

GROCERIES

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probably could help your household budget,” Pfuhl said.

Don't forget about coupons and reward programs offered by your grocer and manufacturers. Whether it's in print or digital, coupons can still save you money, Pfuhl said. Print circulars like the ones in this paper can also alert you to good deals. Most stores also offer incentive programs where buyers can get discounts on food, gas and other perks so don't forget to swipe your card at checkout.

Stay flexible for good deals

Sometimes you can find similar and cheaper products at another part of the grocery store. “If one doesn't need a fancy cheese from the deli department, they can often save by buying similar cheese from the dairy department,” said Plant of Raymond James.

If there are products that

your family uses on a regular basis, it wouldn't be a bad idea to grab it when you see it because it is still hard to keep certain popular items stocked, Pfuhl said. But try not to hoard, she warned.

Be flexible on what you buy and try different brands, different sizes of products and even a different product in the same category. “Because of supply-chain issues, if you like product X, you may need to buy product Y,” Pfuhl said.

However, pay attention to the price per ounce. “Smaller sizes are another form of inflation,” Plant said. For example, ice cream used to come in half-gallon (64 oz.) cartons and now many come in 48- to 56-oz. sizes.

Stretch your meals and find substitutions

To make meals stretch, repurpose cooked food into other meals throughout the week, Nelson said. She used pork she slow-cooked recently for several meals, including a rice bowl and pulled pork tacos.

When planning meals, identify four or five typically low-cost ingredients you can sub into your diet such as bananas, chicken thighs and beans, Nelson said. “If you can save \$10 twice a week over time, that all just adds up,” she said.

One substitution people are talking a lot about these days is going meatless. By far the largest increase in at-home food costs last year in the U.S. was for meat, poultry, fish and eggs — up 12.6% in December compared to the year before.

With the price of meat so high, you can save a considerable amount of money (and likely see some health benefits) if you go meatless one or two days a week or even a few meals per week, Nelson said.

“There are so many ways to make this work, even for people who are big meat eaters,” she said. Oats, peanut butter, beans, lentils, rice, eggs, potatoes and other vegetables are great staple ingredients for meat-free diets and are cheap alternatives to manufactured plant-based products.



Shari L. Gross/Minneapolis Star Tribune-TNS

Using leftover pork from earlier in the week, Haley Nelson creates tacos, Thursday, Feb. 3, 2022, in the kitchen of her home in St. Paul, Minnesota. Nelson has run her Cheap Recipe Blog for more than a decade, sharing ways to shop and cook cheaply. One of her tips is cooking meat and repurposing it throughout the week in several recipes.

BOOK

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The value of food

Steger, of course, knows about survival, from his adventures as a teen to the remote Northwoods homestead he established in 1964 when he was 19. Since then, he has persevered in some of the most extreme conditions on the planet. Steger led a crew on a heralded 56-day dog-sled journey to the North Pole in 1986, the first of its kind to make it with only the supplies the team carried with it. He repeated the feat two years later when he trekked across Greenland, traveling 1,600 miles south to north, again without any resupply. In 1989, he led the first 3,471-mile dog-sled traverse of Antarctica.

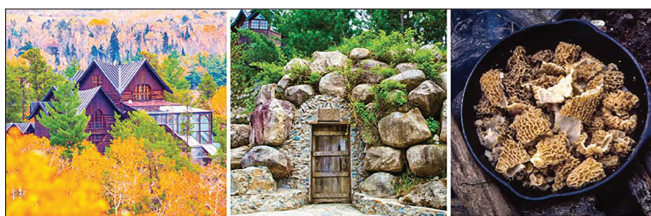
In forested regions, he would get by on game provided by native hunters. But in polar regions, where there's no game and nothing grows, he relied only on rations. Among the majestic surroundings few humans ever see, he stared starvation in the eye.

