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## **RECIPES WITH REBECCA**

Hi! I'm Rebecca Parnell; I'm sure you've seen my face on some of our previous leaflets! As well as being Operations Manager for the town's four Anglican churches, I have also been running the Chat-Tea kitchen since October 2020, with my colleagues Karen Pritchard and Rachel Hawksworth.

A few people have asked me recently about the recipes I use in the Chat-Tea kitchen, as well as about how I came to love cooking so much. So, going forward, I will provide as many recipes as I can, on a printed sheet, so that you can keep them altogether in this folder, and try them out as and when you get the chance. I'll also explain a bit about my love for food and cookery!

I grew up on a Lincolnshire dairy farm - part of a large, traditional farming family. From a young age, I watched my Nana cooking fresh meals from home-grown and local produce; nothing was wasted, as so many of that generation, who had lived through the war, were so adept at. I began trying cookery aged 7 and in earnest, by 9 (taught mostly by my Dad who is himself a passionate foodie); by my early teens I was cooking Sunday dinners for 12 people and Christmas dinners since then have stretched to 25 guests with no sweat! Through my late teens and gap year, I worked in my parents' bakery and café in Yaxely, cooking and preparing outside catering orders during the days and in the kitchen of an Italian restaurant during the evenings. Holidays from university were spent working in the kitchen of a residential care home for the elderly.

So there's a little about me and my obvious love of food! I am passionate about simple, great-tasting, healthy meals, cooked on a budget and with minimal waste - it's how I was raised!

Please let me know how you get on trying the upcoming recipes! Rebecca xx

### **My Kitchen Essentials...**

This is a list of staples I always like to have in the kitchen, both at Chat-tea HQ and at home!

**Beef/Chicken/Veg stock cubes**

Bovril

**Chick peas/lentils (tinned)**

Cornflour

**Curry Powder**

**Garam Masala**

**Garlic granules/Garlic salt**

**Italian Seasoning/Mixed Herbs**

**Kidney/Butter beans (tinned)**

**Mustard Powder**

**Smoked Paprika**

**Tinned Tomatoes**

**Tomato Puree**

**Worcestershire Sauce**

## **Cooking Hints and Tips:**

- Meat is easier to slice before it's fully defrosted, so if using frozen meat, don't let it thaw out completely before you get chopping. If it has fully defrosted, or you've bought fresh, large scissors can sometimes be better at cutting meat than a knife, especially if you don't have a steel to keep your knives sharp.
- Don't throw away the leaves from your cauliflower! Slice the green off the stalks, chop and add to your meals - it tastes just the same as cabbage and is full of goodness.
- For a healthier option, use brown (also called wholegrain) rice instead of white, or mix them in equal quantities (this is what I do in the Chat-Tea kitchen!) and cook them for the same amount of time. Brown rice costs about the same as basmati, but is much more nutritious and contains about four and a half times as much fibre. For an even healthier option, add crumbled cauliflower to your rice; underneath curry, chilli, or any other strong flavours cauliflower is practically tasteless!
- Buying small pots of herbs from the supermarket is really expensive for what you get, so it is worth spending a little bit more to buy in bulk, either online or from a spice market stall or wholesaler. Four years ago, I bought a 1kg bag of mixed herbs (yes, I did look like I was going to start dealing!) from Amazon for about £10 and I am still working my way through the bag now! If you're green-fingered, why not grow your own in a pot or window box? (If anyone can teach me how to keep a coriander plant alive, please get in touch - I swear they come home with me to die!)
- Don't add salt to your recipe until you have added all the stock cubes, as these can be very salty. Adding salt is always the last thing I do to a recipe, after tasting and before serving.
- If all else fails - bulk out with beans! Tinned chick peas, lentils, kidney beans, butter beans and even baked beans are a great staple to keep in your cupboard where possible. They can be added to so many meals, to give extra nutrition and fibre and make things go further.
- If you're short on potatoes, you can add parsnips and swede to your chopped spuds before boiling, to make root potato mash, or add sweet potatoes and butternut squash to give a creamy taste, with extra goodness.
- If you make too much - freeze it! Use large freezer bags, release all the air, seal and lay flat on a baking tray to freeze. Once frozen, they take less space in the freezer and are also much quicker to defrost than if frozen in large Tupperware type tubs or containers.
- If your mushrooms have gone a bit past their best while in the fridge, you can peel the skin off easily from underneath the edge, towards the top of the mushroom. They can then be chopped and cooked, rather than wasted, and they will have a lovely strong flavour.



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## RECIPES WITH REBECCA

These recipe cards are designed to provide a basic outline of the ingredients needed to make each meal - the idea is that they will help you to use what you have available, so don't worry if you don't have all the things listed. I'll let you into a little secret...I pretty much NEVER follow a recipe when I cook! Just use what you have in your fridge/cupboards - you don't need to follow this card exactly to make a great meal!

