

THE CHEAPSKATES

JOURNAL

Bright ideas to save you money



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THE CHEAPSKATES JOURNAL - BRIGHT IDEAS TO SAVE YOU MONEY

March 2016

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The Cheapskates Club -

Showing you how to live life debt
free, cashed up and laughing!

If you want to win the Battle of the
Bills and are serious about saving
money, and living life debt free,
cashed up and laughing then this is
the place to be.

The Cheapskates Journal

Brought to you by: The Cheapskates Club
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Mar 2016

From Cath's Desk

Hello Cheapskaters,

How are you enjoying MOO Month? I just love March because I can MOO away to my heart's content and my family doesn't bat an eyelid. They accept that sometimes my MOOs are a huge success and occasionally they're a huge fail (and sometimes the fail is so huge they remind me of it just about forever, in a loving way of course). So far this month all my MOOs have been successful so their teasing has been minimal.

As I was putting this month's Journal together I kept MOO month in mind and I'm happy to say that the MOOs that are included are all great and well worth the few minutes they take to put together and the bonus is I've learnt a new skill or recipe.

Learning a new skill or recipe is a wonderful way to save money. It's also a great way to inflation proof your lifestyle. When you know how to make the things you need from scratch you aren't held to ransom by supermarkets and department stores and the continually rising prices they charge for a dwindling choice of goods.

If you haven't tried MOOing yet, please do. Start with something simple, Cheapskates Washing Powder or MOO Yoghurt and move forward from there. Before long you'll find you MOO before you shop simply because it's become a great money, time and energy saving habit.

Have a great month everyone.

Happy Cheapskating,

Cath

Feature Article: When to Invest, When to Pay Off Debt, and When to Do Both

If you're facing the dilemma of paying off debt or investing your money, you might also be wondering if you can come out ahead with some combination of both.

Fortunately, there is a middle ground that allows you to pay off your debt while making smart investments to increase your current income.

Sometimes, investing instead of paying off debt may even be a more cost-effective decision. If your investment yields earnings greater than the interest on your debt, your money is better spent on those higher yield investments - **AS LONG AS YOU CONTINUE TO FOCUS ON PAYING DOWN THAT DEBT AND USE THE INTEREST EARNED TO MAKE EXTRA PAYMENTS.**

Let's look at different scenarios to help you determine the most lucrative options for your own situation:

1. When investing is a better option. You may have a mortgage or loan debt that carries with it a set monthly interest rate. If the debt costs you less money per month than you could otherwise earn through profitable investments, then it is in your best interest to focus on investing.
2. When it's better to pay off your debt. Of the many different kinds of debt, credit card debt often carries with it some of the highest interest rates in the industry. These interest rates can now be as high as 18% to 23%, and trying to find investment options that yield such a percentage in earnings may prove difficult.

Until you find an investment option that provides you with that percentage amount in returns, it may be in your best interest to focus exclusively on paying off the debt.

Investing and paying off your debt. You may now be seeing the bigger picture regarding debt and investing. In essence, it is a balance of interest rates.

Finding a balance where you are paying off your high-interest debt while investing in stocks that also provide a high percentage in returns is ideal. The investments will be more cost-effective than paying off your low-interest debt.

If debt is like a leaking boat, the best step is always to plug the largest leak first. High interest credit card debt is by far the largest leak and should be considered a top priority.

It's also important to consider the fact that many loans can be paid in advance. Paying a loan in advance is always the best return on your capital and should be done whenever possible.

If you're still deciding on whether to pay off your debt or invest, make a list with your debt on one side, and investment options on the other side. Compare the interest rates from both sides and decide which require your attention first. Then your plan will be your most lucrative solution.

A Thoughtful Moment: The Elephant Rope

As a man was passing the elephants, he suddenly stopped, confused by the fact that these huge creatures were being held by only a small rope tied to their front leg. No chains, no cages. It was obvious that the elephants could, at any time, break away from their bonds but for some reason, they did not.

He saw a trainer nearby and asked why these animals just stood there and made no attempt to get away. "Well," trainer said, "when they are very young and much smaller we use the same size rope to tie them and, at that age, it's enough to hold them. As they grow up, they are conditioned to believe they cannot break away. They believe the rope can still hold them, so they never try to break free."

