



Freezer Cooking on a Budget

from 30 Day Gourmet

by

Christi Gillentine

Freelance Writer and
Mom of 3 toddlers,
Christi cut her monthly
grocery bill by \$200

Email the author:
christi@30daygourmet.com



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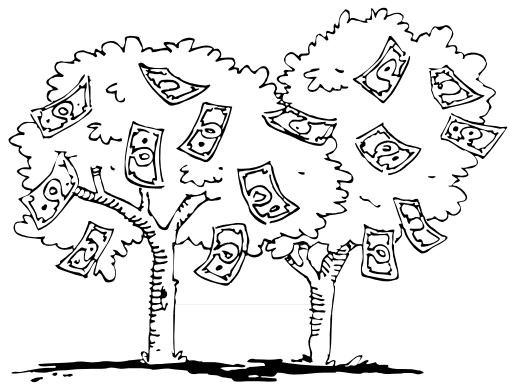
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Dear fellow budget minded cooks,

Each of us has a reason for wanting to cut and lower our grocery costs. If you are already a 30 Day Gourmet you may be well on your way. If you are just starting out, it's a lot easier than you might think. As a wife and mother of three toddlers, including twins, my reasons for reducing grocery costs were simple. I was spending nearly \$150.00 dollars every week at the supermarket and because of time restraints I was still unable to get a decent meal on the table come dinner time. I needed a solution and fast. That is when I began cooking the 30 Day Gourmet way. I was only looking to spend the \$600.00 a month grocery budget in a more efficient way. I never dreamed I could effectively reduce our family's food budget by \$200.00 dollars each month! I began to compare the reduction in grocery costs our family had, and knew if I just planned right and maximized our food dollar, I could come up with the money I was searching for to fund part time preschool for my children. I did. And it didn't require a second job or more over time work for my husband or myself!



What would you do with an extra \$200.00 dollars a month or more? Let this eBook help start you on your way. Inside you will find recipes that are low in cost while still maintaining taste, texture and eye appeal (because if it doesn't look, smell and taste good- no one will want to eat it!). Each recipe conveniently lists the average price per meal as well as the price per serving. You will also find budget tips for each recipe to help you get the most from your food dollar. A handy Substitutions and Low Cost alternatives cheat sheet is available. Print one up and tape it to the inside of your pantry door! And don't miss the Five Rules To Shop By- a must see for any cook looking to reduce their food costs.

With Freezer Cooking On A Budget from 30 Day Gourmet you learn how to cut corners in the kitchen without losing flavor or excitement from your meals and put money back into your pocket at the same time. Because if I can do it, so can you!

Happy Cooking!

Christi Gillettine

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Five Rules To Shop By:

1. If it does not look, smell and taste good no one's going to eat it

It's not really saving money if food goes to waste because you or your family doesn't enjoy eating it. That low cost cabbage casserole recipe may have seemed like a good idea on your 30 Day recipe planner work sheet, but if you still have half a dozen still sitting in your freezer as you approach the end of the month it may not have been worth the time or money to make. Stick with recipes that are satisfying and enjoyable to eat. And depend on spices from your pantry to kick up the flavor of entrees that may have otherwise been too bland. You and your family will feel less restrained on what may be a tight food budget.

2. Loss Leaders = Big Budget Winners

Loss leaders are advertised items that supermarkets use to get you to shop at their store. They may take a loss on Pillsbury Cake Mix hoping that you will spend the rest of your food dollar at their store. The supermarket then increases the prices of other store items to make up for the loss on advertised specials. The key to maximizing your food dollar is to only buy the advertised specials. Stock up on items during the month as they go on sale and use coupons to get an even better deal if you can (some stores may even double or triple coupons). Get to know several of your area supermarkets and check their advertised specials each week. If you live in a rural area, call stores and ask them if you can be added to their advertisement circular mailing list.

3. Take The "Pantry Challenge"

Always shop your pantry stash first when preparing for your monthly cooking sessions. If, for example, you stocked up on corn bread mix from a loss leader special, by all means incorporate that into your meal planning. By shopping your pantry first, you can lower the cost of your monthly cooking session considerably.

