

Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service

K-State Research and Extension Family Nutrition Program



DINING ON A DIME

Eating Better for Less



Entertaining and Dining Out on a Budget –

Advice from the 2003 to 2010 issues of the newsletter

Dining on a Dime: Eating Better for Less,

by Erin Henry and Mary Meck Higgins,

available at <http://www.ksre.ksu.edu/HumanNutrition/p.aspx?tabid=91>

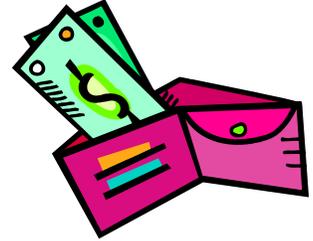
Entertaining on a Budget

With creativity and planning, you can scale down food purchases without cutting back on the fun and festivities of holiday and party meals. Here's how:

- § Plan. Establish how much you can afford to spend. Want to invite more guests than you can comfortably afford to feed? Host a potluck! Ask family and friends to bring a favorite dish and copies of the recipe for it. Bonus: everyone gets to try new foods. Or, if not a potluck, at least delegate desserts and salads. Save money and add surprise to the menu by asking guests to bring a dish.
- § Delay Your Meal Celebration to get Day-After Deals. The day after a holiday can be a great time to find festive food bargains at the store. Consider delaying your holiday meal by several days to take full advantage of sales. Special-event foods may be marked down in price by as much as 70 percent. Look for reduced prices on certain meats, such as turkey and ham; dairy products; baked goods, such as holiday rolls; and specific fresh and canned fruits and vegetables. Be sure to check the “sell-by date” before purchasing items.
- § Downsize your Menu. Consider your budget along with what's on special and seasonal at the grocery store. For example, plan a meal consisting of two or three kinds of homemade soups and one crowd-pleasing snack such as popcorn with raisins. Add a few kinds of bread and hot cocoa or an unsweetened beverage to complete the menu.
- § Shop Wisely. Keep — and use! — a grocery list. Watch for sales. Grocery stores periodically have great discounts on basic holiday foods. Use this to your advantage, but only buy items you need and avoid the “extras” that are not on your list. If you're serving fewer menu items, you'll need to buy greater quantities of each. This means you can buy ingredients in bulk, which can be a great way to save some cash. Look at the unit prices to ensure that you're getting the best deals.



§ Compare Convenience Costs. Some convenience foods are money-savers, but many others are not. Compare costs per serving to determine if you will save money on a convenience food. For example, canned sweet potatoes may be a good buy compared to fresh ones. Prebaked brown and serve rolls can often be found for under \$1 a package. On the other hand, you can prepare your own gravy and stuffing inexpensively with items that you probably already have in your home, or cut your own fruits and vegetables to save money on a relish tray.



Being "Wallet Wise" when Dining Out

Tips for lowering your away-from-home meal costs include:

- ◆ Share Entrees. Restaurant portions are growing in size, along with our waistlines and the tab at the end of our meals. To decrease all of the above, share an entrée with a friend or family member.
- ◆ Order Water with Meals. Sodas, specialty drinks, or even just a glass of iced tea can easily add an extra dollar (or much more!) per person to your meal ticket. Ask for a slice of fresh lemon to add a special touch and a dash of flavor to your water.
- ◆ Do Lunch. Lunch menus often offer the same items as dinner menus, but in smaller and lower-priced portions. So opting to go out for lunch, or for an early afternoon supper, can save money. However, even during the evening, a smaller portion or half-order may be offered.
- ◆ Clue in on Coupons. Some restaurants send out coupons to entice your business. Check your mail, local paper, and even the Internet for special offers.
- ◆ Plan your Budget. To reduce your spending on away-from-home dining, reduce how often you and your family eat out.



For more information about healthy eating, contact your local extension office. The Food Assistance Program can help people of all ages with low income buy nutritious foods for a better diet. To find out more, call toll-free 1-888-369-4777.

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K-State Research and Extension is a short name for the Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service, a program designed to generate and distribute useful knowledge for the well-being of Kansans. Supported by county, state, federal and private funds, the program has county Extension offices, experiment fields, area Extension offices and regional research centers statewide. Its headquarters is on the K-State campus, Manhattan.

This material was funded in part by USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program through a contract with Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services. Brand names appearing in this publication are for product identification purposes only. No endorsement is intended, nor is criticism implied of similar products not mentioned.

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