

A sunburst graphic with numerous thin, light gray lines radiating from a central point behind the main title text.

Healthy Moms Podcast

BY **Wellness Mama**[®]
simple answers for healthier families

Episode 2: How to Buy Real Food on a Budget

Hello and welcome to episode 2 of the "Wellness Mama Podcast" where we provide simple answers for healthier families.

In my first episode, I talked about why I wanted to start a podcast in the first place and my mission in doing so. And I've asked my readers online what would be helpful for me to cover in this second episode. And a lot of the feedback I got was that help in figuring out what actually it practically means to be on a real food diet and how to make that happen especially on a budget. So that's what I'll be covering today.

Just my most asked questions in dealing with real food. And it seems like "real food" is one of those terms that has a hundred meanings on the internet. For the most part, I think that all of the real food "definitions" are an improvement over the standard American diet certainly, but I also think it's important to define that term these days because it's used so often across the board.

So for me, real food just simply means unprocessed, non-modified foods and as close to their natural state as possible with a focus on the most nutrient dense foods available. And obviously just doing the best we can with where we are in our state of life.

So at our house, the bulk of our diet is made up of proteins like grass-fed meats and pastured poultry, lots of vegetables. There's a hashtag online going around called "more vegetables than a vegetarian," and I think that's extremely important especially when we're talking about green vegetables, and that's an easy way to get extra nutrition in the diet. And then also things like fruits and healthy fats.

And the great majority of those foods that are in the grocery store these days are actually processed and they don't really fall into that category because they have to go through quite a few steps to get into their current state, so we avoid these processed foods. And for the most part as a family we also avoid grains just because most of them in today's society are very processed.

I think of it as turning the old food pyramid on its head. So rather than structuring every meal around grains and starches with 6 to 11 servings, we start with proteins and healthy fats as the bulk of your calories so does it mean they're gonna be the bulk of the volume of your food. Vegetable should definitely fill that in. But meat's healthy fats, vegetables, and fruits and that everything else is peripheral to those.

So with five kids, I found that focusing on extremely nutrient dense foods is the only way to keep my kids from being constantly hungry when they're growing. A lot of people avoid fats because they contain more calories per gram, and I am big on eating lots of sources of healthy fats because when you look at food as a fuel, and not as a pleasure, and not as just calories, but when you look at the fact that what we eat is meant to fuel our bodies, it's a good thing that fat adds more calories.

Protein and carbohydrates both have four calories per gram on average while fat has nine calories per gram. So if you're thinking of food in terms of fuel, since calories are in essence, a fuel for the body, fats are like high octane fuel. From consuming 10 grams of fat, you get almost double or more than double the energy, meaning calories, as if you consumed 10 grams of carbs. So this would be like choosing between two different types of gas at a gas station. If one gave you nine miles per gallon and one gave you four miles per gallon the choice is

pretty logical.

I definitely declare if I don't subscribe to the philosophy of cutting calories or cutting fat, or carbs for that matter, but I think it's really important to shift to thinking of food as a source of fuel first and as the source of nourishment rather than thinking of strictly what has the fewest calories we can eat the most of it. So in other words, we should be focusing on consuming enough nutrients from food each day that by the time we've gotten all the beneficial foods that we're trying to consume, we shouldn't have to worry about calories since these types of foods are naturally very filling and satisfying.

So at our house, for simplicity and budget, I have a basic food outline of what a normal day looks like and we meal plan all the time to save both time and money. The time being a big onem because life with any number of kids is just a very busy thing so the time is is extremely important to me. So for us, breakfast is almost always some form of protein either eggs or leftover protein. So that might be something like omelets or Keisha's or just a leftover stir fry.

Occasionally, we'll make a smoothie with additional protein and healthy fats added and if we're really in a hurry. Lunch is almost always leftovers or a big huge salad topped with leftover meat, nuts, veggies, fruits, etc.. I have a whole meal plan rotation but dinner is usually a meat and veggie stir fry of some kind or a casserole, or in our house often a new recipe I'm testing for the blog.

