

JOE WICKS

THE BODYCOACH

WEAN IN 15

UP-TO-DATE
ADVICE AND
100 QUICK
RECIPES





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THE BODYCOACH

WEAN IN 15

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For all the little people in my life who bring me so much happiness and laughter: My two awesome nephews, Oscar and Milo, and my beautiful little angels, Indie and Marley.

Without you I would never have written this book, so thank you for being my taste testers and letting me know exactly what you think of the recipes.

I love you all so much and I can't wait to 'never grow up' with you!

CONTENTS

[INTRODUCTION](#)

[WHAT IS WEANING?](#)

[15 THINGS I'VE LEARNT](#)

[PART ONE: THE BASICS](#)

[Is your baby ready?](#)

[Milk](#)

[Finding a routine](#)

[Getting ready for mealtimes](#)

[Allergies](#)

[How to prep like a boss](#)

[Gagging and choking](#)

[Veg-led weaning](#)

[Vitamins and key nutrients](#)

[Responsive feeding and portions](#)

[PART TWO: THE RECIPES](#)

[About the recipes](#)

[6 months](#)

[6 months+](#)

[7 months+ finger foods](#)

[7–9 months+](#)

[10–12 months+](#)

[12 months+](#)

[INDEX](#)

[THANKS](#)

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the start of an exciting and messy journey into weaning your baby from milk on to solid foods. It will be a journey of ups and downs, smiles and tantrums, tears and laughter. New foods will be lovingly enjoyed in front of your eyes and the next day those very same foods might well be thrown on the floor or in your face. Although it can be very unpredictable, you can be certain that it will be fun! In fact, now Indie is 18 months old and eating like a little adult we really do miss those early stages of introducing new foods to her. Luckily, we've just had another baby so we can't wait to start the adventure all over again. After weaning one baby we are now feeling way more confident about doing it for a second time.

I've found the key to weaning is being realistic, and having a lot of patience

I'm going to be totally 100% open with you when sharing our experience with weaning, every single step of the way. From Rosie's emotional breastfeeding journey and travelling abroad with a young baby to Indie's allergic reaction to cashew nuts and her trip to the hospital, I will be completely honest. If you follow my Instagram @weanin15_ you will know this already, but it's very important to me that I share my reality of life as a parent as it's not all perfect every day and I'm still learning.

The aim of this book is to give you the confidence to start weaning and to help you enjoy it with your baby, knowing that you are doing a great job, no matter how rough or smooth the journey is.

The truth is that when Rosie and I started this process with Indie at 6

months old we were completely clueless. We had no confidence because we had no experience. Indie was our first baby and we really wanted to be sure we gave her the best possible start. We had the usual concerns that most parents have . . . Are we doing it right? How much should we be feeding her? What if she chokes? How do we know if she's allergic to nuts? When do we stop giving her milk? The great news is, this book will help answer all of these questions and more in a clear, friendly and simple way.

Ultimately there is no right or wrong with weaning. There is no perfect blueprint or plan for all babies

I will never claim to be an expert in this field but I did some research and found Charlotte Stirling-Reed, a registered nutritionist who specializes in maternal and infant nutrition. It was very important to me that before I started weaning Indie and sharing anything online that I was putting out the correct information. Contacting Charlotte was one of the best decisions I've ever made, and I'm so grateful to her for all her support and advice. Having her guide us every step of the way has been wonderful and I believe it's the reason we were so calm and confident throughout, and why Indie is such an adventurous eater.

Charlotte really pushed us to think differently about infant nutrition and to challenge Indie every day with new foods, flavours and textures. She is so incredibly passionate about babies' nutrition and, like me, really wants to inspire parents to help give their babies the best possible start in life. There are so many mixed messages online now about what's right and wrong when it comes to feeding your baby. I know in my experience that this left me feeling really confused and nervous about starting.

You'll be happy to know that Charlotte is an experienced mummy to a little boy called Raffy and has worked with thousands of parents helping them on their weaning journey. Charlotte is sharing all of her knowledge alongside up-to-date research and NHS guidelines in this book with us all. Like me, she really understands the importance of nutrition on our energy, sleep, mood, digestion, happiness and quality

of life and, together, with *Wean in 15* we aim to help you set your child up for a life of healthy eating.

RELAX,
HAVE FUN AND ENJOY THE PROCESS WITH YOUR BABY

One thing I would like to share with you is that I didn't have the best start in life when it came to nutrition. After leaving home at 15, my mum had my brother at 17 then me at 19. She just wasn't educated about healthy food and wasn't taught how or what to cook at home.

THIS IS YOUR OWN JOURNEY SO TAKE IT AT YOUR OWN
PACE

I was raised on formula milk from birth and didn't get a single ounce of breast milk (awareness of the benefits of breastfeeding wasn't as well known in 1985) and then started on jars of pureed fruit and veg. As a toddler growing up, I was given sugary cereal, fizzy drinks, fast food, sweets and fruit juice. I grew up on sandwiches, frozen nuggets and pasta with tomato sauce. My mum was just doing the best job she could and what she thought was right for me at the time. It makes me laugh now, but it's pretty crazy to think just how much sugar I must have consumed each day.

During this time when I was growing up there really wasn't the awareness and education around this stuff. I was also a super fussy eater, didn't eat many vegetables, and didn't really get adventurous with food until I was an adult.

Surprisingly, I was never an overweight kid, but, jeez, I was hyperactive. I never slept through the night and would be climbing the walls during the day. I had very little focus, a short attention span and had behavioural issues at school. Looking back now and knowing what I do about nutrition, I have no doubt that my diet played a huge part in my behaviour. The reason I think it's important to share my background is because I don't want you to feel that anything written in

this book is judgemental in any way. It will contain suggestions and up-to-date health guidelines but remember these are just guidelines to help you make decisions, and not a rigid framework you must comply with at all times. There are obviously a few things you need to avoid but ultimately there is no right or wrong with weaning. There is no perfect blueprint or plan for all babies.



IT IS COMPLETELY NORMAL NOT TO BE PERFECT EVERY DAY

Each baby is unique and individual in their food preferences, appetite and development. Your baby is your baby and you are free to feed them however you like. Try not to compare your child to others. This is your journey and you can take it at your own pace. Whichever style of weaning you decide to go for is your choice, and remember all children eventually do learn to eat with a knife and fork.

I hope this book acts as a useful guide that helps you feel calm and confident and prepared, with lots of lovely recipes that you'll enjoy cooking. You will have days where you ace it and have prepped wonderful healthy food and it all goes to plan, and other days you'll be too busy or tired and grab food on the go or offer something less balanced and wholesome. Just know it's okay to not be perfect every day. I'm certainly not with my own food choices and also at times with Indie's. But I really care about nutrition, so this means I always try to do the best I can, and that's the most important thing.

Don't worry, you don't have to be a master chef to put healthy food on the table for your baby or toddler. *Wean in 15* is simple and quick (most recipes take less than 15 minutes to make) and the more you get stuck in to the recipes, the easier you'll find it to create delicious, healthy and balanced meals for the whole family.

So if you're ready, let's saddle up, get cooking and enjoy the ride.

Good luck!

Love Joe, Rosie, Indie and Marley

WHAT IS WEANING?

Weaning is simply the process of introducing your baby to solid foods – that gradually increase in variety, texture and portion size – alongside breast or formula milk, until your baby is eating a similar diet to the rest of the family.

It's all about a gentle and gradual journey from a single food – milk – to the more complex, varied and exciting experiences that make up adult foods and mealtimes.

Sometimes weaning is referred to as 'complementary feeding', simply because we are introducing our baby to foods and nutrients to complement their current milk intake. Up until around 6 months of age, breast or formula milk is all a baby will need to help them grow and develop; however, at around 6 months of age, babies start to need more than they can get from milk alone.

There are many reasons for this, some to do with an increasing need for nutrients (especially iron), as stores that a baby received from Mum during pregnancy start to become depleted, therefore these need to be provided by a more varied diet.

Additionally, eating in itself is a skill that your baby needs to discover, and the introduction of solid foods also helps your baby to learn important developmental skills such as biting, chewing, swallowing, as well as skills around self-feeding and dexterity with utensils.

Weaning is also about helping children to learn to enjoy a variety of foods, and experience the social aspect of mealtimes with the family. They learn a lot from watching you eat, so bringing them in to your mealtimes and eating a wide variety of healthy foods yourself can

make the whole process of weaning smoother and more enjoyable for your baby.



When it comes to introducing foods, it's good to follow your baby's lead most of the time, and to let them go at their own speed. Starting off with a few tastes of solid foods, and gently moving from one meal, to two and then three meals a day, is what it's all about. The same goes for textures and introducing a variety of new foods too.

All babies are different and often take to the process of weaning in very different ways. Some gobble up their food right from the very start, while others are slower to build interest. The same is also true with portion sizes, so try not to compare your little one's weaning journey with others and go at your own pace. Getting his or her weight checked regularly and visiting your health professional is a good way to be sure that you're on track!

We know from research how important weaning is, and that what and how we feed our children from a young age really can make a difference to their patterns of eating later on in life. This book will help you to learn the what, the why and the how of getting your little one off to a good start with their food.



← Me!

15 THINGS I'VE LEARNT

Here is a list of fifteen things I've learnt that I wish I had known when Indie was 6 months old. This is when we started weaning her onto solid food. Hopefully it will take away a bit of the worry, stress or fears you may have before moving forward through this book.

- 1** It doesn't matter if you decide to spoon-feed your baby, do baby-led weaning (BLW) or a combination of both. Either way your baby can get all the nutrition they need to grow and develop. We did a combination of both with Indie.
- 2** Your baby's appetite, just like your own, will vary every day depending on many factors. This means there is no perfect portion size for all babies. Each baby is individual so try not to compare yours to others. You will learn very quickly how much to offer your baby because they will let you know if they are full up or still hungry. If you find the portions in this book are too small or large for your baby just adapt them and save any leftovers for lunch the next day.
- 3** If your baby does refuse to eat, stay calm and remove the pressure on yourself and your baby by leaving the table. They may not be interested in food in that moment but probably will be later. We usually play with Indie or take her to the park to burn some energy and work up an appetite. Most of the time we reheat the food we initially offered, and she eats it all.
- 4** Your baby will pull very funny faces and often reject something new you have offered them. This is normal. They are experiencing a new flavour or texture for the very first time. Perhaps they are in shock,

sometimes they are disgusted and sometimes they are overjoyed. Don't be disheartened or upset by their response and assume they hate it. It's so important to expose your baby to something multiple times before really knowing if they totally dislike it. Indie, for example, can't stand avocado on its own. We offered it to her as a finger food and a mash more than ten times and had it thrown back at us. Rather than give up on this really great source of healthy fat we just started to add it into wraps or pasta and she's fine with it and gobbles it up. I think the texture was what put her off, not the flavour.

- 5** Weaning babies is very unpredictable and requires lots of patience. One day your baby will love something you cook and eat the whole lot in minutes. The next day you can offer the exact same thing and they look disgusted and won't touch it. This has happened with Indie many times, especially if she is overtired, unwell or teething. Don't let this worry you. In the early stages of weaning your baby will be getting most of their nutrition from breast or formula milk.

- 6** Try not to let the fear of choking hold you back from offering finger foods or thicker, lumpier textures of food. A baby choking is very rare as long as you chop and prep foods properly. Your baby needs to learn how to deal with solids and how to bite, chew and swallow food as they progress through their weaning journey. Babies also have a very strong gag reflex, which is further forward in the mouth than it is for adults. So quite often you will see your baby gag and bring foods to the front of their mouth with their tongue. It's a bit scary the first time you see it, but it's important not to panic or get really alarmed or start pulling food out of their mouth. If you honestly do find the thought of offering finger foods to your baby too worrying, then just focus on spoon-feeding and offer small amounts of super soft finger foods (overcooked veggies for example) that you can easily squish between your finger and thumb, until you build up the confidence for more advanced textures. It's not a competition or race, so go at your own pace and increase to lumpier textures when you and your baby are ready.

7 Try to be adventurous with new flavours and food groups. You can offer just plain steamed, boiled or pureed foods for months but imagine how delightful it is for your baby to experience different flavour combinations and textures each week. We constantly challenged Indie's palate from early on with things like stews, orzo, risotto and curries using spices like paprika, cinnamon, cumin and turmeric. We introduced coconut milk, Greek yoghurt and homemade pesto and excited her senses every day. This is one reason why Indie has such a big appetite and eats almost anything. We've created a mini foodie by being the chefs at home designing the menu and always trying to change the special of the day. It's so easy to encourage fussy eating by limiting the options and only offering what we know they will love and never reject. So be adventurous for your baby even if you aren't yourself. Keep the variety, keep it exciting and keep encouraging.



8 A calm and peaceful environment makes all the difference when it comes to a healthy eating routine. We have Indie sitting in her high chair at the table with acoustic lullaby music playing on Spotify. This means she has an instant familiarity and she knows it's time to sit and eat. Of course, we eat out a lot too but when at home we try to keep the same familiar environment with as little distraction as possible.

9 Be a role model and try to sit down together to eat whenever possible. We all have busy lives and I know this can really be a tough one. Babies are constantly watching and learning from us, so it's good to show them that mealtimes are relaxing and enjoyable. It's natural to want to just stare at them, trying to make them eat their food, but we've learnt now that Indie will often eat more when we're not pressuring her and are just getting on with our own meals. I missed out on this as a kid so I hope it's something we continue as our family grows.

10 Prepping like a boss is key! Something we've really learnt is that there is no point in putting a lot of effort into cooking one meal for a baby that may end up thrown over the walls. Always make enough so that there can be leftovers to store in the fridge or freezer for when you're really in a rush. Another idea is to batch-cook things when the baby is napping so you've always got something prepared . . . Cooking around a hungry baby is NOT fun!

11 Allergic reactions are a big fear for new parents on the weaning journey. Indie actually had a reaction to some cashew butter we gave her on toast when she was 7 months old. It wasn't serious but we still had to take her to the hospital. An allergy test revealed that she is allergic to cashews and pistachios. Prior to this we had given her peanut butter and almond butter mixed in with her porridge and she was fine so it was a surprise for us. Even though it was upsetting we kept calm in front of Indie. There is

really no way of knowing what your baby is allergic to until they start to try things so don't let this fear hold you back from introducing certain foods. (See [here](#) for more detail about allergies.)

12 One dilemma we initially faced with weaning was trying to understand when to reduce Indie's milk intake and how to get the right routine and timing with milk and food. When you first begin weaning, it's ideal to offer your baby the same amount of milk as you did before they first began their solid foods. Breast milk or formula milk will still provide the majority of calories and nutrients that babies need each day at the start of weaning. As you notice the frequency of your baby's meals, along with their portion sizes, increasing, you may start to notice a very natural and gradual decline in the amount of milk your little one takes too. (See [here](#) for more information.)

13 The biggest challenge a parent may face is trying to get their babies and toddlers to eat vegetables. Some babies will eat loads of veg from day one and keep it up forever. Others will dislike them from the start and refuse every veg on the planet. As Indie got older she started to refuse plain steamed or boiled veg (I don't blame her really, boiled broccoli smells like fart). We just incorporate lots of veg into her meals, for example in pastas, omelettes, curries and even things like savoury porridge, which she loves. It's good to keep exposing babies to veg in the whole form, but essentially your baby doesn't need to sit with a side of steamed greens or a head of broccoli to be healthy. With the wonderful recipes in this book your baby will be eating plenty of veg and getting all the goodness they need.

14 It's really easy to panic and worry that your baby isn't getting enough food if they refuse the meal you offer them. This may make you begin to offer an alternative meal or give lots of snacks. But only offering the things you know they will love and always eat means your baby will learn very fast that they will get exactly

what they want if they make a stand. This can really narrow their food options and lead to fussy eating. We rarely offer Indie alternatives and avoid letting her graze on snacks in between meals. We learnt that if we gave Indie a banana or some berries and then tried to give her dinner an hour later she would rarely have an appetite for it. Babies have little stomachs, so focus on a good mealtime routine and avoid filling them up with snacks.

15 Finally and most important of all: enjoy the weaning journey. Don't put too much pressure on yourself or the baby, you're doing the best you can, you're learning and your baby loves you for it! It doesn't matter what anyone thinks of your parenting as long as you and your baby are happy. Take lots of photos and videos too. This will be a very short time you look back on once your baby is all grown up so try not to stress and worry and just HAVE FUN!

PART ONE

THE BASICS



IS YOUR BABY READY?

The recommended age to begin weaning varies from country to country. However, in the UK, based on our population, World Health Organization (WHO) advice and plenty of research, our NHS suggests that infants are ready for solid foods at around 6 months of age.

Starting at around 6 months helps to ensure that your baby is developmentally ready for solids and can mean they are more efficient at chewing, swallowing and self-feeding and can cope with a variety of textures more quickly too.

We also know that breast or formula milk is more or less all that little ones need before 6 months of age (see more in the supplements section [here](#)), and some children may not be developmentally ready for solids before this time.

That being said, it is important to remember that ALL babies are different and they all reach milestones at slightly different times, so it can be helpful to look out for the main signs of readiness, which are listed below. Rather than one at a time, check for multiple signs occurring together.

SIGNS OF READINESS

- Your baby can stay in a sitting position and hold their head and neck steady.
- Your baby can coordinate their eyes, hands and mouth – so they can look at, intentionally pick up and pop food/toys in their mouth themselves.
- Your baby can swallow food and has lost the tongue thrust (which

leads to more food being pushed out than swallowed).

If you do think your little one might be ready for solid foods BEFORE they get to 6 months of age, it's worthwhile having a chat with your Health Visitor (HV) or GP first. Similarly, if your baby was born prematurely, your HV or GP will be best placed to advise you on when it might be best to start giving your baby their first solid foods.

It's important not to offer solid foods to your little one before 17 weeks of age (around 4 months) as they are unlikely to be developmentally ready before then.

NORMAL BABY TRAITS

Many parents report other signs of readiness in their babies, including:

- showing an interest in food
- chewing fists
- seeming more hungry than usual
- not being satisfied with their usual milk
- waking during the night more often

However, these are all normal infant behaviours that occur during the first 6 months of life as babies start to learn and explore. These signs alone (unless accompanied by the main signs opposite) are not usually signs of readiness. You could try simply offering a little more milk to help a baby who seems hungrier, until you see all of those main signs of readiness opposite.

Indie started showing interest in the food we had just before 6 months – she would often stare at us when we were eating and try to grab the food out of our hands. She would also lean forward to try and take a bite out of things. We knew she was ready because she was great at sitting up and hand–eye coordination and she was also gesturing and pointing at food.

We were happy with her having milk until 6 months but after that we started introducing her to solids. This is where the real fun began!

MILK

The World Health Organization suggests that ‘infants should be exclusively breastfed for the first 6 months of life, and thereafter should receive appropriate complementary feeding with continued breastfeeding up to 2 years or beyond’.

There are many benefits to breastfeeding, including the fact that it provides all the nutrition your baby needs for around the first 6 months (with some exceptions). Breast milk can also reduce the risk of infections in babies and children, including gastrointestinal and respiratory infections, and will adapt and change to a baby’s specific needs. However, in the UK we are lucky to have safe alternatives available in the form of infant formula for those who are not able to or choose not to breastfeed. Formula milk also provides babies with all the nutrients they need to grow and develop, but doesn’t have all of the benefits that a baby may receive from breast milk.

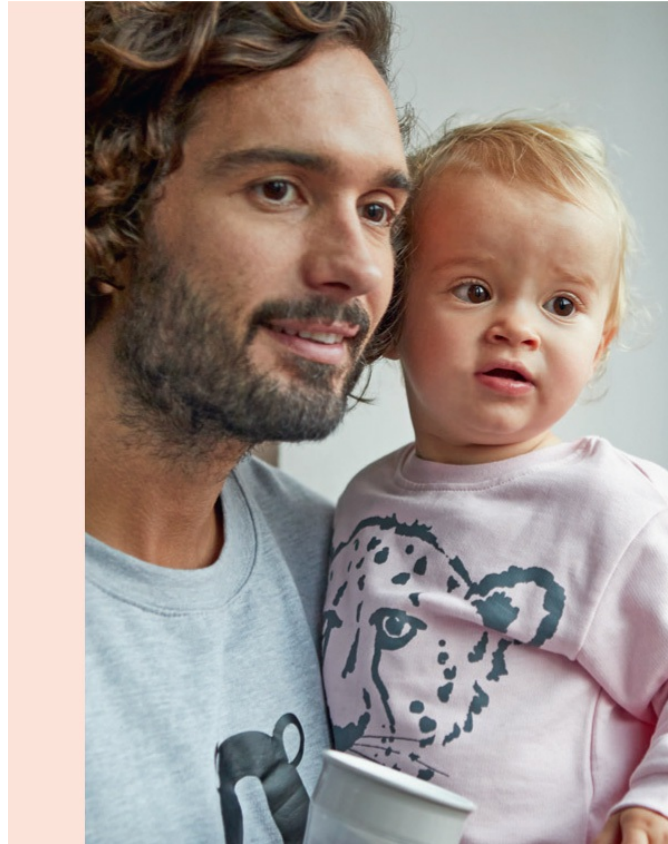
Initially when you first begin weaning, it’s ideal to still offer your baby the same amount of milk as you did before they began on solid foods. The reason for this is that the first tastes of food are simply about that – initial tastes – as well as the exposure to new flavours and textures. Breast milk or formula milk will still provide the majority of calories and nutrients that babies need each day at the start of weaning.



Rosie's breastfeeding journey

Rosie always intended on breastfeeding Indie when she was born. She attended some breastfeeding classes at the hospital during pregnancy to find out more about it and what to expect. The first two weeks of breastfeeding were really emotional and challenging. This was a painful and frustrating time for Rosie as Indie wasn't latching on properly and this made her really sore. It was upsetting, and at times Rosie would cry and feared it wasn't going to get better, but she went to see a breastfeeding specialist who helped, and this made a huge difference. Eventually Indie was latching on perfectly and they both loved the closeness and convenience of feeding on the go at any time.

At about 5 weeks of age when Indie had nailed the breastfeeding, we introduced one bottle of expressed milk before bed. This was important to us because I really wanted to feed her myself and we wanted to give Rosie some independence.



Just as breastfeeding took patience and perseverance, so too did the bottle. Some days Indie would love it and other days she would scream and refuse it. This was just a phase we had to push through and we are so glad we did. Having the baby take a bottle of breast milk can be helpful as it removes some pressure from Mum.

Eventually it became a difficult balance of pumping and expressing and actually having milk to feed Indie in the moment there and then, so we found it quite challenging. As a lifestyle decision, we decided to opt for a mix of breast milk and formula from when Indie was about 8 months old.

Rosie stopped breastfeeding Indie completely at 11 months old when

Indie's demand and interest naturally dropped. She had formula milk until 12 months, then we switched to full-fat cow's milk as her main drink.

I was really proud of Rosie getting this far with it and, even though the World Health Organization recommends breastfeeding to 2 years or beyond, we have no regrets at all. This is just me sharing my experience and journey – everyone's feeding journey is different, so focus on doing what makes you and your baby happy and try not to worry about anyone else's opinion.

MILK AND FOODS

Experts advise parents to continue to offer the same amount of milk to their baby at the start of weaning and let the baby guide them as to how much they want to take – this is a process called 'responsive feeding' (see [here](#)).

Over the first months or so of weaning you will increase the frequency of your baby's meals, along with their portion sizes, and at the same time there will be a very natural and gradual decline in the amount of milk you give to your little one.

When it comes to breast milk, it's important to know that it's a dynamic substance – meaning that breast milk is changing all the time dependent on your baby's needs and environment. This means that you don't necessarily need to know exactly how much milk a breastfed baby has, as intake should adapt as your baby starts to get more in the way of calories and nutrients from their solid food. The amount of milk your little one takes will decrease over time as they become more familiar with and interested in solid food.

When it comes to formula, it's recommended to keep offering your baby a similar amount of milk at the start of weaning: the NHS suggests 600ml is appropriate at around 7 months as a very general guide. From around 10 months of age, the NHS suggests that roughly

400ml of formula milk will be appropriate for your baby alongside increasingly diverse complementary foods – again, this is just as a rough guide, so be flexible.

Some babies can take to solid food right away and want less milk early on in weaning – if this is the case, alongside continuing to offer a similar amount of milk, try adding your baby's usual milk into solid foods that you give. Have a chat with your health visitor, so they can keep an eye on your baby's weight and intake.

When weaning is established and your baby is on roughly three meals a day, you can spread your milk feeds out around your family's routine. It's good to leave a reasonable gap between a milk feed and solid food, however, just to allow your baby time to build up an appetite for their newly introduced food.

WHAT TYPE OF MILK?



