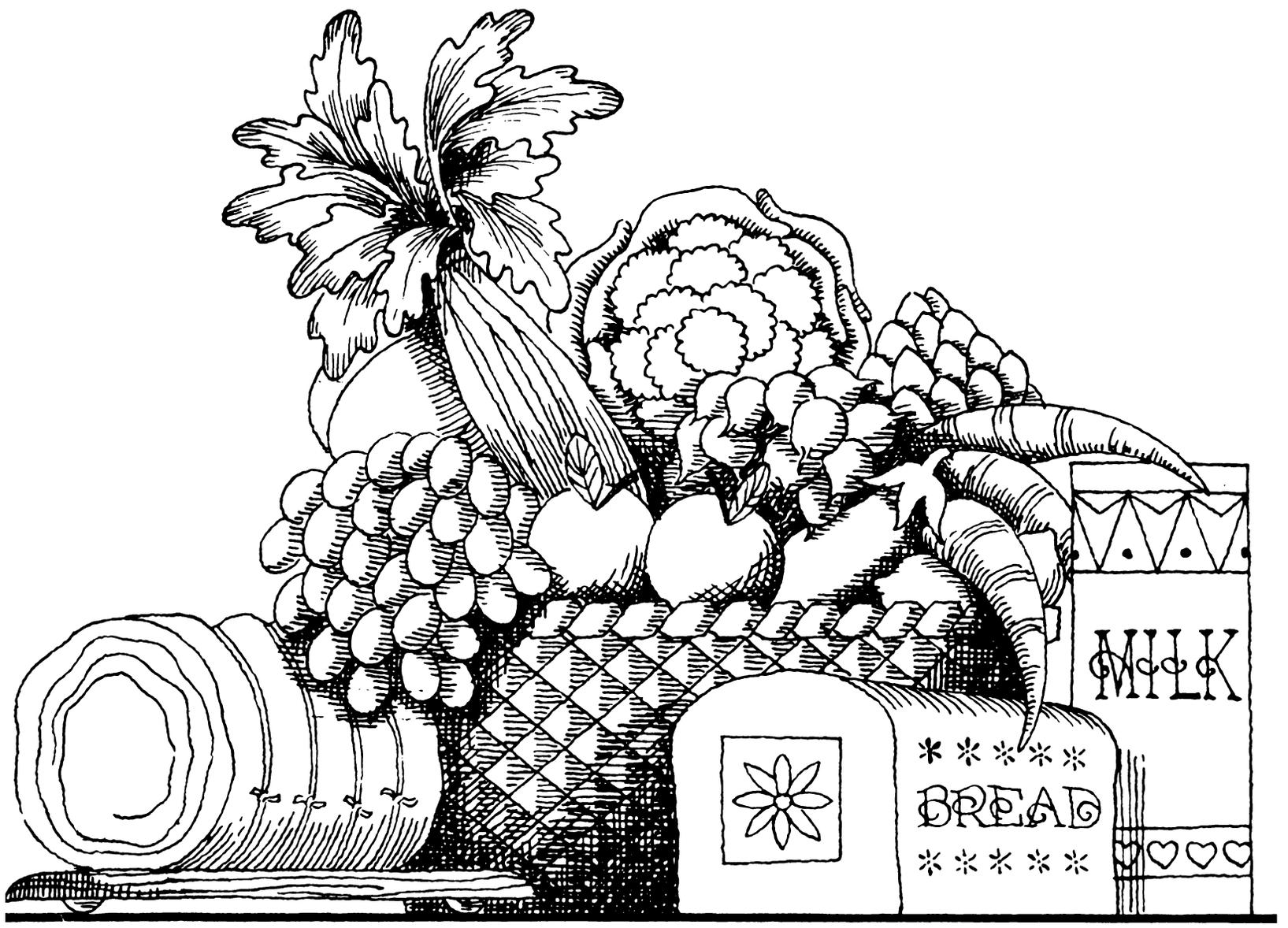
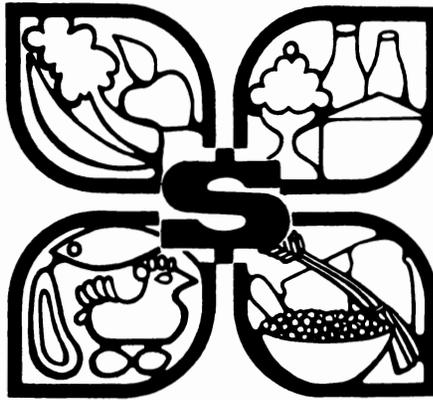


