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FOR
DUMMIES®

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- Make healthy and delicious meals on a budget
- Eat well for breakfast, lunch, dinner and in-between
- Entertain a crowd without breaking the bank

Oliver Harrison

*Internet chef and presenter of
StudentCooking.tv*



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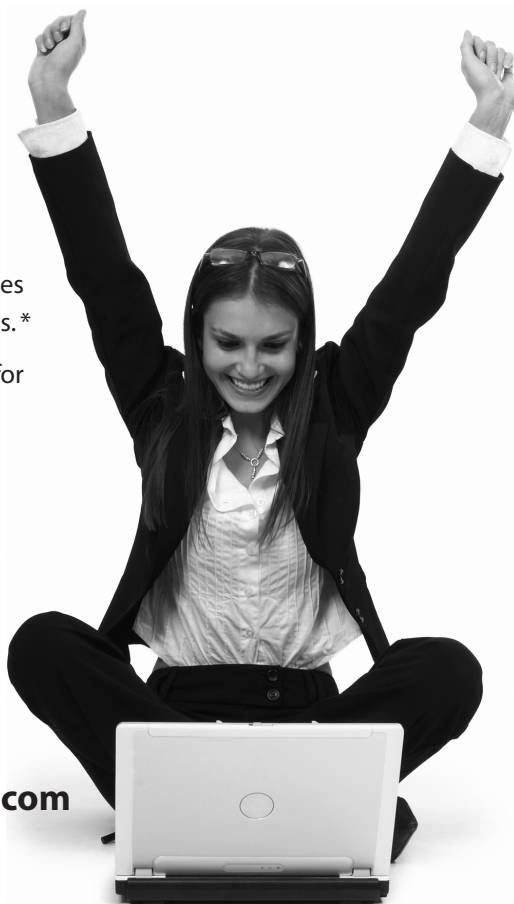
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by Oliver Harrison



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About the Author

Oliver Harrison is one of the presenters and part of the team that create studentcooking.tv, the award winning website and podcast series dedicated to cooking at uni. With a long interest in food and cooking, Oliver set up the show as an answer to the lack of practical cooking advice on offer to students while at uni. With its irreverent humour and less than serious approach to cooking, the show was an instant success and is now run at several universities across the U.K. Watch it now at www.studentcooking.tv.

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Introduction



Chances are, before coming to uni and facing up to three years or more of independent living, you won't have spent too many hours in the kitchen at home, training and honing your culinary skills to a fine art.

Cooking's the kind of thing that you often leave to your parents, the meal that magically appears when you get called down to dinner. Maybe you feel that you don't really need to know how to cook, because you'll manage throughout uni on bland pasta and pizzas like everyone else. And yet uni is the perfect time to start learning how to cook, and it's utterly brilliant. Having a night in and cooking for your friends is amazing – the banter between mates, the laughs around the table and that warm feeling as you see everyone tuck in and enjoy something that *you* made . . .

Learning to cook isn't hard at all. In the words of my Mum (yep, she's the one who got me into cooking), 'If you can read, you can cook.' You read the recipe, you do what it says. Cooking certainly isn't economics, combined maths, medieval English or whatever degree you're studying; it's a simple way to create meals that taste great, and all on a student budget.

So whether you're a bit of a culinary connoisseur or you've yet to grill your first sausage, this book is for you. By the time you've tried some of these recipes, you'll be well on your way to effortlessly creating fantastic food, knowing what ingredients go well together and how you can eke out £10 to feed yourself for a week. Think you can't cook? Think again.

About This Book

So here it is, your Bible of food, your guide to student grub, everything you need to make some fantastic meals for you and your mates. Unlike other student cookbooks, this one doesn't

patronise you and give you 50 different recipes for beans on toast. Just because you're on a budget doesn't mean you should be eating budget-style food. I know what you're likely to have in your kitchen, so don't suggest you use any fancy equipment or ingredients that you use once and then watch as they slowly fester and disintegrate in your sink or fridge.

