

A photograph of four purple shallots resting on a metal surface. The shallots are in various stages of focus, with one in the foreground being sharp and others in the background being blurred. The metal surface has a decorative, embossed pattern. The lighting is soft, highlighting the texture of the shallots.

An Honest Kitchen

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&
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Introduction

Leftovers

One of the most important and useful skills for eating well is *knowing what to do with leftovers*. I don't know where my eating would be if it wasn't for my freezer and while I enjoy cooking, I don't want to do it every day. So, whenever I spend time in the kitchen, I'm not only making a meal, I'm also trying to produce some leftovers. Whether the leftovers are a whole extra meal, or just part of a meal, it's a much more time-efficient way of cooking.

Knowing what to do with leftovers makes it easier to eat well.

It doesn't take twice the time to cook twice the quantity. So spending a few extra minutes chopping and prepping, when you are in the kitchen, can then save you bucketloads of time and effort on another night. Reheating leftovers or defrosting something from the freezer is quicker and a whole lot cheaper than ordering takeaway. Plus it will almost certainly be a better meal. Leftovers are common in my house and I get a certain satisfaction from having a well-stocked freezer, full of choice.

However, not everything can be frozen. In which case the meal you cook one night needs to be used up the next, otherwise it's going in the bin. While I hate wasting food, I also like variety and sometimes, no matter how good the meal, I get bored with eating the same dinner two nights in a row. This is when it pays to know a few tricks and twists; how to make the second meal different from the first.

This is particularly true in summer when I don't want to spend hours in the kitchen. Sunny weather and warm days mean I'd rather be outside and when it's ridiculously hot I don't want to be anywhere near the oven. However, I still want to eat well. Which means being efficient during the time I am in the kitchen and making the foundation of two meals at once. This mindset is something I naturally gravitate toward.

There are lots of ways you can make the second meal different from the first. Using a different protein; applying a dressing; crumbing a bit of tangy cheese over the top; making a dish that can be served as a side on one night and then a main the next - these are all techniques I use to change Leftovers into something new. You'll see some of these thoughts throughout this edition of *An Honest Kitchen*.

Beneath each recipe we've included notes. These may be a further explanation of one of the cooking techniques used in the dish. Alternatively, it might be information on how to store the meal, or whether it can be frozen. We've also included suggestions on vegetarianising the meat and fish dishes, and proposed ways you can vary the meals, depending on your taste and what's in your fridge on the day.

For a number of recipes, we've also outlined ways in which you can make a different meal from the leftovers. A good example is the *Spiced Lamb Cutlets with Tomatoes & Eggplant*. If you cook this using the quantities in the recipe, you'll have enough vegetables for two meals. Rather than just repeating the lamb, you can put together a second, quite different dish, by coupling the leftover tomatoes and eggplant with chickpeas and a drizzle of tahini. It's the same basic vegetable mix, which you've already cooked, but the final meal is fresh and new.

Another example is the *Risoni Salad*. It's worthwhile making double quantities of this as it keeps well overnight in the fridge and can be used in a number of different ways. You could use the salad as a side dish to either the *Barbecued Bream* or *Tomatoes Stuffed with Fetta*. Alternatively you can also make a meal out of the *Risoni Salad* itself. Another example is the *Hot and Tart Cucumber Salad* which can be eaten one night with the *Fish Cakes with Ginger and Coriander* and then the next with *Barbecued Prawn Skewers*.

Getting creative with your leftovers will save you money and also improve the food you eat, so don't throw anything away. Instead, try to find ways to make your leftovers into a slightly different meal.

Kathryn

Eating more sustainably (and saving money while you're at it)

Every meat eater I know loves a thick, juicy steak—the most expensive cut of all. In winter, casseroles and stews keep them content, aromatic dishes that are cooked long and slow, but in summer, it's those quick-cooking, expensive cuts we gravitate toward. But what about the cheaper bits? The less glamorous parts that most prefer to ignore at the butchers' counter? Ignore them at your peril. You're missing out on some of the best options. These cuts are just as tasty as your favourite steak and here's the good news - they're much cheaper, too. Take a look at the *Lamb Cutlets with Tomatoes, Eggplant & Spices* on page 27. It's a delicious example of a less-used cut of meat.

