

Stretching Our Protein Dollars

A little diversity and menu planning using the *price per pound on protein items* is the way to go for today's cook who wants to keep their family members happy and lower their food budget.



- Combine dried **beans** with chicken, pork, or meat to make burritos, tacos, chili, and pasta dishes. Stretching meat with beans is a very old tip but now we can see in today's prices why it is a very wise decision.
- Meat and **potatoes** - using more potatoes and less meat is another cost-wise strategy. Potatoes are only \$1.39 per pound and they are accepted by almost everyone.
- **Tofu** easily changes out for meat in many stir fry dishes especially for kung pao dishes which use veggies, spices, and peanuts. It is especially helpful if you increase the seasonings a little and crisp up the tofu with a little oil in the pan.
- **Eggs** can be great for dinner. You can make omelets, torta, or hard-boiled eggs and serve them with salads, toast, or over avocado toast.
- **Whole chicken** makes less work for the cook. It roasts in 1-2 hours unattended and can make many meals. By using it as a garnish in soups, burritos, or pasta dishes you can really stretch one chicken across many meals. The carcass can be gently boiled to make a broth.
- **Veggie burgers** are certainly not the cheapest item but they are so easy to store in the freezer plus they heat up in a minute. So they deserve some recognition. Label reading is necessary because some have a lot more sodium than others.
- **Pork chops** are a favorite of many tables and they can be made in smaller portions especially if you prepare a whole grain such as brown rice to go with them.
- **Fish** may be cheaper if you buy frozen items in bulk and watch store specials.

Protein cheat sheet

Here is a list of food prices from an average grocery store in California. You can use [instacart.com](https://www.instacart.com) to research the prices in your favorite local store or even to compare them across stores in your area.

- Beans (dried) \$1.39 per pound
- Tofu, \$2.50 per pound
- Eggs, large, store brand, \$3.79 per dozen
- Peanut butter, national brand, \$3.89 per pound
- Ground turkey, \$4.50 per pound
- Whole chicken, \$4.59 per pound
- Ground beef, \$6 per pound
- Canned tuna \$6 per pound
- Veggie burger, \$10 per pound (averaged)
- Hot dogs \$10 per pound
- Pork chops, \$10.50 per pound
- Tilapia \$11.49 per pound
- Steak \$12 per pound
- Salami and processed meats: \$16 per pound