

Healthy Eating on a Budget

Eating healthy on a budget doesn't mean you have to give up flavor, fun, or speed. It's possible to buy fresh foods without spending your entire paycheck or resorting to a slow-cook lifestyle. With a little planning and prep you can eat well and still have time and money leftover to enjoy life. Keep these 10 tips for healthy eating on a budget in mind on your next grocery trip.

1. **Eat before you shop** Impulse buys can add up to a busted grocery budget. (those quick-grab treats don't do anything good for your waistline either)
2. **Pay attention to specials** Pick up the sales flyer at the front of the store to find out which produce is in season and see deals of the week. Also, watch out for little hangtags in the aisles calling out savings.
3. **Reach for store brands** For things like milk, butter, brown rice, cereal, frozen veggies and more, in-house brands are just as tasty as the name brands – and they can be dollars cheaper!
4. **Don't pass up ripe produce** My grocery store often has bags of extra ripe fruit at full discounted prices – I once picked up 20 bananas for just \$1.00! Cut everything up when you get home, freeze it, and you've got fresh fruit that will last for weeks. Frozen fruit gives a vitamin boost to smoothies, hot oatmeal, and more.
5. **Skip the fancy steaks** Save the filet mignon and T-bones for special occasions, and opt for leaner, less expensive cuts of meat and ground beef instead. Flank steak can be dressed up with spices, and roasts make a nice meal that will provide plenty of next-day leftovers. Also, consider buying beef in bulk. Stock up when meat goes on sale, or go in with friends to purchase a side of beef – you can get 100lbs. for around \$3.560 per pound. (Be sure to store everything in the freezer!)
6. **Invest in eggs** Packed with protein – one whole egg contains all of the essential amino acids. Eggs are also inexpensive compared to other protein source, and don't have to be relegated to breakfast recipes. (Scrambled egg tacos make a quick mid-week dinner)
7. **Get a whole chicken** It might seem like less work to pick up packages of pre-cut breasts, but it's often more cost effective to get an entire bird. Whole chickens will set you back around \$1.15 per pound – a bargain compared to the upwards of \$6 per pound you'll shell out for individually cut packaged pieces. A three-pound bird takes a little over an hour to cook, but then you've got several meals worth of food – saving you time later. You can have roast chicken for dinner on Sunday, use the dark meat leftovers for chicken tacos or lunch wraps on Monday, and toss the bones in a slow-cooker overnight to make broth for a hearty soup or stew later in week.
8. **Fill up on frozen goods** Frozen fruits and veggies are packaged up at their peak, helping to lock in nutrients and making them just as healthy as their fresh counterparts. (Just be sure to

read the labels and skip anything with added sugar or sodium) Other frosty goods, like wild-caught fish and pasture-raised beef and bison, can also be great buys. They're often dollars less than what you'll find at the meat counter. Prep tip: Pull wild sockeye salmon out of the freezer in the morning, thaw it in the fridge during the day, then roast it with a squeeze of lemon and some pepper in a 425 degree oven for 15 minutes – add a mixed greens salad and you've got a quick, healthy dinner!

9. **Visit the bulk aisle** Staples like brown rice and beans are even less expensive when you skip all the packaging and scoop them out of the bulk bins – about \$.60 per pound for brown rice and about \$1.50 per pound for beans. Cook up a big pot of each and toss them into quick meals throughout the week. Brown rice and beans can be served up in stir-fry, chili, salad, burritos, and more. And brown rice even makes a yummy breakfast porridge – just add a splash of milk, cinnamon, and fruit. Oats are another great item to buy from the bins!
10. **Hit up the farmers' market** Because you're cutting out the middleman (the grocery store), local growers often have the best deals for fresh, in-season produce. Don't be afraid to buy a lot – fresh fruits and veggies can be cut up and stored in the freezer for later.