

# village view

by Andrea Leonard

How many people walk out of the supermarket these days without a vague feeling of foreboding? Food prices must be met for survival, and they're getting a little scary.

Not long ago at a meeting on nutrition I picked up a mimeographed sheet entitled, "How To Get Twenty Nutritional Servings from One-and-a-Half Pounds of Hamburger". I didn't expect to need to use it in the near future, but now I'm having second thoughts.

The average family is composed of four people; in theory, if you follow the directions, you can feed them five main meals for a little over \$2, right? In theory, maybe.

In practice, you can't, because in each case you've got to add other things to the hamburger, and support it with vegetables and dessert to make a meal. Each extra ingredient costs money, too; these aren't as expensive as meat, however, and there are savings to be realized.

Most family cooks can use all the help available to stretch the shrinking dollar. Here's how to get twenty nutritious servings from a pound-and-a-half (plus) of hamburger.

First, get the meat and a package of soy protein. Mix all the meat with an envelope and one-half of the soy protein, add two teaspoons of salt, a half teaspoon of pepper, a finely chopped onion, and mix well.

Using about a pound of the resulting mixture, make four patties, each out four ounces. Broil or fry for four servings. That leaves sixteen to go. You should have about a pound-and-a-half left.

To this remainder add one beaten egg, a cup of rolled oats, another chopped onion, two tablespoons of ketchup, and a cup of skim or lowfat milk.

Pack into a greased loaf pan measuring approximately 13" x 4" x 2½". If you plan to use it the next day, refrigerate; if not, cover with foil and freeze in the pan.

When ready to continue your dollar-stretcher plan, bake

the loaf for an hour in a 350 degree oven. Allow an extra 15 minutes if you took it from the freezer immediately before baking.

Use a third of the resulting meat loaf for four more servings. Refrigerate the remaining two thirds. You've still twelve more servings to create from the remainder.

Within a day or so, chop another onion and saute it in two tablespoons of cooking oil. Add a can of tomato paste, two cans of water, and a can of tomato puree, salt and pepper to taste, and toss in a teaspoon of Italian seasoning. Simmer for five minutes.

Into this sauce crumble one-third of the remaining meat loaf, continuing to simmer, covered, for half-an-hour. Meanwhile, boil two cups of elbow macaroni in six cups of salted water for eight minutes. Rinse and drain.

Return macaroni to the cooking pot. Now remove one-and-a-half cups of the sauce, cool and refrigerate it. Pour what's left of the sauce over the macaroni, stir gently, and simmer for another fifteen minutes to blend the flavors. Serve with salad or cole slaw and hot buttered rolls for a hearty meal of American Chop Suey.

Twelve down; eight more coming up. If everyone is sick and tired of hamburgers by now, they can't be blamed. This is a good time to freeze everything again while you vary the menu with baked chicken, tuna casserole, or hot dogs, beans and potato salad.

After a decent interval, defrost the remaining third of the meat loaf and the sauce. Have a nice fresh head of cabbage on hand for the next go-around. Bring to a boil a large pot of water, and immerse eight large outer leaves of the cabbage in the boiling water about three minutes, or until limp.

Cook enough rice to make a generous cupful. Crumble half the remaining meat loaf into the rice, add a beaten egg to two-thirds of a cup of milk, and stir all together. Divide the mixture into eight equal parts on the eight limp cabbage leaves. Roll up the leaves, tucking in ends and sides.

Add to the defrosted sauce a tablespoon of brown sugar and one of lemon juice. Spoon a little of this sauce into a pie plate, arrange the cabbage rolls, open side down, in the sauce and pour the remaining sauce over the top. You may either bake this immediately in a 350 degree oven for 45 minutes, basting two or three times, or you may choose to freeze the prepared cabbage rolls for a freezer-to-table meal. Just be sure to wrap the pie plate in foil and keep covered with the foil while you bake it. No basting is necessary in this case.

That's four more servings, and you're facing a final four to get rid of that remaining one-half of one-third of the leftover meat loaf. If there are still four people showing up for meals on a regular basis, you can pick up a package of taco shells with a sauce at your local grocery.

Chop two raw tomatoes, a quarter of a head of lettuce, and grate a half-pound of cheddar cheese. Prepare the taco shells and sauce according to package directions, fill the shells with the tomatoes/lettuce/grated cheese mixture, pour on the sauce, and pretend you're Mexicans. A can of chili or a couple of ears of fresh corn-on-the-cob will make this a meal to be remembered.

As an alternative, just in case your family doesn't relish Mexican food, American Chop Suey, or stuffed cabbage, you might substitute meat pie turnovers.

Mix one of the thirds of leftover meat loaf with about a third of the left-over sauce. Cut two-thirds of a cup of shortening into two cups of flour, add three-quarters of a teaspoon of salt, and six tablespoons of cold water all at once; stir until mixture cleans the bowl.

Turn out the resulting dough on a floured board, knead ten times, roll out, and divide into eight five-inch squares. Divide the meat/sauce mixture among the squares, piling it on one half of each crust. Moisten the edges with water, fold in half and seal. Squares look great folded diagonally. Bake on a cookie sheet at 400 degrees for twenty to twenty-five minutes or until pastry is golden brown and cooked through.

Your family may prefer meals like this to some of the alternative economy meals such as beef liver, soups, or stews concocted from beef neck bones or short ribs. On the other hand, these inexpensive (relatively speaking) meats are fully as nutritious as steaks, chops and roasts. Soups and stews made from cheaper cuts are rich in flavor; they can be stretched and given extra food value by the addition of barley, rice or pasta.

Flank steak, broiled to medium-rare, and carved very thin on the diagonal across the grain, is a tasty substitute for roast beef although it's bound to toughen if well-done. A flank steak, frozen raw, will cut easily into strips for Stroganoff, sweet-sour beef, pepper steak, or stir-fry dishes if your family likes meals prepared in a Wok.

While none of us relishes the idea of needing to stretch a pound-and-a-half of hamburger to twenty servings, it's not a bad idea to know it can be done and how to do it. Maybe you'll luck out and never feel the real pinch; on the other hand, maybe you'll be mighty glad someday to know it's possible.

All of us hope we'll never face such need; none of us can be certain of what's ahead, however, and there's nothing like being prepared.

And who knows? Your family may find some of these meals are more appetising than their current favorites. Most people enjoy any good meal attractively served, eaten in pleasant company and surroundings, and followed by a delicious dessert.

There's lots worse things than getting back to basics.