



TIPS

30 Ways in 30 Days to Stretch Your Food Budget

1. **Buy in bulk.** Buy frequently-used ingredients in bulk (e.g. beans and frozen vegetables)
2. **Cook in large amounts and freeze leftovers.** Place enough food for 1-2 meals in each container.
3. **Create a weekly meal plan that uses the same ingredients in different ways.** For instance, extra grilled chicken can be used in a casserole or salad at another meal.
4. **Shop in season at farmers' markets.** Many farmers' markets offer WIC or Senior coupons for the produce. Contact your local health department to find out more information.
5. **Grow your own fruits and vegetables.** Many fresh and nutritious fruits and vegetables can spring from a couple of packs of seeds. Use pots if you don't have space for a garden. Try indoor pots or greenhouse growing for the cooler months.
6. **Substitute fruits and vegetables for meats.** Meats are more expensive but beans are an excellent protein substitute, and vegetables and fruits add flavor, texture and nutrients.
7. **Make regular grocery lists and stick to them.** To avoid buying less healthy and more costly items, make regular grocery lists of essential items that keep you healthy (like fruits and vegetables), and stick to them.
8. **Eat at home...more often.** Eating at restaurants or buying packaged and processed foods can increase the amount you spend on food. Buy basic ingredients, such as fruits and vegetables, to cook more simple meals at home.
9. **Skip the cake ... but you don't have to skip dessert!** Fruits are a delicious and cheap alternative to more costly desserts.
10. **Make homemade soup that's chock full of fruits and veggies.** Homemade soup is a healthy and tasty way to use fall fruits & vegetables. Make a big batch and freeze leftovers in small lunch-size containers. Try these: butternut squash, mushroom and barley, or carrot and apple.
11. **Look for deals and sales at your grocery store.** Check your local grocery store coupons for sales on seasonal produce, or take advantage of overstock discounts.
12. **Try more dried goods (such as dried fruit and beans and legumes) that store well through all seasons.** Beans and legumes are also a cheaper protein option than meat.

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13. **Don't shop hungry!** Eat a piece of fruit or some vegetables before going to the grocery store to avoid hunger-based impulse buys.
14. **Use coupons only for items that are on your list!** This will help to avoid buying extra, unhealthy foods.
15. **Canned fruits and vegetables matter.** Canned vegetables [such as low-sodium tomatoes] and canned fruits in juice will last a long time, and can be a healthy addition to a variety of meals. Stock up when they are on sale.
16. **Always keep frozen fruit on hand.** It's easy to store and will be available when you're ready to add it to a meal or use it for a healthy dessert.
17. **Pick your own!** Late summer or early fall is a great time to pick your own fruits and vegetables. This can be a fun and cheap way to buy in bulk and freeze, can, or dry for later.
18. **Add dried fruit to make any meal or snack healthier.** They last for a long time and taste great too! Buy a large package of raisins or other dried fruit, such as cherries, cranberries or apricots, then add to cereals, salads, peanut butter sandwiches or sweet and savory dinner sauces.
19. **Save with store brands.** Store brands can be a great budget choice for many forms of fruits and vegetables that are just as tasty and healthy for you as fresh!
20. **Stick mostly to the outside aisles when shopping at the grocery store.** This is where the fresh produce and food items are and it's healthier to avoid the expensive, processed foods that are located in the inside aisles.
21. **Pick carefully on the inside aisles.** Look for healthy, minimally-processed foods to stock your pantry with basics that last for months, including whole grains (whole wheat pasta , oatmeal and brown rice, for instance), dried beans, and canned veggies and fruits; go down only the aisles that have items you need.
22. **Try new fruits and vegetables!** You might find a new family favorite. To minimize waste, buy new foods in smaller amounts that are easy on your budget.
23. **Make a list of the healthier, less expensive foods and recipes your family likes to eat.** Add that list of foods to your regular grocery list.
24. **Try a Leftover Makeover!** Spice up leftovers by adding new fruits and vegetables to create something new for the next day. Last night's dinner makes a great inexpensive lunch for today. Turn a chicken dinner into a veggie-rich soup or extra veggie sides into a veggie casserole or lasagna.
25. **Waste less with smaller servings.** To avoid second serving temptation, store extra servings in the refrigerator before sitting down for the meal.
26. **Don't throw out bruised or dented fruits and vegetables.** They can be just as tasty! Just be sure to remove all bruised areas during preparation.
27. **Plan ahead!** Make a detailed food plan for the week or month and buy only what you can store or use within that time.
28. **Store your fruits and vegetables promptly.** To make fresh fruits and vegetables last longer, store them in the refrigerator or freezer immediately after getting home from your shopping trip.
29. **Clearly label your foods before you store them.** When storing fruits and vegetables in the freezer or refrigerator, clearly label them with contents and the date to stay within a safe and tasty time frame.
30. **Get creative with your leftover fruits and vegetables.** Make salsa from your tomatoes and freezer jam from your fruits!

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