PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Tips for Healthy Eating on a Budget

This information can help you make healthy food choices while cutting down on food costs. It has tips for food planning, shopping, and cooking. It also has a list of healthy, low-cost pantry items, a sample meal plan, and recipes.

Healthy food choices help your body get more of the nutrients it needs to work its best. Making sure your body gets enough nutrients can help you feel better overall. It also can help you manage your symptoms and weight during cancer treatment.

To learn more about making food choices during cancer treatment, read *Eating Well During Your Cancer Treatment* (www.mskcc.org/pe/eating-cancer-treatment).

Planning

Planning is the key to healthy eating on a budget. You can plan by looking for sales, making a shopping list, and avoiding wasting food.

Look for sales

- Look for sales on things such as:
  - Fresh produce (fruits and vegetables).
  - Lean proteins, such as poultry and fish. Poultry is meat from birds, such as chicken and turkey.
  - Low-fat dairy items, such as yogurt and fat-free or 1% milk.
  - Whole grains, such as brown rice, barley, oatmeal, and whole wheat bread.
  - Canned tuna, salmon, and sardines.
  - Dried or canned beans.
  - Items you use often or that are on your shopping list.
- Make a weekly eating plan based on what's on sale. Plan meals around fresh produce, lean proteins, low-fat dairy items, and other sale items. For example, you can make a simple meal with a lean meat or fish, vegetables, and whole grains. It's also helpful to plan meals that use the same ingredients.
- Stock up on items when they're on sale, especially non-perishable items. Non-perishable items are ones that last a very long time before spoiling. Examples are nut butters, canned beans, canned fish, and pasta.

Tips for finding sales

- Check newspapers, store circulars (flyers and ads), and store websites for sales and coupons.
- Download and check apps for sales. Stores that have apps include:
  - ALDI
  - BJ's Wholesale Club
  - Target Circle
  - ShopRite
  - Stop & Shop
  - Walmart
  - Wegmans
- Online markets that have apps include:
  - FreshDirect
  - Imperfect Foods
  - Instacart
  - Misfits Market
  - Shipt
- Visit different grocery stores in your neighborhood and compare their prices. Items can cost more at one store than another. Apps (such as Flipp) and websites (such as

www.coupons.com) offer digital coupons. They can also compare prices of deals in stores in your area.

- If you need a certain product, visit the company's website to check for coupons.
- Think about making a weekly habit of checking for sales. You can compare prices and stay aware of sales.

Make a shopping list

- Make a shopping list based on your weekly eating plan. Stick to your list when you shop.
- Spend most of your food budget on nutrient-rich vegetables, fruits, low-fat dairy, lean protein, and whole grains. For more examples, read the section "Low-cost items to build a healthy pantry."
- Try to buy fresh produce that's in season. It's flavorful, there's lots of it, and it often costs less than produce that's not in season. Visit www.seasonalfoodguide.org to learn what produce is in season in your area.
- If you need to buy produce that's not in season, buy it frozen.
- Avoid items with added sugar or salt. Check the item's ingredient list to see if sugar or salt was added.

Do not waste food

- Use highly perishable items early in the week. Highly perishable items are ones that spoil quickly, such as fish and seafood, salad greens, berries, and fresh herbs. Save less perishable items for later in the week. Less perishable items are ones that do not spoil as quickly.
- Have leftovers for lunch.
- Create new meals from leftover ingredients. For example, use leftover cooked meat and vegetables as fillings for casseroles, frittatas, and wraps, or for soups.
- Freeze foods or leftovers to use later.

Shopping

Here are some tips for smart, low-cost grocery shopping.

- Do not go food shopping when you're hungry.
- Only buy items on your grocery list. Sticking to your list will help you avoid spending money on things you didn't plan on.
- Choose store brands instead of name brands. They often cost less, and their quality and taste are just as good.
- Avoid pre-prepared items, such as washed or cut vegetables and shredded cheese. Pre-prepared items

cost more. It's better to prepare the items yourself if you have time.

- Avoid pre-packaged meals. They often cost more than cooking yourself.
- Buy bulk goods online or from warehouse clubs (such as Sam's Club, Costco, and BJ's). Remember only to buy things you know you'll use before they spoil or expire.
  - Buying in bulk can seem like a high cost, but it can help you spend less over time. Spending a larger amount all at once means you will not need to keep spending smaller amounts that add up.
- Know how much you're spending. Use the calculator on your cell phone to keep track of how much you're spending while you shop.
  - In New York, most food items are not taxed. Foods that are taxed include:
    - Heated foods.
    - Ready-made foods, including sandwiches.
    - Carbonated (fizzy) drinks.
    - Candies and sweets.

    If you're buying these items, make sure to account for tax.

- Compare the unit price of items. The unit price is the price for a set volume or weight. It's often listed on the tab below the item on the shelf. Checking the unit price helps you better compare costs, especially for items that are different sizes.
- Check the clearance shelves for discounted items.
- Skip aisles or sections with soda, chips, cookies, and candy, if you can.
- Avoid buying sugary drinks, such as sodas or juices. Drink water at home instead.

If you go to the same store often, sign up for their loyalty or rewards program. You'll get member-only discounts automatically at checkout. Some programs even offer extra benefits, such as cash rewards if you shop at the store often.

Cooking

- Use the same ingredients and leftovers for different recipes. For example:
  - Make a double batch of brown rice. Use it the next day, too.
  - Chop broccoli for a potato dish. Use the leftovers for a broccoli stir fry.

Low-cost items to build a healthy pantry

The items in this section are low-cost and healthy. Think about making them part of your weekly eating plan, especially when you see them on sale.

