March is Nutrition Month!

While ideally we’d like to eat nutritiously throughout the entire year, March is National Nutrition Month. This month has a focus on eating healthy on a budget. There is a misconception that eating nutritiously is expensive and that is just not true. This newsletter will provide you with tips to shop, prepare and cook on a budget.

Nicole’s Nutritional Notes

Eating Healthy on a Budget

There are misconceptions out there that healthy food = expensive food. However, this is not necessarily the truth. This newsletter contains some tips to help you make choices that are not only healthy, but also economical. All you need to do is follow the 3 P’s.

PLAN, PURCHASE & PREPARE

1. Plan
   - Plan meals and snacks for the week using your regular budget
   - Use online resources to find quick and simple recipes
   - Prepare meals that will stretch pricier food items, such as stews, casseroles, stir-fried dishes
   - Create a grocery list before going to the grocery store
   - Check for sales and coupons in the newspaper or online
   - If your grocery store has a membership, sign up!

2. Purchase
   - Go to the grocery store when you are NOT hungry and not in a hurry
   - Only buy items on your grocery list and stay out of the aisles that don’t contain items from your list
   - Store brands are typically cheaper to purchase
   - Compare unit prices on shelves between brands to get the best price
   - Bulk items/family packs usually cost less
   - Purchase fresh fruits/vegetables that are in season; buy canned vegetables with less salt
   - Pre-packaged, pre-cut items are convenient but typically more expensive than those that require more prep time
   - Good low-cost items available all year include:
     - Protein – beans
     - Vegetables – carrots, greens, potatoes
     - Fruit – apples, bananas

3. Prepare
   - Some meal items can be prepared in advance; pre-cook on days when you aren’t that busy
   - Double or triple up on recipes and freeze meal-sized containers of soups and casseroles or divide into individual portions
   - Try a few meatless meals by substituting with beans and peas or try ‘no-cook’ meals like salads.
   - Incorporate leftovers into a subsequent meal
Agency Spotlight

The Junior League of Ann Arbor is sponsoring a produce distribution for the families of Estabrook Elementary School in Ypsilanti. Thanks to this great collaboration between Food Gatherers, The Junior League and Estabrook, hundreds of children and families will be able to supplement their diet with fresh produce! They even had a taste test for the students of grapes and cucumbers.

10 tips for affordable vegetables and fruits
(USDA - choosemyplate.gov)

1. Celebrate the season – buy fresh produce that are in season. These are easier to find, have more flavor and are typically less expensive. Try your local farmer’s market when the season is right!
2. Why pay full price? – check the local newspaper, online and at the store for sales, coupons and specials that will cut food costs. Often, you can get more for less by visiting larger grocery stores.
3. Stick to your list – plan out your meals ahead of time and make a grocery list. You will save money by buying only what you need. Don’t shop when you’re hungry. Shopping after eating will make it easier to pass on the tempting snack foods. You’ll have more of your food budget for vegetables and fruits.
4. Try canned or frozen – compare the price and the number of servings from fresh, canned and frozen forms of the same fruit or vegetable. Canned and frozen items may be less expensive than fresh. For canned items, choose fruit canned in 100% fruit juice and vegetables with “low sodium” or “no salt added” on the label.
5. Buy small amounts frequently – some fresh fruits and vegetables don’t last long, so buy small amounts more often to ensure you can eat the foods without throwing any away.
6. Buy in bulk when items are on sale – for fresh fruits or vegetables you use often, a large size bag is the better buy. Canned or frozen fruits or vegetables can be bought in large quantities when they are on sale, since they last much longer.
7. Store brands – buy store brands when possible. You will get the same or similar product for a cheaper price. If your grocery store has a membership card, sign up for even more savings.
8. Keep it simple – buy fruits and vegetables in their simplest form. Pre-cut, pre-washed, ready-to-eat, and processed foods are convenient, but often cost much more than when purchased in their basic forms.
9. Plant your own – start a garden for fresh, inexpensive, flavorful additions to meals. Herbs, cucumbers, peppers or tomatoes are good options for beginners.
10. Plan and cook smart – prepare and freeze vegetable soups, stews or dishes in advance. This saves time and money. Add leftover vegetables to casseroles or blend them to make soup. Overripe fruit is great for smoothies or in baking.

