

How To S-T-R-E-T-C-H Your Food Dollar

by Heidi Diller, RD

Albertsons Corporate Nutritionist (NAPSA)—According to the United States Department of Agriculture, a family of four spends \$80 more a month on groceries than it did two years ago. Yes, it's the worst case of food inflation we've seen in 20 years. Try having



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two teenagers at home that drink more gallons of milk than I use in gasoline. Funny that a gallon of milk is currently the same price as a gallon of gasoline. Gives new meaning to the phrase "food is fuel."

I've never been much of a coupon user. And I rarely watched the ads. Not anymore. The challenge I now face is still providing my family with healthy meal options but at a price I can afford. Some simple tips like not shopping hungry and using a list have helped keep unneeded items out of my cart. But this journey has taught me to find ways by which I can stretch my food dollar without my family even noticing the difference. Here are my tips:

- Use the weekly food ads to create a weekly dinner menu. I create a five-day menu that uses the meat that's on sale along with fresh and frozen produce. I never use coupons for items I don't regularly buy. Remember, fewer store visits equals fewer dollars spent.

- Herbs and spices are expensive. So I add flavor and moisture to my cooking by using healthy salad dressings. For example, you can sauté chicken breasts in a tablespoon of Italian dressing and add veggies and rice for a flavorful but low-cost dinner.

- Know how to shop the produce department. Buy apples, oranges, grapefruit, potatoes and onions by the bag—not the piece. It's cheaper and will fill more

lunch bags and cover more meals.

- Did you know that frozen turkey and eggs are the most economical sources of protein per ounce in the store? Yes, eggs are at an all-time high, but at only 50 cents per serving, they are still a protein bargain.

- Two nights a week, save money by trying meatless alternatives. Canned beans provide a good source of protein, fiber and nutrients without the added fat. Add beans to salads, casseroles and soups.

- Use private-label brands and save 15 to 25 percent compared to name-brand labels.

Tex Mex Dinner Salad

A perfect meatless meal for a hot summer night for less than \$15.

Serves 4

Ingredients:

- 1 (15-ounce) can Wild Harvest pinto beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 (15-ounce) can Wild Harvest black beans, rinsed and drained
- 1½ cups shredded Cheddar and Monterey cheese blend
- 1 head of romaine lettuce, rinsed and chopped
- 3 tomatoes, chopped
- ½ cup Catalina Free salad dressing
- 2 cups corn chips (optional)

Directions:

Drain and rinse the beans. In a large bowl, combine the pinto beans, black beans, cheese, lettuce and tomatoes. Add ¾ bottle dressing and mix well. Add corn chips before serving.

Nutrition Info (per serving)
Calories 450; Fat 12g; Cholesterol 22mg; Carbohydrate 59.5g; Fiber 17g; Protein 26g

Recipe adapted from www.allrecipes.com.



Note to Editors: This story is most relevant to the following states: CA, WA, OR, ID, NV, UT.