

Everything You Need To Successfully Grocery Shop

as a busy college student on a budget



By: Nohemi Lopez, Dietetic Intern

Being a college student can make grocery shopping feel like a chore. Between commuting, attending classes, and doing homework, it can feel like the extra errand you just don't want to run. It's *okay* if you don't like grocery shopping, you can own that and still take steps to make grocery shopping feel a little easier to do. When you are making sure you're actually using the food you buy and realize how beneficial it can be (for your health, and your wallet), you'll find more motivation to get it done!

Some (indirect) benefits of grocery shopping:

- 1. Eat more fruits, veggies & other nutrient-dense foods.**
- 2. Eat more home-cooked meals.**
- 3. Stay well-nourished so you can truly focus on what's important. whether that's your family, job, or school.**

In this post, I'm going to give you practical tips on not only how to plan your weekly meals, but also how to navigate the grocery store (and save money while doing it!).



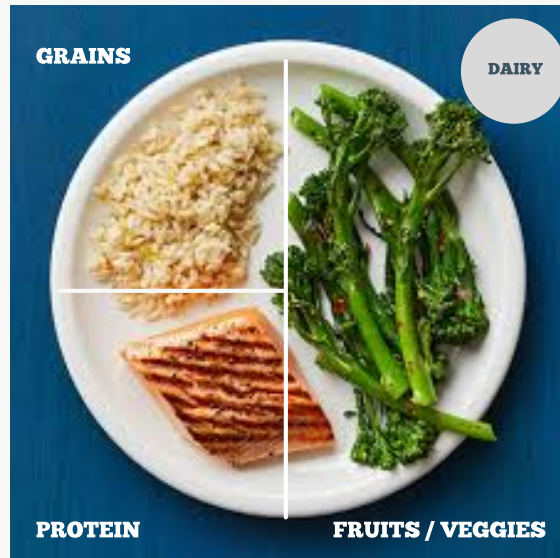
what to expect

- 1 - You will learn how to build balanced meals + how to meal plan
- 2 - You will learn how to create a grocery list & strategically shop the store
- 3- Budget-friendly shopping tips & tricks

Creating a Balanced Meal

The Plate Method

Eating balanced meals will allow you to not only feel full and satisfied after eating, **but will also provide you with the energy you need to focus on the things that matter.**



It's good to note here that the Plate Method is a guide and goal, but not a rule. The guide is for your plate to be approximately 1/4 protein, 1/4 grains, and 1/2 veggies and/or fruits. You will see that you can get very creative with what you choose to mix & match.

The next step will be the fun part: choosing your meals for the week!

Meal Planning. . . Do I have to?

Remember, the end goal of all of this is to feel confident in the grocery store. It's hard to feel confident when you go in without a plan and have no idea what foods you'll need for the week. **Planning out your meals in advance will help you save you time and money.**

When planning out your meals:
Pick 2-3 breakfasts, lunches, and dinners that you can rotate throughout the week.
Not sure what I mean? No worries!
I'll explain.



Planning Out Your Meals

Pick 2-3 and rotate

By picking 2-3 recipes for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, you can rotate them throughout the week and simplify your whole routine. From our sample meal plan down below, you can see that we have planned overnight oats Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. **This makes it so that there's a little more variety during the week as well as convenience.**

	BREAKFAST	LUNCH	DINNER
M	Overnight Oatmeal	Veggie Pita Wrap With Hummus	Chickpea Curry + Rice
T	Smoothie with Fruit, Yogurt, + Spinach	Turkey Sandwich + Cherry Tomatoes	Refried Bean Tostadas with Lettuce, Tomato, + Cheese
W	Overnight Oatmeal	Veggie Pita Wrap With Hummus	Chickpea Curry + Rice
TH	Smoothie with Fruit, Yogurt, + Spinach	Turkey Sandwich + Cherry Tomatoes	Refried Bean Tostadas with Lettuce, Tomato, + Cheese
F	Overnight Oatmeal	Veggie Pita Wrap with Hummus	Eat out with friends!



how to build a quick meal

To build your own quick meal, follow the steps below.

First pick 1-2 of each . . .

then add flavor!

Grains

Tortillas / Wraps
Breads/Toast
Rice/Quinoa/couscous
Pasta/Noodles
Oatmeal/Grits/Cereal
Popcoarn

Protein

Meats / Fish
Nuts / Nut Butters / Seeds
Canned or Dried Beans
Tofu / Tempeh / Seitan
Eggs + Dairy

Veggies

Canned
Fresh
Frozen
Bagged (salad kits)

Seasonings

Paprika
Cumin
Turmeric
Cinnamon
Lemon Pepper
Chili Powder
Get creative!

