



How to stretch your food dollars on a budget

by Mina Goodman, RDN

Grocery shopping can be a real challenge, especially if you are on a limited budget. Because food is a controllable expense, it can be a target for reduced spending when money is tight. You can follow these tips for keeping to a budget and making your dollars go even further. Savings can start before you even get the grocery store by planning a list which can be on paper or digitally. Get an idea of what types of protein and carbohydrates you'd like at your meals for the week, and then be sure to pair with vegetables, fruits, and ideas for snacks. Don't forget to check your refrigerator and pantry to see what you already have, which can help save money and prevent food waste. See below for some healthy, budget friendly examples of each category of food:

Protein:

- | | | |
|--|----------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> eggs | <input type="checkbox"/> tofu | <input type="checkbox"/> seitan |
| <input type="checkbox"/> beans | <input type="checkbox"/> chicken | <input type="checkbox"/> cheese |
| <input type="checkbox"/> peanut butter | <input type="checkbox"/> fish | <input type="checkbox"/> cottage cheese |
| <input type="checkbox"/> nuts | <input type="checkbox"/> beef | <input type="checkbox"/> yogurt |
| <input type="checkbox"/> seeds | <input type="checkbox"/> tempeh | |

Carbohydrates:

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> brown rice | <input type="checkbox"/> whole wheat, vegetable, or bean pasta | <input type="checkbox"/> whole grain crackers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> whole wheat bread | <input type="checkbox"/> quinoa | <input type="checkbox"/> potatoes with the skin on |
| <input type="checkbox"/> oats | | |

Vegetables:








(fresh, frozen, or low sodium canned):

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> broccoli | <input type="checkbox"/> carrots | <input type="checkbox"/> mushrooms |
| <input type="checkbox"/> cauliflower | <input type="checkbox"/> celery | <input type="checkbox"/> tomatoes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> green beans | <input type="checkbox"/> jicama | <input type="checkbox"/> sugar snap peas |

Fruits:

- | | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> apples | <input type="checkbox"/> berries | <input type="checkbox"/> mango |
| <input type="checkbox"/> banana | <input type="checkbox"/> grapes | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> oranges, | <input type="checkbox"/> peaches, | |

Once you have your list, be sure to save extra money with these tips:

-  cook beans from dry (instead of canned)
-  grate your own cheese (instead of pre-shredded)
-  buy mixed herb blends (instead of individual spices)
-  take note of the "unit price" of foods to find the best deal (this will be next to the price tag on the shelf)
-  avoid pre-cut fruits, vegetables, and meat – cut yourself at home whenever possible
-  buy in bulk instead of small or individual serving containers
-  try vegetarian meals 1-2 times per week



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