



Trimming the Grocery Bill

Recent events in our economy have caused many individuals to look for ways to save money. For some, the grocery bill is a great place to start. Below are 12 tips for trimming the grocery bill to stretch and save food dollars.

1. **Take an inventory.** Every few months, take an inventory of the foods you have available. Use that inventory as a starting point for planning meals.
2. **Plan your meals.** Knowing what you will be preparing for meals and snacks helps you to plan your shopping list.
3. **Take a tip from Santa Clause – make a list and check it twice.** A written list of what you need helps you to stay focused at the store, can help reduce impulse buys, and can help ensure that you get what you need so you don't have to make multiple trips to the store. Fewer trips equal less temptation for impulse buys.
4. **Study grocery store ads before shopping.** If you know what is on sale before you go to the store, you can plan your meals to get the most out of your food dollar by using sale items in your menu.
5. **Compare prices with unit pricing.** Unit price is the cost of an item per unit such as per ounce, slice, pound, etc. By looking at the unit price, you can compare costs of similar items that may be packaged in different-sized containers. Larger containers are not always the most cost efficient—they may actually cost more per unit, or you may end up throwing away spoiled and outdated food.
6. **Bend, stoop, and stretch your way to lower food costs.** Store brands are often found on the lower shelves and can be comparable in quality and taste to the more popular (and more expensive) national brands.
7. **Don't shop when you are hungry.** Shopping when you are hungry increases impulse buying—and it is often for foods that are not the most healthful.
8. **Take advantage of loss leaders, but don't let them take advantage of you.** A loss leader is a product that is sold for less than what the store paid for the item. Its purpose is to draw you, as a customer, into that store. The idea is that once they get you in the store, you will buy products in addition to the loss leader.
9. **Buy fresh fruits and vegetables that are in season.** You will get both the best price and the best quality.
10. **Use convenience foods wisely.** In general, the more someone else prepares your food, the more you are going to pay for it.

- 11. Cut back on foods with no nutritional value (i.e., soda, chips, cookies, candy).** These foods use about 12 percent of your food dollars and offer little nutritionally.
- 12. Don't waste food.** An estimated 25 percent of edible food is wasted. Wasted food is really money that is thrown away. Proper storage and use of leftovers can help reduce food waste.

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