



Tips for Grocery Shopping on a Budget

Are you feeling the pinch of rising food prices? Here are some ways you can make the most of your food dollars.

Plan meals and make a list. A sure way to overspend is by wandering through the aisles and tossing whatever looks good into your shopping cart. Instead, plan weekly menus and write out a shopping list that corresponds with the store aisles. Look for menu planning and recipe help on your supermarket's website. Many food store chains feature tools for planning and pricing meals.

Use coupons and reward cards. Did you know that the Sunday inserts in your local newspaper have anywhere from \$50 to \$75 worth of coupons in them each week? Clipping coupons or printing them off from grocery store websites can save you 10-15% on your grocery bill. Also, consider joining your supermarket's shoppers' club. Not only will you enjoy reduced price specials, but you may receive additional coupons for items you regularly purchase printed on the back of store receipts.

Buy store brands. The Food Marketing Institute reports 56 percent of shoppers say they are economizing by buying store brand products (known as private label). Private label brands are often 15-20% less expensive and just as high quality as their national brand counterparts.

Buy on sale and in bulk. Cruising the aisle for sales on shelf-stable products you use regularly is a great way to save money. Keep in mind - buy larger quantities only if you have space to store and use the food before it spoils.

Compare unit prices. Use the "unit price" (price per pound, ounce, or pint) to compare national brands with store brands, or bulk and economy-sizes with single-serve or regular-size packages. Many stores show the unit price on the shelf tag underneath the item.

Read food labels. Compare ingredients and nutrients using the % Daily Value. Choose items with less than 5% Daily Value for saturated fat, cholesterol, and sodium. Purchase more nutrient-dense foods that are high in fiber, vitamins, and minerals. Foods with more than 5 g fiber per serving are considered high in fiber - that's about 10% of your daily requirement!

Shop the perimeter. Fresh produce, meats, dairy and breads tend to be on the outer perimeter of supermarkets, so start there before hitting the inner aisles for other necessities.

Nutrition Facts	
8 servings per container	
Serving size	2/3 cup (55g)
Amount per serving	
Calories	230
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 8g	10%
Saturated Fat 1g	5%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 160mg	7%
Total Carbohydrate 37g	13%
Dietary Fiber 4g	14%
Total Sugars 12g	
Includes 10g Added Sugars	20%
Protein 3g	
Vitamin D 2mcg	10%
Calcium 260mg	20%
Iron 8mg	45%
Potassium 235mg	6%

* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.



Shop seasonally and locally. Fresh produce often costs less when it's in season and travels a shorter distance - plus it retains more of its nutrients and tastes better, too! Visit a local farmer's market or join a produce club to take advantage of seasonal fruits and veggies.

Keep foods safe and prevent food waste. Use dating information ("sell by" and "best used by") to help select the freshest foods at the market. Put cold and frozen foods in your shopping cart last, and store them right away in the refrigerator or freezer. Once you're home, store foods so those with the oldest "sell by" dates will be used first. Know how long foods will stay fresh after you bring them home - for example, eggs that are refrigerated properly last up to 6 months before they go bad!

Pay attention at the checkout. Make sure prices are rung up as advertised or as indicated on the shelf label, especially for sale items. Some stores will even give you the item free if they make a mistake on the price.

Sidebar: Food Group Economics 101

Produce: Seasonal produce often offers the best nutritional value for your money. However, for produce that isn't in season, canned or frozen fruits and vegetables might be more economical.

Grains: Count on whole-grain breads, cereals, pastas, and other grain products to add variety to your meals at a low cost. Buy in bulk when possible and cook them yourself rather than buying quick-cooking or pre-seasoned varieties.

Dairy: Look for less expensive forms of milk, such as nonfat dry milk or gallon containers of skim milk.

Protein: Calculate the cost per serving, not cost per pound, when buying meats; for example, 1 lbs of ground turkey will feed 6-8 people if used in chili compared to 4 people if used to make burgers. Eggs, chicken, and turkey are usually your most economical choices. Also consider vegetarian sources of protein like beans, peas, and nuts.

Fats and Sweets: These items provide a lot of calories but little to no nutrients. Not a very sweet deal.

For more information about healthy lifestyles, contact Guilford County Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health at 336-641-7777 or www.guilfordcountync.gov

Free language assistance is available upon request.

Adapted from an article in the *ADA Times* July/August 2008 by Linda McDonald, MS, RD, LD