

Quick Wins Tips and Recipes

A practical companion to the Quick Wins for Busy Days guide

Healthy eating does not need to be complicated. This guide follows the ingredients featured in the Quick Wins for Busy Days list and shows how they can be included in everyday meals and snacks. Simple additions - a sprinkle of seeds, a pouch of lentils, or a spoonful of Greek yoghurt or cottage cheese - can help create more balanced, nutritious and satisfying meals with minimal preparation.

The recipes are designed as flexible ideas rather than strict meal plans. Adjust portions and ingredients to suit appetite, dietary needs and the rest of the day. Where exact nutrition matters, check the current product label because brands and recipes vary.

The quick wins approach

- Keep useful ingredients visible and easy to reach.
- Combine a source of protein with fibre-rich plants and, where appropriate, healthy fats.
- Choose plain or minimally seasoned products where possible, then add flavour with herbs, spices, citrus or vegetables.
- Use ready-cooked or canned foods when they make a balanced choice easier on a busy day.

Chickpeas

Chickpeas are an affordable and versatile source of plant-based protein and fibre. The combination of protein and fibre can help make meals more filling, while fibre supports healthy digestion. A jar or tin of chickpeas is a useful cupboard staple - simply drain and rinse, and they are ready to use.

Quick ways to use it

- Toss into salads, soups and curries.
- Mash with avocado or feta for a quick toast topping.
- Blend with tahini and lemon to make hummus.
- Roast with a little olive oil and spices for a crunchy snack or salad topper.
- Add half a tin to a salad, soup or tray of roasted vegetables to increase its protein and fibre.

Bulgur Wheat Bowl with Roasted Vegetables and Chickpeas

Ingredients

- 1 red pepper, deseeded and roughly chopped
- 1 yellow pepper, deseeded and roughly chopped
- 1 white onion, roughly chopped
- 1 red onion, roughly chopped
- 1 small aubergine, roughly chopped
- 1 courgette, roughly chopped
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 tsp dried mixed herbs
- 100 g bulgur wheat
- 1 lemon, halved
- 100 g cooked chickpeas, rinsed
- Small bunch flat-leaf parsley, roughly chopped
- Small bunch coriander, mint or basil, roughly chopped
- 1 tbsp mixed seeds
- Black pepper and a small pinch of sea salt

Method

1. Heat the oven to 200 C or gas 6. Put the vegetables in a shallow baking dish and toss with the oil, dried herbs and seasoning. Roast for 45 to 60 minutes until soft and lightly charred, shaking the pan occasionally.
2. Place the bulgur wheat in a bowl. Squeeze over half the lemon and cover with 100 ml boiling water. Cover and set aside until the liquid has been absorbed, then fluff with a fork.
3. Transfer the bulgur and chickpeas to the roasted vegetables and mix well so they absorb the cooking juices. Add the remaining lemon juice, fresh herbs and seeds.

Practical note: Leftovers make a useful lunch. Vary the vegetables according to the season and add feta, tofu, eggs or sardines when more protein is needed.

Recipe reference: Adapted from Aine Carlin, The New Vegan

Lentils

Lentils are a versatile source of plant-based protein and fibre. They are naturally low in fat and also provide nutrients including iron and folate. Their combination of protein and fibre can help make meals more satisfying, while fibre supports healthy digestion.

Quick ways to use it

- Add to soups, curries and stews.
- Stir ready-cooked lentils through salads.
- Mix into a Bolognese or chilli alongside or instead of some of the meat.
- Combine with roasted vegetables, feta and mixed seeds for a quick lunch.

Roasted Beetroot Lentil and Feta Salad

Ingredients

- 4 beetroot, peeled and cut into chunks, or cooked beetroot
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 250 g pouch cooked lentils
- 80 g rocket
- 125 g feta, crumbled
- 75 g walnuts, roughly chopped
- Quarter bunch chives, finely chopped
- 4 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- Juice of 1 lemon
- 1 tsp Dijon mustard
- 1 tsp honey
- Black pepper

Method

1. Heat the oven to 220 C, 200 C fan or gas 7. Place raw beetroot on a baking tray, drizzle with 1 tbsp oil and season. Roast for about 30 minutes until tender.
2. Combine the dressing ingredients in a bowl. Add three-quarters of the cooked beetroot and leave it to marinate for up to 45 minutes.
3. Mix the lentils with the rocket, most of the feta and two-thirds of the walnuts. Add the beetroot and dressing, then finish with the remaining feta, walnuts and chives.

