

Peggy's 15 Power Cut Meals

The old British meals families lived on when the power went out in the 1970s. Every one still works without electricity.

PEGGY'S POWER CUT RULES

1. Keep the fridge and freezer shut. A full freezer stays frozen for up to 48 hours, or 24 if it's half full, as long as nobody opens it.
2. Never use a barbecue, camping stove or generator indoors. The fumes can kill, and you can't see or smell them.
3. A torch is safer than a candle. If you use one, stand it in a proper holder, away from curtains, and never leave it on its own.
4. The minute you hear a cut is coming, boil the kettle and fill a flask.

Never refreeze raw food that's thawed: cook it straight away till it's steaming hot. A gas hob only works in a power cut if the maker says it can be lit with a match. If you smell gas, put out flames, touch no switches, open the windows and ring 0800 111 999.

15 Toast on a Fork

YOU NEED

- 2 slices of bread
- A long toasting fork
- Or a dry frying pan, for the gas

From the cupboard: Butter, and plenty of it

METHOD

1. Let the fire burn down to glowing red coals. Move the fireguard only while you're toasting.
2. Spear the bread on the fork and hold it up to the coals, not in the flames, till golden. Then turn it over.
3. With no fire, toast it in a dry frying pan on the gas, a couple of minutes a side.
4. Butter it while it's hot, so it melts right in.

Open fire, or one gas ring

About 5 minutes

Makes 2 slices

About 15p for 2 slices (20c)

Use the longest fork you've got and keep your sleeves back. Your face will still end up hotter than the toast.

Eat it hot. Cold toast is no good to anybody.

14 Tomato Soup and a Dip

YOU NEED

- 1 tin tomato soup (400g)
- 2 slices of bread, for dipping
- A flask, if a cut's on its way

From the cupboard: Butter for the bread

METHOD

1. Tip the soup into a small saucepan and warm it on a low gas, stirring. Don't let it boil, or it catches on the bottom.
2. When it's steaming hot, pour it into a bowl, with the bread and butter alongside for dipping.
3. If your cooker's electric, heat the soup till steaming while the power's on. Pour it into a flask warmed with boiling water.
4. Keep the lid on till you want it, then pour it straight into a mug and drink it while it's still steaming.

One gas ring, or a flask filled beforehand

About 10 minutes

Makes 1 big bowl

About 60p a bowl (80c)

A dip is a slice of bread for dunking. Most mums made you have three spoonfuls before you got one.

Drink it while it steams as you pour. If it's gone lukewarm, throw it away. Don't keep any.

13 Luncheon Meat Fritters

YOU NEED

- 1 tin luncheon meat (340g)
- 4 tbsp self-raising flour
- About 5 tbsp cold water
- 1 tin baked beans, to serve

From the cupboard: 3 tbsp oil for frying; brown sauce

METHOD

1. Warm the beans in a small pan till bubbling. Put the lid on and move them off the heat.
2. Cut the meat into 6 thick slices and pat them dry. Whisk the flour and water with a fork to a thick batter.
3. Heat the oil in a shallow frying pan over a medium gas. A shallow pan, mind: never a chip pan by torchlight.
4. Dip each slice in the batter and lay it in the pan, away from you. Fry 2 to 3 minutes a side, till crisp, golden and hot right through.
5. Drain them on kitchen paper and serve with the beans and plenty of brown sauce.

One gas ring · shallow frying pan About 20 minutes

Serves 3 About 55p a plate (75c)

Spam fritters, if you had school dinners in the sixties. Brown sauce is not optional.

Eat them all hot, while the batter's crisp. Fritters don't keep, fridge or no fridge.

11 Beans on Toast

YOU NEED

- 1 tin baked beans (415g)
- 4 slices of bread
- A knob of butter, for the beans
- Grated cheese, if you like

From the cupboard: Butter for the toast, and plenty of pepper

METHOD

1. Tip the beans into a small saucepan with the knob of butter. Warm them gently on the gas, stirring, till bubbling.
2. Put the lid on and move them off the heat. Toast the bread on a fork at the fire, or in a dry frying pan, a couple of minutes a side.
3. Butter the toast, pile the beans on top and give them a good shake of pepper.
4. Grate a little cheese on top, if you like, and let it melt into the beans.

One gas ring · saucepan and dry frying pan

About 10 minutes Serves 2 About 30p a plate (40c)

No gas at all? Tinned beans are already cooked, so they're safe cold, straight from the tin.

Never keep beans in the opened tin. With the fridge off, eat them all.

12 Tinned Peaches and Evap

YOU NEED

- 1 tin peach slices (410g)
- 1 small tin evaporated milk (170g)
- A hand tin opener

From the cupboard: Nothing else

METHOD

1. Open the peaches with a hand tin opener and share them between 3 bowls.
2. Punch two holes in the top of the evap: one to pour, and one to let the air in.
3. Pour it over the peaches and eat it straight away.

