



Trim expenses for Thanksgiving feast

Money is tight in our household these days. Do you have ideas to share to help us reduce costs for Thanksgiving dinner?

Even when you're expecting a crowd, Thanksgiving dinner doesn't have to be expensive. Here are some tips, most of which can actually be used year-round to reduce food costs:

- Plan ahead. Write out your menu and watch grocery store ads for sales on items that you'll need. Sometimes stores will offer a free turkey if you spend a certain amount of money; if you take advantage of such an offer, be sure to buy only items that you will use. Sometimes, turkey is so inexpensive it's not worth spending the extra money on other items just to get it free.

- If you normally purchase ready-made items, consider going the old-fashioned, do-it-yourself route. Homemade dressing, gravy, mashed potatoes, sweet potatoes, pies and cranberry sauce, for example, are often less expensive than purchasing ready-made or boxed mixes.

You might even compare the cost of canned pumpkin pie filling with that of canned pumpkin puree and evaporated milk — the latter could be cheaper as long as you have other ingredients (sugar, eggs and spices) already on hand. A bonus: Homemade foods generally contain less sodium than boxed or other already-prepared foods. Depending on how you prepare them, they can be more

healthful in other ways too.

- Take a look at your traditional recipes and determine if you can substitute or leave out ingredients without sacrificing quality. Does your homemade stuffing really need parsley, and could you use onions in it instead of shallots? For sweet potatoes, would a bit of brown sugar work just as well as marshmallow fluff?

- In addition, take a hard look at your traditional menu and ask yourself if anything could be dropped. (No one seemed to notice the year my mom stopped serving pearled onions at Thanksgiving.)

- If you don't already, ask guests to bring a dish to share instead of shouldering the entire burden yourself.

- Resist the urge (if you have it) to use disposable plates, cups, utensils and glasses. If you don't have enough silverware or other dinnerware for everyone who will be joining you, ask a guest to bring some to supplement what you have on hand.

- For a natural (and free) centerpiece, collect fall leaves, twigs, berries, grasses and even weeds.

- Be sure to make use of all your leftovers. Refrigerate perishables within two hours, and plan ahead on how you will be able to make use of any remaining food over the following days so it (and the money you paid for it) doesn't go to waste.

Chow Line is a service of Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Chow Line, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH, 43210-1044, or filipic.3@cfaes.osu.edu.



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