



Eating Well Without Breaking the Bank

Balancing a healthy diet with a tight budget can feel daunting, especially when you're adapting to a new way of eating for health reasons. Many assume nutritious food comes with a high price tag, but that's not necessarily true. With some thoughtful planning, you can eat well and even cut costs. Here's how to strategize your budget, meals, and grocery runs for success.

Before Heading to the Store...

Map out your week and wallet. Check your schedule and set a realistic food budget. Account for days you'll eat out or cook for others.

Take stock of what's on hand. Peek into your pantry, fridge, and freezer to see what you already have. List items you can build meals around.

Hunt for deals. Browse weekly grocery flyers or online ads to spot discounts. Look for bargains on pricier items like organic proteins or dairy—use them fresh or freeze them for later.

Plan your menu. Design a week's worth of meals based on what you have and what's on sale. Search for recipes that match your ingredients and cover breakfasts, lunches, and dinners.

Build your shopping list. Jot down extras you'll need for your recipes, plus staples to restock. Double-check your list to avoid forgetting essentials.

Maximize SNAP benefits. If you use Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), confirm your store or local farmers' market accepts it. Some markets double your produce dollars up to a limit, like \$10, stretching your buying power.

Know your produce priorities. Check the Environmental Working Group's Clean 15 and Dirty Dozen lists. Save money by buying Clean 15 items conventionally (low pesticide risk) and splurge on organic for the Dirty Dozen (high pesticide risk).

Eat first. A quick snack before shopping helps you stick to your list and dodge tempting impulse buys.

At the Store...

Stick to the plan. Only grab what's on your list—no extras.

Go generic. Opt for store brands over name brands to save cash without sacrificing quality.

Look low. Check bottom shelves for cheaper versions of shelf-stable goods—stores often place pricier items at eye level.

Skip the processed stuff. Packaged foods come with a markup for convenience. Whole foods are typically cheaper and better for you.

Shop seasonal. In-season fruits and veggies are tastier, fresher, and often priced lower to move quickly.

Consider frozen. Frozen produce locks in nutrients at peak ripeness and costs less than fresh. Stock up when prices dip for leaner weeks.

Buy bulk basics. Pick up spices, grains, beans, or nuts from the bulk bins—you control the amount and save compared to pre-packaged options.

Steer clear of junk. Avoid the middle aisles packed with snacks, sodas, and candies. They're costly, low on nutrients, and won't keep you full. Focus on the store's edges for produce, meat, and dairy instead.