

## IS WHOLE FOOD EATING REALLY MORE EXPENSIVE?

What if I told you that with a little planning, two people can eat a *very well-rounded and healthy diet* on under **\$8 a day**?

Sounds too good to be true, doesn't it? First, check out this list of items that I consider to be inexpensive whole foods:

- beans \$0.28/lb.
- rice \$0.80/lb.
- oatmeal \$1/lb. (organic)
- flour \$0.84/lb. (organic)
- lentils \$0.98/lb.
- potatoes \$0.36/lb. (local farmer)
- carrots \$0.54/lb.
- squash less than \$1/lb. depending upon the variety (.75/lb. from a local farmer - free from your neighbor :)
- greens 1.42/lb. Have you ever seen a pound of greens? It's hard for one person to consume the whole pound in a week!
- bananas \$0.67/lb.
- apples 1.00/lb.
- eggs \$2.69/dozen (local farm)



Now that you know some of the prices of whole foods, let's look at how you would combine these together to make a meal. Let's say that you really love pancakes and oatmeal and that you and your partner alternate the two for breakfast for a week. Four days of oatmeal and three days of whole grain pancakes. Stay with me while I take you through a little math:

4  $\frac{3}{4}$  cups of oatmeal equals one pound. One cup of dry oatmeal equals two servings. So it follows that you can get a little under 10 servings out of each pound of oatmeal. One pound of oatmeal costs approximately \$1.00. That means that each serving of oatmeal is costing you about \$0.10. Let's say you're going to add a drizzle of honey, a little nut milk or organic and/or raw cow's milk and some raisins. We'll bring the cost for one serving of oatmeal up to \$0.25, after accounting for the enhancements. That means it costs you and your partner \$2.00 for your oatmeal breakfasts for a week.

Now let's look at the pancakes. I just got an email from a woman who is a distributor of bulk whole food items. She advertised a 16-grain pancake mix that would cost \$1.16 per six pancakes. Let's say that you each eat three pancakes and you add real maple syrup and a chopped up apple for the topping. Since real maple syrup is expensive, let's break that cost down too instead of just estimating. One quart of real maple syrup costs about \$14. That's \$0.22 per tablespoon, which is more than enough for three pancakes since it's intensely flavored and we're adding an apple for additional sweetness. That would add another \$0.44 to your meal, bringing the cost up to \$1.60. Let's say you just can't live without organic raw butter on your pancakes so you put a teaspoon of butter on these now delectable pancakes. Say we can get an average pound of organic butter for \$6.00. One teaspoon would cost \$0.9 cents bringing your cost for breakfast for two up to \$1.78. Add the apple in (half for the two of you) for \$0.33 and you've got pancakes for breakfast three days a week for \$6.33.

Breakfast is now complete (and delicious and healthy) and our costs for two people for the entire week are \$8.33. That's \$1.19 for two people per day; \$0.60 per person per day for breakfast.

Now let's move on to lunch and dinner. We'll just do one meal for each to finish out our example, although your week would consist of several different whole food meals.

#### Stir Fry for Two (with big helpings or leftovers)

We'll use 4 cups cooked rice at \$0.54, 2 cups cabbage at \$0.18, 2 onions at \$0.36, 2 cups sweet potatoes at \$0.60,  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup tamari at \$0.80, and  $\frac{1}{3}$  C olive oil at \$0.96. Let's have an orange with our meal. One sliced orange for each person is \$0.50. Our total is \$3.94 for two people, \$1.97 per serving, or \$27.58 for the week for two people with leftovers.

#### Vegetable Soup with Salad and Bread for Two

Let's make our soup with three pounds of potatoes (\$0.63), one pound of onions (\$0.55), one pound of carrots (\$0.54), one pound of cabbage (\$0.38), one pound of celery (\$0.80), and three

pounds of tomatoes (\$3.60). Let's add water for stock and season it with lots of dried herbs. Let's say the total of our herbs cost \$1.00 since they're so light and go a long way. We'll add salt and pepper, a pound of beans that we cooked beforehand (\$0.28) and a handful of pasta (\$0.30). This will make enough soup for two people to eat everyday for a week. The total cost is \$8.08. That's \$1.15 per day; \$0.58 per person per serving. Our salad is literally pennies for a great big handful (.10 per serving) and we'll dress it with a drizzle of olive oil, lemon, honey and salt (.10 per serving). Let's go ahead and add a fat slice of artisan bread so we're sure to get full. At \$4.65 for 14 slices, that equals \$0.33 per serving. That brings our total for the week for two people to \$15.50. \$2.21 per day for two people, \$1.11 per serving.

So for the entire week, for breakfast, lunch and dinner for two people, our total is: \$51.41 which equals \$7.34 per day for two people. \$3.67 a day for one person and averages out to be \$1.22 per meal on average.

So you see that setting aside a little time to cook, choosing to eat lots of fruits and vegetables, whole grains and little or no meat, can be the key to eating well on a budget.

As a side note, here are the five least expensive fruits and vegetables listed on the USDA's website:

Potatoes .31/lb.	Watermelon .32/lb.
Cabbage .38/lb.	Bananas .45/lb.
Carrots .54/lb.	Grapefruit .55/lb.
Onions .55/lb.	Cantaloupe .61/lb.
Sweet Potatoes .60/lb.	Honeydew .67/lb.
Cucumbers .75/lb.	Oranges .74/lb.

