


RANDOM HOUSE  BOOKS

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# The Easy Cook Cookbook

Edited by Sarah Giles

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## About the Book

The cookbook for people who loved good food but don't want to spend too much time in the kitchen

- Over 120 easy recipes for delicious food from Britain's fastest-growing cookery magazine
- Includes classic dishes, modern twists, international flavours and ideas for every occasion – all with simple, straightforward instructions and using easy-to-find ingredients
- *Easy Everyday Food* provides ideas for healthy weekday suppers, from low-fat meals to handy standby recipes and ideas for quick puddings
- *Easy Weekend Food* is for when you have a little more time, including recipes for entertaining and baking as well as lunches and snacks
- All of the recipes have been triple-tested so you can cook with complete confidence



**The**  
**easy** **COOK**  
**COOKBOOK**  
REAL FOOD FOR BUSY PEOPLE

Edited by Sarah Giles

**BBC**  
BOOKS



# Introduction

***Easy Cook* magazine does exactly what its title suggests - it makes cooking easy! And this cookbook is designed to show you just how straightforward making home-cooked meals can be.**

It's easy to get stuck in a rut, making the same meals week in and week out - and it's no wonder that cooking can sometimes seem like a chore. But *Easy Cook* shows you new ways of using familiar ingredients, with plenty of recipes you can rustle up and get on the table in a matter of minutes - safe in the knowledge that you're serving yourself and your family healthy, home-cooked food. These are not the sort of recipes you have to spend hours on - they're fast, simple ideas that need no special skills and, more often than not, they use the kind of ingredients you would normally put in your supermarket trolley every week anyway.

There's now at least one whole generation in the UK that has not been taught cookery at school and, without the basic skills, cooking from scratch can seem daunting. What's more, with so much convenience food around it's tempting to think - why bother? However, a growing number of us are coming to realize that while convenience food does have a place in our busy lives, too much of it is simply not good for us. And, as you'll see from the recipes in this, our first *Easy Cook* cookbook, it can be almost as quick and easy to make a meal yourself as it is to heat up a ready meal.

**Quick and easy cooking**

That's not to say we insist our readers turn their backs on anything that's been pre-prepared. Cooking doesn't have to be all or nothing and our recipes often include short-cut ingredients – after all, *Easy Cook*'s strapline is 'real food for busy people' and we know that time is of the essence. So we're quite happy to suggest using a sachet of ready-made stir-fry sauce or a tub of pasta sauce in an ingredients list, for example – there's nothing wrong with that when the recipe includes nutritious, fresh ingredients too. As well as short-cut ingredients, the recipes are full of time-saving techniques that you can use again and again and, to give you as much choice and flexibility as possible, we also suggest lots of variations – showing you how to adapt a recipe so it's suitable for vegetarians, for example, or explaining how, with an adjustment or two, you can change a chicken recipe to a fish recipe or use lamb instead of beef.

When we put together the first issues of *Easy Cook* magazine, over four years ago, our aim was to encourage beginners to get cooking. But it soon became obvious that our no-fuss recipes were appealing to more experienced cooks too. After all, even if you're the best cook in the world, there are still times when you need inspiration for a quick meal at the end of a busy day! We like to think our straightforward approach, friendly tone and wide selection of ideas, ranging from after-work suppers to cakes, bakes and meals for entertaining, continue to give everyone – keen cook or not-so-keen – plenty of new recipes to add to their repertoire.

### **Meals for the whole week**

Following the same distinctive format as the magazine, *The Easy Cook Cookbook* is divided into two parts. The first part, 'Easy Everyday Food', starts with our trademark 'Easy Suppers' (all ready in 20 minutes or less) and you'll find

plenty more ideas for family dinners in the 'Easy Family Food' chapter, which is designed to help get the whole family back round the dining table once in a while – after all, there's plenty of evidence to suggest that families who eat together find it easier to communicate with each other. Our 'Easy Standby' recipes take some of our favourite storecupboard ingredients as their starting point, while 'Easy Puds' gives you speedy ideas for rounding off weeknight meals. And with our 'Easy Low-fat Meals', you'll find that cutting down on fat doesn't mean missing out on flavour.

