



FRUGAL ABUNDANCE



EXCHANGE PLAN

by Maggie Lyon

© FrugalAbundance 2014
All Rights Reserved

Some portions of this document were published by Miss Maggie
under the title *Frugal Fat Loss with the Exchange Plan Diet*.
This is an updated and revised version of that document.

I am not a health professional. I'm a homemaker and a mom with many years in the trenches, a diabetic husband, my own metabolic disorder and 4 perpetually starving children (2 of whom are still at home). This document should not be construed as professional advice in any form. This publication is provided for information purposes only. Use it at your own risk.

Before beginning this or any weight-loss program consult with your health care professionals. Bring this document in with you and show them what you're up to. Follow your health care provider's advice above my own. What works for me may or may not work for you.

It's impossible for me to know the specific health needs of each individual who reads or uses this document, so I cannot be expected to accommodate all of any one person's special requirements. I have done my best to accommodate as many dietary needs as is practical within the limitations of this space. Ultimately you are responsible for your own health care and I hope that this document can help you achieve some of your own health goals.



HEALTHY, SENSIBLE, BUDGET-WISE & FAMILY FRIENDLY

Weight Loss Exchange Plan



Introduction

If you're reading this document it's probably because your weight is not what you want it to be. Our modern food supply isn't exactly conducive to maintaining a healthy weight on a budget. When you're doing your best to stretch your food dollars while *still* hoping to eat better and maybe lose a few pounds, the situation can seem hopeless. I'm here to tell you it's not.

There's a popular urban myth that it's impossible to eat healthy on a small budget; that it's impossible to lose weight eating low-cost foods. I do not believe this is true. I believe it is completely possible to improve one's health and reduce one's weight on the smallest of budgets.

It takes work, to be sure. We have to change the way think about food. We have to change the way we cook, the way we shop for food, and the way we plan our meals. We have to make some sacrifices, such as giving up fast food. We have to face some uncomfortable bits of reality, such as portion control. Weighing and measuring our food isn't as easy as just eating as much as we want, of everything we want. There's an adjustment period involved. Most of us can't just jump in feet first and do everything perfectly all at once. We may need to take our time and make changes gradually, until we become more accustomed to our new way of eating.

It's vital that we be gentle with ourselves as we adjust. Real food requires prep-work. It takes a little more time than just boiling up a pot of

macaroni and cheese and frying a few hot dogs to go with it.

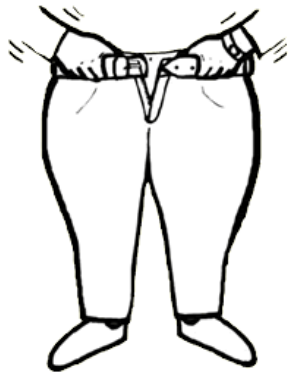
Those of us who are unfamiliar with fresh and frozen vegetables will have a lot of fun finding new favorites. We'll have a bit of extra work at the supermarket, reading labels and comparing prices. When we come home, we'll have meats to repack for the freezer and vegetables that must be stored in the refrigerator.

As we learn to plan meals, we'll make better choices at the market and in the kitchen. It can be overwhelming to learn so many new skills so quickly. If you've been watching your budget for any length of time, then many of these behaviors will already be second nature. You can build on the skills that you already possess and use them to new advantage.

Losing weight, eating more health-giving meals, these things take time and effort. It's not easy and it doesn't happen overnight. On the other hand, it doesn't cost much more than you're already spending on food. In many cases, you will actually save money because as your eating comes under control, the amount of money you spend on food automatically comes under control too. If you've ever found yourself waiting in the drive-thru line, asking yourself why you are, once again, spending money you can't afford on food that is only going to make you sick, then you know what I'm talking about.

Changing yourself, from a gut level (literally :-)) does not happen overnight. You're allowed to take your time. You're allowed as many false starts as you need. You're allowed to have

good intentions that don't quite make it over to changed behavior just yet. You're allowed to bargain, cry, deny and even feel sorry for yourself a little while. This plan will wait on you. It will be here when you're ready.



Until you reach that point, I encourage you to take a long, honest look at yourself. Allow yourself to really see what you're spending, what you're eating and what your health status really is. Do you have diabetes, high blood pressure or a heart condition that you are pretending to manage, without really making any changes? If so, now is the time to admit these things to yourself. Run a status check of eating habits, health problems, fitness level and health goals. Where are you now, and where would you like to be?

When you see the unvarnished truth of where you're at, when staying where you are hurts more than opening the door to change, that's when it will happen. That's when you can take action to improve your circumstances. This food plan can help you get there.

I highly recommend that you find a support group, either online or better yet, in person. Free weight-management groups are available almost everywhere. [Overeater's Anonymous](#) and a Christian group called [Celebrate Recovery](#) can be found nationwide. You may be able to find other free or affordable options in your area. Ask at the library or church. In my experience it is very hard to do this alone. For me it was nearly impossible. A support group makes it so much easier. If nothing else, find a good friend or even your spouse, who can go on this journey with you.

For those interested in doing this program with a church group you can find some free program information at my website, [Frugal Abundance](#).



About The Plan

The *Frugal Abundance Exchange Plan* is not the latest thing. It's not new and improved. It's not based on new scientific breakthroughs and it's not endorsed by celebrity fitness gurus. It won't cost you an arm or a leg. It won't turn you into a movie star. It won't make you buy expensive supplements or unfamiliar foods. You don't have to weigh yourself in public or attend expensive meetings. There are no joining fees, and no extra incentives or bonus gifts for ordering *NOW!*

On the contrary, the *Frugal Abundance Exchange Plan* is absolutely free. It's based upon a tried and true weight-loss method using dietary exchanges. It's accessible, easy to understand, budget-wise, family-friendly and infinitely adaptable.

If you're not exactly sure what makes a diet healthy then you're in luck. By using the exchange plan you'll automatically be eating a balanced diet, full of all the nutrients that are necessary and beneficial for you and your busy lifestyle. No matter how many pounds you want to lose, from 200 or more, to that last 5 or 10, this plan can be customized to fit your needs. The diet provides several well balanced, nutritious food plans at multiple calorie levels so it's easy to find the plan that best fits your lifestyle.

There are many menu plans from which to choose. From 1000 calories for the petite among us, up to 2100 calories for the burliest of lumberjacks. If you're vegetarian, vegan or a dyed in the wool meat eater you will be able to use

the *Frugal Abundance Exchange Plan*. If you're metabolically challenged or, as my husband jests, have a broken endocrine, you can use this weight-loss plan. If you have food allergies, diabetes, high blood pressure, are gluten-free or dairy-free, this plan can accommodate your specific requirements. If you have to watch every penny and stretch every dollar until it squeaks, you can use this plan.



Time Tested, Safe & Effective

Variations of the dietary exchange plan have been around since before World War II. In 1950 the American Diabetes Association and the American Dietetic Association officially introduced their exchange plan to the public. It was designed to provide an accurate and easy way for diabetics to track and regulate the number of calories, carbohydrates, protein and fat they consumed throughout the day. Many people, including spouses and family members of those early diabetics, noticed that they lost weight while following the exchange plan. The plan ensured a balanced diet, and the weight-loss was almost a side effect. Eventually so many people successfully lost weight on the exchange plan that it was almost universally recognized as a safe, healthful method of weight-loss. Since its inception countless numbers of people have lost weight and maintained a healthy weight using dietary exchanges.

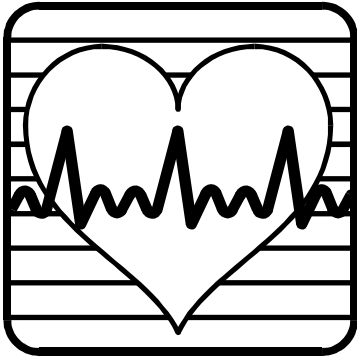
You've probably heard of some of the better known plans that have used exchanges over the years. Weight Watchers® was based upon food exchanges until 1997. Richard Simmons' Deal-A-Meal® system from the 1980's used exchanges. Joanna Lund's Healthy Exchanges® and a Christian program called First Place® are others you may have heard of. All of these plans are similar to the exchange lists that were produced by The American Diabetes Association and The American Dietetic Association.

The *Frugal Abundance Exchange Plan* itself is far from extraordinary. It's based on 8 individual food groups or categories, including:

- Grain/Starch
- Meat/Protein
- Vegetables
- Fruits
- Milk
- Fat
- Other Carbohydrates
- Free Exchanges

Menu plans allow for a specific number of servings from each food group. Within each category you may trade or exchange one portion of food for another. The foods in each category are measured into units with similar nutritional values. For instance a 1-ounce slice of bread can be exchanged or traded for 1/2-cup of cooked macaroni or 3/4-cup of cold cereal. Each food, in the measurement indicated on the list, will provide approximately the same number of calories, fat, protein and carbohydrates as other foods in that category. This makes menu planning both flexible and easy.





Shortcut To Healthy Diet

By following our exchange plan you can easily and automatically control the amount of calories, protein, carbohydrates and fat you eat every day.

I have high cholesterol, high triglycerides and a heart murmur. It runs in my family. In order to keep my heart healthy I must be very careful of cholesterol and saturated fats. Since I knew this was important, I once tried a low calorie diet that had me keeping written track of calories, total fat, cholesterol and saturated fat all at the same time. I can honestly say it was one of the most difficult things I ever tried to do. I couldn't even keep it up for an entire week before I fell off the wagon and again, felt like a failure because I couldn't keep track of everything I was supposed to. Later, when I went back to my trusty exchange plan, I realized that simply by following my chosen food plan, I was gaining control over all the numbers that were causing me so much grief. The simplicity of this effort had me kicking myself for ever trying anything more complicated.

Meal planning becomes a lot easier with the exchange plan too. I don't have to worry if I'm providing a balanced diet for myself or my family. If I've eaten all of the exchanges in my plan by the end of the day, then I can go to sleep confident in the knowledge that I've eaten right. When planning breakfast, lunch or dinner, I simply have a look at my food plan and plug the foods I want into the exchanges.

For instance, let's suppose I'm on the 1400 calorie *Basic Balanced Diet* food plan and I want a fruit smoothie for breakfast. I have 3-

fruit exchanges for the entire day. I know I want an apple with lunch, so that leaves 2 fruit exchanges for my smoothie. I look down at the exchange list and see that 1/2 a banana and 1-cup of strawberries each equal 1-fruit exchange. I look at the milk exchanges and see that 3/4-cup of nonfat yogurt equals 1-milk exchange. So I put the banana, strawberries, yogurt and a few ice cubes into my blender and blend it smooth. Voila! Breakfast is served. I've used 2 of my fruit exchanges and 1 of my milk exchanges. I know I have 1-fruit exchange left for the day and 2-milk exchanges left for the day. I haven't used any of my grain, protein, fat or free exchanges yet.

After breakfast I'm packing lunch. I know I want an apple and that will use up my last fruit exchange for the day. I decide on soup, a sandwich and salad to go with the apple.



Since time is sensitive, I decide to use a canned soup. When I look over the exchange lists I see that several varieties of canned, condensed soup can be counted as an Other Carbohydrate. Condensed soup is fast, cheap and easy, so I choose tomato soup, mix it and heat it on the stove. Then I preheat a small thermos with hot water from the sink, and pack the hot soup inside. I will only be using about half of the soup I prepared, so the remainder can go into the fridge to be saved for tomorrow's lunch.

Next, I make my sandwich from 2-slices of reduced calorie bread. This equals 1-grain exchange. I top it with 1-ounce of lean turkey lunch meat, 1-ounce of fat-free Swiss cheese and a little yellow mustard. I add a handful of lettuce or sprouts to the sandwich. The lunch meat and fat-free cheese add up to 2-protein exchanges.

The lettuce or sprouts is about 1/2-cup, which is half of a vegetable exchange. The mustard is free.

Next I build my salad, starting with 1-1/2 cups of lettuce. Mentally I add this to the 1/2-cup of lettuce used on my sandwich and I have 2-cups of raw leafy greens, which equals 2-vegetable exchanges. I want more than lettuce in my salad though, so I add 1/2-cup of chopped green pepper, 1/4-cup of shredded carrot and 1-small Roma tomato, about 1/4-cup chopped. This gives me 2-more vegetable exchanges for a total of 4. It's only lunch and I've already gotten in my 4-servings of vegetables for the day.

On the Frugal Abundance *Basic Balanced Diet* you can eat as many vegetables as you like. Even though my 4-vegetable servings have been used up for the day, I can still have more for dinner and snacks if I like.

Back to our packed lunch. We've got soup, a sandwich, apple and salad. We need salad dressing. On the Fat exchange list I see that 2-tablespoons of reduced fat salad dressing equals 1-fat exchange. I like reduced fat Caesar, so I pack 2-tablespoons in a small container and stuff it in my lunch pack. Breakfast and lunch are done, so I'm good to go until dinner.

I need a snack in the afternoon so I drink a cup of skim milk and nibble on 3-graham cracker squares spread with 1-tablespoon of sugar-free jam or jelly. This uses up 1-milk exchange, 1-grain exchange and 1-free exchange.

