



Managing Rising Food Costs

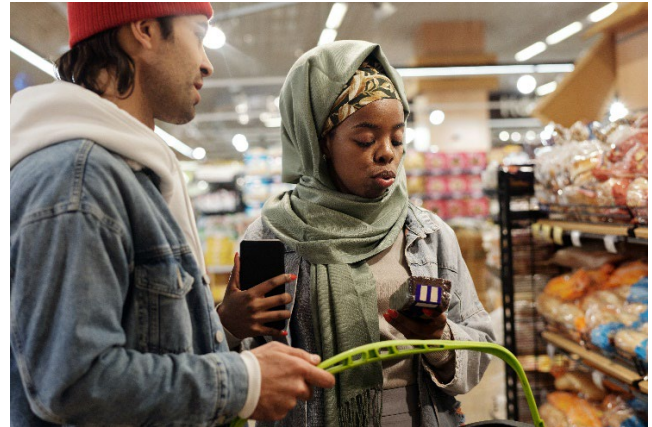
Over the last few months, Wisconsin households have felt the brunt of rising food prices. Managing these costs has been especially challenging for many Wisconsinites as the rise in costs coincided with decreases in household income due to the impact of the health pandemic. While the pandemic’s critical impact has shifted from its peak in 2020, rising food costs have continued or worsened.

This rise in food expenses from Sept. 2021 to Sept. 2022 (BLS, [USDL-22-1990](#)) is detailed in this chart.

Food Items	Cost Increase by %
All Food Items	13%
Cereals & Baked Goods	16.2%
Meats, Poultry, Fish, Eggs	9%
Dairy & Related Products	15.9%
Fruits & Vegetables	10.4%

There are several strategies that can be used to minimize the impact of these rising costs. These strategies include:

- **Plan meals ahead.** By planning meals for the week before going to the store, shoppers give themselves a ‘game plan.’ This encourages shoppers to buy items they need and minimize unplanned, high cost purchases. If detailed planning is not possible or preferred, take a few minutes before entering the grocery store to consider the main items to buy.
- **Check cupboards.** Look through the pantry closely before shopping. This will keep you from buying things you already have.
- **Consider store brand items.** There is evidence ([Consumer Reports](#), 2012) that store brand items are as much as 25% cheaper than equivalent name brand items. Each grocery purchase is different, so shoppers should compare prices for all the options available.
- **Shop the sales.** Take a few minutes to review the weekly ads before entering the grocery store. This can help build your shopping list or find the best prices.



- **Match the shopping schedule.** Many grocery stores start weekly sales midweek. As a result, shoppers may be able to buy the best-priced items on Wednesday or Thursday.
- **Buy produce in season.** When produce is in season there is plenty of it available to stores to supply. Because of this high supply, the price may be cheaper than when it is out of season and in low supply.
- **Consider frozen or canned items.** When buying fruits and vegetables, consider whether you can save money by getting frozen or canned instead of fresh. If shoppers choose ones that do not have added sugar or sodium, the nutritional value is similar. Plus, you don’t have to worry about the items spoiling as you do with fresh items.
- **Build a food budget.** Have a limit set for how much to spend at the grocery store. This will encourage you to identify the food items of most importance before shopping.
- **Don’t shop while hungry!** Shopping while hungry may encourage impulse buys and purchases that do not have much nutritional value.

Talk about these grocery shopping strategies, and other financial topics, with your county’s financial educator. Visit <https://counties.extension.wisc.edu/> for more information.