0-6 MONTHS
Breast milk
(feeding responsively)
OR
Formula
(around 150ml/kg*)



6-12 MONTHS
Primarily breast milk or formula alongside increasing complementary foods
(around 600-400ml*)



12-24 MONTHS
Continue with breast milk up to 2 years or beyond
Can introduce full-fat cow's milk as a main drink (around 350-400ml*)
Can introduce fortified alternative milk alongside balanced diet (around 350-400ml*)



2+ YEARS
Can continue with breast milk until 2 years or beyond
Full-fat cow's milk or fortified alternative, alongside balanced diet (around 350-400ml or 3 x dairy portions*)

** These are average amounts based on general guidelines per day. Babies should be fed responsively with attention paid to baby's cues for hunger or fullness. All babies are very different.*

COW'S MILK

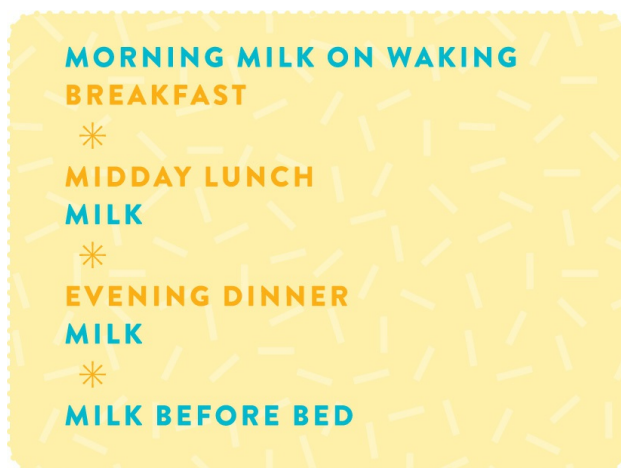
Full-fat cow's milk is fine to add to your baby's food and cooking from around 6 months of age, but is not recommended as a main drink until your baby is 12 months old.



FINDING A ROUTINE

Babies' appetites are all different, so the best thing to do is to find a routine that works for you and your family. Spreading out solids and milk intakes throughout the day and allowing enough time for your baby to build an appetite, as well as allowing them a routine so that they know when to expect solid food and when to expect their usual milk can really help. When we first started to introduce solid foods to Indie, her milk supply and feeds stayed pretty similar.

At around 7 months old your baby may start to gradually move on to three meals a day, and so a routine similar to this below may work for your family:



Be aware that milk is still a food and can fill your baby up, and so it's good to try offering breast or formula milk after meals so that your baby has an opportunity to get all the nutrients they need as well as to be exposed to lots of tastes and textures too.

Indie's feeds looked a lot like the routine opposite until 11 months, when she stopped having her milk feed after dinner. It was quite a gradual and easy transition. At 11 months, Indie's feeds looked like

this:



Your baby might eat the same amount of food and the same amount of milk or they might have less milk and loads more food. It's also dependent on each baby's appetite and what they're like – Indie's appetite is biggest in the morning. We found that if we gave her milk in the morning there was no point in taking her downstairs and giving her breakfast straight away – she needed an hour to play and work up an appetite, then I would sit down with her and feed her something like porridge with berries or a mixed veg and cheese omelette.



GETTING READY FOR MEALTIMES

Here are some ideas for setting the scene for a positive experience at mealtimes. Even if a parent follows all the 'rules' and does all the right things, their baby could still be naturally fussy or not that into food. However, this is a short summary of things that worked for us.

- * **Create a relaxed environment.** Play calming music and turn off the TV so there are no distractions.
- * **Make sure your baby is sitting upright and not slouched.** It's best if they can have their feet supported in a high chair too, so that it's more comfortable and they are more stable.
- * **Let them play with food a little.** Let your baby feel and experience the food, telling them what's coming rather than just sneaking it in their mouth when they are looking around you. Indie wants to look at her food and suss it out and play with it. For example, if we served her a spinach and broccoli puree, we often gave Indie a little bit of broccoli to hold so she could work out what she's going to get and feel it. This all helps familiarize baby with food, what it looks and feels like and, eventually, what it tastes like too.
- * **Have fun with it and let them get stuck in.** We love food and luckily Indie does too. We try to make mealtimes enjoyable by cooking together and letting her stir or mix stuff.
- * **Expect mess and embrace it.** Weaning is a messy job. You'll feel like you're cleaning up all day and that your table, floors and walls will never be clean again. That's probably true – but learning to let go and be calm is essential.

- * **Don't assume your baby is a fussy eater.** Sometimes they refuse a food and other times they accept it, it's all part of the weaning journey and it's similar to how we eat as adults – sometimes we just don't feel like eating broccoli. Indie used to pull some disgusted faces when she tried new foods, but actually it's normal behaviour as she worked out the new taste and texture. If you look at your own diet as an adult, you might realize you eat three or four things on repeat throughout the week as your go-to meals, but with a baby it's important to introduce a range of nutrients if possible. Even if you don't like asparagus or broccoli or spinach, try to offer them to your baby because if you leave it too late it might be difficult for your little one to get into them later on.

- * **Don't put too much pressure on it.** Sometimes this can backfire. It's good to remember that babies' appetites fluctuate all the time. Sometimes they are ravenous and other times they refuse the meal they gobbled up the day before. We found that if Indie's ill or teething she often goes off food. If I'm sitting trying to feed her, rather than just forcing it I'll take her away for an hour or two and when we come back she's more likely to try it. Or we just give her a little bit of extra milk that day so she's still getting her energy and nutrients. As long as we are offering three balanced meals each day, alongside her usual milk feeds, that's all we can do. It's never a good idea to force feed or coax a baby into eating.

- * **Get outside!** If you are cooped up all the time it's not good for the baby's development. You can take your baby out and sit on a park bench for breakfast, giving them something like pancakes. I've found that's been really beneficial for Indie's mood and energy for the day. Go outside, get your toes in the grass and enjoy the fresh air. If there's bad weather you could go to a cafe and take your baby's food with you, or when you go out for lunch with friends you can have your baby's lunch there too. If you only feed them in their high chair they might only want to eat in that environment.



ALLERGIES

Understandably, a lot of parents are cautious about giving their baby allergens. Advice around introducing foods that can trigger an allergic reaction has changed in recent years. Previously it was recommended that we should delay introducing certain allergenic foods to a baby, but after further research in this area, the UK guidelines on introducing certain allergens have been adapted.

WHAT ARE THE COMMON ALLERGENS?

There are fourteen major allergens that are the most likely foods in the UK to trigger an allergic reaction. These include:

- cow's milk
- eggs (eggs without a red lion stamp should not be eaten raw or lightly cooked for infants)
- foods containing gluten, including wheat, barley, oats and rye
- tree nuts (serve them crushed or ground for infants)
- peanuts (serve them crushed or ground for infants)
- sesame seeds (serve them crushed or ground for infants)
- soya
- shellfish (don't serve raw or lightly cooked)
- fish
- molluscs (don't serve raw or lightly cooked)
- mustard

- celery
- sulphur dioxide
- lupin (a type of flour and seeds that you might find in bread, pastries and even pasta)

The truth is, however, that many other foods can also trigger allergic reactions, but these are the most common ones in the UK.

INTRODUCING ALLERGENS

When it comes to introducing some of these common allergens to a baby during weaning, recent advice suggests that they should be introduced from around 6 months of age, alongside other foods in your baby's diet. This is because evidence shows that delaying the introduction of foods such as peanuts and eggs beyond 6–12 months may actually increase the risk of developing an allergy to these foods. So, it's good to introduce them fairly early during the weaning journey, soon after your baby's first tastes.

The easiest way to know if your baby has an allergy is to just offer very small amounts of allergens at home and to introduce them one at a time. For instance, if they've never had fish before, don't introduce them to nuts on the same day.

It's also considered best practice by allergen specialists to offer them for the first time in the morning, as the only new food that day, and to leave a couple of days' gap before introducing another common allergen, so you can spot any reaction easily.

Once an allergen has been introduced without a reaction you can make it a regular part of your little one's diet, which may also help to minimize the risk of an allergy developing later on down the line.

Your little one may be at a **higher risk** of developing allergies if . . .

- your baby has already been diagnosed with an allergy or food

allergy (e.g. Cow's Milk Protein Allergy)

- your baby has eczema
- you have a family history of food allergies, eczema, asthma or hay fever

If your baby fits into the categories on the previous page, they should ideally be seen by a doctor who specializes in food allergy, or a registered dietitian, before you start weaning.

If you're concerned about allergy risk, then talk to your health visitor or GP.

The below is advice from the NHS on what symptoms you may see as a result of an allergic reaction:

- diarrhoea or vomiting
- a cough
- wheezing and shortness of breath
- itchy throat and tongue
- itchy skin or rash
- swollen lips and throat
- runny or blocked nose
- sore, red and itchy eyes

In very rare but severe cases, a food may cause a severe allergic reaction, which can be life-threatening, called anaphylaxis – seek medical advice immediately if your baby is having difficulties with their breathing. It's important to get medical advice as soon as you think your little one is having an allergic reaction to a food.

Indie's allergy

After Indie's first tastes, we started introducing her to tiny amounts of

100% peanut or almond butter, and she had no reactions. But when Indie was 7 months old she reacted to cashews. We spread a little cashew butter on toast for her. After a few minutes she was rubbing around her mouth and eyes, which were starting to get sore. Within 10 minutes her face was swollen and she was sick. She wasn't upset, but feeling itchy. We both kept calm to avoid scaring her, and because we could see that she wasn't in anaphylactic shock.

We rang the emergency services and told them our baby was reacting to cashew butter. They asked if she was having trouble breathing or if she was distressed but she wasn't, so then we knew it wasn't dangerous. They sent out an ambulance because she was so young. (If you call about anyone under 2 years old, the NHS is obligated to send out an ambulance.) By that point the allergic reaction was on its way down. The flare-up lasted about 45 minutes in total.



The paramedics took her to hospital because she was so little. We were released after an hour, having been told that we should take her

to an allergy specialist. The test showed that Indie was allergic to cashews and pistachios. They didn't give her antihistamines at the hospital because the flare-up had gone, but they gave us some epi-pens, so we've always got liquid antihistamine and an epi-pen in our baby bag.

The allergy specialist told us to continue giving her nuts, like ground hazelnuts, almonds, seeds and peanuts. We sprinkle a little on her food, and she's perfectly fine. When she's a little older we might consider getting her re-tested by an allergy specialist.

HOW TO PREP LIKE A BOSS

Cooking around a hungry baby is NOT fun, so here are some ideas for getting ahead and planning mealtimes.

TIMING

It is helpful to stick to having meals at a similar time, even if it's not bang on the dot. Babies tend to like routine when it comes to their day-to-day activities and sleep, so encouraging one around mealtimes can be helpful for them too.

When it comes to the right time of day, this really varies from family to family and depends on what will work for you and your own baby. It's good to pick a time of day with minimal distractions, when your baby is calm and happy, not overtired or over-hungry. It's also good to allow lots of time for this experience so you can sit together and enjoy mealtimes in a relaxed way.

When you've decided on a time of day, try to roughly stick to the same structure each day, so over time your baby learns when to expect their solid food as opposed to their milk feeds. Remember, initially your baby will just be having tiny tastes at one meal each day. It's good to introduce meals gradually to build on a routine and give your little one time to get used to the process of eating. Moving gradually from one meal to two meals, and then to three meals after a month or so of weaning might work for you, but every baby will go at their own pace.

Ideally, when your baby has accepted each mealtime and seems comfortable with eating, it might be time to add in another meal, until they are on something similar to three meals a day alongside their

usual milk feeds.

CHOOSE YOUR METHOD

There are two schools of thought on weaning: baby-led weaning (BLW) and spoon-feeding.

Baby-led weaning is when babies are encouraged to self-feed from the very start of weaning, without the use of mashed foods and a spoon.

Some parents really prefer this method of introducing solids to their baby and like the fact that it encourages self-feeding and independent eating.

However, offering foods from a spoon is also helpful to encourage familiarity with the use of cutlery, besides being a helpful way to encourage a wide variety of different tastes and textures into your baby's mouth.

There is no right or wrong way to feed your baby, so you can absolutely choose the method of weaning that works for you, but it's great to go with your baby's cues on this too. A combined approach can actually be helpful, as some babies take to finger foods right away, whereas other babies are less sure and prefer to have some of their foods off a spoon initially. We decided to offer Indie mashed foods AND finger foods at the same time, so she was exposed to foods in their whole form as well as purees with each meal.

Offering finger foods alongside mashed foods from a spoon can offer a 'best of both' approach, and allow your baby to self-feed and practise with solid pieces of food as well as letting them explore how to use a spoon and the variety of textures that come with spoon-feeding. Lots of babies try to take the spoon off their parents and get fairly efficient at using it to self-feed quite quickly.

Offering finger foods can be scary for some parents, but if you start

super soft and gradually increase the variety that you offer to your baby you can quickly build up confidence. We made sure initially that the finger foods we offered – such as broccoli, green beans and asparagus – were really well cooked so that you could squish them between your finger and thumb easily.

Ultimately, offering variety and eating together are two of the best ways to help your baby develop the skills they need to bite, chew and swallow a range of foods early on. Whichever way you choose to feed, it's important to always sit with your baby when they are eating. Also be aware that there is no evidence that offering finger foods and a spoon together will increase the risk of choking or that either BLW or spoon-feeding results in a greater risk of choking for a baby.

If you are starting with purees, you can move through these textures quite quickly from a runny puree, to slightly thicker purees that dollop off the spoon, then to more mashed textures, by simply adding less liquid and blending or mashing the foods a little less. Do this nice and gradually, but it's important to move through these textures fairly early on in weaning so your little one doesn't get stuck on very thin purees.

A NOTE ON TEETH

Babies don't need teeth to eat soft finger foods or textured purees: their teeth are just below the gum, so the gums are fairly solid. Some babies don't have much in the way of teeth in their first year, but they can still explore a wide variety of textures. Just remember to start with soft finger food and gradually build on the texture you offer as your baby gets more confident.



EQUIPMENT

In the early stages a good blender is useful because they're great for

making purees. Other than that, all you need is a baby bowl and spoon. You'll be using all your normal pots and pans and there is no need to invest in fancy equipment. If you go travelling, carry your own bowls and spoons because most places will only have metal teaspoons. Indie never got into sippy cups, she drinks from normal open cups like a boss. It's good to have a masher if you like to mash things, but you can also use a fork.

SNACKS

The NHS recommends that babies don't really need 'snacks' until they are around 12 months of age. Before then their usual meals and milk should be enough for them.

Now Indie is older, we give her things like bananas, berries and chopped olives for mini meals on the go. Rosie also makes her little oat biscuits, pancakes or flapjacks. They're easy to grab and go and don't take long to make. Satsumas or rice cakes with peanut butter are also good options.

Snacks are good to have with you for those times your baby gets really hungry and moody and needs a little top-up, but don't fall into the habit of letting your baby graze on them all day long. This can really make eating at mealtimes even more difficult as their appetite won't be as big.

There is so much misleading information in the baby snack industry – for example, some bags of snacks for babies have added salt or sugar. The same applies to shop-bought meals. I tasted a sachet of baby food once and I couldn't believe how sweet it was. I think these are fine every now and again and we did use pouches occasionally when travelling but we don't rely on them. Home-cooked food will always win over pouches or jars.



GAGGING AND CHOKING

It's rare and unlikely that a baby will choke – they've got a really good gag reflex. I've given Indie a couple of peas on her spoon and she'll often gag it up so she can chew it. It can be scary the first time they do it because it looks like they might be choking, but in just a second you see that they're only pushing the food back to the front of their mouth.

Most babies will gag at some point during their weaning journey. It's actually a really normal process that babies go through as they are learning to cope with foods thicker than the milk they have been used to. During weaning, a baby's gag reflex is fairly far forward in their mouth, and this usually begins to move backwards from 4–7 months of age.

Exposure to a variety of textures helps babies to learn how to cope with more solid textures and helps to develop their ability to chew. This is why offering finger food and moving through textured purees and mashed foods is so beneficial early on in weaning and before 9–10 months of age. However, even though gagging is normal, it can be a really frightening experience for parents. A few tips to help:

- * Make sure you ALWAYS stay with your little one when they are eating.
- * Make sure your baby is sitting upright at all times when feeding.
- * Prep foods properly, removing tough skin, pips, stones and bones where needed.
- * Cut large, round foods such as grapes and cherry tomatoes into thin, manageable pieces.

- * Avoid hard foods such as raw carrots and apple chunks and whole nuts until your baby can manage them properly. Whole nuts and grapes are not recommended for kids until around 5 years of age.

Going on a baby first aid course can help to boost your confidence, but a gagging baby will usually cough, make gagging or retching noises, and may even vomit to dislodge the food. They may become distressed and have watery eyes and a red face too during this process. It's best to try and let the baby deal with this and try not to get too distressed yourself.

Choking is very different, and your baby is more likely to go blue and be silent – in this situation, they will need immediate help from you (familiarize yourself with first aid advice for this).



VEG-LEAD WEANING

Following the latest nutritional advice from Charlotte, we decided to start introducing Indie to green and savoury vegetables for the first two weeks of weaning. It worked well because Indie was already getting most of her nutrients from Rosie's breast milk. Rather than giving her sweet flavours such as sweet potato, pear or apple, we gave her green vegetables like broccoli, kale and asparagus blended up into purees alongside some finger food versions of the same vegetables.

THE LATEST ADVICE

Traditionally many people in the UK have started the weaning process by offering babies foods such as apple purees and baby rice, which are sweet-tasting. We know that babies are born with a preference for sweeter tastes, which is beneficial as both breast and formula milk are sweet. This means that sweeter foods offered at the start of weaning are usually readily accepted and easily gobbled up. However, recent research suggests that starting weaning in a different way – with vegetables – might be a better route.

Infants seem to be pretty receptive to new flavours at the start of weaning and therefore more readily accept a wider variety early on, if offered. Additionally, food preferences tend to start in the early years and can continue into later life, and as vegetables are typically a food that many young children dislike, offering them earlier may help to build familiarity and an acceptance of them that could last a lifetime!

This is where the concept of starting with green and savoury vegetables has come from. Research has so far suggested that starting weaning with veggies and continuing to offer a variety of

vegetables during weaning is likely to lead to more veg being accepted and eaten later on. The NHS in the UK also recommend starting weaning by including veggies that aren't so sweet in order to allow babies to get used to a wide variety of flavours. To find out how you can go about doing this, see [here](#) in the recipe section.



FUNNY FACES

It was really funny seeing Indie pulling faces when she first tried the green vegetables – and she certainly didn't seem to like everything she had at first – but the process introduced her to different bitter and savoury tastes rather than just the sweet stuff that we are naturally programmed to enjoy. Your baby might pull a funny face when you give them spinach and you might feel bad about it, but you really are giving their palate a chance to develop. It's probably more shock and surprise – they've only ever tasted sweet before.

Try not to worry if not much is eaten initially, it's much more about getting them used to new tiny tastes of a variety of savoury veggies in the early stages of weaning. We wouldn't expect them to gobble them right up, although some babies might!

Of course there were times when Indie refused to eat, and I could have offered her blueberries, raspberries, grapes or yoghurt and she would have enjoyed it, no matter what mood she was in, but I tried to persevere with the veg. Babies tend to enjoy foods that they are familiar with, so it's important to keep offering a variety, including those savoury veggies. Babies might grow up to love vegetables or to hate them – but at least you've given them a try.



VITAMINS AND KEY NUTRIENTS

When your baby is starting to become more confident with eating, and has had his or her first tastes of foods, it's a good idea to start thinking about balancing out their food intake, to make sure that they get enough in the way of energy and nutrients every day.

Babies grow at a rapid pace during the first 2 years of life and therefore have high demands for nutrients and energy, relative to their body sizes and appetites. This means that offering babies foods and meals containing plenty of nutrients is key.

A simple way of doing this is to think about offering your little one a variety of foods from the four main food groups below early on in their weaning journey. (When it comes to introducing allergens, e.g. fish, dairy, eggs, see [here](#) and chat with your GP if your baby is 'at risk' of allergies.)

- * vegetables and fruits
- * carbohydrates such as potatoes, oats, grains, rice, pasta and other starchy foods
- * proteins such as beans, lentils, pulses, fish, eggs and meat
- * some full-fat dairy alongside their usual breast or formula milk

Once your little one has moved on from first tastes it's time to offer a balance of these food groups at most mealtimes (see [here](#) for the 6 months+ recipes). This will help to ensure your baby is getting enough of everything they need, but there are some other important nutrients that might need attention.

IRON is important for making red blood cells, which help to carry oxygen around a baby's body, and contributes to normal cognitive development of children. Most of a baby's iron stores come from their mother during pregnancy, and these are sufficient, along with breast milk or formula, for the first 6 months of life. From 6 months of age (after first tastes) iron needs to come from a baby's diet and so it's important to include foods that contain iron – such as lentils, red meat, eggs, fortified cereals, beans and nut butters – early on.

OMEGA-3 FATTY ACIDS are mainly found in oily fish (salmon, mackerel, sardines and trout) and are an important part of children's and adults' diets as they are needed for brain development and to help maintain a healthy heart. Recommendations around fish are to offer two portions of fish a week, one of which should be oily fish. However, stick to offering oily fish no more than twice a week for girls and four times a week for boys, as they can contain pollutants from the sea that are safe in small amounts but can build up if we have too much. You can get omega-3 fatty acids from fortified foods, including omega-3 enriched eggs, ground walnuts, soya beans and linseed/rapeseed oil, but the omega-3 fatty acids found in foods from plants are in a different form from those found in oily fish. It's still beneficial, but has to be converted by the body to be used and this process isn't 100% efficient. If your baby isn't eating oily fish, make sure you offer plenty of the plant sources to ensure they get enough.

ZINC helps us to process carbohydrates, proteins and fats in the body and usually is present in foods that also contain protein and iron, such as eggs, wholegrains, meat and pulses. Including a selection of these foods in baby's diet daily should help ensure that zinc needs are also met.

CALCIUM helps to build strong bones and teeth. Most of a baby's calcium will still come from either breast or formula milk, but you can include small amounts of pasteurized full-fat dairy products, such as plain yoghurt, full-fat cow's milk and cheese, in your baby's foods from around 6 months of age. Cow's milk isn't recommended as a main drink for your baby until 1 year.

IODINE is often forgotten, but is important as it's needed for making thyroid hormones in the body and it contributes to normal growth in children. The main sources are white fish, dairy and eggs.

FIBRE is important for the digestive system. Fibre-rich foods include fruits and vegetables as well as wholegrain carbohydrates such as whole-

meal bread, pasta and brown rice. It's a good idea to use a combination of white and wholegrain carbohydrates for babies and young children, because wholegrains contain lots of fibre and so can be very filling, not leaving enough room for the nutrient-dense foods that infants need when growing so quickly. Including some wholegrains is fine from 6 months of age; you can gradually build on how much fibre you offer as your little one grows.



RECOMMENDED SUPPLEMENTS

The NHS recommends that breastfed infants in the UK receive a daily supplement of 8.5–10 micrograms of vitamin D from birth until 1 year of age (and then 10mcg of vitamin D from 1 to 4 years of age is recommended daily). Vitamin D mainly comes from sunlight and is hard to get from food alone.

Formula milk is already supplemented with vitamin D, and therefore formula-fed babies won't need extra vitamin D until a baby is having less than 500ml of formula milk a day.

It's also recommended that all babies from 6 months of age and up until 5 years of age (if they are having less than 500ml of formula milk) receive a supplement containing vitamins A and C. Speak to your health visitor about this as some areas offer free vitamin drops for young babies, which contain the correct amount of vitamin A, C and D; via the Healthy Start scheme.

Vitamin A supports the immune system and is found in a wide range of foods including oily fish, dairy, eggs, sweet potatoes, mango, spinach and red peppers.

Vitamin C is also important for the immune system as well as helping to enhance iron absorption from foods, so it may help to serve vitamin C-rich foods, such as red peppers, potatoes, berries and oranges, alongside iron-rich foods (see [here](#)). Most fruits and vegetables are a good source of vitamin C, so as long as your baby is having these in their diet regularly, they should be getting enough.

Vitamin D is found in just a few foods, such as oily fish, red meat, egg yolks and fortified foods, but mainly comes from sunlight.

It's important not to offer baby too many supplements at the same time, so speak to your pharmacist before giving your child one or more supplements.

VEGETARIAN AND VEGAN BABIES

Babies can get most of the nutrients they need on a well-planned vegetarian or vegan diet. However, it really can take a fair bit of extra planning. If you want to raise your baby as a vegetarian or a vegan, it's a good idea to have a chat with a healthcare professional, such as a GP or registered nutritionist or dietitian, first. They can help you ensure your baby is getting the best possible nutrition.

Some of the nutrients that are very important for babies' growth and development (see [here](#)) come largely from animal-based foods. These include iodine, calcium and omega-3 fatty acids, which largely come from fish and dairy in the UK diet. If your baby doesn't eat fish or dairy, then you may need to think about supplements, or fortified foods that include iodine. Omega-3 can come from a well-balanced diet which includes ground seeds, ground walnuts and fortified foods such as enriched eggs.

It's also important to include enough plant-based protein, iron- and zinc-containing foods in the diet of a vegan or vegetarian baby. These might include beans, chickpeas, lentils, ground nuts and seeds, fortified grains and cereals and dark green leafy vegetables. Additionally, combining grains and legumes together in the same meal can help provide a balance of proteins for vegan and vegetarian babies.

