

# The Process

Section Two



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# The Process

## How Do We Do This?

*Like any cooking process, you'll gather ingredients, utilize your tools and appliances, combine and process the ingredients, and then consume them. It's just that with mega-cooking™ you'll be gathering LOTS of ingredients; utilizing almost every kitchen gadget, dish, and appliance you own; combining processes; and consuming the food over a period of time.*

The concept is simple and the process is basic. If you just take it one step at a time, you'll see there is a logical flow. The next parts of the book will walk you through these topics. In addition to these "step-by-step" instructions, the **Topics** section is filled with more explanations and definitions about specific ingredients, methods, and equipment.

### **Planning**

We start with planning, selecting recipes, scheduling tasks, and adapting our tastes to streamline our cooking.

### **Equipment**

We consider our equipment and collect, borrow, or rent good tools.

### **Ingredients**

We procure our ingredients, competing with restaurants and grocery stores for quality and price. We evaluate quality and rethink storage and processing.

### **Methods**

We process and cook the ingredients on a much larger scale than single servings.

### **Storage**

Storage is a major consideration, as we want our food to be delicious when we do eat it months later.

**Serving**

With mega-cooking™, you'll have to consider thawing time, reheating, and serving quite differently than when you prepared, cooked, and served a dish all on the same day.

If you follow this system step-by-step, you'll soon see that it is something *you can do*.

## Chapter Two

# Planning: How do we Plan to do this?

*One of the most critical aspects of mega-cooking™ is planning.*

That comes naturally to my husband. He is a list maker. I'll never forget coming home from a five-day publicity trip and seeing a Gantt chart down the length of the hallway. He had planned the children's activities in fifteen-minute blocks<sup>1</sup>. It was a work of art with the intricacy of a shuttle launch. If that isn't amazing enough, they did it. They stayed on schedule including meeting me at the airport with a bouquet of roses. I laugh now because he never did that again. He learned his lesson and decided it wasn't worth it. He now just makes rough schedules with alternatives figured in, or we travel together as a family.

But for me, planning is work. I've had to force myself to become somewhat organized. If I didn't, I would have to call the dentist's office and say something like, "Oh, yes, this is Mrs. Bond, Stuart's mother. I was just calling to reconfirm his next appointment. Would you mind verifying the date and time for me?" That's how we word it when we've lost that little business card they gave us six months ago . . .

If Alan was at one end of the Likert organizational scale, I was at the other. Now, I've learned to inch more toward the middle.

And you'll also need to get a little bit organized to mega-cook as well. Not too much, but just enough. If you're inclined toward that scientist approach to life, then you will love mega-cooking™ because you can organize and plan and make Gantt charts to your heart's content.

In other words, the meals don't just jump out of your freezer — no matter how much you want them to. You have to sow some before you can reap.

*Sidenote*

1. Now, I do plan Trent's therapies in 15-minute blocks, but Alan had planned days in advance when he was going to bathe the children and change their diapers (two in diapers at the time). I don't think he understood that at that stage of our lives, I didn't plan baths they just happened. Such as when they went swimming in a grape jelly jar or washed the dog with toothpaste, or ate dirt, or . . . I bathed them when they needed it, and even when they didn't (or so they thought). I'm not against planning, I have learned that some aspects of life just happen and no amount of scheduling can predict when it's time to change a diaper.

### Menu List

My first step is developing my menus (a list of the recipes I'll use). For me it is a rough draft. I've never stuck with one completely, but it's a start. I fantasize about what I'd like my family to eat (all things being equal) — and then I face reality and consider what they like, what I'll accept, what's available, and what the checkbook will bear. I'll search through my recipe books<sup>2</sup>, I'll go through my recipe cards, I'll read the back of boxes, and I'll sift through my stacks of magazines (filled with recipes I'll cut out some day and organize). You have your own style and preferences. This is when you take control of what **you** eat.

There are some recipes that we cook every time we have a Mega-Weekend. My children love them and they fit well into our “menu matrix.” Those are spaghetti sauce (I'll then use it for many recipes), chili, meatloaf, and hamburger patties. About everything else is up for grabs.

