

TOPIC:

Eating Healthy and Shopping on a Budget

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INSTRUCTIONS FOR FOSTER PARENT TRAINING CREDIT:

**Read through this self-study*

**Fill out the "CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING" Questionnaire*

**Return to ACRF for 1.0 hour of training credit.*

Most of us want to eat better and make healthy and nutritious meals for our families but shudder at the cost of fresh, organic, or locally sourced foods. Well, we have lots of tips for eating healthier on a budget and shopping tips for large families. The dollar just doesn't go as far as it used to and buying fresh produce and organic foods can get costly. If you have foster children in your home, there are also some other factors that you'll need to consider. For example, a child in foster care must have snacks and meals that meet the federal food program requirements.

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/meals-and-snacks>

You will also need to try to incorporate food from the child's culture. For example, if you have a Native Alaskan child in your home, you might make smoked salmon or salmonberries. It is also important that you make sure you are aware of any allergies that your child may have and ensure that those items are excluded from their diet. Except for medical reasons, it is never okay to force feed a foster child, withhold food, or coerce a child into eating.

You can easily prepare foods for a large family without spending a lot of money. Try these tips to save time, money, and stress when making meals for your friends or family.

1. **Keep it simple.** Healthy and creative meals don't have to be complicated. A simpler menu will usually cost less money and will be easier to prepare in the end.
2. **Allow your family to help.** Divide jobs among family members. Remember -- kids love to be in the kitchen! With help, you can get more done and have more time to enjoy with your family.
3. **Stretch recipes by adding ingredients.** Get more servings out of your favorite recipes! Add rice to soups or stews, frozen vegetables to favorite pasta dishes, or beans to burgers to serve more meals.
4. **Options for the holidays.** Try having a holiday brunch. Breakfast foods like eggs are less expensive and make a great protein for the main dish. Another fun idea is to have a yogurt parfait bar, where everyone can add their favorite toppings to yogurt.
5. **Make it a potluck.** Potlucks are a great option for large families. If you are hosting, prepare the main dish and leave the sides to the rest of the family. It creates less work for you and allows everyone to make and sample each other's creations.
6. **Need help making ends meet?** Discover more about nutrition assistance programs by visiting <https://helpingamericansfindhelp.org/alaska/ak-food-assistance/>

Save More at the Store

The smartest shoppers know that saving money is more than luck. When shopping for groceries, it's about having a game plan and making smart decisions about what to put in your cart.

1. **Ask for advice.** Grocery stores, ethnic markets, dollar stores, retail supercenters, and wholesale clubs can offer good deals. Ask friends and family where they shop and find their best bargains!
2. **Eat before you shop.** Grocery shopping hungry can lead to impulse buying and unhealthy food choices.

3. **Read the sales flyer.** Sales flyers are usually released mid-week and can be found at the store’s entrance, in the newspaper, or on their website.
4. **Use coupons** – but only for items that you know you’ll use. If you don’t need an item right away, save the coupon and see if it goes on sale.
5. **Look up and down for savings.** Stores often stock the priciest items at eye level. You can save big by looking at the upper and lower shelves too.
6. **Check for store brands.** Most stores offer their own brand of products that often cost less than name brands.
7. **Grab from the back.** Stores typically stock shelves from back to front, placing the newest items behind the older ones. Reach in the back for the freshest items especially in the produce, dairy, and meat aisles.
8. **Ask for a rain check.** If a sale item has run out, ask the store for a rain check. This allows you to pay the sale price after the item is restocked.
9. **Join your store’s loyalty program.** Most stores offer a free loyalty program. Get special offers and discounts that non-members do not.
10. **Think outside the store.** Farmers markets and farm stands can be great options for picking up fresh produce at a discount. Check the National Farmers Market Directory for locations near you.

10 Tips for Eating Better on a Budget For additional resources go to: <https://www.choosemyplate.gov/>

1. **Plan, plan, plan!** Before you head to the grocery store, plan your meals for the week. Include meals like stews, casseroles, or soups, which “stretch” expensive items into more portions. Check to see what foods you already have and make a list for what you need to buy.
2. **Get the best price.** Check the local newspaper, online, and at the store for sales and coupons. Ask about a loyalty card for extra savings at stores where you shop. Look for specials or sales on meat and seafood—often the most expensive items on your list.
3. **Compare and contrast.** Find the “Unit Price” on the shelf directly below the product. Use it to compare different brands and different sizes of the same brand to determine which is the best buy.
4. **Buy in bulk.** It is almost always cheaper to buy foods in bulk. Smart choices are large containers of low-fat yogurt and large bags of frozen vegetables. Before you shop, remember to check if you have enough freezer space.
5. **Buy in season.** Buying fruits and vegetables in season can lower the cost and add to the freshness! If you are not going to use them all right away, buy some that still need time to ripen.
6. **Convenience costs...go back to the basics** Convenience foods like frozen dinners, pre-cut fruits and vegetables, and take-out meals can often cost more than if you were to make them at home. Take the time to prepare your own—and save!
7. **Easy on your wallet.** Certain foods are typically low-cost options all year round. Try beans for a less expensive protein food. For vegetables, buy cabbage, sweet potatoes, or low-sodium canned tomatoes. As for fruits, apples and bananas are good choices.
8. **Cook once...eat all week!** Prepare a large batch of favorite recipes on your day off (double or triple the recipe). Freeze in individual containers. Use them throughout the week and you won’t have to spend money on take-out meals.
9. **Get creative with leftovers.** Spice up your leftovers—use them in new ways. For example, try leftover chicken in a stir-fry, over a garden salad, or in chili. Remember, throwing away food is throwing away your money!
10. **Eating out** Restaurants can be expensive. Save money by getting the early bird special, going out for lunch instead of dinner, or looking for “2 for 1” deals. Ask for water instead of ordering other beverages, which add to the bill.

To Earn 1.0 Hour Foster Parent Training Credit (Alaska Foster Parents Only) COMPLETE [QUESTIONNAIRE](#)