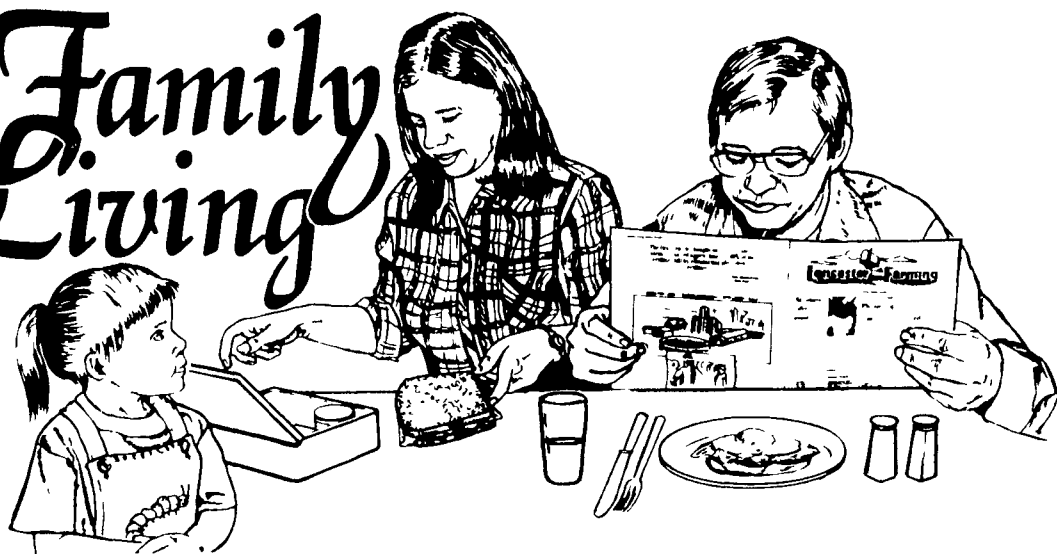


# Family Living



## Making baby food can help stretch food budget

BY SUZANNE KEENE

ELIZABETHTOWN — Raising babies can be expensive. The cost of cribs, car seats, high chairs, clothes, diapers, toys, doctor bills and food all add up to an astonishing amount.

But parents on tight budgets have found ways to reduce, if not to eliminate, these costs.

Mothers can cut the food allowance, one of the largest essential elements of the total budget, by making baby food at home instead of buying prepared foods at the grocery store.

Julie Deppen, the mother of two, says she decided to make her own baby food "mainly because it's cheaper."

Julie started preparing baby food when her first child, Heather, was ready for solid food. Heather is now two-and-a-half years old, but Julie will soon be repeating the process for six-month-old Joelle.

Although Julie says making your own baby food is not necessarily easier than buying prepared foods, it is not a difficult or time-consuming task. When she first started introducing solid foods, Julie said she would cook some peas or another vegetable and puree them in the blender.

When Heather had been through the introduction process and was able to eat most foods, Julie said she would grind up a little of whatever the family was having for dinner in her baby food grinder.

"It's not really any extra work once I had my meal prepared," Julie said, estimating that she spent only about three minutes to grind out a single meal for Heather. Julie mixes all the parts of the meal - meat, potato and vegetable - together with a little gravy or water to make the grinding easier. One of Heather's favorite combinations was chicken, rice and peas, Julie said.

Most foods can be prepared in the grinder, but some meats are a little tough. When grinding meats, Julie says she depends on her husband, Eric, to volunteer his muscles. Hamburger, chicken and very tender roasts are the easiest meats to grind, she says.

The cost savings makes the effort worthwhile. Julie estimated that it costs her about five cents to make a baby food jar of peaches. The same portion would cost about 30 cents in a grocery store.

Most of the vegetables Julie uses come from the garden on the farm they rent near Elizabethtown, making the savings even greater.

Julie received her baby food grinder for a baby gift, but says she would have bought one anyway. The grinders sell for about \$5 or \$6 and are simple to use.

The food is placed in the grinder and is pureed by turning the handle and pressing down. The ground food comes to the top and can be served directly from the grinder.

Sandi Harnish of Willow Street is another farm wife who makes her own baby food. She said saving



Julie Deppen, the mother of two, demonstrates how simple it is to make baby food with a grinder.

money was also the primary factor in her decision to prepare her own food.

"We have all our garden produce, so it seems really silly for us to go buy it (baby food)," she said. "To us, it's a big savings."

Sandi has two children, Daniel, who is 10 and a half months old, and Amanda, who is three and a half

Sandi said she makes the baby food ahead of time and freezes it in pop out ice cube trays. Once the food has frozen, she puts it in plastic bags. That way, when the baby is hungry, "All you have to do is take it out of the freezer and heat it up," she said. If you have a microwave, she noted, you can warm it even faster.

When the baby gets older, she freezes single serving portions in plastic butter tubs, which are larger than the ice cube trays.

Sandi believes that homemade baby food is more nutritious than store bought food. "You know what you're putting into it," she says.

If you would like to try making your own baby food, but aren't quite sure where to start, the recipes below, taken from "Feed Me I'm Yours," by Vicki Lansky, should get you started in the right direction.

