

# May Grocery Price Tracker Analysis by Dr. Ben Brennan

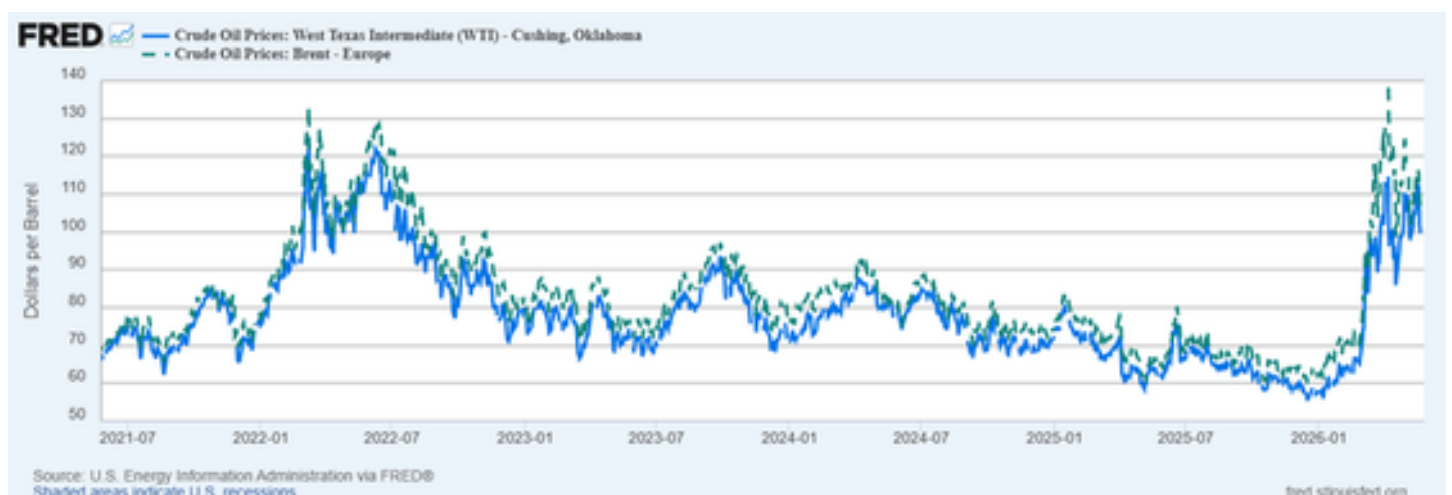
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The general trend of falling grocery prices we've seen in 2026 finally ended in May. Prices rose 0.84% compared to April, which would correspond to 10.55 percent annual price growth if every month grew at the same rate. Now prices are about 0.12 percent higher than they were in December, and the highest they've been since December 2025. The obvious most direct impact here is the price of fuel and energy. The impact of rising fertilizer prices is likely to be seen down the line.

Month	Monthly Growth	Growth Since September
January	-1.88%	-1.34%
February	1.43%	0.07%
March	-0.46%	-0.39%
April	-0.33%	-0.72%
May	0.84%	0.12%

### Drivers of Basket Increase

For most of these items, the rising cost of oil is playing some direct or indirect role in the price increase. That could be through transportation or the energy used in production. It could be through plastic in the packaging. It could also just be that inflation narratives in the ether provide cover for raising prices that have needed to be raised for a while.



The biggest dollar value change in the basket was for cod. This appears to be due to declining cod quotas, leading to reduced global cod supply. Tomato prices had the second biggest price change and the highest percentage change. One of our price collectors commented that the cheapest tomato variety has changed this month, and federal reports indicate that a freeze in Florida earlier in the year, coupled with tariffs on Mexican tomatoes, is driving up prices. Two steak cuts appear here, and the USDA projects that beef supplies will fall for the foreseeable future.

