

Student muscle recipe book

Affordable meals for stronger training and better recovery

For male student members aged 18-24 who lift four or five times a week, with additional guidance for varsity rugby, football, hockey and American football.

Eat well around student life

This book gives you ten straightforward recipes, a seven-day plan aiming for 180-200g protein a day, and a shopping list built around repeat ingredients. Most recipes take 5-35 minutes and use a hob, microwave or both.

Building muscle takes consistent training, enough food and time to recover. Start with a week you can repeat, then adjust portions to your appetite, progress and sporting workload.

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How to use it: Read page 2, pick your meals, shop from page 9 and keep the match day guide handy. All recipe quantities make one generous serving unless stated otherwise.

Prepared for Fitness Fraternity student members. General guidance for healthy adults; seek personalised advice if you have a medical condition or dietary restrictions.

Set a target that fits you

180-200g is the sample plan target, not a requirement for every student. A useful muscle-building range is about 1.6-2.2g protein per kilogram of body weight each day. Smaller students can often spend less and get the same benefit with less protein. [1,2]

Body weight	Daily protein range
65kg	104-143g
75kg	120-165g
85kg	136-187g
95kg	152-209g

Spread protein across three meals and one or two snacks. Four eating occasions containing roughly 35-50g each make the sample target manageable. Keep a similar protein intake on rest days. [2]

Eat enough to grow

There is no single calorie target for all 18-24-year-old men. The plan is a starting menu, not a personalised calorie prescription. If your weight is stable, strength is progressing and recovery is good, you may not need to change it.

If gaining size is your goal and weight and performance have stalled for two or three weeks, try adding 150-250 kcal daily, such as extra rice or toast. Track a few morning weigh-ins as a weekly average; adjust slowly. Fast weight gain is not all muscle. Varsity players should also track speed, fitness and how they feel.

Read these before cooking

Weights: meat is raw; rice, pasta, oats and lentils are dry; tinned beans and tuna are drained (baked beans include sauce). Fruit weights are edible portions. Milk is in ml and eggs are medium. Use a kitchen scale.

Estimates: recipe nutrition is calculated from representative food values, not laboratory analysis. Brands and portions vary. Yogurt assumes 10g protein per 100g; check the label. Costs use illustrative UK budget unit prices, not a verified live basket. All sides listed in each recipe are included. Optional swaps are not.

Daily basics: vary fruit and vegetables, include wholegrains and unsaturated fats, drink regularly and protect your sleep. Check pack allergen labels, including sauces and spices. Oats need certified gluten-free labelling for coeliac diets.

Breakfasts that do the job

B1 Banana and peanut overnight oats

1serving | 5minutes pluschilling | approx£1.32

762 kcal | 44g protein | 94g carbs | 22g fat

Ingredients: 80g oats; 250ml semi-skimmed milk; 200g plain high-protein yogurt; 20g peanut butter; 120g banana.

1. Mix the oats, milk, yogurt and peanut butter in a lidded bowl. Refrigerate overnight, or for at least 2 hours.
2. Slice the banana over the top when serving. Add a little water if you prefer a looser texture. Student tip: Use plain strained yogurt or skyr with around 10g protein per 100g. Standard Greek style yogurt may contain much less.

Allergens: Milk, peanuts, oats.

B2 Eggs and beans on toast

1serving | 15 minutes | approx£1.66

798 kcal | 49g protein | 80g carbs | 29g fat

Ingredients: 3 medium eggs; 200g baked beans; 100g wholemeal bread; 80g frozen spinach; 5g rapeseed or olive oil; 250ml semi-skimmed milk.

1. Heat the beans in a saucepan until piping hot. Wilt the spinach in a frying pan with the oil.
2. Beat the eggs, add to the spinach and stir over a gentle heat until set. Toast the bread.
3. Serve the eggs and beans on toast, with the milk to drink.

Student tip: A filling breakfast for a long morning of lectures. The milk is included in the nutrition and cost.

Allergens: Eggs, milk, wheat.

Porridge and a chicken staple

B3 Apple and raisin porridge

1serving | 10 minutes | approx£1.66

762 kcal | 47g protein | 110g carbs | 14g fat

Ingredients: 90g oats; 300ml semi-skimmed milk; 250g plain high-protein yogurt; 150g apple; 20g raisins.

1. Put the oats, milk and finely chopped apple in a saucepan. Add 100ml water and simmer for 5-7 minutes, stirring.
2. Take off the heat. Stir in the raisins and serve the yogurt on top or alongside. Add cinnamon if you have it.

