Ask the Expert: Choosing Healthy and Inexpensive Foods

Written by Caroline Parker, Undergraduate Student in Nutrition & Dietetics, Purdue University

When your wallet and stomach are running on low, it is important to find foods that are nutrient-packed and affordable. Look for a variety of carbohydrates including fruits, vegetables, and whole grains; protein foods including meats and dairy; and foods with unsaturated fat.

Carbohydrates are your body’s main source of energy. Sweet potatoes are a great, inexpensive source of carbohydrates. At only about $0.92 cents a pound, sweet potatoes provide a rich source of vitamins and minerals. Just one sweet potato provides about 370% of your daily need for vitamin A! In addition, sweet potatoes contain vitamin B, C, potassium, and fiber. Other carbohydrates that provide important nutrients include oranges, blueberries, oats, and quinoa.

Protein can be found in both animal and plant-based foods. Eggs are an “egg-cellent,” affordable, and nutritious animal-based protein source. One egg contains about 6 grams of protein, along with vitamins and minerals. Eggs are also a source of choline, important to brain function. Canned beans are a great plant-based protein source and can be found for less than $1.00 a pound! One cup of beans contains about 15 grams of protein, and are rich in iron, folate, magnesium, and potassium.

Despite the many “fat-free” food products available, studies have shown that healthy fats are essential. Dietary fat may act like a vitamin sponge. Without fat, your body would not absorb fat-soluble vitamins! One of the most easy-to-find, low-cost sources of fat is milk. Milk costs around $2.00 dollars a gallon, and is also a rich source of protein, calcium, B vitamins, and phosphorus.

Choosing healthy foods doesn’t have to break the bank! There are a wide variety of healthy and low-cost foods to choose from that will keep you and your family healthy.

Photo: creativecommons.org
Source: https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/29-cheap-healthy-foods#section3
Food Safety:
Teaching Children Food Preparation

Written by Clara Vasquez-Mejia, Food Scientist, M.Sc

Studies show that kids make healthier food choices, and prefer to snack on more fruits and vegetables when they are involved with food preparation at home. You can involve and empower your kids to make healthy food choices by following the USDA recommendations for safe kitchen activities for children. It is important to set safety rules in the kitchen when working with kids. You may ask their input when setting the rules so they feel like part of the team. Here are some suggested safety guidelines for children to follow:

1) Always ask for an adult’s permission before working in the kitchen.
2) Wash your hands before and after cooking.
3) Clean as you go.
4) Handle hot items with care.
5) Watch out for sharp knives! Let adults use the knives, unless you’ve been trained on Good Knife Safety tips.
6) Ask before you try any ingredients, raw items might make you sick.
7) Always listen to the adult.
8) Stay away from electrical sockets, especially if your hands are wet.

9) If you burn yourself, tell an adult immediately and hold the burned area under cold running water.
10) Put cooked food on clean plates. Do not put it on cutting boards where raw food was handled.
11) Don’t put knives or sharp objects into a sink full of water. Someone could reach in and get hurt.
12) Turn pot handles in toward the back of the stove, to avoid someone accidentally bumping into them and knocking the pot over.
13) Check that all the kitchen appliances are turned off before you leave the kitchen.

Visit choosemyplate.gov for more information and a list of age-appropriate kitchen activities to get children involved and cooking safely!

Sources: https://www.nutrition.gov/subject/life-stages/children/kids-in-the-kitchen
https://www.snackworks.com
Potassium
Written by Ashlyn Burns, Master of Public Health Student, Purdue University

Potassium is a mineral needed for the body to function properly. The kidneys, heart, muscles, and nerves all depend on having enough potassium. The amount of potassium needed by each person depends on their age, and ranges from 3,000 mg a day for children 1-3 years to 4,700 mg a day for adults 19 years and older. The amount needed by children and teenagers increases with age. Pregnant and breastfeeding women may also need a little extra potassium in their diet. Many foods contain potassium, including:

- Fruits, such as bananas and raisins
- Vegetables, such as potatoes and broccoli
- Kidney beans and soybeans
- Milk and yogurt
- Meat and fish

Individuals with certain bowel conditions and those taking certain medications may have trouble getting enough potassium. Research has linked lack of potassium to high blood pressure, kidney stones, bone health, and blood sugar control. Too much potassium is dangerous but is generally not a concern unless one is taking potassium supplements.

Source: https://ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/Potassium-Consumer/

Potassium-Packed Smoothie

Ingredients (2 servings)
- 1 cup coconut water (may substitute plain water or orange juice)
- 1 cup frozen mangoes OR peaches
- 1 whole banana, peeled
- Optional: 1 cup spinach

Directions:
1. Peel and slice banana. Place banana slices in blender.
2. Add frozen fruit to blender.
3. If fruit pieces are stuck together in large clumps, break them apart.
4. Pour coconut water over the fruit in the blender.
5. Run blender following manufacturer instructions until blended.
6. Pour smoothie into two glasses.
7. Enjoy!

Nutrition Information (1 serving)
- Calories: 125
- Fat: 1g
- Carbs: 34g
- Protein: 4g
- Potassium: 730 mg

Underlining denotes TEFAP commodity ingredients
Photos: creativecommons.org
In the News: Welcome Our New Editor!

Written by Ashlyn Burns, Master of Public Health Student, Purdue University

Indiana’s Emergency Food Resource Network would like to welcome our new newsletter editor, Caroline Parker!

Caroline, a sophomore dual majoring in Dietetics and Nutrition, Fitness, and Health, will be taking over the newsletter editor position in 2019. She is from Granger, Indiana, where she grew up playing volleyball and dreamed of becoming a rock star chef on television. She enjoys cooking, exercise, playing with her dog, and listening to country music.

If she wasn’t busy studying dietetics, Caroline says she would spend her time as an animal trainer. She is a self-proclaimed “roller coaster junkie” and lover of food. Her favorite food is peanut butter, but she also loves coffee and chocolate!

If you have any questions, comments, or concerns about future newsletters, feel free to reach out to Caroline by email at parke285@purdue.edu.