

## FEED YOUR FAMILY FOR \$4 A MEAL!

*Grocery cost analysis, cheapest vs. most expensive locally-owned big-box grocery store.*

### Summary:

Average consumption for a family of four, two adults and two small kids (or one adult and three kids).

Five days' worth of all meals are planned; remaining meals can be "wild cards."

Breakfasts, approx. \$2.40 (at cheapest store) to \$3.70 (at most expensive store), each.

Lunches, approx. \$2.00 - \$3.20 each.

Meat-based suppers, approx. \$3.70 - \$6.50 each.

Vegetarian suppers, approx. \$3.90 - \$6.25 each.

Staples, used at all meals, over a month or more: approx. \$32.65 - \$63.50.

Total: approx. \$195 - \$332 per month for meat-based meals; \$199 - \$328 for vegetarian. Mix and match!

### *Week 1: based on tuna, pork chops - rice, macaroni - peas, carrots*

1. Tuna rice casserole with peas
2. Tuna melt sandwiches, applesauce
3. Pork chops, rice, & applesauce
4. Red beans and rice\* with broccoli
5. Macaroni and cheese, carrots, peas

= \$18.20 - 38.30

1 head broccoli (1 lb) 1.00 - 1.50

2 small cans tuna 1.00 - 1.80

Frozen peas .80 - 1.80

1 can mushroom soup 1.00 - 1.40

Medium can whole tomatoes .60 - 1.00

Large natural applesauce 2.00 - 3.40

1 lb cheddar cheese 3.10 - 5.50

4 pork chops (2 lb) 4.60 - 14.00

2 lb elbow macaroni 1.80 - 3.40

1 can red beans .70 - 1.20

Bread, whole wheat (18 oz) 1.60 - 3.30

(or white 2.00 - 3.30)

### *Week 2: hamburger - macaroni, tortillas - green beans, corn*

1. Meatloaf and green beans
2. Chili-mac\* soup
3. Burritos with Mexican corn
4. Macaroni casserole with corn
5. Vegetable soup

= \$21.55 - 34.00

Carrots (2 lb) .90 - 1.90

1 green pepper .60 - .80

Crackers (1 box saltines) 1.20 - 2.40

Frozen green beans .80 - 1.50

Large can whole tomatoes 1.05 - 1.70

2 cans red beans 1.40 - 2.40

1 can tomato soup 0.75 - .90

Celery .60 - 1.00

3 lb hamburger (2.80 - 3.00/lb) 8.40 - 9.00

10 small flour tortillas 1.25 - 3.00

Frozen corn, 1 lb .80 - 1.80

Medium can whole tomatoes .60 - 1.00

2 cans refried beans 1.40 - 3.20

2 lb elbow macaroni 1.80 - 3.40

### *Week 3: chicken, hamburger - potatoes, pasta - salad, green beans*

1. Baked chicken with baked potatoes & salad
2. Pasta alfredo with salad (oil & vinegar dressing)
3. Chicken soup with bread
4. Spaghetti with green beans
5. Breakfast for dinner (eggs, fried potatoes, toast, juice)

= \$22.40 - 36.60

1 whole chicken 6.50 - 10.00

2 large tomatoes (1/2 lb) .50 - 1.00

1 large green pepper .60 - .80

1 can frozen orange juice 1.50 - 1.70

2 lb spaghetti 1.50 - 3.60

Large can whole tomatoes 1.05 - 1.70

Small can tomato paste .45 - .70

Eggs 1 dozen 1.30 - 2.40

1 head lettuce 1.50 (green)

(or iceberg, .90 - 1.40)

1/2 lb mushrooms 1.50 - 1.80

Frozen green beans .80 - 1.50

8 oz grated parmesan cheese 2.00 - 4.80

Large can tomato puree 1.60 - 1.80

Bread, whole wheat (18 oz) 1.60 - 3.30

(or white 2.00 - 3.30)

