

Dining n a Dime

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How to eat right in a downsized economy

Kandy Brannon desperately needed to get to the grocery store but money was tight. She scoured her pantry and found packages of dry red and black beans. After soaking the beans overnight, she put them in her slow cooker with two cans of fire-roasted diced tomatoes and a can of Ro-Tel® tomatoes. Adding a salad and some cornbread, she threw together an easy, delicious, and nutritious meal. The best part is it only cost her pennies from her pocketbook.

During a tough economy, many people rediscover the economies of eating home-cooked meals. Here are a few easy-on-the-wallet foods that offer great nutrition to incorporate at home.

beans and lentils

Loaded with fiber. A great source of protein. A nutrition powerhouse. Beans and lentils are extremely versatile and incredibly

economical. There are so many choices of beans available—black, kidney, white, navy, cannellini, pinto, garbanzo, and more. Black beans and rice is a classic combo—less than \$1 per serving. Canned beans are easier, but pricier. A 15-ounce can is about a dollar, which will provide about 1-3/4 cup, vs. a pound of dried beans, which will cost just about the same but make 5 to 6 cups—almost four times more for the money.

Lentils are easy to prepare and relatively quick-cooking. Soups are the most common way to include them. Pair with a green salad and some whole-grain bread or brown rice for a wonderfully wholesome vegetarian meal. Make a habit to go meatless on Mondays and more often during the week to save money. Visit www.meatlessmonday.com for ideas.

canned salmon

Salmon is such a great source of omega-3s. What better way to get the health benefits of fish oil than from the real thing?

TIPS TO EAT SENSIBLY AND \$AVE

- Practice portion control. Eat the recommended “deck of card size” piece of meat/poultry/fish.
- Eat at home. It not only saves money, but calories. And it gets the family together.
- Pack your lunch. Spending \$10 (or more) five days a week eating out adds up.
- Cook in quantities for two or more and freeze leftovers or pack them for lunch.
- Choose generic or less expensive store brands.
- Buy in bulk. Divide and freeze family packages of meat/poultry/fish.
- Buy what’s in season.
- Clip coupons and follow sales.
- Shop from a list to avoid unplanned purchases.
- Shop without the kids to avoid unwanted distractions and temptations.
- Avoid 100-calorie snack packs. They are no bargain. Instead buy larger packages and divide into individual snack bags.
- Avoid prepackaged foods. Skip the prewashed salad greens and precut fruit and veggies.
- Invest in a slow cooker for efficient one-dish meals.

▶ GET EXPERT NUTRITION ADVICE.

For more information or to schedule a nutrition consultation with a Cooper Clinic registered dietitian, call **972-560-2655** or visit www.cooperaerobics.com.

Healthy eating for less. No expiration date.



Most canned salmon is wild, rather than farmed. Fresh wild salmon may cost \$20 per pound, but a 15-ounce can is only about \$3.

Make salmon salad just as you would tuna. Add bulk by tossing in veggies such as chopped celery, cucumber, red onion, tomato, and more. The extra volume cuts back on calories and boosts the nutritional value and fiber. Some canned salmon may have the fine bones which are edible and provide the added benefit of calcium.

Salmon tacos, salmon burgers, or salmon cakes are some other terrific meal ideas. Search *Eating Well* (www.eatingwell.com) and *Cooking Light* (www.myrecipes.com) web sites for recipes.

pasta

Pasta is the base for a marvelous meal. Instead of loading up with heavy meat sauce and cheese, use a light marinara. Or sauté some veggies in a small amount of olive oil with garlic and toss with pasta.

A pound of pasta will cost less than \$2 and provide four to six servings. Whole-grain wheat pasta is not that much more expensive and has added health benefits. Whole grains contain phytonutrients—such as flavonoids, lignans, and phytic acid—and antioxidants that fight damage to cells. And diets rich in whole-grain foods and other plant foods and low in saturated fat and cholesterol may help reduce the risk for heart disease. Pair with a dark green salad with vinaigrette dressing for a complete meal.

For recipes with whole wheat pasta, visit www.barillaus.com.

eggs

Have you ever had breakfast for dinner? Why not? Eggs are a high-quality protein at a very low price. About 13 cents and 70 calories (per large egg) buys you 6 grams of high-quality protein—nearly a quarter of your daily choline and selenium needs—and 13 essential vitamins and minerals in varying amounts. Make an egg-white omelet with loads of veggies and 2 percent cheese; serve with whole wheat toast and fruit. Remember, people with heart disease should limit eating egg yolks to two per week. Check out the American Egg Board for recipes: www.incredibleegg.org/recipes-and-more.

whole chicken

Whole chickens are another supermarket bargain. Buy a whole chicken instead of the more expensive boneless, skinless chicken breasts. Oven roast, remove the skin and bones, and use in pasta dishes, salads, stews, soups, sandwiches, and casseroles.

Check out the blog Cheap Healthy Good to see how to make 17 meals out of one 7-pound whole chicken for a mere \$26.

www.cheaphealthygood.blogspot.com.

