

Good Nutrition Makes Good “Cents”

In today’s world, people want to get the most for their food dollars. Some budget-conscious shoppers mistakenly think that skipping nutritious foods, like fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains and lean meats, is a way to save money. The good news is that you can trim food costs without compromising your personal nutrition goals. In fact, with a little extra planning, you can serve nutritious meals, have more variety and manage your food budget.

Stretching Your Food Dollar

Saving at the supermarket starts at home. Before you shop, follow these steps:

1. *Review newspaper ads.* When you know what’s on sale, you can plan your meals around specials and well-priced seasonal foods. Coupons and customer loyalty cards also can be a great way to save money.
2. *Plan your weekly menu.* A little advanced planning for dinner meals can make a big difference in your shopping time and costs. It can also save time and money by eliminating extra trips to the store.
3. *Make a grocery list.* Shopping with a list is one of the best ways to control spending and avoid impulse buying. Use your menus and recipes to write your list after you check your refrigerator and pantry for foods you already have on hand. To save shopping time, organize your list according to the store layout, highlighting the advertised sales and specials.

Back to Basics

Eating out and ordering in can quickly shrink your budget, so it makes sense to cook and eat at home. A little effort goes a long way toward making nutritious, affordable meals.

- *Be adventurous and try new recipes.* Look for budget-wise Healthy Living recipes on www.kraftfoods.com.
- *Make extra batches* to freeze, or use later in the week for lunches or quick suppers.
- *Capitalize on all-in-one dishes or one-pot entrees*, which can save prep time and money. Slow cookers are a great way to turn affordable cuts of meat into delicious entrees. Add extra



Beef and Vegetable Skillet

vegetables and beans to boost nutrition and stretch the meal. One example—stir a package of mixed vegetables into your favorite mac ‘n cheese for color and nutrition.

- *Stock your fridge and cupboards* with items that are affordable, nutrient-rich and easy to prepare. Here are some suggestions:
 - *Beans:* canned or dried, are protein-rich and make nutritious, satisfying soups, stews, burritos, chili or dips, such as hummus.
 - *Pasta and rice:* are quick and easy to prepare. Combine these with veggies and meat, poultry or fish for hearty soups, stews, casseroles, salads or stir-fries. Whole-grain pastas, bulgur, barley and brown rice are affordable and contribute fiber, too.
 - *Soups:* pair tasty soups with a sandwich or salad for nutritious “comfort” food. Make your own soups with homemade or prepared broth, veggies, beans, pasta or rice and leftover meat or chicken.
 - *Eggs:* can be the star of a quick and easy meal any time of the day. Whip up an omelet or frittata using leftover meat and veggies.
 - *Milk:* works great as a base for chowders, quiche, strata or pudding.
 - *Lean meat, poultry and fish:* can be extended by using small amounts in casseroles, soups, stews and main dish salads. Buy family-size packages of meat, poultry and seafood (Hint: Look for “manager’s specials,” too!) and divide into meal-size portions before freezing. Inexpensive cuts of meat work well in stews and casseroles.
 - *Peanut butter and nuts:* can be affordable alternatives to meat. Peanut butter makes a tasty addition to stir fry sauces or can be added to smoothies for extra flavor and nutrition. Sprinkle nuts on salads and stir-fries, too.
 - *Condiments:* are an inexpensive way to add flavor and

interest to your dishes because small amounts go a long way. Stock a selection of herbs, spices, barbecue sauce, mustard, vinegars and low-sodium soy sauce.

Produce Perks

With fruits and vegetables, you have the option of fresh, frozen, canned or dried, so it pays to shop for your most economical choice. All are nutritious and can be part of a healthy eating plan.

Fresh: Buy in season for the best value. If one is available, shop at a Farmer's Market for good prices on locally-grown produce. Better yet, plant a garden and harvest your own produce. Plan to use fresh fruits and vegetables first so they don't go to waste.

Canned, frozen or dried: These are convenient, economical options for fruits and vegetables not in season. Most canned vegetables are fat-free (look for lower-sodium or "with no added salt" choices); buy frozen vegetables without sauces to avoid extra calories and fat. For less sugar, buy canned, frozen and dried fruits without added sugar.

Plan Your Leftovers

Get started on tomorrow's meal using today's leftover ingredients. With a little planning, leftovers can become a creative new meal. Here are a few examples:

- Chop up leftover hamburgers and add to spaghetti sauce to start a pasta dinner.
- Stir-fry leftover chicken with frozen veggies. Add some cooked rice, an egg and a few dashes of low-sodium soy sauce for a delicious main dish of fried rice.
- Use leftover sliced beef or pork roast to make tasty dinnertime options such as barbecued beef or pork sandwiches, soft tacos or satisfying wraps.
- Top leftover pizza with sliced veggies before re-heating to make a yummy lunchtime dish.

Snack Smart

For good nutrition and economy, snacks should be planned and factored into your food budget.

- Cut up carrots, celery or apples, instead of buying pre-cut options. Serve with hummus or peanut butter.
- Pop a bowl of popcorn for the family to get fiber and whole grain; add raisins and whole-grain cereal for a tasty trail mix.

- Top whole-grain crackers with 2% cheese.

Your imagination is the only limit on creative and delicious ways to prepare tasty dishes that will please your family and make good economic "cents."

Here's a great-tasting Healthy Living recipe that doesn't scrimp on flavor or nutrition. Try it and see for yourself.

Beef and Vegetable Skillet

Prep: 10 min.

Total: 30 min.

Makes: 4 servings, 2 cups each

- 1/2 lb. extra lean ground beef
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1/4 cup KRAFT Light House Italian Dressing
- 1 each medium zucchini and green pepper, thinly sliced
- 1 can (14-1/2 oz.) Italian-style diced tomatoes, undrained
- 1 pkg. (10 oz.) frozen corn, thawed
- 3/4 cup water
- 1-1/4 cups instant brown rice, uncooked
- 1/2 cup KRAFT 2% Milk Shredded Cheddar Cheese

COOK meat and onions in dressing in large nonstick skillet on medium-high heat until meat is no longer pink and onions are tender, stirring frequently. Reduce heat to medium. Add zucchini, peppers, tomatoes and their liquid and the corn; mix lightly. Cover; simmer 5 min. Stir in water.

BRING to boil on medium-high heat. Stir in rice; cover. Reduce heat to medium-low; simmer 5 min. Remove from heat; stir. Cover; let stand 5 min. Fluff with fork.

SPRINKLE with cheese; cover. Let stand 5 min. or until cheese is melted.

TIP: Store any leftovers in tightly covered container in refrigerator up to 3 days.

Nutrition Bonus: A serving of this savory low-calorie, low-fat skillet dinner provides more than 1 cup of the recommended 2-1/2 cups of vegetables per day and is a good source of vitamin C from the combination of zucchini, peppers and tomatoes.

Nutrition Information Per Serving: 350 calories, 9g total fat, 3.5g saturated fat, 45mg cholesterol, 810mg sodium, 48g carbohydrate, 5g dietary fiber, 10g sugars, 21g protein, 15%DV vitamin A, 60%DV vitamin C, 25%DV calcium, 15%DV iron.

Exchange: 2-1/2 Starch, 2 Vegetable, 2 Meat (L)

Dietary Exchanges based on *Choose Your Foods: Exchange Lists for Diabetes* © 2008 by the American Diabetes Association and the American Dietetic Association.