

Family Budgets: Getting the Most for Your Money

Your housing, transportation and food costs are a large part of your budget. To get the most out of your food dollars, develop a spending plan. Shopping wisely and preventing waste are two important things you can do to save money.



Establish a Food Budget

- A food budget is a written plan that is used for food eaten at and away from home. It includes snacks, coffee breaks, and school lunches. A food budget also includes costs connected with canning and freezing food at home.
- About 15% of your household income should be used for food. Consider the needs of your family when deciding on the amount of money to be spent on food. Time available for food preparation should also be considered. Lifestyles and traditions impact what is spent on food. Keep store receipts for two weeks to help you look at what you are buying and how much money you are spending on food.
- Based on your budget, you should set aside a certain amount of money to spend on food each month. A way to avoid spending too much money is to divide the monthly amount into weekly amounts. A good way to watch what money is being spent is to write down how much money you plan to spend each week and then what you actually spent during the week.

Plan Meals and Prepare to Shop

1. When planning meals, find ways to cook once and eat two or three times from the leftovers. For example cook a roast with potatoes and carrots for one meal. Use leftover roast to make hot beef sandwiches or beef and noodles for another meal.
2. Compare ready-made and convenience foods to foods you can make yourself. Making your own may be cheaper and the food may taste better. Home prepared food can be made with less fat, sodium and sugar. See the "Taco Comparison" for a cost difference between ready-made and made-at-home tacos.
3. Prepare a shopping list, clip coupons for foods you usually buy, and compare grocery ads for best prices to avoid impulse buying and save money.



Know how. Know **now.**

Shop Wisely

Shop when you are not tired or hungry and when you do not have to take your children. Learn how stores are trying to trick you with their advertising gimmicks. For example, stores will often place higher priced items at eye level or at the end of the aisle. To avoid spending extra money, go down an aisle and look for items that are on sale.

Prevent Waste

Handle and store food properly. When running errands, buy groceries last. Shop for frozen and cold foods last and put these foods in the same bag(s) or an insulated cooler, but **do not** place meats in the same bag as other foods. Put groceries away as soon as you get home. Separate foods into meal size portions and freeze in a plastic container with a lid. Use or freeze refrigerated leftovers within 3-4 days.

Taco Comparison

Fast Food Taco

Cost: \$.95 each or 12 for \$11.40

Ingredients:

1 6-inch hard shell
2 ounces ground beef
2 tablespoons shredded lettuce
1 tablespoon finely grated cheese
1 ounce taco sauce

Considerations:

Convenience is costly.
No food preparation needed.

Home-made Taco

Cost: \$.65 or 12 for \$7.80

Ingredients:

1 6-inch hard shell	\$.10
2 ounces ground beef	.24
taco seasoning	.07
2 tablespoons shredded lettuce	.03
1 tablespoon finely grated cheese	.18
1 ounce taco sauce	.03

Considerations:

Shopping and food preparation time.
Choose a lower sodium seasoning.
Add other ingredients like chopped tomatoes or onions.

Conclusion:

One home-made taco cost \$.30 less than one fast food taco. If you purchased 12 fast food tacos it would cost \$3.60 more than if you made 12 tacos at home.

Note: This cost comparison was done during July, 2004, when ground beef prices were high.

Sources:

Neb Fact: Checklist for Household Income and Expenses

Michigan State University, Eating Right Is Basic 3rd. Edition, Making the Most of Your Food Dollars.