

LOWERING YOUR FOOD COSTS
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Introduction

When we need or want to save money, we can cancel the newspaper, sell our car, and wear hand-me-downs, but we still have to eat. The good news is you can eat healthful and delicious food, and quite a bit of it, for less than you may realize. Do you know that the average American family spends \$150 - \$300 per person per month on food? Do you know that an adult can eat 3 substantial, nutritious meals a day for as little as \$96 per month (and sustain life for quite a bit less)? Now, to do so takes a little more effort than popping some frozen fish sticks in the microwave and opening a bag of dreary pre-chopped lettuce, but nothing too heroic. You don't even need to clip coupons or be a member of Costco. (Go to <http://www.cnpp.usda.gov/USDAFoodCost-Home.htm> to see government's food plan.)

From Scratch or Ready-Made?

By far, the best way to save money on food costs is to cook from scratch. Not only is it cheaper and more nutritious and *a lot* tastier, it often doesn't take much more time than cooking from a mix or driving over to a fast food place and waiting in line. Here are some comparisons that may surprise you. (These numbers are based on average prices of average sizes of either national or house brands at Stater Brothers. More savings can be realized, of course, by shopping in bulk at the club stores -- though club store prices are not always cheaper and are sometimes more -- watching for specials, planting a garden, etc.)

	READY MADE	FROM SCRATCH
white bread	.99 (mostly air) - 4.00++/loaf	.68
french bread	1.50/loaf	.29
Anderson's pea soup	1.43 / 1 1/2 cup serving	.26
chili	1.35/ 1 1/2 cup serving	.60
clam chowder	1.25/ 1 1/2 cup serving	1.00
minestrone	1.55/1 1/2 cup serving	.45
chicken broth	2.86/quart	.75
waffles	.32/square	.10
chocolate chip cookies	.17/each - slice & bake	.05
pie crust	1.25/each - unfold & bake	.43
french toast	.42/each - frozen	.19 w/ homemade bread
biscuits	.17/each - canned (repulsive if you ask me, which you didn't)	.08
scalloped potatoes	4.74/7 cups	2.21
pinto beans	.57/cup	.16/cup (cooked from dry)
cheese pizza	10.76/12" - Pizza Hut	1.58/14"
"Egg McMuffin"	2.59 - McDonald's	.95
french fries	1.00/small - McDonald's .40/frozen - 3 oz.	.20/large - 1/2 lb.

You can save a lot too on nearly identical items by shopping well. Here are some of the more glaring comparisons:

yeast	.67/individual pkg. vs. .04 equivalent in bulk
vanilla	.50/tsp. from small bottle vs. .07 in pint size (S&Final)
ham	4.89/lb in sandwich meat section vs. 2.49 in regular meat section
spices (e.g., oregano)	5.19/oz. in jar vs. .89/oz. in bag
carrots	1.49/lb for "baby" vs. .65/lb. regular (note that "baby" carrots are just regular carrots ground down)
oatmeal	.15/serving plain (or .04 from Storehouse) vs. .44 for flavored
orange juice	.31/cup frozen vs. .42 reconstituted
grape juice (not "cocktail")	.39/cup frozen vs. .47 bottled
salad mix (lettuce, carrots, red cabbage)	5.52/lb - bagged vs. .71/lb. average for each of the separate components (FYI: the lettuce core weighs only 2 oz. - abt. .05)
coleslaw mix (cabbage & carrots)	1.49/lb - bagged vs. .67/lb. average for cabbage & carrots)
broccoli	2.29/lb. pre-cut vs. 1.79 whole

Meat & Produce

Though I said that these calculations are based on average prices on an average day, I must say that you really need to watch the specials on meat and produce. For example, boneless chuck was on sale recently for \$1.57/lb., which is a very good buy, but the non-special price is about 3.69/lb. Whole chickens go on special regularly and the difference can be well over \$1/chicken etc., so plan your meat dishes around specials. Beware also of how the meat is cut. Sometime back, "country style beef strips" were \$2.89/lb. while boneless chuck roast was \$2.28/lb. Well, guess what "country style beef strips" are. Yes, simply boneless chuck roast. "London Broil" was \$1.99/lb., while round steak, which is the identical part of the cow cut thinner was \$2.99/lb. (I discussed this with the butcher, who said, "People aren't supposed to know this.") Watch out for meats that are the names of some dish, e.g., "stew meat," etc. They are generally just a larger piece cut up a different way.

Certain produce is a good buy or at least reasonable year round, e.g., cabbage, carrots, bananas, though even these items go on special occasionally. However, seasonal produce (e.g., peaches, melons, pears) is best when it's cheapest because that's usually during its peak season.

I am amazed by the people I talk to who think fresh fruit is a luxury, like a T-bone steak. The average piece of fruit in season is only about .50/piece. That's cheaper than a bag of chips or a soda or a bag of french fries. It's important to think in terms of price per serving rather than price per pound or price per unit. For example, I was talking with a woman once who thought cantaloupe was beyond her means. I pointed out that when it was on special for .33/lb it was only .33/serving. She said, "I've never thought of it that way before." I guess she had just thought "I can't pay \$1.50 for one cantaloupe!" The same applies to meat. When ribs are \$1.19/lb. and sirloin is \$2.27/lb., which should you buy? When you figure you need about a pound of ribs per serving and you can stretch sirloin into 4-5 servings per pound if you do a stir-fry, the answer is obvious.

Getting the Most out of Your Chicken

Here are some facts that might convince you to cut up your own chickens, if you don't already. This study was based on a 3.92 lb. chicken on special for .77/lb, or a total of \$3.02.

CHICKEN PART	YIELD PER CHICKEN	PRICE PER POUND SOLD SEPARATELY	COST IF BOUGHT SEPARATELY
boneless breast	.88/lb.	\$3.49	\$3.07
legs	1.25/lb	\$1.69	\$2.11
wings	.63/lb.	\$2.39	\$1.51
Total			\$6.69

As you can see, even if you only used the breast and threw the rest away you would come out even. However, you might say it's not worth your time to cut up a chicken. I will try to convince you otherwise. (Based on Stater's specials)

Cut-up chicken \$.91/lb

Whole chicken \$.77/lb.

\$.14/lb. x 3.5 lbs. per chicken = \$.49/chicken

It took me about 1 1/2 minutes to cut up one chicken, but I based the following calculations on 2 minutes to allow for beginners.

2 minutes x \$.49 = **\$14.70/hour**

You could go into business cutting up chickens and make almost \$30,000 a year! (This includes 2 weeks' vacation. You could earn even more if you speeded up.)

Periodically chicken parts will be on special at a good price. For example, breasts (with bone) were recently on sale for \$.99/lb. The following figures are based on a 5.83/lb package that cost \$5.77.