### Things you need to consider:

- How large of a mega-cook do you want to tackle?
- Do you want all your meals to come from the plan?
- Do you want to still cook some meals from scratch during that time frame?
- How often will you be eating meals away from home?
- How many meals do you want available for hospitality (ones to take to sick friends or to use for hosting others in your home)?
- How much storage space do you have (freezer size)?

### Recipe Selection

Choose your recipes carefully. I've learned from years of experience what combinations will freeze well and what won't.

- Fat doesn't freeze well.
- Butter works much better than margarine in freezing.
- Porous foods will absorb the flavors of the other ingredients. (That's why spaghetti and noodles are better the second time around). Sometimes this is great and gives you a good blend, but sometimes it makes everything taste the same.

- The more moist a recipe (in contrast to dry) the better it freezes.
- Mishandling of high water-content ingredients will change textures. (More about proper handling throughout the book.)
- Always consider your family's preferences. Freezing doesn't make something better they don't like.
- Always use the freshest, highest quality ingredients available.
- Never scrimp on safety and food hygiene.

### Testing

Jill's First Law of Mega-Cooking™: ALWAYS TEST A RECIPE FIRST BEFORE YOU MAKE MEGA-BATCHES.

If you read a recipe and think your family might like it, then cook it. Before you serve it, save one portion and freeze it. If your family likes the recipe cooked and served the same day — good. After a few weeks, thaw the frozen portion and warm it up. Have a taste test. If it works, then add it to your menu list.

Believe me you don't want to make twelve meals worth of a recipe to find out your family doesn't like it. It is well worth the time to test recipes. Sometimes it is just a matter of adapting the ingredients a little or changing processing steps slightly. We've found that families have various levels of tolerance to sweets. One family will say a recipe is too sweet, while another wants more honey in it. I've varied recipes just a little (less garlic, more spices, and a different type of cheese) and transformed a “I-love-you-BUT” recipe into a “Mom-let's-come-up-with-a-good-name-for-it-so-we-can-put-in-your-next-book” recipe.

All the recipes in this book have been tested by other families. In some recipes, I've given suggestions for variations of a particular ingredient that won't substantially change the recipe — it will still rise, congeal, or work.) In some recipes, I'll indicate “MOL” which means “more or less” — you can adapt it to your family's tastes.

Sometimes I'll vary the same recipe as we batch cook to give us variety. We'll take the same base recipe and then add additional ingredients as we divide it. An example would be

### Sidenote

3. With three hungry sons, if I don't save some BEFORE it goes to the table, there won't be any left to test freeze afterwards.

### Important!

**Jill's First Law of Mega-Cooking™:** Always test a recipe first before you make mega-batches.

### Please Note

In some recipes, I've given suggestions for variations of a particular ingredient that won't substantially change the recipe — it will still rise, congeal, or work.) In some recipes, I'll indicate “MOL” which means “more or less” — you can adapt it to your family's tastes.

### Sidenote

2. As someone who enjoys cooking and writes cookbooks, I read recipes like most people read novels — for enjoyment. I have a collection of cookbooks from the 30's, 40's, and 50's that I enjoy and get many ideas from. I'm always searching for, and then “improving,” recipes.

meatloaves. I vary the basic recipe to make seven different flavored loaves. Suggestions are listed with the recipes.

### Rewriting Your Favorite Recipes

There are enough recipes in this book to keep your freezer stocked for the biggest of mega-cooks, but I fully expect you to adapt and rewrite your own recipes to fit your tastes.

If you haven't looked at the recipes in this book, please, take time and review a few. You'll notice they aren't written up in a format like other cookbooks. That's because we're mega-cooking™. I rewrite recipes I use into a new format. It makes my life so much easier when it is time to mega-cook. Sometimes, I'll just jot down notes in the margin next to the recipes about multiple amounts and then number and write in additional steps for preparation.

I wrote this cookbook the way I like to cook and to be instructed. I like it when a friend gives me a recipe and writes down that she uses two cartons of sour cream instead of only the one the original recipe called for. I like it when she tells me how she got the recipe or a story about it. I like to be "walked" through a recipe. So, I'm treating you with the same respect and friendship.

Here is an explanation of each of the aspects of the recipes in this book. As you write your own, use any of these features you feel would make your work easier and more enjoyable.