Student tip: For a microwave, use a large bowl and heat in short bursts, stirring frequently, until the oats are cooked.

Allergens: Milk, oats.

M1 Paprika chicken and rice

1serving | 25 minutes | approx£1.99

763 kcal | 55g protein | 96g carbs | 15g fat

Ingredients: 180g skinless chicken breast; 100g rice; 200g frozen mixed vegetables; 50g onion; 10g rapeseed or olive oil.

1. Cook the rice according to the pack. Dice the chicken and onion.
2. Heat the oil in a frying pan. Soften the onion for 3 minutes. Add chicken and 1 tsp smoked paprika; cook for 10-12 minutes, stirring.
3. Add the frozen vegetables and a splash of water. Cook until the chicken is fully cooked and the vegetables are piping hot. Serve with rice.

Student tip: Batch option: multiply all ingredients by four. Cook rice fresh when practical; follow the separate rice storage rule on page 11.

Allergens: Check spice blends.

Quick meals for busy weeks

M2 Beef and bean chilli

1serving | 35 minutes | approx£2.33

846 kcal | 51g protein | 115g carbs | 15g fat

Ingredients: 150g 5% fat beef mince; 120g kidney beans; 100g rice; 200g tinned chopped tomatoes; 75g onion; 100g carrot; 5g rapeseed or olive oil.

1. Heat the oil in a large pan. Cook chopped onion and grated carrot for 5 minutes. Add the mince and brown, breaking it up.
2. Add tomatoes, drained kidney beans, 1 tsp paprika, 1 tsp cumin, chilli to taste and 100ml water. Simmer for 20 minutes until the mince is fully cooked.
3. Cook the rice separately and serve with the chilli. Add water to the sauce if it becomes too thick. Student tip: For four portions use 600g mince, two tins of beans giving 480g drained, two 400g tins of tomatoes and four times the other ingredients.

Allergens: Check spices.

M3 Creamy tuna and pea pasta

1serving | 20 minutes | approx£1.63

704 kcal | 58g protein | 91g carbs | 10g fat

Ingredients: 120g tuna in spring water; 100g pasta; 150g peas; 75g plain high-protein yogurt; 50g onion; 5g rapeseed or olive oil.

1. Cook pasta according to the pack. Add peas for the final 3-4 minutes. Reserve a mug of cooking water before draining.
2. Soften the chopped onion in the oil for 5 minutes. Add drained tuna and heat through.
3. Remove from the heat. Stir in the pasta, peas and yogurt, loosening with a little cooking water. Season with pepper.

Student tip: Use a tin that gives 120g drained tuna. Keep the pan off the heat when adding yogurt to reduce splitting.

Allergens: Fish, milk, wheat.

Plant protein and easy dinners

M4 Tofu and lentil curry

1serving | 30 minutes | approx£1.84

878 kcal | 54g protein | 108g carbs | 24g fat

Ingredients: 200g tofu; 60g red lentils; 80g rice; 150g tinned chopped tomatoes; 100g frozen spinach; 50g onion; 5g rapeseed or olive oil.

1. Heat oil and soften chopped onion. Add 1-2 tsp curry powder and stir for 30 seconds.
2. Rinse the lentils. Add them with tomatoes and 250ml water. Simmer 15-20 minutes, stirring and adding water as needed, until soft.
3. Add cubed tofu and spinach. Simmer for 5 minutes until piping hot. Meanwhile cook rice separately; serve together.

Student tip: Vegan. Choose firm tofu with around 14g protein per 100g. If yours has 10g, use 280g; the cost and calories will change.

Allergens: Soya; check curry powder for mustard.

M5 Loaded bean and cottage cheese potato

1serving | 15-20minutes | approx £1.81

694 kcal | 49g protein | 93g carbs | 12g fat

Ingredients: 350g potato; 200g baked beans; 250g cottage cheese; 80g frozen spinach; 5g rapeseed or olive oil.

1. Scrub and prick the potato. Microwave on a microwave-safe plate for 8-12 minutes, turning halfway, until soft throughout. Large potatoes may take longer; rest for 2 minutes.
2. Heat the beans until piping hot. Wilt spinach in the oil in a separate pan.
3. Split the potato and add spinach, beans and cottage cheese. Season with black pepper.

Student tip: An oven alternative takes about 60-75 minutes at 200C or 180C fan. Choose vegetarian beans for a vegetarian meal.