The man was amazed. These animals could at any time break free from their bonds but because they believed they couldn't, they were stuck right where they were.

Like the elephants, how many of us go through life hanging onto a belief that we cannot do something, simply because we failed at it once before?

Failure is part of learning; we should never give up the struggle in life

Make Your Own Granola

Granola is a heartier version of what we Aussies call toasted muesli. It's eaten as a breakfast cereal, but it makes a great base for trail mix too.

Granola, if done correctly, can be a healthy snack for any occasion. Granola is a crisp wholegrain cereal based on oats, but you can use other grains as well. It's slightly sweetened with honey, sugar or maple syrup, usually contains nuts and dried fruit and is baked to form crisp little clumps of deliciousness. Use this recipe to make muesli by leaving out the sweeteners and oil and not baking it. Unbaked it will keep for up to a month in the pantry or three - four months in the freezer.

Many ready-made granolas are high in fat and sugar as well as expensive. However, with a few simple tweaks, you can have an energy

boosting, healthy snack for a fraction of the cost.

The whole grains in granola provide slow-release energy to keep you feeling full longer. So they make an excellent snack to take to work or school. By using natural sweeteners such as maple syrup, honey, coconut and dried fruits, you get a lighter version of the traditional snack.

Granola is also extremely versatile so you can add any kind of grain, nut, seed and dried fruit you want. As long as you keep the basic quantities the same, you can make a wide variety of granolas to suit your family.

Most granola recipes call for old-fashioned rolled oats but it doesn't have to stop there. Granola is so extremely versatile you can add any kind of grain, nut, seed and dried fruit you want. As long as you keep the basic quantities the same, you can make a wide variety of granolas to suit your family.

Here are some ideas for things you can include in your granola:

Grain - Rolled oats (NOT instant or quick oats), rye flakes, barley flakes, quinoa, wheat bran

Oil – Coconut, olive or another healthy oil

Sweetener – Honey, maple syrup, molasses, brown sugar.

Dried fruit – Sultanas, dates, sweet coconut, currants, diced dried apples, pears, cherries, raisins, blueberries, strawberries, banana, figs, mango, pineapple, apricots, peaches.

Nuts – Peanuts, walnuts, pecans, cashews, pistachio or almonds

Seeds - Sesame seeds, sunflower seeds, pumpkin or your favourite seeds

Spices – Cinnamon, nutmeg, cardamom, cloves, ginger or any other spice that you like

Flavoured chips – Dark chocolate, milk chocolate, peanut butter or butterscotch

Flavouring/extract – Vanilla, maple orange or your favourite extract. You can even use apple juice.

A basic recipe for granola will look something like this:

3-4 cups grain

1-1/2 cup nuts

1-1/2 cups seeds (optional)

1 cup coconut

1/2 - 3/4 cup sweetener

1/4 - 1/2 cup oil

1 teaspoon spices (combined)

1 cup dried fruit (optional & added after baking)

In a large bowl, mix the grains, nuts, seeds and coconut. In a smaller bowl, mix the sweetener, extract, spices and oil. Pour liquid over grains and mix until everything is well coated.

Spread evenly on a baking sheet covered with parchment paper.

Bake at 150 degrees Celsius for 30 minutes. Stir and bake another 15-20 minutes or until toasty brown.

Add fruit and mix well. Allow granola to cool completely and store in an airtight container for up to ten days or freeze for up to 90 days.

Granola is such an easy thing to make and because of its versatility it's something that everyone will enjoy. Try using different fruits, grains and seed mixes for a custom snack. Be sure to write down the measurements so you can keep track of your favourites.

Nix the Midday Lunch Breaks with Co-Workers

You probably know the scenario. The office clock says noon and everyone starts to talk about where to go for lunch. Often the drive time to a restaurant eats up most of the lunch hour, not to mention the petrol and the actual cost of the meal.

It's hard to find a half decent lunch for less than ten dollars. You gobble down your food, share a few laughs with your co-workers and rush back to the office wishing you had time for a nap.

