

Cincinnati Grocery Prices: Seven Months of Data

Alpaugh Family Economics Center at the University of Cincinnati

Since September 2025, the **Alpaugh Family Economics Center** has been tracking grocery prices across **41 stores** and **65 items** in the Greater Cincinnati metropolitan area. This monthly report presents our latest findings — offering the kind of localized price intelligence that disappeared when the Bureau of Labor Statistics discontinued its Cincinnati-specific Consumer Price Index in 2018.

Key Finding: March 2026

Average grocery prices in Greater Cincinnati are down approximately 0.22% compared to our September 2025 baseline — the result of significant swings in both directions across our basket of 65 tracked items.

How We Measure Local Grocery Prices

Our price index applies the same **relative importance weights** used by the Bureau of Labor Statistics for the national urban CPI. Within each category, we calculate a geometric mean of monthly price growth rates, then combine categories using BLS weights to estimate the change in the cost of a typical household's grocery basket. September 2025 serves as the baseline, normalized to an index value of 100.

Seven Months of Price Movement

The path from September to March has been uneven. After early declines, prices nudged up through the winter before falling again in March.

Month	Monthly Growth	Growth Since September
October	-0.19%	-0.19%
November	+0.15%	-0.04%
December	+0.07%	+0.03%
January	-0.15%	-0.12%
February	+0.15%	+0.03%
March	-0.25%	-0.22%

Note: Monthly growth rates are calculated from the previous month's weighted average. "Growth Since September" reflects cumulative change from the September 2025 baseline.

What's Pulling Prices Down?

Three items — eggs, chicken, and coffee — collectively represent nearly 11% of our tracked basket, and all three have seen notable price decreases since September.

Biggest Price Declines Since September

Eggs (dozen): -\$1.29

Boneless Skinless Chicken Breast (lb): -\$0.70

Coffee (lb): -\$0.93

Bacon (lb): -\$0.42

Egg and chicken price trends in Cincinnati **align closely with national data**. Both were already declining nationally as avian influenza disruptions eased, and our local data confirms that trend. The charts below show national average prices from February 2021 through February 2026.

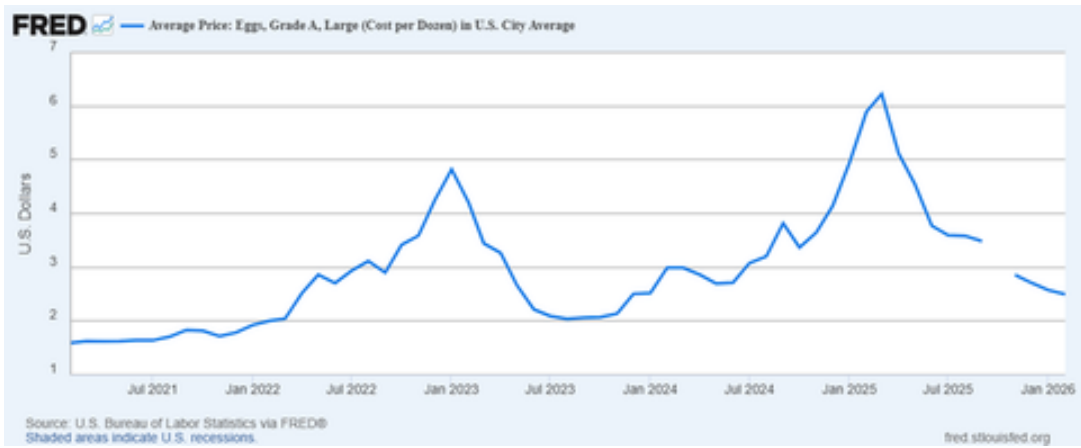


Figure 1: Average Price of Eggs, February 2021–February 2026 (National)

