

# Nutrition News

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## Food Budgeting

### Cutting Food Costs: Planning, Shopping and Buying



We are all feeling the crunch on our monthly budget these days. Being thrifty is important when we need to watch our food dollars. With a little planning and smart shopping, you will be able to keep more money in your pocket. Here are some tips on how to plan, shop and buy foods on a budget.

#### Plan

- Never leave home without a shopping list. Keep paper and pencil in the kitchen to list the foods you need to buy.
- Plan your meals for the week – then put the food items you need to prepare those meals on your list.
- Keep your kitchen cabinets and refrigerator organized so that you can see what you have and know what you need to add to your grocery list.
- Prepare some meals without meat. Use dried beans, eggs, or peanut butter as a main dish.
- Plan meals using seasonal foods. Fruits and vegetables in season are cheaper and tastier than buying them out of season.
- If you use coupons, clip coupons for those items you already use. Don't put something on your list that you don't need or would not otherwise buy just because you have a coupon.
- Think about mileage. Shopping at many stores may not be worth the extra time and gasoline cost.

#### Shop

- Shop only once a week. The more trips to the store, the more money you spend.
- Have a set budget on how much you can spend on food each week.
- Do not shop when you are hungry because you will buy extra food that you would not ordinarily buy.
- Shop without your children if possible. They may ask for foods that you would not normally buy or are not as nutritious as you would like them to be.
- Buy foods at grocery stores with the best prices for the foods you buy – dollar store or the local farmers market. Avoid shopping in convenience stores; they tend to be more expensive.
- Shop at stores that offer extra savings on “seniors day” or double-coupon days.
- Avoid buying foods that are displayed at the end of the aisle or are sample foods. Some stores want you to try something new so that you will be tempted to buy it and try it. If the foods are not on your list, do not put them in your cart.

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## Buy

- Check the store flyer for sales items and stock up.
- Compare brands. Buy store brands instead of national brands.
- Compare the unit price of food items. Comparing the cost per ounce or per pound will help you get the most for your money.
- Buy foods in bulk only if you save money doing so.
- Avoid buying foods that will go bad quickly. Spoiled food is money in the trash can.
- Avoid buying junk food for snacks. Stock up on fresh or canned fruits and vegetables, 100% fruit juices, milk and popcorn for snacks.
- Check the *sell by* and *use by* dates to be sure you buy the freshest foods.
- Buy the most economical form of a food item. For example, buy plain breads and cereals instead of the fancy breads and cereals. Buy regular rice, grits or oatmeal rather than the quick-cooking version. Head lettuce is much cheaper than buying lettuce in a bag. Buy a whole chicken and cut it up yourself rather than a whole cut-up chicken.
- Shop around the edges of the grocery store. Generally, the healthier, less-processed foods, such as fruits, vegetables, dairy and meat are found around the edges of the store. These foods are healthier and go further in the kitchen.
- Do not buy dented or damaged canned goods. They may be inexpensive but could be a waste if the food is spoiled.

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To find out more, contact your parish agent.