Item	Price Change	Percent Change	Price
Fresh Cod (Pound)	\$1.28	11.61%	\$12.33
Tomatoes (pound)	\$0.49	37.27%	\$1.82
Flat Iron Steak (Pound)	\$0.46	3.63%	\$13.23
Bakery Fresh Store Bakery Cupcakes (6 Count)	\$0.42	8.02%	\$5.70
Deli Turkey (sliced) (pound)	\$0.41	7.14%	\$6.18
Flank Steak (Pound)	\$0.37	2.72%	\$14.05
Celery (1 stalk)	\$0.33	16.27%	\$2.35
12 pack of coke	\$0.29	3.26%	\$9.19
Frozen Pineapple (16 ounce)	\$0.25	7.88%	\$3.41
Pears (pound)	\$0.23	10.30%	\$2.50

### Are All Prices Rising?

The largest price decrease in May was nearly a one-dollar drop in the price of top sirloin. This, as well as the 41-cent decrease in tri-tip prices, was likely driven by store competition for Memorial Day grillers, since, as mentioned above, beef supply appears to continue to tighten. The second-largest price drop is in orange juice, which has reportedly been experiencing weakening global demand.

Item	Price Change	Percent Change	Price
Top Sirloin Steak (Pound)	-\$0.97	-6.80%	\$13.24
Orange Juice (Gallon)	-\$0.57	-6.86%	\$7.69
Tri-Tip Steak (Pound)	-\$0.41	-3.08%	\$13.05
Strawberries (Pound)	-\$0.32	-9.89%	\$2.91
Boneless Skinless Chicken Breast (Pound)	-\$0.29	-7.81%	\$3.39
Butter (Pound)	-\$0.26	-7.28%	\$3.27
Blackberries (Pound)	-\$0.24	-3.43%	\$6.80
Coffee (Pound)	-\$0.18	-2.30%	\$7.60
Fresh Salmon (Pound)	-\$0.14	-1.33%	\$10.32
Ground Beef (Pound) (Not Frozen)	-\$0.13	-2.08%	\$6.30

I haven't found any definitive explanations for what's going on with chicken breast prices. It might have to do with the larger, faster-growing varieties of chicken now being raised for slaughter leading to lower costs per pound of meat. However, I recently watched a video that was very illuminating on selecting chicken breasts. In the video, a butcher walks through what he looks for when purchasing chicken breasts. And as it turns out, these larger birds with larger breasts are the biggest culprits for the "woody breast" abnormality that leads to hard, tough, and chewy chicken breasts. I personally have avoided buying chicken breasts altogether because of this. This makes me wonder whether the price decrease is also a result of declining demand for chicken breast as consumers shift to thigh meat instead.

Or more likely it's the same thing happening with sirloin, tri-tip, ground beef, and salmon: stores competing over customers buying large volumes of meat for Memorial Day. In an introductory microeconomics class, students learn that one factor that shapes how price-sensitive consumers are for a particular product is the percentage of their budget that the item takes up. The story we tell is that consumers are less sensitive to changes in gum prices, since they buy gum infrequently and it often accounts for a small share of their budgets. Whereas a daily coffee

habit is something a consumer is going to be much more price sensitive due to it taking up a larger share of their budget. Around Memorial Day, meat will take up a larger share of consumer budgets than usual, and as a result, consumers will be more sensitive to price differences and more likely to shop around for good deals.

[Full Rundown of Average Prices](#)

<b>Item</b>	<b>Average Price</b>	<b>Price Increase</b>	<b>Percent Increase</b>
12 pack of coke	\$9.19	\$0.29	3.3%
Apples (Pound)	\$1.48	\$0.07	5.0%
Bacon (Pound)	\$4.66	-\$0.05	-1.0%
Bagels ( Half Dozen)	\$2.29	-\$0.03	-1.3%
Bakery Fresh Dinner Rolls (22 Ounce)	\$4.56	-\$0.11	-2.3%
Bakery Fresh Store Bakery Cupcakes (6 Count)	\$5.70	\$0.42	8.0%
Bananas (pound)	\$0.51	-\$0.02	-3.8%
Blackberries (Pound)	\$6.80	-\$0.24	-3.4%
Blueberries (Pound)	\$6.46	\$0.03	0.4%
Boneless Skinless Chicken Breast (Pound)	\$3.39	-\$0.29	-7.8%
Bread (20 ounce Loaf)	\$1.73	\$0.03	2.1%
Butter (Pound)	\$3.27	-\$0.26	-7.3%
Can of Tuna (5 Ounce)	\$1.02	\$0.01	0.7%
Canned Green Beans (14.5 ounce)	\$0.88	\$0.02	2.9%
Canned Peaches (15.25 ounce)	\$1.79	\$0.01	0.4%

