

**Frugal Shopping Without Couponing**  
**Or**  
**How I feed a family of 10 on \$550 a month**

**By**  
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## Who Thought I Had Something To Say?

A friend of mine suggested I write an e-book about how we feed a family of 10 on \$550 a month (soaps/detergents/toiletries included) without using coupons. I always feel silly because I assume everyone else is doing so much better than I am, but maybe not. This does not have extra pages or cute pictures. It is barebones information and will be inexpensive to print out and will save paper.

So, here goes, and this is dedicated to my friend *Kayla*, who inspired me with this in the first place.

### Measure Twice, Cut Once

This was advice my dad and brother gave me years ago in teaching me to do some handyman work around the house and it is good counsel in many areas of life. If you measure wrong and cut something wrong, you have to start again and it ends up costing much more money than if you had measured twice and gotten the accuracy in the beginning. This fits perfectly with menu planning and budget shopping.

Some folks plan and fill a pantry and shop from that. I can see how that would be a **GREAT** idea, and I am working toward a well stocked pantry, but I have found that I needed to learn how to cut down what I actually bought first. For me, the planning (measuring twice) is the key to buying basic foods and keeping the budget down.

I need to add that I have one daughter who is away at college so we actually only have 9 of us at home. But of those 9, one is a 9 year old boy and the rest are teens or adults with **HEARTY** appetites of youth. And on a regular basis we have missionaries stay with us for upwards of a week (generally 5-8 of them) at various times throughout the year, so I still plan as if we had 10 people all the time. It evens out this way.

Now, this is really important. Don't think that you have to do this all at once and all in one week! It has taken me many years to get to the place where it is second nature to me. The first time I even *heard* of a price book I **FREAKED OUT!!!** Take this in stages, work on one aspect of it one week, the next week go out and do the leg work, or whatever. Sometimes we forget that we 'eat the elephant one bite at a time'!! We try and shove the whole 4,000 pounds into our mouths and wonder why we are choking!! ☺ And always remember this: **BREATHE!!!** (☺)

### Computer Time:

My first suggestion is writing out the all meals you actually eat. Most of us have a list of 20 or so meals that are the staples of our family's eating. It is uncommon for families to

weekly have several different recipes they are trying. When we don't know what to make, we fall back to our family favorites. So, start by writing those down. Now do it for breakfast, lunch and supper. This will give you what I call a Master List of meals. You may add to this as you try and like new recipes, but start with this place. When I first started this, I needed my family's help, there were so many meals that I had forgotten that I make regularly. So, get their memory juices flowing and use their help!

Next, to prepare a **price book**, (mine is now in my head -- I can tell you the cost of an item at the 3 stores and I will usually be right to within \$.10). Now I **KNOW** that the concept of making a price book can be **INTIMIDATING** and **DAUNTING**, but in reality, it isn't that hard...it just takes some work. And, as my friend *Kayla* said, *"if you look at this as a challenge to your intellect as well as your pocketbook, it becomes more of a game than drudgery."*

Make sure that when you are actually going to the store to price these items that you go **WITHOUT CHILDREN**. For some of us that will just not be possible, but if you have the option of someone (maybe Dad) watching the children, you will get through the store much quicker!

**Back to computer time:**

I suggest you make a page for each grocery area: dairy, produce, breads/bakery, canned fruits/vegetables/beans, pasta, frozen, cereals, baking supplies, etc. This helps with this step.

Take each of those Master Meals and write out every single grocery item needed to make those (spices, salt, everything), writing/typing them in the section where they go (bakery, dairy, frozen – this is so that you can have your grocery items organized and easy to find). Since my meals are all very basic and very simple from scratch, I know the ingredients in my head. For example, if I am doing my grocery list for *Pasta Carbonara*, I would do this:

<b>Dairy:</b> Eggs (6) Whipping cream Parmesan cheese (1c) Butter (1/4 #)	<b>Pasta:</b> Angel hair (2)	<b>Meat:</b> Bacon (1#)	<b>Spices:</b> Salt pepper
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If you do not, remember that "measuring" twice takes a lot of work in the beginning, but once it is all down on paper (or computer) it gets much easier and faster from here. Doing the work ahead of time on the computer (or paper) saves lots of unexpected purchases causing you to go over budget or to have no money at all for several days eating (this is the "cutting" part).

## Going To The Stores:

Take that large list of grocery items (these are the food stuffs you should always be looking to have on hand - if you decide to stock a pantry) to the different grocery stores where you normally shop and begin to price them. Now, **NOT** the sale prices, we can add those in later, just the everyday prices. So you should have a page that might look like this:

Grocery item	Aldis	Walmart	Krogers
<b>Baking:</b>			
White flour	1.29	1.39	1.65
Chocolate chips	1.49	1.99	2.79
<b>Dairy:</b>			
Butter	2.39	3.19	3.29
American cheese	1.99	3.99	4.99
Eggs	1.49 (doz)	1.99 (18 ct)	2.19 (18 ct)

- You should always take this with you when you shop, at least until you carry it in your head
- You should use it to compare the sales flyers from the various stores each week.
- Put the sale prices in pencil next to the regular prices

You will find that most stores (Kroger in particular) have sales that are sort of regular things, like Kroger's Tyson boneless chicken breasts that regularly go on sale for \$1.99/pound. BUT I also know that they have sales every 4-5 months when they go on sale for \$1.69/pound. These are things to keep track of for your stocking up, although it will take a year to begin to see all the cycles.

