

This Week's DINNERS

\$70
OR LESS

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Day One

Green Chile Burritos, green salad on the side with Basic Vinaigrette

Day Two

Egg Plus Salad Sandwiches on Homemade Rolls, seasonal fruit on the side

Day Three

Pasta with Quick Meat Sauce, steamed seasonal vegetables, Homemade Garlic Focaccia

Day Four

Cheese Enchiladas, Healthier Refried Beans, green salad

Day Five

Popeye Burgers on Homemade Rolls with Simple Dill Potatoes and cut-up vegetables on the side

Day Six

Velvety Vegetable Soup, side salad, leftover Focaccia

Day Seven

Cheese Pizza, salad - use up any leftovers from the week as pizza or salad toppings.

Plan #2: Mostly Meatless

This week's meal plan is designed to be easy to prepare and inexpensive to purchase. It also comes with a \$70 price tag to feed 4 people for seven dinners.

This plan is "mostly meatless". Vegetarians can easily supplement the meat featured in two of the nights with their preferred veggie patties and add extra vegetables to the pasta sauce.

Going "mostly meatless" is a great way to cut costs. If you'd like to add more meat, feel free to do so. You'll have the basis for great meals on hand to supplement with additional protein.

Prep ahead.

We've taken some of the concepts behind a large freezer cooking day and applied them to a week's meals at home. You can do a lot of the prep work in advance. Spend an hour or two chopping, dicing, and baking and reap the rewards all week long.

Many of the meals share common ingredients and "build on one another". That is to say, some of the rolls you bake on Day Two will be enjoyed on another day later in the week. Likewise, any leftover vegetables will be made into a pizza and salad dinner a





Cheats for Good Cheap Eats (aka creative substitutions)

In order to keep the overall grocery total low, we have often made some substitutions throughout the meal plans in order to trim costs.

For instance,

- While recipes featured in this plan may call for either sunflower or olive oil, we've tested this plan with olive oil only. In this way, if you only have the funds for one purchase, know that you can fudge a bit. Will the flavor be different? Of course, but you'll also spend less if you just can't spring for a bottle of two different kinds of oils.
- The same goes for flour.

We've tried to anticipate common cheats and short cuts you could make in order to trim costs. Feel empowered to make creative substitutions in order to eat well, but spend less.

few nights following. In this way, you'll reduce waste and save time and effort in the process.

On healthy eating...

Each family has its own reasons for why they buy certain things: health, budget, taste. We can't predict what everyone will like. Make the tweaks that you prefer for what's on the plan.

For instance, we use unbleached all-purpose flour as well as whole wheat flour and sometimes even designated bread flour. Your price will change based on what you use. You may even grind your own wheat. Go for it! We're not dictating what kind of flour you *should* use, but we've listed the most economical (generally speaking) option on our grocery list. Feel free to change this according to your preferences. Just know that your total spent may differ.

Keep calm and shop on.

You can buy these ingredients at any grocery store. Choose what

Read the notes in this meal plan **CAREFULLY!** There are cheats that we've added to get the price point lower.



store has the best prices available in your area.

However, all the ingredients (except for the yeast) happen to be available at Trader Joe's, a place that doesn't always have everything one might need in a given week.

You don't have to shop there, but know that if that is one of your regular stops, you could get it (almost) all in one place. Additionally, Trader Joe's serves as a mid-range price point. The ingredients list was purchased for \$70 or less at Trader Joe's, so you should find comparable pricing elsewhere, particularly if you buy items on sale or shop at a store with regularly lower prices than Joe offers.

Your mileage may vary

That said, we can't guarantee everything. Prices vary from day to day and from location to location, no matter where you shop. But, you should come in close. We've assigned target prices for the most expensive items.

We also assume that you have some basic pantry staples on hand, like salt, pepper, and basic spices. If you are stocking "from scratch", your costs may be a little higher.

