

We are all watching our pocketbooks and trying to make the most of each dollar. A question recently posted on [www.grist.org](http://www.grist.org) was how can we maintain a green, healthy diet on a budget. A guest writer, Lou Bendrick, offered the following suggestions:

**Have a plan before you get to the store.**

Set up a household budget and keep to it. Check out [www.wasabe.com](http://www.wasabe.com) for tips about managing your finances. Wasabe has a helpful virtual community of like-minded people who are rethinking their budget choices.

**Perform organic triage.**

Decide what is really important to you. For example, organic or locally grown produce; inexpensive or hormone-free meats. Work into your budget what you are willing and can pay for that decision.

**Rethink meat**

Producing beef for the average American diet annually emits as much greenhouse gas as a car driven 1,800 miles. Conventionally raised meat is inhumane, hard on the environment, and expensive.

Cook one meatless meal each week using inexpensive staples such as beans, rice, pasta, cheese, nuts and eggs. Add soy meatballs, burgers, or sausages which will give your meal that meat edge. Check out a vegetarian cookbook at the library or use your computer to get great recipes.

**Clip coupons**

My husband has used coupons when grocery shopping since his college days. It is his hobby to keep track of coupons and know when to match them up to sale items. He often comes home with bags of groceries for only a few dollars.

Coupons are included with your Sunday Times-Herald, as well as online, in magazines and grocery store ads. Check natural food stores' fliers or healthy lifestyle magazines for offers. If there's an organic brand you really like, check the company's web site for coupons.

Shop strategically

Take your shopping list to the store and stick to it. Never shop when you're hungry. Shop as much as you can in the outer aisles, where fresh food usually is located, and less in the center aisles, where processed stuff lurks. Remember to bring along your reusable shopping bags.

**Shop outside the conventional grocery store**

Patronize our local farmers markets and farm stands. Join a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture, [www.localharvest.org/csa/](http://www.localharvest.org/csa/)) and enjoy organic local food. Eatwell ([www.eatwell.com](http://www.eatwell.com)) in Dixon has a drop off spot in Vallejo where several families pick up their weekly boxes. Ellie and Rick Wells have enjoyed this fresh produce for several years.

**Bulk up**

Check out the bulk bins. Some staples are significantly cheaper. Invest in reusable containers to store these at home. The only packaging you will deal with is the plastic bag which you can return to the store for recycling.

**Cook more**

In general, cooking at home is cheaper and healthier than eating out. Cooking from scratch is healthier than opening a box. Try doubling your recipes and freezing half for a future meal. Learn to use your microwave, pressure cooker or crock pot to save time and energy.

**Grow something.**

It does not take that much space to grow a couple of tomato plants or greens. Go to [www.organicgarden.org](http://www.organicgarden.org) or [www.kitchengardeners.org](http://www.kitchengardeners.org) for ideas. Rita LeRoy at Loma Vista Farm (707 556-8765) starts vegetable plants in their green house for sale to the public.

**SALT**

Yes, we are in a drought, but somehow those weed and wildflower seeds germinate in sidewalk cracks. I'm treating those with salt. It takes a couple of applications and since I don't ever want plants to grow there, it is a inexpensive, environmentally correct solution.

**Confidential Paper Shredding**

The City of Vallejo is sponsoring a paper shredding event on Saturday, February 21 at VALCORE Recycling from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. There is a charge of \$5 per twenty pounds (maximum: 100 pounds).

*VALCORE Recycling Board Member Jane Bogner's "A Sorted Affair" is published every other week in the Times-Herald. For recycling information call VALCORE Recycling at 645-8258 or visit [www.VALCORErecycling.org](http://www.VALCORErecycling.org).*

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