B vitamins are also found in a really wide variety of foods, including fruits and vegetables, bread and cereals, and eggs, meat and milk. If your little one doesn't eat any animal products you will need to make sure they are having a varied diet to get all of the different B vitamins needed. Vitamin B12, however, is only available in animal foods, so if your baby has no animal products (including no dairy or eggs) they may need a supplement of vitamin B12 or to opt for foods fortified with vitamin B12.

Again, talk to your GP or pharmacist before giving your baby multiple supplements.

PLANT-BASED MILKS

Plant-based milk alternatives (except rice drinks) can be used in cooking or mixed with food from 6 months, but remember to look for versions that are unsweetened and have been fortified with calcium. Breast milk and/or infant formula should be baby's main drink until 12 months of age, and, just like cow's milk, milk alternatives should not be given as a main drink until 1 year. As noted already, it's a good idea to speak to a healthcare professional such as a health visitor or GP if you are thinking of cutting cow's milk and dairy out of your child's diet completely. If your child has an allergy or intolerance to milk, or is following a vegan diet, talk to your GP or a registered dietitian. They can advise you on suitable milk alternatives.

Rice milk is not suitable for babies until they reach 5 years of age, due to traces of arsenic that are often found in this milk.



RESPONSIVE FEEDING AND PORTIONS

When it comes to feeding babies, there is so much more to it than simply WHAT we put on their plates. The surrounding environment and the responses and behaviours that they get from their parents can all make a difference to how they develop patterns of eating.

‘Responsive feeding’ encourages lots of communication around feeding including signs of hunger and fullness between a parent and their baby. It can really help during weaning and works like this.

- 1** A parent sets up the food environment with a calm space, minimal distractions and a good structure around mealtimes.
- 2** A baby responds by eating, throwing, rejecting, smiling at mealtimes as well as showing their skills and abilities for a parent to interpret (e.g. can they take lumps readily, are they gagging lots, how good is their hand–eye coordination).
- 3** A parent then, in turn, responds to this by attending to their baby’s signals and encouraging their development – for example moving to lumpier textures, demonstrating how to use finger foods, or stopping a meal if their baby is showing signs of fullness.

In this way, it’s really easy for a baby to learn about food and their own appetite cues, as well as allowing you as a parent to see how you can progress them through their weaning journey.

PORTION SIZES

Responsive feeding can really help when it comes to portion sizes. Lots of parents are nervous during weaning about how much their baby is eating. However, there are no portion size recommendations for babies, and there is a very good reason for this. Babies' appetites change all the time, from day to day and from meal to meal. Like adults, their appetites are also affected greatly by illness, tiredness, excitement, pain, growth, etc, and so it's OK for them to reject food sometimes and eat a lot on other occasions. Try not to compare your little one's appetite with that of other infants, because they are all so different. Instead, try to offer a variety of healthy foods and allow your baby to decide how much they will eat at mealtimes. Looking at their intake over a week, rather than day to day, can be helpful and can often put things into context a little more.

If you're ever concerned that your little one isn't eating enough or is eating too much, the best advice is to check their routine around food and milk, take a look at how much milk is being consumed throughout the day, and also go and visit your GP or health visitor to get your little one weighed and to get any questions you have answered directly.

REFUSING FOOD

Food refusal is often a normal part of the weaning journey, so if your baby goes through a period of rejecting food, remember that it's completely normal.

A few things you can do to bring the enjoyment back into food and mealtimes again are listed below (continues on [here](#)):

- * Take the pressure off mealtimes and try not to coax or force foods if your baby isn't keen on eating. Instead, respond to their signals of refusal by gently removing the food or simply saying 'that's OK' and sitting back and eating your own food.
- * Keep offering a wide variety of foods, even if sometimes they are rejected.

- * Try smaller portions at mealtimes so you're not overwhelming them with food.
- * Sit and eat with your little one as much as possible so they learn from seeing you enjoy your food.
- * Avoid drawing too much attention to the food refusal and stop mealtimes if your baby gets distressed.
- * Keep trying, sometimes it takes multiple attempts of certain foods before they are accepted. This doesn't mean offering them every day or every meal, but just not giving up after a few tries.
- * Make mealtimes fun and enjoyable, let your baby play with food and experiment with it, lots of smiles and encouragement as well as eating together can all be helpful.

Portion sizes are definitely based on the demands of the baby. Indie's demands can be really different. Sometimes she'll have a massive breakfast then not want to eat for the rest of the day. Other times she'll want to eat all day. If your baby has had a sedentary day, they're not going to need as much energy. If they've had a really active day of crawling and walking, they're going to need more.

As Indie walks now, she's eating slightly bigger portions more regularly. Sometimes in the morning she can eat an adult-sized portion of porridge. Breakfast is usually her favourite meal. Sometimes she won't eat as much for lunch and dinner but it depends on timings and what we've been doing that day. Just like there is no set portion size for adults, there isn't one for kids. And then of course sometimes Indie won't eat a meal, but we come back in an hour's time and try again after a distraction, rather than offering alternatives. Patience pays off in the end.





EATING OUT

One thing that really upsets me is seeing the quality of food on kids' menus in restaurants. They are usually terrible and very limited to things like chips, nuggets, fish fingers and pizza. It's such a shame that this is what is presented to us as the only option for our children.

My advice is to look beyond the kids' menu and look at the normal menu for starters or sides that your baby may enjoy, or even choose a meal which you can share with them. This is what we tend to do with Indie. I'm not saying we never give Indie chips or slices of pizza on occasion but we do not limit her world to the kids' menu.

When we travelled to Costa Rica with Indie at 8 months old we didn't even ask to see the kids' menu. We would just order something simple like grilled fish, steamed veg and mashed potato or rice for ourselves and share it with her. At around 1 year we would share almost anything with her including daals, mahi mahi, curries and risottos. I think eating out with your kids is good because they get to try new things you may not cook at home. Don't be afraid to ask the waiter to ensure the chef doesn't add salt to the meal but remember, one meal with a tiny bit of salt isn't a big issue if most of your meals in a week are cooked from fresh at home without any.

One thing stopping a lot of parents eating out in restaurants is the fear of a public tantrum or a screaming baby. Indie has done this many times and it's usually when she's hungry or overtired, so timing your meals out is important. Just try to stay calm and don't worry what other people think. Other parents have been in the same boat before, so just ride it out and keep enjoying meals out with your family.

PART TWO



THE RECIPES



ABOUT THE RECIPES

KEY

F = Freezable

V = Vegetarian

VE = Vegan

GF = Gluten-free

As the following sections will explain, I recommend starting weaning for the first week or two with single tastes of vegetables, offering one different veggie each day and trying to stick to more savoury and bitter options such as broccoli, cauliflower and potatoes (see veg-led weaning, [here](#)). After this, it's about continuing to offer these veggies as well as other sweeter veggies as part of your baby's weaning journey, alongside a wide variety of food combinations – including proteins, carbohydrates and fruits.

Indie was an adventurous baby and so she was very good at coping with different textures and ate fairly big portions at some meals from the word go. Some babies move through textures more slowly and have smaller appetites, and that's perfectly normal too. It's good to go at your little one's own pace. Keep progressing with textures though, as it's good to move from smooth purees to mashed foods, then from mashed foods to minced and chopped as your baby gets more confident with eating.

The recipes in this book are all easy to adapt, so you can offer smaller portions and also softer textures by adding more liquid or by mashing,

mincing and chopping your baby's food a little more.

SAFELY REHEATING AND FREEZING FOOD

- * Cool leftovers as quickly as possible, ideally within 1–2 hours.
- * Divide cooked leftovers into individual portions in airtight containers or ice-cube trays and refrigerate or freeze.
- * Use refrigerated leftovers within 2 days.
- * When reheating, make sure the food is heated until it is steaming hot throughout. (But be careful to cool to an appropriate temperature for your child.)
- * Be careful with rice, which you should ideally serve as soon as it has been cooked. If that isn't possible, cool rice within 1 hour and keep in the fridge or freezer. Refrigerated rice should be eaten within 24 hours and never reheated more than once.
- * Always defrost leftovers completely, either in the fridge overnight or in the microwave.
- * When defrosted, food should never be reheated more than once.
- * Cooked food that has been frozen and removed from the freezer should be reheated and eaten within 24 hours of fully defrosting.

SPECIAL INGREDIENTS

Here's a list of ingredients to avoid or to prepare in special ways.

- * Added sugar – avoid as babies simply don't need it!
- * Salt – not good for little kidneys so avoid adding it to your baby's food or offering salty foods such as gravy and crisps.
- * Whole nuts/peanuts – are a choking risk (as are whole grapes), so avoid offering these whole until children are around 5 years of age and ensure they are prepared appropriately – sliced or ground (see [here](#)).

- * Honey – can contain a specific bacteria that is very rare but can be dangerous so avoid up until 1 year. Remember that honey is also a sugar.
- * Unpasteurized, blue or mould-ripened cheese – avoid because they are a risk of food poisoning. Check labels when choosing cheeses. Full-fat hard cheese is fine for your baby and unpasteurized/mould-ripened are OK to offer if they are cooked in recipes.
- * Raw fish, shellfish – avoid lightly cooked or raw fish or shellfish for your baby, due to the higher risk of food poisoning these may pose.
- * Some raw eggs – raw or lightly cooked eggs are fine for your baby from 6 months of age if the eggs have the Red Lion stamp on them (see photo opposite). If they don't have the stamp, these eggs are fine to offer to your baby, but make sure they are well cooked all the way through.
- * Rice milk – can contain trace levels of arsenic and so it's best to avoid giving this to your baby until they are 5 years of age.
- * Certain types of fish – shark, swordfish and marlin – contain high levels of mercury and so aren't recommended as foods for your baby. Oily fish such as salmon and mackerel are super beneficial in small amounts, but there are restrictions as to how much young girls and boys should have, due to potential toxins that can build up in the body. Boys are recommended to have no more than four portions of oily fish a week and girls no more than two portions.



6 MONTHS



FIRST TASTES

For the first two weeks of weaning we started with single tastes each day of a variety of savoury and bitter vegetables, to help Indie start to accept these flavours early on. I wanted to offer her a variety, so we gave her super-soft finger foods alongside some of the same food pureed on a spoon. You can blend or mash these veggies with some of your baby's usual milk.

You could try something like this:

DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3	DAY 4	DAY 5	DAY 6	DAY 7
Broccoli	Potato	Green beans	Asparagus	Swede	Kale	Avocado

DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3	DAY 4	DAY 5	DAY 6	DAY 7
Courgette	Cauliflower	Aubergine	Mushroom	Spinach	Cucumber	Peas

This is just to give ideas and you don't have to do this for 2 weeks straight, but it's good to offer single tastes of veggies for the first week or so, before moving on to combining ingredients – e.g. potato, broccoli and salmon or egg and tomato – and offering a really varied diet with proteins, carbohydrates and even herbs and spices alongside plenty of veggies and fruits (see 6 months+ recipes, [here](#)).

POTATO PUREE

This is a nice neutral flavour to kick off with. When you come to mixed purees, potato is a great filler for thickening other veggies.

MAKES 22 TBSP/ICE CUBES

V F GF

1 medium potato, peeled (around 300g)

100–120ml baby’s usual milk or water

Chop the potato into 1.5cm cubes. Place in a medium lidded saucepan over a medium heat and cover with boiling water. Boil for 15–20 minutes until tender.

Drain and mash or blend adding in the milk or water until you have the consistency of double cream and the mixture is loose enough to fall from the spoon.

Keeps for up to 2 days covered in the fridge.

TIP

For all four purees:

You could freeze before adding in the liquid (so it will take up less room) and dilute to your required consistency as and when needed.

COURGETTE PUREE

This is a good first puree taste. The water content in the courgette helps make it nice and thin for your baby to swallow.

MAKES ABOUT 10 TBSP/ICE CUBES

V F GF

1 large courgette (around 200g)

80–100ml baby’s usual milk or water – optional

Cut the courgette into 1.5cm cubes. Boil or steam the courgette for 8–10 minutes until soft.

Drain and blend or mash the courgette, adding in a little water or baby’s usual milk if needed, but the water content from the courgettes should be enough to create a loose consistency that will fall from the spoon.

Keeps for up to 2 days covered in the fridge.

PARSNIP PUREE

Parsnip is a sweeter veg and your baby will probably love it. Try offering this after plenty of bitter green and savoury veg have been offered first.

MAKES 20 TBSP/ICE CUBES

V F GF

300g parsnips, peeled
150ml baby's usual milk or water

Cut the parsnips into 1.5cm cubes. Boil or steam the parsnips for 8–10 minutes until soft.

Drain and blend the parsnips adding in a little of baby's usual milk or water until you have the consistency of double cream and the mixture is loose enough to fall from the spoon.

Keeps for up to 2 days covered in the fridge.

BROCCOLI PUREE

Broccoli is a great first food. You can puree it easily but also offer a super-soft little floret to try alongside it. I call them baby trees.

MAKES 12 TBSP/ICE CUBES

V F GF

1 small head of broccoli (around 150g)
80–100ml baby's usual milk or water

Break the broccoli into small florets. Steam or boil for 8–10 minutes

until soft.

Drain and blend the broccoli adding in a little of baby's usual milk or water until you have the consistency of double cream and the mixture is loose enough to fall from the spoon.

Keeps for up to 2 days covered in the fridge.

TIP

For all four purees:

Any leftovers of these single taste purees could be added to your baby's foods later on to avoid any waste.



6 MONTHS +



COMBINED FLAVOURS

Indie mainly had purees at this stage, but we also offered her finger foods alongside them so she could start learning to feed herself. Batons of vegetables like broccoli and carrots are great for a baby at this age so they can hold on to them, but they need to be really soft. It is best to steam them so they're like mush when they get between baby's gums.

After the first 2 weeks of green veggies, we started to combine foods together such as potato and broccoli mash and we also started to bring in some iron-rich foods such as beans and lentils as well as higher allergen-risk foods like eggs, fish and nut butters (see info on introducing allergens on [here](#)). After those first few combinations, it was all about building in lots of variety to Indie's diet. I found that Indie likes a mixture of flavours – like sweet potato, salmon and broccoli. Broccoli on its own is quite hardcore but when we started to combine things that's when she got really excited about food.

We began getting more creative by adding flavourful ingredients like cheese, fresh herbs and spices into veggie stews or mashed lentils and butterbeans (which Indie loves). Seeing your baby's reaction to a cheesy broccoli mash with paprika for the first time is just wonderful, so be adventurous. Babies don't need to eat bland foods.

COURGETTE, PEA AND MINT PUREE

Now the fun can start by mixing flavours. Fresh mint is a great addition, but you could also try parsley or coriander. Be adventurous by mixing it up and trying new things.

MAKES 14 TBSP/ICE CUBES

V F GF

1 large courgette (around 200g), washed and cubed
100g frozen peas
2 sprigs of mint, finely chopped
80–100ml baby's usual milk or water – optional

Steam or boil the courgette for 8–10 minutes or until fork tender. Add the peas towards the end of the cooking time and cook for 2 minutes.

Drain the courgette and peas and mash or blend, stirring through the mint. Add in baby's usual milk or water for a smoother consistency.

Keeps for up to 2 days covered in the fridge.

TIP

It is easy to add more or less liquid to make it the right texture for your baby. This is also a great sauce for serving with pasta later on.



POTATO, PARSNIP AND CARROT

This was one of Indie's favourite blends. It's sweet and creamy and goes down a treat.

MAKES ABOUT 20 TBSP/ICE CUBES BEFORE DILUTION

V F GF

- 1 small potato (around 200g), peeled and chopped into 1.5cm cubes
- 1 medium parsnip (around 200g), peeled and chopped into 1.5cm cubes
- 2 medium carrots (around 200g total), peeled and chopped into 1.5cm cubes
- 80–100ml baby's usual milk or water – optional

Place all the vegetables in a medium pan over a medium heat and cover with boiling water. Cook for 15–20 minutes until completely tender.

Drain and mash or blend adding in water or baby's usual milk for a smoother consistency.

Keeps for up to 2 days covered in the fridge.

BROCCOLI, SWEDE AND POTATO MASH

I like to batch-cook this one and store it in the freezer in cubes or bags. It defrosts well and makes a great quick meal in the early stages.

MAKES 22 TBSP/ICE CUBES

V F GF

- 100g potato, peeled and cut into thin small pieces

100g swede, peeled and cut into thin small pieces
150g broccoli, broken into small florets
80–100ml baby's usual milk or water – optional

Steam or boil the potato and swede for a total of 12 minutes or until tender. Add the broccoli 4 minutes before the end of the cooking time.

Drain and mash or blend the vegetables. Loosen with baby's usual milk or water for a smoother texture.

Keeps for up to 2 days covered in the fridge.

AVOCADO AND BUTTERBEAN MASH

This is a super healthy way to include some protein and fat in your baby's diet – both important in the early stages of weaning. It's a great colour and texture and easy to mash.

MAKES ABOUT 12 TBSP/ICE CUBES | NO-COOK

V F GF

1 large ripe avocado, de-stoned
100g tinned butterbeans, drained and rinsed juice of ½ lemon or lime
80–100ml baby's usual milk or water – optional
1 tsp finely chopped chives – optional

Add the avocado flesh, butterbeans and lemon or lime juice to a mixing bowl and blend with a stick blender until smooth. Add in baby's usual milk or water for a looser consistency. Stir through the chives if using.

Keeps for up to 2 days covered in the fridge.

CARROT PORRIDGE

Porridge is Indie's favourite breakfast of all time. We started Indie on

plain rolled oats from the start. Cook low and slow and they go super-soft and creamy.

MAKES 12 TBSP/ICE CUBES

V F GF

30g porridge oats
250ml whole milk
1 carrot, peeled and finely grated (around 40g grated weight)
¼ tsp ground cinnamon

Add all the ingredients to a small saucepan over a medium heat. Bring to the boil gently and then reduce the temperature to low and simmer for 10 minutes, stirring regularly to develop a creamy consistency.

Keeps for up to 2 days covered in the fridge.

BUTTERNUT, CINNAMON AND ALMOND BUTTER

Mixing tiny amounts of nut butter into meals is a great way to introduce nuts to your baby's diet. This also gets good veg in for breakfast or lunch.

MAKES 10 TBSP/ICE CUBES

VE F GF

200g shop-bought frozen cubed butternut squash (or peeled butternut, cut into 1.5cm cubes)
2 pinches of cinnamon
1 tbsp almond butter

Steam or boil the butternut for 10 minutes until tender when pricked with a fork. Drain, then blend or mash with the remaining ingredients.

Keeps for up to 2 days covered in the fridge.



CHEESY COURGETTE AND SPRING ONION RICE

Babies don't need to eat bland foods. Let them explore the flavours you love too. When I introduced cheese to Indie, there was no going back.

MAKES 14 TBSP/ICE CUBES

V F GF

1 tsp olive oil
1 medium courgette (around 150g), grated
35g spring onions (about 3), finely chopped
100g cooked white basmati rice
100ml hot water
40g cheddar, grated

Add the oil, courgette and spring onions to a medium non-stick frying pan and sauté over a medium heat for about 5 minutes until soft.

Add the rice and hot water to the frying pan, breaking up the rice with a wooden spoon in the pan. Cook for a further 2 minutes, allowing most of the liquid to evaporate off before stirring through the cheese.

Mash or blend more if needed.

Keeps for up to 2 days covered in the fridge.

LEEK, QUINOA AND TARRAGON

I love seeing Indie's face when I give her a new spice or herb. You never quite know how its going to go, which makes it fun.

MAKES 17 TBSP/ICE CUBES | LONGER RECIPE

VE IF USING OLIVE OIL **F GF**

1 tsp unsalted butter or olive oil
100g leeks, finely chopped
1 tbsp finely chopped tarragon
70g washed quinoa
200ml hot water

Melt the butter or heat the oil in a medium saucepan. Add the leeks and tarragon and sweat over a low heat for a few minutes until soft.

Add the quinoa and stir to combine. Pour over the hot water and cook, covered, for 20 minutes or until the quinoa is fluffy and the water has been absorbed.

Keeps for up to 2 days covered in the fridge.

SWEET POTATO, WHITE FISH AND BROCCOLI

We started offering Indie white fish early on before we gave her meat. It has a flaky texture so it's easy to swallow and works well mashed with different veg.

MAKES 20 TBSP/ICE CUBES

F GF

1 medium sweet potato, peeled and cubed
80g broccoli, broken into small florets
1 tsp coconut oil
100g white fish, skinless and boneless (such as haddock or cod)
80–100ml baby's usual milk or water – optional

Steam or boil the sweet potato for 10 minutes, then add in the broccoli florets and cook for a further 4–5 minutes until soft.

Melt the coconut oil in a small non-stick frying pan over a medium heat. Slide in the fish and fry for about 7–8 minutes until cooked through.

Flake the fish and blend or mash together with the sweet potato and broccoli. You can add in a little of baby's usual milk or water if you want a looser consistency.

Keeps for up to 2 days covered in the fridge.





AVOCADO BASIL PUREE

Fresh herbs are good for us but also bring food to life. Be brave, be different. Give your baby new flavour experiences as early as possible.

MAKES 10 TBSP/ICE CUBES | NO-COOK

VE F

- 1 medium avocado, de-stoned
- 4 tbsp coconut milk
- 1 tbsp finely chopped basil
- 1 slice brown toast, crusts removed and cut into 6–7cm fingers

Mash or blend the flesh from the avocado with the coconut milk until smooth. Stir through the basil and serve with 1–2 brown toast fingers.

Keeps for up to 2 days covered in the fridge.

RED LENTIL, CAULIFLOWER, TURMERIC AND KALE

Lentils are a great food to introduce at around 6 months of age as they offer a source of iron. I love the turmeric in this.

MAKES 12 TBSP/ICE CUBES

VE F GF

- 60g red lentils, rinsed
- 70g cauliflower, roughly chopped into small pieces
- ¼ tsp ground turmeric
- 200ml hot water
- 15g kale leaves, finely shredded

Place the lentils, cauliflower and turmeric in a small saucepan and cover with the hot water. Simmer for 5 minutes before adding in the kale and cooking for a further 5–7 minutes.

Mash or blend, breaking down the cauliflower pieces.

Keeps for up to 2 days covered in the fridge.

BROCCOLI, SALMON, PEAS AND POTATO

Using soft boiled potato helps to thicken the texture of purees when you're trying to move your baby's textures up a notch.

MAKES 20 TBSP/ ICE CUBES

F GF

1 small potato (around 200g), peeled and cut into 1.5cm cubes

60g broccoli florets

1 small fillet of salmon (around 100g), skinless and boneless

60g frozen peas

80–100ml baby's usual milk or water – optional

Place the potato in a saucepan, cover with boiling water and cook for 15–20 minutes until tender.

Add the broccoli and salmon to a steamer and set over the potato for the last 8–10 minutes of cooking time. Slide the peas into the steamer 4 minutes before the end of the cooking time.

Drain the vegetables, place all the ingredients in a bowl, and mash or blend, adding in water or baby's usual milk for a smoother consistency.

Keeps for up to 2 days covered in the fridge.

FENNEL, CHICKPEA, APPLE AND WATERCRESS

Plant-based protein sources like chickpeas are great for your baby – you don't always need to rely on fish, chicken or red meat.

MAKES 20 TBSP/ICE CUBES

V F GF

1 medium fennel bulb, woody stems trimmed and roughly chopped
60g tinned chickpeas, drained and rinsed
1 apple, peeled, cored and roughly chopped
30g watercress leaves
80–100ml baby's usual milk or water – optional

Place the chopped fennel, chickpeas and apple in a medium saucepan over a medium heat. Cover with boiling water and boil for 8–10 minutes until soft and tender. Alternatively steam for the same time.

Drain and blend the mixture with the watercress until smooth, diluting with a little water or baby's usual milk for a looser consistency.

Keeps for up to 2 days covered in the fridge.





LEMONY AUBERGINE WITH YOGHURT AND PARSLEY

Plain full-fat Greek yoghurt is my go-to dip for most of Indie's meals. This creamy aubergine dip is wonderful and works well spread on pitta.

MAKES 16 TBSP/ICE CUBES

V F GF

- 1 aubergine, cut into 1cm cubes
- 1 tbsp lemon juice
- 2 tbsp Greek yoghurt
- 2 tbsp finely chopped parsley

Steam the aubergine for 10 minutes until perfectly soft. Blend with the lemon juice and yoghurt, then stir through the parsley.

Keeps for up to 2 days covered in the fridge.

TIP

You could add tahini, olive oil and salt for an adult dip version.

PEAR, BEETROOT AND BLUEBERRY OVERNIGHT OATS

Overnight oats are a lifesaver on busy mornings. I make big batches of these all the time for me, Rosie and Indie.

MAKES 24 TBSP/ICE CUBES | NO-COOK

V F GF

1 pear, cored and roughly chopped
1 medium cooked beetroot
3 tbsp Greek yoghurt
6 tbsp water
60g blueberries, squashed thoroughly with a fork
80g porridge oats

Blend the pear, beetroot, yoghurt and water until perfectly smooth. Stir through the squashed blueberries and the oats. Leave overnight or eat straight away.

Keeps for up to 2 days covered in the fridge.



CUCUMBER MINT YOGHURT

Indie loved to dip stuff as soon as she started feeding herself with finger foods. This is one of her favourites and works well with chicken.

