

ARE YOU EATING OUT TOO MUCH?



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Menu

Do You Eat Out Too Much?

If disposable income might be sneaking out the back door of your family finances, one of the causes could be between the lunches and dinners from eating out every week. With a family of five, even eating out at a basic Darden casual fare restaurant can run \$60 to \$80 with basic fountain drinks. Add in a couple of appetizers and you could be reaching \$100 for a family of five. In addition, lunches at the local deli or a casual fast fare type restaurant can set you back \$10 a day pretty quickly during the work week. Total up all of the lunches and dinners, and it could be dwindling those valuable disposable dollars that can help to build a college education or retirement fund. Dining out and entertainment expenses have become a blurred line in the family budgeting process because of so many new places treating food like art. Spending more than 5% of your net income probably crosses the line for 'dining out', becoming more than it should be as a line item within a family spending plan. So, how to fix this hole in your budget?

1

It's the Same Old... Same Old- Do you ever have those nights or weekends where you go to dine out simply because you are bored as hell from the same three meals you keep eating over and over again? In these cases, you really aren't looking to spend more money, but just figure out a way to cure your overall boredom with the routine. The fall time can be a great part of the year to invite a few friends or neighbors over for a barbeque or do a pot luck type dinner where everyone brings a few dishes. If going to do potluck, remember a few rules about making something people don't have to poke around in to figure out what exactly you made. By having a meal with others you can actually get to sample some other dishes and come up with ideas. Another alternative can be to use a social media sites like Pinterest to try some new recipes.

Planning, Planning, Planning- Our family has adopted a family wall calendar where we all put up the different school and business events we have for the week. If grocery shopping is on the weekend and the calendar events for the week are already known, it can be easier to meal plan. This means you might be able to buy something frozen that you really like from the grocery or specialty store. When you don't take the time to plan, it can force you into eating random meals out that add to your expense load each month.

2

3

Do Dessert, Not Dinner- If planning to have a family night or even a date night with your partner, it doesn't have to cost an arm and a leg. Consider taking a walk or drive to the local ice cream shop for some tasty treats or hitting the local coffee shop for dessert instead of having dinner out. Many times when out at casual fare restaurant, doubling decision making only happens after it is already too late and the dessert is already on the way to the table. Eating dessert at these places will make it even worse. One way to cut down on these expenses is making the main meal at home and then go somewhere for dessert.

Breakfast For Dinner- If dining out for dinner or lunch, consider breakfast as an alternative. Breakfast choices tend to be less expensive overall than lunch or dinner options and can be a great alternative. This means going for an omelet, a stack of pancakes, or some type of yogurt with granola type dish as opposed to the regular meal. It can be a fun and refreshing way to lighten things up.

4

Growing up as a kid eating out was truly a treat in the family. With the convenience of fast food and casual fare restaurants, it's easy to turn dining out into a four or five night a week routine. Consider closely how this can impact the overall budget and how that money plays into the overall financial goals between spending and saving.

