

Collection of all found posts on “Field Effect” from Dale Power

Part III: The Economics of Eating

The Economics of Eating

Can you eat enough on 50 Cents a day to survive?

The Idea:

With hard economic and environmental times upon us, (very soon, already started in most places) it seems wise to have an action plan, to know what can be done to survive and to not make things worse in the world, if that is at all possible.

So my first idea is pretty simple, at least on paper, find out how much I can reduce my food budget for a month and document it, so that others can see for themselves what might be done, and mainly so that I can find out how hard (or easy) it is to do.

Not wanting to wait too long for perfect conditions, because after all, who gets perfect in hard times? I have decided to begin this trial, test (whatever it should be called...) on August first, 2010.

This gives me about two weeks from the point of the original idea to the start of the project. In practical terms this means eating on somewhere between 48 and 80 cents per day for a whole month. (See the “Rules” below for why it has to be so high...)

I will (try) to write about this each day, give an update and explain exactly what I am doing, as well as catalog any insights I have that are promoted by this endeavor. I hope people will read it and give feedback, tips, or their insights as well!

The Rules:

- 1. A 2,000 Calorie per day minimum.** Sure, it would work to simply starve, into a low food cost per day, but this is about how well a person could eat cheaply and still maintain normal function. (That 2,000 calorie amount may not be “enough” as my caloric needs seem to be slightly higher than that per day, but it was picked as being the “normal” amount, based on the FDA food labels (percentage of a typical 2,000 calorie diet...On all the food labels now.). So no real reason for that specific amount, except that it sets a lower limit.)
- 2. No Refrigeration.** Most people in the world don't have access to refrigerators, and if you do personally (which I do of course, typical American that I am) what would you do if the power went out? With food going bad before you can eat it, rotting and such? I am keeping the stove and oven though. I KNOW that I can make food without one for certain, so that is not a huge concern for me at this stage.

3. **Sustainable food.** I don't have a better term for this... I don't mean specifically that the food has to be environmentally friendly, though for the most part what I am eating won't be too bad that way. (Meat and dairy are too expensive for this effort, leaving mainly grains and some fats as the main caloric sources) No, I mean food that I can face eating day after day. So a bit of variety (Spices things like that, though I have to count them into the total cost for each day), and enough of the base essentials to keep a body going. Carbohydrates, fats and proteins, vitamins and minerals when possible. I have decided against supplements for the month, to get a real sense of what this kind of diet might be like, if it needed to be applied for a longer time.
4. **All food must be bought, except for garden vegetables.** I have a very small garden, already put in place, and some tomatoes growing in pots indoors. I will include the price of these, as eaten, based on how much the seeds cost at time of purchase. I live in a rural area, so no dumpster diving or begging for food out here! I also will refrain from getting free food from nature, since so many people reading this (who may need to apply something similar one day) will most likely live closer to a large town or city than I do and may not have that option.
5. **On August 9th I will have a cake.** That being my birthday. I don't know how I will work it in to the food budget, but it will be there and I will do it as inexpensively as possible. It will probably be very small.

July 31, 2010

Beginning....

I find myself both excited about trying this and a little worried at the same time. How hard will this be to follow? Will I be able to get enough to eat to keep up normal activity or will I have to cut things back?

It is kind of comforting (in a sad way) to think that most people in the world eat no more than this per day, while keeping up full time jobs, families and lives. Many get by on a lot less. At least I know my food will be clean, free of bugs and rot and that I could simply get more if I really needed it, without fear that there simply isn't enough. Something for me to think about while doing this.

August 1, 2010

Day 1

Why am I doing this?

This project, eating as economically as possible, was spurred originally by an article I saw on-line, in which the amount of money used each week for food was examined for several countries. I was amazed at how much some have, with some countries spending nearly ten dollars a day to feed people and others getting by on pennies.

My focus however is not to highlight how some have plenty of food and other have too little, not specifically at least, though I do plan to go into the massive famine in Niger before this months work is over!

No, what has really caught my mind is the huge potential for a second "Great Depression" in the United States.

What would I do if I had to make due with very little money for food? How would I, and people like me, get by? It is obvious that many would simply starve with their current skill sets, or turn to crime to get by. This project is about learning how not to have to do that.

So, to learn a new way of surviving, and possibly to show others how I did it. That's why I am doing all this.

~

Today I am only planning on eating two meals, though I will keep to at least 2,000 calories. Mainly it's the time it takes to prepare very inexpensive food and time issues involved, I don't want to spend all day cooking. There is always a trade off though, and a little extra time is something we all can find, when pressed hard enough.

The first thing I noticed about this project is that cooking skills seem to be tightly linked to the ability to lower food costs. Since I have been doing most of my own cooking, from scratch, for about two or three years, this isn't that big of a deal to me personally, but I could see it being a stumbling block to someone that was used to just popping a box of something into the microwave and heating it for five minutes. (End of day note: Almost all food from scratch takes much less time and effort than to ALL of the food from scratch.)

Cooking is easy though. There are really just three things needed for successful food preparation from scratch.

The right tools: Such as the needed ingredients and cookware. Most cooking and baking doesn't take a lot of specific equipment though, just a pot of some kind, and some kind of pan that will allow you to bake things in the oven. The end product may not look right, but it will still taste about the same, even if you use the "wrong" pan.

Attention: Many people get bored or distracted easily while cooking, or try to do too many items at one time. I noticed that as I prepared my food today that the fact that I would have to eat this food, no matter how it turned out, really kept my mind focused on what I was doing! (Funny how that works)

Some Basic Knowledge: If you don't have it, using a recipe works as well. In general, for survival cooking purposes it is probably better to use lower heat and more time than to try and hurry things along, as that can lead to burning.

~

Daily Breakdown

Breakfast:

Pollenta (Corn cereal. Kind of like a really thick Cream of Wheat.) One cup dry (10.46 cents) with salt (.01 cents) and a little less than one table spoon of vegetable oil, (1.9 cents.)

Calories: 550

Total cost of breakfast: 12.37 cents

Dinner:

Bean burritos. Hand made Tortillas. Four, VERY large (22.4 cents). Refried beans, slightly less than one cup (11.6 cents). Slightly less than three tablespoons of oil. (5.7 cents)

Calories: 1,500

Total cost of dinner: 39.7 cents

Daily Grand Total:

Calories: 2,050

Cost: **52.07 cents**

Day Two:

August 2, 2010



Breaking things down!

Just in case anyone was wondering how I'm figuring this out, and planning things for least cost, I will include the basic formula bellow.

Cost of individual purchase/Number of 100 calorie increments = Base unit price.

*Note: I am using a base unit of 100 calories as my standard.

In numbers it would look like this: (This is for Course corn meal, out of which I have been making Pollenta. It can be used for other things too though.)

Cost of Purchase:.38 cents per pound.

Number of 100 calorie units per pound: 16 (The total calories is actually 1,605.6 per pound, but rounding to the nearest hundredth seems workable to me in this case.)