4. No One Will Know It's Generic

In all my experience as a cook, I have never had someone ask me if my food was made with generic ingredients. Most people will never know that you chose the store brand onion soup mix or canned tomatoes and it's an easy way to cut your budget. Try the store brands (or other generic brands) once and see for yourself if you notice a difference. With some items you may feel brand loyal and that is ok. Find what works for you. If you are an avid coupon clipper and shop stores' loss leaders, you may find wonderful deals on name brand items.

5. Rely on a Price Book

A price book enables you to easily compare an item's price listed at different stores as well as compare different brand name prices. This way you can be sure you're getting the best value for your food dollar. To start your price book you will need a small note pad, something you can refer to at home or in the supermarket. Each item should be assigned its own page. List only the least expensive store's price. If you know you can get it cheaper at one store there is really no need to know that the competing store charges \$.58 cents more for the same item. Update it often as prices tend to fluctuate. Use it not only for loss leaders but also to get the best price on everyday staples. Title the page with the item's name, then list the information below in columns: brand name/Supermarket/ price paid-price per unit/date listed.

An example would be:

Butter/Margarine

Brumble & Brown/Albertsons Market/ \$1.38 for 12 oz./September 2001
Country Crock/ Warehouse Market/ \$1.20 for 16 oz./ September 2001

Fill in your price book as you shop or use your receipt as a guide.

ENTREE - POULTRY

Recipe: Crunchy Chicken Strips

Servings:	4	8	12	16	20	24
Makes:	20	40	60	80	100	120
Ingredients:						
Chicken breast; boneless, skinless	4	8	12	16	20	24
Corn Flake Cereal	15 oz.	30 oz.	45 oz.	60 oz.	75 oz.	90 oz.
Paprika	2 t.	1 T. + 1 t.	2 T.	2 T. + 2 t.	3 T. + 1 t.	4 T.
Garlic powder	2 t.	1 T. + 1 t.	2 T.	2 T. + 2 t.	3 T. + 1 t.	4 T.
Salt	1 t.	2 t.	1 T.	1 T. + 1 t.	1 T. + 2 t.	2 T.
Pepper	1 t.	2 t.	1 T.	1 T. + 1 t.	1 T. + 2 t.	2 T.
Milk	2 C.	4 C.	6 C.	8 C.	10 C.	12 C.

Assembly Directions:

Pour milk into a bowl and set aside. Cut chicken breast into 1 inch strips lengthwise then soak in milk. Meanwhile pour corn flake cereal in a blender and blend for 30 seconds. It is best to do this in 2 cup portions so the flakes don't become dust, you want them to be small flakes. In a large bowl or container mix corn flakes, paprika, garlic powder, salt and pepper. Place chicken strips one at a time in corn flake mixture and coat well by pressing down on chicken strip into the coating. Strips will also take on a flatter form when you do this. Spray oil onto a cookie sheet and bake coated strips at 350 degrees for about 15-18 minutes or until juices run clear.

Freezing and Cooking Directions:

To Freeze: Allow to cool on cookie sheet then flash freeze. Place strips in freezer bags for dinners or lunches (about 5 strips per serving). Seal, label and freeze.

To Serve: Place frozen or thawed strips on cookie sheet and bake at 350 degrees for about 7-10 minutes. Serve with ranch dressing.



Comments:

It's best to reheat these in the oven to maintain crispy texture. You could reheat in the microwave, but coating will be less crispy and more soggy like that of a fish stick reheated in a microwave. These are great for dinners or lunches and taste as yummy as the fast food version, but lower in cost and fat!

Budget Tips:

Always stock up on chicken breast when they are on sale to insure you get the best price for your money. Generic or store brand corn flakes can cost up to \$2.00 less per box than name brand and no one will know the difference.

Average Assembly Cost:

Per Meal: \$2.87

Per Serving: \$.71

SIDES & SALADS

Recipe: Pasta Primavera

Servings:	6	12	18	24	30	36
Ingredients:						
Frozen peas and carrots	2 C.	4 C.	6 C.	8 C.	10 C.	12 C.
Cream of chicken soup	10 oz.	20 oz.	30 oz.	40 oz.	50 oz.	60 oz.
Milk	1/2 C.	1 C.	1-1/2 C.	2 C.	2-1/2 C.	3 C.
Parmesan cheese	1/4 C.	1/2 C.	3/4 C.	1 C.	1 1/4 C.	1 1/2 C.
Garlic, minced	1 t.	2 t.	1 T.	1 T. + 1 t.	1T.+2t.	2 T.
Pepper	1/4 t.	1/2 t.	3/4 t.	1 t.	1 1/4 t.	1 1/2 t.
Salt	1/2 t.	1 t.	1-1/2 t.	2 t.	2-1/2 t.	1 T.
Parsley, dried	1 t.	2 t.	1 T.	1 T. + 1 t.	1 T. + 2 t.	2 T.
On Hand:						
Thin spaghetti, cooked	3 C.	6 C.	9 C.	12 C.	15 C.	18 C.

