

21 BUDGET HEALTHY EATING TIPS

Good Food Needn't Be Expensive!



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Introduction

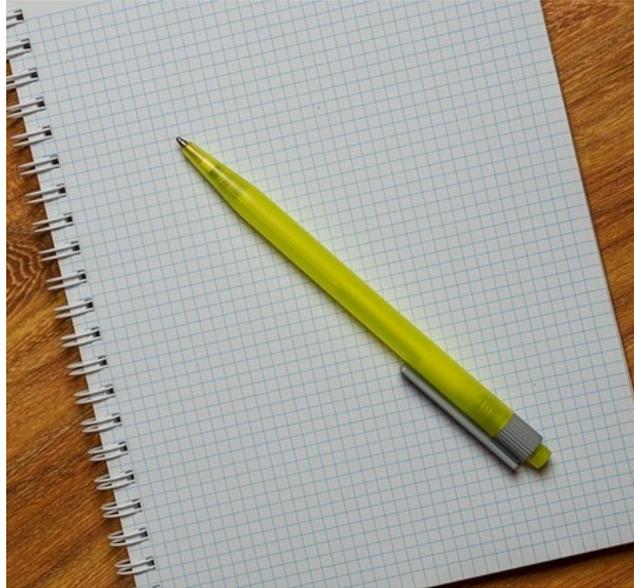
Shopping to ensure that your family gets the proper nutrition, while also sticking to a tight budget, can be difficult. Because of the lower cost of unhealthy processed foods, many modern day families have had to turn to cheaper foods that just don't deliver the nutrients and vitamins that the human body needs. It seems that money just does not go as far as it used to, and this includes at your grocer or supermarket.

Fortunately, you don't have to sacrifice your family's health in return for a less painful financial experience in the checkout line. When you put into practice the following 21 budget healthy eating tips, you and your family will enjoy delicious yet healthy foods, without breaking the bank.



1) Before You Go Shopping, Make a Budget And Stick to It

There is an old saying that if you fail to plan, you plan to fail. That is certainly true when sticking to a budget. First off, do not think of your budgeted food expenditure as a set of handcuffs. Instead, see it as a way to free your mind from worry and stress over spending too much.



Financial advisor Dave Ramsey advises that around 10% of your total income is a great place to start a grocery budget. This means making a budget for every other financial aspect of your life as well. If 10% is not enough to sufficiently and nutritiously feed your family, spend a little more here, and cut back in some other area. Stick to this budget for at least 30 days, then review and make necessary changes.

2) Plan Ahead Each and Every Month

Working hand-in-hand with setting and adhering to a family budget comes planning. This will include daily and weekly coupon acquisition, as well as constantly keeping your ears open concerning sales and bargains in your area.

Set aside a specific time each and every month or week to focus your time entirely on planning your grocery shopping trips. Sit down with your coupons and a notebook used specifically for planning your pantry purchases. In a

very detailed manner, write down just what you plan to buy, according to the budget you just set.

3) Buy "In Season" and Purchase Locally

When you purchase foods that are in season and from local merchants, you generally get fruits and vegetables that have fewer preservatives, insecticides and other chemical negatives.

Also, buying in season means that you usually spend less for foods. When local farmers harvest their produce, they get it to local stores and roadside farmers' markets as quickly as possible.

They have an abundance at this time, and that tends to drive down prices. By purchasing locally and buying in season, you also get the most nutrients and nutritional benefits that food has to offer, since it is at the peak of its growing cycle. By supporting local merchants you benefit your local economy, and when you buy in season, you save money while eating the healthiest fruits and vegetables as well.

4) Track What You Waste

Try as you may, you probably end up throwing away some food every now and then. Keep track each month of the different types of foods and beverages you are throwing out. Look for patterns, and areas where you can make smarter decisions about food preparation.

In the United States alone, an incredible 90 billion pounds of food is wasted

each and every year. From farm to plate to landfill, that is anywhere from \$1,350 to \$2,275 of waste per family annually according to the Natural Resources Defense Council. Learn the art of cooking with leftover

5) Buy in Bulk

Larger supermarkets and dry goods grocery stores allow you to cut back on spending immediately, because they buy in such huge quantities. You can also purchase industrial and restaurant size quantity canned and frozen food items. This can in some cases save you from 25% to 50% off of foods you would already buy in smaller quantities. Which leads easily right into our next budget healthy tip.