### CHICKEN AND VEGETABLE CURRY



This card will be looking at what's needed to make a mild chicken and vegetable curry, like the ones served from the Chat-tea kitchen. When I make this for myself, I use at least a medium curry powder (I like it hot and sweet!) so feel free to make this recipe according to how spicy you like it. The ingredient list makes this recipe look tricky but it's actually a very simple 'throw it all in the pot' meal!

This recipe is designed for 2 hungry people and works out at about £2.40 per person (using the full recipe overleaf) but could be reduced to £1.80 if no meat is used.

#### Recipe Tips:

For this recipe, you can use chicken or turkey breasts, whole or pre-diced - whole/frozen are generally the cheapest, or fresh boneless thighs (a bit more expensive but a much more tender meat). You can also use pork instead - my absolute favourite is belly pork as the fat gives an amazing sweetness to a curry - and it's cheap! If you buy it from the butchers however, make sure to ask them to remove the rind (and they'll dice it for you too, if you ask nicely!) The packs in the supermarkets already have the rind cut off; pork loin steaks are just as good. Or how about you forego the meat altogether and just have veggies?!

Garam Masala is an amazing spice blend that does not have any heat to it - it's not like curry powder which is spicy, it just offers a great flavour.

Sweet potato goes really well in a curry and is much more nutritious than white potato. If you don't have any for this recipe however, you can still use normal potato, as it can help make your meal go further - no need to even peel white potatoes, just scrub and chop! Whichever you choose however, don't cut them too small or they will dissolve to nothing while cooking.

If you hate chopping onions (like me!) then you can use spring onions instead - I chop them with scissors as it's quicker and less fiddly. Don't forget you can use the whole of the spring onion - cut off the roots and the very tips, then peel off any limp leaves and use the rest.

If you don't have mango chutney or fresh mango for this recipe, then you can add chopped apple and/or raisins/sultanas to add some sweetness - especially if they are slightly past their best for eating uncooked. The same applies with tomatoes - use fresh if you don't have tinned - the more squishy and overripe, the better, as they will soften more while cooking.

# Ingredients:

- 300g chicken/pork, diced
- 1 medium onion (or about 4 spring onions) finely chopped
- Vegetables - my favourites for this recipe are:  
cauliflower (florets and green), spinach or greens, green beans, sweet potato (peeled, chopped) - aim for a mug of raw vegetables per person, more if you're not adding meat.
- 1 tin chopped/plum tomatoes
- 1 heaped tablespoon of tomato puree
- 2 garlic cloves, peeled and crushed (or 2 teaspoons of garlic granules/garlic paste)
- 1 chicken or veg stock cube
- 1 tin chick peas, drained and rinsed
- 2 heaped dessert spoons of Garam Masala
- Curry powder - add to taste (start slow!)
- 2 heaped teaspoons of cornflour (for thickening)

## **Optional/extra ingredients:**

- 2 tablespoons of hummus - plain/onion/red pepper flavours are all fine
- 2 tablespoons mango chutney/1 chopped mango/2 chopped apples and/or handful of raisins/sultanas
- 1/2 teaspoon fennel seeds
- 1/2 teaspoon mustard powder
- 150ml fresh cream or 1 tablespoon of natural/plain yogurt
- Fresh mint and/or coriander - 4-6 leaves, finely chopped

## **TIP:**

### **Thickening Sauces**

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Cornflour is one, if not the best way to thicken up gravies and sauces.

Place 2 heaped teaspoons in a small bowl or mug and add a little cold water - just enough until it mixes to a paste with no lumps.

Ensure your sauce/pan is boiling and pour in the cornflour paste a little at a time, while stirring the pan continuously. Add more until it thickens up to the right consistency.

This should be done right at the end of the process, as the sauce may stick to the pan if cooked too much more once thickened.

# Method:

- Find a decent sized saucepan or deep frying pan and heat a few tablespoons of oil in the pan. Add the chopped onions, garlic and fennel seeds and cook until softened (about 5-10 mins), then add the diced meat. Stir regularly until the meat is browned (about another 10 mins)
- Make up about a pint of chicken/veg stock with boiling water and add to the pan. Add the remainder of your ingredients and stir well to mix. Reduce the heat to a simmer and stir regularly.
- Boil a pan of slightly salted water and add the rice - about 120g in total for 2 people. I boil mine in plenty of water (about 2 inches above the top of the rice) and stir frequently - add more water if it starts to run a bit dry. Rice usually takes about 10-12 minutes but I taste it to check. When done, drain in a sieve, rinse with a kettle of boiling water, and return to the pan until required.
- Add more water to the curry if the pan appears to be boiling dry at any point - different vegetables will use different amounts of water - potatoes will absorb more, and frozen meat/veg will add water. The time taken to cook through will depend on the vegetables you have used and the size they have been cut. Use a skewer or the tip of a sharp knife to test if the vegetables have cooked and are soft. It should take about 15 minutes for this all to cook through.
- Once cooked, taste test the sauce and add anything more you feel it needs eg more curry powder, salt or sweetness. If the sauce is too watery, mix up some cornflour paste, bring back to the boil and add as explained above. Once thickened, remove from the heat and serve.