

## **EATING HEALTHY WHILE ON A BUDGET**

Are you on a budget? At the university student level, and even in the professional worker level, you're going to find that time is needed throughout the day to satisfy your hunger. Hunger is the last thing any hard working individual wants weighing on them throughout the day. But how important is it that you eat healthy? Furthermore, how can you do it on a tight budget?

*"Ramen noodles are cheap and convenient"*

They may be convenient, but they are definitely not cheap. Ramen noodles are popular among college students, but the truth of the matter is that you pay for convenience in this case. On average, a package costs 25 cents. If you have 5 minutes in a day to prepare a meal, then there are even cheaper options that satisfy your stomach, your wallet, and especially your health and wellness needs - *Rice*.



A 5 lb bag of rice is usually \$5 at a grocery store. Walmart and Asian/Middle Eastern/Mexican markets have even bigger bags at an even cheaper price per pound. Rice is high in fiber, especially the brown rice variety. Whether you want to invest in a rice cooker for \$10 or just use a regular cooking pot, you can have plenty of rice available in a matter of minutes.

*"I can only afford to buy canned foods, fresh foods are too expensive."*

There's nothing wrong with canned foods, but one thing you must consider is the sodium content. The average American takes in 3,400 milligrams of dietary sodium, more than twice as much as the recommended value by the Institute of Medicine. In your shopping experience, you will come across canned beans/veggies with high or low sodium. Be sure to check your labels!

And by the way – Fresh or dry produce will save you money in the long run:



A 16 ounce can of beans can be purchased for about 75 cents at the cheapest. 16 Ounces of dry beans can be anywhere from \$1 to \$3. This measurement is off, however, as dry beans do not have the water weight factored in as a can of beans does. Dry beans offer much more servings per pound once they are cooked. *And a bonus feature* – You don't have to worry about sodium! Just about any food that you can buy in a can will be cheaper if bought fresh. Remember – price often reflects convenience.

*“Aren't frozen vegetables bad?”*

Frozen vegetables and fruits are simply preserved with low temperature. The nutrition label would reveal that most frozen foods lack the preservatives which may be found in canned foods. One thing you have to consider is that you again pay for the convenience of having vegetables frozen for you. If you can make it to the grocery store every couple of days, you may consider replacing your frozen stock with some fresh stock, or even freezing them yourself.



*“But I don't like the taste of these foods!”*

You will want to learn how to mix spices into your recipes. This does require a bit of an initial investment, as a spice could cost as much as \$10 a pound – but spices go a very long way. Some absolute essentials for a tasty recipe:

- Cumin – for bold, earthy flavors. Often found in any chili recipe.
- Oregano – Added to almost every tomato/Italian themed dish.
- Paprika – Sweet and semi-spicy flavor to add to multiple dishes
- Black pepper – A necessity for vegetables and meats (some would say ☺ )
- A blended seasoning – “*powder*” You may want to experiment here and see what you like



*“What is one simple way for me to save money and eat healthy?”*

Ditch the sodas. The price of soda has been increasing consistently for the past many years, and will continue eating your money at a fairly appreciable rate. Drinking one can of soda a day, assuming the price is 36 cents a can, you will have spent \$130 after a year – and that’s only saving your waistline if you drink diet! Try drinking tea or even liquid water enhancers like MiO. It only takes a few days of these drinks to taper off of a soda addiction.



Recipes:

1.) Chicken and Rice with Vegetables

- 4 cups of water added to a pot
  - 2 cups of brown rice
  - 2 Tbsp olive oil (Coconut oil works well too!)
  - 1 pound boneless skinless chicken breast
  - ½ cup diced onion
  - ½ cup diced sweet bell pepper (any color will do)
  - ½ cup of peas
  - Paprika and black pepper
1. Bring the pot of water to a dull boil. Add rice and cook over medium-high heat until all of the water has evaporated.
  2. While the rice is cooking, spray a skillet with the cooking spray, heat the skillet over high heat. Add chicken, onion, and bell pepper and sprinkle with a light coat of pepper and paprika. Cook until chicken is no longer pink on the inside
  3. Add peas. Add rice once the water has evaporated. Continue cooking for 5-7 minutes or until the desired consistency is reached

