

THE HARD-TIMES PANTRY

14 Days of Simple Meals When Money Is Tight

42 family meals for a family of four

Breakfast, lunch and dinner from one carefully planned grocery list.

This guide is built around inexpensive staples that do more than one job: chicken becomes supper, broth, soup, dumplings and pot pie; flour becomes biscuits, tortillas, pancakes, bread and cookies; beans and rice become filling meals without making every day taste the same.

Budget: approximately \$90-\$100 at a value-oriented grocery store. Prices vary by location, package size and weekly sales. This plan assumes you already have water, salt and black pepper.

Prepared for Poetic Tears

Before You Shop

Buy the quantities listed below. Do not reduce the chicken, flour, beans, eggs or vegetables if you want to follow the full 14-day plan exactly. The modest extra cushion is intentional.

Item	Quantity	Working price range
Self-rising flour	15 lb (3 x 5-lb bags)	\$9-15
Cornmeal	5 lb	\$3-5
Long-grain white rice	5 lb	\$4-6
Dried pinto beans	3 lb	\$3-5
Russet potatoes	10 lb	\$4-8
Large eggs	42 (30-count + 12-count)	\$7-10
Pasta	16 oz	\$1-2
Diced tomatoes	1 x 14.5 oz can	\$1-2
Frozen mixed vegetables	64 oz	\$5-7
Chicken leg quarters	20 lb (2 x 10-lb bags)	\$16-22
Roll breakfast sausage	2 x 16 oz	\$8-11
Margarine / vegetable-oil spread	about 45 oz	\$4-5
Vegetable oil	24 oz	\$3-4
Granulated sugar	4 lb	\$3-4
Old-fashioned oats	42 oz	\$4-5
White vinegar	32 oz	\$2-3
Tea bags	1 box	\$2-3
Ground coffee	1 economical container	\$5-7
Evaporated milk	2 x 12 oz cans	\$3-4

Expected total: roughly \$90-\$100. The price is an estimate, not a guarantee. Sales can lower it; local prices can raise it.

Important: Coffee and tea are included as economical beverages, but the exact number of cups depends on the package purchased and how strongly your household brews them.

Set Yourself Up for Success

- **Freeze raw meat promptly.** Keep only the chicken and sausage you expect to cook within the next day or two in the refrigerator; freeze the rest.
- **Cook beans in batches.** Soak and cook about 1 lb at a time. Season the cooking water lightly; refrigerate or freeze cooked beans you will not use promptly.
- **Cook rice intentionally.** Most recipes list cooked rice. One cup dry long-grain rice generally makes about 3 cups cooked. Cool leftovers promptly.
- **Save chicken bones.** After a chicken meal, refrigerate or freeze the bones promptly. Simmer them with water later to make broth. Salt and pepper turn that broth into the backbone of several meals.
- **Taste as you cook.** Sausage is already salty. Beans, potatoes, rice and flour are not. Salt bland foods enough to wake them up, and use black pepper where noted.
- **Do not leave cooked food sitting out.** Refrigerate leftovers promptly and reheat leftovers and poultry thoroughly.

The plan deliberately repeats a few techniques, not identical meals. That is how a small pantry becomes two weeks of food without feeling like punishment.

Your 14-Day Menu

Day	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
1	Creamy Oatmeal	Beans & Cornbread	Roast Chicken, Potatoes & Vegetables
2	Pancakes & Homemade Syrup	Bean & Rice Bowls	Sausage-Potato Skillet
3	Potato & Egg Skillet	Egg Salad & Quick Bread	Chicken & Dumplings
4	Hoecakes & Syrup	Chicken-Rice Soup	Sausage-Tomato Pasta
5	Creamy Oatmeal	Bean & Rice Burritos	Chicken Pot Pie
6	Sausage Gravy & Biscuits	Leftover Chicken Pot Pie	Beans & Cornbread
7	Breakfast Burritos	Vegetable-Rice Soup	Roast Chicken, Rice & Gravy + Water Pie
8	Crisp Oatmeal Cakes	Egg Salad Sandwiches	Egg & Vegetable Fried Rice
9	Biscuits & Syrup	Creamy Potato Soup	Sausage & Rice Skillet
10	Oatmeal Pancakes	Bean Burritos	Chicken-Potato Stew & Cornbread
11	Sausage-Egg-Potato Scramble	Chicken Noodle Soup	Chicken & Dumplings
12	Sweet Cornmeal Cakes	Egg & Potato Burritos	Savory Sausage Pasta
13	Sausage Biscuits	Beans & Cornbread	Chicken & Rice with Pan Gravy
14	Pancakes & Syrup	Hearty Pantry Soup	Sunday Chicken Pot Pie + Rice Pudding

