

Nutrition Matters

Nutrition Services, Community and Health Services

Best buys - eat well for less

This fact sheet will give you tips and information on getting the best value for your money from each of the four food groups of Canada's Food Guide. Healthy eating means eating a variety of foods. The Food Guide is a tool that will help you get all the nutrients your body needs to be healthy. Please refer to the Food Guide for the recommended number of Food Guide servings and sizes.

Some general tips to save money on food...

- Plan ahead – use the foods you have at home
- Check weekly store flyers for sales
- Create a shopping list – keep to your grocery list to avoid buying foods you do not need
- Buy in bulk
- Compare brand prices to store or no name brands
- Set money aside for your groceries

Best buys in... Vegetables and Fruit



Vegetables and fruit are great sources of vitamins, minerals and fibre. Dark green vegetables and orange fruits and vegetables are rich in vitamin A, vitamin C and folate.



When in season

- Fresh produce is cheapest when it is in season
- Visit pick-your-own farms or your local farmers' market to buy large quantities of produce; preserve some by freezing or canning to use when fresh is not in season and more expensive
- Grow your own vegetables. You can get started with a small garden or window box and some seeds. Easy to grow vegetables include tomatoes, beans and bell peppers

Frozen and canned

- Canned or frozen products are a better buy when fruits and vegetables are not in season, especially in the winter months
- Canned and frozen products have about the same nutrient content as fresh
- Do not thaw frozen vegetables before cooking. This will help keep the nutritional value high
- Avoid vegetables that have breaded coatings or sauces. These cost more and are higher in fat and salt
- Compare the price of the products using the unit price (price/100 ml) usually seen on the store shelf sticker to find the best buy
- Avoid fruit punches, beverages or drinks because they contain a small amount or no real fruit juice. Look for frozen concentrated **juice** for the best buy
- A juice box costs more per serving than juice bought in a larger container. For lunches, use a thermos or bottle to transfer juice from a larger container

Buy when fresh produce is in season

This chart shows the main season for the harvest. The small squares show when the produce is available locally and the peak “pick your own” season.



| Fruit/Vegetables | June | July | August | September | October |
|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Apples | | | | ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ | |
| Blueberries | | | ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ | | |
| Cherries | | ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ | | | |
| Grapes | | | | ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ | |
| Peaches | | | ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ | | |
| Pears | | | | ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ | |
| Strawberries | ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ | | | | |
| Beans | | | ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ | | |
| Broccoli | | | ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ | ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ | |
| Carrots | | | ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ | ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ | |
| Cauliflower | | | ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ | ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ | |
| Peas | | ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ | | | |
| Squash | | | | ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ | ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ |
| Tomatoes | | | ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ | ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ | |

Source: Foodland Ontario



Best buys in... Grain Products

Grain Products are a great source of energy, vitamins, minerals and fibre! Enjoy a variety of grains such as whole grain breads, cereals, pastas and rice, and make them the central part of your meal.

Pasta, rice, noodles

- Buy pasta and rice on sale or at a bulk food store
- Try couscous, brown rice or barley for variety
- Pasta and rice keep well when stored in a dry place



Breakfast cereals

- Buy larger packages instead of the individual serving size packages
- Choose hot cereals for a good buy
- Limit the amount of sugar-coated cereals you eat
- Mix higher-fibre cereals such as wheat or bran buds with a lower-fibre cereal



Breads

- 100% whole wheat provides the best nutritional value for the dollar
- Compare brands to find the least expensive
- Whole grain breads may cost a bit more but are more nutritious than white bread
- Buy day old bread, the price is usually reduced. Use it right away or store it in the freezer



Best buys in... Milk and Alternatives

Milk Products provide us with a great source of energy plus essential nutrients that are key to our health. Choose lower-fat milk products more often in order to give your body the nutrients it needs, with less fat and fewer calories.

Milk and cream

- Buy milk in 4 L bags or jugs; it's cheaper than buying cardboard cartons
- Freeze bags of milk for up to six weeks if you can't use them before the expiry date. Thaw the bag in the refrigerator and shake it before you open it
- Choose milk products with 2% M.F. (milk fat) or less
- Use evaporated 2% milk instead of cream in recipes for less fat. Creams are highest in fat and low in nutrient content



Cheese

- Buy cheese in blocks and slice or grate it yourself
- Sliced cheese may be cheaper at the deli counter than in packages; compare the price per kg for best buys
- Processed cheeses are a good source of calcium but they cost more and are higher in salt
- Freeze blocks of cheese when they are on sale or if you are not able to use before the expiry date
- Choose products containing 20% M.F. (milk fat) or less more often



Yogurt

- Compare prices of large containers rather than single serving size containers
- Buy plain yogurt and add your own fruit toppings for a healthier alternative
- High-fat and low-fat yogurts often cost the same price. Yogurts with 2% M.F (milk fat) or less are a healthier choice for adults



Best buys in... Meat and Alternatives

Meat and Alternatives are rich in protein, B vitamins, iron, zinc and magnesium. Red meats are the best source of iron. Choose leaner meats and poultry; remove all visible fat before cooking.

Good value meat cuts

- Ground beef - lean is a healthier choice, if buying regular, drain and rinse the cooked meat
- Stewing meat
- Shoulder (pork)
- Brisket (less tender)
- Cross rib
- Outside round
- Bottom or inside round

Cooking ideas for less tender meats

- ✓ Use moist cooking methods such as stewing, pot-roasting or braising
- ✓ Marinate the meat overnight in the refrigerator
- ✓ Pound the meat using a mallet before cooking



Processed meats

- Although hot dogs, sausages and bologna are inexpensive, they are a poor source of protein and they are high in fat and calories
- Cold cuts from the deli counter may be cheaper than packaged ones; compare prices per kg

Poultry

- It costs less to buy a whole chicken and cut it up at home compared to buying in pieces
- Chicken legs, thighs and drumsticks are generally a better buy than chicken breasts



Fish

- Canned tuna, salmon and sardines are inexpensive choices. Compare brands for the best buy
- Frozen fish fillets such as Alaskan pollock, Boston blue fish, haddock or ocean perch are good buys
- Prepared battered fish fillets or fish sticks are more expensive and are higher in fat. For a healthier option, use bread crumbs to make your own coating



Meat alternatives

- Try a meatless meal more often using meat alternatives; you will save more money
- Meat alternatives such as eggs, tofu, peanut butter, canned beans, peas and lentils are your best buys



More to think about!

- Avoid shopping on an empty stomach. Hungry shoppers buy more than they need
- Look through the bottom and top shelves. Items at eye level may be more expensive
- Avoid buying at corner stores. You are paying extra for the convenience
- Family size bulk packages may be cheaper but check the price per kg. If buying in bulk, freeze unused portions into smaller portions right away
- Make a stir fry, a casserole dish or pot of soup – this is a great way to use up the foods you already have at home