

LET'S EAT – IF WE CAN AFFORD IT!®

by Dan Pemble, Kissimmee, Florida – September 14, 2026



OMG! Exactly how and why have food prices been allowed to escalate above and beyond what is untenable to many amongst us these DAZE!? Are we who reside in this country who have proclaimed ourselves to “have the world’s largest economy” going to have food on our tables going forward? I think we have all been lead to believe that question was only of major concern to so-called “developing countries” where famine is indeed a reality for far too many!

For those of us, especially seniors relying on fixed incomes consisting of social security and retirement pension plans - without the benefit of having received large returns on our investments - each successive year results in a continuing erosion of our buying powers – including the forever-increasing cost of feeding ourselves! In this “Land of the Free and Home of the Brave” country of ours where our agricultural production has consistently been second to none in world circles, what has gone askew and why have our food prices escalated beyond anyone’s beliefs? Let’s think about it a bit.

I am certainly no expert on the reasons for our current food price saga, so I have done a bit of research and am “paraphrasing” my findings as follows:

In a nutshell, 2026 food prices remain high in combination with lingering inflation, supply chain issues, labor & energy costs, climate-related matters, and industry consolidation, as explained further:

-Inflation “has cooled” to pre-pandemic levels but prices for groceries are about 25-30% higher than in 2020. One web site labeled this as “sticky inflation” where past increases become permanent rather than temporary!

-Prices for meat, fish, poultry, and eggs have continued to rise, while prices for some fruits & veggies have declined just a bit below 2020 prices.

(More reasons on the next page!)

- Supply chain and Labor issues: worker shortages in farms, processing plants, and in distribution centers; consequential higher wages as passed on to us consumers
- Shipping disruptions on ports due fuel price changes and geopolitical tensions such as port blockages and labor disputes
- Tariffs and trade policy changes such as those with Mexico and Canada
- Reduced crop yields due to extreme weather
- Cattle production yields are the lowest in decades driving beef prices to extreme highs (recovery will take some years into the future)
- Industry consolidation: fewer retail chains controlling larger market shares - allowing prices to continue to escalate due to less competition
- Another gimmick called “shrinkflation” wherein package sizes/quantities in a package become smaller but the price of the package remains the same!

Well, absorbing all these facts about why we have our current grossly-inflated costs for food is one thing, but what can you and I do now?

DO COMPARATIVE-PRICE SHOPPING AND THEREBY SAVE YOURSELF SOME “BIG BUCKS”! I WON’T MENTION THE STORES HERE, BUT JUST THINK ABOUT THE FOLLOWING EXAMPLES:

- Would you rather spend \$1.79 for a very high-quality bag of potato chips or spend \$4.77 for a “name-brand” product (a \$3 difference!)?
- Would you rather spend almost \$8 or more for a pound of hamburger or spend about half that if you shop (WISELY) elsewhere?

We all must eat but do we need to sustain the growth of major grocery store chains whose prices remain all too high or should we get smart, save some hard-earned money, and shop elsewhere? I like the alternative and there are low prices on many grocery items just waiting for YOU to discover them! Then we can enjoy eating, knowing we didn’t “break the bank”!