“In Antarctica, it really looked like we were going to perish, and I think anytime anybody starves, your perspective of life changes,” Steger said. “It really puts you in touch with our fragility, and with those that don't have the privileges that we all do here in America. It's hard to put into words, but food is a little different to me. It's something I never take for granted.”

Here's what not taking food for granted looks like: planning every meal so nothing is wasted; growing what you can and buying in bulk what you can't; knowing the farm, and maybe even the exact animal, your meat comes from; and, most of all, keeping it simple.

“For myself, simplicity is really quality,” Steger said. “We usually equate simplicity with the opposite — that we're going to compromise our values and our way of living.” Not so, he said. Not when the way you eat aligns with your values to nourish your body and preserve the Earth.

Helping in those pursuits is Rita Mae, Steger's 27-year-old niece, who spends her summers at the homestead cooking for residents and visitors in a bare-bones kitchen, with a pantry of essentials, the



The Steger Homestead Kitchen

Will Steger and Rita Mae Steger ~ with Beth Dooley



University of Minnesota Press-TNS

“The Steger Homestead Kitchen: Simple Recipes for an Abundant Life,” by Will Steger, Beth Dooley and Rita Mae Steger.

biggest cast iron skillet she can find and a lush garden.

“It definitely connects you to food more, gardening and picking and harvesting your food, washing it and making sure it's clean — it makes it really rewarding,” she said. “Everything just tastes better. Relaxing feels better.”

In addition to a number of recipes from her Grandma Steger, Will's mother, the book also includes recipes from Rita Mae's mother, Kim Chi. Both matriarchs valued family meals, and their imprint is stamped upon the large gatherings she caters at the homestead.

“My grandma, she always had a setup on the table. No matter what it was she was cooking, there was always sliced bread and butter, a glass of milk and applesauce,” she said. “And on my mom's side, my aunts cook a lot and we would always have lunch and dinner together. It's just been the example I've been given my whole life. I definitely connect with my ancestors through food.”

Her mother's Vietnamese background comes through in twists she added to American recipes, such as ground beef goulash that's deepened with soy sauce, and breakfast fried rice. Rita Mae makes both of those at the homestead, and offers those recipes in the book.

Sharing those dishes with Steger Wilderness Center guests — who range from vocational school students from Minneapolis to international climate leaders — “is a nostalgic experience for me,” she said. “I can kind of live in the past and just eat the food that's been my favorite.”

A taste of the past

Nostalgia is a thread throughout “The Steger Homestead Kitchen,” both in Will's remembrances of his adventures, and in his affection for a grass-roots way of living that's been largely subsumed by modern conveniences. Whether he's talking about clearing the land, getting rice-cooking tips from his tentmate in Antarctica, or griddling flatbread on a stove he named Harvey that's fashioned out of a barrel, every story has a recipe and every recipe has a story.

“Storytelling was a big part of this collaborative effort,” said Dooley, the Stegers' co-author. “The recipes reflect Will's values: Live simply, offer hospitality. Will loves gathering around a fire after a good meal, talking. His meals are never fussy, no exotic ingredients or fancy equipment. It's about being together.”

But simple doesn't mean easy.

“Homesteading requires

thinking ahead, stocking up on whole grains, dry beans, oils, seasonings and essentials, keeping things organized and labeled and in mouse-proof containers,” said Dooley, a regular contributor to the Star Tribune's Taste section. “It's garnering resources, not buying more perishables than will really be put to use.”

Steger, who says he hasn't eaten anything out of a box in 50 years, admits even he can slip up. “I'm not a perfectionist or militant, but it's an awareness” to do better, he said. An awareness he garnered from traveling to the ends of the Earth.

He hopes his stories, and the book, can give others that awareness, too.

“That's why I go on these experiences, because, sometimes, I'm not sure — there's no guarantee I'm going to come back. And then when I come back, I'm actually a different person in many different ways, because it's opened my whole life up to the reality of life, and that's really reflected to me in food,” Steger said.

