

Ellen H. Semrow

Money Stretching Ideas for Making Your Food Dollar Go F-u-r-t-h-e-r

A food dollar is precious. It purchases food to satisfy hunger. It brings familiar foods to the table where all can share in the warm, happy feeling that comes from enjoying food together. Used wisely, your food dollar can do all this and more. It can, with planning, provide foods to help each family member, young and old, become the energetic and healthy individual that he wants to be.

The person purchasing and serving food should know the value of every dollar. Although a certain amount of food money is placed in the pocket-book each week, some of it goes for away-from-home meals. And it may be called on to cover emergencies—a doctor or car repair bill; the purchase of new shoes. In that event, how to make the most of what is left calls for pennypinching with know-how.

To have food in the refrigerator, in the cupboard, or on the pantry shelf and cash on hand means future meals. Planning can do much to bring about this security.

Each family's plan is theirs alone. It changes as the family grows in number and in years. It changes with the season, with prices for food.

To have cash on hand, you may purchase food by the meal or by the day. Or you may purchase only the foods needed as you can afford them and round out the commodities you receive. Also, you may be forced to shop often because you share a kitchen or because the equipment and storage space do not fit your needs.

Payday is shopping day for many. A family may spend a certain amount, trying to purchase food to last out the week. Because of tradition, another family may purchase expensive regional or imported items, adding other foods as dollars allow.

Families far from shopping centers must have food supplies to last more than 2 weeks. Each trip costs money.

Others can afford to pursue and purchase quantities of bargain-priced foods for future use. And those with gardens have a supply of fresh, canned, or frozen foods.

Working homemakers purchase more convenience foods than stay-at-homes do. Often it is the children who shop, cook, and serve meals when mothers cannot be at home. For such families, teamwork in planning and doing is a necessity.

To use food money well, first consider the food needs of every family member. Then weigh these against the dollars you have to spend. Get the most for the least by:

- Picking from the plentiful foods in planning meals and snacks.
- Shopping from a prepared list.
- Spending the food money in stores stocking a wide variety of good foods, where the average price means lower grocery and meat bills for you week in and week out.

One homemaker may plan weekly menus as she studies food advertisements. Another is so skilled she can see in her mind's eye each of the meals she will prepare for the family and guests,

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making use of best buys. Both will have other choices in mind should they be disappointed in the "special offers" or discover that the supermarket is sold out of what they wanted. Both types of homemakers plan and use shopping lists as guides. Experience has taught them that this is a good way to save energy and money.

How to Make a Shopping List:

Jot down the needed items as food supplies run low.

Inventory the refrigerator, freezer, and shelves. First, plan uses for your leftovers.

List the same kinds of foods and supplies together.

Watch food advertisements. Foods in plentiful supply are at the peak of their quality and are reasonably priced.

"Specials" may be closeouts, to be sold before the new crop or pack arrives at the store.

Shop newspaper pages, compare all prices, the ones in small print as well as big offerings.

Those caught in the low-income squeeze who cannot afford newspapers, and those who cannot read even the free advertisements, can by working together with others plan purchases and shopping trips. Sharing talents, experiences, and expenses is one way to obtain more for less. Community helpers may advise on the good buys,

show how to use new foods, organize shopping trips. They may make transportation available at cost.

Place perishable and frozen foods last on your list. Purchase them just before "checking out."

Be sure your shopping list contains the foods needed for each person, on each day.

Do servings from the meat group total at least two? Include dry beans or peas, eggs, and cheese with meat.

See that four or more servings of enriched or whole-grain breads and cereals are included.

Servings of fruits and vegetables should add up to four. Include deep-green and yellow vegetables and vitamin C-rich fruits or juices.

Plan for three to four cups of milk a day for children; two cups for adults. Include milk used in cooking. Cheese counts here.

Total the food costs, omitting cleaning and household supplies. If cuts are needed, start in trimming and substituting.

Money-Saving Suggestions:

Rethink meat. It takes about a third of the food allowance. Plan entrees around less-tender cuts. Pick those with the most meat to eat for money spent. If pig ears, snouts, and tails are used often, be sure to include additional red meat. Lunch meats are

Cost per Serving of Commonly Used Fresh Pork Variety Meats*

Retail cut	Servings per pound	Price per pound in pennies											
		19	21	24	29	31	34	37	39	41	44	47	49
		Cost per serving											
<i>Pork—fresh:</i>													
Chitterlings....	3	6+	7	8	9+	10+	11+	12+	13	13+	14+	15+	16+
Pig ears... Pork snouts...													
Hog fries... Pork livers... Neck bones.... Pork tails..	2	9+	10+	12	14+	15+	17+	18+	19+	20+	22	23+	24+
	1	19	21	24	29	31	34	37	39	41	44	47	49

*Information developed from personal interviews with packers, retailers, and public aid workers in the Chicago area, 1968.

costly. Plan more large roasts and use some of the meat for sandwiches. Pass up chicken parts; cut up a whole bird. Use fish if the price pinch is less.

