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Economizing in Grocery Purchases



The Wise Homemaker Always Checks
Her Bills—Ewing Galloway

SOUTH DAKOTA STATE COLLEGE
EXTENSION SERVICE
C. Larsen, Director
Brookings, S. D.

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Economizing in Grocery Purchases

By Susan Z. Wilder

Extension Nutritionist and Supervisor Home Extension Work

How to economize in grocery purchases is a vital problem to the homemaker. If she will study the problem within the home and check this information against the outside sources she can train herself to become an efficient food buyer. The family will be well fed on a small amount of money and there will be a reserve for other things.

The observant groceryman is a keen analyst of the buying public. The homemaker will find it interesting to discuss food buying with him. He knows many ways to save in grocery purchases and is willing to acquaint her with them if she will ask questions. He is anxious to give good values. He wants to satisfy his customers.

This circular was prepared after interviews with grocerymen and homemakers in different towns in the state. Comments from both are included. The grocerymen were asked how homemakers could save on grocery purchases. They mentioned homemakers whom they considered efficient buyers. These homemakers were interviewed as to their methods of saving on grocery purchases.

The rapid changes in transportation and refrigeration have brought the products of tropical and foreign countries into the local markets of the state. The development of machinery has made it possible to preserve perishable products in quantity so they can be transported long distances and sold very reasonably.

Buy Essential Foods

The homemaker who wishes to purchase groceries economically and maintain her family in health will know the essential foods to include in the daily menu and the reasons for using them.

She will use the Family Food Guide to Low Cost Balanced Diet.

Every Meal—Milk for Children, Bread for All

Every day—

Cereal in porridge or pudding
Potatoes
Tomatoes (or oranges) for children
A green or yellow vegetable
A fruit or additional vegetable
Milk for all

Two to four times a week—

Tomatoes for all
Dried beans and peas or peanuts
Eggs (especially for children)
Lean meat, fish, or poultry or cheese
(U. S. Bureau of Home Economics)

With this knowledge the homemaker can easily make substitutions of the less expensive groceries for those of higher price. She can keep the family in health, satisfied and happy with the food served. Otherwise the saving in money will not be worth while.

Know Food Value in Relation to Price

The careful homemaker will compare the value and cost of food in different size containers. The size of the package does not indicate the exact amount inside. She will know the price before ordering but will not use the price as the only guide. She will order by weight and measure and recheck the sales slip as to exact weight, amount and cost.



Homemakers studying different brands of fruits in the local grocery store.—U. S. Department of Agriculture.

"The homemaker will know prices in relation to food value. Two cherries may be of the same size but one may have large pits and little pulp while the other has small pits and a large amount of pulp," said a homemaker.

"The homemaker always asks the cost; not how much actual food for the money." The prepared breakfast foods are expensive and the unprepared inexpensive. The homemaker judges too often by the size of the package. "Put in 5 ounces less and sell it 2 cents cheaper and the homemaker will buy because the price is reduced. When eggs are 40 to 50 cents a dozen you cannot get enough of them but when they are 8 or 10 cents they do not sell," were the groceryman's comments.

Budget Food Money

The homemakers who are good buyers budget their money and know what they spend.

They plan their meals and expenditures ahead of time and are able to make the money go further. They keep a record of purchases; classify them in groups as meat, cereals, sweets; study and check them against the

allowance so they know whether the money planned for each division of the food budget is adequate.

"The greater number of people buy what they need from day to day. The average grocery sale is under \$1.00," said the groceryman.

"The homemaker will check her purchases to assure herself that she has received what she ordered in kind, weight, and measure. She will find occasionally that she can give the family a food treat by shifting the items of the budget. She will plan ahead of time to use the perishable products immediately or to preserve them."

