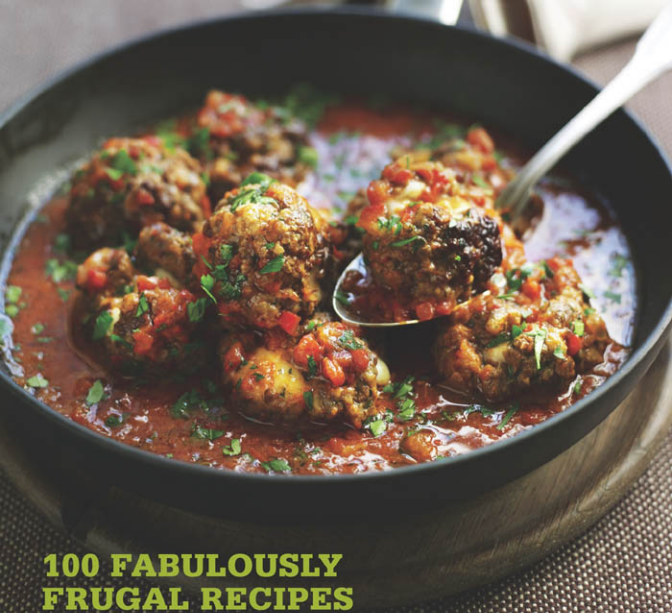


MINCE!

MITZIE WILSON



**100 FABULOUSLY
FRUGAL RECIPES**

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A.
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and to Kate Whitaker for her beautifully
composed photographs.

This book is for my long-suffering
husband, Dave, and for Angelica and
Georgiana, who have had to eat nothing
but mince for three months. I hope that
one day they will cook these recipes for
themselves.

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How many times do you pick up a pack of minced meat when you're in the supermarket? Quite often, I'll bet!

But instead of cooking yet another lasagne or shepherd's pie, why not transform it with a few extra ingredients into a spicy curry, a simple hearty pie or a warming main meal soup? Why not sprinkle it onto dough to make some gorgeous spicy flatbreads or try your hand at rolling a meatball?

Mince is magic.

It's the easiest, quickest meat you can cook with and I guarantee that whatever meal with mince you make, your family will be sure to clear their plates!

This book is a collection of invaluable mince recipes; one which celebrates mince in all its forms: beef, lamb, pork, chicken, turkey... even game mince. I hope you will come back to the recipes again and again: mince is that unique staple that feeds families and friends, that can be on the table in minutes with the minimum of fuss, that tastes wonderful... that curious thing that everyone, actually, likes!

There is nothing quite like it, and alongside my favourite recipes for lasagnes, chillis, pasta bakes and burgers, I've included lots of lesser-known wonders, a feast of fresh ideas and a bounty of magical meals from around the world. Enjoy!

**Mitzie Wilson, London
March 2009**

BUY

Minced meat is always great value, but the quality can vary. Mince is generally made from less popular and tougher cuts of meat. The more you pay, the better the meat quality is likely to be and the less fat content it will have. There are, however, no rules about how much meat or fat content there should be in mince, so the mince you get from supermarkets and the mince you get from butchers can vary enormously.

Beef and lamb mince

Minced beef is generally made from the less popular and tougher cuts of meat from the forequarter, including cuts such as shoulder, brisket, flank, neck and shin which are passed through a mincing machine once or twice.

Quality standards

The Quality Standard Mince Mark for beef and lamb is a scheme by EBLEX (English Beef and Lamb Executive) that provides high levels of assurance about the meat you buy. The Quality Standard for beef and lamb is the only scheme in the UK to cover eating quality. All beef and lamb carrying the mark is chosen according to a strict process to ensure it is succulent and tender. Quality Standard beef and lamb is produced to higher standards than required by law and is inspected at every stage from farm to meat counter. The Quality Standard Mark also tells you where your beef and lamb is from. For example, meat from an animal born, raised and slaughtered in England will carry the Quality Standard Beef or Quality Standard Lamb Mark indicating English origin with the St George's flag. If an animal cannot meet all the criteria, (if it was born in Wales, for example) it will be able to carry the Quality Standard Mark but indicate British origin with the Union flag. The scheme is the only one in the UK to include criteria to improve the eating quality of beef and lamb. Measures such as setting age restrictions to animals entering the supply chain are designed to avoid the resulting meat being tough or dry.

Fat content

The Quality Standard Mince Mark ensures that the mince is 100% beef, with no additives, fillers or added water. The fat content must be no more than 20% for standard beef mince; lean mince contains no more than 10% fat; and extra-lean has no more than 5% fat. Mince that contains more than 20% fat cannot carry the Quality Standard Mark. Steak mince should come from prime cuts of meat and be more tender, so is ideal for burgers. A good indication of the fat content of the mince is to look at the colour. You can see the fat granules in the meat and the redder the meat, the less fat is usually visible.

Pork mince

There are no quality marks for pork mince. It can have quite a high fat content so don't add oil when frying the mince and if a lot of fat should come out when cooked, you can drain the mince through a sieve. Look for lean mince if you prefer.