Bulk cheese costs less per pound than sliced or grated cheese.

Run in favorite recipes with stretch-power; extend the meat or fish with bread, rice, noodles, and pasta—spaghetti, macaroni, etc.

Plan uses for dry beans and peas.

Buy cereals that require cooking instead of ready-to-serve ones.

Use vegetable shortening, margarine, and butter to thriftiest advantage.

Scan luxury snacks such as potato chips, popped corn, corn puffs. Of this group, pretzels cost less per ounce. Private label brands and larger packages normally cost less per ounce for like quality.

Soft drinks cost less per ounce in returnable bottles than in disposable cans or bottles. Save on larger-sized bottles and lesser-known brands.

Skip costly low-calorie, instant or convenience meal items. Example: Buttered toast spread with preserves is cheaper than fruit-filled popups.

Choose from abundant and low-cost vegetables and fruit rather than from unusual or imported varieties. Buy the least expensive forms, whether fresh, frozen, or canned. Example: Root vegetables such as sweet potatoes or white potatoes, turnips, carrots, and beets might take the place of Puerto Rican plantains, yautias, and yucas.

Select lower grades wherever you can without losing appetite appeal and usefulness. An example: Grade B eggs can be used for baking and for some egg dishes.

The locally grown beans, dried or canned, are cheaper than imported beans.

Select juices and drinks for vitamin C value. Rule out fruit-flavored choices supplying only sugar.

Bread cubes and noodles give stretchpower to this Rosy Beef Romanoff.



Substitute dried or evaporated milk for part of the fresh milk.

If you have made every possible saving and still find yourself spending more than you should, replan the menus. Begin by cutting quantities of meat, poultry, and fish; vegetables and fruits less rich in vitamins A and C. Add more bread, cereals, potatoes, and dry beans and peas. Keep quantities of milk and cheese, green and yellow vegetables, tomatoes, and citrus fruits and juices the same.

With menus planned and shopping list ready, two more decisions need to be made—where to shop and how.

Prices vary with store policy and location, even within the city. For savings, patronize a cash-and-carry store. Which one? Ask yourself these questions:

Does the store stock a wide variety of food? Is there a consumer adviser to help you? Does it offer value, quality, and freshness at lowest prices? Are the surroundings neat and clean?

Are the fresh meat and produce counters filled with quality items, trimmed to reduce waste, and reasonably priced? Can you examine bagged produce? Is the added cost of feature games, stamps, check cashing services, and perhaps hot coffee, in addition to ample parking space, worth it to you?

Shopping special offers means going from store to store. Consider transportation, time, and energy. Such a trip may offset savings. You may fare better with one-store shopping where pricing policy and services suit your needs. Recheck prices often. Compare items with those advertised by competitors to be sure that you get your dollar's worth.

Careful buyers can save even in times of a price pinch. Staples offer biggest savings: enriched flour, rice, and bread; margarine; sugar; and the simple convenience foods like some biscuit and cake mixes. Canned chicken soup and instant coffee are usually good buys. Plan your available kitchen time so you can save by cooking from scratch.

Pointers for Pricers:

Know the grades for food quality developed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Read labels and inspection stamps.

Compare sale prices with the stock prices. Spotlighted product displays may suggest a bargain. Check the shelves. The featured price may be the usual price. Look for a competing product of the same size and quality. You may save here.

Think about quality in terms of use. Why use fresh tomatoes when canned ones will do?

Compare costs of various forms of food—fresh, instant, dried, frozen, or canned; enriched or unenriched. Buy the type which suits needs and food likes. Example: Frozen spinach, free from waste, may cost less per serving than fresh. Enriched bread costs no more than the unenriched kind.

The seasonal food prices should be noted. Keep track of the trends. Buy when prices are down. Substitute when prices are up.

Take advantage of private label items when the quality and price are right.

