

# Tasha D'Cruz

MATERNAL HEALTH



## New Mums' Guide to Batch Cooking

Get ready for a  
nourished  
fourth trimester  
and beyond

# Hello!

## I'm so pleased you're here

In requesting this guide you have taken a small but significant step towards having a more restful and nourished journey through motherhood.

They say it takes a village to raise a baby. I say it takes a village to make a mother.

You've spent nine months watching your body grow to accommodate your baby, and then stretch to allow the baby to make its grand entrance. But are you eating right for your baby? How will your body heal in the hours, days, weeks and months after giving birth? How will you cope with sleepless nights? And will you ever feel like you again?

I support new mums to improve their health with nutrition and lifestyle changes so they can be the stronger, healthier and more resilient mum they want to be.

A healthy pregnancy and full recovery is critical for both the mother and the baby's wellbeing, yet we've lost the culture of nurturing and nourishing new mums. I'm here to help you reclaim a small part of it.

## Join my community



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# Why batch cook?

Those first few days and weeks after giving birth are likely to be the tireddest you've ever been in your life. You'll exist in a fog of confusion about this tiny creature you are responsible for.

At this time you're probably most tempted to reach for the easy pasta meals, the beans on toast, the takeaways.

But investing in a little time filling your freezer before your baby is born could make life a little easier for yourself and guarantee you have some nutritious meals to fall back on before you reach for your third takeaway menu of the week. Getting your partner to help (or do the whole lot!) would be a bonus as they are likely to be the ones who'll do most of the cooking while you focus on recovering from birth and feeding your newborn, so having a choice of dishes to take out of the freezer is going to make life easy for them too.

## 5 steps to prepare for batch cooking:

1. **Plan to start midway through your third trimester.** At this point, every time you cook a meal that is freezable, make a double batch and put half in the freezer.
2. **Three to four weeks before your due date, plan a big batch cook.** Don't leave it too late as you might find it harder to stand up for a long time or not feel like cooking. But don't do it too early because most food can only be kept for 3 months in the freezer.
3. **Clear out, defrost and clean your freezer.** This gives you a chance to throw away food that has been there a while and an opportunity to reorganise to make it easier to stack your food neatly
4. **Gather recipes.** Think about comfort food, one bowl meals, one-handed meals and snacks. I've provided a sample of recipe ideas and suggestions taken from my recipe ebook but remember to be guided by your preferences.
5. **Collect containers.** You're going to need a lot! Glass, stainless steel, freezer bags and wide-mouthed jars are all good options.

# 5 batch cooking tips

1. Make more **one-handed snacks** than you think you need – for midnight hunger, for rushing out the house for appointments. **Budget for 3–4 snacks per day for a month** (around 7–8 dozen snacks).
2. Allow for food you can serve with fresh food – you might get bored of soft textures after awhile and crave fresh, crunchy vegetables and salads. Think about **cooked meats, fishcakes and patties** that you can **serve over salads**. Ask friends and family to pick up bags of salads for you when they come and visit.
3. Make plenty of **one-handed meals**. **Smooth soups** are better than chunky ones as you can drink them from a cup; in stews **cut meat and veg into pieces that can fit on one spoon; freeze toasted sandwiches, wraps** and homemade filled **pastries** that can be reheated and eaten with one hand.
4. **Label your food really clearly** with what the food is, the date you cooked it and instructions on reheating. This will be helpful for you, your partner or any friends and family who can help put some food on for you. Be really clear about what's in the containers so you don't have to guess later on!
5. Make a good **list of all the food in your freezer** and stick it somewhere obvious (e.g. on your freezer!). Note down how many portions of each you have. Cross them off as you use them so you know what you still have in there.



