



Cooking on a Budget

#studentlife hacks



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SYDNEY

A collaborative work by the Student Transition and Retention Team and Virginia Chan (PhD Candidate, Faculty of Science) and Yumeng Shi (PhD Candidate, Faculty of Science) and proudly sponsored by Allianz Global Assistance.

Shopping on a Budget

Knowing how and where to shop

Supermarkets

The major supermarket chains in Australia are Coles and Woolworths. Coles and Woolworths have catalogue discounts which change every Wednesday. Certain daily-made produce will be discounted at the end of the day, e.g. bread or roast chicken. You can also join their reward schemes and earn points as you spend and redeem them later to reduce the cost of your grocery bill.

Other supermarkets include

- IGA
- Aldi
- Corner stores
- Multicultural stores (ask family/friends)

IGA supermarkets in suburbs where there is a high proportion certain cultural groups will stock special cultural items, e.g. IGA Haymarket stocks common Asian ingredients.



Fresh Food Markets

- Flemington Markets
- Harris Farm
- Fruit Ezy

You can shop with your friends at Flemington Markets in bulk to save money.

At Harris Farm, look for the "imperfect picks" section. These are fruit and vegetables which don't look perfect, e.g. bumpy apples, small avocados. However they are still fresh and quality produce and are much cheaper than standard fruit and vegetables.

Shopping on a Budget

Other places to look



Sometimes, as a student you may find yourself in a difficult financial position. However, there are options available through community food initiatives that can help you get through tough times and still eat well.

Other places to look for groceries

Community Gardens

There are many local community gardens around Sydney. Click on this link to find your closest community garden: communitygarden.org.au/acfcgn-directory/

At the University of Sydney there is a Community Garden located at Maze Crescent, opposite the School of Architecture, Design and Planning. To find out more about how to get involved, contact usydcommunitygarden@gmail.com

Community initiatives

- OzHarvest Market Store - Kensington www.ozharvest.org/what-we-do/market/
- The Staples Bag (sometimes have Camperdown "pop up" markets) www.thestaplesbag.ssi.org.au/
- Add Road Food Pantry (Marrickville) addroad.org.au/the-food-pantry/
- The Food Co-op at the University of Sydney www.usydfoodcoop.org
- USU Grocery Boxes <https://www.usu.edu.au/usyd-store/Food-and-Beverages.aspx#29271>

At the OzHarvest Market Store, all food available is donated. The store runs on the principle of "Take what you need, pay if you can" - so you pay as little as \$0 or as much as you want! Keep in mind that every dollar that you spend here equals two meals served to vulnerable women, children and men across Australia. So give as much as you can!

Simple ways to save time and money

A little planning goes a long way



If you're looking to reduce your food budget, a little meal preparation can save you from spending big on last-minute take-away orders.

Try to write up a meal plan for one or two weeks. Stick to your shopping list when you go shopping which can help to avoid food wastage. How to make the most of your shop:

- Buy in-season fruits and vegetables. Usually cheaper than imported produce, in-season fruit and vegetables are also often more nutritious and flavoursome.
- If you're worried that fresh produce may perish quickly, then tinned, canned and frozen vegetables are a nutritious, convenient and inexpensive way to buy vegetables.
- Avoid impulse purchases like chips and chocolates, which are often positioned near the checkouts - take your shopping list and refer back to it as you shop.
- Be sure to check what you already have in your fridge and pantry to avoid unnecessary purchases. If you plan to buy in bulk, make sure you have plenty of storage space available.

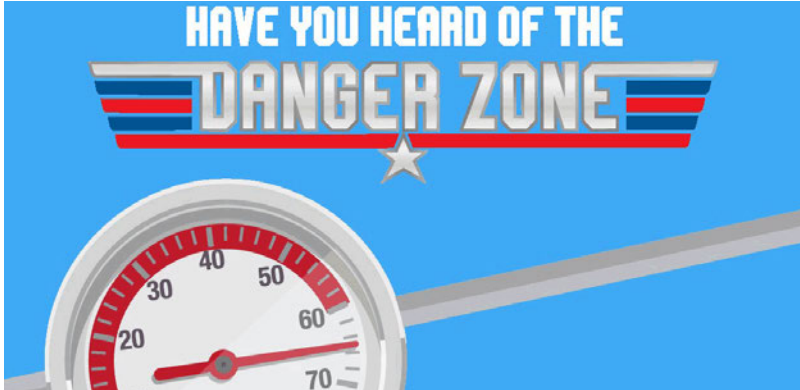
Cook once, eat twice

While it can be tempting to order food when you have assessments to complete and are feeling short on time, it may not be the best option for your health or your wallet. You will know exactly what you put in your meals, most restaurants add a lot of salt, sugar and fat. There are a few time-saving strategies you can use to get the most out of your cooking:

- Use frozen or tinned foods, which are already prepared and diced
- Cook meals in bulk to eat over several days
- Use quality reusable containers to freeze leftovers - next time you're busy, you'll have a home-cooked meal ready.

Prepare your food safely

Stay away from the danger zone



Knowing how to prepare your food safely will help you to avoid getting sick. Perishables and cooked foods must spend as little time as possible between **4 and 60 degrees**. This is known as the danger zone, where bacteria multiplies rapidly.

Store your food properly - make sure pantry goods are sealed to prevent pests, perishables are stored in the fridge and frozen foods are kept below zero degrees.