Day 1	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
	Creamy Oatmeal	Beans & Cornbread	Roast Chicken, Potatoes & Vegetables

Creamy Oatmeal

Ingredients

- 2 cups old-fashioned oats
- 4 cups water
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 1/4 teaspoon salt

Directions

Bring water and salt to a boil. Stir in oats, lower heat, and simmer 5-7 minutes, stirring occasionally. Stir in sugar. Add a spoonful of diluted evaporated milk only if desired and available.

Beans & Cornbread

Ingredients

- 3 cups cooked pinto beans
- Salt and black pepper to taste
- CORNBREAD: 2 cups cornmeal
- 1 large egg
- 1 1/2 cups water, approximately
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1/2 teaspoon salt

Directions

Warm beans with a little cooking liquid; season well. Heat oven to 425 F. Mix cornbread ingredients to a thick pourable batter. Pour into a greased hot pan and bake 20-25 minutes until browned.

Roast Chicken, Potatoes & Vegetables

Ingredients

- 4 chicken leg quarters
- 2 lb potatoes, cut into chunks
- 2 cups frozen mixed vegetables
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 1 teaspoon salt, divided
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper, divided

Directions

Heat oven to 400 F. Season chicken with about half the salt and pepper and roast until browned and the thickest part reaches 165 F. Toss potatoes with oil and remaining seasoning and roast until tender. Heat vegetables separately with a little salt and pepper. Save bones and any uneaten chicken promptly for broth.

Day 2	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
	Pancakes & Homemade Syrup	Bean & Rice Bowls	Sausage-Potato Skillet

Pancakes & Homemade Syrup

Ingredients

- 2 cups self-rising flour
- 1 large egg
- 1 1/2 cups water, approximately
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil, plus a little for the skillet
- SYRUP: 1 cup sugar + 1/2 cup water

Directions

For syrup, simmer sugar and water gently about 5 minutes; cool slightly. For pancakes, whisk egg, water, sugar and oil. Stir in flour just until combined. Cook 1/4-cup portions on a lightly oiled hot skillet, turning when bubbles form.

Bean & Rice Bowls

Ingredients

- 2 cups cooked pinto beans
- 2 cups cooked rice
- 1/2 teaspoon salt, or to taste
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 teaspoon vinegar, optional

Directions

Warm beans with a little bean liquid and season. Spoon over hot rice. A tiny splash of vinegar brightens the beans without making them taste sour.

Sausage-Potato Skillet

Ingredients

- 4 oz breakfast sausage
- 1 1/2 lb potatoes, diced small
- 1 cup frozen mixed vegetables
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil only if needed
- Black pepper; salt only after tasting

Directions

Brown sausage deeply; remove. Cook potatoes in the drippings, adding a little oil only if the pan is dry. Let the potatoes brown before stirring. Add vegetables and sausage; cook until hot. Pepper generously and taste before adding salt.

Day 3	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
	Potato & Egg Skillet	Egg Salad & Quick Bread	Chicken & Dumplings

Potato & Egg Skillet

Ingredients

- 1 lb potatoes, diced
- 4 large eggs
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper

Directions

Brown potatoes in oil over medium heat until tender. Season. Beat eggs, pour over potatoes, and stir gently until eggs are set.

Egg Salad & Quick Bread

Ingredients

- 4 hard-boiled eggs
- 1 tablespoon white vinegar
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 1-2 tablespoons water
- Salt and black pepper
- BREAD: 3 cups self-rising flour
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 2 tablespoons oil or melted margarine
- About 1 1/4 cups water

Directions

Heat oven to 375 F. Mix bread ingredients just until combined; place in a greased loaf pan and bake 35-45 minutes. For egg salad, mash one cooked yolk with vinegar, oil, sugar and enough water for a creamy dressing. Chop remaining eggs, mix in dressing, salt and pepper. Serve on cooled sliced bread.