As you walk to your desk, you notice this guy putting away his lunchbox. He appears calm, happy and ready to get back to work, some of which he did while eating his lunch. He's thinking how delicious it was, how much money he saved and the hassle avoided.

Is it worth it to prepare and take your lunch to work each day? Well, looking at some basic examples let's say the cost to make your own lunch costs about \$3 a day. It's probably much cheaper.

That's \$15 for a five-day week. Eating out at approximately \$10 a day comes to \$50 for the week. You saved at least \$35 not including drive time and petrol. That's more than \$1,800 a year saved. Interested?

Here are some luncboxing tips. Prepare it the night before so you're not rushed in the morning. Keep it simple but be creative and think healthy. Sandwiches on wholesome bread are fine but include nuts, fruit or yogurt. Also, put in a little treat for yourself that you can look forward to, perhaps a health bar or your favourite biscuit or slice.

Plan ahead and buy in bulk with lunches in mind. Buy larger bulk packs of treats and put

them in smaller plastic bags instead of buying small individual bags. Don't pay more for convenience.

Cook a big dinner and save some for lunch the next day or the entire week. If it's home cooked you know it's good, healthy and cleaner. Put it in individual containers that night so you can grab and go in the morning.

If you're running late there's nothing wrong with occasionally taking a can of soup or vegetable chili. Most offices have ovens or microwaves you can use for heating.

Bring your drink too. You can probably get two litres of juice for around \$2, about 25 cents a glass. Compare that with expensive vending machine drinks or coffee and you've saved even more.

It's up to you of course, but you can continue to work while you eat, catch up on your emails or other relaxing reading. It just might impress the boss and if you have to take off early, you don't feel as guilty. Don't be surprised if others ask you for tips on taking a packed lunch either, especially when they see you're actually enjoying your lunch and your lunchbreak.

There's a lot to be said for packing your lunch. You eat better, save time, money and you're more productive. Now all you have to do is figure out where to invest all that money you saved.

Freeze-Ahead Meals and Sauces

Have you ever wished you could fill your freezer with meals that are already prepared and ready to heat and eat? Oh, yeah, those are called TV dinners, but you're not convinced they're that healthy or they don't come in the foods your family likes. You could make your own freeze-ahead meals and sauces. It will take some time but it can be so comforting knowing you have

those meals for those evenings you simply don't want to cook.

Preparing freeze-ahead meals will take time. You will want to plan which meals to prepare, make a shopping list, go purchase the food and then do the actual cooking. There are a number of websites which share information on freeze-ahead meals and they usually recommend doing this type of cooking over at least two days.

One of the easiest types of meals to do as a freeze-ahead meal is a casserole. You can put the ingredients together in an aluminium pan, cover it and pop it into the freezer. When the time comes to eat it, it will be so easy you'll be glad you spent the time making it.

Lasagne is one of the most popular meals for families to make ahead and freeze. You will need noodles, spaghetti sauce (homemade or store bought), cheese and meat. Prepare the lasagne as if you're going to eat it right away except you won't bake it now. When you have added the last cheese layer, place a cover on the pan. Let it cool in the refrigerator or place the casserole pan in a sink of ice water prior to freezing to ensure it freezes uniformly.

You can also make your favourite soups to freeze for later use. Chili is welcome in the colder months but you might not always have to time prepare it. Make a big pot of chili, break it down into normal amounts needed for your family, and place the containers in the freezer. When you're hankering for a bowl of chili, it will be so much easier to reheat the frozen chili than making an entire pot.

Spaghetti is a common meal families prepare on a regular basis. Cans or jars of sauce at the store are expensive and it seems prices continue to rise. Rather than turning to store bought sauce, make your own and freeze it. Buy tomatoes when they are on sale and prepare the sauce with your favourite ingredients. Your family will be able to taste the difference and the love.

Perhaps you've come across a great sale on ground beef. There are so many ways you can use it. Cook the meat right away using onions and simple seasonings. You can freeze enough in one container for a variety of meals – spaghetti, tacos, shepherd's pie, burritos, enchiladas or pirogues.

Freeze-ahead meals can be so helpful when you're rushed for time. The effort at the beginning of the process might seem excessive but the time is definitely well worth it. To make the process easier, enlist the help of your family or cook with a friend! You can share the work load and the foods that prepared.

