## Consuming **Thoughts** by

Fay Strickler

Penn State Extension Home Economist for Berks Co.



Food costs can take up a large part of the family budget. While food is a necessity, often steps can be taken to decrease the food budget without sacrificing taste and nutrition. Here are a few suggestions to plan low-cost meals.

Evaluate family food choices. Do you rely on convenience foods, often eat meals away from home, or frequently choose gourmet or specialty foods? Each of these habits can inflate the money spent on food.

Foods prepared from scratch are cheaper then their convenience counterparts. (Notable exceptions are orange juice and pancake and cake mixes.) When vou choose a convenience food, you are paying for the food, the labor of the person preparing it, and packaging. How many convenience foods could you replace with made-from-scratch versions?

Similar to convenience foods, the price of foods eaten away form home contains hidden labor and "atmosphere" costs. If family members frequently choose meals at restaurants, cafeterias, or fast food joints, you may want to reconsider these habits.

While gourmet and specialty foods can add excitement and variety to your meals, they can also add dollars to the checkout tape. Plain food may have to be the backbone of your menus for a

Watch the meat portions. Meat, fish and poultry are often the most expensive items on the dinner plate. Many Americans also eat larger portions of these foods than is recommended. A total of 5 to 7 ounces of meat, poultry and fish per day provide all the protein needed by an adult. Growing teenagers need a little more and children need less.

Your dinner plate should be filled with more vegetables and starch foods (rice, noodles, pasta) than meat. Here are some portion sizes to help you estimate your protein intake. 1 egg = 1 ounce;  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup tuna = 1 ounce; 2 tablespoons peanut butter = 1 ounce; 1slice prepackage luncheon meat = 1 ounce. A piece of meat, poultry or fish the size of a deck of cards = 3 ounces. If you eat smaller portions you'll also consume less fat and calories.

Plan your meals. By planning meals (try to plan at least the main meal), you can take advantage of grocery specials on meat, better utilize the food in your cupboards, and reduce the stress of deciding what to prepare each day. Also plan one meal to eat leftovers. Any food that is thrown out because of spoilage wastes

If your family despises leftover vegetables, place a jar or plastic container in the freezer to hold the leftover bits. When the container is full, make soup! Buy in bulk and cut your own. If you have a wholesale store nearby, or if your supermarket carries bulk foods, you can often save by buying large quantities.

Another potential savings lie in cutting your own meat and poultry. A top or bottom beef round can be purchased at many supermarkets and cut at home into roasts steaks and stew meat. A whole chicken can be divided into legs, breasts, and cook the back, etc for soup.

Meat, poultry and fish: Along with checking the price per pound, consider the amount of waste from bone and gristle. Also remember that although products such as hot dogs and cold cuts seem inexpensive, they contain large amounts of fat and sodium which may not be a wise nutritional choice.

So, choose foods wisely and save in 2003!

#### Warning: This E-Mail's A Hoax

LEESPORT (Berks Co.) --- We all get them --- those e-mail warnings passed along by friends about computer viruses, health issues, and a host of other topics. So how can you tell if they're legitimate?

Clues can alert you to hoaxes. Vague technical language and instructions to send the message to everyone in your address book are two of them.

You don't have to guess. A number of sites can help you separate fact from fiction, including http:// hoaxbusters. ciac.org, maintained by the Computer Incident Advisory Capability Office at the U.S. Department of Energy. Antivirus software firms also list hoaxes. Before you pass along the next "urban legend," check

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# Supervise Child's Internet Usage

LEESPORT (Berks Co.) — The Internet has become a staple for many of today's teens. Chatting on-line has replaced telephone conversations.

Unfortunately, along with all of its great benefits, there are some negatives to the use of the Internet. Some adolescents are actually becoming addicted to the

**BLACK ROCK'S** 

Internet.

Many parents do not understand how computers work nor do they take the time to supervise their children's use of it. Parental advisories are available for many other forms of entertainment for children, such as video games, compact discs and movies. There is no such advisory when chil-

dren are left to use the Internet on their own. It is completely unregulated.

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it especially important for parents to supervise their children in their use of the Internet.

How can you tell if the Internet may be a problem for your child? Here are some warning signs you will want to be aware

- Do they spend an excessive amount of time on-line?
- Are they staying up late on the computer and having a hard time getting up in the morning?
  - Have their grades dropped?
- · Do they insist on privacy when they use the computer?
  - Are your long distance

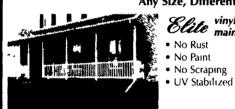
charges higher than usual?

 Does your teen receive personal gifts and mail from people you do

not know? For some great ideas to help your family with the Internet, request free booklet, Protecting Your Children on the Internet. Contact your local Penn State Extension of-

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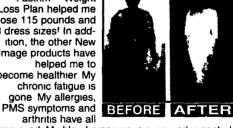
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