

## **Eating Right When the Budget's Tight** **by the American Institute for Cancer Research**

Higher food prices are driving many people back home for dinner instead of eating out. It's a great opportunity to prepare meals that are healthier and lower your cancer risk. Here's how you can shop to benefit your wallet as well as your health.

Researchers are finding that vegetables, fruits, whole grains and beans may help lower your cancer risk. Try filling 2/3 or more of your plate with plant foods and 1/3 or less with lean meat, poultry, fish or dairy (and avoiding processed meat like hot dogs). With a little planning, you can shift money you'd spend on less-than-healthy foods like rice mixes, packaged desserts, prepared sauces and dressings to basic healthy ingredients you can eat in a healthier way while staying within budget. Here are some tips:

- **Make your own.** When it comes to snacks, it's often healthier and less expensive to simply make your own. Whip up a healthy summer dip (Tomato and Red Pepper Dip) with fresh, cut-up vegetables instead of chips. Or ...make your own chips (Toasted Pita Wedges). *Recipes below.*
- **Buy plain rice instead of a boxed mix** and flavor it with your own herbs and spices. Use healthful olive oil and vinegar to make your own dressings. (Some canned healthy foods like beans, tomato products and soups are high in sodium. Just drain and rinse your beans and choose reduced-sodium versions of tomato products and soups.)
- **Avoid shopping when you're hungry** so you don't buy more than you need and can better resist impulse buys.
- **Check your refrigerator.** See what needs to be used or frozen before it spoils. Then make a list of what to buy.
- **Plan to buy supplies for several days' worth of meals.** It can help to plan in advance so you don't end up at the fast-food drive-thru when you're very busy and have few groceries at home.
- **Recycle leftovers.** Refrigerate them within two hours and use them in another meal the next day. Add leftovers to salads, pasta, pizza or burritos. Cook aging fresh vegetables as part of a stir-fry, chili or soup. Chop overripe fruit and whirl in the blender for a sauce or smoothie with low fat yogurt. Mixed dishes can be frozen in single-serving portions – just clearly label and date them. When you are reheating leftovers, reheat solids to 165 degrees and boil soups.

### **Tomato and Red Pepper Dip**

1 jar (12 oz.) roasted red peppers, rinsed and drained  
1 can (15 oz.) white beans, rinsed and drained  
1/4 cup tomato paste, preferably reduced sodium  
2 garlic cloves, minced  
3 Tbsp. lowfat mayonnaise  
1 tsp. dry oregano  
1 tsp. ground cumin

1/4 tsp. ground chili powder or pinch cayenne pepper  
Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

**Instructions:** Coarsely chop peppers. Place in food processor or blender and puree. Add beans, tomato paste, garlic, mayonnaise, oregano, cumin and chili powder or cayenne. Process to smooth puree. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Let stand one hour before serving. Keeps up to three days, tightly covered and refrigerated. Makes 2 ¼ cups.

*Nutritional Information: Per 2 tablespoons: 32 calories, <1 g total fat (<1 g saturated fat), 6 g carbohydrate, 1 g protein, 1 g dietary fiber, 120 mg sodium.*

### **Toasted Whole Wheat Pita Wedges**

*Serve these up with your favorite dip or spread.*

2 whole wheat pita breads (6 inches)  
Olive oil spray  
2 Tbsp. Parmesan cheese

**Instructions:** Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Separate halves of each pita bread, then cut each half into 8 wedges. On large baking sheet, place wedges in single layer. Spray lightly with olive oil. Sprinkle with Parmesan cheese. Bake for 15 minutes. Makes 4 servings. *Nutritional Information: Per serving: 97 calories, 2 g total fat (<1 g saturated fat), 18 g carbohydrates, 4 g protein, 2 g dietary fiber, 217 mg sodium.*

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