# Buying Food





COST OF FOOD AT HOME FOR ONE WEEK ESTIMATED FOR FOOD PLANS AT FOUR COST LEVELS, MARCH 1976. U.S. AVERAGE

Individuals	Thrifty Plan Dollars	Low-Cost Plan Dollars	Moderate Cost Plan Dollars	Liberal Plan Dollars
<b>Child:</b>				
7 months to 1 year	4.50	5.60	6.80	8.10
1-2 years	5.10	6.60	8.10	9.70
3-5 years	6.20	7.90	9.80	11.80
6-8 years	7.90	10.20	12.80	15.40
9-11 years	9.90	12.80	16.00	19.30
<b>Male:</b>				
12-14 years	10.60	13.60	17.10	20.50
15-19 years	11.70	15.00	18.80	22.70
20-54 years	11.10	14.60	18.40	22.20
55 years and over	9.80	12.80	15.90	19.20
<b>Female:</b>				
12-19 years	9.40	12.10	15.00	18.00
20-54 years	9.00	11.70	14.60	17.50
55 years and over	8.20	10.50	13.00	15.50
Pregnant	11.30	14.50	17.90	21.40
Nursing	12.00	15.40	19.20	22.90

### A Daily Food Guide

#### Vegetable-Fruit Group

4 or more servings

Include—

A citrus fruit or other fruit or vegetable important for vitamin C

A dark-green or deep-yellow vegetable for vitamin A — at least every other day

Other vegetables and fruits, including potatoes

#### Meat Group

2 or more servings

#### Milk Group

Some milk for everyone

Children . . . . . 3 to 4 cups  
 Teen-agers . . . . . 4 or more cups  
 Adults . . . . . 2 or more cups

#### Bread-Cereal Group

4 or more servings

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# Buying Food

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Stretching food dollars is a challenge for most of us since most food items cost more now than they did a few years ago. Fortunately, incomes have risen more rapidly than food prices. The portion of disposable income going for food has decreased from about 20% in 1960 to about 17% in 1975. But that may be of little consolation at the check-out counter.

Why are we so conscious of increases in food prices? One, food is a major item in most family

budgets. Two, food is purchased frequently and any price changes are quickly noted.

Fortunately, a good diet depends on the foods you select, not the amount of money you spend. Families that spend a liberal amount for food are more likely to select foods that make up a good diet. But an adequate diet can be obtained on a limited budget. Food choices are more limited, and there is little money for empty-calorie foods.

## Food for Your Family

Each family is unique, and, consequently, each will have a unique food plan.

The kinds and amounts of food to buy depend on a number of factors. Answer these questions to gain an understanding of why your grocery bill is high or low, and why it changes from year to year.

How many persons are in the family? Larger families (more than 4) tend to spend less per person for food than smaller families.

What are the ages of family members? As children grow older, it costs more to feed them. It costs more to feed an 18-year-old boy than to feed his father. After age 20, the food cost per person tapers off gradually.

How many males and females are in the household? It usually costs more to feed men and teenage boys than women and teenage girls.

How active are family members? Active persons need more food than those who get little exercise.

What is the family income? As incomes rise, families tend to spend more for food, but the proportion of income spent for food is smaller.

