

Peggy's 15 Wartime Ration Meals

What British families ate to get by on the ration in the Second World War. Every one still works today, and each comes with what it costs now.

ONE GROWN-UP'S RATION FOR A WEEK

Bacon or ham 4 oz (113g) · butter 2 oz (57g) · margarine 4 oz (113g) · cheese 2 oz (57g) · sugar 8 oz (227g) · tea 2 oz (57g) · milk 3 pints · one fresh egg, if the hens were laying.

Plus meat by price, and 16 points a month for tins and dried fruit. The amounts changed through the war, so take it as a typical week.

Ovens are given in °C, fan, gas mark and °F. Cook meat and fish right through, and keep hot oil away from little hands.

15 Potato Floddies

YOU NEED

- 2 medium potatoes
- 1 small onion
- A rasher of bacon each, if you saved one

From the cupboard: A little oil or dripping, salt and pepper; brown sauce, to serve

METHOD

1. Peel and grate the potatoes and the onion. Squeeze out the water in a clean tea towel.
2. Season with salt and pepper. Heat a little fat in a shallow frying pan.
3. Drop in spoonfuls and press them flat. Fry 3 to 4 minutes a side till crisp and golden.
4. Fry the bacon alongside if you've got it, or serve them with a dab of brown sauce.

Hob · shallow frying pan

About 20 minutes

Serves 2

About 25p a plate (35¢)

Grate the potato just before you fry, or it turns grey. Squeeze it hard: wet potato won't crisp.

Best straight from the pan, while they're crisp.

14 Mock Banana Sandwiches

YOU NEED

- 1 parsnip
- 1 tsp sugar
- A few drops of banana essence
- 4 slices of bread

From the cupboard: A scrape of margarine

METHOD

1. Peel and chop the parsnip. Boil it till soft, about 15 minutes.
2. Drain it well and mash it with the sugar and the banana essence. Let it cool.
3. Scrape the bread with margarine, spread on the parsnip, and close your eyes.

Hob · small pan

About 25 minutes

Makes 2 rounds

About 25p a round (35¢)

Did it taste like banana? Well. It tasted like a parsnip that had heard about bananas.

Eat them fresh. Mashed parsnip keeps 2 days in the fridge, covered.

13 Carrot Cookies

YOU NEED

- 1 tbsp margarine
- 2 tbsp sugar
- 4 tbsp grated raw carrot
- A few drops of vanilla
- 6 tbsp self-raising flour

From the cupboard: A little margarine for the tray

METHOD

1. Cream the margarine and sugar. Beat in the grated carrot and the vanilla.
2. Fold in the flour. Drop teaspoons of the mixture onto a greased baking tray.
3. Bake about 20 minutes. They come out soft, like little cakes.

Oven 190°C · 170 fan · gas 5 · 375°F About 30 minutes

Makes about 12 About 3p each (5¢)

Grate the carrot fine, so it melts into the mix. Call them biscuits, or cookies if you're in America.

Keep them in a tin for 2 days. They're soft, so don't expect a crunch.

12 Dried Egg on Toast

YOU NEED

- 1 level tbsp dried egg powder
- 2 tbsp water
- 1 slice of hot toast
- Or 2 fresh eggs, today

From the cupboard: A scrap of margarine; salt and pepper

METHOD

1. Mix 1 level tbsp of powder with 2 tbsp of water till smooth. That makes one egg.
2. Melt the margarine in a small pan and scramble the egg gently, stirring, till it's set.
3. Pile it on the hot toast. With fresh eggs, beat two and scramble them the same way.

Hob · small pan About 10 minutes Serves 1

About 60p a plate (80¢)

Dried egg is still sold for baking. Fresh eggs: British Lion are fine soft; in the US, cook them till firm.

Eat it straight away, while the toast's hot.

11 Toad in the Hole

YOU NEED

- 4 sausages
- 100g plain flour
- 1 egg
- 250ml milk

From the cupboard: 1 tbsp oil or dripping, and a pinch of salt

METHOD

1. Whisk the flour, egg and milk with the salt to a smooth batter. Let it stand while the oven heats.
2. Put the sausages and fat in a roasting tin and brown them in the hot oven for 10 minutes.
3. With oven gloves on, pour the batter round them, away from you, while the fat's sizzling. Bake about 30 minutes, door shut.
4. It's done when it's risen and golden. Check a sausage is steaming hot with no pink.

Oven 220°C · 200 fan · gas 7 · 425°F About 45 minutes

Serves 2 About 70p a plate (95¢)

Don't open the oven door, or it won't rise. Get the fat really hot before the batter goes in.

Best hot. Fridge leftovers within 2 hours, eat within 2 days, reheat once till piping hot.

