

SHOPPING ON A BUDGET

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Today, most of us live on a budget, and when it comes to our food dollars, we are always looking for ways to reduce costs. Ultimately, being able to afford healthy food can be difficult, even when you know which foods to choose. However, even when you're eating on a tight budget, it doesn't mean you can't enjoy healthy foods.

Here are seven valuable tips for making inexpensive meals more beneficial to your health and easier on your wallet.

1. Plan ahead and Make a Shopping List

Take a few minutes and plan out your meals for the week before heading out to the grocery store. Additionally, to make the most of your food dollars, plan meals around items that are on sale, including fresh produce, lean protein, and whole grains.

Make sure to compare national brands with store brands and shop for the lowest price to get the maximum value. Remember, when you take time to plan meals ahead of time and make a list, you are in control of buying only what you need. In turn, you are reducing your food waste and overspending on unnecessary items. Be sure to check your refrigerator, pantry, and freezer before heading out to the store to avoid purchasing items you already have.



Plan ahead and make a shopping list.
Photo credit: Pixabay

2. Use Coupons

Coupons are a great way to save on groceries as long as you use them on items you already would buy. Compare prices on similar items even when using coupons since sometimes other brands can still cost less even with coupons.

Coupons can be found in the Sunday newspaper, printed online, on your local grocery store website, and on apps using your smartphone.

3. Shop for In-Season Produce

Purchasing produce that is in season means you are getting the best value for your money. For example, avoid buying a watermelon in January. While it may sound delicious, you will pay a premium, and it may not taste great. In-season produce costs less, tastes better, is fresher, and is at peak nutrition.

Check out your local farmers' markets too! Not only will you be supporting your local farmers but often times the prices are more affordable.



Purchasing produce that is in season means you are getting the best value for your money.

Photo credit: Pixabay

4. Buy Frozen Fruits and Vegetables or Canned Alternatives

Did you know that frozen produce is just as nutritious as fresh? More often than not, buying frozen fruit and vegetables is more cost-effective. This means that produce is picked at peak freshness before packing. This can include canned products as well.

However, make sure to read the ingredients on the food label to avoid purchasing fruits and vegetables with added sugar or salt.

5. Avoid Grabbing Convenience Food

While it can be tempting to grab already prepped food, you will pay the price. Take, for example, washed and chopped lettuce in a bag; while it certainly saves time, you most definitely will pay more. So, opt to buy a head and lettuce and wash and chop it yourself.

6. Lookout for More Cost-Effective Protein Options

Meat is usually one of the highest dollar ingredients in most recipes, so it is best to consider buying a larger quantity when it is on sale and freeze it for another time, consider using a less expensive cut of meat, replacing some of the meat in a dish with

beans, brown rice, or vegetables. Lastly, experimenting with other non-animal protein-rich sources like beans, nuts, eggs, and lentils can be highly cost-effective.

7. Repurpose Your Leftovers

It can be tempting to throw leftovers into the garbage but DON'T. Enjoy leftovers for lunch the next day, whip up a new dish from the leftover ingredients, or freeze what you didn't eat. There are so many ways to use the same ingredients for different dishes.

With these tips, you can enjoy healthy and nutritious food while cutting down on your food spending. Too overwhelmed? Start small; even minor changes can make a difference in your food costs.

References:

1. Eat right Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics <https://www.eatright.org/food/planning-and-prep/smart-shopping/shop-healthy-on-a-budget>
2. USDA MyPlate U.S. Department of Agriculture <https://www.myplate.gov/eat-healthy/healthy-eating-budget>

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