



# Living Well customer guide

**Abri**  
Creating communities,  
empowering lives

# Eating well for the planet and your purse



**Hi, I'm Chef Tom Hunt, a climate change activist and father (of a very loud three year old). I've worked with food my whole life, from my very first job, working on a pig farm, to my time at River Cottage working alongside Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall as a course leader and banquet chef.**

Now I mostly cook at home for my family, writing recipes for cookbooks and articles. If there's one thing 20 odd years of working in food has taught me, it's that how we eat, even as individuals, makes a difference, to our health, community, and the environment.

I've teamed up with Abri on its Living Well campaign, and to bring you this guide to help you to eat to save the planet in an affordable way.

My job is to teach people how they can shop, cook and eat in a way that supports both personal and planetary health. Because how we eat is one of the easiest and most effective ways to engage with the climate crisis in a positive way.

Alongside these ideals, we have to be realistic. We're all facing a squeeze in living costs. Food bills are going up and food poverty in the UK is among the highest in Europe. If we are going to eat well for the planet, it has to work well for us financially too.

It can be easy to think that eating in a climate-friendly way means expensive ingredients, or niche plant-based foods that you're unlikely to get the kids (or your other half) to try. In fact, that's not the case.

Eating well for the planet can increase the quality and nutrition of our food all while saving us money. It's about saving waste, energy and our time through clever cooking, centering our weekly shop around seasonal, local fruit and vegetables and whole foods and buying better produce when we can.

None of that needs to cost more. In fact, it can cost us less. It can also taste great and give the feel-good factor, keeping us and our planet healthy too.

**Tom.**

# Make a start: what this guide offers you

This guide is all about making climate-friendly cooking easy, tasty, and affordable.

You'll find top tips, a five-day meal plan on a budget and some stories from Abri customers who have started thinking about ways to live and eat sustainably.

It doesn't have all the answers, but it has plenty to get you started on climate-friendly ways to eat for both your purse and the planet.

Give it a try. We'd love to know how you get on.

## Did you know?

- **71% of UK adults think we're in a large climate emergency.**
- **When asked to describe how they feel about climate change, the most frequently used words by UK adults were 'powerless' (37%), 'frustrated' (32%) and 'anxious' (29%).**
- **Over a quarter of UK adults (28%) are already cutting back on meat and dairy products to help tackle climate change.**
- **In the next five years, 41% of UK adults said they would be willing to reduce how often they eat meat and animal products on a weekly basis to help lower their carbon footprint.**

**This tells us that many people want to take positive steps to help tackle climate change, but they don't always know where to start.**

\*Findings from YouGov research. All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc, in a survey commissioned by Abri. Total sample size was 2,116 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 2nd - 6th December 2021. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all UK adults (aged 18+).



# Easy, affordable, and tasty: Tom's ten top tips for small changes that make a big difference

## 1. Be creative

Not every meal has to be planned. Dig around in the fridge and cupboards to invent a meal that uses up your odds and ends. You'd be surprised what you can make from casseroles to frittata. When you do plan a recipe, be creative and experiment by replacing ingredients with what you have. Keep it simple and you can't go wrong.

## 2. Follow my Root to Fruit philosophy

Waste nothing. Only top, tail and peel veg if you have to. The tails of a green bean for instance look pretty and taste fine. And the green tops of most root vegetables are edible and delicious. Try cooking beetroot tops like spinach, serving radish tops in a salad or whizzing carrot leaves up into a pesto.

## 3. Shop wisely

Before going shopping make a list of the ingredients that you already have in the kitchen and build them into your weekly meal plan. Durable vegetables like roots, cabbages, apples, squash, and onions keep well so buy in bulk whilst buying smaller quantities of herbs, soft fruits, salad and leafy greens.

## 4. Know your sell/use by dates

'Sell by' and 'best before' dates are there to make sure food gets to our homes in tip-top condition. But remember food is perfectly delicious and consumable right up until it's 'use by' date. Try to cook just enough for your meals unless you're planning on batch-cooking extra meals for another day.

## 5. Buy food you love

This sounds obvious but is very important. Spend what you can afford on buying fresh healthy ingredients that you love to eat. This will help you support better farming, waste less and save more as you savour every last bite.

