

# The Supermarket Diet: Cost and Convenience of Following a Good Housekeeping Plan

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## Abstract

Good Housekeeping's Supermarket Diet claims that the dieter "won't feel hungry, will lose up to two pounds a week and will keep the weight off". The Supermarket Diet attempts to make dieting suitable for different lifestyles through varied calorie plans. To evaluate the cost of following this diet, the prices of the ingredients of a week's diet at two different supermarkets in Beloit have been found. These results are compared to the USDA's Thrifty Food Plan. While the USDA plan cost \$32.40 per week, the Supermarket Diet costs ranged from \$189.34 to \$213.56 per week.

## Introduction

Good Housekeeping created the Supermarket Diet as a way to make dieting convenient. It claims weight loss is possible, but a true lifestyle change is necessary in order to achieve it. By creating a diet with three caloric intake plans, Good Housekeeping's Supermarket Diet creates a more personalized and flexible diet. These three calorie tracks--1,200, 1,500 and 1,800 calories--give the dieter the power to decide on how rapidly and easily to lose weight and also how to simply maintain weight.

The diet's largest claim is that it creates easier options for what is eaten. They have an aisle-by-aisle guide for shopping at the supermarket that makes life and this diet "easier" to control. Good Housekeeping's Supermarket Diet also has a pull out Guide for going aisle to aisle.

Table 2: Thrifty Meal Plan Cost

Age-gender groups	Weekly cost <sup>1</sup>	Monthly cost <sup>2</sup>
	Thrifty plan	
<b>Individuals<sup>1</sup></b>		
<b>Child:</b>		
1 year	19.10	82.70
2-3 years	20.20	87.40
4-5 years	21.00	91.10
6-8 years	26.60	115.30
9-11 years	30.60	132.40
<b>Male:</b>		
12-13 years	32.50	140.80
14-18 years	33.60	145.60
19-50 years	36.00	155.80
51-70 years	32.90	142.50
71+ years	33.00	142.90
<b>Female:</b>		
12-13 years	32.40	140.40
14-18 years	32.10	139.30
19-50 years	32.40	140.30
51-70 years	31.80	137.70
71+ years	31.20	135.10
<b>Families</b>		
<b>Family of 2:<sup>4</sup></b>		
19-50 years	75.20	325.70
51-70 years	71.10	308.20
<b>Family of 4:</b>		
Couple, 19-50 years and children—		
2-3 and 4-5 years	109.50	474.50
6-8 and 9-11 years	125.50	543.80

Table 3: Thrifty Meal Plan Shopping List

Food category	Females	
	19-50 years	
<b>Total pounds</b>	<b>33.51</b>	
	<i>Pounds per week</i>	
<b>Grains</b>		
Whole grain breads, rice, pasta, and pastries (including whole grain flours)	1.25	
Whole grain cereals (including hot cereal mixes)	.38	
Popcorn and other whole grain snacks	.00	
Non-whole grain breads, cereal, rice, pasta, pies, pastries, snacks, and flours	1.14	
	<b>2.77</b>	
<b>Vegetables</b>		
All potato products	2.05	
Dark-green vegetables	1.29	
Orange vegetables	1.19	
Canned and dry beans, lentils, and peas (legumes)	.93	
Other vegetables	1.94	
	<b>7.40</b>	
<b>Fruits</b>		
Whole fruits	5.16	
Fruit juices	.46	
	<b>5.62</b>	
<b>Milk products</b>		
Whole milk, yogurt, and cream	.20	
Lower fat and skim milk and lowfat yogurt	11.31	
All cheese (including cheese soup and sauce)	.03	
Milk drinks and milk desserts	.00	
	<b>11.53</b>	
<b>Meat and beans</b>		
Beef, pork, veal, lamb, and game	.65	
Chicken, turkey, and game birds	2.67	
Fish and fish products	.43	
Bacon, sausages, and luncheon meats (including spreads)	.00	
Nuts, nut butters, and seeds	.47	
Eggs and egg mixtures	.06	
	<b>4.28</b>	
<b>Other foods</b>		
Table fats, oils, and salad dressings	.55	
Gravies, sauces, condiments, and spices	.55	
Coffee and tea	.02	
Soft drinks, sodas, fruit drinks, and ades (including rice beverages)	.00	
Sugars, sweets, and candies	.04	
Soups (ready-to-serve and condensed)	.76	
Soups (dry)	.00	
Frozen or refrigerated entrees (including pizza, fish sticks frozen meals)	.00	
	<b>1.91</b>	

Table 1: Foods for First Week of Diet

Table 4: Results of Diet Shopping in Beloit, WI

## Method

In order to evaluate The Supermarket Diet's largest claim, its ease and convenience to follow, I went to Cub Foods and Walmart and checked the prices of a week's worth of food for the diet. The first two weeks, called the Boot Camp, the diet calls for a number of foods for the meals the dieter must prepare shown in Table 1. After that, I researched online for any standard for an amount of money spent per week. I found the USDA's standard, named the Thrifty Meal Plan, which dictates how much should be spent on food weekly and monthly. It is updated every month, and I used the standards for August, as they were the last standards posted online. That selection is shown in table 2. Table 3 is the Thrifty Food Plan grocery list for a woman 19-50 years of age.

I also looked at Cub Foods and Walmart because they are examples of stores that can usually be found in many towns: a large, sometimes national, chain and a smaller, more regional chain.

## Results

When I went to Walmart and Cub Foods, I got the prices on the foods on Table 1. The results are shown in Table 4. The cost of the foods for the Supermarket Diet were very expensive. The Thrifty Meal plan was created under the already set dietary standards and "serves as a national standard for a nutritious, low-cost diet. It represents a set of market baskets of food that people of specific ages and genders could consume at home to maintain a healthful diet that meets current dietary standards, taking into account the food consumption patterns of U.S. households" (1).

## Discussion

After going from store to store, two things were apparent. Firstly, not everything could be found in either store that was on the list. Secondly, the cost of food per week was not affordable according to the USDA's Thrifty Meal Plan.

The Supermarket Diet may be effective in the long run. Unfortunately, it is not as affordable as it claims. When compared to the Thrifty Meal Plan, the diet is impractical. It is unaffordable and thus not as easy as advertised to maintain. The Thrifty Meal Plan is also based on an obsolete food pyramid. The plan is based on the USDA's food pyramid, which is not as effective as the Willett Food Pyramid, and so I am skeptical of the Supermarket Diet.

## Conclusion

The Supermarket Diet is effective but costs substantially more than the USDA's Plan.

## References

- "USDA Food Plans: U. S. Average at four Cost Levels-- Cost of Food at Home" August 2007. United States Department of Agriculture. 1 Oct. 2007 <<http://www.cnpp.usda.gov/USDAFoodPlansCostofFood-CostOfFoodAtHome.htm>>
- Jibrin,M.S., R.D., Janis. The Supermarket Diet. New York, New York.: Hearst Books, 2006.