



Savvy Shopper's Checklist

Eating healthy on a budget starts with meal planning and buying healthy, yet inexpensive, foods. Check out the list of healthy, budget-friendly foods below and plan meals which use them as key ingredients.

FRUIT & VEG

Broccoli
Onions
Spinach
Tomatoes
Green cabbage
Potatoes
Sweet Potatoes
Butternut squash
Frozen berries
Frozen vegetables
Bananas

GRAINS & LEGUMES

Beans
Brown rice
Oats and oatmeal
Dried lentils
Edamame
Quinoa

FISH, MEAT & EGGS

Eggs
Canned tuna or salmon
Chicken Breast
Unprocessed pork

DAIRY

Cottage cheese
Yogurt
Milk

March is National Nutrition Month

Nutrition for Budget-Minded and Busy Families

by B. Kay Sugg

Just a few weeks ago, the nation watched Tom Brady—at age 43—lead his team to a Super Bowl win. Whether or not you are a fan of Brady or his team, the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, you can't help but marvel at the tremendous accomplishment this is at his age, which is considered old for a professional football player.

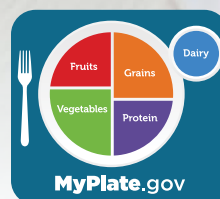
While Brady follows a very strict diet and an intense training routine that most ordinary citizens could not maintain, his health and physical condition stand as an example of what good nutrition and physical activity can accomplish.

Most of us are not professional athletes, don't have people helping us with our diets and exercise, and don't have the money to buy only the best, highest quality health foods. Even so, there are plenty of ways to serve yourself and your family nutritious meals that are affordable and fit into your busy lifestyle. This month, which is National Nutrition Month, we wanted to take a closer look at ways to eat a more nutritious diet on a budget.

Eating Healthy Doesn't Have to Break the Bank

It is a commonly-held belief that eating a healthy diet is expensive. Nutrient-dense foods and organic fruits and vegetables can be costly, but you don't have to limit yourself to only those foods, and they are not the only options for eating a healthy diet. There are many foods which are low-cost and highly nutritious. Check out our Savvy Shopper's Checklist at right for some examples.

With today's busy schedules, we simply don't have time to cook. However, a little pre-planning goes a long way. Try planning the week's meals on the weekend, and pre-making dishes that can be popped into the oven later in the week. You can also prepare grab-and-go snacks that can be taken to school, work, or after-hours activities. And, if you do find yourself picking up a snack or meal on the go, opt for healthier selections like baked chips, protein and granola bars, trail mix, and fresh vended foods.



Sources: myplate.gov • snaped.fns.usda.gov • eatright.org • thesimpledollar.com • money.usnews.com

One Week at a Time

Planning meals for the week ahead helps with budget by making sure you are not buying foods that you will not use. It also gives you the opportunity to look at the week in one sitting, where you can evaluate the mix of foods you prepare instead of making decisions in the grocery store when you are hungry and are tempted to make purchases based on your mood at the time.

Here are some tips for planning weekly meals:

- Start with using food ingredients you already have in the fridge, freezer and pantry. They are already paid for, so you are saving money by making use of them.
- Write down all of the day's meals for the week: breakfast, lunch, dinner, and snacks.
- Identify new recipes to try and do some searches for healthy recipes and low-cost meals; there are many!
- Plan meals that can be cooked in advance if your schedule is busy
- Consider making larger recipes with enough servings to eat leftovers later in the week.
- Plan for a mix of fresh, frozen, and non-perishable items in your meals. Use the fresh foods first, so they don't go bad.
- Focus on recipes that use the fruits and vegetables currently in season. Not only are they the freshest, but are generally less expensive than foods that are not in season and must be shipped from other places.

Savings at the Store

You can get further savings at the store with just a little effort and by making some smart choices. Here are a few tips:

- Compare products for the best deal and substitute store brand products in place of name brand products. They are often the same quality and cost less.
- Use store circulars and go online to look for coupons, sales, and store specials. Only use coupons on foods you normally eat; don't just buy items because they are on sale.
- Since you are planning for the week, and will be cooking with the ingredients purchased within a few days, look for items nearing the expiration date, which may be on sale. Use the foods with the earliest expiration dates first.

Sign up for supermarket discount cards and loyalty programs; you'll get special offers, discounts, and coupons for being a member.

Think Outside the Store

You can support local farmers and get very fresh fruits and vegetables at local farmers' markets and produce stands. You can also join a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program for low-cost produce grown locally. For an online directory of CSA programs, visit <https://www.ams.usda.gov/local-food-directories/csas>.



INGREDIENTS

- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
 - 1 medium onion (cut into medium dice)
 - 3 pounds chicken legs and thighs (trimmed of excess fat, cut into 2-inch pieces)
 - 2 quarts water
 - 1 teaspoon salt
 - 2 bay leaves
- Prep: 15 mins
Cook: 60 mins
Servings: 2 servings

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Heat the vegetable oil in a large, heavy-bottomed pot over medium heat.
2. When the oil shimmers, add the diced onion and cut-up chicken pieces and sauté until the chicken is no longer pink (about 5 to 7 minutes).
3. Add diced onion. Cook until the chicken releases its juices, about 20 minutes.
4. Add 2 quarts of water, salt, and bay leaves.
5. Cover and simmer until the broth is rich and flavorful, 20 to 30 minutes.
6. Strain and discard the solids.
7. Enjoy your broth!

Source:
<https://www.thespruceeats.com/quick-full-flavored-chicken-broth-recipe-1809184>

Quick and Full-Flavored Chicken Broth

Chicken broth is great for use in a wide range of delicious dishes, as well as being a central ingredient for soups and stews. It can be used to add additional flavor when used as a cooking liquid for grains like rice and quinoa, as well as for braising chicken and vegetables. This quick recipe is easy to make and can be frozen for use at a later date.

