

Healthy Grocery Shopping



Healthy eating begins in the grocery store. Learning how to healthfully navigate through the supermarket aisles and select the right foods provides one of the most powerful opportunities to improve you and your family's health and well-being. Today the science is now crystal clear and irrefutable—the foods that cross our lips have a profound and lasting impact on all aspects of our health. Thankfully, it's as simple as the choice between right and wrong. The right foods like fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and nuts prevent disease and give us life, while the wrong foods like sugary beverages, fast foods, and junk foods promote disease and reduce vitality. I know what ends up in your cupboards and your fridge is dictated by what you put in your grocery cart, so I am on a mission to provide you with the grocery shopping education you need to ensure that your cart gets filled with the right foods for a healthy life.

In the pages that follow, I am going to arm you with a road map for healthy grocery shopping that will place you and your loved ones on the fast track to nutritional excellence. I am determined to help you fully experience the awesome benefits that healthy, home-prepared foods can provide and understand that the first step is putting the right foods in the grocery cart. I am also fully aware of how overwhelming and frankly daunting healthy grocery shopping can seem. With up to 40,000 food choices including 100 different cereals and 50 different yogurts available to choose from, it's a wonder that even the most motivated and knowledgeable healthy shoppers can triumph. But have no fear! I am here to ensure your success. As a nutrition expert, wife, and mother of four that has been grocery shopping for three decades, I have gotten it down to a science that you too can apply and succeed with.

My guidance and instructions promise to be straightforward, clear, prescriptive and in some cases profoundly liberating. Over the years in my private wellness coaching practice, I have taken my pupils through the grocery store to instruct them in healthy food selections. I call these sessions my “grocery clinics,” and they have been proven to dramatically improve the nutritional health of those I mentor. Consider this chapter your grocery clinic. Your first step should be to commit the “golden rules” for healthy eating to memory before your next trip to the supermarket. They are the bedrock for nutritional success and can easily be mastered in a short period of time. For optimal success, take the information that follows with you to the grocery store until you have mastered the task. Follow the “ground rules” provided for each basic area of the grocery store until you feel like you have it down pat, and of course, use my list of Dr. Ann approved foods to keep things fail safe. I want you to take complete advantage of the detailed shopping lists I have conveniently provided to be sure you are stocking up on the right foods and avoiding the wrong ones. Eventually, you will not need my written guidance because knowledge of the fundamental “ground rules” will become second nature, and you will automatically apply them as the basis for all the foods that go into your shopping cart. Lastly, because I want nothing less than the very best nourishment for you and your family, I promise that if you follow my guidance that is exactly what you will get.

The Golden Rules Of **HEALTHY EATING**

Enjoy:

- A wealth of fruits and veggies, especially the “superstars”
- Monounsaturated fats as your main fats—extra virgin olive oil, canola oil, nuts, seeds, and avocados
- 100% whole grains—at least three servings a day
- Omega 3 fats regularly—oily fish, omega 3 eggs, canola oil, walnuts, flax seeds, dark leafy greens, and whole soy foods
- Any variety of beans—on a daily basis is best
- Healthy protein at each meal—fish, shellfish, poultry, low fat or skim dairy products, nuts, seeds, beans, whole soy foods, and omega 3 eggs
- Make water your primary beverage

Restrict/Avoid:

- “Great White Hazards”—white flour products like white bread, white rice, white potatoes, and sugar/sweets
- Saturated fats—fatty cuts of red meat, whole dairy products, butter, and palm oil
- Trans fats—strictly avoid this group, which includes stick margarine, processed foods containing partially hydrogenated oils, and shortening
- Red meat, especially processed and fatty varieties—Limit red meat to two servings or less weekly
- Sugary beverages—soda, fruit drinks, sports drinks, vitamin waters, etc.

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Reality Check

Grocery stores are in the business of selling foods for maximum profits—not improving your health. This is a critically important concept to grasp because, with few exceptions, the foods that have the biggest profit margins are the unhealthiest like sodas, pastries, and chips. It is precisely these two opposing forces—what is best for grocery stores versus what is best for human health—that creates the confusion and bewilderment consumers feel when trying to decipher which foods are good for them and which foods are bad. In the pages that follow, I promise to clear away this dense fog of confusion so you can readily and easily make the right choices.

