

DIY Your Own No~Buy July



By Nev Sweeney

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1.0 Introduction

When I came up with the idea of No-Buy July, it pulled together a number of ideas and worked for us at the time. That being said, if you want to run your own 'No-Buy July' there is no reason that it has to be in July, or to go for one month. Following is a list of titles for all twelve months if July doesn't do it for you (some are better than others!) or you can pick your own -

- Thrifty January
- Frugal February
- Miserly March
- Affordable April
- No-pay May
- Judicious June
- No-Buy July
- Austere August
- Savings September
- Economical October
- No-Spend November
- Slender December

The important thing, if you are so minded, is to give it a go and see how it works for you and your family. Try stuff out, learn things, and have fun!

2.0 NBJ The original (2018)

2.1 How I put the idea together

I was reading a very nice article in the latest Earth Garden magazine (No 184) by Rachel Altenbacher where she ate only out of her garden for a month. This included a 7.5 x 2.5m veggie patch, produce from her orchard and chooks and some other pantry and swapped items. I thought this was an intriguing idea. I am also about halfway through David Holmgren's book "Retrosuburbia" in which he talks about a "Home-based lifestyle" which I also found intriguing.

We decided to synthesize these and a few other ideas (it dovetails well with Plastic Free July and Zero Waste) together and came up with "No Buy July". The idea of no-buy July is to just use what we have on the property as much as we can for the next 31 days, so that we can –

Reduce unnecessary consumption and with it, waste – I think we are pretty frugal, but I want to test that theory and at the same time challenge ourselves to be more resourceful and innovative with what we have.

Save money – We have a fixed amount of cash to live on and we need to get the most out of it.

Make best use of existing resources – We do rely on our own resources, but I feel we could do better and by focussing on doing better we will -

- Learn new ways of looking at things
- Learn new skills

Have fun – I think that by challenging ourselves to better we can have a lot of fun rising to that challenge.

What about the extra stuff can't produce?

We have allocated \$50 per week maximum, which we won't touch if we don't have to but can cover minor unforeseen shortages.

Exemptions

There are a number of exemptions to the no buy rule being mainly -

- Pharmaceuticals
- Regular bills (energy, water etc)
- Gift cards, birthday money etc accumulated prior

Petrol

Just to make things interesting I have allocated 1 tank of petrol for the month, which I topped up on the afternoon of June 30th. We usually go through a tank of petrol every one to two weeks, so this will encourage us to use walking, biking and public transport more. I still want some petrol available for things like our monthly permaculture Sydney West meeting, which is at night and we have a whole stack of crap to take with us. Travelling home on bus and train at 10:00pm loaded to the gunwales with PSW gear does not exactly thrill me.

How will we do it?

Home Harvest

We only have our 600m² block to draw from, but having said that it does provide us with fruit, veg, herbs and eggs. The chooks are firing pretty well at the moment and giving us 2 eggs a day, we have lots of citrus: lemons mandarins, oranges and limes and all the usual herby suspects are available from the herb "wedding cake" and other parts of the garden.



In terms of veg we have lots of leafy greens with silver beet, bok choy, tatsoi etc and some brassicas such as cabbage, kale, broccoli and cauliflower starting to come on. We also have celery, snow peas, water chestnuts, lettuce, carrots, chokoes (of course) and Jerusalem artichokes. Unfortunately, we have just run out of home-grown onions, until the next crop come in.

We do also make use of wild greens like sow thistle, wild lettuce, mallow and dandelion which we mainly harvest from around the yard but can also forage.

Shopping in the Pantry

We have a fairly comprehensive pantry anyway and have recently been getting back into bulk buying to reduce costs and packaging waste. We have a bulk supply of flours, whole wheat (plus we have a nice electric grinder), skim milk powder and now we have red kidney beans and black beans as well as our own home preserved tomato pasta sauce and diced tomatoes. We don't grow enough potatoes so buy them by the bag (organic) through our friends Greenhills organics. A bag usually lasts us about 2 – 3 months and we restocked a couple of weeks ago.



Doing stuff we know how to do but stopped

In the past we used to make bread a lot more and make our own pasta and the like but due to a number of factors like too much to do (and laziness on my part) we don't do as much of anymore, so that is going to re-start.

Doing stuff we haven't tried before

I want to give some new stuff a try, like using our stored skim milk to make ricotta cheese (for homemade ricotta and silver beet ravioli or tortellini) and Greek style yoghurt. I like sour cream on our home-made Mexican bean tortillas, but I want to try substituting with homemade Greek style yoghurt and see how it goes. Also, we want to try new vego/vegan meals to widen our repertoire.

Freezer

Which I suppose brings us to meat. We have some in the freezer but our current meat consumption is down to one or two nights per week, so I don't see this is a big issue. It has been interesting to note that with the reduction of the importance of meat, the

freezer has become a less critical piece of equipment for us too. Once upon a time we would buy a side of beef (pasture fed) a side of lamb and/or pork and some chook bits. If we were to do that now the meat would go out of date well and truly before we could use it. So it is more a case of buying stuff as we need it.

We also have some (homemade) ready meals in the freezer if we do hit a patch where we don't have time to cook, reducing the likelihood of dipping into the cash reserve to get takeaway.

Shopping at the Shops

We did one last "standard" shop on the Saturday. It covered the stuff we would buy on a usual grocery shopping trip, although the variety and volume of stuff we have been buying over the years has declined somewhat due to the bulk buying and home production.

So, there you have it! We are ready to go "home based" and see where that takes us. I am looking forward to the challenge, and also having the time to do more "from scratch" stuff as well. I am hoping that being barred from that quick trip to the shops will make us more creative, and as a by-product make things more fun and satisfying when we rise to the challenge.

2.2 How it Worked

Here at the Choko Tree we were going to get by on the contents of our pantry and garden, and avoid going out and spending unnecessary cash, we were going to do this for the entire month of July (2018) and christened it: No-Buy July (NBJ).

INITIAL THOUGHTS

The first few days of NBJ felt strangely like a final exam. Sort of like just having finished a class where you have been taught a whole stack of techniques and then have to put them all together for a final exam. Probably because we had been doing a lot of these thing on and off for years but not necessarily all at once. Anyway, that's what the first few days were like, until we settled into a routine and then it just became "how we do things around here" or in other words – business as usual.

In terms of what we set out to do as mentioned in the previous section, ie –

- Reduce unnecessary consumption and with it, waste
- Save money
- Make best use of existing resources by learning new ways of looking at things and learning new skills, and
- Have fun

It was a resounding success on all fronts! Here is some detail on how things went –

FOOD

Breakfast – I usually have muesli and Linda usually has porridge in winter, and we had sufficient of both of those in our stores to continue on as we usually do for the month, but during this time I did think about my muesli. I am going to buy in a larger supply (5kg or so) of organic rolled oats then design up a "muesli concentrate" which can be mixed with the oats to make.....muesli! Research is ongoing, more on this in a later article.

Lunch – typically I/we like a cheese and salad sandwich or wrap for lunch. Anyway, this is simple in summer but to provide fodder for a salad-based lunch is a bit more difficult at this time of year (winter!). We have some cheese in the fridge but would need to buy in salad fixings. That was until I came up with the idea of teaming up some of our bottled diced tomatoes (see section 6.2) which were already in the pantry with pickled beetroot (also a pantry staple), lettuce from the garden and then a boiled egg or

two (from our own chooks). This made a nice salad sandwich or wrap, depending on what bread was available.



Ah, yes! Bread. We had made quite a bit of bread in the solar oven over the years, but at this time of year I can make it in the oven attached to the slow combustion wood heater. I have gotten a bit lazy and it is easier to buy a loaf of stone ground whole meal, which comes in a recyclable/compostable paper bag than to bake our own. But this is NBJ! So I needed to get back into baking. We use a fairly simple bread recipe but it takes a number of hours for rising and such and I need to be organised to do it so we have bread when we need it, so what to do if time was short?

The answer? Make unleavened tortillas! (see Section 6.7) I can throw them together in less than an hour (and most of that is waiting time) and they make a great wrap, as well as bean burrito or whatever else. I just needed to take a bit of a mind shift to realise that tortillas also make a great lunch as well as dinner. That was a winner!



Dinner – For the most part this didn't change much and we still made stuff which is mostly vegetarian (Check out some recipes [here](#)) but we also tried some new stuff, like making spinach and ricotta dishes based on our own home made ricotta (section 6.6) and likewise vegetarian Indian dishes based on our home made paneer (section 6.7).



The dishes we normally made that have sour cream (I lurve sour cream!!) in them could have been a problem, but we have been converting over to Greek style yoghurt instead

and have started making our own based on powdered skim milk and using commercial pot set yoghurt as a starter. (which you buy once).

We have also been making our own dessert type stuff like choc chip biscuits, impossible pie, apple pie, which we restrict to Friday nights.....and possibly Saturday nights as well.

Friday night dinner has been, since time immemorial, special and we usually get takeaway. This is more often than not a hamburger/steak sandwich/chips/fish cocktails or whatever from our really nice, privately owned (ie not chain or corporate) local hamburger shop. When we originally talked about NBJ I was in favour of laying in a stock of the bits and pieces to make such treats and do that at home, however, my sweetie pointed out that there was little point in buying in all the stuff just so we could make it at home. So I caved and we used some of our discretionary fund (to the tune of about \$16) to pay for dinner on Friday nights. We also used to buy in dessert for Friday nights but as mentioned above, we now produce this ourselves.

DISCRETIONARY CASH

Well, to me the above bit is a great segue into how (or if) we used our weekly \$50 allowance. Taking into account the four full weeks in July and how much we allowed per week, that gave us \$200 to cover off any stuff we needed but could not produce during NBJ.

How much did we spend? All up of the \$200 allotted we spent \$106.45.

This mainly went on Friday night dinner, stuff we couldn't produce but needed for a certain dish such as mushrooms and a small tub of pot set yoghurt to kick ours off. Linda was taken to a farmer's market by the kids and picked up a couple of small bits and pieces and then there was coffee, which requires an entry on its own!

Coffee

I don't smoke, drink or gamble, but over the years I have come to look forward to a cappuccino at our local shops after breakfast and Don (our local barista) makes a good one. However I found over the years that a small drain on funds can cost a bit when you add it up and I would get my cappuccino (in a keep cup by the way) on average six times a week.

Unfortunately, when I did the math this worked out to somewhat over \$1300 a year. (say what?) To be fair I had resisted some efforts to get me to reduce my consumption previously but NBJ meant that I had to get serious and so I cut my store bought coffees down to 1 per week (to be consumed with the other members of Grumpy Club). This in itself would save us over \$1000 per year. So on the other days I would have a home coffee, using jars of coffee we had accumulated and which Linda could no longer drink. This meant that the coffee I was consuming had already been bought and which would have gone stale over time and had to be thrown out if they were not used, so it was essentially free. After doing this for a month, I have found it is possible to habituate myself to this coffee and still enjoy it.

PETROL

To make things interesting I decided to allow one tank of petrol for the whole of NBJ. A tank will usually last us from one to two weeks, and I was hoping to push it to a month. Unfortunately, that was not to be, not because we went out all over the place and ignored the whole NBJ thing, but because neighbours and family required being ferried around all over the place. While I wanted to see if we could make it or not, unusual circumstances cropped up and I needed to do the driving because assisting neighbours and family comes before arbitrary limits set up as an experiment. In the event we made it to halfway through the third week before I needed to refill the tank.

Going Out

As luck would have it, for most of NBJ we spent at home with the odd outing to visit family or attend required meetings such as the permaculture Sydney west general and committee meetings and our own sustainability group. We did intend to go on an outing one day but for various reasons it did not happen. Planning it did make me more aware that a greater percentage of our going out involves a “retail experience” at some point in the outing and the opportunities for doing free stuff in our area are not that great.

WHERE TO FROM HERE?

In the words of my brother, Jim, now we move into “spend like a drunken sailor August”.

A couple of days after the end of NBJ we sat down and had a look at what we did, how it all went, and then talked over where we were headed next. Surprisingly, we liked most of the experience of NBJ, and the challenges of making do with what we have on hand. Another amazing thing was that all of the experiments we tried with making new foods from scratch or using exiting supplies in new ways turned out well. They were edible and tasty to the point where we are going to keep doing most of them. Saving the cash did not hurt either.



We have decided to continue doing most of what we started, but with the odd coffee, meal and trip out thrown in. Next year we might even give No-Buy July another go but take it to the next level (whatever that means!)

Obviously there had to be some exceptions to this rule, such as pharmaceuticals, bills etc, and additionally, I came up with a maximum figure of \$50 as a weekly allowance to cover anything that we hadn't thought of beforehand. If it wasn't needed, we didn't spend it!

On June 29th I did the last standard shop before No-Buy July and filled up the car with petrol on the 30th, which would hopefully last a month. At that time we were going through two tanks a month so we would need to walk/use public transport if we went out a lot.



