

News Home > News > Lifestyliving

- Nation
- World Updates
- Courts
- Parliament
- Columnists
- Opinion
- Honours List

Monday September 20, 2010

# Learn to shop smart with savvy planning

**We can get all our grocery shopping done and still have change to spare.**

NUDGING your way through a wet market will yield you cheap and fresh produce. But if the crowds and dankness of a pasar is not your thing, all is not lost. There are many, many ways to save money on groceries.

Just ask Rohani Jelani, chef, food writer and founder of the Bayan Indah Culinary Resort in Kampung Sungai Penchala, Selangor, who avoids shopping at hypermarkets, no matter how good the bargains may be.

"Although many people flock to hypermarkets for big bargains, I'm not a big fan. I find hypermarkets impersonal and soulless. I dislike shops which are so big, you have to push your cart around for miles to locate any particular item. I am usually in a hurry and I find that shopping in these huge warehouses much more time-consuming than popping into a smaller supermarket where everything is basically at arm's length."

Rohani, who admits that she isn't always price-conscious when shopping for produce ("I do have a tendency to value quality over price"), says she finds other ways to save instead.

"I'm quite a creature of habit and tend to buy from the same shopkeepers and stall holders for years and years because I believe in creating relationships with people I do business with. I know them and they know me, and usually this is enough to ensure that they always give me their best goods at their best prices," she shares.



'I tend to buy from the same shopkeepers and stall holders because I believe in creating relationships with people I do business with. I know them and they know me, and usually this is enough to ensure that they always give me their best goods at their best prices,' says Rohani Jelani.

Go online and you will find numerous tips on how you can save. For example, [www.fivecentnickel.com](http://www.fivecentnickel.com) advises shoppers to avoid shopping on an empty stomach – hungry shoppers are apparently more likely to load up on snacks and unnecessary food items.

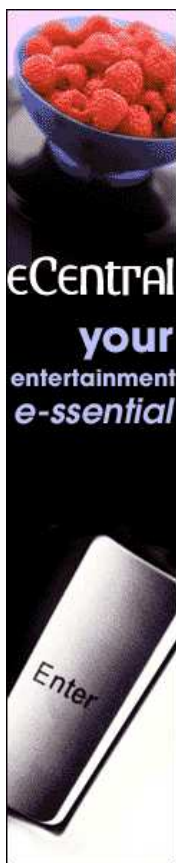
Another site, [ezinearticles.com](http://ezinearticles.com) warns shoppers not to focus on produce that are at eye level. "Products placed at eye level are usually the most expensive. Before grabbing the first item you see, take a few seconds to look at the upper and lower shelves."

While there are many useful tips available online, the basic good practices when it comes to shopping smart are age-old habits that reflect good sense – things our parents and grandparents used to do.

Here's a list of 10 easy things we can start with:

**1. Set a budget.**

Whether it's RM50 or RM500, having a budget is the first step to saving money. With a budget, you know exactly how much you have to spend



Introducing the New BlackBerry® Curve™ 3G.

- Nation
  - Business
  - World
  - Sports
- Sarawak offers RM6bil for Bakun dam  
 Anti-diabetic drugs containing rosiglitazone restricted  
 Taib wishes to defend Balingian seat in Sarawak polls  
 Sosilaw ati murder: Three suspects remanded 6 more days  
 MIC Youth wants action against racist principals w ithin 2 weeks

Follow us on



News Poll

Do you agree that too many Datuk titles have been awarded and there should be a limit each year from now ?

- Yes
- No

VOTE View Results

Most Viewed Most E-mailed

- Clerk and daughter found dead in hotel
- Hard to detect fake Datuks w ithout national registry
- DPM: I can't act against principals
- Johns Hopkins University to set up medical school and hospital in Malaysia
- Bulldozer to excavate sites
- Dr M: I'm distressed by loss of Malay voice
- Too generous w ith Datukship?
- Nadia keeps Naza flag flying
- Kidney patient dreams of becoming a doctor
- The blame game

Latest Jobs from MyStarJob.com

- Supply Chain Head
- Assistant Sales Manager
- Senior Engineers
- Junior Engineers
- Site Clerks
- Assistant Finance Manager
- Accountant
- R&D Engineers (Electrical & Electronic)
- R&D Engineers (Mechanical)
- R&D Engineers (Softw are)

Latest from StarProperty

- Making Greater KL the nation's heartbeat
- 70% loan for third and subsequent houses?
- Contemporary masculine design 101
- Thank you for subscribing to the StarProperty.my e-newsletter!
- Preserving Pudu's rich heritage

and you will be forced to shop accordingly. Want to challenge yourself further? Leave your credit cards at home and just go out with the amount you have allocated. Maybe bring RM10 extra, you know, for “too good to resist” deals.

