

Eating Healthy in Rural Settings

Living many miles from the nearest grocery store can present a challenge when it comes to providing your family an abundance of fresh food for a balanced intake. In some communities, there are plenty of fast food restaurants and convenience stores but few grocery stores. That can create a barrier to healthy eating. But rethink that challenge and turn it into an opportunity by following these tips!

- **Make copies of our 'Planning Meals' sheet and the 'Grocery Shopping Trip' in this lesson.** Before you go to the grocery store, plan a week's worth of meals. This is ever SO IMPORTANT when you live in a rural setting.
- **Now craft your grocery list.** Consider what is on sale at your local store and what is in season at your local farm stand. If you don't plan, you may only eat well within a few days of your grocery trip! Plan for healthful meal components that you are learning about in this manual - vegetables, fruits, healthier protein foods, whole grains etc. and steer clear of the processed convenience food as much as you can, as well as foods loaded with saturated fat, salt and sugar.
- **As you plan your meals, consider which produce needs to be eaten soon after you have shopped.** Port that into your plan early in your week. Use vegetables that keep longer later in the week.
- **Vegetables that have 'shorter' storage times**, that should be eaten sooner than later are: spinach, eggplant, ripe tomatoes, lettuce, asparagus, broccoli, sweet corn, green beans and cucumbers.
- **Vegetables that have 'longer' storage times** - that can be planned into meals later in the week or month are: beets, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, winter squash, potatoes and sweet potatoes.
- **For a full list of vegetable and fruit storage** (length of time) and creative ways to store in outdoors or in basements, please check out Cornell's Cooperative Extension's 'Storage Guidelines for Fruits and Vegetables' <http://chemung.cce.cornell.edu/resources/storage-guidelines-for-fruits-vegetables.pdf>
- **Get savvy with freezing food!** Check out our 'Frozen Food Storage' infographic on the next several pages. You'll be surprised at not only the protein foods and fruits and vegetables storage tips, but other unique items that can be frozen such as herbs, yogurt, nuts, tofu, rice, grains, tortillas, starchy beans, eggs and milk!
- **Keep a running grocery list of items you are getting low on.**
- **Have a plan for leftovers** - they make great lunches the next day!
- **Consider stocking up on frozen and shelf stable ingredients** from the resource in this lesson called 'Cooking from your Cupboard'. This is especially helpful if you have to delay your weekly grocery store trip. In fact, frozen veggies can have even more nutrition than fresh produce that has been stored for several days or weeks.
- **Jump into gardening** if not already doing so. And try your hand at preserving foods at home through drying, freezing and canning. Our local Purdue Extension has a course called Preserving Nature's Bounty - Home Food Preservation Workshop. \$5.00 fee. Check out: <https://extension.purdue.edu/ALLEN/article/4279>
- **If you don't garden, frequent your local farm stand.** If your area is lacking a farm stand, rally your community and neighbors to bring one into your area. The demand for farm fresh food is only increasing!
- **Gather together with your neighbors and have a healthy potluck** every few months. Share recipes and strengthen the bonds and relationships in your community. Supports not only physical health but mental health as well!