March is Nutrition Month! Check out choosemyplate.gov for more information.
Tips: Best Buys for Cost and Nutrition

Breads & Grains:

- Look for bargains on day old bread. It costs less but is still nutritious.
- Buy regular rice, oatmeal and grits instead of instant to save on money, sugar and calories.

Vegetables & Salads:

- Buy large bags of frozen vegetables. Seal tightly in the freezer between uses.
- Avoid pre-bagged salad mixes. They are usually more expensive and spoil faster.

Fruits:

- Buy fresh fruits in season when they generally cost least.
- Frozen and canned fruits are a smart choice all year round.

Low-Fat Milk Products:

- Buy fresh, low-fat milk, yogurt and cheese in the largest size that can be used before spoiling. Larger containers cost less than smaller sizes.
- Ultra-pasteurized milk has a longer expiration date and won’t spoil as fast.

Meat & Beans:

- Dried beans and peas are a good source of protein and fiber. They last a long time without spoiling.
- Chuck or bottom round roast has less fat and is cheaper than sirloin.
- Look for specials at the meat counter. Buy meat on sale for big savings.
- Buy meat in large bulk packages to save money. Freeze portions you might not use right away to prevent spoiling.

What’s New?

Know someone that might benefit from food stamps/food assistance? We have several partner agencies that can help your clients apply. Partner agencies that currently participate include:

- Calvary Bible Church – Ypsilanti
- Salvation Army – Ypsilanti
- Hope Center – Ypsilanti
- Salvation Army – Ann Arbor
- Faith in Action – Chelsea
- Aid in Milan – Milan
- Active Faith – South Lyon
- Northfield Human Services – Whitmore Lake

Check out our website for more information:
Foodgatherers.org > Need Food > Individuals in Need of Food > Food Stamps/SNAP

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Great Snack! Peanut Butter Pita Pockets
(Iowa State University Extension)
Serves: 4
Serving size: ½ sandwich
Cost per serving: $0.31

Ingredients:
2 apples, pears, bananas, peaches or mangoes
2 medium whole wheat pita pockets
¼ cup chunky peanut butter

Instructions:
Wash and slice fruit. Cut pitas in half to make 4 pockets. Warm each pita half in the microwave for about 10 seconds to make them more flexible. Carefully open each pocket and spread about 1 Tablespoon of peanut butter on the inside walls of each pita half. Fill each pocket with sliced fruit. Serve at room temperature.

Nutrition Facts Per Serving: Calories 221, Total Fat 8.9g, Sodium 249mg, Dietary Fiber 5.8g, Protein 7.2g

Great Dinner! Crispy Salmon Patties
(Iowa State University Extension)
Serves: 6
Serving Size: 1 patty
Per Serving: $0.52

Ingredients:
1 (14.75-oz) can salmon, drained
1 egg
1 slice whole-wheat bread, shredded or 5 crushed saltine crackers
1/3 cup white onion, chopped fine
1 medium garlic clove, minced
Pinch of black pepper
½ teaspoon seasoning (paprika, chili powder, dill weed)
2 teaspoons vegetable or olive oil

Instructions:
Remove any large bones and skin from salmon. Break into chunks with fork. Break egg into a large bowl. Whisk with fork. Add salmon, bread/crackers, onion, garlic, pepper and additional seasoning. Mix gently. Form into 6 patties about ½ inch thick. Heat oil over medium heat in a large skillet. Place patties on hot oil skillet. Leave skilled uncovered. Cook 3 minutes. Turn patties over and cook the other side 3-4 minutes to a temperature of 145°F. Serve immediately. Makes a great sandwich with whole wheat bread, tomato, lettuce and onions.

Nutrition Facts Per Serving: Calories 140, Total Fat 6g, Sodium 310mg, Protein 18g

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