Tips for Being a Savvy Supermarket Shopper

As the rising cost of living is cutting into our budgets, it’s important to be savvy in our grocery shopping. Consider these tips.

- Check your home food inventory before going to the grocery store, including your pantry and food storage. What do you have on hand that should be used before it expires? What food storage items need to be rotated while still within peak quality?
- Take inventory of your freezer and refrigerator. There may be fresh foods that need to be eaten soon or items you forgot about in the freezer.
- Look over grocery store ads to see what is on sale, and plan your meals accordingly.
- Make a menu before shopping, and remember to include a plan for leftovers. This can be as simple as brown-bagging leftovers instead of eating out for lunch, or turning leftovers into another meal.
- Make your grocery list and do your best to stick to it. Or even better – use the grocery pick up or delivery option. This can help eliminate items you can do without, but are easy to succumb to when walking through the store.

- Use cash at the grocery store. This will help you be strategic and stick to your list and budget.

- Eat food before it spoils. The USDA estimates that the average American household of four wastes about $1,500 worth of food per year. That’s a lot of money that could be put toward something enjoyable and useful for your household.

- Think outside the recipe. Though we have learned to adapt to supply chain shortages, remember that when an item on your list isn’t available, you can look for other options. In meals such as soups, salads, and casseroles, grains can usually be swapped, based on what you have on hand, i.e., rice for barley, potatoes for noodles, etc. To get ideas, do an internet search for recipe substitutions.

- Don’t neglect vegetables and fruits. If prices are high on fresh produce, check for other options. Frozen vegetables are often reasonably priced and are usually cheaper per pound than fresh. They can be steamed, boiled, roasted, or added to soups, stir fry recipes, casseroles, and pastas. Shop for in-season produce for better prices. Canned vegetables and fruits are also a great option.

- Select family favorite meals that are less expensive and put them into your meal rotation regularly. Whole-grain, hearty pancakes are a fun, easy, and inexpensive meal to pair with eggs and fruit for a well-rounded dinner.

- Add budget-stretching foods to your menus. Brown or white rice can add bulk in soups or chili. Homemade whole grain rolls, breadsticks, or quick breads are inexpensive to make and can help stretch a meal.

- When eating out, share a meal or eat out for dessert
only. Or try setting a goal to reduce the number of
times you dine out in a given amount of time.

- Take advantage of free school meals provided as a
  pandemic resource for your school-aged children. If you
  and your family qualify, take advantage of WIC or SNAP
  to stretch your food dollars even further.

It can be discouraging to see food costs rising, but remember – you have control over your spending. With discipline and effort, you can still be a savvy shopper.

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