But I make sure that the kids especially and me if I'm nursing or pregnant get a lot of extra healthy fats from coconut oil, grass-fed butter, and then things like bone broths which are a different kind of healthy fat and also have amino acids and minerals, and so many important things. And that we can do things like cultured foods which are a good source of lactobacillus bacteria and all kinds of nutrients.

So we really had to focus on those when we were working to reverse an allergy in one of our children when he was on the gaps diet which refers to the book "Gut and Psychology Syndrome: by Dr. Campbell McBride, if anyone has read it. And we've stuck with this way of eating for the most part because we really do feel better when we include those foods.

So I really encourage anyone who is new to this way of eating to really...I remember how bad the learning curve was when we started and it's been a long journey for me, but, I think, that having a routine and a plan has made an extreme difference for us and it isn't that much more time consuming or expensive if you are very careful about your planning. So that was one encouragement I would definitely give to everyone because another question I get often is, "What foods do you prioritize when the budget is tight?" And we've certainly been there many times in our life as a family.

And there are certainly months when the budget is really tight. So one thing I would say is that health food is definitely a top priority in our budget especially because we've seen how this reduces our bills in other ways. It's reduced our medical bills. We don't get sick as often, but also that any extras including supplements are the first to go when the budget requires it. So there are some supplements that our family takes regularly but my philosophy is that diet must be optimized first, because the best supplements in the world cannot fix it by a diet.

So when budget allows, we focus on quality meats and proteins as a top priority because conventional meats have the potential to contain the most toxins. And we found that a local farmer who raises grass-fed meat and

we found that by buying our meats from him in bulk is comparable to buying conventional meats at the grocery store. And the other advantage is that we get all of the parts of the animal including the organs and the bones.

So we usually will buy a quarter of a cow with other families, and most of the time, the other families are happy to let us have the organs because they don't want them. So we sometimes end up with more organs and bones and then the organs are like nature's multi-vitamin. My husband and sometimes the kids aren't ecstatic about eating them yet so I usually just have the butcher grind these into the meat itself and we don't even taste them but we get the extra nutrients.

Even if we don't get the bones, I have found that most farmers markets sell beef bones for literally pennies a pound because they often go to waste or just get turned into dog bones. So I keep these frozen, the bones, and defrost them as I need so that I have a steady supply of bone broth. Bone broth is one of those amazing super foods that you can make at home for pennies because it's so nutrient dense and we're always on the go. So if I don't have time for a full meal, I can just add some leftovers to a cup of bone broth and drink it.

Eggs are another thing we prioritize since comparatively they're very high nutrient for their cost. And in a lot of places, it's good that you can find a good local source of eggs that's cheaper and then you're also supporting the local economy. And as a side note, that's, kind of, funny because I love eggs, I've recently discovered that with my own Hashimotos I have to avoid eggs right now and I'm realizing how much of an amazing protein source that was and how much I miss it.

So when our budget's tight, I don't freak out at all if I can't buy all organic produce since there are sometimes limited access where we live anyway especially if the farmers markets are not open. So hopefully there are good prices at the farmer's market and we can just cook seasonal foods, but if not I just buy the best that I can with our budget. And even with a family of seven, I found that even when budget is tight, we can eat pretty well as long as we don't go out to eat all the time, and as long as I stick with meal planning to make sure that we aren't wasting food.

Foods like stir fries and soups are extremely cost effective and versatile and it's easy enough to make double of those and freeze them for busy nights. So that would be how I would say to go about incorporating real food if you're on a budget.

And a variation of a question I get a lot is, "Well, is this safe for pregnancy or nursing or what? Is there anything different I should do when I'm pregnant or nursing?" And I've definitely spent a good deal of my time there recently, so I feel like I've got some first hand experience. Certainly, pregnancy and nursing are an extra demand on the body and especially during pregnancy an entire...the child's entire body is being formed. So for me, I'm very careful to focus on nutrient dense foods when I'm pregnant.

