K-State expert shares tips to reduce grocery bills

Simple changes can make a big difference on a grocery budget

By Emily Halstead, K-State Research and Extension news service

MANHATTAN, Kan. -- Grocery shopping is something everyone has to do, but there are many ways to get the job done. Kansas State University food scientist Karen Blakeslee says a few sensible ideas can help consumers save money on their grocery bill.

“Shop your pantry, refrigerator and freezer before you go to the store,” Blakeslee said. “Then make a list of needed items; or even better, make a weekly meal plan and stick to it.”

Then, Blakeslee says, grab a snack before hitting the aisles.

“Don’t shop on an empty stomach,” she said. “That tempts you to make impulse buys and can add to your bill.”

Another money-saving idea: buy alternatives to the brand names. Blakeslee said store brands often taste just as good, or they have premium products that are very similar to the name brand items.

“Have you ever tried a blind taste test to compare?” Blakeslee said. “You may find your family will not even notice a difference.”

Blakeslee said reducing food waste will also eventually save money on groceries. Some tips include:

- Stretch meat with plant proteins. Adding beans to meat-based soup or casseroles can help make meat last longer and add beneficial nutrition.
- Store fruits and vegetables properly and use them in a timely manner.
• Ripe fruit can be used in other ways such as smoothies, cobblers, quick bread and crisps.
• Only shop in bulk when it is necessary and the most affordable option. Checking the unit price of an item can help in deciding when to buy in bulk.

“Shop alone and stay focused,” Blakeslee said. “Include others in creating the shopping list, help them make choices, and help them learn about costs to become better shoppers.”

Blakeslee, who is also coordinator of K-State’s Rapid Response Center for Food Science, publishes a monthly newsletter called You Asked It! that provides numerous tips on food safety. More information is also available from local extension offices in Kansas.

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FOR PRINT PUBLICATIONS: Links used in this story
K-State Rapid Response Center for Food Science, www.rrc.k-state.edu

You Asked It! (newsletter), www.rrc.k-state.edu/newsletter

K-State Research and Extension statewide offices, https://www.ksre.ks-state.edu/about/statewide-locations.html

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