Chicken & Dumplings

Ingredients

- 2 chicken leg quarters
- 7 cups water
- 1 teaspoon salt, then more to taste
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- DUMPLINGS: 2 cups self-rising flour
- 3 tablespoons margarine
- About 3/4 cup water

Directions

Simmer chicken in water with salt and pepper until tender. Remove chicken; pull meat from bones. Return bones and skin to broth and simmer 20 minutes, then strain. Return meat to broth and taste for seasoning. Rub margarine into flour, add enough water for a soft dough, and drop spoonfuls into gently simmering broth. Cover and cook 12-15 minutes without lifting the lid.

Day 4	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
	Hoecakes & Syrup	Chicken-Rice Soup	Sausage-Tomato Pasta

Hoecakes & Syrup

Ingredients

- 2 cups cornmeal
- 1 large egg
- About 1 1/2 cups water
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil, plus a little for frying
- Homemade syrup from pancake recipe

Directions

Mix cornmeal, egg, water, salt and oil into a thick batter. Spoon onto a lightly oiled skillet and cook until crisp and golden on both sides. Serve with a small amount of homemade syrup.

Chicken-Rice Soup

Ingredients

- 1 1/2 cups cooked shredded chicken
- 6 cups homemade chicken broth
- 1 cup cooked rice
- 1 cup frozen mixed vegetables
- Salt and black pepper to taste

Directions

Bring broth to a simmer. Add vegetables and cook until tender. Add chicken and rice and heat through. Taste before serving and adjust salt and pepper.

Sausage-Tomato Pasta

Ingredients

- 8 oz dry pasta
- 4 oz breakfast sausage
- 1/2 can diced tomatoes
- 1 cup frozen mixed vegetables
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
- Salt to taste

Directions

Cook pasta in salted water and drain, saving 1/2 cup cooking water. Brown sausage. Add tomatoes and vegetables and simmer 5 minutes. Toss with pasta, adding a little pasta water if dry. Pepper and taste before adding salt.

Day 5	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
	Creamy Oatmeal	Bean & Rice Burritos	Chicken Pot Pie

Creamy Oatmeal

Ingredients

- 2 cups old-fashioned oats
- 4 cups water
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 1/4 teaspoon salt

Directions

Bring water and salt to a boil. Stir in oats, lower heat, and simmer 5-7 minutes, stirring occasionally. Stir in sugar. Add a spoonful of diluted evaporated milk only if desired and available.

Bean & Rice Burritos

Ingredients

- TORTILLAS: 2 cups self-rising flour
- 3 tablespoons vegetable oil
- About 3/4 cup warm water
- 2 cups cooked pinto beans
- 1 cup cooked rice
- Salt and black pepper

Directions

Mix flour, oil and water; knead briefly and rest 15 minutes. Divide into 8 balls, roll thin, and cook in a dry skillet 30-60 seconds per side. Mash warm beans with a little cooking liquid; season. Fill tortillas with beans and rice. For extra flavor, brown filled burritos seam-side down in a lightly oiled skillet.

Chicken Pot Pie

Ingredients

- 1 1/2 cups cooked shredded chicken
- 1 1/2 cups frozen mixed vegetables
- 2 cups chicken broth
- 3 tablespoons margarine
- 3 tablespoons self-rising flour
- Salt and black pepper
- TOPPING: 1 1/2 cups self-rising flour
- 3 tablespoons margarine
- About 2/3 cup water

Directions

Heat oven to 400 F. Melt 3 tablespoons margarine; stir in 3 tablespoons flour. Gradually whisk in broth and simmer until thickened. Add chicken and vegetables; season and pour into baking dish. Rub topping margarine into flour and add water for a soft dough. Drop over filling and bake 25-30 minutes until bubbling and browned.

Day 6	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
	Sausage Gravy & Biscuits	Leftover Chicken Pot Pie	Beans & Cornbread

Sausage Gravy & Biscuits

Ingredients

- 4 oz breakfast sausage
- 3 tablespoons self-rising flour
- 1/2 can evaporated milk
- 1 1/2 cups water
- Black pepper; salt after tasting
- BISCUITS: 2 cups self-rising flour
- 1/4 cup margarine
- About 3/4 cup water

Directions

Heat oven to 425 F. Cut margarine into flour, add water just until dough forms, pat and cut; bake 12-15 minutes. Brown sausage, sprinkle with flour, cook 1 minute, then slowly stir in milk and water. Simmer until thick. Add plenty of pepper; taste before salting.

