

# Food News

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The cost of living is very much in the news at the moment and we have been asked to produce an edition on how you can save money when cooking and eating.

We've taken tips from people living in Warwickshire as well as from web sites and blogs and hope you find the results interesting.

As a word of caution: if you or people you work with cannot afford to buy food **now**, articles about cooking in bulk and cheap healthy recipes will not help. Contact a local food bank or community centre and you will be provided with an emergency food parcel. Taking round a meal for them may also help.

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Warwickshire Food Forum

## Food News

is produced by the education & choice sub-group of Warwickshire Food forum

The forum is a multi-agency partnership aiming to improve food

choices for people in Warwickshire.

The focus is on making food affordable, sustainable and providing information to help people make

healthy choices. The group will also ensure that there is Warwickshire wide help for people who have difficulty affording food.

# Truth or Myth

**The UK is a wealthy nation, but food poverty or food insecurity is increasing. Some say this is because people do not shop wisely, spend their money on other things and that increased income would not help.**

Studies in the UK however, have shown that, as poorer families' income goes up, they spend more on fruit, vegetables, fibre, oily fish and other foods rich in vitamins and minerals - and cut their spending on alcohol and tobacco as their income rises.

## How many people are affected?

5 million people in the UK lived in food poverty between 2019 – 2020, according to the Governments Family Resources Survey. In 2020, this was 8% of the population, but data from The Food Foundation suggests food insecurity levels rose to 9% of the population in January 2021.

The Trussell Trust has seen an increase in food bank use of 123% over the past five years, whilst the Independent Food Aid Network report a rise of 110% between 2019 and 2020.

Fair Share suggest 1 in 10 people in the UK are struggling to afford to eat.

The UK Food Strategy has a section on inequality which describes how the diets of people on different incomes differs and the health consequences of this. See the figure above.

Women in the most deprived 10% of neighbourhoods in England now die 3.6 months younger than they did in 2010. Their life expectancy is 7.7 years shorter than that of women in the richest areas.

It also reported that there are more fast food outlet in deprived areas.

## Some definitions:

Food poverty encompasses both the affordability of food and its accessibility within local communities. *Sustain*

'The inability to afford, or to have access to, food to make up a healthy diet.' *The Department of Health*

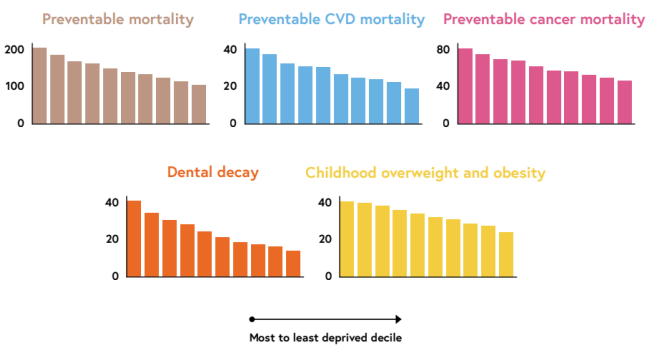
'Food poverty is worse diet, worse access, worse health, higher percentage of income on food and less choice from a restricted range of foods.'

*Professor Tim Lang*

'The inability to consume an adequate quality or sufficient quantity of food in socially acceptable ways, or the uncertainty that one will be able to do so.' *Professor Elizabeth Dowler*

"Most people who fall into food poverty struggle because their income is too low or unreliable. This can be caused by low wages, a patchy social security system and benefit sanctions, which make it difficult to cover rent, fuel and food costs." *The Big Issue*

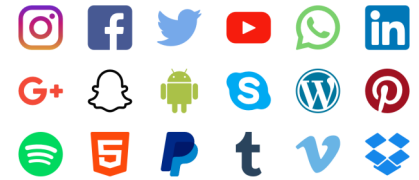
Figure 5.1  
People on low incomes are more likely to suffer, and die from, diet-related conditions<sup>7</sup>



Y axis in all charts shows relative risk, expressed as percentages, rate per 100,000 people, or mortality per 100,000 people.



# Social Media Know-how



## Food cost savvy

Where can you go to find more tips about reducing the cost of meals. Here are some well established people and organisations you might like to check out. This information might not be of use to people in crisis, and needing a food parcel but it might help prevent a crisis.

Jack Munroe (<https://cookingonabootstrap.com/>) is passionate about access to food as you will see if you read any of her blogs. If you haven't experienced food poverty and think you know what it might feel like, read her blog—it might change your mind. Very political and passionate.

Jack can be found on all media platforms. She also provides recipes. All are priced, and some show you how much the prices have increased over the years.