On the Menu: It's Autumn and the Apples are Amazing

Apple Pancakes

Pancakes take a while to make so I usually put them on the meal plan for weekend breakfasts or lunches. If you're tired of plain pancakes, why not try Apple Pancakes as an alternative instead? This recipe is easy to make. Use your imagination when serving. Try adding fresh blueberries or raspberries or thinly sliced apple and sprinkle with cinnamon sugar. Yum!

Ingredients

2 large eggs

2 cups SR flour, sifted

1/3 cup sugar for the recipe plus 2 tablespoons sugar (or more) for cooking

1 tsp bicarb soda

2 tsp ground cinnamon

1 tsp ground ginger
1/4 tsp grated nutmeg (freshly grated if you have it, but pre-grated will work)
2 cups plus 2 tablespoons buttermilk
60g unsalted butter, melted
2 tsp vanilla extract
2 peeled Granny Smith apples, 1 cored and grated, 1 thinly sliced on a mandolin

Method:

Begin by preparing your apples. (Remember to sprinkle a little lemon juice on the apples to keep them from turning brown after cutting or grating.) Cut one apple on a mandolin to make uniform thickness slices. These will be used with the pancake batter.

The other apple should be peeled and grated to add to the batter.

Now you're ready to start on the batter itself. Melt the butter over medium heat being sure not to scorch it.

In a medium to large size bowl, beat two large eggs until frothy.

Add the flour to the beaten egg.

Then add the 1/3 cup of sugar. Reserve the rest of the sugar for actual cooking.

Next add the bicarb soda, salt, cinnamon, ginger and nutmeg.

Add the buttermilk, vanilla and melted butter to the mixture and then stir to incorporate everything.

Add the grated apple. Stir until just combined. The mixture will be thick.

Preheat the frying pan over medium-high heat. Lightly spray with cooking spray or add a little butter.

Add 1/2 cup batter to the pan. Place two lightly sugared apple slices on top.

Cook the pancake until bubbles form (about 2 minutes). Flip the pancake with a spatula and cook until golden brown on each side for a total of about 4 minutes cooking time per pancake. You may need to spray the spatula with cooking spray between pancakes to ensure the pancake doesn't stick to the spatula.

Place the cooked pancake on a plate. Garnish with apples slices other fruit and a sprig of mint, if desired.

Spiced Apple Muffins

Ingredients:

2 cups SR flour

1 tsp salt

1/2 tsp cinnamon

1/2 tsp nutmeg

2/3 cup brown sugar

2 eggs (beaten)

2/3 cup milk

1/4 cup butter (melted)

1 cup peeled and grated apple

1/4 cup chopped walnuts (optional)

Method:

Pre-heat oven to 170 degrees Celsius. In a large bowl sift together the flour, salt, cinnamon and nutmeg. Mix in brown sugar. In a separate bowl,

combine eggs, milk and butter. Mix well. Add egg mixture to flour mixture and mix (do not over mix). Fold in apples and walnuts (if using). Spoon batter into lightly greased muffin tins. Bake in preheated oven at for approximately 20 minutes or until golden and baked through. Let cool in pan for 5 minutes before removing to wire rack to cool completely.

Cinnamon Apple Bread

Ingredients:

2 1/2 cups plain flour

1 tsp bicarb soda

1/4 tsp salt

1 tsp cinnamon

1 cup sugar

1/2 cup butter (melted)

1 egg (beaten)

1/2 cup milk

1 teaspoon vanilla

1 cup peeled, chopped apples

1/2 cup raisins

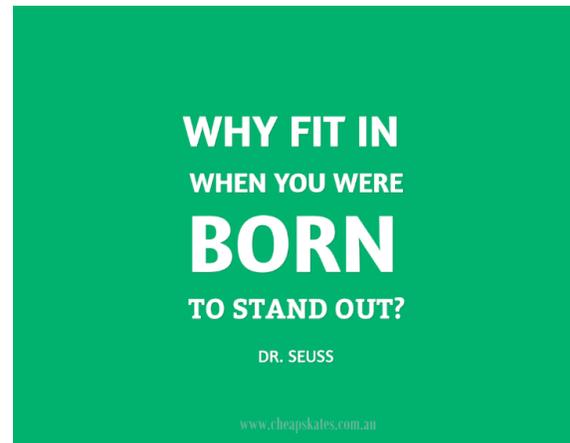
1/2 cup chopped pecans (optional)

