Budget Busters: Saving Money & Eating Healthy During a Pandemic

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Today’s Objectives

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Introduction to Food Spending

• In the United States:
  • Average consumer spends 6% of monthly budget on food
  • Cost of Groceries for:
    • 1 person: $162-372/month
    • Couple: $371-773/month
    • Family of 4: $570-1298/month
The Impact of COVID-19\textsuperscript{2,3}

- Increase in at-home cooking and take-out
- Stockpiling may lead to overspending
- 15-20\% monthly increase in grocery spending
  - Up to 40\% of grocery expenditures may be online
- **At the store:**
  - Out-of-stock items & increased willingness to buy off-brands
  - Health precautions: hand and cart disinfectant, off-peak hours, avoiding use of cash, self-checkout
  - Increased prices being considered, less promotions
Tip 1: Plan Your Meals\textsuperscript{4,5}

- Check your pantry and refrigerator
- Rethink Dinner
  - Skip the feast and go simple
- Look for less expensive protein options
  - Cheaper cuts of meat (chicken thighs, organ meats, whole chickens, pork shoulder, chuck roast, bottom round, etc.)
  - Eggs
  - Meatless meals
- Use your leftovers for lunch or freeze for later
- Get the family involved
- Stick to the meal plan once you make it
- Check out meal planning resources online (links at end of presentation)
Tip 2: Make a Budget & Stick to It $^4,5$

- Prepare a grocery list and follow it
- Keep an eye on your cart
- Don’t shop when you are hungry
- Avoid distractions
  - Eye-level products
  - Online advertisements
Tip 3: Bargain Hunt$^4,5$

- Buy store/generic brands for staple foods
  - Could save 20-25% (a savings of $3000/year)
- Comparison shop
  - Try out different stores, consider why you picked the one you go to?
    - Top 7 “Cheapest” Grocery Stores: Aldi, Market Basket, WinCo Foods, Food4Less, Costco, Walmart & Trader Joes
- Buying in bulk is not always a cost savings
  - Buy what you need and what you will actually eat
- Don’t buy it just because you have a coupon!
Tip 4: Choose “Farm-Fresh” & Local⁴,⁵

- Shop local and in-season
- Consider Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs
- Farmer’s Markets
- Your own garden
- Find out what is available near you!
- If needed:
  - Local food banks
  - Emergency food services through community groups/churches
Tip 5: Final Do’s & Don’ts

Do:
- Store Loyalty Cards
- Space out big purchases
- Check out grocery store rebate apps (Ibotta, Receipt Hog, Checkout51, Fetch Rewards)
- Follow your favorite brands on social media for bargain alerts & coupons

Don’t:
- Store Credit Cards
- Packaged, convenience food items (pre-cut, pre-marinated, etc.)
- Buy more than you need
Additional COVID-19 Shopping Tips⁴,⁵

• If you must purchase food two weeks at a time:
  • Look for non-perishable, fresh, frozen, and canned items
    • If you can, buy it frozen
    • If its canned, look for no sugar added and low sodium options
Headed to the store? 4,5

- Wear a face mask
- Bring your own sanitizing wipes
- Practice social distancing
- Wash your hands when you get home and after you unpack groceries
- Clean and sanitize reusable bags and surfaces they touch
  - No evidence that food packaging spreads COVID-19
  - Concerned? Feel free to wipe down and air dry
Food Budgeting & Meal Planning Resources

- Grocery Budget Calculator
- Budget Calendar
- Meal Planning Calendar with Recipes
- 5-Day Meal Planning Worksheet
- Recipes & Tips for Healthy, Thrifty Meals
References


Are there any questions?