

Frugal Tips

Food

Always, *always* make a grocery list. Plan your menu, balancing the more expensive items with less expensive, and make a list. To save time, you might consider saving your menus and corresponding grocery lists until you have a month's worth, then rotate them, adding in new dishes at your leisure.

Make two meals and freeze one for a later use whenever you can. There are lots of advantages to this. You save money by buying your food in bulk. You have a dinner in the freezer ready to use so that you don't run out for fast food when you are too busy to cook. And it is so nice to have a ready-made dinner in the freezer when you are ill or not feeling well.

Try not to buy convenience foods as they are usually more expensive and less healthy. Learn several quick, cheap recipes for when you need a convenient meal. Or better yet, always have at least one frozen meal in the freezer.

Do away with soda. Not only is soda expensive, but it is SO unhealthy. Get used to drinking water and you won't be sorry.

Plan dishes with smaller portions of meat rather than whole servings of meat per person. Or better yet, learn several "meatless" meals. The meat is usually the most expensive part of the meal. Examples: spaghetti, casseroles, beans, etc.

Freeze food when it is in season. Strawberries, for example, cost a whole lot less per pound in June than they do in December. Buy them in droves and freeze them in big zipper seal freezer bags. (They won't stick together if you lay them out on a cookie sheet and freeze them individually before you put them in the freezer bag.) Freeze your corn in July or August. Get bunches of green and red peppers while they are on sale. You can easily freeze enough to use all year long if you are smart.

Grow your own herbs. If you use a lot of herbs, you can save a bundle by growing them right in your windowsill, and they taste better besides. They

are easy to keep, but I've never been very successful starting them from seed. I'd suggest buying them as seedlings.

Shop at discount food stores. We have a store called Save A Lot in our area that offers great discounts on food. We've discovered that their ravioli tastes identical to Chef Boyardee, and their canned beef stew and canned chili can't be distinguished from Armour Brand.