Proteins	
• Eggs • Tofu • Peanut butter	• Canned legumes (such as beans and chickpeas)* • Dried legumes (such as beans, chickpeas, and lentils)*

** Beans and other legumes cost less to buy than other sources of protein, such as meat and poultry. Choose dried legumes rather than canned legumes. A bag of dried beans costs less to buy and has more servings than a can of beans. You can cook dried legumes faster with a pressure cooker or slow cooker, such as a Crock-Pot® or Instant Pot®. Cooking dried legumes at home does take time, but it can be rewarding if you plan for it.*

Grains	
• Tortillas • Pasta • Noodles • All-purpose flour • Whole wheat flour • Oats	• Whole wheat bread • Cornmeal • White rice • Brown rice

Dairy and Non-Dairy Items	
• Fat-free or 1% milk • Unsweetened nut milk (such as almond or soy milk) • Nonfat or 1% plain yogurt	• Soy yogurt • Queso fresco • Cheddar cheese • Mozzarella cheese

Canned Vegetables	
• Crushed tomatoes • Tomato paste • Asparagus • Spinach	• Corn • String beans • Beets • Carrots

Non-Starchy Vegetables	
• Lettuce and other greens • Carrots • Celery • Broccoli	• Peppers • Tomatoes • Garlic • Onions

Starchy Vegetables	
• Potatoes • Sweet potatoes • Butternut squash • Acorn squash	• Pumpkin squash • Plantains • Taro

Fruits

• Apples • Bananas • Watermelon • Cantaloupe • Honeydew melon	• Casaba • Oranges • Limes • Lemons

Frozen Fruits and Vegetables	
• Berries • Peas • Green beans	• Corn • Edamame

Pantry Items that Add Flavor	
• Low sodium soy sauce • Low sodium chili sauce • Coconut milk • Low sodium fish sauce • Low sodium miso paste	• Sardines • Low sodium anchovies • Olive oil • Wine vinegar

Spices	
• Garlic powder • Chili flakes • Cumin or cumin seeds • Paprika or smoked paprika	• Dry oregano • Dry parsley • Mustard seeds or ground mustard

Sample menus and recipes

This section has 7 days (1 week) of sample menus and recipes that are healthy and use low-cost ingredients.

Each sample menu includes:

- **Examples of healthy foods to try at each meal and snack.** We list balanced options from different food groups (grains, proteins, fruits, vegetables, and dairy).
- **Total cost.** This is the total cost of ingredients needed to make the meals for each day. The total cost is an estimate. The exact cost depends on when and where you buy the ingredients, and if they're on sale.
- **Nutrition information.** This is the amount of nutrients for each day, such as total fat and protein. The nutrition information is an estimate. The exact information depends on the ingredients you use and the serving size of the meals.

Day 1 sample menu

Breakfast	• Creamy oatmeal with peanut butter and banana • Coffee or tea
Lunch	• Hearty tuna salad sandwich • ½ cup (4 fluid ounces) apple juice mixed with water

Dinner	• Roasted chicken drumsticks • Baked potato • Tomato and lettuce salad
Snack	• 1 apple • 1 tablespoon peanut butter
Total cost	$7.50

Day 1 nutrition information

Nutrition information is for the whole day. Amounts are listed as grams (g) and milligrams (mg).

Calories	1800
Protein	96 g
Total fat	79 g
Saturated fat	15 g
Total carbohydrates	176 g
Dietary fiber	26 g
Added sugars	7 g
Sodium	1505 mg

Day 2 sample menu

Breakfast	• Fruity overnight oats
Lunch	• Chicken and broccoli baked potato
Dinner	• Ground turkey rice bowl

Snack	• 1 ounce cheese • 1 serving pretzels • 1 apple
Total cost	$7.50

Day 2 nutrition information

Nutrition information is for the whole day. Amounts are listed as grams (g) and milligrams (mg).

Calories	1900
Protein	118 g
Total fat	71 g
Saturated fat	21 g
Total carbohydrates	201 g
Dietary fiber	27 g
Added sugars	10 g
Sodium	1912 mg

Day 3 sample menu

Breakfast	• Peanut butter toast
Lunch	• Chicken salad toast
Dinner	• Turkey and bean burrito
Snack	• ½ cup plain yogurt • ½ cup canned peaches in 100% juice
Total cost	$6.30

Day 3 nutrition information

Nutrition information is for the whole day. Amounts are listed as grams (g) and milligrams (mg).

Calories	1860
Protein	84 g
Total fat	72 g
Saturated fat	17 g
Total carbohydrates	219 g
Dietary fiber	29 g
Added sugars	9 g
Sodium	2070 mg

Day 4 sample menu

Breakfast	• Yogurt parfait
Lunch	• Chickpea salad
Dinner	• Bean and cheese quesadilla
Snack	• ½ cup fat-free yogurt
Total cost	$6.45

Day 4 nutrition information

Nutrition information is for the whole day. Amounts are listed as grams (g) and milligrams (mg).

Calories	1701
Protein	83 g

Total fat	67 g
Saturated fat	18 g
Total carbohydrates	192 g
Dietary fiber	36 g
Added sugars	5 g
Sodium	2081 mg

Day 5 sample menu

Breakfast	• Veggie scramble • Whole wheat toast
Lunch	• Loaded baked potato with broccoli and cheese
Dinner	• Creamy lentil soup
Snack	• 1 ounce cheese • 1 apple • 1 tablespoon peanut butter
Total cost	$6.71

Day 5 nutrition information

Nutrition information is for the whole day. Amounts are listed as grams (g) and milligrams (mg).

Calories	1658
Protein	75 g
Total fat	67 g
Saturated fat	19 g
Total carbohydrates	190 g

Dietary fiber	35 g
Added sugars	8 g
Sodium	1225 mg

Day 6 sample menu

Breakfast	• Apple cinnamon oatmeal • Whole wheat toast with peanut butter
Lunch	• Meatless chili • Brown rice
Dinner	• Green Spanish frittata
Snack	• 1 ounce cheese • 1 cup (8 fluid ounces) nonfat milk • 4 crackers
Total cost	$7.46

Day 6 nutrition information

Nutrition information is for the whole day. Amounts are listed as grams (g) and milligrams (mg).

Calories	1552
Protein	75 g
Total fat	64 g
Saturated fat	13 g
Total carbohydrates	169 g

Dietary fiber	35 g
Added sugars	19 g
Sodium	2500 mg

Day 7 sample menu

Breakfast	• Peanut butter and banana toast
Lunch	• Hearty taco bowl
Dinner	• Chicken and broccoli stir fry
Snack	• 1 apple
Total cost	$8.28

Day 7 nutrition information

Nutrition information is for the whole day. Amounts are listed as grams (g) and milligrams (mg).