Instead, this book gives you over 160 fantastic recipes that taste great and are simple to create. I go through how to feed yourself, your friends and even your entire hall (partay!) without having to extend your overdraft, as well as look at what ingredients to buy and where to buy them. Even if you're only armed with a microwave and a kettle, I still have recipes for you; so wherever you are and whatever kind of kitchen you have, prepare to get stuck in and get making some fantastic food.

Conventions Used in This Book

To make this book easy to read, you'll see that I use certain conventions:

- ✔ All web addresses appear in `monoFont`.
- ✔ Occasionally, I use specific measurements for ingredients, but most of the time, they're pretty rough – such as a mug or a handful.
- ✔ If you come across a cooking term you've never heard before, take a look at the glossary at the back of the book to understand what I'm going on about.
- ✔ All the recipes are followed by a list that gives you a complete nutritional breakdown.
- ✔ A little tomato symbol next to a recipe means that the meal is suitable for vegetarians.
- ✔ When eggs or chicken appear in a recipe, please make sure that you buy free-range. Okay, so they cost a little more than battery chickens and their eggs, but an animal that's spent its life stressed out in a cage can't produce good eggs or meat.

- ✓ All oven temperatures are based on fan ovens – ovens with a fan that moves the heat around. If your oven isn't a fan oven, allow a little more cooking time for each recipe.
- ✓ When I mention a 'spoonful' of something in the recipes, I mean a dessert-spoon size. I explain when anything bigger or smaller is needed.

Foolish Assumptions

Every *For Dummies* book is written with a particular reader in mind, and this one is no different. I'm guessing you're:

- ✓ At, or will soon be going to uni and need a bit of a helping hand in the kitchen.
- ✓ Not stupid. It's not your fault if you don't know how to cook, and don't let anyone ever tell you differently.
- ✓ Wanting a bit of a laugh and aren't afraid to get your hands dirty making something that your friends will enjoy.
- ✓ A bit strapped for cash at the moment and don't want to spend too much money on food.
- ✓ Wanting to experience different flavours and tastes, and fancy going on a bit of a culinary journey without it sounding poncy.

How This Book Is Organised

This book is designed so that you can dive in anywhere and still get the most out of things. You don't have to read it from cover to cover, taking notes on every page. Here's what's waiting for you.

Part 1: Getting Started

Things kick off in Chapter 1 with a quick look at why cooking at uni is so great and some of the benefits that come with becoming the hall chef. I go through what you need (both

ingredients and utensils), and look at what you *don't* need. Things get a bit yucky as I look at the lost art of kitchen hygiene and work out how long things last in the fridge and freezer before they become biohazards. Then it's off to the shops in Chapter 2 to look at how you can spend less and get more. Finally, in Chapter 3, I look at how what you eat affects how you feel and the nutrition in your nosh.

Part II: Breakfast, Lunch and Snacks

Part II gets you cooking, beginning in Chapter 4 as you whip up some healthy starts to the day and hangover-beating breakfasts. Lunch arrives before you know it, so in Chapter 5 you can slurp simple soups, packed full of vegetables and other healthy goodies as well as making quick and easy salads. I also give you some great little lunch recipes for two, covering everything for meat eaters to veggie visitors. Still feeling hungry? In Chapter 6 you can serve up snacks and dips to quieten that rowdy stomach, as well as making the best snacks to get you through a long night's revision.

Part III: Bringing On the Main Course

Chapter 7 is where you get stuck into making some great meals for when you're on your lonesome. No more ready-made meals for one as you'll soon be creating your own delicious dishes, whether they're meaty, fishy, vegetarian or vegan. In Chapter 8, you step up a gear and eat food to get you going; whether you need energy, brain food or meals to fight off fresher flu.

