



# *Plant Based* **ON A BUDGET**

A Simple Guide With All The Tips & Tricks You Need  
To Change Your Eating Habits On The Cheap

BY TISH BOOKER

Plant Based On A Budget

# PLANT BASED ON A BUDGET!

How To Eat Healthy Without Breaking The Bank

A guide with all the tips and tricks you need to make changing your eating habits financially possible

By Tish Booker - There's An Herb For That!

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*First edition*

## Lentils over Couscous with Air-Fried Oyster Mushrooms



## LET'S TALK ABOUT IT!

Welcome to the best part of the rest of your life! Now is the time to start a new journey, or renew an old promise to yourself—to get healthy! No matter what the reason is, you have made it to this point, reading this book in order to improve your health. Getting healthy and revising your eating habits is not easy especially when food prices continue to go up. As always, the things that are better in nature are also more expensive. It can be difficult to find the right foods at a decent price. But with determination and ingenuity it can be done.

I went on my own health journey five years ago and ran into the same obstacles. As I soon learned, buying organics is crazy expensive! Choosing healthy alternatives when money is scarce can create a new level anxiety. How does one avoid that? With careful planning. With active deal searching. With efficient recipes. With leftover usage. It can be done! Here are some steps that will get you started:

1. Plan Meals
2. Shop Smart
3. Meal Prep
4. Make Leftovers
5. Gardening

Planning meals can eliminate wasting food. Shopping on a budget will keep costs low. Prepping your meals can help spread them over several days, creating leftovers. Gardening will provide a never ending sources of fruits and vegetables, lowering prices all around.

This book will provide you with the tools to start implementing a healthy budget friendly option and provide recipes to help you on your journey.



Spelt Naan

# Chapter 1: The Foundation of Eating Healthy on a Plant-Based Budget

Eating a healthy plant-based diet on a tight budget is not only achievable but can be deeply rewarding. Whether you're new to plant-based eating or simply trying to save money, this book will guide you step-by-step through strategies, recipes, and tips to create nutritious meals without breaking the bank. The key is to focus on three main principles: **planning**, **smart shopping**, and **meal prep**.

In this first chapter, we'll establish the foundation for building a healthy, budget-friendly plant-based lifestyle. By understanding a few core concepts and basic strategies, you'll be well-equipped to transform affordable ingredients into wholesome, satisfying meals.

## Understanding the Basics of Plant-Based Nutrition

Before we dive into the practicalities, it's essential to understand what a healthy plant-based diet looks like. A balanced diet should include the following food groups:

1. **Whole Grains:** Wild rice, bulgur, quinoa, barley, and millet products are nutrient-dense, filling, and cost-effective. They serve as the backbone of many meals.
2. **Legumes:** Lentils, chickpeas, beans, and peas are powerhouse sources of protein and fiber. They're affordable, versatile, and can be bought in bulk.
3. **Vegetables:** Both fresh and frozen vegetables are essential. Focus on seasonal or frozen options to keep costs low while ensuring a range of nutrients.
4. **Fruits:** Prioritize seasonal fruits and those that store well, like apples, seeded grapes, and citrus fruits.
5. **Healthy Fats:** Incorporate affordable sources like nuts, seeds, avocados, and olive oil in moderation.
6. **Herbs & Spices:** These enhance flavor and are essential in making plant-based meals satisfying.

# Creating a Healthy Meal Plan on a Budget: The Core Strategy

The secret to a plant-based lifestyle that's both nutritious and budget-friendly lies in **meal planning and preparation**. Planning your meals helps prevent food waste, reduces impulse buying, and ensures you get all necessary nutrients without overspending.

## Step 1: The Budget-Friendly Plant-Based Pantry

The first step is to build a solid pantry foundation. Investing in some long-lasting staples will set you up for success. Here's a basic list of budget-friendly plant-based essentials:

1. **Grains:** Brown rice, quinoa, whole wheat pasta, oats, and bulgur.
2. **Legumes:** Dried or canned beans (black beans, kidney beans, chickpeas), lentils, split peas.
3. **Canned Goods:** Crushed tomatoes, tomato paste, coconut milk, and vegetable broth.
4. **Spices & Seasonings:** Garlic powder, onion powder, cumin, paprika, oregano, cinnamon, and chili flakes.
5. **Condiments:** Soy sauce/amino acid, mustard, apple cider vinegar, nutritional yeast, and tahini.
6. **Healthy Fats:** Olive oil, nut butters, sunflower seeds, and flax seeds.

These staples can be bought in bulk when on sale and stored for extended periods, reducing your monthly grocery expenses over time.

### Price Matters

But where can the cost-conscious shopper find these bulk items at a great price? I'm glad you asked! Here are a couple of my favorite options.

**Aldi's:** A German grocery store making inroads in the US, Aldi's is known for its great prices and healthy food options. Since they are based in Europe, the majority of their products adhere to EU rules and don't carry harmful dyes and preservatives commonly found in US food products. And the prices are 15-20-% cheaper than your average grocery store! They carry everything from coconut milk to flax seeds to fresh produce.



**Winco:** My favorite store! This grocery store is actually owned by its employees through a stock option program. They keep their prices low by only taking cash and debit cards to avoid credit card fees. The best part however is their bulk section. Winco carries a multitude of beans, flours and grains that make up a plant-based eater's diet. I often buy Spelt and Chickpea flour, quinoa, lentils and nuts there. Since you're buying in bulk, the prices are better than getting a five pound bag from a regular grocery store.



**Azure:** Looking for a delivery/pick up option? Azure Standard is a nationwide grocery option that prides itself on selling healthy products at a great price—in BULK. You can buy from one pound to 1200 pounds of flour at a time; one box or a pallet full of fruit at a time, and they even have a sale and clearance section on their site. Azure has a delivery option which does carry an extra fee, but generally they will deliver goods to a central location and buyers will meet there to pick them up. This helps Azure keep their prices low.



## Step 2: Designing a Weekly Plant-Based Meal Plan

A well-thought-out meal plan minimizes waste and keeps costs low. Start by choosing recipes that share ingredients to avoid buying items that will only be used once. Here's a simple framework for structuring a week's worth of plant-based meals:

- 1. Base Meals Around Grains & Legumes:** Build meals around filling, nutrient-rich grains and legumes. For example:
  - **Breakfast:** Chia seeds soaked overnight in milk or yogurt and added fruit; savory amaranth or buckwheat porridge can also be used.
  - **Lunch:** Lentil soup with homemade bread can also be used in burritos or over black rice.



- **Dinner:** Chickpea and vegetable stir-fry over quinoa or couscous.
- 2. Use Vegetables Wisely:** Utilize affordable, nutrient-dense vegetables like cabbage, squash and greens. Plan dishes that combine fresh and frozen produce to balance cost and nutrition.
- 3. Repeat Ingredients in Multiple Meals:** Cook a large batch of a base item (e.g., beans or quinoa) and use it throughout the week in different dishes, such as salads, wraps, and grain bowls.
- 4. Create Flexibility:** Plan a couple of simple, adaptable dishes like a stir-fry or grain bowl that can accommodate leftover ingredients.

## Step 3: Smart Shopping Strategies for a Plant-Based Diet

Grocery shopping strategically is key to staying within your budget. Here's how:

- **Make a List and Stick to It:** Plan your meals, make a list, and avoid impulse buys.
- **Buy in Bulk:** Stock up on grains, legumes, and spices in bulk. Use the bulk bins at your local grocery store or find deals online (Winco, Azure Standard).
- **Opt for Store Brands:** Often, store-brand products are of similar quality but significantly cheaper (Aldi's).
- **Choose Seasonal Produce:** Seasonal fruits and vegetables are cheaper and often fresher. In off-seasons, rely on frozen options, which are just as nutritious.
- **Consider Frozen and Canned Options:** These are often cheaper, have a longer shelf life, and retain nutrients. For example, frozen spinach and canned tomatoes are versatile and affordable. However when looking at canned foods, choose BPA free options and choose jars whenever possible.

## Step 4: Building Budget-Friendly, Nutritious Meals

Once you have your pantry stocked and your meal plan in place, it's time to build some actual meals. The key is to focus on **simple, wholesome ingredients** that provide maximum nutrition for minimal cost. Here are a few foundational meal-building strategies:

- **Grain + Legume + Veggie + Sauce:** This formula is the foundation of many healthy plant-based meals. Examples include:
  - Quinoa + Black Beans + Corn & Bell Pepper + Avocado Lime Sauce
  - Bulgur + Red Lentils + Cucumbers & Broccoli + Tahini Dressing
- **Hearty Soups and Curries:** Soups and curries are a budget-friendly way to combine grains, legumes, and vegetables. They are easy to make in large batches and store well.
- **One-Pot Meals:** Limit clean-up time and reduce the number of ingredients by sticking to one-pot dishes like lentil curry or chickpea stew. Instapot and slow cookers are ideal for these types of meals.
- **Breakfast Basics:** Use couscous, chia seeds, and chickpea flour to create filling, nutrient-dense breakfasts. A basic recipe like chia pudding (almond milk, coconut yogurt, chia seeds, and fruits) can be prepared ahead of time. Add them all to a jar and let them sit overnight for a delicious nutritious breakfast. Use chickpea flour mixed with water to create a quick egg-like scramble or delicious flatbread.