### *Week 4: weiners, soupbones - beans, biscuit - greens, salad*

*(make powder-milk biscuit mix & keep in fridge - add water & bake)*

1. Pigs in a blanket, salad
2. Bean soup, salad (oil and vinegar dressing)
3. Split pea soup, biscuits
4. Beanie weenie\*, bread, greens
5. Pancakes for dinner, juice

= \$12.25 - 21.10

8 hot dogs .65 - 2.00

1 head lettuce 1.50 (green)

(or iceberg, .90 - 1.40)

3 cans navy beans 2.05 - 3.60

1 lb split peas .30 - .70 (1/2 lb bulk)

(or pkg, .70 - 1.40 pkg)

2 lb. ham hocks or neck bones 2.95 - 7.40

2 large tomatoes (1/2 lb) .50 - 1.00

Frozen spinach, 10 oz, .80 - 1.00

28 oz can baked beans 2.00 - 2.20

1 can frozen orange juice 1.50 - 1.70

## Meatless meals

*Week 1: white beans, tofu pups, pasta, green beans, lettuce, beets, carrots, mushrooms*

1. Pasta fagioli\*, green beans
  2. Beanie-weenie (freeze extra pups), salad, carrot sticks
  3. Senator soup\*, salad, carrot sticks
  4. Dirty rice, glazed carrots, beets
  5. Pigs in a blanket, green beans, sliced apples
- = \$19.15 - 29.20

Apples 3.50 - 5.00	1 lb navy beans dry (bulk) 1.15 - 1.80
Celery .60 - 1.00	(or pkg .60 - 1.50)
Carrots (2 lb) .90 - 1.90	(or 4 can navy beans 2.70 - 4.75)
1 head lettuce 1.50 (green)	1 medium can tomatoes .55 - 1.00
(or iceberg, .90 - 1.40)	Can beets .70 - 1.20
Frozen spinach, 1 lb 1.25 - 2.50	(or fresh beets .80 - 1.00)
(or two 10-oz pkg, 2.40 - 3.00)	Frozen green beans .80 - 1.50
Tofu hot dogs 4.00	Plain unsweetened soy milk 1.20 - 3.00
Medium can tomatoes .55 - 1.00	1/2 cup of pecans (2 oz), bulk 1.35 - 2.10
Small pasta 1.10 - 1.70	(or 2 oz sunflower seeds, raw, bulk, .20 - .30)

*Week 3: red beans, tofu, pasta, broccoli, peas, green beans, corn*

1. Creole noodles\*, broccoli
  2. Scrambled tofu\*, oven fried potatoes, orange juice)
  3. Garlic fried tofu, corn, green beans
  4. Red beans and rice, broccoli
  5. Vegetable soup (potato, carrot, corn, tomato, red beans), bread
- = 14.85 - 25.70

2 heads broccoli (2 lb) 2.00 - 3.00	Carrots (2 lb) .90 - 1.90
2 tofu 3.00 - 4.80	Red beans dry packaged 2 lb 1.35 - 3.00
1 can frozen orange juice 1.50 - 1.70	(or 3 cans 2.05 - 3.60)
Frozen green beans .80 - 1.50	3 medium cans tomatoes 1.80 - 3.00
Frozen corn, 1 lb .80 - 1.80	Bread, whole wheat (18 oz) 1.60 - 3.30
Pasta 1 lb 1.10 - 1.70	(or white 2.00 - 3.30)

*Week 2: lentils, garbanzos, cabbage, carrots, peas, zucchini, mushrooms*

1. Spaghetti (freeze extra sauce), peas, carrot sticks
  2. Minestrone soup, salad, bread
  3. Spanish rice (bell pepper, tomato) with garbanzos, salad
  4. Lentil soup, apple slices, bread
  5. Lentil-rice pilaf, cabbage cooked with apples, carrot sticks
- = \$20.00 - 30.00

