Spring/Summer
2026

From Our Kitchen to Yours

24 family favourites,
cooked by our centre chefs



Hello families

Every day, our centre chefs cook fresh, healthy meals for thousands of children across Australia. They›re often the people children remember most. Families often ask us for the recipes. So here they are.

This book has 12 snacks and 12 mains from our spring/summer menu, scaled down from centre batches to family sizes. They're all nut free, and every main has a vegetarian option.



The chefs behind our recipes

Five of our chefs have shared their own favourite recipes and tips in this book: Eliza Jupp *(Papilio Barton)*, Robin Duckwitz *(Milestones Keperra)*, Daniel Ty *(Papilio Hornsby)*, Kate Waterhouse *(Papilio Turner)* and Louise Hinton *(Kids Academy Penrith)*.

The remaining recipes have been sourced from our fresh food partner, Woolworths at Work, and were developed in collaboration with The Biting Truth, a nutrition consultancy founded by Accredited Practising Dietitians Anna Debenham and Alex Parker. Their team is passionate about turning nutrition science into simple, practical habits that work in everyday life.

All recipes are designed to align with the Australian Dietary Guidelines, the National Quality Framework for early childhood education and care (ACECQA), and relevant state-based nutrition programs.

We hope these recipes make mealtimes a little easier. And maybe your little one will finally eat zucchini at home too.

Happy cooking!

The Affinity Education team

Table of Contents

How to use this book 4

Early childhood nutrition 5

Little helpers in the kitchen 6

"They eat it at daycare, but not at home!" 7

Snacks

Chef Eliza's ABC Sugar-Free Breakfast Muffins 9

Tasty Cheese and Baby Spinach Muffins 10

Chef Robin's Zucchini Bites 11

Easy Oaty Slice with Crunchy Veggies 12

Chef Daniel's Banana Peach Bread 13

Hummus Three Ways: Zippy, Flamingo Pink and Hulk 14

Pineapple and Cheese Pizzas 15

Chef Daniel's Savoury Scrolls 16

Chef Daniel's Pancake Batter Slab 17

Chef Kate's Bliss Balls 18

Roasted Veggie Chips and Green Pea Dip 19

Oven Baked Broccoli Chips 20

Mains

Chicken and Lentil San Choy Bau 22

Nonna's Traditional Bolognese 23

Build Your Own Beef Burrito Bowls 24

Monster Mash Beef and Creamy Potato Pie 25

Go Thai Fish Curry with Rice 26

Catch of the Day Tuna Pasta Bake 27

Chicken, Pumpkin and Ricotta Mac and Cheese 28

Chef Daniel's Bowl of Sunshine Yellow Dahl and Basmati Rice 29

Chicken Pesto Pasta with Chef Lou's Nut Free Pesto 30

Colourful Beef Fried Rice Bowls 31

Mighty Chicken Biryani 32

Sticky Teriyaki Beef and Fluffy Rice 33

Healthy lunchbox tips 34

Thank you 35



How to use this book

Serving Sizes

Snacks make a batch to share.
Mains serve 4-6 (about 2 adults and 2-3 children).

Halve or double as you need.

Look for these icons on each recipe:

Icon	Meaning
	Vegetarian
	Has a vegetarian swap
	Gluten free, or has a gluten free swap
	Dairy free, or has a dairy free swap
	Egg free, or has an egg free swap
	Freezes well
	Good for lunchboxes
	Easy jobs for children to help with

Allergies

All recipes are nut free. Always check labels, as ingredients can change. If your child has an allergy or intolerance, follow the advice of their doctor or dietitian.

Early childhood nutrition

Why the first five years matter

Children grow faster in their first five years than at any other time. Their brains, bones and bodies need good food to keep up. This is also when they learn what food is, how it tastes and how to enjoy it. The habits they form now often stay with them for life.

You don't need to get it perfect every day. Aim for a mix of foods from the five food groups across the week, and offer water as the main drink.

How much do young children need each day?

Food group	1-2 years	2-3 years	4-8 years
Vegetables and legumes	2-3 serves	2 ½ serves	4 ½ serves
Fruit	½ serve	1 serve	1 ½ serves
Grains (bread, rice, pasta, oats)	4 serves	4 serves	4 serves
Meat, fish, eggs, tofu, legumes	1 serve	1 serve	1 ½ serves
Milk, yoghurt, cheese	1-1 ½ serves	1 ½ serves	1 ½-2 serves

What does one serve look like?

Food group	One serve is
Vegetables	½ cup cooked veggies, or 1 cup salad or leafy greens
Fruit	1 medium piece, or 1 cup diced
Grains	1 slice of bread, or ½ cup cooked rice or pasta
Meat and alternatives	65 g cooked lean meat, 80 g chicken, 100 g fish, 170 g tofu, 2 eggs or 1 cup cooked legumes
Dairy	1 cup milk, 2 slices cheese or ¾ cup yoghurt

Young children have small tummies, so these serves are spread across meals and snacks. That's why our snacks always come with fruit or veggies on the side.

Source: Australian Dietary Guidelines, via Nutrition Australia.

Keeping little ones safe at mealtimes

- Grate, steam or thinly slice hard raw foods like carrot, celery and apple for children under 3.
- Cut small round foods like grapes and cherry tomatoes into quarters.
- Don't give whole nuts to children under 5.
- Don't give honey to babies under 12 months.
- Cut noodles and long pasta into short pieces for younger children.
- Always have children sit down to eat, and stay with them while they eat.

Little helpers in the kitchen

Children are more likely to try food they've helped make. Cooking together also builds counting, language, fine motor skills and confidence. Look for the Little hands icon on recipes with easy jobs for children.

