

taste buds

chef Larry
JanesCoupon
clipper
confesses

Recently, I opened up a press release from a major printing company extolling the virtues of using coupons to help make the tough times easier. The release has 8 pages of coupon-related information, plus a multitude of consumer guides for clipping coupons, all based on the premise that we are in a recession.

This article says people are taking a more conservative approach to spending and cutting back on big-ticket items. Of course, the article goes on to say that consumers can save a lot of money on their grocery bills using coupons.

Heck, I was using coupons when Ronald Reagan was in the White House. Not to steal the line from a famed country western duo but hey folks, "I was doin' coupons when coupons wasn't cool!"

As a matter of fact, last year, Channel 7's "Kelly and Company" did a couponing show, highlighting two women who saved 15 percent on their weekly grocery bill. I did the coupon-cooking segment and said that I consistently save 20-25 percent every week — without trying.

IF I REALLY set my mind to this and do some advanced planning and rebating, I could easily whop off another 10 percent. As you can tell, I hate to plan!

One of the reasons I started using coupons in the first place was that I noticed, while travelling around the country, that most coupons were redeemed at face value. Then I began hearing about the "supermarket wars" here in Metro Detroit that featured double coupons.

allowing you to save even more. The groceries are almost free when you play the triple-coupon game that some stores offer.

I'm not the only one playing this game. According to NCH Promotional Services, couponing is growing. In 1990, consumers saved more than \$3.32 billion dollars using coupons.

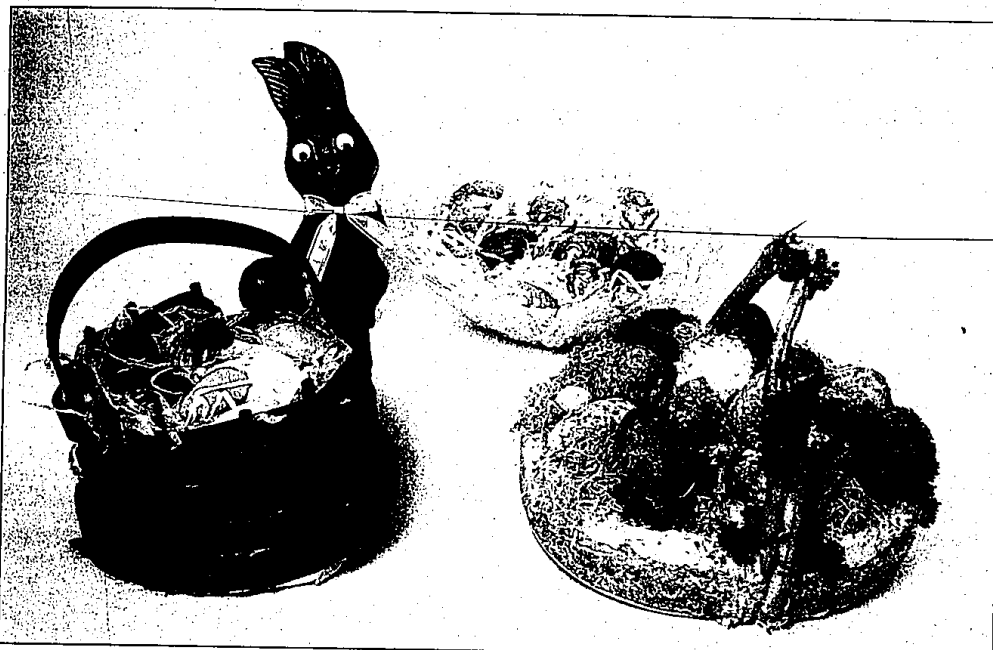
Ah, but there are few rules that should be followed for optimum results. It's a proven fact that the amount you save varies depending on how many groceries you buy. At the James Gang house, we spend an average of \$100 per week at the grocery store. I consistently save a minimum of \$20 using coupons.

THE NATIONAL average is just over \$10 in savings per week and that works out, dear readers, to an extra \$520 per year in savings. The way I look at it, I save over \$1,000 per year using coupons!

Here are a few tips to help you tap into coupons:

- Make a shopping list.
- Organize your coupons to keep track of what you have and their expiration dates.
- Keep track of how much you save each week.
- Look for items on sale, and use coupons for greater savings.
- Use coupons to stock up on items you buy regularly. Everyone uses toilet tissue. Just about every toilet, there are cents-off coupons in every paper.
- Get the family involved. Use the savings to pay allowances, save for a weekend trip or luxury items. What a great learning game for elementary students!
- What a great way to supplement gas purchases with high schoolers!

Coupons are everywhere. They're in magazines, newspapers, retail circulars, product packaging and even in the mail. For more information, you can get a free informational booklet called "Clipping Sense" by sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope to: Valassis Inserts, c/o PH, 36111 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150.



You can eat the contents of those Easter baskets — and the baskets, too. Milk chocolate basket, caramelized sugar basket and smoked salmon cheesecake basket are all easy to make.

ART EMANUEL/Staff photographer

Easter baskets to make, eat

By Larry Janes
special writer

Tis the season to start thinking about making Easter baskets.

Anyone can head out to the mall with checkbook or charge card in hand and purchase ready-made baskets in everything from plastic to wicker or from silver to crystal. Today's cook with taste, however, might use those as a last resort, thinking instead, more creatively, by experimenting with an edible Easter basket.

Instead of a \$2 woven plastic creation, two bucks worth of milk chocolate and an afternoon in the kitchen could create an elegant edible basket that would wow the fur off the Easter Bunny himself. If a decadent chocolate creation sounds too fattening, consider a smoked salmon cheesecake basket filled with faux-eggs molded from assorted cheeseballs and topped with a blanched green bean handle.

