

17

SAVING MONEY WITH 4LEAF

By J. Morris Hicks

On the surface, it might appear that healthy eating will cost a lot more than our standard meat, dairy and egg diet. And since most people never get beneath the surface, the perceived high cost of plant-based eating just gives them one more reason not to give up their Typical Western Diet.

But for me, a 70-year old man enjoying vibrant health, I see things much differently. For a person who prepares his own food up until 6 p.m. and goes out to eat almost every night, I have actually saved money. Since I made the switch to plant-based eating in 2003, I calculate that I save around \$400 per month--adding up to a total of almost \$60,000 over the past 12 years. So how did I save that kind of money?

Two ways: by saving on the meals I prepare at home and saving even more money when I eat in restaurants. Let's begin with the typical meals that I prepare at home: my *Sailors Daily Oatmeal* and *Sailors Super Lunch or Dinner*. You can find both under "Recipes" at 4leafprogram.com.

4LEAF GUIDE TO VIBRANT HEALTH

It all boils down to cost per 100 calories. So, in preparation for this chapter, I visited my online grocer at PeaPod.com, where you can find the price, calories, percent fat, and fiber grams for every food that you can imagine. I then analyzed fourteen common foods, ranking them from least expensive to most expensive on a cost per 100 calories basis.

Notice in the chart below that by far, the least expensive foods are the grains and legumes. Since the bulk of my calories in both of my “go-to” meals are grains and legumes, averaging about 15 cents per 100 calories, it means that I can have a 500-calorie meal with over 300 of those 500 calories costing about 45 cents.

Even after adding a lot of the more expensive fruits and/or veggies (the other 200 calories), I can still prepare a pretty good meal (for one person) for around two or three dollars.

Food	\$Cost per 100 calories	% Fat	Fiber
1. Brown Rice	.08	7%	A
2. Black Beans	.21	3%	A
3. Eggs	.28	57%	Zero
4. Cream Cheese	.30	80%	Zero
5. Wieners	.38	85%	Zero
6. Bacon	.38	75%	Zero
7. Chicken Breast	.55	17%	Zero
8. Apples	.62	3%	A
9. Cantaloupe	.69	5%	A
10. Oranges	.69	2%	A
11. Frozen Broccoli	.83	10%	A
12. Frozen Spinach	.93	10%	A
13. Fresh Broccoli	2.42	10%	A
14. Fresh Spinach	4.33	10%	A

What do we see here? Grains and legumes are great bargains. Averaging around 15 cents per 100 calories, low in fat and high in fiber, these are the kinds of foods that will keep you going between meals and won't break the bank.

What else do we see? The animal-based foods (3-7) are no bargain at any price. All are high in fat, loaded with cholesterol and have zero fiber or phytonutrients, all of which contribute to poor health.

What about those seemingly expensive vegetables at the bottom of the chart? Keep in mind that while you may put what seems like a lot of broccoli or spinach on your plate, they don't contain very many calories and will be a very small proportion of the total calories in the meal. They are loaded with health promoting vitamins, fiber and phytonutrients and you definitely should include them in your 4Leaf meals. Just don't let their cost per 100 calories scare you away!

Taking a look at fiber. Notice that all of the plant-based foods got an "A" in this category; whereas all five of the animal-based foods have absolutely no fiber. We need fiber, and we need much more than most of us are getting. The average American gets less than 10 grams of fiber daily, when experts recommend we get at least 25 grams per day. A whole food, plant-based diet will deliver more than 50 grams of fiber a day.

A word about starch. As Dr. McDougall says, "People have eaten a starch-based diet for thousands of years." They derived the bulk of their calories from grains, legumes and potatoes while eating as many fresh fruits and vegetables as they could find.

Without enough starch in our diet, we feel like we're

starving within a few hours after eating a plate of just fruits or just vegetables. Those starches also save us money.

Summary of savings with a plant-based diet. In the old days, I would eat a few sausage biscuits for breakfast and would grill some kind of meat when I had dinner at home. On a weekly basis, I would have about 12 meals at home and would eat 9 meals out. Believe it or not, it's those meals outside the home where I have saved the most money.

Savings at home. For my twelve weekly meals consumed at home, I computed an average cost of \$3--compared to \$5 per meal when I used to eat some combination of meat, dairy, eggs and/or fish at almost every home-cooked meal. With a savings of \$2 per meal, I am now saving about \$24 a week on those twelve meals.

Savings in restaurants. This is where I save the big bucks. In Chapter 15, I described my *creative ordering* process, where I order a \$20 entrée, ask them to hold the meat, add a lot more of the grains and veggies, and to kindly adjust the price accordingly. By eating this way, I conservatively estimate that I save about \$8 per meal. At nine meals a week, that works out to a \$72 weekly savings.

Summary of Annual Savings

- \$1248 saved at home. ($52 \times 24 = 1248$)
- \$3744 saved eating out. ($52 \times 72 = 3744$)
- \$4992 Annual Savings

What could you do with an extra five grand a year? Install solar panels on your roof, take a great vacation, put aside money for retirement or your kids' college education, or give to your favorite charity?

The Hidden Costs of Animal Foods. In addition to that five grand per year, you will also save money on medical bills, prescription drugs, vitamins, lost work and income due to illness and so much more. If you add up all the factors involved, eating a whole food, plant-based diet is one of the best bargains that you will experience in your lifetime. Then, when you consider the many benefits of “vibrant health” for yourself while doing great things for the environment, there is simply no comparison.

Avoid cans and save even more money. Not only do those containers almost double the cost of the contents, they’re also an environmental nightmare. I did a little analysis of canned vs. dried beans. Here’s what I found:

The canned beans cost \$.35 per 100 calories compared to only \$.21 for the dried beans. If I eat 100 calories of beans every day, each year I save \$51.10 by using the dry beans that come in a bag.

What about the environmental impact? In the USA alone, we use 37 billion cans each year. If we didn’t use cans at all, we could save enough energy to power 36 million homes. We’d also save an enormous amount of water and finite metal materials. That said, the impact of eating animal-based foods is monumental compared to eating plant-based even with using cans. So if you just can’t manage to soak and cook your own beans (my co-author is guilty here), then use cans and recycle.

Want to see the full analysis on hpjmh.com? Just Google “Canned or Dried Morris Hicks.” In fact, if you want to find what I have written on almost any topic, just include the two words “Morris Hicks” in your query. One or more of my 900+ blog-posts will probably appear.