Jobs for every age

Age	Jobs they can try
2-3 years	Wash fruit and veggies, tear lettuce and baby spinach, tip in pre-measured ingredients, stir cold mixtures, sprinkle cheese
3-4 years	Mash bananas and potatoes, pour and mix, spread passata or ricotta, roll bliss balls, scoop batter into muffin cases
4-5 years	Measure with cups and spoons, crack eggs into a bowl, grate cheese with help, cut soft foods with a child-safe knife, build their own burrito bowl
5-8 years	Read a simple recipe and follow it step by step, measure and level dry ingredients, grate carrot and zucchini, cut cucumber and capsicum with a child-safe knife, make their own muffin pizzas, pack their own lunchbox

Tips to make it fun

- Pick a time when you're not in a rush. Weekends are ideal.
- Give them their own apron, bowl and spoon.
- Stand them on a sturdy step or learning tower at bench height.
- Measure ingredients into small bowls first so they can tip them in.
- Talk about colours, textures and smells as you go.
- Wash hands before you start, and keep children away from hot ovens, stovetops and sharp knives.
- Expect a little mess. It's part of learning.



"They eat it at daycare, but not at home!"

Why it happens at the centre

- Friends at the table. Children copy what other children eat.
- Routine. Meals happen at the same time and place every day.
- No pressure. Educators offer the food, and children decide how much to eat.
- Lots of tries. It can take 10-15 tries (or even more) before a child accepts a new food.

Try this at home

- Eat together when you can, and eat the same meal.
- Put a small amount of a new food next to a food they already like.
- Let them serve themselves. Burrito bowls and hummus platters are perfect for this.
- Show them how you touch, smell and taste a new food.
- Avoid using treats as rewards, like "eat your veggies and you can have dessert".
- Get them cooking with you. Children are more likely to taste what they've made.
- Ask your child's educators what they enjoy at the centre, and start there.

Source: Raising Children Network.

Snacks



All our snacks are nut free, and egg free options are included. Each one is served with fruit or veggies, just like at the centre.

For children under 3, grate, steam or thinly slice hard raw veggies and fruit.

Oven temperatures are fan-forced.
For a conventional oven, add 20°C.

Chef Eliza's ABC Sugar-Free Breakfast Muffins

Makes 12 | Prep 15 min | Cook 20 min

Recipe: Chef Eliza Jupp, Papilio Barton

Ingredients

- 1 1/3 cups (200 g) plain or wholemeal flour
- 3 tsp baking powder
- 1/2 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1 1/3 cups (120 g) rolled oats, blitzed into small pieces (keep 2 tbsp aside for the topping)
- 1/3 cup (80 ml) light olive or vegetable oil
- 1 tsp vanilla essence
- 1 tsp apple cider or white vinegar
- 1 large ripe banana, mashed (about 120 g)
- 1 small carrot, grated (about 60 g)
- 1 apple, peeled and grated (about 140 g), or 150 g tinned pie apple, mashed
- 3/4-1 cup (200-240 ml) full cream milk

Method

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C. Grease a 12-hole muffin tin or line it with paper cases.
2. Mash the banana. Grate the carrot and apple.
3. Mix the flour, baking powder, cinnamon and oats in a large bowl.
4. In a second bowl, mix the oil, vanilla, vinegar, banana, carrot, apple and ¾ cup of milk.
5. Tip the wet mix into the dry mix and fold until just combined. Add a little more milk if it's too thick.
6. Spoon into the muffin tin until each hole is ¾ full. Push any bits of carrot or apple under the batter so they don't burn.
7. Sprinkle the tops with the oats you kept aside.
8. Bake for 18-20 minutes, or until a skewer comes out clean.

"If you have a sweet tooth, lightly drizzle 1-2 tbsp sugar free maple syrup over the muffins when they come out of the oven. It adds sweetness without adding sugar to the recipe." - Chef Eliza

Swaps

- **Gluten free:** use gluten free plain flour, and swap the oats for quinoa flakes.
- **Dairy free:** use a calcium-fortified plant milk.

Tasty Cheese and Baby Spinach Muffins

Makes 12 | Prep 15 min | Cook 20 min

Recipe: Chef Robin Duckwitz

Ingredients

- 2 1/3 cups (360 g) plain flour (or wholemeal)
- 3 tsp baking powder
- 1/4 tsp garlic powder (optional)
- 1/4 tsp dried oregano (optional)
- 1 egg, or egg replacer to equal 1 egg
- 1 cup (240 ml) full cream milk
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 140 g frozen chopped spinach, thawed and squeezed dry
  (or 2 handfuls fresh baby spinach, chopped)
- 1 1/2 cups (180 g) grated tasty cheese
- 1 tsp sugar (optional)

To serve: *carrot and celery sticks, orange slices*

Method

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C. Grease a 12-hole muffin tin or line it with paper cases.
2. Mix the flour, baking powder, garlic powder and oregano in a large bowl.
3. In another bowl, whisk the egg (or egg replacer), milk, oil, spinach, sugar and most of the cheese. Keep a little cheese for the tops.
4. Add the wet mix to the flour and stir until just combined. Add a splash more milk if needed.
5. Spoon into the muffin tin and sprinkle with the rest of the cheese.
6. Bake for 20 minutes, or until a skewer comes out clean. Cool before serving.

Swaps

- **Gluten free:** use gluten free plain flour.
- **Dairy free:** use a calcium-fortified plant milk and dairy free cheese.



Chef Robin's Zucchini Bites



Makes about 30 small bites | Prep 15 min | Cook 15 min

Recipe: Chef Robin, Milestones Keperra

Ingredients

- 2 medium zucchini, grated (about 375 g)
- 3/4 cup (105 g) grated cheddar or tasty cheese
- 3 eggs, or egg replacer to equal 3 eggs
- 1/3 cup plain flour
- 3/4 tsp Italian seasoning (optional)

Swaps

- **Gluten free:** use gluten free plain flour.
- **Dairy free:** use dairy free cheese.
- **Egg free:** use egg replacer (follow the packet).

