



Food Bites

September 2015

Fruit of the Month Blackberries

Blackberries are a soft and delicate fruit which grows on thorny bushes or trailing vines. Technically, the blackberry is a drupelet, or a cluster of fruits, like a bunch of grapes, and the seed inside each drupelet contributes to the berry's nutrient value.

Studies show blackberries have one of the highest antioxidant contents per serving of any food tested. This means that regular consumption of blackberries may have a positive impact on health, athletic performance and disease risk.

Anthocyanins, or the "flashy flavonoid," give blackberries their glossy, dark color, and it's this powerful phytonutrient that's been shown to protect the brain from oxidative stress and may even reduce the effects of age-related conditions such as Alzheimer's disease and dementia. Blackberries have also been shown to have beneficial health effects in the fight against cancers of the GI tract, like colon cancer.



Veggie of the Month Runner Beans

Runner Beans look like somewhat larger versions of what North Americans know as Green Beans or String Beans. There are a few differences, other than just size. Runner Beans are a perennial plant, whereas Green Beans are annuals. When the Runner Bean seed first starts to grow, the stem and the first set of leaves are the first thing to emerge from the ground. When a Green Bean seed starts to grow, the first thing to emerge from the ground is the two halves of the seed. Runner Bean vines twist clockwise, Green Bean vines twist counterclockwise.

When very young, you can use Runner Beans raw in salads, but otherwise you will want to cook them. They don't need to be podded or stringed; just slice and boil or steam until tender. Very old ones, though, may need stringing.

Good source of fiber, mineral salts, Vitamin C, protein and carotene. Some sources say that the tuberous roots of the plant can be toxic; others say that they are eaten by native South Americans.



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Texas AgriLife Extension Service
Family and Consumer Science
P.O. Box 279, Panhandle, TX
79068

Jeanene Montgomery

Jeanene Montgomery
Texas AgriLife Extension
Family & Consumer Science

The Food Stamp Program helps low-income people buy nutritious foods. Food Stamps can help you and your family eat a healthier diet. Better Living for Texans is supported by USDA's Food Stamp Program. This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

A program sponsored by
Texas AgriLife Extension Service,
Texas Health and Human Services Commission,
and USDA Food and Nutrition Service.

Slow Cooker Hamburger Stew

- 1 pound ground beef
- 1/2 cup chopped onions
- 1 cup chopped carrots
- 2 cups chopped potatoes
- 1 cup chopped celery
- 1 can (15 ounce) tomatoes
- 4 cups water
- 1/2 teaspoon oregano, basil or other herb (optional)

1. Brown ground beef in a medium fry pan. Drain fat.
2. Place beef, chopped vegetables, tomatoes and water in slow cooker.
3. Cook on LOW 8 to 10 hours or on HIGH for 4 to 6 hours.



Canned Tuna, Tomato Sauce & Pasta

- **Pasta** (Use whatever shape is in your cupboard; try a whole grain pasta)
- **Tomato-based pasta sauce** (Use the size of container you normally would for the amount of pasta being prepared)
- **Canned tuna** (Use the can size you'd typically serve for one meal)
 - **Optional add-ins/toppings:** chopped olives, capers and/or chopped parsley (allow about 1/2 tablespoon per serving, or as desired for these ingredients)
 - **Grated parmesan cheese** (optional)



1. Prepare pasta according to package directions.
2. While pasta is cooking, drain tuna and heat with pasta sauce in a sauce pan.
3. Drain pasta, reserving 1 cup of the cooking water.
4. If desired, stir olives and/or capers into pasta sauce.
5. Mix pasta thoroughly with sauce. Add reserved cooking water as needed to moisten the mixture. If using parsley, add to pasta along with the sauce. Or sprinkle parsley on top of the pasta when it is served.
6. If desired, top pasta with grated parmesan cheese.

Creamy Macaroni & Cheese

- 2 cups uncooked elbow macaroni
- 3 Tbsp butter
- 2 Tbsp all-purpose flour
- 3/4 tsp salt
- 1/8 tsp pepper
- 2 cups half & half
- 16 slices American cheese, quartered

1. Heat oven to 350 degrees. Cook macaroni according to package directions. Drain.
2. Melt butter in 3 quart saucepan until sizzling; stir in flour, salt and pepper. Add half & half; cook over medium heat, stirring constantly, 5 to 7 minutes or until mixture boils and thickens.
3. Reduce heat to low; stir in cheese. Cook 3 to 5 minutes or until cheese is melted. Add cooked macaroni; mix well.
4. Spoon into ungreased 2 quart casserole. Bake 25 to 30 minutes or until heated through.



