



**Irish Heart
Foundation**

Here for Every Heartbeat



Budget-friendly Mediterranean meal plan

The **cost of living** has gotten higher in recent years, and many people are feeling the pressure when it comes to food shopping.

If you are trying to eat healthily while keeping costs low, you are not alone.



The good news is that a Mediterranean-style way of eating does not have to be expensive. Many of these foods that form the foundation of the Mediterranean diet are very affordable.

Beans, lentils, chickpeas, oats, potatoes, wholegrains, seasonal vegetables and tinned fish can all provide excellent nutrition at a low cost.

Rather than focusing on expensive 'superfoods' or specialist products, Mediterranean eating is based on simple meals made from everyday ingredients. Cooking from scratch when you can, planning meals ahead, using leftovers and choosing more plant-based meals can reduce food costs while still creating delicious, satisfying meals.



Key principles of budget Mediterranean eating

	Build meals around pulses – for example beans, lentils and chickpeas.	✓
	Choose seasonal fruit and vegetables as these will be lower in price.	✓
	Frozen fruit and vegetables are just as nutritious and often cheaper.	✓
	Buy supermarket own-brand products where possible.	✓
	Use oats, potatoes, rice and wholegrain pasta as budget-friendly staples.	✓
	Use tinned fish such as sardines, mackerel and tuna.	✓
	Cook larger portions and use leftovers for lunches.	✓
	Eat less highly processed convenience (or 'junk') foods and takeaways, even if they are on offer.	✓

Below is a list of options for breakfast, lunch and dinner which you can pick and choose from to create your own **7-day heart healthy meal plan**.



★ Remember, healthy eating doesn't have to be complicated.

★ You do not need to choose a new option every day. For example, some people choose to have the same breakfast or lunch every day.

★ The most important thing is that your meal is nutritious and you enjoy it.

Batch cooking can be a great option too so you can have dinner ready for a few days in a row.



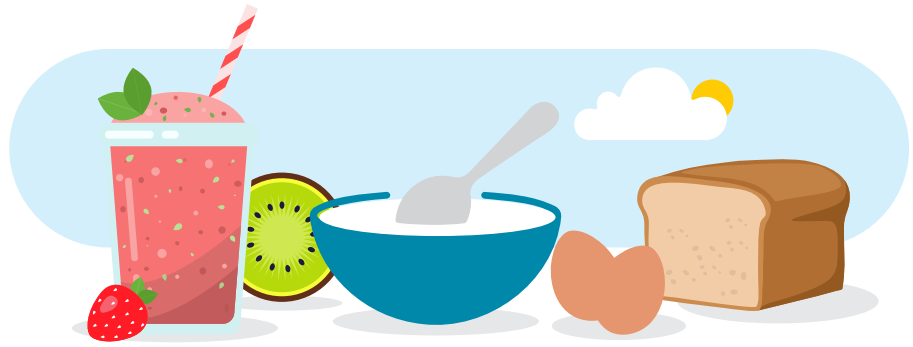
We have provided you with a blank meal plan at the back where you can fill in the options that work best for you. Why not stick it on the fridge to keep you motivated?



