

## **How to Feed a Family of 4 on \$50 a Week**

*from AICCCA Member, [Take Charge America](#)*

Despite reports of a falling unemployment rate in the U.S., there are still millions of Americans that are either out of work, working part-time (when they want to work full-time), under-employed or have just given up on finding work. Many who are working have seen their wages remain stagnant, without a cost of living increase or suffered a reduction in pay or hours worked. It seems that it is impossible to turn on the TV without seeing reports of businesses closing or laying off employees.

With the difficult job market and the increase in the cost of goods and services, many people are looking for any way possible to make their dollar go farther. For many families, housing and food are the biggest expenses that they face.

In this article we are going to take a look at how it is possible to feed a family of four breakfast, lunch dinner and snacks, that are relatively healthy, on just \$200 a month... without extreme couponing, Ramen Noodles every night or a ton of pre-packaged foods.

Making meals and shopping on a budget, especially if you haven't done it before, will take planning, practice and some resolve on your part. Here are some tips to help you save on groceries and stick to your budget.

### **Set your budget for groceries... and stick to it.**

You might have your shopping list with you, all planned out in advance, and know exactly how much you want to spend but if you arrive at the grocery store with your credit or debit card in your pocket you are setting yourself up for failure.

The smart bargain shoppers go to the store with cash... only the amount they have budgeted for that trip. You might have the best intentions of sticking to your budget but it is easy to be tempted to go over when you have additional funds at your disposal. If you go to the store with only \$50 in cash, the cards left at home, it will be impossible to overspend.

### **What about the coupons?**

You do not have to be one of those extreme coupon clippers to feed your family on a \$50 a week budget. For most of us, using coupons to the extreme is just not practical. We have all seen the shows or read the stories of people getting \$600 or more worth of items at the grocery store for just pennies or even free, and it looks so simple.

But the reality is, couponing is far from simple... it usually requires you to go to different stores a few times a week, most cashiers would have a meltdown if you handed them over a 100 coupons at one time, not to mention you have to buy, find, clip and organize all of those coupons. That's not to say you should stay away from using coupons should you come across some for items that you would normally buy... and of course the store at which you normally shop accepts them.

## **Plan your meals**

You might be thinking that there is no way to plan meals for four people and only spend \$200 a month... but it can be done, my family of four is living proof. As a matter of fact, we just got done putting away our \$49.82 worth of groceries for the week. Instead of showing you a fictitious menu, let's take a look at what my family of four ate last month.

Our family consists of my wife and I, and our two boys that are 10 and 12... they both have very healthy appetites! Our boys are homeschooled making it much easier to control what and how much they eat, without the worry of packing lunches for school.

*Month of June, 2014 - \$193.49 spent on food*

We basically have two weekly menus that we rotate every other week, I'll just list one weeks' worth so you get the idea.

### **Monday**

Breakfast – cereal or oatmeal with fresh fruit

Lunch –

Snack – yogurt (homemade)

Dinner – Ham (on sale) green beans, baked potatoes, watermelon for dessert

Drinks – Kool Aid, water, coffee (for mom and dad), water

### **Tuesday**

Breakfast – eggs w/ ham (leftover), biscuits (homemade)

Lunch – Salad with hardboiled egg, ham (leftover), cheese and homemade ranch dressing

Snack – Rice Krispie Treats

Dinner – chicken soup (homemade), bread (homemade) butter

### **Wednesday**

Breakfast – Omelets and toast

Lunch – Salad or PB&J

Snack – Microwave popcorn

Dinner – Spaghetti with homemade sauce, bread (homemade) butter

### **Thursday**

Breakfast – breakfast burritos, egg, cheese sausage (on sale)

Lunch – bologna sandwiches, yogurt

Snack – BBQ potato chips (Dollar General brand \$1.00 5oz bag)

Dinner – Shake-n-bake (homemade) pork chops (on sale), green beans, watermelon

### **Friday**

Breakfast –

Lunch – salad with ham, cheese, homemade ranch

Snack – microwave popcorn

Dinner – Chicken quarters (on sale), peas, rice

### **Saturday**

Breakfast – cold cereal, fresh fruit

Lunch – BBQ chicken (leftover) sandwiches, homemade fries

Snack – yogurt, fresh fruit

Dinner – burritos, nachos, salad

## **Sunday**

Breakfast – eggs, bacon (on sale), biscuits and gravy

Lunch – chicken salad sandwiches (leftover chicken)

Snack – fresh fruit

Dinner – hamburgers, mixed fresh veggies, homemade fries

We are fortunate now that we live in a rural area and have a great selection of fresh vegetables and fruit in season. We anticipate being able to save even more money on food when our garden starts to produce.

We are constantly adding to our stockpile of food and buy bulk items when there is a really good sale. Being able to rely on your stockpile will eliminate the need to shop for those items each week.

While our meals might not appeal to everyone and they may not fit the textbook definition of healthy, we feel that we are able to provide our kids (and us) a tasty, balanced meals each day, free from fast food, all for around \$50 a week. With a bit of planning and smart purchases you can too.

Keep in mind that fifty dollars can buy you several bags of groceries that will feed your family for a week... or it can pay for one meal out at a restaurant! You decide.