And I've also found that I had the easiest pregnant pregnancies when I have focused on nutrient dense food before and during pregnancy. And, of course, the best time to begin a healthy pregnancy regimen is before conception because then all of the cells that your body has are optimized for that pregnancy. So having a strong nutritional system in place can actually increase your odds of a healthy conception and there's a lot of studies showing the impact of nutrient levels on fertility and everything else, but it also helps you handle the transitions of early pregnancy without the discomfort. And ensuring actual nutrition during pregnancy is one of the best gifts you can give your baby.

I feel, like, doctors often warn about foods to avoid when we're pregnant like cold cuts or too much caffeine or soft cheeses or raw fish but not many of them give very detailed advice on what optimal pregnancy nutrition should look like, so I had to navigate these waters a lot during my first two pregnancies and I thought that I did a lot of research on this and really asked a lot of experts to figure out what I should be eating.

And with my own background of nutrition, I realized I had unlearned actually some of the things I had been taught because, unfortunately, eating a diet that best during pregnancy sometimes requires forgetting a lot of conventional wisdom. For instance, like, a low fat diet is not healthy during pregnancy because a baby needs fat to develop their brain tissue correctly.

Focusing mainly on healthy whole grains, as they're called, is also not necessarily the best thing during pregnancy. And a lot of pregnant women are told you know, just eat constantly throughout the day to keep your blood sugar stable and it turns out that's not always the best advice either because baby really can feed on blood sugar. So the more the higher blood sugar is constantly the more likely you are to have a larger baby.

So a woman's body is quite literally building an entire human being during pregnancy, so as such she needs a lot of sources of all the things that support the human body, and mainly proteins and healthy sources of fat and lots of vegetables and fruits for the nutrients. And I also personally take certain supplements during pregnancy to make sure I'm getting the spectrum of nutrients that I need because the food supplies often deplete it.

So for me, personally, the foods that I focus on during pre-conception, pregnancy, and breastfeeding which has been most of the past eight years for me are things like protein and I aim to get about 80 grams or more a day when I'm pregnant. And I've noticed I tend to be less nauseous in the beginning when I do that and when I have my magnesium levels high enough.

Healthy fats are another one and that's often a big hurdle for a lot of women because we've been told not to eat that for so long, but it's vital for baby's organ and brain development. And the Western Prize Foundation says that women should focus on healthy source of meat especially red meat which contains iron and things like eggs and butter and olive oil and raw dairy that's tolerated and that all those are so beneficial to a developing baby.

And, of course, vegetables and fruits have a variety of minerals and vitamins and fiber and eating a varied diet especially green leafy vegetables can also help raise vitamin K levels. And I think that this is really important because it improves the clotting factors in the woman's blood so that before she delivers she is at less risk for a hemorrhage.

And then not a food that something important during pregnancy is drink enough filtered water because a woman's blood supply actually increases during pregnancy. Her blood volume increases quite a bit. And so as a pregnant woman, you will need to drink enough fluid to replenish the amniotic fluid that surrounds the baby and enough to keep her blood supply up.

So for a lot of women, this is about a gallon a day but it's extremely important to stay hydrated during pregnancy. And then most doctors are very good about telling women this but things to avoid pre-conception, pregnancy, and breastfeeding would be things like too much caffeine, processed foods. I think, the latest study

I saw showed that there were 200 chemicals found in the umbilical cord blood of most babies and that's certainly a very good reason to avoid any unnecessary chemicals in food or environment because processed foods also offer very little nutrition and they can lead to constipation and blood sugar instability during pregnancy.

And then one food that I'm absolutely militant about avoiding during pregnancy is vegetable oils and any kind of processed fat like that because these are completely foreign to the body and there's no biological need for them and there's some evidence now linking these to cell mutations and cancers especially in their oxidized form which they would be if anything's been fried in them. And this is especially important for pregnant women because of those types of foods are incorporated into the developing baby. They're at more of a risk for it to find mutations so I'm very careful to avoid those when I'm pregnant.

