

Have you been wondering how you can still eat healthy and stay on a budget? If you've been cutting back on healthy foods during this tight economy, you don't have to! Here are some food cost-cutting tips and recipes to help. Not only will they save you money, but also they're good for you and the environment.

- Plant a garden that you can maintain with your schedule. Choose fruits and veggies that grow well in Washington and in raised beds or containers. A "Google" search will help you find info on the easiest way to build a raised bed. Try visiting your local nursery for help with picking the right veggies/fruit for your space. Growing your own herbs is a wonderful way to add taste and flavor to your meals without adding extra sodium, MSG, or processed seasonings.
- Start looking for local and/or organic produce that's in season. The farmers markets and local farms will be opening soon to offer Spring's bounty. Yes, organic can be expensive. So, check your local coop for those foods that are safe to buy non-organic. Often local food is organic even though it's not advertised that way. Certified organic requires a lot of paperwork so often you'll see "pesticide free" instead of organic. There are some wonderful little farms stands and family owned farms in Snohomish, Skagit & Whatcom counties. You'll be supporting those local farms, putting money back into the local economy and eating fresh, pure food. Many foods known for their detoxifying properties are available in spring. After a long winter let these seasonal foods start the cleansing process in the body.
- Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is a great way to get fresh, local, mostly organic produce each week. When you join a CSA you are "buying" a share of that farmer's crop (usually in spring) then enjoy a weekly delivery of produce throughout the harvest season. This saves you extra trips to the grocery store. Buying into a CSA helps local farmers continue to produce fresh, healthy and delicious foods from their farm to your table.
- Purchase whole grains (rice, pasta, quinoa, barley, kasha, kamut) in bulk. It saves money, keeps money in the local economy, and reduces packaging waste. Make a large batch once a week and use the rest in several different meals. Most whole grains can be used in soups, casseroles, and as a stuffing in peppers, mushrooms, or squash. Make main dishes and salads by adding grilled veggies or lean meats. Using new spices and herbs makes these staples exciting and new again. New recipes can be found in ethnic cookbooks, on-line or at the library. Step out of the box with new recipes found in

ethnic cookbooks or on the internet. WHOLE grains are an excellent source of fiber, B-vitamins, and energy.

- Don't forget beans & lentils. Inexpensive and nutrient dense when used in dry form, just soak overnight and cook according to package directions. Make a large batch to use in soups, salads, pasta, casseroles and dips. Combined with whole grains, you have a complete protein meal. Canned beans are also inexpensive, time-saving, and nutritious if you make sure to rinse them to get rid of extra sodium. Beans are rich in fiber, healthy carbohydrates, potassium, protein and iron, and low in fat. Eat beans with foods that are high in vitamin C (tomato sauce, veggies, or an orange after your meal) to help absorb the iron more efficiently,
- Set aside a weekly time to plan your meals and shopping list. Plan easier quicker meals for those days you're busy and make double batches on days when you have more time. The extra can be used later in the week or frozen for future use. Buy only what you need to ensure unused foods don't end up spoiled and thrown out. Have family members help with the preparation and give kids tasks they can complete easily. It helps prepare them for the future, gives them a sense of accomplishment and pride, and takes some of the weight off your shoulders.
- Day old bread or bread with a few days until expiration is just as nutritious and costs less. It can be frozen or kept in the fridge to maintain freshness.
- Instead of purchasing veggie stock in cans and cartons, I save my (washed) veggie scraps and freeze them in a large resealable bag or container. When I have enough, I put them in the crock pot, fill with water and herbs (bay, thyme, parsley, garlic) and let them cook until I have a rich flavorful stock. It takes about 3 hours on high, 5 or 6 on low. Veggie scraps that work best are onion, carrot, corn, celery, potato, leeks, green beans, squash, garlic, parsley stems or fresh herb scraps, and tomatoes (especially if you have a summer bounty). I avoid strong flavors, such as red or green peppers, cauliflower, and broccoli. The consistency of the veggies doesn't matter because you discard them (in compost) after completing your stock. If you don't use all of the stock right away, it can be frozen for later use in soups, sauces, etc.
- Root veggies, like yams, potatoes, beets, carrots, parsnips & turnips are often inexpensive. They require no refrigeration and last longer when stored in a cool dark place. They can be mashed, roasted, baked, used in soups, and made into healthy desserts like sweet potato pie.
- Buy plenty of fresh berries in season. Freeze them on a cookie sheet, put them in containers and store them in the freezer to use in oatmeal, smoothies or crisps