Allergens: Milk.

Snacks that close the gap

S1 Yogurt crunch bowl

1serving | 5minutes | approx£1.40

520 kcal | 40g protein | 56g carbs | 14g fat

Ingredients: 300g plain high-protein yogurt; 30g oats; 20g peanut butter; 120g banana.

1. Spoon yogurt into a bowl. Stir in the oats and peanut butter.
2. Slice the banana over the top. Eat straight away or keep covered and chilled until needed. Student tip: Split into two smaller snacks if a large bowl feels too filling. Use yogurt with around 10g protein per 100g.

Allergens: Milk, peanuts, oats.

S2 Cottage cheese toast and fruit

1serving | 5minutes | approx£1.38

518 kcal | 39g protein | 66g carbs | 8g fat

Ingredients: 250g cottage cheese; 100g wholemeal bread; 150g apple.

1. Toast the bread and spread the cottage cheese over it. Add black pepper if you like.
2. Serve with the apple. For a packed lunch, carry the cottage cheese in a chilled container and assemble when ready.

Student tip: A savoury alternative to S1. Swapping snacks changes the daily total; check the recipe numbers.

Allergens: Milk, wheat.

Seven days of simple meals

Each code means one full serving from pages 3-7. Have S1 as one snack or split it between afternoon and evening. Every day also includes one 150g apple and 10g extra oil, stirred into a savoury meal. These are included in the totals and shopping list.

Day	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Snack	kcal	Protein
Monday	B1	M1	M2	S1	3059	191g
Tuesday	B2	M2	M3	S1	3036	198g
Wednesday	B1	M1	M4	S1	3091	194g
Thursday	B3	M2	M5	S1	2990	187g
Friday	B1	M3	M1	S1	2918	198g
Saturday	B2	M4	M2	S1	3209	194g
Sunday	B3	M5	M1	S1	2907	191g

Daily totals are calculated before rounding. They include protein from rice, oats, vegetables and other ingredients as well as the main protein foods. No protein powder is included.

Make the week work for you

Lunch and dinner can swap places. Batch cook the chilli and chicken, freeze spare portions promptly and cook rice fresh. This week repeats meals deliberately so opened packs get used.

For a smaller protein target, reduce the yogurt snack or meat portion and keep enough carbohydrate to train well. For example, reducing S1 yogurt from 300g to 150g removes about 15g protein and 90 kcal. Replacing those calories with rice, bread or fruit may suit your energy needs.

For more energy, add 50g dry rice to a main meal: around 180 kcal and 39g carbohydrate. Or add 100g bread: around 240 kcal and 41g carbohydrate. These extras also add some protein, so 200g is not a strict ceiling.

Variety over the term

Rotate seasonings, vegetables and protein sources. Swap a tuna meal for tinned salmon or sardines sometimes for oily fish; the nutrition and cost will change. Use the vegetarian curry and loaded potato regularly. Choose fruit you will actually eat.

On a sports day: use pages 12-13 to add fuel around the session. The base menu may not provide enough energy for a large rugby player or a student doing both gym and pitch training.

The weekly shopping list

Quantities cover the exact seven-day menu on page 8, including daily apples and extra oil. Buy the next practical pack size and use or freeze what remains. Yogurt is the biggest recurring purchase: compare protein content as well as price.

Protein and dairy	Needed	Example purchase
Chicken	720g	1kg pack
Beef	600g	2 x 500g; freeze spare
Tuna	240g	2 tins, 120g drained each
Tofu	400g	2 x 200g packs
Eggs	6 eggs	6 eggs
Yogurt	3.35kg	4 x 1kg tubs
Cottage Cheese	500g	2 x 300g tubs
Milk	1.85 litres	2 litres

Carbohydrates and tins	Needed	Example purchase
Oats	630g	1kg bag
Rice	960g	1kg bag
Pasta	200g	500g bag
Bread	200g	800g loaf; freeze spare
Potato	700g	1kg loose or small bag
Kidney Beans	480g	2 x 400g tins, 240g drained each
Beans	800g	2 x 400g tins
Lentils	120g	500g bag
Tomatoes	1.1kg	3 x 400g tins

Also needed: paprika, cumin, chilli and curry powder; black pepper and optional cinnamon. Water is used in cooking. Cost estimates include an 8p seasoning allowance per recipe serving.