And then grains and sugars, I avoid when I'm pregnant just because they're both not the most nutrient dense food choices, and especially in our family, grains can cause a lot of health problems, so I try to focus on the most bio-available nutrient dense foods when I'm pregnant.

And, of course, some of these needs vary but when I'm pregnant obviously check with a doctor before you take anything especially when you're pregnant. I personally take probiotics just because there's so much emerging evidence that's fascinating that a woman's body...when a baby is born, baby cultures their gut bacteria in part from the mother's gut flora during the birthing process. So I'm very careful to support my gut flora during pregnancy so that I can pass on a healthy gut bacteria to my children.

Also things like omega 3s like EPA and DHA have been widely studied in the importance of babies developing brain. Things like vitamin D, there was a study that showed that women who took enough vitamin D were half as likely to develop gestational diabetes or pregnancy related complications like high blood pressure or preeclampsia, and they were also less likely to have premature labor. So vitamin D needs vary but you can have your doctor run a vitamin D test and see if you're deficient or not.

Another nutrient that's extremely important during pregnancy is folate and we know that folate, we often hear folic acid has a preventive effect against spinal bifida and other developmental struggles, but folate is the natural form, folic acid is a synthetic. So the recommendation I've seen is that around 400 to 800 micrograms of folate a day is essential for developing baby.

Another important nutrient just for the clotting is iron because anemia can cause serious complications during delivery and doctors are very careful to watch a woman's blood levels of iron during pregnancy. So things like eating enough red meat or cooking things in a cast iron skillet can both help raise those levels.

And if a doctor or a midwife approves, I've had both the doctor and a midwife recommend this to me, but I make a tea that I drink at the end of pregnancy that includes red raspberry leaf which is said to be toning to the uterus, natal leaf, alfalfa leaf, and then a little bit of peppermint leaf just for the taste. And I brew that and keep it cold in my fridge that I can just drink it whenever I am thirsty and not to be in the mood for hot tea.

So in general, just to give a summary, that the mental checklist that I keep in my head during pregnancy is to include things like my vitamins, gelatin from bone broth, magnesium, Vitamin C, Vitamin D, and the Omega 3s, and then make sure I get enough beneficial fats from sources like butter and coconut oil, enough protein usually about 80 grams. And then I eat liver once a week during pregnancy for that soluble vitamins. And they

talk about this in depth.

Dr. Kate Shanahan does in the book "Deep Nutrition" which is a fascinating book but it really doesn't the importance of organ meat especially during pre-conception and pregnancy. So I would recommend that book to anyone who's considering pregnancy. Also the fermented foods to boost that bacteria. I use a lot of lacto fermented foods. I make homemade sauerkraut, beet kabass, all kinds of fermented vegetables, water kefir, coconut yogurt, all kinds of fermented foods just to keep my gut bacteria optimal. A few cups of bone broth every day, tons of fresh uncooked fruits and vegetables.

And then another important thing that seems very logical but just not to try to diet during pregnancy because that's a time when you need to focus on high nutrition and not deprivation so that your baby has what a baby needs to grow.

And the follow up question I get usually to the pregnancy question is, "Well, what about the kids? Are there specific foods that you feed your kids or really focus on with the kids?" And my theory is that the younger the child the more important the nutrient dense foods are since children are still building their lifelong nutritional foundation and books like "Nutrition and Physical Degeneration" by Weston A. Price, and I mentioned "Deep Nutrition" by Dr Katherine Shanahan, talk about the importance of high nutrient foods before, during, and after pregnancy, and while children are young and how that literally impacts every aspect of health.

One particular thing that they mention is the relationship of nutrition to oral health and even face and jaw structure which I find so fascinating. My husband and I both had braces so I'm hoping that with optimal nutrition, our kids can avoid this and healthy fats and fat-soluble vitamins and foods like gelatin seem especially important for this particular purpose.

Conventional wisdom says that we should limit our intake, in our children's intake, of saturated fats and give them "healthy fats" like vegetable oil, but we're seeing kids as young as nine years old getting heart disease now. And it seems like it's direly important that we really do figure out what is causing these problems. So you see this recommendation to avoid saturated fat a lot but the problem is the research isn't supporting that and limiting saturated fats especially in kids can sometimes do more harm than good.

