

Meals for Hard Times

How one lady is able to feed a family of 6 for one week on \$30

By Dee Ann Guzman

I am writing this for Moms who sometimes have to feed several children on very little money. We all get to this place at one time or another.

These are the basic things that I use when really low on money. If you usually cook from scratch you may already have some of these things. Go down the list and check off what you have.

- Oatmeal
- Dry beans
- Rice
- Cornmeal
- Frozen chubs of ground turkey from Save a lot .69/lb
- Milk
- Eggs
- Chicken leg quarters
- Tomato paste
- Pasta
- Flour
- Salt
- Sugar
- Cinnamon
- Baking powder
- Shortening
- Salt pork or bacon
- Margarine
- Onions
- A few packages of frozen veggies
- Flour
- Ramen noodles
- Cans of tuna
- Peanut butter

I don't know where you live, but I live in Oklahoma. Here, Save-a- Lot foods is one of the best places to pick up deals. However on the West coast, I used to shop at Grocery Warehouse. If you have one of these nearby you are certainly blessed. Their logo has a rainbow on the building usually.

Now, I am going to assume that all your husband can give you is \$30. Maybe he can only give \$20, and I'll show you where to adjust. Here, Chicken quarters are sometimes on special for .29/lb.. So for two weeks I would probably buy 2-3 of

those. If they are more expensive I would buy two, but at .29/lb I would buy 3. Shop for sales with your news paper before going out. Plan your route in advance to save money on gas. Assuming that you bought 3 chicken quarters we've already spent \$9.

The next thing on the list is bacon, salt pork or very cheap ham. Now I am going to assume that you have dry beans in the house. If you don't they must be purchased. The bacon can be bought in ends and pieces the cheapest, and this is perfect for using the ways I will suggest. If you spend \$3 on the bacon, and \$3 on the beans, we have spent \$15.

Now if you can, pick up some ground turkey at Save-a-Lot. Try to get 4 chubs @ .69/chub. So you have spent \$2.80 more or \$17.80. Now here is where things get sticky. First of all you need two things more to get through - milk and eggs. Now milk and eggs is something I always have, due to my goats and chickens. In fact it has been awhile since I have been in a really desperate situation, because of homesteading. However I started homesteading to help prevent us getting into a bad spot (within the Lord's will of course). So at this point, on \$30 you should purchase: 1 gallon of milk and 3 dozen eggs. The milk is NOT for drinking. Use the milk for cooking. On \$20 you should drop 10Lb of chicken to get your milk and buy 2 dozen eggs.

Now on \$20 you are done. On thirty dollars the balance should be made up with Ramen noodles, a can or 2 of tomato paste, a bag of potatoes, cornmeal, peanut butter and frozen vegetables. Now, you probably noticed that I said not to drink the milk. This is because that milk can be used more wisely for making meals. If your family are big milk drinkers, they will have to get used to not drinking so much right now. This is not a permanent thing, but rather temporary to get through. Also, as much as you are capable, try to balance your meals. However hard times call for hard ways of eating. Our grandmothers and grandfathers often simply ate meals like cornbread and milk. Extra money should be used for missed things on the list or luxury items such as cheese.

Now for the cooking. For all the cooking I am assuming you are feeding 6, like I would be. When you come home from the store divide the chicken into smaller portions, say four to a gallon ziplock bag. Put them in the freezer.

Day One

The first thing you do is put beans on to soak. Soak them overnight and rinse in the morning adding fresh water. Put those on to cook either in a crockpot or in a pan on the stove. Add a couple of pieces of bacon. At the same time you put the beans to soak, take a cup of milk, a cup of flour, and a teaspoon of sugar, and blend together. Leave in a warm spot covered by a paper towel. *[Ed. note - this is for the sourdough starter. There is some confusion regarding this recipe for starter and bread, so please read through the entire article before starting this. If*

*it is unclear, try **this recipe** instead.]* The next day, get up early and make eggs and bacon. In our house fried eggs stretch longer than scrambled. Partly because I usually make too many scrambled. So fry each person in the house an egg and make a little bacon. Also make some quick muffins.