# What to batch cook

## before giving birth

### **Raw and Ready**

- Raw meat + marinade + veggies + grains, pulses or starchy veg
- Freeze in individual freezer bags and then in one large freezer bag
- Can be cooked from frozen but make sure raw meat is fully cooked before serving
- Examples: sheet pan meals, stir fries, fajitas

### **Almost ready**

- Food prepared up to the point of cooking in the oven
- Can be cooked from frozen but will take longer in the oven. Make sure food is bubbling and piping hot
- Examples: cottage pie, lasagna, fish pie, fish fingers

### **Ready**

- Food that is fully cooked, ready to be reheated
- Can be cooked from frozen but make sure food is bubbling and piping hot before eating
- Examples: soups, casseroles, patties and cakes, pulled meat

### **Snacks and treats**

- You'll need more than you think!
- Examples: sweet and savoury muffins, biscuits, energy balls, flapjacks, oat bars

### **Breakfast and lunch**

- Frittata muffins, savoury muffins, frozen porridge, pancakes and waffles

### **Things to eat with the food**

- Side dishes, cooked and frozen in individual portions
- Examples: bread, rice, quinoa, beans, lentils, frozen vegetables

# What to batch cook

## weekly batch cook

- 1-2 breakfast options
- 1-2 vegetables
- 1 tray of patties (meatballs, burgers, fishcakes, lentil patties, fritters)
- 1 casserole or pie
- 1 snack

For example:

- Bowl of overnight oats or granola
- 1 large frittata
- 1 tray of roasted mixed vegetables
- 4 roasted sweet potatoes
- 1 tray of fishcakes
- 1 big shepherd's pie
- 1 batch of mackerel pate

Stretch one joint of meat over the week

- Sunday – Roast Chicken
- Tuesday – Chicken fajitas
- Thursday – Fried rice with chicken picked off the carcass
- Friday – Minestrone soup made with stock from the chicken carcass

Or:

- Sunday – Baked glazed ham
- Tuesday – Ham and mushroom risotto
- Thursday – Ham, vegetable and barley soup (made with the ham cooking water)

# Recipes





# Raw & ready

## frozen fajitas kit

4 tbsp. lime juice (about 3-4 limes)  
4 tbsp. olive oil  
2 tsp. smoked sweet paprika  
1 tsp. ground cumin  
1 tsp. salt  
1/2 tsp. mild chilli powder  
6 chicken breasts or 10 boneless  
chicken thighs, cut into slices  
5 mixed peppers, sliced  
4 red onions, sliced  
Wheat or corn tortillas

Recipe from The Kitchn  
8 servings

1. Make the marinade - combine the lime juice, oil, paprika, cumin and salt in a medium bowl. Add the chicken and toss in the marinade.
2. Tear 8 large sheets of foil and 8 slightly smaller sheets of greaseproof paper. Place a sheet of greaseproof paper on each sheet of foil.
3. Divide the peppers and onions evenly among the 8 packets, leaving a thick border. Top with the chicken slices and pour over any extra marinade. Fold the sides of the foil and greaseproof paper over the chicken, then fold the top and bottom of the foil over. Make sure the chicken is completely covered in foil.
4. Slide each packet into its own freezer bag, along with 1-2 tortillas if you like. Press out as much air as possible and seal the bags, labelling carefully, then stack the freezer bags up in the freezer.
5. To cook the fajitas, preheat the oven to 200C. Place a foil packet on a baking tray and bake for 20-25 minutes. Put the tortilla in to warm for the last five minutes.
6. Serve with guacamole, sour cream, cheese salsa and chopped lettuce leaves. You might find it easiest to make up a salad bowl and eat it with a fork with the tortilla on the side as it can be messy trying to eat it as a wrap!

You can substitute the chicken with strips of steak, beef mince or prawns or drained black or pinto beans.

# Raw & ready

## 2 frozen stir fry kits

### **Stir-fry base (per portion):**

1/2 cup cooked brown rice  
150g chicken thigh strips, pork strips,  
steak strips, minced meat, firm tofu  
slices  
1 clove garlic, crushed  
1/2 red pepper, sliced  
Small baby sweetcorn, sliced  
Small handful sugar snap peas, sliced

### **Basic stir-fry sauce (per portion):**

1 tbsp. soy sauce  
1 tbsp. dry sherry or mirin  
1 tbsp. water or broth  
1 tbsp. honey  
1/2 tbsp. rice wine vinegar  
1/2 tsp. sesame oil

### **Thai stir-fry sauce (per portion):**

1 tbsp. green curry paste  
1 tbsp. fish sauce  
1 tbsp. coconut milk

1. Whisk your chosen stir-fry sauce ingredients together until well mixed.
2. Place the protein in a freezer bag and add your chosen stir fry sauce, pressing out as much air as possible.
3. Place the rice and vegetables in separate freezer bags, pressing out as much air as possible.
4. Place the packets of protein, rice and vegetables in one large plastic bag. Label carefully with cooking instructions.

