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The Advocate

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FOOD INFLATION

GROCERY PRODUCTS THAT HAVE RISEN THE MOST IN PRICE SINCE START OF PANDEMIC

Alexander Coolidge

Cincinnati Enquirer
USA TODAY NETWORK

If you think food inflation at the supermarket since the COVID-19 pandemic is just bananas – it's not.

Bananas, averaging 62 cents a pound in January, have stayed relatively cheap.

As of January, the cost of groceries at the checkout is 24.7% more expensive than it was in March 2020, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. The overall price of food has risen so high it has outpaced the 20% rise of overall inflation since the pandemic outbreak nearly four years ago. (Both food and the overall rate continue to climb, albeit at a slower pace in the past year.)

The price of groceries is heating up, too, as a political issue as President Biden scrambles to address consumers' struggle to pay for it all. In January, Biden accused companies of "ripping people off" by keeping prices high even after many food costs have begun to level off or come down in recent months. Last week, Biden announced a "strike force to crack down on unfair and illegal pricing" against corporations that "may be violating the law and keeping prices high," including in the food and grocery sector.

Consumers, the president – even Cookie Monster – is upset about high prices and side effects like "shrinkflation" where food manufacturers package everything from cookies to potato chips in smaller bags or boxes to obscure higher prices.

Perhaps sensing the sour national mood, Cincinnati-based Kroger reiterated its promise to lower food prices if the supermarket giant is successful in winning federal approval for its proposed \$25 billion takeover of rival Albertsons. Federal officials weren't convinced; they sued days later, saying the deal could mean still higher prices for consumers.

"That inflation is a problem can matter for politics – people notice these things, in the same way they notice gas prices, and it matters for their sense of how well the economy is doing," Katherine Cramer, a political science professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, told The Enquirer. "Paying \$2.50 for a dozen eggs when the cost until recently had been below \$2 tells people inflation is a problem."

Here's a closer look at what's happened to the prices of the staples you put in your shopping cart:



GETTY IMAGES

See INFLATION, Page 2A

Get yours at Indian Mound Mall

CHOOSE YOUR DIAMOND
NECKLACE AT \$499
DUNKIN'S
DIAMONDS

Airport terminal built ahead of demand

Newark-Heath preps for Intel-led growth

Emmet Anderson

TheReportingProject.org

The Newark-Heath Airport is sporting a fresh look with a brand-new terminal, set for an official dedication on Aug. 24.

The new building at 530 Heath Road in Heath was inspired by anticipated growth and development in central Ohio and safety risks created by the old terminal, built nearly 50 years ago.

The airport's taxiway was moved in 2019 because it was too close to the runway, but its new location was too close to the old terminal and was considered an obstacle by Federal Aviation Administration standards.

And the entire old terminal – knocked down and replaced with airport parking – could fit inside the main room of the airport's new \$5 million building.

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Pataskala having its first Easter Egg Hunt since COVID

Maria DeVito

Newark Advocate
USA TODAY NETWORK

For the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic, a beloved Pataskala tradition returns this spring.

Lead by Pataskala's Impact City Church, 19 community partners have come together to bring back the Pataskala Easter Egg Hunt this year for the first time since 2019.

Laurie Duggan, an Impact City member and event volunteer, said one of the church's core values is positively impacting the community, and this event meets that goal. It was also important to the church to ensure the event focuses on the true meaning of the Easter holiday.

"There's going to be eggs and bounce houses and food trucks, and it's going to have all the things that a carnival or festival would have, but it also will be Christ-focused," she said.

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LOCAL WEATHER

TODAY

HIGH: 74
LOW: 55

Cloudy, showers around; breezy in the p.m.

FRIDAY

HIGH: 61
LOW: 35

Cloudy and mild with a couple of showers

SATURDAY

HIGH: 58
LOW: 43

Times of clouds and sun

SUNDAY

HIGH: 51
LOW: 29

Intervals of clouds and sunshine

MONDAY

HIGH: 40
LOW: 26

Colder; breezy, a flurry in the afternoon

ALMANAC

Tuesday

TEMPERATURES

High **68**

Low **39**

PRECIPITATION (in inches)

Tuesday **0.00"**

SUN & MOON

SUN Today Fri.
Rise .. **7:42 a.m.** .. **7:41 a.m.**
Set ... **7:36 p.m.** .. **7:37 p.m.**

MOON Today Fri.
Rise **10:00 a.m.** **10:38 a.m.**
Set .. **12:03 a.m.** .. **1:18 a.m.**

MOON PHASES

First **Full** **Last** **New**

Mar 16 Mar 25 Apr 1 Apr 8

NATIONAL EXTREMES

48 contiguous states Tuesday
HIGH TEMPERATURE
Zapata, TX **87°**
LOW TEMPERATURE

Crested Butte, CO **1°**

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Eggs

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When and where is the egg hunt?

The event will be held from 1-4 p.m. March 23 at Thomas J. Evans Foundation Park, 10255 McIntosh Road, Pataskala.

The event kicks off with a 2 p.m. opening ceremony that will include a raising the flag, singing the national anthem, and saying a prayer.

What ages can participate?

Egg hunts, by age group, will begin at 2:15 p.m.:

- Under 2 years old at 2:15 p.m.
- 2- to 4-year-olds at 2:20 p.m.
- 5- to 7-year-olds at 2:25 p.m.
- 8- to 11-year-olds at 2:30 p.m.

The egg hunt is partnering with The Eli Effect, a Pataskala nonprofit that supports children with physical disabilities by providing equipment and experiences, to have have "inclusive eggs," which will be tied to helium balloons so children with physical disabilities can pick them up.