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Budget-friendly

Breakfast ideas



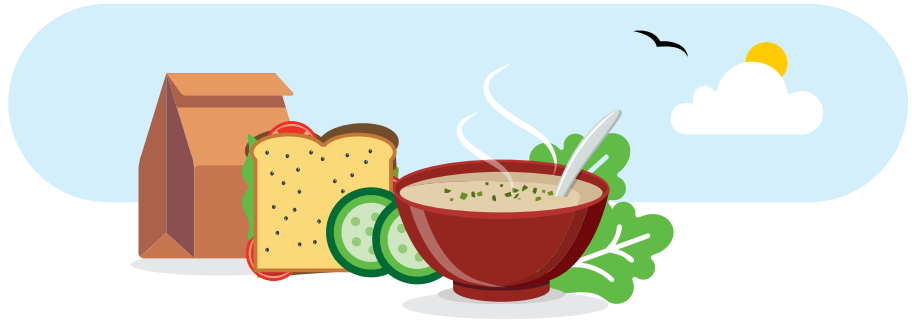
Money-saving budget tip

1	Irish Heart perfect porridge topped with orange segments and sunflower seeds.	Sunflower seeds provide a low-cost alternative to nuts while adding healthy fats and texture.
2	Boiled eggs on wholemeal toast.	Make extra and keep boiled eggs in the fridge for several days. You will have them ready for breakfasts and lunches instead of buying convenience foods.
3	Wholegrain toast with peanut butter and banana.	This breakfast is rich in fibre and healthy fats, helping to keep you full and reducing the need for costly snacks. Freeze bread and take slices out as needed to reduce food waste.
4	Natural yoghurt with oats and seasonal fruit.	Buy larger tubs of yoghurt and portion them yourself rather than purchasing individual yoghurts. The fibre from oats and fruit will help support healthy cholesterol levels.
5	Irish Heart high protein oat pancakes.	Use overripe bananas for the mix that might otherwise go to waste. Any seasonal or frozen fruit will work well for a nutritious topping.
6	Vegetable omelette using leftover vegetables.	Build a weekly 'leftover meal' into your plan to use vegetables before they spoil. Serve with a slice of wholegrain toast for a balanced Mediterranean-style meal.
7	Baked beans on wholegrain toast.	A very low-cost meal that is high in protein and fibre. Choose larger tins of beans and store any leftovers in the fridge rather than buying small individual tins, as these tend to be more expensive.
8	Irish Heart perfect porridge topped with raisins and cinnamon.	Raisins add natural sweetness, while cinnamon boosts flavour, helping you cut back on added sugar and keep breakfast budget-friendly.
9	Irish Heart ultimate overnight oats with grated apple and mixed seeds.	Make 3 to 4 portions at once. Store in the fridge to save time and avoid buying more expensive grab-and-go breakfasts.
10	High fibre breakfast cereal with low fat milk, and seasonal or frozen fruit.	Buy supermarket own-brand cereals, then use seasonal fruit or frozen options which tend to be cheaper but are just as nutritious.

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Budget-friendly

Lunch ideas



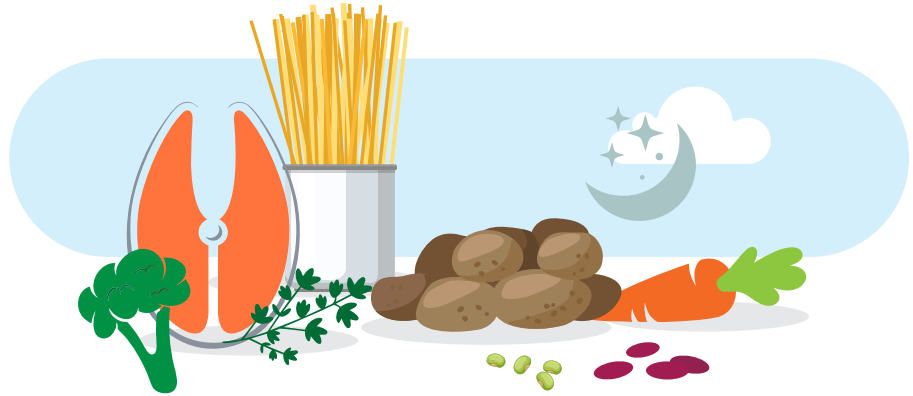
Money-saving budget tip

1	Irish Heart winter vegetable and lentil soup.	Buy dried lentils rather than pre-prepared soups. A small bag of lentils can make several pots of soup. Dried herbs will work in place of the bouquet garni in this recipe also.
2	Chickpea salad with cucumber, tomato and olive oil.	Using seasonal tomatoes and cucumber can help keep this Mediterranean-style meal both nutritious and budget-friendly.
3	Baked potato topped with baked beans.	Potatoes have a long shelf life and are often cheaper than wraps, rolls and breads. Both potatoes and beans are naturally rich in potassium which support healthy blood pressure.
4	Irish Heart tuna, sweetcorn and spinach pasta.	Buying own-brand tuna and wholemeal pasta, and using frozen spinach instead of fresh, can help reduce the cost of this meal while still providing a Mediterranean-style balance of wholegrains, vegetables and protein.
5	Wholegrain toast topped with sardines and sliced tomato.	Tinned sardines are an affordable source of protein and heart-healthy omega-3 fats, making them a cost-effective alternative to fresh fish.
6	Irish Heart onion and new potato tortilla.	Potatoes and onions are long-lasting staples that provide fibre and nutrients, making this tortilla a filling, heart-healthy Mediterranean-style meal. Enjoy it hot or cold and use leftovers for lunch to save on both time and money.
7	Egg and salad sandwich.	Eggs provide low-cost protein, while salad vegetables add fibre and nutrients to support heart health.
8	Homemade Irish Heart minestrone soup.	Base the soup on vegetables you already have rather than buying ingredients specifically for the recipe. This provides a low-cost, filling meal that is high in fibre and much lower in salt than packet soups.
9	Irish Heart easy 'that's-a-wrap' pizza.	Using wholemeal wraps as a pizza base is a low-cost alternative to ready-made pizzas, and choosing your own toppings makes it much lower in saturated fat.
10	Mixed bean salad with tinned mackerel, beetroot, red onion and grated carrot.	Using tinned and seasonal ingredients helps keep this salad nutritious, rich in healthy fats, filling and budget-friendly.