Discover how to make a chilli con carne in an electromagnetic box in Chapter 9 as you master microwave cooking and create meals you'd never thought possible. In Chapter 10, I look at how to make the most of time and money, making meals in under 10 minutes flat and getting the most out of any leftovers. I round things off in Chapter 11 with some decadent desserts and treats, spoiling the chocoholics among you and satisfying those who are hungry for more.

Part IV: Entertaining

Whether you're having a lads' or a girls' night in, Chapter 12 has the best recipes to entertain with, while in Chapter 13, you discover the surprisingly simple task of pulling together a Sunday roast, whether chicken, turkey, beef, lamb or pork. Someone special coming round? Turn to Chapter 14 as I show you the easy way to impress a date with your cooking. It's party time in Chapter 15, as I run through cooking for the ultimate uni party.

Part V: The Part of Tens

The final chapters read like the dream team of culinary top ten lists, all stuffed onto the few remaining pages of the book. Turn here for some quick and easy tips and money-saving suggestions about cooking at uni. And head to the Glossary if you need to know the difference between blanching and braising.

Icons Used in This Book

If you spot these icons in your book, don't worry, someone hasn't read through it before you and defaced the pages with witty little pictures; they're supposed to be there. They handily explain certain concepts and pointers:



Spot this sign and you know you'll have money leftover for a beer.



These are useful little pointers you won't want to forget in a hurry.



The target highlights little tips and tricks that help make cooking an easy and enjoyable experience.



Cooking can sometimes be dangerous, so make sure that you read these little pointers carefully.

Where to Go from Here

Get stuck in! Don't worry about starting at the beginning; choose a recipe that tickles your tastebuds and give it a go! Fancy a home-made chicken kebab? Turn to Chapter 5. Want to treat yourself to a chocolate brownie? Chapter 11 will satisfy your craving. Recipes for vegetarians and vegans are in each chapter, so no one misses out.

Of course, if you do prefer to start at the beginning, you have the added advantage of knowing what you need to start cooking, as well as a few pointers about where to buy all the ingredients that you require. Or if you're in a real hurry, check out the Cheat Sheet or Part of Tens at the front and back of the book.

Either way, get ready to get your hands dirty and you and your friends laughing and enjoying something that too many students are missing out on – proper home-cooked food, made with a little bit of money, a big bit of passion and probably fuelled by a lot of beer. Enjoy.

Part I

Getting Started



To go with our nuts and fruit, we need a natural sweetener - Quentin's just gone to get that now.'

In this part . . .

Tighten your apron, arm yourself with spatula and frying pan and brace yourself as you begin to embark on a culinary quest against hunger! Feeding yourself at uni may feel like a quest as epic as finding a certain stolen ring, but trust me, with the help of this book, you'll find it a lot easier, cheaper and more enjoyable than you thought. Part I is where it all begins and where you get kitted out with everything you need for cooking at uni.

Chapter 1

Saying Hello to Your Kitchen

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In This Chapter

- ▶ Cooking at uni – fun or fiendish?
 - ▶ Kitting out your kitchen
 - ▶ Storing and reheating food safely
-

There's no better time to start cooking than when you're at uni, surrounded by friends who are constantly up for having a laugh and grateful for anything edible you can rustle up for them.

This book has everything you need to make that happen. Don't worry if the extent of your culinary expertise is making a cheese sandwich or if you struggle peeling a banana; throw away any ideas you have of cooking and get ready to start looking forward to every mealtime.

Before you get stuck in to making fantastic food, you're going to need something to make it with. This chapter goes over everything you need to kit out your kitchen, from essential utensils to store-cupboard favourites.

Student kitchens aren't renowned for their cleanliness, so I also go over some basic kitchen hygiene. You want your food to be safe to eat and to avoid anything nasty developing in the fridge . . .

But enough with the scary talk. Read on for why you'll soon be consulting this book with a spatula in one hand and a saucepan in the other.

