

Stretttccccch Your Food Dollar

By [Denise Schipani](#) Sent: Wednesday March 10, 2010



Denise Schipani is a mother of two. She's the Mom Advice columnist for [American Baby](#), and blogs at www.ConfessionsofaMeanMommy.com

So many money tips these days strike me as obvious. Brew your own coffee! Borrow books from the library! Shop the clearance racks!

Golly, y'think?

Like my grandmothers before me, frugality is in my genes. I tear Brillo pads in half—and napkins. I wash Ziploc bags. I'll show you my \$7 jeans if you show me yours! But in these credit crazy times, when a \$5 coffee is normal and you can spend \$3 on a box of frozen, crustless PB&J sandwiches, the temptation to overspend—especially on food—can be overwhelming. Here's how I keep grocery costs in check for a family of four:

- **Make a no-budge budget.** I get in and out of the grocery store on about \$100/week. That means knowing what we have, what we need and never buying extras just because they're on sale. Something else will be on sale next week.
- **Buy only what you'll eat.** A 2008 study by the Environmental Protection Agency found that Americans waste about 30 million tons of food each year. That's like throwing

money in the garbage. I get a quarter of a pound of deli ham, exactly enough for three or four sandwiches for my sons on weekdays. It's PB&J—with crusts—after that.

- **Forget brand loyalty.** I'll buy anyone's bread, crackers, corn, jam, etc. (within reason)—as long as the price is right.
- **Browse the just-past-sell-by rack.** If you're going to stir-fry peppers, who cares if they're yesterday's bruised ones?
- **Convert the kids.** Precious frugal mom moment? When your seven-year-old says, "Mom, if the Fruity Cheerios are on sale and you have a coupon, can you get some?"

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