

## Stamped: ANXIOUS

Posted At : May 10, 2012 3:16 PM | Posted By : Food Bank Staff  
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By Margarett Purvis

Seven months ago I returned to the Food Bank ready to put forth my best effort in helping as many New Yorkers connect to the plight of our poorest neighbors. Within the 1st month I met with our director for all things policy related to discuss this Food Stamp Challenge I saw on CNN. We had a robust conversation where she gave me examples of how it could work and the many avenues we could take. As I walked out of her office, I said over my shoulder, "I definitely want us to do that."

So here's my Friday morning confession: **when I said I wanted to do it...I had no idea that she was going to make it a reality six months later and that I would have to figure out how I would eat for One WEEK on \$31!** I remember the day that they raced in my office to say that



Susi and Mario had agreed to lead the campaign. I was just as thrilled as they were. I remember when Mario stood before the crowd at our recent Can Do gala and spoke passionately about why people should join his family in the challenge to relate to almost 50 million Americans and 1.8 million New Yorkers. I've smiled every time a tweeter joins the campaign. I experienced all of that and still 24 hours before the challenge begins.. **I FEEL INCREDIBLY ANXIOUS.**

I'm no different than any other working professional. I love a great coffee and probably lean on it a little more than I should. When I actually get a chance to go out for lunch...I expect it to be pretty yummy. My days are long and I typically have no desire to spend those final hours over a stove. GrubHub.com and peapod.com feel like personal gifts from the universe TO ME. They make this working girl...WORK. So now I stare at 7 days on a food budget that I usually have spent in a single day. The overachiever in me wants to do everything really well. But the negotiator in me immediately started figuring out how/where I could adjust the challenge to fit my lifestyle. Hey, don't judge me. I warned you that this was a confession.

Yesterday morning as I stared in my fridge berating myself for not shopping BEFORE the challenge and still having nothing FOR the challenge, I had a bit of an epiphany. **I think the first lesson for me was to remember that what's causing me anxiety equals RELIEF for people who actually NEED these resources.** Imagine if my anxiety was based in having NO FOOD. I'm blessed that this is not my daily reality so I've decided to be grateful to have the opportunity to highlight the daily struggle of others. This doesn't mean that I won't complain a lil bit on one of these days...it just means that the disposition of my inner foodie has been adjusted.

The Food Stamp Challenge is about people living on the BUDGET and not the actual benefit. My plan is to crack open my handy crock pot and make meals that will stretch. Thankfully the Food Bank has a great team of nutritionists who put together a \$31 grocery list. (That's not cheating because this resource is provided via monthly trainings to our member network and clients in our Harlem site.) While perusing my list, the first thing I noticed was that the array of fruit that I typically eat is MIA. I can get a couple of apples though. Not the kind I like but at least an apple. Also, according to the list I would have to eat ground meat rather than ground turkey...because it's too expensive. So, I decided to go online to find coupons so that I could hopefully trade up. You can follow my journey onTwitter OR you can join me by participating in the



Challenge, sharing your experiences on Facebook and Twitter and CONTACTING YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS to encourage them to PROTECT this most valuable resource in our safety net....FOOD FOR THOSE WHO NEED IT.

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