Checking out the Benefits of Cooking at Uni

The benefits of cooking for yourself when you're at uni are seriously massive. Not enough students realise how a bit of time in the kitchen can do wonders for their health, bank accounts, relationships and, of course, appetites. Cooking at uni:

- ✔ **Saves you money.** A lot of money. Cashing out on ready meals or takeaways five nights a week soon adds up and rapidly depletes your student loan. With a bit of essential reading (that is, this book), you can eat very well and very cheaply while you're at uni. Instead of paying £4 or £5 for food each night (which could soon add up to £25 a week just on your evening meal), you can spend around the same amount of money but feed yourself three good meals a day, seven days a week. So while everyone else is squandering their money on fast food, you can be quietly saving for that new Playstation game, new dress or, of course, textbook on your reading list . . .
- ✔ **Keeps you healthy.** By cooking for yourself, you can see exactly what you're putting into your body. You know how much salt a meal has, or what vegetables are in there, plus you can choose what you eat. Getting into shape for the summer holidays is easy when you're cooking for yourself because you can decide what to eat and really feel and see the benefits of it.

Having the ability to cook healthy grub not only keeps your skin glowing and your body in shape, but it also means you're less likely to catch any germs and bugs that are going round campus. Which means you spend less time in bed feeling sorry for yourself and more time out at parties.

- ✔ **Increases your attractiveness.** Seriously! Okay, so a floral apron and Marigolds don't do it for everyone, but there's something about a girl or guy who can cook. Mmm. No, I mean you'll have no problems making friends when you're at uni if you're handy in the kitchen. The ability to effortlessly cook a delicious meal is something that a

lot of students will admire you for. The warm smell of a home-made lasagne cooking in the oven turns a hall of residence into a home, and you'll soon become a living legend and the centre of most social activities.

One of the best memories I have of uni is staying in on a night and cooking for my mates in the flat. Everyone would chip in some money and I'd go off and buy the ingredients and cook the meal, while they sorted out the beer and wine. In the evening, we'd all get together round the kitchen table, drink, listen to music and enjoy a fantastic home-cooked meal. These are just some of the great memories uni life can give you!

Check out the chapters in Part IV for loads of recipes perfect for a raucous night in.

- ✓ **Makes you part of the community.** Students come and go in towns and cities and put a lot of money into the local economy. But not many really become a part of the community. Cooking for yourself connects you a bit more to the shops and businesses around you. A trip to the local market or independent shop means you quickly get to know your butcher, fishmonger and grocer who can give you loads of culinary tips and advice. Your money can support the local farmers and food suppliers in the area. It's nice to feel a bit more rooted and know that you're doing your bit for the community.
- ✓ **Develops a great skill.** Now, I don't want to get all doom-mongering on you, but one thing you find when you finish uni is that life suddenly becomes a lot harder. All of a sudden you're in the real world with bills to pay, a job to get to every morning and less and less time to watch *Loose Women*.

You also find that your personal time becomes very precious. After spending all day at work, you have little time to learn how to cook – it either becomes something you look forward to, or something you dread. Cooking is like tying your shoelaces: it's something that everyone has to learn at some point in their lives (after all, you have to eat to live), so why not make the most of it and spend the time you have at uni creating food that makes every mealtime that bit more enjoyable. Okay, lecture over!

Looking at What You Need

The good news is that you don't need to buy much to cook at uni, and you certainly don't need any expensive or fancy kitchen utensils. You can kit out your kitchen in one swift shop at a supermarket or hardware shop and still have change from a tenner.

Whatever you're cooking, having a selection of store cupboard ingredients is really handy. Always try to have a few basic ingredients in stock because you'll use them for a lot of your cooking. Again, it's all cheap stuff; nothing too fancy or expensive.

Grabbing some essential utensils

You can get your hands on all sorts of kitchen utensils from your local hardware store or supermarket (the big, out-of-town, 24-hour places are the best ones to visit for non-food items). Don't bother buying any named brands or all-singing, all-dancing gadgets – the simple budget range is fine.