The Supercook.com site lets you click on ingredients, and it will suggest recipes using those ingredients. Great on a day you want to use leftovers.

Love food, hate waste. (<https://www.lovefoodhatewaste.com/>)

As well as recipes, they give tips on how to store food to maximise its shelf life and for using leftovers.

Marcus Rashford and Tom Kerridge provide recipes for the Fairshare web site and on Instagram.

<https://www.instagram.com/fulltimemeals/> or <https://endchildfoodpoverty.org/full-time-meals>.

Check these recipes before trying as a lot use the oven so could be costly.

Change 4 Life offers tips and recipes (<https://www.nhs.uk/healthier-families/recipes/>)

Student cook web site has a section on when the food runs out. <http://www.studentcook.co.uk/cooking-with-leftovers-when-money-runs-out.html>. It also has other sections on saving costs., but take some ideas with a pinch of salt. The Change from a Fiver page suggested seeing how many tiger prawns you could get from a fiver, rather than how to get a whole meal.

Check sites that share articles from other media such as Warwickshire Live. They are regularly reporting money saving tips from the money expert, Which and Influencers.

To find out more about local help with food and fuel costs go to: <https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/foodandfuel>

## Getting the most from your shop

Careful shopping can make a difference, but might take a little longer.

- Download apps and join membership clubs or store cards for the places you shop at, or products you use the most – there are more deals for members. This can include money off certain items, free fruit for children or a free drink.
- Many fast food firms and coffee shops have special offers but only use these if you are looking for a treat as you often have to spend a lot to get deals.
- There is a price war on so shop around. If you use the same store every time, try somewhere new. They may offer the foods you use at a lower price.
- To save petrol and time use a price comparison site / app. Popular ones are:
  - ⇒ [latestdeals.co.uk/supermarket-price-comparison](https://www.latestdeals.co.uk/supermarket-price-comparison)
  - ⇒ [mysupermarketcompare.co.uk/](https://www.mysupermarketcompare.co.uk/)
  - ⇒ [Trolley.co.uk](https://www.trolley.co.uk)
- Plan your weeks menu with the whole family. Maybe everyone gets to pick 1 meal a week.
- Make a shopping list based on that menu. Remember to check what's in the cupboard, fridge and freezer before you go shopping so you don't buy items you do not need.
- Check use by dates and plan how to use food that is going out of date so you do not waste food. Search on line or in the library for recipes using the item you need to use up.
- Compare prices per 100g. Larger amounts often cost less, so buy these when you can afford to.
- Take advantage of cut-price items from the shops such as special offers or foods reaching their sell by date (yellow stickers). You can get up to 75% discount. Sometimes these offers are at the end of the day, but many supermarkets are discounting items all day.
- If you see an offer, make a swap, but remember to swap any other items you were going to use to make your original meal.
- Check use by and best before dates. Don't buy something that needs to be used by tomorrow if you do not plan to use it until 2 days later.
- Look for wonky or imperfect veg. A bag of wonky green beans cost 72p, while a pack of identically sized beans was £1.30.
- Other supermarkets sell different fruit and veg at an especially low price each week, e.g. Lidl.

### The taste test

One cost saving tip is to change from a branded item to an own brand. There are lots of articles on this at the moment.

"Which" asked a panel of consumers to blind-taste & rate 12 different brands of baked beans, from Heinz, Branston and KP to Aldi, Tesco, Lidl and more. Cheap Lidl and Morrisons baked beans took the top spot in their test, tying for first place. Someone else did a taste test for the Birmingham mail and she loved Tesco beans. All these are less than half the price of branded beans, so the savings will quickly stack up.

You will find similar taste tests on different items on social media - Warwickshire Live on Facebook often reports these. All we suggest is try it yourself and if you prefer an own brand, you will save.

## Cooking Tips

Once you have decided your menu, how you cook the food can make a big difference to the cost

