

VEGAN COOKING ON A BUDGET—TIPS SHEET

1. Cooking for less generally means shifting towards carbs (pastas, rice, bread, potatoes, etc.) Be sure to buy whole grain products to ensure that you still get your protein and your nutrients. For example, the whole grain pasta I made tonight had 8 grams of protein; white pasta has hardly any. Leave the skin on potatoes for more nutrients (even when making mashed potatoes or potato salad).
2. Try other grains—wheat berries are high in protein, very low in cost, and have a fantastic chewy texture that's great in vegetable soup. Quinoa is a great substitute for couscous and much higher in protein. Buckwheat is great in pancakes.
3. Use less oil. You can add water to prevent sticking as you stir-fry.
4. Buy rock salt in bulk. Salt brings out the natural flavors of food, and rock salt is cheap and has other minerals, which keeps its sodium content down.
5. Substitute dried for fresh herbs--Super cheap to buy in bulk. In fact, buy all dried herbs in bulk, except parsley and cilantro. Dried parsley and cilantro are tasteless, so you need to get fresh. Grind your own peppercorns; it's just as cheap as ground pepper and the flavor is much better. Makes you feel like your dish is luxurious even though it is cheap.
6. Buy whole flax seed and grind it in a coffee grinder. It is cheaper than buying ground flax since flax expands when it is ground. It also contains more Omega 3s that way. Blend together one tablespoon ground flax with three tablespoons water to replace one egg in baking. You can keep left-over ground flax in a reused glass jar (think small jelly jar or similar) in the fridge.
7. Bake your own cake/muffins etc.
8. Go ethnic. There are a lot of poor people in India. What do they eat? It is some of the cheapest food you could ever make!
9. Use a ton of dried legumes. Lentils don't need to be soaked, and work great in chili, vegetable soup, and make great sloppy joes! Black-eyed peas don't need to be soaked, but most other legumes should be for a few hours. The cheapest legumes are pinto beans—great in any Mexican dish. In recipes, add more legumes than called for—this will stretch your dollar a little farther (make sure to add extra seasonings when you do this). Split peas are also pennies, and make great soup! If you like the ham flavor in split pea soup, add liquid smoke (it's cheaper than fake ham)
10. Use powered soy milk in baking. Powered soymilk (mixed with water as indicated on the package) with a splash of vinegar can replace buttermilk in baking.
11. Buy from Farmer's Markets when you can. In the winter, buy the largest package of frozen veggies that you can find, and seriously stock up on them when they are on sale. Buy canned tomatoes when tomatoes are not in season.
12. Don't drive too far to get your groceries—plan ahead to save gas and money. (I get food when I'm driving by the grocery store for another reason, like on my way home from work).
13. Drink water.
14. Become allergic to throwing food away. Learn to use that last bit of everything, with a little planning. It's a challenge that's fun!
 - a. Make a weekly menu. If you buy cilantro for one meal, plan another meal that uses it since you know that it goes bad fast and you won't use the whole bunch on one meal. Cilantro works great in Mexican, Latin American, and Indian dishes. Make a grocery list based on your menu for the week.
 - b. You usually don't need to follow recipes exactly, use what you have.
 - c. Vegetariantimes.com allows you to put in an ingredient you would like to use and do a search—tons of recipes to use that up usually appear. I never check vegan because I can substitute cheese (with vegan cheese), milk (with soy milk) and sour cream (with tofutti). This gives me more options.

- d. Epicurious.com—this site has meat recipes, but you can check meatless. It searches most popular cooking magazines for recipes with the ingredient you'd like to use up.
- e. If you have a grocery store on the way home from work or some place you routinely go, it is better to buy less perishables and make more frequent trips.
- f. Make a double batch of food. Freeze the leftovers in tofutti containers, hummus containers, or whatever containers you have on hand—those can be your quick microwave meals and they cost much less than frozen entrees.

15. And after the meal:

- a. Put the left-overs in easy single-serving dishes for quick lunches, or make a plan to transform them into something else.
- b. Compost veggie scraps
- c. Reuse shopping bags for trash and recycling. I can't remember the last time I bought garbage bags!