Quick muffins

2 C. flour
3/4 cup sugar
1 Tbsp baking powder (omit if using self rising flour)
1 teaspoon cinnamon
3/4 to 1 C. milk with a dash of vinegar added, or omit if you don't have vinegar
1/4 C oil

Mix all together and pour into muffin tin filling cups by half, or pour into a loaf pan, and have bread. Bake at 400 degrees until golden brown.

After breakfast, make sure and put your beans on to cook. Then check the starter I had you set out last night. Does it smell sour? It should be beginning to smell sour. Set it aside until tomorrow. Now for lunch you can either choose tuna or egg salad sandwiches. Either way, make a batch of biscuits and stuff them with the mixture. Now take your tomato paste out, open all the cans. Drop large spoonfuls of tomato paste onto a cookie sheet and pop them in the freezer. Allow to freeze. When frozen take them out and put them into a ziplock bag. Now they can be used whenever you want a little tomato flavor.

Take two of these little tomato nuggets and drop them into your beans. Add a chopped onion and a little chili powder. Serve this for dinner along with cornbread. More than likely you have some left over beans, and they should be served the next day for lunch.

Tomorrow morning you will be making bread, so we will start it tonight. Take out your starter. Take 1 egg out and put it into a glass of hot tap water (do not crack it). Warm some milk, perhaps 1 quart, not hot just warm. Now get out a large bowl. Take three quarters of your starter and pour it into the bowl. To the rest of the starter add a cup of flour and a cup of milk. Put this back in the refrigerator. To your starter in the bowl, add your egg, 1/4 C oil, the warm milk, 8-12 cups of flour (start with 5-6 cups and add a little at a time until the dough is the right consistency), and mix and knead well. (Another word for beating the heck out of the dough: excellent stress reliever! No wonder our foremothers rarely got anxiety attacks!) Allow to rise in a warm place overnight.

Now, everyone has had a full stomach for today. Tomorrow has enough trouble of it's own. Simply enjoy today's contentment, and give thanks to God for his provision.

Day Two

Breakfast- Oatmeal and bacon

Right now apples and pears are getting ripe across the country. Perhaps you know of someone with apple trees or pear trees. Many times people don't do anything with them. Ask around and you are likely to find someone who would love to have someone glean their apples. It would be a good outing for the kids, and would help remind you of the wonderful joy that God has for us through his creation. Bring them home and cut them up and make applesauce, and apple pie, and apple muffins, and apple juice.

Punch down your risen bread dough and form into loaves. Let rise again for the morning, then bake at 350 degrees until golden brown. Now for lunch you have left over beans and fresh sourdough bread. After lunch take a ziplock of chicken out of the freezer.

About 2 hours before dinner, put the chicken in a large pot to boil. Simmer one hour, and then take the chicken out of the pot and take it off the bone. While you are deboning the chicken add a little water, and one chopped onion, and salt and pepper to your broth. Simmer while deboning. Now put your chicken back in the broth and make up a batch of biscuit dough. Drop the dough into the water about ten minutes before you serve your chicken and dumplings. Put a lid on the pot and leave it until serving time. Turn off the burner and serve your family a meal. Save the leftovers Now notice I don't mention vegetables. If you have some use them, but keep in mind that there may be other recipes later in this incredibly long e-mail that call for them.

Now take a walk outside. Sit by yourself somewhere, and just breathe. Hopefully hubby is home, and all is well. Make a list of how God has blessed you today. Remember those adorable things the kids did. Now get a good night's sleep. I always read my bible at night. After the labor of the day is finished I can take all my cares to the Lord.

Day 3

You more than likely had leftover chicken and dumplings. Breakfast is toast (made with homemade bread) with peanut butter, and a little bacon.

Lunch, take some frozen veggies(broccoli would be excellent). Take a deep casserole pan, fish out all the leftover chicken out of the chicken and dumplings. Put one cup of rice, and one cup of broth (conserving the rest), and one cup of water in the casserole with the chicken and half a bag of broccoli. Season to taste, and bake covered for 1/2 hour. Uncover and sprinkle a little of any kind of cheese (if you have it, if not omit) Serve this for lunch.

