



Snacks, Sides & Small Bites

When cooking on a budget, snacks are often the first thing you shave away. If you're creative, though, you can make plenty of cheap, healthy and delightful snacks to enjoy in all seasons and on any occasion. (And remember, leftovers make great snacks, too!)

Jacket Sweet Potatoes

FOR FOUR

I like to serve these with all kinds of toppings, usually leftovers from other meals. Try filling them with roast chicken, beans and cheese, corn and tomatoes—whatever you have around.

- 4 large sweet potatoes
- salt and pepper
- ¼ cup sour cream
- ½ bunch scallions, finely chopped

Heat the oven to 400 °F. Scrub the sweet potatoes and stab them with a fork a few times. Lay them on a baking sheet.

Bake for 60 to 75 minutes. Because sweet potatoes vary greatly in size, check them after an hour by stabbing with a long knife. If it goes through easily, they're ready. If not, bake longer.

Let cool for 15 minutes. Make a long cut along the top of each potato and open them gently, beating with a fork to fluff up the soft, orange middle.

Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Let each person add sour cream and scallions (or more salt and pepper) to their taste.



\$4.80 TOTAL
\$1.20 / SERVING



Smoky and Spicy Roasted Cauliflower

FOR FOUR

Roasted veggies are always delicious, but there's something magical that happens to cauliflower in the oven. It gets so crispy and nutty, and that flavor is brought out even more with the spices here. I'm happy to just eat a bowl of this for dinner, maybe with an egg on top.

- 1 head cauliflower, cut into small pieces
- 2 cloves garlic, unpeeled
- 1 tbsp butter, melted
- 1 tsp smoked paprika
- ½ tsp cayenne pepper
- salt and pepper

Turn the oven to 400 °F.

In a medium-sized roasting pan, arrange the cauliflower pieces and the unpeeled cloves of garlic. Pour the butter over the cauliflower and then sprinkle the spices over top. Use your hands to thoroughly coat the cauliflower with butter and spices.

Bake for 45 minutes to 1 hour, depending on how crispy you like the florets. Squeeze the roasted garlic throughout and trash the skins.

\$3.40 TOTAL
\$0.85 / SERVING

Spicy Green Beans

FOR TWO

Whenever I make these, I think, "why don't I have this every day?" Throw a fried egg on top, serve with rice, and you have a delicious meal.

- 1 tsp vegetable oil
- ½ lb green beans, ends trimmed, chopped into bite-size pieces
- 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1 tsp soy sauce
- 1 tsp sambal oelek (or 2 tsp chili flakes)

ADDITIONS

- 1 tsp ginger, grated
- 1 tsp lemon juice

Add the vegetable oil to a frying pan on medium heat. Once it's hot, add the green beans. Let them cook undisturbed for about 1 minute.

Mix the garlic, soy sauce, and sambal oelek in a bowl (and the ginger and lemon juice, if using).

The beans should have turned bright green. Add about ¼ cup of water to the pan. Cook another 2 minutes, until the water is mostly gone. Pour the sauce into the pan and toss gently to coat. Cook another 2 minutes, until everything is fragrant and most of the liquid is gone. Poke the beans with a fork: if it goes through easily, they're done. They should take about 5 minutes.

Taste and add more chili sauce or soy sauce if you want the beans hotter or saltier.

\$1.30 TOTAL
\$0.65 / SERVING





\$4 TOTAL
\$1 / SERVING

Mexican Street Corn

FOR FOUR

This recipe takes fresh, sweet summer corn—already amazing—and adds salt, tang, and spice to the experience. If you have an outdoor grill, prepare the corn that way, but for those without, a broiler is a great shortcut!

- 4 cobs corn
- 4 tbsp mayonnaise
- ½ cup cotija, queso blanco, feta, Romano or Parmesan, grated
- chili powder
- 1 lime, sliced into wedges

Turn your oven's broiler up to high.

Peel off the outer layers of the corn and clean off all the corn silk. Leave the green ends attached for a convenient handhold.

Place the cobs on a baking pan under the broiler for 2 to 3 minutes, then rotate them and repeat until they're brown and toasty all the way around. The broiling shouldn't take more than 10 minutes total.

