



Thermomix — Simple Dinners for Busy People

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Why the Thermomix Changes Weeknight Cooking for Busy People

The Evening When There Is No Energy Left to Cook

It is half past five. Work is done, the children are waiting to be picked up or already sitting at the table asking what is for dinner. In the fridge sit the vegetables bought on Sunday with the best of intentions, but the plan for using them got lost somewhere between meetings and driving somebody to practice. At moments like this the easiest thing to reach for is a delivery app, or something from the freezer that does not taste quite the way it should.

This book was written with exactly those evenings in mind. Not Sunday cooking for pleasure, when there is plenty of time and nobody is watching the clock, but an ordinary Tuesday, when a family has to be fed within forty minutes of walking through the door. The Thermomix is not a miracle machine that cooks by itself, but it shifts the arithmetic of time far enough that cooking regularly during the week stops being a heroic effort.

Poles spend an average of 6.1 hours a week in the kitchen, and most respondents say they devote between 45 minutes and an hour and a half a day to cooking alone. That is a lot of time on a day that also has to hold a job, homework with the children and at least a moment of sitting down.

The problem is rarely a lack of skill. The problem is that cooking dinner the classic way means watching several things at once: chopping, stirring the sauce so it does not catch, boiling pasta in a second pan and braising meat in a third.

6.1 h

a week is what Poles spend in the kitchen, according to the Beko Great Survey

What the Thermomix Does Differently From an Ordinary Pan

A conventional hob demands that the cook be present at every stage. You have to stand over the sauce so it does not split, watch the meat so it does not burn, and adjust the heat by hand every time something threatens to boil over. The Thermomix combines scales, mixer, blender, steamer and a pan with precise temperature control in a single bowl, so a great deal happens automatically, without anyone standing over the machine.

The TM6, currently the flagship model in the Vorwerk range, runs on 1500 W, reaches up to 10 700 revolutions per minute and holds the temperature of water to within a single degree, never going above 100°C when cooking in water, while for browning or caramelising it goes up to 160°C. The machine can stir ingredients and heat them to a set temperature at the same time, so a béchamel or a vegetable soup can be left alone with no fear of it catching, and you can use those minutes to cut a salad or lay the table.

Parallel cooking

A way of organising work in the kitchen where one task (the machine stirring a sauce, say) happens automatically while a person carries out the next step of the recipe by hand. This, rather than raw motor speed, accounts for most of the time saved.

In practice the biggest difference is that there are no three pans, a frying pan and a mixing bowl to wash once the cooking is done. Soup, sauce and part of the accompaniment all come out of one bowl, which can be cleaned straight away with the pre-clean function. For a family cooking every day that means not only less time at the stove but also far less clearing up after dinner, which in practice can matter as much as the speed of the cooking itself.

💡 Start With One Meal a Week

Do not try to cook everything in the Thermomix at once. Pick one day, Wednesday for instance, and make a soup or a one-pot dish from Chapter Three. Once the rhythm of working with the machine starts to feel natural, add more days.

A 2.2 litre bowl is enough for dinner for four without cooking in batches, which counts for a lot in a family with children. With more people at the table, six for example, some of the recipes in this book need two cooking cycles, or a larger portion of a side dish cooked separately on the hob; I flag this at the recipes where it matters. It is also worth knowing that the motor at high speed makes a noticeable amount of noise, mostly when chopping hard vegetables, so if you are cooking in the evening with a child

already asleep in the next room, it is better to schedule the chopping for earlier and leave the cooking itself, which is far quieter, for later.

This Is Not a Passing Fashion

It is worth knowing that machines of this kind have a longer history than one might expect. Vorwerk was founded in 1883 in Wuppertal by the brothers Carl and Adolf Vorwerk, initially as a carpet manufacturer. The first all-purpose kitchen machine, the VKM5, went on sale in 1961, and in 1971 the company introduced the VM 2000, regarded as the forerunner of today's Thermomix. Each subsequent generation, right up to the current TM6, developed the same idea: bring together in one bowl all the stages of cooking that used to require separate equipment.

For a busy family what counts is not the brand so much as the result: fewer dishes, less watching, more consistency. A dish cooked to a precisely programmed time and temperature turns out just as well on Monday as it does on Friday, even when the person cooking it is tired and in no mood to think about the recipe.

The machine has been on the Polish market for a long time. Vorwerk Polska has been trading here for thirty years, and in that time the one-bowl kitchen has travelled from a novelty demonstrated at home parties to a piece of equipment many families treat as ordinary kitchen furniture, alongside the fridge or the oven. That shift is what shows this is not a passing trend but a tool that has proved itself in daily use over years, rather than in a one-off show-cooking demonstration.

Who This Book Is For

This guide is written for someone who already has a Thermomix at home but still uses it rarely, perhaps only for recipes from the ready-made recipe platform, and would like to know how to weave the machine into everyday dinner cooking. It is also for someone still considering the purchase who wants to see what cooking dinner midweek actually looks like, rather than the polished demonstrations at a show.

I assume no cooking experience beyond the basics: chopping vegetables, using a hob and following a recipe step by step. Every recipe in Chapters Three and Four is written so that it can be cooked without any prior knowledge of culinary terms, and the trickier concepts, such as reverse mode or layered cooking, are explained the first time they come up and recalled in later chapters.