To cook:

1. Hold the packets of meat, rice and vegetables under some running water to loosen the contents slightly.
2. Heat the rice in the microwave for 2 minutes or steam in a small saucepan with a splash of water.
3. Heat some oil in a wok or frying pan, then add the chicken. Cook until golden spots appear and chicken is cooked through.
4. Add the vegetables and cook until the vegetables are hot but still retain some crisp. Serve over the rice.

Recipe based on The Kitchn

# Raw & ready

## 2 frozen tray bake kits

### **Lemon and herb chicken**

8 chicken thighs  
500g baby potatoes, cut in half if large  
250g broccoli, cut into florets  
2 onions, quartered  
2 cloves garlic, crushed  
1 tbsp. olive oil  
Juice of 1 lemon; cut the rind into four pieces  
4 sprigs of hardy herbs (e.g. thyme, rosemary, oregano)  
1/2 tsp. salt

4 servings

### **Mustard honey salmon**

2 tbsp. honey  
3 tbsp. Dijon mustard  
1 tbsp. apple cider vinegar  
1 tbsp. olive oil  
1/2 tsp. salt  
Grind of black pepper  
Large handful green beans  
500g baby potatoes, cut into quarters  
4 salmon fillets

Recipe based on The Kitchn

4 servings

1. Place all the ingredients in a large bowl and mix well with your hands, making sure all the chicken pieces are well coated.
2. Divide ingredients between 4 single serve containers, placing the vegetables at the bottom and topping with two chicken thighs per serving. Make sure a piece of lemon rind and a sprig of herb goes into each container. Cover with lid, label well and freeze.

#### **To cook:**

1. Thaw overnight in fridge.
2. Bake at 180C for 1 hour, poking the chicken to make sure its cooked through.

1. Whisk the honey, mustard, vinegar, oil, salt and pepper together in a large bowl. Add the salmon pieces and mix well.
2. Divide the beans and potatoes between 4 single serve containers and top with a salmon fillet each. Cover with lid, label well and freeze.

#### **To cook:**

1. Thaw overnight in fridge.
2. Bake at 180C for 10-12 minutes, depending on thickness of fillet. Check salmon is just cooked through.



# Almost ready meals

## lentil & sweet potato shepherd's pie

5 sweet potatoes, scrubbed  
200g green lentils, washed  
100g oats  
1 bay leaf  
1 tsp. salt  
1 tbsp. olive oil  
250g chestnut mushrooms, finely chopped  
1 onion, finely chopped  
1 celery stalk, finely chopped  
1 carrot, finely chopped  
2 garlic cloves, crushed  
180ml stock  
60ml red wine  
1 tbsp. tomato paste  
1 tbsp. soy sauce  
1 tsp. smoked paprika  
Handful fresh parsley, chopped

Recipe from The Kitchn  
6 servings

1. Preheat the oven to 200C. Prick the sweet potatoes and roast the sweet potatoes until very soft, around 45 minutes-1 hour.
2. Place the lentils, oats, bay leaf, salt and 1 litre of water in a saucepan. Bring to a boil and lower the heat. Simmer until lentils are soft, stirring occasionally to keep the oats from sticking to the bottom of the pot, around 15-20 minutes. Discard the bay leaf and drain the mixture.
3. Meanwhile, heat the olive oil in a large pot and add the mushrooms, onion, celery, carrot and garlic and cook until the onions are soft and translucent. Lower the heat to medium and add the lentil mix, stock, wine, tomato paste, soy sauce, paprika, parsley and some black pepper. Simmer for 5 minutes, taste and add salt and pepper as needed. Allow to cool.
4. Peel and mash the sweet potatoes, season to taste with salt and pepper.
5. Spread the lentil mix into a 9x13inch baking dish (or 9x9 for a thicker pie) or into oven-proof single serve containers. Spoon the sweet potato mix on top and smooth down.
6. Cook at 175C for 35-45 minutes. If freezing, freeze before baking and either thaw before cooking as instructed or cook in the oven for 1 hour and check the food is bubbling hot.