Get out your starter and put half of it in a bowl. Replace with 1/2 C milk, 1/2 C. flour. Adding some milk, mix with flour, a little sugar and salt to make a stiff dough. Let rise until after dinner. Punch down, and put into the refrigerator. For dinner, take out a chub of turkey and 5 packages of ramen noodles. Brown the turkey, add ramen noodles and the contents of one of the seasoning packets, and leftover veggies from lunch. Simmer and serve.

Also take some of your bread and cut into chunks. Add a few raisins if you have them. Mix 1 egg, 1 cup of milk, 3/4 C sugar (brown would be nice, but not necessary.), and 1 tsp. cinnamon. Pour mixture over bread, and bake. This bread pudding is wonderful if you pour just a little milk over it.

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Day 4

First thing when you wake up take dough out of fridge. Roll out on a board to about half inch thickness. Dot with margarine, sprinkle with cinnamon and sugar, and roll up in a roll. slice across the roll, and place your cinnamon rolls on their sides in an oiled pan. Turn on your oven for few minutes just to warm it, and then turn it off and put your rolls into it to rise. When they have risen some, turn on your oven to 400 degrees and bake until golden brown. Serve this with an egg each. For lunch take out whatever ramen you have left over, add the remaining broth from the dumplings, another fresh package of ramen, and serve for lunch. Also take another package of chicken out of the freezer. For dinner boil the chicken and take off the bone. Set aside the broth. Now take 1 1/2 cups rice and brown it gently in a little oil. Add three cups of the broth into the hot pan, putting the leftovers in the freezer. From the freezer take out two of the tomato nuggets, and add them and the chicken to the rice. Cover and simmer on medium until all water is absorbed. Add salt and spices to taste.

Now another day is done, and all is right with the world. Everyone is probably full, and God is watching over you. This is four meals.

Day five

Take out a package of chicken. For breakfast-pancakes. Now I often make my own syrup by heating sugar and water on the stove and flavoring with either maple flavoring or vanilla. I also just love the recipe Laura Ingalls Wilder describes in Farmer Boy.

Stacked pancakes- Make small pancakes, and on each one add a sliver of margarine and a little brown sugar (she said maple sugar, but most people would

not have that in their cupboard). Do this as you make them. These are excellent although very fattening!

This can be served with either bacon or you can take some thawed ground turkey, add sage, salt, pepper, onion powder, and garlic powder and make your own sausage. Now this is a little better if you take a little of your salt pork and put it in your blender and add to it. 1 chub can give you enough for a couple of breakfasts. Apple sauce if you gleaned apples.

Lunch

Today have ramen soup with any leftover meats and chop a few veggies small. Cook the veggies with the seasoning packet and water, then add your noodles at the end. Also make your own crackers.

Crackers

Any recipe for pie crust
garlic powder
Italian seasoning or fresh rosemary chopped
a little grated cheese if you have it

Mix all the ingredients together well. Roll out on a cutting board a little thinner than for pie. Now cut into squares and poke each cracker several times with a fork. Bake until crispy and golden brown in a 400 degree oven.

Dinner

Boil your chicken till it is falling off the bone. Take the meat off the bones. Cool the broth. Take a cup of broth and set aside. Make a double crust pie recipe. If you are smart, which I know you all are, you will do this at lunch when you make your crackers and pop the crust into the fridge. Line the a pie plate with half the crust. Now chop some veggies, or use some frozen veggies. It would be nice to use a potato or two, and some celery. Simmer the veggies until half done in just a little water. Mix with the chicken. Fill the crust. Place the other crust on top and bake. Serve this with whatever drink you prefer. See next page for drinks on a budget.

Simple cookies

1 cup butter, margarine, or shortening
1 cup sugar
4 cup flour
1/2 tsp salt
2 tsp. Baking powder

1 tsp cinnamon, or 1/2 cup peanut butter(take off half a cup shortening), or
2 tsp vanilla
Handful of any nuts, dried fruit, or oatmeal in the house.

