

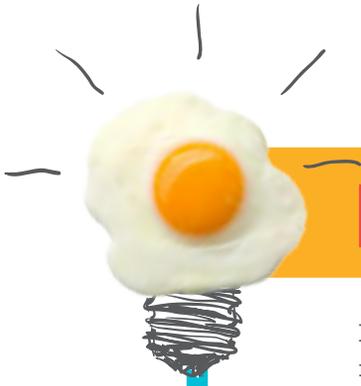
MAXIMIZING FOOD DOLLARS



When shopping for breakfast foods to feed the whole school, it's easy for the grocery bills to quickly add up. In order to help stretch food funding, developing a comprehensive budget at the start of the school year is necessary. When thinking about ways to save at the cash register, it's important to consider not only the dollar value, but also the nutritional value of the food being purchased.

The following tips are meant to help volunteers shop more effectively and maximize their food funding in order to ensure all students have access to the most important meal of the day.

- Before going to the grocery store, plan the menu and shop with a list;
- Look out for sales in weekly flyers, plan what stores to shop at based on the best prices and be flexible with the menu. If bananas were planned for the week but apples are on sale, change the menu to substitute the sale item;
- Order through a food distribution company, school cafeteria, or school milk program when possible. Look for food distributors that offer free delivery;
- Partner with other schools and organizations to combine food orders;
- Buy in bulk or shop wholesale;
- Choose store brands. Often the store name or no name version are of equal nutritional value at a lower price;
- Use coupons when possible;
- Buy produce in season. Produce that is in season is fresher, tastier and cheaper. Seasonal availability guides can be accessed through the provincial or territorial Department of Agriculture;
- Buy local. Link with a local farm or farmer's market;
- Establish a school or community garden to grow your own vegetables;
- Serve canned or frozen products when the particular fruit or vegetable is not in season. Choose low-sodium or salt-free vegetables, and fruit packed in water or 100% fruit juice;
- Mix higher fiber cereals, which tend to be more expensive, with those that are more likely to go on sale;
- Serve hot cereals more often. Serve plain oats, not the artificially flavored and sweetened packages, and add flavor for a low cost by incorporating raisins, cinnamon and applesauce;
- Only buy whole grain bread for the best nutritional value;
- Connect with a local bakery to get discounts on day-old bread;
- Serve alternatives to meat including eggs, hummus, or soy nut butter;
- Stock up on items when they are on sale and freeze them. Milk can be frozen for up to six weeks, yogurt can be frozen to make frozen yogurt pops or smoothies, and cheese can also be frozen (we recommend grating it first);
- Convenience foods are always more expensive; prepare the portions from whole food whenever possible (e.g. chop fruit and veggies, slice or grate cheese, portion yogurt in cups or bowls, portion cereal, etc.)

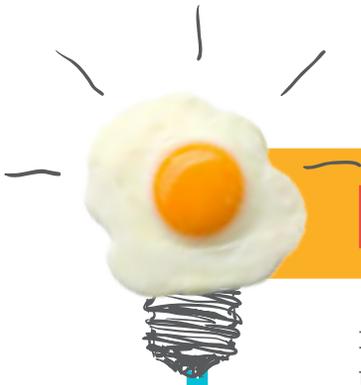


BRIGHT IDEAS

If some of these tips aren't realistic due to limited preparation time in the morning, consider seeking a volunteer to fill the role of Prep Chef.

Prep chef is a flexible position that can be done anytime during the day or after school by a parent, teacher, or student volunteer, including food skills classes. The prep chef is responsible for prepping food to be served the next day or week. For example: washing and chopping fruits and vegetables, portioning crackers or dry cereals in baggies, boiling eggs, baking muffins or granola bars, making pancakes and freezing them, grating or slicing cheese into individual portions, and much more.

Note that for food safety purposes it is required that all food is prepared at school or in a certified kitchen and not at a volunteer's home.



BRIGHT IDEAS

Look for the unit price when shopping. The unit price breaks the ticket price down to the cost per liter, kilogram, etc. and is usually found on the product price tag attached to the shelf. This information makes it easy to quickly compare different items to find which one has the best value.

