

## **Top 5 Ways to Save Money on Organic Foods**

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There are many different ways to save money on organic foods. We use four of the five methods listed here. If you make a commitment to purchase organic foods for either your health or the health of your family, you will then find a way to make it work.

### **1. CSA's: Community Supported Agriculture**

Community supported agriculture is just what the name implied. It is foods grown in your local area. Often organic farmers can be found in the Internet by looking up the keyword CSA. We belong to an organic farmer who brings food to our area each week. We select one convenient location and go to pick up or food. Typically organic farmers will sell a "share" of the foods grown in a season. That means that the farmer will divide up the weekly harvest among all the people who bought shares for that season.

If you are strapped for cash, some farms will let you work on the farm for a few hours a week or a month in exchange for your share of the produce. This is a win-win for the farmer and for you. This is another way to earn your organic produce for a nominal amount of time.

In addition to saving money, this option is quite "green" and adds to sustainability because it reduces the carbon footprint. Produce brought in from your local community is much more sustainable than produce brought in from hundreds or thousands of miles away.

### **2. Local Cooperatives: Cooperative Stores or Buying Groups**

Many communities have cooperative stores that are owned by the members. Some communities have cooperative buying groups that do not have a store, but use space in the community or someone's home. Both of these options allow for savings on organic foods. In addition to researching these options on the Internet, one of the best ways to find these options in your community is by word of mouth. Use your friends and co-workers who are into organic foods to find out where they are shopping.

If your community does not have a cooperative store or buying group or club, you can start one. I set up an account with a wholesale distributor of specialty foods to save money and had people join me for monthly or quarterly orders. Some health food stores might consider letting order in bulk from them as many health food stores already have a policy of offering discounts for orders by the case.

### **3. Buying in Bulk**

Most health food stores and food cooperatives sell grains, seeds, nuts and other foods in bulk. You can often save money by purchasing in bulk, but not always. The reason it is typically less expensive than individually packaged foods is because the saving on the packaging is usually passed onto the consumer. A recent bulk purchase of organic raw pumpkin seeds resulted in about a 25% savings for our family over the individually packaged units for the same food.

One important caution on bulk foods is that you must be careful if you have IgE mediated or life-threatening food allergies due to the issue of contamination. We have multiple IgE mediated food allergies and are very careful with any bulk purchases we make. As with any recommendation, you must do your own research and consider the risks and benefits. Talk to the storeowner to make sure the product is safe. When in doubt about any food safety, don't eat the food.

#### **4. Purchasing meats and poultry directly from an organic farmer**

I had sticker shock when I saw the prices of meats and poultry free of hormones, antibiotics, additives and preservatives. A fantastic way to save money on meats and poultry is to purchase  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a cow,  $\frac{1}{2}$  of a pig, and whole chickens directly from an organic farmer. Saving money in this fashion will require the investment of a large freezer to hold your foods. I estimate that our meat and poultry costs are about 50% less using this method. You can find a friend and share part of an animal if you are not sure you will be able to use all of the meat. Some organic farmers also sell their organic meats in individual packages.

#### **5. Grow Your Own**

If you have a small strip of yard, you can grow your own organic foods. Just make sure your neighbors aren't spraying pesticides on their lawns as it could contaminate your crops. If you don't have a yard, you can offer to garden for someone who does have land and share the yield with him or her. It is good old-fashioned ingenuity that will get you organic foods at a price that you can afford.