

Strategies Applied on the main dish:

- **Chicken:** In my area, the low is rarely less than 99 cents a pound for chicken breasts. This is my “buy” price and I stock up. Even if there is a limit, I’ll stop by the store more than once or send the kids in to buy some on a separate purchase from mine. I prefer bone in – the bone has a bit of weight, but it’s worth its weight in golden chicken stock. which is easy to make, expensive to buy.
- See my post on how to be [frugal with bone in breasts](#). If you like recipes like this, the chicken can be sliced, frozen and labeled for stir fry. Cost for this recipe, 1 pound, about a dollar.
- **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 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. Cost for this recipe: 16 cents.
- **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’s, and pick up a lot of my basic vegetables there for about half the price of a regular grocery store. Cost for the onion: 33 cents a pound, a small onion is about 10 cents.
- **Mushrooms:** They are often on sale at my grocery for about 1/2 price, especially around holidays. I pick them up when they run 89 to 99 cents a package. Turns out, according to the World’s Healthiest Foods, the [simple button mushroom](#) as many good qualities as its more expensive siblings! Go underdog! Cost 50 cents.
- **Cornstarch:** Used in all kinds of Asian stir-fries, I always pick up several boxes (or jars, nowadays) around Thanksgiving, Easter or Christmas when baking goods are on sale and coupons are available. It lasts for years, so why not?
- **Green Onion:** I just buy one bunch when on sale and use over and over (put the white part into a jar and place in a sunny window, where it will regrow for weeks...) This amounts to so little, I don’t generally even count the cost.
- **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. I figure about 4 cents.
- **Brown Sugar:** C&H, 2 lb bags, regularly \$2.39 is always on a deep sale around the holidays when coupons abound. A bag costs a dollar or less. I buy a few bags and once opened, I keep brown sugar in the bag, but put the bag into Ziploc. If it gets lumpy, I add a heel of bread into the bag and it will soften up again in a few hours. 1 pound = 2 ½ cups, so sale cost is about 7 cents, regular cost about 35.
- **Apple Juice:** If you don't have apple juice on hand, use a little apple sauce with water to total 1/2 cup. Juice is an item that can often be picked up on sale with a coupon...sometimes for nothing, but pretty consistently for under a dollar for a bottle or a frozen concentrate can. cost about 5 cents.

- **Soy Sauce:** Often on sale during the Asian New Years, and often with coupons – Soy Sauce is an item I normally am able to pick up at no cost. Even without coupons, half a cup is just pennies.
- **Plum Sauce:** I think I paid about \$2.99 for a small jar; it's worthwhile to have this on hand for a dipping sauce or to add to other ingredients for a little mystery flavor. It's like a wonderful ketchup and could go in a number of things ranging from meatloaf to anything using a bbq sauce...you're limited only by your imagination. Two tablespoons, probably about 10 cents.
- **Rice Vinegar:** pick up around the Chinese New Year, usually about the time of our New Year, it's inexpensive, there are often coupons...I don't know the cost of mine, but recipes usually call for a teaspoon or a tablespoon, so the initial investment has paid off forever...maybe a few pennies, at most.
- **Bourbon:** While many recipes don't call for actual bourbon, I found a small amount rounded out the taste...I'm not a bourbon, Scotch or Whisky drinker, nor do I have any friends who are, so I just bought a little "airplane" bottle and used about a quarter of it. Cost 25 cents.
- **Liquid Smoke:** Be careful here, a few drops are all you need...this is one item I'll never pour directly in or measure over my ingredients...it's easy to spoil the whole recipe with too much, but a touch is sublime...I've never seen it on sale, but a bottle will last most people for years and it never spoils...it's such a tiny amount, I'm not even counting it.
- **Rice:** You can buy special rice, but I just use supermarket rice. (This method will not work with “converted” rice like Uncle Ben’s. To make it a bit stickier like the restaurant version, I first rinse, then measure in the water (use a 1 to 2 ratio, rice to water) let it sit for a few minutes and then give it a good stir. Cook as usual: Bring to a boil, put on lid and barely simmer 15 to 20 minutes, leave the lid on, turn off heat, and let it steam for five, then fluff gently with a fork. Rule of thumb? Use a half a cup of uncooked per person. Buy on sale, with a coupon – look for a price of about 8 cents a cup. I often find smaller packages, with a coupon are free. 16 cents
- **Broccoli:** This is often on sale for 89 to 99 cents a pound in my area. If the price of broccoli is high, substitute something else. Fresh vegetables are often less expensive than frozen (which sometimes has added water as part of the weight. It seems an oft-repeated lie that frozen are cheaper - it often depends on the season, the sale price and the vegetable. Cost 75 cents.
- **Carrots:** Always cheap, but cheaper in the fall and winter, 5 pounds for \$1.99 – my target price is generally \$1.00 a pound. They keep so well, there’s no sense in not stocking up when they’re cheap. (just make sure they’re not wet from condensation) I used 3 good sized carrots, about a 1/2 pound, cost 20 cents.