



ZWC Guide to Stretch Your Food Budget

(excerpted from the NY Times, March 2025)

*There's no getting around it: Food is expensive right now.
These 9 expert hacks can help lower your grocery bill.*

1. Focus on Cooking - Cooking at home is almost always cheaper and healthier than going out to eat or ordering in. Keep your pantry stocked with essentials to make quick, simple recipes.

2. Eat Less Meat – If you can go meatless a couple of times per week, you can definitely save money. Not only are meatless meals less expensive, they often last longer in the fridge than the average piece of meat, meaning there's less of a chance they will go to waste.

3. Avoid Wasting Food – Wasting food is basically throwing money in the trash. Think twice before you buy more than you need. Repurpose odds and ends into something else.

4. Sign Up for Coupons – Clip them on your phone with store apps. Don't forget about price matching. If you buy something and see it on sale elsewhere or at the same place later on, see if the store offers a price match, and ask for one.

5. Know Your Grocery Store – Get to know the layout. Just because something is in a prime spot in the supermarket, advertising a sale, it doesn't mean it's the best price for a certain ingredient.

6. Snack Less – Cutting down on snacking, and in turn buying fewer snacks, can impact your grocery bill. Eat your meals rather than grazing all day on snacks.

7. Learn to Love Your Store Brand – Private label food is often much cheaper. Depending on your personal preference, you may find a favorite among the generic brands – or barely notice the difference.

8. Look at the Price per Ounce – Price per ounce gives you a better sense of whether something is a good deal or not. A smaller container may be cheaper on its face, but it also may contain less and cost more per ounce.

9. Lean on Your Community – Sometimes community support can help. Food banks, pantries, community gardens and fridges are an option. In Columbia County, the Columbia County Recovery Kitchen provides freshly prepared, locally sourced nutritious meals for those in need.

REDUCE CONSUMPTION AND WASTE

To reduce consumption and waste, focus on mindful purchasing, reusing items, and finding alternative solutions for needs. Prioritize buying only what's necessary, opting for second-hand items or borrowing instead of buying new, and using reusable options instead of single-use products.

Mindful Purchasing

- **Plan and reduce overbuying:** Take inventory of what you have before shopping to avoid unnecessary purchases.
- **Prioritize needs over wants:** Consider if you truly need something before buying it.
- **Buy in bulk:** This reduces packaging waste and can save money in the long run.
- **Choose sustainable options:** Look for products made from recycled materials and those with minimal packaging.
- **Support local businesses:** This reduces transportation emissions and supports your community.

Borrow Instead of Buying

Local Tool Libraries

A Tool library is a place where community members can borrow tools for a set periods of time at a low cost.

Philmont Library, 101 Main Street, Claverack NY-visit their website at <https://philmontlibrary.com/tool-library/>
Has tools for home repair, gardening, etc.

Toolshed Exchange, 110 South Front Street, Hudson NY- visit their website at <https://toolshedexchange.org/tools/>
Has 190 items for camping, maintenance/repair, electronics, garden /yard, kitchen/cooking, textiles/crafts, media production, moving and carrying, etc.

Chatham Library, 11 Woodbridge Avenue, Chatham NY- visit their website at <https://chathampubliclibrary.org/books-movies-more/#library-of-things>
(Chatham and Canaan Library Patrons Only)
Electronics, audio visual equipment, sewing machine, tools, gardening equipment, lawn games, ukeleles

Historic Albany Foundation Tool Library, 89 Lexington Avenue, Albany NY- visit their website at <https://www.historic-albany.org/tool-library>
Has 780 items in their library for gardening, crafts/home décor, electrical cleaning, masonry, painting, plumbing, flooring, power tools, woodworking, etc. Annual Membership is \$20, and offers free monthly workshops.

Buy In Bulk

Refillable Locations

A refillable location allows you to bring clean, empty containers to the store, fill them with the desired product, and pay for the quantity they take.

Hawthorne Valley Farm Store, 327 County Route 21C, Ghent, NY visit their website at <https://store.hawthornevalley.org/>

Chatham Real Food Market Co-op, 15 Church Street, Chatham, NY – visit their website at <https://www.chatham.coop/>

The O Zone, 144-148 Pitcher Lane, Red Hook, NY-visit their website at <https://theozonehv.com/>

Berkshire Food Co-Op, 34 Bridge Street, Great Barrington – visit their website at <https://berkshire.coop/>