Lunch - Leftover Chicken Pot Pie

Ingredients

- 4 servings of Day 5 chicken pot pie

Directions

Refrigerate Day 5 leftovers promptly. Reheat until steaming hot throughout. Serve each person one portion.

Beans & Cornbread

Ingredients

- 3 cups cooked pinto beans
- Salt and black pepper to taste
- CORNBREAD: 2 cups cornmeal
- 1 large egg
- 1 1/2 cups water, approximately
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1/2 teaspoon salt

Directions

Warm beans with a little cooking liquid; season well. Heat oven to 425 F. Mix cornbread ingredients to a thick pourable batter. Pour into a greased hot pan and bake 20-25 minutes until browned.

Day 7	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
	Breakfast Burritos	Vegetable-Rice Soup	Roast Chicken, Rice & Gravy + Water Pie

Breakfast Burritos

Ingredients

- TORTILLAS: 2 cups self-rising flour
- 3 tablespoons vegetable oil
- About 3/4 cup warm water
- 4 oz sausage
- 3 large eggs
- 3/4 lb potato, finely diced
- Black pepper; salt after tasting

Directions

Make 8 tortillas as directed in the burrito recipe. Brown sausage and remove. Cook potato in drippings until browned and tender. Add beaten eggs and scramble. Return sausage, pepper, and taste for salt. Divide among tortillas.

Vegetable-Rice Soup

Ingredients

- 6 cups chicken broth or water
- 1 cup cooked rice
- 1 1/2 cups frozen mixed vegetables
- 1/2 cup cooked pinto beans
- 1/2 teaspoon salt, then to taste
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper

Directions

Simmer vegetables in broth until tender. Add rice and beans. Heat through and season to taste.

Dinner - Sunday Roast Chicken, Rice & Gravy

Ingredients

- 4 chicken leg quarters
- 3 cups cooked rice
- 1 cup frozen mixed vegetables
- 2 tablespoons margarine
- 2 tablespoons self-rising flour
- 2 cups chicken broth
- Salt and black pepper

Directions

Roast seasoned chicken at 400 F until browned and 165 F inside. Make gravy by stirring flour into pan drippings and margarine, then slowly whisking in broth. Simmer until thick. Serve over rice with vegetables.

Sunday Dessert - Water Pie

Ingredients

- CRUST: 1 1/2 cups self-rising flour
- 1/2 cup margarine
- Cold water, a tablespoon at a time
- FILLING: 1 1/2 cups water
- 3/4 cup sugar
- 4 tablespoons self-rising flour
- 4 tablespoons margarine

Directions

Heat oven to 400 F. Cut margarine into flour for crust and add only enough cold water to form dough. Press or roll into a 9-inch pie plate. Pour water into the unbaked crust. Mix sugar and flour together, sprinkle evenly over the water without stirring, and dot with margarine. Bake about 30 minutes; reduce to 375 F and continue until the filling is set and the crust is browned. Cool completely before slicing.

Kitchen note: Water pie is an old-fashioned pantry dessert. Because ovens and self-rising flour brands vary, judge doneness by a browned crust and set filling, not the clock alone.

Day 8	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
	Crisp Oatmeal Cakes	Egg Salad Sandwiches	Egg & Vegetable Fried Rice

Crisp Oatmeal Cakes

Ingredients

- 2 cups old-fashioned oats
- 3 1/2 cups water
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon margarine for skillet

Directions

Cook oats, water, sugar and salt until very thick. Spread in a shallow dish and chill until firm. Cut into cakes and brown in margarine on both sides. Serve plain or with a little syrup.

Egg Salad Sandwiches

Ingredients

- 4 hard-boiled eggs
- 1 tablespoon white vinegar
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 1-2 tablespoons water
- Salt and black pepper
- BREAD: 3 cups self-rising flour
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 2 tablespoons oil or melted margarine
- About 1 1/4 cups water

Directions

Heat oven to 375 F. Mix bread ingredients just until combined; place in a greased loaf pan and bake 35-45 minutes. For egg salad, mash one cooked yolk with vinegar, oil, sugar and enough water for a creamy dressing. Chop remaining eggs, mix in dressing, salt and pepper. Serve on cooled sliced bread.

