

**WTNS Radio OSU Extension Update for March 14, 2022**  
**Healthy People. Healthy Finances. Healthy Relationships.**

On today's OSU Extension update for Healthy People, Healthy Finances, & Healthy Relationships we'll talk about stretching your food dollar, and as always look at some upcoming programs from OSU Extension.

A common lament is that prices are going up for everything- at the pump and at the checkout. It doesn't look to be changing soon, so let's brainstorm some ways to stretch the food dollar.

Myplate.gov suggests that the first step is to plan, plan, plan. For some, this may not come naturally. The concept of planning out meals in advance seems constrictive. If you still like to have freedom in your meal planning, then approach it like a menu. Plan out your menu for the week, but don't assign days. That way you will have all the ingredients you need, but not feel like it is completely structured.

Be sure to compare the price on different brands and for different sizes of packages. The largest package is not always the best price. If you are used to buying brand names of foods, gradually give store brands a try. For some foods, the savings just won't be worth the compromise in the taste or texture. But for many items you will never notice a difference, except for the money that you will save.

Food manufacturers know that we consumers will pay for convenience. But this may not be the time to use our food dollars for convenience. Instead of purchasing pre-cut vegetables, or frozen meals, or bottled sauces, or prepped salads from the deli case, try preparing these from scratch.

I am a big fan of cooking large meals that make plenty of leftovers. These leftovers are perfect for lunches or on those evenings when there is little time between getting home from work and heading to an evening activity. And leftovers don't have to be the same as the original meal.

Make a big batch of grilled chicken that can be used later for a salad or stir fry.

Our local restaurants need our support. There are wise decisions we can make when eating out to stretch our dollars. Portions are often larger than one serving. Get a to-go box right away to save a portion of your meal for lunch the next day. If dessert is something you typically splurge on, try sharing instead of getting a dessert only for yourself.

A couple of years ago, Carol Smathers, OSU Extension field specialist for youth nutrition, shared her strategy for making 120 meals for under \$200. That would be 20 days of meals for two adults eating 3 meals a day or 10 days of meals for a family of four eating 3 meals a day.

Smathers wrote two articles for the Live Smart Ohio Blog at [livesmartohio.osu.edu](http://livesmartohio.osu.edu). She shares many photos of the meals that she creates that are healthy and under \$1.50 per meal. Here are a few of her meal inspirations.

**BREAKFASTS:** Every breakfast included 1/2 cup fruit, milk, and coffee. Some of her ideas are Homemade granola with pecans or Ham and eggs with toast or a muffin

**LUNCHES:** Every lunch included an entrée with protein, 1-2 fruit and vegetable servings, and water. Inspirations include Ham and cheese on Italian bread or bagel, Chili with cheese, or Pasta salad with pepperoni, vegetables, and fresh Parmesan.

**DINNERS** – Every dinner included an entrée with protein, a grain, 2 servings of vegetables, and water. Some dinners she made are Chicken w/ vegetables stir fry with General Tso's sauce or Tikka Masala, Pasta with marinara, pepperoni, fresh Parmesan, and garlic toast, and Bratwurst on toast with grilled peppers & onions

Making a plan and being intentional can help stretch those food dollars. And keep this Swedish proverb in mind "He who buys what he does not need, steals from himself."

And now let's look at some upcoming programs from OSU Extension. Electric multi cookers are a quick and convenient way to speed the cooking process compared to a normal stovetop version. Commonly known by the brand name "Instant Pot," these multi cookers not only save time, but also money and stress. Join me on March 22 from 6:00-7:30 PM at the Coshocton Public Library, where I'll be demonstrating a variety of recipes including Spaghetti Squash, Quinoa with Vegetables, and Chocolate Lava Cakes. Register for the class at [coshoctonlibrary.org](http://coshoctonlibrary.org) today. You can find details about future programs related to financial wellness, food preservation, diabetes, and more at our website [coshocton.osu.edu](http://coshocton.osu.edu).

In closing, at OSU Extension, we are proud to work for Coshocton County to help educate and improve our families, farms, and businesses. Please feel free to contact OSU Extension for more information at 740-622-2265 or visit our website at [coshocton.osu.edu](http://coshocton.osu.edu). Make it a healthy day!