

# Real Food on a Budget

Increasingly, more people are choosing to eat “real foods”—that is, food that nature gives us versus processed foods. The number of farmers’ markets in this county is rapidly growing, and “farm-to-table” restaurants are popping up everywhere.

As we learn more about the benefits of consuming real foods, it’s becoming clear that a mostly real foods diet is a better choice for our own health and the health of our environment.

*“Shake the hand  
that feeds you.”*  
— **Michael Pollan,**  
**author of *In  
Defense of Food:  
An Eater’s  
Manifesto***

Unfortunately, cost is a major barrier for many people who are considering a switch to natural foods. Without careful thought and planning, real foods may increase your grocery bill. Consider these tips to eat real food on a budget:

- **Plan ahead.** Plan your meals and go food shopping with a list to avoid last-minute, unnecessary purchases. To download and print a free weekly meal plan template, visit: [http://organizedhome.com/sites/default/files/printable/notebook\\_food\\_menu\\_planner\\_weekly.pdf](http://organizedhome.com/sites/default/files/printable/notebook_food_menu_planner_weekly.pdf).
- **Cook more.** With the exception of “fast food,” it costs more to dine out. Think of going out to eat as a weekly treat rather than the daily norm.
- **Buy in bulk.** Items like beans, whole grains, and raw nuts and seeds cost much less out of the bulk bin than their prepackaged counterparts.
- **Shop your farmers’ market.** This is the best place to find affordable, fresh, local produce picked at the height of its flavor and nutrition.
- **Eat in season.** Seasonal foods cost less because it takes less production effort for the foods to go from farm to fork.
- **Eat less.** Real foods are more nutrient-dense, so you don’t need to eat as much to feel satisfied.
- **Make your own convenience foods.** For example, homemade salad dressing not only costs less, but is easy to make. It also tastes much better than the store-bought kind.
- **Eat less meat.** Try “Meatless Mondays” or think of meat as the side dish and vegetables as the main dish. Another option is to “stretch” your meat dishes by adding beans or other vegetables.
- **Save and eat leftovers.**