

Stockton/Lodi

COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER



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How To Save \$\$\$ on Food

And establish life long habits that will save you money forever.

Food prices increased faster in 2023 than they have in over 40 years. The price spikes are due to a perfect storm of inflation, engorged transportation costs, and unexpected hits to the agricultural industry. That's an unpleasant marker of just how much inflation has been digging into people's wallets, especially at the grocery store. As inflation continues to drive grocery spending up, you may be looking for ways to combat it.

GO OLD SCHOOL

Before Costco, before the Safeway Rewards Card, people shopped the sales. Remember when your grandma would come home from the market with five bags of sugar? When you gave her the side-eye, she would bark out that 'they're having a sale!'

Sales are back, people. And times are tough, so channel your inner-grandma and stock up on sale items, especially pantry staples, like . . . well, sugar. And flour. And brown sugar.

In fact, the winter holiday months are perfect for stocking up on baking essentials like vanilla extract, spices, sugars, butter (which can be frozen) and the like, which are sold at deep discounts for the holiday baking.



How To **Save \$\$\$ on Food** (continued)

CHOOSE YOUR GROCERY STORE WISELY

One of the best places to start is finding what grocery stores you have in your neighborhood. Some of the lower-priced stores include FoodMaxx, Winco Foods, Walmart, and Trader Joe's.

To get the most value out of your money, you might want to consider dividing your shopping up between a few stores to get the best deals and a great selection (Trader Joe's, for example, might not have the widest range of items available in the store, so you may have to get some of your favorite foods from other places).



ALWAYS BUY GENERIC

With a few exceptions, generic or store brands are almost always completely identical to the name-brand product. Aside from having the same ingredients, they're often even made by the same manufacturers. So don't waste your money paying extra for the more recognizable label. Always look for and choose the generic version nearby.

This is especially true if your shop at Trader's Joe's. While everything is labeled "Trader Joe's" brand, 90% of 'their' items are supplied by a big name producer. Example: Trader's Joe's refrigerated almond milk is produced by Blue Diamond, the largest almond producer in the country. Price wise - it's never 'on sale' as Trader Joe's doesn't have sales, but it's consistently priced at or below the major grocery retailers' sale price of Blue Diamond Almond milk.

^{How To} Save \$\$\$ on Food (continued)

TRACK THE PRICES OF REGULARLY PURCHASED ITEMS

Items like soda, bread, ice cream, cheese and meat are usually on sale at one of the major retailers. These sales rotate and vary from week to week. With the help of apps like Flipp, you can keep getting access to deals and promotions from over 2,000 merchants and find the one that offers the best price on your favorite chips or any other product. This particular application also allows you to track items and get notified when the price drops. This prevents you from having to access multiple grocery apps to see their weekly ads.

PAY ATTENTION TO THE UNIT



PRICE!!!



The unit price is often different from the overall price of the item. The former tells you the cost per pound, quart, or other unit of volume or weight of a food package.

A lot of brands prefer not to raise the price of their products. Instead, they choose to reduce the amount of product in the packaging which can trick the customers into thinking that they are still paying the same price for the same volume.

We might say, “Pick up a half gallon of ice cream at the store,” but what we mean is “Pick up a quart and a half of ice cream at the store.” A half a gallon of milk is no longer a half of a gallon. It’s two thirds of a half of a gallon. The price is the same, but you’re now getting 25% less. They’ve even coined a new term for this: *Inflationomics*.

So, if you want to save quite a few bucks on every trip to the grocery store, try to compare the unit prices of the products (you’ll usually find it on the shelf tag, next to the item price).

How To Save \$\$\$ on Food (continued)

MEAL PREP TO SAVE MONEY

Back to going old school. Meal prep and planning is very “in” right now, but the truth is, it used to be the norm. A while back. Ok, a long time ago. Before technology and UberEats and fast food on every corner. Before microwaves even! (gulp) Yes, that was also before both parents had to work 50 hours per week to keep the lights on and there was more time and less pressure.

Even so, these days, with a small investment of time and planning, one can easily meal plan, shop and prep for the week. One Sunday afternoon shopping and prepping can make for six hassle-free evenings in a row. Who doesn't want that? (For a straightforward guide on how to become a meal prep professional, [click here](#).)

