

Frugal Foods: Spend Less – Get More

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During the coronavirus pandemic, it has become even more important to find ways to get the most for our grocery dollars. Building meals based around the most low-cost, health-promoting foods is one way to cut costs while still providing good nutrition for our families. So let's discuss some so-called "frugal foods".

The following foods are among the least expensive, great tasting, and most health-promoting foods available. They offer great taste while packing a nutritious punch. Try them for breakfast, lunch, supper and snacks.

Apples and Bananas. They are a perfect on-the-go snack. Both are satisfying and a sweet nutritional powerhouse which can be eaten either raw or cooked in a variety of ways. Eat one alone or add to salads, desserts and baked goods.



Beans. Beans offer dietary fiber, protein and antioxidants that help fight disease. Canned beans cost about 30 to 35 cents per serving. Dry varieties that you cook yourself cost even less. Serve them as a main dish, side dish or healthy addition to a soup or salad. Keep them on hand to pack into brown bag lunches and to make quick suppers.

Brown Rice: With a slightly nutty taste, brown rice is a fiber-rich whole grain that is more nutritious than white rice. Brown rice can be served with cinnamon and milk for breakfast, used to complement a variety of entrees, and as a flavorful addition to soups, stews, casseroles and salads.

Canned Tomatoes. Canned tomatoes make a great base for countless main dishes, dips, sauces, soups, stews and chili. Tomatoes are rich in vitamin C and lycopene (two healthful antioxidants). Buy them without added salt if possible.

Canned Tuna. Tuna offers high protein at a low cost. The versatile fish is a source of vitamin D, low in calories and fat, and lends itself to sandwich fillings, salads and main-dish casseroles. Tuna is also a good source of heart healthy Omega-3 fatty acids.

Eggs. Eggs are a relatively inexpensive high protein food. Boiled, fried, or scrambled – eggs cook quickly. They are perfect for breakfast, lunch or supper. For variety, try French toast, huevos rancheros, or egg salad.

Fat-free Milk. A natural convenience food, fat-free milk offers a healthy dose of vitamin D, calcium, protein and potassium. Milk is important in building and maintaining healthy bones. Serve fat-free milk as a beverage with meals and snacks, and use in soups, smoothies and desserts.

Kale. Kale is one of the least costly green vegetables you'll find. Kale is easy to serve stir-fried with a small amount of vegetable oil and garlic, lightly steamed, or as a colorful addition to salads. Kale is even good used as a topping on home-made pizza, or in green smoothies.

Potatoes. White potatoes and sweet potatoes are satisfying and are high in dietary fiber, vitamin C and potassium. They can be baked, boiled, steamed, mashed, pan or oven-fried, roasted, or added to soups, stews, and casseroles.

Rolled Oats. At just a few cents per cup, rolled oats is a heart-healthy whole grain with 4 grams of dietary fiber. Rolled oats also offer complex carbohydrates that break down slowly to provide lasting energy and stave off mid-morning hunger. A perennial hot-cooked cereal, oats also can be included in such foods as breakfast bars, breads, rolls, cakes, cookies, meatloaf and more.

Needing to get the most from your food dollars? Building meals and snacks around these “frugal foods” helps ensure good nutrition for your family yet allows you to spend less on trips to the grocery store.

Find more information about these topics and others, by contacting the Wildcat Extension District offices at: Crawford County, 620-724-8233; Labette County, 620-784-5337; Montgomery County, 620-331-2690; Wilson County, 620-378-2167; Pittsburg Office, Expanded Food and Nutrition Education (EFNEP), 620-232-1930. Wildcat District Extension is on the Web at <http://www.wildcatdistrict.ksu.edu>. Or, like our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/wildcat.extension.district.

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