## Back To The Computer:

The next thing I did many years ago was come up with a list of meals for a pay period. We get paid twice a month so I have menus (16 of them, actually) that list breakfast, lunch and dinner for 15 days. I typed these out on my Excel spreadsheet. (OK, if the idea of using a spreadsheet is making you hyperventilate...DON'T WORRY! It can be done on paper! But a spreadsheet is just a fancy name for premade tables – they can do calculations if you want them to but I don't use that aspect of it.)

Beneath all the breakfasts for those 15 days I will list every single grocery item needed to make those meals, and then the same for all the lunches and then for the suppers. Make sure you mark down the quantity and size of the items you need to buy.

After you do this, you want to take your price book and put the lowest price you **normally** find it next to the item on your spreadsheet, along with the initial for the store to buy it. This gives you an idea of the regular cost of this food item. Add it all up and this gives you a ballpark figure of how much this pay period menu will be. Do NOT

forget to add in milk, juice (if you buy it), coffee, sodas, snacks (and toiletries/soaps – unless you have a separate budget for those items). It will look something like this:

cream of wheat	egg salad sand, veggie	Am chop suey, salad
Chocolate chip muffins	tuna sand, veggie	pasta carbonara, salad
breakfast burritos	chicken salad sand, cukes	chicken pot pie
Cream of wheat #3.19 W	<del>Miracle whip 2.99 W</del>	Pasta (2) 1.00/each K
<del>Flour 1.29 A</del>	<del>Yeast 6.99 CM</del>	Hamburg 1.69 CM
Eggs 1.99/18 K	<del>Honey 2.99 A</del>	Tomato sauce (2) 1.19/each K
Chocolate chips 1.49 A	Tuna (5) .49/each A	Angel hair pasta (2) 1.00/each K
Milk 2.99 A	Chicken (4#) .89/# K	Bacon 3.00 K
<del>Sugar 2.19 A</del>	Carrots 1.00 A	Whipping cream 1.49 K
Tortillas .89 W	Celery .89 A	<del>Parmesan cheese 2.99 K</del>
Cheese 2.19 K	Cukes (2) .79/each A	<del>Butter 2.39 A</del>
<del>Salsa 2.99 W</del>	Apples 2.19 K	Frozen mixed veggies 1.49 K
Toothpaste 1.00 DT		<del>Crisco 3.99 W</del>
<del>TP 6.99 K</del>		Romaine lettuce 2.19 W
<del>Shampoo 1.00 CVS</del>		<del>Salad dressing 1.79 W</del>
<del>Salt .49 A</del>		
<del>Baking powder 6.99 Azure</del>		

TOTAL: \$41.85

Now, you will note that I didn't list eggs more than once even though I need them for egg salad sandwiches and for the pasta carbonara. If I need more I will simply go the original list of them and add how many I'll eventually need. Doing it this way helps to see if I can have several egg dishes in a menu period, particularly while Aldis has eggs \$.49/dozen – a big savings over my normal \$1.99 for 1 ½ dozen. The same with cheese. If I need 1 c of cheese, but Kroger's has cheese on sale for 3 c package, then I'll alter my what we eat and include enough meals to use up that cheese, since I'm buying it anyway.

You'll notice that some of my menu items I've stricken through. This is what I do with a pencil on my printed copy. Once I print out my menus and grocery list, I go through my pantry, fridge and freezer and cross off what I have on hand and don't need to buy. UNLESS I am running low on that item, of course.

Then I total up what it all costs. IF it puts me over budget, then I look at which of my meals are the most expensive (usually one with meat or chicken that I don't have in the freezer) and swap it out for a cheaper meal from my Master Menu List (remember that?) until the entire menu comes under or just at budget.

Then I continue to make these menus until I have at least 4 on hand that vary the meals we eat. I save them all on my computer (if you are doing it on paper, have it in a notebook – but put them in sheet protectors so they won't get so worn out and tattered that you can't read them).

Finally, I check all the grocery flyers for the week. Now we no longer get the newspaper now that our children stopped delivering. But I go online for each of our local stores and view their weekly flyers that way. This will help me to know if any of my grocery items are on sale (so I can be careful to get those instead) and sometimes it helps me to switch out some food items. I might have been planning to buy some frozen tilapia from Aldis but see that frozen shrimp is on very good sale at Kroger. I will then look in my Master Meal List and replace a shrimp dish for the tilapia recipe and continue on from there.

