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Supermarket Savings

Each time you turn on the news, you hear about rising food costs. However, there is no need to panic! There are actually some easy, practical ways to keep your food costs down when you visit the supermarket. As with everything, a good plan always helps us with whatever task we are undertaking, even food buying. The University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension has come up with their “Tips that Can Total Big Bucks.” These are really good suggestions and when used will certainly save you money at the cash register.

- 1. Keep a grocery list.** Keep a list of exactly what you need and try to stick to it, unless you encounter something on sale that you will use later. Also, each time you go to the store for those “forgotten items” you will spend more in the store, not to mention the extra gas money.
- 2. Garbage check.** Use your perishable items before they ruin, tossed out food is tossed out money! This goes the same for left-overs, eat them the next day.
- 3. Avoid shopping when hungry.** Eat before you go shopping and if you take your children, make sure and feed them in advance too.
- 4. Brown bag it.** If you normally eat out at noon each day, consider brown bagging it at least one to two days a week. Most lunches can easily cost \$5.00 or more.
- 5. Coupon common sense.** Use coupons for foods you normally would eat, rather than for “extras.” Also, try and shop on double or triple coupon days if your supermarket offers this service. Check online for coupons too.
- 6. Check expiration dates.** Don’t buy foods that are about to expire, unless you plan on eating it immediately. Try to purchase items with the longest expiration dates, there is a better chance you will consume it before it ruins.
- 7. Small scale experiments.** When trying new foods, buy the smallest package available. So if your family doesn’t like it, you don’t waste a large portion of food.
- 8. Costly convenience foods.** Try to avoid pre-packaged or pre-mixed food ingredients, vegetables, or fruits. They cost more than doing it yourself.
- 9. Staple food stock up.** Buy staple foods that have a long shelf-life when they are on sale.

10. Bulking up when the price is right. Make sure you are really saving money by buying a larger package, sometimes it isn't the best purchase. Plus, plan on using it before the expiration date.

11. Store brand savings. They are comparable in nutrition to name brands, and taste-wise, there may be little difference.

12. Beware of snack attacks. Enjoy snacks, such as chips, cookies, candy, etc. in limited amounts.

13. Shop the specials. Plan your menu around the sale items. Buy extra packages of meat when it is on sale and freeze it for later use.

14. Think before you drink. Buy a reusable water bottle and fill it up with tap water. Also, limit soft drinks and fancy coffees.

For more information on this topic you may visit <http://lancaster.unl.edu/food> or contact the Texas AgriLife Extension Service office at 903/473-5000, ext. 157.

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