Method

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C. Line a baking tray with baking paper.
2. Put the grated zucchini in a clean tea towel and squeeze out as much liquid as you can. It needs to be quite dry.
3. Mix the zucchini with the cheese, eggs, flour and seasoning.
4. Roll ½ tablespoon of mixture into a ball and flatten it onto the tray. Repeat.
5. Bake for about 15 minutes, until crispy around the edges.

"This is always one of our children's favourite ways to eat zucchini." - Chef Robin

Easy Oaty Slice with Crunchy Veggies



Makes 20 pieces | Prep 15 min | Cook 20-25 min

Ingredients

- *3/4 cup (120 g) plain flour (or wholemeal)*
- *2 cups (180 g) rolled oats*
- *1 tbsp chia seeds*
- *2 tbsp water*
- *125 g margarine, melted (or butter)*
- *1/3 cup (80 g) brown sugar*
- *2 tsp vanilla essence*
- *3/4 cup (130 g) raisins, chopped (or dates or dried apricots)*

To serve: *carrot and cucumber sticks.*

Method

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C. Line a 20 x 30 cm slice tin with baking paper.
2. Soak the chia seeds in the water for 10 minutes until they form a gel.
3. Mix the flour and oats in a large bowl.
4. In another bowl, whisk the melted margarine, brown sugar and vanilla. Stir in the chia gel.
5. Pour the wet mix into the dry mix and stir well. Add a splash of water or milk if it's too dry.
6. Fold in the raisins.
7. Press the mixture firmly into the tin.
8. Bake for 20-25 minutes, until golden at the edges. Cool completely in the tin, then cut into squares.

Swaps

- **Gluten free:** use gluten free plain flour and quinoa flakes instead of oats.
- **Dairy free:** use a dairy free margarine (check the label).

Chef Daniel's Banana Peach Bread

Makes 1 loaf | Prep 15 min | Cook 50-60 min

Recipe: Chef Daniel Ty, Papilio Hornsby

Ingredients

- 2 ripe bananas, peeled (about 200 g)
- 1 x 410 g can sliced peaches in juice, drained (keep the juice)
- 2 cups self raising flour (half plain and half wholemeal is great)
- 3/4 cup (80 g) rolled oats, blended into flour
- Up to 1/3 cup raw sugar
- 1/3 cup olive oil
- Up to 1/3 cup peach juice from the can

To serve: *cucumber slices*

Method

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C. Line a loaf tin with baking paper.
2. Blend the banana, oil, sugar and half the peach juice with a stick blender. Leave it a bit chunky if your children like that.
3. Dice the peaches. Stir in the flour, blended oats and peaches. Add more peach juice or water, a little at a time, until it's a thick batter.
4. Spoon into the loaf tin.
5. Bake for 50-60 minutes, or until a skewer comes out clean. Cool in the tin for 10 minutes, then on a rack.

Swaps

- **Gluten free:** use gluten free self raising flour, and swap the oats for quinoa flakes.



"Naturally sweetened and with the fruit serve included in each slice, it's a healthy and nutritious treat. If you prefer sugar free, try half the sugar or replace it with extra banana. You may need a little more flour if you do." - Chef Daniel

Hummus Three Ways: Zippy, Flamingo Pink and Hulk



Serves 4-6 as a snack | Prep 10 min | No cooking

Ingredients

Zippy hummus

- *1 x 400 g can chickpeas, no added salt, drained and rinsed*
- *2 tbsp olive oil*
- *1 tsp minced garlic*
- *1 tbsp lemon juice*
- *1/4 tsp ground paprika*
- *1/4 tsp ground cumin*
- *2-3 tbsp water*

Make it flamingo pink: *leave out the paprika and cumin, and add 140 g canned beetroot (drained), plus an extra 1 tbsp lemon juice and 1 tbsp olive oil.*

Make it Hulk green: *add a handful of baby spinach, a few basil leaves and 2 tbsp grated cheese.*

Use the rest: *grate leftover beetroot into sandwiches and wraps, or make a second batch of flamingo pink hummus.*

To serve: *carrot and celery sticks, plain brown rice crackers.*

Method

1. Put everything except the water in a food processor or blender. Blend until smooth.
2. If it's too thick, add water 1 tablespoon at a time.
3. Taste and adjust. Spoon into a bowl.
4. Serve on a platter with veggie sticks and crackers so children can help themselves.

Swaps

- **Gluten free:** use gluten free crackers (check the label).
- **Dairy free:** leave the cheese out of the Hulk version.

Pineapple and Cheese Pizzas

Makes 8 mini pizzas | Prep 10 min | Cook 15 min

Ingredients

- 4 English muffins, split in half (wholemeal is great)
- 1/2 cup passata or pizza sauce
- 1 x 225 g can pineapple pieces in juice, drained
- 1 cup (120 g) grated tasty or mozzarella cheese

To serve: *apple slices*

Method

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C. Line a baking tray with baking paper.
2. Spread 1 tablespoon of passata on each muffin half.
3. Top with pineapple and cheese.
4. Bake for 15 minutes, or until the cheese has melted.



Swaps

- **Gluten free:** use gluten free English muffins or gluten free bread.
- **Dairy free:** use dairy free cheese.
- **Soy free:** use Lebanese or pita bread instead of English muffins.

