

Thanksgiving Dinner in Arkansas: An Economist's Perspective

With Thanksgiving right around the corner, people will be hitting the grocery stores soon to prepare for holiday meals. Over the last couple of years we have experienced price increases for certain items, such as turkey and eggs. In the past 12 months, inflation has been seen in almost every sector of our economy and price increases at the grocery store have been felt by all Arkansans. Due to discounts and promotional sales running in supermarkets across the state, Arkansans may see some relief at check-out this year compared to the past. In this edition of the *Ag Insider*, we examine the results of this year's Arkansas Farm Bureau Thanksgiving Feast Survey.

The survey was developed in partnership with the ArFB Women's Leadership Committee, results were developed with price gathering in seven Arkansas counties. Based on survey data, the average cost of Thanksgiving dinner decreased this year over last year, but that comes with a caveat; you must be a savvy shopper. Prices and data collected by our shopper partners resulted in an estimated cost of \$64.40 for a family of 10 or \$6.44 a person, down 77 cents from last year's average of \$65.17.

The average price per-pound for turkey this year is \$1.32, a five cent decrease from 2021. However, this price is based on discounts and promotions, which can be found throughout the state. Those promotions skew the data a bit, helping to bring down the average price. Without the promotional price reductions, turkey prices would ring in at roughly \$1.57, or 20 cents higher than 2021. At that price point, turkey prices alone increased the meal expense by 6% to \$68.43.

Several outbreaks of avian influenza (AI) has impacted poultry production across 43 states, resulting in a premium on turkeys in some stores. AI has affected approximately 48 million birds across the US, including nearly eight million turkeys, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The only way to limit the spread of AI is to completely remove infected flocks, each flock consisting of approximately 15,000 birds. The AI outbreak has also impacted the supply of chickens and eggs. It is unlikely that all supermarkets will receive their usual shipments of turkeys ahead of the holiday and the birds that do reach the shelves will be priced higher than normal.

Every sector has seen a fair share of price increases, and it is no differ for turkey and swine producers. High supply costs from feed, fuel, fertilizer, and labor make raising turkeys and swine more expensive. The USDA's recent Farm Sector Income Forecasts predicts record high total production cost, increasing by 17.8% from 2021 to \$437.4 billion in 2022.

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Aside from protein, reported prices for potatoes, cranberries, carrots, celery, and dinner rolls were the main contributors to the lower meal cost this year. These items were down roughly 22% compared to last year. Our shoppers saw some increases on the shelves, with the price of stuffing up 78% to \$3.83 and whipping cream up 30% this year.

Typically, Arkansas food prices remain more affordable than other states. However, prices will vary throughout the state and from store to store and promotional discounts can be found to offset increased prices this Thanksgiving.

The survey was based on statewide averages in responses from members of the Arkansas Farm Bureau Women's Leadership Committee and other volunteers who surveyed food prices at grocery stores and supermarkets across the state. They were asked to report the "best in-store price" of 15 items included in the meal and are allowed to take advantage of advertised specials, excluding discount coupons and purchase requirements. The survey is intended to be a snapshot of actual prices across Arkansas. Though unscientific, the survey is intended to be a snapshot of actual prices across Arkansas and the nation. The survey period was Oct. 27 – Nov. 4.



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2021 – 2022 Thanksgiving Dinner Survey

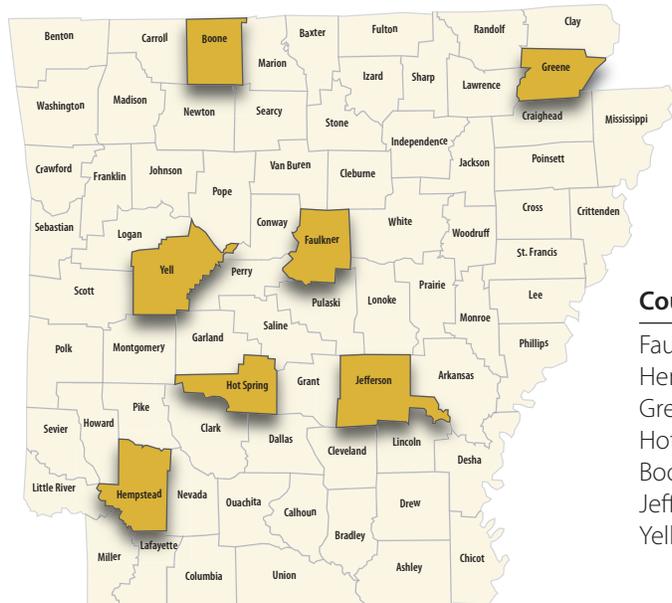
Items & Average Prices

Meal Items	2021	2022	✓/▲
16 lb. Young Tom Turkey	\$21.96/1.37 lb	\$21.09/1.32 lb	✓
4 lb. Half Bone-in Ham	\$9.13/2.28 lb	\$8.93/2.23 lb	✓
Sweet Potatoes (3 lbs)	\$2.96/.99 lb	\$2.52/.84 lb	✓
Russet Potatoes (5 lb bag)	\$3.34/.67 lb	\$2.95/.59 lb	✓
Fresh Cranberries (12 oz pkg)	\$2.49	\$1.86	✓
Fresh Carrots (lb)	\$1.21	\$0.98	✓
Fresh Celery (bunch)	\$1.54	\$1.10	✓
Frozen Green Peas (16 oz pkg)	\$1.27	\$1.27	—
Frozen Green Beans (16 oz pkg)	\$1.36	\$1.26	✓
9" Frozen Pie Shells (2 per pkg)	\$2.74	\$2.61	✓
Cube Stuffing, Herb Seasoning (14 oz pkg)	\$2.14	\$3.83	▲
Dinner Rolls (12 count pkg)	\$2.92	\$2.26	✓
Pumpkin Pie Mix (30 oz can)	\$3.51	\$3.44	✓
Whole Milk (gallon)	\$3.91	\$3.88	✓
Whipping Cream (1/2 pint carton)	\$1.92	\$2.50	▲
**Miscellaneous	\$3.45	\$3.95	▲

Total Average Cost

2021	2022
\$65.17 (\$6.52 Per Person)	\$64.40 (\$6.44 Per Person)

Individual Surveys in Arkansas



County	Price
Faulkner	\$57.85
Hempstead	\$69.58
Greene	\$57.93
Hot Spring	\$62.87
Boone	\$59.88
Jefferson	\$59.86
Yell	\$82.80