Number of breasts = 7. The meat itself amounts to about 3.83 lbs. This is enough for 2 sandwiches (from 1 breast), 6 boneless breasts, and 10 oz. of the little "tenders" that come off when you bone the breast (that go for \$5.99/lb. - enough for about 4 servings in a stir fry). That's 12 servings averaging \$.48/serving. Pretty good considering boneless breasts go for \$3.49/lb. Oh, you also have enough bones to make about a quart of broth which would cost about \$2.86 in a can. So, for \$5.77 you get what could otherwise cost about \$18. (See directions for cutting up & boning chicken at end.)

A Word About Seasonings

Seasoning some meat, noodles, tomato sauce, flour, cookie dough, etc. is not really very expensive if you consider that the average spice or herb is about .10/tsp. Salt is .004/tsp., baking soda .01/tsp. Baking powder is really steep at .04/tsp. Consider this the next time you are about to buy a package of seasoning mix at .79+++, the bulk of which is sugar, starch, & salt. If there were more than a teaspoon of actual spice, I'd be surprised.

Is It Worth It?

So, is all this penny pinching really worth it? What's a nickel here or a few cents there? Well, it does add up. Imagine that you make the following thrifty choices every day for a year and see how much the difference is. (I realize that this is not completely realistic, but you get the point.)

	Annual Savings Per Person	Annual Savings Per Family of 5		Annual Savings Per Person	Annual Savings Per Family of 5
oatmeal vs. Fruit Loops	\$77	\$385	Homemade potato bread vs. Orowheat		\$843 (based on 1 loaf per day)
plain oatmeal vs. flavored	\$106	\$530			
frozen grape juice vs. bottled	\$62	\$310	plain rice w/ butter vs. Rice-a-Roni	\$157	\$784
			home-made pea soup vs. canned	\$427	\$2135

Remember, to be provident means to look towards the future. A dime at a time doesn't seem like that big of a deal, but even a dime wasted every day amounts to **\$36.50** over the course of a year. A lot of people would be very happy to be handed \$36.50 in one lump sum. Actually, these days a penny saved is more than a penny earned when you consider income tax alone is at least 20 - 25%. In other words, to end up with \$36.50 you can spend, you would have to earn **\$45.60**. Consider this scenario: Making your own bread (if your family goes through a loaf a day) could save you up to **\$843/year**. To net that, you would have to gross **\$1053.75**, which would take you 42 hours of working at \$25/hour or 132 hours working at minimum wage to earn. This doesn't even take into consideration the cost of working such as clothes, gas, or child care!

SAMPLE MENUS
(Recipes for italicized items follow)

Monthly Cost Per Person (30 days)			
	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
Cheapest	\$26.10	\$48.60	\$21.60
Most Expensive	\$44.10	\$51.90	\$66.90
Overall Average	\$33.66	\$56.83	\$44.16
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Total Monthly Average for All Meals = \$134.65			

Breakfast

oatmeal	.15	2 eggs	.34	4 <i>waffles</i>	.40
milk	.22	2 <i>biscuits</i>	.16	<i>syrup</i>	.10
2 pieces <i>buttermilk/raisin toast</i>	.20	orange juice	.31	mixed fruit (allow	
1/2 grapefruit	.30	banana	.33	1 piece of whatever	
	.87		1.14	per person)	.50
				milk	.22
					1.22
 "McMuffin"	 .95	French toast from			
milk	.22	<i>buttermilk/</i>			
orange	.30	<i>raisin bread</i>	.34		
	1.47	milk	.22		
		cantaloupe			
		(in season)	.33		
			.89		

Compare: Annual difference between oatmeal breakfast (.87) vs. a breakfast of Lucky Charms, o.j. from the dairy case, store-bought bread, and milk (1.37) = **\$183/person**. The egg breakfast (\$1.14) vs. a frozen breakfast sandwich, o.j. & a banana (1.84) amounts to an annual difference of **\$255/person**.

Lunch

fruit	.50		
milk	.22		
carrot/celery sticks	.25		
pretzels	.17		
	1.14	+ egg salad sandwich (.48)	= 1.62
		+ tuna sandwich (.75)	= 1.89
		+ ham sandwich (.85)	= 1.99
		+ chicken sandwich (.59)	= 1.73
		(from roasted chicken)	

Compare: Annual difference between tuna salad lunch (.92) & "tuna kit", canned fruit cup, pudding cup, & chips from assortment box (2.49) = **\$591/person**. Annual difference between egg salad lunch & Big Mac Meal (5.19) = **\$1303/person**.

Dinner

<i>split pea soup</i>	.26	baked potato	.20	<i>potato/egg frittata</i>	.60
<i>cornbread</i>	.24	w/ broccoli	.35	mixed fruit	.50
milk	<u>.22</u>	butter	.08	wheat roll	<u>.08</u>
	.72	cheese	<u>.20</u>		1.18
			.83		
<i>Caribbean beans & rice</i>	.27	<i>pasta w/ cream sauce</i>	.50	<i>cheese pizza (2 pieces)</i>	.62
3 corn tortillas	.15	2 <i>breadsticks</i>	.08	tossed salad (lettuce & carrots)	.40
mixed fruit	.50	peas or green beans (frozen)	.30	apple juice	.25
baked custard	<u>.17</u>	3 <i>cookies</i>	<u>.15</u>	cookies (3)	<u>.15</u>
	1.09		1.33		1.42
<i>pasta w/ broccoli</i>	.85	<i>minestrone (+ 4 sm. meatballs)</i>	.45	<i>taco (w/ tortilla, lettuce, tomato)</i>	.70
2 <i>breadsticks</i>	.08	2 <i>breadsticks</i>	.32	<i>Caribbean beans & rice</i>	.27
milk	.22	grape juice	.40	mixed fruit	.50
<i>apple cake</i>	<u>.30</u>	pumpkin pie (Google Libby's recipe)	<u>.60</u>	milk	<u>.22</u>
	1.45		1.53		1.69
		(w/meatballs)	1.85		
<i>Caribbean beans & rice</i>	.27	<i>sweet & sour meatballs (4)</i>	1.30	<i>sirloin w/ onions, pepper, mushrooms & mozzarella on french roll</i>	1.15
chicken leg	.62	rice	.11	<i>coleslaw</i>	.40
<i>cooked cabbage</i>	.32	green beans	.30	milk	<u>.22</u>
3 corn tortillas	.15	milk	.22		1.77
milk	<u>.22</u>	<i>apple cake</i>	<u>.30</u>		
	1.58		2.23		
<i>scalloped potatoes & ham</i>	.82			<i>sautéed chicken strips</i>	.60
peas	.30			buttered noodles	.20
wheat roll	.08			mixed fruit	.50
<i>banana cake</i>	<u>.23</u>			green beans	.30
	1.43			<i>biscuit</i>	.08
				milk	.22
				<i>mother's lemon pie</i>	<u>.14</u>
					2.04

Compare: Annual difference between split pea dinner (.72) & canned clam chowder with salad from bag (2.12) = **\$511/person**. Annual difference between chicken w/ beans & rice dinner (1.58) & pre-cut boneless breast, flavored rice, vegetable in pouch, & bakery roll (3.14) = **\$569/person**.

