

## **5-a-day is all well and good if you can afford it.**

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Jamie Oliver is wrong. There, I said it. It's not a truth universally accepted, and I love his principles, his guiding light; the vision and the passion he wants to share with everyone. But he's wrong, and that's the end of it.

It's easy to be a food snob, to look down on people buying tins of this and packets of that whilst you have your basket of fresh veg. I'm going to say it.... It's easy when you're middle class. God I've only gone and brought class into in now. Bloody hell. Let me explain.

You are a single mum on a budget. You have just got home from work having picked the kids up from nursery, and you want to make lasagne for their tea. You can either buy the ingredients fresh, knock them all together in about an hour and a half (we're not all on Ready Steady Cook you know), and produce something oven crisp and exquisite. Or you can pay a couple of quid for the Tesco Basic option and bung it in the oven whilst you sort the washing out, so you can perhaps spend some quality time with the little darlings and ensure you get them to bed on time.

Now, if time alone doesn't make your decision for you, then cost certainly will. Half-decent mince costs about three quid per 400g, and even store brand tins of tomatoes cost about 50p a tin. Cheese costs about four pounds per 400g (the amount of cheese you get for this is an ever reducing figure, but that's another story). Fresh basil will set you back about a quid. Then onions aren't as cheap as they used to be, plus any other veg you want to stick in it (I like to use mushrooms myself). The pasta costs about a quid a box. You'll be lucky to get change from a tenner at Sainsbury's. Bish bash bosh, as Jamie himself would say.

THIS is the problem. If you can afford it you don't look twice at what your shopping bill adds up to. I bet you never see Jamie and Jools on a Sunday night wandering up the 'reduced to clear' aisle. When you don't have any money, everything is accounted for. Vegetables are ridiculously expensive, for how far they can go. We live in a society where, by weight, it is actually cheaper to buy oven chips than it is to buy potatoes. This is a fact. Well, kind of. Eating healthier isn't just a lifestyle choice based on the time we have available to us, it's also a drain on our resources.

That's without logistical issues. Fresh food goes off. Meals have to be planned. I've read supermarket magazines which trumpet how they can 'feed your family for a fiver!' For a lot of families that's pushing the boat out. And this is impossible, utterly impossible for someone like Jamie Oliver to understand. It's impossible to understand for anyone who doesn't have to go through the frustration and agony every time they visit a shop. To anyone to who hasn't been reduced to the verge of tears because they can't find the ingredients they need to make a simple spag bol for less than the fiver in their pocket, this must sound ridiculous. But it's not. It's real.

If we are serious in this country about changing the way people eat for the better, a simple public health message isn't enough. Education doesn't put more money in peoples' pockets. Schools need bigger budgets for their meals, something Jamie himself came up against. And somehow, the ridiculous inflation in the price of basic fruit and vegetables needs to be arrested. Somehow, this good stuff needs to find its way into the homes of people who can't currently afford it.

Because when a McDonald's cheeseburger costs 99p, what would you do?