

Kitchen Korner

Thrifty And Tasty Tips To Help Stretch Your Meat Dollar

(NAPSA)—There's good news for consumers who are trying to cook up ways to cope with higher food prices.

By doing their homework before they shop, many are finding that it's possible to identify values in the supermarket meat case that are tasty and can help save money.

Why are prices rising? Corn to feed livestock and poultry is being made into ethanol to fuel our cars. High corn demand means high feed prices, which in turn means high food prices.

To help consumers enjoy delicious and nutritious meat on a budget, experts at the American Meat Institute offer these tips:

Start With A Plan

- Every shopping trip should start with a plan—a meal plan that leverages sale items and coupons. Get organized with a shopping list, weekly promotions and coupons. This triple effort will result in real savings if you are able to coordinate the use of coupons with weekly advertised meat specials. Plan at least a week's worth of entrées so you can profit from the weekly specials.

- Use coupons from a variety of sources, such as newspapers and magazines, online grocery coupons from popular coupon Web sites, and in-store coupons that are dispensed throughout the supermarket on double and triple coupon days.

- Join frequent-shopper programs at each of the grocery stores where you shop. The stores' incentive programs can slice a percentage off your total food bill.

Stock Up And Save

- Stock up on sale meat items and value/family packs to fill your freezer.



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- If you purchase a large meat value pack, be sure to portion the meats in quantities suitable for your household and freeze the packages individually.

Plan For Leftovers

Plan dinners so you will have leftovers to use for later meals. You'll save time, energy and supermarket dollars when you plan ahead to buy and prepare enough servings for more than one meal.

It's also possible to make the leftovers more inviting by incorporating them into another recipe—a "planned-over."

- Leftover roast beef or steak can become "planned over" beef quesadillas. Leftover hamburgers can be crumbled into spaghetti and lasagna sauces.

- Leftover pork chops can become pork fried rice with the addition of cooked rice, ginger, scallions, vegetables and eggs.

Shop For Value Cuts

Cuts of meat from the shoulder and leg are well-exercised muscles, are more lean and have a coarse grain. These cuts are very flavorful and are generally considered a "value cut" because they cost less but deliver good flavor and a large amount of meat. These less tender cuts can be tenderized by several methods:

- Marinate in a liquid containing an acid such as vinegar, wine, or lemon or lime juice. As the meat stands in the liquid, the acid breaks down the less tender cuts of meat. The formula for liquid to meat is $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of liquid per 1 pound of meat. Since marinades only penetrate about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch into meats, it is key to use a cut that is relatively thin.

- Always marinate meats in a covered container and place in the refrigerator. Use a sealable food-grade plastic bag or a glass or stainless steel container, so the acid marinade does not react with the container.

- Use a low-heat and moist-cooking method to soften the connective tissues that run through the muscles. Both the slow cooker and braising cooking methods are perfect cooking techniques for value cuts.

- For more information on stretching the meat dollar or for a series of recipes that use value cuts, visit www.MeatMattersInfo.org for a brochure called "Stretching Your Meat Dollar." Or send a stamped, self-addressed, business-size envelope to Stretch Your Meat Dollar/AMI, 1150 Connecticut Ave., NW, Suite 1200, Washington, DC, 20036.