MAKES 10 TBSP

GF

¼ cucumber (around 70g)
90g Greek yoghurt
8 mint leaves, finely chopped
2–3 finger-sized grilled chicken strips, to serve

Cut the cucumber in half lengthways and remove the seeds, scraping them out with a teaspoon. Grate coarsely with a box grater.

Mix together the grated cucumber, yoghurt and chopped mint, adding in 1–2 tablespoons of water to loosen the mixture. Use a pair of kitchen scissors to snip the cucumber into smaller pieces for a finer texture. Serve with 2–3 fingers of grilled chicken.

Keeps for up to 2 days covered in the fridge.

AUBERGINE, RED PEPPER AND COUSCOUS

It's great to move on from smooth purees by trying new textures. Couscous, orzo or risotto are great foods to offer as you and your baby get more confident.

MAKES 20 TBSP/ICE CUBES

VE GF

1 aubergine, peeled or unpeeled and cut into 1cm cubes
1 red pepper, de-seeded and roughly chopped
30g couscous

50ml hot water

Steam the aubergine and pepper for 10 minutes until perfectly soft.

While the aubergine is steaming, place the couscous in a small bowl and pour over the hot water, cover the bowl with a piece of cling film and leave for 5 minutes to absorb the water. Remove the cling film and fluff with a fork.

Blend the aubergine and pepper until smooth and stir through the couscous.

Keeps for up to 2 days covered in the fridge.

MUSHROOM POLENTA

Offering earthy and savoury flavours from a young age is important as babies will always prefer sweeter stuff. Give this one a try!

MAKES 20 TBSP

VE IF USING OLIVE OIL **F GF**

300ml hot water
10g porcini mushrooms
150g chestnut mushrooms
1 tbsp unsalted butter or olive oil
1 tsp fresh thyme leaves
50g quick-cook polenta

Pour the hot water over the porcini mushrooms and leave to soak.

Gently wipe the chestnut mushrooms clean and place in a food processor. Whizz for a few seconds or until the mushrooms are finely chopped. Alternatively, you can finely chop them by hand.

Melt the butter or heat the oil in a medium non-stick frying pan over a medium heat. Add the chopped mushrooms and thyme and fry,

stirring regularly, for 6–7 minutes or until they have released any water and have taken on a nut-brown colour. Remove from the heat and set aside.

Strain the porcini mushrooms through a sieve, catching the mushroom stock that's left behind in a small saucepan. Very finely chop the mushrooms and add to the frying pan.

Place the mushroom stock on a high heat until simmering, then lower the heat and very slowly add the polenta into the pan, stirring all the time. Heat for 1 minute or until thickened.

Add the sautéed mushrooms to the polenta and serve.

Keeps for up to 2 days covered in the fridge.

TIP

If reheating, simply add a splash of water until you reach the desired consistency.



PARSLEY, PEA AND GREEN BEAN PUREE

Gorgeous greens! We found it helped to offer soft finger foods like green beans alongside to help Indie with her pincer grip.

MAKES 12 TBSP/ICE CUBES

F GF

80g green beans, trimmed and cut into short pieces, plus extra to serve –optional

100g frozen peas

2 tbsp chopped parsley leaves

2–3 grilled chicken strips (around 6–7cm), to serve

Add the beans to a small saucepan of hot water and boil for 3 minutes. Add the peas and continue cooking for a further 3 minutes.

Drain the vegetables. Set aside a few whole beans to serve, if desired. Add the chopped parsley to the cooked beans and peas and blend until smooth with 60ml water. Serve with grilled chicken strips and the beans, if using.

Keeps for up to 2 days covered in the fridge.



7 MONTHS + FINGER FOODS



GRABBING A BITE

Finger foods can help little ones to explore food at their own pace. They are also great for helping them to develop hand– eye coordination and encouraging them to try out a variety of textures.

Some babies (especially if they are trying baby-led weaning) take to finger foods straight away and are less fussed about using the spoon. They may be more familiar with a variety of more complex finger foods early on, and so plenty of the recipes in this chapter may be perfect for those who are 6 months of age who can sit up and hold their head and neck steady.

If your little one is less confident with finger foods, start with well-cooked veggies that you can squash nicely between your finger and thumb. You can then start exploring more of a variety of finger foods, such as the ones given in this section, once your little one gets more confident.

RASPBERRY AND OAT FINGERS

These are easy to hold, bite and swallow and they taste yummy. I often make a big batch and reheat them in the microwave for 30 seconds.

MAKES ABOUT 18 FINGERS

V GF

2 ripe bananas, mashed
1 egg, whisked
25g desiccated coconut
90g porridge oats

1 tbsp melted unsalted butter or rapeseed oil
100g frozen raspberries

Preheat the oven to 180° (fan 160°/gas mark 4). Line a flat baking tray with baking parchment.

Mix together the mashed banana, egg, desiccated coconut, oats and melted butter or rapeseed oil in a medium bowl until well combined. Stir through the frozen raspberries.

Tip out the mixture so it forms a mound on the prepared baking tray. Pat the mixture into an oblong (roughly 20 × 15cm). Bake in the oven for 10–12 minutes.

Allow to cool before cutting into eighteen fingers.

Keep for up to 2 days covered in the fridge.

SWEET POTATO TOAST WITH MASHED BANANA AND TAHINI

*Who knew you could toast sweet potato? It's such a great idea and so simple. **Don't forget that tahini contains sesame, which is an allergen** (see [here](#)).*

MAKES 2 SLICES

VE GF

2 slices of sweet potato, skin removed, cut lengthways and roughly 5mm thick
½ small banana, mashed
2 tsp tahini
pinch of cinnamon – optional

Set your toaster to its highest setting and place the sweet potato slices in the toaster. Keep toasting the potato slices until specking brown

and cooked through in the centre.

Mix the banana with the tahini and cinnamon, if using. Slice the toast into fingers and serve with the banana mixture.

SIMPLE FLATBREADS

These are great finger foods for your baby to use with any of the dips in this book. Indie also loves avocado mashed with Greek yoghurt.

MAKES ABOUT 10 SMALL FLATBREADS

V F

260g spelt flour, plus extra for dusting
20g ground flaxseeds
1½ tsp baking powder
250g Greek yoghurt

Add the flour, ground flaxseeds and baking powder to a large mixing bowl and whisk together with a balloon whisk. Stir in the Greek yoghurt using the end of a wooden spoon before going in with your hands to bring the dough together into a ball.

Add in 1 tablespoon of water if it looks a little dry, then knead for 1 minute until springy.

Divide the dough into ten small pieces and, using a rolling pin, roll each piece into a small circle roughly 5mm thick.

Heat a dry large non-stick frying pan over a medium to high heat and fry the breads for 1–2 minutes on each side, or until speckled with brown spots on both sides and puffed a little.

Keeps for 2–3 days in an airtight container.

IMAGE OF RECIPES [here](#)

SWEET POTATO OAT BITES

A great way of incorporating some veg at breakfast time. These are lovely eaten warm out of the oven or cold as a snack on the go.

MAKES 16 BITES | LONGER RECIPE

V F

1 large baked sweet potato (around 220g)
80g porridge oats
1 tbsp ground flaxseeds
1 tsp ground cinnamon
2 tbsp melted coconut oil
1 egg, beaten

Preheat the oven to 180° (fan 160°/gas mark 4). Line a large baking tray with baking parchment.

Using your fingers, peel and discard the skin from the sweet potato.

Place the oats in a blender or food processor and blitz into a flour-like consistency. Add the remaining ingredients, including the sweet potato flesh, and blend until smooth.

Spoon tablespoons of the mixture onto your prepared baking tray. Use a wet spoon to flatten each mound down a little into a small round disc shape. Bake in the oven for 12–15 minutes until set. Allow to cool before serving.

These keep for up to 2 days in an airtight container.

TIP

To roast the sweet potato, place it on a baking tray and pierce a few times with a fork or skewer. Drizzle with 1 teaspoon of olive oil. Roast in an oven preheated to 180° (fan 160°/gas mark 4) for 40–45

minutes until perfectly soft all the way through.

PUMPKIN SEED PESTO DIP

Nothing tastes better than a homemade pesto. This dip will make roasted carrots or other vegetable sticks even more appealing.

MAKES 7 TSBP

V F GF

2 tbsp natural yoghurt

3–4 roasted baby carrots – I like using ones with green tops

For the pesto

20g pumpkin seeds small bunch of basil (around 15g)

50ml extra virgin olive oil

1 tbsp water

To make the pesto, toast the pumpkin seeds in a small dry frying pan until they begin to pop. Place the toasted pumpkin seeds and the remaining pesto ingredients in a mini blender and blend until perfectly smooth.

Spoon the natural yoghurt into a small dipping bowl and swirl in 1 tablespoon of the pumpkin pesto. Serve alongside the roasted carrots as a finger food.

The pesto keeps for up to 2 days covered in the fridge.

TIPS

To roast the baby carrots, place them on a baking tray and toss them in 1 teaspoon of olive oil.

Roast in an oven preheated to 180° (fan 160°/gas mark 4) for 25–30 minutes until perfectly soft in the middle and tinged brown.

You could also toss the pesto through pasta or swirl it into soups – perfect for adults too.

IMAGE OF RECIPES OVER THE PAGE



CHEESE AND BROCCOLI SCONES

Here's another clever way of getting some green veg into your baby's diet. These warm cheesy bites will go down a treat.

MAKES 12 SMALL SCONES | LONGER RECIPE

V F

125g broccoli
250g plain flour
2 tsp baking powder
70g chilled unsalted butter, cut into cubes
125g cheddar, finely grated

100ml whole milk, plus a little extra for glazing
1 large egg, whisked

Preheat the oven to 180°C (fan 160°C/gas mark 4).

Using a box grater, coarsely grate the broccoli, making sure you use mainly the florets and not the stalk.

Sift the flour and baking powder into a mixing bowl, add the butter cubes and rub in with your fingertips until the mixture resembles breadcrumbs. Mix in the broccoli and cheese.

Add the milk and egg and mix in with a knife. When the mixture starts to come together, go in with your hands to bring the dough into one lump. If the mixture looks a bit too dry, add in a splash more milk. If it's a little too sticky, add in an extra tablespoon of flour. To ensure light airy scones, try not to over-handle the mixture.

Dust a work surface with a little flour and roll out the dough to roughly 2cm thick. Divide into ten equal portions and shape into rounds if you like.

Place the scones on a baking tray and brush with a little milk to glaze. Bake in the oven for 16–18 minutes until risen and lightly golden brown.

These keep for 2–3 days in an airtight container.





VEG STICKS AND GREEN HUMMUS

Chickpeas are a great source of protein and when blitzed are the perfect creamy texture for your baby. This could also be spread on toast.

MAKES 2 ADULT AND 1 BABY PORTION | FAMILY SIDE OR SNACK | NO-COOK

V F HUMMUS ONLY

1 × 200g tin of chickpeas, drained and rinsed
1 spring onion, finely chopped
3 tbsp soft herbs (parsley, chives, tarragon, basil or coriander)
2 tbsp lemon juice
½ clove garlic
2 tbsp natural yoghurt
1 tbsp extra virgin olive oil

To serve

veg sticks (roughly 6–7cm)
pitta bread fingers

Add all the ingredients except the oil to a food processor and process until smooth, adding in a splash of water to loosen the mixture if needed. Spoon into a bowl and drizzle over the olive oil.

Serve with veg sticks and toasted pitta fingers.

The hummus keeps for up to 2 days covered in the fridge.



KALE CHIPS

Babies and toddlers usually love crisps and deep-fried chips. Try this healthy alternative as a snack at home or on the go.

MAKES 100G

VE GF

100g whole kale leaves, woody stems removed

1 tbsp olive oil

¼ tsp garlic granules

¼ tsp onion granules

Preheat the oven to 120°C (fan 100°C/gas mark ½).

Place the kale leaves on a large baking tray big enough to lay the leaves out in a single layer. Drizzle over the olive oil and, using your hands, massage the leaves with the oil to coat evenly. Sprinkle over the garlic and onion granules.

Bake in the oven for 8–10 minutes or until crispy and lightly golden – make sure you keep a close eye on them as they can burn easily.

Keeps for up to 2 days in an airtight container.

7-9 MONTHS +



TEXTURE AND FLAVOUR

Once your baby is established on three meals a day and eating a little more in the way of portions it's important to balance out their meals. This doesn't have to be complicated, but trying to think about providing a protein, a carbohydrate and a veg at each meal can help, along with a little full-fat dairy here and there.

At this stage you can gradually move away from purees and start to simply mash and chop up soft things like kidney beans, while still offering whole pieces of softened vegetables and other options as finger foods. You can give them things like orzo, risotto or pasta as long as it's the right texture for your baby. We moved Indie on to curries and stews, which could be made of butterbeans, mushrooms, baby tomatoes, paprika and spinach. These are things that I would enjoy eating myself. That's what this whole philosophy is about – don't just give babies 'baby food', give them food that you would also enjoy. Indie was mastering hand-eye coordination and starting to pick up things like blueberries and peas with a great pincer grip at this age.

Indie has always loved porridge – I get a lot of milk in it, some cinnamon, stir in some nut butter, ground sesame or chia seeds and blueberries and bananas. There's a range of textures. We pimp her oats up quite a bit, which she likes. I also think it's important to play with temperature to let Indie try different heats of different foods as well as different textures.

We continued experimenting with herbs and spices like a sprinkle of coriander and basil at this age. I love giving her smoked paprika and curry powder and seeing her face light up. People are so worried about giving their kids flavours but it's fine to expose babies to fresh herbs and spices – avoiding chilli, salt, sugar or anything aggressive.

QUINOA AND PEAR PORRIDGE

Porridge is so versatile as it can be eaten sweet or savoury. This one tastes sweet but has an added twist with the quinoa.

MAKES 8 TBSP

V F GF

½ ripe pear, core removed pinch of cinnamon
150ml whole milk
50g cooked quinoa – either from a pre-cooked pouch or cooked yourself
1 tsp almond or other nut butter, to serve

Place the pear, cinnamon and milk in a blender and blend until smooth.

Add the pear milk and cooked quinoa to a small lidded saucepan over a low heat. Cover with the lid and cook for 8–10 minutes, stirring from time to time until thickened.

Serve with the almond or other nut butter stirred in at the end.

Keeps for up to 2 days covered in the fridge.

BUTTERNUT PORRIDGE

This is another easy way to add a little veg into your baby's brekkie. We try to use porridge as an opportunity to introduce new veg or spices.

MAKES 18 TBSP

V F GF

30g porridge oats

250ml whole milk
1 tbsp desiccated coconut
5 tbsp Butternut, cinnamon and almond butter (see [here](#))

Add all the ingredients to a small saucepan over a medium heat and cook the porridge for 8–10 minutes, stirring from time to time until thickened and creamy.

Keeps for up to 2 days covered in the fridge.

TIP

Prepare ahead – Butternut, cinnamon and almond butter (see [here](#))

TURMERIC SCRAMBLED EGG

Spices give food colour and make everything taste better. Eggs are a good ingredient for flavouring with turmeric, but also cumin or sweet paprika.

MAKES 1 PORTION

V

1 tsp olive oil or unsalted butter
3 cherry tomatoes, diced
¼ tsp ground turmeric
1 egg, whisked brown toast, crusts removed and cut into 6–7cm fingers

Heat the oil or melt the butter in a small non-stick frying pan over a medium heat. Add the tomatoes and turmeric and fry until soft.

Stir in the egg, moving it around in the pan until fully cooked through. Serve with 1–2 fingers of toast.

TIP

You could use 60g of firm tofu instead of the egg. Simply crumble the tofu into the pan at the same time as you would the egg, breaking it up into smaller pieces with a wooden spoon. Cook for 2–3 minutes.



EGGY BREAD WITH MASHED STRAWBERRY YOGHURT

Greek yoghurt is the best base for making your own fruity yoghurts without the added sugar.

MAKES 1 PORTION

V

1 egg, whisked
2 tbsp whole milk
1 slice of brown bread, crusts removed
30g strawberries (around 2)
2 tbsp Greek yoghurt
1 tsp unsalted butter or coconut oil

Whisk together the egg and milk in a shallow bowl. Dip the bread in the egg mixture and leave to soak for 10 seconds.

Meanwhile, mash the strawberries and mix with the Greek yoghurt.

Melt the butter or coconut oil in a medium non-stick frying pan over a medium heat. Fry the eggy bread for 1–2 minutes on each side until the egg is completely cooked through.

Cut into fingers and serve with the strawberry Greek yoghurt.

TIP

This mashed yoghurt recipe would also work really well with blueberries, raspberries or blackberries.



SPINACH, BANANA AND SWEETCORN MINI MUFFINS

These are so great for batch-cooking and taste awesome. If we are out for the day we often carry a few of these for Indie.

MAKES 12 SMALL MUFFINS | LONGER RECIPE

V F

100g sweetcorn
2 large handfuls of spinach
2 eggs
2 soft ripe bananas
100ml rapeseed oil, plus extra for greasing
160g self-raising flour
1 tsp baking powder
1 tbsp chia seeds – optional

Special equipment

18-hole silicone mini muffin tray, or 18 mini muffin moulds

Preheat the oven to 180°C (fan 160°C/gas mark 4).

Blitz the corn until roughly chopped into smaller pieces in a mini blender or food processor.

Place the spinach, eggs, bananas and rapeseed oil in a blender and blend until perfectly smooth.

Place the flour and baking powder in a mixing bowl and whisk together to combine. Pour the wet mix into the flour along with the chopped corn and fold together in as few moves as possible – try not to overmix.

Lightly grease the mini muffin tray. Spoon the mixture into the muffin

tray, sprinkle with the chia seeds if using, and bake in the oven for 12 minutes or until risen and cooked through in the middle. Leave to cool before removing from the muffin tray.

Keeps for up to 2 days in an airtight container.



BLACKBERRY AND APPLE CINNAMON BAKED OATS

This is a guaranteed winner! At this age we usually didn't offer Indie her breakfast until about 60–90 minutes after she had her morning milk so she had a bigger appetite.

MAKES 2 PORTIONS | LONGER RECIPE

V F GF

50g porridge oats
1 small apple, grated
1 egg
150g yoghurt splash of milk generous pinch of cinnamon
1 tsp vanilla extract
8 large blackberries

Preheat the oven to 180°C (fan 160°C/gas mark 4).

Mix all the ingredients except the blackberries together and pour into a small, deep baking dish or two small ramekins. Top with the blackberries, pushing them into the surface of the mixture a little.

Bake in the oven for 25–30 minutes or until golden and puffed.

Keeps for up to 2 days covered in the fridge.

BEETROOT PORRIDGE PANCAKES

Getting a baby to eat beetroot isn't easy, so we started to blend it with Indie's pancake mixture. She loved it! It's a great little trick for introducing a variety of new flavours.

MAKES 14–16 SMALL PANCAKES

V F

1 cooked beetroot (vacuum-packed in water)
70g plain flour
1 egg
120ml whole milk
1 tsp baking powder
150g left-over plain porridge knob of unsalted butter

Place all the ingredients except the porridge and the butter in a blender and blend until perfectly smooth. Pour the batter into a bowl and whisk through the porridge.

Grease a non-stick frying pan with the butter and set over a medium heat. Fry the batter in batches, spooning the batter in and cooking for 2–3 minutes on each side.

Keeps for up to 2 days covered in the fridge.

TIP

Serve with yoghurt and berries at breakfast, or for a savoury twist spread with cream cheese and top with cucumber, mackerel or salmon.

CHEESE AND TOMATO ORZO

Such a simple flavour combination but I love it. Orzo was the first pasta we offered Indie as it's nice and small and is easily swallowed.

MAKES 1 ADULT AND 1 BABY PORTION | FAMILY MEAL

V F

1 tbsp olive oil
½ small red onion, finely chopped

100g cherry tomatoes, roughly chopped

100g orzo pasta

300ml hot homemade vegetable or chicken stock (see [here](#)) or water

50g cheddar, grated

Heat the olive oil in a medium saucepan over a medium heat. Add the onion and tomatoes and fry for 2–3 minutes until the onion is softened.

Add in the orzo and hot stock and simmer over a low heat for 10 minutes until the pasta is cooked through.

Beat in the cheese with a wooden spoon and serve.

Keeps for up to 2 days covered in the fridge.

TIP

This recipe would work with another pasta such as rigatoni or spaghetti, but ensure it is chopped nice and small before serving.



BEETROOT, GREEK YOGHURT AND MINT DIP

It's nice to offer your baby a variety of different colourful foods. This is good to have as a dip for chicken strips, veg sticks or a warm pitta.

MAKES 10 TBSP | NO-COOK

GF

1 medium cooked beetroot (you can buy them vacuum packed in water from any supermarket)
50g cucumber, peeled
100g Greek yoghurt
1 tbsp lemon juice generous pinch of ground cumin
2–3 finger-sized grilled chicken strips, to serve

Coarsely grate the beetroot and cucumber. Mix with the Greek yoghurt, lemon juice and cumin.

Serve with 2–3 finger-sized pieces of cooked chicken.

Keeps for 2–3 days covered in the fridge.

BLACK BEAN DIP

Black beans are a great source of plant-based protein. Indie loves to dip food – although it's messy, it's a fun part of food exploration.

MAKES 12 TBSP | NO-COOK

V GF

1 × 400g tin of black beans, drained and rinsed
½ clove garlic
1½ tsp ground cumin

2 tbsp crème fraiche
juice of ½ lemon
1 tbsp olive oil

Place all the ingredients in a food processor and blitz until perfectly smooth. Serve with red pepper strips and toasted pitta bread as a snack.

Keeps for 3–4 days covered in the fridge.

CAULIFLOWER, KALE AND CHICKPEA CURRY

A little mild curry powder will be a whole new taste experience. Babies might pull funny faces at first but they may simply be getting used to new flavours.

MAKES 4 PORTIONS

VE F GF

60g tinned chickpeas, rinsed and drained
2 tsp coconut oil
100g cauliflower, broken into small florets
1 tsp mild curry powder
200ml coconut milk
20g kale, stems removed and finely shredded
1 tbsp lime juice

Squash each chickpea using a fork or your thumb. Melt the coconut oil in a medium saucepan then add the broken chickpeas, cauliflower and curry powder and fry over a medium heat for 2–3 minutes until the cauliflower is beginning to soften and has taken on a little colour.

Add the coconut milk and kale to the pan and continue cooking until the cauliflower is completely tender. Stir through the lime juice, leave as is or mash/blend to create a smoother texture.

Serve with rice, flatbread fingers or couscous.

Keeps for up to 2 days covered in the fridge.

SWEET POTATO, RED LENTIL AND CINNAMON DAL

Lentils are a brilliant texture for babies. This dish has natural sweetness from the potato and cinnamon so it is sure to be a hit.

MAKES 2 PORTIONS

V F GF

2 tsp coconut oil
80g sweet potato, peeled and cut into 5mm dice
½ small onion, finely chopped
½ tsp cinnamon
50g red lentils, rinsed
250ml homemade stock (see [here](#)) or water

Melt the coconut oil in a medium saucepan over a medium heat. Add the sweet potato, onion and cinnamon and fry for 2–3 minutes until the onion is soft and translucent.

Add the remaining ingredients and simmer until the lentils have absorbed most of the liquid and the sweet potato is soft – this should take around 8–10 minutes. Leave as it is or blend/mash for a smoother consistency.

Keeps for 2–3 days in the fridge.



COD, SPINACH, POTATO AND PEAS

This is like a healthy version of fish, chips and mushy peas. Cod is really flaky so a good fish for babies to feed themselves.

MAKES 1 ADULT AND 1 BABY PORTION | FAMILY MEAL

F GF

1 medium potato, peeled and sliced into small pieces
2 tbsp whole milk
1 tsp unsalted butter
50g shallots (around 2), finely sliced
140g cod, cut into cubes handful of spinach, roughly chopped
60g frozen peas squeeze of lemon

Add the potato to a bowl with 2 tablespoons of water. Cover and cook in the microwave for 7–8 minutes until soft. Mash with the milk until smooth.

Melt the butter in a medium pan. Add the shallots and fry for 3–4 minutes until soft. Add the cod cubes and cook for 2–3 minutes until cooked through. Stir in the spinach and peas and continue cooking until the spinach has wilted and the peas are cooked through. Mash everything together a little and fold through the potato, adding in a squeeze of lemon.

Keeps for 2 days covered in the fridge.

WHITE FISH CONGEE WITH SPRING ONIONS AND PEAS

Congee is a bit like a rice porridge which sounds odd, but it tastes delicious. It's really comforting and a great texture for your baby.

MAKES 2 PORTIONS

F GF

90g jasmine rice
1 thick slice of ginger, peeled
1 clove garlic, bruised
1 spring onion, finely chopped
600ml hot homemade or low-sodium chicken stock (see [here](#))
30g frozen peas oil, for greasing
70g boneless, skinless white fish such as haddock, cod or hake
1 tsp cider vinegar

Add the jasmine rice to a small saucepan, along with the ginger, garlic, spring onion and hot stock. Simmer on a low heat for about 20 minutes, stirring regularly to prevent the rice from sticking as it gets soupy and thicker. Stir in the peas 5 minutes before the end of the cooking time. Remove the garlic and ginger and discard.

