

Strategies Applied:

•As mentioned above, using leftovers can really speed up the cooking process. The recipe doubles well. This recipe does not freeze well.

•**Poultry:** I buy at sale prices of 69 to 99 cents a pound for the turkey, and 89 to 99 cents a pound for chicken breasts. You may be able to pick up chicken legs or thighs for even cheaper. Use your leftovers wisely – they can be stored, cooked for short-term, a month or two in the freezer – after that they’ll deteriorate quickly. Two cups is about 10 ounces, so on the high-end, the protein for this meal is 62 cents.

•**Pasta:** I’ve hardly paid for any pasta in years, I simply buy on sale with a coupon, especially for the higher end pastas. A great sale price for a pound is about 88 cents a pound, but most coupons are for 50 cents to a dollar.

•**Artichoke Hearts:** They’re never really cheap, but do go on sale, often unadvertised. I scan for them when I’m shopping and pick them up for \$1.99 a can, usually about \$1.00 off in my area. Aldi often has them less than the regular grocery store. Look for artichoke hearts, also, where your store discounts items for immediate sale.

•**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.

•**Butter:** A bit of a splurge, cost and calorie wise – but for taste and health, I’d rather use real butter than trans fat laden margarine or oils. Yes – they do have trans fat, even if the label says they don’t. Harvard, for instance, says unequivocally: “*The key to a healthy diet is to substitute good fats for bad fats and to avoid trans fat.*” While butter isn’t a healthy fat, many feel that trans fat is worse than saturated. Buy on deep specials, often around the holidays with store coupons. I shoot for \$2.50 a pound and freeze, where it stays fine for months.

•**Wine:** I really shop the sales and speak to the employees – I find I can find great wines for a pittance. If you have a wine shop you like, I find you can get mailings or emails for their best sales – often in the fall and spring. My last bottle of a basic white was \$2.99 – I know, I know, they say always buy a wine you’d drink to cook with, but you’d be surprised at the bargains you can get and how long you can use a bottle for quick little recipes like this and my bargain wine really is quaffable. If I were making a recipe with a long, slow reduction like a stew, especially with a red wine, I’d be a lot more careful, because any tannins or off flavors might be even more exaggerated, but all I want here is a well-rounded flavor and a bit of acidity. I’ll even throw the wine in

if it's starting to turn to vinegar, and if I didn't have any wine, I'd add a bit more stock and a few teaspoons of white wine or champagne vinegar, or even a red wine.

•**Cheese:** I can usually find supermarket cheese on sale for \$2.00 for eight ounces, but I've found it on special with coupons for free or even \$1.00 for 8 ounces. I don't usually plan on making a recipe like this that requires a lot of cheese unless I have sales priced cheese available. You can freeze cheese and use for recipes, (but not for eating) although wrapped it lasts for a long time.

•**Green Onions:** I try to buy on sale for about 50 cents a bunch (usually during Holidays) then put the white tips in a jar of water in a sunny window to regrow. Kids love taking ownership of the project. I only need to replenish every few months. Cost is so minimal that I don't even count it.

•**Carrots:** An inexpensive item even not on sale – but it keeps so well I buy a couple of packages if it is cheaper. \$1.00 a pound is standard in our area, but the larger packages of 5 pounds are often on sale for \$2.50 – that's 50 cents a pound, or about 15 cents for three. Carrots will keep longer if you rotate the package, which is so often on the bottom of the drawer, so they don't sit in condensation.

•**Parmesan:** When I make a casserole like this, I don't have a problem with substituting the canned – I wish I could always use the best, but I just have to cut corners to stay on budget. I save the good stuff for when it really matters. I'll look for store specials (often buy so many products, get so much off,) coupons from Kraft or buy a store brand. My buy price is \$1.99 for a can.

•**Bread crumbs:** I've brought bread crumbs once, when a friend asked me if I'd pick up a can of Progresso Crumbs on my way to a dinner at their house. I was horrified how expensive they were. I always make my own from the left over bread and toss them in the freezer for when I need them (see my post on [bread crumbs](#).) When I am sautéing something, I use the once I've toasted rather than soft bread crumbs. Since they are made from a discarded ingredient, I don't count any cost.

•**Flour:** nominal