## 6. Store food correctly

Remove vegetables from any plastic wrapping so they can breathe, keep fresh fruit and vegetables in the fridge below 5°C, store root vegetables in a dark cupboard and wrap cheese and meat well. Bananas ripen other fruit so keep them in a separate bowl – unless you want to ripen other fruit intentionally.

## 7. Consider cutting back on meat and dairy products

Most people eat some sort of animal product at every meal. But, you can switch out some of these things quite simply to help reduce your carbon footprint while also eating a super tasty dish. It will probably cost less too.

## 8. Love your leftovers

Leftovers can be a luxury, especially when we are busy. Keep any leftovers, no matter how small, in containers to eat as snacks or for a later lunch. Label your food with a date so you know when it was made. Eat cold or reheat until it's piping hot right through. Make the most of your freezer too. If food gets close to its use by date or you have leftovers that you don't have time to eat, pop them in the freezer and eat them when you have time.

## 9. Aim to eat seasonal produce and shop locally

With a whole range of exciting ingredients available at our fingertips, try switching a few items in your shop to seasonal and local items. To have a sustainable diet, building in produce that is fresh and in season is key. Buying local, seasonal produce means that it hasn't travelled as far and reduces the carbon footprint.

## 10. Keep a waste diary

Keep a diary or list of all the food that goes into the compost bin, even peelings and root greens. Explore Abri's Living Well Guide and my website for rescue recipes, so next time you can make a delicious meal from them. Reducing food waste is another way of saving money.



## Your stories: Louise

Louise has lived in an Abri home for 26 years and runs the Amesbury Green Fingers Community Garden. She's responsible for keeping the garden running, planting and growing, and encouraging the local community to get involved. She's also written a cookbook for people using food-bank items.

"Like a lot of people, I do worry about climate change. The weather being so different all the time due to climate change does make a big impact on the community garden project.

I try to eat in a climate-friendly way. I grow my own fruit and veg and encourage others to grow their own at the community garden, so we are all eating locally grown and sourced food rather than imported items which effects the climate.

I buy what I need and use sustainable sources like pantries where the food is surplus from supermarkets and usually towards the end of its sell by date. I do a lot of batch cooking and then freeze items to stop food going to waste.

Buying food has been difficult for people especially being able to afford to buy locally-sourced fresh fruit and veg as the price of everything has gone back up. Trying to help people with this is a real passion of mine at the garden. There's so many people that are grateful and it's made a real difference that they can take from the garden, especially following covid and furlough and money being difficult.

There are lots of things people can do to eat in a sustainable way, even if using food-banks.

When using foodbanks or food support, you can be given items and be unsure what to do with them, and then they end up being thrown away or wasted.

For example, if a foodbank package was to include a tin of soup and a packet of pasta, some people may not think to put these together and add vegetables to make a pasta bake but this lasts longer and feeds more people than if you use these items separately.

Any practical hints and tips that organisations like Abri and chefs like Tom can give would be helpful for people. Knowledge sharing is very important."



# Your stories: Mike

Mike works at the STAMP community allotments in Mansbridge, Southampton. The allotment is a talking point for its members and the local community, helping to reduce loneliness and improve community spirit. Mike has lived in an Abri home for seven years and is a big believer in sustainability and not letting anything go to waste.

"People are definitely struggling with food poverty, but it is possible to eat a climate-friendly diet on a budget, especially if you grow your own produce in gardens or local allotments.

Growing your own produce is a great way to spend your time usefully – you can get fitter, be outside, and eat free, fresh food with no additives. It's a win-win for people and the planet.

Also, using food banks or community pantries is a good way to reduce food waste from supermarkets and find cheaper fresh items.

We need to get kids involved from early years and get them planting seeds and learning about growing vegetables. If they plant the seeds, they want to see it grow, and then eat it.

