

... SEPTEMBER 2010 ...

QUICK TAKES

HEALTHY FOOD SHOPPING STRATEGIES

A smart shopping strategy can help you put healthy foods on your table even when the budget is tight. The key points to keep in mind are:

Make a shopping list and stick to it: Be sure to include staples that you are running low on and the ingredients you need for the upcoming week's meals.

Shop for in-season produce: If you are unsure what's in-season, ask your produce manager for advice on seasonality and good value.

Frozen fruits and veggies can be a healthful bargain: Freezing produce immediately after harvest preserves high levels of vitamins and nutrients.

Try store brands: Grocery retailers have been expanding into healthy options.



Prepared Meals at the Supermarket

More and more people are using the supermarket as a place to pick up prepared meals. A survey by the Food Marketing Institute found that 27 percent of people said they got most of their take-out from supermarkets, compared with 35 percent from fast-food restaurants and 18 percent from full-service eateries. But often prepared meals do not stack up nutritionally to home-cooked meals.

Like many meals prepared outside the home, they can be high in fat and sodium, and are less likely to come with vegetables. The not-so-surprising results of the 2009 Shopping for Health survey found that some of the key reasons consumers find it hard to eat healthy foods are busy schedules, difficulty finding healthy fast-foods and the higher cost of healthy foods.

Putting quick, healthy, economical options on your dinner table is not as hard as you may think. Here are some strategies to get started at your supermarket.

Start with a rotisserie chicken

A rotisserie chicken is an affordable (\$7 to \$8), versatile source of lean protein that can be a great start to a variety of quick meals. Here are a few meals you can pull together in no time:

Meal 1 - Simple Roast Chicken Dinner: Serve some simple sides with a rotisserie chicken for a quick and healthy meal. Grab a baked potato or sweet potato and pair this with a bag of steamed veggies of choice.

Meal 2 - Asian Chicken Salad: Shred rotisserie chicken and mix with a bag of broccoli slaw, sliced almonds and light Asian sesame dressing. Serve with a fresh baguette.

Meal 3 - Chicken Soft Tacos: Mix picante sauce, lime juice, chili powder, shredded chicken and shredded lettuce and toss until evenly coated. Scoop into soft tortillas and top with shredded low-fat cheese and fat-free sour cream if desired.

Go see the seafood counter

Many Americans shy away from preparing seafood. More than twice as much fish is ordered at restaurants than is prepared at home. Cooking most seafood is simple and quick. It can be costly, but most supermarkets run weekly specials that make it more affordable. Give this virtually fat-free protein source a try.

Meal 1 - Catch of the Day: Select whichever fish is on sale such as scod, tilapia or salmon and pick your cooking method. Some of the quickest are broiling, steaming or sautéing in a pan. Buy a bag of prewashed baby spinach and a box of quick cooking whole-wheat couscous, which only tacks on an extra 10 minutes to your meal prep.

Meal 2 - Shrimp Caesar salad: You can often find good deals on bags of frozen cooked shrimp at the supermarket. Defrost them in small batches by running them under cold water. These can be tossed with prepared Caesar salad mix for a super speedy meal. You could also make your own with torn romaine lettuce, seasoned croutons, Parmesan cheese, cherry tomatoes and light Caesar dressing. Serve with a whole-grain roll.

Meal 3 - Go for sushi: Both low in fat and high in healthy omega-3 fatty acids, sushi is one of your best bets when running into your local grocer for dinner. If you don't like the thought of raw fish, most groceries stock a selection of cooked fish sushi or even veggie-only sushi.

Prepared Meals at the Supermarket (cont.)

Create a sensational salad

Supermarket salad bars vary from store to store. While generally getting a salad is a healthy choice, you do have to watch your toppings and dressings. Try these tips on getting the convenience of the salad bar while saving some money.