This Week's Recipes

You'll need to download or print these recipes to reference this week. It's always a good move to read them all first as well since many recipes serve more than 4 people:

[Healthier Refried Beans](#)

[Green Chile Burritos](#)

[Basic Vinaigrette](#)

[Egg Plus Salad Sandwiches](#)

[Homemade Buns](#)

[Quick Meat Sauce for Pasta](#)

[Garlic Focaccia](#)

[Cheese Enchiladas](#)

[Homemade Red Enchilada Sauce](#) (if not purchasing canned) - from Gimme Some Oven



[Popeye Burgers](#)

[Simple Dill Potatoes](#)

[Velvety Vegetable Soup](#)

[Basic Pizza Dough](#)

[Last-Minute Pizza Sauce](#)

[Jamie's Spice Mix](#) - Trader Joe's 21 Seasoning Salute is an economical alternative if you don't already have the spices for the homemade mix on hand.

This Week's Groceries

This is a grocery list for all ingredients needed for the week as well as notes for cutting costs and stretching ingredients.

Read through the list carefully to see what you already have on hand or what you might omit in order to accommodate a family preference or to trim costs further.

Dairy/deli section

- 24-ounces (1 1/2 pounds) jack or cheddar cheese (target price \$2.99 or less) - You will use this in the burritos as well as in the enchiladas. The burritos call for jack cheese, but cheddar will work just as well. If a block of cheese is cheaper, go for that and shred your own.
- one pound mozzarella cheese for pizza (target price \$3.99 or less)
- one dozen eggs (target price \$1.99) - use 8 for the sandwiches (you could get by with less), 1 for making the burger buns, 3 to use in salads, if desired
- milk (target allowance \$0.50) - you just need a bit for the homemade buns and for the burger patties. You can use water in the buns and omit it from the patties if you like, instead.

Produce



- 1 to 2 onions (target price \$1.30) for burritos, burgers, soup, and meat sauce. If these are sold by the piece, as they are at Trader Joe's, buy the largest you can find. I was able to buy one onion for \$0.69 that was as big as two regular onions!
- slicing tomatoes (target price \$2.29) - use on egg sandwiches, burgers, salads
- one to two 12-ounce bags baby spinach or other salad greens or heads lettuce, etc (target allowance \$5) - to use for salads, as burger and sandwich toppings, and 3/4 cup to chop into burgers
- 1 to 2 bell peppers (target price \$1.33 each for organic) - for sandwiches, cut-up veggies, and soup (if using)
- cucumbers (target price \$0.79) - for sandwiches, cut-up veggies, and salads
- 1 to 2 bunches celery (target price \$2.29) - for meat sauce and cut-up veggies.
- 8 ounce package mushrooms (target price \$1.69) - for meat sauce, soup, salads, and/or pizza
- green onions (target price \$0.99) - for enchiladas (optional) and salads, if desired
- garlic (target price \$0.65/head)
- 5 pound bag russet potatoes (target price \$3.99 organic) - use 4 pounds in the Dill Potatoes; use the remaining pound in soup, if desired
- lemon (target price \$0.39) - to use in Jamie's Spice Mix, but this can be omitted if you like. If you do buy the lemon, use the juice as part of the vinegar/acid in the vinaigrette or slice it up after zesting to add to water glasses
- seasonal fruit for side dishes - We budgeted \$5 for seasonal fruit.
- seasonal vegetables for steaming, as cut-up veggies and to use in the soup and salads. We budgeted \$5 for seasonal veg.
- fresh basil, optional - This is a very pricey item if you don't grow it yourself, so we recommend omitting it for this week or using 1/3 the amount in dried form instead.

Canned/dry goods

- 1 pound dry pinto beans or use three 15-ounce cans (target price \$1.00 if dried; \$0.89 if canned)
- one 7-ounce or two 4-ounce cans chopped green chiles (target price \$0.79 per can; prices vary)
- 1 to 2 cans tomato paste (target price \$0.89 organic) - This is for the meat sauce and the pizzas. You will need a partial can for the meat sauce, so it's your call if you want one or two cans. The pizza sauce recipe makes a lot, so most families can probably make a smaller batch of pizza sauce and just buy 1 can.