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Budget-friendly

Dinner ideas



Money-saving budget tip

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| 1 | <u>Irish Heart spaghetti bolognese.</u> | Bulk out the sauce with extra carrots, celery or lentils to make the mince go further, creating a more affordable meal that is higher in fibre. |
| 2 | <u>Irish Heart honey-sesame roasted root vegetables</u> with added chickpeas. | Add a tin of chickpeas to boost fibre and plant protein, making this dish more filling. |
| 3 | <u>Irish Heart chilli con (less) carne.</u> | Using lentils and beans instead of extra mince helps reduce costs while boosting fibre, making this a filling, meal that is low in saturated fat. |
| 4 | Chicken and vegetable pasta bake. | Use skinless chicken thighs to reduce cost and saturated fat. |
| 5 | Tofu and vegetable stir fry served with brown rice. | Using frozen or seasonal vegetables can help keep costs down while adding plenty of colour and variety to your plate. |
| 6 | Baked potato with tuna, sweetcorn and low-fat cream cheese. | Using tuna, sweetcorn and low-fat cream cheese creates an affordable, high-protein meal while keeping saturated fat lower. Potassium-rich potatoes can help support blood pressure management. |
| 7 | Vegetable fried rice with egg. | Use leftover rice and add any vegetables you have on hand to reduce food waste and increase variety. |
| 8 | <u>Irish Heart tasty turkey meatballs with tagliatelle.</u> | Adding extra vegetables helps stretch the turkey mince further and reduce costs, while the lean turkey and wholewheat pasta provide protein and fibre to support heart health. |
| 9 | <u>Irish Heart shepherdless pie.</u> | Using lentils instead of meat helps keep costs down while providing protein and fibre. This recipe is rich in plant-based protein, fibre and vegetables and is low in saturated fat. |
| 10 | <u>Irish Heart 15-minute satay stir-fry.</u> | Using frozen or own-brand stir-fry vegetables helps keep costs down, while the vegetables, wholewheat noodles and nut butter provide fibre and healthy unsaturated fats. |

Budget-friendly

Shopping list

Cupboard

- ✓ Oats
- ✓ Wholegrain pasta
- ✓ Brown rice
- ✓ Dried lentils
- ✓ Tinned chickpeas
- ✓ Tinned beans
- ✓ Tinned tomatoes
- ✓ Peanut butter
- ✓ Olive oil
- ✓ Herbs and spices

Affordable Mediterranean staple
fruit and vegetables

- ✓ Bananas
- ✓ Apples
- ✓ Carrots
- ✓ Onions
- ✓ Potatoes
- ✓ Cabbage
- ✓ Frozen vegetables
- ✓ Seasonal fruit

Fridge

- ✓ Eggs
- ✓ Natural yoghurt
- ✓ Milk
- ✓ Hummus
- ✓ Seasonal vegetables

Protein foods

- ✓ Eggs
- ✓ Beans
- ✓ Lentils
- ✓ Chickpeas
- ✓ Tinned tuna
- ✓ Sardines
- ✓ Mackerel

Healthy budget
snack ideas
(optional)

- ✓ Banana
- ✓ Apple
- ✓ Homemade popcorn
- ✓ Carrot sticks and hummus
- ✓ Natural yoghurt
- ✓ Oatcakes with peanut butter
- ✓ Seasonal fruit
- ✓ Roasted chickpeas
- ✓ Boiled eggs
- ✓ Homemade vegetable soup cup



Weekly meal planner

Goal(s) for this week:

Name

Week beginning



	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Snacks (optional)
Mon				
Tues				
Wed				
Thurs				
Fri				
Sat				
Sun				

Weekly money-saving checklist

- Plan meals before shopping ☐
- Make a shopping list and stick to it ☐
- Use frozen vegetables when cheaper ☐
- Include beans, lentils or chickpeas several times this week ☐
- Cook at least one meal that provides leftovers ☐
- Check cupboards before shopping ☐
- Buy seasonal fruit and vegetables ☐
- Choose supermarket own-brand products where possible ☐
- Reduce food waste by using leftovers ☐



Notes/shopping list...