

Shopping Cart Smarts

What to Look for the Grocery Aisles



In the Dairy Aisle

Choose low fat or fat-free dairy products.

Add powdered non-fat milk to skim milk to increase the density (and protein and minerals) without fat.

Try Greek yogurt instead of sour cream for salsa, dips and salad dressings. With less fat, it's thicker and has more protein.

Use low fat milk or pureed veggies to thicken soups instead of cream.

Select soft margarines or spreads with 0g trans fats and the least saturated fat you can find.

Choose reduced fat cheeses, but cook them carefully. High heat toughens them.

Using stronger-flavored cheese, such as sharp Cheddar or Parmesan, means you need less for flavor.

It's Fine to Use Cans

Canned foods are good quality at least 2 years.

Canned fruits and vegetables are nutritionally equivalent to, if not better than fresh some months of the year.

Choose canned goods with no added salt and little sugar or oil.

Canned tuna, salmon, chicken
Canned fruit in juice

Use canned soup as the seasoning, add plenty of no-salt-added vegetables, leftover meats, whole grain pasta to make a quick meal.

Choose marinara sauce instead of Alfredo for pasta, or make your own from no-salt-added tomato sauce and seasonings.



Bread Basket and Cereal Bowl



Read the INGREDIENTS LIST, not the front of the package, to decide if it's whole grain. Whole Grain Flour should be the first ingredient. If it has a stamp there are at least 8 g of whole grain per serving. If the stamp says 100%, then all the grain ingredients are whole grain. A serving of whole grain is 16 g. Aim for at least 3 servings a day.

Don't trust the color. Brown bread is often colored with caramel or molasses. 'Multigrain' could mean as little as a teaspoon of other grain.

Look for fiber on the label. A slice or serving should have at least 2 g of fiber.

Try pita breads, whole grain tortillas, flatbreads and other types for variety.

Choose oats and barley for their soluble fiber to help lower cholesterol. Choose whole grains and high fiber cereals for digestion. Choose cereal with no more than 5 g sugar per serving. (5 g is 1 teaspoon)

Protein Power

Choose fish twice a week. Canned fish in water is fine. Opt for salmon, trout, tuna or herring for the omega-3 health benefits. The selenium in fish helps protect our brains from potential mercury problems. Avoid breaded fried fish.

Look for lean cuts of beef and pork. Beef cuts of 'round' or 'loin' are generally leaner.

Ground beef that is '80% lean' is still 20% fat, which is too much for our hearts. Plus, higher fat ground beef will shrink more as it loses fat during cooking. Get the leaner meat for better health, and more protein on the table.

Ground poultry can be tricky. Stick to 90% or more lean or you'll be getting ground skin in there. Remove skin and visible fat from poultry pieces before cooking to reduce the fat by about half.

If you can't use the meat, poultry or fish in 1-2 days, freeze it.

Choose eggs, beans and soy products instead of meat several times a week. One egg a week is fine for most people, and it's cheap, high quality protein.