

STRETCHING YOUR FOOD DOLLARS

Food Shopping Strategies

Know what you have in your cupboards, pantry, refrigerator and freezer before you shop. Keeping your food storage areas organized allows you to see what you need at a glance.

Stock Up

Having the ingredients you use frequently on-hand gives you the ability to put meals together more easily and quickly. Stock your cupboards with items that have long shelf lives such as canned and dried goods. Replace often – keep a list on a cupboard door of items to replace the next time you go shopping. Buy items in bulk, but only if you have the room to store them and will use them up before their date of use expires.

Plan Meals

You can plan meals for a whole week or a few days at a time, whichever works best for you, but planning is the key. Start with a few family favorites and then consider what you can make with leftovers. For example, tonight's roasted chicken and vegetables could become tomorrow's chicken soup, chicken tacos or chicken fried rice.

Write It Down

Write a shopping list before heading to the market. Be sure to check fridge, freezer, pantry and cupboard first.

Food Storage Strategies

Organize Food Storage Areas

Group similar foods together so you know what you have. For example, keep all canned vegetables together on a single shelf in your pantry, and keep fruits and vegetables in their own zones in the refrigerator so you can easily see what you need to replenish. Likewise for foods in the freezer – keep meats in one area to avoid packages pushed to the back and forgotten.

Pay Attention to Dates

When buying fresh items, such as dairy, meat and pre-packaged fresh food, check food date or expiration labels. You can eat foods after the “best before” date (food quality label), but do not eat foods after the “use by” date (food safety label).

Store Produce Properly

Store fruits and vegetables in the refrigerator and wash them immediately before you eat them. Keep fridge drawers clean and dry – line them with paper towels to absorb any additional moisture.

Freeze Food Properly

If you buy frozen food items in bulk, such as meat, rewrap them for freezer storage and date them so you do not leave them in the freezer too long. If you are freezing meals or leftovers for future use, make sure they are fully cooked and cooled then wrapped well with as little air as possible. For breads or baked goods, wrap them in foil and then place in dated freezer bags.

Food Use & Reuse Strategies

Always Consider Leftovers

The best way to stretch your food dollars is to make the most out of the meals you make. When planning a meal, remember to think of what you can do with any leftovers, as well as ways to use up remaining ingredients you might have purchased for that meal.

Creative Ideas for Leftovers

Here are a few ideas for making leftovers into new meals:

- Add to a stir-fry or fried rice
- Stuff into peppers, zucchini or eggplant
- Add to a frittata
- Use as ingredients in risotto
- Use for tacos, quesadillas, tostadas or enchiladas
- Make into sandwich rolls or wraps
- Add to a cold salad or a grain or lentil salad
- Add to a bean dish
- Serve over pasta
- Use as ingredients for soups
- Use as ingredients for savory pies quiche or casseroles