

Keep in mind:

Items like this that are at the perfect texture when they go into the fridge thicken in the cold - there's an opportunity for unintended waste, here. Family members, looking for a quick snack, may judge how much they are going to eat by measuring out the item in the cold state, not taking into account that they may be eating what is basically two or three servings instead of one. I find it's better to reheat an amount, thinning with a bit of water if necessary, then serve it out.

- **Ground Beef:** by many, is considered to be a "cheap" meat, but I rarely see any hamburger for sale at less than \$2.49 a pound and it goes up from there. Buy it and freeze when it's on sale. Much healthier chicken breast runs \$1.69 to \$1.99 on sale, pork loin about the same. Many roasts can be bought at a low of \$3.49 to \$3.99 a pound. By comparison, hamburger doesn't seem to be the greatest bargain out there. Four pounds \$10.00.
- **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. This is one item I seldom buy at Aldi unless I can't get a better price at my store. Cost at Aldi 66 cents for two, 79 cents a pound.
- **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. You've just saved yourself a step for next time you make a dish. If you have enough, consider making [French Onion Soup](#). If you use half an onion, consider if you can sauté the rest and put it in a Ziploc in the freezer. If not store in the door where you'll see it when you're cooking next. 2 at 33 cents a pound, about 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.
- **Tomatoes, canned:** These go on sale periodically, and if you're flexible about brand you can often find inexpensive prices at the same time the producer issues coupons or Catalinas (slips that print out at check out giving you money back if you buy so many. Catalinas are often unadvertised.) Check your coupon matching site and load up when they are at very low prices. My tomatoes were no cost, but I'll price it out at 50 cents, which is an easily attainable sales price. I find the best deals on the 29 to 30 ounce cans, and if used for a recipe like this, divide

and freeze half, bagged and tagged. I rarely buy anything but whole tomatoes and blend to desired consistency.

- **Tomato Soup:** Substitute canned tomatoes pulsed in the blender or food processor if you'd like, but there is something a little magical about the way the smooth, creamy soup makes this sauce. I try to stock up on a few basic canned soups in the fall, and with coupons and sales I often buy them at no cost. My cost was free, but a good sales price with a coupon is about 50 cents, so I'll count a dollar toward the soup.
- **Ketchup:** Buy your condiments in the summer when there are coupons out there and big sales – if you miss the summer sales, another great time of the year for condiments is right before the [Super Bowl](#). Cost for 1/4 cup is about 10 cents.
- **Brown Sugar:** Both Brown Sugar and Powdered Sugar go on sale before Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter - just the time there are great coupons out there. You may find lesser sales around other holidays, too. I generally pay between 60 and 99 cents for the two-pound bags - I don't like to run low because the regular price is around \$2.39. Cost for 1/2 cup is 10 cents.
- **Other ingredients:** If bought on sale, with coupons, are nominal in cost. The same rule that applies for ketchup applies to the other condiments.
- **Buns:** Buy on sale and with a coupon! Buns can be a pricey item for the nice ones. Sometimes the ones in the bakery are much less expensive. I checked the bread aisle and found 8 for \$4.49, then checked the bakery where 8 of the same type were \$2.00. The smaller grocery store buns are often on sale for 89 cents. This cost will be a variable. Don't waste left over buns! We like to make [Parmesan Toast](#) with them, or [bread crumbs](#) or plan a second meal like chicken salad or tuna melts.