

# Food \$ense



*Wisconsin Nutrition Education Program*

Vol. 9 Issue 1

Oct.-Nov.-Dec. 2008

<sup>UW</sup>**Extension**

## **Supermarket Savvy—Save Big Bucks!**



Feeling like your grocery bill is out of control? Use these tips to help you get the most for your food dollars.

### **Plan Ahead**

- Check what you have – look in the pantry and refrigerator to see if you can combine a food you have on hand with an ingredient you plan to buy to make another meal.
- Check grocery ads & collect coupons – many stores feature weekly ads with “specials” (items at reduced prices) and “loss leaders” (items sold below cost). These items *may* be bargains if they are foods you use. Collect coupons for products you will be buying and check the expiration dates.
- Plan healthy meals – make a meal plan for the week. Keep specials or bargains in mind. Planning ahead saves preparation time, money, and ensures better meals.
- Make a list – keep a grocery list posted, and remember to take it with you to the store. List staple items as well as specials, and organize the list by food type and department.

### **When to Shop**

- Shop alone if possible – when your mate or children go shopping with you, your bill generally increases. Leaving them home can help avoid unplanned spending on items not on the list.

- Avoid shopping when tired or rushed –you may buy anything to “get through and go home.” If you’re hungry, it’s tempting to overbuy, especially on prepared foods.
- Shop weekly or less often – plan your shopping so that you can buy groceries for a week or more at a time. Making less trips to the store also helps save on gas money.

### **In the Store**

- Stick to your list – avoid impulse buys to stick to your budget.
- Compare prices – store brands and sale items may not *always* be the best buy. Use the unit price to determine the least expensive form of the food you’re purchasing.
- Buy in quantities that are most economical for you – it may be unwise to buy the largest package if you have a small family. Look for the best buy in the size package you can use before it goes to waste.
- Look up and look down—check higher and lower shelves for less costly items.

### **At Home**

- Handle and store foods properly – Put foods away quickly in order to reduce waste. Frozen and refrigerated foods should be handled first.

## Does Buying Organic Make \$ense?

Grocery store shelves are becoming more crowded with pricey organic versions of everything from milk to hot dogs. However, some of these foods pitched as healthier may not always be worth their higher price tags.

The term *organic* refers to farming methods that avoid pesticides and other chemicals in an effort to protect the environment. Before a product can be labeled *organic*, a Government-approved certifier inspects the farm where the food is grown to make sure the farmer is following all of the rules needed to meet USDA organic standards. Organic foods often cost more because the farming methods are more labor intensive and produce smaller crops.

The USDA makes no claims that organically produced food is safer or more nutritious than conventionally produced food. Consider fruits and vegetables. Regardless of how they are grown, all fruits and vegetables contain vitamins, minerals, antioxidants and fiber that contribute to a healthy diet. As always, it is a good idea to thoroughly wash your fruits and vegetables before eating them, which can help limit your intake of pesticides.

What matters most is that healthy, affordable foods are regular items on your family's grocery list and weekly menus.

### What will you do?

Setting a SMART goal can help you do more with this newsletter: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely. For example, *I will walk around the park three times a week (instead of I should go walking.)* Make a SMART goal from one of the ideas in this newsletter, and write it here:

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## Confetti Taco Salad

*Less meat and more beans makes a money-saving main dish!*

- ½ lb ground beef
- 1 pkg taco seasoning mix
- 1 can beans (red, pinto, black, kidney) drained and rinsed
- 3 cups slightly crushed tortilla chips
- 1 cup shredded cheese
- 1 tomato, chopped
- 8 cups torn or shredded romaine lettuce

1. Brown beef and drain well. Stir in beans, and add taco seasoning with 1 cup water. Stir and heat well.
2. In a large bowl, layer lettuce, chips, bean mixture, tomato and cheese. Chopped onion, green pepper or olives can be added.
3. Toss lightly. Serve with low-fat ranch or French dressing if you like.  
Makes 4 to 6 servings.

## Easy Beef & Bean Pasta

*Stretch your food \$\$ by using canned beans and less meat in main dishes*

- ½ lb ground beef
- 3 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1 can beans (red, pinto, black, kidney) drained and rinsed
- 1 can tomatoes
- ½ tsp salt
- ¼ tsp pepper
- 1 ½ cups dry pasta, cooked and drained
- 2 T fresh basil (or 1-2 tsp dried)
- 3 T Parmesan cheese

Brown beef with garlic; drain off fat. Stir in beans, tomatoes and seasonings, and cook over medium heat 5 minutes. Add hot pasta, and sprinkle with cheese. Makes 4 servings.

## Free Active Fun!



Take a walk! As a physical activity, walking is hard to beat: it's free, it requires no special skills, and most people of any age can do it. It's an activity a family can easily do together. Walking is also a

great thing to do when you need time by yourself.