Are home-produced foods available? If so, that may reduce cash outlay for food, especially during the months of peak production.

How many meals does the family eat away from home? If most family members buy lunch away from home, your grocery bill should be lower. However, your total food bill may be much higher. According to the National Restaurant Association, the average cost of a restaurant meal is \$6.50 per person.

How much time can be spent in the kitchen?

Time available for food preparation influences food selection. If there isn't much time to spend in food preparation, prepared or partially prepared foods may be purchased. This may increase the amount of money needed at the grocery store.

Is your family getting the kinds and amounts of foods that it needs? Check your meals against the Daily Food Guide inside the front cover.

## The Cost of An Adequate Diet

You can estimate how much it will cost to feed your family for a week on a Thrifty, Low-cost, Moderate cost, or Liberal-cost plan by using estimates from the Agricultural Research Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The food plans are amounts of foods of different types that families might buy or obtain by home production to provide nutritious diets for family members at different levels of cost. At each level of cost, amounts of foods for men, women, and children of different ages and for pregnant and nursing women are suggested.

The food plans are revised from time to time to take into account new information about nutritional needs, nutritive values of foods, food consumption of families, and food prices.

The Thrifty food plan has been developed as a basis for setting the coupon allotment for the Food Stamp Program, and for others who wish to really economize on food. This plan contains less meat, poultry, and fish and more dry beans and grain products than families consume on the average. Families following the Thrifty plan should choose

from the food groups the most economical foods they enjoy eating. For example, the Thrifty plan assumes the use of some less expensive non-fat dry milk as well as some fluid milk. Cereals which need to be cooked cost less than the ready-to eat varieties and therefore would be used with the Thrifty Plan.

Use of the Thrifty plan may require more time and skill spent in planning and preparing meals than does use of the other three food plans.

The Low-cost and Moderate-cost plans provide diets that are typical for most groups of people in this country. Compared with the Moderate-cost plan, the Low-cost plan calls for smaller amounts of some foods, such as meat, poultry, and fish; milk, cheese, and ice cream; fruits and vegetables other than potatoes; and bakery products and sweets. The Low-cost plan calls for larger amounts of cereal, flour, bread, and dry beans. Users of the Low-cost plan are expected to select the lower cost foods within food groups — ground beef rather than steak and bread rather than fancy rolls, for example. The Liberal plan allows for a greater variety of foods and for considerably more animal products, fruits, and vegetables than the Moderate-cost plan. More expensive choices within the groups account for much of the greater cost of the Liberal plan. Greater discard of edible food is assumed in the Liberal plan.

When nutritive values for average selections of foods within food groups are assumed, the plans provide the nutritional goals for food energy, protein, calcium, iron, vitamin A value, thiamin, and riboflavin, niacin, and ascorbic acid; and fat provides no more than 40% of the food energy.

Which food plan is most like your food pattern? How much would this food plan cost for your family? Look at the Cost of Food at Home table inside the front cover. Find the weekly cost for each person eating from family food supplies. For family members who eat some meals out, deduct 5% for each meal not eaten at home from the cost in the table. For example, if a child eats lunch out five times a week, subtract 25%, or one-fourth, of the cost shown for the child's age group.

For guests and others who occasionally eat with the family, list 5% of the cost in the table for the proper age groups for each meal. You may need to make an adjustment if some people in your family are very active and therefore need to consume more food. Next, total the costs listed and adjust the total if there are more or fewer than four persons usually eating at the family table. Costs in the table are for individuals in families of four persons. Adjustment is necessary because large families tend to buy and use foods more economically than small families. If the family has

- 1 person . . . . . add 20%
- 2 persons . . . . . add 10%
- 3 persons . . . . . add 5%
- 4 persons . . . . . use as is
- 5 persons . . . . . subtract 5%
- 6 or more persons . . . . . subtract 10%

A family of four (couple 20-54 years, children 6-8 and 9-11 years) following the plan would use these amounts of food during a week .

