

Quick Tips: Grocery Store Survival Guide

How to save on produce:

- Talk to the produce manager about markdowns, and find out what time of day they markdown produce (that is generally perfectly good).
- Buy fresh produce in season, concentrating on the featured sale items. If not on sale, buy frozen vegetables as they tend to be less expensive and have coupons available for name brands. Frozen vegetables are frozen at the peak of freshness so they may have more nutrition than fresh vegetables that have been in storage for a longer period of time.
- Save money by doing it yourself. The cost savings of washing your own lettuce, peeling your own carrots, cutting your own fruit equates to an hourly wage of over \$50. If it takes 5 minutes to save 60-70%, it's worth doing yourself.
- Consider the cost per serving of fruits and vegetables and make simple substitutions to vary your diet and save money. Also compare the cost per piece of fruit or potatoes of a 5-lb. bag as compared to buying individual pieces by the pound. Smaller apples cost less, lead to less waste, and have fewer calories.
- Pay attention to food waste and work to reduce it to zero. Food waste accounts for 10% to 40% of families' overall grocery spending (the average percentage increases as the average grocery spending increases according to USDA statistics). Serve realistic portions for weight-management and proper nutrition. Don't serve children more food than they would realistically eat.

How to save on meat, chicken, fish:

- Only buy main dish ingredients when they are on sale. Pay attention to your stores' featured sales item on the first page of their weekly ad and plan that week's meals around that ingredient. Chicken is a common sale item, so be creative about finding healthy recipes that your family likes using various types of chicken. Buy at least one or two extra weeks' worth of the main ingredient item to freeze so you don't have to pay full price in the future.
- Consider buying fish that is flash-frozen to save, or only buy the type of fish that is on sale.
- Talk to your store's butcher about daily markdowns and check them out each time you visit the store. Stores will frequently mark down items with sell-by dates of that day or the next day. As long as you freeze or prepare the item immediately, it is perfectly safe to eat.
- Buy larger family-pack quantities of meat or chicken and package them into smaller quantities for the freezer to pay a lower per-pound cost.
- Only buy boneless chicken breasts when they sell for half price. If not on sale, compare the per-pound price of individually frozen chicken breasts sold in the bag.
- Buy whole chickens at a lower per-pound price, or less-expensive chicken drumsticks or thighs. Buy chicken leg quarters and cut off the skin and visible fat. Bake some for dinner and bake additional pieces to use in a chicken soup, stew or casserole later in the week.
- Compare the per-pound cost of your favorite cuts of meat, chicken, and fish at a local wholesale club to save 20-40%. Buy the large quantity for your freezer or divide with a friend.

Snacks:

- Managing snacks is important because family members are likely to eat planned ingredients for other meals if you don't have easy snacks available. Let family members know what snacks are available and encourage them to choose the healthy options.

Avoid food waste:

- Plan a leftover night once per week or plan a consecutive meal based on leftover ingredients.
- Have one shelf in your refrigerator with clear, see-through plastic containers with leftovers. Use for lunches, snacks or leftover night with a different meal for each person if necessary.

For more information, visit www.couponmom.com.