

Key ingredient to save money at Thanksgiving? Planning

November 24 2008



(PhysOrg.com) -- Of all the things you can do to create both joyful and economical holiday meals, the most important one is planning, says a Montana State University Extension nutrition educator.

"When I think of trying to make it all work for Thanksgiving and other holiday meals, the biggest financial benefit comes from planning ahead," said Coleen Kaiser, MSU Extension's coordinator of two federally funded nutrition education programs: the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program and the federal food stamp program's education arm under its new name of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or SNAP-Ed.

"Just like in everyday cooking, when you think of how to provide your family with nutritious meals, planning is very important," she said.

Planning two-to-three weeks ahead of time lets you take full advantage of coupons and advertised specials at local grocery stores. It also lets you look for bargains at area "dollar" or thrift stores, which sometimes stock pickles, brown sugar or other groceries. Though making a special trip to those stores to shop for a few groceries may not make sense with the current price of gasoline, knowing ahead of time what your needs are for Thanksgiving may let you take advantage of your stop there when you go to look for a fall table decoration or crayons for your child.

"And when you shop little by little, it's not such a big hit on the budget," Kaiser adds.

The number of offerings on the holiday table also provides an opportunity to save a bit on each dish -- and not by changing the recipe, either.

"If you decide to have all of the dishes, you may be able to make less of each one," suggests Kaiser. That can reduce the food bill by avoiding waste.

Traditionally, Thanksgiving is such an expanded meal that the table may not even be able to hold all of the family classic recipes that you prepare. That means that another useful part of planning is to ask the family which recipes are their favorites. Which recipes really make it a holiday? Does everyone love it when you prepare grandma's pecan and pumpkin pie, or is one the clear favorite? The same types of choices can be made on vegetable and other side dishes. Does your family want both green bean casserole and candied yams, or is one enough?

"Involving the family in the choices might simplify both shopping and

the hours spent preparing for the dinner," Kaiser said.

Also consider stocking up for another holiday meal while shopping for Thanksgiving. Grocery stores often have coupons and special prices on canned goods like yams, pumpkin pie filling and condensed milk. If you stock up, you'll have them on-hand for the next holiday.

While Kaiser generally is a proponent of adapting traditional family recipes to be healthier and contain fewer calories, she says Thanksgiving may be one of those times when you want to enjoy grandma's full-flavored and full-calorie recipes.

"There may be about three holiday meals each year that have special significance, and it's okay to enjoy special foods at that time. Just pay attention to when you feel full," she said. "And on that topic, don't skip meals to leave room for Thanksgiving dinner. Feeling like you are starving is setting the stage for over-indulging."

You can take care of some of the extra calories and be good to yourself by putting on your coats after the meal and going for a walk or even a treasure hunt after the dinner.

"Take advantage of the fact that you are together with family and friends and have some fun together," Kaiser said.

If you have adult children or friends invited to dinner, be sure to invite them to bring their family favorite recipe. That spreads the cost, the work and the fun of the holidays.

Planning what to do with leftovers is a good way of decreasing the cost of the one big holiday meal. There are many recipes for leftover turkey and vegetables, some of which you can find on the MSU Extension Nutrition Education Program's recipe box at

www.montana.edu/nep/recipes.htm . You can substitute turkey for any recipe that suggests chicken, including soup, tetrazzini, and stews.

Other helpful websites include the federal SNAP-Ed Connection with healthy recipes, food safety info and ideas for holiday foods snap.nal.usda.gov and the University of Nebraska Extension flyer titled, "Turkey Anytime: A recipe for Turning Leftovers into Planned-Overs" at lancaster.unl.edu/food/turkey-anytime.pdf

Provided by Montana State University

Citation: Key ingredient to save money at Thanksgiving? Planning (2008, November 24) retrieved 24 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2008-11-key-ingredient-money-thanksgiving.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.