# Almost ready meals

## 3 ways with bolognese

4 tbsp. olive oil  
50g butter  
3 onions, finely chopped  
3 celery stalks, finely chopped  
3 carrots, finely chopped  
600g beef mince (or mix of pork and beef)  
300g mushrooms, finely chopped  
300g beluga or puy lentils, cooked  
250ml red wine  
4 tbsp tomato puree  
400ml beef stock  
150ml milk

1. Heat the oil and butter in a large saucepan. Add the onion, celery and carrot and cook for around 10 minutes. Add the mince and brown all over. Increase the heat, add the wine and cook until evaporated. Dilute the tomato puree in the stock and stir into the meat. Bring to a boil.  
2. Either transfer the mixture to a slow cooker and cook on low for 8-9 hours or add an extra 150ml of stock, cover and cook in the oven at 180C for 1-2 hours, or on the hob for 2 hours, checking periodically and adding some water or stock if it looks dry. Stir in the milk and cook for 10 minutes.

Recipe adapted from BBC Food.

Makes 12 servings

**Lasagne:** Use 1/3 of the mixture to make 4 individual servings of lasagne.

1 small tub ricotta, Small handful grated parmesan, Small handful parsley, Salt and pepper, 4-6 sheets of lasagne, a small ball of mozzarella, handful grated cheddar.

Mix the ricotta, parmesan, parsley and salt and pepper in a small bowl. Soften the lasagne sheets in a pan for 3-4 minutes. Thinly slice the mozzarella. Layer the lasagne in four individual serve containers as follows: meat, ricotta, lasagne sheets, topping the top lasagne sheet with ricotta mix and mozzarella slices and grated cheddar. Freeze. To cook: thaw overnight and cook in oven at 180C for 35-40 minutes or 1 hour from frozen. Check food is bubbling hot.

**Cottage pie:** Use 1/3 of the mixture to make 4 individual servings of cottage pie

2-3 large mashing potatoes, scrubbed, large knob of butter, splash of milk, fresh nutmeg, to grate, salt and pepper, grated cheddar (optional)

Chop and boil the potatoes in salted water until soft. Mash with the butter and milk until smooth, add salt and pepper to taste. Spread the meat mixture into four individual serve containers and top with mashed potato, a grating of nutmeg and a small handful of grated cheddar. Freeze. To cook: thaw overnight and cook in oven at 180C for 35-40 minutes or 1 hour from frozen. Check food is bubbling hot.

**Bolognese:** Spoon remaining 1/3 portion into 4 freezer bags, squashing until flat to remove air. Freeze to eat with spaghetti, courgetti or jacket potatoes.

# Almost ready meals

## fish pie

1kg mashing potatoes, scrubbed and chopped  
400ml milk, plus a splash  
25g butter, plus a knob  
25g flour  
4 spring onions, sliced  
400g fish pie mix (cod, salmon, smoked haddock, prawns). Use fresh fish, not frozen  
1 tsp. mustard  
Small bunch of chives, finely snipped  
Handful frozen sweetcorn  
Handful frozen peas  
Handful grated cheddar

Recipe from The BBC Good Food  
4-6 servings

1. Cook the potatoes until very soft. Drain thoroughly and mash with a splash of milk and a knob of butter.
2. Melt the 25g of butter, add the flour and spring onions and cook for 1-2 minutes. Gradually whisk in the 400ml of milk using a balloon whisk. Bring to a boil, stirring to avoid any lumps. Cook for 3-4 minutes until thickened.
3. Remove from heat, add fish, mustard, chives, sweetcorn and peas.
4. Spoon the fish mixture into individual serve containers, spoon the mashed potato on top and sprinkle with a handful of cheese. Cover and freeze.
5. To cook: thaw overnight and cook in a preheated oven at 200C for 20-25 minutes or cook from frozen for 45 minutes. Check food is bubbling hot.