	<u>Unit</u>	<u>Thrifty</u>	<u>Low-cost</u>	<u>Moderate-cost</u>	<u>Liberal</u>
Milk, cheese					
ice cream	qt.	15.2	16.0	19.2	20.7
Meat, poultry					
fish	lb.	7.4	12.4	15.8	18.9
Eggs	dz.	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.3
Dry beans					
and peas,					
nuts	lb.	1.4	1.4	1.2	1.3
Vegetables,					
fruit	lb.	25.6	33.3	39.2	45.3
Grain					
products	lb.	11.4	17.1	16.4	16.9

Keep a list of what you spend for food each week. Remember to subtract the cost of non-food items from the total you pay at the supermarket. Soaps, detergents, paper products, pet foods, magazines, drugs, cosmetics, and other non-food items are not included in these estimates.

Are you spending more or less than the estimated amounts? If you're spending much less than the Low-cost plan, you should check the Daily Food Guide to see if your family is getting all of the foods they need. If you're spending more, perhaps there are ways to reduce the amount of money spent for food.

## Getting The Most For Your Food Dollar

Shopping is a challenge. It's difficult to decide which products to choose from the 7,000+ items in a grocery store. New products appear almost daily and you will want to choose those that will give you the most nutrition and satisfaction for your food dollar.

Good nutrition is important but it is also important for your family to enjoy food. Uneaten meals will not supply any nutrients. How can you get the most nutrition and enjoyment from each food dollar?

### Before You Shop

Sit down and plan. Plan family meals for a week, using the Daily Food Guide as a basis.

Whenever possible anticipate "extras" needed for mealtime guests. Also consider activities of family members which might cause them to miss a

meal or require a meal earlier or later than normal. Do family members carry packed lunches? If so, this must enter into meal planning. If garden produce or other perishable foods are available, be sure to include them in the plan.

Make an effort to plan with instead of for the family. This gives everyone an opportunity to request favorite foods. And it should make family members more aware of the nutrition, cost, and preparation considerations that affect meal planning. Introduce new foods or prepare familiar foods in a different way. However, don't overload the week's menus with unfamiliar foods.

From your meal plan, make a list of the kinds and amounts of foods needed for the week. Remember to check the freezer, refrigerator, and pantry for items already on hand so these will not be duplicated.

**Check specials.** While you are planning, check food store advertisements for "specials". Planning some meals around specials is a good way to stretch the food dollar.

For example, chuck roast was offered as a special 20 weekends in a year according to a study done by the Economic Research Service of USDA. The average savings was 16 to 17¢ a pound.

If the family likes an item that is on special and if you have adequate space to store it, you can save by buying it in larger quantities. You may need to reorganize your meal plans to include perishable specials.

**Choosing a store.** Your choice of a store will also affect your food bill. Consider location, services, and quality as well as actual cost of food when making this choice. It's best to do most of your shopping where prices are lowest. Traveling miles to get a bargain on just a few items may not result in any savings. Stores that give credit or trading stamps may or may not charge higher prices. Specialty stores that carry a limited number of items usually charge higher prices.

**In the store.** Stick to your list when you get to the store. Impulse buying makes the food bill go up! A list should be somewhat flexible, however, so that you can make substitutions. The substituted food should have the same food value as the food you had intended to buy.

**Read labels.** The label tells you what is in the package. It gives the name of the product, the manufacturer, the ingredients for products which do not have a standard of identity, and the quantity. For example, a label listing ingredients in this order "sugar, egg white and egg yolk solids, salts, mono and diglycerides, corn syrup solids, imitation vanilla, and certified food color" indicates that sugar is present in the largest amount and certified food color in the smallest amount.

Packaging laws require that the content of packages weighing less than 4 lbs. or containing less than 1 gallon be stated in ounces. This information should help you decide how much you need to buy and to compare costs.

