![good CHEAP eats® BY JESSICA FISHER]

What to Do
When You Need to Save Money on Food FAST

ASSESS THE SITUATION.

$ **How much cash do you have?** What have you been spending? On what?

DEVELOP A STRATEGY.

How much food do you have on hand? Take an inventory of the food you have. Focus on eating this before you buy more.

CREATE A BUDGET.

Based on your past spending and the USDA Food Cost reports, develop a doable budget for the next month, including all expenses plus food. Don't spend more than your allotted amount.

PLAN MEALS BASED ON WHAT YOU HAVE.

List as many meals as you can. Prep foods ahead so it's easier to stick to the plans.

What More Can You Do?

1. **Create a catalog of budget meals you love.** This way you'll be excited about eating home cooked meals. Focus on ingredients that are cheap or go on sale often.
2. **Learn the Good Cheap Eats Way to Save.** Plan, Shop, Cook! It's easy when you know the system.
3. **Take the 10-Day Save Money Fast Challenge.** You'll save money and get a solid plan in action to keep going toward your goals.

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To Make Quicker Progress

A few months staying on budget and using what you have will help you reduce costs, however, you'll make quicker progress when you dial up your efforts. Here's how:

- **Be clear on the difference between wants and needs.** When money is tight, focus on the needs first.
- **Make plans to use or freeze leftovers.** Waste not, want not!
- **Shop your kitchen in a focused way.** Do a pantry challenge and/or be sure to repurpose leftovers
- **Do a Grocery Store Showdown** so that you know what's the best grocery store for the things you buy.
- **Start tracking grocery prices** so you can easily recognize a sale.
- **Price out your recipes and meals** so you're more aware of your savings. It's so much cheaper to cook at home than dine out!
- **Talk with family members about their likes and dislikes.** It's not a bargain if no one wants to eat it.
- **Track grocery spending regularly** so you can stay on budget and adjust as needed.
- **Practice freezer meal prep** so you can buy free time and avoid restaurants and impulse buys. If there's food prepped, you won't be tempted to buy something more!
- **Keep an inventory of food you have on hand** so you can reduce waste and avoid duplicate purchases.
- **Clean the fridge every 3 days** to make sure you eat up prepped food before it goes bad.

Learn more in the 10-Day Save Money Fast Challenge.