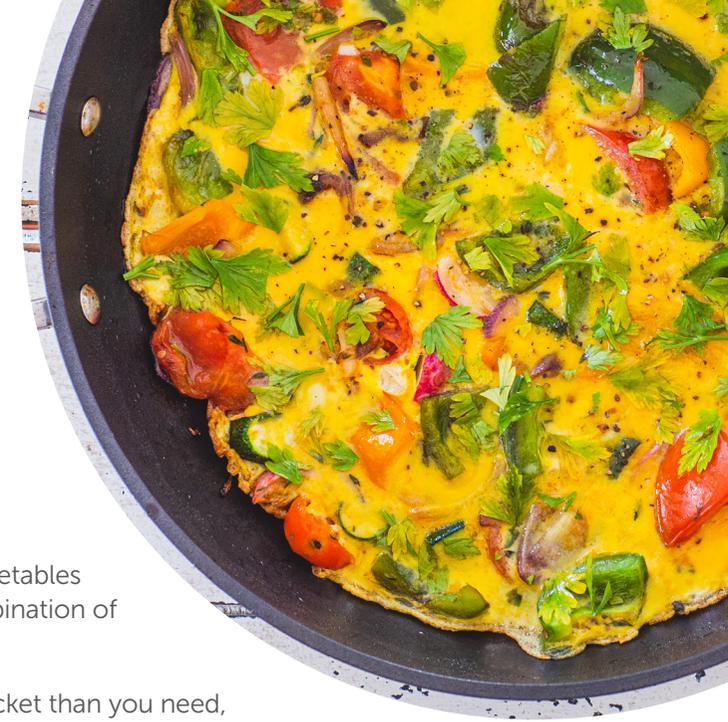
We don't have any waste in the allotment, and we do a lot for the environment. The way I see it is everything you grow is something less you have to buy. When you see fruit and vegetables imported from abroad in supermarkets that you could easily grow yourself, you realise everything has a carbon footprint.

I'm a big believer in not wasting food. You don't throw leftover vegetables away when you can make a bubble and squeak the next day!

So many meals today are pre-packed for speed and convenience, but they're not very environmentally friendly. As a society, we're not thinking enough about what we throw away. That's a big thing. And people don't always think they have time to cook from scratch and they get distracted with their phones or TV. But the more people we get involved, the more it will inspire other people to have a go."



# Try it: five family friendly recipes, from leading eco-chef, Tom Hunt



**Prep time: 15 minutes**

**Cook time: 30 minutes**

**Serves 4**

**Total cost with optional potatoes and greens: £2.69**

## **Ingredients:**

2 tbsp olive oil

500g leftover vegetables

6 free range eggs, lightly beaten

Herbs, optional

## **To serve, optional:**

650g potatoes

300g red cabbage or other greens

1 tbsp olive oil

## **Fridge-raid frittata**

A firm family favourite, frittata is a versatile dish that's quick to make. It's delicious made with leftover roasted or freshly sauteed potatoes, carrots, squash or any vegetables that you have to hand. It's also a great way to convert waste into taste. What combination of ingredients do you have left in your fridge waiting to be loved?

If you decide to garnish your frittata with herbs and end up purchasing a larger packet than you need, chop and freeze any leftovers in an ice cube tray filled with water. That will keep them fresh.

## **Method:**

Prepare your vegetables by cutting harder root vegetables into thin slices that will cook quickly, and softer ingredients into suitably larger chunks.

Heat a large frying pan over a medium heat with the olive oil being careful not to let it smoke. Slowly sauté the vegetables for 10-15 minutes until they become tender and season well.

Ensure the vegetables are spread evenly around the pan, and then pour in the eggs.

Turn the heat right down low and cook until it is almost perfectly set but a little soft still. Placing a lid on top for a few minutes can help the eggs set quicker.

Serve topped with optional fresh herbs.

To cook the optional ingredients, wash, quarter then boil the potatoes with their skin on for 20 minutes or until tender.

Finely slice then boil the red cabbage in plenty of water for 10 minutes or until fork tender.

Dress both with extra virgin olive oil, season to taste and enjoy.

