

Cauliflower Soup with Ham and Cheese



Holiday meals are enjoyed at many get-togethers with family and friends this time of year. For some, special foods are made and purchased for such meals. For others, a traditional menu is served each year. Whatever the situation, the cost for holiday meals can be surprising, but fortunately there are ways to reduce your costs yet still enjoy family and friends this holiday season.

At most holiday parties, there is usually seemingly endless amounts of food. While it is nice to have the diversity of flavors and food choices, sticking to just one, or maybe two, meat options or entrees can help with your budget. Meat is usually the most expensive part of the meal, therefore, reducing the amount made and offering more side dishes can decrease expenses. Also, keep an eye out for the meat sales in your local grocery ads.

Avoid pre-made foods and make the food yourself. The general rule of thumb is the more work you do, the less the food costs. Also, if you enjoy cooking and baking, throw on some holiday music and while you whip up your holiday goodies in your kitchen.

Use up those leftovers. When a meal is finished, take the time to put the food in containers so they are ready to use for another meal. Put food away promptly after a meal. Perishable food should not sit out for more than two hours. Get creative with your leftovers and throw them into different casseroles, soups, sandwiches and/or salads!

The cost of beverages can also add up quickly. The cheapest and healthiest choice is tap water. Serve water as the main choice with meals. Some beverages are full of empty calories so let your guests fill up on delicious, nutritious foods rather than sugary beverages.

If ham is on the menu for your holiday meal, here is a great recipe to use up the leftovers!

Ingredients:

- 2 T. butter
- ½ cup diced onion
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- ¼ cup all-purpose flour
- 2 cups milk
- 3 cups low-sodium chicken broth
- 2 ½ lbs. chopped cauliflower florets
- 3 cups reduced-fat mild cheddar cheese
- 6 oz. cooked leftover ham, chopped



Directions:

1. In a large soup pot, melt the butter over medium heat. Add the onion and cook until softened, about 5 minutes. Add the garlic and stir until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Stir in the flour and cook for 30 to 60 seconds longer. Slowly whisk in the milk and the broth. Bring to a light simmer, then add the cauliflower. Cover the pot and cook until the cauliflower is tender, about 15 minutes.
2. Working in batches, transfer the soup to a blender and blend until smooth. Return to the soup pot.
3. Stir in the cheese and stir until the cheese is melted. Stir in the ham and heat until the ham is heated through, then serve warm.