



Savvy Supermarket Shopping

How to make big savings on food costs while eating well and supporting your health and dietary needs. With lots of tips and hacks for meal planning, grocery shopping, and smart food storage, to help you achieve best value for money.

Small change adds up

It's amazing how much you can save from grocery bills simply with price comparing, grabbing discounts, and switching a basic such as everyday teabags to a cheaper version. Aim to swop products without reducing nutritional value, and that you can enjoy. Making one change is very motivating for continuing changes to your shopping basket.

Start with a plan

- **Plan meals** based around items already in the cupboards and freezer. Don't overlook forgotten tins and packets from the back of cupboards, or items from the bottom of the freezer. Check use by date, then see how much you can save from your supermarket spend as these items can contribute to your meal planning.
- **Make food at home** as it's much cheaper than buying ready meals or takeout. Home cooked meals and easy-to make sauces, instead of buying ready-made, and packed lunches. Plan ahead to do this, so you'll have the ingredients ready.
- **Make a shopping list** to avoid impulse buys and over-buying. Instead buy only what you need.
- **Set a budget** if you need to limit total spend.

Savvy shopper

Budget supermarkets Aldi and Lidl have increased prices of their own brand budget products until some are now more expensive than premium supermarkets such as M&S and Waitrose. Price gap is closing between rocketing budget product prices and premium ranges or brand labels, and between traditionally cheaper supermarkets and premium stores. Be prepared to shop around.

Price comparison

Shop around to see where you can get best deal and use different supermarkets for different products. Some supermarkets have launched new budget ranges to help with this, such as Sainsbury's 'Pocket Friendly Prices'. You can price compare individual groceries using supermarket comparison website priceable.co.uk or trolley.co.uk which has phone app too.

Change habits

Check through your routine shopping list to see if there are any items you buy out of habit that you could re-think. Suggest starting with simple items such as teabags, to begin with, where there are lots of options and you won't need to additionally factor in dietary needs when making the switch. Try switching to a cheaper brand or economy sized boxes, and compare supermarket own label prices.

Yellow sticker deals

All major supermarkets put yellow stickers on fresh foods that must be sold that day because it's reached the 'display by' date, and also store-cupboard items such as cereal packets with damaged packaging.

- **Time of day** when stickers are added varies. Usually added in last hour or two before closing time. Lidl and Asda add stickers in the morning as well. Worth getting to know the routine in your local supermarkets as stickers can appear during the day too.
- **Location in-store** varies, some stores have special yellow sticker shelves, others do not.
- **Discounts** between 30 and 70 percent, great way to get a half price meal. If these are foods that can be frozen, it's a great way of securing cheap ingredients and meals for the future.



Loyalty discounts and cashback

- **Signing up.** All well-known supermarkets except Aldi have a loyalty card, consider signing up for them all. Check out in-store leaflets or supermarket websites to sign up and find out details of their loyalty offers, as these differ from one supermarket brand to another. Remember to take loyalty cards with you, or use downloaded loyalty apps, to scan at checkout. For online grocery shopping, register card to automatically link. Some health food shops have loyalty cards too, for example Holland & Barrett and local Hackney health food store Harvest.
- **Benefits.** Great instant saving of up to 50 percent exclusive discount off certain individual items. Money off checkout total using discount vouchers. Cashback earned from points, calculated at 2 to 5 percent of spend, apply cashback at checkout.
- **New customer discount** at checkout first time you shop online on a supermarket website or app.

Eligibility discounts

- **Blue Light Card discount.** Asda offers discount to Blue Light Card holders.
- **Seniors discount.** Iceland offers 10 percent off shopping for those aged 60 plus on Tuesdays. No minimum spend. Remember to take valid Senior ID to claim.



Supermarket shelf hacks

- **Buy frozen fruit and vegetables**, they are frozen at peak freshness and often cheaper than fresh. Very good value considering you are paying by weight only for trimmed edible parts and not the bits you would have thrown away. Avoids food wastage.
- **Buy loose fruit and vegetables** instead of pre-packaged if you don't need much. Look for food markets and local shops that sell loose if your high street supermarket only has them packaged.
- **Avoid supermarket salad bags** of torn up leaf, they are poor value for money as leaves wilt and go slimy very quickly. Instead buy a whole lettuce.
- **Discount fruit and vegetable boxes** offered by various supermarket brands from time to time. Keep an eye put for these in-store and online. Cuts veg cost by 50-75 percent.

