

# Nutrition on a shoe string budget

Every time you buy a convenience food in the grocery store you are paying the food manufacturer to provide you with a maid service. When you buy total convenience foods such as a TV dinner, you are hiring a cook. Are these luxuries you want?

The average family spends over one-third of each food dollar for protein foods — meat, poultry, fish and eggs. Another one-fourth is spent on non-food items such as paper products, pet foods, and hair care products.

Despite the high cost of food, there are a number of ways the grocery bill can be cut down without giving up the quality of foods you like.

If you spend \$80 a week on groceries, in a year the total dollar amount would be \$4,160. Food shopping should be treated more businesslike. Appoint someone else or yourself to be the food purchasing agent for the family.

A savings of \$10 a week would be \$520 in a year — nice tidy little savings. To figure the food bill, subtract all the non-edibles, such as beauty care products, magazines, and pet food.

To take this a step further, subtract everything that has little or no nutritional value. Soda, snack foods, coffee and tea would all come under this heading. These totals will probably astound you.

Perhaps consideration should be made to shop for non-edibles and non-nutritional foods somewhere other than the grocery store. Let's start with a game plan for super-market savings.

**Step One:** Take inventory. Look through cupboards, refrigerator and freezer and see what's on hand. Foods stored in a freezer for more than one year lose quality. Since you have paid for the food make sure you consume it at its peak to get all the



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## nutritional value.

If you haven't seen the back or bottom of your freezer for a year, check it out. You may have more food on hand than you realize. Incorporate last week's dairy products and other perishables in food prepared this week.

**Step Two:** Check coupons and newspaper ads for specials. Watch out for a coupon come on. Couponed food is only a bargain if you use the product. When shopping don't buy more than you have planned to use or can store properly.

**Step Three:** Plan your meals at home, not in the grocery store. You have an idea of what's on hand, available coupons and weekly specials, so now is the time to plan meals. Meal planning may sound tedious, but it doesn't have to be.

Consider what your family likes to eat, do you have enough time to prepare it, the nutritional balance of the meals and of course, how much it will cost. Meats and/or protein alternatives, fruits and vegetables, breads and cereals, milk and cheese are the basic four food groups to follow when planning meals. Plan a variety of interesting and appealing meals and snacks that your family will love to eat.

**Step Four:** A shopping list. This is a check off list so when you get home from the store you have all the ingredients you need. Every time you run back to the store for one or two items it costs.

Put unplanned purchases in the

baby seat portion of the cart and have them rung up separately. Impulse shopping accounts for 20-30 percent in additional spending.

Don't buy cute little containers, little cans or packages. Generally they cost more than the larger quantity. Check the cost per serving to determine the best buy. Never buy food out up that you can buy whole. Learn to cut up a chicken, make stew meat and slice a watermelon and save money.

**Step Five:** Prepare the food — not merely heat it! If you enjoy cooking, you can save money on baked goods, soups, and entrees by making your own. Consider making your own homemade mixes. Go on a one-day shopping and cooking spree, grocery shop and cook all the same day. Cookies, muffins, soup, stews and casseroles can all be prepared at the same time. Freeze them for your very own convenience foods.

**Step Six:** Think before you shop and when you shop! Don't be like some shoppers that realize the food is running low and jump into the car and head for the nearest grocery store.

The following are some food budget stretchers to get your money's worth:

- Day-old bread makes better toast than fresh.
- Use a clean frozen juice can to store dough for refrigerator cookies. Run hot water over the sides of the

can when ready to bake, then push out the dough and slice. They will certainly taste better than the convenience box or tube.

- Leftover cooked cereal can be stored in the small cans, fry it the next time.
- Try oatmeal in soup instead of rice and lettuce leaves that you are going to discard instead of cabbage in the soup.

Vinegar is a natural meat tenderizer.

Wasting food is really poor economics — so make sure you eat what you purchase at its peak quality.

Buy nutrient dense foods to get more for your food dollars. This means they are exceptionally high in vital nutrients. A few of these are spinach, tomatoes, tuna packed in water, non-fat or low-fat milk, tofu, fresh carrots, ground turkey, dry kidney beans, whole wheat bread, potatoes and brown rice.

The cost of food is a major concern for consumers who must cope with a limited budget. Making intelligent selections from the thousands of available food products is essential in obtaining optimum nutrient value for the price paid.

To save money and have more nutritious meals is to take time at home planning, time in the store shopping, and time at home preparing.

Lois Thieleke is a home economist with the Oakland County Cooperative Extension Service. Watch for her next column, "Cooking for One or Two."

If you have any ideas or topics you'd like to see addressed in future columns or stories on the food pages, send your ideas to: Food Editor, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, Mich. 48150.

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# Meat week

## Convenience is key in paillards with zucchini

Convenience is a key meal-time ingredient for today's active families. But what makes one recipe more convenient than another? The main criteria for a convenient recipe are as follows:

- It should contain a maximum of eight ingredients.
- It should take no more than 30 minutes to prepare from refrigerator to table.
- It should provide two to four servings.
- It should use a minimum of prepared foods.

