

Holiday Hints

Save Time And Money On Holiday Meal Preparation Top Five Tips To Save This Season

®

(NAPSA)—The holiday season brings with it plenty of celebration, time with family and friends, and at the center of many occasions—food. From hosting a dinner party, to creating hostess gifts or office treats, to taking full responsibility for the family's holiday meals, it often seems the entire season is spent between the grocery store and the kitchen. The hours and dollars add up—but with a few simple steps, you can save on each.

1. Plan ahead.

Writing out meal plans, recipes and shopping lists in advance cuts out last-minute trips to the corner store, where products are generally more expensive, as well as saving the time of having to head out on additional shopping outings during the crunch right before the holidays.

2. Buy key ingredients in bulk.

Not only will buying in bulk save money and additional trips to the store, but it also ensures a stocked cupboard of holiday essentials when stores run low later in the season.

3. Search for promotions online.

On the Internet you can find savings on what you need, when you need it. You can double-check your final shopping lists against the more than 100 printable coupons available online at any given time at websites

like www.coupons.com and www.thecouponmom.com. Or go straight to your preferred grocer's or favorite brands' websites, like www.bettycrocker.com or www.kraftfoods.com.

The Recipes tab on Coupons.com provides recipes with user reviews, cooking instructions and the added bonus of coupons linked to some of the ingredients.

4. Prepare large batches of holiday favorites and freeze.

Preparing several dozen cookies or canapés at once takes much less time than preparing a couple dozen several times. It also guarantees that last-minute invites aren't accepted empty-handed.

5. Combine cooking and socializing by hosting a baking party.

If each guest brings one or two key ingredients, you avoid having to purchase large quantities of spices and other expensive ingredients. At the end, each attendee leaves with a quantity of varied cookies and other baked goods—for home or as a gift.

By cutting time and money out of the food prep process, cooks can get back to what holidays are all about: spending time with loved ones and celebrating. These five simple steps help take a little of the stress (and expense) out of the season—and make it truly about holiday cheer.