# Welcome Farmers Market Season // Tossed Salad with Citrus Dressing



Warmer weather means it's farmers market season. Read up on some of the great benefits of shopping at a farmers market, and don't miss the recipe at the end!

After an especially long and snowy winter, the opening of farmers markets around the state is certainly a welcome sight. There are many individual, community and environmental benefits associated with shopping at local farmers markets. Markets often offer a wide variety of reasonably priced, high quality fruits and vegetables that are at the peak of their nutritional value. If you receive SNAP benefits, many markets offer a matching incentive program called Double Up Food Bucks (DUFB). For every \$10 in SNAP benefits used at the market, you will receive up to \$10 in DUFB tokens to spend on fruits and vegetables, making them even more economical.

The produce at farmers markets is often harvested within a couple of days or hours of the market, so the consumer has more time to use it before it spoils. Shopping at farmers markets also helps support farmers in your area, as well as the local economy. On average, food in the United States travels about 1,500 miles to get to your dinner plate, which can have various negative impacts on the environment. Fruits and vegetables sold at farmers markets have generally travelled just a few miles, which means savings in both your wallet and your environment. In addition to these benefits, farmers markets are a fun place to spend a few hours. Many offer free music, games and events for children and tasty food samples. The opening day of farmers markets varies around the state. Check with your local USU Extension office to find the farmers market in your community.

Here's a great recipe for some of the first items to show up at Utah's farmers markets. This is a great recipe to add any other fruits or vegetables that look good at the market.

### Tossed Salad with Citrus Dressing

Yield: 8 servings.

From eatwellutah.org

#### Ingredients:

- 4 c. torn fresh spinach
- 4 c. torn leaf lettuce
- 2-11 oz. cans mandarin oranges
- $\frac{1}{4}$  small red onion, thinly sliced
- 2 T. thinly sliced radishes

#### Dressing:

- $\frac{1}{2}$  c. orange juice
- $\frac{1}{4}$  c. lemon juice
- $\frac{1}{4}$  c. olive oil
- $\bullet \frac{1}{2}$  t. seasoned salt
- $\frac{1}{4}$  t. paprika (optional)
- pepper, to taste

### **Directions:**

Toss spinach, lettuce, oranges and radishes in salad bowl. Combine dressing ingredients and whisk together until blended. Serve with salad.

This article was written by Heidi LeBlanc, Food \$ense State Director, and Casey Coombs, RD, CD; Policy, Systems, and Environments Coordinator, Utah State University Food \$ense

## Menu Planning Around Farmers Market Selection

# LIVE WELL UTAH

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# MENU PLANNING AROUND FARMERS MARKET SELECTION

How do you plan your weekly menu and shop at your local farmers market, without knowing what exactly you might find there? Follow these tips to help you plan a more flexible menu, and and take advantage of the fresh local produce at the farmers market.

Farmers markets are known for offering an ever-changing variety of fresh fruits and vegetables. Although variety is a benefit of shopping at local farmers markets, it can be difficult and overwhelming to come up with a menu for the week without knowing beforehand what will be available. Yet, being flexible allows you to choose the produce that looks the best and is offered at a good price. Below are some tips for planning meals around the unpredictable availability at the farmers market.

- Reverse your menu planning schedule. Shop at the market first, then build a menu for the week based on what you purchased. This will also help ensure that you use what you bought, reducing food waste.
- Plan the non-vegetable portion of the meal, and then add the vegetables after seeing what looks best at the market.
- 3. Have a general sense of when different fruits and vegetables are usually in season and available. Plan your menu with at least two different options and then buy the one that is offered at the best price.
- 4. Bring your menu to the market. If there is something that looks great, but isn't in your plan revise your menu on the spot to incorporate it.
- Include some meals that use a wide variety of produce in like stir-fry, soup, or omelets.
- 6. Be open to making last minute substitutions to your favorite recipe. Here are some ideas of fruits and vegetables that are good substitutions for each other.

Recipe calls for	Try this instead			
Apples	Pears, grapes, cherries			
Beets	Radishes, turnips, rutabaga, potatoes			
Blueberries	Strawberries, raspberries, blackberries, pitted cherries			
Broccoli	Cauliflower, cabbage, Brussel sprouts			
Cucumbers	Zucchini, celery			
Zucchini	Yellow squash, patty pan squash, eggplant			
Potatoes	Carrots, sweet potatoes, beets, rutabaga, turnips			
Spinach	Kale, Swiss chard, bok choy			
Onions	Shallots, leeks, scallions			
Peaches	Nectarines, plums, pears			

This article was written by Heidi LeBlanc, Food \$ense State Director, and Casey Coombs, RD, CD; Policy, Systems, and Environments Coordinator, Utah State University Food \$ense,

# Eating Healthy in Challenging Times



Check out these tips keep healthy food on your table no matter your financial situation.

