

MARKET TO MOUTH:

**A Recession-Strategy Guide to Shopping Responsibly, and Cooking, &
Eating Well on a Budget**

by Louise Ross

Represented by:

Steve Harris

CSG LITERARY PARTNERS LLC

127 Hillside Avenue

Cresskill, NJ 07626

201-569-9213 – Office

201-681-6145 - Cell

steven@csgliterary.com

LOUISE ROSS --MARKET TO MOUTH, THE BRAND:

Although I'll expand on this in the Publicity section, MARKET TO MOUTH is an established blog at <http://www.markettomouth.blogspot.com> with significant traffic – 16,000 visitors or 500 page views per week – people who spend an average of two-to-three minutes on the site. *MARKET TO MOUTH*, the book, will be featured on the blog, with a link to Amazon.

My online community of foodie, mom, health, writer and technology bloggers is rich with marketing potential. Blogger outreach will be a great way to boost the book's profile, particularly via mentions, interviews, link backs, and postings on popular food, health and technology blogs where Louise Ross – MARKET TO MOUTH is featured as guest blogger and foodie.

Louise Ross – MARKET TO MOUTH has a presence on Facebook and Twitter and Whole Foods Market blogroll. Whole Foods has over a million followers on twitter, and on the occasions they've retweeted @LouiseRoss tweets with a link to MARKET TO MOUTH posts, the blog has received upwards of a 1000 visitors within hours!

MARKET TO MOUTH has a YouTube channel -- <http://www.youtube.com/user/MarkettoMouth> featuring a proof-of-concept pilot with me as the host, and my guest, a single professional woman learning how to shop on a budget.

Louise Ross – MARKET TO MOUTH has a presence on two online TV programs: www.DigitalDivas.TV where I'm one of 5 women sharing their colorful experiences navigating the “crazy, ever-changing world of technology, new media and life,” and www.bv22.org where I host of a series of culinary gardening programs.

Scott Simon, host of NPR's Weekend Edition Saturday, has upward of a million followers on twitter. He follows less than 100 tweeters; @LouiseRoss is one of those people. We periodically "direct message" one another.

My burgeoning online platform and social capital is a known commodity, far-reaching, and will serve me extremely well promoting *MARKET TO MOUTH*.

ABOUT THE BOOK:

As a former chef, now grocery shopping and cooking consultant in the organic and foodie mecca of Boulder, Colorado, I often hear comments like these from readers, clients and friends:

- ❖ “The price of groceries keeps going up while my income keeps going down.
- ❖ We can’t afford organic, and we certainly can’t afford to shop at “Whole Paycheck”
- ❖ I’m eating on a budget. It’s called “rice and beans.”

What I’ve been able to teach people is to become responsible shoppers mindful of budget and sustainability, proposing that one can save money by planning before shopping and being creative and non-wasteful in the kitchen. I’ve accomplished this by explaining a step-by-step pre and in-store strategy for staying on budget, and once home, simple tricks for storing groceries (keep fresh vegetables loose in the crisper, since produce sweats and deteriorates prematurely when they’re stored in plastic bags), and tips for preparing nutritious meals with no fuss and no waste. For example, simmering a whole chicken over the weekend means you can make meals during the week ranging from stock-based soups to quick dishes that call for cooked chicken meat.

This recession has understandably caused people to cut back on their grocery budget, and to think that preparing healthy and satisfying meals is a thing of the past. And even though The Food Network reaches nearly 100 million American homes, that doesn’t

mean viewers can watch their favorite chef cook a dish and then know how to shop within their means for the ingredients they'll need.

Food activist and author Michael Pollan has written that the rise in eagerness to watch the celebrity chef cook “has, paradoxically, coincided with the rise of fast food, home-meal replacements and the decline and fall of everyday home cooking.” Fast food, of course, seems less expensive than preparing a meal of healthier whole foods. But that's not the case. Maybe you're spending only five or six dollars on takeout for a meal that seems less expensive, but the truth is many home-cooked meals are shapeshifters, making their way from soup to pasta topping to side dish – not only helping you save money, but helping you eat well and with an eye toward health.

And so there is learning involved: Just as you wouldn't expect someone to prepare a holiday meal of roast turkey before first learning how to dress the bird, learning how to shop wisely to maximize both value and seasonal abundance is the key to eating well in any economy.

MARKET TO MOUTH: A RECESSION STRATEGY GUIDE TO SHOPPING RESPONSIBLY, AND COOKING & EATING WELL ON A BUDGET will help reinforce the belief that buying groceries at Whole Foods Market – or anywhere else – can be done in a cost-effective way that still allows for healthy foods and for preparing simple meals that engage one's inner chef. Readers will have the opportunity to rediscover the joy of paring back to basics, both at the grocery store, and in the kitchen. By shopping seasonally, and choosing whole, unprocessed foods such as fresh produce, less expensive cuts of humanely-farmed meat, poultry, and eggs, sustainably-fished seafood, and bulk dry foods over the processed, packaged, tinned, and frozen foods of the middle aisles,

they'll find it's possible to not only reduce their grocery bill, but to eat colorful and healthful meals

On shopping trips with clients to Whole Foods and elsewhere, I've seen a lack of practical shopping know-how. Within time, I was able to identify the most common problems people face:

- ✚ Lack of Preparedness – if you don't give any thought to what you and your family will eat in the coming week, you won't know what to buy.
- ✚ Absence of In-Store Strategy – so, if you're not prepared, you'll meander aimlessly around the store, picking up whatever looks good without considering the food you already have at home, what you'll prepare with the food that's bought, and whether or not you were buying enough.
- ✚ Grocery Store Overwhelm – some shoppers are overwhelmed by the grocery store shopping experience, the choices, the noise, and the people. Despite how prepared they are, the overwhelmed shopper gets frazzled while shopping, and the more frazzled they get, the more likely they are to ignore their list, causing them to snatch-and-grab in an effort to be done and out of the store.
- ✚ Inability to Identify the Best Deals – these shoppers toss items in their shopping cart without checking the price of anything!
- ✚ Impulse Purchasing – many shoppers impulsively throw high-priced foods and or inedible items into their carts such as attractively-packaged gourmet granola and or flowers, perhaps a magazine and then a treat at the check-out.

The common theme is consistently spending beyond their means, often blaming Whole Foods or other grocery stores for being too expensive, rather than analyzing their own budget-breaking habits and lack of practical shopping know-how.

With advance planning and having a strategy before going to the store it's possible to purchase organic produce, humanely-farmed meats, poultry, dairy, sustainably-fished seafood, and bulk dry goods even in this recession.

And then there are a second set of challenges that shoppers face as soon as they arrive home with their food:

- Unaware of best storing practices to minimize spoilages: many people often throw out perishables such as lettuce, spinach, and fresh herbs, because shoved at the back of the fridge or in the bottom of the crisper in plastic bags, these items sweat and quickly deteriorate.
- Lack of know-how for cooking simple, nutritious meals with groceries purchased: too many people reach for boxed and frozen meals, because they have little patience in the kitchen and not a lot of confidence preparing anything “too fancy.”
- Failure to know what to do with leftovers: too often leftovers are just thrown out.
- No joy in the kitchen, resulting in budget-breaking trips either back to the store for more groceries, and/or to get take-out, and/or going to a restaurant: This frustration with cooking results in over-spending on boxed and frozen meals and take-out and eating out.

STRUCTURE:

MARKET TO MOUTH will be divided into Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter in order to take advantage of seasonal produce that is usually more abundant and affordable. Each chapter will offer a weekly menu for each month. Sample shopping lists will accompany each weekly menu plan, followed by method recipes for preparing the meals proposed in the menu plans.

