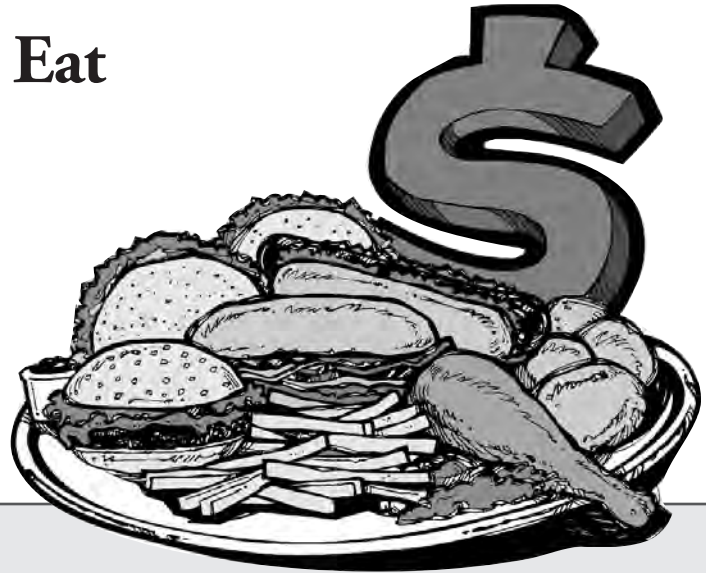




Saving Money While You Eat

When researchers talk about the amount of food that's wasted by Americans every year, the numbers range from \$43 billion to \$100 billion. The important thing is—it's a lot. And that means some of that loss is out of your pocket. This FFEF newsletter contains ideas for ways to keep that money in your wallet. As with most things, there are plenty of viewpoints on what is the best way to save money on food. We thought we'd include several of those viewpoints and let you decide what will work the best for you. ■



Ways to Avoid Waste

Shopping to avoid waste can require a time investment at first. Ask yourself what you have the most of—time or money? If your answer is time, it might be worth investing that time in some good meal planning and grocery shopping. Keep in mind as you plan your meals that the longer period of time you try to plan for, the less accurate you will be. It might be a good idea to try shopping every two or three days to begin with to make sure that you are only buying as much as you will use. The more practiced you are, the longer you will be able to plan for without throwing food away.

As you plan your meals, take into consideration how much time you will need to prepare your meals. Don't plan meals that take an hour to prepare for a night on which you only have half an hour to make dinner because of other time commitments you have made. This is often a reason that food goes to waste. Because time is short, you may end up ordering fast food or take out and the food you thought you were going to cook goes to waste.

Each time you prepare your grocery list, take an inventory of what food is left from the last time you shopped. What did you buy too much of? What did you buy that no one wanted to eat? Each week you will be able to fine tune your plans until you reduce the amount of waste to a minimum. As leftovers accumulate, have a leftovers night periodically in which you make a meal out of your leftovers. See how creative you can be.

When storing leftovers in the refrigerator, mark the date you store them with a permanent marker on tape on the package. Keep a marker and tape near the fridge to make it easy to do. Glass containers make great storage containers because it's easy to see the contents and they are easy to clean and reuse. Check out your refrigerator every day to make sure you don't have food that will soon be outdated. If you do, make sure you include it in your next meal so it doesn't go to waste. Do the same with the food in your cupboards. Check the expiration date on the packaged and canned foods you have so you can be sure to use them before they expire also.

You can also take a week or other period of time now and then in which you don't purchase any additional food until you've used all the food on hand. Instead of running to the store when you run out of something,

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Ways to Buy in Bulk

Buying in bulk is the opposite of shopping to avoid waste. Although both methods hope to have the same result—saving money on your grocery bill—it takes a different thought process to buy in bulk. What it will do is allow you to have what sounds good to you on any particular day, but instead of having to go to the store to get it, you can get it from your own cupboard.

1. Start with a basic shopping list. On this list put the food items that you usually buy. Think about the meals you cook most often. Put the main ingredients to those meals on your list, e.g., dried potatoes, pasta, ground beef, etc.
2. Once you have your basic beginner list, start checking out the grocery ads. If one of the items on your list is on sale for an excellent price, for example if the pasta is on sale at “buy one get one free,” buy as much as your budget will allow—even if it’s only one extra package.

