



Stretching Your Food Dollars

USING GOOD STRATEGIES AT HOME AND AT THE GROCERY STORE

What Drives Food Prices?

- Transportation costs
- Weather
- Overstocked items
- Other?



Specials?

- In season products
- Overstocked Items
- Items close to the “sell by” date.

Remember, it isn't a special if you end up throwing it out...



Unit Pricing

You can compare different sizes of packages.

Small Jar Peanut Butter		Large Jar Peanut Butter	
Fancy Label Peanut Butter 16 oz.	Price \$ 2.85 Price per pound \$2.85	Fancy Label Peanut Butter 26 oz.	Price \$ 4.39 Price per pound \$2.71

Peanut butter in the small jar costs \$2.85 per pound.
Peanut butter in the large jar costs \$2.71 per pound. A better buy!

- The tag on the shelf should have the total price and the unit price — this way, you can determine the best deal.
- You will find that often the larger container is cheaper

Why Buy Local and In Season?



- In general, locally-grown produce is less expensive than produce from out of state.
- Food that doesn't have to travel long distances may retain quality longer.
- Out of season fresh fruits and vegetables may cost more due to transportation and storage requirements.

Store Brands vs. Name Brands



- Store brands (sometimes called generic) are often less expensive than national brands
- Many people are unable to detect any difference in taste between a store brand and a national brand.

Making a Food Plan and Budget



Shop with a plan in mind. Plan menus with what you already have on hand.

Go with a list of what you need, and stick to it!

Every week take stock of your food on-hand. Don't buy more until you have used up what you have.

Eat before you shop. When you are hungry, everything looks good!

Shop alone if possible.

...more planning...



Time your shopping trips to coincide with in-store specials and coupons.

Check websites for rebates, refunds and freebies.

Get family members involved with clipping coupons, planning menus and checking out store circulars.

Pay with cash, debit card, or check.

Good Shopping Strategies :



Buy in bulk. Bulk buying can save you money **only** if per-unit cost is lower. Buy what you will use, throwing away food is the same as throwing away money.

Put on blinders. Grocery stores are designed to promote impulse buys.

Whenever possible, buy local, and in season. Food out of season is generally more expensive than food in season.



Buy meat on sale and in larger packages. Repackage meat into smaller portions for your family size, and freeze for a later use.

...more shopping strategies ...



Use reward cards if the stores you usually shop offer cards. ***Pay attention to promotions.*** Some stores offer rewards if you spend a target amount within a certain time.

Compare prices and stores. Look at brands you normally buy, and compare prices. ***Shop for sales and stock up,*** if you have room to store.

Shop infrequently. The less time you spend in the store, the fewer temptations. ***Adopt the mantra “get in and get out”.***

...more shopping strategies...

Check out lower shelves. Stores often place the most expensive items at eye-level. ***Avoid “end cap” or checkout line impulse buys.***

Watch for “best by” and “use by” dates. As these dates approach, you will almost certainly see the item discounted.

Check the “sale bins”. Most stores have “sale bins”—check these for day old bread, meat or dairy products.

Check your receipts. Scanners make life more convenient, but they aren’t perfect.



Maximizing Food Use in the Kitchen



- ***Avoid prepared foods.*** Most pre-packaged food you can make at home, cheaper and more nutritiously.

Skip bottled water.

Experiment with meals with five or fewer ingredients in the main dish. Check out vegetarian options, with beans or other alternative protein sources.

Learn to substitute recipe ingredients. If the recipe calls for an ingredient you don't have, try something else.

...more tips for the kitchen....

Make your own convenience foods. Keeping quick breads, frozen cookie dough in the freezer can cut down on the need for store-bought treats.

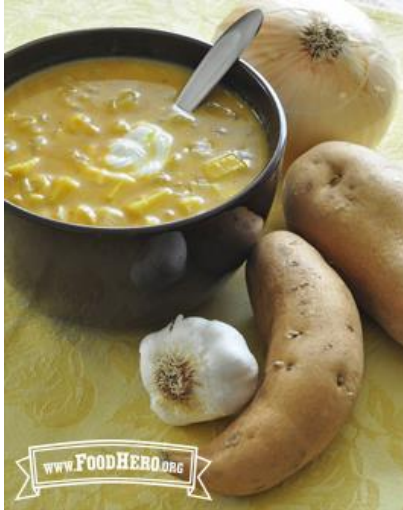
Utilize appliances you may already own such as bread machines, slow cookers, blenders and waffle irons.

Try recipes for ethnic food. Many ethnic cuisines are built around grains, fruits and vegetables.

Reduce the amount of meat in soups and stews, and add more vegetables and/or dried beans.



...more tips for the kitchen....



Make use of leftovers. Pull out all your leftovers from the refrigerator and make a meal. ***Use leftover vegetables*** you have at the end of the week and add to chicken broth for homemade soup.

Brown bag to work and make your own snacks. ***Avoid pre-packaged foods.*** You can grate your own cheese and wash and cut your own vegetables cheaper than you can buy them.



Prepare food ahead. Spend some time on the weekend pre-making dishes, and freezing them, to serve during the week.

Share your ideas!



This is not an exhaustive list of tips, but we hope it will get you started on saving money on your grocery bill. Please share any other ideas you may have for stretching your food dollars!

Additional resources

www.foodhero.org

Oregon State University Extension Service, www.oregonstate.edu/extension

www.allrecipes.com/budgeting

USDA, www.cnpp.usda.gov

www.myplate.gov

Community Connection of Northeast Oregon contributed to this lesson.