
- 2 tbsp oil
- Salt

Method

- 1 Cook onion, chilli, tomato and cumin into a quick salsa.
- 2 Warm the tortillas in a dry pan.
- 3 Fry the eggs sunny-side up.
- 4 Lay eggs on the tortillas.
- 5 Spoon the warm salsa over and serve.

Vegetarian

Already vegetarian for egg-eaters.

Vegan

Top the salsa-covered tortillas with pan-fried seasoned tofu 'scramble' instead of the fried eggs.



MEXICAN

Loaded Nachos

Crunchy tortilla chips piled with beans, cheese and salsa.

Cook time: 15 min | Difficulty: Easy | Quick Dish

Origin & Story

Nachos were invented in 1940s Piedras Negras, Mexico, by Ignacio 'Nacho' Anaya, who topped tortilla chips with cheese for hungry guests. They became a global favourite.

Main Spices & Their Role

- **Cumin** — Seasons the beans.
- **Chilli powder** — Brings smoky heat.

Ingredients

- 1 large bag tortilla chips
- 1 can beans
- 1 cup grated cheese
- 1/2 tsp cumin
- 1/4 tsp chilli powder
- Salsa, jalapenos
- Coriander

Method

- 1 Warm the beans with cumin, chilli powder and salt.
- 2 Spread the tortilla chips on a pan or tray.
- 3 Scatter over the beans and grated cheese.
- 4 Cover the pan on low heat until the cheese melts.
- 5 Top with salsa, jalapenos and coriander.

Vegetarian

Already vegetarian — use a vegetarian cheese.

Vegan

Use plant-based cheese (or a cashew queso) and pile on guacamole and salsa.



MEXICAN

Mexican Rice

Fluffy tomato-tinted rice, a classic Mexican side.

Cook time: 25 min | Difficulty: Easy | Entree

Origin & Story

Arroz rojo ('red rice') is the everyday Mexican rice dish, toasted first then simmered in a tomato broth so every grain is fluffy and full of flavour.

Main Spices & Their Role

- **Cumin** — Adds warm, earthy depth.
- **Garlic** — Builds the savoury base.

Ingredients

- 1 cup rice
- 1 tomato, pureed
- 1/2 onion, chopped
- 1 garlic clove
- 1/2 tsp cumin
- 2 tbsp oil
- 2 cups stock or water
- Salt
- Peas (optional)

Method

- 1 Toast the rice in oil until lightly golden.
- 2 Add onion, garlic and cumin; cook 1 minute.
- 3 Stir in the tomato puree and cook until thick.
- 4 Add the stock and salt, bring to a boil.
- 5 Cover and simmer on low until fluffy.

Vegetarian

Already vegetarian — use vegetable stock or water.

Vegan

Already vegetarian and vegan — cook in oil (not ghee/butter) to keep it fully plant-based.



MEXICAN

Mexican Street Corn

Charred corn kernels tossed with lime, chilli and cheese (pan-style).

Cook time: 15 min | Difficulty: Easy | Quick Dish

Origin & Story

Elote is a Mexican street-food icon sold from carts across the country. This off-the-cob pan version, esquites, delivers the same smoky, tangy, spicy hit.

Main Spices & Their Role

- **Chilli powder** — Dusted over for smoky heat and colour.
- **Smoked paprika** — Reinforces the charred flavour.

Ingredients

- 2 cups corn kernels
- 1 tbsp mayonnaise or butter
- 1/2 tsp chilli powder
- 1/4 tsp smoked paprika
- Lime juice
- Crumbled cheese
- Coriander

Method

- 1 Char the corn in a dry hot pan until spots appear.
- 2 Transfer to a bowl and stir in mayo or butter.
- 3 Add lime juice, chilli powder and paprika.
- 4 Fold through the crumbled cheese.
- 5 Top with coriander and serve warm.

Vegetarian

Already vegetarian — use a vegetarian cheese.

Vegan

Swap the mayo for vegan mayo and use plant-based cheese (or nutritional yeast) for the crumble.



MEXICAN

Refried Bean Bowl

Creamy mashed beans over rice with fresh, colourful toppings.

Cook time: 20 min | Difficulty: Easy | Entree

Origin & Story

Frijoles refritos ('well-fried beans') are a cornerstone of Mexican cuisine. Beans are simmered, then mashed and fried for a rich, creamy base that stretches a tiny budget a long way.

Main Spices & Their Role

- **Cumin** — The defining warm, earthy note of the beans.
- **Chilli powder** — Adds gentle heat and colour.

Ingredients

- 1 can beans
- 1 cup cooked rice
- 1/2 tsp cumin
- 1/4 tsp chilli powder
- 1/2 onion
- 2 tbsp oil
- Tomato, coriander & lime to top

Method

- 1 Saute onion in oil, then add the spices.
- 2 Add beans with their liquid and mash to a rough paste.
- 3 Cook until thick and creamy, seasoning with salt.
- 4 Spoon over a bowl of warm rice.
- 5 Top with tomato, coriander and a squeeze of lime.

Vegetarian

This dish is already vegetarian.

Vegan

Already vegan — traditionally lard is used, so cook the beans in oil (as here) to keep them plant-based.



MEXICAN

Salsa Fresca with Rice

Zingy raw tomato salsa spooned over fluffy seasoned rice.

Cook time: 15 min | Difficulty: Easy | Quick Dish

Origin & Story

Salsa fresca (or pico de gallo) is the fresh, uncooked salsa of Mexico, its name meaning 'rooster's beak'. Paired with simple rice it makes a light, refreshing meal.

