

Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service

K-State Research and Extension Family Nutrition Program



DINING ON A DIME

Eating Better for Less



Grocery Shopping on a Budget –
 Advice from the 2003 to 2010 issues of the newsletter
Dining on a Dime: Eating Better for Less,
 by Erin Henry and Mary Meck Higgins,
 available at <http://www.ksre.ksu.edu/HumanNutrition/p.aspx?tabid=91>

Shopping Lists Save Time, Money

Are you looking for an easy way to save \$1,000 or more a year? Use a shopping list. The average shopper spends 40 percent more on impulse purchases when shopping without a list. If you spend \$50 each week at the grocery store, there's a good chance that \$20 of those purchases are unplanned. That adds up! The average shopper spends \$2.17 for every minute they're in a supermarket. You're likely to spend 50 cents more for every minute you are at the grocery store beyond the first 30 minutes.



Here are some tips for saving with a list:

- ◆ Write your grocery list in the same order as the aisle layout of the store, or group your shopping list so that foods are listed by category. This will help you reduce the amount of time you spend in the store. The more time you spend looking for items in a supermarket, the more food dollars you're likely to spend.
- ◆ Keep your weekly shopping list in a handy central location so you can note which items to buy more of as you use them throughout the week. Ask family members to add to it as needed. The goal is to avoid running out of items and making frequent return trips to the store.
- ◆ Before shopping, check your kitchen to make sure you have the ingredients — and the amounts — that you'll need in order to prepare the meals and recipes you planned for the week. If possible, plan to prepare extra servings on the days when you cook so that you can freeze the extras for a future day when you don't have time to cook. Add any necessary items to your grocery list.
- ◆ Buy according to the list when you get to the store.

Shopping List	
Fresh fruits & vegs apples bananas Watermelon cabbage onions	Baking items flour cinnamon nuts
Rice & pasta macaroni brown rice	Canned / Boxed tomato sauce peanut butter green beans
Breakfast foods oatmeal	Beverages tea
Household supplies bleach paper towels	Bakery products Bread nortillas
Refrigerated foods Milk chicken	Frozen foods Orange juice corn Pizza

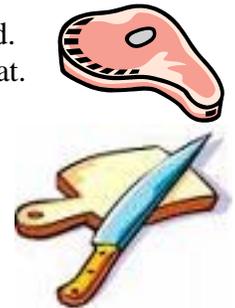
Coupons or Generic Brands?

- By buying generic or store brands, you could save 40 percent on your groceries. Store and generic brands usually cost less than name brands.
- If buying name-brand foods, check for coupons in newspapers and on the Internet. Before using a coupon, compare prices of different brands. Use coupons only for foods already on your grocery list. Use them on the store's double or triple coupon days, if available.



Tips for Getting More Value for Your Dollars Spent on Meat

- ➔ Chuck, round, flank, plate, shank and brisket are less costly and less tender cuts. But after marinating or being cooked with liquids, such as in a slow cooker or boiled gently in stews, these cuts become very tender. Rib and loin cuts are more tender and can be cooked without added liquids, such as by stir-frying, broiling or grilling.
- ➔ Lean cuts provide more meat for your dollar.
- ➔ Consider the amount of cooked lean meat or the number of servings obtained for the price. The cut with a low price per pound is not always the best buy if it contains a great deal of bone, gristle or fat.
- ➔ A pound of raw meat without bones or fat will provide about 12 ounces after cooking.
- ➔ Plan to serve three ounces cooked meat per person per meal.
- ➔ If you can afford the initial cost, buying in bulk will save money. Compare two packages of the same cut of meat, and buy the one that costs the least per pound. Freeze the surplus in meal-sized portions, either before or after cooking the meat.
- ➔ Do the preparation work yourself. For instance, slice your own steaks or kabob chunks, make your own meat patties, and cook meats yourself to reduce costs.



Shopping Tips that Lower Your At-Home Food Costs:

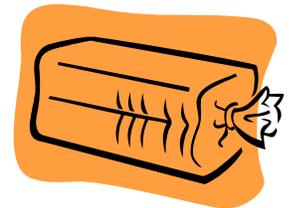
- \$ If possible, keep your kitchen pantry, refrigerator and freezer supplied with basic foods. These will help you be ready when you're hungry for a quick, tasty and nourishing meal or snack!
- \$ Plan to shop during the least busy times. Weekdays and early mornings tend to be less crowded, which lets you get in and out of the store quickly.
- \$ Shop less often. This will save you time, as well as saving you money on gasoline and on impulse buying.
- \$ When taking advantage of special pricing, remember that discounts only save you money if the product is one that you need and normally buy, and will actually use.
- \$ Buy non-perishable discounted items in bulk, when possible.
- \$ Use the unit price as a quick way to compare products of different brands and sizes. Unit price labels are usually found on the shelf edge directly below or above the food item in the grocery store. (The price label on store shelves typically lists two prices. One is the total price you pay for the item, and the other is the price per unit. The unit may be a pound, ounce, quart or other measurement.) You can calculate the unit price by dividing the total price by the number of units it contains.

- \$ Look for grocery bargains on both the top and bottom shelves, and in out-of-the-way spaces. Middle shelves and center-stage areas typically don't hold the best buys.
- \$ Purchase fresh fruit and vegetables in the produce section of the store rather than from the salad bar. Salad bar items tend to cost more per unit price. Exception: If you only need a small amount of a perishable item, buying a small quantity from the salad bar may result in less waste and in money saved.
- \$ Buy fresh fruits and vegetables in season when they are cheaper. An outdoor market with locally-grown food may offer you savings on fresh produce.
- \$ Buy more expensive foods only when they are on sale, and then buy a little extra to freeze, if possible.
- \$ To waste fewer materials, use washable and durable food covers, utensils, cloths, beverage containers and food containers more often. Re-useable products cost less than always buying disposable ones.



Keeping a Price Book

- ★ You will likely save money by keeping notes on the prices of items that you often purchase and of your more expensive grocery items. For example, to start, record the regular price and the sale price, if there is one, of your five most-commonly purchased food items, such as milk or a loaf of bread or jar of peanut butter.
- ★ If you shop at several grocery stores, make columns to record the prices at each store.
- ★ You'll begin to notice where certain items are sold for less money, as well as trends in sales.
- ★ Although a price book requires some extra time at first, it allows you to track good deals.



For more information about healthy eating, contact your local extension office. The Food Assistance Program can help people of all ages with low income buy nutritious foods for a better diet. To find out more, call toll-free 1-888-369-4777.

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K-State Research and Extension is a short name for the Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service, a program designed to generate and distribute useful knowledge for the well-being of Kansans. Supported by county, state, federal and private funds, the program has county Extension offices, experiment fields, area Extension offices and regional research centers statewide. Its headquarters is on the K-State campus, Manhattan. This material was funded in part by USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program through a contract with Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services. Brand names appearing in this publication are for product identification purposes only. No endorsement is intended, nor is criticism implied of similar products not mentioned.

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