

Healthy Eating While Spending Less - Adapted for African and Caribbean Communities

Are you on a budget, managing a fixed or limited income, or simply trying to save money on food? Home cooking and limiting the amount you eat out helps a lot .

Keep reading for helpful tips on healthy eating well while spending less.



Steps you can take

Plan ahead

Meal planning helps prevent waste, stretches your food dollars, and helps to avoid impulse buys. Here are some meal planning tips:

- | Look for the week's specials in newspapers, store flyers and online.
 - | Get to know the regular price of food items to see if the special really saves you money.
 - | Buy food items you regularly need when they are on sale. It's only a bargain if you can use the food you buy.
 - | Try coupon or money-back smartphone apps, such as Flipp-Weekly Ads and Coupons or compare store flyers online, such as <http://www.flyertown.ca>
 - | Ask your cashier if you can receive coupons by email or mail and if the store you shop at does price matching.
 - | If sale item is out of stock ask for a rain check.
- | Use recipes to plan meals or for menu ideas to use the items you found on sale.
 - | Avoid recipes that call for 'one-time only' ingredients you are not likely to use again. Instead, plan for ingredients you can use in a variety of ways like cheese that can be used for sandwiches, omelets or macaroni and cheese.
- | Plan meals and snacks over several days, or even a weeks worth.

Base your meal around the most expensive item, usually the meat

- i Check your fridge and pantry to see what you have at home and then write your grocery list.

Shop

- i Bring your own reusable shopping bags (plastic bags cost extra!).
- i Shop at discount grocery stores or supermarkets. Some African and Caribbean grocery stores have weekly specials. Small convenience stores or mini marts often have less variety and higher food prices.
- i Ask if your grocery store or supermarket has a loyalty program like a rewards card to earn free groceries.
- i Shop above and below eye level for bargains. Products placed at eye level, are often the most expensive.
- i Compare prices of various foods and brands from different stores. No-name or store brands usually cost less and offer the same nutrition as high-end brands.
 - i Use unit pricing. Unit pricing shows the price of food for a specific amount, usually per 100 grams. It is often written on the same sign as the item price, and makes it easier to compare prices for the same amount of food.
 - n Larger amounts of products are usually cheaper.
 - n Here's an example of unit pricing on two different sized boxes of cereal, showing the larger box of cereal is a better buy, even though it costs more:

Size of Cereal Box	Cost Per Box	Unit Price
2 kg box	\$11.80	\$0.59 per 100 g
1 kg box	\$7.00	\$0.70 per 100 g

- i Compare bulk bin prices. Buying bulk allows you to buy just what you need such (i.e. spices.)
- i Buy fresh vegetables and fruit while in season when they are cheapest. At other times during the year, try frozen. It is less expensive and the quality is excellent.
- i Stick to your grocery list to avoid buying food you do not need. Also

avoid shopping when you're hungry or when you are rushed.

- | Try to time your shopping when the store puts items on sale. This is often near the end of the day or after a holiday.
- | Don't buy bottled water or pop. Drink tap water instead. It is healthier, less expensive and wasteful. Add slices of ginger, lemon or lime for extra flavour.
- | Shop mostly along the outer walls of the grocery store where you find more foods that are less processed.
- | Skip prepared foods as they often cost more than preparing foods yourself. For example:
 - | A block of cheese costs less than shredded cheese.
 - | A homemade salad costs less than prepared ready to eat salad.
 - | Unseasoned chicken cost less than pre-seasoned chicken.
- | Look for a free grocery store tour led by a Registered Dietitian. These tours teach about healthy eating, reading labels and shopping for best value.

Cook

- | Prepare big batches of food that can be refrigerated or frozen for leftovers .
 - | For example make a big batch of soup or stew and then freeze the rest for another night. Boil a big batch of pigeon peas (gungo peas), kidney beans, brown or black eyed beans. Use half for stews, soups or bean porridges and then save the other half to cook with rice for your favourite mixed rice and beans (or peas) dishes.
- | Use your slow cooker to prepare one-pot meals, including stews, casseroles, curries and soups. Cooking your meat slowly will help soften the meat. You can also add extras to extend the meal such as Irish potatoes, carrots, chayote, cabbage and lentils.
- | Consider joining a community kitchen, or ask your family and friends to cook together so you can share the work and everyone gets to take food home!
- | Add leftover cooked vegetables or vegetables that are starting to wilt to soups, stews, curries, stir-fries or rice.
- | Make more meatless meals such as vegetarian bean stews, soups or

rice dishes. For example; peas or lentil soups, vegetarian pelau or cook-up rice or vegetarian peanut stew or egg stew (see recipe below).