Calories	1695
Protein	90 g
Total fat	55 g
Saturated fat	7 g
Total carbohydrates	210 g
Dietary fiber	35 g
Added sugars	12 g
Sodium	1500 mg

Recipes

The recipes for each day are included in this section. Each recipe includes:

- A list of ingredients.
- The prep time. This is the time it takes to get all the ingredients ready before cooking or making the meal. The prep time is an estimate.
- The cooking time. This is the time it takes to cook the meal. The cooking time is an estimate.
- The number of servings in the recipe.
- Instructions on how to cook or make the recipe.

Day 1 recipes

Creamy oatmeal with peanut butter and banana

Prep Time	Cooking Time	Servings
5 minutes	7 minutes	1

Ingredients

• 1 ¾ cup (14 fluid ounces) 1% milk • 1 cup quick-cooking oats	• 2 tablespoons peanut butter • 1 banana, sliced

Instructions

1. Add the milk to a pot and bring to a boil over medium-high heat.
2. Add the oats to the pot and stir. Lower the heat to low. Simmer uncovered for 5 to 7 minutes, stirring occasionally until the oatmeal is creamy.
3. Take the pot off the heat. Add the peanut butter. Mix well.
4. Place the oatmeal in a bowl. Top with the banana slices.

Hearty tuna salad sandwich

Prep Time	Cooking Time	Servings
10 minutes	0 minutes	1

Ingredients

- 1 (5-ounce) can tuna, drained
- 1 medium carrot, shredded
- 1 medium celery rib, shredded
- 1 tablespoon mayonnaise
- 1 tablespoon low sodium dressing (Italian dressing, balsamic vinaigrette, or dressing of your choice)
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 2 slices whole wheat bread

Instructions

1. Open and drain the can of tuna.
2. Shred the carrot and celery. You can use a peeler, box

grater, or food processor.

3. Place the tuna, carrot, celery, mayonnaise, dressing, salt, and pepper in a bowl. Mix well until smooth or until you reach the texture you want.
4. Spread the tuna salad on 1 slice of bread. Add the other slice of bread to make a sandwich.

Roasted chicken drumsticks with baked potato and tomato and lettuce salad

Prep Time	Cooking Time	Servings
15 minutes	45 minutes	1

Ingredients

- 2 chicken drumsticks, cooked or roasted*
- 1 medium russet potato
- 1 cup lettuce, chopped
- 1 large ripe tomato, chopped
- ¾ tablespoon vinegar
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- A pinch of salt and pepper (only if you want this)

**You can make 4 drumsticks, if you want. The cooking time will be the same. Save the other 2 drumsticks for another meal, such as Chicken and Broccoli Baked Potato. You can find that recipe in the "Day 2 recipes" section.*

Instructions

1. Preheat the oven to 400 °F (204 °C).
2. Rinse the chicken drumsticks under cool water. Pat them

dry with paper towels. You can brush the drumsticks with a little olive oil and season with a pinch of salt, if you want.

3. Rinse the potato under cool water. Pat it dry with a paper towel. Prick the potato with a fork in 2 to 3 places.
4. Place the drumsticks and potato on separate baking sheets. Put them in the preheated oven at the same time.
    - Bake the drumsticks for 20 minutes. Take out the baking sheet and flip the drumsticks over. Put them back in the oven for another 20 minutes. Bake the drumsticks until their internal temperature is 165 °F (74 °C). The internal temperature is the temperature of the middle of the food. You can use a food thermometer to check the internal temperature.
    - Bake the potato for about 45 minutes or until fork tender. Fork tender means a fork can slide into the center of the potato easily.
5. While the drumsticks and potato are cooking, make the salad. Wash the lettuce and tomato. Chop the lettuce into strips. Chop the tomato into ½-inch pieces. Mix the lettuce and tomato in a bowl.
6. Make the salad dressing. Add the vinegar to a small bowl and slowly whisk in the olive oil. You can also add a pinch

of salt and pepper, if you want.

7. Once the potato is done, cut it lengthwise in the center and use a fork or spoon to open it. You can season it with a pinch of salt, if you want.

Day 2 recipes

Fruity overnight oats

Prep Time	Cooking Time	Servings
5 minutes	0 minutes	1

Ingredients

- ½ cup oats
- ½ cup low-fat vanilla yogurt
- ½ cup (4 fluid ounces) 1% milk
- 1 tablespoon peanut butter
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ½ cup frozen fruit (blueberries, pineapple, or fruit of your choice)

Instructions

1. Mix the oats, yogurt, milk, peanut butter, and cinnamon in a mixing bowl or other container.
2. Add the frozen fruit on top of the mixture.
3. Cover the bowl or container with plastic wrap or a lid. Leave it in the refrigerator overnight.
4. In the morning, take the bowl or container out of the refrigerator. Serve cold.

Chicken and broccoli baked potato

Prep Time	Cooking Time	Servings
5 minutes	5 to 47 minutes	1

Ingredients

- 1 to 2 chicken drumsticks (cooked or roasted), shredded
- 1 medium russet potato
- ½ cup broccoli florets
- 3 tablespoons water
- 2 tablespoons shredded cheese (cheddar, Monterey Jack, blend, or other)

Reheating instructions

Follow these steps to reheat leftovers from the Roasted Chicken Drumsticks with Baked Potato recipe. You can find that recipe in the "Day 1 recipes" section.

1. Reheat the chicken drumsticks and baked potato in the microwave or oven until they're hot.
    - **If you're using a microwave:** Place the drumsticks on a microwave-safe plate and cover the plate loosely with plastic wrap. Microwave on medium power for 1 minute. Place the potato on a microwave-safe plate and cover the plate with a damp paper towel. Microwave on medium power for 3 minutes.
    - **If you're using an oven:** Preheat the oven to 350 °F (175 °C). Place the drumsticks and potato on separate baking sheets. Put them in the oven at the same time.

Reheat the drumsticks for 15 minutes. Reheat the potato for 15 to 20 minutes.

2. Skip to step 5 below in the “Instructions (if you’re not reheating leftovers)” section.

Instructions (if you’re not reheating leftovers)

Follow these steps if you’re cooking the chicken drumsticks and baked potato from scratch, not reheating leftovers.