Soup is a great way to use leftovers. Use stock or a can of diced tomatoes as a base and add any vegetable, meat, and bean leftovers. A crock pot makes it easy to cook the soup all day and have it ready for dinner whenever you need it.

3. You are now starting your food storage. Work through your list in this way until you have bulk quantities of all the ingredients you use most often. But make sure you only buy in bulk when the items are on sale. Grocery stores usually run the same item on sale about every 6 or 12 weeks so within the next three months, the items on your list should go on sale at least once. Each time you buy items on sale, you are saving money.

4. You want to buy as little as possible at full price. If nothing on your list is on sale one week, you might want to consider changing your menu for that week. Sometimes an item is on sale for \$1.59, the next week it’s \$1.29 and the next it’s \$.99. It takes awhile before you’ll get to know when an item is at a really good price. But don’t despair. You’ll get there eventually.



5. As the weeks go by your food storage will be building, some weeks faster than others. As you think of additional items you would like to store, add them to your list and watch for sales. Coupons can increase your savings.

6. When the going gets tough, as it can when you have a small food budget and your storage takes a long time to build, take a little tally to remind yourself of what you’re saving. For instance, let’s say your favorite pasta is \$1.59 a package. This week it is on sale for “buy one, get one free.” This is a great deal so you cut something extra out of your weekly shopping trip so you can buy 4 packages. Normally this would cost you \$6.36; however, this week it is only costing you \$3.18 because you are getting two of the packages for free. These little savings add up until you are eventually making significant savings.

Steam fresh vegetables for dinner, and save the cooking water as a broth for soup or for making rice. Steaming is a great way to preserve the vitamins and minerals in fresh vegetables that get lost when you boil them.

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When you are grocery shopping, buy fresh perishables last and keep them together in your shopping cart so they stay cold. Ask the bagger to put cold foods in a bag together. If you are buying hot foods from the deli, keep these separate from cold foods in your shopping cart.

It will keep working like this until eventually, you will have a very well-stocked pantry and freezer with items all purchased on great sales. With careful planning, you shouldn't have to pay full price for anything again. By creating a food storage that contains food you will eat, at great prices, you should be able to really lower your grocery bill.

7. Store your food properly. In order to make the most of your bulk food buying, you must store the food properly so it doesn't spoil. Canned and packaged foods are relatively easy to store. Just make sure you rotate the cans and packages out so the oldest ones get used first and don't just sit at the back until they go bad. Here is

The Ways We Shop

There are two ways to approach grocery shopping when you're trying to save money. The first, and probably the one you hear about most commonly is buying in bulk. This advice usually runs along the lines of "buy as much as you can for the least amount of money you can." This is good advice if done with careful planning, especially if you have a large family.

The second is advice you may not hear as often but it can be equally effective. This approach is based on the idea that you buy just the amount your family needs to avoid having any waste. Research done in 2005 indicated that Americans throw away about 14% of the food they purchase. If your grocery budget is \$400 per month, research would indicate that you throw away about \$56 of food per month. That's more than \$600 per year. It might be nice if you could use that \$600 rather than waste it.

SAFE FROZEN FOOD STORAGE TIMES

FROZEN FOOD	TIME
Bacon and Sausage	1-2 Months
Casseroles	2-3 Months
Egg whites or egg substitutes	12 Months
Frozen Dinners and Entrees	3-4 Months
Gravy, meat or poultry	2-3 Months
Ham, Hotdogs and Lunchmeats	1-2 Months
Meat, uncooked roasts	4-12 Months
Meat, uncooked steaks/chops	4-12 Months
Meat, uncooked ground	3-4 Months
Meat, cooked	2-3 Months
Poultry, uncooked whole	12 Months
Poultry, uncooked parts	9 Months
Poultry, uncooked giblets	3-4 Months
Poultry, cooked	4 Months
Soups and Stews	2-3 Months
Wild game, uncooked	8-12 Months

a chart indicating the amount of time food can be frozen and still retain its flavor and nutrients. Frozen foods remain safe indefinitely, it's more the flavor and nutrition you need to worry about. ■

Ways to Avoid Waste, *Continued from page 1*

force yourself to use what is left. This not only ensures nothing goes to waste, but it also makes sure that you completely rotate your food regularly.