RECIPES

These are my favorite recipes for various standard items. There are a few dishes that may be new. I'll vouch for all of them.

BREADS

Buttermilk Biscuits (.08/ea. cf. at .17/ea. canned)

2 cups flour	1 Tbsp. baking powder	1/2 tsp. salt
1/4 tsp. baking soda	1 Tbsp. sugar	1/3 cup shortening
1 cup buttermilk		

Mix together dry ingredients. Then cut in shortening. Add buttermilk all at once. Stir to moisten. Knead lightly 10 times. Roll or pat to 3/4" thick. Brush tops with melted butter. Bake at 450 about 10 minutes. Makes about one dozen.

Waffles (.10/square cf. at .32/square - frozen)

3 1/2 cups flour	4 tsp. baking powder	2 tsp. baking soda
1 tsp. salt	6 eggs	1 cube melted margarine
3 cups buttermilk		

Mix all dry ingredients. Beat eggs with margarine & buttermilk. Stir this into dry ingredients. Cook on hot waffle iron. Makes about 8 big waffles (32 square) Maybe more. For lighter waffles, separate eggs. Add yolks as indicated. Beat whites until stiff and fold into batter. These freeze well. Just toast some up for breakfast.

Buttermilk Pancakes (.08/4" cf. at .25/ea. frozen)

1 cup buttermilk	1 egg	2 Tbsp. butter or margarine - melted
3/4 cup flour	1/2 tsp. salt	1 tsp. baking soda

Mix together buttermilk, egg, & butter. Dissolve soda in about 1 tsp. water and stir into this mixture. Mix together flour & salt. Stir liquid stuff into this just until moistened. Let rest about 20 minutes. Cook on hot griddle. (Don't stir mixture in between for best results.)

Cornbread (1.88/batch - .24/generous serving)

1 cup flour	3/4 tsp. salt	1 tsp. baking soda
1 Tbsp. sugar	1 tsp. baking powder	1 cup yellow cornmeal
2 eggs - well-beaten	1 2/3 cup buttermilk	1/4 cup oil

Stir dry ingredients together thoroughly. Stir together eggs, milk & oil. Stir into dry ingredients. Bake in greased 9" square pan or medium skillet at 400 for 30-40 min. Serves 8.

French Bread French Rolls Bread Sticks Pizza Crust (.29/loaf if you buy yeast in bulk)

1 Tbsp. yeast dissolved in 1/4 cup warm water	1 tsp. sugar 1 1/2 cups warm water	1 3/4 tsp. salt 4 cups flour
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Add 1 1/2 cups warm water to dissolved yeast. Add sugar, salt & flour. Knead on floured board, adding only enough flour to keep from sticking, until smooth - about 5 minutes.

Place in lightly greased or oiled bowl, turning so greased side is up. Cover with dish towel or plastic wrap. Let rise in warm place until double & light, about 1 hour. Punch down & shape into one large loaf, 2 skinnier ones, or 8 rolls. If making loaves, slash top with sharp knife or razor blade making several diagonal slashes or one long slash. Place on ungreased baking sheet sprinkled with cornmeal. Let rise 20 or 30 minutes until light. Bake at 400 (preheated) 30-40 minutes or until nice & brown & hollow-sounding when tapped on bottom.

For pizza crust: use 1/2 batch for one. (It doesn't really have to rise, though I usually pour a little olive or regular oil in the bowl, turn the dough over to coat, and let it rise for awhile.) Roll out & fit into pizza pan or cookie sheet, making a little rim around the edge. Spread sauce, cheese, etc. I just heard that adding a couple of tablespoons of gluten flour makes it chewier and better. Haven't had a chance to try it myself first.

Potato Bread (.68/loaf)

1 medium potato	1 cup milk, scalded	2 Tbsp. sugar
2 tsp. salt	1 Tbsp. butter	1/2 cup warm water
1 Tbsp. yeast	6 cups flour (approx.)	

Cook peeled, diced potato in water to cover until tender. Drain, reserving 1/2 cup liquid. Mash with fork. Add milk, sugar, salt, reserved liquid & butter to hot potato. Dissolve yeast in warm water. When potato mixture has cooled to lukewarm, add dissolved yeast. Add enough flour to make a soft dough. Knead until smooth & elastic. Place in greased bowl. Turn dough so that greased side is up. Cover with plastic wrap or dish towel & let rise in warm place until doubled. (1 - 1 1/2 hrs.). Punch down & let rise until doubled again. (45. minutes) Shape into 2 loaves & place in greased bread pans. Cover & let rise until dough is to top of pan. Bake at 400 for 15 minutes. Reduce heat to 350 & bake for 30 minutes more or until done. If you like, substitute a cup of whole wheat flour for one cup regular flour. Also makes good buns for hamburgers and other sandwiches.

Buttermilk Raisin Bread 1.62/loaf)

1 1/2 cups buttermilk	1 Tbsp. yeast	1/2 c. margarine or butter
1/3 cup sugar	1 1/2 tsp. salt	1 tsp. baking soda
1 cup raisins	2 eggs	5 - 5 1/2 cups flour

Scald buttermilk in top part of double boiler over simmering water (or in microwave.) Sprinkle yeast on 1/4 cup warm water and let stand 5 minutes & then stir until dissolved. Pour hot buttermilk over butter, sugar, salt, baking soda, & raisins. Stir until butter melts. Cool to lukewarm, then stir in eggs, yeast mixture & 2 cups flour. Beat vigorously until blended. Gradually add enough flour to make a dough that clears bowl. Turn out on floured board & knead until elastic. Put in greased bowl & turn dough over to grease top. Cover with plastic wrap or dish towel. Let rise in warm place 1 1/2 hours, or until doubled in bulk. Punch down & shape into 2 loaves. Put in greased 9 x 5 x 3" pans. Let rise again 1 hour, or until doubled. Bake at 350 45 minutes, or until done.

This also makes a good cinnamon bread. Roll out dough and spread with melted butter and a mixture of sugar and cinnamon. Roll up, pinch edge into loaf and place seam side down in greased pan. Bake as described above.

SOUPS (I figure a decent serving is 1 1/2 cups. Half a can of soup isn't very much.)