Buy In Quantity

The following table shows the possibility of quantity buying in staple groceries:

If you buy	Amount	Cost		Amt.	Cost	*Cost	You Save
Butter	1 lb.	\$.27	in place of	$\frac{1}{4}$ lb.	\$.08	\$.32	\$.05
Cocoa	1 lb.	.29	in place of	$\frac{1}{2}$ lb.	.20	.40	.11
Coffee (in 1 lb. cans)	3 lb.	1.10	in place of	1 lb.	.40	1.20	.10
Dates (in bulk)	2 lb.	.25	in place of	12 oz.	.25	.66	.41
Flour—patent	49 lb.	1.35	in place of	5 lb.	.20	1.96	.61
Fruit—canned, pints	1 doz.	1.35	in place of	1 pt.	.15	1.80	.45
Jam—Raspberry	4 lb., 8 oz.	1.15	in place of	1 lb.	.35	1.40	.25
Oatmeal—paper cartons	3 lb. 7 oz.	.18	in place of	$1\frac{1}{2}$ lb.	.10	.22	.04
Peaches	65 cr.	.85	in place of	1 doz.	.25	1.38	.43
Prunes (40-50)	5 lb.	.50	in place of	1 lb.	.12 $\frac{1}{2}$.63	.13
Raisins—bulk	4 lb.	.34	in place of	15 oz.	.15	.64	.20
Sugar	100 lb.	5.00	in place of	10 lb.	.53	5.30	.30
Mayonnaise	1 lb.	.35	in place of	$\frac{1}{2}$ lb.	.20	.40	.05
Tea	$\frac{1}{2}$ lb.	.35	in place of	$\frac{1}{4}$ lb.	.20	.40	.05
Vegetables—pints, canned, standard	1 doz	1.10	in place of	1 pt.	.10	1.20	.10
TOTAL		14.43			3.28 $\frac{1}{2}$	17.91	3.28

* Cost of larger amounts if purchased at smaller unit prices.

After having estimated the staple grocery needs the homemaker will place as large an order as she can afford considering the percentage saved by cash payment, the money invested, the home storage facilities and the time saved by having a supply ready to use. Careful inquiry will help the homemaker decide the staples she prefers to buy in quantity. She will find the reason if the price seems too high. The product may be out of season, of extra fine quality, of a nationally advertised brand, or a scarcity of the food in the market may exist. The price may be low because the store is selling one product in large quantities to draw the trade. One store specialized in navy beans and canned tomatoes, and sold 1,000 to 1,500 pounds of beans a week in January. Eighty per cent of the canned products sold were tomatoes. As a result the price was very low.

"The staples like sugar, flour and dried fruit include twenty or more different groceries. They are always the least expensive and bring customers to the store. There may be a difference in price in two brands of a product like cake flour or chocolate."

Homemakers can buy canned products in dozen lots. The saving is from 5 to 15 per cent. The groceryman prefers to sell in dozen lots because he feels the homemaker will use more if she has the supply at home. To the woman of good judgment it is a saving if she is clever in her meal planning. Said the groceryman, "Homemakers who want the best quality of canned products will make an effort to secure them. There is another class to whom a can of beans is a can of beans or a can of corn is a can of corn."

"To help homemakers know the good buys we do everything we can. The cheaper goods of quality are always displayed prominently."

Produce Some Foods

A garden helps save on grocery purchases, in cutting down cash expenditures for fresh and canned vegetables and fruits. The extent to which it lowers the food expenditure will depend on the time and effort the family uses to produce a good garden, live out of it in summer and preserve and store the extra crop. "Raise a garden and buy fewer groceries" is the slogan of an efficient homemaker.

The home production of milk, eggs, cream and meat such as poultry, pork and beef is also an important item in saving on the family food expenditures.

"Meat, especially in the form of steaks purchased at the market is expensive. Beef pot roasts cost less and when served with noodles and dumplings are nutritious, palatable and inexpensive," said the homemaker.

The grocerymen report they sell quantities of prepared meats. There is a demand for minced ham and summer sausage selling from 18 to 50 cents. The cheaper sausages contain a quantity of cereal. Eighteen cents is expensive for cereal since oatmeal is 18c to 25c for 3 pounds, 7 ounces and rice six pounds for 20c. The prepared meats are always expensive. The homemaker with ingenuity and planning can reduce the meat cost $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ if she uses home produced poultry, pork and beef. Buying prepared meats is one of the most costly ways to spend the food dollar.