The second part of the cookbook is called 'Easy Weekend Food' and this is where, if you need any more convincing, you'll really see how enjoyable time spent in the kitchen can be. The recipes are all still straightforward and none of them requires you to spend ages standing over the stove, but they're designed for more relaxed cooking and dining than most of us have time for during the week. So you'll find a pie, a casserole and a roast, for example, that take a little more time in the oven than recipes in 'Easy Everyday Food' – but you can just leave them cooking while you get on with enjoying your weekend. You'll find recipes for cakes and bakes that will remind you how therapeutic cooking can be – especially when you can sit back with a cuppa afterwards and reward yourself with a slice of something delicious. And there are also lots of recipes in this part of the cookbook that are perfect for entertaining – you can mix and match our suggested starters, main courses and desserts, but feel free to substitute recipes from other parts of the book too.

We really hope *The Easy Cook Cookbook* will inspire you – whether you're an experienced cook or a beginner – and that it will motivate you to get into the kitchen and do some

more home cooking. Remember – it's fun, it's easy (and it's tasty, cheaper and healthier too).

Happy cooking!

Sarah Giles

## PART ONE

### easy everyday food

#### **Great recipes for midweek meals, to take you through from Monday to Friday**

Most of us are busy, busy, busy these days, especially during the working week. If you come home tired after a day at the office, or you've been coping with the kids all day, it's so easy to turn to a ready meal for supper – and, every day, thousands of people do just that.



The recipes in our 'Easy Everyday Food' section are designed to show you that good, home-cooked food using fresh, healthy ingredients doesn't need to take ages to prepare and that ready meals and fast food really aren't the only options when life is hectic and time is short.

Whether you're a busy mum, or you go out to work all day, you'll find plenty of easy evening meals that can be on the table in 20 minutes or less. There are also recipes that can be rustled up using the kind of ingredients most of us already have in our kitchen cupboards, meals that even the

fussiest of kids will love, speedy puddings and – if you're on a diet – you'll find lots of low-fat options too.





easy

## SUPPERS

ready in 20 minutes or less

**These suppers are designed to help you get good, nutritious food on the table at the end of a busy day and they can all be ready in no more than 20 minutes.**

So many people rely on ready meals these days and, although we know they can come in handy sometimes, our aim is to show that in not much more than the time it takes to peel off the lid and cook one in the microwave, you can just as easily rustle up a simple homemade meal. It only takes a little more effort, but the end result is tastier and a lot less expensive.

Our easy suppers use everyday ingredients and give them a new twist. We try to keep the number of ingredients to a minimum too, so you don't have to spend ages looking through your kitchen cupboards before you can get started (and this helps keep the costs of each meal down too).

The method in each recipe usually involves just two or three different steps, and you don't need any special knowledge or skills to get good results. It means that all of the recipes are great if you're a beginner but, equally, if you're a more experienced cook you'll find plenty of ideas to inspire you.





oy salmon  
ticky glazed pork  
amb steaks with tomatoes and olives  
ausages with mustard and apple  
loney mushroom chicken  
angy trout  
hicken with lemon and chives  
una linguine  
usilli with green spinach sauce  
loat's cheese and leek tarts  
reamy chicken with leeks  
amb chops with a coriander crust  
hai mince  
eppered beef  
izzling salmon with honey and lime  
peedy beef stir-fry

## Soy salmon

You can leave out the garlic in step 3, if you like, but it gives the salmon a really lovely flavour and is so quick and easy to do that it's worth spending just a couple of extra minutes on it.

- Serves 4
- Ready in 10 minutes
- Not suitable for freezing

**salmon fillets**

**tbsp olive oil**

**tsp soy sauce**

**cloves of garlic, thinly sliced**

**spring onions, finely shredded**

**1** Turn on the grill to medium. Brush the salmon with a little oil and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Line a grill pan with foil, brush with a little more olive oil and put the salmon fillets on it, skin-side down. Sprinkle 1 tsp of soy sauce over each salmon fillet.

**2** Grill the salmon on one side only for about 6–8 minutes, until the flesh is lightly browned and firm to the touch.

**3** Fry the garlic in the remaining oil, stirring all the time until it just starts to turn golden.

Serve with the garlic, the shredded spring onions and new potatoes or stir-fried veg

## **Sticky glazed pork**

Couscous makes a good alternative to rice for midweek suppers, as it's so quick to prepare. You can add cucumber, peppers or even frozen peas to this dish to increase the veg count, if you like.

- Serves 4
- Ready in 20 minutes
- Not suitable for freezing

**tsp English mustard**  
**tbsp clear honey**  
**plash of orange juice**  
**pork loin steaks**  
**100g couscous**  
**bunch spring onions, thinly sliced**  
**tbsp olive oil**  
**50ml hot chicken stock**  
**large handful of cherry tomatoes, quartered**

**1** Turn on the grill to medium. Mix together the mustard, honey and orange juice, then smear over the steaks. Grill the steaks for 4 minutes on each side or until cooked, brushing over any leftover glaze.

