



Healthy Eating on a Budget



Despite common belief that it is not possible to eat well on a budget, it actually IS! You're not alone if you don't believe so – in fact, 62% of shoppers say it costs too much to eat healthy food. One study showed that serving fruits and vegetables for snacks can actually SAVE you money. Snack-size portions of produce cost about 2 cents less on average than snack-size portions of foods like crackers, chips, or donuts. Once you know you can do it, all you need are the tips and tricks to make it happen. This guide will help you achieve your goals.



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Before Going Shopping

Plan out meals for the week and only go to the store once.

Make a grocery list as you are less likely to purchase items impulsively. Check for items you may already have hidden in the pantry.

Take advantage of coupons. Open a supermarket discount shopper card. Consider opening an account at a wholesalers such as Cosco or B.J.'s.

Plan meals around discounts and remain flexible to incorporate sale items into recipes.

Compare prices on-line or in a local newspaper as there are price differences among grocery stores. Try to use coupons on items that you would normally purchase.



While Shopping

Consider scratch cooking. Instead of buying prepared lunchables, purchase sliced lunch meat or cut cheese to create your own. See “Recipes” for healthy, budget-friendly meals.

Avoid highly processed, packaged, or “junk foods”. While these foods may be less expensive, they add minimal nutrition for your food dollar in the long run.

Purchase in season items. This means that produce has come from a shorter distance to make it to the store, so it will be fresher and less expensive. Most stores have specials on produce every week, so check circulars.

Purchase in bulk. Buy large bags of frozen vegetables: it is just as nutritious as fresh and it avoids spoilage issues that fresh are susceptible to. Buy larger cuts of meats, i.e. purchase a whole chicken vs pre-portioned breasts or thighs. If you purchase in bulk family packages (greater than 5 lbs), freeze the rest.

Only purchase items you will use between now and the next time you go shopping to avoid food from spoiling.

Purchase store-brand vs. name-brand which is often cheaper.



At Home

Stick it in the freezer. If you purchased meat in bulk, separate into individual portions prior to freezing it, so you can easily defrost it later. If you purchased fresh produce, cut or slice items such as onions or peppers before freezing them.

Trim visible fat from meat. Bake or broil meats in a drip pan to reduce fat content. Braise or pot-roast cheaper cuts of meat to make them more tender. Refrigerate your dish after cooking so it can allow the fat to harden on the surface where you can cut it off.

Incorporate healthy fillers to meats to decrease the amount of meat that is needed. Add non-starchy veggies that have vitamins and fiber; nuts and seeds for protein; or whole-grain starches like brown rice which have B-vitamins. Consider adding these to stir-fry dishes or casseroles.

Have vegetarian meals 2-3 times per week. Vegetarian protein sources include beans, soy (i.e. tofu), nuts which are less expensive than meat, lower in saturated fat., and higher in fiber. Consider making vegetable stir-fry or chili made with beans and veggies.



Michigan's Locally Grown & Produced Foods



Apples, Apricots, Blueberries, Cantaloupes, Cherries, Grapes, Honeydew Melon, Nectarines, Peaches, Pears, Plums, Strawberries, Watermelon



Asparagus, Beets, Broccoli, Brussels Sprouts, Carrots, Cauliflower, Celery, Cucumbers, Eggplant, Garlic, Kale, Lettuce, Mushrooms, Onions, Peppers, Potatoes, Spinach, Squash, Sweet Potatoes, Tomatoes

Tip: Purchase in season, frozen or canned produce which locks in more nutrients and is less expensive than fresh produce.



Barley, Buckwheat, Corn for grain (i.e. flour), Oats, Rye, Wheat

Tip: Aim to make at least half of your grains whole. Look out for the first ingredient as "whole grain" on the nutrition facts label.



Almonds, Beans, Beef, Chicken, Duck, Eggs, Goat, Hazelnuts, Lamb, Pecans, Perch, Pork, Quail, Soybeans, Sunflower seeds, Tilapia, Trout, Turkey, Venison, Walnuts

Tip: Purchase meat in family size or value pack versus smaller cut sizes like breasts or thighs. Lower cost protein options include eggs, beans and peas such as kidney beans, lentils, split peas.



Milk, Milk from sheep and goats

Tip: Opt for low-fat or fat-free options which contain the same amount of nutrients. Purchase items, i.e. yogurt containers in larger sizes versus individual sizes to save money.



