



Maximizing Your Profits by Saving Money at the Grocery Store

Since the IRS has approved the “*standard meal deduction*”, keeping track of who eats what (family vs. daycare) is much less important. You are able to better benefit from buying foods on sale and using wise shopping tips. Here are some of those tips that may help you save money as you shop for child care food supplies, as well as your family.

~Don't shop hungry. It seems obvious that you would be more likely to add unneeded items to your shopping cart if your tummy is rumbling.

~Shop alone. It's unlikely that you'll be able to make accurate price comparisons with your husband or young children tagging along, let alone the extra items they are likely to add to the cart.

~Shop with cash. People are generally more likely to increase their spending if they are using a debit or credit card, as opposed to cash. For some reason, it's harder to hand over the green.

~Plan your weekly menus based on weekly ads. Make it a challenge to add as many discounted sales items into your menu as possible.

~Shop with a list and stick with it. Plan to purchase and store extras of non-perishable foods. (keep within the pull date)

~Ask for a Rain Check if the store is out of the advertised sale item. Most grocery stores offer rain checks on out of stock ADVERTISED items. If a clerk replies with an estimate of when more product may be available, simply state that it is unlikely that you will return by that time, and that you'd prefer a rain check.

~Coupon storage. Make a place for your coupons. You might try a small Rubbermaid container with index cards and stationary sized envelopes. Make sure to throw a calculator in as well.

~Clip coupons on any item you would buy IF it were at least half off. File the coupons right away. You won't use them if you can't find them!

~Take time once a month to quickly discard expired coupons. Although it is not always the case, many coupons expire at month's end. You could piggy-back this task with your food program submission, so you won't forget. It takes less time than you think to do this, and it will keep your system working by keeping you from becoming frustrated while searching through your file at the store.

~Coupons should only be used if a lower unit price is produced. Be selective and make sure the coupon item is a better buy than a similar sale item or store brand item. Don't be discouraged if you find that you are only using about 5 - 10% of the coupons clipped. If you clip a good number of them, it could still add up to a significant savings.

~Use manufacturer coupons and store coupons together (one each). Nearly all stores (Costco excluded) will allow you to use BOTH a manufacturer coupon (as in the Sunday paper) along with a store coupon (as in the store's weekly sales flyer).

~If you find a good deal, particularly on items that do not soon expire, buy the limit. A pantry filled with \$.20 tuna fish, \$.45 peaches and \$.50 refried beans serves you three-fold. By purchasing items in bulk you will spend less money over-all on the same groceries, you will have a strong food storage to aid you in disaster preparedness, and you may very well be able to avoid otherwise unnecessary trips to the store.

~Purchase quality whole-grain breads from bakery outlet stores. Breads can be frozen and stored for 2-3 weeks without compromising taste, texture, or safety. You may try switching to cracked wheat (which is NOT whole grain) first, then transitioning the children to whole grain bread, rolls, bagels, english muffins, and buns. For variety, you might also try sliced french bread (great for french toast), butterflake rolls, and specialty breakfast breads.

~Costco offers convenience, but not necessarily the best prices or healthiest options.

~When purchasing items in bulk or from a warehouse type store, consider whether you are actually saving money, or receiving more product than you need. Will you use the item before it expires? Would you be just as happy with less.



~Cash-n-Carry offers warehouse prices without the warehouse fees. Look for excellent prices on dairy items, fresh fruits and vegetables, tortillas, and paper products among other things. This is also a great place to purchase pitchers, slotted spoons, serving trays, and other things needed to aid in effective family style serving.

~Keep a price book to compare savings. A price book does not have to be a fancy notebook. It could be as simple as keeping a piece of notebook paper in your wallet, listing your most frequently purchased items and their unit prices at various stores. You may be surprised to find that your membership is not worth it's price in savings, or that you could save dollars simply by crossing the street. Having this information handy can also help you decide whether to purchase an item where you are shopping, or to wait until your next trip to another store. Often the unit price is calculated for you on the tiny shelf sticker.

~Only purchase groceries at the grocery store. Often the stores are able to offer lower priced grocery items, at least in part, by increasing prices on "essential" non-grocery items. Laundry, paper and other household items should be purchased elsewhere.

~Private label/store brands often have great taste. Generic items are definitely worth a try, especially since they are usually less expensive than Private label.

~Always check the expiration dates! A great deal is only a great deal if you can safely and reasonably use the product before its shelf life ends.

~Unsure how to best select produce, ask! Take a moment to learn a few tricks from your produce stocker, who will likely be more than happy to explain how to select a cantaloupe or onion.

~Summit Foods off Canyon Road in Puyallup frequently has 10 pound sales on fruits, vegetables and meats every week. If you are in the area, you may want to check it out. Unless all of the bananas are bright yellow already, most providers can definitely use 10 pounds of cantaloupe, apples, oranges, or bananas before they spoil. If Summit Foods is not convenient to you, look for other IGA grocery stores, such as Saar's Market Place. No matter where you shop, always take the time to bag your own produce, rather than select a bag off the display. No one will take more care picking the best produce, than you!

~Bulk spices are available at Fred Meyers and Winco. Often when buying spices and seasonings, you are paying for the container. Why not help the earth and your pocket book by reusing the ones you have. Cash-n-Carry also has decent prices on packaged seasonings.

~While Albertsons is no longer accepting competitors coupons, they have recently begun featuring coupons that essentially double your manufacturer's coupon.

~Wherever you shop, be sure to sign up for the store's ad mailing if they offer to mail them to you. Also, signing up for the store's preferred program will often get you specials and coupons not offered to other customers.

For more money saving ideas, pick up one of the three volumes of *Tightwad Gazette* from your local library, or visit the dollar stretcher online at www.stretcher.com.

~ Coupon Organization: You can organize your coupons a number of ways (by location in store, alphabetical, etc), but the most important thing is use a system that will work for you.

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| Store coupons to be used this week | Cleaning | Laundry |
| Rain Checks to be used this week | Condiments | Meat |
| Other Rain checks | Cookies | Medicines |
| Baby Supplies | Crackers | Mouth (toothpaste, gels, floss, rinse) |
| Baking (include anything found in this isle) | Dairy/Cheese | Paper products (tp, paper towels, napkins) |
| Beverages | Dog food | Pasta/rice |
| Body (soap, razors, deodorant) | Feminine | Plastic (garbage bags, glad wrap, bags) |
| Bread (including hot dog buns, bagels) | Frozen Foods | Snacks (whole grain chips, pretzels) |
| Candy | Hair | Seasonings |
| Canned foods | Household (batteries, bulbs) | Soup |
| Cereal | Ice cream | |