### Walking to Get Fit

- Walk with your chin up and your shoulders held slightly back.
- Walk so that the heel of your foot touches the ground first. Roll your weight forward.
- Walk with your toes pointed forward.
- Swing your arms as you walk.
- Think of your walk in three parts. Walk slowly for 5 minutes. Increase your speed for the next 5 minutes. Finally, to cool down, walk slowly again for 5 minutes.
- Try to walk at least 3 times per week. Add 2 to 3 minutes per week to the fast walk. If you walk less than three times per week, increase the fast walk more slowly.
- To avoid sore muscles, start gradually. Over several weeks, walk faster, go further, and walk longer.

The more you walk, the better you will feel.

### Walk for Fun

If you have children, walk to a neighborhood park or play ground. Don't just watch your kids play – play with them! Push the swing, run beside the merry-go-round, and climb the monkey bars! The park is also a place where you can really stretch your legs, go on a nature hike, or have a picnic.



## Dear Sue Keeney ...

Meet Sue Keeney--your source of research-based information about nutrition and health! Readers of all ages like Sue's practical tips on eating for good health, stretching the food dollar

Dear Sue Keeney,

I am spending too much money on lunches! Our school raised prices this year, and my kids want me to buy those packaged lunches from the store. What should I do?

Dee Prest

Dear Dee,

First of all, apply for free/reduced price meals. This program is meant for families who are having trouble making ends meet. You can apply anytime by contacting your school office. Your information is confidential, and schools make sure their system does not reveal which children are participating. If your school serves breakfast, you can also save money that meal.

Students do not have to eat "school lunch" every day. When deciding what to buy for lunches, remember that fancy packaging from the store costs you REAL money. A lunch kit only contains a few crackers, meat, cheese, mini-candy bar, and a sugary drink for \$2.59. If you buy those foods and pack it yourself, it will only cost \$1! In a month's time, you can save over \$30 on lunches, and you could make them so much healthier:

- Include fruits and vegetables that your child likes: raw veggies, apple wedges, or fruit sauce.
- Instead of sandwiches every day, how about peanut butter and crackers, string cheese, or cheese spread on celery?
- Instead of high fat treat like a candy bar, you could include a granola bar or oatmeal cookie for a sweet tooth.
- Your child can buy a carton of milk at school, and you can send yogurt or homemade pudding.

Be sure to include a small ice pack to keep the lunch safe.

Sue Keeney

## Save \$\$ on Cleaning Supplies

You can make inexpensive, less toxic cleaning products by using simple items you already have in your kitchen cupboard. Remember to LABEL spray bottles and other containers after you have mixed the ingredients. Here are a few recipes for easy cleaning products:

- Windows: Put 3 T. vinegar per quart of water in a spray bottle. Shake well. For streak-free windows, use newspaper instead of paper towels to wipe them!
- Air freshener: In a spray bottle, mix 1 tsp baking soda, 1 tsp vinegar or lemon juice, and 2 cups hot water. “Spritz” into the air to remove odors.
- Bathroom: For tub and tile cleaner, mix 1<sup>2</sup>/<sub>3</sub> cups baking soda, ½ cup liquid soap, and ½ cup water. Then add 2 T. vinegar. If you add the vinegar too early it will react with the baking soda.
- All purpose sanitizer: Mix 2 tsp borax, 4 T. vinegar, and 3 to 4 cups hot water in a spray bottle.
- Toilet bowl: Pour 1 cup borax into toilet bowl before going to bed. In the morning, just simply scrub and flush.
- Laundry brightener: Add ½ cup lemon juice during the rinse cycle.
- Wood floors: Add 1 cup vinegar to one pail of water.
- Furniture polish: Mix olive oil and vinegar in a one-to-one ratio and polish with a soft cloth.

Source: <http://www.greenerchoices.org>

## *Kids in the Kitchen*

### Edible Play Dough

- ½ cup creamy peanut butter
- ¼ cup honey
- ½ cup confectioner’s sugar
- ½ cup dry milk powder

Combine peanut butter and honey in a bowl; mix until smooth. Add confectioner’s sugar and dry milk to peanut butter mixture. Mix well. Add additional confectioner’s sugar to make the consistency of play dough, if needed.

### Saving Energy in the Kitchen

Many kitchens are a hot bed of activity all year long. There are a few things you can do in the kitchen to save money on your energy bill:

- Use small appliances whenever possible.
- When using the oven, bake several dishes at the same time.
- Set aside one day to do all your baking and avoid the expense of heating the oven up multiple times.
- Use your microwave for quick tasks like melting chocolate.
- Get everything you need from the refrigerator at one time, so you only open the door once.
- Make the most of your dishwasher by running only full loads.

From Alliant Energy’s PowerHouse News

WNEP education is supported by the USDA Food Stamp Program, UW-Extension and local partners. Food stamps can help provide a healthy diet. To find out more about food stamps, call 920.386.3760. To learn more about the Wisconsin Nutrition Education Program in Columbia or Dodge County, please contact:



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