

Nutrition News

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A COMMUNITY NUTRITION PROGRAMS NEWSLETTER

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Food Budgeting Ideas for Thrifty Menus

During these tough economic times, many families are concerned about rising food costs. Here are some tips on how to stretch your food dollars through meal planning.

Use Less Meat, Poultry and Fish

Although meat is an excellent source of protein and many nutrients, most Americans over-consume protein foods. Use smaller portions of meat, poultry and fish, and fill your plate with vegetables instead. Make casseroles with chicken and rice, ground beef and pasta or fish and a dressing mix.

Ground beef, turkey or chicken can be stretched in many recipes and used creatively: spaghetti sauce, stuffed peppers, hamburgers, pasta casseroles and tacos. To stretch the meat when making stuffed peppers or tacos include beans for your protein.

Buy whole chicken and cut it up yourself. If you serve baked chicken one day you can use the leftovers for making chicken soup and stew for the next day. Add frozen or canned vegetables for nutrition and flavor. They often cost less than fresh and can be bought on sale.

Use canned beans and peas in casseroles and soups to increase protein to reduce cost. For example, use less meat and more beans in lentil and pea soups, tamale pies, taco salad, Spanish rice and pasta casseroles. Also, think about including peanut butter with meals not just for peanut butter sandwiches.

Use More Whole Grain

Whole-grain products are excellent sources of nutrients and phytochemicals that we need for good cardiovascular health. Many people think that grain products are high in calories and fattening, but it is what we put on our grains that adds the calories, such as butter and cream cheese. You can use whole grains for making hot cereal for breakfast, in casseroles and as a side dish. Combine whole grains with vegetables in

casseroles such as spinach and rice, pilafs with brown rice and whole grain pasta with zucchini or squash. Build your meal around whole grain and vegetables while using meat as a condiment and flavoring.

Use More Seasonal Vegetables And Fruits

Although many fruits and vegetables are available around the year, vegetables and fruits have growing seasons and it is during these times that they are available at the lowest prices. Produce harvested locally is offered at the best prices in stores.

Vegetable	Availability
Asparagus	May
Broccoli	July
Brussels sprouts	August, September, October
Cabbage	June, July, September, October
Carrots	August, September, October
Cauliflower	June, July, September, October
Corn	July, August, September
Cucumbers	July, August, September
Eggplants	August, September
Greens	April through November
Lima beans	August, September
Mushrooms	All year
Peas	May, June
Peppers	July, August, September
Potatoes	July, August
Pumpkins	September, October
Snap beans	June, July, August, September
Spinach	May, June, September, October
Squash	June, July, September
Sweet potatoes	October, November
Tomatoes	July, August, September,
Turnips	April, May, September, October

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Fruit	Availability
Apples	July, August, September, October
Apricots	May, June
Bananas	All year
Cantaloupe	May through November
Cherries	May, June
Dates	October, November, December
Figs	July, August, September
Grapefruit	All year
Grapes	May through November
Honeydew melon	June through November
Kiwifruit	October through May
Lemons	All year
Oranges (Navel)	November through April
Oranges (Valencia)	May through October
Peaches	May, June, July, August, September
Pears	August, September, October
Plums	May through October
Pomegranates	September, October, November
Prunes	August, September, October
Strawberries	February through November
Tangerines	November through March
Tangelos	November through March
Watermelons	May through October

Information on Thrifty Meals

If you are in a rut and run out of ideas for new recipes and meals, go to the library to check out books on cooking for less. Information on preparing food on a budget has always been available, and many cookbooks can help you with new recipes.

You can also find information on the Internet if you have access to a computer. Go to http://www.pueblo.gsa.gov/cic_text/food/rec-thrifty/menus.htm for hints and tips on budgeting, menus and recipes for thrifty meals.

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To find out more, contact your parish agent.