

How to for

WITH A HELPFUL SUPPLEMENT
ON BUDGET WINES AND SPIRITS
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EAT BETTER LESS MONEY

JAMES BEARD
and SAM AARON

SIMON AND SCHUSTER

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THE INSTANT MEAL: A Guide to Impromptu Cooking

It's bound to happen, usually when you least expect it and always when you are unprepared. Friends drop in for a quick drink and a chat and stay on until dinnertime. An unexpected guest or relative arrives from out of town. Your husband calls up at the last minute to say he is bringing his old college or army chum or, even worse, the boss back for dinner. The children collect a couple of friends on the way home from school. Or you are delayed in town and can't get home in time to shop or to prepare a regular meal. These are common situations that challenge the patience, fortitude and ingenuity of the person who has to do the cooking—you.

This chapter is planned to help you face such emergencies with confidence and calm. It includes quickie recipes that can be whipped up in half an hour or less, suggestions for stretching or dressing up simple family fare or end-of-the-week leftovers to feed the sudden guest, and shortcut yet delicious dishes that can be whipped up from the supply of reserve foods on your kitchen shelf—all those canned and bottled, packaged and dehydrated products that the food industry is turning out in greater volume every year. And if you have a blender (and we hope you do, for it is one of the best investments a busy cook can make), you are even farther ahead in the gourmet-meal race, for in no time at all you can have a super sauce like Hollandaise, a smooth and perfect soup or a frozen dessert ready to put on the table.

Capitalize on Mixes

Despite the dark mutterings of the food purists, we are lucky today to have a battery of foods at our fingertips—mixes, refrigerated and frozen foods—that remove many of the time-consuming processes from meal-making and usually cost no more than if you had started from scratch (and, dare I say it, the end result is often as good as or even better than what you might have produced yourself).

Mixes are probably the best friend a hurried cook and hostess can have.

One of their main advantages is the many ways they can be used, not just as directed on the package, but as substitutes or shortcuts in all kinds of recipes. In the last few years they have been supplemented by products that go even farther, refrigerated bake-and-serve foods—rolls, biscuits, cookies, pastries—that are even more versatile and simple to use. Dinner rolls can be used to top meat pies and baked fruit desserts. Flaky crescent rolls (our old friend the croissant under an American name) make great roll-ups for little sausages or fingers of cheese as an hors d'oeuvre, and the cooky doughs are ideal for making crusts for fruit tarts and cheesecake. Look around the supermarket shelves and in the refrigerated cases and you'll find all kinds of things to experiment with.

Count on Canned Goods

Even familiar old canned goods should not be underestimated. Deviled ham, for instance, can be used in recipes calling for a small amount of ground ham; canned fish are great for stretching casseroles and soups or for making pasta sauces and omelet fillings; and every shelf should have a full range of tomato products—paste, sauce and the whole peeled tomatoes. These, especially the Italian plum type, are vastly superior to the pale flavorless fresh ones we are restricted to in winter—and cheaper too. Also, don't overlook canned baby foods, if you happen to have them in the house. In a pinch, they make an excellent quick substitute for purées in soufflés.

While it may be true that today, with telephones, refrigerators and freezers and all the modern conveniences and services, we have no need to keep an enormous supply of canned and packaged foods on hand, how often have you found yourself at a loss for something to cook for dinner and making a hurried call to the meat department for a quick-cooking and expensive item like lamb chops or a steak? The refrigerator may be at the week's low point of supply and the roast in the freezer will take hours to defrost. If you took the advice we gave you at the beginning of this book, you should have some dishes already prepared and frozen for just such a contingency. But somehow it is often more fun to go to the kitchen shelf and let your creativity swing into high gear. There are few satisfactions equal to being able to turn out a really divine meal in nothing flat to the pleasure and admiration of your family and friends.

Stock an Emergency Shelf

What constitutes a well-stocked emergency shelf? It all depends on your space and location. The woman living in a big house in Grand Falls, Nebraska, may have room for cases and cases of supplies, while the cave dweller in New York may not be able—or need—to give up more than a

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few feet of cabinet space. The following list is to be regarded merely as a check for things to have on hand. It includes the foods I like to keep on my shelves and have found most useful. Add to or subtract from it according to your taste, budget and storage space.

MEATS

Chili con carne	2 cans
Chili with beans	2 cans
Corned beef	4 cans
Corned-beef hash	2 cans
Ham, deviled	2 cans
whole	2 cans
Tongue	1 can

You should also have on hand a selection of dried sausages, such as salami, cervelat, and summer sausage, that will keep indefinitely. Snack sausages like pepperoni and the Spanish chorizo are also good to stock in the refrigerator and can be used in cooking.