Lazy Lasagna

- 1 lb ground beef
- 4 cups frozen cheese-filled ravioli
- 1 jar pasta sauce
- 1 Tbsp chopped fresh basil leaves
- 2 tsp fresh oregano leaves
- 8 slices 4 cheese Italian Blend cheese



1. Heat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Cook ground beef in ovenproof 12 inch skillet over medium high heat, stirring occasionally, 4 to 5 minutes or until browned. Remove beef from pan; drain.
3. Place frozen ravioli into same skillet; top with cooked ground beef. Pour sauce evenly over beef; sprinkle with basil and oregano. Cover; cook over medium heat 7 to 8 minutes or until heated through. Remove from heat.
4. Arrange cheese slices over ground beef mixture. Place skillet into oven. Bake 4 to 5 minutes or until cheese is melted. Sprinkle with additional chopped fresh basil or oregano leaves, if desired.

Italian Meatloaf Cupcakes

- 1 lb ground beef
- 1/2 lb Italian sausage
- 1 cup Italian seasoned breadcrumbs
- 1 cup carrots, finely chopped
- 1 cup tomato pasta sauce
- 1/2 cup water
- 2 eggs
- 1/2 cup onion, finely chopped
- 1 tsp dried oregano leaves
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp pepper
- 6 slices 4 cheese Italian blend cheese

Potato Topping

- 1 1/4 cups water
- 6 slices 4 cheese Italian blend cheese, quartered
- 2 Tbsp butter
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1 1/3 instant mashed potatoes
- 2/3 cup milk



1. Heat oven to 450°F. Spray 12 cup muffin pan with no-stick cooking spray. Place muffin pan onto 15x10x1-inch baking pan; set aside.
2. Combine all meatloaf ingredients except cheese slices in bowl; mix well. Stack 6 cheese slices. Cut into 4 even strips; then cut across into thirds to create 12 small square stacks of cheese.
3. Shape about 1/3 cupfuls meatloaf mixture into 12 (2 1/2-inch) balls. Press 1 stack cheese into center of each ball, covering evenly with meat mixture so cheese is in center. Place stuffed meatloaf mixture into muffin cups. Bake 20-25 minutes or until internal temperature is at least 165°F and meat is no longer pink.
4. Combine 1 1/4 cups water, 6 cheese quarters, butter and 1/2 teaspoon salt in 4-quart saucepan; cook over medium-high heat until cheese is melted and mixture is just begins to boil. Add potatoes and milk; mix well. Top with about 3 tablespoons potato mixture over each meatloaf; sprinkle with paprika, if desired. Serve immediately.

Coney Island Taters

- 1 pound lean ground beef
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 cup prepared barbecue sauce
- 2 large all-purpose potatoes
- 1/2 cup shredded Cheddar cheese
- 1/4 cup sliced green onions (optional)



1. In large skillet, brown ground beef and onion over medium heat 8 to 10 minutes or until beef is no longer pink, breaking up into 3/4-inch crumbles. Pour off drippings. Stir barbecue sauce into beef; cover and simmer over medium-low heat 10 minutes.
2. Meanwhile pierce potatoes in several places with fork. Place on paper towel in microwave oven. Microwave on HIGH 10 to 11 minutes or until tender, rearranging potatoes halfway. TIP: Some potatoes may become tender before this — start checking a few minutes before time is up.
3. Cut potatoes lengthwise into quarters. Cut each quarter crosswise in half. Arrange 4 pieces potato on each serving plate; top with beef mixture. Sprinkle with cheese; top with green onions, if desired.

Pasta and Meat Sauce

- 1 batch make-ahead crumbled beef made from 1-pound lean ground beef and 1 medium chopped onion (need not be thawed)
- 1 can (14.5 ounces) regular or no-salt added diced tomatoes
- 1 can (8 ounces) regular or no-salt added tomato sauce
- 1 teaspoon Italian seasoning
- 1/4 teaspoon powdered garlic or 1 small clove garlic, minced
- 1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper
- Salt (optional, according to taste)
- 8 ounces of pasta (macaroni, spaghetti, etc.)



1. Place all ingredients, EXCEPT pasta, in a saucepan and simmer, covered, over low heat until meat is thawed and heated throughout, about 20 to 30 minutes; simmering also allows flavors to develop. Stir occasionally. Add more water if the mixture becomes too thick.
2. While meat sauce is simmering, prepare 8 ounces of pasta (macaroni, spaghetti, noodles, etc.) according to package directions.
3. Drain pasta; serve topped with meat sauce or mix pasta together with meat sauce before serving.

