

# AskAnya

Anya Todd is a vegan registered and licensed dietitian who graduated from Case Western Reserve University and completed her internship at the Cleveland Clinic Foundation. Though she cringes at spending \$4 on a loaf of bread, Anya has no problem spending \$4 on her favorite chocolate bar.



- How can I follow a nutritious vegan diet without busting my food budget?

**One of the biggest misconceptions about a vegan diet is that it is too expensive to maintain, and that is simply (soy) baloney! Here are some tips for eating a healthy vegan diet while staying on a budget.**

## Cook For Yourself

It seems that my generation and those younger are so spoiled by convenience foods that we balk at the idea of having to boil a pot of water. Relying on pre-packaged items, such as expensive frozen meals, or dining at pricey restaurants can send your weekly food budget through the roof. If you are scared of venturing into the kitchen, help is on the way. There are so many wonderful cookbooks, websites and podcasts that teach everything from properly cutting an onion to assembling a three-layer cake. For free recipes and cooking videos, check out ChooseVeg.com.

## Stick With the Basics

Beans, grains and produce are low-cost and should be the backbone of any healthy vegan diet. A two-pound bag of dried beans costs around \$1 at my local grocer and will easily feed me and my husband for a few meals when used in dishes like chili and soups. Even canned beans are affordable and require zero preparation. Full of protein and fiber, beans should be used often. Rice, pasta, and nontraditional grains, like millet and quinoa, are very easy to prepare and have a variety of uses. A bowl of rice and beans with a little bit of salsa and a salad is one of the cheapest and most filling meals I have found. Fresh and frozen produce are essential to have on hand. Local farmers' markets are wonderful for providing inexpensive local fruits and veggies which in turn supports your local economy.

## Make A List

List making is in my genes. My dad is a chronic list-maker. Wish lists, "to-do" lists, "books to read before I die" lists – I enjoy making them all. The grocery list is no exception. Taking the time to create a shopping list for a week's worth of meals can be daunting at first, but you will get the hang of it. Just remember, you are saving money!

## Think Ethnic

When omnivores ask me, "Well, what do you eat?" as if I am dramatically limiting my options by choosing to go cruelty-free, I take pleasure in naming foods of which they have never heard. The plethora of international cuisine, whether it is Indian, Asian, Mexican or Middle Eastern, is not only tasty but really inexpensive. Chana Masala, an Indian dish, is one of my all-time faves that costs well under \$5 to make and feeds me for a few meals.

**If you are watching your budget, chances are your friends are too. Planning a potluck in which everyone brings a vegan dish is a great way to enjoy a yummy meal, while only investing the time and money for the one dish you prepared.**

Just remember, you work hard for your paycheck, so it's ok to spend \$5 on dessert at your favorite vegan bakery every now and again. Plus, you are helping a vegan establishment stay in business. So, indulge!