$38/16=2.375$ cents for every 100 calories of Corn meal.

So breakfast today (Pollenta again. It's cheap and pretty filling...) which started as one cup of dry Corn Meal (course ground. It tends to be the cheapest. Buying out of the bulk section of your store will probably save you a little money as well.) costs...

$2.375 \times 4.5= 10.6875$ cents..

But I added 100 calories of oil as well! That will add 100 calories at a base cost of 1.75 cents per. (Vegetable oil is cheap and high calorie.)

10.6875 for the Corn Meal

Plus an additional 1.75 for the oil

Equals 12.4375 cents.

Here is my short list of prices by 100 calorie unit cost:

Oil: 1.75 cents.

Corn meal: 2.375 cents

Flour: 2.5 cents

Rice: 2.63

Pinto Beans: 5.2

Salt and most other spices: Approximately .01 cents per serving.

(But obviously these are servings to taste, not 100 calorie units!)

I may add to this list as we go along, if I can find anything low enough in price to be added.

Dinner:

Tonight's meal was a replay of yesterdays dinner, with some small changes for variety and cost saving. I replaced some of the beans with rice.

This bulked up the meal a bit and hunger is not at all a problem.

Calories: 1,600

Cost: 38.7 cents

Totals:

Calories for day: 2,150

Cost for days food: **51.1375 Cents**

**Day Three:
August 3, 2010**

The Cost of Being Human

It's funny, but I really thought that my main focus during the early days in the project would be about food. Wanting more (nope, the amount I have is actually enough for me!) wanting different food (not yet...) or just having cravings for things I can't afford on .50 cents a day.

What I have notice most though is how focused I am suddenly on the expense of everything else around me. How much does my toothpaste cost per use? (About one cent.) How much would the air conditioning cost if I wasn't keeping it off in an effort to slow global warming? (About five dollars per day.)

Also I keep noticing how many things I have that I buy instead of make, even though making them would probably be far more cost effective. Shoes, clothes, soap and towels all come to mind. This doesn't mean I will make all of these things though, as work keeps me busy most of the time these days. Still, perhaps I should learn to do these things for myself, just in case the economy takes an even deeper plunge soon? (Which has been predicted by almost everyone, including the government if you listen closely.)

At the same time, a lot of things I do still have a negative impact on the planet. Driving a car (truck actually, though a small one) is pretty necessary here, being

some fifty miles from the nearest large town. But I could walk to the mailbox instead of drive more often. (Hey, it's four miles from my front door. Each way! So, yes, I have in the past tended to drive it....) I could possibly go into town once a month instead of twice as I do now.



The biggest thing I have noticed though is plastic. It's everywhere. In almost everything! I would like to try and divest my life of the stuff, as least in new purchases, but I'm not certain I can. This bears a lot of thinking! Of course, the big thing right now is to combine the best of both worlds, help the Earth's environment while also spending less and working to generate more jobs for others.

Breakfast: Pollenta

Calories: 550
Cost: 12.4375 cents.

Dinner AND a snack for later: Homemade crackers with tomato. (Garden tomato, two cents total cost! Beats buying from the store.)

Calories: 1,450
Cost: 33.25 Cents.

Total:

Calories: 2,000
Cost: 45.6875 cents

Day Four: August 4, 2010

Protein

A lot of people have been asking me if this project will allow me to have enough protein to survive, some even fear for my health and safety!

So I did some research and found out a few things.

First, this diet is very low in protein by normal



American (U.S.) standards, but seems to have enough for long term maintenance, as long as I can get enough beans in to compliment the grains. (At five cents per 100 calorie unit, they are not cost friendly in this effort. I will have to try and find a cheaper source.)

Second, most people eat way more protein than their bodies can handle easily. Some people claim that the FDA Recommended allowance is over three times what a person really needs!

Everyone, including the FDA and the Cattle industry admit that Meat farmers certainly had a strong influence on how the standards were set. (Here I would have been hoping for medical professionals with some research behind them instead.)

Third, the Beef, Chicken and Pork lobbies are powerful in the United states! The Dairy board as well. They have, over the years, co-opted what we know about food and replaced it with advertising and propaganda.

For instance, adult humans, even women, don't need cows milk to survive. Eating greens and a low protein diet seems to lead to stronger bones, rather than weaker ones as we have all been told so many times.

A study done about a year ago showed that, in women (and probably men, but that wasn't what this particular study was about.) eating too much protein might be linked to bone density loss. While this still remains a question, and no answer has been defined, it does show that people may have some slightly skewed ideas about food and what is actually a healthy diet.

You can read the full article on [Science Daily](#). (Link will open in a new window.)

It seems more and more that we may not actually need to drink milk at all and that meat should be restricted in diet for health concerns. (Not to mention environmental concerns, but that is a story for another time...)

That said, I still feel the same trepidations that everyone else has. Propaganda works, even when you know that what you have been taught is false (which is the true and horrible magic of it! You know that what you are hearing is not correct, but the sheer repetition causes your subconscious

mind to act as if it is reality.). But I am comfortable with the fact that I won't die this month from lack of protein. Most likely.

Breakfast: Pollenta again.

Calories: 550
Cost: 12.4375 cents.

Dinner: Bean Burritos

Calories: 1,450
Cost: 39.025 cents.

Total:

Calories: 2,000
Cost: 51.4625 cents

**Day Five:
August 5, 2010**

Trouble!

Nothing huge or world shattering, but the price of course corn meal went up at the store I get it from, so instead of .38 cents per pound, it is now .43 cents per pound.

This means that the cost per 100 calorie unit has gone from 2.375 cents to a whopping 2.6875 cents!

I did however manage to crawl around the bulk bins long enough today to find that dried peas, a legume that will help add completed protein to this grain heavy diet, run only .55 cents per pound, in 100 calorie units this is 3.056 cents.

It will require eating peas instead of beans for protein, but it will help bring the costs back down. (Peas are NOT my all time favorite food. Still, I refuse to be defeated by a vegetable!)

*But frankly I am not looking forward to "Pea Burritos". Still, it's not like I have room to be picky and "nothing ventured, nothing gained"!

Perhaps I will make them into a dip and have them with crackers instead tonight though.

**Update, it turns out that dried peas need to be cooked like beans. That is for a long, long time! I ended up eating tortillas alone at first, then the cooked peas later! Not the best meal ever, but it will do well enough to keep me alive.



Breakfast:
Pollenta (Expensive new
pollenta...)

Calories: 550
Cost: 13.84375 cents

Dinner:
Dried peas and tortillas.

Calories: 1,500
Cost: 32.875 cents.

Total:

Calories: 2,050
Cost: **46.71875 cents**

**Day Six:
August 6, 2010**

Sleep.

While I don't feel particularly hungry most of the time and I have no strong food cravings at all so far, I have noticed my sleep needs going up just a little.

I would say I am averaging about an extra 45 minutes of sleep per day or so.