Two bottles of vanilla extract. The bottle on the left contains 2 fluid ounces, while the one on the right contains but 1 fluid ounce. While the sizes of the bottles are somewhat deceptive, the purchaser will not be misled as to the quantity received in case she reads the quantity of contents statement required by the pure food law on all packages of foods and beverages.—U. S. Department of Agriculture.

Can Extra Garden Products

The more provident homemakers can products when they are plentiful. Those who can extensively in summer do not buy many canned products in winter. "Can fruits when they are low in price. Don't buy them when they are first in season. Have patience for a little while and they can be purchased for half and the family will have a treat too. It sometimes helps to open a can of that particular fruit when it is first in season," said a homemaker. Know the cost of home canned fruit. It is less expensive than the commercially canned. A crate of strawberries, including sugar and fuel, home canned, costs 15c a pint while commercially canned strawberries cost 25c a pint. Homemade peach jam costs 10c a pint and the commercial 25c. Home canned meats are inexpensive, and if the canning is done in the winter much time is saved in the busy season because the meat is ready to use.

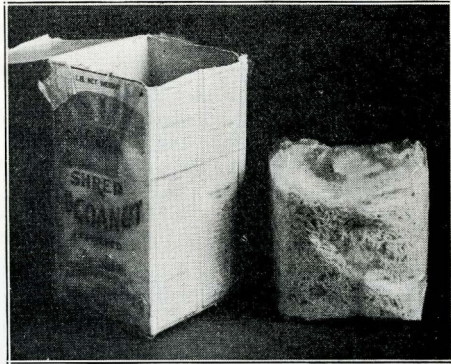
Prepare More Foods at Home

"Bake bread, don't buy it ready baked. Doing one's own baking is a big item in saving on groceries. At least $\frac{1}{2}$ the cost of bread can be saved by baking it at home, unless it requires too much time and energy which might be used to better advantage some other way," said the homemaker.

Cookies of excellent quality can be made at home most inexpensively. It is a question whether it is an economy to buy manufactured cookies. They are selling at 19c to 45c a pound, while flour, the main ingredient, is selling at \$1.25, \$1.50 and \$1.60 for 49 pounds or 2c to 3c a pound.

"Buy raw breakfast cereals from the mills and prepare them at home instead of buying prepared cereals. Five pounds for 20 cents of partially ground wheat is a good buy," said the homemaker. These cereals can be bought from many South Dakota mills. The homemaker must know whether she can keep a large quantity in good condition.

Home produced meat can be prepared in a variety of ways for serving and canning. There is a tendency to serve monotonous meals when meat is produced at home in large quantities. The homemaker's effort should be directed toward getting variety and palatability into the meals of home produced products if she is to save on grocery purchases effectively.



A package of shred cocoanut which is decidedly deceptive. The shred cocoanut contained in an oil paper wrapper occupies scarcely more than half the space of the cardboard box. The buyer will be guided by reading the quantity of contents and the net weight statements upon the label.—U. S. Department of Agriculture.

Study Commercially Canned Products

The wise homemaker studies the brands of canned products on the local market and purchases those she considers the best quality at the price she wishes to pay. She cannot rely on the price as the index of quality. In an examination of six different brands of peas, pint cans selling for 15c were as good in color, size and flavor when prepared as one for 25c. This is not true of all brands.

The groceryman recounted the story of a family in which the husband maintained that the wife spent too much on canned corn. He insisted that they try a less expensive brand. The wife served the cheaper brand and immediately the husband complained that there was something wrong with the cooking. After the use of the two brands a number of times they returned to the original brand.

The groceryman said that number 10 cans of fruits and vegetables are the best buys. Raspberries and strawberries in number 10 cans are selling for 59c, apricots 55c, loganberries 42c, pears 45c. Pineapple and cherries are 55c when a year ago they sold for 85c and 95c.

"Buy fruits in number 10 cans and recan them or make them into preserves," said the homemaker.