Free food

- **Free food apps.** [Too Good Too Go](#) for surplus food from local shops and restaurants. [Olio](#) for spare food offered by individuals in local neighbourhoods.
- **Community cooking classes.** Free ingredients and lessons. Learn simple cooking skills to make home-made meals in future and save money. Sign up with [Bags of Taste](#) (Hackney, Tower Hamlets, Newham), or contact local charities for referral to other opportunities.

- **Check drained weight** on food labels such as tinned fish, while comparing prices, to ensure value for money. Don't just look at the total contents weight on label as cheaper brands sometimes add more liquid to increase the contents weight, and you'll be pouring that liquid down the sink.
- **Compare price by weight or volume** using supermarket shelf labels which do the hard work for you displaying price calculation per 100g or 100ml so you can more easily compare value for money and cheapest prices per volume. This information available for online shopping too.
- **Beware of multi-buys.** All those offers such as '3 for 2' are supermarket promotions designed to get you to spend more. It's a false saving on food and should be avoided unless you know you can make use of the extras without wastage, such as freezing or sharing your shopping with a friend or neighbour.

Save on household products

Save on items such as detergents and hand wash to help cut supermarket spend. In addition to shopping around and switching to cheaper brands, look out for refill pouches which are 50 percent cheaper than buying a new bottle. Multi-buys of your tried and tested products are good value if you are confident you'll use it all and there is a good saving, or if you can split purchase with someone.

Coupons and vouchers

Use these only if it's something you need anyway, otherwise it's a false bargain.

Smart food storage

With prices of everyday food basics such as bread and cheese escalating, here are tips and tricks for keeping supermarket food fresh for longer.

Say cheese

- **Keep at back of fridge**, along with other dairy, as it's coolest there. Don't store in the door.
- **Re-wrap** according to type of cheese, after opening supermarket packaging. Wrap hard cheese in cling film to stop it drying out. Wrap other blocks of cheese in a food wrap paper such as baking, parchment, or waxed food paper, available from supermarkets. Then place inside a plastic food bag folded over but not airtight sealed. This allows cheese to breathe and prevents mould.

Use your loaf

No need to throw away half a loaf because it's gone stale or mouldy. Instead freeze bread on day of purchase, except for slices for one or two days. To freeze, remove from supermarket packaging and re-wrap in cling film, or airtight sealed plastic food bag, or tin foil. Bread can be stored for 1-6 months depending on how well it's wrapped. Can freeze any bread, including rustic loaf (advise cut in half), bags of rolls, or pre-sliced bagels. Make the most of yellow sticker bread and stock up the freezer. Remember to label so you know when you froze it and when to use by. Defrost in kitchen, or toast slices from frozen.

TOP TIP: Wrap bread slices two at a time in cling film, then re-pack the loaf back into its original bread bag before freezing. Then just defrost two slices at a time for a sandwich later in the day or pop the two frozen slices under grill to toast.

Freezing food

Most food can be frozen. Checklist of freezing advice at [Which? advice about food you can freeze](#) and [Food Standards Agency](#). Look for freezing instructions on food packaging. Great way to avoid food waste, just defrost the amount you need for a meal.

- **Wrap portions individually** before freezing so you can easily remove and defrost portions. Great way to get maximum value out of fish, meat, or chicken multipacks bought on discount.
- **Reduce vegetable waste** by freezing spare chopped vegetables. Can cook from frozen.
- **Remember to label** - write food description, quantity, date frozen, and defrost by date.



TOP TIP

Keeps salad fresh for two weeks

- **Wrap and seal up** salad and vegetables that you keep in the fridge.
- Start by wrapping in kitchen paper or brown paper bags. Can even use newspaper. Paper absorbs moisture and keeps food crisp and prevents rotting. Also stops root vegetables such as carrots from sprouting tops and getting old quickly.
- Seal up after wrapping in paper, using any sealed airtight plastic food bag, or reuse a thin corner shop carrier bag. Tupperware box is an option too. Store in fridge crisp drawer.
- This hack using paper and sealed plastic is great for all refrigerated vegetables such as salad, leafy greens, celery, courgettes, carrots, radishes, and other root vegetables.

TOP TRICK: Place a sheet of kitchen paper over lettuce inside bag, then turn bag over so paper is under lettuce and store this way up.

- **Revive wilted salad leaves** by soaking in large bowl of water chilled with ice cubes. Revive celery stalks this way in a tall glass.



Useful links

[MoneySavingExpert: supermarket shopping tips](#)

[Which? advice about food you can freeze](#)

www.lovefoodhatewaste.com

Article by Susan Downing,
ELFT Cost of Living Co-ordinator, PP Team