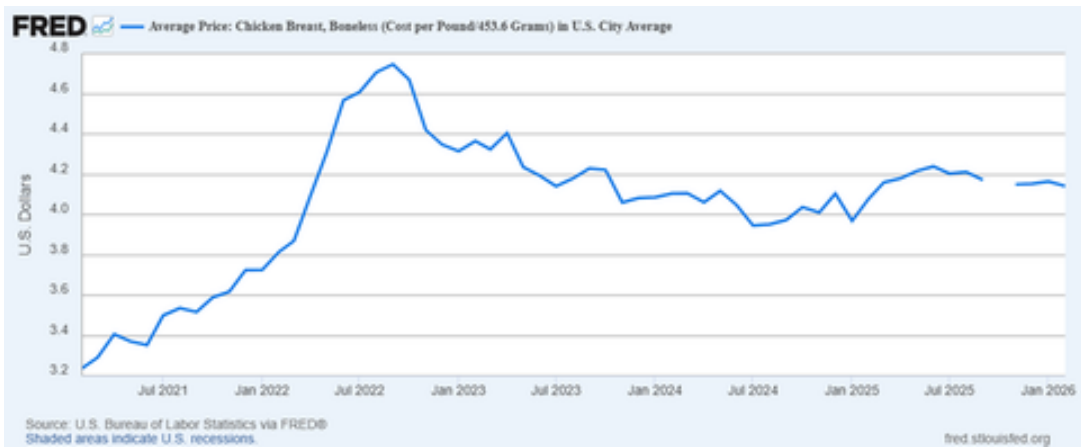


Figure 2: Average Price of Chicken Breast, February 2021–February 2026 (National)

Coffee tells a more nuanced story. National consumer coffee prices have continued rising — but our tracker focuses on **store brands and private-label alternatives**, which appear to be benefiting from declining global wholesale prices. Retailers whose store-brand contracts came up for renewal recently may be passing lower commodity costs on to shoppers faster than name brands do.

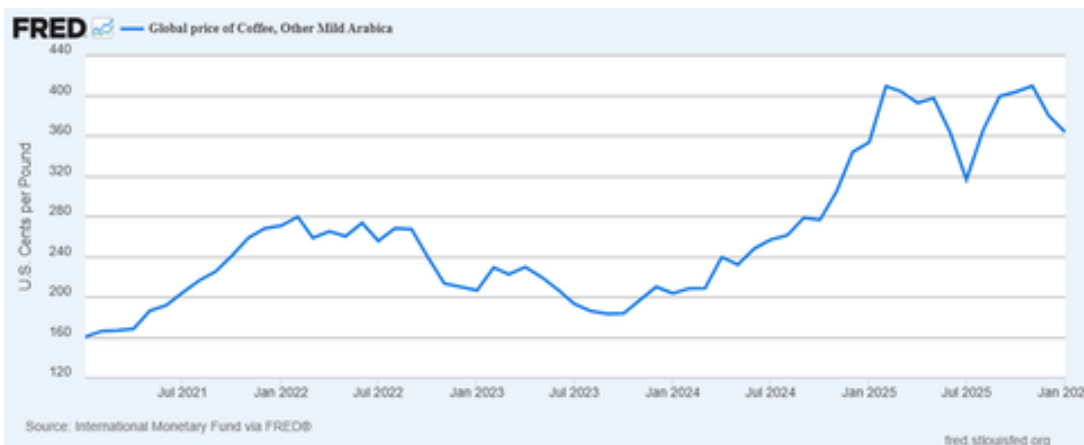


Figure 3: Global Wholesale Coffee Prices, February 2021–February 2026

Bacon rounds out the good news. At \$4.94 per pound, the average local price is down \$0.42 from September — consistent with national pork market trends showing relief after post-pandemic highs.

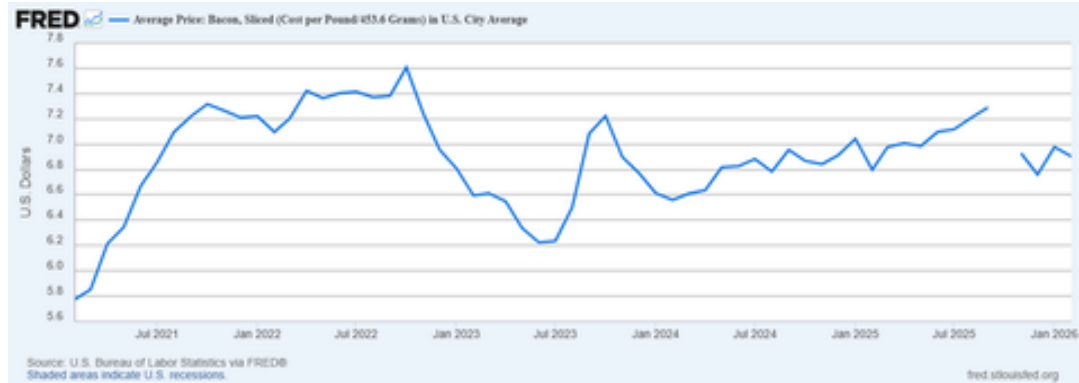


Figure 4: Average Price of Bacon, February 2021–February 2026 (National)

What's Keeping Prices From Falling Further?

Significant increases in other items offset the gains above. Three categories stand out: olive oil, cereal, and deli meats.

