

### Strategies Applied:

- **Greens:** I sometimes buy whatever's on sale, but I'm a big fan of both Kale and Turnip Greens. Kale, I think is the better choice here - it's nice and sturdy. Even at regular price, most greens are not expensive. A bunch runs between \$1.00 & \$1.29 a bunch here in Minnesota – other regions may well have lower prices. Cost: \$1.00. If you fold the greens so the stalk protrudes, you can very easily remove most of it by running your hand down the stalk and pulling. I don't worry about the thinner bits of stalk higher on the leaf – I like the texture.
- **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.
- If you're used to buying canned beans, unless a 15 ounce can is less than 26 cents with sales and coupons, they are more than the 79 cent per pound price of dried at Aldi's. A fifteen ounce can is about 1 1/2 cups of beans, and a pound is roughly the equivalent of 3 cans. Cannelloni beans are difficult to find dried, here, so two cans with coupons ran 50 cents.
- **Olive Oil:** I have a little strategy for buying [olive oil](#) – using coupons and sales to lower the price, so click on the link. I also look for new brands and stock up - heavy competition means that when a new brand comes to the store, it is often at a fantastic price for a few weeks, then settles in at around the same price as the others. I think it's important to use olive oil as opposed to many others – the health benefits outweigh a bit more extra cost, and it can be had at a very reasonable price. I also like the fact that Olive oil contains no hidden trans fats like Canola or Vegetable oil. Cost for this recipe: 32 cents.
- **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.
- **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 10 to 15 or stalks in a sleeve. Cost 20 cents.
- **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 10 cents for two. 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. Cost 10 cents.

- **Squash:** Varies wildly in price by season, I picked up a medium one for about \$2.49 & used 1/2, cost \$1.25.
- **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.
- **Near Deli Cheese:** This is my term for the grocery store "fancier" cheeses often found near the deli - Of course, if your budget allows, buy the best cheeses you can afford, but those on a budget shouldn't shy away from dishes that need a little more punch from their cheese for monetary or taste reasons. While one may not wish to put a grocery store cheese out for a tasting, for instance, most are just fine in dishes or sprinkled on top, and can be bought for very little money by watching sales and using coupons.
- Pick the coupons up (generally on hang tags near the cheese) when you see them, not when you want to buy them. Sales seldom seem to happen at the same time the coupons are out, but most of the coupons have very long expiration dates. Hang on to them and use them when sales pop up. Watch your coupon matching sites, too - they'll let you know when the sale is and if the producer has any coupons on their websites. I've often gotten things like goat cheese, tubs of ricotta or balls of mozzarella, etc., for no cost or just pennies. Cost 25 cents.
- **Bread:** When making a soup like this, especially one with beans that requires a bit of planning, I often stir up a loaf of overnight [Artisan bread](#). Cost for the loaf, about 25 cents.
- **Vinegar:** I pick up a jug of white vinegar around Easter - often with a coupon, and often on an unadvertised sale. It keeps forever and is dirt cheap. The better vinegars are often on sale at Easter, and on sale with coupons sporadically through the summer. Many can be picked up at no cost or for just pennies. Stock up because great sales other times of the year are much less likely and vinegar is a component of so many recipes. Cost nominal.