Later, while I'm preparing dinner I'm hungry and have trouble wanting to nibble while I cook. To beat the need to nibble I get out a couple of stalks of celery and munch on them instead. Celery counts towards the vegetable exchange, which I can have in unlimited amounts.

I look over my food plan and see that I have 2-grains, 2-protein, 1-milk, 2-fats and 2-free exchanges left for the day. For dinner I decide on chicken stir-fry with vegetables served over

brown rice. At the table I measure 2/3-cup cooked brown rice onto my plate. Then I weigh 2-ounces of cooked chicken and scoop on at least 1-cup of vegetables. One of my fat exchanges was used up by the oil in which the chicken and vegetables were fried.

Since this probably isn't enough food to keep me full until bed time I add some more vegetables. In this case I choose a large salad made with fresh spinach and canned beets. I only have 1-fat exchange left and I want to save it for my midnight snack. So I look over the list of free exchanges and see that I can use 2-tablespoons

of fat-free Italian dressing. I use this to dress my salad. Dinner winds up using 2-protein exchanges, 2-grain exchanges, 1-fat exchange and 4 vegetable exchanges. Plus the celery from prep-time and that's 5 vegetable exchanges total for dinner.

For my midnight snack I've saved 1-milk exchange and 1-fat exchange. I decide to indulge in 6-ounces of fruit flavored, sugar-free yogurt and top it with 1-tablespoon of sunflower seeds. Delicious! All of meals were filling, budget-friendly and nutritious.

This example day was based on the 1400 calorie *Basic Balanced Diet* food plan. It used

the following exchanges:

- 4 Protein
- 4 Starch/Grain
- 9 Vegetable
- 3 Fruit
- 3 Milk
- 3 Fat
- 1 Other Carbohydrate
- 2 Free Exchanges, leaving 1 unused

As you can see, the menu planning requires some thinking on your part, but it's not rocket science, or even algebra. Meals get eaten whether we plan or not. The exchange lists give



us a head-start on planning. It reminds us to limit certain foods in which we may normally overindulge like fats and sugary snacks. Then it helps us remember to add extra servings of foods which we may normally overlook such as vegetables and fruits.



Affordable

Any diet, no matter how well tested, no matter how effective, no matter how many doctors, dietitians, or health experts endorse it, is ultimately useless if we cannot afford to follow it. It doesn't matter if celebrity fitness gurus sing and dance to it's virtues in hour long infomercials night after night—any plan that costs too much, that snatches much needed resources away from the rest of the family, is worthless.

To be effective a diet must be affordable to start in the first place. Then it must be affordable to stay on indefinitely. Too many weight-loss programs are designed to make money off of the pain of desperate people who are sick and tired and dearly in need of help. Some programs make it seem like their plan is affordable at first, but then the costs of foods, materials, meetings and maintenance fees add up to big bucks.

If you're like me, you may have been guilty once or twice of equating the cost of a specific plan with it's value and effectiveness. For instance, if a plan costs me \$169, I might think that if I'm willing to pay that much for it, it's proof that I must really be serious about losing weight this time around. I may also think the effectiveness or value of the plan is equal to it's price. With this reasoning an expensive plan seems more valuable and effective than an inexpensive or free plan. Surely a plan that costs

more must have secret information that makes it worthy of it's high price. It's implied that this type of secret information will finally make it effortless to lose weight and live a healthy lifestyle.

Following this logic, free and low cost plans seem pretty worthless, because if the information was really beneficial, then the author or publisher would make consumers pay to obtain the information for themselves. The reasoning goes like this. The more valuable the information, the more highly prized it is. The more prized it is, then the more it costs the consumer, and the more we are willing to pay for it. Since it's so much better than any of the other information out there, it costs us more to obtain it. We understand it's value, because we understand it's cost.

By this reasoning, if we don't have to work to obtain the information, then it must be inferior. If the information is too easy to access, then it must not be beneficial. Americans are especially susceptible to this type of faulty logic because of our consumer driven society. It seems logical that information must be more valuable if it's harder to access and we have to pay more money to obtain it.

This is defective reasoning. The real value of anything, especially weight-management programs, is the value we assign it ourselves. We declare its value by learning more about it and applying it to our lives. The more time and attention we invest, the more valuable it is to us. Money doesn't give our weight-loss program value. Our willingness to use it and our dedication to following it does.



Don't feel bad if you've fallen for the false promises of faulty logic. I've been tricked more than once and many, many other consumers have too. Luckily, those of us who keep a tight budget usually overcome this type of faulty thinking early in life. Once you've tried more than a few popular diets, you start to realize that "*celebrity weight-loss secrets*", or "*new scientific breakthroughs in the field of nutrition*" are usually more hype than help.

A diet isn't more valuable or more effective because it's used by our favorite celebrity or endorsed by the latest popular health expert. These are all methods of marketing a weight-management or fitness program to make us want to buy it. Convincing us, as consumers, that we can look like the beautiful people on television, that we can lead a glamorous lifestyle similar to theirs, if we use their product, is a bunch of baloney.

Advertisers make big bucks because they have the psychological insight to manipulate us without our knowledge. Advertisements make all sorts of implied promises to us that in the end, are outright lies. They do this because if they can make us believe their product or program has enough value, then they can convince us to buy it. They get our cash. We get the false promises and another dent in our self-esteem because we couldn't even make this *new and improved sure-bet* diet plan work for us. If the plan cost a lot to begin with, then it just adds to our shame because we wasted valuable resources too. Advertisers and marketers play on our hope and our shame. They manipulate us into forking over our hard-earned cash so they can profit from our discomfort and desperation. They imply that if we take their pills or buy their merchandise that we won't really have to change anything. We'll use their product or join their club or buy their expensive foods or follow their book and the fat will magically melt off. This is a false promise. No diet plan works unless we do the work ourselves.

One of the newest and most insidious marketing strategies for diet plans and health foods is centered around pride and implied social status. Some plans suggest that their programs are more enlightened or forward thinking than others. They require expensive specialty foods pur-

chased from specialty markets. To use some of these diets you must purchase extremely expensive foods from the internet. Some of the buzz words are raw, sea-salt, grain-fed, GMO-free, grain-free, traditionally grown or processed, gluten-free, allergy-free, free-range, organic, small-batch, ancient, and super-foods. This marketing technique is one that I have fallen for myself. It's extremely subtle and extremely effective.



Not all of these products or principles are bad in and of themselves. Certainly if you have allergies, then you'll want to avoid the foods which cause the allergic reaction. The problem is, that as a group these foods appeal to the pride that some of us feel for eating a certain type of enlightened diet. It puts us above the commoners and their plebeian swill. It appeals to our desire to give our families the best as proof that we love them. It gives us social status and self-worth because of the superior standard of living we achieve through their purchase and use. It proves we are socially enlightened and health conscious.

At the supermarket we can look at our cart and feel superior when we mentally compare it to the other carts we see filled with junk food. For some of us this type of implied social status and social awareness can be just as tempting as the false promises of pills, shakes, celebrity fitness gurus and celebrity endorsements.

That doesn't mean we have to avoid all of these foods. It doesn't mean we can't shop at health food stores or natural food co-ops. It *does* mean we have to examine our motives, manage our resources responsibly and see if we are reaching for false promises or implied status

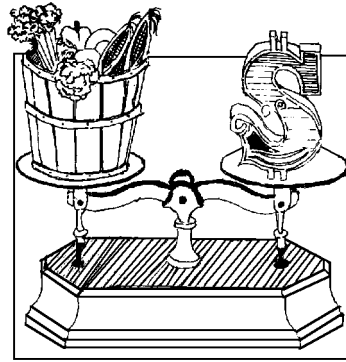
with the food choices we make. If we're compromising the family's budget in order to buy these types of status products, then we may need to reassess our choices.

The cold, hard reality of living on a budget is that there are some products we simply cannot afford. That doesn't mean that we are bad. It doesn't mean our families are unworthy. It simply means that we have arranged our values in a way that makes the best of limited resources.



You've probably seen something similar to this example. Popcorn, in a high-end, artistically minimalist package, that is labeled "*Ancient Grain Traditionally Processed In Small-Batches! Lightly Seasoned with Sea Salt! Gluten-Free!*" It's priced about 15-times higher than the cost of simply popping the corn ourselves. Our home popped popcorn is also an ancient grain, traditionally processed in a small batch and is naturally gluten-free. Our packaging is a large mixing bowl. We can sprinkle ours with sea-salt or keep it low-sodium, as we like. Not as glamorous, but just as nourishing.

I would argue that by preparing our own popcorn, instead of falling for the hype on the package, we are practicing fiscal responsibility. This is clearly an expression of deep affection for our families, for their long term health and welfare. We are displaying our love for them and our desire for their well being and our own by actively choosing to live within our means instead of filling our carts with exotic foods that have become symbols of pride and our desired social status.



In real life value doesn't come from without. It comes from within. Value doesn't come from super foods, fitness shakes, nutrition bars, expensive equipment or the implied social status of specialty foods or enlightened eating plans. Value and worth come from inside ourselves. Other people, products and programs cannot give it to us. We grant it of our own freewill. To me, balancing my budget while providing a healthy affordable diet for my family and myself, supplies more value and more self-worth than any specialty food or diet plan could ever promise.

We assign value to our car, our home, our families and our health by the number of resources we allocate to these items. When we're on a very tight budget certain resources, such as cash, are severely limited. We can't throw cash at a problem to fix it, so we have to use other resources instead. We use free resources such as creativity, time and attention. Thus we show our children we love them, not by spending money on them, but by spending time with them. We may not be able to buy them the latest high-tech gadget, but we *can* play with them, talk to them, and even more importantly, *listen* to what they have to say. They will feel how much we value them because of the time, energy and attention we give them.

We show how much we value our home or our car by keeping it clean and in good repair. We show how much we value social issues by volunteering our time towards their support. We show the value we assign our health by taking the time to learn about what type of lifestyle changes will improve and encourage our good health.

Good health is one of those values we teach our children through our behavior. We teach them not to lie by being truthful with them and with others. We teach them not to swear by choosing not to swear ourselves. We teach them to read and pray by allowing them to see us reading and praying. We teach them to value their own health by showing them how much we value healthy lifestyle choices. These include exercising regularly, getting enough sleep, eating more fruits and vegetables, drinking plenty of water, participating in a religious tradition¹, and avoiding fast food and processed foods.



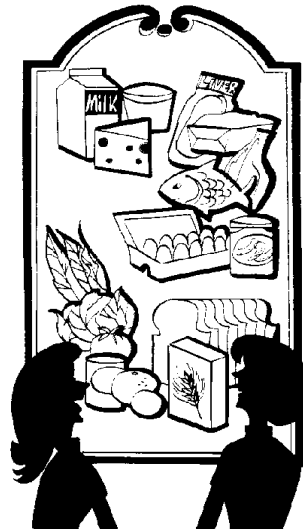
The *Frugal Abundance Exchange Plan* is free. You can download the entire plan for free, from my website, FrugalAbundance.com.

This plan is free because the people who need this type of information the most are those who usually can't afford to buy it. It's free because it's so valuable that it would be a shame to keep it under wraps and deprive others from using it due to financial limitations. Do not equate it's cost with it's benefits or effectiveness.

Not only is the diet plan affordable to procure, but following the plan is cost-effective too. On the exchange lists you'll see regular, everyday foods, the type that your family already likes and enjoys. There are no scary shocks during meal time unless you want there to be. You can serve normal dishes such as homemade tacos, chili, burgers, oven-fried chicken, pasta and even tuna casserole. If you feel like something new then you can shock the family with weird

vegetables like kohlrabi, bok choy or jicama. You don't have to though. You can stick to familiar family favorites such as green beans, carrots and broccoli.

As a matter of fact, since sticking to the *Frugal Abundance Exchange Plan* is easier if you cook your meals at home. You may even find that your cost of food actually goes down. Giving up fast foods means you'll feel better. The family will be eating better and your monthly food costs will decrease. How's that for affordability?



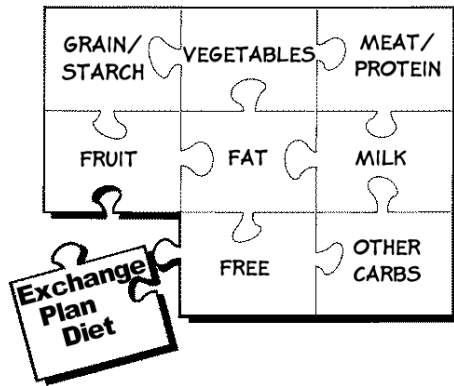
How Do I Start?

First choose a *Food Plan*. You will find the Food Plans at the end of this document. Each food plan provides several menus, each at a different calorie level. Menus denote the number of exchanges we should eat from each food group to stay within a specific calorie range. It's up to us to plug the exchanges into meals and snacks for the day.

It's like putting a puzzle together. Each day is a new puzzle and it's up to us to fit all of the pieces or exchanges together to make 3 meals a day, plus snacks. Managing our daily food intake becomes much easier when we know our limits and are willing to stay within them. By counting exchanges, we eliminate the need to count calories, carbohydrates, protein and fat grams. A good food plan is a short cut to an affordable well balanced, healthy diet.