Veggies vertically

The idea was that we would be doing it every year, and we did do it two years in a row, but within a year after that we ran into covid, and its associated lockdowns and all of a sudden, we were doing it for real!

Why is it Worth Doing No-Buy July?

What we found by doing No-Buy July (NBj) was a number of things –

Waste – setting up for NBJ caused us to look at what we were buying and reduce packaging waste by bulk buying, and using what we could grow ourselves. By using our homegrown and stored materials we were able to reduce our waste production by over 50%

Resilience – NBJ gave us the opportunity to practice existing skills and learn new ones to make the best of our stored and home-produced resources. Practicing things like pasta making with stored flour and home-grown eggs, using alternative cooking arrangements like the rocket stove with twigs produced onsite and nearby and making home produced flatbreads and bread from the solar oven rather than storebought. These skills proved very useful during the Covid shutdown.



We still make the flatbreads a couple of times a week

Fun – It was great fun putting aside time to try new things, make new foods and practice new skills. It was also very satisfying to identify something which we didn't

have, research the problem, and then produce it or a substitute from the resources which we had on hand.

Savings – using materials bought in bulk and/or home produced allowed us to save money during NBJ. Plus, by not being out in the shops as much it meant reduced opportunities for ‘impulse buys’ and reduced petrol usage and associated costs. We started doing new things, like homemade yoghurt from our stocks of skim milk powder rather than buying it in. we also substituted things we could make, like yoghurt, for things we couldn’t, like sour cream. Also foraged foods like thistle, wild lettuce and dandelion increase the variety of what we were eating, at no cost. All of which saved us cash over the month of NBJ.



homemade deodorant

Environmental Footprint – taking into account the travelling, waste production and impulse buys that we didn't do, this had quite an impact on reducing our environmental footprint.

Simple Living – the idea of simple living may or may not attract you, but we found that as a side effect of our NBJ actions we started moving in that direction anyway, and we found it to be very satisfying.

The Process of Setting up and Running your own No-Buy July Activity

Decisions

As wonderful as it would be to decide on June 30th, that you will be powering through NBJ this year, there are some decisions to be made and some work to be done if you want to get the most out of the experience. Allow a few months to give you plenty of time to plan, do a bit of research, and start a veggie garden (if you need to!).

Work out if you want to get involved in NBJ this year and run it past the family and hopefully get their buy-in. Then work out what your parameters are, or you can just use mine. (\$50 per week discretionary cash, 1 tank of petrol for the month and so forth).

Research

There are a couple of tools to help you work out –

- What food you have already on hand to base your food storage on (see Appendix 1 – Pantry Audit Form), and
- What foods and associated consumables you buy on a regular basis. (see appendix 2 – Grocery Data Form)

These are available on our website and are included in several of the eBooks linked at the bottom of this article.

A	B	C	D	E
Date	Item	Size	Number	Total cost
2/01/2019	Peaches - Sliced	825g	2	\$7.00
21/12/2018	Peaches - Sliced	825g	2	\$5.60
16/12/2018	Peaches - Sliced	825g	2	\$5.60
6/12/2018	Peaches - Sliced	825g	3	\$7.50
23/11/2018	Peaches - Sliced	825g	3	\$10.50
17/11/2018	Peaches - Sliced	825g	2	\$7.00
30/10/2018	Peaches - Sliced	825g	1	\$1.75
21/10/2018	Peaches - Sliced	825g	4	\$11.20
8/10/2018	Peaches - Sliced	825g	3	\$10.50
25/09/2018	Peaches - Sliced	825g	3	\$8.40
15/09/2018	Peaches - Sliced	825g	2	\$5.60
15/09/2018	peanut butter - smooth	780g	1	\$6.50
8/10/2018	Pie apples	800g	2	\$8.60
15/09/2018	raisin toast	650g	1	\$3.50
5/11/2018	Salada wolemeal crackers	250g	1	\$2.00
5/11/2018	Salmon tin - spring water	95g	2	\$3.00
15/09/2018	Salmon tin - spring water	95g	2	\$3.00
5/11/2018	Shampoo Elvive	325g	1	\$8.00
21/10/2018	Soy Sauce - Kikkoman	1 litre	1	\$8.00
16/12/2018	Tartare Sauce	220g	2	\$4.00
21/10/2018	Tofu - Macro Sate	200g	1	\$4.00
16/12/2018	Tomato sauce	500ml	1	\$1.47
21/10/2018	Toothpaste - Cadet	110g	1	\$1.75

Results of our 'food buying' audit

By looking at what cleaning products and personal care products you regularly use and by doing a bit of searching in books or the 'net, you could come up with materials that are cheaper, less toxic and can be home produced using materials bought in bulk, thus reducing costs again.

Also, while we had a productive garden and some fruit trees already in place, the idea of NBJ can be a catalyst if you have been considering breaking into gardening. If you are short on land, cash and/or time then sprouts or microgreens might be the way forward to add a fresh element to your NBJ experience and this can be the time to do some research before putting things in place. Check out the Small Scale food Growing and Sprouts and Microgreens eBooks linked below.

<https://www.underthechokotree.com/resources/18-free-e-books?download=199:small-scale-food-growing-2nd-ed>

<https://www.underthechokotree.com/resources/18-free-e-books?download=186:sprouts-and-microgreens>

Planning

Once you have carried out some research, it is then a case of putting a plan in place by working out what actions you have decided that will make sense to you in your situation. Once having identified which products you buy the most, which can be bought in bulk? Items like flour, sugar, rice, rolled oats, and even whole wheat (plus a grinder) if it makes sense and your budget will stretch that far, or possibly powdered milk if you find it palatable (we do, and it has saved us considerable cash and waste by buying it in bulk).



We store bulk dry goods in 20 litre containers near the kitchen

A plan can easily be put in place then by writing (on paper or the computer) what each action is, who is going to carry it out (assuming you have other people on board as well) and a completion date, which is great to help focus on what needs to be done. Clearly

the plan also needs to be reviewed regularly (weekly/fortnightly/monthly discussion with the family?) to make sure that actions are going ahead.

Actions

So, prior to NBJ, this means carrying out the actions on your plan, the actions which make sense to you and your circumstances. This could be bulk buying appropriate foods and learning to store what you can, planting a veggie garden and/or fruit plants, accumulating the materials for making your own cleaners and personal care products, including making your own soap if that makes sense to you.



We had fun making our own crackers from scratch!

During NBJ it will be a case of making your own, based on the resources you have on hand, can trade or find free locally and the research you have done so far. When you come up with problem of lacking something, it can be very satisfying to research and work out how you can produce what you want, from what you have. But even if that is unsuccessful, you might need to dip into your 'just-in-case' allowance, or just put it down to experience as one of the things that didn't work out this time around but can be provisioned for if there is a next time.



Home pasta making - satisfying, tasty and fun!

The biggest action of NBJ, though, is to have fun! Use the time you save at the shops to make your own, spend time with the family or just relax at home. Hopefully you will be able to find the time to just have fun!

Review

When you get to the end of NBJ it is worth having a sit down with everyone who participated to identify what worked and what didn't. Will you keep going with something even after NBJ has finished? We found that making the flatbreads was very effective in using out bulk resources, saving time and reducing waste that we vowed to keep going and we still do that to this day.

Did you find it overall to be a fun and educative experience? Will you do it again next year or was once enough? Record your conclusions so that if you do decide to do it again next year, you can improve on the things that didn't work this year.

3.2 The Impact of NBJ on Us

The impact of our original forays into NBJ have been many and varied over the years since and they were only reinforced by the dislocation of supply chains caused by covid. To be honest our (OK my) shopping habits had become pretty shambolic by the time the idea of NBJ had come to me. Particularly in terms of food and other consumables that we are likely to get down at our local shops. What this meant was that each day I would go for a walk, and call in at the local shops, possibly pick up a coffee, then visit the supermarket, butcher or greengrocer to pick up whatever was needed that day.



Our system grows well, but we still need to buy stuff in

This had a number of results including stuff going out of date because the food areas were not tidy and regularly checked, stuff not being there when we wanted to make a particular dish and running out of frequently used staples. Also, because I was not keeping an eye on the food storage areas they became pretty choked up and poorly organised. This, in turn, meant that we were wasting money and food that went out of date or just plain off and had to be thrown, or buying perishable stuff we already had. In the lead up to the first NBJ we started some processes that carry on to this day, and one of the major ones is how we shop.

As mentioned elsewhere, we first did some research to actually record what foods and consumables we usually bought, and what we had on hand at the time ('buying

audit' 4.3 and 'pantry audit' 4.2) so we could see where bulk buying would work out best for us, but we also changed the way we shopped.



Takeaway coffee - enjoyable, but the costs add up

Shopping Process

Rather than a bit here and a bit there we decided to do a single shop every two weeks.

This had a number of effects –

- It reduced the number of shop-bought coffees I had a week, which was not good (from my point of view) but saved us over \$1000 per year.
- It reduced the number of impulse buys and getting stuff that we wound up not using because it turned out to be not right for us, even if it was 'cheap'.
- During the time of covid it reduced the amount of time I was out and about running a risk of infection.

- It meant we had to be more systematic about our purchases.

When I say 'systematic' what I mean was we had to develop a system or process that supported this new method of shopping so that we could be assured that we got all of what we needed and none of what we didn't. This included not only grocery items but also any meat we were getting low on (we still only eat meat once or twice a week, but having a back-up is always good) and any fruit and veg that we were not able to produce ourselves, or not produce in sufficient quantity. An example of this is onions, which we are able to grow six or seven months' worth, but when we run out, we have to buy in until the next crop comes due.



Chicken schnitzel halves, two per container separated by baking paper, packed by the butcher and placed in the freezer

What this translated into was a couple of things –

- First, before each shop we put a list together of what we needed, and

- Second, as a process for developing the list we went through an abbreviated pantry audit that included the fridge, freezer and any ancillary food storage areas.

This two weekly food audit not only identified what we had run out of and what we were getting low on, it also showed up where lower shelf life stuff (like fruit and vegetables and some food products) were getting close to their use by/best before date. So that not only did we know that they would need to be replaced but we could consume them before they got too old. This both reduced food waste and saved us money.



Newest tins on the right, to use, take ones from the left!

After the shopping was completed, the new buys were put into appropriate storage (freezer, crisper, fridge or pantry) but placed so that the newer material went to the back and the older products or produce were in the front so that they would be used first. This ensured that we didn't get any 'dead spots' in our food storage where products would be neglected and gently side past their 'use by' or 'best before' dates without us noticing, while the newer stuff got used straight away.

Another way to improve efficiency of using up food is to develop a menu plan for the week and then buy based on that. This does not work for us, however, because it means that you are using and buying smaller amounts and not taking into account food stored in bulk or semi-bulk amounts. I do some short-term menu planning based around the food we have in storage, using the idea of 'peasant eating' that is to say, 'what do I have the ingredients to make' rather than 'what do I feel like eating'.

Our efforts in NBJ also resulted in us ceasing to buy certain products at all, just making them from scratch using our bulk stores, in particular flatbreads or tortillas, tinned beans and lentils (we cook and freeze the dried product), herb and spice mixes including stock powder, muesli and biscuits as well as (when I get there) loaves of bread and yoghurt. The amount and variety of cleaning agents we use has also been greatly rationalised and simplified.



All-in-all the impact of NBJ on our life has been to simplify it, increase our resilience and reduce our spending, and that is always a good thing!

4.0 Initial Research

4.1 Introduction

While the pantry audit was originally about packaging, after conducting one I found the idea had many other merits to recommend it. By doing an audit just before a food shopping trip, you will know what you have run out of and what you are running low on so that you can put together an accurate shopping list, topping things up before you need them. This saves you both time and money because you won't be running out of foods and maybe having to make a sudden trip to the shops to pick up an 'essential' for that recipe you are halfway through. A regular pantry audit also enables you to keep an eye on foods that are approaching their 'use by' date so you can use them up before they go over, again saving money and reducing waste.

4.2 The Pantry Audit

Using a pantry audit (and including the fridge and freezer) can give you a handle on the food packaging waste you are generating and have on hand, and then provide the information needed to help you start reducing it. Addressing food packing waste is a great way to start on your journey towards zero waste!

It doesn't take long to do, I did ours in about half to three quarters of an hour, with some extra time taken to sit down and analyse the results. The prime issue is plastic food packaging, especially after all the issues we have been having with sending Australian recyclable plastics overseas, then the receiving countries no longer accepting it. We have little in the way of local processes to recycle it, so now a lot is ending up in land fill. As you conduct your audit, making a note of the type of packaging the food was bought/stored in will make later analysis easier as you can hit the stuff in plastic packaging first.



Also, the frequency you use each item is worth recording so that you can hit the biggest fish first (to coin a mixed metaphor). I did this by using three numbers to set out the highest use stuff –

1. used daily to weekly (high use)
2. used monthly or less (low use)
3. Dead stock. (forget it!)