Now, this could be from many sources, such as overwork, and trust me, it has been incredibly busy lately, or simply not wanting to waste any energy on a subconscious level.

What I do know is that I feel surprising good during the day. I thought I would be dragging a little or preoccupied with thoughts of food, but so far this hasn't happened. (Of course I am also using a lot of focused meditative techniques and altered states of consciousness most of my waking hours, which is probably helping to prevent obsessive thoughts of food. The meditation is linked to my "day job".)

Controversy. (How can this generate controversy?!?)

When I started this I had no idea that this project would stir up so many people! Apparently some people feel that any diet that does not include meat is somehow a threat to them...

Others feel that I am somehow "anti-vegetable" because my current eating plan cannot afford expensive fruits and vegetables, so, have to be used sparingly.



I admit that I am a vegan (which is like a really strict vegetarian, just with no milk or dairy.), but for environmental reasons, rather than health or animal rights reasons. I AM for animal rights and the good treatment of animals, but it is simply not what spurred me into such an eating pattern. Just to put peoples minds to rest, I normally eat a lot of fruits and vegetables however. They just don't fit into this current "Survival Exercise" plan. (But thank you, those who have expressed concern for me! So far I feel good. I will let everyone know if this starts to wear on me.)

A few people have even complained to me (seriously here, they weren't joking...

Not joking at all...) that my doing this is wrong, because it makes them feel like they are being gluttonous. Or wasting money. I am talking about people yelling at me in "all caps" here... (One even claimed I was doing this to show other people up!)

I suppose I should just be happy that people are bothering to think about how much food costs and how much they really need to eat, which is the actual point to all of this. Well, some of the points. There is more I will cover as the weeks pass. (Environmental concerns, the Famine in West Africa, the growing Obesity problem in the U.S.)

To be very clear: this is not about getting people to eat any given way, simply to show a solid method of modern, urban compliant, survival eating. It is not demonstrating a plan recommended for either maximum health or environmental concerns specifically. Instead it is meant to reflect what a person or group of people might wish to do near the beginning of an economic crash, if they do not have a large garden or hunting readily and legally available to them. If this project offends anyone in any way, please keep this bit of information in mind. No offense is ever intended.

Breakfast:

Pollenta (still not all that boring! Go figure?)

Calories: 550

Cost: 13.84375 cents.

Dinner:

Crackers and Tomato with Rosemary.

Calories: 1,473

Cost: 34.675

Total:

Calories: 2,023

Cost: 48.51875 Cents.

**Day Seven:
August 7, 2010**

Living without Power or Water.

At about seven in the evening on the Sixth of August, the power suddenly went out. Luckily for me, I was just pulling dinner out of the oven when it happened and everything went quiet.

There is an eerie sort of silence that happens when all the power is gone suddenly like that, it just stops and all of the hums and buzzes that we have learned to block out, things we don't even notice day to day, are made obvious by their absence.

As it turns out, but what I didn't learn until the next day, wild fires had taken down power lines over ten miles away from my

house. I still don't know all the information on it, which leads to some interesting thoughts about what we expect as "the full story" on certain issues, but that is something to go into at a later date.

The issues I had to deal with the next day are the interesting ones though!

With the power out there was no heat for cooking and no power to operate the well. If we were to keep everything going until the power came back on we had to find a way to provide water fast. The six horses we have here (only three belong to us directly) were running out of water and the temperature was pushing 105 in the shade. This was handled thanks to a kind neighbor that has a solar powered cattle watering system that pumps about three gallons of water a minute.

By bailing out water from the trough, it was possible to collect about 120 gallons of water in large plastic bins and trucked it the three and a half miles back to the house. (It would have been almost impossible to do this on short notice without a vehicle, but most people in the world don't own a private vehicle at all. Minor reflection on how good I actually have things!) This gave us enough water to make certain the horses were taken care of for the day. For the people and other animals we keep about forty gallons of water on hand, so that wasn't an immediate concern.

It is amazing how long it takes to move any real amount of water by hand, using a bucket. Just shifting that water took the better part of two hours. (Not that there was much else to do other than work around the house.)

That only left my food.

Everything on my current eating plan requires cooking or baking, and being a little unprepared I didn't have anything set aside for emergencies that was already made up, not wanting food to possibly go bad.

Just for the record, no grain really becomes edible by soaking in cold water...

You need heat to soften most grains into something worth/able to eat.

It was easy enough to make an emergency solar oven, just an insulated box (in my case it was a turkey roaster! Insulated and black on the inside) with some kind of lid. I found some old, semi-clear plastic tarp (often used when painting as a professional drop cloth.) and was able to seal it around the top using rubber bands. *Emily came up with the idea of using those materials and built the chain of rubber bands that sealed it in place. So credit to her for this one!

While the sun was shining the temperature grew nicely, heat the bowls of water to about the level of very warm, even hot tap water in about an hour.

Not warm enough to make rice yet though, when the clouds came!

So, digging through the cupboards and quickly doing some math, I discovered that two packages of Raman, with four and a bit tablespoons of oil would serve as a good base for a meal if I wasn't too picky.

I plopped the Raman in the warm water, sealed it up and had well cooked Raman in about fifteen minutes! I added a little salt, some garlic powder and chives to it for flavor (never eat the flavor packages that come with them... More on that later in the month.) and had a dinner that was slightly over 1,000 calories for about 37 cents. (Very expensive, but there was little choice at the time.)

When I started doing this I didn't expect to have to come up with a source of cooking heat that didn't use electricity or fire (In case you come from a wet climate, if there are wild fires you want to avoid anything that could send up even a small spark or ember, as that can make the whole thing even worse.). It's a good thing that I knew enough about solar cooking to make something, even though I didn't make optimal use of my daylight hours for it. I should have started first thing in the morning and probably should have a solar oven working full time every day, ready to go on short notice.

I have to say, this event really drove some points home about how far from self sufficient I really am. I could and would make it if things got dicey, sure, but I don't have things set up to smoothly transition into an emergency situation. More work is definitely needed on this score.

The temptation to simply open up a can of something (and I have plentiful food on hand!) regardless of the cost was high. It took an act of will to try and stick to the low cost eating plan under stress. I think that is something that gets forgotten when doing emergency planning sometimes, people forget that if a bump comes along, they are likely to forgo a disciplined plan in favor of what makes them feel safe and secure at the moment.

Breakfast:

One small garden Watermelon!

Calories: 300

Cost: 1 cent.

Diner:

Ramen with an oil based sauce.

Calories: 1,040

Cost: 37 cents.

Snack:

Crackers I made when the power came back on. Two tomatoes from the indoor plants.

Calories: 600

Cost: 19.25

Total:

Calories: 2,040

Cost: **57.25 cents**

**Day Eight:
August 8, 2010**

West African Famine.

A huge drought, a plague of locust and poor farming practices have come together to create a "perfect storm" in West Africa, leading to famine and increasing hardship for the people there.

