Spend Your Dollars Wisely

Two dozen hints on how to spend less for groceries and eat more healthfully.

1. Plan ahead. Make and use a shopping list. Plan what you’ll cook, what you’ll need, and how many meals you can get from one dish.

2. Buy according to UNIT PRICE on the shelf tag. It should show the price as cost/oz or cost/lb. The UNIT PRICE shows which costs less for the real food in the package.

3. Compare store and national brand prices and nutrition labels. Even with a coupon for the national brand, store brands are often less expensive, and just as healthy.

4. Only use coupons for what’s on your list, or what you are sure you will use soon.

5. Compare prices on ‘specials’ vs. regular brands. Often specials are no savings. The ends of the aisles are not always good buys.

6. Buy and eat more beans, peas and lentils, and less meat. Have a vegetarian day once a week.

7. Decide how much your time is worth and whether you can afford to buy peeled carrots at $5 a pound, or peel them yourself for $.99/lb.

8. Put more whole grains, fruits and vegetables and less meat on your plate.

9. Buy canned or frozen fruits and vegetables, especially when they are not in season. Only buy fresh produce when it’s in season. Be sure to get the reduced sugar and no salt added packages.

10. Buy the largest packages that you can store and use on basic foods that don’t spoil rapidly, such as cereal or flour. You usually spend less on packaging that way. (See #2)
11. **Buy meats in larger packages**, then divide into meal or serving sizes at home. Package and freeze for future use.

12. **Buy concentrated frozen juices** instead of ready-to-drink. They usually cost less.

13. **Buy small packages or individual serving sizes** of things you don’t need or tend to eat too much of, such as ice cream.

14. **Carry your lunch** instead of buying out every day. Make enough for the week on Sunday and freeze each day’s meal.

15. **Roast a turkey, turkey breast, ham or roast beef**, then slice it thinly and freezer for sandwiches. It will cost less and have less salt than prepackaged lunch or deli meats.

16. **Buy the package that has the least amount of packaging**. You’ll get more food and less plastic for your money.

17. **Make your own snacks** to take to work. Divide large bags of chips or carrots into baggies. You can make healthier snacks and use less packaging than the vending machine.

18. **Drink more water and milk** and less soda. Get a small thermos for milk, coffee, tea or water.

19. **Buy only as much fresh produce as you can use** before it spoils, just enough for 2-3 days.

20. **Buy plain fat-free yogurt** and add your own sugar or sweetener, or better yet add applesauce or mashed fruit.

21. **Buy plain rice or potatoes** instead of mixes and add your own herbs and spices.

22. **Try to shop just once a week**, and not when you’re hungry. There’s less temptation to buy more.

23. **Shop when you have time** to read the labels and compare prices.

24. **Check for ‘Use by’ or ‘Best if used by’ dates** on meats, seafood, and packaged dry goods. Most canned goods will be good for years.