



Eating on a budget needn't mean compromising on delicious foods — in fact, you can crunch those calories as well as your bills with these easy, everyday tips from *Sweet's* nutrition editor, Azmina Govindji.

25 ways to save cash and calories

1 Watch your waste

Don't bin the leftovers! It's easy to revitalise the leftovers from yesterday's meal by adding one or two new ingredients: it can be as quick as throwing in a can of sweetcorn and some dried herbs. If you have a leftover curry but no rice, you could try stuffing the curry into wholemeal pitta bread with shredded salad for a twist on an Indian meal. Or you could make leftover chicken and vegetables into a filling casserole with some canned beans. Just remember to reheat meat dishes till piping hot, reheat only once and eat within two days.

2 Concentrate on content

You'll benefit the waistline and the wallet if you spend just a little more time at the supermarket. Compare portion sizes and number of portions per packet. And do compare different brands as you can often get similar foods at a cheaper price when you buy supermarket own-brands. Don't be drawn in by words like 'natural' or 'Mediterranean' on special packaging. You may be charged a premium for packaging that looks exciting but what you need to do is look at the small print.

3 Serve up a soup

Home-made soups can be quick, easy, nutritious and cost-effective. Don't bother cooking the vegetables in oil or butter first; simply simmer any frozen, fresh or even canned vegetables in some stock and add herbs and spices to intensify flavour.

4 Beware the BOGOF

Don't get sucked into multipacks or 'buy one get one free' offers. It's easy to be lured by such signs and buy foods that weren't on your shopping list. Big packs of food can often mean you eat more, because it's simply hard to put the rest away. And if you think about it, by

eating more of them, you're probably spending more in the long run. If you buy multipacks, get into the habit of only keeping a few packs accessible and storing the rest out of sight.

5 Write it down

Take a shopping list with you to the supermarket and be disciplined. You might find that taking cash rather than a credit card can help to limit your spending too.

6 Don't supersize it

Have you noticed that portion sizes have got bigger? Once a bag of crisps weighed in at 25g — now it's closer to 35g, 40g or even 55g! Lyndel Costain, spokesperson for Dietitians in Obesity Management UK comments: 'Going large on a cheeseburger with fries and cola will add 165 calories to the meal, a king size chocolate bar spells another 100 calories, while a triple-pack sandwich could mean an extra 400 calories. Even wine has got bigger — a 'small' glass seems to have risen from 125ml to 175ml — with an extra 35 calories. All this becomes very sobering when you consider that just an extra 100 calories each day could lead to a 10lb weight gain in a year.'

7 Paying attention pays off

Eat without distractions. Don't let your best efforts to control how much you eat be sabotaged by doing something else during meals. A study in *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* found that women who ate while listening to a story on the radio ate 70 calories more than women who ate with no distractions.

8 No, honestly

Practise saying 'no'. We are often pressured by others to eat when we aren't hungry. If you really don't want to eat something, learning to say 'no, thank you' will

really help. But feeling confident about saying it takes practice as we may feel we are upsetting others. But you are in fact looking after your own needs. First practise saying 'no thanks' at home by yourself. It will soon become easier.

9 Shop alert

Try not to shop when hungry, tired, upset or stressed. You may be less likely to compare prices and therefore just chuck foods into the trolley in your race to get home.

10 Less is more

Watch your portion sizes — even if they seem like better value. 'We typically underestimate how much we eat by 25 per cent, so it helps to "get your eye in" as to what is a healthy portion size,' comments Lyndel Costain. 'Measure foods occasionally at home and see how they look on plates or in bowls. For example, measure a cup of cooked pasta or 4 heaped tablespoons of rice and put it on a plate. Note how much space it takes up. Use your knowledge when you eat out.'

11 Full of beans

Jane Sutherland, President of the Guild of Food Writers, suggests you replace half the meat in stews and casseroles with canned beans. 'There are plenty of interesting varieties to choose from, especially those in water without added salt and sugar, and they are great store-cupboard standbys.'

12 Last chance for fruit

Don't waste fruit that is going a bit soft in the fruit bowl — purée squidgy bananas into smoothies and poach or bake other fruit such as apples, pears and plums in fruit juice. Serve with natural yogurt and a dash of honey. ▶▶

SHUTTERSTOCK

13 The big freeze Take advantage of the freezer, especially if you've cooked more than you intended. Even if you've taken some frozen meat out of the freezer to cook, you can refreeze the cooked meat. Remember, however, to defrost thoroughly in the fridge and heat well before eating.

