

FOOD REVOLUTION

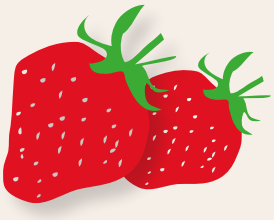
GENERAL TOOLKIT

30 IDEAS FOR STARTING A FOOD REVOLUTION IN

EVERYDAY LIFE



Cooking skills used to be passed down from generation to generation.



But the passing of knowledge has been interrupted as fewer people cook from scratch and food education is taken of school curriculums. As our busy work lives take over, more of us are eating convenience and processed foods, rather than taking the time to create homemade meals, or sit down and enjoy our food.

However, cooking doesn't have to be time consuming, complicated or expensive if you learn a few basic cooking skills. Good food isn't the preserve of posh restaurants and fancy chefs, everyone knows something about food and everyone has valid opinions about it. We can all enjoy food and even the busiest of people can prepare and enjoy simple, tasty meals and not have to rely on convenience foods. No one should be nervous about getting in the kitchen and cooking, no matter how little they currently do. Here are some tips to help you get back to basics with food, no matter how busy you are.

1 Out with the old and in with the new

Sit down and have a think about your health, lifestyle and eating habits. Assess what is in your cupboards and whether your diet consists of fresh, homemade foods or shop bought pre-packaged and processed meals. Make a list of all the things you want to change, come up with some goals and stick them up on the fridge or somewhere visible.

2 Avoid convenience food

It might be tempting to pick up a meal for one and sit in front of the TV when you get home, but try to avoid doing this. Most ready-meals are filled with preservatives and additives, and high in fat, salt or sugar. It can be just as quick to reheat some leftovers or whip up a salad.

3 Learn to Cook

If you don't already know how to cook then now is the time, it's never too late. Learning to cook will reduce your reliance on convenience food and save you money. It doesn't take long at all to learn a few recipes that you can then always turn to. Consider joining a cooking club or taking lessons so you are not battling on your own.

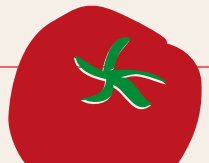
4 Know the basics

Learn the basics so that when you don't have time to follow a recipe or don't have one to hand, you can throw in rough estimates of different ingredients, and still have a tasty meal.

5 Equip your kitchen

If you have a properly equipped and organised kitchen you won't have to spend time searching for utensils or looking for something to replace the utensil you need. You don't have to go all out and get a new kitchen, just the basics to make cooking easy and enjoyable.









6 Start simple

Don't take on too much all at once: create a plan that is easy to follow and that you won't feel overwhelmed by. Take simple and sustainable steps, such as cooking from scratch a few times a week, cutting out one unhealthy food type or introducing one new food kind.

7 Eat more meals at home

Once you have got to grips with the basics of cooking and know a few recipes, try to eat more meals at home. Not only is this cheaper, but it also means that you know exactly what you are eating – you control the ingredients, nutrition and portion sizes.

8 Plan ahead

Cooking from scratch isn't always easy when you're busy during the week, but planning can make it completely manageable. Plan a menu ahead for the week and do a shop before it starts. That way you have everything you need for when you get home in the evening. If you are out during meal times, pack a homemade meal or snack — that way you can save money and make sure it's healthy.

9 Make a grocery list and stick to it

Think in advance and prepare a list of what you want to cook for the week. By having a list of ingredients for specific meals you'll be less likely to pick ready meals or anything else that tempts you as you browse the supermarket.

10 Stock your pantry with the basics

It's a great idea to go through your pantry and have a think about the basics — oils, tinned tomatoes, spices, herbs and grains. If you have a well-stocked and organised pantry then you'll always be able to rustle up a tasty homemade dish, even on the nights when you don't have time to pick up anything extra from the shops.

11 Always read the label

Avoid buying anything with ingredients on the label that you can't read or pronounce, even when buying frozen food. Preservatives and chemicals aren't food. Where ever possible, stick to buying local, organic foods, and fresh ingredients to cook from scratch.

12 Buy Local

Support your local community by visiting your farmers' market to see what foods you can pick up there. Some also deliver, and getting some fresh fruit and veg boxes delivered to your home will save time. Have a look out for chef demos at your farmers' markets, as you might also get some great tips on what to do with these foods.

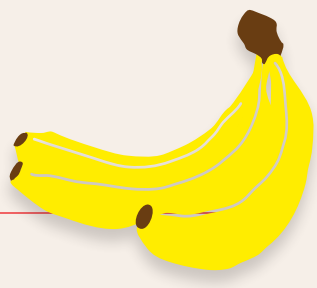
13 Buy the best you can afford

If you can afford to buy high-quality organic chicken and beef that has been raised humanely, then do so. If you can't, look for less expensive cuts and choose recipes that braise and stew. You can do a lot with cheaper cuts if you know how, and it will allow you to buy higher-welfare animals.