Personally, I don't let my children consume any kind of processed fats like I mentioned vegetable oils or margarine. And I don't eat them myself either because, I talked about this in depth, but these are chemically created fats that oxidize quickly with air or light and they have no place in the human body because anything beneficial you can get from them at all which is little, you can get in higher amounts from other foods. So we focus on getting fats from things like cold press olive oil, if we're gonna be using it cool, or for cooking things like raw organic butter or ghee, coconut oil, grass-fed or lard, that kind of thing.

So it's absolutely important to get any saturated fat from healthy sources but we also need to realize that for kids that aren't always the enemy, they are important for developing brains and bodies. And they also help keep kids satisfied after meals and are important for hormone function and for sporting like I said brain health. So our children eat the same meals that we do, but I try to make sure that I add even more nutrient dense foods to their meals if I can. And since we only have healthy foods available for them, they can ask for as much as they want and follow their natural hunger cues because all that's available is healthy to them.

So in a given meal, I might have one child who eats multiple servings of protein and maybe they're growing

and they need more protein, while another one just wants of sauerkraut, or another child may just want broccoli with butter and it's been amazing to see how intuitive kids are with their bodies and what they actually need when they're fed a healthy diet. And we also make sure to avoid processed foods and sugars and food dyes especially at home.

There are just so many nutrient dense foods and drinks that children can consume that it just seems like a waste to let them consume processed foods when they don't really offer any benefit anyway. So I'll make chewable vitamins for the children with grass-fed, gelatin, and pureed fruit and sneak in some extra nutrients or occasionally will make chocolate out of coconut oil or probiotic marshmallows. So if we're going to consume any treats, I try to boost their nutrition as well.

And what's fascinating, at least for our family, is that as I've learned more about the importance of this kind of nutrition for children it's visible in the children. Our oldest had some demineralisation on his teeth when he was younger and we've been able to actively reverse that. And the oldest two are the only ones who have ever gotten seriously ill at all. Our younger children, who I have been on a more nutrient dense diet during their pregnancies, have naturally darker skin and they tan incredibly well. And I'm Irish, so this isn't necessarily genetic.

They're also just very muscular and athletic and they've all crawled and walked very early. So, I think, I mentioned the probiotic rich foods and how important that is for children. And, unfortunately, our third son was born via c-section and so this was an area that I researched a lot. And I found that when a child went with the a c-section they don't have the same opportunity for their gut bacteria to culture and the natural process of birth.

So especially for our child who a c-section, but for all of them I try to make sure that they're consuming enough sources of probiotics and healthy bacteria either from supplements or from ideally fermented foods so they consume foods like probiotic lemonade, water kefir, kombucha soda, fermented foods, and that really helps their gut bacteria. So, I think, a high quality, very high nutrient, and varied diet is incredibly important for young children and so that's what we focus on with ours.

And then I also get the question, "What are the first foods that you feed a baby and when do you start that?" And as with anything you know, check with authorities such as like a doctor, also do your own research. In our family, starting with their very first foods, I'm very careful to make sure that the children learn how to like healthy foods first. So I nursed them exclusively as long as possible, usually until about six months and then we start with bone broth and fermented foods and fermented cod liver oil for the fat soluble vitamins and the vitamin D that babies need at that age.

And I also rub magnesium oil on their feet at this age at night because it helps them absorb the vitamin D and it helps them sleep, but since it's on their skin they only absorb what they need. And this could also be done with fermented color oil and rubbing it on their bottom when you change your diaper because their skin will only absorb what they need.

So with my oldest, I didn't know all this and he was fed rice cereal and pureed baby food. And while he's become a wonderful eater now he definitely had the hardest time of it because I didn't feed him those nutrient dense foods first. And most babies, I found naturally like homemade soups and stews especially when the foods are cooked soft enough and those are great first foods for babies since babies are born with a

naturally leaky gut which is super important.