Food Best Buys ...and what to do with them

Vegetables and Fruit

- | Buy extra produce in season or when on sale so you can freeze some for later use.
 - | Yams, cassava and leafy greens like pumpkin leaves, sweet potato leaves, callaloo and kale freeze well even without cooking.
 - | Fruits like papaya, pineapple, mango and banana also freeze well and can be added to fruit smoothies. Use mangos or pineapple to make a chutney.
 - | Tip: write the date on the food you freeze!
- | Buy large bags of plain frozen vegetables and fruit if you have the freezer room. They are just as nutritious as fresh!
- | Try 'just past peak' fresh vegetables and fruits like bananas or plantain that are available in the discount produce section of the store. For example use over-ripe plantains or bananas in pancakes (eg. plantain mosa or banana pancake).
- | Avoid buying prepared raw vegetables or fruit. Cut or wash them yourself.
- | Check to see if pre-bagged items such as avocados (pear), mangoes or oranges cost more in bulk or per item. Also think about if you can use all of the item before they go bad.
- | Use 100% frozen juice concentrates instead of boxed or bottled juices. Avoid fruit "drinks" which may be less expensive, they are also less nutritious.
- | Add raisins or cut up dates to muffins or loafs which are cheaper than many other dried fruits.
- | Make your own salad dressings – try 125 mL (½ cup) vegetable oil plus 125 mL (½ cup) vinegar or lemon juice plus your favourite herbs for seasonings.
- | Grow your own herbs or produce, or join a community garden in your



community. Potatoes, lettuce, cucumber, sweet peppers, callaloo, green beans, okra and carrots are good choices to grow.

- | Join bulk buying programs for fresh produce to benefit from savings (such as Garden Fresh Box, Good Food Box or a community share agriculture (CSA)).

Grains

- | Cook your own rice, porridges, pap or pasta. It is cheaper and healthier than packaged mixes, which are often higher in sodium (salt), fat and lower in fibre.
- | Buy on sale or day-old whole grain products like bread, bagels, buns and English muffins and freeze what you won't eat right away. Use for sandwiches and bread puddings.
- | Make homemade muffins and loaves rather than buying from the store. Freeze what you don't need for later use.
- | Buy bulk, plain hot cereals like oatmeal, millet, sorghum or cornmeal and add your own spices rather than single serving packages.



Protein Foods

- | Try eggs as they are a good source of protein and can be used in many ways, such as omelets, egg salad, stews, sauces or curries.
- | Choose peanut butter as it can be used instead of meat in soups, stews, sandwiches or with whole grain crackers.
- | Use legumes (beans, peas, and lentils) more often by adding them in rice, salad, soups or stews.
- | Choose cheaper cuts of meat for stews and cut it up yourself if possible.
 - | Try beef chuck, bottom roasts, round steaks, pork loin or goat shoulder.
- | Use canned tuna, sardine, mackerel or salmon.
- | Buy plain frozen fish or canned fish in water.
- | Buy chicken backs and thighs rather than breasts, which are cheaper. Or, roast a whole chicken and use the leftovers for sandwiches, stir-fries and then make soup or stock with the bones.



- | Use firm tofu in stir-fries or casseroles, or add cubed tofu to salad instead of more costly meats or fish.
- | Add chopped unsalted peanuts, sunflower seeds, or sesame seeds to stews, porridges, cookies or salads. They are cheaper than many other nuts and seeds and are a good source of protein and healthy fats.
- | Buy the largest size you can store of milk, cheese and yogurt. Milk bags or most hard cheeses can be frozen for later use. Avoid single portions of cheese or yogurt as they usually cost more.
- | Use skim milk powder instead of fresh milk. Drink it, or add it to porridges, custard, pap, sauces, puddings, pones or baked goods.
- | Use skim evaporated milk in place of fresh milk sometimes. Buy them when on sale as they are non-perishable and great to have on hand in your pantry or cupboard. Use in pap or porridges, teas and other hot beverages.



Tomato and Egg Stew

Makes 4 servings

Ingredients		
4	Eggs	4
15 mL	Vegetable oil	1 Tbsp
250 mL	Onion, sliced (1 large)	1 cup
2	Garlic cloves, crushed	2
500 mL	Tomatoes, halved and sliced (4 medium)	2 cups
375 mL	Red bell pepper, sliced (1 large)	1 ½ cups
125 mL	Low sodium chicken or vegetable broth	½ cup
1 mL	Salt	¼ tsp
1 mL	Black pepper, ground	¼ tsp

1. In a small bowl, whisk eggs and set aside.
2. In a large sauce pan, heat oil over medium heat. Sauté onion and garlic until soft (about 2 minutes). Stir frequently.
3. Add tomatoes, red peppers and broth. Stir in salt and pepper. Cover the pan and reduce heat to low-medium high, Cook vegetables for 5 minutes until they start to soften.
4. Pour the egg mixture over the vegetables into the sauce pan, but do not stir. Cover the pan and let eggs continue to cook for 2 minutes until they start to get firm or set.
5. Remove lid and gently stir the eggs to break into lumps. Stir to combine with the vegetables.
6. Replace lid and cook an additional 5 minutes. If you desire more sauce add 2-4 tablespoons of broth.

Tip: Serve with boiled plantain, potatoes, sweet potatoes or yams. Add any other vegetables of choice when doing this recipe, for eg. Leafy greens like spinach, kale or callaloo also work well.

Nutrients per serving (¼ of the total recipe)			
Calories: 155	Carbohydrate: 10.2 g	Calcium: 47.2 mg	Fat: 9.3 g
Sodium: 229 mg	Protein: 8.5 g	Fibre: 2.2 g	Iron: 1.3 mg

Recipe from "Simply Great Food" from Dietitians of Canada, p. 63 (2007).



Additional Resources

- | Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide www.healthcanada.ca/guide
- | My Menu Planner www.eatrightontario.ca/menu
- | Recipes www.eatrightontario.ca/recipes

1 "Good and Cheap" Cookbook PDF

www.cookbooks.leannebrown.com/good-and-cheap.pdf

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