Working quickly, spread a tablespoon of mayonnaise over each cob, lightly coating every kernel. Next, sprinkle the cheese all over the corn. It should stick fairly easily to the mayonnaise, but you'll probably get a little messy coating them thoroughly.

Sprinkle chili powder over the corn, but not too heavy or it'll be gritty. Use any chili powder you like; ancho or cayenne are great.

Lastly, squeeze lime juice all over and serve hot!



\$3.50 TOTAL
\$1.75 / SERVING

Green Chili and Cheddar Quesadillas

FOR TWO

- 4 tortillas (p. 137)
- ½ cup sharp cheddar, grated
- ½ cup green chilies, canned or fresh, chopped
- 1 tbsp fresh cilantro, chopped

These are a great snack or a quick meal, and you can add pretty much anything to them! To make 'em cheaper, use fresh tortillas (p. 137).

Spread ¼ cup of green chilies evenly over one tortilla. Sprinkle ¼ cup of cheese over the chilies, then top with half the cilantro. Place another tortilla on top of each prepared tortilla to form a quesadilla. Repeat!

Place a large, non-stick pan on medium heat. Once it's hot, add a quesadilla and toast for about 1 minute. Flip it over and brown the second side, then do the same for the other quesadilla. Slice into triangles and enjoy with some fresh salsa (p. 163) and sour cream.

Cornmeal Crusted Veggies

FOR FOUR

These are kind of like having veggie french fries. The cornmeal makes them super crunchy, and they're great with a dipping sauce. Might I suggest peanut sauce (p. 161)? This breading process can be done with almost any vegetable; some of my favorites include zucchini wedges, bell peppers, and cooked winter squash. It's sort of like fried green tomatoes or okra, but this baked version skips the expense and mess of the oil, yet keeps the crunch.

½ lb green beans, stems cut off
½ cup all-purpose flour
2 eggs
¼ cup milk
1 cup cornmeal
1 tsp salt
1 tsp black pepper
1 tsp paprika
½ tsp garlic powder

ALTERNATIVES

zucchini
bell pepper sticks
winter squash
cauliflower florets
broccoli florets
okra
carrot sticks

Heat the oven to 450 °F.

Set up your breading station! On one plate, spread out the flour. Crack both eggs into a bowl, add the milk, and mix lightly with a fork. On another plate, spread the cornmeal, salt, black pepper, paprika, and garlic powder. Mix the plate with your fingers.

Spread a small amount of oil or butter across a baking sheet.

A few at a time, take the green beans and dredge them in the flour. Next, transfer the flour-covered beans to the egg mixture. Cover the beans lightly with egg mixture, being careful to shake off any excess egg. Then transfer to the cornmeal mixture and coat them evenly.

Carefully spread the crusted green beans onto the baking sheet. Repeat until you've done them all. If you run out of any of the three mixtures, just mix up a bit more.

Bake for 10 to 15 minutes, until golden and crispy. Enjoy hot with your favorite dipping sauce!

Pictured are bell peppers and green beans.



\$2.60 TOTAL
\$0.65 / SERVING

\$2.80 TOTAL
\$1.40 / SERVING



Brussels Sprout Hash and Eggs

FOR TWO

This is a great light lunch or side dish. The Brussels sprouts get salty and tangy from the olive and lemon, then crispy and caramelized on the bottom. Mix in the little bit of fat from the egg yolk, and wow is this delicious.

4 cups Brussels sprouts, finely chopped
salt and pepper
1 tbsp butter
3 cloves garlic, finely chopped
6 olives, finely chopped
lemon juice
2 eggs

Chop off the ends of the sprouts. Slice them in half, then finely shred each half. Place the shreds in a bowl and sprinkle with salt and pepper.

Melt the butter in a non-stick pan on medium-high heat. Swirl it around to coat the pan. Add the Brussels sprout shreds and garlic, then leave it to cook for about 1 minute. Mix it up and toss it around. Add the olives and mix again.

Crack the eggs into separate areas of the pan. Sprinkle them with salt and pepper. Pour in 2 tablespoons of water and cover with a lid. Let the eggs steam, undisturbed, for 2 minutes.

Once the whites of the eggs are cooked through, turn off the heat and sprinkle everything with lemon juice.

