

Our
supersaver
shopping
strategies
will help you
slim your
body without
shrinking
your wallet.

By Sharlene K.
Johnson

Eat Better, Spend Less

We know you had every intention of eating the broccoli that's been buried in your fridge for weeks (hey, we've been there). Same goes for the lettuce that you planned to turn into a crisp salad for dinner (yep, guilty of that one, too) and the bananas you meant to bring to work for a snack (ditto). If it sometimes seems that you can't eat the healthy food you buy fast enough, you've got plenty of company.

The average family of four in the United States tosses out about \$1,350 in

groceries every year, according to Jonathan Bloom, author of the new book *American Wasteland: How America Throws Away Nearly Half of Its Food (and What We Can Do About It)*. "Fruits and vegetables top the list of most-wasted foods," Bloom says. "It's often because we forget what we bought. Things get pushed to the back of the produce drawer, and out of sight is out of mind."


Shop a little smarter and you won't have to trash good food or your hard-earned cash. As a bonus, you'll boost

your diet and your bank account at the same time. Check out these mega-money-saving ideas before you hit the checkout line.

Plan ahead. The single best way to save at the supermarket is to map out your dinners for the week and shop with a list, experts say. Sounds like a no-brainer, but most of us don't do it. That's how we end up buying things we already have. Take a quick inventory of your pantry, fridge and freezer so you know what you've got on hand. Then

decide on the recipes you want to make for the week. (Need some inspiration? Go to fitnessmagazine.com/quickrecipes for dozens of yummy fast and healthy ideas.) Jot down the ingredients you need and head to the supermarket.

Shop for what's in season. The freshest foods have better flavor and more nutrients, and they're also less expensive. In the off-season, try frozen fruits and veggies, which offer the same healthy benefits for low prices.



Don't be lured into buying mass quantities of anything at a warehouse store. It's a myth that bigger is cheaper. You'll actually end up spending more.

Pick the Right Produce

Surprise: Some conventionally grown fruits and veggies are relatively pesticide-free, according to the Environmental Working Group, a non-profit organization that strives to protect public health. When you're buying any of the "Dirty Dozen" (right), which are more likely to be contaminated with chemicals, it is worth spending a little extra on organically grown varieties. Carry this shopping cheat sheet in your purse.

THE CLEAN 15

From Best to Worst

- Onions
- Avocado
- Sweet corn
- Pineapple
- Mangoes
- Sweet peas
- Asparagus
- Kiwi
- Cabbage
- Eggplant
- Cantaloupe
- Watermelon
- Grapefruit
- Sweet potato
- Honeydew melon



THE DIRTY DOZEN

From Worst to Best

- Celery
- Peaches
- Strawberries
- Apples
- Blueberries
- Nectarines
- Bell peppers
- Spinach
- Kale
- Cherries
- Potatoes
- Grapes (imported)

Get more than you pay for. Grocery stores across the country are going the extra mile to help you eat healthy. For instance, Safeway stores' online Food Flex program gives you a nutritional snapshot of your purchases and shows you better alternatives. Whole Foods Market holds weekly value tours of its stores to point out good-for-you deals. (Who-knew secret: You can taste most foods at Whole Foods to make sure you like them before buying. Ask for details at the service desk.)

Veg out. Go vegetarian one or more days a week and you'll slash your grocery bill big-time. Angela Barton, author of the blog My Year Without Spending, says that since she and her husband switched to eating meat just a few times weekly, she saves 25 percent every time she shops. Swap beef and chicken for beans, grains and eggs. Our delish and easy recipes for these

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3 Easy Ways to Shrink Your Grocery Bill



Cut back on coupons. "I've seen it over and over in my research: People buy things they wouldn't normally choose, because they have a coupon," says consumer psychologist Kit Yarrow, Ph.D., coauthor of *Gen BuY*. "Cheap prices allow you to rationalize less healthy purchases." Ask yourself if you would want it without the coupon. No? Skip it.

Shop after you eat. "When you're famished, you naturally crave the

most calorie-rich foods," Yarrow says. The next thing you know, you're piling your cart with corn chips and doughnuts.

Leave the kids home. As soon as you walk into the store, they start up: "I want candy/cupcakes/ice cream. Please, please, please!" Cue the tears. You end up buying more than you planned to. Have your husband watch them while you shop. Or trade babysitting time with another mom.

foods in "Mix-and-Match Meals" on page 156 will get you cooking.

Stock up on superfoods.

"Plenty of fruits and vegetables are both nutrient dense and inexpensive," says Lauren Futrell Dunaway, R.D., program manager at the Prevention Research Center at Tulane University in New Orleans. Her best budget-friendly, vitamin-packed produce picks:

Bananas contain plenty of potassium as well as vitamins B₆ and C.

Cabbage is loaded with vitamin C. Every cup of cooked, shredded cabbage that you eat provides 75 percent of your recommended daily allowance (RDA) of C.

Cantaloupe is high in vitamins A and C.

Carrots have more vitamin A than any other vegetable, and they're rich in vitamins C and B₆.

Greens, such as spinach and turnip, mustard and collard greens, are full of vitamin A.