No cooking at all 5 minutes Serves 3

About 40p a bowl (55c)

Evap or custard on your tinned fruit? Tell Peggy in the comments on YouTube.

Opened evap goes off like milk, so don't keep it in the tin. With the fridge off, use it all.

10 The Cold Supper

YOU NEED

- 2 slices of bread
- A lump of Cheddar (about 50g)
- A few slices of cold ham
- Pickled onions and beetroot
- A spoon of piccalilli

From the cupboard: Butter for the bread

METHOD

1. Butter the bread.
2. Cut the cheese and lay out the cold meat. Have the ham early in a cut, while the fridge is still cold.
3. Add whatever's in the pickle jars, and eat it like a picnic.

No cooking at all 5 minutes

Serves 1, or as many as you like About 70p a plate (95c)

Piccalilli is a bright yellow mustard pickle, if you've never had it. A tin of corned beef does instead of ham.

Ham's a fridge food. After 4 hours without power, older people should leave it out.

9 Egg in a Cup

YOU NEED

- 2 eggs
- A knob of butter
- 1 slice of bread, for toast soldiers

From the cupboard: Salt and pepper, and butter for the toast

METHOD

1. Toast the bread in a dry frying pan, a couple of minutes a side. Butter it and cut it into soldiers.
2. Lower the eggs into a small pan of boiling water. Boil about 7 minutes, so the yolks are just set but still soft.
3. Cool them under the cold tap for a moment, then scoop them into a teacup with the butter, salt and pepper.
4. Mash it all up with a spoon, and dip in the soldiers.

One gas ring · small saucepan

About 15 minutes

Serves 1

About 50p (65¢)

Soft yolks are fine with British Lion eggs. In the US, the advice is to cook eggs till the yolks are firm.

Eat it while it's warm. It won't keep.

8 Bread and Dripping

YOU NEED

- 1 thick slice of bread
- 1 tbsp beef dripping (about 20g)
- A scrape of the brown jelly underneath

From the cupboard: A pinch of salt

METHOD

1. Spread the dripping on the bread, nice and thick.
2. Scrape some of the dark brown jelly from the bottom of the basin and spread it on top.
3. Sprinkle with a pinch of salt.

No cooking at all

2 minutes

Makes 1 thick slice

About 20p a slice (25¢)

Save the dripping from your own roast and it's free. Dripping or not in this house? Tell Peggy on YouTube.

Keep dripping covered in the fridge. If the fridge has been off over 4 hours, throw the jelly away.

7 Boil-in-the-Bag Cod

YOU NEED

- 1 boil-in-the-bag cod in parsley sauce
- 40g instant mash (4 heaped tbsp)
- A handful of frozen peas (50g)

From the cupboard: A knob of butter and pepper

METHOD

1. Bring a big pan of water to the boil on the gas. Drop in the bag and simmer about 20 minutes, or as the packet says.
2. Add the peas to the pan for the last 5 minutes, so they're piping hot.
3. Ladle 150ml of the boiling water into a bowl and stir in the mash with a fork, with a knob of butter and pepper.
4. Lift out the bag with tongs and snip the corner. Pour it over the mash and drained peas: the fish should be steaming and flake easily.

One gas ring · big saucepan

About 25 minutes

Serves 1

About £1.80 a plate (\$2.40)

In a long cut, eat the fridge food first, then the freezer food as it thaws. Never refreeze thawed raw food.

Eat it straight away. Fish leftovers don't keep with the fridge off.

6 Cocoa at Bedtime

YOU NEED

- 1 mug of milk (250ml)
- 1 heaped tsp cocoa powder
- 1 heaped tsp sugar

From the cupboard: Nothing else

METHOD

1. Warm the milk in a small saucepan on a low gas till it steams. Don't let it boil over.
2. Mix the cocoa and sugar to a smooth paste in the mug with a splash of the hot milk, or it goes lumpy.
3. Pour in the rest of the milk, stirring as you go.
4. Drink it downstairs, then take a torch up to bed, not a candle, with a hand free for the rail. Hot water bottles: hot, never boiling.

One gas ring · small saucepan

About 5 minutes

Makes 1 mug

About 25p a mug (35¢)

No gas? Hot water from the flask and a good splash of milk makes a decent cocoa.

Long-life milk keeps in the cupboard till it's opened. Then it needs the fridge, like any milk.

