

So Many Ways to Shop!

This article tackles the topic of shopping for food! I recently met a new friend who shared a story that stuck with me. When she first moved from India to North America and walked into a grocery store, she was so confused. She wasn't sure what she was looking at – all of the boxes, cans, and bags that stood in front of her didn't resemble food at all. She was not sure what they were or how to eat them. She said that shopping at home was so different - food was recognizable. You could smell it and feel it. You knew exactly what to do with it. It made me sad to think of how highly processed our food offerings have become in supermarkets. It also made me grateful that there are still places in the world where food is recognizable, including at our own farmer's markets!

When it comes to shopping for food, there is a lot to think about. There are 2 main objectives:

1. To make the most conscious, ecologically sustainable choices possible.
2. To find high-quality, nutritious foods at affordable prices.



Conscious, Ecologically Sustainable Grocery Shopping

Sometimes it might feel like an impossible task to be completely ethical and sustainable in our food choices. So, we settle for doing what we can, learning as we go, and trying to make the best choices with what we do know. Here are 6 steps you can take to inch closer to ethical, ecologically sustainable eating.

1. **Eat lower on the food chain.** Eating lower on the food chain means eating more plant-based meals. Plant foods leave a far softer carbon footprint than animal products. If you do include some animal products, make most of your meals plant-based, and use the smallest amount of animal-based items you can manage.
2. **Support sustainable practices.** Choose products that align with more conscious food production. Look for items that are fair trade, certified organic, or sustainably sourced.
3. **Avoid or minimize single-use plastics.** Bring your own shopping bags, produce bags, and containers to reduce plastic waste. Choose mostly products without packaging, or with minimal packaging.
4. **Choose local.** Buying local means supporting farmers near you and reducing the transportation footprint of goods. It also generally means fresher, better-tasting food. Enjoy your local farmer's markets or go directly to farms, if possible.
5. **Buy foods in season.** Buying foods in season also generally means less shipping distance and a lower carbon footprint.
6. **Be aware of egregious food production practices.** While production practices surrounding animal products are especially problematic, there are several plant-based foods that have a dark side. Some of the worst offenders are bananas, chocolate, coffee, rice, and sugar.



Finding High-Quality Nutritious Foods at Affordable Prices

Grocery prices have skyrocketed and that has made providing healthy choices more challenging for families. Fortunately, there are many things that we can do to get the best nutrition bang for our buck! Here are my top 10 tips.

1. **Make a shopping list.** A shopping list is one tool that can lead to more healthful eating (see the example at the end of this appendix). There are plenty of other reasons to make a shopping list:
 - It functions as a memory aid.
 - It reduces impulse purchases.
 - It helps us to structure meals.
 - It saves time and money.
 - It can help to reduce food waste.
2. **Plan your meals.** Studies have shown that planning meals improves diet quality and food variety. Meal planning supports healthy weights and tends to save time and money.
3. **Buy in bulk.** When you buy in bulk you usually pay less per ounce. If you have a freezer, buy nuts, seeds, and dried fruits in bulk. You can use a specialty shop and order 10 or more pounds of the nuts/seeds that you use regularly. Grains and legumes can also be purchased in bulk. I order from a local organic producer, and they provide free delivery. You can even buy produce by the case if you have a way of preserving it (e.g., freezing, drying, or canning). One word of caution – don't buy more than what you know you can manage!
4. **Buy mostly whole foods.** One of the best ways to reduce food costs is to purchase food that is unprocessed. It is far less expensive to purchase beans and grains than to purchase prepared veggie burgers, for example. It is also less expensive to buy whole fruits and vegetables than precut ones.
5. **Reduce your food waste.** In the United States, 40% of all food is wasted or thrown in the garbage. This is bad news for the environment and our pocketbooks. I would say our goal should be to waste less than 1% of our food. We can reduce food waste by planning meals, buying wisely, and storing foods properly. Know

what is in your fridge and if it looks like a veggie might spoil before you use it, freeze it. For example, greens can be washed and frozen in zip-lock bags and then added to smoothies, soups, or stews. Use leftovers creatively. There is almost no leftover that cannot be used to make soup or stew.

6. **Compare prices.** Before you go out shopping, compare prices using flyers or apps (there are several helpful apps to choose from). You can also compare prices on the grocery store shelf by looking at the price per unit – it helps to compare prices of items sold in different sizes. Store or generic brands are often less expensive than name brands.
7. **Grow some of your own food.** While it is wonderful to have a big garden, even growing a few vegetables and herbs in containers, or growing sprouts on your counter will reduce your grocery bill and provide you with delicious and nutritious food. Of course, personal gardens also reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and pesticide and fertilizer use. It also provides a perfect opportunity to get closer to nature and teach your children how to grow foods, harvest foods, and enjoy a wide variety of delicious plants!
8. **Be selective about where you purchase food.** Of course, getting food from farmer's markets, food coops, or natural food stores are great options, but they are not always affordable or accessible. However, our grocery store choice is sometimes more about convenience than anything else. Try your best to frequent locally owned businesses, but regardless of where you shop, make the most ethical choices you can. Talk to your grocer about bringing in ethically sourced food. Specialty stores that feature international foods and the international sections of supermarkets and natural food stores are often good places to find unfamiliar ingredients, and in some cases, to get great prices.
9. **Subscribe to a harvest box service.** If you have a harvest box or other local farm delivery service – sign on. You will be buying local, in-season, fresh, and nutritious food. It also provides an opportunity to try foods you may have never tried before.
10. **Be organized with food storage.** Keep your storage spaces clean to prevent the growth of bacteria and mold.
 - **Refrigerator** – Use the crisper drawer for fruits and vegetables. Store fruits and vegetables separately as the ethylene produced from apples, pears, and potatoes can accelerate the ripening of other fruits and vegetables. Move