I try (it doesn't always work) to reserve \$15-20 for stocking up each pay period. If Walmart has a great sale on salsa, I will buy several to put in the pantry. Or when County Market has their Can-tastic sale and their canned fruit and vegetables are on sale for \$.25, I will buy several cases for the pantry. Or if a friend is driving out to Sam's Club (it is an hours drive so I never go) I can give them some money for tomato sauce in the industrial size cans.

### **Doing The Shopping:**

Now you are ready to head to the various stores (mine are all fairly close to one another, but I sometimes don't do all the shopping on the same day – I will do Krogers since it is near me but I may save my Walmart and Aldis run – they are near each other – for the day I drive a child to the college, since it is on the way). You have your list of what to purchase at which store. If you find a significant increase in the grocery item, you should also have your price book with you. If you know it is cheaper someplace else, wait and buy it later. Keep your price book updated with real time prices at the stores as you shop.

### **If At First You Don't Succeed, Try, Try Again**

You may find that no matter how you swap out your meals, you simply cannot get within your budget. If that is the case then 2 things are possible:

- You have an unrealistically low budget for the number of people in your home
- You simply eat too expensively for the money you have

My experience is that the 2<sup>nd</sup> problem is often the issue. In which case you need to look at the amount of convenience foods you buy. If you are working outside the home, there is always a balance between time and money, and you will often have to spend more money to save some time, in which case you will have to up your budget some. But if you are a stay-at-home-mom, it really will be worth it to spend some extra time making "cream of soup mix" from scratch that will last for 15 meals for the same amount of money it will cost to buy 1 or 2 cans of it (for example).

Again, look through your meals with a Frugal Eye. Are you buying 2 boxes of muffin mix for \$6.00 when you can make those same muffins from scratch for \$1.00? Are you buying pre-prepared potato mixes when you can make your own potatoes for a fraction of the cost? Are you serving pre-cut veggies for \$5.00 when you can cut your own for

\$1.00? Many of you are probably not doing these things, but we need to look at every item in our menu to see if it can be altered by making it from scratch for a cheaper (and often healthier) alternative.

Also look at the amount of meat, poultry, fish, pork you are serving. When I make a casserole with meat, I always double (or triple) the recipe but I do NOT double or triple the amount of meat. This may not seem significant in one meal, but if you do this every night, it can save a lot of money in the course of a week.

Also look at chicken. 1 pound of boneless chicken breasts at \$1.99 will serve 4 people while a 4 pound whole chicken at \$.89 per pound (total of \$3.56) will serve 3. So, at these prices, sometimes the chicken breasts are the better buy. Of course with a whole chicken, you can bake it and serve it for 1 meal, then bone what is left for another casserole and finally boil it and use the left over (and what is on the bones still) plus the broth for soup.

Hamburg: are you paying full price? Call your local grocery store to see if they sell their Yesterday's Ground Meat for less. We have one store that does and I never pay full price for ground beef. I can get nice ground sirloin for \$1.99 or a good ground chuck for \$1.69 per pound if I buy what was yesterday's ground beef. They often come in larger "family size" packages, but take them home, divide them up and pop them in Ziploc bags for the freezer. And remember, NO MORE than 1 pound per bag! Do it in ½ pound sizes if your family is smaller because your meals will be smaller. That \$8.00 5# bag of meat could be 10 meals for your family (it is 5 meals for us).

## **Make Your Own Mixes**

There are any number of blogs and websites that give recipes for making your own mixes so I won't take up a lot of space here with hundreds of them. I will share just a few of them here, the things that I use most and have found to be the most cost effective for my family. NONE of these are my invention, but some of them I've had recipes for from years ago and cannot remember where I got them from. If they are recently obtained, I credit the source. All can be found in various places online.

### **Cream of Soup mix:**

2c dry milk  
¾ c cornstarch  
¼ c chicken bullion granules  
2 T dry onion flakes  
½ t dried thyme  
½ t marjoram  
½ t pepper

Combine and mix altogether and store in airtight container.

To prepare:

½ c dry soup mix

1 ¾ c water

2-3 T butter (optional)

Mix together mix and water and cook until thick, add butter. You can add mushroom bits for a mushroom soup or chicken broth in place of ¼ c water for chicken soup or ¼ t celery seed for celery soup. Equals 1 can cream soup.

### **Onion Soup Mix:**

¾ cup instant minced onion

4 tsp onion powder

1/3 cup beef-flavored bouillon powder (msg-free)

¼ tsp celery seed, crushed

¼ tsp sugar

Mix all the ingredients and store in an airtight container.

To prepare:

Add two tablespoons mix to one cup boiling water. Cover and simmer for fifteen minutes.

### **Taco Seasoning Mix:**

1 Tbsp chili powder

2 tsp. onion powder

1 tsp. cumin

1 tsp. garlic

1 tsp. oregano

1 tsp. paprika

1 tsp. salt

1 tbsp. sugar

Mix together and store in airtight container. 3 T = 1 package taco seasoning

### **Laundry detergent**

There are many different variations of this that can be found all over the internet, but this is the one I use. I've used the powdered version but didn't like it nearly as well. It is very economical, easy to make and with an essential oil added, smells quite lovely.

