

## Eating Well While Spending Less

Whether you're a college student on a budget, just starting out as a new couple, coping with a limited income or simply trying to be more frugal with your food dollars, there are plenty of ways to eat well while spending less.



### Steps you can take

Before you begin...

- | Get a copy of "Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide" [www.healthcanada.gc.ca/foodguide](http://www.healthcanada.gc.ca/foodguide), which promotes healthy eating for Canadians. Use it to plan your meals and grocery list. You can also personalize the food guide to meet your needs at "My Food Guide" [www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/myguide-monguide/index-eng.php](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/myguide-monguide/index-eng.php).
- | Know the healthy foods you and your family enjoy eating, so that you can shop and cook to meet their taste and avoid waste.
- | Plan your meals. Get a notebook and use it to plan your meals, make your grocery list and keep track of food prices. A little meal planning goes a long way to prevent waste, stretch your food dollars to get the best nutrition and avoid impulse buying at the grocery store.
  - | Plan your meal around the most expensive item, usually the meat item. Then, fill in the rest of the meal with starches (grains and starchy vegetables), vegetables and fruits. Think about preparing meals that can serve as 'extras' for lunches or for leftovers for another meal.
  - | Try a vegetarian meal option once or twice a week. Using home prepared recipes with beans, peas or lentils is an economical way to get healthy protein.

- | Plan your grocery list for several days of meals and snacks to make as few grocery store trips as possible.
- | Check your fridge and pantry first to see what you have at home and then create your grocery list.

### Getting Started...

- | Check newspapers and store flyers on-line or in the store for grocery store specials and food items on sale.
- | Get to know the usual prices of foods so you can tell if the advertised or special price is really a bargain.
- | Shop at grocery stores or supermarkets. Food prices at convenience stores are generally more expensive and these smaller stores have less variety.
- | Shop above and below your eye level. Food companies pay a lot of money to have their products placed at eye level where it's easy for you to see them. Look above and below eye level for bargains.
- | Compare prices of various foods and brands from different stores; keep a notebook handy to record prices while shopping.
- | Clip coupons and use them to buy food you need - it's only a bargain if you can use the food.
- | No-name or store brands offer the same nutrition as name brands but at a lower price. The only differences are the label may not be as fancy and the product inside may look a little different. Try store brand canned fruit, vegetables, soup, cereals, pasta, beans and many other products.
- | Use unit pricing. Unit pricing shows the price of food for a specific unit. The price is usually listed per 100 grams and is sometimes written on the same sign as the price of the item.

Here's an example of unit pricing on cereal, showing the larger box of cereal is a better buy:

<i>Size</i>	<i>Unit Price</i>
1.24 kg box	\$0.61 per 100g
620 g box	\$0.68 per 100g

- | Buy from bulk bins. Staple items like flour, whole grain rice or pasta, cornstarch, sugar and spices can be much cheaper from bulk bins- check the unit prices.
- | Prevent waste. Buy only what you need, eat what you prepare or use what's leftover in another meal or freeze for another day.
- | Make time to prepare big batches of food that can be refrigerated or frozen for later use. Maybe your family or friends would like to join in; this way you can share the work and everyone gets to take a variety of food home. You can also consider joining a community kitchen.
- | Plan for leftovers by using a whole chicken or large cut of meat. (It takes time for the butcher to cut meat products into smaller portions, resulting in a higher price.) For example, roast a whole chicken one day; then use leftovers for sandwiches, stir-frys or stews or freeze for another use on another day.
- | Avoid buying junk food! The price you pay for a large bag of chips could likely be used to buy a large jar of no-name or the store brand of peanut butter that could serve dozens of lunches.
- | Drink tap water - no need for pricey bottled waters or pop.
- | Prepared foods - Usually, the less prepared a food is, the cheaper it is. Here are some examples:
  - | a bag of dry pasta is much less expensive than a frozen pasta dinner.
  - | a block of cheese is cheaper than shredded cheese.
  - | a home-made salad is cheaper than one bought at a grocery salad bar.
- | Avoid recipes that call for 'one-time only' ingredients that you're not likely to use again.

- | Buy only what you need. If you can't use it, it's not a bargain.
- | Stick to your grocery list. Avoid impulse buying by shopping alone (if possible, without the kids) and avoid shopping when you're hungry and may be tempted to buy more food.