If you're not at uni yet, check what your future hall of residence provides in its kitchens. You may find that it already supplies most of these items.

Here's my top ten essential utensils list. Get these and you're sorted for cooking at uni:

- ✓ **Measuring jug.** The cheapest measuring jugs cost less than 50p, so don't worry about getting a silver-plated one signed by Ainsley Harriot; a cheap plastic jug is fine. You use this for measuring liquids (surprise, surprise) and for adding any stock or sauces to risottos, curries and soups.
- ✓ **Colander.** At number two in my culinary countdown is a colander, like a sturdy sieve for those not in the know. Again, a cheap plastic one is fine. You need a colander for draining potatoes, spaghetti and rice. Buy one with smaller, rather than larger draining holes (make sure strands of spaghetti won't fit through it) so you can use it for everything.

- ✓ **Potato masher.** A potato masher, with its flat grid-shaped end, is very satisfying to use after a frustrating day in the library. Take it out on boiled potatoes, swede, carrots – anything that you want mushed to a pulp.
- ✓ **Spatula.** You use a spatula to stir and break up food in the frying pan, and they cost about 20p. A simple wooden one will suit your purposes just fine.
- ✓ **Tin opener.** Nothing's more infuriating than getting half-way through a recipe and realising you have nothing to open your tin of baked beans. Tin openers are one of life's great inventions. Don't splash out on an electric one – go for a sturdy hand-operated tin opener (preferably with one of those little hooks for opening beer bottles too).
- ✓ **Frying pan.** You're starting to get into the important utensils now and the frying pan is in at number six. Great for frying, playing tennis and air guitar, get a fairly decent frying pan because this is one utensil you'll use all the time. Non-stick pans are good, but not essential.
- ✓ **Saucepan(s).** That little bracketed 's' means you're wise to get more than one saucepan because you quite often need to use more than one at a time. You can often buy saucepans in sets of two or three, in increasing sizes. The small ones are good for making sauces and cooking rice, while the bigger ones are good for soups and boiling potatoes. Buy at least two sizes.

You don't need to spend a lot on saucepans; a cheap set does the job. As long as they conduct heat well, they're suitable.
- ✓ **Ovenproof dish.** You need an ovenproof dish for lasagnes and cottage pies, two staple meals of student life. It's also a good dish to cook fish in, especially in the microwave (see Chapter 7 for the recipes).

A little rectangular Pyrex dish only costs a couple of quid and is sturdy enough to last you your time at uni, if not longer.
- ✓ **Chopping board(s).** Here's that plural 's' again. Get a decent wooden chopping board for all your bread and vegetables and a cheap plastic one for meat preparation. Having two chopping boards (one for raw meat and fish and one for vegetables and cooked meat) helps to keep



your kitchen safe and hygienic and stops the chance of raw meat coming into contact with ready-to-eat food, leading to salmonella (food poisoning).

You'll use the wooden chopping board all the time, so try to get something nice and chunky. A good one will last you for years, so think of it as an investment. If you want to get something a little smaller and lighter, that's fine, but it won't last as long.

You won't use the plastic board as much as the wooden one so save your pennies and buy a cheap one. If you buy a really cheap thin board, place a tea towel underneath to stop it slipping on the work surface.

- ✓ **A good knife.** A smooth-bladed and sharp knife is *the* most important tool in your kitchen because you use it every time you cook. *Fork* out money on a knife (groan) and a good sturdy sharp one will not only last longer and perform better, but also be safer for you to use because a blunt knife may slip off food and cut you.

Hardware shops and supermarkets are good places to buy knives, although independent cook shops have a wider selection. Look to spend between £15 and £30 on a knife; it's a lot of money, but trust me, it's an essential buy. Scare your parents and ask them for a good knife as a leaving-home gift.

If you can bear to part with any more money, get a decent serrated knife too for slicing bread and carving roasts. 'When will I ever need to carve a Sunday roast?' I hear you ask. Well, read Chapter 13, and you'll be dying to try one.

