

How Mario Batali & The Chew Helped Me Enjoy Food Again

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By Daniel Buckley,

Last week, after finishing the Food Stamp Challenge, the first thing I wanted to do was spend an evening cooking a dinner that would make me excited about food again. One of the comments I heard a lot around the office during the challenge is that living on a food stamp budget made food boring. There is only so many times you want to eat the same thing, and there are only so many options at such a restricted budget. I can tell you that it'll be a while before I eat peanut butter again.

So when I took a look at the recipes Mario Batali posted to *The Chew's* website while he and his family were taking the challenge (see the links to your right), I was excited to find recipes that would remind me how enjoyable eating can be while still keeping a pretty low budget.

The [Braised Chicken with Potatoes and Tarragon](#) was the perfect choice for me since I had eaten enough lentils and beans during the challenge, and chicken and potatoes was exactly the kind of comfort food I needed. With just a few basic ingredients added – water, garlic and red onion – the dish produced a stock that was incredibly savory and had a bit of unexpected sweetness added from two tablespoons of tomato paste. While the potatoes were perfect for sopping up the stock, I would recommend accompanying this dish with some simple, steamed spinach or string beans that would combine well with the meal's flavors and add the greens that every meal needs.

I'm thankful that Mario's dish helped me enjoy food again, and I love it that, while taking the Food Stamp Challenge, he also took the time to identify recipes that could help low-income Americans eat well anytime without breaking the bank.