Healthy Food and Meals on a Budget

Tips for planning your meals and shopping:

- Raw and whole foods that are not prepared or processed usually cost less than buying precooked or ready-to-eat versions of these foods such as fresh chicken versus frozen nuggets or canned soups versus homemade soups.

- When you prepare a recipe, if it makes for four or more servings you can put the extra portions in the freezer. Put the extra one or two portions in individual plastic containers or freezer bags, with the name of the food and the date prepared. These foods are good for at least a couple of months in the freezer before the quality may go down.

- Keep a running grocery list. Each trip to the supermarket will cost you extra time and gas or taxi money. By keeping a list, you will not have to run out for single items and you would have less chance to buy things on an impulse.

- Plan your menus around the store sales. Review supermarket flyers or look for their specials on the website. You will save the most money on sales for meats. When creating your menus, have a plan for leftovers such as making sandwiches with extra servings of chicken or pot roast or freezing in batches. Also, remember other less expensive proteins such as lentils and beans.

- Identify the foods you can prepare more cheaply at home. Why buy prepared gelatin, pudding and tea when they are simple and inexpensive to make yourself. Same with canned fruits and applesauce, buy in cans or jars rather than single-serve containers.

- Serve appropriate portions, especially with higher-priced items like meats and cheeses. Save money and avoid overeating. Stretch chicken breast by cutting them into thin cutlets. Add lentils or oats to extend ground meat when making meatloaf or patties.

- Do a quick inventory of your refrigerator at least twice a week. Find a use for everything before it goes bad. Toss wilting vegetables into a pot of soup or spaghetti sauce. Freeze leftovers for another day and ripe bananas for banana bread, to mix in pudding or smoothies.

- There are many resources to assist you with meal planning and budgeting tips as presented here. Doing a search on the internet such as “Meal Planning on a Budget” or “Thrifty Food Plan” will give you many resources for meal planning, food shopping, and preparation.
• Grow your own tomatoes, peppers, carrots, lettuce and more. Save money, have fun and get better flavor at the same time. Questions about gardening? Contact Cornell Cooperative Extension, Schenectady County at 518-372-1622 and ask for the Master Gardener.

• Cook more meals at home. You control the ingredients and you would not be paying the extra cost and tips associated with restaurant meals. This goes for fast foods as well. Of course, there is always a time and place to eat out!

At the Grocery Store

• Use coupons only for foods you normally buy. Try to shop on double- and triple-coupon days.

• Do not shop when you are hungry. Have a “healthy” snack before heading out to help you resist buying things you were not planning to.

• Stock up. Buy extra canned and frozen goods, cereals and even meats and fish when they are on sale. Wrap meats in a freezer bag before freezing.

• Buy generic. Store brands are usually as good as higher priced name brand products. Compare ingredients lists and Nutrition Facts panels to see if the foods are made with similar ingredients and provide similar nutrition regarding calories, types of fats, added sugars, and sodium content.

• Check unit prices or prices per serving. Look good on the shelves because the least expensive items are often on the top and bottom shelves. Buying a larger size of the food you want because it has a lower unit price helps save money. For instance, a large container of yogurt that you have to dish out is usually less expensive per ounce than buying individual cups of yogurt. Just be sure you are able to use all of the food before it starts to go bad.

• Try using these high-nutrition, low-cost foods. Instead of expensive meats, try beans, lentils, eggs, peanut butter, tofu and canned fish (salmon, tuna or crabmeat) as your protein sources. You can often find good prices on grains such as oats, brown rice and barley which are good sources of fiber and B vitamins. Sweet and white potatoes are low-cost filling options that are good sources of vitamin C and fiber (with the skin). Frozen fruit and vegetables are rich in nutrients and less expensive than their fresh counterparts.

• If shopping from home is offered in your area, some grocery services allow you to compare prices between products on their website to get the best value possible on the items you want.

