

HOB

a simpler way to cook:
80 stove-top recipes
for everyone



amy
sheppard



B L O O M S B U R Y

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with photography by
polly webster

B L O O M S B U R Y A B S O L U T E
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introduction



Last year, just a few days after Christmas, my oven stopped working. I was right in the middle of cooking dinner. It wasn't the end of the world. A simple fix, just a part that needed replacing, but it was out of action for a week.

To be honest, the relief I felt that the oven didn't break two days earlier (in the middle of Christmas dinner) eclipsed any annoyance I might have felt. And I still had the hob...

I wrote a new meal plan and spent the week cooking exclusively on the hob. I loved it. It got me out of my cooking rut and forced me to strip everything back. I tried new foods and new ways of cooking and simplified the old. I also discovered a few things. The first thing I discovered is that hob cooking is more forgiving. There's more flexibility than there is with oven cooking. There's time to make mistakes. The window of cooking food to perfection is much wider.

Yes, hob cooking can be slow – in fact I've written a whole chapter on it – but, as you'll see from this book, it's generally a much quicker, simpler way of cooking. Immediately you're eliminating the 15-minute wait to 'pre-heat the oven'. You're cooking on heat straight away.

I've provided a rough guide as to how long each recipe might take you to cook (not including prep), to help you plan ahead, but I'm aware that everyone's hob may be a little different, and sometimes it can depend on the ingredients you're using, so it might take you a little longer in some cases.

I found that hob cooking can be much more conducive to busy lives and family dinner times. It's right there, simmering, sautéing or frying in front of you. Speed it up, slow it down, reheat it. Perfect if you have a chaotic, multi-functioning kitchen like mine.

I wanted to write a cook book that I would want to use. So, I've structured this book so that it fits easily with meal planning. Whether you're short of time, short of money, entertaining friends or looking for something for the weekend – you'll be able to find a Hob meal for you.

There are seven chapters. Some recipes will need a side, like rice or potatoes, so you'll need two pans. However, two-thirds of the recipes are one-pan meals. There are icons at the top of each recipe to indicate whether or not it's a one-pan or two-pan meal.

Does it matter what type of hob you have? No. Gas, electric, induction, it doesn't matter. The only temperature directions are low, medium or high. You know your hob; you know how fast or slow it cooks. These recipes will give you the flexibility to cook more intuitively.

lunch & brunch Full of quick meals and snacks, this chapter brims with the sort of food you can cook on a lazy Saturday morning and eat in bed with the papers.

quick dinners Exactly what the title tells you: quick and simple meals, with easy prep and few ingredients, and on the table in less than 20 minutes. These are easy wins that are ideal for busy, midweek evenings.

weekend food This chapter is all about fakeaways, treats and exciting ingredients. Guilty pleasures that are perfect for weekends when you want something a little bit special.

budget wonders I love having a few cheap recipes up my sleeve. When you're on a budget and need to make your food go even further, you need ideas on how to make something great from the basics. Think tinned, frozen and cheap ingredients with simple ways to use leftovers.

a low simmer These dinners will take a little bit longer. They are meals to cook for pleasure, when you have the time to really enjoy the process. Think stews, casseroles and comfort food. It's slow cooking to get incredible flavours out of great ingredients.

midweek crowd pleasers A chapter of dinners that will become your weekly regulars, these are band new family favourites that you'll hopefully end up knowing off by heart.

sweet hob I nearly didn't include a pudding chapter in this book. I wasn't sure if there were enough desserts that you can make on the hob – I was wrong! I've written some quick and easy sweet treats that I think will become firm family favourites.

simple sides A few ideas for quick accompaniments to any meal.

I really hope you enjoy #HOB. If you make any of the recipes, don't forget to tag me @amysheppardfood – I love seeing what you're cooking!

Amy x

I don't have a big selection of kitchen kit. In fact, most of the pots and pans I own I've had for many years; some were even my grandparents'. I like to stick to what I know when I'm cooking. I have pans that get hotter than others, some that retain their heat better than others and some that have excellent non-stick credentials!

My point is, that you don't need any fancy kit to make the recipes in this book. Anything that you don't have, there'll be an alternative.

pots & pans

As a guide, though, below I've outlined the main pans you'll need to cook the recipes in this book:

a casserole pan A large, deep, heavy-bottomed, two-handled casserole pan. These are often copper or cast iron.