If you're going to invest the time, you'll need to invest in the right equipment. Don't skimp on food storage containers. Choose ones that are freezer/microwave/dishwasher/oven safe. Opt for glass over plastic. Splurge on the type with compartment dividers, especially for the little ones in your house. [Check out these leak-proof, BPA-free ones from Amazon](#).



Another advantage to meal planning and prep is less waste. If you know you're using half of an onion for this dish, you can plan another dish that requires onion. That other half of the onion doesn't end up buried in the back of your produce drawer, sprouting legs. And since nothing is cheap anymore, not even onions, less waste means more money.

How To Save \$\$\$ on Food (continued)

DON'T BUY INDIVIDUALLY PACKAGED FOODS

Getting individually packaged foods like small bags of chips or nuts can be convenient, but in the absolute majority of cases, scooping and bagging yourself would make the same item cheaper. Moreover, such a trick would help reduce waste!

Another tip when it comes to chips and cereal: upon opening, immediately pour the contents of the bag into a large, resealable bag. They'll stay fresh much longer, which reduces food waste and saves money.

Take advantage of reusable snack containers for school/work lunches, like these available on Amazon, to cut down on single-use plastic waste.

Instead of buying small packages of meat, opt for the larger, bulk-priced packages and repackage before freezing. For more information on proper food storage, see the article on page 7.

In Conclusion.

Grocery costs are at an all time-high with no immediate relief in sight. However, with some planning and a little leg-work, keeping food costs down is possible. Frugal shopping, proper food storage and wasting less can all contribute to a lower grocery bill.





How to **PROPERLY** Store Perishable Foods

MEAT

Raw meat should be handled with care and you should always wash your hands thoroughly before and after handling raw meat, poultry or eggs. This stops bacteria and allergens from spreading onto food, surfaces and equipment.

For information on packaging fresh meat for freezing, [click here](#).

For information on canning meat, [click here](#).

VEGETABLES

Celery

- Start by ditching that grocery-store plastic bag the celery came in. ...
- Wrap your whole, uncut celery snugly in aluminum foil, which provides a stronger barrier for locking in moisture than plastic.
- Place the wrapped celery in the crisper drawer of your refrigerator and store for up to four weeks.

Leafy Greens

- Lay the clean, dry leaves on paper towels, loosely roll into a cylinder and place in a zip-top baggie.
- Alternatively, you can line a large airtight container with paper towels and loosely fill it with greens. Top with another paper towel layer and snap on the lid. Store in a cold part of the fridge.

How to
PROPERLY
Store Perishable Foods

Mushrooms



- The secret to mushroom storage is that they stay fresh longer if you take them out of their container. Wrap them in paper towels placed in open plastic bags (paper bags are even better) and keep them in the fridge. Watch our how-to video for more.

Tomatoes



- Tomatoes can be tricky. Storing them properly will depend on where you got them and how they were grown.
- There are schools of thought both for and against refrigerating.
- For details and storage options, [click here](#).

Green Onions



- Cut the green onions as you would use them.
- Next, wrap the scallions in a damp paper towel. The trick is to not let the towel have too much water, as that can cause rotting. Another option would be to wrap the green onions in a dry paper towel and then spritz or drip water onto the towel, again avoiding excess moisture.
- Place the paper-towel-wrapped veggies in a plastic bag, it does not need to be sealed tight. And then put them in the crisper drawer in your fridge.
- With this storage method, green onions should last for up to 2-3 weeks. Periodically check the towel to ensure it stays moist.
- For more ways to keep green onions fresh, [click here](#).

Eggplant



- Keep the eggplant out of direct sunlight and place it in a cool room, about 54 degrees Fahrenheit. Garages, basements, or other spaces with cold temperatures make for ideal conditions. The eggplant will stay fresh for four days.

Fresh Herbs



- Wrap or roll the herbs in damp paper towels so that you cover the entire herb, then store them in a Ziploc bag in the fridge. Even without any special care, hardy herbs tend to last longer in the refrigerator than soft herbs, even if you just keep it in the little plastic container it's sold in – usually a week or so..