One recipe that meets all of these convenience criteria is Lemon Beef Paillards with Pan-Grilled Zucchini. This flavorful entree contains eight ingredients, can be prepared and cooked in 24 minutes, provides four servings and uses fresh ingredients like boneless beef top sirloin steak, zucchini, fresh lemon juice and other seasonings.

One reason this meal can be prepared so quickly is because of the way the beef is prepared. You start with pieces of beef top sirloin steak which are cut just one-half inch thick. Then you flatten them by pounding to a uniform one-quarter inch thickness. This makes the thin slices of beef easy to quickly pan-broil or grill until brown. Meat cuts prepared in this classical French manner are called "paillards."

Before cooking the beef paillards rub them with a garlic/herb paste. Zucchini halves make a great color and flavor accompaniment to the beef. Give an interesting appearance to the zucchini by scoring them in a diamond pattern. Use either a heavy nonstick frying pan or a well-seasoned cast iron frying pan to ensure quick and even cooking. The end result is a fast, under 250 calorie meal in minutes.

## LEMONY BEEF PAILLARDS

WITH PAN-GRILLED ZUCCHINI

Preparation time: 12 minutes

Cooking time: 12 minutes

1 to 1 1/4 lbs. boneless beef top sirloin

steak, cut 1/2 inch thick

1 clove garlic, minced

1 tsp. dried rosemary leaves, crushed

1/4 tsp. salt, divided

1/4 tsp. coarsely ground black pepper, divided

1 tsp. plus 2 tsp. olive oil

4 small zucchini, cut in half lengthwise

2 tbsp. fresh lemon juice, divided

Cut boneless beef top sirloin

steak into 4 serving-size pieces.

Place each piece on flat surface;

cover with waxed paper and flatten

with bottom of saucerpan, mallet

or cleaver to 1/4 inch thick.

Mash garlic with French knife;

combine with rosemary, 1/4 teaspoon salt and 1/4 teaspoon pepper.

Combine with 1 tablespoon oil and rub

both sides of steaks with garlic mixture; reserve.

Score cut side of each zucchini in a diamond pattern

1 inch apart and 1/4 inch deep. Pat dry;

reserve. Heat heavy nonstick frying pan

over medium to medium-high heat 3 minutes. Add remaining oil and zucchini. Cook 3

minutes; turn and continue cooking 3 minutes or until tender. Remove

zucchini to warm platter and season with remaining salt and pepper

and 1 tablespoon lemon juice; keep warm.

Reheat frying pan until hot. Quickly cook steaks, 5 at a time, 1

minute or to desired degree of doneness, turning once. Add remaining

lemon juice to frying pan, turning steaks to glaze. Serve

steaks with zucchini. Makes 4 servings.

\*A well-seasoned cast iron frying pan may be used for the non-stick frying pan.

# Elegant stuffed chicken easy to fix

AP — Stuffed chicken rolls are a specialty for entertaining. Each plump, golden roll equals one serving portion so they're convenient for buffet dining.

This recipe made with Boursin cheese with garlic and herbs is a favorite. The cheese is available in the dairy case in most supermarkets.

If your schedule calls for a make-ahead meal, stuff and roll the chicken breasts, then cover and refrigerate them for several hours. The crumb coating may be added just before baking so it stays crispy.

## CHEESE AND HERB STUFFED CHICKEN

- 2 whole medium chicken breasts (1 1/4 lbs.), skinned, boned and halved lengthwise
- 6 oz. pkg. Boursin cheese with garlic and herbs, softened
- 1 tbsp. all-purpose flour
- 1/4 cup shredded carrots
- 1/4 cup coarsely chopped walnuts
- 1/4 cup minced parsley
- 1/4 cup fine dry bread crumbs
- 2 tsp. grated Parmesan cheese
- 2 tsp. margarine or butter, melted

Place each chicken breast half, boned side up, between 2 pieces of clear plastic wrap. Using the flat

side of a meat mallet, pound lightly, working from center to edges to form a 5 1/2-inch square. Remove plastic wrap. In a small mixer bowl beat together Boursin cheese and your unit smooth. Stir in carrot, walnuts and half the minced parsley. Place one-fourth of the cheese mixture on each chicken breast half; fold in 2 sides and roll up jelly-roll style. Press edges to seal. In a small

bowl combine remaining parsley, bread crumbs and Parmesan. Brush chicken rolls with melted margarine; roll in coating mixture. Place rolls, seam side down, on a wire rack in a 13x20-inch baking dish. Sprinkle with any remaining coating mix. Bake in 350°F oven for 40-45 minutes or until tender and golden. Makes 4 servings.

Nutrition information per serving:

415 calories, 34 g protein, 11 g carbohydrates, 28 g fat, 60 mg cholesterol, 243 mg sodium.

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