A Typical Evening: The Family Home From Work

Picture a family arriving home around five. Instead of chopping vegetables on three boards at once, one person tips onion, carrot and stock into the bowl, sets the time and temperature and goes off to help a child with homework. Twenty minutes later the soup is ready, and nobody had to stand at the stove even once.

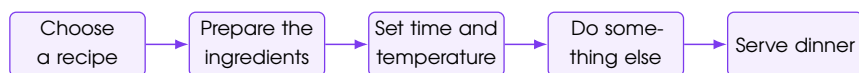
How to Use This Book

The chapters that follow move from the basics of operating the machine, through specific recipes for soups and one-pot dishes and main courses ready in half an hour, to organising a whole week of cooking using freezing



Figure 1.1: A parent helps a child with homework while dinner cooks by itself in the background — parallel cooking in practice.

and portions prepared in advance. Each chapter can be read on its own, but reading them in order gives the most, because the techniques from Chapter Two come back in the recipes in the chapters after it.



Not every recipe in this book requires the latest model. Most of the techniques work just as well on older generations of the machine, though cooking times may vary slightly depending on motor power and bowl capacity. Wherever the difference matters, the recipe says so clearly.

Quantities are given in grams and millilitres, because the built-in scales make guesswork pointless. It is worth getting into the habit of weighing

straight into the bowl rather than falling back on old habits with separate kitchen scales and measuring cups. This one change of habit, small as it seems, does more than anything else to shorten the preparation of every recipe that follows, because it removes the shuffling of ingredients between containers.

Do Not Compare Yourself to Photographs Online

Photographs of finished dishes on social media are often styled and shot in perfect light. Your dish may look different and still taste exactly as good. Focus on flavour and on how long it took, not on the aesthetics of a phone screen.

Time, Not Perfection

The Thermomix does not suddenly make cooking perfect. It makes cooking doable midweek, without the evening stress and without a mountain of washing-up after dinner.

Checklist: Before You Start Cooking From This Book

- ☐ Check that your bowl holds at least 2 litres for dishes serving four
- ☐ Clear a space for a chopping board close to the machine
- ☐ Read Chapter Two before moving on to the first recipes
- ☐ Pick one day in the week for your first attempt
- ☐ Keep the basics to hand: salt, pepper, stock, olive oil

Getting to Know the Machine: The Functions That Really Speed Up Cooking

Scales, Mixer and Pan in One Bowl

Before we move on to the recipes, it is worth getting to know a few functions that account for most of the time saved in practice. The first is the built-in scales. Instead of fetching a separate appliance and moving ingredients between bowls, you tip them straight into the machine, zeroing the display after each addition. It is a small change, but it removes one of the most time-consuming stages of classic cooking: measuring and transferring.

The second function is stirring and heating at the same time. The blades in the bowl turn at an adjustable speed, from the gentlest stirring of a sauce to chopping vegetables at top speed, reaching 10 700 revolutions per minute on the TM6. Temperature is controlled independently of speed, so you can sweat vegetables at a low speed at 100°C and then blend them to a smooth soup in the same bowl, without decanting anything into a blender.

Steaming Without Watching the Pan

The Varoma attachment, supplied with the machine, lets you steam food above the simmering contents of the main bowl. In practice that means

Table 2.1: The temperature ranges used most often when cooking dinner

Range	Temperature	What for
Low	37–60°C	warming, melting, delicate sauces
Boiling	90–100°C	soups, sauces, cooking pasta
Steam	Varoma	vegetables, fish, fat-free sides
High	120–160°C	browning, caramelising onions

soup cooking below and vegetables or fish steaming above it, at the same time and without a second burner. Steam preserves more of the colour and texture of vegetables than boiling does, because the ingredients do not leach their nutrients into the water.

On a busy evening this is one of the most practical functions the whole machine offers. While the sauce cooks below, broccoli or a salmon fillet can be prepared above it, which means the whole dinner reaches the table at once instead of arriving one component at a time.

Layered cooking

A technique in which the main dish cooks in the bowl while an accompaniment (vegetables, fish, steamed rice) cooks at the same time in the Varoma above it. Both are ready at the same moment, with no need to watch two separate pans.

 Set a Reminder to Check the Water Level

On longer steaming programmes it is worth glancing once into the bowl to check there is still enough water. If a recipe calls for more than twenty minutes of cooking, add a little more water than stated at the start, so you do not have to interrupt the process halfway through.

Slow Cooking and Sous Vide, or Technique Without Hurry

Not every evening is a rush. At the weekend, or on a day when work finishes early, the slow cooking mode comes into its own: meat or vegetables braise for hours at a low temperature while the machine watches the process for you. Sous vide goes a step further: vacuum-sealed ingredients cook in a water bath at a constant temperature, usually between 40 and 85°C, accurate to a single degree, for anything up to twelve hours.

For a family cooking on weeknights, slow cooking works best on a Sunday, when you can prepare a larger batch of goulash or of meat for a one-pot dish and then divide it across several dinners in the days that follow. There is more on how to organise such a system in Chapter Five.

 A Typical Sunday: Cooking Ahead

Picture a Sunday afternoon with beef goulash braising slowly in the bowl while the whole family gets on with its own business. Three hours later there is enough for two dinners during the week; all it needs is reheating and a freshly cooked grain to go with it.



Figure 2.1: Portions of beef goulash made on Sunday and packed into containers for dinners through the week.

Settings Worth Knowing by Heart

A handful of functions come back in almost every recipe in this book, so it pays to memorise them rather than hunting for them each time.