My little adventure of yesterday really drove home for me how much harder it is to get along when you don't have access to things like water, or fuel for a fire! (And what I went through was nothing at all compared to the real hardships other face every single day.)

I normally don't ask people for money or donations, but if you have anything to give to these people, and even a few pennies will make a difference to them, I highly recommend that you donate to one of the charities that is sending aid to that region of the world.

Here is a link to one of the groups doing the best work so far, though there are several others:

I know that I personally am making an effort to donate and will continue to try to raise awareness of this situation both on line and in my personal life.

Getting the word out is as important as giving money, and again, everything you do will help and may save lives. People are dying right now, millions of small children are facing life long brain damage due to hunger, and funds just haven't been coming in fast enough to do anything about it of note yet!

This is action that we can all feel good about taking, knowing that our actions will actually make a positive difference.

Breakfast:

Crackers (from the batch made last night)

Calories: 750

Cost: 18 cents.

Snack:

More crackers. (I made a lot in case the power went back out...)

Calories: 750

Cost: 18 cents

Dinner:

Rice with a light sauce. (New source of rice. Bought bulk, long grain, 55 cents per pound. 2.345 cents per 100 calorie unit.)

Calories: 600

Cost: 13.625

Total:

Calories: 2,100

Cost: 49.625 cents.

Day 9:
August 9, 2010

39

On my birthday, I like to take time to look back over what I have done with my life, see who I have helped and put to myself this question:

“What the HECK are you doing?!?!”

If I ever find that I can't give a good answer, then I know it is a time to change who I am and do something new.

Right now I am trying to find solutions to some of the worlds environmental problems, working a lot, sharing information with people and trying to learn all I can, about everything I can.

I don't think I help enough people in general, but I am working on it, if I keep trying, maybe someday I'll get there.

I am trying to learn to do with less, less food, less material drive, less waste. Far from perfect at it, but still trying. (Because the World needs people to become less driven by material desires if it is to heal and continue with us humans as part of the package.)

Is this good enough? Is it worth doing?

Am I wasting my life or spending it wisely?

I don't know...

For now though, it is a good enough place to work from, so I will keep going.

:)

*Also, today I get a cake.

This is going to play merry havoc with my daily food budget, but it is in the rules, so I get one! I will count it separately, but I WILL account for how much it costs and how many calories are in it and so on.

Everything else will be normal food wise today though.

Breakfast:
Pollenta

Calories: 550

Cost: 12.55 cents.

Dinner:

Rice with seasonings.

Calories: 600

Cost: 15.03 cents.

Total:

Calories: 1,150

Cost: 27.58 cents.

Cake: (Yay!)

(This is the cost of the whole thing, but I don't get to eat it all.)

Calories: 1,200

Cost: \$1.20



Day 10:
August 10, 2010

Recipe One: Crackers.

You know that you want to make your own crackers. If you don't know it, then you haven't tried it yet! It's so easy that you will probably never buy crackers again after making them once. Too easy to make your own!

Ingredients:

2 cups flour. (almost any type will do, but I like unbleached white flour for this.)

¼ to ½ cup oil. (you get nice rich saltines with ¼ cup and very rich, nearly pie crust crackers with ½)

½ Tablespoon salt.

Herbs and spices of your choice to taste. (I like to use garlic and onion powder, some chives, a bit of pepper, but use what you want or go plain, it's all tasty.)

Water. (have a cup on hand, but you won't use it all most of the time.)

Pre-heat oven to 450 degrees Fahrenheit.

1 Put all the dry ingredients in a bowl, then add the oil and stir with a spoon until all oil is mixed.

2 Slowly add about a table spoon of water at a time alternating mixing with a spoon, until everything looks just like a bunch of slightly moistened clumps (you can always ADD more water later, but you can't take it out, so go slowly.)

3 Now, using your hands, compact the dough into a single mass that holds together, but feels slightly dry to the touch.

4 Knead for two to five minutes. Add a little water if you need to, but don't let it become too sticky.

5 Prepare a flat surface with a light dusting of flour and put the dough in the middle. Dust the top of the dough with flour so that the roller won't stick!

6 Roll the dough as flat as you can for crisp cracker or leave thicker for softer ones. If you added a lot of oil, you will find it falls apart if less than ¼ inch thick, which is fine, just get it as thin as you easily can.. Cut into what you consider cracker sized pieces. How big or small is personal choice, but they should all be roughly uniform, so that they will bake in about the same amount of time.

7 Put on baking sheet. No oil is needed, it won't stick, even if you didn't use any oil at all (which makes saltines by the way!)

8 Add salt to the top and lightly press down, pushing the salt into the top of the cracker a bit. This will keep it from falling off when you eat.

Bake for 9-11 minutes at 450 F.

Remove from oven and cool on wire rack, or a towel. (The Wire rack is better though.)

Breakfast:

Pollenta

Calories: 550

Cost: 12.55 cents.

Dinner:

Crackers

Calories: 1,450

Cost: 33.25 cents.

Total:

Calories: 2,000.

Cost: 43.8 cents.

Twitter:

This is just a quick thanks to those of you on Twitter that have been picking this up and spreading the news about the Economics of Eating.

Please keep up all the wonderful work!

Everyone else!

If you would like to join me on Twitter, just look for

DaLawPower.

Thanks, you are all so great!

Breakfast:

Pollenta!

Calories: 550

Cost: 12.55 cents.

Diner:

Pancakes with syrup! (All home made.)

Calories: 1,448



Cost: 39.25 cents.

Total:

Calories: 1,998

Cost: 51.8 Cents.

Day 12:
August 12, 2010

Pollenta Day!

Just to keep things "real" I thought I would try to eat just one food for the day. A lot of people around the world do not have great variety or choice in what they eat, so I thought I would put myself in their shoes for a bit.

It is amazing how much you can learn about others by going through a small part of what they do each day. Facing hunger is a huge thing that we don't really think about. Maybe we can't think about it, from our safe worlds with plenty of food and the certain knowledge that we can get more just by hopping down to the corner store with a wad of cash or a debit card?

Still, I can try to put myself in the skin of others and see what there is to learn from them.

Oddly enough, I am finding that compassion for others is far more central to my thoughts now than it was even two weeks ago!

Eggs!

I may splurge and have one tomorrow. We have all the chickens so the price per egg is only about five cents. (So about 7.5 cents per 100 calorie unit) It is tempting, though I will have to try and figure out where to shift calories around so I can afford it!

Stress...

Even though things are going well and a lot more people have noticed this project is going on (Please tell your friends about it too!) I feel an odd bit of stress creeping in. It is like something in my hind brain is urging me to go faster, to do more.

This may be related to the food/money rationing, even though there is actually plenty in the cupboard to eat and more than enough in the bank.

Something primal perhaps?

Total for the day
(Because it is all the same, I won't bother with a per meal break down!)

Pollenta:

Calories: 2,000
Cost: **48.775 Cents**

Day 13:
August 13, 2010

Understanding Despair

Even though I am choosing to hold to this project and I don't have to for financial reasons, or because food is actually scares or costly in my area, I still feel a tiny bit of growing despair about, well, everything.

