** (Courtesy of Creative Market)**

**Choose Frozen Produce:**

Buying frozen fruits and vegetables at the store is a **better nutritional option** than canned produce and a **better financial option** than fresh produce. Generally, frozen produce is better nutritionally because canned foods tend to have higher sodium and added sugar to preserve the goods. **With less added sugar and salt**, produce is also typically frozen when it is at its peak nutritional value, thus preserving its nutrient content fairly well. Compared to fresh produce, frozen fruits and vegetables **last much longer,** which allows for **decreased waste** and **less trips to the store** to re-buy the food. Additionally, frozen produce is oftentimes more affordable than fresh produce so next time you are at the store make sure to compare the prices.

**Avoid Highly Processed Meats:**

Although it may be more cost-effective to choose processed meat choices like salami, SPAM, hot dogs, and canned meats, the **health risks of over-consuming** these highly processed food products can be harmful. Specifically, processed meats are **higher in sodium** which can increase the risk for high blood pressure and heart disease. In order to maintain good protein intake and reduce your grocery store bill, **mix in a few plant-based protein options** into your weekly meals. These can include lentils, black beans, and tofu. Plant-based sources of protein usually come in bulk that last for multiple meals/servings, are **nutritionally dense**, and are **just as low-priced** as processed meat choices.

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**Choose Generic Brands Rather than Name-Brands:**

You may have noticed that when you go to the grocery store, food products have varying prices depending on what brand sells them. Name-brand foods are foods that are sold by companies that are typically well-known brands including Jenny Craig, Nestle, and Green Giant. Sometimes right next to the name-brand product is a food item that is the exact same, but just sold by a different, lesser-known company. These generic brands are **usually the exact same nutritionally**, but for **a lower price.** Therefore, when shopping at the grocery store, check the different prices to pick the food item that is the lowest price.

**The Bottom Line**

 It is important to continue to eat full, nutrient-dense meals for our optimal health. Although healthier foods may seem too expensive to afford this year, following these tips to shop healthy on a budget may help decrease your overall economic burden.