Consider intended use when choosing a product. A few canned fruits and vegetables are graded. The various grades are alike in food value. Grade A is fancy quality and always the most expensive. Grades B and C are less expensive and are suitable for use in soups, casseroles, pies and cobblers.

Brand names are often used as indicators of quality. One producer may pack the various qualities of a product under different brand names. If you are familiar with the different brands, you can choose the quality needed.

Nutrition labeling is designed to give consumers information about the nutritive value of food products. Nutrition labels are required on products which have one or more nutrients added, and on products for which nutrition claims are made. Nutrition labeling is optional for other products. For instance, if vitamin C is a natural component of a fruit juice, no label is required, but if additional vitamin C is added a nutrient label must be present.

Protein, fat carbohydrate, and calorie content per serving are included on the label. The quantities of seven vitamins and minerals in a serving of the food are expressed as percentages of the U.S. Recommended Dietary Allowance. Several other vitamins and minerals may be included if the manufacturer wishes.

Nutrition labeling can help you become more aware of key nutrients needed for good nutrition and health. It gives you an opportunity to compare Brand A with Brand B, and to identify foods which are good sources of specific nutrients.

**Compare costs.** To compare, figure cost per serving. This gives a truer picture of cost than price per pound in some cases. For example, to compare the cost of frozen and fresh peas, you need to know that there are 4 small servings in a 10-ounce package of frozen peas and 2 in a pound of fresh peas. A comparison of cost per pound would be meaningless.

When comparing various cuts of meat, consider the amount of bone and fat. Count on getting about 4 servings per pound from boneless cuts; 2 servings from bone-in cuts; and 1 from bony cuts such as spareribs. The number of servings in a pound of various meat types and cuts is shown in the publication FM-413, Cost Per Serving Guide for Meat. Learning to recognize a package that contains enough of a particular cut to serve your family will help to compare costs.

The computer assisted program, "Food Buying for Good Nutrition" should be helpful in determining the number of servings derived from a market unit. This program will also point out adequacies or deficits for each food group in your food plan and the amount of money spent on each group of foods.

**Unit pricing.** Some stores have calculated the cost per unit for the shopper. Most companies use a shelf tag which includes a description of the item including weight and price, and also the cost per unit (the unit may be a weight or volume measurement).

	Unit Price
	53.3
\$1.60	cents
X brand shortening	per
48 oz.	pound

For most shoppers, price is only one factor to be considered in making a decision. A 3-lb. can of coffee may be a better buy than a 1- or 2-lb. can in terms of cost per pound, but the total cost may be more than a limited budget can cover. And it is still necessary to know the number of servings in the unit.

**Buy in quantity.** If you can use a large amount of the food and if the cost per serving is less, then purchase a large quantity of it. Remember that a bargain isn't a bargain if you cannot or will not use it. Try a small quantity of a brand of food before buying a large quantity.

**Prices vary with package size.** Larger packages may or may not be the best buy. For example, one brand of cornflakes comes in eight 1-oz. packages (77¢), a 12 oz. package (49¢), and an 18-oz. package (69¢). A 1-oz. serving of cornflakes would cost 9.6¢ if purchased in individual packages, 4.1¢ if purchased in the 12-oz. package, or 3.8¢ if purchased in the 18-oz. package.

If a family of six has cornflakes every day (42 servings a week), it can save \$2.43 a week by using the 18-oz. package rather than individual packages. A small family or a family that uses cornflakes only one or two times a week may find the 12-oz. package a better buy.

Not all foods cost less when purchased in a large quantity. If granulated sugar is selling for \$1.20 for a 5-lb. bag and \$2.39 for a 10-lb. bag, the cost per pound or per cup is the same. It is more economical to buy flour in 5-lb. bags than in 2-lb. ones. However, there is usually little difference in the cost per pound of flour in 5-10-and 25-lb. bags. Buy the size which is best for your family. Potatoes cost less per serving if purchased in a 10-lb. bag than if purchased in a 5-lb. bag, but if your family does not eat potatoes often, the 10-lb. bag might spoil or sprout before you could use all

of it.

