

Dine on a dime

Eating healthy doesn't mean breaking the bank

SMART \$AVER



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You want to eat healthier.

But organic fruit and grass-fed beef can put a dent in your food budget. Those \$3.99 fast-food value meals begin to look pretty appealing after your first \$300 grocery store trip.

Healthy eating doesn't have to be pricey. If you know

how to save, it can be less expensive than dining out or grabbing prepared meals from the grocery store.

Make your own salad mix

Even with a sale or coupon, salad mix costs more than \$2.50 per bag at most grocery stores. Sure, it is clean, cut up and ready to go, but you are paying for that convenience. Purchase a head of romaine, red-leaf lettuce and a head of radicchio, and the price per ounce will be far less than the bagged salad. Plus, bagged salad was cut up in the factory days ago; your own greens will be fresher, and there will be less waste.

Buy spices in bulk

Spices can be expensive per ounce, but they give big flavor in return. Spices should be rotated out of your cabinet every six months to a year. Old spices are not flavorful and don't

have the punch of fresher ones. Bulk spices have a lower price per ounce. If you split the larger container between co-workers or friends, everyone can share in the savings and flavor.

Roast your own chicken

Buying a prepared rotisserie chicken at the grocery store is quick and easy, but salt and fats are added to those birds. I know, I used to work in a deli. Wait until whole rotisserie chickens go on sale in the meat department for 99 cents a pound and buy a few of them. Sprinkle the chicken with salt, pepper, spices, diced onion, a few cloves of garlic and drizzle with olive oil. Roast it in the oven at 425 degrees until the breast meat reaches 165 degrees.

Experiment with beans

Beans are an excellent, inexpensive source of protein. Try a black bean burger instead of a traditional hamburger and taste the flavor for a fraction of the cost. These burgers cost about 25 cents each.

Black Bean Burger

Yield: 4 burgers
1 15-ounce can of black beans
1 large egg
2 tablespoons salsa
1/3 cup crushed pretzels

Rinse and drain the beans. Transfer to a bowl and start mashing the beans with the tines of a fork. Add a large egg and stir to incorporate. Add 2 tablespoons of your favorite salsa and stir to

incorporate. Add 1/3 cup crushed pretzels. Allow the mixture to rest for a few minutes to absorb the moisture of the egg and the salsa. Add more pretzels if needed.

Divide the mixture into four equal portions and form into patties. Using 1 teaspoon of peanut oil in a nonstick skillet, pan sear them on each side for 2 minutes per side or until cooked through.

Serve with a couple more scoops of salsa or a dollop of sour cream.



Scan with your smartphone to see how Sarah Mock makes her own yogurt.

Make your own yogurt

Yogurt is another wonderful source of protein. It can make for an inexpensive breakfast or midday snack, but those little cups can add up. At my grocery store, I am able to get a

32-ounce container of top-brand organic yogurt for \$3.50. The problem is, my kids will gobble that up in less than two days. In order to pinch some pennies, I learned how to make yogurt in the slow cooker using just three ingredients.

More food savings

Make homemade chicken stock. Place a leftover chicken carcass in a large pot; cover with water; add onion, celery, carrot, garlic, peppercorns and a few bay leaves. Bring to a boil and then drop to a simmer for 2 hours. Cool the stock, skim the fat and you have fat-free chicken stock. Store in the refrigerator for up to one week or freeze.

Make your own baby food. Forgo the jarred baby food and puree your own fruits and veggies. Use an immersion blender or food processor to reach the consistency of food that is right for your baby.

Stock up on frozen veggies. Sometimes fresh is just too expensive. Hit up the frozen food section for your favorite out-of-season fruits and vegetables. You will be amazed at the price per ounce in savings. They can easily be tossed into the blender to make smoothies or be incorporated into an easy stir-fry dinner.

Read more creative money-saving tips from Sarah Mock at howipinchapenny.com and yorkblog.com.



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