

How to save \$50 off your food bill and still eat tasty, nutritious meals

June 27 2022, by Clare Collins and Megan Whatnall



Credit: AI-generated image ([disclaimer](#))

Grocery prices have taken a hike upwards for a host of reasons, including the rising costs of petrol, fertilizer and labor.

You could "shop around" for cheaper groceries, but that would cost you more in fuel or travel, not to mention time.

Research shows a healthy diet costs low-income households [20 to 30%](#) of their disposable income. But a [healthy diet](#) remains cheaper than one dominated by highly processed foods and drinks.

Cutting your grocery bill takes planning and flexibility—and knowing your budget.

So how do you do it?

Start by checking which [vegetables and fruits are in season](#), and find recipes that include these.

Swap some fresh veggies and fruit with canned and frozen varieties, and substitute very expensive items for cheaper alternatives.

Have a meat-free meal at least once a week.

Next, create a grocery list. This helps [save money](#) by reducing in-store impulse buys. Look at what you already have in the pantry, fridge and freezer, and only buy what you need. This will reduce [food waste](#).

Check online catalogs for specials before heading to the shops. Once in store, compare prices and [choose brands that are cheaper](#). This makes [nutritious meals more affordable](#).

How much do households spend on groceries?

A [2021 survey](#) found the average supermarket grocery bill was A\$98 per week for a single person, \$145 for two, \$168 for three, \$187 for four and \$255 for five or more people.

An [older survey from 2016](#) found the average household (2.6 people)

spent \$269 per week across all [food](#) (\$237) and alcohol (\$32) purchases, both at the supermarket and other outlets.

About half the money was spent was on "[discretionary](#)" items such as meals out or fast food (\$80), with \$20 spent on lollies, chocolate, savory snacks and potato crisps, and \$10 on cakes, biscuits and puddings. At the supermarket, \$26 was spent a week on fruit and vegetables.

A [2019 survey](#) found the average person spent \$300 a week for all food and drinks. This included groceries (\$135), eating out (\$52), alcohol (\$31), take-aways (\$22), barista coffee/tea (\$13), food delivery services (\$12), supplements (\$12) and health foods (\$11).

These surveys show it's common to spend more on foods and drinks consumed away from home than on groceries and more on unhealthy items than healthy ones.

\$50 Swap and Save List

Based on a 2 adult household

Swap to



Iceberg lettuce

Iceberg lettuce = \$6
Cos lettuce = \$2.80
Red cabbage (1/2) = \$3.50

Saving for 1 lettuce
\$2.50 – \$3.20



Cos, butterleaf,
red or green cabbage



Fresh blueberries

Fresh raspberries = \$48.00/kg
(\$6.00/punnet)
Frozen raspberries = \$11.00/kg (\$1.38/125g)

Saving for 1 punnet
\$4.62



Frozen berries

Credit: nomoneynotime.com.au

What about saving \$50?

Five tips to help you save

Putting all this together, here are five key tips to keep in mind when planning food for your household:

1) Have a food budget

Total food budget dollars will be influenced by how many people you need to feed, their age and your household income. A rough rule of

thumb is it shouldn't cost more than one-third of your total household disposable income.

Allocate target amounts in your budget for both core, nutritious foods and [discretionary foods and drinks](#) (soft drinks, chips, biscuits, cakes, lollies, pies, pastries and deli meats) and on foods away from home (coffees, [fast food](#), pubs, clubs, bottle shops and restaurants).

2) Make a [weekly plan](#) for breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks

Write a matching [grocery](#) list. Check the pantry, fridge and freezer to see what you already have or whether any [ingredients can be swapped to save a purchase](#).

3) Pack your lunch

Buy a lunch box and pack it the night before. Put it in the fridge so you can grab and go in the morning. For ideas, see our [\\$5 make-at-home lunches](#).

If your mornings are too busy, pack in breakfast foods too.

4) Cook more meals at home

Cooking more meals at home might include [cheaper and healthier versions](#) of some of your take-out favorites such as pizza and burgers.

A [study from the United States found](#) those who cooked more at home spent half the amount of money on food eaten away-from-home than those who cooked infrequently. They also spent 17% less on food overall.

Interestingly, both groups spent the same on groceries suggesting that infrequent home cooks either wasted more food, ate more, or both.

5) Cook double batches

Cook greater quantities of meals like [curries](#), soups and casseroles, and either freeze them or have the same meal twice.

For those needing to shop on a significantly restricted budget, we've developed a \$60 a week meal plan on our [No Money No Time](#) website. This free resource contains a meal plan with inexpensive recipes, designed to meet key nutrients needed for health.

If you need help getting food right now, try the [Ask Izzy](#) website. By submitting your postcode, it shows support services, such as free meals, near you.

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