For more information on purchasing locally grown produce, please visit the Michigan Farmer's Market Association:
<http://mifma.org/>

Recipe Ideas



Black Bean Quesadillas

Total Servings: 8

Total Cost: \$\$\$\$\$

Ingredients

- 3/4 cup chunky salsa (or Pico De Gallo)
- 1 can 15.5 ounce low-sodium black beans (drained and rinsed)
- 2 cups shredded reduced-fat Colby & Monterey Jack cheese
- 2 tablespoons fresh cilantro (finely chopped)
- 4 8-inch whole wheat flour tortillas
- 1/2 teaspoon extra virgin olive oil

Instructions

1. Using a strainer, drain excess liquid from salsa.
2. Transfer tomato mixture into a bowl.
3. Mix together black beans, cheese, & cilantro.
4. Separate black bean medley over half of each tortilla. Fold tortillas in half.
5. Heat skillet over medium to high heat. Brush with oil. Place filled tortillas on skillet.
6. Cook for about 5 minutes.

MyPlate Food Groups: 1/4 cup veggies, 1 ounce grains

Adapted from: <https://whatscooking.fns.usda.gov/recipes/myplate-cnpp/black-bean-quesadillas-cnpp>



Chicken Stir Fry

Total Servings: 6

Total Cost: \$\$\$\$\$

Ingredients

- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1/2 cup carrots (peeled)
- 1/2 cup celery (sliced thin)
- 1/4 cup onion (cut into strips)
- 1 green pepper (cut into strips)
- 1 tbsp garlic (finely chopped)
- 3 cups brown rice

Instructions

1. Heat a large pan with olive oil over medium to high heat
2. Add veggies and garlic to the heated pan. Stir until garlic is slightly brown.
3. Add the chicken to the pan.
4. Stir the food for ~1 minute in the pan.
5. Serve with cooked rice.

**The recommended safe minimum internal temperature for chicken is 165 degrees F.*

MyPlate Food Groups: 1/2 cup veggies, 1 ounce grains, 1 1/2 ounces protein

Adapted from: <https://whatscooking.fns.usda.gov/recipes/food-distribution-fdd/chicken-stir-fry>

Recipe Ideas



Greek Pork Chops

Total Servings: 4

Ingredients

1 lb pork cutlets (or 4 boneless pork chops)
1 tbsp olive oil
1 tbsp red wine vinegar OR lemon juice
2 cloves garlic (peeled, minced)
1 tbsp dried oregano
1/2 tsp sea salt
1/4 tsp black pepper
1 cup green beans

Instructions

1. Place the pork, oil, vinegar, oregano, & garlic in a bowl and mix well. Cover bowl and refrigerate for at least 4 hours overnight.
2. Sprinkle the pork with salt and pepper.
3. Place a skillet on the stove over high heat. When hot, add the pork to the dry skillet, waiting 30 minutes between each addition.
4. Cook for 7-8 minutes on each side until crispy. Add green beans to sautee until desired.

MyPlate Food Groups: 1/2 cup veggies, 1 ounce grains, 2 1/2 ounces protein

Tip: How to Cook with Less Fat

Use low-fat or no-fat dressings, dairy products, etc., when possible.

Use nonstick cooking spray to grease pans.

Bake, broil, boil, steam or grill meats.

Substitute applesauce for oil in your favorite baked products. Most cakes can be substituted one for one. For cookies and bars, substitute applesauce for half the fat.

Choose canned fruits packed in their natural juices.

Buy tuna packed in spring water instead of oil.

PROTEIN

Try swapping other protein sources for the given recipes. Choose lean proteins and vary your protein choices

Using affordable proteins such as beans, eggs, and canned fish several times a week can be a healthy option.

Replace half the ground meat in tacos with beans. Used canned tuna vs salmon in a casserole. Garnish a salad with a hardboiled egg.

How to Understand a Price Tag

Understanding what the numbers mean on a price tag can help you be savvy. Two important definitions are:

Retail Price - price paid for each item

Unit Price - indicates how much an item costs per pound, ounce, quart, etc.

The following shows two different price tags. In the first one, the retail price is \$1.62 for one 32 oz. yogurt. The unit price is \$0.05 per oz. In the second one, the retail price is \$0.72 for one 6 oz. yogurt, but the unit price is \$0.12 per oz. Based on the unit price, you can determine that the larger, 32 oz. yogurt saves you \$0.07.



What determines the unit price?

TOTAL PRICE / SIZE = UNIT PRICE

Example: What is the unit price of a 6 oz yogurt that has a retail price (price paid) of \$0.72?

—> $\$0.72 / 6 \text{ oz} = \0.12

References

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For more information, please visit: <https://www.choosemyplate.gov/budget>



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