Chasen's Chili (modified w/ more beans & less meat) (14.50/batch or abt. 1.00/serving cf. at 1.35 - canned)

3 cups pinto beans	2 large cans tomatoes	1 lb. green peppers, chopped
1 1/2 lbs. onions, chopped	1 1/2 Tbsp. oil	2 cloves garlic, pressed
1/2 cup parsley, chopped fine	1 1/2 lbs. ground beef	3/4 lb. ground pork
1/3 cup chili powder (or 1/2 this	2 Tbsp. salt	1 1/2 tsp. pepper
amt. for mild. Gebhardt's is best)	1 1/2 tsp. cumin seed	1 1/2 tsp. MSG (omit if you have an
		aversion to it, but use more salt)

Rinse beans. Place in pan with water 2" above beans. Soak overnight. Simmer, covered, in same water until tender. Add tomatoes & simmer 5 minutes. Saute green pepper in oil for 5 min., add onions, & cook until tender, stirring frequently. Add garlic & parsley. Saute meat. Drain & add to onion mixture w/ chili & cook for 10 minutes. Add beans & rest of seasonings. Simmer, covered, 1 hour. Remove cover & continue cooking 30 minutes.

Minestrone (.45/serving)

1/3 cup oil	1 clove garlic	1 Tbsp. fresh parsley, chopped
2 cups chopped onion	2 cups zucchini	2 cups cut green beans
1 cup macaroni, uncooked	1/4 tsp. pepper	1 cup celery, chopped
1 8 oz. can tomato sauce	1 1/2 cups beef bouillon*	1 cup chopped cabbage
2 tsp. salt	1/4 tsp. ea. oregano & basil	4 cups sliced carrots
8 cups water		1 large can Small Red Beans (or
		cook your own from dry!)

Saute onion, celery, parsley, & garlic in oil. Add everything but zucchini, macaroni, & Red Beans. Simmer 45 minutes. Add undrained beans, zucchini & macaroni & cook 15 minutes or until macaroni is done. Makes about 2 gallons. If you want to freeze it, add macaroni & zucchini after it's thawed. *I like "Better Than Bouillon" base. Making your own broth from bones is NOT cost effective these days.

Andersen's Split Pea Soup (1.59/batch or .26/serving. Equivalent in cans = 8.59. This is not a typo.)

1 lb. (2 cups) green split peas	2 quarts water	1 onion, chopped
1 large carrot, peeled & chopped	1 stalk celery, chopped	1/4 tsp. thyme
bay leaf	pinch of cayenne	salt & pepper to taste (at least 1 tsp.
		salt)

Combine all ingredients & boil 20 minutes, partly covered. Reduce heat, cover, & simmer 45 minutes or until peas are tender. Discard bay leaf & strain soup through sieve or put through blender. Adjust seasonings to taste & reheat to serve.

Clam (or Corn) Chowder (1.08/serving using 2 cans of clams cf. at 1.62/serving - canned)

1/2 lb. bacon, diced	1 large onion, chopped	1-2 cans chopped clams
4-5 medium potatoes, peeled &	1 quart (approx.) milk	1 bay leaf
cubed		

Cook bacon until done. Drain most of fat. Add onion & saute slowly until onion is tender. Add potatoes, juice drained from clams & salt & pepper. Add water to almost cover potatoes. Add bay leaf, cover & cook until potatoes are barely tender (about 10 minutes.) Add milk in desired amount. If you like it thicker, shake about 2 Tbsp. flour with a cup of the cold milk until dissolved & stir into rest of hot mixture. Cook over medium heat, stirring until thickened. Remove bay leaf, stir in clams & heat through.

For corn chowder, omit clams & bay leaf, & use bulk sausage (Jimmy Dean is best) instead of bacon & 1-2 packages of frozen corn instead of potatoes.

MAIN DISHES OR SIDE DISHES

Roast chicken (.50/serving when chicken is on special)

Rinse chicken and pat dry. If roasting whole chicken, sprinkle outside and cavity liberally with salt and let sit (refrigerated) all day or overnight. Chop an onion, a couple of garlic cloves, a stalk of celery, and a carrot and stuff in cavity. Roast breast side down in at 400 about 2 hours or until done. For cut up parts, lift up skin and salt and pepper—not more salt than you'd want to eat. Place a thick onion slice under the skin. Refrigerate as described above. Bake in shallow pan skin side up at 350 about 50 minutes or until juices run clear (less for breast meat). The pre-salting is sort of like brining but easier and makes the chicken very moist and tasty.

Potato-Egg Frittata (.60/serving)

4 large potatoes	4-6 eggs	1/2 cup milk
1/4 c. chopped green onions	salt & pepper to taste	optional: diced ham, cooked bacon, chopped mushroom, chopped spinach
1/4 c. chopped parsley		

Cook potatoes in salted boiling water just until done. (Or use leftover baked potatoes.) Peel & dice. Saute potatoes in butter or a mixture of oil/butter until nicely browned. Remove from pan. Beat eggs with milk, salt & pepper. Stir in green onions & parsley & any of the optional ingredients you wish. Melt a couple of tablespoons of butter to cover bottom of frying pan. Return potatoes to pan & pour egg mixture over this. Cover pan & cook over very lowest heat until set - top will still be moist. Put under broiler for just a minute to set the top. Serve with catsup or hot tomato sauce seasoned with a little worcestershire, dry basil, green onions, & parsley.

Caribbean Beans & Rice (2.40/batch or .27/serving)

1 1/2 tsp. olive oil	1 large pimento or roasted red pepper, cut into short, thin strips	1/2 green bell pepper, cut into short, thin strips
2 garlic cloves, finely chopped	4 cups cooked black beans	2 Tbsp. white vinegar
5-10 dashes Tabasco	3 cups cooked white rice, preferably cooked in chicken broth	3 Tbsp. cilantro, finely chopped (optional)
salt & pepper to taste		

Heat oil over medium high heat until hot but not smoking. Add pimento, green pepper & garlic & saute for 2 minutes. Add beans, vinegar, & Tabasco. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to low, cover & simmer for 5 minutes. Stir in rice & cilantro. Taste & adjust seasonings. (You may want to add more olive oil if it is too dry for your taste.) Yield: 9 3/4 cup servings.

Scalloped Potatoes (2.21/7 cups cf. at 4.74/package equivalent)

6 medium potatoes	1 medium onion	3 Tbsp. butter
salt & pepper	flour	milk

Peel & slice potatoes & onions very thin. Then put a layer of potatoes in medium baking dish, add a few slices of onion, dot with little pieces of butter, a generous sprinkling of salt, pepper & flour. Repeat layers until dish is almost filled. Bake at 350 without milk for about 15 minutes. Meanwhile, heat enough milk to half fill the casserole & pour over partially cooked potatoes. Bake about 50 minutes longer or until potatoes are easily pierced with a fork. For a main dish, add small strips of ham with potatoes & top with generous layer of grated cheddar cheese about 15 minutes before potatoes are done.

Oven French Fries (.20/serving)

For each serving, peel 1 potato & cut into rounds, half moons, strips, or thin wedges. Cover with ice water, then drain & pat dry. Toss with enough salad oil to moisten. Preheat oven & baking sheet to 425. When oven is hot, remove baking sheet & dump potatoes on it. Spread evenly into 1 layer if possible. Bake 15-30 minutes depending on shape. When they're about half done, turn over. Scoop onto paper towels & salt to taste.