"A number 10 can of strawberries, sugar and fuel cost 90c—made into preserves it yielded $3\frac{1}{2}$ quarts at a cost of 25c a quart."

Number 10 cans of vegetables can also be purchased. Corn, string beans and spinach in number 10 cans are selling for 45c.

One groceryman said that he sells many half pint cans of different

vegetables and fruits for 10c and that often times homemakers refuse to buy pint cans of those vegetables and fruits, also for 10c because they may have some left over and cannot serve it.

Salmon is the greatest seller in canned fish. The price varies from 38c a pound and 28c for a half pound of best quality to 28c a pound of medium variety and 15c per pound of the poorest quality. The higher priced salmon, like the cod is rich in oil which furnishes vitamin D. Canned salmon

at 15c a pound is not as fine quality and rich in oil as the more expensive but is of good flavor.

The groceryman made the following observations: "Read the label on the can. Two cans may be of almost the same size, perhaps only 3 ounces different. The one may sell for 10c and two of the other for 25c. Perhaps the larger can is the better buy.

"The canned vegetables most frequently sold come in standards, extra standard and fancy packs. The standards are of good quality but the size varies, not as tender as 'fancy' and flavor is not quite so good. They are inexpensive and probably are the quality to buy if considerable saving is to be made in the purchase of

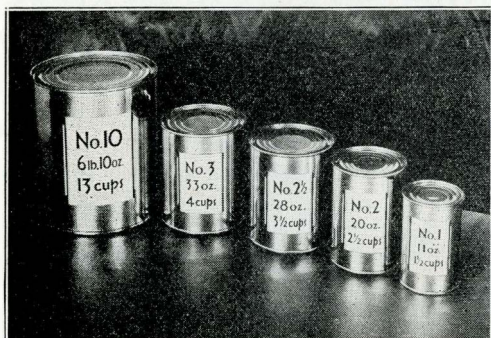


TABLE OF COMMERCIAL CAN SIZES
(American Can Company)

Size of Can	Weights	Cups
No. 1	10 1/2 oz. to 1 lb.	1 1/2
No. 2	1 lb., 2, 3 or 4 oz.	2 1/2
No. 2 1/2	1 lb., 12, 13, or 14 oz.	3 3/4
No. 3	2 lbs. to 2 lbs. 4 oz.	4
No. 5	3 lbs., 8 oz.	7
No. 10	6 lbs., 4 oz. to 6 lbs., 14 oz.	13 1/4

canned products. The 'fancy' packs have only the most tender vegetables. The 'extra standard' are larger and even more perfect.

"The sugar content and the solidness of the pack determines the grade of berry." Fruits may be bought canned as fancy, 'heavy syrup, no blemish, pieces large and uniform;' choice 'lighter syrup, perfect fruit but small pieces;' standard, 'light syrup, pieces likely to vary in size.' 'A low grade cherry in large cans runs as low as 6 pounds, 4 ounces, 6 pounds, 7 ounces while the best grade is 6 pounds, 9 ounces.' Fruits put in water pack are seconds and carry the statement on the can, 'Below the U. S. Standard, low quality but not illegal.' A poor grade of berries is not packed because they will not sell. Under the Mapes law (federal) canners must label canned food to show the standard of the product.

Buy Dried Fruits After Study of Demand, Quality and Price

Dried fruits are an excellent food and quite inexpensive.

There is always a supply of dried apricots, peaches, pears, apples, prunes, dates, figs, and raisins; the greatest demand is for prunes and apricots. Dried pears and apples are in little demand. The groceryman gave as the probable reason for the small demand for dried apples the fact that the fresh apples are inexpensive and are always available. The demand for dates and raisins daily is quite constant because homemakers use them in baking. The greatest demand in prunes is 90 to 100 to a pound at five to eight cents a pound. The groceryman questioned whether the homemaker buying this brand receives as much for her money as if she purchased prunes 30 to 40 a pound for 10 to 15 1/2c a pound. It will depend somewhat on the use she wishes to make of the prunes. The smaller sizes may be

