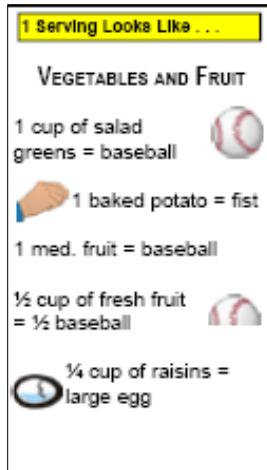


EAT HEALTHY AND SAVE YOUR BANK ACCOUNT



There is no need to break the bank to eat healthy foods. You and your budget can have a healthy outcome with a

little information and planning. People often believe that eating healthy, including lots of fruits and vegetables, is beyond their budget. But there are ways to stretch the grocery budget. Stock up on staples such as beans, brown rice, oatmeal and barley; check the sale ads to see what is on special and shop produce that is in season. Fresh produce tastes better and costs less when it's in season." One-half cup of fresh fruit equals one

serving. By eating the proper serving sizes, you can also reduce food costs.

The best way to get recommended amounts of essential nutrients needed for health is to eat a well-balanced diet containing a variety of foods and by following the USDA MyPyramid.

The MyPyramid is found at <http://www.mypyramid.gov> In addition to a food and fitness tracker, it now includes a menu planner.

WAYS TO STRETCH THE GROCERY BUDGET:

- ◆ Stock up on staples.
- ◆ Check the sale ads when planning your weekly menu and shopping list.
- ◆ Create your weekly menu or download one from www.oces.tulsacounty.org
- ◆ Stick to the list while shopping.
- ◆ Shop for produce that is in season.
- ◆ Avoid paying for pre-packaged foods that are high in cost and low in nutrients.

By: Charlotte Richert, OSU Extension Family & Consumer Sciences Educator

Safe Handling of Fruits and Vegetables

An average of 4 strangers have touched the apple you are about to eat. At least 20 people may have handled the tomato. Proper handling of fruits & vegetables reduces the risk of food borne illness. Fresh produce could become contaminated either before or after it is harvested, during food preparation or in storage.

Eating contaminated produce can lead to

serious illness and sometimes fatal infections. However the benefits of fresh produce outweighs any food safety risks. Consumers should follow these food safety practices and stay alert to health bulletins to reduce any risks:

- Wash produce under running water just before eating, cutting or cooking. Scrub firm produce with a clean produce brush. Drying produce with a clean cloth or paper towel may reduce bacteria that may be present. Fruit and vegetable washes have not been proven to remove any additional soil. Save your money!
- Purchase items that are not bruised or damaged.
- Be sure to keep fresh fruits and vegetables separate from meat, poultry and seafood.
- Choose fresh cut produce such as half a watermelon or bagged mixed salad greens that are refrigerated or surrounded by ice. Do not buy pre-washed salads with a lot of brown-edged pieces or if greens are very wet.
- Proper storage affects both quality and safety. Certain fruits and vegetables retain the highest quality when stored in a clean refrigerator at 40° F or below. Produce that is purchased pre-cut or peeled should be refrigerated to maintain quality and safety.
- All produce should be washed, even those that will be peeled before eating.

Buying Tips for Fruits and Vegetables

By: Sue Gray, OSU Extension Horticulture Educator

Fruits and vegetables are live food. They are still respiring when harvested, shipped, purchased and stored by us. Produce does not improve in storage, but is kept at certain temperatures and humidity levels to keep it from decaying.

Produce in grocery stores has often been transported over one thousand miles. By the time it gets to Oklahoma it has only 5 to 7 days of storage remaining before it is inedible.

To get the most from what we spend on produce, try to buy it from as local a source as possible. For ALL produce, there are certain indicators we can learn about to help spot the very best that's in the bin:

Firm, free from cuts and bruises and other damage, as well as the stem end free of rot. Specific produce pointers and storage tips follow:

Irish potatoes: Firm, smooth shape, no cuts, no sprouting eyes, no green cast to skin. *Cool, moist.*

Carrots: Packaged, pre-shaped "baby carrots" should have a late "sell-by" date, should look moist, but not slimy. Feel the package to check for firmness. *Cold, moist.*

Apples and Pears: Firm, shiny, stem in place with a bulge at the top showing where it was detached from the tree. A flexible stem indicates freshness. *Cold, moist.*