1/3 of a bar of Fels Naptha soap (or Zote soap, even Ivory soap will do) grated

½ c Washing Soda

½ c Borax

large plastic bucket

essential oil (optional)

In large sauce pan mix grated soap and 6 c of water, heat to boiling. Melt soap completely. Add Washing Soda and Borax and stir 'til all has dissolved. Remove from heat. Pour 4 c HOT water into clean bucket and add soap mixture. Stir well. Now add 22 c HOT water to bucket and stir. Once it has cooled to room temperature, add 10-15 drops of essential oil (I use lavender/vanilla).

Let mixture sit for a day or so and it will become gel-like. Use ½ c per load.

### **Pancake Syrup:**

1½ cups reserved water from boiling potatoes {The potato starch left in the water from boiling your potatoes helps to thicken the syrup as it cooks.}

½ cup packed brown sugar

½ cup white sugar

1 tsp Maple Extract

Add water and sugars to a saucepan on medium heat. Continue to stir until sugars are dissolved. Add in Maple Extract. Continue boiling until you've reached your desired consistency, keeping in mind your syrup will thicken as it cools. I usually end up boiling mine for roughly 10-15 minutes.

(this is courtesy of Phoebe Hendricks of [Getting Freedom](#))

These are just a few of the homemade mixes that are available online.

### **Price Comparisons on Making Your Own At Home:**

Sometimes it is just NOT cheaper to make it from home. Like if you can get bread from the store for \$.69, it is NOT cheaper than spending \$1.95 to make it at home. However, we also need to compare apples to apples. If I am committed to eating whole grain breads, then I need to compare whole grain breads to what I make at home.

Sometimes making mixes saves just a little, but when we make them with ingredients we already have in the house, it may save even more.

I will give price comparisons for the Laundry Detergent and the Pancake Syrup since I've purchased these ingredients recently and know the prices.

## **Laundry Detergent:**

Borax: \$3.49

Washing Soda: \$3.99

Fels Naptha: 1.34

I can get 12+ batches of detergent from both the Borax and the Washing Soda and 3 batches from the Fels Naptha. Each batch cleans about 52 loads of laundry.

### **cost per load (prices are all at Walmart.com)**

Homemade: \$.02

Xtra laundry detergent (one of the cheaper brands) \$.08

Tide powder: \$.15

Tide liquid: \$.20

So, it is 4 times more expensive to use one of the cheaper brands on the market, and using liquid Tide is 20 times more expensive.

## **Pancake Syrup:**

Brown sugar 1.99

White sugar 2.19

Vanilla 1.99

Each batch makes 1 ½ c syrup.

### **cost per cup**

homemade syrup = \$.40

Aunt Jemima syrup = \$3.15

## **Do Not Borrow From Peter To Pay Paul**

If you are really trying to work to reduce and then stay within your grocery budget, USE CASH. You may find the first pay period that you end up having breakfast foods for supper a couple of nights when you run out of money. It is a real education when this happens because you see that this can be a real challenge. BUT it is really worth it in the end!

Don't use your plastic cards because it is way too easy to go over budget (been there, done that). When you only have \$XX for the budget period, you really have to rethink buying that pizza for \$20 when you can make pizza for \$5.

## Some Choices We've Made

Not everyone is willing to make the choices we've made, but this is where we have come in our journey.

- We have meatless meals at least once a week, often 3
- We often have breakfast meals for supper once a week
- We ration certain foods (like milk; we have several large milk drinkers and have to ration their consumption and still we buy 8 gallons a week)
- We only get soda for special holiday treats when it goes on major sale
- We don't buy cookies when we can make them
- Popcorn is a staple of our home: for snacks, for lunches with cheese and fruit – and not the microwave popcorn but the pop on the stove kind
- We buy fresh fruit each pay period but only what is cheaply available in the stores – in the winters that means mostly apples and bananas, or we buy canned (or if I've been able to can my own)
- We buy fresh vegetables that are in season, so in the winters we are limited as to variety – so we eat frozen
- We try to mix grains together to get complete proteins to avoid animal proteins for some meals

We seldom eat out. It costs our family over \$25 just to eat at McDonalds so if we do eat on the run, it is a PLANNED outing for a special event. When we do our Christmas shopping, we plan eating at the food court at the mall in a large city where we go.

Because we live in a small rural area, there is never any real *need* to eat away from home. If we have an all day outing planned (like Homeschool Day at Six Flags), we simply pack up the cooler chest with fruit, fresh veggies, bread and peanut butter, jugs of water and/or juice, granola bars or cookies and eat on the road. It is a very rare thing anymore that I have not planned ahead enough to know when we'll need to be eating and where we'll be.

## Paper Products/Toiletries:

This can be a major expense! The only paper product we use is toilet paper. I have tried all different kinds from the cheapest to the most expensive and softest. For our family Scott brand 1000 sheets per roll is the most economical. However, Kroger has a store brand of the same size that is \$7.59 for a 12 pack (Scott is currently \$10.85). This 12 pack will normally last our family 1 ½ months. Only 1 month if we have company for any length of time.