**Be willing to try different things.** Try different brands. Store or house brands are usually less expensive than national brands. Often, the quality is similar. Test new products. Add variety to meals.

Beef may be the family's favorite meat but don't neglect pork, veal, lamb, poultry, fish, eggs, beans, and peanut butter. By using all types of meat and meat substitutes, you will be able to take advantage of more specials.

**Know what you are buying.** Many food products are ready to serve. You may or may not have to pay for the preparation of these foods. The preparation may range from very little, such as measuring of ingredients in hot roll mixes, to almost complete preparation of the product. Brown and serve rolls are an example of this. It's up to you to evaluate the cost, quality, and the time that these products save in relation to your wants and needs and those of your family.

Choose the best values from each of the Four Food Groups of The Daily Food Guide. These tips are meant to help you choose.

## Fruits and Vegetables

A family of 4 should use more than 100 servings of fruits and vegetables in a week. Cost studies show you can use inexpensive vegetables and fruits and spend only about \$9 a week; or you can buy more costly and out-of-season items and spend more than \$20 a week.

Buy fresh fruits and vegetables when they are in season for best quality and lowest prices. Canned and frozen fruit and vegetable prices may also show seasonal variations. Prices may be lowered just about the time the new crop is harvested.

Compare cost per serving on fresh, frozen, canned, or dehydrated forms to see which is the best buy. A one-half cup portion or a portion usually served, such as an apple, a banana, or a potato, is considered to be one serving.

Evaluate the condition of perishable fruits and vegetables and the storage facilities that you have at home before deciding how much to buy.

Be sure fruits and vegetables are fresh. Vegetables that are limp or wilted have lost much of their vitamin C.

For a change, canned tomatoes, tomato juice, and seasonal fresh fruits and vegetables such as tomatoes, green pepper, broccoli, cabbage, "greens", cantaloupe, and strawberries can replace citrus fruits as sources of vitamin C. Apricots, apples, pears, prunes, and pineapples do not supply much vitamin C. Juices from some of these fruits have vitamin C added.

## Breads and Cereals

Foods from the breads and cereals group are important in the diet because they supply food energy and several important nutrients at relatively low cost.

About 13% of every food dollar is spent for flour, cereals, and bakery products. But these foods supply 40% of the thiamin, 30% of the iron, 20% of the protein and riboflavin, and more than 15% of the calcium in diets.

Some of the vitamins and minerals are removed when the outer layers of grain kernels are removed during processing. The miller or baker may "enrich" the product by adding specified amounts of niacin, riboflavin, thiamin, and iron to make the nutritive value approximately the same as whole-grain. You get more nutrients for your money if you select enriched or whole-grain products.

Read the label to find out if a product is enriched or whole-grain. Nutrition labeling is required on enriched breads and cereals. If the product is not whole grain, and is not labeled, you know that it is not enriched. It takes 3 lbs. of unenriched bread to give the amount of thiamin contained in 1 lb. of enriched bread or 1 lb. of whole wheat bread.

There are no standards for restored and fortified cereals, so the manufacturer selects the nutrients to be added and the amounts. Read the label and compare one cereal to another.

Pre-sugared, ready-to-serve cereals cost more per ounce than many unsweetened ones. They usually furnish more calories than those you sweeten yourself.

Rice which is labeled "parboiled" or "converted" has been specially treated to drive the nutrients from the outer husks into the kernel before the husks are removed. Parboiled, converted, and enriched rice are better buys than unenriched rice.

## Meat and Meat Substitutes

Foods from this group take more than 1/3 of each dollar spent for food.

The range of prices within this food group is greater than in any other group, so careful selection can result in worthwhile savings.