What that means is that there are tiny holes that have babies gut that allow parts of their food to pass to pass through into their bloodstream. And so when the baby is nursing, the antibodies and important nutrients in the breast milk can pass through into the bloodstream and the body can learn to develop natural antibodies, but this process isn't is beneficial once the child starts eating because food particles get into the bloodstream they're more likely to cause problems. It can even cause autoimmune problems or other issues. So it's important to help them naturally seal that gut before they start eating.

So gelatin and bone broth actually helps close the gut and prevent these food sensitivities. And after a few weeks of bone broth and soft cooked veggies, we'll add things like soft cooked egg yolks only or little pieces of meat or organ meats or fish and cooked vegetables no meat. Introduce other foods from there. And I add grassfed butter or coconut oil to a lot of foods at this age since those healthy fats are so key for brain development.

At about a year old, I also start introducing fermented drinks like water kefir or kombucha and more raw fruits and vegetables. So we don't eat grains very often anyway because there's a strong history of auto immune conditions in our family, and we found that a lot of us just don't handle grains well. But for the children I really try to hold off on grain exposure at all even minimal until at least two years old just to make sure they have developed a really solid gut bacteria before that point.

And it is something I do that's very counter-cultural is to not pureed foods or make specific baby foods. And I do that for several reasons. For one thing, I don't like the idea of creating different foods for children. I think it's a dangerous precedent early on and I actually think it stunts of baby's ability to learn to feed himself. If you are feeding him soft foods with a spoon.

So we start off with bone broth which is fed with a spoon, but then any food that we give to a baby is cut into tiny pieces and just put on the table in front of them. And babies are so curious and have that natural instinct to put things in their mouth so when the food is small enough they can't choke, they learn both motor skills and how to feed themselves this way. So that's what we do with our babies.

Then another question I get all the time is, "Well, that's great and all but how do you actually get your older kids to eat real food without fighting them?" And I get that question a lot. And it to me it's a soapbox in a way because I think that partially we expect our kids not to like certain foods and sometimes we even cater to that and make, you know, special meals for them, or if we go to a restaurant, there are special kids meals and they're usually are junk food or parents will cook separate meals just for the children.

So in general, I found that a lot of parents assume that kids won't like or won't eat certain foods even if the child has never complained. And there's a perception that things like chicken nuggets and sandwiches and prepackaged kids size snacks are the foods of choice for kids, and we as parents are often hesitant to introduce foods that we fear they won't like.

And this was initially a battle for us as well, but I figured out some food guidelines and I mentioned these before, the food rules that we have at our house, and I picked them up largely from my mom's French background, because I found that the attitude we teach our children about food is as important as the food choices that we're giving them.

In the times that I visited other countries, which was pretty much before I had children, I noticed that, especially in places in Europe like in France, that they obsess about food less but they eat higher quality food but less of it. So I really looked at different cultures and how they teach their children a healthy attitude about food. And I came up with these guidelines that we follow at our house. And the first one is that we don't allow complaining about food.

So in our house children and adults are not allowed to complain about food choices. And this does not mean that they're forced to eat at every meal but just that the negative talk about food is not permitted. So food is first for nourishment and this is important to teach children. And so we tell them that complaining about food is rude to the cook and it's showing a closed minded attitude.

So we don't force anyone to eat if they're truly not hungry, but we say that eating time is family time and so everyone has to sit at the table with a happy attitude. And if the children insist on a negative attitude they get to go to their room until they have more positive attitude. Especially in our house with five, if one child has a bad attitude about food it spreads very quickly so we tend to try to head that off right away.

Another rule that we follow is that food is not a reward. So food is first for nourishment, not entertainment or emotional reward. And for this reason we try definitely not always perfectly but we try not to bribe with food or offer food as rewards for good behavior. And I even try not to make certain food a big deal on birthdays or other occasions because we try to focus on the experiences instead.