Method:

Preheat oven to 180 degrees Celsius. In a large bowl combine flour, bicarb soda, salt, sugar and cinnamon. Add melted butter, egg, milk and vanilla. Mix well. Fold in chopped apples, raisins and pecans (if using). Pour batter into a lightly greased loaf pan. Top with chopped pecans (if using). Bake at 350F for approximately 45 minutes or until centre is baked through. Cool

for 10 minutes in pan before removing to wire rack to cool completely.

Quote of Note



Cheapskates Tip Store

DIY Sugar Body Scrub

I have been making my own body scrub for years now. All I do is add some raw sugar to my favourite shower gel or bubble bath liquid. I typically mix equal parts of the raw sugar and the shower gel together in a plastic bowl and use it to exfoliate all over in the shower. It is especially good for sloughing away hardened skin on the heels of the feet! Feel free to use a smaller proportion of sugar to shower gel or even substitute raw sugar for regular white or even caster sugar if you find it is too rough on your skin. Much cheaper than the cosmetic exfoliants on the market, and the sugar dissolves in water which is much better for the environment than those nasty artificial exfoliating micro beads (which I believe are beginning to be banned!).

Contributed by Jessica Kurucz-Wiedemann

Anti-bacterial Wet Wipes

Approximate \$ Savings: Up to \$10 per pack

I make my own anti-bacterial wet wipes that are much better than the bought ones. Firstly find a tall round air tight container that will fit a Viva paper towel roll into it. The one I have is slightly too small but when wet they squish down easily. I got mine from The reject shop for \$5. Place a full roll of Viva paper towels into your container. Mix in a jug 1 and 2/3 cups of water, 1/2 cup of Isocol rubbing alcohol (Chemist Warehouse) and 4 squirts of dishwashing detergent. Pour slowly over the paper towel to saturate. Pull the centre roll out when wet and dispense from the centre to use.

Contributed by Keryn Gibbs

How to Spread Hard Butter

Saw this tip on the net and saved it.

Cut the amount of butter you want to use and put it on a plate. Grab a glass and fill it with hot water. Let it rest for a minute or till the glass outside is warm. In quick succession, tip the water out of the glass, dry it and invert it over the chunk of butter. In a minute or so, you'll have beautifully soft butter.

Joyofquilting

Keeping the Other Half Motivated to Save

I've been following a budget for eight years now. When my husband and I purchased our house at 22 years old in Sydney we needed to be smart with our money if we wanted to make it work. Month in month out we stuck to it. We have since been able to travel overseas annually and I've been able to be a stay at home mum with our two children 2 and 4. We have renovated our house and own our car, owe

nothing on credit cards and always up to date with bills and mortgage (ahead by approximately 10 years). My tip is in our case when my husband may say "spaghetti again" I'll just give him a happy reminder that "Europe next year is going to be amazing" or "isn't it great we don't stress about meals and bills". It works every time.

Contributed by Erin L.

Best Ever Free Recipes

I used to be a recipe book junkie, always buying and not always using. Some books were great to browse but recipes too complicated, too many ingredients or did not suit our tastes.

I find the very best recipes are the hand written from friends and relatives, these are tried and true.

Also recipes from the product packaging. One example is my Sticky Date Pud, printed on the CSR Brown sugar pack. Another favourite is to use your computer and Google. You are sure to find whatever you are searching for.

