

EDITOR'S CHOICE BOOK REVIEW

By Carol Hardin

CHEAPER, BETTER, FASTER

By Mary Hunt - Available through Amazon

The author said she didn't actually set out to be a tip aficionado but it began with her publishing her Debt-Proof Living newsletter (formerly Cheapskate Monthly) and invited readers to share their best money- and time-saving tips. She said they arrive printed on napkins, on snippets torn from newspapers, phone, fax and email messages or buried in the middle of long letters. There were so many!! So, she published her first book, Tiptionary, in 1997, which was a big hit. Since 1997, the world has changed A LOT! She worked with Revell Books to get out this new edition -- Cheaper, Better, Faster.

She is funny with her stories about how some tips were received. I like the one she tells about the woman who was so excited that she no longer needed to scrub the toilet on Saturday as her husband had started dumping his denture-soaking liquid into the commode every morning. (p.63)

She said the criteria for whether a tip made it into this collection were fairly simple: "If it didn't insult my intelligence, included a reasonable expectation that it saved time or money and prompted a response close to "WOW! What a great idea!" --- it was in!" So, she said, "I won't be telling you how to floss your teeth as we're smart and we already know how to do that, but floss a turkey (page 125) or floss that winter coat (page 69), you'll be glad you knew that!

She says she doesn't use every tip in this book, certainly not on a regular basis, because some of them don't apply to her life but someone has tested them and likes them. She says, "Think of Cheaper, Better, Faster as a grand smorgasbord loaded with every kind of delicacy you can possibly imagine—even some things you can't. As you pass by, look at everything, consider most things, and fill your plate with what suits your taste. The best thing about this book is, like a good smorgasbord, you can come back over and over and over."

The first section is on automobiles. Amid a plethora of good-sounding tips, I found this one: Cleaning windshield wiper blades: Before you toss the wiper blades, clean the rubber part with rubbing alcohol. You may be pleasantly surprised that they are not worn out—just gunked up. This is just one tiny part of this long chapter full of good ideas!

Chapter 2 is on cleaning. The very first tip: Use green plants for air fresheners: Houseplants help filter the air of indoor pollutants such as formaldehyde and benzene. The best of these air cleaners are spider plants, philodendron and aloe vera (which you can use for burns and other problems). She says one plant for about every 100 square feet can remove up to 87 percent of toxic organic pollutants PLUS they produce oxygen!! Another quick one: To remove lime deposits from faucets, cover with vinegar-soaked paper towels for about an hour before cleaning. Re-do if heavy. One more, pour salt on oven spills while too hot to clean which will make easier to clean and prevent the spill from smoking or flaring up.

The third chapter is on clothing and accessories and addresses consignment stores and how to successfully use them, both as a buyer and as a seller. Did you know you can freeze sturdy plastic bags full of water in your boots to stretch them? Shoes too. Never leave clothes to be dry cleaned in a hot car; stains can bake in. Learn how to teach your child to tell left from right shoes and other tips for teaching kids. Odors and repairs are covered as well.

Chapter 4 is on food and cooking and tells you how to make baby food and how to store it. Also, put a just baked cake on a wet towel. It will cool faster and come out of pan easily. How to "make" butter, buy

meat, keep celery crisp (stand in jar of cold saltwater and refrigerate), how to do all kinds of coffee and all kinds of pasta. This chapter will save you tons of time and money!

Gifts are addressed in the fifth section. Many, many suggestions for great gifts, including IOU gifts and great wrapping ideas. The book would be worth the price (very reasonable) for just this section or for any one of the other sections!

Everyone needs ideas on health and beauty such as: pull a small balloon over a finger bandage before putting it in water and don't drink sodas with calcium-rich food as the phosphoric acid will block absorption of calcium into bloodstream. Make a cheap and effective heating pad out of a tube sock filled halfway with uncooked white rice and knot the top. Heat in microwave in 30 second increments until you reach a good temp. Rice can burn so watch. Great for cold feet!! So many more great ideas!!

Section 7 is on holidays and special occasions and has ideas for baby showers, birthdays, Christmas (one idea: Have your children sort their toys and give you some to make room for Christmas gifts. Clean up the toys and give them to charities for children who won't have Christmas.), Easter, Halloween, parties, and weddings. So many unique and useful ideas...save money and time too!

Can you imagine how many good tips there are out there on the home? The author gives you tons of them in Chapter 8! Lots of ideas on purchasing and caring for appliances, handling bugs, candles, crafts, decorating, floors, flowers, furniture, fuse boxes, garage sales, heating and cooling, kitchens, moving, safety and much, much more.

Kids and babies have their own chapter in 9. How to clean up after kids and babies and how to entertain them, diaper rash (zinc oxide), zippers and all kinds of tips to make your life—and theirs---better!

Chapter 10 is on laundry and you can learn how to bleach without using chlorine and still have white! How to remove candle wax from a tablecloth, set colors, how to wash delicates, drying, lint, mending, ironing, odors, pillow washing, rugs and stains. You can save a lot of money by not ruining clothes and linens while cleaning them.

The fun stuff! Money and finances cover banking, ATM safety, bill paying, credit cards, coping with customer service, bartering, insurance, investing, record keeping, savings, Social Security and taxes.

You can find ideas for barbecuing, going to the beach, birds, bugs, critters, hoses, gardening, how to take care of your mower, picnics, planting, pool, driveway stains, and more in Section 12 on outdoors and gardening.

Chapter 13 is on pets: Don't feed cats cold canned cat food—let come to room temperature. Learn how to clean and line a cat box and that cardboard French fry containers make good pooper-scoopers and you can keep puppies away from furniture legs, carpet, etc. by mixing ¼ cup oil of cloves, 1 tablespoon paprika and 1 teaspoon black pepper (keep away from kids!) and dab on anything you want to keep puppy away from. Boil orange and lemon peels in water, cool and use for a pet rinse or dip for fleas and to make them smell good or you can spray with mixture of 2 parts water, 1 part vinegar to get fleas too.

Repairs and maintenance are covered in Chapter 14. This is a very inclusive chapter and the tips will save you time, money and frustration. Fix leaks right away as a faucet leaking 60 drops a minute wastes 113 gallons of water a month! I loved this one: When refurbishing a room, write this information and tape it to the back of the switch plate: the brand and color of paint, how much it took to paint the room, how many rolls of wallpaper were required and the circuit breaker number that serves this room.

Can you believe, she covers shopping too?! (Chapter 15) Auctions, bartering, buying in bulk, buying used, coupons, generic or store brands, factory direct—seconds and overruns, grocery shopping (Don't buy on first few days of month as, unfortunately, some stores have been known to raise prices when

government and Social Security checks come out.), major purchases, sales, scanners, and wholesale among others.

And finally, travel and entertainment: Air travel (if your flight is cancelled, rebook on phone to avoid long lines at ticket counter and if you must make connections, try to make for smaller airports to reduce traffic delays), rental cars, car travel, hotels, libraries, movies, outings (If you can't afford expensive tickets to shows and concerts, call and ask if you can attend a rehearsal.), packing, traveling with medications and with pets, and vacations.

This is a very worthwhile book for anyone as so much is covered and covered well in easy to read chapters. I see this as a very marked-up book with lots of markers!