

Thriftaholic-Live Well, Spend Less

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Thriftaholic-
Live Well, Spend Less

Eve Thomson

Lots of practical and
creative ideas

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Introduction

Were you taught that if a job has to be done it is worth doing well? Were you taught that if you want a job done well, do it yourself? As a young military wife I did do jobs myself. I felt obliged to contribute to the regimental fete representing our British garrison of several thousand. I won third for my fresh flower arrangement, second for my dried flower arrangement, second for my savoury flan, first for my embroidery picture and first place for my dress made with a sewing machine. As a result I heard on a loudspeaker that I was overall show winner. Okay so far, I suppose.

However, simultaneously that day, I was running a raffle. The prizes were assorted bottles of drinks, both alcoholic and non-alcoholic. Mistakenly, while selling the tickets, I sold not only the raffle tickets but also their stubs. Panicking on the day, as so many people seemed to have won a bottle, I just gave away bottles to the demanding customers. My mistake proved very profitable for the stall. Ok, it didn't quite work out as I expected but I did it myself!

Do you have to be poor to be thrifty or is it a quality used by all walks of life? We can be humbled by learning about the everyday methods used to recycle in deprived countries. However, I read of a boat owner who built his multi-million pound yacht out of recycled materials. The interior design of a home, also worth millions, was completed by the owner's wife.

Thrift can be time consuming but the result is satisfaction and achievement.

Choices depend on self-discipline, time plus money and pride in doing something yourself.

Like you, I feel the need value for money and I like my money to go further. The thriftier you are, the more likely you for are able to save and feel more secure. Then you will have the luxury of deciding how to use the extra money you've saved.

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Dedicated to my parents
and grandparents

Cooking

Some of us hate cooking. Others don't have the time. We have to eat so why not try to eat well but economically if possible. My Burmese mother was my culinary role model so on various evenings as a child I enjoyed her eclectic cooking. My father could cook basic dishes too. Once you begin to cook regularly you try to think of it as pleasurable and a wind down from work. In contrast some of us have little time or no inclination to cook. However, these days much emphasis is placed on freshly prepared foods so we know it is a priority.

To help us all become organised when we cook regularly, it helps to plan ahead. We can plan meals for the week from recipe books or memory, write down the ingredients and use the shopping list for the weekly trip to the shops. You may not always feel like doing this weekly planning but it is worth the effort. This way you avoid making a dish of something like chicken with olives without the olives (as I did!) or serving a homemade dish in a frazzled state.

When we begin to plan meals, hassle later in the week is prevented since all the ingredients are in the fridge or freezer, cupboard or drawer and we know on which days we have more time to cook or buy what is needed and prevent impulse buying.

Some of your recipe books are stained and well-thumbed and various recipes become favourites and used repeatedly. I first used tuna pancakes (recipe from a famous cook) like a gateaux, as a twenty three year old teacher when I was messing member in charge of planning meals where I lived in Germany. Not a popular job but everyone has to do it at some time.

I used a good pancake recipe all through my marriage and it's used by my children too.

Shopping lists can be made on a mobile phone. Use a note pad and cross out items with a biro as you find them along the supermarket aisles. Don't use a smart pen, you'll lose it. For a small fee you can use the internet supermarket delivery system and save time and petrol. Special offers are displayed on the website plus products so you can save money as you order. Beware of buying special offers just for the sake of it. Your weekly bill can only decrease if you buy the reduced items you use regularly. You will find you're your weekly shopping bill becomes smaller according to the amount of meat you buy too.

When you plan ahead, sometimes ask other family members to choose a dish and perhaps cook it later in the week. Predictably, when asked, my husband always chooses spaghetti bolognese, cottage pie or steak and kidney pudding. The latter made from scratch was far too labour intensive for a weekday evening, maybe on a Saturday.

You will soon find that other family members are capable of preparing a meal too.

Try to incorporate other people to complete tasks like chopping and cooking a stir fry, baking a chocolate cake or mixing and cooking a sponge pudding in the microwave for six minutes.

It shows that you are not indispensable even though we like to think that we are. This gives others the confidence to cook.

Eventually try to have at least some days when others prepare or partially prepare the evening meal. If you don't like cooking then find cookery books with simple recipes that can be produced speedily. Use quick recipes or non-cook recipes on days when you want a break, have to stay later at work or take children to evening clubs. One night can be salad night with a few delicatessen type products (be careful as they can be expensive so make the salad large and imaginative) and another could be junk food night-the favourite for my husband and also the children. This can be bought in or prepared easily from packets. A very quick recipe is spaghetti with bacon and onion plus frozen peas. During the week, thaw meat or fish, if required, in the fridge overnight for a meal the next day.

A typical week of meals can incorporate starters, soups and puddings as well. I wanted our children to accept as many types of dishes and tastes as possible. The aim being that as adults they would be able to enjoy all types of food. Obviously, if time is short or the purse doesn't stretch, these second courses can be omitted or simplified, for example, to cheese and biscuits.