A BEGINNER'S GUIDE *to* MEAL PREP

Learning how to meal prep will save you time, money and make it easier to cook healthy dinners – even when you're busy. But you may be wondering how to keep your meal-prepped food fresh and tasty throughout the week or if there are any food safety guidelines to consider when cooking meals ahead of time. The culinary pros in the Good Housekeeping Test Kitchen have years of experience in efficient, well-planned cooking (they have to fly through dozens of recipes per week, after all), so they dished out their best meal prep tips. Your guide to easy, organized (and delicious!) cooking ahead.

WHAT IS MEAL PREPPING?

Meal prep is the practice of preparing key elements of a dish like grains, roasted veggies or cooked protein, or even the entire recipe (make-ahead meals FTW!), before you plan to eat it. This smart meal planning method gives you a head start on the week, often leading to faster, healthier, stress-free eating.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

Meal prepping can save you time on busy weeknights by making food available to heat and eat right when you get home. It can also save you money: Meal planning helps ensure that you don't buy things at the grocery store you don't need, and pre-prepped food is more likely to get eaten so it reduces food waste. It's also easier to eat healthy meals since the menu gets set in advance. You're less likely to choose a not-so-great option when you already have a healthy dinner at home, ready to go.

A BEGINNER'S GUIDE *to*
MEAL PREP

ARE THERE DOWNSIDES TO MEAL PREP?

Since meal prepping can involve eating the same dish or types of food a few days in a row, it's not for people who prize variety and freshness above all else. Getting kids on board with eating "leftovers" can also pose a challenge, especially if you're making accommodations for different dietary restrictions or palettes. To avoid monotony, use different spices, dressings or condiments in your dishes or freeze some of your prepped food to feature in meals for a future week.



Or skip pre-made meals and focus on prepping your ingredients instead: Washed celery and carrots can be diced for a tomato sauce or sliced for snacking, cooked quinoa can be paired with any protein or turned into a grain salad and roast chicken can be shredded and stirred into different meals all week (soups, wraps, tostadas, etc.) to name just a few ways your prepped ingredients can be transformed.

A BEGINNER'S GUIDE *to* MEAL PREP

WEEKLY MEAL PREP HOW-TO

There are a few different ways to meal prep, but all the food preparation methods involve organizing the food in your fridge in a way that makes for easy breakfasts, lunches and dinners – whether that's just chopping or slicing foods or actually cooking it. There's no one way to do it, but three common techniques include:

BATCH COOKING

Make big recipes at once (like on the weekends) to freeze or save for use later on. For 35 mouth watering recipes perfect for batch cooking, [click here](#).



PREPPED INGREDIENTS

Do a bunch of chopping, peeling, slicing or roasting beforehand and use those components in recipes later on.



INDIVIDUALLY PORTIONED MEALS

Divvy up portions into containers ahead of time so you can grab and go. Check out these fun and functional meal containers on [Amazon](#).



A BEGINNER'S GUIDE *to*
MEAL PREP

OKAY! I AM READY! HOW DO I START MEAL PREPPING?

Stock up on reusable, airtight food storage containers that will help your prepared ingredients or meals stay fresh by locking bacteria and odors out.

BEST FOR SALAD

Rubbermaid Brilliance Salad and Snack Lunch Combo Kit
Under \$30 on Amazon



BEST FOR BATCH COOKING

Joseph Joseph 12-Piece Multicolored Food Storage Container Set
Under \$30 at Amazon



BEST WITH DIVIDERS

PackIt Flex Bento Food Storage Container
Leak resistant,
dishwasher/microwave safe.
Get them here.



A BEGINNER'S GUIDE *to*
MEAL PREP

BEST FOR SNACKS

Blender Bottle GoStak Twist
n' Lock Storage Jars
Under \$15 at Amazon



BEST FOR REHEATING

Pyrex Simply Store Glass 18-
Piece Food Container
Set Under \$30 at Amazon

Once you have your meal-prepping gear, you may want to download a grocery list app that will help keep your plan organized and make shopping and cooking a snap by curating recipes and grocery lists for you. Don't fret if you're not into the tech-based solution: A pen and paper also work for planning out your week.

For even more meal planning, food prepping,
money-saving tips, read the whole article at
[Goodhousekeeping.com](https://www.goodhousekeeping.com)

