

# Food Money-Saving Tips

It is the food choices made over the long run that add up to good nutritional health and have the ability to realize financial savings. No one set of menus or recipes, whatever the cost, can satisfy everyone, nor can you always eat as planned. Being flexible is part of making healthy eating fit into your lifestyle and budget.

## ¢ Before Going to the Store

- *Eat something healthy.* Don't shop hungry.
- *In the kitchen, make a list of meal ideas* for the coming week. Keep in mind the days you'll have time to cook from scratch and the days you'll be pressed for time. Then, make a grocery list and stick to it.
- *Review store ads, clip coupons, and organize* them at home.

## ¢ At the Grocery Store

- *Sign up for your grocer's bonus/discount card* for additional savings.
- *Try store brands.* The most costly brands are often placed at eye-level. Store brands that may be cheaper and just as good are often placed higher or lower on the grocery shelves.
- *Look for the unit price to compare similar foods.* It tells you the cost per ounce, pound, or pint, so you'll know which brand or size is the best buy. Most stores show the unit price on a shelf sticker just below the product.
- *Buy in-season fruits and vegetables.* Use local farmers markets when possible - the foods are fresher and tend to cost less.
- *Buy milk in large containers* (gallon or 1/2 gallon) that generally cost less than milk in quart containers. Milk sold at "24-hour" convenience stores usually costs more than that sold at supermarket food stores.
- *The whole may be cheaper than the parts.* Buy a whole chicken and cut it into pieces at home instead of buying pre-cut chicken (breasts, legs, and wings) that may be more expensive.
- *Stock up on sale items* you can use in a timely manner. Buy in bulk for quality and value, but serve healthy portions.
- *Use your food budget wisely.* For the price of a large bag of chips and a box of cookies, you can buy a lot of apples, bananas, carrots, potatoes, peppers, and other healthier foods.

## ¢ For Later at Home

- *Assemble healthy snacks at home* in small baggies using foods such as nuts and seeds, low-fat cheese, and fresh veggies and fruits, rather than buying less healthy and more expensive prepackaged and processed snacks,
- *Do "batch cooking"* when the food budget and time allow. Cook a large amount of spaghetti sauce, divide it into family-size portions, and freeze them promptly for meals later in the month.
- *Take advantage of planned leftovers* to cut preparation time and save food dollars. For example, prepare a roast, serve half of it, and freeze the remaining half to use later with vegetables for a quick soup or in other dishes.

## ¢ Rethinking Eating Out

**For about \$20, you could buy...**

**X**



• 4 Whopper Combo Meals at Burger King (\$5.44 each)  
**Total: \$21.76**

**OR**

**✓**



**For about \$20, you could buy...**

**X**



• 8-piece KFC chicken meal  
• 4 biscuits  
• 2 sides  
**Total: \$19.61**

**OR**

**✓**



• 2 pounds chicken breasts (\$1.96)  
• 10 pounds potatoes (\$2.97)  
• 8 ears corn (\$2)  
• 1 pound peaches (98 cents)  
• 1 gallon skim milk (\$2)  
• 1 pound 96% lean ground beef (\$2.98)

• 32-ounce tub of 99% fat-free Yoplait yogurt (\$2.27)  
• 18-ounce canister of oats (\$1.18)  
• 2 pounds frozen sweet peas (\$1.98)  
• 1 pound of dried kidney beans (\$1.22)  
**Total: \$19.54**

**Comparison Shopping:  
McDonald's for Four**

**\$27.89**



- 2 Big Macs
- 1 cheeseburger
- 1 6-pc. Chicken McNuggets
- 2 medium fries
- 2 small fries
- 2 medium Cokes
- 2 small Cokes

**Nutrition facts per person**

CALORIES	900 (average)
FAT	37 grams
CARBOHYDRATES	123 grams
PROTEIN	23 grams

**Chicken, Potatoes and Salad for Four**

**\$13.78**



A savings of \$14.11,  
or 51%, over the  
McDonald's meal.  
Prices per item:

**Nutrition facts per person and  
difference from McDonald's meal**



CALORIES	934
+4%	
FAT	39 grams
+5%	
CARBOHYDRATES	80 grams
-35%	
PROTEIN	67 grams
+191%	

A person can prepare a homemade spaghetti dinner with salad for a family of four in 15 minutes and for an approximate total of \$8.88 or \$2.22 /person. If a family of four eats a spaghetti dinner with salad in a restaurant it can easily cost \$10.99 a person or \$43.96. That doesn't even include beverages, tax and tip. Plus it may take 10 to 20 minutes to drive to the restaurant and another hour to be served and eat and then 10 to 20 minutes to drive back home. – Colorado St University Extension Office