Then there's the whole fish. The head frightens many a cook. The eyes stare up from the grill or your plate, a reminder that your dinner was once a living creature. Confronting, naturally, but owning up to what you're eating can be liberating. Your fishmonger will do the nasty bits for you – the gutting and scaling – but please, leave that head on! Cooking fish whole, head and all, results in succulent meat that's harder to overcook than filleted pieces and, rest assured, you can always discard the head before serving to the squeamish. Once you feel confident doing this, the choices available to you are astounding, sustainable and, you bet, cheaper. And I don't know anyone who is squeamish about *that*.

While you're being brave about things, why not try spatchcocking a chicken next? The *Spicy Barbequed Chicken* on page 19 is a fantastic recipe to begin with. The butcher can do it for you, but more often than not, your chicken will come in a vacuum-sealed bag that he/she may not be keen to open. Besides, it's just as quick and easy to do this yourself.

Spatchcocked birds cook beautifully, the meat remaining tender and juicy. Give it a try—see page 47 of the *Glossary* for more information.

Lucy

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N.B. The V symbol indicates that a meal is either vegetarian or has a delicious, easy vegetarian adaptation in the box below the recipe.





Tomato, Egg & Spinach Tagine

Serves 2 - 3

1 tablespoon olive oil
½ onion, thinly sliced
2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
2 teaspoons preserved lemon, roughly chopped
½ bunch parsley, roughly chopped
½ bunch coriander, roughly chopped
1 teaspoon dried oregano
1 teaspoon chermoula or ras el hanout
1kg fresh tomatoes, roughly chopped – *see note below*
1 whole chilli (optional)
½ bunch English spinach or silverbeet, roughly chopped
4 eggs

To serve: rice of chunks of crusty sourdough bread

Cook the herbs and spices: Heat a heavy-bottomed casserole dish (with a lid) over a medium heat. Add the olive oil and once it's hot but not smoking add the onion and garlic. Sauté gently for 5 - 6 minutes, until the onion has just started turning translucent. Add the preserved lemon, parsley, coriander, oregano and chermoula. Stir these through and cook for about 1 minute, until the spices are quite fragrant and the fresh herbs are wilted.

Add the tomatoes & spinach: Add the tomatoes and stir to coat with the onion mixture. Score the end of the chilli (see Lucy's Notes below) add that to the pan, along with the spinach. Mix well, season with salt and pepper and then cover the pan and cook for 5 minutes.

Cook the eggs: Take the lid off the casserole dish and stir the contents. With the back of a spoon make four wells in the tomato mixture and break an egg into each well. Put the lid on the pan and cook gently for about 10 - 13 minutes - until the egg whites are cooked and the yolks just set. Serve immediately.

Cooking & Storage:

While this dish is *probably* better if you peel the tomatoes it is my *most hated* kitchen task, so I don't bother. It is worthwhile getting rid of some of the excess juices and seeds from your tomatoes, to ensure the final dish isn't too sloppy. I cut each tomato in half and give it a gentle squeeze over a bowl, flicking out excess seeds with my fingers. Then I chop in half again lengthways and add to the tagine.

These quantities make a lot of tagine, more than you need for one meal. The tomato / spinach base can be cooked ahead and even stored overnight. However, only add the eggs just prior to serving, as they turn rubbery if left for too long. Despite the eggs not keeping, I still cook the larger quantity of tagine, as the leftover tomatoes are extraordinarily good the next day, served on toast, with slices of avocado. I just make sure when I'm serving up the first meal, I spoon out all the eggs so there's only vegetable left behind.

Variations:

You could make a **vegan version** of this dish by leaving out the eggs and adding in a tin of white beans.

Lucy's Notes:

Scoring the chilli is easy. Photographed on the right.