- ▶ Cast iron is perfect for slow cooking. It takes a while to heat up, but once hot, it stays hot. Remember, then, the food inside will continue to cook a while after you've turned the heat off.
- ▶ Copper pans are expensive, but most will last a lifetime if you look after them. They heat quickly and more evenly than cast iron and cool down just as fast. The responsiveness of these pans is what makes them a favourite with chefs.
- ▶ Use a casserole pan primarily for slow cooking. Ideally, choose one with a non-stick base to make braising easier. If it's an old faithful with little non-stick left, don't worry. You'll use it mainly for cooking casseroles, stews and soups. If you don't have one, just use a standard saucepan.

a non-stick frying pan Choose a frying pan that has an excellent non-stick bottom – which you'll need for some of the recipes. In fact, this is the only bit of kitchen kit that I replace every couple of years as the bottom becomes tired and food begins to stick. Some of the recipes

require a frying pan with a lid. Don't worry if you don't have one – all the recipes have been tested using a substitute. You can use a sauté pan or shallow casserole pan with a lid if you have one. Or, you can carefully cover the top of the pan with foil or the bottom of a metal baking tray – basically, anything that stops steam escaping.

a medium, non-stick saucepan with lid This is your standard saucepan. These tend to be either stainless steel or aluminium with a non-stick coating. If you're using a stainless-steel pan, food can sometimes stick. Try using a little more oil and turning down the heat. I have a saucepan with a spout that you can pour from when the lid is still on. It allows you to drain pasta and vegetables without using a colander – a game changer as far as saucepans are concerned!

There are a number of different types of hob. Electric, gas, induction – each with their advantages and disadvantages. I won't run you through the benefits of each one as chances are you've either selected the right one for you, or you've inherited it with the house. Either way, you'll probably know it like the back of your hand.

and what of the hob?

You can make all the recipes in this book with any type of hob. The instructions will guide you to use low, medium or high heat settings and, sometimes, whether you should use a large or small burner. One of the benefits of cooking on the hob is that you can see the food as it's frying, simmering or steaming. This makes cooking on the hob a more intuitive experience. If your food is cooking too fast, turn the heat down; too slowly – crank it up a bit.





modern meal planning

All the recipes in this book have been made in my kitchen and tested multiple times, often at chaotic family dinners. Any recipes that were stressful to make, overly complicated or that I just didn't enjoy cooking, did not make the book. I wanted the recipes to be easy and joyful to make – think dinners that you'll make over and over and recommend to your friends. I also wanted the chapters and recipes to fit in easily with meal planning. If you've not meal planned before, or you're looking for a new way to do it, there is no better way to save time and money, so read on.

I promise you that 10 minutes a week of writing down what dinners you're having, and when, will change dinner times (and your budget) for the better – for ever. Meal planning will:

- ▶ Help you prepare for busier nights.
- ▶ Mean you waste less food. Every ingredient that you buy will be allocated to a meal.
- ▶ Spend less money on your weekly food bill. You'll only buy the food you need.
- ▶ Mean you spend less time having to cobble together dinners from a random selection of food and more time cooking the food you love.

There is a reason that recipe-box companies have been such an overnight success. We all want to cook, but we want it to be simple, we need it to fit in with our busy lives and, ultimately, we want a plan.

I've organised the recipes and created the chapters in the book with the aim of making meal planning easier for you. Follow these simple steps and hopefully you'll find plenty of recipes to inspire your weekly plan and get the DIY recipe-box experience:

- 1 Every two or three months write a 'Master Meal Plan.' Don't worry, it sounds more complicated than it is. This is a list of all the regular dinners that you cook, plus a few new ones. You'll need 20 to 25 dinners on this list. It seems like a lot, but once you get started, you'll realise how many you already have in your armoury. Once you run out of the obvious mealtime hits, think back to dinners you've not had in a while and get ideas from the rest of the family.

- 2 Once you have the list, you need to split it into categories with four or five recipes in each:

quick dinners These are the meals that take about 20 minutes to get on the table. There's a whole chapter of ideas in this book (see pages 47–73). Don't forget to add the simple dinners. Meals like jacket potatoes and beans on toast are a vital part of any meal plan!

budget Think tinned food, cheap ingredients and dinners that use up leftovers like vegetables (soups and stir fries) and mashed potato (fishcakes, bubble and squeak, topping for cottage pie). Take a look at the budget chapter for ideas (see pages 101–127).

weekend food These are the treat dinners: pizza, fish and chips, fakeaways. They're your weekly guilty pleasures and long-cook Sunday lunches. Take inspiration from the Weekend Food and A Low Simmer chapters in this book (see pages 75–99 and 129–153, respectively).

family favourites Or as I've called them, Midweek Crowd Pleasers (see pages 155–181). Put your midweek regulars in this category: the family staples. Fajitas, spaghetti bolognese, tacos, meatballs and lasagne are a few of our favourites.

something new If you're anything like me, you'll probably have a collection of recipes that you want to try; recipes you've found in cookbooks, or online or in magazines. Now's your chance to try them.

