

8 tips for saving money on groceries

By **KATIE WORKMAN**
Associated Press

I do not know of a single person who doesn't like to save money. And the supermarket is one of the most important places to be shopping-savvy.

The good news is there are so many easy and effective ways to slash your grocery budget.

Here are eight tips that will bring that receipt total down considerably.

1. Buy whole fruits and vegetables. Pound for pound, whenever you buy anything that has been peeled, cut up or prepped in any way, you are paying a premium. And not only are you paying more for the work that went into the prepared food, you may lose additional money on the back end, since these items are more perishable than their whole counterparts. Pre-diced onion might only last for a handful of days in the fridge, for example, while whole onions will last for weeks.

2. Don't snub store brands. House brand foods used to feel like an inferior version of name brand items, but these days stores have more formidable relationships with manufacturers, and often the house brand of something might be made by the same company as a reputable brand name product. You will have to taste some to figure out what you like. And stores like Costco with their Kirkland brand items, or Trader Joe's with their eponymous line of groceries, are powerful examples of how good store brand products can be.

3. Put the freezer to work. If pork chops are on sale but you don't plan to make them this week, consider buying them and freezing them for later. Or if your market or price club has a great deal on bulk chicken or ground beef, take advantage of it, and just divide up the package into smaller freezer-proof containers or bags. Label everything and wrap it well. Frozen shrimp also



AP Photo/Al Behrman

A worker stocks the fresh meat shelves at a Kroger Co. supermarket in Cincinnati. The supermarket is one of the most important places to be shopping-savvy. The good news is that there are so many easy and effective way to slash your grocery budget.



AP File Photo

A shopper passes a shelf of crackers and other items at a Ralphs Fresh Fare supermarket in Los Angeles.

deserves a special shout-out: Most shrimp that you buy "fresh" was actually frozen and defrosted any-

way, so stash a bag in the freezer for quick weeknight dinners. Frozen vegetables and fruit are also great to

have on hand.

4. Look for the bargain aisle. Many supermarkets have a designated aisle

where they feature a selection of reduced-price items. Often these items are seasonal, and you might see

them discounted further after a holiday (matzoh ball mix is practically free right after Passover, and candy canes are a steal on Dec. 26).

5. Look for "While Supplies Last" signage. In one of the markets where I shop, some of the sales signs on the shelves have additional language (in small print, so get in close to check!) letting shoppers know that an item is in limited supply and intended to sell out. Often these prices are discounted heavily since the store is trying to clear its shelves for new products.

6. Stock up on on-sale non-perishables. If you have the storage space, when you see that canned broth or tomatoes or beans or pasta is on sale, throw a few extra into your cart. I once bought 10 containers of mustard because the price was so good (I happen to really love mustard).

7. Look for clearance areas in the market. Day-old pastries and bread (perfect for French toast or stuffing!) might be tucked into a small shelf near the bakery. Corners of the store may have shelves with collections of miscellaneous products that no longer warrant space on the main shelves. This might be because they are close to expiration, or there are just a few left and they aren't being restocked. You could also get some serious steals on packages that got a little dinged up, but the contents are still fine. (Who cares what the outside of the box of cereal looks like?)

8. Look at the store circular before you go. Many major markets have a website that will show you the items on sale that week. A chance to think about this in advance means that you can meal-plan around the pot roast that is on special, or decide this is the week to stock up on snacks for back to school.

Katie Workman is the author of "Dinner Solved" and "The Mom 100 Cookbook," and creator of the mom100.com blog.

Gallery in central Mexico displays a trove of folk art

By **KIM CURTIS**
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ATOTONILCO, Mexico — It's been said that if you're not an artist when you first visit San Miguel de Allende, you'll certainly be one by the time you leave. Similarly, if you step into Mayer Shacter's Galeria Atotonilco as a novice, you'll walk out an appreciator of fine Mexican folk art.

Shacter, a former ceramics artist from Berkeley, California, who has lived in Mexico since 2003, is much more than a curator. He travels to remote areas of Mexico to meet the artists and learn about their craft, and then he brings their work back to his gallery, where he imparts his knowledge to his customers.

