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25 WAYS TO MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR GROCERY DOLLARS

Twin Cities Area Natural Food Co-ops Offer Tips for Stretching Food Purchases

MINNEAPOLIS (May, 2009) — With the economy in decline and shopping budgets extremely tight, consumers are seeking ways to make the most of their expenditures. While many families cut back in other areas before reducing their food budget food co-ops throughout the Twin Cities and surrounding area suggest consumers can actually do more with the grocery dollars they already are spending.

“Simple activities, such as developing a food budget, planning before shopping, shopping wisely, changing the way in which you prepare meals and continuously evaluating spending habits all are ways to make the most of your grocery dollars,” said Kim Kusnier, marketing programs specialist for National Cooperative Grocers Association (NCGA) – a business services cooperative, to which the Twin Cities food co-ops belong.

“Implementing these tips do take time,” she added. “But, by following them, you can spend less time worrying about your budget, and more time with family and friends, cooking, dining and conversing.”

Twin Cities Area Co-ops' 25 Tips for Making the Most of Your Grocery Dollars:

Set a Budget:

- Calculate your current food expenditures
- Decide on your grocery budget
- Stick to your budget by setting up a tracking method, much like your checkbook

Plan Ahead:

- Clean out expired or unusable food from the pantry and fridge
- Inventory what's in your freezer
- Draw up a list of staple foods you'll need every week
- Create a grocery list you can re-use every week
- Share the list with your family for their input
- Clip coupons, but only for items on your list
- Plan your shopping around sales

Shop Wisely:

- Stick to your list; avoid impulses

- Change your purchases with what's in season
- Focus on the perimeter of the store, where bulk, produce and basics are most available
- Consider special orders of bulk quantities of food

Change Your Patterns:

- Prepare the produce you've purchased (i.e., clean and slice fruit and vegetables and store in a container in your fridge)
- Organize your cupboard
- Put a message pad or board on your fridge with meal plans and snack options; note when leftovers or perishables were put into the fridge
- Don't overstock; plan for leftovers
- Minimize purchasing food at convenience stores
- Slowly add more cooking time into your schedule
- Plant a garden
- Try to eat as a household more often

Re-evaluate Your Methods:

- Try your budget and plan for a few months before assessing
- Continually monitor how you're spending your food budget
- Adjust your budget, if necessary

Tips provided by Liz McMann, Mississippi Market Natural Foods Co-op, St. Paul, Minn.

About Twin Cities Natural Food Co-ops

The Twin Cities are nationally recognized for their progressive and strong natural food cooperative system. In the metropolitan and surrounding area, there are 11 independently owned natural food cooperatives: Eastside Food Co-op (Northeast Minneapolis), Just Food Co-op (Northfield), Lakewinds Natural Foods (Anoka, Chanhassen and Minnetonka), Linden Hills Co-op (Southwest Minneapolis), Mississippi Market (two St. Paul locations), City Center Market (Cambridge), River Market Community Co-op (Stillwater), Seward Co-op Grocery & Deli (South Minneapolis), St. Peter Food Co-op (St. Peter), Valley Natural Foods (Burnsville) and The Wedge (Uptown Minneapolis).

For more than 30 years, Twin Cities natural food co-ops have proudly offered local and organically grown foods and products. For more information and a list of local food co-ops, visit www.twincitiesfood.coop.

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