6) Shop at Wholesale Clubs

At wholesale clubs like Sam's and BJ's in the United States, membership is free to certain businesses, trade organizations and other corporations. Even if you have to purchase an annual membership outright, the cost is more than recouped on your first shopping trip or two.

A recent shop at Sam's Club online found Folgers Classic Roast Ground Coffee (48 oz container) with an everyday price which was 50% to 100% more expensive elsewhere on the Internet.

To help you free up money from other financial spending areas in your life, these stores are an excellent source for bulk baby items, clothing and toiletries as well

7) Try to Avoid the Dirty Dozen

Each year the Environmental Working Group publishes its annual Dirty Dozen list. The guide takes 48 common and popular vegetables and fruits and ranks them according to the "dirtiest" of the bunch. By analyzing 32,000 samples that have been tested by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Food and Drug Administration, those common fruits and vegetables with the most pesticide residue present are uncovered.

2014 was the fourth year in a row that apples were the most pesticide-laden produce, followed by strawberries, single grapes and celery. Peaches, whole spinach, bell peppers, nectarines, cucumbers, cherry tomatoes, imported snap peas and potatoes all made the Dirty Dozen list in 2014. Every year the Environmental Working Group publishes its findings at www.ewg.org, including the cleanest fruits and vegetables, which we will cover next.



8) Get Plenty of The Clean 15

Eating for nutrition while sticking to a budget means avoiding pesticides and other possibly dangerous chemicals that can make their way into your food.

The Environmental Working Group list we just mentioned highlighted some fruits and vegetables which you want to wash very thoroughly before eating, or avoid altogether. However, there is a flip-side to that research.

The Clean 15 highlights which fruits and vegetables of the top 48 tested proved to be the cleanest, showing a presence of the fewest possible pesticides. Kicking off that list in 2014 were avocados, sweet corn, a whole pineapple, fresh cabbage and frozen peas. Also making the list as clean food were onions, asparagus, mangoes, papaya, cantaloupe, kiwi, eggplant, grapefruit, cauliflower and sweet potatoes. As mentioned above, check the official www.ewg.org website each year for an updated list.

9) Grow Your Own

When you grow your own fresh garden produce, you control everything. You can make sure you use pesticide and chemical-free soil and seeds, and there is absolutely nothing that tastes better than fresh fruits and vegetables grown right in your backyard or on your patio.

If you live in a small apartment or home, wonderful books like Square Foot Gardening by Mel Bartholomew allow you to take advantage of each and

every inch of available gardening space you have. Growing your own backyard produce provides so many different rewards, and is definitely a healthy, budget-friendly tip as well.

10) When Purchasing Meat, Buy Half, Whole Animals

Competition is fierce in the food industry, and this frequently leads to local butchers offering discounts as much as 25% or 50% when you purchase meat in bulk. Consider teaming up with a couple of friends to split the cost of a quarter, half or whole animal.

As an example, frequently you may have to spend as much as \$15 to \$18 per pound on a choice cut of steak. That same exact piece can result in a cost of just \$5 to \$7 per pound when purchased in a typical one-half cow package.

Meat is going to be much more expensive than fruits and vegetables, and choosing to buy in bulk here means a larger one time investment, but the savings over time per pound are extreme.

11) Don't Forget the Versatile Chicken

A recent web search on Google for "chicken recipes" turned up more than 179 million results. From soups to sandwiches, salads to casseroles, the inexpensive chicken is extremely versatile. Usually costing much less per pound than beef, lamb and pork, chicken is the basis for many healthy meals.

One cup of diced or chopped chicken delivers just 306 calories, and only 94 mg of sodium. On the plus side, that single cup of chicken delivers approximately 70% of your daily protein requirement, as well as 15% of the vitamin B6 you need every day. Chicken also offers vitamin A, calcium, iron and magnesium, and is available year-round.



12) For Eggs, Go Local

If you can find farmers offering eggs from pasture hens, these are the healthiest eggs you can buy. When you go straight to your local farmer and cut out the middleman, these ultra-healthy eggs wind up costing you less than pastured eggs at your nearby specialty health food store. If you don't know what farmers are located near you, check out LocalHarvest.org.