**Prep time: 15 minutes**

**Cook time: 45 minutes**

**Serves 4**

**Total cost: £3.00**

**Ingredients:**

800g potatoes,  
quartered, skin left on

2 tbsp olive oil

1-2 small onions

150g carrots

250g mushrooms

4 garlic cloves

2 tbsp yeast extract  
(such as Marmite)

3 sprigs rosemary or thyme,  
optional

1 tbsp tomato paste

250ml red wine

1 x 400g can of lentils

## Mushroom and lentil shepherd's pie

This is a hearty and filling dish I'd recommend making on a lazy Sunday morning or in advance as the flavours get better with time. The mushrooms and lentils cook down into a really 'meaty' rich stew.

Reducing waste in the kitchen isn't just about saving food: the time and energy it takes to cook food are also important. To save energy, go for stove-top cooking instead of the oven when you can, and use the right-sized pan, with a lid. When you do need to use the oven, batch cook dishes or fill it with other get-ahead dishes that can be stored in the freezer. To fill the oven, I like to raid the fridge and roast any extra vegetables that need using up. These roasties make a great side vegetable or ingredient that can be used in other recipes like my Fridge-raid frittata or Fridge forage stew.

**Method:**

Bring a large pan of salted water to the boil. Add the potatoes and simmer for 20 minutes or until fork tender.

Strain, keeping the cooking liquid and return the potatoes to the pan. Mash with a tablespoon of extra virgin olive oil, adding back a little of the cooking water to create a nice fluffy mash.

Season well adding more olive oil to taste, then put to one side.

Heat a large thick-based pan over a medium heat with a tablespoon of olive oil. Add the onion, carrot and mushrooms and cook for 5 to 10 minutes or until it begins to turn golden in colour.

Next add the garlic, yeast extract, tomato paste and your choice of rosemary or thyme. Stir together and heat through.

Next add the red wine and bring to the boil. Add the lentils including their cooking water. Bring to the boil, reduce to a simmer and cook for five minutes, or until the mixture thickens. Season to taste.

Preheat the oven to 180°C. To finish, transfer the lentil mixture into a deep 20cm casserole dish and top with the mashed potatoes. Place in the hot oven for 20 minutes and enjoy.





**Prep time: 5 minutes**

**Cook time: 15 minutes**

**Serves 4**

**Total cost with optional salad: £3.46**

**Ingredients:**

- 2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 2 tsp freshly cracked black pepper
- 500g pasta
- 200g walnuts (or almonds)

**To serve, optional:**

- 100g salad leaves
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 tbsp cider vinegar

## Creamy walnut pasta with salad

Did you know that, after lamb and beef, cheese is the third biggest emitter of greenhouse gas emissions? I love dairy but also like to vary my ingredients, bringing in other foods in its place to boost flavour, reduce the environmental impact and increase nutrition.

This recipe is based on a traditional Italian dish made with pecorino cheese. In place of the cheese, the creamy sauce in this recipe is made with walnuts. Walnuts are a good environmental crop because they grow on hardy trees. Tree orchards allow the ground to stay intact, locking in carbon and building biodiversity and wildlife.

**Method:**

Soak the nuts in water for one to eight hours in advance to help them blend into a creamy sauce.

Heat a large pot over a medium heat with the olive oil. Add the black pepper and cook for 10-20 seconds, before adding 600ml of boiling water.

Add the pasta and stir until it's submerged. Return to the boil and simmer, stirring occasionally until the pasta is just cooked with about two centimetres of starchy water at the bottom of the pot.

If the water disappears before the pasta is cooked add a little more as necessary.

Meanwhile, drain then blend the nuts into small pieces in a blender, then stir through the pasta, tossing everything together.

Serve warm with an optional side of salad leaves dressed with extra virgin olive oil and cider vinegar.

**Prep time: 15 minutes**

**Cook time: 45 minutes**

**Serves 4**

**Total cost: £3.00**

**Ingredients:**

2 tbsp oil

3-4 small onions,  
cut into wedges

1kg mixed vegetables  
(I used mushrooms,  
beetroots, and carrots)

4 garlic cloves

500g new potatoes -  
or 240g barley, lentils  
or split peas

3 sprigs rosemary or  
thyme, optional

3 bay leaves, optional

2 tbsp tomato paste

1 tbsp yeast extract  
(such as Marmite)

250ml red wine,  
beer or stout

## Fridge forage stew

All stews get better with time as the flavours come together. Take advantage of this fact by getting ahead and making this stew in advance. It will last in the fridge for up to five days or the freezer for over six months.

