

How-To: Save Money



on Groceries

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PHOTOGRAPHED BY **JONATHAN FREDIN**



From canned goods to produce, milk to meat, groceries are a big ingredient in the family budget. But if the cost of chow is giving you indigestion, try these Super 7 tips from home economist and personal chef Wendy Perry, of Zebulon, to feed your family for less.

1. PLAN.

“Look around to see where you can create a pantry,” Perry said. A coat closet will do (install sturdy shelves), or carve out space under a staircase. Having convenient access to food items saves you from buying duplicates.

Sign up for grocers’ e-news and base meals around what’s on sale. Buy extras to freeze for later — if you don’t have a freezer, invest in one. It will pay for itself in grocery savings, she says.

2. TIME IT RIGHT.

“Most meat departments do mark-downs about supper time,” Perry said. “Great deals can be found on things to cook in the next day or so, or freeze. Another bonus is fewer shoppers, so you can breeze right through checkout.”

She also recommends online grocery shopping to save time, using drive-through pickup or delivery. Many stores offer this service for a small monthly fee.

3. SOUP IT UP.

“Keep a ‘soup pot’ container in the freezer,” Perry said. “It’s a good way to use tidbits you might throw out otherwise.” She saves celery leaves and slaw for flavor, mashed potatoes for creaminess, meats and even pickle juice.

The best part? “No two pots of soup are the same,” she said.

Freeze fruit too, for making banana bread or fruit smoothies later.

4. DIY

Stock up on on-sale sausage and hamburger, fry, crumble and freeze; use to add fla-

continued on page 26

continued from page 25

vor to homemade pizzas; Perry adds onions and peppers.

“Make your own burger patties instead of buying premade, and keep buns in the refrigerator to prolong shelf life — steam in the microwave for 15 seconds to freshen,” she said.

5. CROCK IT.

“From overnight oatmeal for pennies to making the cheapest cuts of meat fork tender, the crock pot will be your friend,” Perry said. It’s also great for large batches of food, like taco filling.

“Make Nachos in a Bag — kids love them,” she said. “Buy a single-serve bag of corn chips, heat the filling and spoon onto chips in the bag. Top with shredded cheese, throw in a fork, and have walking nachos!”

6. SHOP SMART.

“Eggs are one of the best values in the grocery store, in terms of money and nutrition,” Perry said. Use them to make quiche, individually sliced for multiple breakfasts on the go, or batches of breakfast burritos.

Other best buys include inexpensive meat cuts and store brands, when compared carefully.

Worst buys include convenience foods like pre-cooked meats or pre-diced veggies, and beware the “gotchas” located in center aisle.

7. MAKE IT FUN.

Take inventory of your freezer and pantry, plan menus, then set aside a wintry afternoon to cook meals that will feed your

family for weeks to come. Add friends and it becomes a party.

“One large chuck roast will make six or more servings,” Perry said. “There are a gazillion things to do with boneless chicken breasts — cook a bunch in the kitchen or on the grill,” then add your favorite seasonings.

“Get in the habit of doubling every recipe you cook,” she said, “one to eat and one to freeze. In addition to saving money, you’ll spend half as much time making meals as you did before.

“The possibilities are endless. And remember — don’t be afraid to cook without a recipe.”

Finally, Perry points out that mealtime is family time.

“Make an effort to sit down as a family to eat. Get out the real plates. It brings everybody together,” she said. “Mealtime should be a fun, relaxing, happy time of day.”

Throw-Together Supper

RECIPE BY CHEF WENDY PERRY

When it comes to fast and budget-friendly recipes, don’t be afraid to just throw it together! Open your fridge, grab what you see, enhance from your pantry and voilà — supper! Recipes not required. Have fun in the kitchen. Just taste as you throw and keep adding stuff until you like it. You may end up creating new family favorites.

Here’s an example:

Leftover Boston butt (cooked a few days ago in crock pot), roughly chopped
Barbecue gravy/sauce served with butt (made from drippings)
About a pint of slaw (left from same meal)
1 can Mexi-corn (corn with peppers)
1 can black beans, drained and rinsed
Large can diced tomatoes, drained
Few shakes of Mrs. Dash Southwest or 1 packet taco seasoning
1 box corn bread mix

*Throw all except corn bread together in soup pot or crock pot. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to simmer, to reduce liquids and thicken.
Bake the box of corn bread mix. Slice into squares and place a square in each soup bowl. Ladle pork mixture over corn bread. Garnish with a sprinkling of leftover grated cheese.*

And that is a “Throw-Together” supper!

WHO TO CALL

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