



Now is prime time to examine grocery bill

Every week, I'm shocked at how high my grocery bill is. And I've heard we can expect even higher prices next year because of the drought. Please share any tips you can on saving money on groceries.

Actually, agricultural economists don't expect the cost of food to rise dramatically because of the drought, although you will see some higher-than-normal increases in meat and poultry, eggs, and milk. That's because the animals that produce those products eat so much corn, and corn prices are increasing because of the drought. The U.S. Department of Agriculture expects the drought to raise the cost of beef and dairy products, for example, just 1 percent higher than the 2.5 to 3.5 percent hike normally seen due to inflation.

On the other hand, much of the produce grown in the country is irrigated and likely won't be affected too much by the drought.

The nutrition world is capitalizing on concern over higher meat prices and expected stable prices for produce: It's suggesting that maybe now is the time to more closely follow MyPlate, which helps consumers meet the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, and boost intake of fruit and vegetables and reduce consumption of meat.

Try it: Plan one or more meatless meals a week, or adopt a more

Mediterranean-style diet by cooking small amounts of meat with a wide variety of vegetables. It can help save you money and help balance your diet.

Some other ideas to get more from your dollar include:

- If you don't already, plan your meals and make a grocery list. Check for advertised specials and plan meals around what's on sale.
- Look for produce that's in-season. It's usually so abundant that grocery stores offer great deals on it.
- Beans (garbanzo, black, kidney and pinto, for example) are good sources of lean protein and fiber, and are low-cost all year round. Plan a meal or two with beans as the main dish.
- Look for smaller apples, bananas and other individual fruits. You'll get more servings per pound.
- Buy dry milk and use it in cooking instead of the more expensive regular milk. It will last several months in a tightly sealed container, or you can keep it in the freezer in a resealable zipper storage bag to last even longer.
- Check the groceries at discount and dollar stores to see if you can save money on items you regularly use.
- Determine how much you pay for convenience. You could save a bundle by buying heads of lettuce instead of pre-bagged salads, and regular rice, pudding and oatmeal instead of instant.

Chow Line is a service of Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Chow Line, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH, 43210-1044, or filipic.3@osu.edu.



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