

## Having your cake—and eating it for half the price

Book Review: *The Smart Mom's Guide to Staying Home: 65 Simple Ways to Thrive, Not Deprive, on One Income*, by Chrstine K. Walker, Trafford Publishing, \$15.95

There are lots of books and magazines that will tell you how to cut back on all those things you don't really need so you can live a simpler, less expensive life. This is the first one I've found that says it's OK to still want a designer outfit, a good cup of coffee and a nice haircut and then tells you how to do it without breaking the bank.

Christine Walker, a Winnetka resident, spent more than 10 years working in politics and business-to-business marketing before she married and became a full-time mom to her two boys. After four years of learning to live on less, but not live without, she's written a book offering the rest of us the benefit of her experience.

Certainly some of her tips are standard fare—pay your bills on time to avoid those late fees (tip No. 47), shop resale stores for nearly new designer duds (35) and don't go to the grocery store when you're hungry (6).

Others are far more creative. One I like is to look for ways to barter what you need (46). A photographer friend of mine took that approach to get her son a week at the pricey summer camp he coveted. In exchange for a free week there, she stayed an extra day when she dropped him off and shot several rolls of film that were used to create a new camp marketing brochure.

But what I like most about Walker's book is that she doesn't believe in going without. Rather, she preaches having what you want, but finding a way to get it cheaper. Hoping to try the new high-end restaurant in town? Find out whether there is an early bird special (21). Ask if the place offers a deal on Monday nights (19). And drink the water for free rather than paying for sodas (29).

And, once you're there, ask which entrée offers the biggest serving. Order it, and ask the waiter to wrap half for take-home before the dish ever comes to your table. Voila—you get a meal, aren't tempted to overeat and have tomorrow's lunch (28).

This readable, 89-page gem is a quick, inspiring read. It could be better edited, but her points come across regardless.

If you're looking for a way to save a buck here and there—whether as a way to quit your job and live on hubby's salary or simply to give a little boost to the family budget—there's certain to be something in here that will help.

**Cindy Richards**