Before we begin, I want you to get a sense of how the grocery stores' quest for profits can create powerful challenges for “healthy” grocery shopping, especially in those who are uninformed or naïve to this reality. Relentless and potent marketing forces are at play throughout the grocery store to lure you to buy food, especially those that bring the biggest profits. Have you ever noticed how consistent the layout of one grocery store is to another? Indeed, even among competing chains, the aisles display an uncanny degree of uniformity. This is not mere happenstance. A massive amount of meticulous consumer behavior research has gone into creating the grocery store layout that results in the most sales and the highest profits. To illustrate, let me share a few common strategies. Staple items like eggs and milk that comprise the most frequent grocery store purchases are almost always placed towards the back of the grocery store. This placement forces you to walk past hundreds of other food products that grocers hope you will decide to buy along the way. Sections nearest the entrance to the store are the preferred locations for “sensory



rich” items. These are the products that exploit our automatic attraction to powerful sensory stimuli like the vivid colors of fresh flowers, the aroma of freshly brewed coffee (notice the coffee shops popping up just inside your grocer’s front door) or the irresistible scent of freshly baked goods. Grocers know that the more intense the sensory stimuli the more likely we will buy on impulse. Impulse buys are the proverbial “icing on the cake” for supermarkets. And how about those obtrusive, practically knock-you-over displays placed in high profile areas like the end of aisles or just as you walk in through the grocer’s front doors? These spots are prime real estate and are logically reserved for foods with the highest profit margins (nutritionally anemic, processed junk foods) and the ones we notoriously tend to grab on a whim. I can recall walking into a supermarket a few years back to be met at the entrance by an almost majestic display of junk foods. There was literally a floor to ceiling archway of bags of potato chips and cases of soda that you had to enter followed by an almost enclosed circular arrangement of assorted boxes of cookies and donuts. It was like entering a junk food carnival. I could go on, but what I want you to really grasp is that where and how grocery stores display products is a highly researched, proven science used to encourage you to buy as much food as possible and make them the greatest profits. Let me warn you again that for the most part, the most lucrative sales are for the wrong foods—the ones that promote chronic diseases like diabetes, obesity, and heart disease. Don’t give in to these ploys!

You Have The Power!

It is my hope, now that you are armed with the awareness that a supermarket’s main interest is in making money and not your health, you will feel compelled to always shop with a strong sense of personal empowerment and a deeply committed purpose. Only YOU should be in control of the foods that go into your cart, not the manipulative forces of grocery store marketing. Make a concerted effort to tell yourself each and every time you walk through the supermarket front doors that you will remain strong and steadfast in selecting foods that are good for you and your family (which I will carefully outline for you in the upcoming sections). Stand tall and remain proactive with every step down every aisle and do not succumb to the marketing forces that push you to make unhealthy (not on Dr. Ann’s list!) choices. Learn to consciously shut it all out like I do. No giving in to your senses! No impulse buying! No extraneous purchases! No wrong foods in your cart! Make a

mental, or better yet, a written pact with you and your loved ones that everything that goes into your grocery cart will emanate from you and only you. You are the nutritional gatekeeper of your family, and your selections should always be in the best interests of their health and well-being.



Attitude Adjustment

Before we get into the grocery store, I have some final wisdom that I know will make the process more pleasant and more successful. Everything is easier when we are happy, so I urge you to develop a positive mental attitude! I cannot stress enough how important it is to nurture and cultivate a joyful, cheery frame of mind relative to your grocery shopping duties. The reason for this all-important attitude adjustment is elemental—it simply makes no sense to loathe an activity that is required for health. Make no mistake—you and your family's chances of achieving and maintaining good health without regularly eating home-prepared meals is near impossible. Within our modern food culture, you simply cannot rely on the foods or meals someone else has provided—from convenience stores or restaurants—and expect good health. In fact—expect the opposite. Studies consistently show that home-prepared meals provide more of the good, health-promoting stuff like fruits, vegetables, fiber and essential nutrients while restaurant-based meals provide more (and in many cases way more) of the disease-promoting stuff like excess calories, sodium, refined carbs, unhealthy fats and sugar. Thankfully, there are a host of sound reasons why you should be positive and upbeat about your grocery shopping opportunities.