If you are anything like us you will have dead stock in your pantry. That is to say stuff that we never use and which has been sitting around forever, taking up valuable space in our pantry. It may be dead stock because our tastes have changed over the years, it was something which looked good but when we tried it we found it not to our tastes, or it may be something we over-bought which has gone out of date and we are not game to use it. Or it may be that it was an impulse buy which seemed like a good idea at the

time but, if we had thought about it, we would have known it was not really 'us'. Rare, but it does happen!

To conduct the audit is fairly simple, download the [excel spreadsheet](#) I put together, or develop your own, then go through your pantry (and fridge if you want that in your terms of reference) item by item and write down every product in there. Against each item you can also make a note of the packaging type (plastic bag, paper bag, glass jar, cardboard carton, plastic jar etc.) and if you want to be really thorough, the pack size and number of packages which you have. You can then make an estimate of the frequency of use of each item using the one to three scale above. By looking at the amount you store and the usage score it will give you an idea of which items to hit first to get the best bang for your buck in terms of the volume of packaging waste you are generating.

The next trick is to highlight any and all pantry and fridge contents which are in packaging which you find unacceptable. To help you decide how far you want to go, I suggest you consult the hierarchy of packaging (check out the next section - 4.3), which lists packaging types from the best (ie none) at the top, to the worst (non-recyclable plastics) at the bottom. You decide how far up you want to go.

Once you have developed all this data, it is then a case of analysing it and working out what changes you are going to make. From the work I did with our pantry/fridge audit, it seemed to me that there were four (or in reality five) options that I could see –

The Options

1. Buy a similar product, packaged further up the hierarchy
2. Buy from one of the emerging 'bulk buy/packaging free' places
3. Make the product at home (ideally from bulk sourced or home produced raw materials)
4. Use up and not replace
5. Oh yes! I have no idea at the moment!

The Details

1. Buy a similar product, packaged further up the hierarchy – So maybe you buy your mayo in a plastic jar and there is another brand available in glass, or you have been buying your flour in 1kg plastic bottles, but it is available in paper bags or even better, bulk, packaging free! I realise there are some other issues at play here. Your favourite hot sauce may be available in a non-recyclable plastic bottle and you know the other brands packaged in glass bottles just won't do the trick. It can leave you in a quandary because you really, REALLY like that hot sauce! If you can't make an equivalent one yourself, one approach I suggest is a blind taste test.

The Blind Taste Test

Get hold of a small amount of all the readily available hot sauces, which have been appropriately labelled, from friends and acquaintances or even buy a small container of each. Have someone trustworthy (this is NOT the time for practical jokes!) put a small amount onto a plate or in a container like a shot glass labelled as 1,2,3 or a,b,c; etc, anything so that you don't know which is which. Try each one and rate it from best to worst according to your taste. Then review the results with your trusted colleague to find out which brands were high on your list of acceptable ones and what they were packaged in. I tried this approach when we were looking for a mayo, and found that my pre-conceived notions were just not correct. By doing a blind taste test, it is the actual flavour of the product you are rating, not the brand and you may find that hot sauce in a glass bottle is actually OK!

2. Buy from one of the emerging 'bulk buy/packaging free' places etc. – There are a whole stack of places opening up which will allow you to buy bulk pantry staples such as flours, pasta, rice, sweets etc. into your own containers or glass jars you can buy in the shop. We have a number around here including The Source, Nom Bulk Foods, Honest to Goodness, Naked Foods and Scoop Wholefoods. They are scattered all over Sydney, although if I were honest, the concentration is greater in the east than out here in the

west. We now buy flour, dried beans, oats, dried fruits, nuts and sweet treats (shh!) and other staples in our own bottles and jars regularly.



There are other options too, particularly for refrigerated items, like your friendly neighbourhood deli and greengrocer, who are likely to allow you to buy their products weighed into your containers, especially if you become a regular customer. Food coops are another possibility and if there is not one in your area, maybe you could start one? Farmers markets quite often are not just for fruit and veg (although packaging free fruit and veg is great too!) but also have lots of artisan and value-added products like jams, sauces and chutneys etc in re-usable glass jars.

3. Make at home – There are a large number of books and websites out there dedicated to people who want to make their own stuff, including pantry staples like jams and sauces, preserves, spice mixes, pasta – all sorts of things. We have put together a couple of spice mixes that allow us to use some of our home-grown herbs and other packaging free components to create superior substitutes for the commercial products. We make a stock powder, (Section 6.4) equivalent to chicken stock, which is based on nutritional yeast. The stock cubes it replaces were wrapped individually in a paper/foil composite which was not recyclable. Likewise the Mexican spice Mix (section 6.5) we use for our burritos used to come in foil throw-away pouches, but now that we produce our own from packaging free and home grown ingredients that source of waste has been eliminated. It is also enormously satisfying to make this stuff yourself!

4. Use up and not replace – This is mostly our go-to for dead stock, unless it has well and truly exceeded its use by date, then it gets composted and not replaced! I bought lentils to try, but found that Linda is not a fan, I don't mind them but it won't be a huge disappointment if we use the ones we've got and call it quits. Likewise we have fooled around with wine vinegars in various guises, but I am not a fan and Linda isn't much of a fan either so I am casting around for recipes that are not too disgusting, failing that they will be used as weed killer or disinfectant!

5. I got no idea! – Hopefully you won't get too many of these. One that came up for us was marshmallows, packed in soft plastic, we use them rarely in winter over the fire when the kids are here.

Now with your recording an analysis done, you are primed for action! Have a recce in your local (or as local as you can find) packaging free store and see what they have that will allow you to switch some of your purchases over to bulk. Or pick a product or two and work out your waste reduction strategy for them and then implement it. The whole process is interesting, gives us an appreciation for the waste we generate, and can be lots of fun. It will also move you towards your waste reduction goals, whatever they may be. Good luck!

4.3 The Food Packaging Hierarchy

We all face choices when we buy food and one of the choices we make is how the food is packaged.

The idea of a hierarchy is we start at the top (best case scenario) and work our way down, looking for the most appropriate answer, until we hit the answer which works for us, hopefully before we hit bottom (worst case scenario). It may be that we have no choice and do end up at the bottom of the hierarchy, but by using the tool to look at our options, sometimes we can choose an option higher up the hierarchy than our current 'go-to' option.

Thus the food packaging hierarchy is a tool to allow us to evaluate our choices in one small area of our lives. An area which can have a negative impact on the environment and, after thinking about it, come up with the best solution for us.

The Food Packaging Hierarchy

1. Packaging free – if we are talking about packaging and its impact on the environment once it is thrown away, then to buy something packaging free just has to be the ideal way to go. There are now options for buying in bulk and taking your own containers for refill as well as supporting traditional businesses like your local purveyor of fruit and veg or delicatessen who can provide food packaging free. Obviously if we produce it ourselves it is packaging free also. Unfortunately we can't always get what we want packaging free because either it is not offered packaging free by the retailer or because we are not in a position (for whatever reason) to make use of a packaging free option.

2. Reusable glass jars/bottles – Even in this day and age, where plastic is king, there are still lots of food products provided in glass jars and bottles, which are by and large reusable. The use that comes first to my mind is to use them to make our own food preserves and we have found over the years that by accumulating glass bottles and jars we can increase the amount of preserving we do each year at no extra cost. The weak link in this chain can be the lids which may eventually have issues with the sealing ring, but there are places now where you can even buy the new lids (while recycling the old ones) and keep the glass containers in use. Of course preserves are not the only thing they can be used for, they can also be used as a storage container for stray nuts, bolts and screws in the garage (another old habit which needs reviving), to produce food by using them to grow sprouts or even to do soil testing eg the soil texture test or even to replace plastic as food packaging in the freezer. There are sites on the 'net which can give you ideas on how to reuse glass jars and bottles from the sublime, to the ridiculous!

Even if you don't want to use these handy glass containers yourself you can pass them on to friends, family and neighbours to help them in their own preserving efforts or to schools or preschools for craft use. By using our purchasing power to buy a glass

packaged product over its similar, but plastic packaged rival, we can send a powerful message to the product producers.

3. Reusable steel containers/aluminium – sadly, over the years these have become less and less common, and when they are available they are usually only produced for a short time as a product promotion. They are still out there though and can be used to store the product which they originally held when bought in bulk, or other bits and pieces as required.

4. Recyclable glass/steel/aluminium containers – Some glass containers aren't really practical for anything other than what they were originally designed to do, such as the smaller, irregularly shaped containers used for jams or condiments. So any glass container that won't be reused in your system immediately fits into this category. To be fair, some steel food cans can be re-used in crafty situations (eg pen holder etc) or as no cost pots for plants, or even to construct a rocket stove. The down side of these ideas is that over time the steel cans will rust out and deteriorate to the point where they will be absorbed back into the soil and entropy wins again (a small win for entropy but a win nevertheless). The up side is that glass, steel and aluminium can be recycled endlessly and will turn out a product as good as the original, in fact as far as glass is concerned, less energy is required to melt a tonne of glass recycling than is required to melt the raw materials (silica sand, soda ash, limestone etc) to make a tonne of glass, not to mention the mining costs, so it is a win/win!

5. Compostable/recyclable paper/cardboard containers – strangely enough these actually seem to be becoming more popular. I have noticed a number of products including some sweet treats, packaged in paper/cardboard rather than clear plastic or polystyrene foam. This is a change also worth encouraging, although the downside is that if we compost these containers they may miss out on going to landfill but the embodied energy is lost and entropy wins again. Another downside is that paper and cardboard products cannot be recycled indefinitely. Every time they are recycled the pulping process reduces the fibre length to the point where the stock becomes useless, at which point composting is the best option.

6. Reusable plastic containers – Some of the food containers which were once served by glass packaging are now contained in plastic containers which with a bit of thought can be re-used, eg peanut butter, fruit, mayo, honey, jam etc. once they are washed out! These can be used for a number of things but because they are plastic and can't stand heat they are no good for home preserving. You could use them for storing spices, dry goods, grains etc.

7. Recyclable plastic container – Recyclable plastic containers have a number symbol which tells you the type of plastic it is made from and while all of these are able to be recycled, there needs to be a system in place to recycle them. In Australia at the moment (April 2019) our recycling system is in a shambles because we relied on it being done overseas and the countries involved have refused to take our rubbish. This has resulted in plastic packaging which is theoretically recyclable going to land fill. Regardless of this fact, plastic is downcycled, rather than recycled, meaning that it is used to make a lower grade of plastic and so eventually winds up in an unusable dead end in most cases. Which plastics are being collected for recycling in your area will vary over time, so it is best to talk directly to your local council or their waste contractor to find out what is happening.

8. Non-recyclable plastics/mixed – any plastic not marked with an identification number cannot be recycled, with the exception of soft plastic bags which were used by Redcycle but are now starting to be picked up for use by RecycleSmart. There are also containers made of mixed materials like tetrapak which are difficult to recycle.

4.4 The Food and Consumable Buying Audit



A buying audit is complementary to a 'Pantry Audit' (see previous section) in that the pantry audit tells you in some detail of the food which you have on hand at the time of the audit, the 'Buying Audit' allows you to track the type, amount and cost of foods coming into the household over time.

I have a fair idea of the sorts and amounts of food which we buy in general, but there is no substitute for measuring and for recording the data. We have a supermarket, greengrocer and butcher within walking distance and to save transport energy these tend to be our go-to.

I wanted to know what we were spending so I could see what opportunities there were for –

- Home production
- Bulk buying
- Substituting from other sources.

First, I set the criteria for the audit. It would cover food purchases from the supermarket and greengrocer and to a lesser extent, butcher which we have been using less and less as we move towards a plant-based diet. It did not include: takeaway (traditional on a Friday night) or bulk purchases like a 25kg of rolled oats and skim milk powder (\$90 and \$120 respectively) which occurred during the time of the audit.

To help me record the data I was generating I put together a (very) simple Excel spreadsheet. Excel spreadsheets also have a 'sort' function which helps me to analyse the data by grouping together purchases of similar products over time. The headings I used for the grocery sheet was –

Date – so that I had an idea of the time that items I purchased regularly would last before they needed to be rebought.

Item – this one is important to get right and by that I mean to use the same item name each time they are entered on the spreadsheet. If an item is entered as 'baked beans' initially then 'beans, baked' when bought next and then as 'Fred's Baked Beans' a third time it makes sorting for analysis very difficult. Entering each item under the same name each time means they will group together when sorted. Simple I know but it easy to make a mistake..... Or so I've heard!

Size – how many grams, kilos or litres of each product is bought at a time, which can give you a feeling for how much of each product is bought over the time of the audit, and can then be extrapolated over a month, 6 months, or year or whatever. Thus you can hit the high use stuff first.