- 12 burrito-size tortillas (target price \$1.99)
- one to two dozen corn tortillas (target price \$0.99/dozen) How much you buy depends on how many enchiladas you are making.
- five-pound bag of flour (target price \$2.99 for unbleached all-purpose) - for homemade burger and sandwich buns, focaccia, and pizza. A bag typically has 16 cups of flour, so you should have a bit leftover. Some of the recipes call for bread flour, whole wheat flour, etc. Feel free to buy one kind and use it all recipes. There may be slight texture differences, but they are negligible, especially if you're trying to stay under budget.
- 15-ounce can tomato sauce (target price \$1.49)
- 1 pound pasta (target price \$0.99)
- 28-ounce can enchilada sauce, if making 2 dozen enchiladas. (target price - \$2.29) OR make your own sauce. If you make your own, you'll need 2 cups chicken or vegetable stock and small amounts of oil, flour, chili powder, garlic powder, salt, cumin, and oregano.
- 4-ounce can sliced black olives (target price \$1.19) - this is an optional topping for enchiladas, pizza, and salads
- 4 to 8 cups (1 to 2 quarts) chicken or vegetable broth (target price \$2/quart) - you'll need the larger amount if you are making your own enchilada sauce

Meat department

A good target to shoot for is 1/4 pound of meat per person per meal.

- 2 pounds ground beef or turkey (target price \$2.99) - for burgers and sauce. If you've got big meat eaters, add more.

Regular pantry ingredients

We are making the assumption that you have some basic ingredients in your pantry and spice cupboard. If you don't have these items on hand, it may bump your price point over the allotted \$70. If you don't have the funds to stock the spice cupboard, see if you can find a store that allows you to buy small amounts at bulk pricing.

- red wine vinegar for salad dressings
- olive oil and sunflower (or other neutral) oil - If you can only afford one oil this week (prices vary widely on this) then use the olive oil for best flavor.
- yeast

- honey, sugar, or sucanat (for pizza dough, buns)
- a slice of bread - The burger patties call for 3/4 to 1 cup fresh bread crumbs. You can make your own bread crumbs by whirring a slice of bread in a blender or food processor. This adds texture and stretch the meat. You can omit it if you like.
- salt - recipes may call for different kinds such as fine sea salt or kosher. Use what you prefer, knowing that you'll need a little less for recipes that call for kosher salt.
- pepper
- dried dill (for potatoes)
- chili powder (for beans)
- onion powder (for beans)
- garlic powder (for focaccia and enchilada sauce, if making from scratch)
- ground cumin (for enchilada sauce, if making from scratch)
- dried oregano (for focaccia and enchilada sauce, if making from scratch)
- sweet paprika (for vinaigrette)
- dried thyme (for soup)
- dried basil (for Quick Meat Sauce, if not using fresh)
- condiments and pickles (for sandwiches)
- hot sauce (for burritos), optional
- vital wheat gluten (for buns), optional
- Jamie's Spice Mix contains onion powder, garlic powder, paprika, dried basil, dried oregano, fine sea salt, black pepper, celery seeds (optional), grated lemon zest, cayenne pepper. If you don't already have these items on hand, it may take you over \$70 to buy them. Trader Joe's 21 Seasoning Salute (\$1.99) is an economical alternative. Otherwise, create a custom seasoning blend with what ingredients you do have on hand.

This Week's Prep List

These are tasks you can do in advance to make the rest of the week easier. Please keep in mind that prepped food is generally good for up to 4 days, refrigerated. If you plan to store these items for longer, wrap them well for freezing.

The steps below are in order of how you will need things during this meal plan. So if you don't have time to do them all, just chip away at the list as needed. This list also includes any shortcuts and meal building you need to be aware of.