- ▶ **It can definitely be gentler on your wallet.** A significant portion of your food dollars spent in a restaurant or fast food joint go toward non-food related expenses like labor and manufacturing.
- ▶ **As noted above, grocery shopping offers a profound opportunity to improve your family's health, especially if you are the "nutritional gatekeeper" for your household.** According to the experts, about 72 percent of what crosses the lips of family members is under the direct control of a single individual. This is the individual who does most of the grocery shopping and meal preparations, and in about 90 percent of households it is the same individual, AKA the nutritional gatekeeper. For me, the nutritional gatekeeper of my household, I consider grocery shopping a labor of love. I urge you to cultivate this same belief and promise it will warm your heart.
- ▶ **Healthy food choices abound.** Never before has there been such a dazzling array of healthy choices in the standard grocer. Whether it is tapping into the goodness of whole grains or the stunning variety of brightly colored fruits and veggies—disease-busting, life-saving selections are more bountiful than ever.

- **It provides an opportunity to get some “lifestyle exercise.”** Grocery shopping includes a bit of walking, pushing, pulling, and lifting. Fortunately, this movement can make a meaningful contribution to your body’s innate requirement for regular physical activity. In my grocery store, I am well known by the baggers as the lady who makes you thread her arms with as many shopping bags as possible to avoid using the cart and never wants help to her car. I do this because I know it is a very efficient way for me to simultaneously get some resistance and aerobic exercise during my shopping trips.
- **It offers some cognitive exercise too.** Using your intellectual capacities to compare prices, calculate savings, or decipher food labels is good for your brain.
- **Grocery shopping offers a social outlet.** We are inherently social beings and require interaction with others for good health, especially mental health. The grocery store can be a common place to run into friends and neighbors. Whether you simply extend a warm smile or engage in a full conversation, the social connection is good for you.

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Dr. Ann's... **WHAT'S FOR DINNER?**

One day, years back when I was juggling a busy medical practice with raising four young children and putting a tasty, healthy, husband-happy meal on the table each night, I had a revelation. I recognized that the hard part of cooking dinner was figuring out what I was going to make and having the proper ingredients readily available in my kitchen.

And the light bulb went off. I realized that if I had ten or so dinner meal plans that I knew satisfied my criteria for health and taste, along with the ingredients that comprised them, grocery shopping and preparing dinner would be so much easier and less taxing. And so I did it.

I spent a Saturday morning writing down fifteen dinner meal plans and their ingredients on one side of fifteen separate 3 × 5 index cards. If I did not know the recipe by rote memory, I wrote it down on the flip side of the index card. I laminated the index cards at the Kinko's down the street, punched a hole in the top left corner of each, and put them all onto a simple O ring. This handy, makeshift "Dinner Menus and Recipe Booklet" became my constant pocketbook companion and my secret weapon for de-stressing family dinner.

In fact, I found my portable, compact dinner guide so helpful—I created one suitable for the marketplace. I call it *What's for Dinner... 15 Healthy, Family-Friendly Meal Plans and Recipes*. You can own this convenient tool too, which is available at:

www.DrAnnWellness.com

Before You Go

In addition to putting on that happy face and feeling good about your upcoming grocery shopping experience, here are a few additional before-you-go tips that will help you.

1. **Do not shop hungry.** The hungrier you are, the more likely you will be tempted to place high-risk, unhealthy foods like sweets and junk foods into your shopping cart. Because of what transpires in our brains in a state of hunger, we simply lose self-control, especially when surrounded by a large variety of tempting foods that are just an arm's length away. Take the edge off your hunger by eating a "smart" pre-shopping snack as needed. For best results, choose something with a little healthy fat, some protein, and some fiber. My top picks would be a small handful of nuts, some baby carrots dipped in hummus, or a few apple slices spread with a bit of peanut butter.
2. **Beware of the pitfalls of shopping with young children.** For those of you, like me, who have had to grocery shop with young children in tow, you already know that it slows things down (which is great for the grocery stores) and frequently creates a more stressful shopping experience. What you may not recognize is that those little ones can become a powerful force in terms of unhealthy foods piling up in the grocery cart. The reason is fundamental and human—"the whine factor" works! And boy do the grocery stores know it. Resisting the pleas, cries and at times, full on temper tantrums flowing from a child's mouth when they "want that food" is extremely challenging. It is human nature to give in. You may have noticed that the kid-friendly junk foods—think pre-packed "lunches," sugary cereals, and candy are on the lower tiers of the grocery shelves. Grocers are well aware that if the little ones can see it they will want it and beg you for it if they have to. Over the past decade, grocery stores have become increasingly kid-friendly with the likes of free cookies (ugh, even in the age of the childhood obesity epidemic!) and kiddie-sized shopping carts because it is good business for them. Beware however, these gimmicks may not be what are best for you or your small children.
3. **Shop with a list.** I cannot overstate the power of this practice. Carving out a little time to sit down and plan out your family meals so you can create a shopping list has numerous benefits. First and foremost, it provides a safeguard against impulse purchases that can boost what you pay at checkout and sabotage your good health. Impulse purchases are notorious for high-risk foods. Shopping lists help to ensure that your kitchen will be stocked with the foods and ingredients your family needs for upcoming meals, and save you wasteful trips back to the grocery store.

