



25 Cheap Foods that are Good for You!

Get BIG Nutrition for Less Dough

-- By Stephanie Romine, Staff Writer

Watching your wallet and your waistline can be tricky. Eating right is easy when money is no object, but a trip to the supermarket often yields frustration for healthy eaters on a budget (which is most of us!). Fruits, vegetables, whole grains and lean protein are on your list, but they're so much pricier than Ramen noodles, frozen pizzas and bottles of soda!

Sure, some healthful foods are more expensive, but the same [of smart shopping](#) apply: Price compare, be flexible about brands and choose larger sizes to save money per serving.

To help make your next shopping trip a breeze, but we've scanned the shelves and roamed the aisles to find 25 foods that are nutritious and affordable. (Prices from Safeway.com, March 2009, Greater Philadelphia area. These prices will vary according to location.)

Protein

1. **Canned salmon:** \$2.89 for 14.75 ounces (59 cents per serving)

Get your Omega-3's for less. Salmon is full of these healthy fats, which help lower cholesterol and prevent heart attacks.

2. **Chicken breasts:** \$3.49 per pound (87 cents per serving)

Easy-to-prepare, chicken is full of lean protein, which helps keep you fuller longer.

3. **Natural peanut butter:** \$3.39 for 16 ounces (42 cents per serving)

Skip the sugary, processed varieties and spread the real stuff on whole-grain bread. Throw a tablespoon in smoothies or yogurt, use it as a dip for carrots and pretzels, or mix it with a bit of low-sodium soy sauce, brown sugar and garlic, then thin with water for a quick sauce.

4. **Canned beans:** 84 cents for 15 ounces (22 cents per serving)

Bulk up soups and stews while getting protein and fiber. Try chickpeas or black beans if you're not a fan of kidneys or pintos. Drain, rinse, and blend with lemon juice, garlic, cumin and a bit of vegetable broth for a quick dip.

5. **Eggs:** \$1.99 for a dozen large (17 cents per serving)

Not just for breakfast, eggs are among the easiest foods to cook. If you're watching your cholesterol, scramble one egg and two egg whites. Add onion and spinach and you've got a great omelet.

6. **Dried lentils:** 79 cents per pound (20 cents per serving)

Full of protein and fiber, lentils cook in just 15 minutes! Throw some in soups and stews or cook with curry powder for a quick, spicy meal.

7. **Almonds:** \$3.99 for 9 ounces (44 cents per serving)

Get vitamin E, fiber and protein while satisfying a crunchy craving. Nuts are rich in an amino acid that could be linked to heart benefits. Chop a few raw ones and throw them on yogurt.

Fruits

8. **Frozen fruit and berries:** \$2.99-\$5.99 per pound (75 cents-\$1.50 per serving)

Throw some in the blender with milk or yogurt for a healthy treat. Frozen berries can be used in oatmeal or drained and baked into muffins and quick breads.

9. **Apples:** 68 cents each

They might not keep the doctor away, but apples are actually full of antioxidants, which help slow the progression of age-related diseases.

10. **Bananas:** 35 cents each

Slice one on your morning yogurt or oatmeal for some added fiber and only 100 calories or so. Snack on a potassium-rich banana to prevent cramps after a workout.

11. **Grapes:** \$2.99 per pound (75 cents per serving)

Freeze grapes for a low-calorie dessert or snack. Grapes--especially the dark purple ones--contain plenty of antioxidants that are known to help heart health.

Vegetables

12. **Romaine lettuce or other hearty lettuce:** \$1.99 per head (66 cents per serving)

Banish the iceberg and choose sturdy Romaine for your salads. It will give you more fiber and nutrients, plus a satisfying crunch.

13. **Carrots:** \$2.79 for 3 pounds (23 cents per serving)

Mom was right. Carrots are good for your eyes, thanks to the antioxidants, including beta-carotene, in them. (That's what makes them orange!) Dip them in hummus (made from canned beans), natural peanut butter or low-fat dressings.

14. **Frozen spinach:** \$2 for 16 ounces (50 cents per serving)

Thaw and drain this good-for-your green, then toss it in omelets, soups, stir-fries and pasta sauces. Spinach is full of vitamins A, C, K, plus fiber and even calcium.

15. **Canned tomatoes:** \$1 for 14.5 ounces (28 cents per serving)

Choose low-sodium varieties and throw a can in pasta sauces and chili to stretch a meal. Puree a can with a cup of skim milk and season to taste for your own tomato soup. You'll get a dose of vitamins A, B and C and lycopene, an antioxidant known to prevent cancer.

16. **Garlic:** 50 cents per head (5 cents per serving)

Ditch the bottled and powdered stuff if you want to reap more of the myriad health benefits. Pungent and tasty, garlic can help lower cholesterol and blood clots, plus it can have a small effect on high blood pressure. Crush or chop it to release more of the

antioxidants.

17. **Sweet potatoes:** \$1.49 per pound (37 cents per serving)

Aside from being sweet and delicious, these bright root vegetables are a great source of fiber and antioxidants. Bake, mash or roast them--you'll forget about those other, paler potatoes.

18. **Onions:** 97 cents each (32 cents per serving)

Like garlic, this smelly vegetable is full of health benefits. Onions have been proven to lower risks for certain cancers, and they add flavor with few calories. Try roasting them to bring out their sweetness and cut their harsh edge. (If you well up while cutting them, store onions in the fridge for a tear-free chop.)

19. **Broccoli:** \$2.49 per pound (63 cents per serving)

Broccoli is like a toothbrush for your insides. Full of fiber, it will provide you vitamins A and C, plus fiber and a host of antioxidants. Broccoli is a superstar in the nutrition world.

Whole grains

20. **Whole-grain pasta:** \$1.50 for 13.25 ounces (45 cents per serving)

With a nutty flavor and a subtle brown color, whole-wheat pasta perks up any meal. Start with half regular, half whole-wheat pasta, then gradually add more wheat pasta for a burst of fiber and nutrients.

21. **Popcorn kernels:** \$2.39 for 32 ounces (30 cents per serving)

Air-popped popcorn has just 30 calories and a trace of fat. Pop a few cups, spritz with olive oil or butter spray and sprinkle on your favorite seasonings for a guilt-free treat.

22. **Brown rice:** \$1.49 for 16 ounces (19 cents per serving)

Brown rice is a great side dish, but you can also use it to help stretch your ground meat. Mix a cup of cooked rice with 8 ounces of lean ground beef next time you make meatloaf to save 45 calories and five grams of fat (and some money) per serving.

23. **Oats:** \$3.19 for 42 ounces (15 cents per serving)

Oatmeal is a hearty breakfast, but you can also cook sturdy steel-cut oats in chicken broth for a savory side dish. Or, mix oats with ground turkey to stretch your meatballs.

Dairy

24. **Quarts of low- or fat-free yogurt:** \$2.49 for 32 ounces (47 cents per serving)

Buy large containers of plain or vanilla yogurt, then add real fruit. You'll save money and calories by not buying fancy single-serve yogurts.

25. **Gallon of skim milk:** \$3.04 (19 cents per serving)

It really does a body good. Full of calcium and protein, milk can help stretch a meal. Pair an eight-ounce glass with a piece of fruit or a granola bar for a filling snack.