A healthy diet does not need to be expensive, in fact eating out and buying convenience foods can cost a lot more than preparing food at home. The following information will help you with shopping, preparing and cooking nutritious food and help you save money.

**Takeaway meals or home cooking- which is cheaper?**

Takeaway foods are very convenient but can be expensive and are often full of hidden fats.

An average serve of Pad Thai costs $9.00 for takeaway versus about $2.80 to make this version of Pad Thai at home (see recipe), which is only about a third of the cost of the takeaway.

Indian restaurants charge about $7.50 for a takeaway serve of chicken korma but using this Chicken and Lentil Korma recipe costs less than half the price - about $3.40 per serve and is highly nutritious.

**Recipes**

**Chicken and Lentil Korma**

**Ingredients (serves 4)**

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 6 chicken thigh fillets, chopped
- 1 large brown onion, finely chopped
- 2/3 cup korma curry paste
- 1/2 cup water
- 400ml can coconut milk
- 2 x 400g cans brown lentils, drained, rinsed
- 1/4 cup coriander leaves, chopped

**Method**

Heat oil in a frying pan over high heat. Cook chicken, in batches, for 3 minutes, tossing, or until browned. Set aside.

Reduce heat to medium. Add onion. Cook, stirring, for 3 minutes. Add curry paste. Cook, stirring, for 2 minutes. Combine water and coconut milk. Add to frying pan with chicken and lentils. Stir to combine.

Cook, uncovered, for 30 minutes or until chicken is cooked through. Sprinkle with coriander. Serve.
**Pad Thai***

**Preparation Time 15 minutes**

**Cooking Time 15 minutes**

**Ingredients (serves 4)**

- 1 1/2 tbs seasoning sauce
- 1 tbs tamarind concentrate
- 1 tbs fresh lime juice
- 2 tsp finely chopped palm sugar
- 250g rice stick noodles
- 60ml (1/4 cup) peanut oil
- 300g firm tofu, drained, cut into 2cm cubes
- 5 purple eschalots, sliced
- 3 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 1 carrot, peeled, halved lengthways, thinly sliced diagonally
- 1 red capsicum, halved, deseeded, thinly sliced lengthways
- 2 eggs, lightly whisked
- 100g bean sprouts
- 1/4 Chinese cabbage, shredded
- 2/3 cup loosely packed fresh coriander leaves
- 2 tbs crushed unsalted peanuts
- Lime wedges, to serve

**Method**

Combine seasoning sauce, tamarind, lime juice and sugar in a jug. Set aside. Place noodles in a large heatproof bowl and pour over enough boiling water to cover. Set aside for 5 minutes to soften. Stir with a fork to separate. Drain.

Heat 2 tbs of the oil in a wok over medium-high heat until smoking. Add half the tofu and stir-fry for 2 minutes or until golden brown. Transfer to a plate lined with paper towel. Reheat wok and repeat with the remaining tofu.

Heat the remaining oil in the wok over medium heat until just smoking. Add eschalot and garlic and stir-fry for 2-3 minutes or until the eschalot softens. Add carrot and capsicum, and stir-fry for 1-2 minutes or until carrot is tender. Make a well in the centre of the vegetables. Pour the egg into the well and stir-fry until partially cooked. Add noodles and stir until well combined.

Add reserved lime-juice mixture, tofu, bean sprouts, cabbage and coriander, and stir-fry until combined.

Divide the pad Thai among serving bowls and sprinkle with peanuts. Serve immediately with lime wedges.

General Tips to Decrease Grocery Shopping Costs

✓ Plan meals in advance – decrease food waste
✓ Make recipes in bulk and freeze for quick re-heating
✓ Always take a shopping list (reduces amount of “extra” foods purchased)
✓ Never shop when hungry
✓ Read food labels – compare nutritional value of similar products with different prices
✓ Check the weight of the product you are purchasing and compare with that of other products (see the kilo-cents counter below)
✓ Calculate the price per serve to determine the best value for money
✓ Check the price that your food items scan through the register at (the price may be incorrect)
✓ Check the product’s use-by date

Healthy Eating can be Cheap and Easy!

Fruit and Vegetables
There are hundreds of varieties of fruits and vegetables available in Australia, many you may have never seen before but they might be cheaper than the vegetables you are familiar with. For tips on cooking, preparing and eating different types visit the Market Fresh website:

Buying fruits and vegetables that are in season are likely to be cheaper and taste much better! Here is a quick guide to what is in season throughout the year:

Spring: asparagus, beetroot, mandarins, kiwi fruit
Summer: tomatoes, snow peas, zucchini, bananas, grapes, stone fruit
Autumn: bok choy, celery, pumpkin, corn, passionfruit, nashi pear
Winter: beans, cauliflower, swedes, apples, pears, oranges

For a complete coloured list of seasonal availability of fruit and vegetables visit these Market Fresh websites:

Frozen vegetables are just as nutritious as fresh vegetables, they are more convenient and keep for longer so keep a range of frozen vegetables in your freezer to add colour and nutrients to your meals.

Canned fruit (in natural juice, not syrup) and vegetables (e.g. corn, legumes, beetroot) are also nutritious and convenient.
Meat

Meat, chicken and fish all provide protein and some iron but they are often very expensive. Cheap and easy alternatives are egg, tinned fish and legumes. Tinned chickpeas, lentils and kidney beans are ready to eat and can be substituted in meat dishes e.g. pasta bolognaise –try using half beans and half mince.

Convenience Stores compared to Supermarkets

Groceries at convenience stores and small local shops can be up to double the price of the same product at large supermarkets because they buy products in smaller volume and pay more from the wholesalers. They will also stock leading brands so your choice is often limited. Planning your meals in advance and doing a ‘weekly shop’ at a supermarket will mean you are less likely to rely on convenience stores for your groceries.
The Kilo-Cents Counter
Adapted from WA Department of Health 2002

The Kilo-Cents Counter is a ready reckoner to help you to compare prices by weight.

Check the price of the food you buy per kilogram and decide if it is good value for money compared to alternatives.

To find the price per kilogram:
Step 1 Round off the price to the nearest 50 cents
Step 2 Round off the weight to the nearest 50 grams
    This will give rounded amounts.
Step 3 Use the Kilo-Cents$ Counter on the back page. Move across the prices column to the rounded price of the food item, and then move downwards to the rounded weight of the food item, shown in the margins.
The square you land on will be the price per kilogram.
For example, a food item costs $1.20 and weighs 200 grams:

1. Round off $1.20 price to $1.00

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2. Weight is 200 g

3. The price per kilogram will be $5.00 (see highlighted section).

NOTE: When comparing prices for items which weigh less than 200 grams you will see there is a wide range in prices depending on whether you round the price down or up to the nearest 50 cents. If this range does not help you to compare prices, you may prefer to use a calculator:
Price per kg = price ($) ÷ weight (grams) x 1000

Created by Caulfield Community Health Service March 2010
## Kilo-Cents Counter

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1000 g = 1 kg  
1000 mL = 1 Litre
When you compare prices per kilogram you will find that highly processed, packaged and advertised foods are more expensive than comparable foods. For example:

- Fruit leathers may cost $20–30/kg compared to fresh fruit at only $1–4/kg
- Potato crisps may cost $12–30/kg compared to fresh potatoes at only $1–2/kg
- High sugar cereal may cost $10–15/kg compared to plain cereal at only $1–4/kg