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News Release

Ideas for Saving on Food Costs

Have you noticed the increase in your food bill recently? If so, you're not alone. According to the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization, consumers worldwide are facing rising food prices in what analysts call a perfect storm of conditions. Freak weather is a factor. But so are dramatic changes in the global economy, including higher oil prices, lower food reserves and growing consumer demand in China and India. So what can you do? By making some simple changes in your food shopping habits, you can manage to make it through these tough economic times. Here are some ideas on saving money with food costs while still maintaining quality and nutrition.

Saving money on food can be fun because you become more inventive with different recipes and flavor combinations and are also more likely to be conscious of the quality of food you buy when stocking up on sales or buying things in season. Try putting some of the following suggestions into practice and enjoy the savings.

Plan your menus a week in advance. By planning ahead, you will know what food items are needed and can look in sale papers to find the best deals on the items you need.

Cut food waste. If you purchase a quantity of food you must have a place for storage. Consider purchasing a freezer to take advantage of deals for buying in bulk.

Always use a list for shopping. Make a detailed list with prices and stick to it. After doing this over a period of time, you can come within a dollar of your original estimate. Also, by purchasing items from a list, you will not be as tempted to purchase impulse items. Post a list where other family members can add items as they are needed. This will eliminate running out of items. If frequently-used items are on sale and can be stored easily, consider buying several at the low price. This way the item will likely last until it is on special again.

Use coupons. These little pieces of paper are real money and can significantly reduce the total cost of groceries. Learn to collect and organize coupons so that they can be matched to on-sale items for even more savings.

Buy in bulk with a friend. If you find a great buy on some item in bulk but find that it is more than you can use or store, consider joining with a friend to make the purchase. You will still get the bargain price without the waste.

Shop around. Find the best bargains for your needs. Traveling a little further or to more than one store will not deplete your food savings. No store runs everything on sale at one time. Making all purchases at one store could cost you more than you think.

Buy fruit and vegetables that are in season. Not only do you save money this way, but the produce is fresher.

Avoid purchasing packaged foods. You can save by preparing things like “hamburger helper”, macaroni and cheese, etc. from scratch yourself.

Try making meatless meals a couple days a week. Meat is expensive and a lot of it is not very healthy anyway. When cooking with meat, by adding beans, rice or noodles can stretch small amounts of meat with such things as sauces, chili, and casseroles.

For more information on this or related topics, contact Ruth Brock, Regional Extension Agent for Consumer Science and Personal Financial Management. You can reach her at the St. Clair County office at (205) 338-9416 or email at brockru@auburn.edu.

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*Sources: www.suite101.com/reference/save_on_food_costs
www.fao.org/newsroom/common/ecg/1000808/en/FAOEBRD.pdf*

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