We live in times that are unique to anything we've ever experienced. Our economy has brought about challenges, and many people are trying to survive on their paychecks. Layoffs, cutbacks and business failures have taken their toll, and we are left to use our resources to the best of our abilities and look for ways to make the most of what we already have.

Where do we pull money from when finances are tight? What is the most flexible budget item we have? It's the food budget. A lot of the other expenses don't change a lot from month to month. The mortgage or rent doesn't change, utilities are basically constant, so if the car breaks down or the kids need new shoes, it seems easiest to take the money from the food budget. That may leave many people living off ramen noodles or macaroni for the rest of the month.

Believe it or not, a few of the following simple behavior changes can reap big savings on the food budget, and a family can eat healthy meals inexpensively.

1. The first thing you need to do is learn to plan. You can't expect to get good results unless you put a little forethought into the process. Take note of what's on hand. What's in the refrigerator? This includes leftovers. What's in the pantry? What's on sale at the store? Begin to plan menus using this information. Try to build the main part of your meal around rice, noodles or other grains. Use small amounts of meat, poultry, fish or eggs. Plan snacks that give your family the nutrients they need. Buy fresh fruits and vegetables in season. Keep them handy instead of potato chips. Use planned-overs to save time and money. Prepare a roast, serve half of it and freeze the remaining half to use

later for sandwiches, soups or stir frys.

- 2. After you've planned your menus, make a shopping list and stick to it. This helps avoid impulse buying. How often do you go into the store needing one thing and come out with a whole cart full of groceries?
- 3. Shop alone, when you're not hungry. When children accompany you, you tend to buy items you did not intend to buy. When you are hungry, everything looks good and you end up with a lot of unnecessary items.
- 4. Incorporate beans into your diet. These are a very inexpensive protein and can stretch a meal a long way.
- 5. Cook meals from scratch rather than using convenience foods. It's far cheaper. You can save a lot of money by washing your own lettuce, slicing your own cheese or peeling your own carrots. Don't pay extra for individual serving sizes. Buy yogurt, applesauce, cereal and snacks in large containers. It only takes a few moments to transfer servings into bags or reusable containers to pack in your lunch.
- 6. Compare fresh, frozen and canned food to see which is cheapest. Seasons affect the prices. One type is not always cheaper than another.
- Use the cheaper store brands rather than name brands. Advertising costs add extensively to the cost of an item.
- Cook soups or casseroles in large amounts and freeze for later meals. Cook once, eat twice. This saves time and money.
- 9. Buy items that are in season, on sale and available in bulk. Buy the large package of ground beef and divide it into meal-sized portions.
- 10. Change your eating habits. Give up luxury items like potato chips and soda. Cut down on fast foods. Our society has become very dependent on it. Some reports say we spend as much as 65 percent of our food budget on fast food! Much of this food is high in fat and calories

and not as nutritious as cooking your own.

It is possible to eat healthy meals on a reduced budget. It will take planning and effort, but the results will be well worth it!

This article was written by Ellen Serfustini, USU Extension FCS Agent, Carbon County

# Family Mealtime // Meal Planning 101



A key to successful family mealtime is planning. Research has shown that cooking at home is significantly more likely if you already know what you will have for dinner.

#### **10 Steps to Meal Planning**

- 1. Set aside time each week for menu planning. The amount of time you need will decrease as you gain practice.
- Ask your family for ideas of what they would like to eat during the week.
- Plan your menu around food items you already have in the pantry.
- Choose a variety of meals including family favorites, budget stretchers, and quick fix meals.
- 5. Cook once, eat twice.
- 6. Plan to use your leftovers.
- 7. Picture USDA's MyPlate as you plan each meal.
- 8. Have your local store circulars available. Take advantage of those sales!
- 9. Create a thorough shopping list.
- 10. Keep it simple! Successful family meals don't have to be gourmet; they just have to be a time together.

Weekly Menu					
Family mealtime is an anchor for the day.	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Snacks	
Monday					
Tuesday					
Wednesday					
Thursday					
Friday					
Saturday					
Sunday					
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Printable Weekly Menu Planner

### Quick Tips

**Tired of planning a menu every week?** Try planning a 2-4 week cycle menu. Choose meals for 2–4 weeks and then repeat once the cycle is over. Change cycle menus with the seasons to take advantage of local produce.

**Bored of the same old meals?** Add some theme nights to your week. Taco Tuesdays, Breakfast for Dinner Thursdays, or Sandwich Saturdays are fun for the whole family. Let the kids choose a theme and then make some table decorations for added entertainment.