Practical note: Feta and the dressing contribute salt and energy. Use smaller amounts if you prefer a lighter salad.

Recipe reference: Adapted from Good Food, Roasted beetroot and feta salad

Cottage Cheese

Cottage cheese is a high-protein, versatile food that can be relatively low in calories, particularly when choosing a reduced-fat variety. A typical 150 g serving provides around 14 to 17 g of protein, which can help make meals more satisfying. Cottage cheese can also provide calcium, although the exact nutritional content varies between brands.

Quick ways to use it

- Add to scrambled eggs, porridge or pancake batter.
- Blend into smoothies or sauces.
- Spread onto toast or crispbread.
- Serve as a dip with vegetables or fruit.
- Mix with pesto, herbs and seasoning for a quick savoury snack.

Vegetable Egg Muffins

Ingredients

- 1 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 1 small bunch spring onions, finely chopped
- 1 red pepper, finely diced
- 1 yellow pepper, finely diced
- 4 eggs
- 200 g cottage cheese
- 40 g Parmesan or Cheddar, grated
- 2 tbsp freshly chopped herbs or 2 tsp dried herbs
- Black pepper and optional sea salt

Method

1. Heat the oven to 180 C fan. Warm the oil in a frying pan and cook the spring onions and peppers for 3 to 4 minutes until softened. Remove from the heat.
2. Whisk the eggs, then stir in the cottage cheese, grated cheese and herbs. Add the vegetables and season with black pepper.
3. Divide the mixture between eight lined or silicone muffin cups. Bake for about 20 minutes until puffed and set. Leave to cool slightly before serving.

Practical note: Store in an airtight container in the fridge for up to two days. Cottage cheese and hard cheese already contain salt, so taste before adding more.

Recipe reference: Dominique Ludwig, No Nonsense Nutrition

Sardines

Sardines are a convenient, nutrient-rich source of high-quality protein and omega-3 fats. When eaten with their soft bones, they also provide calcium, alongside vitamin D and vitamin B12. Choose sardines with the bones, packed in olive oil, spring water or tomato sauce, with minimal ingredients and lower-salt options where possible. The NHS recommends eating at least one portion of oily fish each week as part of a balanced diet.

Quick ways to use it

- Mash onto wholegrain toast with lemon and black pepper.
- Toss through a tomato and bean salad.
- Add to wholewheat pasta with tomatoes and spinach.
- Serve with a baked potato and crunchy salad.

Sardines and Tomatoes on Toast

Ingredients

- 2 slices sourdough or wholegrain bread, toasted
- 1 large garlic clove, halved
- 1 x 120 to 135 g can sardines
- 130 g cherry tomatoes, halved
- Handful watercress
- 1 tbsp parsley, roughly chopped
- Half a lemon
- Black pepper

Method

1. Rub each piece of warm toast with the cut garlic.
2. Mix the sardines with the tomatoes, watercress and parsley. If using sardines in oil, include only as much oil as needed.
3. Pile the mixture onto the toast. Finish with lemon juice and black pepper.

Practical note: Sardines packed in spring water provide less added oil, while olive-oil varieties produce a richer meal. Check the salt on the label.

Recipe reference: Adapted from Good Food, Sardines and tomatoes on toast

Greek Yoghurt

Greek yoghurt is a nutritious source of protein and calcium. Strained Greek yoghurt is typically higher in protein than standard yoghurt, which can help make meals and snacks more satisfying. Choose plain, unsweetened varieties and check the label, as protein, fat and added sugar can vary considerably between products.

Quick ways to use it

- Serve with berries, fruit and mixed seeds.
- Spoon over porridge or overnight oats.
- Blend into smoothies.
- Use instead of mayonnaise or soured cream in dressings and dips.
- Serve alongside savoury dishes.

