

Eating Healthy for Less

By Bill Bradley, Registered Dietitian and Cookbook Author

There is a common misperception that eating healthy is very costly and requires us to get a second job or sell our car! While it is true that, if you are not careful, you can end up spending more on a week's worth of organic, specialty foods than it would cost to take a simple week's vacation. That being said, it is also possible to eat nutritiously and economically- seeing your food bills go down in some cases!

Here are some suggestions on saving a serious amount of money on food that will make both you and your body very happy!

1) The Magical Fruit – The number one protein eaten in America is meat. Meat is expensive and studies have shown that increased meat intake equals increased disease. The number one protein eaten in the Mediterranean (one of the healthiest places in the world) is beans. Beans are high in fiber and studies show that people who eat beans live longer and have lower rates of diabetes, heart disease and certain cancers. Beans are much less expensive than meat. Canned beans are often on sale and when they are, I stock up on a lot of them. Dried beans are even cheaper and as long as you remember to soak them overnight, they are relatively easy to cook as well.

2) Vegetables – In general, the more veggies people eat in a day, the healthier they are. Vegetables can be a major expense, but there are ways to save on vegetables. We have a share in a local organic farm. For \$350 we get delicious organic vegetables throughout the whole growing season. The cost savings is huge as I am sure we would spend over \$1,000 on inferior, non-organic vegetables from the grocery store. Because we get so many vegetables we end up freezing a lot of them so that we can use them during the winter months. There are also deals throughout the year in our local store and co-op on frozen

vegetables. Frozen vegetables are often as healthy as freshly picked because these vegetables are usually picked at their ripest (when they have the highest amount of nutrients) and frozen right away.

- 3) **Grains** – Rice, millet, quinoa and oats are all very healthy for you and quite inexpensive. I go to the high end specialty stores that have bulk foods for good quality grains at a really low price. In bulk, I can get organic grains for less than I would spend for pre-packaged non-organic grains, once again saving lots of money for a higher quality food.
- 4) **Herbs and Spices** – It is worth traveling to your high-end bulk store (Whole Foods, local co-op) for herbs and spices. The money savings for these items in bulk is incredible. I can fill up most of my spice jars with fresh, high quality herbs and spices for the same price as 1 jar of a pre-bottled spice.
- 5) **Oils and Butters** – Butter is one of those items that I don't use very much, but there are recipes that I love that use butter. Since butter can be frozen, I wait until there is a really good sale and then buy a few pounds to freeze. Olive oil is one of the healthiest oils and many people just go for the cheapest one they can find. Unfortunately, when it comes to olive oil, in most cases, you get what you pay for. There are a few exceptions of olive oils that you can buy for a good price that still maintain their quality. Check out the oils at Trader Joe's, Costco and your local specialty store. Also, most stores sell California Olive Ranch Olive Oil and if you wait for it to go on sale, you can get it at a good price.

These are the foods that are the basis of a healthy diet. I also save money on grass-fed beef by buying it directly from the local farms in our area (and I don't use it often) and I save a lot of money on fish by waiting for our local co-ops truck sale where I buy ocean raised frozen salmon for half the price of most stores. If saving money and eating healthy are your priorities, I think you will find it easy to eat amazing food for less.

This month's recipe, Egyptian Lentils with Rice and Pasta, is a great example of a Mediterranean meal that is very affordable and delicious.