### Economical Eats and What To Do With Them!

<p>Vegetables and Fruit</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>  Seasonal foods are generally less expensive at their peak in your local area - enjoy fresh or freeze in portions you can use for another time; be sure to label and date the package</li> <li>  Use root vegetables like potatoes, carrots, parsnips, turnips, sweet potatoes and onions in soups and stews</li> <li>  Buy large bags of frozen vegetables and fruit; use only what you need and freeze the rest</li> <li>  Buy plain frozen fruits and vegetables instead of those with added seasonings and sauces</li> <li>  Use 100% frozen juice concentrates vs boxed juices; while fruit "drinks" are less expensive, they're also much less nutritious</li> <li>  Try 'Just passed peak' fresh fruits and vegetables like bananas that are available in the discount produce section of the store. They're ideal to use in muffins</li> <li>  Add raisins or cut up prunes to muffins or loafs - most other dried fruit like cranberries and blueberries can be quite expensive</li> <li>  Add leftover cooked vegetables to soups or stews or stir-frys</li> <li>  Make your own salad dressings with ½ cup vegetable oil, ¼ cup vinegar or lemon juice and your favorite seasonings</li> </ul>
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<p>Grain products</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>  Buy day old whole grain bread, bagels, buns - freeze and use later for toast, sandwiches and bread crumbs</li> <li>  Use regular white grain rice vs instant rice; add extra rice to soups and casseroles; buy whole grain rice when it's on sale</li> <li>  Make home-made muffins and loaves vs store bought</li> <li>  Buy no-name cereals vs name brand</li> <li>  Buy bulk vs single serving hot cereals such as oatmeal</li> <li>  Try adding bulgur in meatloaf, salads or casseroles and use less meat</li> <li>  Add cooked pearled barley to soups and use less meat or look for recipes that use it as a salad base</li> </ul>
<p>Meat and Alternatives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>  As an alternative to some costly meats, use eggs to make an omelet or frittata for dinner; make egg salad for lunch; add chopped cooked eggs to spinach or pasta salads; take a boiled egg for a morning snack</li> <li>  Use peanut butter instead of meat in sandwiches or atop whole grain crackers</li> <li>  Try canned baked beans on whole grain toast for dinner; add 1 can kidney or other bean to pasta or rice salads; add 125 mL (½ cup) lentils to soups or stews to thicken instead of cream</li> <li>  Braise or stew beef chuck or bottom roasts; stay away from heavy, costly and fatty 'bones' like spare ribs, short ribs</li> <li>  Bake pork loin or rib chops</li> <li>  Make canned tuna or salmon sandwiches, or use in casseroles and salads</li> </ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>  Roast a whole chicken vs chicken parts; use the leftovers for sandwiches or add to soups or casseroles</li> <li>  Check for meat, poultry or fish counter specials</li> <li>  Use regular tofu in stir fries or casseroles or add cubed tofu to salads instead of more costly meats or fish; try tofu in a smoothie instead of yogurt</li> <li>  Add chopped peanuts to cookies or atop salads; many other nuts are more costly</li> <li>  Top vegetable, fruit or pasta salads with shelled sunflower or sesame seeds</li> </ul>
Milk and Alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>  Buy plain yogurt and add your own fresh or frozen fruit</li> <li>  Mix skim milk powder with water according to package directions. You can drink it or add it to soups, gravies, casseroles, sauces, pudding or baked goods</li> <li>  Buy no-name cheese in larger blocks. Most firm or hard cheese can be frozen so cut off and freeze in blocks you can use</li> <li>  Buy cottage cheese in larger containers</li> </ul>

Try this frittata for supper one evening as an alternative to a meat entree.

<i>Kitchen Sink Frittata</i>		
6	Eggs	6
½ cup	Milk	125 mL
¼ tsp	Salt	1 mL
¼ tsp	Freshly ground black pepper	1 mL
1 Tbsp	Vegetable oil	15 mL
½ cup	Diced onion	125 mL
1	Sweet potato, peeled and shredded	1
1	Tomato, diced	1
2 cups	Cooked chopped vegetables (such as broccoli, green peas, green peppers, corn, or green beans)	500 mL
1 cup	Shredded reduced-fat cheese	250 mL

Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). In a small bowl, whisk eggs and milk. Add salt and pepper. Set aside. In a large skillet, heat oil over medium heat. Sauté onion until softened, about 5 minutes. Stir in sweet potato, tomato and cooked vegetables. Transfer vegetable mixture to 8 cup (2 L) greased baking dish. Pour in egg mixture and top with cheese. Bake in preheated oven for 20-30 minutes or until topping is golden and puffed and a knife inserted in the center comes out clean. Makes 6 servings.

Nutrients per serving:

Calories: 183	Carbohydrate: 12.6 g	Calcium: 145 mg	Fat: 9.2 g
Sodium: 288 mg	Protein: 13.0 g	Fibre: 2.1 g	Iron: 1.3 mg



Very high in: Vitamin A and vitamin B12. High in: Vitamin C, riboflavin, niacin and folate. A source of: Dietary fibre.



## Additional Resources

- | Get help making a meal plan at EatRight Ontario's new "Menu Planner Tool" [www.eatrightontario.ca/en/menuplanner.aspx](http://www.eatrightontario.ca/en/menuplanner.aspx)
- | Health Canada, Interactive Nutrition Labelling Tool [www.onpen.ca/Docviewer.aspx?id=9139](http://www.onpen.ca/Docviewer.aspx?id=9139)
- | EatRight Ontario, Food Choices When Money Is Tight (series of handouts) [www.eatrightontario.ca/en/Articles/Budget/Food-choices-when-money-is-tight---Budget-friendly.aspx](http://www.eatrightontario.ca/en/Articles/Budget/Food-choices-when-money-is-tight---Budget-friendly.aspx)

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