Think of cost per serving or portion rather than price per pound, especially when it comes to meat. Cuts high in bone and fat cost more per person than cuts with little waste. Example: Spareribs versus rolled pork loin.

Buy all cereal foods by the cost per ounce or pound.

Buy foods that store well and in largest sized packages which can be used in a reasonable length of time and not hog shelf, freezer, or refrigerator space.

Judge values in fresh fruits and vegetables. Make your own selection, handpick whenever you can. Use thought and care in handling perishables. Adding to spoilage adds to costs.

Do not buy merely because the price is low. Buy to suit your needs.

Consider produce in season and grown nearby.

Look for signs of decay, bruises, or blemishes. Choose only sound items.

Select fruits such as apples, peaches,

and melons for use, and thus reduce waste. Example: Why hand a huge apple to a small girl who can eat only a small apple?

Small produce may be sold by measure. Check containers for loose pack; for fancy items on top, culls on the bottom.

Develop the habit of doing mental arithmetic while you shop. For easy division, round out servings or ounces and prices and get approximate costs.

Always shop from a list. Try to shop alone, when the store is not crowded. Impulse buying is less when one is not under pressure from prodding shopping carts and clamors for goodies. If children are along, they should be present at the checkout counter to learn firsthand that food costs money.

If the man of the house does the shopping, then he should be in on preparation of the list. Children old enough to take part should be included.

Be the consumer's best friend when you shop. Treat all merchandise you handle as if you were paying for it. Place unwanted goods back where they belong. Handle shopping carts with care. Any loss or damage to merchandise or property increases supermarket costs, costs for which the consumer always pays.

Select packaged foods carefully. The packaging may be worth more than the contents. Examples: Individually wrapped or trayed cookies in special boxes, heat-and-eat dinners, imported foods like crackers and oatmeal in tins.

Be sure all canned and packaged items are in good condition. Check milk cartons for dripping. Inspect butter cartons with care. Get what you pay for. Look at egg cartons for wet or dry egg solids. Open lid carefully. Don't buy if any eggs are cracked. Close properly.

Check processing dates on all packages carrying them. Buy those with the most recent datemark.

Watch the scale. It should carry an inspection stamp showing it has been checked for accuracy. Be sure it registers zero before item is weighed. Have weight checked on bagged produce.

Watch the checker as your bill is rung up on the cash register. Follow each entry to be certain you are charged only for actual purchases and that prices are right. Ask for a "recount" if you feel an error has been made.

With experience in planning and shopping you will learn that price alone does not always mean a best buy. You will know how to pick foods for their real value.

Prompt and proper storage of food in the home saves food value, flavor, texture, and appearance. Spoilage and waste can undo savings.

Foods that do not require refrigeration at all, or none until the package or can has been opened, keep best when tightly sealed and stored in a dry, cool spot away from light and heat. In hot, damp climates, some foods must be placed in covered containers for protection. Keep only short supplies of these. Make certain that containers and shelves are clean.

Refrigerator temperature should be 35° F. to 45° F. To store, always cover or wrap foods to prevent moisture loss. Use most perishable items first. Leftovers won't be skipped if kept at front of shelves.

Freezer temperatures should be zero or lower. The food taken from the freezer can be only as good as that which you put in, provided that it was wrapped properly and was not stored overlong. Freeze foods which mean real savings. All packages should be labeled with date, kind, and amount of food. Freeze only 2 pounds for each cubic foot of space every 6 hours. If you have a large freezer, jot down items and dates as you store. Scratch each package off the list upon removal, the oldest first.

If meat is boned out, wrap and freeze the bones. When enough are on hand, make soup.

If there is a special on ground beef in large packages, divide into portions before wrapping and freezing; some for meat sauce for spaghetti, some shaped into individual patties.

Ham trimmings can stand short-time freezing. Use with greens.



When ground beef has to show up on the family menu every other day, try Beef Balls Potpourri for variety. Ingredients include stuffing, a tomato sauce, thin slices of peeled cucumber, strips of green pepper, and onion rings.

When you have to create meals from but few ingredients, using them more than once a day, sameness shows up fast. Ban monotony and waste through pennywise preparation. Discover new ways with foods. You can learn how to make even third-time-around food far tastier by attending demonstrations or classes or by using tested recipes.

