

## Healthy Eating While Spending Less - Adapted for Latin American Communities

Are you on a budget, managing a fixed or limited income, or simply trying to save money on food? Home cooking and limiting the amount you eat out helps a lot.

Keep reading for helpful tips on healthy eating well while spending less.



### Steps you can take

#### Plan Ahead

Meal planning helps prevent waste, stretches your food dollars, and helps to avoid impulse buys. Here are some meal planning tips:

- i Look for the week's specials in newspapers, store flyers and online.
  - i Get to know the regular price of food items to see if the special really saves you money.
  - i Buy food items you regularly need when they are on sale. It's only a bargain if you can use the food you buy.
  - i Try coupon or money-back smartphone apps such as Flipp-Weekly Ads and Coupons, or compare store flyers online, such as <http://www.flyertown.ca>
  - i Ask your cashier if you can receive coupons by email or mail and if the store you shop at does price matching.
  - i If sale item is out of stock ask for a rain check.
- i Use recipes to plan meals or for menu ideas to use the items you found on sale.
  - i Avoid recipes that call for 'one-time only' ingredients you are not likely to use again. Instead, plan for ingredients you can use in a variety of ways like oatmeal that can be used for hot cereal or filler when making hamburgers.

- i Plan meals and snacks over several days, or even a week's worth. Base your meal around the most expensive item, usually the meat.
- i Check your fridge and pantry to see what you have at home and then write your grocery list.

## Shop

- i Bring your own reusable shopping bags (plastic bags cost extra!).
- i Shop at discount grocery stores or supermarkets. Small convenience stores or mini marts often have less variety and higher food prices.
  - i Ask if your grocery store or supermarket has a loyalty program like a reward card to earn free groceries.
- i Shop above and below eye level for bargains. Products placed at eye level, are often the most expensive.
- i Compare prices of various foods and brands from different stores. No-name or store brands usually cost less and offer the same nutrition as high-end brands.
  - i Use unit pricing. Unit pricing shows the price of food for a specific amount, usually per 100 grams. It is often written on the same sign as the item price, and makes it easier to compare prices for the same amount of food.
    - n Larger amounts of products are usually cheaper.
    - n Here's an example of unit pricing on two different sized packages of steel cut oats showing the larger package box of oatmeal is a better buy

Size of Steel Cut Oats Package	Cost per Package	Unit Price
840 g	\$3.29	\$0.39 per 100 g
360 g	\$2.49	\$0.69 per 100 g

- i Compare bulk bins prices. Buying bulk allows you to buy just what you need such (i.e. spices.)
- i Buy fresh vegetables and fruit while in season when they are cheapest. At other times during the year, try frozen. It is less

expensive and the quality is excellent.

- | Stick to your grocery list to avoid buying food you do not need. Also avoid shopping when you're hungry or when you are rushed.
- | Try to time your shopping when the store puts items on sale. This is often near the end of the day or after a holiday.
- | Don't buy bottled water or pop. Drink tap water instead. It is healthier, less expensive and wasteful. Add slices of lemon or lime for extra flavour.
- | Shop mostly along the outer walls of the grocery store where you find more foods that are less processed.
- | Skip prepared foods as they often cost more than preparing foods yourself. For example:
  - | A block of cheese costs less than shredded cheese.
  - | Homemade refried beans costs less than canned refried beans.
  - | A homemade fruit salad costs less than prepared or canned fruit.
- | Look for a free grocery store tour led by a Registered Dietitian. These tours teach about healthy eating, reading labels and shopping for best value.

## Cook

- | Prepare big batches of food that can be refrigerated or frozen for leftovers .
  - | For example buy ground beef on sale and make a big batch of spaghetti sauce for a pasta dinner and then freeze the rest to be used to make lasagna another night.
- | Use your slow cooker to prepare one-pot meals, including stews, casseroles and soups. Cooking your meat slowly will help soften the meat. You can also add extras to extend the meal such as cabbage and lentils to soups and potatoes.
- | Consider joining a community kitchen, or ask your family and friends to cook together so you can share the work and everyone gets to take food home!
- | Add leftover cooked vegetables or vegetables that are starting to wilt to soups, stews, or stir-fries.

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## Food Best Buys ...and what to do with them

### Vegetables and Fruit

- | Buy extra produce in season or when on sale so you can freeze some for later use.
  - | Tip: write the date on the food you freeze!
- | Buy large bags of plain frozen vegetables such as spinach or corn and fruit like pineapple or mango if you have the freezer room. They are just as nutritious as fresh!
- | Try 'just past peak' fresh vegetables and fruits like bananas that are available in the discount produce section of the store.
- | Avoid buying prepared raw vegetables or fruit. Cut or wash them yourself.
- | Check to see if pre-bagged items, such as avocados or oranges cost more in bulk or per item. Also think about if you can use all of a bulk item before it goes bad.
- | Use 100% frozen juice concentrates instead of boxed or bottled juices. Avoid fruit "drinks" which may be less expensive, they are also less nutritious.
- | Add raisins or cut up dry apricot to muffins or loafs which are cheaper than many other dried fruits.
- | Make your own salad dressings – try 125 mL (½ cup) vegetable oil plus 125 mL (½ cup) vinegar or lemon juice plus your favourite herbs for seasonings.
- | Grow your own herbs or produce, or join a community garden in your community.
- | Join bulk buying programs for fresh produce to benefit from savings (such as Garden Fresh Box, Good Food Box or a community share agriculture (CSA)).