Sloppy Joes

- 1 batch make-ahead crumbled beef made from 1-pound lean ground beef and 1 medium chopped onion (need not be thawed)
 - 1 teaspoon prepared mustard
 - 1/4 teaspoon chili powder
 - 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
 - 1/4 teaspoon powdered garlic or 1 small clove garlic, minced
 - Salt (optional, according to taste)
 - 1 cup of no-salt added ketchup
 - 1/4 cup water
 - 4 to 6 hamburger buns
1. Place all ingredients in a saucepan and simmer, covered, until meat is thawed and heated throughout, about 20 minutes; simmering also allows flavors to develop. Stir occasionally. Stir occasionally and add more water if the mixture becomes too thick.
 2. Spoon into buns and serve.



Supermarket Saving\$:

16 Tips that Total BIG Bucks!

by Alice Henneman, MS, RD

<http://lancaster.unl.edu/food>



It's possible to save money shopping for groceries without cooking everything from scratch, packing your purse with coupons, or purchasing foods in season.

Here are 16 easy tips that total big bucks. An example is given for each with the potential

savings from: (1) spending less and/or (2) avoiding losing money through tossing uneaten foods. The possible grand total saved is given at the end of this article. **A dollar saved is even better than a dollar earned: You don't have to pay taxes on it!** Prices are rounded to the nearest 25 cents and may vary by store and region.

1. Keep a grocery list. Gas for an extra trip to the store easily can add a dollar or more to your grocery bill. And the less you shop, the less likely you'll make an impulse purchase. Keep a grocery list where it's easily accessible, such as on the fridge, and remember to take it with you to the grocery store. Stick to your list for added savings, but do stay flexible if you encounter a sale.

EXAMPLE:

1. Gas to drive four miles for an extra trip to the store: **\$1.00 (or more!).**
2. Impulse purchase of snack crackers at the store: **An additional \$2.50 spent.**

2. Garbage check. We lose money whenever we toss food because it spoiled before we got around to eating it. If leftovers get the "heave ho" because they're left too long, we're putting money in the garbage can. Make planning to avoid tossing foods a priority.

Consider: If wilted lettuce is a frequent occupant of your garbage can, serve more salads at the beginning of the week. If extra mashed potatoes get tossed because they've lingered too long in the fridge, make less next time. Or recycle them as potato patties, shepherd's pie or potato soup within a day or two of making them. Other ideas: Use ripe bananas in banana bread; add juice to smoothies or make popsicles; freeze leftovers for another meal.

EXAMPLE: Tossing a half bag of "tired" lettuce: **\$1.00.**

3. Avoid shopping when hungry. Everything looks

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Lancaster County

444 Cherrycreek Road, Suite A / Lincoln, NE 68528 / (402) 441-7180

good on an empty stomach. It's all too easy to buy something to tide us over in the car until we make it home. Eating before shopping not only helps forestall impulse buys, it may save calories. If you're shopping with your kids, feed them, too.

EXAMPLE: Buying an energy bar at the grocery store to tide you over until you get home: **\$1.50 spent.**

4. Brown bag it. If you normally eat out at noon, consider brown bagging it at least once a week. The typical fast food meal easily can cost \$5.00 or more. Take leftovers from the evening meal to work the next day. Or, a peanut butter sandwich and a piece of whole fruit are quick to pack.

NOTE: You may save money on your children's lunch by having them participate in the school lunch program. They can eat a balanced meal, offered at a reasonable price.

EXAMPLE:

1. Eating a sack lunch once a week: **Save \$2.50.**
2. Eating a sack lunch 5 days a week: **Save \$12.50.**

5. Coupon common sense. Use coupons only for foods you normally would eat, rather than for "extras." Don't miss out on potential sources of valuable coupons. Check your grocery receipt – sometimes there are great coupons on the back that help save money. Also, if you have access to a computer, check online for coupons. For starters, check the Web site of the store where you shop or of products you use. Often the Web site address for many foods is given on the product label.

If possible, shop on double or triple coupon days when a store increases the value of coupons. Grocery store loyalty cards may be another source of savings, offering in-store discounts to cardholders.

EXAMPLE:

1. Using two 50-cent coupons for items you DO use: **Save \$1.00.**
2. NOT buying that NEW dessert mix: **Save \$2.00**

6. Check expiration dates. Avoid buying a food that is past its prime. If it's on sale and near its expiration date, use it soon.

EXAMPLE: Avoid dumping a half gallon of old, soured milk down the drain: **Save \$2.50.**

Know how. Know now.



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7. Small scale experiments. Before trying a new food, buy the smallest size of package. If your family doesn't like the food, you're not stuck with a big box.

EXAMPLE: Buying a small container of a new spice that you later discover your family won't eat: **Save \$1.50.**

8. Costly convenience foods. How much time do you really save when buying a convenience food? It takes just a few seconds to mix your own sugar and cinnamon rather than buying it pre-mixed. Microwaving a bowl of regular oatmeal rather than pouring hot water over a pre-measured package adds only a few minutes.