- Slice meat, fish, and vegetables thinner so they cook faster
- Use a metal colander, steamer or divided pan to separate foods such as pasta and veg, so you can just use one ring on the hob.
- Put a lid on pans to prevent heat escaping.
- Boil the water to cook rice or pasta in a kettle and pour into a pan that you have heated with a small amount of water in it rather than filling the pan with cold water to heat on the hob.
- Rice - boil for half the cooking time stated on the packet with a lid on the pan. Turn off the heat and leave to steam in the pan for the remainder of the cooking time.
- Couscous and noodles - pour boiling water over, stir, stick a lid or plate on top and it will cook in 10 mins.
- Pasta – boil for 5 minutes and then switch the heat off and let it cook in its own heat for another 5 – 10 minutes depending on the size of the pasta.
- If you are using the oven, plan to fill it by cooking your main, potato, veg and pud as well. Most cakes cook at 160C, but we found muffins that cook at 200C, the same as the lasagne on page 6.
- To quicken up cooking of baked potatoes put a metal skewer into each potato, this transfers heat to the centre of the potato, speeding up cooking time.
- If you are only cooking one dish, use the microwave rather than the oven. Microwaves use a lot of power, but you use them for less time than the oven.
  - ⇒ Money Saving Expert calculated that cooking a potato in the microwave was 25% cheaper than using the oven.
- Finally, when you have finished cooking and have switched off the oven, put a heat-proof bowl full of water in the oven to heat for the washing up.
- Use a slow cooker. Slow cookers make great stew, curry, soup and bolognese, but can also be used to cook joints, jacket potatoes and desserts. They use the same energy as a lightbulb. We found slow cookers to buy from £15 to £50.
  - ⇒ Uswitch suggest you will use about 30p electricity to cook a meal. Meals take 5—8 hours to cook.
- If you batch cook and freeze It means you'll have meals to choose from on days you don't want to cook or are too busy. Its also a good way of using special offer meats, fish and vegetables as they often need cooking the day you buy them



Try take away hacks and make your own version of ready meals.

BBC Good Food recipes: <https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/collection/takeaway-favourite-recipes>

Netmums ideas: <https://www.netmums.com/recipes/category/fakeaway-recipes>

Keep your freezer full as this helps it work more efficiently. If you have space take advantage of foods on special offer. Bread, cheese, meat and fish usually freeze well, but check labels to see if a food is suitable for home freezing.

## What is cheaper—making it yourself or buying ready made?

We have priced a recipe to see how you can get the best meal for the best price using different ingredients and ready made sauces. Lasagne is a meat sauce layered with sheets of pasta and a cheesy sauce. Recipes vary which will affect the cost (for example some added red wine to the meat sauce). Sometimes white sauce is added to the layers, sometimes it is poured on top and cheese sprinkled over.

Below are the ingredients from a Tesco easy classic lasagne recipe which serves 4 - 6. All the ingredients up to and including the honey are used to make the meat sauce. The lasagne is cooked at 200C for 30 minutes. Continues on the next page.

Ingredient	Price	Tips
• 1 tbsp olive oil	11p	Use if you like the flavour (cost 70p/100ml). Any vegetable oil will work (cost 12p/100ml).
• 2 rashers smoked streaky bacon	22p	Most recipes add smoked meat. Lardons and smoked ham were more expensive than streaky bacon
• 1 onion , finely chopped	30p	Some recipes use 2 onions and no celery. 30p each
• 1 celery stick, finely chopped (50g)	15p	Some use 2 carrots, mushrooms, spinach instead of celery - choose what ever is on special offer
• 1 medium carrot , grated	4.5p	Imperfect carrots 3p/100g, standard were up to 8p/ 100g
• 2 garlic cloves , finely chopped	8p	25p a bulb. Garlic granules are cheaper. Use a level tea-spoon instead of 2 large cloves. 85p per pot.
• 500g beef mince	£3.00	Most recipes say use a 5% fat mince (60p/100g). You can use pork, beef or turkey—or a mixture. See below. 20% fat mince was 40p/100g. Frozen may be cheaper.
• 1 tbsp tomato purée (15g)	3p	Comes in 200g tubes costing 40p or more.
• 2 x 400g cans chopped tomatoes	90p	Some cut price brands were cheaper than supermarket own
• 1 tbsp clear honey	0	This is the only recipe we have seen using honey. Some recipes using tomato add a little sugar to the dish to round off the flavour, but its not essential
<b>Total</b>	<b>£4.83</b>	You can buy a bottle of tomato sauce costing 70p (brands are up to £2), but it contained no extra vegetables and more sugar than onion. Total £4.50 (with meat added)



We cooked a 5% fat mince and a 12% mince. Although the 5% mince was more expensive, we had far more meat for our lasagne.