For example, an early-Fall weekly menu plan for two on a budget of around \$120 might look like this: (* = whichever is priced for your budget)

Meatless Monday: Olive-oiled pasta & green ratatouille topped w/walnuts & feta

Tuesday: *Pork or turkey sausages w/ red beets and apple in mustard sauce

Wednesday: Lime & honey Whole Catch salmon w/cilantro polenta & veggies

Thursday: Coconut *chicken legs or thighs w/carrots, wilted spinach & rice.

Friday: Mini tortilla pizza topped w/leftover ratatouille, salmon or chicken & feta

And the accompanying shopping list might look like this:

Produce: beet bunch with green tops intact, cilantro, string beans, carrots, green squash, egg plant, tomatoes, loose spinach, green or red onions, green or red pepper, garlic, apples, limes

Protein: *Pork or turkey sausages, *chicken legs or thighs, *fresh or frozen salmon

Dry Bulk: polenta, walnuts, pasta, rice, honey, tamari, olive oil

Wet Bulk: Bulk olives & feta mix in oil & herbs

Packaged items: Fresh or frozen tortillas, mustard, yogurt, coconut milk

And the method recipe for Meatless Monday's dinner might look like this:

- 1) In a skillet heat 2-3 tablespoons olive oil. Add a peeled and coarsely chopped clove of garlic. Sauté garlic on low so that the oil is infused with garlic flavor. Remove the garlic and turn up the heat.
- 2) Add chopped chunks of eggplant to the oil and sauté over high heat, allowing egg plant to brown but not burn – turn heat down if necessary.
- 3) Add a chopped onion, green squash, and a chopped red or green pepper to the egg plant. Sauté over med to low heat. Put lid on skillet and turn heat to low and gently stew vegetables in their own moisture for about 15 minutes (add a little water if veggies begin sticking). At around the 10 minute mark, you could add a handful of washed spinach or beet leaves, allowing them to wilt into the ratatouille. Season the lot with salt and ground black pepper.
- 4) Meanwhile, boil a pot of water and add your choice of pasta. Cook pasta. Strain, running colander under a warm tap to flush out starch water. Return pasta to pot and hot plate, stir over heat to evaporate any remaining liquid. Remove pot from hot plate, and pour a liberal amount of olive oil over pasta.

To Serve: Spoon pasta into individual bowls, top with a generous spoonful of ratatouille, sprinkle with feta and toasted walnuts.

Breakout season-specific shopping, storage, and cooking tips for singles, couples, and families will be featured in boxed format:

Nuts are best stored in a screw-top glass jar in the fridge, or if you find you keep nuts for some time before eating them all, keep them in Tupperware in the freezer. This will ensure that the oil in the nuts does not go rancid.

When cooking without exact recipes, learn to measure quantities by keeping in mind portions per person, i.e. one portion of meat protein is about 3 ounces, enough to fit in the palm of a medium-sized hand.

Buying bulk means you pay only for what you pick. Bring your own recycled plastic bags and small plastic containers to collect your bulk items and fresh produce; it makes sense to re-use plastic and zip-lock bags rather than trashing them after one use.

This format of season-specific menu plans, shopping lists, method recipes and breakout tips will ensure readers have the help they need to make economical and healthy fresh food choices while they're grocery shopping, and then once home, the help they need to appropriately store and organize their food for the week before turning their attention to the fun part: cooking easy, colorful and tasty meals everyday with minimal hassle and no waste.

MARKET TO MOUTH will teach readers how to become savvy grocery shoppers, ahead of advocating simple cooking methods certain to inspire reader's inner chef and kitchen confidence. And the surprising bonus: this book will show that shopping for whole, unprocessed foods and eating healthily in this economy does not cost an arm and a leg.

TESTIMONIALS:

“Louise is "writing the book" on landfill-friendly grocery shopping – get this: Inside her recycled plastic shopping bag, she brings her used Ziploc bags from home to fill with veggies and bulk items that she buys. She also brings plastic containers – the kind found in the bulk aisle – which she fills with nut butter and other bulk items. These are the ethical shopping habits of the future that we need to adopt today. I also liked how she avoids highly packaged items, even organic spinach in plastic containers. Why buy them when you can bring your own plastic bag and fill it up yourself – it only takes a sec. Louise is a gem in our community and a boon to healthy living.” *Catherine, 53, CU Professor*

“Going with Louise to Whole Foods helped me make a fundamental shift in my approach to shopping for my family of four. It gave me an objective look at how I shop for food, what distracts me from my shopping list, and how to find value. I’m a savvier shopper now, and I actually enjoy the satisfaction of getting our groceries weekly, rather than in an ad-hoc fashion! Plus, I’m more confident experimenting in the kitchen, cooking our meals.” *Jane, 43, part time working mom of 2*

“Louise writes a monthly foods column for Women's Magazine. Every month, never fail, I finish reading her article and I feel inspired and enlightened. She is an excellent writer with a fresh and unique voice, and her useful tips on saving money in the kitchen and expertise behind the apron enriches our magazine. I consider Louise a leader

in our community and an inspiration for women anywhere. Her writing is a service on a topic where we all could use some help! “

Aimee Heckel Editor, Women's Magazine

THE MARKET

MARKET TO MOUTH is for anyone who shops at Whole Foods Market and organic-style grocers – foodies and gourmands who want to eat well and healthily, and save money.

With the popularity of food shows – indicative of Americans’ love of food and eating – and an increased awareness of the importance of eating healthy, and with these recessionary times necessitating that we all grocery shop and cook on a budget, everyone who eats or who wants to eat better for less, can learn something from this book.

Additionally, there is a segment of the readership who is more a Whole Foods shopper. This target market tends to be more discerning in their consumption choices, and more willing to spend money on products that fit their values; in short, they are defined as conscious consumers or individuals who make up the Lifestyles of Health and Sustainability (LOHAS) market.

LOHAS consumers “tend to make their purchasing decisions in keeping with their values of social and environmental responsibility, the environment, the planet, social issues, health, fair trade, sustainable practices.” *Green Stock Exchange, greensx.com*

Approximately 19% percent of the adults in the U.S. (41 million people), are currently considered LOHAS consumers – a \$209 billion market. Because the content of *MARKET TO MOUTH* will align with the core values of LOHAS consumers, it has the potential to capture a corner of this market, and a mere 1% of it is approximately 400,000 book buyers.

COMPETING TITLES:

Saving Dinner: The Menus, Recipes, and Shopping Lists to Bring your Family back to the Table, by Leanne Ely, host of SavingDinner.com – Ballantine Books (Paperback – Aug 25, 2009 \$14.95).

This offers a step-by-step, seasonal strategy with weekly menu plans, shopping lists, and recipes for the meals proposed, plus breakout cooking tips alongside some of the recipes. But, Ely limits her book to couples with kids. Moreover, its answer to budget cooking relies on consumers buying lower-quality food from dollar-store type grocers in the effort to save money. In contrast, *MARKET TO MOUTH* will enable shoppers to strategize how to shop at any store within their means, and will include meals that can be prepared for singles, couples, and families with kids.

The Everything Cookbook Meals on a Budget: High flavor, Low Cost Meals your Family will Love. 300 Penny-Saving Recipes. By Linda Larson, the about.com Guide For Busy Cooks – Adams Media (Paperback - April 30, 2008 \$14.95).