Number – This is just there so that when I bought multiples of the same item, I didn't have to enter each one separately, but I would still be able to work out the total numbers of that item over the period being measured.

Total cost – how much each item (or number of items) cost all up to give me an idea of how much I was spending over time. This column could be aggregated to give me a total spend during the audit timeframe.

I then put together a similar sheet for Fruit and Veg, and meat. If you want a blank copy to model your own on, it can be downloaded [here](#) (Grocery Data Blank).

A	B	C	D	E
Date	Item	Size	Number	Total cost
2/01/2019	Peaches - Sliced	825g	2	\$7.00
21/12/2018	Peaches - Sliced	825g	2	\$5.60
16/12/2018	Peaches - Sliced	825g	2	\$5.60
6/12/2018	Peaches - Sliced	825g	3	\$7.50
23/11/2018	Peaches - Sliced	825g	3	\$10.50
17/11/2018	Peaches - Sliced	825g	2	\$7.00
30/10/2018	Peaches - Sliced	825g	1	\$1.75
21/10/2018	Peaches - Sliced	825g	4	\$11.20
8/10/2018	Peaches - Sliced	825g	3	\$10.50
25/09/2018	Peaches - Sliced	825g	3	\$8.40
15/09/2018	Peaches - Sliced	825g	2	\$5.60
15/09/2018	peanut butter - smooth	780g	1	\$6.50
8/10/2018	Pie apples	800g	2	\$8.60
15/09/2018	raisin toast	650g	1	\$3.50
5/11/2018	Salada wolemeal crackers	250g	1	\$2.00
5/11/2018	Salmon tin - spring water	95g	2	\$3.00
15/09/2018	Salmon tin - spring water	95g	2	\$3.00
5/11/2018	Shampoo Elvive	325g	1	\$8.00
21/10/2018	Soy Sauce - Kikkoman	1 litre	1	\$8.00
16/12/2018	Tartare Sauce	220g	2	\$4.00
21/10/2018	Tofu - Macro Sate	200g	1	\$4.00
16/12/2018	Tomato sauce	500ml	1	\$1.47
21/10/2018	Toothpaste - Cadet	110g	1	\$1.75

Sample of what the records may look like

To operate the audit was a fairly simple matter. Every time I made a purchase within the criteria I had set out I made sure to get the receipt and then as soon as I got home (mostly, alright I saved them up until the end of the week!) entered the data for each one into the spreadsheet. I did this for a period of four months, but you could do it for as long or short as you like, bearing in mind that the longer it goes on for, the more information it will yield.

After four months I sat down and did a bit of analysis, the easiest way to do that (for me) was to sort for item name so that the items were aggregated, and it turns out over those 4 months we bought –

- 9 tins of sliced beetroot, total weight 7.5kg for a bit over \$21 (could be home produced and/or preserved)
- 26 tins of sliced peaches (in juice), total weight 21.5kg for \$80.65 (no way to grow at our place but could be bought in bulk in season and home preserved)
- 16 x 750g loaves of bread for \$76 (home baking)

- All up \$746 worth of groceries, \$260 worth of F&V and \$10 worth of preserved meats for homemade pizza (we did have some meat in the freezer we were working through to use up).
- Not too bad for a family of 2 for four months, I think!

This approach can also be used to identify other consumables such as cleaners, paper products, personal care products or what have you! It all depends on how much information you want to generate about your spending habits.

It depends on what is important to you and what your big-ticket items are in your journey towards living a sustainable life, but whatever they are decide what you need to measure to control them, and then do it!

4.5 Our Food Storage System

Back in the 80's when I started out on this journey it was called survivalism and these days it is talked about in terms of 'prepping', but both philosophies can have negative connotations and tend to focus on the individual and depending on where you are in the world, can also focus on guns and ammo! I prefer the term resilience, which can be an individual but also a community aspiration.

It does make sense to have some form of back-up food supply in an uncertain world, not only for you and your family but also so you can help those less fortunate in times of need.



There are also other advantages to having some food storage over and above your immediate needs as well as increasing your resilience –

1. More flexibility of meal planning at short notice,
2. The ability to throw a meal together in the event of unexpected guests without needing a run to the shops
3. Reduced likelihood of running out of a critical ingredient while cooking, requiring another run to the shops.
4. Where the food item are bought in a supermarket, if you keep some stock you can wait until that item is available at reduced price/on special, thus saving you money.
5. If you are buying bulk amounts of ingredients this will also save you money as well as reducing the amount of packaging you generate.

Plus if there is a situation where supplies are getting low, you won't be competing for the stuff left in the shops; that can go to the people who really need it as you will already have yours.

The downside of setting up food storage is that it is quite possible to buy in too much, or too much of the wrong stuff, resulting in the food going off or otherwise taking up space and not being eaten, with the associated wastage of both food and money. I have

made these type of mistakes in the past much to my disappointment with myself, but what we do these days works very well (for us at least) so I will describe it for you.

Research

We found that if we wanted to start a meaningful storage program, we first needed to understand what food items we already had floating around home, so we did a pantry audit (see section 4.3) and included the fridge and freezer. This gave us a feeling for what we already had on hand and how much, so that we could avoid buying too much of stuff we already had, what it didn't do was give us a feeling for how much stuff we bought in, and from where. So to do this I constructed an excel spreadsheet to keep track of this information and filled it out for some months. By knowing how much of what we were buying it was easier for decisions to be made about how much of what to store, what could be improved by bulk buying and what opportunities there might be to home-make stuff for ourselves.

Bulk Staples

We buy most of the staples which we eat on a regular basis in bulk by the bag (12.5 kg, 20kg or 25kg depending on the material), and then store them in 20 litre polypropylene sealable buckets, most of which are kept in the laundry. Such staples include –

- **Rolled oats** – organic – used mainly for my muesli but can be used to make Linda's porridge or oat milk, which is not as disgusting as it sounds! They are great for Anzac biscuits or to make a pie crust and to grind and add to bread to for a nutty flavour. We buy them 25 kg at a time from an organic foods bulk supply. Due to issues with pantry moth, we keep the bulk bag in the freezer and pack off a 10 litre bucket for day to day use as required.

- **White Rice** – Before you email me, I know how brown rice is sooooo much better for us, but white rice lasts longer in storage, and besides, we prefer white rice. It provides a great source of carbs whether it is boiled, steamed or fried and it can be ground to flour

and used to make rice noodles or spring roll wrappers or even gluten free pasta (if that is your thing) or fermented to make a spirit or vinegar. We buy Australian long grain rice (because that is what we like) from a local Asian food supplier.



- **Whole wheat** – organic – we have been using it, bought direct from the mill, by the 20kg bag (originally in 12.5 kg bags) for years so about 8 years ago we bought a quite professional electric grain mill from Skippy grain mills and mill the whole grain to flour as we use it, for raised bread, flatbreads, pizza dough etc. Whole wheat flour can go stale comparatively quickly but as the whole grain it stores for years.

- **Powdered Milk** – We started out using the 1kg bags from woollies and got used to the taste, but we bought a 25kg bag of non-instant Australian produce skim milk and found it actually to be much more palatable than the woollies stuff. It works out to 60c per litre of milk. As well as being used as milk once reconstituted it can be used to make

yoghurt or low fat cheese quite easily. We buy it from a food industry supply place in towards the city.

- **Baker's flour** – we found years ago that whole wheat products can tend to be a bit heavy so we bake our breads etc. as a 50:50 mix of whole wheat and baker's flour. We get organic unbleached bakers flour by the 12.5 kg bag from the organic bulk food supply.

- **Sugar** – white sugar, not much to say, we tend to buy a stack of 3kg paper bags of white sugar from woollies and repack into the 20kg bucket and recycle the paper bags.

Semi – Bulk staples

These are products which we keep a ready supply of, but don't go through them quickly enough to make it worth buying in huge amounts. They are quite often bought packaging-free into our own glass jars from an organic bulk supply shop. This includes products such as -

- lower use flours like white self-raising and plain flour and cornflour
- alternative rices such as basmati and Jasmin rice (yes, even a bit of brown!)
- Other muesli components such as raisins, sultanas and wheat bran straws
- Lower use sugars like brown sugar and icing sugar
- Dried legumes such as red kidney beans, black turtle beans and chickpeas
- Nuts like almonds, cashews and walnuts which can be eaten as is or put into cooked dishes

Canned Goods

Canned fruit, vegetable and meat were the backbone of our [original storage program](#), and for most of them I committed the ultimate sin of storing them without integrating them into our meal plans, violating the cardinal rule of 'store what you eat and eat what you store'. There were a number of reasons for this but in the end it meant that

some stuff was in storage for 20+ years and wound up being composted/recycled instead of eaten.

We still do store some canned goods but in a severely reduced numbers and variety. These days the cans we store in any amount are limited to corn kernels, peaches in juice and beetroot. We use them on a regular basis (as was pointed out when I analysed our shopping habits) so we keep enough to last between the times when they are on special. How often they are used and the size of the can will dictate how many cans we store such that we will have up to half a dozen 825g beetroot tins but a couple of dozen 400g corn tins. This is still considerably less than the boxes of cans we stored previously. This also does not take into account the odd cans of fish, pineapple, pie apple or whatever that are likely to appear in anyone's pantry, depending on their tastes.

Home Preserves

Over the years we have tried quite a few methods of preserving bought in excess or excess stuff we grew ourselves including drying, freezing, bottling and pickling. The way we grow our food these days means that we get a steady if small supply rather than the seasonal gluts we used to, so the need to preserve excess produce is reduced. There is one main exception to this – tomatoes!



Around the end of the year we mix our own tomato produce with bought in stocks (organic when we can afford it, but local at least and preferably chemical free) and turn some into pasta sauce/passata, some into diced tomatoes and some into pizza sauce. We usually process enough in a couple of weekends to last us for the coming year. We also do a bit of drying, mostly leaf crops, but I am interested in growing or buying mushrooms and then drying them for later rehydration and to be turned into powder as a flavouring agent.

Sundries

These are the little bits that add flavour like spreads, sauces and spices. For the most part we will keep one or two spares of the usual size container we buy so that we don't run out at a critical time and have to go bolting for the shops! The exception is spice mixes. Rather buy in jars of spice mixes like curry powder, Mexican spice or stock powder, we keep stocks of whole spices which we then grind and blend ourselves. It is not as difficult as you might think and there are some recipes elsewhere on this site, but we have found that having a copy of Hemphill's 'Spice and Herb Bible' invaluable in making our own spice mixes.

Practice

No I don't mean screaming "We're all gonna die!" and running for the bunker. Life is busy and you might not get to practice your skills every day, so some programmed practice time is a good thing. Get the family involved and make it a fun challenge!

Every year we do 'No Buy July' (which is what this eBook is all about!!!) and this gives an opportunity to test our skills and preparations which we hope will make us more resilient. You can read the detail here, but essentially, we commit to buying almost nothing for a month, just subsisting on our stores and what we grow, using the skills we have learned in cooking, food processing and using what we have. If we are short of something, or have run out, how can we make use of what we have to get where we want to go?

Running 'No Buy July' gave us the motivation to make use of the skills, ideas and preparations we had made to improve the resilience of our lifestyle to see how well they worked. It was fun and most educative to see what worked, what didn't, where we were successful and where more thought, training or practice was required. At the end of No Buy July (it could be any month or any time for you) we look at how things went. What the learnings were and how we would improve for next year.

Conclusion

The approach we use is not a knee jerk, *'go out and buy a warehouse full of toilet paper Covid is upon us'* type of approach. It is a measured approach taking time to design things so that waste is minimised. It worked well for us and made sure we were storing the right stuff, the right way, for us, and that we were able to use it when needed. Everyone's tastes are different so if you want to put together some food storage, for any of the reasons outlined above, you need it to fit your families' needs, and to work for you. So, give our process a go and see how it works for you.

5.0 No-Buy July 2024

The Idea

As referenced earlier in this eBook, I came up with 'No Buy July' (NBJ) in 2018, based on several ideas. I had read in an Earth Garden Magazine where a lady (Rachel Altenbacher) had written an article about how she ate only from her (much larger than ours) garden for a month. At the same time, I was reading David Holmgren's 'Retrosuburbia' and his description of a 'home-based lifestyle'. I had also come across the ideas of 'zero waste' and 'Plastic Free July' so I rolled everything together and christened it 'No Buy July'.

We did it for a couple of years, then Covid turned up and it seemed that it had become our lifestyle rather than a challenge for one month a year. Anyway, this year (2024) – I decided to give it a go again to check how our systems would cope. I also, as mentioned in a previous article, wanted to 'take it to the next level' next time I did it, whatever that would mean. It turns out that is meant setting up a Facebook group and doing NBJ with a whole stack of other people! But more on that later!

