

Grocery Shopping on a Budget



Gas prices aren't the only thing rising, the cost of food is as well. It can be difficult to make healthy choices when you're on a budget. The following tips are some ways to help make your grocery trip a little easier and lighter on your wallet!

- Plan ahead by making menus and a list. If you're wandering down each aisle of the store without a plan of action, you will surely overspend on foods that aren't necessary. Try to plan menus for the upcoming week and make a list of food that is needed for those meals and snacks.
- Don't go hungry! If you're hungry while you're grocery shopping, that hunger will influence what you buy and you may end up with more than you can afford.
- Stick to the perimeter. Choose foods from the outer aisles of your grocery store as they are mostly fresh produce, meats, dairy and breads. Load up your cart with these foods before hitting the middle aisles. The interior aisles typically contain more processed and convenience foods.
- Use coupons and reward cards. You can certainly save some money by clipping coupons but make sure you're not buying foods only because there is a coupon, especially if it's something you don't need. Use coupons as well as your store's reward card for extra savings that are not offered to 'non-members.'
- Buy store brands. These brands, also known as 'private labels' are usually identical to the brand name but much cheaper. Most name brand products are stocked at eye level but the products stocked lower or higher on the shelves are just as good.

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Knowledge to Go

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- Buy on sale and in bulk. Look for sales on shelf-stable items and other products you use regularly. Buying in bulk is cheaper, but only if you have the storage space and will be using it before it spoils and has to be thrown out.
- Compare unit prices. Use the 'unit price' to compare brands and see which is really cheaper. Most stores show the unit price on the shelf tag, so check that out to get more for your money.
- Keep your food safe and prevent waste. Use the dates to select the freshest items at the store. Visit the cold/frozen food section last so those items aren't in your cart as long. Put them away first when you get home. When stocking foods at home, use older items first.
- Shop seasonally and locally. Fresh produce is usually much cheaper when it's in season. Go to a local farmer's market to get fruits and vegetables that are fresh and haven't traveled a long distance.

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