

Snacks in a Snap

Let kids help you make tasty snacks* that will power them through the day.



Avocado Crunch

Let children mash 1 ripe avocado in a bowl. Add juice from half a lemon, 2 teaspoons of sunflower seeds, and a pinch of salt. Spread over Cucumber Sammies (right), or serve with vegetable slices or whole wheat crackers.

Cucumber Sammies

Cut cucumbers into 1/8-inch slices. Help children top with egg salad, tuna salad, Avocado Crunch (left), or turkey and cheese. Cover with another cucumber slice.

Baked Apples

Core apples and place in a microwave safe dish. Each child can fill their apple with about 1/2 teaspoon of butter, brown sugar, and cinnamon. Add a few raisins, if desired. Cook for about 6 minutes in the microwave. Allow to cool before serving with toasted whole wheat pita wedges dusted with cinnamon.

Kabobs

Cube different cheeses and slice a mixture of fruits. Invite children to make snack kabobs on coffee stirrer "skewers" or pretzel sticks.

Seasonal Fruit Salad

Let children help you wash and peel fruits that are in season. Cut into bite-size pieces. Combine in a large bowl. Squeeze the juice from half a lime over the fruit. Drizzle with a Tablespoon of honey if you like. Serve family-style with graham crackers.

Banana Crunch

Ask for help mashing one large, very ripe banana in a bowl. Add 1/4 to 1/3 cup of low-sugar granola, a dash of cinnamon, and mix. Spread onto thin wafers or graham crackers.

Roasted Vegetables

Preheat oven to 375°. Wash and cut several types of root veggies (beets, carrots, parsnips, sweet potatoes, turnips, etc.) lengthwise, into "fingers." Toss in a large bowl with 2 Tablespoons of canola oil, 1/2 teaspoon of salt, and 1/2 teaspoon of pepper. Place in a single layer on a baking sheet in preheated oven. Roast for 35-45 minutes, until tender. Serve over brown rice.

Smoothie

Have children help add ingredients to a blender. Use 6 ounces low-fat milk, 2/3 cup of frozen fruit, and 1/2 teaspoon of honey, if you like. Little fingers can press buttons to be sure everything is blended well. Pour and serve with whole oat granola bars.

*Snacks are for kids aged 2 and older. Adjust the ingredients as needed so that each child receives the age-appropriate amount to meet CACFP requirements.

Stretching Your Ingredients

Plan to use foods and ingredients in more than one meal to save money and prevent food waste.



Breads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make bread pudding, French toast, stuffing, or croutons.
Rice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make rice pudding. Or, add to soups and casseroles.
Pasta	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make pasta salad or casseroles.
Fruits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Combine for a fruit salad. • Use in muffins, quick breads, and pancakes. • Slice on top of hot or cold cereal. • Freeze to use in smoothies.
Vegetables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toss with cold pasta and light dressing for pasta salad. • Use in soup or stews. • Combine for a mixed vegetable salad.
Milk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use in baked goods such as muffins or quick breads.
Yogurt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use plain yogurt in place of sour cream in recipes. • Use to make veggie or fruit dip.
Cheese	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use as a topping for vegetables. • Use in quiche or toss with pasta. • Keep frozen until needed.
Meat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slice for sandwiches. • Use in meat sauces, stuffed peppers, chili, or soups. • Use in stir-fry with leftover veggies. • Use to make a chef salad.
Chicken	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sandwiches with sliced chicken. Or, use for chicken salad sandwiches. • Use in a soup, casserole, or stir-fry. • Use the bones to make stock. • Shred and use to top a veggie salad.
Eggs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make egg salad sandwiches. • Add to salads. • Make a frittata.
Beans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reheat, mash, and spread on tortillas with other toppings. • Toss in salads. • Use in chili, soups, casseroles, and stews. • Make bean dip to eat with crackers or veggies.

Stocking Your Pantry

Keep these ingredients on hand to create quick and healthy meals.

Baking Products. Have flour, sugar, baking soda, and baking powder on hand. They are basic ingredients for many fresh baked goods.

Canned Beans and Fish. Add beans like kidney, black, pinto, or lima to salads and soups. Or, serve as side dishes or add to a main dish. Use canned tuna and salmon to add protein to salads, casseroles, and pasta.

Canned Fruits and Vegetables. Canned produce like pineapple, applesauce, corn, and green beans make quick and easy side dishes or snacks on their own. Or, use as an ingredient to stretch main dishes.

Canned or Powdered Milk. Canned low-fat evaporated and dry powdered milk keep longer than fresh. Prepare them according to the package directions. Use in recipes instead of fresh milk.

Canned Tomato Products. Keep canned tomato sauce and whole, diced, or puréed tomatoes on hand. They are basic ingredients in a wide range of recipes.

Low-sugar cereals. Stock up on whole grain cereals when they're on sale. Enjoy with fruit and milk. Or, use to make trail mixes, baked goods, or crispy coatings for meat, poultry, and fish.

