

Eating Healthy on a Budget

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July 8, 2022

Is it really possible to eat healthy on a budget? With rising grocery costs, it may seem like doing the impossible.

According to a recent survey by The Hartman Group, some 85% of consumers have noticed food costs rising. Over half of those people say rising prices have impacted their ability to purchase foods, beverages and other grocery items. And 25% admit they have to rethink how they shop for groceries.

Here are some steps you can take to manage food costs — and still eat healthy.

No. 1: Eat out less. If you prepare a meal at home, you can add fruits and vegetables and cook with whole grains. While fresh may be best in season, frozen or canned (look for no-salt-added) can be the most economical when not in season. Also consider other sources of protein besides meat, like black beans, lentils, quinoa and eggs.

No. 2: Skip or reduce soft drinks and energy drinks.

No. 3: Choose larger containers of unsweetened yogurt to add to fresh or frozen fruit, smoothies and oatmeal.

No. 4: Choose canned or frozen seafood, such as tuna or cod. Fish is a great source of protein. Look for the reduced-sodium tuna and tuna packed in water rather than oil.

No. 5: Eat from your own freezer. You already have purchased it. Take an inventory and plan your meals around what you already have in your freezer. Have a taco night with ground beef or use those frozen vegetables in a quick stir-fry.

No. 6: Reduce your food waste. Can you repurpose leftovers? I love to cook a whole chicken in my slow cooker and serve the chicken with potatoes and vegetables the first day, then use the leftover chicken in a quesadilla, chicken salad, chicken chili or chicken enchiladas. You can even make homemade chicken noodle soup and broth with the bones. A rotisserie chicken works as well.

No. 7: Plan your meals. My mom used to get the grocery store flyer and plan our meals around what was on sale. Today, you can do the same thing with the grocery store's app. A few places even still offer coupons. Clip and save. Planning your meals also helps avoid overbuying. Knowing what's for dinner reduces the temptation to eat out. Plan meals to include a protein, vegetable, fruit, whole grain and low-fat dairy.

No. 8: Save eating out for special occasions. That keeps eating out a celebration rather than an everyday event.

No. 9: Rather than buy your coffee — hot or iced — from a drive-thru or convenience store every day, make it at home. That way you can control the sugar, cream and calories — and save money, too.

No. 10: Eat before you shop at the grocery store. You'll be much less likely to buy things that aren't on your list.

Q and A

Q: Do caffeine and alcohol affect sleep quality?

A: Caffeine has a half-life of between 5 and 8 hours, meaning half the dose is still in your system that many hours later. It all adds up throughout the day if you're having multiple drinks or foods such as chocolate that contain caffeine. Even if you do fall asleep, the quality of sleep is impacted as your brain is more active with caffeine. Alcohol has been found to decrease sleep quality by 39% when consumed in certain quantities (more than two servings for men and more than one serving for women). Alcohol is also a diuretic, making it more likely you have to wake up to go to the bathroom. To be safe, time having a drink at least two hours before bedtime.

RECIPE

Not sure how to cook fish? Here's an easy recipe with a Mediterranean flair. Use any fish you like: trout, salmon, cod or tilapia. Recipe is adapted from Hy-Vee's Seasons magazine.

FISH WITH MEDITERRANEAN SALSA

Servings: 2

1 tablespoon plus 1 1/2 teaspoon olive oil, divided

1 tablespoon unsalted butter, melted

3 cloves garlic, thinly sliced

1 1/2 teaspoons finely chopped fresh oregano

1 1/2 teaspoons finely chopped fresh thyme

1/4 teaspoon coarsely ground black pepper

1/8 teaspoon kosher salt

1 (8-10 ounce) fresh fish, skin on, about 3/4 inch thick

1/2 cup halved cherry tomatoes

1 tablespoon drained capers

1/2 cup fresh Bing cherries, pitted and quartered

2 tablespoons finely chopped Italian parsley

1 tablespoon sliced jumbo queen olives, chopped

Preheat oven to 425 degrees F. Add 1 tablespoon olive oil to a large cast iron skillet. Heat skillet in oven for 10 minutes. Stir together butter, garlic, oregano, thyme, salt and pepper in small bowl and set aside. Remove skillet from oven. Place fish, skin side down, in skillet. Drizzle butter mixture over fish. Add tomatoes and capers. Bake 10 to 12 minutes or until fish reaches 145 degrees. For salsa, stir together cherries, parsley, olives and remaining olive oil in small bowl. Serve salsa over fish. Garnish with additional parsley if desired. Serves 2.

Per serving based on using trout: 320 calories; 24 grams protein; 10 grams carbohydrates; 21 grams fat (6 grams saturated); 80 milligrams cholesterol; 2 grams fiber; 6 grams sugar (0 grams added); 490 milligrams sodium.

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