Poutine

FOR FOUR

Poutine isn't an everyday meal, but it's a favorite. Since I don't like deep-frying at home, I bake the fries; they still get crispy without the fuss of frying.

Montreal-style poutine is made with vegetable gravy, as in this recipe, but you can also make your favorite beef or turkey gravy.

Of course, proper poutine uses cheese curds, and if you can find them do use those, but fresh mozzarella works for me. It has the same spongy quality, just maybe with a little less squeak. This recipe does come out a little more expensive than you would think because of the fresh mozzarella. If you use less or skip the cheese entirely, you can cut the price in half.

2-3 medium Russet potatoes, sliced into sticks
2 tbsp vegetable oil
salt and pepper
scallions, chopped
6 oz fresh mozzarella, diced

GRAVY

2 tbsp butter
1 shallot or 3 scallions, finely chopped
3 cloves garlic, finely chopped
2 tbsp all-purpose flour
1½ cups vegetable broth
1 tsp soy sauce
½ tsp cayenne pepper
salt and pepper
6 leaves fresh sage, finely chopped (optional)

Set the oven to 400 °F.

Pour 1 tablespoon of vegetable oil onto a baking sheet. Spread the oil around, then spread out the sticks of sliced potato. Pour the rest of the oil over the top and sprinkle generously with salt and pepper. Use your hands to ensure the potatoes are coated with oil, salt, and pepper, and evenly spread across the pan. Place them in the oven and bake for 20 minutes.

Meanwhile, prepare the gravy. Melt the butter in a saucepan on medium heat. Add the shallot and garlic. Let them cook for 2 minutes until translucent, but not brown. Add the flour and quickly stir with a spoon. Add a little broth if gets too clumpy.

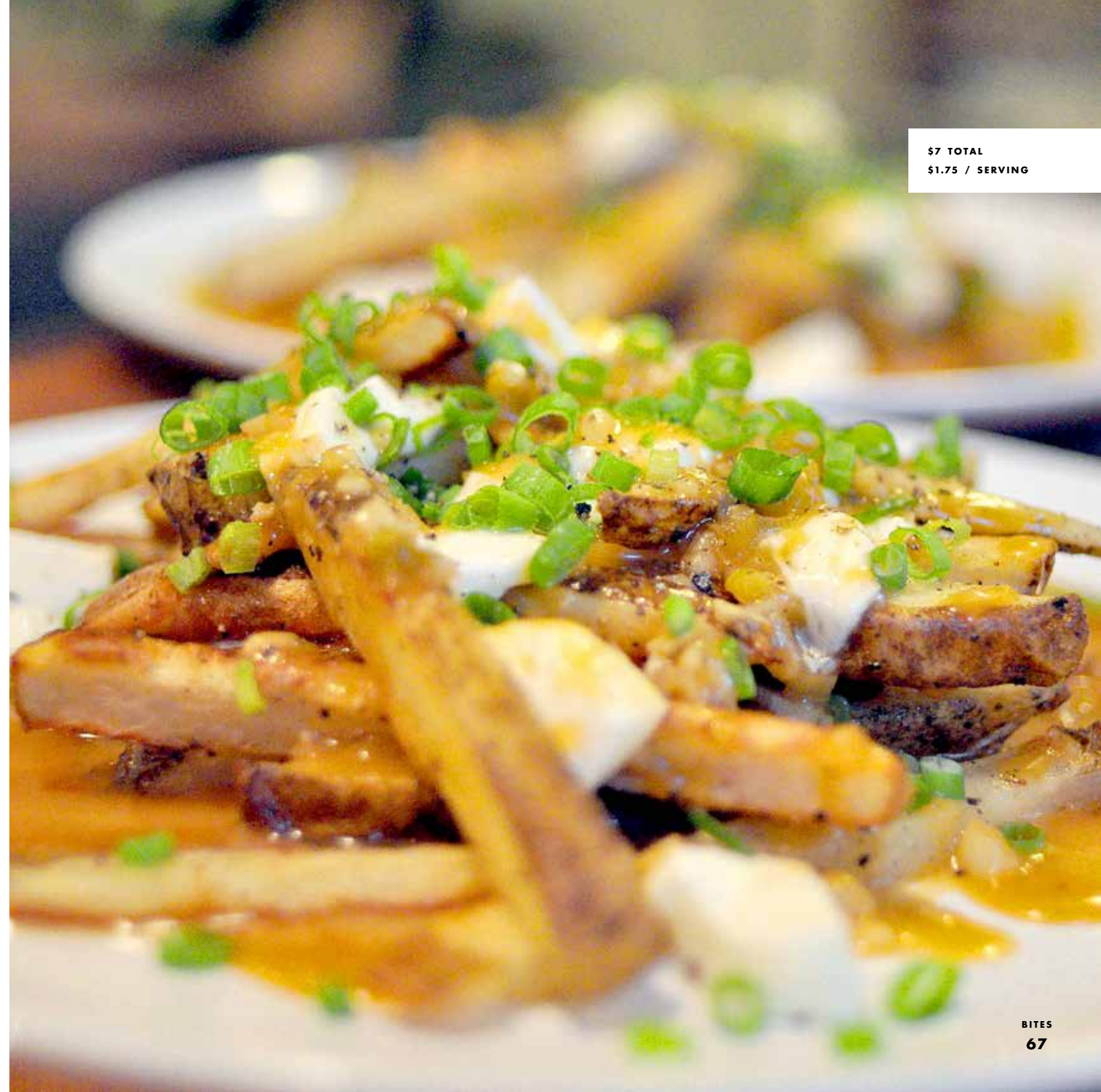
Let the mixture cook until it turns light brown. Add the vegetable broth, soy sauce, and cayenne pepper. Bring the gravy to a boil, then turn down the heat and let it cook for about 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Taste it, adding salt and pepper as needed. Turn down the heat to very low, just enough to keep the gravy warm until the fries come out of the oven.

