



## Cutting Food Costs in These Times of Economic Downturn

People who embrace change are likely to thrive in the upcoming economy; those who fight to maintain their current comforts will suffer. With the housing market in a crisis, the US dollar's value falling, and gas prices going crazy, now, more than ever before, the time has come to make a committed decision to become healthy through proper nutrition. Over the past 35 years I have encouraged people to eat a starch-based diet—few have listened. Escalating costs of food, and medical care, as well as poor health, will force this long-overdue shift in people's food choices. If you have not done so already, I encourage you to get ahead of the crowd. Not only will you be more likely to survive financially (at least), but you will also help accelerate trends that will have a ripple effect benefitting everyone.

The first step to surviving an economic crunch is to think, "How do I cut my expenses?" Focus on those things you can control. You have 100% control over the foods you buy and eat. Food is one of the largest single monthly purchases consumers make. According to Merrill Lynch, at the end of 2007, "36 percent of consumers' disposable income went to food, energy, and medical care, a bigger chunk of income than at any time since records were first kept in 1960." (<http://www.kansascity.com/449/story/543331.html>) In this newsletter I will address the costs of food, which are intimately related to costs of medical care—a subject of an upcoming newsletter.

### The Escalating Cost of Food

Food is one of our three basic needs for survival (air and water are the other two). Most people living in developed countries (US, Europe, Australia, New Zealand, etc.) have enjoyed a high standard of living and an abundance of relatively cheap food. However, the cost of food has been rising worldwide each year, and at a faster rate than ever before. Two major developments account for this:

People of underdeveloped countries, especially India and China, are prospering and can now purchase more food and more expensive foods, like meat and dairy products. Seems as if everyone wants to eat like Americans eat—more accurately described as "the diet of kings and queens." Producing food—animals requires large amounts of grain. The second reason is that the production of biofuels made from all kinds crops, from corn to nuts, is taking away from the food supply. Worldwide demand is just beginning to deprive people in developed countries of their cheap foods. Plan on this trend accelerating.

### Animal Foods Are Expensive

Animal foods, like meat, poultry, fish, milk, and cheese, are expensive. Approximately one-third of the calories consumed by people living in developed nations are from animal sources. In the near future, the diet of the average Westerner will, of necessity, include more grains, legumes, tubers, fruits, and vegetables, and significantly fewer animal products.

On average, moderately active women consume about 2000 calories daily and men 2500

#### Cost of Animal-derived Foods

Consider the costs of these animal foods to provide for your daily calorie needs\*:

Food and weight	Unit Cost (USD)	Cost of 2500 Calories (USD)
1 lb. Rib Eye Beef	9.99	24.29
1 lb. Ground beef	2.99	6.55
1 lb. Chicken breast	3.99	13.72
1 lb. Salmon	9.99	30.60
1 lb. Cheddar Cheese	6.29	8.54
1/2 gallon milk	2.49	10.37

\*Cooking costs not included; lb. = pound = .454 Kg; USD = United States Dollar; Prices in Northern California.

calories. You have a choice of which foods will provide for your energy needs. The cost of animal-food centered meals cooked at home for one person could easily be \$10 a day or more.

**Eating Out Is Expensive**

**Cost of Fast Foods**

Consider the costs of these fast foods to provide for your daily calorie needs\*:

Food	Unit Cost (USD)	Cost of 2500 Calories (USD)
Taco Bell Taco	0.99	14.56
Taco Bell Steak Burrito	3.19	12.65
Taco Bell Chicken Salad	5.39	17.06
KFC Snacker	1.19	9.30
KFC Oven Roasted Twister	3.59	19.10
Burger King Whopper	2.99	11.12
Burger King Triple Whopper	4.99	11.03
BK Chicken Sandwich	3.99	12.62
BK Big Fish Sandwich	3.39	13.24
McDonalds Big Mac	3.19	14.77
McDonalds Large Fries	2.00	8.77
McDonalds Chicken Sandwich	3.49	20.77
McDonalds Fish Sandwich	3.19	20.98
Round Table Veggie Pizza	21.35	19.34
Round Table Ulti-meat Pizza	21.35	14.83

USD = United States Dollar; Prices in Northern California.

People do not realize how much money they spend in restaurants, and on fast food. In the United States about half of the food dollar is spent eating out—with about 40% of that going to full-service restaurants and 40% to fast food <http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/aer829/aer829.pdf>). At least one-third of American adults and children eat at a fast food restaurant daily. The expensive habit of eating out is already changing; the National Restaurant Association says 54 percent of restaurants reported declining traffic in January of 2008, and the government says eating at home increased last year for the first time since 2001 <http://www.kansascity.com/449/story/543331.html> Spending \$14 for a full day's worth of fast food meals would not be unusual.