1 Deem, Rich. "Scientific Studies that Show a Positive Effect of Religion on Health." 2006. Evidence For God. Accessed 15 Dec. 2012. <<http://www.godandscience.org/apologetics/religionhealth.html>>

Remember too, that if you try one food plan and it doesn't work for you, then you can try another one, or tweak your own plan, until it's just right for your lifestyle.



Choosing The Best Plan For YOU!

This document provides four types of Food Plans, the *Basic Balanced Diet*, the *High Carbohydrate Plan*, the *High Protein Plan* and a new bonus category, the *Dairy-Free Plan*. Within each type of food plan there are various menus with differing calorie levels.

Basic Balanced Diet

Sample 1600 Calorie Food Plan

- 5 Protein Exchanges
- 5 Grain/Starch Exchanges
- 5 or more Vegetable Exchanges
- 4 Fruit Exchanges
- 3 Milk Exchanges
- 3 Fat Exchanges
- 3 Free Exchanges
- 1 Other Carbohydrate Exchange

This is a personal favorite. I designed this plan to provide a balance between starches, protein and vegetables. Vegetables aren't as easy for me to eat as protein and starches. On this plan, for every starch and protein exchange I eat, I know I have to eat a vegetable exchange too, to balance it out.

I'm not sure why, but this type of "bargain" seems to work for the way I think about food. For instance, if I have a sandwich for lunch that uses 2 grain/starch exchanges and 2 meat/protein exchanges then I know I need to add 2 vegetable exchanges to balance out my menu. As I explain it, I admit that it seems a little silly, but for reasons I don't even pretend to understand, I have found that this method works for me. And that's the bottom line for all of us, we have to use what works.

Another thing I like about this plan is that it's easy to remember. In our hectic modern world using fewer brain cells can be a significant benefit.

This plan provides a moderate balance of protein and carbohydrates while emphasizing fruits, vegetables and low-fat dairy products. There's enough variety to keep it from becoming dull. I find that on this plan I can serve the same foods to the whole family. I weigh and measure my portions as necessary, while the rest of the family simply indulges in the healthy food provided at the table. The prospect of having to cook separate portions for myself is a daunting one. So I really appreciated that we can all eat the same things.

If you're not sure where to start, this is the one for you.

High Carbohydrate Food Plan

Sample 1600 Calorie Food Plan

- 6 Grain/Starch Exchanges
- 4 Protein Exchanges
- 4 or more Vegetable Exchanges
- 4 Fruit Exchanges
- 3 Milk Exchanges
- 3 Fat Exchanges
- 3 Free Exchanges
- 1 Other Carbohydrate Exchange

With its focus on fruits, vegetables, and complex carbohydrates, this plan is perfect for vegetarians and vegans. Omnivores who are trying to eat more whole grains, dried beans, fruits and veggies will find it useful too.

Several years after creating it, I discovered that the 1600 calorie version of this plan follows the DASH diet quite closely. DASH stands for Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension. It was designed by the US National Institutes of Health to reduce blood pressure by changing the way people eat. It turned out to be very successful. Since its inception, the DASH diet has also been shown to lower cholesterol, reduce the risk of heart disease, stroke, some cancers, kidney stones and diabetes. It's recommended by the American Heart Association, the National Heart Lung & Blood Institute, The Mayo Clinic and the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans put out by the USDA. It recommends two levels of sodium, 2,300mg or even better—1,500 mg of sodium per day, less than 150 mg of cholesterol, and very little saturated fat. It encourages the use of lean fish, poultry, dried beans, whole grains, fruits, vegetables, nonfat dairy and small portions of nuts. It's been so successful that *US New & World Reports* has repeatedly awarded it the title of *Best Overall Diet*. It won over several more familiar diets such as Weight Watchers® and Biggest Loser®. For more information about the DASH diet, you may visit the NHLBI at <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/index.htm>.

If you want a plan that has research to prove its value, then the DASH diet may be the one that's best for you. If you are following the official DASH diet, you'll find the 1600 calorie menu of the Frugal Abundance *High Carbohydrate Food Plan* compatible with your diet.

Please note, the official DASH diet does not allow for Other Carbohydrates. You may omit this exchange if it doesn't fit your desired plan.

High Protein Food Plan

Sample 1600 Calorie Food Plan

- 2 Grain/Starch Exchanges
- 10 Protein Exchanges
- 4 or more Vegetable Exchanges

- 3 Fruit Exchanges
- 3 Milk Exchanges
- 3 Fat Exchanges
- 4 Free Exchanges
- 1 Other Carbohydrate Exchange

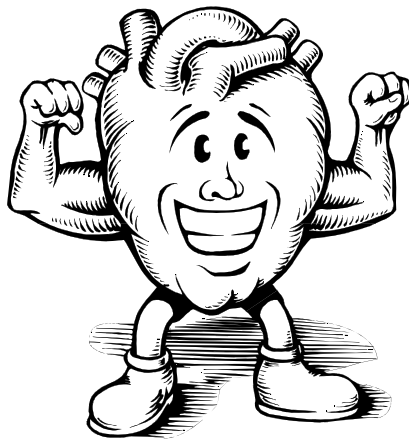
This plan emphasizes protein consumption by providing more protein exchanges than the other food plans.

If you prefer to eat a grain-free diet, then this is the plan for you. For your carbohydrate exchanges choose starchy vegetables such as peas or sweet potatoes. For your other carbohydrate exchange use a tablespoon of honey to sweeten your foods or beverages throughout the day. This fits easily with popular Paleo, Primal and Caveman diets. You don't have to worry if you're getting enough nutrients. All you have to do is choose your calorie level and plan your meals to fit your Food Plan.

If you often suffer from hunger on a low calorie diet, then you may find this plan will help diminish your hunger between meals. Some people may prefer to begin with this plan and then move on to a different one when their appetite is under better control.

On this plan it's important not to over indulge in red meats which are usually higher in cholesterol than poultry and fish. Be careful not to overdo processed meats either, which are loaded with sodium. Choose wisely to make the best of your options and remember to take a daily vitamin.

The *High Protein Food Plan* isn't an extremely low-carb or Atkins-style diet. Moderate portions of carbohydrates such as grains, starchy vegetables, dairy and fruit are included in each calorie level of this plan. I understand that some people feel they do best on an extremely low-carb diet, but after much consideration I realized that I do not have the knowledge or expertise to provide this type of food plan for my readers.



The *High Protein Food Plan* is the best compromise I am able to supply.

Dairy-Free Food Plan

Sample 1600 Calorie Food Plan

- 6 Grain/Starch Exchanges
- 6 Protein Exchanges
- 6 Fat Exchanges
- 6 Vegetable Exchanges
- 4 Fruit Exchanges
- 4 Free Exchanges
- 1 Other Carbohydrate Exchange

Somewhat similar to the *Frugal Abundance Basic Balanced Diet*, the dairy-free plan does not include any milk exchanges. It does include additional fat exchanges to accommodate the fat found in many non-dairy products such as dairy-free milk, tofu and vegan cheese alternatives. These are not saturated fats for the most part, which means that even though there is a little more fat in this plan, there is no more cholesterol.

When I began my weight-loss program last year, I followed the *Basic Balanced Diet Food Plan*. I don't consume dairy though, so I was counting soymilk as my milk exchanges. As time went by I realized that I preferred the flexibility of counting soymilk as 1 Protein exchange and 1/2 Fat exchange, and then omitting the dairy category completely. For me this makes it easier to adapt the plan to fit my and my family's dietary needs. It takes a little extra forethought to make sure we get enough calcium and Vitamin D, but that is something I'm already accustomed to doing.

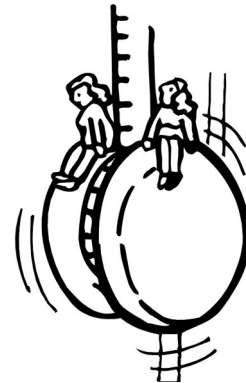
If you and your family do eat dairy, then this is probably not the best choice for you. If you don't eat dairy though, this plan may provide you with further options. In the Exchange Lists you'll find a special bonus section of Non-Dairy products including many popular dairy-free milks and cheese alternatives.



Choosing Your Calorie Level

In order to lose weight we must consume fewer calories than we expend. This is why low calorie diets continue to work while fad diets fall by the wayside. It's a proven fact that if you eat fewer calories than you use, your weight will decrease. *Frugal Abundance Food Plans* make it easy to maintain a specific calorie level. All we have to do is plug our food choices into our exchanges, and voila! Calories are counted automatically.

Usually when I start a weight-loss plan I'm feeling pretty gung-ho. I want to start with the lowest number of calories so that I can quickly begin to see results. I want my clothes to fit better and I want to see the numbers on the scale go down for once, instead of steadily creeping up, no matter what I do. It's tempting to jump in at 1000 calories a day, relying on determination and will power to see me through the discomfort of eating so few calories a day.



The only problem is that when I eat so few calories a day, I get hungry. Ravenously hungry.

My hunger becomes a predatory beast lurking in the kitchen jungle, looking for easy prey. This kind of extreme hunger makes me vulnerable to binging on whatever I can find just to make the hunger go away. I've learned that I am not able to suffer stoically through hunger that lasts all day. Some people may be able to do this. I cannot. For me it leads to yo-yo dieting, which isn't good for anyone.

Feeling hungry for an hour before lunch time rolls around, or while preparing dinner, is normal, appropriate hunger. Constantly feeling hungry throughout the day because I'm not getting enough calories is inappropriate hunger. Inappropriate hunger makes me vulnerable to binging. I don't want to binge because when I do, it means my good sense has checked-out and my mindless, insane compulsion to eat is in charge. This is a recipe for disaster. I need enough food to avoid feeling hungry throughout the day. Feeling hollow, or even empty, is fine. Feeling ravenous should be avoided.

I recommend choosing a calorie level that does not leave you feeling hungry all day. Determining that level is tricky and you may need to do some trial and error to determine which calorie level is best for you at this point in your weight-loss journey. If you have a lot of weight to lose, your calorie level will change over time, as you lose weight. When your body is smaller you need fewer calories. As you lose weight you will need to reduce your calorie level to continue losing weight. At the beginning of your diet you may lose weight on a 1600 calorie diet. As your body shrinks you may find you need to reduce your calories to 1400, and eventually 1200 in order to continue losing.

As a general rule, if you are female and have 75 or more pounds to lose, you can probably start with a 1600 calorie diet. If you have between 35 and 50 pounds to lose, you may find that the 1400 calorie menus work better for you.

Those with between 15 and 35 pounds to lose will probably be happy with the 1200 calorie menus. If you have less than 10 pounds to lose then the 1000 calorie menus may work best. Weight-loss is an individual process. What works for one person doesn't always work for another. It's up to you to figure out what works best for you and your body. I can offer guidelines, but only you know how your body reacts and performs under different circumstances. You

have to determine which calorie level is best for you. If you're having trouble choosing a food plan then consult your health care professional.

Another option is to choose a Food Plan and menu level you can live with for the long term and simply make it your own. In this case I recommend 1400 or 1600 calories because these are the most nutritionally sound for long term use. You don't change calorie levels, you simply stick to your favorite plan and then remain on it until you reach your goal weight. At that point you can

reevaluate.

With this strategy you will lose weight quickly at first, and then more slowly, until eventually your weight will even out to the weight you will be for the rest of your life. There are no surprises, there is no switching things around. There is simply eating, keeping track of your exchanges and getting on with your life.

I personally like the simplicity and effectiveness of this approach. It's the method I've chosen for my weight-loss. While my weight-loss has slowed down as my body has become smaller, the weight-loss is still steady and reliable. The eating is easier too, because I've gotten used to the process over time.

On a low calorie food plan it may seem challenging to get enough nutrients into one's daily diet. With practice you'll get the hang of it, but it's still important to stay in touch with your health care provider. If you have any chronic conditions, or pre-existing health problems, it's vital that you go through this process with the



supervision of your health care team. Don't take chances with your health. It's not worth it.

No matter which plan you choose, I recommend a daily vitamin, such as Flintstones or an inexpensive store-brand version of your favorite. This will help to fill in any nutritional nooks or crannies that may need attention.



Drink Enough Water

Most of us do not drink enough water, which can lead to overeating. Sometimes our bodies will tell us we're hungry, when we're actually thirsty. Wires get crossed in our brains and we interpret thirst as hunger. Sometimes we'll crave salty foods when we're thirsty because our bodies know that if we eat salty foods then we'll get thirsty and grab a beverage. This leads to eating when what we really need is a tall, frosty glass of ice water.

Sometimes I crave fruit when I'm thirsty. I'll walk by the fruit bowl and the oranges or grapefruit start to look extra luscious because I'm thirsty and fruit is high in water content. The best way to combat this urge to eat is to make sure we get plenty of water. Most experts suggest that we sip on water throughout the day.

Many of us probably sip on soda, coffee or tea throughout the day without even thinking about it. Water is a better choice for our finances because it's much cheaper. It's better for our bodies too because there

are no calories, caffeine, artificial sweeteners or other junk in water.

I drink ordinary, cheap tap water. At my house we keep a large jug of water in the refrigerator. I have trained myself and my family to drink water when we are thirsty instead of other, more expensive beverages. Actually we keep two jugs in the fridge. When one is empty, the second one is there, cold and ready to use. The empty one gets filled up and has time to chill before it's needed.

