

Cooking for One



Cooking for just yourself can seem like a challenge. Packaged foods may have more portions that you can use, and some recipes make amounts that seem too large for one person. You may wonder if there are ways to cook for yourself on a budget, without wasting food. Here are some helpful tips to save money when you are shopping and cooking for yourself.

Shopping Tips

- Write a shopping list before you go to the store. Having a list will save time and money.
- Buy fresh fruits and vegetables every 3 or 4 days. Prepare produce at home instead of buying pre-cut and packaged fruits or vegetables.
- Frozen vegetables last longer than fresh. Look for generic brands on sale. At home, you can take just the amount you want from the package and leave the rest in the freezer.
- Buy a small block of cheese and shred it at home instead of buying shredded cheese. Blocks of cheese stay fresh longer than shredded.
- Buy dairy products in small containers so you can finish them before they spoil. Look for sales on 6-ounce yogurts, pints of low-fat or nonfat milk, and 3-ounce packages of cream cheese. The price-per-unit is higher for smaller containers, but you won't waste food.
- Buy frozen chicken breasts or peeled shrimp in 2-pound packages. Thaw just the amount you need. Keep the rest frozen in a tightly sealed package for another time.
- Cook and slice a whole chicken for sandwiches. Have about 3 ounces of meat per sandwich, and freeze leftovers in a sealed package for later.
- Buy one jar of a dry herb blend, such as Italian seasoning or herbes de Provence, instead of several jars of individual herbs.
- Choose dried foods, like grains, nuts, and dried fruit, from bulk bins. Bulk foods cost less than those in packages.
- Divide loaves of bread or packages of buns, and freeze some for later use. To prevent freezer burn, use freezer-safe plastic bags.





Cooking Tips

- Add leftover foods to soups and stews. To create a delicious and filling meal, use leftover vegetables; cooked pasta, rice, or barley; canned beans; and leftover pork, beef, or chicken.
- Prepare a recipe that serves four or more, and freeze individual servings for later use. This will cost less than most packaged meals.
- Muffin tins are perfect for freezing single portions of meatloaf, chili, sauces, and stocks. Freeze foods in the tins and then pop the portions out. Store the frozen foods in freezer-safe plastic bags.
- Divide prepared pizza dough into two or three portions, each the size of a baseball. Place the balls in plastic bags and store in the refrigerator. Each ball will make a single-serving pizza. Leftover vegetables make a great topping.
- Eggs are a perfect food when cooking for one. Scramble eggs for breakfast. Create a quick egg sandwich for lunch. Or how about a vegetable omelet served on a bed of spinach for dinner?
- Divide meat, poultry, or fish into 3- to 4-ounce portions, and refrigerate each type separately. Cook single portions throughout the week, or cook them all at once and reheat over the next few days.
- Beans are inexpensive and easy to use. Cook a bean chili, then divide it into single-portion, freezer-safe containers. Thaw containers as needed. Dried beans are cheaper than canned, but they need to be soaked and cooked. If you're short on time, choose canned beans (they go on sale often).
- Make wraps or burritos with leftovers. Use chicken, pork, beef, beans, or scrambled eggs. Add vegetables, low-fat cheese, or salsa.
- Add 2 to 3 ounces of cooked chicken, beef, or pork to cooked pasta. Choose whole wheat pasta for more fiber. Toss in your favorite vegetables and ¼ cup of jarred pasta sauce or 1 tablespoon of oil.