- Peanut butter sandwich fillings can be different. Add applesauce, chili sauce, or orange juice and grated rind to it; enough to make it spreadable. Scones, hushpuppies, brownies, and fruit salad dressing can be made with peanut butter.
- Flick bread slices in and out of an egg-milk mixture, coat slices with cornmeal or breadcrumbs, pan fry for new flavor and texture.
- Cut biscuit dough and bread into different shapes. Serve with new spreads. Cube or crumb bread trimmings.
- Fry rice Chinese style and serve it under a blanket of hot, thick tomato sauce garnished with bits of fried ham or sausage and shredded Cheddar

cheese. Or, layer hot rice, chopped ham, sour cream and shredded Cheddar cheese in a baking dish, finishing off with cheese; bake in a hot oven for 10 minutes.

Do not repeat flavors or colors on a menu—apple salad and apple pie, red beets and red cabbage.

Too many strong aromas at any one meal, such as garlic, onion, and cabbage, can ruin appetites.

Recipes are needed when you are learning to use strange foods. Introduce new dishes with this plan: Offer them at dinner, serving small portions along with familiar foods. Children tend to accept a new food if parents show they like it.

Food wastage is less with the tested recipes. Preparation is easier, dishes are tastier, failures are fewer when measuring spoons and cups are used. Always measure dry ingredients with dry cups and spoons. Pots and pans of the right size are important, too. If you lack equipment, it helps to think about how to do it with what you have on hand.

Clock your time and ability to cook and serve meals. Remember that a few well-chosen foods, all on the table at the right time, make a more satisfactory meal than many carelessly prepared dishes straggling along.

Homemakers with little kitchen time, who cannot afford heat-and-eat foods, can divide some favorite recipes into steps. Decide what can be prepared on the night before and safely refrigerated, then what must be done at mealtime in a few minutes. Such recipes, when planned into menus, give these bonuses: Savings in time and money, balanced meals, happier people at the table.

Quick-cooking foods are best started after all who will eat are at home. Overcooking and extra-long holding of foods rob the eating quality. If foods must be served at different times, prepare those which can be held over or reheated.

Check foods as they cook to avoid scorching, especially those cooking in little water.

Use a sharp knife for carving meat. Remember: Attractively sliced meat, when arranged on a platter or placed on a plate, looks elegant.

All foods should be picture pretty, alone or together. Their colors, shapes, sizes, and textures should flatter each other.

Foods have right serving temperatures. Ice cream at zero is too cold. Refrigerate it a short time, letting the flavor bloom before serving. Mashed potatoes are delicious when hot, sad when cold. Bananas taste best at room temperature.

Breads and rolls are good at either room temperature or oven-warm.

Use these facts: Tart foods sharpen appetites; sweets dull them. Crunchy or crisp foods add texture contrast: hard rolls with the soups and stews, crisp toast with creamed dishes.

Show off foods to advantage. The right tablecloth, place mats, dishes, glassware, and flowers can light up a meal. Wrongly used, they turn off appetites—orange juice in purple glasses, for instance. If you can have but one

set of dishes, stick to a plain design and light colors. Pick clear glassware. With these, and color in tablecloths and the decorations, you can avoid problems.

Ways to encourage good eating include a change of pace in meal service. Surprise the family with an occasional indoor or outdoor picnic. Use fanfare upon special days. Rather than rush through a meal to see a TV show, make it a tray supper.

Each person is an individual. Appetites vary with age and how one feels at the moment. Keep servings small. Let each ask for more as long as he eats what is on the plate.

Snacking dulls the appetite, wrecks food budgets. Eating a week's supply of apples in 1 day not only spoils the desire for other food, it discourages the cook. Check food binges. Snacks should be part of the food plan.

You have three assets in leftovers—savings in time since they are already cooked, an extra stretch for the food budget, and variety.

The trick to using leftovers is to change their appearance and step up the flavor as much as possible. One-dish meals and scalloped dishes (various cooked foods heated in sauce) make a changeover easier. You can extend the meats and vegetables with dumplings and biscuits; with rice, macaroni, noodles, and bread cubes. You can top off such entrees with french-fried onion rings, Chinese noodles, or seasoned croutons. Eye appeal doubles when colorful ingredients like chopped tomato, pimiento, green onions, chives, or green pepper are added to toppings.

Omelets and french toast are more tasty with bits of leftovers. A small amount of cooked vegetables can stand an hour or two in french dressing for added flavor. Strips of leftover meats and cheeses make salads hearty.

Second-time-around fruits—cooked, canned, or fresh—can be added to cottage cheese. You can replan these into desserts along with other fruits. They, like vegetables, can be added to flavored gelatins, chilled in molds,

and turned out on lettuce or shredded cabbage.

