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A lesson in easy meals

Beans-on-toast was long the staple meal of impoverished students, but now they are fussier and want nutritious, cheap, easy-to-cook ingredients, says Roz Crowley

IT’S college time and while beans on toast or coleslaw sandwiches were the staples for many students in the 1980s, these days students are fussier about their diet. Economical, easy, flexible, healthy, but interesting recipes are what our clever students need to get them through a busy college term.

■ For more ideas, see www.rozcrowley.com.



ARANCINI (RICE BALLS)

In Italy, arancini are small, orange-shaped balls, a terrific Italian way of using up leftover cooked rice, including risotto. They make the best use of rice leftovers and are great for parties, for substantial nibbles, or with a salad as a main course. Students love them. Even made from scratch, with new rice, they cost very little. Arancini is pronounced ‘aran-cheeny’.

To serve 4
300g cooked rice
2 heaped teasp butter
1 dessp Parmesan or other, hard cheese
Handful filling (see below)
2 eggs, beaten lightly
2 des sp flour
Salt and pepper
Vegetable oil for frying
2 handfuls bread-crumbs.

Make the filling first, by mixing together chopped, leftover meat, vegetables or cheese. A teaspoon of leftover Bolognese sauce in each ball is great. Try a simple cube of cheese for each one (cheddar is fine, but moz-

zarella has a great, creamy texture). I recently used cubes of feta, with chopped chorizo. Black pudding and parmesan is great.

I often use brown basmati, but allow it to absorb more water than for fried rice, to help it stick together. Add flecks of the butter to the rice, ideally while still warm, so it melts a little. Then, add the parmesan. Any cheese, finely grated, can be used, too. Mix well.

To prevent sticking, wet your hands and take a small handful of rice and mould it into a small ball. Press a 1p-size piece of filling into the centre and bring the rice around, to close it up completely and make it smooth again. Dip each one first in seasoned flour, then the beaten egg, then the breadcrumbs. Just before frying, dip them into more breadcrumbs, as the egg often comes through the first layer. The aim is a good seal on the arancini. Ideally, these should be deep-fried, but, as long as the oil is hot and you don’t move them around until the underside is crisp, you can fry them in half their depth and turn them over to finish browning. Heat the oil — hot enough to fry a square of bread quickly. Fry one or two at a time, for fastest frying. Drain, and serve hot or warm.



THRIFTY, NIFTY, FRIED RICE

As well as arancini, you can turn the leftovers of this dish into a decent soup by adding water and a stock cube, grated cheese, and a can of corn or baked beans.

Brown basmati is my favourite to use. Any or all of the vegetables work well — don’t worry if you don’t have some of them. Even shredded cabbage is good, added at the last minute. The same amount of



Roz with second-year Psychology and English student Anthony O’Riordan in the kitchen. Today’s students are more adventurous with food. Pictures: Denis Scannell

vegetables will stretch to feed at least six, if necessary. Just double the amount of rice and follow the rest of the recipe.

Serves 2-3
250g rice
Water
4 streaky rashers, chopped
2 large onions, chopped
2 des sp olive oil
3 cloves garlic, chopped
1 cm fresh ginger, chopped finely (optional)
1 chilli, chopped (optional)

2 carrots
1 stick celery, chopped (optional)
1 handful frozen peas
Soya sauce
Sweet chilli sauce (optional).

Get the rice going first, by bringing it to the boil with 2cm of water over the level of the rice. Cover with a lid and turn down the heat, so it steams gently. Brown rice takes 15-20 mins.

Meanwhile, fry the rashers in the oil in a wide frying pan, until brown. Add the chilli and onions,

turn the heat down and cook for two minutes. Add the garlic and ginger, if using. Grate or chop the carrots and add to the pan with the celery. Stir until the onions are limp. Add the peas from frozen and stir until defrosted. By now, the rice should be cooked, so test to check it is not still too chewy and drain of any spare liquid. Tip into the pan and toss around, coating it with the vegetables. At this stage, you can add a beaten egg, or any leftovers. Stir gently. Add the soya sauce, and, if you fancy it hotter, some sweet chilli sauce. Stir until hot through. Always make sure leftovers are heated fully to kill bacteria. Serve hot, with a green salad on the side.



BASIC TOMATO AND BEAN STEW WITH POACHED EGG

Serves 2-4
2 large onions, sliced
2 dessp olive or sunflower oil
2 carrots, grated or chopped
4 cloves garlic, chopped
1 can tomatoes
1 can beans
300ml stock or water
1 handful noodles
1 egg per person
Black pudding (optional)
Chorizo (optional).

Cook the onion and garlic slowly in the oil until soft — 3-5 mins. Add the can of tomatoes (or 4 fresh ones while in season), carrots, can of beans and stock or water. Add chorizo or black pudding, if used. Cook 5 minutes. Add cooked or uncooked noodles, and any chopped leftovers. Bring to the boil for 3 mins. Meanwhile, fry or poach an egg (see how online).

Serve portions of the stew in a bowl topped with the egg. For extra flourish and vitamins, add chopped parsley.