Getting your hands on extra gadgets

The previous ten items can see you through your years of cooking at university and are a great start to kitting out your kitchen. However, if you've found yourself with a few quid left over and fancy pimpin' out your kitchen a little more, here are a few extra items that aren't essential, but are very useful and will impress your flatmates:



✓ **Blender.** I never had a jug-style blender while I was at uni, thinking that I'd never really use one. But now I have a blender, I use it every day, making fruit smoothies in the summer and toe-warming soups in the winter. A blender isn't essential, but is absolutely brilliant to have.

A hand blender (also called an immersion blender) is a cheaper alternative to an upright blender, but doesn't give you the same power and flexibility.

✓ **Scales.** Weighing scales are only really vital for baking when measurements need to be exact, but a cheap set of scales is still a useful item to have in your kitchen.

✓ **Cheese grater.** Another cheap utensil to buy, but one that's *grate* to have . . . I'll get my coat.

✓ **Casserole dish.** If you're a fan of casseroles (and let's face it, who isn't?), then casserole dishes are pretty important items in your life. A casserole dish is a large ovenproof dish with deep sides (and usually a lid) that allows you to make not only casseroles, but big fish pies, ratatouilles and anything that you cook in liquid. Some of the roasts in Chapter 13 benefit from being cooked in a casserole dish.

Casserole dishes aren't expensive. You can get a suitable one for around a fiver from a hardware store or large supermarket.

✓ **Large bowl.** You need a large bowl to be able to mix ingredients together, whether you're making a cake or an omelette. You can get a large bowl for less than a pound.

Compiling a Store Cupboard Hit List

You have your utensils sorted; now you need some food to start cooking. Coming up is a list of the ingredients to keep handy in your cupboard. Not only are they the foundations for a lot of the meals in this book, but also even if you're at the end of your overdraft and your cupboards are pretty much empty, as long as you have these ingredients, you can make a meal – see the Cheat Sheet for the Quick Pasta and Tomato Sauce recipe.

- ✓ **Onions.** Used all the time in Italian cooking, so perfect for your spag bols, lasagnes and many other meals, try to keep a few onions in your cupboard at all times.

White onions are used more often than red in most cooking, and are more readily available and cheaper.

Red onions are slightly sweeter than white onions and are nice when cooked slowly, or finely chopped and eaten raw in salads or with tuna mayo.

- ✓ **Garlic.** Useful for general cooking and fending off sudden vampire attacks, garlic is cheap to buy and another good store cupboard essential.

- ✓ **Pasta.** Pasta is perfect fast food. Bung the pasta in boiling water for ten minutes and you're halfway to making a meal. You can find loads of different types of pasta from the tubular style penne to the action man bow tie-esque farfalle. I advise buying a packet of spaghetti and something simple like penne or conchigli. Great for filling you up when your pockets are empty, keep a bag of pasta in your cupboard at all times.

- ✓ **Rice.** Rice is a staple ingredient for many Eastern dishes and fills you up on the cheap. If you have nothing else in your cupboards, a bowl of rice keeps you from feeling hungry. Like pasta, you can find many different types of rice. Basmati is good for Thai food and curries, while long grain rice is perfect for a good chilli con carne. Keep a packet of long grain rice in the cupboard, whether you choose the healthier (but longer to cook) brown rice or white rice.

- ✓ **Tinned chopped tomatoes.** Mix with a bit of pasta and you have a very cheap meal. You use chopped tomatoes in many Italian dishes, and a tin in your store cupboard always comes in handy, even if it's just for something to put on toast.

For a cheaper alternative, buy plum tomatoes and chop them up yourself.

- ✓ **Mixed dried herbs.** Herbs are great to work with and add a massive amount of flavour to your dishes. If in doubt, buy a jar of mixed dried herbs. A quick sprinkle of these before the end of cooking adds more flavour to your dish.