We use cloth napkins. After Christmas, I go to K-Mart and buy their cloth napkins (usually 2 for \$1.00) and their cloth table cloths. I like to have about 30 napkins in my

pile and I replace old and stained or worn napkins each Christmas. Also with the table cloths, I have about 10 that I replace yearly as needed.

We don't use paper towels at all. We have lots of wash cloths (you can often buy them 12 for \$4.00 at Walmart) and hand towels (these I often get at the second hand store). We use these for our messes. If I am frying things (and it is seldom, but since I make my lists for meals ahead of time, I always know when I'll fry), I get paper bags instead of either plastic or using my own reusable bags. Then I'll use the paper bags to drain my fried foods on.

I confess that I have no system for buying toiletries other than watching for sales. I usually get these at CVS or Walgreens when they have some good sales. I never pay full price but I do not coupon or even understand how to use the card system. Sometimes we simply buy these items at the Dollar Tree.

### **Try A Week Of "Eat From My Pantry" Meals**

We had a week not too long ago where we had some unexpected and large expenses which took the rest of my grocery money. We had only \$25 for the week to feed our family. Some dear friends gave some great suggestions. One of my daughters (who is being trained to fully run a household) jumped at the challenge and she took the suggestions and came up with a menu for the week. We sat down together and altered a few things and had a great list of meals that came almost completely from what we had in our freezer, fridge and pantry.

You'd be surprised how much is actually there! We ended up spending \$4.84 that week and we even had more desserts than normal (because of what we had on hand from special sales earlier in the year). We felt satisfied and had a lot of fun. So now, we try to every other month, have a week where we try to Eat From My Pantry. We work hard to keep purchases to under \$10 for that week. The rest of our budget money goes into a jar for stocking up the pantry again. But I've been finding that I actually get more in my pantry than I used because I have the opportunity to use it during great sale times.

### **Holidays – Headache or Blessing:**

Again, for our holidays we keep things simple. Because we live so far from family and everyone in our church either has family nearby or they travel to family, it is a rare thing that we get to share our holidays with others. But feeding just 10 people can still be an expense when you are looking at special foods.

First of all, I have my holiday menu planned 6 months in advance for Thanksgiving (our Christmas does not include big fancy meals). Then, as items we would need come on

sale, I pick them up bit by bit and store them away until the holiday. Again, we keep our meal simple and most of it is made from scratch and many ingredients are things I have in my pantry from the summer bounty. Apples stored from the fall orchard sales, pumpkins pureed in the freezer from autumn decorations, potatoes are usually abundant, farmers markets provide ample vegetable produce from fall harvests and inexpensive and turkeys begin to go on sale. So, as these things begin to fill my pantry I wait for the holidays to use them with very little extra expense come the holidays themselves.

## **Cleaning:**

I was asked about my cleaning products. I generally use ammonia for almost all of my household cleaning, and that is inexpensive. I have watered down ammonia in spray bottles in my bathrooms and the kitchen for daily cleaning and use it in varying strengths for spring cleaning and window washing.

## **Master List of Meals:**

I mention having all your normal meals listed. I am including a list of all of my meals and links (if I have them) to recipes. These are the meals I use to compile my 2 week menus. You may notice that my meals are very, very basic. I don't have lots of time or money for gourmet cooking; basic whole foods from scratch is what keeps us in budget.

I am always adding new recipes as I find them on the internet or cookbooks, so keep checking back to my [blog](#) for updates.

## **Breakfasts:**

- pancakes
- waffles
- breakfast burritos
- scrambled eggs
- [Melt In Your Mouth Muffins](#)
- chocolate chip muffins
- muffins of various varieties
- bagels
- [Faye's coffee cake](#)
- Oatmeal
- Cream of Wheat
- Scones
- home made granola
- cinnamon rolls
- [french breakfast puffs](#)
- french toast
- homemade donuts
- English muffins and yogurt

- ham & cheese omelets
- granola bars & fruit smoothies

### **Lunches:**

- grilled cheese
- [muffins](#) & rice ([Kellogg's Original All Bran Muffins](#))
- popcorn/fruit/cheese
- quesadillas
- mac & cheese
- english muffin pizzas
- corndogs
- ramen
- egg salad sandwiches
- tuna sandwiches
- turkey/chicken salad sandwiches
- lunch meat sandwiches
- cornbread and rice
- peanutbutter sandwiches
- fish sticks

### **Suppers:**

- pasta w/butter & garlic
- pasta w/alfredo sauce (w/turkey/chicken)
- pasta w/marinara sauce
- homemade pizza
- quiche (broccoli & ham)
- [emerald rice bake](#)
- hot dogs/hamburgers
- [chicken tetrazzini](#)
- beef & bean burritos
- taco salad
- American chop suey
- [pasta carbonara](#)
- shepherd's pie
- french dip
- meatloaf
- stew
- chili
- [taco soup](#)
- pigs in a blanket (white or corn)
- turkey/chicken soup
- chicken/beef fajitas
- [meatballs](#) & spaghetti
- chicken pot pie

