



CHEAP RECIPE BLOG

COOKING CHEAPLY. EATING WELL

THE FRUGAL COOK'S SECRET INGREDIENT ———— GUIDE ————



Pantry Flavor-Boosters: Cheat Sheet



Worcestershire sauce

Deep, savory umami for soups, beef, sauces



Soy sauce

Adds salt + umami; use in place of salt



Bouillon powder or paste -

Instant depth for soups, grains, beans
(try Better Than Bouillon brand)



Dijon mustard

Sharpness + body for dressings and glazes



Lemon or lime juice

Adds brightness and cuts through rich
flavors (add a teaspoon to creamy soups)



Hot sauce

Layers of heat and tang (add a few
drops to soup or sauces)



Vinegars (balsamic, apple cider, rice)

Add complexity and acidity; vinegar can
wake up bland soup



Peanut butter

Budget-friendly creaminess +
richness for Asian-style sauces



Thai peanut chicken drumsticks

With peanut butter,
soy sauce & lime juice

Add-Ons That Level Up Cheap Meals

**Cheap Ingredients,
Elevated With
Texture + Spice**



Creamy Components

Greek yogurt, sour cream, cream cheese, crème fraîche, heavy cream, half-and-half, butter, canned coconut milk

Crunchy Toppers

Toasted breadcrumbs, crushed tortilla chips, peanuts, slivered almonds, toasted walnuts, fried onions, bacon bits, everything bagel seasoning, sesame seeds, sunflower seeds, pine nuts

Spicy Additions

Chili crisp, chili paste, crushed red pepper flakes, sriracha sauce, chipotle peppers in adobo sauce, cayenne pepper, pickled jalapeños, fresh ginger

Sour Flavors

Fresh citrus juice, apple cider vinegar, red or white wine vinegar, malt vinegar, tamarind paste

Sweet Hints

Honey, maple syrup, white or brown sugar, dates or date sugar, fruit juice, palm sugar, sweetened condensed milk, applesauce, cinnamon, vanilla

Tip:

Texture and spice add contrast. Use just one to make your \$1.50 meal feel like takeout. Use two or more to impress your foodie friends and relatives.

Bland soup?

Try adding a teaspoon of apple cider vinegar to wake it up. This will work equally well in brothy (ex: chicken noodle) or creamy (ex: broccoli cheese) soups.

Before & After Meal Log

What I made	How I upgraded it	The result
Spaghetti with canned sauce	Added lemon zest + red pepper flakes	More zing and spice
Boxed mac & cheese	Added dijon mustard and breadcrumbs	More flavor and crunch
Ramen	Added coconut milk and chili crisp	Creamy and spicy
Canned beans	Added bouillon and lemon juice	Savory and bright

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