#### Title

I see no point in giving my recipes boring titles. I market my recipes to my family. Who can get excited about "Lima Bean Casserole?" I changed that recipe around and then renamed it *Chuckwagon*.<sup>4</sup> When I serve it, we use bandanas for napkins and do a cowboy theme for dinner. My sons have *third helpings*. Have fun with recipe names. Make it something that the family wants to eat, that sounds delicious, or evokes a memory. We like to name recipes after the person who gave us the recipe, for example *Aunt Kay's Lunch*. One of the all-time favorite name change of a recipe is what I used to call black bean soup-now it's *Feature from the Black Legume*. My children have been asking me to name a recipe "I Don't Know" so that we can have a "Who's on First" type of conversation when they ask what's for dinner. They are your recipes, call them what ever you want.

*Sidenote*

4. *Chuckwagon* and *Feature from the Black Legume* are in *Dinner's in the Freezer!*™

### Coding

This coding is printed for those cooks who do mega-sessions and are coordinating many recipes at one time. There is no need to write a title out each time on ingredient lists. Use either the number code or the three-digit designation to simplify your planning. You'll want to code your recipes. This really isn't making more work for you, it is cutting out duplication of effort.

### Background

This is where I chat with you and give you some history about the recipe, some suggestions for preparation or serving, or some encouragement concerning this recipe. You might want to jot down some notes about how you created a recipe, who gave it to you, when you first served it, or any ideas you have as to how to make it more appealing to your family.

### Ratings

I like to know what I'm getting into before I start a recipe. Here is where you'll want to judge how difficult a recipe is to make, how time consuming, how expensive, etc. For the recipes in this book, these ratings are a result of years of mega-testing and responses from other cooks. Your actual results will vary. Use these figures for comparing recipes with each other.

### Equipment

Here we list any special equipment that we'll need to make this recipe easier to prepare. Of course, we'll need measuring spoons and cups, mixing bowls, etc. (standard kitchen equipment) for every recipe, so I don't waste space mentioning those. I only add equipment that I consider specialized, or something that isn't basic to common recipe preparation. It is only a suggestion of how to make the best use of your time. For those of you who have not started collecting extra kitchen equipment, you can do these recipes by hand and each recipe features alternatives. (See section about equipment)

### Pre-steps

Here I draw attention to those aspects of the recipe that I do ahead of time, do to save money, or incorporate with other recipes.

## Ingredients

This is one aspect that is critical to mega-cooking™: listing ingredients and their amounts in a useable format. (For a detailed explanation about ingredients, see page 60.)

## Steps

In the **Methods** section, I give details about preparing food and developing steps to incorporate with other recipes, thus making the whole process user-friendly. You'll notice most recipes start with common steps that can be completed no matter what your mega-cooking™ style. Then I offer options depending on if you are doing a mega-session, duplicating, or multi-batching.

## Additional Suggestion, Tips, or Comments

Here I cover anything else I think will prove helpful in preparing this recipe. I suggest you make notes on your recipes as to what side dishes you like with this, which option works best for your family, and any particular brand of ingredients, flavor, or variation. I've also included suggestions and comments from the mega-testers.

Don't make extra work for yourself. Only include information you need. If you know you'll always make "x6" a recipe, don't bother to calculate three other multiples. If you'll always prepare it using one particular option, don't write two other methods of preparation. Of course, I give several options because so many different people are reading and using this system. You can write your recipes on index cards, as data-files on your computer, or on plain notepaper using the example in this book.

## Scheduling

People fascinate me and I enjoy them immensely. I appreciate how everyone has their own style and way of doing things. One place you can really notice the different styles of people is at a club swimming pool. There are the bold ones who don't test the water but immediately exit the locker room, climb the tall ladder to the platform diving board, and dive head-first. Then some walk to the steps and carefully dip one toe into the water. They shudder. Think about it. Then they slowly submerge one foot. They work slowly inch by inch until it has taken them an entire hour to get their waist wet. And then there is every variation between. Neither one is right or has mastered the BEST way to get into a pool. It is a matter of preference, and sometimes health reasons.

Likewise, with mega-cooking™. There were some who've opted for the high-diver approach and some who've inched their way in. We received quite a few letters from ladies who, upon reading *Dinner's in the Freezer!*™, bought ingredients for six-months worth of meals, cooked it, and ran with it — they were thrilled. We also have many letters from those who started with one recipe, doubled it and then tripled it, and then added another recipe to their repertoire. The system works for each of them and a hundred variations in between.

