Food Planning during the Coronavirus Pandemic

For more information about the Food and Nutrition Service response to COVID-19, please visit FNS.USDA.GOV/CORONAVIRUS

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First check your refrigerator, freezer, and pantry—and expiration dates and best by dates. This can help you plan meals using what you have, and help you limit trips to the grocery store.

Make a shopping list to stay focused in the store. List general items like “fruit” or “bread” since stores may not have some specific items.

Explore your shopping options, such as pickup or delivery, as well as third-party delivery options. If you’re older, check if your store has early shopping hours just for older Americans.

Buy what you and your family need at this time, and resist the urge to buy in much larger quantities. Prepare a shopping list that will cover everyone in your household for 2 weeks.

Choose a mix of shelf-stable, frozen, and fresh foods. Shelf-stable examples: pastas, rice, beans, nut butters, and dried and canned goods. Frozen examples: breads, meats, vegetables, fruits, even milk. With fresh foods, buy a variety in quantities that you usually buy.

Eat your fresh food first. Stock your freezer and pantry with items you can eat in the second week and beyond.

What should I make? While everyone is home together, consider trying a new recipe or try new flavors to keep things interesting. For others, sticking to simple or familiar foods and tastes provides comfort.

Access food while school is closed. Many school districts continue to provide meals to students in need during closures. Contact your school to see if meals may be available through pop-up food systems, grab-and-go meal pickups, or school bus routes.

For an expanded version of this tip card, including resources on food planning and activities for families at home, go to MYPLATE.GOV/CORONAVIRUS.

For more information on COVID-19, please visit CORONAVIRUS.GOV.

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