I think this is a good thing though!

I mean, imagine what would happen if the world suddenly took an economic down turn, and while you (*because you have prepared*) have food to eat and people that love you, everything became just a bit more uncertain and stressful, right when you had to make a sudden change in your diet, which also throws you off track?

Planning fun events, singing, dancing, being with happy people (or at least people willing to fake it for a while) and having hobbies and projects lined up to help you stay busy and entertained can really make a huge difference in your personal outlook.

More directly, using meditation techniques like Tibetan compassion meditation or the [Overcoming Depression](#) technique mentioned here can really brighten your day. (Your whole life if you are diligent enough.) But they only help if you remember to use them!

I think, when people talk about making preparations for "the bad times" they sometimes forget that they will want to have things set up so that the bad times aren't really so bad after all.

Breakfast:

Pollenta

Calories: 550
Cost: 12.55 cents.

Dinner:
Dry Pea and tomato wraps.

Calories: 1,500
Cost: 34.75 cents.

Total:

Calories: 2,100
Cost: **47.3 Cents.**

Day 14:
August 14, 2010

Natural light living

The idea is a simple one, keep the lights off and windows clear so that most of the light you live by comes from the sun. This puts you on a more natural footing and seems very centering.

Of course I let myself lapse for a bit, meal times changed and I'm awake until the wee hours of the morning most days enjoying the cooler weather.

So today I decided to get back into a more natural cycle and keep the lights off when it got dark, which meant eating in the dark as well. Have you ever tried to balance peas on crackers in the dark? Not as simple as it sounds!

I ended up eating with my hands, picking up big scoops of peas and shoving them into my mouth like a two year old. It was kind of fun in a slightly messy way.

The heat is intense, especially since we have been keeping the air-conditioning off all the time lately. I figure that if we can survive this month without it, we should be pretty much set for a life of living without it, at least until Global Warming kicks in full bore!

I have been giving more thought as to what areas of my life I can cut back, as far as energy and carbon footprint goes. The natural light living is just one of those steps. The rest will be dropped in piecemeal as I figure out how to keep working and have at least a bit of fun every now and again while doing it.

Breakfast:

Pollenta

Calories: 550

Cost: 12.55 Cents.

Dinner:

Crackers with Peas and
Tomato.

Calories: 1,450

Cost: 34.75 Cents.

Total:

Calories: 2,000

Cost: 47.3 Cents.



Day 15:
August 15, 2010

Half-way point!

Yay! Half way there!

So far I haven't starved to death or succumbed to scurvy or beri-beri!

I have to say, I am amazed and heartened by the positive outpourings of support over the last couple of days! That positive energy is really helping me to keep going, even when things get a little dark and gloomy. (Around two A.M. when thoughts of Nachos start plaguing me...)

I am confident that I can do this and that others can too, if need be. That is the real reason for all of this, ultimately, not just to learn new things, but to show others that a regular

fellow like me can do this and that they can too, if it comes up.

I would like to urge people to stock up a bit more over the next few months. In the spring and summer we can all grow some kind of garden (or at least a window box or two) but winter is harder and having a little bit put aside in case of emergencies can't hurt! On the good side, I don't think things will be that bad this winter. Not in most places.

But there are rumors of coming food shortages and hard economic times, so if you can spare a few extra dollars, buying enough food to last for a few months may be the way to go.

Again, thanks for all the support and kind words!

I won't give up!

Breakfast:

Pollenta (Which oddly I am really beginning to like...)

Calories: 550

Cost: 12.55 Cents.

Dinner:

Pea and garden veggie wraps.

Calories: 1,450

Cost: 35.25 Cents.

Day 16:
August 16, 2010

No sleep!

All right, this has nothing to do with the project at hand directly, but I had to run some errands and that, in a way, led me not to sleep last night. I have been up for about 30 hours as I write this. (33 as I edit!)

I feel pretty good, all things considered! Now the tough part...

I just had my first meal of the day, at about the time I have been having it plus a few hours, and I am not certain if I will be able to stay up late enough to eat dinner! I feel pretty full already and the idea of eating again in two or three hours sounds, uninteresting to say the least!

OK, It may be hard, but I will keep to the project rules without variation.

But if I explode from eating too much, please don't let the cats eat my body.
(Because that would be disturbing!)

I will go running in about an hour, maybe that will wake me up enough to make it until dinner!

(If dinner is posted below, I made it! If not...?)

Breakfast:

Pollenta

Calories: 550

Cost: 12.55 Cents.

Dinner: (I made it!)

Pancakes.

Calories: 1,450.

Cost: 34.75 Cents.

Total:

Calories: 2,000 (Naturally!)

Cost: 47.3 Cents.

Day 17:
August 17, 2010

Out of balance & Stuff!

I have been working so much that I haven't stopped to do anything fun or relaxing for weeks. That can't be a good thing long term! Balance in life is important too.

I have also noticed that I keep eating later and later in the day, even if I am hungry earlier. I blame the heat and not wanting to cook because of it, during the day! But there is no reason I can't do some baking at night and have things ready to go during the next day. Pre-planning is almost always the way to go.

I still feel well physically, but I have to admit I am not as emotionally well set as I was two weeks ago. I think part of that may be all the interactions with people effecting me on a psychic level. It makes me wonder how celebrities handle such things? They must be bombarded constantly by people forming deep level links with them, due to their interest and focus on them.

Something I find very interesting in life is that the subconscious mind doesn't differentiate between reality and fantasy. Which explains why people feel so close to television characters that they go through adventures with each week!

I think I may try some new recipes soon. (Edit: I did! Dumplings! Turned out all right. I would make them again, if it was winter...)

I haven't been doing much new because it is easier, not because there is nothing else that could be done.

Besides It's good to shake things up every once and a while, right?

Breakfast:

Pollenta

Calories: 550

Cost: 12.55 Cents.

Dinner:

Dumplings with spice!

Calories: 1,450

Cost: 35 Cents.

Total:

Calories: 2,000

Cost: **47.55 Cents.**

Day 18:
August 18, 2010

Clarifying some things!

It has been brought to my attention that I may not have been very clear at the beginning about why I am doing this and what my initial idea was for setting this up. Well, keeping in mind that all successes are shared and all failures are mine, I guess I have to do something to fix that then!

Here is my initial premise:

Imagine waking up one morning to find that things have gone down hill rapidly over night. Maybe it is a job lost, or the economy going south hard and fast. Maybe it is a disaster that effects outlying regions near your area...

You have some money and decide that it is time to make some preparations to ensure that you and your family have at least something on hand to eat while you get everything else you can together (or you needed to make preps on a budget before this time and did so...).

You put in a garden of course, but that means at least 45 days until you can harvest anything to eat. (or in the case of most vegetables closer to 85 days to harvest.) This assumes you are in the part of the year in your area where growing is doable. If not you will have to find other methods of getting your own food in limited space, while keeping the plants viable.

