Grocery Shopping On A Budget: Getting More For Less

Many consumers are under the impression that it’s expensive to eat healthy. While shopping on a budget may seem challenging, with the proper tools, you can stretch your dollar and maybe have some money left over.

Planning Ahead is essential to avoid feeling overwhelmed or shocked by prices at the grocery store. It takes a little leg work, but use these tips to get started.

- Decide on a specific amount of money to spend on food for each week. Try not to spend all your money at once.
- Plan a weekly menu to help itemize your grocery list.
- Take inventory of your kitchen to see what you need to buy.
- Browse grocery store circulars to compare prices and select the best deals.
- Make your list, and stick to it! Don’t be tempted by every sale.
- Shop when the store is not usually crowded.
- Do not go to the grocery store hungry. Temptation may lead you to buy something you don’t need.

Tips While Shopping:
- Don’t be afraid to buy store brands.
- Pay attention to the unit price. This will help you pick the least expensive option among similar foods.
- Buying in bulk can be cheaper than buying smaller packages. If you see a sale for a staple item (flour, sugar, seasoning, or oil) it may be a good time to restock.
- Check the expiration date, and choose products that will last the longest. Recently stocked foods are usually toward the back of the shelf.
- Make sure the cashier charges you the correct amount for each item and scans all of your coupons.

Keeping it healthy:
Cutting food costs does not mean cutting health. Choosing nutrient dense foods provides a substantial amount of vitamins and minerals with relatively fewer calories, unhealthy fat, and sugar. Here are some nutrient dense shopping suggestions to get more bang for your buck.

Grains:
Choose 100% whole grains when you can. Whole grains contain more fiber which promotes heart and intestinal health.
Tip: Stock up and freeze breads when they are on sale.

Oatmeal is a whole grain, with no added salt, fat, or sugar.
Tip: Buy a big container of natural whole oats rather than instant oatmeal to maximize cost and health benefits.

Fruits & Vegetables:
Fresh is best, but if you have to choose canned select a low sodium vegetable option and fruits packed in their own juice or light syrup.
Tip: Canned goods have an extended shelf life, stock up on good deals.

A common myth is that you have to buy organic foods to optimize health. While organically grown foods may contain less pesticides, the potential for bodily harm is not serious enough to warrant a strictly organic diet.
Tip: Strawberries, pears, apples, and bell peppers are more likely to have pesticides than other fruits and vegetables. If you have extra money, these products may be more worth buying organic.

Produce that is in-season or grown locally is often fresher and less expensive. Visit your local farmer’s market for fresh fruits and vegetables. Many Greenmarkets will accept Food Stamps.

Dairy:
Choose low-fat or fat-free dairy foods to reduce saturated fat and cholesterol intake. These choices are lower in calories and have the same nutritional benefits.
Tip: Hard cheeses, such as cheddar, last longer, and powdered milk has a longer shelf life.

Meat & Beans:
Boneless skinless chicken breast and turkey cutlets are your leanest options.
Tip: To save money, buy the whole bird, remove the skin, and freeze for up to 3 weeks.

Dried or canned beans are also a great source of protein and dietary fiber.
Tip: Substitute these foods for meat once a day to provide beneficial protein at a lower cost.

Sources:
www.groceryguide.com
www.rd411.com
www.mypyramid.gov
allrecipes.com

Cooking on a Budget!
Avoiding the pre-made and frozen meals at the deli counter will save you money. Try to make those foods from scratch if you can.

Consider preparing a large portion of cooked chicken breast or ground beef for the week and making it into a different meal each night. Throw leftovers atop mixed greens, a baked potato, in a tortilla, or with stir fried vegetables for variety.

Another great way to save time and money is to prepare something that can last several days. Take a look at this recipe idea.

Tuna Noodle Casserole
2C whole wheat elbow macaroni
1 (9 oz) can tuna, drained
1 (10.75 oz) can condensed cream of mushroom soup
½ C low fat milk
1 C low fat shredded cheddar cheese
½ C bread crumbs

Preheat oven to 350°F. Bring a large pot of lightly salted water to a boil. Add pasta, cook for 8-10 minutes or until al dente; drain.

In a large bowl, combine tuna, condensed soup, and milk. Mix with macaroni, and pour into a 2 quart casserole dish. Sprinkle low fat cheddar cheese and bread crumbs on top. Bake in a preheated oven for 20-30 minutes, or until bubbling and browned.


