

# Eating Healthy on a Budget

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Like it or not, food is a major money drain on the average American. Month in and month out, people spend hundreds of dollars to keep their bellies full. According to the USDA's Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion, the average expenditure for a low-cost meal plan for a family of four in the United States is **\$557**. This is substantially less than the liberal food plan, which comes in at **\$1,088** for a family of four for a month.

One of the most effective ways to save money is to cook at home more often, but that comes with its own set of problems. The question is How can you cook a variety of meals at home without buying tons of ingredients and breaking the bank?

It's simple! Of course, eating healthy starts with shopping healthy by using the 3 P's:

- ✓ Plan
- ✓ Purchase
- ✓ Prepare

Using the 3 P's you will be able to plan a healthy and affordable meal get the most value when shopping. Let's get started!

## Plan

### Step 1: Planning your weekly meals



- Think about meals you will serve throughout the week.
- Set a Budget. Focus your budget on foods that are healthier for your family such as vegetables, fruits, whole grains, dairy, and protein foods.
- Make a List of current items. (*What's on Your Shelf*). Knowing what you have will help you not only to buy the foods you need as well as help you to utilize current leftover items.
- Write down a list of foods you will need to prepare your meals.

### Step 2: Low Cost Options

- When creating your list choose foods that cost less all year long such as beans, eggs, and carrots. Frozen vegetables like spinach and green beans are also low-cost options.
- Consider food items that can be used in more than one dish such as potatoes and stir fry veggies (carrots, mushrooms, peppers). These items can be used for salads and other dishes too.
- To cut cost used alternative food options. For example: Instead using ground beef trying using ground turkey or chicken

### Step 3: Know what you want to prepare

Your goal is to plan meals to:

- ✓ Save time
- ✓ Stretch your dollar
- ✓ Help you feed your family healthy and
- ✓ nutritious food

**Planning not only saves time and money but also helps us choose healthier foods.**

### Step 4: Savings Tips



- To get the best bang for your buck. Use store circulars and go online to look for coupons, sales, and store specials. Make note of which items are truly a deal that will save you money *and* satisfy your family. Also, don't be afraid to purchase store brands. Store brands can still be cheaper even when using a coupon on a national brand.
- Look for stores that double coupon values as well as honor price matching such as Walmart.
- Some stores will allow you to use a manufacturer's coupon plus a store coupon.

## Purchase



- Stick to your list
- Have something to eat before you go shopping. It's easier to stick to your shopping list when you are not hungry.
- Try store brands. They are the same quality and cost less.
- Find and compare unit prices listed on shelves to get the best price.
- If you have extra space consider buying items in bulk or as family packs which usually cost less.

## Prepare



- Easiest part!
- Let your children help you prepare
- Use healthy cooking methods such as
  - Broiling
  - Baking
  - Grilling
  - Steaming
- Some meal items can be prepared in advance; precook on days when you have time.
- Double or triple up on recipes and freeze meal-sized containers of soups and casseroles.

Choose MyPlate

<http://www.choosemyplate.gov/healthy-eating-on-budget.html>

What's Cooking? USDA Mixing Bowl

<http://www.whatscooking.fns.usda.gov/>

**For more information, please visit the LSU AgCenter website or the websites below.**



Cooking with Limited Recourses

<https://snaped.fns.usda.gov/nutrition-education-materials/cooking/cooking-limited-resources>

LSU AgCenter SNAP Ed Program

[http://www.lsuagcenter.com/topics/food\\_health/education\\_resources/fnp](http://www.lsuagcenter.com/topics/food_health/education_resources/fnp)