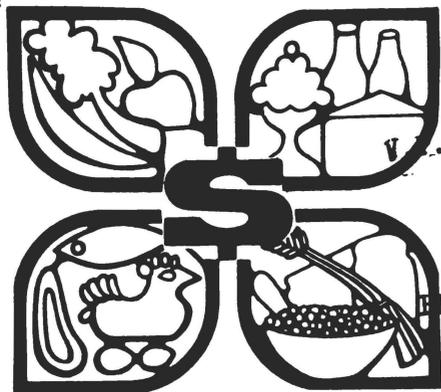


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BLACKSBURG, VIRGINIA

FOODS AND NUTRITION

MF-534

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SMART FOOD SHOPPING

Shopping for food is a serious matter; some families spend up to half of their income for food. The amount of money you spend on food is not as important as what you buy, however. You don't have to spend a lot of money in order to be well-fed, but you may have to choose between what you want to eat and what you need to eat. Some of the foods we like best may not be very good buys. Soft drinks, potato chips, candy, doughnuts, etc., taste good and give us energy but are not very good sources of protein, vitamins, and minerals. If we bought foods which give the most food value for the money, we'd buy things like nonfat dry milk, dark leafy greens, dried beans and peas, and white enriched bread. They are hearty, substantial foods but lack glamour.

All of us would like to spend less money for food or get more for the money we do spend. That would provide money for other things we need or want.

Here are some suggestions to help you make your food dollar go further.

Eliminate food waste. It is estimated that 20% of all food is wasted. That could mean that of each \$100 worth of food you buy, \$20 worth is wasted. Food is wasted when we let it spoil or get stale before we use it, when we take out or serve larger portions than will be eaten, by improper storage (we forget to put food into the refrigerator or freezer), or by storing it too long (we forget about the leftovers in the refrigerator). Some of us waste food by eating more than we need or even want.

Select a store which gives good value. You may be shopping at a neighborhood store because it is close by, or because the manager of the neighborhood store does favors for you--cashes your social security check, lets you charge groceries, or even advises you what to buy. A larger store may not be as convenient or have the personal touch, but it does offer a greater variety of products. Not only does the supermarket have a larger choice of brands and of package sizes but it usually has lower prices.

Check the prices on several items you buy often at two different stores. Is there a difference in price on any or all items? You may find that one store has lower prices on every item or on most of the items. One store may have a lower price on just one item. That item may be a "special". Stores use specials to get you to come in and shop. They know that once you are in the store, you are apt to buy other items.

Check the specials. A store advertises its specials in the newspaper and on radio and television. Some stores mail circulars to area residents. Store ads are usually posted in the store as well.

One advantage of getting the newspaper is that you can compare prices from several stores. This can help you decide where to shop. You'll usually do better by shopping at the store which has the best prices on the items you plan to buy.

Wednesday evening or Thursday morning papers will have the weekend specials which are usually good Thursday through Saturday. Some stores also offer early week specials for Monday and Tuesday shoppers.

Not all items in a store's advertisement are reduced in price. You need to know the regular price to be able to judge whether the special price is really lower. A variety of items is usually included to show that the store has most everything you need. Seasonal foods are included to let you know that the food is now available. Some stores do identify foods which have been reduced in price by a special symbol or phrase.

Some persons shop at several different stores to take advantage of more specials. Store hopping may pay off if the stores are close together, but pennies saved on food can be lost on time and gasoline or bus or cab fare. There's also the temptation to buy other things which may wipe out any savings.

Make fewer trips to the store. It is hard to buy just the one or two items needed for a meal or snack. We usually buy more than we meant to or need. If you find you need just one item, see if you can come up with a substitute. If there's no bread, could you bake biscuits?

If you've been in the habit of going to the store every day, start by skipping a day. Work up to doing your major shopping once a week.

Make a list. A list can help you cut down on trips to the store. Keep a running list of the things you need. When you use the last can of tomatoes, add tomatoes to your list; when you notice that the vinegar jar is about empty, add vinegar to your list.

When you are ready to do the weekly shopping, think about what foods you want to eat. Check to see if any of these foods are on special. Are there other foods on special which you can use? How many meals will you be fixing in the week? Is there anything special about the meals--company, one or two family members away, a birthday or anniversary? Do you have some foods on hand you need to use up? Do you need other foods to mix with leftovers?

Group things on your list--all canned goods together, frozen products, fresh produce, breads, etc.

If you are familiar with the store, list items in the order of their location along your shopping route.

Set aside time for shopping. It takes time to do a good job of shopping. If you hurry, you're apt to forget something. Or if you wait until meal time, you may decide you only have time to shop for that one meal. You may want to avoid shopping when the store is crowded.

Eat before you shop. If you are hungry, you are apt to buy foods that you can eat right away, or be unable to pass up tempting displays.

Shop alone. Shopping with children will cost you money. They'll find things for you to buy which aren't on your list. They also compete for your attention. Another adult or an older child can help by gathering the items on your list, doing price comparisons, and carrying the groceries home.

SHOPPING DAILY

