

Cooking Matters Grocery Shopping Tips

Step One: Determine items needed and create a list

- Discuss recipe(s) to be prepared in class and note any changes to the recipe.
- Plan for 2-3 recipes per class.
- Create a grocery list and be sure to include enough groceries for participant take home bags.
- If paper goods are needed (i.e. Ziploc bags), you may use your gift card to purchase these items.

Things to consider when shopping

- When take-home groceries are provided, groceries should cost around \$100.
- Shop with flexibility in mind (e.g. substitute out-of-season produce for in-season or sale produce whenever possible).
- Compare unit prices, purchase store brands instead of name brands, unless the name brand is cheaper.
- Buy in bulk when it is practical (e.g., spices or produce that will be provided in take-home grocery bags).
- Buy whole instead of pre-packaged produce (e.g. whole carrots instead of baby carrots).
- Keep a pantry at the site for items commonly used in Cooking Matters recipes (e.g., oil, cooking spray, salt, pepper, spices, canola oil, etc.). Replenish as needed.

Step Two: Purchase groceries.

- Plan to shop 1-2 days before the class
- Bring the following items with you to the store:
 - shopping list
 - store gift card
 - grocery bags
- Save your receipts and mail them to GSFB with the End of Course Paperwork.

Making Healthy Choices

- Purchase whole grains instead of refined grains whenever possible.
- Purchase canned vegetables with “no salt added” or “reduced salt.”
- Purchase canned fruits in light syrup or their own juice.
- Purchase frozen fruits with “no sugar added.”
- Choose reduced-fat or nonfat dairy products.
- As you check out, remember to pick up enough bags to for packing the take-home groceries.

** If your community has a bag fee encourage participants to bring their own bags for the take home groceries.

Step Three: Bring groceries to class and package take-home grocery bags.

- If you have the groceries it is helpful to arrive at least 30 minutes prior to class.
 - You will need this time to prepare stations, connect with instructors and pack take home groceries before the beginning of class.
- Separate the food used for in-class cooking, activities and take home groceries.

Prepare take-home grocery bags

- Separate the ingredients that will be sent home with participants according to the amount needed to make the entire recipe.
- Each take-home bag should contain the same ingredients.
- Create spice bags, if applicable, and label them.
- Label other broken-down bulk items as needed (e.g. if purchasing blocks of cheese, divide each block into appropriate amounts and place them in baggies).
- Provide a copy of the recipe for participants to take with them.
- If there are leftovers or you have extra take home bags:
 - send them home with participants
 - leave behind for the host agency to use with clients
 - handout to volunteers

Things to consider when preparing take home groceries:

All recipe ingredients should be provided in take-home grocery bags except small quantity items that you can assume are on-hand at home. For example:

- Butter
- Salt and pepper
- Common herbs and spices
- Eggs
- Condiments

Send small quantity items that are less common and are not likely to be on hand at home. For example:

- Specialty herbs and spices, like cayenne pepper, basil, cumin, or oregano
- Fresh herbs
- Specialty condiments like soy sauce

If you are unable to provide all major recipe ingredients, think carefully about how to select ingredients to maximize your grocery budget. For example:

- If a recipe calls for 3 different produce items, provide one or two that may be more difficult for participants to afford or locate.
- Provide the specific amount in the recipe rather than a full package. For example: measure 1 cup of rice and put in a Ziploc bag instead of a full bag of rice.

Step Four: Organize and turn in receipts.

- At the end of the course series, label and organize receipts for each week (e.g., Week 1, Week 2, etc.).
- On the outside of the manila envelope indicate amount spent on groceries each week and the total amount spent for the class series.
- Place any remaining gift cards in the manila envelope to mail to GSFB with the End of Course Paperwork.