Turkey and chicken mince

Chicken mince is a lean and healthy choice but not so easy to find in supermarkets. Turkey mince is readily available, very economical and very lean.

Venison and game mince

Venison and game mince is sometimes available in supermarkets, but is more likely to be available in country butchers and specialist suppliers. If you are unable to buy venison or game mince from your local butcher you can order it on line. YorkshireGame.co.uk and its partner company blackface.co.uk will deliver any game or venison cut you could need, and the quality is superb. Venison is a very lean meat and so venison mince tends to be a little dry, it is a good idea to mix it with good quality, fatty beef mince to add a little fat content. Game mince can be a mixture of meats so check with your supplier before you buy.

MINCE

How to cook mince

Standard beef, lamb, pork and venison mince has around 20% fat content so I prefer not to use oil or extra fat when cooking as it will fry in its own fat. If you find that a lot of oil comes out of the mince, drain some of it off, or skim it off once it has cooked and cooled. Lean mince, chicken and turkey mince may need to be fried in a little oil, but keep it to a minimum or you are defeating the object!

Always get the pan hot before you fry mince, and stir it while frying to break up the clumps. Generally, mince needs only 10 minutes over a high heat – until all the meat has turned brown – to cook. Further cooking, however, helps to make the mince more tender, and that usually means simmering for at least another 10–30 minutes. Longer cooking helps meld all the flavours together and will make it even more succulent.

Making burgers

It's a good idea when making homemade burgers to make them as flat as possible and not too thick. The thicker they are the longer they will take to cook in the centre, whilst the outside becomes blacker and blacker. Try to chill burgers for 30 minutes in the fridge before cooking to help them firm up.

Cooking burgers

All burgers should be cooked until no longer pink in the centre – use a knife to pierce the centre and the juices should run clear. A good test is to pierce the centre of the burger with a knife, count to 3, then place the tip of the knife against your wrist, if it is hot to the touch the burger is cooked. Better still, cut one burger in half and check that it is no longer pink.

Avoid over-cooking home made burgers as they have a tendency to be dry, and remember to leave them to rest for 5 minutes before serving so that the meat relaxes and the juices distribute evenly throughout.

Beef burgers can be served medium to well done, but chicken, turkey, lamb and pork burgers must be cooked thoroughly.

Burger cooking times

For 1½–2cm thick under a hot grill or barbecue:

Beef burgers

3–4 minutes each side

Chicken/turkey/lamb pork burgers

5–6 minutes each side

If you are cooking or barbecuing lots of burgers for a crowd, fry them for 2–3 minutes on each side then place in a very hot oven for a further 10 minutes for medium-cooked.

Making meatballs

Having gone to the trouble of making meatballs, it's extremely disappointing to discover that they taste bland when served up. Avoid the scenario altogether by frying just a little bit of your mixture in hot oil ahead of cooking the rest. That way you get to taste a sample of the cooked mixture and can make minor – or major! – adjustments to flavour and seasoning as desired.

FREEZE

To freeze mince

You should freeze raw mince on the day of purchase. Never re-freeze defrosted raw mince. Cooked mince can be chilled and reheated the next day and freezes beautifully. That means you can batch-cook to your heart's content! You can save yourself time and money cooking like this: stretching a batch of cooked mince over two nights or storing away readymade meals for those busy weekday evenings when the last thing you want to do is set up in the kitchen for an hour. If you are making meals in bulk, freeze them in plastic bags or sealed freezer containers for up to 3 months. The night before you plan to eat them, defrost them in the fridge. Mince must always be reheated thoroughly; the centre of the dish should reach boiling point for at least 10 minutes.

Freezing burgers

Uncooked burgers can easily be frozen. Freeze them in a single layer on a tray if possible, then pack into a plastic freezer bag and seal tightly. Alternatively, layer the burgers with squares of baking parchment in-between if you don't have the room to lay them flat. Freeze burgers for up to 3 months. If using strong flavours such as garlic and curry spices they may be better if frozen for only 1 month, as the flavours can develop too strongly after this time. Burgers should be defrosted overnight in the fridge. I don't like cooking homemade burgers from frozen as it takes too long to cook the meat through to the centre.

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HUNGRY HORDES

Our love affair with mince begins as a toddler, when spaghetti Bolognese and cottage pie are some of the first solid foods we are introduced to. Mince is easy to eat, easy to cook and economical too, so it's no wonder we continue to cook it in one form or another almost every week. Here you'll find all your staple mince meals – the dishes you'll turn to most often knowing your families will enjoy them. But we all need a little help to keep us inspired in the kitchen (and claim a few well deserved compliments from the family now and again), so I hope you'll find plenty of new ideas to try here too, and that you end up with clean plates all round!

LAMB

Everyday mince

This straightforward everyday meal will become a regular favourite. I make a big batch of this sauce (double or treble the quantities here) and freeze it in portions for later use. It is perfect comfort food to use for cottage pie, or to serve with mash, or pasta. If you want to make it richer use red wine instead of stock. If you want more vegetables in it add chopped mushrooms, tomatoes or courgettes or – in the winter – swede or parsnip.

