

Beef's a Bargain

by Carol Wilson

My bill at the grocery store last week was \$137.00. If I had five kids and a hungry husband at home, that wouldn't have been too bad. But I thought it was a terrible price to pay for food for two people.

I was home stashing my supplies in the cabinet when a friend came over. In the midst of my singing the grocery store blues, she commented, "Oh well, you probably bought a lot of meat."

She didn't know that we have half a beef in our freezer. The \$137 went for flour and sugar and canned goods and cabbage, but not for meat. But her comments piqued my interest. Her opinion is a popular one. Most people blame their high grocery bills on the "high" cost of meat.

I decided to do some comparative pricing next time I went shopping. I found that the same grocery store that sells beef loins for 16 cents an ounce charges 31 cents an ounce for halibut steak and 37 cents an ounce for lobster. Something was starting to smell a little fishy.

I like good home-grilled hamburgers, so I decided to find out what they were really costing. Ground beef was a bargain at seven cents an ounce. But the accompanying catsup, mustard and mayonnaise retail for six, 16 and nine cents an ounce. Ouch!

In the next aisle, peanut butter was selling for 13 cents an ounce . . . and an ounce of crackers to go with it cost 26 cents. The new sugar-free Jello is selling like hotcakes, at the prohibitive price of \$1.36 an ounce. And corn chips at 90 cents and cheese puffs at 98 cents could sure run the bill up quickly! At those prices, I didn't think eight cents an ounce was too much to pay for a pork roast.

Prepared breakfast cereal was selling for 18 cents an ounce, four cents more than the cost for an ounce of Choice sirloin steak. Beef was looking like a better buy all the time! I was glad I didn't like steak sauce when I found it would cost 23 cents an ounce to put sauce on my 14 cent steak.

I found that a quarter would purchase an ounce of toothpaste or shampoo and razors retailed for 30 cents apiece. Light bulbs go for a dollar apiece. Deodorant costs 30 cents an ounce. And you can take a porterhouse steak home for 20 cents an ounce, a nickel less than it takes to buy a roll of toilet paper.

And the list continues. One ounce of tea bags sells for 89 cents, but we haven't seen a reenactment of the Boston Tea Party. An ounce of Kool-Aid costs 75 cents and coffee goes for 27 cents an ounce. But boneless hams are sold for nine cents per ounce.

I just can't figure why people will complain about paying eight cents an ounce for round steak and turn right around and buy Stove Top stuffing for 16 cents an ounce. That is double the money! I prefer standing over a hot grill tending the beef ribs I bought for six cents an ounce to dusting furniture with my 11 cents an ounce polish. (Mmmm,

I can almost taste the barbecue right now!)

The store was full of paradoxes. Salad dressing mix is sold for \$1.87 an ounce and breakfast bars go for 30 cents. Chuck steak, on the other hand, can be bought for less than a dime. Ounce for ounce, candy bars sell for more than three times the price of chuck steak.

When steaks are cheaper than paper towels or chocolate chips or coffee, I find it hard to believe that people can gripe about the prices they pay over the meat counter. **AJ**

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