While the rice is cooking, lightly oil a small microwaveable dish. Place the fish in the dish, adding a tablespoon of water. Cover and microwave for 4–5 minutes until cooked through. Break the fish into flakes.

Stir the cider vinegar through the rice. Stir through the white fish flakes.

Keeps for up to 2 days covered in the fridge.

TIP

If you don't want to use white fish you can top the rice with finely chopped hard-boiled egg.

MOROCCAN MINCED LAMB WITH SWEET POTATO AND COUSCOUS

This is one of my favourite recipes in the book. This dish will also taste really good over rice or pasta.

MAKES 1 ADULT AND 1 BABY PORTION | FAMILY MEAL

F MOROCCAN MINCED LAMB ONLY

250g lamb mince a little olive oil, if necessary
1 onion, finely chopped
130g sweet potatoes, peeled and diced small or grated
1 clove garlic, minced
¼ tsp mixed spice
¼ tsp ground cinnamon
¼ tsp ground turmeric
2 tbsp tomato puree
45g sulphate-free dried apricots, finely chopped
400ml hot homemade stock (see [here](#)) or water couscous, to serve
(20g per baby portion)

Add the mince to a dry frying pan over a medium heat and brown, breaking up the meat with a wooden spoon. The lamb should release its own fat but if needed add a splash of olive oil to prevent sticking.

Remove the mince from the pan with a slotted spoon, leaving any fat behind in the pan, and keep to one side.

Add the onion, sweet potato, garlic and spices to the pan and fry until the onion is soft and the spices are fragrant. Add the mince back to the pan along with the tomato puree, dried apricots and stock and simmer away for about 10 minutes until most of the stock has evaporated and the flavours have melded.

Place the couscous in a small bowl and add just enough hot water to completely cover it. Cover with cling film and leave for 5 minutes until the water has been absorbed. Remove the cling film and fluff with a fork.

Serve the lamb with the couscous.

Keeps for up to 2 days covered in the fridge.



SQUASHED TOMATO AND WHITE BEAN STEW

I love giving Indie a variety of beans and pulses. We keep tins of chickpeas, kidney beans or cannellini beans in the cupboard for a good addition to lots of meals.

MAKES 2 PORTIONS

VE F GF

1 tbsp olive oil
½ red onion, finely chopped
100g tinned cherry tomatoes
¼ tsp smoked paprika
100g tinned cannellini beans, drained and rinsed
1 sprig of rosemary – optional
2 tbsp water
80g cooked rice

Heat the olive oil in a small saucepan over a medium heat. Add the red onion and sauté for 2–3 minutes until the onion begins to soften.

Add the remaining ingredients and simmer for 10 minutes, squashing the tomatoes until they pop and breaking up the cannellini beans a little with a wooden spoon. Remove the rosemary from the pan before serving.

Keeps for up to 2 days covered in the fridge.

TIP

You can play with the texture very easily with this dish because the beans are very easy to mash up or leave a bit chunky.



EDAMAME AVOCADO MASH FLATBREAD WITH SALMON

Salmon is a great oily fish, which is important to offer to babies from around 6 months of age. It flakes really easily, making it easy for babies to feed themselves.

MAKES 1 PORTION

F MASH ONLY

1 flatbread (see [here](#) or use 1 wholemeal pitta)
½ medium ripe avocado, de-stoned
30g cooked edamame
1 tsp lime juice generous pinch of ground cumin
30g poached salmon

Warm the flatbread through in a toaster or under the grill.

Mash or blend the avocado and edamame with the lime juice and cumin. Spread the mash over the warm flatbread, flake over the salmon and serve.

The mash keeps for up to 2 days covered in the fridge.

TIP

Serve with chopped hard-boiled eggs as an alternative to the salmon.





CREAMY CHICKEN, BROCCOLI AND MUSHROOM PASTA

I remember when I first made this recipe for Indie. Her face lit up and she loved it. It tastes just as good with butterbeans or chickpeas instead of chicken.

MAKES 1 ADULT AND 1 BABY PORTION | FAMILY MEAL | LONGER RECIPE

F

100g broccoli florets
120g chestnut mushrooms
1 tbsp unsalted butter
½ onion, finely chopped
1 clove garlic, minced
2 skinless boneless chicken thighs, finely diced
100g orzo pasta
500ml hot homemade chicken stock (see [here](#)) or water
50g cream cheese juice of ½ lemon
1 tbsp fresh tarragon, finely chopped black pepper

Cut the broccoli into very tiny florets – you only want the ends. Discard the stems, or if you like you can keep them and use for stocks or soup. Chop the mushrooms very finely, or you can tear into small pieces with your hands.

Melt the butter in a non-stick frying pan set over a medium heat. Add in the onion, mushrooms and garlic and sweat for around 8 minutes until the mushrooms have released some of their water and the onion is soft and translucent. Add the chicken to the frying pan and cook until lightly browned and cooked through.

Add the orzo to the pan and stir to combine and coat in the butter. Pour in 400ml of the chicken stock or water and stir in the broccoli florets. Simmer away until the orzo is cooked through and very soft,

adding a little more of the remaining stock if it gets too dry.

Stir through the cream cheese, lemon juice and tarragon. Season with black pepper to finish. Blend or mash to create a finer texture if you like.

Keeps for up to 2 days covered in the fridge.

SWEET POTATO FRITTATA SQUARES

Anything bite-sized and easy to hold like this is great for babies learning to feed themselves. The squares are good warm, cold or reheated in the microwave.

MAKES ABOUT 20 SQUARES

V F GF

6 eggs
handful of parsley, finely chopped
1 tbsp chopped chives
30g parmesan or vegetarian hard cheese, grated
black pepper
2 tbsp olive oil
150g shallots, peeled and finely sliced
1 tsp smoked paprika
1 fat clove garlic, minced
50g frozen peas
1 large roasted sweet potato, peeled and cubed

Preheat the oven to 180°C (fan 160°C/gas mark 4). Whisk together the eggs with the parsley, chives and parmesan. Season the mixture with black pepper.

Add 1 tablespoon of olive oil to a roughly 16 × 21cm ovenproof omelette pan. Place over a medium to low heat and cook the shallots until soft, translucent and sweet. Add the smoked paprika and garlic,

sauté for another minute. Stir in the peas and cook for 1 minute or until defrosted.

Add another tablespoon of olive oil to the pan followed by the sweet potato and pour over the egg mixture. Lowering the heat, stir the egg mixture gently to cook until you have the consistency of wet scrambled eggs.

Finish the frittata off in the oven for 10 minutes or until puffed and set firm enough to remove from the pan. Loosen the edges and underneath of the frittata with a palette knife, invert the frittata onto a plate and cut into 4cm squares.

Keeps for up to 2 days covered in the fridge.

TIP

To roast the sweet potato, place it on a baking tray and pierce a few times with a fork or skewer.

Drizzle with 1 teaspoon of olive oil. Roast in an oven preheated to 180°C (fan 160°C/gas mark 4) for 40–45 minutes until perfectly soft all the way through.



SWEETCORN AND RICOTTA FRITTERS

Fritters are a great way of adding soft textures into your baby's diet. I like to have these in the fridge so, while I'm cooking, Indie can have one as a starter.

MAKES 20 FRITTERS

V

130g sweetcorn
3 spring onions, finely chopped zest of 1 lime
150g ricotta cheese
1 egg
3 tbsp flour
½ tsp baking powder
2 tbsp milk
20g parmesan or vegetarian hard cheese, grated olive oil, for frying

Blitz the sweetcorn for a few seconds in a food processor, then transfer to a mixing bowl and add the remaining ingredients apart from the oil.

Heat a little oil in a large non-stick frying pan over a medium heat. Cook the fritters in batches adding in 1 tablespoon of mixture per fritter. Cook for 1–2 minutes on each side or until tinged brown and cooked through.

Keeps for up to 2 days covered in the fridge.



CHEESY PEA QUINOA RISOTTO

Risottos are awesome for adding in any veg you fancy. This one tastes yummy with the cheese. I think you and your baby will enjoy it!

MAKES 1 ADULT AND 1 BABY PORTION | FAMILY MEAL | LONGER RECIPE

V F GF

1 tbsp unsalted butter or olive oil
1 small onion, finely chopped
1 clove garlic, minced
100g quinoa
600ml hot homemade stock (see [here](#)) or water
130g frozen peas, defrosted
80g cheddar, grated a squeeze of lemon and a handful of chopped herbs, to finish – optional

Melt the butter or heat the oil in a medium saucepan over a medium heat. Add the onion and garlic and gently fry until soft and translucent.

Add the quinoa, stirring to coat it in the mixture.

Add in the hot stock, a ladle at a time, waiting for each ladleful to evaporate before adding in the next.

When you have roughly one ladle of stock left, add in the peas and cheese along with the remaining ladle of stock. Stir until creamy and the cheese has melted into the stock. Remove from the heat and add the optional lemon juice and herbs now if you like.

Keeps for 2–3 days covered in the fridge.



INDIAN-SPICED SPINACH, CHICKPEA AND POTATO CURRY WITH YOGHURT

Life gets easier when you can start to cook meals like this for enjoying together. It means less time in the kitchen and less washing up too.

MAKES 1 ADULT AND 1 BABY PORTION | FAMILY MEAL

V F GF

2 tsp coconut oil
1 small onion, finely chopped
½ tsp grated ginger or shop-bought ginger puree
1 tsp garam masala
1 medium potato, peeled and sliced into small pieces
120ml water, plus 2 tbsp
1 × 227g or ½ × 400g tin of chopped tomatoes
70g chickpeas, rinsed and drained, squashed – but not mashed – with a fork
small handful of spinach, roughly chopped
70g natural yoghurt

Melt the coconut oil in a medium saucepan. Add the onion, ginger and garam masala and sauté for 2–3 minutes over a medium heat until soft, translucent and aromatic.

Add the potato to a bowl along with 2 tablespoons of water. Cover and microwave for 6–7 minutes or until tender.

Add the tomatoes, chickpeas, spinach and the 120ml water to the onion and spices. Cook until the spinach has wilted down and the sauce has reduced a little.

Add the cooked potato and stir in the yoghurt to finish.

Keeps for up to 2 days covered in the fridge.

BROCCOLI, BASIL AND CASHEW PESTO WITH CHOPPED SPAGHETTI

*This homemade pesto tastes better than any shop-bought one.
It's good to have in the fridge to throw on some pasta and leftover veg.*

MAKES 1 ADULT AND 1 BABY PORTION | FAMILY MEAL

V F PESTO ONLY

150g broccoli florets, excluding any woody stems
40g cashews (or other nut such as almonds, hazelnuts or walnuts),
toasted if you have time
¼ clove garlic or generous pinch of garlic granules
zest of 1 lemon plus 1 tbsp lemon juice
25g cheddar, finely grated
handful of basil
3 tbsp olive oil
spaghetti, to serve (around 30g per baby portion)

Cook the broccoli in a pan of boiling water for 3 minutes. Drain, then rinse under cold running water to cool the broccoli down and stop it from cooking further.

Place the cashews in a processor or mini chopper and process for 1 minute. Add in the broccoli and remaining ingredients and process until smooth.

Cook the pasta in the same pan as the broccoli as per packet instructions. When cooked, snip into shorter lengths with a pair of kitchen scissors for your baby.

Serve the cooked spaghetti with the pesto.

The pesto keeps for up to 2 days covered in the fridge.

RED PEPPER PESTO, GREEN BEANS AND PASTA

Another amazing homemade pesto. You can use any pasta type here and just chop it all super fine to suit your baby.

MAKES 2 PORTIONS

V F

1 red pepper
15g blanched almonds
½ clove garlic or a generous pinch of garlic granules
4 basil leaves
1 tbsp olive oil
1 tbsp water
60g dried spaghetti, cut into short lengths
40g green beans, cut into short lengths

Preheat the grill to its hottest setting. Place the red pepper under the hot grill for around 10–12 minutes, rotating the pepper every few minutes until blackened and blistered on all sides. Remove the blistered skin of the pepper and discard. Cut the pepper in half and scrape out the seeds and stem.

Add the pepper, almonds, garlic, basil, olive oil and water to a mini blender and blend until smooth. Alternatively, use a stick blender.

Cook the pasta as per packet instructions, adding in the green beans 4 minutes before the end of the cooking time. When cooked, snip the pasta into shorter lengths with a pair of kitchen scissors.

Drain the pasta and beans and stir through the pesto to serve.

Keeps for up to 2 days covered in the fridge.

TIP

You can keep the green beans whole if you want to use as a finger food. If you have the time you could toast the almonds.



10-12 MONTHS +



FAMILY MEALTIMES

Continue to offer your baby plenty of variety and a good balance of food groups at this stage. It's all about really getting your little ones on 'family foods', joining in at mealtimes and eating similar foods to the rest of the family (but still with no added sugar and salt).

We really liked this stage as we could now start to enjoy recipes and food as a family as opposed to having to make separate 'baby food' for Indie. I would make things like pea and courgette risotto or mild vegetable curry. This is the time where prepping like a boss and batch cooking really come to good use. Any leftovers we could just reheat for Indie the next day.

Hopefully your baby will have moved through the textures and now be able to take foods that are more minced and chopped, rather than mashed. Think chopped spag bol or lasagne.

Some people like to include a pudding after a main meal at this stage too. Fruit or milk-based puddings, without any added sugars, are best for your baby and can help them top up on nutrient intakes too.

Remember there are no guidelines regarding portions, so go with your baby's appetite cues and try to listen to their signals that they want more, or that they've had enough. Their appetites are likely to change from day to day and meal to meal so try to let them take the lead.

At this stage you might find that your baby's milk intake is starting to decrease as their intake of food steadily increases and they get more confident and competent with eating. This is perfectly normal and at this stage a baby on formula milk might be having around 400ml of milk throughout the day, as a very rough guide. Breast milk will usually adjust based on your baby's needs and how much food they are

having. If you're at all unsure, it's worth having a chat with your health visitor about how much milk or food your little one is eating.

APRICOT CHIA SEED JAM

This is a great jam to have in the fridge. I spread it on Indie's toast in the morning or stir some into her Greek yoghurt.

MAKES 10 SMALL TBSP

V F

200g fresh apricots or plums, de-stoned and roughly chopped
4 tbsp water
2 tbsp chia seeds
brown toast fingers, natural yoghurt, sliced apple, to serve

Add the apricots and 2 tablespoons of water to a small lidded saucepan over a low heat and slowly heat through with the lid on. Cook until the apricots break down, this should take around 5 minutes.

Remove the lid and add the chia seeds and another 2 tablespoons of water to the pan. Stir and continue cooking for a further 2 minutes. Remove from the heat and leave to cool and thicken.

Use to top brown toast fingers, stir into yoghurt, or serve with sliced apple. Keeps for up to 1 week covered in the fridge.



BANANA OATY PANCAKES WITH COCONUT AND BLUEBERRIES

Pancakes are such a quick and easy win in the morning. They are perfect for babies to pull apart and try to feed themselves.

MAKES ABOUT 10 SMALL 6–7CM PANCAKES

V F

1 banana, peeled and sliced
2 eggs
40g porridge oats
30g desiccated coconut, plus extra to serve if you wish
½ tsp baking powder
½ tbsp coconut oil or butter
40g blueberries, large ones cut into quarters, smaller ones cut into halves

Blend together the banana, eggs, oats, desiccated coconut and baking powder until perfectly smooth.

Melt the coconut oil or butter in a non-stick frying pan over a medium heat. To cook the pancakes add tablespoonfuls of the batter to the pan and dot the top of each pancake with a few of the chopped blueberries. Cook for 1–2 minutes before flipping to cook the reverse side. Repeat until all the batter is used.

Leave the pancakes to cool a little after cooking to prevent the blueberries from burning your baby's mouth. Sprinkle with desiccated coconut to serve, if you like.

The pancakes keep for up to 2 days covered in the fridge.

TIP

The pancakes can also be chopped into fingers.



CAULIFLOWER RED PEPPER EGG MUFFINS

These little muffins are great for baby-led weaning and on-the-go mealtimes. On warm days we like to take Indie to the park for an outdoor breakfast.

MAKES 16–18 SMALL MUFFINS | LONGER RECIPE

V F

240g cauliflower, broken into small florets
2 tbsp water
80g cheddar, finely grated
zest of 1 lemon
handful of chopped parsley
1 jarred red pepper, roughly chopped
55g plain flour
55g polenta
1½ tsp baking powder
6 eggs, whisked butter, for greasing

Special equipment

18-hole silicone mini muffin tray

Preheat the oven to 180°C (fan 160°C/gas mark 4).

Place the cauliflower in a bowl with the water, cover and microwave on full power for 4 minutes.

Mix together the remaining ingredients in a mixing bowl, stirring until you have a smooth batter. Fold in the cauliflower florets. Grease the mini muffin tray.

Spoon the mixture into the muffin tray and bake in the oven for 20 minutes until risen and cooked through.

Keep for up to 2 days covered in the fridge.

ASIAN-STYLE SCRAMBLED EGGS

Eggs don't have to be plain and boring for your baby. Adding spices and spring onion gives more flavour and makes them way more enjoyable.

MAKES 1 PORTION

V

1 tsp sesame oil

1 spring onion, finely chopped

15g (1 tbsp) frozen peas, defrosted pinch of Chinese five spice powder (I use Bart's as it has no added salt or sugar)

1 egg, whisked

toast fingers, to serve

Add the sesame oil and spring onion to a small non-stick frying pan and sauté for 1–2 minutes or until soft. Add the peas, five spice and egg, moving everything around in the pan until the egg is cooked and nicely scrambled.

Serve with a couple of toast fingers.



BROCCOLI CAULIFLOWER TOTS

This is one of the most popular recipes I've ever shared on Instagram. You will probably want to eat them all yourself as they taste incredible.

MAKES ABOUT 24 TOTS

V F

200g broccoli florets
200g cauliflower florets
1 tsp dried oregano
1 tsp garlic granules
1 tsp onion granules
80g cheddar, finely grated
2 eggs, whisked
50g breadcrumbs
olive oil, for greasing

Preheat the oven to 200°C (fan 180°C /gas mark 6). Line a baking tray with baking parchment.

Steam the broccoli and cauliflower in a little water for 2 minutes. Drain in a sieve or colander, then rinse under cold running water to stop them from going too soft. Roughly chop the vegetables and place in a large mixing bowl with the remaining ingredients apart from the olive oil.

Work the mixture together with your hands and roll up into little tots. Grease the lined tray with a little olive oil, place the tots on the tray and bake in the oven for 15 minutes or until tinged golden brown round the edges.

Keeps for up to 2 days covered in the fridge.

TOFU, SUGAR SNAP PEAS AND MANGO SESAME NOODLES

Who said babies have to eat baby food? This is a proper tasty meal and one I love to eat with Indie.

MAKES 1 ADULT AND 1 BABY PORTION | FAMILY MEAL

VE GF

150g firm tofu, cut into small cubes
½ tsp Chinese five spice powder (I use Bart's as it has no added salt or sugar)
1 tsp sesame oil
½ red pepper, sliced thin
70g sweetcorn
50g sugar snap peas, sliced thin lengthways
150g cooked rice noodles
100g mango, cut into matchsticks
2 tsp toasted sesame seeds

For the dressing

½ tbsp lime juice
1½ tbsp sesame oil

Toss the tofu in the Chinese five spice to coat.

Heat the sesame oil in a medium non-stick frying pan over a medium heat. Add the tofu and cook until tinged brown on all sides then remove it from the pan.

Add the pepper strips, corn and sugar snap peas to the pan and stir-fry for 2–3 minutes. Add the cooked noodles and tofu back to the pan and warm through for 1 minute.

Whisk together the dressing ingredients.

Add the mango, sesame seeds and dressing to the noodles and toss everything together to combine.

Keeps for 2 days covered in the fridge.

TIP

Add some chopped mint and coriander for extra flavour.

PARSLEY AND MINT CAULIFLOWER COUSCOUS

When I first offered Indie some plain steamed cauliflower she tasted it and threw it on the floor. Rather than give up, I decided to make this instead and she loved it.

MAKES 1 ADULT AND 1 BABY PORTION | FAMILY MEAL

VE GF

1 small head of cauliflower (around 500g), broken into florets
2 tsp ground cumin
¼ tsp garlic granules
1 tbsp olive oil small bunch of parsley, finely chopped
small bunch of mint, finely chopped
25g toasted flaked or ground almonds, very finely chopped if flaked
½ lemon

Preheat the oven to 200°C (fan 180°C/gas mark 6). Line a large baking tray with baking parchment.

Place the cauliflower in a food processor and blitz until finely chopped. In a large mixing bowl mix the cauliflower with the cumin, garlic granules and olive oil.

Tip the cauliflower onto the prepared baking tray, spreading it out into

an even layer. Place in the oven and cook for 12 minutes, giving the cauliflower a little turn with a fish slice halfway through cooking.

Fold the sides of the parchment paper up and funnel the cauliflower into a serving bowl. Add the chopped herbs and almonds. Add a little squeeze of lemon and toss everything together.

Keeps for 2 days covered in the fridge.

TIP

This is good served with cooked chicken fingers and cucumber and mint yoghurt dip.

MUSHROOM AND TURKEY BOLOGNESE

This is the perfect family meal. You can easily adapt it to suit your baby by chopping, blending or mashing it to the desired texture.

MAKES 2 ADULT AND 2 BABY PORTIONS | FAMILY MEAL | LONGER RECIPE

F BOLOGNESE ONLY

250g mushrooms, finely chopped by hand or in a food processor
2 tbsp olive oil
1 red onion, finely chopped
1 carrot, peeled and grated
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 bay leaf
sprig of thyme, finely chopped
sprig of rosemary, finely chopped
1 star anise
3 tbsp tomato puree
500g turkey thigh mince (or use beef mince)
1 × 400g tin of chopped tomatoes pasta, to serve

Add the mushrooms to a medium saucepan with 1 tablespoon of olive oil. Set over a medium heat and cook until all the water from the mushrooms has been released. Take your time with this part of the process – the bolognese sauce tastes better if all the water evaporates and the mushrooms take on a lovely meaty texture.

Add the remaining olive oil, onion, carrot, garlic, bay leaf, thyme, rosemary and star anise. Turn the heat down to low and gently sweat until soft but not coloured – this should take around 8 minutes. Stir in the tomato puree and cook for 1 minute. Now turn the heat up a little and add in the turkey mince, breaking the mince up with a wooden spoon. Cook until the mince is cooked through.

Add the chopped tomatoes, then fill the empty tomato tin with hot water, swill around a little to pick up any tomato residue and add to the sauce. Leave to bubble away and cook out for around 20 minutes or until the sauce has thickened and most of the water has evaporated.

While the sauce is cooking, cook the pasta as per packet instructions. When cooked, snip into shorter lengths with a pair of kitchen scissors for your baby. Serve the bolognese with the pasta.

The sauce keeps for up to 2 days covered in the fridge.

TIP

If fresh herbs are not available swap these for 1 teaspoon dried mixed herbs or oregano.



LAMB AND LENTIL SHEPHERD'S PIE WITH SWEET POTATO MASH

This is one of my favourite family meals to make in a big batch as it freezes well and is easy to reheat.

MAKES 2 ADULT AND 2 BABY PORTIONS | FAMILY MEAL | LONGER RECIPE

F GF

50g red lentils, rinsed
150g lamb mince
1 onion, finely chopped
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 celery stick, finely chopped
1 carrot, peeled and grated
1 tsp dried or fresh thyme
1 tsp dried or fresh rosemary
a little olive oil, if necessary
2 tbsp tomato puree large pinch of allspice powder
200ml low-sodium lamb stock or hot water
50g frozen peas
400g sweet potatoes or white potatoes, peeled and cubed
1 tbsp unsalted butter splash of milk

Preheat the oven to 180°C (fan 160°C/gas mark 4).

Place the lentils in a small saucepan and cover with hot water from the kettle. Cook over a medium heat for 10 minutes or until soft and cooked through and the water has evaporated.

Brown the lamb mince in a saucepan (you shouldn't need any fat as the lamb should release some fat to prevent sticking). Remove the mince from the pan with a slotted spoon and keep to one side. Use the lamb fat that should be remaining to sauté the onion, garlic, celery, carrot and herbs until soft and translucent, adding in a splash of olive

oil if extra fat is needed.

Add the lentils, lamb, tomato puree and allspice to the saucepan and continue cooking for 2 minutes, stirring with a wooden spoon. Add the stock or water and peas and bubble away for a couple of minutes until you have a nice rich consistency.

Cook the potato cubes in the microwave for 5 minutes or until soft enough to mash. Mash until perfectly smooth, stirring in the butter and a splash of milk.

Spoon the lamb mince mixture into a medium ovenproof dish. You can make a large pie for all the family or divide into smaller portions and freeze for another day. Top with the mash and bake in the oven for 15–20 minutes or until lightly browned on top.

Keeps for up to 2 days covered in the fridge.

TIP

You can top with a little grated cheese if you like.





QUINOA-COATED FISH FINGERS WITH MINTED PEAS

Most kids love frozen fish fingers but they are often made with added salt. This yummy homemade version is simple to make and tastes just as good.

