

## Dates of Publication

Surveys are conducted quarterly:

March, June, September, December

## Cost of Food at Home for a Week in Alaska

December 1997

## 14 Communities Surveyed

Up to three stores in each of fourteen communities were surveyed during December of 1997 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 were collected. All costs were adjusted to reflect local sales tax where applicable. Since Wasilla and Palmer were combined in this census, their differing sales taxes were averaged when calculating food costs.

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 price 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 USDA Cost of Food at Home survey issued December, 1997. 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 historical food costs are expressed in a new manner in this report. The percent change in cost is expressed as the incremental change, which will be positive or negative if costs rise or fall, respectively. For instance, the current row 6 Anchorage cost is \$100.05 compared to the September cost of \$96.57. Costs in Anchorage increased  $100.05 - 96.57 = \$3.48$ , or  $100 * 3.48 / 96.57 = 3.6\%$ , which rounds to 4%. Expressed in previous reports the Anchorage change would have been 104%. Other than Anchorage, rows 18 through 22 repeat the percentage by which each community differed from Anchorage at that date.

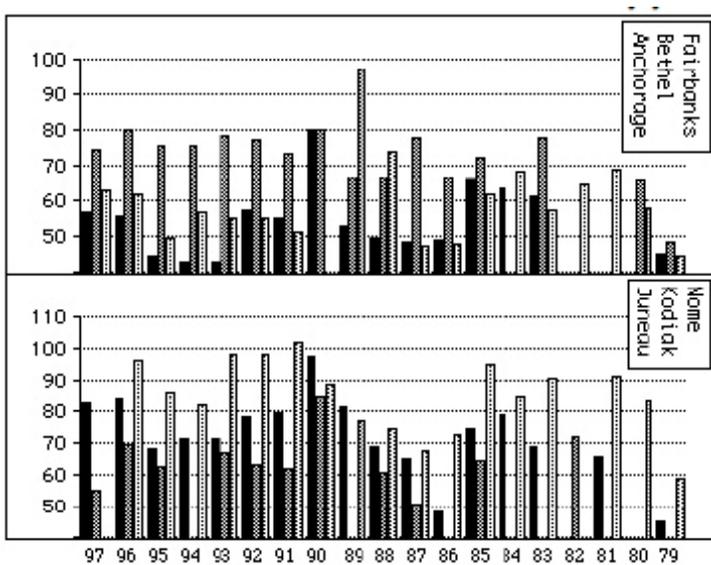


Figure 1 is included in response to requests for the cost of fuel. It shows the cost of a barrel (55 gallons) of number 1 heating fuel in six Alaskan communities in December from 1979 to 1997. The upper half of the figure shows Anchorage (black), Bethel (gray) and Fairbanks (stippled), the lower half shows Juneau (black), Kodiak (gray) and Nome (stippled). The cost of fuel oil has been volatile over this period, the mean values from 1979 to 1997 are \$54.36, \$72.29, \$59.23, \$72.28, \$64.68 and \$85.11 for Anchorage, Bethel, Fairbanks, Juneau, Kodiak and Nome respectively. Anchorage and Fairbanks have had the lowest cost over the survey years but clearly factors other than community size play a role oil pricing.

