

A photograph of a brown paper grocery bag filled with fresh produce. A large loaf of golden-brown bread is the central focus, partially inside the bag. To its left are clusters of green and dark purple grapes. In the foreground, several bright yellow bananas are visible. The background is a soft-focus white surface. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent white and blue geometric shape that frames the text.

# Illinois Extension

Serving Bond, Clinton,  
Jefferson, Marion  
and Washington counties

Four Week

# GROCERY CHALLENGE



**Illinois Extension**

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

# 4-Week Grocery Challenge

Take some time to think about how much money your household spends on food.

- Do you spend more money on groceries or eating out?
- Are you spending too much of your overall budget on food?

Let's try to get a better understanding.

- How much are we spending on food each week?
- Where are we spending money on food (groceries or restaurants)?
- Are some meals or recipes more cost-effective than others?
- How much food (and money) is wasted each week?

Creating an awareness of your spending is the first step toward making positive behavior changes. Take this 4-week meal and grocery planning challenge to see if you are making the best choices to fit your needs. At the end of the four weeks, take some time to reflect on what you think were good choices and what things you would like to change or improve.

**Written By: Jamie Mahlandt**

University of Illinois, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Local Extension Councils Cooperating.

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# Consider Grocery Goals

## *Reduce food waste (and grocery budget loss)*

- Plan to use what you buy
- Read expiration dates
- Make meals that your family enjoys!

## *Focus on cutting grocery costs*

- Use what you already have on hand
- Buy what you need and shop with a list
- Pay attention to unit costs when comparing prices
- Plan to eat leftovers

## *Pay attention to portions*

- Meal plan for the needed servings
- Use food preservation for extra servings
- Store extra ingredients for future use

## **Set Grocery Goals for the Month:**

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# Meal Planning

	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
Sunday			
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Saturday			

Month: \_\_\_\_\_

Week: \_\_\_\_\_

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# Grocery Planning

	Daily Groceries	Weekly Groceries	Budget
Sunday		<u>Items on hand</u>	
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday		<u>Groceries to buy</u>	
Thursday			
Friday			
Saturday			

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# Food Spending Summary

Planned Expenses                      Actual Expense                      Variance

Week 1			
Week 2			
Week 3			
Week 4			

<b>Total:</b>			
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Notes:

**Month:** \_\_\_\_\_

# Meal Planning Reflection

*What meals met your needs the most this month?*

*Were you able to follow through on your meal plans?*

*Did you have leftovers? Were you able to utilize or save leftovers?*

*What meals did you most enjoy that you would like to repeat?*

*Which meals were the most cost effective on your grocery budget?*



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Financial instability can negatively affect physical, mental, and social health and can ultimately lead to bankruptcy. Illinois Extension provides financial well-being resources for all ages and life stages, which helps improve self-sufficiency, reduces the need for communities to provide support services, and creates opportunities for individuals to protect and build wealth.

The University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign's land-grant mission thrives each day through Extension's programs, resources, knowledge, and dedicated staff.

With an extensive background in higher education, Jamie Mahlandt now serves as a Financial Educator for Bond, Clinton, Jefferson, Marion, and Washington counties in Southern Illinois. She provides educational programming on consumer economics to the local community with an emphasis on financial management.



For questions about Illinois Extension Financial Education programs, contact Jamie at the Illinois Extension Office in Breese at 618-526-4551 or by email at [knuf@illinois.edu](mailto:knuf@illinois.edu). You can also find more resources on her website at [go.illinois.edu/BCJMWFinances](http://go.illinois.edu/BCJMWFinances).

### Connect to Illinois Extension



**Main  
Website**

[go.illinois.edu/bcjmw](http://go.illinois.edu/bcjmw)



**Financial  
Resources**

[go.illinois.edu/BCJMW  
Finances](http://go.illinois.edu/BCJMWFinances)



**Facebook  
Page**

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BCJMW](http://go.illinois.edu/FacebookBCJMW)



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Channel**

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BCJMW](http://go.illinois.edu/YouTubeBCJMW)

#### **College of Agricultural, Consumer, and Environmental Sciences**

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## Illinois Extension

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

### Bond County Extension

208 Academy

Pocahontas, IL 622475

(618) 664-3665

Monday - Friday, 8 AM - 4:30 PM

### Marion County Extension

1404 E. Main, Rt 50 East

Salem, IL 62881

(618) 548-1446

Monday - Friday, 8 AM - 4:30 PM

### Clinton County Extension

1163 N. Fourth Street

Breese, IL 62230

(618) 526-4551

Monday - Friday, 8 AM - 4:30 PM

### Washington County Extension

9623 Wall Street

Nashville, IL 62263

(618) 327-8881

Monday - Friday, 8 AM - 4:30 PM

### Jefferson County Extension

3452 Broadway

Mt. Vernon, IL 62864

(618) 242-0780

Monday - Friday, 8 AM - 4:30 PM

