



# NEWS RELEASE

## Defense Commissary Agency

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## Labor Day is good time to value labor spent in kitchen

*By Kay Blakley,  
DeCA home economist*

**FORT LEE, Va.** – Some of us consider time in the kitchen a labor of love; others see it as a necessary chore. Either way, you might be interested in knowing how the cost of convenience foods affect the bottom line, in time spent and money spent.

Consumer surveys indicate that quick and easy dishes, based on pre-cut, pre-cooked or pre-mixed ingredients are rated highly desirable by more than one-fourth of today's grocery shoppers. The major disadvantage is that many commercially packaged "convenience" foods are often higher in calories, fat, sugar and sodium and are almost always more expensive than the same dish made from scratch.

There are two major exceptions for commissary shoppers, though. Because commissaries sell products at cost, you don't pay for the labor that goes into making a fruit or vegetable tray or package of stir-fry vegetables made in your store's produce department. The same goes for a fully cooked, ready-to-serve rotisserie chicken prepared in your store's deli department. These are labor- and cost-saving examples of the best kind. Take advantage of them as often as you can.

However, beware of pre-cut fresh produce items prepared by manufacturers – buying fresh broccoli florets instead of a whole stalk of broccoli, sliced apples instead of whole apples, even baby carrots instead of whole full-size carrots can increase the price by 60 percent or more. Is saving five minutes of kitchen preparation worth that amount of money to you? Consider the fact that 1 pound of potatoes will make about three servings mashed. Divide the cost per pound by

three to arrive at the cost per serving, then compare to the cost of using instant potatoes. Is the money spent worth the effort saved? Maybe so, if you hate the thought of peeling potatoes.

Here's an easier one for you. Did you know you can prepare regular oatmeal in the microwave oven? Preparation steps for both instant and regular oatmeal are nearly identical, but the cost of instant is often more than double the cost of regular on a per-serving basis. Are you willing to pay double just for the joy of hearing the rip of the instant package being opened? Pretty silly question, right? But, you get the point, don't you?

Instead of automatically reaching for the convenience version of a product, make an informed decision by comparing the difference both in price and in labor required. And, always shop smart by shopping the commissary first – that way, even if convenience is what you want most, you'll at least save 30 percent or more compared to a retail grocery store.

Now, come to Kay's Kitchen at <http://www.commissaries.com> and take your pick of this week's collection of quick and easy recipes to make your Labor Day celebration decidedly delicious.

**-DeCA-**

**About DeCA:** *The Defense Commissary Agency operates a worldwide chain of commissaries providing groceries to military personnel, retirees and their families in a safe and secure shopping environment. Authorized patrons purchase items at cost plus a 5-percent surcharge, which covers the costs of building new commissaries and modernizing existing ones. Shoppers save an average of more than 30 percent on their purchases compared to commercial prices – savings worth more than \$4,400 annually for a family of four. A core military family support element, and a valued part of military pay and benefits, commissaries contribute to family readiness, enhance the quality of life for America's military and their families, and help recruit and retain the best and brightest men and women to serve their country.*