Chef Daniel's Savoury Scrolls

or Slab

Makes about 12 | Prep 20 min | Cook 20-25 min

Recipe: Chef Daniel Ty, Papilio Hornsby

Ingredients

- *1 cup (250 g) natural yoghurt*
- *About 2 cups (300 g) self raising flour, plus extra for dusting*
- *1/2 tsp baking powder (optional)*
- *2 tbsp tomato paste*
- *2 tbsp nut free pesto (see Chicken Pesto Pasta, page 30) (optional)*
- *1-2 veggie additions, such as 1/2 cup frozen spinach (thawed and squeezed dry), 1/2 zucchini (grated and squeezed) or 1/4 capsicum (finely diced)*
- *3/4 cup grated cheese, plus a little extra for the tops*
- *Dried herbs (optional)*

To serve: *fresh fruit slices*

Method

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C. Oil a baking tray.
2. Mix the flour (and baking powder) into the yoghurt and knead until it forms a soft dough. Add a little more flour if it's too sticky.
3. On a floured bench, press and stretch the dough into a rectangle about 1 cm thick.
4. Spread with tomato paste and pesto. Scatter over the veggies and cheese.
5. Roll it up from the long side and slice into 12 scrolls. Or leave it flat as a pizza slab.
6. Place on the tray. Sprinkle with a little more cheese and some herbs.
7. Bake for 20-25 minutes, until golden.

Swaps

- **Gluten free:** use gluten free self raising flour (the dough will be softer, so pat it out rather than roll).
- **Dairy free:** use a thick plain plant-based yoghurt and dairy free cheese.

"Natural yoghurt combines with self raising flour to make a protein and calcium-rich dough. Just make sure you have enough flour, as the dough can be quite sticky." - Chef Daniel

Chef Daniel's Pancake Batter Slab

Sweet or Savoury

Serves 6-8 | Prep 10 min | Cook 20 min

Recipe: Chef Daniel Ty, Papilio Hornsby

Ingredients

- *1 1/2 cups plain flour*
- *2 tsp baking powder*
- *1 tbsp full cream milk powder*
- *Pinch of salt*
- *1 egg, or 1 tbsp egg replacer mixed with water (follow the packet)*
- *2 tbsp vegetable oil*
- *About 3/4 cup water*

Sweet version: *add 1 tsp sugar (optional) and 1 cup of blueberries, diced strawberries, sliced banana or grated apple. Dust with cinnamon after baking.*

Savoury version: *add 1/2 cup each of drained canned corn and grated cheese, plus a handful of spinach or grated zucchini. Dust with garlic powder or finely grated parmesan after baking.*

Swaps

- **Gluten free:** use gluten free plain flour.
- **Dairy free:** leave out the milk powder and use a plant milk instead of water. Skip the cheese.

Method

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C. Grease a 20 cm square baking tin.
2. Whisk the flour, baking powder, milk powder and salt in a bowl.
3. Add the egg, oil and water. Whisk until smooth, like a thick pancake batter.
4. Stir in your sweet or savoury add-ins.
5. Pour into the tin and bake for 20 minutes, or until a skewer comes out clean.
6. Cut into squares.



Chef Kate's Bliss Balls

Makes 20-30 | Prep 20 min | No cooking

Recipe: Chef Kate Waterhouse, Papilio Turner

Ingredients

- *150 g pitted dates, soaked in warm water for 10 minutes and drained*
- *125 g (about 1 1/3 cups) rolled oats*
- *25 g (1/4 cup) desiccated coconut, plus extra for rolling*
- *25 g (about 3 tbsp) flaxseed or hemp seeds*
- *15 g (1 tbsp) chia seeds*

Optional add-ins: *100 g mashed banana and 2 tbsp cocoa (chocolate banana), 100 g soaked dried apricots, 100 g soaked dried apple, or 1/2 tsp cinnamon.*

Method

1. Blend all the ingredients (and any add-ins) until they form a sticky paste.
2. Roll into balls. Use 15 g balls (about 1 level tablespoon of mixture) for toddlers and 30 g balls for kindy children.
3. Roll in coconut.
4. Keep in the fridge until ready to eat.

Swaps

- **Gluten free:** use quinoa flakes instead of oats.



Roasted Veggie Chips and Green Pea Dip



Serves 4-6 as a snack | Prep 15 min | Cook 25 min

Ingredients

Veggie chips

- *2 medium potatoes, cut into chips*
- *1 large carrot, cut into chips*
- *1 tbsp olive oil*
- *1/2 tsp dried oregano (optional)*

Green pea dip

- *3/4 cup (100 g) frozen peas*
- *1/2 tsp minced garlic (optional)*
- *1/3 cup (90 g) ricotta*
- *1 tsp olive oil*
- *2-3 tsp lemon juice*

To serve: watermelon slices.

Method

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C.
2. Toss the potato and carrot chips in oil on a baking tray. Sprinkle with oregano and spread out.
3. Bake for 20-25 minutes, until cooked through but still holding their shape. Cool slightly.
4. Meanwhile, cook the peas in boiling water until tender. Drain and cool a little.
5. Blend the peas, garlic, ricotta, oil and lemon juice until smooth. Add a splash of water if needed.
6. Serve the chips and fruit on a platter with the dip in the middle.

Swaps

- **Dairy free:** use 1/3 cup drained cannellini beans instead of ricotta.

Oven Baked Broccoli Chips

Serves 4-6 as a snack | Prep 10 min | Cook 25 min

Ingredients

- 1 head of broccoli (about 200 g), cut into florets (or frozen florets)
- 1/2 cup (60 g) grated tasty cheese

To serve: apple and watermelon slices.



Method

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C. Line a baking tray with baking paper.
2. Cook the broccoli in boiling water until tender. Drain on paper towel and cool.
3. Place the florets on the tray and gently squash each one flat with the bottom of a cup.
4. Sprinkle with cheese.
5. Bake for 10-15 minutes until golden. Flip and bake for another 5 minutes if the bottoms need it.
6. Serve with fresh fruit.

Swaps

- **Dairy free:** use dairy free cheese.

