

Shopping On a Budget

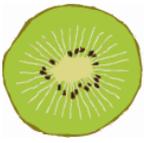
These are a few of our favorite tips for saving money at the supermarket. These suggestions can shave 10% to 40% off your grocery bill.

1. **Purchase store-brand products** over national brands. Prices for store brands are almost always less for nearly identical products. Even at natural food stores, where prices are generally higher, their store brands can save you money over national brands found at conventional supermarkets.
2. **Cook foods from their natural state.** Avoid the temptation to buy pre-packaged, pre-prepared foods just because they take less effort and time. Though you may save 5 minutes of prep time, pre-prepared foods can cost 3-5 times more. Think of your prep time as a meditation. It really helps you slow down and focus on the present moment. Give it a try. You may soon come to prefer the peace of mind it brings. Keep a copy of our cooking guide for various grains and legumes handy. While they cook, get your exercise in during the 30-40 minutes they take to cook.
3. **Shop the bulk aisle.** You won't pay for the added packaging and you can get just the right amount you need for your recipe without waste. Keep a copy of our bulk foods shopping guide handy.
4. **Look for sale items and stock up.** Canned goods can keep for a year or more if stored properly. Packages of deli meats, cheese, pesto sauces, and the like can be purchased in quantity and kept frozen for 3-6 months. Lemon and lime juice, tomato paste, broths, and other sauces can be frozen in ice cube trays. Just drop the cube into a pan to use during cooking, or leave them in the refrigerator to thaw overnight.
5. **Prepare budget recipes** instead of ones that contain more expensive ingredients. Make these a part of your weekly dinner routine—homemade soups with vegetables and rice, noodle and casserole dishes, quiches, vegetarian meals that utilize beans and whole grains, and recipes that contain ground meat instead of filets. These all cost less than meals that contain expensive animal protein or are convenience packaged. Consider making kabobs with fruit and vegetables instead of just grilling meat. Use your own recipes or download some of our ideas.
6. **Make a weekly meal plan** and shop only for ingredients you put on your shopping list. This helps you avoid the trap of buying too much because you don't know what you'll be cooking this week. Create your own or use one of ours.
7. **Keep a shopping list.** This will prevent over-buying (how many times have you bought another head of garlic or package of cheese because you forgot you just bought some last week) and it can help reduce impulse buying since your attention will be focused on the list and not the tempting treats that lurk throughout the store. A list also saves time, as it allows you to just zip over to the products you



need so you can get in and out. No unnecessary browsing as you try to remember what else you need to purchase. It may even help to keep a shopping list that is organized by department to save a little extra time. Create your own or use ours.

8. **Avoid waste.** Buy only what you need. Shop your Farmer's Market for fresher produce that will last much longer in your fridge, and get a package or two of Debbie Meyer's Green Bags that really do prevent produce from browning and spoiling so quickly. Chop and freeze any fruit or veggies that are about to spoil to use in smoothies or a stir fry later.
9. Most stores offer **volume discounts**. If you have a favorite energy bar, sports drink, soup mix, or other item you consume regularly, purchase a case and save 10% at most stores. Ask the store's customer service department for details before you shop. Some items can be ordered especially for you, even if it's not found on the shelf. Find a neighbor, friend or family member who could split the order with you if you don't have the space to store the extras.
10. **Consider frozen.** Some people mistakenly believe that frozen foods are less healthful than fresh. Not true! Frozen vegetables can supply more vitamins than fresh, especially when fresh veggies have had to travel miles to reach your local supermarket. Plus, you don't have to worry about the produce spoiling so quickly. Our favorite frozen veggies include stir fry mixes, green beans, broccoli, winter and butternut squash (pureed or chunks), corn, and peas. It's always a great idea to keep frozen shrimp, scallops, meats, and tempeh on hand when you want to throw a protein-rich meal together quickly and healthfully. Fresh pasta can be frozen, as can pesto sauce and marinara. In fact, most sauces can be frozen (except cream sauces that may separate).
11. **Create your own sauces, salad dressings, and marinades.** Instead of buying pre-made ones in bottles and jars, make your own! Not only will yours taste better, you can make them lower in sodium and higher in antioxidants by using fresh or dried herbs and spices, vinegars (such as balsamic, apple cider, or seasoned rice vinegar), citrus or other fruit juice, or Bragg's liquid amino acids in place of salt or soy sauce (Bragg's is a raw food version of soy sauce, but lower in sodium than even the low sodium options).
12. **Choose lower-priced cuts of meat.** If they are tougher cuts, slice into small chunks or thin strips and marinate (the acidic enzymes of the marinade will penetrate the meat and tenderize it). Or consider using a slow cooker, as longer cook times allow the fibers to soften.
13. **Buy meat and poultry in value packs.** Divide and freeze at home if you won't be consuming it within the next couple days.
14. **Buy poultry thighs over breasts.** Sure they contain more fat, but only about 6 grams per three cooked ounces, if you remove the skin, and they contain more iron.



15. **Cook good, expensive cuts of meat less often and serve in smaller amounts.** Instead of having a 6 oz. steak as a single meal, slice it, stir fry it with vegetables, and make it into two 3-oz. meals. It will look like the same amount of food (or more), but will save you calories and money, not to mention boost your fiber and antioxidant intake.
16. **Extend hamburger meat by mixing other ingredients into it.** Some of our favorites include grated onion, bell peppers, fresh herbs, egg and breadcrumbs, or old fashioned oats. Bulgur also works great. All these options boost fiber, antioxidant, vitamin and mineral intake.
17. **At meals, cook less meat and more whole grains and legumes.** Not only are whole grains much more economical, whole wheat, barley, amaranth and quinoa offer a great source of protein, as well. Legumes offer even more. These carbohydrate-rich sides actually help keep blood sugar levels more stable (as opposed to other processed grains), and offer tons of vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants. They are excellent sources of fiber, too.
18. **Use coupons!** Those Sunday newspaper coupons can save you hundreds of dollars over time. So clip and save. If you don't like taking the time to sort through them, clip while watching a re-run of your favorite show and then just file them into a coupon booklet with dividers for easy access. We suggest using a fabric file that can fit easily in your purse or just be left in the car.
19. **Cook at home more often and eat out or order take-out less often.** Think cooking takes too much effort? There are thousands of recipes for preparing quick and easy meals that are both nutritious and delicious. Available on the Internet and in recipe books, many of these meals can be prepared in bulk and frozen, too.
20. **Shop less often for a greater number of items.** This will help save money on gas by making only one trip to the market instead of multiple trips. If you own a bike, save even more on gas by riding your bike to the store instead of driving. It helps you get your exercise in! Don't forget to bring your reusable bags, and be sure to use either a backpack or a wire basket attached to your bike in which to tote the groceries home safely.
21. At local natural foods markets, inquire about the **Mambo Sprouts coupon booklets** and value guides. They contain dozens of money-saving coupons that can save you upwards of \$30.
22. Visit Whole Food's customer blog at blog.wholefoodsmarket.com for others' ideas on ways they save money and find the best bargains at the market.

There are websites designed specifically to help you save money on your grocery bill by bargain hunting or offering printable grocery coupons to save money on hundreds of top brand products. Some of these websites include: www.coupons.com, www.grocerycoupons.net, www.couponmom.com, or www.couponsurfer.com.