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## Tips, Tricks, Time and Money Savers

During the first two years of the pandemic, many shelves in the grocery stores were barren. Most people couldn't understand what was happening. I tried to explain the process many times over. To me, it was easy to understand the problem of these shortages.

The first year of the pandemic, when everything shut down, was the big tell. Factories closed. Workers sent home. Then, when things opened up again, the workforce was decimated. Those factories could not find people to work at the wages they previously paid.

Warehouses were emptied of their stock. No one replenished that stock because they could not find workers to produce the products. Today, there are still gaps on the store shelves. Locally, businesses are begging for people to return to work, or they are trying to find new workers to hire and train. People want a living wage.

When wages rise, prices escalate at exorbitant rates. If you want to stretch your money so your household budget breathes a sigh of relief, take a step back and pay attention to what you do daily, and what you waste.

My goal is to not contribute to the landfill—I recycle like no one's business. I use what I purchase to the nth degree. For example, one of my favorite freezer storage bags is the pint size. That product disappeared from shelves in stores. I found them online and ordered six boxes—just to make sure I had stock.

Those pint freezer bags are perfect for a single chicken breast. A couple of pork chops. Sliced meat loaf. One sliced banana to pop into the freezer for a smoothie. The options are limitless. But what do you do with all those bags when they are emptied? Simple. You wash them inside and out and reuse them.

*What a hassle, you say?* Not really. Here's the trick I recommend.

Buy ahead of time:

- A dishwashing scrubby—you know, one of those sponge thingies that has sponge on one side and a scrubby surface on the other side, or 100% scrubby
- Long wooden skewers or spoons

Here's the process:

Thoroughly rinse the bag with warm (not hot) water.

Squirt a couple of drops of dishwashing liquid soap into the water and use the scrubby to clean the bag.

NOTE: Do not forget to scrub the zipper sealer. The meat or whatever you placed in the bag most likely slid across that zipper sealer.

Rinse the bag thoroughly.

Take a heavy glass or jar and add some skewers, pointed side down, or long wooden spoons. You can also use tall decanters.

Slide the clean bag over two skewers or spoons, spaced far apart to open the bags wide.

Allow to drip-dry.

Store the clean bags to reuse again and again.

May the landfill starve!