

# 20 Ways to Save Money on Groceries

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*Modified by Lori Itano*

- 1. Follow a menu plan.**

Plan out everything you need for the week, so you are not tempted to run to the store for last-minute items or order take-out (both of which tend to be expensive). Meal planning can be done in many different ways, including the classic method of looking at what you have and what's on sale or in season, and plan out each meal for each day. If you enjoy more spontaneity, you can also use that information and plan a bunch of breakfasts/lunches/dinners, grocery shop for those, and choose from the list each day. Or you can use categories – for example, Tuesday is Mexican night, Wednesday is pasta, Friday is pizza, etc.
- 2. Keep it simple.**

Simplify the number of side dishes. Instead of trying five different kinds of beans, stick to one or two. Etc.
- 3. Be flexible.**

Even though it saves money to menu plan, sometimes there is a sale on something, and flexibility means you will buy and serve the sale item (and preserve it) instead of slavishly sticking to your meal plan.
- 4. Buy in bulk (aka “the pantry principle”)**

This is where you can save quite a bit of money, though it is averaged over the long run and – depending on the item and amount – can be steep in the month you purchase it. Buy in bulk (particularly when it's on sale) and eat out of your pantry, replacing items as they go on sale again (or are needed). Consider splitting with another family (or families), if needed. Eat more frugally (rice and beans can be a menu item once a week, for example, spiced many different ways) to be able to set aside some money for bulk purchases.
- 5. Prioritize seasonal produce.**

Seasonal produce is cheaper, but also healthier because it is more fresh.
- 6. Preserve seasonal bounty through canning, dehydrating, fermenting or freezing.**
- 7. Grow or gather (forage) your own.**

This includes being friends with gardeners, who often have more produce than they know what to do with and are happy to give some away.
- 8. Don't waste anything.**

Plan your menus so that produce that is most fragile is eaten first, or freeze/process in some way to minimize waste. Also see the [No-Waste Vegetable Cookbook](#) by Linda Ly for lots of ideas on how to eat parts of vegetables that normally get thrown away, such as carrot tops or tomato leaves.
- 9. Stretch your meals with frugal whole foods.**

This includes adding beans and/or rice or potatoes to soups, chili and pasta sauce, for example.
- 10. Make it yourself.**

Processed foods are the highest cost by weight. Not only are you saving money but you are getting healthier. This includes transitioning to healthy soda in the form of water kefir

or kombucha (see Maria P.); Mike C. can advise on homemade beer; Andrius can advise on homemade wine.

**11. The less processing, the cheaper it is.**

Buy cheese blocks and shred yourself. Buy a roast and cut for steaks. Roast a whole chicken, then set aside the bones and organs for broth and shred and freeze the leftover meat for future meals. Etc.

**12. Choose less expensive snacks.**

Make what you can; check pinterest or use your favorite search engine to come up with creative, tasty ideas. Or go radical: No snacks at all.

**13. Batch cook.**

And eat leftovers for lunches, or freeze for future meals (to serve instead of take-out).

**14. Go through your pantry periodically.**

Then use what you've found as the basis for the menus for the following week(s).

**15. Invest in proper kitchen tools.**

If you will be doing a lot of cooking and/or preserving, it pays (in time and hassle) to have the right tools to do the job well. This does not have to cost a lot of money, as there is a lot of kitchen stuff on Freecycle and available from relatives who have it accumulating dust in the back of their cupboards. It can also be had very inexpensively at second-hand stores. If it is a larger item, see if you can borrow it to try out a few times before committing to owning it.

**16. Mill your own flour (really a subset of #15).**

This sounds radical, but having done it for the last 25 years, I can say it isn't as radical as it sounds, and the mill pays for itself very quickly in savings from buying grain in bulk. When I started 25 years ago, mills were \$200. They are now priced at about \$300. It took me nine months to pay back the cost of the mill 25 years ago (because the cost of bulk grain is much cheaper than milled flour); I imagine it's quicker now.

**17. Use grocery pick-up or delivery services.**

IF they have a coupon. Or use it to avoid the temptation of impulse buys.

**18. Watch for digital deals.**

For those who have apps on their phones.

**19. Make and stick to a grocery budget.**

Set a guideline, give it a test run, and modify as needed. Continue to challenge yourself to lower it. And pay with cash.

**20. Get creative with the rest of your budget.**

Cut where you can in other areas. Focus on cutting what you don't care about as much or doing things like planning your routes to save gas.