**Healthy Foods on a Budget: A Shopping Guide**

Eating healthy doesn’t have to break the bank. By making intentional choices and planning, you can enjoy nutritious meals while staying within your budget. Below are practical tips, a recommended grocery list, and budget-friendly meal ideas to help you get started.

**General Tips for Budget-Friendly Healthy Eating**

1. **Plan Your Meals**:  
   Create a weekly meal plan and shopping list to avoid impulse purchases. Meal prepping ensures you always have quick, healthy options on hand.
2. **Buy Seasonal Produce**:  
   Seasonal fruits and vegetables are often fresher, tastier, and more affordable.
3. **Shop Store Brands**:  
   Generic or store-brand products typically offer the same quality as name brands at a lower cost.
4. **Limit Processed Foods**:  
   Prepackaged snacks and meals can be expensive and less nutritious. Dedicate a day to making homemade snacks or meals for better value.
5. **Purchase in Bulk**:  
   Grains, beans, nuts, and other staples are often cheaper when bought in larger quantities.
6. **Freeze Extras**:  
   Stock up on sale items like meats, fruits, and vegetables, and freeze them for later use.
7. **Cook at Home**:  
   Preparing meals at home is generally healthier and more cost-effective than dining out.

**Recommended Grocery List**

**Proteins**

* Pasture raised or Organic Eggs
* Canned tuna or salmon (BPA free)
* Dried or canned beans (e.g., black beans, chickpeas, lentils)
* Chicken (whole, thighs, or drumsticks for better savings; pasture-raised if possible)
* Peanut butter or other nut butters

**Fruits and Vegetables**

* Organic apples, bananas, and oranges
* Frozen berries or mixed fruit
* Carrots, celery, and bell peppers
* Potatoes and sweet potatoes
* Leafy greens (e.g., arugula, romaine)
* Onions and garlic
* Seasonal vegetables (e.g., zucchini, squash)

**Grains and Starches**

* Brown rice (preferably not sourced from China)
* Oats (sprouted and organic, if available)
* Whole-grain pasta
* Quinoa
* Whole-wheat or cassava tortillas and bread

**Dairy (or Dairy Alternatives)**

* Coconut milk or cream
* Greek yogurt (plain or unsweetened)
* Cheese (buy in blocks and shred yourself)

**Pantry Staples**

* Olive oil (in glass containers for better quality)
* Spices and herbs (e.g., salt, pepper, cumin, paprika; consider making your own blends)
* Tomato paste or canned tomatoes
* Broth or homemade bouillon cubes
  + - Chicken Bouillon
  + 1 1/3 cup Nutritional Yeast flakes
  + 3 TBSP onion powder
  + 7 ½ tsp Redmond’s salt
  + 2 ½ tsp garlic powder
  + 1 tsp dried thyme
  + 1 tsp sage
  + 1 tsp paprika
  + ½ tsp turmeric
    - Beef Bouillon
  + 2 tsp mustard powder
  + 1 tsp granulated garlic
  + 1 tsp paprika
  + ½ tsp onion powder
  + ½ tsp chili powder
  + 1/3 tsp celery seed
* Vinegar (white, apple cider, or balsamic)
* Liquid aminos (a healthier alternative to soy sauce)

**Snacks**

* Organic popcorn kernels (for air-popping)
* Unsalted sprouted nuts or seeds
* Rice cakes or whole-grain crackers
* Fresh fruit

**Tips for Choosing Healthy Foods**

1. **Read Labels**:  
   Check for hidden sugars, high sodium, and unhealthy trans fats in packaged items.
2. **Opt for Whole Grains**:  
   Look for "100% Organic whole grain" or "organic whole wheat" as the first ingredient on labels.
3. **Pick Lean Proteins**:  
   Choose skinless poultry, fish, and plant-based options like beans and lentils.
4. **Consider Frozen or Canned Options**:  
   Frozen fruits and vegetables are just as nutritious as fresh ones, and canned goods (preferably in glass containers) are budget friendly. Look for low-sodium or no-added-sugar options.
5. **Limit Sugary Drinks**:  
   Water, kombucha, tea, or coffee are healthier and more affordable alternatives to soda and juice.

**Sample Budget Meal Ideas**

1. **Vegetable Stir-Fry with Rice**:  
   Sauté seasonal vegetables in broth or olive oil and serve over brown rice for a quick, nutritious meal.
2. **Chickpea Salad**:  
   Combine canned chickpeas with chopped vegetables, olive oil, and a squeeze of lemon juice for a fresh, protein-rich dish.
3. **Oatmeal with Fruit**:  
   Cook oats and top with frozen blueberries or other fruit for a wholesome breakfast.
4. **Egg and Veggie Scramble**:  
   Use eggs and leftover vegetables for a simple, protein-packed breakfast or dinner.
5. **Pasta with Tomato Sauce and Lentils**:  
   Add cooked lentils to marinara sauce and serve over whole-grain pasta for a hearty, affordable dinner.

By implementing these tips and sticking to your grocery list, you can enjoy balanced, healthy meals without overspending. With a little planning and creativity, healthy eating on a budget becomes simple and sustainable.