



Oregon State University Extension Service

Make the Most of Your Grocery Budget in 2021

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The new year is the perfect time to revisit your budget. Food spending is necessary for all of us and, during COVID, we may be cooking more at home. Focus on consistent positive choices to spend less and eat well. Read on for simple tips to help you make the most of your grocery budget in 2021.

Budget

First, create your monthly grocery budget by calculating what you currently spend at the store. Save all your receipts for a period to know what you are spending. To determine your spending goal, you can use a grocery budget calculator (<https://spendsmart.extension.iastate.edu/plan/what-you-spend>) or budget about 10-15 percent of your monthly income. Once you know your monthly budget, divide it by four to estimate your weekly grocery allotment. This will help you prioritize the most necessary purchases. Consider cutting back in small increments towards your spending goal. For example, if your monthly spending goal is \$400 but you currently spend \$600, you can start by reducing your budget to \$500 per month.

For more help with your 2021 grocery budget, check out <https://trainingspace.ny.gov/courses/eating-healthy-on-a-budget/mainmenu.cfm>

Meal Plan

Plan your meals out for the week to save yourself time and money in the store. Follow this link for a meal planning worksheet: <https://iastate.app.box.com/s/nwecdndbm5ighioz3suu>. When planning your meals, first check your pantry and fridge to see what you already have on hand. Then, plan some go-to meals that you and your family can easily prepare on busy weeknights. Some

examples include quesadillas, pastas, and rice bowls. Finally, consider designating a few meatless meals. Incorporate affordable and nutritious options like eggs, legumes, and nuts to cut down on your grocery bill.

Shop

What is the most cost-efficient store in your area? According to a 2019 study, WinCo, Costco, Trader Joe's and Walmart were ranked in the top 10 cheapest grocery stores in the nation. Before you go to the store, search for coupons for foods that are on your list. Check out this link for more tips on couponing: <https://ohioline.osu.edu/factsheet/11-fcs-904>. While at the store, use unit pricing to compare two items across brands. You can use an app like Spend Smart Eat Smart. Buy generic brands and seasonal produce as often as possible, and select frozen, dried, or canned foods to avoid wasting food that might spoil if kept too long.

Love Leftovers

Don't let leftovers go to waste. Use them up by designating a "leftovers night" each week or repurposing leftovers into a new dish. Double your recipes and freeze the extra so that you have an easy option on hand on those busy weeknights when you don't feel like cooking.

Food Insecurity

Nationally, in Oregon, and in our communities, COVID-19 has caused an increase in food insecurity, which is defined as "the lack of consistent access, quality and availability of food for an active, healthy life," by the United States Department of Agriculture.

If you are experiencing ANY food insecurity, the below resources may help. If you are able to help others, please donate locally to Marion Polk Food Share.

Food resources in Marion County and Area

- Marion Polk Food Share provides a variety of emergency food resources and a list of food pantries in Marion County and across the region - <https://marionpolkfoodshare.org/>
- USDA Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) – previously known as Food Stamps. <https://one.oregon.gov/>
- Budget-friendly recipes that your whole family will enjoy visit www.foodhero.org.