If there are budgetary constraints, you might prefer a carmel-

ized sugar basket whose total cash outlay wouldn't exceed 99 cents.

These are just three ideas a creative cook can whip up in the kitchen with minimal fuss. The best part about it, you don't necessarily need a degree in culinary arts or, for that matter, a kitchen to rival that of Jacques Pepin's. But there are a few necessities to make the job easier.

LET'S START with the woven chocolate basket. A true connoisseur wouldn't work with anything less than imported chocolate. Chocolate for molding, such as the tiny disks available at most gourmet shops and bulk food stores, would do nicely but, then again, a pound and a half of chocolate chips would suffice.

A base made from a nine-inch chocolate frosted cake would work but so would a nine-inch Styrofoam disk dipped in chocolate. One base would take 40 minutes to make, the other four.

Just make sure the chocolate is

melted gently and not scorched. An aluminum cookie sheet, scoured with a non-stick agent (such as Pam) and fill them with a mixture of herbed cheeses.

EVERYONE HAS a favorite cheese ball recipe. Instead of shaping them into balls, I molded them into eggs, then rolled them in paprika or parsley or chopped nuts. Fill in the bare spots with some fresh sprouts instead of plastic grass, and even without the steamed green beans held together with toothpicks, you can make a centerpiece that will not only whet an appetite but be stunning as well.

Our final edible basket was derived from a favorite recipe gleaned from Rose Levy Beranbaum's "Cake Bible." A calorie-laden torte was encased in a cage of spun sugar. First attempts at making a spun-sugar edible basket proved disastrous. While inverting the spun sugar case, it was evident that the cage proved far too delicate to even think about filling it

with Easter basket goodies. A second attempt had us turning our heads a moment, only to find the boiled sugar had turned to a blackened amber (Caution: sugar, when heated to these temperatures, cooks fast).

A third attempt (remember now, this recipe only cost 99 cents for the sugar) had us literally slapping ourselves on the back. After the sugar was boiled to a desired temperature and then allowed to cool until slightly thickened, the drizzling over the back of a parchment-paper-encrusted bowl not only produced a gorgeous amber hue but, when unmolded, proved to be dainty, sophisticated and definitely one of the prettiest baskets.

One word of caution though, as we learned in the photographer's studio, this basket was also the most fragile and should be treated with much respect to avoid breaking it. Figure about 30 minutes to make this beauty.

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Desserts for Passover
are in the holiday spiritBy Anne R. Lehman
special writer

Jews around the world will sit at their dinner tables Friday and participate in the traditional holiday meal called a Seder.

Rich with symbolism, the Seder includes an assortment of foods, many of which are meant to recall the liberation of the Jewish people from Egyptian slavery. Matzah, unleavened bread, is central to the ceremonial meal and recalls the haste with which the Jews left their oppressors. They simply did not have time to let their bread rise before their exodus.

Those who partake in a Seder are expected to eat at least one and a half sheets of matzah, drink four cups of wine and eat a meal to boot. One might question why a dessert is necessary, but for many a holiday meal is simply not complete without it. Hence, traditional desserts like macaroons, sponge and nut cakes have evolved.

The most important thing in preparing any food for Passover, says Chaya Sara Silberberg of Congregation Bais Chabad of West Bloomfield, is that all ingredients are not only kosher but Kosher for Passover. For example, a kosher vegetable oil may seem reasonable to use, yet many oils are derived from grains,

such as corn, which are prohibited during the eight-day holiday.

LIKE MANY Passover foods, desserts usually begin with eggs. Because flour and leavening agents cannot be used, potato starch, matzo meal (ground matzah) and other binding elements are used. Nuts, coconut, dried fruits and chocolates are some of the more commonly used dessert ingredients, but with the availability of more KP products than ever before, the possibilities for unique desserts are endless.

The Silberbergs, like many Chasidic Jews, use few commercially manufactured products, even though they are KP. For example, they do not use matzah or cake meals, Passover staples in most Jewish homes. Silberberg explains that the custom is to be as strictly observant as possible. "It's the one time of year that it's okay to be totally fanatic," she says.

Additionally, she keeps things as simple as possible. "Technically there is nothing wrong with making bagels out of reliable KP products," Silberberg said, "but for me, the spirit of the holiday would be lost."

Does this mean no desserts for her family during Passover? "Our desserts are simple," she says, enumerating such sweet options as fruit compotes, sorbets, ice

creams and her self-created No-Potato-Starch Nut Cake.

In recent years, Andrea and Allen Stawls and their four children of West Bloomfield have hosted more than 25 people in their home on each of the two Seder nights. Preparation for the holiday begins weeks before in the form of cleaning and replacing kitchen wares.

"COOKING is actually the easy part," Stawls says laughingly. Along with her mother and mother-in-law, she begins cooking a few days before the holiday. "I really have no choice," she says. "When you cook for a large crowd you have to get a head start." Consequently, she tries to prepare desserts which freeze well, such as her chocolate soufflé.

The interesting thing about this dessert, she points out, is that besides satisfying chocolate lovers, the recipe doesn't include anything which obviously violates the dietary laws of Passover. "People don't realize that making this dessert for Passover is different from making it the rest of the year. Even though there is no flour, all of the ingredients including the coffee come out of new packages marked Kosher for Passover. The dessert reminds you that in every aspect Passover is different from the rest of the year," she says.

See recipes, Page 6B.



Andrea Stawls of West Bloomfield, with son Art, 2, cuts apples for Upside Down Apple Cake.

DIAN DEAN/Staff photographer