- ripe avocados, peaches, pears, pineapple, and mango into the fridge to pause ripening. Keep leftovers in airtight containers (preferably glass).
- **Pantry** – store dry goods like grains, pasta, beans, dried herbs, and spices in a cool, dry, dark pantry or cupboard. Keep them in airtight containers (preferably glass). Mason jars work well for grains and beans – label jars. Keep spices away from heat and light to preserve freshness. Store bread at room temperature (in a bag) or in the freezer. Potatoes, onions, and garlic are also best stored in a cool, dark place (not in the fridge).
 - **Freezer** – Use airtight containers, freezer bags, or vacuum-sealed bags. Label and date items before adding them to the freezer. Nuts and seeds can be stored in labeled mason jars in the freezer section of the fridge. Keep your upright or deep freezer organized (you may even want to keep a running list of what is inside).
 - **Counter** – Keep bananas, avocados, tomatoes, and squash at room temperature. Cucumbers and citrus fruits are also said to taste best when stored at room temperature.

The Shopping List

The shopping list below provides a summary of almost everything you might need as a whole food, plant-based cook. Customize it and include additional items of your own.



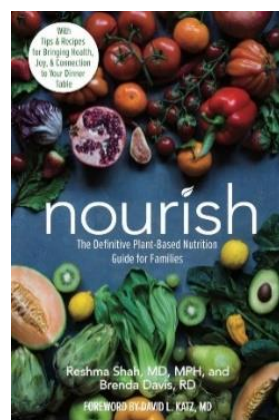
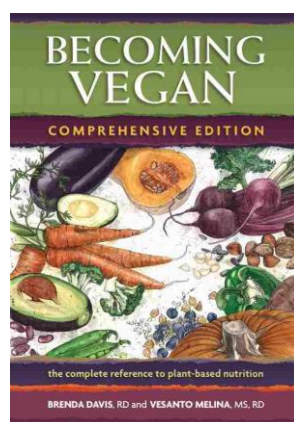
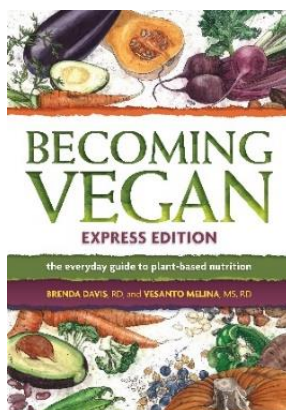
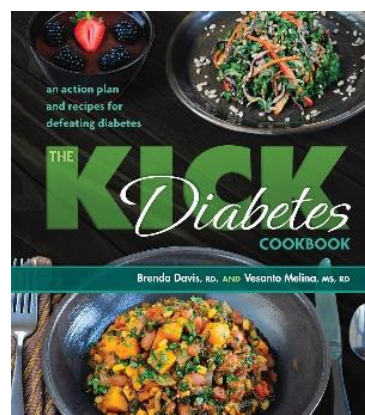
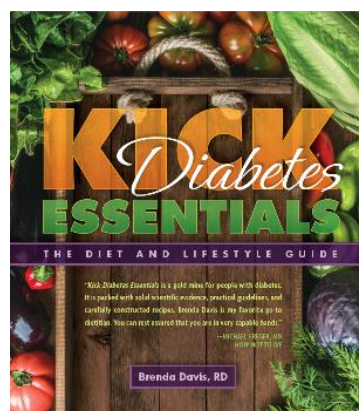
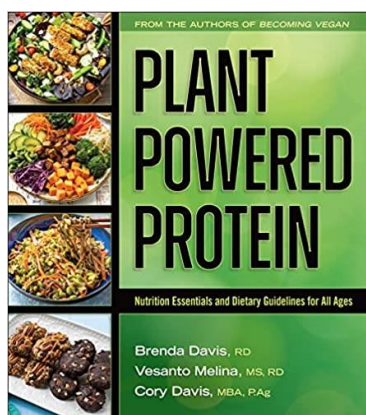
My Plant-based Shopping List