## Practical Recipe: Budget-Friendly Lentil & Vegetable Stew

This simple yet hearty lentil and vegetable stew costs less than \$1.50 per serving and uses ingredients commonly found in your pantry.

### Ingredients:

- 1 cup of dry lentils (or 2 cans, drained and rinsed) (\$.75)
- 1 large bell pepper, chopped (\$.75)

- 1 onion, diced (\$.50)
- 2 cloves garlic or one thumb of ginger, minced (\$.50)
- 2 sweet potatoes, cubed (\$1)
- 1 cup diced tomatoes (\$.75)
- 1 tsp cumin (\$.50)
- 1 tsp paprika (\$.25)
- 4 cups vegetable broth or water (\$.25)
- Salt & pepper to taste (\$.50)
- **TOTAL: \$5.75**

### Instructions:

1. In a large pot, sauté the onion and garlic in a splash of oil until fragrant.
2. Add the chopped pepper and sweet potatoes, cooking for another 5 minutes.
3. Add the lentils, tomatoes, broth/water and spices. Bring to a boil.
4. Lower heat and simmer for 30-40 minutes, until lentils and vegetables are tender.
5. Season with salt and pepper, and serve with a side of quinoa, couscous or homemade bread.

**Tip:** This stew freezes well, so make a double batch and store half for future meals!

## Actionable Takeaways for Chapter 1

1. **Stock Up on Plant-Based Staples:** Build a pantry of budget-friendly essentials like beans, grains, flours and spices.
2. **Plan Simple Meals:** Use basic ingredients to create versatile, nutritious meals.
3. **Be a Strategic Shopper:** Buy in bulk, opt for seasonal produce, and don't overlook frozen or jarred items.
4. **Start Small:** Begin with a few go-to recipes, like the lentil and vegetable stew, and expand your repertoire gradually.

In the next chapter, we'll explore specific budgeting techniques and meal prep hacks to help you get even more out of your grocery dollars. By the end of this book, you'll have all the tools you need to create delicious, healthy, plant-based meals without overspending.

# Chapter 2: Mastering Budgeting & Meal Prep Hacks for a Healthy Plant-Based Lifestyle

With the foundational strategies from Chapter 1 in place, it's time to dive into the specifics of budgeting and meal prep. Even with a well-stocked pantry and meal plan, it's easy to overspend or waste time and resources if you don't have a solid system for managing your grocery dollars and meal preparation. In this chapter, you'll learn how to streamline your grocery shopping, maximize your ingredients, and efficiently plan and prep meals to make every dollar count.

## Part 1: Budgeting Techniques for Plant-Based Meals

Sticking to a budget doesn't mean sacrificing nutrition or flavor. By applying these budgeting techniques, you can stretch your grocery dollars while still enjoying a variety of healthy meals. Here's how to do it:

### 1. Know Your Monthly Food Budget

Before you start shopping, it's essential to establish your monthly food budget. Be realistic about how much you can afford to spend and track every dollar. Tools like spreadsheets or budgeting apps (e.g., Mint, YNAB) can help.

- **Example Budget Breakdown:**
  - Total Monthly Food Budget: \$250
  - Bulk Staples: \$100
  - Fresh Produce: \$70
  - Condiments & Spices: \$30
  - Miscellaneous: \$50 (for sales, unexpected needs, or to stock up on items)

## 2. Plan Around Weekly Sales & Coupons

Check your local grocery stores for weekly sales, discounts, and coupons. Plan your meals around discounted items to get the best value.

- **Tip:** Use store apps or websites to browse sales before creating your shopping list.
- **Coupon Strategies:** Use digital coupons and cashback apps like Ibotta or Checkout 51 to save even more.

This is where your local stores will be helpful. Stores like Publix, HEB, Safeway, Lucky's etc may be more expensive in general, but often have coupons or sales where you can stock up on produce and staples. Even discount stores like Aldi's, Grocery Outlet, Super 1 Foods or 99 Cent stores may have weekly sales that you can take advantage of. Stock up when you can!

## 3. Use a Price Book

Keep a small notebook or digital document to track the regular prices of items you buy often. This way, you'll know what a good deal looks like and when it's time to stock up.

- **Columns to Include:** Item Name, Store, Regular Price, Sale Price, Date
- **Pro Tip:** If you have multiple stores in your area, use this book to compare prices and plan shopping trips for maximum savings.

For convenience, I added a sample grocery price list form for your personal use!



# PLANT BASED GROCERY LIST



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Month: \_\_\_\_\_

Vegetables/Fruits:

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Proteins:

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## 4. Buy in Bulk Wisely

Buying in bulk can be a game-changer, but only if you're selective. Focus on shelf-stable staples like:

- **Grains** (rice, oats, quinoa)
- **Flours** (flours, starches and other baking staples)
- **Legumes** (dried beans, lentils, chickpeas)
- **Spices** (cumin, chili powder, garlic powder)

Avoid buying perishable items in bulk unless you have a plan to use or freeze them.

## 5. Use a “No Waste” Strategy

Food waste is the enemy of a tight budget. To minimize waste, use the following techniques:

- **FIFO (First In, First Out)**: Organize your pantry and fridge so that older items are at the front and get used first.
- **Repurpose Leftovers**: If you have leftover rice, turn it into fried rice or a grain salad. Use overripe bananas in smoothies or bake them into muffins.
- **Create a Freezer Inventory**: Label and date items you freeze. Keep a simple list so you know what's available and can incorporate it into your meal planning.

# Part 2: Meal Prep Hacks to Maximize Your Grocery Dollars

Smart meal prep is a cornerstone of efficient, budget-friendly plant-based eating. These tips will help you save time, reduce stress, and get the most out of every ingredient.

## 1. The Batch Cooking Method

Batch cooking involves preparing large quantities of a base ingredient or meal component that can be used throughout the week in different dishes. This technique is ideal for grains, legumes, and roasted vegetables.

- **Grains:** Cook a large pot of quinoa or brown rice at the beginning of the week. Use it in stir-fries, salads, grain bowls, or burritos.
- **Beans:** Prepare a batch of black beans or lentils and use them in soups, stews, tacos, and wraps.
- **Roasted Vegetables:** Roast a variety of root vegetables and keep them on hand to add to pasta dishes, grain bowls, or as a side.

### Example Recipe: Versatile Black Beans

#### Ingredients:

- 2 cups dry black beans (or 4 cans, rinsed and drained) (\$1.25)
- 1 onion, diced (\$.50)
- 2 cloves garlic, minced (\$.50)
- 1 tsp cumin (\$.50)
- 1 tsp chili powder (\$.25)
- Salt & pepper to taste (\$.25)
- TOTAL: \$3.25

#### Instructions:

1. In a large pot, sauté onion and garlic until fragrant.
2. Add black beans, spices, and enough water to cover (if using dry beans).
3. Simmer until beans are tender, about 1-2 hours for dry, or 30 minutes for canned.

#### How to Use It Throughout the Week:

- Day 1: Black bean and corn salad over quinoa
- Day 2: Bean burritos with avocado and salsa with rice
- Day 3: Black bean chili
- Day 4: Bean and grain bowl over roasted vegetables
- Day 5: Black bean pizza on chickpea flat bread

## 2. Build a “Mix-and-Match” Meal Plan

Create a flexible plan with a few base ingredients that can be mixed and matched throughout the week. Here’s a template for a 5-day plan:

1. **Grain Base:** Cook one large pot of brown rice or quinoa.



2. **Protein Base:** Prepare one batch of chickpeas or lentils.
3. **Vegetables:** Roast a large tray of seasonal vegetables.
4. **Flavorful Sauce:** Make a versatile dressing like tahini sauce, lemon-garlic vinaigrette, or peanut sauce.

### Example Mix-and-Match Combinations:

- **Day 1:** Quinoa, chickpeas, roasted veggies, and tahini sauce in a grain bowl.
- **Day 2:** Chickpea and veggie wrap with a lemon-garlic vinaigrette.
- **Day 3:** Stir-fried rice with leftover vegetables and a drizzle of peanut sauce.
- **Day 4:** Lentil and quinoa salad with mixed greens and roasted carrots.
- **Day 5:** Lentil curry over brown rice.