Mains



All our mains are nut free and serve 4-6 (about 2 adults and 2-3 children).

Every main is vegetarian or has a vegetarian swap.

Most freeze well, so make a double batch for busy nights.

Oven temperatures are fan-forced. For a conventional oven, add 20°C.

Freezing and reheating

- Cool leftovers quickly and get them into the fridge or freezer within 2 hours of cooking.
- Freeze in family or single portions for up to 3 months. Label them with the name and date.
- Thaw in the fridge overnight, not on the bench.
- Reheat until steaming hot all the way through. Only reheat once.
- Freeze sauces and fillings on their own if you can, and cook rice or pasta fresh on the night.

Leftover cans

Some mains use half a can. Look for the "Use the rest" tip to see which other recipe it goes in. Move leftovers into an airtight container (not the open can), keep them in the fridge and use within 2-3 days.

Chicken and Lentil San Choy Bau



Serves 4-6 | Prep 20 min | Cook 20 min

Ingredients

- 250 g rice noodles (or brown rice)
- 1/2 iceberg lettuce, leaves separated
- 1 1/2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 1/2 tsp minced garlic
- 1 tsp minced ginger
- 1 brown onion, finely diced
- 500 g chicken mince (or lean pork mince)
- 2 tbsp salt-reduced soy sauce
- 1 1/2 tbsp oyster sauce (optional)
- 1/2 x 400 g can lentils, no added salt, drained and rinsed
- 1 large carrot, grated
- 4-5 mushrooms, grated or finely chopped
- 1/2 x 230 g can water chestnuts, drained and finely diced

Use the rest: add leftover lentils to Nonna's Traditional Bolognese or Sticky Teriyaki Beef. Toss leftover water chestnuts into Colourful Beef Fried Rice.

Method

1. Cook the noodles following the packet. Snip into pieces no longer than 2 cm with kitchen scissors.
2. Heat the oil in a wok or large frying pan over medium-high heat. Cook the garlic, ginger and onion until golden.
3. Add the chicken mince and cook until browned, breaking up any lumps.
4. Stir in the soy sauce, oyster sauce, lentils, carrot, mushrooms and water chestnuts. Cook until tender.
5. Add the noodles and toss to combine.
6. Spoon into lettuce cups. For younger children, shred the lettuce and serve the mixture on top.

Swaps

- **Vegetarian (Tofu and Lentil San Choy Bau):** swap the chicken for 300 g crumbled firm tofu and use the whole can of lentils. Use a vegetarian stir-fry sauce, as oyster sauce is made from oysters.
- **Gluten free:** use gluten free tamari and gluten free oyster sauce. Rice noodles are naturally gluten free.

Nonna's Traditional Bolognese

Serves 4-6 | Prep 15 min | Cook 40 min

Ingredients

- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 brown onion, finely diced
- 1 carrot, grated
- 2 celery sticks, finely diced
- 1 1/2 tsp minced garlic
- 500 g beef mince
- 2 tbsp tomato paste
- 700 g passata
- 1 x 400 g can lentils, no added salt, drained and rinsed
- 1/2 tsp dried basil
- 1/2 tsp dried oregano
- 375 g penne (or your favourite pasta)
- 3/4 cup grated tasty cheese

Method

1. Heat the oil in a large pot over medium heat. Cook the onion, carrot, celery and garlic until soft.
2. Add the mince and cook until browned, breaking up any lumps.
3. Stir in the tomato paste, passata, lentils, basil and oregano.
4. Turn the heat to medium-low. Cover and simmer, stirring now and then, until the sauce thickens slightly (about 20 minutes).
5. Cook the pasta following the packet, then drain.
6. Serve the sauce over the pasta and sprinkle with cheese.

Swaps

- **Vegetarian (Nonna's Lentil Bolognese):** skip the mince and use 3 x 400 g cans of lentils in total. Add 200 g finely chopped mushrooms for extra texture.
- **Gluten free:** use gluten free pasta.
- **Dairy free:** leave off the cheese or use dairy free cheese.



Build Your Own Beef Burrito Bowls

beef mix only

Serves 4-6 | Prep 20 min | Cook 35 min

Ingredients

- 1 1/2 cups (300 g) brown or basmati rice
- 1 1/2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 brown onion, finely diced
- 1 1/2 tsp minced garlic
- 500 g beef mince
- 2 carrots, grated
- 1 x 400 g can black beans, no added salt, drained and rinsed
- 1/2 tsp ground cumin
- 1/2 tsp ground paprika
- 1/2 tsp ground coriander
- 2 tbsp tomato paste
- 3/4 cup (200 ml) salt-reduced vegetable stock
- 2 cups (300 g) frozen corn kernels
- 1/4 iceberg lettuce, shredded
- 2 tomatoes, finely chopped
- 1 1/2 cups (150 g) grated tasty cheese

Method

1. Cook the rice following the packet.
2. Heat the oil in a pot over medium heat. Cook the onion and garlic until soft.
3. Add the mince and cook until browned.
4. Add the carrot, black beans, spices and tomato paste. Stir well.
5. Pour in the stock and bring to the boil. Simmer until the liquid has reduced by half.
6. Cook the corn in the microwave following the packet.
7. Put the rice, beef, corn, lettuce, tomato and cheese in separate bowls. Let everyone build their own.

Swaps

- **Vegetarian (Bean Burrito Bowls):** skip the mince and use 3 x 400 g cans of black beans in total.
- **Gluten free:** check the stock is gluten free.
- **Dairy free:** use dairy free cheese.