Preparing a shopping list can also streamline the shopping experience, and help you get in and out more quickly (remember the more time you spend in the grocery store the more likely you will pick up foods that you don't need). Last, but not least, it forces you to plan your meals ahead of time, which dramatically increases the likelihood that you will actually prepare them. To make healthy meal planning a snap, be sure to check out my *Eat Right for Life™: Cookbook Companion*.

4. **If you use them (and I hope you do), don't forget to bring your reusable, eco-friendly shopping bags.** This will help reduce your own family's carbon footprint and reduce pollution. Plastic shopping bags require oil to produce and are non-biodegradable. Although they are recyclable, unfortunately most end up in our oceans and landfills as refuse. Aside from being green, eco-friendly shopping bags accommodate more food, are more comfortable and easier to carry, and can ultimately bring down the cost of your groceries. Some stores even provide a small credit for shoppers that provide their own bags. Otherwise, the less plastic bags you use at checkout, the lower the grocer's overhead and the more savings they can pass on to you.
5. **Think ahead for safe transport of your groceries from the store to your kitchen.** In some cases, you may need to have a cooler in your car. According to food safety experts, any perishable food should be refrigerated within two hours. If the outside temperature exceeds 90 degrees F, you will need to get perishable foods home and in the freezer or fridge more quickly—within one hour. If your supermarket is more than 30 minutes away from your home or if you know that your trip home from the grocery store will be delayed by more than 30 minutes for errands or such, pack a cooler. Place any meat, seafood, poultry or eggs in it to safeguard against the growth of harmful bacteria that could cause a food borne illness.



Dr. Ann Recommends...

MAKING THE LIST!

Always keep your grocery list in a prominent, visible place on your kitchen counter with a pen or pencil handy. Encourage your family members to jot down things they may need and be sure to write down those must-have kitchen staples before they run out.

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General Guidance

We are just about to begin our virtual grocery tour, which is the perfect time to make note of some very important general guidance that can dramatically simplify our journey.

1. **Focus on selecting whole, real, unprocessed foods.** These are the foods generously provided by Mother Nature—“foods as found and foods as grown.” These humble, yet all-mighty foods do not come in glitzy boxes or packages complete with an ingredients list boasting strange, chemical-like words. Rather, they are as simple and tasty as their names suggest, and come in a delicious array of options, including apples, pears, kale, cabbage, brown rice, oatmeal, fish and chicken. As an easy and reliable “filter” for making real food selections, ask yourself if the food is something that your great, great grandfather could have eaten before you put it in your cart. Although there are notable exceptions, much of the time if the answer is “no”, the selection will not be good for you.
2. **Concentrate your shopping around the periphery of the store.** In most all grocery outlets, the whole, real foods will be found in the perimeter aisles. Conversely, the interior aisles are home to the seemingly endless displays of factory-made, processed foods that I want you to minimize or avoid.



3. **Beware of dubious health claims.** Do not get sucked in by the in-your-face healthy phrases like “contains whole grains” or “trans-fat free” that boldly shout out from the front of packages. With very rare exceptions, these claims are a reliable indicator of a man-made, not nature-made, food. Even worse, many of these foods are the ones that are bad for you. Classic examples include packaged chips and donuts that promote “trans-fat free” or toaster pastries boasting, “contains whole grains.” Do not be duped by these slick packaging ploys. Having taken lots of nutritionally naïve consumers through the grocery aisles—this is one of the most common mistakes I see them make.
4. **If you do reach for a packaged product, quickly vet its ingredients list before putting it in your shopping buggy.** While abiding by the suggestions above pretty much takes care of this one, just say no to it if:
 - ▶ **It contains words you have a hard time pronouncing or that are foreign to you.** Steer clear of foods that list ingredients that read as if they were something from Frankenstein’s lab like “butylated hydroxyanisole” or “acelsulfame-K.”
 - ▶ **The ingredients list is long.** My general rule of thumb is to stick to those with lists of less than seven ingredients. Although there will be some exceptions, like cereals and “healthy” packaged foods like hummus or salsa, the overwhelming majority of the foods on my master, “Dr. Ann Approved Foods” shopping list have less than seven ingredients. Most will have less than four.
 - ▶ **It has any of the following words: partially hydrogenated, fully hydrogenated, shortening, artificial color(s), artificial flavor(s), or high fructose corn syrup (HFCS).** While some may signify the presence of truly toxic compounds like trans fats (partially hydrogenated oils), they are all telling markers for contrived products of modern food technology versus real food.

