



Real food

Our food editor, **CATHERINE HILL**, talks Pancake Day treats, stretching your food budget for a bit of home entertaining, best buys and must-have store cupboard standbys...

On the flip side

The challenge this month of coming up with a dinner party for four for under £20 was no mean feat! The key to getting the right balance at the right price meant choosing inexpensive everyday ingredients and giving them a twist with some clever flavourings and spices. This month's curry works just as well with shin of beef and ox cheek, so find your price point and experiment.

I'm also looking forward to flipping hot home-made pancakes on Shrove Tuesday. A delicious and economical treat, the only question is which filling should you go for – one of my favourites is lightly cooked warm pears topped with a drizzle of ready-made chocolate sauce and a spoonful of ice cream. Sliced bananas cooked in maple syrup with cream is another winner, or for something really indulgent, how about orange segments cooked in butter and sugar with a glug of brandy? Delicious!

Catherine



OFF THE SHELF

Check out this month's great must-try goodies...



1 You've got to have Ben & Jerry's frozen yogurt on hand next time you fancy an (almost) guilt-free treat. Their **Chocolate Fudge Brownie** is delicious and less than three per cent fat! A 500ml tub is £4.45 in Tesco and Waitrose.



2 M&S's **Chicken and Red Wine Casserole** is a fantastic dish that, with fresh herbs and a pile of mash, I'd be more than happy to pass off as home-made! £6.49 for a 620g pack.



4 Just add chicken or prawns, coriander and lime to Thai Taste's **Easy Pad Thai Meal Kit** for a quick supper for two. £2.29 for a 232g pack from Waitrose.



3 Ocean Spray's new range of delicious fruit juices are an easy way of upping your five a day. Try **Raspberry and Blackberry with Cranberry**, £1.75 a litre from Asda.



0% fat Greek yogurt is a fantastically versatile ingredient that I couldn't be without. For creamy desserts like Eton mess or fruity mousses, I tend to substitute half the cream for fat-free yogurt to lighten the whole thing up. Use as the base for a low-fat tzatziki dip – just stir in finely grated cucumber and finely chopped spring onion, then flavour with garlic, lemon juice and plenty of seasoning.



Take a pot of...

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Budget-beating BASICS £

Pound for pound, chicken thighs are almost half the price of chicken breasts or fillets. Moist and flavoursome, they're almost impossible to dry out by overcooking. They readily take on flavours when marinated and are great skewered and grilled, sliced and stir-fried or used on the bone for a classic coq au vin or gutsy slow-cook casserole.



IN THE MIX

It's not often I fall in love with a gadget, but after going through several cheaper electric mixers in the last ten years or so, this heavy duty mixer is fantastic. The Kenwood kMix is amazingly powerful, and it looks pretty gorgeous too. Around £40 from department stores and cookshops.