- Reverse mode (the blades turning the other way) protects delicate ingredients, pieces of vegetable in a goulash for instance, from being chopped up as they are stirred
- The timer runs independently of the temperature, so you can set a long cooking time and go and do something else
- The soft start function, which builds up speed gradually, makes chopping onions easier without them splattering up the sides of the bowl

- The beep at the end of a programme means you do not have to stand by the machine the whole time

What saves the most time is not the machine itself but the fact that you can walk away from it.

A Screen That Guides You Step by Step

The TM6 has a built-in 6.8 inch touchscreen that can display a recipe broken into successive steps, with the temperature, time and speed set automatically for each stage. That means there is no need to memorise the parameters in this book: either copy a recipe once into your own list in the app, or keep the book open beside the machine and move through the steps by hand, setting the parameters yourself on the dial.

For someone just starting out, step-by-step guidance is often more comfortable, because it removes mistakes in setting temperature or time. Over time most people who cook regularly switch to setting the parameters by hand, because it is quicker, especially with recipes cooked every week and already known by heart.

How to Scale Recipes to the Size of Your Family

Every recipe in this book serves four, but scaling up or down is simple as long as you stay within the capacity of the bowl. For two people, simply halve everything and keep the same cooking time, since a smaller volume of liquid reaches the target temperature almost as quickly. For six, it is

better to increase the quantities by half than to double them outright, because a 2.2 litre bowl has its limits, especially with dishes containing plenty of vegetables in chunks, which take up more room than liquid.

⚠ Do Not Fill the Bowl Above the Maximum Mark

The scale on the inside wall of the bowl shows the maximum safe filling level. Going above it risks hot contents spilling out during stirring at higher speeds, particularly with soups, which expand as they come to the boil.

The Accessories That Genuinely Shorten Dinner

A few of the accessories supplied with the machine come back regularly in this book. The simmering basket, which sits directly in the bowl, lets you cook pasta or rice in the same bowl as the sauce, without draining separately in the sink. The butterfly whisk, a special attachment that clips over the blades, protects delicate mixtures such as whipped cream or egg whites from being chopped by accident, though in everyday dinner cooking it comes in handy less often than it does for desserts.

The spatula with a measure on the end, also part of the set, serves both for lifting out the finished dish and for tipping dry ingredients straight from the packet without dirtying an extra spoon. Keep it always in the same place beside the machine so you are not hunting for it mid-recipe with your hands full.

Table 2.2: The accessories used most often for quick dinners

Accessory	Use in this book
Simmering basket	pasta and rice cooked in the bowl with the sauce
Varoma attachment	steamed vegetables and fish, layered cooking
Spatula with measure	lifting out the dish, adding dry ingredients
Silicone scraper	cleaning the bowl walls after blending

Safety and Quick Cleaning

The bowl has a lock that prevents the blades from running while the lid is open, and the high temperatures are insulated from the outer housing, so touching the bowl during cooking does not risk the burn you would get from a hot pan on the hob. When cooking is done it is worth running a short pre-clean programme straight away with a little water and washing-up liquid, so that residue does not dry onto the blades and the proper wash later takes only moments.

Do Not Put Your Hands in the Bowl Before Removing the Blades

Even with the programme stopped, the blades stay sharp. Always take them out before washing the bowl by hand, and use the spatula supplied with the machine, never your fingers, to scrape residue from the bottom.

In households with children it is worth remembering that the lid lock guards against the blades starting, but not against someone touching

a hot lid just after cooking at a high temperature. A good habit is to stand the machine towards the back of the worktop, out of easy reach of the youngest, and to wait a few minutes after the programme ends before anyone other than the adult cooking comes over to lift the lid.

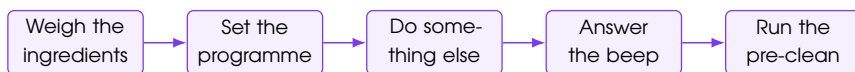
Common Mistakes in the First Few Weeks

Most beginners make the same handful of mistakes, all easy to avoid once you know about them. The first is tipping every ingredient in at once instead of in the order the recipe gives. Onion and garlic browned first build the base of flavour on which the whole sauce rests; thrown in together with the liquid they simply boil instead of softening, and the dish comes out flat.

The second mistake is setting speeds too high where the recipe calls for low ones. High speeds with a goulash or a chunky vegetable soup will turn it to mush, even with reverse mode switched on. The third common problem is not seating the measuring cup properly in the lid while cooking at a high temperature, which lets steam escape, so the dish takes longer than the recipe says and sometimes loses part of the liquid needed for the right consistency of sauce.

Read the Recipe Through Before You Start

Before the first ingredient goes in, read the whole recipe once from beginning to end. The order of steps matters more in the Thermomix than in traditional cooking, because part of the work happens automatically and a mistake halfway through a programme is hard to undo.



Three Functions Do 80% of the Work

The scales, simultaneous stirring and heating, and steaming in the Varoma account for most of the time saved during the week. The rest of the functions, such as sous vide or fermentation, come in useful less often, mainly at weekends.