Let's look at some of your options. You know what you can handle, your cooking level, your storage space, your schedule, and your budget.

Don't live someone else's life. Live your own. Don't worry or even concern yourself with what your neighbor is doing. I can't imagine anyone calling you to compare if you have as many meals in your freezer as they do — and if you do have a friend like that, pray for her. There are bigger things in life to spend our energy on. Even if you have only one extra meal ready to heat in your freezer, that's one meal you didn't have before and it is progress.

When I started mega-cooking™, I first fixed a huge pot of spaghetti. I was pregnant with my first child and had 24-hour "morning" sickness. So, when I had a "good day" I made up a mega-batch of whatever I was cooking because I didn't know when I'd have another "good day." At that same time, I was pursuing my Master's degree in industrial engineering, majoring in systems management. Our need for decent meals within our budget and the systems design work I was studying blended wonderfully. I thought, why not apply all that expertise producing widgets into producing meals. So, my husband and I began mega-cooking™. The more we mega-cooked™ the more we learned. I made lots of mistakes, but now that we've been at this for more than fifteen years, we have it down to a science.

As you read the **Methods** section, you'll note a variety of ways you can add mega-cooking™ to your meal preparation. Pick and choose as you like. Depending on what is going on in my life, I pick and choose also. For instance, I might double a recipe, serve it with one dish I cooked during a mega-session months ago, duplicate my effort on the bread, and stream-line the preparation of the fresh fruit.

**Duplicating**

You don't have to start by doubling recipes. Begin by duplicating one step. Here are some examples:

**Onions**

Chop two onions tonight. Use one for tonight. Package the other one for use tomorrow night. You'll find that duplicating a step doesn't double your effort. Much of our work is getting ingredients out and washing up the equipment.

**Ground Meat**

As long as you are sautéing a pound of ground meat, you can do a second pound with very little extra effort. Use one pound for tonight. Store the other pound in an airtight bag and have ready for pizza tomorrow night. I try to duplicate steps as much as possible.

**Salad**

Even with a fresh salad, you can tear the lettuce and put half in the salad bowl for tonight, the other half in a plastic bowl, and make two salads for about 25% more effort. It takes about as long to chop two stalks of celery as one. Just chop them side-by-side. Don't add any "wet" ingredients (e.g., tomatoes) to the second salad. Seal the second salad. Then tomorrow, you can make your salad by simply adding some tomatoes.

**Dry Ingredients**

If you're making a recipe for a cake, quick bread, or biscuits, work two bowls, side-by-side, and mix all the dry ingredients for the recipe into each bowl. Finish the recipe in one of the bowls by adding the wet ingredients, mix, and bake. With the other bowl of mixed dry ingredients, bag and label it. You've made your own "cake mix" — all you need to do is add the egg and water, mix, and bake another day when you're pressed for time.

I try to duplicate steps as much as possible. Even when I pull out the entrée from the freezer, I'll duplicate my work with one of the side dishes or the dessert. Remember duplicating doesn't double your work — it maximizes your output.

**Doubling**

One easy method is to start slowly. Choose one day this week when you have some time to fix a nice dinner. When you buy groceries, buy double the amount for that night's menu. When you fix it, cook double the amount. Eat one meal and

freeze the extra. That gives you one meal for another night when your schedule is tight. With this method you're getting twice the result, but for little extra work. You don't have to double an entire dinner, try doubling the entrée or the dessert. Then work your way to an entire meal.

I use a calendar program to estimate blocks of times and schedule each person's activities — when I feel like being that organized. Or, I just "bark" out orders as the steps occur to me. In other words, you might want to plan each phase of a mega-cooking™ — while Mom is cooking hamburger meat, and Dad is peeling onions, Junior should core and slice apples, and Sister should be making meatballs. Or, you might make rough notes, like "First we process the produce, then we cook the meat, then we make sauces, then we assemble recipes." You can schedule actual steps with as much detail you want.

**Ingredient List**

One form I use every time I mega-cook™ is my Ingredients List. This is much more than a shopping list — I use it more when I'm cooking than I did when I was shopping. It helps me not only list what I need to buy and how much, but it serves to keep track of how to use the ingredients.

