

## Cooking on a Budget Recipes with Nancy Root-Miller



### Fried Rice

3 tbs. oil, divided  
2 eggs, beaten  
1 onion, finely chopped  
2 cloves garlic, minced  
1 tbs. grated ginger or 1/4 tsp. ground ginger), optional  
2 cups mixed chopped vegetables (fresh, frozen, or canned)  
3 cups cooked plain rice, white or brown  
2 tsp. soy sauce or more to taste  
½ cup chicken or vegetable stock or broth  
1 cup cooked, chopped chicken or pork, optional

In a large frying pan over medium heat, heat a little oil. Add eggs and cook, stirring, until softly scrambled, about 2 minutes, Scrape out of the pan and set aside.

Wipe out pan, add 2 tbs. oil and raise the heat to medium high. Add onions and garlic and cook until soft and beginning to brown.

For veggies:

--If using fresh veggies, add them and cook another 5-7 minutes until tender.

--If using frozen veggies, break them up and add them while still frozen, to the pan. Cook until thawed and warm, 2-3 minutes.

--If using canned veggies, drain them well and add to the pan. Cook for 1 minute until warm. Use less soy sauce with canned vegetables, as they already contain salt.

Once the veggies are hot, add the rice and stir well to combine. Season with soy sauce, Add broth; cook until the liquid has evaporated. Stir in chicken if using. Stir in reserved scrambled eggs, breaking them into small pieces as you go. Serve hot.

### NOTES:

-You can use any veggies you like, but try to use a variety. Carrots and peas are popular, but any finely chopped cooked veggies will work: broccoli, cabbage, peppers, etc.

-You can use water instead of broth or stock, but the flavor will be milder.

-Add a little of any Chinese seasoning you like; teriyaki, duck sauce, plum sauce, hot mustard, chili sauce, black bean paste

-For crunch, add finely chopped water chestnuts and/or roasted peanuts.

## Pear Cranberry Crisp

4 cans (15 oz.) pears, rinsed and drained  
1 cup dried cranberries  
8 tbs. (1 stick) butter, softened  
1 cup oats  
½ cup brown sugar  
½ cup flour  
Salt

Heat oven to 425F. Lightly grease a 13x9-inch baking dish. Stir together the pears and cranberries. Season with a pinch of salt and pour into dish. In a small bowl, mix the butter, oats, brown sugar, and flour with an additional pinch of salt until the mixture clumps (I use my fingers), Evenly scatter over the fruit. Bake for 15-20 minutes until the fruit is bubbly and the topping is browned.

### NOTES:

-Try different fruits. If the canned fruit is in juice instead of syrup, just drain--no need to rinse. The tart cranberries balance the sweetness of the fruit--you can use raisins or dried cherries instead.

-Make this with fresh pears or apples instead. Peel and core them, slice into wedges and add to the dish. If they're tart, add a sprinkle of sugar. Bake for 45 minutes at 325F to let the fruit cook through.

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## Cooking Dried Beans

This is a technique rather than a recipe, and applies to most dried beans.

Pour a pound of dried beans in a large bowl or cookie sheet, Sort through, removing any stones, cracked or wrinkled beans. Pour the beans into a colander and rinse well, (If you don't have a colander or strainer, pour them into a big bowl, cover with water, and remove them with a slotted spoon or your hands. Discard water.

Next step: soaking. It's not necessary, but I highly recommend it Soaking cuts down on cooking time, and removes the enzymes that cause gastric upset (i.e., gas), There are two methods:

- 1) Overnight soak. Pour rinsed beans into a large bowl and add water to cover by at least 3 inches. Leave for 8-12 hours or overnight.
- 2) Quick soak: Pour rinsed beans into a large saucepan and add water to cover by 2 inches. Place over high heat, Bring to a full boil and boil for 2 minutes. Remove from heat and let sit for 1 hour.

After soaking by either method, drain and discard soaking liquid. Briefly rinse the beans, then place in a large saucepan and add water to cover by 2 inches. Bring to a boil, reduce heat to low and cook until tender, Start checking beans after 40 minutes by biting into one; they should be tender but not mushy. This will take anywhere from 40 minutes to 1 ½ hours depending on the type of beans

Cooked beans will keep in the fridge for 4 days and for months in the freezer. To freeze beans, drain any liquid and place them in zip lock bags, Flatten and seal the bags, cool then freeze, To use, either place a bag in a big bowl of very hot water, or if you're making soup or chili, just add the frozen beans right into your cooking pot.

