



So You Think You Are Too Broke

It's time to jump in and begin or to increase your storage food sefforts. How do you do that on a paycheck to paycheck budget?

How do we eat an elephant? One bite at a time. How do we secure food storage? One small step, one day, at a time.

- Save your change. At the end of each day empty pockets, wallets, purses and the cup in the car where you dump your change. Place the money in a jar and by the end of the month you will be surprised how much you have saved. Get the kids involved and each night at dinner or family prayers ask them for their contributions. Promise them if they help you will be sure to include their favorite desserts in your food storage plan.
- Know which stores give rain checks. Always ask for a rain check and be sure to ask if the item on sale is regularly stocked or if it was just brought in for that sale. At Christmas I asked for a rain check at Longs and they told me the marshmallow cream I wanted was a seasonal item, and sure enough they never had it again. Darn! Wanted that for smores in an emergency.
- Will the store match a competitors price? If they will you are really in luck, no driving around town to take advantage of sales. When I find an item in a sale flier that I want to purchase I throw the flier in the car so as I run errands I am sure to have it with me.
- Know when sales begin. Around here grocery stores begin their sale week on Wednesday. The discount pharmacy stores on Sunday. As you move forward with our General Store this becomes very important. For example, this week we are working on desserts (If you aren't folowing our stocking up schedule on [facebook](#) go there now, like the page and select get notifications). No one around here had brownie mixes on sale Monday but Wednesday the sales change so we have two chances to get that favorite dessert on sale. Advice for future weeks, when we discuss an item to be purchased that week, if it is on sale get it before Wednesday. If it is not on sale wait until Wed.(or whichever day of the week new sales begin) and see if it goes on sale then. It's awful when you run out Monday to purchase something and then on Wednesday it goes on sale. Do keep up however and don't wait until next week or you will fall behind in obtaining your three month supply.
- Sign up for custoner rewards cards.
- Know your prices. You may want to start a list in your binder with a column for the items and columns for the stores you frequent. Copy prices from your sales receipts onto the list and before long you will have a record of where an items can be purchased the least expensively. If you want to accomplish this more quickly take your older children with you and give each one a list of items to price. Go to several stores, and compile a complete list when you get home. This will also teach children to become wise shoppers, as they see the price differences can be considerable. Now when a store has a sale you will know if it is a real bargain or just so, so.

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- Remember the seasonal sales. Many grocery store items are on sale every six weeks. Others have a 12 week cycle and some are seasonal. We will add seasonal items to your General Store when it is appropriate but you should also have your own list of those times for when you are restocking as you rotate.
- Coupons can be found in many places. Newspapers; the Sunday paper, local coupons appear in weekday ads, paper carriers often have extra papers, some schools supply newspapers to classrooms and you may be able to get the old papers and clip the coupons (get to know a teacher) and of course there are many internet sites now where you can print coupons. Share with friends. Ask friends for their newspapers or begin a swap group at work, church or with other soccer moms. Magazines have coupons. If you find one while waiting in the dentist's office or at the hairdresser ask if you can clip it.
- Wash your own car. When you wash your car fill a bucket with soapy water. Rinse the car, turn off the water, soap up the car, rinse again and turn off the water as you dry and clean the inside.
- Cook from scratch. Cookies and bread are much, much cheaper to make at home. Some packages foods such as pasta dinners may seem cheap but they are so small you need several to feed a family and you still need to add veggies and a protein.
- Take your food and drinks with you when traveling or going to your childrens sporting events. Pack a lunch or just the fixins and stop at a park or nice rest area to eat.
- Eat breakfast for dinner. To stretch your food budget and free up money for storage items, eat breakfast for dinner at least once a week. Last night we had eggs, hash browns, applesauce and juice for dinner. All made from scratch, of course. The eggs were 40 cents, potatoes 20 cents, onion 10 cents, butter 5 cents, applesauce 50 cents, juice 50 cents, for a total of \$1.75 for an entire meal for two. For fun figure out what you spent on dinner last night. How much could you have saved by eating breakfast for dinner instead?
- Keep your freezer full. Really full. If you can't afford to stock it with meat then fill old juice bottles with water and freeze them. This is great in a power outage, they keep foods frozen longer and provide safe drinking water when they melt. The more full the freezer the less electricity it takes to keep the temperature below freezing.
- Hang out the laundry. I don't like to dry towels on a line because they are stiff but I love the smell and feel of other items that are line dried. This may be a necessity during a power outage so you should have a way to do this planned out just in case. Practice now and save money.
- Make your own laundry detergent.
- Replace ceiling fixtures with fans. They are great! Most times you will not need the air conditioning at all, or at least very little if you keep your fans cranked up. Ceiling fans are also great for the patio as they allow you to spend more time outdoors during hot months. More time outdoors means less time needing an air conditioner.