By virtue of Larson offering information on how to prepare to cook on a budget, it is similar to my book. However, her highlighted paragraphs “Start with a Plan,” “Write a List,” “Where to Cut Corners” etc., do not present as a cohesive strategy for shopping on a budget. In contrast, *MARKET TO MOUTH* will provide a step-by-step pre-shopping and in-store strategy for budget-wise one-stop-shopping. Ultimately, Larson’s real focus is “300 Penny-Saving Recipes” specifically for families. This means *MARKET TO MOUTH*’s shopping and cooking tips for singles and couples (and families) will reach

the audience Larson and Ely bypass, the frugally-minded foodies and gourmands who shop at Whole Foods Market and organic-style grocers.

Eat Cheap Eat Well from TV's "The Poor Chef", Charles Mattocks – Wiley & Sons (Paperback - April 13, 2009 \$18.95). Mattocks's approach is to focus primarily on beef, pork, poultry, fish, and seafood, offering "penny-pinching" recipes for each protein item. In comparison, my book will emphasize fresh produce while deemphasizing meat, stressing the budgetary and health benefits of both. And where Mattocks's meat-focus recipe book limits itself to a market of big meat-eaters, this book will appeal to a broader market, one that is interested in consuming a more vegetable-based diet.

PUBLICITY:

There are three main ways that I can significantly contribute to marketing and promoting *MARKET TO MOUTH*: 1) by building Louise Ross – MARKET TO MOUTH, the brand, via social networking and online TV 2) via in-person promotion 3) via local and national media coverage.

1) Building Louise Ross – MARKET TO MOUTH the Brand

Blogging

MARKET TO MOUTH is an established blog at <http://www.markettomouth.blogspot.com> with significant traffic. Since its launch in February 2009, Louise Ross – MARKET TO MOUTH has received 16,000 visitors or approximately 500 page views per week, people who spend an average of two-to-three minutes on the site. Readers can buy books that I recommend in the sidebar by clicking through to Amazon. *MARKET TO MOUTH* will be one of those books.

My online community of foodie, mom, health, writer and technology bloggers is rich with marketing potential. Blogger outreach will be a great way to boost the book's profile, particularly via mentions, interviews, linkbacks, and postings on the popular food blog www.farmtotableonline.org and the brain-health blog www.bodiesinspace.com where Louise Ross – MARKET TO MOUTH is featured as a guest blogger.

Louise Ross – MARKET TO MOUTH has a presence on Facebook and Twitter and Whole Foods Market blogroll. Whole Foods has over a million followers on twitter,

and on the occasions they've retweeted @LouiseRoss tweets with a link to MARKET TO MOUTH posts, the blog has received upwards of a 1000 visitors within hours!

On Facebook, Louise Ross – MARKET TO MOUTH is friends with British author and actress (All Creatures Great & Small) Carol Drinkwater. Carol has written a handful of bestselling books <http://www.caroldrinkwater.com/books.htm> on her life running an olive farm in the south of France. She proposed that her Facebook page would be a great place for me to interact, adding that “the crowd there will love your profile and culinary skills. Without a doubt, there is an opportunity to reach a receptive market via Carol’s Facebook page.

Louise Ross – MARKET TO MOUTH has a YouTube channel: <http://www.youtube.com/user/MarkettoMouth> There, a proof-of-concept pilot is available for viewing. It features Louise Ross as the host, and my guest, a single professional woman learning how to shop on a budget. In due course I’ll upload vlogs or video blogs to the YouTube channel and the blogsite. Vlogging will be a strategic platform where I can regularly announce the availability of my book, *MARKET TO MOUTH*.

Along with 4 other savvy, entrepreneurial women, I’ve created an online TV show: <http://www.DigitalDivas.TV> In weekly episodes, the Divas share their colorful experiences navigating the “crazy, ever-changing world of technology, new media and life.” As the “foodie Diva” my presence and commentary builds my brand identity as does the potential for click-throughs to the blog where viewers will be exposed to the extent of Louise Ross – MARKET TO MOUTH, the brand, including the book, which they’ll be able to buy on the blog site.

In conjunction with Boulder Valley Media Alliance, which manages Boulder County's only full time education cable channel, Comcast 22 an interactive and video-rich site <http://www.bv22.org>, I've co-produced, and hosted, a series of culinary gardening programs. As the audience builds to the online show, so too does the potential for click-throughs from bv22.org to the blog, where again, viewers will be exposed to the extent of brand, Louise Ross – MARKET TO MOUTH.

2) In-Person Promotion

My independent-concierge tours of Whole Foods offer another strategic platform from which to promote the book directly to its target market. Since the book will be available in-store, I can offer signed copies to everyone who buys the book and takes a tour with me.

Whole Foods' in-store culinary centers are perfectly positioned to promote the book. I envision offering the Boulder market my independent-concierge tours in conjunction with cooking classes that follow the *MARKET TO MOUTH* strategy (as outlined in this book proposal). Individuals who sign up for the class will pre-pay for the tour, the cooking class, and a signed copy of the book. Depending on the Boulder market's receptivity to the tour-cum-cooking class package, this concept could be tailored to fit the Whole Foods flagship stores (with a culinary center) nationwide.

3) Local and National Media Coverage

Boulder "Women's Magazine" runs Louise Ross – MARKET TO MOUTH as a regular bi-monthly column in their print magazine and in their e-zine, where they also

feature MARKET TO MOUTH on their blogroll. An article on the book would serve as a great adjunct to my column. The editor of the Women's Magazine is also a staff writer at Boulder's daily newspaper. An article in the Boulder Daily Camera on the evolution of Louise Ross – MARKET TO MOUTH from blog to book is highly feasible.

In November 2005, I had a very successful author event at the Boulder Bookstore for my self-published comic novel, *Baking at Midnight: The Misadventures of Tildy Wilson*, resulting in *Baking* becoming a Boulder Bookstore bestseller during the 2005-2006 holiday season. It's fair to anticipate Boulder Bookstore agreeing to host an author event for me to present and sign *MARKET TO MOUTH*.

Local radio KGNU has expressed interest in running a twice-weekly 5-minute Louise Ross – MARKET TO MOUTH morning show. At the very least, my contact there may agree to do a promotional interview with me about the blog and the book.

Louise Ross – MARKET TO MOUTH is building strategic partnerships with Meatless Monday <http://meatlessmonday.org> and Animal Welfare Approved (AWA) <http://www.animalwelfareapproved.org> MARKET TO MOUTH features a Meatless Monday post every Monday (Meatless Monday is woven into the sample menu plan in this book proposal) and in turn, is featured as a "Blogger on Board" on Meatless Monday's website. MARKET TO MOUTH recommends AWA stamped protein items as the most dependable brand of humanely-farmed, antibiotic-and-hormone free meat, poultry, eggs and dairy for health and sustainability. Meatless Monday and AWA are both heavily-visited online avenues for promoting *MARKET TO MOUTH*.

Scott Simon, host of NPR's Weekend Edition Saturday, has upward of a million followers on twitter. He follows less than 100 tweeters; @LouiseRoss is one of those

people. We “direct message” one another periodically. I’ve been building my twitter relationship with Scott since February 2009 when he signed onto twitter. I’d welcome the opportunity to approach Scott with a request that NPR consider interviewing me for the purpose of promoting *MARKET TO MOUTH*.

MARKET TO MOUTH features on Whole Foods’ blogroll <http://blog.wholefoodsmarket.com>, more significantly, I’m in ongoing talks with the international organic grocery store regarding a strategic partnership whereby Whole Foods agrees to distribute *MARKET TO MOUTH* through their flagship stores nationwide.

My social capital, and Louise Ross – MARKET TO MOUTH the brand, is far-reaching; it will serve me extremely well promoting *MARKET TO MOUTH*.