- Prepare the beans. Half the beans will be used in the burritos and half will be served as a side dish on Day 4. Freeze the beans if you won't be using them within 4 days. If you get canned pintos, just skip step 1 in the recipe and go right to the mashing and seasoning.
- Shred the cheeses if you did not already buy them shredded.
- Chop and slice the onions. Slice enough for sandwiches and burgers. Chop 1 1/2 cups for the burritos, meat sauce, and soup.
- Prepare the burritos. If you won't be enjoying them the day you prep them, freeze them until ready to serve. This makes 12 burritos. Depending on the size of your family, you may want to package them in two separate zip-top freezer bags: one for dinner and the rest for snacks.
- Prepare a batch (or two) of the Basic Vinaigrette. You'll use this on salads throughout the week as well as on the egg sandwiches. Olive oil tends to solidify upon refrigeration. Be sure to pull the dressing from the fridge with enough time in advance of serving to liquify again.
- Prepare salad greens and toppings for the week. Store in airtight containers in the fridge.
- Prepare Jamie's Spice Mix. Stash in the freezer in an airtight container. (If you're not using fresh lemon zest, you can store it in the cupboard.)
- Bake the Homemade Buns. If you only have one kind of flour, then go ahead and use that. We did not specify bread flour on the list, though you can use it if you like. The vital wheat gluten is optional. You'll use some of the buns for the egg sandwiches and some for the burgers. If your family are big eaters, consider making a double batch, but adjust your grocery list accordingly. Be sure to set aside the required number of buns for each meal.
- [Hard cook the eggs](#), leaving one or two for making hamburger buns. You'll use up to 8 eggs for the egg sandwiches, use the remaining three on salads or for snacking.
- Slice tomatoes for sandwiches and burgers. (If you don't want to refrigerate your sliced tomatoes — the flavor can lessen once in the fridge — hold off until right before serving.)
- Leaf or shred lettuce for egg sandwiches and burgers.
- Prep seasonal vegetables for steaming, cut-up veggies, side dishes, salads, and for soup.

- Prepare the seasonal fruit for salads and side dishes.
- Prepare the Quick Meat Sauce. This can be doubled or tripled and frozen if you'd like to get some freezer cooking done while you're at it. Adjust your shopping list accordingly.
- Make the focaccia. Serve half on Day 3 and half for Day 6. After it has cooled on Day 3, wrap the second half well for freezing and stash it in the freezer until Day 6.
- Make the enchilada sauce, if using homemade.
- Assemble the cheese enchiladas. If you're only going to eat one pan, freeze the second pan prior to baking. Bonus freezer meal for a later date!
- Prep the burger patties. You can freeze them to use at a later date, so feel free to make double or triple batch. Just adjust your shopping list accordingly.
- Prepare the Dill Potatoes on the day of serving. (Leftovers can be tossed into the soup on Day 6.)
- Use leftover vegetables from the week in the soup on Day 6.
- Prepare the pizza dough and freeze if making more than a day in advance. Freezing directions are included in the recipe instructions.
- Prepare the pizza sauce, cover, and refrigerate. This should stay good for up to a week in the refrigerator.



Other things you should note:

Day One:

It's burrito night! You can prepare the beans and burritos a day in advance (or longer if you store the burritos in the freezer). My people like them crisped on a griddle. Serve with a green salad on the side. Be sure to save the leftover beans for a side dish on Day 4.

Day Two:

Let diners prepare their own egg and salad sandwiches. Pass plenty of vinaigrette; be sure to pull it from the fridge with enough time in advance to liquify. Serve seasonal fruit on the side. Save half the buns for burgers on Day 5.

Day Three:

Prepare the focaccia a few hours in advance of serving. The pasta and sauce come together quickly on the stove. Serve steamed vegetables on the side. Be sure to save half the focaccia for Day 6.

Day Four:

Assemble easy cheese enchiladas if you didn't do it in advance. The recipe makes two dozen, so you can freeze one pan before baking if you want. Serve the enchiladas with the refried beans from Day 1 and a side salad.

Day Five:

It's burger night. Serve Popeye Burgers on homemade buns with Dill Potatoes and cut-up veggies on the side.

Day Six:

Prepare a soup, using up any vegetables from the week that will work, such as potato, carrot, sweet potato, zucchini, celery, asparagus, green beans, rutabaga, broccoli, or cauliflower. These would have been seasonal vegetables that you bought for salads and dipping as well as expressly to put in this soup. Don't use too much celery, not more than a cup.

Day Seven:

It's time for pizza! In addition to your dough, sauce, and abundant cheese, you might have some olives, green onion, tomatoes, and other vegetables to top four 12-inch pizzas. Freeze leftovers or eat them for lunch tomorrow. Assemble any leftover veg or fruit into a side salad.