**Duplicating and Multi-batching Ingredient Lists**

If you are duplicating or multi-batching by making only one mega-recipe per shopping trip, then you could incorporate the ingredients for that recipe onto your regular list, but please continue reading for the other options, because some of the ways we apply and use this list will help you also.

**Mega-sessions (All Sizes)**

No matter if you are planning to do a large or a small mega-session of cooking, you need to plan out the ingredient list. Believe me, it will pay off. First, I'll tell you what we're doing and why, then I'll give you several methods answering how to do it.

**What We Need to Include**

Whichever method you choose, you need to keep a running list of the ingredients, then add the amounts for each recipe SEPARATELY. Once you have the amounts listed, you can total for the shopping list.

**Why We Isolate Amounts**

Normally when people shop, they don't have to coordinate ingredients used in several recipes. They're buying in such

small quantities that mega-shopping isn't an issue. They can make quick substitutes, and when at home, it is relatively easy to know which recipe the stew meat goes in to- the stew.

#### Strategic Cost Reduction Planning

By pooling all the amounts of each ingredient into a master list, I then have a tool to bargain with. I can then mega-shop for the best prices on large amounts. Mega-shopping has so many advantages I've dedicated an entire chapter to the concept. (See page 112.) By preparing a good Ingredients List, you can plan your attack at the market.

#### Adjustments While Shopping

If you have "ground beef — 2 pounds" on your list, you know that meat is for hamburgers for Saturday's lunch. If you don't like the quality or price of the ground beef that week, you can simply change your menu to personal pizza and buy pepperoni instead of ground beef. But when you are planning anywhere from five — fifty different recipes, it would take the mental equivalency of juggling elephants to remember every ingredient in every recipe and the amount. If I can't find good (quality and price) acorn squash for the *Harvest Chicken* recipe, I can review my Ingredients List and make an intelligent choice:

- a. Scrub the recipe entirely — reduce the amount of chicken quarters by 20 pounds and scratch one of the #10 can of peaches and . . .
- b. Invent a new recipe — acorn squash doesn't look good, but since I need them for *Harvest Chicken*, I could try butternut squash instead.
- c. Reschedule that recipe — if the prices for the non-perishable ingredients are great or I'm bulk purchasing any of the ingredients to qualify for special discounts, I can go ahead and buy the other ingredients, process them to some extent and wait until acorn squashes are reasonable (in a few weeks or so). Note that this works when there will only be a short delay until the needed ingredient will be available or in season. For example, I just freeze the extra chicken, store the can of peaches, and either freeze or store the other ingredients until my supplier can get the squash — then I'll simply multi-batch that one recipe.

If I had just printed totals for all the ingredients I wanted to buy, I could not have made an informed decision if there was a change of availability. Here's another example: All Susie writes on a shopping list is ten cans of tomato sauce (she had calculated the figure "remembering" the sauce came in 12-ounce cans), but at the store she finds the cans are 16-ounces. If Susie had made a thorough Ingredients List, she could quickly make the adjustment, she might find out that she can go ahead and get two #10 cans for less money and then supplement with a few of the small cans. (If Susie knows the recipes, she'll know that most of the tomato sauce would be used during the mega-session. She really only needs a few small cans for use on some SAR [some assembly required] recipes.)

#### Use of Ingredients

The benefits of the Ingredients List extend beyond planning and shopping to cooking. Normally, it is very easy to know how to use the food you've purchased. The roast is for the roast dinner on Thursday. The head of lettuce is for Taco Night on Tuesday.

But when you are mega-shopping and processing large amounts of food and those same ingredients are going in half-a-dozen different recipes, you need a plan. Though we cover this in detail in the **Methods** chapter (page \_\_\_\_), let me give you three examples:

- We cook all the ground meat for the appropriate recipes ahead of time and store it in one large container in the refrigerator. When I start assembling recipes, I look on my Ingredients List to refresh my memory about all the recipes that call for cooked, crumbled ground meat. I then "pace" my use of that meat. If I'm not careful, I'll be over generous on the first few recipes I assemble. It looks like so much meat, after all. But then when I prepare the last recipes, I won't have the meat I need — either I have to be sparse with the meat, or go buy and cook more. But if I consider all the recipes I've planned for that meat, the balance comes out right.
- Or I won't forget that half of the mushrooms need to go into the Count Stroganov Beef and not accidentally put them all into the spaghetti sauce.
- By looking at the row on the list for lemons, I won't mistakenly juice them all, forgetting that I need the zest from a dozen before I squeeze them. I can quickly see on

my Ingredients List just how I should process my produce. I'll know that half my apples need to be peeled and sliced, and half should be sliced only.