## 3. Freeze Extra Portions

Freezing meals and ingredients is a crucial strategy for minimizing waste and ensuring you have ready-made, healthy options on hand.

- **What Freezes Well:** Cooked grains, beans, soups, stews, and sauces.
- **Freezing Tip:** Portion items into single servings and label them with the name and date. This makes it easy to pull out just what you need without defrosting an entire batch.
- Use a Vacuum sealer to adequately preserve the extra portions for the freezer.

## 4. Invest in Versatile Kitchen Tools

A few affordable kitchen tools can make meal prep much easier and more efficient. Consider adding these to your kitchen:

- **Slow Cooker or Instant Pot:** Great for batch-cooking grains, beans, and one-pot meals.
- **Immersible Mixer:** Makes it easy to make sauces or chop veggies quicker and safer.
- **Large Baking Sheets:** Perfect for roasting big batches of vegetables at once.

- **Freezer-Safe Containers:** Store leftovers or pre-portioned meals for the week.
- **Vacuum Sealer:** Quickly and safely seals leftovers or extra meals for freezing and storage.

## 5. Use Theme Nights to Simplify Planning

Designating theme nights can help streamline meal planning and reduce decision fatigue. Here are some ideas:

- **Meatless Monday:** Lentil or bean-based dish (e.g., Lentil Bolognese over whole wheat pasta).
- **Taco Tuesday:** Bean, quinoa, or veggie tacos with salsa and avocado.
- **One-Pot Wednesday:** A large pot of stew, curry, or soup.
- **Stir-Fry Thursday:** Use up leftover veggies and grains.
- **Freezer Friday:** Use a pre-prepped meal from your freezer.

## 6. Repurpose Ingredients to Keep It Fresh

Eating the same thing every day can get boring. To keep meals exciting, repurpose ingredients into different types of dishes:

- **Lentils:** Use in soups, salads, tacos, and even burgers.
- **Grains:** Serve as a side, in a main dish, or for breakfast with fruit and nuts.
- **Vegetables:** Add to grain bowls, pasta dishes, wraps, or omelets (for those who eat eggs).

## Meal Prep Plan: “Sunday Power Hour”

Dedicate some time on Sunday to prepping your week’s meals. Here’s a simple plan:

1. **Cook a Batch of Grains:** Prepare 3 cups of brown rice, quinoa or COUSCOUS.
2. **Batch-Cook a Protein:** Simmer a large pot of lentils or beans.
3. **Roast a Tray of Vegetables:** Use whatever you have on hand (carrots, broccoli, sweet potatoes, etc.).

4. **Make Several Sauce:** Whisk together a tahini sauce, some lemon-garlic dressing or pepita cream for the week.
5. **Chop Fresh Veggies:** Prep salad ingredients or snack veggies (like carrots, bell peppers, and cucumbers).

With this foundation, you'll have multiple mix-and-match meals ready to go, cutting down on both cooking time and decision-making.

## Actionable Takeaways for Chapter 2:

1. **Create a Realistic Food Budget:** Use a price book and weekly sales to stay within your limits.
2. **Meal Prep Strategically:** Batch-cook grains, proteins, and veggies to streamline meal prep.
3. **Repurpose Ingredients:** Avoid food fatigue by using ingredients in various ways throughout the week.
4. **Minimize Food Waste:** Use leftovers creatively and keep a well-organized freezer.

By mastering these budgeting and meal prep hacks, you'll not only save money but also build a sustainable plant-based lifestyle that's delicious and rewarding. In the next chapter, we'll explore how to create versatile, nutrient-packed meals using a core set of low-cost ingredients.

# Chapter 3: Building Versatile, Nutrient-Packed Meals with Low-Cost Ingredients

Creating delicious, nutrient-dense meals doesn't require expensive, exotic ingredients. With a core set of affordable pantry staples, you can whip up a variety of dishes that are not only satisfying but also packed with essential nutrients. In this chapter, we'll focus on identifying low-cost, nutrient-rich ingredients and transforming them into versatile, delicious meals. By the end, you'll have a toolkit of go-to recipes and strategies to build nutritious plant-based meals on a tight budget.

## The Core Set of Low-Cost, Nutrient-Rich Ingredients

The secret to creating versatile, nutrient-packed meals on a budget is stocking your pantry and fridge with multipurpose ingredients that can be used in a variety of ways. These staples should be affordable, nutrient-dense, and have a long shelf-life when possible. Here's a list of must-have ingredients that will serve as the backbone of your plant-based cooking:

### 1. Whole Grains:

- **Rice:** A staple that's inexpensive, filling, and high in fiber.
- **Quinoa:** While slightly more expensive, quinoa is a complete protein and cooks quickly.
- **Oats:** Versatile for breakfast, baking, or savory dishes like oat-based "meatloaf."
- **Barley & Bulgur:** Cheaper than quinoa but provides a similar texture and nutrition profile.

Here are some bulk bin prices from Winco to give you an idea of possible savings:

Beans, Black Turtle	\$0.90 per lb
Beans, Garbanzo	\$0.90 per lb
Beans, Great Northern	\$0.88 per lb
Beans, Large Lima	\$1.74 per lb
Beans, Mayo Coba	\$1.29 per lb
Beans, Pinto	\$0.55 per lb
Beans, Red Kidney	\$1.20 per lb
Beans, Small Red	\$1.03 per lb
Lentils	\$0.86 per lb
Peas, Black-Eyed	\$1.35 per lb

Couscous	\$1.63 per lb
Bob's Red Mill Whole Wheat Pastry Flour	\$0.84 per lb
Cocoa Powder, Dutch Baking	\$2.31 per lb
Coconut, Unsweetened	\$2.83 per lb
Corn Starch	\$0.88 per lb
Flour, Brown Rice	\$1.23 per lb
Flour, Cake	\$0.43 per lb
Flour, Gem All Purpose	\$0.66 per lb
Flour, Semolina	\$1.24 per lb

Flour, Spelt	\$1.51 per lb
Flour, Tapioca	\$1.35 per lb
Flour, Unbleached	\$0.35 per lb
Flour, White	\$0.40 per lb
Flour, White Rice	\$1.10 per lb
Flour, Whole Wheat Unbleached	\$0.41 per lb

Penne, Brown Rice	\$2.25 per lb
Potatoes, Sliced	\$2.21 per lb
Rice, Arborio	\$1.75 per lb
Rice, Basmati	\$1.26 per lb
Rice, Brown Basmati	\$1.26 per lb
Rice, Brown Jasmine	\$0.78 per lb
Rice, Converted	\$0.72 per lb
Rice, Forbidden	\$2.79 per lb

Rice, Jasmine	\$0.78 per lb
Rice, Long Brown	\$0.63 per lb
Rice, Long White	\$0.47 per lb
Rice, Pearl	\$1.00 per lb
Rice, Short Brown	\$0.93 per lb
Rotini, Brown Rice - Organic	\$2.25 per lb
Spaghetti	\$0.79 per lb
Spaghetti, Brown Rice	\$2.25 per lb
Spaghetti, Whole Wheat	\$2.32 per lb
13 Bean Soup Mix	\$1.27 per lb

Granola, Pumpkin Flax	\$1.83 per lb
Granola, Vanilla Almond	\$1.60 per lb
Millet, Hulled	\$0.59 per lb
Muesli Cereal	\$1.94 per lb
Oats, Old Fashioned	\$0.59 per lb
Oats, Quick	\$0.59 per lb
Oats, Regular - Gluten Free	\$1.73 per lb
Oats, Regular - Organic	\$1.09 per lb
Oats, Steel Cut	\$0.60 per lb
Quinoa	\$4.73 per lb

Egg Noodles, Extra Wide	\$1.82 per lb
Elbow Pasta	\$0.79 per lb
Elbow Pasta, Brown Rice	\$2.25 per lb
Elbow Pasta, White Rice	\$2.25 per lb

## 2. Legumes:

- **Lentils:** One of the cheapest and most nutrient-dense sources of protein and fiber.
- **Chickpeas:** Great for hummus, salads, stews, and roasting for snacks.
- **Black Beans, Kidney Beans, and Pinto Beans:** Use in soups, stews, tacos, and salads.
- **Split Peas:** Perfect for hearty soups and stews.

## 3. Affordable Vegetables:

- **Carrots, Potatoes, and Sweet Potatoes:** Long shelf-life, versatile, and packed with vitamins.
- **Cabbage:** An inexpensive, nutrient-dense green that lasts for weeks in the fridge.
- **Frozen Vegetables:** Equally nutritious as fresh and often cheaper. Use mixed veggie bags, frozen broccoli, and spinach.

