



5 Ways to Eat Real on a Budget

Food Day, on October 24 every year, is a nationwide celebration of healthy, affordable, and sustainably produced food, and a grassroots campaign for better food policies. It aims to help people Eat Real, which means cutting back on sugar drinks, overly salted packaged foods, fatty, factory-farmed meats, and junky restaurant foods in favor of vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and sustainably raised protein.

How can you Eat Real without breaking your bank? Here, Food Day uncovers how what's good for your health and the environment can also be the best thing for your wallet.

- 1. Know your options:** While you may be in the habit of dropping into the nearest grocery store, checking out the options and comparing prices of local farmers markets, community supported agriculture (CSA), and co-ops can save you money while giving you more bang for your buck. If your grocery store proves to be the best option, choosing house brand over name brand packaged foods can save you money.
- 2. Compare your options:** Look at unit prices (typically per-pound or per-quart) instead of just the price tag. For example, though the price tag on a bag of pre-packaged spinach might read \$2.99, the unit price could be much more expensive than even loose-leaf organic spinach.

- 3. Buy in bulk:** You'll create savings just by cutting down on packaging. Look for a bulk goods section the next time you go shopping (big self-fill containers often carry goods like rice, legumes, beans, and dried fruits).

- 4. Buy seasonally:** Not only is it less expensive, but eating seasonally can make it easier to buy locally grown and sometimes more nutritious produce. In the winter, canned, frozen, and dried fruits and veggies are great options too.

- 5. Cook your own meals:** Buying prepared food is expensive, while cooking your own meals can be an enjoyable experience that connects you to your food and gives you more control over sodium and sugar intake. No time? Prepare a big meal over the weekend, then store it in the refrigerator or freezer to eat as the week goes on. Looking for recipes? Click here for some Food Day favorites: <http://www.foodday.org//recipes>. Or check out the Capital Area Food Bank's Healthy Recipe Database.

If you count up the dollars you spend every week on food, including fast food meals, morning cups of coffee, muffins, bagels, doughnuts, and vending machine snacks, **you might be surprised how easy it is to change your eating habits and Eat Real on a budget.**