CUADERNO DE IDEAS

Is Healthy Eating More Expensive? How to Eat Wel

Alimentación y bienestar · 05/11/2026 · Por Camilo Calderón

A balanced diet does not require expensive labels or imported products. Learn practical ways to plan meals, choose accessible foods, and make nutritious choices within your budget.

Is Healthy Eating More Expensive? How to Eat Well on a Budget

Many people associate healthy eating with costly products, supplements, imported foods, or complicated recipes. But eating well does not mean buying the most expensive items in a supermarket. Everyday foods, simple preparation, and thoughtful planning can help build a balanced diet that fits a budget.

1. Healthy eating is not a label

Packages that say “natural,” “fitness,” or “high protein” do not automatically make a food necessary or better for everyone. A balanced pattern is built from variety, adequacy, and habits that can be sustained. Cost matters, but so do access, culture, cooking facilities, time, and individual health needs. Avoid treating one food or diet as a universal solution.

2. Build meals from accessible staples

Beans, lentils, rice, oats, eggs, seasonal produce, and other locally available staples can provide useful nutrients at reasonable cost. Legumes offer protein and fiber, can be used in soups, stews, salads, and side dishes, and can be cooked in batches. Eggs are versatile and can be boiled, scrambled, or combined with vegetables. Oats make a simple breakfast and can be paired with fruit. Choose options that are practical and familiar where you live.

3. Plan before shopping

Check what you already have, plan several meals, and make a list organized around those meals. This can reduce impulse purchases and food waste. Think about how ingredients can be reused: cooked beans can become a stew one day and a salad or filling another day. If you have limited time, choose a few simple recipes and prepare components in advance.

4. Compare cost and use, not just package price

A large package may be cheaper per unit but only helps if you can store and use it before it spoils. Frozen or canned vegetables and fruit can be practical alternatives when fresh produce is costly or unavailable; compare labels and choose products with less added salt or sugar when possible. Store foods safely and use older items first. Buying seasonal produce can also reduce cost, though availability varies by location.

5. Make balanced choices without rigid rules

Include a variety of food groups across meals: vegetables and fruit, grains or other staple

carbohydrates, sources of protein such as beans, lentils, eggs, fish, or meat where suitable, and fats in appropriate amounts. The right pattern depends on a person’s needs and circumstances. No single meal needs to be perfect, and one food does not determine overall health.

6. Watch out for common budget traps

Specialty products, supplements, and “diet” snacks can add cost without being essential. Supplements may be appropriate for some people, but they should not replace a varied diet or be taken as treatment without qualified advice. Be cautious with promises of quick results and with advice that eliminates entire food groups without a clear medical reason.

7. A practical shopping routine

Set a spending limit that reflects your real budget.

Check your pantry and refrigerator before making a list.

Choose a few meals and reuse ingredients safely.

Compare unit prices and consider seasonal, frozen, or canned options.

Prepare portions you can store safely and actually eat.

Review what was wasted and adjust the next plan.

Healthy eating is shaped by more than individual choices; income, food availability, time, and living conditions all matter. The goal is not to blame people for their circumstances. Start with one affordable change that works for you, such as adding beans to a meal or planning a few dinners before shopping. A sustainable approach can be more useful than an expensive plan that is hard to maintain.