

# Ten Top Tips to Cut Your Food Bill

With food costs rising by 20%, are you wondering how to make ends meet at the supermarket checkout? Menus4Mums, the online family meal planners, have given us these tips to help get your grocery costs down but keep the quality high.

**Tip 1: Plan your meals.** Start by writing a list of all the meals your family likes. Then, each week, think about whether there will be any days when people will be away, when there will be guests, or when you'll need a quick meal. Look online at supermarket offers and build meals around these ingredients. Plan a suitable meal for each day, ensuring that you have a good balance of protein (eg meats, fish, pulses), carbohydrates (eg potatoes, rice, pasta), and vegetables. Think about using up leftovers (what about turning Sunday roast chicken into a delicious risotto on Monday?) See what needs using up in your fridge or freezer. And try to include an interesting variety of tastes and textures.

**Tip 2: Cook one main meal for the whole family.** You can take out portions for small children before adding salt and strong spices, and you'll be getting them used to eating the same as the rest of the family. You'll also be saving on gas/electricity, not to mention your precious time.

**Tip 3: Batch cook.** This saves both time and money, so must be good! So next time you are making Spaghetti Bolognese, make at least twice the amount and freeze what you don't need immediately (labelled, of course!) That way, you can take advantage of the frequent supermarket offers on multiple packs of mince plus save on fuel costs. And another day you'll hardly need to cook!

**Tip 4: Write a shopping list.** Now you know what you'll be cooking next week, it's easy to write down the ingredients you'll need. Check the outer reaches of your store cupboard and freezer for items you already have – no point buying them twice! Don't be too frugal when drawing up your list. If it's unrealistic, chances are you'll ignore it when you get to the shops and just pile treats into your trolley.



**Tip 5: Never shop on an empty stomach.** If you do, you just know you'll end up at the checkout with a trolley brimming with cake, crisps, and chocolate – and a huge grocery bill to boot! Instead, if you are feeling peckish before hitting the shops, have a banana or a quick snack. It could save you a lot of money.

**Tip 6: Don't use a basket for small shops.** If you pop in the supermarket mid-week to top up on fruit or milk yet come out with a £30 bill each time, try not using a basket. Chances are you'll just buy what you went in for!

**Tip 7: Buy Seasonally.** If we want strawberries all year round, we can have them, but they will cost more out of season – both environmentally and in our wallets. Not only that, but they don't taste as nice! Out of season, try buying frozen fruit and vegetables which will have been frozen within hours of being harvested and before losing much of their nutritional value.

**Tip 8: Beware of BOGOF and Buy 2, Get 1 Free deals.** They're great if you will use double the amount, but you might find it is still cheaper to buy an own brand product. Be particularly wary of deals on perishable foods – just because you can buy two bags of pears for the price of one doesn't mean to say that you will want to eat them all! Finally, many of the deals are offered on foods which are high in salt, sugar and fat, so beware.

**Tip 9: Taste test lower range products.** We don't mean suddenly going from premium brands to the most basic products. But if you give some of the middle range brands a try, the chances are you won't notice a difference. Look at the health data on the packaging too – some lower range foods are actually healthier than the premium varieties.

**Tip 10: Give the supermarket a miss sometimes.** Try buying your meat at your local butcher – you're likely to be impressed by the quality. Plus if you can buy exactly the quantity you want, saving money and waste. Seasonal fruit and veg is often cheaper at your local market or farmers market, and you could turn it into a trip out with the family. What about taking the family to your local Pick-Your-Own farm in the summer? Or check out your local farm shop for quality, local, seasonal produce.

Menus4Mums is a fabulous online family meal planning service for busy parents. Members get a new meal plan each week for dinners the whole family will enjoy, with recipe cards and a super-handy shopping list broken down into supermarket aisles. The meals take advantage of supermarket special offers to keep grocery bills down. All this from £6.95 for four weeks. Visit [www.menus4mums.co.uk](http://www.menus4mums.co.uk) for more information and to download a FREE one week sample menu plan.

Why not enter our competition to win a 6 month Menus4Mums membership? Just tell us how much a 6 month membership normally costs. Is it (a) £20, (b) £40 or (c) £60?

E-mail your answer to [competition@cheshiremums.com](mailto:competition@cheshiremums.com) by the 15<sup>th</sup> August 2011, stating Menus4Mums in the subject line.

 The logo for Menus4Mums features a large pink smiley face with a green fork on the left and a green spoon on the right. Below the smiley face, the text "menus4mums" is written in a purple, lowercase, sans-serif font.
 

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