

BEST BUYS

using Canada's Food Guide

Stretch your food dollar and build a healthy plate. Start with half a plate filled with vegetables and fruit. Then fill a quarter of the plate with whole grains. Add protein foods to the remaining quarter. Make water your drink of choice.

Vegetables and Fruit

Fill half your plate with vegetables and fruit. Choose whole fruit instead of juice, drinks or cocktails.

Fresh

Save by buying...

- fresh vegetables and fruit in season.
- small amounts to avoid waste if they ripen quickly. Reduce food waste even more by only cutting up what you plan to eat within the next day.
- root vegetables like potatoes, carrots, parsnips, turnips, sweet potatoes and onions.
- produce from the 'reduced' section for better value – but beware as this produce needs to be used up quickly.
- apples, oranges, and potatoes in pre-packaged bags rather than individually. Try different recipes to use them before they spoil.



Tip: Remember, children don't need juice to be healthy. Whole vegetables and fruit have more nutrients, like fibre, and less sugar.

Frozen and Canned

Save by buying...

- frozen vegetables that often cost less than fresh in the winter. Use them in casseroles, soups, chili or main dishes. Choose those without added sugars, seasonings, breading or rich sauces.
- fresh, frozen or canned fruit to use as a tasty alternative to a costly dessert.
- peas, corn, green beans, mixed vegetables and spinach for the best buys in frozen products.
- store brand frozen products or lower priced brand name products.
- canned fruit and vegetables without added salt (sodium) or sugar.

Tip: Add leftover cooked vegetables to soups, stews or stir-fries.



Protein Foods

The new Food Guide released in 2019 combines the meat and alternatives and the milk and alternatives food groups. This new food category is called protein foods.

Best buys in protein foods, include legumes and pulses, fortified soy beverages and tofu, nuts and seeds, eggs, fish and shellfish, lean poultry and lean beef, pork and wild game. Also included in protein foods are dairy products such as lower fat milk, lower fat yogurts, lower fat kefir, and cheese lower in fat and sodium.

Milk

Save by buying...

- milk in bags rather than cartons. You can freeze milk in bags for up to 6 weeks. Thaw in the fridge.
- dry milk powder. Follow directions and use it in recipes that call for milk.

Cheese

Save by buying...

- store brand or store-wrapped cheese.
- mild and medium cheese. They are cheaper than old cheese.
- larger blocks of cheese to slice or grate yourself.

Yogurt

Save by buying...

- tubs of yogurt instead of multi-packs or smaller containers. store brands.
- plain yogurt and add your own fruit and nuts.

Other Sources of Calcium

For a variety try...

- fortified soy beverage that has vitamins and minerals equal to those in cow's milk; look for "unsweetened" varieties to cut back on added sugar.

Important note: Soy and other plant-based beverages are not suitable for children under two years old.

More Protein Foods

Plant-based Protein Foods

Save by buying...

- legumes (peas, beans, and lentils) in dry form. Canned legumes are also inexpensive and can save you time. Puree beans or chickpeas to use in dips and spreads.
- tofu – use it in place of half the ground beef in meatloaf, chili or tacos. Use it in stir-fries.
- nuts and seeds in small amounts

Tip: Legumes are low in fat and high in fibre. Choose canned legumes without added salt and rinse well before using. Add them to soups, pasta sauces, chili and salads, stews, casseroles, burritos and tacos.



Eggs

Save by buying...

- eggs – not just for breakfast! Boil them for part of a quick snack.

Fish

Save by buying...

- unflavoured canned 'light' tuna (rather than Albacore or "white" canned tuna), salmon and sardines packed in water. They are economical and nutritious. Compare brands for your best buy.
- plain frozen fish. Fish sticks and battered fish fillets are more expensive and higher in fat.

Poultry

Save by buying...

- whole chickens and cut them into serving size pieces yourself.
- poultry pieces and cook them up before freezing. This will reduce food waste by helping you plan for quick meals.
- unprocessed products. Pre-basted, pre-seasoned and pre-marinated cost more and are higher in fat and salt.

Cuts of Meat

Save by buying...

- a slow-cooker in order to cook and enjoy more economical cuts like pot roasts, stewing beef and meat from blade, cross rib and shoulder cuts.
- lean ground beef on sale. Cook it up with onions, garlic and other minced vegetables. Freeze it in smaller portions and put a date on it. This can reduce food waste. Use it for pasta, sauces, chili, taco mix, shepherd's pie and more.

Whole Grain Products

Look for the phrase "whole grain" on the label and in the ingredient list. Many foods containing whole grains will have the words "whole grain" followed by the name of the grain as one of the first ingredients. Products labelled with the words "multigrain," and "organic" are not necessarily whole grain.

Breads

Save by buying...

- Discounted bread that has tomorrow's 'best by' date. Freeze it right away. It can last up to 6 months.
- Keep bread in the freezer. Storing it in the fridge can delay mold, but it quickly stales the bread.

Breakfast Cereals

Save by buying...

- plain hot cereals made with 100% whole grains. Add your own fruit and nuts to cereals such as wheat biscuits or rolled oats. Pre-sweetened varieties and those with added fruit and nuts cost more.



Tip: To choose the healthiest cereals, pick ones made with whole grains that have at least 4 grams of fibre and 8 grams or less of sugar per 30 gram serving.

Pasta, Rice & Grains

Save by buying...

- plain brown rice, whole grain pasta and other whole grains. Store in well-sealed container in a dry place. Add your own vegetables and seasoning for flavour.
- bulgur, quinoa, buckwheat, millet and barley for variety and fibre.

More Expensive Items

- Specialty breads (e.g. pumpernickel, rye, pita, sour dough) may cost up to twice as much but they provide variety and are still relatively inexpensive.
- The more processed the product (e.g. crackers, pre-seasoned noodles and rice mixes), the more expensive they are.
- Bakery products like donuts, muffins and croissants can be expensive and higher in fat and sugar.

Tip: Make your own trail mix by combining your favourite whole grain cereal with a handful of nuts and seeds.



Adapted with permission from the Leeds, Grenville & Lanark District Health Unit