Cooked Cabbage & Carrots (.32/serving)

1 head cabbage - coarsely chopped or shredded 4 carrots, peeled & grated salt & pepper to taste 3 - 4 Tbsp. margarine or butter

Put all ingredients in large pan. Cover & cook over low heat. Stir occasionally. Add more butter if desired. Continue to cook 10 - 15 minutes until cabbage is tender. (The vegetables usually give off enough moisture that you don't need to add water. However, if it starts to stick, add a little.) Serves about 8.

Coleslaw

cabbage, shredded as finely as possible carrots, shredded
Basic Oil & Vinegar Dressing green onions tops, chopped
Miracle Whip or mayonnaise

Mix together as much cabbage, carrots, & green onions as you wish. Add enough oil & vinegar dress to moisten lightly. Then add enough Miracle Whip or mayo to hold it together to your taste. Salt to taste. Improves with age (within reason).

Taco Meat (.50 - 60/serving)

1 1/2 lb. ground beef 1 onion, chopped 1/2 tsp. salt or to taste
1 can Mexican style stewed tomatoes 1/2 tsp. ground cumin 1/2 tsp. chili powder
1/4 tsp. oregano 1 clove garlic, minced 1/4 tsp. black pepper

Brown meat with onion & garlic. Drain fat. Add rest of ingredients. Simmer at least 20 minutes. Add water if necessary to keep from sticking. Adjust seasonings to your liking. Enough for 8 - 10 tacos.

Pizza (3.10/pizza - cheese)

1/2 recipe of *French Bread* dough 1 small can tomato sauce 1 clove garlic, pressed
approx. 8 oz. mozzarella cheese, grated dry oregano dry basil
parmesan cheese Optional: sliced pepperoni, onions, mushrooms, green peppers, etc.

Sprinkle pizza pan or standard cookie sheet with a little cornmeal. Roll out & stretch bread dough to fit pan, building up a little rim by pushing dough against the edges. Stir garlic into tomato sauce. Spread sauce over dough. Sprinkle with parmesan, oregano & basil to taste (about 1/2 tsp. each, at least). Spread grated cheese over top. Top with any other ingredients desired. Bake at 425 on lowest shelf until bottom of crust is light brown. (Lift up with spatula to check.) 15-20 min.

Sauted Chicken Strips (.60/serving - see chicken study)

2 chicken breasts, boned, skinned & sliced diagonally (or equivalent in the little strips that come off when you bone a chicken breast - about 1 lb.) If buying boneless breast, use 4 as those are already halved. 1/2 tsp. salt 1/4 cup cornstarch
1/2 tsp. pepper 1/4 cup oil
1 egg white

Toss chicken with salt & pepper. Let stand 20 minutes. Sprinkle with cornstarch & oil. Mix with spoon to coat. Let stand 20 minutes. Fold in egg white. Let stand 30 minutes. Sauté chicken in melted butter or margarine until opaque & golden brown (about 7 minutes total). Mix cooked chicken with 1/2 cup minced parsley & 1/4 cup minced chives for color & flavor if desired. Also very good served with *Sweet & Sour Sauce*.

Sirloin Steak Sandwich (1.10/ea.) - make when sirloin is on special for 1.98/lb.

1 lb. sirloin steak, cut in very thin strips (it's easy to cut when partially frozen)	1 small onion, sliced 1 - 2 green bell peppers, sliced	1/4 lb. or more sliced mushrooms mozzarella
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Sauté steak in a little melted margarine, butter, or oil until done - about 5 minutes. Remove from pan. Add vegetables & sauté in a little more butter until done to your liking. Add cooked meat & let simmer together for a minute or two. Add salt & pepper to taste. Serve on french roll with grated or sliced mozzarella. Serves at least 5.

Meatballs (.08/ ea. tiny ones .24/ea. large. These are very versatile & can be served with any type of sauce, e.g., barbecue, sweet & sour, Italian, even just some ketchup plain or mixed with a little Worcestershire. You can thicken some of the broth, add mushrooms & sour cream, chives, etc.)

1 lb. lean (22%) ground beef 1/4 tsp. paprika 1/4 cup onion, finely chopped 3/4 tsp. salt	1/2 cup soft bread crumbs (whir about 1 slice in blender) 1 tsp. Worcestershire sauce	good grind of pepper 1 egg 1-2 Tbsp. parsley, minced About 1 quart of vegetable or beef broth (Use a couple of bouillon cubes & add onion, carrot, celery for flavor)
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Beat egg slightly. Add other ingredients except meat and broth and mix thoroughly. Add meat & mix well, but lightly. Shape into meatballs 1 - 2" in diameter. Drop into boiling broth in batches. Do not over crowd. Lower heat & simmer covered 5-6 minutes for small, 10-12 for large or until done. (Cut one open to check.) Remove with slotted spoon & drain on cookie sheet. They look sort of anemic at first, but darken as they cool. When they're in sauce you can't tell anyway. Beats frying.

If you have a meatloaf recipe you like, you can use that too—it's just a matter of shape.

Pasta With Broccoli (.64/serving side dish - .85/main entree)

1/2 lb. fresh broccoli 2-3 cloves garlic, minced salt & pepper to taste	1/2 lb. spaghetti or linguine 1/2 tsp. dried red pepper freshly grated Parmesan	5 Tbsp. olive oil 2 cups water (approx.)
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Wash broccoli & peel stalks. Cut off buds leaving small part of stem. Slice stalks into 2" lengths. Break pasta into 2-3" lengths. Heat oil in 9-10" skillet & briefly cook garlic, but do not brown. Add red pepper, pasta, & broccoli. Add 1 cup water & salt to taste. When it boils, stir the ingredients well. Cover & continue cooking, stirring frequently so that strands do not stick together & add water 1/4 cup at a time as it is absorbed. When ready, the pasta will be cooked, the broccoli crisp-tender, & the sauce that clings to the pasta will be minimal. Total cooking time 10-15 minutes. Do not overcook. Serve immediately with salt, pepper, & Parmesan. Yield: 2 -3 entrees or 4 side dishes.

Pasta With Cream Sauce (1.80/batch or .45/serving)

1/2 lb. spaghetti or fettuccine, cooked al dente	Make white sauce with: 2 Tbsp butter or margarine 2 Tbsp. flour 2 cups milk salt & pepper to taste	Crumb topping: Sauté 1 clove minced garlic in 3-4 Tbsp. melted butter. Stir in 2 cups fresh bread crumbs, 1 Tbsp. minced fresh parsley, 1/2 tsp dry basil, & 1 tsp. oregano. Stir all together until lightly toasted.
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Combine hot cream sauce with pasta. Place on individual plates & top with crumbs. Serves 3-4. You could add some diced cooked chicken, clams, or shrimp if you like.

