

Food

Your food shopping takes up a large amount of your monthly budget. By looking for ways to save money, you may find increased food costs easier to deal with.

- **Set a spending limit**

Set yourself a weekly/daily spending limit based on your available budget.

For example, using your monthly total for food on your budget, divide this total by the number of weeks/days between paydays and this will give you your weekly/daily limit to stick to.

- **Plan your meals**

Take a look at what food you currently have in the cupboard and freezer. How many meals can you make out of this food? Would buying some cheap staples such as pasta and rice make these ingredients stretch further?

Making a weekly meal planner and using a shopping list will not only reduce your food waste but will also reduce your food costs as you are only buying what you actually need.

- **Batch cooking**

If you have a freezer, this is an effective way to be more efficient. Batch cooking is where you cook enough food for multiple meals and freeze it for when you need it. Batch cooking can save you time, you won't need to cook every day. It also saves you money by using up ingredients before they go off.

You don't need to be an expert chef to plan and batch cook your meals. Learn two or three recipes to get you started. You can find lots of easy-to-follow recipes for free online.

Some examples of meals that work great for batch cooking are:

- Stews/soups
- Spaghetti Bolognese
- Chilli

- Cottage pie
- Bean and sausage hotpot

All these dishes can be made dairy or meat free for vegetarians and vegans.

• Regularly check what food you have in stock

You can buy cheaper cuts of meat, like braising steak, shin or shoulder. They're still delicious and are best cooked in a Slow Cooker.

• Regularly check what food you have in stock

It sounds obvious, but the best way to save money on food is to base your meals around what you have already. It can help you spend less on food shopping, because then you'll only buy the items you really need.

Take note of any tinned foods you have, as well as any dried foods such as rice and pasta, before you head to the shop. It also helps to know what seasoning and sauces you already have. Keep your cupboards tidy so you can see what you have in stock more easily, to avoid re-buying items lurking at the back of the cupboard. Don't forget to check your freezer as well.

• Look at ways to use up fresh food first

If you have fresh food such as fruit, vegetables, meat and dairy, focus on including these in your meals over the next couple of days. Check the 'use by' dates on your fresh food and try to use them up in order of which date is sooner.

Don't be put off if a food item's 'best before' date is today. This date is different to the 'use by' date. It only indicates when the food is in its best condition, and it's usually fine to eat. Don't eat items past their 'use by' date.

- **Saving money at the supermarket**

When you shop for food at the supermarket, you may find that you spend more than you planned to. Supermarkets are designed to tempt you into buying items you may not need.

There are simple tips to help save money on your food shopping.

- **Write a list**

Making a list can keep you from buying items on impulse.

Do your best to stick to it.

You could even use a free app on your phone to make a note of what you need. Some have alerts to remind you when you need to restock an item.

When considering a special offer, make sure to check the item's 'price per weight' on the price ticket rather than how much the price has been reduced. That way, you know exactly how much you're getting for your money and can compare with similar products.

- **Visit the reduced section**

Supermarkets must get rid of food items by the 'best before' date. These items are usually fine to eat for some time afterwards or you can freeze them for a later date.

There may be more than one reduced section in the store. Check the fresh, chilled and stock cupboard sections.

- **Use supermarket coupons**

Before you go shopping, check the supermarket's or product's website to see if there are any coupons available. You can then print them off at home or use them on your phone to get a discount. As with all special offers, only use coupons on items that you know you need.

- **Make a note of what everything costs**

When you get home, look at the receipt and make a note of what you spent on each item. Over time, you'll become familiar with these costs, which will help you when you plan your meals.

- **Downshift to a cheaper supermarket**

If you haven't already, consider switching to a cheaper supermarket. Doing this could save you hundreds of pounds a year. Try looking for websites that compare prices between different supermarkets.

– Have a meat-free day

Popular meat cuts such as chicken breast and lean mince can be expensive. By having at least one meat free day each week, you could save a considerable amount of money over time.

– Add more vegetables to bulk up your meals

Pulses such as beans and lentils can make you feel full for longer and are a good source of protein and other nutrients.

– Only buy what you can use or freeze

When buying fresh fruit and vegetables only buy what you can use in the next couple of days.