MAKES 2 ADULT AND 1 BABY PORTIONS | FAMILY MEAL

F SALMON FINGERS ONLY

80g cooked quinoa (use a pre-cooked pouch to save time)
4 tsp sesame seeds
4 tbsp ground almonds
½ tsp onion granules
¼ tsp garlic granules
4 tbsp plain flour
2 small eggs, whisked
240g salmon fillets, cut into 8 fingers
1 tbsp coconut oil
200g frozen peas
2 sprigs of mint

Pulse the quinoa in a mini chopper until you have a finer texture. Mix the quinoa with the sesame seeds, ground almonds, onion granules and garlic granules.

Place the quinoa mixture on one plate, the flour on another and the egg on a third plate. Roll the salmon fingers in the flour, then dip in the egg, shaking a little to remove any excess. Finish by rolling in the quinoa crumb.

Melt the coconut oil in a large non-stick frying pan over a medium heat. Fry the salmon fingers in the pan for 4–5 minutes until golden brown on all sides.

Cook the frozen peas for a couple of minutes in boiling water until thawed and cooked through. Add half the peas to the mini chopper with the mint and blend until smooth, then mix the blended peas with the whole peas.

Serve the salmon fingers with the minted peas. Keeps for 2–3 days covered in the fridge.

SALMON AND BEETROOT SAMOSAS

Indie doesn't eat beetroot on its own, but she does when I get creative with recipes like this. These are a great finger food and break up very easily.

MAKES 9 | LONGER RECIPE

F SAMOSAS ONLY

1 tbsp olive oil, plus extra for greasing
1 tsp cumin seeds
½ medium onion, finely chopped
2 cloves garlic minced
1 tsp garam masala
½ tsp ginger paste
3 cooked beetroots (vacuum-packed in water not vinegar if shop-bought), finely chopped
200g poached or steamed salmon, broken into flakes
small bunch of coriander, roughly chopped
juice of ½ lemon
6 sheets of filo pastry
50g unsalted butter, melted, or olive oil

For the raita

¼ cucumber, grated
80g Greek yoghurt squeeze of lemon

Preheat the oven to 180°C (fan 160°C /gas mark 4). Line a baking tray

with baking parchment and lightly grease it.

Heat a non-stick frying pan over a medium heat and gently toast the cumin seeds until fragrant. Remove from the pan. Add the tablespoon of olive oil to the pan and sauté the onion and garlic for 4–5 minutes or until soft and translucent. Add the garam masala, toasted cumin seeds, ginger paste and chopped beetroot and cook for 2 minutes. Stir in the salmon, coriander and lemon juice. Remove from the heat.

Lay a sheet of filo pastry on a chopping board and brush it lightly with the melted butter or oil. Top with another sheet of filo. Cut into three long equal strips around 10cm wide. Fold the pastry over to create a cone at one end and spoon in some of the filling. Keep folding the pastry around the cone to create a triangle. Brush with melted butter or oil to seal.

Repeat the process with the remaining ingredients. Place the samosas on the prepared tray. Brush the samosas with butter or oil and bake in the oven for 15 minutes until golden and crisp.

To make the raita, squeeze the grated cucumber to remove excess water. Mix with the remaining ingredients. Serve alongside the samosas. Keeps for up to 2 days covered in the fridge.

TIP

You could freeze the prepared samosas before cooking, placing them in a single layer in the freezer. To cook from frozen, arrange on a lined baking tray, brush with melted butter and cook in the oven for 25 minutes.



CAULIFLOWER PIZZA

This is a fun recipe for your baby or toddler to get involved with. They can help spread the passata or sprinkle the cheese on top.

MAKES 3–4 BABY PORTIONS | LONGER RECIPE

V

1 head of cauliflower, broken into florets
½ tsp garlic granules
½ tsp onion granules
60g ground almonds
20g parmesan or vegetarian hard cheese, grated
1 tsp oregano
30g spelt flour
1 egg, whisked
2 tsp olive oil
30g kale, woody stems removed and finely chopped
6 tbsp passata
120g mozzarella or cheddar, grated

Preheat the oven to 180°C (fan 160°C /gas mark 4). Line a flat baking tray with baking parchment.

Place the cauliflower in a food processor and process until finely chopped. Place in a bowl, cover, and microwave on full power for 4 minutes. Mix the cauliflower with the garlic granules, onion granules, ground almonds, parmesan, oregano, spelt flour and egg to form a dough.

Drizzle half the oil over the parchment-lined tray. Top with the cauliflower mixture and spread out, patting the mixture into a round circle about 5mm thick. Bake in the oven for 15 minutes.

Drizzle the remaining oil onto the kale and massage into the leaves

using your hands. Remove the part-baked pizza base from the oven and top with the passata followed by the kale and the grated cheese. Bake in the oven for a further 15 minutes or until the cheese is melted and the pizza is tinged golden brown around the edges. Cut into triangles to serve.



STIR-FRIED ASIAN SLAW TOFU WRAPS WITH MANGO SAUCE

This is a lovely recipe for babies to feed themselves, packed with exciting flavours. The wraps may fall apart as they are eaten, but weaning is a messy business . . .

MAKES 8

VE GF

1 tbsp sesame oil
2 carrots, grated
2 spring onions, finely chopped
8 radishes, grated – I like French breakfast ones because they are milder
2 small handfuls of bean sprouts
2 leaves of Chinese cabbage, shredded
8 rice paper wrappers
100g tofu, cut into 8 fingers

For the mango sauce

160g ripe mango, roughly chopped juice of ½ lime
1 tbsp sesame oil

Heat the oil in a wok or large non-stick frying pan over a high heat. Throw in the vegetables and stir-fry for 3–4 minutes until starting to soften. Remove from the wok and leave to one side while preparing the remaining elements.

Add the mango sauce ingredients to a blender and blend until smooth.

Get organized for the next bit by setting out a clean, dry chopping board, the stir-fried vegetables and a bowl filled with cold water big enough to submerge a rice paper wrapper.

To make the wraps, dunk a rice paper wrapper in cold water, patting until it just begins to feel pliable. Remove from the water, shaking a little to remove excess. Lay the wrapper on your board and place some of the vegetable filling towards the bottom edge of the wrapper. Set a finger of tofu on top. Fold the bottom edge in and over the filling and then fold the two outside edges in over the filling and continue to roll up tightly and as neatly as you can. Repeat with the remaining ingredients.

Serve with the mango sauce for dipping.

Keeps for up to 2 days covered in the fridge.

KALE AND COTTAGE CHEESE CUPCAKE LASAGNES

This is such a fun recipe to make: a cute handheld version of a veggie lasagne. Add extra veg like baby tomatoes, aubergine, courgette, peas.

MAKES 10

V F

1 tbsp olive oil, plus extra for greasing
200g fresh lasagne sheets
70g kale, woody stems removed and finely shredded
180g tomato passata
¼ tsp garlic granules
70g Greek yoghurt
30g parmesan or vegetarian hard cheese, finely grated
300g cottage cheese green salad, to serve

Special equipment

10-hole muffin tray
2 circular cookie cutters (see Method)

Preheat the oven to 180°C (fan 160°C /gas mark 4). Lightly oil the 10-hole muffin tray with a little olive oil.

Cook the lasagne sheets in a large pan of boiling water for 2 minutes, removing them with tongs and placing in a colander to cool a little. Add the kale to the water and cook for 1–2 minutes until wilted, then drain in a colander and rinse under cold running water to prevent further cooking.

Toss the kale with 1 tablespoon of the olive oil. Mix the passata with the garlic granules. Mix the Greek yoghurt with the parmesan and cottage cheese.

Take two circular cookie cutters (one a couple of centimetres bigger than the holes in the muffin tray and a smaller one around the same size as the holes). Using the cutters cut ten large circles and ten smaller circles from your sheets of lasagne.

Press the larger circles of pasta into the muffin tray holes. Place 1 tablespoon of the cottage cheese mixture into each followed by a little of the wilted kale and a spoonful of the passata. Top each lasagne with the smaller circles of pasta followed by 1 tablespoon of the cottage cheese mixture.

Bake in the oven for 15–20 minutes until golden on top.

Serve with a salad on the side.

Keeps for up to 2 days covered in the fridge.

IMAGE OF RECIPE OVER THE PAGE



MEXICAN FALAFEL BLACK BEAN BITES WITH A YOGHURT AND AVOCADO DIP

Babies love dipping finger foods. It's a messy game but so fun. I loved to see Indie's hand-eye coordination improve each week.

MAKES 10 BITES

V F

1 × 400g tin of black beans, drained and rinsed
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 tsp sweet paprika
1 tsp ground cumin
50g breadcrumbs, brown or white
1 tbsp olive oil, plus a little extra for frying

For the yoghurt and avocado dip

½ small avocado, de-stoned
50g natural yoghurt

squeeze of lime
1 tbsp water

Mix the black beans with the garlic, paprika, cumin, breadcrumbs and olive oil, breaking up the beans a little with a fork. Knead the mixture with your hands and mould into ten walnut-sized balls. Flatten each ball a little with your hand.

Heat a little olive oil in a non-stick frying pan over a medium heat and fry the patties for 1–2 minutes on each side.

To make the yoghurt and avocado dip, add all the ingredients to a mini blender and blend until smooth. Serve the bites with the dip on the side.

Keeps for up to 2 days covered in the fridge.

TIP

These are also nice served with pitta bread and salad or couscous.



BABY INDIAN THALI

Don't be afraid to keep challenging your baby with as much variety as possible. Try different cooking methods, new flavours and textures.

MAKES 1 ADULT AND 1 BABY PORTION | FAMILY MEAL

V

1 chicken breast, cut into 6 fingers
1 tbsp natural yoghurt
¼ tsp mild curry powder
100g cauliflower, broken into medium florets
1 tbsp water
1 clove garlic, minced
2 tsp olive oil
⅛ tsp ground turmeric
50g courgette, cut into fingers
2 flatbreads (see [here](#)), to serve
yoghurt or raita, to serve

Place the chicken, yoghurt and curry powder in a small bowl and stir to coat with the yoghurt. If you like you can do this up to one day in advance so that the chicken really takes on the flavour, but don't worry if you don't have time.

Place the cauliflower in a microwaveable bowl with the water, cover with cling film or a plate and microwave on full power for 1½ minutes. Drain away the water.

Mix together the garlic, oil and turmeric in a small mixing bowl. Add the courgette and cauliflower and toss together to coat everything.

Heat a griddle pan over a high heat until searing hot. Griddle the vegetables for 4–5 minutes, moving them around in the pan until browned on all edges. Remove from the pan and add the chicken,

cooking for 2–3 minutes before turning and cooking the other side for 1–2 minutes, making sure the chicken is cooked through. Check by slicing into one of the pieces to make sure the meat is white all the way through, with no raw pink bits left.

Serve the chicken and vegetables with flatbreads and a dollop of yoghurt or raita on the side.

Keeps for 2–3 days covered in the fridge.

TIP

You could also serve this with my dal recipe (see [here](#)).



PUMPKIN, KALE AND BUTTERBEAN MAC 'N' CHEESE

This mac 'n' cheese is great because it has so much veg in it. If your baby doesn't eat certain veg, just try offering it in different ways and exploring new food combinations.

MAKES 1 ADULT AND 2-3 BABY PORTIONS | FAMILY MEAL

V

200g macaroni
100g kale, woody stems removed and shredded finely
250g frozen cubed butternut squash
1 tbsp water
1 × 400g tin of butterbeans, drained and rinsed
½ tsp garlic granules
300ml whole milk
1 tbsp unsalted butter
1 tbsp flour
100g cheddar, grated
½ lemon

Cook the pasta as per packet instructions in plenty of boiling water, adding the prepared kale 2 minutes before the end of its cooking time.

While the pasta is cooking, cook the butternut by placing it in a microwaveable bowl with the water. Cover the bowl and microwave on full power for 5 minutes.

Blend the butternut, half the beans and the garlic granules with the milk until perfectly smooth.

Heat the blended milk, butternut and bean mixture in a pan until hot. Melt the butter in another saucepan over a medium heat, whisk in the flour and cook for 1 minute.

Gradually add the hot milk mixture to the flour and butter, continuously whisking as you go, until fully incorporated, silky smooth and thickened. Whisk in the cheese and add a squeeze of lemon. Taste the sauce and add a little more lemon if you think it needs it. Roughly chop the remaining butterbeans and stir through the sauce along with the pasta and kale and you're ready to serve.

Keeps for up to 2 days covered in the fridge.



COURGETTE, SARDINE AND BARLEY MINISTRONE SOUP

I won't go near sardines. No chance. BUT this doesn't mean Indie has to avoid them too. It's so important to not let our own food preferences limit what we give our babies.

MAKES 2 ADULT AND 2 BABY PORTIONS | FAMILY MEAL

F

- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 1 sprig of rosemary, finely chopped
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 medium courgette, cut into cubes
- 1 × 400g tin of chopped tomatoes
- 200ml homemade vegetable stock (see [here](#)) or water
- 200g tinned cooked barley
- 1 tin sardines in oil or water

Heat the olive oil in a saucepan then add the onion and rosemary and cook for 2–3 minutes over a medium heat until soft and translucent. Add the garlic and courgette and cook for a further 2 minutes.

Add the tomatoes, stock or water and barley and continue cooking for around 10 minutes to develop the flavours and soften the courgette. Flake in the sardines and serve.

Keeps for 2–3 days in the fridge.

TIP

Serve with bread and cheese. Add a sprinkling of chopped fresh basil or parsley and a squeeze of lemon for extra flavour.

VERY GREEN CURRY

Life is so much easier when one meal can be shared by the whole family. This is a great one for batch cooking and enjoying together.

MAKES 2 ADULT AND 1 BABY PORTIONS | FAMILY MEAL

F CURRY ONLY **GF**

3 kaffir lime leaves
2 large handfuls of spinach
25g bunch of coriander, including stems
4 spring onions, roughly chopped
4cm piece of fresh ginger, peeled
2 cloves garlic
1 × 400ml tin of coconut milk
1 tbsp coconut oil
2 chicken breasts, sliced into thin pieces
1 large courgette, cut into bite-sized chunks
6 baby sweetcorn, cut into small rounds
200g frozen peas
cooked jasmine rice, to serve

Strip out the stems from the lime leaves and discard. Add the leaves to a blender along with the spinach, coriander leaves and stems, spring onions, ginger, garlic and coconut milk. Blend until smooth.

Melt the coconut oil in a large frying pan set over a medium heat. Add the chicken pieces and fry for 3 minutes until cooked through. Check by slicing into one of the larger pieces to make sure the meat is white all the way through, with no raw pink bits left. Add the courgette and corn and cook for a further 3 minutes.

Pour the green sauce into the frying pan along with the peas and heat through for about 5 minutes or until the peas are defrosted and the vegetables have softened a little. Serve with jasmine rice.

Keeps for 2 days covered in the fridge.

IMAGE OF RECIPE OVER THE PAGE







TURKEY AND RED LENTIL NUGGETS

These delicious homemade nuggets will go down a storm. They make a great finger food with plenty of protein- and iron-rich lentils.

MAKES ABOUT 20 NUGGETS | LONGER RECIPE

F

90g red lentils, rinsed
2 large eggs
500g turkey thigh mince
140g breadcrumbs
2 tbsp chopped fresh sage or 1 tbsp dried sage
½ tsp garlic granules
1 tsp onion granules olive oil, for greasing
3 tbsp plain flour

Cover the lentils with hot water and cook over a moderate heat for 8–10 minutes or until cooked through. Drain and chill in the fridge until cold.

Whisk one egg, transfer to a shallow plate and set aside. Whisk the other egg in a mixing bowl. Add the turkey mince, half the breadcrumbs, the lentils, sage and the garlic and onion granules to the bowl and mix everything together with your hands.

Shape into twenty nuggets and chill in the fridge for 30 minutes.

Preheat the oven to 180°C (fan 160°C/gas mark 4).

Line a baking tray with foil and lightly oil the tray.

Place the flour and remaining breadcrumbs on two separate shallow plates. Dust each nugget with a little flour, dip in the egg wash and roll in the breadcrumbs. (You can also freeze them at this point, spread out in single layers – defrost completely before cooking in the oven.)

Place on your prepared baking tray and bake in the oven for 25 minutes or until golden and crisp on the outside and fully cooked through.

Keeps for up to 2 days covered in the fridge.

RAINBOW QUINOA SALAD

Weaning should be fun and full of colour and this healthy, bright and tasty dish is exactly that.

MAKES 1 ADULT AND 1 BABY PORTION | FAMILY MEAL

V

1 × 250g pouch cooked quinoa
20g pumpkin seeds, finely chopped
1 vacuum-packed cooked beetroot, grated
50g tinned sweetcorn
50g cooked edamame, roughly chopped
1 small carrot, grated
small bunch of coriander or parsley, finely chopped
100g raspberries, any large ones cut in half

For the dressing

4 tsp lime juice
4 tsp extra virgin olive oil
2 tbsp natural yoghurt

Warm the quinoa as per packet instructions. Place the pumpkin seeds in a small frying pan over a medium heat to toast for a couple of minutes until they begin to pop in the pan. Skip this step if you don't have time.

Whisk together the dressing ingredients until combined. Place all the salad ingredients together in a bowl and drizzle over the dressing. Toss everything together gently to combine.

Keeps for up to 2 days covered in the fridge.

KEDGEREE WITH CHOPPED EGG AND GREEN BEANS

There is so much flavour and goodness in this recipe thanks to the oily fish. Never be afraid to try something new.

MAKES 2 PORTIONS

GF

1 egg
1 tbsp unsalted butter
1 tsp mild curry powder
3 spring onions, finely chopped
100g quick-cook basmati rice
250ml hot water or homemade vegetable stock (see [here](#))
50g green beans, cut into small pieces or left whole as a finger food
1 × 80g tin of mackerel fillets, in water or oil
juice of ½ lemon
1 tbsp chopped parsley – optional

Set two saucepans on the hob. Fill one with boiling hot water and use it to boil the egg for 10 minutes until hard-boiled.

Melt the butter in the other pan over a medium heat. Add the curry powder, spring onions and rice, stirring for 2 minutes to coat the rice in the melted butter and toast the grains. Pour in the hot water or homemade stock, stir once to release any of the rice from the bottom of the pan and cover with a tight-fitting lid. Lower the heat and cook for 10–12 minutes, adding in the green beans halfway through the cooking time.

Peel the boiled egg and roughly chop. Flake the mackerel fillets. Stir the lemon juice and parsley, if using, through the rice and spoon onto plates. Top with the mackerel and chopped egg to serve.

Keeps for up to 2 days covered in the fridge.



RATATOUILLE WITH KIDNEY BEANS, PEPPER, COURGETTE, AUBERGINE AND TOMATO

This is one of Indie's all-time favourite recipes – which is great because it is so packed with veg. If your baby refuses it the first time around, let them build up an appetite and simply try again.

MAKES 2 ADULT AND 1 BABY PORTIONS | FAMILY MEAL | LONGER RECIPE

VE F GF

- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 small aubergine, peeled and cut into 1cm cubes
- 1 small red onion, finely chopped
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 small courgette, peeled and cut into 1cm cubes
- 300g good-quality passata
- 1 tbsp oregano
- 1 jarred red pepper, drained and cut into 1cm slices
- 1 × 400g tin of kidney beans, drained and rinsed

Heat the olive oil in a large non-stick frying pan. Add the aubergine, red onion, garlic and courgette and sauté over a low heat until soft; this should take about 10–15 minutes. Stir through the passata, oregano, chopped roasted pepper and kidney beans and continue cooking for a further 5 minutes.

Keeps for up to 2 days covered in the fridge.

TIP

Serve with couscous, rice or a baked potato and a sprinkle of cheese. You can also use it to make my ratatouille parcel recipe (see overleaf).

RATATOUILLE PARCELS WITH MOZZARELLA

This is a brilliant way to use up leftover Ratatouille (see previous page). They are an easy-to-grab feast for your baby.

MAKES 4 PARCELS

V F

2 flour tortilla wraps
½ quantity ratatouille (see previous recipe)
70g mozzarella, cut into 1cm cubes
2 tsp flour mixed with 2 tsp water to make a paste
oil, for brushing

Preheat the oven to 180°C (fan 160°C/gas mark 4). Line a baking tray with baking parchment.

Cut the wraps in half and roll into a cone shape. Spoon in a tablespoon of ratatouille followed by a cube of mozzarella. Repeat with another spoonful of ratatouille and another cube of mozzarella.

Seal any seams shut using the flour paste and your fingers, pinching the curved outer seam together gently. Place on the prepared baking tray. (If freezing, freeze the parcels at this stage, ahead of baking.)

Brush the parcels with a little oil and bake in the oven for about 10 minutes. Leave to cool a little before serving.

Keeps for up to 2 days covered in the fridge.

MEXICAN CORN AND BLACK BEAN RICE WITH SMASHED AVOCADO

Keep being adventurous with added spices and textures if you want to

grow your very own little foodie.

MAKES 1 ADULT AND 1 BABY PORTION | FAMILY MEAL

V GF

1 tbsp olive oil
1 red onion, finely chopped
1 clove garlic, minced
1 tsp ground cumin
1 tsp smoked paprika
1 × 250g pouch of cooked brown or white rice
1 ripe beef tomato, diced
juice of 1 lime, plus slices of lime to serve – optional
200g tinned black beans, drained and rinsed
1 × 80g tin of sweetcorn
small bunch of coriander, roughly chopped
1 small avocado, plus extra slices to serve – optional
grated cheddar and a dollop of yoghurt to serve MEALS | 10–12
MONTHS +

Heat the olive oil in a medium non-stick frying pan.

Add the onion, garlic, cumin and smoked paprika and sauté over a medium heat for a couple of minutes until soft.

Microwave the rice as per packet instructions and add to the frying pan along with the remaining ingredients except the avocado and cheese.

Peel the avocado and remove the flesh. Mash with a fork in a small bowl.

Serve the rice with the smashed avocado, a sprinkling of cheese and a dollop of yoghurt. Add another few slices of avocado if you like.

Keeps for up to 2 days covered in the fridge.

IMAGES OF RECIPE OVER THE PAGE





12 MONTHS +



EATING LIKE A BOSS

At 12 months mealtimes were really fun. Indie became more adventurous and started trying to feed herself more often. She enjoyed a really wide variety of foods. It's great to think about what we want to eat and adapt a meal for Indie off the back of that.

At this age it's fine to give most foods. It's important to still be mindful that sugar and salt aren't ideal in children's diets and we should still try to keep them to a minimum.

You also may still need to be careful with certain foods such as whole nuts, whole grapes too – these are still a choking hazard for young children.

By this stage, hopefully your baby will be eating a really wide variety of foods similar to that of adults and in similar textures but just smaller portions. If your little one is still having breast milk you can carry on offering this as long as you and baby want to continue.

At 12 months, if you're formula feeding you can switch to full-fat cow's milk as your baby's main drink from now on. Offering this in an open cup is best for your baby's teeth, and around 400ml of milk is recommended. Once your baby gets to 12 months of age, you might also want to start offering nutrient-rich snacks in between meals. It's important to try and choose snacks that are balanced, and much smaller than an actual meal so that your baby doesn't fill up on these and refuse the food you offer at mealtimes. Thinking of snacks as 'mini meals' and having a structure around them, rather than letting children graze, is important.

Focus on including foods from each of the four main food groups at most meals and as some snacks. These include:

- vegetables and fruits
- carbohydrates such as potatoes, oats, grains, rice, pasta and other starchy foods
- proteins such as beans, lentils, pulses, fish, eggs and meat
- dairy such as cow's milk, cheese, yoghurt (or alternatives)

CHARLOTTE'S RAINBOW BIRTHDAY PANCAKE STACK

Nutritionist Charlotte Stirling-Reed created this recipe for her son Raffy's birthday, as parents often ask her for no-added-sugar cake ideas. Raffy had a lot of fun tearing it apart with his hands!

MAKES 1

V

175g self-raising flour
1 tsp baking powder
1 egg
200ml whole milk
1 clementine
150g raspberries
knob of butter
150g Greek yoghurt
4 strawberries, sliced
handful of blueberries
½ small mango, sliced
½ kiwi, sliced

Special equipment

1 bamboo skewer

Add the flour and baking powder to a mixing bowl and whisk to combine. Make a well in the centre of the flour, crack in the egg and add half the milk. Whisk together, incorporating the flour. Using a

zester remove the zest from the clementine and add to the bowl. Add the remaining milk and whisk to a smooth batter. Rest the batter for 5 minutes.

Blitz the raspberries in a mini blender until smooth, then pass them through a sieve to remove the seeds, and set the sauce aside for later.

Grease a non-stick frying pan with the butter and set over a moderate heat. Use the batter to make five pancakes around 10–12cm in diameter, cooking them in batches and flipping to cook the reverse side when bubbles appear on the surface.

To assemble the stack, top four of the pancakes with the Greek yoghurt and then top with the strawberries, blueberries, mango and kiwi, setting aside a few choice pieces to decorate the top. Stack all the pancakes neatly on top of each other, inserting a bamboo skewer through the middle to keep the whole thing together.

Thread the remaining fruit onto the skewer to create a rainbow effect. Drizzle the stack with the raspberry sauce to serve. Don't forget to remove the sharp skewer when little hands get close!