DESSERTS For health & budget reasons, we probably shouldn't eat dessert every night. However, an occasional treat is good for our mental health. Many desserts are really quite low cost. Pumpkin pie, for example, comes to about .23/serving & is full of vitamin A. It would be a fitting conclusion to a light supper of soup & bread. (I like the Libby recipe on the pumpkin can myself. You can Google and get it.)

Mother's Lemon Pie (.88/pie or .14/serving if you get lemons free from someone. About .21 if you have to buy a lemon.)

1 large lemon	1 egg	1 cup sugar
1 1/2 tsp. melted butter	1/4 cup water	1 1/2 tsp. flour
1 unbaked 9" pie shell		

Grate peel from lemon & squeeze juice. Combine sugar & flour. Beat egg in mixing bowl & add sugar mixture. Stir in lemon peel, juice, water & butter. Pour filling into crust. It will be a thin, liquid layer. Bake at 450 about 15 minutes until crust is brown & filling bubbles & turns golden. Cool & chill. Cut in small wedges. Also makes delicious shallow tarts (.03/ea.)

Fresh Apple Cake (3.57/cake or .30 - .45/serving)

4 cups apples, peeled & finely chopped	1 cup granulated sugar	1/4 cup brown sugar
1/2 cup oil	2 eggs	1 tsp. vanilla
2 cups flour	2 tsp. baking soda	1 tsp. cinnamon
		1 tsp. salt

Beat together sugars, oil, & eggs. Mix together dry ingredients & stir into egg mixture. Fold in apples. Bake in greased 9 x 12 pan at 350 until done (about 30 minutes.) Good served with lemon sauce or lemon glaze.

Banana Cake (.23 - .38/serving)

1/2 cup shortening	1 1/2 cup sugar	3 eggs, separated
1 cup (abt. 3) bananas, mashed or blended	1/2 cup buttermilk	2 cup flour
1 tsp. baking soda	1 tsp. baking powder	1 tsp. salt
		1 cup walnuts (optional)

Preheat oven to 350. Grease & flour two 9" round pans or one 9" x 12" pan. Cream shortening, and then add sugar & beat well. Beat in yolks, then add bananas & buttermilk & mix well. Stir dry ingredients together & add to banana mixture. Beat whites until stiff. Fold into other mixture. Fill pans & bake 30-35 minutes until toothpick inserted in center comes out clean (longer for 9" x 12"). Serves about 6 per layer. Good with just powdered sugar sprinkled on, or frost with vanilla or cream cheese frosting.

Oatmeal/Chocolate Chip or Raisin Cookies (.05/ea.)

1/2 cup butter or margarine	1 cup sugar	2 eggs
1 tsp. vanilla	1 1/2 cups oatmeal, uncooked	1 1/2 cups flour
1/2 tsp. baking soda	1/2 tsp. salt	1/4 cup milk
1 cup nuts, (optional)	1 cup chocolate chips	1/2 tsp. baking powder

Cream butter & sugar. Add eggs & vanilla & beat until light & fluffy. Stir in oatmeal. Stir together flour, soda, baking powder, & salt. Add to other mixture & stir until blended. Stir in chocolate chips. Drop by teaspoon onto lightly greased cookie sheets. Bake at 350 about 12 minutes. Makes about 5 dozen.

For raisin cookies, substitute 1 cup raisins for chocolate chips & add 1 tsp. cinnamon & 1/2 tsp. ground allspice to flour mixture.

MISCELLANEOUS

Sweet & Sour Sauce (2.14/batch - about 1 1/2 cups.)

1/2 cup brown sugar	1 Tbsp. cornstarch	1/2 cup red wine vinegar
1/3 cup pineapple juice	1/4 cup finely chopped green pepper	1 Tbsp. catsup
1 Tbsp. soy sauce	1 clove minced garlic	1 tsp. fresh ginger, finely minced (or 1/2 tsp. powdered ginger if desperate)

In small saucepan, combine brown sugar & cornstarch. Add remaining ingredients. Cook, stirring, until thickened & bubbly - just a few minutes.

Pancake & Waffle Syrup (.99/pt)

Combine 1 part light brown sugar to 1/2 part water. Bring to a boil & simmer a minute or two. Add a few drops of maple flavoring.

Basic Oil & Vinegar Dressing (1.15/cup)

2/3 cup salad oil	1/3 cup cider or red wine vinegar	1 tsp. sugar
freshly ground pepper	2 Tbsp. catsup	1 tsp. mustard
1 tsp. salt	1 tsp. garlic salt	dash Worcestershire sauce
1/2 tsp. salad herbs or oregano (optional)		

Combine everything in a jar or bottle with tight lid & shake vigorously before using. Seasonings are easily varied to suit your taste.

Chicken Broth/Stock (.45/quart cf. at 1.52 for canned)

Put as many odd chicken parts (backs, wings, bones from breasts, etc.) as you have in a pan & roast at 350-400 until somewhat brown. (Throw in a chopped onion while you're at it.) Put in pot & cover with water. Add a carrot or two, some celery, some more onion & a few pepper corns. Bring to a boil, reduce heat, & simmer at least an hour. Or, put it in a crock pot & cook all day or night. Drain broth through colander. Chill. Remove fat that is solidified at the top. Add salt to taste. You can also make broth per your cookbook & then pour it over a pan of browned chicken parts & let it simmer until reduced by 1/3 or so. This makes it very rich. It will be brown rather than yellow or clear.

If you have stripped a roasted chicken, brown the carcass in the oven if you have time, & then make broth as described above. I usually just stuff it in a crock pot after dinner & leave it overnight.

It is easier to cut up a chicken when it is still partially frozen.

The Butcher

CUTTING UP A CHICKEN

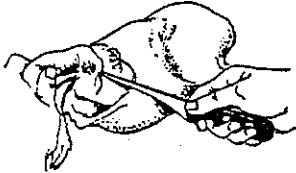
"I didn't come in here for a lecture, Merle," she said, "All I want is two legs and one breast." I sold them to her, and apologized for preaching.

I guess it has become something of a compulsion whenever a customer tries to waste their money on expensive chicken parts, to lecture a little on the economic advantage of cutting up your own chicken. Two legs and one breast is the better part of a bird and most often you will save money if you buy the whole bird and cut it up yourself.

Even if you threw the rest away, you'd save money! There I go again! Forgive me!

It's possible that many of you don't do it because you've never done it and don't know how. Let me show you, it's easy. And you really can save money!

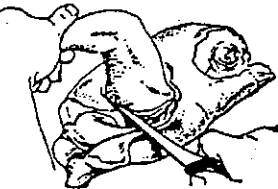
Buy a fryer, better yet keep your eyes open for a sale and when the price is right, buy several. Put one on the cutting board and just look at it for awhile. Study it. Touch it. Feels gickey, doesn't it? That's all right, get used to it. Remember you are saving money. Try to figure out where the component parts seem to be attached. O.K. Ready now — cut it up!



