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# Maximizing Nutritional Value and Food Access during COVID-19

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COVID-19 has changed the way we shop, cook, and interact. While these drastic changes can be stressful, there are steps we can take to ease financial and food-related worries. Below are some tips that may help make food shopping, cooking, and mealtimes simpler.

## Grocery Store Tips

- **Prepare a list before you go.** Check your refrigerator and freezer for items you may use in creative recipes. Plan meals and snacks for the week and buy only what you need.
- **Look online and ask in-store for coupons or discounts.** Before heading to the grocery store, search for potential savings on-line and/or in sales circulars.
- **Shop the top and bottom shelves.** The items are usually less expensive, along with store brands versus name brands.
- **Never shop when you are hungry or rushed.** This may result in overspending. Also, during this period when grocery store lines are long, enlist the help of family, friends, or church and community members.
- **Buy canned, frozen foods and other non-perishables.** Stock your pantry, fridge and freezer with items that will last longer such as rice and pasta, canned or frozen vegetables, protein rich canned tuna, lentils, dried or canned beans and peanut butter. This will not only reduce the number of trips to the grocery store but will also save you money.
- **Stock up on shelf stable nuts and seeds.** They are excellent sources of protein and fiber.
- **Include fresh fruits and vegetables, if possible.** Although frozen produce is just as nutritious as fresh, look for fresh produce too.

For example, choose things that are either in season (often cheaper), or that last longer like apples, carrots, potatoes, and oranges. Tip: freeze produce before it goes bad for use in a future meal.

- **Consider shelf-stable milk and/or cow's milk alternatives.** They can be stored outside the fridge until opened. Alternative milks often have a longer shelf life than most cow's milk.

## Meal Prep Tips to Stretch the Dollar:

- **Protein bowl.** Mix a protein-rich food with frozen sides and shelf-stable sauces to create a nutritious and delicious bowl. For example, combine rinsed canned beans, tuna or leftover cooked chicken, cooked rice or pasta, frozen veggies, and tomato sauce. You can prepare or recombine the ingredients to stretch over a couple of days.
- **Stretch the God's Love Meals.** Save half of the soups you receive and use as a sauce to get two meals out of one. For example, pour half of your puree of mushroom soup over a bed of brown rice, canned white beans, and steamed frozen spinach.
- **Prepare your own soups and stews in batches: portion and freeze.** Flavors merge and deepen in soups and stews. Add produce from the day before and it will fit right in.

## Helpful Resources:

- **Coronavirus NYC Neighborhood Food Resources Guides** – Coronavirus (COVID-19) is rapidly changing life in New York City. To help connect community members in need with food resources during this challenging time, the Hunter College NYC Food Policy Center created the Coronavirus NYC Food Resource Guides for each NYC neighborhood
- **GrowNYC COVID-19 Schedule Changes & Resources** – This is information central for up-to-the-minute GrowNYC schedule, programming or operations changes due to COVID-19.
- **COVID-19 Food Assistance Resources** – Find helpful links in this guide at [nyc.gov](https://nyc.gov)



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