Dice the mozzarella.

After the fries have baked for 20 minutes, remove them from the oven. Lift them with a spatula and test their tenderness with a fork. If it goes through easily, the fries are ready. If you want them a little more crispy, flip them over and put them back in the oven for a few more minutes.

Once they're done, pile one layer of fries onto a plate. Top with cheese and then the hot gravy. Repeat with a second layer before sprinkling with scallions and more freshly ground black pepper.

\$7 TOTAL
\$1.75 / SERVING





\$1.50 TOTAL
\$0.75 / SERVING

4 slices bread
2 tbsp butter
salt and pepper
topping
fried egg (optional)

IDEAS

Things On Toast

I love bread, and toast in particular is my comfort food—I crave it when I’m sick or worn down. Here, I would like to suggest that you take some toast and put something tasty on it. That’s it!

Certainly toast can feed a crowd, but I like this meal for times when I’m on my own and want a quick meal or snack. It’s a great way to use leftovers or turn a side dish into a full meal.

What makes this more like a special dinner than a quick snack is the way you treat the bread—toasting it in the pan like a nice piece of fish.

A pile of sautéed or raw veggies over buttered, toasty bread is the perfect meal for one and a great way to try a new vegetable. I’ve suggested a few other toast variations on the following pages, but you can use pretty much any veggie dish from this book or invent your own. Add a fried egg on top if you’re extra hungry.

Melt ½ tablespoon of butter in a small pan on medium heat. Place the two slices of bread in the pan and let them cook for about 2 minutes, then lift them with a spatula to check whether they’re golden brown underneath. When they are, flip ‘em over.

Add the rest of the butter to the pan to make sure the second side of the toast becomes just as golden as the first. Sprinkle the top of the bread with salt and pepper. Once the second side is golden, set the bread on a plate to await its topping.

For the toppings, you can go raw or, as I most often do, sauté veggies or beans with flavors like garlic and chilies, olives and dill, ginger and turmeric, or any other classic combination (p. 166).

Instead of toast, the topping ideas on the next few pages would also be great over rice or any other grain, in a tortilla, tossed with pasta, or even on a pizza. It’s up to you!



\$2 TOTAL
\$1 / SERVING

PEAS AND LEMON: This is like a less-salty, more-rustic version of the British classic mushy peas. Add a bit of olive oil to a pan on medium heat. Drop in the garlic and peas along with 2 tablespoons of water so that the peas can steam a bit. Leave them until they turn bright green. Sprinkle with lemon juice, Romano, salt, and pepper, then remove the peas from the heat and mash with the back of a fork, either in the pan or in a bowl. Pile onto toast and enjoy!