1 Turn the chicken so that it is lying on its side with the wings on the left. Take your boning knife firmly in your right hand and the chicken's wing in your left hand. Move the wing up and down a time or two to find the target. Now place the tip of the knife on what looks like the joint and disjoint. If you hit something hard, you missed — "dis isn't da joint." Excuse me for that. But don't panic. Just wiggle the knife blade around a little, there's a joint in there somewhere and it's worth your effort to find it.

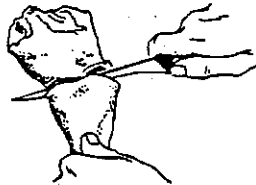


2 When you have successfully disengaged the wing, turn the bird so the leg is on the left. Lift the leg with your left hand so that the skin on the forward side is stretched tight. Lift it up and down a couple of times to get the feel of it. Notice, as you are lifting, the spot on the back where the thing seems to be attached; that's your next target. Make a little cut with the tip of your knife to mark the spot.



3 Holding the leg out from the chicken, cut through the tight skin and on to the joint, first on one side of the leg and then the other. If you marked the target right the leg should now come off, if it doesn't just help it along with the blade of the knife — it will

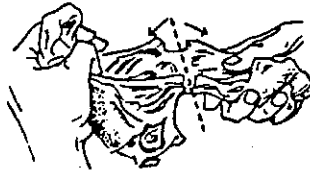
Now that wasn't so bad was it? You're doing fine. If you ran into a tough joint or missed a target don't worry about it; just turn the bird over and try it again, first the wing and then the leg.



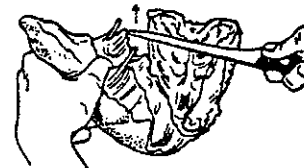
4 If you want the leg and thigh separated to that now before we proceed with the rest of the bird. Lay the leg on the cutting board — skin side down. Hold the leg with the left hand and with the right move the thigh back and forth to find the joint. Then slip the knife between the joint — there is a space, you'll find it. While you're at it, you may as well remove the "tips" of the wings. There's not enough meat on them to mess with so cut them off —BUT— don't throw them away.



Back to the Bird! 5 Turn what's left so that it's lying on its back with the breast in your left hand. Hold it steady with your left hand and cut through the skin at the rear to the center of the back. 6 Put your knife down and with your right hand bend the back until it breaks in half. Cut off the bottom half.



7 Hold the breast in your left hand with the broad end on the cutting board and the pointed end pointing up. Notice the white cartilage where the wing was removed? Just above that cartilage there is an open space. Insert the knife blade through that opening and out the corresponding opening on the other side.



8 Now look on the inside of the bird. From where your knife blade is — up — there is a row of little white dots of cartilage where the ribs are connected to the breast. Lift the knife up cutting through each of the little dots. It's a little like dot drawings you did when you were a kid, only the dots aren't numbered. Again put down your knife and with your right hand bend back the back until it separates from the breast.



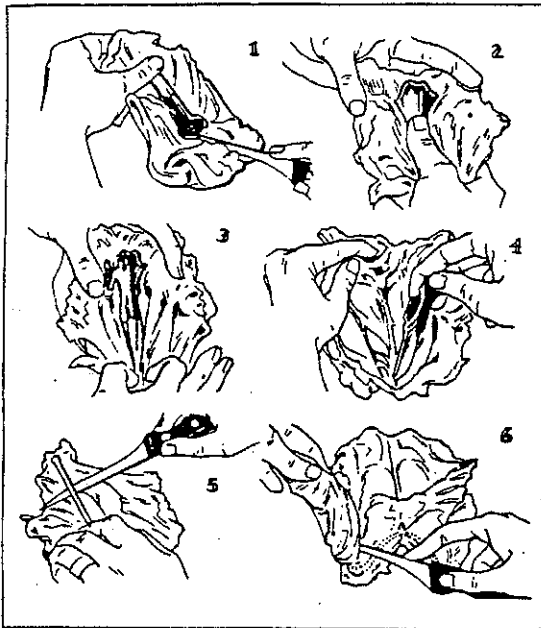
Now reach around behind you and give yourself a well deserved pat on the back. YOU HAVE CUT UP A CHICKEN!

The Butcher

BONING THE BREAST

"What about the breast?" "You can't leave the breast all in one piece like that." "You didn't show what to do with the breast." "What do you do with the breast?"

The other day, on "The Butcher" I was promoting with all my arguments, the many money saving advantages of buying chickens whole and cutting them up yourself. Evidently the idea caught on and did I "catch it!" I got cards, I got letters. I got quizzical looks and questions from customers over the meat counter. It was brought many times to my attention that, while following the instructions made an easy task of taking the bird apart, we didn't talk of the best part — the breast part.



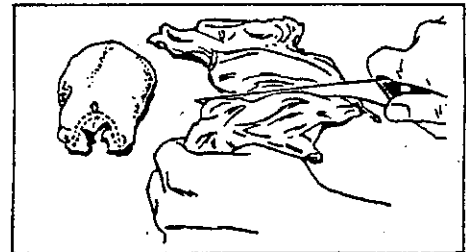
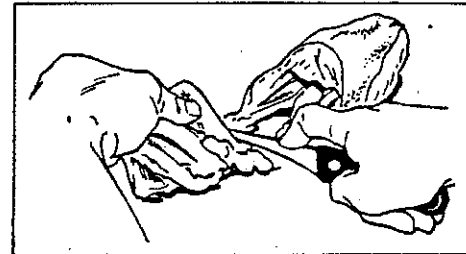
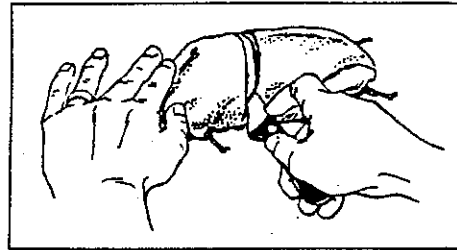
"What do you do with the breast part?" the simplest way to take the breast apart is to 1) hold it with the pointed end up and make a cut with just the tip of your knife through the little piece of cartilage at the broad end of the "Keel" (breast) bone. 2) Now pick the breast up and push from underneath and pop the Keel bone loose. 3) Run your thumb and forefinger along either side of the Keel bone to loosen it from the meat and then 4) pull it out.

At this point you can divide the breast into two serving size portions by simply cutting along the line where the Keel bone was removed. You'll have to push a bit harder at the broad end of the breast to cut through the small "wishbone" which is left in the meat.