Small head of cabbage (2.5 lb, .60/ lb) 1.50	1 head lettuce 1.50 (green)
Carrots (2 lb) .90 - 1.90	(or iceberg, .90 - 1.40)
Bag of apples 3.50 - 5.00	1 lemon .60-.70
Frozen peas .80 - 1.80	1/2 lb mushrooms 1.50 - 1.80
Zucchini .70 - 1.00	2 large green pepper 1.20 - 1.60
Dried lentils 1 lb (bulk) .85 - 1.30	Tomato paste 2 small cans .90 - 1.40
(or pkg .95 - 1.40)	Tomatoes 3 medium cans 1.70 - 3.00
Dried garbanzos 1/2 lb (bulk) .65 - .80	Tomatoes 2 large cans 2.10 - 3.40
(or 2 cans 1.30 - 2.40)	Bread, whole wheat (18 oz) 1.60 - 3.30
	(or white 2.00 - 3.30)

*Week 4: black beans, tempeh, lettuce, carrots, peppers, corn*

1. Black bean burritos with rice, lettuce, pico de gallo; orange juice
  2. Marinated tempeh sandwiches, salad, carrot stix
  3. Black beans and white rice, corn, carrots
  4. Peppers stuffed with Spanish rice, corn
  5. Black bean tempeh chili with corn bread, pineapple
- = \$25.85 - 43.55

1 1/2 package tempeh 5.40 (must buy 2 pkg, 7.20)	Carrots (2 lb) .90 - 1.90
1 head lettuce 1.50 (green)	2 large tomatoes (1/2 lb) .50 - 1.00
(or iceberg, .90 - 1.40)	6 bell peppers 3.60 - 4.80
1 pineapple fresh 3.30	4 jalapenos (1/2 lb) .50 - 1.00
(or lg can sliced 1.00 - 1.90)	7-oz can chipotle chilis 1.70 - 2.60
Frozen corn, 1 lb .80 - 1.80	1 can frozen orange juice 1.50 - 1.70
Small can tomato paste .45 - .70	2 medium cans tomatoes 1.20 - 2.00
Black beans dry (bulk) 1 1/2 lb 1.65 - 2.25	Bread, whole wheat (18 oz) 1.60 - 3.30
(or 5 cans 3.25 - 6.50)	(or white 2.00 - 3.30)
1 pkg corn bread mix .50 - .80	10 small flour tortillas 1.25 - 3.00

*\*What are these? See Dr Leigh's various cookbooks for recipes.*

**Sample breakfasts: oatmeal, granola, yogurt, toast and eggs**

**= \$11.90 - 18.60**

Bulk granola 3-4 cups (1 lb) 1.70 - 3.90	Bread, whole wheat (18 oz) 1.60 - 3.30 (or white 2.00 - 3.30)
Yogurt large plain 2.30 - 2.90	Margarine 1 lb 1.00 - 1.30 (or butter 1 lb 2.90 - 4.00)
Eggs 1 dozen 1.30 - 2.40	
Bananas, 3 lb 1.50 - 2.10	
Milk 1 gallon 2.50 - 2.70	

**Sample lunches: soup, cottage cheese and fruit, PBJ sandwiches, tuna sandwiches**

**= \$10.95 - 16.65**

Canned soup tomato 1.35 - 1.35	Tuna 1 can .50 - .90
Canned soup alphabet .80 - .80	Lg can sliced pineapple 1.00 - 1.90
Cottage cheese 2 lb, 2.20 - 3.40	Bread, whole wheat (18 oz) 1.60 - 3.30 (or white 2.00 - 3.30)
Bag of apples 3.50 - 5.00	

**Sample lunches: peanut butter crackers with fruit, egg salad sandwiches, ramen noodles**

**= \$9.20 - 15.60**

Crackers (1 box saltines) 1.20 - 2.40	3 packs ramen noodles (0.20 each) 0.60
Bag of apples 3.50 - 5.00	Bread, whole wheat (18 oz) 1.60 - 3.30 (or white 2.00 - 3.30)
Lg can sliced pineapple 1.00 - 1.90	
Eggs 1 dozen 1.30 - 2.40	

**NOTES**

How to:

- Each week, make a list of menus for that week: 5 suppers, 5 lunches, 5 breakfasts. Let 2 days each week be "wild cards," eating leftovers or being creative with the odds and ends.
- Make a shopping list for all the ingredients you'll need, meal by meal - organized by grocery-store aisle:

fresh fruits/ vegetables	frozen	can/ condiments	meat
bread/ cereal/ pasta	eggs & dairy	baking and spices	non-food items
- NEVER shop on an empty stomach; ALWAYS have a complete list.
- Don't throw away your list when you're done shopping! Post it on the fridge so you remember what meals are available. When the week is done, save your list. You can use it again someday.
- Public libraries have hundreds of cookbooks you can borrow for free. You can find recipes for quick, cheap meals, and how to make your own bread, yogurt, baking mixes, etc.
- I don't recommend focusing shopping lists around sales or coupons, because they tend to encourage people to buy things and in quantities they normally wouldn't. More money is saved in the long run by making simple "from scratch" meals.
- Feeling oppressed by too much kitchen work? Consider buying paper plates occasionally, to cut down on dishes & reduce the temptation to go out to eat. You'll also need storage containers - re-use veggie bags from the produce department; wash and save glass jars.

**Staples: to use in meals for a month or more**

**= \$32.65 - 63.50**

Onions 1.30/5 lb - 2.00/3 lb	Brown rice, long grain 5 lb bulk 2.80 - 8.00 (or two 2-lb pkg 3.60 - 6.00)
Garlic 1/2 lb .75 - 2.00	(or white, 5 lb bulk 2.65 - 6.45) (or white, 5 lb pkg 3.00 - 4.50)
Potatoes 10 lb 2.30 - 4.00	
Brown sugar 2 lb 1.40 - 2.00	
Peanut butter 3.15 - 4.00	Rollled oats 1 lb bulk .60 - .80 (or quick, 12 packs/box, 1.70 - 3.00)
Jelly 2.80 - 4.20	Whole wheat flour 5 lb bulk 2.25 - 5.00 (or 5 lb pkg 3.30 - 2.30) (or white, 5 lb pkg 1.55 - 2.80)
Mayonnaise 2.50 - 2.70	
Ketchup 1.75 - 2.30	
Cooking oil, 48 oz (canola) 2.35 - 5.00	Powdered milk bulk 1 lb 3.70 - 4.80 (or pkg, 8 qts, 6.35 - 9.00)
Olive oil, 17 oz (for dressing) 2.65 - 5.00	
Apple cider vinegar 1.45 - 2.70	Bouillon powder bulk, 2 oz, .80 - 1.30 (or pkg of 6 cubes, 1.90 - 2.80)
Red wine vinegar for dressing 1.20 - 2.70	
Herbs and spices, bulk, total about 3.00 - 5.00	

These prices reflect conventional "house brand" and bulk products when available.

This analysis is based on shopping and cooking strategies used by people on food stamps (the SNAP card).

Where I live, a family of four with one full-time and one part-time minimum wage incomes (\$8.80/hr), or one full-time \$13.20/hr income, takes home approximately \$1900 per month (after 10% taken out for FICA taxes).

If they pay our community's average rent for a two-bedroom apartment (\$800/month), and do not pay any childcare or medical expenses, they are eligible to receive \$396 per month in food stamps. They could afford these meals.

The WIC program is open to kids under school age. It provides a credit card that's good for milk, cheese, breakfast cereal, juice, eggs, beans, peanut butter, fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. The income limit for a family of four is \$796 per week (\$3446/month). Studies show that every taxpayer dollar spent on WIC saves \$3 or more in better health.

Organic food products cost approximately 1.5 to 2 times the lowest prices shown here. If you want organic but aren't sure how to afford it, I suggest starting with foods that can't be peeled, like fresh greens, celery, and berries. Don't forget to wash your organic produce before using, especially if raw - pesticide-free doesn't mean bacteria-free.

The food allowance I project here is a low-ball figure. I recommend using any extra grocery money available on adding more fruits, juices, and fresh greens daily. For sweets, a good rule of thumb is: if you can make it from scratch at home, then your wallet and your waistline can probably afford it.