Cream shortening and sugar. To this can be added an egg if desired. Blend flour, baking powder, and salt in a separate bowl with a fork. Add remaining ingredients blending quite well. Drop by spoonfuls onto cookie sheet. Serve these hot cookies for dessert.

Before going to bed take out two chubs of ground turkey. Place in the refrigerator.

I just love the end of the day. All the kids are in bed. Hubby is out like a light and it is just me and God. Read a good book. Read God's word and then off to sleep.

Day Six

Omelet

A good omelet is an art. However, with a little effort a couple of eggs can make a real meal. An omelet does not have to have cheese. However it does make it nice. With an omelet a little dab will do you. Fry a slice or two of bacon, and crumble it up. Dig in your fridge for any fresh veggies you can find. A little onion, a little pepper, even a few frozen veggies will do. Also just a little grated cheese is wonderful. The path to an excellent omelet is in the pan. Many people use a nonstick skillet. I am not fond of silverstone pans flaking into my food, so my favorite pan is a good, well seasoned iron skillet. You want just a small amount of oil well covering the pan. You also want the pan quite hot. When making an omelet, you want the eggs well beaten and you want to pour the egg into the hot skillet immediately after beating. Have a spatula close at hand. As soon as the eggs have begun to set at the edges just a little, you want to begin pushing the edges toward the middle and lifting them to allow the uncooked egg to seep under and cook as you tilt the pan to and fro. As soon as all of the egg is set(I scrape all the uncooked egg I can from the middle out to the edge), add your meat and vegetables, and salt and pepper, to half and fold the egg over. Add a cover and turn the burner off. As the egg rests, prepare your plates. Cut the omelet into portions(my 10 inch skillet feeds five or six), and serve nice and warm.

Lunch

Peanut butter sandwiches

Dinner

Tuna Casserole

A package of egg noodles
3 TBS margarine
1 1/2 cups milk
Seasoning packet from a package of chicken flavored ramen noodles
1/2 cup flour
dash onion powder
dash garlic powder
dash pepper
1/8 tsp salt
1 can of tuna or even two if you have lots

Cook noodles in water until al dente (I test mine by throwing a noodle against the refrigerator. If it sticks, it's done.) While noodles are cooking blend in a small bowl flour and seasonings. Heat 1/2 cup milk in a small sauce pan. Add remaining milk to bowl and blend well. Add the mixture in the bowl to hot milk and blend with a whisk stirring constantly until thick. Add tuna and blend well. When noodles are done, drain and add butter. Add tuna sauce and stir well.

Day Seven

Breakfast

Biscuits and gravy

I am going to share my biscuit recipe here handed down to me from my grandmother and probably from her mother to her. Now traditionally there is no written recipe to this. These biscuits are more about technique. However I will try to share a workable recipe here.

2 cups of flour
4 tsp. of baking powder
1/2 tsp salt
1/3 cup shortening or lard
1 1/2 cups milk to which has been added 1 tsp of vinegar or 1 1/2 Cups buttermilk if you have it

Blend with fork or sift flour baking powder and salt. Cut shortening into flour until very small. I use my fingers for this. Make a well in center of flour mixture and pour a little bit of the milk in the biscuits, stirring between additions, until flour is just taken up by the milk. What you should be left with is a ball of dough which looks neither too wet or too dry to handle. Pinch off small balls of dough rolling very gently between the hands into balls. Touch the dough as little as possible to do this(don't knead). Bake in a 400 degree oven.

There are many ways to make gravy. This is mine:

Bacon gravy

Fry some bacon. Take out bacon and add two cups of milk to fat. Crumble bacon and add it to milk. Take 1/2 cup flour 3/4 tsp salt and a little pepper and blend well in a small bowl. With a whisk, blend 1 cup milk into flour and pour into milk mixture in pan. Stir constantly adjusting spices.

Lunch

Egg salad sandwiches

Make a loaf of sourdough bread according to previous directions. Mold French bread style, and bake after rising.