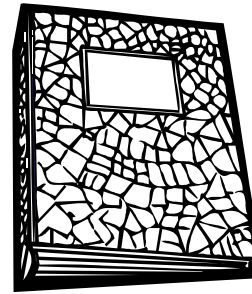
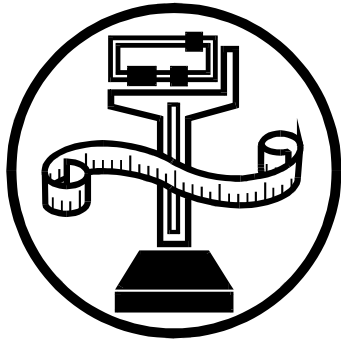
If your water doesn't taste good to you then you can try chilling it, which is surprisingly effective. A lot of people are resistant to this simple act. You have to find an empty pitcher or wash a juice-jug. Then you have to stand at the sink while it fills with water. Then you have to affix the lid and place it in the refrigerator. It doesn't take much work. Plus it's practical and far more economical than any other beverage we could drink.

If you still can't abide tap water, then you can buy a water filter. There are pitchers and counter top models that widely available. These aren't cheap, but they cost less than soda pop and bottled water. Filtered water takes time to prepare because the water has to work its way through the filtration process. To save time you can make it a habit to fill the container before you go to bed, when you're cleaning the kitchen.

It used to be that experts suggested everyone drink at least 2-quarts (8-cups) of water a day. Now the suggestion is that we drink 1/2 an ounce of water for each pound of body weight. That means that if you weigh 200-pounds that you need 100-ounces of water a day, or about 12-1/2 cups.



If you find yourself snacking throughout the day, then the problem could be that you're not getting enough water to drink. Fill up your glass or water bottle and keep it handy as you do your daily activities. Bring it in the car, to work, when you go out with friends, and drink it frequently. It's a practical and affordable way to improve your diet and control your appetite.

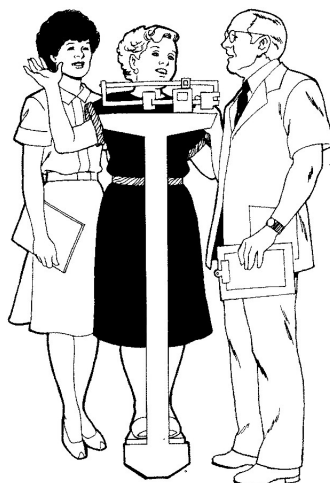


Necessary Tools

Every worker needs adequate tools. Imagine trying to vacuum the carpet without a vacuum cleaner. You wouldn't get very far before giving up in frustration. How about a carpenter. How far could she go without a hammer and saw? Or a preacher without a Bible? How could he nurture his flock without the main tool of his trade? The truth is he couldn't. In fact, no one can do their job properly if they don't have the correct tools.

Losing weight is like this. We require certain tools to enable us to follow our chosen plan. Tools which we cannot do without. Luckily, most of us already have most of the tools we need and any that we must buy can be purchased inexpensively.

First off you need a printer and paper to print out the exchange lists. Next you need measuring tools. A small food-scale, measuring cups and spoons will keep your portions honest. A clean, organized kitchen makes it easier and faster to prepare your meals. You'll also need pencil and paper or a notebook to plan and keep track of your daily food intake. A bathroom scale or measuring tape helps you chart your progress. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, you need a support system so that isolation and frustration cannot conquer all of your good intentions. All of these tools are vitally important to the success of any weight-loss program.



Paperwork

The *Frugal Abundance Exchange Lists* appear in the next section of this document. They are similar, but not identical, to those used by diabetics, dietitians and physicians. They are safe and easy to use. I recommend you print them out, punch holes in the sides and place them in a binder or folder (the kind with brads). Read them over completely. When you're done, read them again. After living with the exchange lists for a little while, they become almost intuitive. Until then, keep reading them so you are thoroughly familiarized with the concept. They are your map to successful weight loss.

If you use a 3-ring binder to hold your exchange lists, then you can also store your healthy recipes in the binder and make your own custom designed weight-management plan and cookbook.

Be certain to share the exchanges and food plans with your health care professional. Make sure to get the "go-ahead" before embarking on your journey. It will give you peace of mind, and prevent any mistakes that may not be best for your good health. I neglected to do this. Later, after discussing my plan with my nurse practitioner, I had to change several details to match her recommendations. This was inconvenient to say the least! It would have been better if I had spoken with her about my program before I began.



Measuring Tools

These make portion and calorie control possible. If we want an accurate calorie count, then it helps to weigh and measure our portions, so we can stick to our food plan. Overestimating portions can easily sabotage our weight-loss efforts.

I admit that measuring every morsel I eat is a pain in the neck. It's tedious and makes me feel resentful because other people don't have to weigh and measure their portions so why should we? Resentment builds, portions grow, and weight-loss is stalled. It stinks.

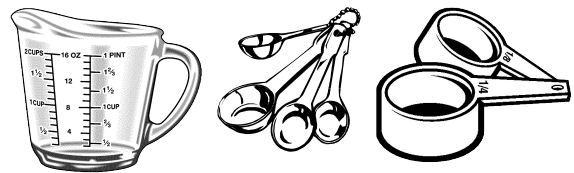
Being obese stinks more, I think. I'm not a perfect weigher or measurer. But I keep trying. I think one of the main things to do with any weight-loss program is to keep trying. I forgive myself, and I keep trying. I may not do it perfectly, but I keep trying. I let myself off the hook of expecting perfection, and I keep trying.

Ideally I would weigh and measure all of my food, all of the time. It really does improve the speed and regularity of my weight-loss. It tends to prevent plateaus too. So in all honesty I recommend you always weigh and measure. It's the right thing to do. At the same time I say that, I realize that in the real world this may not always be possible. In order for a plan to work for a lifetime we have to learn how to manage it in many different situations.

I make it a practice to weigh and measure my portions when I'm at home. Most of meals are eaten at home or packed and carried with me, so I can weigh and measure my food most of the time. When I'm out in public, or at a family function I do not weigh and measure. I have found though, that when I am consistent about weighing and measuring at home I train my eye

to recognize the size of a portion, so I am less likely to overestimate when I don't have my measuring tools available.

Sometimes I find myself rushed and stressed and I don't weigh and measure as faithfully as I would like. Rather than feel guilty about it, I grant myself some grace and forgiveness. When I realize that I am not taking the time to weigh and measure my foods, I stop then and there, take out my scale, and correct my behavior. I don't have to follow my plan perfectly. I just have to keep following it as best I'm able. This is easiest if I'm gentle with myself along the way.



I use four measuring tools:

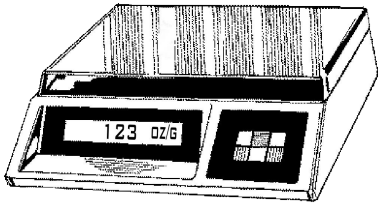
1. A glass measure with a spout for easy pouring
2. Nested measuring cups
3. Graduated measuring spoons
4. An office postage scale

For milk, water and other liquids, you need a glass measuring cup with a spouted lip for easy pouring. Don't be tempted to buy a cheap plastic one. Glass measures last longer, and hold up better to temperature changes. I like to have three of them: sizes 1-cup, 2-cups and 1-quart. If you only have one then a 2-cup size is good.

Measuring cups are usually metal or plastic. I prefer the metal ones. They come in standard groups of 1-cup, 1/2-cup, 1/3-cup, 1/4-cup and sometimes 1/8-cup. I also purchased a separate 2-cup measure because it's handy for measuring large amounts of flour or rice.

Measuring Spoons come in standard sizes of 1-tablespoon, 1-teaspoon, 1/2-teaspoon, 1/4-teaspoon and sometimes 1/8-teaspoon too. I find teaspoons and tablespoons to be very helpful when measuring oil and other fats, so I have a few extras. Small plastic cups used for measur-

ing liquid medicine such as Niquil® are convenient for measuring small amounts of liquid.



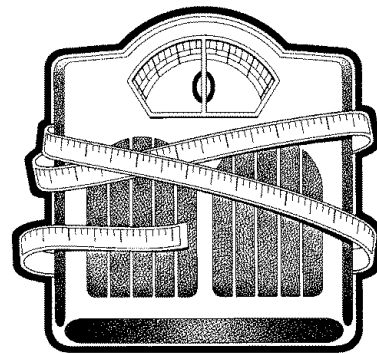
You will also need a food scale. There are lots of cheap plastic models available that simply don't work. Toss them out or sell them at your next yard sale and never buy another. You may be lucky enough to find a good, affordable food scale at your local superstore or department store. You need one that measures in both grams and ounces. If you can't find one in all the usual places then it's time for a trip to the office supply store. Once there go to the postal scale section and have a look around. There will be many digital scales all in a row. Look for one that measures in both ounces and grams. You will have several to choose from, so pick the cheapest, and march home with your purchase. Keep an extra battery on hand in the kitchen junk drawer and you're set.

To make cleanup easier I lay waxed paper or plastic wrap over my scale before measuring items like cooked meat or shredded cheese. My postal scale is such a joy to use too! It gives me accurate, readable results every time. If a \$20 investment helps loose 20 or pounds or more, I consider it well worth the cost. It also helps to get a good visual of what 3-ounces of meat or a 5-ounce potato really looks like. This helped me cut down a lot on overestimating my portions because it forces me to stay honest and on track.

The previous tools are all necessities. In addition I like to have small juice cups that hold a little more than 1/2-cup or 4-ounces, and larger glasses that hold a little more than 1-cup or 8-ounces. It's a lot easier to pour a cup of soymilk into a glass when I know that the glass I'm using holds the portion I need. Pouring 1/2-cup of orange juice into a giant glass makes me sad because it looks like so little. Pouring 1/2-cup of orange juice into a small juice cup makes me feel like I'm getting "enough." I'm a compulsive

overeater, so I have to be gentle with my need to see that my cup is full. A small cup tricks my mind into thinking that my measured portion is "enough."

After I had been following my plan for a few months I picked up a selection of smaller plates and bowls from the thrift store. Smaller dishes are recommended by a lot of weight-loss experts and I have to admit that they are a psychological boost to weight-loss. Smaller portions look bigger on smaller plates than they do on large plates. Restaurants use this strategy all the time. It's a visual trick, but it works.



Identifying Weight-Loss

Gauging weight loss can be done with a regular bathroom scale or by using dressmaker's measuring tape to record your body's measurements. Some authorities recommend only weighing in once a week, or even once a month. Other authorities suggest weighing daily, but go on to remind us that minor daily fluctuations should be expected, especially during menses. If visual evidence inspires you then you can create a graph to chart your progress. If you find that weight-loss is slow for you, it may help to only weigh yourself infrequently so that you don't become discouraged.

The scale is not the be-all-end-all of eating healthier. It doesn't measure our determination, or dedication. It's easy to give it too much power over your self-worth. If you're vulnerable to this type of thing, then do yourself a favor and weigh no more often than monthly. It's easier on your ego and can actually help your progress in the long run.

If you're too heavy to register on your bathroom scale (usually over 300 or 320lbs) you can visit your local doctor's office and weigh yourself there. They do not charge for this. It is free. Simply go up to the receptionist, tell her you're there to use their scale and then go weigh yourself. Limiting access to the scale may actually make it easier for you to follow your Food Plan because you won't be fretting over every normal fluctuation. Instead you'll just be seeing the steady progress that comes from improving your diet.

If you don't have a scale, don't want one, or can't afford to buy one that works, then you can use measuring tape instead. First determine which body parts you want to track. Popular places to measure are the upper arm, upper thigh, waist, hips, and bust. You can keep track of a single measurement or several at a time. Over time you'll see the measurements decreasing, which is a great motivator to keep doing what you're doing, because it works.



Providing Adequate Work Space

When you're on a tight budget you find yourself cooking and eating at home most of the time. When you're changing old, unhealthy, eating habits into new, health-giving, eating habits, and still watching the budget, you find yourself cooking and eating at home even more often.

The biggest sabotage to weight-loss and food economy is a dirty kitchen. I believe this so

firmly that I am willing to state categorically that if you are on a budget and you cannot keep your kitchen tidy, then you cannot lose weight. Trust me, I speak from experience.

We need clean kitchens in order to have the space we require to prepare and store our healthy food. A dirty kitchen makes it impossible to do any of the preparation work necessary for most healthy, budget-friendly cooking. A dirty refrigerator or dusty cabinets can actually contaminate the food we've worked so hard to buy. This wastes hard earned food dollars and makes it nearly impossible to maintain our chosen Food Plan.

Cleaning the kitchen every day gives us the work area necessary to cook and store our food. A clean refrigerator works like a magic box to preserve our healthy fruits and vegetables throughout the week until we are ready to eat them. Organized cupboards allow us to find our supplies quickly and easily. When we don't have to hunt in dark recesses of cave-like cupboards we save both time and effort, not to mention the cost of purchasing a duplicate of something we already own, but can't find.