### Grains

- | Cook your own rice, pasta, barley, quinoa, or whole grain. It is cheaper and healthier than packaged mixes, which are often higher in sodium (salt), fat and lower in fibre.
- | Buy on sale or day-old whole grain products like bread, bagels, buns,

tortillas and freeze what you won't eat right away. Use for grill cheese sandwiches, quesadillas or homemade bread pudding.

- | Make homemade muffins and loaves rather than buying from the store. Freeze what you don't need for later use.
- | Buy bulk, plain hot cereals like oatmeal and add your own fruit rather than single serving packages.
- | Try adding quinoa, wheat bran, or oatmeal, to meatloaf, salads, or casseroles and use less meat.



## Protein Foods

- | Try eggs as they are a good source of protein and can be used in many ways, such as boiled eggs, omelets, egg salad, deviled eggs or scrambled eggs with rice.
- | Choose peanut butter as it can be used instead of meat in sandwiches or with whole grain crackers.
- | Use legumes (beans, peas, and lentils) more often by adding them in pasta or rice, salads, soups, or stews.
- | Choose cheaper cuts of meat for stews and cut it up yourself.
  - | Try beef chuck, bottom roasts, round steaks, pork loin, or rib chops.
- | Use organ meats like beef, pork and chicken liver in casseroles, stir-fries or soups.
- | Use canned tuna or salmon in sandwiches, in stuffing, or salads.
- | Buy plain frozen fish. Add lime or lemon juice and your favourite herbs to give it flavour.
- | Buy chicken backs and thighs rather than breasts, which are cheaper. Or, roast a whole chicken and use the leftovers for sandwiches, stir-fries and then make soup or stock with the bones.
- | Use firm tofu, crumbled or diced, mixed with your favourite meat or chicken in stir-fries to reduce the cost of meats or fish.
- | Add chopped unsalted peanuts, sunflower seeds, or pumpkin seeds to cookies or breads. They are cheaper than many other nuts and seeds and are a good source of protein and healthy fats.
- | Buy the largest size you can store of milk, cheese and yogurt. Milk



bags or most hard cheeses can be frozen for later use. Avoid single portions of cheese or yogurt as they usually cost more.

- Use skim milk powder or evaporated milk instead of fresh milk. Drink it, or add it to soups, casseroles, sauces, puddings, or baked goods.



Try this Colourful Bean and Corn Salad for supper one evening as an alternative to a meat entrée.

### Colourful Bean and Corn Salad

Ingredients		
1 can (19 oz)	Black beans, drained and rinsed	1 can (540 mL)
1 can (12 oz)	Corn kernels, drained	1 can (341 mL)
1 cup	Chopped tomatoes	250 mL
½ cup	Chopped green or red peppers	125 mL
½ cup	Chopped red onion	125 mL
¼ cup	Chopped fresh parsley	60 mL
Dressing:		
2 Tbsp	Red wine vinegar or balsamic vinegar	25 mL
1 Tbsp	Olive oil	15 mL
½ tsp	Ground cumin	2 mL
½ tsp	Minced garlic	2 mL
½ tsp	Hot pepper sauce (optional)	2 mL
¼ tsp	Salt	1 mL
	Black pepper	

1. Salad: In a large bowl, combine beans, corn, tomatoes, pepper, onions and parsley. Set aside.

2. Dressing: In a small bowl or measuring cup, whisk together vinegar, oil, cumin, garlic, hot pepper sauce, if using, salt, and pepper to taste. Blend well. Pour over salad.

Serves 10. Makes 5 cups (1.25L)

Nutrients per 1/10 recipe		
Calories: 94	Carbohydrates: 17 g	Protein: 4 g
Fat: 2 g	Fibre: 3 g	

Recipe from "Cook Great Food" Dietitians of Canada, pg. 163 (2001).



## Additional Resources

- | Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide [www.healthcanada.ca/guide](http://www.healthcanada.ca/guide)
- | My Menu Planner [www.eatrightontario.ca/menu](http://www.eatrightontario.ca/menu)
- | Recipes [www.eatrightontario.ca/recipes](http://www.eatrightontario.ca/recipes)
- | "Good and Cheap" Cookbook PDF [www.cookbooks.leannebrown.com/good-and-cheap.pdf](http://www.cookbooks.leannebrown.com/good-and-cheap.pdf)

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## Notes

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