Dr. Ann's Tip **JOIN A CSA!**

CSA stands for “community supported agriculture” and thankfully, this new system for procuring farm fresh local produce is becoming more and more accessible. As a member of a CSA, you pay an upfront subscription to a local farm to receive a weekly or biweekly box of fresh produce. Before I had my own vegetable garden, I used a CSA and loved it. I highly recommend them, and hope they’ll inspire you to start your own garden, too!





Marketing “Myth-Conceptions”

Without question it is my universal experience that the single most confusing aspect of “healthy” grocery shopping for consumers is making sense of the marketing language on food labels. Many seemingly healthy phrases on the front of packages can be disgracefully misleading. Don’t be seduced by them! Here are the worst offenders.

“Multigrain”—This favored term for grain-based products does not signify anything other than the product contains more than one type of grain (and the grains present could be 100% refined white flour!).

Instead of authentic whole grain products that are good for you, most “multigrain” products are simply mixtures of refined grains. In fact, other than “multigrain pasta,” which I do recommend, leave any other “multigrain” product on the shelf and select those that are bona fide 100% whole grain.

“12 grain” or “7 grain”—Just like the multigrain abuse noted above, these terms do not designate a reliable whole grain product. Keep in mind that the first word in the ingredients list for a grain-based product must be “whole” not “enriched” to indicate it is good for you.

“Antioxidant Fortified with Vitamins E and C”—You will definitely pay more for products souped-up with added antioxidants, yet there is no scientific evidence that supplementing foods with extra antioxidant vitamins has any benefits. In fact, studies have shown that taking antioxidant supplements provides no benefits for cardiovascular disease or cancer protection.

“Organic” on processed food packages—Unfortunately, studies repeatedly show that consumers believe foods with “organic” on their labels are more nutritious and less likely to cause weight gain. This is simply not true. “Organic” simply signifies that the food was produced without pesticides, antibiotics or growth hormones. There are oodles of processed “organic” foods on grocery shelves that are loaded with calories, refined flour, salt, unhealthy fats and excess sugar— so be careful!

“Made with real fruit”—This is a common phrase for packages of toaster pastries and pancakes, and it simply means that “some” fruit (typically fruit juice) is present. Unfortunately, “some” is usually a tiny, nutritionally-irrelevant amount. On at least one brand of toaster pastries, salt is listed before the fruit on the ingredients list. In other words, the product contains more salt by weight than real fruit—not good!

“High in fiber”—Because of the sparkling and well-deserved healthy reputation of dietary fiber, this three-word phrase is literally all over the place now. It means that a single serving of the food provides at least five grams of fiber, but that does not necessarily translate to any health benefits. With few exceptions, products that list “high in fiber” are manufactured foods in which isolated fiber—commonly maltodextrin, inulin (also called chicory root), oat fiber, and wheat fiber—have been artificially added to it. At this point in science, there is no evidence for any health benefits from eating isolated forms of fiber. This is in stark contrast to the fiber that is naturally a part of whole grains, beans, fruits and vegetables. So forget the processed and go for the real!

“A full serving of vegetables”—For me, this one is a personal pet peeve and a blatant give-away that the food is factory-made. Get your vegetables from the real thing and forget the fruit drinks, crackers, chips, and sauces that unfairly take advantage of vegetables’ virtues to entice you to buy their products.

“All natural”—This is one of the most common claims on processed food products and it is essentially meaningless. You find it plastered all over “unnatural” products like sugary beverages and chips. Even meats that have been artificially injected with salt solutions can bear this misleading designation. Completely ignore this deceptive term.

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 1 Cup (53g/
Servings Per Container A

Amount Per Serving

Calories 190 Calories from

% Daily

Total Fat 3g

Saturated Fat 0g

Trans Fat 0g

Cholesterol 0mg

Sodium 100mg

Potassium 300mg

Total Carbohydrate 37g

Dietary Fiber 8g

Soluble Fiber 5g

Insoluble Fiber 3g

Sugars 13g

Protein 9g

Vitamin A 0%

Calcium 4%

Now, Let's Go Shopping!