

**PENNY SAVER NEWS**

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Is there anyone around who has not wished for a few more hours in the day, especially right around dinner time? It seems the family always comes home ready to eat, whether we've had time to get the food ready for them or not! How about some ideas for quick, and healthy, meals to ease the summer load a little?

If you think about it, the meat is usually what takes the longest to prepare. So, once a week skip the meat! There are plenty of healthy options instead of chops, or even chicken. An excellent choice is any kind of bean. If you have a slow cooker, pull it out and put it to work. Soak the beans in it the night before. In the morning drain off the beans, add the liquids and seasonings, set it on low and off you go. By the time you're home you'll have a pot of nutrition ready and waiting. Otherwise go for canned beans.

Warm corn tortillas in the oven while you heat a can of refried beans. Look for a lower sodium variety! Add a dish of grated low-fat sharp cheese to the table, a bowl of shredded lettuce and a bowl of salsa as hot or mild as you prefer. Top each tortilla with a spoonful of beans, some cheese, lettuce and salsa, and dinner's ready.

Be sure to make extra if you're making chili or sloppy joes in the slow cooker. Tomorrow night the rest of the batch will be topping for baked potatoes, white or sweet. Zap the potatoes in the microwave to get them almost done without heating up the kitchen. Then finish them in the oven to dry them out a bit and give them a baked flavor while you reheat the chili. Put out a dish of grated cheese, some steamed chopped broccoli, and let people pile on the toppings. No one needs to go hungry with that.

Another good choice for quick protein is an egg, or two or three. Eggs have some of the highest quality and most easily digestible protein, at a fraction of the cost of meat. And they're super-quick to prepare. You can have scrambled eggs with stir-fry veggies and Chinese sauce ready in minutes. Or make an omelet. Fill it with shredded meat left from last night's dinner, grated cheese and plenty of veggies. If you can afford the cost more than the time, get a little package of pre-chopped red, green and yellow sweet peppers to add color as well as flavor. Use an egg and a white to lower cholesterol, or a packaged egg substitute. They're still super quick to cook.

There's no need to feel guilty if you buy frozen, when you choose well! If a turkey breast is on sale, get it. Roasted, it can be sandwiches or salad for lunch, filling for a dinner omelet. Do it on the grill to keep the kitchen cool. Choose veggies without sauce or seasoning. That's where all the fat and salt come from. Then, add them to a frozen meal package that has more salt, fat or sauce than we need. You can stretch one bag that "Serves 2.5" (Whoever has 2.5 people?) into enough for 4 or 5 by adding extra vegetables. Grill enough chicken one night to add extra to the frozen meal the next night.

As much as possible plan ahead to cook double when you do cook. Make 2 pans of lasagna tonight. It won't take much more time. Bake them both. Serve one. Cut the other into individual servings, chill and freeze for next week. By portioning first you can have a 'take your pick' night when each person gets to choose their own dinner. Individual servings take less time to reheat later than a whole pan too.

When you can afford it, buy double of well-priced items. Get enough chicken or pork chops when the price is right. Divide large packs, which are usually less expensive

per pound, into individual or meal-sized packages. Date and freeze them. You can even add seasoning or marinade to the packages, to let the meat season in the freezer. Plan to use the seasoned packages within 4 to 6 weeks, as some seasonings will get too strong if left longer.

Here's a no-bake dessert bar sure to please the kids, old or young.

#### No-Bake Bars

½ C packed brown sugar	½ C creamy peanut butter
¼ C honey or corn syrup	1 tsp vanilla extract
2 C oatmeal (not instant)	1 ½ C crisp rice cereal
¼ C mini chocolate chips	

Spray a 9 inch square pan, or line pan with waxed paper then spray. Combine sugar, peanut butter and honey in bowl. Microwave on High 2 minutes until it boils, stirring once or twice. Stir in vanilla, then cereals. When well mixed stir in chips. Pat mixture into prepared pan. Cool. Cut into squares or bars. Makes 12-16.

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