Dirty dishes are probably the hardest for me, personally to keep up with. Some folks can magically make themselves wash as they go, so they never have a sink full of dirty dishes frowning at them from a cluttered kitchen. I am not one of these people. I struggle with the dishes. A lot. What I've noticed about myself is that when the dishes are dirty I am unlikely to cook. I'll find any excuse to get out of it. Instead of preparing good wholesome meals at home, I find myself running by a fast-food joint to pick up hap-

py-meals for the kids. While I'm there it's a small matter to choose something for myself too. Fast-food chains are doing better at offering healthy choices on their menus but I usually don't purchase them. The healthy options tend to be expensive and I never seem to have enough cash to buy enough food to fill the bellies of growing children plus an expensive, healthy alternative for me. I wind up buying myself something cheap and fattening.

The solution to the fast-food blues is to keep the dishes done. This gives me the environment I need to prepare healthy, low-cost meals for the family and myself, saving me money and improving our health in the process.



Making myself do the dishes is like making myself weigh and measure my food. I don't like doing it. It is inconvenient, time consuming, annoying and often seems pointless, especially when I'm already tired.

This is the type of thinking that I have to protect myself against. I don't have to listen to this stuff when it starts running through my head. When I find myself saying these things I try to replace them with a positive message instead.

For instance, when I tell myself that I don't have time to finish up the dishes before bed, I replace it with "Breakfast will be so easy to make in a clean kitchen." Then I do my best to do the dishes anyway. I don't always succeed. As with all the other parts of my program, I keep trying anyway. I make mistakes along the way,

but I keep trying. A few mistakes are not the end of my efforts. They're just a bump in the road, a reason to forgive myself and remind myself that I do not fail unless I give up completely.



In the short term, keeping the dishes done may seem like it takes more time, but in the long-run, it saves time and money. Sure, it's annoying to hang out in the kitchen at night, finishing up the dishes and putting away the pots and pans when I'd rather be reading in the warmth of a snuggly bed. To be honest though, it's more annoying to be fat and unable to tie my shoes or see my feet when I'm standing. It's more annoying to be unable to walk up stairs without pain. I remind myself of that when I scrape congealed goo off of the plates into the garbage.

When morning comes, I am always thankful for the time I spent on the kitchen the night before. If it's one of those mornings when I couldn't make myself do the dishes the night before, I sigh and grant myself a little grace. Then I run soapy water into the sink and lay my hand to the task in front of me. Better late than never, as the philosophers say.

To eat healthy meals, we must give ourselves a place to prepare them. Do this by keeping the dishes done, and the counters clean. Tidy up the cupboards and the fridge so you have clean storage areas for all the healthy food you bring home. Sticking to a healthy diet is hard enough. We have to stack the deck in our favor as much as we possibly can. A clean kitchen, refrigerator, stove and cupboards propels us one step closer to success.

Another obstacle I've found in my home is a cluttered table. At my house we have one dining table. It's in the kitchen and tends to be a catch-

all for various projects throughout the day. Cleaning it off before mealtimes is a royal pain in the neck. I need someplace to eat though. I need a place that is tidy, convenient and where the pets can't leap up on me and harass me or steal my food. I want a place to eat with my family so that we can talk to each other and look at each other and be a family together for mealtimes. I know for a fact that if we all camp out in front of the boob-tube, that ain't gonna happen.



Eating at the table has other benefits, it signals to me, to my brain, that my meal has a beginning, a middle and an end. When I eat in front of the TV or my computer I am disconnected from the act of eating. This makes it far too easy for me to overeat. If I eat in bed then I tend to snack mindlessly.

It's certainly convenient and warm there in the bed. Plus there are no witnesses to the quantity of snacks I stuff down my throat, so the privacy is nice too. If I want to remain fat for the rest of my life that works out just fine. Except I don't want to be fat for the rest of my life. I don't want a shortened lifespan because of my unhealthy habits. I want to have a strong, "normal" sized body that doesn't hurt. When I'm standing I want to look down and be able to see my own feet. I want to be able to fit into a chair that has arms on the sides. I want to be able to buy clothes in the regular clothing department instead of trudging to the smaller area of less attractive, more expensive, plus-size clothing. I want to be able to afford the really abundant and cute clothing at thrift stores that always seem a size smaller than my body.

The fact is, I want this badly enough to pay attention to what I'm eating. For me, that means

eating at the table, even when cleaning off the clutter *again*, seems frustratingly redundant. It also means keeping up with dishes, especially when I don't want to.



Write it All Down

Keeping track of your daily food intake is a fundamental part of this diet. Like weighing and measuring, it's not an easy habit to form, but it makes all the difference in achieving our weight-loss goals. It's one more way we can stack the deck in our favor.

It, too, is a pain in the neck filled with tedium and drudgery. I take a deep breath and do my best to do it anyway. I don't do it perfectly, but I keep trying. If I miss a day (or a month) of recording my meals then I forgive myself and gently nudge myself to start fresh today, with this meal, whether I've weighed and measured my portions or not. It's still worth doing.

I use an old personal planner from the 1990's for my record keeping. I cut standard paper in half, punch holes in the right places and then stuff them in the planner. It folds up nicely and easily fits in my purse. This is my favorite way to keep records, but any type of notebook will work.



Some people only write down what they eat, as they eat it. Other people pre-plan what they

are going to eat for the next day, or the next week. Then they still write down everything they eat during the day, because our plans and reality don't always coincide perfectly. This is the method I recommend. Plan what you're going to eat on one page, and then on the next page, write down what you actually do eat. It gives me the advantage of planning in advance. And also the accountability of being honest about what I actually do eat.

Writing down everything we eat, even licking the spoon after making a PB&J for a wandering child, is one of the best way to stick with our food plan. Not only does it give us daily accountability, but it's especially helpful when we reach plateaus. It allows us to go back and look at our eating patterns so that we can plan strategies to overcome our challenges. Omitting foods or lying on our record only hurts our efforts. Do yourself a favor and vow from the beginning to tell the truth at least in the privacy of your own records. It really pays off in the long run.

Some people are with me up until this point. The wisdom of doing the dishes and measuring portions may seem obvious and doable. But there is something about writing down what we eat that just strikes some of us as a no-go.

To some folks keeping track of every morsel they eat may even seem unnecessary. This is absolutely true for anyone who is able to manage their weight on their own. If you can make yourself eat less and control your weight automatically, then keeping track of everything you eat is indeed unnecessary for you.



Most of can't do it this way. If we could have succeeded just by watching what we eat and

consciously trying to eat less then we would have done so already. We wouldn't be struggling with our weight now.



If I *knew* that I would lose 20 pounds simply by writing down what I ate every day, then I would be much more willing to do it. Well guess what! Keeping written records of everything we eat doesn't *automatically* eliminate 20 pounds, but when combined with the rest of the program, the weight really does come off!

Personally, I rebelled against the idea of keeping track of my food intake for more than a decade. I wasn't yet ready to take responsibility for all the food I was really eating. If I didn't write down what I was eating, then I didn't have to admit how much I was eating. And let me tell you, it was a lot more than I thought it was.

Now I know better, but back then I sincerely believed that writing down everything I ate would give me less control over my life. I thought it was obsessive, militant and plain old stupid. I believed that I was strong enough to succeed without having to resort to such drastic measures.

In my mind writing down everything I ate was something that only hopeless cases would have to resort to. I didn't see myself as a hopeless case, so I refused to write down what I ate and continued to gain weight until I was officially morbidly obese. Right about then it occurred to me that I might be one of those hopeless cases, and if I wanted to turn my life around, I might need to step outside of my very narrow comfort zone to do it.

When I remember that time in my life I have a lot of compassion for the woman I was. I was in a dark, discouraged place. I was drowning in a heavy case of denial. I was hurting so much, all the time, both emotionally and physically. I wasn't ready to accept the reality of my situation. The truth is that I was a morbidly obese, compulsive overeater, with a lot of health problems. If I kept going the way I was, I would continue to suffer in that hopelessness for the rest of my life.

Eventually I hurt badly enough, for long enough, that I was willing to make sacrifices to my comfort zone. I became willing to take actions to change my situation. Each small action gave me a little more encouragement and a little more hope. Keeping track of what I eat is one of those actions.

I know now that if I'm not willing to write down what I eat, then it's very likely that I will remain a slave to my appetite for the rest of my life. I don't want to be trapped in a pain filled, obese body, slowly shutting down because I'm overburdened with fat. I don't want to be stuck in hopeless circumstances.

So, I breathe deeply. I gird my loins, and I take action. I write down what I eat, even the smallest morsels. I do it because if I don't do it, then nothing will change. And the truth is, I had gotten so big that change was imperative. The change had to happen not just in the food I ate, but in the way I lived. For me, that has to include keeping track of my food intake.

I like the way I feel now that I'm lighter. I have a choice now, about whether I live my life trapped in an obese body or not. Having that choice is incredibly empowering and filled with hope. I write down what I eat as an act of hope, an act of gratitude because I do have a choice and I don't have to remain trapped in my sickness forever.



Support System

A Support System is the last requirement. Of all of the suggestions, it's the most necessary, the most vital. This will take different shapes for different people. Formal groups are available like TOPS, First Place, Celebrate Recovery (CR) and Overeater's Anonymous (OA). These are all good support systems. Some are free (such as CR and OA) and some are not. Some of them will make you follow their diet plans and others will let you choose your own plan. Choose the plan that is best for your lifestyle and pocket-book. This may or may not be the *Frugal Abundance Exchange Plan*. That's okay. The bottom line is that you have to do what works best for you.

On-line support communities are another option. I believe it's best if you have both real-life and cyber support systems. They can work together synergistically to give you the benefits of both approaches. I have tried managing my weight with only on-line support. This wasn't enough for me and it isn't enough for many of the people who have written to me. Experience teaches us that real-life, face to face support, whether a formal meeting or an informal pact between friends or spouses can make the difference between success or failure.

A lot of obese people overeat for complex reasons. I eat to numb my feelings. When I feel overwhelmed, when I feel like my kids, my husband, the world, is ganging up on me, I overeat to comfort myself. It's a short term fix that makes me feel better for a few minutes, or a few hours. It helps me ignore uncomfortable feelings

and make it through the moment. In the long run this type of behavior is self destructive. It doesn't help me develop coping skills for dealing with my feelings. It's a way of turning my anger inwards instead of feeling and processing it when I experience it.

I have had a lot of trouble sticking to diets in the past, not because of the food plan, but because of my inability to simply manage my thoughts, feelings and reactions to the complicated process of living. I needed a support group to work through these issues, so they don't get in the way of my food plan. If you've been overweight for any length of time then you probably have some baggage of your own that needs to be unpacked and sorted out. I have found that it's nearly impossible to do this alone. A support group, good friends and religious faith help enormously. If you've tried dieting many times in the past and repeatedly failed to meet your goals, then it's very likely that there are underlying issues that need to be addressed. Support groups help get to the root of the problem so we can work through it and get on with the business of living.

Another issue support groups can help us with is encouragement. One of the biggest obstacles in any weight-loss program is becoming discouraged. When we have other people available to cheer us along it's easier to stick to our program. We keep each other motivated and share encouragement. We reduce our sense of isolation and give each other hope, a vital part of any weight-loss plan.



The Finish Line

Exchange based weight-loss plans, such as the one here, have some definite advantages over other diets. First off, they're affordable. A food plan can be as cheap or as expensive as we are willing to make it. An ounce of grain-fed, free-range, organic filet mignon and an ounce of supermarket ground beef will use up the same number of protein exchanges, but one costs 10 times more than the other. It's up to us which foods we buy and which ones we eat. In the middle of winter broccoli and hot house asparagus will both fit into our vegetable exchanges. One (broccoli) will help our budget stretch to cover all our needs, the other (asparagus) will take us one step closer to the poor house. We have complete control over which foods we choose and how much we spend on our healthy lifestyle.

Especially in these wickedly inflationary times, few of us can afford to try every new diet that captures the public's eye. Most of us can't afford to join expensive weight-loss groups or buy the exotic foods associated with other programs. It's hard enough to buy regular food, much less specialty products that are hard to prepare, don't taste good, rot in the refrigerator and don't keep you full past meal time. This doesn't mean we're stuck. It doesn't mean we have to settle for less than we deserve.

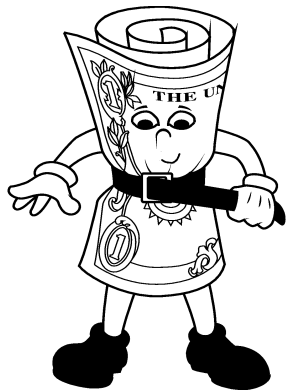
With the *Frugal Abundance Exchange Plan* it's possible to develop and maintain a healthy diet and lose weight on even the tightest of budgets. It's not as easy as popping a shelf-stable

prepared diet meal into the microwave or picking up take-out from the local deli. Doing the work ourselves takes effort, but most anything worthwhile does.

An advantage of this effort is that while you are following your chosen food plan, you are developing the skills you will need to maintain your weight-loss for a lifetime. You will learn to plan healthy, family friendly, budget-wise meals that meet your nutritional needs and your family's taste preferences. You will learn to prepare the meals you need to reach your goals and then you will be able to maintain your goals by using the same techniques you used to arrive at them.

