



Meals In Minutes



Cutting Food Costs at the Grocery Store

If you're like the typical family, food costs are an expensive part of your budget. With a little thought plus some shopping know-how, you can cut food costs and save money at the grocery store.

Read cost/item labels on stores shelves

Most grocery stores have a label on the shelf detailing the cost per ounce or per container. Use that information to compare different brands and sizes for the best buy.

Buy only the most necessary convenience foods

Prepare as many foods from scratch as possible. Convenience foods are the most expensive part of your grocery bill.

Purchase larger quantities of food when cheaper and practical

Always check the cost per unit to be sure the large quantity is a better buy than the smaller one.

Buy fresh fruits in season

When fruits or vegetables are out of season, they cost much more. Tailor your purchases to seasonal produce. For example, buy peaches, strawberries, corn, tomatoes, and melons in the summer. Buy apples, pears and broccoli in the fall and winter. Buy frozen varieties when they are cheaper than fresh.

Choose store brands of foods, rather than national brands

Store brands are usually significantly cheaper and most are just as tasty and similar in quality as the national brands.

Beware of coupons

Coupons are usually for the more expensive national brands. Be sure to check the price of another brand of the same item. Many times it is still cheaper than if you used the coupon.

Buy large serving sizes rather than individually packaged servings, but only when convenient and practical

For example, a 32 oz. container of vanilla yogurt is cheaper per ounce than the 6 oz. size. If you mainly eat yogurt at home, then the larger container is a better buy. If you tend to carry the yogurt to work, and you don't feel like putting it in single serving containers, then the smaller serving sizes are more practical for you.

Don't shop when you are hungry. Your grocery bill can go up by 17%!

Use canned beans as a source of protein instead of chicken or other meats

Beans are much cheaper than meat and packed with nutrition. Try a bean burrito lunch instead of the chicken version.

Make your own snacks

Snack foods are one of the most expensive items on your shopping list. Try making your own, such as a healthy trail mix with cereal, pretzels, and raisins or another dried fruit.

Plan

Plan your meals and snacks, make a grocery list and take it with you to the supermarket.



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Meals with Ease: Freeze!

Here's How it Works:

1. Decide on 12 meals you would like to prepare.
2. List the ingredients you will need, including storage containers and freezer bags. Plan to double-bag to prevent freezer burn or punctures.
3. Check off the ingredients you already have with an X.
4. Go to the grocery store and buy everything else, crossing off as you go.
5. Prepare all 12 meals; insert directions for cooking or re-heating on index card in-between freezer bags, label and date. Freeze.
6. Pull out the dish you would like to prepare the night before, put it in the refrigerator and it will be ready to cook/re-heat 24 hours later.
7. Enjoy!

Other Tips:

- **Turn 12 meals into 24.** You may want to make 2 meals out of one if you have a small family. For example, make a large recipe like Baked Chicken Spaghetti and separate into two freezer baking containers. Or, if you are marinating meat, separate into quart-sized freezer bags for individual servings. Freezing cooked Taco Meat is another great example. Separate the cooked meat into two quart-sized bags.
- **Balance is key.** Balance your meal selections in terms of beef vs. chicken or any other meat your like. Be sure to add in a veggie based dinner like the Bean and Cheese Enchiladas or Vegetable Stir Fry, a few times a week.
- **Don't forget the veggie sides!** Stock up on frozen and canned, no salt added, vegetables to serve with these meals. This Sample July Meals preps typical grill meats, but don't forget the fresh corn on the cob, fresh cucumbers and tomatoes and salads, too.
- **Cooked vs. Raw.** Some of the sample meals freeze uncooked meats and some cook the meats, prepare the dish, and then freeze:

Cooked

Cooked Taco Meat
Cooked Meat for Spaghetti
Cooked Chicken for Salads
Baked Beef and Ravioli
Baked Chicken Spaghetti

Fresh

BBQ Pork Tenderloins
Sweet-n-Sour Chicken Marinade
Beef Fajita Meat (could be cooked)
Marinated Steaks
Teriyaki Chicken
Caribbean Chicken

<p>BBQ Pork Tenderloins X Chipotle Rub 1 1/2 lbs. Pork Tenderloins</p> <p>Sweet-n-Sour Chicken Marinade for Stir-Fry X Sweet-n-Sour Marinade X 10 oz. Pineapple Tidbits, in own jce X 2 lbs. Chicken Breasts</p> <p>Beef Fajita Meat X Fajita Seasoning 1 1/2 lb. Flank Steak</p> <p>Marinated Steaks Marinade of Choice 6 small Sirloin Steaks</p> <p>Teriyaki Chicken for BBQ X Teriyaki Sauce 1 lb. Chicken Breasts</p> <p>Cooked Taco Meat Taco Seasoning 1 lb. Lean Ground Beef</p> <p>Cooked Meat for Spaghetti X Italian Seasoning 1 lb. Lean Ground Beef</p> <p>Cooked Chicken for Salads X Fat Free Italian Dressing 1 lb. Chicken Breasts</p>	<p>Bean/Cheese Enchiladas Small Tortillas X 1 can Fat Free Refried Beans X 1 can Corn, no salt added 1 pkg. Colby/Jack Cheese X 1 can Enchilada Sauce</p> <p>Baked Beef & Ravioli X 2 c. Spaghetti Sauce 9 oz. Cheese-filled Ravioli X 4 oz. Mozzarella Cheese 1 lb. Lean Ground Beef X Italian Seasoning 9 oz. Frozen Spinach</p> <p>Caribbean Chicken Caribbean Marinade 1 1/2 lbs. Chicken Breasts 15 oz. Pineapple Slices, in own juice</p> <p>Baked Chicken Spaghetti X Spaghetti Noodles X Spaghetti Sauce 1 lb. Chicken Breasts X 4 oz. Mozzarella Cheese</p> <p>Storage Containers: 3 Disposable Baking containers (safe for ovens, microwaves, dishwashers, etc.) with lids 3 boxes Gallon Freezer Bags X 1 box Quart Freezer Bags</p>
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Now you try!