Egg & Vegetable Fried Rice

Ingredients

- 3 cups cold cooked rice
- 2 large eggs
- 1 1/2 cups frozen mixed vegetables
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 1 teaspoon white vinegar
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper

Directions

Heat oil in a large skillet. Scramble eggs and remove. Cook vegetables until hot, add rice and let it brown in spots. Return eggs, add vinegar, salt and pepper, and toss well.

Day 9	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
	Biscuits & Syrup	Creamy Potato Soup	Sausage & Rice Skillet

Biscuits & Syrup

Ingredients

- 2 cups self-rising flour
- 1/4 cup margarine
- About 3/4 cup water
- Homemade syrup

Directions

Heat oven to 425 F. Cut margarine into flour, stir in water just until dough holds together, pat about 3/4-inch thick, cut and bake 12-15 minutes. Serve warm with margarine and a little syrup.

Creamy Potato Soup

Ingredients

- 1 1/2 lb potatoes, diced
- 4 cups water
- 1/2 can evaporated milk
- 2 tablespoons margarine
- 3/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper

Directions

Simmer potatoes in salted water until very tender. Mash about half directly in the pot. Stir in evaporated milk and margarine. Add pepper and adjust salt. Do not boil hard after adding milk.

Sausage & Rice Skillet

Ingredients

- 4 oz sausage
- 3 cups cooked rice
- 1 cup frozen mixed vegetables
- Remaining 1/2 can diced tomatoes
- Black pepper; salt after tasting

Directions

Brown sausage. Add vegetables and tomatoes and cook until hot. Fold in rice and let some of it brown against the skillet. Pepper generously; taste before salting.

Day 10	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
	Oatmeal Pancakes	Bean Burritos	Chicken-Potato Stew & Cornbread

Oatmeal Pancakes

Ingredients

- 1 cup old-fashioned oats
- 1 1/2 cups self-rising flour
- 1 large egg
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- About 1 1/2 cups water

Directions

Let oats soak in water 5 minutes. Stir in egg, sugar and oil, then flour. Cook on a lightly oiled skillet as for pancakes.

Bean Burritos

Ingredients

- TORTILLAS: 2 cups self-rising flour
- 3 tablespoons vegetable oil
- About 3/4 cup warm water
- 2 1/2 cups cooked pinto beans
- Salt and black pepper

Directions

Make 8 tortillas. Mash beans with enough cooking liquid to make them creamy and season well. Fill tortillas and brown the filled burritos in a lightly oiled skillet if desired.

Chicken-Potato Stew & Cornbread

Ingredients

- 2 chicken leg quarters
- 1 1/2 lb potatoes
- 1 cup frozen mixed vegetables
- 6 cups water
- 1 teaspoon salt, then to taste
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- CORNBREAD: 2 cups cornmeal
- 1 large egg
- 1 1/2 cups water
- 2 tablespoons oil
- 1/2 teaspoon salt

Directions

Simmer chicken in seasoned water until tender. Remove meat from bones and return meat to broth with potatoes and vegetables; simmer until potatoes are tender. Bake cornbread at 425 F for 20-25 minutes.

Day 11	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
	Sausage-Egg-Potato Scramble	Chicken Noodle Soup	Chicken & Dumplings

Sausage-Egg-Potato Scramble

Ingredients

- 4 oz sausage
- 2 large eggs
- 3/4 lb potato, diced
- Black pepper; salt after tasting

Directions

Brown sausage and remove. Cook potato in drippings until tender and browned. Add beaten eggs, scramble, return sausage and season.

Chicken Noodle Soup

Ingredients

- 1 cup shredded chicken
- 6 cups chicken broth
- 4 oz dry pasta
- 1 cup frozen mixed vegetables
- Salt and black pepper

Directions

Bring broth to a simmer. Add vegetables and pasta; cook until pasta is tender. Stir in chicken and heat through. Taste and season.

