

Ingredients for traditional Thanksgiving jump 13%

By Kathryn Reed

This is going to be the most expensive Thanksgiving dinner you've ever had.

At least that's what the American Farm Bureau Federation is saying. Each year the organization prices out what a turkey dinner for 10 people will cost. It's gone up 13 percent since 2010 – the largest one-year spike since 1990 – with the total cost being the most since 1986 when the federation first started doing its calculations.



I pooh-poohed the study when I first heard about it because I didn't think anyone could serve a Thanksgiving meal to 10 people for \$49.20.

Part of the problem is my menu would be different than the Farm Bureau's. If they invited you for dinner, you would have turkey, frozen green peas, pumpkin pie from a can with real whipped cream, whole milk, stuffing from a bag, store bought rolls, fresh cranberries, and sweet potatoes.

I decided to price a similar meal at Grocery Outlet in South Lake Tahoe this past weekend on the assumption it's the least expensive place to buy groceries on the South Shore.

I found a 12-14 pound turkey selling for \$14.99, 2-pound bag of frozen green beans for \$2.99, butternut squash \$1.99 each, Truckee sourdough baguette \$2.39, a bag of granny smith apples \$3.99, a 5-pound bag of russet potatoes for \$1.99, and a bag of stuffing mix for \$1.89.

So, in Tahoe, I would say people are going to be able to make a basic Thanksgiving meal for 10 people for less than \$50. And if there are leftovers, one could say you are eating for free.

I'll admit it's been a while since I've hosted a Thanksgiving dinner. For some reason people veer away from a vegetarian's house on this holiday.

But I have had a bird on my table before. I just didn't cook it. That's what mom is for. And my sister brought the meat thermometer. I know we didn't have 10 people and that it cost more than \$50. And this was a few years ago. I decided if I were going to serve meat, it was going to be good meat. The turkey came from Overland Meat Co.

I only make homemade apple pie. A friend bought me some pippins from Apple Hill earlier this month for \$1.29 pound. I don't know how many pounds there were, but the bag could have made 1½ 9-inch pies. I didn't know until I saw it at the store on Saturday that apple pie mix is available in a can. It makes me nauseous thinking about it. (I'm a huge apple pie snob.) I read the list of ingredients and couldn't pronounce all of them.

I have no problem, though, with making a pumpkin pie from a can.

My family doesn't do stuffing out of a bag or a box. In fact, mom's is so good that when I visit her we love to have it as a meal or snack – in months other than November.

We don't do frozen veggies as a general rule either – at least not as a side dish. Ironically, though, frozen and canned veggies can be better than the fresh stuff at grocery stores because they are picked at their peak instead of too early – as is often the case for what's in the produce aisle. The other good thing about frozen-canned veggies is you can use them when that particular item is not in season. This can be better than using something imported from another country

where who knows what pesticide may have been applied to the field or orchard.

Just watch the salt content, especially on canned products.

Other things that drive up my grocery bill are premium vanilla ice cream for the apple pie, wine (Champagne is good idea to pair with turkey), spices for the various dishes, appetizers, snacks, even napkins and candles.

To lower the price of your holiday grocery bill, coupons are one way. Red Plum is just one of many online coupon sites. Some of the major turkey producers like Butterball and Hormel have discounts on their sites. The Grocery Game has been helping shoppers save money for 10 years.