

Cooking Well on a Budget part 1

Eating on a limited budget is difficult and can be overwhelming at times. There are many barriers that may get in the way of not only eating well, but eating healthfully. The Nutrition department will be referring to Leanne Brown's [Good and Cheap](#) cookbook which focuses on tips, tricks, techniques, and recipes for making good food, on a \$4 per day budget. The tips we are providing are not a meal plan or applicable to every single person. All of our member agencies may have different supplies and all of our site participants may have different tastes and resources. The next few NewsBites nutrition articles we offer are just a series of tips, recipes, and ideas that you can add to your toolbox. Happy cooking!

Tips for Eating and Shopping Well

1. **BUY FOODS THAT CAN BE USED IN MULTIPLE MEALS:** Versatile ingredients like flour to make tortillas, pancakes, or scones. Garlic and lemons can be used to add fantastic flavor to any meal.
2. **BUY IN BULK** (if you can): Buying larger amounts usually keeps the prices down. When working within a tight budget, it might not always be possible to shop for the future, but do it when you can. If the item will go bad before you are able to finish it, go for the smaller size.
3. **START BUILDING A PANTRY:** If possible— and admittedly this can be difficult for people living on their own— reserve part of your budget to buy one or two semi-expensive pantry items each week. Items like soy sauce or spices can be pricey at first, but if you use just a little in each recipe, they go a long way. Turmeric, cumin, and ginger will suddenly provide a world of flavor on your shelf.
4. **THINK WEEKLY:** Each week, mix things up by buying different varieties of staple foods like grains and beans. This week, you might have oatmeal every morning with black bean chili or black bean tacos later in the day, but next week you'll have yogurt for breakfast and hummus for lunch.
5. **TREAT YOUR FREEZER WITH RESPECT:** A freezer can be a great friend for saving time by letting you prepare large batches of food at once. Cooking dried beans takes a while, so make more than you need, then freeze the rest. Another great trick Leanne learned from a reader is to cook up a whole package of bacon and then freeze it in little parcels. This makes it easy to add a small amount of bacon to a dish without the temptation of using the whole package. Try to label and date frozen items, as it can be easy to forget what is in a container or how long it has been there.

Best Tomato Sauce

Makes 7 cups

Source: *Good and Cheap Cookbook*

- 2 Tbsp olive oil
- 6 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1 tsp chili flakes
- 2 (28 oz) cans tomatoes, crushed or diced
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Zest of one lemon (optional)

Directions: Add the olive oil to a saucepan over medium heat. Sauté the garlic until it smells great and becomes translucent, about 1 minute. Add chili flakes and cook for 30 seconds. Add cans of tomatoes and cook until warmed through. Add lemon zest, if using, then salt and pepper to taste. Because canned tomatoes are already salted, you may not need to add any extra salt.

If you want a **thicker** sauce that will stick to pasta better, cook it a little longer to evaporate more of the liquid, 10 to 20 minutes. Use immediately, keep in a jar in the fridge for up to a week, or portion it out into containers and store in the freezer for a month.