- 1 tsp olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1 cup peas, fresh or frozen
- 1 tsp lemon juice
- Romano or Parmesan, freshly grated
- salt and pepper



\$5 TOTAL
\$2.50 / SERVING

ASIAN GREENS GRA PROW: This works with any Asian green, from bok choy to tatsoi to gai lan. Splash the oil in a pan on medium heat. Sauté the garlic for 2 minutes, then add the ginger, soy sauce, and the stem part of the greens. Cook for 4 to 5 minutes, until almost tender. Add the leafy part of the greens and cook for 2 more minutes. Turn off the heat and mix in the Thai basil. Taste and add salt and pepper, unless the soy sauce is salty enough on its own.

- 1 bunch Asian greens, stem separated from leaves
- 1 tsp vegetable oil
- 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1 tsp ginger root, grated
- 2 tsp soy sauce
- 1 handful Thai basil
- salt and pepper

CARAMELIZED ONIONS AND CHEDDAR: Melt the butter in a pan on low heat. Add the onions and let them cook slowly, about 20 minutes. As the onions darken, stir them occasionally, adding a bit of water to loosen up the sticky onion bits on the bottom and keep them from burning. Leave the onions until they're dark purple. They will now be sweet and caramelized. Spread them over toast and top with slices of aged cheddar, salt, and pepper. Put the toast back in the pan and cover with a lid until the cheese is bubbly, then serve it up.

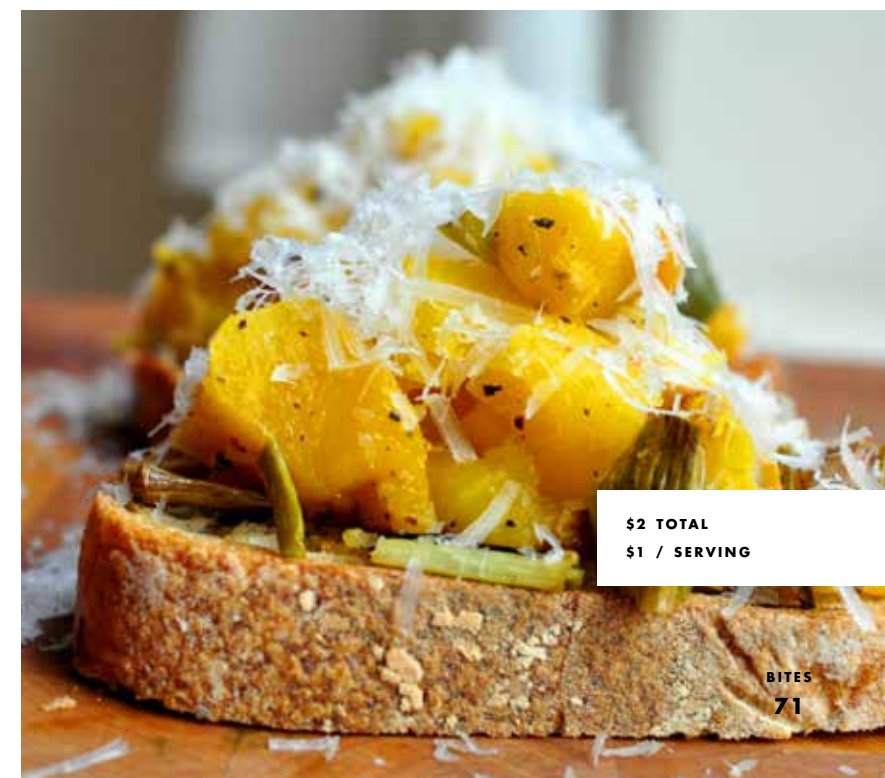
- 1 tbsp butter
- 1 red onion, thinly sliced
- sharp cheddar, thinly sliced
- salt and pepper



\$2 TOTAL
\$1 / SERVING

ROASTED VEGETABLES: This is one of my favorite ways to eat leftover roasted vegetables. Simply create a ridiculously tall pile of vegetables like the winter squash and leeks pictured here, then sprinkle with grated Romano or Parmesan and fresh pepper. You can also add any sauce you have on hand or sprinkle crushed nuts on top.