Notable Price Increases Since September

Olive Oil, Store Brand (16.9 fl oz): +\$0.29

Cereal, Store Brand (12 oz): +\$0.49

Deli Turkey, Sliced (lb): +\$0.85

Olive oil prices had been recovering from the spikes associated with the 2023-24 droughts in Spain, but the most recent season has been plagued by low yields due to poor weather in the Mediterranean. The global price chart tells the story clearly.

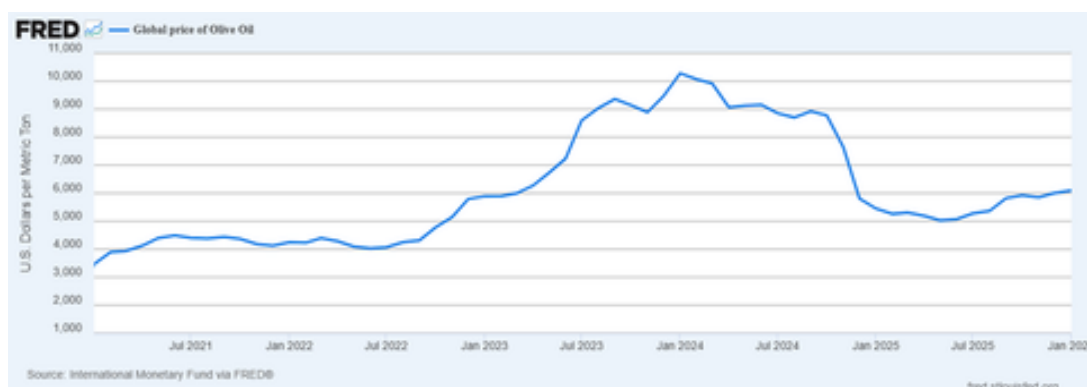


Figure 5: Global Olive Oil Prices, February 2021–February 2026

Cereal price increases are consistent with the BLS's Cereals and Bakery Products sub-index, which has trended upward over the same period – driven by rising energy costs, logistical disruptions, and labor shortages.

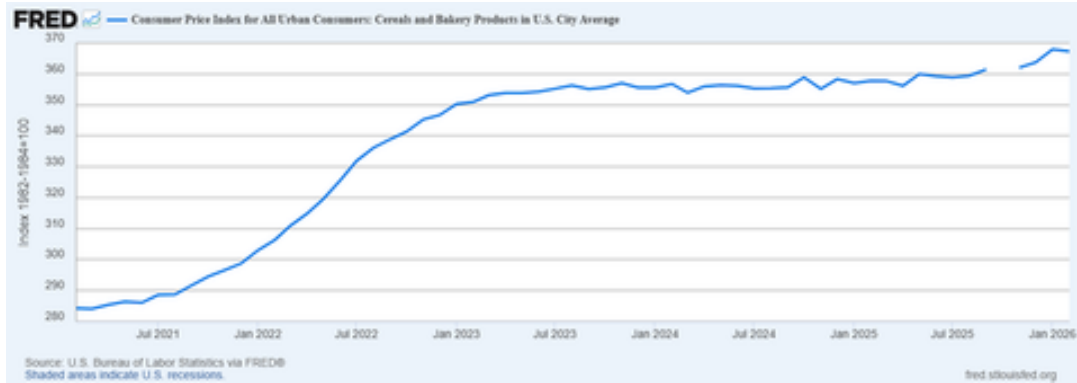


Figure 6: CPI – Cereals and Bakery Products Sub-Index, February 2021–February 2026 (National)

Deli turkey has risen \$0.85 per pound since September, though **March brought a slight \$0.06 pullback** – mirroring national lunch meat prices, which showed signs of cooling in February after months of gains.

Figure 7: CPI – Lunchmeat Sub-Index, February 2021–February 2026 (National)

The Tariff Effect — and Its Limits

Tariffs on aluminum and tin have left a modest but measurable imprint on canned and packaged goods. A **12-pack of Coca-Cola is up \$0.50 (5.0%)** since September. Among the six canned goods we track, four have seen slight price increases:

Canned tuna (5 oz): +\$0.07 | Canned green beans (14.5 oz): +\$0.07 | Canned peaches (15.25 oz): +\$0.06 | Canned spinach (13.5 oz): +\$0.10

Notably, canned tomatoes (-\$0.04) and canned soup (-\$0.08) have moved in the opposite direction, suggesting that tariff effects are neither universal nor uniform – likely reflecting differences in supplier contracts and product sourcing.