1. Preheat the oven to 400 °F (204 °C).
2. Rinse the chicken drumsticks under cool water. Pat them dry with paper towels. You can brush the drumsticks with a little olive oil and season with a pinch of salt, if you want.
3. Rinse the potato under cool water. Pat it dry with a paper towel. Prick the potato with a fork in 2 to 3 places.
4. Place the drumsticks and potato on separate baking sheets. Put them in the preheated oven at the same time.
    - Bake the drumsticks for 20 minutes. Take out the baking sheet and flip the drumsticks over. Put them back in the oven for another 20 minutes. Bake the drumsticks until their internal temperature is 165 °F (74 °C). The internal temperature is the temperature of the middle of the food. You can use a food

thermometer to check the internal temperature.

- Bake the potato for about 45 minutes or until fork tender. Fork tender means a fork can slide into the center of the potato easily.

5. Place the broccoli florets in a microwave-safe bowl with 3 tablespoons of water. Cover the bowl loosely with plastic wrap. Microwave on high power for 3 to 5 minutes. Take the bowl out of the microwave and set it to the side.
6. Once the drumsticks are done, shred the meat from them. You can use your hands or 2 forks to pull the meat apart.
7. Once the potato is done, cut it lengthwise in the center and use a fork or spoon to open it. Create a small hole in the potato by scooping out a bit of the potato flesh.
8. Mix the potato flesh with the broccoli and place the mixture on top of the potato.
9. Shred the cheese. You can use a peeler, box grater, or food processor. Add the cheese on top of the potato. Put the potato back in a 400 °F (204 °C) oven until the cheese melts (about 2 minutes).
0. Add the shredded the meat from the chicken drumsticks on top of the potato.

Ground turkey rice bowl

Prep Time	Cooking Time	Servings
15 minutes	45 minutes	1

Ingredients

- ½ cup rice
- ½ cup low sodium beans (black, pinto, or other), rinsed and drained
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- ½ cup ground turkey
- 1 cup lettuce, chopped
- ½ cup tomatoes, chopped
- 1 tablespoon low sodium dressing (Italian dressing, balsamic vinaigrette, or dressing of your choice)

Instructions

1. Prepare the beans.
    - **If you're using canned beans:** Open and drain the can. Rinse the beans under cool water.
    - **If you're using dried beans:** Rinse the beans under cool water and place them in a large bowl. Fill the bowl with cool water, 2 inches above the beans. Leave the bowl on the kitchen counter and let the beans soak overnight (about 8 to 12 hours).
2. Cook the rice. Follow the instructions on the package. Depending on what rice you use, it can take 20 to 45 minutes to cook.
3. Drain the beans and then cook them. You can use the

same method whether you're cooking canned or dried beans. Heat 1 tablespoon of olive oil in a pot over medium-high heat. Add the beans and simmer uncovered for 5 minutes.

4. Heat 1 tablespoon of olive oil in a pan over medium heat. Add the turkey and cook for about 5 minutes or until the meat is browned.
5. Wash the lettuce and tomato. Chop the lettuce into strips. Chop the tomato into ½-inch pieces.
6. Layer all the ingredients in a bowl. Top with the dressing.

Day 3 recipes

Peanut butter toast

Prep Time	Cooking Time	Servings
5 minutes	2 to 10 minutes	1

Ingredients

- 2 slices whole wheat bread, toasted
- 2 tablespoons peanut butter
- 1 banana, sliced
- Ground cinnamon to taste

Instructions

1. Toast the bread.
    - If you're using an oven, preheat it to 350 °F (177 °C). Place the bread on a baking sheet and bake for 4 to 5 minutes. Take out the baking sheet and flip the bread

over. Put it back in the oven for another 4 to 5 minutes.

- If you're you're using a toaster, toast the bread for 2 to 3 minutes, or for as long as you want.

2. Spread the peanut butter on both slices of toast. Top with the banana slices.
3. Serve with cinnamon sprinkled on top.

Chicken salad toast

Prep Time	Cooking Time	Servings
15 minutes	45 minutes	1

Ingredients

- ½ cup chicken or ½ boneless, skinless chicken breast (about 3 ounces)*
- 1 cup carrots, shredded
- 1 cup celery, shredded
- 1 to 2 tablespoons low sodium dressing (Italian dressing, balsamic vinaigrette, or dressing of your choice)
- 2 slices whole wheat bread, toasted

**You can make a whole chicken breast, if you want. The cooking time will be the same. Save the other half of the chicken breast for another meal.*

Instructions

1. Preheat the oven to 400 °F (204 °C).
2. Rinse the chicken breast under cool water. Pat it dry with

a paper towel. You can brush the chicken with a little olive oil and season with a pinch of salt, if you want.

3. Place the chicken breast on a baking sheet and put it in the preheated oven. Bake for 20 to 35 minutes, until its internal temperature is 165 °F (74 °C). The internal temperature is the temperature of the middle of the food. You can use a food thermometer to check the internal temperature.
4. Shred the carrots and celery. You can use a peeler, box grater, or food processor.
5. Once the chicken breast is out of the oven and cooled, chop it into ½-inch pieces and place it in a bowl. Add the carrots, celery, and dressing. Mix well.
6. Toast the bread.
    - If you're using an oven, preheat it to 350 °F (177 °C). Place the bread on a baking sheet and bake for 4 to 5 minutes. Take out the baking sheet and flip the bread over. Put it back in the oven for another 4 to 5 minutes.
    - If you're you're using a toaster, toast the bread for 2 to 3 minutes, or for as long as you want.
7. Spread the chicken salad on 1 slice of toast. Add the other slice of toast to make a sandwich.

Turkey and bean burrito

Prep Time	Cooking Time	Servings
10 minutes	45 minutes	1

Ingredients

- ¼ cup rice
- ¼ cup low sodium beans (black, pinto, or other), rinsed and drained
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- ½ cup ground turkey
- ½ cup lettuce, chopped
- ¼ cup tomatoes, chopped
- 1 to 2 tablespoons shredded cheese (cheddar, Monterey Jack, blend, or other)
- 1 (6-inch) whole wheat tortilla

Instructions

1. Prepare the beans.
    - **If you're using canned beans:** Open and drain the can. Rinse the beans under cool water.
    - **If you're using dried beans:** Rinse the beans under cool water and place them in a large bowl. Fill the bowl with cool water, 2 inches above the beans. Leave the bowl on the kitchen counter and let the beans soak overnight (about 8 to 12 hours).
2. Cook the rice. Follow the instructions on the package. Depending on what rice you use, it can take 20 to 45 minutes to cook.

