

## Healthy Eating While Spending Less - Adapted for Chinese 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:

- ┆ Look for the week's specials in newspapers, store flyers and online.
  - ┆ Get to know the regular price of food items to see if the special really saves you money.
  - ┆ Buy food items you regularly need when they are on sale. It's only a bargain if you can use the food you buy.
  - ┆ Try coupon or money-saving smartphone apps, such as Flipp-Weekly Ads & Coupons), or compare store flyers online, such as <http://www.flyertown.ca>
  - ┆ Ask your cashier if you can receive coupons by email or mail and if the store you shop at does price matching.
  - ┆ If sale item is out of stock ask for a rain check.
- ┆ Use recipes to plan meals or for menu ideas to use the items you found on sale.
  - ┆ 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 whole wheat flour that can be used for making dumpling, Chinese crepes (jian bing) or steamed bun.
- ┆ Plan meals and snacks over several days, or even a weeks 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 rewards 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 bags of whole wheat flour, showing the larger bag of whole wheat flour is a better buy, even though it costs more:

Size of Flour Bag	Cost per Bag	Unit Price
5 kg	\$5.99	\$0.12 per 100 g
2 kg	\$3.99	\$0.20 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.
- i 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 flavor.
- | 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 whole fish costs less than fish fillets.
  - | A homemade hot and sour soup costs less than take-out soup.
- | 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 a whole chicken on sale and make a big batch of chicken and freeze into meal-sized portions. Or, use a whole chicken to make broth and freeze the broth to be used to make noodle soup 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 lotus roots, Chinese cabbage and carrots 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, stew, or stir-fries.

## 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 and fruit 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 tangerines or apples 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 dates to loafs which are cheaper than many other dried fruits.
- | Make your own salad dressings – try 30 mL (2 Tbsp) sesame 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, buckwheat noodle, oat, 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 and buns and freeze what you won't eat right away. Use for French toast or bread pudding.
- | Make homemade steamed buns 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 fresh or dried fruit rather than single serving packages.
- | Try adding carrot or potato to stir-fries 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 omelets, steamed eggs, boiled egg, Chinese crepes or Chinese frittata.
- | 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 to noodles 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 canned tuna or salmon in sandwiches, casseroles, or salads.
- | Buy plain frozen fish. Add a teriyaki or lemon sauce you make yourself to give it flavor.
- | 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 in stir-fries or casseroles, or add cubed tofu to salad instead of more costly meats or fish.
- | Add chopped unsalted peanuts, sunflower seeds, or sesame seeds to cookies or salads. 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, yogurt and soy beverage. Milk bags and tofu can be frozen for later use. Avoid single portions yogurt as they usually cost more.
- | Use skim milk powder instead of fresh milk. Drink it, or add it to pudding or baked goods.



Try this Stir-Fried Vegetables with Tofu as an alternative to

a meat entrée.

## Stir-Fried Vegetables with Tofu

Ingredients		
2 Tbsp	Vegetable oil	25 mL
1	Large onion, cut into wedges	1
3	Medium carrots, sliced diagonally	3
3	Celery stalks, sliced diagonally	3
¼	Small cabbage, sliced thinly	¼
1 cup	Snow peas, trimmed	250 mL
1 cup	Mushrooms, sliced	250 mL
1 cup	Firm tofu, cubed	250 mL
½ cup	Chicken broth	125 mL
1 Tbsp	Cornstarch	15 mL
½ -1 tsp	Ginger root , finally chopped or ½ tsp/2 mL ground ginger	2-5 mL
¼ tsp	Black pepper (optional)	1 mL

1. In a wok or large heavy skillet, heat oil over high heat. When oil is very hot, add onion, carrot and celery; cover and steam for 5 minutes. Add cabbage, snow peas, mushrooms, and tofu; steam, covered, for 5 minutes longer.

2. Mix together chicken broth, cornstarch, ginger and pepper; pour over vegetable mixture. Stir-fry for 1 minute or until sauce thickens. Serve over hot rice.

Nutrients per serving (1/6 of the recipe)		
Calories: 151	Carbohydrates: 12 g	Protein 9 g
Fat: 8 g	Fibre: 8 g	

Recipe from Dietitians of Canada, Cook Great Food (2001) pg, 341.



## Additional Resources

- 1 Canada's Food Guide <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/index-eng.php>
- 1 Eat Well Recipes <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/tips-healthy-eating/eat-well-recipes.html>
- 1 Community Food Centre Canada <https://cfccanada.ca/>

*These resources are provided as sources of additional information believed to be reliable and accurate at the time of publication and should not be considered an endorsement of any information, service, product or company.*



## Notes

*\*Additional Notes From Your Health Care Professional\**

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