When the weight-loss phase is over we can flow smoothly into the maintenance phase. The change over occurs naturally, as an outgrowth of the healthy habits we have already established.

A lot of the suggestions in this document are hard to do. They seem inconvenient at first glance, and they take time out of my already hectic life. It seems hard to believe that they are worth all the extra effort.



At the beginning of this document I said that we designate the value of our weight-loss plan through the time, attention and dedication we assign to it. Planning meals, doing my dishes, weighing and measuring my food, keeping track of what I eat, these are the evidence of the value I give to my diet, to my new healthy lifestyle.

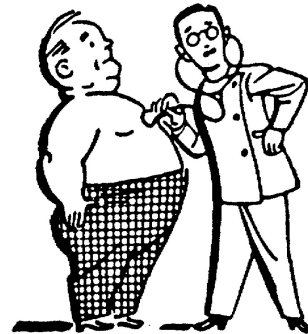
More money won't accomplish any of these tasks for me, unless it's paying a maid to clean my kitchen, a cook to prepare my meals, and a dietitian to design them. That's not something that most of us can afford to do. Certainly it's not

something that someone on a tight budget can manage.

Instead of throwing my money at the problem, I take the time to plan my meals and write down what I eat. Instead of bemoaning my lack of time, I wash my dishes and clean my kitchen. Instead of longing for foods I can't afford (like ribeye steak and lobster) I weigh and measure the portions of food that I can afford.

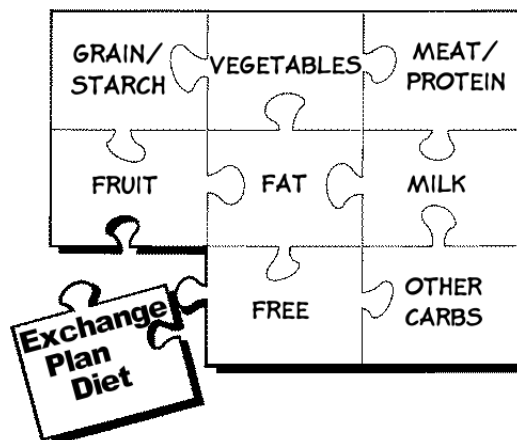
I want to continue losing weight. I want to feel stronger. I want to be able to buy all of the small sized, cute, fiscally responsible clothes at the thrift store. In order to do this I must accept the importance of all of the techniques described in this document.

Weight-loss is about behavior. It's about the many small choices we make every day. We can't buy the fat off of our bodies. If we could, then we would have; millions of us would have. Weight-loss is one of those fleeting things in modern culture that we cannot buy to prove our value. It's something we must create individually, by changing from the inside out. If we truly want it then we must earn it for ourselves.



Before beginning this or any weight-loss program you should consult your doctor or health care professional. I am a mom and a homemaker. I am not a professional. This document should not be construed as professional advice. Do what works best for you, and talk to your doctor about your choices.

Additionally please note that exercise is a vital part of any weight-loss program. The purpose of this document is not to explore the benefits and advantages of moderate, daily exercise. Please see our [main website](#) for more information on this subject.



Exchanges In A Nutshell

An exchange is the same thing as a portion. Within a food group one portion of an item may be traded or exchanged for one portion of another item. For instance, 1-slice of bread may be exchanged for 1/3-cup cooked rice. They each have similar calories and nutrients. When we use the exchange plan we are able to create healthy meals that are low in calories but still include all the nutrients we need to keep up with our busy lifestyles. It also reminds us to include a variety of nutrient dense fruits, vegetables, whole grains and low fat dairy in our daily meals.

THE GRAIN OR STARCH GROUP Generally 1 serving is equal to:

- 1-ounce of bread
- 1/2 cup cooked cereal or pasta
- 3/4 cup cold cereal
- 1/3 cup cooked rice

Some bread products are prepared with added fat. Muffins, biscuits and waffles are prime examples. Since these items have a higher fat content than most Grain Exchanges, the fat is made up for with a fat exchange. This means that a muffin is worth 1 Grain Exchange plus 1 Fat Exchange. The extra fat exchange accommodates the extra amount of fat in these foods.

Starchy vegetables are included in the Grain Group because their carbohydrates are very similar to Grain items. Mixed vegetables, corn, peas, baked beans and potatoes are all members of the Grain group.

THE PROTEIN GROUP Generally 1 serving is equal to:

- 1 ounce cooked lean meat, poultry or fish
- 1/4 cup canned tuna or salmon
- 1 ounce light cheese (+ 1/2 fat exchange)
- 1 tablespoon nut butter (+ 1 fat exchange)

Some protein exchanges are higher in fat than others. These high fat items “cost” 1/2 to 1 Fat exchange in addition to a Protein exchange. Some protein foods, such as dried beans, are also high in carbohydrates. 1/2 cup of cooked dried beans, peas or lentils equals 1 Grain/Starch exchange and 1/2 a Protein exchange.

THE MILK GROUP Generally 1 serving is equal to:

- 1 cup skim milk or 1% fat milk or plain soymilk
- 1/3 cup instant nonfat dry milk
- 3/4 cup nonfat yogurt, plain or artificially sweetened

If you are lactose intolerant you may substitute soymilk for dairy milk. Be sure to read the label. A serving should have less than 100 calories and 12g of carbohydrates.

THE VEGETABLE GROUP Generally 1 serving is equal to:

- 1 cup raw leafy green vegetables like lettuce or spinach
- 1/2 cup of most other vegetables, raw or cooked
- 1/2 cup vegetable juice

Be sure to eat plenty of vegetables while trying to lose weight, more is better. Vegetables fill us up without filling us out.

THE FRUIT GROUP Generally 1 serving is equal to:

- 1 medium fruit like an apple or orange
- 2 very small fruit like plums or tangerines
- 1/2 cup canned unsweetened fruit
- 1/2 cup fruit juice
- 1/2 a banana
- 1 cup berries or melon

Look over the Fruit exchanges to note any exceptions to this rule of thumb. Some juices are limited to 1/3-cup instead of 1/2-cup. Dried fruits vary.

THE FAT GROUP Generally 1 serving is equal to:

- 1 teaspoon vegetable oil or butter or margarine or lard or mayonnaise or animal fat
- 1 tablespoon reduced fat margarine or reduced fat mayonnaise
- 1 tablespoon commercial salad dressing
- 2 tablespoons commercial light salad dressing

Use fats with discretion. They are concentrated sources of calories. Reduced fat products can help extend your fat servings to cover more territory.

FREE EXCHANGES

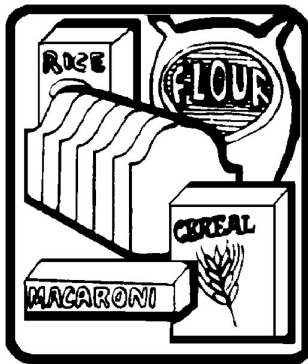
These add variety to our diet. Because they are so low in calories and carbohydrates they do not need to be added to our daily totals. Measured Free exchanges should be limited to 2 or 3 a day. Unmeasured Free exchanges may be consumed as desired.

OTHER CARBOHYDRATES

This group is made up mostly of alcohol and sugary or starchy foods. They add needed variety to our menus. If your chosen plan does not have an included Other Carbohydrate exchange, then each serving from this group must be used to replace a serving from the Grain/Starch Group. Because of this it's recommended that servings from this group be limited to 1 per day or less. If you are on a limited carbohydrate diet, these are the exchanges that you should omit first.



Dietary Exchange Lists



Grain/Starch Group

Foods in this group supply:

- 15g carbohydrate
- 3g protein
- up to 1g fat
- 80 calories

Some starchy vegetables such as potatoes and corn are in this group instead of the vegetable group. I was very rebellious about this idea to begin with, but I have come to accept it as a necessary part of following the exchange plan. As often as possible choose whole grain versions of the foods in this group.

1 Grain/Starch Exchange

Breads

- 1-ounce slice bread, any type
- 1-ounce roll, any type
- 3 tablespoons bread crumbs
- 1/2 an English Muffin
- 1-ounce pita bread, 6-inches
- 2 slices reduced calorie bread
- 1 reduced calorie hot dog or hamburger bun
- 1 medium flour tortilla
- 2 small corn tortillas
- 1 reduced fat frozen waffle
- 1/2 a (2-ounce) pita bread

Cereals

- 3/4 cup of most unsweetened cold cereals
- 1/2 cup of most cooked hot cereals
- 1-1/2 cups puffed cereal like puffed rice or puffed wheat
- 3/4 cup cornflakes

- 3 tablespoons Grape-Nuts
- 1/2 cup cooked oatmeal
- 1/4 cup dry oatmeal
- 2 tablespoons steel cut oats
- 1/2 cup cooked grits
- 2-1/2 tablespoons dry girts
- 2 tablespoons Cream of Wheat or Cream of Rice or Farina
- 2 1/2 tablespoons dry cornmeal
- 1/2 cup cooked cornmeal
- 1 large shredded wheat biscuit
- 1/2-cup bite-sized shredded wheat
- 1/2 cup bran flakes
- 1/2 cup raw wheat bran
- 3 tablespoons wheat germ
- 1/4 cup oat bran

Grains & Pasta

- 3 tablespoons flour, any type: all-purpose, unbleached, whole wheat, barley, spelt, buckwheat, self-rising, rye, or bread flour
- 3 tablespoons rice flour
- 1/3 cup cooked white or brown rice
- 2 tablespoons uncooked rice
- 3 tablespoons uncooked instant or minute rice, white or brown
- 1/2 cup cooked wild rice
- 1/2 cup cooked whole wheat or cracked wheat or bulgur
- 2 tablespoons dry amaranth
- 1/3 cup cooked amaranth
- 1/3 cup cooked barley
- 1-1/2 tablespoons dry barley
- 2 tablespoons dry kamut
- 1/3 cup cooked kamut
- 1-1/2 tablespoons dry millet
- 1/4 cup cooked millet

- 2 tablespoons dry teff
- 1/3 cup cooked teff
- 2 tablespoons sorghum (grain)
- 6-tablespoons cooked couscous
- 1 ounce uncooked pasta, any type
- 1/2 cup cooked macaroni
- 1/4 cup dry macaroni
- 1/2 cup cooked egg noodles
- 1/3 cup dry egg noodles
- 1/2 cup cooked spaghetti
- 1 ounce (dry) lasagna noodle, 1 average noodle

Starchy Vegetables

- 1/2 cup mashed potatoes
- 4 ounces raw potato
- 1/2 cup sweet potato (no added sugar)
- 1/3 cup canned sweet potato packed in syrup, drained
- 3 ounces raw sweet potato
- 1/2 cup cooked corn
- 1/2 a fresh, large corn on the cob, or a small frozen one, about 6-inches long
- 1/2 cup creamed corn
- 1/2 cup peas
- 1/2 cup Lima beans
- 1 cup classic mixed vegetables (corn, peas, green beans & carrots)
- 1/3 cup baked beans, canned or home-made
- 1 cup winter squash (acorn squash, pumpkin, butternut etc.)

Snacks

- 8 animal crackers
- 3 cups plain, air-popped popcorn
- 3 square graham crackers
- 3 gingersnaps

- 1 ounce angel food cake
- 6 saltines or soda-crackers
- 3/4 ounce baked tortilla or potato chips
- 3/4 ounce pretzels
- 3/4 ounce hard, crisp bread sticks
- 24 oyster crackers
- 2 thin crisp breads (Wasa or RyCrisp)
- 2 rice cakes, any flavor
- 1 cup low-fat croûtons
- 10 reduced fat Wheat Thins®
- 5 reduced fat Triscuits®
- 3/4 ounce matzo

1 Grain/Starch Exchange and 1/2 Fat Exchange

- 1 reduced fat crescent roll
- 1 low fat granola bar
- 1/2 cup low-fat ice cream, any flavor (about 100 calories)
- 1 gluten free frozen waffle (such as Van's)

1 Grain/Starch Exchange and 1 Fat Exchange

- 2-1/2 inch biscuit
- 1/2 cup chow mein noodles
- 2-ounces prepared cornbread
- 6 round butter type crackers
- 1 cup regular croûtons
- 3 ounces French Fries
- 1/4 cup granola
- 1 average muffin (not giant)
- 2 pancakes, 4-inches each
- 3 cups microwave popcorn
- 1/3 cup prepared stuffing
- 1 regular frozen waffle
- 2 hard (crisp) taco shells

- 1 ounce thin wheat crackers
- 1 ounce most gluten free rice or multi-grain crackers
- 1/3 cup hummus
- 1/2 cup light ice cream

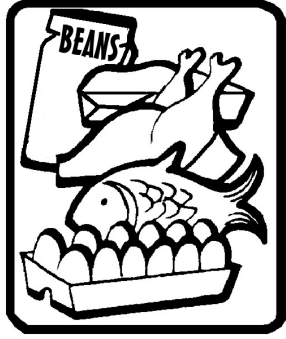
1-1/2 Grain/Starch Exchanges

- 1-1/2 ounce hamburger or hot dog buns. Most store-brands are about this weight.
- Small English Muffins, about 22g Carbohydrates and 120 calories
- Small Bagel, about 22g Carbohydrates and 120 calories
- 1 packet instant grits, any flavor
- 1 packet plain instant oatmeal
- 1 packet low-sugar flavored instant oatmeal

1 Grain/Starch Exchange and 1/2 Protein exchange

- 2/3 cup cooked Lima beans
- 1/2 cup cooked dried beans
- 1/2 cup cooked split peas
- 1/2 cup cooked lentils
- 1 ounce dry beans, peas or lentils
- 2 tablespoons dry quinoa
- 6 tablespoons cooked quinoa (slightly heaping 1/3-cup)





Protein Group

Each food within this group contains:

- Less than 55 calories
- At least 7g protein
- Up to 3g fat.