## 4. Flavor Enhancers:

- **Onions and Garlic:** Affordable aromatics that boost flavor in any dish.
- **Canned Tomatoes:** Use in sauces, stews, and soups.
- **Herbs and Spices:** Cumin, chili powder, paprika, oregano, and Italian seasoning. Buy in bulk to save money.

## 5. Healthy Fats:

- **Olive Oil:** A small bottle can last a long time and is essential for sautéing and salad dressings.
- **Peanut Butter or Almond Butter:** A good source of healthy fats and protein.
- **Nuts and Seeds:** Sunflower seeds, flaxseeds, or chia seeds are budget-friendly choices.
- **Avocados:** A versatile fruit that can be used for smoothies, guacamole and sauces.

## 6. Condiments & Sauces:

- **Soy Sauce or Tamari:** Adds umami to stir-fries and marinades.
- **Tahini:** Versatile for dressings and sauces.
- **Nutritional Yeast:** A non-dairy cheese substitute that's rich in B vitamins.

By building your pantry around these core ingredients, you'll be equipped to create a wide range of nutritious meals without overspending. Next, we'll look at how to use these ingredients to create flexible, nutrient-dense dishes that are simple, delicious, and satisfying.

## The Meal-Building Framework: Core Components of a Healthy Plant-Based Meal

To build a nutrient-packed meal, focus on including a combination of grains, legumes, vegetables, and healthy fats. Each meal should have a balance of these components to ensure you're getting a range of nutrients. Here's a simple formula to follow:

### Meal-Building Formula:

1. **Grain Base:** Start with a whole grain like brown rice, quinoa, or oats.
2. **Protein Power:** Add a source of plant-based protein, such as lentils, chickpeas, or black beans.
3. **Veggie Boost:** Include a variety of vegetables—fresh, frozen, or canned.
4. **Flavorful Toppers:** Use herbs, spices, nuts, and seeds to add texture and flavor.
5. **Healthy Fats:** Drizzle with olive oil, add some avocado, or top with nut butter.

### Example Combinations:

- **Grain Bowl:** Brown rice + black beans + sautéed greens + avocado + salsa.
- **Hearty Stew:** Lentils + diced potatoes + carrots + cabbage + cumin.
- **Power Salad:** Quinoa + chickpeas + chopped veggies + tahini dressing + sunflower seeds.

# Building Versatile, Nutrient-Dense Meals

The following meal ideas use our core ingredients and meal-building formula to create dishes that can be customized based on what you have on hand.

## 1. One-Pot Lentil and Vegetable Stew

A hearty, budget-friendly stew packed with protein and fiber.

### Ingredients:

- 1 cup dry lentils (brown or green) (\$.75)
- 1 onion, diced (\$.50)
- 2 cloves garlic, minced (\$.50)
- 2 large carrots, sliced (\$1)
- 2 potatoes, cubed (\$1)
- 4 cups vegetable broth (or water) (\$.25)
- 1 cup diced tomatoes (\$.50)
- 1 tsp cumin (\$.50)
- 1 tsp smoked paprika (\$.25)
- Salt and pepper to taste (\$.25)
- TOTAL: \$5.50

### Instructions:

1. In a large pot, sauté the onion and garlic in a small amount of olive oil until fragrant.
2. Add the carrots, potatoes, and lentils. Stir in the cumin and paprika.
3. Add the diced tomatoes and vegetable broth. Bring to a boil.
4. Lower heat and simmer for 30-40 minutes until lentils and vegetables are tender.
5. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

### Customization Tips:

- **Add More Veggies:** Include chopped spinach, kale, or frozen mixed vegetables.
- **Switch the Protein:** Use chickpeas or split peas instead of lentils.

## 2. Chickpea and Vegetable Stir-Fry



A quick and versatile dish that can be served over rice or as a wrap filling.

### **Ingredients:**

- 1 can (or preferably 1.5 cups cooked) chickpeas
- 1 onion, sliced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 cup bell peppers, sliced (fresh or frozen)
- 2 cups mixed vegetables (carrots, broccoli, snap peas)
- 2 tbsp amino acids or tamari
- 1 tbsp tahini (optional for a creamy sauce)
- 1 tsp chili flakes (optional for heat)

### **Instructions:**

1. In a large pan, sauté the onion and garlic until fragrant.
2. Add the chickpeas and cook until slightly browned.
3. Add the bell peppers and mixed vegetables, stirring to combine.
4. Stir in soy sauce and tahini, cooking until vegetables are tender.
5. Sprinkle with chili flakes if desired.

### **Customization Tips:**

- **Use Different Beans:** Swap chickpeas for black beans or edamame.
- **Change the Grain:** Serve over quinoa, barley, or whole wheat noodles.

## **3. Savory Bulgur with Vegetables and Spices**

Grains aren't just for breakfast! Make a savory version for lunch or dinner.

### **Ingredients:**

- 1 cup brown bulgur (\$1)
- 2 cups vegetable broth (\$.25)
- 1 bell pepper, cubed (\$.75)
- 1 cup chopped spinach or kale (\$1)
- 3 garlic cloves (\$.50)
- 1/2 cup of red onions (\$.75)
- 1/2 tsp cumin (\$.50)
- Salt and pepper to taste (\$.25)

- Optional: Top with nutritional yeast or tahini sauce (\$1)
- TOTAL: \$6.00

### Instructions:

1. In a pot, bring the vegetable broth to a boil and stir in the bulgur.
2. Lower the heat and add the bell pepper, garlic, onions and seasonings.
3. Cook for 5-7 minutes until the bulgur is creamy.
4. Stir in the chopped spinach and cook until wilted.
5. Top with avocados and tomatoes if desired.

### Customization Tips:

- **Add More Protein:** Stir in mushrooms or chickpeas.
- **Add More Veggies:** Use whatever leftover vegetables you have on hand.

## Transforming Core Ingredients into a Week's Worth of Meals

With these basic recipes in your repertoire, you can create multiple meals using the same core ingredients. Let's outline a sample weekly meal plan that uses our low-cost ingredients creatively:

- **Day 1:** Lentil and Vegetable Stew (double the batch to use later in the week).
- **Day 2:** Chickpea and Vegetable Stir-Fry OVER Rice.
- **Day 3:** Mushroom Burritos with Couscous over Spinach.
- **Day 4:** Leftover Lentil Stew with a Side Salad.
- **Day 5:** Chickpea and Quinoa Power Salad with Lemon-Tahini Dressing.
- **Day 6:** Spelt Pancakes for Breakfast, Vegetable Stir-Fry Wrap for Lunch.
- **Day 7:** Clean-Out-the-Fridge Grain Bowl (mix all leftover grains, veggies, and beans).

By following this meal plan, you'll have a week's worth of nutritious, filling meals that cost only a few dollars per day.

## Actionable Takeaways for Chapter 3:

1. **Stock Up on Core Ingredients:** Prioritize affordable, nutrient-dense staples like grains, legumes, and hearty vegetables.
2. **Use the Meal-Building Formula:** Combine grains, proteins, veggies, and healthy fats for balanced meals.
3. **Create Versatile Recipes:** Start with simple recipes that can be adapted based on what's available and in season.
4. **Repurpose and Repeat:** Use leftovers creatively and don't be afraid to repeat meals with slight variations.

In the next chapter, we'll focus on meal planning for specific health goals and dietary needs, ensuring your budget-friendly plant-based meals are tailored to support your overall wellness.

# Chapter 4: Meal Planning for Health Goals and Dietary Needs on a Budget

Plant-based eating is inherently flexible and can support a wide range of health goals and dietary needs—from weight management to boosting energy levels, improving digestion, or meeting specific nutrient requirements. In this chapter, we'll delve into how to structure plant-based meal plans for different health goals and dietary preferences, while keeping costs low. By the end, you'll be equipped to tailor your budget-friendly plant-based meals to your specific wellness needs.

## Identifying Your Health Goals

The first step in creating effective meal plans is to clarify your personal health goals. While plant-based eating is a great foundation, different health objectives may require slight adjustments in your approach to meals. Here are some common goals and the specific dietary focuses associated with each:

1. **Weight Management:** Prioritize low-calorie, high-fiber foods that promote satiety.
2. **Increased Energy:** Focus on balanced macronutrient ratios and iron-rich foods.
3. **Improved Digestion:** Include high-fiber, gut-friendly foods like fermented vegetables and prebiotics.
4. **Muscle Gain & Athletic Performance:** Incorporate protein-dense foods and complex carbs.
5. **Managing Blood Sugar:** Emphasize complex carbohydrates, low-glycemic foods, and steady protein intake.

Each of these goals can be achieved with a plant-based diet, but the specific choices of ingredients and meal structures will vary. Below, we'll explore tailored strategies and meal plans for each goal while maintaining a budget-friendly approach.