14 Smoothie does it Try a tip from consultant nutritionist Rupinder Gill: 'Instead of buying smoothies from the supermarket which can be pricey, make your own at home. Try this lovely energy-boosting breakfast smoothie: blend 1 banana, 3 tbsp toasted porridge oats, ¼ tub plain yogurt, splash of apple juice and, if it needs to be sweetened, 1 tbsp maple syrup or honey. It's delicious and the oats are low GI, so this could keep you going till lunchtime.'

15 Beat the burger bar Try making your own burgers at home and stay away from the fast food options. Make fresh beefburgers with minced beef, onions, garlic, spices and fresh mint. The mixture goes further if you add some breadcrumbs, or even try puréed chickpeas, which are a great low-GI, high-fibre alternative. Mix well and shape into burgers. Grill until cooked through and serve with wholemeal burger buns and fresh salad. Instead of buying chips, microwave a few baking potatoes, cut into wedges and roast in the oven with a drizzle of olive oil.

16 Smart dressing Choose yogurt (cheaper and lower in calories) instead of mayonnaise. Try making home-made coleslaw with grated carrot, white cabbage, yogurt and herbs of your choice. These ingredients are low-GI, low-calorie and a low price.

17 Italian for less Choose ricotta cheese over mozzarella. It's great for dishes like pizza, lasagne and moussaka and a huge calorie saving.

18 Storecupboard stars Instead of packing the freezer with frozen burgers, chips and pizza, make sure that the cupboards are stocked with versatile ingredients such as pasta, noodles, brown rice, canned tomatoes, beans, lentils and tuna. These foods are cheap, healthy and can be rustled up in a matter of minutes.



19 Save fuel on foot Get walking! Save the car for big shops only. If you just need to pick up a few bits, try to walk to your local supermarket. You will burn less petrol and more calories.

20 Get clever with takeaways If you have a Chinese takeaway, buy only the main dishes and microwave some rice at home. Keep some pitta bread in the freezer and toast this instead of ordering naan bread from the Indian takeaway. Not only will you benefit the bulge by having less fat from your steamed rice and pitta bread, you'll also benefit the budget.

21 Check your money diet Talking of budgets, a word of advice from accountant Murtaza Dato of Deitch Cooper: 'Plan your spending so that it lasts you until your next salary cheque. Look through your earnings, and set aside money for any planned expenses such as your mortgage or bills. Then work out how much you have left for food shopping so that you're not eating into next month's salary, but at the same time, that you're not skimping on good, healthy food.'

22 Plan your plateful Have you checked the size of your dinner plates? It might sound silly, but plate sizes, like portion sizes, have been creeping up lately. A smaller plate means smaller portions. Research shows that eating off a smaller plate really does mean you're satisfied

with less, and you might even be wasting less food in the long run.

23 Pop your own Instead of crunching through crisps, try munching some home-made popcorn. If you buy popping corn, you can make enough for the whole family by using just a few tablespoons. Simply heat a saucepan with a lid (ideally a glass lid) and drizzle 1-2 teaspoons of oil into the pan. Throw in 3-4 tablespoons of popping corn, cover and allow to pop over a medium heat. It takes about three minutes for the popping to stop. All you need now is that Friday night DVD!

24 Spot your 'money pit' A lot of us have a habit of spending money and calories that we take for granted – such as that coffee-shop cappuccino on the way to work or buying an overpriced sandwich for lunch. It all adds up over time; could you find a cheaper (and lower-calorie) alternative?

25 Have fun and save Next time you have friends over, challenge each other to bring a delicious dish for under a certain budget (cash or calories!). You could eat really well and discover some fab new recipes. ■

About Azmina

Sweet's expert is consultant nutritionist and registered dietitian Azmina Govindji, who runs her



own practice working with national organisations such as the British Heart Foundation, the World Cancer Research Fund and the Diabetes Research & Wellness Foundation. Azmina regularly appears on TV, including ITV's *This Morning* and Five's *The Wright Stuff*, and on the NHS Choices website. She has written 14 books, including *Healthy Eating for Diabetes* with Antony Worrall Thompson and the latest, *Healthy Indian Cooking for Diabetes* (Kyle Cathie, £12.99). Visit her website, www.govindjinnutrition.com, for more info.