

Food Away Doesn't Have to be A Budget Buster

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LESSON SUMMARY:

On average, families spend at least 30% of their food budget on food away from home. Budgeting for food away from home will help you better manage your food resources. Making careful choices at restaurants and take-out stores will help you get the most for your money. This lesson will guide you in budgeting effectively for food away from home. In addition, you will learn how to compare costs between food prepared at home and food purchased away from home.

LESSON OBJECTIVES:

At the end of the lesson, learners will be able to:

- Define “food away from home”.
- List strategies for saving money on food away from home.
- Compare costs between food prepared at home and food purchased away from home.

LESSON MATERIALS:

Before teaching this lesson be sure to assemble the following materials:

- Food Away Take Home Tips (one copy for each participant)
- Food Away Cost Comparisons (one copy for each participant)
- Food Away Evaluation (one copy for each participant)
- Pencils and/or Pens (one per participant)

BEFORE THE LESSON:

Before leading this lesson, take time to review all lesson materials and handouts.

This lesson includes a recipe for homemade hummus. If you would like, you can prepare this recipe before the lesson and share it with the group.

INTRODUCTION: (5 minutes)

Begin the lesson by saying the following:

Think about how often you eat at restaurants rather than prepare meals at home. Turn to the person next to you, introduce yourself, and tell each other about some of the restaurants you enjoy and why.

Note: If your group is small, you can go around the group and have individuals share aloud.

LESSON: (10 to 15 minutes)

What are foods away from home?

Once everyone has shared, say the following:

Everyone likes a break from cooking. However, the extra cost of eating food away from home can put a strain on your budget, making it harder to have the money needed for other household expenses. If you are having trouble making ends meet, cooking at home whenever possible will certainly help you stretch your resources further.

However, when you do choose to buy food away from home, there are ways to save money. That is what we are going to discuss next – how to budget for eating away from home and how to save money when you do.

The term “food away from home” refers to food prepared and purchased outside the home. This includes full meals eaten at a restaurant, single ready-to-eat items such as beverages and snacks, and freshly prepared food purchased at grocery stores.

How can we save money when eating away from home?

Distribute the handout - Food Away Take Home Tips – giving one copy for each participant.

Say the following:

Most of us enjoy eating out or need to buy ready-to-eat foods when we don't have time to cook. Careful planning and budgeting can help you manage your food budget so that you can afford food away from home occasionally.

Here are a few ideas for saving money on food away from home:

Decide how much you will spend on food away from home each week or month and include this amount in your budget. Be careful not to spend more than this amount.

Take advantage of coupons or specials you find in sale fliers or online.

Buy the regular size (not super-size) portions. Order the smallest size beverage on the menu or better yet, ask for a glass of water. It is a healthy choice, and it is free!

Order a kid's meal for yourself. Portions are smaller and the price is too!

Buy carry-out for the main dish of a meal, and prepare the rest of the meal at home. For example, buy a pre-baked whole chicken and add salad and vegetables prepared at home.

When eating at a restaurant, divide your meal into two parts, and take half of it home for a meal the next day. This will save money and calories, too.

Another option is to share an order with a friend or family member.

Instead of ordering a meal for a child, share yours with them.

What were you thinking as I talked about ways to save money when eating away from home? Which of these suggestions do you think you might try? Who would like to share your thoughts on other ways to lower costs that I have not yet mentioned?

Is it really cheaper to cook at home?

Distribute the handout - Food Away Cost Comparisons – giving one copy for each participant.

Say the following:

So far, we have been talking about making choices when eating away from home that will save money. Now we'll take a look at how the cost of eating out compares to preparing similar foods at home. To get an idea of the cost for you and your family, keep track of your spending on foods away from home for a week. Many people are surprised when they keep track of how much they spend on food away from home.

INSTRUCTOR NOTE:

These are approximate prices, and they have been rounded to make the math easier.

It also is surprising how much you can save when you make meals and snacks at home.

Take a look at the handout – Food Away Cost Comparisons. It shows you the approximate cost of 4 common food items that you can buy at restaurants like fast food restaurants.

If you made these 4 foods at home for your family of 4, rather than buying these foods once a week for a month, you would have saved about \$184! Put a big circle around that number! Turn to your neighbor, and talk about what you would do with \$184 in cash in your purse or wallet! Who would like to share what you would do with an extra \$184 to spend?

Homemade Hummus Recipe (optional):

The lesson includes a recipe for homemade hummus. If you made the hummus, you can share it with the group at this point.

INSTRUCTOR NOTE:

As participants are enjoying the hummus, point out that beans are a low-cost source of lean protein. Point out that protein is important for growth and that protein helps you to fill full.

RECAP AND REVIEW: (5 minutes)

Say the following:

Take a look at your “Take Home Tips” handout. Choose one change you might try making. Draw a circle around it, and post it on your refrigerator when you get home to remind you to try one change in the coming week.

EVALUATION: (5 minutes)

Provide each participant with a copy of “Food Away Evaluation”. Allow time for all participants to complete the evaluation. Once everyone has completed the evaluation, collect the evaluations. Return evaluations to your Family and Consumer Sciences Extension Agent.