- I use the Ingredients List to manage how I actually process and use the ingredients.

### How to Make a Useful Ingredients List

Now that you know the Ingredients List is important and have a rough idea of how we use it, let's look at options for producing one that works for you. There are several methods. Choose a method that makes the most sense to you, and is cost and time-effective. Don't make extra work for yourself.

#### Paper and Pencil Version

In the **Form** section, there is a sample that you can use, or you can apply the design on plain paper if that is easier. I suggest you use pencil, so you can make changes easily.

1. Top each recipe column with a heading indicating what recipe that column's ingredients are for. You might want to use either the 3-digit or 3-letter coding provided in this book. Or use your own designation so that you can identify what belongs to what.
2. Review your first recipe (recipe column 1).
3. Start with the first ingredient. Write it down as the ingredient 1, then go to recipe column 1 and write in the amount. (Note: You might want to make two amount columns, one for shopping amount and one for assembling amount (see page \_\_\_\_).)
4. On the second line for ingredients, write down the second ingredient of your first recipe. Write the amount needed for recipe one on the second row in recipe column one.
5. Proceed with step 4 for each of the ingredients on the first recipe.
6. Review your second recipe (recipe column 2); start with its first ingredient.
  - a. If it is an ingredient already on the list, then just trace across that row and write the amount in column 2.

- b. If it is a new ingredient (not already on the list), add it in the next available row and the amount needed in column 2.

7. Proceed through all the ingredients for recipe 2, repeating step 6 as often as needed.
8. Continue working through each new recipe, adding a row for each new ingredient or using the row for any previously listed ingredient.
9. Once you have all the ingredients logged, add the rows and print your totals in the last column.

#### Concerns and Additional Ideas

What if you are using more recipes than you can make columns across the paper?

1. Use the paper sideways (landscape instead of portrait)  
OR
2. Tape additional sheets side-by-side for the width you need OR
3. Double or Triple use each recipe column. For example:
  - a. make recipe column 1 for 3 recipes: #1 write in blue, #2 write in green, #3 write in red
  - b. Use slash marks to separate the different amounts
  - c. Use highlighter pens to distinguish the amounts for the two or three different recipes.
4. Or use one of the next three methods.

What can you do to make the ingredients easier to find on the list?

1. Plan on using several sheets of paper and head the sheets with:
  - a. an alphabetical system (page 1 would be for ingredients that start with the letters A-D; page 2 for those E-H, etc. OR

- b. a type group system (page 1 would be for meats, page 2 for produce, page 3 for condiments, etc.) OR
  - c. a supplier grouping system (page 1 for ingredients you'll buy directly from the farmer, page 2 for those you'll buy from the grocery wholesaler, etc.) OR
  - d. any other grouping system that makes sense to you.
2. Use highlighter pens or colored pens to distinguish between ingredients either by type, or supplier, or any grouping you choose.
  3. Plan on the first time through as your "rough draft." Then re-do the form, using whatever grouping system works best for you. Some might want to organize it according to the layout of their favorite store, by food type, by supplier, or by alphabetical order. The column "group" is for you to use to designate any type of grouping.

Figure 1. Sample Ingredients List

Done	Supplier	Ingredient	Group	#1 AKL	#2 CDM	#3 SPS
		Meat, ground	Meat	8 lbs	15 lbs	20 lbs
		Corn, kernels	Can	1-#10		
		Taco seasoning	Con	1 cup		
		Tortilla chips	Dry	1-large		
		Sausage, ground	Meat		3 lbs	
		Onion, chopped	Pro		1 cup	5 cups
		Garlic	Pro		5 cloves	20 cloves

Legend					
Meat	— any meat products	Dry	— any dry goods	Con	— any condiment, spice, or other extra items
Can	— any canned goods	Pro	— any produce		

You can use any system that makes sense to you. This matrix will serve you well as you plan, shop, and cook.