Encourage the eating of salads and soups by adding seasoned, toasted bread cubes before serving. Cubes also can become puddings, fruit desserts, or stuffings. Crumbs can be used to coat foods for frying. Doughnuts can be split, spread with marmalade, and broiled for a moment. Renew cakes and cookies by serving them with fruit sauces and ice cream.

When it comes to getting the most out of food money, one thing more is necessary. It is the enthusiastic and thrifty-minded homemaker who prepares food with imagination and joy and serves it with pride. She creates the atmosphere for enjoying food. To her,

as it should be to every one of us, food is precious.

How To Use Table:

Assume chuck roast (bone-in), lamb shoulder roast, and Boston butt (bone-in) are all 59 cents per pound. Which is the more economical choice? Just match the price per pound with the meat cut you are comparing. Reading the table under the 59 cents per pound column shows chuck roast at 30 cents per serving, lamb shoulder roast at 24 cents per serving, and the bone-in Boston butt at 20 cents per serving. Servings are from 2½ to 3½ ounces of cooked lean meat.

(Marketing Information for Consumers, Cooperative Extension Service, Ohio State University, Columbus.)

Cost per Serving of Red Meat and Poultry

Retail cut	Servings per pound	Price per pound											
		29	39	49	59	69	79	89	99	109	119	129	139
		Cost per serving											
BEEF:													
Sirloin Steak.....	2½	12	16	20	24	28	32	36	40	44	48	52	56
Porterhouse, T-bone, Rib Steak.....	2	15	20	25	30	35	40	45	50	55	60	65	70
Round Steak.....	3½	8	11	14	17	20	23	25	28	31	34	37	40
Chuck Roast, bone-in....	2	15	20	25	30	35	40	45	50	55	60	65	70
Rib Roast—boneless.....	2½	12	16	20	24	28	32	36	40	44	48	52	56
Rib Roast—bone-in.....	2	15	20	25	30	35	40	45	50	55	60	65	70
Rump, Sirloin Roast.....	3	10	13	16	20	23	26	30	33	36	40	43	46
Ground Beef.....	4	7	10	12	15	17	20	22	25	27	30	32	35
Short Ribs.....	2	15	20	25	30	35	40	45	50	55	60	65	70
Heart, Liver, Kidney....	5	6	8	10	12	14	16	18	20	22	24	26	28
Frankfurters.....	4	7	10	12	15	17	20	22	25	27	30	32	35
Stew Meat, boneless....	5	6	8	10	12	14	16	18	20	22	24	26	28
LAMB:													
Loin, Rib, Shoulder Chops.....	3	10	13	16	20	23	26	30	33	36	40	43	46
Breast, Shank.....	2	15	20	25	30	35	40	45	50	55	60	65	70
Shoulder Roast.....	2½	12	16	20	24	28	32	36	40	44	48	52	56
Leg of Lamb.....	3	10	13	16	20	23	26	30	33	36	40	43	46
PORK—FRESH:													
Center Cut or Rib Chops.....	4	7	10	12	15	17	20	22	25	27	30	32	35
Loin or Rib Roast.....	2½	12	16	20	24	28	32	36	40	44	48	52	56
Boston butt—bone-in....	3	10	13	16	20	23	26	30	33	36	40	43	46
Blade Steak.....	3	10	13	16	20	23	26	30	33	36	40	43	46
Spare Ribs.....	1½	22	29	37	44	52	59	67	74	82	89	97	104
PORK—CURED:													
Picnic—bone-in.....	2	15	20	25	30	35	40	45	50	55	60	65	70
Ham—fully cooked: bone-in.....	3½	8	11	14	17	20	23	25	28	31	34	37	40
boneless and canned shankless.....	5	6	8	10	12	14	16	18	20	22	24	26	28
center slice.....	4¼	7	9	12	14	16	19	21	23	26	28	30	33
5	6	8	10	12	14	16	18	20	22	24	26	28	
POULTRY:													
Broiler, ready-to-cook... legs, thighs.....	1½	22	29	37	44	52	59	67	74	82	89	97	104
breasts.....	3	10	13	16	20	23	26	30	33	36	40	43	46
Turkey, ready-to-cook: under 12 lbs.....	4	7	10	12	15	17	20	22	25	27	30	32	35
12 lbs. and over.....	1	29	39	49	59	69	79	89	99	109	119	129	139
1½	22	29	37	44	52	59	67	74	82	89	97	104	