These are referred to as lean meats. Meats with a higher fat content will “cost” a protein exchange plus an additional 1/2 to 1 fat exchange. This helps us limit saturated fat.

1 Protein Exchange

Egg, Dairy & Vegetarian

- 2 tablespoons grated Parmesan Cheese
- 2 ounces fat-free cream cheese
- 2 egg whites
- 1/4 cup egg substitute
- 4 ounces low fat tofu
- 1/2-ounce dry Textured Vegetable Protein
- 1 ounce vegetarian burger or fake meat, any kind
- 1 ounce fat-free cheese
- 1/2 ounce Protein Powder Shake Mix, sugar free, plain or flavored
- 1 ounce prepared seitan or wheat meat
- 10 grams vital wheat gluten flour (for preparing your own seitan)

Fish & Seafood

- 1 ounce cooked white fish such as flounder, whiting, sole, cod, tilapia, halibut, ocean perch, pollack etc.
- 1 ounce canned fish such as salmon or tuna
- 1 ounces cooked or canned clams, packed in water
- 1 ounce cooked shrimp, crab, oysters etc.

Poultry

- 1 ounce cooked chicken or turkey, white or dark meat
- 1 ounce cooked ground turkey
- 1 ounce lean cooked turkey breakfast sausage
- 1 ounce smoked turkey sausage
- 1 ounce cooked chicken livers

Beef, Pork & Other Meats

- 1 ounce cooked, drained and rinsed ground beef, regular or lean
- 1 ounce cooked lean beef, all visible fat removed (from the round)
- 1 ounce cooked extra-lean ground beef, 10% fat or less
- 1 ounce cooked or canned ham
- 1 ounce cooked lean pork, all visible fat removed
- 1 ounce cooked lean lamb, all visible fat removed
- 1 ounce cooked liver, heart or kidneys

Processed Meats

- 1-1/2 ounces low-fat deli meat: ham, beef, chicken, turkey, etc.
- 1-1/2 ounces fat-free hot dogs
- 1 ounce reduced-fat canned luncheon meat such as SPAM® or Treet®
- 1 ounce Canadian Bacon

- 1 ounce reduced-fat smoked sausage

1 Protein Exchange and 1/2 Fat Exchange

- 1 ounce lean corned beef, all visible fat removed
- 1 ounce canned corned beef
- 1 ounce lean ground beef, 15% fat, ground round

Egg & Dairy

- 4 ounces tofu; 1/2 cup
- 1 whole egg
- 1/4 cup part skim ricotta cheese
- 1 ounce part skim mozzarella cheese, 1/4 cup shredded
- 1 ounce reduced fat or 2% hard cheese, 1/4 cup shredded
- 1 ounce feta cheese
- 1 cup unsweetened soymilk (may be counted as 1 Milk Exchange if preferred)

1 Protein Exchange and 1 Fat Exchange

- 2 ounces lean turkey bacon
- 1 ounce hot dog, 3g fat per ounce
- 1 ounce chicken or turkey bologna, 1 slice
- 1 ounce hard cheese, or 1/4 cup shredded: Cheddar, Swiss, American, Provolone etc.
- 1 tablespoon peanut butter
- 1 tablespoon Tahini
- 1 tablespoon any nut butter: Almond, Cashew, Soy Nut, no sugar added
- 1 ounce cooked, drained and rinsed pork sausage
- 1 ounce Neufchatel Cheese
- 3 tablespoons miso

1 Protein Exchange and 1/2 Grain Exchange

- 1-1/2 ounces Tempeh
- 1-1/2 ounces cooked Soybeans
- 1/4 cup cooked Soybeans
- 3 tablespoons Soy Flour, defatted

1/2 Protein Exchange and 1 Grain Exchange

- 2/3 cup cooked Lima beans
- 1/2 cup cooked dried beans
- 1/2 cup cooked split peas
- 1/2 cup cooked lentils
- 1 ounce dry beans, peas or lentils
- 2 tablespoons dry quinoa
- 6 tablespoons cooked quinoa (slightly heaping 1/3-cup)



Milk Group

Foods in this group supply:

- 90 calories
- 12g carbohydrate
- 8g protein
- Less than 3g fat per listed serving.

1 Milk Exchange

- 1 cup fresh skim milk
- 1 cup fresh 1% low-fat milk

- 1/3 cup instant non-fat dry milk powder
- 1 cup reconstituted skim milk
- 1/4 cup buttermilk powder
- 1/2 cup evaporated skim milk
- 3/4 cup plain non-fat yogurt, homemade or store-bought
- 1 cup nonfat buttermilk
- 1 cup plain soymilk
- 1 cup unsweetened soymilk (see note at bottom of section)
- 1 cup light soymilk

Other Milk Products

- 3/4 cup artificially sweetened yogurt (6oz)
- 1 sugar-free dairy shake like Alba (not slim-fast)
- 2 packets sugar-free, low-calorie hot chocolate mix, (1 packet is 1/2 a Milk Exchange)

1 Milk Exchange and 2 Fat Exchanges

- 1 cup fresh whole milk
- 1 cup reconstituted whole milk
- 1/3 cup instant powdered whole milk
- 1 cup whole buttermilk
- 1 cup whole milk yogurt
- 1/2 cup evaporated whole milk

NOTE: Plain unsweetened soymilk may also be counted as 1 Protein Exchange and 1/2 Fat Exchange if preferred. See the Bonus Non-Dairy section for more non-dairy choices.



Vegetable Group

Foods in this group supply:

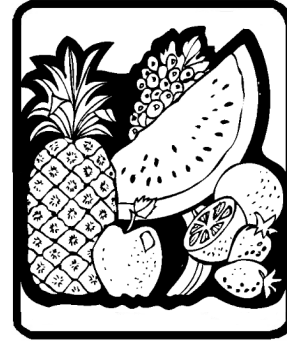
- 25 calories
- 2g protein
- 5g of carbohydrates.

Be sure to eat at least 4 servings of vegetables everyday. The measurements apply to cooked, raw, canned or frozen vegetables, unless otherwise stated.

1 Vegetable Exchange

- 1/2 cup cooked artichokes
- 1/2 cup asparagus
- 1/2 cup bamboo shoots
- 1/2 cup green beans
- 1 cup fresh bean sprouts
- 1/2 cup beets
- 1 cup raw bok choy
- 1/2 cup broccoli
- 1/2 cup Brussels sprouts
- 1 cup raw shredded cabbage, any type
- 1/2 cup cooked cabbage
- 1/2 cup carrots
- 1/2 cup cauliflower
- 1 cup celery
- 1 cup sliced cucumbers
- 1/2 cup cooked eggplant

- 1/2 cup chopped green onions or scallions
- 1/2 cup cooked greens: collards, kale, turnip, beet greens, etc.
- 1 cup raw greens
- 1/2 cup cooked mushrooms
- 1 cup raw mushrooms
- 1/2 cup okra
- 1/2 cup chopped onions
- 1/2 cup pea pods
- 1/2 cup peppers: green, yellow, red or chile
- 1 cup radishes
- 1 cup raw salad greens or lettuce
- 1 cup Bag-O-Salad
- 1/2 cup rutabaga
- 1/3 cup salsa (fat-free & sugar-free)
- 1/2 cup sauerkraut
- 1/2 cup cooked spinach
- 1 cup raw spinach
- 1/4-cup sugar-free spaghetti sauce
- 1/2 cup summer squash
- 1 medium tomato
- 1/2 cup chopped tomatoes, fresh or canned
- 1 ounce or 1-1/2 tablespoons tomato paste
- 1/4 cup tomato sauce
- 1/2 cup tomato juice
- 1/2 cup turnips
- 1/2 cup mixed vegetable juice
- 1/2 cup water chestnuts
- 1/2 cup zucchini



Fruit Group

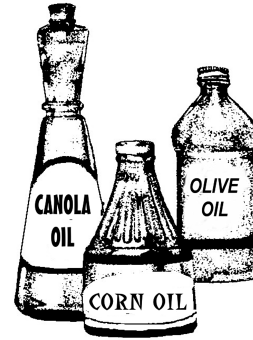
Foods in this group supply:

- 15g carbohydrate
- 60 calories

1 Fruit Exchange

- 1 small apple
- 1/2 cup apple juice
- 1/2 cup unsweetened applesauce
- 4 fresh apricots
- 8 dried apricot halves
- 1/2 a large banana, or 1 small banana
- 3/4 cup blackberries
- 3/4 cup blueberries
- 1/3 cantaloupe, or 1-cup cubed
- 12 sweet cherries
- 1/2 cup sour cherries
- 1/3 cup canned low-sugar pie filling
- 1/2 cup canned sugar-free pie filling
- 1 cup artificially sweetened cranberry juice
- 2 tablespoons dried, sweetened cranberries (Craisins)
- 3 dates
- 1-1/2 figs
- 1/2 cup canned fruit cocktail packed in fruit juice or water
- 1/3 cup mixed 100% fruit juice

- 1/3 cup grape juice, white or purple
- 1/2 a grapefruit
- 1/2 cup grapefruit juice
- 3/4 cup canned grapefruit pieces packed in water or fruit juice
- 17 grapes or 1/2 cup
- 1 cup cubed honeydew melon
- 1 large kiwi fruit or 2 small ones
- 3/4 cup canned mandarin oranges packed in fruit juice or water
- 1/2 cup canned mandarin oranges packed in light syrup
- 1/2 mango
- 1 nectarine
- 1 medium orange
- 1/2 cup orange juice
- 1 peach
- 1/2 cup canned peaches packed in fruit juice or water
- 1/2 a large pear
- 1/2 cup canned pears packed in fruit juice or water
- 3/4 cup fresh pineapple
- 1/2 cup canned pineapple, packed in fruit juice or water
- 1/2 cup pineapple juice
- 2 small plums
- 1/2 a whole pomegranate
- 2/3 cup fresh pomegranate seeds/berries
- 1/3 cup pomegranate juice
- 3 prunes
- 2 tablespoons raisins
- 1 cup raspberries
- 1-1/4 cup whole strawberries
- 1 cup sliced strawberries
- 2 small tangerines
- 1-1/4 cups cubed watermelon



Fat Group

Foods in this group supply:

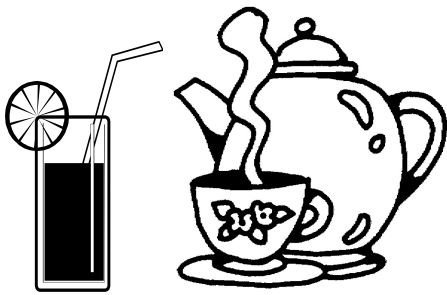
- 5g fat
- 45 calories

By choosing reduced fat versions of common items like butter and mayonnaise, you can stretch out your fats to cover more territory.

1 Fat Exchange

- 1/6 of an avocado, 1.3-ounces
- 1 teaspoon bacon grease
- 1 slice bacon
- 1 teaspoon butter
- 2 teaspoons whipped butter
- 1 tablespoon light butter
- 2 tablespoons shredded coconut
- 1 tablespoon cream cheese
- 1 tablespoon heavy cream
- 2 tablespoons half & half
- 1 teaspoon lard
- 1 teaspoon margarine
- 1 tablespoon reduced fat margarine
- 1-1/2 teaspoons 65% vegetable oil but-
tery spread
- 1 teaspoon regular mayonnaise
- 1 tablespoon reduced fat mayonnaise
- 1 teaspoon vegetable oil, any type
- 2 teaspoons peanut butter or other nut
butter

- 2 teaspoons tahini or other seed butter
- 1 tablespoon commercial salad dressing
- 2 tablespoons commercial reduced fat salad dressing
- 1 teaspoon shortening
- 2 tablespoons sour cream
- 8 to 10 large green or black olives
- 1 tablespoon chopped nuts such as walnuts, pecans, cashews, pine nuts, or peanuts
- 1 tablespoon seeds such as sunflower or sesame
- 4 whole almonds
- 15 pistachios



Free Exchanges

Free foods supply:

- less than 20 calories
- less than 5g carbohydrates each.

You don't have to add these items towards your other exchanges. If a food has a specified serving size, limit yourself to 3 or 4 of these total, spread throughout the day. This doesn't mean you can eat 3 servings of sugar-free jelly *and* 3 tablespoons of fat-free mayonnaise, *and* 3/4 cup of salsa. It does mean that you can have *one* serving of each of these items throughout the day. Combined, they would add up to 3 servings total. Foods without a serving size listed may be consumed as often as you like.

