

Reduce your Food Expenses

GENERAL STRATEGIES

- Plan ahead-prevents last minute trips to the grocery store and impulse buying. Prevents resorting to fast food. I can serve my family of 5 a meal on a regular basis for an average cost of \$6.50. This includes sides of a veggie, starch, and/or bread.
- Designate certain nights of the week for a particular meal
 - Examples Sunday night is crock pot meal
 - Have a meatless meal at least once a week
 - Have a spaghetti/pasta night
 - Soup and sandwich night
- Have a list of EASY MEALS on hand
 - These are meals you can fix quickly, using ingredients you normally have on hand.
 - Spaghetti
 - Tuna Casserole
 - Veggie Plate (several different types of veggies with rice)
 - Soup and Sandwiches
 - Baked Sweet Potatoes and veggies
 - Buttered Noodles and veggies
 - Breakfast for Dinner (pancakes, eggs, toast)
- www.angelfoodministries.com -National organization that allows anyone to order prepackaged boxes of food for \$30. There is a list of items available under each category-with special orders for diets with allergies and people on the go. One regular box would serve a family of 4 for at least 1 week.

INCORPORATING FREEZER COOKING AND WEEKLY SALE COOKING

- Freezer cooking-
- Allows me to list my meals on the calendar (PLANNING AHEAD), pull out a meal the day before to defrost in fridge, and takes approx. 30 min to get meal on the table-fewer dishes to wash because all chopping, grating, prep work was done beforehand.

- Weekly Sale Freezer cooking is one way to plan ahead and take advantage of the sale items at your grocery store. I call these Mini-Cooks. When I cooked this way, I used a regular freezer above my refrigerator. I did not have a separate freezer. Use freezer bags. Freeze them flat, and then store them upright like books on a shelf.
- Choose your store-review your weekly ad for main sale items.

Example using chicken breasts-on sale for \$1.99 lb, which is my target price for boneless, skinless, chicken breasts. I go to my cook book, which is organized by the main ingredient of the recipe (Chicken recipes) and select 5-8 recipes to prepare using the chicken on sale. Use one or two meals for the current week and freeze the remaining meals for future meals.

Cooking many recipes at once also allows you to utilize the cost savings at the warehouse stores-large containers of ricotta cheese, shredded cheese, meats, etc.-usually at a lower price than buying smaller packages.

Book that has several options for mini-cooks by main ingredient, Frozen Assets, Lite and Easy, available in Wake County Library system. Mini cooks with items including tofu, crab, eggplant, beans, pasta, pork, turkey, chicken, tuna and beef.

- www.e-mealz.com is a service that finds your weekly sale items and provides recipes and shopping lists. \$5/month for the service-billed quarterly. Recommended by Dave Ramsey. www.daveramsey.com

HOW DO I KNOW IF THE PRICE IS A GOOD DEAL OR THE BEST DEAL?

Use a Price Book-this is something that you will initially use for 2-3 months until you get a good idea of the price on items that you buy and where to get the best deal. You will also notice the sale cycles on each item (there really is a system!) After the initial work, you usually will not need it anymore/you will know most of your products in your head.

Category: Fresh Meats

Product: Boneless, skinless chicken breasts

Date/store	Price	Amount	Price per	Coupon
BJ's Warehouse	\$95.75	1 case Perdue-48 lbs.	\$1.99/pound	
BJ's Warehouse		Single pkg-Perdue	\$2.48/pound	
Lowe's Foods		Family Pack-Perdue	\$1.99/lb on sale	
Over the Counter	Sudafed			
BJ's Warehouse	10.99	130 ct. 30 mg	.14/pill	
Wal-Mart-store brand	3.39	24 ct. 30 mg	.14/pill	

Brought some blank price book pages for those who want a copy. You can make additional copies. More information on price books available at www.getrichslowly.org - explains the price book as originally presented in the Tightwad Gazette over 20 years ago! Lots of great links to more info and access to an electronic price book.

OTHER MONEY SAVING TIPS

1. Take advantage of prescription transfer incentives. Drug stores want your prescription and regularly offer gift cards up to \$25 just for transferring your script. Easy to do- call the pharmacy you want to transfer to, give them your script number and the phone number of the pharmacy your script is at. They will do the rest.
2. www.paperbackswap.com Nationwide website that allows you to post books you no longer want/need and request books from others that you do want/need. No out of pocket cost to get started. Just post minimum of 10 books and get 2 credits to request 2 books. Also can swap audio books, CD's and DVD's.
3. www.half.com This is a site owned by e-bay that focuses on selling books, cd's and dvd's. Many times, the prices here are better than Amazon, or at least the same.