Meal #1

Meal #7

Meal #2

Meal #8

Meal #3

Meal #9

Meal #4

Meal #10

Meal #5

Meal #11

Meal #6

Meal #12



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Home-Cooked Meals: Make it Happen!

Make a Grocery List

- Start with a plan – take time to plan your meals.
- Plan to use fresh meats or produce in the first few meals of the week.
- Plan to use frozen/canned meats and vegetables at week's end.
- Only shop once a week to save time and money.
- Write a grocery list for everything you will need for the week.
- Stick to the list at the grocery store.

Make Several Meals and Freeze

- Take 2-3 hours to prepare 12 meals for the month.
- Make ahead beef and chicken for tacos, stir fry and more. Then freeze in separate quart-sized freezer bags, label and date, and pull out as needed.
- Combine uncooked meat, such as chicken, steak, or pork tenderloin with marinade in freezer bags, label and date, and freeze. Pull out of the freezer the night before you plan to use it and thaw in the refrigerator. By the next night it will be ready to throw on the grill. If you forget to pull out the meat you were going to grill, just put it in a bowl of cold water in the refrigerator. In about 30 minutes it will be thawed and ready for the grill.

Make It Easy

- Change your mindset of what a meal at home should look like: it doesn't have to be a four-course gourmet meal-it could be as simple as a Peanut Butter and Jelly Sandwich, Baby Carrots and Fresh Fruit.
- Plan simple meals for the nights you know will be especially busy with activities or you will be getting home late from work.
- Use and plan for leftovers. If you make Ham one night plan to use the leftovers creatively for the next day. Examples include Ham Sandwiches or Ham Salad made with low fat mayonnaise and veggies, Chef Salad with Ham, Ham-Cheese-Egg Casserole made with egg whites or Ham and Bean Soup. Plan one leftover meal so you don't get tired of it and chop or slice up the remaining ham and freeze in quart-sized freezer bags, labeled and dated, and use for a future meal. This can be done with Roasts, Chicken and Turkey.
- Use frozen vegetables for stir fry and fajitas.
- Purchase bagged salad and cut veggies. They are more expensive, but it's worth it if you actually eat them instead of letting them spoil and truly wasting money.
- Use the Meals in Minutes handout and plan fall/winter meals and spring/summer meals.



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Great Make-Ahead Lunches

1. Peanut-Butter Smash

Spread creamy peanut butter and one small, lightly mashed banana onto a slice of whole-grain bread. Drizzle with honey, and sprinkle with a small amount of chopped roasted peanuts.

2. Tuna Twist

Combine drained Albacore tuna, shredded carrot, diced celery, and a few peas. Stir in equal parts light mayo and plain yogurt seasoned with dill. Roll the mixture up with shredded lettuce in a whole wheat or spinach tortilla.

3. Fondue Fruit Plate

Pack fresh, pre-cut fruit from the supermarket (or cut yourself and save money) the night before. Add a small carton of vanilla yogurt for dipping, some slices of your favorite cheese, and a whole-grain roll or crackers.

4. Yellow Submarine Sandwich

Lean turkey and ham, thin slices of yellow tomato, lettuce, chopped banana peppers, and mustard on whole wheat hoagie or baguette.

5. Pizza Rounds

Top a whole wheat bagel with tomato sauce, cheese, and favorite veggies. Heat in microwave until cheese melts. Or top with salsa, black beans, avocado, cheese and olives. Follow above heating instructions.

6. Two Meals for the Price of One

When dining out, ask for a to-go box when your meal arrives and put half of it in box for tomorrow's lunch.

7. Stuff a Pita

Spread low-calorie Italian dressing, add lean deli meat, sprouts, peppers, onion and low-fat cheese.

8. Mega Salad

Lettuce, one hard boiled egg, favorite veggies, sprinkle of sesame seeds, cut up apples, feta and low-cal dressing. Throw in a whole grain roll or crackers.

9. Noodle Surprise

Cook favorite pasta; add 1 tsp of olive oil, favorite vegetables chopped up, olives and top with parmesan cheese.

10. Roll Up Sandwich

Use favorite sandwich stuffing and wrap in a whole wheat or flavored tortilla.