TERIYAKI SALMON RICE BOWL STEAMED WITH MANGE TOUT

It's surprising just how short the early weaning stages are. Before you know it you will all be enjoying grown-up meals like this.

MAKES 2 ADULT AND 2 CHILD PORTIONS | FAMILY MEAL

280g sushi rice
2 × 140g skinless salmon fillets, plus 2 × 40g child portions
150g mange tout
1 tbsp water
100g cucumber, cut into ribbons with a peeler

For the teriyaki sauce

1 tsp grated ginger
1 clove garlic, minced
20ml reduced-sodium soy sauce
30ml water
juice of ½ lime
½ tsp cornflour mixed with 1 tsp water

Preheat the oven to 200°C (fan 180°C/gas mark 6). Line a baking tray with foil.

Wash the sushi rice under cold running water. Place the rice in a saucepan and cover with 450ml cold water. Bring to the boil, lower the heat and cook covered for 10–12 minutes until cooked through.

Whisk together the teriyaki sauce ingredients until combined. Place the salmon fillets on the prepared baking tray and tip over the teriyaki sauce. Cook in the oven for 10 minutes until cooked through. You can check this by slicing into the thick end of a fillet to make sure the flesh has turned matt pink in colour.

Place the mange tout in a bowl with the water, cover with a plate or

cling film and microwave for 2–3 minutes until soft.

Serve the salmon with the sushi rice, mange tout and cucumber ribbons on the side.



WHITE FISH WITH TOMATO SAUCE PASTA BOWS AND GRATED CHEESE

Pasta is often a winner with kids. You can experiment with herbs and flavours and this one with fish is just delicious.

MAKES 1 ADULT AND 1 CHILD PORTION | FAMILY MEAL

70g pasta bows
1 tbsp olive oil
½ onion, finely chopped
1 small carrot, finely grated
2 sprigs of thyme, leaves stripped
1 × 400g tin of chopped tomatoes
80g peas
1 tbsp balsamic vinegar
140g skinless, boneless white fish (haddock, cod, pollock or coley)
100g cheddar, grated

Preheat the grill.

Cook the pasta in plenty of boiling water for

10–12 minutes. Drain.

While the pasta is cooking heat the olive oil in an ovenproof frying pan over a medium heat. Add the onion, carrot and thyme and sauté for 2–3 minutes until soft. Add the tinned tomatoes, peas and balsamic vinegar. Stir together and top with the fish. Cook for a further 8 minutes.

Add the drained pasta bows to the sauce around the fish, sprinkle everything with the cheese and place under a hot grill for 2 minutes until the cheese is melted and bubbling.

BARLEY AND COURGETTE RISOTTO

Risottos are one of the best textures for weaning and adding in your veg. This one uses barley for a change and is nice and creamy.

MAKES 1 ADULT AND 1 CHILD PORTION | FAMILY MEAL

F V

knob of butter
1 banana shallot, finely chopped
1 clove garlic, minced
1 medium courgette (around 150g), grated zest of 1 lemon
1 × 400g tin of cooked barley, drained
100ml hot homemade vegetable stock (see [here](#)) or water
20g parmesan or vegetarian hard cheese, grated
2 tbsp mascarpone or cream cheese

Melt the butter in a non-stick frying pan. Add the shallot and garlic and sauté over a medium heat for 2–3 minutes until soft. Add the courgette and lemon zest and continue cooking for a further 2 minutes until soft.

Add the barley to the pan and then gradually incorporate the hot stock or water, stirring and cooking until creamy and most but not all of the liquid has evaporated. Stir through the parmesan and mascarpone cheese, remove from the heat and serve.

Keeps for up to 2 days covered in the fridge.

BUTTERNUT AND KIDNEY BEAN QUESADILLA

This is a very popular recipe in my house. It is so simple to throw together, packed with veggie goodness and a great finger food.

MAKES 1 ADULT AND 1 CHILD PORTION | FAMILY MEAL

V

100g frozen cubed butternut squash
1 tbsp water
2 tsp coconut oil
2 spring onions, finely sliced
1 tsp ground cumin
½ tsp smoked paprika
½ tsp garlic granules
1 × 210g tin kidney beans, rinsed, drained and roughly chopped
juice of ½ lime
handful of coriander, leaves and stems, chopped
2 flour tortillas
50g cheddar, grated

Place the butternut and water in a microwaveable bowl and cover with cling film or a plate. Microwave on full power for 5 minutes, then check to see if the butternut is tender and cooked through. If not cover and microwave for a further 1 minute, repeating this until the squash is soft.

Melt the coconut oil in a large non-stick frying pan over a medium heat. Add the spring onions, spices, garlic granules, kidney beans and butternut squash, mashing everything together, and cook for 2–3 minutes to meld the flavours. Add in the lime juice and chopped coriander, remove from the pan and keep to one side.

Wipe the frying pan clean, put back on the hob and place one of the tortillas in the pan. Sprinkle over the grated cheese and spread over the butternut squash mixture. Top with the second tortilla, squashing everything down firmly with the palm of your hand. Cook for 2–3 minutes before flipping and cooking for a further 1–2 minutes or until golden brown on each side.

Place the quesadilla onto a plate or board and cut into triangles to serve.



POTATO, APPLE AND BEETROOT HASH BROWNS WITH SALMON

This is a really fun and experimental dish with lots of variety. Why not try it for breakfast? Think outside of the cereal box.

MAKES 1 ADULT AND 1 CHILD PORTION | LONGER RECIPE | FAMILY MEAL

F

- 1 medium baking potato
- 1 small bramley apple, peeled and coarsely grated
- 1 small cooked beetroot (vacuum-packed in water recommended), coarsely grated
- 1 tsp onion granules
- 4 sprigs of thyme, leaves stripped
- 2 tbsp plain flour olive oil, for greasing
- 2 × 170g tins of boneless salmon in oil or water, drained and flaked

Preheat the oven to 180°C (fan 160°C/gas mark 4). Line a flat baking tray with a sheet of baking parchment.

Cook the potato in a pan of boiling water for 10 minutes. Remove from the water and leave to cool a little, or if you don't have time use a rubber glove on one hand to protect against the heat and coarsely grate into a bowl. Squeeze the apple a little to remove any excess juice and add to the bowl along with the remaining hash brown ingredients. Mix everything together well to combine.

Brush the prepared baking tray lightly with oil. Place the grated potato mixture in four mounds on the tray – you can make two of the mounds slightly bigger for an adult if you like. Cook in the oven for 20 minutes; after 10 minutes' cooking squish each mound down with the back of a fish slice and flip over for the final 10 minutes.

Serve the hash browns with the salmon on the side.

Keeps for 2 days covered in the fridge.

TIP

Serve with a good dollop of yoghurt and a squeeze of lemon, with salad leaves and some cucumber sticks on the side. The salmon can be swapped for tinned mackerel or tuna.

TUNA AND OLIVE TORTILLA PIZZA SANDWICH

These are super easy to make. Indie sprinkles the cheese and herbs on top (and all over the kitchen!). It is so special when she gets involved in the making of food.

MAKES 2 PORTIONS

1 tsp olive oil
¼ red onion, finely sliced
60g courgette, cut into ribbons with a peeler
small handful of spinach, roughly chopped
1½ tbsp tomato puree, mixed with 1½ tbsp water
pinch of dried oregano or mixed dried herbs
2 white or brown flour tortillas
30g sweetcorn
10g sliced black olives
40g tinned tuna in water
40g mozzarella or cheddar, grated

Heat the oil in a large non-stick frying pan over a medium heat. Throw in the onion, courgette and spinach and cook for a couple of minutes until wilted and soft. Remove from the pan.

Mix the tomato puree mixture with the dried herbs and spread on top of one of the flour tortillas. Place the tomato-topped flour tortilla in the frying pan you used to cook the vegetables and top the tortilla with the

vegetables, sliced olives and sweetcorn. Flake over the tuna and sprinkle over the cheese. Top with the other flour tortilla and press everything down with your hand to flatten. Cook over a low heat until the cheese has melted and the bottom tortilla is nicely browned. Flip the tortilla over carefully to cook the other side for a couple of minutes or until tinged golden brown.

Tip out onto a plate or board and cut into triangles.

LAMB KOFTAS WITH RAINBOW COUSCOUS

This is probably the tastiest recipe in this chapter. The spices make the lamb taste absolutely delicious. A real family winner!

MAKES 2 ADULT AND 2 CHILD PORTIONS | FAMILY MEAL

F KOFTAS ONLY

300g lamb mince
1 tbsp dried mint
1 tsp ground cumin
1 tsp ground coriander
zest of 1 lemon
oil, for brushing
Greek yoghurt, to serve
lemon juice, to serve – optional

For the couscous

150g couscous
300ml boiling water
½ yellow pepper, finely diced
½ red pepper, finely diced
100g cucumber, finely diced
small bunch of mint (around 10g), finely chopped
30g bunch of parsley, finely chopped
juice of ½ lemon
2 tbsp olive oil

Special equipment

4 metal or bamboo skewers (soak bamboo skewers in water for 30 minutes)

Mix the lamb with the spices and lemon zest. Divide the mixture into four portions: two smaller child's portions and two larger for adults. Mould each portion into an oval shape and thread onto the skewers, squeezing the mixture on with your hands to spread out a little along the skewer. Brush each kofta skewer lightly with oil to prevent them from sticking.

Place the couscous in a bowl and pour over the boiling water. Cover and leave to absorb the liquid.

Meanwhile, heat a griddle pan over a medium heat until hot. Cook the skewers on the griddle for 3–4 minutes on each side until cooked through and the meat is well sealed.

Fluff up the couscous with a fork and add the remaining ingredients. Stir through to combine. Remove the koftas from the skewers and serve with the couscous and a good dollop of yoghurt on the side, plus a squeeze of lemon if you like.

Keeps for up to 2 days covered in the fridge.



SPINACH FALAFEL BITES

This is the perfect on-the-go snack for your baby or you can make it into a meal with the hummus, salad and pitta.

MAKES 8 FALAFELS

F V

1 × 400g tin of chickpeas, drained, rinsed and patted dry
1 clove garlic, roughly chopped
zest of 1 lemon
100g baby spinach
small bunch of coriander
1 tbsp ground cumin
2 tbsp plain flour
1 tbsp olive oil

To serve

Green hummus (see [here](#))
Salad and pitta

Place all the ingredients except the olive oil in a food processor and blitz until fairly smooth. Tip into a bowl and shape into eight small patties.

Heat the olive oil in a non-stick frying pan over a medium heat and fry the falafels for about 3 minutes on each side until lightly browned.

Keeps for up to 2 days covered in the fridge.

IMAGE OF RECIPE [here](#)

HERB AND CHEESE COUSCOUS BITES

These are ideal for batch cooking and freezing. They are seriously

tasty freshly cooked but also can be eaten cold or reheated.

MAKES AROUND 15 BITES

F V

80g couscous
100ml boiling water
40g cheddar, grated
5 tbsp finely chopped soft green herbs (parsley, chives, mint, basil or sage)
zest of 1 lemon – optional
1 tbsp spelt, wholemeal or white flour
3 tbsp ground almonds
2 eggs, whisked
1 tbsp olive oil

Place the couscous in a small mixing bowl and cover with the boiling water. Cover the bowl with cling film and leave for 5 minutes until the water has been absorbed and the couscous is tender. Fluff with a fork.

Add the remaining ingredients apart from the oil and mix to combine.

Heat the olive oil in a non-stick frying pan over a medium heat. Add tablespoonfuls of the mixture and fry for 2–3 minutes until golden brown before flipping. Flatten each a little with a fish slice and cook the other side for 1–2 minutes.

Keeps for up to 2 days covered in the fridge.

IMAGE OF RECIPES OVER THE PAGE



CHICKPEA AND MUSHROOM BURGERS

This is a super tasty veggie burger that you and your baby will love. Your baby may not be able to hold a mini burger but it can easily be cut into tiny pieces for them to self feed.

MAKES 2 ADULT AND 4 BABY BURGERS (OR 8 BABY BURGERS) FAMILY MEAL |
LONGER RECIPE

V F BURGERS ONLY

50g blanched almonds
2 tbsp olive oil
1 onion, finely chopped
2 cloves garlic, minced
150g chestnut mushrooms, diced small
1 × 130g packet pre-cooked brown rice
1 × 400g tin of chickpeas, drained and rinsed
1 tsp smoked paprika
1 egg yolk
25g cheddar, grated

To serve

bread buns
sliced or mashed avocado
baby gem lettuce leaves
grated cheese
sliced tomato
spoonful of yoghurt

Place the almonds in a large dry frying pan over a medium heat and toast until fragrant and lightly browned. Remove from the pan and keep to one side for later.

Add 1 tablespoon of olive oil to the pan along with the onion, garlic and mushrooms. Fry for about 10 minutes or until all the water from the mushrooms has evaporated. Add the rice to the pan and break up with the back of a spoon.

Add half the mushroom rice mixture to a food processor, along with all the almonds and the chickpeas. Process until smooth.

Scrape the mixture into a bowl and add the remaining rice and mushrooms, smoked paprika, egg yolk and the grated cheese. Mix everything together to combine. Shape the mixture into patties – you can make eight child-sized patties and keep some for the freezer or make two large ones and four small.

Wipe the same frying pan clean and add the remaining tablespoon of oil over a medium heat. Fry the burgers for 1–2 minutes on each side to form a lightly golden crust. Serve in a bread bun (mini for kids and large for adults) with sliced avocado, lettuce, extra grated cheese, tomato and yoghurt.

Keeps for up to 2 days covered in the fridge.



FIVE SPICE THAI CHICKEN CAKES WITH CARROT, CUCUMBER AND RADISH SALAD

I love this recipe so much! The cakes taste unreal. It might be worth doubling up on the recipe because you may want to eat the lot . . .

MAKES 1 ADULT AND 1 CHILD PORTION | FAMILY MEAL

F CAKES ONLY

- 1 chicken breast
- 5g bunch of coriander, leaves and stems separated
- 1 tbsp breadcrumbs
- 2 spring onions, finely sliced
- zest and juice of 1 lime
- 1 tsp Chinese five spice powder (I use Bart's as it has no added salt or sugar)
- 2 tsp olive oil, plus extra for frying
- ¼ cucumber, cut into ribbons with a peeler
- 1 small carrot, peeled and cut into ribbons with a peeler
- 2 radishes, thinly sliced

Place the chicken breast in a food processor and blitz for 1 minute or until finely chopped and mince-like in texture. Be careful not to overdo this as you don't want to end up with a paste.

Finely chop the coriander stems. Add the minced chicken, chopped coriander stems, breadcrumbs, spring onions, lime zest, 1 teaspoon of the lime juice and five spice to a small mixing bowl and mix to combine. Wet your hands a little and shape into six small round discs.

Heat a little oil in a non-stick frying pan over a moderate heat and cook the chicken patties for 2–3 minutes on each side until cooked through.

Whisk the remaining lime juice with the olive oil and toss over the

cucumber, carrot and radish. Add the reserved coriander leaves to the salad and serve with the chicken cakes.

The chicken cakes and salad will keep separately for up to 2 days covered in the fridge.

TIP

Try swapping the chicken with salmon or turkey mince. You could try soft carrot batons instead of the carrot salad if it's easier for your baby.





FISH TACOS WITH FRIED TOMATO SALSA

The more variety you can offer your baby at a young age, the less likely they are to become fussy eaters. This is my lovely, lightly spiced take on a Mexican taco.

MAKES 1 ADULT AND 1 CHILD PORTION | FAMILY MEAL

½ tsp ground cumin
½ tsp ground coriander
¼ tsp garlic granules
2 × 120g skinless, boneless cod fillets
2 tbsp olive oil
12 cherry tomatoes
½ red onion, finely chopped
1 clove garlic, minced
1 small avocado, de-stoned
juice of ½ lime
4 small soft corn or flour tortillas, warmed
1 small baby gem lettuce, shredded

Mix together the spices and garlic granules and use to coat the fish.

Heat 1 tablespoon of the oil in a non-stick frying pan over a medium heat and add the fish to the pan. Cook the fish for 3–4 minutes on each side.

Heat the remaining oil in a small saucepan over a moderate heat and throw in the tomatoes. Cook for 4 minutes or until they begin to burst and start to break down. Stir in the red onion and garlic and cook for 2 minutes before removing from the heat.

Mash the flesh from the avocado with the lime juice. Top the warmed tortillas with the tomato salsa, avocado and shredded lettuce. Flake over the fish and roll up to serve.

CARIBBEAN SPICED CHICKEN AND SQUASH CURRY

This is the tastiest curry in the whole book. Remember your baby's appetite can vary day to day, so don't be upset if they don't eat all the food you offer them.

MAKES 1 ADULT AND 2 CHILD PORTIONS | FAMILY MEAL | LONGER RECIPE

F CURRY ONLY **GF**

1½ tbsp Caribbean curry powder or normal curry powder
4 skinless, boneless chicken thighs, cut into bite-sized pieces
1 tbsp coconut oil
1 onion, finely chopped
sprig of thyme
1 bay leaf
1 clove garlic, minced
1 tsp minced ginger
½ tsp allspice powder
4 plum tomatoes, roughly chopped
1 × 400ml tin of coconut milk
400g frozen cubed butternut squash
juice of ½ lime
6 spring onions, roughly chopped small bunch of coriander, roughly chopped
rice to serve

Sprinkle half the curry powder over the chicken, mix well and put to one side.

Melt the coconut oil in a large saucepan or casserole dish over a medium heat. Add the onion, thyme and bay leaf and fry for 2 minutes, stirring regularly. Add the garlic and ginger and continue cooking for a further minute.

Sprinkle in the remaining curry powder and the allspice and stir-fry for

1 minute. Add in the chicken and cook for a couple of minutes to seal. Add in the tomatoes and continue cooking until they start to break down.

Add the coconut milk and squash to the pan and continue cooking for 8–10 minutes or until the squash is cooked through. Stir in the lime juice, spring onions and coriander. Cook for a further 2–3 minutes to allow the flavours to meld together. Remove the bay leaf and thyme sprigs before serving. Serve with rice.

Keeps for up to 2 days covered in the fridge.



TURKEY, CARROT AND SWEDE HAND PIES

Pie for baby? Absolutely! This hand pie makes the perfect on-the-go meal for a hungry baby.

MAKES 8 SMALL PIES | LONGER RECIPE

F

2 × 320g shortcrust pastry sheets
1 medium carrot (around 130g), peeled
130g swede, peeled
2 tbsp water
30g unsalted butter
130g leeks, sliced thinly
1 tbsp dried tarragon
150g quick-cook turkey breast steaks, sliced into small strips
1½ tbsp plain flour
250ml hot homemade chicken stock (see [here](#)) or water zest of 1 lemon
½ tbsp lemon juice
1 tbsp crème fraîche
1 egg, whisked

Remove the pastry sheets from the fridge 45 minutes before making the pies. Preheat the oven to 200°C (fan 180°C/gas mark 6). Line a flat baking tray with baking parchment.

Prepare the carrot by cutting into quarters lengthways and then slicing around 5mm thick. Cut the swede into similar-sized pieces to the carrot. Place both carrot and swede in a microwavable bowl with the water, cover and microwave on full power for 8 minutes until soft.

Melt the butter in a medium saucepan over a medium heat. Add the sliced leeks, tarragon and turkey and cook for about 4–5 minutes until the leeks have sweated down and the turkey is cooked through.

Check by slicing into one of the larger pieces to make sure the meat is white all the way through, with no raw pink bits left. Add the flour, stir into the turkey and leek and cook for 1 minute before gradually adding in the hot stock, stirring in a little at a time until fully incorporated.

Continue cooking for a further 1–2 minutes or until the stock has thickened a little. Stir in the cooked carrot and swede, the lemon zest, lemon juice and crème fraiche.

Unroll the pastry sheets and cut each into four rectangles. Brush around the outer edge of each rectangle with a little egg wash. Top one half of each rectangle with about 2 dessertspoons of the filling and fold over the pastry to seal.

Crimp the outer edges with a fork and poke a couple of holes in the middle of each pie to allow steam to escape. (If freezing, freeze the pies at this stage before baking.)

Place the pies on the prepared baking tray. Brush each pie with a little egg wash and bake in the oven for 20 minutes or until the pastry is golden brown. Leave to cool for 15–20 minutes before serving to your child.

Keeps for up to 2 days covered in the fridge.

CHICKEN AND VEG TRAY BAKE WITH A HERBY DRESSING

Tray bakes are just the best way to cook: so easy, delicious and they leave very little washing up. That's always a win in my eyes.

MAKES 2 ADULT AND 1 CHILD PORTIONS | LONGER RECIPE | FAMILY MEAL

GF

5 tbsp olive oil

500g sweet potatoes, cut into wedges

150g baby carrots, tops left on
1 small fennel bulb, cut into wedges
6 whole cloves garlic, skin on
5 boneless skin-on chicken thighs
½ lemon
1 tbsp fennel seeds
small bunch of thyme, leaves stripped from the stems
250g cream cheese
small bunch of mint
small bunch of chives
small bunch of basil

Preheat the oven to 200°C (fan 180°C/gas mark 6).

Drizzle 3 tablespoons of the olive oil into a large roasting tray. Throw in the sweet potatoes, carrots, fennel and garlic and toss to coat in the oil. Place the chicken thighs on top of the veggies, drizzle with the remaining olive oil, then squeeze the juice from the lemon over everything.

Pound the fennel seeds in a pestle and mortar to break the seeds up and help release their flavour. Sprinkle the fennel and thyme over the chicken and veggies. Roast in the oven for 40–50 minutes or until the chicken is cooked through. Check by slicing into one of the larger pieces to make sure the meat is white all the way through, with no raw pink bits left. The veggies should also be tinged golden brown.

When the chicken and veggies are cooked remove the garlic cloves and pop from their skins. Add the garlic, cream cheese and soft herbs to a blender and blend until smooth, adding a splash of water to loosen the mixture if needed. Serve the chicken and veggies with the green sauce drizzled over.

Keeps for up to 2 days covered in the fridge.



HOMEMADE VEGETABLE STOCK

MAKES ABOUT 1.5 LITRES | LONGER RECIPE

V GF F

2 carrots, roughly chopped into small pieces
2 onions, roughly chopped
1 leek, sliced
1 medium tomato, roughly chopped
1 clove garlic, roughly chopped
2 celery sticks, roughly chopped
4 bay leaves small bunch of parsley, roughly chopped
1 tsp peppercorns
2 tbsp sunflower oil
2 litres hot water

Place all the vegetables, the herbs, peppercorns and sunflower oil in a large stockpot or saucepan over a medium heat and sauté for 5 minutes, stirring the vegetables from time to time. Add in the hot water, bring to the boil and simmer uncovered for 20–30 minutes.

Strain the stock through a sieve and decant into containers. You can freeze the stock and defrost when needed or it keeps for up to 5 days covered in the fridge.

TIP

Feel free to use any aromatic herbs or herb stalks you may have lying around. You can also add in other vegetables that may need using up – shallots, fennel, broccoli stalks and mushrooms all work well.

HOMEMADE CHICKEN STOCK

MAKES ABOUT 1.5 LITRES | LONGER RECIPE

GF F

- 1 chicken carcass
- 1 carrot, roughly chopped
- 1 celery stick, roughly chopped
- 1 large onion, sliced
- 2 sprigs of thyme
- small bunch of parsley
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 tsp peppercorns
- squeeze of lemon or a splash of cider vinegar

Place all the ingredients in a large stockpot or saucepan big enough to accommodate them and pour over enough cold water to cover the carcass and all the vegetables.

Slowly bring to the boil and then simmer, skimming off any scummy froth that may appear on the surface as often as you can. Keep it simmering for 2–3 hours or until the stock has a good depth of flavour.

Strain the stock through a strainer into a large bowl. Leave to go cold and chill overnight. Any fats in the stock will have now risen to the surface and should be easy to scrape away with a spoon and discard.

Keeps for up to 4 days covered in the fridge.

TIP

Divide up into portions for freezing.

