

Making your food dollars count

by Monine Stebbins

Making Food Dollars Count is the title of a new, no frills, U.S. Department of Agriculture bulletin. It's black printing on white paper with no drawings or pictures. It reminds me immediately of the generic labeled food available in the markets. Maybe you remember when it was in the news that Secretary of Agriculture Block and his family were living on the food stamp allotment a short time ago. This is the collection of recipes and menus they used. He said then that people could get their own free copy of this information from the County Extension Office—though it's taken a while to get it distributed. Now they're available at the Extension Office nearest you.

The meals are cooked from scratch, resulting in from 1 to 2½ hours a day being devoted to meal preparation, not counting shopping time. There are two weeks' menus of three meals and a snack each day with all meals eaten at home. The lists of food needed for each week's menus are included, and though they aren't shopping lists, they would be useful in making such a list.

I found it interesting that the family of four this was planned for was not what we think of as the typical family. It was for a woman and three young children; a pre-schooler, a grade school and junior high school age student. That's probably a very realistic choice, since many women who are heads of households like this are in the low-income bracket that qualifies them for food stamps.

The suggested menus are not the only way to make food dollars count, but are good examples. The booklet does a good job of including planning for leftovers. For instance, three meals are planned from three pounds of turkey drumsticks. The recipes and portions for all three meals are included, telling you how much meat and drippings to save at the beginning for each of the meals. Menus encourage planning ahead instead of eating until you're stuffed and then looking for something to do with the last few scraps.

There are also small portions of the higher-priced food items, 2½ ounces of meat, one-eighth of the pie, one-half of a banana or pear. Some of these are a little unrealistic according to the way my family does things. Three eggs scrambled for four people or six tablespoons of syrup for the whole family to put on their pancakes—that's getting a little to pinch-penny.

There is a big reliance on the bread and cereal group, which is very effective in keeping costs down and can also provide for good nutrition. One of the featured recipes is a biscuit mix with lots of ways to use it. There's a nice variety of meats—some basic recipes and some that are quite inventive. The recipes have very good directions and would be useful for the person just starting out with cooking.

Though I would probably never go completely through the week's menus as they're outlined, the method for stretching the dollar is a good one to remember. The recipes are useful, featuring food that are generally available and low-cost. It's well worth the effort to call or stop into your County Extension office and ask for your free copy, HG #240, *Making Food Dollars Count*.

Her, are a couple of the recipes from the booklet that I've tried and found were tasty and economical.

MEATBALLS IN SAUCE WITH RICE

Meatballs:
¼-pound regular ground beef
½ cup soft breadcrumbs
1 tablespoon onion, finely chopped
1/8 teaspoon salt
¼ cup milk

Mix beef, breadcrumbs, 1 table-spoon onion, salt and milk thor-

oughly. Divide into 12 portions. Shape into balls. Brown meatballs in hot frypan and drain.

Sauce:
1 cup tomato puree
2 tablespoons chopped onion
1 tablespoon vinegar
1 teaspoon sugar
½ teaspoon oregano leaves
1/8 teaspoon pepper
¼ cup water

Mix all ingredients and pour over meatballs in the frying pan. Bring to

a boil. Reduce heat, cover and boil gently for 20 minutes. Spoon sauce over meatballs once during cooking. Remove cover and cook 5 minutes longer to thicken sauce. Serve over 3 cups cooked rice.

PEACH COBBLER

1 tablespoon cornstarch
1/8 teaspoon ground cinnamon
16-oz. can sliced peaches and juice
¼-cup biscuit mix
1 tablespoon sugar
¼ cup water

Preheat oven to 400°. Mix cornstarch and cinnamon in saucepan. Stir in a little of the peach liquid until smooth. Stir in remaining liquid and peaches. Cook over low heat, stirring occasionally, until thickened, about 4 minutes. Pour into 1-quart casserole.

Stir biscuit mix and sugar together. Stir in water until dry ingredients are barely moistened. Spread on top of peach mixture. Bake until top is lightly browned, about 30 minutes.

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