**Eat for Less than \$3 a Day on The McDougall Diet**

The McDougall Diet is based on starches—potatoes, grains, and legumes. These plant foods, which provide for the bulk of your calories, cut expenses in several important ways. Starches are inherently inexpensive—a full days supply of calories from starches will cost less than \$1.50. You can stockpile grains, potatoes and legumes, cutting costs of transportation to the market. These foods are easily stored for long periods of time without the energy costs associated with refrigeration. Since they do not easily spoil there is little wastage. Clean up after plant-based, low-fat meals is easy and cheap because there is no grease requiring expensive, environmentally toxic, cleansers. A simple rinse will often do.

The McDougall diet also includes some perishable fruits and green and yellow vegetables. These items are more expensive than starches; but they are consumed in small amounts; thus, adding relatively little to the food bill. Focusing on fruits and vegetables that are in season will also help

keep your food budget affordable. With the starch component costing less than \$1.50 daily, this leaves an additional \$1.50 to spend on fruits and green and yellow vegetables; keeping the total food costs at

\$3 a day per person on the McDougall Diet.

Mary provides several of our favorite inexpensive meals in her recipe section this month. For example, the ingredients for her Stove Top Stew cost \$1.40 (fills up four adults) and the Pea Soup ingredients cost \$1.80 (fills up 6 adults).

### Cost of Common Starches

Consider the costs of these tubers, legumes, and grains to provide for your daily calorie needs\*:

Food	Unit Cost (USD)	Cost of 2500 Calories (USD)
20 lb. White potatoes	6.99	1.75
10 lb. Sweet potatoes	5.99	3.00
25 lb. Pinto Beans	13.79	1.05
25 lb. Rice (brown)	24.75	1.52
50 lb. Rice (white)	14.99	0.44
120 Corn Tortillas	2.79	1.00
50 lb. Corn Grits	41.99	1.28
	6.99	
9 lb. Oatmeal		1.09

\*Cooking costs not included; lb. = pound = .454 Kg; USD = United States Dollar; Prices in Northern California.

### Cost Saving Tips

- Buy large quantities of long-lasting products
- Buy unprocessed foods
- Buy in bulk from health-food stores, coops, and grocery stores
- Shop warehouse stores (wholesale clubs)
- Buy on-line by mail order
- Make food at home from basic ingredients; don't eat out
- Rely on starches for calories
- Buy fruits and vegetables that are in season
- Shop at farmers' markets
- Plant a garden
- Use a well-planned grocery list
- Shop after meals, not when you're hungry
- Shop efficiently to cut down on gasoline-consuming trips to the stores
- If going to a place nearby, walk or cycle instead of using the car.

### Should You Store Food for an Emergency?

Buying large amounts of food could be a sound financial investment considering the escalating costs of foods. Worries about worldwide catastrophe from epidemics of avian flu, nuclear war, financial depression, and devastations predicted from global warming, may cause some people to consider stocking up on food. The Latter Day Saints (Mormon) Church recommends storing a full year's supply of food. Their recommendations focus on a starch-based meal plan, because this is the only practical way such storage

can be done. A family of four would store 1200 pounds of grains (corn, wheat, rice) and 250 pounds of legumes, plus additional canned and packaged fruits and vegetables in order to provide for one year. Recommendations for quantities and items to purchase (<http://lds.about.com/library/bl/faq/blcalculator.htm>) and effective means of storage (<http://www.fcs.uga.edu/pubs/current/FDNS-E-34-1.html>) can be found through the Internet. You will also be able to locate companies dedicated to providing survival foods. <http://survivalacres.com/>

### **Winning in the New Economy**

Winning during an economic crunch involves behaviors not much different than those you should already be doing during good times. Plus, if you do these sensible things now you are less likely to find yourself enduring a financial crisis later. A person spending \$14 a day eating at fast food restaurants could be spending \$3 by eating a starch-based diet at home. This translates into \$11 per day savings. (This means \$330 a month and \$4015 per year saved, which happens to be enough to attend the McDougall 10-day live-in Program in Santa Rosa, CA—so you might consider the McDougall Program as a free program.) And think about the health benefits gained by avoiding all that fat and cholesterol. Money saved on food can be put away and/or spent on everything else. But one thing you do not want to spend your money on is more medical care.