Fresh fruits and vegetables make up a significant amount of the food that gets thrown away. People buy them in the belief that they want to eat healthy meals, but end up throwing them away because they don't have time to prepare them. If you find that you're still throwing food away, try buying food that's frozen instead of fresh food. That way you will be able to keep food longer. You can also try to buy fresh fruits and vegetables that keep longer. Apples, oranges, carrots, squash, potatoes, and onions are all fresh foods that will store for longer than some other foods. Fresh fruits and vegetables are richer in nutrients so it is best to include them in your meal planning as much as you can. The longer food sits in your refrigerator, the more vitamins and minerals it loses, so if you have the time to shop every few days, your food will stay fresher. ■

Ways to Save on Baby Food

If you have babies in your household, you know how expensive it can be to provide nutritious food and good hygiene care. Did you also know that most baby food manufacturers supply coupons and ways to save on their websites? Below is a list of websites you can visit to find coupons and e-mail offers that help you save. You can search for more sites on the Internet.

Similac

<http://www.welcomeaddition.com>

Huggies

<http://www.huggieshappybaby.com/offers/ml.aspx>

Gerber Club

<https://www.gerber.com/register>

Gerber Baby Food

<http://www.gerber.com/coupons>

Beech Nut

<http://beechnut.com>

Earth's Best Baby Food

<http://www.earthsbest.com/promos/>

Your Sunday newspaper frequently has coupons for diapers, baby food, baby dishes and utensils, and various brands of baby formula. If you don't take the paper, perhaps you could ask someone who does—a friend or family member—to save the coupons for you. Drugstores also send out circulars now with good savings on products. If you can't find someone to save the coupons for you, you may be able to pick up copies of the circulars at the store itself. You can also ask the customer service department at your local grocery store if they have any special baby clubs. They may have money-back rebates when you purchase certain quantities of baby products.

Another good source for coupons for baby supplies is your pediatrician's office. Next time you visit, ask about coupons or samples they have available.

Tips for Making Your Own Baby Food

Did you know you can make your own baby food, and it is more nutritious and definitely less expensive than store-bought baby food? Parents often feel there must be something especially good about store-bought baby food from famous brands that justify the high price. Not true. There is nothing magical about baby food. Adult

foods that are similar in consistency to baby foods are just as good, but cost much less. One jar of baby food carrots, for example, costs about the same as a

whole pound of fresh carrots. Baby food in jars offers convenience, but you can find small plastic storage containers that work just as well and you can use them over and over again.

A really great method for storing homemade baby food is in the freezer. Freeze food that you puree, such as steamed vegetables and fruits, in ice cube trays. This way you will have pre-measured one-ounce portions of food. Just fill the trays and cover them with plastic wrap to freeze. After the food is frozen, remove the cubes from the tray and store them in plastic freezer bags marked with the date

When you're ready to thaw the food for eating, place the amount you need in the refrigerator. It will thaw in about four hours. Don't thaw food at room temperature. If you need the food faster than four hours, you can thaw the food by placing the cubes in a small bowl and then placing the small bowl in a larger bowl that has hot water in it. This method takes about twenty minutes. If the pureed food is a little too thick for your baby, just add water or formula to the desired consistency. ■

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Rice with Apple and Squash Baby Food

- 1 squash - acorn, butternut, or other squash
- 1-2 cups cooked brown rice
- 1/2 cup applesauce

Cut squash in half and scoop out seeds. Place halves face down on a cooking sheet or pan and cover in an inch of water.

Bake at 400 degrees for 40 minutes or until skin detaches and meat is soft. Scoop meat from skin and place in a blender. Add applesauce and cooked rice and blend. Add water as necessary to achieve a smooth, thin consistency.

(Recipe found at www.wholesomebabyfood.com)

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