



Fill Your Oven

When we look at cooking costs it is important to know which appliances cause the biggest cost. As an example, a standard electric oven will cost approximately 72 pence per hour at 180°C. This cost is quite high if you are only going to cook 1 meal or cake at a time.

So, fill your oven! A slight increase in cooking time may be needed if cooking multiple dishes but the savings over the long term will be noticed.

As an example, if I cook a cottage pie for an hour in the oven today it will cost me 72 pence as a Cost to Cook. However, if I cook my cottage pie for today, my pasta bake for tomorrow and my sausage casserole for the day after all at the same time in my oven the cost to cook will be £1.08 for all the dishes, saving over £1.50 if cooked as individual meals.

Following food safety advice, remember that you can prepare food and keep refrigerated for 3 days. We call this the prep +3 rule, meaning you have the preparation day plus 3 more to consume the food. Multi-dish cooking allows you to save time during a busy schedule because your meals only need re-heating before consumption. Use the microwave to re-heat, they typically cost just 5 pence for 10 minutes.

Another point to remember is that when the oven is filled, you can turn it off earlier and the temperature will remain for longer. So, when cooking multiple dishes that require 90 minutes to cook, you can turn the oven off after 80 minutes, keep the door shut and let the food continue its cooking process. Temperatures drop slowly in an oven, by doing this you will save money on your energy bill further reducing the Cost to Cook.

This simple multi-cooking technique also allows for better meal planning and thus helps to reduce your shopping bill and food waste. With a little planning and some time, this technique will save on many levels.

Perfecting this technique may take a little time but the opportunities are endless when you start reducing your Cost to Cook; by using all of your oven rather than just one shelf. Starting the journey takes some planning and nerve but using some of the recipes within the Food and Fuel resources and the wider UKHarvest website are a great way to start.

Some of our favourites to “Fill Your Oven” are:

Cottage Pie	Quiche
Sausage Casserole	Fish Pie
Pasta Bakes	Creamy Cauliflower Cheese
Frittata	Mediterranean Chicken Bake