Honeydew melon is high in vitamin C.

Oranges and **grapefruits** each supply more than 100 percent of your RDA of vitamin C.

Plums are packed with healthy

antioxidants and phytonutrients.

Potatoes are a good source of vitamins C and B₆ and potassium.

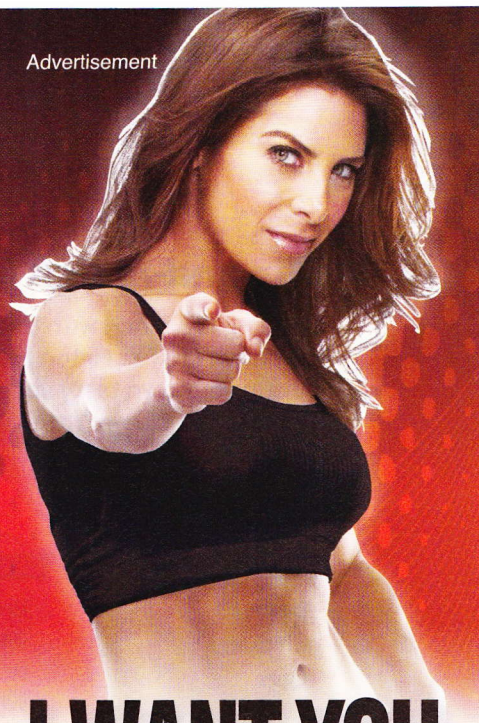
Downsize your shopping cart.

Don't be lured into buying mass quantities of anything—whether it's chicken, condiments or paper products—at a warehouse store. It's a myth that bigger is cheaper, says Joanie Demer, coauthor of *Pick Another Checkout Lane, Honey*. Truth is, you'll actually end up spending more.

Know when not to go natural.

"People think that if they eat everything organic, they'll be healthier, but organic butter and sugar have the same fat and calories as regular butter and sugar," points out Jennifer Welper, executive chef at Hilton Head Health, a weight-loss spa in South Carolina. Plus, organic foods are often more expensive. When you're choosing snacks, look for tasty, good-for-you foods that will fill you up for around 150 calories. A handful (about one ounce) of almonds, a piece of fruit or a plain nonfat yogurt with berries is a much smarter choice than all-natural cookies or chips.

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Mix-and-Match Meals

Cooking is a cinch with this put-it-together recipe plan from Jennifer Welper, executive chef at Hilton Head Health. Try the combos suggested below or mix up your own tasty variations. Most of the ingredients are already in your kitchen; just sub in frozen vegetables when fresh picks are out of season.

CREATE IT

Pick a **PROTEIN**

- Beans
- Chicken
- Eggs

Choose a **CARB**

- Brown rice
- Whole-wheat pasta (try orzo)
- Whole-wheat tortillas

Add a few **VEGGIES**

- Asparagus
- Bell peppers
- Broccoli
- Carrots
- Cauliflower
- Green beans
- Mushrooms
- Onions
- Snow peas
- Sugar snap peas

Select a **SEASONING**

- Basil and garlic
- Cilantro-lime sauce (lime juice combined with cilantro, garlic and salt)
- Garlic and thyme
- Salsa
- Teriyaki glaze (purchased or made with low-sodium soy sauce, brown sugar and mirin, a sweet rice wine found in the Asian foods section)



Quick flavor tip

Top meals with a little bit of low-fat cheese, such as 2 percent sharp cheddar, low-fat feta or part-skim mozzarella.

SERVE IT

As a **STIR-FRY**

- Fried rice, peas, carrots and onions scrambled with eggs and teriyaki glaze
- Sautéed chicken, onions, carrots, broccoli and snow peas over brown rice
- Whole-wheat orzo with stir-fried asparagus, onions, peppers, zucchini and tomatoes

Wrapped in a **TORTILLA**

- Black beans, brown rice, chopped veggies and salsa
- Chicken strips, peppers, onions and cilantro-lime sauce
- Scrambled eggs, sautéed veggies and salsa

As a **DISH**

- Grilled Mediterranean chicken kebab (with olive oil, garlic and thyme) and vegetable orzo
- Omelet stuffed with sautéed vegetables and topped with salsa
- Brown rice, white beans and sautéed vegetables with olive oil (one teaspoon per serving), a splash of balsamic vinegar, and basil

Make a slick swap. Yes, olive oil is heart healthy, but it's also costly. Save it for when flavor really counts, as in salads, and use canola oil for cooking. "It's much less expensive, and it gives you healthy monounsaturated fats as well as a dose of

omega-3 fatty acids," says Erin Palinski, R.D., a nutritionist in Franklin, New Jersey.

Stick close to home.

You can find bargains on fruits and vegetables grown locally—and they're typically

treated with fewer pesticides, too. Go to farmer's markets late in the day for the best prices. "Most growers will do two-for-one deals when they're ready to pack up," says Latham Thomas, a nutrition counselor and the founder of Tender Shoots

Wellness in New York City. Also, consider joining a community-supported-agriculture (CSA) program, which gives you a weekly or biweekly box of produce from a nearby farm for a flat fee. If you can't use the whole box yourself, split