Supermarket Tips: Making Smart Choices at the Food Store

for Easy Healthy Meals

Strategies: Plan Ahead
Planning what you eat at home is important, whether you work long hours or stay home with the kids. Eventually we all spend time at home, so the fridge and cabinets should be packed with healthy foods. If you’re a mom or dad, it’s especially important to have your shelves overflowing with healthy foods for both you and the kids. The number of obese children has increased dramatically in recent years. Studies show that the reasons for the increase are because kids eat more packaged and processed foods (which generally contain more fat and calories) and they move less (television and computers have replaced playing the backyard).

Whether you love to cook or can barely use the microwave, healthy eating at home is simple. You need to know some simple shopping strategies. Set one day aside each week to do all of your grocery shopping. Try to be consistent. If Sunday is the best day to go, try to shop only on Sunday. The less time you spend in the supermarket, the fewer temptations you’ll encounter (especially when starting a weight-loss plan).

The Essentials
Planning ahead means being prepared for any occasion or obstacle. If you don’t have the following healthy staple foods at home, then it is time to get to the grocery store!

Healthy Eating Supermarket Staples for Your Pantry:
- Breads: whole grain bagels, tortilla wraps, pita pockets, breadsticks, crackers, and breads
- High fiber cereals
- Quick-cook Oats
- Whole wheat pizza dough
- Baby-cut carrots
- Grated low-fat cheese
- Instant grain dishes: couscous, tabbouleh, boil-in-bag brown rice
- Low sodium chicken and vegetable broth
- Bagged fresh or frozen vegetables
- Fresh or frozen fruit
- Sweet potatoes

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- Sun-dried tomatoes
- Dried mushrooms
- Tomato paste, tomato sauce, canned whole tomatoes
- Canned meats and fish: chicken, tuna, salmon, crab
- Canned beans: (ex: black beans, lima beans, kidney beans)
- Shelf-stable or evaporated fat free or low fat milk
- Salsas, chutneys and other low-fat condiments
- Assorted whole wheat pastas
- Assorted rice: brown rice, while rice, basmati rice
- Dried fruits
- Nonstick canola or olive oil cooking spray
- Flavored vinegars: balsamic, red wine, white wine

### Choosing Frozen foods

You can build an entire meal from the ingredients in the freezer case, and it could be a nutritious meal. Everything from appetizers to desserts can be found in the frozen-food aisle. Some frozen foods are a little healthier than others, of course, and some are certainly better bets when you’re trying to lose weight. Here are a few:

**Low-fat frozen dinners and vegetables.** Arriving home hungry is definitely a risky situation if you’re trying to stick to a healthy meal plan. If you can delay for two minutes, you’ll have yourself a healthy, warm meal.

If you’re shopping once a week, determine how many lunches and dinners you’ll be eating at home (it’s best to over-estimate, just in case). Stocking your fridge with healthy frozen foods is one of the best ways to plan ahead for at-home (or office) obstacles.

**Vegetable mixtures.** Rather than buy three or four different types of veggies, you can get a lot of variety (and more nutrition) in a single bag. Stick with plain vegetable mixtures and season them yourself rather than take a chance with the extra calories and fat that comes with a pre-made sauce.

**Pasta.** Frozen plain ravioli and other filled pastas can be surprisingly low in fat and calories and a good basis for a quick and easy healthy meal. Read those labels to know for certain.

**Unsweetened frozen fruit.** Thawed fruit makes its own juice, and you can use the mixture to top yogurt, waffles or pancakes for breakfast or dessert. They are also really useful to make fruit smoothies and shakes.

**Low-fat waffles.** Waffles can be a healthy, low-fat food, but check the label. Choose the one that is high in fiber and low in fat and calories.

**Greens and beans.** Lima beans, black-eye beans, collards, kale and mustard greens are available in frozen form. Frozen vegetables have equal if not greater nutrient value as compared to fresh veggies and it’s easy to stock up on them.

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Choosing canned foods
Canned fruits and veggies are the least healthy compared to fresh or frozen. For those who are busy, canned foods may be easier to prepare than fresh. Here are some recommended canned foods:

- Tomatoes
- Tomato sauces
- Low sodium chicken broth
- Low sodium vegetable broth
- Canned beans and lentils (rinse before use)
- Low sodium split pea soup
- Low sodium lentil soup
- Low sodium corn kernels
- Beets
- Tuna
- Salmon
- Crab

Saving Grains
Grains are easy to prepare, but some take a while to cook. The good news is they freeze and reheat well. And they don’t taste warmed-over the way other leftovers can. When you cook pasta, rice, couscous etc., make two to three times as much as you need and freeze what you don’t need in half-cup proportions, which is a great size for an individual side dish later in the week.