



That everyone's feeling the inflation pinch is by now old hat. Every columnist in the country has had his say on the subject.

For you and me, the question becomes what can we do in our daily lives to mitigate the effect it has on our market basket costs. That's where the shocks keep coming.

A year ago, everytime we stopped at the grocery store ten dollars did a disappearing act. Now everytime we push a cart through the aisles it's a twenty that goes "poof".

There are ways we can help ourselves to some extent. We can buy hamburger instead of steak. We can cut down on our use of sugar which nutritionists tell us isn't good for us anyhow.

We can pass up prepared foods, most mixes, the costly items the manufacturers have paid someone else to put together, and go back to the measuring cup and spoon, the sifter and rolling pin.

It's not all that difficult to make a cake from scratch; there's something immensely satisfying about stirring up a batch of bread, kneading it, letting it rise, punching it down and putting it in pans and, when it's doubled again, baking it.

Smells marvelous. Tastes fantastic. Makes your family appreciate you. And saves money; quite a lot. We can make bread for about half the cost of buying it at the store.

We can break out those linen napkins, yellowed with age, and the napkin rings in the back of the silver drawer and polish them up.

Sure napkins have to be washed and ironed. But they don't take up much room in the washing machine, and your iron can be turned off while you finish those little pieces.

Paper towels are a convenience, but you'll use less of them if you keep a terrycloth hand towel near the sink.

You can cart your own trash to the dump instead of hiring someone else to come and collect it.

You can turn off lights and use electrical appliances less frequently or for shorter periods. Plan to bake several things at one time when you use your oven. Many vegetables will bake to perfection in the same heat that cooks a casserole, roasts potatoes, heats up the rolls and warms the dinner plates.

If you're making a stew for dinner, you can avoid turning on the oven entirely and cook everything over one burner. While you eat, water for after-dinner coffee will heat on the same burner, after it's turned off.

One of the best ways to save is to stick to in-season fruits and vegetables. Turnip and squash do get a little tiresome through the long winter months, but garden lettuce and fresh baby carrots taste wonderful when you haven't had them for a while.

months, and freezing are all money-savers, and good ways to assure some variety in winter meals-to-come. It's not all that difficult.

Would you try a very simple way to make bread? Honest, it's not difficult and doesn't make a mess. It takes time, true, but mostly what takes time is the rising, and you can be doing something else while that's going on.

Start with a bag of Spruance bread mix available at your grocer's for under a dollar (this week). All you have to add is water; for white bread follow the directions on the bag.

For oatmeal, which we enjoy much more, try it this way. In a measuring cup put 1/4 C of warm water. Add the yeast in one of the packets that come with the mix. Stir and set aside to soften.

In a good-sized bowl, put 1/2 cup of rolled oats. Pour over it 1/2 cup of boiling water and stir with a fork. Add 1/4 cup of molasses and stir. Add one cup of lukewarm water and one cup of the flour mix. Add the yeast mixture and stir.

Add three cups of the flour mix and stir well. That's your bread dough. Turn it out on a floured board and mound it up in a ball. Turn the bowl upside down and cover the dough; let it rest for ten minutes.

At the end of ten minutes knead it. Just follow the directions on the bag. Use all the flour you need on your hands to keep it from sticking to your fingers -- also the board.

When you've kneaded it enough it will feel very elastic and alive. Wash your hands, now, and also the bowl; then grease one loaf pan, one cupcake pan, and the bowl.

Put the dough in the greased bowl and flip it over once to get both sides greased. Cover with a linen towel and set in a warm, not hot, place to rise.

Tidy up the kitchen -- but leave the board -- you'll use it again in an hour or less. While you're waiting, sprinkle a little dry oatmeal into the pans and shake around. Check the dough in about 50 minutes. Stick your fingers into it. If the dents stay, it's ready.

Punch it down. That's right, with your fist. And turn it out on the floured board again. Knead it some more, as before.

Cut off about a third of the dough and divide it up into small round balls, about the size of walnuts. Put two in each section of the cupcake pan.

Divide remainder of dough in two equal parts. Form two round balls. Put them in the loaf pan, side-by-side.

Sprinkle a little oatmeal on top of the rolls and on the loaf, as well. Put back in a warm place, cover again with the towel, and

let rise a second time. Now you can get rid of the flour, the board, and put your kitchen to right.

You'll have a fork, a knife, a bowl and a couple of measuring cups to wash, dry and put away.

After about 40 minutes, start preheating your oven to 350. The bread should be ready to go into the oven by the time it's hot.

The rolls should bake in twenty minutes or so. The loaf will take about 35. You can tell when it's done because the crust is hard, and when you tap it with your fingertip, it sounds sort of hollow.

It'll be nicely brown and smell heavenly.

Turn the rolls, and the bread when it's done, out onto a cake rack, and allow to cool. If you like a soft crust, butter the tops while still hot.

Eat one roll, immediately. You'll be hooked for life.

When thoroughly cool, store the rolls in a clean plastic bag. Break the loaf in half. Wrap one half in waxed paper, put in a plastic bag and pop it into the freezer to keep fresh.

Keep the other half in a plastic bag for immediate use. Use for sandwiches, toast,-- or just eat it with butter. It's more like cake than bread; the molasses makes it sweet.

From the time you start until the moment it comes out of the oven shouldn't be longer than three hours. And you spend less than half an hour at the actual making.

You've still got half a bag of mix left for next time. And you've bread and rolls for which you'd spend twice as much if you bought them at the store.

It's one way to beat the rising cost of living.