3. Drain the beans and then cook them. You can use the same method whether you're cooking canned or dried beans. Heat 1 tablespoon of olive oil in a pot over medium-high heat. Add the beans and simmer uncovered for 5 minutes.
4. Heat 1 tablespoon of olive oil in a pan over medium heat. Add the turkey and cook for about 5 minutes or until the meat is browned.
5. Wash the lettuce and tomato. Chop the lettuce into strips. Chop the tomato into ½-inch pieces.
6. Shred the cheese. You can use a peeler, box grater, or food processor.
7. Layer all the ingredients on one half of the tortilla. Roll the tortilla and fold it into a burrito.

Day 4 recipes

Yogurt parfait

Prep Time	Cooking Time	Servings
5 minutes	0 minutes	1

Ingredients

- ½ cup frozen berries
- 1 cup plain yogurt
- ½ cup cold cereal
- 2 teaspoons honey or brown sugar

Instructions

1. Let the frozen berries slightly thaw out on the kitchen counter for about 2 minutes.
2. Place 4 tablespoons of yogurt at the bottom of a glass or bowl.
3. Add 4 tablespoons of berries on top of the yogurt.
4. Add 4 tablespoons of cold cereal on top of the berries.
5. Repeat steps 2 through 4, layering the ingredients on top of each other.
6. Add 2 teaspoons of honey or brown sugar on the very top of the parfait.

Chickpea salad

Prep Time	Cooking Time	Servings
10 minutes	0 minutes	1

Ingredients

- ½ can low sodium chickpeas, rinsed and drained
- ½ cup spinach, chopped
- ¼ cup red onion, chopped
- ¼ cup carrots, shredded
- 1 to 2 tablespoons low sodium Italian dressing
- 1 serving whole grain tortilla chips (about 9 chips)

Instructions

1. Open and drain the can of chickpeas. Rinse the chickpeas under cool water.
2. Chop the spinach and onion into ½-inch pieces.
3. Shred the carrots. You can use a peeler, box grater, or food processor.
4. Mix the chickpeas, spinach, onion, carrots, and Italian dressing in a bowl.
5. Serve with tortilla chips.

Bean and cheese quesadilla

Prep Time	Cooking Time	Servings
10 minutes	5 minutes	1

Ingredients

- 1 cup low sodium beans (black, pinto, or other), rinsed and drained
- 1 ½ tablespoons olive oil
- ½ cup shredded cheese (cheddar, Monterey Jack, blend, or other)
- 1 (6-inch) whole wheat tortilla

Instructions

1. Prepare the beans.
    - **If you're using canned beans:** Open and drain the can. Rinse the beans under cool water.
    - **If you're using dried beans:** Rinse the beans under

cool water and place them in a large bowl. Fill the bowl with cool water, 2 inches above the beans. Leave the bowl on the kitchen counter and let the beans soak overnight (about 8 to 12 hours).

2. Drain the beans and then cook them. You can use the same method whether you're cooking canned or dried beans. Heat 1 ½ tablespoons of olive oil in a pot over medium-high heat. Add the beans and simmer uncovered for 5 minutes.
3. Shred the cheese. You can use a peeler, box grater, or food processor.
4. Layer the beans and cheese on one half of the tortilla. Fold the tortilla over.

Day 5 recipes

Veggie scramble

Prep Time	Cooking Time	Servings
10 minutes	14 minutes	2

Ingredients

- ½ small red onion, chopped
- 1 medium ripe tomato, chopped
- 1 cup spinach, roughly chopped
- 4 eggs
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1 tablespoon olive oil or canola oil

Instructions

1. Chop the onion and tomato into ½-inch pieces. Roughly chop the spinach. Set the vegetables to the side while you get the rest of the ingredients ready.
2. Crack the eggs into a bowl. Season them with salt and pepper. Mix well with a whisk or fork and set it to the side.
3. Heat the oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the onion and cook for 3 minutes. Add the tomato and keep cooking for another 4 minutes. Stir occasionally with a spatula. Add the spinach and keep cooking for another 2 minutes, stirring occasionally.
4. Pour the eggs over the vegetables and gently stir until done. This takes 3 to 5 minutes, depending on how firm you like your eggs cooked.

Serving suggestion: Serve with 2 slices of whole wheat toast.

Loaded baked potato with broccoli and cheese

Prep Time	Cooking Time	Servings
10 minutes	25 minutes	2

Ingredients

- 2 medium russet potatoes
- 2 garlic cloves, minced (chopped into small pieces)
- 2 cups broccoli florets
- 2 to 3 tablespoons water
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- A pinch of salt and pepper (only if you want this)
- ½ cup shredded cheese (cheddar, Monterey Jack, blend, or other)
- 2 green onions (scallions), chopped

Instructions

1. Preheat the oven to 400 °F (204 °C).
2. Rinse each potato under cool water and pat it dry with a paper towel. Prick each one with a fork in 2 to 3 places. Place the potatoes on a microwave-safe plate and cover the plate with a damp paper towel. Microwave on high power for 4 minutes.
3. Carefully move the potatoes from the microwave-safe plate to a baking sheet. Bake them in the oven for 10 to 15 minutes.
4. While the potatoes are baking, mince the garlic into small pieces. Place a skillet over medium-high heat. Add the garlic, broccoli florets, and 2 to 3 tablespoons of water. Mix them together. Cook for 2 to 3 minutes, until the water evaporates (disappears). The steam will cook the broccoli as the water evaporates.

5. Take the potatoes out of the oven. Cut each one lengthwise in the center and use a fork or spoon to open them. Create a small hole in each potato by scooping out a bit of the potato flesh. Set the potato flesh to the side for later.
6. Add 1 tablespoon of olive oil to each potato. You can also add a pinch of salt and pepper, if you want. Mash and lightly mix.
7. Mix the potato flesh with the broccoli and place the mixture on top of each potato.
8. Shred the cheese. You can use a peeler, box grater, or food processor. Add the cheese on top of each potato. Put the potatoes back in a 400 °F (204 °C) oven until the cheese melts (about 2 minutes).
9. Chop the green onions into small pieces. Sprinkle on top of each potato.