Checklist: Functions to Master Before Your First Week

- ☐ Test the scales with the bowl empty
- ☐ Try steaming with something simple, such as plain vegetables
- ☐ Find reverse mode in the menu and remember where it lives
- ☐ Run one full cooking cycle on the timer without watching it
- ☐ Run a short pre-clean straight after the first use

03

Soups and One-Pot Dishes for a Difficult Day

Soup as the Rescue for an Evening Without a Plan

When there is no idea for dinner and the fridge looks like a random collection of vegetables, a blended soup is the safest way out. Almost any root vegetable or squash can be turned into a thick, filling soup, and the proportions can be adjusted freely without any risk of the dish failing. In the Thermomix the whole process, from browning the onion to blending the finished soup, happens in one bowl, which cuts the clearing up to washing a single item instead of a pan, a blender and a bowl.

The recipes below are base recipes. The vegetables can be swapped for whatever happens to be in the fridge, keeping the same ratio of liquid and the same cooking time.

RECIPE 1

Cream of Tomato With Basil

This dish goes from nothing to a bowl on the table in under twenty-five minutes, chopping included.

Ingredients for 4 servings:

- 1 onion, quartered
- 2 cloves of garlic

- 800 g tinned tomatoes, or fresh ones blanched and peeled
- 400 ml vegetable stock
- 1 tablespoon tomato purée
- a handful of fresh basil
- salt, pepper, a tablespoon of olive oil

Method:

1. Chop the onion and garlic in the bowl at high speed for a few seconds.
2. Add the olive oil and sauté for 3 minutes at 120°C at a low speed.
3. Add the tomatoes, purée and stock, and cook for 15 minutes at 100°C.
4. Add the basil, season with salt and pepper and blend to a smooth soup at high speed.

 Thicken Without Cream

If the soup comes out too thin, add a pre-cooked potato or a handful of rice. The starch will thicken it without any need for cream, which keeps the ingredient list short and the dish lighter.

RECIPE 2

Cream of Pumpkin and Carrot With Ginger

A seasonal version that works from early autumn through winter, while pumpkin is easy to find in the shops.

Ingredients for 4 servings:

- 500 g pumpkin, peeled and diced
- 3 carrots
- 1 onion
- a thumb-sized piece of ginger
- 500 ml vegetable stock
- 100 ml coconut milk

Method:

1. Chop the onion and ginger at high speed for a few seconds.
2. Add the pumpkin and carrot and cook with the stock for 20 minutes at 100°C.
3. Add the coconut milk and blend smooth at high speed.
4. Season with salt, pepper and a pinch of nutmeg.

Table 3.1: Preparation times for the dishes in this chapter compared

Soup	Chopping	Cooking
Cream of tomato	5 min	18 min
Cream of pumpkin and carrot	8 min	20 min
Cream of broccoli and cheese	6 min	18 min
Chicken broth soup	8 min	26 min
One-pot goulash	10 min	30 min

RECIPE 3

Cream of Broccoli and Cheese

A dish that even children who are wary of vegetables often accept, thanks to the pronounced flavour of the cheese.

Ingredients for 4 servings:

- 500 g broccoli, broken into florets
- 1 potato, diced
- 1 onion
- 500 ml vegetable stock
- 100 g hard cheese, grated
- 50 ml single cream, 18%

Method:

1. Chop the onion at high speed for a few seconds, then sauté for 3 minutes at 120°C.
2. Add the potato, broccoli and stock, and cook for 18 minutes at 100°C.
3. Add the cheese and cream and blend smooth at high speed.
4. Season with salt, pepper and a pinch of nutmeg.

 Keep a Few Florets Back for the Top

Before blending, set aside a handful of the cooked broccoli florets. Scattered over the finished soup just before serving they add texture, and they encourage children to try a vegetable they can see whole rather than only as a purée.

RECIPE 4

One-Pot Chicken Broth Soup With Noodles

The classic flavour of chicken broth, ready in a fraction of the time the traditional recipe takes, thanks to finely diced meat instead of a whole bird.

Ingredients for 4 servings:

- 400 g chicken breast, diced
- 2 carrots, sliced
- 1 parsley root, sliced
- 1 leek, cut into rings

- 1 litre chicken stock
- 100 g fine soup noodles
- flat-leaf parsley

Method:

1. Put the vegetables and stock into the bowl and cook for 10 minutes at 100°C in reverse at a low speed.
2. Add the chicken and cook for a further 10 minutes in the same mode.
3. Add the noodles and cook for another 6 minutes, until tender.
4. Scatter with chopped parsley just before serving.

⚠ Do Not Add the Noodles Too Early

Noodles added with the vegetables at the start of cooking will collapse into mush. Put them in only during the last few minutes, exactly as the recipe times it, so they keep a little bite.

RECIPE 5

One-Pot Dish: Vegetable and Meat Goulash

A goulash differs from a blended soup in that the ingredients stay in pieces rather than being blended, so setting reverse mode is essential: the blades stir without breaking down the meat and vegetables.

Ingredients for 4 servings:

- 500 g pork shoulder or turkey thigh, diced
- 2 peppers, cut into strips
- 2 carrots, sliced
- 1 onion, diced
- 400 g tinned tomatoes
- a tablespoon of sweet paprika, salt, pepper, a bay leaf

Method:

1. Chop the onion briefly at high speed, then sauté with the paprika for 3 minutes at 120°C.
2. Add the meat, set reverse mode and sauté for 5 minutes at 100°C.
3. Add the vegetables, tomatoes and seasoning, and cook in reverse for 25 minutes at 100°C.
4. Check that the meat is tender and give it another 5 minutes if needed.

⚠ Do Not Skip Reverse Mode for a Goulash

Ordinary stirring will break the meat and vegetables down to a mush instead of leaving them in pieces. Reverse mode turns the blades the other way and stirs far more gently, which is essential for one-pot dishes with chunky ingredients.