13) Get a Friend Involved

In the same way that teaming up with a partner when you exercise leads to greater success, planning and executing your grocery shopping trips with someone else who has the same goals in mind can keep you on track. You can watch each other's backs, team up on larger purchases which create greater savings, and then head home and take advantage of our next budget healthy tip.

14) Have Community Cooking Parties

This strategy works really well with the bulk-buying and wholesale shopping tips mentioned above. When you get another couple of families involved in a community cooking session, you can really begin to see the grocery savings start to add up.

This is also an excellent way to create a social environment of like-minded individuals who can motivate each other to stick to healthy eating patterns, while also saving money at the same time.

15) Buy Frozen Foods

While fresh is always best, frozen foods are often times healthier than their canned counterparts. Just make sure you read nutrition labels, and you will find that purchasing frozen foods allows for a lot of versatility. You also end up throwing out less food, since you can simply portion off the amount you need from your freezer each and every time you cook.

16) Prepare And Eat Fresh and Healthy Foods – Like Soup!

The number one health culprit in soups is usually salt. However, there are literally thousands of recipe books and websites that show how you can prepare healthy and delicious soups on even the tightest of budgets.

Because of the high liquid quantity, you feel full quicker. Soups also ensure that you are getting plenty of liquid in your diet, and you can portion out individual servings, and even freeze soups, chowders and stews for quick and simple reheated meals later.

17) Incorporate These Foods into Your Daily and Weekly Diets



A quick web search for "healthy foods under one dollar" recently returned an incredible 1,600,000 results. We are not talking tasteless, unpopular foods either. WebMD points out that routinely, bananas can run as inexpensive as \$0.25 \$0.45 per serving, with one large banana weighing about 1/2 pound.

That single banana delivers just 121 calories, 20% of your required daily vitamin C, 14% of your daily potassium and 3.5 grams of your daily fiber.

Other extremely inexpensive but healthy foods recommended by the well respected health site include apples, baby carrots, canned beans and canned tomatoes.

18) Focus On "Single-Ingredient" Foods

Do you know why the produce section in almost every grocery store or supermarket is off in some back corner of the building? That is because the higher margin items, usually canned vegetables and beverages, are up front to get your attention first.

Fresh grapes, apples, bananas and cantaloupe can be had as inexpensively as \$0.20 per serving. Garlic is routinely as inexpensive as \$0.30 per bulb, and improves memory while improving your heart health with amazing antioxidants, and also reduces your risk of cancer and Alzheimer's. Raw, fresh kale is very versatile, and has to be considered the antioxidant King of fruits and vegetables. Broccoli, winter squash, sweet potatoes, watermelon, pears and Kiwi are also inexpensive but healthy one-ingredient food items.

19) Beans, Beans the Musical Fruit, the More You Eat the More You Toot!

That funny little jingle refers to the flatulence that beans can cause, but they are also incredibly healthy. And they require a minimal financial investment.

Garbanzo beans, lentils and black beans are extremely versatile, and when purchased as dry goods can run as low as \$0.10 to \$0.12 per half cup serving. Excellent providers of protein, calcium, fiber, folic acid, potassium and healthy antioxidants, dried beans can last for over a year past their printed expiration date in a cool, dark pantry.



20) Get the Kids Involved

Your children probably have a few favorite food items, which taste great, but are not the healthiest. Weaning your children away from sugar-laden, fatty and fast foods will be much easier when you make planning, shopping and cooking a family exercise. This is also a great way to teach financial responsibility and budget planning.

21) Rinse and Repeat

Healthy habits come from unconscious behavior, which is developed from consciously practicing these 21 budget healthy tips on a consistent basis over time. Continue to focus on at least a few of these strategies each and every time you shop and prepare meals.

You will find that a subconscious skill will begin to develop, which allows you to quickly spot bargain grocery and produce shopping opportunities that are also healthy and delicious. Sit down and write out a sensible budget, plan your shopping, buy in bulk, get your friends and neighbors involved, and your waistline will shrink as your wallet or pocketbook gets fatter.

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