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Regional Extension Agent
News Release

Extension Office Offers Workshop: Save Food Dollars by Using Coupons

Do you cut out coupons and never use them? Do you organize your coupons inside a pocket of your handbag? Do you save coupons on your window sill and find them again months after they have expired? If you answer yes to any of these questions, chances are you are a Coupon Klutz. But do not despair. By making a few changes you can be on the road to becoming the next Coupon Queen.

If you save coupons chances are you have seen articles about the shopper that bought three grocery carts full of food and paid under \$50 for it all. Do you ever wonder how those people do it? For one thing, those who accomplish such miraculous coupon success are what we refer to as Coupon Queens and chances are they spend a lot of time perfecting their skills.

If you do not have a lot of time to devote to couponing, you can still advance your skills by adding just a few strategic steps to your collecting process. Will you have the success that the real Queens have? It is possible!

Shop at Stores That Double Coupons If you do not have a store in your area that doubles coupons it may be worth it to organize a shopping day in a town nearby that does have such a store. Buddy-up with a friend and make the trip together. Two eyes are better than one and your friend may spot a deal that you may miss.

Learn To Spot When Generic is Better Generic food products are made at the same companies that produce many of your favorite brand-name products. The packaging is all that is lacking. By pulling out your calculator and adding up the difference in using your coupon for a brand-name item versus buying generic, you will quickly figure out what direction will save you the most money. Remember, just because you have a coupon does not mean you have to use it. Always use the method that will save you the most.

Double-Up Your Savings Combining your coupon with other promotions going on in the store will save you a bundle. If you have a shopper's card, look for those items that you have a coupon for that are also discounted with your shopper's card. Double-up on 2-for sales, such as two cans of soup for a discounted price, plus your coupon. This is also an excellent time to use the

coupons that specify that you save only when you buy two of the same product. Always shop with the grocery store printouts of what is on sale so that you don't miss any of the super buys.

Save and Trade Save all coupons, even those you do not need, and begin trading with friends and relatives. To find others interested in trading in your area, check the classified section of the paper. Also, do not be afraid of proposing the idea to any groups that you belong to or start a group and see if your local library will sponsor meeting times. Meeting one evening every two week's for a few hours should not be too over demanding for a busy schedule.

Keep It Organized Keep your coupons organized. Everyone seems to have a slightly different approach to how to accomplish such a task. The best approach is to come up with your own than stick to it. Being consistent in how you file your coupons is the most important piece of the coupon organizational puzzle. If you keep switching your method you risk forgetting where things are when you are pushed for time at the grocery store.

Plan Your Menu Menu planning will help you use the coupons that you have before they go out of date. I have planned many a week's meals based on what products I have coupons for and the savings is always substantial.

Know What Is On Sale Know what the grocery stores are offering on a weekly basis. Either subscribe to your local paper or pick up the paper on the day that generally offers grocery store inserts. You do not want to miss capitalizing on using coupons on your favorite items that may be on special nor do you want to miss a special triple-coupon promotion. The Sunday paper generally carries food coupons and the Thursday paper will carry grocery store inserts, but check your local paper to make sure those days are the same where you live.

By planning out your weekly menu in advance, setting aside ample time to do the grocery shopping, and keeping your coupons organized so you can get to them quickly, you will be able to maximize your coupon potential and make leaps and bounds down the grocery aisle to becoming a Coupon Queen.

If you are interested in learning how to better utilize your coupons, please make plans to attend a workshop that is being offered by the St. Clair County Extension office on **Monday, May 16, 2011 from 4-6p.m. at the Pell City Civic Center.** Cost to attend the class is \$5. You must pre-register to attend no later than May 9th and the class size is limited to 50. For more information the Extension office at 205-338-9416 and to download a registration form, please visit www.aces.edu/StClair or stop by the Extension office located on the lower level of the St. Clair County Courthouse in Pell City to register. The program will be presented by Angela Treadaway, regional Extension agent in Food Safety/Preservation and Preparation.