

# 15 Ways To Eat Healthy Without Breaking The Bank

Pamela Salzman - BLOG



I am very committed to eating really healthfully and feeding my family as much nutritious food as possible. Many people complain to me that they can't buy fresh, organic food because it's too expensive. It's interesting to me that 100 years ago we spent twenty-five percent of our disposable income on food and now we only spend ten percent. Furthermore, we're actually consuming more food than before, while getting fatter and sicker. But I do think we're starting to make the connection that we have a lot of cheap food in this country, and that cheap food has hidden costs—to our physical bodies, as well as the environment.

How can we eat healthfully without breaking the bank? Although they may not work for everyone, here are the strategies I have used over the years to allow me to eat the way I want and stay within my budget:

## 1. Cook from Scratch

Fast food and convenience food come with a hefty price tag. Someone's got to pay for all that packaging and marketing! We have got to get back in the kitchen and learn how to cook some simple basic meals and staples. Making a pot of soup with vegetables and beans, homemade salad dressing or an omelet are not only easy and inexpensive, but they will almost always be higher in quality than what you get from outside your kitchen. Even if you just swap out ridiculously expensive boxed cereals with steel cut oats or homemade muesli, over time you'll save more than you think.

## 2. Have a Plan

Americans waste about 25% of the food they buy. Not only are we piling more into our landfills, but we are throwing money in the garbage. The most important thing I do every week to help make sure I am organized to actually cook every night is to make a menu for the week and shop accordingly. This means everything I buy has a purpose and I rarely put anything into my cart that's not on my list. This

cuts waste dramatically. If you do nothing else, shopping with a meal plan in mind will save you tons of time and money.

### **3. Bulk Bins**

The bulk bins at my supermarket sometimes offer savings over buying the same item in a package. This is also a good idea if you want to try out a food and you're unsure of buying a whole bag of it which could end up going to waste.

### **4. Case Discounts**

My local Whole Foods will offer a discount of 10-20% when buying a case of an item, typically in quantities of 12. This is great for things that I go through quickly like olive oil, or for non-perishables such as packets of frozen acai puree. However, this isn't a great strategy for foods with a short shelf life like nuts or cheese.

### **5. Shop the Salad Bar**

Don't supermarkets mark up items on the salad bar? Not everything! Normally, there is a flat price for all the items at the salad bar, for example \$6.99 pound, so there are deals to be found. Foods like grilled chicken, nuts, seeds and cheeses are usually cheaper at the salad bar than if you bought them separately on their own.

### **6. Eat Seasonally**

You've heard it a million times, but there's a reason for that! Produce purchased in season is almost always less expensive than out of season because it's usually locally grown and also fresher and tastes better, too. Sometimes you can even stock up during the season and freeze it for later. We use a lot of berries in smoothies, pancakes and muffins, so at the end of the summer, I will buy many flats of them and freeze them for the "off-season."

### **7. Great Deals on the Web**

Everyone knows that warehouse clubs like Costco and BJ's offer great deals on bulk items and many of them are starting to carry foods like organic quinoa and wild fish. But also think about websites like [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com), [vitacost.com](https://www.vitacost.com) and [mountainrose.com](https://www.mountainrose.com) for great deals on many more items – and you don't need to leave your house to do it! I save lots of money on [Amazon](#) buying everything from cases of [Eden Organic canned beans](#) to [Celtic sea salt](#) to [seaweed](#).

### **8. Farmers Markets**

Buying directly from the farmer can offer lower prices than the supermarkets on locally grown, seasonal produce, eggs and meat. This certainly depends on where you live, but I also find that farmers sometimes cut their prices a little half an hour before the market closes.

### **9. Cut Back on Meat**

We all need protein (although many of us consume more than necessary), but animal protein is usually the highest ticket item on the grocery bill. And organic or pastured meat is even more expensive than non-organic, but it's an area where I am not willing to compromise. The key is to have enough high-quality protein, while staying on budget. When I do buy meat, I plan for 3-4 ounces per person, 3-4 days per week. The rest of the week we eat vegetarian meals that rely on quinoa, eggs, beans and lentils which are a nutritional bargain especially if you cook them from scratch.

### **10. Prioritize What is Important to Buy Organic**

Very few people can afford to buy everything organic, so prioritize. In this order due to higher amounts of pesticide contamination, I focus on organic meats and wild fish, butter, dairy, foods we eat a lot of (oats, eggs, olive oil, nut butters) and then I follow the [Environmental Working Group's Dirty Dozen](#) for produce.

### **11. Nutritional Bangs for the Buck**

Just because \$5/bunch purple heirloom carrots and at \$12/pound shiitake mushrooms are out of my budget, doesn't mean I have to throw in the towel. There are nutritional bargains to be found. Try canned wild fish instead of fresh, dried beans, free-range eggs, bananas, Russet potatoes, cabbage, carrots, rolled oats, brown rice, and frozen vegetables which all pack a lot of nutrients for less money.

### **12. Skip Prewashed Salad, Precut Vegetables**

Again, these come with a price for the convenience of having someone else do the prep work. If finding time to prep vegetables before dinner is an issue, try doing this work in the morning before you leave for the office or the night before.

### **13. Drop the Canned and Bottled Beverages**

It goes without saying that sodas and sweetened beverages offer you nothing in the way of health benefits, and all that plastic and glass don't do the environment any good either. But these drinks are just wildly expensive for no nutrition. Water is all you really need, so invest in a water filter if you can and BPA-free water bottles for everyone in your house.

### **14. Ethnic Markets**

Local, ethnic markets can offer an amazing array of affordable produce and specialty items. In my area, I have been to Japanese markets with incredibly fresh fish at a fraction of the price at my supermarket. The same is true for produce that I have found at local Middle Eastern markets. I've also found some really cool, inexpensive spices and condiments that I've never seen in my local supermarket.

### **15. Purchase Store Brands**

Many supermarkets carry their own brands which are of comparable quality to name brands and offer a big discount. Look to see if the store has calculated the unit price on the display so you can make a educated decision about which brand is a better value.

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*Pamela Salzman is a certified holistic health counselor. She shares her approach to nutrition through her natural foods cooking classes and [website](#), a resource for her healthful, family-friendly recipes and nutrition tips. She was recently [profiled](#) in Elle Magazine. Please visit Pamela's [website](#) or [Facebook page](#) for more information and great resources.*

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