About the Author

I have cooked for film crews, foreign dignitaries, and CEOs in Australia, and across Europe to France and England. I believe that food should be whole, fresh, healthy, and full of color. My philosophy: As long as you're eating a rainbow you're covering your nutritional needs while creating an eye-appealing meal that also tastes great. By creating seasonal menu plans, shopping lists, and a strategy for staying on-budget, I'm able to purchase mostly organic produce, bulk dry goods, hormone and antibiotic-free meats, poultry, fish and dairy at specialty grocery stores like Whole Foods Market – even in this recession, watching my money. In 1980 I graduated with a degree in Hotel Catering from William Angliss Institute, Melbourne, Australia; in 1990 I graduated from Boulder Graduate School (now Naropa University), Boulder, CO, with a BA/ MA in Psychology and Counseling. Today, I'm an entrepreneur, food writer, and MARKET TO MOUTH's recession-strategy food blogger.

Table of Contents

Introduction:

Shopping at Whole Foods Costs a Whole Paycheck, Right? Wrong!

1. How to Grocery Shop with Less:

I. Before You Get There: The Pre-Shopping Strategy

II. Being There: The In-store Strategy

2. Stocking your Condiment & Dry Goods Pantry

3. How to Shop and Cook by Season

4. Grocery Shopping and Cooking Throughout the Year:

Part One: Spring

Part Two: Summer

Part Three: Fall

Part Four: Winter

End Notes:

Index

Chapter Summaries

Introduction:

Shopping at Whole Foods Costs a Whole Paycheck, Right? Wrong!

A common misconception is that eating well costs a lot; that buying whole, healthy foods costs an arm and a leg.

According to a 2007 USDA study, a family of four consisting of two adults and two children on average spent about \$189 on groceries a week. Yet, according to that study, a family who chose a healthier meal plan consisting of inexpensive cuts of meats, whole grains, fresh fruits and vegetables was actually able to reduce its grocery bills by about \$20 a week. I'll show you how you can budget your grocery shopping, choosing to spend those designated dollars on whole, un-processed foods, and how easy and tasty it can be to avoid the drive-thru or takeout rut, saving precious cash, and have fun in the process.

It's a matter of following a few simple rules. For instance, I advise my shopping clients to shop the edge of the store. The periphery is where all the unprocessed foods are displayed such as fresh fruits and vegetables, seafood, dairy, meat, poultry, dry bulk items -- foods that should make up at least 80 percent of your grocery purchases and which will ultimately contribute to reducing your grocery bill. In short, a grocery cart filled with whole foods is cheaper than one filled with the boxed and frozen meals found in the middle aisles.

1. Chapter One: How to Grocery Shop with Less

Grocery shopping on a budget is a skill that doesn't come naturally to everyone, but rather, has to be learned. Just as you wouldn't expect someone to prepare a holiday meal of roast turkey before first learning how to dress the bird, acquiring practical skill on how to fish for fish before cooking the fish is an important but overlooked step in the process. The goal of this section will be to outline easy-to-implement steps designed to help readers become savvy grocery shoppers.

Under the **Before You Get There** section, readers will be introduced to a series of steps that will allow them to feel prepared and organized before they even enter the store:

- Plan ahead; think about the upcoming week – how many meals will be eaten at home and by how many people.
- What supplies are already on hand in the pantry and fridge, and what items do you need.
- What's on-sale at the grocery store and what coupons can you use – check online for both.
- With the previous points in mind, create a basic menu plan for the week – consider that one or two main meals can be created from leftovers and write an accompanying shopping list.
- Make your menu plan and shopping list flexible as a way to accommodate the best deals that will be apparent once you're at the grocery store.
- Plan to buy at least 80% of your groceries as whole, unprocessed foods i.e. in-season fresh vegetables and fruit, fish and or meat / poultry and some dairy and

bulk grains, legumes, nuts, and seeds. Packaged, tinned or frozen foods should comprise the remaining 20%, some weeks less.

- Peruse your favorite cookbooks for ideas when you write your menu plan and shopping list, but use recipes as a guideline only, don't be bound by them or else your shopping list will end up containing items out-of-season and not within your budget. Improvise, and swap out ingredients for produce in season and on-sale.

In the **Being There** section, readers will be introduced to a series of steps that will facilitate them staying on budget. For example:

- If grocery shopping is stressful for you, try to shop when the grocery store is least busy i.e. early in the morning, or in the evening after dinner.
- If you tend to impulse purchase when hungry, don't grocery-shop on an empty stomach.
- One-stop shop and then only once a week, otherwise you waste time and money driving around from store to store.
- Have your list on-hand at all times at the grocery store, and stick to it, though allow yourself one impulse purchase, within your means, per week.
- Buy 80% of your groceries from the store's periphery as whole, unprocessed foods--weigh fresh produce so you know how much you'll be paying-- and 20% from the middle aisles.
- Avoid prolonged browsing in the middle aisles; the attractive merchandising is a marketing strategy designed to encourage impulse purchasing, and not a guarantee of healthful food within your budget.

- Give yourself a time limit to collect the groceries from your list and check out.

Keeping in mind that this book will be divided by season and a resource for singles, couples, and families, there will be mini breakout tips specific to the season and for each type of reader. For example:

Summer is a time when singles are more likely to go over-budget by meeting friends in restaurants; one solution: invite friends to a dinner party where everyone shares their most creative, budget-conscious pot-luck dish.

Fall is harvest season, and couples who enjoy spending time together in the kitchen might consider drying, canning or preserving abundant produce purchased in bulk at a discount, and then storing it for winter use and or holiday-season gifts.

For families, winter is the perfect opportunity to gather at the table for good conversation and to share hearty, value-conscious soups, stews or casseroles made from scratch or with leftovers, accompanied by homemade breads or muffins

Chapter Two: Stocking your Condiment & Dry Goods Pantry on a Budget

Condiments like ketchup, mustard, vinegar and dry goods like grains, legumes, beans and flours are a necessity if people are to feel well-resourced cooking comfortably and easily at home. But these are not grocery items that need to be purchased weekly, and condiments, in particular, need never be purchased at full price.

The purpose of this section will be to offer a money-saving strategy for building a well stocked condiment and dry-goods pantry. This will be accomplished by informing readers of the budgetary advantages of buying dry goods in bulk, and buying generic brand condiments.

Chapter Three: How to Shop and Cook by Season

The four seasons are nature's way of providing our diets with diversity while also providing an effective way to balance our systems so that we can cope with the heat of summer and the cold of winter. Changes in growing conditions from Spring to Summer and then Fall to Winter are considered essential for balancing the earth's resources and its life forms. But today, it's so easy for us to forget about seasons when we eat. Modern food processing and worldwide distribution of foods make certain seasonal foods available year-round which means our grocery-store shelves look much the same in December as they do in July. Yet fresh produce that's in-season has the most flavor, nutritional value, and is plentiful and thus affordable. It makes sense to buy what nature has provided in abundance for the following reasons:

Budgetary: Readers will be encouraged to take note of the competitive price of abundant seasonal fresh produce over the less abundant and out-of-season produce which is usually brought in from outside the area or from abroad. In Winter for instance, pears and apples are plentiful and the organic varieties are often on-sale for around \$1.99 a pound in Colorado. But summer's soft berries like strawberries and raspberries, which are shipped into Colorado from California or beyond, hover around \$5.00 a pound in winter versus \$2.50 in the summer when they're in season and grown locally.