5 Bubble and Squeak

YOU NEED

- 400g leftover mashed potato
- 200g leftover cooked cabbage
- 1 tbsp dripping or oil
- An egg each, if you're feeling flush

From the cupboard: Salt and pepper

METHOD

1. Mash the potato and cabbage with salt and pepper. Use leftovers under 2 days old, and only if the fridge hasn't been off 4 hours.
2. Heat the dripping in a frying pan over a medium gas, and press the mixture in flat.
3. Leave it alone for 5 minutes, till there's a brown crust underneath. Don't keep poking it.
4. Turn it over in pieces and fry 5 minutes more, till it's crusty and steaming hot right through.
5. Fry the eggs alongside till the whites are set. Runny yolks are fine with British Lion eggs; in the US, cook till firm.

One gas ring · frying pan

About 15 minutes

Serves 2

About 45p a plate (60¢)

Fry it in dripping if you've got some. You see, bread and dripping comes in handy after all.

Leftovers can only be reheated once, so eat it all hot, straight from the pan.

4 Porridge from the Flask

YOU NEED

- Half a mug of quick oats (about 40g)
- A flask of water, boiled the night before
- 1 tbsp golden syrup

From the cupboard: A pinch of salt; a splash of long-life milk, if you like

METHOD

1. The night before, fill a flask with boiling water, standing it in the sink in case it spills. Screw the lid on tight.
2. In the morning, put the oats in a bowl and pour over about twice as much hot water from the flask.
3. Stir, put a plate on top and wait 5 minutes, till the oats are soft and thick.
4. Stir again, and drizzle with golden syrup.

A flask of boiling water

5 minutes

Serves 1

About 10p a bowl (15¢)

Warm the flask with a little boiling water first and tip it out. It stays hotter for longer.

Make it fresh each morning, and eat it while it's warm.

3 Lancashire Hotpot

YOU NEED

- 300g lamb neck, in chunks
- 1 onion, sliced
- 400g potatoes, sliced thin
- 1 stock cube in 300ml hot water

From the cupboard: Salt and pepper, and a little butter for the top; pickled red cabbage, to serve

METHOD

1. Only an old gas oven with no electric ignition, fan or controls works in a power cut. Light it as its instructions say.
2. Layer the lamb and onion in a deep ovenproof pot with a lid, seasoning as you go.
3. Overlap the potatoes on top like roof tiles, and pour the stock over. Dot the top with butter.
4. Lid on for 1½ hours, then lid off for 30 minutes, till the top is golden and crisp.
5. It's done when the lamb is tender and the gravy's bubbling. Never go out and leave the oven on.

Old gas oven · Oven 160°C · 140 fan · gas 3 · 325°F

About 2 hours 15 minutes

Serves 2

About £2.20 a plate (\$2.90)

Serve it with pickled red cabbage, the way Lancashire always has.

No fridge? Don't keep any. Otherwise fridge in 2 hours, eat in 2 days, reheat once till piping hot.

2 Jacket Potatoes in the Fire

YOU NEED

- 1 big baking potato each (about 250g)
- Foil
- Grated Cheddar (about 30g each)

From the cupboard: Butter, salt and pepper

METHOD

1. Wait till the fire has burned down to red embers. Prick the potato and wrap it tightly in foil.
2. Push it right into the embers with the fire tongs and put the fireguard back. Leave it about an hour, turning once.
3. Lift it out with the tongs and push in a skewer. It should slide in easily, soft right through.
4. Split it, add butter and cheese, and eat it off your knee in front of the fire.
5. No fire? An old gas oven with no electric ignition, fan or controls will do: Oven 200°C · 180 fan · gas 6 · 400°F, an hour.

Open fire embers, or an old gas oven

About 1 hour

1 potato each

About 60p each (80¢)

Chestnuts on the coal shovel? Sweet chestnuts only, never conkers, and nick the skins first or they go bang.

Eat it hot. With the fridge off, don't keep a cooked potato for later.

1 Pobs

YOU NEED

- 1 or 2 slices of bread
- A mug of milk (250ml)
- A sprinkle of sugar

From the cupboard: A knob of butter, a pinch of nutmeg or a spoon of golden syrup, if you like

METHOD

1. Tear the bread into a bowl.
2. Warm the milk in a small pan on the gas till it steams. Or use half a mug of hot water from the flask and a good splash of milk.
3. Pour it over the bread and leave it 2 or 3 minutes, till it's soft.
4. Sprinkle the sugar on top, and eat it while it's warm.

One gas ring, or a flask of hot water

About 5 minutes

Serves 1

About 25p a bowl (35¢)

Some added a knob of butter, a pinch of nutmeg or a spoon of golden syrup. Every one of them was right.

Make it fresh and eat it warm. Bread and milk doesn't keep.

Want more?

Peggy's Power Cut Cookbook has all fifteen of these, ten more and the safety pages, each on its own page with a colour photo. It's at littlepeggyskitchen.com

Prices are rough October 2026 UK supermarket costs, with US dollars at about \$1.33 to the pound. Ovens and hobs vary, so use the times as a guide, and check labels for allergens. Free to print and share. Peggy is an AI-made character. The recipes, prices and history are real.