



HOW TO BUILD AN EASY, AFFORDABLE, AND HEALTHY SHOPPING LIST

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Grocery shopping on a budget does not mean just microwavable ramen and mac n' cheese!

Below is a shopping list that incorporates easy, affordable, and healthy food items to look for at the grocery store. These items are easy to prepare and cook using basic kitchen equipment (microwave, oven, stove). This is by no means a comprehensive list, but I wanted to highlight some shopping staples. These items provide the foundation to make a variety of quick, healthy meals and snacks for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Some items are specific to Trader Joe's, but most can be found at any grocery store. This list is also appropriate for those who are vegan and vegetarian.

Produce Section

- Broccoli, cauliflower, squash and other vegetables available in a steam bag (ready in minutes in the microwave!)
- Any type of fresh vegetable or fruit (avocado, sweet potato, berries, and more!)
- Bagged salad kits (ex. broccoli and kale slaw—just add dressing and protein of your choice)
- Shelled or peeled edamame
- Cooked lentils

Refrigerated Section

- Chicken sausage (grill on a pan for a few minutes on each side)
- Chicken, turkey, and beef
- Tofu and tempeh
- Low sodium deli meat (limit to about once a week)
- Eggs
- Hummus (great dip for cut up carrots, bell pepper, and celery)

Frozen Section

- Any type of frozen vegetable (cook in the microwave with a few tbsp. of water)
- Any type of frozen fruit (great to throw into home-made smoothies)
- Brown or jasmine rice or quinoa (microwavable)
- Cauliflower rice
- Any type of frozen fish (lasts longer than fresh and ready to prepare when you are)
- Sweet potato, kale, or cauliflower gnocchi (found at Trader Joe's)

Canned Foods Section

- Any type of bean: garbanzo, kidney, black, and pinto (great source of protein and fiber)
- Turkey, beef, or vegetarian chili

Dried Goods

- Nuts and seeds
- Dried fruit
- Unsweetened apple sauce
- Peanut butter
- Rice cakes
- Seaweed snacks (salty, crunchy, low-calorie alternative to chips and individual packets make portion control easy!)
- Wild skipjack tuna (find it at Trader Joe's!)
- Tetra pack soups that focus on vegetables like butternut squash (brand example is Pacific Foods)(pro tip...look for low sodium)
- Whole wheat sourdough bread (sourdough bread is a wonderful, fermented food product + you get the added benefit of consuming whole grains)
- Unsweetened instant oatmeal (individual packets are great for breakfast topped with some cinnamon, dried or fresh fruit, and nuts)

The general rule of thumb for building a healthy plate, based on the USDA MyPlate guidelines, is to have half of your plate be non-starchy vegetables, a quarter protein, and a quarter grains or starchy vegetables. For more information reference the nutrition article on the Hospitality website titled, “how to compose a healthy and balanced plate.” Eating a variety of grains, proteins, vegetables and fruits provide key beneficial nutrients. As part of a healthy diet, it is also important to limit foods high in sugar, salt, and fat.

Where Sugar Hides

- Sauces (pasta, BBQ, ketchup, and salad dressings)
- Cereals and granola
- Granola bars
- Baked goods/pastries
- Peanut butter (choose one with no added sugar)

Where Saturated Fat, Trans Fat and Salt Can Hide:

- Frozen foods other than the basics such as plain vegetables, rice, proteins
- Pre-packaged sandwiches and salads (not referring to the bagged salad kits)
- Canned soups
- Packaged cookies and pastries

This list should ensure you have the basics to be able to prepare easy, healthy, and quick meals on a budget. However, again, this is NOT a comprehensive list. It is just a good starting point. When creating your meals, try mixing and matching these food items and following the instructions on how to build a healthy plate. Happy shopping!