Dried Fruit and Nuts. Use as a snack on their own or in homemade trail mix. Add to cereals, baked goods, and yogurt for a snack or breakfast.

Dried Herbs. Buy the dried herbs and spices you use often. Use to add flavor in place of extra salt.

Oil. Canola and olive oils are healthy choices when cooking or making dressings. Cooking spray keeps food from sticking to the pan.

Pasta and Rice. Buy whole wheat pasta and brown rice on sale or in bulk or family-size packages. Store in airtight containers after opening to keep fresh and prevent pests.

Vinegar. Keep apple cider, red wine, rice, or balsamic vinegars on hand for homemade salad dressings and marinades.



Storing Fresh Fruits and Vegetables

Don't let produce go bad. Keep it fresh longer using these tips.



Fresh Fruit or Vegetable	How to Purchase	How to Store
Apples	Buy firm apples without any bruises or soft spots.	Store at room temperature for 3–5 days. Or, refrigerate for up to 3 months.
Bananas	If you will not eat right away, buy bananas when they are green so they will last longer. Allow them to ripen (lose any green color) before eating. Only buy bananas with many brown spots when you need overripe bananas for baking.	Ripen at room temperature. To prevent over-ripening, store in refrigerator up to 1 week. The skin will turn black, but the fruit will still be good. Peel and freeze overripe bananas to use in smoothies and muffins.
Beets	Buy brightly colored, firm beets. If greens are still attached, they should look fresh and not wilted.	If greens are still attached, remove and store separately (see Cooking Greens below). Refrigerate beets for 2–3 weeks.
Berries	Buy firm, plump berries with no mold spots.	Refrigerate unwashed, in a single layer if you can. Will last 3–5 days.
Broccoli	Buy sturdy, dark green spears without yellow spots.	Refrigerate in a plastic bag for 3–5 days.
Carrots	Buy brightly colored, firm carrots without shriveled or soft spots.	Refrigerate in a plastic bag for 3–5 days.
Cabbage	Buy fresh-looking heads without yellowing or brown spots.	Refrigerate in a plastic bag for 1–2 weeks.
Cauliflower	Buy heads with bright white florets without any browning. The attached greens should look fresh and not wilted.	Refrigerate in a plastic bag for 3–5 days.
Celery	Buy crisp stalks without any blemishes.	Refrigerate in a plastic bag for 1–2 weeks.

When purchasing fresh bananas, mangoes, pears, plums, peaches, or nectarines: If you will eat right away, buy ripe. If you won't, buy before they are ripe and let ripen at home. Or, buy a mix — a few that are ripe to eat right away and a few that aren't for later in the week.



Storing Fresh Fruits and Vegetables continued >

Fresh Fruit or Vegetable	How to Purchase	How to Store
Citrus fruits (e.g., oranges, limes, lemons)	Buy fruit that feels heavy for its size without any specific soft spots. Juicier citrus fruit will yield slightly when squeezed.	Store at room temperature up to 1 week. Or, refrigerate up to 1–2 months.
Cooking greens (e.g., kale, collards) — except spinach	Buy fresh, crisp, brightly colored greens.	Refrigerate in a plastic bag for 5–10 days.
Corn	Buy in husks that are moist and green. The silk attached at the tip should be golden brown. Instead of peeling back the husks, which can dry out the corn, feel through the husks for plump kernels underneath.	Refrigerate, with husks still on, in a plastic bag for up to 2 days.
Cucumber	Buy firm without any soft spots.	Refrigerate in a plastic bag for 3–5 days.
Eggplant	Buy with smooth skin without any soft spots.	Refrigerate in a plastic bag for 3–5 days.
Garlic	Buy with papery skin without any green sprouts.	Store in a cool, dark place (away from potatoes) for 2–3 weeks.
Grapes	Buy firm grapes still attached to the stem and free from mold.	Refrigerate in a plastic bag, up to 1 week.
Green onions	Buy when greens are brightly colored and white parts are firm.	Refrigerate in a plastic bag for 3–5 days.
Lettuce or salad greens	Buy crisp-looking greens without signs of mold or browning.	If damp when purchased, dry first. Refrigerate in a plastic bag for 3–5 days. Place a dry paper towel in the bag to absorb any extra moisture.
Mangoes	When ripe, mangoes will “give” or feel slightly soft when pressed.	Ripen at room temperature. Refrigerate ripe mangoes for up to 3 days.
Melons	Buy melons that yield slightly when you press on the end opposite the stem. Watermelons should have a yellow spot on the bottom.	Ripen at room temperature. Refrigerate ripe melon for up to 3 days.
Mushrooms	Buy firm and fresh looking. They should look dry but not dried out.	Refrigerate for up to 1 week. If you buy loose, place in a paper bag first.

If refrigeration is not available, some fruits and veggies can be stored in a cool room or basement instead. Try potatoes, beets, carrots, other root veggies, apples, and pears.