Baking

Recipe Suggestions for the Week

Monday Leftover's

SAVOURY RICE (for 2)

2 tablespoons olive/rapeseed oil, 1 onion, 1 tomato, 250g. (8oz) rice, (optional bay leaves/ chicken stock cube or paste, curry paste/ tomato paste) any leftover cooked or uncooked vegetables and/or meat.

Heat oil and add the chopped onions. Fry until they are translucent. Add any other raw chopped vegetables. Fry gently for about 5 minutes. Meanwhile boil half a kettle of water. Add any optional flavouring (bay leaves/stock cubes or paste/curry paste/tomato paste). Add the rice and stir. Pour in 250 ml. (half a pint) boiled water to cover. Stir gently and cook for 5 minutes. Add herbs and leftovers (more water?) and continue simmering for about another 5 minutes until the rice squeezes between fore finger and thumb and the water gone.

Tuesday cold plate

BEETROOT and YOGURT SALAD (for 2)

175g. (6oz) cooked beetroot, 1 dill pickled or plain cucumber, 1 tablespoons wine vinegar, 2 tablespoons yogurt, salt, freshly ground black pepper, half a tablespoon chopped dill or fennel

Dice the beetroot and dill cucumber and place in a bowl. Mix the remaining ingredients except the herbs and stir into the beetroot and cucumber. Sprinkle the herbs on top.

Add deli items like scotch eggs, samosas, spring rolls, onion bhajis, satay chicken sticks, slices of salami or ham or fish, coleslaw or dips).

Wednesday convenience food

BANANA ICE-CREAM (for 4)

150g (3oz) sugar, 150g. (3oz) milk (or half cream and half milk), 1 lemon, 300g. (12oz) banana pulp

Peel bananas and cut into small pieces, sprinkle with lemon juice and whisk together with sugar (or mash with a potato masher). Add milk, stir well and pour the mixture into the ice-cream maker bowl. Switch on the machine or remove from the freezer every 30 minute and stir manually until frozen.

The ice-cream was assembled and mixed in my ice-cream maker before preparing the convenience food. The ice-cream maker can be economical if you are producing, regularly, lots of real ice cream made with cream, milk or yogurt, as opposed to cheap ice cream made of palm oil. Buy a machine

with a strong spindle and mixer attachment.

Thursday Dairy

SPANISH OMELETTE (for 2)

1 tomato, 2 cooked potatoes, 2 cooked or bottled peppers, 1 small onion, olive oil, 2 tablespoons frozen peas, 4 eggs, salt and pepper

Chop the tomatoes, dice the potatoes and cut up the peppers.

Chop the onion and fry it lightly in olive oil. Beat the eggs and season. Add the vegetables to the pan. Cook gently, stirring for a few minutes.

Pour the eggs into the pan. Shake occasionally. When one side is brown, flip the omelet on to a plate and slide it back on to the pan to brown the other side. Serve hot or serve cold between bread slices like a French omelet.

OR

Dairy such as soufflés, cheese pie, flans, egg nests (raw eggs cracked and buried in depressions in mashed potatoes and baked) fruit pudding (apple crumble, gooseberry fool, baked apples/peaches, poached pears, melon boats).

Friday Pasta

SPAGHETTI WITH BACON, ONION and PEAS (for 2)

250 gm. spaghetti, seasoning, 2 tablespoons olive oil, 175gm. bacon, 3 large onions, 125gm. frozen peas, (chopped parsley, grated cheese optional).

Boil water in a kettle. Heat the oil, chop the bacon and fry for 2-3 minutes. Chop the onions and add, cooking steadily. Add more olive oil if there is not enough fat. Cook the spaghetti in the seasoned, boiling water for 4 minutes. Then add the frozen peas. Continue cooking for another 3 minutes until nearly tender (about 7 minutes). Drain the spaghetti and mix with the bacon and onions. Add parsley and parmesan or cheddar cheese.

OR

a soup with added pasta

Saturday

BREAKFAST/BRUNCH

Continental breakfast with lovely muffins, bagels, rolls and pastries, spreads and jams plus meat and cheese slices. A cheaper version of this would be slices of some breads or rolls with spreads.

OR

FRENCH STYLE LUNCH

Baguette or stick bread, butter, cheese, pate and/or local pork pies with wine.