Chicken & Dumplings

Ingredients

- 2 chicken leg quarters
- 7 cups water
- 1 teaspoon salt, then more to taste
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- DUMPLINGS: 2 cups self-rising flour
- 3 tablespoons margarine
- About 3/4 cup water

Directions

Simmer chicken in water with salt and pepper until tender. Remove chicken; pull meat from bones. Return bones and skin to broth and simmer 20 minutes, then strain. Return meat to broth and taste for seasoning. Rub margarine into flour, add enough water for a soft dough, and drop spoonfuls into gently simmering broth. Cover and cook 12-15 minutes without lifting the lid.

Day 12	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
	Sweet Cornmeal Cakes	Egg & Potato Burritos	Savory Sausage Pasta

Sweet Cornmeal Cakes

Ingredients

- 2 cups cornmeal
- 1 large egg
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- About 1 1/2 cups water
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil, plus a little for skillet

Directions

Mix into a thick batter. Cook small cakes on a lightly oiled skillet until crisp and browned on both sides.

Egg & Potato Burritos

Ingredients

- TORTILLAS: 2 cups self-rising flour
- 3 tablespoons vegetable oil
- About 3/4 cup warm water
- 3 large eggs
- 3/4 lb potato, diced small
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- Salt and black pepper

Directions

Make 8 tortillas. Brown potato in oil until tender. Add beaten eggs and scramble. Season, divide among tortillas, and roll.

Savory Sausage Pasta

Ingredients

- 8 oz dry pasta
- 4 oz sausage
- 1 cup frozen mixed vegetables
- 1 tablespoon margarine
- 1/2 cup chicken broth or pasta water
- Black pepper; salt after tasting

Directions

Cook pasta and drain. Brown sausage, add vegetables, then broth and margarine. Toss with pasta until glossy and hot. Pepper well and taste for salt.

Day 13	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
	Sausage Biscuits	Beans & Cornbread	Chicken & Rice with Pan Gravy

Sausage Biscuits

Ingredients

- 4 oz sausage, cooked and divided into 4 patties
- BISCUITS: 2 cups self-rising flour
- 1/4 cup margarine
- About 3/4 cup water

Directions

Bake biscuits at 425 F for 12-15 minutes. Brown sausage patties thoroughly. Split biscuits and serve with sausage; add a small spoonful of pan gravy if desired.

Beans & Cornbread

Ingredients

- 3 cups cooked pinto beans
- Salt and black pepper to taste
- CORNBREAD: 2 cups cornmeal
- 1 large egg
- 1 1/2 cups water, approximately
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1/2 teaspoon salt

Directions

Warm beans with a little cooking liquid; season well. Heat oven to 425 F. Mix cornbread ingredients to a thick pourable batter. Pour into a greased hot pan and bake 20-25 minutes until browned.

Chicken & Rice with Pan Gravy

Ingredients

- 4 chicken leg quarters
- 3 cups cooked rice
- 1 cup frozen mixed vegetables
- 2 tablespoons margarine
- 2 tablespoons self-rising flour
- 2 cups chicken broth
- Salt and black pepper

Directions

Roast seasoned chicken at 400 F to 165 F. Transfer pan drippings to a saucepan, add margarine if needed, stir in flour, then whisk in broth. Simmer until gravy thickens. Serve chicken and gravy over rice with vegetables.

Day 14	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
	Pancakes & Syrup	Hearty Pantry Soup	Sunday Chicken Pot Pie + Rice Pudding

Pancakes & Syrup

Use the matching recipe elsewhere in this guide.

Hearty Pantry Soup

Ingredients

- 2 cups cooked pinto beans
- 1 cup cooked rice
- 1 lb potatoes, diced
- 1 cup frozen mixed vegetables
- 6 cups chicken broth or water
- 1/2 teaspoon salt, then to taste
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper

Directions

Simmer potatoes and vegetables in broth until tender. Add beans and rice and heat through. Season carefully. This is a planned recipe, not a vague 'use whatever is left' meal.

Dinner - Sunday Chicken Pot Pie

Ingredients

- 2 cups cooked shredded chicken
- 1 1/2 cups frozen mixed vegetables
- 2 cups chicken broth
- 3 tablespoons margarine
- 3 tablespoons self-rising flour
- Salt and black pepper
- TOPPING: 1 1/2 cups self-rising flour
- 3 tablespoons margarine
- About 2/3 cup water

Directions

Prepare exactly as the earlier chicken pot pie: make a broth-thickened filling, season it well, top with biscuit dough, and bake at 400 F for 25-30 minutes.