Oils & Spreads

Pesto / Marinara
Greek Yogurt / Sour Cream
Curry Sauce
Green Chili/ Salsa
Jams
Vinegars
Oils & butter

Making The Grocery List

**now that you have your meals planned out,
list out all of your ingredients**

This list is going to consist of all of the ingredients you need for the meals you've created.

Here's a good time to make sure you don't already have those ingredients at home.

Check your fridge and pantry for what you have on hand.

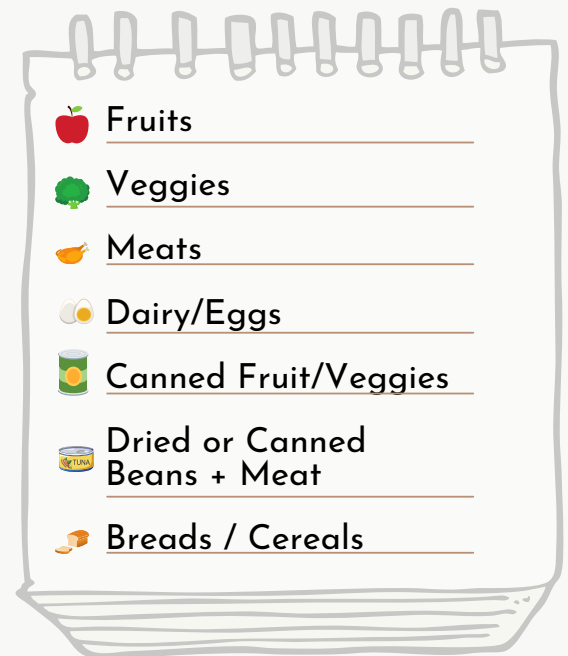


quick tip

List your ingredients based on how you plan to walk through the store.

It can be helpful to walk around the perimeter of the store first, and then go through the aisles.

Remember, the perimeter has mostly whole foods and the aisles have more processed foods. This doesn't mean you should avoid the aisles -- they still have many nutritious options such as canned beans, meat, fish, veggies, and fruits. They are also where you'll find your fiber-rich whole grains.



Budget Friendly Tips

to save money as a college student

1. Buy shelf-stable pantry items in bulk

Buy the larger size containers of oatmeal, canned goods, dried beans, and pastas. It seems more expensive initially when the single serve and smaller containers look cheaper, but are actually more expensive long-term.

2. Choose frozen fruits + veggies

Did you know that frozen produce is picked at peak ripeness and frozen rapidly to preserve nutrients? Buying frozen fruit & veggies is a great way to save money without sacrificing nutrition.

3. Go more plant-based

Buying meat can add an average of \$10-20 extra dollars per week. Choose beans, dairy, nuts, and seeds for more plant-forward and budget-friendly protein options.

4. Download grocery apps + digital coupons

By downloading all your nearby grocery store apps, you can easily compare prices at home and choose the store that has the best deals going on. You can also easily "clip" digital coupons in the app, which makes for the most convenient way to utilize them in this day and age.

Pantry Staples

Examples of pantry items you can buy in bulk or stock up on.

CANNED + JARRED

- Coconut milk
- Tomato paste
- Diced tomatoes
- Canned chipotles in adobo
- Canned tuna
- Salsa
- Pumpkin puree
- Tahini
- Nut/seed butter

BEANS, LEGUMES, GRAINS

- Black beans
- Chickpeas
- Cannelli beans
- Lentils
- Brown or wild rice
- Quinoa
- Old fashioned oats
- Whole wheat or lentil pasta

NUTS, SEEDS, DRIED FRUITS

- Almonds
- Cashews
- Walnuts
- Pecans
- Chia seeds
- Flax seeds
- Hemp seeds
- Pumpkin seeds
- Raisins
- Medjool dates

OIL, VINEGAR, CONDIMENTS

- Extra virgin olive oil
- Coconut oil
- Sesame oil
- Balsamic vinegar
- Red wine vinegar
- Rice vinegar
- Low sodium soy sauce or tamari
- Dijon mustard
- Avocado oil mayonnaise

Free Resource

made just for you

All of this info is great, but after you close out of this blog, you might not be able to remember it all.

That's why we created a free downloadable meal planning journal, just for you. It includes space for you to brainstorm meal ideas, perform recipe research, explore grocery delivery options, plan your weekly meals and write out your weekly grocery list.

[To download this free resource, click here.](#)



happy grocery shopping!



about the author

Nohemi Lopez is a Dietetic Intern at MSU Denver. She plans to become a Registered Dietitian soon after graduating.

