

# BUDGET

# STRETCHING

# FOOD IDEAS

## Rising Costs Eating Up Your Family's Budget?

### Tips To Help Keep You On Track and On Budget

by Phil Lempert

(NAPSA)—If the rising cost of food is taking a big bite out of your family's budget, you're not alone. Although the high cost of food is not expected to come down, you shouldn't have to give up the taste and quality you and your family are used to.

Don't worry. Making smart choices will allow you to keep your family happy. Buying frozen meals, side dishes and vegetables can provide great-tasting, high-quality foods for a fraction of the cost of dining out or fast food options.

Here are some tips to help you save money at the grocery store without sacrificing taste or quality:

**Always shop with a list:** If you don't, it's very likely you'll overspend. Even if you just go to the store for milk, take a note that says, "Just buy milk."

**Combine convenience and value at mealtime:** According to Technomics, 35 percent of people are eating out less often. Frozen foods such as Banquet Select Recipes deliver incredible value over eating out. For around \$1.50, your family can enjoy a complete meal that has been thoughtfully prepared with tender cuts of meat like white-meat chicken, rich sauces, colorful vegetables and flavorful touches like shredded cheese.

**Frozen fruits and vegetables are healthy alternatives to fresh:** The rising cost of fresh fruits and vegetables can make it difficult to provide your family with these essentials. Buying frozen fruits and veggies will save money—sometimes more than half the price of fresh. Since frozen foods last longer, you can stock up at once and cut down on gas-guzzling trips to the grocery store.



**Always make a shopping list and stick to it—if you don't, you might bust your food budget.**

**Get the whole family involved in saving money on food:** Put your kids in charge of clipping coupons and, as a reward, give them a percentage of the savings as an allowance. You'll teach them about value and get some help with this tedious task.

**Account for the entire cost of a meal:** Frozen foods often provide a complete balanced meal as opposed to some meal mixes that say "just add chicken," which may be the most expensive component.

**Don't overlook your savings:** Pay attention at the check-out to make sure the prices and discounts from coupons and frequent-shopper programs register correctly.

Working these small changes into your grocery shopping trips will not only save money and time, but they will help keep your family happy and satisfied.

*Phil Lempert, one of the nation's top trackers of supermarket trends, is a regular guest on the TODAY show and has written articles on food trends in USA Today and other national publications.*