best for sauce and the largest for salads and confections. Apricots are 18 to 32c a pound. The greatest demand is for apricots at 30c a pound. They are of better color, flavor and more attractive. The 18c variety of apricots is dark and the flavor is not so good. A 14 to 15 ounce package of raisins sells for 12 to 15 cents. The groceryman suggested a better buy in 4 pounds (no seeds) for 34c—a saving of 20c if the larger amount were purchased. Raisins keep well when home stored. If the homemaker uses large quantities she will save by purchasing the 4 pound package. Figs in 12 ounce packages costing 15c are the best buy because a small amount of figs are used. Bulk figs can be purchased and would be the better buy if a homemaker uses many figs. Dates are less expensive than they have been for years. If purchased in 12 ounce packages they cost 25 cents. This is at the rate of 33c a pound but bulk dates are much less, 2 pounds costing 25 c or 13c per pound. It means a saving of 20c if the 2 pound package of dates is purchased.

Study Selling Agencies

The homemaker will study the grocery selling agencies that she has access to locally. These may include the cash and carry, the credit, the cooperative, the mail order store, the parcel post, the road side, and farm women's markets. She will use one or all of these depending on whether the store is clean and easy to reach, the owner is honest and accommodating, groceries are of good quality and average price.

"Most homemakers take time to shop. If they look around they sure can find good buys," said a groceryman.

"She is as good a shopper as I have ever known. She knows prices, specials, and how to prepare foods. If fresh carrots are cheaper than canned carrots she knows it. She can judge value. She has been feeding three adults and four children this year on what my family of three lived on—an average of \$50 a month including meat, milk and groceries," remarked the groceryman.

"The homemaker can save money if she will watch for grocery specials on staple products. She can almost keep her pantry stocked on specials," said a homemaker who estimated she saved \$25 during the year by knowing quality in groceries and making use of sale purchases.

Use Educational Material

The homemaker will study the educational material available on savings in grocery purchases from the U. S. Department of Agriculture, State College Extension Service, magazine articles and commercial circulars. She should attend meetings and talk over food buying problems with neighbors and grocerymen. She will receive valuable information from these sources if she will ask intelligent questions after carefully summarizing her family food needs and the amount of money she wishes to spend. After studying this material the homemaker will think over the purchasing problems which bother her the most, decide on a plan for meeting them and try the plan until its truth or fallacy has been tested.

The groceryman gave the following answers to the question, "What are some of the things you wish homemakers would not do?"

1. Telephone for a package of yeast in the morning and phone again for other groceries in the afternoon. This means two deliveries. If the homemaker thought through her grocery needs for the day she would place the complete order at once.

2. Place an order just before the delivery wagon is to leave the store. This means delaying the clerks in putting up the orders already in and holds up the delivery until the late order can be filled. The homemaker should know the hour the delivery starts and order early in order to prevent delay.

3. Complain about the quality of goods delivered or the service rendered to others and fail to speak to the groceryman so he can correct the difficulty. One instance given was that the delivery boy always broke a number of eggs. When reported and talked over with the boy a remedy was found.

4. Handle perishable foods such as peaches, bananas and cantaloupe in the store. Squeezing them will always leave a bruise. The groceryman said that he had one customer who bruised five cantaloupe in a few minutes. She did not buy.

5. Be unfair—A homemaker bought 2 bottles of commercial pectin, used one and returned the other. The groceryman discovered she had opened the bottle and filled it with water.

Sometimes homemakers buy meat for dinner, decide not use it, keep it until the following day without refrigeration and return the meat claiming it was spoiled when purchased.

6. Criticise the groceryman's products and prices and compare them with those from other stores. If he is reliable he is selling on as close a margin as he feels he can.

A method which will secure the groceryman's cooperation is to ask what he considers the best values. The homemaker may find bargains in groceries the very store she is criticising.

7. Criticise the groceryman for mistakes she makes. Sometimes women fail to seal their cans after processing. They lose the products but claim it is the poor quality of the rubber rings which the groceryman sells.

Cooperation between the homemaker and groceryman in meeting the family food needs will result in mutual benefit.

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