

USDA's Nutrition Assistance Programs: *Eat Right When Money's Tight*

FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICE JANUARY 2012



CHECK OUT

- **MyPlate** at www.ChooseMyPlate.gov
Features practical information and tips to help Americans build healthier diets. MyPlate is designed to remind Americans to eat healthfully.
- **Community Corner** on the SNAP-Ed Connection at www.snap.nal.usda.gov
Find information, tips, and tools for making healthy lifestyle choices.
- **Recipe Finder** at <http://recipefinder.nal.usda.gov>
Contains over 600 low cost, nutritious, and delicious recipes in both English and Spanish.
- **The SNAP pre-screening tool** at www.snap-step1.usda.gov
See if you qualify for SNAP benefits and how much you might receive.
- Find the **location of your nearest SNAP office** at www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/default.htm

Now More Than Ever, USDA's Nutrition Assistance Programs Can Help

Many families are concerned about the rising cost of food. Read on for tips on how to stretch your food dollars through budgeting, food selection, and low-cost recipes. If you are struggling to put food on the table, USDA's nutrition assistance programs may help.



Use foods you already have to plan menus.
Add missing foods to your shopping list.

Resources: Available For Food

- Know how much money you have to spend on food.
- Make a shopping list based on the money you have to spend.
- Buy only the amounts of fresh foods you can use before it spoils.
- Consider frozen or shelf stable items that last longer.

Planning: Making Meals With Foods On Hand

Before going to the grocery store, check what foods you already have.

Once you know what foods you have, ask these questions:

- What meals and recipes can I make using the foods I have?

- Can I mix foods together to make a tasty and nutritious meal?

- Which foods do my family need for good health?

Then:

- Plan what recipes you will make using your list of foods.

- Use other foods on your list such as vegetables, fruits, and whole grains to complete the menu.

- Once you plan your menus, make a new list for missing foods you need to buy.

~Turn the page for more tips on low-cost, healthy shopping.



Fruits and vegetables are usually less expensive when they are in season. Farmer's Markets always carry what is in season.



Look for bargains on day old bread. It costs less but is still nutritious.

Shopping: Before, During, and After

Before Shopping

- Make a shopping list. This helps you stick to your budget.
- Plan your meals. Planning helps put leftovers to good use.
- Look for coupons, sales, and store specials.
- For added savings sign up for the store discount card.

During Shopping

- Don't shop when you are hungry. It's easier to stick to your shopping list.
- Try store brands. They usually cost less.
- Compare products for the best deal.
- Check sell by dates. Buy the freshest food possible. It lasts longer.

After Shopping

- Store food right away to preserve freshness.
- Freeze food to prevent spoiling.
- Divide foods into small portions for children and elderly to prevent waste.
- Use foods with the earliest expiration dates first.

Tips: Best Buys for Cost and Nutrition

Breads and Grains

- Look for bargains on day old bread. It costs less but is still nutritious.
- Buy regular rice, oatmeal, and grits instead of instant to save on money, sugar, and calories.

Vegetables and Salad

- Buy large bags of frozen vegetables. Seal tightly in the freezer between uses.
- Avoid pre-bagged salad mixes. They are usually more expensive and spoil faster.

Fruits

- Buy fresh fruits in season when they generally cost less.
- Frozen and canned fruits are a smart choice all year round.

Low-Fat Milk Products

- Buy fresh, low-fat milk, yogurt, and cheese in the largest size that can be used before spoiling. Larger containers cost less than smaller sizes.
- Ultra-pasteurized milk has a longer expiration date and won't spoil as fast.

Meat and Beans

- Dried beans and peas are a good source of protein and fiber. They last a long time without spoiling.
- Chuck or bottom round roast has less fat and is cheaper than sirloin.
- Look for specials at the meat counter. Buy meat on sale for big savings.
- Buy meat in large bulk packages to save money. Freeze portions you might not use right away to prevent spoiling.