

*Cathleen's Odyssey*

# Food Strategies for Frugal Travelers



Cathleen  
Fulton



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Each chapter title below is a hyperlink that takes you directly to the chapter.

## **INTRODUCTION**

**[Why Food Frugality?](#)**

## **STRATEGIES**

**[Healthy Eating to Maintain Your Travel Energy](#)**

**[Planning Ahead](#)**

**[Bulk Cooking and Planning for Leftovers](#)**

**[Shopping and Cooking for Extending Stays](#)**

**[Food Strategies for Short Stays](#)**

**[Be Prepared with “Emergency Food”](#)**

**[Hostel and Guesthouse Cooking](#)**

**[Freebies](#)**

**[Food preparation when there is no kitchen](#)**

## **SHOPPING**

**[General Recommendations](#)**

**[Shopping in Traditional/Farmers Markets](#)**

**[Hybrid Café/Hostel Food](#)**

## **WHAT I CARRY**

**[Equipment](#)**

**[Staples and Emergency Foods](#)**

**[Extras](#)**

**[Comfort Foods](#)**

## **THINGS I LIKE TO PREPARE (WITH RECIPES)**

Easy Meals

The Versatile Dishes

Breakfast

Lunch

Packed Lunches for Travel & Hiking

Dinner

## **APPENDIX**

Cathleen's Odyssey Blog Posts About Food

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

## **BACK COVER**

# INTRODUCTION

I have developed a deep fondness for moving myself around...quite a bit...all over the world. I have become a senior nomad, living in hostels and guesthouses. I am a frugal traveler—I must travel within the limits of my small pension and some savings. During 2017–18, I spent thirteen months in Europe, including the UK, the Netherlands, and Denmark. “Isn’t that part of Europe expensive?” you ask? It doesn’t have to be.

## **WHY FOOD FRUGALITY?**

Since I mostly sleep in hostels and low-cost guesthouses, if I were to eat all or most of my meals in cafes, then my food budget would quickly outweigh my cost for a bed. Unless I choose frugality in all my traveling practices, I would not be able to be the wanderer I am. If the choice is whether to go to the trouble of preparing most of my own food OR not to travel at all, there is no doubt what I choose.

My strategy for affording to visit some of my favorite Western European countries long-term is to live more like the way I do at home. This includes preparing most of my own meals and saving restaurants for the occasional special treats or opportunities to sample local fare.

During that 13 months, the average cost of the food I prepared myself was \$129 and the average cost of food and drink I ate in cafes and restaurants was \$164. This means that my average monthly food cost was less than \$300. Even during my seven days in Copenhagen, food cost me less \$69.00—in one of the most expensive European countries! At less than \$10 per day for all my food, I consider that a success.

In this book, I provide suggestions and help you develop food-preparation planning skills so that it all becomes almost second nature. It won't be long before other hostel guests look over at your plate longingly and remark, "Wow that looks good!"

So, eat your main meal in, and go out to that sweet little bakery down the street for dessert. Or grab a pint at the local pub where a band is playing.



*My first cream tea in the UK. Not my last, but it was definitely the best.*



*Two hostel kitchens I have worked in.*

*Above: Alburgue Cantabrico in A Fonsagrada, Spain*

*Below: Islesburgh House Hostel in Lerwick in the Shetland Islands—  
one of my favorite hostels in Europe. Notice that there are several  
cooking stations providing everyone with plenty of room to work..*



# STRATEGIES

I have developed some “best practices” that work well for me which I outline in this chapter. Of course we are all different—maybe you would like to eat out more and cook less than I do. You may be vegan and will need to adjust my recipes appropriately. You will have to remain flexible: food availability and quality can vary greatly from place to place. I hope these strategies will give you a starting place to develop the style of eating that works for you. Whatever you choose, make sure you are enjoying your travels!

## HEALTHY EATING TO MAINTAIN YOUR TRAVEL ENERGY

*I have found that my digestive system deals with changes in diet better if I consume a serving of oats and a serving of yogurt or kefir (probiotics) daily. Therefore, it is not unusual for me to break my fast with these foods.*

When traveling, it is easy to fall victim to unhealthy eating habits. (Ask me how I know!) There are just so many new food experiences to be had! After a while, you start feeling sluggish and walking from the train station to your

hostel is an exhausting ordeal. Preparing most of your own food means that you have more control over what goes onto your plate. The foods I prepare include lots of fresh vegetables and fruits and very few preservatives, whenever possible.

## PLANNING AHEAD

When choosing accommodations, I always check to be sure there is a guest kitchen. Virtually all hostels in Europe have them. Many guesthouses do as well. And even when I book through AirBnB, I make sure I will be allowed to use the kitchen.

When reserving your hostel or guesthouse on-line, use Google maps to search for supermarkets nearby. If you have a choice of hostels, choose the one nearer to the supermarket—unless of course it has poor reviews.

