

Setting up your student kitchen!

Once you've got these essentials in the cupboard, your meals will pretty much cook themselves (well, almost)! Nearly everything listed will keep for years, too. Then you'll just need something quick, easy, and tasty to cook – take a look at our recipe ideas...

With just a few basic kitchen essentials, you'll be ready to start cooking up a storm in no time at all. Investing in these cheap basics at the start of the year will make rustling something up much easier and cheap in the long-term, as these kitchen cupboard essentials will last you right up until the end of the year.

Top 20 kitchen cupboard essentials:

1. Salt and pepper



Two of the most obvious kitchen essentials, but these can't go without a mention since they are like the superheroes of student cooking!

Whilst we do recommend you reel in your salt intake since it's not great for your health, mastering the art of seasoning well will make even the most depressingly boring dishes super satisfying to scoff.

2. Tabasco



Tabasco is a great staple for spicing up any meal you have. Just as a warning: there is a high chance you will get addicted to this stuff as a student.

Tabasco can last out of the fridge for a month or two, but pop it in the fridge and it should keep for months. An even cheaper alternative would be to keep some chili powder to add to dishes instead, but be aware that you'll be missing out on the vinegary bonus!

3. Mixed dried herbs



Using a variety of mixed dried herbs is the secret to cooking great-tasting food on the cheap. It's all about choosing the herbs you like most, and a good idea is to go for a seasonal mix such as Italian mixed herbs or Mediterranean.

If you manage to choose the 'right' herbs, pretty much anything will taste nice! It's just a matter of working out which ones float yer boat...

4. Cooking oil



You'll need oil for cooking almost anything. A lot of recipes you come across will specify suggest using extra virgin olive oil, but whilst this is definitely the good quality, good-tasting stuff, bog standard olive oil will do and it's highly unlikely you'll notice any difference.

If you're on a tight budget, you can also opt for the cheaper options of sunflower or vegetable oil, which will do the job just as well.

5. Pasta



When you're a budget-pro university student, pasta really is your best friend. You could eat pasta pretty much every day of your life and never get bored of it if you jazz it up with different sauces and ingredients.

6. Rice



Yet another dried essential to add to the list, rice can go with almost everything and can be an equally cheap carbohydrate to mix up with pasta throughout the week to keep things interesting!

7. Chopped tomatoes



Unlike fresh tomatoes, tins of these bad boys will literally last for years. Use them to slap up a pasta dish, a curry sauce – anything really.

Our recipe vaults are full of ideas with tinned tomatoes as a base, why not take a look?

8. Tomato puree



Another store cupboard essential closely related to the above, a tube of tomato puree will cost you around 30p and goes a long way.

Add a spoonful to any recipe with tinned tomatoes involved and it'll magically bring out the flavour of the tomatoes.

9. Flour



Flour is one of those things you should always have sitting waiting in your cupboard. Not only is it great for making a riotous good mess, as demonstrated from the image above, it's decent for cooking with too.

10. Sugar



Without sounding too much like Gillian McKeith, too much sugar definitely isn't good for you. Particularly as a student, sugar can really mess with your energy levels and cause you to crash hard if you overdo it.

However, there's no denying that a little bit of sugar is good for loads of recipes – from stir-fries and bolognese sauce to cakes. To keep things versatile, we'd recommend going for caster sugar over regular sugar, as it's much better for cooking with since it dissolves quickly.

11. Bread



Sandwiches are the best meals ever when you're on a budget, and you can keep things interesting by [getting creative with every sandwich you make](#).

Stick it in the freezer and you'll never have to worry about eating it all before it goes stale.

12. Baked beans



This might be a bit of a stereotype, but there's a reason why baked beans are the national cuisine for students. Good on their own, on a baked potato or toast.

The best thing about beans is that they're cheap and tasty, but also count as one of your five a day! Try adding some tabasco or other herbs or spices to make your own style of beans too.

13. Potatoes



Boil 'em, mash 'em, roast 'em... So many things to be done with potatoes!

One great way to cook them is simply cut them into cubes, chuck them onto a baking tray with salt 'n pepper and a mix of herbs and spices, drizzle on oil and cook for around 30 minutes at 180C! Definitely a cupboard essential, but beware of sprouts after keeping them too long. Store them in a dark, dry cupboard in a paper bag and they'll keep much longer.

14. Onions and garlic



This charming little twosome can turn pretty much anything into a tasty meal busting with flavour. Whether you're making a simple curry or a Bolognese sauce, they're the base of pretty much everything you cook in a pot!

Another tip is that if you really loath the process of chopping garlic, you can actually buy it pre-chopped in jars to use when you wish. It certainly doesn't taste as good as the real stuff, but it lasts ages in a jar and saves you a stage of prep!

15. Soy sauce



If you're a fan of Asian food (which we totally are), then it's well worth investing in some soy sauce. Soy sauce is your source of salt in Asian cooking, so if this is something you think you'll be rustling up, invest in a bottle.

We recommend going to a Chinese supermarket to get your soy sauce as opposed to buying it in a regular supermarket – the bottles are around double the size and half the price!

16.Tuna



It may seem like an odd one to include in the list, but the nutritional value that you get for the price is incredible. Tuna is packed full of protein which is great for keeping up the energy levels and brain power.

Throw a can of it in pasta bakes, salads and sandwiches for great meals which keep hunger at bay.

17.Stock cubes



Stock cubes are really useful to have in your cupboard as they're an important addition to a lot of staple dishes, and are needed in pretty much any pot of soup you make.

Veggie or chicken are the most versatile of all the stock cubes, so if you're investing in just one flavour, we'd suggest going with one of those.

18.Soup



First off we'd like to point out how easy it is to make your own soup, but if you're not up for that, there are other cheap and cheerful options!

Tinned soups are always great to have stored in the cupboard for a rainy day, as are the seriously cheap sachets of cuppasoups! Cuppasoups are also a great snack to carry around in your bag that you can have as a study snack – all you have to do is ask for a cup of hot water in the uni canteen.

19.Ketchup



Ketchup isn't just for fries! We're including ketchup in this list not just as a condiment to have with any potato-based snacks, but weirdly ketchup can be used in heaps of recipes to give it a sweet and rich kick.

You wouldn't believe how many tomato-based curry recipes recommend a good splodge of the stuff, and spaghetti bolognese just isn't the same without it!

20.Tea and coffee



Keep a steady stock in your cupboard for late night heart to hearts, break-ups and early morning pick-me-ups. But remember, keep an eye on your caffeine intake!