throughout the year. This is especially cost effective with blueberries and raspberries. With all the blackberry bushes we have in Washington....it's FREE!!!

These are some ways to save money while maintaining a healthy diet. Come up with some of your own and get excited about eating healthy, while saving money, supporting your local community and farmers. Here are a few websites you might like to research for more ideas.

www.localharvest.org

www.pccnaturalmarkets.com

www.wafarmersmarkets.com

www.tilthproducers.org

www.eatright.org

www.google.com/tipjar

www.wholefoodsmarket.com/products/wholedeal/mealplans.php

www.pioneerthinking.com/inthekitchen-frugal.html

www.mypyramid.gov

Get a free copy of Puget Sound Fresh Farm Guide or visit www.pugetsoundfresh.org. It lists all the local farms/farmers markets, what's fresh & when, as well as county fairs and many other local happenings.

Enjoy growing, preparing, and eating a healthy, low-cost diet.

Angela

Cost-effective and nutritious recipes.

Rainbow Pizza

3 whole-wheat English muffins, split

1/2 cup pizza or pasta sauce

Pizza toppings: choose 3 or make several different pizzas

Grated carrots

Sliced mushrooms

Chopped broccoli

Pineapple chunks

Chopped green/red/yellow peppers

Soy sausage crumbled

Slice zucchini

Black olives

1 cup mozzarella cheese, grated

~Spread about 1 tablespoon of sauce on each muffin half.

- ~Arrange your favorite toppings on the muffin in a single layer, use at least 3 colors.
- ~Sprinkle one tablespoon cheese on each pizza
- ~Place on baking sheet and bake at 350 for 10 minutes or until pizzas are heated thru and cheese is melted.

Vegetarian Chili

1 medium onion, chopped (chopped green/red pepper can be also be used in addition to onion)
2-4 cloves garlic, minced or pressed
1 tbsp. vegetable oil
2 medium carrots, finely chopped
2 medium tomatoes, chopped or 1 can pureed tomatoes and 1 can diced tomatoes
2-15 oz. cans black beans, chili beans, kidney beans or combo of any two, can also use beans cooked from dry; about 4 cups
1 Tbsp. Chili powder-can also add 2 tsp. each cumin powder and coriander powder for add'l flavor
Fresh chopped cilantro to taste

- ~Sauté onion, carrots & pepper (if using) in oil in large saucepan until soft.
- ~Add garlic, sautéing until soft-about 2 minutes, then add herbs & spices.
- ~Place in cooking pot then add tomatoes (canned or fresh) and beans.
- ~Cook on medium for about 20-30 minutes.
- ~Can also place in crockpot on high for 2 hours or until thoroughly heated.

Top each bowl with cheese and low-fat sour cream or plain yogurt.
Serve with cornbread, soft whole wheat tortillas, or crackers.

Other veggies, such as corn, green/red peppers, or green chilies can be added.

Lavender yogurt with Fresh Strawberries

2 cups low fat plain yogurt (Greek yogurt is best)
2 Tbsp. (or more to taste) lavender or rose petal jam
2 cups fresh organic strawberries, sliced
Lavender flowers (culinary lavender)
Ground flax

- ~Place jam in small bowl and stir, then place yogurt in bowl and mix together until incorporated
- ~In 4 dessert type cups place 1/2 cup sliced strawberries in each
- ~ Top each with 1/2 cup of the yogurt/jam mixture then sprinkle with lavender flowers and ground flax