14 Don't buy small, just use food wisely

Even if you're buying for one, you can still buy a loaf of bread or a pack of chicken breasts. Just think about how much you will eat within the next few days and freeze the rest so that you don't have food going off and going to waste. You can always split food into individual portions before freezing, so you don't have to waste anything that you can't refreeze.





15 Freeze food

A great way to save time during the week is to cook a big batch of food when you get time, and freeze some of it for when you are in a rush. Frozen fruits and vegetables are also a great thing to have stocked in the freezer, because they are frozen right after they are harvested, so retain their natural goodness.

16 Pack leftovers for lunch

If you make a big batch of food the night before, then rather than eating it all or letting it go to waste, put some aside for your lunch the next day. It saves time, waste and money, and will make a much tastier and healthier lunch than any premade or processed food you might end up buying.

17 Make friends with salad

Salads are really quick and easy to make, full of goodness and you can get really creative with them. Pick and mix different elements and simply put them together, in no time you'll have a fresh, crunchy salad ready to enjoy as either a quick lunch or as a side dish. Making your own salad dressings is much better than buying shop bought ones, which are often filled with hidden ingredients, so experiment with different oils, herbs and seasoning to accompany your salad.



18 Get fresh with smoothies

Smoothies are ideal for one and so easy to make. You can easily transfer them to a flask or bottle and take them with you as you go out. So make sure you have some fruit, yogurt and milk in the house for those mornings that you are in a rush to leave, so you can quickly whip up a smoothie and take it with you. If you're hungry, you could even add some oats to make it a little more hearty.

19 Soups

Making soup is really easy and there is no end to the variety of soups you can make. It's always great to have some homemade soup in the freezer for a warming supper or to take to work with you for a lighter, healthier lunch.

20 Breakfast

Breakfast is the most important meal of the day, so always have a proper one. Stock up on breakfast ingredients, from wholegrain cereal and fresh fruit, to eggs and brown bread. It's worth taking some time to set yourself up for the day.

21 Use a slow cooker or crockpot

Have a think about investing in a slow cooker. That way you can throw everything into it in the morning before you leave the house, and when you get home in the evening your dinner will be ready and waiting for you! You can freeze the extra portions or take some for lunch at work the next day.



22 Drink water

Say no to sugary and fizzy drinks – not only are they often expensive, but they are also filled with added sugars, empty calories and artificial flavours, colours and additives. Water is the best thirst quencher, and you can also mix things up and add ice, fresh fruit and mint to add some flavour.

23 Use shortcuts

When in a rush, take advantage of some shortcuts, whether its pre-chopped fruit and vegetables, frozen vegetables or canned beans. By making and freezing your own foods, you'll also create your own shortcuts.

24 Get experimental

Try new things once in a while. Substitute a sweet potato for a white potato, add a little heat with a chilli, try a shallot instead of an onion. You'll be surprised at how much more you enjoy shopping and cooking when you are exploring new things.

25 Rely on those in the know

Get to know your butcher, baker and fishmonger, so they can help you pick the best stuff at the best price. If you are only buying for one and don't want to buy a whole joint of meat, then it's a good idea to visit the meat counter where the butcher can cut smaller portions for you.

26 Include your friends

Get your friends involved too. See if they need to make changes to their food habits and include them in what you are doing. Let them know what changes you are making so that they can be supportive, especially when you eat out together. You can also invite them round to try out your homemade dinners, or even host a potluck dinner where you can each bring ingredients or a dish and cook up something together.

27 Take the changes one at a time

You won't be able to make huge changes straight away, but each step you take will make a difference. Long-term change needs support from everyone, so make sure your family and friends know that this is something that you will be sticking too and why. Remember that small changes every day can be a recipe for success.



28 Take time to enjoy your food

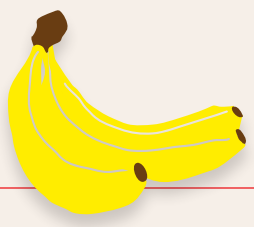
It's important to have a proper sit-down meal, whether it is with friends or alone, especially if you have taken the time and made the meal yourself.

29 Start A Food Blog

By starting a food blog and documenting your story, you can share what does and doesn't work and connect with others on the same path. You'll also have a readymade recipe book that you can refer to whenever you are looking for something to cook, and from past experience you'll know what's quick and easy to make with the ingredients you already have.

30 Celebrate food!

Remember that cooking is fun, there are endless things you can make, and cooking is a great way to take your mind off work and focus on something else. It's also a brilliant way to bring friends and family together.







JAMIE OLIVER FOUNDATION | REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER 1094536 | © JAMIE OLIVER 2012