## Meal Planning for Specific Health Goals

# 1. Weight Management: Creating Satisfying Meals That Are Low in Calories but High in Nutrients

When planning for weight management, the focus is on creating nutrient-dense meals that are low in calories but high in volume, fiber, and nutrients. This approach helps promote satiety and reduces the likelihood of overeating.

## Key Strategies:

- **High-Fiber Foods:** Include vegetables, legumes, whole grains, and fruits to increase fullness.
- **Low-Calorie Density:** Use ingredients like leafy greens, non-starchy vegetables, and broths.
- **Protein-Rich Choices:** Choose beans, lentils, tofu, and tempeh to maintain muscle mass and manage hunger.

## Sample Meal Plan:

- **Breakfast:** Fruit Salad with Chia Seeds In A Jar
  - 1/4 cup chia seeds (\$1)
  - 1/2 cup mixed fruits (\$1)
  - 1 tbsp coconut yogurt (\$1)
  - 1 cup plant-based milk (\$1)
  - Mix fruit with chia seeds then add milk.
  - Let mixture sit overnight in the jar and eat in the morning.Makes 4 servings. **Total cost: \$4.00**
- **Lunch:** Sweet Potato Curry
  - 1 can of organic coconut milk (\$2.75)
  - 1/2 cup cubed sweet potatoes, celery, and onions (\$3)
  - 1 cup of chopped kale or spinach (\$2)
  - 1/2 cup zucchini (cubed) (\$1.50)
  - Season with garlic, turmeric, pepper and salt. (\$1)
  - Saute the vegetables, then add the milk and the leafy greens last. Makes 3-5 servings. **Total cost: \$10.25**
- **Dinner:** Lentil and Potato Shepherd's Pie
  - Base: 1 cup cooked lentils (\$1)

- Topping: 1 large purple potato, mashed (\$1)
- Sautéed vegetables and/or herbs of choice (\$2-3)
- Mix lentils with sautéed onions, garlic, and carrots. Top with mashed sweet potato and bake until golden. Top with fresh herbs of choice—rosemary, oregano, thyme. Makes 4 servings.  
**Total cost: \$4.00-\$5.00**

## 2. Increased Energy: Balancing Macronutrients for Steady Energy Levels

If you're looking to boost energy, it's essential to balance your intake of carbohydrates, protein, and healthy fats. This approach stabilizes blood sugar and prevents energy crashes.

### Key Strategies:

- **Complex Carbs:** Use whole grains like brown rice, quinoa, and sweet potatoes.
- **Iron-Rich Foods:** Include lentils, spinach, chickpeas, and fortified cereals.
- **Healthy Fats:** Avocados, nuts, and seeds help with sustained energy release.

### Sample Meal Plan:

- **Breakfast:** Quinoa Breakfast Bowl
  - 1/2 cup cooked quinoa (\$1)
  - 1/2 banana, sliced (\$.25)
  - 1 tbsp almond or hazelnut butter (\$2)
  - Cook the quinoa with water like you would rice. Add almond butter and bananas then mix. Sprinkle with cinnamon and flaxseeds. Makes 3 servings. **Total cost: \$3.25**
- **Lunch:** Chickpea and Avocado Sandwich
  - 1/2 cup mashed chickpeas (\$1)
  - 1/4 avocado (\$1)
  - 1 tbsp lemon juice (\$1)

- Spread on chickpea flatbread and top with tahini sauce and tomato slices. Season to taste. Makes 2-3 sandwiches. **Total cost: \$3.00**
- **Dinner: Sweet Potato and Black Bean Tacos**
  - 1 large sweet potato, roasted (\$1)
  - 1 cup black beans (\$1)
  - Avocado (\$1)
  - Seasonings to taste (\$1)
  - Cut the potato into small chunks after oven roasting. Add the cooked black beans and serve on corn tortillas with a drizzle of avocado sauce. Makes 4-6 servings. **Total cost: \$4.00**

### 3. Improved Digestion: High-Fiber, Gut-Friendly Meal Plans

If your goal is to improve digestion, focus on including a variety of fiber-rich foods, prebiotics, and fermented items like sauerkraut or kimchi to support gut health.

#### Key Strategies:

- **Soluble and Insoluble Fiber:** Include a mix of both for optimal digestion.
- **Probiotics:** Incorporate fermented foods like kimchi, sauerkraut, and kombucha.
- **Prebiotics:** Onions, garlic, and bananas help nourish beneficial gut bacteria.

#### Sample Meal Plan:

- **Breakfast:** Smoothie Bowl with Gut-Friendly Toppings
  - 1 cup unsweetened almond milk
  - 1/2 cup mangoes, blueberries and strawberries
  - 1/2 burro banana
  - Blend until smooth and top with 1 tbsp hemp seeds and a spoonful of coconut yogurt.
- **Lunch:** Quinoa and Vegetable Salad
  - 1 cup cooked quinoa

- 1 cup raw cucumbers, broccoli, and bell peppers
- 2 tbsp tahini dill lemon sauce for added probiotics.
- **Dinner:** Lentil Stew with Root Vegetables
  - 1 cup cooked lentils
  - 1/2 cup chopped turnips, onions, and celery
  - 1 cup vegetable broth
  - Simmer with garlic, onions, and thyme for a warming, gut-friendly meal.

## 4. Muscle Gain & Athletic Performance: Protein-Rich and Calorie-Dense Meals

For muscle gain, you'll want to increase your overall calorie intake, particularly focusing on protein-rich and calorie-dense foods to support muscle repair and growth. Here are some examples:

***Tofu: With 10 grams of protein in a 3/4-cup (100 grams) serving, tofu is an excellent plant protein source.***

***Lentils are a good source of protein. A 1/2 cup serving of cooked lentils provides about 12 grams of protein.***

***One cup of cooked quinoa weighing 185 grams (g) provides 8.14 g of protein.***

***30 grams (g) of hemp seeds, or 2 to 3 tablespoons, provide about 11 g of protein.***

***A 1/4 cup of raw mixed nuts contains 4 grams of protein.***

Key Strategies:

- **High-Protein Foods:** Tofu, tempeh, seitan, beans, and lentils.
- **Calorie-Dense Ingredients:** Nuts, seeds, whole grains, and avocados.
- **Post-Workout Meals:** Include a mix of protein and carbs for recovery.

Sample Meal Plan:

- **Breakfast:** Protein-Packed Smoothie
  - 1 cup coconut yogurt (\$1)
  - 1/2 cup flax seeds (\$.75)
  - 1/2 burro banana (\$1)



- 1 tbsp almond butter (\$1)
- Blend until smooth and sprinkle cinnamon on top. Makes 2 servings. **Total cost: \$3.75**
  
- **Lunch:** Tofu and Quinoa Power Bowl
  - 1 cup cooked quinoa (\$1)
  - 1/2 cup sautéed tofu (\$1)
  - 1 cup roasted sweet potatoes (\$1)
  - Mix the cooked vegetables with the quinoa and tofu. Top with avocado slices and a drizzle of tahini sauce. Makes 4 servings. **Total cost: \$3.00**
  
- **Dinner:** Portobello Stir-Fry with Wild Rice
  - 1 cup cooked wild rice (soaked overnight) (\$1.50)
  - 1 cup cubed portobello mushroom (\$3)
  - 1 cup mixed vegetables (bell pepper, zucchini, snap peas) (\$3)
  - 1 cup onion (\$1)
  - 2-3 cloves garlic (\$.50)
  - 1 thumb ginger (\$.50)
  - Sauté vegetables in amino acid, garlic, and ginger. Makes 4 servings. **Total cost: \$9.50**

## 5. Managing Blood Sugar: Steady Energy with Low-Glycemic Foods

To manage blood sugar, focus on eating balanced meals that combine complex carbohydrates with protein and healthy fats to slow the absorption of sugars into the bloodstream. For example:

***Lentils keep blood sugar levels even, without spikes and crashes.***

***Apples contain fiber, which helps slow down the absorption of sugar into the bloodstream.***

***Sweet Potatoes have a low GI content when boiled and can help people with diabetes manage blood sugar levels.***

### Key Strategies:

- **Low-Glycemic Carbs:** Use sweet potatoes, legumes, and whole grains.

- **Protein & Fat Pairing:** Always include protein and healthy fats with each meal.
- **Avoid Sugary Foods:** Opt for natural sweeteners like dates or fruit.

