

Budget Conscious Shopping Ideas

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People, and in particular caregivers, are feeling the pinch of inflation. Caregiving is often unpaid, and while it can be satisfying, caregivers often experience a greater financial burden, stress, and economic consequences. All of these can impact their health and that of their care recipient. While more financial support is always welcomed, I would like to share some information gathered locally on how some caregivers and individuals are addressing this challenge and to provide some tips for “frugal eating”. I would at the outset like to thank the Halifax Regional Library (Alderney site), along with the Dartmouth Community Health Team who hosted a session on this topic and shared the wonderful resources they garnered from the community. Both of these organizations are excellent resources. I would also like to thank the many colleagues and caregivers who provided tips in addition to the information included here. Hopefully, some of these ideas will resonate and be helpful in your planning and budgeting:

- First and foremost, avoid shopping when you are hungry as it can lead to unnecessary purchases!
- Become familiar with today’s food prices so you are not overpaying for items.
- Buy in bulk for non-perishable items and freeze perishables when they are on sale.
- Utilize coupons. Search online for coupons for regularly purchased brands. Peruse the coupon boards as you enter stores usually located near the grocery carts. Many shelves also have coupons in store.
- Some areas have community markets and offer amazing deals on produce. Check out what is available in your community or from local farmers. Imperfect produce can also be cheaper to buy as they are not uniform but the quality and flavor remain.
- There is a meat market that is popular and local to HRM and reportedly worth the trip for some from outside the city. Coordinate or carpool with neighbors and friends for such events. Traveling too far can be expensive given the cost, but if someone is heading that way, they may be willing to assist and share costs or pick items up on your behalf.
- Don’t forget to check out your local community grocers as well as they offer deals that can compare to big box stores.
- A few retailers offer price matching for the exact product. Sign up for free flyers or download a free app such as [Flipp](#) which shows the current flyers and sometimes previews the upcoming ones. On the app, you can create a recurring weekly grocery cart for items you get consistently. Each week the app populates the list and tells you where items are on sale.
- Keep a close eye on items as they are being scanned at stores to ensure you are getting the price advertised. Be aware of [The Scanner Price Accuracy Code](#). If there is a scanning error you may get the item for free (up to \$10).
- The [Flashfood](#) app lets you search for massively discounted foods that grocery stores are trying to offload as well as [Too Good To Go](#) which allows you to rescue unsold food at your favorite spots.
- Be sure to always load your loyalty points when you go shopping. Some programs can be combined with credit card points for example to increase point power. Always remember however to pay those cards off!
- Libraries and community hubs offer food calendars that direct community members to food banks, free meals, and free programming that offers food. Along with the opportunity for food, it also provides for social interaction.
- Most stores offer rain checks for sale items—just ask at the customer service desk. Some stores offer other perks if an item isn’t available such as points.
- Some food banks will deliver for a small fee if community members show a doctor’s note indicating the need when mobility or transportation are issues.
- Some drug stores have amazing weekend deals—especially on staples such as eggs and milk. Note the days so you don’t miss out.
- Dollar discount stores offer grocery items such as bread, canned goods, and vitamins.
- At some warehouses or wholesale clubs, you don’t need a membership to access some services such as pharmacy. They can be significantly cheaper than elsewhere if you are nearby or able to plan for that savings. There are also not-for-profit pharmacy programs with referrals.
- Check out any discounts offered that you can take advantage of given your memberships and associations.
- Make a grocery list and stick to it. Know the layout of the grocery store so you can target the needed areas and look at expiry dates when buying to ensure shelf life. Comparing price as well as volume, brand name versus no name, and buying in bulk sections for things such as spices can be cost-saving. Less expensive items can be found higher and lower on the shelf so look further than what is in front of you.
- Meal planning can be a lifesaver. Buying in season can be cost-effective as well as meal planning around what is on sale.
- Do all your meal prep for the week on one day, and then either freeze or store it in the fridge, ready to go. For variety, you can then alternate meals. Consider community cooking to share meals with your neighbors and allow you variety.
- Save by limiting going out for coffee, and instead making it at home. If you are going out, bring a large, insulated thermos of pre-made coffee instead. Consider water which is better for hydration and health.
- Try not to use apps for delivery and just call places directly to order take-out food. Consumers and local businesses save money because there are no service charges. Sign up for the free appetizers most restaurants offer if you plan to visit.
- Store food properly so they do not become waste. Vegetables that are about to turn bad can be used for soup broth. Think about how you can use food leftovers for stock or another meal version etc. If you don’t think you are going to use something in time before it spoils, freeze it! Check

expiry dates at home regularly.

- Leftovers make a great mobile meal to deliver to a care recipient particularly if you are not fond of eating it several days in a row and it may get thrown out.
- Buying frozen or canned versus fresh fruits and vegetables allows you to have them on hand and use them when needed without worrying about spoiling.
- Whenever you peel root vegetables such as potatoes, carrots, or parsnips, consider food waste and bake the skins you have peeled away for starch, a tasty snack, or chip.

- There is a high price for convenience foods. For example, pre-made salads or pre-shredded cheese. Consider making your own to reduce costs.
- Some restaurants have a bulletin board where you can take a free meal and return the gesture at a time when you are able. A hand-up when needed!
- Add red lentils or beans to soups and sauces. It is a great inexpensive way to add protein and help keep you full longer.
- Many communities offer free programs that encourage frugal healthy eating, planning, budgeting, and sharing. Engage in a workshop that might support further ideas to assist.
- Seeds can be inexpensive. Start a few pots at home to supplement your budget. Community gardens are a great resource and plots can be very economical.

I was amazed at all the great tips, in no particular order, that were shared by the community and caregivers. In these economic times, we need all the help we can get. If you have something to offer that wasn't included here, please reach out and share at support@caregiversns.org!