- roasted chicken
- meat pies
- chicken strips
- Italian sausage
- Lasagna
- chicken parmesan
- grilled chicken
- [skillet enchilladas](#)

## STORING UP FOR THE WINTER

*“Go to the ant, O sluggard, Observe her ways and be wise, which, having no chief, Officer or ruler, prepares her food in the summer And gathers her provision in the harvest.” Prov 6:6-8*

In years past our grandmothers and great-grandmothers would “put food by”. In the months of harvest they would can and store food from their abundance to feed their families in the winter. This is a lesson we can re-learn in our day, but we can add some technology to maximize our resources.

### **Foods that store well:**

Root crops (carrots, onions, garlic, potatoes, beets, etc.) – these can be stored in a cool dry basement. Most of us probably do not have a root cellar, but we can approximate one in your unheated basement. What you need is moist, cool and dark surroundings – about 34 degrees is perfect. Here is an excellent site for help on preparing your own root cellar storage: [National Gardening Association](#) .

### **Foods that freeze well:**

For many of us, freezing is a better way to go than canning. Canning is good for high sugar or high acidic foods but not for most vegetables or meats unless you have a pressure canner. I confess I’ve never had the courage to use one after my mother told me of her experience as a young woman when she caused an explosion in her kitchen with a chicken! I do, however, use a water bath canner regularly for applesauce, apple butter, apple pie filling, jellies, jams and tomato sauce. I will talk about that later.

To freeze vegetables you need to prepare the vegetables, have boiling water available in a large pot, have ice water available in another large bowl and a colander for transferring the vegetables. Also Ziploc bags and a 1 c measure.

Blanch is a term that means to plunge cleaned and prepared vegetables or fruit into boiling water for a few seconds or minutes to set the color, soften the skins for easy removal and just barely cook it. Then it is plunged into cold (often iced) water to stop the cooking process. It is then ready for freezing.

Foods that I've frozen are:

- Green beans
- Broccoli
- Cauliflower
- Corn
- Pumpkin
- Zucchini (this I grate raw and then bag in 1 c portions)
- peas

I've never had a very large garden, but over the years, these are vegetables I've grown and stored.

At the end of this section I will post the link to my blog for how I prepare corn for the winter freezer. Some people omit the blanching process with corn, but I find removal from the cob much easier if the corn is blanched and I think the blanching retains better color and flavor for freezer storage than freezing completely raw. You can make your own choice according to your preference.

Pumpkins are a great crop for winter preparedness. You can puree (completely blend to a smooth pudding-like texture) for use in breads, pies, or cookies. I use the leftover pumpkins from my friends from Halloween! Those large pumpkins may not be the absolute best for pies (pie pumpkins are really excellent and much better than canned), but they are just as good as canned. They are wonderful for breads (which make a great Christmas gift) and cookies. With 2-3 pumpkins (simply ask your friends to save them after their Halloween decorations are over) you can get 8-12 or more 1 c Ziploc bags for the freezer. Link to my blog for processing follows below.

If you have access to apple orchards or to friends' apple trees, you can get a good crop of apples that can both be stored in your basement or fridge or can be canned for the winter. You can prepare apple pie filling and cant that and simply pour it into a prepared pie crust. You can make applesauce (there is NOTHING as wonderful as homemade apple sauce, and with the right apples, you don't even need sugar) or apple butter. This is also a great Christmas gift! Again, a link for processing apples for canning follows below.

### **Foods that can well:**

I like to can applesauce, apple butter, apple pie filling and tomato sauce, as well as jellies and jams. I have recipes (in the Appendix) and links below to how to do applesauce, etc . You can find some great recipes for jellies and jams in the packages of Ball canning jars. Those are pretty much what I've used, although I've tried low sugar varieties as well.



For tomato sauce, I use the following item (I bought it years ago at a Farm & Fleet in Indiana). I simply cut the tomato (I don't even blanch it to remove the skin) and pop it in the strainer and crank. You need 2 bowls: one for the liquid and one for the skin. I will put the skin through the strainer 2 more times after the initial one to get all the fullness of the pulp out of them. (this strainer also works GREAT for applesauce)

Cook the sauce on the stove on low (along with whatever spices you want to use, I use oregano, minced fresh garlic, crushed red pepper, and 2 bay leaves) for 4-6 hours until thickened. Then can it according to water bath canner instructions. Sometimes I'll add a can of puree and 1 small can of paste to the sauce while it cooks and then can it.

