

Saving Money on the Gluten-Free Diet

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We have been using the gluten-free diet for more than 10 years now and we save money by using these proven strategies. We use all of the methods outlined below to differing degrees.

1. Buy wholesale

I have purchased foods wholesale at a discount since we started the gluten-free diet. To purchase wholesale, you will need to get together with some like-minded people to form a buying group so that you can meet the necessary minimum volume that some wholesalers require. Contact the distributors who service your grocery stores and health food stores and find out what it takes to establish an account, how they process orders and how you have to take delivery. Another possible method of buying wholesale is through an already established food co-operative or buying group. Just by talking with people shopping for the same diet that you are on, you can discover many group buying opportunities.

2. Buy by the case

Many stores will give you a discount, sometimes as high as 10%, if you order a case of a particular food from their store. Ask the store where you shop if they have this policy, or what discount they are willing to give you. As more consumers turn to on-line shopping (often with free shipping), some “brick and mortar” stores will be much more likely to try to please you and accommodate this request.

3. Buy in bulk

While bulk buying can save money, because bulk items in a store are often in easily opened bins, you need to beware of possible cross contamination and other food allergy issues. There are only a few foods that we consider buying in bulk. Talk to the store manager if you have serious allergy concerns or celiac to see if this issue has been or can be addressed. While bulk buying can save you money, you need to be responsible about making sure there is no contamination.

4. Make it from scratch

By far the best savings can come from making foods from scratch. Gluten-free baked goods are not inexpensive. Don't let the cost of a package of xanthan gum fool you. Some people have sticker shock when they see the cost of a package of xanthan gum (often over \$10 for 8 ounces). The truth is that you only use a teaspoon or less per cup of flour so you are spending a few cents not a few dollars on a batch of baked goods. We make a huge amount of gluten-free and dairy-free baked goods from scratch simply because I am unwilling to pay a lot of money for foods that are not all that good. You would be amazed at how good some gluten-free, dairy-free baked goods can taste when they are freshly made! It is a matter of learning the tricks and techniques and having good recipes, of course.

5. Make your own mixes at home

Once you have a reliable recipe that you love make your own mix for it. To do this simply place two or three mixing bowls on the kitchen counter and measure all of dry ingredients into the bowls as if you were going to make two or three batches of your favorite recipe. Then instead of adding the liquids and wet ingredients, place the dry ingredients into a quart or gallon sized plastic bag and label it with the contents and date. I just made a dry mix for our Texas Sheet Cake and labeled it:

“Texas Sheet Cake: flour, sugar, salt, xanthan gum, cocoa, baking soda, Egg Replacer; NEEDS: margarine and liquid ingredients”

The next time I make a Texas Sheet Cake, all I have to do is put the dry ingredients in a mixing bowl and add the liquid ingredients. This is a fantastic way to save both money and time.

6. Stock up on sale items

Every once in a while we find the specialty food items we purchase on sale. While it doesn't happen often, when it does we will stock up and purchase what our budget will allow that month.

7. Purchase directly from a local farmer

Buying foods, including produce, meats and poultry directly from a local organic farmer is a fantastic way to not only save money and decrease the environmental footprint, but also to support the local economy and know what you are getting. One way to find local organic farmers is by looking them up on the Internet under the search term or key words of 'Community Supported Agriculture' or 'CSA'.