So instead of birthday cake we might take a trip to the zoo for a birthday. Or, my older son loves going to baseball games for his birthday instead of food so we try to focus on the experience not the food. In the same way though, I don't ever present food as a punishment or associate them with punishment like, "You have to eat XYZ or you are gonna get spanked." I would never do that to a child because just like they can't complain about food it's a negative attitude that is always discipline not the act of the action of relating to the food.

So I've seen too many children and I've even seen it myself as an adult an emotional connection with certain foods or a desire to eat certain foods in an emotional situation especially sugary foods. So while the types of food we provide is so important, it's also really important to avoid creating a positive or negative association between foods, especially unhealthy foods.

So I personally would rather that they have those fine memories be connected to family time and experience not to a food. So what we do, of course, sometimes the children have treats but they're just occasional sporadic treats. We don't use them as a bribe and the kids don't earn them from good behavior, they don't get to go you know, eat out or have cake just for an achievement. That's just considered a family enjoyment when we do that.

Our third rule is that eating is a family activity. And, I think, that the trend of eating on-the-go all the time and eating by ourselves while watching TV, it's contributed to the negative attitudes children have about food. So for this reason we make a sincere effort that meals, especially breakfast and dinner are is the feeling that whenever possible and to make that an enjoyable bonding time.

And the advantages are that mealtimes hopefully will provide the time for conversation and bonding with our children, but that because of the conversation and the bonding, everyone is more slowly and more mindfully

also. So in our house the whole family eats the same thing at each meal. There's no special meals for the children. And if a food is unusual or new to us we just don't make a big deal about it. And I found that when we just present things with a positive attitude, most of the time the children are on board no problem.

And I've seen even my husband, I've mentioned this before, I've seen him choke down liver with a poker face. He hates liver. And then the kids eat it because they see us eating it. So mealtime is family time and we really try to focus on that.

Another rule for us is to keep constantly trying new foods and to help facilitate a non picky palate in our kids. We only give them one small bite of each food at a given meal. So maybe one green bean, one piece of sweet potatoes, and a piece of meat. And when they finish every bite, they can request more of any food that they want. So they don't like a food all they have to do is eat one bite of it.

If they say they don't like something we just say, "Well that's fine, you'll probably learn to like it." We teach them that the dislike of food is not set in stone. So we don't force huge amounts of it to them, but we set the expectation that they keep trying healthy foods until they learn to like them. And so just as negative comments about food aren't allowed, we try to promote a positive attitude about new foods and set the expectation that they're gonna learn to like all the healthy foods one day.

Another rule for us is that it's okay to be hungry sometimes. I worked with clients who have completely lost the natural sense of hunger because we, as a society, we constantly have food wherever we go. So it's perfectly normal and expected that you would get hungry before you eat. That's your body's way of telling you that you need to eat. And that normal hunger at meal times encourages children to eat what's served and to eat enough to avoid being hungry too far in advance of the next meal.

So, at the same time, like a child in our house who complains about food is excused at the dinner table and may not get to finish that meal, so they quickly learn to have a more positive attitude rather than to be hungry. And it's really taking more than one half eaten meal or missed meal for a child to learn to like a food. So we don't let in our house hunger be an excuse for unhealthy eating or bad attitude. And we don't often offer snacks all day either because we want to let the children have a natural hunger before they eat again.

And I mentioned before about the six food rule is to focus on nutrient dense foods. So whenever we have a choice to focus on the more nutrient dense food choice. And I wanted to share also five tips that I have for staying on a real food diet on a budget, because, like I said, that's beat us a lot of the time, and I have found some tricks along the way. And by far, the most important is meal planning. And that's made the biggest difference in our food budget and staying on track. And it helps me only have to go to the grocery store about once a week and it just saves so much time.

So I have a system that I use which anyone can duplicate which is basically to find about three to four weeks of recipes that your family likes and that are relatively inexpensive to make. And then write these on their own individual index cards with the meal and the recipe on one side and on the back, how much of each ingredient you need for your family.