September is National Family Mealtime month. Each Friday this month we'll be posting on that topic — specifically from the Live Well Utah Cookbook, Family Mealtime Edition. This publication is available for free at your local Extension office, or available digitally here. It features some great tips on the importance of family mealtime and meal planning, plus 21 quick, inexpensive, and nutritious recipes that are sure to please even the pickiest eaters.

### Ask a Specialist // 15 Ways to Save on Groceries



Follow these tips to save some extra money for the holidays!

#### Being a Frugal Foodie

Money spent on food is probably one of the biggest expenses in a household budget-perhaps even larger than a mortgage, depending on family size. Combine money spent on groceries with money spent eating out, and that number gets even larger.

Here are some tricks to save on food costs. And as a bonus, most money-saving tips will also help you eat healthier.

1. Make a meal plan and detailed shopping list. Together these

will help you spend less time in the store, help you buy only what you need and help you avoid more frequent shopping trips. Remember to use foods in your cupboard and food storage as part of your meal plan instead of buying unnecessary duplicates.

2. Reduce the number of trips to the grocery store. Undoubtedly you've gone to the store to buy a gallon of milk and spent more than \$10. Try to narrow store visits to once a week; if you shop more frequently than that, try twice a month. Buy as much milk, fruit, etc., as you need for that time, or try doing without an ingredient instead of making another trip to the store.

3. Shop when the stores are less crowded and NOT when you are hungry. Food originally not on your list suddenly appears in the cart when you're hungry, which doesn't save money. However, it is a good idea to make your meal plan when hungry because it's easy to bring meal ideas to mind with a grumbling stomach.

4. Make food from scratch, or nearly from scratch. It is generally cheaper than buying pre-packaged foods. Buying a head of lettuce and a package of carrots and chopping it yourself will likely be cheaper and larger than buying a prepackaged salad mix. But if you won't chop the lettuce and carrots, it will be a waste of money. It's almost always cheaper—and healthier—to choose more whole, fresh foods rather than boxed, bottled or frozen ready-to-eat options. Consider your options for saving money and compare that with your time and your family's preferences. If you have time, options such as making homemade bread, tortillas and other bread products could save a lot of money over the long term.

5. Ditch the myth that healthy foods are more expensive. While some foods considered healthy are more expensive than less healthy foods, this is not always the case. For example, frozen salmon fillets could be considered healthier than sirloin steak, yet salmon is more expensive per pound. However, chicken is a lean meat, generally cheaper than sirloin steak and a healthier choice. Another example: for the price of a box of cereal (or cheaper), you could buy a large container of oatmeal, which has more servings than the box of cereal, provides 100 percent serving of whole grains, is naturally filled with fiber and nutrients and is free of added sugars.

6. Eliminate food waste. Healthy, fresh foods become expensive when they are allowed to spoil or age before they can be eaten. Carefully plan how you'll use foods while they are fresh. List a few meals that use the same foods and refer to that when you have excess or when certain foods are on sale. Also try the "cook once, eat twice" idea where you make one large meal and repurpose it for a different meal the next day. Be sure to use the freshest foods first, then turn to frozen and canned foods. Another way to eliminate food waste and save on food is to carry leftovers or sack meals when on the go to avoid eating out.

7. Compare prices between generic and store brands. Generally foods higher or lower on the shelves will be cheaper than those at eye level. Also check unit pricing (most stores include this in the price tag on the shelf) and not just the price per container.

8. Use coupons carefully. If it is a product you usually buy and use, and the coupon will make the item cheaper than the generic brand, it is worth using. Check for online coupons that connect to your shopper's card. Price matching can also be a great way to save money. Some stores require you to bring proof of the item price in another store, so be prepared.

**9.** Buy produce in season. The price of fresh produce can vary throughout the year, based on harvest season. Save money and vary eating habits by buying fresh produce in season. Watch for labeling of prices-most of the time, fresh produce is

priced per pound, not per item. There could be a great difference between heads of cabbage that are .99 per pound versus .99 per head.

10. Don't forget frozen and canned fruits and veggies. Most fruits and vegetables that are canned or frozen are processed quickly at their peak of ripeness and nutrition. Canned and frozen fruits and veggies without added sugars and salts are healthy options and can be less expensive than fresh options, especially for foods out of season or hard to find in your area. They also add an element of convenience since the chopping and/or peeling has been done, and they store well.

11. Since meat is costly, consider cheaper proteins including milk, eggs, peanut butter, Greek yogurt, cottage cheese, edamame and beans. Reduce the amount of meat used in recipes. If a stir-fry recipe calls for 2 pounds of chicken, try the recipe with 1 pound and add more veggies. Save the other pound for later. Or add more whole grains and vegetables to your diet.