**2** Meanwhile, tip the couscous and spring onions into a bowl. Spoon the oil into the stock, pour onto the couscous and stir. Cover tightly with cling film and leave for 5–6 minutes or until the liquid is absorbed. Fluff up with a fork, then stir in the tomatoes and season. Top with the pork and pan juices.

Serve with green veg



Sticky glazed pork

## **Lamb steaks with tomatoes and olives**

You could make this using chicken thighs or drumsticks instead of lamb, too. Don't use tinned black olives – they tend to be a bit hard and bullet-like. Buy fresh ones (from the deli counter in the supermarket) if you can or, failing that, use olives from a jar.

- Serves 4
- Ready in 20 minutes
- Not suitable for freezing

**tbsp olive oil**

**lamb leg steaks**

**red onion, cut into 8 wedges**

**tsp dried oregano**

**50ml white wine**

**100g pack cherry tomatoes**

**100g pitted black olives**

**handful of fresh flat-leaf parsley, chopped**

**1** Turn the oven to fan 180C/conventional 200C/gas 6. Heat the oil in a large roasting tin on the hob. Brown the lamb steaks in the tin for 1 minute each side.

**2** Add the onion to the tin with the oregano. Pour over the wine and add the tomatoes. Scatter over the olives, then place the tin in the oven for 5 minutes until the lamb is cooked. Scatter with the parsley.





Lamb steaks with tomatoes and olives

## Sausages with mustard and apple

Use meaty sausages for this – herby ones like Lincolnshire will give the best flavour and stay nice and firm. To make this dish even speedier to cook, cut the sausages in half before you fry them.

- Serves 4
- Ready in 20 minutes
- Suitable for freezing

### **Lincolnshire sausages**

**tbsp olive oil**

**large onion, cut into thin wedges**

**apples, cored and cut into wedges**

**rounded tbsp redcurrant jelly**

**tbsp wholegrain mustard**

**chicken stock cube**

**few fresh rosemary sprigs or ½ tsp dried (optional)**

**1** Fry the sausages in the oil for 5 minutes, turning frequently. Add the onion and cook until golden. Toss in the apples and stir-fry for a minute or so.

**2** Pour 300ml of boiling water over the redcurrant jelly, mustard and stock cube, and stir well. Pour into the pan. Add the rosemary, if using, and simmer, uncovered, until the apples are just tender and the sausages are cooked through.

Serve with mash or rice

## Honey mushroom chicken

The tasty sauce for this quick-cook chicken dish is lovely as it is but if you prefer a slightly thicker sauce, take the chicken from the pan at the end of step 2, turn up the heat and allow the liquid to bubble and reduce a little.

- Serves 4
- Ready in 20 minutes
- Suitable for freezing

**boneless, skinless chicken breasts**

**tbsp olive oil**

**50g mushrooms, sliced**

**fresh rosemary sprigs, halved**

**tbsp tomato ketchup**

**tbsp clear honey**

**chicken stock cube**

**1** Cook the chicken in the oil for about 2 minutes each side. Remove from the pan then add the mushrooms and rosemary, and cook until starting to brown.

**2** Stir in a mugful of water then add the ketchup and honey, and crumble in the stock cube. Put the chicken back in the pan. Cover and cook over a gentle heat for 10 minutes until just tender.

Serve with mashed potatoes and green veg



Honey mushroom chicken



## Tangy trout

Don't throw away leftover or stale bread – instead, whizz it into breadcrumbs and store it in the freezer, ready to use in a recipe like this (it will take no more than a couple of minutes to defrost).

- Serves 4
- Ready in 15 minutes
- Not suitable for freezing

**trout fillets, skin on**

**0g breadcrumbs**

**tbsp soft butter**

**mall bunch of fresh parsley, chopped**

**rated rind and juice of 1 lemon**

**5g pine nuts, toasted and roughly chopped**

**tbsp olive oil**

**1** Turn on the grill to high. Lay the trout fillets, skin-side down, on an oiled baking tray. Mix together the breadcrumbs, butter, parsley, lemon rind and juice, and half the pine nuts. Scatter the mixture in a thin layer over the fillets, drizzle with the oil and place under the grill for 5 minutes. Sprinkle over the remaining pine nuts.

Serve with lemon wedges and a potato salad



Tangy trout