Serves 6–8 | Takes 15 minutes to make, 30 minutes to cook

**500g minced lamb or beef
2 medium onions chopped
1 clove garlic, crushed
2 carrots, diced
2 tbsp tomato purée
1 tbsp plain flour
300ml lamb stock
salt and freshly ground black pepper**

Dry-fry the minced lamb and onion in a large pan over a high heat until the onion has softened and the meat has browned. Add the garlic, fry for 1–2 minutes then add the carrots, tomato purée and sprinkle over the flour. Cook for a further 2–3 minutes until the flour has been absorbed, then pour over the stock, stirring well until thickened. Lower the heat and simmer the mince for 30 minutes. Taste and adjust seasoning.

**Freeze for up to 3 months.
Defrost overnight and reheat thoroughly.**

LAMB

Million-vegetable mince

This is a brilliant way of getting children to eat vegetables; just finely chop any vegetables you have in the food processor and then disguise them by cooking with the mince. Cook the lot in a tomato-flavoured sauce and serve with spaghetti and your kids will never know they're eating so healthily.

Serves 6 | Takes 15 minutes to make, 30 minutes to cook

**2 medium onions
2 carrots
1 red pepper, deseeded
2 courgettes
150g mushrooms
500g minced lamb or beef
1 clove garlic, crushed
2 tbsp tomato purée
1 tsp dried oregano
300ml lamb stock
400g can chopped tomatoes
salt and freshly ground black pepper**

Chop the onions, carrots, pepper and courgettes into chunks and place in a food processor with the mushrooms. Whizz until quite finely chopped. Place the mince in a large saucepan and fry until the meat has browned all over.

Add all the chopped vegetables, garlic, tomato purée and oregano. Cook for a further 5–10 minutes stirring well, then pour over the stock and canned tomatoes. Season well, bring to the boil, then lower the heat and simmer the mince for 30 minutes. Taste and adjust seasoning.

**Freeze for up to 3 months.
Defrost overnight and reheat thoroughly.**

BEF

Cottage pie

This is the classic family favourite. A shepherd's pie is made with lamb in exactly the same way. Add cooked carrots, parsnips or cabbage to the mash if liked, and top with grated cheese too to make for an even more delicious dish.

Serves 4 | Takes 30 minutes to make, 30 minutes to cook

**500g minced beef
1 onion, finely chopped
1 carrot, diced
1 tbsp tomato purée
300ml beef stock
1½ tbsp Worcestershire sauce
700g floury potatoes
100ml milk
50g butter
salt and freshly ground black pepper**

Fry the minced beef, onion and carrot in a medium pan for about 5 minutes until browned. Add the tomato purée, beef stock and Worcestershire sauce, bring to the boil then cover and simmer for 20 minutes.

Set the oven to 180°C/160°C fan/gas 4.

Meanwhile, boil the potatoes in lightly salted water for 15–20 minutes or until tender. Drain well. Add the milk and butter, season and mash well. Pour the mince into a 2-litre baking dish and top with the mashed potato. Bake for 20–30 minutes until golden brown and bubbling.

This can be made a day in advance and reheated thoroughly until piping hot in the centre. It can also be frozen although the mashed potato may be a little watery when defrosted, so if planning to freeze it, add less milk to the mixture. Freeze for up to 3 months. Defrost overnight in the fridge before reheating for 45 minutes–1 hour or until piping hot in the centre.



LAMB

Meat and tatties

The juices from the minced lamb help to cook the layers of potato, so you end up with a lovely thick moist dish. While this might not be the most glamorous of meals, it's certainly one of the most comforting!

Serves 6 | Takes 20 minutes to make, 45 minutes to cook

1kg potatoes
2 large onions
2 tbsp sunflower oil
500g minced lamb or beef
1 clove garlic, crushed
1 carrot, diced
100g swede, diced
2 tbsp tomato purée
1 sprig rosemary, leaves stripped and chopped
1 tbsp plain flour
300ml lamb stock
salt and freshly ground black pepper
25g butter

Peel the potatoes and slice as thinly as possible. Peel and slice the onions. Heat the oil in a pan and add the onions. Cook without browning for 5 minutes until transparent. In a separate pan dry-fry the mince for 5 minutes until browned. Add the garlic, carrot, swede, tomato purée and rosemary and cook for 2–3 minutes then add the flour and stir well. Gradually add the stock stirring well until thickened. Season well and bring to the boil.

Set the oven to 190°C/170°C fan/gas 6.

Layer half of the sliced potatoes and half the onions in the base of a shallow 2-litre baking dish and top with the meat sauce. Top with another layer of onions and potatoes. Season well. Cook on the hob over a low heat for 5 minutes, then dot with the butter, cover with a tight fitting lid and transfer to the oven for 30 minutes until the potatoes are tender. Remove the lid and cook for a further 15 minutes until the potatoes are tender and golden.

Not suitable for freezing.