

Cost of Food at Home for a Week in Alaska

- December 1996
- Surveys are conducted quarterly: March, June, September, December
- 19 Communities Surveyed

Up to three stores in each of nineteen Alaskan communities were surveyed during November and December of 1996 for the cost of a specific set of food and non-food items. The 104 food items selected were taken, with some modification, from the USDA Low-cost Food Plan which is itself based on a nationwide survey of eating habits of Americans, conducted in 1977-78. In addition, the costs of such items as water, propane and electricity are collected. All costs have been adjusted to reflect local sales tax when applicable. Since Wasilla and Palmer were combined in this census, their differing sales taxes were averaged.

The estimated prices of unavailable food items in various communities were calculated as the expected cost as judged from the prices of all available items relative to the prices of those items in Anchorage. The percent of foods unavailable in each community are shown in the survey.

Weekly food consumption rates for a family of 4, children 6 - 11 years, form the basis of the expressed food costs. All other costs are ratios of that cost as calculated from the December 1996 USDA Cost of Food at Home Survey. The cost for this family of 4 can be calculated from the table by summing the individual members. For smaller families such a sum would be too low and should be adjusted up by 20%, 10% or 5% for families of 1, 2 or 3 persons respectively. Similarly, the sum for larger families would

be too high and downward adjustments of 5% and 10% are suggested for 6 and 7 or more member families. These adjustments reflect that some economies may be realized when preparing foods for larger families.

The current and historical costs are given as percentages of the cost in Anchorage. However, the Anchorage column was modified (it would otherwise always read 100%) to represent the percentage of past Anchorage costs to the current cost.

The US average weekly costs were estimated by the USDA using 2400 items priced in major communities around the US, including Anchorage and Hawaii. Prices are adjusted monthly based on an index change within categories. This methodology differs entirely from that used in Alaska and therefore the US average figures cannot be directly compared. Further information on the USDA survey is available from the USDA Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion and on the world wide web at <http://www.usda.gov/fcs/cnpp.htm>.

It is important to note that the food costs presented here are based on a prescribed low cost diet plan. It is assumed that meals will be planned, that cooking facilities are available and few convenience foods are eaten. Each of the foods were priced for their lowest available cost regardless of packaging or brand. In addition to food costs, representative values are presented for fuels, utilities and building materials.

The accompanying graphic demonstrates that a wide range of food costs exist statewide. Small quarterly price fluctuations are commonly reported.

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To see the results of Alaska Cooperative Extension's Food Cost

Survey on the world wide web, point your browser to:

<http://www.uaf.edu/ces/fcs>

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