The Extras That Turn a Soup Into a Full Dinner

A blended soup, filling as it is, can feel too light for some members of the household as the only evening meal. A few simple additions turn it into a proper dinner without cooking a second course. Croutons of wholemeal bread, drizzled with olive oil and crisped in a pan in a couple of minutes, add crunch and make the meal look more finished. A hard-boiled egg cooked earlier, halved and set on top of the soup, brings protein without a separate dish to cook.

For a more substantial version, a handful of chickpeas cooked in advance and briefly fried with spices works well, as do pieces of grilled chicken left from the day before, reheated and diced. An addition like that needs making only once on Sunday and will keep in the fridge for a few days, ready to be thrown by the handful into the soups that follow during the week.

Table 3.2: Additions to soup that need no separate cooking

Addition	Preparation time
Wholemeal croutons	3 min in a pan
Hard-boiled egg	8 min, can be cooked ahead
Fried chickpeas with spices	5 min in a pan
Chicken left from the day before	2 min, reheating only



Figure 3.1: A bowl of thick vegetable soup with its extras — croutons, chickpeas and pieces of meat — ready to serve as a full evening meal.

How to Adapt the Base Recipes

The rule that holds for most soups and one-pot dishes is simple. Keep the ratio of liquid to vegetables from the base recipe and swap the ingredients for whatever you happen to have. Courgette, celeriac, parsley root or broccoli make just as good a blended soup as pumpkin or tomato, and the meat in a goulash can be replaced with lentils or chickpeas for a plant-based version, adding a few minutes to the cooking time for the pulses.

Seasoning is best left until the very end, after blending or once cooking has finished, because flavour concentrates as the liquid reduces, and what tasted well seasoned at the start can end up too intense or, on the contrary, too flat. Tasting with a spoon a few times as you go, rather than adding all

the seasoning at the outset, gives far more control over the final flavour, particularly the first few times you try a new recipe.

For families with small children, a good habit is to set aside a portion of the soup before adding anything sharper, such as chilli or a lot of garlic, and season the rest afterwards. That way one dish feeds the whole family instead of two separate versions of the same recipe.

🗨️ A Typical Evening: Soup From Leftovers

Picture a Friday evening with only odds and ends of vegetables left in the fridge after a week of shopping. Instead of being thrown out, they all go into the bowl with stock and seasoning, and twenty minutes later there is a soup on the table that tastes as though it had been planned from the start.

Frozen Vegetables as a Base for a Difficult Week

Fresh vegetables are not always to hand, especially midweek when the shopping has been put off until the weekend. Frozen vegetable mixes, broccoli with carrot for instance, or a mix for vegetable soup, work just as well in the Thermomix as fresh ones and sometimes better, since they are already cut to a uniform size, which helps them cook evenly. The difference in the flavour of the finished soup is minimal, especially when it is seasoned with fresh garlic, herbs and a squeeze of lemon at the end.

The only change to the recipe is a few extra minutes of cooking, because frozen vegetables go into the bowl cold and have to thaw before they start cooking properly. There is no need to defrost them separately beforehand;

add them to the bowl straight from the freezer and add those extra minutes to the time in the base recipe.

💡 Always Keep One Bag of Frozen Vegetables in Reserve

One packet of frozen vegetable mix in the freezer is a guarantee that even with an empty fridge you can make a decent soup in a little over twenty minutes. It is the simplest insurance for evenings when the shopping has slipped.

📖 One Base Recipe, Dozens of Variations

There is no need to know ten separate soup recipes. Master one pattern: brown the aromatics, add the vegetables and the liquid, cook, blend if you want to. The rest is a matter of what happens to be in the fridge.

✅ Checklist: Soup for a Difficult Evening

- ☐ Check which vegetables need using up urgently
- ☐ Get the stock ready, fresh or from a cube
- ☐ Decide between a blended soup and a chunky one-pot dish
- ☐ For a chunky dish, remember reverse mode
- ☐ Season only at the end, after tasting

04

Main Courses in 30 Minutes: Meat, Fish and Plant-Based Cooking

The Principle of a Complete Meal From One Bowl

The real saving in time appears when the main course and its accompaniment come together at the same moment rather than one after the other. This chapter returns to the layered cooking of Chapter Two: the sauce or the meat cooks in the bowl while rice, a grain or vegetables steam at the same time in the Varoma. The result is a full dinner on the table in the time the classic method would take to produce one component of it.



Figure 4.1: Layered cooking lets you prepare a chicken sauce and steamed rice at the same time in one machine.

Complete meal

A dinner made up of protein, a starchy accompaniment and a vegetable, prepared in a single cooking cycle by working the bowl and the Varoma in layers, without cooking each element separately.

RECIPE 6

Chicken Curry With Steamed Rice

A dish in which an aromatic chicken sauce cooks below while the rice steams above it at the same time.

Ingredients for 4 servings:

- 500 g chicken breast, diced
- 1 onion, 2 cloves of garlic
- 400 ml coconut milk
- 2 tablespoons curry paste, or a teaspoon of curry powder
- 200 g basmati rice
- a handful of spinach

Method:

1. Chop the onion and garlic at high speed for a few seconds, then sauté for 3 minutes at 120°C.
2. Add the chicken, curry and coconut milk, and set the Varoma with the rice and water on top.
3. Cook for 20 minutes at 100°C, in reverse at a low speed.