Greek Yoghurt Overnight Oats

Ingredients

- Half tsp cinnamon
- 45 g rolled porridge oats
- 100 ml oat milk or milk of choice
- 2 to 4 tbsp plain Greek yoghurt
- 50 g mixed berries, fresh or frozen
- 3 walnuts, broken
- Optional small drizzle of honey

Method

1. The night before serving, stir the cinnamon and milk into the oats with a small pinch of salt. Cover and refrigerate overnight.
2. The next day, loosen with a little water or milk if needed.
3. Top with the Greek yoghurt, berries and walnuts. Add a small drizzle of honey only if additional sweetness is required.

Practical note: This can be made the night before and taken to work. Using a larger spoonful of Greek yoghurt will increase the protein.

Recipe reference: Adapted from Good Food, Overnight oats

Ground Linseed

Ground linseed, also called flaxseed, is rich in fibre and the plant-based omega-3 fat alpha-linolenic acid. It has a mild, nutty flavour and is an easy way to add extra fibre and healthy fats to everyday meals.

Quick ways to use it

- Sprinkle over porridge, overnight oats or yoghurt.
- Blend into smoothies and shakes.
- Stir into pancake or muffin batter.
- Add to homemade bread.
- Keep ground linseed sealed in the fridge and add a spoonful to breakfast.

Green Goodness Smoothie

Ingredients

- 1 banana
- 1 handful kale or spinach
- 6 strawberries, chopped
- 1 date, pitted
- 2 tbsp milled linseed
- 2 tbsp kefir or plain yoghurt
- 250 ml dairy or unsweetened fortified alternative

Method

1. Place all the ingredients in a blender.
2. Blend until smooth and creamy, adding a little more liquid if needed.
3. Pour into a glass and serve promptly.

Practical note: The banana and date both add sweetness. Omit the date if the banana is ripe enough, and choose a protein-rich milk or yoghurt for a more sustaining breakfast.

Recipe reference: Adapted from Linwoods Health Foods, Green Goodness Gut Friendly Smoothie

Mixed Seeds

Mixed seeds are an easy way to add fibre, plant-based protein and unsaturated fats to everyday meals. Depending on the mixture, seeds can also provide micronutrients including magnesium, zinc, iron and vitamin E.

Quick ways to use it

- Sprinkle a spoonful over soups, salads or porridge.
- Add to yoghurt and fruit.
- Scatter over eggs or avocado on toast.
- Use as a crunchy topping for hummus and roasted vegetables.
- Keep a packet somewhere visible to make this an easy daily habit.

Golden Butternut Squash Soup

Ingredients

- 1 butternut squash, peeled and cut into bite-sized pieces
- 1 brown onion, finely chopped
- 1 to 2 red chillies, finely chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, chopped
- 1 tsp smoked paprika
- 2 x 400 ml cans coconut milk
- Small drizzle olive oil
- Mixed seeds to serve
- Black pepper and a small pinch of sea salt

Method

1. Cover the squash with water, bring to the boil and simmer for about 25 minutes until soft. Drain and set aside.
2. Cook the onion and garlic in a little olive oil for 10 to 15 minutes. Add the paprika, chilli and squash, and cook for a further 5 minutes.
3. Add the coconut milk, bring to the boil and simmer for 10 minutes. Blend until smooth, then serve with a measured sprinkling of mixed seeds.

Practical note: Coconut milk is rich in saturated fat. For a lighter everyday version, replace one can with water or low-salt stock, or use reduced-fat coconut milk.

Recipe reference: Adapted from Deliciously Ella, Golden Butternut Squash Soup

References

These sources support the general nutritional information used in the ingredient sections. Recipe references are shown separately at the end of each recipe. Accessed September 2026.

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Important information

This guide provides general nutrition education for healthy adults. It does not replace individual advice from a registered dietitian, appropriately qualified nutrition professional or medical practitioner. Requirements may differ during pregnancy, with allergies or intolerances, and for people managing kidney disease, diabetes, cardiovascular conditions or gastrointestinal disorders.