Practical: The practicality of purchasing seasonal foods follows from the budgetary advantage: if it's abundant and on-sale, it simply makes good sense to buy in-season vegetables and fruits like apples and pears in winter, rather than higher-priced out-of-season and out-of-state fruit like berries.

Sustainability: Produce that's abundant and on-sale is often local or regional. Purchasing in-season local food sustains the commercial infrastructure of one's community by supporting the region's farmers and food producers, plus it reduces product carbon footprint. Food trucked a short distance, like apples trucked to Colorado grocery stores from Colorado orchards, uses less fuel in transport than food from out of state or abroad such as summertime Valencia oranges from Australia.

Health: In most areas of the world it is hot in summer and cold in winter and just as we wear cool clothes in summer and warm clothes in winter, there are foods that cool the body and foods that warm the body. As a result of consumer habituation to choice, i.e. summer fruits and salad vegetables in winter, the notion that it is not as healthful to eat cooling foods when it is cold may seem contrary to some. However, there is wisdom in nature, therefore it follows that there's good judgment in choosing and consuming the foods that nature provides at specific times of the year.

Chapter four: Grocery Shopping and Cooking throughout the Year:

Part One: Spring

The return of warmer days with more sunlight hours means the return of life in the plant world. Spring is evidenced in the natural world by new green growth on trees

and in the garden, and in the store by the return of a variety of leafy green vegetables such as Swiss chard and tender young spinach, asparagus and avocados galore.

The beauty of preparing meals with fresh spring produce is the return of verdant color to one's meals. Leafy greens are full of detoxifying phytonutrients and many have a slight bitter flavor – both are nature's liver-cleansing agents. Just as we spring clean our homes, we can spring clean our liver, digestive system and blood after a winter of acid-forming rich foods by eating plenty of alkaline spring greens.

Complicated recipes and flavor-enhancing sauces are not necessary because of the characteristic taste of spring's bounty. For example:

- 1) Wash a bunch of asparagus, snapping off the woody ends. Heat a skillet lined with olive oil on high, toss in asparagus and move skillet about so asparagus char-grills but doesn't burn. Once tender, remove asparagus from skillet and lay on a large plate or platter. Drizzle with a little lemon juice and season with cracked black pepper and sea salt.
- 2) Wash a bunch of baby spinach and some peppery arugula, toss into a bowl.
- 3) Add a peeled avocado and gently mix into greens with enough olive or walnut oil to coat greens, lemon juice and pistachio nuts.

To Serve: Greens and asparagus can be served as a light meal with chunks of crusty bread, olive oil for dipping and chunks of fresh tomatoes topped with chopped chives.

Spring will be divided by the months March, April, and May, and under each month, the fresh produce most plentiful at that time, and thus most often on-sale, will be identified. Readers will have the chance to familiarize themselves with the season's fresh-produce best buys.

Incorporating spring's best-value produce, plus fish and or seafood, inexpensive cuts of meat, and pantry items, I'll list sample main-meal menu plans for Monday-thru-Friday of each week, for each month -- 20 main-meal ideas per month, or 60 per season. Sample shopping lists will accompany each menu plan. Following the menu plan and shopping lists will be simple methods for preparing each meal idea listed, including tips for making meals for just one, or extending the listed meal ideas to feed two or more people.

On each page, there will be practical breakout tips either on storing produce, freezing, cooking, making use of leftovers, or improvising when exact ingredients aren't available, such as:

Bunches of leafy greens are often on-sale for "buy one, get one free." Make the most of the offer, but if you don't plan on eating 2 bunches of greens that week, wash, dry, and sauté one bunch, and then freeze it.

Avocados are often available in bags of 4-6, store avocados in the fridge, keeping the ripest out for immediate use. To ripen hard avocados, leave them on the windowsill for a day or two.

After a winter of heavy eating, use flesh protein sparingly in spring. Rather than meat as the feature of your meals, use it as a topper, a side, or go without for a day or two a week.

The aim of this section will be to give readers the opportunity to discover the ease, practicality, and budgetary advantages of writing shopping lists based on planned menus, and to realize the joy in creating simple, fresh and nutritious spring meals for one, two or a family, with groceries purchased from a list.

Part Two: Summer

Never mind the heat, summer is a feeding fest of colorful cooling fruits and salad vegetables. In the grocery store, the produce section is filled with soft fruits, i.e. juicy citruses, luscious berries, peaches, melons, watermelon, and water-laden vegetables like lettuces, celery, cucumbers, tomatoes, summer squash, corn and okra.

Nature intended summer's bounty to be eaten raw or slightly cooked. This means the benefit of preparing meals with summertime produce and bountiful fresh herbs like basil, parsley, dill, cilantro and cooling mint is the nominal cooking involved, thus the heat one's kitchen would normally generate is minimized and the inherent cooling property of summer's moisture-rich produce is maintained.

Because we're not as hungry for heavy meals when the weather is hot, summer meals of alkaline-rich salad vegetables infused with sweet rice-wine vinegar served on their own or as an accompaniment to a small side of grilled, marinated fish or chicken are quick and easy to prepare. For example:

- 1) Wash, partially peel and chop a cucumber and half a jicama. Pop into a bowl and douse liberally with rice-wine vinegar. Add a handful of chopped cilantro.
- 2) Marinade for at least an hour firm-flesh fish such as mahi mahi or salmon in lime juice, Bragg Liquid Aminos, chopped garlic and a chunk of peeled and chopped ginger.
- 3) Grill fish on each side till just tender and serve with a side of vinegar macerated vegetables.

To Serve: Place the grilled fish on a plate, top with the macerated jicama and cucumber, and add a sprig of cilantro to the side. Follow main meal with cut fruit drizzled with lemon juice and dipping bowls of plain yogurt enriched with honey and almonds.

Summer will be divided by the months June, July, and August, and under each month the fresh produce most plentiful at that time, and thus most often on-sale. Readers will have the chance to familiarize themselves with the season's fresh-produce best buys.

Incorporating summer's best-value produce, plus fish and or seafood, inexpensive cuts of meat, and pantry items, I'll list sample main-meal menu plans for Monday-thru-Friday of each week for each month -- 20 main-meal ideas per month, or 60 per season. Sample shopping lists will accompany each menu plan.

Following the menu plan and shopping lists will be simple methods for preparing each meal idea listed, including tips for making meals for just one, or extending the listed meal ideas to feed two or more people. For example, let's say I listed salad as a meal

idea, the following are tips for making salad a leftover meal for one, a side for a couple and a bigger meal for a family:

Singles: Wilt any leftover salad in a pan and use it to fill an omelet or beat it with a couple of eggs and boiled potato to create frittata (see page ...)

Couples: Make salad greens a side to a filling, summertime cold soup like Bread, Almond and Cucumber Soup (see page ...)

Families: Use grains like protein-rich quinoa or nutty-flavored millet, cubed polenta or pasta, and or a mix of colorful beans to create a more filling, staple salad and then top it with seeds, nuts and or chopped hard boiled egg.

On each page, there will be practical breakout tips either on storing produce, freezing, cooking, making use of leftovers, or improvising when exact ingredients aren't available.

For example:

Fresh herbs are best stored by standing them stems down in a cup with enough water to keep the cut stalk-bottoms moist and then storing the herbs in the fridge. Or if you want to keep herbs longer than a few days, wash and drain them, and wrap herbs in paper towel or a linen kitchen towel, storing in the fridge

Stretch protein items further by portioning cooked chicken or beef into 2 or 3-ounce pieces per person and then slicing or cubing protein and tossing portions on top of salad or vegetables or noodle bowls. Substitute meat protein with boiled eggs or tinned tuna, salmon or sardines.