So when you want a meal plan, you just pick out as many recipes as you need for that time period that your meal planning for, turn them over, write down all the ingredients that you need and go to the grocery store

and get those ingredients. So it helps you stick to a list and make sure that you know what you're cooking each night and it really just saves time. And so for us, that's a lot of things like there are stir fries or slow cooker meals on there just because there are a lot more inexpensive.

Another tip is to prepare things in bulk. So when our budget is really tight I prepare a large inexpensive cut of meat and then really stretch it as much as possible. So we might make a roast and stretch it into a soup or stew later on, or the leftovers get used in a stir fry just to stretch the protein as much as possible. Same with other types of protein. I try to find inexpensive vegetables at farmer's markets or to use in-season vegetables which are usually a lot cheaper.

In the winter, we use a lot of organic frozen vegetables since there are a lot cheaper and in my opinion it's better to have frozen vegetables that were frozen when they were fresh than fresh-ish vegetables that were shipped around the world. So that's what we do in the winter. And I found that even cabbage just cost pennies year round and that could be made in a sauerkraut or stir fries.

There's just so many inexpensive vegetable or vegetables that you can get year around. In the summer, we buy a lot of ours from the farmer's market or from local Amish farmers and in most places there are some really good local options.

Another tip would be to order things in bulk. So it can cost more up front but over the long term ordering things in bulk like we order like coconut flour, coconut, all of our herbs and oils and fats, we order those in bulk from a co-op. So if you can find a good one near you that really is a way to save as well.

And my fifth tip would be not to buy drinks and not to drink calories. So if you're trying to stay healthy, hopefully, you've already cut out the things like soda and canned drinks and processed juices. But if not, that's an easy step to take because that alone makes a big difference in improving health and budget. So if you've consumed very many of these beverages, go back and look at your the percentage of your grocery bill that they take up, because in general, buying drinks and any prepared form is very expensive and very unhealthy.

Even fruit juices can create a big insulin spike and they're expensive without offering very much nutrition. You're gonna get more nutrients from an apple than from apple juice. Same thing we're pasteurized milk is a lot of it, especially conventional milk contains hormones or some kind of preservative or has been pasteurized. So cutting out the liquid calories can be a good way to save money.

And what we do do if we're tired of just water are inexpensive real food options like I've mentioned water kefir, Kombucha, which you can make at home for literally pennies. Or herbal teas, I order herbs in bulk so I make herbal teas that are just full of nutrients as well and we make homemade coconut and almond milk at home and I'll put this in the show notes, but instead of buying those at the store where they're expensive you can make them at home for pennies.

And for us when budget's been really tight, we also just save money in other areas. So things like we don't ever eat out mainly because we can make healthier food at home, but also because it's more expensive and there's not room in our budget and then we make expensive items at home for much less than we would pay for them. So things like laundry detergent and lotion and toothpaste and deodorant and shampoo.

Once you start down that road, you can really make the majority of your cleaning and beauty products for so

much less. And when our budget is really tight, like I mentioned, we cut back on the supplements as well and try to just focus on the highest quality food that we can. Another way is that we exercise at home with our kids. Right now, we don't have gym memberships because if your gym membership in our yard is decently expensive, and if you have a good pair of shoes in a backyard, you can get the same thing.

So those are some other ways that we save money.

And so those would be my best tips for learning to eat real food, especially if you're on a budget. And I've compiled a lot of resources on this and I'll leave them in the show notes. I also have a system called "Wellness Mama Meals" that will be reopening really soon. It provides a really detailed framework for that and takes all the guesswork out and I'll link to that as well.

So thank you again for listening to the "Wellness Mama Podcast." I'd be honored if you take a second and review it for me in iTunes and subscribe so that you're notified of future episodes.

In the next few episodes, I'm gonna have Lauren of "Empowered Sustenance." She's amazing. She'll be talking about things like gelatin. "Mama Natural," Genevieve, will be talking about natural parenting and natural pregnancy. And Heather Dessinger of "Mommypotamus" will be on to talk about the importance of probiotics and fascinating info on lip ties and tongue ties. So make sure to subscribe so that you can see all of those episodes and until next time, have a healthy week.