Assembly Directions:

In a gallon sized freezer bag combine all ingredients.

Freezing and Cooking Directions:

To Freeze: Seal, label and freeze.

To Serve: Cook spaghetti according to package directions. Cook primavera sauce in a sauce pan over medium heat for 20 minutes or in microwave safe dish heat on high for 7 minutes. Mix together with spaghetti and serve warm.

Comments:

This is a perfect side dish for a big cooking session as it requires no cooking on assembly day. Just pour into a bag and freeze! You can substitute cream of chicken soup for cream of broccoli or mushroom. Also you can substitute peas and carrots for other vegetables like broccoli, cauliflower, green beans and corn.



Budget Tips:

Assembly cost includes spaghetti. Because the ingredients are so versatile this recipe is a great money saver. Buy fresh vegetables if they are in season or use frozen vegetables that are bought on sale or as loss leaders.

Average Assembly Cost:

Per Meal: \$1.79

Per Serving: \$.29

SNACKS & DESSERTS

Recipe: Chocolate Cake with Peanut Butter Frosting

Servings:	16	32	48	64	80	96
Cake mix ingredients:						
Chocolate cake mix	18.5 oz.	37 oz.	55.5 oz.	74 oz.	92.5 oz.	111 oz.
Cocoa powder, unsweetened	1 T.	2 T.	3 T.	1/4 C.	1/4 C. + 1 T.	1/4 C. + 2 T.
Milk	1-1/3 C.	2-2/3 C.	4 C.	5-1/3 C.	6-2/3 C.	8 C.
Vegetable oil	1/2 C.	1 C.	1-1/2 C.	2 C.	2-1/2 C.	3 C.
Eggs	3	6	9	12	15	18
Vanilla extract	1 t.	2 t.	1 T.	1 T. + 1 t.	1 T. + 2 t.	2 T.
Frosting:						
Peanut Butter, creamy	1 C.	2 C.	3 C.	4 C.	5 C.	6 C.
Butter, softened	1/2 C.	1 C.	1-1/2 C.	2 C.	2-1/2 C.	3 C.
Powdered sugar, sifted	2 C.	4 C.	6 C.	8 C.	10 C.	12 C.
Milk	1/4 C.	1/2 C.	3/4 C.	1 C.	1-1/4 C.	1-1/2 C.
Vanilla extract	2 t.	1 T. + 1 t.	2 T.	2 T. + 2 t.	3 T. + 1 t.	4 T.

Assembly Directions:

Cake: Combine all ingredients for cake mix; beat together until smooth, about 2-3 minutes. Spray a 9x13 inch pan with oil and pour in cake mixture. Bake at 350 degrees for 40 minutes. Cake should be done when the center springs back to the touch and the sides are just starting to pull away from the pan.

Frosting: Blend peanut butter and butter with an electric mixer. Add in milk and vanilla; mix together. Add in the powder sugar and beat until frosting is fluffy. This is a thick frosting, but if it seems too thick add in another tablespoon of milk.

Freezing and Cooking Directions:

To Freeze: Allow cake to cool completely then spread frosting on top. This is a sheet cake so frosting is only applied to the top. Frosting should be spread on thickly, about an inch deep. Flash freeze to set frosting then cover with foil, label and freeze. Thaw completely to serve.

Comments:

This cake is so delicious! It has a rich flavor that will satisfy any chocolate craving. It's like eating a peanut butter cup- cake! Listed is the average box size of a packaged cake mix.

Budget Tips:

By using the cake mix you are saving lots of time in the kitchen and they are great loss leader sale bargains. I always stock up if I have coupons and hit a great sale. You could substitute devil's food cake mix or any of the chocolate cake mix flavors on the market.

Average Assembly Cost:

Cost Per Meal: \$3.21

Cost Per Serving: \$.20