### BAKED SWEET POTATO AND APPLES

- 1/4 cup cooked sweet potato
- 1/4 cup liquid (milk or cooking water)
- 1 cup applesauce or apples

Preheat oven to 350°F. Remove skin and core and slice apples. Mix sweet potatoes and apples in a buttered baking dish. Pour liquid over. Cover and bake for 30 minutes. Puree or mash with a fork.

### COCKADOODLE STEW

- 1 cup cubed chicken or turkey, cooked
  - 1/4 cup rice, cooked
  - 1/4 cup vegetables, cooked
  - 1/4 cup chicken broth
  - 1/4 cup milk
- Blend or puree together and make into food cubes.

### LIVER STEW

- 1 cup beef liver
  - 1/4 cup broth
  - 1/4 cup milk
  - 1/4 cup potatoes, chopped
- Cook together until liver and potatoes are done. Puree and freeze in cubes.

### TROPICAL TREAT

- Combine
  - 1/2 very ripe avocado, mashed or pureed
  - 1/2 very ripe banana, mashed or pureed
  - 1/4 cup cottage cheese or yogurt
- Canned fruits, with sugar syrup rinsed off, are also easy to puree and serve.

# BACK HOME

By Michelle S. Rodgers



Lancaster Extension  
Home Economist

### "COMPUTER BUG"

This column may not appear different, but it is! I wrote it on the computer. Self diagnosis indicates that I have the "computer bug". After one week of intense computer training, the symptoms are evident: fingers itching to touch the keyboard, muscles aching to sit in front of the screen, and sleepless nights while my mind whirrs with computer lingo and programming ideas. And, I couldn't wait to see how the computer would write this column for me. We, (Mac the computer and I), inserted a word here, changed the print style in another place, and erased my typos. The only problem occurred when I pressed the wrong key and erased the entire first paragraph. Fortunately, Mac has a better memory than I do and the first paragraph was retrieved from his memory and re-typed.

The computer has taken over my desk, and at the present time my sewing room has become the computer room. Within one short week it has changed my way of doing some things and the way that I spend some of my time. But how are families affected when a computer joins the ranks?

While research is not complete, many of the affects are seen as positive. Dr. James Van Horn, extension family sociology specialist, reports that, "A computer in the home can enhance and strengthen the family. At the very least, the computer is a challenge and provides many families with a reason to work together." Just the complexity and the fact that it can do so many things encourages family members to become involved with one another in solving various problems. Working on computer problems is similar to the family putting together a large puzzle, with each member contributing some of the pieces.

Another positive is that the computer requires active participation. Unlike watching television, a passive activity, the computer requires activity to make it happen.

Children today have grown up with computers. As a result, they are unafraid of this "new technology." It is a part of their world. And because of it's complexity, the computer challenges a child with one problem after another. Once a problem is solved, the person using the computer, along with those helping, receives immediate results. This gives a feeling of competence, "I can do it!" This is one reason why children, and especially children

who may not do well in school, are often so enthused about using the computer. It captivates them and they learn in the process.

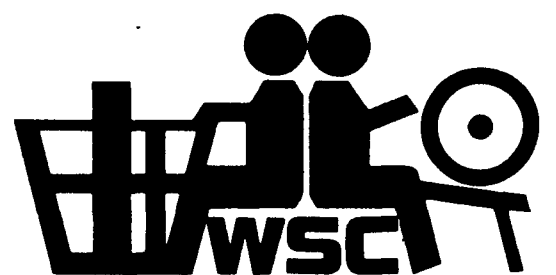
One concern about the computer and the family is the social implications. After a one week steady diet of computer, you might have thought I would have been thrilled to clean the house and mow the lawn. Instead, I found myself rushing through activities to get back to the computer. While I anticipate I'll recover from this "computer bug," for some children, computers have taken the place of a "best friend." Computers make convenient friends because they are always available, they always respond, and they have infinite patience. It is possible to get "hooked" on computers to the exclusion of social contact with other children.

In this computer age, the purchase of a home computer is often viewed as a criteria of a good parent (along with braces and a private room for each child). Actually, there is no need to push computers on children. Parents can expose children to computer usage in day to day activities—at the store and bank. Families can take time to attend computer demonstrations together or enroll in one of the many classes available. Find out if your children are really interested in a computer. If your children don't care about computers, invest in a musical instrument, a box of acrylics, or simply give them time to figure out what they care about. Then, keep the door open for them to learn about computers if and when they're ready. Computers are a part of our lives, a part that most young children will respond to if they are not forced to forget other aspects of being alive.

If you decide to purchase a home computer it will require an investment of time and effort to evaluate the best buy for your family. You might read computer magazines, talk to others who own a home computer, attend a computer show, read directories and review software available, or take a short introductory course.

Well, I'll admit that after writing this column with the word processor, I've decided to retire the pad and pencil method. However, "I won't go as far as time magazine did in 1982 when they named the computer "Man of the Year." I still prefer my own 6'2", blond, walking and talking version as my man of the year.

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