[Processing corn for freezing](#)

[Homemade applesauce](#)

[Homemade apple butter](#)

[Homemade pumpkin puree](#)

[Water bath canning](#)

## APPENDIX WITH DETAILED INSTRUCTIONS AND RECIPES

### Water Bath Canning Instructions

#### Supplies needed:

- Jar grabber (to pick up the hot jars)
- Lid lifter (has a magnet to pick the lids out of the boiling water where you sterilize them. (\$2 at WalMart, Target, and sometimes at grocery stores)
- Jar funnel (\$2 at WalMart, Target, and sometimes at grocery stores)
- Large spoons and ladles
- 1 Canner (a huge pot to sterilize the jars of apple butter after filling (about \$30 to \$35 at mall kitchen stores, sometimes at WalMart (seasonal item))
- Ball jars (WalMart carry them - about \$8 per dozen quart jars including the lids and rings), either jelly jar size, pints or quarts

The dishwasher is fine for washing the jars, the water bath processing will sterilize them as well as the contents! If you don't have a dishwasher, you can wash the containers in hot, soapy water and rinse, then sterilize the jars by boiling them 10 minutes, and keep the jars in hot water until they are used.

Leave the jars in the dishwasher on "heated dry" until you are ready to use them. Keeping them hot will prevent the jars from breaking when you fill them with the hot ingredients.

Put the lids into a pan of hot, but not quite boiling water (that's what the manufacturer's recommend) for 5 minutes, and use the magnetic "lid lifter wand" to pull them out (or use tongs).

Fill them to within 1/4 inch of the top, wipe any spilled apple butter off the top, seat the lid and tighten the ring around them.

Process means put them in the canner and keep them covered with at least 1 inch of water and boiling. If you are at sea level (up to 1,000 ft) boil pint jars for 5 minutes and quart jars for 10 min. If you are at an altitude of 1,000 feet or more, see the chart below.

Recommended process time for Apple Butter in a boiling-water canner:

Jar Size	0-1000 ft	1001-6000 ft	Above 6000 ft
1/2 pt or pint	5 min	10 min	15 min
Quarts	10 min	15 min	20 min

Recommended process time for applesauce in a boiling-water canner:

Jar size	0-1000 ft	1001-3000 ft	3001-6000 ft	above 6000 ft
Pints	15 min	20 min	20 min	25 min
Quarts	20 min	25 min	30 min	35 min

Lift the jars out of the water and let them cool without touching or bumping them in a draft-free place (usually takes overnight) You can then remove the rings if you like. The lids will “pop” (vacuum seal) as they cool. If any do not seal by morning, use those immediately and keep in fridge. They have not sealed properly and must be refrigerated and used within 1 week.

## Homemade applesauce

**Two methods are shown below, one for the stovetop and one for the crockpot.**

### **(stovetop method)**

You will need:

Apples (use a sweet apple, not Granny Smith, and use a combination of varieties for the best applesauce: fuji, gala, rome, honeycrisp, pink lady, snow are good varieties to use) – if you are only making enough for supper or breakfast, you will use 3-4 pounds of apples to make 1 quart – if you are making applesauce to can, you will get about 13-14 quarts per bushel of apples

- Large heavy pan
- Sieve
- KitchenAid with the Sieve/grinder attachments (\$370) OR - a Foley Food Mill (\$25) OR if you are REALLY into a tedious, time-consuming method, a simple metal sieve
- Apple corer/slicer

Wash the apples and core and slice them (or use the corer/slicer to cut them and core them at the same time), do not bother to peel them.

In the bottom of the heavy pan, put about 1 inch of water or apple sauce and then put in the sliced apples. Put the lid on and heat on high. Bring to a boil and cook until the apples are soft through and through.

Pass the cooked apples through the sieve, which separates the sauce from the skin. Add cinnamon, if desired, to taste. You should not need any sugar. It is ready to eat or to can.

### **(crockpot method)**

This works well for very soft apples, like Snow. See the information above on amount of apples and types above.

Peel, cut into quarters and remove core and seeds. Pile to top in crockpot and cover. Cook on LOW for 6-8 hours. Stir. It will be a lovely smooth texture. Add cinnamon, if desired, to taste. You should not need any sugar. It is ready to eat or to can.

## **Directions for Making Apple Butter**

### **Ingredients and Equipment**

- 9 quarts of Applesauce, fresh or canned
- 2 tablespoons of ground cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon ground cloves
- 1/2 teaspoon of allspice
- 2 cups sugar

### **Directions**

Step 1 – Make unsweetened applesauce!

That's right, apple butter starts with applesauce! You can use store bought applesauce, but the apple butter won't taste nearly as good. It's better with your own applesauce (either previously canned or fresh made).

Step 2 – Fill the crock pot

Fill the crock pot to within an inch of full with applesauce, mine takes about 5.5 quarts. Now, you CAN do this using a regular large pot on very low heat on the stove, but the crockpot works much better, because its heat is very low. I've never had a batch burn in the crockpot.

Step 3 -Add the spices

Add:

- 2 tablespoons of ground cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon ground cloves
- 1/2 teaspoon of allspice
- 2 cups sugar

Step 4 – Cook the Apple butter

Set the crock pot on low or medium heat.

Cover it loosely or use a large pot splatter-guard. It will spatter as it boils slowly, so I also cover nearby surfaces with towels. You don't want to seal it tightly because you want the steam to escape so it can reduce in volume and thicken.