Opening Lines Colm O’Regan

I’M up early this morning — fierce early. The smugness is overwhelming. That’s not a surprise — the world attaches a moral value to early-rising. The early bird catches the worm; early to bed and early to rise leads to health, wealth and wisdom. By contrast, late is only better than never.

I don’t want to understate the scale of my achievement this morning.

Especially as I’ve overcome a particularly harrowing addiction to the snooze button.

Most mornings consist of me telling the alarm: “Really, alarm clock? You didn’t think I was being serious, did you?” There then follows a sleep pattern of nine-minute micro-sleeps, each one followed by accusing the alarm of all sorts of betrayal. Yet, I’ve overcome these

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There are downsides to early rising. You become insufferable and say things like “I’ve half a day’s work done already!” and “Are you STILL in bed?”

challenges and, rather like exercise and drinking plenty of water, I’m asking “why don’t I do this more often?”

Of course, I’m only up because I have to be. I have to bring someone to the airport. There is something about the incontrovertible reality of a plane taking off, whether everyone’s on it or not, that cuts through all snooze-button inclination.

It’s a pity that necessity is the only mother of ascension, because the early-morning world has a charm all of its own.

There is a camaraderie on the road. People are bound together by bleariness. Milkmen, street-cleaners, taxi drivers who have just dropped off the last ‘legend’ from the night before, someone cycling in to open up the Spar. The traffic lights are mostly green and even when

they’re not, it’s no problem to wait. An urban fox stops. We regard each other for a while. The fox wonders if I’m new to the area, looks at the age of my car, and hopes the neighbourhood isn’t going downhill.

AA Roadwatch has nothing to say, yet. The Jack Lynch Tunnel is free of all load-spilled trucks. The ‘Farrybank djewal carriageway’ has no bumper-to-bumpers.

Lough Atalia is just that — a lake rather than a defensive formation preventing an attack on Galway from the East. The radio is more placid. The talkie stations haven’t woken, yet. If you wanted, you could hear a replay of yesterday’s bad news, but to best capture the mood, listen to the pre-breakfast DJ. They haven’t the energy for competitions or for talking to listeners. They’re just playing a Prefab Sprout song that won’t get

near the playlists for the next 12 hours.

By 8 o’clock, we have all become competitors on the road — snarling and beeping at each other. We have conversations with other drivers that they will never hear: “No, go ahead — DON’T let me turn right? That would be TOO sound, you [insert swear-word]!”

There are downsides to early rising. You become insufferable and say things like “I’ve half a day’s work done already!” and “Are you STILL in bed?”

I know it won’t last. Tomorrow, if the alarm goes at the same time, I will patiently explain to it that there’s been a mistake and I don’t know who told it that I was getting up at that ridiculous hour, but if it didn’t mind, I was going to have a snooze. I’ll let the fox have the worm.

over the car industry, which I do understand is in a crisis.

Personally, I would love to take public transport, but even though the hassle is minor, I would prefer for it to be hassle-free.

Going to the train station, telling them in advance I’m coming, and not to forget the ramp to facilitate my wheelchair, is a bit of a pain. I’m not a member of a world-famous girl band, but I don’t need to be telling security I’m arriving.

Same with the bus. I’d be delighted to take a bus to Cork City for a shopping trip, but getting in the door of the bus is a hassle.

We are living in the dark ages in Cork and Munster, but then we go up to Dublin and see the pretty Luas, the DART, and the nice buses.

Why must we be forgotten down here?

I know Cork City isn’t massive, but wouldn’t it be great to see people living in Bishopstown get to Douglas, like people from Crumlin get to places like Stephen’s Green, just by hopping on a LUAS?

We shouldn’t have to go everywhere by car.

We should be able to stroll onto the train or bus, or whatever, and not panic about overpriced train tickets or buses with monstrous high steps.

We shouldn’t have to be relying on our cars 24/7.

We should be abandoning them, what with pollution and everything. It’s time to start taking public transport, and driving forward into the future.

The way I see it



Joanne O’Riordan

My drive to get us back on public transport

PUBLIC transport is increasingly important. Hopping on a bus, or a LUAS, or a train, it’s so simple.

Yet people rely more on cars. It’s understandable; you can go at your own pace.

My parents are the same. Promises of ‘we will take the train now, it is easier’, fall flat.

Even though stats and figures show the prices of petrol and diesel have gone up, and fewer people are buying cars now than a few years ago, travelling on the M50, I still see loads of cars.

Compare that to entering a train carriage, where you’d be surprised if there were more than 15 people. I always wonder why that is?

Approximately, it would cost you €35 to go up to Dublin by car. Don’t forget to add on the €1.80 for the toll.

Compare that to a train ticket, which would cost you €60-€70. Scandalous.

Yet, then we get Minister for Transport, Leo Varadkar, proclaiming that the car industry is screwed.

My friend, you are overcharging people for their train tickets, never mind having a nervous breakdown

“We should be able to stroll onto the train or bus, and not panic about overpriced tickets or buses with high steps”