## **Refried Beans**

1 tbs. oil

1 onion, minced

2 cloves garlic, minced

2 cups cooked beans (or 2 cans beans, rinsed and drained)

1 small can chiles

½ cup broth or water

Salt and pepper

Warm oil in a large frying pan over medium heat. Add onion, garlic, chili powder, and a pinch each of salt and pepper. Cook until onions are tender and fragrant, 5-8 minutes. Stir in beans, chilies, and broth. Cook 5 minutes, then start mashing some of the beans with a fork. Cook and mash until the mixture is thick, with some whole beans still visible. Taste and adjust seasoning.

### *NOTES:*

- Use any beans you like, except for chickpeas.
- Use whatever chili powder you like, but make sure you know how hot it is.
- Instead of (or along with) the canned chiles, you can add salsa or canned chopped tomatoes with chiles.
- Serve the beans with rice for a protein-rich meal, or with tortilla chips as a dip. Garnish with chopped tomatoes, salsa, avocado, black olives, cheese. Top with fried eggs and cheese for huevos rancheros. Spread on a tortilla, sprinkle with cheese, and top with another tortilla, then cook in a frying pan for a few minutes per side for quesadillas.

## Healthy and Delicious Ramen

2 tbs. oil  
1 large onion, thinly sliced  
3 - 4 cloves garlic, minced  
2 small zucchini, sliced  
1 bell pepper, halved and sliced  
6 - 8 cups chicken broth or stock, or vegetable stock  
2 pkg. instant ramen, seasoning packets discarded

Heat oil in a large saucepan over medium heat. Add onion and garlic and season lightly with salt and pepper. Cook, stirring, until deep golden, 15 minutes. Add zucchini and bell pepper; cook 5 minutes until softened. Add 6 cups broth, raise heat to medium-high, and boil 5 minutes, Taste broth and adjust seasonings, Break ramen noodles into the pot and cook, stirring occasionally, for about 5 minutes until ramen is tender.

### NOTES:

**Do** cook those onions until browned; this is the best way to build excellent flavor using the packet.

-Use whatever vegetables you like. Thinly sliced mushrooms and cabbage would be delicious here. If using canned or frozen veggies, boil the broth first, then add veggies with the ramen. Add green onions at the end if you wish.

-Flavor with grated ginger, soy sauce, hot sauce or red pepper or a squeeze of lemon if you wish.

-Add more broth for a soupier ramen.

-Add a handful of cooked, chopped chicken or pork, or cubed tofu, for protein.

## COOKING ON A BUDGET - NOTES AND SUGGESTIONS

-Basic sautéed **onions and garlic** add flavor to any savory dish. Cook them until just tender and translucent for mild flavor or until deeply browned for rich flavor. Fresh garlic is cheap and easy to use, but minced garlic in a jar is fine too.

-**Salt and pepper** can make nearly anything tastier. Get kosher or sea salt at the dollar store and always sprinkle the salt with your fingers, not with a salt shaker. You control the amount much better that way. Add tiny sprinkles as you cook instead of waiting until the end. Use a pepper mill (if you can) fresher flavor.

-**Seasonings** are your friend. You don't need an entire spice rack; a few staples will do, Mrs. Dash makes a series of tasty, salt-free seasoning blend. A tiny pinch of red pepper flakes will boost any dish if you like a little heat. Get an herb mix such as Italian seasoning. Buy a knob of fresh ginger and leave it in a zip lock bag in your freezer. Peel and mince or grate a little ginger into soups, stir-fries or rice for a zippy Asian flavor.

-If you have a sunny windowsill, buy some potting soil and a few packets of seeds and **grow your own herbs for pennies**. Fresh herbs add a ton of flavor and freshness. Start with chives, parsley, and basil and build from there. Put the root ends of scallions in a glass of water and set in the sun; scallions will regrow.

-Make your own **stock** for pennies, Keep the clean peelings and trimmings from carrots, onions, garlic and other veggies in a large zip lock bag in your freezer. Add bones and scraps from cooked chicken. When the bag is full, dump it in a large saucepan, barely cover with cold water, and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer for a few hours uncovered. The longer you cook it, the richer the stock will be. DO NOT add salt, but you can add pepper or herbs. Stock will keep in the fridge for a week and in the freezer for months.



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