How many Easter eggs will there be?

There will be between 25,000 and 30,000 eggs for children to find, Duggan said. There will also be other gifts and prizes available.

Is there any cost to participate?

The event is free and there is no cost to participate.

Will there be other activities?

In previous years, the event mainly featured just an egg hunt. This year organizers are bringing in inflatable attractions, food trucks and characters, including the Easter Bunny, for photo opportunities.

With so much growth happening in Pataskala, the event is an opportunity for those who have moved to the community in the past four years to meet their neighbors, Duggan said.

"The inflatables are really a way to get people to talk, to kind of hang around, not just come for an egg hunt but really build a sense of community," she said.

Will there be food available?

There will be five food trucks on site:

- **Le Macaron** serves authentic, handmade French macarons.
- **Taco Cartel** serves tacos.
- **Bada Bing Bada Wings** serves chicken wings with sauces made from scratch.
- **Dan's Deli** serves hot dogs, hamburgers and sandwiches.
- **Porters Coffee House** serves pastries and sandwiches.

Extra tips before you go

Duggan said organizers expect between 3,000-5,000 will attend the egg hunt, and she recommends people carpool, if possible.

Kids should have their own baskets to use.

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Pataskala's Easter Egg Hunt, pictured here in 2017, returns in 2024 for the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic. JOE HAHN/SPECIAL TO THE STANDARD

Terminal

Continued from Page 1A

The new building is equipped with a pilot's lounge, flight training, a fixed-base operator's room, a small kitchen and a large meeting room.

"I don't really know of another airport of this size that would be as nice a facility as this place," said Terry Treneff, president of the airport's board.

Treneff has been involved with the airport for 39 years and served as president of its board for all but a few in the beginning. The airport is officially named the Newark-Heath Airport Treneff Field – after him.

"Apparently, when you stick around too long, they don't know what else to do with you, so they start to name things after you," he said.

In the past four decades, Treneff has seen the airport change quite a bit, but in recent years, it's grown at an exponential rate, especially since the Intel project was announced in January 2022.

Since the development of the Silicon Heartland project began, Treneff says there has been an increase both in the traffic and demand for the airport, which is visible from the Ohio 79 shopping area – especially when planes fly low over the roadway during takeoffs and landings.

Daily takeoffs and landings have increased, and 79 airplanes, the most in airport history, are currently based at the airport. An additional 67 airplanes are on a

waiting list for when hangar space frees up.

"Well, I don't have 67 new hangars," Treneff said. "The problem, if you read airport literature, is that practically every airport in the country wants more hangar space. There's more airplanes in the country than there are places."

Of the new terminal's \$5 million cost, the FAA covered about 75%, with the other 25% coming from the Ohio Department of Transportation and Licking County.

"I think the county realized that things were starting to go on (in New Albany) and that it had to be done anyway, and now is a good time to get ahead of it," Treneff said.

Treneff, along with the other members of the board, are not employees of the airport. For them, it's a labor of love.

"They double my salary every year, but it's still zero," he said.

The airport, which is officially owned by the county, leases the property to Aviation Works Inc., which takes care of day-to-day operations, such as pilot training, fuel sales and airplane rentals and maintenance.

The goal is to build more hangars on the property in the future, but Treneff said it will take a lot of fundraising from the airport board.

Emmet Anderson writes for TheReportingProject.org, the nonprofit news organization of Denison University's Journalism program, which is sponsored in part by the Mellon Foundation and donations from readers.

Inflation

Continued from Page 1A

Everything more expensive since COVID-19

How bad is food inflation at the supermarket?

There's not a single food item (out of more than 100 closely tracked and seasonally adjusted) at the supermarket that's gotten cheaper since March 2020, according to federal data.

The food that has risen the least since the pandemic? Tomatoes, which are 1.1% more expensive, currently averaging \$2.15 per pound nationwide. Then bananas, which are 4.6% more expensive in the past four years.

If the breadth of inflation depresses you, you could always have a drink. Wine purchased for home consumption was the third-least affected by runaway prices: up 5.9%, followed by liquor, up 7.2%. Skip the beer, though. That rose 15%.

The two broad categories of food that were most inflation-resistant in the past four years (that were lower

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Katherine Cramer, a political science professor at University of Wisconsin-Madison

than the rates of both supermarket inflation and overall inflation) were fruits and vegetables, which rose 17.9%, and dairy and related products, which rose 19.1%.

What got the most expensive?

There's good news and bad news about eggs. What's good is their prices have dropped the most of anything in your store in the last year: 28.6% cheaper than at the start of 2023. What's bad is egg prices are still 35.6% higher than at the start of the pandemic. Egg prices peaked in January 2023 and were nearly

double what they were in March 2020: up 89.8%.

A dozen eggs average \$2.52 nationally as of January after soaring above \$4 in the past two years amid an avian flu epidemic.

The current reigning champion of most inflated grocery item, however, is not that far away in the dairy case. Margarine is 54.1% more expensive than four years ago. Manufacturers have blamed the war in Ukraine (previously a major agricultural producer) for disrupting the world's commodity markets, including for sunflower and soybean oils.

Recent volatility on store shelves

Until the latest data from January, overall food prices were beginning to level off and many individual items became a little cheaper. New inflation data will be reported in mid-March that will reveal if prices are flaring up again or if January was a one-month blip upward.

Looking ahead, federal officials predict overall food prices will keep climbing, but at a much slower rate: up 1.6% in 2024 versus 5% in 2023, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Price Outlook.

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