10 Corned Beef Hash

YOU NEED

- 1 tin of corned beef (340g)
- 3 or 4 boiled potatoes, diced
- 1 onion

From the cupboard: A little oil or dripping, salt and pepper; brown sauce, to serve

METHOD

1. Chop the onion and fry it in a little fat till soft. Add the diced boiled potatoes.
2. Break in the corned beef and stir it through.
3. Press it down and leave it alone till there's a brown crust underneath.
4. Turn it over in pieces and let the other side brown. Serve it piping hot.

Hob · frying pan About 25 minutes Serves 3

About £1 a plate (\$1.35)

If you're in America, it's the corned beef in a tin, not the kind you have on St Patrick's Day.

Fridge leftovers within 2 hours, eat within 2 days, reheat once till piping hot.

9 Bread Pudding

YOU NEED

- 250g stale bread
- 150g mixed dried fruit
- 50g sugar, and a little extra
- 2 tsp mixed spice
- 40g margarine, melted
- 1 egg

From the cupboard: Cold water for soaking, and a little margarine for the tin

METHOD

1. Tear the bread into a bowl, cover it with cold water and soak 30 minutes. Squeeze it out hard.
2. Beat in the fruit, sugar, spice, melted margarine and egg.
3. Spread it in a greased tin about 20cm square and sprinkle a little sugar on top.
4. Bake about 1¼ hours, till firm and brown. Cut into 9 squares.

Oven 180°C · 160 fan · gas 4 · 350°F

About 1 hour 45 minutes

Makes 9 squares

About 20p a square (25¢)

Not to be confused with bread and butter pudding, which is another thing entirely.

Even better cold next day. Fridge it within 2 hours, eat within 2 days, or freeze for 3 months.

8 Homity Pie

YOU NEED

- Shortcrust pastry for a 20cm tin
- 400g potatoes
- 1 onion and 1 leek
- 50g cheddar, grated

From the cupboard: A knob of margarine, salt, pepper and a little parsley

METHOD

1. Line a 20cm tin with the pastry. Boil the potatoes till just tender, then cut them into chunks.
2. Slice the onion and leek and soften them in the margarine for about 10 minutes.
3. Mix them with the potatoes, parsley, salt and pepper, and fill the pastry case.
4. Cheese on top, where you can see it. Bake 30 to 35 minutes till golden.

Oven 200°C · 180 fan · gas 6 · 400°F

About 1 hour

Serves 6

About 30p a slice (40¢)

Shop-bought shortcrust saves a job. Warm or cold, it's a proper meal, and a slice travels well.

Fridge within 2 hours and eat within 2 days, cold or reheated once till piping hot.

7 Stuffed Hearts

YOU NEED

- 2 lamb's hearts
- Half a packet of sage and onion stuffing
- 1 onion and 2 carrots
- 300ml gravy or stock

From the cupboard: A little dripping or oil, salt and pepper

METHOD

1. Snip out the tubes and gristle with kitchen scissors, and wipe out any blood with kitchen paper. Don't rinse them under the tap.
2. Make up the stuffing and fill the hearts. Brown them all over in the fat in a casserole dish.
3. Add the sliced onion and carrots and the gravy. Put the lid on.
4. Braise about 2 hours, till tender. Slice one: it should be steaming hot with no pink.

Oven 160°C · 140 fan · gas 3 · 325°F

About 2 hours 30 minutes

Serves 2

About £1 a plate (\$1.35)

It's just lean meat, really. Ask the butcher to trim them, and you're halfway there.

Fridge leftovers within 2 hours, eat within 2 days, reheat once till piping hot.

6 Rabbit Stew

YOU NEED

- 1 rabbit, jointed
- 2 tbsp seasoned flour
- 2 onions, 3 carrots
- A rasher of bacon, if any
- 600ml stock
- Dumplings, if you're flush

From the cupboard: A little dripping or oil. For dumplings: 100g self-raising flour, 50g suet, salt and cold water

METHOD

1. Roll the rabbit pieces in the seasoned flour and brown them all over in a little fat.
2. Add the sliced onions and carrots, the bacon and the stock, and bring it to a simmer.
3. Lid on, and simmer gently about 1½ hours, till the meat comes away from the bone.
4. For dumplings, mix the flour, suet and salt with cold water to a soft dough. Roll 8 balls and sit them on top for the last 20 minutes.
5. Check the rabbit is steaming hot with no pink near the bone.

Hob · heavy pot with a lid

About 2 hours

Serves 4

About £1.70 a plate (\$2.30)

Some mums finished stews in a haybox to save fuel. It leaves food warm for hours, so keep it simmering instead.

Fridge within 2 hours, eat within 2 days, or freeze for 3 months. Reheat once till piping hot.