Finish the shop and keep costs down

Produce and cupboard	Needed	Example purchase
Mixed Veg	800g	1kg frozen bag
Peas	300g	500g frozen bag
Spinach	520g	1kg frozen bag
Onion	700g	1kg bag
Carrot	400g	500g loose
Banana	1.2kg	about 12 medium bananas
Apple	1.35kg	about 9 medium apples
Raisins	40g	500g bag
Peanut Butter	200g	340g jar
Oil	170g	1 litre bottle

Food actually used: approximately £50.25 for the week, or £7.18 per day, under the stated assumptions. Allow roughly £55-£70 at checkout if starting with empty cupboards, because you buy whole packs, oil and seasonings. Local prices and pack sizes may push this higher.

For transparency, the costing assumes chicken £7.70/kg; lean beef £9/kg; tuna £0.90 per 120g drained; tofu £5/kg; high-protein yogurt and cottage cheese £3.50/kg; milk £0.80/litre; eggs 22p each; oats and rice £1.50/kg; pasta £1/kg; frozen vegetables £1.50/kg. These are planning assumptions, not retailer quotations.

Get more from each shop

Compare unit prices and protein per 100g. A cheap low-protein yogurt is not a like-for-like replacement. Own-brand skyr or quark may be better value. Choose frozen vegetables, freeze bread, and share larger packs with housemates.

Use beans and lentils to stretch meat dishes. If budget is tight, first use the body-weight protein range on page 2: forcing 200g when you need less can add unnecessary cost.

Keep rice, potatoes, oats and fruit in the shop so you still have energy to train.

The base plan excludes delivery, cooking energy, drinks other than listed milk, supplements, and extra match day food. Prices were considered in September 2026; check your basket before buying.

Cook twice and store it safely

Sunday preparation

Make four servings of M2 chilli and four servings of M1 chicken and vegetables. Portion the sauces and chicken separately from rice. Refrigerate only what you will eat within 48 hours; cool and freeze the rest promptly. Cook rice fresh for each meal where possible.

Make Monday B1 oats and set out dry oats for later breakfasts. Divide snack ingredients into portions. Keep dairy chilled and follow the earliest use-by or opened-pack instruction. Do not prepare seven days of chilled meals at once.

Midweek preparation

Make two servings of M4 curry; freeze any portion that will not be eaten within 48 hours. Make tuna pasta and loaded potatoes when needed. Move the next frozen meal into the fridge the night before you need it.

The rules for a shared student kitchen

Cook: Keep raw meat and ready-to-eat food separate. Wash hands and utensils. Cook chicken and mince thoroughly; a food thermometer should show 70C for 2 minutes, or 75C for 30 seconds. [6]

Cool: Divide food into shallow containers. Refrigerate or freeze within 1-2 hours; keep the fridge at 5C or below. Eat ordinary refrigerated leftovers within 48 hours or freeze them. [6,7]

Rice needs extra care: cool it as quickly as possible, ideally within 1 hour. Keep refrigerated rice for no more than 24 hours before reheating. For later meals, freeze promptly after cooling. Do not leave rice cooling in the pan all evening. [7]

Reheat: Thaw in the fridge and use within 24 hours of full defrosting. Reheat only once until steaming hot throughout; stir microwave meals and check the middle. Follow shorter pack instructions where given. [6,7]

Pack: Use a fridge at university or an insulated lunch bag with ice packs for meat, cooked meals and dairy. Keep chilled food cold until eating; use shelf-stable snacks if you cannot do that.

Basic kit

One saucepan, a non-stick frying pan, chopping board, knife, sieve, microwave-safe bowl, kitchen scales and a few freezer-safe containers are enough for this book. Label containers with the meal and cooking date.

Fuel the work on the pitch

Rugby, football, hockey and American football add demands beyond lifting. Keep protein steady and adjust carbohydrate, total food and fluids to your minutes played, position, body size and the training week. These are practical applications of team-sport guidance. [3,4]

Your week	How to adapt the base plan
Gym only or light skills	Use the base menu and judge appetite, progress and recovery.
Hard pitch session or match	Add carbohydrate before and after. An extra 50g dry rice plus a bagel and banana provides about 110g carbohydrate.
Gym and pitch on the same day	Eat between sessions. Add lunch or snack portions rather than leaving all the extra food until bedtime.
Tournament or repeated fixtures	Plan portable food, chilled recovery meals and drinks before leaving. Keep topping up between games.