The purpose of this section will be to give readers the opportunity to discover the ease of preparing healthful, colorful, budget-conscious summertime meals based on planned seasonal menus and using accompanying shopping lists to purchase ingredients needed for one, two or families.

Part Three: Fall

Fall is harvest time. A beautiful season of the year made more so by the softening light and the heavier, moist air, filled with the pungency of fecund summer gardens in the early stages of decomposition. Ripe smells, plus the prevalence of towering green stalks heavy with the last of late-summer yellow corn set against a back-drop of withering golden sunflowers – these tall two usher in the end of one season and the beginning of the next.

And as the weather transitions, our inclination to eat cooling, water-dense salads naturally shifts to a preference for warming autumnal foods such as fall's harvested vegetables: squash, dense and fleshy pumpkin and sweet potato, eggplant, wild mushrooms, texture-rich cabbage and brussel sprouts, beets, carrots, and turnips.

Softer in color compared to summer's rainbow-hued cornucopia, Fall's produce is nevertheless imbued with flavor. Wild mushrooms and root vegetables in particular have

distinct earthy overtones. We're drawn back into the kitchen to cook hot meals with Fall veggies which are great flavor pals to gamey-flavored turkey, pork, and lamb. One of my favorite simple and aromatic meals is as follows:

- 1) Peel and chop a small butternut pumpkin or acorn squash or a combination of both.
- 2) Chop and wash a leek or brown onion, sauté in a pan with a little olive oil, a chopped clove of garlic and a spring or rosemary.
- 3) Cut a couple of pork and cranberry or lamb and garlic sausages into chunks and toss them into the pan. Put lid on pan and allow contents to cook slowly on low.

To Serve: Spoon into large serving bowls with a side of sautéed or stewed apples and seeded mustard.

Autumnal fruits like figs, apples, and pears are great sweet additions to savory dishes and root vegetable soups or they can stand alone as succulent palate cleansers at the end of a heavy meal. Cooked fall fruits also make wonderful breads and muffins, and baked desserts like crisps, which topped with flax and sunflower seeds and or nuts plus yogurt can be served the following morning for breakfast.

Fall will be divided by the months September, October, and November, and Fall's best-value produce will be listed under each month. Incorporating fish and or seafood, inexpensive cuts of meat, and pantry items, I'll show sample main-meal menu plans for Monday-thru-Friday of each week for each month -- 20 main-meal ideas per month, or 60 per season. Sample shopping lists will accompany each menu plan. Following the menu

plan and shopping lists will be simple methods for preparing each meal idea listed, including tips for making meals for just one, or extending the listed meal ideas to feed two or more people.

On each page, there will be practical breakout tips either on storing produce, freezing, cooking, making use of leftovers, or improvising when exact ingredients aren't available. For example:

Sausages often go on sale, which means there's no reason to pay full price. Watch out for price reductions, and buy more than you'd usually buy, freezing what you don't use immediately for use later on.

Make the most of leftover cooked root vegetables by tossing them into a pot, with or without chopped apple, adding water or stock, cooking and then blending the mix to create a hearty soup. Serve with chunks of Apple & Cornmeal Bread (See page ...)

Turkey drumsticks, thighs and wings are incredibly economical after Thanksgiving. Casseroled with fall veggies, and served with mashed potato or a grain, one chunky thigh will stretch to feed 3 to 4 people. Drumsticks and wings also make great stock for soups.

The purpose of this section will be to give readers the opportunity to familiarize themselves with Fall's fresh-produce and monthly best buys so that they can easily incorporate those foods into their menu plans and shopping lists, and once home, into their daily meals.

Part Four: Winter

In the northern hemisphere, winter is typically much cooler than preceding months, and depending on where you are, it can be cold to bitterly cold, wet and or snowy, windy and often gray. In an effort to manage the inclement challenges of the season, we naturally turn to warming, pungent and or spiced foods.

Foods that take longer to grow are generally more warming than foods that grow quickly. Animal protein falls into this category, as do root vegetables and nuts. When it's cold, our preference is to enrich already warming foods with fats and oils, spices and sweeteners. Nevertheless, however satisfying, we're better off consuming rich, fatty foods in moderation, since they tend to be acid-forming and the extra calories quickly add winter pounds, which can be hard to lose come springtime.

At the store, it's possible to make healthy, fresh-food choices from the seasonal produce available. Despite that the coldest time of the year is not a natural growing season, winter produce includes hot-house varieties and carryovers from Fall's late harvest of fruits and vegetables i.e. acorn and spaghetti squash, butternut and regular pumpkin, winter beets, carrots, red cabbage, kale, spinach, braising greens, onion, garlic, ginger, potatoes, celery, brussel sprouts, cauliflower, celeriac, parsnips, turnips, pears and apples.

I relish cooking in winter; the oven and hot plates heat the kitchen and enticing aromas fill the home. My preference is for thick casseroles, stews, and soups, made flavorful with stock, vegetables, herbs, garlic and ginger, meat and or beans or lentils which are rich in protein without being too rich in fatty calories. After the holidays,

plump turkey wings, and thighs are plentiful and thus affordable. My method for delicious, delicately-flavored post holiday soup is as follows:

- 1) Pop several turkey wings or drumsticks in a pot of water with a couple cloves of garlic, a chunk of peeled and chopped ginger
- 2) Simmer for an hour, and then strain. Remove turkey meat from bones and store for use later.
- 3) In a pot sauté in a chunk of butter a couple of chopped and washed leeks, a peeled and chopped celeriac bulb, and several chopped Bosc pears.
- 4) Cover pears and vegetables with stock, and simmer for about 30 mins.
- 5) Whiz ingredients in blender and return soup to pot, season with salt and pepper.

To Serve: Top with a blob of yogurt or sour cream or a drizzle of half and half.

Winter will be divided by the months December, January, and February and under each month the fresh produce most plentiful at that time, and thus most often on sale, will be identified. Readers will have the chance to familiarize themselves with the season's fresh-produce best buys.

Incorporating winter's best-value produce, plus fish and or seafood, inexpensive cuts of meat, and pantry items, I'll list sample main-meal menu plans for Monday-thru-Friday of each week for each month -- 20 main-meal ideas per month, or 60 per season. Sample shopping lists will accompany each menu plan. Following the menu plan and shopping lists will be simple methods for preparing each meal idea listed, including tips

for making meals for just one, or extending the listed meal ideas to feed two or more people.

On each page, there will be practical breakout tips either on storing produce, freezing, cooking, making use of leftovers, or improvising when exact ingredients aren't available. For example:

After Christmas and New Year watch out for great sales on holiday foods such as cranberries, pecan nuts, turkey, brussel sprouts, sweet potato, tangerines, and so on. Great prices are one reason to buy extra and store for later. If you buy nuts in bulk, keep them in freezer. If you buy extra brussel sprouts consider using them in a hearty Winter Soup (see page ...) and then freezing the soup.

Winter beets with their leafy green tops are a two-for-one vegetable. Cut the stalks from the bulbs, storing the bulbs in the crisper of your fridge, and then wash the green leaves, cutting them away from the woody stalks. Store leafy tops wrapped in paper towel or a linen kitchen towel in the fridge, and then cook them as you would any leafy green.

In some parts of the country the selection of winter vegetables starts to seem colorless and boring by January. I often supplement my fresh purchases with economically priced, organic frozen vegetables. They're great in soups, casseroles, stews, adding much-needed variety and color.

The purpose of this section will be to equip readers with the information needed to make healthy fresh-food choices at the store using a menu plan and shopping list, then once home, the tools to prepare season-specific, warming, budget-minded healthy meals for one, two or a family.

