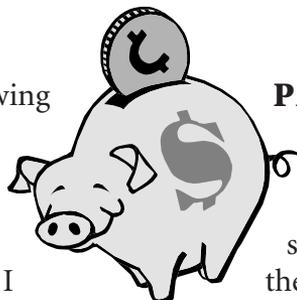


# Introduction

**W**hen I was just a lad growing up with my Grandma Putt, we didn't have much money, but we sure had fun! Grandma never made a big fuss about "frugality." (In fact, I don't recall her ever mentioning the word!) She just went about life in her good old commonsense way—and enjoyed every single minute of it. In fact, I'd say she was a world champ at what folks today would call "livin' the good life on the cheap!"

It'll come as no surprise that this book is chock full of tips, tricks, tonics, and just plain good ideas that Grandma Putt passed on to me over the years. There's plenty more than that, though—after all, a lot of the things that put big holes in our bank accounts didn't even *exist* in Grandma's day! That's why, in these pages, I've taken her solid, down-home wisdom, and added some new-fangled angles of my own. Then, for good measure, I've tossed in a lot of money-saving brainstormstms that folks have shared with me as I've traveled this great land of ours.



**PART I** of this book is all about spending money wisely—whether you're shopping for the basic necessities of life or heading off on the vacation of your dreams.

In Part II, we'll talk about saving money. How? By taking good care of all that great gear you've just bought! Besides time-tested techniques, you'll find formulas for cleaning, polishing, and keepin' up your whole house, and everything in it. Plus, I'll tell you how to cut the high cost of personal care for the entire family, including your four-footed pals. Take a look at the next page for one example of my Fantastic Formulas—they're guaranteed to save you money over store-bought solutions!

We'll start Chapter 1 in a place where most of us drop big bucks every week: the grocery store. (Even I can't grow everything I eat!) I'll clue you in on a whole slew of cost-cutting tactics that the corporate bean counters would rather you didn't know about, including how to make store geography work in your favor, not theirs, and how to read

between the lines in ads and posters. I'll even tell you what you should never buy in a supermarket—not, that is, if you're looking for a bargain.

Movin' right along to Chapter 2, I'll give you my best advice on dressing like a king (or queen) on a pauper's income. Then, in Chapter 3, we'll enter that uncharted territory which strikes financial fear in lots of folks' hearts: appliances and electronics. I'll arm you with a bevy of facts and strategies that'll save you hundreds of dollars (or more) on stoves, refrigerators, and washing machines, as well as computers, VCRs, and other gadgets.

Chapters 4 and 5 really hit home—your home, that is. There, you'll find a

passel of ideas and strategies for saving money on decks, patios, and other building projects, whether you do the work yourself, have your neighbors lend a hand, or call in a pro. I'll also let you in on some inside secrets for landing the best deals on furniture, tools, and building supplies—including why you'll almost never find a real bargain at one of the big-box megastores!



Part I ends with luxury travel on a shoestring budget. That's where you'll discover my tried-and-true techniques for finding the best bargains in air fares, rental cars, and hotel rooms. Plus, I'll give you the inside scoop on havin' more fun for less money, no matter where you're headed.

**PART II** is all about hangin' on to your investments, large and small. We'll start in the kitchen. After all, it's great to get a steal of a deal on 10 pounds of potatoes. But if they go bad before you've eaten 'em all, you've thrown your hard-earned bucks right out the window! In Chapter 7, I'll share more moneysaving tactics than you can shake a grocery bag at—including how to store your food so it stays fresher, longer, and how to turn tired leftovers into

FANTASTIC FORMULA	
	<b>One-Shot Cleaner</b>
Here's an excellent all-purpose cleaner:	
2 quarts of water	
2 cups of rubbing alcohol	
1 tablespoon of ammonia	
1 tablespoon of dishwashing liquid	
Combine all ingredients in a spray bottle, then go to town. (Incidentally, this super-duper concoction will beat commercial, streakless glass-cleaning products hands down!)	

## SUGAR, SUGAR

\* \* \* \* \*

Ah, the dreaded hard-as-a-rock brown sugar. Your brown sugar starts out just fine, but once you open up that box or bag, the contents turn to stone about as quickly as it takes liquid cement to harden. What to do? Here are a couple of options:

- ◆ Keep the box in the fridge. Believe it or not, it keeps the contents from hardening.
- ◆ Buy brown sugar only in plastic bags. Once you open the bag, fold down the top really tight and clip it shut (I use a large paper clip), then put it into another plastic bag with a zipper closure. Now it'll keep in the pantry for months without hardening.
- ◆ If it's too late and you're stuck with a brown sugar fossil, put it in a glass bowl, sprinkle a few drops of water over it, and put it in the microwave for 10 to 15 seconds. It should soften right up.
- ◆ Emergency Plan B: Put rock-solid brown sugar in a tightly covered container with a slice of white bread, and put it in the microwave for 30 seconds. Your sugar'll be as soft as the day you bought it (and you can feed that piece of bread to the birds).

meals you'd be proud to serve to Julia Child herself. For a taste of what you'll find, take a peek at "Sugar, Sugar," at left, for ways to "revive" rock-hard brown sugar.

Of course, spoiled food isn't the only culprit in *The Case of the Run-away Dollars*. Clothes, appliances, furniture, even decks and patios can go belly-up before their time. They won't, though, if you heed the helpful hints in Chapters 8 through 11. There, you'll find time-tested tips for keepin' everything inside and outside your house lookin' and workin' its best. What's more, I'll arm you with a slew of fantastic formulas that beat commercial cleaning products hands down, and at a fraction of the cost.

But wait—we're not through yet! To keep you lookin' and workin' *your* best, you need a little TLC, too, and so do your four-footed pals. In Chapters 12 and 14, you'll not only find some great health and fitness tips for you and your pets, but also some fantastic formulas for everything from mouthwash and hair conditioner to dog food and flea repellent.

Whew! As you can see, we've got a lot of ground to cover. So what are we waiting for? Let's get this show on the road!