### Sample Meal Plan:

- **Breakfast:** Sweet Potato Breakfast Hash
  - 1 cup diced sweet potatoes (\$1)
  - 1 cup onions and bell peppers (\$2)
  - 1 cup cooked black beans (\$1)
  - 1 avocado (\$1)
  - Saute sweet potatoes with the onions and bell peppers. Top with black beans and avocado slices. Makes 3-4 servings. **Total cost: \$5.00**
- **Lunch:** Lentil and Brown Bulgur
  - 1 cup cooked lentils (\$1)
  - 1 cup bulgur (\$1)
  - 1 cup diced cucumber (\$.50)
  - 1 bell pepper, diced (\$1)
  - Half lemon (\$.25)
  - 1/4 cup tahini (\$1)
  - Mix cooked bulgur and lentils with cucumber, bell pepper and top with a lemon-tahini dressing. Serves 4 people. **Total cost: \$4.75**
- **Dinner:** Chickpea and Spinach Curry
  - 1 cup cooked chickpeas (\$1)
  - 1 cup cooked brown rice (\$.75)
  - 1/2 cup coconut milk (\$1)
  - 2 cups spinach (\$1.50)
  - 2 cups roasted vegetables (\$2)
  - Serve seasoned chickpeas over brown rice with the roasted vegetables. Makes 4-6 servings. **Total cost: \$6.25**

## Tailoring Your Plant-Based Meal Plans: Practical Tips

1. **Adjust Portions for Caloric Needs:** If you're looking to lose weight, slightly reduce portion sizes of calorie-dense ingredients like oils,

nuts, and grains. For muscle gain, increase serving sizes of these foods.

2. **Incorporate Seasonal and Local Produce:** Eating seasonally not only supports local farmers but also helps reduce costs.
3. **Embrace Simple Meals:** Don't overcomplicate meal planning. Repeat meals with slight variations to save time and money.
4. **Supplement Wisely:** Depending on your diet, consider budget-friendly supplements like vitamin B12, vitamin D, and omega-3s from algae if needed.

By aligning your meal plans with specific health goals and dietary needs, you can create a personalized approach to plant-based eating that's both effective and sustainable on a budget. In the next chapter, we'll explore creative ways to add variety and flavor to your plant-based dishes using simple, low-cost ingredients.

# Chapter 5: Elevating Your Plant-Based Dishes with Alkaline Ingredients

In this chapter, we'll explore how you can transform your everyday plant-based meals into vibrant, flavorful dishes using simple, low-cost alkaline ingredients. Alkaline foods are classified as having a pH level of 7 and above and many believe these foods are beneficial to the body and in healing dis-ease. Foods with a pH level under 7 are considered acidic and it is thought that too much acid in the body can inhibit the body's natural healing tendencies. It can be tricky finding foods that meet this standard, so we have included a couple of recipes to get you started.

## Understanding Alkaline Ingredients

Before diving into recipes, let's define what makes an ingredient "alkaline." Alkaline foods are those that promote an optimal pH balance in the body, ideally tipping the scale toward a slightly alkaline level rather than overly acidic. Alkaline ingredients generally include leafy greens, herbs, fruits, root vegetables, nuts, seeds, and some grains.

Incorporating these ingredients into your dishes not only benefits your health but also opens up new ways to add variety, texture, and flavor to your meals. The best part? These ingredients are often budget-friendly and can be found at your local grocery store or even grown in your own backyard.

### 1. Enhancing Flavor with Citrus Zest and Juice

One of the simplest ways to elevate any plant-based dish is by using the zest and juice of citrus fruits, such as kiwis, key limes, or oranges. These fruits are rich in alkaline properties and offer a fresh, tangy brightness that can balance the natural earthiness of grains, beans, and leafy greens.

Ideas for Incorporation:

- **Lemon-Drizzled Veggies:** After roasting or sautéing vegetables, drizzle a bit of fresh lemon juice over them. It adds a burst of flavor and highlights the natural sweetness of the veggies.

- **Citrus Marinades:** Use a key lime juice as a base for a light, alkaline-rich marinade. Add ginger, olive oil, and herbs to create a quick dressing for salads, grilled mushrooms, or vegetables.
- **Citrus Zest Topping:** Grating lemon or lime zest over finished dishes (like a warm bowl of quinoa or a cold salad) adds a refreshing twist and depth of flavor.

## 2. Infusing Dishes with Herbs and Greens

Herbs are nature's flavor bombs—packed with nutrients and alkalinity. Whether fresh or dried, they bring a punch of flavor to even the simplest plant-based meals. Common alkaline herbs like parsley, cilantro, basil, and mint can be used in abundance to brighten dishes without adding extra calories.

Ideas for Incorporation:

- **Herb-Infused Olive Oil:** Infuse olive oil with fresh rosemary, thyme, fennel or basil. Drizzle it over soups, salads, and roasted vegetables for added richness and flavor.
- **Green Smoothies and Sauces:** Use alkaline greens like spinach, kale, or arugula to make vibrant sauces (such as pesto or green tahini) or add them to smoothies for an extra nutrient boost.
- **Fresh Herb Garnish:** Instead of relying on heavy sauces or dressings, use fresh herbs like cilantro, parsley, or chives to top your dishes. It adds a layer of complexity without overwhelming the other ingredients.

## 3. Nutty Crunch and Creaminess with Seeds and Nuts

Alkaline-friendly seeds like sunflower, pumpkin, chia, and flax are excellent for adding both texture and nutrients to plant-based dishes. They are high in essential fatty acids, vitamins, and minerals, making them a versatile addition to almost any meal.

Ideas for Incorporation:

- **Nutty Crusts:** Ground almonds or sunflower seeds can be used as a crunchy coating for baked vegetables or tofu, creating a satisfying texture and nutty flavor without the need for processed breadcrumbs.

- **Creamy Nut-Based Sauces:** Create a creamy sauce using soaked cashews or tahini (sesame seed paste). Simply blend with lemon juice, garlic, and water for a delicious and nutrient-dense dressing that can be used on everything from grain bowls to veggie wraps.
- **Toasted Seeds:** Lightly toast pumpkin or sunflower seeds in a pan and sprinkle them over salads, soups, or grain dishes. Toasting enhances their natural flavor and adds a delightful crunch.

## 4. Natural Sweetness from Fruits

Many fruits, particularly those that are low in sugar but high in fiber, like berries and melons, are also considered alkaline. These fruits are not only refreshing but also add natural sweetness to both savory and sweet dishes without the need for refined sugars.

Ideas for Incorporation:

- **Berry-Infused Dressings:** Blend berries like blueberries or strawberries with balsamic vinegar and olive oil to create a sweet and tangy dressing. This pairs well with leafy green salads or roasted vegetables.
- **Fruit in Savory Dishes:** Try adding sliced pears, apples, or citrus segments to salads, grain bowls, or stir-fries. The sweet, juicy flavor of fruits can add contrast to the savory elements, making each bite more dynamic.
- **Dehydrated Fruits as Toppings:** Dried figs, apricots, or goji berries can be sprinkled on top of salads or mixed into grain dishes. They provide a sweet burst of flavor while also being nutrient-dense and alkaline.

## 5. Earthy Flavors with Root Vegetables

Root vegetables like sweet potatoes, beets, turnips, and radishes are incredibly versatile and packed with alkaline goodness. Their earthy flavors and natural sweetness can be brought out by roasting, boiling, or even eating them raw.

Ideas for Incorporation:

- **Roasted Root Vegetables:** Cut root vegetables into bite-sized chunks, toss with olive oil, herbs, and a pinch of sea salt, then roast them in the oven. The result is a caramelized, naturally sweet side dish that pairs well with grains and leafy greens.
- **Root Vegetable Chips:** Thinly slice beets, sweet potatoes, or parsnips and bake them in the oven until crispy. These healthy chips are a great alkaline-friendly snack or topping for soups and salads.
- **Raw Slaws:** Grate raw carrots, beets, or radishes into slaws with a simple lemon-tahini dressing. The raw vegetables provide a crunchy, refreshing texture that complements the creamy dressing.
- **Spiralized Veggies:** Run zucchini, cucumber and other watery vegetables through a spiralizer to create vegetable noodles that can be eaten raw or sauteed.

## 6. Umami Depth with Fermented Foods

Fermented foods, such as sauerkraut, kimchi, and miso, are not only great for gut health but also add a deep umami flavor to plant-based dishes. Although some fermented foods may not be highly alkaline, their benefits for digestion and flavor complexity make them a valuable addition to your kitchen.

Ideas for Incorporation:

- **Miso-Based Sauces:** Whisk together miso paste with water, lemon juice, and a touch of sesame oil to create a savory sauce. Drizzle this over grain bowls or steamed vegetables for a delicious umami boost.
- **Fermented Veggie Toppings:** Add a spoonful of sauerkraut or kimchi to salads, sandwiches, or grain bowls for a tangy, probiotic-rich topping.
- **Miso Soups:** Combine miso with vegetable broth, tofu, and greens to create a simple, nourishing soup that's packed with flavor.