I made this stew with a mixture of mushrooms, beetroots and carrots with new potatoes, however, any combination of vegetables with potatoes or wholegrains will create a tasty one pot wonder.

**Method:**

Cut your chosen vegetables into large chunks, leaving the skin on to save waste.

Heat a large saucepan or casserole dish over a medium heat with the olive oil. Add the onions, vegetables and garlic and sauté for five minutes.

Add the rest of the ingredients, bring the wine to the boil and cook for two minutes. Add 500ml water, season, place a lid on top and bring to the boil.

Reduce the heat and gently simmer for 45 minutes on a low heat until all the ingredients are tender.

Adjust the seasoning and enjoy.



**Prep time: 15 minutes**

**Cook time: 35 minutes**

**Serves 4**

**Total cost with optional salad: £3.00**

### Ingredients:

2 tbsp olive oil

3-4 small onions, diced

500g sweet potatoes, diced into rough cubes

400ml can of coconut milk

1 tbsp tomato paste

4 tbsp crunchy peanut butter

1 red chilli, finely sliced, optional

6 sprigs coriander

250g brown basmati rice

4 tbsp hot curry powder \*

\* You can also make your own curry powder with a combination of optional spices: E.g. 2 tsp ground ginger, 1 tbsp ground coriander, 1 tbsp ground cumin, 1 tbsp ground turmeric, 1 tsp cayenne or hot chilli powder

## Sweet potato and peanut butter curry with wholegrain rice

CO2 emissions from most fruit and vegetables are lower than most conventionally produced meat and dairy. Depending on the fruit or vegetable you're using, its carbon footprint could be anywhere between 10 and 50 times lower than meat and dairy. Flipping your weekly shopping list to centre on plants first can hugely reduce your food costs and environmental impact.

It's so important to bring out the rich flavours of your ingredients when creating a plant-based dish. This is why I've chosen this West African inspired recipe for sweet potato and peanut butter curry. The peanut butter thickens the stew and creates a seriously protein-rich, tasty and satisfying meal.

For both environmental and health reasons, try to choose peanut butter without artificial additives or palm oil. To reduce waste, don't peel the sweet potato and use the whole coriander stalk, even the thick end which can be finely chopped and sprinkled over the top with the sprigs.

Try out serving the curry with wholegrain brown basmati rice, as whole grains are an essential part of a nutritious, low-waste diet.

### Method:

Heat your olive oil in a medium sized saucepan with a lid over a medium heat. Add the diced onion, sweet potato and a pinch of sea salt and cook for five minutes.

Once the onions wilt down, add the curry powder and cook for a further two minutes whilst stirring.

Next add 150ml of water, the can of coconut milk and tomato paste and stir well, place the lid on top and bring to the boil.

Simmer for 20 minutes or until the potatoes are fork tender. Keep an eye on the heat and stir regularly to make sure the curry doesn't stick to the base of the pan. Stir in the peanut butter and cook for a further five minutes stirring regularly and put to one side.

Meanwhile add the brown basmati rice to a saucepan and cover with 500ml of cold water. Place a lid on top and bring to the boil, reduce to a simmer and cook for 30 minutes or until the water is absorbed and the rice is tender.

When you are ready to eat, finely chop any thick coriander stalks and scatter over the curry with sprigs of coriander and the optional sliced chilli.



# The why: Abri's role and what climate-friendly cuisine has to do with a housing provider.

Abri's mission is to create thriving communities and empower positive lives. This isn't just about providing warm, safe, energy-efficient homes (although that's a big part of it), it's also about positively influencing how those homes are lived in.

Our national consumer research highlighted that lots of us are worried about climate change but are struggling to know what to do about it. And of course, we know that the cost of living, and food poverty are very real issues facing our communities and others, up and down the UK.

Giving practical hints and tips on how to eat well – or in a climate-friendly way, for less is one small step on that journey. We hope you've found something new and positive to try in this guide, that works for you and your family.

## Want to know more about Living Well?

Head over to our social media channels for lots more ideas and information.

 Abri Community

 @abrigroup

 @abri.social





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