Perks of this dish – High in protein and fiber, low in fat and sodium, only takes about 15 minutes to make



## 2.) Beans and Rice

- 2 Tbsp olive oil
- 1 medium onion
- 1 medium bell pepper
- 4 stalks of celery
- 4 cloves of garlic
- 1 pound dry red beans
- 6 cups low sodium vegetable broth
- Thyme, oregano, paprika, black pepper, cayenne pepper
- 6 cups cooked rice (Consider using brown rice for high fiber)
- Green onions (optional garnishment)
  1. Soak red beans overnight in a pot of water. The water should be a few inches higher than the beans
  2. Dice the celery, bell pepper and onion. Mince the garlic. Cook in a large pot over medium heat with the olive oil for 5 minutes
  3. Drain the bean water, rinse with cool water. Add beans to the pot of cooked vegetables. Add a pinch of thyme, oregano, paprika, black pepper and cayenne pepper.
  4. Bring content to a boil over high heat with a lid covering the pot. Once the contents reach a boil, reduce to a low heat and simmer for 2 hours – Increase heat if the contents are not simmering. Stir occasionally to make sure nothing is burning to the bottom. The lid must stay on to keep the beans from drying out.
  5. After the 2 hours, mash some of the beans against the pot with the spoon. Allow to simmer an additional 30 minutes.
  6. Add to a serving bowl and place warm, cooked rice and onions on top as desired

Perks – High protein and fiber, very tasty and low cost, requires limited attention during cooking



### 3.) Chunky Lentil and Veggie Soup

- 2 Tbsp olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic
- 1 medium onion
- 3-4 carrots
- 3 celery stalks
- 1 can black beans (or 16 oz prepared)
- 1 cup lentils dry
- Cumin, oregano, paprika, black pepper, cayenne pepper
- 1 can diced tomatoes (about 2 medium tomatoes)
- 4 cups low sodium vegetable broth
  1. Mince garlic, dice onion, and cook both in a large pot of olive oil over medium heat until tender. Dice celery and carrots and add to the pot to cook for additional 5 minutes
  2. Drain black beans; add to pot along with dry lentils and a pinch of the listed seasonings. Add the tomatoes and broth, and finally stir until well combined
  3. Bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce heat to a low level once the contents boil and maintain at a simmer for 30 minutes
  4. Test the lentils to make sure they are tender. Serve in soup bowls. Add salt or sour cream to taste

Perks – Low cost, very high in protein and fiber, variety of vegetables



#### 4.) Spinach Pie

- 1 Tbsp olive oil
- 1 small onion
- 1 clove garlic
- 1 cup of cottage cheese
- ¼ cup parmesan cheese
- ½ tsp of salt and pepper
- Dash of nutmeg
- 2 eggs
- 16oz spinach (frozen)
- 8oz puff pastry
- Flour for dusting
- Whisked egg for glazing
  1. Preheat oven to 375 degree F. Dice onion into tiny pieces and mince garlic. Cook in a small skillet with olive oil until soft and transparent
  2. Prepare the rest of the filling. Combine cheeses, eggs and spices in a mixing bowl. Strain the frozen spinach and press out as much moisture as possible with hands. Add spinach to the bowl
  3. Add onions and garlic to the mixture
  4. Dust a work surface with flour and unfold the puff pastry onto it. Use a rolling pin to make it into a 12"x12" square. Drape the dough over a 9" pie dish.
  5. Spread the filling evenly in the dish. Fold corners back over top of the filling (Its okay if they don't fully reach the center). Glaze the top with a whisked egg for appearance. Bake for 45 minutes in the oven. Allow the pie to rest so the filling can set.

This is a treat! – It is fairly high in fat (puff pastry) but has zero sugar and is low in sodium. Be careful... This is very addicting!