Hopefully these tips will help you navigate the grocery store with ease. Remember to plan ahead, look for sales, and consider your health!
Vegetable of the Quarter: Asparagus

Asparagus are one of the most versatile spring vegetables. Asparagus are delicious simply steamed or roasted, and added to salads, soups, pastas, and stir-fries; they’re also a great alternative to staples like broccoli and string beans. They add color and flavor to almost any seasonal dish.

Asparagus are fat-free, cholesterol-free, and low in sodium, and are an excellent source of folate, vitamins A and C, potassium, iron, and fiber. According to the National Cancer Institute, asparagus has more glutathione, a potent cancer-fighting antioxidant, than any other fruit or vegetable. Additionally, asparagus are high in rutin (a phytochemical that strengthens blood vessels) as well as fiber and inulin (which may help maintain digestive health).

### Nutrition Facts

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<tr>
<th>Serving Size</th>
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<tr>
<td>Calories</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iron</td>
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### How to buy it
- Look for firm, bright green asparagus spears with tightly closed leaves. Check the stems and select bunches without dry or split ends. Thick or thin asparagus is really a matter of personal taste—thin spears are more tender and sweet, while thicker spears have a meater texture and stronger flavor.

### How to store it
- Keep asparagus in the refrigerator in a loose plastic grocery bag to provide plenty of circulation. For best quality, try to use them within a few days from purchase.

### How to clean it
- Rinse asparagus under cool water to remove any grit. Snap or cut off the bottom inch of stems to remove the tough ends. Thick asparagus sometimes develops a tough outer skin that can be easily peeled off.

### How to cook it
- An easy way to prepare asparagus is to coat it with a little olive oil, sprinkle with salt and pepper, and roast it in the oven at 400°F until it turns a light golden brown. You can also steam asparagus in boiling water or in the microwave. When you want to change things up, you can throw bite-sized pieces in a stir-fry, pasta dish, or cold salad. However, you choose to prepare it, asparagus is done when it’s tender and still has a slight crunch to it.

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**Roasted Asparagus with Lemon & Mint**

**Prep and Cook Time:** 30 minutes

**Ingredients:**

1 bunch thick asparagus, rinsed with bottom 1-2 inches trimmed off
1/2 cup olive oil
1/4 cup lemon juice (1-2 lemons)
1 teaspoon fresh mint, chopped
Salt and pepper to taste

**Directions:**

Preheat oven to 400°F. Whisk olive oil, lemon juice, and mint in a large mixing bowl. Toss asparagus with olive oil mixture, and lay in a single layer on a large rimmed baking sheet. Season as desired with salt and pepper. Place baking sheet in oven and roast for 8-10 minutes or until light golden-brown and tender.

**Yield:** 4 servings

**Source:** simplyrecipes.com

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**Herb of the Quarter: Mint**

Most of us are familiar with the refreshing taste of mint in toothpastes, mouthwashes, chewing gums, and candies. Mint comes in many varieties including peppermint, water mint, and spearmint. Mint is rich in vitamins A and C as well as a wide range of essential minerals such as manganese, copper, iron, potassium, and calcium. Even in small quantities, mint offers a number of health benefits.

- **Digestion:** The aroma of mint tea can soothe the stomach and promote digestion.

- **Nausea and Headache:** Mint balms or oils rubbed on the forehead, temples, and nose may provide relief from nausea or headaches.

- **Respiratory Problems:** Whether suffering from allergies, sinus infections, or a common cold, drinking mint tea may help open air passageways and relieve congestion.

- **Skin Care:** Mint oils provide a cooling sensation to the skin and can help to treat minor burns, itching, and skin irritations. Mint tea may also help clear up skin disorders like acne.

- **Cancer:** Preliminary research shows that enzymes and antioxidants present in mint might help prevent certain types of cancer such as skin, lung, and colon cancers.

The most common way to add mint to your diet is through drinking mint tea. Fresh mint leaves can also be added to soups, curries, sauces, dressings, rice dishes, and even dessert recipes.

**Sources:**

- www.organicfacts.net
- www.associatedcontent.com
- www.helpwithcooking.com

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**If you would like to schedule a nutrition counseling appointment, please call:**

Sarah Robertson, RD, CDN at 212-367-1261 OR

Jenny Torino, MS, RD at 212-367-1259