

PENNY SAVER NEWS

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There have been several articles in national news recently about how expensive it is, or can be, to eat all the fruits and vegetables we should. Some people look at the recommendations for 8 to 10 servings a day and wince. It's not that they don't like fruit and veggies, but that they think they'll break their budget and empty their wallet buying them all. Sure, they can be expensive. But there are lots of ways to cut costs while still getting your nutritional needs met.

Some of the ways to watch your pennies for fruits and vegetables are the same as for all other grocery shopping. Make a list before you get to the store, and stick to it. Grocery managers know very well how to tease and tempt us into buying more than we planned to. The prettiest, nicest, and often most expensive things, are right out in front at eye and hand level. They make it easiest to grab those items.

Do as much of the work yourself as you can manage. Certainly, the bags of peeled baby carrots are quick, easy, pretty, and right up there to be seen. But do you really want to pay \$5 a pound just because someone else peeled them for you? Peel them yourself and they'll be \$.89 a pound! Can you shred your own cabbage for slaw, chop your own pineapple for sweet and sour? The more preparation you're willing to do, the less you'll pay someone else.

Check the calendar. Fresh produce will generally be less expensive when it's in season. If we insist on buying strawberries in August, we should recognize that they've been shipped from someplace far away. Not only will that make them more costly, but

the nutritional quality is more likely to have suffered. Besides, buying what's in season locally is supporting our local farmers and growers! If you need a list of what's in season in Florida, give me a call and leave your address, I'll mail you one.

Don't be afraid of canned or frozen produce. If it will work in the recipes you have planned, much of the time the canned or frozen will be both less expensive and more nutritious. All the long-distance shipping takes a nutritional toll on fresh produce. But when they're frozen, or sealed in an air-free, light-free can, the nutrients don't go anywhere. Choose 'no salt added', or 'canned in light syrup' for the least added ingredients. Most No Salt Added vegetables are just veggies and water, nothing more.

When you find a good deal or have a good coupon for frozen or canned produce, buy as large a quantity as you can store and use in the next 4-6 months. The nutritional value won't decrease in that time.

Often, even without a coupon, store brand canned and frozen produce is less expensive. You might find the peach slices are not as even as the big-name brand product, or the green beans are more varied in size. But that doesn't affect their nutrition. If you're going to use them in soup or casseroles, cobblers or pies, the size differences won't matter.

When you do buy fresh produce, it's generally best to buy it in small quantities. That way you won't be stuck with overripe fruit that's too soft to enjoy, or need to throw away half a bag of expensive green beans that have all turned slimy. Before they get to that stage, use them! Make soup with the last of the veggies, even if you don't need it for dinner tonight. Then freeze it for some night next week when you're too busy to cook. Super-ripe fruit can go into a smoothie today, or be pureed and frozen to make

sweet bread, cobblers or cakes when you need something for the school bake sale or a special dessert for dinner.

Here's a way to use a variety of left-over or almost-over vegetables. Mix and match according to what's in the refrigerator or your family's preferences. The vegetables can be leftovers, stir-fried, canned or frozen. Steamed or sautéed spinach or other greens are a good addition for part of the vegetables. Enjoy!

End of the Vegetables Quiche

1 refrigerated 9" pie crust	2 cups cooked, drained vegetables
1 cup part-skim ricotta cheese	$\frac{3}{4}$ cup grated, low fat Cheddar cheese
$\frac{1}{4}$ cup skim or 1% milk	2 eggs, or substitute equivalent
2 tsp Italian or pizza seasoning	2 tsp Dijon or yellow mustard
1 Tbsp grated Parmesan cheese	dash of hot sauce, optional

Preheat oven to 375°F. Press pie crust into bottom and sides of 9" pie plate. Spread drained vegetables over crust. In small bowl combine ricotta, Cheddar, milk, eggs, mustard and seasoning. Mix well then spoon over vegetables. Sprinkle with Parmesan. Bake 20 minutes, until knife inserted into center comes out clean. Serve hot, and refrigerate any leftovers. Serves 4-6.