- roasted vegetables (p. 122)
- Romano or Parmesan, freshly grated
- pepper



\$2 TOTAL
\$1 / SERVING



\$3 TOTAL
\$1.50 / SERVING

SALTY BROCCOLI: Warm up the oil in a pan on medium heat. Add the garlic and chili flakes and cook for 2 minutes, until they smell great but are not yet brown. Add the anchovy and cook for another minute. Add the broccoli and about ¼ cup of water. Cover the pan, steam for 3 minutes, then toss and cook for 2 minutes, until the broccoli is tender and the water is gone. Spoon onto toast; top with cheese, salt, and pepper!

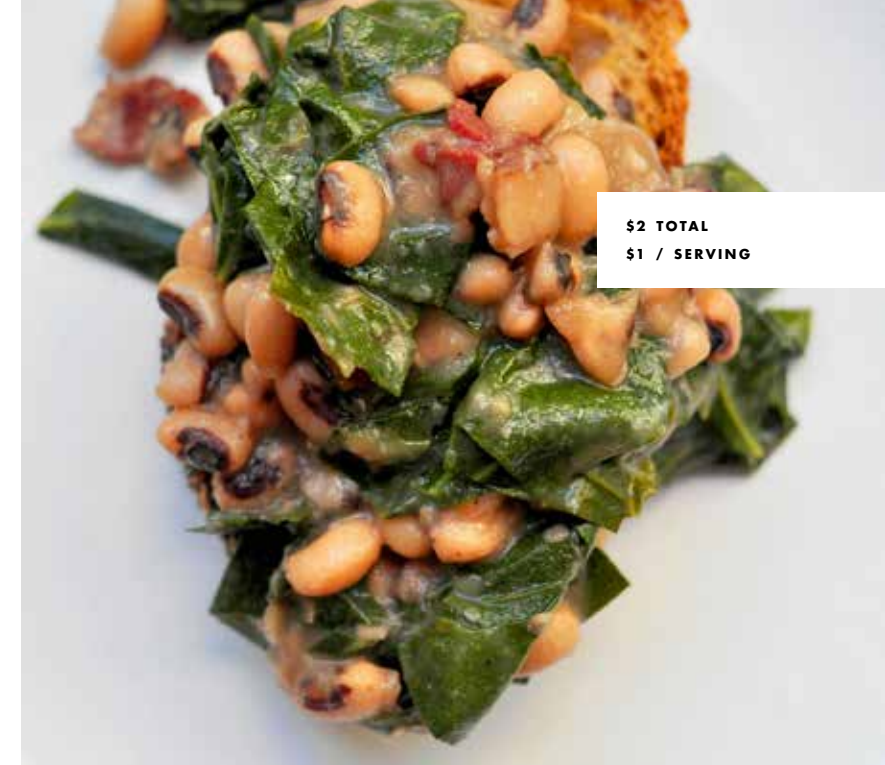
- 1 tsp olive oil
- 3 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1 tsp chili flakes
- 1 anchovy, finely chopped
- 1 crown and stem of broccoli, chopped
- Romano or Parmesan, freshly grated
- salt and pepper



\$3.50 TOTAL
\$1.75 / SERVING

BROILED EGGPLANT SALAD: Here's yet another use for leftovers—or just a way to make a great salad more substantial. Simply dollop the broiled eggplant salad onto toast, then add some herbs or greens to the top for a fresh counterpoint, along with a bit of cheese.

