

FOOD

Spring shopping hints

by Monine Strode-Stebbins

Have you succumbed to that bright bunch of sunshine yet? I always know when spring is here, the daffodils are offered in the produce department—and they do seem so cheerful and bright. Especially if the weather has been rainy or dark, they talk their way into my grocery cart. It's not quite as tempting this year, because my new husband has lots of delightful daffodils in the yard, but they still call to me. This brings up one of the general principles about the cost of food. Not everything you buy at the grocery store is food.

A couple of years ago, I was standing in line at the grocery store behind a woman who was complaining about the cost of food. She was loudly talking about how small the sack was that held \$20 worth of food. As I looked the things over in her cart, I noticed a pair of panty hose, some light bulbs, some wine and cat food—all part of her food budget.

More than 20 percent of the money spent in grocery stores isn't spent on food at all. It goes toward soap, paper goods, magazines, health and beauty aids, and household cleaning supplies. Even such items as pet food, alcoholic beverages and soft drinks can't really be considered food.

One-stop shopping is very convenient and sometimes less expensive than going from store to store. It's very helpful to me to pick up that pair of panty hose I need when I'm shopping for food items. There's even a brand or two that I find is cheaper at the grocery store than anywhere else, but I try to remember that the whole bill isn't just for food.

If you're shopping at one of the stores equipped with electronic scanners, your grocery tape is very complete, giving you the information you need to separate out your non-food items. It is interesting to add them up and see how much you're actually spending on non-foods. If the cost is very high you might look for ways to cut down on the use of some of these items.

One thing we do at my house is use cloth napkins. I'm a needlepoint addict and made napkin rings with our initials on them so we can use the napkins more than once unless it's a really messy meal. My new family has had some adjusting to do to this system. My own kids just assumed that was the way everyone did it or at least that they had to accommodate their Mom who is a little strange about wasting paper.

Another thing you can do is check the unit pricing tag on the shelves. Paper products can be especially difficult to decide which is a bargain. Some stores will give a discount on case lots of such items, too, so if you have storage space it might be worthwhile to shop in quantity.

Remember, it may be handy to buy your baking pans, mops, shampoo, and even plants along with your food but it can't really be considered as the cost of feeding your family.

Here is a delightful oatmeal cookie recipe that is quick to fix.

PRUNE OR DATE CHEWS

- ¼ cup butter or margarine melted
- ¼ cup whole pitted dates or prunes
- 1 egg
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 ¼ cups uncooked oatmeal
- ½ cup all-purpose flour
- ½ cup firmly packed brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon soda
- ½ teaspoon salt

Place butter, prunes or dates, egg and vanilla in blender container; blend 5 to 10 seconds or until fruit is coarsely chopped. Add to combined remaining ingredients; mix just until dry ingredients are moistened. Spread evenly into well-greased 13" x 9" baking pan. Bake at 350°, 18-20 minutes or until golden brown. Cool. Cut into bars. Store in tightly covered container.

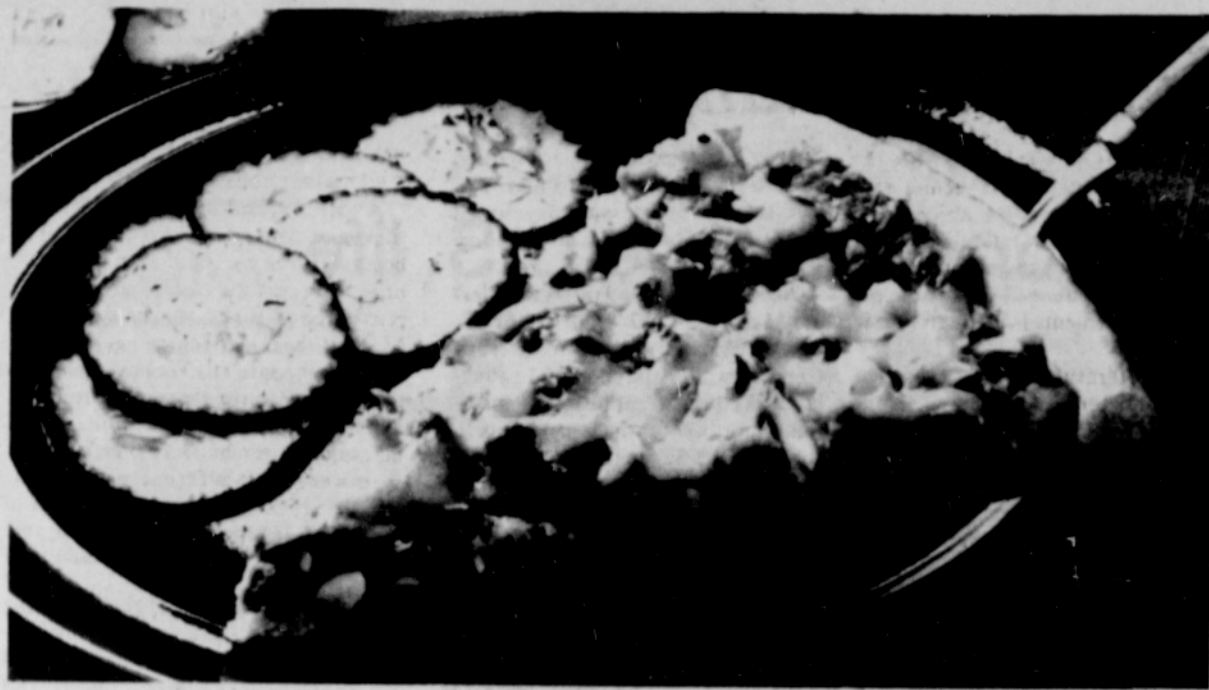
Tuna melt pizza

FAMILY-SIZE TUNA MELT

- 2 cups prepared biscuit-baking mix
- ½ cup cold water
- 2 cans (6½ ounces each) tuna, drained
- ½ cup mayonnaise or salad dressing
- ¼ cup chopped onion
- ¼ cup chopped dill pickle
- 3 hard-cooked eggs, chopped
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon pepper
- ½ teaspoon prepared mustard

- ½ cup shredded Cheddar cheese (about 2 ounces)

Heat oven to 425°. Mix baking mix and water until soft dough forms. Roll or pat (with hands floured with baking mix) dough into 12-inch circle on ungreased cookie sheet; pinch edge of circle, forming ½-inch rim. Mix remaining ingredients except cheese; spread over crust. Sprinkle with cheese. Bake until crust is golden brown, 20 to 25 minutes. 10 servings.



Tuna melt makes the main course for a hearty meal or becomes a light snack.

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