# Almost ready meals

## fish fingers

500g cod, pollack, haddock or salmon fillets  
100g fine breadcrumbs or polenta  
50g plain flour or brown rice flour  
2 eggs, beaten with some milk

Recipe from Felicity Cloak  
4-6 servings

1. Place the breadcrumbs/polenta, flour and eggs in 3 separate flat dishes. Season the breadcrumbs with salt and pepper (and some lemon zest if you want!)
2. Cut the fish against the grain of the flakes into chunky fingers.
3. First dip the fish in flour, then egg, then breadcrumbs until completely coated. Lay each coated finger on a lined baking tray as you go.
4. Freeze the fish fingers on the baking tray for two hours until fully frozen, then transfer to freezer bags.
5. To cook, heat oven to 200C and bake for 20-30 minutes until golden and cooked through. Alternatively, heat a little oil in a frying pan on a medium heat and fry from frozen for 4-5 minutes each side, until golden and cooked through.

# Almost ready meals

## chicken goujons

8 chicken thighs or 4 chicken breasts,  
cut into strips  
125g fine breadcrumbs or polenta  
1/2 tsp cayenne pepper  
salt and pepper  
50g plain flour or brown rice flour  
3 eggs, beaten

Recipe from BBC Food  
4-6 servings

1. Mix the breadcrumbs and cayenne pepper in a shallow bowl. Season with salt and pepper. Place the breadcrumbs, flour and egg in separate shallow bowls.
2. First dip the chicken in flour, then egg, then breadcrumbs until completely coated. Lay each coated goujon on a lined baking tray as you go.
4. Freeze the goujons on the baking tray for two hours until fully frozen, then transfer to freezer bags.
5. To cook, heat oven to 200C and bake for 20-30 minutes until golden and cooked through. Alternatively, heat a little oil in a frying pan on a medium heat and fry from frozen for 4-5 minutes each side, until golden and cooked through.

# Ready meals

## smokey pulled pork

4 tbsp. smoked paprika  
1 tsp. chilli powder  
4 garlic cloves, left whole  
1 tsp. dried thyme  
4 tsp. salt  
3 tsp. ground black pepper  
4 tbsp. olive oil  
4 tbsp. apple cider vinegar  
4 tbsp. honey  
2 large onions, thickly sliced  
2 kg boneless pork shoulder, cut in half, fat removed

Recipe from Fitter Food  
10-12 servings

1. Mix the paprika, chilli powder, garlic, thyme, salt and pepper in a large bowl. Add the olive oil, vinegar and honey and mix into a paste. Add the two pieces of pork to the bowl and mix well with your hands, getting the marinade into every nook and cranny.
2. Place the onions in the bottom of the slow cooker and place the pork on top.
3. Cook on low for 8-12 hours until the pork is tender enough to shred with a fork. You might need to turn the pork halfway through the cooking time.
4. Shred the pork, then add it back into the slow cooker to mix well with the juices and onion.
5. Portion out the pork into 10 freezer bags and flatten, removing as much air as possible. Stack the freezer bags on top of each other in the freezer.

To cook:

Run the pork under a warm tap to loosen a little, then pour into a saucepan and warm over a low heat until bubbling hot. Serve over rice, with potatoes, in a wrap, on a salad or with roasted vegetables.

# Ready meals

## sausage and cauliflower casserole

1 tbsp. olive oil  
12 large sausages (use spicy pork, herby pork or lamb merguez, depending on the flavour you want!)  
1 medium onion, chopped  
4 cloves garlic, minced  
Leaves from 2 thyme sprigs  
1 tin of tomatoes  
1 medium head of cauliflower, cut into small florets

Recipe from the Kitchn  
4-6 servings

1. Preheat the oven to 180C. Coat a 9x13-inch baking dish with a little olive oil.
2. Heat the tablespoon of olive oil in a large frying pan on a medium heat. Squeeze the sausage out of its casing straight into the frying pan in little meatballs. Fry for 5 minutes or so until beginning to crisp on the outside.
3. Add the onion, garlic and thyme and sauté for 5-6 minutes more.
4. Pour the sausage mix into the prepared baking dish and add the cauliflower florets and tin of tomatoes. Season with some salt and pepper.
5. Place in the oven and cook for 30-40 minutes until sausages and cauliflower are cooked through.
6. Divide into 1- or 2-portion sized containers or freezer bags and freeze.