“I hope the book reflects that simplicity and joy, simple living and simple eating with friends and community.”

VERY AMERICAN GOULASH

Serves 4 to 6.

Note: “My mom, Kim Chi, has a knack for spicing up American recipes, adding a dash of soy sauce and a sprinkle of red pepper flakes to boost flavors,” writes Rita Mae Steger in “The Steger Homestead Kitchen” (University of Minnesota Press, 2022). Serve this over buttered noodles.

- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 1 pound ground beef
- 1 onion, diced
- 1 (28-ounce) can whole tomatoes
- 1/4 cup tomato paste
- 2 tablespoons soy sauce
- 1 teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 4 cloves garlic, smashed

Film a large, deep skillet with the oil and set over medium heat. Crumble the ground beef into the skillet and cook until it is no longer pink. Stir in onion and cook until softened, then add tomatoes, tomato paste, soy sauce, red pepper flakes, salt and garlic. Lower the heat and simmer until the liquid is slightly reduced, about 10 minutes. Adjust seasonings to taste.

MOM'S GINGERSNAPS

Makes about 3 dozen cookies. Note: A favorite from Will's mom's spiral cookbook. “We make these cookies every week,” said Steger. From “The Steger Homestead Kitchen” (University of Minnesota Press, 2022).

- 2 cups flour
- 1 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cloves
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup maple or brown sugar
- 1 cup (2 sticks) butter, softened
- 1 egg
- 2 tablespoons sorghum or molasses
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- Granulated sugar, for coating

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Line several baking sheets with parchment, or lightly grease.

In a large bowl, stir together flour, ginger, cinnamon, cloves, baking soda and salt.

In a separate bowl, cream together sugar, butter, egg, sorghum or molasses and vanilla.

Form a well in the center of the dry mixture and add the creamed butter mixture. Mix together until everything is well combined.

Pour a little granulated sugar on a plate. Using a teaspoon, form the dough into 1 1/2-inch balls and roll in sugar to coat. Place cookies on baking sheet, leaving about 2 inches between each one. Press down slightly with your fingers to flatten the dough. Bake until the edges have just begun to crisp and center is soft, about 12 to 15 minutes.

Remove the baking sheet from the oven and allow the cookies to sit for about 1 minute. Using a metal spatula, transfer cookies to a cooling rack.

BLACK BEAN WILD RICE BURGERS

Serves 4.

Note: This is the burger of choice for omnivores and vegans at Hobo Village gatherings. They are made with the simplest pantry staples. You can also scramble the bean mix in a skillet for nachos and burritos. From “The Steger Homestead Kitchen” (University of Minnesota Press, 2022).

- 1 cup walnuts
- 3 tablespoons vegetable oil, divided
- 1 onions, diced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/3 cup breadcrumbs or oats
- 1 1/2 cups cooked or canned black beans, drained
- 1 cup cooked wild rice
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- 1 teaspoon smoked paprika
- 1 teaspoon cumin
- Salt and pepper, to taste

Scatter walnuts into a large skillet and set over medium heat. Toast the nuts, stirring frequently, until they are lightly browned, about 7 minutes. Remove from pan and allow to cool.

In the same pan, heat 1 tablespoon of oil over medium heat. Add the onion and garlic and cook until the onion is translucent, about 7 minutes; remove from heat.

Transfer the walnuts to a food processor and process into a fine meal. Add the breadcrumbs or oats and process again until blended.

Turn the black beans into a large bowl and thoroughly mash with the back of a fork. Stir in the walnut mixture, the wild rice, and add the onion, garlic, chili powder, paprika, cumin, and salt and pepper. Mix together thoroughly.

Divide the mixture into 4 even pieces. Using your hands, roll the pieces into balls and press down to form burgers, holding the patty in one hand and using the other to smooth the sides.

Heat the remaining 2 tablespoons oil in a pan set over medium heat. Cook the burgers to brown on both sides, about 3 minutes per side.



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