Vegetables	
FRESH	
Asparagus	Jicama
Avocados	Mushrooms
Beets	Onions (white, red, green, leeks)
Bell peppers (all colors)	Parsley
Broccoli	Parsnips
Broccolini	Peas (green, snow, sugar snap)
Brussels sprouts	Potatoes
Cabbage (Chinese, green, red, or purple)	Pumpkin
Carrots	Radishes
Cauliflower	Rutabaga
Celery	Squash
Corn on the cob	Sweet potatoes
Cucumbers	Tomatoes
Green leafy vegetables (arugula, Bok choy, collards, kale, lettuce, mustard greens, turnip greens, spinach, Swiss chard)	Turnips
Kohlrabi	Yams
Jalapeno peppers	Zucchini
FROZEN	
Broccoli	Green beans
Brussels sprouts	Peas
Cauliflower	Spinach
Corn	Squash
CANNED/DRIED	
Artichoke hearts	Tomatoes (whole, diced, or crushed)
Hearts of palm	Tomato sauce and paste
Pumpkin	Sundried tomatoes
Fruits	
FRESH	
Apples	Kiwi
Apricots	Mangoes
Bananas	Melons (cantaloupe, honeydew, watermelon)
Berries (blueberries, blackberries, cranberries, raspberries, strawberries)	Papaya
Cherries	Peaches, nectarines
Grapefruits	Pears
Grapes	Pineapple
Lemons	Plums
Limes	Pomegranate
FROZEN	
Berries	Mangoes

Cherries	Pineapple
DRIED (unsweetened)	
Apricots	Currants
Cherries	Dates
Cranberries	Prunes
Coconut (dried, unsweetened)	Raisins
CANNED (unsweetened)	
Applesauce	Pears
Peaches	Pineapple
Legumes	
DRIED	
Adzuki beans	Lima beans
Black beans (and black turtle beans)	Mung beans
Black-eyed peas	Navy beans
Cannellini beans	Pink beans
Chickpeas	Pinto beans
Cranberry beans	Red beans
Great Northern beans	Scarlet Runner beans
Fava beans	Split peas (green, yellow)
Kidney beans	Soybeans
Lentils (black, green, brown, red)	White beans
FROZEN	
Edamame	Lima beans
Green chickpeas	
CANNED	
Black beans	Lentils
Cannellini beans	Kidney beans
Chickpeas	Mixed beans
Fava beans	Pinto beans
LEGUME PRODUCTS	
Hummus	Tempeh
Tofu	Roasted legumes
Grains and Grain Products	
WHOLE GRAINS (INCLUDING CUT, ROLLED AND GROUND)	
Amaranth	Oats (groats, steel-cut, rolled)
Barley	Popcorn kernels
Buckwheat	Quinoa
Bulgar	Rice (black, brown, red)
Cornmeal	Rye berries
Freekeh	Spelt berries
Kamut berries	Whole grain flours (wheat, Kamut, spelt, oat, rye)
Millet	Wild rice
GRAIN PRODUCTS	
Breads (whole grain)	Crackers (whole grain)
Cereals (whole grain)	Pasta (whole grain)
Nuts and Seeds	
WHOLE, CHOPPED OR GROUND	

Almonds	Macadamia nuts
Brazil nuts	Peanuts (although technically a legume)
Cashews	Pecans
Chia seeds	Pumpkin seeds
Flaxseeds (whole and ground)	Sesame seeds
Hazelnuts	Sunflower seeds
Hemp seeds	Walnuts
NUT AND SEED BUTTERS	
Almond butter	Peanut butter
Cashew butter	Tahini
Mixed nut butter	
Herbs and Spices	
FRESH	
Basil	Mint
Cilantro	Parsley
Dill	Rosemary
Garlic	Sage
Ginger	Thyme
DRIED	
Allspice	Mixed spices
Basil	Nutmeg
Bay leaves	Onion powder
Cardamom	Oregano
Cayenne	Paprika
Celery seed	Parsley, dried
Cinnamon	Pepper, black or white
Cloves	Poultry seasoning
Cumin	Pumpkin Pie spice
Curry powder	Red pepper flakes
Dill	Rosemary
Gara Masala	Salt
Garlic (powder, granules)	Sage
Ginger, ground	Savory
Marjoram	Tarragon
Mint, dried	Thyme
Mustard, dry	Turmeric
Miscellaneous	
Arrowroot starch	Miso
Baking powder	Mustard (Dijon, stone-ground)
Baking soda	Nutritional yeast
Bragg Liquid Aminos	Nondairy milk (almond, cashew, oat, soy)
Cornstarch	Olives
Curry paste	Red peppers (roasted)
Hot sauce	Tamari
Horseradish	Vinegar (apple cider, balsamic, rice, wine)
Maple syrup	Vegetable broth
Molasses	Yogurts (almond, coconut, oat, soy)

This article was written for a PCRM Food for Life Instructors group called So Many Cooks in the Kitchen. This group meets online to provide amazing cooking and nutrition demonstrations that are free to share globally. For wonderful whole food, plant-based cooking shows, tune in to their monthly broadcasts. <https://somanycooks.com/about/>



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