

# How to Get the Most Out of Your Food Budget

Making nutritious food choices for your organization does not have to break your budget. It is possible to purchase, prepare, and serve nutritious food, even with rising food costs. See below for practical tips on how to stay within your budget while purchasing food for your organization.

Practical Tips to Help You Stay Within Your Food Budget	
<b>Look for Deals</b>	Look at store flyers for the lowest food prices and sales. Watch for coupons in flyers, in-store or within store apps. Grocery stores and supermarkets often have lower prices than convenience stores. Where possible, look at deals on more expensive items such as meat, and use this to make your meal plan.
<b>Menu Plan</b>	Plan your meals in advance based on what you have on hand and what is on sale. If possible, ask participants ahead of time what foods and meals they would like to see on the menu. Making meals that are well liked by your participants reduces food waste and total food costs.
<b>Make a Grocery List</b>	Making a grocery list helps you stay on budget and limits impulse purchases. Make your grocery list based on deals, your budget, and your meal plan. Review your budget each week and keep track of spending.
<b>Plan your Grocery Shop</b>	Schedule grocery shopping into your calendar. Give yourself adequate time and ensure you have what you need (grocery list, meal plan, and reusable bags etc). Try to shop on a full stomach to avoid impulse purchases.
<b>Cook from Scratch</b>	Focus your budget on buying mostly whole, less processed items that fit into Canada's food guide: whole grain foods, protein foods, vegetables and fruit. Try to limit highly processed foods as able.
<b>Buy Frozen or Canned</b>	Buy frozen or canned vegetables, fruit and meat when fresh are more expensive or when you need them to last longer. Frozen and canned foods are often less expensive and can be just as nutritious. Look for options with little to no added salt or sugar.

<b>Buy in Bulk</b>	Buy larger packages of dry, canned or frozen foods that you will use up, to save money per unit. Some fresh foods like meat, fish, cheese, bread and some vegetables can be divided and frozen.
<b>Buy In-season</b>	Buy in-season produce to help save money. In-season produce is often cheaper, better quality and tastes better. For more information on seasonal vegetables and fruits, visit <a href="#">What's in Season - Canadian Food Focus</a> .
<b>Compare Brands</b>	Compare prices among different brands of food. Often, store brands such as No Name, Great Value, President's Choice, Co-op Gold and Compliments cost less than other brands
<b>Buy Less Meat</b>	To save money, plan meals with less meat. Instead use eggs, beans, lentils or canned fish. Consider meals that mix beans or lentils with meat to stretch the meat further. Try to ensure meat-free meals are part of your programming to stay within budget.
<b>Limit Food Waste</b>	Buy only what you need and make plans to use up the food you have while it is fresh. Buy food in bulk if it is shelf-stable, can be frozen, or you know you will use up the quantity before the best before date. Where possible, allow participants to serve their own food and send home leftovers with participants when applicable.
<b>Store Food Properly</b>	Store fruits and vegetables properly to prolong their freshness and prevent food waste. For information on how to store fresh food properly watch: <a href="#">Video: How to store fruit to keep them fresh - Unlock Food</a> <a href="#">Video: How to store vegetables to keep them fresh - Unlock Food</a> .
<b>Limit Drink Options</b>	If possible, provide only tap water and milk or milk alternatives. Juice, pop, and other drinks often have added sugar and increase your total food costs.