



# Unlock the Potential of Food

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## 10 Tips for Planning Meals on a Budget

Are you trying to save money on your food bill but don't want to compromise on nutrition? If so, start by planning your meals for the next few days or week ahead. It takes a bit of time, but it will help you save money and can help boost nutrition.

### 10 tips to get you started on meal planning on a budget:

1. Make a menu. Decide which meals you will make for lunch and dinner and make a list of the items that you will need from the grocery store. When you have a plan, you will be less likely to spend money on fast food or convenience meals.
2. Plan your meals around foods that are on sale. Check store flyers, newspaper inserts and coupon sites online. You may be surprised at the good buys available. Just be sure to buy and plan for foods that you will actually use so that they don't go to waste.
3. Plan some plant-based meals every week. Legumes (beans, lentils, dried peas), tofu and peanut butter offer great tasting protein at a good price. Here are a few tasty plant-based meal idea recipes: The Ultimate Mixed Bean Salad, Chickpea Tikka Masala, and Quick Quinoa and Veggie Casserole found on Cookspiration.com. Don't forget about canned fish, like tuna and salmon. These can be an inexpensive way to get protein and omega-3 and last longer than fresh varieties.
4. Check your pantry, refrigerator and freezer. Look at the expiry dates of the foods and ingredients you already have on hand. Which ones do you need to use up? Look for recipes that use those foods and ingredients.
5. Enjoy grains more often. Grains such as rice, pasta, barley and couscous are inexpensive and can be used in many different recipes. Try them in soups, stews and salads such as Lentil Bolognese and Curry Chickpea Pasta Salad found on Cookspiration.com.
6. Avoid recipes that need a special ingredient. Some recipes call for a special ingredient that you may not have. How much does that ingredient cost? Does it come in a small or big package? Can you use it in other recipes before it goes bad? It may not be worth the money to buy an ingredient if you are only going to use it once. Leave the ingredient out or try the recipe with an ingredient that you already have at home. It's fun to experiment while cooking and you may surprise yourself with the finished dish.

7. Look for seasonal recipes. Vegetables and fruit are less expensive when they're in season. Frozen and canned choices are also a good buy and can be just as nutritious.
8. Plan to use leftovers. If you're cooking roast chicken with rice and vegetables for Sunday night's supper, then make chicken sandwiches for Monday's lunch. On Tuesday, use the bones to make a chicken soup and toss in any leftover vegetables and rice. Download our free recipe book [Easy Meals for Great Leftovers](#) for more inspiration (found on [UnlockFood.ca](#)).
9. Make extras. Don't let a big bunch of carrots or celery go to waste. Use it all up by making an extra big pot of soup. If ground beef is on sale, make two batches of lasagna instead of one. Serve one batch for dinner, and freeze the other batch in meal-sized portions for another time.
10. Know what your family likes to eat. Encourage your family to share their favourites and help with menu planning. That way you can look for favourite ingredients and foods when they go on sale.

When meal planning, it is also important to make sure meals are balanced. A balanced meal includes vegetables and/or fruits, whole grains and protein foods. For more information on balanced meals visit [UnlockFood.ca](#).

For more recipe ideas, check out [Cookspiration.com](#) – our site dedicated to nutritious meal and snack ideas.

### **How can a dietitian help?**

A [dietitian](#) can give you personalized advice on how to save money on food while not compromising on nutrition. They will make sure you are getting all the nutrients you need to be healthy as well as share grocery shopping and cooking tips to make the most of your food budget. Did you know that dietitians are covered by many employee health benefit plans? [Connect with a dietitian today!](#)

### **Bottom line**

Meal planning is one of the best ways to save money on food while making sure you are eating balanced, nutritious meals.

Visit [www.NutritionMonth2023.ca](http://www.NutritionMonth2023.ca) for more on how to connect with a dietitian and for trusted food and nutrition information.