End note: Resources

This will include the web address of MARKET TO MOUTH, the blog and YouTube channel, suggesting readers participate in the MARKET TO MOUTH community of responsible, budget and health conscious grocery shoppers and foodies by subscribing and or becoming “followers.”

SAMPLE CHAPTER:

INTRODUCTION:

Shopping at Whole Foods Costs a Whole Paycheck, Right? Wrong!

Twenty five years ago, I was cooking incredibly fancy and rich food for film crews, director parties, foreign dignitaries, and CEOs in Australia, and ranging across Europe to France and England. Today, I'm a former chef applying my love of simple gourmet cooking as a food columnist, a recession-strategy food blogger, and as a grocery shopping-cum-cooking consultant in the organic and foodie mecca of Boulder, Colorado.

In this tough economy, I still choose to eat well, buying fresh, seasonal, mostly organic produce, humanely-farmed and thus antibiotic-and-hormone free animal protein, some dairy, plus dry goods like grains, legumes, nuts, and seeds including treats such as dried fruits and chocolate – and all of the dry goods I buy in bulk using my own recycled plastic bags.

I am significantly more value-driven nowadays as a result of documentary films like *Food Inc*, *Fresh*, *Here we Grow*, *The Future of Food*, and books like *In Defense of Food*, by food activist, Michael Pollan, *Righteous Pork Chop* by environmental activist, Nicolette Hahn Niman, *What to Eat*, by nutritionist, Marion Nestle, and *Food Matters*, by New York Times columnist, Mark Bittman. Because these documentary film-makers and authors have exposed the underbelly of the food industry and factory farming, when given the choice to purchase cheap groceries knowing they're not organic, may contain hormones and antibiotics, and not knowing from where the food has been sourced, I pass-

up the cheap groceries for food priced slightly higher, as long as the price is attached to food that correlates with my core values.

For me, buying, cooking, and eating food has never been about consuming at a discount. My concern is that bargain-basement-priced food is cheap in viable nutrients, and rich in acronyms masquerading as food. Instead, I've always found buying, cooking, and eating food to be a highly creative, sensual, health-defining, and social experience. Being budget-conscious has enhanced my creativity, fed my senses, my health and my social needs in a way that shopping and cooking without a budget never did.

Being on a budget also means that I've returned with renewed passion to the grocery store and to the kitchen. From this place of enthusiasm, I began writing a blog and a regular magazine column on recession-strategy shopping and cooking. I soon began hearing from local readers who wanted me to shop with them as a consultant so they could learn directly how to grocery shop on a budget and eat well. Teaching what I know has fed my delight in helping others learn how to help and nourish themselves and their families, and to be conscious, eco-minded consumers.

These days when grocery shopping, I practice my skill at holding to a budget, which I learned as a professional chef ordering food for meals catering to as few as two and up to as many as 1000 people. It's a formula that holds true twenty-five years later, and it looks like this: buy mostly whole, unprocessed foods; the smaller the budget, use meat, poultry, fish and cheeses sparingly, buy produce in season and whenever possible, make it local fresh produce, and buy dry goods like grains, legumes, nuts etc. in bulk.

Additionally, the easiest trick I employ, and which I counsel my clients to practice, is "Shop the edge of the store." The periphery is where all the whole,

unprocessed foods are displayed – the fruits, vegetables, fish and seafood, dairy, meat poultry and dry bulk items; foods that should make up at least eighty percent of one’s grocery purchases and which ultimately contribute to reducing one’s grocery bill. In short, whole foods are actually cheaper than the boxed, packaged, and frozen foods in the middle aisles, items that make up twenty percent or less of one’s weekly groceries.

According to a 2007 USDA study, a family of four consisting of two adults and two children on average spent about \$189 on groceries a week. Yet according to that same study, a family who chose a healthier meal plan consisting of inexpensive cuts of meats, whole grains, and fresh fruits and vegetables, was actually able to reduce its grocery bills by about \$20 a week.

Once home from grocery shopping, I stow my purchases well so that nothing goes off prematurely and is subsequently thrown out. After all, tossing food out is akin to putting one-to-five dollar bills into the trash. And then I take the time to create simple, colorful and nutritious meals with my groceries so that by the end of the week, I’ve cooked and eaten all my perishables and leftovers, wasted nothing, and avoided impulsive dashes back to the store for additional items.

My cooking style is not complicated; it’s an exercise in common sense, color-coordinating and taste-testing as I go. And yes, I like to coordinate the color of my vegetables, because I know that if I eat a rainbow, I’m covering my nutritional needs while creating an eye-appealing meal that also tastes great.

I don’t use recipes. My theory is that when you become independent of recipes and recipe books, and instead trust your instincts and inner chef, you’re less likely to make extravagant and unnecessary food purchases at the grocery store by way of

ensuring that you have all ingredients on-hand for a particular dish. If you're trying to stay on-budget, then cooking directly from recipes is a recipe for going off budget. Instead, I use method notes for preparing main meals. You'll see that my methods for preparing meals are absent exact amounts, because I use "dollops" and "blobs," "chunks" and "bunches." Then I toss, throw, sauté, whisk, whiz and blend.

Cooking, like life, is an experiment in creativity, and when you're on a budget, grocery shopping and managing your food for the week requires unabashed creativity. By trusting yourself in the kitchen, and taste-testing your way to a delicious and nutritious meal, cooking is less a chore and more fun. The common misconception is that eating well costs a lot; moreover, buying groceries at stores like Whole Foods Market costs a whole paycheck.

Offering my independent-concierge shopping-on-a-budget tours of Whole Foods, I observed among those I helped a lack of practical shopping know-how. It was this shortcoming, and not the price of groceries, which contributed to their elevated grocery bills. Within time, I was able to identify the most common problems people face while grocery shopping:

Lack of Preparedness: When Ed, a late-thirties single dad of two young boys, met me at Whole Foods to learn how to shop for groceries on a budget, he knew he needed food at home. But, he hadn't given any thought to what he and his boys would eat in the upcoming week, so he wasn't sure what to buy. Which brings me to the second most common problem ...

Absence of In-Store Strategy: So Ed's answer to his lack of preparedness was to meander aimlessly around the store and pick up whatever looked good without

considering what he already had at home, what he'd prepare with what he bought, and whether he was collecting enough groceries for a week's worth of meals.

The solution: As a busy entrepreneur and single dad, convenience and low prices are top priority for Ed, so I showed him how to find the best deals on items he liked. Ed learned that he could buy healthy food at a fair price, changing the way he thinks about shopping and preparing healthy meals for himself and his kids.”

Grocery Stores Overwhelm: Greg, a forty-something husband and dad of two tweens, periodically does the grocery shopping for his family. He's also an introvert who finds the grocery store experience overwhelming – the choices, the noise, and the people all get to him. When we met up, he had a shopping list and he'd gone online and noted Whole Foods' weekly sale items, plus he'd clipped some coupons. Despite how prepared he was, though, I noticed Greg getting frazzled while shopping, and the more frazzled he got, the more likely he was to ignore his list and he'd snatch-and-grab in an effort to be done and out of the store.

The solution: Given how easily Greg can become over-stimulated by environmental factors, I suggested he shop when the grocery store is least busy; that is, before 9 a.m. on the weekend, or after 8 p.m. in the evenings.

Inability to Identify the Best Deals: Todd and Anna are in their early 30's and recently engaged. They met me at Whole Foods with a list and lots of experience shopping together. They asked for my help because they had no idea how to reduce their grocery bill, which averaged nearly \$200 a week. As I shadowed them, I watched Todd and Anna collect everything on their list, plus some, but without checking the price of anything!