Red meats are well-liked foods within this group. In general, cuts from along the back of the animal are the most tender. These cuts (steaks and chops) are popular and are usually priced higher than cuts from the leg and belly areas which may

be less tender. Fortunately, the lower-cost cuts are just as tasty and nutritious as the more expensive ones.

Price per pound can be misleading. Remember to allow for the bone and fat in the meat.

The price per pound may also be misleading when buying a quarter or side of beef for the freezer. A 300-lb. side of beef which sells for 80c per pound will cost \$240. But only 220 lbs. will be usable meat, so the price per pound of usable meat will be \$1.10.

Poultry and eggs are usually economical sources of protein. A large chicken or turkey is often a good buy because you get more meat in proportion to the bone. A whole chicken is less expensive than cut-up chicken or that packaged by the piece.

If we remember that 2 eggs provide about the same nutrition as a serving of meat, we find them very economical even when their prices seem relatively high.

Compared to most meats, many kinds of fish are low in cost. Frozen fish fillets — perch, cod, and whiting, for example — are generally good buys year-round. Grated tuna can be used in a variety of main dishes.

Beans, peas, and peanut butter offer the most protein per dollar spent and may be used as substitutes for meat. The quality of the protein is not quite as good as that from animal sources. However, this lack of quality can be supplemented by including in the same meal, small amounts of animal proteins, such as egg or cheese, or other vegetable proteins that supply what is lacking in beans. Both wheat and rice are good protein companions for dry beans.

Cottage, Swiss, and American cheeses are also economical sources of many of the nutrients found in meat.

## Milk

How much milk does your family need in a year? You might like to calculate the cost of this quantity of milk.

Milk is available in a variety of forms. By using the most economical form or a combination of forms, you may be able to save a considerable sum of money in a year.

For example, a family of 6, with 4 children ages 8 to 16, needs 1,643 quarts of milk a year to get the number of servings suggested in the Daily Food Guide. The following table shows how much it would cost to buy this quantity of various forms of milk.

	Price per Quart	Cost per year 1643 quarts
Milk, whole, fresh	48¢	\$788
Milk, skim, fresh	41¢	\$674
Nonfat dry milk	25¢	\$411
Half fresh whole and half nonfat dry milk	37¢	\$608

Yogurt, ice cream, and ice milk can replace milk in diets, but at added cost. A cup of ice cream may cost three times as much as the 1/2 cup of milk it replaces.

## Fats and Sweets

Everyone buys and enjoys foods in addition to those in the Four Food Groups. Many of these

“other foods” chiefly add calories and appetite appeal to meals and snacks. The cost of food energy from these “other foods” varies widely. Granulated sugar will provide 100 calories for about a penny, whereas the same number of calories gained from soft drinks will cost 10 to 25¢.

If added calories are needed for growing youngsters, underweight persons and those who are physically very active, wholesome desserts may fill this need. Some of the essential foods for the day may be used for dessert in the form of milk puddings, ice cream, and fruit desserts.

If fewer calories are needed, this is the category which can generally be reduced without depriving nutrient needs.

Butter and margarine are equal in food value and are the only fats containing vitamin A.

## Summary

Good planning is a must if you are to get the most from food dollars. A good diet depends on the foods you select, not the amount of money you spend.

If your family is “average,” you can probably improve the quality of the diet and lower the cost by using a larger share of each food dollar for

- 1) milk and milk products
- 2) vegetables and fruits
- 3) cereals and bakery products

and a smaller share for

- 1) foods in the meat group
- 2) other foods such as fats, oils, sugar, sweets, coffee, tea, and soft drinks.

Here are examples of two menus which use this idea:

### Lower Cost

Macaroni and cheese  
Cole slaw  
Homemade cornbread with margarine  
Carrots  
Oatmeal cookies and applesauce  
Coffee with milk

### Higher Cost

Ribeye steak  
Asparagus with hollandaise sauce  
Sesame seed dinner rolls with butter  
Pickles and olives  
Blueberry cobbler with French vanilla ice cream  
Coffee with cream