

Balancing Your Health on a Budget

Eating healthy, even on a modest budget, can be easier if you follow the three *Ps* — plan, purchase, prepare.

We've all heard the adage, "Haste makes waste." This definitely applies when it comes to meal time. A lack of advance planning for a meal can result in unhealthy choices, like picking up a donut and a café mocha for breakfast or grabbing a hamburger and fries when you're in a rush. These choices can take a load out of your wallet and add it to your waistline. Instead **P-L-A-N** your meals using these simple steps.

Prepare

Plan out your meals and snacks according to your budget. Write down your family's meals for the next 7 days. Lay out the plan with your family. Agree on some foods that you all enjoy, and make other meals favorites of each family member.

Look

Look for healthy recipes online! Visit <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/healthy-eating-tips/sample-menus-recipes/HealthyLunchtimeChallengeCookbook.pdf> for some simple, healthy recipe and menu ideas that were created by kids all over the United States and are great for the entire family!

Plan where you can stretch your dollars beyond one day's menu items. Dad likes chili and your son likes pasta, so plan a hearty chili with sweet corn one day. Add the leftovers to organic pasta sauce for another day — all you have to do is prepare whole grain spaghetti and a salad. And you have a delicious, quick, and hearty meal.

Ads

- Prepare your list using the items in the weekly ads or search online for coupons to optimize your savings.
- Use the list you prepared and shop for those items only.
- Eat before you crave! Do not shop when you are hungry.

Nutrition

- Buy fruits and vegetables that are in-season and on sale; pre-cut them at home and store in portions in the refrigerator or freeze them for later use.
- Purchase items in bulk if you have room to store them.

TIP

Look for recipes online! Visit the website listed above for some simple, healthy recipe and menu ideas created by kids all over the United States.

STIR FRY VEGETABLES AND BEEF

Yield: 4 servings

Cooking Time: 30 minutes

Calories: Under 250 calories per serving

Cost: Per recipe – \$5.15, per serving – \$1.29

INGREDIENTS

1/2 tsp. ground ginger	1 bell pepper (chopped)
1/8 tsp. garlic powder	1 onion (chopped)
1 tsp. soy sauce	1 pkg. fresh mushrooms (sliced)
1/3 cup water	2 tbsp. oil
1 cup carrots (sliced)	8 ozs. sliced beef
2 cups broccoli	

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- Buy generic and private label brands, as they are sometimes less expensive.
- Look at the “unit cost” when comparing prices — potatoes may be 99¢ per pound if you buy singles, but a five-pound bag may only cost \$3.99 (80¢ per pound).
- Enjoy a “let’s not cook” dinner. Plan a salad with fresh spinach and other vegetables and fruits, top with protein-rich beans and almonds, and drizzle with a tablespoon of low-fat dressing. Have a glass of non-fat milk on the side.
- A well-stocked pantry can also help you enjoy some great meals even on a tight schedule and budget — see our [March 2013](#) article for some great tips.

Healthy food choices that cost under \$1.00 per serving include produce such as apples, pears, bananas, carrots, broccoli, and sweet potatoes. They also include frozen vegetables, canned products such as beans and tomatoes, and staples like rice, oatmeal, and barley. Finally, perishables such as non-fat dairy (milk, yogurt) and eggs are some great, low-cost ways to get your nutrients. Eating healthy and nutritious doesn’t have to be expensive!

Look for the **Keys to Better Health™** attributes such as Heart Health, Whole Grain, Sodium Free, and Low Sodium to help you lead a better life — eating nutritious, delicious food even on a budget. Bon appétit!



INSTRUCTIONS

1. Wash hands and any cooking surfaces.
2. Mix spices, soy sauce, and water; set aside.
3. Wash vegetables. Slice carrots, broccoli, and mushrooms. Chop onions and bell peppers.
4. Heat oil in large frying pan and add meat when oil is hot; stir until brown.
5. Push meat to the side, and in the middle of the pan add carrots, onions, and peppers. Cook them for one minute.
6. Add mushrooms and broccoli. Cook until they are tender.
7. Add liquid mixture and cook until bubbly.
8. Reduce heat, cover pan, and cook for two more minutes.
9. Serve over whole wheat pasta or brown rice.

Source: Texas Cooperative Extension, The Texas A&M University System, Expanded Nutrition Program
<http://recipefinder.nal.usda.gov>

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