- 3 Once you have your recipes in order, you're ready to write your weekly meal plan. Write down the seven days of the week (or make it repeat to give ten or 14 days if you prefer to shop for longer):
 - Fill in Saturday and Sunday with dinners from Weekend Food and A Low Simmer.
 - Identify which one or two nights of the week will be busiest for you. These might be nights where you're working late, or maybe the kids have swimming lessons. Select meals from Quick Dinners.



- ▶ Select one or two of the meals from Budget. Cooking at least one budget meal a week will keep the cost of your shop down. If it's the week before pay day or you're cutting back, choose more than just one or two.
 - ▶ Fill in the remaining days of the week from your list of family favourites and try adding one of the meals from your list of something new.
- 4 Once you have your weekly meal plan, work down the list of dinners. Write down all the ingredients you'll need on your shopping list.

Other things you might want to consider when meal planning:

- ▶ Have at least one meat-free dinner a week.
- ▶ Think about adding some lunches. There are plenty of ideas in the Lunch & Brunch chapter (see pages 23–45).
- ▶ Try, if you can, to select some recipes that share some of the same ingredients. It will reduce the amount of food you have to buy and minimise waste.
- ▶ Change the Master Meal Plan every two or three months – after all, by then new recipes may very well have become family favourites!
- ▶ Add a couple of dessert recipes from the Sweet chapter (see page 183–207) – if not for during the week, then certainly as a treat at the weekend.

If you're a little overwhelmed by the number of steps I've included to create a meal plan – don't be. Once you start, meal planning is incredibly easy. With your Master Meal Plan in your pocket, you'll never look back!

To make meal planning a little easier, I've added a few weekly meal plan templates to the back of this book, with space to write your shopping list. There's a few, so you'll be able to create a number of different variations to keep things interesting!

The following isn't an exhaustive list, but it is a list of some of my favourite storecupboard ingredients. These are additions that can turn a good meal into a great meal; food items that you might not necessarily think to keep in your cupboards and tips on how to use them.

balsamic vinegar I always have this in the cupboard. I add it to sauce bases. It helps to balance the sharpness of tomato. Use it to make simple salad dressings by adding it to equal quantities of oil. From this you can add any spices, seasoning or flavour that you like.

breadcrumbs If you're anything like me, you'll nearly always have a leftover crust of bread hanging around. Blitz any bread past its best to breadcrumbs and freeze them. They defrost quickly and are great for bulking out burgers, coating chicken or fishcakes, and frying to put on top of pasta or salad dishes.

chipotle chilli powder If you're a fan of hot, smoked barbecue flavours, you need a jar of this in your spice cupboard. Experiment by swapping regular chilli powder for this in some of your recipes. It adds a different type of heat and makes a nice change.

coconut milk This is such a useful staple. I use coconut milk in fish stews, curries, soups and sauces. It's a very kid-friendly ingredient – you can even use it for breakfast in smoothies or overnight oats. The coconut flavour isn't strong, you just get a nice, creamy, background sweetness.

crème fraîche If this isn't a regular on your shopping list, it should be. Use it in pasta sauces, casseroles, curries and chicken dishes. You don't need very much to add a creamy silkiness to sauces.

frozen spinach I rarely buy fresh spinach these days. It's expensive and there's only a short time when it's at its best before going soggy. Having spinach in the freezer means I have it whenever I need it – you soon realise that it's a nice addition to a lot of dinners.

garam masala I feel like this is an underrated spice blend. It's full of wonderful, warming flavours, without being spicy. If you're introducing children to curries or cooking for people who don't like their food too spicy, this is a great way to go.



gouda cheese I buy this cheese in slices. It melts quickly without being too fatty and gives you a lovely gooey, stringy cheese when cooked, making it perfect for toasties and sauces.

gravy granules I use beef and chicken gravy granules (depending on the meat I'm using) in casseroles, pies and even chilli con carne. It helps to thicken the sauce and gives a deeper flavour to the meat.

halloumi If you're trying to eat less meat, halloumi is a wonderful vegetarian ingredient. It has great texture and flavour and is incredibly versatile. Coat it in a little flour and fry until golden to add to salads. Coat in breadcrumbs for lovely croutons to add to soups and pasta dishes; or use it in vegetable curries.

