United States Department of Agriculture

MAKE EASY AND HEALTHY FAMILY MEALS!

A few steps can help you make easy, healthy family meals on a budget. Find time to plan and prepare healthier meals each week. Use the time you save to enjoy your family.

PLAN

Plan your family meals. Think about meals, snacks, and beverages you will serve throughout the week. Write down a list of foods you need to prepare your meals or keep the list in a wallet, purse, or on a mobile phone. Focus your budget on foods that are healthier for your family such as vegetables, fruits, whole grains, dairy, and protein foods.

- **Use a shopping list to stay on track.** Review coupons and sales to find less expensive foods. Look in newspapers or weekly store flyers to find sales and coupons for foods that you need. $
- **Join a store's bonus or reward card program to receive more savings.** Visit the store's customer service desk or website for information about how to sign up. $
- **Choose foods that cost less all year long.** Beans and eggs are low-cost healthy protein foods. Frozen vegetables like spinach and green beans are also low-cost options. $
- **Stock your kitchen.** Select foods that you can make and serve quickly on busy days, such as:
  - Canned beans and fish
  - Canned low-salt or low-sodium vegetables or soups
  - Whole-grain pasta, brown rice, and quick-cooking oats
- **Store fresh foods right away to keep them fresh longer.** Use fresh fruits, vegetables, and milk quickly to prevent them from spoiling.
- **Buy fruits and vegetables in season.** Some fruits and vegetables, such as peaches or corn, are cheaper when you buy them in season. Look for sales in the grocery store and your local farmers markets for cheaper choices. Many farmers markets accept SNAP benefits. $

Keep ingredients such as seasonings, flour, baking powder, herbs, and oils in your pantry to help you quickly prepare healthy meals.

$ BUDGET-FRIENDLY TIP

PREPARE

Do some tasks in advance. Make meals on the weekends when you have more time. Prepare extra and freeze some meals to use later in the week. Find ways to save yourself time during the weekdays when everyone is busier.

- **Look for shortcuts.** Grated, chopped, or pre-washed foods cost more but often save time in the kitchen. Compare prices on these items. Look for sales on easy to prepare foods such as frozen veggies or mixed salads. $
- **Prepare a meal that kids and adults will enjoy.** Try not to make a separate meal for each person. If your child likes plain vegetables, meat, rice, or noodles, set some aside before you add other ingredients.
- **Serve no-cook meals.** Make simple meals like salads with canned tuna and beans or cold sandwiches with lean meats and sliced vegetables. Find information about meal planning, shopping, and creating healthy meals at ChooseMyPlate.gov/budget/index.html.
- **Cook when you have more time.** On the weekends, make soups, stews, or casseroles. Cook larger amounts of lean ground beef or turkey and use some for chili or spaghetti later in the week. Freeze some of your meals for really hectic days.
- **Look for recipes with fewer ingredients.** Choose recipes with only a few ingredients that can be prepared quickly. Visit WhatsCooking.fns.usda.gov for ideas.
- **Involve kids in family meals.** Let children help with simple tasks like washing fruits, choosing the veggies, setting the table, or measuring foods. On busy weekdays, give everyone a task to help you get dinner on the table.

Farmers markets often carry foods grown locally. Find a local market near you by visiting: search.ams.usda.gov/farmersmarkets

November 2014
Food and Nutrition Service
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