To cook:

Thaw overnight in the fridge and cook on the hob or in a preheated oven until bubbling and heated through.



# Ready meals

## lamb stew

2 tbsp. olive oil  
3 carrots, cut into thick chunks  
2 large potatoes, chopped the same size as the carrots  
2 onions, chopped  
1 stick celery, chopped  
2 cloves garlic, crushed  
1 bay leaf  
8 rosemary leaves  
500g stewing lamb pieces or loin chop  
200g puy lentils  
2 tsp. tomato puree  
Water or stock  
Salt and pepper

4-6 servings

1. Preheat the oven to 180C.
2. Heat a tablespoon of olive oil in a large frying pan on a medium heat. Fry the onions, carrots and celery until onions are translucent and vegetables are soft, then add the garlic and fry for another minute. Scrape the vegetables into an oven-proof casserole dish.
3. Turn up the heat and add another tablespoon oil to the pan and fry the lamb meat to form a good crust on each side. Place the lamb on top of the vegetables in the casserole dish.
4. Add the tomato puree to the pan and scrape it around for a minute or so. Add the herbs, salt and pepper and then deglaze with some water or stock. Pour the mix into the casserole dish and top up with more water or stock until the meat and vegetables are covered.
5. Cover and cook in the oven for 1 1/2-2 hours, topping up with more water if necessary.
6. Divide into 1- or 2-portion sized containers or freezer bags and freeze.

To cook:

Thaw overnight in the fridge and cook on the hob or in a preheated oven until bubbling and heated through.

# Ready meals

## 2 smooth soups

### **Leek and potato soup**

25g butter  
1 tbsp. olive oil  
2 carrots, chopped  
2 sticks of celery, chopped  
2 medium onions, chopped  
2 cloves garlic, crushed  
400g leeks, washed well and sliced  
400g floury potatoes, diced  
2 litres vegetable or chicken stock

Recipe based on Jamie Oliver  
6 servings

1. Heat the butter and oil in a large saucepan. Add the carrots, celery, onions, garlic and leeks, add a pinch of salt and pepper, then cook with lid slightly ajar for 10 minutes until softened, stirring regularly.
2. Add the stock to the pan followed by the potatoes. Bring to a boil, then simmer for 10-15 minutes with the lid on, until the potatoes are cooked through and the leeks are soft.
3. Blitz in a blender or using a hand blender, then taste and season as necessary.
4. Freeze in 6 x 500ml soup freezer bags.

### **Watercress and butterbean soup**

50g butter  
300g watercress  
2 leeks, sliced  
1 onion, chopped  
1 tin butter beans  
800ml stock  
150ml double cream

4 servings

1. Melt butter in a large saucepan, then add the leeks and onion. Cover and cook on a low heat with a lid on for about 10 minutes.
2. Add the watercress and wilt down for 2 minutes. Add the butterbeans and stir well. Add the stock and bring to a boil.
3. Whizz the soup in a blender or using a hand blender. Add the cream and stir well until mixed in.
4. Freeze in 4 x 500ml soup freezer bags.

# Tasha D'Cruz

## MATERNAL HEALTH

## Did you love these recipes?

These are taken from my recipe eBook which is sent out to all my clients.

Alongside almost 100 recipes, my clients also receive worksheets, guides and checklists to help them plan for a healthy, happy motherhood, whether they're pregnant, just given birth, 6 months or 2 years postpartum!

We cover:

- **Essential nutrition** for maternal health to aid recovery, restore energy and build resilience
- How to **meal plan** and what to **batch cook**
- What food to prioritise to **heal and repair**
- How to **rebuild strength**
- What to eat for **breastfeeding success**
- How nutrition can affect **mood and mental health**
- Embracing the new world of motherhood through **self-love**

Interested in  
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(it's free!)

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