Preparations



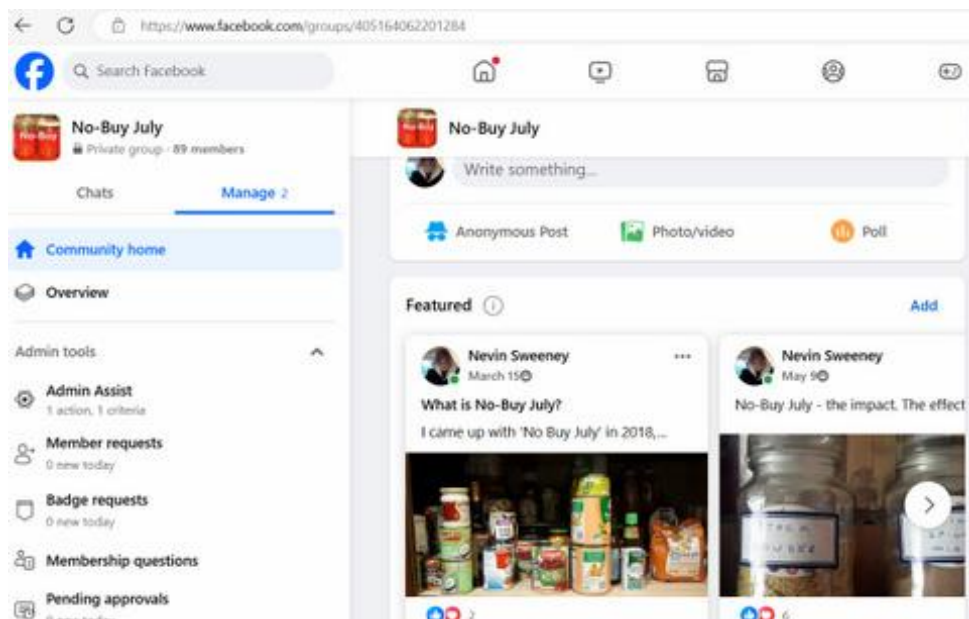
As usual I did some research on what we were buying and increased the variety of stuff we buy in bulk a bit like raisins & sultanas, cashews and almonds, metho (for fire starting and cleaning/disinfection not drinking!) rice, whole wheat and organic baker's flour. I had also noticed the amount of bread we were going through. We have a breadmaker but I had some issues with it, the LCD readout was a bit funny with some parts of the display missing, and the last couple of times I had used it (with two different batches of yeast) it gave us rather collapsed dense loaves. After a bit more research, I found that I needed to heat up the water going into the breadmaker even though it had its own heating cycle initially, and the first time I used it the LCD cleared of its own accord and was working properly again.



The Facebook Group



I started working on the Facebook group (imaginatively titled 'No-Buy July') at the end of February (2024), the idea being that it gave me a month to put some NBJ articles together to use as featured articles pinned at the start of the group (links to those articles are at the end of this one). I wanted to go public towards the end of March so that it would give people three months before NBJ to do some research and pre-work to get the most out of it. To do the initial work I made the group private so that I could then go public when I was ready to open the group up. That is not they way things work evidently and once a group is private, it stays private according to Facebook. One lives and learns!



I wrote an article on the 'what, why and how' of NBJ (see section 3.1 of this eBook), broke the article up into three parts (What, Why and How) then posted them as three separate posts pinned to the start of the group. I later added a pinned article on what the impact of NBJ had been on us. The group went public on the 21st of march and from that point on I posted articles from our website on most days until the end of NBJ. The articles talked about things like grocery and food buying audits, food storage, growing food in small spaces, sprouting and microgreens, foraging wild herbs, recipes of various sorts and how to do stuff like making vinegar, spice mixes and flatbreads. Other members posted as well, talking about what they were doing for NBJ.

In the end, the group got a total of 89 members.

How it went – Generally

In general terms it was fun for us, as it always is, but what surprised me was that it was less of a challenge than previous years had been. As a result of the original NBJs we did, we had set up systems such that we were used to operating on what we were growing and bulk stores that we always keep on hand. I guess this is also why the Covid shutdowns weren't as traumatic as they could have been for us. I tried some stuff, like making our own mayo, which worked well and tried making cinnamon scrolls which did not work well. Throughout the experience we made our own yeast bread using the breadmaker and flatbreads as per my normal habit. We are still continuing to do that today.



Homemade Mayo



...and, homemade flatbread!

For me, one of the greatest indicators that we had a working system was that we didn't need to go belting out to the shops on the first of August to re-stock. Our focus on

home produce and bulk stores meant there were really no things we were lacking except maybe chocolate, and we got around that by baking ANZAC biscuits as a sweet treat. I will go back to doing the shopping every two weeks, on the Tuesday morning as we did prior to NBJ.



Growing

During NBJ our garden kept us supplied with lots of veggies: bok choy, broccoli, carrots, cauliflower, cabbage, chokoes, Jerusalem artichokes, lettuce, silver beet and snow peas plus the odd capsicum and even more surprisingly, tomatoes!



A self-seeded cherry tomato came up in the northern side of the front yard under the mulberry tree and near the 5500litre water tank and next to one of the gabions so I guess the microclimate was right. It has been remarkably productive, providing us a small bowl of tomatoes every couple of days and even now it just gets bigger and more productive every day. Usually for NBJ I open jars of our preserved diced tomatoes when I want tomatoes on a sandwich, but this year I only needed to open one jar and that was it.



The garden also provided us with ginger and herbs, mandarines (although we had to fight ratty for them!) oranges and a few lemons and limes. The chooks have also been remarkably productive, giving us 3 to 4 eggs every day over the whole of NBJ.

Cash and Petrol

I allowed \$50 for stuff which we had not allowed for, and a full tank of petrol for the entire month. In terms of cash, I went through \$10 per week for two coffees from our favourite barista (some things I just can't go without) and on getting home late after dropping my daughter and her family at the airport I splurged on a bit of Red Rooster for us, at the cost of \$26. So overall we came in well under my allowed limit. For the petrol, we basically didn't go anywhere except one drop off and pick up from the airport, so that we still had three quarters of a tank at the end of the month.

Final Thoughts

It has been a fun time this year, especially being able to share it through the Facebook group. Speaking of the Facebook group, here are some of the members thoughts at the end of NBJ –

Debra: "I would do it again. A good exercise in eating seasonally out of the garden, I enjoyed not going to the shops as much. And so much better for your health."

Lauren: "Please seriously consider next year, I enjoyed the posts and they helped me assess my own path through NBJ."

Meggy Moo: "Thank you for initiating this inspiring challenge . Due to unforeseen circumstance , I did not participate in NBJ . However, I m about to embark on an August austere venture . Your posts have given me some ideas !"

Elizabeth: "Well. Having conquered July, I am going into NB August!!! Just a thought. I had to go out today to pick up Dog Food for my little dog. But avoided all temptations to splurge on anything else just because I could!! It has certainly made me aware of spending just because you can. I have a "Colesworths" Order coming tomorrow. First for over a month. They must miss me because I got lots of emails tempting me back

through July. I resisted. This time I got Free Delivery and over \$50 worth of points to add to my collection! No impulse shop when you order online. And consider. And cross off the order if deemed non essential. I enjoyed NBJuly. My pantry got a big shakeout. And it was fun.”

Zoe: “Well I didn’t commit, and I didn’t achieve but seeing everyone’s comments and what they are doing did make me think about my own buying habits. It did spur me on to use more of my own produce.”

Danielle: “I shopped yesterday. It was weird. I have not missed the supermarket. I broke a day early because I had a Coles voucher that needed to be used by the end of July. My buying habits have already changed.”

Cecelia: “Thanks Nevin....always inspirational...ideas for going forward for me as I was overseasspending....”

Comments made prior to and during NBJ included –

Janine: “I think I need to do an audit first and then start practicing now! so I can fine tune it,”

Danielle: “I’m firming up my NBJ plans. We’ve had lots of periods of no shopping over the last few years due to floods and I don’t feel like doing a complete no buy thing as a result. Instead, I’ll have a supermarket ban and buy basic ingredients only. So, I can go to the fruit and veg shop and the butcher if needed, and I can buy milk but I’ll have to make yoghurt. I eat yoghurt every day. I’ve made it before when I used to milk a local cow, but I’ve got lazy. NBJ will be a kick-start for me”

Tong: “What a meaningful way to celebrate my birthday! I am now determined to save a few pumpkins and winter melons (no wonder called winter melon), dry up some herbs, plan to source some beans, see what I can freeze”

Wendy: “A good reminder to reduce our waste, re-use what we have and recycle what we can. Will be delving into the dark depths at the back of the pantry, organising things by their Use By and Best Before dates to use up the forgotten things.”

Angela: “We are making dog food at the moment that is mostly no-buy July. It’s got meat and offal that was already pre-purchased last month, then a few different types of lentils and oats from our stores, veggies from the garden, a few eggs from dad’s garden (our chickens are not firing yet), plus some cans of tuna from stores. He’s a lucky pup!”
Well, that’s it for 2024, why not join us in 2025?

6.0 NBJ Projects

6.1 Introduction

Following are some projects which you may find interesting to put some time into before you start No-Buy July, like making some 'tomato-based pasta sauce' (6.2) or 'bottled diced tomatoes – the easy way' (6.3) so you can have them on hand to make use of when you don't want to be buying tomatoes. Others, like making your own spice mixes (6.4 & 6.5), soft cheese (6.6 & 6.7) flatbreads (6.8), crackers (6.9) or mayonnaise (6.10) can be interesting things to do, using pantry staples, during NBJ itself.

In any case these can be things to do in the kitchen with the family that are a lot of fun at any time, and you get to eat the products!

6.2 Making Tomato-based Pasta Sauce



Every year we make a load of pasta sauce the traditional way and diced tomatoes the easy way (see 4.2 below), usually around 50 jars of each, enough to last us a year.

The Tomatoes

We just don't have the land to grow as many tomato plants as we need to keep us in passata for a year. I do make a half dozen jars from our own tomatoes when we have a good year but that is about the most I can hope for, so I buy them in. I do get them from a number of sources, mainly from a couple who grow them locally at their farm about a half hours drive away, but I have bought organic (when I have the cash) from my friend who runs the organic shop, and chemical free (not certified organic, but almost the same thing), from a farmers market about 40 minutes drive away. I have also gone in to Flemington markets on a Saturday morning and bought directly from there. Depending on how many bottles are left over from the previous year, I usually get 50kg to 70kg of tomatoes all up, but this will be over several weekends. I can process up to 25kg at a time, more than that just gets too much.

The Pots & Jars

Over the years the size of the pots I cook up has increased, the old 4 litre pot just doesn't cut it anymore! My current go-to tomato pot is a 20 litre 'Ball' brand preserving pot, with a curved glass lid. It is the biggest pot we have, and it enables me to fit a full 16kg box of tomatoes into the one pot. Also, unlike my older 4 litre pots, it has a steel insert allowing me to use the solar powered induction cooker when I can. If we don't have enough sun then it is back to the gas stove.



For processing (boiling) the filled jars of tomato sauce, I have a 'Baccarat' brand 10 litre pot which is also able to be used on the induction cooker. While I did not buy it with one, I was able to get hold of a circular rack exactly the right size to fit in the bottom of

it, to keep the jars up off the hot bottom of the pot during the boil. The 10 litre pot will accommodate 10 of the 375gm jars which we use for preserving quite comfortably. While we have used a number of different sized jars over the years, we find that with just the two of us, the 375gm jar is now ideal.

The Tomato Squeezer

For years we used the 'fruit press' referred to in the original article and while it was lots of fun and extracted the good stuff in one pass, it was PAINFULLY slow. To process half a dozen jars did not present much problem but the number of jars we were looking at these days it just did not cut the mustard. So we looked around to see what else there was (check reviews [here](#)) but settled on a 'Gulliver' brand tomato squeezer. It is a bit of a pain to clean, but it is so much faster than the fruit press, that I could whip through 5 times the jars in half the time of the old one.



So most years we use our hand powered 'Gulliver' but a couple of years ago we got my elder daughter a high grade electric tomato squeezer, and it makes the poor old 'Gulliver' look pretty sick. Again, though, it is a fair amount of work to clean up so it makes the most sense to use it for as many jars as we can manage on the day, such that

we generally use it when we are getting together to prepare tomato sauce for all of the Sweeney clan.

