Be Supersmart at the Supermart

Want an extra $150 a year for your food allowance? You can get it merely with a little extra savvy at the supermarket.

Figures from the U.S. Department of Commerce indicate the typical American family spent $1,500 on groceries last year. Now, researchers for a leading university report this grocery bill can be cut as much as 10 per cent with smart shopping practices.

How? Here are some tips from supermarket home economists. Smart shopping starts at home. Sit down with your newspaper and a pad and pencil and read the supermarket ads. Start building a grocery list from the specials---you'll probably find meal plans shaping up for the week.

Home economists, who are members of the National Association of Food Chains Consumer Advisory Committee, suggest you start your reading with the specials on meat --- the focal point of most meals.

If you run across a cut you're not familiar with, see if the ad includes hints on how to cook it. Or check a cookbook. You may discover a new dish that will become a family favorite.

When a big cut is offered, consider how it can be turned into meals for two or more days. This is real thrift---and you'll save time by cooking only once for two meals.

Here's another tip from the supermarket home economists: When these cuts are on special, cook two different meats together---beef with pork shoulder or fresh picnic ham; pork with veal shoulder or rump veal with lamb shoulder.

Each meat flavors the other, and again you'll be cooking just once for two meals. You can serve part of the mixture at one meal and part at another, or serve one meat one day, saving the other for later.

Knowing how much meat is needed per serving is another way to save. A pound of boneless meat, such as ground beef or boned or rolled roast, is usually good for four servings. With the bone in meat like sirloin steak, figure on two servings per pound. But be very generous with boney choices such as pork spareribs or breast of lamb and plan on only one serving per pound.

Buy only as much food as you need. If yours is a two-member family, buy small quantities even though the "large economy size" may be cheaper. There's no saving in buying the large size and then throwing part of it away.

See how you can get the most out of what you buy. If you buy the whole chickens, don't discard the giblets, neck and back because no one will eat them. The broth they're cooked in can be used for soup.

When buying fruits and vegetables, keep their use in mind. Tomatoes for a fancy salad for company should be firm attractive and well-colored---but if it's a casserole you plan, the family will get just as many vitamins from the less attractive but cheaper ones.

Compare prices on canned, frozen, and fresh vegetables. This is the place to keep your shopping list flexible. Fresh green beans may be in season and reasonably priced, but asparagus---which is what your taste buds are set for---may be between seasons and cheaper in frozen or canned form than in fresh.

Don't hide behind your list when you're guiding your shopping cart through the supermarket. Keep an eye out for unadvertised specials that can add to your savings.

Just remember that low priced goods are bargains only if you need them. Ask yourself, "Do I really need this? Would I probably buy it or a similar product regardless of the special price?"

There are no savings in a cupboard full of never-used "bargains." They'll be collecting dust, not interest.

More from Eugene

Hey fella—you're supposed to watch the hands!