Canned Pineapple (20 ounce)	\$1.82	-\$0.02	-1.1%
Canned Soup (Store Brand) (10.5 ounce)	\$0.83	\$0.00	0.3%
Canned Spinach (13.5 ounce)	\$1.51	\$0.00	0.0%
Canned Tomatoes (Store Brand-Diced, 14.5 ounces)	\$0.98	\$0.00	-0.3%
Carrots (Pound)	\$1.29	\$0.00	0.1%
Celery (1 stalk)	\$2.35	\$0.33	16.3%
Cereal (Store Brand) (12 ounces)	\$2.20	\$0.04	2.0%
Cheese (Store Brand -Block)	\$3.71	-\$0.03	-0.9%
Coffee (Pound)	\$7.60	-\$0.18	-2.3%
Cream Cheese (Store Brand) (16 ounce)	\$3.27	\$0.00	0.1%
Cucumber (1 count)	\$0.87	\$0.12	16.5%
Deli Turkey (sliced) (pound)	\$6.18	\$0.41	7.1%
Eggs (Dozen)	\$1.83	-\$0.09	-4.5%
Flank Steak (Pound)	\$14.05	\$0.37	2.7%
Flat Iron Steak (Pound)	\$13.23	\$0.46	3.6%
Flour (Pound)	\$0.60	-\$0.01	-2.0%
Fresh Cod (Pound)	\$12.33	\$1.28	11.6%

Fresh Salmon (Pound)	\$10.32	-\$0.14	-1.3%
Fresh Tilapia (Pound)	\$7.73	\$0.19	2.5%
Frozen Peas (16 ounce)	\$1.44	\$0.02	1.8%
Frozen Pineapple (16 ounce)	\$3.41	\$0.25	7.9%
Frozen Shredded Potatoes (16 ounce)	\$2.05	-\$0.04	-1.9%
Frozen berry mix (16 ounce)	\$4.14	\$0.22	5.7%
Grapes (Pound)	\$2.45	\$0.14	6.2%
Green Bell Pepper ( Per Pepper price)	\$1.18	-\$0.08	-6.1%
Ground Beef (Pound) (Not Frozen)	\$6.30	-\$0.13	-2.1%
Head of Lettuce	\$2.37	\$0.20	9.1%
Lemon (Each)	\$0.72	\$0.01	0.8%
Lime (Each)	\$0.56	\$0.01	1.3%
Milk (Gallon)	\$2.97	\$0.18	6.3%
Olive Oil (Store brand) (16.9 fluid ounces)	\$6.93	\$0.04	0.6%
Orange Juice (Gallon)	\$7.69	-\$0.57	-6.9%
Oranges (pound)	\$1.22	-\$0.02	-1.9%

Peaches (pound)	\$3.17	\$0.22	7.5%
Peanut Butter (Store Brand) (16 Ounces)	\$2.21	-\$0.02	-0.8%
Pears (pound)	\$2.50	\$0.23	10.3%
Plums (pound)	\$2.96	-\$0.03	-1.1%
Potato Chips (Store Brand) (8 ounces)	\$1.89	-\$0.01	-0.6%
Potatoes (Pound)	\$0.88	\$0.01	0.7%
Rice, White, Long grain (Pound)	\$0.91	-\$0.02	-1.8%
Sour Cream (Store Brand) (16 ounce)	\$1.95	-\$0.01	-0.7%
Spaghetti noodles (Store Brand) (pound)	\$1.13	\$0.00	0.0%
Spinach (Bunch)	\$1.83	\$0.11	6.5%
Store Bakery Chocolate Chip Cookies (12 Count)	\$4.34	\$0.03	0.6%
Strawberries (Pound)	\$2.91	-\$0.32	-9.9%
Sugar (Ground-white) (Pound)	\$0.81	-\$0.01	-0.6%
Tomatoes (pound)	\$1.82	\$0.49	37.3%
Top Sirloin Steak (Pound)	\$13.24	-\$0.97	-6.8%
Tri-Tip Steak (Pound)	\$13.05	-\$0.41	-3.1%
Vanilla or Chocolate Ice Cream (Gallon-	\$7.82	\$0.10	1.3%

Store Brand)