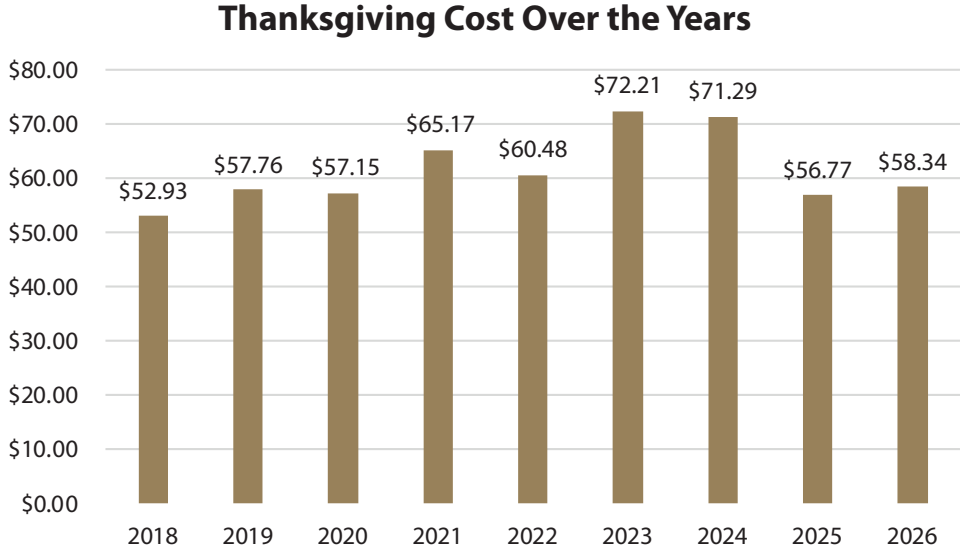
Ag INSIDER
FARM BUREAU ARKANSAS
November 2026

Arkansas Thanksgiving Costs Edge Higher in 2026

Each year, members of the Arkansas Farm Bureau Women's Leadership Committee (Committee) play a key role in helping gather food price data for the American Farm Bureau Federation's (AFBF) Annual Thanksgiving Dinner Survey. The Committee's efforts ensure that Arkansas is well represented in the national snapshot of holiday meal costs, which is one of the longest-running and most recognized surveys tracking the cost of a traditional Thanksgiving dinner in the United States.

Where AFBF looks at the national scale, Arkansas Farm Bureau takes a closer look at what is specifically happening in the state. Arkansas families can expect to pay slightly more this year compared to 2025 when putting Thanksgiving dinner on the table.



Despite a slight uptick this year, the overall cost of a Thanksgiving meal remains significantly lower than the record highs seen during peak inflation years. According to the data the total cost for 2026 is $58.34, which is a modest 2.76% increase from 2025 ($56.77). However, this current price represents a substantial relief for consumers compared to recent history, tracking at 18.17% cheaper than the historic peak in 2023 ($72.21) and 18.17% lower than 2024 ($71.29). This multi-year view shows that while holiday grocery bills are creeping back up, they have successfully stabilized well below the $70+ peaks of the past few seasons.

The survey tracks the average retail cost of popular Thanksgiving meal items, including turkey, ham, potatoes, vegetables, rolls and pie ingredients. Volunteer shoppers from across the state collect prices from grocery stores in their local areas to provide a snapshot of food costs for Arkansas consumers.

The traditional centerpiece of the Thanksgiving meal, the 16-pound young tom turkey, saw a roughly 14% increase in price, rising from $14.10 ($0.88 per pound) in 2025 to $16.14 ($1.01 per pound) in 2026.

While there was a good split between prices changing either positively or negatively some items on the list saw dramatic increases. Sweet potatoes (46% increase in price) and dinner rolls (104% increase in price) were two that stuck out the most.

Sweet potato costs have surged following severe weather events in top-producing regions. North Carolina, which anchors the U.S. supply by producing 60% of all domestic sweet potatoes, saw crop yields drop by 20% to 30% following a multi-year string of severe droughts and major storms. Meanwhile, dinner rolls and baked goods are commanding a premium due to escalating supply chain pressures, increased costs for retail packaging and fuel and higher labor overhead for manufacturers.

On the other hand, some prices have since decreased year over year. A notable price decrease comes from the bone-in ham, down 22% from 2025. This decrease in price comes from around a 1% increase in U.S. pork production coupled with a roughly 1% to 2% increase in dressed weights. This higher supply of heavier animals, combined with softer retail demand, caused live hog prices to drop by 11%. As a result, the wholesale pork carcass cutout value plummeted by roughly 28% down to $70.65 per hundredweight, while the wholesale ham sub-primals used for holiday dinners suffered a steep 15% to 31% seasonal decline, forcing grocery retailers to lower their prices at the meat counter.

