

Money Saving Tips for Each Food Group

Glenda L. Warren

The following tips are for finding good buys when shopping for food. Remember to always compare prices.

Grains

- Buy day-old bakery items and freeze any that will not be eaten immediately. Buy only the amount that you can store and use before it goes bad.
- Buy plain rice and add seasonings, instead of buying rice mixes.
- Buy plain cereal in bulk and add fruits, nuts, and other seasonings. It costs much less than flavored or single-serve cereals. This is true for ready-to eat cereals and for hot cereals.
- Buy hot cereals often especially in the cooler seasons. Hot cereal (in bulk) costs less than ready-to-eat cereal.
- Buy regular rice, oatmeal, and grits instead of the instant and flavored types.
- Buy more whole grains. Substitute a whole-grain product for a refined product – such as eating whole-wheat bread instead of white bread or brown rice instead of white rice. It's important to substitute the whole-grain product for the refined one, rather than adding the whole-grain product.

- Choose foods that name one of the following whole-grain ingredients first list:

"brown rice"	"whole oats"
"bulgur"	"whole rye"
"graham flour"	"whole wheat"
"oatmeal"	"wild rice"
"whole-grain corn"	

- Use the Nutrition Facts label and choose products with a higher % Daily Value (%DV) for fiber – the %DV for fiber is a good clue to the amount of whole grain in the product.
- Read the food label's ingredient list. Look for terms that indicate added sugars (sucrose, high-fructose corn syrup, honey, and molasses) and oils (partially hydrogenated vegetable oils) that add extra calories. Choose foods with fewer added sugars, fats, or oils.
- Teach older children to read the ingredient list on cereals or snack food packages and choose those with whole grains at the top of the list.

-
1. This publication is FCSXXX, one of a series of the Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. First published: Reviewed: Please visit the EDIS Web site at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>
 2. Glenda L. Warren, M.S., R.D., CFCS, Associate Professor, Extension Nutritionist – EFNEP, Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida 32611 – 0310.

The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) is an Equal Employment Opportunity-Affirmative Action Employer authorized to provide research, educational information and other services only to individuals and institutions that function without regard to race, creed, color, religion, age, disability, sexual orientation, marital status, national origin, political opinions, or affiliation. For information on obtaining other extension publications, contact your county Cooperative Extension Service office. Florida Cooperative Extension Service/Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences/University of Florida/Larry R. Arrington, Dean.

Produce: Vegetables and Fruits

- Buy fresh fruits and veggies in season. They cost less and are likely to be at their peak flavor.
- Sauces or seasonings can add calories, fat, and sodium to vegetables. They also can increase the cost. Use the Nutrition Facts label to compare the calories and % Daily Value for fat and sodium in plain and seasoned vegetables.
- Check prices and availability of foods at your local farmers markets.
- Buy whole, rather than pre-cut, fresh produce.
- When produce is priced by the head or bunch (like lettuce or broccoli), buy the heaviest one.
- Compare prices for fresh, frozen, and canned produce.
- Look for large bags of frozen vegetables. You can pour out the exact amount needed then seal the package and use the rest later.
- Buy the “plain” versions and save.
- Buy fruits that are dried, frozen, and canned (in water or juice) as well as fresh, so that you always have a supply on hand.
- Cut-up fruit makes a great snack. Cut them yourself and save money.
- Learn to make your own. For example, a homemade fruit smoothie is more economical than ready made smoothies. Spend your food money for the real fruit and 100% juice. There is often little fruit in “fruit-flavored” beverages or chewy fruit snacks.

Milk

- Buy block cheese. Shredded and sliced usually cost more.

- Use instant nonfat dry milk. It costs less and keeps longer than fluid milk. After it is reconstituted (the water added back in), refrigerate it and use it just like fresh milk.
- Include milk as a beverage at meals instead of sodas or other sweetened beverages. Choose fat-free or low-fat milk.
- If you usually drink whole milk, switch gradually to fat-free milk, to lower saturated fat and calories. Try reduced fat (2%), then low-fat (1%), and finally fat-free (skim).
- Avoid raw (unpasteurized) milk or any products made from unpasteurized milk.

Meat and Beans

- Stock up on canned fish, like tuna, when it is on sale.
- Buy whole chickens and cut them up. Chicken parts usually cost more when purchased separately.
- Look for specials at the meat counter. Many times the special will be much cheaper.
- Instead of sirloin, try chuck or round roast. These cuts have less fat and cost less.
- Choose dry beans or peas as a main dish or part of a meal often.
- Choose nuts as a snack, on salads, or in main dishes. Use nuts to replace meat or poultry.

What to look for on the Food Label:

- Check the Nutrition Facts label for the saturated fat, *trans* fat, cholesterol, and sodium content of packaged foods.
- Processed meats such as hams, sausages, frankfurters, and luncheon or deli meats have added

sodium. Check the ingredient and Nutrition Facts label to help limit sodium intake.

- Fresh chicken, turkey, and pork that have been enhanced with a salt-containing solution also have added sodium. Check the product label for statements such as “self-basting” or “contains up to ___% of ___.”
- Lower fat versions of many processed meats are available. Look on the Nutrition Facts label to choose products with less fat and saturated fat.

In general you can save more for any food group if you buy plain foods and are a “do-it-yourself” person. These are just a few examples of things you can do yourself.

- Cut-up the fruits and veggies.
- Cut-up the chicken.
- Add your own seasonings.
- Make your own soups and salads.

A bonus is that you will often have foods that are better for you. For example, plain veggies will be lower in fat, sodium and calories than those that are in sauces.

Prevent waste and save. Chill (refrigerate) perishable food promptly and defrost foods properly. Refrigerate or freeze perishables, prepared food and leftovers as soon as possible. If food has been left at temperatures between 40° and 140° F for more than two hours, discard it, even though it may look and smell good.

In all cases, shop for good nutrition. You can also teach your children the skills needed to be helpful in stretching food dollar, and getting the most nutrition for the money spent.