Football guidance gives around 5-8g carbohydrate/kg/day for players training several times weekly. This is a workload-based reference, not a compulsory target for every sport or rest day: at 80kg it is 400-640g. Build towards the amount your activity needs and use a sports dietitian for demanding schedules. [4]

Different positions need different portions

Football and hockey: repeated running and sprinting make carbohydrate availability important. Pack a pre-session snack and use half-time or breaks to drink.

Rugby: larger players may need substantially bigger total portions. Backs and forwards differ in running and contact load; support recovery after collisions with normal meals, protein, carbohydrate and sleep. [3]

American football: fuel according to actual practice length and playing time. Long sessions in pads can increase heat and sweat stress. Keep drinks accessible and plan food for long gaps on the sideline.

Persistent fatigue, unplanned weight loss, repeated illness or declining performance can mean you are under-fuelling. Increase food and discuss ongoing symptoms with your university sports dietitian or GP. Adding more gym sessions may worsen the problem.

A practical match day routine

Example for a 2pm kick-off start. Shift the times for your fixture and test foods in training first. This routine replaces and adds to normal meals as needed; it is not an extra full menu on top of page 8.

When	What to eat or drink
8am breakfast	B1 or B3 if you tolerate them well. Drink with breakfast.
10:30-11am meal	A familiar carb-rich meal: rice with a modest chicken portion, or two bagels with jam and yogurt. Go lighter on fat, chilli and fibre if your stomach is sensitive.
Around 1pm	If needed, a banana or a slice of toast with jam. Sip fluids.
Warm-up and play	Use planned breaks to drink. For prolonged hard exercise beyond about 60 minutes, around 30-60g carbohydrate/hour can help; practise your intake. [5]
After the match	Eat a meal with carbs and 25-40g protein within the next couple of hours. If travel delays it, have a chilled milk and yogurt snack plus bread or fruit.
Evening	A full dinner and fluids. Eat again if hungry; recover before the next training day.

Three cheap options to pack

Jam bagel: 1 plain 90g bagel + 30g jam. About 310 kcal, 63g carbs and 8g protein. Approx 30p. Useful before training. Contains wheat; check for sesame.

Recovery snack: 500ml semi-skimmed milk + 150g high-protein yogurt + 1 banana (120g edible). About 430 kcal, 34g protein and 54g carbs. Approx £1.10. Keep chilled. Contains milk.

Simple sports drink: dissolve 30g sugar in water and top up to 500ml; add a small pinch of table salt and lemon to taste. About 30g carbs and 120 kcal. Drink to suit your needs; one bottle is not a fixed fluid prescription.

Hydration: start hydrated, drink regularly and use breaks. Needs vary with weather, kit and sweating; avoid forcing excessive water. After heavy sweating, drink alongside meals containing some salt. [3,4]

Supplements: none are required for this plan. If you choose one, check the exact batch through Informed Sport and follow UKAD advice. Batch testing reduces risk; it cannot guarantee a product is free of banned substances. [8]

Keep the basics consistent

Shop with a list. Eat regularly. Progress your training. Add food when the workload increases. Review **how you feel and perform over several weeks, rather than judging one day.**

Sources and further reading

[1] Morton et al. Protein supplementation and resistance training, 2018
Evidence behind daily protein intake and muscle gain. Open source

[2] Schoenfeld and Aragon. Protein distribution, 2018
Practical daily protein range and spreading intake over meals. Open source

[3] Sports Dietitians Australia. Food for your sport Rugby Union
Team sport meals, recovery, positions and fluid needs. Open source

[4] Sports Dietitians Australia. Food for your sport Soccer
Carbohydrate and fuelling around football training and games. Open source

[5] ACSM. GSSI webinar questions on athlete nutrition
General exercise guidance on carbohydrate during sessions over an hour. Open source

[6] Food Standards Agency. Cooking your food
Cooking temperatures and reheating leftovers. Open source

[7] Food Standards Agency. Home food fact checker
Rice storage, cooling and reheating guidance. Open source

[8] UK Anti-Doping. Managing supplement risks
Assessing supplement need and checking batch testing. Open source

About the numbers: Recipes are original practical meal ideas, not copied from the sources. Nutrition uses representative ingredient values and is rounded per serving. Price assumptions are shown on page 10; actual receipts and product labels take priority. The weekly shopping list is calculated from the exact menu quantities.

This book supports healthy adult students. A sports dietitian can adapt it for allergies, vegan diets, gastrointestinal symptoms, medical conditions or a demanding competition calendar.