The Process

This is pretty much the same, but here it is in more detail –

1. I wash the tomatoes as I take them out of the box, slice them in half and add them to the cooking pot. Once the pot is full I put the heat on low, so I don't burn any of the tomatoes at the start, and put on the lid, after an hour or so or when there is liquid from the tomatoes in the bottom of the pot I take the lid off and put the heat up higher.
2. At this point, the tomatoes will have packed down and I will add more if we have more to process. Once I get a good boil going I back the heat off to a simmer again. I will give the pot a mix every time I walk past it. I usually start this up between 9:00am and 10:00am, and then at this point leave things to simmer uncovered until around 3:00pm.
3. Towards the end of the simmering time I pull out the jars I intend to fill (most have been used at least once) and the lids, most of which have also been used at least once. I do buy some brand-new lids every so often just to make sure I can replace any dodgy ones, but I bought a load of jars 10 years or more ago and those, along with some recycled ones, work well for us. I sterilise them either by boiling for 10 minutes or sticking them in the oven in an old baking dish at 130°C for 10 to 15 minutes. If I time it right I can pull them out just as the tomato mush is ready to process.
4. I set the 'Gulliver' up on the corner of our kitchen bench and then grab a couple of 20 litre containers we use for bulk store to place underneath the edge of the bench, this is just the right height for the output from the Gulliver to fall into a glass jug, for pouring the processed tomato sauce into the sterilised jars. On the other side of the 'Gulliver' goes a bowl to catch the waste seeds and skins.



5. I then carry the, by then 2/3 full hot tomato pot, over and place it on the bench (with a tea towel underneath it, you think I'm suicidal?) and then ladle out the cooked tomato mix into the 'Gulliver' and turn the handle. This delivers processed tomato into the jug and waste into the bowl. Once the jug is almost full I tip the waste from the bowl into the Gulliver again and process it a second time, this extracts the maximum of the goodies. I then stir the jug to distribute the concentrated tomato goodies into the rest of the sauce. When the waste goes into the bowl a second time it gets tipped into another container reserved for tomato waste, which is usually given to the worms.



6. I use the jug to fill up jars, usually about 2.5 jars per full jug (it is only 1 litre), screw on the lids and then place them into the 10 litre water bath, which is hopefully close to boiling. I redo the process until the water bath contains all 10 jars, I put the lid onto the pot and then boil the jars for an hour. Once the jars are boiled I remove them from the water bath and place them on a tea towel to cool. I then repeat the process with the second batch. One 12kg box of tomatoes produces roughly 20 completed jars.

7. The jars just sit there overnight, but depending how hot they were when they went into the water bath, the indicator button in the centre of the lids will start to 'click' into the down position (you can hear the audible 'click') within a few minutes. If they fail to do this there is a problem, probably a dud lid, so the lid will need to be replaced with a new one, and the jar re-boiled.

8. That's it, just label and store in a cool dark place until you need them.

This all sounds like a bit of work, and it is, but it is also very satisfying to look over the fruits of our labours at the end, and to be able to pull out a jar from the pantry in the middle of winter and make a pasta dish with the taste of last summer's sun in it.



6.3 Bottling Diced Tomatoes – The Easy Way

We are in early summer here at the choko farm and we are taking advantage of the availability of tomatoes, home grown ones but also some bought in from local farms. I have mentioned above how we make our yearly supply of tomato pasta sauce about now and I have just finished off this year's batches. I bought in a load of tomatoes and found that there were some left over, but not enough to start another batch of sauce. Coincidentally Linda has been campaigning for bottled diced tomatoes as well as the sauce, so I have processed some diced bottles, and this is how I did it.



The process is incredibly simple. I grabbed a large glass bowl, cut the part where the tomato attaches to the bush out and then diced the tomatoes into the bowl. Those of you out there who are real cooks should probably look away now! The easiest way I

came up with for dicing the tomatoes was to cut the tomato lengthways then crossways almost all the way through, then sliced through the tomatoes from the side so that they collapsed into roughly one centimetre cubes.



With the tomatoes cored and diced I got hold of my preserving jars, I just use recycled glass jars with pop-top lids. Using my newly acquired stainless steel jam funnel I ladled the cubes into the jars up to about one centimetre from the top. I used the cylindrical handle of a wooden spoon to pack the diced tomatoes in as tightly as I could to push out air bubbles. A light sprinkling of citric acid on top ensures that the pH is low enough to prevent botulism, then top the jar up with a bit of water or tomato juice.

With the lids applied they can now go into the water bath for processing. I placed the jars so they are not touching the bottom or each other. I was lucky enough to pick up a 25cm wire round cake cooling stand which fits the bottom of the pot I use as a water bath pretty well and that keeps the jars off the bottom of the pot, fill to just below the lids with cold water. I put the pot on the flame and applied the heat and kept an eye on the temperature such that it took an hour or so to rise from cold to boiling. My jars were only 375ml so I kept them in the boiling water for 30 minutes but if you were

using large jars (say over 2 litres) I would leave them boiling for another 10 or 15 minutes to make sure the heat penetrates fully.



Once the allotted time was passed, I pulled them out and placed them on a wooden cutting board to cool and made sure the lids were tight. As the jars cool the pop top lids pop down with a loud click, letting you know they are properly sealed! Once cooled I labelled them with the contents and especially the date. If you do this on a regular basis it can be very handy to know when an individual jar was processed, so that you use the oldest ones first.

There you have it! Tomato wastage averted and a happy wife, and as we all know happy wife = happy life!

6.4 Spice Mix – Making Stock Powder

Making your own stock at home can be fun and rewarding, but it can also be time consuming and if (like me) you are crap at stock making it can be disappointing and frustrating. So if you want to make up a batch of stock quickly for, say, a soup noodle or

you want to add some concentrated flavour to a dish you are working on, stock powder (commercial or home produced) can fill that need.



There are other reasons why you may want to make stock powder –

- You know what's in it – if you don't put in any MSG, artificial colours, flavours or preservatives you can be absolutely sure there is none of them in your mix.
- Zero waste – this applies particularly when you are looking to replace stock cubes, but if you get your raw materials supplied bulk, into your own glass jars or (in the case of dried herbs) produce them yourself, the product will be zero waste.
- Blend to your own taste – it may be you find the commercial stuff not to your taste, so you can experiment and come up with your own version which suits you.
- Freshness – you know the freshness of your ingredients and if you are regularly using your stock powder you can be sure it will always be fresh.

- Interesting – making your own stock powders from scratch is a fascinating pastime – and you get food at the end!

Having decided to have a go at making our own stock powder, I did a bit of research and came up with a starting formulation based on a recipe in the “Naked Kitchen Veggie Burger Book” by Sarah Davies. This is what I came up with:

½ cup nutritional yeast

1 tablespoon onion powder

1 teaspoon garlic powder

3 teaspoon salt

1 teaspoon thyme

1 teaspoon parsley

¼ teaspoon ground sage leaf

¼ teaspoon rosemary crushed or ground

Pinch turmeric

A couple of notes about the ingredients –

Nutritional yeast – this usually comes in the form of flakes and can be bought bulk into your own containers at places like the Source Bulk Foods or packaged in health food stores and sometimes supermarkets. It is baker’s yeast which has been “deactivated” (read “killed”) by toasting and gives a wonderful nutty cheesy taste often described as umami.

If you have some yeast which is no longer giving your bread a good rise, try toasting it in a pan on the stove until it is golden, thereby making your own nutritional yeast.

Onion and Garlic Powder – this is also available in bulk from a local spice supplier and we get it weighed into our own jars. It also comes in flake or granule form and because we use the flake in other recipes I buy that and use a coffee/spice grinder to grind it to powder when powder is required.



It is quite doable to dice up your own bought or home grown onions and garlic and dehydrate them so that you can reduce costs, use up home grown produce, or ensure only organic ingredients are used.

Parsley, Sage, Rosemary and Thyme (sounds like a good line for a song) – these can all be easily grown and dried at home, or bought packaged or bulk if home production is not feasible for you. They can be ground in a spice grinder or mortar and pestle before use to improve ease of mixing. It is also possible to rub the fresh herbs through a fine sieve before adding to the mix but the shelf life of the stock powder will be very short, requiring it to be used immediately or stored in the fridge for only a few days.



Turmeric – is a bit trickier but can be grown and processed at home, we did it.

Testing

My flavour reference was Massell Chicken Stock Cubes because we like them and I use them quite a bit. Once I had a mix I was happy with I got two identical cups, put in half a stock cube in one and a teaspoon of the stock mix (figuring one was equivalent to the other) and added a (250ml) cup of hot water into each. Without her knowing which was which I gave them to Linda to taste. Without hesitation she identified the homemade one as very weak and bland. (bugger!)



To discover what my problem was I weighed both the half a stock cube and the teaspoon of stock powder. Low and behold, while the half stock cube weighed 6 grams the teaspoon of powdered stock only weighed 3 grams. No wonder it tasted bland! I added another teaspoon of stock powder to the original cup and we both had a taste test. This time the two cups were difficult to tell apart. Success!

Storing and Using

So the big hint is, for stock equivalent to good chicken stock add two teaspoonsful of stock powder per cup (measuring cup = 250 mls) of hot water. Store the made-up stock powder in a sealed container stored in a cool, dark, dry place and it should last 12 months.

6.5 Spice Mix – Mexican Spice

This took a little bit of work. We used to buy the packet stuff but had some concerns with it as noted above. We downloaded a few recipes off the net but it took some fooling around to get to a formula we liked the flavour of and was not so hot it took our heads off.



The formula we worked out is as follows;

- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- 2 tablespoon + 2 teaspoons ground cumin
- 1 tablespoon salt
- 1 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 2 teaspoons garlic powder
- 2 teaspoons onion powder
- 2 teaspoons paprika
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 2 teaspoons cornflour

This is a good start, and you can go from here. We buy the spices whole or grow our own and grind them just before use, which keeps the flavour fresh. As far as the onion and garlic powder goes, you can buy the powder, buy dried granules and grind in the spice grinder before use or grow your own, dry and then grind. The oregano is also easy to grow, dry and grind. We have not tried anything with DIY paprika, so it is bought in as well.



Add 3-4 dessertspoons to the filling mix below, cook up for a minute or two then add $\frac{3}{4}$ to 1 cup of water which will thicken things up nicely as it reheats.

6.6 Homemade Ricotta Cheese

We have fooled around with cheesemaking in the past, and had some fun with it, but I never really thought about it in terms of serious food production. If we had access to a cow or had our own goats it would make sense, but there didn't seem much point in buying all the raw materials then making it ourselves, but recently things have changed! Over the past few months we have been buying powdered skim milk, to save money, reduce our packaging waste output and to improve our resilience, and very recently we bought a 25kg bag of the stuff to take things to the next level. So if we have a guaranteed supply of skim milk, using it to make cheese, yoghurt etc, rather than buying it, makes a whole lot of sense to me!

Also, we use ricotta cheese on a regular basis, and it is Simple (note the capital "S") to make.

All you need is –

2 cups skim or full fat milk made up into 2 litres of water (to make 2 litres of skim milk from powdered milk put one litre of water into a container, whisk in two cups of skim milk powder until they are dissolved and then top up to two litres with water)

1 teaspoon citric acid (you could use lemon juice, vinegar or other acidulant)

1 teaspoon of cheese salt

The Process

Place the milk into a heavy bottomed pan.

Mix the citric acid with $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of cool water and then pour it into the milk, mixing well.



Place the pan on the heat and heat gently to 85°C – 90°C, taking 20 to 30 min and stirring throughout to stop the milk catching on the bottom as it heats. Coagulation of the milk will start about 80°C.

Once at temp, leave for 10 min to coagulate



Ladle the curds into a filter made from several layers of cheesecloth sitting in a colander, retain the whey if you are going to use it for something else.



Pull the corners of the cheese cloth together and tie them up and suspend it to drain for 20 – 30 min or until you reach the consistency you are looking for.





Remove from the cheese cloth and store it in a sealed container in the fridge, it should last for a week.

When we made ricotta using the above process, using skim milk, we got a yield of 385 grams.



General comments

We made a batch with full cream milk powder and skim milk powder. While the skim gave a smaller yield it and was a bit chalky in texture it tasted great and worked well in the recipes we tried it in.

6.7 Homemade Paneer

This was another experiment during the original No-Buy July. I wanted something else which I could make using the powdered skim milk which could add variety to the meals I was making, and something Indian sounded like a good idea. While of all the experiments we did during NBJ this was probably the least satisfying, the end product was edible and tasted OK, but was different to authentic paneer in that it was chewy rather than creamy. I suspect this would be corrected if full cream milk (fresh or powdered) was used in place of the skimmed milk.



Recipe

2 cups of skim milk powder made up into 2 litres of skim milk

1 teaspoon of citric acid dissolved in ½ cup of hot water

Method

1. Place the milk into a pan with a solid base and bring to the boil, I used a thermometer held next to a wooden spoon to both mix the milk while it was heating to prevent scorching and keep an eye on the temperature at the same time.
2. When the milk starts to boil, reduce the heat to low and drizzle in the citric acid solution, but continue on low heat for 10 to 15 seconds.
3. Remove from the heat and stir slowly as the curds form, then leave it sit for 10 minutes.
4. When the curds have settled below the whey, use a slotted spoon to remove the curds and place them in a colander lined with 2 or more layers of cheesecloth.
5. Pull up the corners of the cheesecloth and tie off to form a bag, hold the bag under a stream of warm water for 5 to 10 seconds to remove any excess citric acid.



