

Barbara Quinn: Organized econovores

Barbara Quinn On Nutrition

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My friend Avril is a professional organizer. Her Web site www.sortandorder.com shows some pretty amazing pictures of how she helps people sort and order the "stuff" in our lives.

Elise Cooke is the author of "Strategic Eating: The Econovore's Essential Guide." Econovore? That's "a person whose good nutrition costs him little time, money and effort," says Cooke.

So here's my question, ladies: How do we save time and money ... and still stay on track nutritionally? Here are some of their ideas:

Buy nutrient dense foods ... foods that give the biggest nutritional bang for your food buck. How do you know if a food is "nutrient dense?" Check the Nutrition Facts label for nutrients that measure up to the price you pay (in calories and dollars). Examples of nutrient dense foods include eggs, nonfat dairy foods, kale, broccoli, spinach, peanut butter and whole wheat flour, says Cooke. And don't forget dried or canned beans ... possibly the best nutritional buy in the entire grocery store.

Load up on good food "deals." But only if you can reasonably store them at home, says Cooke. "Half-price food is no savings if half of it is thrown away."

And if you buy in bulk, adds Avril, designate a separate set of shelves in your storage area where you can sort the items by category. Then make it a weekly routine to transfer needed items to the kitchen so you don't forget what you have and end

up buying more. "I have been in several homes and garages where I uncovered cases of canned, bottled and packaged food that hadn't been seen for months."

Organize food in your kitchen by category. "Then you can easily see what you have and what you will need to put on your shopping list," Avril explains. For example:

- On one shelf, store all your baking goods such as flour, sugar and cornstarch.
- Organize canned goods in rows based on food group — fruit, beans, tuna, soups, etc.
- Invest in plastic containers for dry food such as pasta, rice, beans and lentils. "They look a lot neater than those awkward bags," she explains.
- Save a shelf in the cupboard above your coffee pot for tea and coffee items ... unless you use jars on the counter next to your pot.
- Use the cupboard to the right or left of your stove (depending on whether you are right or left handed) for vinegar, salt, pepper oil — things you use in daily cooking. Keep spices in or on a rack within easy reach of your cooking area.
- Place cookies and sweet items on a higher shelf ... away from little fingers (and big ones).
- Sow savings. Plant a vegetable garden and share your excesses with friends ... and gladly accept their extras. "Trade makes winners of all the participants," says Cooke.
- Do cooperative shopping. Before you head for the store, call a friend and ask if you can pick up anything for him or her while you are there. Besides saving time and gasoline, you may get a similar

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phone call someday that will save you time and gasoline.

Still, says Cooke, we can't take our eyes off the nutritional ball just to save a few pennies. "You could eat dirt and save buckets of money," she says. "The challenge is to eat nutritiously; otherwise, what's the point?" Amen and amen. Thank you, ladies!

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