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# **Easy Meals**

Written by Rachel Allen

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# Easy Meals

Rachel Allen

Over 180 delicious recipes to get  
you through your busy life



Collins

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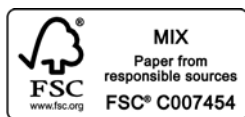
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# Contents

Introduction 6

**Store Cupboard** 8

**Fast and Fabulous** 70

**Five Ingredients or Less** 150

**One Pot** 212

**No Cook** 272

**Fuss-free Extras and Sides** 310

Index 342

Acknowledgements 350



**I**t seems like we all lead such hectic lifestyles these days. Even though I love to cook, often I just don't have the time to make complicated food. I'd love to spend six hours cooking an elaborate meal, but sometimes it just isn't realistic. I think that's true for a lot of people. Our lives are so busy now it can be difficult to set aside time to cook. That said, I don't think it's always the case that the more time you take over a meal the better it is. Truly great food can often be made in minutes and only using four or five ingredients.

It's not just time though; I often want fuss-free food for other reasons. Some days, for instance, I might cook a one-pot dish that bubbles away in the oven as I get on with other things. The other advantage of one-pot cooking is that with everything ready at the same time I don't have to coordinate various different side dishes. There are other times when I can't get to the shops so I need to make something using only ingredients that I already have at home. It is always so satisfying to be able to make good food using only things I can find in my cupboards, fridge or freezer, which means being able to use specific ingredients cleverly as well as knowing what things it's worth stocking up on.

This book is about times like these, when you want to cook a great meal but don't want lots of complex steps either in the preparation or in the actual cooking. That's why you'll find a chapter with recipes that use only five ingredients or fewer. I've also included a whole chapter for when you don't feel like turning on the oven at all. The recipes are unapologetically simple and straightforward – most are very quick from start to finish – yet they never compromise on flavour. A hectic lifestyle doesn't have to mean reaching for a sugary snack or ordering a takeaway. It's perfectly possible to cook wholesome food without too much time or fuss. This book shows you how to do just that – make food that is quick and simple yet always delicious.

*Rachel* x

PS. The oven temperatures in this book are for a conventional oven, but if I am using a fan oven then I usually reduce the temperature by 10 per cent.



# Fast and Fabulous

These recipes speak for themselves – they're incredibly flavourful and delicious, but can all be made in under a half hour. This is the kind of food that's perfect for a midweek supper when you've just come home from work but still want something quite special. Even though these are done in a flash, they are impressive enough to serve to even the most discerning guest!

# Parsnip soup with porcini oil

This simple parsnip soup is given a drizzling of luxury with some easy-to-make porcini oil. Porcini mushrooms are available in delis, specialist food shops and some supermarkets.

**Serves 4 (v)**

**PREPARATION TIME**

**10 minutes**

**COOKING TIME**

**20 minutes**

**50g (2oz) butter**

**1 small onion, peeled and roughly chopped**

**350g (12oz) parsnips, peeled and roughly chopped**

**550ml (19fl oz) vegetable (or chicken) stock**

**150ml (5fl oz) single or regular cream, or 75ml (3fl oz) milk and 75ml (3fl oz) cream**

**Salt and freshly ground black pepper**

**For the porcini oil**

**100ml (3½fl oz) olive oil**

**15g (½oz) dried porcini mushrooms**

- \* To make the porcini oil, pour the olive oil into a small saucepan on a medium–low heat, add the mushrooms and cook very gently for 6–8 minutes, then remove from the hob, strain the mushrooms (reserving the infused oil) and set aside.
- \* While the mushrooms are cooking, make the soup. Melt the butter in a large saucepan on a low heat, add the onion and parsnips, cover with a butter wrapper or piece of greaseproof paper and cook, stirring occasionally, for 6–8 minutes or until they are softened but not browned.
- \* Pour in the stock, then bring to the boil, reduce the heat and simmer for a further 10 minutes or until the parsnips have completely softened. Using a blender or hand-held blender, whiz the parsnips until smooth, then return to the heat, stir in the cream or milk and cream and season to taste with salt and pepper.
- \* To serve, ladle the soup into bowls and drizzle with about a teaspoon of the porcini oil (but not the mushrooms themselves) and top with a grinding of black pepper.



# Seven-minute chicken noodle soup

This is a supremely easy soup to put together. The Thai flavours are wonderfully refreshing, while the rice noodles and slivers of cooked chicken make it quite sustaining too.

**Serves 4**

**PREPARATION TIME**

**7 minutes**

**COOKING TIME**

**5 minutes**

**100g (3½oz) medium rice noodles**

**800ml (1 pint 9fl oz) chicken stock**

**2 cloves of garlic, peeled and crushed or finely grated**

**4 x 2–3mm (¾in) thick slices of unpeeled root ginger**

**300g (11oz) chicken breast or thigh meat, very thinly sliced**

**2–3 tbsp fish sauce (nam pla)**

**Juice of 1 lime or ½ lemon**

**4 spring onions, trimmed and sliced at an angle**

**4 tbsp roughly chopped coriander**

- \* Place the rice noodles in a bowl, cover with boiling water and allow to soak for 4–5 minutes, or according to the instructions on the packet, until softened.
- \* While they are soaking, place the stock in a saucepan with the garlic and ginger. Bring to the boil, then add the chicken and cook for 2 minutes until the chicken is opaque. Add the fish sauce and lime juice to taste, then add in the spring onions and coriander.
- \* Drain the noodles and divide between four warmed bowls, top with the soup and serve.

## Variation

**Five-minute prawn noodle soup:** Make as above, substituting the chicken with the same weight of finely sliced, raw, peeled tiger prawns.







## Five-minute pea soup

I challenge anyone to make a fresh soup any faster than this. It is perfect as an emergency starter or quick lunch. You don't even need to defrost the peas!

**Serves 4 (v)**

**PREPARATION TIME**

**2 minutes**

**COOKING TIME**

**3 minutes**

**500ml (18fl oz) vegetable  
(or chicken) stock**

**200g (7oz) frozen peas**

**2 cloves of garlic, peeled  
and finely grated**

**2 spring onions, trimmed  
and sliced**

**Salt and freshly ground  
black pepper**

**100ml (3½fl oz) single or  
regular cream**

**3 tsp chopped tarragon**

- \* Put the stock, frozen peas, garlic and the spring onions into a large saucepan on a high heat, season with salt and pepper and bring to the boil.
- \* Add the cream and tarragon and liquidise in a blender or using a hand-held blender. Pour the soup into the saucepan and heat through on the hob. Season with salt and pepper to taste and serve with crusty bread.