Creamy lentil soup

Prep Time	Cooking Time	Servings
15 minutes	35 minutes	2

Ingredients

• 2 small carrots or 1 medium carrot, grated • 1 small yellow onion, chopped • 4 garlic cloves, minced (chopped into small pieces) • 1 tablespoon olive oil • 1 teaspoon dry oregano	• Salt and pepper to taste • 2 cups dry green lentils, rinsed • 4 cups (32 fluid ounces) low-sodium vegetable stock • 3 cups (24 fluid ounces) water

Instructions

1. Place a box grater on a cutting board. Using a downward motion, scrape the pointed end of the carrot along the large holes of the box grater. Be careful to keep your hands and fingers out of the way. Keep doing this until the carrot is about 2 inches long. Chop the rest of the carrot into small pieces.
2. Chop the onion into ¼-inch pieces. Mince the garlic into small pieces.
3. Heat the olive oil in a large pot over medium-high heat. Add the carrots, onion, garlic, oregano, salt, and pepper. Mix well. Cook for 4 to 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. This will start to soften the vegetables.
4. Add the lentils into the pot and mix. Add the vegetable stock and the 3 cups of water. Let the soup simmer uncovered until the lentils are soft and the soup looks creamy (about 30 minutes).

Day 6 recipes

Apple cinnamon oatmeal

Prep Time	Cooking Time	Servings
5 minutes	10 minutes	2

Ingredients

- 1 medium crisp apple (Fuji or apple of your choice), diced
- 2 teaspoons unsalted butter or plant-based spread
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar
- ¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 cup quick-cooking oats
- 2 cups (16 fluid ounces) fat-free milk, 1% milk, or non-dairy milk
- A pinch of salt

Instructions

1. Dice the apple into ¼-inch pieces.
2. Place the apple, butter or plant-based spread, brown sugar, and cinnamon in a 1-quart pot over medium heat. Cook uncovered, stirring occasionally with a mixing spoon until the apples are soft (about 3 to 4 minutes).
3. Add the oats, milk or non-dairy milk, and pinch of salt to the pot. Cook while stirring constantly, until the oats are creamy.

Serving suggestion: Serve with cinnamon sprinkled on top.

Meatless chili

Prep Time	Cooking Time	Servings
20 minutes	30 minutes	4

Ingredients

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 1 small yellow onion, diced
- 1 medium green bell pepper, diced
- 2 medium celery ribs, diced
- 3 small carrots, thinly sliced
- 3 garlic cloves, minced (chopped into small pieces)
- 4 tablespoons mild chili powder
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- ½ teaspoon sea salt
- 1 (15-ounce) can low sodium or no salt added red kidney beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 (15-ounce) can low sodium or no salt added red pinto beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 (28-ounce) can crushed tomatoes
- ½ cup (4 fluid ounces) water or vegetable broth
- Toppings (only if you want them): chopped green onions (scallions), chopped spinach, reduced-fat sour cream, brown rice

Instructions

1. Add the olive oil and all-purpose flour to a large pot over medium heat. Mix them well to make a paste, then cook until the paste is golden brown.
2. Dice the onion, bell pepper, and celery into ¼-inch pieces. Slice the carrots thin. Mince the garlic into small

pieces.

3. Add the onion, bell pepper, celery, carrots, garlic, and seasonings (chili powder, cumin, oregano, and sea salt) to the pot. Mix well and cook until the vegetables look soft (about 1 to 2 minutes).
4. Add the beans, tomatoes, and water or vegetable broth to the pot. Cover the pot with a lid and let it simmer for about 20 minutes.
5. Serve with your choice of toppings, if you want.

You can store the leftover chili in airtight containers in the refrigerator. They will stay fresh for up to 3 days. You also can freeze the leftover chili. It's best to eat frozen leftovers within 3 months.

Green Spanish frittata

Prep Time	Cooking Time	Servings
10 minutes	65 minutes	3

Ingredients

• 2 medium russet potatoes, roasted • 2 cups spinach, chopped • 1 small yellow onion, thinly sliced • 8 eggs • ½ teaspoon salt • Ground black pepper to taste	• 1 teaspoon mild chili powder • 3 tablespoons milk or plain yogurt • ¼ cup shredded cheese (cheddar, Monterey Jack, blend, or other) • 1 tablespoon olive oil

Instructions

1. Preheat the oven to 400 °F (204 °C).
2. Rinse the potatoes under cool water. Pat them dry with paper towels. Prick the potatoes with a fork in 2 to 3 places.
3. Place the potatoes on a baking sheet and put them in the oven. Bake for about 45 minutes or until fork tender. Fork tender means a fork can slide into the center of the potatoes easily.
4. While the potatoes are baking, chop the spinach into ½-inch pieces. Thinly slice the onion. Set the vegetables to the side while you get the rest of the ingredients ready.
5. Crack the eggs into a large bowl. Add the salt, pepper, chili powder, and milk or yogurt. Mix well with a whisk or fork and set it to the side.
6. Shred the cheese and set it to the side. You can use a

peeler, box grater, or food processor.

7. Once the potatoes are out of the oven and cooled, chop them into 1-inch pieces. Set them to the side.
8. Preheat the oven to 425 °F (218 °C).
9. Add the olive oil, spinach, and onion to a 10-inch oven-safe skillet over medium heat. Cook, stirring occasionally, for 5 minutes until the onions are golden brown. Add the potatoes and spread them evenly over the skillet with the other vegetables.
0. Pour the egg mixture into the skillet. Add the cheese on top. Keep cooking the mixture on the stove top for about 30 seconds to 1 minute.
11. Put the skillet in the preheated oven and bake until the eggs are puffed and look cooked (about 7 to 14 minutes). The center of the frittata should jiggle a little when you give it a small shake.
12. Take the skillet out of the oven and let it cool.

Serving suggestion: Serve with fresh herbs or a side salad.