Leave it to cook for 6 – 12 hours. How long depends on the size and power of your crockpot, and how thick you like it, If you want to stir it occasionally, that's fine but not necessary. I let mine go overnight.

It will reduce in volume by about half overnight. As it cooks down (the next morning), add the remaining applesauce (about 2 or 3 quarts) and 2 more cups of sugar. Then let it cook a couple of hours more to mix the flavors.

#### Step 5 - Blend the apple butter (optional)

You want a smooth, creamy texture, right? The easiest way is to use a hand-held drink blender. It does a great job of making it smooth. You can also put it into a regular blender, but if you are going to do that, you might want to blend the apple sauce before you put it in the crock pot (it will be much thicker afterwards and won't move in a regular blender).

#### Tips:

- Too thick? if the apple butter cooks down too much or is too thick for your liking, just add a little bit of apple juice and blend it in.
- Not thick enough? Just let it cook some more, with the lid off so the steam can escape!

Now you can fill freezer jars or prepare to can. See canning directions.

Yields about 9 – 10 pints

## **Processing corn for the freezer**

If you have access to your own fresh corn, be sure and use it IMMEDIATELY after picking to preserve the best taste. If you purchase it, try and use it as soon as possible after coming home from the store. If you must wait, refrigerate it to preserve flavor. The longer you wait, the more the taste will break down, so plan to process your corn the day you purchase it.

Tools and ingredients needed:

- very large pot (I use my canner)
- a second large pot
- freezer ziplock-type bags (quart size)
- large amount of ice
- sharp knife or corn cutter (I bought mine at Grummerts for less than \$4)



First, shuck your corn (peel off the husk) and remove as much of the silk from the corn as possible. Place the corn (I can fit 2 dozen easily into my canner) into rapidly boiling water and cover. This part is called *Blanching*. You are not thoroughly cooking the corn, you are simply heating it enough to stop the enzymes from degenerating the corn and losing nutrients and flavor. You will keep the corn in the boiling water 4 minutes. Next you need to STOP the cooking process. You will have your second large pot ready filled with ice covered with cold water. Take the corn from the boiling pot and place it in the ice water pot. You will keep it in the cold water just as long as it was in the boiling. Then you will take your corn cutter (or your sharp knife) and cut the corn off the cob. It will come off in sheets. Don't worry about that. Then you place it into your ziplock bags, either filling the bags to within 1 inch of the top (you must leave space for expansion during freezing) OR measure your standard amounts for your recipes into the bags. I place 2 1/2 c per bag because that is how much I use in most of my recipes. It is best if your corn is cold before freezing. I place them into the fridge for about an hour to cool it thoroughly and then lay them flat into the freezer. Once they are frozen solid, you can stack them up for organization and efficient storage. 2 dozen ear of corn yield about 5-6 quart size bags filled with 2 1/2 c of corn each.

## **Making Pureed Pumpkin**

Cut a 9-10 pound pumpkin in half through the stem portion; you'll need a very sharp knife for this. Scoop out and discard all the strings and reserve the seeds for toasting if desired.

Grease a large shallow baking pan with Pam or shortening, then arrange the pumpkin halves, cut side down, in the pan; prick the skin with a sharp knife to let excess moisture escape. Bake, uncovered, at a preheated 350 for 1-1 ¼ hour, or until the flesh is very tender when pierced and the skin yields easily to light pressure. Let the pumpkin cool.

Scoop out pulp and either whirl to a puree, 1 or 2 cups at a time in a blender or food processor, or mash thoroughly with a potato masher or run through a food mill or a meat grinder. When nice and smooth, set the puree in a wire strainer and allow the excess water to drain off. Let it drain for 30 min, or until the pumpkin looks like thick mashed potatoes; drain well so the puree will not be watery.

Cover and refrigerate the pumpkin puree for up to 2 days or freeze (up to 1 year).

2 cups of cooked puree is equal to a 1 pound can of canned pumpkin; use exactly as you would the canned puree in your favorite recipe.

## Toasted Pumpkin Seeds

Fresh Pumpkin Seeds

Salt

Vegetable shortening (or Pam cooking spray)

Clean fibers off the seeds and rinse well. Place the seeds in a bowl of lukewarm water to cover, stir in a generous amount of salt (2 t per cup of seeds); stir to dissolve the salt. Let soak for 4-6 hours at room temp.

To toast, grease baking sheet very generously with shortening (or spray very well with cooking spray). Drain seeds then spread them in a single layer on greased sheet; sprinkle lightly with salt if you wish. Bake at 300 until golden, crispy brown and somewhat puffed. Serve warm.

### In Closing:

I hope this has been of some help to you in your search for frugality. I am always looking for ways to cut down on our spending without cutting down on our food or our enjoyment of food. I would love to hear from you about this e-book or any other information you have that could help make this a better tool for each one of us.

In His Joy and Grace,

Kate Megill

[Teaching What Is Good](http://teachingwhatisgood.com)