

# Top Tips and Activities! Beat the Budget



Let's bust the myth that enjoying a healthy, varied diet costs an arm and a leg, and preparing a healthy meal takes hours... it's rubbish!! With a little planning, some smart shopping, and food preparation know how, you and your family can tuck in to delicious, healthy AND cheap meals in minutes!! Here are some tips and ideas to make your pounds go further, get your culinary skills up to scratch and make your taste buds tingle!

## Planning ahead

### *Plan your budget*

- Work out how much you have to spend on food per week or month, and then stick to it!

### *Using the kitchen*

- Cooking your own meals from scratch is a lot cheaper and more nutritious than buying processed convenience meals. Get the kids to help out and it can be an activity you all enjoy together.

### *Plan your menu*

- Plan your weekly menu (for some idea's check out our recipes in the 'cooking for kids' section), when you know what you'll be eating you'll know what you need to buy!

### *Make a shopping list*

- Check what food you already have in your cupboards and what needs to be used up in the fridge. List the foods you need and stick to your list whilst shopping. Avoid impulse buys as these can often lead to wasted food and therefore wasted money.

### *Always be prepared*

- Always carry a quick snack in your bag or car, such as a banana, apple or dried fruit and nuts when you're out and about, as shops in remote places are often very over priced and predominantly sell processed foods, high in sugar, fat, and/or salt.

## Smart shopping

### *Compare prices and shop around*

- Your local market or grocery store may be better value than the supermarket (and you save money on petrol/bus fare!). Pennies saved by buying supermarket own products rather than big brands can really start to add up!

### *Shop seasonally*

- It stands to reason that it is cheaper to buy fruit and vegetables grown in season in the UK than it is buying summer produce from another country in the middle of winter! Here is a quick guide to buying seasonally or for a more extensive guide go to:

[www.bbc.co.uk/food/in\\_season](http://www.bbc.co.uk/food/in_season)

- *Spring*: Rhubarb, radishes, broad beans, kale, spring onion, French beans, lettuce, garlic, asparagus

- *Summer*: New potatoes, spinach, aubergine, courgette, cucumber, peppers tomatoes, watercress, peas, raspberries, plums strawberries

- *Autumn*: Spinach, pumpkin, beetroot, swede, squash, sweet corn, turnip, apples, blackberries, pears

- *Winter*: Brussel sprouts, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, leeks, mushrooms, onions, parsnip, potatoes, purple sprouting broccoli

### *Buy the basics and buy in bulk*

- Buy foods that have a long shelf life and can form the base for lots of different meals, e.g. pasta, noodles, rice, porridge oats, dried beans, lentils, frozen vegetables; and remember bigger bags usually mean better value!
- Buy tinned fruit and vegetables they have the same nutritional content as the fresh stuff but last longer, make sure you buy the ones with no added salt or sugar.

### *Shop at the end of the day*

- Supermarkets will usually have more reduced price offers at the end of the day on perishable goods due to go out of date. Take advantage of these offers for items such as poultry, meat, fish or bread that can all be frozen until required.

### *Don't be seduced by special offers*

- Special offers are great, but only if they are on something that is going to be useful and you have enough room to store it. Don't buy a food just because it's on special offer, you might not use it!

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## *Shop with friends or other families*

- Grouping together and buying in bulk from shops or wholesalers is a lot cheaper than buying in small quantities.

## **Clever cooking**

### *Cook in batches*

- Cook larger quantities of some dishes, e.g. chilli, stew, curry, pasta dishes, rice dishes. After cooking, cool the food quickly (within one to two hours) and freeze in serving sized portions for use another time. When reheating the food, make sure it is piping hot all the way through.

### *Use a knife and chopping board!*

- Supermarkets make a fortune from charging for chopping your fruit and vegetables for you. Buy whole loose fruit and vegetables and cut them yourself at home. It may take a little longer, but your wallet will thank you for it!

## *Make recipes go further*

- Add beans, pulses and more vegetables to bulk out meals, e.g. in Shepard's or cottage pie, spaghetti bolognese, curry, stir-fry etc...
- Use leftover ingredients to make your next meal e.g. bolognese into lasagna.

### *Base meals on starchy filling foods*

- Meals based on starchy foods such as pasta, rice, oats, potatoes and bread, are not only really cheap and filling, they are also low in fat (as long as you don't have them with too much butter, oil, cheese or cream!). Choose wholegrain where possible as these will keep you feeling full for longer.

## **Eat together**

Make meal times a social event! Not only is it easier, cheaper and less time consuming to cook one big meal for the whole family to enjoy it can also bring you closer together by allowing everyone a chance to talk about their day!