4. In the last 2 minutes add the spinach to the sauce so that it wilts without losing its colour.

💡 Steamed Rice Without the Stickiness

Before putting the rice into the Varoma, rinse it under cold water until the water running from the sieve is clear. This removes the surface starch, and steamed rice comes out in separate grains instead of clumping together.

RECIPE 7

Steamed Salmon With Vegetables and Lemon Dressing

A dish for days when you want dinner to be light but still satisfying, without much fat.

Ingredients for 4 servings:

- 4 salmon fillets
- 400 g broccoli, broken into florets
- 2 potatoes, diced
- juice of one lemon, 2 tablespoons olive oil
- dill, salt, pepper

Method:

1. Bring 500 ml of lightly salted water to the boil in the bowl.
2. Put the potatoes into the lower part of the Varoma, and the salmon and broccoli into the upper tray.

3. Steam for 20 minutes at Varoma temperature.
4. Mix the lemon juice, olive oil, dill and pepper in a small bowl and spoon over the dish just before serving.

Table 4.1: Steaming times for the most common accompaniments

Ingredient	Time in the steam
Broccoli, cauliflower	15–18 min
Diced potatoes	20–25 min
Fish fillet	15–20 min
Sliced carrot	18–20 min

⚠ Do Not Put the Fish In Before the Harder Vegetables

Potatoes need longer than fish. If both are to be ready at the same moment, the potatoes go in first, in the lower part of the Varoma tray, and the fish only on top after a few minutes of cooking, as the recipe directs.

RECIPE 8

Plant-Based Lentil Bolognese

A meat-free version for meat-free days, or for guests who prefer plant-based food, and one that gives nothing away to the classic in flavour.

Ingredients for 4 servings:

- 200 g red lentils

- 1 onion, 1 carrot, 1 stick of celery
- 400 g tinned tomatoes
- 300 ml vegetable stock
- a teaspoon of dried oregano, salt, pepper
- 400 g wholegrain pasta

Method:

1. Chop the onion, carrot and celery at high speed for a few seconds.
2. Sauté for 3 minutes at 120°C, then add the lentils, tomatoes, stock and oregano.
3. Cook for 20 minutes at 100°C in reverse at a low speed.
4. Cook the pasta alongside in a separate pan and combine with the sauce just before serving.

 A Typical Meat-Free Tuesday

Picture a Tuesday evening when the family has agreed on a meat-free day. The lentil sauce cooks with almost no attention, and the only job that needs any is boiling the pasta in a separate pan, which takes less time than chopping the vegetables for a classic bolognese.

RECIPE 9

Teriyaki Beef With Steamed Vegetables

A dish with an Asian accent, where the sweet-salty sauce balances the delicate texture of the steamed vegetables beautifully.

Ingredients for 4 servings:

- 500 g beef tenderloin, cut into thin strips
- 3 tablespoons soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons honey
- 1 tablespoon rice vinegar
- a clove of garlic, a piece of ginger
- 400 g broccoli and carrot, cut into pieces
- 200 g rice

Method:

1. Chop the garlic and ginger at high speed for a few seconds.
2. Add the soy sauce, honey and vinegar, and mix for 10 seconds at a low speed.
3. Add the beef and set the Varoma with the rice below and the vegetables above.
4. Cook for 15 minutes at 100°C in reverse at a low speed.

 Cut the Meat Across the Grain

Thin slices of beef cut across the muscle fibres rather than along them stay tender even after brief cooking. It is one of the simplest ways to stop a quickly cooked meat dish turning out chewy.

RECIPE 10

Turkey Patties With Mashed Potato

A version of a family classic in which the mash is made in the same bowl as the patty mixture, one after the other.

Ingredients for 4 servings:

- 500 g minced turkey
- 1 egg, breadcrumbs, seasoning to taste
- 800 g potatoes, peeled and diced
- 100 ml milk, 30 g butter
- oil for frying the patties

Method:

1. Cook the potatoes in the bowl with water for 20 minutes at 100°C, then drain through the simmering basket.
2. Blend the potatoes with the milk and butter to a smooth mash and season with salt.
3. Transfer the mash to a bowl, then mix the meat with the egg, breadcrumbs and seasoning in the machine at a low speed.

4. Shape the patties and fry them in a pan on both sides, 4 minutes a side.

A Typical Friday Dinner

Picture a Friday evening when the children ask for something familiar, with no experiments. The mash is cooked and blended in one bowl, the patty mixture is combined in the same place as soon as the mash comes out, and the only thing that needs a frying pan is frying the patties themselves.

How to Match Cooking Time to the Type of Protein

The greatest challenge in composing your own layered dishes is matching the cooking time of the sauce to the time the steamed accompaniment needs, so that both finish at the same moment. Diced chicken usually needs fifteen to twenty minutes in a sauce, thinly cut beef considerably less, barely a dozen or so, and fish is ready fastest of all, often in ten to fifteen minutes depending on the thickness of the fillet.

Rice needs roughly the same time in the steam as chicken does, so those two go together without any adjustment. Diced potatoes cook for longer than most proteins, so with potato dishes it is worth putting them into the Varoma a few minutes early, before the bowl starts cooking the sauce proper, or cutting them into a smaller dice to shorten the time.