You could hunt, but you live in a city (as these are the people that will have the hardest time of things in lean times) and are reliant on what you can get from a grocery store for now, until you and yours can find a way around that fact. (People living in the country tend to have better food stores and have things set aside for emergencies more often.)

There are still services, you can still make a go of things, but the power may be spotty for one reason or another. So refrigeration may be a no go.

This is an exercise about making do!

This isn't about the greatest health benefits a diet can deliver to you, but about what you can do on limited resources to prevent starvation and give yourself enough fuel to keep working and surviving while you build *new* resources.

The calories are set a little low, but it is enough to get by on if you are a moderately active person. I am working on the assumption that in any stressful event you will need more calories than you get in your daily life, due to increased demands. It would be hard, though not impossible to increase the calories over 2,000 spending only fifty cents per person per day. It is unrealistic to assume that because you currently need less, that will hold true under conditions of greater stress though.

My last thought on this.

Learning to do something inexpensively at a harsh level tends to reset what you accept as being doable. I now know that I could have a well balanced diet with plenty to eat, fresh fruit and vegetables for under two dollars a day, every day. This doesn't even seem hard at this point. Now, that still wouldn't include all my favorite foods, but it could be done.

Those are my basic reasons for doing this, my thoughts when organizing it and I hope this will clarify things for those that found that portion of the initial set up weak.

If you find a problem, fix it! (One of my motto's, I hope this fixes any gaps I left on this topic.)

Breakfast: (Is it really Breakfast if you eat at five in the evening?)

Pollenta

Calories: 550

Cost: 12.55 Cents.

Dinner:

Crackers. (Think super rich pie crust with seasonings, not a pack of saltines!)

Calories: 1,450

Cost: 34 Cents.

Total:

Calories: 2,000

Cost: 46.55 Cents.

Day 19:
August 19, 2010

Drained.

Today I woke up ready to go back to bed! This is not normal for me at all, and while I have shaken off a lot of that feeling, it still lingers. A heavy feeling in the eyes, a slight sense of dizziness.

I know that I am not ill and I think I had enough sleep to not feel like this due to a lack there. This could be related to my current diet, or just a poor nights sleep. If I wake up in a similar state tomorrow then I guess we'll know.

Variety.

I am learning first hand that variety of food is too much in the focus of the average American these days. It's good to look towards health, getting enough fruits and vegetables and such (I do miss pineapple!) but most people complaining about my current diet, and yes, people have been complaining about it, site lack of variety as their main concern.

When talking to people, even the ones saying that they worry about lack of certain vitamins and minerals, eventually come around to admitting that they wouldn't like the lack of variety!

I know that I am spending time each day writing about what I have eaten, planing meals out and so on, but I find I am not dwelling on food nearly as much as I used to. I have enough, it's plain in a way, but I'm not constantly hungry. It isn't entertainment, but maybe food shouldn't be entertainment?

I'm not saying that we should all move into caves and become ascetics here or anything like that. We can still have traditional holidays and goodies even. Maybe we just shouldn't live each day like a holiday though? Maybe it's O.K. If the average meal is just about nutrition and keeping us alive?

Isn't that good enough really?

I saw a report today that stated that obese and overweight children in the United States had continued to get fatter over the last ten years. (I hate calling people fat, even if I don't know them, but past a certain point it becomes clear that there is a problem. I think we can safely say we are at that point!)

Would it help kids if we backed off of the super-sized portions, the constant barrage of commercials advertising it on T.V. And required that High Fructose Corn Syrup and MSG not be allowed into our food supply any more? Could we handle it if food was just food again? Just tasted like what it actually was and used quality ingredients rather than tricking people with a chemical cocktail into thinking junk is tasty food?

I don't know really. It wouldn't hurt to give it a try though.

Breakfast:

Pollenta

Calories: 550

Cost: 12.55 Cents.

Dinner:

Pancakes, homemade syrup.

Calories: 1,600

Cost: 37 Cents.

Total:

Calories: 2,150

Cost: 49.55 Cents.

Day 20:
August 20, 2010

Calories Burned...

I ran some calculations yesterday, finding my basal metabolic rate for my height, weight, age and gender along with my current activity level. It seems I am burning off 3,400 calories per day before counting in the calories from the exercise I am doing itself.

Well, it does explain the weight lose rate. (About a pound per day so far.)

Still, I expect things to slow down a bit eventually in weight loss, even at this level of energy expenditure. The human body seems to be able to manage an awful lot on very little sometimes.

Keeping things interesting.

I think I will play around with some new recipes starting tomorrow. Not for me so much, as to show that some different things can be done. I would start today, but I kind of snaked on some crackers last night (out of boredom, which is not a good reason to eat!) and have to account for those in today's total of calories and such. I am adding all the crackers in together down below though! (I had figures for the whole batch and while I have a bit left, I think this is a good guess as to cost.)

Breakfast:

Crackers. Spread out over three meals...

Calories: 1,450

Cost: 30 cents.

Dinner:

Pollenta. Plus a lot of spices, cumin, cinnamon and real garden vegetable onion!

Calories: 575

Cost: 14.55

Total:

Calories: 2,025

Cost: **44.55 Cents.**

Day 21:
August 21, 2010

Novelty.

So today I begin to rework some recipes and seek to do some slightly different things than I have been with food, while keeping to the project restrictions and rules....

I'm starting with a fried Pollenta, as I have been wanting to try it for a while now, with herbs and possibly some vegetables from the garden! There should at least be a tomato ready.

In future projects I need to make sure I get at least a few days off. Not from the project itself, but daily updates become a little wearing after a few weeks! On a project like this it seems disingenuous to write one up ahead though. (Because I am committed to honesty and quality.)

I don't know what to have for dinner tomorrow night....

Perhaps some of you have suggestions?

Breakfast:

Pollenta (Not fried or special in any way. Filling though!)

Calories: 550
Cost: 12.55

Dinner:

Fried pollenta with garden vegetables.

Calories: 1,450
Cost: 35 Cents.

Total:

Calories: 2,000
Cost: **47.55 Cents.**



Day 22:
August 22, 2010

Anticipation!

I have no clue as to what I am making for dinner. So far I have planned everything out in advance, rather carefully. It's time to try this flying by the seat of my pants though. This should be interesting!

My thought is to start with a base of flour, as it is inexpensive and perhaps use a small portion of rice, also inexpensive.

Maybe a flavored rice pocket sandwich? Like a hot pocket perhaps? I could make it sweet and sour flavored I think.

Or perhaps pirogies? Pasta stuffed with potato. I think I can do that if I am careful.

I have a lot of options if I put my mind to it!

I wonder what it will end up being?

I have to say, I feel great today. High energy, in good health, bright eyed and bushy tailed so to speak!

Breakfast:

Pollenta

Calories: 550

Cost: 12.55 cents

For Dinner I decided to do up a fried rice pocket sandwich. Sweet and sour! It turned out really well. I think I will make this dish again, even after this project is over it was so good!

