

## Strategies Applied:

- Dishes that make a large amount like this one have a huge potential for waste: It's served the first night, maybe the second, someone uses some of it for lunch, then the rest languishes as the family grows tired of it. It migrates toward the back of the fridge and eventually someone looks at it, sniffs it, and pitches the rest.
- Instead, when serving these types of dishes, think about serving the first night and then freezing the rest to pull out a few weeks later. This dish freezes quite well for short periods – put a layer of plastic wrap directly on the top. It's always better to keep them wanting more.
- This dish also seizes up and becomes very thick the next day – which means that someone could easily eat huge portions of it in a very concentrated state. Thin the left overs with a bit of water and it will stretch further.
- Make sure you have a use for the other half of the sausage or freeze it. Might I suggest [Jambalaya](#)? Leftover Rice may be used in [Fried Rice](#).
- Bacon:** Used to be an inexpensive ingredient, its price has risen with its popularity. Let's face it, bacon isn't the healthiest – we seldom use it here on its own as a meat, but do use it in small amounts in recipes, where I consider it as a “flavoring” rather than a protein. I buy on store specials and take advantage of coupons – my go to price is between \$2.00 and \$3.00 a package. I freeze until needed, partially thaw (until a knife will go through) and cut across the bacon from top to bottom. 1/16th is the same size as a strip. I wrap the bacon back up and freeze again.
- Onions:** They keep well, so try to buy on sale. Aldi is a good place to find reasonably priced onions. Always less expensive in the fall/winter months, the pricing in my area runs from 33 to 66 cents a pound. Store them in a dark, cool place but not near potatoes. If you've bought too many onions, don't let them go bad. Slice or dice them, saute and portion into Ziplocs labeled “onions” and freeze.
- Bell Pepper:** There are two types of sales, per pound or per pepper. I usually look for the per pepper pricing; in my area it's generally cheaper – I'll then buy the biggest, most gorgeous ones I can find. The peppers are often bagged and sold by a unit price, too. A really good price in our area is about a fifty to seventy cents a pepper for the red, yellow or orange ones, and 40 to 75 cents for the green bell.

•**Celery:** Generally inexpensive, but does go on sale from time to time, so I buy extra when it does. Celery keeps so well, there's no reason to not buy when it's not on sale. Remember to use your leaves, they're full of flavor, and if you don't use them in your cooking, save them, along with the bottom parts for soup or stock. Always wash your celery extremely well. To keep longer, slip a plastic bag loosely over the exposed top of the celery. A good price in my area is 98 cents a sleeve, with about 15 or so stalks in a sleeve.

•**Garlic:** I look for a price of about \$2.99 a pound, or about 54 cents a head. Check the pricing of the bulk per pound as opposed to the packaged. I never really find it on sale, but I use so much, I pay attention and buy a bit more when I see the price is lower. Cost for 4 cloves, around 5 cents.

•**Chicken Stock:** If you read me regularly, I make my own with scraps of vegetables and bones – here's the basic recipe I use for [Best Turkey or Chicken Stock](#) – it's not particular and though it simmers for a long time, the burner is barely on – I just count it as free.

•**Beans:** The lowly bean is one of the healthiest foods one can eat – eating beans regularly basically eliminates the issues so commonly known. Dried beans are so inexpensive to start with that they are seldom advertised as being on “sale,” but they often are after any Holiday in which Ham is considered an option for the main meal. Check for great pricing, too, in the ethnic aisles of the grocery store, as well as the pasta/bean aisle. Prices range, on sale, from \$.79 to \$1.00 a pound. Aldi's had three pound bags for \$2.39, which is the lower number. I paid \$1.29 for this package, 50 cents too much, but I didn't shop around and didn't check to see if I had any when the Dec/Jan sales prices were available.

•**Sausage:** Brand named sausage goes on sale regularly, often at the same time the producer issues coupons. Watch your coupon sites. I normally pay 50 cents to a dollar for a package of smoked sausage, and the “fancier” ones are aggressively marketed and sometimes free.

•**Rice:** Look for the best pricing on rice around Holidays when coupons are most often available, and if you see a coupon, wait for the accompanying sale. Check your market near the pasta/rice aisle as well as in the Ethnic aisles. For a long time I was buying at 8 cents a cup (raw) but haven't been finding that pricing lately. One cup = two cups cooked, so I'm guessing a bit here until I can figure out the exact amount.