Monster Mash Beef and Creamy Potato Pie



Serves 4-6 | Prep 20 min | Cook 1 hour

Ingredients

- 750 g potatoes (about 4 medium), peeled and chopped
- 2/3 cup (150 ml) full cream milk
- 1 1/2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 brown onion, finely diced
- 2 carrots, finely diced or grated
- 2 celery sticks, finely diced
- 500 g beef mince
- 3 tbsp tomato paste
- 1 1/2 tbsp Worcestershire sauce
- 1 x 400 g can lentils, no added salt, drained and rinsed
- 1/2 tsp dried mixed herbs
- 2 tbsp cornflour
- 1 2/3 cups (400 ml) salt-reduced vegetable stock
- 1 1/2 cups (200 g) frozen peas

Method

1. Preheat the oven to 200°C.
2. Boil the potatoes until tender. Drain well, then mash until smooth. Stir in the milk.
3. Heat the oil in a large pot over medium-high heat. Cook the onion, carrot and celery until soft.
4. Add the mince and cook until browned, breaking up any lumps.
5. Stir in the tomato paste, Worcestershire sauce, lentils, herbs and cornflour.
6. Add the stock and bring to the boil. Simmer, stirring, until thick. Stir in the peas. Add a splash of water if needed.
7. Spoon the mixture into a baking dish and spread the mash over the top.
8. Bake uncovered for about 20 minutes, until golden. Stand for 5-10 minutes before serving.

Swaps

- **Vegetarian (Brown Lentil and Creamy Potato Mash Pie):** skip the mince and use 3 x 400 g cans of lentils in total. Most Worcestershire sauce contains anchovies, so use a vegetarian version or 1 tbsp balsamic vinegar.
- **Gluten free:** use gluten free Worcestershire sauce (or balsamic vinegar), cornflour labelled 100% maize and gluten free stock.
- **Dairy free:** use a calcium-fortified plant milk in the mash.

Go Thai Fish Curry with Rice



Serves 4-6 | Prep 15 min | Cook 30 min

Ingredients

- 1 1/2 cups (300 g) brown or basmati rice
- 1 1/2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 brown onion, finely diced
- 1/2 tsp minced ginger
- 1 tsp minced garlic
- 1 tbsp mild curry powder
- 1 x 400 ml can coconut milk (light is fine)
- 1/2 cup (130 ml) salt-reduced vegetable stock
- 800 g white fish fillets such as basa, cut into bite-sized pieces
- 2 carrots, diced
- 2 cups (300 g) frozen broccoli florets
- 2 cups (300 g) frozen cut green beans
- 1 tbsp lime juice (optional)

Method

1. Cook the rice following the packet.
2. Heat the oil in a wok or large pot. Cook the onion, ginger, garlic and curry powder until fragrant and golden.
3. Add the coconut milk and stock. Bring to a gentle boil.
4. Add the fish, carrot, broccoli, beans and lime juice. Cover and simmer until the fish is cooked through and the veggies are tender. Add a splash of water if needed.
5. Serve over the rice. Check for bones before serving to little ones.

Swaps

- **Vegetarian (Thai Tofu Curry with Rice):** swap the fish for 450 g firm tofu, cut into cubes.
- **Gluten free:** check the curry powder and stock are gluten free.

Catch of the Day Tuna Pasta Bake

Serves 4-6 | Prep 15 min | Cook 40 min

Ingredients

- 350 g spiral pasta
- 600 g butternut pumpkin, cut into 2 cm cubes
- 2 1/2 cups (400 g) frozen carrot, peas and corn
- 4 x 185 g cans tuna in spring water, drained and flaked
- 200 g ricotta
- 1 tsp dried basil
- 1/2 cup (50 g) grated tasty cheese
- 1/2 cup (50 g) breadcrumbs

Method

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C.
2. Cook the pasta following the packet, then drain.
3. Put the pumpkin on a baking tray, cover with foil and bake until tender (about 20 minutes).
4. In a large baking dish, mix the pasta, pumpkin, frozen veggies, tuna, ricotta and basil. Add a splash of water if it's dry.
5. Sprinkle with the cheese and breadcrumbs.
6. Bake for 10-15 minutes, until golden.

Swaps

- **Vegetarian (Silken Tofu and Creamy Ricotta Pasta Bake):** swap the tuna for 300 g silken tofu mashed into the ricotta, plus 1 x 400 g can cannellini beans, drained.
- **Gluten free:** use gluten free pasta and gluten free breadcrumbs.
- **Dairy free:** use dairy free ricotta and cheese.



Chicken, Pumpkin and Ricotta Mac and Cheese

Serves 4-6 | Prep 20 min | Cook 50 min

Ingredients

- 500 g butternut pumpkin, peeled and diced
- 1 carrot, roughly chopped
- 1 cup cauliflower florets
- 1/2 tsp ground paprika
- 1/2 tsp ground cumin
- 1 1/2 tbsp olive oil, plus a drizzle
- 150 g ricotta
- 350 g macaroni
- 400 g chicken mince
- 1 cup (250 ml) full cream milk
- 1/3 cup frozen peas
- 1 cup (115 g) grated tasty cheese



Method

1. Preheat the oven to 200°C. Line a baking tray with baking paper.
2. Spread the pumpkin, carrot and cauliflower on the tray. Sprinkle with paprika and cumin, drizzle with oil and bake for 15 minutes.
3. Make a space in the middle of the tray and add the ricotta. Bake for another 15 minutes, until the veggies are soft and the ricotta starts to brown.
4. Meanwhile, cook the pasta following the packet, then drain.
5. Cook the chicken mince in a drizzle of oil until browned and cooked through.
6. Mash or blend the roasted veggies and ricotta until smooth. Stir in the milk and half the cheese.
7. Add the pasta, chicken and peas and mix well.
8. Spoon into a baking dish and top with the rest of the cheese. Bake until golden (about 15 minutes). Stand for 10 minutes before serving.