Pick your salad bar stand-bys

Some favorites are dark leafy greens like romaine lettuce and baby spinach, and colorful raw veggies like cucumbers, carrots, tomatoes, broccoli and bell peppers.

Watch the fat!

Beware of mayonnaise-laden salads and high-fat cheeses. Steer towards lean proteins like egg whites, flaked tuna, grilled chicken, tofu, cottage cheese and beans.

BYO protein

Keep in mind that salad bars are typically one cost per pound (approx. \$5 per pound). If you want to lower the cost of your salad, purchase the heavy items like beans, tuna and cottage cheese separately.

Meal 1 - Greek Garbanzo Bean Salad: Grab a can of garbanzo beans and a package of feta cheese. Next, visit the salad bar for cucumbers, tomatoes, red onion and olives. Combine the ingredients with low-fat Italian salad dressing, lemon juice, garlic and grinding of fresh pepper.

Meal 2 - Nicoise-style Tuna Salad With White Beans & Olives: Pick up a can of tuna, white beans and sliced olives as well as a steamer bag of green beans and some hard-boiled eggs and red onions from the salad bar. Toss these ingredients with olive oil and lemon juice.

Meal 3 - Cuban Grilled Chicken Salad: Toss romaine lettuce with onion, avocado and colorful bell peppers. Top salad with black beans, pineapple chunks, and sliced grilled chicken. Whisk together olive oil, lime juice, garlic, salt and pepper, and drizzle over salad.

Soup it up

To create a quick, hearty and healthy soup, start with a lower-sodium canned soup (about \$2 per can) and add frozen diced vegetables, cooked macaroni or quick-cooking brown rice, and leftover diced cooked chicken, turkey or beans.

Meal 1 - Curried Lentil and Chicken Sausage Soup: Begin with a can of lentil soup and add curry powder, cumin, precooked chicken sausage and a bunch of fresh spinach. Serve with hearty fresh bread.

Meal 2 - Black Bean Soup: Begin with a can of black bean soup and top with plain nonfat Greek yogurt, fresh chopped tomatoes, shredded cheddar cheese and toasted corn tortilla strips.

Meal 3 - Split Pea, Cauliflower and Ham Soup: Begin with a can of split pea soup. Add half of a bag of frozen steamed chopped cauliflower and thick sliced deli ham (honey or low sodium) cut into cubes.

When you have more time at the supermarket, shop with an eye toward fast and nutritious options that you can put together when you are short on time. The more meals you make on your own, the better. But you can find healthy prepared options.

Source: Inverness Medical

Chicken and Tortellini Stew Takes about 30 minutes | Makes 6 servings

Ingredients

2 teaspoons olive
1 onion, chopped
1 red or green bell pepper, cut into short, thin slices
3 carrots, sliced
1 clove garlic, minced
1 32-oz package low-sodium chicken or vegetable broth
2 cups water
1 1/3 cups (4 oz/120 ml) dried cheese-and-spinach tortellini
1 small zucchini, cut in half lengthwise and sliced into thin half-circles
6 white mushrooms, sliced
1/2 teaspoon dried thyme or oregano
about 2 cups diced chicken (from a rotisserie chicken)
1 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley
Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
Grated fresh Parmesan, optional

Preparation

1. In a large, deep skillet or Dutch oven, heat the oil over medium heat. Add the onion, bell pepper, carrots and garlic and cook until they begin to soften, about 7 minutes.
2. Add the broth and water to the pan and bring to a gentle boil. Add the tortellini, zucchini, mushrooms and thyme or oregano. Once the broth comes back to a boil, cook for 10 minutes.
3. Stir chicken and cook until heated through. Stir in the fresh parsley. Taste the stew and add salt and pepper as desired. Ladle into bowls and garnish with a little Parmesan.



Nutritional info

per serving
195 Calories
7g Fat
2g Saturated fat
0g Trans fat
17g Protein
15g Carbohydrate
2g Fiber
210mg Sodium
57mg Calcium

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