

## Budgeting Food Costs on the Gluten-Free Diet

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The gluten-free diet frequently presents high costs to individuals with celiac disease. Specialty gluten-free foods, such as cereal, bread, and pasta, are often two to three times more expensive than standard gluten-containing products. However, there are many ways to save money while on a gluten-free diet; read our cost-saving tips below.

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### Helpful Ways to Save Money on Your Gluten-Free Food Bill

- Look for **deals online** on labeled gluten-free grains, such as quinoa, buckwheat and sorghum which can add more nutrition to baked goods.<sup>1</sup> Gluten-free grains and flours can be stored in the freezer to extend their life.
- Buy fruits and vegetables **in season and at farmers' markets**. Eating gluten-free is a great way to increase your intake of fruits and vegetables. Many Americans do not eat the recommended 5-9 servings per day.
- [Try growing your own vegetables and/or fruit.](#)
- **Frozen fruits and vegetables** are just as nutritious as fresh ones and they can be a cost-effective way to get those 5-9 servings per day especially when they are out of season. Try adding them to soups and stews or gluten-free pasta dishes to add nutritional value.
- To **avoid spoilage**, buy extras of a sale item if you plan to use it up within a reasonable time.
- Make **leftovers with a purpose**. Cook a larger volume of food than you need for that meal and use it for another meal later in the week.
  - Bake extra sweet potatoes to add to salads, soups or breakfast. Prepare extra rice or other grains to be used later with vegetables or other toppings (make your own gluten-free grain bowl).

- Try more **meatless meals**. Dried beans, peas and lentils are cheaper protein sources than meat.
- Call your favorite companies or visit their websites to request **coupons**. As the availability of gluten-free products grows, the competition for customers is also growing.
- Did not like the gluten-free bread you just bought? Do not throw away money. Use the bread to **make bread crumbs** for meatballs or meatloaf. Run cookies through a food processor to use as a crust for pies or cheesecake. Freeze them for later use.
- **Shop around** to find less expensive products. Many supermarkets carry gluten-free items and may advertise them in their sales notices. Use the grocery store apps/websites to compare prices and find coupons.
- Check to see if your supermarket has a **discount table or shelf** for food that is nearing its sell-by-date.
- **Join friends or support group** members on a mail-order. Small groups of people can order in quantity and divide the items to reduce shipping costs.
- Make your own **soup or broth**. Make your own **chili** & freeze the leftovers to top a baked potato, make a taco or taco salad. If you make it in a slow-cooker or crock pot, you can save energy, too.
- Use **unit prices**. This is the price for one “measure” of the item, such as the price per pound or the price per ounce. Look for the best possible deal and check to see if a larger package is cheaper per pound or ounce. The unit price is located on a sticker on the shelf or area near the item.

Unit Price \$20 per oz.	Total Price <b>\$2.40</b>
	12 oz.
Oat Bran Cereal	

## Helpful Tips for Every Household

- **Make a shopping list and meal plan** for the week and stick to it. Keep a master list on your computer or phone of items that you always want to have on hand. Use the master list to check your pantry before shopping.
- **Do not go shopping on an empty stomach**. Treats will end up in your cart faster than they normally would.
- **Try to shop around the perimeter of the store** where foods, such as fruit, vegetables, eggs and dried beans, are found in

- their natural state. Whole foods are more nutritious and less costly than prepared and packaged food.
- **Use coupons whenever possible.** Many stores and food companies offer them on their websites or phone apps.

## Tax Deductions for Celiac Disease

You may claim the gluten-free diet as a medical expense deduction on your U.S. income tax form if the net amount of the reimbursements exceeds 7.5% of your adjusted gross income.

You may also deduct the cost difference of a gluten-free food and that of the gluten-containing food that you have replaced. Please consult your tax preparer when calculating your deductions.

For more information, visit: <https://celiac.org/gluten-free-living/federal-benefits/tax-deductions/>

## Take Home Messages:

1. Choose whole foods whenever possible for their nutrition and lower cost. Frozen and/or local in-season fruit and vegetables usually offer better savings than produce shipped from another state or country.
2. Companies and stores that cater to the gluten-free customer are very good cost-saving resources.

## Helpful Resources (not all sites are exclusively gluten-free)

- **Cooking Tips**
  - <http://activechefs.ca/uploads/2/9/2/7/2927035/pulses.pdf> (tips on cooking with beans, peas, lentils and chickpeas)
  - <https://ontariobeans.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Pulse-Canada-Gluten-Free-recipe-Pamphlet.pdf>
  - <https://glutenfreeonashoestring.com/> (cooking tips and recipes)
  - <https://www.myplate.gov/eat-healthy/healthy-eating-budget> (USDA suggestions; not specifically gluten-free)
- **Shopping**
  - [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)
  - [Thrive Market](http://www.vitacost.com)
  - [https://www.vitacost.com/](http://www.vitacost.com)
  - [https://glutenfreemall.com/](http://www.vitacost.com)
  - [The Gluten Free Shoppe](http://www.vitacost.com)

## References:

1. Schuppan D, et al. Celiac disease; epidemiology, pathogenesis, diagnosis, and nutritional management. *Nutrition in Clinical Care*, 2005.8;2:54-69.
2. Allen B, Orfila C. The availability and nutritional adequacy of gluten-free bread and pasta. *Nutrients* 2018 Sep 25;10(10):1370.

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Editors: Melinda Dennis, MS, RD, LDN, and Hailey Ficarrotta, M.S., Dietetic Intern