**Index Cards**

You will basically be doing similar steps as with the paper and pencil method, but you'll be using a separate index card for each ingredient. Here's how you would use this system.

1. Purchase a stack of index cards. You may want to buy divider cards and a box, but that is optional. (You can color-code<sup>5</sup> this system if you want to.)
2. Review your first recipe.
3. Start with the first ingredient. Write it down on the first index card. On the first line of the card, write in the name or code of your first recipe. Then start a column for the amount. Write down the amount of that ingredient for that recipe. (Note: You might want to make two amount columns, one for shopping amount and one for assembling amount. (See page ..))
4. On the second card, write down the second ingredient of your first recipe. On the first line of the card, write in the name or code of your first recipe. Then start a column for the amount. Write down the amount of that ingredient for that recipe.
5. Proceed with step 4 for each of the ingredients on the first recipe. At this point you might want to alphabetize them so you can find them quickly.
6. Review your second recipe (recipe column 2); start with its first ingredient.
  - a. If it is an ingredient already on the list, then below the listing for the previous recipe, write the name or coding of the second recipe and the amount.
  - b. If it is a new ingredient (not already on the list), start a new card and follow the same procedure.
7. Proceed through all the ingredients for recipe 2, repeating step 6 as often as needed.

*Sidenote*

5. For those of you who really want to be mega-organized, you can color-code the cards for quick reference. Here's a suggestion: red cards for all meat products, green cards for all produce, tan cards for all staples, pink cards for all condiments, etc. Then you can quickly work through them as you call for best prices and shop the store.

8. Continue working through each new recipe, adding a new card for each new ingredient or using the card already made for any previously listed ingredient.
9. Once you have all the ingredients logged, you can add the amount columns and write in your totals.

Figure 2.

Sample Index Card

Bell Peppers		Shop	Assemble	Current Session
Recipe				
CLS	chopped	5	5 cups	5
GRM	chopped	4	4 cups	0
HON	strips or rings	20	20 cups	20
SPS	chopped	5	5 cups	5
Current total for this session:		30		30

### Concerns and Additional Ideas

*How can you use these cards differently than a list?*

1. **BIDWORK:** You can use the space on the back of the card to write notes when you call for bids on certain ingredients.
2. **SHUFFLING THE CARDS:** You can sort the cards one way when you call for bids (all meat recipes together), organize them later by supplier (all Farmer's Market cards together), and then reorganize the cards in order according to each store's layout — or just keep them in alphabetical order. You also can move the cards to a pocket or container as you buy the ingredients (where as with a shopping list you'd check off the ingredients as you buy them). You also can make any notations on that ingredient's card as you shop (e.g., substituting yogurt for mayonnaise in recipe "X").

*Can you use these cards again, or do you have start with blank cards each mega-session?*

You can use these same ingredient cards over and over again.

1. Give them a permanent storage case once the mega-session is over. File them in alphabetical order for quick retrieval next time.
2. Then you can write in the amounts for the recipes that you'll be repeating and add the new recipes. Total the amounts for the current session. (See Figure 2., "Sample Index Card") You'll have to make new cards for the new ingredients that you haven't used before.
3. Use the cards to keep a personal "history" of that ingredient. Write on the back of the card the date you purchased the ingredient, the price you paid for a specified amount, the supplier, and any comments about the quality. You can notice seasonal pricing, inflation, or suppliers' pricing. This will help when you shop next time. You also might want to note any safety precautions or how to select the best quality.
4. You also can keep track of that ingredient as "inventory." If you had extra bell peppers, you might want to note on the card "froze 16 cups — stored on 3rd shelf" or "dehydrated 10 peppers — jars on left side of pantry 4th shelf."

*Are there any other ideas that can make your work easier?*

1. **Note about processing:** You might want to note how you process the ingredient. (Of course this is only applicable to certain ingredients like produce.) But this will help as you make choices about quality and selection when you are shopping and processing the ingredients. On the sample card, I wrote in "chopped" or "slices." (If I was going to use them for a stuffed pepper recipe, I would select top quality, well-shaped peppers, but if they are going to be chopped, I can save money by purchasing a lower grade.)
2. **Note about assembly:** Some ingredients are shape-shifters. You buy them in one form of measurement, but in cooking, you use another form of measurement. For example, you buy ground beef in pounds, but