

Spend Less and Get More Nutrients

Submitted by Franny Eastwood, Family & Consumer Science Agent

A tight budget doesn't have to equal shortchanged nutrition.

While items such as exotic produce, fresh fish and specialty whole-grain breads may need to be limited, there are still plenty of low-cost healthful foods to choose from. Connie Evers, MS, RD, nutrition consultant, writer and the author of *How to Teach Nutrition to Kids* shares these personal tips for paring the food budget and getting more nutrients:

We eat less meat and chicken. I stretch meat with other ingredients and serve chicken as a "side dish" with hefty portions of potatoes, vegetables, pasta or bread rounding out the meal. Stir-fry dishes are a great way to stretch meat, fish and poultry.

I limit the purchase of expensive packaged crackers and cookies. Instead, we make our own peanut butter/cracker sandwiches and rely on items such as toast, fruit, fresh raw veggies and store-brand dry cereal for snacks.

Organization is the real key for sticking to a budget. I scan the store ads for weekly specials, plan menus for the upcoming week, make a list, dig out the coupons and then head for the store. The extra hour spent doing this saves me \$40-50 each week. Coupons can be real money savers but not on expensive national brands or products we don't use.

A hard but important change was to limit impulsive trips to the store between weekly shopping trips. Now when we get cravings for a treat my husband makes cinnamon toast.

Sharon Hoelscher Day, CFCS, has found that stir fry dishes are the easiest, fastest way to take advantage of fresh in-season produce. She has other tips: add milk powder to beans instead of lard for smoothness (and extra calcium) and utilize plant sources of protein such as beans and legumes instead of meat.

Shirley Strembel, MS, RD, conducts supermarket tours and shares these shopping strategies:

The more time you spend in the store usually increases impulsive buys. Plan meals ahead, make a list, shop alone, shop once per week and don't shop hungry. Being organized helps you move through the store faster- even when the lighting in stores is designed to slow you down.

More expensive items are always at eye level. Sugary and expensive cereals are usually placed at your children's eye level. The general rule here is the more food is processed, the more money you spend. For example, fresh potatoes will be much less expensive (and more nutritious) than boxed or frozen potatoes that come with a sauce.

Shirley encourages people to stretch ground meat (rinse first) with potatoes or substitute beans for all or part of the meat in most recipes.

Most importantly, she refers to MyPlate and suggests that one of the best ways to stretch your food dollars is to avoid spending money on foods you don't need. There are no serving suggestions for sugar or fat. That is because you really don't need those foods that give you mostly fat and sugar. She points out that you don't need special health foods; MyPlate is based on ordinary readily available foods that are already healthy.

Source: Food and Health Communications. www.foodandhealth.com For more information on nutrition, food safety, health, or family and child development contact the Marais des Cygnes Extension District Paola (913-294-4306) or Mound City (913-795-2829) offices, or write to fmeastwo@ksu.edu or check out our website: www.maraisdescyignes.k-state.edu