Swaps

- **Vegetarian (Tofu, Ricotta and Pumpkin Mac and Cheese):** swap the chicken for 300 g crumbled firm tofu, browned in the pan.
- **Gluten free:** use gluten free pasta.
- **Dairy free:** use a calcium-fortified plant milk and dairy free cheese and ricotta.

Chef Daniel's Bowl of Sunshine Yellow Dahl and Basmati Rice



Serves 4-6 | Prep 15 min | Cook 35 min

Recipe: Chef Daniel Ty, Papilio Hornsby

Ingredients

- 2 tsp olive or vegetable oil
- 1/2 brown onion, diced
- 1 tsp crushed garlic and ginger (or to taste)
- 170 g (a generous 3/4 cup) yellow split lentils, rinsed
- 1/4 head cauliflower, chopped small
- 1/2 small sweet potato, peeled and diced small
- 2 medium potatoes, skin on, diced small
- 1 large carrot, diced
- 1/2 x 400 g can diced tomatoes
- 1/3 cup (80 ml) coconut milk
- 1 1/2 tsp curry powder
- 1 tsp ground cumin (or to taste)
- 1 tsp garam masala (or to taste)
- 2 2/3 cups (650 ml) salt-reduced vegetable stock
- 1 2/3 cups (330 g) basmati or brown rice
- 1/2 x 420 g can corn kernels, drained (optional)
- Pappadums or roti, to serve

Use the rest: the other half can of tomatoes goes into Mighty Chicken Biryani. Leftover corn works in Sticky Teriyaki Beef or the savoury Pancake Batter Slab.

Method

1. Cook the rice following the packet. Stir through the corn if you're using it.
2. Heat the oil in a large pot. Cook the onion, garlic and ginger until soft.
3. Add the lentils, all the veggies, tomatoes, coconut milk, spices and stock.
4. Simmer, stirring often, for 25-30 minutes until the lentils and veggies are soft. Add a little water if it gets too thick.
5. Serve with rice and a crispy pappadum on the side.

Swaps

- **Vegetarian:** this recipe is already vegetarian and vegan.
- **Gluten free:** check the stock, curry powder and pappadums are gluten free. Skip the roti.

Chicken Pesto Pasta with Chef Lou's Nut Free Pesto

pesto

Serves 4-6 | Prep 15 min | Cook 20 min

Recipe: Chef Daniel Ty, Papilio Hornsby and Chef Louise Hinton, Kids Academy Penrith

Ingredients

Nut free pesto (makes about 1 cup)

- 100 g frozen spinach, thawed and squeezed dry
- 1 cup basil leaves, loosely packed
- 3/4 cup (100 g) sunflower seeds, lightly toasted
- 2 tbsp grated parmesan
- 2 tbsp sunflower oil
- 2 tbsp lemon juice
- Water, if needed
- Optional: a handful of frozen peas

Pasta

- 500 g chicken (mince, diced breast or a mix)
- 1/2 cup nut free pesto
- 1/2 x 400 g can chickpeas, drained and lightly mashed
- 375 g pasta (wholemeal is great)
- 80 g light cream cheese

Use the rest: *add leftover chickpeas to Mighty Chicken Biryani, or blend them into a small batch of Zippy Hummus.*

Leftover pesto keeps in the fridge for 3 days or the freezer for 3 months. Use it in Chef Daniel's Savoury Scrolls.

Method

1. To make the pesto, toast the sunflower seeds in a dry pan until lightly golden. Cool.
2. Blend the seeds with the spinach, basil, parmesan, oil and lemon juice until smooth. Add water if needed.
3. Stir-fry the chicken and chickpeas in 1/2 cup of pesto until the chicken is cooked through.
4. Cook the pasta following the packet. Drain, then stir through the cream cheese.
5. Top the pasta with the chicken mix, or stir it all through. Whatever your children prefer.

Swaps

- **Vegetarian (Chickpea Pesto Pasta):** skip the chicken and use the whole can of chickpeas plus 1 cup frozen peas. Most parmesan is made with animal rennet, so use a vegetarian hard cheese.
- **Gluten free:** use gluten free pasta.
- **Dairy free:** leave out the parmesan and use dairy free cream cheese.



Colourful Beef Fried Rice Bowls

Serves 4-6 | Prep 10 min | Cook 15 min (plus cooking the rice)

Ingredients

- 1 1/2 cups (300 g) white or brown rice
- 1 1/2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 brown onion, finely chopped
- 1 1/2 tsp minced garlic
- 1 tsp minced ginger
- 500 g beef mince
- 750 g frozen carrot, peas and corn
- 2 tbsp salt-reduced soy sauce



Method

1. Cook the rice following the packet and let it cool. Day-old rice from the fridge works best.
2. Heat the oil in a wok or large frying pan over medium heat. Cook the onion until soft.
3. Add the garlic and ginger and cook until fragrant.
4. Add the mince and cook until well browned.
5. Stir in the frozen veggies and cook until hot.
6. Add the rice and soy sauce. Stir until everything is mixed and piping hot.

Swaps

- **Vegetarian (Colourful Tofu Fried Rice Bowls):** swap the beef for 300 g crumbled firm tofu.
- **Gluten free:** use gluten free tamari instead of soy sauce.