The solution: I encouraged Todd and Anna to check the price of everything on their list before they put it in their cart, which included weighing all fresh produce and calculating its full price. This simple tip helped them cut their weekly grocery spending by nearly half, and the happy couple reported that their fridge had never been so full of delicious and wholesome food.

Impulse Purchasing: Penny, a Bridget Jones-eque single girl, had a grocery shopping strategy. Several times a week she'd go to Whole Foods on her way home from work, and pick up something for dinner, maybe some flowers, perhaps a magazine or another treat at the check-out. She couldn't figure out why she was spending so much on groceries and why she never seemed to have any food in the house. When I shadowed Penny, I noticed her impulsively putting inedible items in her cart.

The solution: Once I pointed out to Penny where her grocery money was going, she decided that when she shopped in the future, she'd follow my advice and be more prepared with a shopping list in-hand, a menu plan and budget in mind, and she'd replace her impulse purchases with quick and easy-to-prepare items for dinner.

The common theme among Ed, Greg, Todd and Anna, and Penny is consistently spending beyond their means, often blaming Whole Foods or other grocery stores for being too expensive, rather than analyzing their own budget-breaking habits and lack of practical shopping know-how.

With advance planning and having a strategy before going to the store it's possible to purchase organic produce, bulk dry goods, and humanely-farmed meats, poultry, dairy and sustainably-fished seafood on a tight budget, even in this recession.

Once home from shopping, Ed, Greg, Todd and Anna, and Penny, all said that their problems didn't end. They told me about a second set of challenges that looked something like this:

Unaware of best storing practices to minimize spoilage: Todd & Anna often threw out perishables like lettuce, spinach, and fresh herbs because these items would sweat and quickly deteriorate since they were shoved at the back of the fridge or in the bottom of the crisper in plastic bags.

Lack of know-how cooking simple, nutritious meals with groceries purchased: Ed reached for boxed and frozen meals when we shopped together because he had little patience in the kitchen and not a lot of confidence preparing anything “too fancy.”

Failure to know what to do with leftovers: Penny prepared the occasional meal from scratch and then stored her leftovers, only to accept an invitation out to dinner the next night. She'd then have no idea what to do with her leftovers or whether or not they were still okay to eat, so she'd often just throw them out.

No joy in the kitchen, resulting in budget-breaking trips either back to the store for more groceries, and/or to get take-out, and/or to a restaurant for a meal out: Ed especially expressed frustration with cooking for himself and his boys, which resulted in over-spending on boxed and frozen meals, and take-out.

Perhaps you're beginning to recognize something of your own experience in the problems people typically encounter with their grocery shopping, and in their kitchen. My hope is that this book will offer you the chance to rediscover the joy of paring back to basics, shopping the perimeter of Whole Foods Market or your favorite grocer for

unprocessed foods, and the joy of preparing and eating delicious and healthful meals at home. *MARKET TO MOUTH* is designed to give you the practical tools to accomplish exactly that.

Chapter 1 provides the step-by-step solutions I share with my clients to help them overcome their budget-breaking habits. Chapter 2 offers tips for stocking your pantry on a budget so that you'll feel equipped to cook at home. Chapter 3 outlines the reasons for shopping seasonally. And Chapter 4 is divided into four parts: fall, winter, spring and summer. Each season begins by identifying the fresh produce that's not only abundant at that time of the year but also most often on-sale. That's followed by a weekly menu plan for each month, incorporating the produce of that season, pantry items, and seafood or inexpensive cuts of meat protein. Sample shopping lists accompany each menu plan, as do easy-to-prepare, delicious and nutritious meals for one, two, and families. Practical breakout tips abound throughout Chapter 4 – valuable tips on storing produce, freezing, cooking, making use of leftovers, or improvising when exact ingredients aren't available.

And the surprising bonus: So long as you commit to following the strategies and the breakout tips and tricks outlined in the following pages, this book will show you that shopping for whole, unprocessed healthy food in this economy does not cost a whole paycheck.

MORE TESTIMONIALS FROM THE MARKET TO MOUTH BLOG ...

“I love the MARKET TO MOUTH blog entries dropping into my inbox – keeps me thinking about what I'm eating, and if I'm being adventurous at all with our daily family meals or just sticking with tried & tested – kudos to Louise Ross.”

“Love your tip about adding marinade to the chicken in the zip lock bag before freezing it! You're one step ahead of us all!!”

“Louise, these BLOG posts are great... Thanks for all your help - you rock! Reckon it's make a good TV show, don't you?”

“Today Oprah told the world about the plastic throw away junk floating in the Pacific -- your style of bring-your-own-re-usables needs to get out there. Shall I book you in with her?”

“Love how you put the recipes in the blog -- the crispy kale and the energy bars. . . and love the point about bulk allowing us to buy only what we need -- obvious, but we need reminding.”

“Good article on sticking to a budget...not always easy to avoid the urge to impulse buy so the reminder is great! Lists are the way to go, and thinking ahead.”

“This was super simple and delicious!! I made the Eggplant parm, but not the other dish. Thanks, I love your blog!”

“I appreciate the tips for saving money. You have provided really great ideas. Thanks for sharing.”

“Thanks for an awesome shop around Whole Foods, Louise! The sticky rice turned into a

rice pudding with coconut recipe from epicurious. It was (and continues to be) fantastic! We added strawberries to the fruit mix which adds a great splash of red.”

"My hubby and I have been using your fabulous ideas from your blog recently. He has lost 15 pounds! Thanks for the wonderful tips!"

“Love the post! I am all for improvisation in the kitchen. The other day I used half and half in a recipe because I did not want to buy cream.”

“Fabulous post!! I get the same questions and I can't tell what makes me sadder, the confusion about taste or the source of the food. Farmed salmon that has been dyed pink? Yarg!”

“Loved your story about following your mother around in the kitchen as you chatted away and she handed you little tasks. Thanks for giving us a dash of your early life and a sprinkle of kitchen nostalgia with every recipe!”

“Hey love this recipe; I'm def going to try that with my girls!”

“Hi Louise, We tried your coconut milk/curry recipe with chicken instead of shrimp. So good!”

“Love it Louise! Thanks for sharing your stories and recipes and tips - I always learn so much and have a laugh too. Thanks again.”

“Thanks Louise! These tips are just so handy and simple yet I would never have thought of them myself. Makes my grocery shopping experience so much more enjoyable, affordable and tasty! Keep up the great posts!”

Testimonials from Twitter followers ...

“I just love you; your blog just makes me happy!”

“Sitting at Whole Foods with Alyssa, noticing we're bad deal shoppers. Can we do a shop with you?”

“**WholeFoods** @**LouiseRoss** We appreciate you helping folks learn how to find value in our stores! :)”

“OMG, the soufflé sounds amazing! Never knew about beating the yolks & whites separately. Will have 2 try! Thanks! P.S. I heart your blog!”

“I just nominated your blog for the Tastiest Blog award at BlogHer '09.”

“I've already passed your quinoa recipe ideas on several times. Thanks Louise ;-)”

“I just looked at your site again; it makes my mouth water :-) What's better than real food prepared w/ passion?”

“Oh that's what it was - polenta with turkey stock, chard & bacon!? Twas yummy - any tips 4 Quinoa? Never cooked b4.”

“That sweet polenta recipe sounds fabulous, will try it as soon as I get home.”

“I'm excited to follow you and read your blog! My hope: trigger fun ideas for middle school kids about healthy eating.”