Contributed by Sue Richardson

Making Exfoliation Gloves Last

My daughter and I love using exfoliation gloves that you can pick up from either supermarkets, \$2 shops or discount chemists and they all vary in price. It doesn't seem to matter whether we buy the more expensive ones for about \$5 or the cheaper ones, about \$3, we still had the same problem with them. Firstly, they seemed to be treated with some chemical that makes them very waxy to begin with. Then after a few uses I noticed that they would quickly become water and soap logged. Beforehand when I was too busy, and not watching my dollars, I would simply throw them out and buy new ones, but after I calculated that between myself and my

daughter we were going through 4 -6 pairs a year each I figured I could do better than this. When I bought the next pair, which were the cheaper ones, before using them, I soaked them in a solution of bi carb, vinegar and warm water. Left them for about 30 minutes and then rinsed them and hung them out to dry. My first use of them was so different it was like night and day. No waxy residue and they were able to be rinsed clean with much more ease. A few weeks later, when I noticed they were starting to feel clogged again, I did the same rinse treatment again and Voila! good as new. I can see now that one pair of gloves will probably last us each at least 6 months. A saving of approximately \$24 - \$50 a year!

Contributed by Kerry Wennersten

Re-purpose Baby Wipes to Polish Stainless Steel

I use Aldi face wipes to remove makeup. I wash them each day and when dry I put a few drops of baby oil on them to polish stainless steel appliances. Without Oil they are good for soft dusting.

Contributed by Barbara Cochrane

MOO Tile Cleaning Solution

This was recommended by a professional tiler.

Ingredients:

1/4 cup vinegar

1/4 cup bi carb soda

1 tbsp. dishwashing liquid

750 ml hot water

spray bottle

Method:

Mix vinegar and bi carb. add hot water, mix. Add dishwashing liquid, mix again. Funnel into spray bottle. Use narrow brush on grout joints. Scour brush on tiles.

Grout joints look like new.

Note: do not use on newly laid tiles as grout needs to be fully dry for 30 days.

Contributed by Edeltraud Heyer

Get rid of Tinea FAST!

I was sick and tired of paying up to \$80 for tinea or foot/ toe fungus medication from the chemist for my son.

Being a teenager he would leave the cap off or spill the bottle and would never remember to put the medication on each day.

I was cleaning my teeth one day listening to him whinge that he couldn't find the bottle and was reading what was in the Listerine bottle. It kills germs right and fights infection in your mouth so you have clean breath. Tinea is infection. I told him to wipe the Listerine over his toes (in fact he sponged it over his whole feet) and within a week the tinea had cleared up and his feet no longer smell! Break through! I now only buy the Aldi mouth wash (as it is cheaper than Listerine) and it is working a treat!

Would recommend this to anyone with a foot fungal problem.

Contributed by Kathy Lather

By the Bag Sales

It is fairly common for thrift stores and yard sales offer by the bag sales in my state. My favorite thrift (charity) store just had a \$5 bag sale for all the clothes and shoes you could put in a bag. I learned from a veteran shopper to either tightly roll or to neatly fold all the clothes before putting them in the bag. You can fit 2 or

3 times as many folded clothing as just shoved in clothing in a bag. In my 2 plastic bags, I fit in dozens of pairs of pants and dozens of shirts for my grandchildren,

Contributed by Rhonda Oliver

Water Filters Save \$\$\$ and Effort

For over 10 years now I have had a water filter jug sit by our kettle and coffee machine and use filtered water in both these appliances. Whilst other friends have replaced coffee machines and kettles numerous times ours has never missed a beat and the inside of our kettle looks brand new! I replace the water filters every quarter which costs about \$20-\$30 per year if I can get them on sale or online (or \$2 as I found the last box at a garage sale). I calculate this has saved us hundreds of dollars on descaling products (that the appliance manufacturers recommend using regularly) and not having to replace appliances. If only it were as easy to keep the rest of my kitchen so clean!

Contributed by Michelle Wilkinson

Free Firewood - March 2016

Do you have a wood fireplace? Buying firewood costs around \$ 200 to \$ 300 per trailer load. Driving into the bush to legally obtain some is a long drive and only permitted on certain times of the year. Some manufacturers like furniture and decking manufacturers, also pallet companies supply their cut-offs as free firewood to the public. Check their websites, Gumtree or ring them. More wood is available during summer and autumn. You will need to cut it yourself but can pick up wood by the trailer load. About 2 loads get me through winter. I wouldn't buy this quantity but I estimate I save around \$ 200 in gas heating costs.

Contributed by Edeltraud Heyer

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