Mighty Chicken Biryani



Serves 4-6 | Prep 15 min | Cook 40 min

Ingredients

- 1 1/2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 brown onion, finely diced
- 1 1/2 tsp minced garlic
- 1 tsp crushed ginger
- 3/4 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1/4 tsp ground cardamom (optional)
- 3/4 tsp ground cumin
- 1/2 tsp ground turmeric
- 500 g skinless chicken thigh, cut into bite-sized pieces
- 1 small potato, cut into 2 cm cubes
- 1 cup (250 ml) salt-reduced chicken stock
- 1/2 cup (125 ml) water
- 1/2 x 400 g can diced tomatoes
- 1 cup frozen cauliflower florets
- 2 cups (330 g) frozen carrot, peas and corn
- 1/2 x 400 g can chickpeas, drained and rinsed
- 1 1/2 cups (300 g) white rice
- 2 tbsp plain natural yoghurt

Use the rest: *the other half can of tomatoes goes into Bowl of Sunshine Yellow Dahl. Leftover chickpeas work in Chicken Pesto Pasta or Zippy Hummus.*

Method

1. Heat the oil in a large pot over medium heat. Cook the onion until soft.
2. Add the garlic, ginger and spices. Stir until fragrant.
3. Add the chicken and cook until browned.
4. Stir in the potato, stock, water and tomatoes. Simmer until the potato is tender.
5. Add the cauliflower, frozen veggies and chickpeas. Cook until the veggies are tender.
6. Meanwhile, cook the rice following the packet.
7. Add the rice and yoghurt to the pot and stir gently. Cook on low for 5-10 minutes so the flavours come together.

Swaps

- **Vegetarian (Mighty Veggie Biryani):** skip the chicken, use vegetable stock and use the whole can of chickpeas plus 1 cup of extra veggies.
- **Gluten free:** check the stock is gluten free.
- **Dairy free:** use coconut yoghurt.

Sticky Teriyaki Beef and Fluffy Rice



Serves 4-6 | Prep 15 min | Cook 25 min

Ingredients

- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 brown onion, diced
- 1 1/2 tsp minced garlic
- 500 g lean beef mince
- 1 capsicum, diced
- 1 carrot, finely diced
- 1/2 x 400 g can lentils, drained and rinsed
- 250 g frozen green beans
- 1/2 x 420 g can corn kernels, no added salt, drained
- 1 1/2 cups (300 g) white or brown rice

Teriyaki sauce

- 3 tbsp salt-reduced soy sauce
- 2 tsp sugar (or brown sugar, maple syrup, or honey for children over 12 months)
- 1 1/2 tbsp white vinegar (or lemon juice)
- 1 tbsp cornflour
- 3/4 cup (200 ml) salt-reduced beef stock

Use the rest: *add leftover lentils to Chicken and Lentil San Choy Bau or Nonna's Traditional Bolognese. Leftover corn works in Bowl of Sunshine Yellow Dahl or the savoury Pancake Batter Slab.*

Method

1. Heat the oil in a large pot or wok over medium heat. Cook the onion and garlic until soft.
2. Add the mince and cook until browned, breaking up any lumps.
3. Add the capsicum, carrot and lentils and cook for 2-3 minutes. Add the beans and corn and cook until tender but still crisp.
4. Cook the rice following the packet.
5. Mix the sauce ingredients in a small bowl until the cornflour dissolves.
6. Pour the sauce into the pot and stir until it thickens and coats everything.
7. Serve over the rice.

Swaps

- **Vegetarian (Sticky Teriyaki Tofu and Fluffy Rice):** swap the beef for 450 g firm tofu, cubed and browned. Use vegetable stock.
- **Gluten free:** use gluten free tamari, cornflour labelled 100% maize and gluten free stock.

Healthy lunchbox tips

For non-daycare days, outings, and when your little one starts primary school.

The easy lunchbox formula

Pack one thing from each of these and you're done:

Pack	One serve is
A main	Wholemeal sandwich, wrap or scroll, leftover fried rice or pasta bake in an insulated container
Veggies	Cucumber, capsicum or carrot sticks (grated or steamed for under-3s), cherry tomatoes (quartered), corn cob pieces
Fruit	Apple slices, mandarin segments, berries, a banana
Dairy	Cheese cubes, a tub of plain yoghurt, a small bottle of milk (kept cold)
A snack from this book	A muffin, scroll, slice of banana bread, zucchini bites or bliss balls
Water	A full water bottle. Skip juice and soft drinks.

Lunchbox-friendly recipes in this book

Chef Eliza's ABC Muffins, Cheese and Spinach Muffins, Chef Robin's Zucchini Bites, Chef Daniel's Banana Peach Bread, Hummus Three Ways, Chef Daniel's Savoury Scrolls, Pancake Batter Slab, Chef Kate's Bliss Balls and Easy Oaty Slice.

Bake once, pack all week

- Muffins, scrolls, banana bread and pancake slab freeze well for up to 3 months.
- Wrap pieces one at a time so you can grab just what you need.
- Pack them frozen in the morning. They'll thaw by morning tea and help keep the lunchbox cool.

Keep it safe

- Use an insulated lunchbox with an ice brick or frozen water bottle.
- Most schools and centres are nut aware. All our recipes are nut free, so they're good to go.
- Pack food your child can open on their own.

Hot lunches in a thermos

Leftover Bolognese, Dahl or Tuna Pasta Bake makes a great school lunch. Fill the thermos with boiling water for 5 minutes, then tip it out. Add the food piping hot and close the lid straight away. It will stay warm until lunchtime.

Fussy eater tips

- Pack a small amount of a new food next to a favourite.
- Let them help choose and pack their lunchbox the night before.
- Small portions are less overwhelming. They can always eat more fruit when they get home.

Thank You

A big thank you to the chefs who shared their favourite recipes:

Chef Eliza Jupp, Papilio Barton
Chef Robin Duckwitz, Milestones Keperra
Chef Daniel Ty, Papilio Hornsby
Chef Kate Waterhouse, Papilio Turner
Chef Louise Hinton, Kids Academy Penrith

And to the chefs and cooks in all our centres who make these meals fresh every day.

The information in this book is general in nature. Please speak with your doctor or dietitian about your child's specific dietary needs and allergies.



Tried one of our recipes? We'd love to see how it turned out.

Share a photo with us.

Enjoy!



Milestones
EARLY LEARNING CENTRES
celebrating every stage

milestones.com.au