Table 4.2: Approximate cooking times for common proteins in sauce

Protein	Time in sauce
Diced chicken	15–20 min
Beef in thin strips	10–15 min
Fish fillet	10–15 min
Lentils or chickpeas	18–22 min

⚠ Do Not Add Cold Ingredients Halfway Through Cooking

Adding frozen meat or ice-cold vegetables halfway through a cycle lowers the temperature of the whole bowl and extends the cooking time in ways that are hard to predict. All the ingredients are best kept at room temperature or lightly chilled, never straight from the freezer.

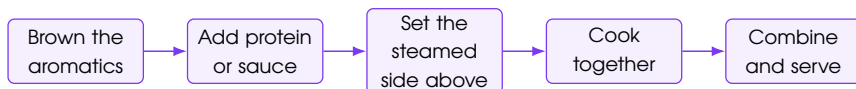
Serving and Portioning on the Plate

The way a dish is served affects how it is received at the table, even when the flavour is identical. A layered dish from this chapter is best plated in order: the starchy accompaniment first as a base, then the protein with its sauce on top, and finally the vegetables to one side of the plate, rather than everything mixed into a single heap. That arrangement lets each person add more sauce or leave out whatever they do not feel like eating, without anyone having to plate up separately.

For children who are reluctant to mix different flavours on a plate, serving the elements apart can decide whether the dish gets eaten at all. It is a small change in serving that costs no extra time in the kitchen and can substantially reduce the number of evening negotiations at the table.

A Template for Your Own Layered Dish

Every recipe in this chapter follows the same structure: aromatics browned at the bottom, protein or sauce cooking in the bowl, a starchy accompaniment or vegetables steaming at the same time. The template will take any set of ingredients that happens to be in the fridge.



Sauces That Rescue a Dish at the Last Moment

Even the best-planned dish sometimes turns out too dry or too bland. A few simple sauces, made in the bowl in less than a minute, can rescue dinner without starting the cooking again. A yoghurt sauce with garlic and dill, blended at high speed for a few seconds, goes with almost any chicken or steamed vegetable dish. A vinaigrette based on olive oil, mustard and balsamic vinegar lifts fish dishes when they lack definition.



Figure 4.2: A quick yoghurt sauce with dill and garlic is a simple way to rescue a dish that has come out too dry.

Both sauces are made straight in the bowl, right after the main dish comes out and without washing it in between; a quick wipe of the walls with the spatula is enough. It is the answer for evenings when the dish came out technically correct but is missing something, and there is no energy left for more cooking.

💬 A Typical Rescue: Dry Chicken

Picture a situation where the chicken from the recipe has come out a little too dry because it cooked a few minutes too long. Rather than worrying about it, a yoghurt and garlic sauce takes shape in the same bowl in a matter of seconds, and spooned over the top it changes the dish completely.

📖 One Cooking Cycle, the Whole Dinner

The principle of layered cooking delivers a complete meal in a single cycle, instead of cooking the accompaniment separately once the main course is done. That is the change that shortens dinner the most, more than any speed of chopping or blending.

✅ Checklist: A Main Course in 30 Minutes

- ☐ Choose your protein: meat, fish or a pulse
- ☐ Pick an accompaniment whose cooking time matches the protein
- ☐ Brown the aromatics before you add any liquid
- ☐ Set the Varoma with the accompaniment for the time the sauce cooks
- ☐ Season and serve straight away, while the accompaniment is hot

05

Organising the Week: Planning, Batch Cooking and Freezing

Planning Saves More Than Fast Cooking Does

The previous chapters showed how to shorten the cooking itself with the scales, layered cooking and the Varoma. The biggest obstacle to cooking every day, though, is often something other than the pace of work at the machine: the absence of a plan, which means deciding afresh each day what to cook and checking whether the ingredients are in the house. Fifteen minutes spent on a Sunday writing out a plan for the whole week can save more time than any single kitchen trick from the earlier chapters.

The plan does not have to be rigid. It is enough to decide in advance which dishes from this book will appear in a given week and to build the shopping list around them, rather than buying things at random and looking for a use for them afterwards.

A good plan also takes account of the rhythm of the week itself, not just the list of dishes. Monday, after the looseness of the weekend, is often the day with the least energy for cooking, so it is worth planning something that can be made almost without thinking, such as a soup built on a ready vegetable base from Chapter Three. Friday, by contrast, can be the day to reach for something more demanding, since the weekend leaves more time to put things right if anything goes wrong.

 Keep the Plan in One Fixed Place

A sheet of paper on the fridge, a pinboard or a note on your phone: any of them will do, as long as there is only one and everyone in the house knows where to look. A scattered plan, part in your head and part on scraps of paper, disappears as quickly as no plan at all.

Batch Cooking: What to Make on Sunday

Some of the dishes in this book take well to being made in advance and reheated a few days later; others taste best freshly cooked. The vegetable and meat goulash from Chapter Three and the lentil bolognese from Chapter Four belong to the first group: after a day or two in the fridge the flavour often improves, because the ingredients have had time to settle together. Fish dishes and those with delicate steamed vegetables are best cooked fresh, just before serving, so that they do not lose their texture.

 Cook a Double Batch Rather Than Two Separate Dishes

When you make a goulash or a lentil-based sauce, double the quantities straight away. A 2.2 litre bowl will usually take a double batch without trouble, and the extra cooking time is negligible, since the temperature is set for the whole cycle anyway.