You're likely to save by cutting fruits and veggies yourself. Plus, the pre-cut ones won't keep as long.

EXAMPLE: Buying a carton of old-fashioned or quick oatmeal that provides 30 servings vs. buying 3 boxes instant oatmeal that contain 10 packets each: **Save \$5.50.**

9. Staple food stock up. Invest in staple foods when they're on sale. Buying a boatload of bananas (and other perishable foods) isn't a very good long-term investment. Stocking up on staples such as reduced-price canned tuna or tomato sauce can be. Remember: Check expiration dates.



EXAMPLE: Stocking up on 10 cans of food reduced by 20 cents apiece: **Save \$2.00.**

10. Bulking up when the price is right and you can use it. First, do the math and check if you actually do save by buying a larger package. The cost of two foods of the smaller size may be a better price than the larger one. Plus, will you use the food while the flavor is still tasty? Always check it out. If the larger size meets your criteria, go for it!

EXAMPLE: Buying a 5-pound bag of rice instead of a 1-pound bag: **Save \$1.50.**

11. Store brand savings. Store brands are comparable in nutrition to name brands. And, taste-wise, there may be little difference. In some comparisons, they have been preferred over the name brands.

Some store brands may vary more in size, color, or texture than name brands. This may be unimportant, however, depending on use. A less than perfect-appearing vegetable may be just fine if used in a casserole or soup.

Store brands and lower-priced brands tend to be positioned on the top and bottom shelves. The national brands are more likely to be on the middle shelves.

EXAMPLE: Buying just two store brands and saving 50-cents on each: **Save \$1.00.**

12. Prevent food flops. Check preparation methods for unfamiliar foods. Perhaps that tropical fruit looked enticing at the store. If you're don't know how to prepare it or where to find information once you bring it home, think again. Or, that new cut of meat – do you slowly roast it or can it be grilled? Either way, find out or risk a food flop.

Often the produce person or the meat manager at the store can give you some tips. Many produce departments have books with descriptions of all the items, what they taste like, how to prepare them, etc.

EXAMPLE: Avoiding that purchase of self-rising flour and finding it won't work in your recipe: **Save \$2.50.**

13. Beware of snack attacks. Unless you're fairly active and need the calories, enjoy snacks, such as chips, cookies, candy, etc. in limited amounts. You'll save money and may lose unwanted pounds at the same time!

EXAMPLE: Buy one less bag of chips weekly: **Save \$2.00.**

14. Shop the specials. Plan your menus around sale items, especially more expensive purchases such as meat.

Buying several packages of meat on sale and freezing it may save quite a bit. "It is safe to freeze meat or poultry directly in its supermarket wrapping but this type of wrap is permeable to air," advises the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture Food Safety and Inspection Service (USDA/FSIS). "Unless you will be using the food in a month or two, over wrap these packages as you would any food for long-term storage using airtight heavy-duty foil, (freezer) plastic wrap or freezer paper, or place the package inside a (freezer) plastic bag." When repackaging family packs into smaller amounts, USDA/FSIS also recommends these wraps.

While raw ground meat maintains optimum quality in the freezer for 3 to 4 months, larger pieces of meat like steaks or chops maintain optimum quality for 4 to 12 months. At 0 degrees F, frozen foods remain safe indefinitely. Thaw meat in the refrigerator on a plate on the bottom shelf so it doesn't drip onto other foods.

EXAMPLE: Buying meat on sale: **Save \$2.00.**

15. Think before you drink: Buy a reusable water bottle and fill it with tap water. Your investment soon pays for itself. Limit amount of soft drinks and fancy coffees.

EXAMPLE: Drinking tap water vs. buying a 12 pack of bottled water: **Save \$4.00.**

16. "Checkout" temptation. OK, you've almost made it to the finish line ... don't stumble now as you approach the checkout lane. As you're waiting in line, think twice before buying some last-minute temptation.

EXAMPLE: Resist a magazine with a new diet: **Save \$3.50.**

GRAND TOTAL: The more of these tips you use and the more foods you use them with, the more you can save. Case in point: If you used each of the preceding examples in ONE shopping trip a week, you could save as much as \$40 a week. **Multiply that by 52 weeks and the savings would be ... TA DA! ... over \$2,000 yearly!**

Reviewed by: Cindy Brison, Sarah Doerneman, Jennifer Dunavan, Shannon Frink, Cindy Goody, Kayla Hinrichs, Lisa Kopecky, Toni Kuehneman, Jennifer Meyer, Amber Pankonin, Joan David Sather, Kathy Tack, Kathy Taylor, Jennifer Yen, Jessica Wegener and Linda Wetzel. 10/2008



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