Sunday Dessert - Old-Fashioned Rice Pudding

Ingredients

- 2 cups cooked rice
- 1 large egg
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1/2 can evaporated milk
- 1 cup water
- 1 tablespoon margarine
- 1/4 teaspoon salt

Directions

Heat oven to 350 F. Beat egg with sugar, evaporated milk, water and salt. Stir in rice. Pour into a greased baking dish and dot with margarine. Bake 35-45 minutes, stirring once halfway through, until creamy and lightly set. Serve warm or chilled.

Something Sweet From What You Already Have

Hard-Times Sugar Cookies

Ingredients

- 2 cups self-rising flour
- 1/2 cup margarine, softened
- 3/4 cup sugar
- 1 large egg
- 1-2 tablespoons water only if needed

Directions

Heat oven to 350 F. Cream margarine and sugar. Beat in egg. Stir in flour. If the dough will not hold together, add water 1 teaspoon at a time. Roll into 20-24 small balls, flatten gently, and sprinkle very lightly with sugar if desired. Bake 9-12 minutes, just until the edges begin to color. Cool before storing.

Simple Pancake Syrup

Ingredients

- 1 cup sugar
- 1/2 cup water

Directions

Combine in a small saucepan. Bring to a gentle simmer and cook about 5 minutes. Cool slightly before serving. It thickens as it cools.

"Hard times are easier to endure when there's still something sweet on the table."

A little sweetness can make a lean day feel a little more normal.

Homemade Staples

8 Simple Flour Tortillas

Ingredients

- 2 cups self-rising flour
- 3 tablespoons vegetable oil
- About 3/4 cup warm water

Directions

Mix flour and oil. Add warm water gradually until a soft dough forms. Knead briefly, cover and rest 15 minutes. Divide into 8 balls, roll very thin, and cook in a dry skillet 30-60 seconds per side.

Quick No-Yeast Bread

Ingredients

- 3 cups self-rising flour
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil or melted margarine
- About 1 1/4 cups water

Directions

Heat oven to 375 F. Stir ingredients together only until combined. Put into a greased loaf pan. Bake 35-45 minutes. This is a sturdy biscuit-style quick bread, not a soft commercial sandwich loaf.

Basic Chicken Broth

Ingredients

- Saved cooked chicken bones and skin
- Water to cover
- Salt and black pepper

Directions

Place saved bones in a pot and cover with water. Simmer gently 30-60 minutes. Strain. Season lightly. Cool promptly and refrigerate or freeze. Use in soup, gravy, dumplings, stew and pot pie.

A Few Rules That Make Cheap Food Taste Better

- **Brown it.** Sausage, potatoes and chicken develop far more flavor when allowed to brown.
- **Season in layers.** Add a little salt while cooking, then taste at the end. Black pepper is especially useful in gravy, dumplings, potatoes and sausage dishes.
- **Save the drippings.** A spoonful of sausage or chicken drippings can flavor an entire pan of potatoes, rice or gravy.
- **Use vinegar carefully.** A teaspoon can brighten beans or fried rice. Too much will dominate the dish.
- **Use broth instead of plain water when it matters.** Pot pie, dumplings, soup and gravy are where homemade chicken broth earns its keep.
- **Protect tomorrow's meal.** When a recipe says to save chicken or broth, portion it before everyone goes back for seconds.

Being short on money does not mean your family should dread coming to the table. The goal is to make inexpensive ingredients work harder - and taste good while they do it.

Food-Safety Notes

Keep raw poultry separate from ready-to-eat foods. Cook chicken to a safe internal temperature of 165 F. Refrigerate cooked foods promptly. When reheating leftovers, heat them thoroughly until steaming hot throughout. If food has been left at room temperature too long or you are unsure it was stored safely, discard it.

This guide is for general meal-planning and educational use. Grocery prices, package sizes, cooking equipment and household needs vary. Adjust seasoning and portion sizes for your household while protecting ingredients reserved for later meals.

From my heart to yours,
Rita