



Extension News Column

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Still looking for ways to reduce your grocery store costs? Let's look at some ways to consume wisely.

Food costs are still a major part of our budgets. Did you realize that 25% of all edible food bought by Americans goes to waste according to the US Department of Agriculture? The average US household spends more than \$6000 a year on food, so that translates to \$1500 of waste.

How can we reduce this waste?

- Pay attention to portions. Don't prepare too much food. I'm having to learn how to cook for two people instead of six and three of those were teenage boys who could eat a ton of food. It is a challenge, but I'm cooking less.
- Serve less. Reduce the size of servings and let everyone know they can return for more if they want. Most of us belong to the "clean plate club" as my mother referred to it. So it makes sense that if you put less on the plate, you won't eat as much.
- Take care of leftovers. If you have leftovers from a meal, properly package and refrigerate them. I immediately pack the remainders of our supper into plastic containers for reheating the next day for lunch.
- When you do cook large, have a plan. The leftover steak or grilled chicken from tonight's supper can add protein to a salad for tomorrow's supper. Taco meat or ham can be added to eggs and cooked in a quiche or a strata. Beans can be put in a tortilla with salsa and cheese for a great burrito. Leftover meat can be seasoned, cooked with onions and peppers, served on a bun with cheese on top for a cheese steak sandwich that is hard to beat.
- When you bring food in from the store, instead of putting it in the front of the refrigerator, bring the old stuff to the front and put the new food in the back. You'll use the old first, saving it from the trash bin.
- Get familiar with your freezer. If you find that bread goes bad before you get it eaten, freeze it and take out only a few slices at a time. If bananas are going brown, freeze them in the peel. They can be changed into smoothies or banana bread when you have time.
- Rotate your food. Periodically use up all the foods in your freezer and in the cabinet. No food is good forever. The longer it stays in the cabinet or in the freezer, the quality of the food goes down. So use the old before the new.

In addition, reducing the waste means less packaging to throw away and fewer trips to the grocery store. Pay attention to the food waste and you'll reduce the cost to feed your family.