## 7. Alkaline Grains and Legumes

Grains, flours and legumes (beans) can also be alkaline. In general, most grains and beans are acidifying, but you can make them alkalizing by soaking and sprouting them. However some of these pantry staples come with a pH level higher than 7 naturally. They can be used as accompanying sides to a meal or make up the full meal themselves. Here is a small list of

the most popular alkaline grains and beans you can add to your plant based diet.

- **Quinoa:** A naturally alkalizing grain that is a staple of an alkaline diet
- **Amaranth:** A naturally alkalizing grain
- **Millet:** A naturally alkalizing grain
- **Fresh beans:** Fresh beans like green peas, lima beans, and lentils are alkaline
- **Soaked and sprouted whole grains and beans:** Whole grains and beans become alkalizing if you soak and sprout them before preparation

### **ALKALINE RECIPE: BAKED ZUCCHINI BOATS**

- 4 zucchinis (\$1.25)
- 1 cup mushrooms (any kind, except shiitake) (\$1.50)
- 1/4 cup walnuts (\$2)
- 1/4 cup chopped onions (\$.50)
- 1/2 teaspoon oregano (\$.25)
- 1 tablespoon of grapeseed oil (\$1)
- Alkaline herbs of your choosing (Coriander, Parsley, Basil, Rosemary) (\$1)
- Sea salt and cayenne pepper, to taste (\$1)

**TOTAL \$8.50**

#### **Instructions:**

Preheat the oven to 400°F (200°C). Spray grapeseed oil all over a large baking dish that fits the length of the zucchinis.

Cut the zucchinis in halves lengthwise. Use a teaspoon to scoop out the flesh of the zucchinis carefully.

Cook the filling by sautéing the mushrooms, onions, walnuts, and zucchini filling in a pan with grapeseed oil. Season with sea salt, oregano, and cayenne pepper.

Use a spoon to fill the hollowed out zucchini boats with the filling.



Cover pan loosely with foil and bake for 10-15 minutes or until zucchinis are cooked through.

## **ALKALINE RECIPE: SPAGHETTI SQUASH WITH KALE**

- One spaghetti squash, cut in half (\$1.50)
- 1/4 cup Kalamata olives (\$.75)
- 1/4 cup chopped onions (\$.50)
- 1 cup mushrooms (\$1)
- 1 tablespoon of grapeseed oil (\$.50)
- Rosemary, Basil and Mint (\$1.25)
- Sea salt, white pepper, ginger powder to taste (\$1)

**TOTAL \$6.50**

### **Instructions:**

Preheat oven to 400°F (200°C). Spray grapeseed oil on a large baking dish that fits both halves of the squash. Sprinkle your choice of seasonings on top. Then lay them face down and bake for 30-40 minutes.

Sauté mushrooms, onions and olives lightly in avocado or grapeseed oil. Season while cooking.

Wash then strip the kale, leaving big leaves for each plate.

When done, flip the squash and toss the insides with a fork. It will resemble Pasta.

Scoop out the pasta squash and plate on top of the kale leaves. Layer the mushroom onions and olives on top of the squash. Sprinkle the herbs on top for flavor.

## **Alkaline: A New Way of Eating**

Incorporating alkaline ingredients into your plant-based meals doesn't have to be complicated or expensive. With a few simple, low-cost ingredients, you can enhance the flavor, texture, and nutritional value of your dishes, making every meal not only delicious but also a step toward better health.

From bright citrus to earthy root vegetables, the possibilities are endless. Check out the table below to see what foods are alkaline and what foods are not.

## pH Values of Common Foods and Ingredients

Note: Variation exists between varieties, condition of growing and processing methods.

Item	Approx. pH	Item	Approx. pH
Apple, baked with sugar	3.20 - 3.55	Brussels sprout	6.00-6.30
Apple, eating	3.30-4.00	Cabbage	5.20-6.80
Apple – Delicious	3.9	Cabbage, green	5.50-6.75
Apple – Golden Delicious	3.6	Cactus	4.70
Apple – Jonathan	3.33	Cantaloupe	6.13-6.58
Apple – McIntosh	3.34	Carrots	5.88-6.40
Apple Juice	3.35-4.00	Cauliflower	5.6
Apple Sauce	3.10-3.60	Celery	5.70-6.00
Apple – Winesap	3.47	Cherries, California	4.01-4.54
Apricots	3.30-4.80	Cherries, red, water pack	3.25-3.82
Apricot nectar	3.78	Cherries, Royal Ann	3.80-3.83
Apricots, pureed	3.42-3.83	Corn	5.90-7.50
Artichokes	5.50-6.00	Cucumbers	5.12-5.78
Artichokes, canned, acidified	4.30-4.60	Cucumbers, dill pickles	3.20-3.70
Artichokes, Jerusalem, cooked	5.93-6.00	Cucumbers, pickled	4.20-4.60
Asparagus	6.00-6.70	Eggplant	4.5-5.3
Avocados	6.27-6.58	Figs, Calamyrna	5.05-5.98
Baby corn	5.20	Four bean salad	5.60
Bamboo Shoots	5.10-6.20	Fruit cocktail	3.60-4.00
Bananas	4.50-5.20	Grapes, Concord	2.80-3.00
Beans	5.60-6.50	Grapes, Niagara	2.80-3.27
Beans, black	5.78-6.02	Grapes, seedless	2.90-3.82
Beans, kidney	5.40-6.00	Grapefruit	3.00-3.75
Beans, lima	6.50	Horseradish, ground	5.35
Beans, soy	6.00-6.60	Jam, fruit	3.50-4.50
Beans, string	5.60	Jellies, fruit	3.00-3.50
Beans, wax	5.30-5.70	Ketchup	3.89-3.92
Beans, pork & tomato sauce	5.10-5.80	Leeks	5.50-6.17
Beets	5.30-6.60	Lemon juice	2.00-2.60
Beets, canned, acidified	4.30-4.60	Lime juice	2.00-2.35
Blackberries, Washington	3.85-4.50	Lime	2.00-2.80
Blueberries, Maine	3.12-3.33	Loganberries	2.70-3.50
Blueberries, frozen	3.11-3.22	Mangoes, ripe	5.80-6.00
Broccoli	6.30-6.85	Mangoes, green	3.40-4.80

# Bonus Chapter: Gardening - Grow Your Own Food!

In the previous chapters, we discussed how to eat healthy at minimal cost. One of the greatest ways to save money while eating good food is to grow it yourself! Creating a garden is a wonderful way to make sure your food is not full of poisons and preservatives. There are seen and unseen benefits to gardening that comes with growing your own food: it lessens your bills when buying fruits and vegetables but also provides a mental benefit. Studies prove that grounding yourself by putting your hands in the soil, being out under the sky and getting exercise while gardening can significantly improve heart health.

Starting a garden can cost as little as **\$20-\$50** for containers, soil, and seeds, and the harvest can save a substantial amount on grocery bills. With the right planning and plant selection, you'll have a supply of fresh, healthy produce to support your plant-based diet year-round.

## Plan What to Grow

**High-Value, High-Yield Plants:** Grow vegetables that are typically expensive to buy, such as tomatoes, peppers, and herbs.

**Easy-to-Grow Greens:** Leafy greens like kale, spinach, Swiss chard, and lettuce are quick-growing, nutrient-dense, and can be harvested repeatedly.

**Protein-Rich Options:** Grow beans, peas, and other legumes if you have the space. These are excellent sources of plant-based protein.

**Root Vegetables:** Carrots, radishes, beets, and potatoes are easy to grow and provide bulk for meals.

## Start from Seeds or Seedlings

**Seeds** are cheaper and give more variety but require a longer growing period.

**Seedlings** are more expensive upfront but can help you get an earlier start.

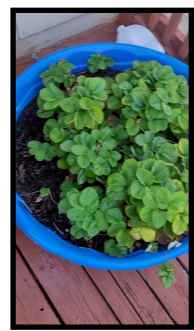
Start seeds indoors if your growing season is short or if you want to extend your harvest by starting in cooler months.

### **Practice Succession Planting**

Instead of planting everything at once, plant in stages so you have continuous harvests. For example, plant a row of lettuce seeds every few weeks to keep fresh greens available.

### **Harvest and Store Efficiently**

Pick vegetables as soon as they ripen to encourage new growth. Blanch and freeze excess greens, or pickle cucumbers, peppers, and other vegetables to extend your harvest.



# Conclusion: Implementing Your Plant-Based Journey on a Budget

Eating healthy, delicious plant-based meals on a small budget is entirely possible with the right strategies, ingredients, and mindset. Throughout this ebook, we've explored a variety of practical techniques and approaches to help you take control of your nutrition, improve your well-being, and save money in the process. We also provided easy-to-follow recipes and practical guides to aid you in your journey. By following these steps, you'll be able to build a sustainable, nourishing lifestyle that works for your budget and health goals.