Dinner

Spaghetti

Prepare spaghetti as you did last night's noodles. Take out chubs of turkey from fridge. Brown turkey with a little chopped onion. Absolutely great pasta sauce comes from two things: Tomato paste(not sauce), and sweet to acid balance. My basic pasta sauce is built around those two things. After browning meat(when you are not so poor use beef and Italian sausage), add either 1 can of tomato paste, and 2 cans of stewed tomatoes(I like the ones that come with the seasonings already in them) or 2 cans of tomato paste. Also add garlic powder, onion powder, and Italian seasoning. And the secret ingredient is, about two tablespoons of sugar. Simmer and serve with pasta. It is great to have some parmesan around for this.

Now split your fresh loaf of sourdough, butter both sides and sprinkle with Italian seasoning. place under the broiler until golden brown.

Well that is 1 weeks worth of meals. Part 3 is beverages.

We live in a day and age where the normal act of consuming liquid is expensive, not to mention often unhealthy. My grandmother made grape juice, canned it, and served it throughout the year. Right now if you live in the right area fall grapes are free from the wildlands. Edible grapes hang in bunches. There are a few Vitus varieties that are inedible, but the grapes are usually on single stems rather than in a bunch. There are several online resources available to see the difference. Try doing a google search on "Vitus".

Grape Juice

Grape juice is great for your children! It has been shown to be beneficial to the heart and body. It is easy to make bad grape juice. Here is how to make the good

kind. De-stem your grapes and wash them. Put the washed grapes into a large kettle. Smash the grapes well with a potato masher. Fill pan with water to at least two to three inches above grapes. heat on low to near 145 degrees or just a little too hot to touch. You should see steam beginning to rise. Take grapes off the stove and mash well again. Pour contents into a jelly bag and drain, twisting and squeezing bag well. Pour hot juice into jars, and put on lids and rings. Process pints and quarts 5 min. under 1000', 10 min. 1000 - 6000' and for 15 min. 6000' and above. When serving dilute by at least half, and add sugar if desired to taste.

Strawberry lemonade

When strawberries are in season and cheap, or when you have plenty coming from the garden, this is a wonderful thing to can up for winter. Wash and drip dry several pint jars(enough to fill your canner). To each jar add 1 cup strawberries, 1 cup lemon juice, 3/4 Cup sugar, and fill the remaining space in the jar with water if necessary. Put on lids and rings, tighten. Now can as for Grape Juice above. Remember that you never start the time on canning until pot is at a rolling boil. Also make sure that water is at least three inches above jars. Take jars out of canner; allow to cool. When serving, pour through strainer into a pitcher, and dilute to taste. This is like summer in a glass.

Watermelon Juice

Another wonderful drink is this: Watermelon is often inexpensive, and it makes an absolutely wonderful drink. De-seed a whole watermelon and process in a blender. Strain into a pitcher. Watermelon juice is so sweet that often it does not have a good balance of tart to sweet. To correct this add a little sugar if necessary, and a TBS at a time of vinegar to taste. Apple cider vinegar is good for this, but I have also used just white vinegar. Start with one TBS and stir between additions until it tastes right. Serve this by the pitcher in season. You can also add more sugar and freeze in popsicles. These would be wonderful in winter, but i bet they won't stay around that long!

Iced Tea

Another drink that I am excited about is Liptons cold brew tea. the great thing about this is that you can grab a jug of water, throw a bag in and take off to wherever. By the time you get to wherever, you have tea. Great for cheap outings with the kids. Also, Bigelow puts out a raspberry herb tea that can easily be brewed cold as well. It is just wonderful. I use two large teabags to a gallon of water with both of these fine teas.

Water

In addition I can't say enough about just plain water. Water is healthy, and quenches a thirst faster than anything. Also, when you add a little lemon or lime

to ice water, you have a fine refreshing drink. It is also nice to buy club soda and pour over fruit. Anyway I hope you all enjoy these recipes. Several of them are being put in the little homemaking cardfile I am doing for my daughter, Lacey. God bless.