Main Spices & Their Role

- **Chilli** — Fresh jalapeno or serrano for bright heat.
- **Cumin** — Seasons the rice with warmth.

Ingredients

- 1 cup cooked rice
- 3 tomatoes, diced
- 1/2 onion, minced
- 1 chilli, minced
- Lime juice
- 1/4 tsp cumin
- Coriander
- Salt

Method

- 1 Combine tomato, onion, chilli, lime and coriander for the salsa.
- 2 Season with salt and let it sit 10 minutes.
- 3 Warm the rice with a pinch of cumin.
- 4 Plate the rice and spoon salsa over the top.
- 5 Finish with extra lime and serve.

Vegetarian

This dish is already vegetarian.

Vegan

Already vegetarian and vegan — cook in oil (not ghee/butter) to keep it fully plant-based.

Pet-Friendly

Simple, unseasoned dishes that are safe for dogs and cats - no salt, oil, onion, garlic or spices. Always cool the food before serving and consult your vet.

4 recipes



PET-FRIENDLY

Chicken & Rice (Dog-Friendly)

Plain boiled chicken and rice — the classic gentle meal for dogs.

Cook time: 25 min | Difficulty: Easy | Entree

Origin & Story

Boiled chicken and white rice is the meal vets most often recommend for dogs with an upset stomach: bland, easy to digest and cooked with absolutely no seasoning.

Main Spices & Their Role

- **No spices** — Pet meals are kept completely plain — no salt, oil, onion or garlic, all of which are harmful to pets.

Ingredients

- 1 skinless chicken breast
- 1 cup white rice
- Water
- Nothing else (no salt, oil, onion or garlic)

Method

- 1 Boil the chicken breast in plain water until fully cooked.
- 2 Remove, cool and shred into small pieces.
- 3 Cook the rice in plain water until soft.
- 4 Mix the shredded chicken with the rice.
- 5 Cool completely to lukewarm before serving to your pet.

Vegetarian

For a veg option (dogs only), use plain cooked pumpkin and rice with a little plain green beans.

Vegan

Cats are obligate carnivores; a vegan meal is not recommended. Always consult your vet before changing a pet's diet.



PET-FRIENDLY

Plain Scrambled Egg (Pet-Friendly)

Simple unseasoned scrambled egg — a protein treat for cats and dogs.

Cook time: 10 min | Difficulty: Easy | Quick Dish

Origin & Story

A plain scrambled egg is a safe, protein-rich treat for both cats and dogs when cooked with no oil, butter, salt or seasoning of any kind.

Main Spices & Their Role

- **No spices** — Kept plain and safe — no salt, oil, butter or seasoning, which can upset a pet's stomach.

Ingredients

- 1-2 eggs
- A splash of water
- Nothing else (no salt, oil or butter)

Method

- 1 Beat the eggs with a small splash of water.
- 2 Cook gently in a non-stick pan with no oil or butter.
- 3 Stir softly until just set.
- 4 Break into small bite-sized pieces.
- 5 Cool to lukewarm before offering to your pet as a treat.

Vegetarian

Already a simple vegetarian (egg) treat for pets.

Vegan

Offer plain steamed vegetables like carrot or pumpkin instead of egg. Consult your vet for guidance.



PET-FRIENDLY

Pumpkin & Turkey Mash

Soft mashed pumpkin with plain turkey — gentle on a dog's tummy.

Cook time: 30 min | Difficulty: Easy | Entree

Origin & Story

Plain pumpkin is a vet favourite for aiding pet digestion. Combined with lean, unseasoned turkey it makes a soft, wholesome bowl for dogs.

Main Spices & Their Role

- **No spices** — Completely plain — pumpkin and turkey only, with no salt, oil, onion or garlic.

Ingredients

- 1 cup plain cooked pumpkin
- 1 cup plain cooked turkey (or chicken)
- Water
- Nothing else (no seasoning)

Method

- 1 Steam or boil the pumpkin until soft, then mash.
- 2 Cook the turkey in plain water until fully done, then chop small.
- 3 Mix the turkey through the mashed pumpkin.
- 4 Add a little cooking water if it needs loosening.
- 5 Cool completely before serving to your dog.

Vegetarian

Use plain pumpkin with a little cooked rice or plain green beans (dogs only).

Vegan

Not recommended for cats. For dogs, a vet-approved plant meal of pumpkin, rice and green beans can work — ask your vet first.



PET-FRIENDLY

Sweet Potato & Chicken Bowl

Steamed sweet potato with plain chicken — a wholesome dog dinner.

Cook time: 30 min | Difficulty: Easy | Entree

Origin & Story

Sweet potato is a nutritious, easily digested carbohydrate for dogs. Paired with plain chicken, it makes a balanced, seasoning-free bowl they love.

Main Spices & Their Role

- **No spices** — Kept plain and pet-safe — no salt, oil, onion or garlic.

Ingredients

- 1 sweet potato, cubed
- 1 chicken breast
- Water
- Nothing else (no seasoning)

Method

- 1 Steam or boil the sweet potato cubes until soft.
- 2 Boil the chicken in plain water until fully cooked, then chop small.
- 3 Combine the chicken and sweet potato in a bowl.
- 4 Mash lightly if serving to a smaller pet.
- 5 Cool to lukewarm before serving to your dog.

Vegetarian

Use plain sweet potato with cooked lentils or green beans for a veg option (dogs only).

Vegan

Not suitable for cats. For dogs, a vet-approved sweet potato and lentil bowl works — consult your vet first.