INDEX

Note: reference numbers in *italics refer to illustrations*.

adventurous foods [ref1](#)
allergens [ref1](#), [ref2](#), [ref3](#)
almond [ref1](#), [ref2](#), [ref3](#)
almond butter [ref1](#), [ref2](#), [ref3](#)
 butternut, cinnamon and almond butter [ref1](#), [ref2](#)
anaphylaxis [ref1](#), [ref2](#)
appetite [ref1](#), [ref2](#), [ref3](#), [ref4](#), [ref5](#), [ref6](#), [ref7](#)
apple
 apple puree [ref1](#)
 blackberry and apple cinnamon baked oats [ref1](#)
 fennel, chickpea, apple and watercress [ref1](#), [ref2](#)
 potato, apple and beetroot hash browns with salmon [ref1](#)
apricot chia seed jam [ref1](#), [ref2](#)
aubergine
 aubergine, red pepper and couscous [ref1](#)
 first tastes [ref1](#)
 lemony aubergine with yoghurt and parsley [ref1](#), [ref2](#)
 ratatouille with kidney beans, pepper, courgette, aubergine and tomato [ref1](#), [ref2](#)
avocado [ref1](#), [ref2](#)
 avocado basil puree [ref1](#), [ref2](#)
 avocado and butterbean mash [ref1](#)
 edamame avocado mash flatbread with salmon [ref1](#), [ref2](#)
 Mexican corn and black bean rice with smashed avocado [ref1](#), [ref2](#)
 yoghurt and avocado dip [ref1](#), [ref2](#)
 frittata, sweet potato frittata squares [ref1](#), [ref2](#)
 fritters, sweetcorn and ricotta fritters [ref1](#), [ref2](#)
 fussy eaters [ref1](#), [ref2](#), [ref3](#), [ref4](#)–3

gagging [ref1](#), [ref2](#)–5
 general practitioners (GPs) [ref1](#), [ref2](#), [ref3](#), [ref4](#)
 gluten allergy [ref1](#)
 green bean
 first tastes [ref1](#)
 kedgeree with chopped egg and green beans [ref1](#)
 parsley, peas and green bean puree [ref1](#), [ref2](#)
 red pepper pesto, green beans and pasta [ref1](#), [ref2](#)
 growth [ref1](#)

hash browns, potato, apple and beetroot hash browns with salmon [ref1](#)
 health visitors (HVs) [ref1](#), [ref2](#), [ref3](#), [ref4](#)

herbs
green hummus [ref1](#), [ref2](#)
herb and cheese couscous bites [ref1](#), [ref2](#)
honey [ref1](#)
hummus, green hummus [ref1](#), [ref2](#)
hyperactivity [ref1](#)

immune system [ref1](#)
iodine [ref1](#), [ref2](#)
iron, dietary [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

jam, apricot chia seed jam [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

kale [ref1](#)
cauliflower, kale and chickpea curry [ref1](#)
first tastes [ref1](#)
kale chips [ref1](#), [ref2](#)
kale and cottage cheese cupcake lasagnes [ref1](#), [ref2](#)
pumpkin, kale and butterbean mac 'n' cheese [ref1](#), [ref2](#)
sweetcorn and ricotta fritters [ref1](#), [ref2](#)
white fish with tomato sauce pasta bows and grated cheese [ref1](#)
see also cheddar; [cream cheese](#); [mozzarella](#); parmesan

chia seed, apricot chia seed jam [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

chicken
baby Indian thali [ref1](#), [ref2](#)
Caribbean spiced chicken and squash curry [ref1](#), [ref2](#)
chicken and veg tray bake with a herby dressing [ref1](#), [ref2](#)
creamy chicken, broccoli and mushroom pasta [ref1](#), [ref2](#)
five spices Thai chicken cakes with carrot, cucumber and radish salad [ref1](#), [ref2](#)
very green curry [ref1](#)

chickpea [ref1](#), [ref2](#)
cauliflower, kale and chickpea curry [ref1](#)
chickpea and mushroom burgers [ref1](#), [ref2](#)
fennel, chickpea, apple and watercress [ref1](#), [ref2](#)
Indian-spiced spinach, chickpea and potato curry with yoghurt [ref1](#)

child development [ref1](#)

chips, kale chips [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

choking [ref1](#), [ref2](#), [ref3](#), [ref4](#), [ref5](#)

cinnamon [ref1](#), [ref2](#), [ref3](#), [ref4](#)
blackberry and apple cinnamon baked oats [ref1](#)
butternut, cinnamon and almond butter [ref1](#), [ref2](#)
sweet potato, red lentil and cinnamon dal [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

coconut (desiccated) [ref1](#), [ref2](#)
banana oaty pancakes with coconut and blueberries [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

coconut milk [ref1](#), [ref2](#), [ref3](#), [ref4](#)

cod
cod, spinach, potato and peas [ref1](#)
fish tacos with fried tomato salsa [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

complementary feeding see [weaning](#)

congee, white fish congee with spring onions and peas [ref1](#)

coordination, hand–eye [ref1](#), [ref2](#), [ref3](#)

cottage cheese, kale and cottage cheese cupcake lasagnes [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

courgette [ref1](#), [ref2](#), [ref3](#)

barley and courgette risotto [ref1](#)

cheesy courgette and spring onion rice [ref1](#)

courgette, pea and mint puree [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

courgette puree [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

courgette, sardine and barley minestrone soup [ref1](#)

first tastes [ref1](#), [ref2](#), [ref3](#)

ratatouille with kidney beans, pepper, courgette, aubergine and tomato [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

couscous

aubergine, red pepper and couscous [ref1](#)

herb and cheese couscous bites [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

lamb koftas with rainbow couscous [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

Moroccan minced lamb with sweet potato and couscous [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

parsley and mint cauliflower couscous [ref1](#)

cream cheese [ref1](#), [ref2](#), [ref3](#)

cucumber [ref1](#), [ref2](#), [ref3](#)

cucumber mint yoghurt [ref1](#)

first tastes [ref1](#)

five spices Thai chicken cakes with carrot, cucumber and radish salad [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

curry

Caribbean spiced chicken and squash curry [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

cauliflower, kale and chickpea curry [ref1](#)

Indian-spiced spinach, chickpea and potato curry with yoghurt [ref1](#)

very green curry [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

dairy foods [ref1](#), [ref2](#), [ref3](#)

dal, sweet potato, red lentil and cinnamon dal [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

dietitians [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

dips

beetroot, Greek yoghurt and mint dip [ref1](#)

black bean dip [ref1](#)

pumpkin seed pesto dip [ref1](#)

yoghurt and avocado dip [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

dressings [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

herby dressing [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

eating out [ref1](#)

edamame bean [ref1](#)

edamame avocado mash flatbread with salmon [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

egg [ref1](#), [ref2](#), [ref3](#), [ref4](#), [ref5](#), [ref6](#), [ref7](#), [ref8](#), [ref9](#), [ref10](#), [ref11](#), [ref12](#), [ref13](#)

allergenic nature [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

Asian-style scrambled eggs [ref1](#)

eggy bread with mashed strawberry yoghurt [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

kedgeree with chopped egg and green beans [ref1](#)

muffins [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

pancakes [ref1](#), [ref2](#), [ref3](#)

sweet potato frittata squares [ref1](#)

turmeric scrambled egg [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

falafel

Mexican falafel black bean bites with a yoghurt and avocado dip [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

spinach falafel bites [ref1](#)

fennel [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

fibre, dietary [ref1](#)

filo pastry, salmon and beetroot samosa [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

finger foods [ref1](#), [ref2](#), [ref3](#), [ref4](#), [ref5](#), [ref6](#), [ref7](#)

fish [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

courgette, sardine and barley minestrone soup [ref1](#)

fish tacos with fried tomato salsa [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

kedgeree with chopped egg and green beans [ref1](#)

oily fish [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

quinoa-coated fish fingers with minted peas [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

sweet potato, white fish, broccoli [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

tuna and olive tortilla pizza sandwich [ref1](#)

white fish congee with spring onions and peas [ref1](#)

white fish with tomato sauce pasta bows and grated cheese [ref1](#)

see also [cod](#); [salmon](#)

flatbread [ref1](#)

edamame avocado mash flatbread with salmon [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

simple flatbreads [ref1](#)

flavour [ref1](#)

flaxseed [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

food allergies [ref1](#), [ref2](#), [ref3](#), [ref4](#)

food groups [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

food preferences [ref1](#)

food refusal [ref1](#), [ref2](#), [ref3](#), [ref4](#), [ref5](#)

food texture [ref1](#), [ref2](#), [ref3](#)

foods

to avoid [ref1](#)

new [ref1](#), [ref2](#), [ref3](#), [ref4](#), [ref5](#), [ref6](#)

playing with [ref1](#)

formula milk [ref1](#), [ref2](#), [ref3](#), [ref4](#), [ref5](#), [ref6](#), [ref7](#), [ref8](#), [ref9](#), [ref10](#)

combined with breast milk [ref1](#)

reducing [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

supplements of [ref1](#)

when to stop [ref1](#)

freezing food [ref1](#)

frittata, sweet potato frittata squares [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

fritters, sweetcorn and ricotta fritters [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

fussy eaters [ref1](#), [ref2](#), [ref3](#), [ref4](#)

gagging [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

general practitioners (GPs) [ref1](#), [ref2](#), [ref3](#), [ref4](#)

gluten allergy [ref1](#)

green bean

first tastes [ref1](#)

kedgeree with chopped egg and green beans [ref1](#)

parsley, peas and green bean puree [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

red pepper pesto, green beans and pasta [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

growth [ref1](#)

hash browns, potato, apple and beetroot hash browns with salmon [ref1](#)

health visitors (HVs) [ref1](#), [ref2](#), [ref3](#), [ref4](#)

herbs

green hummus [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

herb and cheese couscous bites [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

honey [ref1](#)

hummus, green hummus [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

hyperactivity [ref1](#)

immune system [ref1](#)

iodine [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

iron, dietary [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

jam, apricot chia seed jam [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

kale [ref1](#)

cauliflower, kale and chickpea curry [ref1](#)

first tastes [ref1](#)

kale chips [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

kale and cottage cheese cupcake lasagnes [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

pumpkin, kale and butterbean mac 'n' cheese [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

red lentil, cauliflower, turmeric and kale [ref1](#)

kedgeree with chopped egg and green beans [ref1](#)

kidney bean

butternut and kidney bean quesadilla [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

ratatouille with kidney beans, pepper, courgette, aubergine and tomato [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

lamb

lamb koftas with rainbow couscous [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

lamb and lentil shepherd's pie with sweet potato mash [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

Moroccan minced lamb with sweet potato and couscous [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

lasagne, kale and cottage cheese cupcake lasagnes [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

latching on [ref1](#)

leek [ref1](#), [ref2](#), [ref3](#)

leek, quinoa and tarragon [ref1](#)

leftovers [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

lemony aubergine with yoghurt and parsley [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

lentil(s)

lamb and lentil shepherd's pie with sweet potato mash [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

red lentil, cauliflower, turmeric and kale [ref1](#)

sweet potato, red lentil and cinnamon dal [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

turkey and red lentil nuggets [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

mac 'n' cheese, pumpkin, kale and butterbean mac 'n' cheese [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

mackerel, kedgeree with chopped egg and green beans [ref1](#)

mange tout, teriyaki salmon rice bowl steamed with mange tout [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

mango [ref1](#)

stir-fried Asian slaw tofu wraps with mango sauce [ref1](#)

tofu, sugar snap peas and mango sesame noodles [ref1](#)

mashed food [ref1](#), [ref2](#), [ref3](#), [ref4](#), [ref5](#), [ref6](#), [ref7](#), [ref8](#)

mealtimes [ref1](#), [ref2](#), [ref3](#)

mercury contamination [ref1](#)

milk

cow's [ref1](#), [ref2](#), [ref3](#), [ref4](#), [ref5](#), [ref6](#), [ref7](#)

expressed [ref1](#)

fortified alternatives [ref1](#)

plant-based [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

rice [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

see also [breast milk](#); [formula milk](#)

minestrone, courgette, sardine and barley minestrone soup [ref1](#)

mint [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

beetroot, Greek yoghurt and mint dip [ref1](#)

courgette, pea and mint puree [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

cucumber mint yoghurt [ref1](#)

parsley and mint cauliflower couscous [ref1](#)

quinoa-coated fish fingers with minted peas [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

mozzarella [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

ratatouille parcels with mozzarella [ref1](#)

muffins, cauliflower red pepper egg muffins [ref1](#)

mushroom

chickpea and mushroom burgers [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

creamy chicken, broccoli and mushroom pasta [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

kale and cottage cheese cupcake lasagnes [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

pumpkin, kale and butterbean mac 'n' cheese [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

red pepper pesto, green beans and pasta [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

white fish with tomato sauce pasta bows and grated cheese [ref1](#)

pastry dishes

salmon and beetroot samosa [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

turkey, carrot and swede hand pies [ref1](#)

peanut [ref1](#), [ref2](#), [ref3](#), [ref4](#)

peanut butter [ref1](#)

pear

pear, beetroot and blueberry overnight oats [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

quinoa and pear porridge [ref1](#)

pea(s) [ref1](#), [ref2](#), [ref3](#), [ref4](#), [ref5](#)

broccoli, salmon, peas and potato [ref1](#)

cheesy pea quinoa risotto [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

cod, spinach, potato and peas [ref1](#)

courgette, pea and mint puree [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

first tastes [ref1](#)

parsley, peas and green bean puree [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

quinoa-coated fish fingers with minted peas [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

white fish congee with spring onions and peas [ref1](#)

pepper [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

aubergine, red pepper and couscous [ref1](#)

cauliflower red pepper egg muffins [ref1](#)

ratatouille with kidney beans, pepper, courgette, aubergine and tomato [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

red pepper pesto, green beans and pasta [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

pesto

broccoli, basil and cashew pesto with chopped spaghetti [ref1](#)
pumpkin seed pesto dip [ref1](#)
red pepper pesto, green beans and pasta [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

pie
lamb and lentil shepherd's pie with sweet potato mash [ref1](#), [ref2](#)
turkey, carrot and swede hand pies [ref1](#)

pistachio nut [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

pizza
cauliflower pizza [ref1](#), [ref2](#)
tuna and olive tortilla pizza [ref1](#)

polenta [ref1](#)
mushroom polenta [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

porridge oats [ref1](#)
banana oat pancakes with coconut and blueberries [ref1](#), [ref2](#)
beetroot porridge pancakes [ref1](#)
blackberry and apple cinnamon baked oats [ref1](#)
butternut porridge [ref1](#)
carrot porridge [ref1](#), [ref2](#)
pear, beetroot and blueberry overnight oats [ref1](#), [ref2](#)
raspberry and oat fingers [ref1](#)
sweet potato oat bites [ref1](#)

porridge (quinoa), quinoa and pear porridge [ref1](#)
portion sizes [ref1](#), [ref2](#), [ref3](#), [ref4](#), [ref5](#)

potato [ref1](#), [ref2](#)
broccoli, salmon, peas and potato [ref1](#)
broccoli, swede and potato mash [ref1](#)
cod, spinach, potato and peas [ref1](#)
first tastes [ref1](#), [ref2](#), [ref3](#), [ref4](#)
Indian-spiced spinach, chickpea and potato curry with yoghurt [ref1](#)
potato, parsnip and carrot [ref1](#)
potato puree [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

premature babies [ref1](#)

processed baby foods [ref1](#)

protein [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

pumpkin, kale and butterbean mac 'n' cheese [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

pumpkin seed [ref1](#)
pumpkin seed pesto dip [ref1](#)

purees [ref1](#), [ref2](#), [ref3](#), [ref4](#), [ref5](#), [ref6](#), [ref7](#)
avocado basil puree [ref1](#), [ref2](#)
broccoli puree [ref1](#)
courgette, pea and mint puree [ref1](#), [ref2](#)
courgette puree [ref1](#)
equipment [ref1](#)
moving on from [ref1](#)
parsley, peas and green bean puree [ref1](#), [ref2](#)
parsnip puree [ref1](#)
potato puree [ref1](#)

quesadilla, butternut and kidney bean quesadilla [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

quinoa

cheesy pea quinoa risotto [ref1](#), [ref2](#)
leek, quinoa and tarragon [ref1](#)
quinoa and pear porridge [ref1](#)
quinoa-coated fish fingers with minted peas [ref1](#), [ref2](#)
rainbow quinoa salad [ref1](#)

radish [ref1](#)

five spices Thai chicken cakes with carrot, cucumber and radish salad [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

raita [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

raspberry [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

raspberry and oat fingers [ref1](#)

ratatouille

ratatouille with kidney beans, pepper, courgette, aubergine and tomato [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

ratatouille parcels with mozzarella [ref1](#)

reheating food [ref1](#)

responsive feeding [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

rice [ref1](#), [ref2](#), [ref3](#), [ref4](#), [ref5](#)

barley and courgette risotto [ref1](#)

cheesy courgette and spring onion rice [ref1](#)

kedgeree with chopped egg and green beans [ref1](#)

Mexican corn and black bean rice with smashed avocado [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

teriyaki salmon rice bowl steamed with mange tout [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

see also baby rice

rice milk [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

rice noodles, tofu, sugar snap peas and mango sesame noodles [ref1](#)

ricotta, sweetcorn and ricotta fritters [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

risotto

barley and courgette risotto [ref1](#)

cheesy pea quinoa risotto [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

role models, acting as [ref1](#)

routines [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

salads

five spices Thai chicken cakes with carrot, cucumber and radish salad [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

rainbow quinoa salad [ref1](#)

salmon

broccoli, salmon, peas and potato [ref1](#)

edamame avocado mash flatbread with salmon [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

potato, apple and beetroot hash browns with salmon [ref1](#)

quinoa-coated fish fingers with minted peas [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

salmon and beetroot samosa [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

teriyaki salmon rice bowl steamed with mange tout [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

salsa, fried tomato salsa [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

salt [ref1](#), [ref2](#), [ref3](#)

samosa, salmon and beetroot samosa [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

sardine, courgette, sardine and barley minestrone soup [ref1](#)

sauces

mango sauce [ref1](#)

teriyaki sauce [ref1](#)

tomato sauce [ref1](#)

scones, cheese and broccoli scones [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

sesame seed(s) [ref1](#)

tofu, sugar snap peas and mango sesame noodles [ref1](#)

shepherd's pie, lamb and lentil shepherd's pie with sweet potato mash [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

sitting up [ref1](#), [ref2](#), [ref3](#), [ref4](#)

slaw, stir-fried Asian slaw tofu wraps with mango sauce [ref1](#)

snacks [ref1](#), [ref2](#), [ref3](#)

soup, courgette, sardine and barley minestrone soup [ref1](#)

spelt flour [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

spices [ref1](#)

see also specific [spices](#)

spinach [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

cod, spinach, potato and peas [ref1](#)

first tastes [ref1](#)

Indian-spiced spinach, chickpea and potato curry with yoghurt [ref1](#)

spinach, banana and sweetcorn mini muffins [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

spinach falafel bites [ref1](#)

spoon-feeding [ref1](#), [ref2](#), [ref3](#)

spring onion [ref1](#), [ref2](#), [ref3](#), [ref4](#), [ref5](#), [ref6](#), [ref7](#)

cheesy courgette and spring onion rice [ref1](#)

white fish congee with spring onions and peas [ref1](#)

stew, squashed tomato and white bean stew [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

stir-fried Asian slaw tofu wraps with mango sauce [ref1](#)

stock

homemade chicken stock [ref1](#)

homemade vegetable stock [ref1](#)

strawberry [ref1](#)

eggy bread with mashed strawberry yoghurt [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

sugar snap pea, tofu, sugar snap peas and mango sesame noodles [ref1](#)

sugary foods [ref1](#), [ref2](#), [ref3](#)

swede

broccoli, swede and potato mash [ref1](#)

turkey, carrot and swede hand pies [ref1](#)

sweet potato [ref1](#)

lamb and lentil shepherd's pie with sweet potato mash [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

Moroccan minced lamb with sweet potato and couscous [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

sweet potato frittata squares

[ref1](#), [ref2](#)

sweet potato oat bites [ref1](#)

sweet potato, red lentil and cinnamon dal [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

sweet potato toast with mashed banana and tahini [ref1](#)

sweet potato, white fish, broccoli [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

sweet-tasting foods [ref1](#)

sweetcorn [ref1](#), [ref2](#), [ref3](#), [ref4](#)

Mexican corn and black bean rice with smashed avocado [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

spinach, banana and sweetcorn mini muffins [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

sweetcorn and ricotta fritters [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

tacos, fish tacos with fried tomato salsa [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

tahini, sweet potato toast with mashed banana and tahini [ref1](#)

teeth [ref1](#)

teriyaki salmon rice bowl steamed with mange tout [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

thali, baby Indian thali [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

toast [ref1](#), [ref2](#), [ref3](#), [ref4](#)

sweet potato toast with mashed banana and tahini [ref1](#)

tofu

stir-fried Asian slaw tofu wraps with mango sauce [ref1](#)

tofu, sugar snap peas and mango sesame noodles [ref1](#)

turmeric scrambled tofu [ref1](#)

tomato [ref1](#), [ref2](#), [ref3](#), [ref4](#), [ref5](#), [ref6](#), [ref7](#)

cheese and tomato orzo [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

fish tacos with fried tomato salsa [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

ratatouille with kidney beans, pepper, courgette, aubergine and tomato [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

squashed tomato and white bean stew [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

white fish with tomato sauce pasta bows and grated cheese [ref1](#)

see also passata

tongue thrust reflex [ref1](#)

tortilla wraps [ref1](#), [ref2](#), [ref3](#), [ref4](#)

tuna and olive tortilla pizza sandwich [ref1](#)

turkey

mushroom and turkey Bolognese [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

turkey, carrot and swede hand pies [ref1](#)

turkey and red lentil nuggets [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

turmeric

red lentil, cauliflower, turmeric and kale [ref1](#)

turmeric scrambled egg [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

vegetables [ref1](#), [ref2](#), [ref3](#)

finger foods [ref1](#)

veg-led weaning [ref1](#), [ref2](#), [ref3](#), [ref4](#)

see also specific [vegetables](#)

vegetarian/vegan babies [ref1](#)

vitamins [ref1](#)

watercress, fennel, chickpea, apple and watercress [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

weaning

baby-led (BLW) [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

baby's readiness for [ref1](#)

definition [ref1](#)

equipment [ref1](#)

and gagging [ref1](#)

and key nutrients [ref1](#)

messiness of [ref1](#)

and milk [ref1](#)

preparation for [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

and routines [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

and safety considerations [ref1](#)

snacks [ref1](#)

and spoon-feeding [ref1](#), [ref2](#), [ref3](#)

starting age [ref1](#)

timing [ref1](#)

veg-led [ref1](#), [ref2](#), [ref3](#), [ref4](#)

wholegrains [ref1](#)

World Health Organization (WHO) [ref1](#), [ref2](#), [ref3](#)

yoghurt (Greek) [ref1](#), [ref2](#), [ref3](#), [ref4](#), [ref5](#), [ref6](#)

beetroot, yoghurt and mint dip [ref1](#)

cucumber mint yoghurt [ref1](#)

eggy bread with mashed strawberry yoghurt [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

lemony aubergine with yoghurt and parsley [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

yoghurt (natural) [ref1](#), [ref2](#), [ref3](#), [ref4](#)

Indian-spiced spinach, chickpea and potato curry with yoghurt [ref1](#)

yoghurt and avocado dip [ref1](#), [ref2](#)

zinc [ref1](#)

THANKS

There are so many people involved in creating a beautifully designed book like this. I would like to start by saying a big thank you to Maja, Bianca and Lydia, my photographer, food stylist and prop stylist for making every recipe look so amazing and wonderful. I absolutely love how this book looks and reads.

Thank you to Charlotte for guiding me along the weaning journey with Indie and helping me put this book together with such important and helpful information. You've given me and Rosie so much confidence with all of your knowledge and experience, so thank you for sharing that with us. You made weaning fun and enjoyable for us and I'm excited to see this book do the same for other people too.

I would like to say thank you to my team Carole, Martha, Jodie, Jess, Bríd, Bev and Nikki for working with me to produce such a lovely and special book and getting it out to the world.

Many thanks to the gorgeous models in the book – Indie Wicks, Milo Wicks, Arya Alshanti and Abigail Dawodu.

Finally thank you, Rosie, for giving me our two beautiful babies.




ABOUT JOE WICKS

Joe Wicks, aka The Body Coach, is Britain's favourite healthy cook. He has helped hundreds of thousands of people achieve new levels of fitness and fat loss with his bestselling recipe books and 90 Day Plans, as well as through his online social media community and YouTube channel.

Joe was appointed Children in Need's first Schools Ambassador in 2019 with the aim of encouraging UK schoolchildren to become more active and have fun in the process. During his UK Schools HIIT Tour in 2019, he travelled the length and breadth of the UK, helping to show young people that exercising is enjoyable as well as hugely beneficial.

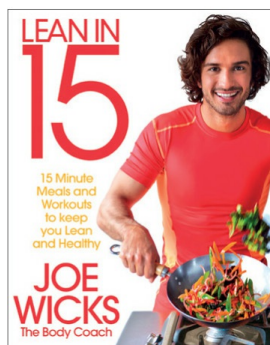
Joe lives in London with his wife Rosie and two young children. This is his eighth book.

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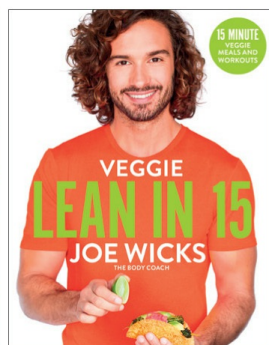
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Joe's 30-Minute Meals



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First published 2020 by Bluebird

This electronic edition published 2020 by Bluebird
an imprint of Pan Macmillan
The Smithson, 6 Briset Street, London EC1M 5NR

Associated companies throughout the world
www.panmacmillan.com

ISBN 978-1-5290-1634-5

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A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

PUBLISHER Carole Tonkinson
MANAGING EDITOR Martha Burley
SENIOR PRODUCTION CONTROLLER Sarah Badhan
DESIGN Ami Smithson
FOOD STYLING Bianca Nice
PROP STYLING Lydia Brun

Thanks to Jelly Fabrics for the loan of their printed fabrics for the photo shoot.

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