OR

EASY CASSOULET (for 2)

2 chicken thighs, 2 tablespoons olive oil, 2 Toulouse

sausages (or spicy sausages), 125g (4oz) streaky bacon, 1 onion, 1 carrot, 2 cloves garlic, 125ml. tin pureed tomatoes, 1 tablespoon tomato paste, 1 teaspoon sugar,

1 bay leaf, 1 sprig fresh rosemary, 2 tablespoons chopped parsley, 1 tin white beans (drained and rinsed), 85g. (3oz) white breadcrumbs, salt and pepper

Brown the chicken thighs and sausages in hot oil. Transfer to an oven proof dish. Add the bacon, onion and carrot to the pan and fry over high heat. When they start to brown, lower the heat and add three quarters of the garlic. Cook for a short while then scrape the contents off the pan and add to the oven dish. Pour 300ml (13 fluid ounces) of water into the pan and bring to a boil. Scrape the pan residue into the water.

Pour this water into the casserole and add the tomato puree, tomato paste, sugar, bay leaf, rosemary and half the parsley. Add the white beans, season and bring to the boil.

Simmer, half covered for about forty minutes. Stir and occasionally crush some of the beans against the side of the dish to thicken the sauce. Later mix the casserole and bake for thirty to forty minutes.

Place the remaining garlic, parsley and breadcrumbs, place on top. Bake for about 15 – 30 minutes.

Sunday

ENGLISH BREAKFAST is generally appreciated.

OR

JOINT of meat (special offer at the store) with roast potatoes and two vegetables such as red cabbage with a few apples, large mushrooms and frozen peas inside plus celery and lentil ragout, roast squash, gravy, maybe homemade Yorkshire puddings.

RED CABBAGE WITH APPLE (for 4)

1 medium or small red cabbage, 8 cloves, 3 bay leaves, 125g (4oz) butter, 2 tablespoons vinegar, 2 tablespoons honey, 2 tablespoons blackcurrant juice, 3 tart green apples.

Cut in half a medium or a small whole red cabbage. Remove the white core and shred.

Place in a microwave bowl. Add the cloves, bay leaves, butter, vinegar, honey and blackcurrant juice. Cover with cling film and cook in the microwave for 10-15 minutes. Core the green apples and stir into the mixture. Cook for another 5-10 minutes.

OR

CHINESE MEAL

PORK and VEGETABLE SOUP (for 4)

8 spring onions, 175g.(4oz) pak choi, 250g. (8oz) boneless lean pork, 1-2 tablespoons rape seed oil, 1 and a half litres (6 cups) chicken stock, 2 tablespoons soy sauce, half a teaspoon pared and grated fresh ginger root, 125g. (4oz) Chinese egg noodles

Heat the oil in the wok and stir fry the pork over medium high heat for about 5 minutes until it is no longer pink.

Add the stock, soy sauce and ginger. Cook until the mixture boils. Simmer for 10 minutes. Stir in the noodles, cabbage and onions. Cook until just tender for about 1-4 minutes.

OR

INDIAN MEAL

MILD FISH MOLI (for 4)

1 small onion, 12g. (2oz) butter, little fresh ginger, a few green chillies, 6g. (half an ounce) flour, 8 ml. (8 fl.oz.) tinned coconut milk (or sachet coconut cream and water, salt, 500g. (1lb) fish fillets, quarter teaspoon turmeric

Fry the sliced onions, ginger and chillies in the butter. Stir in the flour and cook slowly for 3 minutes. Add the coconut milk and cook slowly until the mixture comes to the boil. Add the fish and turmeric. Simmer for 20-30 minutes, or until the fish is cooked.

A book about Superfoods can be useful. It will give you the names of foods that contain many vitamins and minerals in one food. There will be an explanation of their beneficial effects on your health.

Waste Not Want Not

Try to re-use any left overs in the fridge in a meal the following day. If you have left over cooked mashed vegetables, rice or pasta, store it in the fridge and use it in a thick soup or dish the next day.

Left over raw vegetables or eggs can be used in a Spanish omelet. Left-over cooked meat can be frozen, labeled and kept in the freezer. It could be added to a stew, rice or pasta dish. Bag, label and freeze raw bones for future use to make stock with perhaps a little chopped raw onion, celery and carrot. Conversely I am more likely to put the raw bones in the dish, such as soup or stew, as it is cooking and then remove them with a slotted spoon when the dish is ready.

Raw vegetables in the fridge can be used in a stir fry. Left over fruit could be made into fruit fool (pureed cooked fruit mixed with custard) or smoothies.

Stale bread or rolls make good bread and butter pudding.

Try putting a savoury left over such as bolognese sauce into frozen vol-au-vents or frozen Yorkshire puddings and after a quick bake in the oven they can be tasty.

Cold meat slices with relish on special bread like pumpnickel are appetising. Left over cheese can be grated on top of dishes or made into a sauce to mix with cooked vegetables or then baked in a pie using frozen pastry. Empty jars can be rinsed out and the diluted contents added to a dish as stock. *

Today, we want to live well but with care for our ourselves, family and environment. Here are many tips for lowering our spending in a responsible way. This book has ideas on recycling and buying less. Dip in and out to see suggestions for making and growing items ourselves. Start with just one idea and you will feel good!

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