

Strategies Applied:

- This recipe gets better after two hours, but improves even more over a few days – double it and have it for lunch or snacks. The olive oil may harden a bit in a cold fridge – keep it toward the front of your fridge and it will be less likely to happen. If it does, set it out at room temp for a few minutes or even pop it in the microwave for just seconds.

- Onion:** Buy onions whenever you see them drop in price and store in a cool, dark place away from any potatoes. I look for them at Aldi and pick up a lot of my basic vegetables there for about half the price of a regular grocery store. Cost for the onion: 66 cents a pound, an onion is about 20 cents.

- Bell Pepper:** These can vary in pricing depending on the color, and of course, are always cheapest in the summer. 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. Great prices come around every now and then and don't seem to match the seasons! Aldi, again, is another great place to find peppers – sometimes I'll pick up the tri-color packages for \$1.79.

- Tomatoes:** The Roma tomatoes were on sale, so I used them instead of regular tomatoes – I paid \$1.49 for 20 ounces (\$1.03 a pound) Cost \$2.60. Remember, there are scales at the stores to judge 2 1/2 pounds, but this recipe isn't really that particular.

- Cucumber:** Another vegetable I buy at Aldi. A large one is about 25 cents. I peel, slice, and then run a spoon through the center portion, over a strainer in my bowl so I don't lose any juices.

- Garlic:** Runs around 59 to 99 cents a head in my area in the boxes. It can be a little tricky to discern the best prices because it can also be bought by the pound, and generally you'll pay less this way.

- Parsley:** I grow in my garden and bring indoors to kill over the winter! Just in case, I do chop and freeze some in ice-cube trays and they're perfect for this. I throw them in a strainer and leave out, or pop in the microwave and then strain out.

Tomato Juice or V-8: Why not use V-8? I can get it on sale with a coupon for a buck, something that I've never seen happen with Tomato Juice and I get a few more nutrients. Another dirt cheap option is to save your juice when you use canned tomatoes. I throw it in a Ziploc and put it in the freezer.

- Olive Oil:** My strategy for buying **olive oil** is to look for sales and combine with coupons. I look for about 8 cents an ounce (a tablespoon) so cost for this recipe is about 25 cents. Save the good stuff for drizzling and finishing.

•**Vinegar:** Every so often they'll have coupons for vinegar, making name brand lower than store price. Best time to buy is generally around Easter for the basic White or Apple Cider. Summer is usually when you'll find the good cooking vinegar on sale. I'll find sale prices, too, around Thanksgiving and Christmas. Stock up on the best prices because they keep forever. Often sales are not advertised, and you can find coupons, now and then, for both the basic and the fancier vinegar. Three tablespoons are about 5 cents.

•**Jalapeno:** Freakishly expensive by the pound, they're so small they're very affordable. One small was 30 cents. Slice off the stem end, then slice down the middle. Use a spoon to very easily scrape off the ribs and seeds. The spoon conforms perfectly to the inside of the pepper. I don't know why I always see Chefs on tv struggle with these - perhaps they're overly attached to their knives! If I didn't have jalapeno, I'd use a few red pepper flakes or several dashes of your favorite hot sauce.

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