

Your Shelf-Stable Shopping List

How could planning ahead help you and your family eat healthy meals and save money, even if you can't make frequent trips to the store for fresh produce?

You can create healthy meals even if fresh produce isn't always an option. All it takes is a little creativity. By buying in bulk, preparing meals ahead of time, and using your freezer, you can create budget-friendly, healthy meals up to weeks in advance! Plan your shopping trip before you go, then use the list on the back of this sheet to help you choose healthy, shelf-stable foods.

Plan ahead

A little forethought can help you eat well and save money. First, consider how many people you'll need to feed, and what meals you and your family will enjoy. Next, use online resources or recipe books to find freezer- and budget-friendly recipes. Some easy make-ahead and freeze meals are meatballs, chili, soups, stews, stir-fries, and crockpot meals. As you plan, include a vegetable, a protein food, and a whole food source of carbohydrates (like whole grains, beans, fruit, or starchy veggies) at each meal. Finally, make a shopping list and take it to the store with you. Creating a list and sticking to it can help you save money at the store.

Shopping tips

Choose fresh produce with a longer shelf life. Only purchase salad mixes or precut fruit or vegetables that you will consume or freeze within a week. Plan to use fresh produce before using canned or frozen items in your pantry.

Canned or frozen fruit and vegetables are healthy and budget-friendly options too. Choose low-sodium options without added seasonings, syrups, or sauces. Add your own flavors with herbs and spices during cooking.

Purchase more expensive items like meat or seafood frozen or in bulk to save money. When you get home, separate larger packages into meal-size portions before putting them in the freezer. To get the longest freezer shelf-life from your meats, first wrap meat in aluminum foil or plastic wrap and then in a freezer bag. Be sure to label your meats, and write the date they were frozen. Depending on the type of meat, it will keep in the freezer from 1-2 months up to a year.

Consider vegetarian sources of protein like eggs, tofu, beans, nuts, and seeds. These add variety, may have a longer shelf-life, and can be more budget-friendly than meats.



Shopping list

Pantry Staples:

Canned Goods:

- Low-sodium soups and broths
- Canned salmon, tuna, sardines
- Beans
- Canned fruit and vegetables

Dry Goods:

- Whole grains: brown or wild rice, quinoa, barley
- Dry beans and lentils
- Hot or cold cereals
- No-sugar-added dried fruit

Condiments:

- Nut butters
- Olive or avocado oil
- Vinegars
- Low-sodium soy sauce, ketchup, mustard
- Dry herbs and seasonings
- Pasta sauce

Beverages:

- Coffee and tea
- Milk: shelf-stable or dairy-free options have longer shelf life
- Seltzer water

Breads, Pastas, Baking Mixes:

- Whole grain pastas
- Whole grain waffle or pancake mix
- Whole grain breads (freeze for longer shelf life)

Produce:

Greens: whole cabbage, romaine, kale, collard greens

Winter squashes: butternut, acorn, delicata, spaghetti squash

Root vegetables: carrots, parsnips, turnip, rutabaga, beets

Celery

Onions

Garlic

Potatoes

Apples

Unripe pears, avocado, or bananas

Citrus: clementine, oranges, grapefruit, lemons and limes

Protein Foods:

Eggs

Fresh or frozen poultry & meat

Fresh, frozen or canned seafood

Tofu or tempeh

Edamame (fresh or frozen)

Greek Yogurt

Other Items:

Igniting Action:

After reading this, what stands out to you about planning your shopping trips?

What is one step you can take this week to plan ahead?