Source: https://www.eatright.org/food/planning-and-prep/eat-right-on-a-budget/20-money-saving-grocery-shopping-tips
Mini Meat Loaves, Green Beans, and Potatoes
$2.25 per serving
Meat loaf in individual portions, fingerling potatoes, and crunchy green beans all on one sheet pan.
Prep: 10 minutes Bake: 40 minutes at 400° Stand: 10 minutes
Servings: 4

**Ingredients**
- Nonstick cooking spray
- 12 ounces fingerling and/or new potatoes, halved or quartered
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- Salt and black pepper
- ¼ cup barbecue sauce
- ¼ cup fine dry bread crumbs
- ¼ cup finely chopped onion
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 pound lean ground beef
- 8 ounces green beans, trimmed
- 1 teaspoon olive oil
- ¼ cup barbecue sauce

**Directions**
1. Preheat oven to 400°F. Line a 15x10-inch baking pan with foil; coat foil with cooking spray. Place potatoes in one half of pan. Drizzle with 1 Tbsp. oil and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Bake 20 minutes, stirring once. Can skip the salt to reduce the sodium.
2. Meanwhile, in a large bowl combine 1/3 cup BBQ sauce, bread crumbs, onion, and garlic powder. Add ground beef; mix lightly until combined. Shape into four 3-1/2 x 2 inch meat loaves.
3. In a medium bowl drizzle green beans with 1 tsp. oil and sprinkle with salt and pepper; toss to coat. Place loaves and green beans in pan with potatoes. Bake 20 to 23 minutes more or until loaves are done (160°F) and potatoes and beans are tender.
4. Spoon 1/4 cup BBQ sauce over loaves; cover and let stand 10 minutes. To reduce the sugar and sodium content of the recipes use less BBQ sauce.

Nutrition Facts Per Serving: 455 calories, 6g saturated fat, 1g polyunsaturated fat, 9g monounsaturated fat, 805mg sodium, 39g carbohydrates, 4g fiber, 16g sugar, 34g protein.

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Chicken with Parmesan Noodles
$2.10 per serving
Start-To-Finish: 20 minutes
Servings: 6

**Ingredients**
- 9 ounce package refrigerated angel hair pasta, or fettuccine or linguine
- 1½ pounds skinless, boneless chicken breast halves, cut into bite-size pieces
- 4 large carrots, thinly sliced
- 6 tablespoons (3oz) purchased basil pesto
- Olive oil (optional)
- 2 tablespoons butter spread
- ¼ cup shredded Parmesan cheese
- Fresh basil (optional)

**Directions**
1. Cook pasta according to package directions.
2. Meanwhile, in 12-inch skillet cook carrots in 1 Tbsp. melted butter spread over medium heat for 3 minutes. Add chicken; cook and stir 4 to 5 minutes or until no pink remains in chicken. Add 4 tablespoons pesto; toss to coat.
3. Drain pasta. Return to pan; toss with remaining butter and pesto. Serve with chicken mixture. Sprinkle pasta with Parmesan cheese and ground black pepper. Drizzle with olive oil and top with basil.

Nutrition Facts Per Serving: 390 calories, 5g saturated fat, 369 mg sodium, 28g carbohydrates, 3g fiber, 33g protein.

Source: https://www.bhg.com/recipes/healthy/dinner/cheap-heart-healthy-dinner-ideas/?slide=slide_12288#slide_12288
Consumer-centered access for long-term care information, referrals and assessments. For information, call 382-8481, #9, ext.304

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Word Puzzle

BUDGET
COUPON
FREEZE
GARDEN
GENERIC
HOMEMADE
INVENTORY
LIST
PLAN
PORTION
STOCKUP
STOREBRAND
UNITPRICE

S M B M N U C K K U M C W G B
N T Z H R A J I N O N J A H N
H D O T S I L I R P L R T C O
L C O R J J T P U E D J Y F I
J B O U E P B K I E N Z D F T
E G K U R B C W N A R E N R R
X J U I P O R A V X V G G E O
J V C K T O O A E K D O Z E P
P E K S K U N M N D F R H Z W
E D A M E M O H T D F M Q E L
P F B R U D Z C O A G S C X B
A F S L N S L Z R Z J L F Y T
B O O F V B X O Y U F U Z D N

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Do you have a questions or concerns about what to eat?
If you are participating in services offered by Schenectady County’s Senior and Long Term Care services, you are eligible to have a free consultation with a Registered Dietitian.

Call Cornell Cooperative Extension, Schenectady County at 518-372-1622, ext. 269. Leave a message, if necessary, for dietitian to call you back.

Check out our website for nutrition resources:
http://cceschenectady.org/nutrition-for-seniors