Cantaloupe: Firm, with stem detached fully to show a "full moon" appearance. Fragrance should be melon-like and sweet. *Cold moist.*

Tomatoes: Firm, yet just giving under pressure if squeezed, and a good tomato fragrance. *Cool and dry.*

Peppers: Firm, not squeezable, with stem cleanly cut. Jalapenos can have cracks in skin, indicating fuller ripeness. *Cool, moist.*

Cucumber: Firm, smooth dark green skin. Yellow indicates over maturity. *Cool, moist. (under 45 degrees F will cause pitting a.k.a. cold damage)*

Grapes: Green stems and soft to touch, indicating full ripeness. *Cold, moist.*

Summer Squash: Yellow straight and crookneck: Small, light yellow color, skin oozes fluid if pierced. Zucchini, deep green, shiny, also with tender skin. *Cool, moist.*

Onions: Firm, clear papery skin intact, stem end firm and not mushy. *Cool, dry.*

Okra: Small, 2 to 3 inch pods, no black spots, indicating cold storage damage. *Cool/moist.*

Sweet Corn: Husk fresh & green, kernels plump, easily punctured, revealing milky fluid. Ears filled to the tip. Avoid cobs with very soft, small kernels that are not ripe. Overripe kernels will be large and tough. *Store cold and moist.*

Leafy Salad Greens: Spinach, lettuce, collards, mustard, etc. should all be bright green & crisp. Wilted, yellowed leaves indicate age and poor quality. *Cold moist storage is best.*



By: Bruce Peverley, OSU Extension Ag Educator

How to Buy Beef in Bulk

Meat is a major cost in a family's grocery budget. One way to reduce this cost is by buying beef in bulk. This will depend on your situation. Basically, there are three ways to buy meat:

- As a whole carcass or a side (includes one- hind and one forequarter).
- As a wholesale cut such as a loin, round, chuck or rib.
- As a retail cut.

These questions will help determine what is best for your situation: What cuts of beef are most commonly served? How much does a family consume in a certain period of time? How many pounds of beef will my freezer hold? An average beef carcass weighs 700 pounds. A side will generally weigh about 350 pounds. This refers to the hanging or gross weight by which the carcass is sold. Remember: the price one pays is based on hanging weight. The average weight loss from cutting or trimming is about 25 percent. Therefore, a 700 pound carcass will yield about 525 pounds of usable meat cuts, a side about 262 pounds. A rule of thumb for carcass beef is 25% waste, 25% ground beef, 25% steaks and 25% roasts.

When purchasing a whole carcass or side, a variety of high and low priced cuts are obtained. You'll get some cuts such as brisket, short ribs and shank not normally purchased. Meat markets generally convert these cuts to ground beef and stew meats. To be a "good buy" the buyer must use every cut made from the carcass. If a family doesn't eat certain cuts, have them made into ground beef. If you mainly use ground beef, it may be wise to only purchase a fore-quarter. A fore-quarter has less tender cuts, but will provide a higher percentage of lean cuts at a lower cost than a side. Advantages of buying a full side or quarter of beef are:

1. You determine the cutting order (what cuts you want the quarter or side cut into).
2. Roasts and steaks can be cut to desired weight and thickness.
3. Food budget can be planned for longer periods since actual meat costs are known.
4. Many trips to the market can be eliminated,

In general, one cubic foot of freezer space will hold 350 pounds of cut and wrapped

meat. Frozen beef can be stored from 9 to 12 months.

Below is one example of buying a side of beef from a meat processing center.

Presently the cost of a 350 pound side is \$1.85/pound or \$647.50. Cost of processing the side (cutting and wrapping) is .50/pound or \$175. Total cost to buy and process the side of beef is \$822.50. The 350 pound hanging side will yield about 263 pounds of useable cuts after processing losses (fat and bone). The average cost for a pound of usable cuts from the side will be \$3.13 per pound.

Remember, after processing, a side will yield 1/3 ground beef, 1/3 steaks, and 1/3 roasts. On average, it is estimated that the consumer can save \$200 by purchasing a side of beef rather than buying retail cuts.

OSU EXTENSION SERVICE, TULSA COUNTY
4116 E. 15TH STREET
TULSA, OK 74112
(918) 746-3700
MORE INFORMATION:
WWW.OCES.TULSACOUNTY.ORG