Day 7 recipes

Peanut butter and banana toast

Prep Time	Cooking Time	Servings
5 minutes	2 to 10 minutes	1

Ingredients

• 2 slices whole wheat bread, toasted • 3 tablespoons peanut butter	• 1 banana, sliced

Instructions

1. Toast the bread.
    - If you're using an oven, preheat it to 350 °F (177 °C). Place the bread on a baking sheet and bake for 4 to 5 minutes. Take out the baking sheet and flip the bread over. Put it back in the oven for another 4 to 5 minutes.
    - If you're you're using a toaster, toast the bread for 2 to 3 minutes, or for as long as you want.
2. Spread the peanut butter on both slices of toast. Top with the banana slices.

Hearty taco bowl

Prep Time	Cooking Time	Servings
10 minutes	3 to 10 minutes	1

Ingredients

• 1 cup meatless chili* • 2 cups spinach, chopped • 1 green onion (scallion), chopped	• 3 tablespoons shredded cheese (cheddar, Monterey Jack, blend, or other) • 1 (6-inch) whole wheat tortilla

**To cook meatless chili, see the recipe in the "Day 6 recipes" section. If you have leftovers from that recipe, you can use it for this recipe.*

Instructions

1. Reheat the meatless chili in the microwave or on the stove top until it's hot.
    - **If you're using a microwave:** Place the chili in a microwave-safe bowl and cover the bowl loosely with plastic wrap. Microwave for 3 minutes.
    - **If you're using a stove top:** Place the chili in a pot over medium heat. Let it simmer uncovered for 5 to 10 minutes.
2. Chop the spinach into strips. Chop the green onion into small pieces.
3. Shred the cheese. You can use a peeler, box grater, or food processor.
4. Layer the chili, spinach, and cheese in a soup bowl. Sprinkle the green onion on top.

5. Serve with the tortilla.

Chicken and broccoli stir-fry

Prep Time	Cooking Time	Servings
5 minutes	15 minutes	1

Ingredients

- ½ medium onion, chopped
- ½ medium green bell pepper, chopped
- 1 boneless, skinless chicken breast (about 6 ounces)
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- Ground black pepper to taste
- 2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
- 1 ½ tablespoons reduced-sodium soy sauce
- 1 teaspoon brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 3 cups broccoli florets

Instructions

1. Chop the onion and bell pepper into ½-inch pieces.
2. Cut the chicken breast into 1-inch cubes. Season with the garlic powder and ground black pepper.
3. Mix the vinegar, soy sauce, brown sugar, and 1 tablespoon of olive oil in a small bowl. Set it to the side.
4. Heat 1 tablespoon of olive oil in a large skillet over high heat. Let it warm up for 1 to 2 minutes. Add the chicken cubes and spread them evenly in the skillet. Let them cook for 1 minute on each side, without stirring.

5. Add the broccoli florets to the skillet. Mix well. Add the onion and bell pepper. Mix for another 1 to 2 minutes.
6. Add the sauce mixture and stir for 2 to 3 minutes. Keep cooking while mixing until the chicken is well done. You should be able to break the chicken cubes apart with your spatula or cooking spoon.

Serving suggestion: Serve with brown rice or whole wheat noodles.

Commonly asked questions

What produce is in season if I live in the NYC metro area?

Spring (March to May)	• **Vegetables:** Artichokes, asparagus, broccoli, dandelion greens, lettuce, mushrooms, peas, radishes, ramps, rhubarb, sorrel, spinach, spring onions, turnips • **Fruits:** Apricots, rhubarb, strawberries (buy all 3 early in the season)
Summer (June to August)	• **Vegetables:** Beet greens, corn, cucumbers, green beans, lettuce, okra, peppers, snap peas, summer squash, Swiss chard, tomatillos, tomatoes, zucchini • **Fruits:** Apricots, blueberries, cantaloupe, cherries, kiwi, mangoes, nectarines, peaches, raspberries, strawberries, watermelon

Fall (September to November)	• **Vegetables:** Brussels sprouts, cauliflower, celery, fennel, kale, leeks, parsnips, pumpkins, rutabagas, sunchokes, turnips, winter squash • **Fruits:** Apples, cranberries, grapes, pears, persimmons, quince • **Other:** Chestnuts
Winter (December to February)	• **Vegetables:** Beets, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, carrots, celery root, kale, leeks, parsnips, rutabagas, turnips • **Fruits:** Apples, grapefruit, lemons, oranges, tangelos, tangerines • **Other:** Dried beans, herbs

How do I store fresh produce to make it last longer and keep it from spoiling?

Storing fruits

- Most fruits ripen best at room temperature. Once they're ripe, put each fruit in its own plastic bag and store it in the refrigerator. The bag can stay open.
- Berries, cherries, figs, and grapes need to be refrigerated right after you buy them. If they're moldy, throw them away before you put them in the refrigerator. Store each fruit in its own shallow container or bowl, and it cover loosely with plastic wrap.

Storing vegetables

- Take off or loosen tight bands. Put each vegetable in its own plastic bag and store it in the refrigerator. The bag can stay open.
- Some root vegetables have leaves that you can eat (such as beets, radishes, and turnips). You can cook these greens just like other leafy vegetables. If you want to use the greens, cut them off higher up on the stalk. Put the greens from each vegetable in its own plastic bag and store it in the refrigerator. The bag can stay open. Most greens from root vegetables will stay fresh for about 3 days.

Tips to help keep fruits and vegetables from spoiling

- Avoid washing fruits and vegetables before storing them. The extra moisture helps harmful bacteria grow. This can make fruits and vegetables spoil and get moldy faster. It's better to wash fruits and vegetables right before you eat or use them. If you want to wash your fruits and vegetables before storing them, that's OK. Just make sure to wash and dry them very well. Put each fruit and vegetable in its own airtight container lined with paper towels and store it in the refrigerator.
- Some fruits and vegetables let out ethylene (EH-thuh-leen) gas as they ripen. This natural gas makes nearby

produce ripen faster. Store these fruits and vegetables away from everything else:

◦ Apples ◦ Apricots ◦ Avocados ◦ Cantaloupe ◦ Figs ◦ Honeydew melon ◦ Nectarines ◦ Onions	◦ Peaches ◦ Pears ◦ Peppers ◦ Plums ◦ Potatoes ◦ Tomatoes ◦ Unripe bananas

Organic produce can cost a lot. Is it OK to buy inorganic produce instead?

