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WHO

Money Savers: Taste Test

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Some items at the grocery store taste the same, they just look different because of the packaging. On average, thrifty shoppers can save 10% to 30% on groceries by buying generic labels instead of name brands. But how will they hold up in a side by side taste?

"The store brands have been used a lot more lately because they're obviously cheaper, but they do compare as far as quality and taste," says Hy-Vee Dietitian Heather Illg. She says while kids only care about taste, parents are more concerned about cost and convenience.

We filled our cart with two of everything on our kid-friendly meal- one store brand and one name brand item. Buying generic string cheese, crackers, pizza and cookies saved us \$4. We served ten hungry kids at the First Christian Boys and Girls Club in Des Moines to see if the store brands tasted as good as the name brands. Our taste testers liked the Hy-Vee string cheese over Sargento's while Triscuits came out on top of the store's wheat cracker. The kids picked the more expensive Jack's pizza and for dessert, the generic chocolate chip cookie scored higher than Nabisco's Chips Ahoy.

Illg says taste and price aren't the only factors to consider. The money you save could end up costing your family nutritional value. Some of the store brands on our menu were higher in saturated fat and sodium. "Taste really rules. People want to eat healthy, but if it doesn't taste good they're not going to," says Illg.

The easiest way to compare name brand and store brand for nutritional value is to use NuVal. It is a nutritional scoring system. Unlike cost, the higher the NuVal number, the better. Shoppers will find the score on many foods in the grocery store right next to the price on the shelf.

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