Get the most for your budget! There are many ways to save on the foods that you eat. Three main steps are planning before you shop, purchasing the items at the best price, and preparing meals that stretch your food dollars.

Before you head to the grocery store, plan your meals for the week. Include meals like stews, casseroles, or soups, which “stretch” expensive items in to more portions. Check to see what foods you already have and make a list for what you need to buy.

Look for specials or sales on items at your local grocery store. Or buy in bulk, but remember about storing extra and enough freezer space.

Get creative with leftovers. Spice up your leftovers and use them in new ways. Remember, throwing away food is throwing away your money.

Lasagna Casserole

Ingredients:

1 pound ground beef
1/4 cup chopped onion
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon pepper, divided
1 pound medium pasta shells, cooked and drained
4 cups shredded part-skim mozzarella cheese, divided
3 cups 4% cottage cheese
2 large eggs, lightly beaten
1/3 cup grated Parmesan cheese
2 tablespoons dried parsley flakes
1 jar (24 ounces) pasta sauce

Directions:

1. In a large skillet, cook beef and onion over medium heat until meat is no longer pink, breaking meat into crumbles; drain. Sprinkle with salt and 1/4 teaspoon pepper; set aside.
2. In a large bowl, combine the pasta, 3 cups mozzarella cheese, cottage cheese, eggs, Parmesan cheese, parsley and remaining pepper. Transfer to 13x9in. baking dish or two 8x8in dish to freeze one. Top with beef mixture and spaghetti sauce (dish will be full).
3. Cover and bake at 350 degrees for 45 minutes. Sprinkle with remaining mozzarella cheese. Bake, uncovered until bubbly and cheese is melted, 15 minutes longer, Let stand for 10 minutes before serving.

Nutrition Information: 1 Serving, 667 Calories, 30g Fat, 157mg Cholesterol, 1209mg Sodium, 56g Carbohydrates, 12g Sugar, 4g Fiber, 44g Protein

Note: Replace the ground beef with Italian sausage if you want more spice. To Freeze: Sprinkle casserole with remaining mozzarella cheese. Cover and freeze unbaked casserole. To use, partially thaw in refrigerator overnight. Remove from refrigerator 30 minutes before baking. Preheat oven to 350°. Bake casserole as directed, increasing time as necessary until heated through and a thermometer inserted in center reads 165°.
Tis the season for Pumpkin Picking! From tasty recipes, to decorating for the season, pumpkin season is in full swing! Pumpkins aren’t just pretty to look at; they provide a ton of great nutrition. Pumpkins provide a great source of vitamins A and C, Potassium, and Fiber. Pumpkins are a type of winter squash that are available in October and November. If you really take a liking to pumpkin, canned pumpkin is convenient and available year-round. Try adding in pumpkin purée to add some yummy fall flavor along with fiber to some of your favorite fall recipes!

Taking a few scary easy steps can ensure your Halloween is both enjoyable and healthy! Walk from house to house with your children while they trick-or-treat instead of driving. This is a great way to get in some exercise! However, take steps to ensure you stay safe since pedestrian injuries are the most common injury to children on Halloween. Some safety tips from the American Academy of Pediatrics include always staying with young children, staying in a group, putting reflective tape on costumes and trick-or-treat bags, carrying a cellphone for quick communication, staying on well-lit streets, always using the sidewalk, only crossing the street as a group at established crosswalks, and never assuming you have the right of way since motorists may have trouble seeing you. If you have older children who are trick-or-treating alone, review the route that is acceptable to you, set a specific time when they should return home, and be sure everyone has a working flashlight with batteries. Learn more at bit.ly/AAPHalloweenSafety.

MANHATTAN, Kan. — When paying the monthly bills, it may feel like the paycheck just doesn’t go as far as it once did, and this is especially true in a time of price increases, said Elizabeth Kiss, K-State Research and Extension specialist in personal finance planning.

To help consumers, Kiss referred to a K-State Research and Extension publication titled, When Your Income Drops: Sharpening Survival Skills.

Buying grocery items that are on sale and using coupons are ways to help reduce food costs. Another small adjustment people can make to extend their financial resources is to minimize food waste. Cook in smaller portions or freeze excess food for future meals. “Throwing foods away is like putting money in the trash,” Kiss said.

For more tips, check out the K-State online publication series, When Your Income Drops.