4. www.clarkhoward.com He is the ultimate penny pincher and provides great information on a wide variety of topics.
5. Sources for eyeglasses- www.zennioptical.com -Super low prices; the only down side is you can't try them on. It is best to find a frame you like in a store and then find something similar at Zenni. Read more about Zenni Optical on Clark Howard's website (see above).
*Even if you are not a member of BJ's or Sam's Club, you can still purchase eyeglasses from the optical shop at the price offered to the members. May be required to pay cash or credit card, no checks.
6. Wake County Library-if you have a library card in Wake County, you have access to a wide variety of internet databases at no cost. For example, you may access Consumer Reports magazine, articles from the Wall Street Journal, demographic mapping database, Chilton Auto Repair manuals, NC live media collection and more!
Follow these instructions to access from your home computer (must have a library account and pin number)
 - a. Go to <http://www.wakegov.com/libraries>
 - b. Click on My Library Account
 - c. Enter your library card number and 4 digit pin
 - d. Click on Search Electronic Databases
 - e. Scroll through the list and click on the title of the database you want to use.
7. Farmer's Market-get your produce at the Farmer's Market on Saturday morning in the wholesale area. Split with others who are there for ultra low prices on the things you normally buy.
8. Clothing- We live in a very affluent area and can reap great rewards by shopping at consignment stores and thrift stores. I regularly find better quality clothing at a consignment/thrift store than I would if I spent the same money at Wal-Mart or Target. Check items carefully for any defects and take the time to try things on. There are numerous children's consignment sales in our area every year.
9. Coupons almost weekly from Michael's or AC Moore. They will accept each other coupons. Can use these to purchase many things at 40% off. They carry several office supply-type items, home decorating, kids toys, and organizational things. It is not just craft stuff!

Foods That Freeze Well

Baked Goods
Beans (dry), cooked

Grains, cooked (rice,
barley, bulgur, couscous)

Pancakes
Pies

Burgers	Hamburger patties, uncooked	Pot pies
Breakfast Burritos	Quiche	Poultry
Breakfast Casseroles	Quick Breads	Roast meats (beef, chicken, lamb, pork)
Brownies	Lasagna	Sandwiches
Cakes	Main dishes	Sauces
Calzones	Manicotti	Sloppy joes
Casseroles	Marinated meats	Soups
Cookies	Mashed Potatoes	Stuffed Shells
Egg Rolls	Meatballs	Taco/burrito fillings
Enchiladas	Meatloaf	Tofu
French Toast	Meat pies	TVP text veg protein
Fruit Sauces	Muffins	Waffles
Fudge		

Foods that Don't Freeze Well

Mayonnaise	Salad greens	Fried foods
Salad Dressings	Sour cream	Soft cheese (cream cheese)
Canned Danish rolls*	Cooked egg whites	Canned refrigerator biscuits*
Canned croissant dough*	Potatoes	Cake icings

**these can be baked and then frozen*

- Mayonnaise separates. It can be used in limited amounts if mixed with other ingredients in a sauce or casserole.
- Sour cream becomes watery, but can also be used same ways as mayonnaise.
- Fried foods lose crispness and become soggy.
- Soft cheese often becomes watery, so don't use alone. It can be used mixed into recipes, however.
- Potatoes cooked in soups and stews can become mushy and dark.
- Cake icings made with egg whites, cream fillings, soft frostings and custard or cream filled pies don't freeze well.
- Cooked egg whites become tough and rubbery.

FREEZER REFERENCE BOOKS

- Cooking Ahead by Mary Carney

- Once-a-Month Cooking by Mimi Wilson and Mary Beth Lagerborg- great reference for the overall freezer cooking method, but doesn't do a good job of teaching you to use your own recipes. My family only liked a few of her recipes.
- Dinner's in the Freezer by Jill Bond- Jill explains how her and her family cooks 4 months worth of food over one weekend-lots of Christian references and extra tips for living on one income-very thorough, lots of great detail information
- 30 Day Gourmet by Nanci Slagle and Tara Wohlenhaus
- The Freezer Cooking Manual by Wohlenhaus and Slagle-This book is awesome filled with yummy recipes and great forms that can be copied. It also includes very comprehensive conversion charts and describes how to cook with a friend. This is my favorite book so far. The older edition is cheap on Amazon.com
- Frozen Assets by Deborah Taylor-Hough- Deborah introduces the 2-week cooking plan and has several mini-plans. This is a good book to start with if you are overwhelmed.
- Frozen Assets Lite and Easy by Deborah Taylor Hough-Great if you want to try more mini-plans. Includes more vegetarian and seafood recipes.
- Make a Mix- by Karine Eliason- Not a freezer cooking book, but how to make master mixes that you use in other meals. Easy to incorporate into freezer cooking.
- Big Food by Elissa Altman- Amazing ways to cook, store, freeze, and serve everything you buy in bulk-This is a great read and has helpful information. The recipes are on the gourmet side though.
- Not Just Beans by Tawra Jean Kellam- handy book that has recipes for all kinds of basic needs, like Taco Seasoning, Tartar Sauce, BBQ Sauce- Has my FAVORITE granola bar recipe!!

FREEZER COOKING WEBSITES

www.dinnerinthefreezer.com Several recipes available, I have not tried them.

www.30daygourmet.com This is based on the 30 Day Gourmet book and the Freezer Cooking Manual. The book is my favorite and there is a lot of great information on this website. I like many of their recipes too.

www.organizedhome.com/content-85.html This is a great site with complete instructions on the freezer cooking method; also has recipes and information about several related aspects such as selecting a freezer, cooking with a partner, etc.

FREEZER COOKING SOFTWARE

Advantage Cooking-from 30 day gourmet- \$34.99 plus shipping >You can use a free trial version by going to their website at www.30daygourmet.com . I like this because it gives you all the reports you need to freezer cook- containers needed, action list of things to do before cooking day, appliances needed, etc.-SAVES TONS OF TIME!!!

Master Cook Deluxe-A recipe organizational software-inexpensive, but w/o freezer cooking helps- \$9.99

Shopping List Software-free download from

www.thehomeschoolmom.com/kitchen/

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