

Better You Healthy Grocery Shopping on a Budget



Making nutritious choices does not have to hurt your wallet. Decide on a budget, then use these tips below to outsmart the grocery stores and stretch your food dollars.



Planning is key:

- Plan meals and snacks for the week, looking at your calendar, what's on hand and your family's nutritional needs.
- Find quick and easy recipes online.
- Include meals that will stretch expensive food items (stews, casseroles, stir fry dishes).
- Make a grocery list and stick to it.
- Check for sales and coupons in the newspaper or online and consider discount stores.

When shopping:

- Shop the perimeter of the grocery store for healthy foods like fresh produce, lean proteins and low-fat dairy.
- Buy groceries when you are not hungry and when you are not too rushed.
- Use a store loyalty card for added discounts.
- Find and compare unit prices listed on shelves to get the best price. Look high and low on shelves to find the best buys.
- Purchase items in bulk only if your family will consume it all.
- Choose fresh fruits and vegetables in season; look for buy one, get one free deals and freeze what you won't use in a few days.
- Buy store brands if cheaper.
- Beware the cost of convenience: pre-cut fruits and vegetables, individual cups of yogurt, instant hot cereal and individual cheese servings are convenient, but usually cost more than those that require a bit more prep time.
- Resist checkout temptations, strategically placed for last minute impulse buys.

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Getting the groceries home:

- Wash, cut and store vegetables in clear containers – ready for use.
- Vacuum seal portions of meat bought in bulk and not on the menu in the next 3 days.
- Some meal items can be prepared in advance; pre-cook on days when you have time.
- Double or triple up on recipes and freeze portions of soups and casseroles.
- Incorporate leftovers into another meal.
- Be creative with a fruit or vegetable and use it in different ways during the week.



Your action plan: Where can you save money?

Resources to help your food budget:

- Food budget calculator based on # of people in household, gender, age, meals away
<https://spendsmart.extension.iastate.edu/>
- Guide to seasonal produce by state and month or type of produce
<https://www.seasonalfoodguide.org/>
- Farmers Markets
<https://www.localharvest.org/farmers-markets/>
<https://search.ams.usda.gov/farmersmarkets/>
- Find Pick-Your-Own Farms by regions in Florida
<http://pickyourown.org/FLnorth.htm>