Near the end of this book I share my favorite recipes and suggestions. However, it is important that you prepare flavorful foods *you* like. Then you won't get bored and be tempted to go out. Before you embark, practice making a few meals using the techniques I describe here so you know what works for you. The main thing is to keep ingredients and preparation simple. Plan to prepare foods that you really like to eat so you don't get tired of them.

## BULK COOKING AND PLANNING FOR LEFTOVERS

I mostly travel alone and prefer to NOT spend a lot of time fixing a meal for one person every evening. This is where “bulk cooking” comes in handy. When I plan to stay in one location for more than a

*Preparing your own meals can actually save time. Cumulatively, I spend much less time cooking, eating, and cleaning up than I would if I ate most meals in restaurants.*

couple days, I will cook up a batch of versatile stir fries, boil a few eggs, and maybe fry up some apples (see “Things I Like to Prepare” [beginning on page 35.](#)) This will create



enough food for 3–4 days' worth of dinners as well as some lunches. During the rest of the week, I will combine these in different ways, so I don't get bored. I may spend an hour or so cooking on the first day, but after that, reheating and laying out the food takes minutes!

## **SHOPPING AND COOKING FOR EXTENDED STAYS**

When staying in one location for three or more days, you have lots of options and will enjoy more variety of foods. Prepare three or more servings of stir-fries, boil up some eggs, make up some fried apples, and cook up some rice. You can buy a half-kilo of ground beef and make up three or four seasoned patties. Over the next days, mix and match your prepared foods. (See my suggestions for Stir Fried Salads, Seasoned Burgers, and Fried Apples in the Recipe section.)

I make one kitchen mess on the first day, but the remaining days, I use the microwave to reheat a few things. No juggling with other guests for counter or stovetop space. No waiting to get into the refrigerator. And I have very few dishes to wash up.

Here are some typical shopping cart items I buy when staying in one place for a while—but usually not all these things at one time.

- ◆ Plain yogurt
- ◆ Bread or crackers
- ◆ Potatoes (I prefer the thin-skinned yellow potatoes. They cook better in the microwave than russet types)

*(Pages 9–33 omitted)*



*Photo courtesy Rebecca Fulton*

# THINGS I LIKE TO PREPARE (WITH RECIPES)

These are not so much recipes as they are guidelines. I don't specify quantities or even exact ingredients. Your quantities will change depending on how many days you are staying in one place or how many servings you need. And your ingredients will certainly change based on what is available or looks yummy in the market. Get into the habit of "riffing" on these ideas.

And certainly these are not all the possibilities! Experiment with some of your favorite foods at home—working to simplify their preparation—to get a feel for quantities of ingredients.

*You won't find any pasta dishes among these recipes. Most people I see preparing food in hostels are preparing some kind of pasta. Indeed, one hostel I stayed in invited guests to post their favorite hostel recipes on a bulletin board. Every one of the 10 or 12 recipes was a pasta dish! I like well-made pasta as much as the next person, but you can be more creative than that.*

*(Pages 35–59 omitted)*

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Cathy Fulton has been a world nomad since 2014. She is a citizen of the United States, but she does not have a permanent residence. Traveling solo and independently has become a way of life for her. This means that she plans and books all her own travel and does not go on organized tours. Her goal is to travel cheaply so that it is financially sustainable. This means that hostel dorm rooms and small guest houses are usually her temporary homes.

Cathy is always looking for ways to save while still experiencing the cultures deeply. She has found the best way to engage with locals is through common interests such as cooking and the fiber arts (knitting and spinning).

You can learn more about Cathy's way of life on her website and blog, [CathleensOdyssey.com](http://CathleensOdyssey.com).

During her thirteen-month sojourn in Europe, Cathy Fulton's average daily food costs were less than \$10 USD. Traveling frugally and staying in hostels and guesthouses with kitchens is the key. This includes preparing most of her own meals and saving restaurants for the occasional special treats or opportunities to sample local fare.

**But it does not have to be a lot of work!** In *Food Strategies for Frugal Travelers* Cathy outlines easy ways to prepare healthy meals from fresh ingredients without spending a lot of time in the kitchen and without having to carry a lot of food in your pack.

*Her goal? In and out of the kitchen quickly  
and with as little mess as possible!*

Enjoy whole-meal salads, fiber-filled breakfasts, and easy-to-make lunches for traveling days. Be prepared to cook under most any circumstance—even without a kitchen! Take advantage of all those bounteous European farmers markets to collect your ingredients. And you won't be giving up the opportunities to savor local specialties every once in a while.

*"...there are many helpful tips that I wish I would have read or considered before traveling. Even after traveling mostly on my own for seven months, trying to be as frugal as I could, I still found new tips and tricks..."*

Miquela Wagner—USA

*"full of tips not just for saving money but also for healthy eating while travelling"*

Nev Chamberlain—UK

**Cathy Fulton** has been a world nomad since 2014. Her solo, independent travel style has become a way of life. Her goal is to travel cheaply so that it is financially sustainable. Her stories and frugal-traveling strategies can be found at [CathleensOdyssey.com](http://CathleensOdyssey.com).

Published by

*Cathleen's Odyssey*

CathleensOdyssey.com