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- Split the cost of a babysitter with friends when you want to go out. You babysit one week and they return the favor the next. Naturally this is only a good strategy when you have children of similar ages and only a few between you.
- Eat dinner at home. If you like to go out for a date night with your honey, eat BEFORE you go out. Find a great restaurant or ice cream parlor and just have a great dessert. If you want to eat out occasionally, find out what nights your favorite hangouts have special deals or if they have hours with reduced pricing. Many places offer the same meals at a reduced price before "rush hour", from 4-5 o'clock, for example.
- Eliminate checking account fees. I hate bank fees. With so many free checking account plans available, there's no reason to pay a fee. And if the bank happens to charge you one, ask them to reverse the fee or take your business to another bank.
- Recycle old clothes. Cleaning out closets not only declutters and makes you feel better but it can also provide hours of entertainment for kids. Take those old clothes and shoes, clean them up and give them as birthday gifts to be use for dress up. If dresses are too long either hem them with iron on hemming tape or just cut them off. If you sew cut the clothes down and remake them for younger family members. If you don't sew now is a great time to learn.
- Learn to Cook. Really. There are so many cooking shows on TV now and most of us have a friend or family member who we look forward to inviting us over for dinner because they are such great cooks. Ask one of those great chefs to teach you or watch a food show with a paper and pencil and take notes. Once you learn a few basics you will be able to create yummy meals from scratch, much less expensive than prepared foods.
- Save leftovers. When you are preparing a recipe and have left over onion, celery, or peppers chop them up and store them in the freezer until you need that ingredient again. We have all thrown away extra ingredients because they degrade to the point of yuk and we toss them. Frozen ingredient veggies such as these are not good to use in fresh foods but they are great for casseroles, soups, stews and even Thanksgiving stuffing.
- Use leftovers. I usually purchase whole chickens when they are on sale, big...savings, and bake them for a meal. There are always leftovers. I have a family who does not really enjoy having the same meal two days in a row. How do I use left over chicken? There are so many ways...chicken and rice, chicken tacos, chicken enchiladas, chicken fajitas, chicken cacciatore, chicken salad, Chinese chicken salad, chicken pot pie and the list goes on... These are all also great alternatives for what to do with all that left over turkey at Thanksgiving. All left over meats should be looked at not as leftovers but as an ingredient for another meal.
- Never turn down free food. I had someone jokingly say they always lock their car during the summer when they park in the church parking lot or they come out to find a bag a zucchini in the back seat. Many foods that our friends grow can be easily canned or frozen, another skill to learn if your don't know how. Others, like zucchini, are not great canned. It is good frozen for use in soups and stews but I like to use it as an ingredient first, and then freeze it. This can be done with all sorts of foods. Make

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zucchini bread and freeze it. Wrap it carefully and it will last for months. Chocolate zucchini cake is also wonderful!! It can easily be frozen and then frosted when you are ready to use it. Last week my husband was craving sweets so I made carrot cake cup cakes with half of the recipe and a carrot cake loaf (baked it in a bread pan) with the rest. Next time that craving hits I can whip out the loaf and I'm done. Tell everyone you know that you are available to glean or take their extra produce. If you need suggestions and recipes to use unfamiliar foods you are given just ask our [facebook group](#). There are lots of great cooks there!

- Get rid of the breakfast cereals for this month. Eat oatmeal, cream of wheat, eggs and toast, or pancakes instead. All are a fraction of the cost. If you have to have juice with your breakfast purchase juice that is on sale or frozen concentrate and cut down the serving size to half. Forget the bacon and sausage. Remember you are saving money now so you can build a General Store and have more freedom later.
- Think carbs. I know you don't want to do this every night but a few nights a week will save big. Spaghetti does not need to include meat sauce or meatballs. Fried rice is easy, cheap and a great way to use up leftover veggies and meat. Other very inexpensive meals are soups, split pea and potato are easy and cheap. Homemade pizza is another frugal meal. Make homemade dough, seriously easy to do, use the cheapest spaghetti sauce you can find, you will only need half the jar or less, or season tomato sauce, add a little cheese and any fresh veggies, olives, or meats you have left over or on the shelves in your general store. Freeze the remaining spaghetti sauce for pizza next week.

I have dozens of tips I have used to save money so I could allocate more to food storage. These are but a few. You can do this no matter what your income. You just need to take that first step and be willing to make a few small changes. Before long, unlike Mother Hubbard, your cupboards will no longer be bare.