Eating Right when the Budget is Tight

I often hear things like, “I’m on a tight budget. I live off of Top Ramen!”

I regularly get clients who want to change their diet though they live on a very limited budget. The common misconception is that eating healthy costs more. It can, but it doesn’t have to.

What I tell people is that you need to spend your money on nutrition, not calories. And this video explains the difference beautifully.

The more active you are, the more calories you need. I recommend people with active lifestyles bulk up on beans, brown rice, amaranth, oats, and quinoa. If you shop around, you can get these products for $2 a pound or less. And they provide nutrient dense calories.

Even if you’re at a gas station, usually, you still have decent choices. You know that little fruit basket that’s right by the register? A banana will usually cost you less than the Snickers bar, and instead of robbing your body of nutrition to balance out the acidity and undo the other damage refined foods cause, you’re feeding your body.

“But Snickers really satisfies!” one client said to me, quoting the old marketing line. And it may be true. If you’re used to eating junk food, it is what your body wants. And lots of that junk food tends to sort of stick with you for a while. While the sugars get digested very quickly, much of the other ingredients in refined crap food don’t digest well at all. This leaves people with a full feeling for a longer period of time than when they eat fruit and vegetables. The trick is to learn to not need that full feeling. Or to always have those

above mentioned bulk foods ready and waiting to consume.

I always eat lots of produce. On days that I am active, I also eat more beans, brown rice, amaranth, oats, and quinoa. But most importantly, I've learned not to want that full feeling. I feel lighter and cleaner. And I pay careful attention to how my body feels due to what I eat. But most importantly, nutrition, to me, is the most valuable thing in the world, next to air and water. And that's how I chose to spend my money and feed my body.

And be sure to check out local farmers markets for higher quality, more densely nutritious produce. Since farmers markets are trendy these days, you'll probably have to shop around quit a bit for the deals. If you're lucky enough to live by a u-pick farm, you cannot get any better than that! When I stayed in Arizona. I got most of my vegetables for $2 a pound at Schnepf Farms. Organic, and as fresh as it can be, you can't beat those prices! And getting a little dirty while really seeing where your food comes from is good for the whole family.

But because I myself am often on a very tight budget, this is the most important rule I live by when shopping for produce:

In order of most to least desirable produce:

1. Fresh, truly organic (I am not talking about the certification), heirloom, and local
2. Fresh and local heirloom
3. Fresh and local
4. Fresh and organic
5. Fresh conventional (sans GMO and some of the worst offenders for being laden with pesticides like the dirty dozen here)

I almost never buy frozen and never buy canned produce.

It takes practice. Changing your diet the right way means changing your lifestyle. It means preparing your own food. It means shopping with a totally different mindset. Learning new recipes and learning how to cook quick, healthy, delicious meals takes time. But the reward can be a life without aches, pains, and disease. Vitality is not only priceless, but in the long run, it’s much less expensive. And if done right, it’s even cheaper in the short run.