



## Tips to beat rising food prices

Save money at the grocery store with these tips to beat rising food costs

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# Checkout checklist

Rising food prices mean more creativity in the kitchen

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Got a bit of a queasy feeling?

Brace yourself for a kick in the stomach at the grocery checkout: Food prices are expected to rise.

Some economists predict food prices may shoot up by as much as 4% by next year as extreme drought conditions in the U.S. have destroyed crops.

Indigestible for many Canadians, rising food prices will impact what consumers put in their shopping carts and possibly lead families to eat cheaper, less healthy food.

"Global demand, severe weather, higher fuel and production costs all play a role in the price of food and the predictions can send waves of panic," says Mary Carver, Ottawa-based professional home economist.

Statistics Canada reports food prices have been increasing steadily since the

second quarter of 2010.

John F.T. Scott, president and CEO of the Canadian Federation of Independent Grocers, reports "Canadian consumers can expect a 3-4% increase in 2013, which is much better than what other markets can expect."

Canada is a very competitive market with very strong operators and manufacturers all vying for consumer loyalty and patronage, says Scott.

And you can still serve up good family nutrition. "There's no need to jeopardize nutrition to save money," says Carver. "Healthy eating is possible on a budget by careful menu planning, strategic grocery shopping, less food waste and using fewer convenience foods."

Bean, lentil and egg recipes are economical and nutritious main course options, adds Carver.

Stretch your food budget by making home-cooked

meals a priority, experts say.

Jennifer MacKenzie, of Foodworx, recommends cooking from scratch at home and "double up on recipes when you have time to cook; then refrigerate or freeze the extra for another meal."

Having a meal waiting will help families avoid the temptation to stop for take-out during the after-school activities rush, says MacKenzie, a professional home economist based in Lakefield, Ont., and author of *The Complete Root Cellar Book*.

Joyce Parslow, a professional home economist with Canada Beef Inc., suggests focusing on nutrient-rich foods. Lean meats, fish and poultry, seasonal fruits and vegetables and whole grains give you the best nutritional value per calorie/serving.

Go for the least processed foods, advises Parslow, and pack a lunch from home — the \$8 per day savings can be better spent on weekly groceries.

**REDUCE, REUSE, REHEAT**  
Waste not! Throwing away food is like throwing away money, says Sandra Saville, registered dietitian for Longo's. "About 40% of the food in Canada is wasted, including the food thrown away by households," says Saville. Cut waste by storing food properly and using a shopping list based on a menu plan. "Use leftovers for lunches, or create 'make-over' meals to enjoy the next day, including stir-fry dishes, soups and casseroles," says Saville. Peel and freeze ripened bananas to use in banana bread, muffins and smoothies. Do not toss out edible vegetable parts like beet and broccoli leaves — add them to soups, casseroles and stir-fries.

**COSTLY CONVENIENCE**  
Do it yourself and you'll do your bank account and family a favour. "You pay dearly for packaged foods that have sprung out of convenience," says Joyce Parslow, a professional home economist with Canada Beef Inc.

- Grate your own cheese
- Wash and spin your own lettuce/salad greens
- Cut block cheese into individual lunch-size servings
- Peel and cut carrots, celery, broccoli, cauliflower, etc into bite-size bits for veggies and dip — it's worth it to have a stash of sealable, re-useable containers
- Buy steak to cut into stir-fry strips or kabob cubes or buy a whole pot roast or simmering steak to cut your own stewing beef

### BEAT RISING FOOD PRICES WITH A FEW SIMPLE TRICKS:

- Use more root vegetables.
- Buy and slow cook less tender cuts of meat.
- Discover quinoa, a complete and versatile protein.
- Buy in season or join a local crop-sharing program.
- Buy in bulk. Many cereals, rice and rolled oats are less expensive without fancy packaging.
- Make it yourself for less, including homemade dressings, cookies and pasta sauces.
- Quench your thirst with water, not pop.
- Shop with a calculator. Check unit price on shelf labels to help determine the best buys.
- Look beyond eye level. Often better buys are located above or below eye level.
- Ask for and use rainchecks if a store runs out of an advertised special.
- Organic is a choice that can be more expensive. Some produce with the least likelihood of pesticide residues are sweet onions, avocados, corn, asparagus, mango, cantaloupe, pineapple, peas, kiwi, grapefruit, cabbage, broccoli and eggplant.
- Resist last-minute temptations at the cash register.
- Be vigilant at the checkout. Mistakes happen when products are scanned twice or even left behind unnoticed.
- Ask if your grocer will match a competitor's price to avoid driving across town.

— COURTESY OF MARY CARVER, OTTAWA-BASED PROFESSIONAL HOME ECONOMIST

## HEARTY BEAN SOUP

When counting every food dollar, skip the soup aisle and make your own, such as this hearty, nutritious bean soup. (Recipe courtesy of Longo's)

- 1 Tbsp. (15ml) extra virgin olive oil
- 1 onion, chopped
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- ½ tsp. (2 ml) chili flakes
- 3 fresh tomatoes, diced
- 1 can (19 oz/540 ml) Western Family beans, drained and rinsed (6 bean mix works nicely)
- 2 cups (500 ml) vegetable or chicken broth
- ¼ tsp. (1 ml) salt
- 2 cups (500 ml) baby spinach or other greens, chopped
- ½ cup (125 ml) freshly grated Parmesan cheese or original goat cheese

In a soup pot, heat oil over medium heat and cook onion, garlic and chili flakes for about 3 minutes or until softened.

Add tomatoes, beans, broth and salt; bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer for 15 minutes.

Stir in greens and cook for about 5 minutes or until wilted and tender. Sprinkle with cheese to serve.

Serves 4.