I will tone down the sweet and sour sauce a little though next time.

This cost slightly too much for a true fifty cent day, but only by a little bit.



Dinner:

New pocket sandwich with
no name!

Calories: 1,450
Cost: 38 Cents.

Total:

Calories: 2,000
Cost: 50.55 cents



Day 23:
August 23, 2010

It's easier to put off...

Something that I have noticed over the last few years is that it is easier to put off things until later, like making preparations for emergencies or putting together alternative power systems to run a home.

There always seems to be a thousand reasons why not to do things, and when you sit on things too long without taking action, the good reasons that caused you to want to do them in the first place start to fade from memory.

From what I can see though, most people are like this with at least some part of their life! We all have areas that we want to do better in, we want to take certain, make useful steps happen, but for some reason they always seem to be less important than doing something else. Like watching television or keeping up with the Jones's.

This isn't a call to action. I just like to remind myself occasionally of what I plan to do. In that way fewer things get forgotten in the passing of time and more is likely to be worked on. At least eventually.

Of course I often work twelve hour days on my day off, working longer hours most of the rest of the time. So perhaps I need to prioritize my life and cut out things that are not as important to me in order to make time for the things I would like to do?

It's a thought!

Breakfast:

Pollenta

Calories: 550

Cost: 12.55 Cents.

Dinner:

Oatmeal flax Pancakes with Amaretto syrup. (Probably the best meal I have made so far! Most of what I fix is fairly good, but this was beyond that by a good mark! I wonder if I will be able to remember the recipe?)

Calories: 1,500

Cost: 36.25 Cents.

Total:

Calories: 2,050

Cost: **48.8 Cents**

Day 24:
August 24, 2010

Tortillas!

This is a nice, basic recipe that works well and gives a nice, slightly chewy tortilla that is much tastier than the store bough versions.

You will need a dry, un-greased pan (Don't worry this won't stick at all.) or griddle, heated (when the time comes) to about 400 degrees F. If using a stove, use medium high heat. When in doubt go with a slightly lower heat and cook longer!

Ingredients:

2 cups flour (all purpose)

1 and ½ teaspoon Salt

1 tablespoon oil or shortening. (Lard is traditional, but I use vegetable oil with great results, so I don't think it matters much.)

Water. (You will add this slowly, so have a cup to a cup and a half or so on hand, but don't worry if you don't use it all. The amount of water will vary, so be ready to play this one by ear.)

Mix flour, salt and oil with about ½ cup water. Mix with spoon to start with. Keep adding water slowly, until it comes together as a solid mass, at this point it should still be dry, and may actually be in many little pieces (not one lump) that's all right.

Add water about on tablespoon at a time and begin mixing with your hands. (One hand should work, leaving the other free to put water in.) Mix until it is solid, but elastic feeling. You will want to knead it for a few minutes here. (The longer you knead it, the more the gluten chains lengthen.) I usually do about two minutes of kneading myself, just to make certain everything is mixed well enough. Traditionally five minutes is what we are told. Take your pick!

Let rest for 20 minutes. This allows water to even out inside the dough, so don't skimp on this part. Cover the dough with something somewhat air tight, to prevent the dough from drying out. (An over turned bowl, pot or some plastic wrap will work.)

Heat up your pan. Remember, don't oil or grease it! Leave it dry.

Divide the dough into eight separate pieces and dust a flat, clean surface lightly with flour. You want the dough to stick a tiny bit when rolling it out, so try not to over flour the bottom side, you will quickly get a feel for this though.

Take a piece of dough, roll it into a ball and flatten it into a round shape, place it on the flour and roll it flat using a rolling pin. (A round dowel can be used as well, or in a real pinch, anything round, like a food jar without a lid on can work. Flour the rollers and the top well.))

When the dough is as flat as you can get it, pull in off the working

surface and throw it on the pan or griddle. Bake for about thirty seconds per side, slight browning should take place. Turn it for another 30 seconds.

You may find that you have to flip it twice to get the color you want. That's fine.

While this is going on, be rolling out your next tortilla!

When you remove the tortilla from heat, place it on a towel and cover it with the other half of the towel, this will keep them warm.

These tortillas are best served warm and won't keep well, lacking preservatives and being cooked in a fashion that allows them to develop real flavor. (Store bought tortillas tend to be undercooked to preserve flexibility when cold, since you will be using yours directly, no need to skimp on the home cooked goodness!)

Yes, I am referring to these as a cooked product not a baked one. This is due to the method of preparation only.



Breakfast:

Pollenta

Calories: 550

Cost: 12.55 cents

Dinner:

Home made Tortilla wraps with Garden veggies and sauce. (This really worked well!)

Calories: 1,450

Cost: 36 Cents.

Total:

Calories: 2,000

Cost: 48.55 Cents. Dinner:

Day 25:
August 25, 2010

Crackers...

So. I made a batch of crackers last night, so that the flour would safely fit into the flour bin, and started snacking, even though I wasn't hungry.

So, it looks like I get to eat just crackers today! (Because I have to account for the snack too and all...)

On the good side, todays food is only costing about 47 cents, due to the amount of oil in the crackers.

On the bad side this means that I will probably be going hungry later today! :)

Well, no one claimed that this would be easy and many others have gone far longer on far less than I have been.

This is not my most brilliant move so far, but it is survivable. Minor disruptions can happen and we just have to learn how to roll with them, right?

Maybe I can get to bed early enough so that this won't be a huge problem and get back to things that are more interesting tomorrow?

So for today:

Crackers (In several small meals)

Total

Calories: 2, 200

Cost: **47 Cents**

Day 26:
August 26, 2010

Cravings!

All day long I have been alternating between a strong craving for pineapple and for cinnamon rolls with rich frosting. (Not icing, Frosting, which in general has a high fat content. Like the kind Cinnibun uses, only tastier.)

I think I will have pancakes again for dinner, as the oatmeal flax ones I had a few days ago were very good. Tonight I will make up a maple syrup though.

I should do it fast in case the power goes out. Decently high winds are blowing dust and also fanning fires in the area, at least possibly. (Nothing too local yet. Eye and nose, open though.)

I find the cravings interesting. Why would I crave those things in particular, what mineral is lacking or is it a vitamin, that those items represent over other food sources? I really like Pineapple, but I am just so-so on cinnamon rolls, saving them for once or twice a year, mainly in the winter.

I have also been thinking about what I am going to eat when I end this project in a week (six days!). Vegetables and fruit are looking pretty good right now. I think that I will try to focus on that for a couple of months. It would be too easy to rebound from the feelings of lack and eat a lot of bad-for-me foods in a short time period, if I am not careful.

Breakfast:

Another round of Pollenta!

Calories: 550
Cost: 12.55 Cents.

Dinner:

Really yummy pancakes, oatmeal flax! Maple syrup. (Home made.)

Calories: 1,450
Cost: 36.5 Cents.

