

https://www.laramieboomerang.com/news/local_news/extension-staffer-offers-tips-to-limit-grocery-trips/article_8ec11d80-fe57-5862-a5f0-8c8859fc938d.html

FEATURED

TOP STORY

OPEN ACCESS

Nutrition

Extension staffer offers tips to limit grocery trips

By ELLEN FIKE news@laramieboomerang.com

Apr 22, 2020

With the COVID-19 pandemic continuing to infect people every single day, people are still being encouraged to stay at home as much as possible.

But there's one errand that's still essential: Grocery shopping. Although there is an increased usage of grocery delivery services from various chains and apps like Instacart, most people still will have to make some type of grocery run before Gov. Mark Gordon's orders to limit gatherings of more than 10 people is expected to be lifted at the end of the month.

To help mitigate time spent in the store and ways to stretch the grocery budget, the University of Wyoming's Cent\$ible Nutrition program assistant Abby Rux compiled some tips for Albany County residents.

"The biggest thing is planning your menu out for the week and what you need from the store," she said. "Even if you were a planner before the virus, you might have to up your game."

One of the biggest hurdles Rux has seen with meal planning during a pandemic is that certain ingredients might not be available for a dish. She suggested people try to find backup plans for recipes in case they can't get items or try to find substitutions.

Making a grocery list, either on paper or through a cell phone app, is crucial to a strategic shopping trip. To make the list even more detailed, specify the ingredient quantity needed. List items that are located near each other in the store, while leaving perishables and frozen food for last.

"I would recommend planning out a grocery list and menu for two weeks," Rux said. "Plan out your meals as much as possible. Look at what you have in your pantry and see what you can work with. Keep track of how much storage space you have. Think of how long your items are going to last."

Meals such as stews, stir-frys and casseroles help stretch items into bigger portions. It's usually cheaper to buy items in bulk and fruits and vegetables in season, but only if a person is going to actually use the items they purchased. Beans are an inexpensive protein option, and carrots, potatoes, greens, apples and bananas are usually always inexpensive fresh produce choices.

However, frozen and canned fruits and veggies are perfectly reasonable and healthy options, Rux noted.

"There's been some misinformation floating around about frozen and canned foods, but I think it's shifting right now," she said. "People are always thinking fresh is the ideal kind of produce, but that's not always the case. You will get just as many nutrients with canned and frozen fruits and vegetables."

In-season produce around this time of year includes melons, cabbage, broccoli and asparagus.

Rux also pointed to a website called FightBAC.org, which will help people figure out how long they can keep leftovers and provides ways to store fruits and veggies. Rux did add that people shouldn't wash their fresh produce with soapy water, because they shouldn't put chemicals on their food. Plus, the soap and water will start the decomposition process in the produce, meaning it will go bad faster.

"I think we got caught up in the fast-paced lifestyle we had and believed it was easier to just go out to eat," Rux said. "A big positive to come out of this bad situation is that people are coming together again and figuring out how food can make you bond. We were missing out on that. I think it's great to see, but I just really don't want people to wash their food in soapy water."

Ellen Fike is a freelance writer living in Cheyenne. She can be reached at elfylucille@gmail.com. Follow her on Twitter at @EllenLFike.