Let's take a moment to summarize what we've covered in each chapter and highlight the key takeaways that will help you continue thriving on your plant-based journey.

## Benefits Of Plant-Based Eating

In the first chapter, we laid the foundation by introducing the concept of creating healthy plant-based meals on a small budget. We discussed the many benefits of plant-based eating, including its positive impact on health, the environment, and your wallet. We also explored common misconceptions about the cost of plant-based foods and why eating this way can be affordable with a few mindful strategies.

### Key Takeaways:

- Plant-based eating can be affordable and beneficial for overall health.
- Focus on whole, minimally processed foods that are nutrient-dense and cost-effective.
- Learn to build a versatile, budget-conscious shopping list to ensure your meals are both affordable and nourishing.

## Budgeting & Meal Prep Tips

In Chapter 2, we dove into specific budgeting techniques and meal prep hacks designed to stretch your grocery dollars even further. From buying in bulk and shopping seasonally to minimizing food waste, we covered

actionable ways to cut costs without sacrificing quality or variety. Meal prep tips helped streamline your cooking process, saving time while ensuring you always have healthy meals on hand.

## Key Takeaways:

- Buy staples like grains, legumes, and frozen vegetables in bulk for long-term savings.
- Plan meals around seasonal produce and sales to maximize freshness and affordability.
- Batch-cooking and smart meal prep can save time and reduce waste, making plant-based eating easier and cheaper.

## Recipes With Low-Cost Ingredients

Chapter 3 was all about the core set of affordable, nutrient-rich ingredients you can use to create a wide variety of plant-based meals. We introduced the concept of a "meal-building formula," combining grains, legumes, vegetables, and healthy fats for balanced, satisfying dishes. The chapter also provided a collection of simple recipes to show how versatile low-cost ingredients can be transformed into hearty, delicious meals.

## Key Takeaways:

- Stock your pantry with low-cost staples like grains, legumes, vegetables, and healthy fats to build a variety of meals.
- Use a simple meal-building formula to create nutritious, balanced dishes every day.
- Get creative with core ingredients and customize recipes based on what you have available.

## Eating For Specific Health Needs

In Chapter 4, we explored how to tailor plant-based meal plans to support different health goals and dietary needs. Whether you're aiming for weight management, improved energy, or better digestion, this chapter provided practical strategies for building meals that align with your wellness objectives while staying on budget. Each goal-focused plan featured affordable, nutrient-dense ingredients to meet specific nutritional needs.

# An Alkaline Diet

In this chapter, we explored how you can improve your health by incorporating Alkaline foods into your plant-based diet. These foods are classified as having a pH level of 7 and above and many believe these foods are beneficial to the body and in healing dis-ease. Foods with a pH level under 7 are considered acidic and it is thought that too much acid in the body can inhibit the body's natural healing tendencies. We provided ideas that use alkaline foods to create sauces, and full meals.

## Key Takeaways:

- Customize your meal plan to match your health goals, such as weight management, muscle gain, or energy-boosting.
- Focus on specific nutrient groups (fiber, protein, complex carbs, etc.) to support your well-being.
- You don't need expensive ingredients to achieve health goals—strategic use of low-cost foods can help you reach them.

## Moving Forward: Your Plant-Based Journey

Now that we've explored the essentials of plant-based eating on a budget, you have all the tools you need to build a healthy, delicious, and affordable lifestyle. As you continue on this journey, remember that flexibility, planning, and creativity are key. Don't be afraid to adapt recipes, try new ingredients, and make use of seasonal produce to keep your meals exciting and satisfying.

Here are a few final tips to keep in mind:

- **Be Consistent:** Stick to your core ingredients and meal planning strategies, and gradually build on them as you grow more confident in the kitchen.
- **Stay Curious:** Explore new plant-based recipes, experiment with different flavors, and learn from other plant-based eaters on a budget.
- **Celebrate Progress:** Focus on the positive impact your choices are making on your health, your budget, and the environment.

Thank you for reading, and congratulations on taking this important step toward a healthier, more sustainable way of eating. Whether you're

motivated by wellness, financial savings, or ethical reasons, your commitment to plant-based eating on a budget will pay dividends for years to come.



**Here's to a future filled with delicious, nutritious, and budget-friendly meals!**



# MORE RECIPES!



2 1/2 cups Chickpea Flour (\$1)  
3 cups Spring Water (\$1)  
1 tsp. Onion powder (\$.50)  
1/4 tsp. Cumin (\$.50)  
2 tsp. Salt (\$.50)  
Herbs of choice (\$2)  
1 1/2 cups sautéed vegetables of  
choice (\$2)  
3 tbsp. Olive Oil (\$1)  
TOTAL \$8.50

## **KALINTE CUPS**

### Instructions:

1. Preheat the oven to 500° F. Coat a 12-well muffin tin with oil.
2. In a bowl, stir together the flour, water, baking powder, salt, optional seasoning blend, and pepper. Set aside the lump batter while you prepare the veggies.
3. In a large skillet, heat the tablespoon of oil over medium heat. Add the vegetables and herbs (thyme, basil) and sauté until brown. Season to taste.
4. Add the cooked vegetables to the chickpea batter and fill the muffin tins.

5. Bake for 12 minutes at 500 degrees. Open the oven door for 30 seconds to release the steam then cook for another 10-15 minutes until golden brown.

Use a toothpick inserted into the center to confirm the cup is fully cooked. It should come out clean—it might have some crumbs on it, but it shouldn't be wet. Let cool in the tin for 5 minutes, then pop them out to cool on a wire rack.

## PLANT BASED LEMON CAKE



1 1/2 cup flour (\$.50)  
1 cup sugar (\$.75)  
3/4 cup plant milk (\$1)  
1/2 tsp salt (\$.50)  
2 tsp baking powder (\$.50)  
1/2 cup melted vegan butter (\$1)  
1 tbsp vanilla extract (\$.75)  
4 tbsp lemon juice (\$.50)  
2 tbsp lemon zest (\$.25)  
**TOTAL \$5.75**

### GLAZE

1/2 cup powdered sugar (\$1)  
1 tbsp lemon juice (\$.25)  
**TOTAL \$1.25**

Instructions:

Add and mix the dry ingredients. Sift flour if needed so it is smooth  
Then add the wet ingredients one at a time  
Add the lemon zest last then mix again

Bake at 350 degrees for 40 minutes or until the toothpick comes out clean  
Let the cake cool for at least 10 minutes then cover with glaze

Blend the glaze ingredients until creamy  
Pour the glaze over the cooked cake

## ZUCCHINI SPAGHETTI



Caption

3 large zucchinis (\$2)  
2 tomatoes, diced (\$1)  
1/2 cup diced onion (\$.50)  
1/2 cup mushrooms (\$2)  
2 garlic clove (\$.50)  
1 chopped bell pepper (\$1)  
Jar of white or red sauce of choice (\$3)  
**TOTAL: \$10.00**

### Instructions:

Push each zucchini through a spiralizer to create zucchini noodles  
Sauté the onion, garlic, mushrooms and bell pepper  
Add the sauce to the vegetables and simmer for 5-10 minutes

Pour over zucchini noodles.  
Makes 4-5 servings.

## Rosemary Spelt Garlic Bread



- 1½ cups water, room temperature (\$.25)
- 1 teaspoon active dry yeast (\$.75)
- 3 cups of spelt flour, plus more for dusting (\$2)
- ½ teaspoon dried oregano (\$.50)
- 1 teaspoon kosher or fine sea salt (\$.50)
- 2 teaspoons finely chopped rosemary plus more to sprinkle across the top (\$.75)
- 1-2 whole head roasted garlic smashed (\$1)
- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil (\$1)
- ¼ teaspoon of freshly ground black pepper (\$.25)

**Total: \$7.00**

**Instructions:**

Add the yeast in the warm water and let it sit for 10-15 minutes.

In a large bowl, stir together flour, oregano, salt and rosemary and set aside. Add yeast mixture, roasted garlic and olive oil to the bowl then use a rubber spatula to mix it together just until combined. Cover and let rise somewhere warm until it has doubled in size.

Pull the dough out onto a floured surface. With floured hands, gently fold the dough into itself several times until a soft, flour-covered ball is formed. Add pepper and any additional preferred seasoning or herbs to taste.

Add parchment paper to your pan, sprinkle with olive oil and preheat oven to 450°F (232°C). Bake for 25 minutes or until toothpicks come out clean. Cool the loaf before cutting.

Tip: Add additional garlic and rosemary to the top of the loaf before baking.

***GOOD HEALTH TO YOU!***



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