FISH

Anchovy fillets	6 cans
Caviar, red	2 jars
Clams, minced	4 cans
Crabmeat	4 cans
Gefilte fish	4 jars
Lobster meat	2 cans
Mussels	2 cans
Salmon	4 cans
Sardines	6 cans
Shrimp, medium	4 cans
small	4 cans
Tuna	6 cans

VEGETABLES

Artichoke hearts	2 cans
Beans, baked	6 cans
cannellini	2 cans
kidney	4 cans

Beets, whole	2 cans
Chick-peas	2 cans
Corn, whole kernel	2 cans
Mushrooms, broiled	
in butter	4 cans
dried	½ pound
Onions, small white	2 jars
Peas, tiny French	4 cans
Pimientos	4 cans
Potatoes, small white	2 cans
Tomatoes, baby,	
sliced	2 cans
peeled, whole	6 cans

GRAVIES, JUICES, SAUCES

Applesauce	2 jars
Beef gravy	4 cans
Catsup	1 bottle
Chili sauce	1 bottle
Clam broth	4 bottles
Soy sauce	1 bottle
Steak sauce	1 bottle
Tabasco sauce	1 bottle
Tomato juice	4 cans
paste	2 cans
sauce	4 cans
Worcestershire sauce	1 bottle

CANNED SOUPS

Black bean	2 cans
Broth, beef	2 cans
chicken	4 cans
Consommé	2 cans
Cream of celery	2 cans
of chicken	2 cans
of mushroom	2 cans
of tomato	2 cans

MISCELLANEOUS

Bread crumbs, dry	1 package
Capers	1 bottle
Chili powder	1 jar
Chutney	1 bottle
Cornstarch	1 box
Curry powder	1 can
Evaporated milk	6 cans
Kitchen Bouquet	1 bottle
Liver pâté or purée	3 cans
Mustard, dry	1 can
French	1 jar
Nuts, almonds	1 can
peanuts	1 can
walnuts	1 can
Oil, olive	1 bottle
peanut or vegetable	1 bottle
Olives, small green	1 jar
black	1 can
Pickles, assorted	3 jars
Preserves, apricot	1 jar
black-currant jelly	1 jar
Relishes, assorted	3 jars
Tortillas, canned	3 cans
Vinegar, cider	1 bottle
wine	2 bottles

PASTA AND GRAIN

Cracked wheat (bulghur)	1 pound
Noodles	2 pounds
Rice, long grain	2 pounds
short grain	2 pounds
Spaghetti	2 pounds

FRUITS

Apricots, dried	1 box
Cherries, bing, canned	1 can
Peaches, canned	1 can
Pineapple, canned	2 cans
Prunes, dried	1 box

DEHYDRATED PRODUCTS AND MIXES

Biscuit mix	2 boxes
Brownie mix	1 box
Brown gravy mix	1 box
Cornbread mix	2 boxes
Hot roll mix	2 boxes
Piecrust mix	2 boxes
Potato pancake mix	1 box
Soup mixes: leek, mushroom, onion, pea, vegetable	1 box each
Dehydrated shallots	2 jars
Instant minced onion	2 jars
Instant mashed potato	2 boxes

WINES AND LIQUORS

Brandy

Sherry, dry and sweet

Vermouth, dry white

Wine

Red, California, jug-type

White, California, jug-type

Plus an assortment of liqueurs in small bottles or miniatures for flavoring.

In addition to this I assume that you always have on hand plenty of staples such as flour, sugar, an assortment of herbs and spices, basic vegetables and fresh fruits, and that your refrigerator is well supplied with dairy produce and salad greens. Given all this, there is just about no culinary emergency that can faze you.

And now for some of our favorite impromptu dishes, based on the supplies on the emergency

shelf. First, a quick version of a famous French dish called Gratin Savoyard that is made with potatoes and sausages.

QUICK GRATIN SAVOYARD

Butter a casserole; place a layer of sliced potatoes on the bottom, then a layer of sausage of any sort, then more potatoes, more sausage, and top with potatoes. Sprinkle with salt and black pepper and dot well with butter or margarine. Mix $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of milk with 1 can of condensed cream of celery soup and pour over the dish. Top it with grated cheese—Parmesan, Swiss, or whatever you have. Cover and bake in a 375° oven for 30 minutes, or until the potatoes are tender. Uncover for the last 10 minutes and add a little more cheese to make the top crusty and brown. Serves 4.

Together with a salad and perhaps fruit or whatever you may have in the house for dessert, this makes a hearty flavorful dinner in little time and for low cost.

Here is a quick version of coq au vin (chicken in wine) which is something special. It might make Escoffier turn pale, but I think it is much better than many sad attempts at this famous dish that have been concocted. You'll need leftover chicken or turkey. If you dice it, use about 2 cups. And if you use it on the bone, gauge the

amount needed by how much meat is left on the bones. If you have a jar of the small white onions on hand, use the liquid for sauce. But regular onions can be used.

QUICK COQ AU VIN

1 jar small white onions or 1 large onion, sliced
3 to 6 tablespoons butter
4 or 5 pieces bacon
3 tablespoons flour
1 cup liquid drained from onions or canned chicken broth
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup red wine
2 teaspoons Kitchen Bouquet
2 cups leftover diced chicken

If you are using the bottled onions, drain them, saving the liquid, and brown them lightly in 1 or 2 tablespoons butter. If you are using the sliced onion, steam it in 3 tablespoons butter on low heat, tightly covered, until tender. Meanwhile try out the bacon until cooked through but not crisp. Make a sauce by melting 3 tablespoons butter in a pan, blending in the flour and then mixing in the onion liquid or broth, the wine and the Kitchen Bouquet. Cook, stirring constantly, until thickened. Add the chicken and heat thoroughly. Top with the onions and the bacon strips. Serve with rice or tiny boiled potatoes—if you use the small canned ones, just heat them through—and arrange as a border around the platter of chicken. Serves 4.

Another French dish that can be easily shortcut is *jambon à la crème*.