If you occasionally have a gourmet or two galloping around your house, and you want to invite them in for one of those "gourmet goodies" calling for boneless chicken breasts, the procedure is a little different from step 4 on. To bone the breast, do not split it after you have the Keel bone removed. Rather put it on the cutting board with the

pointed end pointing away from you. 5) Run the blade of your knife under one of the two parallel bones that extend toward the point of the breast and loosen it. 6) Use that bone as a handle and with the point of your knife, trim the meat away from the rib bones on one side of the breast. That done, do the same on the other side. Remove the little wishbone from the broad end of the breast and Presto! — boneless chicken breasts — to do with any one of dozens of things that one can do with boneless chicken breasts.

If the "little ones" around your table outnumber the "gourmets" you may want to cut the breasts so that the wishbone is left in tact for the "kids" to wish on. That used to be an important part of Sunday Dinner at Grandma's house when I was growing up.



To save the wishbone, put the whole breast on the cutting board skin side up and find the point of the breast bone. Cut down next to the breast bone as far as you can, then turn the blade of your knife and follow the bone down to the joint where the wing came off. Cut through the joints on either side and lift off the meaty wishbone piece. The rest of the breast can be divided into two pieces by removing the Keel bone just as in boning the breast. Then cut along the mark where the Keel bone came out.

merle ellis





United States
Department of
Agriculture

Center for Nutrition
Policy and Promotion

3101 Park Center Drive
Alexandria, VA 22302

**Official USDA Food Plans: Cost of Food at Home at Four Levels,
U.S. Average, April 2009¹**

Age-gender groups	Weekly cost ²				Monthly cost ²			
	Thrifty plan	Low-cost plan	Moderate-cost plan	Liberal plan	Thrifty plan	Low-cost plan	Moderate-cost plan	Liberal plan
Individuals³								
Child:								
1 year	20.10	26.60	30.50	36.70	87.30	115.20	132.10	158.90
2-3 years	21.70	27.20	32.90	40.00	94.10	117.70	142.70	173.30
4-5 years	22.40	28.40	35.10	42.70	97.20	123.10	152.10	184.90
6-8 years	28.70	38.80	47.70	56.10	124.20	168.00	206.90	243.00
9-11 years	32.90	43.00	55.30	64.80	142.50	186.40	239.80	280.70
Male:								
12-13 years	35.10	49.30	61.30	72.10	152.00	213.60	265.40	312.60
14-18 years	36.30	50.90	63.60	72.90	157.30	220.40	275.70	315.70
19-50 years	38.90	50.10	62.80	76.90	168.60	217.20	272.20	333.10
51-70 years	35.60	47.50	58.30	70.50	154.30	205.70	252.70	305.30
71+ years	35.80	46.90	58.40	71.70	155.10	203.40	252.90	310.70
Female:								
12-13 years	35.20	42.80	51.40	62.40	152.60	185.50	222.50	270.50
14-18 years	34.80	43.00	52.00	63.80	150.60	186.40	225.30	276.50
19-50 years	34.60	43.50	53.70	68.70	149.80	188.50	232.60	297.70
51-70 years	34.30	42.50	52.80	62.70	148.50	184.00	228.70	271.90
71+ years	33.60	42.10	52.30	63.00	145.70	182.30	226.80	272.80
Families								
Family of 2:⁴								
19-50 years	80.90	103.00	128.10	160.10	350.30	446.30	555.20	693.80
51-70 years	76.90	98.90	122.20	146.50	333.10	428.70	529.60	634.90
Family of 4:								
Couple, 19-50 years and children—								
2-3 and 4-5 years	117.60	149.20	184.50	228.20	509.70	646.50	799.60	988.90
6-8 and 9-11 years	135.10	175.40	219.60	266.40	585.20	760.10	951.40	1154.40

¹The Food Plans represent a nutritious diet at four different cost levels. The nutritional bases of the Food Plans are the 1997-2005 Dietary Reference Intakes, 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, and 2005 MyPyramid food intake recommendations. In addition to cost, differences among plans are in specific foods and quantities of foods. Another basis of the Food Plans is that all meals and snacks are prepared at home. For specific foods and quantities of foods in the Food Plans, see *Thrifty Food Plan, 2006* (2007) and *The Low-Cost, Moderate-Cost, and Liberal Food Plans, 2007* (2007). All four Food Plans are based on 2001-02 data and updated to current dollars by using the Consumer Price Index for specific food items.

²All costs are rounded to nearest 10 cents.

³The costs given are for individuals in 4-person families. For individuals in other size families, the following adjustments are suggested: 1-person—add 20 percent; 2-person—add 10 percent; 3-person—add 5 percent; 4-person—no adjustment; 5- or 6-person—subtract 5 percent; 7- (or more) person—subtract 10 percent. To calculate overall household food costs, (1) adjust food costs for each person in household and then (2) sum these adjusted food costs.

⁴Ten percent added for family size adjustment.

This recipe really has nothing to do with the class, but the last time I did it, my niece was there and was talking about how they had gotten into making pizza every Friday night and mentioned this recipe. Everyone said, "Please send it," so I've attached it.

Thai Chicken Pizza

Peanut Sauce:

1/4 c. creamy peanut butter
2 T. Hoisin sauce (I did not include this when we made it because I haven't been able to find it)
1 clove garlic, minced
1/2 tsp. crushed red pepper flakes
1 T. granulated sugar
2 T. brown sugar
2 T. water
2 tsp. sesame oil (or canola oil)
2 T. soy sauce
1 1/2 tsp. minced onion
1 tsp. minced ginger-root

Mix above ingredients in microwave safe bowl. Pour this mixture into blender and blend for 15 seconds or until mostly smooth. Pour back into bowl and microwave for 1 minute. The peanut sauce should be darker now. At this point, you can add more sesame oil to achieve desired consistency.

Toppings:

1 cup cooked, chopped chicken
1 1/2 c. grated mozzarella
1-2 green onions, sliced (you could also try using thinly sliced red onion instead)
1/4 c. grated carrot
2 tsp. minced cilantro
1 T. chopped peanuts

Spread peanut sauce onto prepared pizza crust. Sprinkle 1 c. mozzarella, onion, chicken, carrots, cilantro, nut, and then the rest of the mozzarella. Bake pizza for 10-15 minutes at 425 degrees, or until edges of crust turn golden brown.

Here's the pizza crust recipe I use (thanks to Mike's mom) just in case you don't have one you like:

Pizza Crust

1 1/2 c. warm water
1 pkg. yeast (2 1/4 tsp.)
2 tsp. salt
3 T. Oil
3 1/2 - 4 C. flour, enough to make a stiff dough
2 Tbsp. gluten flour – (optional, but reportedly makes the dough chewier, like "real" pizza dough. You can buy it from bulk bins, e.g. at Henry's)

Dissolve yeast in water. Add other ingredients and knead for 8 minutes. I actually don't let the dough rise at all, so pizza night is actually pretty time friendly. I just plop the dough on a cookie sheet on which I've drizzled olive oil and sprinkled corn meal and use my hands to roll it out. Then put your toppings on and bake it up.