Continued on next page

## What is cheaper—making it yourself or buying ready made? Continued

Ingredient	Price	Tip
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>500g pack fresh egg lasagne sheets</li> </ul>	£2.50	Can use any pasta. If you use dried lasagne or pasta shapes, soak in hot water before making the lasagne. The cheapest 500g dried lasagne cost 75p, but you would only need to use around 400g. Recipes were vague on the amount.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>400ml crème fraiche made loose with a little water</li> </ul>	£2.00	This is instead of a white sauce (crème fraiche - 32p/100g). You could make a sauce with 50g flour, 50g butter, 1/2 litre milk and some nutmeg (89p bottle—but you use 9p worth). A bottle of lasagne white sauce cost around 80p bottle.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>125g ball mozzarella , roughly torn</li> </ul>	75p	Some recipes use mozzarella, others use cheddar. Use mozzarella if you like the stringy cheese. The grated hard mozzarella was more expensive than the balls.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>50g freshly grated parmesan</li> </ul>	94p	The amounts used in recipes vary from 0 to 100g (1.88/100g). Some only used cheddar (63p/100g). Some ready grated was cheaper, other more expensive.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>large handful basil leaves , torn (optional)</li> </ul>	£1.25 for a pot	Jamie's version cooks chopped basil stalks in the meat sauce to add more flavour. Most other versions use dried oregano for the Italian taste
Total for this page	£7.44	If you use dried pasta, bottle of white sauce, all cheddar and no basil, the cost would be £2.74.
Grand total	£12.27	But if you used the lower cost suggestions you could make a 6 person lasagne for £7.24, saving £5.03.

### So what if I bought ready made?

Most ready made lasagnes are for 1 or 2 people, and cost around £3.75 for 2. (£7.50 for 4)

Our lasagne serves 4 - 6 and has over 1kg ingredients. We found a 700g lasagne on special offer costing £5 and a 1kg one costing £4.50, but this contained more water than any other ingredient and only 8% mince, so maybe not such good value.



## What's in Season?

Here is a list of what fruit and veg are in season this May

### Fruit

Rhubarb , Strawberries

### Vegetables

Artichoke, Asparagus, Aubergine, Beetroot, Chicory, Chillies, Elderflowers, Lettuce, Marrow, New Potatoes, Peas, Peppers, Radishes, Rocket, Samphire, Sorrel, Spinach, Spring Greens, Spring Onions, Watercress

Think of radishes, and the first thing that comes to mind is something you can add to a salad for colour and crunch. But they are far more versatile, and cheap, especially if you grow them yourself.

- Look for recipes for pickled radish or radish chutney.
- Roast or braise them (Heat butter in a pan and add the radishes. Cook for a minute, then add some garlic and wine or stock. Let it bubble until the sauce is reduced).
- Add them to a stew or curry
- Mooli or Daikon (大根) is a radish used in Chinese cooking. Fried daikon balls are a popular dish, as is braised or pickled Mooli. Search for recipes using Daikon for lots of different ideas.
- To be simple, add raw to a salad for colour and crunch

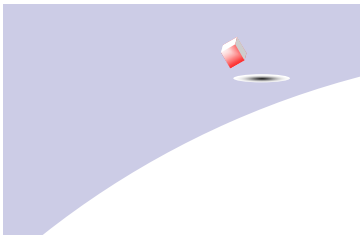


Buy a packet of radish seeds for a cheap option. Under £2 buys you over 1000 seeds. Radishes are quick, easy and fun to grow from seed, ready to eat in as little as four weeks. These compact plants can be grown in even the smallest of gardens and are great gap-fillers on the veg plot. You can also grow them in pots. Sow small batches every few weeks for harvesting throughout summer. There are even varieties for winter harvest.

### Price changes are affecting most of us

The Opinion and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) asked adults about changes in their cost of living over the last month. In March 2022, 87% of respondents reported that their cost of living had increased (a rise from 62% when this question was first asked in November 2021). Of those adults who said their cost of living had increased, 31% reported spending less on food shopping and essentials.





## Warwickshire Food Forum.

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If you have an interest in food , hydration, food costs, sustainability and health, and would like to join the food forum, please contact the editor.

If you would like more information about any of the articles in this newsletter, please contact the editor who will pass this on to the author of the article.

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## References and further reading

Independent Food Aid network: <https://www.foodaidnetwork.org.uk/>

Trussell trust: <https://www.trusselltrust.org/>

The National food Strategy: <https://www.nationalfoodstrategy.org/>

### Radish Recipes and Tips

<https://www.deliciousmagazine.co.uk/recipes/braised-herby-radishes/>

<https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/collection/radish-recipes>

<https://www.gardenfocused.co.uk/vegetable/radish.php>

<https://www.honestfoodtalks.com/mooli-recipe-daikon-radish-benefits/>

### How changes in cost of living is affecting food services

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/businessindustryandtrade/business/businessservices/articles/recentchallengesfacedbyfoodanddrinkbusinessesandtheirimpactonprices/2022-04-04>

### Taste testing

<https://www.which.co.uk/news/article/best-baked-beans-the-supermarket-own-brands-that-beat-branston-heinz-hp-abOOH9u0DYtP - Which?>