Average meal totals varied by location, with prices ranging from $52.44 in Pulaski and Faulkner County in some stores to $72.49 in other Faulkner County stores.

While food prices in Arkansas remain relatively affordable compared to many other states, costs can still vary by

2023 - 2025 Thanksgiving Dinner Survey

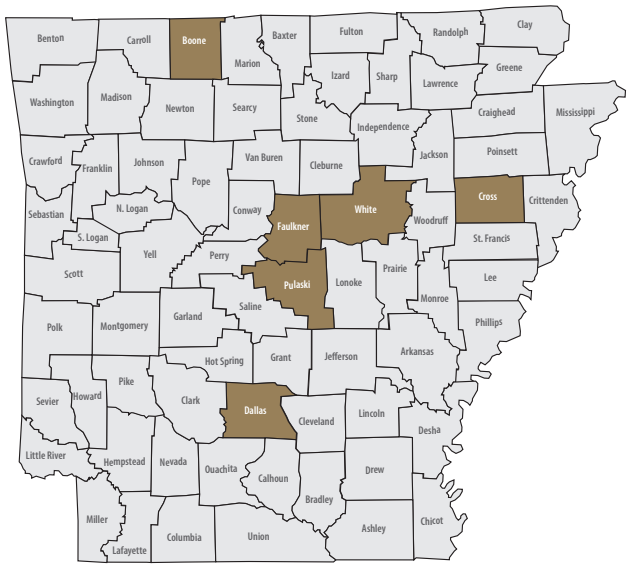
Items & Average Prices

Meal Items	2024	2025	2026	% Change YoY	
16 lb. Young Tom Turkey	$15.13/.94 lb	$14.10/$0.88 lb	$16.14/$1.01 lb	14%	▲
4 lb. Half Bone-in Ham	$21.2/5.30 lb	$14.07/$3.52 lb	$10.93/$2.73 lb	-22%	▼
Sweet Potatoes (3 lb)	$3.03/1.01 lb	$2.40/$0.80 lb	$3.50/$1.17 lb	46%	▲
Russet Potatoes (5 lb bag)	$2.97/.59 lb	$2.47/$0.49 lb	$2.70/$0.54lb	12%	▲
Fresh Cranberries (12 oz pkg)	$1.83	$1.43	$1.28	-10%	▼
Fresh Carrots (1 lb)	$1.04	$1.16	$1.35	16%	▲
Fresh Celery (1 bunch)	$1.05	$1.74	$1.43	-18%	▼
Frozen Green Peas (12 oz pkg)	$1.44	$1.02	$1.24	22%	▲
Frozen Green Beans (12 oz pkg)	$1.77	$1.57	$1.08	-31%	▼
9" Frozen Pie Shells (2 per pkg)	$3.29	$1.94	$1.78	-8%	▼
Cube Stuffing, Herb Seasoning (12 oz pkg)	$3.99	$2.61	$2.88	10%	▲
Dinner Rolls (12 count pkg)	$4.20	$1.68	$3.43	104%	▲
Pumpkin Pie Mix (30 oz can)	$4.20	$3.98	$4.03	1%	▲
Whole Milk (1 gallon)	$4.23	$3.64	$3.70	2%	▲
Whipping Cream (½ pint carton)	$1.92	$2.96	$2.80	-5%	▼

Total Average Cost

2025	2026	% Change YoY
$56.77 ($5.68 Per Person)	$58.34 ($5.83 Per Person)	3%

Counties Surveyed



region and retailer. Shoppers are encouraged to watch for weekly promotions and in-store specials to help stretch their Thanksgiving budgets even further.

The survey was conducted using statewide averages from members of the Arkansas Farm Bureau Women's Leadership Committee, who surveyed food prices at grocery stores and supermarkets across the state. Participants reported the "best in-store price" for 15 items, taking advantage of advertised specials while excluding discount coupons and purchase requirements. While not a scientific study, the survey aims to provide a snapshot of actual prices across Arkansas, with data collected from Nov. 1–5.

Counties Surveyed

Pulaski	$52.44
Faulkner	$52.44
Boone	$53.30
White	$54.46
Cross	$53.88
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Dallas	$70.80
Faulkner	$72.49
Faulkner	$60.90



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