

The Traverse City \$100 Grocery Savings Plan

How to save up to \$100 per week on groceries without coupons, chaos, or driving all over town

What this guide does

Shows where to shop, what prices are worth buying, and how to use a simple 2-3 store strategy to cut your weekly grocery bill fast.

Quick-start version

- Go to Aldi for produce, pantry, and low-cost basics.
- Go to Northland Foods for the best chicken price when it hits the buy zone.
- Use Save A Lot for targeted pork and produce deals.
- Use Meijer, Oleson's, or Family Fare only for specific sale items instead of your full cart.

Most people are not overspending because they are reckless. They are overspending because they are shopping the way stores want them to shop: one store, no plan, buying what sounds good, and assuming a sale sign means it is actually cheap. This plan fixes that.

1. Stop shopping one store

Different stores win different categories. One-store convenience feels easy, but it quietly raises your total on meat, produce, and pantry items all at once.

Use 2 to 3 stores max, not one. That is how you save without turning grocery shopping into a full-time job.

2. Know your 'buy now' prices

Protein: Chicken breast at \$1.99/lb is a buy-extra price. Around \$2.99/lb is acceptable. Above \$3.49/lb is a skip unless necessary.

Drumsticks under \$1/lb are worth grabbing. Pork chops at \$1.99/lb are strong. Ground beef around \$3.50/lb or less is good.

Produce: Potatoes at \$2.99 for 10 lb are strong. Sweet potatoes at \$0.59-\$0.99/lb are good. Pineapple at \$1.79-\$1.99 is worth buying.

Pantry and freezer: Frozen vegetables under \$1, canned tomatoes under \$1, pasta sauce in the \$1-\$2 range, and pasta around \$1 or less are your target numbers.

Category	Strong deal	Okay	Skip zone
Chicken breast	\$1.99/lb	\$2.99/lb	\$3.49+/lb
Drumsticks	Under \$1/lb	\$1.19-\$1.39/lb	\$1.49+/lb
Pork chops	\$1.99/lb	\$2.49-\$2.99/lb	\$3+/lb
Potatoes (10 lb)	\$2.99	\$3.99	\$4.99+
Frozen veg	Under \$1	\$1-\$1.25	\$1.50+

3. Build your week around the cheapest proteins

Do not start with recipes. Start with the cheapest proteins of the week, then build your dinners around them.

Examples: sheet-pan chicken, chicken pasta, soup, BBQ drumsticks, pork chop night, and pork skillet pasta.

4. Buy stretch foods every week

Stretch foods are what turn a cheap protein into a full meal. Always watch for potatoes, onions, peppers, frozen vegetables, pasta, canned tomatoes, and fruit for breakfast or snacks.

5. Use the 70 / 20 / 10 rule

70% of your cart should be the cheapest basics: meat, produce, pantry staples, and frozen vegetables.

20% should be convenience items you will actually use: yogurt, breakfast items, lunch help, or one or two snacks.

10% should be fun or flexible: dessert, nicer fruit, or one item that keeps you from ordering takeout.

The 3-store Traverse strategy

Here is the actual route. Keep it simple and strategic.

Aldi

- Use Aldi for produce, potatoes, sweet potatoes, pineapple, canned tomatoes, pasta sauce, frozen vegetables, and lower-cost basics.
- This is where most of your cart should start.

Northland Foods

- Use Northland for chicken breast, meat deals, and peppers.
- When chicken hits the buy zone, this becomes your protein anchor.

Save A Lot

- Use Save A Lot for pork deals, onions, celery, and occasional produce.
- This is a targeted stop, not a full-cart store.

Fill-in only

- Use Oleson's, Family Fare, or Meijer only for selected sale items instead of your main grocery run.

Sample low-cost week

- Day 1: Sheet-pan drumsticks, potatoes, broccoli
- Day 2: Chicken and pepper skillet with potatoes
- Day 3: Pork chops, sweet potatoes, frozen vegetables
- Day 4: Chicken tomato pasta
- Day 5: Chicken soup with potatoes, celery, and onion
- Day 6: BBQ drumsticks with wedges
- Day 7: Pork and pepper skillet pasta

Breakfasts stay cheap and repetitive: yogurt, fruit, apples, pineapple, and leftover potatoes turned into breakfast hash. Lunches should come from leftovers first.

5 changes that create the savings

1. Stop doing one big-store shop.
2. Buy meat only when it hits a buy-now price.
3. Build meals around what is cheapest, not what sounds good in aisle 8.
4. Buy stretch foods that turn one protein into multiple dinners.
5. Reduce impulse and convenience spending. The real budget killer is often 15 small extras, not one big-ticket item.

What to stop doing immediately

- Assuming a sale sign automatically means value
- Buying pre-marinated meat unless it is truly marked down
- Shopping hungry
- Wandering every aisle
- Buying produce with no meal plan for it
- Treating one-store convenience like it is free

Your weekly grocery reset

Before shopping: check the top meat deals, check the best produce deals, and pick 5 to 7 dinners from what is cheapest.

During shopping: Aldi first, meat stop second, optional fill-in stop last.

After shopping: portion meat if needed, prep potatoes, onions, and peppers, and keep one simple plan for leftovers.

Bottom line

You do not need coupons, 14 apps, or perfect shopping. You need better price awareness, a 2-3 store strategy, and meals built around the week's best deals.

Want this done for you every week? Use this guide as your baseline, then update the current prices from local ads and build your route before you spend money.