Total:

Calories: 2,000
Cost: 49.05 Cents.

Day 27:
August 27, 2010

Corn.

Just to set the record straight, because a lot of people have been contacting me with questions on this subject, corn is not poison.

A lot of people have heard about High Fructose Corn Syrup and assumed that, since it has a bad rep (Well earned in my opinion) and comes from corn, corn must be responsible for diabetes in America.

This leaps right past logic and lands squarely on one foot!
(Teetering, ready to fall down...)

High Fructose Corn Syrup is made by a process which shatters the bonds of the naturally occurring sugars in corn and repackages the sugar so that it has extra, unpaired fructose. Most natural foods have something like a 45-55 ratio of sucrose to fructose. With fruit obviously tending to have the higher number in fructose and cane sugars tending to have sucrose in the top spot. The spread in HFCS is more like 35-65.

Humans process natural sugars well enough, unless an underlying problem already exists. So eating an apple will not give you diabetes.

HFCS however sends that delicate balance out of whack and leaves too much "free" fructose in the system, which is processed much faster than normal and causes your body to move into an out of balance state, becoming hungry sooner due to blood sugar imbalance and putting on weight slightly faster.

This can lead to problems down the line!

But you can safely eat an ear of corn! Or ground corn or any kind of corn that has not been processed and not have a problem.

Eating corn bread or pollenta does not give you diabetes. Drinking all those sodas everyone likes, or fake fruit juices from a store...Now there is a different problem all together!

I highly recommend that, if you have not already, you start reading labels in the store and get rid of everything with High Fructose Corn Syrup in it for a while. I think you will be amazed to find how many things have it!

Yet oddly enough, ground corn isn't one of them...

Breakfast/Lunch

Crackers.

Calories: 1,450

Cost: 32 Cents.

Dinner:

Pollenta +1/2 watermelon

Calories: 600

Cost: 13.05 Cents.

Total:

Calories: 2,050

Cost: 45.05 Cents.

Day 28:
August 28, 2010

New projects!

As this project is nearing it's end, I wanted to take a few minutes to share some of the things that will be coming soon!

September: The whole month will be geared towards workable non-violent self defense techniques and discussions. By the end of the month a whole books worth of information should be on line about this very needed and very neglected part of self protection! (Based on the "Bad Prey" self defense system.)

October: 31 Articles about things that scare us, boggle us and go bump in the night! Real stories, real sightings and a serious look at our relationship with the darker realms of being.

November: Peoples choice! I will let the public pick what the project of the month is! Please be kind to me!

December: A month of useful Christmas and Holiday related information, recipes and gift ideas. Decorating ideas and tips and If all goes well, a few songs as well! (Yes, that's right. Me. Singing. Funny all around!)

Breakfast:

Pollenta.

Calories: 550

Cost: 12.55 Cents.

Dinner:

Veggie wraps with a tangy
spice sauce!

Calories: 1,450.

Cost: 32.5 Cents

Total:

Calories: 2,000

Cost: 45.05 Cents.



Day 29:
August 29, 2010

More Cravings:

As this month and this project near their ends, I find myself craving a variety of foods, most of them very bad for me, far more acutely than I have during the rest of this exercise! I think I will need to hold a tight reign on my eating for a while longer, to make certain I don't start eating everything in sight as a rebound effect!

So for September I will hold to the 2,000 calories per day or so, and increase the amount of fruits, vegetables and eggs. I will need to keep sweets off the menu for a while though. (Superman has Kryptonite, I have snake cakes...Sure, snack cakes don't strip me of my powers, but bullets don't bounce off me normally, so probably a fair trade...)

My life experience has taught me that giving in to cravings is almost never the best idea.

*So ignore the fact that most of my calories from today came from a cinnamon bread that was essentially cinnamon rolls... I did mention both cravings and kryptonite, right?

Breakfast:

Cinnamon Bread:

Calories: 1,700

Cost: 40 Cents.

Dinner:

Pollenta: (I dropped the oil from today's portion, explaining the calorie and cost difference.)

Calories: 450

Cost: 11.25 Cents.

Total:

Calories: 2,150

Cost: **51.25 cents**

Day 30:
August 30, 2010

Thank You All!

Tomorrow I intend to summarize what I have learned from this month, the hardships, the thoughts of others and how they can effect out actions...

So I would like to take today to thank everyone that has helped me through this (You know who you are!) and everyone that gave me encouragement. It helped more than you can know.

I know I have not been able to answer ever single person that has written to me about this yet, but I am plugging away at it, so please be patient with me!

Breakfast:

Pollenta:

Calories: 550

Cost: 12.55 cents

Dinner:

Sweet and Sour Pancakes with an amaretto vanilla syrup.

Calories: 1,450

Cost: 34.5 cents

Total:

Calories: 2,000

Cost: 47.05 cents



Day 31:
August 31, 2010

Project Completed!

Total money spent for food in the month of August:
\$15.39 (with an additional .675) which rounds up to
\$15.40 for the entire month.

Average cost per day: 49.6667 Cents per day. This
includes the Birthday cake on the 9th!

Main things I learned?

First: There are more psychological effects to any form of disciplined rationing than are easily explained. It is a stress and pressure on a person, requiring a good bit of discipline. Since I was working under an idea of emergency preparedness survival eating, I felt obligated to not go over certain expenditure limits. (Even though I could, according to the rules.)

It would be important to know this before starting into an emergency situation, so that a person can adequately plan out stress relieving activities and practices.

Second: It is better in the long run to put cravings out of mind than to indulge in dwelling on them. It makes keeping to strict discipline easier.

Third: Most people that think they are ready to do such a thing for themselves is simply wrong. The vast majority of people responding with what they would do in an emergency situation that they felt was of comparable cost didn't take reality into account, for instance claiming they would use the vegetables from their garden, when to do not have a garden currently and they takes months to grow, needs to be in the right season and so on. Or that they would hunt for food, without any back up in case they simply fail to catch anything.

The next biggest error was in calculating actual food costs.

About half of people simply said "Raman!" even after being shown that Raman is more expensive than many other foods and not as nutritious.

I also saw one, very serious, discussion about how people could simply eat bugs to survive. But the energy costs in collecting bugs for food is so high that you can starve to death trying to collect them. This is not to say that in a true emergency situation you should not eat them if they are present, but collecting them as your main food source is not as sure a method of survival as simply having some food on hand already.

And fourth: It is amazing how very free others are with suggesting that you are not doing enough! I had suggestions that I should subsist on half the amount of calories I was eating per day, that I should fast for a month and that I should never repeat a meal in the monthly plan.

When I suggested to people that perhaps they, themselves should undertake such tasks, no one bothered to take the challenge up for some reason...

I have to say though, that I think everyone should give something like this a try, if only for a week or two. You learn a lot about your habits, cravings and what is actually needed to get by doing this, making it a valuable thing to try out.

*In case anyone is wondering, I lost 18 pounds over the course of this, mainly due to the fact that I did not restrict activities during this time.