6. Return to the colander or place in a cheese mould and top with a plate and approximately 2 kg weight to press the cheese for 2 hours.
7. Unwrap and consume, or refrigerate for up to 2 weeks.



I made the paneer up into a recipe with silverbeet (what else?) chopped tomatoes, onions and spices called Saag Paneer. The texture of the paneer was somewhat chewy but not unpleasant and coupled with vegetable biryani (made with basmati rice, chopped veg and biryani spice in a rice cooker) it was a very tasty dinner.

6.8 Tortillas/flatbreads

I like Mexican food (the admittedly anglicised stuff available here anyway) in general and tortillas wrapped around it in particular. Mind you I was concerned by some of the additives and the level of packaging of the things so maybe something a bit more home cooked was called for.

They turned out to be a wonderful addition to our culinary repertoire. They only take a bit over half an hour to make, use only four or five pantry ingredients, are super tasty and super versatile. They are worth adding to your regular menu.



We make these fellas on a regular basis, at least once and sometimes twice a week as a bread substitute and they are always popular.

Ingredients

Wholemeal flour (ground on our new mill!) 1 cup

Bakers flour 1 cup

Salt $\frac{3}{4}$ TSP

Olive oil 3 Tbsp

Water (warmed) $\frac{2}{3}$ cup

To make:

Mix the flours, oil and salt in a bowl and then slowly add the water while mixing it in with your fingers. Keep adding the water and mixing until it comes together into a dough, turn out and knead for a couple of minutes. Put back into the bowl and let the dough rest for 20 minutes. Cut the dough into 4 equal wedges for wraps or burritos or 8 equal wedges for soft tacos or quesadillas and then form into balls. Using an elliptical rolling pin, roll out each ball into a thin disc. Place into a lightly oiled man on medium heat and let it cook until bubbles form, for me this was a couple of minutes, then turn

over and cook on the other side. Consume immediately or store in an airtight container in the fridge. Freeze if you want to keep them longer.

The end product might not be too pretty (or at least mine weren't originally) but they tasted good and were flexible enough to wrap around the filling. All up they only took half an hour to prepare including waiting time and a couple of minutes to cook each one. They are a worthwhile addition to your culinary repertoire.



6.9 Experiments with Crackers

This was something I wanted to play around with during No-Buy July (see chapter 3 above); a snack food we could make at home from stuff we have hanging around in the pantry makes sense to me! They would be cheaper than the commercial ones and there would be no strange additives to worry about. We even used organic flours. To make things easier I used our pasta maker to roll out the dough and a ravioli wheel cutter to

give the crackers a crinkled edge, although I could have used a pizza cutter or even sharp knife but I like the look of the crinkled edge.

My approach was two-fold, first I made a batch of the cracker dough, turned it into crackers as per the process below and then divided the unbaked crackers into 4 portions. The first one I left bare as a control, sprinkled onion flakes over the second portion, homemade curry powder over the third and a commercial biryani spice mix over the fourth. I only used my fingers to sprinkle the spice mixes and onion so it was a bit hit or miss, in future I will use a sieve.



The second experiment was to put the flavouring agent into the dough and then make the crackers as normal to see how the flavours worked out. I used garlic powder in one and some homemade chicken stock powder to flavour the other. I did wonder whether cooking the crackers would make the flavour stronger or weaker but in the event it make the flavour weaker, but the end result was pretty good anyway.

Recipe

- 1 cup baker's flour
- 1 cup wholemeal flour
- 2 teaspoons salt

2 teaspoons sugar

3 tablespoons of olive oil

2/3 cup water

For the batches I added the flavouring agent to I added 2 tablespoons homemade stock powder to one and 2 tablespoons of garlic powder to the other.

Process

1. Measure out the dry ingredients into a bowl (including flavour powders if used) and mix them around to combine (I used a whisk for this).

2. Add in the wet ingredients and mix (I used fingers!) and knead them together to form a ball of dough.

3. Pat the dough into a rectangular shape and run it through the pasta maker on setting '1', folding it over until it holds together as it goes between the rollers, then run it through on '2' and then on '3'. This will get it to the right thickness.



4. Place the dough onto a flours surface and cut the crackers into the desired shape with the ravioli cutter or whatever you want to use. Pierce each cracker a number of

times with a table fork so that they do not bubble up during baking.

5. If you want to add your flavours on top, brush some water onto the top of the unbaked crackers and then apply your chosen flavouring.

6. Place the crackers onto a silicon baking sheet so that they are slightly separated from each other and bake in the oven at 230°C for 12 to 15 minutes. Towards the end of the bake, keep an eye on the crackers as they can go from perfect to burned in a short time!

Results

Sprinkled flavours

Control (unflavoured) – tasted OK, would go well with any number of dips.

Onion – The onion had a tendency to burn and it wasn't the best tasting cracker I have ever had.

Curry – Definitely a winner! If I had a more even coverage for the curry powder they would have been perfect.

Biryani Spice – As for curry above!

Incorporated flavours

Chicken stock powder – I found these to be really great and took them along to a PSW meeting and the feedback from everyone was that they thought they were very good too. If you find them a bit salty for your taste, leave out some of the salt in the dough recipe.

Garlic Powder – I also found these to be good, but my personal taste is that I prefer the stock powder ones. I took these to the PSW meeting too and again, they were very well received.



The types of flavours you can sprinkle on or incorporate into the basic cracker is almost endless and I will definitely be trying crackers with our home made Mexican spice mix and onion powder too.

6.10 Experiments with Mayo

Back in the day, when I was an industrial chemist I worked on developing emulsions for industrial applications. I would navigate the intricacies of disperse phase versus continuous phase, the hydrophilic/lipophilic balance (HLB) of surfactants and all sorts of other variables. Why is it then, forty years later, I found the thought of making my own mayonnaise to be so intimidating?

Perhaps it was because I would wind up consuming the results of my experiments or perhaps, I didn't want to waste good food if I stuffed it up. I'm still not sure, but here are the results of my mayo experiments.



No substitute for home grown eggs!

Why Mayo?

Part of the reason behind these experiments was to enable me to make mayo with what we had on hand any time I felt like it rather than having to buy the commercial stuff. Also, I was hoping to have a homemade product free of preservatives, antioxidants and stabilisers found in commercial mayo.

Another thing is that mayo is a 'gateway' product! What I mean is that once you can make mayo, there are many products that use mayonnaise as a base that can become part of your culinary repertoire. Products like tartare sauce, garlic aioli (actually garlic, mustard, BBQ and avocado aiolis) remoulade sauce, blue cheese dressing, caramelised onion dip, plus some stuff that seems popular in the US: ranch dressing. While I probably won't make them all, I am definitely up for the tartare and aioli!



'Egg salad' made with home grown eggs and homemade mayo!

Also, let us not forget 'salads' by which I mean things like potato salad, egg salad, pasta salad and so on. Having homemade mayo means you can whip up one of these salads on short notice without having to make a trip to the shops. I love it!

The Process and the Raw Materials

I have read both that making mayo is easy and that it is finicky so I did some research. To form an emulsion you need put in energy, either physically or chemically or both. We don't own a food processor and there was no way I would exhaust myself by using a whisk, so I decided our stick blender would be my weapon of choice.

The oil we use is Aussie virgin olive oil, and I had read that it might be a bit 'full flavoured' for making mayonnaise, but I still wanted to use it, so I decided to start off

with a 50:50 mix of our olive oil and a 'neutral flavoured' oil, in this case avocado oil. In terms of the rest of the raw materials –



or homegrown lemons!

Eggs – would be our own home grown. Some recipes only recommend using the yolk, but I wanted a recipe that used whole eggs. It also seems that they should be at room temperature for the magic to work.

Lemon juice – likewise, our own home grown

White wine vinegar – from the pantry (a bit old but still ok)

Dijon Mustard – I am not a mustard fan, but Linda likes it so we do have some Dijon.

Salt – standard pantry item.



Raw materials plus equipment

Experiment One

My first foray into mayonnaise-ing was based on a recipe from the website ['Inspired Taste'](http://inspiredtaste.net) ([Fail-Proof Homemade Mayonnaise Recipe \(inspiredtaste.net\)](http://inspiredtaste.net)) and was listed as 'Fail-Proof'..... hah!

The recipe was –

- 1 large egg at room temperature
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard

- 1 tablespoon red or white wine vinegar
- 1/4 teaspoon kosher salt, or more to taste
- 1 cup (240ml) neutral flavoured oil, grapeseed, safflower or canola are best
- 1 teaspoon fresh lemon juice, optional

What I failed to consider was that the process for making the mayo is critical. I got hold of a glass jar, a 'Weck' jar with glass lid, although a vacola jar or any jar the right size would do. It is also critical for the business end of the of the stick blender to fit closely in the bottom of the jar. I then followed the procedure for what one would normally do with a food processor, place the egg in the jar, gave it a whiz for 20 seconds, added everything but the oil in the bottom of the jar, give it another whiz, then with the stick blender going, slowly run in the oil.

Unfortunately, in my case, the recipe may have been 'fail proof' but the process wasn't. The stuff mixed alright, but it did not get any thicker and did not emulsify properly. When I realised it was not working, I tried recommended fixes – add a bit of water, whiz longer, add more egg, add a bit more mustard – and nothing worked. I had broken a fail proof recipe! Regardless of what I did, it split after a few minutes, although before it got too bad I did give it a taste test.



Split!

I learned a couple of things from this experiment. One was that using the wrong type of kitchen equipment (stick blender instead of food processor) just doesn't work. That and the recipe I used had WAYYYY too much mustard for my taste.

Experiment Two

After recovering from the humiliation of wrecking a perfectly good mayo, I searched the net for a recipe that was designed to use a stick mixer, a whole egg and with much reduced mustard. What I found was a very interesting recipe from Lisa of Downshiftology, [Mayonnaise Recipe \(Super Easy!\) | Downshiftology](#) which seemed to tick all my boxes.

Her recipe was -

- 1 whole egg
- ½ tbsp lemon juice
- 1 tsp white wine vinegar
- ¼ tsp Dijon mustard
- ¼ tsp sea salt
- 1 cup avocado oil, or light-flavoured olive oil

And the process was somewhat different. She said to put the egg first, followed by everything else into the glass jar, with the oil going in last. She said then let things settle for a minute or two, then insert the stick blender down to the bottom of the glass jar, covering the egg. Run it on high for 10 to 15 seconds keeping it firmly on the bottom of the jar. This is critical apparently. Once the mayo starts to emulsify, you can then move it around to incorporate all of the ingredients. You just continue the process until all the ingredients are blended.



Everything in, allowing time to settle

So, I followed her recipe and process,.....and made mayonnaise!

There was still a slight film of oil on top, which I was able to incorporate when I transferred it to the container before putting it in the fridge. It has a somewhat more yellow look than I am used to, but I think that is due to the rich coloured yolk of our homegrown eggs. It also was still a bit mustardy but nowhere as pungent as my first attempt.

From what I have read, the mayo is OK in the fridge for a week, and by the end of the week it was mostly used up. I found the taste to be fairly mild so it was OK, but I could not help but wonder whether it would be possible to put together a mustard-free mayo, using a whole egg and the stick blender.



More research!

Experiment Three

This one I got from the 'SimplyJillicious' website [Homemade Mayo \(Mustard Free, Paleo\)](http://www.simplyjillicious.com) - (simplyjillicious.com) and was touted as being mustard free as well as gluten free, dairy free and paleo. (rolls eyes).

The recipe was as follows -

- 1 cup oil (of course I used 50:50 avocado: olive oil)
- 1 egg
- 2 1/2 teaspoons fresh lemon juice
- 1/4 teaspoon salt or more to taste
- 1/4 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1/4 teaspoon onion powder
- A pinch of pepper



The onion powder was bought packaging free from a bulk store

Process

I used the same process for this mayo as the mayo in the second try, that is to say, I cracked the egg into the Weck jar first, added the lemon juice, salt and spices , then poured in the 50:50 oil, and left the mix to sit for a couple of minutes.

I placed the stick blender at the bottom of the jar and without moving the blender, turned it on high speed for 10 to 15 seconds.

After the initial 10 to 15 seconds I moved the blender all around and up and down until all the oil was mixed in thoroughly and the contents of the jar.

And sure enough, it made mayonnaise!

For obvious reasons, the mayo was not 'mustardy', it was fairly mild and quite pleasant. There was a taste wandering around in the background that I think was slightly 'olivey' (also for obvious reasons). I do think that this is a mild and pleasant mayo that suits my taste.