Ground Beef, Steak, and Evolving Methodology

Ground beef prices are **up about \$0.13 since September**, though March brought a \$0.06 retreat from February's level. Steak tracking has been refined: an earlier catch-all approach that instructed collectors to record "the cheapest steak cut available" produced noisy, non-comparable data. We have replaced that with four specific cuts — **flank, flat iron, top sirloin, and tri-tip** — enabling more precise comparisons going forward.

Similar improvements have been made in two other categories. A general "fresh fish" item has been replaced with fresh cod, salmon, and tilapia. A general "berries" category is now tracked as blackberries, strawberries, and blueberries separately.

March 2026 Weighted Average Grocery Prices — Cincinnati MSA

The table below shows weighted average prices for all 65 items in our current basket, collected across 41 stores in the Cincinnati metropolitan statistical area.

Item	Weighted Avg. Price
12 Pack of Coca-Cola	\$9.23
Apples (lb)	\$1.34
Bacon (lb)	\$4.94
Bagels (half dozen)	\$2.35
Bakery Dinner Rolls (22 oz)	\$4.61
Bakery Cupcakes (6 count)	\$5.60
Bananas (lb)	\$0.52
Blackberries (lb)	\$7.27
Blueberries (lb)	\$6.52
Boneless Skinless Chicken Breast (lb)	\$3.46
Bread (20 oz loaf)	\$1.76
Butter (lb)	\$3.66
Canned Soup, Store Brand (10.5 oz)	\$0.95
Canned Spinach (13.5 oz)	\$1.54
Canned Tomatoes, Diced, Store Brand (14.5 oz)	\$0.99
Canned Green Beans (14.5 oz)	\$0.89

Canned Peaches (15.25 oz)	\$1.80
Canned Pineapple (20 oz)	\$1.86
Carrots (lb)	\$1.28
Celery (1 stalk)	\$1.98
Cereal, Store Brand (12 oz)	\$2.31
Cheese, Store Brand Block	\$3.82
Coffee (lb)	\$7.84
Cream Cheese, Store Brand (16 oz)	\$3.38
Cucumber (each)	\$0.77
Deli Turkey, Sliced (lb)	\$6.01
Eggs (dozen)	\$2.02
Flank Steak (lb)	\$13.34
Flat Iron Steak (lb)	\$12.78
Flour (lb)	\$0.63
Fresh Cod (lb)	\$10.77
Fresh Salmon (lb)	\$10.22
Fresh Tilapia (lb)	\$7.42

Frozen Peas (16 oz)	\$1.47
Frozen Pineapple (16 oz)	\$3.35
Frozen Shredded Potatoes (16 oz)	\$2.10
Frozen Berry Mix (16 oz)	\$3.92
Grapes (lb)	\$2.32
Green Bell Pepper (each)	\$1.02
Ground Beef, Fresh (lb)	\$6.15
Head of Lettuce	\$2.34
Lemon (each)	\$0.73
Lime (each)	\$0.54
Milk (gallon)	\$2.71
Olive Oil, Store Brand (16.9 fl oz)	\$7.25
Orange Juice (gallon)	\$8.32
Oranges (lb)	\$1.22
Peaches (lb)	\$2.88
Peanut Butter, Store Brand (16 oz)	\$2.21
Pears (lb)	\$1.84

Plums (lb)	\$3.02
Potato Chips, Store Brand (8 oz)	\$1.88
Potatoes (lb)	\$0.86
Rice, White Long Grain (lb)	\$0.92
Sour Cream, Store Brand (16 oz)	\$1.99
Spaghetti Noodles, Store Brand (lb)	\$1.14
Spinach (bunch)	\$1.76
Strawberries (lb)	\$3.44
Store Bakery Chocolate Chip Cookies (12 count)	\$4.37
Sugar, White (lb)	\$0.83
Tomatoes (lb)	\$1.26
Top Sirloin Steak (lb)	\$13.49
Tri-Tip Steak (lb)	\$13.57
Tuna, Canned (5 oz)	\$1.04
Vanilla or Chocolate Ice Cream, Store Brand (gallon)	\$7.59

Prices reflect weighted averages across all tracked stores. Store-brand items are specified where applicable.

About This Report: The Alpaugh Family Economics Center at the University of Cincinnati began tracking Greater Cincinnati grocery prices in September 2025 to fill the data gap created when the BLS discontinued its Cincinnati MSA-specific CPI in 2018. Prices are collected monthly across 41 stores and 65 items. Our index applies BLS urban CPI relative importance weights. For media inquiries or methodology questions, visit economicsresearch.org.