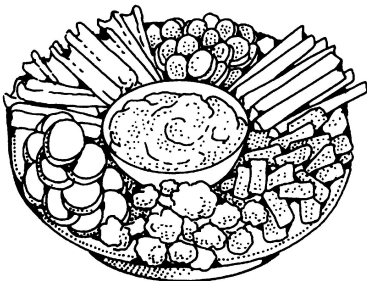
1 Free Exchange

- Artificial Low Calorie Sweeteners

- 1/2 cup unsweetened rhubarb
- 1/2 cup unsweetened cranberries
- 1 tablespoon fat-free cream cheese
- 2 teaspoons powdered coffee creamer
- 1 tablespoon fat-free mayonnaise
- Nonstick Cooking Spray
- 1 tablespoon fat-free salad dressing
- 2 tablespoons fat-free Italian dressing
- 2 tablespoons Walden Farms Salad Dressing (sugar-free & fat-free)
- 2 tablespoons Walden Farms Peanut Butter Spread (sugar-free & fat-free)
- 1/4 cup prepared salsa
- 1 tablespoon soy bacon bits
- 1 tablespoon nonfat sour cream
- 2 tablespoons light whipped topping
- 1 sugar-free hard candy
- 1/2-cup sugar-free fruit gelatin with 1-tablespoon fat free whipped topping
- unflavored gelatin
- 1 tablespoon sugar-free jelly or jam
- 2 tablespoons sugar-free pancake syrup
- 2 tablespoons sugar-free chocolate syrup
- bouillon cubes & broth powders
- 1 cup canned or carton fat-free broth
- 1-tablespoon unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1-tablespoon carob flour
- regular or decaffeinated coffee
- regular or decaffeinated tea
- herbal tea
- diet soda pop
- sugar-free powdered drink mixes such as Crystal Light®
- mustard
- 1 tablespoon honey mustard
- 1 tablespoon ketchup

- 2 tablespoons sugar-free ketchup
- 1 tablespoon barbecue sauce
- 2 tablespoons sugar-free BBQ sauce
- 1 tablespoon cocktail sauce
- 1 tablespoon chili sauce
- horseradish
- lemon juice
- lime juice
- mustard
- soy sauce, regular or low-sodium
- sugar-free teriyaki sauce
- hot sauce
- vinegar, all kinds
- garlic
- Worcestershire Sauce
- Herbs, dried or fresh
- Spices
- pimiento
- Flavorings
- Extracts
- sugar-free pickles
- Butter flavored sprinkles such as Butter Buds or Molly McButter
- 10 sprays refrigerated buttery spray such as *I Can't Believe It's Not Butter Spray*

All vegetables from the vegetable exchange group may be eaten in any quantity desired.



Other Carbohydrates

Each serving contains:

- 15g carbohydrate
- 3g protein
- 80 calories

The main purpose of this exchange group is to give your diet greater flexibility. Other carbohydrates are usually made up of sugar. Some *Frugal Abundance Food Plans* provide 1 Other Carbohydrate as a part of the daily plan. Some food plans do not. If your food plan doesn't provide extra Other Carbohydrate exchanges, then you must replace a Grain/Starch exchange with the Other Carbohydrate exchange. Other Carbohydrates are not as nutritious as Grain/Starch exchanges so it is best to limit them.

1 Other Carbohydrate Exchange

- 2 fat free devils food cookies (such as Snackwells®)
- 2 low fat vanilla crème sandwich cookies (such as Snackwells®)
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1 tablespoon honey
- 1 tablespoon molasses
- 1 tablespoon genuine maple syrup
- 1 tablespoon pancake syrup
- 2 tablespoons reduced calorie pancake syrup
- 1/3 cup sugar free pancake syrup
- 1 tablespoon brown sugar

- 2 tablespoons powdered sugar
- 1 tablespoon Sucanat or Rapadura
- 1 tablespoon granulated Fructose
- 1/3 cup sherbet or sorbet
- 1/2 cup sugar-free, fat-free ice cream
- 1/2 cup regular spaghetti sauce (from a jar or can)
- 1 cup sugar free canned spaghetti sauce, (40 calories or less per 1/2-cup.)
- 1/2 cup condensed tomato soup, 1-cup total when prepared with water
- 1/2 cup condensed reduced fat cream of something soup, 1-cup total when prepared with water
- 1/2 cup condensed alphabet vegetable soup, 1-cup total when prepared with water
- 1/2 cup condensed chicken noodle soup or chicken rice soup, 1-cup total when prepared with water
- 1 packet instant cup-a-soup
- 12 ounce light beer
- 1/2 cup (4 ounces) red or white wine
- 3 tablespoons (1-1/2 ounces) liquor such as rum, whiskey, gin or vodka

1/2 an Other Carbohydrate Exchange and 1/2 a Milk Exchange

- 1/2 cup sugar-free pudding prepared with skim milk, any flavor

1 Other Carbohydrate Exchange and 1/2 a Milk exchange

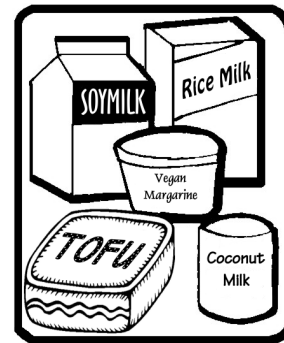
- 1/2 cup regular pudding prepared with skim milk, any flavor

1 Other Carbohydrate Exchange and 1/2 a Fat Exchange

- 1/2 cup low-fat ice cream, any flavor (about 100 calories)
- 2 shortbread cookies

1 Other Carbohydrate Exchange and 1 Fat Exchange

- 2 tablespoons semisweet chocolate chips
- 2 tablespoons butterscotch chips
- 2 tablespoons milk chocolate chips
- 3/4 ounce dark or milk chocolate
- 2 chocolate chip cookies, 2-1/4-inch diameter
- 2 crème filled sandwich cookies
- 2 fudge-striped shortbread cookies
- 5 vanilla wafers



Bonus Non-Dairy List

The dietary exchanges for these are variable. Dietary exchanges are listed after the food itself. This bonus list is included for those who do not consume dairy.

Non Dairy Milks

- 1 cup unsweetened soymilk = 1 Protein & 1/2 Fat
- 1 cup plain or vanilla soymilk = 1 Protein & 1/2 Other Carbohydrate
- 1 cup unsweetened almond milk = 1/2 Fat
- 1 cup original almond milk = 1/2 Fat & 1/2 Other Carbohydrate

- 1 cup vanilla almond milk = 1/2 Fat & 1 Other Carbohydrate
- 1 cup unsweetened rice milk = 1 Grain/Starch
- 1 cup original rice milk or vanilla rice milk = 1 Grain/Starch & 1/2 Other Carbohydrate
- 1 cup refrigerated carton unsweetened coconut milk beverage = 1 Fat
- 1 cup refrigerated carton original coconut milk beverage = 1 Fat & 1/2 Other Carbohydrate
- 1/3 cup light canned coconut milk = 1 Fat
- 2/3 cup light canned coconut milk = 1-1/2 Fat & 1/2 Fruit
- 1/2 cup canned coconut milk = 1/2 Fruit & 6 Fat (yup, 6)

Non Dairy Cheese

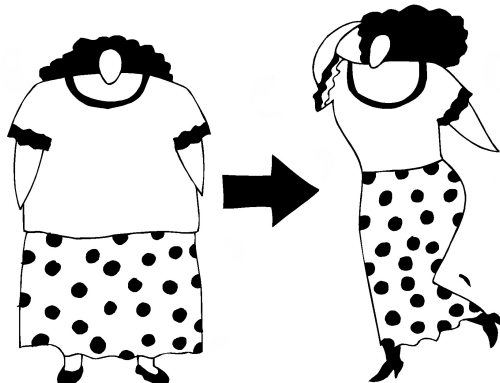
- 2 tablespoons Tofutti Better Than Sour Cream = 1 Fat & 1/2 Other Carbohydrate
- 2 tablespoons Tofutti Better Than Cream Cheese = 1 Fat & 1 Free Exchange
- 1/4 cup shredded Daiya Shredded Vegan Cheese = 1/2 Grain/Starch & 1 Fat
- 1 ounce Daiya Vegan Cheese = 1/2 Grain/Starch & 1 Fat

Non Dairy Spreads

- 1 Tablespoon Blue Bonnet Lactose Free = 1-1/2 Fat
- 1 tablespoon Fleischmann's Unsalted Stick = 2 Fat
- 1 Tablespoon Earth Balance Buttery Spread = 2-1/2 Fat (usually this is simplified to 3 Fat, but to be exact, it is 2-1/2)
- 1 tablespoon Smart Balance Light Buttery Spread = 1 Fat

Non Dairy Miscellaneous

- 4 ounces low fat tofu = 1 Protein
- 4 ounces firm tofu; 1/2 cup = 1 Protein & 1/2 Fat
- 3 tablespoons miso = 1 Protein & 1 Fat
- 1 tablespoon nut butter (any type) = 1 Protein & 1 Fat
- 2 tablespoons nutritional yeast = 1 Protein & 1 Free Exchange
- 1-1/2 ounces tempeh = 1 Protein & 1/2 Grain/Starch
- 1/2 ounce nuts or seeds = 1/2 Protein & 1 Fat
- 2 tablespoons flax seeds or 3 tablespoons flax seed meal = 1 Fat & 1/2 Grain/Starch
- 1/2 an avocado = 1/2 Fruit & 3 Fat (yup, 3)





Frugal Abundance Food Plans

Food Plan for a Basic Balanced Diet

This plan is for anyone interested in a basic, balanced diet that is flexible, easy on the budget and attractive to the family. It offers several levels of calories and I find it especially easy to remember. With it's emphasis on fruits, vegetables and low-fat dairy products, and it's balance of protein and carbohydrates it offers a healthy variety that's easy to live with for the long haul. This plan has a built in Other Carbohydrate Exchange that you can use to adapt the plan to a custom fit.

BASIC BALANCED DIET

Calories	1000	1200	1400	1600	2000	2100
Grain/Starch	3	4	4	5	6	8
Protein	3	4	4	5	6	8
Vegetable	3 or more	4 or more	4 or more	5 or more	6 or more	8 or more
Fruit	2	2	3	4	5	4
Milk	2	2	3	3	4	3
Fat	2	2	3	3	4	4
Other Carbohydrate	1	1	1	1	1	1
Free	2	2	3	3	4	4
Water	8	8	8	8	8	8

High Carbohydrate Food Plans

This plan is great for vegetarians and vegans or for anyone who feels their best on a low-protein, high carbohydrate diet. The 1600 calorie menu is compatible with the DASH diet. The official DASH diet does not include Other Carbohydrates. If you are following the official DASH diet then use 6 Grain Exchanges and omit the Other Carbohydrate Exchange.

HIGH CARBOHYDRATE

Calories	1000	1200	1400	1600	2000
Grain/Starch	3	4	5	6	8
Protein	2	3	4	4	6
Vegetable	4 or more	4 or more	4 or more	4 or more	4 or more
Fruit	2	3	3	4	4
Milk	2	2	2	3	3
Fat	2	2	3	3	4
Free	2	2	3	3	4
Other Carbohydrate	1	1	1	1	1
Water	8	8	8	8	8

High Protein Food Plans

This plan is designed for those who are carb sensitive and lose best with a high protein diet. If you don't eat grains, then choose starchy vegetables such as peas or sweet potatoes for your Grain/Starch exchanges. This plan may help some people gain control of their appetites better than other plans. Some people may want to begin with this plan and then switch to a different one after their appetite has diminished or become more manageable.

HIGH PROTEIN

Calories	1000	1200	1400	1600	2000
Grain/Starch	1	1	2	2	3
Protein	5	7	9	10	12
Vegetable	4 or more	4 or more	4 or more	4 or more	4 or more
Fruit	2	2	3	3	4
Milk	2	2	2	3	3
Fat	2	3	3	3	5
Free	2	3	3	4	4
Other Carbohydrate	1	1	1	1	1
Water	8	8	8	8	8

Bonus Dairy-Free Food Plan

I don't eat dairy. At first I used a regular food plan, and replaced dairy milk with soymilk. Eventually I decided to count my soymilk as 1 Protein Exchange and 1/2 Fat Exchange because it gave me more freedom in menu planning. The following food plans do not include any dairy exchanges. You may find they work better for you if you don't consume dairy products. This plan has more fat exchanges than the other plans to accommodate the extra fat in soymilk, tofu, nuts and seeds. This plan has a built in Other Carbohydrate Exchange that you can use to adapt the plan to a custom fit.

DAIRY FREE

Calories	1000	1200	1400	1600	2000	2100
Grain/Starch	3	4	5	6	7	8
Protein	3	4	5	6	7	8
Fat	3	4	5	6	7	8
Vegetable	3 or more	4 or more	5 or more	6 or more	7 or more	8 or more
Fruit	3	3	3	4	5	4
Free	3	3	3	4	5	4
Other Carbohydrate	1	1	1	1	2	2
Water	8	8	8	8	8	8

A special note for those with more than 50 pounds to lose. As we lose weight on a low calorie plan, our smaller bodies require fewer calories. In order to keep reducing our weight we may eventually need to further reduce our calorie levels. A weight-loss plateau lasting more than a month may signify that it's time to go down to the next lower calorie level. All of the *Frugal Abundance Food Plans* make that part especially easy to manage.