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Storing Fresh Fruits and Vegetables continued >

Fresh Fruit or Vegetable	How to Purchase	How to Store
Onions	Buy firm and heavy without cuts, bruises, or green sprouts.	Store in a cool, dark place (away from potatoes) for 2–3 weeks.
Parsnips	Buy firm without any soft spots.	Refrigerate in a plastic bag for 3–5 days.
Pears	Buy pears without any soft spots or bruising. Press at the top of the “neck” (near the stem) to judge ripeness. When ripe, pears will “give” or feel slightly soft when pressed.	Ripen at room temperature. Refrigerate ripe pears up to 3 days.
Potatoes	Buy firm and free from soft spots and sprouts.	Store in a cool, dark place (away from onions) for 10–12 weeks.
Spinach	Buy crisp-looking without signs of mold or browning.	If damp when purchased, dry first. Refrigerate in a plastic bag for 3–5 days. Place a dry paper towel in the bag to absorb any extra moisture.
Stone fruit (e.g., peaches, plums, nectarines)	Buy when brightly colored and free from bruises or soft spots. When ripe, fruit will “give” or feel slightly soft when pressed.	Ripen at room temperature. Refrigerate ripe stone fruit up to 3 days.
Summer squash (e.g., yellow squash, zucchini)	Buy with firm, smooth skin without any gashes.	Refrigerate in a plastic bag for 4–5 days.
Sweet potatoes	Buy with papery skin without blemishes.	Store in a cool, dark place (away from onions) for 10–12 weeks.
Tomatoes	Should yield to gentle pressure but not be soft. Take a whiff — if it doesn’t smell like a tomato, it won’t taste like one.	Store at room temperature for 2–3 days.
Turnips	Buy when firm. It should not feel soft or look shriveled.	Refrigerate for 2–3 weeks.
Winter squash	Buy hard squash that still has some of the dried-out stem attached.	Store in a cool, dry place for up to 1 month.



Freezing Fruits and Veggies

Buy fruits and veggies in bulk when they are in season and the price is good. Freeze the extras to use another time.

To freeze fruits and veggies, follow these simple steps:

1. Rinse produce. Pat dry.
2. Prep as directed in the chart on page 43.
3. If freezing vegetables, blanch (briefly cook in boiling water) for the amount of time shown in the chart. Using a slotted spoon, immediately transfer boiled veggies to a bowl of ice water. Drain well and pat dry.
4. Place produce in a single layer on a baking sheet and freeze.
5. Transfer frozen produce to a large freezer-safe bag or other airtight container.



Most produce maintains its quality when frozen up to about 6 months (for fruits) or 12 months (for veggies).

Blanching slows the loss of flavor, color, texture, and nutrients during freezing. Veggies frozen without blanching are safe to eat, but may not maintain their quality for as long. If you're pressed for time, hearty veggies like broccoli, carrots, corn, and summer or winter squash can be frozen without blanching. But you may want to use them up more quickly than blanched frozen veggies.



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Freezing Fruits and Veggies continued >

Fruit or Vegetable	Prep Steps	Blanching Time
Bell peppers	Cut out stem and remove seeds. Cut into ½-inch pieces.	2–3 minutes
Blackberries, blueberries, and raspberries	Remove any stems.	Not needed
Broccoli and cauliflower	Cut into 1- to 1½-inch florets	3 minutes
Carrots	Peel and cut into ¼-inch slices	2 minutes
Cherries	Remove stems and pit.	Not needed
Cooking greens (e.g., spinach, collards, kale, Swiss chard)	Remove any tough stems and ribs. Chop.	2–3 minutes
Corn	Remove husks and cut corn off the cob.	2 minutes
Green beans	Trim stem ends.	3 minutes
Mangoes	Cut off skin. Cut fruit off of pit. Cut into 1-inch pieces.	Not needed
Nectarines, peaches, and plums	Remove pit and cut into sixths.	Not needed
Peas	For edible pods, remove tough stems. If using shelling peas, remove from pod.	1–2 minutes
Strawberries	Remove stem and hull. Cut large berries in half.	Not needed
Summer squash	Cut into ½-inch slices.	2–3 minutes
Tomatoes	Remove core.	Not needed
Winter squash	Cut in half. Remove seeds and stringy membrane.	Instead of blanching, place cut-side down on a baking sheet coated with non-stick cooking spray. Bake at 400°F until tender, 35–50 minutes. Let cool. Scoop squash into a bowl, removing skin. Mash with a fork. Cool completely before freezing.

Set Goals: Menu Management on a Budget

Key Messages

- Plan menus in advance to save time and money.
- Make a shopping list before your trip to the store.
- Compare unit prices to find the best deal at the store.
- Congratulations! Be proud of yourself and the changes you've made using what you've learned in this class.

Challenge Yourself

My goal is to...

Try at least one food budgeting idea I learned in class.

What new ideas did I learn in class about saving money on food (plan menus, compare unit prices, etc.)? _____

Which of these ideas would I like to try? Why? _____

After this course I will continue to...

Think about new ways to use what I learned in class.

What other ideas have I learned throughout this class that I want to try? _____

Which weekly challenges do I still want to try? _____

When can I start putting these ideas into action? _____
