

K's Kitchen: The art of reusing leftovers

By Kathryn Reed



I've always been a pretty smart shopper, now I try to avoid the grocery store.

In this economy, it's one way to save money. After all, the federal government has issued a report saying the Consumer Price Index for all food "in the grocery store and from a restaurant" is expected to increase between 2.5 and 3.5 percent this year.

It was one thing when the grocery bill spiked as oil prices did because of transportation costs, but it didn't drop as the price of a barrel of oil or gallon of gasoline fell.

Food prices are rising. It's impacting the average household, which is already struggling to make ends meet, it's affecting the farmers because their take has been reduced, it's affecting schools because they have to pay more to feed the growing number of students on reduced or free lunch programs.

Someone's pockets are getting line with greenbacks.

With that said, I thought I would share a few ways I've been frugal. It's with leftovers. We've all had last night's meal for lunch, but what about making that meal into a new one?

I realize plenty of people call leftovers “used food” and don’t want to eat it. I tend to believe these people are the ones who don’t do the cooking.

Earlier this month I sautéed some veggies I had in the house and cooked some rice. Part of the reusing entailed taking the open container of vegetable broth and using part of it to cook the rice in (with water) and part to cook the veggies in (with olive oil). I also used fresh spinach leftover from a salad as part of the veggie mix.

Tired of reheating that rice-veggie combo, I then cooked up the rest of the spinach with a red onion, and tomato that had seen better days and would never be presentable for a salad. I added the leftover sautéed veggies and rice. Then I added two cans of refried beans.

I cooked all of that until it was hot through and through. I piled a bunch of this mixture into a tortilla and had a veggie burrito. I put a little grated cheese on top, nuked it for a few seconds and put salsa on it.

When I was tired of burritos, I scrambled some eggs. I heated more tortillas, microwaved the bean mixture and pulled out the rest of the grated cheese.

I spread the beans on a heated tortilla, topped it with the eggs, sprinkled some cheese on top and then a few spoonfuls of salsa. I had my version of huevos rancheros.

Now thoroughly tired of the bean mix, I put the remainder into tortillas, wrapped them up and stuck them in the freezer. This way when I’m not in the mood to cook, I have a couple meals in the house that just need thawing and reheating.

Reusing food in this way makes leftovers seem less repetitive and it cuts down on food waste. It also keeps me out of the grocery store for a while.