Yes, it's OK to buy inorganic produce. Eating lots of fruits and vegetables, whether organic or inorganic, offer many health benefits, such as:

- Lots of vitamins, minerals, and fiber.
- A lower risk for heart disease and some cancers.
- Better digestion (how your body breaks down the food you eat).
- Better weight management (staying a healthy weight).

You can also buy frozen produce. Frozen produce is picked and then frozen when it has the most flavor and nutrients. This means it can be just as healthy or even more healthy than fresh produce. A healthy option is plain frozen

vegetables without extra salt, fats, or sugars.

What foods are good for freezing?

Freezing is a great way to store and preserve food. You can buy food in bulk and store it for longer without it spoiling. You also can freeze leftovers, which saves you money and reduces waste.

Here are some foods that are good for freezing:

Fruit

All fruit can be frozen. Before you freeze fruit, make sure to wash and dry it well. You can freeze fruit in small batches and use it for smoothies.

Vegetables

Most vegetables can be frozen (such as carrots, peas, broccoli, and cauliflower). You can freeze vegetables in small batches and use it for soups.

Before you freeze vegetables, blanch them. This will help keep their color and nutrients. To blanch vegetables:

1. Put the vegetable in a pot of boiling water for a short time (about 1 to 3 minutes).
2. Move the vegetable to a bowl of ice water right away to stop the cooking process.
3. Once the vegetable is cool, drain it and pat it dry with a

paper towel.

What foods can I cook in batches?

Batch cooking is a great way to have healthy meals. The following foods can be cooked ahead of time in batches. You can use them for salads, tacos, sandwiches, or side dishes:

- Meats, such as beef, chicken, and pork
- Plant-based protein, such as beans
- Grains, such as pasta, quinoa, and rice
- Roasted vegetables, such as broccoli and carrots

Batch cooking is also a great way to cook some ingredients or foods that need longer cooking time. Casseroles, soups, stews, chili, sauces, salsas, muffins, and scones can easily be made in batches. They also can be frozen. The key is to portion them before you freeze them. This way, when you're ready to use a portion, it's easy to thaw out. Remember to label and date the containers you keep in the freezer.

What are some healthy, low-cost foods I can keep in my pantry?

- Oats, pasta, and rice
- Lentils and canned or dried beans (such as chickpeas,

black beans, and kidney beans)

- Canned chicken or fish (such as salmon and tuna)
- Canned vegetables (such as carrots, corn, and green beans)
- Canned crushed tomatoes, diced tomatoes, or tomato paste
- Low sodium chicken or vegetable broth
- Peanut butter
- Olive oil and vinegar (such as apple cider vinegar and white wine vinegar)
- Herbs and spices (such as cinnamon, garlic powder, onion powder, oregano, parsley, and thyme)

How long can I keep leftovers?

You can keep leftovers in your refrigerator for 3 to 4 days, or in your freezer for 3 to 4 months. **If you keep leftovers in your refrigerator, it's best to eat them within 2 days.**

What do the dates on food and drink products mean?

Examples of common date labels are:

"BEST IF USED BY" or "BEST IF USED BEFORE"

The "Best If Used By" or "Best If Used Before" date tells you how long the product will last before it loses its flavor or quality. To get the best flavor and quality of the product,

eat or drink it before this date.

The “Best If Used By” or “Best If Used Before” date is not:

- A purchase date. A purchase date is the date you need to buy the product by.
- A safety date. A safety date is the last date the product is considered safe to eat or drink for health reasons.

“SELL BY”

The “Sell By” date tells the store how long to offer the product for sale. For the best quality, you should buy the product before this date.

The “Sell By” date is not a safety date.

“USE BY”

The “Use By” date is the last date recommended for using the product while it’s still at its best quality. The product may not be safe to eat or drink after this date because it could spoil or grow harmful bacteria.

The “Use By” date is not a safety date, except for baby formula. If you use baby formula after the “Use By” date, it may lose important nutrients that babies need. It could also become unsafe for babies to drink.

Resources

MSK resources

Food Resources in New York and New Jersey

This handout lists organizations and programs that offer food resources in New York and New Jersey. To learn more, read *Food Resources in New York and New Jersey* (www.mskcc.org/pe/food-resources). You can also ask a member of your care team for a printed copy.

MSK Food Pantry Program

646-888-8046

The food pantry program gives food to people in need during their cancer treatment. To learn more, talk with your clinical dietitian nutritionist or social worker, or call the number above.

Cookbooks

Cook for Your Life: Delicious, Nourishing Recipes for Before, During, and After Cancer Treatment by Ann Ogden Gaffney

You can buy this book on Amazon.com and Barnes & Noble.com.

Good and Cheap: Eat Well on $4 a Day by Leanne Brown

Visit www.leannebrown.com/good-and-cheap-2 to get a free online version of this cookbook.

Websites

American Cancer Society's Patient Programs and Services

www.cancer.org/treatment/support-programs-and-services.html

This organization has programs and services to help people find information about cancer prevention, treatment, and recovery.

American Institute for Cancer Research's New American Plate: Setting Your Table to Prevent Cancer

www.aicr.org/cancer-prevention/healthy-eating/new-american-plate

This website has recipes and nutrition tips.

Cancer*Care*

www.cancercare.org

This organization offers free, professional support services for caregivers and loved ones. Services are available online, over the phone, and in person. It also offers caregiving information and other resources.

Cancer Hope Network

www.cancerhopenetwork.org

This organization helps connect patients and caregivers with resources, programs, and support to ease the cancer journey.

Caregiver Action Network

www.caregiveraction.org
This organization supports and educates caregivers, helping them connect with other caregivers and become their own advocates. Membership is free to caregivers.

Meals on Wheels
www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org
This program delivers nutritious meals to older adults.

Mom's Meals
www.momsmeals.com/our-food-programs/medically-tailored-meals/protein-plus/cancer-support-meal-delivery
This program offers high-protein menu options made to meet the nutrition needs of cancer patients.

NeedyMeds
www.needymeds.org
This organization shares information about prescription assistance programs available at no cost to those in need.

The Social Security Administration's Extra Help Program
www.ssa.gov/medicare/part-d-extra-help
This program helps people with limited income and resources pay for Medicare prescription drug program costs. This includes the cost of premiums, deductibles, and co-pays.

If you have questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

Tips for Healthy Eating on a Budget - Last updated on March 11, 2026
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