

Leyla Weighs In: Keep a budget – a carbohydrate budget

Weight loss diets are definitely doable if you learn to keep a budget. But I'm not talking about budgeting money or even calories here, I'm talking about carbohydrates.

Just like in personal finance where a budget is a tool to allocate your money to pay the bills, and tuck away some discretionary funds for things like hobbies, dining out and entertainment, a carbohydrate budget can be a tool to help you allocate an additional amount of carbs you can consume occasionally without slowing down your weight loss efforts. And since special occasions don't happen too often, you have some leeway to budget a few more carbs.

For example, by maintaining full compliance with your low-carb diet, you can create some flexibility where you can "spend" some carb grams on, say, one meal or beverage this weekend. You may choose to spend it on a small baked potato with your steak (or share one with your dining companion), or choose a cocktail rather than a low-carb beer or glass of wine (a 5-6 oz. serving of wine is fairly low in carbs—provided you have just one). Maybe you'll want to spend your discretionary carb grams on a *small* rich dessert. I say small because the carbs can really add up!

A note of caution – you don't want to have a "special occasion" every weekend of the year, nor use your discretionary carb budget on several consecutive meals. This can result in weight gain as you yo-yo up on the weekend and back down again during the week. It's also an invitation to a permanent weight loss plateau. Try to limit your discretionary carb spending to once or maybe twice a month, depending on where you are in your weight loss efforts.

So if you play your *carbs* correctly, you can find room to indulge without breaking the carb bank.

To your health!