Conclusions

With the right gear and the right recipe you can make mayo quickly and easily
I found the low, and no mustard mayo to be quite palatable

7.0 Resources

7.1 Food Storage Books

How to Store Your Garden Produce – Piers Warren – Green Books (UK) 2008 ISBN 978 1 900322 17 1 – This first part of this book discusses the techniques of preserving fruit and vegetables including clamping, freezing, drying, vacuum packing, salting, bottling, jams etc., fruit butters and cheeses and fermenting. The second part of the book covers each type of produce and how the basic techniques apply to it. A small book with some colour photos in the middle, and lots of good info.

How to Store Your Home Grown Produce – John and Val Harrison – Right Way Publishing (UK) 2010 ISBN 978 0 7160 2246 6 – This book has twenty small (4 to 10 pages) chapters, starting out with health and safety, then moving on to how food ripens and rots, followed by where to store and natural storage. The book then moves on to salting, lacto-fermentation, bottling, then chutneys, ketchups, sauces and pickles. This is followed by jams, juicing cider and perry, drying, storing in oil, freezing, vegetables, fruits, herbs, eggs and conversion charts. The book has quite a few colour pictures and some line drawing. The book has a small amount of information on a lot of subjects.

Root Cellaring – Mike and Nancy Bubel – Storey Publishing (US) 1991 ISBN 978 0 88266 703 4 – The book has good B&W photos and line drawings. It starts off with growing and harvesting vegetables for root cellaring, then covers treating fruits and vegetables before storage. The book also has a large section on the DIY root cellar and some ideas are translatable to the urban and suburban environment. This is a good book and worth getting if root cellars are your bag.

The joy of Keeping a Root Cellar – Jennifer Megyesi – Skyhorse Publishing (US) 2010 ISBN 978 1 60239 975 4 – Regardless of the title, this book also covers drying, canning, pickling and freezing for food storage, with preservation of meat, dairy and eggs also being covered. All told only about 20% of the book actually covers root cellaring. There

are lots of colour photos which gives this book a “coffee table book” feel and reduces the amount of information presented although there is still some good info.

Passport to Survival – Esther Dickie – Bookcraft Publishers (US) 1969 ISBN 978 0 39449 228 5 – This is THE original book on the survival Four foods (wheat, sugar/honey, powdered milk, salt), the idea being that this is the most cost effective, storable diet that can be salted away in case of hard times. It gives lots of recipes for the survival four in various combinations, and some are pretty out-there! The book is divided into four parts, the first part is an introduction cover why they might be necessary, introducing the survival four foods, also other foods that can be included in a storage program and how the diet works. Part two provides a whole stack of recipes based on the survival four. Part three covers other techniques like food preservation and storage, water and other necessities and outdoor survival. Part four covers other options for the future. The book has a small section of colour plates at the centre and there are a few B&W photos scattered throughout.

The New Home Larder – Judith Wills – Transworld Publishers (UK) 2009 ISBN 978 1 905 81131 1 – (Larder = pantry = store cupboard) As the blurb on the back of the book says about setting up a larder – “...You’ll have everything you need to make delicious and nutritious meals without shopping for items everyday”. The book has three parts, part one is ‘Your Larder’ which provides information on setting up your own home larder including why it is important, detail on setting it up and practicalities of operating a larder including cleaning and clearing, avoiding and treating larder pests and making the most of space. Section two, almost half the book, provides a series of recipes based on the stores in your larder including easy suppers, salads and side dishes, preserves and preserving, baked goods and festive occasions. Part three is entitled ‘resources’ and gives a detailed paragraph on all of the larder staples and where you can get them (UK Based). The book has lots of colour photos.

Independence Days – Sharon Astyk – New Society Publishers (US) 2009 ISBN 978 0 86571 652 0 – I love Sharon Astyk’s stuff! The book has seventeen chapter in two parts, and each chapter has a number of recipes associated with it at the end of the chapter.

Part one is 'Independence Days', the first chapter covering the problem and why we should prepare for hard times; chapter two talks about making the most of what we have – Local Eating, Pantry Eating; Chapter three covers how much food you should store. Chapter five talks about food storage on the cheap and chapter six talks about eating from your food storage – every day. Part two covers food storage and preservation how-to. Chapter six covers the mechanics of food storage and chapter seven covers energy conscious food preservation, Chapter eight covers root cellaring and season extension. Chapters nine, ten and eleven cover dehydration, canning (bottling) and fermentation respectively. Chapter thirteen covers cooking when the power is out, chapter fourteen covers medicines, health care and special diets, chapter fifteen talks about managing your food storage and chapter sixteen covers creating and using community resources. Chapter seventeen covers bring it all together. There are no line drawings or photos in the book, text only.

Cooking with Stored Foods – Carlene Tejada & Carroll Latham – H. P. Books (US) 1981 ISBN 0 89586 120 8 – While this is primarily a recipe book, there is a section at the start covering why food storage is a good idea, rotating foods, store-a-meal, electricity power outage and storing water for emergencies. The rest of the book (130 pages) are a series of recipes (over 200 recipes) grouped around meals (breakfast, appetisers, desserts) or ingredients (vegetables, meats, wheat, breads, soups, wheat, chicken & fish). Most of which you can get from your garden, store cupboard or food storage area. On a quick look through there were not too many weird ingredients but a couple like 'butter flavour granules' or 'sweet pickle juice' you might have to look a bit hard for. The book has lots of colour photos.

Healthy Food Storage Guide Book – Karen Lee – Sun Bounty LLC (US) 2013 ISBN 978 0 615 91696 5 – The book is composed of two sections, section one is entitled 'Healthy Eating for Tough Times' and takes up about a quarter of the book. It has some 'interesting' ideas. The second part of the (the bit I am interested in) is entitled The Healthy Food Storage Guidebook. Chapter one covers 12 reasons why you should store food, Chapter two, twenty food storage mistakes and tips and chapter three details how to start a food storage program. Chapter Four covers water storage, Chapter five

grains (and potatoes for some reason!), Chapter six legumes, chapter seven milk and dairy, chapter eight canned goods, Chapter nine freeze dried and dehydrated foods. Chapter ten sweeteners and chapter eleven oils. Chapter twelve covers storing in buckets, chapter thirteen grain mills, chapter fourteen stoves, heaters and cooking and chapter fifteen covers water filters and cleaning items. The book has the odd B&W photo.

7.2 Thrifty Cooking Books

I have a weakness for cookbooks written to help you save money. They sometimes have great ideas in them to help you make use of scarce resources (food, fuel, time) which helps you save money but can also help you cook and eat more sustainably. Here is my collection, I hope that you find at least some of them interesting.

The Thrifty Cookbook (476 ways to eat well with leftovers) – Kate Colquhoun – Bloomsbury Publishing (UK) 2009 ISBN 978 1 4088 0081 2 – Contains some good basic data about how not to waste food as well as simple stuff like stock, making your own bread and jams plus Pizza! A smattering of international recipes from the Middle East, India and South East Asia. Probably not much new if you are an accomplished cook but a great resource if you are new to the game.

The Credit Crunch Cookbook – Katy Denny (Exec. Editor) – Octopus Books (UK) 2009 ISBN 978 0 600 61977 2 – Covers waste not, want not, basic budget meals for light, main and sweet, gourmet touches on the cheap and low cost eat-in recipes for Italian, Mexican, Indian, Thai and Chinese. Some of the recipes in these cheapo books can be a bit rough (unless you like lots of offal) but they are really good in this one. Good tips on cost cutting too.

The \$21 Challenge – Fiona Lippey & Jackie Gower – Simple Savings International P/L (AUS) 2009 ISBN 978 0 9806533 0 4 – They have developed a process whereby you use the stuff you have in your cupboards and can only spend \$21 per week of new stuff, the idea being that it helps you focus on the important stuff while saving heaps of money.

Lots of good cheap recipes as well as a section on using up excess/leftovers effectively. They have a website about the process - <http://www.simplesavings.com.au/>

Table Tucker – Penina Petersen – Hachette Australia (AUS) 2009 ISBN 978 0 7336 2444 5 – This is another “system” but is very environmentally friendly in its approach. The principles are cooking with seasonal ingredients, grow your own veggies, bulk buying, shift old habits and eat less meat, reduce waste, water and energy consumption and embrace earth happy ideas. LOTS of good info on menu planning and lots of good recipes. They also had a website but it no longer seems to be active.

Champagne Life on a Beer Budget – Maree Wrack – Champagne Life Beer Budget (AUS) 2011 ISBN 978 0 9807070 0 7 – Nary a recipe to be seen on this one. It is more about savvy shopping, ideas to help you save in your approach to food buying and cooking, decluttering and getting control of your outgo. The website referenced in the book no longer works.

The Pauper’s Cookbook – Jocasta Innes – Penguin Books (UK) 1971 ISBN 9780711235618 (was re-issued recently). The book has over 250 recipes covering the standard stuff, leftovers, quick dishes based on pantry stuff, money saving extras and living off the land, special occasion dishes and dieting on the cheap. There are also sections on menu planning and kitchen equipment. Recipes are a bit out of date (liver kebabs????????).

The New Pauper’s Cookbook – Jocasta Innes & Kate Harris – Random House (UK) 1992 ISBN 0 09 175434 8 – Similar to the above with additions of sections on Pasta Faster and Veggies for vegetarians. There is still plenty of offal but there are more international recipes and no sign of liver kebabs.

Good Food on a Budget – Georgina Horley – Penguin Books (UK) 1969 ISBN 978 0233961644 – This little paperback has over 500 pages of recipes and information. Lots of information about equipment and setting up a kitchen, basic operations about baking and other kitchen processes, buying vegetables and cutting up meat, all the

basic stuff is there. The majority of the rest of the book is recipes set out by month, which would need to be turned around by 6 months for southern hemisphere to hit the season's right. Some recipes are a bit out of date but at least there is nothing about liver kebabs.

Penny Pincher's Cookbook – Sophie Leavitt – Lancer Books (US) 1973 ISBN 7254 0172 9 – There are a series of “hints” at the back and front of the book, the rest being divided up into recipes for cereal and bread, eggs, soups, meat, fish, vegetables, salads and desserts. There is also a small section on herbs and spices. There are no “international” recipes, just American home cooking with the odd weirdo thrown in like peanut soup.... It is a small paperback.

The Money Saver's Cookbook – Geri Tully – Tower Publications (US) 1970 ISBN N/A – This is another small paperback, not much background just a series of recipes based around meat, poultry, fish, casseroles, leftovers, sausage canned meat and fish, vegetables, rice variations and desserts. There are a couple of pages at the back on suggested kitchen equipment.

The Complete Hassle Free, Money-Saving Kitchen Handbook – Diana Walton & Hilda Kassell – Signet (US) 1974 ISBN 978-0451058607 – This is also a book of techniques rather than recipes. There are sections on spending less at the supermarket, food preparation, using herbs and spices, getting over difficulties like running out of an ingredient and what to substitute, how to use the freezer and other stuff on food storage. There is also a section appliances, partying on the cheap, cleaning up and growing plants from pits and seeds. No a lot of info in each section but interesting nevertheless.

The Thrifty Gourmet – Ann Marshall – Angus & Robertson (AUS) 1974 ISBN 0 207 12453 1 – This is a small book (77 pages) and a little bit dated but it has some good ideas as well. It is divided into ideas on how to economise, then recipes and ideas for breakfast, soup, hogget and lamb, beef and veal, liver and kidneys (!!!!) working with a tough

chook, fish, sausages and sundries. There is also a small section on entertaining on a budget and desserts.

Beating the Cost of Cooking – Mary Berry – Independent Television Books (UK) 1975 ISBN 0 900 72737 3 – From (a much younger looking) Mary Berry of “The Great British Bake-off” fame. She starts put talking about setting up your kitchen and what equipment is required, then talks about making the most of food covering how to shop then making meat, fish et. Go further. She then gets into the recipes around starters, meat and fish, pasta cheese and eggs, rice and vegetables. She also has sections on one-pot meat cooking, cooking with left overs, puddings, cakes and biscuits. Mostly good recipes with a few weirdo’s thrown in like cream of lettuce soup.

The Next-to-Nothing Cookbook – Helen Harrison – Bay Books (AUS) 1982 ISBN 0 85835 564 7 – This one is mostly recipes, lots of sections with a few recipes in each section. Sections include soup, meat, stews and casseroles, spicy dishes, fish, cheese and eggs, beans and cereals, vegetables and salads, dressings, sauces and herbs, sweets, cakes and biscuits. There is also a section on party treats and lollies and one on household management which talks about left-overs, being thrifty and rescuing cooking disasters.

Better Meals for Less – George Cornforth – Review and Herald Publishing Association (US) 1975 ISBN 978 0 3855 2909 9 – The book starts with a chapter on food and nutrition in general then goes on to provide recipes for meat “analogues”, bread, soup, legumes, nuts and eggs, vegetables, salads, fruit and simple desserts. It has some “interesting” recipes such as nut meat a la king but the recipes are healthy as well as vegetarian.

Grocery Data Form – Fruit and Vegetables

Date	Item	Supplier	Amount	Cost per Kg	Total Cost