Freezing Without Losing Flavour

Not everything freezes equally well. Blended soups and goulashes freeze very well, because their consistency barely changes on thawing. Dishes

with rice or pasta are better frozen without the starchy element, cooking that fresh on the day of serving, since rice and pasta often turn soggy once frozen and reheated. Steamed vegetables, especially crisp ones like broccoli, lose their texture in the freezer and are better not frozen at all.

Table 5.1: What freezes well and what is better cooked fresh

Freezes well	Better fresh
Blended soups	Steamed fish
Vegetable and meat goulash	Rice and pasta
Lentil bolognese	Crisp steamed vegetables
Curry sauce without rice	Salads and slaws

⚠ Do Not Freeze in Glass Jars Filled to the Brim

Liquids expand as they freeze, so a container filled right to the top can crack in the freezer. Leave at least two centimetres of space at the top, particularly with soups and sauces that contain a lot of liquid.

A Shopping List Without Random Purchases

A weekly plan only makes sense if a specific shopping list follows from it. The simplest approach is to write your five chosen dishes on a sheet of paper and copy from each recipe only the ingredients you genuinely do not have at home. Basics such as onions, garlic, stock and olive oil are worth keeping permanently in stock so that they do not land on the list again every week.

Shopping planned around specific recipes also removes the commonest cause of food waste, which is buying vegetables with no idea what to do with them. Once every item on the list has a dish and a day of the week attached to it, the chance of something rotting unused in the salad drawer falls close to zero.

Buy Meat and Fish on the Day You Cook Them, or the Day Before

Fresh meat and fish taste best when they go into the bowl no more than a day after they were bought. If the week's plan puts a fish dish on Thursday, it is better to buy the fish separately on Wednesday than to keep it in the fridge from the Sunday shop all week.

Table 5.2: A sample dinner plan for five working days

Day	Dinner
Monday	Cream of tomato with basil, freshly made
Tuesday	Chicken curry with steamed rice
Wednesday	Sunday's goulash, reheated
Thursday	Steamed salmon with vegetables
Friday	Lentil bolognese, freshly made

A Sample Plan for the Week

The plan below combines dishes from the previous chapters in a way that minimises the number of days requiring cooking from scratch, drawing on portions prepared earlier.

Saturday and Sunday are left free of any fixed plan, which leaves room for cooking as a pleasure, or for preparing a batch of goulash or sauce for the week ahead, following the batch cooking principle described earlier in this chapter.

A Typical Sunday Ritual

Picture a Sunday afternoon in which, over an hour and a half, a double batch of goulash and a lentil bolognese are made for the whole week ahead. The remaining evenings need no more than reheating or briefly cooking a fresh accompaniment, with no need to start from scratch.



Figure 5.1: Sunday batch cooking: several portions of finished dishes made in advance save time across the whole week.

When the Plan Does Not Work

Even the best-written week comes apart sometimes. Somebody stays late at work, a child falls ill, plans change and the dish scheduled for Tuesday never gets cooked. The worst response is to abandon the plan for the rest of the week. Better simply to move the uncooked dish on by a day and eat it later, keeping the ingredients meant for that evening in the fridge for another day or two if they will take it.

It is also worth keeping one emergency dish up your sleeve, something you can cook from what is always in the freezer and the cupboard, such as the frozen vegetable soup from Chapter Three. A plan B like that removes the temptation to order a takeaway on the day when everything has gone differently from the way it was meant to.

⚠ Do Not Plan All Seven Days in Advance

A rigid plan for the whole week, with no margin at all, breaks at the first unforeseen event. Plan five working days, as in the example below, and leave yourself room to shift things, rather than scheduling dinner for every single day of the week.

In Summary: Fewer Decisions, More Dinners on the Table

This book began with the problem of an ordinary Tuesday evening, when there is neither the energy nor the time to cook. Chapter Two introduced the functions of the machine that genuinely reduce the work: the scales, simultaneous stirring and heating, and steaming in the Varoma. Chapter Three showed how to use those functions for soups and one-pot dishes, and Chapter Four extended the principle to layered cooking, which brings the whole dinner, protein and accompaniment alike, out of a single cycle.

This chapter closes the circle: no cooking technique will replace a plan for the week. Fifteen minutes on a Sunday writing out five dinners and checking what can be cooked ahead brings more peace of mind than any individual recipe.

Start with a single week. Choose five dishes from this book, write them on a sheet of paper stuck to the fridge and buy ingredients only for that plan. Once you see that it works, the following week will plan itself, without any sense that cooking midweek demands a heroic effort.

Do not expect the first week to pass without stumbles. It is entirely natural that the first goulash comes out differently from the recipe, or that

the steamed rice is a shade too firm. Every further attempt at the same dish comes out better, because you gain a feel for how long chopping vegetables actually takes at your pace and how your machine responds to particular settings. After a month of cooking regularly along the lines of this book, most recipes stop needing the instructions at all, and the whole evening ritual of making dinner shrinks to a set of routine, familiar movements.

The Plan Matters More Than the Pace

The fastest machine in the kitchen will not help if every evening starts with working out what to cook. A fifteen-minute plan for the whole week, combined with the techniques in this book, delivers the real, repeatable saving of time that this book set out to find on its first page.

Checklist: Your First Planned Week

- ☐ Choose five dishes from Chapters Three and Four
- ☐ Check which of them are suitable for batch cooking on Sunday
- ☐ Make a shopping list for the chosen recipes only
- ☐ Plan Sunday's cooking ahead to cover two days of the week
- ☐ Label frozen portions with the date so they do not linger indefinitely