Eating healthy on a budget can feel like a challenge. However, following these tips can help you stretch your food dollars and make healthier meals with the resources you have.

**Before Shopping**

1. **Plan your meals.** Before you go shopping, plan out what you are going to cook in the coming week. Try to find a way to use items more than once throughout the week: instead of buying kale and spinach, you could use kale in two dishes, and use up the entire bunch.

2. **Make a list.** Sticking to a list will help keep you from buying foods you already have, or just don’t need.

3. **Double check your fridge and pantry.** Make sure you have all the ingredients needed for the recipes you plan to cook, so you don’t have to make another trip to the store.

4. **Have a snack.** Shopping after eating will make it easier to pass on tempting snack foods, and help you stick to your list.

5. **Grow your own.** Growing fresh fruits and vegetables in your garden cuts down on grocery spending. Herbs are great plants for beginners!

**During Shopping**

1. **Buy in season.** Shop for fresh vegetables and fruits that are in season. They will be fresher, better tasting, and usually less expensive.

2. **Skip the processed foods.** While these might cost less money, they give you far less nourishment. Empty calories leave us hungry for real food.

3. **Eat less animal protein.** Consider limiting meat dishes to a few times per week. Instead, add plenty of cheaper protein sources to your diet like eggs, tofu, or beans.

4. **Skip the beverage aisle.** Drink water and skip juice, soda, and other bottled beverages altogether. If you’re having trouble quitting fruit juice, water it down so it lasts longer.

5. **Buy in bulk.** Invest in a few jars or containers and stock up on grains, beans, and nuts. Foods in the bulk section are usually much cheaper than prepackaged options.

6. **Buy the bird.** Whole chickens or turkeys are typically a better deal than prepackaged cuts. Roast it whole, remove the meat, and make stock with the bones and some vegetables.

7. **Shop with cash.** Decide how much you can spend weekly. Bring only that amount with you so you won’t be tempted to spend more.
Put your leftovers to work. Rather than tossing leftovers, incorporate them into your next meal! All kinds of leftovers can be repurposed into delicious meals and snacks.

Freeze extra food. Cooked beans, grains, soups, and broth all freeze well. Chop up any fruits or veggies that are starting to get a little old, and freeze them on a sheet pan (this keeps them from sticking together in one clump). Once frozen, these can be stored in bags or containers. Add these to soups, sauces, omelets, smoothies, and more. It’s amazing what healthful tidbits you can sneak into spaghetti sauce!

Freeze your leftover fruits and veggies is a great way to prevent food waste.

Store everything properly. Ever open your vegetable crisper and realize that your tomatoes are mush or your lettuce wilted? Look up the best ways to store your veggies instead of just tossing them together in the fridge.

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Use Foods Before they Expire. Check the expiration dates of foods in your cabinets and fridge. Use the foods that expire sooner, first.

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Don’t forget the leftovers!

Here’s how to repurpose your leftovers for new, tasty meals.

- **Soups, stews, & stir-fries**
  These meals are ideal for using leftovers. Create a base with broth or a sauce, or by sautéing onion or garlic, then add any leftovers you have, such as whole grains, veggies, and meat. A small amount of meat is perfect to add flavor and substance, but be sure to cut it into small pieces so it goes further.
  You can also be very creative with herbs and spices to create unique flavors. With any recipe, make sure you reheat all leftovers thoroughly.

- **“Everything” burritos**
  Most leftovers make very tasty burritos. Simply put everything into a tortilla (preferably whole grain or 100% corn) with a sprinkle of salsa or cheese and enjoy. For example: cut up leftover meat into small pieces; add beans; and add any leftover grains and vegetables.

- **Leftover frittata**
  Most leftover cooked veggies are a great base for a frittata. Heat up veggies in a little oil in a pan, whisk together 6 eggs, and pour them over the veggies. Sprinkle the top with cheese or fresh herbs, and put the pan in the oven. Bake at 375° for 25 minutes, and enjoy for breakfast, lunch, or dinner!

- **Make a “bowl” meal**
  Serve bits of leftover meat, veggies, and beans over a bowl of whole grains for a tasty, nourishing meal. Bring the flavors together by drizzling with a dash of salsa or salad dressing.

- **Experiment with combinations**
  For example, try making a large green salad and adding cooked whole grains and veggies on the top, as well as pieces of meat from another recipe and you have a wonderful new meal.

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Wrap up your leftovers in a whole grain tortilla for an easy and delicious meal.