If you're not using them straight away, freeze meat or fish as soon as you get home, and include them in your next meal plan.

– Saving money on fruit and vegetables

The NHS recommends that we eat at least five 80-gram portions of fruit and vegetables a day. Vegetables add bulk to your meal, and because they contain a lot of water, they help you stay hydrated.

Fruit and vegetables tend to go off quickly, which can be both frustrating and costly if you don't use them up in time.

Frozen fruit and veg are just as nutritious as fresh. The frozen variety is often cheaper and can last much longer.

Buy frozen fruit and veg where you can. If you have fresh fruit and veg, try freezing it before it goes off. You can keep fruit and veg in the freezer for up to a year, so there's plenty of opportunity to use them up.

• Use cashback and loyalty points

If you have previously used cashback websites, you may have some available credit on your account that you can trade in for cash. If possible, try trading the cashback in for a specific retailer or chain. This'll often give your cashback an extra boost.

Do you have a loyalty card where you collect points while shopping? Check to see if you can use these points to help reduce your food shopping and other living costs.

- **Reducing Food Waste Apps**

There are currently a number of Apps available which can both provide practical tips in reducing your own food waste and locations where you can purchase food at a reduced cost or share food, which would otherwise be thrown away.

More information on these apps can be found following the link below:

<https://www.oddbox.co.uk/blog/7-apps-that-are-helping-reduce-food-waste>

Assistance with food costs

- **Healthy Start Voucher Scheme**

This is a scheme for pregnant women (at least 10 weeks) or parents who have a child under 4 years old.

The Healthy Start card is used to buy milk, fresh or frozen fruit and veg and formula milk. In addition, they can also be used to obtain Healthy Start vitamins for both pregnant mum and young child.

You can apply online or via telephone:

Website <https://www.healthystart.nhs.uk/>

Telephone 0300 330 7010

- **Free school meals**

If you receive certain benefits your child may be eligible for free school meals. This can help to reduce some of your day-to-day costs.

You can find out if your child is eligible for free school meals on the government website. <https://www.gov.uk/apply-free-school-meals>

- **Community Larders**

Community larders are open to everyone and enable us to reduce food waste by taking surplus food collected from supermarkets and giving people a chance to use it.

This helps to reduce our impact on the environment and helps save money – everyone's a winner!

- **St Austell and surrounding areas**

Treverbyn Community Hall,

Treverbyn Road, Stenalees, Cornwall. PL26 8TL.

Surrounding areas are covered by mobile larders, please see the below website for more information:

<https://www.thehall.org.uk/communitylarders/>

- **Treverbyn Hall Food Club**

Treverbyn Hall run a food club that you can join for free. For £3.00 you can get a Lucky Dip Bag. This gives a bag of food worth approximately £7. You can have up to 2 bags per week

In very limited circumstance, delivery of the food bags can be arranged, but the majority of food bags are collected in person at local larders / fridges.

- **Newquay Area**

- **Store House**

Seymour Avenue, Newquay TR7 1BL.

Please look at the following link for more information.

<https://newquay.foodbank.org.uk/2021/02/05/introducing-the-new-newquay-store-house/>

- **Truro Area**

- **Malabar Food Club**

For a yearly membership of £1, members can choose food from a selection of surplus food from local supermarkets and the CHAOS farm.

Malabar Community Annexe
Albany Rd, Truro TR1 3ND

Wednesdays 2.30pm – 4pm

Telephone: 07443854360 or 07730892215

- **Foodbanks**

Foodbanks don't just provide food; they can also assist with some essential household items. The largest foodbank organisation in the UK the Trussell Trust but we also have access to other smaller, local groups running foodbanks, if the Trussell Trust does not cover your area.

The foodbank will make sure you get a food parcel which meets the needs of the number of adults and children in your household and any dietary requirements. This will usually include:

- Several meals, usually enough for three days
- Other essential household items, like toiletries or cleaning products
- Small top-ups of credit for gas or electric pre-payment meters (available at some foodbanks)

Please contact us on 01726 874450 or email FIA@oceanhousing.com to request a foodbank voucher, if you are struggling with your food costs