



## Ontario Home Economics Association

### *Ask a Professional Home Economist*

**For Immediate Release**

## **Ways to Cope with Rising Food Prices**

**by Mary Carver, P.H.Ec.**

Canadians spend approximately 11% of their disposable income on food - much less than in many other parts of the world. Still the talk about rising food prices makes us nervous and wanting to stock up. Global demand, severe weather, higher fuel and production costs all play a role in the price of food and the predictions can send waves of panic. While experts debate the causes, consumers can prepare for the reality. There's no need to jeopardize nutrition to save money. It takes discipline and focus to shop wisely - but it is doable. Here are a few tips to calm nerves and help consumers cope with despair at the check out.

- **Determine what you spend on food;** it may be less than you think. Keep track for a couple of weeks. Canadian farm groups celebrated Food Freedom Day on Feb. 12, 2012 marking the date by which the average Canadian earned enough to pay the entire year's food bill. Note that the reference is for 'food' only - not for the sea of other items available in your supermarket.
- **Plan!** Smart planning is the first step to saving money on food. Plan menus for a week at a time. From those menus and advertised specials, make a list. Remember to check the pantry and fridge so as not to miscalculate your needs. Over-buying and poor management leads to food waste - something that we as Canadians are too guilty of. Every trip to the store adds to your cost. Many times an 'empty pantry' leads to expensive take-out options.
- **Learn to cook.** Home cooking is the surest way to save and to get the best value for your food dollar. A new book, launched for Nutrition Month is entitled *Cook!* (Robert Rose Publishers) Produced by Dietitians of Canada, it contains 275 healthy recipes using Canadian food. Basic cooking methods, the latest nutrition advice and 'kid approved' recipes make this cookbook a good investment for families that need to get back to basics. Look for it in your library if you want to save the \$29.95.
- **Try paying for food with cash.** It's estimated that those who use plastic spend more and Canadian families are already carrying too much debt according to the stats.
- **Buy real food** from all four food groups. Choose fresh or frozen produce (yes frozen veggies are nutritious), whole grain breads and cereals, dairy, meat, fish or poultry (or alternatives). Write your grocery list in the same order as the food is presented in your store, reducing your chances of getting distracted by items that are not on your list.

- **Cut back on processed**, ready-to-eat products that are more expensive than fresh food.
- **Buy less-tender cuts of meat.** Slow-cook them for flavour and tenderness.
- **Look for bean, lentil and egg recipes** as economical and nutritious main course options.
- **Check availability of local produce year round:**  
<http://www.foodland.gov.on.ca/english/availability.html>
- **Buy in season** or join a local crop-sharing program - an emerging trend.
- **Buy in bulk.** Many cereals, rice and rolled oats are less expensive without fancy packaging.
- **Do it yourself for less.** Prepared or semi-prepared food is more expensive per serving. Homemade dressings, cookies and pasta sauces are much less expensive than ready-made.
- **Quench your thirst with water**, not pop.
- **Shop with a calculator.** Check unit price on shelf labels to help determine the best buys.
- **Look beyond eye level.** Often better buys are located above or below eye level.
- **Ask for and use rain-checks** if a store runs out of an advertised special.
- **Organic is a choice** that can be more expensive. Some produce with the least likelihood of pesticide residues are sweet onions, avocados, corn, asparagus, mango, cantaloupe, pineapple, peas, kiwi, grapefruit, cabbage, broccoli and eggplant.
- **Resist last-minute temptations** at the cash register. Be vigilant at the check-out. Mistakes happen where products are scanned twice or even left behind unnoticed.
- **Avoid waste.** It's estimated that Canadians waste at least 10% of the food they buy. Off-set rising prices by increasing your effort to avoid food waste.
- **Ask** if your grocer will match a competitor's price to avoid driving across town.

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**The Ontario Home Economics Association**, a self-regulated body of Professional Home Economists, promotes high professional standards among its members so that they may assist families and individuals to achieve and maintain a desirable quality of life.

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