His is now regarded as one of the finest collections of Mexican folk art anywhere. On TripAdvisor, the gallery, which opened in 2006 in a 600-square-foot section of his home and now consumes 6,000 square feet, is currently the top-rated "thing to do" in San Miguel de Allende, which is a short 15-minute drive away.

Shacter's passion for his gallery is immediately obvious. His collection, which ranges from textiles and woven baskets to antique ironwork and papier maché masks, is broad, and "a reflection of my many interests."

"I have a personal relationship with these people. I love helping them preserve these cultural traditions," he said.

For example, about 15 years ago, he met some artisans from Nayarit, who make Huichol yarn and bead art, after they rear-ended his



Emil Varona/Kim Curtis photos via AP

Gallery owner Mayer Shacter holds a hand-embroidered Guatemalan garment at Galeria Atotonilco near San Miguel de Allende, Mexico.

car. Shacter said the police threatened to confiscate the family's pickup truck because it was uninsured.

"We got their information and agreed to pay for our own repairs. They agreed to give us some yarn paintings," he said, adding that they've been doing business ever since.

The Huichol are an indigenous people who mostly live in the mountainous areas of northwestern Mexico. They press brightly colored yarn onto boards coated with a thin layer of special beeswax from Campeche and tree resin. The "paintings" began as ceremonial religious art, and often include representations of deer, corn, peyote and other symbols from Huichol mythology.

Shacter says the artists'

quality of life and sustainability are paramount to him. He rarely buys work on consignment.

"With one or two exceptions, everything in the gallery, we purchase outright," he said. "When we leave a person's house, they have money in hand or money in their bank account."

Another highlight of his collection is the lacquered gourds from Temalcatzingo, Guerrero. Lacquering is one of Mexico's oldest crafts.

During the pre-Hispanic period, oil from chia seeds was mixed with powdered minerals or plant-based dyes to create protective coatings and decorative designs. The gourds can grow on trees or vines and are dried before using. Those with bottle-like



A collection of Wounaan woven baskets from Colombia.

shapes are cut so the top can be used as a lid.

The layers of lacquer must be applied separately, dried and then burnished. Several small pieces can be done in a single day, while a larger decorative piece may take two or three months.

Because Shacter has developed relationships with some of the best artists in Mexico, his gallery is packed with treasures.

Among his current favorites is the pottery from Tonala in Jalisco. He's particularly proud of the work by Geronimo Ramos, one of the few artists who still creates petatillo pottery, which is identified by its light, yellow background filled with crosshatching that looks like a woven palm mat or petate. The tighter the crosshatching, the finer the piece. The style requires a certain type of clay to produce a smooth

painting surface. On top of the crosshatching, the artist usually paints in black, green and cream, and one of the most common images portrayed is the nagual, a mythical half-human, half-animal creature. Then, the piece must go through two separate firings to get its high-gloss sheen.

Shacter and his wife, writer Susan Page, who started the San Miguel Writers' Conference and Literary Festival in 2005, were drawn to this part of central Mexico in part because of the arts community.

San Miguel de Allende was inhabited by rich arts patrons from its start in the 1500s. And in the 1600s, silver was discovered nearby, making the town an important trade thoroughfare. By the mid-1800s, it hit its stride, and many of its mansions, palaces and churches

were built during this time. But San Miguel gained its contemporary reputation as an arts center after American artist and writer Stirling Dickinson arrived in 1937. He and Felipe Cossio del Pomar, a Peruvian painter and political activist, established the town's first art school, which still exists today. In the years after World War II, veterans flocked to the school and others when they realized they could stretch their G.I. Bill money further south of the border.

The city's architecture, cobblestone streets and rich, saturated colors make it an artist's — and collector's — dream. Some believe it's built on a bedrock of rose quartz, which channels positive energy and attracts creative types. Whatever the reason, they continue to flock to San Miguel de Allende — and Shacter's gallery.