## 2. Always make a shopping list.

Do so before you head out to the grocery store. This is so you don't forget to buy an item and, more importantly, to discipline yourself to get only what you need. Browsing in a grocery store can be hazardous to your budget. If you don't have a list, chances are you'll be tempted to buy at least a dozen items you don't need and probably won't get around to using.



One money-saving tip when you're cooking at home: cook for several meals at one go.

## 3. Plan your meals ahead.

This actually helps you to make a comprehensive shopping list. It sounds like an awful lot of work but if you plan your meals for the week before you go shopping, you will buy enough supplies to feed your family for that week without having to fork out more money mid-week for last-minute purchases.

## 4. Cut back on meat.

Meat is expensive and we don't really need to eat meat three meals a day, every day. Cook dishes like pasta or noodles where meat isn't necessary. If you're worried about your protein intake, you can get enough protein from beans, sprouts and tofu.

## 5. Timing is everything.

Do you know that grocers slash the prices of goods when they're nearing their expiry date? And, things often go for less at closing time.

Fresh, unprocessed cheese is a good example. A block of good quality, imported cheese can easily set you back RM15 to RM20 and mess up your budget big time. We shouldn't have to sacrifice the things we like to eat, so instead of skirting past the cheese counter, look out for those that are close to their expiration date – chances are they'll be cheaper. Re-arrange your meals and use the cheese as soon as you can.

## 6. It's where and when you shop.

It's more convenient and comfortable to shop at the supermarket – they open all day (often as late 9pm), they're clean and air-conditioned and parking is a cinch. But, a lot of the time, it's more expensive to shop at a supermarket than at a wet market, hypermarket or neighbourhood sundry shop.

To illustrate my point: the supermarket price for a 450g can of dog food is between RM6.50 and RM6.90; the same product retails at RM6 at my neighbourhood sundry store. At 50 sen cheaper per can, I save RM7.50 a month (one can makes two dog dinners).

Having said that, not all wet markets are cheap and not everything in a

hypermarket is a bargain. You have to do a little bit of homework. Visit a few wet markets and hypermarkets and suss out what is cheaper where.

There are several other plusses to shopping at a wet market. Prices are not net so there is room for bargaining and forging “goodwill” – if you build a rapport with the vendors (i.e. if you buy from them often enough and make friends with them), you often get better prices and sometimes they give you little things like chillies, scallions, celery and lime for free. You may scoff at the small quantity of these “free gifts” but often, all you need is a few pieces of chilli and a bit of celery. If you buy them at a supermarket, they are packaged in bulk and you are forced to buy more than you need.

#### 7. Eat what’s in season.

Chef Rohani Jelani advises shoppers not to focus on beef, chicken, fish or prawns. Instead, she says, turn to ingredients which are plentiful and cheap.

“In this country, we have an almost unlimited year-long supply of fresh leafy greens, tomatoes, eggplant, potatoes, green beans, cauliflower and so on. Add to beans and pulses such as chickpeas and dhal, tofu, tempe and eggs, and you have all the makings of endless feasts.”

#### 8. Make dried beans, eggs and tofu your friends.

Don’t recoil at the idea of eating beans and tofu! They’re wonderful sources of protein and if you know how to season them well and work them into a dish creatively, they can taste great.

#### 9. Recycle.

Even meals can be recycled. Cooking chicken curry? Make a little extra and freeze it for another meal a few days later. You will save on ingredients and also gas and cooking time.

#### 10. Stock up.

Essential items like noodles, rice, pasta, flour, cooking oil and spices can be bought in bulk ahead of time. Supermarkets always offer two-for-one deals on pasta (two packets of spaghetti for RM6.89, for example) and buying a huge packet of mee hoon which will keep for months is undeniably cheaper than buying a 250g packet every month. When you feel your budget is running astray, cook pasta/noodle dinners which are often cheaper but no less tasty. – **By S. Indramalar**

#### Related Story:

[It’s possible to have an economic meal](#)

#### Ads by Google

##### [Tesco Online Supermarket](#)

Helping you Spend Less Every Day 2 Clubcard points on Every£1 Spent  
[www.Tesco.com/Supermarket](http://www.Tesco.com/Supermarket)

##### [London Coupons](#)

1 ridiculously huge coupon a day. It’s like doing London at 90% Off!  
[www.GROUPON.co.uk/London](http://www.GROUPON.co.uk/London)

##### [Steak on the Stone](#)

The Original Stone Cooking System Hot Stone Cooking at its Best  
[www.SteakStones.com](http://www.SteakStones.com)

 Email This  Printer Friendly  SHARE 

Be the first of your friends to like this.

#### More News