- Check the date on foods - if it's a *use by date*, it may be unsafe and should be used or thrown out past this date. If it's a *best before date*, it will most likely be okay, but may have lost quality.
- Always wash your hands, knife and chopping board after you've finished preparing anything raw, especially meat and seafood, and keep raw food separate from food that's already been cooked.
- Always cover food to prevent contamination from bacteria.
- Food can be safely stored in the fridge for **3 to 4 days** - if you plan to keep it any longer, it can be stored in the freezer for several months.
- When re-heating, make sure your food is heated thoroughly past **60 degrees** to kill any bacteria.

Making Nutritious Choices

It's all about balance



Eating well not only has benefits for your physical health but it impacts other areas of your life, like your academic performance and your mental health.

Research has shown that people who eat breakfast do better academically than those who skip breakfast. Better quality diets are also associated with reduced depression risk, while unhealthy dietary patterns – higher in processed foods – are linked to increased depression and often anxiety.

If you're not sure what foods are good for you, it's best to keep it simple and follow the [Australian Guide to Healthy Eating](#).

Ideally, for each main meal you should aim to fill your plate:

- Half with colourful vegetables
- A quarter with grain foods (mostly wholegrain and/or high fibre cereal varieties)
- A quarter with protein sources (such as lean meats and poultry, fish, eggs, tofu, nuts and seeds and legumes/beans)

Low GI foods like whole grains release their energy over a longer period of time, which gives you sustained energy to go about your activities throughout the day.



Australian Guide to Healthy Eating

Enjoy a wide variety of nutritious foods from these five food groups every day.

Drink plenty of water.

Grain (cereal) foods, mostly wholegrain and/or high cereal fibre varieties



Vegetables and legumes/beans



Lean meats and poultry, fish, eggs, tofu, nuts and seeds and legumes/beans



Milk, yoghurt, cheese and/or alternatives, mostly reduced fat



Fruit



Use small amounts



Only sometimes and in small amounts



Quick, nutritious and delicious meals

Breakfast for students on the go



Breakfast: Muesli Cups

Ingredients

- 100g plain yoghurt (no added sugar, low or reduced fat)
- 1/3 cup muesli
- Fruit of your choice

You will also need a clear glass, jar or bowl.

Method:

1. Cut fruit of choice into bite size pieces e.g. halves for strawberries, 1cm chunks for bananas etc.
2. Layer muesli and yoghurt into container.
3. Top with fresh fruit.

Top Tips:

- Choose seasonal or frozen fruit - these options are more cost effective.
- Pre-make and store in the fridge overnight for a quick breakfast in the morning.

Breakfast: Omelette Cups

Ingredients

- 1-2 eggs
- Handful of shredded cheese
- Onion, chopped
- Corn (frozen, handful)
- Capsicum, chopped or other vegetable of your choice

Method:

1. Crack eggs into a microwave safe glass, mug or bowl.
2. Beat eggs with fork until well mixed.
3. Microwave for 1 minute
4. Sprinkle with desired toppings e.g. cheese, corn, capsicum, and onions.

Quick, nutritious and delicious meals

Easy main meals (lunch and dinner)

Mexican bowls



Ingredients:

- 1/2 chicken breast (skinless)
- 1/2 small avocado, sliced
- 1 small tomato
- Rice, microwavable
- Black beans or Mexican mixed beans, 1/4 can
- Corn, frozen
- Purple onion, chopped
- Capsicum, chopped
- Olive oil
- Salt and pepper

Method

1. Slice chicken breast into 1cm wide strips, season with salt and pepper.
2. Heat olive oil in a pan on medium-high heat until smoking.
3. Sear chicken on all sides until cooked through - transfer to a bowl and let cool.
4. Microwave rice (as per instructions) in microwave safe bowl.
5. Defrost any frozen corn (as per instructions).
6. Drain and rinse canned beans.
7. Top rice with chicken, beans, corn, onion, capsicum, avocado and chicken.

Top Tips

- Try different toppings e.g. spinach, tomato, egg, beef, tofu, chill.
Marinate your chicken (lemon juice, olive oil, chilli, garlic).

Quick, delicious and nutritious meals

Main meals (lunch and dinner)

Chicken Salad

Ingredients:

- 1/2 chicken breast
- Salad vegetables
- Purple onion or garlic
- Olive oil*
- Vinegar
- Salt and pepper

*Ratio is 3 parts oil to 1 part vinegar. For 1 portion, aim for 20mL olive oil.

Method:

1. Prepare and cook chicken as per Mexican bowl recipe.
2. Wash salad leaves.
3. Wash and chop vegetables of choice.
4. Finely chop red onion or clove of garlic.
5. Mix vinegar, oil and onions/garlic together and season with salt and pepper.
6. Add dressing to salad.



Top Tips:

- Add extra toppings to your salad - chicken, tofu, canned tuna, beef, beans, quinoa, walnuts or almonds.
- Get creative with your dressing - add garlic, lemon juice, herbs (coriander) for extra taste.
- Made too much dressing? Store it in the fridge, keeps well for approximately 1 week.
- Made too much salad? Wrap leftovers in tortilla wraps or in a sandwich for a quick lunch.



Healthy Snacks

Tasty ideas to fuel your brain



**Water doesn't have to be boring.
Replace sugary soft drinks with this healthy
alternative.**

Ingredients

- Sparkling or still water
- Fruit of your choice, fresh or frozen, cut into 20c pieces

Method

- Mix fruit and water together in a jug.
- Keep in the fridge for 1-3 hours before serving.
- Sip and enjoy while you study!

Top Tips

- Choose seasonal or frozen fruit - these options are more cost effective.
- You can eat the fruit after or top up with extra water.

Healthy snack options include

- Nuts
- Yoghurt (unsweetened)
- Fruit salad
- Boiled eggs
- Hummus with veggie sticks



For more information
Contact
E: [international.support
@sydney.edu.au](mailto:international.support@sydney.edu.au)