5 The Eggless Sponge

YOU NEED

- 175g self-raising flour
- 50g margarine and 50g sugar
- 1 tbsp golden syrup
- 1 tsp bicarbonate of soda
- 150ml warm milk
- Jam for the middle

From the cupboard: A little margarine for the tins

METHOD

1. Rub the margarine into the flour. Stir in the sugar and the golden syrup.
2. Stir the bicarb into the warm milk, then mix it in quickly to a soft batter.
3. Divide it between two greased 18cm sandwich tins. Bake 20 to 25 minutes, till springy.
4. Cool on a rack, then sandwich them together with jam.

Oven 180°C · 160 fan · gas 4 · 350°F

About 40 minutes

Makes 8 slices

About 10p a slice (15c)

Get it in the oven as soon as the bicarb goes in, while it's still fizzing. Nobody will ever guess.

Keep it in a tin for 2 days.

4 Mock Goose

YOU NEED

- 500g potatoes
- 1 large cooking apple
- 1 onion
- 1 tsp dried sage
- 25g cheddar, grated
- 250ml stock

From the cupboard: Salt and pepper

METHOD

1. Slice the potatoes, apple and onion thin.
2. Layer them in a dish with the sage, cheese, salt and pepper, ending with potato. Pour in the stock.
3. Cover with a lid or foil and bake for 1 hour.
4. Take the cover off and bake 15 to 20 minutes more, till the top is brown and crisp.

Oven 190°C · 170 fan · gas 5 · 375°F

About 1 hour 30 minutes

Serves 4

About 45p a plate (60c)

Use a cooking apple. It melts into the potatoes and tastes like the apple sauce you'd have with a goose.

Fridge leftovers within 2 hours, eat within 2 days, reheat once till piping hot.

3 Carrot Christmas Pudding

YOU NEED

- 100g plain flour and 100g breadcrumbs
- 75g suet or fat, 50g sugar
- 1 tsp mixed spice
- 100g dried fruit
- 100g grated carrot
- 100g grated potato

From the cupboard: A little margarine for the basin; custard, to serve

METHOD

1. Mix everything together well. The carrot and potato keep it moist.
2. Pack it into a greased 1 litre pudding basin. Cover with greaseproof paper, pleated in the middle, and tie it with string.
3. Stand it in a big pan with boiling water halfway up the basin. Lid on, and steam about 2 hours.
4. Top the pan up from the kettle as you go. Never let it boil dry.

Hob · big pan with a lid, for steaming

About 2 hours 15 minutes

Serves 6

About 20p a slice (25c)

Sit the basin on an upturned saucer, so it never touches the bottom of the pan. Nobody guesses the carrot.

Wrap leftovers and fridge within 2 hours. Eat within 2 days, reheated once till piping hot.

2 Woolton Pie

YOU NEED

- 1kg mixed veg: potato, carrot, swede
- A few cauliflower florets and 1 onion
- 1 tbsp porridge oats
- 300ml vegetable stock
- Mash or pastry for the top
- A little grated cheese

From the cupboard: Salt and pepper; gravy, to serve

METHOD

1. Dice the veg. Simmer it in the stock with the oats for 10 minutes, stirring now and then.
2. Tip it into a pie dish. Top with mash or pastry, then the grated cheese.
3. Bake about 30 minutes, till brown on top and bubbling at the edges. Gravy on the side.

Oven 200°C · 180 fan · gas 6 · 400°F

About 1 hour

Serves 4

About 50p a plate (65¢)

People joked it was steak and kidney pie without the steak and kidney. With a drop of gravy, nobody minds.

Fridge within 2 hours, eat within 2 days, reheat once till piping hot. Freezes for 3 months.

1 Fish and Chips

YOU NEED

- 2 white fish fillets
- 500g floury potatoes
- 100g self-raising flour
- 150ml cold sparkling water

From the cupboard: Oil for the tray and the pan, salt and malt vinegar; mushy peas, if you can get them

METHOD

1. Cut thick chips and toss them in a little oil. Roast 35 to 40 minutes, turning them halfway.
2. Whisk the flour and sparkling water to a thick batter. Heat 1cm of oil in a frying pan.
3. Dip the fish in the batter and lay it in the pan, away from you. Fry 3 to 4 minutes a side, till golden and the fish flakes.
4. Salt and vinegar on the chips, and mushy peas if you can get them.

Oven 220°C · 200 fan · gas 7 · 425°F, and a frying pan

About 50 minutes

Serves 2

About £1.70 a plate at home (\$2.30)

Our mums kept the dripping and used it again and again. Use fresh oil each time, and never a chip pan.

Best eaten straight away, while the batter's crisp.

Want more?

Peggy's Wartime Ration Recipes has all fifteen of these and ten more, 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.