- broiled eggplant salad (p. 43)
- fresh herbs or greens
- any cheese, crumbled or grated



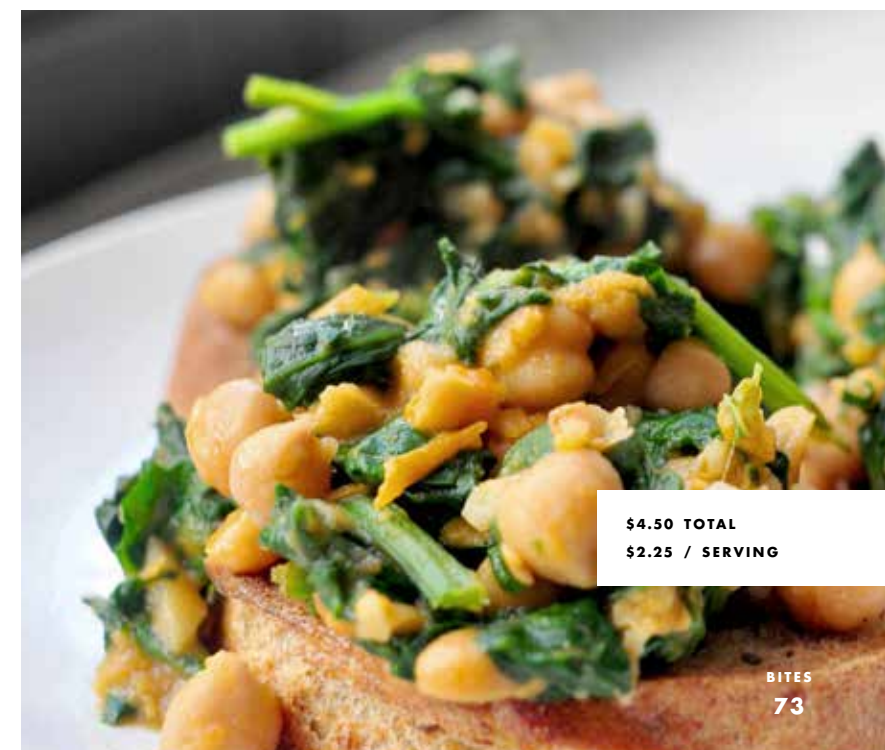
\$2 TOTAL
\$1 / SERVING

BLACK-EYED PEAS AND COLLARDS: Oh man, is there anything more comforting than beans on toast? Friends and family will be delighted even if you're secretly using up leftovers. To make the meal a little more fancy, use jalapeño-cheddar scones instead of toast.

- black-eyed peas and collards (p. 94)
- jalapeño-cheddar scones (p. 22) (optional)

SPINACH AND CHICKPEA: This is a popular tapas dish in Spain. The recipe makes a little more topping than you need for two pieces of toast—but hey, leftovers are tasty. Melt the butter in a pan on medium heat. Add the garlic and cook for 2 minutes. Add the chickpeas and spinach, then cook for 2 to 5 minutes, until the spinach cooks down but is still bright green. Taste and add salt and pepper, then spoon it over toast. If you have it, sprinkle with smoked paprika.

- 1 tsp butter
- 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1 cup cooked chickpeas
- 1 bunch spinach
- salt and pepper
- smoked paprika (optional)



\$4.50 TOTAL
\$2.25 / SERVING



\$1 TOTAL
\$0.25 / SERVING

IDEAS

Popcorn!

Popcorn is such a great snack. It's easy to forget how easy and cheap it is to prepare at home. Try some different toppings! I've suggested a few on the opposite page.

- 1/3 cup popcorn
- 2 tbsp vegetable oil
- 2 tbsp butter, melted
- salt

Place a large pot with a tight-fitting lid on the stove. Pour in the vegetable oil, then the popcorn kernels. Put the lid on and turn the heat to medium.

Using pot holders or oven mitts, occasionally shake the pot from side to side to make sure the kernels are evenly distributed in the oil. Once the popcorn begins to pop, turn the heat down to medium-low and gently shake again.

Once the popping slows down to 5 to 10 seconds between pops, turn the heat off. Wait until you're sure the corn has stopped popping and remove the lid.

Move the popcorn to a bowl and pour butter, salt, and other spices or toppings over top. Gently toss to coat it evenly.

This recipe makes about 10 to 12 cups of popped popcorn—enough for four people. Eat it while it's hot!



SCALLION AND CILANTRO



TURMERIC AND CORIANDER



SPICE OIL (P. 162)



PARM AND BLACK PEPPER

CAYENNE AND
SMOKED PAPRIKA



BROWN SUGAR
AND ORANGE ZEST



CHILI POWDER AND LIME



PARM AND OREGANO

