

## ARE YOU READY FOR RISING FOOD PRICES?<sup>1</sup>

Amy Ahlberg<sup>©</sup>

The Wall Street Journal recently reported that the price of food staples, including grains, beef, coffee, cocoa, and sugar, have risen sharply in recent months. And retailers like Safeway Inc. and Kroger are indicating that they'll be passing their suppliers' price increases on to their customers. That's sobering news, since most of us are already trying hard to stick to—or even slash—our grocery budgets. And rising prices can make it tempting to grab the cheapest food on the supermarket shelf—or buy from a fast-food dollar menu—without considering the toll that low-quality food can take on our health.

But there are ways to eat healthy and still keep your grocery bill from reaching stratospheric heights. For tips on saving money while food shopping, we turned to Karen Ansel, MS, RD, an American Dietetic Association (ADA) spokesperson who specializes in family nutrition, food preparation, and meal planning. Read on for her expert advice:

**#1: Think naked.** When you buy those pre-seasoned rice, couscous, or pasta mixes, you pay dearly for those seasonings. Instead of buying boxed mixes, make your own by mixing dried spices with your favorite grains or pasta. Not only will you save money, but you'll also slash sodium.

**#2: Go vegetarian.** Go vegetarian. Protein foods like meat, chicken, or fish are the most expensive foods on your grocery list. Instead of building your meal around protein, try grain- or bean-based dishes: A recent study found that grains, beans, and nuts give you the healthiest bang for your buck. In the study, people who eat the healthiest diets actually spent less than other people, if they included those staples on their menu. Dry beans and whole grains cost literally pennies per serving, so they help you save big—plus they're packed with fiber, something that most of us don't get enough of. Not ready to give up meat? Try it a few times or meals per week.

**#3: Buy in bulk.** Stocking up with foods bought in bulk can save you as much as 96 percent, according to the Bulk Is Green Council. Plus, you avoid excess

**#4: Don't toss those veggies.** Think those scraps of leftover veggies aren't worth saving? Think again. Instead of tossing little bits of leftover veggies, use them for soups, add them to a single serving of pasta, toss them into a salad, or use them to fill an omelet. In fact, you can save a surprising amount of money by being careful about not wasting food. (Learn how to compost what you don't eat, and you'll spend less on lawn and garden care, too.)

**#5: Skip the fortified foods.** When you buy fortified foods, you're paying up for those added nutrients, but in most cases they aren't even necessary. Case in point: Omega-3 fortified foods have hardly any omega-3s compared to what you'd need in a day, so you're much better off spending your money on foods like canned salmon that are naturally rich in omega-3s. Stick with whole, unprocessed foods that are naturally loaded with nutrients.

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<sup>1</sup> Rodale News, November 11, 2010

**For more ADA-approved advice on eating well in an affordable way, try these suggestions:**

- **Buy bagged frozen vegetables and fruit.** Since you can take out what you need and freeze the rest, nothing goes to waste.
- **When buying produce, choose items with a longer shelf life,** such as broccoli, brussels sprouts, cabbage, and carrots.
- **Freeze any bread** that you won't be using right away.
- **Shop at farmer's markets** that offer local, organic food. Going at the end of the market day can pay off with good deals; try negotiating prices with the vendors.