12. Shop sales and stock up on foods you use often. Track prices of foods you use most, and when prices go down, buy more. Use food storage to plan your meals and rotate the food. This helps keep costs down and reduces food waste. Many grocery stores in Utah have seasonal case lot sales when prices are lower for many pantry-stable foods, such as canned goods, flour, sugar, rice, beans and oatmeal. There are also baking sales in late fall before the holidays.

13. Buy from the bulk section. Not all bulk items will be cheaper than pre-packaged foods, so compare prices carefully. However, buying bulk, scoop-it-out-yourself foods is an excellent way to get food you use frequently or to get small amounts of foods to try in new recipes, such as quinoa, whole grain pasta noodles, nuts, steel-cut oats and ground spices.

14. Grow a garden and use the produce in your meals and

snacks. Visit livewellutah.org and click "recipes" for ideas on using produce easily grown or purchased in most parts of Utah.

15. Consider preserving garden produce for later use. Freezing, dehydrating and canning are all great ways to preserve food and have the potential to save you money and avoid food waste. Canning supplies can be expensive, but can be accumulated over time, and with the exception of canning lids, they can be used repeatedly. For safe, scientifically tested canning and preserving information, go to extension.usu.edu/foodpreservation or contact your local Extension office. For classes near you that will give you more healthy, eating-on-a-budget tips, visit https://extension.usu.edu/foodsense/htm/calendar.

This article was written by Melanie Jewkes, Utah State University Extension associate professor, Salt Lake County

### References

extension.usu.edu

### November Menu Planning



November is a crazy month. Stay ahead of the game and plan your meals now!

#### **Om Nom November**

You might remember that we did a **post** on menu planning a little while back. Menu planning is an amazing way to save money and time! However, thinking of meals to make week after week can be a challenge.

To help you out with the month of November, **bigbiteslittlebudget.com** has put together a sample menu plan for you! Feel free to move meals around, swap meals out for ones you like better and completely change it up. The most important thing is that you make a plan and stick with it.

Don't worry; if you have never tried menu planning, this is a great place start! Plus, **bigbiteslittlebudget.com** has included all of the dinner recipes you will need this month and every single one is absolutely delicious.

Here is one of the recipes you won't want to miss!



To find your handy-dandy November menu plan and all SIX delicious recipes, click here. Happy planning!

#### References

Table for One

# Menu Planning // The Tips, The Tricks and The Benefits



Who knew that saving your time, your money and your health was this easy!

### **October Menu Planning**

#### **Picture this:**

The clock strikes 5:00 and you are home free. Everything is wonderful until you remember you don't have plans for dinner. All of a sudden you're panicking about ingredients and recipes and if you have enough of everything to make a meal. Instead of dealing with the idea of cooking you decide to just grab takeout.

#### Sound familiar?

While this option can be convenient, it is expensive and definitely not the most healthy. No matter if you have a big family or live by yourself, taking time to create menu plans each week will save time and money.

#### Why plan a menu?

Planning a menu will help you avoid:

• Going to the grocery store, loading up your cart, spending \$100 or more, returning home to put all the food away, and then realizing you still have nothing to make for dinner. Let's be honest, we have all done it.

• Spending 30 minutes or more at night trying to figure out what to eat for dinner. Menu planning means you spend 30 minutes or less per week figuring out what to eat. That is quite a time savings.

• Spending \$40 on take out because you couldn't figure out what to make with ingredients in the pantry.

• Throwing out leftovers you forgot about in the back of your refrigerator.

#### How to plan a menu

The hardest part of planning a menu is making time to do it. Use these simple and easy tips along with the **menu planning template** to make a menu in just minutes!

**1. Schedule a time** when you will have a few minutes to dedicate to the task.

**2. Plan your menu around food items you already have on hand**. This will not only make your grocery bill less, but also use up products before they spoil.

**3. Choose a variety of meals** that include family favorites, budget stretchers, and quick-fix meals.

**4. Cook once, eat twice**. Plan to use your leftovers. Putting leftovers into your menu plan will reduce the amount you have to cook and reduce the amount of food waste.

5. Picture your plate as you plan each meal. Remember to include veggies and fruits in the menu. Ideally half the plate will include vegetables and fruits, a quarter of the plate will have grains, and the other quarter will have protein. With a glass on the side for dairy, you will have all the food

groups suggested by MyPlate: choosemyplate.gov.

**6. Have the local store circulars available** when you are planning. Always take advantage of sales on products you know you will use.

7. Create a thorough shopping list.

Use this handy **Grocery Shopping Packet** to assure you have a successful trip to the store.

### Sample Menu Plan for October PLUS 7 Delicious Recipes.

**Big Bites on a Little Budget** has put together a sample menu plan for October to help you get started. Feel free to switch things around and get creative.

Here is one of their wholesome and delicious recipes. **Click here** to find 6 more!



Enjoy!

### References

Mayo Clinic mayoclinic.org

**USU** Extension

extension.usu.edu