honey We seem to get through quite a lot of honey in my house. I often swap sugar for honey in midweek recipes – usually in tomato-based dinners that require a bit of sweetness to balance out the flavour, like spaghetti bolognese and lasagne.

jalapeño slices I always have a jar of these in the fridge and it's surprising how often I use them. I love the vinegary pickled heat. They are great in wraps, burgers and salads or cut up finely and added to mayonnaise.

red pesto Most people have green pesto at the back of the cupboard, but red pesto doesn't seem to be as popular. It's a great addition to any tomato-based pasta sauce, pizza topping, burger mixture, or anything that would benefit from a good kick of sundried tomato.

rice noodles These are lighter than normal noodles, gluten-free and cook in 2 minutes. Add them straight to soups and stir fries to quickly bulk out one-pan meals.

rice pouches I use these all the time, they're so convenient. The rice is already cooked, so needs only a few minutes to heat through. They are great for quick lunches or adding straight to curries and stews for easy one-pot wonders!

sourdough I often have sourdough in the freezer. I cut up a loaf and store a few slices in a freezer bag. Its solid structure and firm texture make it great for toasties, croutons, pizza bread and soups.

soy sauce Soy sauce isn't just for stir fries. Use it in salad dressings, curry bases and marinades. It goes well with fish and with honey, garlic and chilli. If you have a recipe that calls for fish sauce, you can happily swap it for soy.

spring greens This large-leafed often tatty-looking veg is always on my shopping list. It's cheap, it lasts for ages and has great texture. Finely slice it into ribbons and sauté it – it's a great swap for spinach and perfect for soups and stews.

squeezy mixed herbs If you've not bought these before, they're the herbs you get in a tube. They're preserved in a vinaigrette – think mint sauce but with mixed herbs. It's a great way to quickly add flavour to dishes. They keep for a long time, which saves on buying lots of packet herbs that don't keep for long.

tinned fish Many people have tins of tuna and salmon in the cupboard, but mackerel and sardines are less popular. They're both great ingredients. Mackerel is a brilliant addition to rice and potato dishes and is perfectly matched with curried flavours and other hot spices. Sardines love parsley, garlic, lemon and buttery flavours – so get experimenting!

tinned potatoes Tinned potatoes have come a long way, so discard any ill feeling you might have towards them! Add them to stews and curries, pan-fry them as a quick side, or heat them through with melted butter and herbs.



lunch & brunch

This chapter is full of simple recipes that will turn brunch time on its head. From exciting new ways with eggs to next-level wraps, prep-ahead packed lunches and quick snacks, these are recipes to brighten up your Sunday mornings and liven up Tuesday lunchtimes.

perfect poached eggs & devilled crumpets



You might be surprised to see a poached-egg recipe in this cook book. I've seen so many recipes for poached eggs over the years, all requiring a complicated technique or a bit of kit. I wanted to share my recipe that will give you perfect eggs every time and will put 'poachies' firmly back on the lunchtime menu. The curried crumpets are ideal with the egg. If you don't want them spicy, just fry them in butter. Wilted spinach is a nice addition to this dish too.

makes **2** | **10**min

30g *butter*
1 *teaspoon* *curry powder*
2 *crumpets*
1 *teaspoon* *white wine*
vinegar
2 *eggs*
salt and freshly ground
black pepper

- 1** First, prepare the crumpets. Melt the butter in a non-stick frying pan on a medium heat. When bubbling, reduce the heat to low, stir in the curry powder and leave to cook for 1 minute.
- 2** Add the crumpets to the pan, turning them over and pressing down until they're coated in butter. Increase the heat to medium and fry for 5 minutes, turning them over every minute or so, or until crisp on the top and bottom. Press them down occasionally to ensure they're cooked through.
- 3** While the crumpets are cooking, half fill a large saucepan with water. Add the teaspoon of white wine vinegar and bring the water to a furious boil.
- 4** Carefully break 1 egg into a ladle or large serving spoon. Turn off the heat for the water and leave for a few seconds to become still.
- 5** Lower the egg into the water and quickly tip it from the ladle or spoon in one swift movement.
- 6** With the heat still turned off, leave the egg for 3½ minutes (set a timer). Add another egg in the same way exactly 1 minute after the first went in. The water will still be hot enough and timing will be easier.
- 7** Carefully remove the first egg from the pan with a slotted spoon, holding it over the pan for a few seconds to drain any excess water. A minute later, remove the second. Use scissors to trim any loose bits of egg white. Serve the eggs on top of the crumpets, seasoned with a pinch of salt and black pepper.